

NEW YORK OBSERVER

NEW YORK'S WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

The Transom

AUGUST 13, 2001

AUGUST 6, 2001

THE OTHER

"Mommy, when's daddy coming home?"

"When the war's over."

No, that's not Nicole Kidman explaining the caustic reality of Hollywood mega-divorce to her daughter Isabella; rather it's a snippet of dialogue from Ms. Kidman's latest film, the period spookfest *The Others*, which her now rancorously estranged husband, Tom Cruise, produced.

The eeriness of art imitating life in *The Others* practically supersedes the film's attempt at tackling the supernatural. Ms. Kidman plays a woman whose husband has disappeared at war (or did he desert her? she later demands to know). Isolated in a sequestered, ghost-ridden mansion, she stops at nothing to protect her two solar-allergic children from exposure to sunlight.

To make matters even more meta, *The Others*' Chilean director, Alejandro Amenábar, directed Penélope Cruz in 1997's *Open Your Eyes*, which was recently remade in high Hollywood fashion under the name *Vanilla Sky*, starring Ms. Cruz and Mr. Cruise. The homonymically named duo have since erupted into romantic entanglement and recently spent a week cavorting on a secluded Fiji island.

On Aug. 2, Ms. Kidman arrived at the New York premiere at the Paris Theater in full movie-star regalia. Swathed in a slinky Chanel black chiffon get-up and vampily made up by Kevyn Aucoin, Ms. Kidman looked like a Cat Woman for the masses.

Ms. Kidman told a group of reporters that she had spent her summer in Australia, and on the (infamous) Fiji island—though she and Mr. Cruise were there at separate times (her platonic guest was lady-killer Russell Crowe).

When asked if she was relaxing, she exhaled an emphatic "Yes! Yes!" But then, after discussing her upcoming projects—producing a film with Jane Campion, in talks with Lars von Trier (*Dancer in the Dark*) for an upcoming role—she exclaimed, with tragic fatigue: "I'm taking the rest of the year off. I've got to rest."

Ms. Kidman really didn't need to do anything for the rest of the evening. Everyone else involved in the project was prepared to gush sloppy buckets on her contributions to the art. Co-executive producer Paula Wagner, who's better known for worshipping at the altar of Mr. Cruise, got the idolatry ball rolling during the pre-screening thank-you's when she proclaimed Ms. Kidman "one of the most extra-

ordinary and stunning actors I have ever met in my life." Neither Ms. Wagner nor Mr. Amenábar mentioned Mr. Cruise in their comments, and when The Transom asked Ms. Wagner about it, her face squared: "We're all partners in this," she said.

At the party at the Hudson Hotel, Ms. Kidman sat removed from the crowd with the executives, chattering away and giggling excitedly. At one point, she reached slyly across the table for a puff on someone's cigarette.

Meanwhile, the gushing continued. "Nicole is so gorgeous, she's, like, radiant. What a movie star," proclaimed the Kidman-obsessed *SNL* castmember Jimmy Fallon. "It seems like every time she's on-screen, you can't take your eyes off of her."

"I was very moved by Nicole's style," announced *People* magazine's West Coast style editor, Steven Cojocar, who sported a "one-of-a-kind" D&G tank which proclaimed that "Italians do it better."

"I think there should be a special Oscar for that—for well-preserved hair," Mr. Cojocar continued. "Nicole is honestly—and I say this with great emotion—honestly, from a style point of view, she's so stylish. She really looks like a movie star. She's got a kind of Joan Crawford old-school ... I like people who spend nine hours getting ready."

Ms. Kidman didn't need anywhere near that amount of time to make an exit. Round midnight, she exclaimed, "I've gotta go to bed! I gotta get out of here now!" and was swept away by an entourage of ever-fawning girlfriends.

—Benjamin Ryan

BABYFACE TIME WITH CLINTON

Still high from his triumphant Harlem shuffle, Bill Clinton held a Tuesday-afternoon press conference in midtown to announce his partnership with Kenneth (Babyface) Edmonds. The pair will not be producing the next Whitney Houston album, but fighting the world AIDS epidemic.

"There's no way the government can do this alone," Mr. Clinton said during his casual, almost free-style explanation of his new position as advisory board chair for the International AIDS Trust, a new advocacy group run by Sandra L. Thurman, former director of the White House office of national AIDS policy.

While *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd watched from behind amber-tinted glasses, Mr. Clinton tipped his hat to the efforts of Kofi Annan, Colin Powell and Bill Gates, but never mentioned President George W. Bush by name.

And though this move might not boost Mr. Clinton's image in Washington, Mr. Edmonds goosed the former President's uptown status when he gushed that Mr. Clinton has "always been like the coolest person, the coolest guy, the coolest President that ever—probably ever—existed."

—Benjamin Ryan