

News Cannes Film Festival

I came, I saw Uma dance, I shared

My Cannes diary

From an encounter with Stella McCartney on the plane, to a sighting of David Walliams at sea, it's all go for Jonathan Ross

Wednesday For those who enjoy the experience of meeting the famous, or just being close enough to stare really hard at famous faces, there are two guaranteed opportunities I can suggest.

1. On a plane, near the front, naturally, heading to LA the day before the Oscars; or 2. On a plane, front end, heading to Nice the day before the Cannes Film Festival kicks off. I speak from much experience. One year on the way to the Oscars I found myself sandwiched between two Dames, the Smith and the Dench. Dench offered me some of the freebies she had in her Oscar goodie bag. It might sound too much like a scripted joke, but it's the honest truth — she gave me a bottle of abdominal firming creme. You're ahead of me by now yes, it hasn't really worked. On this trip to Cannes I was two arm-rests over from Stella McCartney. We chatted about kids and stuff and then, as we arrived, I spotted the neat trick you can probably get away with only if you are an internationally successful designer. Instead of the beat-up bags that everyone else, myself included, was lugging around, Stella had her stuff in four immaculate, personalised, luxury carrier bags, that probably exceeded the carry-on limit twice over. You can pull off this trick only if the bags are actually that nice — arriving in the Côte d'Azur with a couple of Lidl's wouldn't do at all.

I was met at the airport by Julien, who runs Cinémoi, the French movie channel I am working with. He informed me that we had an interview booked with Woody Allen, along with two of the stars of his latest movie, *Midnight in Paris*: Owen Wilson and Port Talbot's very own Jesus, Michael Sheen. The exciting thing was that he had two tickets for me to the Gala Opening, at which said movie was playing. The Gala Opening that you need to wear a dinner suit for. The dinner suit that I had not packed.

Which is why before we headed for the villa they had arranged for me (so glad I hadn't gone the carrier bag route) we hit the main shopping drag.

The opening gala itself is pretty impressive. Where else in the world do the paparazzi seem to get as genuinely excited by the appearance of a dishevelled Emir Kusturica as they do for Scarlett Johansson? Mélanie Laurent, a French starlet, hosted the gala, and via her we met this year's jury. The French director Olivier Assayas and Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, from Chad, both seemed a little nervous, but the more seasoned show-offs, Uma Thurman and Jude Law in particular, actually looked to be enjoying it. Nansun Shi, the Chinese producer, was elegant and relaxed, as was Linn Ullmann, daughter of Liv



Sun, sea, sand and... celebrities: Jonathan Ross enjoys the high life in Cannes

Ullmann and Ingmar Bergman. I imagine she grew up watching fewer cartoons than most other kids her age. Then out comes the president of the jury, Robert De Niro. Slightly shorter than you might expect, a full head of longish gray hair, he received, quite rightly, a magnificent standing ovation, that must have lasted for close to five minutes. No one wanted to be the first to stop applauding — to do so might send out the message that you didn't love De Niro, didn't love Cinema, in fact. Eventually, we were treated to a montage of his work, including some scenes from *Stardust* that had been written for the great man by my wife. I am proud.

Online today

Video Jonathan Ross interviews Woody Allen and picks his Cannes winners

thetimes.co.uk/cannes

More applause, and then, for reasons I still can't grasp, Jamie Cullum was wheeled out to perform an unappealing mash-up of *New York, New York* and Jay-Z's *Empire State of Mind*. The jury and the president did a reasonable job of concealing their surprise and bafflement. No one ever really knows what to do when live music is being played while they are being watched, but dancing isn't really an option. Sadly, no one had told Mélanie Laurent about the strictly no-dancing rule, and she tried to coax the jury members from their seats — that were, I remind you, on stage. Nansun and Uma gamely shuffled for a bit, as did Linn. The men wisely stayed put. It wasn't the most comfortable part of the night for any of us. My watch told me only minutes had passed but I am old enough to have learnt that watches lie. Finally, the film. When I sit down for

a new Woody Allen movie I have pretty low expectations. A delightful surprise, then, to find out that *Midnight in Paris* is better than OK. Go see it when you can. After the film we shuffled out to attend the post-film party. It was very dull. I ate part of a toffee apple and hurt a tooth.

