

## Secret Identities: Marvel Superheroes, Fashion Trends, and Subcultural Streetwear, 1975-1995

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Over the course of his 1975-1991 career on Marvel's Uncanny X-Men, Chris Claremont turned the struggling series into the best-selling comic in the industry. By redefining the superhero by their individual personality rather than their heroic actions, Claremont emphasized his characters' domestic lives, placing new importance on what characters chose to wear. Characters comment on what they or others are wearing, personify major story arcs through radical makeovers, and are depicted going on dates, playing sports, or lounging around their headquarters— all in clothing other than their superhero costume.

Because streetwear is used narratively in domestic spaces and to indicate the ways characters navigate a crises or solidification of identity, it is actually within streetwear that the hero feels more comfortable. Characters consciously return to streetwear rather than costume in order to discover who they are for themselves. Therefore, their identity is tied to their fashion choices, rather than their costume, and examination of fashion becomes as necessary as the iconographic crime fighting suit in defining the superhero.

By creating characters who dress similarly to their readership, fashion becomes a way for fans to identify with characters. Chris Claremont's revolutionary narrative style created a new interdisciplinary relationship between fashion and costume in superhero comics that would become integral to understanding comics readership. This analysis of clothing worn by female X-Men illustrates the use of streetwear as a tool for narrative symbolism and fan identification, and its influence

### **Biography:**

Monica Geraffo is a Screen Arts and Cultures graduate of the University of Michigan and 2019 Master of Arts candidate in Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, and Museum Practice at the Fashion Institute of Technology. She works as an exhibition installer with FIDM Museum in Los Angeles, installing the bi-annual Art of Motion Picture Costume Design and Art of Television Costume Design exhibitions in conjunction with the Costume Designer's Guild, and as a professional costume designer for film and television. She combines her backgrounds in costume design and archival research to explore the theoretical relationships between dress and the construction of identity in American youth culture, focusing on superhero comics and their subsequent film and television adaptations.