

Feature

By: Maritza Cosano

"The THINGS that DREAMS

As we look back on the Past and contemplate the Present, the Future forms in our minds in an array of questions. To make a clear assessment where we are headed we, interestingly enough, discover that history does repeat itself.

It was in the early 1900's that the "Hollywood Phenomenon" began to attract a mass migration of production companies from the East. The move to a small industrial town in California named Hollywood occurred between 1908 and 1913. The reasons why a full-scale Eastern based industry

weather was much more predictable. Local real estate developers were eager to sell tens of thousands of acres to the newly-arrived production companies upon which they subsequently built vast studios and backlots. By 1914 the independents had completely colonized Hollywood - and the rest is history.

Today, almost 90 years later, the East Coast, and specifically Florida, has recaptured the theme of "the things that dreams are made of". In 1916 more than 100 film companies engaged in full-time production in Jacksonville, then recognized as a

Productions brought us international hit TV series "Flipper" and "Gentle Ben", as well as "Surfside Six" and "The Jackie Gleason Show". "Where the Boys Are", a comedy set in Ft. Lauderdale, is credited with turning the city into the most popular Spring Break destination in the country for college students.

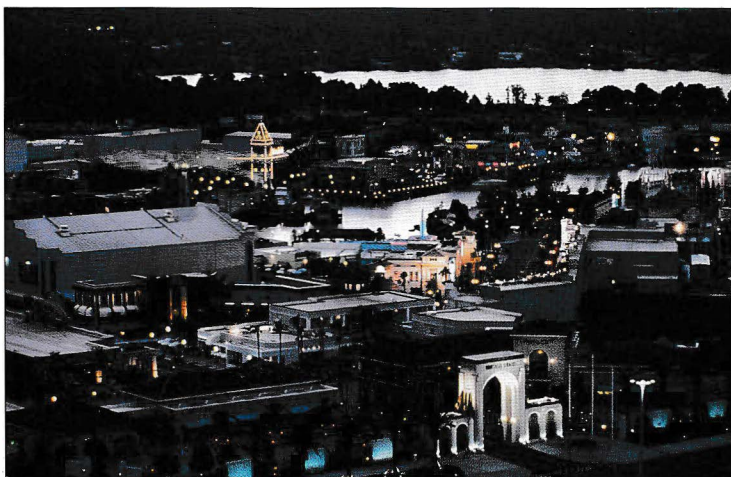
We lost two features in 1973 because of scripts which were specifically written for the state of Georgia. Members of Florida's movie industry, concerned that we were losing too many feature productions, formed a group known as the Florida Motion Picture and Television Association (FMPTA).

In 1974 the FMPTA, with the support of Governor Reuben Askew, began to assist our movie industry. In its first year of operation \$12 million were generated.

Newly-elected Governor Bob Graham began to place a high priority on the development of the film industry here in 1979. He and Lieutenant Governor Wayne Mixson led official state missions to California

The Florida PHENOM

Where Are We Going?



An aerial shot of Universal Studios Florida

moved its entire operation to Southern California during these years have never been completely clear, but it is generally thought that most of the independents went West to escape the proximity of the Eastern financial moguls who wanted to run the show besides manipulating the \$\$\$ flow.

That region also held a divine attraction for film-makers - films could be shot out of doors all year round and all day long because of its sunny, temperate climate. Southern California offered lower taxes, cheap labor and cheap land. Also, the

major film capital. In a critical election in 1917, pro-movie industry forces were defeated and official state cooperation with movie producers vanished overnight.

Between 1929 and the 1930's the construction of an entire city for the movie industry, Hollywood-by-the-Sea, was proposed. The project failed but successfully established the city of Hollywood in South Florida.

From 1950 to 1960 North Florida's picturesque natural beauty set the perfect location for a series of Esther Williams films, Tarzan flicks starring Johnny Weismuller and the horror classic "Creature from the Black Lagoon". Also, "Key Largo", filmed on location at the Caribbean Club on (not surprisingly) Key Largo, remains on our favorites list.

During the 1960's John R. Hugh of Orlando produced and directed the features "A Crowd for Lisette", "Johnny Tiger" and others. Ivan Tors

to invite film producers to shoot in Florida.

Now, the state is united and the Florida film era is reborn. We have become the third largest film producing center in the U.S., after California and New York. We are getting "back to the future" in the 90's, and Governor Lawton Chiles, along with other major Florida players, established the film, video and recording industry as a top priority creating a Commission for Film and Television. As of June 30, 1991, 27 feature films and 7,095 commercials, recordings, sponsored films and training films have been shot here, with combined budgets totalling almost \$200 million.

Florida is the "Premiere Alternative to Hollywood", say the new ad campaigns.

We are not competing with New York or LA. To do so would be arrogant and absurd. They do have about 70 years lead on us, after all. Paris is Paris, Hollywood is Hollywood, New York is New York, and Florida is willing and able to make it happen. We don't have a union mentality of "So it went over budget - the production has to get done!" Also, we are feeding in culture from South and Central America and Europe, and have the experience that makes the difference!

