



## **Year in review: Santa Clarita: Hollywood's back lot Industry experts describe city as ideal for filming**

By Jana Adkins  
Signal Business Editor  
jana@signalscv.com  
661-259-1234 x599  
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Home to a number of hit TV shows, movies, studios, movie ranches and Disney/ABC Studio's 58-acre Golden Oak Ranch movie set, Santa Clarita's thriving film business has positioned the region as a Hollywood backlot to the region's film industry.

And in 2012, the film business was bustling in the area.

When veteran actor, and brother of actor and director Ron Howard, was filming an independent film in Santa Clarita this year, Clint Howard said the "valley's close proximity to Los Angeles and numerous film locations make it a great place for movie-making."

The movie "Huff," a modern suspense retelling of the three little pigs fairy tale, was able to film entirely at one location because of the local set's diverse setting, said Terry James, one of the movie's co-producers.

While Howard is willing to travel almost anywhere to make a movie, the easy commute helps him focus on his acting, Howard said. Santa Clarita is a quick 30-minute drive from Howard's San Fernando Valley home.

"I'm going the opposite direction of traffic," he said. "An easy drive makes filming more pleasurable."

The film's executive producer Cort Howell, owner of Cort Howell Productions, Inc., Windchaser Pictures and a Santa Clarita resident, told The Signal last year that the movie industry is changing its perception of working in the SCV.

"Before, you had to explain to people where you were shooting," Howell said. "But now people know it for filming."

And that reputation has also attracted an ongoing stream of revenue for businesses in the city of Santa Clarita, which issues on-location filming permits and offers productions incentives to film locally.

The hit TV show, "Vegas," premiered on CBS in September and was recently picked up for a full season, said Jason Crawford, marketing and economic development manager with the city of Santa Clarita. His department oversees the city's film office. "Vegas" is locally based and occupies a sound stage and temporary set space at Santa Clarita Studios, he said.

Crawford also pointed out that Santa Clarita continues to be the home of a number of hit television shows including CBS's "NCIS," ABC Family's "Jane by Design" and "Switched at Birth," FX's "Justified," TBS' "The Wedding Band," and ABC's "Wipeout."

And Santa Clarita played host to a number of potential blockbuster movie features that filmed locally in 2012, he said, including "Jobs," "Django Unchained," "The Guilt Trip," "Gangster Squad," and "The Trials of Cate McCall."

“Film days and permits (through November) are roughly even with 2011, which was the biggest year ever for filming here,” Crawford said. “We’re hoping for a big December to push us over.”

The 2012 estimated economic benefit for Santa Clarita from filming is \$19.35 million, up 9 percent over 2011, he said. The 335 permits were up 2 percent over the prior year and the actual 818 film days are down only 1 percent through November from 2011

“Santa Clarita has been a very important filming destination for generations,” said Richard Ballering, vice president of production operations for ABC Studios at a film business symposium sponsored last March by College of the Canyons and the city of Santa Clarita.

The symposium attracted 150 attendees and focused on the economic impact of the film and entertainment industry on the Santa Clarita Valley. Ballering, along with Mike DeLorenzo of Santa Clarita Studios and Jim McClafferty with “NCIS” formed the panel of speakers.

“With consistent reinvestment, Santa Clarita will continue to be a leader in the film community,” Ballering said.

As for Howell’s local production of the movie “Huff,” his company has picked up distribution with Archstone Distribution, Howell said.

“Huff is currently being sold through to foreign markets and a theatrical release in the U.S. is scheduled for 2013,” he said.

<http://www.signalscv.com/section/36/article/84597/>



Actors Charlie O’Connell as “Huff,” left, and Clint Howard as “Karl,” right, rehearse a scene for the camera crew during the filming of the feature film “Huff” in Santa Clarita on Dec. 14.