

FRIDAY-SUNDAY, JULY 18 - 20, 2008

WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE

Cinéma vérité

France's new wave of celebrity biopics

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Cinéma vérité

France's new wave of celebrity biopics



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WSJ.com/Sports

Living small
Some Americans are finding they prefer a cottage to a McMansion.
WSJ.com/Real Estate

WEEKEND JOURNAL

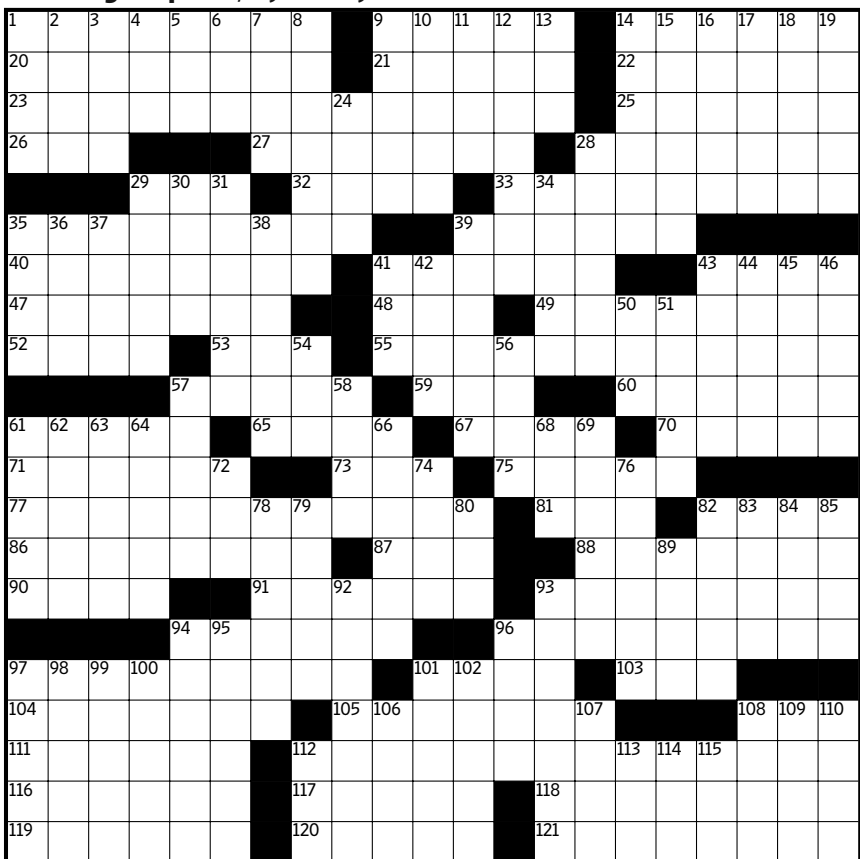
EUROPE

Elizabeth Blackshire EDITOR
Craig Winneker DEPUTY EDITOR
Fahire Kurt ART DIRECTOR
Kathleen Van Den Broeck ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR
Matthew Kaminski TASTE PAGE EDITOR
Questions or comments? Write to wsje.weekend@wsj.com.
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THE JOURNAL CROSSWORD / Edited by Mike Shenk

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Last week's solution

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NAGS AAA SHAKEN BLUSH
ARRAIGNS OOLALA LATTE
STAGNANT BJANDTHEBEAR
LIFEBLOOD ORS OER
LYRA SMARTYPANTS
AVIS OEIL SHEL DUOS
LIKE A PRAYER ONE POINT
SMEAR TEPID ERTE
BEG OSCAR MAYER
GAEA OPAL DAB ENDEMIC
NEWS JUNKIE MINT JULEPS
PRESIDE GRF BAI O ALOT
LAUGHLINES YES
MITT ATTEST STAIR
DAMASCUS CHEESEPIZZA
ANAT ONUS OPUS COED
DOCTORSPOCK NAP S
LUG CON SUPERNOVA
FIRESIDECHAT LONDONER
ALERT SLEEVE ESCAPISM
BLASS LORNES TEE ETE
    
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Keeping your distance

WHEN THE U.S. Golf Association semilegalized electronic distance-measuring devices in January 2006, I wrote a column about the newfangled things. Specifically, I wrote about laser range finders, which at the time so dominated the field I didn't mention any alternatives.

In the interim, much has happened. Golf purists still question the

Golf Journal

JOHN PAUL NEWPORT

need for DMDs, and the USGA still doesn't permit them in its own tournaments (neither do the professional tours, except in practice rounds). But the devices are here to stay. It's no longer a novelty to be paired with someone who consults a hand-held gadget for distances instead of yardage markers. In some amateur competitions, three-fourths of the field uses DMDs.

Fears that the devices would slow down play, or hopes that they would speed things up, have also been disproved. "For all the internal debate we went through about whether to allow them, they've really had no effect on pace of play one way or another," says Biff Lathrop, director of competitions for the South Carolina Golf Association.

But the biggest change is that satellite-based systems, using the U.S. Defense Department's Global Positioning System, are now selling in about equal number to laser range finders. "It's a hot category and still defining itself, but this year, with a lot of new GPS units hitting the market, they're probably up slightly over the lasers," says Bob Tucker, the purchasing manager for TGW.com, a leading online golf retailer.

I have been using a laser range finder for some time now, find it simple and satisfying—you just point it at the flagstick or some other target, such as a fairway bunker, and it displays the distance in yards—and didn't long for anything more in a DMD. After two weeks of testing a GPS system, however, I can confirm that it does have some advantages.

The unit I received on loan from SkyGolf, the company that started selling golf GPS devices in 2002, was its latest, the SkyCaddie SG5, which sells for \$430. It has a bright, color screen readable in sunlight, is about the size of a large mobile phone and at 155 grams is roughly half the weight of my Nikon range finder.

GPS devices certainly give you more information than range finders do. Even the simplest and least expensive versions show the distance to the front, middle and back of the green. For most courses, the SkyCaddie also provided distances to selected course features such as bunkers, water hazards, trees and the end of the fairway. The SkyCaddie senses when you move from one hole to the next, and it's generally accurate to within a few feet.

To my mind, the biggest disadvantage of GPS devices compared with laser range finders is that they can't provide precise yardage to where the pin is located on any particular day. In situations where depth perception is difficult, this can pose problems that color-coded flags only partly remedy.

Another issue to consider with GPS systems is the cost and availability of courses to download to the unit. SkyGolf claims to have

mapped 13,136 18-hole courses in the U.S. (or 90% of the total) and another 5,012 international layouts. To access them, however, requires paying an annual subscription of \$30 to \$60.

Laser range finders cost roughly the same as GPS units, typically \$300 to \$450, but with no continuing costs. Their main drawback, however, is difficulty locking in on a target. Internal software helps the lasers distinguish a pin from a noisy background of trees, but with a shaky hand it's sometimes problematic to get a good reading.

Which to use? It's a matter of personal preference. Better players seem to prefer lasers for their ability to lock in precisely on that day's hole location, but there are exceptions. I played a few weeks ago with a low handicapper, Dennis Johnson,

61, of Montclair, N.J., who prefers the SkyCaddie. "It keeps my head in the game. I like knowing yardages to the front of the green and the back of the green and doing all the calculations," he said. But he also carries a laser just in case.

Given how quickly the market is evolving, it's probably only a matter of time before someone comes out with a combined GPS-and-laser device, perhaps one that includes the kind of vibration-reduction technology found on high-end cameras. A new laser range finder from Leupold, although not approved for play by the USGA, uses information about air temperature, altitude and the elevation change to the hole to recommend clubs. Once they also get Johnny Miller to whisper advice in your ear about how to play the shot, they'll have it made.



Four screen shots from the SkyCaddie SG5 GPS range finder.

The Bushnell Elite 1500 Tournament Edition laser range finder.

THE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP

ROYAL BIRKDALE GOLF CLUB
SOUTHPORT, ENGLAND
JULY 17TH TO 20TH, 2008

THE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP

More than any other victory, a win at The Open Championship is a player's best chance to make his indelible mark on the history of golf. This year's setting of Royal Birkdale only adds to the timelessness of the oldest of the four Majors. One of Europe's most historic links courses, its fairways, deep bunkers and naturally sloping greens have perplexed the world's best for more than a century. For this year's winner, and over a hundred past, the pursuit of the Claret Jug is one that never tarnishes with age.

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Scotch with independent spirit

Behind some rather unassuming labels lurk single malt whiskies with style

THE MACALLAN is one of the best-known and best-loved single-malt whiskies, with prices to match. A bottle of The Macallan 18-year-old Scotch generally retails for around \$140. So it must have been distressing for the distillery's management when the Costco wholesale club started selling 18-year-old Macallan-made whisky for \$60. The bottles are labeled with the discount house-brand "Kirkland" at the top; but just below, in letters nearly as large, are the words "Macallan Distillery."

Plenty of chatter on Web bulletin

How's Your Drink?

ERIC FELTEN

boards has questioned whether the Kirkland malt could be proper Macallan whisky—perhaps, some speculated, this was a batch gone wrong that the distillery offloaded at a discount. Not so. It was just that 20 years ago, Macallan had excess capacity. "We were still producing more liquid than we could sell," according to Patricia Lee in Macallan's marketing department. "We sold the surplus new-make spirit to independent bottlers to store and bottle in their own time under their own label."

This might seem like shocking carelessness with one's brand equity—imagine if Coke sold off excess syrup, letting anyone and everyone market independent versions of Coca-Cola. Ms. Lee allows that "it does cause some confusion." But Scottish distillers have been doing business this way for well over a century.

Scotch distilleries traditionally did not themselves bottle or market their whiskies. They sold it by the barrel to brokers and blenders who mixed them to create blended whiskies such as Chivas Regal, Johnnie Walker and Dewar's. For decades, just about the only way to get a bottle containing whisky from an individual distillery—that is, a single malt—was from an independent bottler. Many of these, such as William Cadenhead, were liquor and wine merchants who bought barrels of whisky for their shops and offered them, unblended, to their customers. Savvy Scotch drinkers learned to look for these single malts because they had quirky and compelling character lacking in even the best blends. Were it not for independent bottlers, there might never have been a single-malt revolution. Thanks to the success of the independents, the distillers realized they should start bottling their malts and create marketable brands of their own. "Independents molded the industry," says Euan Shand, managing director of one such firm, Duncan Taylor & Co. Ltd. "Multinationals who bought into it are reaping that benefit."

And reaping a few headaches too. Take Caol Ila (pronounced cull-EE-la), a lovely, well-balanced malt from the peaty island of Islay. It's only in the past five years that drinks giant Diageo has decided (and a very good decision it was) to make the whisky one of its core, premium brands. But Diageo has had to contend with a surfeit of Caol Ila on the market: In the 1970s, the distillery expanded to six stills from two, and it long had plenty of excess spirit to sell to the brokers. Now that Diageo is investing serious money to promote the malt, umpteen independent bottlings have hit the market.

I had to visit only two local liquor stores to come up with three indepen-



dent bottlings of Caol Ila, a 10-year-old version from Gordon & MacPhail's "Connoisseurs Choice," and 14-year-old versions from Murray McDavid and the Signatory Vintage Scotch Whisky Co. None were Costco-style bargains—in fact, the 12-year-old official distillery bottling was the best buy. Nor were any of the bottles second-rate examples of Caol Ila. They were like fraternal twins—not quite identical, but with interesting personalities of their own. The Gordon & MacPhail was slightly drier than the official Caol Ila; the Murray McDavid, stored in sherry casks, was much sweeter and fruitier; the Signatory had a bright, fresh quality.

The official bottling remains the best bet for "the majority of our drinkers [who] look for consistent character and quality," says Diageo's global malt director, Nick Morgan. And there's a lot to be said for consistency. When you're spending \$50 or \$60 for a bottle, you may not want it to be a crap shoot. But the risk is small—most of the independent bottlings I've bought over the years have been perfectly worthy. Not that I haven't run into the occasional stinker—pallid stuff from an exhausted barrel that had been recycled too many times. Even so, if there is a single malt you love, it's well worth exploring the variations to be found in independent bottlings of the brand.

But do it while you can: As demand for single malts has grown, distilleries have become shy about supplying inter-

mediaries. "It's a sign of the times that major distillers are no longer willing to sell casks to the independents for private bottling," says Mr. Shand of Duncan Taylor. "I believe the multinationals will slowly squeeze the lifeblood out of the independents." Diageo's Dr. Morgan doesn't disagree: "As distillers recognize the importance of their single-malt brands," they will increasingly want "to protect their brand equity and control the quality of the final product."

