

PERSPECTIVE

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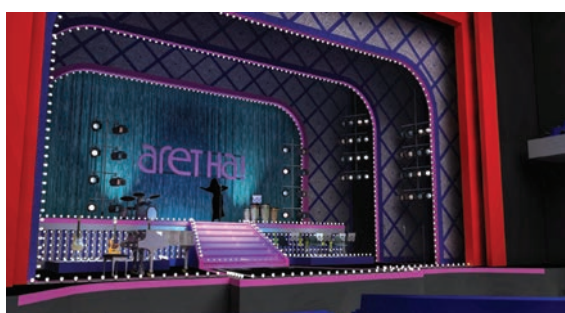
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ON THE COVER:
JUMP SET AT ALADDIN
THEATER, LAS VEGAS,
1974. FROM *GENIUS:*
ARETHA, TIM GALVIN,
PRODUCTION
DESIGNER. DIGITAL
SKETCH BY DANNY
BROWN.



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JUDY BECKER is a life-long cine and telephile. She began her career in film in New York's independent film community, and has since become bi-coastal.

Ratched is Becker's fifth collaboration with Ryan Murphy. She also designed *The Boys in the*

Band; *Pose*; *ACS: The Assassination of Gianni Versace*; and *Feud: Bette and Joan* (for which she received an Emmy nomination).

Most of Becker's career has centered on feature films. Becker is a frequent collaborator of David O. Russell, and just finished designing his upcoming Untitled feature film project. She also designed Russell's *Joy*, *American Hustle*, *Silver Linings Playbook* and *The Fighter*. Becker received an Academy Award and BAFTA nomination for Russell's *American Hustle*. Becker has also collaborated with Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris (*Battle of the Sexes* and *Ruby Sparks*); Todd Haynes (*Carol* for which she received a BAFTA nomination) and *I'm Not There*.

Becker has also worked with many other acclaimed directors, including Ang Lee (*Brokeback Mountain*), Lynne Ramsay (*We Need to Talk About Kevin*) and Steve McQueen (*Shame*).

Becker's current project is *The Brutalist*, directed by Brady Corbet.



JOHN BLACKIE is a multi-award-winning Production Designer whose extensive television credits include *Fargo*, *Hell on Wheels* (for which he was nominated for an Art Directors Guild Award), *Damnation*, *Copper*, *Tin Star* and films, including *Togo*

and *Tucker & Dale v. Evil*.

Most recently, Blackie was Production Designer on the critically acclaimed limited series *The Good Lord Bird*, produced by Blumhouse Television for Showtime. Based on James McBride's award-winning novel, the series stars co-creator and executive producer Ethan Hawke and Joshua Caleb Johnson.



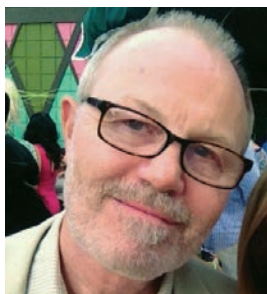
MARK FRIEDBERG'S

early roots in fine art have served as the foundation for all his subsequent work designing for film. He began his career in New York working on cult classics, such as Alexandre Rockwell's *In the Soup* (Audience Award at Sundance) and Maggie

Greenwald's *The Ballad of Little Joe*.

Mark's other films include *The Life Aquatic*, *The Darjeeling Limited*, *Across the Universe*, *The Producers*, *Runaway Bride*, *New Year's Eve* and *Mildred Pierce* (for which he won the Emmy® Award for Outstanding Art Direction). One the the films Mark is most proud to have worked on is Ava DuVernay's *Selma*.

Mark most recently finished designing *The Whale* for Darren Aronofsky with whom he also made the epic *Noah*. Other recent work includes Todd Phillips' *Joker*, and several collaborations with Barry Jenkins, including *If Beale Street Could Talk*, *The Underground Railroad* and the upcoming *Lion King* prequel.



TIM GALVIN trained as a stage designer and worked in New York theater before moving into film. He has served as the Production Designer, Art Director or Set Designer for more than forty feature films or television shows.

Tim's film Production Designs include David

Mamet's mystery *The Spanish Prisoner*, Josh Klausner's thriller *The 4th Floor*, Mills Goodloe's golf drama *A Gentleman's Gam*, Patrick Swayze's love story *One Last Dance*, Wayne Beach's crime puzzle *Slow Burn*, Zev Berman's true-horror thriller *Borderland*, Tim Chambers' basketball comedy *The Mighty Macs*, Mans Marling and Bjorn Stein's Appalachian mystery-thriller *6 Souls*, Lee Daniels' epic family drama *The Butler* and Peter Farrelly's true tale of an unlikely friendship *Green Book*.

Tim also designed the television drama series or pilots of *Hack* and *Trooper* for CBS, *Kidnapped*, *Parenthood* and *Prime Suspect* for NBC, *The Following* for FOX, *Bloodline* for Netflix and *Divorce* for HBO. *Genius: Aretha* for Nat Geo will be next.

Tim's Art Direction efforts include *Beloved*, *Sleepers*, *Quiz Show*, *A League of Their Own*, *Philadelphia* and *The Silence of the Lambs*.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Building Expansive Worlds

BY DAVID MORONG, EDITOR



Particularly striking in this issue is the dominance that long form streaming and cable series have taken on in both the entertainment landscape in general and in the work of Production Designers and Art Departments. Seven of the eight articles in this issue feature the expansive work designers and their teams have created in this format, with visual worlds that unravel over several hours of storytelling.

