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INTERNATIONAL

## Scout & About

Posted: Fri., Sep. 28, 2012, 4:00am PT

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### 'Scene' lifts S.F. dream

**Scout & About: Northern California 2012**

By TODD LONGWELL

When Woody Allen came to San Francisco in August to shoot his new untitled film, it bucked the recent trend for projects set in the City by the Bay. Features such as "Rise of the Planet of the Apes" and TV skeins like Fox's "Alcatraz" have shot the bulk of the production in incentives-rich Vancouver then dropped down to the city for a few days to pick up "beauty shots" of the city's famed cable cars, the Golden Gate Bridge and other local landmarks.

"It was decidedly written for San Francisco, and that's where he wanted to shoot it," says the film's location manager Jonathan Shedd. Shooting somewhere else "was never a consideration for him."

Most directors don't have the power to insist on filming in the San Francisco, but since the city sweetened its six-year-old "Scene in San Francisco Rebate Program" in 2009, it's been getting a little easier for them to do so.

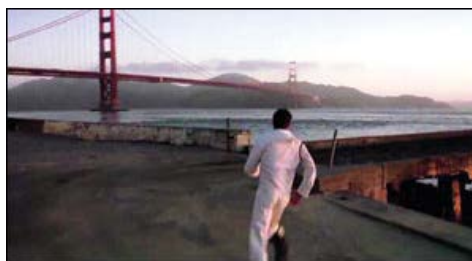
Shooting days for the 2011-2012 fiscal year increased 36.8% in San Francisco over 2009-2010, as upcoming features "Knife Fight" and "About Cherry" came and took advantage of the program, which offers producers up to \$600,000 in refunds on city fees (including permits, police and rental of city property) and local payroll taxes. To qualify, projects with budgets less than \$3 million must do 55% of principal photography in San Francisco; if the budget is \$3 million or more, the threshold is 65%.

The news is even better for commercials, which have had a 61% increase in shooting days in the last two years. "We get a lot of car commercials," says San Francisco Film Commission executive director Susannah Greason Robbins. "They seem to really love our financial district these days. It's pretty deserted on the weekends, so we can make it a loop for them (to drive around)."

Usually, a project only comes to San Francisco if it needs a look unique to the city, but the recent



'Hemingway & Gellhorn'



'The Master'

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HBO film "Hemingway & Gellhorn," starring Nicole Kidman and Clive Owen, used spots throughout the Bay Area to portray locales around the globe - none of them San Francisco -- including Cuba, China, Finland, Poland, Germany, London, Idaho and Key West.

"I would find in Chinatown a perfect untouched block that is more like Shanghai was then than Shanghai is now," says the film's location manager Patrick Ranahan.

HBO was initially reluctant to let director Philip Kaufman, a longtime San Francisco resident, do an all-Bay Area shoot, but "we were lucky enough to win the lottery and get the California rebate," explains exec producer Trish Hofmann, referring to the system California has set up select producers who can take advantage of the state's limited incentives program. "Plus, we fully utilized the San Francisco rebate," in part by basing production offices in city-owned buildings on Pier 80 and shooting interiors in an adjacent warehouse and in a hangar on Treasure Island.

The production also employed a money-saving visual sleight-of-hand, using Berkeley vfx house Tippett Studios to cut new shots into archival footage of the actual locations.

"When we went to St. Vincent's School for Boys (in nearby San Rafael), we'd shoot the garden and put those images in with real images from the houses in Cuba and Key West and nobody could tell the difference," Ranahan says.

Although portions of writer/director Paul Thomas Anderson's "The Master" are set in San Francisco, it too used the Bay Area to portray a multitude of locations.

Much of it was shot on Mare Island, a peninsula on San Pablo Bay about 23 miles northeast of San Francisco that operated as a naval shipyard for more than a century before closing in the early 1990s.

"We were able to turn the officers' quarters into our East Coast neighborhood in Philadelphia and use the old Navy hospital as the receiving station for Freddie Quell (Joaquin Phoenix) when he returned from WWII," explains Jack Fisk, the film's production designer. "We (also) turned an old warehouse into a seamen's hiring hall and used a small park as a part of our Lynne, Mass., set."

Originally, the filmmakers planned to shoot half of the film in Los Angeles, but "once we realized how much we could shoot in the Bay Area, it didn't make sense to look elsewhere," says Fisk.

In addition to films and TV, the region's production houses and vendors have a significant client-rich community in their backyard: Silicon Valley, home to many of the world's largest tech companies, including Adobe, Apple, Hewlett-Packard and Intel.

"For almost anyone who works in film and media, unless they're independent filmmakers, the corporate (work) from Silicon Valley is a huge part of (their) business," says T.J. Worley, production veep for Camp Creative, a San Francisco marketing and design studio whose clients include Cisco and Google.

Projects can include product intro reels for trade shows, demo videos for the Web and retail outlets, and SEC presentations. "It's almost everything except the commercials, which are usually shot out of L.A.," says Leigh Blicher, managing partner at Videofax, a San Francisco-based rental house for digital cameras and accessories. These companies are very concerned with their image so they want the best equipment.

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