Anticipating a drought, the middlemen are looking to guarantee their supply. As Alistair Hart of the independent bottler Hart Brothers slyly puts it, the "poachers have turned game keepers." Gordon & MacPhail led the way, buying the Benromach distillery in 1993; Signatory now owns tiny Edradour; Bruichladdich is humming under the ownership of the Murray McDavid crew; and independent blender and bottler Ian Macleod Distillers Limited is proprietor of the stills at Glengoyne.

Now that bottlers are on the other side of the branding divide, how eager are they to do business with other independents? Not very. Says Gordon & MacPhail marketing manager Ian Chapman: "Production of Benromach under Gordon & MacPhail's ownership is owned and bottled by Gordon & MacPhail."

Mr. Felten is the author of "How's Your Drink?: Cocktails, Culture and the Art of Drinking Well" (Agate Surrey). Email him at eric.felten@wsj.com.



Getting the most out of a big bottle

BY DOROTHY J. GAITER AND JOHN BRECHER

My husband and I have come into a Salamanazar of 1998 Gallo Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon. We have placed it with a wine-storage company for the time being. Is this drinkable now? If not, when? How would we go about enjoying it—a big party? And, if so, how big do you suggest, assuming thirsty friends? What expertise do we need to open and pour it?

—Ann Parode Dynes, La Jolla, Calif.

Extra-large bottles like this—a Salamanazar is the equivalent of 12 bottles—are sometimes made by wineries in very small numbers. In this case, for instance, Gallo told us it made just five of these bottles and never sold them at retail; they were just for auctions and special events. A spokesman for the company told us that in June, at the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen, Gina Gallo and Mike Martini conducted a reserve seminar consisting of older wines. "The wines showed well and were 750-ml bottles. A nine-liter would most likely be in great shape, with years of age left," he said, and we certainly agree, assuming proper storage. But we're hesitant to tell you all that for fear that this might go into the dreaded "too special to open" category. Indeed, our guess is that most big bottles like this are saved forever for a special occasion and ultimately go bad. Don't let this happen! A bottle like this will make any gathering very special and would be a great excuse for a very large party with your thirstiest friends.

How to handle it? We asked sommelier Conrad Reddick of Charlie Trotter's in Chicago for advice. Charlie Trotter's has an 18,000-bottle cellar that includes several large-format bottles up to the Melchior size (24 regular-size bottles). Mr. Reddick cautioned that handling a Salamanazar doesn't require any real expertise, but does necessitate a bit more caution. "Safety is a concern at that size," he said. "I wouldn't want my mother pouring one of those. They are heavy, round and made of glass and you can easily drop them." Your basic needs for opening a large format bottle are a reliable corkscrew, an extra person and a bunch of decanters.

For a bottle that has been properly stored on its side, Mr. Reddick said you'll want to stand it upright for at least a week to let the sediment settle. He feels there's nothing better than a regular waiter's corkscrew for this type of extraction. Make sure the worm on your corkscrew is long enough to reach the bottom of the cork. (If the bottle has been stored badly and the cork is dried out and stuck to the sides, try a two-pronged cork remover.) As you tip to pour, be careful. "It is difficult to control the flow. You never know how much is going to come out," said Mr. Reddick, so start gently. You'll need two people to execute the decanting—one person to pour and the other to run decanters under the bottle. "Once you start decanting and you angle the bottle to pour, you want it to be a continuous motion," he said. After you fill a decanter, gently stop the pour, but don't tilt the bottle back upright. Your helper should have the decanters lined up and ready to go so this can be a seamless process. You should also have some cleaned, empty, regular-size bottles standing by in case there is some left over for the next day—or week.

Melanie Grayce West contributed to this column.

At Bayreuth, Wagner meets the Web

BY BOJAN PANCEVSKI

Special to *The Wall Street Journal*

THE BAYREUTH OPERA festival, the prestigious but tradition-bound music event, will take a leap into the 21st century by making one of its performances available online in streaming video.

The annual celebration of Richard Wagner's works in Bayreuth, Germany, which takes place July 25-Aug. 28, will also for the first time broadcast the night's performance live on large screens in the town's central square, which can fit up to 15,000 people. Entrance will be free.

The festival, founded by Wagner in 1876, is known as one of the most elitist and conservative music festivals in the world. Tickets for performances at the Festspielhaus theater, which seats 2,000 and was commissioned by Wagner specifically for performances of his works, cost up to €208, are sold only by mail and routinely sell out; waiting lists can extend for years.

This year, Bayreuth will sell 10,000 online tickets to the July 27 performance of "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg" for €49. The performance can be viewed live at 4 p.m. Central European Time, and accessed once again at any time over the following week. (The opera is nearly five hours long, not including two one-hour intermissions.) The video will include a backstage tour during the intermissions (www.bayreuther-festspiele.de).

"For those who only know Bayreuth by name, maybe they will say, 'OK, I'll check it out if I can watch it at home on my laptop,'" said Katharina Wagner, Richard Wagner's great-granddaughter and the director of "Die Meistersinger," according to the Associated Press.

Opera houses around the world have been trying out new programs and technologies to attract audiences. The Metropolitan Opera in New York has had wide success with its live transmissions to movie theaters. This year it will expand the program to 11 productions shown in nearly 800 theaters, including theaters in 12 European countries. London's Royal Opera House broadcast live performances free to big outdoor screens this summer, while the English National Opera offers podcasts.

Bayreuth says the initiative isn't about selling tickets, but is rather an effort to popularize the festival and Wagner's works. "It is not a mere marketing gag; we are overbooked for years ahead," said festival spokesman Alexander Busche. "The intention was to bring the festi-



Above, bystanders await the arrival of guests outside Bayreuth's Festspielhaus in 2007, including German Chancellor **Angela Merkel** and her husband Joachim Sauer (right).



val closer to people around the world, also to those who are unable to travel to Bayreuth." Mr. Busche declined to comment on sales figures until the end of the festival.

The Web experience isn't expected to rival attending Bayreuth, which is a pilgrimage site for opera devotees. They say the fine acoustics at the Festspielhaus coupled with the atmosphere and history of the festival are unmatched.

Even so, the festival says the audio and video quality will be high, depending on one's Internet connection, and says online users can connect their computers to stereos or big-screen televisions. Viewers can reach technical help from Bayreuth's Web site. The transmission will be encoded to prevent recording, Bayreuth says.

Bayreuth says it plans to continue the Web broadcasts next year. It is part of general makeover begun this year of the festival, which has always been run by the Wagner family. Current director Wolfgang Wagner, 87 years old, the composer's grandson, said he will step down after this year's festival; his daughter, Ms. Wagner, 30, is a candidate to take over and is credited with pushing for modernization.

The festival has added daily podcasts to its redesigned Web site, which launched this week, as well as rehearsal audio and a virtual tour of the opera house.

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A scene from last year's 'Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg'

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A modern take on Iceland's traditional

BY CATHRYN DRAKE

Special to *The Wall Street Journal*

Reykjavik

SHOPPING ISN'T the first reason that comes to mind when pondering a trip to Iceland. The country's mysterious and stunning landscape, featuring waterfalls, volcanoes and hot springs, is the main draw. But Reykjavik has a thriving fashion scene, and a large number of contemporary designers are taking one of Iceland's most traditional styles as a starting point: the Icelandic sweater.

These colorful, thick sweaters with intricate yoke patterns are hand-knit from wool from the island's native sheep, a mainstay of the economy since the first settlers came from Norway in the ninth century. The wool, which has long, coarse, water-resistant fibers and a soft inner layer of fine hairs that provide insulation, is durable and warm, but also relatively light.

A number of Reykjavik boutiques are selling new versions of the traditional designs, which typically used a natural palette of whites, browns and grays with border patterns to make the sweaters thicker and warmer at the neck, waist and wrists.

The company Farmers Market, opened three years ago by designer Bergthóra Guðnadóttir and musician Jól Pálsson in an industrial loft near the harbor, is revitalizing the hand-knit tradition with slimmer, longer profiles.

Mr. Pálsson says that the wool of the Icelandic sheep is like a "cross-breed between Jimi Hendrix and Fabio," referring to its unique combination of wiry and soft fibers. Farmers Market woolens are made with a finer weave than the traditional sweaters, and are enhanced by a special finishing process of washing and pressing after the garment is made. The sweaters range from 14,900 Icelandic kronur (about €120) for a cardigan to 19,000 kronur for the new Reykjahlid hooded cardigan, lined with wind-proof cotton.

The nubby monotone Kross cardigan comes in white, gray, or black with a separate pin closure adorned with Swarovski crystals. The dark brown zippered Stapi cardigan has a turtleneck and a vertical cable pattern.

Iceland's first lady—and fashion maven—Dorrit Moussaieff is a big fan; the day I visited the showroom a soft gray yoked cardigan in merino and the striking new fringed Oxl shawl (12,500 kronur) were ready to be dispatched to her.

Farmers Market also has a line of accessories, including belts made of North Atlantic salmon skin, processed in the northern fishing village Saudárkrókur, which has also supplied Nike and Jimmy Choo (Eyjarlód 9; ☎ 354-552-1960; www.farmersmarket.is).

Along Laugavegur and Bankastræti—essentially one continuous street lined with cafés, bakeries and bars in the central shopping district—are a number of fashion boutiques carrying the wares of Icelandic de-



Left, a **Farmers Market** Icelandic wool sweater; above, the Farmers Market shop; right, designer **Bergthóra Guðnadóttir** (on left) with Iceland's first lady, **Dorrit Moussaieff**; far right, a design by **Steinunn Sigurd** inspired by the work of Icelandic artist Hildur Bjarnadóttir.

signers. shoes and accessories by international designers. It is opening a branch in New York's Soho neighborhood this autumn (Laugavegur 7; ☎ 354-561-6262; www.kisan.is).

Located in the oldest house in the city, between the Old Harbour and Tjörninn pond, Kraum sells Farmers Market sweaters and accessories along with fashion, jewelry and household furnishings by more than 60 Icelandic designers, including sophisticated knit dresses and shawls in Icelandic wool and chic unstructured fur accessories by Ásta (Adalstræti 10; ☎ 354-517-7797; www.kraum.is).

Meanwhile, ELM (www.elm.is) and KronKron (www.kronkron.com) sell stylish Scandinavian designs, and Spaksmannsspjarir (www.spaksmannsspjarir.is) offers hip street styles that combine retro contours with sexy cutouts, as well as its own take on Icelandic wool sweaters.

The most traditional styles have recently had a resurgence in popularity. The patterned cardigans and pullovers, as well as hats, mittens and scarves, became widespread in the mid-20th century. The most common pattern—with the iconic yoke—is called the Lopi, named after the unspun Lopi wool used to make it. The style's origin is debated; it was possibly inspired by either the traditional costume of Greenland or a design by the Bohus Stickning, a knitting cottage industry in Sweden in the early 20th century.

The Handknitting Association of Iceland, located in the shadow of the stunning Hallgrímskirkja cathedral, has a mind-boggling selection that includes pullovers in rich earth tones and



Photos: Farmers Market



Cathryn Drake

Above, **traditional hand-knits** in the Folk Art Museum in Akureyri; left, actor **Daniel Raymont**, in Reykjavik to shoot a movie, tries on the local style at the **Handknitting Association** shop.

cardigans—buttoned or zippered—made by women working in their homes. Prices run from 10,600 kronur to 13,200 kronur.

The shop also sells folksy hats, mittens and slippers, as well as contemporary basics, including a long wraparound cardigan in solid colors such as black, gray or red (8,000 kronur). Avid knitter Ms. Bjarnadóttir, the artist, says old-fashioned lacey knits have come back in vogue, such as a turtleneck she made, constructed in a series of scalloped rows. The shop sells lacey shawls and scarves in hot pink and bright orange as well as in subdued tones like oatmeal and moss green (3,590 kronur).

Since the sweaters are individually hand-knit, the fit varies, so it pays to try each one on. If you don't find the right size or color combination, you can custom order a sweater by choosing from the skeins of yarn displayed on shelves



Steinunn

at the back of the shop. The standard designs take roughly 20-30 hours for one knitter to produce. It's also possible to bring along your own picture or pattern to have a unique sweater created for you, for an extra fee.

If you find the wool itchy, you can wash the sweater carefully by hand to soften the coarser outer fibers (Skólavörðustígur 19; ☎ 354-562-4747; www.handknit.is).

The Handknitting Association also sells yarn and patterns—the various styles of Icelandic sweaters until recently were known by the numbered patterns produced by the IStex company (www.istex.is).

The group also sponsors periodic "Knit Cafés" at a Reykjavik coffee shop, where artisans such as IStex head designer Védís Jónsdóttir demonstrate how to knit particular patterns. They are free and open to the public, and it is possible to request a presentation in English by calling ahead (see www.handknit.is).

