

PARTNER CONTENT

# VARIETY

# NEW JERSEY

FILM IN THE STATE

# WHERE FILMING BEGAN



New Jersey  
Motion Picture  
& Television  
Commission



# NEW JERSEY

VALUE AND VALUES:  
DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD.



New Jersey  
Motion Picture  
& Television  
Commission

# VARIETY



"If you're in Hollywood and going to plant a flag on the East Coast, it should rightfully be New Jersey. We are absolutely purpose-built for film, television and digital. Our location, our talent, the fact that we are a quintessential union state, and this is a big union industry. You add all that together, this is a no-brainer industry for us."

—GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY



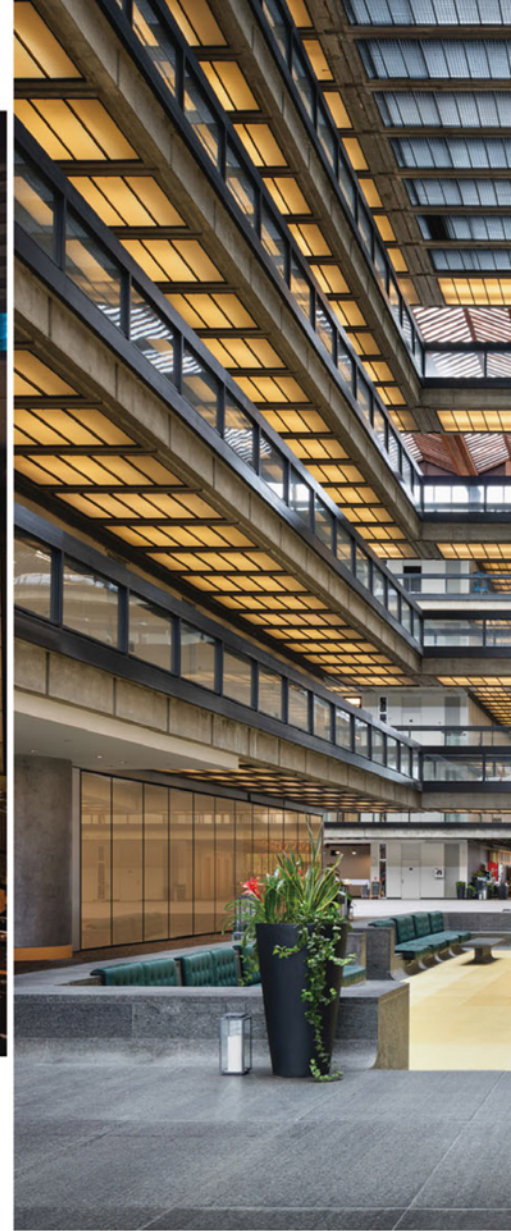
PHOTO: CAPE MAY DEPT. OF TOURISM

- 52 Building an Industry**  
New Jersey's tax credit program has filmmakers flocking to shoot there.
- 54 Expanding Capacity**  
New stages and filming facilities are springing up around the Garden State.

- 55 N.J.'s True-Blue Crews**  
A large, experienced pool of artisans keeps quality up and speeds shooting.
- 56 Taking the Scenic Route**  
The state boasts a range of dazzling locations within a short drive.

- 57 Incentivizing Indies**  
"As They Made Us" producer on how rebates boosted her shoot.
- 57 Discovering New Jersey**  
Mayim Bialik on why directing in N.J. was an unexpected pleasure.

- 6 Cape May offers authentic Victorian architecture and a quaint small-town vibe.**
- 58 Native Son's Home 'Run'**  
Producer Andrew Muscato came back to N.J. for his big break.



# Tax Incentive Seed Money Helps Filming Flower in Garden State

With a rich history in entertainment, New Jersey is reestablishing itself as a premier destination for filmmaking **BY MEREDITH OGILVIE-THOMPSON**

**I**n 1929, Thomas Edison was awarded one of the first honorary Academy Awards for his work decades earlier at the Edison Laboratories in West Orange, New Jersey. During that period, he launched what would become America's most lucrative export and a multibillion-dollar global industry: moving pictures.

More than a century after Edison's pioneering efforts, New Jersey — with its deep pool of talent, diverse locations and some of the most competitive tax incentives in the country (including a diversity credit for productions that meet the requirements) — is reestablishing itself as a go-to location for film, television and digital production.