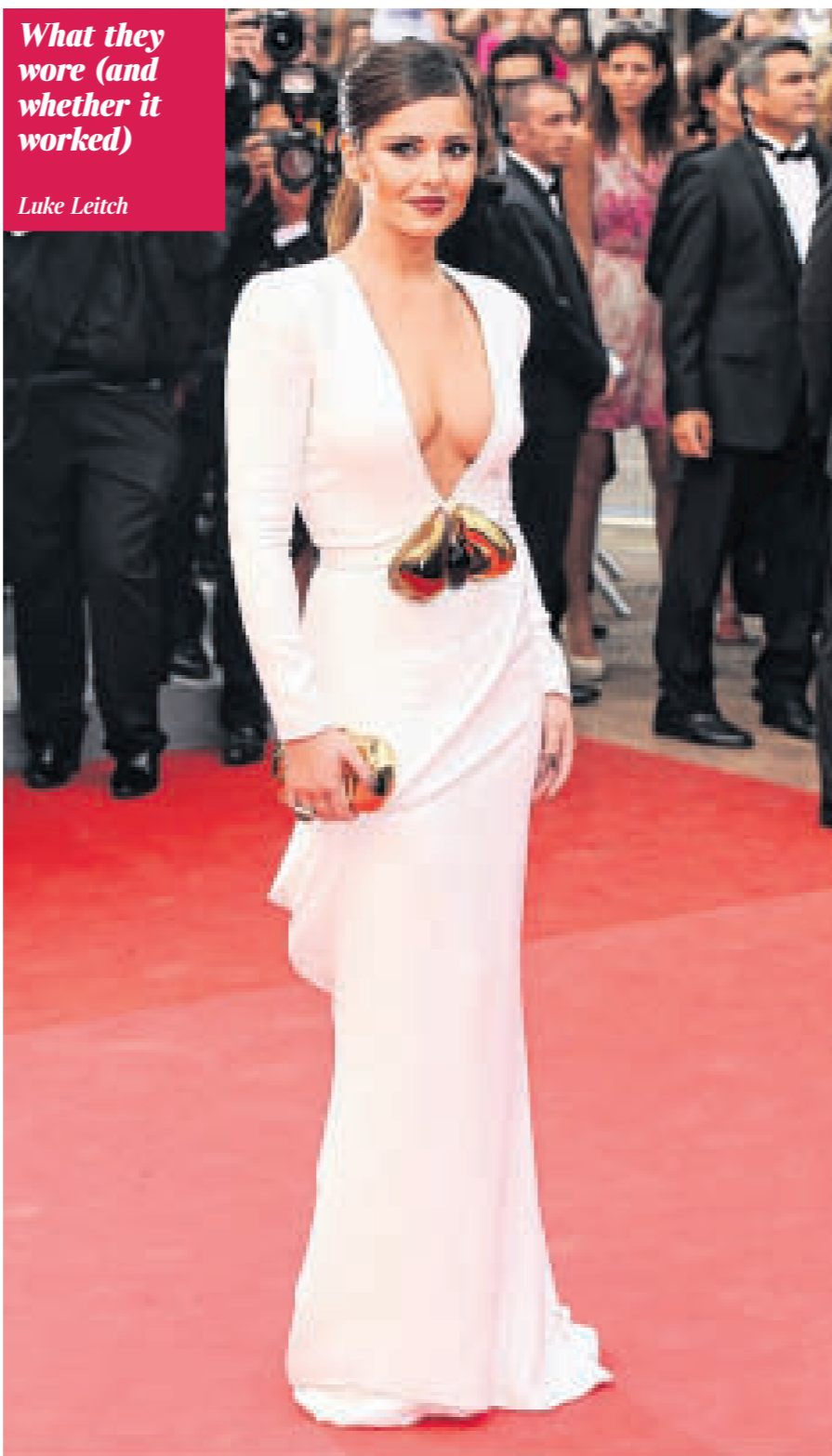
Thursday I wake in my villa — that phrase took me by surprise, but I like the way it sounds. I swish into town and we film several pieces about the films in Competition. I am especially keen to see Pedro Almodóvar's latest, *In My Skin*, as well as Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life*, Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* and Takashi Miike's *Hara-Kiri: Death of a Samurai*. The Finnish director Aki Kaurismäki has a new film as well, *Le Havre*. I danced a tango with him once in a place called Sodankylä. Also, while I am name-dropping, Pedro Almodóvar pinched my right buttock in a nightclub in Madrid back in 1991. Ah, memories...

