

Document Citation

Title	A la mode tells a sew-sew story
Author(s)	Janet Maslin
Source	<i>West County Times</i>
Date	1994 Aug 19
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Á la mode, Duchemin, Remy, 1994

TIMEOUT/MOVIES

'A la mode' tells a sew-sew story

By JANET MASLIN
New York Times

Like fashion itself, the French film "A la Mode" depends heavily on whimsy and charm. And if proof is needed that those can be elusive virtues, it's here on screen.

"A la Mode" supposes that its hero, a 17-year-old orphan with a flair for concocting odd outfits, is a delight to everyone he meets. As Fausto, Ken Higelin is earnest and lively, but he's never the adolescent dreamboat that the film describes.

Fausto's buddy, Raymond (Francois Hautesserre), a plump, ungainly sidekick whose specialty is flatulence on cue, has a similar charisma problem. The film follows these two after they meet in an orphanage, talk earnestly about girls for a while, and then begin work as apprentices in a Jewish section of the nearby town.

Raging hormones turn this into a coming-of-age story, at least for Fausto, who becomes smitten with a pretty young woman (Florence Darel) who wears mechanic's overalls. She becomes his fashion muse,

Review

What: "A la Mode"

Starring: Ken Higelin, Jean Yanne, Francois Hautesserre, Florence Darel
Rating: R

Where: Opens today at select theaters

Star rating: ★½ out of ★★★★★

and she also fixes cars.

Fausto goes to work for Mietek Breslauer (Jean Yanne), the veteran tailor who is the film's most aggressive entertainer and whose gambits will be most successful with any audience.

"Their stomachs must announce proudly, 'I am dressed by Mr. Breslauer!'" he says, sharing with Fausto one of his tailoring secrets in making clothes for men. Yanne brings flamboyant gusto to the film's only amusing role.

While the women of the town flutter over the irrepressible Fausto, he begins forging a tailoring style of his own. Concluding that it's good for business to make very conspicuous creations, he designs a jacket

made of live grass, a shirt with two extra sleeves and other madcap extravagances.

The film's costume ideas — among them a wedding dress that looks like white wrought-iron lawn furniture, and high-fashion outfits incorporating yarmulkes and a Jewish prayer shawl — are merely nutty, as opposed to witty. They suggest more of a circus atmosphere than the world of Paris couture, for which the gifted Fausto is supposedly destined.

"A la Mode" is the first film directed by Remy Duchemin, a veteran assistant director on films that include Marguerite Duras's "Nathalie Granger," Jean Eustache's "Mother and the Whore" and Joseph Losey's "Monsieur Klein." Based on a novel by Richard Morgieue (who wrote the screenplay with Duchemin), it has a staid, ordinary look that seldom suits the eccentricities of this material. Little about "A la Mode" is stylish at all.

THE #1 CO