**The feature "The Many Saints of Newark" used a real streetscape for period effect.**

"If you're in Hollywood and going to plant a flag on the East Coast, it should rightfully be New Jersey," says the state's governor, Phil Murphy. A former banker and ambassador, Murphy brings a combination of fiscal discipline and diplomacy to New Jersey's efforts to build up filming. The result has been a sevenfold increase in local spending since Gov. Murphy took office. Revenue from entertainment production in the Garden State was \$67 million in 2017 — the year before Murphy's term began — climbing to just over \$500 million for in-state production spending from filmmaking in 2021.

"We are absolutely purpose-built for film, television and digital," says Murphy. "Our location, our talent, the fact that we

are a quintessential union state, and this is a big union industry. You add all that together, this is a no-brainer industry for us."

Since the incentives were enacted in 2018, 175 feature films have been shot in New Jersey, generating \$1.1 billion in spending. Because the bill specifically supports resident talent, it is also attracting people back to the state who had previously moved to find work in the industry.

"One of the advantages New Jersey has over most of the other states in the country, outside of California and New York, is [that New Jersey has] more top end personnel to hire," says Tom Bernard, one of New Jersey's film commissioners and co-president of Sony Pictures Classics. "They had incredibly lucrative tax incentive deals in places like Michigan, Louisiana and Georgia, but they didn't have the personnel that were born and bred and lived there. So, they don't have enough crew to create a business that will have the volume New Jersey does."

Growing up on the East Coast, film producer Deborah Snyder — who shot part of "Army of the Dead" in New Jersey last year — never imagined film

PHOTO: COURTESY WARNER BROS.

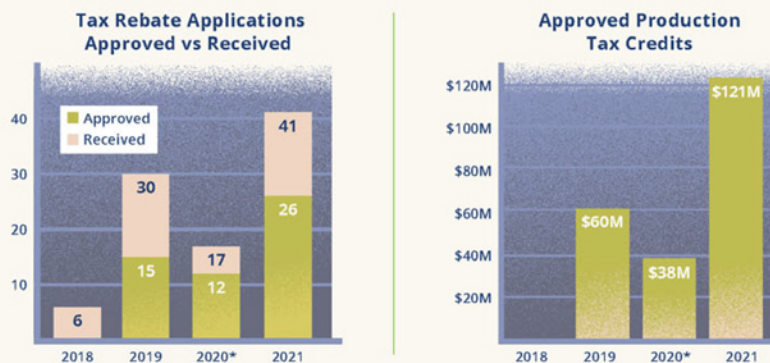


Bell Works in Holmdel became a key setting for the Apple TV+ series "Severance."

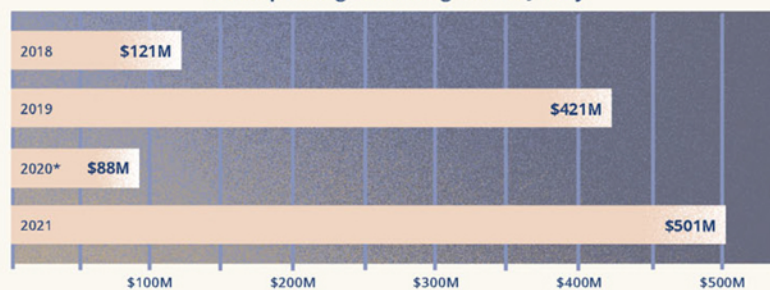
## Numbers Confirm Explosive Growth

Since the state's new production incentives were enacted in July 2018, the number of film shoots — and tax rebates for them — has soared.

*\*The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted shooting in calendar year 2020.*



### Total Spending on Filming in New Jersey



production in New Jersey would become what it has grown into today. "Hollywood and movies seemed so far away," she says. "Now, I believe these incentives and the amount of work that the New Jersey Film Commission is putting into building up the industry is fantastic. Being able to come back and film where I grew up didn't seem attainable back then. It's now a possibility and it's amazing."

Attracting business that might have gone to other states is exactly what New Jersey is aiming to do and, so far, it's working, says veteran producer Michael Uslan, chairman of the New Jersey Motion Picture and Television Commission.

