

TUCSON REGION ON THE SET IN TUCSON

Moviemaking at local resort provides glitz, economic lift

By Phil Villarreal

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A local resort transformed into a Hollywood set this week — just the start of an abnormally active summer of movie-making in Tucson.

The JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa literally rolled out the red carpet for Oscar-winning director Sam Mendes and his untitled comedy, which pumped an estimated \$1 million-plus into the local economy during the four-day shoot.

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Then, in July, the mega- budget "Transformers 2" is scheduled to shoot for a few days at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base's Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group, known as the "boneyard."

"We're humming at a steady 35 miles per hour," said Tucson Film Office director Shelli Hall, who was on the Starr Pass set Wednesday.

She said the bulk of Tucson's \$20 million economic impact from film and TV production still comes from commercials, industrial documentaries and

smaller films, not these large films.

"The spending that goes on here is nothing to shake a stick at," Hall said. "But looking at New Mexico, looking at \$200 million for the state, you're thinking, 'God, I wish I was in that race car,' but we're humming along, holding onto the business."

"It's an uphill battle," she said. "We're driving uphill."

Slated for a 2009 release, the Mendes film stars John Krasinski (TV's "The Office") and Maya Rudolph ("Saturday Night Live") as a couple traveling around the country while looking for the right spot to raise the child they're about to have.

The movie took over various parts of the resort, including the entire lobby, Wednesday. Starr Pass will stand in for a resort in Phoenix.

The studio selected the JW Marriott after surveying every resort in Phoenix and Tucson, said unit publicist Rob Harris.

Filming at the resort culminated Wednesday night and moved on to undisclosed locations in Phoenix, where the shoot will continue a few days.

Hall estimated the shoot bestowed an economic impact of more than \$1 million on Tucson. She arrived at the number from the \$100,000 per day the production spent while in town and said it's a conservative estimate that the total \$400,000 would at least double in secondary and incidental spending throughout the shoot.

Harris estimated that the film employed more than 100 local extras and crew members.

On Wednesday, some of the extras milled about in the lobby as Krasinski and Rudolph shared a scene at a table on a patio. For more than an hour Krasinski redid the scene, which ended with him walking away from the table to take a cell-phone call.

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John Krasinski, of TV's "The Office" fame, waits to begin his scene at the JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa. He is acting in an untitled comedy helmed by Academy Award-winning director Sam Mendes.

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