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Next Subway Stop: Hollywood

By Jake Mooney

The largest room at Steiner Studios, the year-old moviemaking compound at the Brooklyn Navy Yard between Williamsburg and Fort Greene, is 27,000 square feet, with ceilings more than 45 feet high. Inside this mammoth space last Wednesday, as part of the set for a movie called "Across the Universe," were a few cramped rooms straight out of an artsy 1960's East Village tenement building, authentic down to the scuffs on the wood floors.

"One of our security guards works as a narc in the N.Y.P.D.," said Douglas C. Steiner, the studio's chairman, strolling past a painted backdrop in the distance of a cloudy blue sky hung from the rafters outside the fake apartment's window. "He came in here and said, 'I think I busted this place last week.' "

Described by its operators as the biggest studio east of Los Angeles, with five soundstages on 15 acres, the Steiner facility has come of age as its first full-fledged production, "The Producers," has hit the big screen. But though its role in that film is over, the show at the studio must go on.

The other day, crew members with tools and phones clipped to their belts milled around a table stacked with apples, cereal and coffee. At another end of the giant room was a vintage Porsche with a psychedelic paint job, and at another was a small airplane, with a bicycle frame and paper wings, that the comedian Eddie Izzard will soon fly through a hogshead of real fire, as in the Beatles song "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite."

As late as last spring, this space was the site of a gaudy Midtown Manhattan block from the set of "The Producers." But on this day, with shooting long over, the studio's stages, reminiscent of airplane hangars, were bustling with other things.

In one room, performers wearing hip harnesses tested their vocal chords while preparing to swing around a stage in a rehearsal for the upcoming Broadway musical "Tarzan." In another, the voice of the actor Luke Wilson, who was filming a breakup comedy with Uma Thurman, ricocheted around full-size models of dusty brownstones and towering backdrop photographs of New York City apartment buildings.

"I think I used to live across from that building," Mr. Steiner, 45, mused, pointing at one of the backdrops. "I think that's Sheridan Square."

Back on the set for "Across the Universe," men in white lab coats were poking at a man with messy blond hair who wore only boxer shorts and electrodes that were stuck to his chest. It all took place in front of a blue screen, while Mark Friedberg, the movie's art director, looked on.

Mr. Friedberg, who had the same role on the set of "The Producers," said the studio had been a boon to New York's creative community.

"I live in TriBeCa," he said. "It's four and a half minutes door to door for me."

Already, though, Steiner has an alumni society. Some of the crew members of "The Producers" are working on the production of "Fur."

"This," said Mr. Rodriguez, the locksmith, "is the biggest thing happening in Brooklyn."