

NETFLIX

A Peek Behind the Curtain of HOLLYWOOD

35 Behind-the-Scenes Facts on the Making of the Series

1. Coming off of their work together on 2018's *The Assassination of Gianni Versace*, Ryan Murphy told Darren Criss that he wanted his next project to be a “young, hopeful period piece.”
2. Samara Weaving, who plays Claire Wood, received an audition for a secret, untitled project and was given a scene to read from the 1959 film *Some Like it Hot*. She went “full Marilyn Monroe” for the reading, and found out two months later that she had booked a Ryan Murphy show.
3. To prepare for her role, Weaving utilized her father — who has a PhD in film noir — as a resource. She also watched films from the 1940s and documentaries centered on women from that time period.
4. During early discussions about the character, Ryan Murphy described Claire as a “spider.” Weaving worked with the costume design team to give Claire’s wardrobe an insect vibe — lots of red and black hues, and dotted patterns.
5. Each character had a specific color palette that guided their costuming — Archie (Jeremy Pope) is often sporting gold tones, and Raymond (Darren Criss) wears lots of pink shades.
6. Jack’s (David Corenswet) costuming was primarily inspired by James Dean and Marlon Brando.
7. Holland Taylor sent costume designers Lou Eyrich and Sarah Evelyn photographs of her mother from the ‘30s and ‘40s to help with research. They ended up replicating some of the items she wore for Taylor’s character, Miss Kincaid.
8. About half of all the costumes seen on-screen were handmade.

9. The costume design was heavily influenced by the early twentieth century costume designer Adrian, and a series of famous photographs from the 1940s taken by a young Stanley Kubrick.
10. For makeup and costuming references from the era, the team relied heavily on George Hurrell's extensive collection of photographs. Hurrell was the Golden Age's famous Hollywood portrait photographer.
11. Jim Parsons wanted to look completely different for the role of Henry Willson. Makeup head Eryn Krueger Mekash crafted a meticulous transformation process. She designed a toupee that intentionally shows pieces of the baldpate underneath, gave him dark brown contact lenses, and a set of false, yellowed teeth.
12. Parsons was so committed to the role that he choreographed his entire drag dance scene himself. After filming finished, he received a huge round of applause from the crew.
13. When Ryan Murphy received a cut of the scene, he was in the middle of filming *The Prom* with Meryl Streep and showed it to her. Murphy recalls, "She was like, 'Oh my God, this is so brilliant.' And if Meryl thinks you're brilliant, that's the best you can do."
14. The final emotional scene between Rock Hudson (Jake Picking) and Henry Willson (Jim Parsons) was done in one take.
15. To transform Jake Picking into Rock Hudson, Krueger Mekash worked with prosthetic designer Vincent Van Dyke to craft six subtle prosthetic pieces: nose, eyelids, lower lip, and ears. Later in the show, they gave him fake teeth to mirror his character's dental work.
16. Van Dyke created a replica of Eleanor Roosevelt's teeth for actor Harriet Sansom Harris to wear for the role.
17. Krueger Mekash changed both Samara Weaving and Laura Harrier's eyebrow shapes to match the style of the period, and gave them both the bold, red lip that's emblematic of that era.
18. The production design color scheme on the show skews very warm — butterscotch, gold, red — to reflect the Golden Age of Hollywood.
19. The team actually filmed at Musso and Frank's, a famous, long-standing staple restaurant in Hollywood.

