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# VARIETY



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DIRECTED BY Scott Frank  
STARRING Michelle Dockery  
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# SANTA FE & STUDIOS

## THE BALLAD OF BUSTER SCRUGGS

DIRECTED BY Ethan & Joel Coen  
STARRING Tim Blake Nelson  
NETFLIX

## ONLY THE BRAVE

DIRECTED BY Joseph Kosinski  
STARRING Josh Brolin  
BLACK LABEL MEDIA  
COLUMBIA PICTURES

## WACO

DIRECTED BY John Erick Dowdle  
STARRING Taylor Kitsch  
PARAMOUNT NETWORK

## THE RIDICULOUS SIX

DIRECTED BY Frank Coraci  
STARRING Adam Sandler  
NETFLIX

# Thank You

## THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

DIRECTED BY Antoine Fuqua  
STARRING Denzel Washington  
METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER

## LOGAN

DIRECTED BY James Mangold  
STARRING Hugh Jackman  
20th CENTURY FOX

## A MILLION WAYS TO DIE IN THE WEST

DIRECTED BY Seth MacFarlane  
STARRING Charlize Theron  
UNIVERSAL PICTURES

## COSMOS: A SPACETIME ODYSSEY

DIRECTED BY Brannon Braga  
STARRING Neil deGrasse Tyson  
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## Land of Enchantment Charms Hollywood

Recovering from a bumpy spell a few years ago, film and television production across the state is back with a vengeance

By TODD LONGWELL

Actress Lora Martinez-Cunningham had been pounding the pavement in Los Angeles for 13 years. She landed a handful of TV series guest spots, but true success was elusive. Then the Chino Hills earthquake hit in July 2008, rattling Martinez-Cunningham's tiny apartment and her nerves. She decided she'd had enough; it was time to go back home to New Mexico.

But that didn't mean Martinez-Cunningham was giving up on show business. Far from it. Thanks to a generous tax incentive program

established in 2002 under then-Gov. Gary Johnson, New Mexico was attracting a wealth of production, from the hit TV series "Breaking Bad" to high-profile features such as the Coen brothers' "No Country for Old Men" and James Mangold's "3:10 to Yuma."

The move transformed Martinez-Cunningham's life and career. Today, she has a long resume of acting credits in New Mexico-based productions, including recurring roles on NBC's "Midnight, Texas" and Epix's "Graves," and a part as doctor in the recent fea-

ture "Only the Brave." She also directs and produces local commercials and PSAs through her own production company based at Albuquerque Studios.

Best of all for Martinez-Cunningham, she has excellent quality of life, residing in a spacious two-story adobe home she built on an acre of land that she shares with her three dogs. Her extended family lives nearby. "If we were to pick my house up and drop it in L.A., I probably would've had to pay \$2.5 million to \$3 million. Here and I was able to purchase the land

“

The only thing we haven't been able to double is the Pacific Ocean... I just couldn't pull that one off.”

Nick Maniatis

and build it for \$300,000," she says.

Martinez-Cunningham is part of a larger, ever-growing entertainment land rush in the Land of Enchantment. According to the New Mexico Film Office, from 2014 to 2017, the state went from 18 projects with budgets of \$1 million or more to 52, and the amount of direct in-state production spend rose from \$162.1 million to \$505.9 million.

New Mexico's current film & TV production incentive offers a refundable tax credit of up to a 30% on qualified in-state spend, making it competitive with other popular domestic production hubs such as Georgia and Louisiana, which have tax credits that top out at 30% and 40%, respectively.

The power of the incentive is evident at Albuquerque Studios, which has hosted such tentpole films as "Independence Day: Resurgence" (2016), "The Long Ranger" (2013) and

### Firefighting Heroes

Columbia Pictures' "Only the Brave," directed by Joseph Kosinski, shot at Santa Fe Studios and on location in New Mexico.

"The Avengers" (2012). It's also been home to NBC's recently cancelled hospital drama "The Night Shift," which traded off stage space and crew with AMC's "Better Call Saul" (currently gearing up for its fourth season), as well as "Midnight, Texas." The studio is expecting several pilots and one or two features next year.

"It's not like when we opened 11 years ago and they'd say, 'You built a studio there? Why would you do that?' We've really come a long way," says Dana Arnold, CEO of Pacifica Ventures, which owns Albuquerque Studios. "There are ups and downs, but right now we're on an up."

