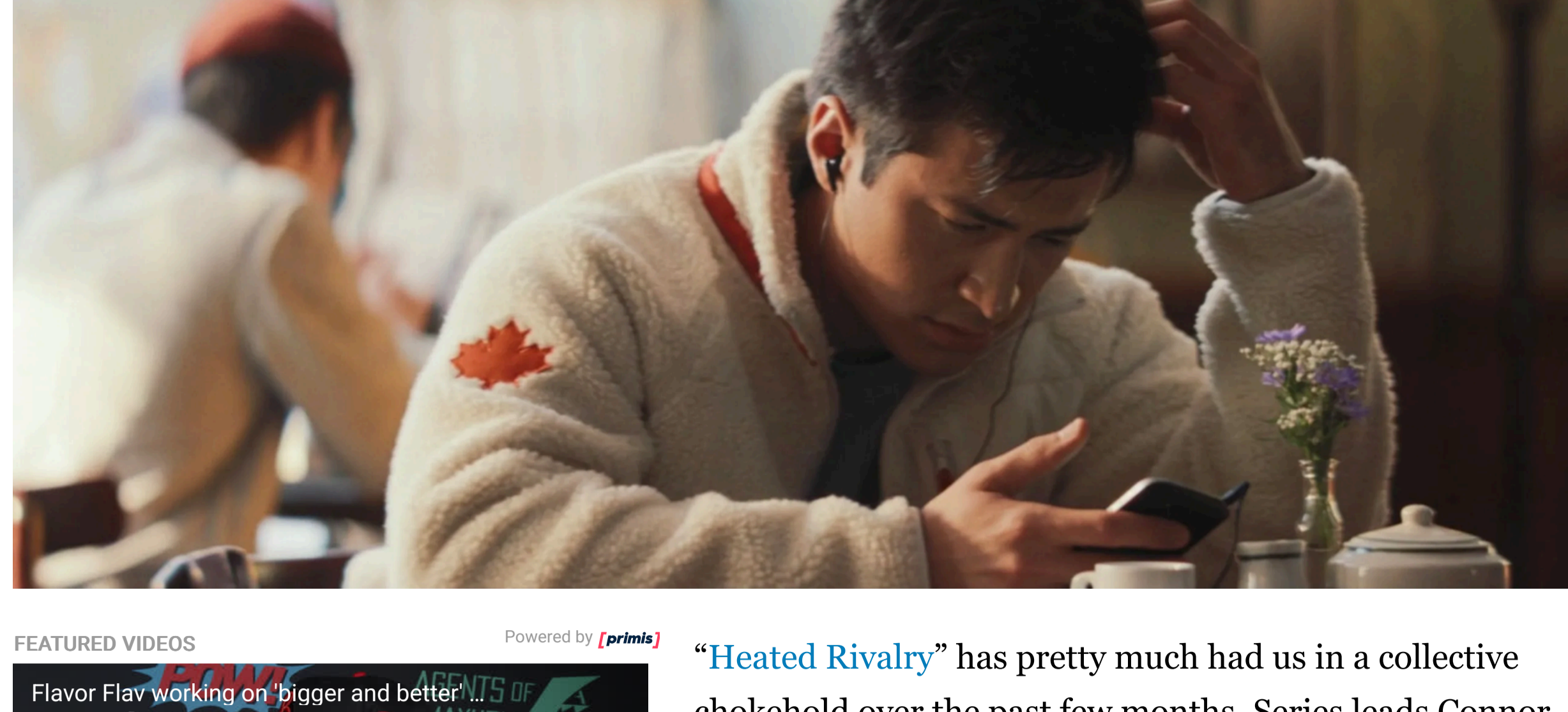


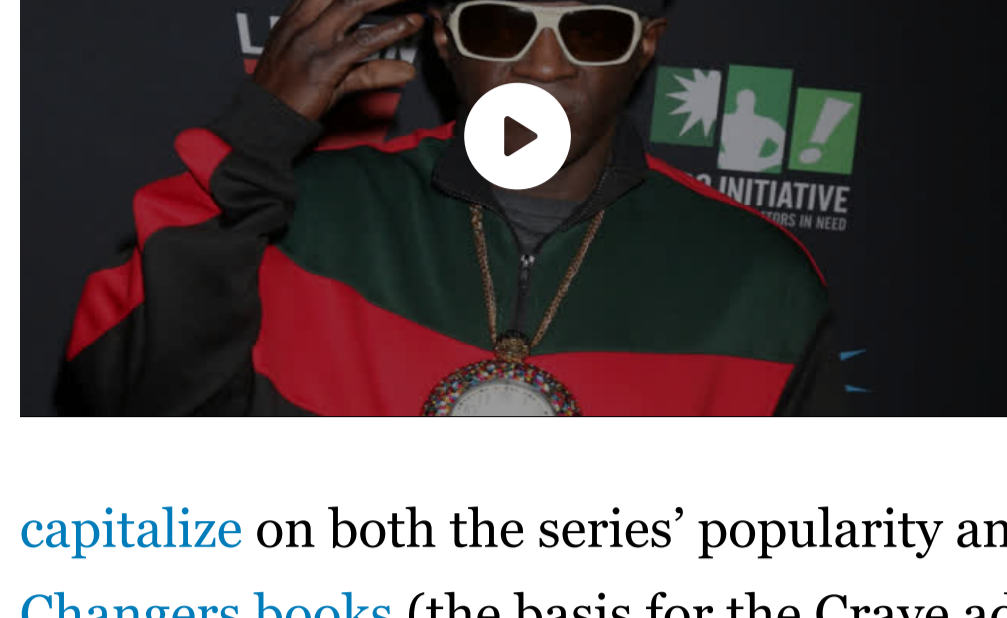
Women Writers Week

# An Anatomy of a Fleece: Why “Heated Rivalry” Fans Have Latched Onto its Very Canadian Jacket

Michelle Jaworski 1 day ago 5 min read



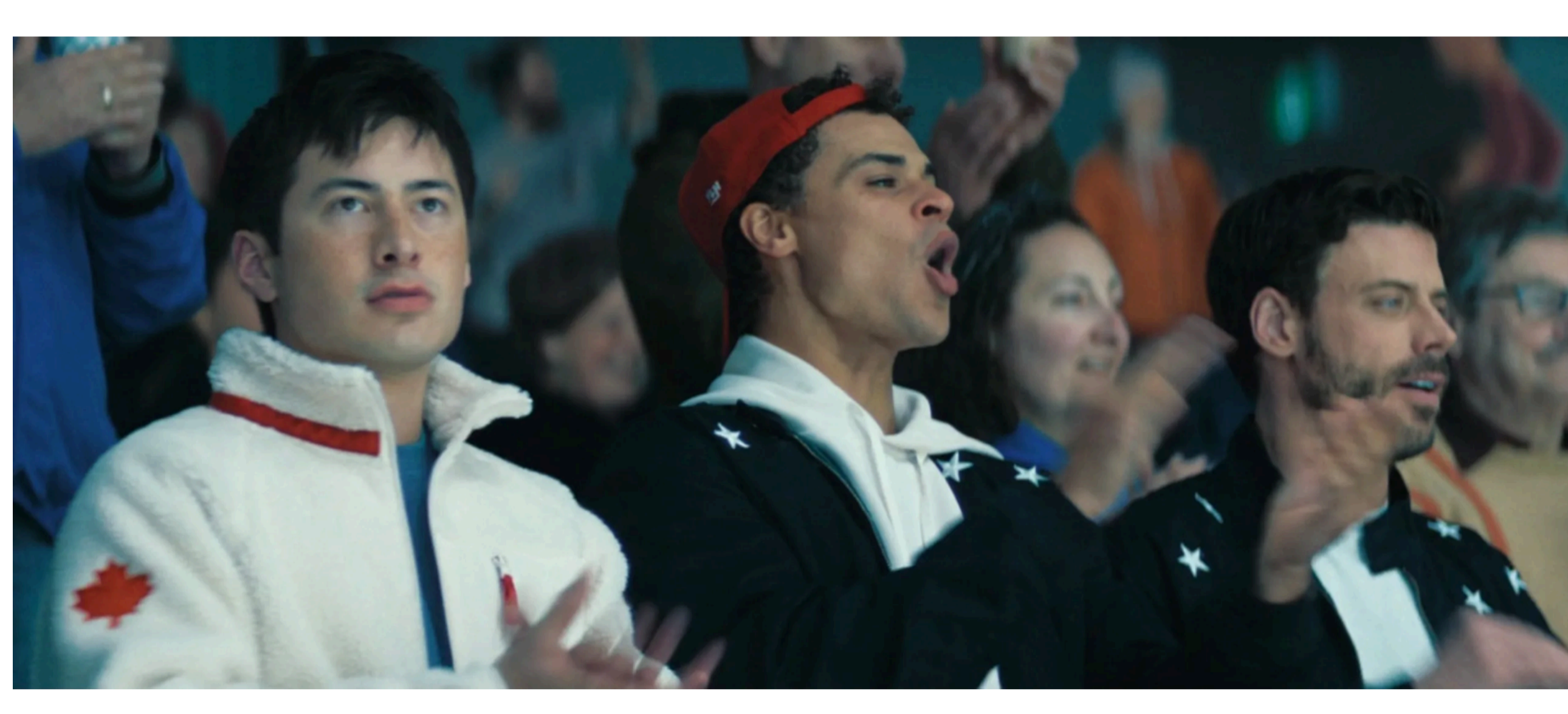
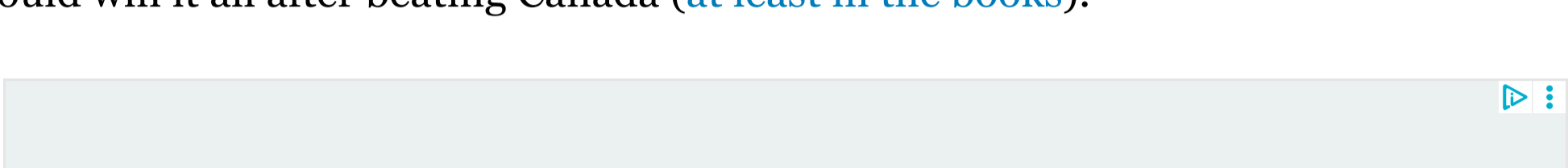
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“Heated Rivalry” has pretty much had us in a collective chokehold over the past few months. Series leads Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams have quickly shot to superstardom. We’re still scratching the surface at what a show like “Heated Rivalry” could do to address professional sports’ culture of toxicity in an environment where pro athletes publicly coming out is still a rare occurrence (even as the National Hockey League hopes to capitalize on both the series’ popularity and its creation of new hockey fans). Rachel Reid’s Game Changers books (the basis for the Crave adaptation) have topped bestsellers’ charts for weeks.

