

CECIL EVANS, Transportation Coordinator: On *Sin City*, we were looking for a specific vehicle that we could rent for a week or two to use in the movie. We actually only bought one car, which was the '55 Chevy police car. For *Death Proof*, we were looking to buy eight 1970 Chargers, six Challengers, and eight Novas—which right now are the premiere muscle cars.

We found these cars for sale anywhere from \$80,000 to \$160,000 and we just couldn't afford that. So instead we found parts of cars that were of this vintage and essentially built new ones. Also, because the cars in this movie needed to be high performance stunt cars, we had to rebuild the motors, rebuild the transmissions, shocks, steering—everything

in the cars—to make them run good and sound. We didn't want to have the wheels fall off while we were shooting.

We normally find cars by networking, really. We run ads in the paper, we contact car clubs, we do all kinds of things to try and stimulate a response when we're finding particular cars. It boils down to finding a guy with a car who knows a guy with a car who knows a guy with a car.

In the first half of *Death Proof*, Stuntman Mike's car is a 1970 Chevy Nova. We got the car running to where it would perform from a stunt standpoint—motor, transmission, powers, wheels, steering. Then

WHITE-HOT JUGGERNAUTS

THE CARS OF DEATH PROOF



we essentially threw out the seats and everything inside the cars, put in our own seats and the effects department built a roll cage in each of them.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE, Production Designer: In our pre production meetings, Quentin was very specific about everyone in the crew watching the great car movies:



our assignment early on and we pulled shots and sequences and stunts from all of those movies.

Another movie that Quentin referenced was Sam Peckinpah's *Convoy*. In it, Kris Kristofferson drives a semi that's emblazoned with a very iconic hood ornament. It's a duck, actually. And Quentin was very clear about wanting to use that exact duck in *Death Proof*.

We eventually found a guy by the name of John Billings, Sr. He had the original mold of the *Convoy* duck. In two days time, we could get any number of ducks needed and with that resource, it made everything come to life for us. The duck somehow brought Kurt Russell's character to life and it took on a life of its own. The duck really became a part of Stuntman Mike.

Quentin was also very specific about the battle of cars between the girls and Kurt Russell. He really wanted a Challenger vs. Charger battle.

STEVE JOYNER, Production Designer: Classic black vs. white—a cowboy showdown.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: The homage to *Vanishing Point* is another key thread throughout *Death Proof*. There were a number of actual sequences that reference that movie, chief among them, an exact replica of the white 1970 Dodge Challenger that Kowalski drives in it.



CECIL EVANS: *Vanishing Point* was filmed in 1970 when these Challengers were brand new. For *Death Proof*, we needed to find six of them. In an early version of the script, this car had four doors. I had told Quentin early on that this car didn't come in four doors; it only had two, and putting two other doors in there would be a real stretch. Ultimately, he changed the script a little bit to where we tear off a front door instead of a back door.

