

THE SWIFTLY CHANGING LANDSCAPE of the film industry is akin to looking at archival material about that strip of desert in Nevada being transformed into Vegas.

Some of the new players in the game are U.S. State Governors with innovative programs to entice filmmakers, while simultaneously working to recoup recession losses. These programs are even impacting the face of the film investor. Once comprised primarily of calculated risk-takers in L.A. and NYC, new entertainment funds are popping-up, representing conservative investors attracted by some of the guaranteed returns made possible by state tax credits. Why let your money sit in a money market with flat interest rates when you can put a sum in play and stand to make a moderate, or if lucky - high return?

The threat that Florida's tourism empire is facing from the BP oil spill is measured against Governor Charlie Crist's newly inked economic incentive plan with enticing provisions made for the entertainment sector: A five-year, \$242 million transferable tax credit incentive program for Florida's Film and Entertainment industry will induce over \$1.2 billion in direct spending by entertainment production companies into Florida's economy. Tax credits are awarded after certified projects complete production and submit a final report. The total amount of tax credits authorized under this bill is \$53.5 million for Fiscal Years 2010-11, \$74.5 million for Fiscal Years 2011-12 and \$38 million for each of Fiscal Years 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. ([www.flgov.com](http://www.flgov.com))

An unexpected stream of revenue that Governor Jennifer Granholm referenced in a radio address encourages Michigan, one of the biggest casualties of the recession; "An entire new industry is emerging in Michigan, one that'll help keep our talented young people here. It's a great story – and maybe one worthy of the big screen itself." ([www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov))

In the HBO series, "Hung," the lead character - Ray Drecker's walk through a dilapidated Michigan town in the opening credits underscores the state's crisis. Yet the quaint lake house that Ray clings to throughout the series is a great metaphor for Michigan's restoration initiatives.

While here in Georgia, the program clutched by Governor Sonny Perdue has played a part in a billion dollar economic boom in 2009 for our peach state – with 2010 expected to exceed these figures. Our city is a-buzz with the promise of a thriving film industry that offers a way to stretch the budget and deliver high content.

There's a film infrastructure in place to meet the needs of A-list productions and adding to the allure of vast shooting locations in Georgia, Screen Gems has snapped up a 30-acre plot of land to develop a motion picture studio, which has the power to propel the Atlanta entertainment industry forward at record speed.

I find myself reflecting on one of the most memorable lectures in my undergraduate education at UCLA from Francis Ford Coppola in 1993. The maestro described his luminous career in terms of unrequited love. There we were, film stu-

dents in rapt attention, listening to our mythological director reflect upon those days in his career as being stymied by the studio system – struggling to make the films of his choosing. Studio executives attempted to dictate everything from the cast to the ending. While "The Conversation" was the film that pulled at his own heartstrings, written 8 years before "The Godfather's" success opened up the financing to get the film made.

Our local wunderkind, Tyler Perry, sidestepped the traditional model altogether by funding the movies that are true to his heart & voice, some adapted from his stage plays, and incidentally are breaking profit margin records. His journey reminds me of one of my favorite quotes: "Do not go where the path may lead: Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Filmmakers are taking note of "Tyler's Way" and becoming emboldened. The Independent producers who once dreamed of Cannes and Sundance as the path to landing a distribution deal are now courting the art house theatres directly, running dynamic multi-platform marketing campaigns, and driving sales to online video stores and screenings.

On the consumer side of things, with the advancements in theatre quality electronics; many balk at leaving the comfort of home to sit in a freezing theater and paying huge mark-ups for popcorn. Plus the indelible shift in TV is favorable for the movie business. Audiences who desire to watch stories unfold by professional actors doing the performing arts may be left wanting by the current TV programming weighted in reality shows.

The old saying "there are many ways to skin a cat" has never appealed to me as the owner of a delightful Persian, but I must admit – as a burgeoning writer/producer, I like it.



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