



ADVOCATEinsider

May 19, 2007

How To Tell You've Settled In At Cannes

CANNES -- May 19, late morning

When the endless accordion music wafting up from the restaurant outside your window changes from amusing to annoying to finally disappearing into the background like white noise -- you've settled in at Cannes.

When you start to cut lines just as aggressively as the French journalists -- you've settled in at Cannes.

When you see on a monitor that Jake Gyllenhaal is walking up the red carpet about 50 feet away from you (looking quite dashing) and you don't even walk over to glance at him -- you've settled in at Cannes.

And when you almost knock your brand new Apple laptop onto the floor and grab it desperately while blurting out, "ooh-la-la!" without even a hint of irony -- why, then you've settled in at Cannes. -- Michael Giltz

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Michael Moore: "Sicko"



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Photo: Getty

CANNES -- May 19 morning

The mostly hotly anticipated film of the festival finally debuts. Sicko was a must-see for virtually everyone, not because they expected a cinematic breakthrough but simply because Moore's movies are fun, entertaining and invariably spark heated debate. If there's one film everyone will ask you about when you return from Cannes, it's Michael Moore's Sicko.

And so the mad rush for the Lumiere. Normally, just arriving 15 minutes early would give you plenty of breathing room. Not this time. The Lumiere was "complet" -- completely full well before the film began. The people who got in had the double pleasure of being the first to see the film and passing by the hundreds of journalists, market goers and others begging and pleading for entrance on the outside. Don't sleep in, people!

The film was typically entertaining, with some very moving footage of real Americans who got screwed by insurance companies, hospitals and the like. A mother losing her baby girl because the ER refused to admit them in an emergency, a woman who worked at a Catholic hospital for years only to have the board refuse life-saving treatment for her now deceased husband, and a woman with cancer who Moore informs us is now dead -- all due to the refusal to provide treatment they clearly needed. Its muckraking in the best tradition of activist journalism.

A funny contrast is made between the US health care system and the health care in Canada, the UK, France and even Cuba. But the very first question at the wildly overcrowded press conference (it attracted easily three times as many people as any other one so far) came from a Canadian who complained that Moore made their system seem to good. He immediately detailed some problems. Moore's reply was succinct and perfect: would you trade your health care card in Canada for a US one? No, the man said immediately. No, of course not, said Moore.

Hopefully, he'll include a 30 second bit of voice-over before the US release. He should make clear that the health care systems in other countries have flaws and that Canada shouldn't feel too proud: it's not that hard to do better than the US. (In a ranking by the World Health Organization, the US was 37th with Canada only a little higher.) Even in France, ranked by WHO as the best health care system in the world, people have genuine complaints. Moore agrees that the health care in those countries isn't paradise and could be improved. They're not perfect. They're just a lot better than the US. His simple point is that the richest country has one of the poorest health care systems in the industrialized world. And that's wrong. -- Michael Giltz

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Fireworks, Bar Battle Part II and A Sneak Peek At Saturday



Photo: Getty

CANNES -- May 18, late night

Every night for much of the fest, a fireworks display lasting about 15 minutes is on display. It's hard to resist fireworks, so it becomes a nice moment to pause on your way back from Jessica Simpson's yacht or a screening of the new Coen brothers film and catch your breath. Of course, my new gay roomie headed out to the bars and he reports that Le Pink and the traditional gay watering hole Zanzibar are in a death match. Zanzibar still has a bigger crowd, but Le Pink has established itself as the more Euro-trashy alternative and does have its adherents. Apparently, late at night you'll have to go to two bars to see and be seen.

I should be fair to my roommate: he's networking and getting to know his bosses more than partying it up. Anyone who actually

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enjoys music will be saddened to know that Cannes is filled with bars blasting out anonymous disco and tiresome mixes and even the gay bars aren't that much better. When he got home, we talked at length for the first time, trading the usual gay tales ("When did you know?" etc.) It would be wildly indiscrete for me to share any details of our stories, but we both agreed that when you go camping with someone, it's important to make sure you pack ALL the necessary supplies.

Finally, tomorrow includes Michael Moore's hotly anticipated Sicko, his look at the US health care industry, I've got that interview session with director Tom Kalin and the lovely Julianne Moore, lots of stories to file, the Moore press conference, a swing by the press offices to check on party and press status for various events and hopefully one or two more films...unless I get an invite to the Vanity Fair party, in which case I have to don a tux and start pumping celebs for quotes for another publication. -- Michael Giltz

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Jessica Simpson: Movie Star



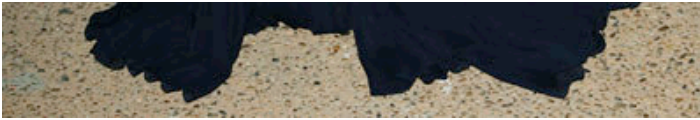


Photo: Getty

CANNES -- May 18, evening

I was shut out of the early screening of the new Coen Brothers movie, so I couldn't fulfill my gay duty and head to the Jessica Simpson party out on a yacht in the bay. But of course my new gay roomie was there and he spilled the dirt on this enjoyably trashy, very "La Dolce Vita"-like experience. Simpson's dad arrived first so everyone could photograph him. Then the pop singer and actress appeared because she's got a couple of movies being promoted here, including a remake of *Working Girl* with Luke Wilson. Simpson is no shrinking violet but even she looked a bit overwhelmed as the rabid group of photographers shouted her name over and over, giving directions like "Show us some leg!" -- a chant they raised again and again and again. The press had to arrive at 7:45 and she didn't appear till around 10 p.m. Perfectly standard, even expected at Cannes. If Simpson had arrived at 8 p.m., everyone would have been so flabbergasted that they wouldn't know what to do.

