

# Coco avant Chanel

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July 9<sup>th</sup>



Amelie star Audrey Tautou stars as legendary fashion designer Coco Chanel in this biopic directed Anne Fontaine . Based on the Chanel biography L'Irreguliere (The Nonconformist) by Edmonde Charles-Roux, this is an enthralling exploration of her early life before she rose to worldwide fame as the most celebrated fashion designer of the 20th Century. We meet the young Gabrielle Chanel, illegitimate daughter of a traveling salesman who learns to sew in a Catholic orphanage before following her singing ambitions lead her to a cabaret club. It is here where Chanel earns the nickname Coco and also where she catches the eye of several high society gentlemen who would ignite her passion and become instrumental in the development of her remarkable career. Coco avant Chanel features dresses from the Chanel collection and House of Chanel art director Karl Lagerfeld also steps onboard to supervise the creation of the films accessories and costumes.

In French with English Subtitles



# COCO AVANT CHANEL

A little girl who is sent with her sister to an orphanage in the heart of France, who waits in vain every Sunday for her father to come for her...

A cabaret performer with a weak voice who sings to an audience of drunken soldiers...

A humble seamstress, who stitches hems at the back of a provincial tailor's shop...

A young, skinny courtesan, to whom protector Etienne Balsan offers a safe haven, amongst the idle and decadent...

A woman in love who knows she will never be anyone's wife, refusing marriage even to Boy Capel, the man who returned her love...

A rebel who finds the conventions of her time oppressive, and instead dresses in her lovers' clothes...

This is the story of Gabrielle Chanel, who begins her life as a headstrong orphan, and through an extraordinary journey becomes the legendary couturier who embodied the modern woman and became a timeless symbol of success, freedom and style.

Director Anne Fontaine has long been fascinated by the figure of Coco Chanel. "It was not so much the fashion as the characteristics of this exceptional woman that interested me," says Fontaine. "I had been particularly touched by the fact that she was a self-made person. This girl, coming from the heart of the French countryside, poor, uneducated, but endowed with an exceptional personality, was destined to be ahead of her time."

Fontaine found Chanel personified in Audrey Tautou. "On my first encounter with Audrey, I was struck by her will, her audacity, and the density of her gaze that goes through you," Fontaine recalls. "Chanel looked at everything. Her culture was not one of knowledge, but a culture of observation. I had not yet written a single line of the screenplay when I met Audrey, but I knew that if she gave me her trust and if the production agreed to stick to the years of apprenticeship, I could then embark on the adventure of my first period movie."

To create the critically important costumes for the period of Chanel's life depicted in the film, Fontaine turned to Catherine Leterrier. "CHANEL's is instantly recognizable. What Karl Lagerfeld

did in adapting the style of CHANEL to the future, I did backwards towards the past. I went back in time, designing the first models that Chanel might have created and which could have fashioned her style. The style of CHANEL is distinctive in its cut, the supple hang of its fabric and the perfect simplicity of its finish. The costumes designed for the film had to be up to the exacting standards of Haute Couture.”

Leterrier set up a temporary workshop for the movie, complete with dressmakers’ apprentices and lead hands, that worked full-time to fabricate the extensive costume demands for the film. “For the scenes where there are a lot of extras—the dance hall, the racecourse, Emilienne's theatre etc.—we made, in addition to the costumes, nearly 800 different hats, created by two great milliners, Stephen Jones and Pippa Cleator. Before she made dresses, Chanel was a successful milliner, and her hats were more architectural and less fussy than those of the times. She made fun of the over-ornate hats that some women wore: 'With that on their head, how can they think!'”

The Film is spoken in French and shot entirely in France. “Chanel embodies French elegance,” says Radot. “Her character is so Parisian that it would have been a shame not to shoot in France.”

From Haut et Court, Cine@, Warner Bros. France and Films Distribution comes *Coco Avant Chanel*, starring Audrey Tautou (*Amélie*, *The Da Vinci Code*) in the title role, along with Benoît Poelvoorde (*Entre ses mains/In His Hands*, *Podium*), Emmanuelle Devos (*Rois et reine/Kings and Queen*, *L’Adversaire/The Adversary*), Marie Gillain (*L’Enfer/Hell*, *Les Femmes de l’ombre/Female Agents*) and Alessandro Nivola (*Junebug*, *Jurassic Park III*). *Coco Avant Chanel* is directed by Anne Fontaine (*La Fille de Monaco/The Girl From Monaco*) from a screenplay by Anne Fontaine and Camille Fontaine, with the collaboration of Christopher Hampton (*Dangerous Liaisons*), loosely based on *L’irrégulière* by Edmonde Charles-Roux. The producers are Philippe Carcassonne (*La Fille de Monaco/The Girl From Monaco*), Caroline Benjo (*Entre les murs/The Class*) and Carole Scotta (*Entre les murs/The Class*).

The director of photography is Christophe Beaucarne. The production designer is Olivier Radot. The film is edited by Luc Barnier. Catherine Leterrier created the original costumes. The production was given the assistance of the Maison CHANEL, who opened their archives and collections. Alexandre Desplat composed the score.

Shot in French in the Paris region and in Normandy, *Coco Avant Chanel* will be released by Warner Bros. Pictures, opening in Australian cinemas on June 25<sup>th</sup>.

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