The interviews went well. Woody was funny, as were Owen Wilson and Mr Sheen. When I asked Woody and Wilson about the red carpet experience the night before, suggesting it is the nicest red carpet experience available, Woody rightly pointed out that I was saying very little. It's a bit like asking someone to agree that a pus-filled abscess on their shoulder is nicer than one on their arse. A quick lunch then a chat with one of India's most popular stars, Aishwarya Rai. Beautiful, smart, elegant and warm. She responded well to all these qualities in me and, dare I say, reflected them back at a higher wattage. Back to MY villa. I rested briefly on a sunlounger by the pool. What did I do to deserve such a hard life? Then down the hill to the gala showing of Lynne Ramsay's *We Need to Talk about Kevin*.

WNTTAK is the only British film in Competition here at Cannes. Well, they needn't have bothered on my account. Don't be fooled by the critics, including *The Times*'s own Kate Muir, who have raved about this — five stars,

What they wore (and whether it worked)

Luke Leitch



Cheryl Cole She's no thespian, yet the pop singer and X Factor judge will no doubt dominate this weekend's coverage courtesy of a neckline that veers so far southwards it should come with a passport. The gown is Stéphane Rolland Haute Couture. Sometimes fashion isn't all that complicated **HIT**

Kate, really? Five stars? It is not "earth-shattering" or "life-changing". It's heavy-handed, melodramatic, irritating and at times just plain ridiculous. Most of the story is told via extreme and annoying close-ups or hand-held wobbly, slightly out of focus shots. If you've ever been tempted to make a parody of a self-serious, dreary, middle-class art film then I am afraid you have been beaten to the punch. I have a horrible feeling it might just win.

Friday Down to the Croisette for one final burst of filming. We have been invited to film in the beachside pavilion that has been set up by an upmarket French beer. In the middle distance, out in the beautiful but chilly sea, a lone figure swam back and forth. Then he headed towards the beach, walking from the water like a chunky male version of Ursula Andress in *Dr*

No. It's David Walliams, who was either just keeping his hand in, or had decided not to fly and had taken the longer, more impressive route to France. We chatted briefly — he was here with his charming child bride, Lara Stone, who is "the face" of one of the many luxury goods that like to be associated with this filmfest. Sadly, he was staying at a hotel rather than enjoying the luxury of his own villa, so I extended the brotherly arm of sympathy before leaving him happily posing for photographs with the half-drunk Brits in free-beer paradise and made my way up the hill to pack and say goodbye to the Riviera.

Watch Cinémoi's Cannes coverage with Jonathan Ross free to air tonight on Sky 343 and Virgin 445, every day during the festival at 8.30pm and on the Cinémoi Cannes iPhone and Android App. www.cinemoi.tv

jokes with Woody



Tilda Swinton She colour-coordinated her green eyes with a halterneck gown by Haider Ackermann and a clutch by Olympia Le-Tan. Her role should propel her to the Oscars but her look was severe-yet-kooky **MISS**



Rachel McAdams Her Monique Lhuillier bustier and big-pant (aka flares) combo was a bold choice indeed. It looks good, too **HIT**



Salma Hayek Vibrant and daring, Hayek's strapless leather dress is by Gucci. Good on her for the riotous red shoulder detail **HIT**



Uma Thurman Uma jumps on to the Pippa Middleton bandwagon in one of Dolce & Gabbana's new broderie anglaise numbers **HIT**

PICTURES: REX, GETTY AND AP

First night

There may be many questions but you'll find no answers here

Film Wendy Ide

Unlawful Killing
Cannes Film Festival
★☆☆☆

Cannes is full of surprises. Keith Allen, hitherto best known for fathering Lily, for authoring the lyrics to the stirring football anthem *Vindaloo* and for his *Shallow Grave* character's naked death, adds a new string to his bow. Who knew that he was also a hard-hitting investigative journalist?

With *Unlawful Killing*, which was shown in the market at Cannes, Allen claims to have unearthed both an establishment plot and a media conspiracy in the reporting of the inquests into the deaths of Diana, Princess of Wales and Dodi Fayed.

Much has already been written about the contentious decision to include within the film a picture of the dying princess at the crash scene. But the film's real problem is not the fleeting inclusion of a tragic picture, however sordid it might be, but rather the lack of journalistic rigour. Allen's main credentials for the job are limited to the fact that he once made a TV programme about Mohamed Al Fayed, who, coincidentally, entirely financed this film.

