

Local business seeks to bring Hollywood to Maine

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A warehouse and office complex on Presumpscot Street may finally bring the film industry to Maine. The Maine Studios, a locally-owned movie studio, is hoping to bring in big budget movie projects and attract local, regional and national talent.

The Maine Studios opened on Aug. 25 with a ribbon-cutting - or, film-cutting - event with Governor John Baldacci and Mayor Jill Duson. John E. Seymour and Laurie Notch of Wasted Minds Media Group lease the building, which used to be owned by Nappi Distributors, a local beer and wine distributors.

"Ever since the studio's opening, there has been an overwhelming response," said Seymour, CEO of Wasted Minds. "A few newspapers printed my cell phone number, and I had to turn it off for four days because people were calling me day and night."

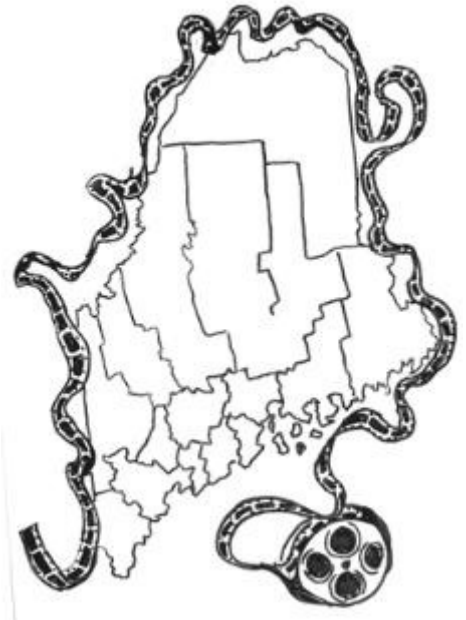
Local companies like Portland Ballet and Fenix Theatre Company have already approached The Maine Studios with various project propositions. During the Free Press' interview with Seymour, a representative from Maine Magazine -- formerly Port City Life -- approached him for scheduling a video shoot of local band Rustic Overtones.

In addition to local companies, The Maine Studios is also consulting with out-of-state production companies such as Los Angeles-based Global Universal Entertainment (GUE).

"We're currently working on a three film deal with GUE," said Seymour. The first project "Cornered" is budgeted at a total of \$500,000. With the two other film budgets added, the total amount of GUE's deal comes to \$13 million. "Once we get financing for these projects, there will be a lot of money flowing into Maine, which will be great for the state's economy."

The Maine Studios will also be working on three television projects. The first show will feature an all-female ghost hunting team with the pilot episode budgeted at \$1.3 million dollars, and they are currently shopping for interested clients, including HBO and Showtime. "If the pilot passes," said Seymour, "roughly 14 more episodes will be planned at \$500,000 per episode. That would make bank for the studio."

In addition, Wasted Minds Media will be working on their own films including "Cube Ghoul", the



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brainchild of Wasted Minds President, Laurie Notch. "It's going to be like Dawn of the Dead meets Office Space," Notch said. Cult film legend Bruce Campbell, of the «Evil Dead» series, may be interested in the project if there is enough financing, she added.

One of the ways The Maine Studio will generate revenue is a program they're starting called the Maine Film Co-op. According to the MaineFilms.org website, the Co-op is "a nonprofit organization dedicated to growing the Filmmaking industry in Maine by providing resources and training, promoting Maine made films and uniting creative minds and craftspeople with their audience."

The Co-op was approved by the board of directors last Wednesday, and it will include four divisions: Maine Film Fund, Maine Film Barter Network, Film Intern and Apprenticeship Program, and The Maine Film Appreciation Society.

The annual membership for the co-op will be \$130 for a year, and members will be able to help The Maine Studios in various ways, ranging from yard work to office jobs to film production on various projects. For the amount of hours co-op members work, the studio will reciprocate those hours by providing free production time for their own projects, including use of staff, equipment and studio space. Co-op members will have other benefits such as a discount card, training and educational opportunities, placement on preferred hiring list and more.

In the future, membership will also offer insurance, legal and business counseling and distribution assistance.

The Maine Film Co-Op will have its first members' forum from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 26. The event is open to the public.