

Warner Bros had special leathergoods and footwear considerations to take into account when setting up its itinerant *Harry Potter: The Exhibition* event. High-profile and popular companies exist in the wizarding world of JK Rowling's books and in Warner Bros's film adaptations, but they are made-up. Sight of an inappropriate brand name among the exhibits at the exhibition would have bemused the Harry Potter enthusiasts who have queued up so far to see the show.

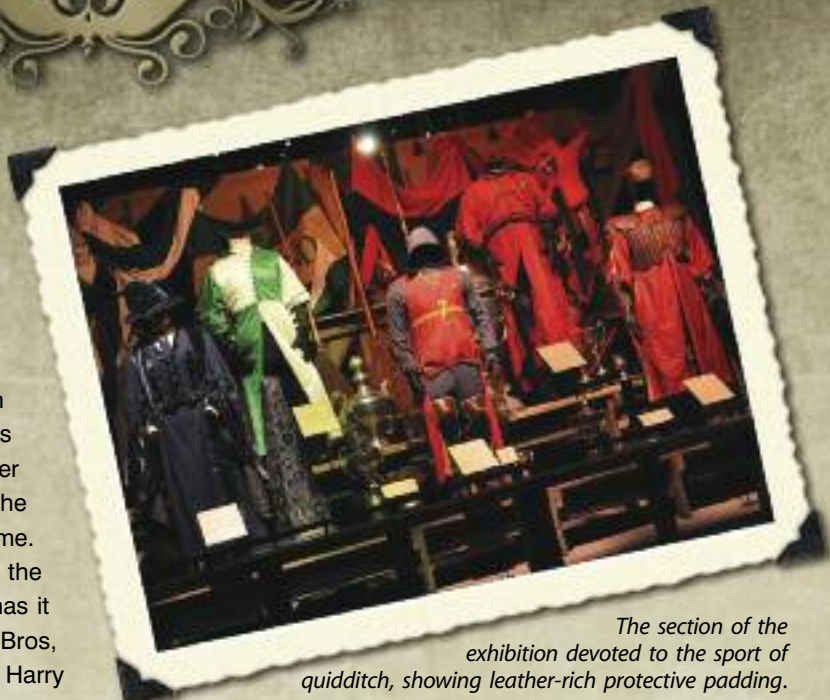
Magical leathergoods

at the *Harry Potter* exhibition

Brand placements can be an important part of films and television programmes, just as complimentary references to brands can provide a big boost. Examples involving footwear include all the references to Manolo Blahnik in *Sex And The City*, to Bruno Magli in *The Sopranos* and in *Frazier*, and to John Lobb shoes in the James Bond series.

Established brands were always unlikely to appear in the Harry Potter films, the penultimate of which reaches cinema screens this autumn. The seven Harry Potter books mention lots of brands, but made-up ones from the world of wizardry that the hero inhabits most of the time. The movies are famously faithful to the books, at the insistence of author, JK Rowling. Hollywood hot talk has it that the film company that has made the series, Warner Bros, convinced Steven Spielberg to direct the first one, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's (or Sorcerer's) Stone*. Spielberg, however, pulled out because he wanted Haley Joel Osment to play the eponymous boy wizard only for Ms Rowling to refuse; she would not allow a US actor to bring Surrey-raised Harry to the silver screen for reasons of authenticity.

With this in mind, the thousands of visitors that have flocked so far to an event called *Harry Potter: The Exhibition*, organised by Warner Bros and its partner GES, would have been



The section of the exhibition devoted to the sport of quidditch, showing leather-rich protective padding.

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surprised and perhaps disappointed on viewing props, costumes and sets from the films to see brand names from the muggle (non-magic) world. This applies to shoes and leathergoods as much as anything else.

