



ADVOCATEinsider

May 21, 2007

"St. Trinian's" Press Conference



Photo: Getty

CANNES -- May 20, afternoon

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The press conference for St. Trinian's was scheduled for 3 p.m. But Rupert Everett and Colin Firth (and the others associated with the film) were all delayed hours during their flight from London. (They're still filming the movie and should be done next week.) The press room at the American Pavilion (located behind the massive Lumiere right on the water) was absolutely jammed, with reporters lined up along the wall when the seats ran out.

It's a remake of a an amusing series of films from the late 50s into 1960, with two hoped-for revivals in '66 n '80 that didn't stick. The three originals are really great fun, with the rather wild students at an all-girls boarding school running roughshod over anyone with their anarchic spirit. The head mistress was played deliciously in drag by Alistair Sims. (British men DO love to don a frock.) And obviously for this sequel Everett will be doing the same. The reckless abandon of these movies should be really bracing -- a celebration of being creative and free-spirited rather than just naughty for naughty's sake.

The two lead students came in their student uniforms looking quite naughty indeed. And Everett and Firth were in fine form, sharing how they really despised each other on Another Country (Everett does admit to being hopelessly, ruthlessly ambitious) and finally became friends many, many years later. Firth also said not being able to get into a party or film (thanks to the mercurial and unmoving security) is a Cannes tradition for the talent. He said that when they came as young men to promote Another Country, he and Colin (and the others) arrived to popping flashbulbs, waved to the crowd, walked up part of the red carpet, stood for the mob of photographers poised there, walked to the top of the red carpet stairs, turned and waved to the massive crowd cheering their every gesture and then turned to walk in for the world premiere of their movie, only to be stopped by a guard who demanded their tickets. They'd forgotten them and no amount of begging and pleading would get them in until someone ran back to the hotel and got them. Delicious.

That came from Firth, but if you haven't read Everett's memoir yet, it's very entertaining too. Firth says he'd like to become a writer and Everett says (not wholly convincingly to me) that he's ready to chuck in acting basically and just write, though he was delighted to hear Shrek 3 had done bang-up business (the biggest animated film opening weekend of all time at \$122 million) since Shrek 4 will be even more of a retirement fund.

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Wandering The Majestic

CANNES -- May 20, afternoon

After my Coen brothers round table, I head over to the Majestic. Have you got a picture of Cannes in your head yet? There's a gorgeous Mediterranean bay filled with yachts. Sitting on the edge of

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the bay is the massive Palais complex, several massive buildings housing tons of space. The Lumiere is the premiere single screen theater, seating thousands. Next to it is the Palais proper, which has numerous floors containing screening rooms, a press conference area, mailboxes for the journalists (overflowing with leaflets and lavish color booklets promoting movies), a WiFi area for journalists with laptops, a press room where people can wait and use one of the dozens of computers available, a bottom floor filled with marketer booths and another building behind it with more screening rooms and more companies hawking movies so obscure they only dream of being straight-to-DVD releases.

Next to the Palais proper is the Debussy, another very nice theater that seats maybe 800 people. Now in front of the Palais and all along the waterfront is the Croisette, the main drag. In front of the Lumiere is the red carpet and from the first day of the fest, the middle of the Croisette across the street is taken over by fans. They arrive with stepladders and place a claim on their spot. They stay there all day long and when a movie is premiering and celebrities arrive in a limo, they perch on their stepladders to see over any obstacles and wave and yell and cheer and take pictures, surrounded by dozens or hundreds of other people who overflow in every direction, especially at night.

The waterfront past the Croisette is a public promenade, with a classic film shown every night on the beach with free attendance. On the other side of the beach are the hotels, with the Majestic the most famous. That's where many journalists head every morning to pick up a free copy of the trades placed there every day (Variety, Hollywood Reporter, Le Film Francais, etc.). Inside the Majestic, you'll also find the first floor bursting with conference rooms. That's where you head to find the major pr firms, the people you need to get on the list for if you want to go to the big parties or in-demand round tables or other events. I'm wandering there to (finally) get my credentials for the Golden Compass events. I'm walking down a hall when a door opens and someone steps out. Clearly it's a screening room because bursting out of the room are screams and the sound of gunfire and explosions.

