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"Being a filmmaker is being an entrepreneur," concludes Azarian. "It takes a lot of hard work, long hours and thinking outside the box. John Catsimatidis, the founder of Gristedes, a successful grocery store chain, said to me that there are two things you need to become a successful entrepreneur: passion and persistence. New York was built on entrepreneurship and I think filmmakers can learn from that."

The 20-acre Austin Studios (left) accounts for much of the city's feature film production, including Mike Judge's new film, starring Dax Shepard and Luke Wilson (below)

claims director Esther Bell. "A few years ago, I directed my feature *Godass* in Brooklyn and it was very easy to get a raw space for building sets. But now it's really difficult to get any big spaces cheaply." Determination has a way of paying off, however. "If you know how to negotiate," she says "you can get a great deal in NYC for just about anything."

Still, Bell isn't ready to give up all of the city's benefits because of financial challenges. "I will always shoot in NYC if the script calls for it," she states. "New York-Brooklyn will always be my muse."

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2. AUSTIN, TX LAST YEAR: #1

Movies Get Bigger in Texas

JUST WHEN WE THOUGHT THEY'D HIT THE apex of the industry, Austin goes and surprises us again. Whether it's got anything to do with being named #1 on last year's list or not (we like to think yes), there's no denying that the film scene in Austin just keeps getting bigger—and better!

Being named our top spot in last year's list was cause for celebration in the city—and further analysis of just how important the film industry is there. *MM*'s accolades prompted the city to take a closer look at the hard economic benefits that moviemakers have had.

"The *MM* ranking was mentioned prominently in the study commissioned by the city, was picked up by many outlets and I'm sure it was a factor in keeping us busy here during 2004," says Gary Bond, director of the Austin Film Commission.

On August 20, 2004, the Mayor's Office unveiled the "Made in NY" incentive program, where productions utilizing NYC soundstages are eligible for a 10 percent state tax incentive, pending five percent city tax credit, a marketing credit which provide free advertising on city property and expanded concierge services, including scouting and story development support.

The incentive—plus free permits, police assistance and access to public locations—have been enough to attract such big-name productions as Andy Tennant's *Hitch*, Shawn Levy's *The Pink Panther*, Walter Salles' *Dark Water*, Bart Freundlich's *Trust the Man*, John Turturro's *Romance and Cigarettes* and Michael Scott Bregman's *Carlito's Way: The Beginning*.

Okay, so what's the downside to being a New York moviemaker? Despite all the shooting incentives, it's no secret that *living* in the center of the universe is still very expensive. Even compared to Los Angeles, the cost of living in the Big Apple is about 38 percent higher. "If you come to New York City and want to live affordably, be prepared to pay top dollar to live in a broom closet," warns Azarian. "Or share your space with at least three other roommates."

But there's one small fact that people looking to relocate often forget: Being a New York moviemaker does not mean you have to live in Manhattan! In fact, according to BankRate.com, a move to Queens could show a 35 percent decrease in Manhattan living costs (and then there's Brooklyn, Hoboken... the list of accessible areas goes on).

"The greatest benefit of shooting in NYC is the extreme diversity of locations and people," says writer... "Espe

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With river-to-river talent, finding reliable and competent help on the cheap is easy for NYC moviemakers. But the ugly subject of real estate comes up once again if you need to find a space to shoot. "New York's biggest drawback is always space,"



1. NEW YORK, NY LAST YEAR: #2

Entrepreneurs Welcome: "Made in NY" Program puts Big Apple Back on Top

START SPREADING THE NEWS! In the five years we've been creating this list, New York City has never strayed very far from the top, and they're back in first place again in 2005. Why? Because there's nothing you can't see, find or do here for a film—and your efforts usually come with the blessing of the Mayor's Office. What Los Angeles has traditionally been to Hollywood, the Big Apple again proves it is to Indiewood—a true independent moviemaking mecca.

The city's film-savvy nature is what's truly impressive, and it's getting more refined each year; there seem to be no lengths to which the Mayor's Office won't go to be sure a moviemaker gets the shot—or location—he or she needs. Spurred on by the enthusiasm and "go-get-'em" attitude of the city's film commissioner, Katherine Oliver, moviemakers are asking for the run of the city and getting it.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Naomi Watts and Ewan McGregor take over New York in Marc Forster's *Stay*; Sydney Pollack films a scene with Nicole Kidman for *The Interpreter*; Esther Bell shoots a scene from *Godass*; Jean Reno, Steve Martin and Beyoncé Knowles in *The Pink Panther*

You want examples? When Marc Forster wanted to get up-close and personal with the Brooklyn Bridge for *Stay*, the city shut the icon down for eight nights, re-routing all Manhattan-bound traffic. When Sydney Pollack became the first director ever allowed to shoot inside the United Nations for *The Interpreter*, he thanked Oliver and Mayor Bloomberg by filming the rest of the picture in the city.

Sure, some moviemakers continue to double Manhattan in places like Montreal, but their reasons for doing so are dwindling. Besides the accommodating attitude of the gatekeepers, the city keeps pushing to make life easier for moviemakers. Anyone who has ever spent time in the city knows that there is no substitute for the real thing. "In terms of location, you can't fake New York," insists director Daniel Azarian. "Its diversity, energy and vitality are all synonymous with this place. A film shot in New York City is going to have a certain authenticity that is hard to explain, but it will be there, and that alone can make your film stand out."