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A new action picture: battle of the bling



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As the curtain closes on the 33rd annual Toronto International Film Festival, the nightclubs and hotel bars will get back to regular closing times.

Indeed, extended hours play a huge part in all the movie-related merrymaking. And this Duchess of schmooze has RocknRolla'd her way through enough parties to reach the end of Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist.

In One Week, I've lived the social equivalent of Passchendaele, heading to the front lines of the fetes. And all without becoming Public Enemy Number One.

So go ahead and Burn After Reading. Or press Control Alt Delete. But without further ado, I present some festival highlights otherwise known as The Good, the Bad, the Weird.

FOUR RACHELS AND A WEDDING

Try to think of another festival where four major actors or actresses shared the same first name. This year, we were graced with Rachel McAdams, Rachel Weisz, Rachel Blanchard and Rachel Bilson. Oh yes, there's also that little film called *Rachel Getting Married*, which is receiving some amaz-

ing buzz for Anne Hathaway's breakout role.

THE GEOFFREY RUSH AWARD FOR MOST PROLIFIC PARTIER

He may not officially have ceded his title but I certainly noticed a handful of eager beavers, namely Mark Ruffalo, Sophia Bush, Gerard Butler and Gil Bellows (are G names predisposed to partying?). Bellows and I ran into each other so many times that I had to insist I was not stalking him.

AT TIFF, THERE'S SUCH A THING AS A FREE RIDE

As an official sponsor, Cadillac made nearly 50 cars available for getting to and from the red carpet. Escalade Hybrids that have yet to hit the market looked imposingly cool, while boasting approximately the same fuel efficiency as a regular Toyota Camry. Ford shuttled celebs around in its new Ford Flex, a slick crossover utility vehicle complete with refrigerator and entertainment system. Joe Fresh wrapped four Smart cars in attention-getting orange and used them as Lilliputian limos. The InterContinental Hotel in Yorkville invested in an EcoCab for a month. The three-wheeled vehicle relies on pedalling but comes with a rechargeable battery.

THE LEAST EXPECTED LOCATION FOR GREAT PARTY

You'd think a maze of aisles and distracting cases of jewelry would work against a get-together. But the Hello! Cana-

da's cocktail reception at Birks's Bloor Street store proved to be a lovely way to kick off last Saturday night. The magazine's nod to legendary couples brought out the likes of Caitlin Cronenberg, Carlo Rota and Lyriq Bent.

HOTEL ROOM SERVICE FOR HUNDREDS AND SERVED OUTSIDE

For Royal Bank of Canada's Blue event in support of the Lake Ontario Waterkeeper organization, the food was prepared at the Royal York Hotel and passed through the hotel's large windows to reach guests in a tented area beside the RBC building.

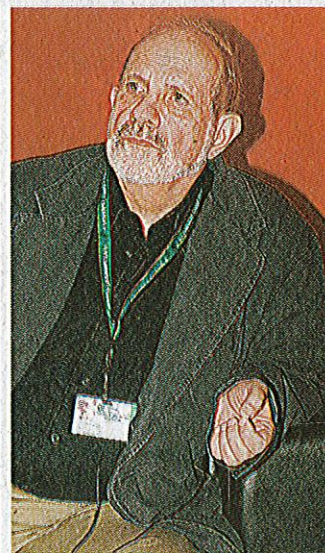
FINE JEWELLERY FACE-OFF

I originally thought the battle of the bling revolved around the parties thrown by Birks and Swarovski. As it turns out, both were also playing a game of red-carpet one-upmanship. The former fancied up Kristin Scott Thomas with pieces from the Esty collection, Michèle Maheux (TIFF executive director) with Tahitian pearls and Jennifer Hudson with an H. Stern gold and diamond bracelet. Swarovski, meanwhile, seduced Evangeline Lilly, Willa Holland and Alicia Keys with lux loaner handbags, and Jully Black with baubles.

MEMORABLE LINE FROM THE INSTYLE PARTY

"Didn't I see you at the Playboy mansion the other day?" overheard on the patio of the Windsor Arms Hotel.

Hey, it could happen to anybody



ARTHUR MOLA/WIREIMAGE

Proof that it's always worth it to chat up the person sitting next to you at TIFF: At Thursday's 3:15 p.m. press and industry screening of the Irish black comedy *A Film with Me in It*, a female journalist asked the grey-haired guy beside her what he'd seen, and was impressed by his list – all international directors, of whom he spoke knowledgeably. "I come here only to watch as many films as I can, and I don't see anything that's going to be released in the States," he said. The journo introduced herself. He shook her hand. "Brian De Palma," he said. » Johanna Schneller

MEMORABLE LINE FROM ONEXONE

"Your job is not a volunteer position to make you feel good," spoken by Columbia professor Jeffrey Sachs about raising money to cut hunger, poverty and disease.

THE BEST REASON TO HANG OUT IN AN OFFICE

Ivan Fecan's new KPMB-designed headquarters on the fifth floor at 229 Queen St. W. transformed into South Beach chic suites for the eTalk Festival bash and DSquared2 fashion show. The CEO of CTVGlobeMedia hosted VIP receptions that drew the likes

of Benji Madden, Richard Branson Steve Nash, Tré Armstrong from *So You Think You Can Dance Canada* and MTV hosts Dan Levy and Jessi Cruickshank.

TIFF'S TOP FISHBOWL

Although eTalk was in more hotels, *Entertainment Tonight Canada's* pop-up TV set in the Drake Hotel's private dining room was the most fun. A two-way window allowed guests on the rooftop patio to watch soundless celeb interviews.

ICEBREAKER ACCESSORY

Eyeglasses that I wore each night for maximum stargazing.

Little did I know that Gerard Butler would try them on, Jack White and wife Karen Elson would compliment me on them and scores of other party people would joke that it was the Sarah Palin-meets-sexy-secretary look.

A SHORT LIST OF EVENT ENABLERS

Whether they composed the lists, created the ambience or coddled the stars, they deserve some attention (and a week of uninterrupted sleep): Barbara Herschenhorn, Candice Best, Raymond Perkins, Ryan Heil of LiveStyle Entertainment, Deb Goldblatt and the Rockit team, Stephanie Carpenter, Nick Prattas and the Park Hyatt posse, Natasha Koifman and the NKPR gals, Samantha Margolis and Samantha Brickman, Jordi Fogle, Josh Feuer, Geoffrey Dawe, Barry Avrich, Jillian Eisenberg Roth, Anny Kazanjian, everyone at CTV, Sugar Media's Jesper Wahlberg, Charles Khabouth and Tara Hendela of Ink Entertainment, Nick Di Donato and Milka Mili for the Liberty Group and ASC wonder women Alexandra Weston and Suzanne Cohon.

THE REASON WHY WE'RE HERE

The late Dusty Cohl, co-founder of the festival. On TIFF's opening night, Myrna Daniels (whose husband John was one of the festival's first financial supporters) told me, "Without Dusty, there would have been no festival." Hats off to him, and here's to next year.