

COSTUME DESIGNERS TALK ABOUT THEIR CRAFT:

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Costume Designers in Television

Juliet Polcsa, Costume Designer for HBO's *The Sopranos* describes the challenge of working on a regular TV series:

"There is a magic about the show, and I do think my costumes have contributed to that. I have been with the cast since the beginning when we really developed who these people were. After so many years we've designed the principal characters. There becomes a sense of maintaining it and as time changes and the characters change a little bit, making sure everything is true. There's a challenge that you don't really have in film because in film there is a finite story to tell. This is essentially how many different ways you can solve the same problem, which is what you do over and over again. There's no comfort zone. Occasionally they'll write in new characters and you get a little shot in the arm."

Jill Ohanneson, Costume Designer for HBO's *Six Feet Under* describes the difference between Costume Design Vs. Dress (Fashion) Designs:

"When you're dress designing, you're dressing bodies with typical aspects—curves and hips and shoulders. But in costume design you're designing for a character. You don't have to just design pants and a shirt and a tie. You're also designing sadness and droopiness and wiltiness. There are so many emotional ways that we play with—color and texture and patterns and the way things hang that contribute to what the character is really about."

Nancy Steiner, winner of the Excellence in Commercial Costume Design Award (2003) for Bacardi & Cola, discusses costume design for TV commercials vs motion picture:

"Commercials are there to sell a product, so you're trying to think it in 30 seconds or 15 seconds. It has to be in your face and very quick to recognize, as opposed to doing films. On film you can take a longer time to create a character. In commercials you just need an image that says something immediately."

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Costume Designers in Motion Pictures

Jeffrey Kurland, costume designer for 18 Woody Allen films, and *Erin Brokovitch* – Costume designers get into character as well...

“Designing costumes is story telling in the same way that a writer or a director tells a story. The right set may help the actor to create the character, but costume designers do so in a physical, intimate way. Our work goes directly to bringing forth the personality that is written on the page. As costume designers we get under a character’s skin the way an actor does.”

James Acheson costume designer for Sony’s *Spider-Man 2* – Advice for aspiring costume designers:

“I would say don’t go into this field unless you’re really passionate about it. The indispensable quality you must have to be a costume designer is a love of human beings. You’ve got to love actors, and you’ve got to love your crew, and you’ve got to love your director. Even when you do, you’ve got to somehow create your own happiness and satisfaction through all of it. Otherwise, you will go crazy.”

Ngila Dickson, costume designer for *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* and *The Last Samurai* – The craziness of the ‘epic’ picture:

“The two films overlapped. The challenge for “The Last Samurai” was building wardrobes in three different countries—L.A., Japan and New Zealand. For “The Lord of the Rings” it was surviving the entire process without being locked up.

“With “Lord” I was constrained in my designs with what was in the book and Peter (Jackson) had quite a clear vision. But within those parameters you can bring a lot to a film like that. “We used to joke that we should have tee shirts that said ‘EPICS ARE US’. Bizarrely I don’t specialize in epic films. It’s just the way it’s been for the last five years. Before this I did ‘Hercules’ and ‘Xena’. Maybe epics are me, I don’t know.”

Edith Head, legendary costume designer – Words of wisdom:

- “The subjective actress thinks of clothes only as they apply to her; the objective actress thinks of them only as they affect others, as a tool for the job.”
- “I have yet to see one completely unspoiled star, except for the animals -- like Lassie.”
- “You can have anything you want in life if you dress for it.”
- “Your dresses should be tight enough to show you’re a woman and loose enough to show you’re a lady.”
- “A designer is only as good as the star who wears her clothes.”

Audrey Hepburn, 1986 Academy Awards® presentation:

“...If clothes make the man, then certainly the costume designer makes the actor! The costume designer is not only essential (but) is vital, for it is they who create the look of the character without which no performance can succeed. Theirs is a monumental job, for they must be not only artists, but technicians, researchers and historians! I am happy to honor these tireless, talented men and women who I have always been inspired by and have so much depended on!

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