

'Transformers 3' to bring \$20 million, 200 jobs to Chicago

By Fran Spielman

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“Transformers 3” — the sci-fi action thriller filming in Chicago this summer — will pump \$20 million into the local economy and create 200 jobs, including ten internships for inner-city students, Mayor Daley said today.

Joking about landing a walk-on roll, Daley welcomed producer Lorenzo Di Bonaventura to Chicago 30 years after the premiere of the landmark film, “The Blues Brothers.”

“Transformers 3” is scheduled to open in late June or early July of next year. It will film in Chicago from July 10 until Aug. 19.

Then-Mayor Jane M. Byrne, Daley’s political nemesis, took a lot of heat for allowing a car to crash into the Daley Center during the filming of “The Blues Brothers.”

“Transformers 3” is certain to include even more scenes of death and destruction on the streets of Chicago.

“You’re gonna see a little bit of mayhem. You know, I mean it wouldn’t be ‘Transformers’ without it,” Di Bonaventura said.

“Hopefully, it’ll be fun. What we find is, people really end up enjoying the spectacle of what we’re doing.”

Daley said a certain degree of mayhem is fine with him so long as “safety comes first. . . . They’re very conscious of that.”

As for the “The Blues Brothers” controversy, he noted that it “didn’t destroy the Daley Center.”

“You don’t want to say where you can go, where you can’t go. They replace everything. They don’t destroy buildings,” he said. “This is all about creativity. They have to figure out their audiences. . . . Younger people are attached to this.”

Seventeen-year-old Montel Williams certainly is. A student at North Lawndale College Prep, he’s one of the film-loving Chicago Public School students lucky enough to be hired as an intern for the filming.

They're already working on video and music production projects through a CPS partnership with the non-profit Free Spirit Media.

"I have a passion for film. It's in my heart deeply. . . . I'm ready for hands-on," Williams said.

And what if it's just a gofer job? No problem, he said.

"This is my career. I'm looking for anything out there that's gonna benefit me and my career," he said.

Daley added, "Even if you're a go-fer, it doesn't matter. You're gonna meet people. And you're gonna see how challenging it is to film anything. . . . I'm very grateful. This is what individuals can do and make a difference in our city. They'll be here [for six weeks], but they'll have a long-lasting impact."

Asked about a possible cameo appearance by Daley, Di Bonaventura laughed and said, "Well, I don't know. I don't know how the mayor would feel about that. It's up to the mayor."

Daley said he's game. He joked that the producers and directors could make him look taller, fix his hair and "lose about 20 years of my life."