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Style / GQ Style Magazine

How Barbara Bersell selected the superstar cast for King & Country

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By David Annand | Photos by Boo George | 19 July 14

From photographer Boo George to male modelling legend Bruce 'The Incredible' Hulse, the team on the King and Country shoot for the current



cowboys...

Boo George

[See the shoot in full, plus exclusive extras, here.](#)

GQ: You started off at *Vogue* in New York City - do you miss the magazine environment?

Barbara Bersell: I loved my days working in that environment and I learned a lot. But since I work with so many magazines on projects now and advertising campaigns that appear in magazines, I feel that I still am working in the magazine world.

Los Angeles is very different to NYC. Did you find it hard to adjust to the LA lifestyle?

Actually, I grew up in LA. My family worked in the entertainment business in LA. My stepfather was an agent at William Morris and worked alongside David Geffen and Barry Diller. I even worked at *Vogue* Magazine in LA under Diana Vreeland. I loved growing up in LA because it was during the Sixties with the huge music explosion. I moved to NY as a 21-year-old to live with a film producer, and I was asked to come work at *Vogue* in NY. NY offered so many different kinds of exciting things, and I loved fashion. I was able to go between NY and Europe, which I loved. Now that I live in LA again, I still feel



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like it's home; and I enjoy the weather, gardening and life with my dogs.

Moving from a *Vogue* editorship to fashion photographer is a brave transition - was there ever a time you thought 'why am I doing this!'?

No, actually it was a natural segue for me as I started my photography while I was at *Vogue*. I worked with so many photographers while I was at *Vogue*, that I developed my own vision while working as an editor. I had many photographer friends and I married a photographer. *Vogue* hired me as a photographer while I was there working as an editor. So I was lucky to have built an amazing portfolio, which enabled me to move on to work for other big magazines such as Italian *Vogue*, British *Vogue*, Italian *Bazaar*, *Vogue Bambini*, *Elle*, etc. From there, I moved into photographing huge worldwide advertising campaigns.

Now that you're in casting do you miss being behind the camera?

Casting is just a different creative arena. I direct actors in auditions showing them how to act and look their best. I try to find the right people for campaigns. Casting is really very interesting. My previous careers in editing and photography actually really enhanced, and was a natural stepping stone to what I do now. I love having the opportunity to work with all the different photographers and collaborate on their creative visions.

Barbara Bersell

You have worked with some of the biggest names in the fashion and film industries: Madonna, Cate Blanchett and DKNY to name a few. What have been your career highlights?

Casting Steven Spielberg in a campaign was a definite highlight. However, I have cast so many legendary icons, I could go on and on...My scope runs from casting and interviewing 150 legendary actors, who portrayed villains for an exhibit at the Cannes film festival, which was photographed by Richard Wright, to having helped build the GAP brand for 22 years casting their celebrity campaigns.

What was your casting brief for the *GQ Style* shoot 'King and Country'?

We were looking for rugged looking guys who look like cowboys or interesting

versions of cowboys. We were also looking for older men with blue wolf-like eyes, guys with characterful craggy faces, up to 65 years old. These guys were going to portray ranchers and oilmen.

Did you have a clear idea of the type of man you wanted for this story?

I was looking for rugged and cool guys with a history in their faces.

It is great to see Bruce 'The Incredible' Hulse back in editorial - do you think it is easier for male models to carry on working for longer?

I really wanted *GQ Style* to use Bruce, as he has a truly great look and was perfect for this project. I feel male models definitely have longer careers than female models. Unfortunately, in the United States as people get older they are quick to get plastic surgery to hide their age. This is unfortunate, because it alters the essence of who they are and they look like totally different people. This is really true of celebrities. It seems to me that in Europe, the culture is more forgiving.

Had you worked with photographer Boo George before? How did you find it?

I hadn't worked with Boo George before, but I have admired his work for a long time. I think he is amazing. I reached out to him because I loved his style and I wanted to work with him.

Boo has a very distinctive style, did this influence your casting decisions?

Yes, absolutely. I try to keep the photographer's vision in mind as I go through the whole casting process, and I wanted Boo to have the perfect talent for his story.

You're renowned for your ability to successfully street cast. Do you just know when someone is going to be the perfect fit?

Yes, I think something just clicks instinctively. I know when someone is a good match for a brand or photographer.

You've been in the world of celebrity casting since 1992 - how has the industry changed since you started?

In 1992, celebrities were very hesitant to do advertising. They even thought it



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both print and

Boo George



King and Country

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