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"Rumours of a link up with Ranveer Singh bore me," Anushka flashes fire

XMAS SPECIAL!

7 Recipes that make Katrina, Ileana go bonkers



Special!
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EXCLUSIVE

NEWSMAKER

No.1

NO LONGER BAD BOY,
BOX-OFFICE EMPEROR
SALMAN KHAN
MAKES PEACE WITH
HIS DEMONS


F Behind the scenes



STYLE & SUBSTANCE

Karishma Loynmoon meets the new age costume designers who create memorable characters out of stars

PHOTOGRAPHS: SAURABH MULEY | HAIR: SARU CHETTIAR | MAKE-UP: SUMEET GHOSALKAR



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT
Neha Bhatnagar • Dilnaz Kharbary
Niharika Khan • Harmeet Sethi
Manoshi Nath • Shilpa • Ameira Punvani
Varsha • Subarna Ray Choudhary

Deepika Padukone's skimpy dresses in *Cocktail* had the men drooling. Vidya Balan sent up steam in a red knotted blouse with a plunging neckline in *The Dirty Picture*. Kareena Kapoor set the screen ablaze with international brands and made size zero the in thing in *Kambakht Ishq* and *Tashan*.

Don't look. Hindi movies are changing. Literally. A clothes revolution is on. And onscreen characters are making fashion statements. Gone are the days when women were dressed in drab sarees and men in ill-fitted suits. Today it's all about looking good, dressing in character and appearing sharp.

So what's bringing about this change in our movies? Or rather who's bringing about this change? Costume designers, undoubtedly. Stars may have their spunk but it's the earnest costume designers who're the real torchbearers of these iconic fashion moments. It's their sharp acumen, international exposure and thorough professionalism that's changing the face of Hindi cinema. Today it's more about the character and its entire look not just the clothes. So Aamir Khan's goatee in *Dil Chahta Hai* or the scar on his head in *Ghajini* were not accidental but well thought out by his costume designers. Costume designing is finally coming into its own in our movies. And designers are emerging as the game changers.

Filmfare profiles some prominent dress designers in the industry today:



“I’ve known Niharika for a long time now, in fact way before *Rock On!!* was even conceived. She has always been trendy with her own distinct style which has helped her to create distinct looking characters in her work. She is a positive force on a film and her energy is contagious and inspiring”

– FARHAN AKHTAR

NIHARIKA KHAN

CLAIM TO FAME:

Khoya Khoya Chand, Rocket Singh – Salesman Of The Year, Trishna, Rock On!!, Band Baaja Baaraat, Delhi Belly, The Dirty Picture

FOREVER IN FASHION

“All our reference points come from the ’70s and ’80s. If you look at the early films of Amitabh Bachchan and Rishi Kapoor, they were freakishly stylish. Fashion can never be regressive. Sridevi with her flouncy blouses and dresses is what we’re still doing. We may make it more modern, clean it up or maybe even do it better!

“I gave Akshay Kumar a colourful look in *Rowdy Rathore* and everyone was all praise. But Govinda has been doing that since eons. You can’t pat me on the back for something I can’t take credit for.

“Although earlier there was no synergy. What Farhan Akhtar did in *Dil Chahta Hai*, was to make one designer work on all characters that brought in uniformity. Agreed, a *Housefull* still works with multiple designers because it’s colourful. You don’t necessarily need organised synergy in every film.

“Our options today are endless. You can pick up something from a brand since it has a commercial tie-up with the film. You know exactly what the frame is going to look like unlike earlier where the look was not given that much prominence. You have the liberty of stylists, back then a designer created everything from scratch. Look at what *Cocktail* has done, it’s got only international brands. The exposure that we’ve got on screen is only getting better and better.”



Filmfare Award
Winner for
Best Costume
THE DIRTY
PICTURE (2012)



“The moment I met Ameira on my second flick *Badmaash Company* we hit it off. She is super observant and can even mimic people superbly. Maybe that’s what helps her retain authenticity and realism with every character she creates. She received acclaim for her first film *Guru* itself. She’s light hearted and has a great sense of humour which is great to take you through stressful times”

– ANUSHKA SHARMA

AMEIRA PUNVANI

CLAIM TO FAME:

Guru, Badmaash Company, Bunty Aur Babli, Teen Patti

A STITCH IN TIME

“You ‘need’ a certain personality to be a costume designer, which doesn’t crumble under intense pressure. Being a woman in this industry can be a problem too especially with men who have fragile egos, which you tend to overstep easily. But I’ve realised it’s okay to stand your ground. At the end of the day my costumes have to enhance the vision of the director who’s the captain of the ship. There have been times when a director doesn’t give you the exact brief. Next thing you know the whole blame’s on you and then obviously you can’t tattle.

