



**FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION**  
**EXCELLENCE IN PRODUCTION DESIGN • PERIOD FILM**  
**PRODUCTION DESIGNER • BARBARA LING   SET DECORATOR • NANCY HAIGH**

**WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY QUENTIN TARANTINO**

About two years ago I began hearing rumors that Quentin Tarantino was planning to make a huge, sweeping film about the movie industry, set in Los Angeles during the 1960s. People described it to me as the ultimate ode to Hollywood, and they suggested it might also revolve around the Manson crimes. Naturally I was over the moon when I received a call saying Quentin wanted me to read his script. I couldn't get there fast enough!

The screenplay simply blew my mind. It was like reading a great novel. It was an epic that really showcased Los Angeles. That was particularly important to me because I'm from L.A. and it's always exciting to see your hometown transformed back to an earlier time. Although Quentin and I didn't grow up during the same era or in the same environment, we were attracted to a lot of similar things.

As a production designer, the most exciting thing about working with Quentin is that he's an incredibly visual writer. He immerses you in his creative process from day one and his unique perspective really made this project special.

Quentin wanted the production design to be real. When I first sat down with him, that was the key thing he kept coming back to. He had to see it. The actors had to see it. Everything had to be done in the real world. He didn't want to worry that there was a green screen behind someone so he couldn't turn his camera this way or that way.



Quentin's brain doesn't work like anyone else's. Rather than make obvious choices about Los Angeles, he tapped into his own childhood memories of growing up in the city. When you watch the film, you're looking at L.A. from his personal vantage point, and you're seeing what he loved about it as a boy. The images in *Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood* are things Quentin saw while driving through the streets decades ago. I remember he turned to me at one point and said, "I'd love to see the blue blades of the Van de Kamp's windmill turning in the night sky." It was such a poetic image! Growing up in Los Angeles, you'd often see those windmills in different parts of the city. They were magnificent. I understood exactly why they meant so much to him.

Quentin's script also dealt with seismic changes that were taking place around the country during the late 1960s, especially in Los Angeles. For one thing, graphics became completely different as psychedelia arrived. Murals suddenly sprouted up across the city. And just as music was rapidly changing, design and architecture were transforming as well. Hollywood Boulevard was a great example of that. You had all of these beautiful, classic buildings lining the street, but a lot of the stores in 1969 were funky headshops and tattoo parlors. It was like two worlds were colliding around the city, and *Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood* taps into that fascinating moment.

That said, we never wanted to make a documentary with this film. Much of the design is a memory of that time and place, combining the real and the imagined. The challenge was faithfully restoring the iconic movie-theater marquees, street signs, freeways and storefronts while mixing in design illusions with sets within sets, such as the Westerns, variety shows and commercials. The key to the overall design for me was to make this vast expanse of Los Angeles feel encased in the fantastical and hallucinatory time of 1969.



# Rick's House

Rick Dalton's house presented me with one of the biggest challenges on the film, in large part because it had to be located right next to Roman Polanski's home in the film. Quentin had a shot in his head — which was also in the script — that had the camera looking at Rick floating in his pool then drifting up over the trees and coming down in front of the Polanski driveway to reveal Sharon and Roman coming out their front door and getting in their car.

We scouted hundreds of different homes. We searched using Google Earth, peering from hilltops, and sent location scouts winding through streets for months to find this configuration. Eventually in the Studio City hills we found a unique combination of two homes that could be altered both inside and out. There was a pool for Rick's backyard and the street leading up to the homes has a bend in it that helped me connect it to the real Cielo Drive, where we were able to shoot some driving shots at night.



The interior of Rick's house was built onstage as Quentin had very specific choreography for those scenes. I designed the set with an open floor plan based on an early mid-century Benedict Canyon development to work with Quentin's staging. We miniaturized the onstage swimming pool so you could always see it outside the windows, and cutting from the real backyard pool to the stage set pool was seamless.

Because Rick is a man without a wife, he never had a decorator. Instead, his décor is inspired by some of the Western films he'd made. Nancy and I had a wonderful time putting together a TV actor bachelor-pad look. Modernist leather couches with a mid-century Barcalounger facing the TV of course. The idea was to make his home very much a part of his work as an actor. That's why there's a saddle from a horse he rode in the corner and gun holster on the wall.







