

By: Caleb Lunetta, July 25, 2019

Once Upon a Time ... In Santa Clarita: Tarantino movie opens Thursday

Hollywood director Quentin Tarantino is known for his genre-defying blockbuster films that combine elements of art house, violence and comedy in his Academy Award-winning films.

And the San Fernando Valley resident calls Santa Clarita “a special place,” according to local film property owners who have played host to the luminary for his latest film that debuts tonight, “Once Upon a Time ... In Hollywood.”

The latest installment in the Tarantino filmography follows the story of “a faded television actor and his stunt double (who) strive to achieve fame and success in the film industry during the final years of Hollywood’s Golden Age in 1969 Los Angeles,” according to IMDb.com.

The film features Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt and Margot Robbie.

Tarantino and movie fans were given a teaser trailer where the opening shot was that of Melody Ranch’s “Main Street” set. Veluzat said that the production team had been working with the studio for a couple months, from planning to setting up to filming, and for him, it was a special experience.

Tarantino has filmed two of his last three movies at Melody Ranch in Newhall, according to studio manager Daniel Veluzat, and he’s praised the SCV in interviews and conversations with local residents.

He really does like it here, said Veluzat, in reference to a question about why Tarantino has filmed his movies at Melody Ranch. “He calls it a special place,” he said.

And on Thursday night, “Once Upon a Time” opens in theaters across the country, including the Santa Clarita Valley, featuring scenes shot at both Melody Ranch and the Saugus Speedway.

“He’s just a brilliant mind when it comes to filmmaking, and he ranks up there with the greatest filmmakers,” said Veluzat. “It’s exciting to be a part of it and see these people arrive to look at the property, apply their script, vision and dreams, to see it ... go to theaters and win awards at the highest level.

“You feel like you had a small part in it,” he added, “it’s a great feeling.”

In “Django Unchained,” Melody Ranch can be spotted as the setting for the saloon scene, when Dr. King Schultz, played by Christoph Waltz, shoots down the sheriff of a small town while Jamie Foxx, who plays Django, looks on in shock, according to Veluzat.

Veluzat said that when he was on the set while they were filming “Once Upon A Time,” he thought it was amazing how the actors for the Tarantino flick emulated the actors of the 1960s.

“They looked identical, and it’s going to be really great (for audiences) to see,” said Veluzat. “When you watch the trailer, and you see the clips of certain characters, it’s amazing.”

The Santa Clarita Film Office said Tarantino filmed four days at Melody Ranch and one day at the Saugus Speedway in an overnight shoot back in October of last year.

“It’s great to have large features here, because they spend a lot of money and bring in a lot of jobs,” said Evan Thomason, an economic development associate for the city of Santa Clarita. “Our bread and butter is usually episodic features, but it’s exciting, and I think there’s a sense of pride in the community for having the big features.”

Thomason said that including “Once Upon a Time ... In Hollywood,” over the last five years the film office has issued 500 permits for 1,300 film days, with an estimated economic impact of \$30 million. A feature film pays \$30,000 a day for a city film permit, according to Thomason.

Melody Ranch has also recently been the site of the “Deadwood” movie, but has been home to a number of blockbusters and television hits in years past, including: “The Lone Ranger,” “Wyatt Earp,” “Gunsmoke,” “Deadwood,” “Westworld” seasons one and two, and more.

But for now, Veluzat, who has seen a number of historical movies, directors and actors come to Melody Ranch, says he is focused on seeing the latest installment in Tarantino’s filmography.

“Melody Ranch has a very rich history,” said Veluzat. “But I can’t wait to see (‘Once Upon a Time ... In Hollywood’). I think it’s going to be an amazing piece of work.”

<https://signalscv.com/2019/07/once-upon-a-time-in-santa-clarita-tarantino-movie-opens-thursday/>



A still from "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood" of Leonardo DiCaprio. In the background is Melody Ranch
Photo by Andrew Cooper © 2019 CTMG, Inc..



The "Main Street" set at Melody Ranch that is being used in "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood."
Photo courtesy of Melody Ranch.



The saloon used for "Django Unchained" at Melody Ranch.
Photo courtesy of Melody Ranch.