“Most films have a budget constraint. It used to fluster me initially, but you learn the hard way that what’s important on camera is merely the fit and the look. You don’t need the most expensive fabric, you can make it look like it’s worth a few lakhs.

“Also you always have to work within time constraints. They’ll ask you to make a ‘*Noorjehan*’ costume in two hours flat. Frankly, you’re way more prepared on outdoor shoots than shooting in your city. Because they expect miracles from you in your own area. As for last minute mishaps, you ought to have a tailor on the set.

“The trick is to know how to handle stars. If I’m sure footed, they’ll gauge that I have their best interest in mind too. In fact, it was Aishwarya (Rai Bachchan) who taught me the single *dhaga ka* stitch during *Guru*, something I wasn’t aware of.

“The only major drawback to costume designing or any demanding profession is that you miss out on a personal life.”





“What’s most intriguing about Varsha-Shilpa is their infectious laughter. They’re both madcaps who never slack with their work. With a body like mine it’s not easy for them. It’s endearing how hardworking they are and they make me and everyone feel comfortable”

– PARINEETI CHOPRA

VARSHA & SHILPA

CLAIM TO FAME:

The Last Lear, Do Dooni Char, Ishaqzaade, Krazzy 4

ON THE JOB:

“You begin costume designing by first referencing, then sitting with your art department, director and your team. With bigger star casts, you hire a wardrobe supervisor to take care of continuity. Usually, if the unit is travelling, we travel too.

“What’s crucial is to know the scene’s situation bang on. Whether it’s indoor or outdoor, night or day, a casual or formal affair, you need to study the personality of the character. It’s about the character rather than the star. Keeping in mind the economic background of the character is a detail you can’t ignore. Also, to get the flavour of the place where the film is set is essential. It’s best to shop from the place your movie is set in. Although, at times we’ve shopped from villages in India, we’ve even bought stuff from shops near Dadar, Santacruz and Andheri stations.

“Directors Habib Faisal and Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra suggested we needed to think more like the characters. They push their stars too. Like, Arjun Kapoor came shopping with us. Your presence on the set is needed as something always goes wrong and you’re needed to tackle it immediately.

“What’s funny is that it’s simple to make our stars look good but it’s most difficult to make them look like regular, casual people. And even after having a million meetings, the wall colour and costume colours always clash. You’re obviously left with no option but to change the costumes because redoing the wall is the most bizarre expectation.”



Filmfare Award
Winners for
Best Costume
DO DOONI
CHAR (2011)



“I have worked with Neha and Harmeet since the beginning of my career and they’ve done everything from my films, ads to magazine shoots. Though they know my personal sense of style, they often encourage me to push my boundaries. If clothes make the man, they’ve played a huge part in making me”

– IMRAN KHAN

NEHA BHATNAGAR & HARMEET SETHI

CLAIM TO FAME:

Imran Khan and Ali Zaffar in *Mere Brother Ki Dulhan*, Imran in *Break Ke Baad*

HOLLYWOOD BOLLYWOOD

“All our movies are musicals, inevitably being *jhag mag* and *jhatak matak*. But if you look at a Hollywood musical, say a *Moulin Rouge*, isn’t that grand too?”

“In *Break Ke Baad*, we made a conscious decision to make the character repeat his clothes. Why do you always need to give fresh changes? Don’t you repeat your clothes normally? It’s a done deal in the West, we took off from there. Still, I don’t think we should consider Hollywood as a benchmark. Especially going by our masses who’re all for vibrancy, colours and elaborate sets.

“But of late we’ve been churning out films based on reality in terms of characters, screenplay and storyline. Take *Barfi!* for instance. Hollywood is undoubtedly more organised. They get into intensive research, detailing and work in advance. But last minute hiccups are prevalent everywhere, more prevalent in our industry though. However, our working style suits us. There is so much you learn on every shoot. Imran Khan in his own way has taught us so much.

“Costume designing is not only about the clothes. There’s fashion marketing, merchandise or even consultancy. There’s a whole new stream of business out there. Earlier fashion stylists were unheard of. A decade ago, assistant directors used to go shopping for the actors. We’ve come a long way and Hindi industry is the next step in every stylist’s career. At some point you do want to work on a great film, with a renowned director, superstar, the works! After all, it’s the one place you get to read your name in the credits.”



“Manoshi’s and Rushi’s biggest strength lies in the honesty with which they approach the script. They allow the script to lead them as they work on each character’s look. Their sense of aesthetics and design leads them to be accurate and also appealing. Their attention to detail is disarming. They genuinely enjoy dressing me and this gives me comfort and builds trust. We share a great working relationship”

– AAMIR KHAN



MANOSHI NATH & RUSHI SHARMA



Rushi Sharma

CLAIM TO FAME:

Khosla Ka Ghosla, Oye Lucky Lucky Oye, Once Upon A Time in Mumbaai, Love Sex Aur Dhokha, Shanghai, Talaash

STARRY TANTRUMS

“We’ve had the privilege to work on films with good production designs. Initially, it is a call between the director, cinematographer, production designer, background, art director and the colour palette they choose. Everything needs to gel together like the set, scene, location, timing of the scene and then finally the actor.