20. The exterior scenes of Ace Studios is actually the Paramount lot in Los Angeles. The commissary was based on the Paramount commissary from the 1940s, and the team even found the exact chairs that were used in the original commissary.
21. George Cukor's house was so famous and intricate that the production team had to find four separate locations to film the Cukor party scene. In real-life, the estate was a Hollywood Regency style home that had been crafted by interior decorator Billy Haines, and the famous architect John Wolfe later added on a cottage and guesthouse. The exterior party shots were filmed at a house in Pasadena, the interior shots are of a house designed by Paul Williams in Beverly Hills, and the production team built the cottage and guest house on a stage.
22. But the most challenging set to build was Schwab's Pharmacy. The original location was torn down in the 1980s, but Ferguson and his team went into painstaking detail to recreate the space — from the original wood type and color to the products they sold.
23. Patti LuPone was known to burst into song on set. Once, while riding in a van with Darren Criss, she started singing "What's New, Buenos Aires" from *Evita*, the musical that won her a Tony in 1980. Criss laughed, "You usually have to pay hundreds of dollars to hear Patti LuPone sing that."
24. Criss and his wife Mia Swier own a piano bar in Los Angeles called Tramp Stamp Granny's. One night during production, LuPone dropped in to treat the crowd to a rendition of "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina."
25. David Corenswet and Patti LuPone are both graduates of the prestigious Juilliard School. When he was in school, Corenswet says that working with LuPone was one of his "pie in the sky dreams."
26. Corenswet loved filming (and watching) the scenes when characters had to do intentional bad acting — like Jack's disastrous first screen test.
27. Criss, like his character Raymond, is half-Asian. Criss was eager to explore "what that means for somebody who passes as white in an era where that is a socio-economic advantage. What does it mean when you're given opportunities, and what is your responsibility to the people in your life who don't have access to those opportunities?"
28. Criss sat behind his co-star Jeremy Pope at the 2019 Tony Awards when Pope became the sixth actor in Tony Award history to be nominated in two categories during the same year for his performances in *Choir Boy* and *Ain't Too Proud*.

29. Jeremy Pope was the first actor to read for the role of Archie, and immediately won the part.
30. Jeremy Pope believes that playing Archie has made him stronger and more confident. Pope says, “Archie is so confident in his writing abilities. He shows up and says, ‘If you're gonna take my writing, you have to take me — my black skin, me as a black artist — as a whole. And that's a very bold thing to say, especially in the 1940s when he's trying to occupy a space in an industry that isn't really catering to him.’”
31. To prepare for her role as Camille, Laura Harrier was influenced by black actors from the 1940s like Hattie McDaniel (who's portrayed by Queen Latifah in the show), Dorothy Dandridge, and Lena Horne. Women who, Harrier says, “didn't get the shot that they should've been given because of the color of their skin.”
32. Harrier related deeply to Camille. She says, “I really feel connected to her. I feel like if I had been born in a different time, her life could have been my life. I'm so grateful to be able to tell her story. I just want to be able to speak out for these people who didn't have a voice at the time.”
33. Before working with Janet Mock, Harrier had never worked with a black female director before. Harrier recalls, “Janet had a level of understanding — especially because so much of Camille's storyline is based on race and what it meant to be a black woman in the 40's — that was really helpful. She understood her story in a way that I think a lot of directors might struggle to.”
34. In Episode 104, “(Screen) Tests,” Dick (Joe Mantello) tells Archie (Jeremy Pope) that he won't be credited as the writer of *Meg* because of his race. Director Janet Mock made the intentional choice to keep the camera focused on Archie as Dick delivers the news. Mock explains, “I've been in that space before, where I was told because of my color, because of my gender, that I couldn't have something or couldn't be the face of something. Rarely does anyone get to see your pain as you're trying to struggle through it, but also don't want to show your pain. I kept the camera on Jeremy's face the whole time because we don't often see the humanity of the person who has to hear that, and take that, and how it affects their lives.”
35. Jeremy Pope describes the series' revisionist history ending as a “beautiful fantasy, a happy ending.” He explains, “These characters have worked so hard and have struggled to create a new Hollywood, a more accepting Hollywood, where you can be black and be the lead actress or actor or screenwriter. You can be gay. You can be open about it. You can talk about it. You can be heard. You can want something and achieve it no matter the color of your skin or what you look like.”