By the way, when you're invited to a party or event on a yacht at Cannes, you have to be careful. Will the boat remain docked or (quite often) does it head out into the bay once everyone's aboard? If the boat goes for a sail, you'll be trapped. Even if you're completely bored, have everything you need (photos, quotes, etc.) and desperately need to be somewhere else, unless you're swimming you can't go anywhere until the party givers decide the show is over and that can mean HOURS. So be careful and make sure you find out exactly what they've planned. -- Michael Giltz

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The Coen Brothers Triumphant New Film

CANNES -- May 18, evening

I spent the afternoon doing interviews and writing stories, including the Advocate.com exclusive about the director of *Water Lilies* coming out in print for the first time. Hence my lack of posting for a while. At 10 p.m., the usually uncrowded late night screening was jammed full because everyone who couldn't get into *No Country For Old Men* was dying for their next-to-last chance to see the new Coen Brothers film. I'd just read the Cormac McCarthy novel it is based on and the book is so funny and gripping (and bleak) I couldn't wait to see the movie.

On first glance, I was a tad disappointed. For me, the movie was good and certainly a return to form compared to *The Ladykillers* and *Intolerable Cruelty*. But I am very alone in this opinion of "good, not great." Virtually everyone I spoke to was raving about the film and

Variety raved, saying it is "a bloody classic" and "one of their very best." When it comes out in the US, I look forward to seeing it again and watching the movie they made rather than looking for the movie I expected.

I was also alone when it comes to the Russian film *The Banishment*. I was mesmerized; everyone else was sleeping and the reviews have been brutal across the board. Mind you, the reviews of *Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter* frankly matter much more than the audiences who applaud or boo. A rave from *Variety* means an obscure film few people liked is suddenly a "festival favorite." But in the case of the Coen brothers, the audience and the critics and the major reviewers are all in sync. -- Michael Giltz

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Tom Kalin Follows Up "Swoon"...15 Years Later

CANNES -- May 18 afternoon

Director Tom Kalin debuted his new film *Savage Grace* -- starring Julianne Moore -- in the Directors Fortnight at Cannes today. Greeted with warm applause, the film opens in the US this November.

Tomorrow, I'll take part in round table discussions with Kalin and star Moore and tell you what I hear about this juicy period piece with sex, drugs, incest, murder and some lovely Givenchy outfits. --

Michael Giltz

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May 18, 2007

A Breath Of Sunshine



Photo: Getty

CANNES -- May 18, late morning

I've got an interview with the first-time director of *Water Lilies* (a very accomplished debut) at 11:45. Now I have to rush over to check on my party and interview requests at the Majestic. That's one of the massive (and massively expensive) hotels on the Croisette. Locals and tourists line up outside the entrance, their cameras at the ready to snap any movie stars that might be staying there. It does bruise the ego a bit to see people peering at you as you approach the guard with your badge, raise their camera and then lower it again dismissively once they get a good look at you. Inside, I find I'm still on hold for The Golden Compass and St. Trinian's parties but have a slot at the Rupert Everett/Colin Firth round table. So I rush back to my apartment for a quick bite because having seen *Les Chansons D'Amour*, I definitely want to check out the press conference that starts at 11.

Disaster strikes when a filling pops out while I'm brushing my teeth and I wonder with fear what a French dentist could possibly be like when even the French people who are supposed to be nice to you are naturally unconcerned with your welfare. Images from *Marathon Man* pop into my head. No bleeding and no soreness so whatever the hell is going on, I ignore it.

At the press conference, everyone is already inside and questions are being asked. The stars can be seen on a monitor, as can the room which is far from full. Not a single journalist is waiting to go in, but when I flash my pathetic yellow badge, one of the seventeen or so guards tells me to wait behind the velvet rope. (This is why I never go to clubs with a doorman.) I stand there politely for five minutes. He stands there talking to the other guards. No one checks to see if or when I can be let in. Finally, I gesture to him and say "S'il vous plait?" He looks at me, quite annoyed, and gestures at me with his palms out, i.e. hold your horses you silly little journalist. After another minute of chatting to keep me in my place, he heads over to a guard by the door, asks a question and then reluctantly lets me in. I shower him with "Mercis" and then scuttle inside.

