



SCHOOL OF THE ARTS FOR MOTION PICTURES AND BROADCASTING

G-STAR SCHOOL OF THE ARTS FOR MOTION PICTURES AND BROADCASTING

2030 South Congress Avenue
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406

PRESS RELEASE

August 8, 2005



Posted: Sun., Aug. 7, 2005, 5:36pm PT

G-Star is in session

Fla. high school lures shoots with writeoffs

By **BASHIRAH MUTTALIB**

HOLLYWOOD -- Unique among production facilities is the G-Star School of the Arts for Motion Pictures and Broadcasting in West Palm Beach, Fla.

The campus is free to use for producers lensing features budgeted at \$12 million and under. Since opening its doors four years ago, it's also become home to the G-Star/Katharine Hepburn Studios and the "G-Star" TV show, which airs on a local PBS station.

G-Star's nonprofit status as a public school offers productions the opportunity to include their facility for investment purposes, which, in turn, allows G-Star to offer IRS tax writeoffs for certain items associated with the production. Full film production insurance is an additional feature.

With 84,000 square feet under one roof on 12 acres, G-Star is the only public high school boasting its own on-campus film studio, providing students hands-on experience on film sets, in production offices and editing suites.

Productions are encouraged to use the 16,600 square-foot warehouse and set construction for shooting. There's also 8,500 square feet of production buildings that include 12 furnished offices with conference rooms (equipped with T1 lines, phone system, wireless Internet and computers), in addition to nine workshops (art department, set

construction, props, wardrobe, grip, lighting, etc.).

Students provide a unique component to the production process at G-Star, and helmer-scribe Susan Seidelman's Snowbird Films ("Desperately Seeking Susan," "Sex and the City," "She-Devil"), recently wrapped a feature utilizing G-Star students, a proviso for the use and services of the school that has become a welcome benefit.

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The wild, wild West is back in action with California's Spirit Horse Prods. joining forces with Old Tucson Co. The union seeks to revitalize film production at Old Tucson Studios and its sister site in Mescal, Ariz.

Billed as "Hollywood in the Desert," the studio is looking to extend its rich film history via the partnership and state film incentives that offer a 50% transaction privilege (sales) tax rebate.

Old Tucson Studios' complete Western town sits on 380 acres within the Tucson Mountain Park in the Sonoran Desert. Sister site Mescal occupies 70 acres surrounded by 2,400 acres of state-owned grazing land.

More than 32 structures make up the Western town in Tucson, including a schoolhouse, bank, hotel, church, jail, two-story homes, isolated ranch house, stage station and saloon.

The larger facility boasts an 8,000-square-foot soundstage; several production offices; on-site stunt, special f/x and prop departments; pyrotechnic specialists; wardrobe and dressing rooms; and carpentry, mechanic and welding shops in addition to a full transportation department and catering.

Six new film and TV productions have recently lensed at Old Tucson, including Stephen King's "Desperation" and the History Channel's "Wild West Tech."

Spirit Horse owners, Michelle Hartly and Shari Hamrick, who've also begun construction on their San Marcos, Calif., studio, report the expansion as "an expression of our commitment to keep film production in the U.S."

* * *

New Mexico's Rio Grande Studios, in association with the city of Rio Rancho, will expand its facility on an additional 22 acres of virgin land, with plans for 50 more acres.

The owners, Michael J. Jacobs and Ruby Handler Jacobs, announced phase-one development will include two 18,000-square-foot soundstages with 40-foot grids, a 13,000-square-foot administration/production building, a 24,000-square-foot mill and 10,000 square feet of covered space. Site has a 2006 planned completion date.

Rio Grande also will offer a wireless satellite trailer providing users 11MB-per-second downstreaming and 5MB-per-second upstreaming, including voiceover IP and real-time MPEG-streaming capabilities (broadband and cell phone) within a 1-mile radius, with the additional plus of being battery-powered up to 36 hours in the field.

The studio also provides "previsualization," the 3-D animatic process of preplanning a film to save on production and editing costs.

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