

Crazy, Rich, Costume Designs

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From the creation of television and cinema we have seen a large influence of films in fashion. Ever since then many shows and movies have been created that have had an impact or influence in the fashion industry. One of the most recent films that has impacted the world of fashion and caused talk around the industry is Crazy Rich Asians. Crazy Rich Asians is a romance comedy drama film that premiered in 2018. The film revolves around a girl, Rachel Chu who travels to Singapore with her boyfriend to attend his best friend's wedding. Rachel is surprised to find out that Nick Young, her boyfriend, is extremely wealthy and belongs to a well-respected family. She has to face off Nick's mother who disapproves of their relationship along with other rich jealous socialites. The costume director is Mary E. Vogt, and the director is Jon M. Chu and has won awards like the Critics' Choice Movie Award for best comedy and the Costume Designers Guild Award for Excellence in Costume Design for a Contemporary Film, among others. The movie stars actors Constance Wu and Henry Golding as the main characters of the film, Rachel and Nick, along with actress Awkwafina, Michelle Yeoh and more.

Fashion seems to take up a large part in the overall film and it's shows throughout the characters wardrobe as well as the set designs. Everyone in the film is seen in very extravagant and elegant outfits all throughout. Through the beginning of the film, you see the main characters, Nick and Rachel, at a restaurant who then are photographed by a young woman who is dressed in a very elegant outfit. The news of Nick Young being seen with Rachel travels throughout social media and into the ears of his mother, Eleanor. In the earlier scenes Eleanor is seen wearing darker colors but as soon as Nick arrives to Singapore, she is wearing lighter colors like greens and blues. The same things happen with the other characters like Rachel and Astrid, whenever they go through a hard situation, they reflect their feelings through their outfits. Astrid's character is very luxurious and glamorous but also caring and her beauty is something

everyone around her notices so when she found out about her husband, she was seen dressed casually, nothing compared to her usual outfits. When she is with her son, she is wearing comfortable clothing as well as when she told Rachel about her husband's affair. An important idea of fashion can be seen at the start of the film. The scene is between Rachel and her mother when they were shopping for the perfect dress for when Rachel meets Nick's family, especially his *Ah Ma* or grandmother. Rachel picks out a blue and white dress, but her mother tells her no since she thinks Nick's family is traditional and says that blue and white is for Chinese funerals. She then suggests a red dress since red symbolizes good fortune and fertility. When Rachel arrives to Singapore her outfits change, and she is seen in much more elegant dresses around Nick's family, but she still stays true to herself throughout her ideas and actions.

The costume director is Mary E. Vogt who has worked in movies like *Hocus Pocus* and *Batman Returns*. She worked closely with the director Jon M. Chu to make his visions come to life. In an article with *Vulture*, it states that the inspiration and influence for the wardrobe came from fairytales like "The Wizard of Oz" and "Cinderella". Since the Young family comes from old money, they are very elegant and show it throughout their clothing as well as their home since it's set up as "a museum." Overall, there does seem to be a relationship between the costumes and the roles played in the film. Nick is considered to be the "golden boy" of the family and his wardrobe is very put together and elegant but still comfortable and he's seen wearing lighter colors. Another character whose personality is reflected really well though the costume is Peik Lin, Rachel's best friend. Peik Lin is a very fun energetic character, and it is definitely shown though her choice of clothing. Her wardrobe consisted of very maximalist outfits that included different prints, textiles and bright colors which definitely matched her

playful personality. I think the costume director and director picked these specific outfits in order to enhance the characters and their personalities but also their social status.

I think that the costumes do show the institutional and social status of a character and they do add information of the psychological status of a character. I think this because we can see it with characters like Astrid and her husband, Michael. Michael is not like Astrid, status wise since he is not born into a rich family like she is and in a way his costume reflects who he wants and is trying to be. In the film, it shows Astrid hide the items she buys from Michael, but he finds out and so Astrid says she got him something too although he does not like expensive gifts and she gives him a new watch and says, “you’re a CEO, you should look the part.” This scene gives us a look at their relationship and how Astrid’s personality is not show off in any way but rather caring.

This film created a lot of talk during its premiere due to many reasons. The representation in the film is something we didn’t often see before in terms of race but also in fashion especially together. Most of the time we think of fashion films we tend to think of movies like “The Devil Wears Prada” or “Breakfast at Tiffany’s” which both have impacted and caused a lot of talk within the fashion and film industry. With this film the creation of the costume design and the inclusivity have sparked many headlines. The film has won awards and has gotten a lot of good ratings by critics as well as features on magazines like Harper’s Bazaar, Entertainment Weekly, The Hollywood Reporter and more. There are also many online articles for magazines like Vogue and Vulture speaking about the costume design in the movie and I think it did have an influence on the fashion industry. There were many silhouettes, textiles and prints featured on the garments that can be seen throughout the runway today or in retail stores around the world. One popular garment that continues to be popular is Astrid’s Dior mini purse. I do think this film

can be considered a “fashion film” because fashion is what is seen throughout the whole film. There is a large amount of looks throughout the film that show us how luxurious these characters are. There are a variety of maximalist and minimalist outfits that each show us the personality of a character which is key to understanding them.

Some of the scenes in which fashion plays a key role include Rachel entering the wedding as well as Eleanor going to confront Rachel by the end of the movie. During the scene of Rachel entering the wedding (Figure 1), she has already interacted with some mean socialites

who try to get into her head by making her think she is not good enough for Nick. She had been told she was not good enough for her son by Eleanor. In this scene she is wearing a light blue dress made out of light textiles like tulle and chiffon with her hair up in a bun and a crystal headband.



*Figure 1: Rachel at the wedding.*

What makes this scene important is the fact that when she came in, she came in with her head high and everyone was looking at her. Eleanor also tells her that her bench is filled up and so Rachel decided to sit in the front with Princess Intan making a good impression while everyone looks at her in disbelief since the princess requested to sit alone. This is a power move done by Rachel and it shows how she doesn't go down without a fight. Another important scene involves Eleanor going to confront Rachel after she caused the breakup between Rachel and her son. In this scene Eleanor is wearing a white pinstripe suit with black shoes and sunglasses (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Eleanor on her way to meet Rachel.

During this scene they are playing a game of Mahjong while having a conversation about how Rachel is not “one of them” and how her mentality is different because she is American. I think the matching pinstripe suit she is wearing really represents her confidence

since she thought she ended the relationship between Nick and Rachel. It fits her body perfectly and she walked in with her head high although the end of the conversation left her feeling the opposite.

Overall, the film does a great job in including fashion as a way of representation, self-expression and storytelling through the wardrobe for every character. The choice of clothing, accessories and the styling really played a huge part in the creation and expression of the film. The characters’ personality was well reflected in the wardrobe chosen for each other and it is definitely fitting to be considered a fashion film. This movie definitely influenced the fashion industry and will probably continue to do so in the future. I know I am considering this film as a fashion film and will revisit for future inspiration or in the long future as nostalgia and fashion history.