

Valley-based film company to feature Demi Moore in first movie

Oct 31, 2020, 9:45am MST

Actress [Demi Moore](#) is starring in the first production from Gilbert-based Rivulet Films — but filming is not happening in Arizona.

[Mike Witherill](#), CEO of Rivulet Films, said filming has begun in Butte, Montana, where more incentives are offered to film producers.

"We get tax incentives shooting in specific locations," Witherill said. "Arizona doesn't have that. That's too bad. If they did, there would be a lot of people shooting movies here. For sure, we would."

[Matthew Earl Jones](#), director of the [Arizona Commerce Authority's](#) Film & Digital Media Program, said Arizona is attracting smaller, independent filmmakers.

Arizona offers the Reel Savings Program that allows the private sector to support the film and digital media industry through special discounts and rebates, Jones said. The program provides immediate savings to productions with no delays or paperwork — a no-hassle, convenient way to realize discounts.

"Businesses that contribute include hotels, rental car operators and restaurants," Jones said. "Reel Savings is 100% private sector money."



BRIAN BOWEN SMITH

Actress Demi Moore is starring in a new film being produced by a new Gilbert film company

Plus, he said, the Film Resource Coordinators Program allows talented individuals in rural communities to work with production companies as the point person, helping them seek out locations and source local talent.

that just became a publicly traded company.

Industry employment

The film industry in Arizona is responsible for creating 1,514 direct jobs in film and digital media, which is more than the national median of 1,091, Jones said.

Employment in the industry increased 68% from 2015 to 2019, which is more than the national average of 4%, making Arizona No. 4 in the nation for the rate of growth, Jones said.

The most recent data from the Seidman Research Institute at [Arizona State University](#) shows film and digital media had a total economic impact of \$224 million on Arizona's gross domestic product in fiscal 2018.

But [Montana's 20% tax credit incentive](#) was more alluring for Witherill, with filming kicking off there this week.

While he wouldn't disclose the budget for this production, called "Please Baby Please," Witherill said the budgets of his films range anywhere from \$10 million to \$50 million. They are financed in a variety of ways, including equity, debt and loans from commercial banks.

While he founded Rivulet Films this year, Witherill has been in the film business for more than 10 years, producing the first "John Wick" movie and "Frontera," which starred [Ed Harris](#) and [Eva Longoria](#).

He's still hoping Arizona will establish a tax credit someday.

"If that were ever to come to be, that would be very beneficial," Witherill said. "The landscape is amazing to shoot. There are a lot of talented people here."

Witherill expects to complete the filming of "Please Baby Please" next month and be ready for a mid-to-late spring release. Stringent Covid-19 safety protocols are in place during filming.

"We do testing every other day when people are traveling, and the actors basically have to be tested before they get on the plane, and they have to be tested again before they go to the set," Witherill said. "We are limiting the crew on set, so it's a challenge. It makes producing a film more expensive. But we're just blessed to be working. We're back to work."

Rivulet Films' parent, Rivulet Media, completed a reverse merger with Bio-Matrix Scientific Group Inc. (OTC US: BMSN) in April to become a publicly traded company. Its stock began trading over the counter under the symbol RIVU on Sept. 21.

"It was a shell sitting there not being used," he said.

Phoenix [real estate developer Aaron Klusman](#) is CEO of Rivulet Media, while Witherill serves as president of Rivulet Media. Rivulet Media also has a [docuseries in production on](#)

[controversial Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio.](#)

Angela Gonzales
Senior Reporter
*Phoenix Business
Journal*