And finally, at Fatasöfnun, the Red Cross's secondhand shop in the center of town, you can find racks of traditional Icelandic sweaters in a range of designs and colors at bargain prices—all still in good condition (Laugavegur 12; ☎ 354-570-4000).

WSJ.com

New looks for wool
See additional images of stylish
Icelandic sweaters in a slideshow at
WSJ.com/Travel

hand-knit look



Left, a church in **Búdir** on the Snæfellsnes peninsula; right, swimmers in the **Blue Lagoon**.

Trip planner: The best of Iceland

BY CATHRYN DRAKE
Special to *The Wall Street Journal*

MOST PEOPLE GO to Iceland to spend time in the spectacular scenery, but it's worth taking a day or two to shop in Reykjavik. Even though it is Iceland's capital and largest city, it has an intimate small-town atmosphere and is easy to navigate.

The recent fall of the Icelandic krona against the euro—it has declined about 33% in the past year—provides another good excuse to shop. The best time to visit is summer, when the days practically never end and the fickle weather isn't harsh. Here's a plan for a weekend in the capital city.

When you get in on Friday night, do as the natives do and take in a swim, steam and sauna at the Vesterbæjarlaug thermal pool, a local hangout.

The Reykjavik Tourist Card includes free entry to the city's seven pools, the zoo and selected museums, and unlimited rides on public buses (1,700 kronur, or about €15, for a two-day pass; see www.visitreykjavik.is).

Next eat some seafood. A fun place is the shack-like Saegreifinn, or Sea Baron, on the harbor (☎ 354-553-1500; www.saegreifinn.is).

For a more upscale experience, the excellent Sjavarkjallarinn Seafood Cellar Restaurant features inventive fusion cooking and cheeky presentation by award-winning chef Lárus Gunnar Jónasson (about 8,000 kronur; ☎ 354-511-1212; www.sjavarkjallarinn.is).

My favorite food option is the recently opened Icelandic Fish & Chips, which serves incredibly fresh organic catches of the day with such a selection of wonderful sauces—including ginger and wasabi, tarragon and white truffle, basil and garlic, coriander and lime, and mango chutney—that it's difficult to select one. Solve the dilemma by choosing a sample platter. The scrumptious onion rings are rendered relatively guilt-free with a light spelt-and-barley batter (about 2,000 kronur; ☎ 354-511-1118; www.fishandchips.is).

Good lunch stops include the Sjavarbarinn all-you-can-eat seafood buffet with an Asian accent, on the waterfront across from the Epal design store (1,400 kronur; www.sjavarbarinn.com); and the famous City's Best Hotdogs (Baejarins Beztu) stand, down the street from the Hafnarhus branch of the Reykjavik Art Museum, which is housed in a converted warehouse. In the evening, the bar and res-



The restaurant and bar at Reykjavik's **101 Hotel**.

taurant Boston is a stylishly bohemian, and often raucous, hangout for early or late-evening drinks, and the food is good, too (www.artmuseum.is).

Other options for people watching are the ultra-cool and chic 101 Hotel Bar (www.101hotel.is), and the old favorite Café Paris, which has free wireless access (www.cafeparis.is).

Since most shops close early—about 6 p.m.—and aren't open Sunday, you will have plenty of time to see the sights and take in a relaxing soak or two, especially if you visit between May and August, when it's light enough to take a hike just before midnight. On the way into town from the airport, you will already have seen the surreal moss-covered lava fields.

Bus tours are an efficient way to take in the natural wonders of the diverse Icelandic landscape. For example, the classic "Golden Circle" tour visits the steaming, sputtering hot springs of Geysir and the waterfalls at Gullfoss, as well as the site of the country's first Parliament, the mysterious and dramatic Thingvellir gorge.

You can also simply take a public bus to the trail head at Kollafjörður, which takes about a half-hour, and hike up the mountain to the source of the waterfall for a spectacular view. Other easy one-day tour options include puffin and whale watching on boats leaving from the harbor, horseback riding and scuba diving and snorkeling near Thingvellir.

An alternative off the beaten track is a drive around the Snæfellsnes peninsula, whose offerings include lush fjords, volcanic peaks, dramatic cliffs and golden beaches, all dominated by the ice cap made famous in Jules Verne's "Journey to the Center of the Earth."

In the quaint port Stykkishólmur—gateway to the remote and wild Westfjords—you can visit artist Roni Horn's Library of Water, a stunning Modernist building overlooking the town filled with translucent columns containing the melted ice of 24 Icelandic glaciers (www.libraryofwater.is).

Just south of town is Helgafell, or Holy Mountain, where Guðrún Ósvífisdóttir, the imperious heroine of the medieval Icelandic Laxdaela saga, enigmatically revealed which of her four husbands she loved most. It is said to be her burial site. Climb to the top for a sweeping view, and then circle the church ruin three times clockwise—without looking back—to make a wish.

If you want to stay on the peninsula Saturday night, the quirky, isolated Hotel Búdir, featuring an open fireplace, a view of the glacier and an excellent gourmet restaurant, makes a romantic and luxurious splurge (21,500 kronur; ☎ 354-435-6700; www.budir.is).

If you stay at the hip midcentury Radisson SAS Hotel Saga, you can make last-minute purchases at the Handknitting Association's shop there, which is open on Sundays. They also serve a fantastic breakfast buffet including a selection of Icelandic smoked fish, homemade breads and the famous yogurt-like skyr (21,000 kronur; ☎ 354-1706-0284; www.radissonsas.com).

A visit to the volcanic pools of the Blue Lagoon on the way to the airport will guarantee a relaxing end to a full weekend.

Selling big-money style in penny-pinching times

AKRIS DESIGNER Albert Kriemler last fall spent three days searching for crepe fabric at a Paris textile-industry trade show, with his mobile phone shut down—incommunicado.

He wanted to find the lightest possible couture-quality

On Style CHRISTINA BINKLEY

crepe to create all-season clothes for working women. Cost wasn't an issue—even with the current financial straits of the retail and luxury industries. "I cannot work with cheap fabric," Mr. Kriemler said in March, a day after his Paris runway show. He fingered a pleated dress with three layers of soft tulle that took four days to drape and pleat. Each stitch of the angled pleats, he said precisely, was 0.7 centimeter higher than the last.

It might seem the wrong moment for this: uncompromisingly expensive fabrics and labor-intensive designs. At \$9,950, the pleated tulle gown is aimed at a rarefied customer group. But Akris isn't taking a cost-cutting approach to surviving the current slowdown. Instead, it's doubling down on pleasing its core customers—powerful women, often career women, who seek modern, innovative clothing.

Rather than following the currently popular flirty or romantic ingenue trends, Akris imbues wearers such as Condoleezza Rice with an attitude of sleek command. Akris targets chairwomen of the board and other high-powered women, though it's less overtly dressy than archrival Armani.

As "fit models" on which to shape its designs, Akris employs not only the typical waifs but also size 12 and 14 women. Mr. Kriemler last year was one of the first luxury designers to create high-waisted, wide-legged pants, back when most of the fashion industry was still designing low-rise pants aimed at the youthful market. He says the woman he designs for "travels, she packs suitcases, she wants to get ahead."

Functionality isn't the current mode in the fashion world. But Akris is a sleeper brand that often outsells the elegant office armor of Armani, St. John, Chanel and Piazza Sempione at stores such as Bergdorf Goodman. Akris is among the top 10 sellers for Saks Fifth Avenue, says Joseph Boitano, Saks's top merchandising executive.

Indeed, the challenge for the Swiss, family-owned company now is to navigate an economy in which fewer people are buying \$5,000 suits. Caroline Brown, a former Armani executive who is Akris's chief executive in the U.S., concedes that she's concerned about the economic climate. "Any company that isn't being cautious right now wouldn't be doing its job." She noted that the shift to making seasonless clothes and clothes that will last longer sty-



Akris's \$6,950 dress with layers of tulle (left), and a dress with a tile-like pattern (right).

listically (without doo-dads that date them) is partly a response to shoppers' concerns about buying frivolous clothes that last only a season or two. Still, she says, the label's fall sales so far are ahead of last year's.

She notes that the traditional path to growth would be to pursue licensing deals to make underwear, accessories and the like—something the Kriemler family declines to do. Instead, the plan is to allow profit margins to shrink and to focus closely on what customers are asking for, which these days is seasonless styles—for instance, colors and patterns that can be worn year-round—and lighter fabrics.

Being family-owned, Akris needn't answer to the quarterly demands of investors. The ability to cut profit margins to ride out a rough period is a "luxury," says Peter Kriemler, Albert's brother and the company's president.

In fact, Akris defies virtually every rule of big luxury-brand operations established by successful rivals such as Chanel and Louis Vuitton. The company offers no high-profit-margin perfumes, handbags, shoes or logo-wear. It makes 100% of its clothes in Switzerland, a country off the radar of the fashion industry with one of the world's most expensive labor markets.

The nonconformist approach may be inspired by Akris's location far from the hubs of fashion in St. Gallen, Switzerland, on the border of the bucolic Appenzell region. Within Switzerland, this German-speaking area, known for its cheeses, is the butt of jokes about its rural populace. But Switzerland is also known for its watchmaking, and Akris clothes are made with a costly perfectionism.

Email Christina.Binkley@wsj.com

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Precise collection
See photos of Akris designs
on and off the runway at
WSJ.com/Fashion

Beijing's new architectural feats are

BY SHAI OSTER

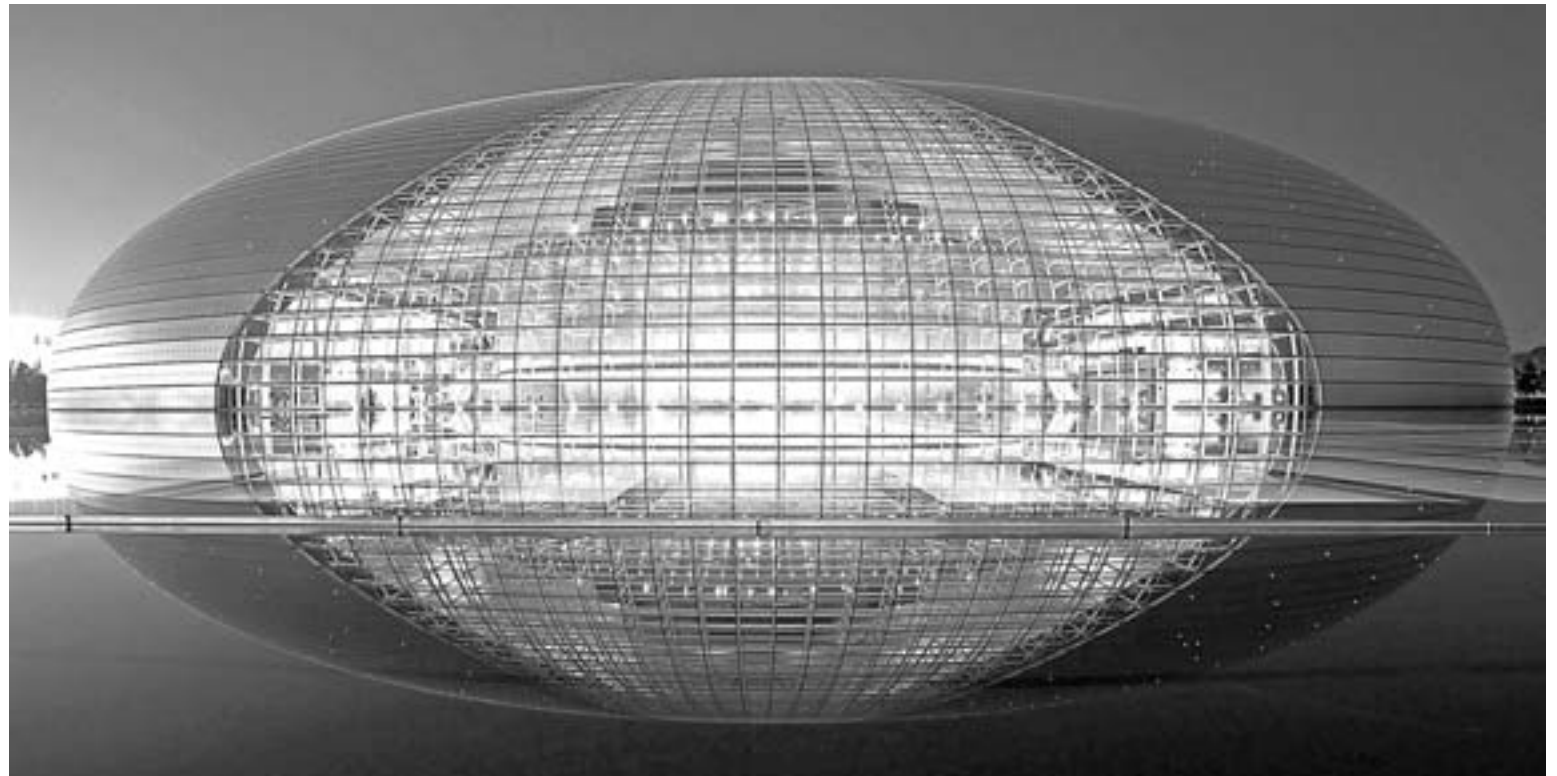
WITH ITS Herculean pre-Olympics construction push, Beijing has in just a few years transformed itself from a city of drab concrete superstructures to a magnet for innovative and ambitious architecture. Visitors to the Games will, like tourists on safari, want to bag the city's Big Five—high-profile buildings that already are considered icons of China's new architecture. There is the National Stadium, aka "the Bird's Nest," whose design is meant to evoke the cracked glaze on ancient porcelain, and the Water Cube, the ocean-blue Olympic aquatics center with a surface of plastic cushions, like a sheet of bubbles. The CCTV Tower, with its twisted-doughnut profile, has redefined the word "skyscraper." The National Center for Performing Arts is like a titanium-clad flying saucer, and there's the vast sweep of Beijing Airport's new Terminal Three.