But Florida is still going through its growing pains. We have talented and highly qualified crews and talent who are eager to work but feel there isn't

are made of "

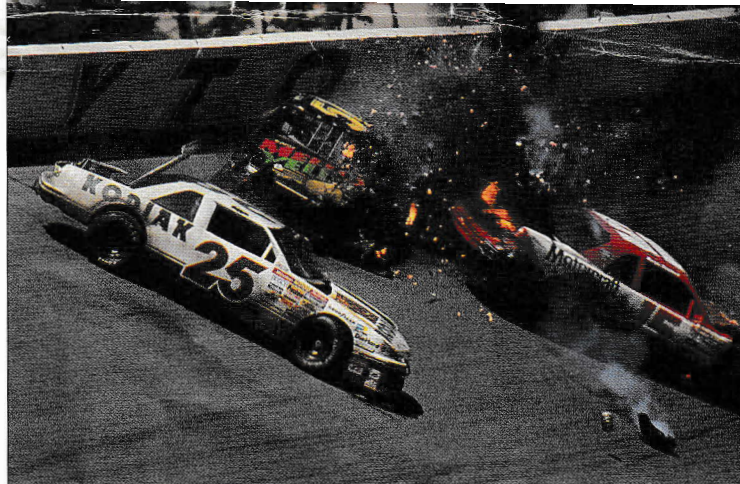
enough to go around. That too is changing drastically. In essence that is what's making us fight back harder than any others in this industry.

Inspiration plus Determination equal Success. The Florida Formula is finally working. We have a big appetite for product and economic interest, and filmmakers like the kind of niche Florida is filling.

"When the level of business lures the traffic, that's when the sound stages and studios are going to be built overnight", says Norm Rice, Vice President and Studio Manager of Universal Studios Florida. "Where we are at the present illustrates where we are going. There is a recognition of behind- and in-front-of-the-camera talent that was not detected before. Some filmmakers are now making Florida their home. Shows are being home grown by filmmakers like Producers Kim Dawson of "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" and Matt Hayden of "Midnight Crossing". Elliott Sulkan,



(Top Left) - On location: Hollywood, Florida... with Richard Dreyfuss on the set of "Let It Ride", a Paramount Picture directed by Howard Koch. (Top Right) - "Days of Thunder" filmed on location in Daytona Beach, starring Tom Cruise and Robert Duvall.



a concoction of cultures and ideas that has been energizing itself into a new experience, and it's playing favorite to one of the most prosperous industries of all time — Entertainment!

How long is this going to last? Where are we going? The 90's have seen a sluggish economy which has buried big corporations and left millions of people unemployed. Yet the recession did not slow Feature Film production in the Sunshine State. It increased approximately 34% during the first half of 1991. Although Television Commercial production decreased substantially during the



(Top) - Don Johnson and Phillip Michael Thomas of "Miami Vice", the Michael Mann television series which again places Miami on the world entertainment map.

April 1992 - Bender, Goldman & Helper, one of the country's leading international entertainment public relations and marketing firms, with offices in LA and New York, opens an office in Miami.

May 1992 - Responding to a rise in production in Florida, the Directors Guild of America, an entertainment financing group based in California, announces the opening of an office in Orlando.

May 1992 - SunBank signs state's first-ever film participation loan with an LA bank specializing in film financing. The multi-million dollar loan will finance a major motion picture to be distributed in late 1992 by 20th Century Fox Film Corporation.

May 1992 - Governor signs the Florida Film and Television Investment Act, which provides considerable financial incentive for filmmakers to spend at least 40% of their production budget in Florida.

May 1992 - The First Annual Conference for Florida Film Commissioners took place in Orlando. These 40 active film



"Traces of Red", starring (L-R) Tony Goldwyn, James Belushi and Lorraine Bracco in this mystery thriller presented by The Samuel Goldwyn Company.

ENON

who likes the easy, comfortable and laid back attitude one finds anywhere in Florida, is also based here. According to Rice, we want to be a state where the filmmakers are eager to work without the pressures of budgets and permit problems, and Florida is the logical choice.

Can we also attract studios like Warner Brothers, Columbia and Paramount to subsidize studios here? "Warner Brothers recently paid us a visit", says Rice. "I really think they had a Mickey Mouse image of what we were accomplishing here. They had no idea Central Florida had such a tremendous and first-rate film industry."

Inevitably, this attraction to our climate, crews and unique locations has turned back the clock to the early magical years of movie making. Florida's position as a location has changed in the last 40 years. From the "Flipper" days to "Miami Vice", and now "Cape Fear", "Edward Scissorhands", "Doc Hollywood", "My Girl", "Days of Thunder", "Parenthood", "Traces of Red", "Stella", "Jaws", "The Bodyguard", "Key West". . . . The wish has become a reality, and so has the dream of making movies again in Florida.

Its natural beauty has hardly changed. The sun still shines and remains to reflect the sweet orange tequila sunrises that play on the horizon almost every morning.

But Florida's main attraction is its unique flavor -

recession, it is now showing distinct signs of recovery and will continue to grow as the economy strengthens. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, entertainment is America's second best generator of trade surplus, topped only by the aerospace and defense industries.

Here are some of the most recent major developments in Florida's film and television production industry which highlight the future, as compiled by Elizabeth Wentworth, Director of the Council's Film and Television Office and Broward Film Commissioner:

June 1991 - Governor Lawton Chiles appointed John Reitzammer as his personal representative to the film industry to work in conjunction with the Florida Department of Commerce.

August 1991 - Governor led Florida film and banking officials on a film recruitment and financing mission to LA, where they met with industry leaders and acquired \$67 million in film financing offers for Florida banks.

October 1991 - Governor opens a film office in LA to serve as a direct link between the state and the entertainment industry. Florida is the first state to have a film liaison based in California.

April 1992 - Governor visits Universal Studios Florida to announce that more than a dozen new film and television projects will be shot on location here - most by the year's end.