

Netflix's [The Real Bling Ring](#) Uncovers the Dirt

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After watching Miles Blayden-Ryall's mini docu series, [The Real Bling Ring: Hollywood Heist](#) you may ask how three, four, at times seven inexperienced bandits got away with raiding Hollywood's wealthiest celebrity estates—more than once. The Los Angeles Police Department was asking themselves the same question when they began uncovering the criminal activity of a group of Valley teens and young adults arrested in 2009. If you add up the numbers, of which there are many, the individuals notoriously known as "[The Bling Ring](#)" in pop culture looted over \$3 million dollars worth of cash, jewelry, and designer items from celebrity addresses they found online.

In the Netflix production, released September 21st of 2022, co-conspirators [Nick Prugo](#) (then Norgo) and [Alexis Haines](#) (then Neiers) don't attempt to defend their character, but instead rewrite the high-publicized narrative of their lives. If you've been keeping up with their infamous legacy since Vanity Fair's 2010 article, [The Subjects Wore Louboutins](#) (which triggered a viral videobite of Haines' distressed response), or Sofia Coppola's 2013 cult film, [The Bling Ring](#), consider the show a mini multi-memoir, revealing classified intel about the crimes, the teens' personal struggles, and how reality struck like a tsunami after a year of successful heists.

Some Preface on the Amateur Burglars

In the era of MTV and fuchsia velour tracksuits, Von Dutch Hats and long nights spent logged into MySpace.com, the fame-obsessed, money-driven teens exclusively targeted their favorite

public figures. Conveniently, their affluent suburb of Calabasas was a brief twenty minute drive from Hollywood. The perpetrators [Rachel Lee, Nick Prugo, Alexis Neirs, Courtney Ames, Diana Tamayo](#) broke into the luxurious wardrobes of [Paris Hilton, Orlando Bloom and Lindsay Lohan](#), just to name a few. [Rachel Lee](#), who declined to be interviewed for the show, accounted for the Bling Ring's Don, and classmate Nick Prugo was her consigliere, speaking in *The Godfather* terminology. Prugo, only a 10th grade student when he successfully stole a car for the first time, formed a fast friendship with an alternative high school classmate. Lee was a fashion-forward devil-may-care kind of girl, voted "Best Dressed" in the Indian Hills High yearbook, and Prugo describes her as the crime org's queenpin from the beginning. The two shared an affinity for luxury and disbelief in boundaries; their street games would eventually take the shape of high-profile crimes. Lee and Prugo were earning a robust supply of money by casing unlocked cars, ending the night with bundles of cash totaling upwards of three-digits, and credit cards they used on Melrose Avenue —when they decided to test their luck a step further.

According to Prugo, it was Lee's idea to break into an internet acquaintances' unoccupied house, verifying they would be on vacation for 11 days through a social media post. They gained entry through the backdoor, and left with a safebox holding over \$30,000 in cash. Prugo recalls the experience in the first episode, [The Fame Game](#), "This was different than stealing cars. This felt more personal."

The Trip to Paris

MySpace.com, TMZ and Google Maps were the primary apparatus in their methodical operation of finding addresses, determining a break in point, and ensuring the resident would be

out —attending some film festival or red carpet. In October of 2008, Lee and Prugo verified through a gossip site that Paris Hilton’s house in the gated community Mulholland Estates, would be empty while she was vacationing in Miami. With the image provided on Google Maps, Prugo located a steep hill towards the back of the mansion that appeared accessible. They couldn’t believe their fortune when they discovered her front door was unlocked, no break-in reinforcements required. The “difficult” part— which it wasn’t— was over; grab as much as you can!

Once inside, Prugo and Lee rummaged through some clothing items from her closet, and opened purses in search of spare cash... of which they found an abundance. Lee conveniently uncovered a spare key underneath her doormat, attaching it to her keychain for future use. Prugo and Lee were restless to find ways to bankroll their spending habits, so they developed a supplementary business. They sold Hilton’s stolen garments on Venice Beach Boardwalk, a Y2K black market Depop dream. Someone in California unknowingly owns a one of a kind Versace miniskirt!

Inspired by the success of their first robbery rodeo, [they would stage at least four or five more break-ins](#). In *The Real Bling Ring*, Prugo recalls the utility of Hilton’s mansion/gold mine, “it was like our personal ATM.” By December of 2008, Prugo and Lee realized that they’d vacuumed out every potential pocket for cash in Hilton’s bedroom, wardrobe, and handbags. They recruited local gophers [Johnny Ajar and Roy Lopez Jr](#), older and more experienced cons, to salvage items in larger quantities-- like the socialite’s extravagant jewelry collection. Incredibly, Hilton hadn’t suspected any intruders in her house, [up until discovering over \\$2 million dollars](#)

[worth of jewelry was missing](#). She was horrified when she saw the security tape of an unidentifiable Lopez trespassing on her property, and immediately alerted the Los Angeles Police Department. With no clear suspect, the LAPD weren't able to make any arrests.

