

## Film-production company opens 5-acre S.A. facility

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Laszlo Rain, a San Antonio film and video production company, has opened a new 5-acre facility on the city's North Side.

The spacious state-of-the-art complex replaces a 3,500-square-foot facility where Laszlo Rain President Tom Nador started the company as Rain Studio roughly four years ago.

The new studio is spread across a hill country setting among native Texas rock, elm and oak trees. Nador says it is an old ranch that called out to him.

It now houses three post-design suites, a conference room, fabrication facilities, a full-service kitchen to support craft service needs and a 1,200-square-foot canopied wooden deck. The facility, which Nador defines as a post-production resort, also offers numerous outdoor recreational areas.

"We bought this property. We took all our savings and stocks and dumped it into this," explains Nador, a native of Canada. "It was a serious investment but it was more than worth it."

He says there are already 20-plus campaigns on the books. One of those is an international campaign commissioned by the Centers for Disease Control.

"The range of our business has gone from local and regional to national and now even international," says Nador. "We're starting to draw talent into the market, too. The whole format of our business has been redesigned."

In the new facility, clients and crews can comfortably watch their productions from any seat in the house. They can also find leisurely escapes while their projects are being produced.

That's because the facility offers a swimming pool area, an Internet-ready client bar, a three-acre paintball war-games field, nature walk and bike trails, as well as plans for a Frisbee golf course and driving range. A studio apartment is also available for guests and late-night sessions. A creek runs through the tranquil property, which borders on 100-acres of Federal Reserve land.

Nador says vibrant colors surround the structure and high-tech equipment can be found at every turn. The aroma of home-cooked meals greets visitors.

"It drives production values," says Nador about the new facility. In fact, he says the success of Laszlo Rain is predicated on the unique setting and design of the new facility, which he describes as "Little House on the Prairie with the Matrix built in."

The Business Journal has previously written about San Antonio lagging behind Austin, Dallas and other markets when it comes to the film and video industry. Nador says the gap may be starting to narrow. He hopes his new facility helps the city catch up.

"After a day or two here, you'll think you're in New York or L.A.," he says. "The compliments from people in those markets who have been in here are flying in. It feels great. Now we need to support this momentum by bringing in the best talent from all over the world."

Catching up to Austin may not be enough.

"This place is a destination for production that is going to be tough to top." Nador says about Laszlo Rain. "In five years we will have put San Antonio on the (production industry) map. I don't know that we'll ever be New York or L.A. But we could sure be Miami."

## **Double-take**

A year ago, the Business Journal reported that San Antonio was getting the production industry crumbs, while Dallas and Austin were bathing in the gravy.

In 2002, the Texas Film Commission released a report indicating that movie-production companies alone had budgeted \$120 million on 23 projects in the Austin area the previous year. In Dallas/Fort Worth, those numbers were \$77 million for 13 productions.

San Antonio was barely a blip. Only half-a-million dollars was budgeted on two productions, according to the report.

Says San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau (SACVB) spokswoman Angela McClendon: "Throughout the United States, film production continues to suffer as feature films and television movies take advantage of Canada's national incentives, and produce most of their projects north of the border. In reaction to this situation, San Antonio has chosen to aggressively pursue commercial production, especially that related to the Hispanic market.

"Companies such as Laszlo Rain have risen to the challenge, and are responsible for the increased economic impact to our community over the past few years."

McClendon has toured Laszlo Rain's new facilities and says she is impressed by their commitment.

"Their interest in a state-of-the-art soundstage is exciting and would inevitably lead to increased commercial activity in our area."

Nador agrees that San Antonio is finding its niche and that the gap between it and some of the other cities is narrowing.

"It will change. It is changing," he says. "It just won't happen overnight, unfortunately."

For now, Nador is simply happy he has earned a larger slice of the pie via his new facility, which supports turnkey film and video productions. That growth comes as others in the industry have disappeared from the landscape.

"We already had a great reputation," explains Nador. "But more than anything, it was a combination of timing and hanging in there, not giving up."

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