

HEADLINE: So Rech, so global

SUBHEADLINE: The Georges Rech Spring-Summer Collection goes down well

BYLINE: WANPHEN SRESHTHAPUTRA

Parisian chic was very much in evidence as it entered the velvet-smooth lobby lounge of the Shangri-La Hotel the other weekend. Before a crowd of fashion-conscious, doll-up visitors, the Georges Rech Spring-Summer Collection 2001 marched past on leggy models and handsome men during a swirl of silky, fluid and colourful fabrics.

The brand, launched in 1960 and famed for its slogan "So French, So Rech", confirmed its position of ambassador of French elegance as its latest collection was unveiled in Bangkok, thanks to a joint effort by Boutique Newcity Plc and the Shangri-La Hotel.

Sport - the word inscribed on the fabric - was the opening theme of the fashion show, with "Georges Rech Sport" taking us to ocean shores while dark blue and coral red tones emanated from casual, unstructured yet elegant suits and bags, before slipping into light purple and multicoloured outfits.

Suits - the brand's field of unrivalled expertise and its springboard to fame - were offered in a variety of forms, from the classic, impeccable male costume to the feminine low neckline and skirt ensemble to trouser suits.

Splendid materials and prints, as well as sophisticated details, were the leitmotif of the show, which ended in a fireworks of embroidered tops and flowery, soft and fluid, floating dresses offering a nocturnal shine.

The fashion show did all the more brilliantly in that its audience included the distinguished and good-looking Jean-Jacques Wegnez, president and managing director of Georges Rech SA, who presided over the event.

Before the show, Jean-Jacques Wegnez spared a few minutes of his time to meet with the press and share his views on the ever-changing universe of fashion.

"Fashion is a global industry, like the economy. Fashion parades taking place in Paris are broadcast the world over and can easily be seen here. The world is into fashion - Thailand is no exception. The only difference is in the light and sun which alter people's perception of colours," he said.

"Women's perception of fashion is the same, yet collections have to be adapted to the country, the culture and precisely to the light. The Asian woman's more silky skin also plays a part as some fabrics suit Asian women better than others."

Adapting George Rech's collection to Thai specifications is thus part and parcel of the partnership which the top quality French brand has established with Thailand over the past eight years.

"We have a licence in Thailand and a team here translating designs made in Paris according to the weather and the fabrics available in Thailand. We wish to do more together and develop a two-way stream of collaboration so that products from Thailand could also be exported to France," Jean-Jacques Wegnez said.

Aware of Thailand's potential in the fashion industry, the president of Georges Rech SA described himself as "impressed by the quality of textile products made in Thailand" and Thailand's "expertise at working light fabrics and complex, difficult and sophisticated details".

"You have talented fingers for sure. With this high-quality standard, Thailand could become a key player on the fashion scene. But you will have to fight for the freedom to import the fabrics you want."

The Belgium-born Wegnez, who was initially trained as a solid state physicist and researcher into chemical fibres, predicted a rising market for smart casual clothes "because the behaviour and lifestyle of women is going towards casual" _ yet coupled with a return of suits.

He added: "By my next visit to Bangkok, I hope Georges Rech will be occupying an entire building here."

The crowd of khunyings and well-heeled customers rushing at the stands opened by the luxurious ready-to-wear house in the lobby of the Shangri-La Hotel would certainly not object.