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'The Romantics' is the most stylish movie of the year

Hot cast, great clothes — all bought from your favorite affordable stores!

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It's the most fashionable movie of the season, and the clothes cam straight off the rack from New York area stores, which won't wallop your wallet. "The Romantics," starring Katie Holmes, [Anna Paquin](#) and Josh Duhamel, tells the story of a love triangle as it unfolds over a WASP-y wedding weekend. Despite the A-list wattage, a major star of the film is the clothing.

Stylist Danielle Kays scoured low and mid-priced stores, working with a wardrobe budget of about \$20,000, according to sources. Her mission: to outfit the actors in clothing that would look classic and expensive without breaking the bank. She went bargain hunting in some of New York gals' favorite haunts to find the right looks, hitting chains like Club Monaco and Urban Outfitters and department stores like Topshop and [Century 21](#) — just like any cost-conscious shopaholic.



"We worked 18-hour days to find just the right clothes," says Kays. "We needed things to look high-end, but we didn't have the budget."

PHOTOS: FASHION IN 'THE ROMANTICS'

'THE ROMANTICS' REVIEW: NICE LOOKING AND A GOOD FILM, TO BOOT

J. Crew looks were also used in the movie, so writer, director and producer Galt Niederhoffer asked the company to partner in the marketing campaign for the film.

J. Crew loved the idea — so much they created a website dedicated to the movie, and shot the actors in looks from the store's 2010 collection. The cast even appears in J. Crew's fall catalogue.

"The clothes [for the movie] reflect the personality of the characters — people in their late 20s on the verge of adulthood," says Niederhoffer. "The trick is to find a way to make these stories, styles and colors work in harmony with the larger tale."

During a pivotal rehearsal dinner scene, for instance, Holmes' choice of dress is meant to convey her anxiety at seeing her ex-lover, Duhamel, marry her ex-best friend, Paquin.

"The dress needed to sum up her predicament. The character would have packed it, thinking about seeing her ex-boyfriend and trying to impress him and then realizing, once she arrived, that it wasn't really the right look for the night," says Kays.

Holmes' black satin, minidress looks to[sexy for the genteel gathering — and perfectly highlights her character's discomfort.

"I spent a lot of time trying to get designer dresses lent to us for Katie, which is incredibly time-consuming and difficult," says Kays, who styled the 2005 sleeper hit "Junebug."

J. Crew outfitted some of the actors in the movie — and then cast them in their fall ad campaign and catalog (seen here).

Photos: Fashion in 'The Romantics'

When Katie put it on, we really knew we'd nailed it. She didn't care one bit who the label was. She was like, 'Yes, this is the dress,' says Kays.

For a big-budget movie, Kays would have either designed the clothes herself and had them tailor-made, or pulled from the big designers who would have eagerly lent their pieces.

"In something like 'Devil Wears Prada,' they are getting shipped mass amounts of designer clothing because the companies want their clothes featured in the film," she says. But with an independent film, it's another story.

"The big designers only have a certain amount of clothing they can lend, and they'd rather have it be featured in the pages of Vogue," says Kays.

Although up-and-coming designers (such as Rachel Comey, ACB, [Lyell](#) and Slow and Steady Wins the Race) generously lent clothes to the film, for the most part Kays had to go shopping.

When the conservative bridesmaid Weesie arrives at the wedding, she is wearing an Indian-print hippie shirt under a blazer from J. Crew. The top is from Local Clothing, a vintage clothing store in the East Village. The cost? \$58.

"When [actress] Rebecca Lawrence saw it, she said to me, 'I understand who Weesie is now!' " says Kays.

The third bridesmaid, Tripler, a wild-child struggling actress played by Malin Akerman, gets to wear the most attention-grabbing looks. Her clothes look like high-end designer wear but come mostly from Topshop, with a little [Century 21](#) thrown in.

An iconic black-and-white striped minidress that accentuates Tripler's sex appeal was a steal at \$110 from Topshop. It's paired with an \$89 blazer from Century 21. Kays found jewelry for Akerman's character at Mango — a store she'd never even set foot in before taking this job. When she saw a gold lion necklace, she grabbed it immediately for Akerman.

Meanwhile, the bride, Lila, who knows perfectly well she's stolen her best friend's lover and seems only slightly troubled by it, dresses like the prim New England woman she is. Her clothes could be Burberry, but they're not. A miniskirt she wears while nervously waiting for her wedding dress to arrive came from Urban Outfitters — for \$48. And around her neck is a gold charm necklace meant to look like it was an heirloom family jewel. "I imagined it was something her mother (played by Candice Bergen) had given to her as a little girl," says Kays. It was a mere \$130 at a Chelsea flea market.

In the book the movie's based on, the bridesmaids gripe over the strangely dour color of their gowns. "Are they gray or pewter?" the girls wonder. "No, they're tin, the color of her heart," says one. "Tin, the color of her ring."

To find them, Kays had to venture into the wilds of New Jersey. She saw what she was looking for at the [Neiman Marcus](#) Last Call clearance center in Elizabeth, where a beautiful gray silk and crepe [Phillip Lim](#) dress with a pearl medallion on the bodice was hanging on a clearance rack. She knew innately it was the very bridesmaid look that Lila would have chosen. It was \$236.

In the meantime, the groomsmen (played by Adam Brody, Jeremy Strong, and Elijah Wood) wear cotton pinstripe suits with coral ties from J. Crew — of course.

Niederhoffer says she couldn't be more pleased with the look of the film, which was shot in just five weeks last year.

"Kays is an angel," she says.

"She understands color the way musicians understand sound. She knows what colors complement each other and the way they make a character look and make a viewer feel."