

VIVE L'OSCAR

Winner Woody Allen may have missed Hollywood's biggest lovefest, but intrepid über movie publicist

Peggy Siegal was there for every single party and every single step of the red carpet way. This year, her exclusive Oscar diary chronicles close encounters with Michelle Williams, Meryl Streep, Harvey Weinstein, Nancy Reagan, Elizabeth Olsen, George Clooney and his French doppelganger

Jean Dujardin and, of course, Uggie.



photographs by Patrick McMullan *and* Billy Farrell Agency



Katie Holmes and Tom Cruise



Octavia Spencer, *The Help* Director Tate Taylor, Viola Davis and George Clooney

Navigating our presidential campaign was a piece of cake compared to understanding the nuances of the 2011 Oscar race for the most revered artistic honor in the world.

This is how nine films fell into the big picture.

Three premiered in Cannes mid-May, a distant nine months ago, creating an Oscar campaign as long as any human pregnancy. At the Palais, the first inkling of Oscar buzz was born as the reclusive **Woody Allen** premiered *Midnight in Paris*. PBS later aired a documentary of Woody discussing his forty-four films showing the astonishing depth of his talent that made you want to immediately hand him the Oscar for Best Picture. Academy rules and Woody forbade marketing this gem.

Woody is not a member of the Academy because he doesn't feel that films should be in competition. He told me, "A statue does not change your life. You still get a cold. You can't get a date. You still

have everyday things to worry about." The Academy learned to love him from a distance and gave him Best Original Screenplay as a consolation.

Terrence Malick's long-awaited, esoteric *The Tree of Life* was unveiled at Cannes and won the coveted Palme D'Or, positioning it for a nomination.

The Artist, created by the French, shot in Hollywood and about Hollywood was the festival surprise. This charming and oddly original black-and-white silent entry was introduced by the ringmaster himself, **Harvey Weinstein**. No one could pronounce or spell director **Michel Hazanavicius's** name. **Jean Dujardin** could not speak a word of English and neither could his 10-year-old co-star, the Jack Russell **Uggie** who had been rescued from the pound after two adopters found

him too wild. Tragically Uggie developed an undisclosed neurological disorder during production, forcing him to retire at the height of his popularity.

No slam dunk Oscar winner emerged in Cannes. Any future film could easily win.

DreamWorks' *The Help* premiered in LA in August and distributor Disney began propelling the politically correct and socially significant film to box office heaven of \$200 million. **Viola Davis** and **Octavia Spencer** were forecast to win Oscars.

In September, the Toronto and New York Film Festivals and Fox Searchlight presented **Alexander Payne's** Hawaiian family saga, *The Descendants*, which broke out of the pack with whispers of winning. Beloved **George Clooney**, playing a father for the first time was hailed as a shoo-in for best actor. Directing *Ides of March* added momentum.

Also at New York's festival **Marty Scorsese** and Paramount sneaked an unfinished cut of *Hugo* in Alice Tully Hall, built for concerts but converted into a 3-D theater. Marty was christened the visionary genius of an innovative, costly 3-D masterpiece.

Director **Bennett Miller's** highly anticipated *Moneyball* for Sony hit a grand slam at its west coast premiere in

Oakland putting the film, its heart throb star **Brad Pitt**, **Jonah Hill** and seasoned writers **Steve Zaillian** and **Aaron Sorkin** in play.

Spielberg's epic *War Horse* for DreamWorks came thundering down the pike with a huge premiere back at Alice Tully Hall, with posters of Lincoln Center's Tony winning theatrical version and their indelible puppets in the background. Steven paid homage to legends **John Ford** and **David Lean** and the country fell in love with a horse named **Joey** and his 14 stand-ins.

Studios worked their stars to the bone. Ironically, Harvey Weinstein's independent French talent who lived in Paris were not as available as their competitors, therefore **Uggie** became a superstar igniting a pet war.

Christopher Plummer, who had Best Supporting Actor in the bag promoted his Jack Russell, **Cosmo**. Diminutive Scorsese was seen on TV on a small couch with his large Doberman, **Blackie**, drooling on his suit. Spielberg never got a chance to trot out his lead horse **Joey**, previously seen in *Seabiscuit* because his ravishing reddish coat was now darkened for another role.

