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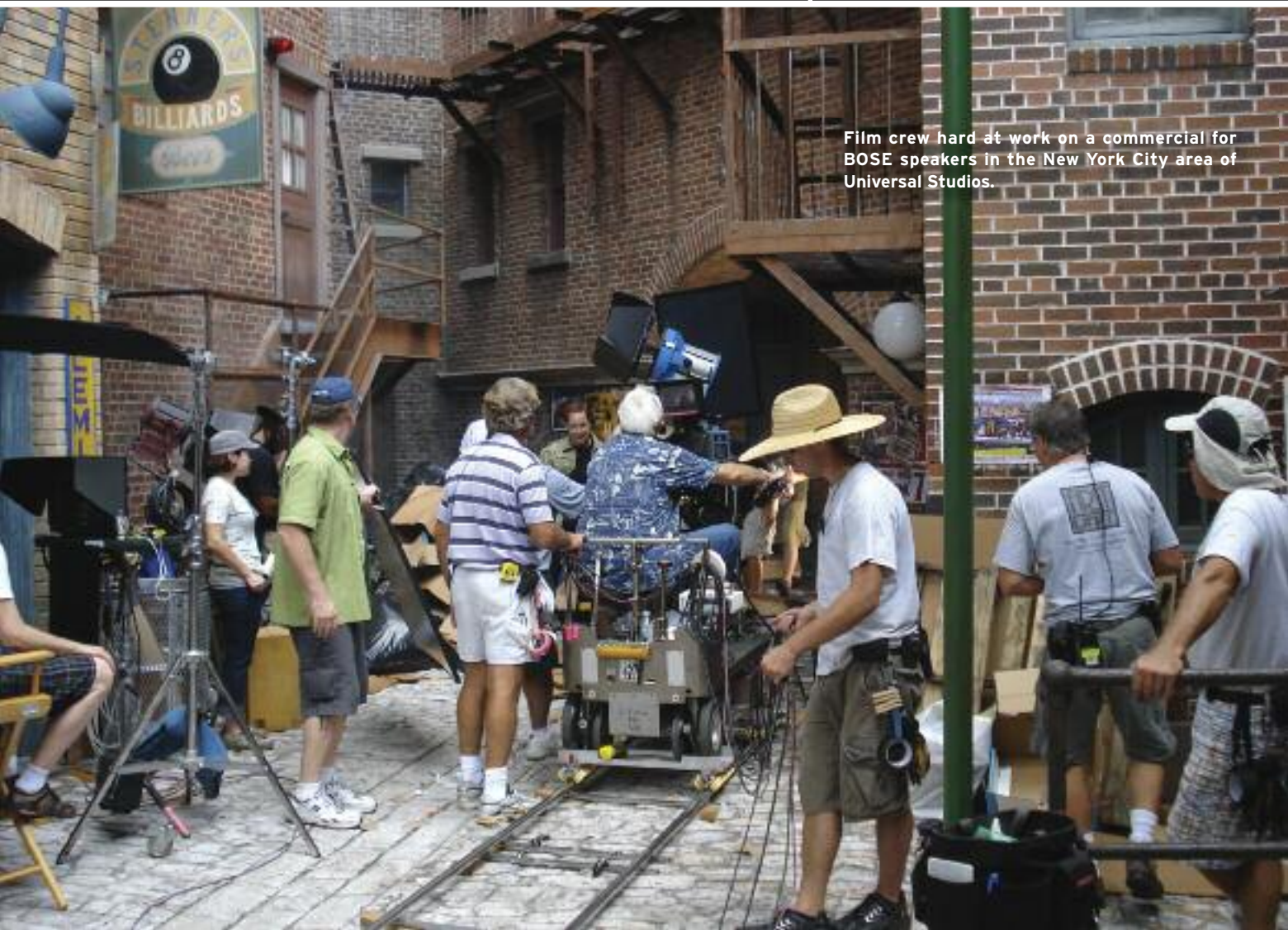
the Script

By Jack Roth

HOME TO THE PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE, FIRST-CLASS LOCATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE NECESSARY FOR FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTION, CENTRAL FLORIDA HAS LONG BEEN A HUB OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY. NOW, A NEW STATEWIDE INCENTIVE IS MAKING THE REGION EVEN MORE COMPETITIVE THAN BEFORE.



