

BY SCOTT FEINBERG

A True HOLLYWOOD Original

FILMMAKER QUENTIN TARANTINO RECEIVES THE LA PRESS CLUB'S DISTINGUISHED STORYTELLER AWARD



Tarantino with Kurt Russell in *Death Proof*, above.

Opposite page, production shots from films as labeled.

WHEN it comes to talking about Hollywood, it's easy to slip into hyperbole. But it is no exaggeration to say that director, producer, screenwriter and actor Quentin Tarantino is the most influential filmmaker of his generation, as well as one of the greatest cinematic visionaries of all time.

The auteur exploded on the scene with 1992's *Reservoir Dogs*, and two years later his *Pulp Fiction* blew away audiences and won the Oscar for best original screenplay. In the ensuing quarter century Tarantino has made seven more films, all of which qualify as genuine cinematic events.

In recognition of all that he has achieved, the Los Angeles Press Club tonight is presenting Tarantino with its second Distinguished Storyteller Award (last year's inaugural prize went to author Michael Connelly). The honor was created to pay heed to storytellers outside of journalism whose dazzling skills bring fiction to life.

"Quentin's unique voice and passionate commitment have served the movie business as an

inspiration to many," said Press Club President Chris Palmeri. "His efforts reigniting the careers of veteran actors have impacted popular culture." That impact has taken many forms, and tonight there is an additional, special significance.

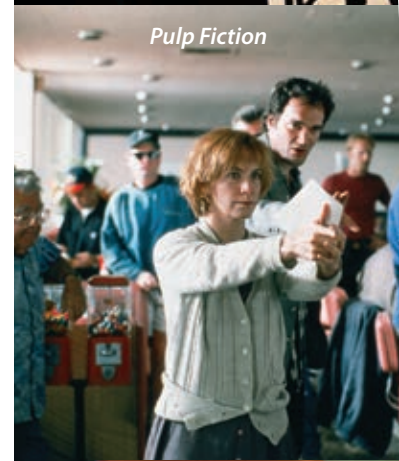
Tarantino cast veteran actor Robert Forster in his 1997 film *Jackie Brown*, and Forster's role as bail bondsman Max Cherry both earned him an Oscar nomination and revived his career. Last year Forster told the *Chicago Tribune* that before *Jackie Brown*, "I went 21 months without a job."

In 2008, Forster hosted the Los Angeles Press Club's first National Arts & Entertainment Journalism Awards. Unfortunately, he passed away last month at the age of 78. Tonight's awards are dedicated to Forster's memory.

Tarantino's story has been well told. He dropped out of school in the ninth grade and went to work in the Manhattan Beach video store Video Archives, where he began developing an encyclopedic knowledge of cinema that rendered him a walking and talking IMDB. His filmmaking career took off quite by accident—he and Roger Avary were production assistants on a 1986 Dolph Lundgren video. Tarantino was hired to write the script that would become 1996's *From Dusk Till Dawn* and Tarantino sold the scripts for what became 1993's *True Romance* and 1994's *Natural Born Killers* in order to finance *Reservoir Dogs*. It featured then-little known actors such as Steve Buscemi, Michael Madsen and Tim Roth.



Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood



Pulp Fiction



Pulp Fiction



Jackie Brown



Jackie Brown



Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood



The process as seen in *Kill Bill* above, and *The Hateful Eight*, below, even in adverse weather conditions.

Looking back, Tarantino pointed to the challenges of a first feature.

"There are so many things about this movie where I didn't know anything," he said at a 25th anniversary screening of the film, according to a 2017 report in *The Guardian*. "If I could do it all again, I'd do it slightly differently."

Still, it made waves, and with that indie masterpiece, Tarantino was off to the races.

His films have been dazzling and diverse, and include *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003) and *Vol. 2* (2004), 2007's *Grindhouse: Death Proof*, 2009's *Inglourious Basterds*, 2012's *Django Unchained* and 2015's *The Hateful Eight*.

There have been awards aplenty over the years. Tarantino won a second best original screenplay Oscar for *Django Unchained*, and the film earned Christoph Waltz his second Academy Award (he

also nabbed one for *Inglourious Basterds*). And *The Hateful Eight* netted acclaimed composer Ennio Morricone his only Oscar.

Tarantino's most recent work is *Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood*. The film, which stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Brad Pitt, opened this past summer and came out on DVD just last week.

The film drew attention for many reasons, including its remarkable recreation of 1969 Los Angeles, its Hollywood-insider references and the inclusion of Charlie Manson in the script. In a recent issue of *Esquire*, when writer Michael Hainey asked what he was trying to say with the title, noting that it has a fairy tale aspect, Tarantino responded, "Well, there is a fairy-tale aspect, so the title fits pretty good. But this is a memory piece also. So it's not historical fact, per se. It is a Hollywood of reality—but a Hollywood of the *mind* at the same time. I was so happy with the title, but I was afraid to put it into the atmosphere. Whenever I referred to this project, I referred to it as *Magnum Opus*."

While Tarantino often references other films in his own, his storytelling is nothing if not original, and reflects his unique sensibility. He is a master wordsmith, a student of pop culture, a shock artist, a comedian and a humanist. Above all, he is fearless, regularly doing things that others have never done before, but many later try to imitate.

There is another side of Tarantino, one that has also drawn ample notice, and that pays off for film fans every single day in Los Angeles. In 2007, the director bought the historic New Beverly Cinema on Beverly Boulevard. He eventually declared that the movie house would use only film prints. Many of those come from his extensive private collection, and help keep the classics alive on the big screen.

"I want the New Beverly to be a bastion for 35mm films," Tarantino says on the theater's web-



A quarter century after *Pulp Fiction* made Tarantino a star as big as any of the people he casts in his movies—from John Travolta to Uma Thurman to Samuel L. Jackson to DiCaprio, Pitt and Margot Robbie—he remains the gold standard. We should all be thankful that we are alive at a time when he is telling stories, and pray that he will reconsider his plans and never stop.

A scene from *Django Unchained*, left, and what started it all, *Reservoir Dogs*, below.



site. "I want it to stand for something. When you see a film on the New Beverly calendar, you don't have to ask whether it's going to be shown in DCP [digital cinema package] or 35mm. You know it's playing in 35 because it's the New Beverly."

Sadly, Tarantino, despite being the youngest 56-year-old ever, insists that his next film will be his last, as he wants to go out while he is still at the top of his game. If his tenth film is anywhere near as impactful as his ninth, then he will have achieved his objective.



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