

# The New York Times

## *'Scandal' Inspires Clothing Line at The Limited*



THE LIMITED  
COLLECTION INSPIRED BY  
**SCANDAL**

DURING [New York Fashion Week](#), which ended on Thursday, there was considerable discussion of designs and designers to die for. Beginning on Monday, the women's apparel retailer The Limited is hoping to stimulate conversations, both actual and virtual, about dresses to double-cross for, skirts to skulk around in and suits to back-stab for.

The Limited is introducing a collection of clothing inspired by "Scandal," the hit [ABC drama](#) about Olivia Pope, a powerful Washington-based crisis handler and fixer, portrayed by Kerry Washington. The melodramatic series, which is to return for a fourth season on Sept. 25, has won praise and fans for its [breathless plots](#) replete with

political skulduggery, affairs in high places, murder and other twists that elicit from viewers continual cries of "Oh. My. God."

The "[Scandal](#)" collection at The Limited contains more than 70 items, with prices from about \$49 to \$250. The garments are due in stores and online next week and are scheduled to be available through May, the end of the 2014-15 television season.

A multimedia campaign bills the collection as "Fearless fashion for ladies who lead." The campaign, with a budget estimated at \$12 million, was created [by Yard](#), a New York agency known for advertising for fashion brands. [LaForce & Stevens](#), also in New York, is handling the social media elements on platforms like [Facebook](#), Instagram, Pinterest and [Twitter](#),

using the hashtag #scandalstylethelimited.

The Limited calls the “Scandal” merchandise a collaborative effort of Ms. Washington; Elliot Staples, head of design for the retailer; and Lyn Paolo, the costume designer for “Scandal.” Her stylized look for the series, described as [“gladiators in suits,”](#) has been noticed by the fashion press. The three are featured in a [video clip](#) that promotes the collection; some [print ads](#), showing models wearing the clothes, also give a shout-out to the creator of “Scandal,” Shonda Rhimes, and feature the logos of the series and ABC.

Those logos signal that the collection is a result of a licensing deal made by The Limited with ABC and the creators of “Scandal.” Financial terms were not disclosed.

The concept “grew out of a segment on ‘Good Morning America’ in fall of 2013 that took outfits Olivia Pope wore on the show and replicated them at affordable price points,” said Diane Ellis, chief executive of The Limited in New Albany, Ohio. “A suit that was ours was featured.”

In research that The Limited conducted to help “reinvigorate the brand and make it really relevant again to our target client,” Ms. Ellis said, referring to the specialty-apparel shopper who sees herself as a “sophisticated professional,” it was discovered that “the No. 1 TV show she looks to for her personal style inspiration is ‘Scandal.’” The research also showed that “Kerry Washington came up in the top three of celebrities she looks to, along with Jennifer Aniston and Sandra Bullock,” Ms. Ellis said.

By becoming a licensee of “Scandal,” The Limited joins a long list of retailers and apparel companies that have agreements to sell licensed merchandise inspired by television series. For decades, children’s shows like “Dora the Explorer” and “Sesame Street” generated most of the deals.

The “Scandal” collection is indicative of the growth of licensed merchandise involving series aimed at adults, said Ira Mayer, publisher and executive editor of a newsletter, The Licensing Letter, among them “The Big Bang Theory,” “Boardwalk Empire,” “Downton Abbey,” “Mad Men” and “Sons of Anarchy.”

Some of the more successful agreements, for series like “Breaking Bad” and “Game of Thrones,” generate an estimated \$100 million a year in retail sales, Mr. Mayer said, with a typical deal bringing in “under \$50 million a year.” By comparison, licensed merchandise from a popular children’s show can generate an estimated \$250 million to \$500 million a year in retail sales, he added.

When it comes to clothing related to adult television series, success “depends on how much the apparel ultimately appeals,” Mr. Mayer said. “The license may draw your eye, but the product has to be what you want.” That said, he added, “For ‘Scandal,’ having that exposure in The Limited is phenomenal,” and he joked that if the collection is a hit, “I can see the fragrance coming: Olivia Pope’s Scandal.”

Some shoppers may raise eyebrows at apparel tied to a soapy series that specializes in lurid, over-the-top moments. “We don’t want to get into the character” of Olivia Pope “in terms of the story line,” said Ruth Bernstein, chief strategic officer of Yard, but rather celebrate her for “what she represents for women today” as someone who “combines success with sex appeal and shows you can be both feminine and fierce.”

“It’s the way you feel in the clothes,” she added. “These are not costumes; you’re going to look like Olivia Pope but feel like yourself.”

Ms. Ellis says the stories the series tells “are a microcosm for the fact people’s lives are messy and confusing, and they want a brand that supports them.”

“While what happens to our target client is not at that level of drama, she’s juggling a lot of challenges,” Ms. Ellis added, “and she looks to Olivia because in spite of all that Olivia goes through, she is still strong, professional, confident and always looks impeccable.”

Asked about the potential for additional “Scandal” merchandise, Ms. Ellis replied: “We are looking for what resonates with our target client. We’ll listen to her and let that direct us.”

Perhaps the next collection can be treated to resist bloodstains.