With an undercover mole in the press room of the Royal Courts Of Justice feverishly transcribing the words of the reporters, and talking head interviews with witnesses such as the biographer Kitty Kelley, the actor Tony Curtis and Piers Morgan, Allen set out to "judge the judges". But despite eavesdropping on the assembled press for the duration of the inquests, the most Allen can come up with in support of a media conspiracy was the fact that BBC royal correspondent, Nicholas Witchell, liked the occasional nap and press speculation about whether the quality of the sandwiches that the jury were offered would affect the time they took come to a decision.

That's not to say that there aren't numerous questions about that fateful night in Paris that remain unanswered. But *Unlawful Killing*, which was scripted by Victor Lewis Smith and Paul Sparks, fails to unearth any concrete answers. In fact, the film is

guilty of the conspiracy theorist's favourite logical sleight of hand — asking a question and then, rather than demanding an explanation, using the fact that the question itself exists as evidence for a sinister plot.

The tone is strident. The score, by Dave Stewart, is twitchily paranoid, reminiscent of the soundtrack to *The Anderson Tapes*. The term "gangsters in tiaras" is used, apparently without irony.

"Presidents have been killed for less," says Allen in the film's dramatic narration, when exploring how Diana's anti-landmine campaign



Was the Princess of Wales murdered because she opposed landmines?

might have angered the arms lobby sufficiently for them to want her dead. By this point in the film, he's throwing increasingly random ideas about, apparently to see what sticks — was it the British "establishment" who wanted her dead? The arms industry? The French, British or American secret service? Notably absent from the film are any dissenting voices, and when challenged about this at the post-screening press conference, Allen said that, "The film is a film from my POV. I think the French call it being an *auteur*."

British audiences are unlikely to get to judge Allen's *auteur* status for themselves soon, however, since lawyers have identified 87 legal issues that are likely to hold up any plans for distribution or broadcast.

Let the credit roll: money on the table as film investors forget fear

Ben Hoyle Arts Correspondent Cannes

Midnight on the Croisette, the mile long boulevard that is the centre of the film world for two weeks every May.

The clubs are full; crowds in suits and evening dresses are lurching between them. After a lean few years the good times are back in Cannes.

The first week of the festival has delivered at least two acclaimed arthouse films (the British offering *We Need to Talk about Kevin* and the French police thriller *Poliss*) as well as appearances by Robert de Niro, Uma Thurman, Woody Allen and Angelina Jolie.

But for the industry itself the real excitement has been behind the scenes where multi-million dollar deals are

taking shape at bewildering speed. Kevin MacDonald, the British director of *The Last King of Scotland* was integral to one, flying in to screen a raw, 30-minute cut from his unfinished documentary about Bob Marley to a hotel suite full of international buyers.

"It was as far removed as you could get from Bob Marley's world: chandeliers and cocktails," he told *The Times*. "I showed them the rough cut, made a speech and then they were off to the next thing. It's a brutal process but part of the rich tapestry of Cannes."

Not for the past few years it hasn't been. The financial crisis badly damaged film funding, adding to fears caused by a collapsing DVD market and a failure to find a profitable model for digital sales. For the past few years

Village movie moguls

Behind the story

The story of the Oxfordshire village that took on Hollywood has captured imaginations at Cannes.

Tortoise in Love was

made on a budget that would barely pay for the catering on a blockbuster, thanks to the residents of the village of Kingston Bagpuize, in the Vale of the White Horse.

The romantic comedy, directed by Guy Browning, tells of an inarticulate microbiologist who becomes a gardener at a stately home and falls in love with a Polish au pair, but has no idea how to tell her.

The title comes from the way he makes his moves with all the rapidity of a tortoise.

The first public screening is this morning. If it is a hit the "mini moguls" who invested between £20 and £10,000 each to raise the £250,000 budget stand to reap a healthy return. If it fails, they will at least have the satisfaction of seeing their village and themselves on the big screen.

the distributors and sales companies who help to finance films become very conservative about their investments.

Dana Harris, of the trade website indieWIRE, said: "Cannes fell off a cliff. People were coming back saying, 'My God, it's so awful' because no business was happening."

This year is different. Among the deals are the financing of a \$100million adaptation of David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas* and a \$100million plus deal for a 3D movie about Pompeii.

Christine Langan, the creative director of BBC Films who backed *We Need to Talk about Kevin* said that the success of the thoughtful, mid-budget films *Black Swan* and *The King's Speech*, that had looked risky bets at the outset, had altered the dynamics.