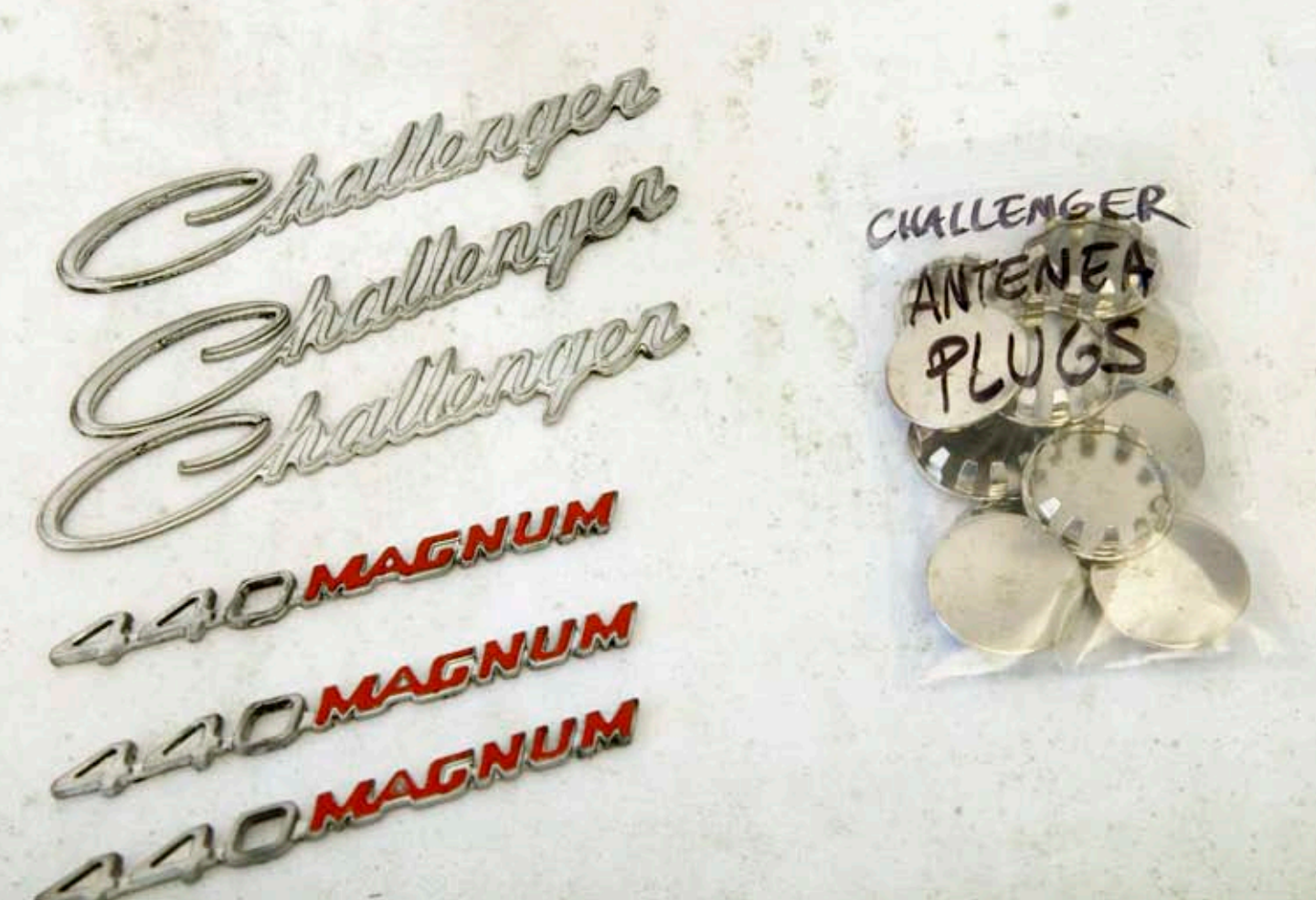
Challengers run anywhere from \$80,000 to hundreds of thousands of dollars, depending on the condition of the car. Again, for most of these, we found car bodies rusting in a field, bought the body and frame and built the car from that.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: We spent a great deal of time on all of the very small details in the cars including the Challenger emblems and all the little extra pieces that go into the exterior of the car. Obviously, we had all these pieces continually being fabricated.

STEVE JOYNER: When we got them, none of the cars came equipped the exact same way. We had to make our own Challenger logos and our own 440 logos. Fortunately, Jeff Poss was able to mold them and cast them and make very realistic logos. Darren Patton on set was able to keep sticking these things on, since they would get knocked off on almost every take. We must have gone through 40 or 50 of the little logo plates.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: We really worked hard to be absolutely accurate to Kowalski's Challenger from *Vanishing Point*. Right down to the gear shifter, the seats, the seat upholstery, interior and exterior, including the hero shot of the engine when the girls open it up at Jasper's farm.

STEVE JOYNER: We had a crew of five people working on the interior of that engine for that shot.



CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: The effects department and our mechanics up in Buellton literally worked seven days a week. Often late into the night, after being on set. All these cars would come in wounded with gaping holes and all manner of debris and parts all over the place. Having these cars ready for shooting the next day was quite an endeavor. Pete and Sean, along with John McLeod's team were just heroic.

Every night when the Challengers and Chargers came back to the shop, my chest would ache.

STEVE JOYNER: It looked like a demolition derby. They'd come in smoking, with parts dragging.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: Crippled, wounded.

STEVE JOYNER: There were several times when wheels were broken off. Buddy Joe was still able to drive with one of the front wheels actually wedged under the car. I don't how he did it, he's amazing.

John McLeod and his crew worked really hard with the mechanics to keep the cars tough enough to keep taking the hits and keep running. John and his crew did a lot of work internally—behind the body panels and in the back and the front of the car—to reinforce them so they could actually hit without sustaining any real damage. The sheet metal looks terrible, but underneath those cars are completely fine.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: One quick element to address is that this really became a movie about Tracy Dashnaw. She spent weeks driving that Challenger with Zöe on



the hood and those two obviously had a huge amount of trust in each other. Day after day, they were able to go out and make it all happen take after take. Tracy was one of our main stuntdrivers on this show. She doubled for Tracie Thoms and she really came into her own on this. The work she and Buddy Joe did together was absolutely ballet. They were perfectly choreographed and their sense of timing was spot on. I remember one morning they came out and did a rehearsal and she said, "Well I didn't even have my contacts in!" They did three rehearsals right in a row. They were just sweet, good spins.