By December, as film critics bestowed their own awards upon many films, **Stephen Daldry** struggled to finish *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* with a new score. There was buzz **Daldry** could be editing the winner. Producer **Scott Rudin** juggled his astounding three films in one year from **Daldry**, **Miller** and **David Fincher** directing *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

Daldry has received three consecutive directing nominations. In January, for his fourth film, he received a Best Picture nomination, for a boy's emotional journey dealing with 9/11, and the nine films were officially off and running. Forty-five film and media groups handed out awards leading up to Oscar night.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22

My airplane seatmate to LAX was Sony Classics **Michael Barker**. The night before Woody Allen had shown *Michael To Rome With Love*, his new film shot in Rome and rumored to be his best. When Woody won the Oscar Sunday night, for a record breaking 23rd overall nomination, he had just finished pasta at *Sette Mezzo* on Lexington Avenue with art dealer **Lorinda Ash** and **Soon-Yi**. He went home and watched the N.B.A. All-Star game. **Soon-Yi** watched the awards show on a TiVo delay in another room.





Jane Fonda and Richard Perry

Scarlett Johansson

Salma Hayek

Billy Crystal

By the time Woody won, he had fallen asleep and Soon-Yi didn't want to wake him. The next morning he went to the breakfast table alone and read in *The New York Times* that he had won. He had to think it was a good omen and he would not catch a cold that day.

Before Michael and I flattened our recliner chairs for the big sleep, I told him I felt confident his Iranian film *A Separation* would win Best Foreign Film. He told me *The Artist* would take Best Picture and Director. Actor was a tight race between **Brad Pitt**, **Jean Dujardin**, the "Clooney of France" and the real **George Clooney**. George was essentially running against a version of himself, which only slightly amused him.

The biggest dilemma was Viola vs. Meryl. Michael picked Meryl as New Yorkers did.

Meryl's publicist Leslee Dart whispered to me. "She is dressed like an Oscar. What do we do if she loses?"

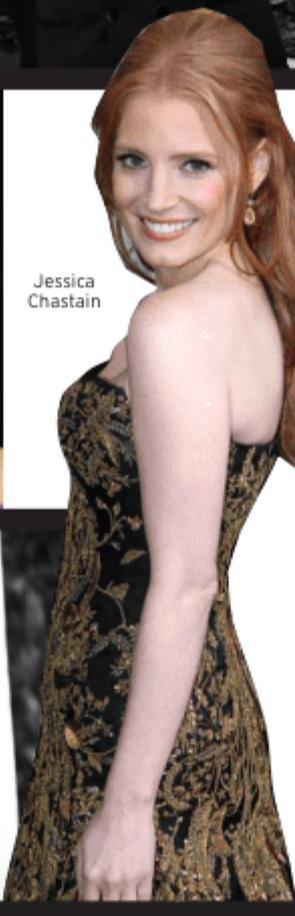
The Help had taken on a life of its own lead by vivacious Viola in LA. *The Iron Lady*, a much criticized film, showcased Meryl's tour-de-force performance. Few knew at the last minute, on President's weekend, Harvey's shout out, "She hasn't won in 29 years!" resonated.

An androgynous driver named Monica greeted me at the airport in a black tuxedo that would make Albert Nobbs weep for joy, prompting me to devilishly think of her as "Nobbs" all weekend. She barely recognized me sporting a new **Sally Hershberger** hairdo, "the yenta with the dragon tattoo."

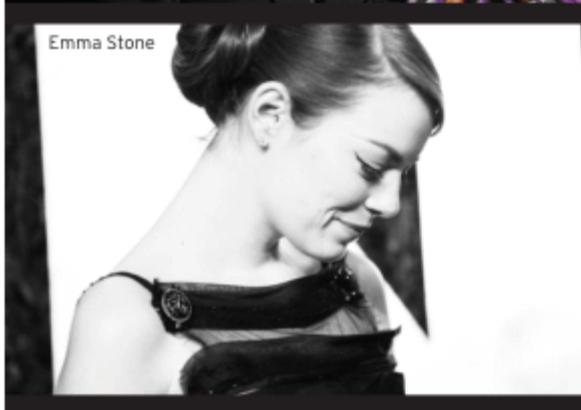
Checking into the Beverly Hills Hotel I bumped into Best Actress nominee, Golden Globe and Spirit Award winner **Michelle Williams** with her daughter **Matilda Ledger** headed to the swimming pool. Innocently standing there with no makeup she was remarkably the antithesis of **Marilyn Monroe**. I told her she so deserved the Oscar for her mesmerizing transformation which did not cheer her up knowing the



Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson



Jessica Chastain



Emma Stone

gold was going to Viola or Meryl.

