

Newsday

Wednesday, September 29, 2004
Circulation: 357,124

Brooks To Film In Brooklyn

It's Bialystock and Bloomberg

By Glenn Thrush

Bialystock & Bloom is relocating to Brooklyn.

Mel Brooks will shoot his remake of "The Producers" in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, not far from the Williamsburg neighborhood where he grew up as Melvin Kaminsky.

"My heart leaps with joy to know now that we are going to film right on these streets, the streets that I grew up on," Brooks said during a news conference yesterday at the newly opened Steiner Studios.

The \$45-million musical, a film version of the Tony-winning Broadway production, will begin shooting on Feb. 21 with Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick reprising their roles as producers Max Bialystock and Leo Bloom. The movie will also feature Nicole Kidman and Will Ferrell.

The 78-year-old comedian, writer and filmmaker made the first version of "The Producers" in the city in 1968, on a far lower budget, with Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder.

Brooks said new labor agreements and newly created state tax credits made it possible to film in New York instead of seeking cheaper locations in Canada.

"It was breaking my heart to think that we had to go to Bucharest or Toronto or Vancouver to somehow mimic this incredible city," he said. "Without the tax benefits, the truth is, the horrible truth is that this movie would probably be made in Kabul, wherever the cheapest place in the world to shoot is."

At the event, Gov. George Pataki signed a bill that will offer up to \$25 million a year in tax breaks to productions that use New York locales or production facilities. The bill also allows the city to offer an additional \$12.5 million in annual tax breaks if the City Council approves. Brooks, never one to shy from a crowd, schmoozed with reporters, flinging off Borscht Belt jokes and heckling politicians as they tried to read their prepared statements.

When Bloomberg suggested he be cast as Max Bialystock, the swindler who seduces old ladies to finance his Broadway schemes, Brooks quipped, "We wanted somebody a little taller." But

Bloomberg - slightly taller than Brooks but shorter on comedic stature - got the biggest laugh of the day.

When Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver suggested Brooks get a second bar mitzvah during filming, Bloomberg shot back, "Or a second bris."