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ROLL UP THE RED CARPET

With fashion in the spotlight thanks to a slew of Hollywood blockbusters and streaming hits, will stylists soon join writers and actors behind the picket lines?

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PHOTOS: HBO, GETTY



Left: Jeremy Strong plays the son of a powerful media mogul in *Succession*, a show that highlights the expensive but understated tastes of the ultra-wealthy – if you know, you know. Right: Sarah Jessica Parker's fashion choices in *SATC* revival *And Just Like That* are as flashy as ever.

FASHION and entertainment are engaged in an awkward little tango. On the one hand, the two have never been locked in a closer embrace. To wit: François-Henri Pinault, the head of luxury firm Kering, just snapped up a majority stake in the Los Angeles-based Creative Artists Agency, or CAA. Musician Pharrell Williams ascended to the throne as men's creative director for Louis Vuitton

earlier this year. And Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* is now the biggest global Warner Bros. movie ever, having raked in more than \$1.34 billion at the box office. Legions of millennial and Gen Z fans dutifully documented their pilgrimages to the cinema in various shades of fuchsia, including many who decided this was as good an occasion as any to engage in retail therapy.

It's a golden era for intellectual property branding at the movies. Ridley Scott's *House of Gucci* hit theaters in 2021, starring Adam Driver as Gucci heir Maurizio Gucci and Lady Gaga as his wife, Patrizia Reggiani, who was convicted in 1998 for ordering a hit on her husband. This year, Ben Affleck and Matt Damon's Artists Equity released *Air*, a film about the development of Nike's Air Jordan shoe. And hold your popcorn: *Ferrari*, a new sports thriller centered on Enzo Ferrari, just premiered at the Venice International Film Festival.

At the same time, the Writers Guild and SAG-AFTRA union strikes that kicked off last May and July, respectively, are still in full swing. Not since 1960 had the American writing and acting communities jointly walked off the nation's sets. Many of the issues at the heart of the labor dispute center on the streaming business model – which affects residuals, or the long-term payments negotiated by unions for airings after an initial release – and the increasing use of new technologies such as artificial intelligence.

Industry rumblings suggest fashion, hair, and makeup stylists are paying attention: Studio use of artificial intelligence could affect their future, too. They clearly play a significant role in the success and marketing of films and shows, but many of them – like writers and actors – are freelancers, pinballing from one gig to the next. Consider *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*, which came out in June and plays with the notion of time travel. According to *Variety*, over 100 artists at visual effects company Industrial Light and Magic spent several years on the project, relying on archival materials from previous *Indiana Jones* film footage, as well as various clay-cast models of Ford's head to de-age the actor using machine-learning equipment. Union actors have expressed concerns about the ways in which their image and voice may be used in the future, while writers have objected to the potential use of AI to cut costs in scriptwriting. What happens if studios decide to intensify use of technology in costuming?

Lauren Gurganous, a friend and striking writer who has worked on *30 Rock*, *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* and *Girls5eva*, said costuming and makeup were a “huge part” of what audiences respond to in viewing movies and shows. “Writers only have so much space in a script to



Clockwise from top left: Actress Allison Janney joins SAG-AFTRA union members on strike in July; Pharrell Williams, men's creative director at Louis Vuitton; scenes from *Succession* and *House of Gucci*.

PHOTOS: HBO, GETTY



convey a character's look. And even if we had the page space, most of us are wearing the same hoodie for months on end, so you don't want us weighing in too much anyway. Your costume and hair and make up departments take tiny character descriptions and, at an absolutely ludicrous pace, work magic to bring those people to life at a level you could have never dreamed in your brain. I'm always blown away by that," she said.

The impact of fashion on the success of streaming productions is undeniable. When Netflix released miniseries *The Queen's Gambit* in 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, it spurred not only a renewed enthusiasm for chess, but also a collective swoon over actress Anya Taylor-Joy's Peter Pan collars and A-line skirts, selected behind the scenes by costume designer Gabriele Binder and later displayed in a virtual exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum. Similarly, actress Rachel Brosnahan's 1960s-inspired wardrobe from Amazon Prime's *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* was on display at Saks Fifth Avenue last April as part of a mile-long tribute to the show. Costume designer Donna