Crime Spree

The Bling Ring resumed their robbery roulette in February of 2009. Co-ringleader Prugo doesn't gloss over the dishonorable motives, recalling his friend circle's costly habit of partying, and things that come in a bottle or clear ziploc bag. He confessed that quick cash was a recurring motive, admitting to the camera, "Once we needed more, we would just go back to work." Prugo routinely checked TMZ for news articles about a burglary to ensure they were "in the clear," and when he didn't see any reports about Hilton, he and the Bling Ring reconvened for their next home invasion. Next on the hit list was reality television star [Audrina Patridge](#), who joined Netflix for a sit-down interview reflecting on the difficult era of her life. While she was attending Oscar Night—a surefire window of time that Prugo confirmed through the internet—he and Lee indulged in storage trunks of Patridge's coveted couture, leaving with an estimated \$43,000 worth of goods.

The first blister on a fortunate roll of avoiding discovery, [Patridge's security tape showed the two outside her screen door](#), loading up their oversized tote bags and briskly escaping like vigilantes from *Ocean's 8*. Patridge recalls her panic in the show's second episode, saying "It was like they went shopping in my closet! After my house was broken into, I was the most terrified I've ever been in my entire life."

Prugo was browsing TMZ for a routine check-in when his heart took a twenty-flight elevator down to his stomach. Fortunately, the demi-HQ video grade worked in their favor, distorting Prugo and Lee's faces enough to remain unrecognizable. Arguably, it was one of the few times the fame-obsessed kids were less than thrilled to see their faces on camera. The startling brush with discovery didn't dissuade their recklessness, but somehow empowered them to pursue their next batch of victims, considering they'd successfully evaded *one* close-call.

Zero Parental Guidance

[Andrea Arlington](#), stage mom and self-proclaimed spirituality guru, makes an appearance in *The Real Bling Ring*. She chauffeured 15 and 17-year old Alexis and Gabrielle to pin-up modeling gigs around Los Angeles—which she helped them book. The former Playboy model home-schooled her daughters with a curriculum of Christian Science texts and celebrity wisdom—their patron saint was humanitarian Angelina Jolie. Arlington's dynamic with her two teenage daughters was highly dysfunctional, frequently smoking marijuana with the girls and instilling the notion that fame would fulfill them. A hybrid between Joan Crawford and Kris Jenner, Arlington's startling lack of self awareness makes for three episodes of unintentionally hilarious interview candor. She gleefully makes the contradictory statement, "It wasn't about fame. It was simply about doing what I knew I loved doing, and that was being on camera."

Arlington fashioned vision boards from magazine clippings to conjure her family's success in the entertainment industry. Miraculously, it worked; the ticket to television she'd been waiting for "manifested", as she calls it, when E! Entertainment contacted her with a six-digit contract offer. In 2009, the Kardashians reality show was overtaking the Television industry, and [inspired](#)

[the E! network to film more content sensationalizing raunchy rich girl behavior](#). Arlington's biological daughters, Gabrielle and Alexis, and foster daughter [Tess Taylor](#) star in the short-lived series, accurately titled [Pretty Wild](#). They had begun filming a few weeks before Haines' arrest—and continued chronicling her legal troubles for the remainder of the season.

Trip to Orlando

Sophia Coppola's cult film *The Bling Ring* suggests Haines masterminded the group (Prugo comments on Haines-inspired character Nicki's bulk of screen time, "it bothered me!"), but she was only involved in one heist. In the Netflix docuseries, Haines insists that until Prugo invited her to partake in their [midnight raid of actor Orlando Bloom's estate](#), she was unaware where her friends' bottomless supply of designer clothes was coming from. She had started living with him in midsummer of 2009, having been kicked out of her mother Andrea Arlington's house, also interviewed in the documentary. Prugo recalls that Haines *fervently* wanted in on the action; to hear him tell it, this was not a case of peer pressure, but a collective excitement around burglarizing Bloom's estate. Haines currently co-owns a substance abuse recovery center with her husband, and has been highly [outspoken in the media about her struggles with addiction](#) that began in her teen years. In *The Real Bling*, Haines accredits her \$10,000-a-week cocaine addiction as the reason she complied, saying she was "open to the idea of robbing a house to get money for drugs."