“Believe it or not but the easiest star to work with by far has been Aamir Khan. He’s a hard task master but once everything is locked, there are no last minute surprises coming our way. You don’t mind doing 20 look tests beforehand, locking only three and moving on from there.

“The directors of our films have always supported us. Stars do have their apprehensions, so you work around them, which is more about the silhouette than anything else. Fittings are another priority to which alteration is always a solution. No one is unreasonable. They’ll instead give us suggestions, which most of the times are right. Think about it, doesn’t an actor live with the character the most? As for mood swings, there are good days and bad days.”



Filmfare Award
Winners for
Best Costume
OYE LUCKY!
LUCKY OYE!
(2009)

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“She dresses characters, not stars! In *Parineeta* where I meet Saif Ali Khan and he was supposed to push me down, Subarna asked me to take care, I was so touched. Just then she blurted out, “There’s no spare saree, it should not tear!” That’s Subarna with her blinding focus. But there’s an untouched innocence which has remained unchanged. She’s extremely genuine besides being a mad and fun Bengali”

– VIDYA BALAN



SUBARNA RAY CHAUDHARI

CLAIM TO FAME:

Parineeta, *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*, *Laaga Chunari Mein Daag*, *Eklavya*

MONEY MATTERS

“Vidhu Vinod Chopra as a producer is generous. He only thinks of creativity which inspires you. There are also producers who bargain for the best with no resources at hand. Then you have to make do with what you’ve got, yet deliver only class. That’s where you use fabrics that are cheaper because on screen what catches the eye, is only the fit. It’s another notion that a period film needs to have a higher budget. Not true, you just need to deal with things smartly.

“The budget is never enough for any movie. I prefer to know the producer’s budget beforehand and then adjust accordingly. Leading actors are brand conscious and don’t like to settle for the lesser known brands and fits. Like for *Tell Me Oh Khuda* Dharamji, Rishi Kapoor and Vinod Khanna all of them wanted their outfits stitched from Gabbana. It’s not a budget-friendly brand and nor can you as a costume designer put your foot down. Producers had no option but to concede to these expenses.

“Hindi movies are a *nasha*; it’s difficult to give up. Some costume designers understand the game, some don’t. So don’t hike things up to make money overnight; you’ll be thrown out before you know it. But if you happen to take a sabbatical for a bit, you tend to get insecure. Even if I don’t work for a year, I’ll be wiped out. So I like to work on ads in between movie projects to be prepared for any twists and turns.”





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“She’s super organised and has been with me since three years now. I wanted to work with her on Shirin Farhad... because she’s a Parsi. And she knows the intricacies well, from the fabrics, the embroidery to the lace. She could tell the fake Gara embroidery work from the real deal. In fact, she even brought me some of her aunt’s clothes and I looked like a pucca Parsi in them.”

– FARAH KHAN

DILNAZ KHARBARY

CLAIM TO FAME:

Shirin Farhad Ki Toh Nikal Padi
(SFKTNP)

DESIGNER'S DIGEST:

“If you are from a reputed institute, you are sorted as a costume designer; it’s your basic foundation. But if you’re fresh out of college, go get yourself a degree. And if you can’t then please work under someone for five years before you start on your own.

“Short term courses won’t help you one bit. You need to learn your way up. It’s not going to be a joyride. Also you have to understand that you’re not designing your own vision but your director’s keeping your actor’s body type in mind. *Pehle agar choli sahi se katti nahin thi, chal jaata tha.* Not now. If you’re not at your best, you won’t survive in the long run. What you see on screen for one minute has had 5000 hands working on it.

“But it’s an extremely unpredictable industry. Sometimes they shoot through the night and there’s nothing you can do about it. Your schedules go for a toss. Sometimes they’ll demand a shirt in two hours flat. I’ve learnt you need to have back-ups on the set. I remember we were shooting a crucial scene in *SFKTNP* where Boman Irani proposes to Farah Khan on a date. When you think of a date, you’d only think dinner right? So we put Farah in this beautiful diamante encrusted red cardigan. In the midst of shooting Farah said it was a day scene!

“As for competition, I’d be complacent without it. But again only a Niharika Khan could pull off a *The Dirty Picture*, a Manish Malhotra a *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* and a Sabyasachi a *Black*. There’s room for everyone with varied kinds of cinema now.”

