

Costume-design veterans Canonero (*Marie Antoinette*, *The Cotton Club*, *Out of Africa*) and Rose (*Pirates of the Caribbean* trilogy) have paved the way for talents such as Alexandra Byrne (*Elizabeth*, *The Golden Age*)

COSTUME DRAMA



Elio Iannacci goes behind the seams with the world's top costume designers in film

It's 58 minutes and 53 seconds into one of the most stylish scenes in movie history. A flawless Kirsten Dunst—sporting an Amy Winehouse-sized hairdo—is walking down some serious alabaster stairs with a royal entourage. Violins start playing and Sofia Coppola's camera pans to an aerial view of a Venetian-style dance floor. More than 20 couples in 18th-century bourgeois clubwear start swinging to the posh punk of Siouxsie and the Banshees, and a luscious vision of taf-

feta, lace, velvet, brocade—you name it—opens up as far as the lens can see. Although it sounds more like a Dior couture show, it's *Marie Antoinette*—the movie. No matter how much it may look like John Galiano is behind all the spectacular foofery, all the credit goes to the Italian costume designer Milena Canonero.

Who, do you ask, is this? Just the lady responsible for winning an Academy Award for costume design this year for Coppola's epic. The same woman who has created some of the most fashionable outfits in period gems such as *The Cotton Club*, *The Godfather Part III* and

Dick Tracy. (She has also been asked to costume Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca* at New York's Metropolitan Opera.) And the award-winning design genius (three Oscars, two BAFTAs) is quick to remind me that *Marie Antoinette*'s four-minute "olde school" party scene was not half as easy to produce as it looked.

"The actual costume-making took about three months in costume ateliers in Rome, London and Paris, and during the shooting I had a team of 40 people both on set and in our own costume atelier," says Canonero from her home in Los Angeles. "We worked full speed ahead all of the time. It was my most challenging film."

How challenging? Canonero's typical workday on *Marie Antoinette* involved shooting Dunst in different stages of Marie Antoinette's life: "We [did] many different scenes on the same day. We covered about 20 years of her life, [from princess of Austria to Queen >



of France], and we could not repeat clothes," she says, exhausted at the thought of the film's vast inventory.

Canonero's a true fashion lover, so it is little wonder her talent for wardrobe-ing has influenced international runways over the course of her expansive career. Her first job on set was with Stanley Kubrick for 1971's *A Clockwork Orange*. As any hard-core haute fan can tell you, the aesthetics of that particular flick went on to inspire the likes of both Nicolas Ghesquière of Balenciaga (remember the severe riding caps from his Fall '06 runway?) as well as Neil Barrett's menswear collection for Fall '07. And speaking of Galliano, our man John was reportedly obsessed with Canonero's designs from her second film, the epic *Barry Lyndon*, whose dark, candlelit 18th-century gowns actually became a major reference for key houses such as Chanel and Givenchy in their Fall '06 collections. Although it can't be proved, Banana Republic surely owes a fair share of its safari-inspired khaki sales from the 1980s to Canonero's vision. Her famed *Out of Africa* palette of camel, cream, cinder and wheat became all the rage in the age of excess soon after the Meryl Streep-starring vehicle struck box-office gold.

"I was surprised that the safari look took off so well after the film was released," says Canonero. "I didn't think we were hitting on such a note. It just clicked. Costume design starts with the



Balenciaga's Fall '06 collection was inspired by the bowler hats used in *A Clockwork Orange*

head of the character: Are they wearing a hat? Do they have short hair? Then I work out the silhouette and the style of the costumes. It is definitely an art form. Not a pure one but one that is flexible and must take into consideration many elements; character, the actor and his or her sensibilities, and the director's vision come into play."

It's a brand of flexibility that U.K. costumer Penny Rose is more than

familiar with. After heading up the wardrobe department for more than 29 feature films, Rose, who is noted for providing material for the Material Girl in *Evita*, agrees that the two-way actor/designer collaboration is a necessity in her line of work.

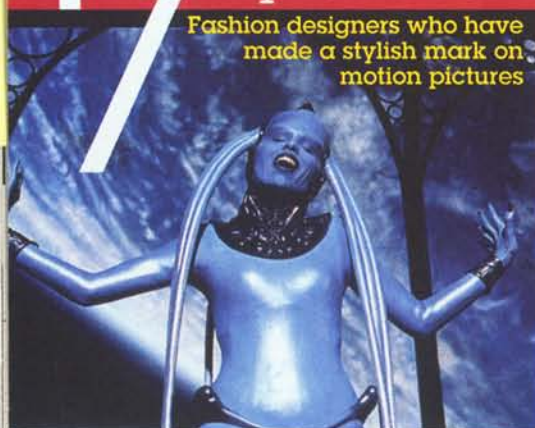
"Starlets are people like Lindsay Lohan. Stars are people like Sandra Bullock—proper actors—who are helpful. Not people who come in and say 'I only wear Prada,' when the character is a doctor in a hospital," she explains.