These projects can be a multiple episode exploration of a single narrative, like *The Underground Railroad*, *The Queen's Gambit*, *The Good Lord Bird*, and *Aretha*, or an expanded chapter in what will be part of a multi-season epic, like *Bridgerton*, *Dickinson* and *Ratched*. In all these efforts, the designers and their collaborators tell a vast visual story that spans hours of screen time, allowing viewers to linger in worlds and stories that might fly by or be omitted in a feature length version.

The impact of this brand of entertainment is apparent in the ADG Awards, also featured in this issue. The winners and nominees in the television categories are dominated by this form, with *The Mandalorian*, *Ozark*, *The Queen's Gambit*, and *What We Do in the Shadows* winning in their respective categories.

The boom in this format has been a main driver in the expansion of work for Art Departments everywhere. Every designer who shared their stories of creating these series recognize the indispensable talents of the artists who work with them to shape these worlds. While the market for resources created by this growing segment can make securing crew, stages and locations seem like a competitive sport, the requirements of the expanded canvases these series provide, and wave of opportunities they offer to the design community, promise a continuation of demand, and hopefully even an increased need, for the talents of Art Departments worldwide.

A. *THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT*.

B. *THE GOOD LORD BIRD*.

C. *THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD*.

D. *DICKENSON*.

E. *BRIDGERTON*.

F. *GENIUS: ARETHA*.

G. *RATCHED*.





Designing *Genius: Aretha*

FORGING A STRONG DRAMA

BY TIM GALVIN, PRODUCTION DESIGNER

A

A. NEW BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH. PRODUCTION STILL.

B. ARETHA FRANKLIN, PLAYED BY CYNTHIA ERIVO, PERFORMING AT THE ALADDIN THEATER IN LAS VEGAS, 1974. SHOT ON LOCATION AT COBB COUNTY CIVIC CENTER. PHOTO BY RICHARD DUCREE.

C. *GENIUS: ARETHA* DESIGN SCHEME. DRAWN BY TIM GALVIN.

I thought I knew who Aretha Franklin was—the legendary diva who invented soul music, whose classic songs are ubiquitous. Then I read Suzan-Lori Parks’ script for the third season of National Geographic’s anthology series *Genius* and realized there was so much more to her. *Genius: Aretha*, produced and directed by Anthony Hemingway, aimed to capture all the glory of the Queen of Soul literally from birth, presenting a thrilling opportunity and challenge for any designer... including yours truly.

Aretha’s genius is revealed by exploring her musical gifts. Her astonishing variety of expression, originality and innate skill combined with the influences that shaped her, grounded in church and family, fueled her life and career. To penetrate the Queen’s façade, the series uses themes of public vs. private, ambition vs. obligation and control vs. love. Told in a world of performances and studios, homes and churches, lovers and causes, this epic story follows Aretha from humble beginnings to superstardom while surrounded by family, musicians and producers

who recognized, supported and profited from Aretha’s immense talent. All in eight episodes! Not as obvious but just as vital to understanding Aretha is her father, Rev. C.L. Franklin. A domineering Baptist preacher of great skill and ambition, his creed of self-empowerment, church and gospel, social justice and personal reward was the soil that Aretha grew in. These intertwined worlds anchored the story and its design.

DESIGN TEAM AND PLAN

I was starting from scratch in Atlanta since previous seasons of *Genius* were shot in Europe. *Aretha* required a new locale and crew, and for the studios (Nat Geo, Imagine and Fox 21/Disney), Georgia fit the bill. Early on, unit production manager Ed Cathell, location manager Caleb Hinshaw and I met to strategize and begin the search for locations and crew. Luckily, I recruited Danny Brown as Art Director, Kristie Suffield as set decorator, Molly O’Donnell as Art Department coordinator and Kevin Ladson as prop master. A few weeks in, I had a solid team.

