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HERALD ON SUNDAY
JULY 25-31, 2010

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TV3's Kate Rodger and
her new movie show

Cover story

IT'S NOT every day you get to interview one of the world's most talked-about women, Angelina Jolie, then hop into a hotel pool alongside her tribe of kids. But it was all in a day's work for Kate Rodger, 3 News entertainment reporter and the brains and face of its movie segment Film3, during a recent press junket in Mexico. "On our lunch break I got in the pool and saw Maddox and Shiloh getting in too, and Angelina holding their towels. Later when I rolled over on my sun-lounger I realised the Jolie-Pitts were two sun-loungers along from me. Zahara and Pax were there too. Brad was in LA with the twins, starting work on his next film."

Don't get me wrong – Rodger is no name-dropper. Blame the hack who has been badgering her for celebrity tales. "I know as an entertainment reporter it should be part of my genetic makeup, but I'm just not a big celebrity-gossip person. I could talk to celebrities all day about films they're in but I'm not that fussed on who they're shagging."

However, her eyes flicker with interest when I mention that Javier Bardem and Penelope Cruz just got hitched. "That means I interviewed him the day before he flew off for the wedding! I can't believe Javier met me and still wanted to marry Penelope," Rodger deadpans with the self-deprecating humour and lack of pretension that has drawn so many Film3 fans.

At 43, this veteran interviewer is so used to asking the questions that switching sides makes her nervous. This manifests in a waterfall of words. She is generous, too, with her time on a frantic week that has seen her flit around the International Film Festival, file her usual stories and put the final touches to her new TV3 show *Reel Late with Kate*.

There hasn't been a locally made film show for so long that even industry insiders can't remember when it was.

"People have been trying to get one up for more than 10 years," says industry stalwart Ant Timpson, "so Kate's show is a miracle."

It didn't come easy, but after pushing for it for years, and building the Film3 brand, the girl who has made film geek chic finally got her wish.

Financed largely by Event Cinemas, the weekly half-hour show is being billed as Film3 on steroids. Its core is in-depth reviews of two new releases, the first being Leonardo DiCaprio mindbender *Inception*. You can also expect extended interviews with a major player, locals and internationals, in the movie game who will double as a guest reviewer. First off the starting block is Karl Urban of *Star Trek* fame, who will talk about his Hollywood/New Zealand balancing act, working with Matt Damon and dealing with stalkers. In the mix, too, is film news, trivia snippets and a countdown of the top 10 movies that week.

To say Rodger is excited is an understatement. After seven years at TV3, where she went from radio, this is a chance to spread her wings and to give New Zealand films the coverage they deserve. It's a chance to go into more depth than her usual two-three minute stories. And a chance to use some of the footage that has ended up on the cutting-room floor. Not that she's dissing Film3, her beloved slot of four years. "Getting the big screen on the small screen for 2.5 minutes of primetime is an absolute gift. But it's always heartbreaking when you know there's so much good stuff that you can't use." Now that never-seen stuff has found a happy home at 10.30pm.

Don't dare suggest that's a dog of a timeslot. "While I'd obviously be happy with a slot after 7 Days on a Friday night, I'm happy with the time. Because I want to get it up and running and get it right in a non-peak slot. Plus, Sundays are our biggest-rating nights, and it's the same slot that *Nightline* has." She figures most fellow filmies won't be in bed before 11pm. And film enthusiast or no, plenty will stay up to watch her interview with Angelina.

Yes, that was a nerveracking interview. "You read all the headlines about Angelina adopting

dozens of children and wandering around refugee camps being Mother Teresa – who wouldn't be in awe of her? But she's got this kind of serenity and, when she wandered past before we talked, she flashed me a warm smile. So I walked in there feeling better, sat down and she just calmly and openly gave me a delightful interview."

Because film stars hardly ever come to New Zealand to promote their movies, Rodger goes to them. Promotional press junkets regularly go to Australia or the US where Rodger will do four or five interviews in one trip. At my request, she rattles off a few scalps: Julia Roberts, Nicole Kidman, Sting, Gary Oldman, Colin Firth, Michael Douglas, Jennifer Aniston, Viggo Mortensen, Christian Bale, Jeremy Irons, Chris Rock, Hugh Jackman, John Cleese, Sam Neill, Jerry Seinfeld, Ben Stiller.

