

New York's film and TV industry thriving amid pandemic

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By Stacey Delikat



Hollywood in NYC

At a time when the coronavirus pandemic has put entire industries on hold, film and TV production in New York City is moving full steam ahead.

NEW YORK - Two brand-new sound stages are opening for business at the 100-year-old Kaufman Astoria Studios in Astoria, Queens, and producers are already clamoring to book the space. Soon Apple TV will begin production on a show in one of them.

"The demand has been looking for more stages for a while," said Hal Rosenbluth, the president and CEO of Kaufman Astoria Studios.

At a time when the coronavirus pandemic has put entire industries on hold, film and TV production is moving full steam ahead.

"It's been this constant build, the need for original programming into your home, it's what you're demanding," Rosenbluth said.

A build that is peaking as the coronavirus continues to rage and people are stuck at home, turning to their televisions and streaming devices hungry for new shows and movies to watch.

"Every channel you're watching is looking to do original programming," Rosenbluth said. "The old days, you would put on a cable station and the only thing you saw was reruns. That's not happening anymore."

NYC film, TV productions resume under pandemic rules

While production was halted throughout the country during the first wave of the virus in spring 2020, Kaufman Astoria and other studios throughout the city put into place new strict protocols to allow productions to safely resume and expand.

Steiner Studios is getting ready to break ground on a 14-acre site in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, that will be home to eight new sound stages and hundreds of thousands of square feet of support office space.

"We've been at pretty much full capacity since we opened in 2004 and the demand for content is at an all-time high," said Doug Steiner, the chairman of Steiner Studios, whose existing location in the Brooklyn Navy Yard is home to the sets of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* and movies like *Joker*.

While Los Angeles remains the country's production hub, New York continues to gain ground, aided by generous tax breaks from the state, Steiner said.

"There were more new dramatic series started in New York last year than there were in L.A., so I think we continue to get more market share," Steiner said.

New York City is becoming 'Hollywood East'

Steiner said his new Sunset Park studios, nicknamed Steiner Sequel for now, will create about 2,200 new jobs when completed in 2024. As part of the development deal, the company will revitalize a local waterfront park, create a space for nonprofits, and invest in other community improvements.

Meanwhile, Kaufman Astoria Studios is one of the primary funders of a new five-block reactivation project called Innovation QNS that includes affordable housing in its neighborhood.

Brooklyn Industry City project scrapped

The studios say it's about making the movies and TV shows you want to see, all while making New York's communities, and economy, stronger.

"In these crappy times this is a rare bright light in the economy for New York and it's part of New York's future, media, and tech," Steiner said. "And we're glad to play a part."

Where the magic happens – A grand tour of Steiner Studios in Brooklyn (Sept. 20, 2019, report)

A great deal of that work happens at Steiner Studios in Brooklyn. It is the largest film and television production studio in the U.S. outside of Hollywood.