AMI spring/summer 2022: Uniquely commercial escapism

By Godfrey Deeny • July 4, 2021

A moment of restrained escapism at AMI, with founder designer Alexandre Mattiussi creating a collection for a world finally emerging from Covid tentatively.

Shot with joy, though not melodramatic excitement, inside a fun fair AMI hired just for the shoot, the show video of the spring/summer 2022 collection was unveiled on Saturday, July 3. It marked the latest unusual date as the European catwalk season continues to be a fragmented series of one-off events, and fell just two days before Paris begins its four-day haute-couture season.

“We are living a moment between two worlds. The world of Covid restrictions and isolation, and a new one with hope and energy where we want to gather together. As we are coming back to normal life, let's celebrate it with beauty, poetry, romanticism, sexiness, sensuality, hair and boobs!” explained Mattiussi, who named the video, 'L'Échappée Belle', a French phrase meaning you risked danger but survived, like a prey escaping the hunter.

Though there is nothing tentative about the performance of his brand, which is quite probably the fastest growing indie runway brand in Paris, or Europe, in many years.

Backed up by a well-organized back office and Mattiussi’s own canny blend of French cool and commercial savvy, AMI is enjoying truly explosive growth. In the past financial year, ending on March 31, AMI doubled its revenues to 68 million euros, as the brand went into overdrive on the web.

Even as we met with Mattiussi for a preview on Friday inside a showroom on Rue Cassette in Paris's Saint-Germain, a score of backstage staff were busy photographing and cataloging the collection – some 750 references to be ready to start selling directly on Monday.

For next season, Mattiussi would like to see young ladies in slinky, body-stocking like robes, sleeveless sequined columns, or in flirty chiffon cocktails – ideal for a terrace cocktail, or even a red carpet moment at Cannes. Mattiussi has set up a suite at the film festival, which starts next week, and plans to attend European cinema's most fashionable moment there, the annual AmfAR dinner.

In more casual moods, AMI gals will wear oversized spencers and cropped tuxedos; or voluminous boyfriends’ blazers in sturdy wool gabardine.

As did his guys in his co-ed video, though pairing them with great tie-dye shorts and pants; the material dyed in Paris, but the garments assembled in Portugal. Each tie-dye hand-made, so no two looks the same, as his youthful cast dashed about the fair ground or jumping on dodgems.

“We spent lockdown looking at images of empty cities – Paris, Venice or New York. So, I wanted come back but not crazily,” added the designer.

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In January, Chinese investor vehicle Sequoia acquired a majority stake in AMI. That in part helped to fund rapid expansion, though AMI’s cash flow is so strong, most boutique openings are financed internally.

The brand will open a New York flagship in November, and has now 10 stores in China. On Friday, Alexandre even opened AMI men and women pop-ups in Galeries Lafayette, and hung his iconic heart over an A logo inside the department store’s famed Art Deco cupola.

“We are the first brand in the history of Galeries Lafayette to be hung inside the department store’s cupola. And their cupola is the most visited place in France after the Eiffel Tower,” chuckled the bearded and bright eyed Alexandre, who still rides around Paris on his scooter from the new home he is renovating in the haute bohemian 20th arrondissement.

His heart logo aertexes are now ubiquitous among cool Parisians, as are his soft AMI Paris sweat-shirts. His spring/summer 2022 accessories also looked powerful: great new sneakers with mountaineers ropes and not laces. Floppy felt cloches made by Borsalino.

Buoyant, bouncy and upbeat like his collection, Mattiussi has hit the sweet sport many designers just dream about.

“I work a long day, every day. But I was alone in an apartment 10 years ago when I started AMI, and now I have almost 200 people working for me. That makes me proud,” he concluded.