Some stars certainly live up to that big-headed, self-involved stereotype. "You hear about people who can go either way and you're not sure if you're going to get them on a good day. Angelina Jolie is one, Daniel Craig is another and Russell Crowe is another – he can just kind of chew you up and spit you out. They didn't, but they could." Then there are those, such as Seth Rogen, who have blatantly ignored her until the second the cameras started rolling. "It's so rude. I wouldn't treat another human being that way."

So, how does she appear so relaxed, even while interviewing the most famous – or famously rude – stars? "I used to take Rescue Remedy. Now, once I'm sitting down having a conversation, I'm pretty relaxed. But these days, the interview slots are so short I get performance anxiety. You spend two days flying over and a day

prepping, but you only have minutes to get what you need out of them. You have to be on form."

Take interviewing Johnny Depp for *Public Enemies*. His schedule was so busy that the interview time was halved to 2 minutes and 40 seconds. "And it's Johnny Depp, and you can, and it was fine. But you've got a person who's been sitting there for three days in a hotel room doing four-minute interview slots, and you've only got 20 seconds to connect with them. Often it doesn't quite happen. But I try to find one little quirky thing, like that they've been to Sam Neill's vineyard. Being from here is a real advantage. Often they prick their ears up and go 'oh, New Zealand!'"

Favourite stars? Three-time interviewee Matt Damon, Fergie from the Black Eyed Peas, the "adorable" Meryl Streep, and Sir Peter Jackson. Funny story there. "I was thinking 'oh



Screen queen

Kate Rodger has finally achieved her dream of a locally made film show, about to debut on TV3. She talks to Sarah Lang.

KATE WEARS: DRESS BY HELEN CHERRY, NECKLACE BY TOPSHOP, LOCATION: SMITH BAR

JANNA DIXON

Kate's little-known gems

The Beat My Heart Skipped From French director Jacques Audiard and one of the most delicious film titles ever.

Once Upon a Time In The West Far from little-known really, but this is a must-see. An opera set in the west with some of the most iconic dialogue ever committed to celluloid and set to an awe-inspiring Ennio Morricone score.

Somersault A little Aussie gem starring a then little-known Abbie Cornish and Sam Worthington before they both hit the Hollywood bigtime.

As In Heaven Swedish. Awesome. And starring Michael Nyqvist, plays Michael Blomkvist in the *Millenium* movies.

Betty Blue Passion, love, sex, insanity, everything you need in the perfect French movie.

The Usual Suspects Who is Keyser Soze? Even when you know the epic twist in this brilliant whodunnit it doesn't stop you enjoying it time and time again.

Guilty Pleasures

The Notebook Ryan Gosling. Say no more.

Point Break Keanu and Swayze – a match made in heaven.

Moulin Rouge And yes I do sing along.

The Fifth Element Luc Besson orders around Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Tricky and Milla, and asks Gaultier to do the costumes. What's not to love?

Steel Magnolias When I need a good cry.

great, they're letting me have an extra 10 minutes with him', then we realised I'd accidentally locked the publicist out of the room." But nothing beats getting to interview George Lucas, creator of *Star Wars*, the "life-changing" movie that got Rodger addicted to film at age 10, when she watched it eight times at the movies.

Another job perk is covering the Oscars and major international film festivals such as Cannes. "You're at a premiere party dancing away to Beyonce and you bump into someone and you're going to say 'watch it' but it's Will Smith. It's surreal."

Still, Rodger assures me her life is not as glamorous as it sounds: she's working hard – not sightseeing, she lives out of a suitcase, and it's hard on her relationship (which she prefers not to talk about). "I'm on my own a lot, so you have to enjoy your own company. But it's never a drag, because this is my dream job."

That job is also about reviews, which Rodger approaches as a layperson. "I imagine I'm an audience member standing in the cinema, looking up at the board, thinking 'what am I going to see?'. I'm not there to analyse the editing, I'm there to ask: Is this worth 15 bucks? And if it's not my thing, I'll say so. But if you're a *Twilight* fan and *Eclipse* tells the story well, I'll tell viewers that too."

Rodger gives her audience plenty of credit for knowing hers is only one opinion. "Some people, like my friend in Wellington, know if I love a film they'll hate it, or the other way around."

You would think seeing at least four films a week would dampen her enjoyment, but it doesn't. That sensory experience of going to the movies – the smell of popcorn, the lights dimming, the seats squeaking – never gets old. "Everything is all expectation and excitement. I like the full immersion, the shared experience. Listening to people's reactions, like 'Oh my God, did you like that?', 'no it was shit'."

