



Photo by Ken Davies; www.KenDaviesPhotography.com

BEHIND THE SCENES

WITH MAGGIE BILL, WARDROBE DIRECTOR

By Kathleen Davies

When we want to know who's won what, or is going out with whom, or in trouble from whatever... we turn to Entertainment Tonight Canada. Everyone always looks fantastic, from the celebrity hosts to the guests.

"Behind the scenes of this fast-paced TV show is a team of hard working and skilled professionals," says Wardrobe Director Maggie Bill, who has been making people look good every weeknight since the program's inception five years ago. "It's a wonderful and dedicated crew. We meet tons of great people up close and it's fun, but everyone has to work fast and switch focus on a dime. We always have to be ready to adapt to breaking news, as with Michael Jackson for example."

CAMERA-READY

Maggie starts her hectic working day at 8 a.m. at Global studios, but may have already done a few hours pulling in what she needs. Shooting starts at 11, the show is packaged in the afternoon, and ready to feed at 6. There's little time for the benefit of fittings... people get dressed quickly with split second decisions made on what to wear and it takes talent and a good eye to make the wardrobe work in the time available.

Guests usually have their own stylists and know what suits them in front of the camera. "They rarely need more than a tweak, if that," Maggie says. "Now and again I may make a suggestion. Sometimes a colour will take years off or a shape will add pounds."



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AWARD SEASON

Award season starts after the Christmas hiatus, with the Golden Globes, MTV Awards, Grammy's, SAG, and Oscars in quick succession. "Everyone on the show is a pro and does their jobs perfectly,"

Maggie says. "I'm able to plan ahead and ship the wardrobe, including accessories and jewelry, to the various locations. But one of the most exciting times of the year is the Toronto International Film Festival. We host parties, shoot interviews on location from a hotel at the center of it all, and have lots of red carpet dates. We need wardrobe continuity, depending on when stories will be aired, so it's busy. Toronto is just buzzing. It's fun to see so many famous faces up close, even for us!"

STYLIST INTERNS

Interns are probably partly attracted by the celebrity factor and many students studying fashion or design management apply for the position. About three each year are chosen and help with organizing, sourcing (i.e., tracing exactly the right pair of Jimmy Choos!), liaison with suppliers and designers, detailing the credits, and the other work that goes into making wardrobe camera ready, including humdrum tasks like cleaning and steaming.

Stylist opportunities in Canada are few, but Maggie says developing fashion expertise and a fashion eye are prerequisites. "Move to Milan, New York, London. Developing the skill to make people look good is partly a function of time and experience. When I walk into a store, I usually know, within seconds and while the clothes are still on the racks, what is going to look fabulous."

DRESS COMFY

Maggie also says you need to know what looks good on you and be confident in your own skin. "The cast has to be comfortable. If you're not happy with what you're wearing, you're not at ease and it will show and this is as true on TV as in life."

Maggie's route to her glamorous job was via a varied and creative

life, as she recommends. Starting as a producer for documentaries, Maggie worked in Rome, London, and New York, as well as on music videos for "Learn to Fly" by the rock band Pink Floyd and for Canadian singer Alannah Myles.

THE MAGGIE DRESS

Building on her fashion talent, Maggie also designed the convertible Maggie Dress, a winner on The Dragon's Den, with three dragons wanting to invest. This packable, washable, and wearable dress is "the best travel dress ever," says Maggie, and is sold online and through reps and home parties. "The Maggie looks good on women of all shapes and sizes, can be dressed up or down, and adapted for dinner or the beach." About to leave on vacation, Maggie was true to her vision and packed a couple of Maggie Dresses and the recently introduced top and pants. "That's about all I need!"



Cheryl Hickey
Host of Entertainment Tonight Canada