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Style

Heated Rivalry's costume designer on the show's hottest styles — yes, including the 'tuna melt pants'

Hanna Ridley reveals the details behind some of the most talked about fashion from the CBC series

Suzanne Rhinelander · CBC Life · Posted: Jan 23, 2026 2:00 PM EST | Last Updated: 9 hours ago

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(Crave)

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Heated Rivalry, the Canadian TV show based on the queer hockey romance novels by Rose Scotia author Rachel Reid, is quite literally everywhere right now.

The hauls of the boundary-pushing series, Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie, are booked and sold out. Fans are recreating the characters' looks, from Williams's signature mullet to Storrie's tattoos and appearing on podcasts. And all-you-social-media and on-countless-Reddit-threads, legions of fans are talking about what their characters, Shane and Ilya, are wearing on the show (despite the fact that many of the sexiest popular scenes do without clothing altogether).

If you're a fan of the show from creator Jacob Tierney, or just follow pop culture in general, you've likely already come across Rod Taylor's Canada Place on your feeds. But there are a many more looks to talk about in the spicy Crave series.

(Crave, Hanna Ridley/Instagram)

For a deeper dive into some of Heated Rivalry's most memorable fashion moments, we reached out to the show's Toronto-based costume designer Hanna Ridley, who shared her thought process behind the fits and what they can tell us about the much-flustered characters.

Ilya's 'tuna melt pants'

During a pivotal scene in Episode 4, Ilya invites Shane over to his place, greeting him in nothing but a pair of black drop crotch pants and matching slides. After sex, Ilya prepares tuna melt sandwiches for his guest. Shane, before things get heavy again (naturally).

The name behind the slow-mideats "tuna melt pants"? American designer Rick Owens, which known for his provocative ready-to-wear collections, as well his hard-shoulder blazers, boldly tailored menswear silhouettes and intriguing cuts. "They evoke so much cultural significance," said Ridley. "They're so fun and challenging and interesting, and I think that kind of attitude really lends Ilya to work."

Ilya also has a penchant for the finer things in life, she explained, which made these pants a great fit. "Ilya's not scoping for attention, but they're still extremely expensive loungewear."

Sasha's floral blouse

(Crave)

In Episode 3, viewers meet Ilya's former flame, Sasha, played by actor Kaden Connors. In this flashback, Sasha is a bit of a hot mess, and his wardrobe reflects that, from his Scholars Rocks dispositions, which Ridley sourced from Toronto vintage shop 20 Mary.

A lot of the L.A. and Paris-based Amerik designs on S.R.'s adversaries — a little bit toxic in some ways," she said. "I kind of like that for the Russian characters because they do kind of feel like they're illustrating their issue at the expectation of both their country and their sport."

At the same time, the characters of the piece allowed for Ridley to experiment with the idea of "masculinity and femininity and how they fit," for her, that shirt was kind of one even a question. "I'm glad that it made it into the show."

Ilya's patchwork jacket

(Crave)

In the pilot episode, Ilya wears a patchwork denim chore coat to a hotel rendezvous with Shane.

"That one is actually a huge Boss jacket that I just really love," Ridly said. "[It's] a bit of a surprising one to both a chore coat and denim jacket, which I thought it fun because it feels really playful."

The piece was originally paired with camouflage pants, but Tierney — best known for his work on Letterkenny and its spin-off, Shoresy — felt they were too bold. Pulse rate. So she swapped them out for a pair of black pleats, which felt like the right choice for Ilya. "They feel a lot Euro to me," she said.

The result is a subtle Canadian tuxedo for the Russian character. "I know P.Z.[1] put in little nods to our country when I can. Shane's something really nice about that visual language that will evoke certain things for the audience," said Ridly.

Rose's leopard-print shirt

(Crave)

During Shane's overt crush with Rose Landry (Sophie Nélisse) in Episode 4, the furious actress stands out in her bold red and black leopard-print Miu Miu shirt.

Leopard print tends to be associated with a certain type of character and is "inherently sexy," said Pulsey, however, the shirt's sweet Peter Pan collar tempers the overall vibe. "The fact that it's still a bit of an innocuous, demure option makes for but a bit like a safe choice, I think, for Shane," she explained.

The look also helps to convey Rose's character, said Pulsey. "She's confident, but she's also not aggressive in any way."

Ilya's club shirt

(Crave)

Pulsey also dressed Ilya in leopard print in Episode 4 for the show's unforgettable nightclub scene, but to a very different effect.

At this point in the season, Shane and Rose have gone public with their relationship and Ilya is "feeling a little bit itchy and needing to go get attention somehow," said Pulsy. Enter the Rhesus leopard print piece from Jean Paul Gaultier's Fall 1998 collection, also sourced from Toronto's 20 Mary. It's a bold and playful shirt whose luxurious fashion choices while speaking to its emotional state, to the point he is distracted.

It also foreshadows the end of the night when Ilya's "essentially skinned" after spotting Shane and Rose dancing together in the club, Pulsy said. "He loses a lot of his power and ends up going home alone."

Rose's silver club dress

(Crave)

Of more mind instantly want to Kevin Knightley's clubbing top in Blind (Life Bechtum in Paris, William's other 21st birthday dress when seeing Ryan's crush Rich in Episode 4, you're not alone. "That's kind of what I was trying to do," said Pulsey.

Her goal was to make Rose look super confident, but not like she was winnowing the wheat. "I kind of wanted to make that connotation with Hollywood, where there's a lot of visual pulling that people to in terms of how they want to present themselves and what icons they want to connect to," she said.

Instead of sourcing from a shop or pulling from a designer, Pulsey created this dress herself using a vintage pattern. "It's a very simple pattern, actually, but it's very flattering and it's something that don't get the chance to make pieces from scratch, she said, so Rhinelander's commitment to flex those muscles and craft an eye-catching number that fit Nélisse perfectly — even if it meant making that adjustments up until the camera started rolling.

"I was definitely on my knees [in the green scene] while they were going over their lines, trying to see the seams together," she said with a laugh.

Kip's friends' fits

(Crave)

In Episode 5, Ilya Grady — a barista played by Robbie S.K. — is introduced, along with his group of friends, who are Rose's exes. Ilya's friends are dressed to experiment more with colour and vintage pieces to express each person's individuality.

Take Kip's best friend, Elena Rigg (Nadine Bhabha), who sports a vibrant red Escape gown during the gala scene and a pink and orange striped puffer coat by Gerrard based Ottingwards at the City. "We had really great outfits on her," said Pulsy.

"One of things that I wish we could've had a little bit more time with was the Kip world," she added. "I'm hearing with Season 2 we'll be able to play with that a bit more."

Shane's Team Canada fleece

(Crave)

Lastly, a moment for Shane's white Team Canada jacket. It features in Episode 2 and has been drawing loads of attention recently with fans crossing their fingers and toes and crazy even petitioning for Team Canada to produce it.

Pulsy had comfort in mind when designing the piece, which ended up being a minimalist white zip-up fleece embroidered with red maple leaves on each arm and "Canada" on the back.

"This is a contrast to most Olympic uniforms, which she says often feel unpassionate and too avant-garde for the average person.

"I wanted to make something that just felt super Canadian and simple and straightforward," she said. "Something that felt like you would want to put it on."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elyanne Miranda

Elyanne Miranda is a Toronto-based journalist, editor and content writer. Follow her @ellyanneh.

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