We made his bar the piece de résistance, with heavy Spanish wood backed in Palomino skins. The walls are dominated by posters and magazine covers of his shows and films. If you look closely, you'll see a board game from Rick's fictional show "Bounty Law" on his bookcase next to the stereo. His card table and jukebox complete this bachelor-pad look.





# Rick's Movie Posters



Quentin has one of the most incredible movie poster collections I've ever seen. They're very much a passion of his, so it was important that all of Rick Dalton's posters be as authentic as possible. If Rick made a movie at a specific studio, the poster had to reflect that.

To create the poster art, we did a couple of photo shoots with Leonardo DiCaprio and posed him in a variety of ways. Some of the posters were handled by 83-year-old Renato Casaro, the last of the great Italian illustrators. Quentin was thrilled to discover that he was still alive. Renato did two amazing illustrations from the photographs that Quentin staged with Leo. Martin Duhovic, an English illustrator, did one poster. Another was made by our lead graphic designer Tina Charad, and four others were created by Sony illustrators working from photos of Leo. They came in all different sizes. Each one had a different meaning for Quentin, who wrote all of the poster copy — even for the Italian-language ones.

# Musso & Frank Grill

Sadly, Los Angeles has a history of ripping down historic buildings faster than most other cities, and the ones that remain are often changed. Luckily for us, little had been altered on Musso & Frank Grill, which first opened in 1919, making it one of the oldest restaurants in the city. It still looks almost exactly the way it did when Joseph Musso and Frank Toulet originally founded it.

Best of all, the people who work there are as extraordinary as the building itself. I've never met employees who love their jobs as much as the staff at Musso & Frank. That place is their life! Many of them have worked there since they were teenagers, and they're now in their mid-70s. In terms of detail, they went out of their way to make sure that every plate in that scene was from the '60s, which helped us immensely. I suppose that's why it's one of Quentin's favorite restaurants. The entire waitstaff loves him as much as he loves them. They normally don't close for shooting on as many days as we asked, but they did it for him. That tells you something.



# Cliff's Trailer

The cool thing about Cliff Booth is that he's such an enigma. We never get to know too much about him, just a few tantalizing details, including the small trailer he lives in. Quentin wanted it to be located behind a drive-in movie theater, because the last of the great marquees in Los Angeles were drive-ins. We both agreed that the Van Nuys Drive-In, with its spectacular rearing-horse mural, was the one to bring back to life for this film.





I loved the look of the Spartan travel trailers of the 1940s and '50s, and we lucked out and found a dilapidated one in a field that we hauled out and rebuilt much of. Then we added Cliff touches to it like a ladder to the roof, a chair on top and TV antennae. We built a breakaway version of the interior of the trailer on a stage for all the scenes with Cliff and his dog.

When designing the interior, I considered the handful of things we know about Cliff. He was in the Korean War. He loves cars and bikes. He likes Dean Martin's Matt Helm movies. And he's a big fan of actress Anne Francis, who played detective Honey West on TV. Quentin didn't want to reveal too much beyond that. Clearly, Cliff is not a homemaker. He's not going to be entertaining guests at his trailer. It's just him and his dog. He sleeps there, and then he leaves. That's pretty much the feeling of his world, which is incredibly different from the way Rick Dalton lives. Rick aspires to be someone, but you don't see any aspirations in Cliff. He just lives his life, day by day, without anxiety.



# Spahn Ranch

For Spahn Ranch, we found an empty park in Simi Valley that was once a movie set and had the landscape and terrain we needed. It's called Corriganville Park and it's in the Santa Susana Pass area, just two miles from the original location of Spahn Ranch, so the high, rocky landscape had the same feel. Quentin wanted George Spahn's dilapidated house to be perched high above everything, so when Rick Schuler, our supervising location manager, showed me Corriganville Park and it had a little hill in the center I knew Quentin would love it. Quentin declared it perfect as soon as he saw it.

The ranch was a huge design challenge for me. It was a vast amount of empty land to put our world into. We had research photos for a section of an iconic Western street set and a horse corral. From written descriptions we knew there were outbuildings that had been turned into illegal chop shops by local biker gangs. I took creative license in creating the surrounding areas of the Western street.