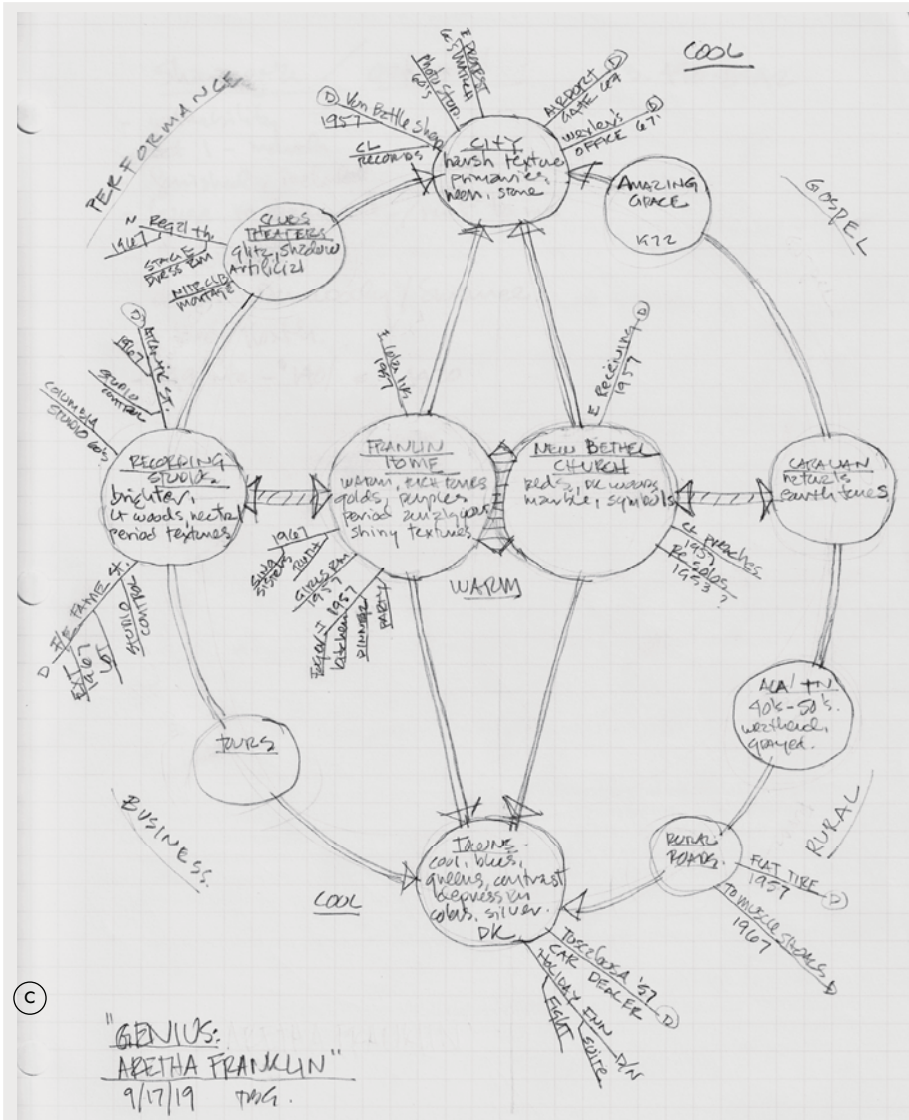


B

When making a film design, I look to the script for an underlying structure and then sketch a chart of the narrative. This process reveals a unique map of the story with the scenes and settings arranged by physical traits and emotional relationships. I use this framework to build a design scheme that defines the category and nature of the settings, establishes relative values, connections and balance between groups, and assigns color, texture and tone. All good scripts have a physical manifestation that can be discovered, and no two are alike.

The scheme in *Aretha* places the twin fundamental aspects of her life, home and church, at the center of her world. They are also the source of much of her life's dramatic tension. Arrayed on one side are her rural and gospel roots balanced with her studio and performance life. The cities and towns where she lived and worked join these arcs, creating a harmonized whole out of the story's many pieces.

The visual keys to a design are often intuitive and derived from the script, but historical research



C

and reference to particular artists can spark inspiration. For *Aretha*'s scheme, period *Jet* and *Essence* magazines were invaluable, while Romare Bearden's collages provided a mooring for the show's palette. With a comprehensive structure in mind and the parameters of production established, the design work could begin.

