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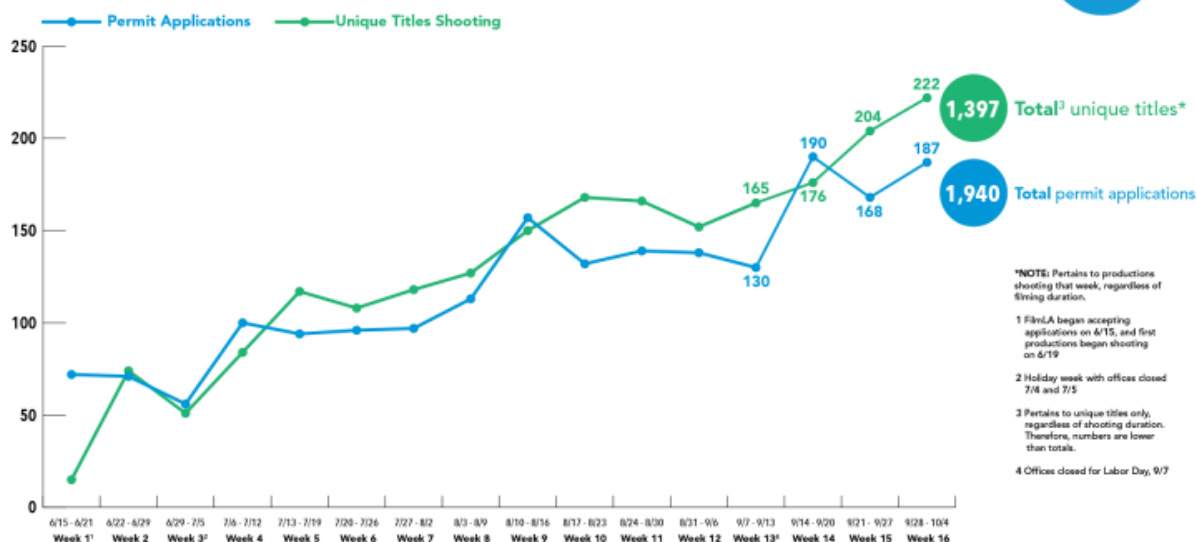
COVID-19 Pandemic Slices Summer Filming Season in Half



Even as filming is beginning a slow return in Greater Los Angeles, a sobering new report released today reveals the enduring effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region's film, television and commercial production industry. Updated data from FilmLA indicate that filming in area communities declined by 54.5 percent year-over-year to muster just 4,199 Shoot Days (SD)* from July through September, 2020. With Reality TV (up 10.3 percent to 1,159 SD) and Commercials (down 41.2 percent to 782 SD) together accounting for 46 percent of all filming on- location, the local film industry's road to recovery hinges on a planned October restart for scripted Television and Feature projects of scale.

As it has since July 2020 and previously in times of industry downturn, for a time FilmLA will continue to monitor business activity levels and report monthly on the number of film permit applications it receives. Looking specifically at September, FilmLA saw multiple weeks of business activity increases, receiving on average around 34 film permit applications per day. September was also the month that Television edged out Commercials as the source of new applications for the first time since June.

PRODUCTION ACTIVITY, SINCE RESTART



That Reality TV emerged as the bright spot for LA’s summer filming season is unsurprising. Operating with smaller crews and casts and the freedom to easily adjust storyline and location choice, reality projects came online quickly after LA County reopened to filming in mid-June with robust health protection protocols in place. Although Reality TV production peaked in Greater Los Angeles in 2014 and the category has declined each year since then, FilmLA joins other industry observers in predicting a comeback for the Reality TV format, as content distributors, including streaming services, pipeline new content for their platforms.

The advertising industry, represented in FilmLA data by Commercials and Still Photography (the largest part of the “Other” category referenced on the attached chart), also saw a quick return to production over the summer. Again, straightforward public health protocols, small crew sizes and location flexibility were key. Immediately following the resumption of filming, these genres played an important role in testing the compatibility of the County’s COVID-19 protocols with FilmLA’s streamlined approach to permitting. Permit turnaround time has returned to prior efficiency, at around three business days for non-complex shoots.

