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## E-village extravaganza

Suraya al-Attas

AS the "extras" took their places on the set, "director" Datuk C.B. de Mille - who's about to start the production of his latest film My Movie - was busy calling out orders to Ian the production assistant, making sure the set is ready for the shoot.

For many of the "extras", it was the first time they had set foot on a movie set, let alone act. And so it was that the good Datuk decided to give them a bit of coaching, all the time reminding them that there were 74 cameras on the extras alone and they wouldn't want to be caught on camera doing something they shouldn't be doing!

Directors of de Mille's stature don't usually have the time to talk, much less coach, extras. But this he did - making them do various sounds in the Sound Stage - while waiting for the "main star" to arrive ("The larger the star, the later he can arrive...").

The "main star" was none other than the Prime Minister; the "director" Afdlin Shauki; the "extras" the 600 guests; and the occasion the launch of E-Village's Studio Precinct, which comprises the Virtual Studio and Sound Stage.

The Studio Precinct comes under Phase One of E-Village's seven-year building plan. All in, there will be eight studios in the precinct.

The Virtual Studio, designed and equipped with cutting edge technology provides the use of highly-advanced computers that deliver "mo-cap" or motion caption capabilities and special effects.

The Sound Stage, which ranks as one of Asia's largest with a grid height of 16 metres and floor area of 200 square metres, is designed to accommodate large-scale productions, massive backdrops and sets as well as cinematic stunts and effects.

Among the film industry folks who attended the launch were Mahadi J. Murat, Shuhaimi Baba, Rosyam Nor, Hani Mohsin, Aziz M. Osman, Erra Fazira, Habsah Hassan and Ruhani Abdul Rahman.

Also there were Erma Fatima and her cameraman husband Badaruddin Haji Azmi, Umie Aida, Wendy Wong and film veterans Jamil Sulong, Rosnani Jamil and M. Amin. Hong Kong star who made good in Hollywood Jackie Chan was one of the special international guests.

Indeed, it was with much pomp and pageantry that the E-Village was launched by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Friday night.

From the colourful parade depicting the various cultures of Malaysia at the Gateway Plaza - E-Village's main entrance - and the rousing performance by 20 percussionists at Event Plaza to the lively entertainment at the Sound Stage right down to the dazzling display of fireworks to mark the end of the event, it was obvious that no expense was spared for the launch.

The highlight of the event was clearly the song and dance routine that depicted movies past, present and future on a Kuala Lumpur street. Presented by Australia's Pollard Productions, the audience was entertained with musical numbers, stunts, fight scenes, pyrotechnics and special effects plus a Bollywood extravaganza.

As Afdlin put it: "In a Sound Stage, you can be anywhere you want to be... with just a little imagination."

Choreographed by Ross Coleman and designed by Tony Award-winning designer Roger Kirk, a stage environment was created to showcase the studio's potential and capabilities.

Some of the best-loved movie icons were honoured in the 30-minute musical production: from Shirley Temple (which saw 10 little girls in the former child star's get-up, complete with blonde wigs and white frocks doing a cute little dance number), Charlie Chaplin, Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, Marilyn Monroe, disco king John Travolta, Austin Powers, Bruce Lee and our very own Tan Sri P. Ramlee.

The show also featured local artistes Sharifah Aini, Dayang Nurfaizah, Anuar Zain and Mas Idayu, who each gave commendable performances.

There's only one complaint, though.

Why was the footage in the tribute to the late P. Ramlee shown while the Prime Minister and other international guests were still touring the Virtual Studio?

As it turned out, the audience, who was initially enjoying the footage, lost interest the moment the PM and his entourage came into the Sound Stage to take their seats. It did seem as if the 10-minute screening was shown just to kill time.

But all said and done, the show was well-produced and choreographed, seeing that it was staged with less than three weeks of rehearsals.

Everyone involved in the production - from producers James Ring, Barry Newman and David Mitchell to the performers (90 per cent of whom were locals) - deserves a pat on the back for a job well done.

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