Flash back to Orlando, 1989. Universal and Disney commit a combined \$1 billion for production facilities and studio tours. Suddenly, there is an arms race of sorts, as Disney-MGM Studios and Universal Studios Florida each open sound stages mere miles apart along Interstate 4.



Film crew hard at work on a commercial for BOSE speakers in the New York City area of Universal Studios.



COURTESY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS



COURTESY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT: RALPH CLEMENTE

When Valencia Community College was looking to expand its film program in 1988, officials turned to Ralph Clemente. Twenty-two years later, Clemente continues to represent the industry expertise exhibited by educators in the region.

Initially, film technology and production classes began at Disney-MGM Studios (now Disney's Hollywood Studios) and soon, under Clemente's direction, expanded into a full-time program at the main Valencia campus in Orlando. These days, students focus on making feature films, which have budgets of up to \$1.2 million, not funded by the college. Series pilots have been produced upon request, in addition to public service announcements and TV action, drama and cable shows, among other work. Students have even shot on location in places such as Los Angeles, although most work is done in Central Florida.

Clemente, whose career as an actor, producer and educator spans four decades — he was a stand-in for the lead actor in "Flipper" (1963) — holds firmly to his theory about filmmaking. "To teach how to make films," he says, "you have to actually go out and make them."



COURTESY VCC

That same year, the arrival of Steve Martin on the set of Ron Howard's *Parenthood* prompts local media to proclaim Orlando as "Hollywood East." National media outlets such as NBC and *Newsweek*, among others, take notice.

"That was never our intention," says Suzy Spang, vice president of the Metro Orlando Film & Entertainment Commission, a division of the Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission. "Hollywood East was a complete misnomer thrust upon this region, not by the local industry, but by the media. Our intention has always been to be the best Orlando possible."

David Nixon, a longtime filmmaker, agrees: "Hollywood East? No, eventually, Hollywood East was wherever the money was." Nixon is the head of Orlando-based DNP Studios and Possibility Pictures, which specialize in commercial/corporate work and faith-based films, respectively.

Long known as the world's premier tourist destination, Orlando has also been a haven for production within the entertainment industry. With ample assets for film, television and commercial production — including state-of-the-art sound stages and unique locations — the region also has year-round filming capabilities, a skilled crew base and supportive local communities. Orlando's healthy feature film, episodic, and commercial production market is valued at roughly \$845 million per year, with more than 3,400 employees in film and television production-related positions.

But in the early 1990s, the region began losing production work, initially to Canada and then to other states such as Louisiana and Michigan, which were buoyed by government incentives that attracted commercials, TV series and movies. Incentives funds

were offered in Florida, but they were sporadic and limited — typically available at the beginning of the state's fiscal year but gone after six months.

"For a while, it was very difficult to compete because the state wasn't offering incentives equal to Louisiana and Michigan," says Spang. "But those states were trying to build an entertainment industry from scratch. Michigan was even willing to train their automotive workers to work in the film industry. But here in Florida, we already had the talented crew and infrastructure support. We just needed the money to help level the playing field."

While Florida has been in and out of the incentive game, the state has never been a major competitive force — until recently. In the 2010 legislative session, Metro Orlando's legislative leadership — Florida Representative Steve Precourt and Florida Senator Mike Haridopolis — wrote and championed the

Q How many national commercials are shot in the region every year?