The exhibition first opened its doors in Chicago in the summer of 2009 and then went to Boston. In April 2010 it

moved to Toronto for an extended stay before transferring to Seattle in October. The plan is to move it to a permanent home in London in the course of 2011. It's been a popular attraction. The Ontario Science Centre, which hosted the event's Canadian leg, welcomed a record number of visitors during July and August this year, 330,605 over the two months. This is a 13% increase over last year's attendance for the months that make up most of the school summer holidays. It attributed this success in part to the popularity of Harry Potter: The Exhibition. "These strong attendance figures reflect the amazing appeal of the special exhibition as well as our permanent exhibits for visitors of all ages," said Lesley Lewis, the Science Centre's chief executive on announcing the figures. To cope with demand on the final days, the Ontario Science Centre stayed open to visitors until 11.00 pm. This level of popularity indicates that the exhibition passes the authenticity test.

No substitute

It should hardly need saying that synthetic substitutes for such an ancient, noble, natural and versatile material as leather barely feature.

One of the most famous props in the whole collection, a diary that becomes a matter of life or death in the second film, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, has a lovely, black leather cover with metal supports at each corner. In a similar vein, visitors get to see that flamboyant and sensationalist journalist from the *Daily Prophet* newspaper, Rita Skeeter, has a better taste in notebooks than she does in clothes. The exhibition has a whole collection on show, in blue, red, green and pink, each with an alligator leather cover.

Much of the action takes place in Harry's place of learning, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and no one gets to go through school without books. Some of those on display are exquisitely bound in leather, with *An Advanced Guide to Transfiguration*, A5-sized in faded, burgundy-coloured, full-grain leather, with tiny gold stars embossed on it, the pick of the bunch. The left-hand flap of the cover is round, not square, at the edge, and it doesn't come all the way across. There is a leather thong, bearing the same embossed stars decoration, to keep it closed. A diary-sized book alongside is called a *Handbook of Do-It-Yourself Broom Care*. The rounded edge, star decoration and thong feature here, too. High levels of skill and workmanship went into making these exquisite items, even if they are barely appreciable on screen.

An entire section devoted to the wizard's favourite sport, quidditch, includes impressive quantities of leather. The players wear large protective gloves made mostly of leather, and in addition the goalkeepers have pads to protect their legs, similar to cricket pads, but in well aged brown leather. Knee pads and breast plates for the goalies are also leather. Another novelty is the giant leather Chesterfield armchair in a recreation that the organisers have made of the hut in which half-giant Rubeus Hagrid lives in the Hogwarts' grounds. The chair is one exhibit that visitors are not only allowed to touch, but even to sit in.



An exhibit showing Harry Potter's Hogwarts uniform.

CREDIT: WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT INC./HARRY POTTER PUBLISHING RIGHTS JKR (S10).

Feast of footwear

One of the first noteworthy pairs of shoes visitors were able to see as they moved round the display cases in Toronto (the only venue we have been able to visit so far) were those of Ginny Weasley, the sister of one of Harry's best friend, Ron, and the love of Harry's life. They are nicely stitched, although the squarish toe makes them look slightly masculine, almost as though Ginny has inherited them from Ron or another of her six older brothers. This is surprising because the character, in the books especially, is a bit too feisty to make do with hand-me-down shoes, stretched though her family's finances are. Who made the shoes we do not get to know because the organisers have placed a piece of cloth over the label on the inner sole.

They have played the same trick to hide the identity of the shoes worn in one of the early films by Hermione Granger, Harry's other best friend. These are classic school shoes with a polyurethane sole, a mary-jane style strap and a small buckle. Hermione's trainers from the fifth film, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, are also part of the exhibition and these are much more interesting. They are part of an exhibit of a range of casual clothing that actress Emma Watson wore to play the part in that film and they look like authentic casual shoes for a girl of 16. Again the sole is polyurethane, while the upper is made of brown suede, with pink suede flashes. They bear no branding whatsoever.

