

## Document Citation

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“satire” on the Parisian fashion world, would elude pronounceability in Kansas, Miramax has opted for something less Porta Potti. Unfortunately it’ll take more than a name change to rescue what is surely the lowest point in this has-been’s increasingly debilitated résumé. Might I suggest shackling the negative to a rusty oil drum and hoisting the entire mess over the side of a garbage scow?

All right, since you asked, I’ll tell you how I really feel.

Trading on the only idea that studio moguls are convinced Altman ever had — that a large and kooky cast, plopped down in a generic “setting” (fashion industry, country-music biz, health-nuts’

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convention; take your pick) and woven around one another in a narrative “tapestry” automatically equals “invention” or “neodocumentary” or “success” or something — *Ready to Wear*’s title encapsulates this long-ago inspired director’s decaying metaphysique. The performances, the cloying sarcasm, the casting decisions — oh look, there’s Sally Kellerman again — are strictly one-size-fits-all. (The moguls are wrong, by the way: two of Altman’s finest — *The Long Goodbye* and *California Split* — are different birds altogether.)

It might be enough to note that *Ready to Wear*’s tone is set by no less an actor than Kim Basinger, playing a “dim” reporter for FAD-TV who keeps the screenplay (by Altman and *Examiner* maven Barbara “Two Stars” Shulgasser) roving by interviewing, in a Southern accent as wide and muddy as the Mississippi, various luminaries (Stephen Rea, Lauren Bacall, Jean-Paul Gaultier) as they arrive for the season’s festivities. If that isn’t clever enough for you, how about a running gag involving stepped-in dog shit? It might make a handy metaphor for Altman’s incontinent mess, but only until ticket-buyers realize that the shoe in the pile is theirs. ■

**‘Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle’** opens Friday, Dec. 23, at Bridge, S.F.; ACT I and II, Berk.; and Grand Lake, Oakl. **‘Ready to Wear’** opens Christmas day at Metro Center and Northpoint, S.F.; UA, Berk.; Orinda, Orinda.

### ‘Ready to Wear’

Apparently concerned that *Prêt-à-Porter*, the original title of Robert Altman’s titanicly tired new