

FASHIONISTA

How the Costumes in HBO's 'The Deuce' Expose the Authentic Grit of '70s Times Square

Costume designer Anna Terrazas skillfully rode a fine line without being exploitative.



David Simon's latest HBO's new series "The Deuce" has been touted as a worthy Sunday night replacement for "Game of Thrones," a new "The Wire" — this time chronicling the sex industry and the legalization of porn in early-'70s New York — and "[a feminist project](#)," as co-star and producer [Maggie Gyllenhaal](#) told *New York Magazine*. The Brooklyn-based actress plays single mother Eileen, a.k.a., street name: Candy, a sex

worker making a living independently (and not under the auspices of a pimp) in "the Deuce," a nickname for the then-super seedy Times Square stretch of 42nd Street between Broadway and 8th Avenue.

The overall premise of a series centered around the sex industry populated with women, but created by two men, could have been a risky undertaking. So Simon and co-creator George Pelecanos ensured that women [were integral parts of the creative process](#), including Gyllenhaal as producer, four directors, like, Michelle MacLaren of "GoT," who directed the pilot, writers and department heads, including costume designer [Anna Terrazas](#).

To dress Candy and fellow sex workers, fresh-off-the bus Lori (Emily Meade) and budding bibliophile Darlene (Dominique Fishback), Terrazas rode a fine line of communicating the women's professions while infusing dignity and their struggles to ultimately avoid being exploitative.



Candy (Maggie Gyllenhaal). Photo: Paul Schiraldi/HBO

"It was a very interesting project because, for the first time, I got to think more about the characters and the use of the clothes, like how the girls will pay for the clothes," she says, over the phone. "We tried with each of the girls to find their personality." To subtly highlight Candy's financial hardships and the toll of the constant hustle, Terrazas added little rips in her skirts or cigarette burns. (When Gyllenhaal's character goes back to her real Eileen persona for a visit to her disapproving mother and young son, she wears bell-bottom jeans and a classic vintage khaki trench.)

Terrazas found inspiration through extensive research online, in books and on film, especially "Taxi Driver," of course, and the 1971 Al Pacino movie "[The Panic in Needle Park](#)," about heroin addicts hanging out in the now-banker bro and baby stroller-populated pedestrian oasis on 72nd Street and Broadway.

Photo documentation Terrazas found of the era helped her use costume to dispel sartorial stereotypes and tropes of what we usually see sex workers wearing in movies and on TV. "A lot of girls working in the street at that time were wearing trousers and turtlenecks and long sleeves," Terrazas points out. Fresh-off-the-bus Lori (Emily Meade) at one point wears a mock turtleneck under shorts overalls with patent leather boots.



Lori (Emily Meade) in her "small town girl" outfit and C.C. (Gary Carr). Photo: Paul Schiraldi/HBO

When Lori arrives at Port Authority and is immediately recruited by pimp C.C. ("Downton Abbey"'s Gary Carr), he blasts her patchwork denim jacket, yellow knit top and bell-bottoms outfit (above) as too "small town girl" and encourages her to pick out a dress — hanging on a rack in the backseat of his Cadillac — to "look more New York." (Spoiler: She demurs. Also, ironic, considering her throwback country bumpkin outfit would sell for a premium at an upscale Manhattan boutique in 2017.)

But a wardrobe detail you might not notice immediately also helped reveal Lori's

provenance. "In that time, a lot of the girls did not wear a bra. It was just nipples out and it didn't really matter," Terrazas says, noting that the women's liberation movement and pre-AIDS-era sexual revolution influenced many women's decision to forgo the oppressive garment.

"When Lori arrives in that yellow shirt, we actually put a bra [on her] because it was super conducive to making her look like she just arrived to New York," she says. Like authentic [bullet bras](#) or [corsets](#) for '60s and 19th century period pieces, the overall rejection of the undergarment in the series help set the tone of '70s-era Times Square and communicate the female character arcs, including NYU student Abby (Margarita Levieva, below) in a later notable job interview scene. "Those tiny details, we really took care of them."