But several lower-profile works add to Beijing's new aesthetic, including a giant video installation on the side of a restaurant and a hotel clad in metal lattice. Beijing also is constructing, in Chaoyang Park, the world's biggest Ferris wheel.

For centuries, the golden roof and red walls of the emperor's palace and the narrow gray "hutong" alleyways between courtyard homes defined Beijing. Starting in the 1950s, China's communist rulers remade the downtown, with massive, Stalinist edifices like the Great Hall of the People and acres of prefabricated concrete apartment blocks. Economic opening in the 1980s brought a new building boom, but not much in the way of new taste. Beijing's architects, determined to maintain a Chinese touch, capped new towers with traditional-looking structures that seemed blown there by a tornado.

Since 2001, when Beijing's Olympic bid prevailed, international and local designers have been arriving as if drawn by a magnet. Lately, British engineering firm Arup, which has worked on the construction and design of four of the Big Five, has so many visitors coming through that it hired hosts and printed a city map highlighting 29 of its buildings. Rory McGowan, the head of Arup's Beijing office, which is overseeing construction of the CCTV Tower, says conditions are ripe, from the demand for fast growth to the willingness of urban planners to try new ideas. And there's Beijing's relatively low costs and its wealth of open spaces, many of them old factory plots. "The CCTV Tower will never be repeated," he says.

Today, design is everywhere. "There's a lot of new money in China now," says Gregor Hoheisel, an architect at Graft LLC, who created a new hotel overlooking the Forbidden City. "New money tends to be a bit louder." Here is a guide to the new must-sees, plus some



lesser-known architectural treasures.

National Center for the Performing Arts

The vast, low-lying space-age oval designed by France's Paul Andreu is covered in titanium and surrounded by a pool of water. The building was met with extraordinary controversy, starting with the entryway. Visitors enter via underground walkway. Wan Siquan, the engineer who oversaw construction, says he became comfortable with this feature only after satisfying himself that the complex could be completely evacuated within minutes. Now, he shows visitors how underground water keeps the pool's temperature stable, preventing algae outbreaks in summer and ice in winter. Critics have complained that a foreigner was chosen to design such a prominent building—and that it looks like a giant fried egg.

Nevertheless, Chinese and foreign tourists flock to see it. Enter the glass-roofed entrance hallway and see how light filters down through the pond overhead. Inside the center, local wood and marble turns a huge cavern into an intimate space.

CCTV Tower

The giant state broadcaster's new "tower" actually is a twisty glass-and-steel doughnut, designed by Rem Koolhaas and his Dutch design firm, in collaboration with the Arup engineers. The facade is set to be completed by the start of the Games; the interior is likely to take many more months.

Two leaning towers rise 165 meters above the ground, then make a sharp turn to meet in a wide overhang—creating the dizzying sensation that they are defying the usual laws of physics. To stabilize the structure, designers built a giant underground foot, like skis that prevent the skier from leaning too far forward and



tipping over. The building overpowers remnants of an older neighborhood. "A lot of people criticize what urban development means, but it's good that there's a debate," says Chinese architect Zhu Pei, who urged city officials to invite Mr. Koolhaas and other international architects to join the competition to build the tower.

National Stadium ('The Bird's Nest')

For most Olympic visitors, the site of the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as track-and-field events, will define their memories of Beijing. The stadium earned its nickname for the way the steel-and-cement girders cocoon the 91,000 seats inside. The design grew from brainstorming sessions between the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei and the Swiss architectural firm Herzog & deMeuron. The building evokes Chinese culture. Beams crisscrossing seemingly at random are meant to recall the crackled glaze on ancient Chinese ceramics. From the south, the angled bowl resembles the hat-shaped Chinese gold ingots that are a symbol of prosperity. The main support system consists of 24 columns, each weighing 1,000 tons. It took some 7,000 workers

Clockwise from top left: Beijing's National Center for Performing Arts; the GreenPix video installation; Terminal Three at Beijing's airport; CCTV Tower; Opposite House hotel; and National Stadium, better known as 'The Bird's Nest.'

three years of 12-hour shifts around the clock to complete the structure. "The CCTV tower is a triumph of technology," says Xu Weiguo, an architecture professor at China's Tsinghua University. "The Bird's Nest is a triumph of thinking."

Terminal Three

The giant arching sweep of the new terminal at Beijing Capital International Airport, designed by Britain's Norman Foster, is the first thing that will greet most Olympic arrivals. T3 is one of the world's largest enclosed spaces, designed to handle an estimated 50 million visitors a year: It is just over 3.25 kilometers long, with 101 gates, 50 kilometers of baggage conveyers, 98 moving walkways, 168 escalators and 179 elevators. The arch of the massive roof is punctuated with triangular skylights, which from outside resemble scales of a dragon—a symbol



of prosperity and strength. Deep red pillars evoke the red walls of old imperial Beijing.

Water Cube

Designed by Australia's PTW Architects, the National Swimming Center will house many Olympic swimming and diving events. The architects toyed with ideas of a wave-shaped building but then hit on the notion of foam. The walls are made of 3,500 "bubbles," each one a plastic cushion made from a see-through type of Teflon. The plastic conducts solar energy and

more than Olympian



Photos: Getty Images; The Opposite House; Simone Giostra/Arup/Ruogu

also insulates, reducing energy consumption by 30%. Inside, there are five swimming pools, 17,000 seats, aquatic rides and a restaurant.

GreenPix

In west Beijing, the Italian architect Simone Giostra transformed the side of a seafood restaurant into GreenPix, a multi-story video-art installation. By day, solar panels store energy; by night, the energy fuels light displays. For the next few weeks, the wall will feature six specially com-

missioned video installations curated by Luisa Gui, an Italian producer based in New York. The building is attracting attention for its transformation into art without the use of more energy.

Opposite House

For years, the Sanlitun neighborhood in east Beijing was a chaotic strip of bars and an open-air market. Now, it has been redeveloped by Hong Kong-based Swire Group with shopping malls, restaurants and a high-end hotel, the Opposite House. Designed by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, the hotel from outside seems to be wrapped in green glass; on closer inspection, it echoes the geometric pattern on rice-paper windows in old Chinese homes. Inside is an atrium draped with metal mesh and a wall covered in clear plastic cubbyholes—a modern take on a Chinese medicine chest. Basement restaurants, nearing completion, overlook a stainless-steel swimming pool.

Hotel Kapok

This hotel, near the Forbidden City's western gate, is a modest work from Mr. Zhu, the architect better known for his Digital Beijing building. Hotel Kapok is a

refurbished office building wrapped in metal lattice; the façade's blurring effect has given rise to the nickname "the Blur Hotel." Mr. Zhu is also at work on a branch of the Guggenheim Museum for Beijing; his plans call for a steel- and glass-clad building that is nearly invisible.

The Emperor

The exterior of this hotel blends in with the gray façades of the hutongs near the Forbidden City. The space-age interior was designed by the Los Angeles-based architectural studio Graft. Modular sofas in grey, orange and lime-green zigzag down the hallways, evoking pleasant versions of "A Clockwork Orange." Rooms, each named for an emperor, feature a bathtub by the bed.

Jianwai SOHO

SOHO China, the husband-and-wife team of developers Pan Shiyi and Zhang Xin, seems to have branded half of Beijing with its logo. Riken Yamamoto, a Beijing-born Japanese designer, created the stark white towers of the Jianwai complex—a mix of homes, businesses and stores, which plaster their names in the giant windows.

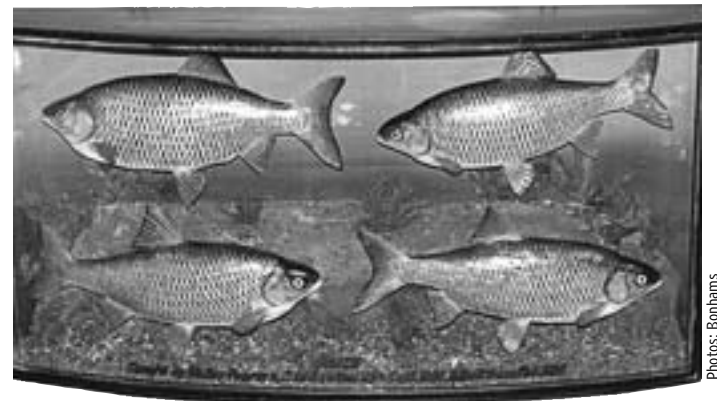
Qianmen

South of Tiananmen Square, imperial Beijing's traditional commercial district is getting a face lift. Champions say the project is a step toward saving Beijing's last hutongs; detractors say the district is being Disney-fied. Either way, it's an important experiment in preserving China's ancient culture while bringing it in line with modern needs.

—Sue Feng in Beijing contributed to this article.

WSJ.com

The new aesthetic
See a video about Beijing's modern-architecture boom, at
WSJ.com/Lifestyle



Photos: Bonhams

Four roach fish caught by Walter Pearson in 1945; estimate: £800-£1,200.

Bonhams sale to recall summers on the Thames

RECAPTURE BYGONE summer days down by the River at Henley-on-Thames, where Bonhams holds its annual daylong auction Saturday of nostalgic rivercraft, ship models, peaceful Thames views and anglers' mounted trophy catches.

The sale, which follows the Henley Royal Regatta held ear-

terways. The boats on offer include a tinplate steam model of an American battleship from circa 1910 estimated at £400 to £600 and an English 19th-century pond yacht with original varnished timber deck and mast, estimated at £600 to £800.

The sale is also a fisher's paradise. Items on offer include rods, reels, bait boxes, flies, wading nets and antique books on angling.

Collecting

MARGARET STUDER

lier this month, takes place in a football-field-size tent in which participating boats are stored during the regatta. Held along a lovely section of the Thames, this is an event to which buyers can bring their picnic baskets. (That's if the weather cooperates. "Last year we were getting around in our wellies," recalls Bonhams marine specialist Lionel Willis.)

"Belle," a 23-meter Victorian river launch, will lead the auction. Built in Kingston upon Thames in 1894, the once-dilapidated but now fully restored vessel can carry 100 passengers and is equipped to cater for 70, says Bonhams, "be it on the Thames or on any other waterway from here to Russia" ("Belle" is estimated at around £200,000).

For those looking for something a bit smaller, there are also family launches, cruisers, punts, canoes and dinghies, with prices starting at just a few hundred pounds. Among them will be "Isolde," a small launch from the 1950s. Mr. Willis says the boat, estimated at £10,000 to £12,000, "epitomizes sunny days on the Thames."

Need something even smaller? The sale also features model pool boats, tiny replicas of bigger ships that can be piloted by remote control on small wa-



A 19th-century potbellied fishing creel; estimate: £6,000-£8,000.

Among the most popular items are mounted fish that often tell the story of an angler's proudest moment. At the top of the angling lots this year will be a mounted 23-kilogram salmon, an unusually large specimen reeled in by Major Frank J. Pullar on July 10, 1928. With an estimate of £5,000 to £7,000, the salmon is a chance to own a beautifully preserved aquatic specimen for a lot less money than it would take to land Damien Hirst's preserved shark. Another angler's triumph: a lot with four mounted roach fish caught by Walter Pearson in September 1945 (estimate: £800 to £1,200).

Also in the sale's angling section will be a 19th-century leather potbellied creel (a container used when fishing to keep the catch fresh) embossed with brass plaques that record the great fish it contained (estimate: £6,000 to £8,000). "This is a rare and wonderful piece," Bonhams angling specialist Charles Kewley says.

