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Three Decades of Performing Arts

Actors protest the prospect of war

By Mark Caro
KRT CAMPUS

Movies may, for the most part, be politically tame and notoriously slow to respond to current events, but some stars are doing their best to compensate with their mouths.

So there was actor Ed Norton at the Berlin International Film Festival earlier this month saying, "It must be good to be in Germany and France because I have completely forgotten what it is like to be proud of your government."

Norton's "25th Hour" director Spike Lee was on the same page regarding U.S. plans to invade Iraq, saying at a festival news conference, "Too many people are being bowled over by (President) Bush and Tony Blair in Britain. It's ludicrous to expect the whole world to follow what they want. America doesn't have the moral right to tell other people what to do."

Other celebrity war opponents have included Martin Scorsese ("Any sensible person must see that violence does not change the world and if it does, then only temporarily."); George Clooney ("The government itself is run exactly like 'The Sopranos.'"); Dustin Hoffman ("I'm not anti-American, but I am against the current administration's policy."); and Richard Gere ("I keep asking myself where all this personal enmity between George Bush and Saddam Hussein comes from. It's like the story of Captain Ahab and the great white whale from 'Moby Dick.'")

Then there was Sean Penn's "fact-finding" mission to Iraq in December, during which the actor said, "If there is a war or continued sanctions against Iraq, the blood of Americans and Iraqis alike will be on our hands." (Penn is suing producer Steve Bing for \$10 million claiming he lost a movie role because of his Iraq trip.)

Celebrity outspokenness is nothing new (recall Jane Fonda's notorious trip to North Vietnam) and may enliven the public debate, but not everyone in the entertainment community is thrilled to see actors and filmmakers atop political soapboxes.

"I think people always think success in show business gives them the right to be moral political arbiters," director Joel Schumacher ("Falling Down," "Phone Booth") said. "I'm not in that camp. I think you can privately do whatever you want, but I'm always suspicious of how much ego is involved. I think the government will survive no matter what Ed Norton thinks of it."

Dennis Hopper also attended this year's Berlin Film Festival and was asked for his opinions on the prospect of war, but his answer didn't make headlines. "I said, 'I don't think this is the place to discuss it,'" Hopper said. "And that was the end of it."

He added: "We live in the United States of America, and we have the right to speak and talk about anything we want. I find it a little embarrassing, because I think that right now we need to support the decision that's been laid down by our government to go after Saddam and try to get him to disarm, which is what the United Nations is talking about, and not to give Saddam a mixed message that maybe he can get out of this."

Actress Janeane Garofalo, however, believes entertainers can provide a useful alternative viewpoint when the media, in her mind, is so in synch with the government. "These same corporate entities have an interest in war, have an interest in profiting from war," Garofalo told the Washington Post, claiming that too many



Salma Hayek and Edward Norton arrive at the Beverly Hilton Hotel for the 6th Annual Golden Globe Awards ceremony, Sunday Jan. 5, 2003 in Los Angeles, Calif.

anchors and reporters "are willing to be a mouthpiece for the establishment and for White House propaganda."

Given the widespread speculation that war in Iraq may begin in mid-March, the March 23 Academy Awards ceremony could become a political speech-a-thon. Oscars producer Gil Cates said the show's policy will be the same as it was 12 years ago during the Persian Gulf War: Presenters will be expected to stick to the script.

"I'm asking them to present best animated feature," Cates said. "I'm not asking them to talk about anything other than that, and if they wanted to talk about anything else, I wouldn't ask them to present the award."

Award winners, however, are another story. "If somebody wins the Academy Award and they have 30 seconds to say thank you, while I think it's inappropriate for them to do anything else, I don't think it's unethical," he said, adding that pins and ribbons also won't be outlawed.

As for his overall view of entertainers playing politics, Cates said, "I make the distinction between actors that I would make with ordinary citizens. I think it's always interesting to hear a smart person discuss something, and I think it's always sad to hear a stupid person discuss something."

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Michael Jackson put curse on Spielberg, Vanity Fair claims

NEW YORK (AP) — Michael Jackson paid a witch doctor to place a curse on DreamWorks partners David Geffen and Steven Spielberg, and wears a prosthetic tip on his nose, claims an article in Vanity Fair magazine.



JACKSON

Titled "Losing His Grip," the article also includes an interview with an unnamed California prosecutor who investigated child molestation allegations against the pop star. The prosecutor said Jackson befriended young boys "and as soon as they started sprouting whiskers — whoosh — they were out the door."

Jackson denied allegations that he sexually molested a 13-year-old boy in 1993. He reached a multimillion-dollar settlement with the teen and was never charged.

A representative for Jackson had no comment Tuesday.

Jackson allegedly paid a witch doctor \$150,000 in 2000 to put a hex on several Hollywood figures. Spielberg was allegedly included because he did not allow him to star as Peter Pan in "Hook." He blamed Geffen for sabotaging his career, the magazine said.

Both Spielberg and Geffen are partners in the DreamWorks entertainment company, which includes a movie studio and a record company.

The article also claims that Jackson wears a prosthesis for the tip of his nose because of a lack of cartilage due to excessive plastic surgery.

The magazine appears on newsstands beginning this week.

Agent confirms Kournikova-Fedoriv marriage, divorce

NEW YORK (AP) — From Russia, with love — for a short time, anyway.

Tennis star Anna Kournikova and hockey player Sergei Fedoriv were married and divorced, his agent said, confirming rumor that began 1 1/2 years ago.

"He was married to her. I honestly don't know when he got married to her — all I know is that he was married," agent Pat Brisson said Monday. "He's kind of surprised that everyone's asking him the same question."

Asked about reports of a marriage, the Detroit Red Wings' forward told The Hockey



KOURNIKOVA

News magazine for its March 14 issue: "They are true. We were married, albeit briefly, and we are now divorced."

He said he doesn't keep in touch with Kournikova, 21.

'Joe Millionaire's' Andrich copes with newfound fame

NEW YORK (AP) — The price of fame is high these days for "Joe Millionaire" winner Zora Andrich, and the pay out may be low.

In the last month, Andrich has gone from a chateau in France to making local corporate appearances and working the talk show circuit.

Evan Marriott, her made-for-TV boyfriend, has been absent from all her events. She wasn't wearing the diamond ring Marriott gave her on the last episode of the Fox television series.

Andrich was there on behalf of the Isle of Capri Casinos, Inc., a gaming company based in Biloxi, Miss., which threw a party to launch a new advertising campaign and celebrate the opening of the Nasdaq Tuesday morning.

"It's really odd," the 29-year-old New Jersey schoolteacher said. "For real celebrities, their entrance into the spotlight is gradual. By the time they make their \$20 million movie they're prepared to handle the fame. For me it was normal one day, crazy the next."

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