



Buenos Aires City Relaunches Film Commission (EXCLUSIVE)J

John Hopewell | December 4, 2019



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BUENOS AIRES — Under municipal Minister of Culture Enrique Avogadro, the City of Buenos Aires is relaunching its Film Commission, taking advantage, yes, of the peso-dollar exchange but, above all, of Argentina’s unquestioned talent base, which is already triumphing outside Argentina.

Two examples, both from the TV sector: in 2018, Argentina sold more top 20 scripted format exports— eight – thanks to the sales of Telefe shows by Viacom. Intl. Studios, than any other country in the world, according to a study unveiled by The Wit at Mip Cancun.

Also, led by “Monzón,” a Buena Vista Original Productions with Buenos Aires’ Pampa Films, Argentina won far more kudos at last month’s Produ Awards than any other territory in Latin America.

Buenos Aires’ Film Commission drive builds on recent shoots in the city led over 2018-19 by international reality shows such as “The Mole,” for Germany and a New Zealand/Australia version of “The Bachelorette.” “El Presidente,” a Fabula-Kapow-Gaumont scripted series for Amazon Prime Video, has also shot in Buenos Aires.

The Commission also helped Underground, producers of “El Marginal,” to secure shooting permission for the multi-lauereed series in a soon-to-be-demolished central city penitentiary.

Spearheaded by Avogadro, Buenos Aires’ Town Hall’s Culture Minister since 2018, the Film Commission re-launch envisages offering services to companies wanting to break out into international, sectorial training, such as for screenwriters and technicians, and “inverted missions,” as Avogadro called them, inviting delegations, such as of buyers, to Buenos Aires.

The Film Commission will have a larger presence at the world’s most relevant festivals, markets and trade fairs. Buenos Aires City will also study how to attract shoots given the opportunities opened up by the new global platforms, and update its locations guide to provide state-of-the arts tools for overseas manages and producers not traveling to Argentina.

“It’s very important for our city to promote these sectors,” Avogadro told *Variety*. “They’re the kind you want to have in your city in terms of employment, offering opportunities to creative talent, and impacting other industries like the entertainment industry in general, transportation and the hospitality industry.”

The Film Commission’s push comes as the Argentine peso has plunged 37% against the U.S. dollar in the last 12 months. “The peso exchange rate is highly attractive but we would be competitive without it, It’s not the main point. Our first attraction is talent and locations,” Avogadro argued.

Leon Forde at London-based strategy consultants Olsberg, SPI, a leading authority on shoot incentives worldwide, agreed.

“Exchange rates are one of the pillars of attraction for lots of places but they sit alongside other elements like talent base, studio provision and incentives.”

He added: “International producers need to know that there are going to be high quality work force when they come to shoot.”

Unlike Mexico or Brazil, which have felt much more the “Netflix effect” of hugely hiked demand for top-class crews, the difficulties of producing in Argentina means that its sector is not working at full capacity. It will be easier to crew up with first class technicians in Argentina.

Just how that talent can supply the demand for content in other parts of Latin America, especially Mexico, is likely to be one of the large questions for Argentina in the next few years.

Buenos Aires’ major challenge, Avogadro added, will be to create international alliances with markets, festivals, countries and other cities that recognize the Film Commission as a counterpart, attract more important international and local OTT platforms to shoot new projects in the city, and above all to build an institution hand-in-hand with the private sector which becomes active in deciding where to focus the Commission’s efforts and best-case treatment for visiting productions. ■