We simply can’t get enough of Shane Hollander (Williams) and Ilya Rozanov’s (Storrie) love story, no matter how many times we’ve seen it or what future seasons (and books) have in store for us. But as much as “Heated Rivalry” has expertly built its characters from the ground up, often through sex (and often without them wearing much at all), the show’s breakout look is one that solidly stays on: a pure Canadian fleece.

The garment—a white fleece with “CANADA” displayed across the back in red, red trim at the collar, and a red maple leaf on each arm—is briefly seen in the second and third episodes of “Heated Rivalry” (“Olympians” and “Hunter,” respectively) when Shane is at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Ilya and the Russian men’s hockey team already flamed out, whereas Canada and USA, represented in the episode by the New York Admirals’ Scott Hunter (François Arnaud) and Carter Vaughn (Kolton Stewart), both still have a shot at winning gold; like in Milan, the US men’s hockey team in “Heated Rivalry” would win it all after beating Canada (at least in the books).

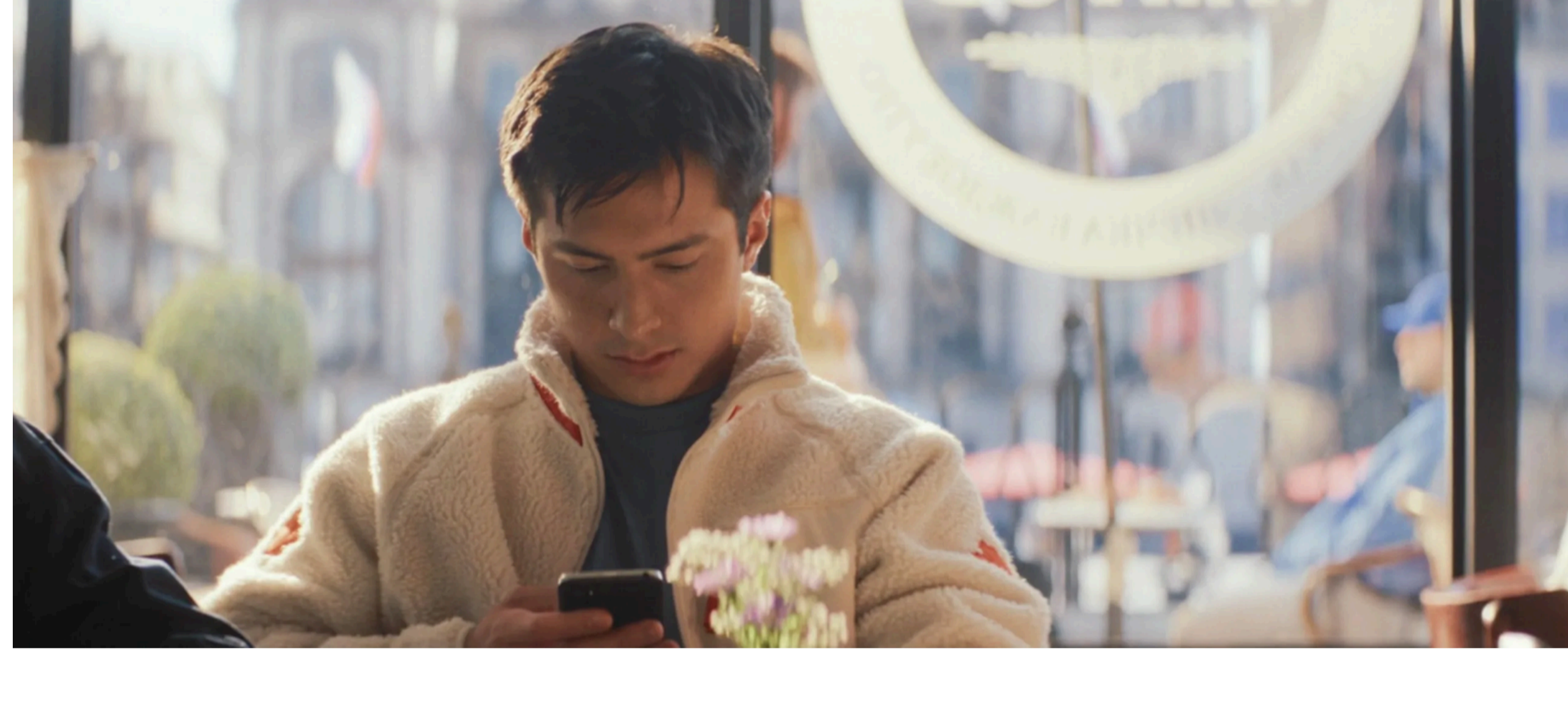


Shane is still wearing the fleece when the three of them watch Shane’s friend perform in the men’s figure skating short program, and also when he later confronts Ilya (already in a bad mood and entirely garbed in black) about ignoring him.

We don’t see the jacket again after Sochi, although Shane wears plenty of casual athletic wear when he’s not on the ice before eventually hiring a stylist. But the jacket still made its mark. In the three months since the premiere of “Heated Rivalry,” the fleece sparked fan-made knockoffs (including some requests from multiple players on the Canadian women’s hockey team), a Change.org petition, notice from Team Canada, a team up between Province of Canada and “Heated Rivalry” that will (eventually) allow us to have a jacket of our own, and Williams delivering the fleece onto the literal shoulders of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney.

Not bad for a jacket that gets maybe about four minutes of screentime in the entire first season, huh?