"For example, Madonna's contribution was enormously relevant to costuming *Evita* because she knows her body and knows what works for her. She had more than 120 costume changes, and it was a battleground because she wasn't in the habit of standing still for fittings, but we pulled it off—and she was hugely helpful."

Another helpful "star" Rose identifies is our cover girl, Keira Knightley, whom Rose costumed during her turn as Queen Guinevere in 2004's *King Arthur* as well as for her role in all three *Pirates of the Caribbean* films. Knightley in turn praises Rose for "having an unbelievably brilliant knowledge of film." No surprise, given that Rose has worked on creating the look of films as diverse as *Mission: Impossible* and *Wild Hogs*. But, as Rose points out, her work is far from glorified.

"We are referred to by the studio executives as the 'rag pickers' and we are as far down the food chain as it gets," >

7 stylish moments in film



1 Jean Paul Gaultier and *The Fifth Element* Gaultier's late-'90s, neo-futuristic latex costumes were the perfect fit for the Milla Jovovich vehicle.

2 Yves Saint Laurent and *The Pink Panther* The original 1964 *Panther*, starring Claudia Cardinale, had a chic closet filled with dark femme fatale outfits created by YSL.



3 Paco Rabanne and *Barbarella* A '60s look into the future by the famous Spanish designer, replete with go-go boots, metallic breastplates over tight bodysuits and sequin-scattered minis.

4 Bob Mackie and *Lady Sings the Blues* Two of the '70s most noted personalities—fashion designer Mackie and soul icon Diana Ross—worked together to recreate an outlandish version of the Harlem jazz period for the Oscar-nominated film on the life of Billie Holiday.



Mortensen and Watts wear Armani and Belstaff, respectively, in their latest film, *Eastern Promises*



part, but it's not the biggest. People are always surprised by that."

Cronenberg's soon-to-be-released next project with her brother is their much-anticipated feature film *Eastern Promises*. The film, which will be premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival this month, stars Viggo Mortensen and Naomi Watts. Although she refuses to reveal the intricacies of the plot, Cronenberg does say Watts' character is "on a motorcycle for pretty much the whole movie," which affected what clothes she wore.

"I think the clothes should be filmable rather than fashionable. Viggo is in Armani—his clothes are very specific to his [hit man] character. And I put Naomi in a lot of sweaters because the film is based in London and it was cool. She also has a motorcycle jacket from Belstaff." Perhaps this means we can expect motorcycle chic to be the next big fashion statement? You heard it here first, folks. □

she admits matter-of-factly. "It would be fair to say that very often the catering budget is way higher than mine. How many successful films are there where the actors are naked?"

Strangely, Rose notes, "the costume-design world affects fashion greatly, but fashion does not affect costume design. My world involves a character, an actor, a director's views and my input. I'm not here to decide if somebody looks nice in a party dress—no offense."

Canadian Denise Cronenberg is another unsung heroine from the throes of film fashion. Cronenberg's well-known brother, director David, was the first to give the Toronto-born costumer a break by testing her out as a trainee on *Videodrome*, his film starring Deborah Harry. He later hired her as a full-fledged costume designer to clothe the cast of his 1986 remake of the horror flick *The Fly* (starring Jeff Goldblum and Geena Davis), and she has since done every film with him over the past 23 years. Cronenberg

realizes what kind of power she has over the actors.

"I give them the clothing that gives them their character," she offers, speaking to me while on the set of *The Incredible Hulk*, currently filming in Toronto. "I was in ballet, so I know what it's like to have costumes tried on you that you hate, and then have to go out and perform. You feel horrible and it affects your performance."

"I go through the script in detail and figure out what kind of money their characters earn, the kind of person they are, and I speak to the production designer about the colour palette of the film."

"Do you know what the best training is? Being a mother. Psychology and caring are so important [with actors]," she emphasizes. "Design is a big

THE CLASSICS

A few of the most memorable designer collaborations with film

- Givenchy and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*
- Giorgio Armani and *American Gigolo*
- Christian Dior and *Rear Window*
- Halston and *Pieces of Dreams*
- Michael Kors and *The Thomas Crown Affair*



5 Proenza Schouler and *Drawing Restraint 9* Helping to create Björk's gorgeous 15th-century gear, Proenza Schouler is responsible for maintaining Matthew Barney's vivid vision in one of 2005's biggest art-house films.

7 Rick Owens and *Up with Dead People* Fashion designer Owens collaborated with Toronto-born director Bruce LaBruce to create the ultimate gothic wardrobe for LaBruce's soon-to-be-launched horror film.



6 Stella McCartney and *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* Jude Law and Gwyneth Paltrow got dressed to the nines in aviation-influenced jackets and outfits by McCartney.

