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ENVELOPE ENTERTAINMENT

Prop or lucky charm? For character or comfort? These film items come straight from the actors

By **RANDEE DAWN**
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Michelle Yeoh and Nico Santos in a scene from "Crazy Rich Asians." (Sanja Bucko / Warner Bros. Entertainment via AP Photo)

An emerald ring, a stuffed bear, a jacket — props and costumes always help ground actors in a film’s story, but few things are more powerful to have on set than something they personally connect with. “It’s a little whisper to yourself in the movie,” says John C. Reilly (“Stan & Ollie”). The Envelope tracked down several of the things actors carried — sometimes directly from home — onto the set and listened to what those whispers sounded like.

Nathanael Saleh, “Mary Poppins Returns” (John Banks)



From left: Nathanael Saleh (with teddy bear), Pixie Davies and Joel Dawson in "Mary Poppins Returns." (Photo Credit: Jay Maidment / Disney)

The item: A stuffed teddy bear

Its origin: Little Bear may not be the starring stuffed animal of the film (that's brother Georgie's giraffe), but Saleh, 12, wanted to know if his own beloved stuffie could be included — and it was agreed to. Little Bear can be seen briefly when Poppins (Emily Blunt) tucks the children into bed and she brings John the beloved toy, which in real life was crocheted by the actor's grandmother. (It echoes one of the characters in Jane Hissey's “Old Bear” book series.)

Getting personal: “Little Bear has always come with me wherever I've gone in the world,” says Saleh in an email. “He's kind of become my lucky mascot.” But during

filming, Saleh had to leave Little Bear on the set. “His whole demeanor changed [when we told him that], says producer John DeLuca. “But he said yes. That decision was so deep for a child!” Adds Saleh, “My sadness was outweighed by realizing that Little Bear would be an important part of the movie. After all, Mary Poppins did hold him as she was singing to us.”

Michelle Yeoh, “Crazy Rich Asians” (Eleanor Young)



Michelle Yeoh wears her emerald ring in a scene from "Crazy Rich Asians." (Sanja Bucko / Warner Bros.)

The item: An original-design emerald ring

Its origin in the film: “We were a smaller budget movie, and when you're showcasing jewels you really need assistance,” says production designer Nelson Coates. “We were talking with jewelers about getting that iconic cut — and we couldn't find it. Michelle overheard and said, ‘I have something,’ and when we saw it, it was perfect.”

Getting personal: “After finishing a special movie, I sometimes buy something that reminds me of it,” says Yeoh, who says she purchased the ring after filming 2011's “The Lady.” “We had to find the right ring, one that represents [Eleanor's] soul. It's like casting the right actor for the job.” Was she worried it might be lost? “It's insured, and I swear to God my producers were more worried than I was about it,” she says. “You have to live your fear.”

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John C. Reilly, “Stan & Ollie” (Oliver Hardy)

The item: A tea cup

Its origin in the film: A blue mug (or cup as Reilly calls it) featuring images of various rope knots. “This teacup had become this beloved companion throughout the shoot, and one of the last scenes we shot is the opening scene in the movie,” says Reilly. “They said, ‘Is there anything you want on your dressing table?’ And I thought, ‘I'm going to put this old thing there. It's a little memento or Easter egg.’”

Getting personal: Reilly says the set designer raised a gentle objection: The scene takes place in 1937, and the mug's enamel wasn't available until the 1950s. But Reilly wanted to keep it anyway, and it can be briefly seen if you look closely in the opening shot of the film. “It didn't even get back to me until later” that there'd been a discussion, says director John S. Baird. “Actors find these sorts of things comforting — like Linus and his blanket. I never had an issue with it.”

Tom Waits, “The Old Man & the Gun” (Waller)



Tom Waits wearing the jacket in a photo from "Old Man & the Gun." (Eric Zachanowich / Fox Searchlight Pictures)

The item: Jacket with racing stripes

Its origin in the film: “Tom brought the jacket with him. I love it when the lines between character and actor blur,” says director David Lowery. Waits’ jacket was purchased specifically for the role by the actor/musician — who plays an accomplice of Robert Redford's character — and the stripes were added later.

Getting personal: “We were just playing around at his first fitting, both trying to get into the head space of who Waller was,” recalls costume designer Annell Brodeur. “Toward the end of the day he sent me this drawing and said what if we did racing stripes on this jacket? And I thought it was a lovely way to incorporate something that made him feel more comfortable in his skin in the character.”



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