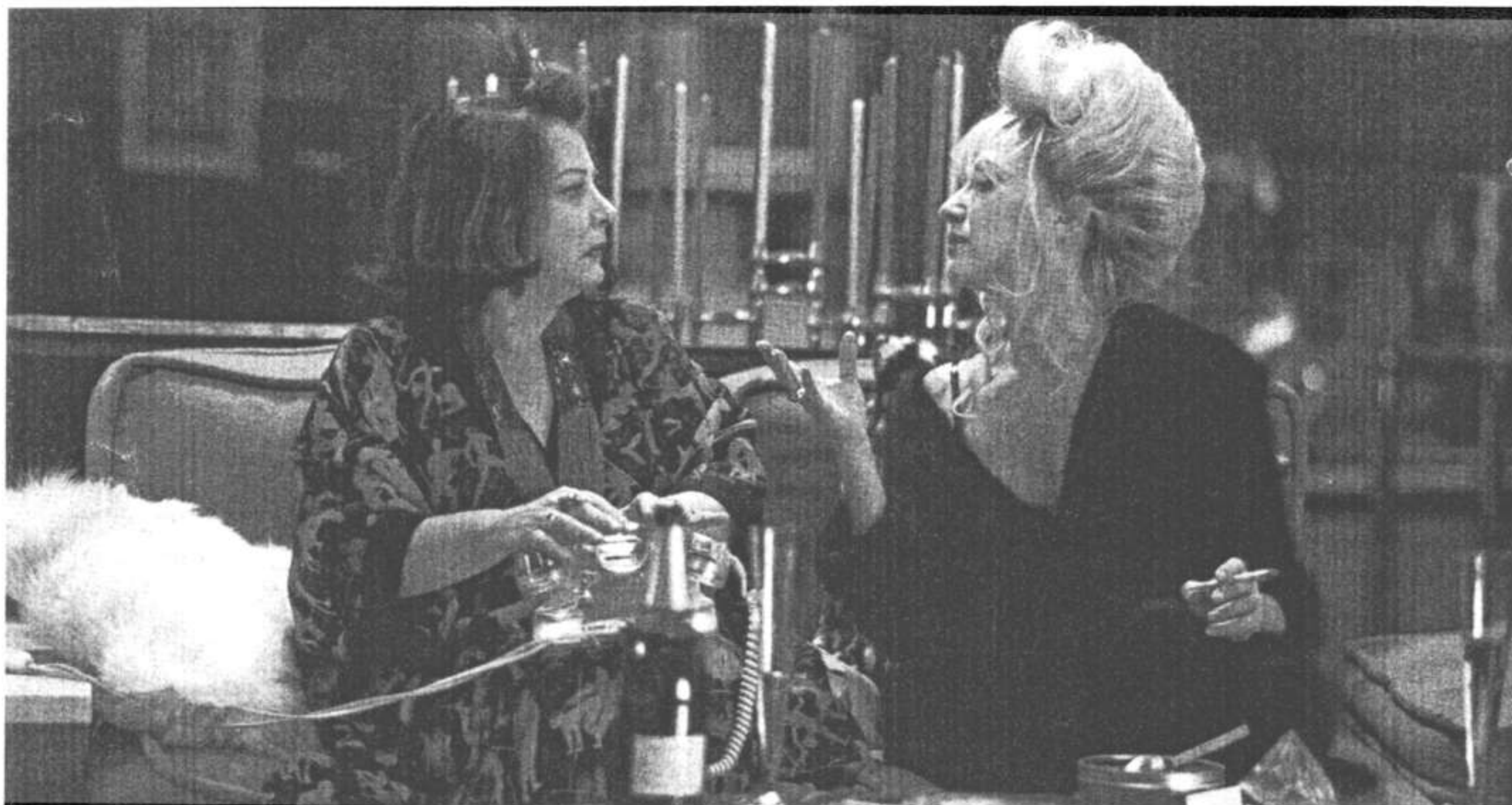


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Absolument fabuleux

Gabriel Aghion

FRANCE, 2001

105 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
 Production Company: **Mosca Films**
 Producer: **Pascal Houzelot**
 Screenplay: **Gabriel Aghion, François-Olivier Rousseau, Pierre Palmade, Remy Waterhouse**, based on the television series "Absolutely Fabulous" by **Jennifer Saunders** and **Dawn French**
 Cinematographer: **François Catonne**
 Editor: **Maryline Monthieux**
 Production Designer: **Olivier Radot**
 Sound: **Brigitte Taillandier**
 Principal Cast: **Josiane Balasko, Nathalie Baye, Marie Gillain, Vincent Elbaz**

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UGC International, 2 rue des Quatre Fils, 75003 Paris, France.
 T (33-1) 4029-8900 F (33-1) 4029-8910
 bchalon@ugc.fr

Production: **Mosca Films, 6, rue du Jour, 75001 Paris, France.** T (33-1) 5580-7717
 F (33-1) 5580-7718

Absolument fabuleux has a pretty simple premise: Take the well-known characters and even whole episodes from the Saunders and French television show "Absolutely Fabulous", plunk them down in Paris instead of London and cast two absolutely fabulous French stars in the lead roles. Josiane Balasko and Nathalie Baye tear into their roles as Eddie and Patsy with a comic gusto that brooks no inhibition and shirks no humiliation. While they feast on champagne and caviar from the moment they lurch out of their drunken slumber and don one ever-more outrageous outfit after another, the two friends stop at nothing to fulfill their reprobate desires, whether for sex or a Jean-Paul Gaultier purse. Eddie's graciously dressed mother and prissy conservative daughter are their foils and nemeses and the handsome rollerblading delivery boy is the object of their lust.

The iconoclastic narrative hilarities of the Saunders and French original are also rampant here, perfectly matched to the over-the-top performances of Balasko and Baye. Stretching her leopard mini-skirt (with matching coat, shoes, purse and hat) over her bulging derriere, Balasko stops at nothing to get a laugh, and Baye is exquisitely grotesque in her colossal wig and fashionista costumes as she teeters and stumbles over the cobblestones of Paris in her stiletto heels. Beyond their individual performances, however, stand the generosity and egalitarianism of their interaction together. Individual scene-stealing is matched

by affectionate duets that sizzle with perfect reactions and precise comic timing.

From the moment the film opens with a montage of great historical moments – a feminist protest, Woodstock 1969, Paris fashion week – we're on a speeding train that is headed inevitably towards wreckage. Eddie's fiftieth birthday party opens the episodic narrative that dives and swerves through a series of incidents that only women with strength, resilience, cunning and an adequate level of alcohol in their bloodstreams could possibly survive.

■ **Kay Armatage**

Gabriel Aghion is a writer-director who has worked in theatre, television and film. Filmography: *La Scarlatine* (83), *Rue de Bac* (90), *Pédale Douce* (96), *Belle Maman* (98), *Le Libertin* (99) and *Absolument fabuleux* (01).

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