"We're getting tons of repeat business, and virtually everybody who has worked in New Jersey comes back or wants to be active in Jersey and do it again," Uslan says.

In addition to a 35% transferable tax credit allocated for qualified salaries, New Jersey is one of only two states to offer an additional incentive (up to 4%) if productions meet certain diversity criteria. Developed to align with wider industry guidelines, the incentive aims to increase diversity onscreen — in terms of the types of stories being told and the

**"At the root of the [diversity] bonus is its connection to the very identity of New Jersey. We have this wonderful diversity of cultures and people from all over the world."**

— MICHAEL USLAN  
Chairman, New Jersey Motion Picture and Television Commission

actors involved — as well as the composition of the crew and inclusivity of companies involved with production.

"At the root of the [diversity] bonus is its connection to the very identity of New Jersey," says Uslan. "We have this wonderful diversity of cultures and people from all over the world contributing to our common identity so it was important to us."

New Jersey also delivers a myriad of location options. Filmmakers can access rural countryside, mountains, coastal towns with period houses and hard-scrabble urban streets all within a few hours' drive. The state has a database built specifically for location scouts, with tens of thousands of images to peruse online.

In response to increased local production, student film festivals and vocational training programs are popping up across the state, as are outreach initiatives to underserved communities. There are even periodic "P.A. Boot Camps" that train people for their first job on a film set.

"You can go work as a P.A. in one of the departments and, if you qualify, can then become an apprentice and a full-fledged member of the union — so that makes people excited to be here," says Bernard.

Having codified the incentives into law, Gov. Murphy recently extended them through 2034 to attract

longer-term investment in soundstages and other production facilities.

With the constant influx of production, New Jersey is fielding dozens of inquiries for warehouse properties that can be transformed into studio spaces and broadcast hubs, facilities for equipment rental, costume and prop shops, car and camper rentals, post-production houses and plenty of other businesses that service the production industry. "When you compare the cost of a gallon of gas or a hotel room or a piece of lumber in New York City to New Jersey, there's a great advantage to working here," says Bernard.

For Gov. Murphy, however, the social reasons are equally compelling. "It's the values that we stand for," he says. "And not just the value in terms of the economic sense. But certain states are going to have issues on a lot of the big social debates that we have as a country right now. LGBTQ, women's right to choose and voter protection, to pick three examples, where a studio will never have any doubt whatsoever where New Jersey is going stand on all of those."

All this leaves Bernard confident about New Jersey's filmmaking future. "I think it's going to be one of the centers of filmmaking within the next 10 years," he says. "It'll be one of the go-to places in the world." \*



LEFT: A turnkey production facility and virtual set campus, Cobalt Stages brings Hollywood to the Hudson.

Effects Inc. — a Manhattan-based grip, lighting and studio rental company — 10 Basin Studios is the company's third campus in the tri-state area. The new facility offers 36,000 square feet of fully soundproof stage and support space and 10,000 square feet of office, flex space and premise parking. Besides those facilities, warehouses surrounding 10 Basin Studios are currently being turned into soundstages, and both Palisade and Cinelease are planning to expand in 2022. In October 2021, it was reported that a 289-acre former Army base in New Jersey could be developed into one of the largest movie and television production hubs in the Northeast. More recently, plans were approved for a Bayonne developer to build a 19-building lot with stages, post facilities and offices. North Jersey's stages and facilities are leased out steadily. Universal rented

PHOTO: KARA VEDDER

# Soundstages Spring Up To Meet State's Filming Surge

New Jersey extends tax credit for brick-and-mortar development in push to position state as a regional production hub **BY ADDIE MORFOOT**

**N**EW JERSEY'S diverse landscapes, film-friendly communities and favorable tax incentives have brought it to the forefront of shooting locations on the East Coast.

Not content to settle for location shoots alone, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy has been urging developers to build state-of-the-art soundstages and production facilities and is creating financial incentives for them to do so.

As a result, new stages have come online and more are on the way.

Gov. Murphy explains, "Our goal in growing the film and TV industry's presence in New Jersey is not just to increase the number of productions shot here, but also to attract studios that will make our state a broad-based hub to create feature projects, along with the ancillary businesses that support them."

With demand for those facilities surging, developers are responding with new construction. Several high-quality soundstages have opened in the Garden State, and even more are in development.