A. FRANKLIN HOME. LIVING ROOM WITH 1950S DRESSING. PHOTO BY RICHARD DUCREE.

B. 3D OVERVIEW OF FRANKLIN HOUSE. SKETCHUP MODEL BY CARLTON LEE.

C. FRANKLIN HOUSE FIRST-FLOOR PLAN DRAWN BY CARLTON LEE.

D. FRANKLIN HOUSE EXTERIOR LOCATION PHOTO.

E. FRANKLIN HOUSE SECOND-FLOOR PLAN DRAWN BY CARLTON LEE.

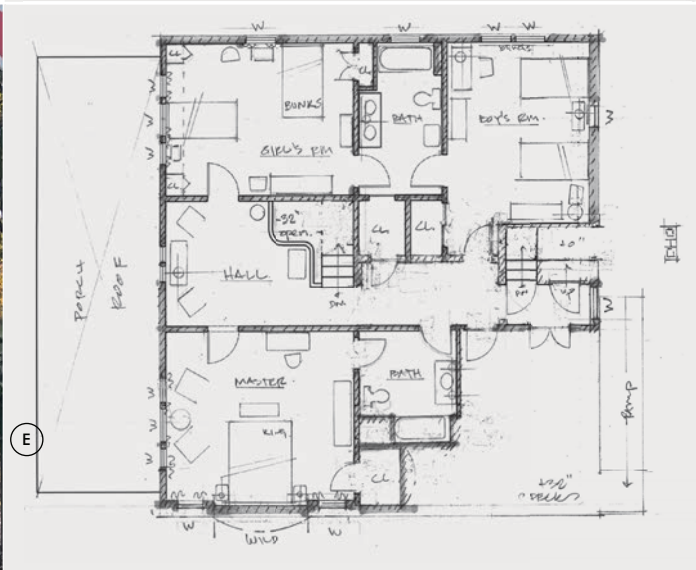
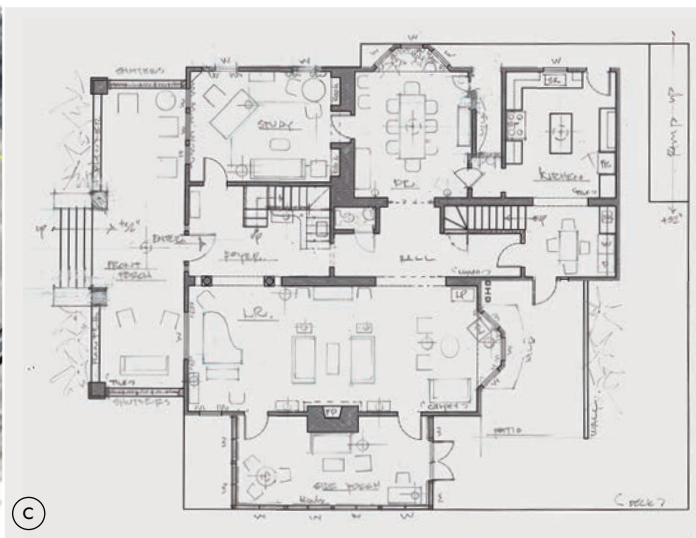
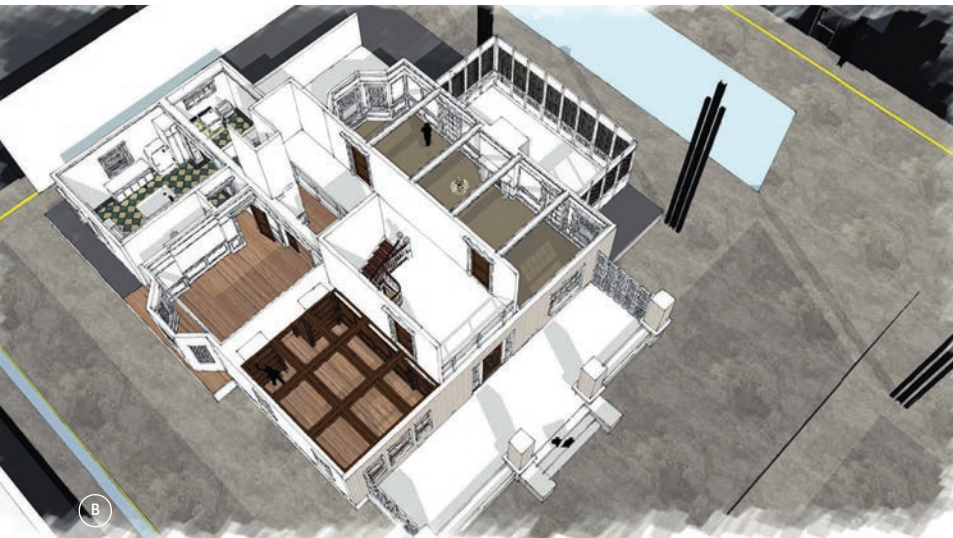
Given a six-decade time span with well-known and varied 20th-century locations, this was a big assignment. I've found that designing multiple periods in one story requires touchstones for an audience—picture cars aren't enough! I needed to strategically employ the signature colors, textures, graphics and decor that denote time and place (and make the cut). Also, there's generally a desire to be factual when representing real people, places and events. This is usually described as being authentic, a quality often confused with accuracy. In a film, authenticity is an emotion that is evoked with creative design distilled from reality, not a copy of it. This distinction allows one to serve the



dramatic action of the script while simultaneously expressing its history.

HOME

The first challenge would be Rev. C.L. Franklin's home in Detroit, both a central design element and a main stage set. C.L. was a prominent pastor who led a solid middle-class life, and all types of family scenes, from *Aretha*'s youth to C.L.'s death, would





play out here. He needed a substantial house. While the scouts looked for an appropriate neo-classic exterior, I roughed out a plan with the director and the production's director of photography, Kevin McKnight.

Anthony, Kevin and I often conferred about period styles, lighting, photography and important references to incorporate into the design scheme throughout the season. I quickly brought Danny and Kristie into these discussions so the drafting and decorating work could progress.

The Art Department opened the stage at Eagle Rock Studios, and we were joined by Assistant Art Directors Carlton Lee Jr. and Kedra Dawkins, buyer Lindsay Alston, Graphic Artist Scott Kinney and the very able construction and dressing crews led by Jason Morgan, Shane Thomas and Mike Tanguay. A two-floor design on separate decks for the Franklin house quickly took shape.

CHURCH

Sharing the center of Aretha's world was her faith and C.L.'s church, New Bethel Baptist in Detroit. A charming and cinematic 19th century Baptist church was found for this key, recurring location representing both C.L.'s livelihood and a solid rock in Aretha's turbulent life.

GOSPEL

Gospel music was the foundation of Aretha's talent and a vehicle for C.L.'s career. He steeped the family in it while expounding a progressive theology that formed Aretha's life-long activism. The design plan detailed C.L.'s bus tours and gospel shows where young Aretha cut her teeth. His roadshow ran through a string of '50s hotels and venues across the Midwest.

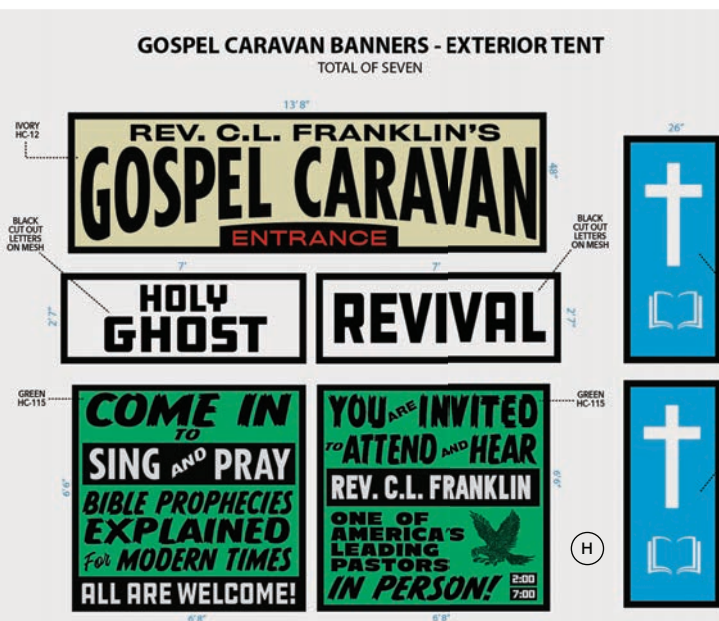
There is powerful singing and preaching in C.L.'s gospel tent, a fun exemplar of the world Aretha was pushed into. The scenes required contributions