This year there seemed to be more parties than ever. *Vanity Fair* publisher **Edward Menicheschi** staged a staggering six nights of "CAMPAIGN HOLLYWOOD." **Ermenegildo Zenga** and **Colin** and **Livia Firth** hosted an intimate dinner at the Chateau Marmont to benefit Oxfam America, Colin's pet charity. Editor **Graydon Carter** and Edward greeted **Cameron Diaz**, **Kristin Davis**, **Gary** and **Alexandra Oldman** and **Mia Wasikowska**. In addition, Livia spoke about her 'Green Carpet Challenge' which uses eco-friendly fabrics for "wear it once" gowns at awards shows. Get it? Go green on red.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Thursday night boasted 15 events causing party panic. Here is a brief rundown of seven.

At *The Hollywood Reporter's* Nominee Night, editor **Janice Min** and publisher **Lynne Segall** greeted the power brokers. With ballots in, competing studios cordially mingled in the Mayor's backyard. **Owen Wilson** slipped in the back door and hung with **Michael Sheen** and producer **Letty Aronson**. Producers **Kathy Kennedy** and **Frank Marshall** chatted with DreamWorks' partner **Stacey Snyder**, producer **Graham King** and **Emily Mortimer**. Fox's **Tom Rothman** and **Jim Gianopulos** compared notes with Focus' **James Shamus**. Young directors **Drake Doremus** (*Like Crazy*), **Sean Durkin** (*Martha Marcy May Marlene*) and Oscar nominee and Spirit Award winner **J.C. Chandor** (*Margin Call*) drank at the bar. Breakout directors **Nick Jarecki** (*Arbitrage*), **Zal Batmanglij** (*Sound of My Voice* and *The East*) and **Jay Duplass** (*Jeff Who Lives at Home*) dreamed about their future nominations. **Aaron Sorkin**, **Piers Morgan** and **Lawrence O'Donnell** handicapped Romney vs. Obama as **Brooklyn Decker** sashayed by.

Urs Fisher's exhibition *Beds & Problem Paintings* featured two bed sculptures at **Larry Gagosian's** Gallery followed by his private dinner at Mr. Chow's. Art lovers **Vera Wang**, **Russell Simmons**, **Steve Martin**, **Jean Pigozzi** and **John Waters** attended.

The US-Ireland Alliance honored nominees *Hugo* screenwriter **John Logan**, *Bridesmaids* star **Melissa McCarthy** and **Michelle Williams** at Bad Robot. Logan also wrote *Rango*, *Coriolanus*, 007's *Skyfall* and *Jersey Boys* for the big screen.



Jennifer Lopez

Diane Kruger

Rooney Mara



Terry Richardson



Graydon Carter and Anna Scott



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Alfre Woodard hosted a down and dirty girls night out in a rented house above Sunset for Viola Davis and Octavia Spencer.

Universal honcho Ron Meyer hosted a civilized private buffet at his Malibu home for Graydon Carter with Tom Cruise, Leonardo DiCaprio, Barbra Streisand, Tom Hanks and Michael Douglas.

Stunning socialite Betsey Bloomingdale gave a seated dinner at her Holmby Hills home for best friends Nancy Reagan, Wendy Stark, Bob Colacello, Joan Collins and fashion icon Lynn Wyatt.

Tobias Meyer, auctioneer for Sotheby's and art dealer Mark Fletcher hosted an open house at their Mulholland Drive home for American avant-garde photographer Terry Richardson. This is the only pre-Oscar party where a guest dropped his pants and mooned the red carpet and Terry signed a fans breast. Art collectors Bill and Maria Bell, Todd Eberle, rock singer Jack Donahue and Francesco Clemente schmoozed.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24

At the BHH I ran into David Heyman,



English producer of the *Harry Potter* franchise who was honored at the Publicists Awards lunch at The Beverly Hilton. "Motion Picture Showman of the Year" was the consolation prize for being snubbed by the Academy for visualizing a publishing miracle for children around the world.

"Nobbs" whisked me off to the British Film Reception hosted by Jeremy Hunt, UK Secretary of State for Culture and Olympics and the British Consul-General Dame Barbara Hay, in her Hancock Park residence. Upon introduction, I blurted out that my friend Lord Astor was interested in having L.A. people get to know his son-in-law, Prime Minister David Cameron. As an appointed diplomat she was horrified by my indiscretion and turned to greet the next American idiot. I was just making conversation.

