

Santa Clarita a boom town for film, TV shoots

By Bob Strauss, Los Angeles Daily News Wednesday, July 9, 2014

At least some runaway production isn't running that far from Hollywood.

The City of Santa Clarita on Wednesday announced its best fiscal year ever for film and television shoots.

There were 531 permits issued by the Santa Clarita Film Office from July 2013 through June 2014, with 1,370 days' worth of production. That represents a 44 percent increase in permits over the previous record fiscal year and a 28 percent spike in filming days.

The economic impact on the area's locations, businesses and industry professionals is estimated to be \$33.5 million, a 31 percent jump from 2012-2013's \$25.7 million.

"Santa Clarita is thrilled to have a fourth consecutive year of record filming," said the city's Film Office administrator Russell Sypowicz. "Filming plays an important role in our local economy, and we have over 6,000 residents employed in the industry. So it's a really good time when we see these continued increases."

Last month was Santa Clarita's best June ever, with 39 permits issued and 141 filming days. That's a 34 percent increase in permits and a whopping 81 percent more days than in June 2013. And the local economy raked in \$3.5 million last month compared with June 2013's \$2 million.

"Usually at this time of year, we're not quite as busy," said Steve Arklin Jr., property manager for the family-owned, 200-plus-acre Rancho Deluxe studios in Santa Clarita. "But this year, summer has been busier than usual. The last 12 months, we've been doing better than the last few years, for sure."

Among other productions, Rancho Deluxe has recently hosted an upcoming HBO series and a variety of commercials, including a currently running Nissan ad.

Series based in Santa Clarita include "NCIS," "The Bridge," "Justified" and "Wipeout," while episodes of "Modern Family," "Criminal Minds," "The Mentalist" and "Sons of Anarchy" have also shot there in the last 12 months.

Television production accounted for only about half of Santa Clarita's production pie, with movies such as "Earth to Echo," "Captain America: The Winter Soldier," "Saving Mr. Banks" and the upcoming "Fast & Furious 7" and "Dumb and Dumber To" also setting up shop.

The city has its own \$50,000-per-year film-incentive program offering basic-permit fee refunds to productions that meet one of the following criteria: be primarily based in Santa Clarita; have pulled four or more additional permits in a given fiscal year; or have been approved under the state of California's tax credit program. Each basic permit runs about \$360, according to Sypowicz.

But that's not the only reason Hollywood keeps heading into the hills.

"We attribute the filming growth to a variety of factors — first and foremost our film-friendly approach for the production companies," Sypowicz said. "We have the lowest permit fees in Los Angeles County — and the incentive program. And then, of course, (there's) our film infrastructure, which includes dozens of soundstages as well as movie ranches.

"All of that, collectively, differentiates Santa Clarita from neighboring areas in Southern California."

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