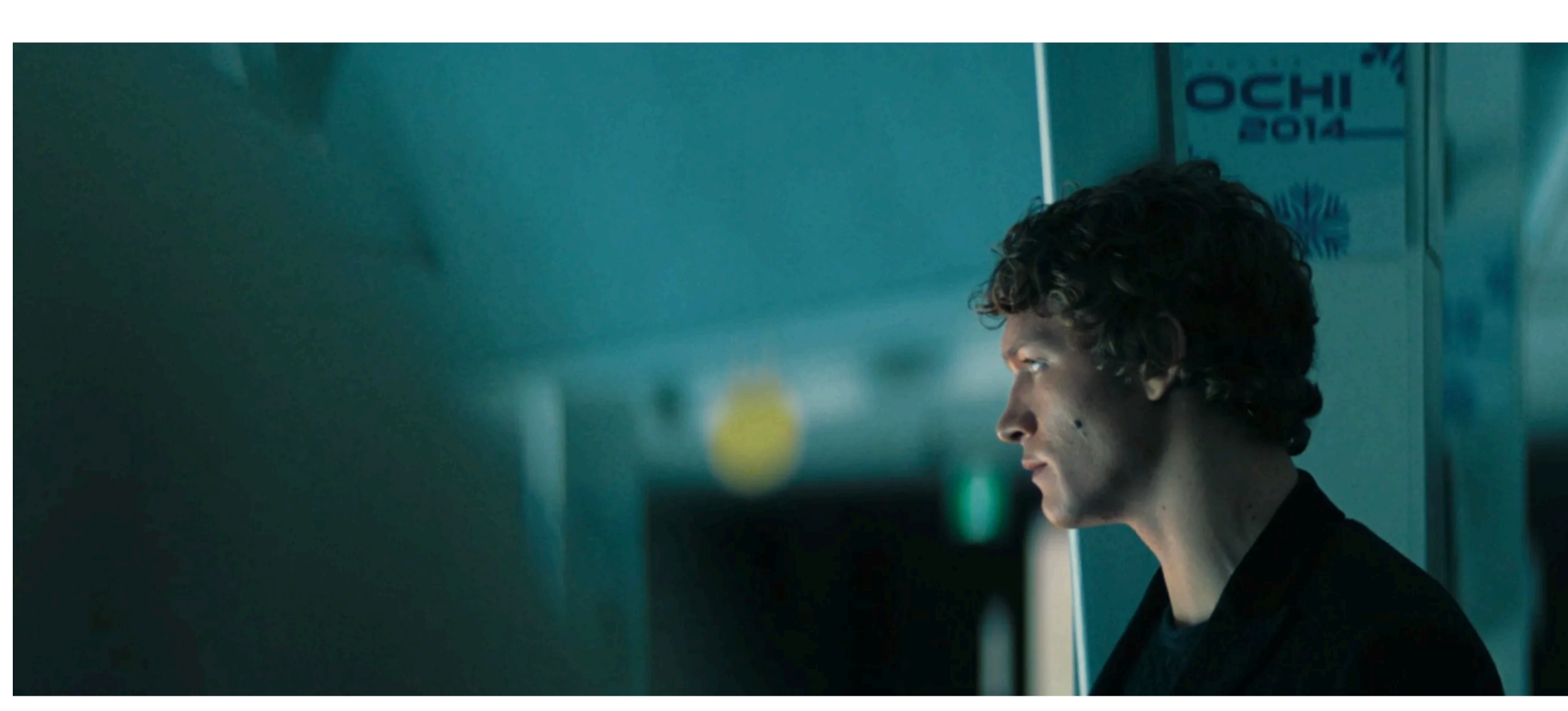
Shows and films often use costumes to tell audiences stories almost as much as character development and plot all the time; it can be a visual shorthand, a nod to someone’s state of mind, or hint at bigger blowups to come. “Heated Rivalry” is no different—even when the costume is something as self-explanatory to the plot as an athlete wearing his country’s official jacket during the Winter Olympics.



Shane’s Team Canada fleece, a creation by costume designer Hanna Puley, isn’t a flashy piece of Olympic athleisure wear by any means. The outfits that these athletes wear to compete against the best in the world and lounge in while representing their countries (including last month’s Winter Olympics in Milan) can be flashy and more stylized as well as comfortable; Team Canada’s actual 2014 Winter Olympics uniform, designed by Canadian apparel company Hudson’s Bay, included a fitted sweater, flourish variations beyond the maple leaf, and even Ilya’s “stupid Canadian wolf bird” on some of the accessories. The patriotic fleece we’ve gotten for Shane and the rest of the Canadian team (conveniently off-camera for this episode) is downright simplistic in comparison. There are hints of red, but it doesn’t overwhelm the jacket.

The fleece looks warm, especially compared to the thin navy star-laden jackets Scott and Carter wear with white hoodies, and the white material makes it look like a fluffy cloud you could rest your head on, a platonic ideal for a work outfit; even if we don’t ever see Shane wearing it while lounging around in Montreal or at the cottage after Sochi, you could imagine it. And when official Olympic outfits—some of which are designed by higher-end brands and companies like Ralph Lauren, Giorgio Armani, and Lululemon—can put you back hundreds of dollars, Shane’s fleece is approachable. In the reality of “Heated Rivalry,” it might possibly even be affordable.

