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LOS ANGELES AND REGION**Park Pleating Co. And The Movies**Comments (0) | [costume design](#), [edward moya jr.](#), [Los Angeles and Region](#), [park pleating](#), [park pleating co.](#)[Aaron Hagstrom](#) | April 30, 2013 | 3:50 p.m. PDT

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In the movie trailer for “Man of Steel,” Russell Crowe strides confidently through his palace on the planet Krypton, his burgundy silk cape billowing behind.

Moviegoers “ooh” and “ahh” over such eye-catching costumes. But few pay attention to details like the cape’s pleating, which was made by a small South Central workshop.

“His costume is outrageous,” said Edward Moya Jr., owner of Park Pleating Co., a garment contracting company. “And it’s all my pleating.”

Costume designers are honored with relative fame and movie screen credits for their designs. Garment makers receive little or none, yet they are integral to the movie industry.

Among the go-to manufacturers for the movie industry is Park Pleating Co., a small 50-year-old family-owned pleating company on South Main Street. It primarily deals in the ancient art of fabric folding that has existed since the Greeks and Egyptians. The company also offers novelty stitching, cloth-covered buttons and belts.

The redbrick storefront is narrow but inside is a long workroom covering the length of two football fields. Three employees cut out fabric on big tables, sew, or operate steamers and fabric-cutting machines. Along the back wall, hundreds of pattern scrolls are stacked in cubbyholes. These cubbyholes served as the backdrop for a photograph in a recent Vogue magazine article on fashion designer Juan Carlos Obando.

Park starts humming when production companies like Warner Bros. and Universal Studios come with concept sketches and fabrics. Moya sets to work to create a look that the designer approves. Then the costume is pieced together and modeled by the actor. This process might be repeated five or six times — as it was for “Man of Steel” — right up until the movie director approves a design.

Park recently made capes for Russell Crowe, who stars as Superman’s father, Jor-El. Employees also pleated the tops of Superman’s red boots and the black sheepskin cape of Faora Hu-Ul — Superman’s nemesis. Capes were duplicated to replace ones ruined in various scenes involving stage blood, water or dirt.

The company receives two or three movie assignments per week, Moya said, and he usually completes the work six to eight months before the movie is released.

For “The Mummy” movies, the adventure-horror blockbuster chronicling a mummy reawakened to life, Park pleated costumes for extras including the smocks of 600 Egyptian villagers and the leather gloves of a throng of warriors. For “The Chronicles of Riddick,” a science fiction film about the space hero’s attempt to elude capture by bounty hunters, Moya pleated several futuristic costumes for the lead character played by Diesel.

Chris Newlander, a costume department buyer for Warner Bros., said Moya’s work on the Jor-El costume was even better than he expected because of its unique pleating. Newlander is charged with contracting companies to design the multiple pieces of a costume and said he frequently looks to Park because of its high standards.

The cape is unique for its “freeform” pleating, irregular pleating accomplished through a combination of hand manipulations and steam ironing. Pleats are made by laying fabric between large creased sheets of Manila paper that are then passed through a steamer.



Park Pleating Co. logo. (Screenshot by Neon Tommy)

"He did an incredible amount of work on Russell Crowe's cape," Newlander said. "An amazing job. It looks otherworldly." Moya pleated several hundred yards of fabric within two weeks, a job that would normally have taken much longer," Newlander said.'

Moya recently proposed pleating and stitching samples for motor-cross trousers worn in Tom Cruise's new film, Oblivion, but his design was rejected.

Outside of movies, Park also works with fashion design companies like Enzacosta, James Perse and BCBG Maxazria.

Mario Weissenberg, a director of production at BCBG Maxazria who collects pleating samples for designers from Park, said Moya understands what designers want.

Juan Carlos Obando, a Los Angeles-based designer, brings work to Park because of Moya's skill in achieving texture with superimposed pleats.

"Sometimes 10 pleating techniques will be used on one piece," Obando said. "It looks rather simple, but the craftsmanship requires a lot of experience."

The firm was founded by Moya's father, Edward Moya Sr., in 1964. The elder Moya was already known as an expert in pleating. While a floor manager at Davis Pleating Co, he stitched accordion pleats on a white cocktail dress; it played a key part in one of the most famous movie scenes of the 20th Century. He watched as Marilyn Monroe wore it on the big screen in "The Seven Year Itch" and stood over a subway grating as a gust of wind billowed the skirt.

Park now pleats Monroe dresses for impersonator performers at Universal Studios Theme Park six or seven times per year, the younger Moya said.

In the 1970s, Park made skirts for five of the largest women's tennis companies, including the Darlington Clothing and Apparel Co. It was making 1,200 skirts per week, Moya said.

Moya's father retired at 80 years old, handing off the business to his son in 2000.

At the time, Park was facing tough times. The North American Free Trade Agreement had freed up American businesses to outsource work to Mexico and Canada. Most of these jobs were in manufacturing, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

Park was floating \$100,000 to \$150,000 in debt, Moya recalled. Too many people were behind in their payments. Father and son tried to corral the money that clients put off paying but with little success. In an effort to recover, the younger Moya refinanced the business and took out a \$250,000 loan.

Moya said part of the problem was due to the unpredictability of the business. Garment contracting businesses started failing around him.

In 1997, Moya was so desperate for work that he began the graphics company Nexus Dimension. Though fairly successful in making graphics for garments and signs, he said, he gave it up to focus on Park when his father retired.

While his company is struggling, it is managing to get by, Moya said. The company broke into the black three years ago. But the past couple of months have been difficult.

If not for the close, personal relationships cultivated with clientele, Park would have been out of business long ago, Moya said. One notable recent contract was with Sian Richards, a London-based makeup artist who has received accolades for her work on Halle Berry in Cloud Atlas. She asked Moya to do some work on makeup bags.

"Unless you care about your clients, you will go down the tube fast," Moya said.

Reach Aaron Hagstrom [here](#).

