

A Comparison of the Costume Designs of Footloose 1984 and 2011

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Table of Contents

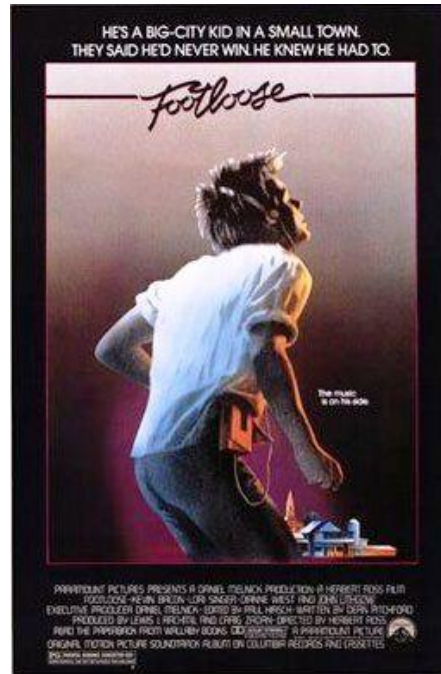
Abstract.....	3
Summary of the Movies.....	4
Introduction of the Two Garments.....	7
The Origin of the Garments	8
Costume Designers	9
Illustrations	10
Reference Sheet.....	12

Abstract

The original Footloose, released in 1984, comes seventeen years before its remake in 2011. Besides the differences in age, the fashion in the films help distinguish the creativity and technological upgrades in fabrics. Both films highlight the relationship between Ren McCormack and Ariel Moore and their interest to dance. In this paper we are looking at the similarities and differences between the two movies in terms of costume design. The main storyline of the movie are identical except the remake has a more diverse cast and a bit less modesty due to the spirit of the time. In the original and remake, there are subtle differences in the material. The opacity, draping and movement of the dresses are telltale signs of the changes in the fabrics. The choice of the fabrics, used in the films, were meant to add drama during the dance scenes, but it also highlighted character development and change.

Summary of the Movies

Footloose 1984



Footloose 1984 (Wikipedia contributors, 2020b)

The main character, Ren McCormack, set up a dance in the school's basement (all dance was illegal before this in the small town) and attends with the pastor's daughter. In the town, dancing is forbidden and seen as a gateway to teenagers engaging in fornication and socializing inappropriately. Ren McCormack moved to Bomont with his mom Ethel to live with his Aunt, her husband, and their kids (Footloose, 1984). Ren enrolled in the local High School and quickly learned that the town has a lot of abnormal rules. In his school he was a part of the gymnastic team and made friends with Willard Hewitt. Ren got a job at a local factory to work at on the weekend. His boss ended up providing him a place to hold the dance that is on the border of the town. Before he could hold the dance, he brought his friends and the preacher's daughter Ariel to a bar a town over. He also taught his friend Willard how to dance in a creative training montage.

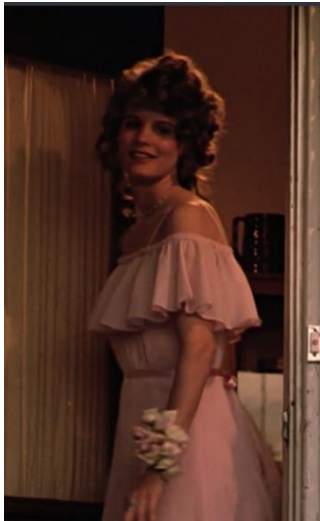


Figure 1: Screen Capture from Footloose 1984 via Philo

With Ariel and Willard’s help Ren was able to petition the towns’ counsel and use scripture verse to show how dance is not a sin. Despite his efforts, the counsel did not allow for a dance to take place in town. As stated previously Ren’s boss helped him find a place for the dance and all of the high school students came together to set the dance up. Ren wore a burgundy Jacket and Ariel wore a blush pink chiffon dress to the prom. Ariel’s dress (Figure 1) was simple yet

stunning with its slim fit and off shoulder ruffles (“Ariel in Footloose (1984) Pink Off-the-shoulder Celebrity Prom Dress,” n.d.).

Footloose 2011



Footloose 2011 (Wikipedia contributors, 2020a)

In a barn the main character Ren McCormack set up a school dance (all dance was illegal before this in the small town) and attends with the pastor’s daughter. Like the original movie, the main character moves to a new town that is has traditional ways and looks to the local pastor for

guidance. This movie starts off with the death of the reverend son and his friends which the originally movie skipped over. Ren moves to Bomont after his mother passed away from leukemia to live with his Uncle and his wife (Footloose, 2011). After his arrival he went out to look for a job at the local Cotton Gin and enrolls in the local high school. While driving around town Ren receives a ticket for playing music too loudly. Ren befriends Willard Hewitt and Woody who helped him fix that his uncle gifted him. Ren's newly found friends explained to him that music, drugs and party have been banned since the death of the previously mentioned teens. Ren's uncle helps he get out of the ticket by letting the judge know that Ren is newcomer. Though Ren is a gymnast he tries out for the football team to play along side his new friends. Ren takes Ariel, Willard and Willard's girlfriend rusty to a bar outside of town. After learning Willard did not know how to dance, he volunteered to teach him in training montage. With Ariel's help and his connection to the pain of losing a loved one he was able to make an emotional plea to the counsel to lift the dance ban. Just like the previous movie the speech did not work, and the law did not get changed. Ren went to work after his failed plea and his boss told him to that he can use the unused storage barn on the boarder of town to hold his prom. After securing a location he vided the church and to the reverend and they had a heart to heart which led to sermon about trusting your children. Town came together to help clean and set up the barn for the senior prom. Ren wore a burgundy jacket similar to the one in the last movie and Ariel dress had was blush pink but a lot shorter and a different outline and design but kept the off-shoulder ruffles (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Screen capture from Footloose 2011 via Hulu

