

Our TIFF: Geoffrey Rush smoking with the riff-raff



TIFF most down-to-earth celebrity? Geoffrey Rush casually shared a smoke or two with regular folks on the sidewalk outside the It Might Get Loud party at the SoHo Metropolitan. George Pimentel for National Post

National Post · Friday, Sept. 12, 2008

How the Post's team of reporters saw this year's film festival. By Nathalie Atkinson, Vanessa Farquharson, Shinan Govani, Ben Kaplan, Chris Knight, Adam McDowell, Katherine Monk, Jay Stone and Bob Thompson

Best festival motto

OK, there is only one: For the love of film. But it's so flexible. Say it in a straight voice and it's about how much you enjoy movies. Add a sarcastic tone and it doubles as an epithet for when you've just been turned away from a party, or had your cab snatched by Julianne Moore: "Oh, for the love of film!" C.K.

Best star-sighting vantage point

If you can, land this coveted spot: the corner table behind the mesh divider at the Hazelton's lobby bar, which offers perfect sightlines to the hotel's patio, restaurant, lobby, elevators and washroom corridor, so you don't miss a single star. It's celebrity central: Mickey Rourke, Marilyn Manson and Evan Rachel Wood, Adrian Brody, Mark Ruffalo, überpublicist Stephen Huvane and the last emperor himself, Valentino, all waltzed through. Within the same hour. (Bonus: Harvey Weinstein is often ensconced at a side table taking pitches, like an audience with the Pope.) N.A.

Best example of an actor mincing words

Brampton-raised Michael Cera (Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist) was chatting with a few writers during an interview and managed to flub the word August. "I finished in August," he said, then corrected himself sheepishly. "That's August."

"I'm sorry," he said, lowering his head in mock shame, "that's the first time I've ever said that word." B.T.

Best example of an actor not mincing words

During a press gathering for RocknRolla, one brave questioner, who seemed to be confessing rather than wondering, asked this of Gerard Butler: Did Butler think the Cockney crime caper flick was too smart, and therefore difficult for some people to figure out? Butler smirked a little then answered in his Glaswegian brogue as he stared down the reporter, “Only stupid people will have trouble figuring it out.” B.T.

Best place to overhear a film deal being negotiated

Women’s bathroom at the Sutton Place. V.F.

Best out of context quote

“I want it to leave something in my lap, something to chew on.” — Ed Norton. V.F.

Weirdest clash of cultures

Patti Smith played an intimate set at the Gardiner on Wednesday night without accompaniment — but with plenty of competition from the festival partiers, who talked over the entire set. Sometimes, the black-cocktail-dress-swizzle-stick crowd and the icons-of-punk-rock-poetry set just don’t mix. Would you believe those filmfest types didn’t know the lyrics to Because the Night and Gloria off by heart? K.M.

Most dangerous thing to write on press notes

Burn After Reading. C.K.

Best media lounge

The Grand & Toy Media Centre was not only an oasis of calm during the festival, its handy location in the Windsor Arms Hotel put it smack dab between the celebrity-infested Intercontinental Hotel and the press screenings at the Varsity. The staff plied visiting journalists with Fiji water, sugary snacks and even a useful swag bag full of pens, battery-charger and other goodies. C.K.

Surprise benefactors of TIFF

Who would’ve thought Jack Astor’s and Milestones at the AMC cinemas at Yonge-Dundas Square would be so hot? Both chain restaurants routinely had wait lists. And the patio at Jack Astor’s was worth the wait. B.K.

Best use of a recreational vehicle

Smashbox Studios turned Yorkville into a trailer park — or at least a truck stop. After jumping through hoops to secure all the City permits, Smashbox makeup pro Melissa Janus jetted in from La-la-land and parked a deluxe air-conditioned trailer near Sassafras for the weekend, dispensing red carpet looks and touch-ups not to the celebs but to the plebs in line. For free. Classy. N.A.

Most disgusting celebrity habit

Steve Zahn (Management) had a pellet of smokeless tobacco in his cheek during an interview and kept spitting brown juice into an empty plastic water bottle. J.S.

Worst TIFF-related marketing strategy

A freaky Marilyn Monroe impersonator outside Harry Rosen offering popcorn. Silently. V.F.