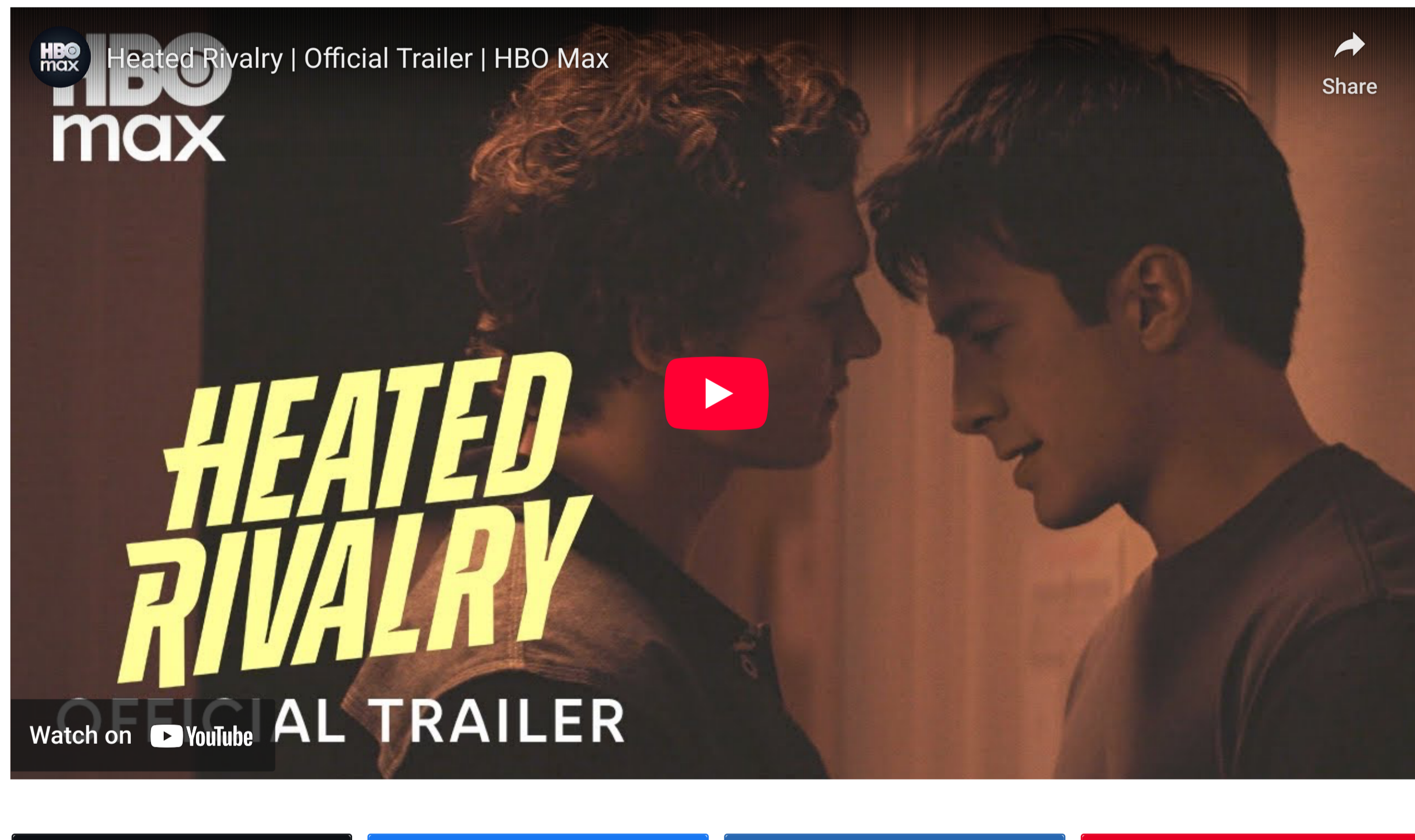
“I really wanted to make Olympic gear that actually felt wearable and cozy,” Puley wrote on Instagram in a breakdown of the show’s costumes. “The idea of approachability and comfort was really important for me here. As well as showcasing Canadian identity—which to me feels like quiet confidence. Tough, self-aware, and a little understated. But, ultimately COZY.”



