

This week in review
Mondrian at the Tate,
tons of kids' holiday ideas,
half-price tourist spots
Plus Free TV guide



Hotshots



taster

The 2nd Portobello Film & Video Festival unspools on Sat 9 with an outdoor screening of a 'surprise British feature' in Pleasance Park, Kentish Rd. Just a taster for the following weekend's jamboree of independent film, video and more in Acton Gardens, Portobello Rd. And it's all free.

Film starts on page 49

tailor made

When design duo Franco Florenz (then Franco, 33, and Andrew Florenz, 39) recently forged a link with high street retailer Debenhams, it came as no surprise to a fashion industry accustomed to the young British label's commercial success.

Unlike others, Franco Florenz have never resorted to the kind of shock tactics upon which many a London fashion company

'Although we have kept the prices low, the collection is still completely based on our way of dressing women.'

has built a rebellious reputation. Their thingy card - which seems to grab as much attention as any brand label or engraved bank cheque - is their accomplished sense of taste: bag, a simple handle on tapered-up glasses and their ability to appeal to a grown-up clientele with very grown-up bank accounts.

Ironically, their high-end items will allow them to continue to the high end of fashion. 'We were driven to open our London way to a financial factor when

Debenhams approached us,' says Franco. 'So often allowed to keep complete control of our marketing label without constantly worrying where the next injection of cash was going to come from.'

For Debenhams, the pay-off is a collection with the Franco Florenz stamp but without the shock pricing. 'We think of it as our diffusion line,' says Franco, something that will bring the Franco Florenz name to a much wider market. And although we have kept prices low by

simplifying the construction of the garments, the collection is still completely based on our way of dressing women.'

But and Andrew's first collection was inspired by Charlie Chaplin and the music from 'The Piano'. With their own experimentally deconstructed interpretation of the accepted dogmas within traditional tailoring, they won an immediate following and a lot of high profile international attention. They followed the 'Best New Designer' award at the British Apparel Export Awards in 1994 and the 'New Generation Award' at the following year's British Fashion Awards. 'We're not trying to reinvent the wheel,' says Franco of their surprisingly simple design philosophy. 'What we do is not about dressing ladies, it's about creating style.'

James Prior

The Franco Florenz autumn/winter collection is available at Debenhams; see ShopTalk 3rd for starts on page 47

