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**I**T'S a dress that's making women all over the world green with envy. A gorgeous emerald-green gown worn by British actress Keira Knightley in the Golden Globe-nominated movie *Atonement* was recently voted best film costume of all time.

Fashionistas and female filmgoers alike raved about it on numerous blog posts when it first appeared on the big screen in the UK and the US last year.

Today, it is still a talking point and being swooned over as the must-have "It" gown this season.

Knightley's character, headstrong 1930s aristocrat Cecilia Tallis, is sheathed in the skimpy backless number in her pivotal sex scene with co-star James McAvoy.

The World War II period romance opens in cinemas here on 24 Jan.

Thousands of film and fashion fans polled by British television network Sky Movies and *In Style* magazine for the survey chose the green frock over iconic cinematic outfits such as Marilyn Monroe's white halter dress

from *The Seven Year Itch* and Audrey Hepburn's black number from *Breakfast At Tiffany's*. (See report on facing page).

But do our local fashion experts think it deserves such a high ranking?

Said Daniel Goh, editor of *Style* magazine: "It's a beautiful dress, very classic in style and beautifully made.

#### UNIQUE COLOUR

"I'm also glad the filmmakers have gone for this acid absinthe colour, which is not a safe or popular colour like ivory, black or red, which they so easily could have chosen."

But Daniel stressed that the importance of a dress is inextricable from the allure and importance of the star wearing it, which is why he disagrees with the No 1 placing.

He added: "Those beautiful qipao worn by Maggie Cheung in *In The Mood For Love* are pure cinematic glamour.

"But then, Maggie Cheung is pure cinematic glamour.

"Knightley is nowhere near the iconic status of Monroe or Hepburn, and this dress is merely one in a long line of dresses she will model in her career."

Keira Knightley's gown picked as best film costume ever in UK poll. Local fashion expert says: Nice dress, but...

# She's too scrawny to carry it off

But in fashion show producer Daniel Boey's opinion, the outfit sits unflatteringly on Knightley because she's "way too scrawny and lacks the boobs to carry it off".

The dress itself doesn't come close to the golden oldies – "outfits that are still being talked about and copied years later".

Daniel said: "I think it's simply a case of a beautiful gown standing out in a sea of uninspiring movie outfits today. Only time will tell if people will still remember this gown 10 years from now."

Fashion stylist Karen Ng feels status depends on the public's continued interest and reference to the particular outfit.

## NOT WOWED

She said: "I find the dress captivating and alluring despite its simplicity... but when I first saw it, it did not make me think 'Wow! That's a dress that's going to go down in history!'"

"(But) the design is elegant and minimalistic, giving it a timeless feel, so it could claim the No 1 spot."

Added Jeanette Ejlersen, fashion and beauty director of Her World

magazine: "Most Hollywood dresses are memorable in the context of the movie or the star.

"It is no doubt a lovely dress and I can see many women falling in love with it and wanting to wear it. The hype over the movie has certainly contributed to the buzz surrounding the dress."

The green garment was custom-made by Atonement's costume designer Jacqueline Durran, who created it after studying documentary and fashion photography from the 1930s.

But director Joe Wright dictated the colour, the cut, the silhouette and the amount of movement it should have.

Durran told Los Angeles Times: "Joe said he wanted a green dress. Green is a very symbolic colour, but I never wanted to pin down exactly what green meant to him."

According to New York Post, to attain the emerald hue Wright envisioned, Durran sourced three different sheer fabrics, all varying shades of green, then layered them, creating a colour she otherwise could not find.

Wright then had the improvised swatch sent to a dye specialist who

"created the perfect green", said Durran.

The rest of the bias-cut costume made out of featherweight silk satin looks deceptively minimal, but is a collection of tiny details, such as tiny perforations in the bodice and a waistline sash that extends into a complicated drapery at the back.

"I'm very pleased if it's striking a chord. That's what we were trying to do with that dress," said Durran.

## REPLICAS ON SALE

In fact, it is becoming so popular that New York clothing boutique Faviana is selling thousands of cheaper replicas priced at US\$238 (\$340) from mid-January.

Incidentally, Faviana also had to recreate eight lookalikes of the dress for the shoot because McAvoy had to rip it off Knightley when the couple were getting it on against a bookshelf.

McAvoy reportedly told contactmusic.com: "It was like it was made of tissue paper."

◆ In the poll, Marilyn Monroe's white halter dress (far right) in *The Seven Year Itch* and Audrey Hepburn's black number (right) in *Breakfast At Tiffany's* were placed second and third, respectively.