The paintings of the Thames and its regattas included in this sale may not be considered among Bonhams' most prestigious works of art, but they do record pleasant moments. "People can buy a picture that shows what they themselves were doing during happy days on the Thames, and put it on the wall of their weekend house," Bonhams pictures specialist Jeremy Waite says.

Among the pictures on offer: "Boating on the Thames" (1990s) by Sherree Valentine-Daines, a nostalgic impressionist picture of a beautiful girl lounging under an umbrella as a suitor rows (estimate: £400 to £600); and Edward Mortelmans' 20th-century look back at eights-racing in the Henley Royal Regatta in the late 19th century (estimate: £4,000 to £6,000).

Cinéma vérité: France's new

By Tobias Grey

Special to *The Wall Street Journal*



Coco Chanel

WHEN FRENCH director Diane Kurys told friends she was considering making a film about Françoise Sagan, the self-destructive author of the 1954 best seller "Bonjour Tristesse," she didn't receive much encouragement. "I don't think they saw any interest in the project," Ms. Kurys says. "During the last few years of her life she wasn't much respected as a writer."

But Ms. Kurys wasn't only interested in Ms. Sagan the writer. She was also fascinated by a tearaway soul who died just four years ago at the age of 69, after a life of dramatic overindulgence. "I'd read a lot about her life and interviewed a lot of those who were close to her," she says. "I found her life very novelistic and intensely cinematic."

French audiences seem to agree. Since its release last month, "Sagan" has sold 450,000 tickets in France. It will be released in the Netherlands, Germany and Japan later this year, and Ms. Kurys is working on finding a distributor in the U.S., where "Tristesse," which Ms. Sagan wrote as an 18-year-old, sold more than 500,000 copies.

Close on the heels of last year's hit "La Môme" (also released as "La Vie en Rose"), about the equally troubled life of French chanteuse Edith Piaf, the French film industry has found itself a new buzzword: le biopic.

Like the Piaf film, "Sagan" boasts a knock-out central performance from a French actress. Just as Marion Cotillard, who won last year's Oscar for best actress, became Piaf, right down to the receding hairline, so Sylvie Testud makes an extraordinary Sagan, playing the writer as an ethereal waif stumbling her way from one accident to another. It had originally been planned as a two-part television movie but was revised to be released on the big screen after the success of "La Môme."

French biopics coming soon include "Coluche," directed by Antoine de Caunes about the life of irreverent comedian/actor Michel Colucci, who stood for the French presidency in 1981, to be released Oct. 15. Two films starring Vincent Cassel are coming about master criminal Jacques Mesrine, who roiled France during the 1970s: "Public Enemy Number 1, Part 1" on Oct. 22, and its sequel, Part 2, on Nov. 19.

Filming begins in September on "Serge Gainsbourg: Vie Héroïque" about the life of the elegantly louche French musical genius, who loved to shock with songs that included "Lemon Incest," a duet with his daughter Charlotte Gainsbourg. It is best-selling graphic artist



Yves Montand



Michel Colucci, a.k.a. Coluche



Above, **Audrey Tautou** will portray Coco Chanel in the film 'Coco Avant Chanel'; **Anna Mouglalis**, right, will play the designer in 'Chanel & Stravinsky.'

Joann Sfar's first film as a director. Filming has started on the Coco Chanel biopic "Coco Avant Chanel," starring Audrey Tautou as the celebrated fashion designer. Another Chanel biopic, "Chanel & Stravinsky," about a love affair between the couturier and the famous composer, will also begin shooting soon. A film about Yves Montand's life is also under way.

The films represent a change in the way the French see celebrities. Whereas once entertainers and artists attracted attention for the quality of their work, they are now seen as fascinating characters whose private lives invite scrutiny. It's an aspect of what the French call "peopolisation"—the culture of celebrity obsession that has been widespread in the U.S. and Britain for decades but has only recently taken hold in France.

"There's a lot of nostalgia at the moment in France for the great figures of the recent past," says Marc



Cerisuelo, a professor of film history and aesthetics at the University of Provence. "It can be linked to French culture's diminishing impact on the world stage." (Last year, Time magazine's cover story "The Death of French Culture," which lamented France's demise as a cultural superpower, had French intellectuals like Bernard-Henri Lévy up in arms.)

"We can see from the films being made that it's only the greatest

stars who get the French biopic treatment, be it Chanel the fashion designer, Sagan the writer or Piaf the singer," Mr. Cerisuelo says.

But the films don't shy away from portraying the stars as fallible humans. Past films have been focused on great historic figures—Napoleon, Joan of Arc, Camille Claudel—and have looked at their public actions that affected history or their struggles to grow as artists. The success of "La Môme" and "Sagan" has put the stress on more contemporary figures, and their messy love lives, drug habits and often unheroic personality traits drive the narratives.

American and British audiences are used to this warts-and-all treatment of stars. Beginning in the 1970s with gritty biopics like "Lady Sings the Blues," which starred Diana Ross as Billie Holiday, or "Lenny," Bob Fosse's downbeat gem about stand-up comedian Lenny Bruce, starring Dustin Hoffman, and leading up to the recent hits about Ray Charles ("Ray") and Johnny Cash ("Walk the Line") that relate the musicians' struggles with drugs and marital infidelity.

"It's only recently that a tabloid culture has infiltrated France," says Hugues Royer, a former professor of philosophy and a journalist at *Voici*, France's largest-selling tabloid magazine. "There is a young public out there now who wants to know everything about their heroes; they have a sort of Anglo-Saxon attitude."

He says the older, more conservative public can be easily shocked by revelations about someone who no longer controls their image. Mr. Royer says a 1983 film about Piaf, "Edith and Marcel," which covered similar territory to "La Môme," wasn't a wide success. "I don't think mentalities were ready," he says.

Mr. Royer points to the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as French president as an example and a driver of



Actor François-Xavier Demaison shooting the film 'Coluche,' about Michel Colucci.

new wave of celebrity biopics



Vincent Cassel and Cécile de France in a film about master criminal Jacques Mesrine.

Roger Anpajou/La petite reine

the growing infatuation with celebrities. "I don't think Sarkozy has ever made a clear distinction between his private and public life," says Mr. Royer, who earlier this year published "La Société des People: De Paris Hilton à Nicolas Sarkozy" (The People Society: From Paris Hilton to Nicolas Sarkozy). The way Mr. Sarkozy has courted publicity is in stark contrast to previous French presidents. François Mitterrand, nicknamed "the sphinx," kept quiet about his teenage daughter from an extramarital relationship until the end of his career, while Jacques Chirac preferred not to discuss the suicide attempts by his daughter Laurence.

Critics say this breakdown of the division between public and private worlds signifies a change in the true French "character." For "a very long time, [the French could be] very proud of a kind of a French cultural exception," Prime Minister François Fillon was quoted saying recently. But today, the French "do not have much to envy the Anglo-Saxon tabloids."

The past few years have seen the emergence of a growing number of glossy French celebrity magazines that sell between 400,000 and 600,000 copies each a week. Titles like Closer, Gala and Public have all appeared in the past five years. Along with the older Voici they have thrived with a paparazzi sensibility and are fast gaining ground on the 60-year-old news and celebrity magazine Paris Match, which tries to market itself as a classier alternative. Many prime-time French television shows now feature celebrity gossip or chat. One of the most imitated was talk show "Tout le monde en parle" (Everybody's talking about it), which ran from 1998 to 2006; host Thierry Ardisson never hesitated to ask celebrities and politicians intimate questions about their sex lives. And as in other parts



Sylvie Testud as author Françoise Sagan in 'Sagan.'

Isopix

of the world, hit French reality television shows like "Loft Story" and "Star Academy" have accentuated the breakdown of the wall separating the traditionally public and private.

French producers are hoping they can repeat the international success of "La Môme," which sold more than five million tickets in France alone and grossed \$82 million world-wide.

By backing films whose starting point is a famous person with a fascinating life, the producers can usually interest foreign distributors. "I like to produce films where there's already some kind of built-in awareness," says Ilan Goldman, producer of "La Môme." "Usually I either buy the rights to a well-known book or I make a film where there's a pre-existing awareness for the subject, like with Piaf."

Expectations are particularly high for the two Mesrine films, both of which were snapped up by Senator Entertainment for distribution in the U.S. after company president Marco Weber saw a 20-minute show-reel at the Cannes Film Festival in

May. Mr. Weber likened the appeal of the movies to "Scarface" and "GoodFellas," and hopes to have the first film in U.S. theaters by the end of the year.

"Coco Avant Chanel," about the early life of the French fashion legend, could also be an international hit. It was one of the hottest properties at February's Berlin film market, and stars Ms. Tautou, one of France's biggest movie stars and a well-known presence internationally. The film's backer, Films Distribution, has been in exclusive negotiations on a multiterritory distribution deal with a major studio, believed to be Warner Bros., according to Variety. It's scheduled for release next year.

Still, there are limits to the biopic trend. France has restrictive laws about portraying the private lives of individuals. Living people can sue for defamation if they don't like how they are portrayed, even if the situations are true, according to Martine Mirepoix, legal head at Prisma Presse, publisher of Voici magazine.

In contrast, British and U.S. laws

allow for more freedoms to portray living people if they are public personalities. "It's completely different in the U.S. and Britain, where there is no way of protecting one's private life, except when the facts don't add up," says Ms. Mirepoix.

In a recent example, Colombian filmmaker Simon Brand is teaming up with U.S. production company Vertigo Entertainment—instead of a French one—to fast-track a biopic about the recently released Franco-Colombian hostage Ingrid Betancourt, according to Colombia's RCN news channel. If the film is shown in France, however, Ms. Betancourt will have the right to sue for defamation if she is unhappy with the way she is portrayed.

Films about celebrities from the past also have restrictions. Producers must reach an agreement with the subject's heirs, who have the right to demand changes to their own depictions in a film, according to Ms. Mirepoix. The necessity of having the heirs' cooperation could mute a harsh portrayal of a celebrity.

The two Chanel biopics focus on the fashion designer's early creative years, as opposed to her more controversial later period when she is alleged to have had an affair with a Nazi spy during World War II.

The Yves Montand biopic is being produced and co-scripted by the entertainer's nephew, Jean-Louis Livi. Mr. Livi's production company, F Comme Film, declined to comment on the content of the film, which is still being written. It is unclear if it will include allegations made by Catherine Allégret, Mr. Montand's step-daughter, in her 2004 autobiography "Un Monde à L'Envers" (A World Upside Down) that the actor sexually abused her from the time she was five years old. Mr. Livi, who was brought up by Mr. Montand and his first wife, Simone Signoret, alongside Ms. Allégret, expressed outrage and denied the allegations when they were first made. Mr. Montand died in 1991.

A hagiographic tone was taken in Robert Guédiguian's 2005 film "The Last Mitterrand," which was less revealing on the personal habits of the president than journalist Georges-Marc Benamou's book of the same name, on which it was based.

Still, there appears to be growing room to maneuver. Ms. Kurys says that when "Sagan" was released she was surprised at how little people blanched at her depiction of Ms. Sagan's life, which includes her little-known lesbian relationships and her notorious cocaine habit—though some critics complained it didn't focus enough on what made her a talented writer. Denis Westhoff, Ms. Sagan's only son, served as a consultant on the film.

"It's just a question of taste and employing the kind of discretion that applies to the kind of personality you're depicting," Ms. Kurys says. "I do think, though, that we can get away with showing a lot more than we used to."



Jacques Mesrine

Isopix



Serge Gainsbourg

Isopix



Françoise Sagan

AFP

Meryl Streep takes on the superheroines

BY LAUREN A.E. SCHUKER

A FEW WEEKS AGO, the blockbuster success of the “Sex and the City” movie was widely declared a symbol of the untapped power of female moviegoers. Now, the arrival of “Mamma Mia!,” an ABBA-inspired musical starring Meryl Streep, will give Hollywood its first hint of how frequently the ladies are willing to flex their newfound box-office muscle.

On the surface, the films appear to have a lot in common. They are filled with familiar female characters; based on long-running and successful franchises; and even feature plots about a wedding that may or may not come off. In a summer filled with the usual buffet of testosterone-fueled franchises such as “Iron Man” and “Hancock,” both films also offer what is quickly becoming Hollywood’s female equivalent of the comic-book superhero: the 40- or 50-something-year-old woman who can have it all, including true love—or the fantasy that Mr. Right will eventually see the light. Both films feature actresses that are well into their 40s and, in the case of Ms. Streep, nearly 60.

