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# Music incubator 2112 expands to film with The Hangar; new cities next



A group works at The Hangar, a film and video production space. (2112 photo)

By **Cheryl V. Jackson**

Blue Sky Innovation

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**T**he music business incubator at Fort Knox Studios is rocking.

In the year it's been running in Chicago's Old Irving Park neighborhood, 2112 has programmed 75 education sessions, held a music hack-a-thon that drew 100 participants and hosted international trade delegations, and taken its act on the road to South By Southwest.

"Looking at what's been done in the past year, I can't image what this is going to be in five years; what this is going to be in 10 years," said 2112 director Scott Fetters.

Well, with Fort Knox's recent launch of The Hangar, a 7,200-square-foot film and video production space, it's getting into the video and movie business. The goal: To support small filmmakers.

"We're focused on video production and the independent filmmaker, the documentary filmmaker," said Fetters, who won't be formally involved with operations at The Hangar. "There's still a gap in independent film in the city. There's not a hub for independent filmmakers."

Fetters said 2112 works closely with Stage 18, the film-related business incubator at [Cinespace Chicago Film Studios](#), and isn't trying to steal its thunder.

"We are sister incubators," he said. "In the short term, we'll have reciprocity on education programming and space and resources. ... They're very symbiotic. Collaboration makes a lot of sense between the two of us."

Stage 18 co-founder Angie Gaffney, who attended the launch of The Hangar, said she doesn't see the new facility as competition.

"It can be geared to some productions that might not be able to rent a space at Cinespace, especially with its busy season," she said. "I have all the love in the world for 2112 and am so excited to continue to work with them as we both grow."

"This is a really exciting time. This is the healthiest the film industry has been in 20 years," Gaffney said. "The more we can build the film community, whether at Cinespace or not, is a beneficial thing for everybody."

Fort Knox is also looking to recreate its 160,000-square-foot creative ecosystem in other cities across North America, starting with Nashville and then possibly Austin, Miami, Oakland and Toronto.

That system began five years ago with an artist- and hospitality-focused remodeling of the studio. They've since added recording studios, sound productions companies, a stagehand school and office space for creative industries.

Fort Knox has built out about 40,000 square feet of space over the past year, accommodating more producers, writers, composers and engineers, and growing its number of recording studios from three to 10, Nielsen said.

Many of those creatives had been working from makeshift studios in their homes or undesirable hours at other studios, he said.

"This model is highly disruptive in a positive manner," said Fort Knox Studios co-owner Kent Nielsen. "There are other cities that have similar problems — what I would call fragmentation."

In addition, the space includes offices and workspace for more mature music- and film-related businesses than 2112 was designed to service, Nielsen said.

The incubator now counts 75 member companies accessing its co-working space, conference rooms, business mentors, investors and educational programming, with costs starting at \$250 a month.

The incubator is particularly interested in the development of music tech startups that benefit the overall music industry. About 15 of its members are tech-focused, including an experiential branding startup called VL Group, a company that makes mailable cards for virtual reality called Good Yeti, and a company that allows music discovery via gamification called The Up Next.

"The elements are coming together in 2112 of really uniting at the hip the Chicago music community industry, the Chicago independent film and video industry and the sector-aligned tech companies that are working in the music space or the music video spaces," Nielsen said.

People from New York, San Francisco and Nashville come to its quarterly Who's Who in Music Tech Meetups, where coders, investors and other industry folks interact, Fetters said.

"People are so excited to have a community for music tech," he said. "To get 30 to 40 companies in a room is not something that was happening anywhere."

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