This too, pretty much sums up Cannes. People are lined up at the Palais to see three hour art films and across the street people are holed up in little rooms watching quickie exploitation flicks that might actually turn a profit. -- Michael Giltz

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The Coen Brothers At Cannes



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Photo: Getty

After XXY, I rushed over to the Noga Beach to chat with the Coen Brothers. Here's how a round table works: Journalists show up at a location -- often at Cannes it's a patio area on the beach, by a pool or in a conference room. You might find 30 journalists there from all over the world. Everyone devours the free nibbles (croissants and coffee) or orders lunch or grabs a drink or frankly anything and everything at hand. The talent there will sometimes be having lunch at the same time. But I never eat because I hate the idea of chewing away while they're talking. I'm there to pay attention to them. Everyone else thinks I'm an idiot for turning down free food and I've no doubt that not a single celebrity has ever thought, 'How nice that this man is at least focusing on me instead of their veal cutlet.'

Anyway, we get grouped by tables, with 5-6 people at a table with one (or two) chair(s) tilted forward so we know that's where the talent is going to sit. Then each table gets a turn with the director followed by one star followed by another star followed by a writer or producer or whomever. Then the war begins. Old pros belt out one question after another, steamrolling over any newbies who try to maintain some politeness or are struggling to speak in a second language. My friends

basically mocked me for caring about the "weak" ones, saying they've got a job to do and if someone has come to Cannes and is too lame or too timid to speak up and get their questions heard, then they deserve to be drowned out.

In some cases, especially with people no one is interested in (the writer, the producer, the marketer -- sorry, guys) there is often a lull in questions that needs to be filled. People say, "You're at Cannes; if you're not ready to fight for your question, you shouldn't be there." I say, no matter where you are, no matter who you are, you should be polite and considerate to others and behave decently. I am clearly wrong on this. Anyway the people rotate every twenty minutes. If there's a big star, once they've hit a table, you might see half or more of the reporters leave to head to the next event, leaving the writer to be queried by just two or three folk.

The Coens were polite, but aren't much on anecdote, either because that's how they are or to discourage interest in them and their lives. Presumably, they just want to make movies and be left alone. And it's working. Josh Brolin and Javier Bardem were very funny; clearly they are guys who don't take themselves seriously. Later, at the party for the film's premiere, Bardem was described as putting a napkin on his head and dancing around wildly. No one blinked an eye. At most, someone might have said, indulgently, "Actors." But my favorite moment came when we were discussing weighty issues like violence in cinema when a waitress dropped off a massive iced bucket of rose. That about sums up Cannes in a nutshell. -- Michael Giltz

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"XXY" -- Another Terrific Queer Film At Cannes

CANNES -- Sunday, May 20 -- early afternoon

The 60th Cannes Film Festival already produced one delight: the coming-of-age drama *Water Lilies* by a talented young French director who promptly [came out to The Advocate](#). Now we've got another winner.

XXY is an Argentinian first feature by Lucia Puenzo about an inter-sexed, or hermaphrodite child named Alex. Presented to the world as a girl, Alex is a 15 year old teenager who has breasts and a penis. Her parents have moved her (again) from Buenos Aires to a small town on the Uruguayan coastline. Often instinctively treated cruelly by others, Alex is a troubled but confident young woman. Her parents wrestle with the question of whether they made the right decision not to have Alex medically assigned to one sex at an early age. Her mother invites a plastic surgeon friend to visit -- along with his wife and sexually curious son -- hoping for a conversation about the unspoken topic.

Alex (a terrific Ines Efron) takes charge and immediately asks Alvaro (also exceptional Martin Piroysky) if he wants to have sex. Alvaro, who has been wrestling with feelings of being gay, is probably relieved to find himself attracted to Alex and after initial shyness, they begin to make out.

In a really remarkable scene early in the film, Alex then turns Alvaro over and begins to penetrate him. His confusion, surprise and arousal makes for an extraordinary moment perhaps never seen in the movies, with an inter-sexed person taking charge of their identity without apology while a young gay man begins to accept who he is as well. The entire film is about acceptance, as Alex more and more resists taking pills to keep her from growing a beard or the possibility of surgery and wants to be accepted and loved as she is.

The adults are secondary, though still important. But the teens are front and center and make this story riveting. Made with assurance and skill, this is an exceptional film. Not since *Boys Don't Cry* has a movie dealt with issues of gender and sexuality in so bold and forthright a manner. It won't have the box office or Oscar impact of that film, of course: it's not in English and the heroine (without spoiling anything) does not suffer a tragic death, the sort of "sad victims" finale that often makes people on the margins acceptable to a wider public. But you won't want to miss it. I liked the movie so much, I made myself late for another interview and stayed for the Q&A. I also arranged to speak to the director and star on Thursday so look for that chat later. -- Michael Giltz

