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Tarantino's Journey to Filmmaking
From video-store clerk to Oscar-winning director

Quentin Tarantino is one of the most well-known directors of the past few decades, but his path into filmmaking wasn't a traditional one. He was born in 1963 in Knoxville, Tennessee, but grew up in Los Angeles after his family moved there when he was young. Tarantino did not take the typical academic route into the film industry. Instead, he dropped out of high school and worked a series of small jobs before finding steady work at a video rental store in Manhattan Beach. That job was the one which he held for the majority of the 80s and his early adulthood. What the job allowed him to do is watch countless films and talk about them with customers, sharpening the movie knowledge and passion that could later shape his career.

Tarantino's filmmaking style is extremely unique but his movies are known for their mix of crime stories, sharp dialogue, and non-linear storytelling. His influences come from a wide range of sources. He has often cited classic Hollywood movies, movies like Jaws, the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, Apocalypse Now, and the Great Escape. Working in the video store allowed him to explore these films and their genres in depth, and he carried many of their techniques into his own work. The heavy use of long dialogue scenes, sudden violence, and references to pop culture can all be traced back to the wide variety of films he consumed while growing up. Tarantino has also pointed to comic books, pulp novels, and television as influences, making his films feel like a blend of many different mediums rather than the product of one school of filmmaking.



After years of writing scripts and trying to break into the business, he got his first major chance when he sold the script for True Romance and then directed Reservoir Dogs in 1992. That debut led directly to Pulp Fiction in 1994, which became a cultural phenomenon and won him the Palme d'Or at Cannes. From there, Tarantino built a career on projects that felt both extremely unique and cinematic, from Kill Bill to Inglourious Basterds and Once Upon a Time in Hollywood. For years, Tarantino has said he plans to stop after making ten films, wanting to leave behind a defined body of work. By his count, he has reached that number with Once Upon a Time in Hollywood, though some argue that the two Kill Bill movies together count as one. Recently, he has spoken about retiring from directing and focusing on writing novels, plays, or television projects. Whether or not he makes another film, his influence on modern cinema and legacy are already cemented.

Film timeline