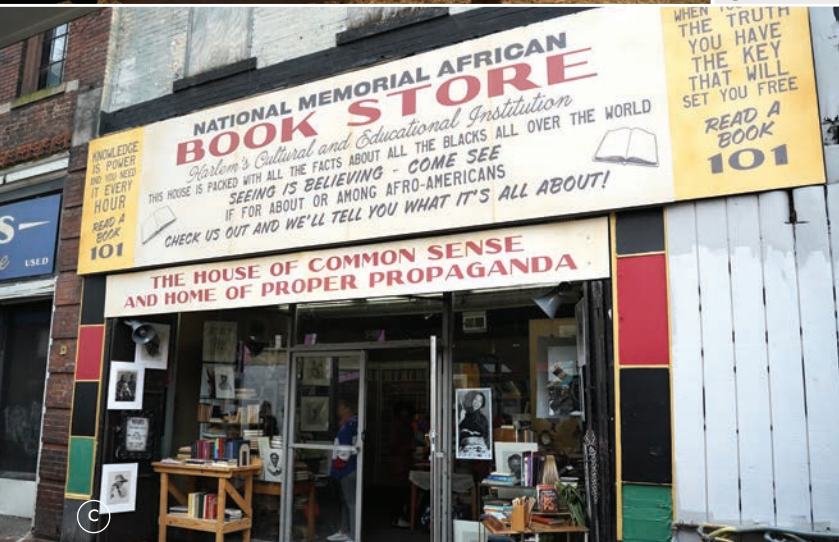
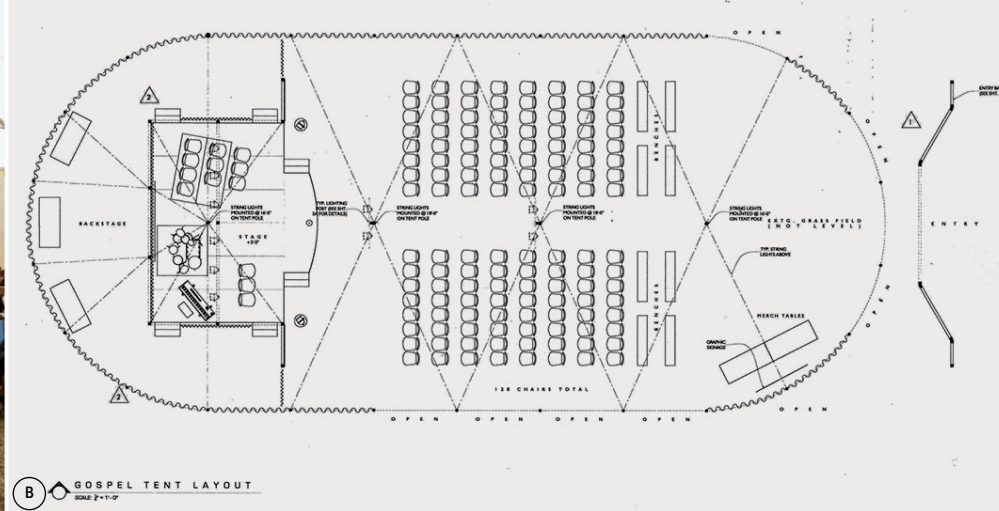
F. FRANKLIN HOME, ENTRANCE HALL. PHOTO BY RICHARD DUCREE.

G. FRANKLIN HOME, KITCHEN. PHOTO BY RICHARD DUCREE.

H. EXTERIOR TENT GOSPEL CARAVAN BANNERS BY SCOTT KINNEY.

I. ENTRANCE TO GOSPEL TENT. EXTERIOR SET AT EAGLE ROCK STUDIOS. PHOTO BY RICHARD DUCREE.





A. GOSPEL TENT INTERIOR. PHOTO BY RICHARD DUCREE.

B. GOSPEL TENT PLAN. DRAWN BY TIM GALVIN.

C. HARLEM BOOKSTORE 1971. SHOT AT ATLANTA LOCATION. PHOTO BY RICHARD DUCREE.

D. CYNTHIA ERIVO AS ARETHA FRANKLIN AT THE NEW TEMPLE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH, 1972. PHOTO BY RICHARD DUCREE.

from everyone, including the VFX supervisor, Luke DiTommaso from The Molecule. The show's visual effects were usually straightforward blue screens and plates, cleanups, crowd tiling, inserts and enhancements, but this exterior set required extensions. A large tent was erected on a lawn adjoining the studio. By replacing backgrounds, we were able to shoot it with a crane. Hallelujah!

