

NEW PRODUCTION COMPLEX TO BE DOWNTOWN L.A.'S FIRST FULL STUDIO

Frank Gehry's Disney Hall and Rafael Moneo's Cathedral of St. Vibiana are not the only projects fueling a downtown renaissance in Los Angeles. Hollywood is moving in.

Bastien and Associates of Irvine, California, has designed Los Angeles Center Studios, a production complex to be located on the site of Unocal Company's old headquarters. The \$105 million development, the first of its type downtown, is scheduled for completion in July.

The project includes six new 18,000-square-foot soundstages and ancillary support facilities, as well as the renovation of several existing buildings. Given the growing demand for elaborate sets, spectacular special effects, and complicated stunt work, contemporary soundstage design has become a specialized operation. The new soundstages at Los Angeles Center

Studios will vary from 35 to 45 feet in height, measured to the bottom of hefty bowstring trusses strong enough to hang a bus, and will contain highly sophisticated audiovisual and mechanical equipment.

In addition, following a precedent set by Bastien with its 1994 soundstage design for CBS Studios, the stages will be constructed of tilt-up concrete. This method differs from traditional double-stud wall soundstage design in that the construction cost is cut almost in half, and the required level of sound absorption is easily reached without complicated insulation materials and techniques.

While the studios' simple, functional forms might not be as visually stimulating as other upcoming buildings nearby, the energy emanating from these silent boxes will remind locals of what makes the city unique. *Alice Y. Kimm*