Another studio on an up: Santa Fe Studios, 61 miles to the northeast, which →



← has hosted the features “We’re the Millers” (2013), “A Million Days to Die in the West” (2014), “The Ridiculous Six” (2015), “The Magnificent Seven” (2016), this year’s “Only the Brave,” the upcoming Paramount Network miniseries “Waco,” and a pair of Netflix series, “Godless” and the Coen Bros. Western anthology “The Ballad of Buster Scruggs.”

But it wasn’t so long ago that New Mexico’s production landscape was looking bleak. When Republican Gov. Susana Martinez came into office in January 2011, she pledged to scale back the incentive, spooking the powers-that-be in Hollywood and causing production to drop off precipitously.

The downturn came at the worst possible time for Santa Fe Studios, which was just opening its doors for its first client, the CBS series “Vegas,” starring Dennis Quaid and Michael Chiklis. “Unfortunately for us, they only did the pilot here,” says Santa Fe Studios president Jason Hool. “California, which had just started their incentive program, lured them over.”

In the end, despite all the trepidation, the only significant change to New Mexico’s incentive was the institution of a \$50 million cap. It’s a “rolling cap,” meaning that if a production has a credit approved after the program exceeds its \$50 million annual allotment, it will receive its payment at the beginning of the next fiscal year.

**Tentpole Mecca**

Albuquerque Studios has hosted multiple studio features and is also home to television projects such as “Better Call Saul.”

Eventually, Martinez got onboard with the incentive program and in April 2014 she signed what is known as the “Breaking Bad” bill, which added an extra 5% to the state’s 25% credit for TV series with an order of six or more episodes and for movies that shoot 10 to 15 days (depending on budget size) in a qualified produc-

tion facility.

The extra 5% tipped the scales, revitalizing production in the state. For better or worse, the program has yet to exceed the cap, “but there’s potential that we might this year,” says Nick Maniatis, director of the New Mexico Film Office.

In the meantime, the film and TV boom continues to give back to New Mexico in the form of tourism, much of which is still inspired by “Breaking Bad,” which wrapped production in 2013. Routes Bicycle Tours in Albuquerque offers

a “Biking Bad” tour (tickets \$50-\$55), and for \$75 fans can check out the show’s iconic locations in an RV outfitted to resemble Walter and Jesse’s rolling meth lab.

While Maniatis appreciates the continued popularity of “Breaking Bad,” he’s quick to point out that New Mexico has more to offer than the series’ suburban Albuquerque locales and arid desert vistas, the latter of which have also served as the backdrop for countless Westerns over the decades.

The best example of the

state’s visual versatility is the new NBC series “The Brave,” about an elite military Special Ops squad to different hot spots around the globe, all portrayed by New Mexico, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Iran, Mongolia, Nigeria, Turkey and Ukraine.

“The only thing we haven’t been able to double is the Pacific Ocean,” says Maniatis. He tried to persuade a production to use Elephant Butte Lake north of Truth or Consequences as a stand-in, “but I just couldn’t pull that one off.”

**TV Producers Create Multi-Purpose Backlot**

In the pilot for NBC’s “Midnight, Texas,” the exteriors of the titular town were shot in Las Vegas, N.M. But when the vampire drama was picked up as a series, it was determined that it would be too logistically daunting to bounce back and forth between its home base at Albuquerque Studios and the rustic downtown 130 miles away.

The solution: recreate a block of Las Vegas on seven acres of leased county land just outside the studio gates, replete with re-creations of two-story 19th Century buildings, stage space, sidewalks and a working fire hydrant.

“The streets in Las Vegas were built wide enough for a six-horse carriage to hang a U-turn. We made the streets



a little bit narrower,” says the show’s co-executive producer Bill Johnson. “It’s probably two-thirds the size of the real town, but it gets the point across.”

Now that “Midnight, Texas” has wrapped for the season, the backlot is being used by another NBC series, “The Brave,” to portray a variety of locations around the world, including Turkey and Iran, with the help of strategic set dressings fashioned by Guy Barnes, who serves as production designer for both shows.

