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Producers Pic Docks at Navy Yard

By Jill Goldsmith



Douglas Steiner, right, Steiner Studios chair, and dad David Steiner flank Mel Brooks, whose pic "The Producers" will be shot at Steiner Studios.

NEW YORK -- New York's Steiner Studios -- the brand-new site at the Brooklyn Navy Yard -- said Tuesday that Mel Brooks' "The Producers: The Movie Musical" will be its first project as New York state and city announced a package of tax incentives to lure production to Gotham.

A sea of some 300 pols and press gathered at the Navy Yard as Brooks, a Brooklyn son, trashed Toronto's bagels as "mushy" and imitated a Yugoslavian extra trying to say "closing time."

Brooks was clearly elated that filming in New York has, he said, at last become affordable. The new Hollywood-style studio promises to make it easier: It's the largest on the East Coast, with five contiguous soundstages, tons of parking and services ranging from a commissary to screening rooms to a makeup area.

"The Producers," a \$45 million pic starring Nathan Lane, Matthew Broderick, Nicole Kidman and Will Ferrell, goes into pre-production later this fall and begins shooting in late February.

"We're thrilled that Mel has decided to make his classic story about New Yorkers, by New York's top talent, right here in New York, where it should be," said Steiner Studios chairman Douglas Steiner. He expects to announce several more film projects in coming weeks.

Gov. George Pataki lamented how often New York scenes are shot outside the Big Apple.

At the studio, Pataki signed into law the Empire State Film Production Credit Program, which offers a 10% tax incentive to feature films and TV series that do most of their filming on qualified New York soundstages. Measure calls for a production to spend at least 75% of its facilities-related expenses at a site that houses a soundstage of 7,000 square feet or larger. If facility costs are less than \$3 million, the film must shoot at least 75% of its location days in New York state.

Funding for the program is capped at \$25 million a year but could be raised.

The legislation, part of the state's annual budget, allowed New York City to provide additional enticements, which it did.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg on Tuesday unveiled the Made in New York Incentive Program, which features a combination 5% tax credit, marketing credits and expanded services for productions completing 75% of their work in Gotham. The program has earmarked \$12.5 million a year.

Marketing perks include the use of outdoor media (billboards, bus shelters, phone kiosks, street banners) equal in value to 1% of a production's total cost.

A "concierge" service offers assistance with story development, scouting and budget analysis; discounts on hotels, car rentals and other services; and consulting on venues for global premieres and launches, according to the New York City Mayor's Office of Film, Theater & Broadcasting.

Film and TV bring in about \$5 billion a year to New York and provide 100,000 jobs.

"Our administration is committed to expanding our share of this important industry," Bloomberg said.

The city invested \$28 million in the Brooklyn Navy Yard Project. Giant New Jersey real estate developer Steiner Equities put in \$90 million to develop the 15-acre site.

The 256-acre Navy Yard dates from 1801.

Separately, Gotham's Kaufman Astoria Studios said "Law & Order: Trial by Jury" will benefit from the tax incentives when it starts shooting there in October.

"The new tax incentive program has had an immediate impact (and) provides a tool for us to keep and attract new production," said Kaufman Astoria president Hal Rosenbluth.