I designed George's home as a small ranch house overlooking the rest of the ranch. When it came to dressing the interior, we only had a few close-up photos of George that gave a sense of his surroundings. From written histories we know he collected George Montgomery sculptures and loved rodeos. Nancy and I worked out what we thought would be some pieces he collected: a few sculptures, posters, his furniture and his ever-present TV. His home has been mostly destroyed since the Manson Family moved in, so that layer of grime and sloppiness was needed to portray the dominance of their presence. It is that sense of dilapidation inside and out that alerts Cliff to worry about George. We also built a backup of the interior of George's house on a local stage in case of rain.

I bookended the ranch set with a corral and feed barn on one side and a larger barn on the other. I dotted outbuildings around the property that Nancy and her team dressed into motorcycle and dune buggy chop shops. I also wanted to pepper the property with broken-down buses, cars, trucks and RVs, now mostly used to house the family members. I went to Steve Butcher, our fabulous picture car coordinator, to help me with these. There's an iconic photograph of the ranch that shows an old truck right next to a mailbox with the words "Spahn Ranch" written on it. I told Steve, "You've gotta find us this kind of truck!" And he found one exactly like it. He was like a dog with a bone — he would not give up until he tracked it down.





# The Studio Lot

For the Bruce Lee sequence, we turned the exterior of a closed high school in Norwalk into our very own studio backlot. With so many films shooting in L.A. at any given moment, it can be extremely difficult to work on a real backlot. So we started looking around at schools and industrial buildings that were built in the 1920s and '30s. When we found the school in Norwalk, which had a slightly Art Deco look, we realized it could pass for Warner Bros. or Paramount. It had all the right bones, so it was a matter of adding building names, stage numbers, film trucks, lighting gear, signage, show props and posters. Doing it this way allowed us to control our own world, rather than navigating around other TV shows, commercials and movies shooting on the same lot.





# Lancer

Quentin's script called for us to faithfully recreate the Western TV series "Lancer," which ran for two seasons from 1968 to 1970. Unfortunately, most of the great Western lots in L.A. are pretty much gone now. There's a Western town out in the deep Valley that's used as a staging area, and Universal has a Western set. Since many of the classic television shows like "Gunsmoke" were shot at Universal, that's where we decided to go. There wasn't much left of it but the studio gave us latitude to build our own Western town, so we spent two months redoing the entire three-block radius to reflect the wealth and scale of "Lancer," a series about a widowed cattle rancher and his sons.



"Lancer" was set in a Monterey-style town in California's San Joaquin Valley, so we added plenty of adobe features. Anything you see that appears vaguely Spanish was our creation. On a side street, we built a large adobe wall with gates opening to the exterior. The goal was to create an interesting border town that's part California and part Mexico, because many of these Western towns had a half-and-half style to them. "Lancer" gave you this in-between feeling, as though all of the Mexican adobe buildings hadn't been replaced with wood buildings yet. Lastly I increased the size and scale of the saloon to make it the focal point of the town. We also rebuilt the interior, adding windows on the balcony level and sides and altering the bar area.

# Bounty Law

I also designed the sets for the fictional TV Western starring Rick Dalton called “Bounty Law,” which was inspired by the real series “Wanted Dead or Alive.” For this section of the film, we went out to Melody Ranch in the Santa Clarita Valley. It’s an older Western town, which made sense to use because “Bounty Law” is supposed to be an older show. It was a black-and-white TV series set in a small town, not unlike “The Rifleman.”

Melody Ranch worked well for us because it has narrow streets, shorter buildings, and a smaller scale. To adapt it to our needs, we installed our own signage, rebuilt many of the facades, and painted several of the existing structures. Because Quentin was planning to shoot these scenes in black and white, we repeatedly tested the paint in order to get the widest variety of greys possible. We didn’t want it to appear all grey, or all black, or all white. That was actually a lot of fun to do. Shooting the “Bounty Law” sequences in black and white was an important period detail because color Westerns had flourished by the late ’60s, but the earlier series were still in black and white.