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Today's Color Is Green





Photo: Getty

CANNES -- May 20, morning

Actually, the color of the entire festival is green this year. When the media picked up their badges during the first day, a friendly woman at the exit pointed out a brand new recycling bin that would be located throughout the Palais and urging us to help them recycle. Recycling bins now appear in the streets, one for bottles and another for paper with the phrase on the side: "A small gesture for a big problem." (I am very roughly translating since I am not even remotely fluent in French.) To top it off, Leonardo DiCaprio brought *The 11th Hour* to the festival. His documentary got mixed reviews and is not expected to be the same commercial force as Al Gore's film. But it will have a good life on DVD and is notable for a very positive final section that deals numerous radical but doable changes that can be made to stop or slow global warming. And members of the "11th Hour Green Team" wandered throughout Cannes handing out leaflets. Remember when nature freaks ate granola and had long hair? These kids are fresh-faced and handsome, as if Abercrombie & Fitch models were trying to get people to support bio-diesel fuel. Good marketing move, I say. -- Michael Giltz

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How Many Directors Does It Take To Salute Cannes?

CANNES -- May 20, early morning

No, that's not the start of a joke. It's the question raised by Chacon Son Cinema, the first screening of the day. It's a compilation of shorts by 30 directors asked to celebrate going to the movies in 3 minutes or less. The hit to miss ratio was very good for this sort of thing. And the

ones that were bad were entertainingly so. Perhaps the most notable was Jane Campion's. We haven't heard from her in a while. Unfortunately the short she delivered was a definite oddball, featuring a woman dressed up as a bug that a cinema worker is trying to squash. Very bizarre. For most of the shorts, the applause varied naturally by how much people liked the film and the director. For Campion's, the appearance of her credit caused a disturbed murmur to ripple through the crowd. How to sum up this sound? It seemed to say, "Oh, where has she been? And what the heck was that?" At the press conference, Roman Polanski stormed out because the questions were so idiotic. But attention also focused on Michael Cimino, who had been rumored for years to have undergone a sex change operation and appeared here looking at the very least androgynous. Jane Campion stood next to him, perhaps in solidarity, perhaps hoping to simply put the negative reaction to her short behind her. -- Michael Giltz

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May 19, 2007

Sneak Peek at Sunday

The next four days are absolutely frantic, with every interview, press conference and party conflicting with something else I really really want (or need) to do. Sunday I'm going to squeeze in some or most of the following: watch the compilation film Chacun Son Cinema, which features shorts from an amazing collection of major filmmakers; then I have to choose between the intersex drama XXY and Caramel (which features at least a little lesbianism); the round table for the Joel and Ethan Coen movie is at 1:30 p.m.; the Rupert Everett/Colin Firth press conference and round tables for the comedy St. Trinian's are at 3 and on; several more screenings are all in the early evening, not to mention the first screening of footage from The Golden Compass with the St. Trinian's party capping it off. But maybe not for me: I still haven't received my invite. -- Michael Giltz

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U2 Rocks Cannes





Photo: Getty

I just came from a friendly mob of people outside the Lumiere. U2's concert film U2-3D debuts tonight and the band promised to perform one or two songs on the red carpet. So the streets -- which are usually filled with tourists and kids and locals hoping for a glimpse of a celeb -- were throbbing with a massive audience looking for a good concert. Most every balcony in the hotels opposite the Lumiere were filled with folks hoping for a better view. (Someone outside my window just shouted out "Where is Bono?") Everything ran late and everywhere I looked more people were streaming towards the fans waiting for arguably the biggest band in the world right now. A TV crew composed of two young women in cocktail dresses sprang into action as the excitement mounted. One of them clambered onto a concrete box holding up a tree (in high heels no less) and shouldered the TV camera while the on-air talent (also in a lovely dress) delivered her short piece. A British woman nearby was not having a good night as she argued incessantly over her cell phone. "How can I feel you respect and love me when you tell me I'm nasty?" she asks, quite reasonably in my book. She storms off stage right and I put her out of my mind. Ten minutes later she is headed in the other direction walking beside a man who is absolutely furious at her and curses, "Stop asking me the same f---ing question!"