C.L.'s righteous activism also swept Aretha into the Civil Rights movement, where she used her celebrity and cash to support social causes. *Genius*

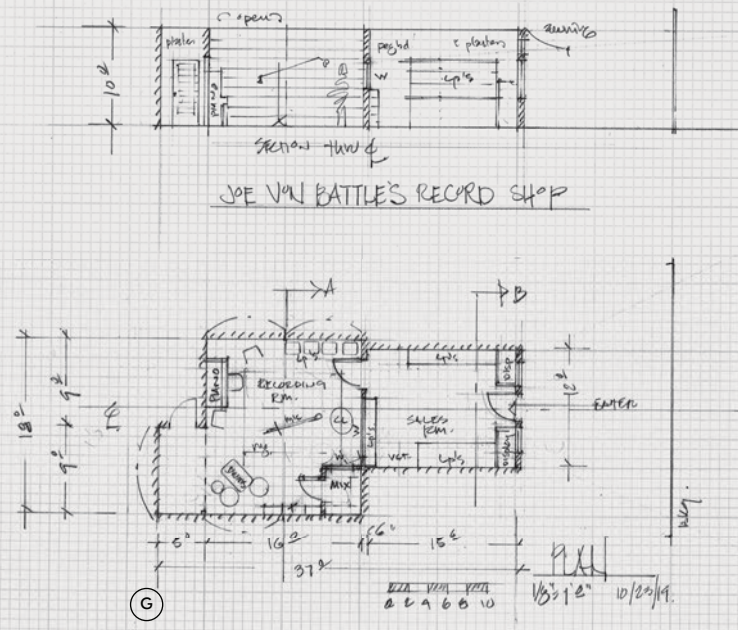
weaves this theme through several episodes, such as at a bookstore in Harlem.

The apex of Aretha's gospel singing came when she recorded the best-selling gospel album of all time, *Amazing Grace*, live in the Los Angeles church, New Temple Missionary Baptist. Sydney Pollack filmed the performance, which became an incredible vérité spectacle that the series devoted most of an episode to capturing. Caleb found a church-in-a-former-cinema similar to the original. The set was made on location, and



E

F



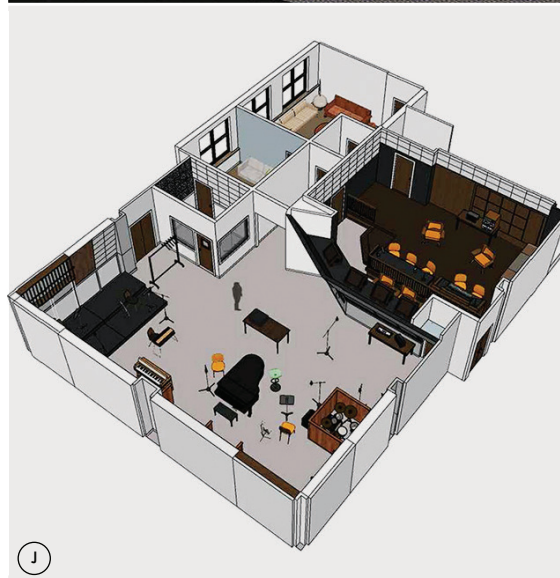
Kevin Ladson brought it to life with period sound, camera and film equipment.

RURAL AND C.L.

The story really begins in Memphis, 1942, with C.L., his wife Barbara and Aretha's birth in humble circumstances. These rural and town scenes required a group of period locations that also added to the palette. *Genius* uses flashbacks to underline significant events in the subject's life. Anthony and Kevin enhanced this motif by shooting early sequences in black-and-white, marking a crucial turning point and creating another texture in the series. Thus, many sets for Aretha's childhood scenes, and all of Memphis, were chosen and designed for grayscale photography. The black-and-white theme included C.L. recording sermons at Joe Von Battle's Record Shop, a swing set on stage.

STUDIO AND BUSINESS

Recording studios were the crucible of Aretha's voice and style. These sets were core elements of the show and the design scheme, there were many



E. & F. FRANKLIN'S
MEMPHIS HOME 1942.
B&W SCENES SHOT ON
LOCATION IN ATLANTA.
PRODUCTION STILL.

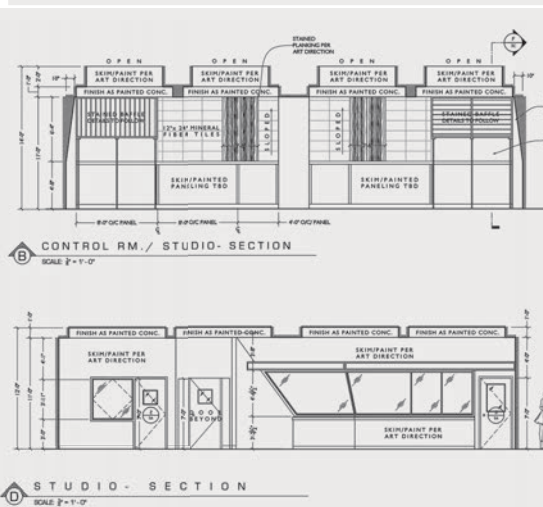
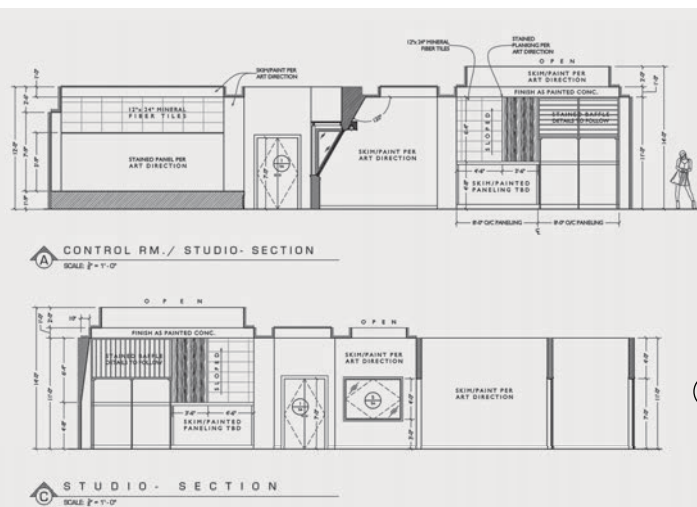
G. JOE VON BATTLE'S
RECORD SHOP PLAN.
DRAWN BY TIM GALVIN.

