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Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: The Fashionista, The Chef, and The Mom *Coco Before Chanel*

"An exceptional future awaits you." - Boy Capel



Director

Anne Fontaine

Producer

Caroline Benjo

Writers

Edmonde Charles-Roux

Anne Fontaine

Camille Fontaine

Starring

Audrey Tautou

Benoît Poelvoorde

Alessandro Nivola

Music

Alexandre Desplat

Cinematography

Christophe Beaucarne

Editing

Luc Barnier

Studio

Warner Bros. Pictures

Distributor

Sony Pictures Classics

Release date

September 25, 2009

Running time

110 minutes

Budget

\$23,000,000

Box Office gross

\$50,390,749 (Worldwide)

Coco Chanel's life work captures the essence of modern fashion design and the invention of a style with profound influence to this day. Rather than concentrating on the professional life of an icon who would come to symbolize modern fashion and international chic, *Coco Before Chanel* explores the formation of a young woman's identity, painfully crafted from the raw materials of a complicated youth.

What emerges most strongly in this film is Chanel's determination and charisma, even more so than her talent for fashion. While the name Chanel now immediately signals high design and wealth, the film begins by showing us an orphan, turned nightclub singer, turned courtesan. As we watch Chanel's difficult climb up the social ranks, propelled by intelligent lies, duplicity, and invented facades, our knowledge of her past gives us a greater admiration of her inner strength, and allows us to forgive her contradictions. Struggling to find her place in the world, and reconcile her feelings for two very different lovers, the young Chanel is shown to have endured great drama in the pursuit of her independence. As Chanel, Audrey Tautou ably conveys a mix of resolve and vulnerability, discovery, and self-preservation.

However, the film's depiction of Chanel's complex romantic entanglements is well-matched by the sumptuous elegance of everything we witness. Many of Chanel's signature inventions are deftly woven into the narrative or visual palette, and the verbal sparring is sleek and sharp. Everything is beautiful to look at and extremely well-crafted. Yet, by the end, we have seen that the development of the singular Chanel style was as much a result of necessity as it was of inspiration and skill, and that it did not come without a significant emotional price.

Did you know?

- *Coco Before Chanel* director Anne Fontaine was a ballerina, actress, and model before working behind the camera.
- After the film finished production, Audrey Tautou signed a contract to become the new 'face' of the Chanel fashion house.
- The clothes at the end of film are real designs taken from the Chanel conservatory.
- After having an affair with a German officer during WWII, Chanel was accused of having Nazi sympathies and briefly stopped designing. When she next released a collection, in 1954, the French shunned her. However, British and American women loved the designs, and her iconic status was cemented.



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"Proud people breed sad sorrows for themselves." - Coco Chanel

Things to Explore

- Why do you think the director chose to only focus on the early part of Chanel's life?
- Why does Chanel lie to hide her past?
- How much affection does Chanel have for Balsan? Why does she stay with him?
- What makes Chanel want to become a designer?
- What is the significance of Chanel's relationship with horses?
- Which of Chanel's romantic relationships is the most honest?
- To what extent is Chanel a feminist?
- Do you think Chanel takes advantage of the men in her life?
- How does the evolution of Chanel's fashion style echo her development as a character?
- How do you feel about the ending? Is it a sad tragedy, or just the beginning of her success?

Themes

- Self-invention
- Class and prejudice
- Ambition
- Gender roles
- Duplicity
- Love and romance
- Style and fashion



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Coco Before Chanel

"I'll speak as I please!" - Coco Chanel

Library Resources

1) Chanel : Collections and Creations, Daniele Bott

A detailed look at Chanel's design history, with over 159 photographs.

Copy	Material	Location
746.92 BOT	Book	Nonfiction

2) Chanel : A Woman of Her Own, Axel Madsen

This 1990 biography covers the extraordinary, complicated life of the fashion designer whose work was characterized by simplicity and functionality.

Copy	Material	Location
B CHANEL,C. MAD	Book	Nonfiction

3) Coco Avant Chanel [videorecording (DVD)]

The DVD includes special features on the making of the film and an audio commentary with writer/director Anne Fontaine.

Copy	Material	Location
DVD COC	DVD Fiction	Audio Visual

Online Resources

<http://www.sonyclassics.com/cocobeforechanel/>

The film's official website, containing videos, photos, reviews, interviews and extensive background on the film.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLdGywfH5s>

A video interview with Audrey Tautou, in which she discusses preparing for her role as Coco.

<http://www.refinery29.com/on-the-eve-of-coco-before-chan.php>

A fashion blog that outlines how to emulate that iconic Chanel style.

<http://www.daemonsmovies.com/2009/09/23/coco-before-chanel-director-anne-fontaine-interview/>

An interview with Anne Fontaine in which she explains why she chose to focus on Chanel's pre-fame story, and why she chose Audrey Tautou to play her.

<http://cdn1.libsyn.com/creativescreenwritingmag/CocoBeforeChanelQandA.mp3?nvb=20100313183933&nva=20100314184933&t=0975de0dfca9b7e2b27db>

Coco Before Chanel director Anne Fontaine shows her similarities to Coco in this feisty, but fascinating podcast interview.



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**"I always knew I would be no one's wife. Not even yours. It's just that sometimes, I forget." -
Coco Chanel**

IF YOU LIKED *COCO BEFORE CHANEL*...

***La Vie En Rose* (Olivier Dahan/140 min/R/2007)** -- Marion Cotillard stars in this fictionalized biopic of French singer Edith Piaf that depicts the various stages of her career, from a difficult upbringing in France, abandoned by her Mother and Father, to her emotional struggles and personal tragedy in Hollywood during the 1950's.

***An Education* (Lone Scherfig/95 min/R/2009)** -- A coming of age period drama that centers on a young girl's choice between pursuing a doomed romance or furthering her career. Just like in *Coco Before Chanel*, the constraints of gender roles and class distinctions are a key theme, and in this film, the classic French fashions and stylish designs that Coco Chanel defined are also to the fore here as objects of alluring, exciting modernity.

***September Issue* (RJ Cutler/90 min/PG-13/2008)** --Provides a candid and unprecedented look at the creative process behind the September 2007 issue of Vogue magazine, the biggest single issue in the magazine's long history. Focuses on editor Anna Wintour as she works with models, writers, photographers, and staff to bring her vision to the printed page.

***Devil Wears Prada* (David Frankel/109 min/PG-13/2006)** -- Based on the popular novel by Lauren Weisberger, this comedic tale pits Andrea 'Andy' Sachs (Anne Hathaway), a recent college graduate anxious for her first job as a magazine writer, against fashion magazine editor and diva Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep).

***Young Victoria* (Jean-Marc Vallee/100 mins/PG/2009)** -- Emily Blunt stars as Queen Victoria, crowned at age 18, as the film chronicles her early years and her marriage to Prince Albert, a powerful romance that produced nine children but left her to a life of emotional seclusion after his death. The film's costume design will engage those interested in fashion design history.

Also Directed by Anne Fontaine:

My Father and I (100 min/NR/2001)

Girl From Monaco (95 min/R/2007)

Also Starring Audrey Tautou:

Amelie (121 min/R/2001)

Da Vinci Code (148 min/PG-13/2006)

A Very Long Engagement (133 min/R/2004)