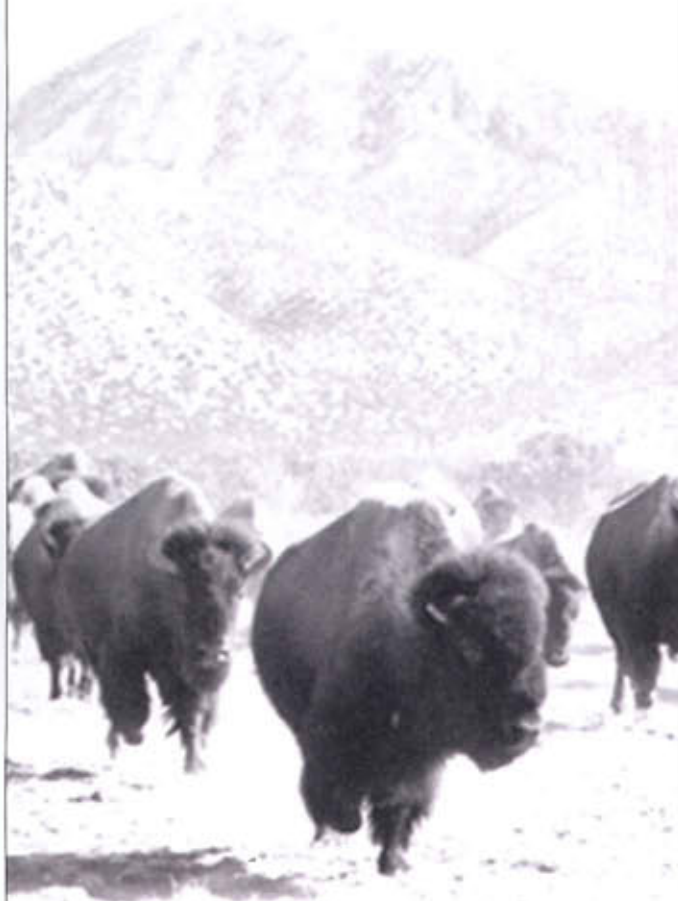
For instance, “in ‘Midnight, Texas,’ there’s a witch named Fiji who has an open garden next to a tattoo parlor and a nail salon,” says Johnson, who’s also co-executive producer on “The Brave.” “We boarded that up, put a roof on it and it became a shop in Tehran with a safe house in the back.”

TODD LONGWELL

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## PROS RELOCATE TO THE LOCATION

Thousands of below-the-line workers have followed the jobs and adopted a more relaxed lifestyle

By TODD LONGWELL

Of all the U.S. states offering film and TV incentives, New Mexico has always been the one most proactive about building a local crew base through measures such as the Film Crew Advancement Program, which gives productions a 50% reimbursement of below-the-line crafts workers' wages for up to 1,040 hours of work if the job trains them in additional skills that will help advance their careers.

That's on top of the state's 25%-30% refundable tax credit for qualified in-state spend, which includes local hires.

However, just because the workers are New Mexico residents, it doesn't mean they're natives. The abundance of high-paying below-the-line jobs created by the film and TV projects drawn to the state by the incentive have inspired many experienced production pros to permanently relocate to the Land of Enchantment.

That's proof positive of the incentive's effectiveness, according to Jon Hendry, business agent of

IATSE Local 480, serving the state of New Mexico.

"You can't build a skilled crew base from the bottom up," says Hendry. "You've got to have people getting opportunities and learning their trade, but you also need people who know what they're doing. People are moving here, bringing skills, buying houses, putting the kids in school, becoming a part of the community — that's real economic development."

A native of Scotland, Hendry first came to New Mexico in the mid-'80s to work on "Silverado," and the state eventually became his home. His story is not an uncommon one.

"People call it the Land of Entrapment," says Randy Moore, who came to New Mexico from Texas with his partner and fellow special effects coordinator Maggie Johnson 12 years ago. "When we moved here, we had a lot of friends who said, 'What the hell are you doing moving to Santa Fe? That's the middle of nowhere.' Probably six or seven of

### Resource Guide

#### Ahern Equipment

**Rentals:** Tool and heavy construction equipment rental company with offices in Albuquerque and Carlsbad, N.M. Phone: 505-247-4300, 575-885-0077

#### Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau

Information on local attractions, shopping and dining, and hotel and convention center event bookings. Phone: 505-842-9918

#### Albuquerque Film Office

Serving the city of Albuquerque, the office offers free assistance to producers in obtaining locations, crew, talent, equipment and accommodations. It liaises with city agencies. Phone: 505-768-3283

**Albuquerque Studios:** Nine soundstages, office space, a mill, lighting, grip, and other on-site support services. Phone: 505-227-2000; email: info@abqstudios.com