H. JOE'S RECORD
SHOP 1953. STAGE SET,
EAGLE ROCK STUDIOS.
PRODUCTION STILL.

I. ATLANTIC STUDIO
CONTROL ROOM.
SKETCHUP MODEL BY
CARLTON LEE.

J. ATLANTIC STUDIO.
SKETCHUP MODEL BY
CARLTON LEE.

K. ATLANTIC STUDIO
ELEVATIONS. DRAWN BY
CARLTON LEE.





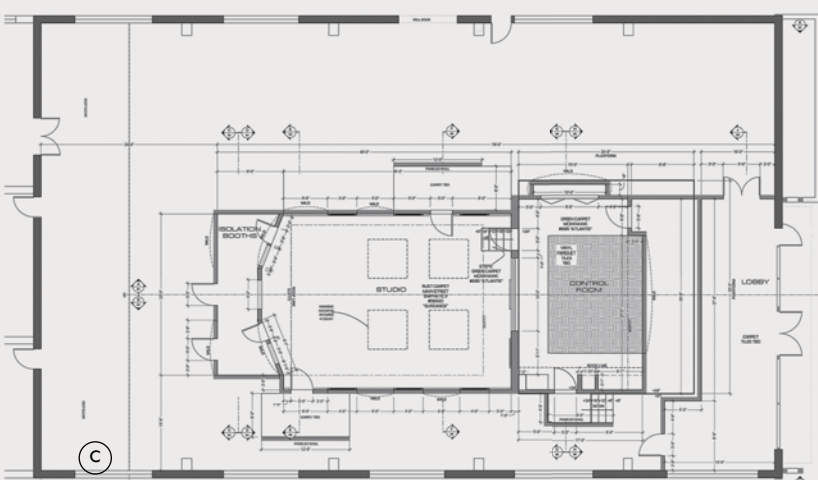
LOCATION, ATLANTA



FAME STUDIOS, MUSCLE SHOALS

FAME STUDIO SET

(A)



(C)



(B)



(D)

FAME STUDIOS

GENIUS: ARETHA

10.18.2015

DRAWN BY: KEDRA DAWKINS

PRODUCTION DESIGNER: TIM GALVIN

ART DIRECTOR: DANNY BROWN

A. FAME STUDIOS ATLANTA LOCATION WITH PHOTOSHOPPED REFERENCE. PHOTOS BY DANNY BROWN.

B. FAME STUDIOS CONTROL ROOM. SKETCHUP MODEL BY KEDRA DAWKINS.

C. FAME STUDIOS PLAN. DRAWN BY KEDRA DAWKINS.

D. FAME STUDIOS INTERIOR. SKETCHUP MODEL BY KEDRA DAWKINS.

E. FAME STUDIOS CONTROL ROOM. PHOTO BY RICHARD DUCREE.

F. RECORDING SESSION IN FAME STUDIOS, 1967. STAGE SET AT EAGLE ROCK STUDIOS. PHOTO BY RICHARD DUCREE.

and some were famous. Early on, the production devoted stage space to the Atlantic Studio, a key multi-episode set composed of the sound studio, control and isolation rooms, lounges, offices and more. Atlantic has a very familiar history that I wanted to honor and guide the Art Department as we developed the design. Danny tasked Carlton with the drawings while Kristie and her team dove into the period gear, which changed over the decades.

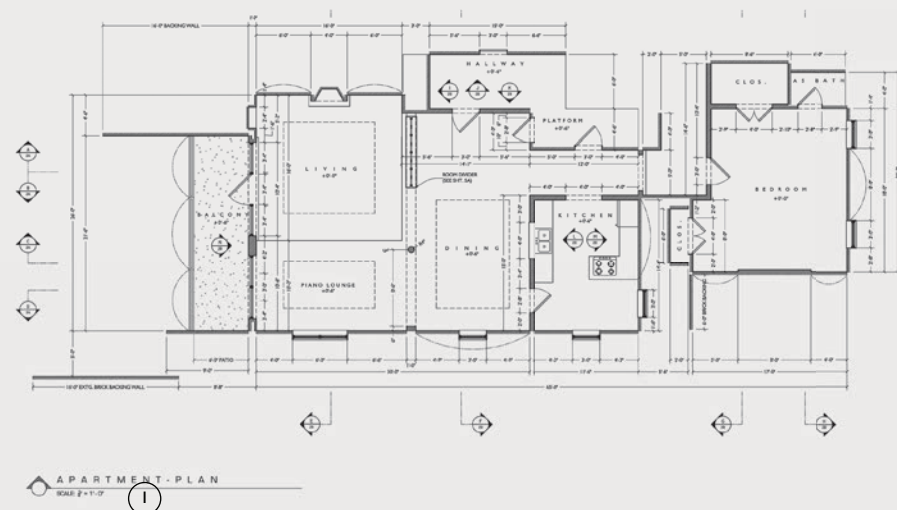
The renowned Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, is a good example of the challenges the production faced. Obscure when Aretha made breakthrough recordings there, Fame's legacy is celebrated now. The production needed to capture the spirit of both its classic interior and the period small town exterior, a crucial linkage for the scenes and another case of refining reality to create authenticity. I knew we should build the set on location, and we got lucky. We found an empty building on a good street. Kedra designed everything to fit; we then added a facade and assembled the studio set inside.



