

Cover shoots

Kim Killion of HOT DAMN Designs! knows what it takes to shoot a good cover photo. One shoot can run the gamut from sweet, chaste Regency to hot contemporary erotica, with the right styling and tweaking of costumes.

A conversation with Kim Killion

What happens during a cover shoot?

Kim Killion: The goal always is to do a small shoot; the goal is always one guy and two or three girls; it always blossoms. We always end up bringing in two to three guys but we always have double the girls for the guys because the girls will go out and change while we shoot guy A with girl A. And then we'll bring in girl B and we'll change them out and so we overlap everyone by an hour. So we have to bring in the girls to sit with the stylist for an hour and then they'll be on set for two hours and so we'll probably have 12 people on set at any given time [...]

[...] So when we get them dressed, especially for historical, there's a lot of layers that go into an outfit. So we'll dress the guy all the way up to his ascot and we'll button all the way up and we'll do the same thing with the girl and so we'll shoot that for a sweeter cover. And that might be a cover that's not—maybe there isn't even any, you know, consummation in that book and then it's easier to undress them.

So then we'll take the ascot off and we'll open up the shirt and this happens within about a 10-minute timeframe that will go from sweet to naked. And so we'll

open up the shirt and then we'll take the jacket off and then we'll unzip the girl's dress and we'll turn her around and we'll shoot the bare back. And as the clothes peel off, the heat level of that particular book obviously increases and then, you know, we'll—by the time they're, that might be a Regency cover but by the time you strip them down to near nothingness then you're into contemporary erotic. So yes, that's the progression and then we send them out and get them dressed again and we do it all over. *[laughs]*

How do you direct your cover shoots?

We put them on set and it's, you know, "Mary meet Joe and Joe, this is Mary. Now get closer." And it's uncomfortable because it's, you know, it's nicer if they can stand back and have a piece of pizza or, you know, have a glass of wine and loosen up or something like that. And then when we get them on set and we'll go through one shoot and then we'll bring them back and they get progressively better, and we re-shoot the same people oftentimes. So they're very comfortable if we bring in someone new then, you know, I'll just look at them and I'll be, "You know, Kate, you know what to do, just show him what we need." And then if they don't do what I ask them to, I will make that happen on my own [...]

[...] When they get stand on set, they don't know where to put their hands, so I will go on set and I will position them. I will, you know, hold her dress up with his hand, "This is how I want you, this is where I want your leg, I want your head angled like this, I want your nose on this side, her nose on this side." And then oftentimes they're not close enough so I'll stand back and my photographer's right here, you know, on my shoulder and I'll be like, "Closer, closer." And if they don't get close enough, I will go in and I will put them closer and I will say, "Don't move. Take the shot." And then we take the shot.

But if I want the actual kiss, I will literally direct, you know, "Joe, I want you to take Mary's top lip into your mouth" and "Mary, I want you to take Joe's bottom lip into your mouth." And, you know, it takes a half a second before they go, "Oh, she wants us to kiss," you know. And it's like "Yes, do that please. Thank you. Take the shot. Great. Okay now everybody can break up." *[laughs]* And that's about how fast it is, so it's entertaining.

Do the same models appear in multiple book covers?

One of our models, Billy Freda. And he came in and we did the shoot and then we stripped out the background and put in the treasure chest, and etc. And sometimes we keep their heads and sometimes we cut half of them off and so we can reuse them [...]

[...] We do covers for one of the New York houses and the author wanted a clothed cowboy and that's actually, you know, it's not uncommon for them to request. We usually ask them, "Do you want them with clothes on or do you want 'man chest.'" It's a term, do you want "man chest"? "Yes, I want the 'man chest,'" or "No, I don't, it's not that hot of a book."

I find this ironic because this is not a hot book, so I was told. But the name of the book is *One Hot Cowboy*. But you know, that's from the same session and basically, you know, we would take the shot and then it was, "Okay, I will go in and I'll undo his vest and undo his shirt and I'll step back out and then we'll take more."

How did you imagine cover shoots were done? Have you ever been involved with a cover shoot?

POPULAR ROMANCE PROJECT

<http://www.hotdamndesigns.com>

<http://www.popularromanceproject.org>

<http://www.facebook.com/PopularRomanceProject>

<http://twitter.com/popularromance>