Daldry told Sony's Sir Howard Stringer and astute film CEO Michael Lynton, Kenneth Branagh, Janet McTeer and Gary Oldman that he, as executive producer of the Olympics, was headed back to London to oversee special events, including the opening ceremony, directed by Danny Boyle. Victoria Beckham

made a dramatic, sullen, last-minute appearance looking perfectly skinny in a dress from her eponymous collection.

At the Women in Film cocktail party at Cecconi's, **Gwyneth Paltrow**, **Shailene Woodley**, **Selena Gomez** and **Vanessa Hudgens** networked with Jessica, Octavia and Viola now of social stamina fame.

Blythe Danner kissed me at the door as a military-type looked on. I kept saying to him, "Where have we met?" Nowhere. He was astronaut **Mark E. Kelly** who came with Blythe and is married to former congresswoman **Gabrielle Giffords**, Paltrow's second cousin. Only I could mistake an astronaut for a movie marketing guy.

Vanity Fair fêted Scorsese and The Film Foundation, which has saved 555 films in 22 years. Cocktails were at the restored Bel-Air Hotel. Honorary Jewess **Lorraine Bracco** ran past me yelling that she was late for **Ronald Perelman's** Shabbat dinner. Three, three-time Oscar winners: composer **Howard Shore**, costume designer **Sandy Powell** and editor **Thelma Schoonmaker** were honored. **Sir Ben Kingsley**, **Danny Huston**, **Patty Clarkson**, **Irwin Winkler** and **Giorgio Armani's** niece **Roberta Armani** with **Wanda McDaniels** debated best director: Marty or Michel?

"Nobbs" delivered me to WME's Party at kahuna **Ari Emanuel's** Brentwood estate, where NFL quarterback and new client **Tim Tebow** was the toast of the party, especially to **Taylor Swift** who made \$35.7 million this year. **Michael Douglas** gave me a kiss... doesn't get any better. Longtime lovebirds **Robert Pattinson** and **Kristen Stewart** made a rare appearance, glued to each other's hips. They mingled with co-star **Taylor Lautner**, **Miley Cyrus**, and her *Hunger Games* beau **Liam Hemsworth**. Meanwhile **Charlize Theron**, **Jack Black**, **Rooney Mara**, **Ben Stiller**, **Barry Sonnenfeld** and **Larry David** talked business with moguls **Les Moonves** and **Viacom's Philippe Dauman**.

Next was UTA Chairman



Felicity Jones

Brooklyn Decker

Miley Cyrus

Jim Berkus' soiree that police almost shut down because the DJ got carried away impressing **Harrison Ford**, **Channing Tatum**, **Jerry Bruckheimer**, **Tom Freston**, Disney's **Rich Ross**, SNL's **Lorne Michaels** and Oscar show producer **Brian Grazer**.

Sunset Tower Hotel owner **Jeff Klein** and producer **John Goldwyn** hosted a secret dinner for **Anna** and **Graydon Carter** at their Hollywood Hills home with **Tom Ford**, **Mitch Glazer**, **Fran Lebowitz**, **Vito Schnabel**, **Denise Hale**, **Lisa** and **Eric Eisner** and VF's **Punch Hutton**, who is **Tim Hutton's** sister.

Last stop was CAA **Byran Lourd's** "Friday Night Party". "Nobbs" was instructed to drop me off at a neighborhood school where a luxury van transported guests to the stone and glass Bel-Air estate situated on a narrow street. I knew that guests **Colin Firth**, **Penelope Cruz**, **Sofia Vergara**, **Salma Hayek**, **Sandra Bullock**, and *Glee's* **Matthew Morrison** did not arrive by bus. Once inside the playing field leveled out and pound for pound there was more famous flesh per square inch than the Oscars

themselves.

I huddled with **Meryl** on the couch and we talked about her race. She thought **Viola**. I thought **Meryl**. She didn't know about **Harvey's** last-minute "29 year" shout out.

I hugged **Bette Midler** and flirted with **Jim Sturgess** and **Bennett Miller**. Universal's **Donna Langley**, who is overseeing **Tom Hooper's** production *Les Misérables*, mentioned **Hugh Jackman's** impeccable manners should insure best behavior from **Russell Crowe**.

I introduced HBO's *Game Change* director **Jay Roach**, who is an authority on Hitler, to **George Clooney** who is writing a thriller about the Nazis stealing art. Clooney whispered, "The Frenchman is winning."

