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Published January 2019

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A CIP Catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978 1 78521 618 3 (print)
978 1 78521 621 3 (eBook)

Library of Congress control no. 2018960007

Published by Haynes Publishing,
Sparkford, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 7JJ
Tel: 01963 440635
Int. tel: +44 1963 440635
Website: www.haynes.com

Printed in Malaysia.

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Hollywood is a town where the phrase 'Fake it until you make it' is less of a cliché and more of a direct instruction for a desirable mode of living.

TRUE LIES IN TINSELTOWN

Living and working in Hollywood requires levels of optimism and inflated self-belief rarely seen outside Third World dictatorships, end-of-the-world cults, or investment banking.

The types of people who thrive in Hollywood are hustlers, scoundrels and egomaniacs. It is an industry built on chutzpah, hyperbole and downright lies. It is a town where the phrase 'Fake it until you make it' is less of a cliché and more of a direct instruction for a desirable mode of living. Put simply, Hollywood is the ideal environment for bluffers.

All Hollywood veterans remember the feeling they had when they first bluffed their way into a gig. There was the flash of glory as they successfully pretended they knew more about the film and television industry than anyone else in the room – perhaps even the world – and, as a result, were given a disproportionate amount of power and responsibility.

Once welcomed inside Hollywood's gilded halls, our brave bluffers discovered another truth. One sunny Los

Angeles day, while jauntily ascending from their golf cart to their personalised Star Waggon, they realised that everyone around them had done exactly the same thing. There were entire companies and film sets where no one knew what the hell they were doing. The place was rife with bluffers. They were everywhere, wafting through the ranks without lifting a finger.

This book will give you the tools you need to bluff about Hollywood and the entertainment industry. It will allow you to convince awestruck admirers that you have peeked into the closed sets of the studio backlots, flown with the stars on private jets, played poker with the moguls and had plastic surgery with their trophy wives (or husbands). All this, without ever having to reveal that the closest you've been to Hollywood is your local multiplex.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

There are many myths about the founding of Hollywood. Most of them are untrue, and in order for you to posit yourself as an expert in the field, it is helpful to be able to allude to some of the basics. So, feel free to assume an air of nonchalant indifference as you drop the following golden nuggets into conversation, with appropriate pauses for emphasis; these, of course, should not be long enough to open yourself up to questions.

That could be disastrous.

MOVIES ON THE RUN

Let's get straight to the point: Hollywood was founded by people on the run.

In the early 20th century, movie companies in New York were dodging film-stock and camera manufacturers (aka 'The Trust') who wanted licence fees on each movie that had been made with their equipment. Accordingly, these manufacturers sent hired goons who could clear film sets faster than a mogul's partner could pillage