

Style

Costume Design

Going out with a bang, so to speak, the final season of *The Walking Dead* brings the Commonwealth (a community of survivors) from the comics to the screen. The introduction of this utopian-seeming community offers the opportunity for a fashion infusion into the zombie apocalypse series, which returned Aug. 22.

Joining the AMC show toward the end of season 10, costume designer **Vera Chow** eagerly took on the challenge of expanding the wardrobe scope of the entire series beyond the established utilitarian and tactical survival essentials. And while she can't say much about the looks she chose for members of the Commonwealth, one hint is the use of brands like vibrant knitwear maker YanYan, known for its cozy and charming cardigans.

Chow also changed up the sourcing process by shopping BIPOC-, women- and LGBTQ+-owned businesses. "A show like *The Walking Dead* has such a giant platform," says Chow via a call from set. With an average of 4.5 million viewers per episode in season 10 and 7 million followers on the show's Instagram account, the long-running series presents multiple mediums to amplify the work of underrepresented designers who often are overlooked during the bulk department-store buying trips that many costume departments rely on.

Chow cast a wide net, searching via Instagram and Etsy



In a scene from season 11 of *The Walking Dead*, Nadia Hilker (third from left) wears a jacket by Asian American-owned Kayo Anime Clothing, based in San Francisco and handcrafted by tailors in Bali.

Surviving Zombies, Stylishly

For the final season of *The Walking Dead*, costume designer Vera Chow scoured Instagram and Etsy to discover an inclusive range of designers and give the show a fashionable, curated edge

By Fawnia Soo Hoo

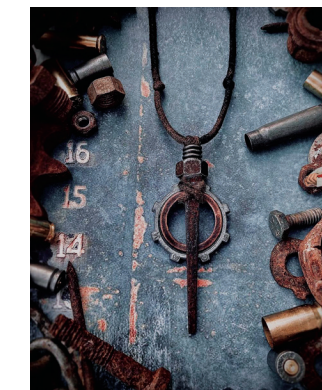
rabbit holes for finds, plus getting old-school, word-of-mouth recommendations from friends. "It spans the world," says the Chinese American costume designer who also worked with BIPOC and indie designers for **Eddie Huang's** 2021 feature film *Boogie*. She lists off Lagos, Nigeria-based designer **Imad Eduso**; sustainable brand **Butcher Apparel**, headquartered in Goa, India; zero-waste line **Deploy London** by British Asian designer **Bernice Pan**; and the apocalypse-adjacent style of Hong Kong's **Hamcus**.



Chow

"My favorite is B.Yellowtail," says Chow. Founded by Indigenous designer and FIDM alum **Bethany Yellowtail**, the brand and retailer celebrates authentic Native American

designs and artistry. "The prints are really cool," says Chow. "I won't go into descriptive details or else it becomes very obvious which character I'm talking about." The Commonwealth denizens also will wear pieces, often customized by Chow's team, by gender-norm-breaking **Wildfang**; Bedouin-inspired **Gipci**; D'iyanu,



From left: Designers used in the new season of *The Walking Dead* include Sky Iron Sanctum (known for its industrial-chic jewelry); knitwear maker YanYan; Hamcus (knitted cotton tank top shown); and Native American-owned brand B.Yellowtail.

founded by Nigeria-born **Addie Elabor**; and ethical casualwear by Portland, Oregon's **Sara Bergman**.

After finding industrial-cool jewelry line **Sky Iron Sanctum** on Etsy, Chow collaborated with its designer, **Kristina Van Istendal**, to custom-make upward of 60 pieces. "We found it very appropriate for a particular group of people on our show," hints Chow, who will tag and credit the brands on social media as new episodes are unveiled.

She emphasizes that taking the time and effort to research and source from a diverse group of designers benefits her process as well as the overall storytelling. "I have to interact with every single vendor, and talk about the show. But I feel like that actually helps me think about the characters more than just plowing through a Bloomingdale's and being like, 'This looks like Yumiko.' 'This looks like Daryl.' 'This looks like Carol,'" says Chow of her intentional "slow fashion" approach. "This helps me really curate." **THR**

The 'Subversive' Style Star of *Awkwafina Is Nora From Queens*

Lori Tan Chinn, who plays Grandma, speaks volumes wearing tops printed with phrases like 'Chinese Badass'

On Comedy Central's *Awkwafina Is Nora From Queens*, loving, foul-mouthed Grandma (**Lori Tan Chinn**) ups her delightfully audacious style on season two, which premiered Aug. 18, thanks to the joint effort of costume designer **Staci Greenbaum** and the actress. "Lori and I talk about what we want Grandma to maybe be saying. Oftentimes, it's subversive," says Greenbaum, who also outfits Chinn in

"highly collectible" Air Jordans and finery that references style icon **Iris Apfel**.

Continuing a streak of bold statements from last season — like "Asians Don't Raisin" — Chinn brought in about 20 of her own tops (often in sturdy, supportive black fabrics to avoid constrictive bras) for Greenbaum to select from. In a "Harvard" T-shirt modified to "HARD," Grandma rudely awakens Nora (**Awkwafina**) in the

premiere. Later, she sartorially declares she's a "Chinese Badass," supports the AAPI community with an "Asian American Girl Club" sweatshirt and watches *Judge Judy* in a Sen. **Tammy Duckworth**-emblazoned tee accented with a **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**-inspired collar, which Chinn found on Etsy. "I like the messages that I have a lot," says Chinn. "I've got even more that you haven't seen yet." — F.S.H.

Lori Tan Chinn in one of her statement sweatshirts.

