

## 'Romantics' clothes unite art, commerce, celebs

By SAMANTHA CRITCHELL (AP) – 1 day ago



NEW YORK — Clothes are a key part of weddings — and, it turns out, the marriage of art and commerce.

Katie Holmes, Josh Duhamel and Malin Akerman are among the well-dressed stars of upcoming film "The Romantics," which is all about friends reuniting for a wedding with a few wounds still not healed. Here, fashion isn't just playing a supporting role — it's a key marketing partner for the film.

The cast, which also includes Adam Brody, Rebecca Lawrence and Jeremy Strong, reunited recently for a photo shoot for J.Crew and changed in and out of several outfits over the course of several hours for the retailer's fall catalog and the brand's website.

Holmes was turned out in black-sequin harem pants paired with a chambray button-down shirt, a combination she likes because it's "a little more tomboy, a little Diane Keaton," as well as a brown cocktail frock and a champagne-colored, flapper-inspired beaded number. That one was her favorite, Holmes says: "It's flirty but grown-up, too."

The vast studio in Chelsea marked a new sort of crossroads for fashion and film. "The Romantics" and J.Crew don't just dabble in product placement — although some of the costumes were indeed J.Crew. The retailer is serving as a bona fide marketing partner, including covering the costs associated with the shoot.

In the film, the characters largely are introduced through their wardrobe: the flirty girl in a studded mini; the pensive but pretty one wearing things dark and demure; the bride obviously in white, even for the rehearsal dinner as if to say, "Remember, I'm the bride here." The guys are in untucked shirts with suits and ties, not truly ready to part with their youthful ways.

"Because the story is about a group of 20-something-year-olds and before they've really become 'adults,' clothes are a huge part of defining their identity," says director Galt Niederhoffer. "Clothes are a personal statement. They can break people visually into introverts, extroverts, romantics, geeks."

The looks were a mash-up of J.Crew's classic pieces, bridal styles and the new upscale 769 Collection.

Niederhoffer, on this day in head-to-toe Madewell, another J.Crew brand, doesn't shy away from the art and commerce connection. She says it might be what keeps small filmmakers going.

"This partnership was a strategic, innovative way to promote our movie with the audience we wanted to reach. This seemed graceful, and having come from the indie film world, this seemed really natural and obvious," she says. "Necessity is the mother of innovation."

Holmes was on board from the start, recognizing that this was a way to get the movie for which she serves as an executive producer in front of audiences. She's the one who rallied the others to reunite — including getting Brody on a red-eye from Los Angeles and a return flight not even 12 hours later — and she's the one who stayed until the bitter end taking personal snapshots with the makeup artists, stylists and lighting folks.

"The movie takes place on the East Coast during the fall. The look of the movie goes well with the feel of J.Crew," says Holmes, who also posed for the brand when she was a starlet on "Dawson's Creek."

"I feel like when we met with Katie the day before and she tried on the clothes, she was excited. And we were excited because she knew how to take the clothes and make them fun," says Tom Mora, J.Crew's head of design for wedding and cocktail. "Anyone can throw on a dress but it's the slightly quirky attitude that lets you experience something different with your clothes."

Duhamel came away from both the movie and photo shoot a fan of sand-colored ties with tonal tan suits. "Clothes have to do with character. Your clothes don't have to be cool, they just have to say something about your character," he says, adding that applies to real life, too.

Holmes, meanwhile, says she likes using clothes to convey mood. She then takes off her heels and walks out of the studio in a plain white tank top and jeans.

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