(E)



(F)



Since the music business was Aretha's lifeblood, a few more recording studios were created for the show. Some were swing sets and a couple were revamps, all furnished with ever-changing consoles by Kristie and Mike's dressing squad.

CITY AND PERFORMANCE

Throughout the season, Aretha's concert career is traced, along with what success brings. From nightclubs and TV shows to international tours, Hollywood, Las Vegas and the Grammys; from walk-up apartments and New York City high-rises to Los Angeles showplaces and Detroit mansions, the audience climbs the ladder with her. To create Aretha's houses, dressed locations were usually used, but the most important home was a stylish Manhattan apartment that played in three episodes. A stage set was built for these pivotal scenes in the '60s and '70s. Kristie's work really shines in these character sets that were a bonanza of period décor and personal detail.

G. & H. ARETHA FRANKLIN'S NY APARTMENT. SKETCHUP MODEL BY CARLTON LEE.

I. ARETHA FRANKLIN'S NY APARTMENT PLAN DRAWN BY CARLTON LEE.

J. ARETHA FRANKLIN'S NY APARTMENT. SKETCHUP MODEL BY CARLTON LEE.

K. & L. ARETHA FRANKLIN'S NY APARTMENT, 1967. STAGE SET AT EAGLE ROCK STUDIOS PHOTOS BY RICHARD DUCREE.



A

Emulating Aretha's electrifying live performances was essential to the show and our designs. These are sequences where close collaboration with Jennifer Bryan, the costume designer, ensured a unified look. Fortunately, Cynthia Erivo carried the torch here. Among the live songs we staged were "Chain of Fools" and "Save Me" in Chicago, "Skylark" and "See Saw" on TV shows, "Satisfaction" in Amsterdam, "Jump" at the Aladdin Casino and "Nessun Dorma" at Radio City Music Hall.



B

I'm especially fond of the show's version of "Reach Out and Touch" at the Fillmore West, for which Danny wrangled a custom rear-projected Joshua Light Show for this groovy scene.

COMPLETION

Aretha Franklin's life was too big to dramatize in eight episodes. To crack this dilemma, Anthony and Suzan-Lori Parks invented modern-day interview scenes that compressed time, unified episodes and provided a moving finale for the season. The series had its ending for this



C

monumental project, and then Friday the 13th arrived.

Like many others, on March 13, 2020, the coronavirus pandemic shut down the show's production, and we entered uncharted waters. There were three episodes to finish, but how? We took a breath that turned into a six-month hiatus. That time took its toll.

When we returned, everything appeared untouched—it was eerie—but things had changed. Some of the team had moved on, which brought in new people. Assistant Art Directors Matt Trinkle and Yolande Thame arrived, and Hunter Brown joined as Art Director. *Genius: Aretha* was among the first productions to institute COVID-19 protocols, impacting everything. Location scouting and shooting were more challenging. The series also had some newly added reshoots, so we got another stage and built more sets. We built unit sets and revamped them; we recycled old sets; we used the stage walls and the back of sets. No corner was bare at wrap.

All of it accomplished in a radically new work environment.

Making Genius: Aretha began as an exciting opportunity to profile an esteemed American artist. It became a surprisingly profound trial-by-fire. The difficulties we faced and overcame forged a strong and tempered drama. In the end, the Queen of Soul deserves nothing less. **ADG**

Tim Galvin,
Production Designer
Danny Brown, Hunter Brown,
Art Directors
Carlton Lee Jr., Kedra Dawkins,
Assistant Art Directors
Matt Trinkle, Yolande Thame,
Set Designers
Scott Kinney,
Graphic Artist
Kristie Suffield,
Set Decorator

A. ARETHA AND THE SWEET INSPIRATIONS ON TOUR AT THE CONCERTGEBOUW IN AMSTERDAM. SET ON LOCATION AT THE TABERNACLE IN ATLANTA, AMAZINGLY SIMILAR TO THE REAL MUSIC HALL.

B. ARETHA FRANKLIN, PLAYED BY CYNTHIA ERIVO, PERFORMING "SEE SAW" ON TV VARIETY SHOW, 1974. STAGE SET AT EAGLE ROCK STUDIOS. PHOTO BY RICHARD DUCREE.

C. SEE SAW SET. RENDERING BY DANNY BROWN.

D. THE QUEEN OF SOUL AT THE REGAL THEATER IN CHICAGO, FAMOUS VENUE FOR THE BIGGEST ROAD SHOWS. SET ON LOCATION AT THE FOX THEATER, ATLANTA.



D