



Peter Jackson gears up for 'District'

Blomkamp makes feature directing debut

By **MICHAEL FLEMING**



Jackson

While their plan to team on "Halo" remains on hold, Peter Jackson and director Neill Blomkamp are going forward this spring on "District 9," a live-action sci-fier that will mark Blomkamp's feature directing debut.

Jackson will produce through his WingNut Films production banner. Blomkamp wrote the script with partner Terri Tatchell.

QED Intl. has committed to fully finance the film through its credit facility with Comerica Bank and Aramid Entertainment Fund, and it will handle worldwide sales. QED Intl. production begins this spring in South Africa, and Jackson's WETA Workshop facility is standing by to provide the visual effects.

CEO Bill Block said that some of the plot particulars will be unveiled for distributors today at AFM.

"We jumped at the opportunity to greenlight this movie with our facility, and we hope to engage selected distributors to be our partners on this," said Block.

Ken Kamins of Key Creatives will exec produce with Block.

Aside from offshore distributors, the surprise project will likely draw interest from studios looking to fill out release schedules with event films beyond the homegrown projects they readied before an expected writers strike.

Neither Block nor Kamins would comment on the budget, but Jackson's sci-fi projects are generally ambitious.

The project grew out of a kinship that developed between Jackson and Blomkamp in New Zealand as they prepped a movie adaptation of the Microsoft game "Halo." Even though that process halted when co-financiers Universal and Fox balked at going forward (*Daily Variety*, Oct. 20, 2006), Blomkamp never left. Rather, he and Jackson continued to bat around ideas until they agreed on "District 9."

"For the last year, my team and I have had the pleasure of working very closely with Neill," Jackson said. "He has a passion and a command of the language of cinema that will result in 'District 9' fascinating people all over the world."

Blomkamp is best known for directing commercials and short films, and Microsoft recently engaged him to shoot three commercials for the product launch of "Halo 3." Though he grew up in Vancouver, Blomkamp was born in South Africa and will be returning to his homeland to shoot "District 9."

Jackson is now in Pennsylvania, where he just began production on an adaptation of "The Lovely Bones," but Kamins said Jackson will be very active as a producer on Blomkamp's film.