But as the movie industry puzzles over ways to replicate the success of “Sex and the City,” film marketers are cautioning that what worked for Carrie Bradshaw won’t necessarily help Universal Pictures push the Dancing Queen to the top of the box-office.

“In five years, we’ll look back at ‘Sex and the City’ as a great marketing campaign for a great movie, but it’s not a model per se that everyone can learn from,” Universal Pictures marketing chief Adam Fogelson says. “Years ago, everyone said that ‘The Blair Witch Project’ cracked the marketing code by using the Internet to market films, and all these years later there is no evidence to show that the Internet alone can be used to make movies blockbusters.”

Universal isn’t turning its back on the opportunity to ride the “Sex and the City” wave. It has actively courted the audience by showing “Mamma Mia” trailers at “Sex and the City” screenings and playing ABBA songs at about 1,000 theaters around the world where the hit film based on the HBO series is playing.

Other films, like Warner Bros.’s “The Women,” are also racing to mimic and replicate SATC’s success. Warner Bros. moved up the release date of “The Women,” a \$16 million film about a set of female friends that features no men in the entire production, from October to early September in hopes of capturing some of the summer audience that flocked to “Sex and the City,” as that film leaves theaters.

“Our feeling was let’s hitch our wagon to that star,” says Diane English, the director of “The Women” and creator of the Emmy-award winning TV series, “Murphy Brown.” Warner Bros. also attached the film’s trailer to “Sex and the City” screenings and tripled the marketing budget for the movie from \$8 million to about \$25 million.

“We have no problem in redoing ‘Sex and the City’s’ campaign and jumping in and saying, ‘If you



Above, Meryl Streep in ‘Mamma Mia!’, which also stars Colin Firth and Amanda Seyfried (right); below (from left), Jada Pinkett Smith, Debra Messing and Candice Bergen in ‘The Women’

liked that, you’ll love this,” says Bob Berney, president of Picturehouse, the specialty label that is distributing “The Women” and was recently absorbed by Warner Bros. “Hopefully, by pushing up ‘The Women’ to September, we can actively get people to get their girlfriends back together at the end of the summer and go again to the movies.”

But the “Mamma Mia” marketing team is more wary of copying marketing strategies of “Sex and the City” outright. Instead of trying to encourage women to see the film in groups, Universal is positioning “Mamma Mia” as a family film to play globally, advertising heavily on MTV and VH-1 to appeal to youth viewers interested in music as well as on talent shows such as “The Miss Universe Pageant” and “So You Think You Can Dance.” Like Miramax’s breakout 2002 hit, “Chicago,” “Mamma Mia” might open quietly but play strongly through the rest of summer.

Trying to lure women into the theaters in the summer can be a difficult task. Earlier this season, “Kit Kittredge: An American Girl,” starring Abigail Breslin and inspired by a line of dolls, was greeted with warm reviews, but lackluster box-office returns.

“Mamma Mia” is opening up against Warner Bros.’s “The Dark Knight,” the highly anticipated sequel of Chris Nolan’s Batman franchise. Although “The Dark Knight” is expected to be a box-office juggernaut and bring in more than \$100 million its opening weekend, Universal is counterprogramming “Mamma Mia” against it. Both films have a large number of midnight showings that play Thursday evening into very early Friday morning. According to a spokesperson at Fandango.com, “Mamma Mia” has more than 300 of these midnight showings, an unusually high figure. “Hellboy II: The Golden Army,” for example, had more than 100 midnight shows.



Unlike “Sex and the City,” which revolves around four major female characters, “Mamma Mia” relies upon a single foundation: Meryl Streep. In the film, Ms. Streep, 59 years old, plays Donna, a former hippie-turned-hotelier who is the mother of 20-year-old Sophie, played by Hollywood newcomer Amanda Seyfried.

Executives at Universal say that Ms. Streep is the cornerstone around which the rest of the film was built. In the right film, Ms. Streep can be a huge box-office draw: “The Devil Wears Prada,” which came out two summers ago, was an instant hit, raking in \$124.7 million at the domestic box office. “We wanted Meryl in the movie, there were no two ways about it,” says Donna Langley, president of production at Universal. “When we found out she was interested in doing the part, we

quickly flew her out” to meet with producers.

Once Ms. Streep committed to the film, the production team solidified the rest of the cast, including her character’s three former boyfriends (Pierce Brosnan, Colin Firth, and Stellan Skarsgard) and her female cohorts (Julie Waters and Christine Baranski).

Ms. Streep has a few years on the fictional Donna, who is presumably in her forties in the musical. (The character had her daughter, Sophie, as a young, unmarried woman and isn’t sure of the paternity.) But Ms. Streep, donning simple blue overalls over a white T-shirt for much of the movie, looks younger on screen, doing acrobatics and splits while belting out ABBA songs. (Yes, that’s actually Ms. Streep dancing and singing.) And younger actresses might be hesitant to play an older role,

as Ms. Langley explains. “The truth is to get any 40-year-old actress to play the mother of a 20-something-year-old actress in a film is challenging,” she says. “Of course we thought long and hard who should play Donna in the film, who would be believable playing the role of a mother.”

Executives say that Ms. Streep’s mature age actually allowed them more flexibility in terms of casting of the ensemble parts, which are vital in a film with more than a dozen major musical numbers, including a big group scene on a pier set to “Dancing Queen” and complex, fully choreographed numbers with the film’s entire cast to “Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!” and “Voulez-Vous,” two of ABBA’s hits. “It wasn’t really until we got up into that next generation that we were really able to see the value of an ensemble, commercially and creatively, that worked well together,” Ms. Langley says.

The film features a number of different cohorts, including the three former boyfriends, Sophie and her two girlfriends, and Ms. Streep and her two gal-pal sidekicks. Ms. Langley liked the older groups so much that she added about \$1 million to the film’s budget to make a series of music videos with Ms. Streep, Mr. Brosnan and their sidekicks dancing and singing reprises in ABBA costumes. (The videos run with the credits of the film.)

Universal also sees Ms. Streep as the key to unlocking the power of “Mamma Mia” globally. “Internationally, we have used Meryl more in marketing the film,” says David Kosse, president of Universal Pictures International. “Her presence gives instant credibility to the musical,” he says.

Along with Ms. Streep, the studio has used big name stars such as Mr. Brosnan to capture a global audience familiar with the “Mamma Mia” brand. Many of the advertisements in the U.K. and Europe, for example, focus on Ms. Streep, while the featured movie poster in the U.S. displays only Ms. Seyfried, holding a bouquet of flowers against a glittering blue Grecian sea—a familiar image from the stage musical.



Photos: Universal Studios; Photofest

Erratic but still funny 'Dave'

'MEET DAVE' STARS Eddie Murphy as a human-size spaceship, a vessel built in the image of its teeny-tiny captain, who commands a large—though equally tiny—crew; he's played by Eddie Murphy too. What's the logic of that design? The logic is that the whole expensive movie was built in the image of Eddie Murphy, a still-talented star who still commands kings' ransoms to make comedies that

Film

JOE MORGENSTERN

still attract gleeful audiences, no matter how arbitrary, erratic, perfunctory, illogical, ramshackle or grotesque those movies may be. And this new one is only some of the above—dumbfoundingly erratic, for the most part, but smart and funny from time to time, especially when Mr. Murphy, in the pseudo-person of the spaceship, tries to imitate earthling behavior.

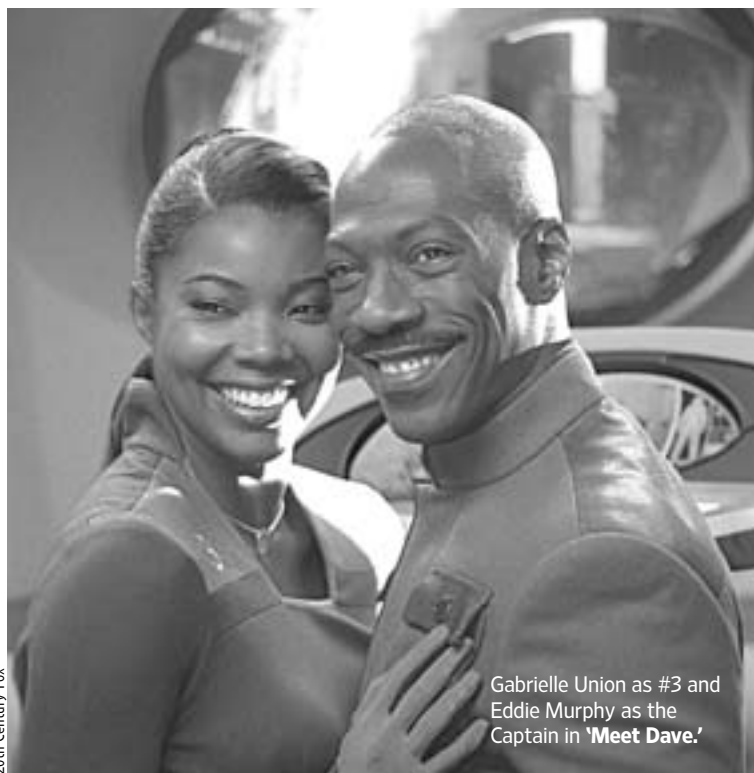
That means learning to walk the walk (though Vincent D'Onofrio did a wilder version as a discombobulated alien in "Men in Black"); talk the talk (calibrating the right pitch is as much of a problem as finding the right words) and eat the eats (meatloaf, which the spaceship's database confuses with the singer Meat Loaf, then hot dogs, 85 of which the spaceship consumes while posing as a contestant at a Manhattan street fair). Above all, it means that the puppeteer orchestrating these behaviors—the pompous, pedantic captain inside the strutting machine—must learn to navigate the bafflements of earthling emotions, starting and ending with love.

If some of this sounds familiar, it's because "Meet Dave" is nothing if not derivative. (Brian Robbins directed from a script by Rob Greenberg and Bill Corbett.) You name it, and the filmmakers have borrowed from it: not only "Men In Black" but "Mork and Mindy," "Fantastic Voyage," "The Incredible Shrinking Man" (which Mr. Murphy is remaking) and "Horton Hears a Who!" among others. (The spaceship wears a white suit because the aliens had intercepted an episode of "Fantasy Island" and figured everyone on earth wore white suits.)

Elizabeth Banks plays an earthling who becomes the object of the captain's love; she's likeable and attractive, though awfully earnest. Gabrielle Union, as the ship's culture officer, isn't earnest at all; she's dynamic and increasingly alluring as she, like the captain and the rest of the crew, takes on the most alien behaviors of the host planet. When certain members of the crew abandon ship for terra firma, "Meet Dave" changes radically—neither for the better nor worse, since those terms don't really apply—and the whole dramatic contraption self-destructs well before the end of its 90-minute running time. Yet the spectacle is seldom boring. Mega-budget grotesque is an art form of its own.

'Hellboy II: The Golden Army'

If you didn't know that there's a Troll Market underneath the east tower of the Brooklyn Bridge,



Gabrielle Union as #3 and Eddie Murphy as the Captain in 'Meet Dave.'

you need to brush up on your monstrosities with the help of Guillermo del Toro's hugely inventive—and smashingly beautiful—"Hellboy II: The Golden Army."

Like the first Hellboy feature four years ago, this film was based on Mike Mignola's Dark Horse comic, and stars Ron Perlman as the red-faced, cigar-puffing, kitten-and-candy-loving, working-class do-gooder who was born a demon but wants to fit in as a human. In that previous episode, Hellboy battled a mad monk, plus hordes of tentacled, egg-laying creatures that had infested our society. Now he's our bulwark against an indestructible robot army that waits to be released from the bowels of the earth. While it waits (for quite a long time, actually), Mr. del Toro and his lavishly gifted colleagues—among them the cinematographer Guillermo Navarro, the production designer Stephen Scott and the creatures-and-effects specialist Mike Elizalde—trot out the most spectacular assortment of life forms since "Star Wars" opened its cantina.

Indeed, "Hellboy II" is best savored as a bestiary, one that includes an eyeless Angel of Death, a legless Bethmoora Goblin and some extremely unpleasant Tooth Fairies—their most prominent feature being their teeth—who feed, diabolically, on calcium. The pace isn't always brisk; this film seems more dependent than its predecessor on set pieces. But the pieces are impressive, and Hellboy is accompanied once again by Doug Jones's aquatic empath, Abe, and Selma Blair's melancholy, pyroki-

netic Liz. She keeps trying, with mixed results, not to set herself on fire.