A Approximately 60

state's most aggressive entertainment incentive legislation to date. Specifically, Florida is offering \$242 million in transferable tax credits over five years, with \$53.5 million transferable tax credits authorized for the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

"It's definitely a game changer," says Spang. Created within the state's Office of Film and Entertainment, the 2010-2011 Florida Film & Entertainment Industry Financial Incentive Program is intended to attract film and digital production, plus "develop and sustain

COURTESY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

FAMILY TIES: THE LEGACY OF THE FULLER FAMILY



Jennifer Pennypacker on set at age 7

Jennifer Fuller Pennypacker is passionate about the film industry because it's in her blood. From a young age, Pennypacker was on sets with her parents — the late Sara Fuller and Bradford Fuller — both of whom helped pioneer the industry in Florida and played a significant role in making Orlando one of the state's top regions for film production.

As one of the first female members of the prestigious Director's Guild of America, Sara Fuller was one of the most respected location managers in the industry. Sara worked to showcase Central Florida as "Anywhere USA," attracting numerous

national commercials to the area. She also helped create the Metro Orlando Film & Entertainment Commission and the Florida Chapter of Women in Film & Television, both of which continue to be strong organizations today because of her signature professionalism. Each year, Film Florida, the statewide industry association, honors Sara by awarding student scholarships in her name.

Jennifer's father, Bradford Fuller, started his career in his hometown of Winter Haven in the 1960s. He went on to specialize in commercials and TV movies, particularly as an expert in filming boating and waterskiing.

In 1980, Bradford and Sara, along with Bradford's brother, Mike, combined their collective experiences producing, directing, and shooting national TV campaigns to create Florida Film & Tape, one of Orlando's pioneering commercial production and post-production companies. Both Bradford and Mike have garnered local and national awards, including recognition by Film Florida in 2008 as "Film Florida Legends," the organization's most prestigious honor.



Jennifer Pennypacker with her father, Bradford Fuller (left), and her uncle, Mike Fuller (right), who were inducted as Film Florida Legends in 2008.

Jennifer followed in her parents' footsteps. She started out as a freelance production coordinator and production manager in the commercial and music video market 15 years ago. She then worked as a production executive at Showtime in Los Angeles before moving back to Central Florida.

In her current role as Director of Project Development for the EDC's Metro Orlando Film & Entertainment Commission, Jennifer proactively works to bring outside productions to



Sara Fuller on the set of "The Adventures of Superboy," a TV series filmed entirely in Central Florida.

the region, as well as support existing indigenous production infrastructure.

As the first female president of Film Florida, Jennifer finds her involvement in the organization to be an extremely personal investment. "I am very passionate about this industry and am honored to help lead Film Florida into its next chapter," she says. "I credit much of my success to literally having been born into this industry, but more importantly, to having two incredible role models as my mom and dad. Of all my titles, my favorite and the most humbling is that of Sara & Brad's daughter."



COURTESY STARS NORTH



COURTESY DNP STUDIOS



COURTESY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

the workforce and infrastructure for film, digital media, and entertainment production."

A box-office bonanza is anticipated — with no trailer necessary.

"The exciting thing about our multi-year tax credit is that it allowed us to go after big TV series," Spang explains. "It made Hollywood look at us as a destination again. In Orlando, we haven't had a big, multi-series TV show scouting us for about three years, but we do now. It has opened the world's eyes that Orlando is a destination. There's interesting content being created here, and we have the incentives to back up our quality crews and production facilities. The diversity of our landscape is also a huge plus. So this kind of activity has put us back on the global radar."

Among the first to submit a request: Nixon at DNP Studios, which most recently won industry acclaim for *Letters to God*, a faith-based movie of inspiration, hope and redemption.

Pam Tuscany, vice president of production at Universal Studios Florida, is in charge of leasing the soundstage areas and says she can already see increased production. Some 38 companies operate on the Universal lot, including vendor and support companies. Noting that "we're at a very healthy place," she expects the new tax incentive to present greater opportunities and promises more action to come.

