

COMMENT

Forgetting Sarah Marshall: Shooting in Oahu

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For inspiration, screenwriter-director Jason Segel tucked himself away in a bungalow on Oahu's North Shore to write the romantic disaster comedy. When taking a break from the script, Segel often found himself dining or drinking at the North Shore's only large hotel complex, Turtle Bay Resort. Naturally, the getaway became the setting for the misery and laughs of his protagonist. From casual dining to surfing, the outdoor activities Turtle Bay offers became backdrops for scenes in the Forgetting Sarah Marshall story, as the main characters collided on their unexpectedly complicated trip to paradise.

Prior to the start of photography, the production was given a traditional Hawaiian blessing by legendary Kahu spiritualist Auntie Netty. To keep the production safe and successful, the native took many castmembers and filmmakers' heads in her hands and recited Hawaiian words of love and prayer. Her words worked, as during the 33 shooting days on Oahu, the weather was idyllic, with cast and crew filled with the spirit of Aloha.

Segel scripted many characters in the film as employees of the island's stunning Turtle Bay Resort. Along with Peter's local love interest, the beautiful front-desk clerk Rachel, surf instructor Chuck (aka Kunu) and waiter Matthew, Segel filled the island with other comic players. These included an initially helpful but ultimately psycho waiter, played by pro surfer KALANI ROBB.

Located on 800 acres of prime coastal property, Turtle Bay Resort became a lush backlot for Forgetting Sarah Marshall. It gave the filmmakers multiple location options from which to choose—from the pristine beaches and open-plan hotel lobby to the nearby helicopter pad. No stranger to the entertainment community, Turtle Bay has hosted film and television productions for years, back to the days of Magnum P.I.

Hotel guests were quite patient with the production of Forgetting Sarah Marshall becoming part of their tropical vacation; they grew used to Segel in character skulking about Bell as Sarah Marshall or bawling himself to sleep in his luxury penthouse. Many were eager to be in the mix of the filming and participated as extras in assorted lobby and pool sequences.

The production did venture outside of Turtle Bay for various Oahu filming setups—including coastline shots of the dramatic cliffs at Laie Point, Mokuleia Beach (which once housed the plane fuselage from ABC's *Lost*), and the pristine turquoise waters and white sandy beaches at Keawa'ula Bay. Surfing action was staged on the breathtaking shores of Haleiwa and photographed by renowned underwater cinematographer DON KING. The Hawaii/Oahu Film Office led the way for the crew to shoot at some of these environmentally sensitive locations.

Costume designer Leesa Evans had a variety of personalities to dress in the Hawaiian style. For her leading ladies, Evans and team designed a range of island garb—from glamorous

Sarah's tropical designer wear, to loose clothing that fit local girl Rachel's vibe. For the men, British rock and roller Aldous Snow still donned his leather pants, but with flip-flops. And as Peter Bretter evolved from heartbroken to hopeful in the film, so did his wardrobe—transitioning from disheveled to decent.

In addition to the principal characters, Evans met the challenge of dressing hundreds of background players with typical North Shore flair. She also designed 16 completely separate weddings, all to which Peter must bear witness during his stay at Turtle Bay. The weddings were all unique in style, ranging from military to bohemian to black-tie formal. No detail was spared from the bridesmaid dresses to the wedding guests.

This theme of brilliantly happy (inescapable) couples who frolic around every corner of the state carried over into supporting characters, such as naïve newlyweds Darald and Wyoma, portrayed by Jack McBrayer and Maria Thayer. In their matching color palette of pastels, plaids and khaki, they romanced one another (and tortured Peter) across the resort.

The art department, helmed by production designer Jackson De Govia, incorporated much of the local Hawaiian art it found on the island. Set decorator K.C. FOX and her team scoured stores in Oahu to find handmade pottery, Polynesian wood carvings, paintings and tapa cloth fabrics to decorate the hotel lobby, Peter's deluxe Kapua suite, hotel bungalows, Ola's restaurant and many other sets. They discovered them at shops in local towns such as Haleiwa, Kailua and Kaneohe. Says De Govia, "The local artisans were the icing on the cake for us. They made paradise a tangible reality and helped with the faux sophistication we slathered all over the place."

The art department reinvented the color scheme of Turtle Bay with beautiful earth and water tones of turquoise, teaks, whites and neutrals, in copper and rattan furniture. In a compliment to the style of the production, some décor was left as is when filming finished.

To capture the natural coastal beauty that surrounds Turtle Bay and the other Oahu locations, buoys were removed when director Stoller and DP Russ T. Alsobrook needed the camera to face the ocean. When filming the luau scene, flame torches were ignited precisely at dusk, with lenses capturing the gloaming hour. The more picturesque they could make the paradise, the easier it was to buy that Peter was experiencing heaven and hell at the same time.

"We tried to capture it all, from sunset shots to luaus and fire dancers," says producer Robertson. "The whole crew appreciated being around the Aloha spirit, and by the end of our time there, we were saying 'mahalo' and wearing leis. It's contagious."

Comedian Russell Brand summarizes much of the cast and crew's experience: "I have had a wonderful time here and found the people of Hawaii to be very laid back and casual. I have seen turtles; I have seen one whale. I have seen several hula girls. Let's just leave it at that."

The last few weeks of filming concluded in Los Angeles. Audiences will recognize such landmark lounges as the Dresden, where Peter and brother Brian have a boys' night out, and the Egyptian on Hollywood Boulevard, the famous Hollywood movie theater where Sarah and Peter walk the red carpet. Finally, Le Barcito in Silverlake was transformed into the interior

of Lazy Joe's Hawaiian bar set, where Peter gets time on stage and a face pounding from Lazy Joe.

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