Introduction of the Two Garments

The two dresses are very similar to each other, they are both blush pink and made of a sheer chiffon looking fabric and is layered for the skirt portion. The dresses are flounce ruffle, off the shoulder dresses with thin straps and similar shapes. The 1984 dress is a little more structured and is opaquer with an A-line shape. It appears to be chiffon but looks heavier and more rigid than chiffon fabric with a faint luster. It fits slightly loose over Ariel's body for a modest and feminine fit. The dress is floor length and covers the actress's legs fully draping the ground. The dress maintains its shape in the prom dancing scene but flows with the actress's movement. It is possibly made of taffeta fabric or crepe.

The 2011 pink dress has more drapery and a sheer appearance that resembles chiffon. The dress skims Ariel's body showing her figure. It appears softer to touch and more lightweight compared to the original pink prom dress. It flows easily and has effortless movement fabric wise. The dress fits close to the body but flares outwards at the hem resembling a mermaid style at calf length. Unlike the original dress, the updated dress has ruching and a tucked design under the bust. It's segmented into different sections by the ruching and pleats while the 1984 dress is sectioned by a ribbon band. The choice of this dress is a representation of sensuality, innocence and rebellion for Ariel. The dress maintains it's virtuous image with the soft pink color and choice of material.

The Origin of the Garments



Figure 3 Screen Capture Footloose 1984 via Philo

The prom dress that Ariel in Footloose 1984 (Figure 3) wore an A-line dress. A-Line is used to describe the shape of the dress. A-Line dresses are shaped like the letter A or a triangular silhouette, narrow at the top and widens from the waist (Ward, n.d.). In 1955 Dior created a line and called it “A-Line”, During 1954-5 he was experimenting with the letters H, and A but the A lines dresses took off (Ward, n.d.).

Dior essentially created what we know as the A-Line dress by creating a dress that follows the shape of the letter. Christian Dior’s assistant designer Yves Saint Laurent deputed his own A-Line dress called the “trapeze” dress (Sewguide, 2019). Though Christian Dior was created the name of the dress, the description which defines what makes an A-Line dress covers dress before Dior’s line. Dresses with fitted tops and flared bottoms have existed for centuries (MasterClass, 2020).

In Footloose 2011, Ariel wore a mermaid off the shoulder dress (figure 4). The mermaid dress is a fitted hourglass shape to the mid-thigh or lower, then it flares out like a mermaid’s tail (Cyprus, 2020). The dress was introduced in the 1930’s by Marcel Rochas and it was his tribute to the female form (“The Fascinating History of Mermaid and Fishtail Dresses,” 2018). The mermaid dress was made to accentuate women’s body and emphasize her curves (Schwanke, n.d.).

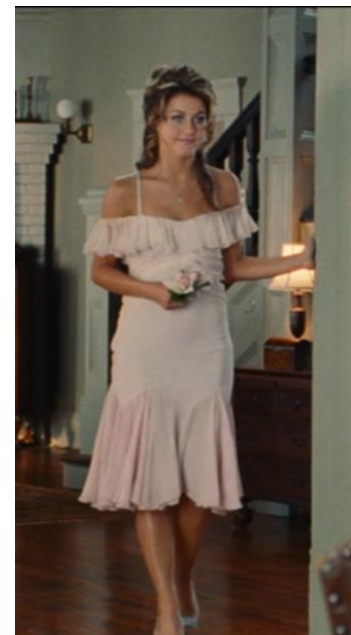


Figure 4 Screen Capture Footloose 2011 via Hulu

Costume Designers

Gloria Gresham was the costume designer for *Footloose* (1984). She worked on numerous films throughout the 1980's to 1990's (Brennan, Gloria Gresham Biography). She started out by working on Broadway play as an assistant costumer then moved on to film (Brennan, Gloria Gresham Biography). Gloria Gresham approached all her costume designs the same way, she read the source material and takes the passage of time into consideration then she speaks to the director about the character (Louie, 1991).

Laura Jean Shannon was the costume designer of the 2011 *Footloose*. Shannon is notoriously known for her work on DC comics movies and shows. She was dubbed the “super heroes” costume designer for her long track record of extravagant designs in imaginative films. She has also been the costume designer for tv shows Star Girl, Titans, Good Girls, Doom Patrol, Black Lightning and more. Her work in movies such as *The Jungle Book*, *Chef and Iron Man*, landed her a nomination for the Costume Design Guild Award in Contemporary Film Design (Shannon, 2020). She started her career in New York City in Indie cult work. She's exhibited wide range and versatility in her creations in various styles.

Illustrations





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