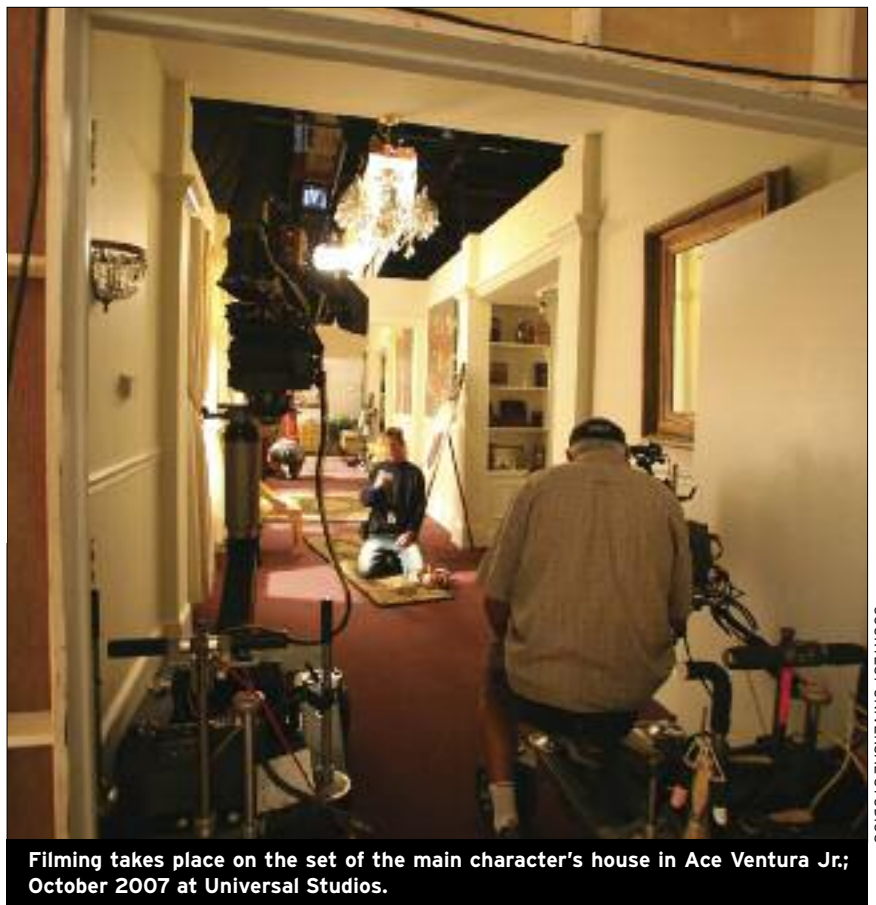
In mid-June, the *Wizarding World of Harry Potter*, a \$200 million-plus attraction, opened at Universal's Islands of Adventure, resulting in increased global attention and park visitation.

And, as Tuscany contends, more visitation equals greater audience awareness of the depth and breadth of live TV being produced in Central Florida. The opening also represented a show of force, as the region's "bench strength" of production people became evident. For the opening events, attended by scores of U.S. and international press, Universal created a media center stocked with a team of all-local production talent — camera operators, editors and satellite providers, among others. A total of 75 production personnel worked full time on live events surrounding the celebration.

Q What Ron Howard film starring Steve Martin, Rick Moranis and Keanu Reeves was shot almost exclusively in Metro Orlando?
A *Parenthood*

Notably, the movie was to be shot in Tennessee, where the story was based, but instead was produced in Central Florida by virtue of state incentives.

"We're thrilled about the [new] incentives. It will bring work here and keep the work that's already here," says Nixon, who is looking to get two more films made in Central Florida, noting that the state gives an extra 5 percent for family-friendly movies.



Filming takes place on the set of the main character's house in *Ace Ventura Jr.*; October 2007 at Universal Studios.

