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SPOTLIGHT ON UTAH'S FILM INDUSTRY

The demand for "something to watch" has skyrocketed over the past two years. Even before the pandemic forced many of us to spend more time at home, the increasing number of streaming platforms created a noticeable uptick in the number of films and television shows being produced.

According to a new *Variety* report, U.S. media and entertainment companies spent more than \$120 billion on original content in 2019. Disney led the way, with nearly \$28 billion invested in content across their studios and networks.

The film industry is a key economic driver in Utah's diverse economy. Utah's film incentive generated \$669.1 million in economic impact over the last five years. Nearly half was from direct spending in the industry, while the additional \$360 million was generated by downstream revenue to local vendors and small businesses.

Film and television production operates as a specialized manufacturing activity and requires a highly-skilled workforce. It can also deliver immediate economic impact in urban and rural communities. The film industry proved exceptionally resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in Utah, where local crews adapted to changing health and safety guidelines and pushed innovations to get back to work.

"The past three years have been a time of incredible growth in Utah's film industry with a total spend of \$194 million by productions and \$68 million of that spent in rural Utah," said Virginia Pearce, director of the Utah Film Commission. "The dollars spent by these companies go directly to the residents of our communities. On average, productions spend between \$100,000 and \$250,000 per day, and many of them film during the off-season, keeping hotels and restaurants and the people that work there busy."

In the past year, 18 films and 14 television series — with a combined production budget of \$189 million — have made inquiries about filming in Utah. There are several reasons Utah is attractive to the film industry, including a wide variety of locations, professional crew and support services, and proximity to the Los Angeles decision-makers and talent base.

The film industry also exports well. Utah's locations often become a major character in films and television series. Paramount Network's *Yellowstone* showcases the mountains of Summit and Wasatch counties and the latest Disney+ series celebrates the *High School Musical* franchise that features the backdrop of Salt Lake City. Recent studies show that four in 10 tourists chose Utah as a vacation destination because our unique landscapes were featured on-screen. This "Film Tourism" has delivered 2.2 million Utah trips and \$6 billion in value for the state over the past decade.

Not only does Utah have the landscapes to attract business and tourism, it's also home to the annual Sundance Film Festival that inspires global audiences and attracts approximately 100,000 attendees each year. Over the past 40 years, the Sundance Film Festival and Sundance Institute have brought thousands of filmmakers and film lovers to the Wasatch mountains and helped to showcase America's Film Set® to audiences around the world. ■



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