Finally, at about 12:44 (a solid hour late, or right on time if you're in a Cannes frame of mind), U2 arrives, poses for photographers and then blasts through "Vertigo" and "Where The Streets Have No Name." Then they went inside and watched themselves perform in 3-D. Is it boring or fun for them to watch one of their own concerts, I wonder. There's often a (terrible) deejay providing a little entertainment for the fans in between arrivals, but I've no idea if a band has actually

ever performed on the red carpet before. History in the making, or at least a little silly fun. -- Michael Giltz

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Fashion Victims and Missing Fathers

CANNES -- May 19, early evening

I spent the afternoon writing articles, transcribing tapes, dealing with editors and trying to arrange more interviews. Yet another example of being so busy covering the fest that I don't have time to attend the fest. I just miss the screening for the Leonardo DiCaprio environmental documentary, so I decide to head to the market and give myself a rest from art films and just watch a movie. A gay movie, to be exact. It's a German flick (I believe) called Fashion Victims, and the poster made clear one character was gay and I thought, what the hell? Kind of an odd duck with the high school senior hero frustrated in his desire to take a trip by his manic, over-controlling dad who gets a suspended license and needs his son to act as a chauffeur while he struggles in the garment business. Junior just happens to fall for the handsome new employee at dad's firm who could push pop out completely with his modern ideas. It's a very modest little flick, with the interesting angle being that the kid doesn't blink an eye when the hunky employee hits on him, plus no one comments on the older guy being probably a good ten years older than him and when his parents realize he's gay, they accept it with matter of fact indifference. It's just another movie and that's something since not so recently it would have been a wrenching drama or an after school special and the kid would NOT have dated a guy so much older or had sex right off the bat. Innocent and interesting, but banal.

I followed that with Tehamil, (Psalms), an odd little Jewish film about a husband and wife and two sons. The husband disappears after a traffic accident mildly shakes up his boys. And the family struggles with his bizarre, uncertain death for the rest of the film. The movie was slow at first, but it started to sink in with me, showing the inability people can have to move on when a tragedy that such an ambiguous form. I don't think a single other soul even appreciated as mildly as I did. It's a good example of how being in the wrong category can hurt a film. This is in Competition and therefore everyone will say, huh? This is one of the absolute bests? If it were in the more modest Un Certain Regard category or even the separate line-up at Director's Fortnight, people would be much more willing to ferret out its charms instead of critiquing how poorly it stands up to the other Competition films. -- Michael Giltz

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Swooning Over Julianne Moore



Photo: Getty

CANNES -- May 18, afternoon

Julianne Moore is a terrific actress and she's also a star. (Those can be -- and usually are -- two very different things.) She and director Tom Kalin were giving round table interviews on *Savage Grace* to the world press at the Hotel Majestic beach. It's a pier extending out into the gorgeous blue Mediterranean waters, with billowy white tent material as awning to provide shade. The film, based on the real life tragedy of a socialite stabbed to death by her son in the early 70s, is due out in the US this November.

Kalin politely answered question after question at table after table. But the stars are everything at Cannes and he was doubtlessly amused to see people swarming when Moore sat down for her first interview after seemingly endless rounds of photography. Journalists crowded onto one long table, a swarm of microphones and cassette players and digital recorders swooped into position and Moore jokingly said, "It's too bad nobody showed up."

Much of the questioning revolved around the scene of incest between

Barbara (Moore) and her son (Eddie Redmayne -- Matt Damon's son in *The Good Shepherd*). In real life, both Barbara and her son Tony told anyone and everyone that they had slept together -- Barbara because she wanted to "cure" Tony of his homosexuality; Tony perhaps because her smothering love had been the center of his entire life. In the movie, it's the quiet but devastating climax of their tortured relationship.

Kalin revealed that while artistically the scene wasn't the most difficult one to do, he did find it draining emotionally.

"I was hiding in the back of the lunch area, crying," admits Kalin, when Moore found him. "What's going on?" she asked him. Kalin explained he was feeling distraught and moved by the intensity of it all. He'd insisted the final portion of the film be shot sequentially, so the incest scene came right at the end of the shoot. He says Moore gave him some sweet but tough love to buck Kalin up: "You better keep it together," he says she told him. "You've got to shoot the murder tomorrow!" "Trust me," responded Kalin. "The murder is not a problem."

And though he's a New Yorker and signed up for a domestic partnership at City Hall (for legal reasons), Kalin doesn't feel compelled to personally take advantage of the changing climate to validate his life.

"I'm in a 15 year relationship with the love of my life, Craig Paul, who is here," says Kalin. "We're thriving happily together. We live in New York City and also have a place in the Catskills. We're the proud parents of two dogs. We're hosting a family reunion in about a month, seeing almost all of my siblings [Kalin has ten brothers and sisters] and some of my extended family.

"I think if I was heterosexual I probably wouldn't be married. I'm not opposed to gay marriage. Anyone who wants to be married should be able to be, legally. But in terms of defining my relationship? Going to a church and saying 'I do' doesn't seem particularly necessary. The fact that we've survived fifteen years through thick and thin -- he's the anchor of my life."

I'll give you more from Julianne Moore later. I've got a screening to head to and can't transcribe the chat quite yet.-- Michael Giltz

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