By maneuvering through a hole Lee cut in the chain-link fence, on July 13th, Lee, Prugo, Haines, and occasional accomplice Diana Tamayo broke into Bloom's estate. They stockpiled 10 models from a hidden Rolex collection compartment in the wall. Haines snagged an original

Alex Perry runway dress from Bloom's wife Miranda Kerr's closet, an oversized Louis Vuitton bag, and Bloom's \$40,000 Louis Vuitton custom luggage set. Lee, who was moving to her father's in Las Vegas later that summer, detached several pieces of masterpiece artwork right off Bloom's walls to repurpose as her own house decor. The [security footage](#) shows the figures, attempting to shield their faces with their hoodies, racing up and down a long hill towards the edge of the property, struggling to carry the hefty suitcases.

Lawyer Up

The beginning of the end came fast in July. Prugo and Lee, joined by occasional accomplice Tamayo, unknowingly performed their last heist at [Lindsay Lohan's rental house in the Hills](#). Following the usual scavenger hunt routine, they successfully scored \$130,000 of clothes and jewelry. Here's what was not part of the plan: her high-quality surveillance footage revealed their discernible faces, and was circulating online. After the LAPD received anonymous tips revealing the suspect, Prugo was the first to be arrested on October 17th. He'd been indisputably [connected to the robbery of Lohan and Patridge's](#).

"I wouldn't be in trouble, I just needed to implicate all my friends", Prugo says in the season's third episode, [Fame and Misfortune](#), of the immunity ideal his attorney described him. According to the Los Angeles District Attorney, no deal was ever on the table; Prugo's involvement was too obvious—and Haines had given his name to the police, an odd move considering she participated in one of the crimes with him. Prugo, erroneously informed that he'd be exempt from any consequences in exchange for information, turned in all six of his Bling Ring accomplices. A flashback of one particularly chaotic *Pretty Wild* morning shows the girls in

bed, awakened with an alarming knock at the door. The police officers present Arlington with a search warrant, and the camera pans to a prayer circle of the girls in the kitchen, while the police discover the treasury of Hilton's items in their household.

Haines' preliminary hearing was filmed—an unusual request, but Arlington was determined to secure a contract for *Pretty Wild's* second season. [A media frenzy erupted surrounding the teenagers](#), augmented by near-constant paparazzi coverage and an infamous Nancy Jo *Vanity Fair* article, *The Suspects Wore Louboutins*. Nick, 21 at the time of his indictment, bargained a sentence of two years in the county jail—a slap on the Cartier-adorned wrist in comparison to the 40-plus he was initially facing. He'd ultimately serve one year of his sentence, though he was [arrested again in 2013 on accusations of solicitation](#). Prugo pleaded no contest to burglarizing Partridge and Lohan's homes, and the remaining charges weren't pursued. His co-founder Rachel Lee wouldn't be so lucky, receiving the heftiest sentence of the bunch, [she served four years in a correctional facility](#). Haines was defending her innocence when she first entered the courtroom—certainly *not* wearing six-inch Louboutin heels, she says, as incorrectly reported by Nancy Jo in her *Vanity Fair* article—but caved for a plea deal after learning victim Orlando Bloom would testify against her. Haines was shocked that she was facing charges at all, explaining, “my involvement was so little.” [She eventually served 32 days of her 180 county jail sentence, pleading no contest to residential burglary](#).

Guilty as Charged

The cloud of white noise generated by the tabloids and box office buzz—the story inspired Sofia Coppola's 2013 cult film titled after the moniker—swathes a serious question about our

culture. How far do we take our infatuation with celebrities and their private lives? Via a crude system of TMZ stalking and Google Maps guesswork, these teens exploited their favorite stars enabled by their overexposure. *The Real Bling Ring* isn't a stab at character redemption; Prugo and Haines wholly agree that there were several dishonorable motives driving their underground, criminal movement. The former Bling Ring members sought after the gratifying financial profits, sense of rebellion and self-guided tour of the people in their internet feeds private sanctuary.

Netflix's *The Real Bling* is a fly on the wall retelling of the star-studded scandal with new undisclosed details in, featuring separate interviews with the now-adult perpetrators. In a detailed elaboration of events, Haines and Prugo's entertaining long-buried candor culminate in a Greek tragedy, birthed in and for Hollywood. The reckless parable of the Bling Ring, a group of unsophisticated, overzealous vigilantes unfolds on-screen in 2022, Prugo and Haines' shameless confrontation with the permanent black spot on their rap sheet.