

'The New Look': Apple TV+ explores Dior-Chanel rivalry with flair



CHENNAI: Apple TV+ offering “The New Look” features a lot style and sheen in the 10-part series as it explores the rivalry between Coco Chanel (Juliet Binoche) and Christian Dior (Ben Mendelsohn) in wartime France and later.

In one scene that encapsulates the friction between the pair, Chanel, who is trying to come back at the age of 70 after an eight-year exile, rages about Dior: “You think Dior is fashion? His designs are extravagant – I have no time for extravagance ... the dress shouldn’t wear the woman, the woman should wear the dress.”

“Dior ruined French couture and I’m coming back to save it,” she says with great flourish.

“The New Look” is superbly fictionalized and created by Todd A. Kessler. It has less of a focus on fashion than one might expect and more screentime is dedicated to the tension that engulfs the two pioneers in the world of haute couture. We learn how Chanel and Dior survived the dark and depressing days of the war: There is even a full

episode on how the Third Reich asked Chanel to carry a message to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, possibly to broker a peace accord. On the other hand, Dior played it cool and saved himself from brutal criticism by stating that he was merely carrying out the orders of his boss, Lucien Lelong (John Malkovich with an amusing wig).

The work is well-paced, exciting and lovely to look at. The gowns are simply divine and the colors magnificently lush while the performances are first class. Binoche conveys the acidity and wit of Chanel, and Mendelsohn carefully treads the line trying to make Dior a gentleman, soft spoken, cultured and exceedingly well mannered. The script though is not couture, not quite, but it is still a pleasure to watch.
