

Hopeful:
Norman speaking at a forum on 'The Art of Vikingdom' at Unimas.



International cast: Purcell (second from right) portraying Eirick in one of the scenes in 'Vikingdom'.

Making it **big** in global moviedom

KRU Studios hopes latest action/fantasy production to strike gold internationally

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KOTA SAMARAHAN: KRU Studios hopes to make it big internationally with its latest production, a fantasy film called *Vikingdom: The Blood Eclipse*.

Executive producer Norman Abdul Halim said the film had been sold to over 80 countries and would open in the United States three weeks after its Malaysian premiere next Thursday.

"This is the first Malaysian movie to be screened in cinemas in the United States. In addition, Universal Pictures has picked up the film for distribution in 10 countries, includ-

ing Britain, Scandinavia, Australia and New Zealand," he said during a forum on "The Art of Vikingdom" at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) here yesterday.

Vikingdom is by far KRU Studios' biggest production to date, with a budget of over RM20mil.

It features a Hollywood cast, including *Prison Break* star Dominic Purcell as the hero Eirick, Norwegian actress Natassia Malthe as his love interest and Australian actor Conan Stevens as Thor.

It was shot and produced entirely in Malaysia by an almost all-Malaysian crew.

Norman described it as a fantasy

action movie akin to *300* or *The Lord of the Rings*. Set in the seventh century, it is about a forgotten king, Eirick, who must face impossible odds to defeat Thor, the god of thunder.

"We did a lot of research for the film. We went to Sweden twice to visit the Viking Museum and speak to historians.

"However, it is not a historical film but a fantasy, a combination of Viking mythology and history," Norman said.

He added that the story concept was first pitched to KRU Studios six years ago at the Cannes Film Festival.

"We thought it was an interesting concept and realised that the subject

matter of the Vikings appeals to a lot of people. They were seen to be barbaric and heartless, mainly because of their actions in raiding and stealing treasures from monasteries," he said.

Norman also said the experience of making *Vikingdom* was both challenging and rewarding, and quite unlike the previous films made by KRU Studios such as *Cicakman* and *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*.

But he believed that it would boost the studio for future productions besides putting Malaysia on the global filmmaking map.

"We want to show the international community that if Malaysian

talent can do a movie about Vikings here, we can make movies about anything. It's still early days for us but the experience of producing and distributing *Vikingdom* is part of building our business to become global," he said.

The movie took more than two years to make, including six months of pre-production work, two months of filming and 16 months of post-production, primarily visual effects work.

Much of it was shot in sound stage studios in Kuala Lumpur while some scenes were shot on location at Gua Tempurung and Kellie's Castle in Perak and Puncak Alam in Selangor.