

On the scene

COMPILED BY JULIA FRASER.
julia.fraser@media24.com

MIGHTY MICHELLE

Michelle Pfeiffer's latest movie *Cheri*, a lavish costume drama based on the novel by French writer Colette, is on circuit this month.



In *Cheri*, Michelle Pfeiffer falls in love with a man about 30 years younger than her.

Set in Belle Époque Paris, Michelle plays the role of Lea de Lonval, a wealthy courtesan. The movie, which also stars Rupert Friend and Kathy Bates, was directed by Stephen Frears of *Dangerous Liaisons* fame, for which Michelle received her first Oscar nomination. Stephen calls it a film about manners, about 'people not saying what they think'. It's also about people learning how to feel again, and about Lea's dawning of self-awareness. Commenting on people sharing their feelings, Michelle

says that 'we may not be as mannered or as proper as people were in the 19th century, but very rarely are we talking about what we're really thinking'.

Michelle turned 50 last year and was surprised at how liberating it was. 'When you're in the second half of your life, you really do have to live in a place of acceptance and celebration that you're still here, and feel gratitude for everything that you have.'

She's all about ageing gracefully. 'If that nose or those jowls bother you, do it [cosmetic surgery]. But this epidemic of people losing sight of what looks good and the distortion that has been going on is creepy,' says Michelle. Her beauty secret is a healthy lifestyle. 'When I'm not making movies, I am super-disciplined. I eat well, I get enough sleep, I exercise religiously – all of that makes a difference.'

Michelle is one of a few film stars who manages to keep a low profile and is highly outspoken about the paparazzi scourge. 'I don't know how these young actors live with it,' she says. 'They used to leave you alone, unless you had some sort of heat on you. Now they just follow them everywhere all the time. I couldn't live that way.' Which may explain her views on her chosen profession and its remuneration: 'I act for free, but I demand a huge salary as compensation for all the annoyance of being a public personality. In that sense I earn every dime I make.' – *Delia de Villiers*

November calendar

NATIONWIDE

◆ US R&B star **Patti LaBelle** is performing at GrandWest in Cape Town on 30 October and at the Sun City Superbowl on 31 October.



Patti LaBelle.

WESTERN CAPE

◆ **The Amy Biehl Foundation Gala Event** is on at the Cape Town International Convention Centre on 7 November. For details and to book, e-mail ilchen@amybiehl.co.za.

◆ **The Nelson Mandela Science Lecture** on Charles Darwin and human evolution will be held at the University of the Western Cape on 24 November. Call 021 557 0246 for details.

◆ **The Christmas Concert** at La Motte Estate in Franschoek will be held on 28 November. For details and to book, call 021 876 4540.



Good Food & Wine Show.

GAUTENG

◆ **The Gauteng Good Food & Wine Show** is on at The Coca-Cola Dome from 29 October to 1 November. See gourmetsa.co.za.

◆ **Pinocchio**, the annual

pantomime by Janice Honeyman, runs at The Mandela at The Joburg Theatre Complex from 4 November.

◆ **Happy Shabalala**, a one-man hit comedy starring Harry Sideropoulos, is on at The Fringe at The Joburg Theatre Complex until 29 November.

KWAZULU-NATAL

◆ **Rock on Beethoven** is on at The Barnyard Theatre in Gateway this month. To book, call 031 566 3045 or visit barnyardtheatres.co.za.

◆ **International Film Festival South Africa** will be held at the Everglades Hotel & Conference Centre in Dargle from 2 to 7 November. Call 033 234 9042 for listings and details.

◆ *Unless otherwise stated, tickets for these events are available at Computicket. All information correct at the time of going to press.*

COMEBACK KID

John Travolta, 55, earned iconic status for his roles in *Saturday Night Fever*, *Grease* and *Pulp Fiction*, and he's back on screen this month in *Old Dogs*. He's famous for his career fluctuations, but nothing could have prepared him for the tragedy that he and his family suffered this year.



Seth Green, John Travolta and Robin Williams in *Old Dogs*.

