Film productions traveling to disparate parts of the world are now discovering that Abu Dhabi is a dream destination for storytelling. A unique T-shaped island in the Persian Gulf, Abu Dhabi is the capital and the second-largest city of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the largest of the seven-member emirates. While many commercials and documentaries have shot in Abu Dhabi, the city recently welcomed two major Hollywood productions: the action drama The Kingdom (starring Jamie Foxx and directed by Peter Berg) and this summer's blockbuster The Bourne Legacy (starring Jeremy Renner).

According to Executive Producer Steve Saeta, The Kingdom was the most ambitious and complex production by far to lens in Abu Dhabi's cosmopolitan city, and government support made the shoot possible. "It was an amazingly positive experience," says Saeta. "During a subsequent scout, we were personally welcomed by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and his chief of staff Yousef Al Otaiba, who is now the UAE's Ambassador to the United States. His Highness put his full support behind our project, resulting in complete cooperation from all parts of the government and the military." This support included a high-level security detail to ensure peace of mind for the production; access to unique locations, like the amazing Emirates Palace Hotel, at a favorable cost; and access to medical services that became necessary when some cast and crewmembers suffered heat exhaustion. "All security, aircraft and locations were provided for a token payment, and we had real partners in the government when it came to solving problems and meeting the ever-changing needs of a chaotic film shoot," Saeta adds.

Also providing key industry infrastructure and support for Abu Dhabi shoots is twofour54, a leading media and entertainment hub in the Middle East and North Africa. Named after Abu Dhabi's geographical coordinates, twofour54 is set up to enable the development of world-class Arabic media and entertainment content, and to position Abu Dhabi as a regional center of excellence in content creation across all media platforms, including film, broadcast, music, digital media, events, gaming and publishing. According to Wayne Borg, twofour54's deputy CEO and COO, Abu Dhabi should be considered as a filming destination more often. "Through

twofour54, the Middle East and North Africa's leading media and entertainment hub, Abu Dhabi can deliver key industry infrastructure [as] a one-stop shop providing prompt government services for all visa/permit requirements; access to experienced crew; and equipment hire supported by state-of-the-art facilities," Borg reports. "twofour54's freelance agency provides an additional pool of highly experienced international production and postproduction media professionals, from cameramen to animators and copywriters to directors."

The Bourne Legacy and a number of other recent productions have successfully shot with twofour54, such as the big-budget Bollywood production Oru Maru Bhoomi Khatha (from the legendary Indian director Priyadarshan), the Tamil film Oru Kal Oru Kandadi (directed by Manickavasagom) and the BBC's "Wild Arabia." To aid future productions, twofour54 and the Abu Dhabi Film Commission have launched the region's first incentive program that will accelerate filming opportunities for international and regional producers. Launched this month, the incentive takes the form of a rebate of up to 30 percent of qualifying spend in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, and is available for feature film, TV, documentary, commercial and music video projects. The qualifying spend relates to goods and services sourced from Abu Dhabi and for relevant expenditure on location or studio filming and postproduction. It also covers costs relating to the contracting of any UAE-registered crew and services for activities in Abu Dhabi and temporary Abu Dhabi accommodation costs.

Producers should also consider Abu Dhabi for its unique environment. The emirate offers a mix of coastal, desert, mountain, urban and suburban locations that includes massive sand dunes in the western region's Empty Quarter desert, a rich underwater-pearl mine, remote offshore islands and a singular mountain, Jebel Hafeet. Abu Dhabi is also famous for its iconic modern architecture. Some of the world's most glamorous and luxurious five-star hotel properties are dotted along the city's seaside Corniche area and its offshore islands of Saadiyat and Sir Bani Yas. Leading international architects, such as Frank Ghery, Zaha Hadid, Jean Nouvel and Tadao Ando, are all designing buildings for Abu Dhabi's prestigious cultural center that is

currently being developed. Their work will join the city's established architectural wonders, like the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque; the port and industrial area of Mussafah; downtown's mix of shops, curiosities and arcades; the peace and tranquility of the Al Ain Oasis; and ancient forts and historical sites, several of which have been listed as official UNESCO World Heritage sites — and all of these locations are fantastic for filming.

After shooting The Kingdom, Saeta would more than recommend Abu Dhabi as a filming location for other projects. "If the material is right and the filmmakers are respectful of their hosts and the traditional culture they will be guests in, then absolutely," he says. "Abu Dhabi is a hospitable, professional, First World city, [and] the government wants the world to come and work and succeed there. And with the right experience and understanding, I would recommend it wholeheartedly. I would enjoy going back." Visiting productions are sure to benefit from Abu Dhabi's top-notch Film Commission and easy, direct access from all major destinations. And with its modern, efficient infrastructure, abundant world-class accommodation, bilingual workforce and a global banking system, Abu Dhabi is an ideal place to support the projects of international and regional producers.