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SBA-Backed Financing Helps Build Meddin Studios, New State of the Art Digital Media Facility in Savannah *—Owners’ “Business Idea” draws visit from President Obama—*

The paint was barely dry on the walls of the three sound studios at Meddin Studios, LLC in late February when word reached owners Jon Foster and Nick Gant that President Obama wanted to include their new digital video production center on his upcoming visit to Savannah. The President would be in the city to speak about plans to increase federal support for small businesses and the White House had seen media coverage of this new “one stop” video production complex designed to serve the city’s growing movie-video activity.

The President would not be disappointed after his on-site inspection of Meddin Studios’ 22,000 square-foot facility. The cutting edge digital complex was built inside the concrete walls of what had been the old Meddin Brothers meatpacking plant on Louisville Road, less than three miles from the heart of Savannah.



Besides its sound studios, the Meddin complex offers full post-production services made up of both video and audio editing suites, as well as a special room to do voice-over reads and sound effects for movies and other productions. The studio also provides a full line of rental camera, grip and lighting equipment including two and three ton video production trucks for hire.

The studio owners used two SBA guaranteed loans to help finance their new venture. One was a \$2 million 504 Economic Development Loan issued through the Small Business Assistance Corporation (SBAC), an SBA Certified Development Company based in Savannah. Colony Bank in Savannah provided a first mortgage for about 50 percent of the project while 40 percent of the deal was funded by SBAC with a 100 percent SBA guaranteed debenture. The studio owners used personal funds for the remaining 10 percent of the 504 development project.

Another \$1.4 million was injected into the studio project with an SBA 7(a) loan issued by Colony Bank. This loan carried a 90 percent guarantee by the SBA to encourage the bank to make what could be a risky start up loan. The studio owners saved about \$46,000 in fees that were waived on the loans as part of provisions in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act enacted by Congress on Feb. 17, 2009.

“These loans were essential,” said Gant recently. “The only reason the bank was able to do them was because of the SBA guarantee.” Gant credits Colony Bank with believing in the business plan he and co-owner Foster developed for their digital studio. He said the bank suggested using SBA backed loans including the 504 financing issued through the Small Business Assistance Corporation.

Their federally backed loans obviously made an impression on President Obama “The main reason we wanted to highlight what they’re doing is they took advantage of an SBA loan to get the studio started,” he said after his visit to Meddin on March 2nd. “Their loan is an example of the kinds of additional capital we want to get out to small and medium-sized businesses.”

Meddin Studios opened following a year where four studio film productions were done in Savannah along with a documentary and several other smaller video projects. “Meddin speaks to the economics of video and film production,” said Jay Self who heads up the city of Savannah Film Office. “What I can get locally, I don’t have to wait for.”

The paths of the studio owners crossed a few years ago when Gant was working in the marketing department at Savannah-based Gulfstream Aircraft. As the company’s Creative Director, he needed some video editing offered by a production firm in Atlanta where Foster was employed. The two men decided later they wanted to combine the full services of a video production company under one roof, and open the facility in Savannah.

Foster is a 1999 graduate of Western Kentucky University with a degree in Broadcasting. He oversees all technical aspects of the studio as well as the coordination of vendor relationships for the company.

Gant, a former photographer in the U.S. Army, received his degree in Broadcast Design from the Savannah College of Art & Design (SCAD). As an alumnus, he and his partner maintain a close working relationship with SCAD. A number of SCAD students recently attended a Production Assistant Training Class at the studio and SCAD professors have brought their students to the facility on several occasions for tours and hands-on experiences.

Meddin Studios currently has six full-time and six part-time employees. It will also increase employment to handle various projects on a weekly or monthly basis.

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