



MGM chief praises Mass. perks

By Scott Van Voorhis

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A top Hollywood entertainment mogul yesterday praised Massachusetts for offering tax incentives in a bid to lure movie productions to the state.

Harry Sloan, MGM's chairman and chief executive, said the multimillion-dollar incentive package, passed last year on Beacon Hill, is already producing results. He credited the incentives for bringing to Massachusetts a big chunk of the filming of an upcoming movie, originally titled "21." It's based on Ben Mezrich's book "Bringing Down the House" about MIT whiz kids who use their math skills to go on a tear in Las Vegas.

The Bay State's tax incentives cover 25 percent of a film's production costs in the state up to \$7 million.

"Twenty-five percent is a lot," Sloan said in remarks after a downtown speech to the Boston College Chief Executives' Club. "That had a lot to do with the movie '21' coming here."

The MGM chief also dismissed concerns that controversies involving movie production crews provided by the local Teamsters union have given Massachusetts a black eye in Hollywood. The union has come under fire for heavy-handed tactics in dealing with movie producers.

Sloan said other big cities, like New York and Los Angeles, have had their own share of union problems.

"In my mind, Massachusetts doesn't stand out," Sloan said.

Meanwhile, the MGM chief said the Hollywood giant is close to a deal with a local technology company for a new online initiative.

Sloan, who took over at MGM 18 months ago, also detailed efforts to revive one of Hollywood's legendary movie companies after it has fallen onto hard times in recent years. MGM is focusing on marketing and distributing films, while offering new installments to such "franchise" movies as the Rocky, Pink Panther and James Bond series.

To finance the production of such films, MGM is matching producers with private investors to pay the bills, which can run up to \$60 or \$70 million, Sloan said.