# Hollywood Boulevard

For Quentin, Hollywood Boulevard was the quintessential heart of the film. The street once housed most of the majestic movie palaces of Los Angeles: Grauman's Chinese, The Egyptian, The Pix Theatre, El Capitan Theatre, Hollywood Pacific, The Vogue Theatre, The Vine Theatre, The Pantages Theatre and the Pussycat Theatre, to name a few. This is where you experienced big sweeping intermission films of the '50s, '60s and '70s. As a child growing up in Los Angeles, I remember seeing films like *The Sound of Music*, *Oliver!*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *Cleopatra*, *Spartacus*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm* and *How the West Was Won* on Hollywood Boulevard. These were event films that my family would drive to Hollywood and spend the day watching, then maybe go for dinner or ice cream on the boulevard afterward. The street was dazzling as dusk turned to night with its neon marquees and store signage glowing. The essence of that look was what I wanted to capture.



Hollywood Boulevard is now the biggest tourist attraction in Los Angeles, so we spent months planning how to transform it with the least amount of intrusion. This was no easy feat. The store owners weren't wild about having their businesses taken away, even for a brief time. Likewise, the city of Hollywood didn't want us impacting commerce more than absolutely necessary, so our shooting permits were good for only a very short window. That meant we had to turn things around extremely fast, which was a challenge because this location demanded an enormous transformation. Today, those blocks are a sea of contemporary shops and restaurants. Almost nothing looks the way it did in 1969.



Ultimately, we created two different shooting areas on Hollywood Boulevard and scheduled the shoots months apart so as not to create traffic nightmares. Once we had everything planned and ready to go, we worked like an army, first doing exterior things like wiring electricity for the movie marquees and neon signs. Then we began putting facades onto the storefronts, working at night when the buildings were closed and we could put cranes on the street.

The movie marquees were so iconic that it was essential we make them as close to the originals as possible. We built recreations at an off-site location, then attached them to their proper theater locations at night using construction cranes. Quentin wanted each marquee to advertise the specific movie that would have been playing on that date and the showtimes throughout the day. He handed me a list he made with all of that information — he is a fantastic resource of all things movie-oriented!





We had a fabulous researcher named Lance Malbon who spent months in libraries, newspaper archives, private photo collections and the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. Together, we assembled hundreds of hours of videos and films for reference. These images and documents gave us an amazing glimpse into that period in Los Angeles. We created food establishments, TV stores, clothing stores, poster shops, seedy tattoo parlors, lingerie boutiques, peep show parlors and movie poster stores. We took some liberties here and there. For instance, we knew there was once an Orange Julius on Hollywood Boulevard, although not on the specific blocks we were using, but we decided to include it anyway. To give more of the texture of the time we added art to the walls on the boulevard, including a large black-light mural and rock posters, which were a staple in 1969.







Throughout the process I worked closely with our incredible set decorator, Nancy Haigh. We worked out what each establishment would be turned into and Nancy and her team took off for a month of collecting, shopping, building and renting pieces to transform the storefronts. The decorating team had an extremely tight prep window — we could only close down the sea of shops, bars and restaurants for the weekend before filming. Nancy approached this task like a general going into battle, carefully crafting how every theater, storefront and establishment would be dressed down to the square inch. She and her extraordinary team walked the boulevard in advance to practice how long it would take to dress. They started on Friday night and finished on Sunday evening in time for the Monday shoot. It was an amazing achievement.

For me, the most exciting part was the first evening of the shoot, when the actors and background extras started walking around in costumes and the vintage cars started cruising past those marquees. It really became 1969. It was truly a “Wow!” moment. Everyone was in period costume and the neon signs and movie marquees were blazing. We all felt transported back to that exact moment in time. What a rush!

# Westwood Village

The challenge we faced in recreating two movie theaters in Westwood is that none of the ones that are there today have marquees. They have LED screens instead. That meant we had to physically remove the LED screens and replace them with our newly created marquees. Luckily, the theaters in Westwood were great to work with. The good news was that the Bruin and the Fox theaters both retained their original shape, although the Bruin required a little extra attention. We added a lot of neon, and touched it up with some paint here and there. I also had to put a 35mm film projector inside the projection booth because their projectors are now all digital. We basically created our own theater inside the theater.



