

Troy, Troy Again

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Published: May 17, 2004

"What does tonight mean to me? Terror! A lot of fear!" said David Benioff, the screenwriter of **Troy**, on the red carpet of the film's premiere. "But I had a couple of drinks before I got here, so I'm feeling a little bit better." On May 10, he joined the film's stars, Brad Pitt, Eric Bana, Peter O'Toole and Brian Cox, in front of the Ziegfeld Theater.

A certain actress Mr. Benioff has been linked to was noticeably absent. Wondering if he was single, we asked whether there's anyone for whose face he'd launch 1,000 ships.

"My girlfriend, yeah -- Amanda Peet," he said. Turns out she's off shooting a film with Ashton Kutcher -- no danger there, if recent reports of his marriage to Demi Moore are not greatly exaggerated.

Another cerulean-eyed beauty was very much present. Despite (or perhaps because of) rumors that her marriage is on the fritz, Jennifer Aniston held court in a floor-length black gown with an open back that extended to the tailbone. She couldn't remember who designed it.

"I'm so embarrassed!" she cried, much as the designer may when he or she reads this.

Orlando Bloom disappointed the droves of fans across the street holding homemade "Orlando" posters (which, surprisingly, outnumbered the "Brad" posters) when he failed to turn up. He's currently on location in Morocco shooting Kingdom of Heaven with Ridley Scott. He was there a year ago, when production started on **Troy**, although hurricanes and the war in Iraq moved the operation to Mexico. Although conditions were hardly favorable (the cast reportedly suffered bouts of food poisoning), director Wolfgang Petersen has fond memories of the secondary set and even brought back a souvenir in the form of a cat.

"She was dying," he explained. "A dog was biting off her little leg. Not leg, tail. And we brought her to Los Angeles and brought her back to life, and now she is a wonderful, wonderful, very lively being called Lola."

Just then Diane Kruger, who plays Helen of **Troy**, swooped in and kissed the director on the side of the cheek. Swathed in Oscar de la Renta, the comely actress admitted it doesn't take an invasion to win her over.

"Before I met my husband, he tried to date me for quite a few months, and I refused him," she said. "I finally agreed to go on a date with him, and I expected him to, you know, bring out the expensive dinner table and woo me. He actually took me to a movie and to McDonald's -- so that was romantic, I thought. It was The Matrix!"

She and the rest of the cast soon settled in for the epic -- although, at two hours and 46 minutes, few could stay put for its entirety. Actor **Sean Bean** -- who plays Odysseus here and Boromir in The Lord of the Rings -- took a smoke break and watched the remainder of the film standing in the back of the theater. While he watched his onscreen counterpart laying gold coins over the eyes of the fallen Achilles, the woman who launched a thousand haircuts flounced by, her no-name dress and her husband trailing behind.

Making an early exit for the after-party, Mr. Pitt and company accidentally brushed against The Transom.

"Excuse me," he said graciously without breaking stride.

At Cipriani, the couple was joined by various screen gods and goddesses (Will Smith, Chris Noth, Eva Mendes, Snoop Dogg, Anne Heche), the music demigod (U2's Bono), the demagogue (Spike Lee) and the mere mortal (that guy from The King of Queens). Famed twin Ashley Olsen (the blond one who isn't being accused of anorexia) looked nervous, standing with her publicist in a white lacy number by Magda Berliner.

Nearby, actress Gina Gershon was chatting about the movie with a group of male friends. There's more than a little similarity, to The Transom, between **Troy** and The Lord of the Rings, as Ms. Gershon's conversation proved.

"Let's talk about which of the characters was gay!" she said, sporting a glamorous updo. "That one guy was a little bit more than a cousin, don't you think?"

The cousin in question was Garrett Hedlund, who played Mr. Pitt's protege onscreen and off. The two trained together to prep for filming. "I was a twig when I started. I was, like, 155, and I jumped way up!"

So did Mr. Pitt, whose signature bonsai leap popped up in almost every battle scene.

"It was a lot of hard work, this one, it really was," he said. "And it shows on the screen, I think. But those are the ones that are worth it, ya know?"

One of the biggest challenges was stunt performance; no doubles were harmed in the filming of **Troy**, apparently.

"It's all us," confirmed Eric Bana, a.k.a. Prince Hector. "I've gotta say, I was rehearsing in a track suit there, but it was a lot easier in the skirt. There was a little bit more movement, things flow a little easier -- you know, nothing gets caught."

Mr. Pitt, on the other hand, got caught with his smarty-pants down. When questioned on his knowledge of Greek mythology prior to filming, he admitted: "Um, I would say iffy at best. No, we didn't cover it in high school, really." Three cheers for the public-school system!

We asked whether he has an Achilles' heel. "I'm passing on that one!" he laughed, and swore it wasn't his well-publicized battle with cigarettes. "War? I have no war! I believe in seasons. I'm on, I'm off, I'm on, I'm off. I'm on right now! There's nothing good about it, but I'm on."

Later, the actor snatched a fedora from co-star Peter O'Toole and perched it on his newly shorn head. Mr. O'Toole paused to reminisce, "When Brad and I had finished doing this very long and difficult scene, we were both absolutely exhausted. Then, in one voice -- not rehearsed, nothing -- we both said, 'We've done the fucker!'"