

## Antrix Update

We are a little later than usual with our first letter for 2026. Since our last update (September 2025), we have found ourselves becoming increasingly busier. There are a number of reasons for this.

1. We now appear to be one of the few remaining costume outlets still in Kent. (Harlequin, Maidstone, moved their business to Norwich last Autumn).
2. People are attending more organised external events, such as themed dinners, balls & musical activities and consequently needing hire quality costumes.
3. Fancy Dress Birthday parties are making a comeback, especially amongst teenagers, who because of Covid, may have missed out on such activities in their earlier years.
4. There is an upturn in the number of requests for items such as wigs, glasses, make-up, etc., in our expanding range of costume accessories for sale.

## Back to Basics

Having the right type of costumes in stock for the size required, has always been an interesting challenge. Back in December 1990, when we first started the business, we used to manufacture costumes, but now 35 years later, it's no longer practical to do this. We know that when it comes to choosing costumes some people are very well organised and may book costumes weeks in advance. However, in an increasingly 'time-poor' culture we invariably find that many people leave things until the last minute.

We have always focused on costumes to go with specific themes. Now that more teenagers are wanting to don costumes and fancy dress, we have found an increased interest in some childhood themes of yesteryear. The past five years has seen a tendency for the younger generation to revisit the basic dressing-up themes from the childhood of previous generations.

Particularly popular are:

- Cops & Robbers
- Cowboys & Cowgirls
- Doctors & Nurses
- Nautical & Pirates

"What I Want to be when I Grow Up", - covered in our "Professions" theme on our website - also seems to be making a come-back.

## Rock & Pop Fashions

We have frequently written about the difficulties of nailing a definitive look by which to portray the Rock & Pop Musical Icons of our day: With successive hits displaying multiple costumed looks over a number of videos, one minute Chappell Roan is in the ascendant (possibly not everyone's first choice, admittedly), the next Sabrina Carpenter is rising in popularity.

Of course, much has to do with the age demographic of the customers making the enquiry, and as such the likes of Noddy Holder, Rod Stewart, Freddie Mercury, Madonna, Cindy Lauper and Tina Turner continue to be popular requests. Several of these 'icons of yesteryear' still thrive with Madonna guesting on a Sabrina Carpenter set at the recent Coachella Festival in California. The exposure doubtless also helped the promotion of her latest single.

Occasionally adding to the mix are the 'fictitious' Pop Stars, as portrayed in movies (even if it's an existing star playing a version of themselves). Mick Jagger in 'Performance' (1970), Hazel O'Connor in 'Breaking Glass' (1980), and Whitney Houston in 'The Bodyguard' (1992). Of course many of these films are here today, gone tomorrow, and few generate actual costume enquiries.

New to the movie landscape in the last month is *Mother Mary*, starring Anne Hathaway. Not your first thought as a pop star (although she has musical form in *Les Miserables* and other productions). This is a film involving a star attempting a comeback, but needing the help of her erstwhile but alienated costume designer (played by Michaela Coel - perhaps best known for 'I May Destroy You').

The concept evokes religious undertones (if you just put *Mother Mary* without 'film' into a search engine, you unsurprisingly get multiple variations on the Madonna and Child), and whilst some interesting costuming is promised, the one seen in many of the trailers features a halo-like spiked headdress (of the kind often associated with religious icon images), combined with a rather skimpier stage outfit.

There are doubtless other aspects of drama and hidden depth involved, but it may make for interesting viewing as a novelty in a market which is currently dominated by action films and franchises.

## You Couldn't Make It Up

You have the costume, but you also need make-up to complete the look. Time was that, for most people, it was a case of using items from standard cosmetics. History records the use of some dubious products such as white lead for cosmetic purposes, but others have been in use for many centuries.

For film and theatrical purposes, the strength of lighting dictated heavier make-up products, often based on greasepaint - some will remember the Lechner brand, with its Lit K, 5 & 9 etc. Greasepaint had its quirks, such as its messy removal routine and going 'off' if not stored correctly, but it was the theatrical go-to for some time. New products in crème and water-base became available but these were still not generally easily found by the public unless you used specialist suppliers. Unfortunately, there are also 'cosplayers' who cut corners and improvise using potentially unsuitable products; Acrylics, powder paint and even food colouring which, whilst usually not harmful, if not diluted correctly, can leave an unwelcome lingering green tinge to a Hulk impression.

Meanwhile, back to costuming, and, aside from the need for make-up which went beyond what usual cosmetics had to offer, new opportunities were developing: A couple working at Butlins holiday camp found that at their entertainments, children liked having their faces painted but there was a lack of the right sort of paints in the mainstream market. Spotting the potential, they sourced funding and ingredients and went on to set up a factory based in Minehead. Snazaroo was created and became a well-known brand and great success in the face-paint market. Others have, of course, entered the field since, but arguably they were the first to mass-market the affordable paints and mini-kits.

In a perhaps strange development, to mark this achievement, there are plans to stage a play in New York to chart the Snazaroo story. At least the show's merchandising souvenirs are well sorted!

## Angels Costumes

Rather like the Snazaroo make-up brand mentioned above, the Angels Costumes name may not be familiar to many, but you will certainly have seen their outfits on film or television: A family firm, founded in 1840, and starting from a showroom in Shaftsbury Avenue, London, they are arguably the country's largest supplier of costumes to the media industry.

In 2002, they moved to a purpose-built 160,000 sq. ft. facility at Hendon including 100,000 sq. ft. of costume facilities with eight miles of hanging costume

space and over one million hire items. As part of the routine costume protection schedule, the costume areas are regularly fumigated.

It is possible to book a 'Behind the Seams' tour of this amazing facility. We took the tour when Downton Abbey was in production, so there were some areas with costumes labelled in preparation for fittings visits, whilst some other areas were off-limits to preserve the secrecy of the designs for other forthcoming productions. It was a fascinating experience.

Anyway, in a recent development, the Angels organisation has become part of the John Gore Studios group, a name probably even less well-known to many, but which has a solid pedigree of Film Production and related areas. To most, this move will mean nothing, but it is all part of the developing media landscape where international competition is growing, and newer players such as Prime and Netflix, with deep financial pockets, are entering the field.

## Forthcoming Events

As part of our website information we have a monthly 'slide-show' of dates, some more notable than others, (including quirky celebrators days for Bees, Unicorns, Elves, etc.) which might be of interest. Whether they generate any costume demand depends on factors such as the day of the week and if an event such as a fete or carnival has chosen the relevant theme. Some pubs and entertainment venues might also have promotional theme days.

Here are a few notable dates:-

May 12-16 Eurovision in Vienna, Austria.

May 19 - 23 Chelsea Flower Show.

May 20 World Bee Day.

June 3 World Bicycle Day.

June 6 Anniversary of D-Day.

June 11 to July 19 sees the FIFA World Cup, with games in sixteen cities in three different countries.

June 21 Summer Solstice.  
(Glastonbury is having a year off!).

July 4 The American Semiquincentennial,  
aka 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the  
Declaration of Independence.

July 14 Bastille Day, the French National Day.

Other ideas for themes can be found on our website  
[www.antrixcostumesmaidstone.co.uk](http://www.antrixcostumesmaidstone.co.uk)