

All white as festival prepares for launch

Kathleen Cuthbertson

NO, haute couture is not a new look for the races.

These gowns, the work of Melbourne designers Toni Maticovski and Gwendolynne with headpieces by Richard Nylon, are a taste of things to come at tonight's Sydney launch of the L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival.

The festival, from March 15-22, holds a launch in Sydney to pique the interest of the national fashion industry.

Festival director Karen Webster said the event would boast the strongest line-up ever for its business seminar — and the details of a big-name international guest will be revealed tonight.

Meanwhile, the cream of Australian designers will feature their autumn-winter 2009 collections on the festival's catwalks.

"The festival, especially over the last two or three years, has very much become a national event which happens in Melbourne," Ms Webster said.

She said that with tough economic times forecast, the festival would make a strong statement to get people excited about fashion.

"We've deliberately been bold with it," she said. "We've got to show a level of optimism, we've got to make a powerful statement, it's got to be engaging and all along it's got to celebrate beauty and fashion in all its elements."

While white is right for the launch, Ms Webster said winter would bring even more of Melbourne's favourite non-colour to our wardrobes.

"There's lots of lace — the whole black 'goth' thing is going to be massive," she said.



Trends: Alexandra and Natalia model couture for tonight's Sydney launch of the L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival. Picture: CRAIG BORROW