"Some films are escapism – pure entertainment – and that's great. Then there are those, like *The Lives of Others*, that somehow change you. That's when I feel unbelievably lucky to do what I do." Chatting to the likes of Angelina is the cherry on top.

Reel Late With Kate premieres tonight on TV3 at 10.30.

And baby makes Glee

Glee's pregnant pause comes to a dramatic end this Friday. By William Keck.

IT IS an episode nine months in the making as former Cheerio cheerleader Quinn Fabray (Dianna Agron) finally goes into labour in *Glee's* climactic season finale. And, according to Agron, fans had better watch with hankies in hand.

"Quinn's going to give the baby up for adoption, even though she's not entirely sure to whom until the very end," reveals the actress, teasing that Will's estranged wife, Terri (Jessalyn Gilsig), the infant's onetime would-be adoptive mother, will be buzzing about.

"If Quinn were to give the baby to her after all Terri's done to Mr Schuester [Matthew Morrison], it would have to be well-deserved," says Agron. "[But] in this show, anything is possible."

Psst: The tot's fate isn't the only drama in the works, as New Directions finally faces off against rival glee club Vocal Adrenaline.

So what will the next season hold for the now-bumpless blonde?

"I have a suspicion that Quinn might return to the

Cheerios," says Agron. "It will be interesting to see what type of girl she becomes."

US TV Guide

Glee's season finale is on TV3, Friday at 8.30pm.



Ross signs off

After 13 at-times controversial years, chat show host Jonathan Ross is leaving the BBC. By Ian Burrell.

IN HIS rollercoaster career at the BBC, Jonathan Ross made it his personal mission to prick pomposity and court controversy. So it is perhaps fitting that, after a decade of trashing chatshow etiquette, he should bring down the curtain on his Beel career by meting out the same treatment to his studio set.

The 49-year-old host, who is leaving the corporation for a "gap year" of writing comics before he joins ITV next autumn, ended the final edition of his *Friday Night with Jonathan Ross* – to be broadcast here on SKY's UKTV on August 6 – with a staged attack on the fixtures and fittings following his closing interview with kung fu film star Jackie Chan.

Although the karate-kicking assault was pre-planned, it will be seen as a suitably symbolic send-off for the prime-time iconoclast who managed to attract the ire of Gwyneth Paltrow, council house tenants and Lord Tebbit, to name but a few, with questions that included asking current Prime Minister David Cameron whether he had masturbated as a schoolboy while thinking about Margaret Thatcher.

Ross announced in January that he was ending his 13-year relationship with the BBC after long-running controversy over his most

recent £6m-a-year (\$12.8 million) pay deal and the outcry over explicit messages the broadcaster and comedian Russell Brand left on the voicemail of *Fawlty Towers* star Andrew Sachs, which resulted in 38,000 complaints. The episode plunged the BBC into an unlikely crisis, leading to it sacking Brand and suspending Ross for three months after he made a comprehensive apology.

The final edition of the chat show, which has run for 10 years, saw Ross interview an array of stellar guests including David Beckham and Hollywood actor Mickey Rourke, before telling the audience that he was "grateful, lucky and honoured" to have worked at the corporation.

Thanking all the guests who have appeared on the show by saying "at least 95 per cent of them were great", Ross said: "Everyone here at the BBC has always been terrific. The experience I've had here has been a blessed one. I've never come in here feeling anything other than grateful, lucky and honoured. So, thank you."

Ross carved out a niche as a deliberate contrast to more reverential chat show hosts by peppering his guests with toe-curling questions, often sexual in nature.

His on-screen statement to Paltrow that he



"would fuck her" led to censure by the BBC Trust, which criticised the decision by the corporation to broadcast the interview and described the comments as "gratuitous and unnecessarily offensive".

Other controversies included his remark to chef Jamie Oliver that people who live in council houses should be banned from giving birth and telling an audience of journalists that his three-year £18m deal meant he was worth "1000 BBC journalists" shortly after the corporation had announced 2000 job cuts.

Ross has said he will spend the next 12 months indulging his passion for comics and pursuing other projects before he starts a £1m contract with ITV to present a new chat show.

In the meantime, the famously fop-haired broadcaster is likely to find his shoes filled by comedian Graham Norton.

The Independent

The Jonathan Ross Show plays UKTV Fridays at 9.30pm; the final episode airs in New Zealand on Friday, August 6.