#### Bonanza Creek

**Movie Ranch:** A Western filming locale with an unobstructed 360-degree vista, five sets including a 24-building town), south of Santa Fe. Phone: 505-471-4248; email: imobcr@gmail.com

**Chapman Leonard:** Major provider of motion picture cranes. Phone: 505-227-2578

**Cinelease:** Equipment rental agency with offices in Albuquerque. Phone: 505-247-1781

#### DigiTech Office

**Equipment:** Printer and copy machine rentals and sales in Albuquerque. Phone: 505-888-7575

#### Don Mickey Designs:

Graphic design and full-color printing service in Albuquerque. Phone: 505-256-7031

#### Entertainment

**Partners:** One many EP branches around the world, this office provides payroll services, incentive consulting, budget and scheduling software and background casting. Phone: 505-227-2240

#### Film Las Cruces:

Location scouting for funded film and TV projects, liaison for productions shooting locally, permits for the City of Las Cruces, and crew and casting call info. Phone: 575-805-3456; email: info@filmascruces.com

#### Fincham Mobile Storage:

Supplier of industrial shipping and storage containers, with offices in Albuquerque and Las Cruces. Phone: 505-821-1666, 575-373-0666; email: office@finchammobilestorage.com

#### Garson Studios:

30,000-square-foot facility on the campus of the Santa Fe University of Art and Design featuring three soundstages, office space and stage management services. Phone: 505-473-6402; email: info@garsonstudios.com

#### I-25 Studios:

Located in Albuquerque, the onetime factory has six soundstages, office space, two mills, two effects shops, a cafeteria and parking for 750 vehicles. Phone: 505-822-7115

them have houses here now."

First assistant director Doug Metzger is a four-decade industry vet who first came to New Mexico in 1986 to shoot the TV movie "The Gambler, Part III: The Legend Continues," starring Kenny Rogers. He returned regularly over the years to work on such films as "City Slickers" (1993) and "A Man Apart" (2003) before finally settling in Santa Fe in 2014.

Back in 1986, film crews working in New Mexico were "the typical L.A. traveling circus coming through town," recalls Metzger. "We did hire some help from locals," mostly for less skilled jobs, "but probably 80% came from out of town, which is kind of the reverse of what it is now."

For crew members to prove that they are a local hire whose salary is considered a qualified spend for the tax credit, they need to get a Film Residency Certification Card or, as a temporary measure, fill out a Declaration of Residency form stating their intent to file their state taxes as a full-year New Mexico resident.

While New Mexico's film and TV industry has grown exponentially in recent years, the state's pace of life is still quiet and slow-moving compared to that of Los Angeles, New York and even other popular domestic production destinations such as Atlanta and New Orleans.

The population of New Mexico is just over 2 million, which Santa Fe Studios president Jason Hool jokes is about as many people that live west of the 405 Freeway in Los Angeles.

And unlike L.A. — and the 405 in particular — "there's no traffic in New Mexico," says casting director Jo Edna Boldin, who relocated from Austin, Texas, in 2007. "You can get on the main freeway in Albuquerque at 5 p.m. and be moving right along."

