

BURBANK'S MAGNOLIA PARK

Where old-school is cool

By Kimberley Lovato

» It's a cool day in Burbank, California, and I'm out for a quiet stroll along Magnolia Boulevard, a thoroughfare lined with a diversity of shops, cafes and restaurants—and best known for retro boutiques, antiques, collectibles and assorted curiosities.

I duck inside Playclothes, a popular vintage emporium. Across 4,500 square feet of floor space are finds such as pointy-toe kitten-heel shoes, as well as A-line dresses, pencil skirts and petite leather gloves folded, hung and stacked on top of antique dressers, wicker fan chairs and other home-decor pieces (which are also for sale).

I run my hand over the stiff tulle of a daffodil-yellow dress. The tag tells me it's from the 1950s. Was it worn to a prom, perhaps? My mind wanders to film and TV scenes in which leading ladies twirled and cooked in these types of feminine frocks. Were some of those shows filmed among Burbank's production studios, which were active even in the '50s?

My attention turns to a rack of clothes from the 1980s, and I begin to laugh. "How can 1980 be vintage?" I jokingly ask the store clerk.

She doesn't skip a beat. "Well, that was almost 40 years ago," she says.

Fair enough. While I don't feel vintage, it's true that some mainstays of my teenage wardrobe—leg warmers and neon threads, acid-wash jeans and jelly shoes—are, in fact, retro.

This morning is a memory sparker not only due to the fashion flashbacks, but also because I grew up in Burbank. I like to think that, like me, the city is aging gracefully, accessorized with just enough old-school to be cool. And Burbank is definitely earning a reputation today as one of Greater LA's hidden treasures. Despite being located "just over the hill" from more-famous



» The Magnolia Park district in Burbank, California, proudly displays the retro fashions of yesteryear in shops such as the vintage boutique Playclothes (above and left).

Hollywood, Burbank seems to suffer no FOMO. Instead, the city embraces its retro and offbeat character, especially here in the Magnolia Park district. Burbank could sport a swagger, as a city with one of the highest concentrations of studios and production facilities in the world. Instead, it lets its star-dusted neighbor bask in the limelight, even though Burbank is where a great deal of movie magic happens.

I didn't always appreciate this about my hometown. But as an adult, I feel lucky to have grown up in a place that still has an outdoor amphitheater, the Starlight Bowl, for summer concerts and fireworks, and in a place where the oldest Bob's Big Boy restaurant in America, turning 70 this year, is a go-to for grabbing a burger, just as it was when I was in high school.

Even back then, my high school friends and I would occasionally head to Magnolia Boulevard

to rummage for funky clothes at secondhand stores such as Junk for Joy costume and vintage shop, or to share a meal of lasagna from Monte Carlo Italian Deli & Pinocchio Restaurant. I'm happy to say that both establishments are still open for business.

Magnolia Park's mom-and-pop vintage vibe drew entrepreneur Ashley Erikson to the area in 2010. Soon after, she launched a blog featuring the idiosyncratic shops of Magnolia Boulevard. She founded the Magnolia Park Merchants Association in 2014 to shine a spotlight on the burgeoning neighborhood, defined at the time as the area between Hollywood Way and Buena Vista Street. Magnolia Park now includes businesses from Clybourn Avenue to Victory Boulevard, a stretch just over 2 miles long.

"There's a store for everyone," Erikson says. "If you like horror films, there's Dark Delicacies.

If you like 1950s pinup fashion, we have Bésame Cosmetics. If you're into film memorabilia, we have Blast from the Past, and if you like hand-made art and gifts, there's Mindfulnest. Behind each store, there's a real person and a passion."

In the span of several blocks I discover a cafe dedicated to handcrafted marshmallows (Plush Puffs) and a shop with myriad Halloweenish antiques and unusual items (Bearded Lady Vintage & Oddities). Nearby, the Martial Arts History Museum enlightens visitors about the significance of martial arts in Asia and America, and displays items ranging from samurai outfits to a headband worn in *The Karate Kid*.

Audrey K. DuBiel opened shop at Audrey *K Boutique & Gifts 13 years ago, selling new but vintage-inspired clothing. She recently also opened Audrey *K Footwear nearby because she believes in the promise of Magnolia Park.

"There is real neighborhood support that encourages creativity, independence and entrepreneurship," DuBiel says.

I grab lunch at The New Deal, which opened in 2017 with American classics such as meat-loaf, crispy fried chicken, and mac and cheese.

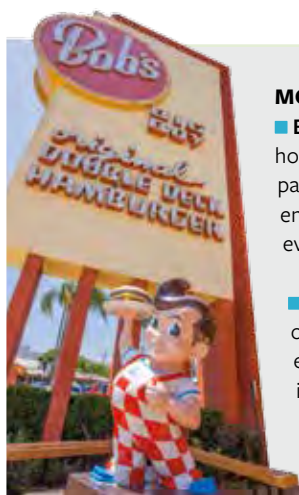
My last stop is Martino's Bakery (est. 1926), just outside Magnolia Park. It's renowned for iced teacakes that are not quite muffins and not quite cupcakes, but are fully delicious and 100 percent Burbank. I buy two and eat one on the way to the airport—less than 3 miles away. ✈

Writer Kimberley Lovato still has a photo somewhere of her teenage self in jelly shoes.



» Today's Magnolia Park is appealingly eclectic. The New Deal, top, offers tasty takes on classic dishes. Plush Puffs, above, handcrafts its marshmallows. Audrey *K Boutique & Gifts, right, has new yet retro-inspired designs.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: VISIT BURBANK; AUDREY *K BOUTIQUE & GIFTS; VISIT BURBANK; PLUSH PUFFS



MORE IN THE BURBANK AREA

■ **Bob's Big Boy** (shown at left) hosts a classic car show in the parking lot every Friday evening—enjoy these with the restaurant's ever-popular burgers.

■ **Castaway** restaurant, which offers an upscale steakhouse experience, recently swapped out its Polynesian decor for a more modern look. The gorgeous views from the outdoor

terrace remain the same. Adjacent to Castaway's dining room, **The Green Room** features bartenders mixing classic and creative cocktails, plus a private outdoor patio, also with amazing vistas.

■ Founded by the late Garry Marshall, a legendary producer and director, the eponymous 130-seat **Garry Marshall Theatre** hosts original plays, movies and storytelling events.

■ Explore behind the scenes with **Warner Bros. Studio Tour Hollywood** to see props, costumes, sets, facades and soundstages used for classic films and TV shows such as *Batman*, *Casablanca*, and *Friends*, among many others.

■ The popular car-remodeling reality show **West Coast Customs** has its showroom in Burbank—visit to check out the coolest autos around. —K.L.