



Occidental Studios Takes Stand Against Runaway Production With New Sound Stage

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There was an interesting [editorial in Canada's *Calgary Herald*](#) this week about the need for a “taxpayer-supported film studio in Calgary” that caught our attention for two reasons. One, the editorial provides insight into the mindset of places like Canada, where most of the population supports government taking an active role in economic development and providing support for specific industries. Two, there is tremendous irony in the argument the editorial makes:

In a perfect world, there would be no need for a taxpayer-supported film studio in Calgary. Filmmakers would flock here for the talent and the diverse scenery of mountains, prairie, badlands and forest, all within an hour’s drive.

Yet, those who think the film industry can or should sink or swim on its own are living a Hollywood fantasy. Canada’s major film locations have all had public investment in the film industry. The Bridge Studios, one of three major studios in the Vancouver area, began as a government operation. The huge, and hugely successful, Vancouver Film Studios had a \$20-million government loan guarantee. The City of Toronto took a 20 per cent interest in Filmport. Montreal studios have enjoyed extensive government support.

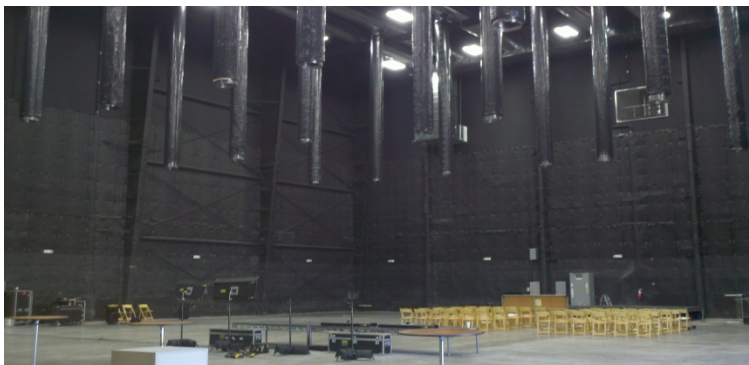
Taxpayer support of the film industry is common throughout the world for the simple reason that the spinoffs in tourism and economic diversification are almost incalculable. Ireland, Italy, Germany and the Czech Republic didn’t invest respectively in Ardmore, Cinecitta, Babelsberg and Barrandov because government bureaucrats love movies. New York’s Kaufman Astoria Studios didn’t receive state and city support out of the goodness of The Big

Apple's heart. Australia also has its share of publicly funded production and post-production facilities.

Fortunately, here in California, everyone else's "Hollywood Fantasy" is what we call our reality. A brand new L.A. sound stage held its ribbon-cutting event only weeks ago. And unlike other sound stage construction projects across the globe, L.A.'s newest stage at [Occidental Studios](#) was built without one cent of taxpayer money. The owners built it because they found the business case for its existence compelling.



Occidental's new sound stage is located on the company's main lot near downtown L.A., which happens to be the oldest continuously operating studio lot outside of Hollywood. Built in 1913, the studio's early history connects with film industry giants such as Cecil B. De Mille, D.W. Griffith and Mary Pickford, who worked at the studio as both an actress and a filmmaker during the lot's early years. And while Occidental Studios may be steeped in Hollywood history, the focus is on the future.



Thus, the new sound stage ("Stage 1" on the lot) is state-of-the-art. The stage, at 14,000 square feet, is quite large and, at 54 feet high, exceptionally tall. The structure offers an additional 6,000 square feet of production offices, dressing rooms, kitchens, make-up facilities and conference rooms spread out over four stories. Adjacent to the new stage is a large and lighted gated parking lot, which can support large television or feature film productions the stage was built to cater to.



Occidental Studios' parent company, Occidental Entertainment Group Holdings, operates a total of 12 sound stages and, in addition to its studio division, has operating divisions including Occidental Lighting and Grip, Prop Services West and Occidental Technologies, which offers technical services including motion capture, pre-visualization and virtual sets.

What struck Film Works as particularly praise-worthy about Occidental's new sound stage was the statement the company was making with its construction. According to Occidental's press release, the new stage is "a vote of confidence in our industry":

We made the decision to build this stage when concerns over runaway production were running rampant — and the virtually unprecedented times in our economy and real estate market were encouraging caution. Still, we have an abundance of faith in the viability of local productions, and we regard this new stage to be both a strategic investment for our company, and a vote of confidence in our industry.



Try as they may, other states and countries are finding they can't replicate the magic we have here, and filmmakers who leave L.A. are frustrated with their experiences elsewhere — frustrated at the unexpected costs, delays and labor force, and ultimately with the on-screen quality of their beloved film/TV projects.

Hollywood's industry leaders want the world's best weather, crews, locations and infrastructure. Today's filmmakers will always push the entertainment technology envelope. They want cutting-edge sound stages built to industry specifications — not hastily converted

Midwest auto plants or meat-packing warehouses — where their creative visions can be translated into on-screen magic.

[Occidental CEO Craig Darian said](#) Occidental's new sound stage, in addition to the company's recent acquisition of a 33,000 square-foot stage in Van Nuys, stand as "both a beacon of hope, and a beacon of confidence":

For our company's part, we have bet heavily on California — and Hollywood, in particular. Our newest multimillion dollar stage and production center stand as both a beacon of hope, and a beacon of confidence, that say, *'We believe in the vitality of our staff... the viability of our industry... and that our state and local governments will finally take all steps necessary to ensure that Hollywood remains synonymous with the Entertainment Industry.'*

Film Works is happy to report that Occidental Studios' current occupancy rate is 100 percent, proving once again that Film Works for Los Angeles.