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Cameras Still Rolling in Louisiana

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By Gary Michael Smith
Guest Columnist

Showing our ability to adapt and maintain, Louisiana currently has several shows in production, including *Premonition* and *Chlorine*, that are in pre-production in north Louisiana. Moreover, three films (*Déjà vu*, *Winter Heat*, and *Deal*) are in pre-production in New Orleans, further proving our strong resolve to return south.

Last fall, 32 productions were tentatively slated to film in New Orleans. While the hurricane dropped the curtain on those plans, business did not stop. According to Malcolm Petal, CEO for the Louisiana Institute of Film Technology, dozens of companies, hundreds of workers, and approximately \$80 million in film production moved from New Orleans to satellite offices in Shreveport, Monroe, and Natchitoches within weeks after the storm—essentially creating Hollywood North and keeping the state from losing millions of dollars in revenue to other states and countries.

Meanwhile, the film/entertainment subcommittee, one of seven subcommittees of the Bring New Orleans Back Commission, is working to analyze the economic condition of the New Orleans film industry before the storm while exploring current economic needs to bring back business. Kelli Bingham, sales and operations manager for the New Orleans office of Panavision, confirmed to me that they are currently supporting filmmaking in Shreveport and New Orleans, with confidence to return to New Orleans very soon. And that day shouldn't be too far away. According to Alex Schott, director of the Governor's Office of Film and Television, UNO's Nims Center in Elmwood, which houses a soundstage, will be working with Disney's *Déjà vu*, and currently moving forward with their expansion

developments. What all this shows is our resolve to continue the momentum of making movie magic. Louisiana still is not only a picturesque shooting location but also possesses a cabal of willing and able crew and talent. And New Orleans, the irrefutable economic hub of the state, continues to offer unmatched cinematic venues. While the Crescent City continues to heal and plan future storm-related contingencies, the rest of the state has taken the lead, showing film executives that the state will not fade to black and strike the set. We have shown our mettle to persevere and take business wherever necessary to get the job done. Maintenez les appareils-photo rouler dans la Louisiane! (Keep the cameras rolling in Louisiana!)

Gary Michael Smith is the drafter of the Louisiana "Film and Video Industry Awareness Month" proclamation and author of *Movie Extra 101—Your Shortcut to Stardom*. He can be reached at www.ChatgrisPress.com.