

CRISS ANGEL
BELIEVE
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

COSTUMES

"Fabric is between the flesh and the soul. This is where I love to slide."
— M  r  dith Caron

M  r  dith Caron's designs for CRISS ANGEL Believe had to be complex and multi-dimensional because so many of the costumes contribute more to the show than simply a look.

Without giving away any of the illusionist's secrets, many aspects of the costumes include features and choices of materials that put them into a category that is somewhere between costumes and props. Individual garments, rags and bits of fabric may be integral to the illusionist's performance, whether Criss Angel is wearing them or another performer is contributing to the astonishing happenings on stage.

The overall look of the show is rich and imbued with a patina of Victorian atmosphere overlaid with a dream-like surrealism that the show's director Serge Denoncourt has dubbed "Weirdtorian." The costumes play a major role in creating the look, and are designed to mesh with the set designs, the masks and puppets, the lighting and so on. This is achieved through fabric choice, colors and cut.

The cut of the coats – especially the men's coats – is long and sweeping with deep vents that are reminiscent of Victorian topcoats, but M  r  dith Caron is at pains to state that she has no interest in recreating precise replicas of 19th century costumes. These are interpretations that use the Victorian era as a jumping-off point for entirely modern designs.

M  r  dith points out that the "Weirdtorian" costumes contain references to the worlds of Charles Dickens and Tim Burton, and therefore convey a sense of darkness in all senses of the word – and the best fabric for that is velvet.

However the velvets she has used are by no means off-the-shelf fabrics. Some are printed, others have three-dimensional Paisley-like designs that reflect two surfaces very differently depending on how the light strikes them. "There are a lot of black fabrics in the costumes and that is unprecedented for Cirque," says M  r  dith. "But they are a *living* black."

Desire and seduction are integral to the show's themes and many of the more striking costumes evoke this through intense colors and richness of detail. In addition to velvets, the *CRISS ANGEL Believe* costumes include leathers, gold tones, jewels and stiffened, pleated lace-like fabrics that undulate like waves.

When M  r  dith first met Criss Angel she studied the contents of his own wardrobe and decided – as a first step – to build on that by magnifying certain aspects of his existing personal look and blending them with the visual direction of the show.

When he saw the finished costumes for the first time, Criss Angel had a special request. He asked for the three letters "JDS" to be embroidered in the collar of his coats. They are far too small and subtle to ever be seen by the audience, but they mean a great deal to Criss because they are his beloved late father's initials.