The table of talent is on a platform just to my left, with an auditorium of about 100 seats in front of me. So as not to raise attention, I just stand by the first row against the wall. My reward? I am in the direct sight line of Gregorie LePrince-Ringuet, who plays the gay college student Erwann and is rightly described by the director as "a breath of sunshine." We know the character is truly gay because the first book you spot in his bedroom is Edmund White's *The Beautiful Room Is Empty*. I have to listen to the questions and answers via headphones that provide instant translation into English. I gather Gregorie is not gay himself, unfortunately. Talking about the threesome, the director Honore says, "All these characters have no sexual concerns about a threesome or whatever. But they are people for whom feelings are more important than sex. We were very careful about the rather naughty side and we wanted to make sure we could desexualize those scenes." Questions about sexuality and language

raise a knowing laugh when one of the actresses (Clotilde Hesme, who plays Alice) points out, "When you're talking about language and sexuality and tongues you've got to be careful." Apparently, in French the word for tongue is the same as the word for language, which probably explains how they invented French kissing.

And Gregorie has this to say about what he liked about his role: "He's a character who is very simple. He doesn't have all the problems of the others because he is still a teenager. He can fall in love without doubting his sexuality. He's a virgin. He's clean. I was a bit anxious playing a homosexual [this after friendly comments that he and the lead got along very well in the sex scenes]. But it went off very well. When he was caressing me all over, the director told me it shouldn't be like two heterosexuals playing homosexuals. We played a couple, which has no gender."

Au revoir, Gregorie. I'd love to come up with a question -- any question -- to ask you, but I have to make my next interview. -- Michael Giltz

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Love Songs



Photo: Getty

CANNES -- May 18 early morning

We're rushing out the door for the first screening of the day (at 8:30 am) and the first screening in the grand Lumiere theater, holy ground at Cannes. The movie is *Les Chansons D'Amour* by Christophe Honore. I want to see every film that's in Competition (22 in all) but this one had a movie still that led me to believe there might be some queer content. Voila! It's a musical that makes use of pop songs written by Alex Beaupain, who's worked with the director before. The

characters simply break into song, without any dramatic switch in style or tone. It's not ironic and anything but kitschy. They sing because they have to.

The story follows Ismael (Louis Garrel) who has somehow found himself in a threesome with his girlfriend Julie (Ludivine Sagnier) and Alice, who is really devoted to "non-sex" but happily kisses Julie. Neither seems gay, but since it's a post-gay world where labels are passe, who cares? Tragedy strikes and Ismael is alone, distraught and somehow becomes the object of affection for Erwann (the charming Gregoire Leprince-Ringuet). I assumed that this gay dalliance would be a momentary diversion to drown Ismael's sorrow. But Erwann is awfully persistent and innocently believes that he can fall in love with a straight man ten years older than him and it could somehow work. The movie wants to believe this too and ends with a line perfect for anyone who finds themselves another's obsession: "Love me less, but love me for a long time."

A small stream of walkouts (typical for almost any film), but a strong apparently French contingent applauded loudly and I heard no boos. (Boos are very, very common here; more on that later.) Not a wholly successful film, but interesting and refreshing in its attitudes. -- Michael Giltz

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May 17, 2007

Sneak Peek At Friday

CANNES -- May 17 late night

What's up tomorrow? (Or more accurately, what's up in 5 hours? First, at 8:30 am is a French film called *Les Chansons D'amour*. Obviously, I want to see any film with queer content, but I also want to avoid reading plot summaries so I can enjoy the films with as little advance knowledge of what they're about as possible. Just the poster for *Water Lilies* (the fine debut feature I saw today) led me to believe there would be some Sapphic content. I'm less certain about *Chansons*, but one still of two guys sort of singing to each other (it's a musical of sorts, I think) indicated there might be a gay subplot. Maybe.

After that I head off to interview the young director of *Water Lilies*. Then I need to check back in with the publicists to see how my requests for access to the AmFAR auction, the junket and party for The Golden Compass and other events are progressing. At 2:15 I've got a press screening (an off-site preview as opposed to its official Cannes debut) for *Savage Grace*, the Tom Kalin film starring Julianne Moore. And my big goal for the evening is to camp out with my lowly yellow badge and make certain I gain entry to one of two screenings of Joel and Ethan Coen's *No Country For Old Men*. I just finished the Cormac McCarthy book, which was very good but even bleaker than

The Road.

Depending on how that goes, I'll either be checking out one other movie or heading to a soiree for Jessica Simpson to trawl for party quotes. -- Michael Giltz

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Where's The Party?

My new gay roomie clearly knows. The straight guys haven't even gone out for a late night beer: one is snoring and the other is in his boxers talking to his girlfriend on iChat. But my new gay roomie is already exploring gay clubs in town, away from the festival and literally on the other side of the train tracks. (I'd say 99% of festgoers have never been beyond those tracks.) He hit some club in town based at a home where 13 euros gets you a vodka and coke and entry to a backyard where a bunch of French boys drink and dance till dawn. He was bored and I was too, not to mention annoyed when I couldn't quite catch the name of the club or where it was located without asking again, which would seem lame since I just agreed it sounded awful. -- Michael Giltz

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