Scripted Television including TV Drama (down 73.2 percent to 286 SD) and TV Comedy (down 96.3 percent to 28 SD) fared far worse last quarter, as did the production of Features (down 64.1 percent to 352 SD). These larger-scale projects, poised to resume now that unprecedented labor agreements were

reached in late September, are powerful job creators and essential to the survival of thousands of local businesses that depend on production. These high-value projects are also the types of productions that are eligible for the successful California Film & Television Tax Credit Program. The state tax credit's Program 3.0 incentivizes in-state production of TV projects and feature films, with several application periods each fiscal year.

“The stage is set for a return – not to business-as-usual but to the ‘best-progress-possible’ for film production in area communities, LA loves film, and there is a real enthusiasm to see this work come back, plus real effort on the part of the industry and local public health authorities to see that it does so with care for public health.”

Paul Audley, President of FilmLA

Audley also emphasized the role of testing, sanitation, physical distancing and PPE use for keeping LA area film sets safe. “Even while exercising all due caution, we may see a few productions shut down for the sake of worker safety. None of this is incompatible with the County’s road to recovery. This is a system set up by conscientious people, working as designed for the protection of Greater LA.”

[Download the Report](#)

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FilmLA Research is a program of [the FilmLA Foundation](#), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization established in 2025 to support a thriving film economy in California. The Research department produces and shares data on the U.S. film economy and global production trends, highlighting California's legacy as the leading film production destination.

FILMLA, INC.® is a 501(c)(4) not-for-profit organization and the official film office for the City and County of Los Angeles, among a growing number of local municipalities. Through expedited permitting, comprehensive community relations, film policy analysis and more, FilmLA works to attract and retain film production in Greater Los Angeles.

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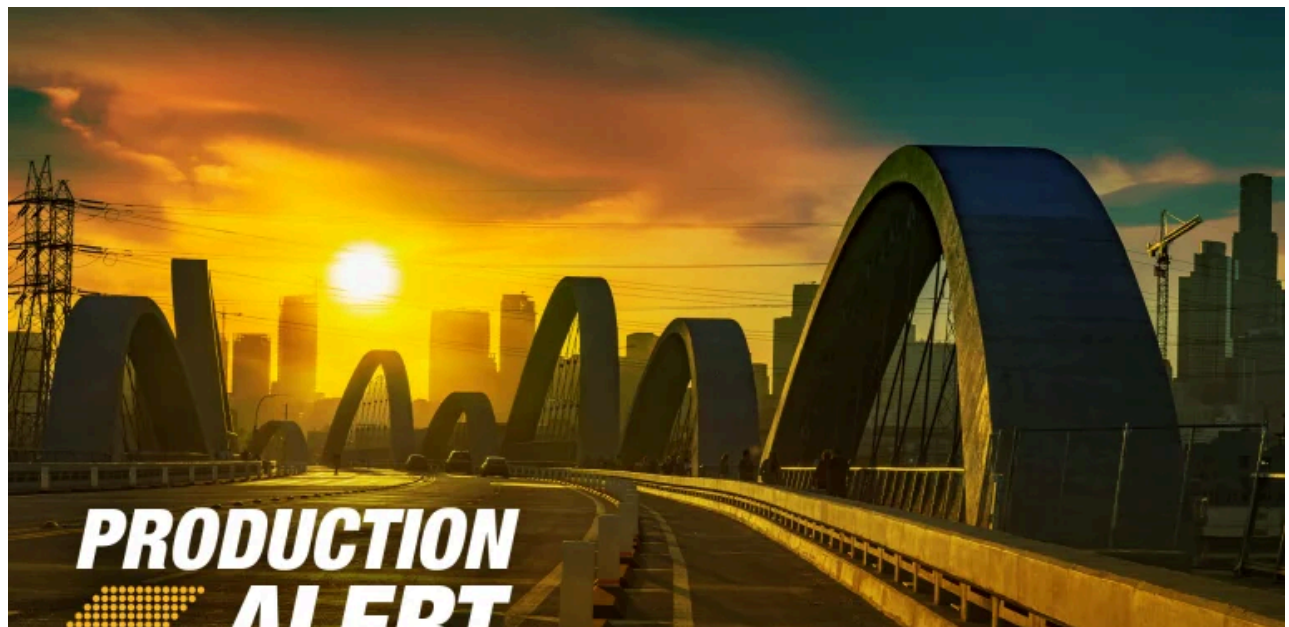
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