On the back of a hot lease market, the governor sent a letter to major movie and television studios last April, offering a 40% credit to those willing to open production facilities in Jersey. The credit, part of the state's overhaul of its tax incentive programs, is a major piece of the governor's film-related agenda.

## Quality Facilities and Stages Span the State

### PROXIMITY TO NYC

- » **10 Basin Studios**  
Kearny
- » **Buttertree Studios**  
East Hanover
- » **Ironbound Studios**  
Newark
- » **Mediamix Studios**  
Allendale

### MULTIMEDIA CAMPUS

- » **Cinelease Studios, Caven Point**  
Jersey City
- » **Parlay Studios**  
Jersey City

### MULTIPURPOSE STAGES

- » **Palisade Stages**  
Kearny

"The narrative has changed," explains Palisade Stages president Jamie Payne. "People in the business used to think when a production was happening in the tri-state area it had to be Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens or Staten Island."

Payne's Palisade Stages, which opened its doors in New Jersey in January 2021, is located in Kearny Point, just eight miles from the Holland Tunnel. The 23,000-square-foot retrofitted warehouse features 32-foot-high ceilings, an industry standard lighting grid, sound-mitigated walls, office space, greenrooms, loading bays and plenty of parking.

Eleven miles away, in Jersey City, is Cinelease Studios — Caven Point, home to three columnless soundstages totaling 112,400 square feet, which are 40 feet high to the grid and 50 feet to the ceiling. Cinelease is currently hosting the shoot for an upcoming cable series.

Cobalt Stages in Hoboken, billed as Hollywood on the Hudson, is a 12,000-square-foot production facility featuring a 7,000-square-foot turnkey soundstage, 20-foot ceilings, equipment rentals and what the facility claims is the East Coast's first virtual backlot. It became an important resource during pandemic restrictions as some shows pivoted to virtual production to shoot in a bubble.

The most recent soundstage to open is 10 Basin Studios at the Kearny Point Business Center. Associated with Eastern



## Quality Crews Make It Happen

By Regina Cho

When filming “Bruised,” a Halle Berry-directed drama about an MMA fighter’s ultimate redemption, the dedicated crew found itself working overtime during a New Jersey winter with a schedule as tough as the punches they were shooting. Through the long hours and unpredictable conditions, producer Basil Iwanyk (shown above) was met only with resolute determination.

“You never got one complaint,” he says. “The Jersey crews reflected Jersey. They worked their asses off, they didn’t complain, wanted to do great work, and they were tough as nails. That was a tough movie to pull off, but the Jersey crew rallied behind [Halle Berry] and did an incredible job.”

Every dollar matters during production, which is a message Iwanyk didn’t have to reiterate. “The thing about the Jersey crews, if you tell them something costs \$10, they will keep it in the \$10 budget. They pay very close attention to the directives and take it as a challenge to make it work.”

Luckily, there are concrete plans in place to “make it work.” John Ford, president of the local chapter for the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees union, is quick to assure there are current strategies in place to continue stratifying deals for different levels of production.

“The IATSE has had theatrical low-budget agreements in place for many years to cover budgets of under \$1 million up to \$18 million, which consist of three tiers with wage scales adjusted up or down,” says Ford. “I’ve witnessed many technicians come to our area from other states where the work was inconsistent. The IATSE Training Trust provides for a myriad of courses for members to improve their skills and safety awareness. Many local unions provide additional training as do the employers.”

“Long-term stability of the tax credits is essential to long-term success,” he adds. “The studios will always follow the money.” \*

Palisade Stages to film Nicholas Stoller’s “BROS.” Billed as the first major studio film with an all LGBTQ+-identifying principal cast, the story centers on two men with commitment issues who try to form a relationship. Though set in New York, all primary production took place in Jersey.

“We really relied on Jersey for everything,” says “BROS” executive producer Karl Frankenfield. “We shot in several locations, and our set dressing, storage and office facilities were at Palisade Stages whether or not we were shooting there.”

Gannon Murphy, general manager of Cinelease Studios (no relation to the governor), says the company, which manages soundstages around the U.S., has always been strategically focused on developing brick-and-mortar infrastructure for production. In New Jersey, Cinelease Studios’ owner and developer, Criterion Group, is already doubling down on its expansion efforts.

