

SKY

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// NAPA VALLEY HIGH NOTES

// TALK SHOW WITH
PETER SARSGAARD

French Allure

The enduring
influence of
Parisians on
popular culture.

*C'est
Magnifique!*

JUNE 2011

Paris' leading lady,
Oscar-winner
Marion Cotillard



BEAUTIFUL MUSE

*Marion Cotillard is an Oscar-winning, stunningly chic actress who has beguiled directors from Olivier Dahan (*La Vie en Rose*) to Chris Nolan (*Inception*, *The Dark Knight Rises*) to Woody Allen (*Midnight in Paris*). And she makes it all seem so effortless.*

// This month you're starring in Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris*, and your character has been described as the "muse." Do you have a muse in your life?

Marion Cotillard: A muse is a very intriguing character and person, someone who is totally fascinated by artists and has a very strong artistic side. The muses I read about have a common fascination with art and very strong characters, and they are open-minded—open on many levels—and very, very accessible. At the same time, they carry this mystery that you cannot really solve, which makes them vibrant, mysterious and inspiring.

There are many, many people who inspire me in my life and in this world. Some people I know, some people I don't. But I wouldn't say that I have a muse. I think there is a difference between being an artist like an actor and being an artist like a writer or a painter. When you are an actor, you have material that has been made especially for you. To be able to create something, you are inspired by many things that you choose as you work and create a character. But when you are a painter or a writer, your first material is yourself, the world and a pen, a sheet

of paper or the material you use for painting. You, yourself, create from the beginning.

// So, in a way, you are your own muse for your roles?

MC: I wouldn't say that . . . but, well, yes. I just did a movie and I was inspired by myself, and it was really weird, because I tried to get away from that, and I would always come back to me. Eventually I told myself, "Well it is like it is. You have to accept that the inspiration will be some of what you are." Not entirely, because it would be too difficult. I find it easier when the character is very far from who I am; when it is close to who I am, it is kind of scary to me.

// What role was that?

MC: It was in [Cotillard's partner] Guillaume Canet's last movie, *Little White Lies*.

// *Midnight in Paris* portrays Paris as a hotbed of creativity, art, big ideas and magic. Is that still the case?

MC: It is still a very creative spot, but it's not like it

BY SARAH ELBERT | PHOTOGRAPHS BY DOMINIQUE ISSERMANN / H&K / CPI SYNDICATION

“I love traveling in different periods of time and going from Inception to Midnight in Paris to a French movie. It makes my life and my job magical, really.”



was in certain periods of time when all of the artists would gather together and share this energy of creativity. Paris is still very creative about art, fashion, movies, but I feel that you don't have this phenomenon that happened in the 1920s, in the '50s, in the '60s, with people like [poet and screenwriter Jacques] Prévert, [poet/novelist/playwright Jean] Cocteau and [actress] Simone Signoret. We don't have this reunion of different arts and different artists who gather together. For example, I don't know if you've heard about La Colombe d'Or, which is this very famous restaurant in the south of France, in Saint-Paul de Vence. It was a place where painters and writers, actors, singers, musicians would see each other and would share moments together, and I feel that we don't have this anymore. But that said, Paris is still very inspiring and very creative.

// I wonder how much the Internet has changed how artists collaborate and congregate?

MC: Yeah, maybe they gather in a different way. But I kind of like this old-fashioned table with wine and ideas being thrown around. Yeah, you

are probably right, maybe there is this kind of phenomenon on the Internet.

// It's a little sad.

MC: I don't know if I would judge it that way. In a way, it could be sad, but in another way, you can have a reunion of a Chinese writer and an American painter and a French singer. I don't know if that exists, actually, but I think it sounds interesting. It's really different.

// Speaking of French singers, your most memorable role is Edith Piaf in *La Vie en Rose*. If you could go back and speak to her, what would you say?

MC: Wow. If I had that chance, I wouldn't think about what I would tell her, I would just wait and see. I would probably be very intimidated, because even though I've never met her, obviously I know that she is strong and she had a very, very strong point of view of people immediately. So I would just hope that she would like me.

// That is a very human response. With your success over the past several years, how do you stay grounded?

MC: With what I do as an actress—a lot of observation of human beings and trying to understand how the human soul works—I think that if you are not grounded then you lose something. I know that I want simple things and I want to stay close to simple things, and what I search for in my life would be bliss and to have a connection with myself and other people.

// What's a perfect day for you in Paris?

MC: It would be a good lunch, because we have good food here—it's cliché, but it's true. I would have lunch in some little restaurant in the Marais—it's hard to think of just one—and then go to a museum. I love the Musée Rodin, with all the Camille Claudels. And I love the Musée d'Orsay; I used to spend a lot of time there when I was a teenager. I also love the Palais de Tokyo. But it depends on my mood, because the Louvre is fascinating, too. Part of the day would definitely be in a museum. And then a good dinner at night, of course.