We changed pretty much everything across the street from the theater as well. We created a clothing store, built a bookshop, put in a Hamburger Hamlet, Italian café and even returned Stan's Donuts, which has been there since the mid-'60s, to the way it once was. The family who owns Stan's couldn't find a decent reference photo of the original donut shop, but Lance, our researcher, was able to track one down, so we recreated it using that. The man who first opened Stan's is 90 years old. When he saw what we'd done, he just started crying. He said, "Oh, my God! This is exactly the way it looked the day I opened it!"

Interestingly enough, one of the hardest things to deal with in Westwood were the new zebra-striped crosswalks that have been painted in the last five years. Getting rid of those is one of the trickiest things you can do. It requires city approval, and you need an all-night crew to paint in the regular old two-stripe crosswalks. Then you have to paint it all back as soon as you finish filming, because they're actually afraid pedestrians won't know how to cross the street if there's not a zebra-stripe crosswalk!





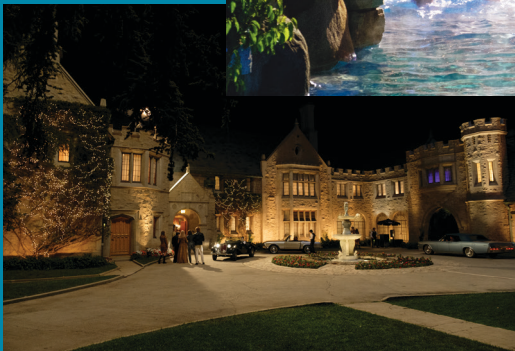


# The Aquarius Theater

My favorite thing about recreating the Aquarius Theater was putting the front mural back in place. I hired three muralists to paint it, and they told me that they'd never done anything that was so much fun before. They loved coming to work because each day mobs of people would arrive and thank them for putting the mural back. Working on this film really brought out that type of nostalgia in everyone. I'm told the mural we designed is going to stay up for a year or possibly longer. Apparently the building's owner realizes that it's very cool to have that beautiful piece of artwork back again.

# The Playboy Mansion

Creating the party at the Playboy Mansion was a lot of fun. We rented theatrical lights and designed our own lighting scheme in the backyard so you could see all of these wonderfully deep colors at night. I'd actually been to a few parties at the mansion years ago, but when I saw it during the daytime with Quentin while we were scouting locations, it looked like an entirely new place. There wasn't as much "Hugh" on display as I remembered, so bringing that element back was a real pleasure. We were able to show how it looked during its heyday.





# Pandora's Box

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# Cars and Billboards

To truly recreate a period world you have to include as many elements of the time and place as possible. For a city like Los Angeles, that means finding the right vehicles. Thankfully, Steve Butcher went out of his way to find the proper trucks, vans, buses and cars we needed. He got us the perfect Helms Bakery truck for a quick drive-by, as well as an original Oscar Mayer Wienermobile. Best of all, for the sequence where we recreated an episode of the TV series “The F.B.I.,” Steve managed to find the exact same pickup truck used on the show. Not just the same type of truck, mind you, he found the actual truck from a guy who collects old movie and television memorabilia.

We also did enormous amounts of research on plumbing vans, diaper trucks, and ice cream and milk trucks. And then our superb graphics team created flawless skins that we applied to the vehicles.

Another important detail that sells a time period is the authentic recreation of billboards. That includes things like bus-stop bench ads as well. We worked side-by-side with Quentin to select the right product and television ads from that era. These were then impeccably recreated by Tina and her department. Changing crosswalks, parking meters, trash cans, post boxes and phone booths took an enormous amount of work, but it’s the combination of these elements that makes a period film believable.



# Capturing a Historic Past

Because the majority of the film's locations no longer exist, I worked closely with Rick, our expert location manager, to find places we could build sets or add facades. But the fact is the entire city is changing. Our current skyline is mostly just a sea of construction cranes. Sunset Boulevard, in particular, is in a pronounced state of change. Glass and steel towers now dominate the Strip, although there are still a few icons like the Cinerama Dome and the Whisky a Go Go remaining.

As a born-and-raised Angeleno, I've come to recognize that L.A. will always be a city that constantly reinvents itself rather than preserving its historic past. That's why I'm thrilled we have a filmmaker like Quentin Tarantino who visually reminds us of what we loved about Los Angeles.

