

# DEADLINE

## Pinewood Sells Stake In Atlanta Studios After Six Year Run

Andreas Wiseman | August 21, 2019



**T**he Pinewood Group has sold its equity in Pinewood Atlanta Studios, the second-largest purpose-built film and TV hub in the U.S., to its joint venture partner in the facility.

The JV was set up in 2013 between Pinewood and River's Rock, an independently managed trust of the Cathy family.

Pinewood will provide sales and marketing support for the studios for a period of up to 18 months during which time the operation will remain branded and operated as a Pinewood facility. The partners say there will be no impact on productions shooting at the studios, which will continue to be led by Frank Patterson, president of the facility.

Set across 700 acres, the studio's 18 sound stages range from 15,000 to 40,000 square feet and it has a backlot spanning 400 acres. Movies to have shot there, taking advantage of Georgia's tax incentive, include *Avengers: Endgame*, *Spider Man: Homecoming* and *Captain America: Civil War*.

According to Pinewood, the parting of ways comes as Patterson has started investing in content companies, while Pinewood Group continues to focus on studio infrastructure. That said, last month Pinewood also announced that it was divesting itself of its JV facility in Malaysia.

A source tells us that future international deals are likely — the Group still has studio interests in China and Dominican Republic, among other markets — but UK expansion remains the key focus at the moment. There may be a handful of job losses as a result of the Atlanta sale, whose value was not disclosed.

We have been told on the record by Pinewood that the exit is “not connected in any way” to controversial anti-abortion laws recently passed in Georgia. The legislation has been criticized by Disney and Netflix. Talks over Pinewood's exit have been going on “for at least two years,” the Group told us.

The space has been a key site for Marvel movies, so Pinewood's exit and the Studio's growing investment in ‘content companies’ does at least leave a small question mark over whether Atlanta will remain a go-to in years to come.

The Pinewood Group, which was bought in 2016 by asset management firm Aermont, is currently expanding its UK Shepperton Studios, a move that will see Shepperton become the second-largest studio in the world. The modernization and expansion of the iconic studios will include up to an additional 530,000 sq. ft of sound stage space.

Paul Golding, Chairman of Pinewood Group Limited, said today, “Pinewood is known across the world as a leading-provider of studio space and over the last six years, Pinewood Atlanta Studios has become the second largest purpose-built facility in the US. As our partners in Atlanta look to expand their focus and invest in content development, we have agreed to sell our equity in the Studios. Pinewood will continue to prioritize its core business of providing studio infrastructure, including extensive growth plans in the UK and expansion in key international markets.”

“The Pinewood Group has been a great partner, building the best facilities in the world for us in Atlanta,” commented Patterson. “I came on two years ago to build content opportunities at the same time the Pinewood Group changed ownership and decided to focus on providing studio accommodation. We've got some exciting investments in the pipeline on the content creation side of the business so this a truly great time for the industry in Atlanta. I would like to thank Pinewood Group for all they've done and how they have helped make Atlanta a world leader in film and digital production.” ■