The fleece stands in even greater contrast (by design, according to Puley) to Ilya’s ensemble when Shane later goes up to Ilya on the upper level. Shane still has on his Team Canada jacket, a detail taken directly from the Heated Rivalry novel. But Ilya is dressed with not a hint of Team Russia gear on him and in a foul mood from a family who sees any outcome less than winning gold to be a disappointment. (And with the Russian men’s hockey team getting knocked out after losing to Latvia just four days in, his father likely sees him as the ultimate disappointment.)

Even without Sochi and Russia’s anti-LGBTQ+ policies hanging in the air making anything between them impossible in that moment, neither of them are yet at a place where they can be honest with each other or themselves about who they are or what they could mean to one another. But Shane, with full support from his parents back home and a friendly rivalry with the Americans that probably gets a fraction of the in-universe screentime that his with Ilya does, is more sure of himself and his place, while Ilya is still finding his footing.

Throughout the first season of “Heated Rivalry,” Shane and Ilya continue to switch between who’s got it figured out and who’s internally flailing. But with that fleece in Sochi, in its Canadian pride and coziness, Shane is the one on solid ground.



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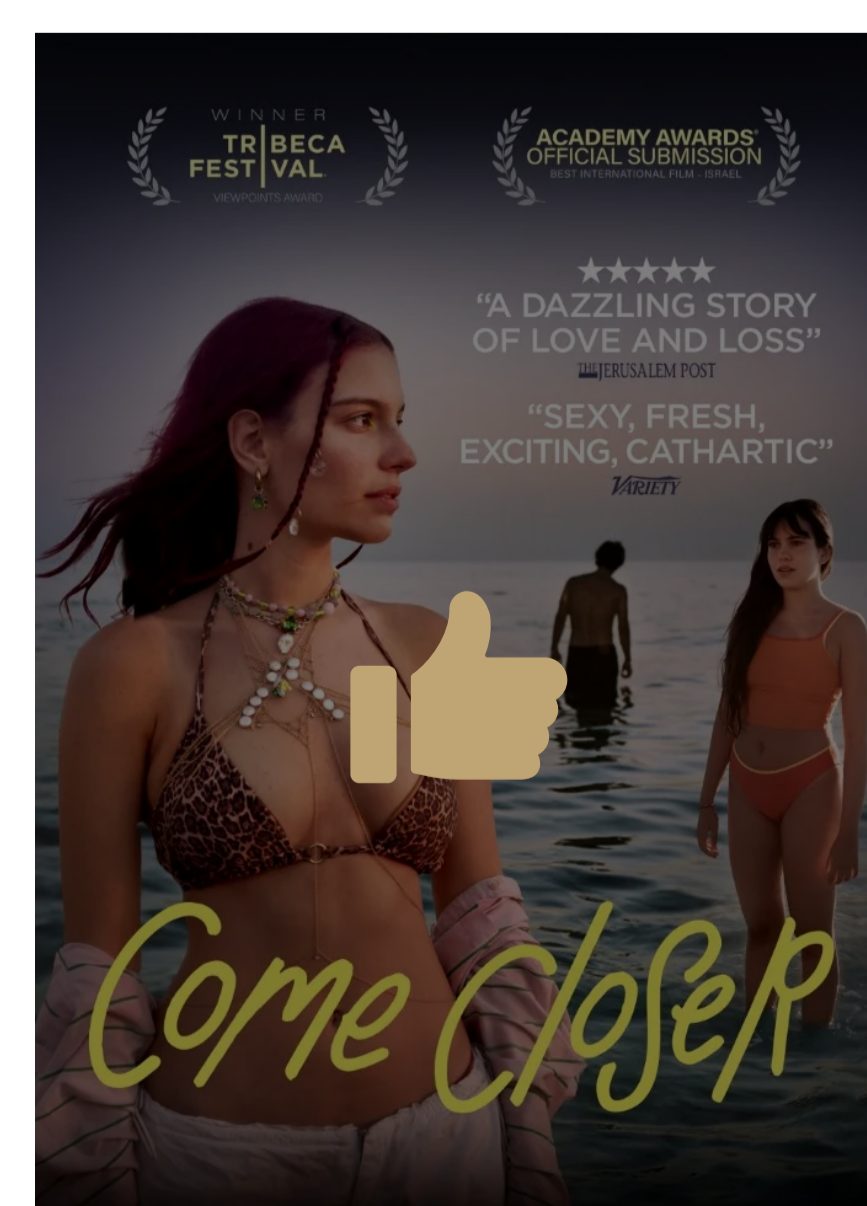
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