COURTESY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS



COURTESY METRO ORLANDO FILM & ENTERTAINMENT COMMISSION



COURTESY FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY



COURTESY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

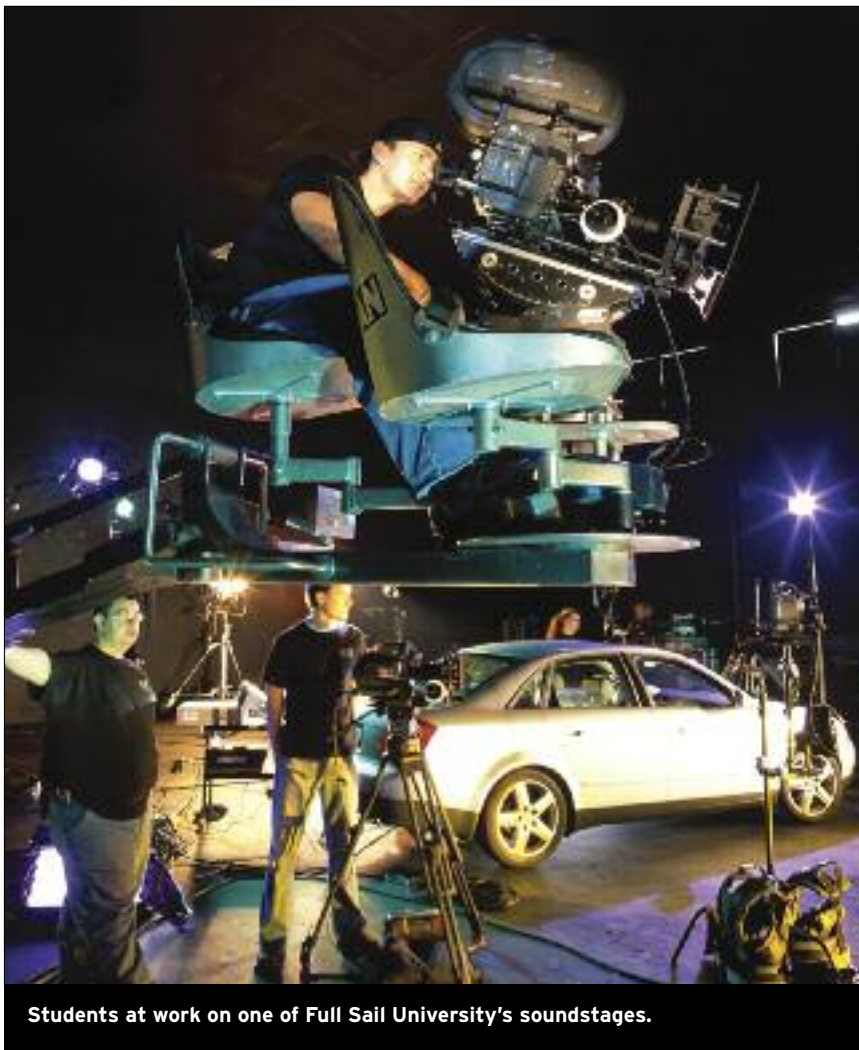
Also, *Family Feud* recently began taping at Universal Studios' Stage 19. The game show, starring comedian Steve Harvey as the host, produces eight episodes a day on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through September 19. A new season starts airing September 13 for national syndication, produced by FremantleMedia North America. In addition, PowerBall drawings are broadcast twice weekly from Universal, and *Total Nonstop Action Impact Wrestling* is shot on site for Spike Television. Says Tuscani, "We are

enjoying great audiences associated with that production."

A major advantage of Orlando being the world's number one tourist destination is the top creative talent that the region's theme parks help employ — engineers, artists, writers and more. In addition, one of the best-selling video games franchises — EA Sports' *Madden Football* — is produced in Orlando. Several highly regarded animation studios are also located here, including Premise Entertainment, Two Door FX and others.