Abby (Margarita Levieva). Photo: Paul Schiraldi/HBO

Terrazas was also careful to not play to stereotypes when it came to dressing the both protector and abuser pimps, including, Larry ("The Wire"'s Gbenga Akinnagbe), Rodney (Cliff "Method Man" Smith) and the aforementioned C.C., in their pinstriped or tapestry brocade suits and white shirts with voluminous ruffle collars (or sleeves billowing out from their jacket cuffs). To reflect authenticity, she took inspiration from documentary video footage and books, including, "[Gentleman of Leisure: A Year in the Life of a Pimp](#)" by Bob Adelman. But she dialed it back to not cross into problematic "costume-y"

territory. Terrazas also looked to the script and talked in depth with the actors to infuse each character's layers and backstory into the costuming.

"They're always super well-dressed, but if you look deep inside, sometimes the shirt is very worn in the neck or it's a little bit dirty," she says. "Sometimes you don't even really realize that when you watch a show, but for the actors, that helps [them get into character] a lot, as well."



Jerry Love (Tariq Trotter) and C.C. (Gary Carr). Photo: Paul Schiraldi/HBO

Terrazas's attention to detail also helped James Franco, who plays both twins Vincent and Frankie (not to mention the viewers), differentiate between the brothers: a family man working double shifts and a hotheaded ne'er-do-well with bad luck gambling streak, respectively.

Aside from a "[13 Reasons Why](#)"-esque device in episode one, it's initially hard to discern between the two Francos due to the same degree of pornstache, greasy shaggy hair and ample lapels. Both brothers have an affinity for close-fitting, wide-lapel leather jackets, but upon closer investigation, Vincent will always be in brown and Frankie in black. Plus, one very carefully considered wardrobe distinction actually made an impact on Franco's delivery of his two characters.

"We came up with the idea of having Frankie wearing Cuban heels," Terrazas explains. "So the way he walks — it's a different walk when you have a heel than the [flatter] beetle boot that Vincent is wearing." So essentially, Franco, as family man Vincent, shuffles with a slow, world-weary slouch, while, as Frankie, he struts with a DGAF swagger in his higher stacked heels.



Frankie (James Franco) in his Cuban heels, Paul (Chris Coy) and Vincent (also Franco). Photo: Paul Schiraldi/HBO

To outfit such a sprawling cast in period clothing, Terrazas and her team shopped "everywhere," including online (Etsy was a big resource) and vintage sellers in Los Angeles, Austin and Philadelphia (by the pound [Bulk Vintage Warehouse](#) proved key for shirts). In New York, where they filmed, Terrazas found dead-stock suiting at [Rue St. Denis](#) and great leather (and Eileen's perfect belted trench) at [Ritual Vintage](#). Even for some vintage pieces, she and her team further distressed or changed colors "to make it look more worn." Terrazas also extensively sourced specialty shops for authentic '70s fabrics to custom-design C.C.'s and Rodney's suits.

Discovering Lori's aforementioned patchwork denim at a vintage shop turned out to be a moment of costume destiny. "We found that jacket and — believe it or not — the name 'Lori' was embroidered on the back of the jacket. I almost *fainted*," Terrazas says. Because the personalization proved too distracting while filming the scene, the embroidery was removed. But still, "those are the things that happen sometimes when you are doing a show and a piece like that appears," she adds.

As you [may have heard](#), "The Deuce" is an equal opportunity series when it comes to nudity, HBO-style, with a fair amount of full-frontal, both female and male. When it comes to the latter, some guys went au naturale, while others required prosthetics, which did at times affect the costume designer's job.

"It's more makeup rather than me," Terrazas explains. "But if [the prosthetics] have to be attached to something, then I'll help them." Add that to the list of [fascinating behind-the-scenes costume design tricks](#).

"The Deuce" premieres on HBO at 9 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 10.