



BEHIND THE SCENES

# TV's Clothes Encounters

BY VICKI JO RADOVSKY

*How do you dress stars on a tight budget? Beg, borrow, and steal ideas*

**S**O YOU'RE ON A strict clothes budget? Well, so is Rachael Stanley, head designer of NBC's *Sisters*. True, Stanley's budget is \$13,000 every week. And she's not at the top of the line, either: Costuming for hour-long dramas can cost up to \$20,000, and daily daytime soaps can run as high as \$70,000 a month (think *All My Children's* Erica Kane). But TV's glitziest designers and wardrobers do have something in common with the rest of us these days: They are also feeling pinched.

"The industry standard keeps getting smaller," says Stanley. "When I was doing *The Colbys* 10 years

ago, it was \$18,000 per episode. I yell and stomp my feet a lot! Most of my creativity goes into trying to do what I do for the amount of money I have."

And according to Brenda Cooper, the costume designer for Fran Drescher's clotheshorse character on CBS' *The Nanny*, *create* is the operative word. "People think you just buy clothes and put them on, but everything has to be shaped, adapted, and changed to make it work for what is required in the scene," she explains, describing how, for a gag involving Shari Lewis and puppet Lamb Chop, she fashioned what looks like a couture-quality fur coat out of an \$83 coat from Nordstrom's sale rack using two sheepskin car-seat covers for the collar and cuffs.

Outfitting even small casts through the customary six costume changes per primary character on an hour-long show would tax any budget. Luckily, many wardrobe mavens have a form of credit not available to other people: When money runs low, they borrow in return for listing the lender at the end of the show. Cary Fetman, who dresses Tom Snyder on CBS' *The Late Late Show* as well as Dennis Miller for HBO's *Dennis Miller Live*, buys and borrows. "For Tom, I buy Donna Karan, Armani, Calvin Klein, Vestimenta, Brooks Brothers," he says. "For Dennis, Ron Ross [a Studio City, Calif., store] works out wardrobe arrangements in exchange for screen credit. We never use the same thing twice, and everything is expensive: Armani, Calvin, Donna, Matsuda."

Despite their alternative profile, MTV VJs go for the cr me of couture, too. Senior wardrobe stylist Jimmy Hanrahan borrows for credit from the showrooms of every major designer, from downtown favorite Joe Boxer (for Kennedy's pajamas) to Jackie Kennedy stalwart Carolina Herrera (for a Daisy Fuentes gown). "The majority of designers like me to 'MTV up' an outfit—take a \$2,200 Chanel cashmere twinset and put it with Levi's—because they realize it's reaching a different age group."

The self-styled king of lending for credit is Sherman Oaks, Calif., menswear retailer Rick Pallack, whose clients include CNN's *Showbiz Today* and NBC's *The Other Side*. "In the past 12 years, our screen credit has run over 100,000 times," boasts Pallack, who insists that a photo of his store be shown. Others are less demanding. The *Entertainment Tonight* credit "Mary Hart's wardrobe fur-

nished by Lillie Rubin" is enough for the Rubin chain, which also outfits *Good Morning America's* Joan Lunden and *Hard Copy's* Terry Murphy.

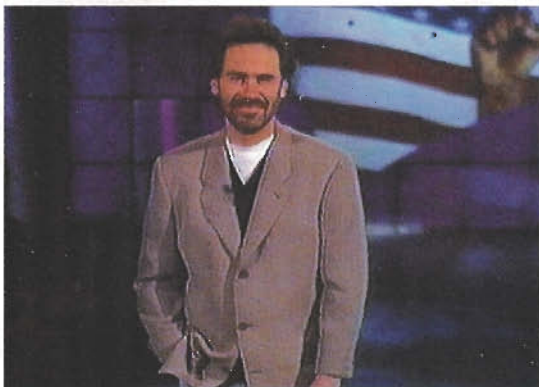
"Lillie Rubin picks up the bill at the different design houses," says *ET* costume supervisor Diane McCloskey. "After six months, the clothes go back to Lillie Rubin," which gives them to charity. "No money changes hands unless Mary wants to buy something." Some upscale stores, including Neiman Marcus, have a policy against such practices, but Bobbe Aiona of Saks Fifth Avenue in Beverly Hills admits her store modified its rule for an episode of *Murder, She Wrote*, which had a fashion story line.

"It's all about relationships—sometimes [store] people are receptive and sometimes they aren't," says *The Nanny's* Cooper. She usually buys at full price from Neiman Marcus, Saks, and Fred Hayman, as well as Loehmann's—you thought Grandma Yetta paid retail?—but she also borrows from ultrahip designers Todd Oldham and Dolce & Gabbana.

The ultimate luxury for wardrobers is something called "studio services," which allow a designer to take out large quantities of stuff on a five-day-approval basis. *Beverly Hills, 90210's* Molly Harris Campbell likes that approach: "I may take out \$5,000 worth of merchandise, and if the store lists it as sold, it distorts their bookkeeping." Identified by a special badge, Campbell can cruise through such trendy L.A. emporiums as Fred Segal and American Rag, avoiding pesky salespeople and filling bags with the trendier-than-thou duds of Donna and Kelly.

Which, admittedly, is not exactly the way most people on a budget shop at Kmart. ♦

*Costuming a daily soap can cost as much as \$70,000 a month*



**FASHION FORWARD:** Clockwise from top left, daytime diva Susan Lucci as Erica Kane, natty Miller, Kennedy in her jammies, and *The Nanny's* Drescher, of whom stylist Cooper says: "People tune in just to see what she's wearing"