The same applies to training shoes that Daniel Radcliffe wore

to play Harry in the third film, *The Prisoner of Azkaban*. The shoes are very well made with stitching across a piece of rubber at the toe. They look like a pair of high-quality and very modern trail-running shoes, with a hint of purple in the laces, which is a trendy touch. Hermione's trainers in the same film are vintage-looking blue ones, while Ron Weasley wears well-worn, round-toed brown boots. The trainers are leisure rather than sports shoes: as mentioned, sport at Hogwarts means only one thing, quidditch, the team game that involves seven players on broomsticks and four different types of ball. *Harry Potter: The Exhibition's* display of quidditch equipment includes many-eyeleted leather boots that come high up the leg, reminiscent of vintage boxing footwear.

Signs of age

Ageing shoes and clothes so that they show the right amount of wear on camera is a perennial problem for the wardrobe departments of film studios. You have to achieve this or show everyone in new shoes all the time. The skill with which the Warner Bros team has achieved this is clear from an exhibit showing an outfit worn in the films by Alan Rickman, playing Professor Severus Snape (Harry's least favourite teacher). To complement a long Nehru-style jacket and black trousers, the outfit includes a pair of good quality black leather boots with scuffed toes, reflecting the scant importance Snape puts on his appearance. Albert Tam, a Toronto student who spent the summer presenting at the exhibition in the Ontario Science Centre (picked because he comes originally from England and has an 'authentic' accent, more proof of the importance to the organisers of attention to detail), explains that something that makes this ageing process even trickier is that most actors are likely to need more than one pair of shoes, in case a pair breaks and the need arises to re-shoot any scene. You couldn't have someone walking along a school corridor wearing one pair of shoes, turn a corner and suddenly be wearing something different on their feet.

Another teacher to earn Harry's disdain, Gilderoy Lockhart, wears fabulous boots in the second film, *The Chamber of Secrets*. Vain, shallow Lockhart has earned a fortune from stealing other people's adventures and writing about them with himself as the main protagonist. Hard to see on screen, his choice of footwear is appropriate for a flash, wealthy young man with a high level of conceit. The boots are beautifully crafted, one pair in light tan leather, the other, even more eye-catching, in crocodile effect bovine leather. Again, no brand names are on show.

This is not the case with the school shoes worn by Parvati Patil, a supporting character, but an important one as she is Harry's date for the extravagant Yule Ball that takes place in the fourth book and film, *the Goblet of Fire*. Perhaps the organisers didn't think she was a central enough character to warrant any cover-up measures for the exhibition, but a brand



Actors James and Oliver Phelps, who play two of the Weasley brothers, at the grand opening of *Harry Potter: The Exhibition* at the Ontario Science Centre in Toronto.

CREDIT: GEORGE PIMENTEL/ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE

name is quite visible on the inner sole of her shoes. The label says Liz Brass and has a curling broken line motif as if to show the flight of an insect. They are ballet pump style school shoes with a big buckle and attractive pink champagne coloured lining. If Liz Brass is a real brand, it doesn't appear to have made it onto the internet yet.

Snake appeal

The star exhibit is, without question, the outfit worn by sneering, cynical bad guy, Lucius Malfoy. Champion of sinister Slytherin house, whose emblem is a snake, Mr Malfoy, played by Jason Isaacs, wears a Nehru-style tunic in green and bronze patterned silk with silver buttons, and a long coat. Best of all is a belt in snakeskin leather that he wears with a sheath for a cane with a silver snake's head handle that houses his wizard's wand. There are three bronze snake heads on the belt (one at each end, plus one for the sheath), each with a mouth that fastens onto a brass ring just off centre. Mr Malfoy's shoes are very handsome Goodyear welts, but in bovine leather rather than snakeskin, which seems like a missed opportunity.

Harry Potter is a phenomenon. The seven books in the series have sold more than 400 million copies and have been translated into 67 languages. Their popularity helped make the films a hit. The seventh of eight films (the final book is being made into two movies) will come out in November 2010, but the series has already grossed more than \$5 billion. For everyday members of the public, *Harry Potter: The Exhibition* offers excellent insight into the lengths film companies go to in the pursuit of authenticity. For fans of *Harry Potter*, it's pure magic. ☺