



PARTNERSHIP

## WONDER KIDS

Indie film auteur Spike Jonze and style savant Humberto Leon join forces for Jonze's new futuristic romance, *Her*—and the clothing collection it inspired for Leon's trendsetting boutique.

BY STINSON CARTER PHOTOGRAPHY BY JESSE CHEHAK



**FILM & FASHION** Clockwise from top: Joaquin Phoenix in *Her*; an iPhone-ready shirt from Leon's *Her*-inspired Opening Ceremony collection; Leon, Carol Lim and Jonze at Opening Ceremony's 10th anniversary party in New York, 2012.

**I**T WAS A THREADBARE JACKET that first brought film maverick Spike Jonze and fashion maven Humberto Leon together. At a Christmas party in New York six years ago, Leon recognized Jonze's well-worn garment because the company he cofounded, cultish global boutique Opening Ceremony, happened to have made it. The designer offered to replace the director's jacket, and the kindling for a haute-couture bromance was sparked. That the two meshed so easily was no surprise: Both are known in their respective fields as visionary cool kids who blend industry smarts with idiosyncratic style, Jonze with his wildly inventive films (*Being John Malkovich*, *Adaptation*) and Leon with his fashion sense that seems to encapsulate the downtown zeitgeist. The friends' first mutual project came in 2009, when Leon designed a collection inspired by Jonze's *Where the Wild Things Are*: A hoodie with pointy ears and a fuzzy, monster-like one-piece sold out in a single day. The project was such a success that they've joined forces again, this time for Jonze's latest film, *Her*, in which Joaquin Phoenix plays a man who falls in love with an operating system, throatily voiced by Scarlett Johansson. The accompanying collection—called *her* by Opening Ceremony—is “designed for men and meant for women to steal,” according to Leon, and includes riffs

on wardrobe staples from the movie, like Phoenix's wool plaid coat and high-waisted pants. *WSJ.* talked to the duo on a call from their far-flung cosmopolitan perches: Leon in Paris, where he was preparing for an upcoming Kenzo show (he and partner Carol Lim serve as the brand's creative directors), and Jonze in Los Angeles, where he was putting the finishing touches on *Her*. Here, they talk filmmaking, fashion and the importance of kung fu to the creative process.

**WSJ:** When did you first begin discussing *Her*?

**SPIKE JONZE:** We were in Paris at the same time and Humberto said, “Let's go to Morocco!”

**HUMBERTO LEON:** Spike brought his guitar, and in between sing-alongs of Pulp songs and buying carpets and eating great Moroccan food, he would tell me about this new project he was working on.

**SJ:** When I have an idea and it's really early on, it's important to bounce it off people I trust and figure out exactly what it is. Back in New York, Humberto and I started taking kung fu together two or three times a week. I'd write all day, then we'd do kung fu after work. On the way home we'd walk through the city and I'd pitch him scenes and he'd give me feedback or ideas.

**WSJ:** What belt did you get to in kung fu?

**HL:** We're before the belts.

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—SPIKE JONZE

**SJ:** If you're new to the class, you're in the back row. There was one point when we weren't literally the last people in the last row, but only because some people came in after us.

**HL:** Every kung fu lesson, I would get this new mini-chapter.

**SJ:** Humberto's comments are all about story and character: “Why did she do that” and “it would be interesting if she had *this* response.” When I was writing, mostly what we talked about was this love story and the complexity of romantic relationships.

**HL:** We would talk about Samantha and Theodore [Johansson and Phoenix's characters] as if they were two people falling in love.

**WSJ:** Spike, did Humberto's perspective affect the way you created the world of the film?

**SJ:** Being around Humberto over the years, I've started to think about clothes and style more, and I started thinking that the wardrobe should be slightly futuristic.

**HL:** I think one of the things that first came to mind was changing the proportions, because that usually signifies the change of a decade or a change in generation.

**SJ:** With *Wild Things*, I made the movie and then I brought it to Humberto. On this one, it was even more intertwined because as I was writing the movie I would talk to him about it. My costume designer, Casey Storm, and I called Humberto a few times to pick his brain.

**HL:** I'm even in a barbecue scene in the film! I was going to L.A., and Spike was like, “We're shooting a scene, come be an extra.”

**SJ:** Humberto's boyfriend, Patrick, and his mom, Wendy, were in it, too. And his nephew, Jarod.

**WSJ:** How did the film influence the Opening Ceremony collection?

**HL:** When I watched the initial segments of the movie, I felt like I really wanted to make a men's collection that could work for both men and women.

**SJ:** They're clothes you can share with your boyfriend or girlfriend. They're romantic clothes.

**HL:** There are moments in the movie when Theodore has this safety pin holding up the device so Samantha can see what *he* sees. We decided to make all the pockets for devices based on the iPhone shape.

**WSJ:** Spike, are you wearing clothes from the collection to the premiere?

**SJ:** Yes. I'm going to be embarrassed wearing clothes from my movie, but I really like them and... damn it, they're good clothes.