I thanked **Bryan Lourd**, **Kevin Huvane** and **Richard Lovett**, got on the bus and prayed that I get invited back.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25

I dragged my tired ass to the Academy, as foreign film aficionado **Mark Johnson** was conducting a symposium on the nominated films, which included Sony



Zoe Saldana



Natalie Portman



Colin Firth and Livia Giuggiolo

Olivia Wilde

Michael Shannon and director Jeff Nichols. Tom held court at the next table with the entire Iranian cast of *A Separation*, which won. Tom almost had a heart attack when I threw my arms around Iranian director Asghar Farhadi, which in Iran is unacceptable behavior, especially by a Jewish American Princess. Tom wished I had gone to the crowded champagne brunch in honor of Prince Albert and Princess Charlene at the Bel-Air Hotel where Montblanc launched Grace Kelly watches. Simultaneously, TV producer Gary Pudney hosted another secretive, lunch which Albert and Charlene actually attended with Graydon Carter, Carolina Herrera, Wallace Annenberg, Bobby Shriver, Bobby Marx, Kathy and Ricky Hilton and Lynn Wyatt. Wolfgang Puck joined them for dessert.

"The French," as the *The Artist* gang was nicknamed, had won six Césars, France's version of the Oscars, in Paris the night before. They flew all night and Harvey's chauffeur arranged a police escort from LAX just in time for them to win four Spirit Awards, cementing the Oscar win.

Back at the BHH, Spielberg was the first to arrive at the tenth annual "Night Before" fundraiser in support of the Motion Picture and Television Fund. Jeffrey Katzenberg had already secured \$200 of a \$350 million fundraising goal that included money from him, Tom Cruise, Steve Bing, Casey Wasserman, Clooney and Spielberg. Every nominee showed up.

Chanel and Charles Finch cooked up their chic soiree at Madeo, where a mariachi band enthusiastically announced everyone's arrival. Bedecked exclusively in Chanel were Diane Kruger, Elizabeth Olsen, Rose Byrne, Ginnifer Goodwin and Rachel Bilson. Also air kissing were Rachel Zoe, Rosanna Arquette, Alice Evans and Ioan Gruffudd, Zachary Quinto, Julia Ormond and Dustin Hoffman.

My Week With Marilyn's English director Simon Curtis insisted we join Kenneth Branagh at The Weinstein

Company's bash at the Soho House in time to hear Tony Bennett sing "Autumn Leaves" to Harvey's surprised 86-year-old mother Miriam, Madonna and Meryl. Jean Dujardin, Bérénice Bejo, Michel Hazanavicius and producer Thomas Langmann staggered around completely jet lagged, too tired to speak English. Uggie on the other hand was the absolute star of the evening as his trainer placed him in everyone's arms for photos. *W.E's* Andrea Riseborough and Abbie Cornish sat next to baseball cap-clad Leonardo DiCaprio as his ex, Bar Refaeli, kept her distance across the room. Zoe Saldana walked in holding hands with Bradley Cooper. Scarlett Johansson introduced me to her boyfriend Nate Naylor. Katy Perry, Felicity Jones and Malin Akerman circled a refreshed Gerard Butler. The two daughters of New York slain hero cop Peter Figoski, Corrine, 14 and Caroline, 16 who had also been Harvey's guests at the Super Bowl stood in the middle of this circus and just fainted.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26

I met interior designer Nicky Haslam in the Polo Lounge and found Nancy Reagan brunching with Bob Colacello and Carolina Herrera. Nancy knows me as "The DVD Lady". I promised to send her *The Iron Lady*. I didn't have the heart to tell her that her late husband, who was Margaret Thatcher's best friend, was barely mentioned in the film.

In a Marchesa gown, Dennis Basso fur and Iradj Moini necklace, I collected Simon Curtis and headed to the Hollywood & Highland Center. Simon, who has never been to the Oscars before, miraculously scored a front row seat between Michelle Williams and Clooney. We pulled up to screams of hysteria at the mother of all red carpets.

Meryl's publicist Leslee Dart whispered to me. "She is dressed like an Oscar. What do we do if she loses?" Sacha Baron Cohen hilariously guilted the Academy into letting him wear his costume from *The Dictator* and, after soiling Ryan Seacrest, he went directly to dinner at *Vanity Fair*. Gwyneth Paltrow won the style award in Tom Ford's white column and Angelina Jolie so successfully invented a new one legged pose in a thigh high slit gown on the red carpet she repeated it for 39.3 million

Classic's *Footnote* from Israel and *A Separation* from Iran. From the other side of the world both governments monitored their directors as the Sony boys kept the peace.