These and other local businesses recruit from the area's numerous schools. The University of Central Florida (UCF) has combined the disciplines of computer science, graphic arts, communication and film into the Center for Emerging Media. UCF's Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy (FIEA) provides a master's level degree for students specializing in the interactive entertainment/gaming industries; while Full Sail University, which is the set location of the popular "Daily Buzz" news program, offers degrees in digital media, computer animation, game design, and film/video production. The Digital Animation and Visual Effects (DAVE) School is a nonpublic career education school providing technical training for aspiring computer animators and visual effects artists.

More than 7,500 higher-education students annually enroll in digital media programs throughout the region. And in 2007, Los Angeles-based motion capture studio Vicon/House of Moves set up shop in downtown Orlando's budding "Creative Village," co-located with UCF's FIEA. The nationally recognized company designs and equips the only professional motion capture studio on the East Coast with fully integrated film, video and audio facilities.



COURTESY FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY

Students at work on one of Full Sail University's soundstages.

Q What comedy's climactic Bourbon Bowl scene was shot at Orlando's Citrus Bowl stadium?
A *The Waterboy*

Along with film and television production, the digital media sector sprung from the convergence of several of the area's established technical fields, including modeling, simulation and training. Generally, as new



COURTESY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS



COURTESY GENE PAGE



COURTESY STARS NORTH

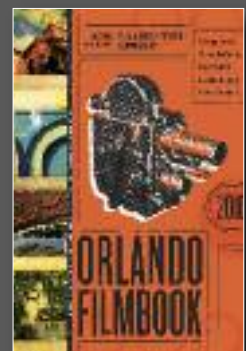
Cinematographer Marty Mullins on a local shoot for *This Man's Life*, which was produced by the Celebration-based company Stars North.

INSIDE THE METRO ORLANDO FILM & ENTERTAINMENT COMMISSION

At the EDC's Metro Orlando Film & Entertainment Commission, Spang and her colleagues promote film and digital media development and production in Central Florida while assisting in further developing the local production infrastructure. They work with production teams to help scout for locations, handle permitting and offer support throughout the entire project schedule. The office assists everyone from student filmmakers to the Michael Bays and Jerry Bruckheimers of the world, providing the following services:

- >> 24-hour access to the *Orlando Filmbook*
- >> one-stop permitting for location filming
- >> maintenance of an extensive digital location library ... accessible anytime, from anywhere
- >> preliminary scouting, evaluation of locations, and familiarization tours
- >> assistance with local hotels and accommodations
- >> support throughout entire production schedule

Visit www.FilmOrlando.com for more information.



applications for digital technology continue to emerge, they extend into entertainment. There is vast potential — particularly as it relates to production work.

"The industry is moving toward a CG [computer-generated] arena," says Ben Noel, a former executive at EA and now executive director of FIEA. "I think there's a wonderful opportunity for film and digital media in studios here in Orlando."

Diego Torroija of Two Door FX agrees. "The industry in Central Florida has a lot of potential to grow with many qualified schools such as UCF, Full Sail and Valencia that continue to crank out a new generation of artists every year," he says. "The ability to bring in these artists and get new perspectives is an advantage that most companies cannot fully comprehend or implement. If these students are brought into the business in the right way, they can help evolve this field by constantly bringing new ideas to the table."

Two Door, for example, developed

an advertising campaign for Rooms To Go using full-body, motion-capture technology through optical infrared cameras to create 3-D animation data. The company was able to produce 30 seconds of animation with multiple characters, motion capture cleanup and rendering in less than four weeks.

Interestingly, in 1995, much of the first fully computer-generated feature film, Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story*, was produced in Orlando. It became a resounding commercial success. Such events could be heading full circle.

"Los Angeles and New York made their mark years ago in film and TV, as well as the theatrical world. And now Central Florida is working on bringing in all aspects of arts and entertainment into their area," comments Torroija.

While Tuscany maintains that the region has been ready and able for production work for years, she contends that the timing has never been better: "I always say, 'Just come with your laptop; we can handle the rest in Central Florida.'" 