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Jeremy Hariton sells Albuquerque to film producers

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He managed planning and business development for regional finance directors in Europe and for licensees in Paramount's home entertainment division. He also did all the analysis for the company's acquisitions at film festivals.

Paramount wanted him in London full time, working on finance, but Hariton wanted to move to the creative side around marketing. He worked on the acquisition and turnaround of **Culver Studios**, where he did business development, studio operations, finance and strategic planning. It's also where he met Smerigan and began working with him and **Pacifica Ventures** to look for sites to build a studio.



"He said, 'Why don't you come to Albuquerque. I'll ruin your life for a year,'" Hariton recalled.

Hariton had no idea what that meant, but followed a gut instinct that staying with Smerigan felt right.

"I've been really lucky," he said. "I've always worked for people who nurtured me and have given me incredible opportunities I never should have had."

It gave him the chance to help design the studio and do project management. Smerigan planned to bring in a marketing and sales person, but Hariton asked for a chance to do it himself. Smerigan said he figured, why not? If it didn't work out, he could bring in someone else to do marketing.

"[Hariton's] success in sales is because he was so dedicated to trying to make this happen," Smerigan said. "He's the ideal partner for me because he's young and energetic and I'm old and not energetic."

Plus, he knows all the pieces that go into a production, Smerigan said, so he can do things like show the producers on "Book of Eli," a post-apocalyptic thriller starring Denzel Washington, why it's more efficient to shoot a scene in San Francisco Bay in the middle of the desert using green screen technology than actually going to San Francisco.

Stanley Hubbard, chairman and CEO of the ReelzChannel, which moved its headquarters to the studios this year, said the two make a good team.

"Nick's a pretty strong personality, but he's allowed Jeremy to blossom under that and Jeremy has risen to it and blossomed in a way that's really complemented Nick and shines well on himself," said Hubbard, whose family's Hubbard Broadcasting Inc. also owns KOB-TV, Channel 4.

Ann Lerner, the film liaison for the city of Albuquerque, said Hariton is passionate about the film industry.

"He's like the cheerleader for Albuquerque in L.A.," she said. "It's a win-win, and it doesn't cost me anything."

Hariton said he's making a major push to reach directors and producers who have not yet worked here. The state's generous film incentives will most likely help, although other states have also enacted incentives, complicating the competitive landscape.

The budgetary pressures on productions these days are immense, he said.

"The profitability models are so tight, they'll make any decision to save a couple of bucks," he said.

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