Michael and Tom Bernard invited me to the Independent Spirit Awards at the Santa Monica Pier. Michael hosted his *Take Shelter* nominees Jessica Chastain,

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people onstage.

Tickets were so tight that I gave my plus one to **Penelope Ann Miller** because she promoted *The Artist* every day for four months. Seated next to us were co-stars **James Cromwell** and **Missi Pyle**.

Billy Crystal made us laugh, *Cirque de Soleil* made us gasp and most of the wins were expected.

Colin Firth crowned Meryl her third win on a record 17 nominations and Harvey beamed.

The Academy was so confident *The Artist* would win, they invited Uggie, who waited in the wings and ran out as **Tom Cruise** announced the film.

Once the show was off the air, I followed my seatmates to the stage loaded with their programs, wraps and handbags and led the French to the press rooms.

The Governor's Ball was the next stop where the winners got their Oscars engraved. Everyone paid respects to the Academy's **Tom Sherak** and **Dawn Hudson**. Stars headed to the Sunset Tower to Graydon's glittering Vanity Fair Oscar bash and their militarized security with micro chipped cards. If your name was not on the list and you were carrying an Oscar, you could walk in. **Billy** and **Janice Crystal** were mobbed with well wishers. **Elton John** made \$5 million dollars at his 20th AmFar event which also auctioned off two tickets to Vanity Fair's party for \$230,000. **Tom Cruise** and **Katie Holmes** were thrilled to talk to **George Lucas**. Gwyneth snuggled with Coldplay's **Chris Martin** and **Jennifer Lopez** brought boy toy **Casper Smart**. Every major actor previously mentioned is standing in the room. Spotted in a sea of celebrity were **Tina Fey**, **Glenn Close**, **Olivia Wilde** and **Jason Sudeikis**, **Terry George**, **Jane Fonda**, **Demian Bichir**, **Claire Danes**, Meryl's daughters **Mamie Gummer** with husband **Ben Walker**, **Grace Gummer**, **Salma Hayek**, **Brit Marling**, **Natalie Portman**, **Sofia Coppola**, **Peter Brant**,

Stephanie Seymour, **Ryan Kavanaugh**, **Ingrid Sischy**, **Sandy Brant** and **Wendi Murdoch** with **Bingbing Li**.

George Clooney threw his own exclusive after party at Craig's in West Hollywood for close friends **Bryan Lourd**, **Grant Heslov**, **Stan Rosenfield**, **Brad** and **Angelina**, **Emily Blunt** and **John Krasinski**, **Cindy Crawford**, **Jimmy Kimmel**, **Ryan Seacrest** and best adapted screenplay winner **Alexander Payne**.

George and Brad cancelled each other out with two great performances. Clooney immediately returned to his best role as humanitarian, flew to the Sudan, met with Obama and was dramatically arrested at a protest.

"The French" threw a wild celebration at the Chateau Marmont, poured champagne down their throats and threw each other in the pool at 3:00 a.m. Nobody spoke English.

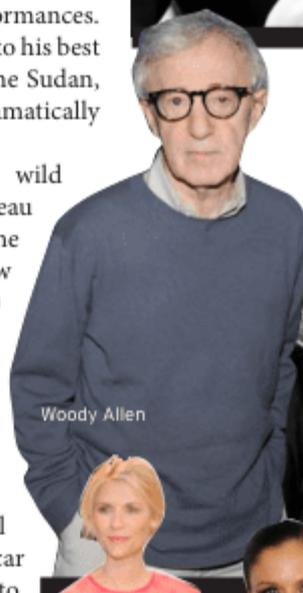
By 4:00 a.m. Harvey rounded up his artists for a live broadcast on *The Today Show* from The Four Seasons lobby. In disheveled black tie, five Oscar winners, all total unknowns a year ago, made Oscar history with the first silent film to win since 1927.

It wasn't God, but 5,800 Academy voters who said they won. This had to be the most exciting night of their lives. The glory and memories live forever. The next day they went back to reality. As Woody says, "A statue does not really change your life. You still get a cold."

Uggie was invited to the White House correspondent's dinner as a guest of the Washington Times in April. He hopes to meet President Obama. ♦



Jean Dujardin



Woody Allen



Elizabeth Olsen



Claire Danes



Georgina Chapman and Harvey Weinstein