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Brooks Helping Movie Biz to Bloom

By Michael Saul

BIALYSTOCK AND BLOOM are moving from Broadway to Brooklyn.

Declaring "there is nothing like New York," Mel Brooks announced yesterday he will film "The Producers: The Movie Musical" at the new Steiner Studios in the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

The legendary funnyman looked on yesterday as Gov. Pataki signed into law the Empire State Film Production Credit Program, which gives a 10% tax credit on production costs for movies and TV shows that do most of their filming on New York sound stages.

"Without the tax benefits, the horrible truth is this movie would probably be made in Kabul!" thundered Brooks, his remarks drawing laughter at every turn.

The musical - the film version of the Broadway hit that was based on Brooks' 1968 movie comedy - will star Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick, reprising their stage roles as blustery Broadway impresario Max Bialystock and meek accountant Leo Bloom.

Nicole Kidman and Will Ferrell also will star in the film, which starts shooting in February.

Brooks said the movie will be very similar to the play. But, he happily disclosed: "We're adding a lot of tall, blond, leggy girls to it - to make more money!"

Bada-boom.

And so it went. Brooks, of course, began his remarks at Steiner Studios with typical borscht-belt humor:

"I met a girl. This girl was sooooo thin. I took her to a restaurant. The waiter said check your umbrella! That's how skinny this girl was."

The news conference wasn't all shtick, though. Amid the laughter, both Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg stressed the importance of the film industry and their hope to draw more productions to New York.

"There's no reason why the movie production industry can't be as large and as successful in New York as it is on the West Coast," Pataki said.

The film industry generates \$5 billion annually in economic activity and 100,000 jobs for New York City, Bloomberg said. City Hall also is working on its own city tax incentive program.

The newly constructed Steiner Studios, which opens next month, is the largest production facility on the East Coast. Douglas Steiner, the studio's chairman, called the opening the "dawn of a new era" for film and TV production in New York.

But yesterday belonged to Brooks.

When Bloomberg suggested he could be the lead in the new movie, Brooks retorted: "We wanted somebody a little taller."

Bada-boom.