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## **Hollywood East on Wallabout Bay: Eagle interview with Doug Steiner** Chairman of Steiner Studios at the Brooklyn Navy Yard discusses our borough's film district



Steiner Studios at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Photos courtesy of Steiner Studios

**By Peter Stamelman**  
**Special to the Brooklyn Daily Eagle**

Doug Steiner is not your average mogul. No bombast, macho swagger or Armani suits. Steiner is a wholly different paradigm: chill, low-key, unassuming and accessible. During a recent lunch interview at Peter Luger's, Steiner was dressed casually in sports shirt and stretchy black hiking pants. He listened thoughtfully to the questions posed and gave equally thoughtful, savvy responses. This is a builder who does the details.

Steiner's professional back-ground is real estate development: he's worked in the business for over three decades alongside his father David. Their companies include the Steiner Equities Group, Steiner NYC and the Steiner Studios, located at the historic Brooklyn Navy Yard. The Studios are their most prominent development project: a 580,000 square foot, state-of-the-art film and television production facility. The studio employs thousands and is being expanded from its current 26 acres by another 24 acres.

It seems somehow appropriate that when Steiner Studios opened for business in 2004 the first film to shoot there was Mel Brooks' "The Producers." Since then, countless major film and television shows have been shot at Steiner, including such films as "Men in Black 3," "Trainwreck," "Inside Man," "Wolf of Wall Street," and

TV series such as “Boardwalk Empire,” “The Deuce,” “The Affair,” and “Girls.” Among the films shot at Steiner this past year were Twentieth Century Fox’s “The Post” and “The Greatest Showman.” TV series currently shooting at Steiner include “Gotham,” and Amazon’s “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel.”

At our lunch at Luger’s, I begin by asking Steiner about how he divides his time between all his various professional responsibilities.

(Related: [Doug Steiner Talks About His Big Navy Yard Plans And Residential Projects](#))

Doug Steiner: It’s random, what I’m doing on any given day, at any given hour. I operate by triage so it’s completely unpredictable. Real estate development is under Steiner NYC. And the properties we have in New Jersey I operate under Steiner Equities. As far as the Studios, there’s the operating of the current studios and then there’s the development and expansion of the Studio properties, which will go on for another ten to fifteen years.



Doug Steiner

Eagle: In an interview you did with the Times a few years ago, you mentioned creating a “New York film district.” Is that something you still hope to do?

DS: Just as there’s a fur district, a diamond district, a financial district, we want to become the content creation district. Since so much of the creative class is based in Brooklyn, we want them to be based on our lot. Whether that’s film, television, social media, whatever form it takes over time. As you know, we are currently 580,000 square feet, we have another 180,000 feet under construction and we have six new sound stages that will be opening this year.

Eagle: Among your current tenants there are several TV shows that picked up Golden Globes two weeks ago, prominent among them “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel,” the Amazon series, which picked up two Globes, including Best Actress in a Comedy Series.

DS: Yes, I’m very happy for Rachel Brosnahan, who plays Mrs. Maisel. The creators and executive producers, Amy Sherman-Palladino and her husband Daniel Palladino, are Brooklynites. They’re a great couple and lots of

fun to have around. The show is terrific, the 50's period sets are fantastic. And another one of our tenants from last year, the Twentieth Century Fox film "The Greatest Showman" just won a Golden Globe for Best Original Song. ["This is Me," by the Tony Award-winning team of Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, who also wrote the songs for "La La Land" and the Broadway play "Dear Evan Hansen."] And the 19th century sets for that film were spectacular.

Eagle: Plus, despite opening to lukewarm reviews, the audience has ignored the critics and made the film a huge hit. [Note: see my January 11 Eagle interview [with Rebecca Ferguson](#), one of the stars of "The Greatest Showman."]

DS: And don't forget Spielberg's "The Post," which was nominated for several Globes and will probably be in the Oscar mix. Aside from an office building in Westchester that they used for the Washington Post's main newsroom, all of the stage work - Katharine Graham's house, Ben Bradlee's house - was all done on our stages. We're very proud to have hosted that production. And "Showman."

Eagle: Did you always know that you wanted Steiner Studios to be located at the Brooklyn Navy Yard?

DS: I sort of stumbled into it. Originally it wasn't my idea to do studios at the Navy Yard. The president of the Navy Yard at that time was Mark Rosenbaum and he had gone to Oxford and was classmates with the guy who at that time was running Euro Disney. And since the Navy Yard had these immense buildings that were the equivalent of airplane hangers, he wrote to his ex-Oxford classmate and asked if Disney might be interested in leasing them. They weren't interested. But that started some other guys thinking, but they couldn't make it happen. So in 1999 we stepped into their shoes, because to me it sounded like a no brainer. I mean, I didn't know what I was doing, all the reasons I had for doing it got stood on their head. But five years later, in 2004, we opened Steiner Studios.



Brooklyn's Steiner Studios as seen from the air

Eagle: What is your vision for the Studios moving forward?

DS: The Navy Yard's historic mission has always been to retain and create industrial jobs in New York City. That started in the '60s and '70s, when jobs were going to right-to-work states in the South and then later on to Mexico and then overseas to China. We think keeping jobs in New York City, in Brooklyn, is a noble mission.

Eagle: We're certainly on the same page in that regard.

DS: We think of our business as manufacturing for the 21st century. A type of manufacturing that's perfect for New York and that wants to be in New York, unlike most manufacturing, which isn't even in the U.S. anymore. And we're in Brooklyn to stay. In fact, I now live in Brooklyn. So the commitment is complete and unwavering.

Eagle: As fellow Brooklyn boosters we salute and applaud you. We look forward to getting the grand tour of the Studios very soon.

DS: We look forward to hosting you. There ain't nuttin' like it.

Editor's note: Doug Steiner's impact on Brooklyn ranks him among the most influential people of the new century. As head of Steiner Studios, called "Hollywood East" along Wallabout Bay in Brooklyn Navy Yard, he has been instrumental in bringing the Brooklyn College Film School to the Navy Yard site as well.

And the dozens of citywide projects his firm has developed include a 55-story tower opposite Brooklyn Academy of Music. A graduate of Stanford University, Doug serves on the boards of the New York City Regional Economic Development Council, BRIC Arts Media, Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and North Brooklyn Parks Alliance. Readers should note also that almost 100 well-known feature films and popular televised series have been shot at Steiner Studios.