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Fans await 'Sex and the City' fashion buffet

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The sex in Sex and the City?

It's clothes porn.

It's lusty shopping. It's erotic materialism. It's bags, baubles and stilettos that dangle and shine as enticingly as any aphrodisiac.

In the movie that opens Friday, they're not trying to hide it. Consider the money moment in the trailer:

"Should we get you a diamond?" Mr. Big asks Carrie, who after longing for Big since the show made its debut in 1998, is finally at the threshold of the marriage she dreamed of.

"No," she replies. "Just get me a really big closet."

In Sex and the City, love comes and goes, but shoes are forever.

For fans, it's been a long four years since the HBO series ended and they're looking forward to the movie -- specifically the Manhattan chic outfits on Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte and Miranda -- as they would an iced cosmopolitan on a hot night.

New Line Cinema is reportedly calling the movie "the Super Bowl for women." In other words, it's all about the commercials, except instead of plugs for Budweiser and Viagra, there'll be vodka and a prescription for some serious retail therapy.

Amen, says Lisa Brown, who blogs from Randallstown as the "Ghetto Fashionista."

"I'm a huge fan and I would say it's probably 90 percent about the clothes," says the 36-year-old recruiter for Microsoft. "Of course, you care about the story line, but to me the big thing is to see what the 'It' bag will be or the 'It' shoe."

Which would explain the Louis Vuitton speedy bag and the pair of pink Jimmy Choo sandals in her closet -- both things Brown spotted on the show and had to own.



She's hardly the only one.

Sex and the City has maxed out many a credit card.

If not for the show, who would have heard of -- let alone bought -- Jimmy Choos or Manolo Blahniks? Who would have affixed ginormous flower pins onto their sweaters? Who would have ordered gold necklaces with their names on them and fallen asleep night after night praying and pining for a genuine Birkin bag?

"Seeing the clothes on people you relate to makes a huge difference in making you want to purchase [them]," Brown says.

And not just the clothes.

Sex and the City persuaded women to order cosmopolitans, indulge with cupcakes and parrot phrases like, "He's just not that into you."

If early signs are any indication, the movie, with the characters still dressed by stylist Patricia Field, will unleash the same urge for emulation, the same marketable magic. Publicity stills alone have sent women reaching for their wallets.

The 135-minute movie is rumored to include 300 wardrobe changes -- 80 outfits just for Carrie.

The list of designers with pieces appearing in the film reads like some sort of fashion institute alumni directory: Fendi, Manolo, Ralph Lauren, Christian Dior, Vivienne Westwood, Prada, Alberta Ferretti, Valentino, Thierry Mugler, Ferragamo, Christian Louboutin -- and that's just for starters.

The glamour set swooned over the Dior gladiator sandals that Carrie wears in a number of scenes -- she actually wears them more than once. Perhaps she's trying to get her money's worth out of the strappy black shoes with nearly 5-inch heels since they cost close to \$800.

Then there's the Eiffel Tower purse Carrie clutches in a shot with Mr. Big. Handbag designer Timmy Woods refers to the \$3,000 bag as "a star" of the Sex and the City movie.

Bag Borrow or Steal, a Web site that allows people to rent designer purses, has basked in the film's lucrative glow ever since director Michael Patrick King wrote a mention of the service into the plot.

"It was really a Cinderella story for us," company spokeswoman Jodi Watson told Reuters. "It's instant credibility for our concept and our brand."

Neither Carrie's use of a MacBook Pro nor Samantha's iPhone have escaped notice.

Based on previews of the movie, fashion experts are predicting the giant flower's comeback -- Carrie wears a white dress with a colossal bud blooming near the shoulder.

Flowers, in fact, spring up all over the place, with a number of characters sporting dresses with bold floral prints -- a look Carrie toughens with the aforementioned gladiators.

Conversely, menswear might get a push from another Carrie ensemble -- she wears a tie and vest over a striped shirt and high-waisted, wide-leg pants. But ever-striving for fashion balance, she keeps the look ladylike by choosing a pink shirt and feminine tailoring.

Fabsugar.com editor Samantha Durbin, who predicts the movie's influence on fashion will be "monumental," promises it will teach us to wear belts in more interesting ways. She also expects a rush for vivid colors and wild prints -- even in tandem.

"The show was fashion eye candy," Durbin says, "but the movie -- which is larger than life -- will be a fashion buffet."

Though trends have certainly been launched by other TV shows and movies -- the haircut that became "The Rachel" thanks to Friends, the shoulder-bearing Flashdance sweat shirt, the shunning of socks because of Miami Vice -- few single programs have captivated the fashion world like Sex and the City.

Carrie's little black half-gloves that cover all five fingers but not quite the whole hand, sold out in black and pink on Field's Web site even before the movie opened.

It will be interesting to see how many women attempt to execute a Carrie classic by trying thigh-high argyle socks with open-toed shoes.

"I don't think some of those outfits are really meant for women in the real world," says Amy Kunkoski, president of the Columbia-based social organization Girls and the City, named as an homage to the show. Even so, a shopping spree in D.C. is a key element of her group's seven-event movie premiere weekend.

"In some parts of Maryland, if you walked around in those things, people would think you were wearing a costume," she says.

Reality, though, was never really Sex and the City's point.

Elayne Rapping, an American studies professor at the State University of New York in Buffalo, calls the show a fantasy for women.

"They have these amazing clothes, and [the women] have endless relationships with really, interesting exciting men," she says. "You wish your life could be like that -- most women do. Why wouldn't we? They live lives of lavish extravagance and they hardly work."

Brown has made a hobby of stalking Sex and the City-worthy items at real-world prices. She prowls outlets, scours the Web for deals and keeps an eagle's eye out for affordable versions of the designer pieces she's seen on the show.

"Style is not something you buy," she says. "It's something you have."

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Wire services contributed to this article.

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