'Journey to the Center of the Earth'

Surprising as it may be, given an unpromising trailer, the 3D update of Jules Verne's "Journey to the Center of the Earth" turns out to be perfectly charming as well as predictably eye-popping. 3D movies have an ironclad obligation to scare the audience with water squirted from hoses or tossed from buckets, and this one observes the convention with a vengeance. (Watch out for spittle spit both by man and beast.) Beyond that, though, the illusion of depth enhances the imaginative treatment of an extremely simple story—even simpler than the one in the much beloved 1959 version that starred James Mason, and played out by a smaller cast.

A cast of three principals, to be precise: Brendan Fraser as a scientist looking for traces of his vulcanologist brother, who may have gone down a volcanic tube (the geological counterpart of Alice's rabbit hole); Josh Hutcherson as his young nephew and Anita Briem as their Icelandic mountain guide. Mr. Fraser hits a silly symphony of right notes; he's lightly amused by the preposterous surroundings, but never self-amused. And what surroundings they are: giant dandelions that scatter their seeds all over the theater, giant Venus fly traps, magnetic rocks floating in a void, mine shafts with roller-coaster tracks, a bio-luminous bird that hovered, like Tinker Bell, over the row in front of mine.

The film marks the auspicious directorial debut of a special effects expert named Eric Brevig. My only quarrel with his direction is that he didn't give Anita Briem enough to do. An Icelandic beauty who speaks English with a barely perceptible but enchanting lilt, she has a few brisk dialogue scenes near the beginning, after which her character is mainly in danger. In those early scenes, though, Ms. Briem reveals a vivid spirit and a gift for comedy. She needs to be seen much more prominently on the Earth's surface.

Preparing for a role as Batman's new foe

IN "THE DARK KNIGHT," the new Batman film, actor Aaron Eckhart is Harvey Dent, an unshakable district attorney who is transformed into Two Face, a wrathful villain. These dual roles put Mr. Eckhart at a pivotal place in this second Batman movie from director Christopher Nolan, who has steered the franchise into grimmer territory than the movies of the 1980s and 1990s. "The Dark Knight" also stars Christian Bale as Batman, the late Heath Ledger as the Joker and Gary Oldman as Lt. Gordon. Mr. Eckhart first attracted notice in the twisted ensemble dramas of writer Neil LaBute. We spoke to Mr. Eckhart about college, capes and "The Dark Knight."

—John Jurgensen



Getty Images

Aaron Eckhart, who plays Harvey Dent, alias Two Face, in 'The Dark Knight'; below, a scene from the film.

Q: When you're acting in a comic-book movie opposite a guy wearing a caped costume, is it hard to resist going over the top?

I took a day or two to look around and see what everyone else was up to. Sometimes you're not sure what the tone of the movie is, especially if you have to be acting with the Batman or the Joker. Heath really set the tone of the film and how dark it was. Still, there were a lot of questions. How big do I go? Do we play it for laughs?

Q: This movie is about the fight against darkness and chaos, and for viewers it's a pretty intense experience. No one actually thought you were making a kids' movie, did they?

I don't ask those questions because I'm the new guy. At times I was like, "What rating is this?" With "Batman Begins," Chris Nolan took this psychological look at Batman as this introspective and self-doubting superhero, and this one just compounds that. I'm a 40-year-old kid, and I think kids are looking for a hero and a leader and tools they can apply to their own lives. Batman is a man who uses terrestrial tools to achieve his powers. People can relate to that.

Q: Even if Heath Ledger hadn't died, people would be talking about his performance. What signs did you see that something special was coming from him?

I saw it the first time he started reading. Heath had

gone to the wall to be in the picture. We'd have to do makeup at the same time, and he would really use that time to get into the character and do the voices. Everyone was aware of what Heath was doing. When Gary Oldman is paying attention, you know that something special is happening.

Q: From "In the Company of Men" onward, many of your characters have wholesome looks that hide a slimy or corrupt streak. Is that something you cultivated or did that creep up on you?

The key to playing those guys is that they're not bad people. It's interesting how much businessmen love the characters I play, because they feel a kinship with them. You find ambitious people in any industry. When they're getting ahead they do it with some cunning. It's the writers making these characters slimy—I just happen to sell it well.

Q: How have those films been received at Brigham Young University, where you went to college?

Let me say this: They haven't asked me back. I haven't spoken at their symposium.

Q: That's where you first started working with Neil LaBute. Are you planning to work together again soon?

He just wrote me the other day. We're always trying to do something. Tonally we have to find something we both want to do. I've been trying to get him to write a sweet romantic comedy, and he won't do it.



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Opening this week in Europe

- Baby Mama U.K.
- Forgetting Sarah Marshall Greece
- Leatherheads Belgium
- Mad Money France
- The Bank Job Poland
- The Incredible Hulk France
- Wall-E Hungary

Source: IMDb

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Hollywood to Bollywood

By Abheek Bhattacharya

"Bollywood calls in Rambo for strike on U.S. cinema." So screamed a recent headline in India about Sylvester Stallone's contract to star in a local movie. Indians are excited not only about the prospect of American influence in Bollywood, India's Hindi-language movie industry, but also that of Indian influence in Hollywood. It will take more than Rambo, however, for the world's two largest movie industries to smash cultural barriers in each other's nations.

Signing an American movie star is a coup for producer Sajid Nadiavala and a first for Bollywood. But Mr. Stallone isn't the first American in the movie business to have discovered India. Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks studio is negotiating a \$500 million partnership with Mumbai-based Reliance Big Entertainment. Reliance Entertainment announced earlier at Cannes that it would also bankroll eight Hollywood studios owned by Nicholas Cage, George Clooney and others.

There are high expectations on both sides. Consider "Vivek," a contributor to bollywood-buzz.in, who thinks the addition of Mr. Stallone to a Bollywood cast might add "more substance" to the local flick. "Substance" is not a word usually associated

with Mr. Stallone, who is best known for shoot-'em-up roles like Rambo and Rocky. But any import from Hollywood may very well bring fresh air to an industry saturated with sequins and song-and-dance routines.

On the flip side, Bollywood's growing ambitions accompany Indian investment in Hollywood. Amit Khanna, chairman of Reliance Big Entertainment, says that his firm will "approve what goes into production" at the eight studios the Indian multinational is financing. Add to that Reliance's investment in 240 movie screens around the U.S., and suddenly India seems ready to deliver its product in America. Two Reliance-financed Bollywood productions, "Broken Horses" and "Kite," are slated for limited releases in the U.S. within the next two years.

But how real are these expectations? When it comes to globalization, cultures operate differently than economies. India's fast-growing economy may be receptive to foreign investment, but this doesn't mean its movie business is too. The "Rocky" star is unheard of in rural parts of India and is unlikely to prove much of an attraction to the millions of fans who follow their Bollywood stars almost as obsessively as they follow their cricket stars.

Conversely, while the notion

of India may charm American investors, moviegoers are a different market. Indian productions may fascinate film studies majors and Manhattan art-house audiences, but it's unclear whether they'll appeal more broadly.

aspura in the U.S., but not with the average American.

Indian moviegoers, too, are seeking familiarity. So far Hollywood seems to understand that in India, one must do as the Indians do. In November, Sony Pic-

tywood's regular American products are considered second-tier. As Mr. Khanna puts it, Hollywood is forced to play by Bollywood's rules. "The days of cultural imperialism are over," he says.

With such limited cultural prospects, the Hollywood-Bollywood story is limited to a financial side. Yet, some predict that as India liberalizes, the movie landscape may alter. "If India becomes like Bangalore then more Indians will start watching Hollywood," Mr. Cowen explains, referring to the whiz-bang technology capital of India, populated by upper- and middle-class youth. As more Indians get wealthier, their tastes will reflect that currently exhibited only by the upper classes.

Even then, it is unlikely one industry may replace the other. In India, Hollywood will become at most an alternative form of cinema for a greater number of Indians. Bangalore may love Rambo, but there is no shortage of fanfare for Aishwarya Rai, Bollywood's premier actress, in the city. Americans, too, may start warming to Indian culture, but the long reign enjoyed by the likes of Mr. Stallone is not about to end. Globalization can wage a long war to remove barriers between nations, but this is one battle it is not going to win anytime soon.

Mr. Bhattacharya is the Robert L. Bartley fellow at *The Wall Street Journal Asia's* editorial page.

Lost in translation?



Aishwarya Rai (l) and Sylvester Stallone.

Tyler Cowen, an economics professor at George Mason University in Virginia and author of "Creative Destruction: How Globalization is Changing the World's Cultures," argues that movies are about familiarity. "A feeling of comfort has to be there" for a movie to succeed, he says. That is the reason that "Americans don't like foreign movies," Mr. Cowen says. A Bollywood movie with Indian cultural themes and actors sells tickets with the Subcontinent's three-million strong di-

tures released "Saawariya," the first Indian movie financed from abroad. "Saawariya" has Bollywood written all over it: song, dance, love story—all the usual ingredients. Hollywood knows what sells in India; it is not about to replace a formula that sells 3.6 billion tickets annually.

In India, Hollywood simply cannot be itself. It is unable to compete with a local industry that already churns out more than 1,000 movies a year. With a mere 5% share of the market's revenue, Hol-

Masterpiece / By Anne Wealleans

Art Deco for Swells at Sea

Objects from ocean liners are seldom found in art museums. Furniture and fittings from passenger ships are more often seen decorating hotels and restaurants, or on show in maritime museums. The interiors of liners are not valued, and by the time of the ship's disposal they are usually faded and out of date. A highly significant exception to this is "The History of Navigation" (1934), the magnificent glass mural from the SS Normandie.

The mural is an important example of French Art Deco by one of its key artists, Jean Dupas (1882-1964). This luxury style is characterized by expensive finishes, exclusive production techniques and bold patterning. At its height in 1920s and '30s, Art Deco was used by the French to re-establish Paris as the world capital of high fashion after World War I.

The Compagnie Générale Transatlantique (CGT), or French Line, capitalized on *haut décor* for its finest ship ever, the Normandie, introduced in 1935 for the Le Havre to New York route. CGT employed the best possible range of French designers and decorators, who had been officially supported at the 1925 Paris Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industrielles Modernes to reinforce French national identity. The contract between the French government and the French Line stipulated that the new ship "had to be not less than equal to the best foreign ship in commission or under construc-

tion." The government's construction subsidy for the Normandie was more than \$60 million.

The ship was designed to carry 750 first-class, 625 tourist-class and 340 third-class passengers—the configuration reflecting the ship's luxury status. This was a party ship, with the emphasis on artificial rather than natural light, dinner rather than *petit déjeuner*, lounging and people watching rather than healthy, outdoor pursuits. Even the garden was glamorous; it was inside the ship and included caged, exotic birds.

The most striking feature of the ship's interior layout was the massive public spaces. The dining room on C Deck, images of which have become emblematic of the Normandie, was a breathtaking 305 feet long, 46 feet wide, 25 feet high and could seat 750 people at once. And while smoking rooms on ships were traditionally the place for the male passengers to retire after dinner, while the women would gather elsewhere, the one on the Normandie's Promenade Deck was another daring use of space: First-class passengers—men and women alike—had to walk through the Smoking Room to reach the Grand Salon beyond. And it was in the Grand Salon that the shimmering beauty of the Jean Dupas mural could be seen.

It was Dupas who selected the history of navigation as the theme for his masterpiece. The work is enormous and can be



Jean Dupas's French Art Deco "The History of Navigation" (1934) from the ocean liner SS Normandie.

seen at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (through October) in its entirety for the first time in more than six decades. It is more than 20 feet in height and consists of 56 glass panels, each measuring just over 4 by 2½ feet. The shimmering effect was achieved by the artist, with the assistance of Charles Champignelle, by painting the back of the glass and then finishing the process off with a layer of silver and gold.

The technique, known as *églo-misé*, is complex and time-consuming. It involves the artist beginning with the highlights and working in reverse to add the fine out-

lines with a needle at the very end. But the results are luscious. The style of the mural is typical Art Deco, with heavily outlined, muscular figures of Greek and Roman gods entwined with elaborate serpents and heavily stylized waves. This is not a chronological narrative of seafaring, but a fantasy image that combines shipping through the ages with classical mythology. Soaring seagulls fly by the billowing sails and rigging of 16th-century galleons. A 19th-century paddle steamer churns through the angular waves. In the foreground are the chariots of The- tis and Poseidon, alongside the

birth of Aphrodite. The effect is somewhat marred by the addition of mirrored, Art Deco wall lights. But the mural is still a perfect backdrop for glamorous cocktail parties and dancing.

We are lucky that the screen did not meet the fate of much maritime interior décor. The Normandie was seized by the American Navy in 1941 and converted into the USS Lafayette. But it was destroyed by fire in New York Harbor the following year and eventually scuttled, the shortness of the ship's life only adding to its glamorous allure. Fortunately, most of the extravagant interior furnishings had been removed, and so the mural, along with many other items, survived.