↑  
**Cinelease Studios, Caven Point — the only purpose-built media campus in N.J. — is located within New York City’s 30-mile zone, offering filmmakers numerous advantages.**

“We’ve been doing this successfully in Southern California, Georgia, New York and Texas for over 45 years. Because of the interest that Gov. Murphy put into it, the New Jersey tax incentive was certainly the beginning of the conversation for us,” says Gannon Murphy.

Cinelease Studios, Palisade Stages and 10 Basin Studios are all located just minutes from midtown Manhattan and within union drive-to-work zones, meaning employers don’t shoulder worker transportation costs.

“States with the right mix of strong crew base, supported economic incentives and proximity to established production markets [tend to] succeed in building entertainment infrastructure and industry longevity,” adds Gannon Murphy. “Which allows businesses like Cinelease to establish permanent, year-round physical locations that put money into the state’s tax base and encourage others to follow.” \*

# NEW JERSEY: Diverse Terrain Is Compact and Camera-Ready

The state's proximity to varied locations helps producers make the most of shoot days.

as seen in  
*VARIETY*



Greenwood Lake  
West Milford

Paterson Great Falls  
National Historical Park  
Paterson

Home to a wealth of stunning landscapes, including the Great Falls of the Passaic River.

Hoboken  
PATH Station  
Hoboken

Delaware  
Water Gap

New Jersey  
Performing  
Arts Center  
Newark

Downtown Clinton  
A charming small town, rebuilt after an 1891 fire, that has served as a backdrop for a wide range of films and TV shows.

FABIAN'S  
ORITZO

Ritz Theatre  
& Performing  
Arts Center  
Elizabeth

Princeton  
University  
Princeton

The Pine Barrens

This pristine wilderness includes picturesque ruins and ghost towns.

Battleship New Jersey  
Camden

An imposing, 45,000-ton decommissioned battleship that cuts an awe-inspiring silhouette.

Batsto Village  
Hammonton

This quaint 1766 town remains largely untouched by time.

Cowtown Rodeo  
Pilestown

The 1950s live on in this rustic arena, which brings a touch of the West to the Garden State.

Atlantic City Skyline  
Atlantic City

The Wildwoods Boardwalk  
Wildwood

These two miles of old-fashioned arcades, rides and snack stands are a blast from the past.

Cape May

Illustration by Owen Gatley



New Jersey  
Motion Picture  
& Television  
Commission





Actor Dustin Hoffman and "As They Made Us" director Mayim Bialik share a tender moment on set.



## Feeling Right at Home in New Jersey

— By Mayim Bialik —

New Jersey was suggested as a place to shoot by the production company in charge of my film, "As They Made Us." I have family and a lot of friends in New Jersey, because my family is from New York, but I'd never considered filming there. I thought of New Jersey as a place to fly into or a place to visit.

But we found so many beautiful neighborhoods to shoot in. We had a terrific crew. With a small budget, many of our New Jersey-based crew ended up doing a whole variety of things to get this movie made.

As someone with deep East Coast roots I feel that this local crew, especially our transportation manager and people who really had to know the neighborhoods, made this movie look absolutely beautiful.

I even found some lovely nature hikes to take on our days off. I've spent time in Teaneck, and I especially enjoy the kosher vegan Chinese restaurant there, Veggie Heaven. There are so many interesting little neighborhood pockets where we found some beautiful historic areas. My kids and I visited the Church on the Green, in Hackensack, on a lovely rainy day.

I felt right at home filming in New Jersey for sure! ✨

*Mayim Bialik is an actor, writer and director, holds a Ph.D. in neuroscience, and is one of the current hosts of "Jeopardy." Her feature film, "As They Made Us," opened in April and is available on VOD.*

# State's Helping Hand Brought This Independent Pic to Life

"As They Made Us" producer points to tax credits and local talent pool as keys to giving this feature high production value **BY REGINALD PONDER**

**"AS THEY MADE US"** producer Anne Clements finds the Garden State bloom with production possibilities — and that's what lured her to shoot in New Jersey.

"We look for what locations make sense creatively and financially," says Clements. "New Jersey gave us the locations we were looking for and the tax credit structure most advantageous for our product."

