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Can Fashion Change How We See Superhero Movies?

WandaVision is a Netflix series part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) centered around superheroes. It is an action-packed TV series focusing on magic, witches, androids, etc. Directed by Matt Shakman and costume designed by Mayes Rubeo, it was released in early 2021, two years after the last MCU movie. The series focused on the aftermath of the last MCU movie, which showed the life of Wanda (Elizabeth Olsen) after her husband Vision (Paul Bettany) was killed in battle. Her denial of losing the last love in her life, caused an alternate universe to open up under her powers which unfortunately also came with unintentional harm. While the setting took place in 2023, the plot of the story took place in various time periods from early 1900's until current times. This meant that various costume designs needed to match the time period the episode was in, which became an interesting concept for Rubeo to play with.

In the *WandaVision* series, each episode was set in a different time period and chronologically kept going, right into 2023. For example, the first episode was set in the 1950's, a play on the sitcom "I Love Lucy." The episode is featured in black and white, and the décor was strategically placed in the 1950's format. However, those aspects weren't the only features that set the tone. The fashion also exhibited what people wore in those times. Wanda in the first episode wore a look inspired by Dior's "New Look", with a cinched in dress and an A-lined hem. Vision wore a classic menswear style of a suit that had wide shoulders and wide-legged trousers. Few episodes in, it now becomes the 1980's. Agnes, Wanda's neighbor, wears a leotard outfit with a headband, hinting the 1980's fitness culture. Wanda wears loose-fitted trousers and a floral vest that hints on boho/hippie culture. Their hair was also tousled, in that icon poofy 1980's curl. Thus,

from these two examples, we see that fashion is extremely important in setting the time period. The various outfits helped the audience understand what time period they were in, and even hinted at what sitcoms the episode referenced to. This is most likely why the costume designer styled the characters this way, to help the audience get the time period.

Whilst fashion did help the time period, it also contributed to the mental state of the character. In the last few episodes of the first season, Wanda is wearing zip sweater and sweatpants. Although this isn't a symbol of depression, this style of dressing is common amongst individuals with mental illness – as dressing isn't really important. Doing this for the main character allowed us to understand that the experiences Wanda was going through, was taking a toll on her mental health.

Although fashion was important in many ways, I wouldn't really consider this a fashion film or series at all. The focus of the series was about witches, powers, fighting villains, etc. When one sees a Marvel or hero movie, they don't really consider fashion. It's not something we really think about, like the outfit of the hero or what they wear once they're fighting; unless the outfit has some sort of power or help to the character. Thus, this is definitely not a series I would tell people to watch because "the fashion was so good,". There's definitely better series and films that do explore fashion better than this. This is also most likely why the film didn't really influence a certain style or make some garment trendy.

Ultimately, unless you're really into fashion and wanting to get inspired in how to incorporate fashion into film, this is probably not a fashion film I would recommend. Though, I do give props to the costume designer and director for being able to integrate styles of the time period in relation to the series. Some designers wouldn't really care and just let the character wear anything that sort of resembles the time period. However, it looks like Rubeo took her time,

researching certain silhouettes and outfits. And it's not even just the outfits! The hairstyle, the accessories, etc. Though fashion wasn't a focus on this series, it did shape the series in helping understand the time period, as well as any mental distress on certain characters.