The Normandie was the apogee of French *haut décor*, the emphasis in the ship's interiors was on glamour and comfort. First-class passengers could escape the outdoors and remain cosseted in the air-conditioned restaurant with no view of the Atlantic Ocean. As with the majority of ocean liners and cruise ships today, the emphasis was on protecting the passenger from the dangers of the sea and from the outside world in general.

Dr. Wealleans, a professor of design history at the Modern Interiors Research Centre of Britain's Kingston University, is the author of "Designing Liners: Interior Design Afloat" (Routledge, 2006).



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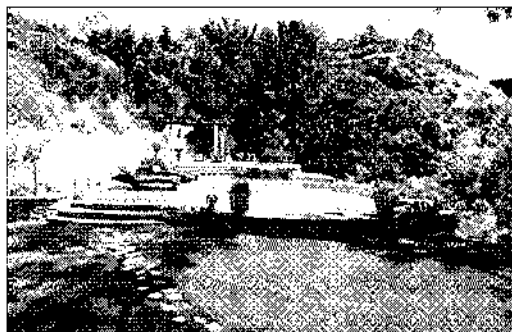
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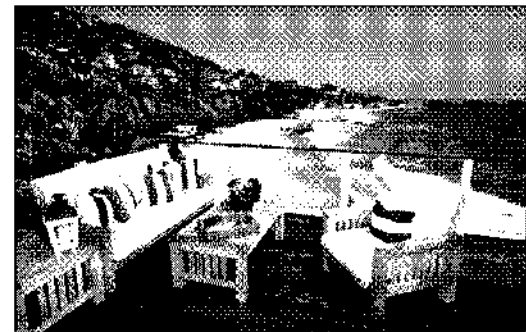
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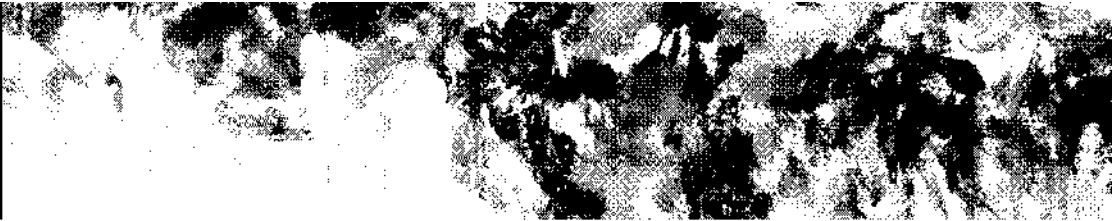


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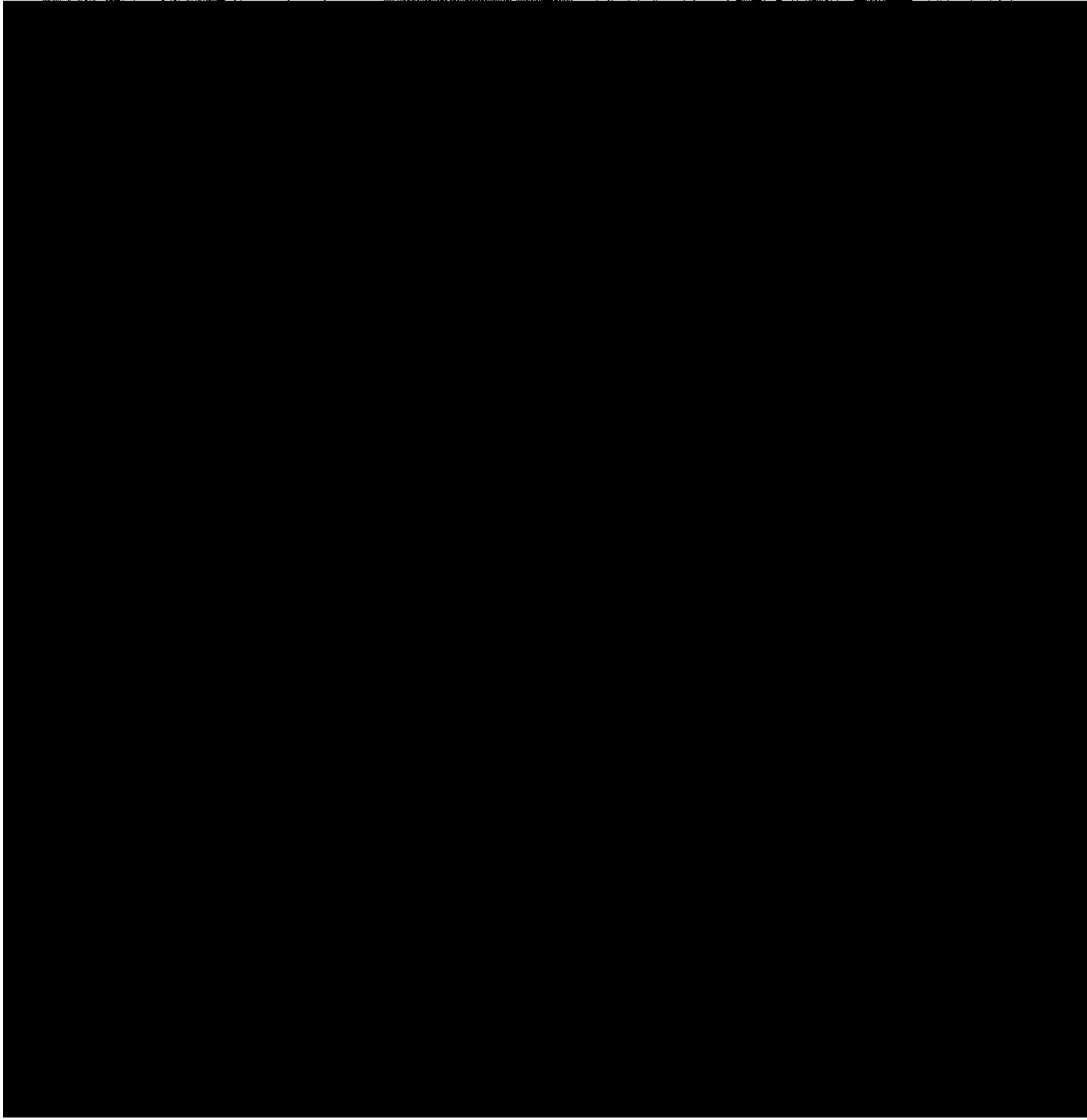
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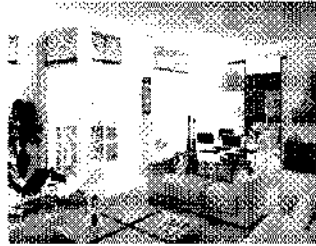
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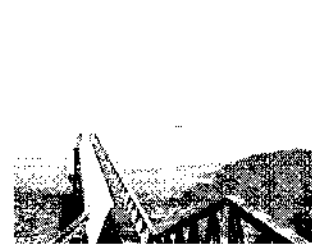
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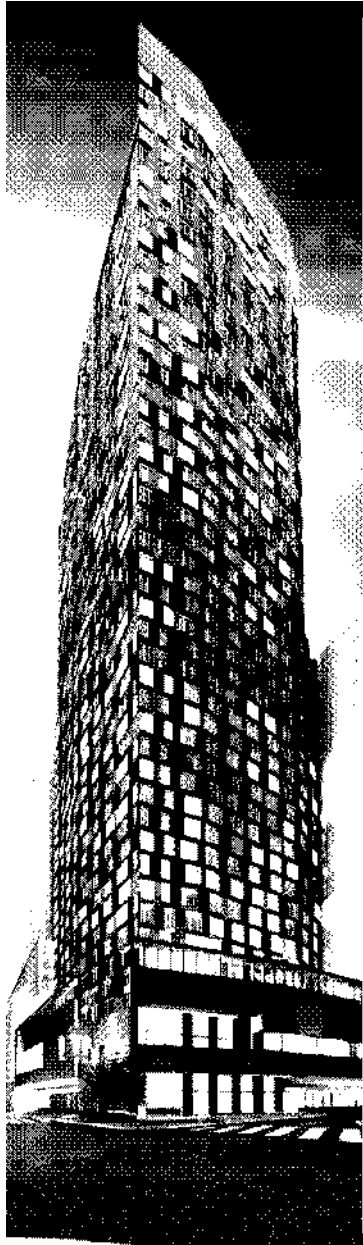
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"Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival 2008" stages performances of diverse styles of jazz and blues—from New Orleans to avant-garde.
Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival
July 25 to Aug. 3
☎ 44-131-4675-200
www.edinburghjazzfestival.co.uk

Hamburg

art
"The Mirror of Secret Desires: Still Lives from Five Centuries" includes works by Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet, Max Beckmann and Georges Braque as well as many Baroque and modern artists.
Hamburger Kunsthalle
Until Oct. 5
☎ 49-40-4281-3120-0
www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de

Helsinki

design
"Fennofolk" explores contemporary Finnish design and culture through art and performances by 100 Finnish artists, communities and organizations.
Designmuseo—Finnish Museum of Art and Design
Until Sept. 28



'Young Girl with a Violet Skirt,' 2005, by Miquel Barceló, in Dublin; below, an illustration by Sanna Annukka, 2008, in Helsinki.

☎ 358-9-6220-540
www.designmuseum.fi

London

history
"Hadrian: Empire and Conflict" explores the life, love and legacy of Rome's most enigmatic emperor through artifacts and relics from 28 museums around the world.
British Museum
July 24 to Oct. 26
☎ 44-20-7323-8299
www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk

art
"The Courtauld Cézannes" shows drawings, watercolors and paintings by Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), including the iconic "Montagne Sainte-Victoire" (1887) and "Card Players" (1892-95).
Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery
Until Oct. 5
☎ 44-207-8720-220
www.courtauld.ac.uk

photography
"Frozen in Time" exhibits 50 vintage photographs and multiplate panoramas taken by 19th-century Italian mountaineer and photographer Vittorio Sella.
Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art
Until Sept. 14
☎ 44-20-7704-9522
www.estorickcollection.com

fashion
"Little Black Dress" celebrates the fashion classic with a display of de-

signs by John Galliano, Amanda Wakeley, Giles Deacon, Zandra Rhodes and Betty Jackson.
Fashion and Textile Museum
Until Aug. 25
☎ 44-20-7407-8664
www.ftmlondon.org

Lugano

art
"Ethnopassion—Peggy Guggenheim's Ethnic Art Collection" shows 35 pieces of ethnic art from Africa, South America and Oceania acquired by Peggy Guggenheim in the 1960s.
Fondazione Galleria Gottardo
Until Aug. 23
☎ 41-91-8081-988
www.galleria-gottardo.org

Madrid

art
"Lepanto: Cy Twombly" shows a narrative series of paintings by American artist Cy Twombly, illustrating the Battle of Lepanto (1571) in the tradition



of previous depictions by Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese and others.
Museo Nacional del Prado
Until Sept. 28
☎ 34-91-3302-800
www.museoprado.es

Nice

music
"Nice Jazz Festival 2008" features 75 jazz concerts presenting more than 500 musicians, including the Archie Schepp Quartet, Rufus Wainwright, Diana Krall, Joan Baez, Maceo Parker, George Benson and others.
Nice Jazz Festival
Until July 26
☎ 33-4-892-6836-22
www.nicejazzfestival.fr

Paris

photography
"Annie Leibovitz—A Photographer's Life, 1990-2005" exhibits 200 prints by Annie Leibovitz for Rolling Stone, Vanity Fair and Vogue.
Maison Européenne de la Photographie
Until Sept. 14
☎ 33-1-4478-7500
www.mep-fr.org

photography

"The Birth of Photography" showcases the museum's collection of daguerreotypes, an early form of photography printed on metal plates.
Musée d'Orsay
Until Sept. 7
☎ 33-1-4049-4814
www.musee-orsay.fr

Rome

art
"Mario Schifano 1934-1998" is a retrospective of the work of the Italian pop art pioneer (1934-1998).
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna
Until Sept. 28
☎ 39-06-3229-81
www.gnam.beniculturali.it

art

"Sean Scully" exhibits a selection of paintings and drawings by the contemporary Irish artist (born 1945).
MACRO Future
Until Aug. 31
☎ 39-06-6710-70400
www.macro.roma.museum

Vienna

sociology
"Bloody Stories: A Historical Journey through the World of Crime" spotlights the history of violent crime with books, manuscripts and photographs.
Österreichische Nationalbibliothek
Until Nov. 2
☎ 43-1-5341-0
www.onb.ac.at

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.

WSJ.com

What's on
WSJ.com subscribers can see an expanded version of the European arts-and-culture calendar at WSJ.com/Europe