

# the Buzz

KIRK AND DEWOLF: BRIDGET BESAW-GORMAN



From left: Laura Kirk and Nat DeWolf want to get *Famous*; Uma Thurman contemplates her corset in the French costumer *Vatel*.

## C'est la Cannes

CANNES HAS NEVER BEEN the gayest film festival (the scene on the Croisette is more about starlets than Speedos). But gay images did flicker on the screen this year, and they weren't always pretty.

The festival—and the complaints—kicked off with the costume drama *Vatel*, featuring Gérard Depardieu and Uma Thurman. Depardieu stars as a chef charged with preparing for a visit by King Louis XIV; the film features a subplot about Louis's brother, known as "Monsieur," who fancies a certain houseboy. (He doesn't get him.) Critics cried homophobia, but director Roland Joffé cried, "Moi?"

"For anybody to detect homophobia in the film," Joffé told *The Advocate*, "they would have to have it in them. Monsieur is treated with immense sympathy." That might be stretching it, but this gay character is no nastier than his straight counterparts—and he does manage a good deed or two.

Meanwhile, in another century, a band of rugged samurai get hot and bothered by a beautiful new male recruit in *Gohatto*, the new film from Japanese master Nagisa Oshima. Returning to the global limelight after a 14-year absence and recovering from a stroke, Oshima scored a commercial hit in his own country while continuing his longtime tradition of breaking sexual taboos on-screen. (His 1976 *In the Realm of the Senses* is still an erotic landmark.)

"It wasn't until I made *Gohatto* that I realized [sexual] taboos have not been fully demolished," Oshima told the press at Cannes, where the film stirred a flurry of controversy. "This is an important problem in Japan."

Festival kudos also went to the British gotta-dance drama *Dancer*, about a boy who

rejects boxing for ballet despite familial pressure. Featuring stirring dance routines and a straight hero's nonjudgmental friendship with a gay classmate, this film promises to be a sleeper hit when Universal opens it in the United States in the fall.

Modern gay imagery got amusingly spoofed in *Famous*, a U.S. mockumentary directed by Griffin Dunne about two young actors chasing stardom. The two are played by cowriters Nat DeWolf and Laura Kirk.

DeWolf is Tate, who's preparing a one-man off-Broadway show, *Hate Crimes and Broken Hearts*. Naturally, as in all gay one-man shows, it involves him stripping down to his underwear.

"It's unbelievable how strange this week has been," says DeWolf, who found out only a few weeks beforehand that *Famous* was coming to the festival.

Getting ready to face the media at Cannes, DeWolf told the producers to make it clear that he's *openly* gay. But despite the crush of reporters and endless roundtable discussions, "no one has asked me so far," he says, laughing. "I think people have a responsibility to be out. I don't know. I could be making a huge mistake. But I can't [be in the closet], it would just be too much work."



Master Japanese filmmaker Nagisa Oshima returned to Cannes after a long absence with the sexy and controversial samurai drama *Gohatto*.