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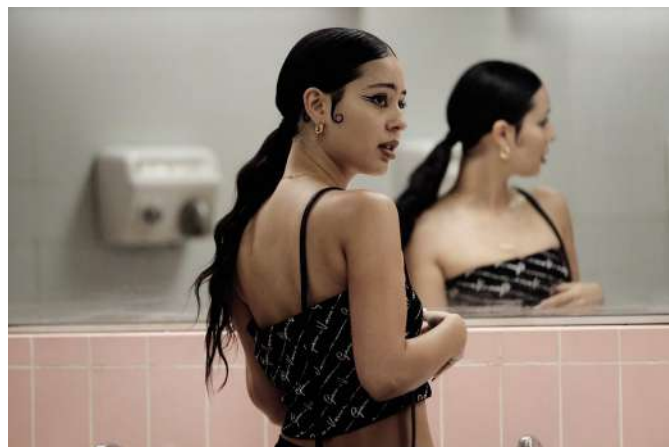
Zakowska penned a book, *Madly Marvelous: The Costumes of the Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, in which she compared main character Midge's impressive array of colorful coats to "the equivalent of a superhero cape—transfiguring, protective, emotional armor that emboldens and empowers her as a character."

Most recently, the sly showcasing on HBO's *Succession* of "quiet luxury" has led some mid-tier brands to position themselves as "stealth wealth" starter kits for the masses. Fashion companies have also seized on the popularity of the show's cast in advertising. Brian Cox, the British actor who plays media scion Logan Roy, starred in a Fall 2023 campaign for Kith, while his co-star Nicholas Braun – the hapless yet cunning Greg – landed in a Father's Day campaign for Brooks Brothers.

Other HBO shows have provided more opulent inspiration. The second season of *The White Lotus*, a show that gleefully presents a

cast of delusional tourists at a luxury resort – reportedly bumped U.S. Google searches for Sicily up by 50 percent, while also boosting the profile of costume designer Alex Bovaird, who told Vogue, “We kind of upped our game this season in terms of people dressing up and peacocking.” Heidi Bivens, the head costume designer for teen hit *Euphoria*, published a book – *Euphoria Fashion* – about her micro mini-skirts, zip-up hoodies and strappy heels. Meanwhile, *And Just Like That*, the new *Sex and the City* reboot, displays luxury logos with abandon; is it a coincidence that a Canal Street crackdown in August led the New York City Police Department to seize \$30 million in knockoffs? We’d have to ask costume designers Molly Rogers and Danny Santiago. All three shows, of course, spawned countless where-to-shop listicles.

The influence of entertainment on fashion is perhaps most explicit, however, in box office franchises, and recently, there have been a lot of them. Variety reported that 14 Mattel toy brands, including Polly Pocket and American Girl, are lined up to be the next *Barbie*. The



FASHION COMPANIES HAVE LONG UNDERSTOOD THE VALUE OF HITCHING THEIR BRANDS TO STAR POWER

Marvel Cinematic Universe, populated by the likes of Spider-Man and Captain America, has unleashed its superheroes not just in theaters, but also on Asics shoes dropped in an exclusive with Kith. DC Comics lent its Gotham City glamour to Lanvin in Spring 2022, when models stomped out in Batman-inspired looks. And costume designer Ruth E. Carter won her second Academy Award for her work on Marvel’s hit *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, in which she outfitted the cast in diverse duds from Hervé Léger, Iris van Herpen and Adidas. Now, with American show business on strike, there is increasingly an off-camera spillover effect in fashion. Artists, of course, are no strangers to side hustles, but the walkout is putting a strain on guild members’ personal finances: One striking writer told NPR he was now earning a living by selling handcrafted snow globes on Etsy. To make ends meet, or at least keep their name out there, many



PHOTOS: HBO



Clockwise from top left: Scenes from the hit series *Euphoria*; Margot Robbie as Barbie; scenes from the second season of *White Lotus*.



performers are weighing the pros and cons of front row appearances at global fashion weeks. Union rules prohibit members not only from performing in movies, but also from promoting them at film festivals or in puff pieces with the press. Technically, however, actors might be able to make a guest appearance at a boutique opening party – they just risk serious side-eye from the internet, not to mention incurring the wrath of their colleagues. It doesn't look great to be sipping prosecco at a Paris fashion junket while your fellow entertainers tug at the plastic on ramen noodle packs. SAG-AFTRA has even issued an ultimatum to social media influencers who are not yet union members but aspire to be: Accepting paid promotional gigs for big studios and streaming companies – or even posting fan content – is considered crossing the

picket line and scuttles any chance of future union membership.

And yet, the shows must go on. Fashion companies have long understood the value of hitching their brands to star power. There are staffers whose entire job it is to finesse the relationship between brands and entertainers. Fashion brands, after all, are a complex distillation of aspirations and associations; as the designer and consumer marketing scion Walter Landor famously observed, “Products are made in the factory, but brands are created in the mind.”

Fashion, like entertainment, sells “dreams, imagination, and sparkle,” to borrow a phrase from *Barbie* – but there's a lot of hard work underneath the surface. This season, keep your eyes on the picket lines.