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VARIETY

Santa Fe Studios Competes With Other New Mexico Stages for Streaming Business

Todd Longwell • 25 April 2019



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Albuquerque Studios entered the spotlight last October when it was purchased by Netflix. While the complex is clearly the jewel in the crown of New Mexico's production infrastructure, with eight soundstages totaling 132,000 square feet, 100,000 square feet of production offices, a large backlot and support space, it's not the only modern studio facility in the Land of Enchantment.

In fact, before Netflix set up shop in Albuquerque, the bulk of its productions in the state were based some 60 miles northeast at **Santa Fe Studios**, which boasts two 19,275-square-foot soundstages, 25,000 square feet of production offices and a 57-acre backlot. Operated by the Hool family (brothers Lance and

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Conrad Hool and Lance's son Jason), it has hosted the Netflix series "Godless" and "Longmire" and the streamer's features "The Ridiculous 6" and "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs," as well the Season 3 finale of "House of Cards."

The Hools bought the 65-acre site for the studio from Santa Fe County for \$2.6 million in 2009, when the state's governor was former U.S. Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson, who has known the brothers since they were all boyhood friends in Mexico City. The studio received a \$10 million state grant plus a \$6.5 million loan guarantee and \$3.5 million worth of infrastructure from the county. Business was slow when the studio opened in late 2011, due to uncertainty surrounding the future of the state's incentive program, but in the years since, it has hosted films including "A Million Ways to Die in the West," "Only the Brave" and "We're the Millers," as well as Fox's "Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey" and The CW's "Roswell, New Mexico."

In 2015, **Santa Fe Studios** asked the county to help fund an expansion with a \$22 million revenue bond. It never materialized, though Lance Hool says the studio is "working on a significant expansion" but isn't at liberty to disclose details yet. However, some clues can be found in the studio's offices.

"They have this cool model upstairs that shows what they want to do," says Liz Pecos, president of IATSE Local 480 in Santa Fe.