STEVE JOYNER: With the cars in the state they were, they rode with the windows dirty and the mirrors knocked off and all the camera rigs on them. Tracy really drove by sense of smell. Buddy Joe and Tracy had a really good intuition of each other. They could drive and without any real visual clues, because they're really couldn't see.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: We had originally been slated to shoot everything in Austin, Texas. But Quentin had early on mentioned that after we shot the first segment of *Death Proof*, that he wanted to take a break and really analyze the chase. It was very complex and he wanted a little time to think about

it. He made the assessment to move the production back to California. We ended up shooting in an area about 2 1/2 hours north of Los Angeles - the Solvang/ Santa Ynez Valley. It provided a great range for all these stunts and all this car action. A lot of roads there really had the quality of different elevations, so you could get great shots of cars sweeping down these fantastic hills. We had a particular area called Figueroa Mountain Road, which basically became our backlot. It was available to do almost any kind of stunt. We were able to re-create the road, take fencing in, take fencing out, re-paint fencing, put in a windmill, take it out—just do different things. But in that grindhouse way—a single location, without lots of company moves but still having lots of cool action—keeping the company stationed in one area and really focusing on shots, instead of moving from location to location.

STEVE JOYNER: We also got to take advantage of some of the new rigs that are available—the Escalade, the MTV, the push pull rig; new equipment that people who do car commercials came up with to create those crazy, dynamic camera moves. Some of it was actually employed for the first time in a movie on *Death Proof*. All these new gadgets allowed Quentin to quickly set up shots and execute them without dealing with

process trailers and long set-up times—things that can really cut into the flow of action.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: Another big part of the shooting style was the use of plain old car mounts. They gave that old style feel that helped balance against the new dynamic rigs. It gave a really nice beat to the scenes and to the takes and was really in keeping with what Quentin likes as far as that old style grindhouse feeling. And boy it was funny because you would see these cars rigged to the hilt with stuff all over the place and Kurt barely able to see over all this gear while he drove but it really, really worked.

Kurt obviously can really drive like all get out. He knew what to do. Totally a pro. Totally in control. It really came together.

In the beginning stages of planning the car chase, we referenced Steven Spielberg's movie, *Duel*. There's a behind-the-scenes feature on the *Duel* DVD that shows Spielberg's entire production wall covered with a map basically from downtown Los Angeles all the way out to Barstow. They were able to map out their sequence. They knew exactly what stunts were going to happen where - all on this huge sheet of butcher paper. Quentin really wired into that idea



and was able to separate out the beats of each part of the sequence and figure them out. Tools like this really help the entire crew map out and visualize how to breakdown a huge sea of data, which is really what a car chase can be until you distill it down and separate out the different components.

STEVE JOYNER: When Quentin wrote *Death Proof*, he envisioned the girls arriving in the second half of the film in a bright yellow 2006 Mustang. Unfortunately, in sitting down and blocking out the scene, we determined that the 2006 model wouldn't work because of the configuration of the windows. So we went back to the drawing board. Cecil Evans and his picture car wrangler, Russell _____, hunted down a Mustang with a different window configuration. The '72 Mustang is what we ended up going with.



We found a couple of matching Mustangs, repainted them, striped them and redid the interiors. Basically we created an homage to our *Kill Bill* Pussy Wagon, which was designed by David Wasco. This became the Lil' Pussy Wagon.

Quentin was very happy with the result and the girls very happy with it. It's also worth mentioning that the Mustang's license plate says "Brand X," which refers to the stunt company that [Stunt Coordinator] Jeff Dashnaw and his crew are all part of.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: The Lil' Pussy Wagon is also an homage to the Lil' Red Express, which was a Dodge logo from the 70s that was on one of their pick-up

trucks. We also referenced it on the original Pussy Wagon.

Having worked with David Wasco on *Kill Bill*, we knew we needed to make our interior really sweet. Quentin, of course, has the original Pussy Wagon in his driveway. He drives it all the time, so he knows what the interior should look like. So I called David Wasco and he gave me the name of the original upholsterer in Los Angeles. I believe it's Fast Eddie's. I talked to Fast Eddie, and he and his crew gave me the exact upholstery color numbers and materials that they used on the original Pussy Wagon on *Kill Bill*. I was able to reference the exact materials, the exact colors and go to a wonderful upholstery team here in Austin, Ben and Virgie from Ben's Upholstery and Paul from Leather Menders. This team kicked ass.

We went over the top from the original Pussy Wagon, even doing all the door panels, all the consoles, everything. Not just the seats, but the piping, the floor, the carpet. We were really thrilled with the outcome there. It looks simple and elegant but, like all things, requires a lot of thought to get it right.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: Obviously what made all these rigs and everything happen as our key grip Jim Shelton and Ellen Pedarfor with the...

STEVE JOYNER: The MTV driver and the escalade driver were instrumental in this. We will have to give you the names.

