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New Mexico? No problemo 'Terminator' is state's biggest shoot

By Borys Kit

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Albuquerque Studios will be used for "Terminator Salvation: The Future Begins."

"The Future Begins" is the subtitle for the next "Terminator" movie, and it might as well be the subtitle for New Mexico's film industry.

When cameras roll May 5, the fourth entry in the big-budget sci-fi franchise will become the biggest movie ever to shoot in the Southwestern state. The McG-directed production, officially titled "Terminator Salvation: The Future Begins," already has begun loading into Albuquerque Studios and will completely take over the facility's six soundstages, keeping its mill humming and offices running until the fall.

Albuquerque Studios, unions and the state banded together for a two-month courtship in order to persuade the production to come to New Mexico. Officials played up the world-class studios, open spaces, high-tech parks including the Sandia National Laboratory and the nearby Kirkland Air Force Base -- and the state's 25% production tax rebate.

"We told them: 'If you need a solar tower, here it is. If you need helicopters and jets, here they are,' " Albuquerque Studios COO Nick Smerigan said. "This will be a first for New Mexico to use all of its resources for one motion picture."

The state's look also was a selling point. "New Mexico represents an arid Western United States, which has a look and feel conducive to creating an American Gothic picture," McG said.

New Mexico was one of the first states to jump on the film-incentive program bandwagon and became a model for others. It also was one of the first to realize that rebates and incentives weren't enough and that soundstages and other infrastructure were needed in order to maintain

any kind of film and television business. Its policy found success last year when Sony Imageworks decided to build a production facility in Albuquerque.

"We think we are heading toward a sustainable production center, growing it from the inside out," said Lisa Strout of the New Mexico Film Office.

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