

RENDERING
created for David Gallo for the Broadway
production of
THE MOUNTAINTOP
starring SAMUEL L. JACKSON

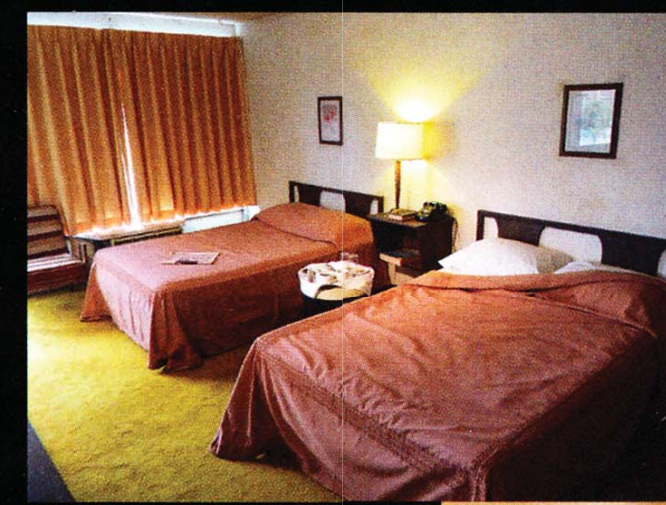


ON THE
COVER

THEATER

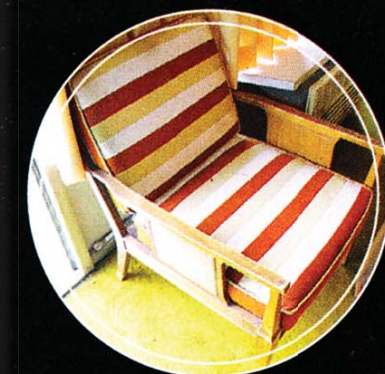
IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME RE-CREATING THE ROOM WHERE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. SPENT HIS FINAL NIGHT.

BY ERIC BENSON



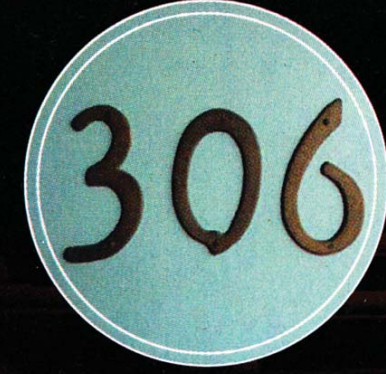
REBORN FOR THE STAGE

"We started off with a perfect depiction," Gallo says, "but we had to open it up to the necessities of the theater." The room got bigger; the beds were reoriented. There were other changes, too: Though nobody's stayed in Room 306 since 1968, "in the seventies and eighties, you could slip the night guy ten bucks, and he'd unlock the door." Some visitors left with mementos, and those pieces had to be replicated.



THE CHAIR

The one in the room is a replacement, so Gallo had the original reproduced from photos.



THE DOOR

The number on the outside of the front door was replaced sometime after 1968, but Gallo liked the fact that the zero had been mistakenly installed upside down and decided to mimic that in the set.



THE BEDS

When Gallo visited the room, he matched the bedspread's color with a sample book and photographed its texture. The bed itself was built based on Gallo's measurements.

PHOTOGRAPHS: JOAN MARCUS (JACKSON); COURTESY OF DAVID GALLO DESIGN/EVAN ADAMSON (REMAINING)

THE FINALE

At the end of the show, the set undergoes an unexpected change, one that required some unusual construction specifications. "Almost every single piece of furniture is bolted down. The props have magnets built into them, and the surfaces are quarter-inch steel plates beneath decorative tops."



THE STAR

"When I was presenting the set," Gallo says, "I said to the company, 'Almost nobody's ever been in the room.' But Sam Jackson [who plays King] came up to me during a break and said, 'I have.' He had volunteered at the museum a few years ago, and they'd let him go in. He got it. We talked about how amazing it had been to be in this piece of history."



THE SINK

It would have been too expensive to re-create certain items, like the sink and baseboard heater, and "people tend to collect beautiful antique fixtures, but no one collects the junk," Gallo says. "We went into condemned apartments and salvage yards and just pulled stuff out. It was all mass-produced, so we were able to find stuff that was right on the money."



PHOTOGRAPHS: JOAN MARCUS (JACKSON); COURTESY OF DAVID GALLO DESIGN/EVAN ADAMSON (REMAINING)



THE CURTAINS

and that in King's room, the track had been balky and drawers stuck. "We put in some practical things, adding, for example, a nightstand—307, I think, had previous visits, but it only has one bed, and I didn't like to be by himself. (Fellow activist Ralph Abernathy shared the room that night.)"