// You grew up as the daughter of actors. How has that shaped your approach to acting? Is there any particular advice you've taken from your parents?

MC: My parents always told me that acting was a job and it was a lot of work. Sometimes people think that it is just being who you are—but it doesn't last very long if you think it's not very, very hard work that you have to achieve to create a character. And the closer the character is to you, the harder you have to work. That is what they taught me at an early age: work, work, work. And I remember when I was in acting class, they would always tell me: “You may have something that is inside of you, this quality that an actor has to have. But if you don't work, someone who might not have this high quality will be much better than you, because this person will experience and will give so much for that art, that job, and that job will give it back to him or her. If you just think that you have something and you can make a job and a life of this interesting but still small thing, you will have a very, very small career.” And that is true, it's really true.

// You've been photographed wearing some truly stunning clothes. How would you describe your personal style?

MC: That is the hardest question. Each time it's like the first time I'm answering it, and the first thing that comes to my mind is “Don't be dumb, please, please don't be so dumb.” I don't really know how to describe it, that is my problem when it comes to fashion. It's hard for me to have a point of view on my style, if I have one. I like to mix things. And I can wear many different things and feel myself, but sometimes I feel like wearing the very finest things and sometimes I feel [like] myself in something that is very edgy and sometimes I feel [like] myself in something that is kind of rock and roll.

// You're not just an actor; you've also performed with the French band Yodelice. What's the draw of being onstage with the band?

MC: I've always wanted to sing—music is very important in my life. I have the chance to know many musicians, and it is something I've always wanted to take further—the experience of really doing something: writing songs, writing music. I studied piano when I

was a kid, but not professionally, and I have great respect for musicians, so I wouldn't call myself a musician. Then I met Maxim Nucci, the singer of Yodelice, and he is a very important person in my life, because he is the one who always says, “Well, you should do this, you should try at least,” and he pushes me: He took me onstage, he put a bass guitar in my hand, he put a mic in my hand, he put drums, he put keyboards . . . He really opened this world for me, and he invited me onstage with the band, which is one of the most beautiful presents I've ever had. Because he knew that I really wanted to do this, but I was too shy or too scared or maybe too impressed by all the singers that I admire so much. Having created this character in the band, whose name is Simone, allows me in a way to feel that I actually have a place in the world of music.

When I started being an actress, I really needed to feel that I had a place in that world, because I thought, “Wow, I am going out there telling stories and asking people to look at me, to listen to me,” and if you don't feel that is where you belong, it's really hard to be—not comfortable, because you never really look for comfort—but at least that you have the right to ask people, “Look at me, I have something to say. Listen to me, I have something to tell you.”

In the music world, it is the same thing for me. Who am I to ask people to listen to me? And . . . step by step, I am finding my place, and little by little, I am realizing that I really have something to share and something to say.

// Do you prefer acting in small intimate films or big Hollywood productions?

MC: Oh, I love both. I'm so grateful that I have the possibility to travel into so many universes, and that is what really makes that job marvelous for me. I love traveling in this world, I love traveling in the human soul, I love traveling in different periods of time and going from *Inception* to *Midnight in Paris* to a French movie. It makes my life and my job magical, really. So, I wouldn't say I prefer one or the other. It is the richness of our job that makes me think I will always have sparkles in my eyes and in my heart. //

LA VIE DE MARION.

From film to rock to environmental activism, a taste of Mlle. Cotillard's varied career:



2011 Stars in Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris* and the thriller *Contagion*.



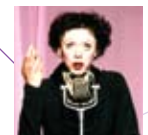
2010 Performs with the band *Yodelice* and travels to the *Congo* with Greenpeace, an organization with which she has long had an attachment.



2010 Stars in *Inception* and *Little White Lies*, directed by her partner, Guillaume Canet, and is made a chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.



2009 Stars in *Public Enemies*, *Nine*, and the first of four “Lady Dior” short films.



2007 Plays Edith Piaf in *La Vie en Rose*, a role for which she wins an Oscar, the César, a BAFTA Award and a Golden Globe.



1998 Appears in her first significant film role as Lilly Bertineau in *Taxi*. Later stars in two sequels.

2003 Stars in her first American film, *Big Fish*, as well as the French film, *Love Me if You Dare*. Later she would become romantically involved with her costar, Guillaume Canet.



1995 Studies drama at the Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique in Orléans, France, where she was raised.

PHOTOS: RIGHT: COURTESY SONY PICTURES CLASSICS (PARIS); MARTA NASCIMENTO/REAREDOX (CONGO); GETTY IMAGES (YODELICE); COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. (INCEPTION); EVERETT COLLECTION (LA VIE EN ROSE); COURTESY OF WEINSTEIN COMPANY (NINE); COLUMBIA PICTURES (BIG FISH); EVERETT COLLECTION (TAXI)