Unlike some states where tax credit payments take as long as four years, New Jersey has a short tax-credit turnaround, which was a major reason Clements decided to shoot there: "We didn't have to take out lengthy loans, which amounted to significant savings."

The state's locations also proved attractive. Rutherford provided the necessary suburban landscape, while older houses allowed 1980s flashback scenes to be shot nearby. Having everything in one location allowed Clements and her crew to stay nearby in Wood-Ridge.

"It was a lovely experience," says Clements. "For some productions, we shoot the majority of the scenes in a tax credit location and then the rest in the

**"The bonus credit is a great way to incentivize diversity in future New Jersey productions."**

— ANNE CLEMENTS

city the film is based on. We didn't have to do that with this production."

Filming in New Jersey also provided access to locally sourced talent.

"The production was able to hire a lot of local talent, including a transport captain and location manager," says Clements, adding that the camaraderie between the cast and crew made the whole experience fun and was more like a family atmosphere.

Clements also praised the state's diversity bonus credit, explaining that diversity is integral to all her productions. "Our group tends to have a lot of female department heads and we always seek to hire as many ethnicities and people of color as possible. The bonus credit is a great way to incentivize diversity in future New Jersey productions."

The new tax credits are already enhancing the state's film industry, and Clements is a strong supporter.

"I would definitely shoot again in New Jersey because my experience on 'As They Made Us' was positive both creatively and financially," she says by phone while on location scouting in — where else? — New Jersey. ✨



## His Home-State Shoot May Be the Greatest Big Break Ever

First-time feature producer Andrew Muscato got a big boost from his native New Jersey, from crews to locations to ease of shooting **BY BOB VERINI**

**H**AILING FROM the Garden State, producer Andrew Muscato is a genuine Jersey success story. Raised in Basking Ridge, he began with documentaries but will soon unveil "The Greatest Beer Run Ever," his first major narrative feature. Featuring a starry cast, it's the true story of John "Chickie" Donohue and his 1967 trek to bring brewskis to his childhood buddies fighting in Southeast Asia.

Co-starring as New York City: Jersey City, Newark, Paterson and North Bergen.

"It wasn't lost on me how special it was to make my first Hollywood feature in my home state," he beams.

In New Jersey, Muscato found "great crews, great actors and very interesting

**From left: Steven Fulop, mayor of Jersey City; John "Chickie" Donohue; director Peter Farrelly; and Andrew Muscato pose for a candid photo on location of the Apple TV+ feature "The Greatest Beer Run Ever."**

architectural locations" on par with those across the river in New York City, along with tax incentives "comparable to those in a lot of popular locations like Atlanta" to make things affordable. He also found cooperative government officials happy to support the shoot.

"The mayors of Paterson, Jersey City and North Bergen came to our set," he says. "We never felt like we were dealing with layers of bureaucracy.

"Filmmaking is often about being able to pivot on the fly, and making last-minute adjustments. It's nice knowing that if there's a sudden change, our location managers can pick up the phone and start talking to local government and get an answer pretty quickly."

Re-creating a bygone Manhattan proved a snap. Prewar buildings, designed to cram together a whole lot of people, were built in the same style on both sides of the Hudson. A Newark landlord offered the production free rein and access to a vacant flat, prompting the real-life Donohue to exclaim, "This is exactly like the apartment I grew up in!"

Muscato still lives in New Jersey, as do many pros who work on production there. "There were a couple days when we shot in Jersey City when I didn't have to go to my trailer, I could just walk back home," he says. One of the film's property masters, Colleen Dolan, is also a native. "Her family is multigenerational in the film business in different departments, and they're all from northern New Jersey."

Muscato's home state did him proud on "The Greatest Beer Run Ever." While he is making "Hollywood" movies now, he says: "I hope it's the first of many productions I'll be able to film in the state of New Jersey.

"It's a filmmaker's paradise," he adds. "I think it has everything a filmmaker could possibly want." \*

COMETO



# NEW JERSEY



**TO SHOOT  
THE WORLD.**

*We're open to everyone.*



New Jersey  
Motion Picture  
& Television  
Commission

**30%-35%**  
**TAX INCENTIVES +**  
**2%-4% DIVERSITY BONUS**

DISCOVER  
**NEW  
JERSEY**



New Jersey  
Motion Picture  
& Television  
Commission