Every parent's nightmare came true for John Travolta and his wife, actress Kelly Preston, when their son, Jett, 16, died after suffering a seizure while on vacation in the Bahamas in January. Since then, the once high-profile Travolta has withdrawn from public life, but fans can see him this month in the comedy *Old Dogs*, which also stars Robin Williams. **On his yo-yo career** Kirstie Alley, who I've worked with, told everyone that I was never aware of having cooled off and it's true. Until I got hired for *Pulp Fiction* I honestly didn't know I had cooled off. **On those pesky gay rumours** I have never felt compelled to share my bedroom habits. Everyone has a right to privacy, so I've never felt (even though I'm famous) that I had to share that with anybody.

On his role in *Saturday Night Fever*

I think it defined the shift, directly or indirectly, from the 1960s to the 1970s. Even though *Saturday Night Fever* only came out in 1977, there wasn't an identity to the seventies until the movie.

On his new movie *Old Dogs* *Old Dogs* is all about parenting – I'm teaching Robin Williams how to be a father, and my character has no clue about parenting.

On being famous I will tell you the things that would be the same, fame or no fame. Being up all night would be the same. Liking empty restaurants, liking empty movie theatres – unless I'm in the movie.

On handling the critics

I learned early on that there are things that you can control in the press, and things that you can't. There's a point where I say, 'They will either like my movie, or they won't.' But if I get obsessed with it, it's going to cause me stress. But because I have had so much of it – of both successes and non-successes, the whole gamut – it doesn't affect me as deeply.

On his son Jett was the most wonderful son that two parents could ever ask for and he lit up the lives of everyone he encountered. We will cherish the time we had with him for the rest of our lives.

Movie previews



Larry David and Evan Rachel Wood.

WHATEVER WORKS Inspired by Woody Allen directing Larry David is a marriage made in heaven (or hell, depending on your comic or moral persuasions). Set in New York, it tells the story of suicide attempter Boris Yellnikoff (Larry David), who is charmed into marriage by a barely legal runaway beauty queen played by Evan Rachel Wood. The wheels come off when the new wife's mother (the fabulous Patricia Clarkson) steps in to 'save' her daughter.



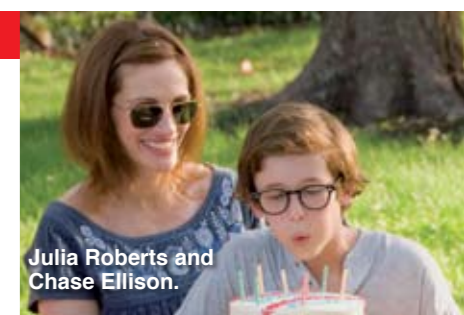
Masahiro Motoki.

DEPARTURES Inspired by *Coffinman*, Shinmon Aoki's mortician's memoir, this movie (which won this year's Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film) is about Daigo Kobayashi (Masahiro Motoki), a cellist who is forced to find work when the orchestra he plays in closes. Daigo returns to his rural hometown with his wife to find work and, by mistake, ends up preparing bodies for cremation in the Asian tradition of 'encoffination'. Sounds darkly intriguing.

MOON Directed by Duncan Jones (David Bowie's son), *Moon* stars Sam Rockwell, who plays an astronaut in charge of the automated mining of helium-3, used by earthlings to create cheap energy. After three years of living alone on the moon with only an artificially intelligent computer named Gerty (voiced by Kevin Spacey) for company, he starts having hallucinations, one of which leads to a violent accident. And a whole lot of subtexts...



Sam Rockwell.



Julia Roberts and Chase Ellison.

FIREFLIES IN THE GARDEN It may be hard to keep up with all the characters in this star-studded melodrama – the cast includes Ryan Reynolds, Willem Dafoe, Emily Watson and Julia Roberts. A family is ripped apart when the bad dad (Dafoe) kills the mother (Roberts) in a tragic accident. Her son (Reynolds), who has written an explosive family memoir, spends the movie looking back in time to figure out where and why it all went wrong. Take tissues.