Biggest break for local talent

Toronto comedians Adam Brodie and Dave Derewlany’s brief but chuckle-worthy appearance in an ad that played at the start of each screening (for Motoreel, an initiative that showcases short films shot on cellphones). Their joke: They took videos viral back before the Internet, when it meant dropping off tapes door-to-door. A.M.

Proof that not all directors are geniuses

Larry Charles requiring the assistance of two reporters and an extra napkin when attempting to pour coffee at the Intercontinental Hotel. V.F.

Classiest civic gesture

The TTC gave reporters free passes for the duration of the festival. A.M.

Worst pirate

Overheard from one of the volunteers, the tale of a pirate who was caught trying to film one of the festival screenings with a camera hidden in his shoe. Who was this: Maxwell Smart? C.K.

Least expected celebrity facial hair

Philip Seymour Hoffman sporting a bushy beard that made talking to him feel a bit like interviewing a rare red panda. (He shaved his fur later in the week.) C.K.

Best film title to say aloud in its native language

Which would you rather watch? The drab Flame & Citron or the Germanic Flammen & Citronen? C.K.

Best reason to skip the festival

Donnie Wahlberg, a co-writer of the Mark Ruffalo-Ethan Hawke South Boston crime flick What Doesn't Kill You, is currently on tour with his old band New Kids on the Block, who have the No. 2 album on the Billboard 200 chart, their first album in 14 years. B.K.

Most overheard chatter-in-lines subject

New York housing prices. C.K.

Second-place

High price of Canadian dollar. C.K.

Best tadpole director with an old soul

Lovely Still director Nicholas "Nik" Fakler, who at 24 brought a movie here about geezer love, starring Ellen Burnstyn and Martin Landau. Furthermore, word has it he wrote the actual screenplay at 17. S.G.

Best extreme makeover

For the John Varvatos Converse party at Holt Renfrew, the department store basement got a total, credible makeover as a retro diner, complete with neon signs, gingham wax paper and onion rings. The guest list was mostly young, male and hip (for a change — we spotted Steve Nash, Jeremy Piven, Gael García Bernal and Deryck Whibley), and MGMT rocked it so hard there was a mosh pit. At Holt Renfrew! N.A.

Most surprising reception

The press and industry screening of Danny Boyle's Slumdog Millionaire invoked two rousing ovations; one when the film ended and one after the dance-filled credits rolled. That's nice reaction for a film that uses the Indian version of Who Wants to Be a Millionaire as its narrative thread. Do I detect Oscar buzz? M.M.

Best film in which to display Buddhist-like patience

In the Shadow of Naga, a Buddhist-themed film about bad guys who become ordained (felonious monks), which the press and industry audience was told would start 10 minutes late; then another 10 minutes; then another; and then "any minute," which is when it finally began. C.K.

Best man-hugging sighting

The greeting of Zac Efron and Gerald Butler at Spice Route. High School Musical: The Spartan edition! S.G.

Best supporting accessory

Michael Cera's never-fail knapsack! S.G.

Best attempt at type sabotage by an actress

Elizabeth Banks has always been "the girl next door," but at the screening for Zack and Miri Make a Porno she said the best thing about working with director Kevin Smith is that you can perform risqué lines. "You can't say f--k my c--t in a Steven Spielberg movie," said the fresh-faced star who's appeared in such films as Spielberg's Catch Me If You Can and Judd Apatow's The 40-Year-Old Virgin. No word yet on where Oliver Stone drew the obscenity line for Banks's forthcoming turn as Laura Bush in W. But if anyone can find the wiggle room between "Gosh darn!" and something that might fall from the lips of Linda Blair in The Exorcist, it's Stone. K.M.

Most down-to-earth celebrity

Geoffrey Rush, who casually shared a smoke or two with regular folks on the sidewalk outside the It Might Get Loud party at the SoHo Metropolitan. A.M.

Best twin-on-twin action

Canadian twins Jill and Jacqueline Hennessy were front-row darlings at the fashion show put on by DSquared designing duo, twins Dean and Dan Caten. Both pairs double-troubled too at the M.A.C-sponsored after-bash. S.G.

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