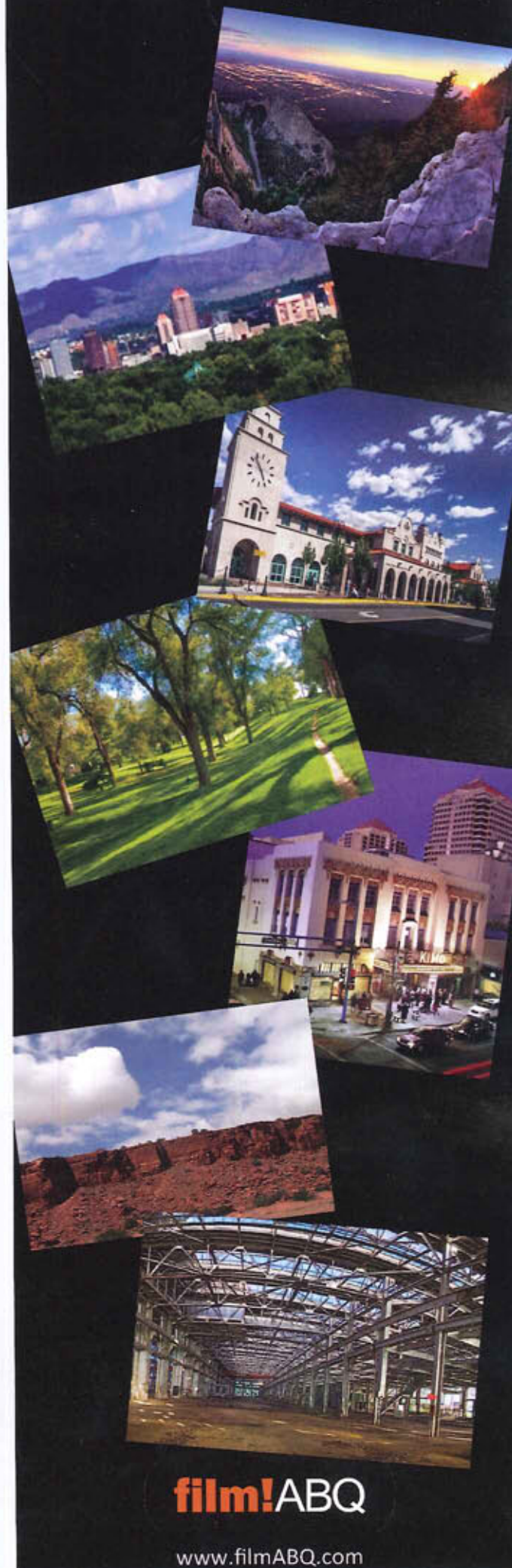
But working far away from a major metropolis has its drawbacks. While New Mexico has built up a healthy infrastructure of crews, facilities and vendors, it doesn't have the profusion of anything and everything related to production that can be had with the snap of a finger in Hollywood.

"We could drive across L.A. and get 20 wind machines," says Moore. "Here, you put them on flatbed semis and truck them in."

Another downside: New Mexico's overall economy is, by many measures, less robust than that of many states.

The upside: The cost of living is low. "People who move here are literally shocked at the price of things like housing, food and car insurance," says Hendry. "Your wages probably go 30% – 40% farther here." ☒

## We have what it takes. Film Albuquerque.



### IATSE Local 480:

The union that represents below-the-line film and TV craftspeople in the state. Phone: 505-986-9512; email: info@iatselocal480.com

### Keslow Camera:

Rental house for film and digital cinema cameras and lenses. Phone: 505-919-8420; email: info@keslowcamera.com

**McDade-Woodcock:** Electrical construction firm in Albuquerque

### Mobile Mini:

Portable storage, mobile office, and tank and pump services. Phone: 505-792-3284

### Motion Picture Set

**Medics:** Owned and operated by medics and based at Albuquerque Studios. Phone: 505-362-1939; email: movieambulance@gmail.com

### New Mexico Film Office:

The state's one-stop-shop for tax incentive, location, casting, facilities and productions services info. Phone: 505-476-5600; email: info@nmfilm.com.

### New Mexico Tourism

**Department/New Mexico:** Resource for the state's travel, tourism and hospitality industries. Phone: 505-827-7400; email: SantaFe.VIC@state.nm.us.

### RAKS Building Supply:

Building material supplier with five locations in New Mexico. Phone: 505-842-1103

### Rock Bottom Rentals:

Provider of cell phone, satellite and wireless devices for the entertainment industry. Phone: 505-227-2560

### Santa Fe Film Office:

Provides film and TV production resources, crews, casting and location info. Phone: 505-986-6353

**Santa Fe Studios:** Opened in 2011, this full-service complex operated by entertainment industry veterans boasts two soundstages, office space, a mill, on-site production services and 57 open acres for backlot work. Phone: 505-954-2400; email: contact@santafestudios.com.

### Southwest Suites

**Corporate Housing:** Extended-stay accommodations with courier services, dry cleaning, meal delivery, grocery shopping, discounted car rentals and on-site massage therapists. Phone: 505-294-7632

### Starr Waggon:

Provider of location trailers for talent, as well as transportation and production personnel with offices at Albuquerque Studios. Phone: 888-367-5946.

### Studio Concierge:

Provides assistance with corporate housing/hotels, car rental, travel booking, personal trainers, spa services, animal trainers and rentals. Located at Albuquerque Studios. Phone: 505-227-2222; email: studio\_concierge@abqstudios.com

### Williams Scotsman:

Supplier of portable offices and trailers with a location in Albuquerque. Phone: 505-345-8991.

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