

BEST ACTRESSES

# FALL'S LEADING LADIES

Angelina flirts, Gwyneth boozes and Katherine coos! Check out the stars brightening up the big screen

BY BRADLEY JACOBS

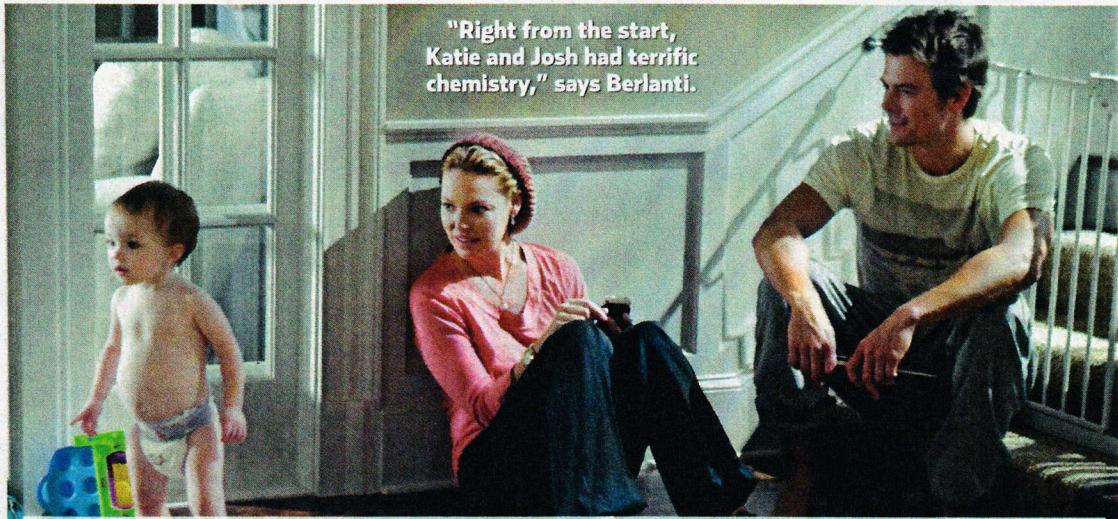
## Angelina Jolie

THE TOURIST, DECEMBER 10

**The story** After a devastating breakup, Frank (Johnny Depp, 47) leaves the U.S. for a getaway in Venice, Italy. Soon after, he falls into a tangled romance with a mysterious European, Elise (Jolie, 35). "On the surface, Angelina's character is sexy and beautiful, but she has a lot of layers," producer Graham King tells *Us*. "Expect twists and turns."

**The scoop** The two megastars, who'd never met before, spent a lot of time "talking about their families and kids," says King (who will also produce Jolie's dramatic directorial debut this fall: a love story set during the Bosnian War). On screen, the A-listers turned up the heat: "They're pros! They knew exactly what they were doing. When their characters first meet, she completely seduces him in such a clever way — just with looks."

Jolie "is obviously very sexy but also has the intelligence for a role like this," King tells *Us*.



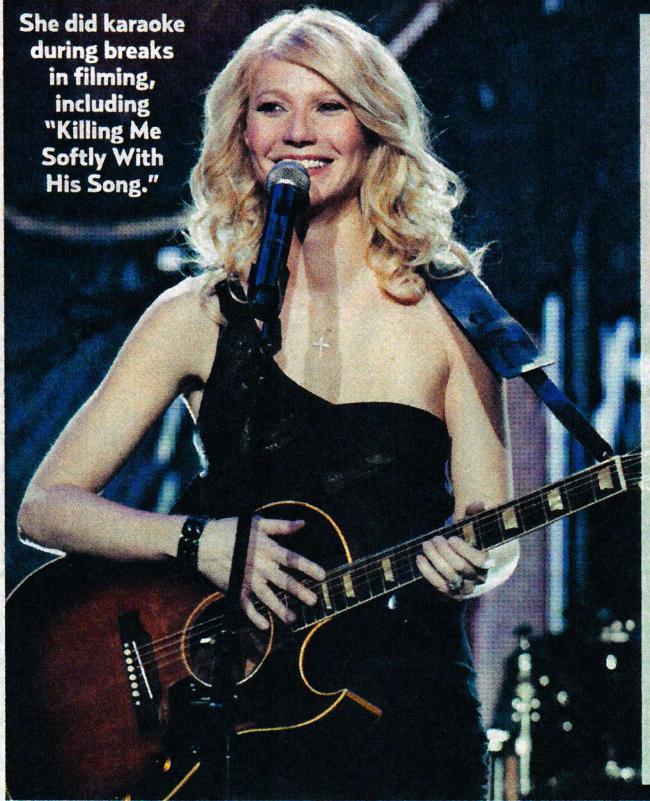
## Katherine Heigl

LIFE AS WE KNOW IT, OCTOBER 8

**The story** In this poignant dramedy, Holly (Heigl, 31) and Eric (Josh Duhamel, 37) are godparents who hate each other, especially after one truly bad date. But when the baby's parents die in an accident, they become little Sophie's caregivers. What follows? Fights, making formula and (surprise!) falling in love.

**The scoop** Just as shooting began, Heigl adopted Naleigh, now 22 months. "She went from holding a baby in a scene to holding Naleigh off camera," director Greg Berlanti tells *Us*. And Duhamel loved playing with the triplets who portrayed Sophie: "He'd swing them between his legs!"

**She did karaoke during breaks in filming, including "Killing Me Softly With His Song."**



## Gwyneth Paltrow

COUNTRY STRONG, DECEMBER 22

**The story** Kelly, an alcoholic country singer (Paltrow, 37), attempts a post-rehab comeback. But as her husband-manager (Tim McGraw, 43) grooms a younger rising star (Leighton Meester, 24), she finds herself reaching for the bottle — and falling for a hot young crooner (Garrett Hedlund, 26).

**The scoop** "Her marriage is tricky, and it definitely gets complicated!" writer-director Shana Feste tells *Us*. To prep for the role, the Oscar winner, who also showed off her pipes in *Emma* and *Duets*, "would send me iChat videos of herself singing in front of her computer, practicing stuff that Chris [Martin, her husband] taught her." A bonus to filming in Nashville? "She loved eating fried chicken and mashed potatoes!"

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: X17AGENCY.COM  
PETER LOVINO, SCOTT GARFIELD

## BEST ACTRESSES

### Christina Aguilera

BURLESQUE,  
NOVEMBER 24

**The story** Small-town girl Ali (Aguilera, 29) makes her way to L.A. and finds work waitressing — and then singing — in a grungy cabaret owned by tough-talking Tess (Cher, 64).

**The scoop** "The shoot was hard: 16-hour days in 6-inch heels!" Cher jokes to *Us*. And "even before we shot it, we trained for almost a month," Aguilera, who wrote three songs for the film, tells *Us*. "Every day, all day. All the dancing got me in great shape!" And although the two never duet in the film, says director Steve Antin, "They were like high-school BFFs from the moment they met."



Cher  
sings two  
original  
songs in  
the film.

### Rooney Mara

THE SOCIAL NETWORK,  
OCTOBER 1

**The story** In this drama inspired by real events, Erica (Mara, 25) dumps self-centered Mark Zuckerberg (Jesse Eisenberg, 26). His rebound move? Creating a site to rate women, which becomes Facebook.

**The scoop** "Mark realizes too late he should be taking better care of her," producer Dana Brunetti tells *Us*. Look for their pivotal breakup scene: "Her performance really sets the ball rolling!"

Mara will also  
star in an  
adaptation of  
*The Girl With the  
Dragon Tattoo*.



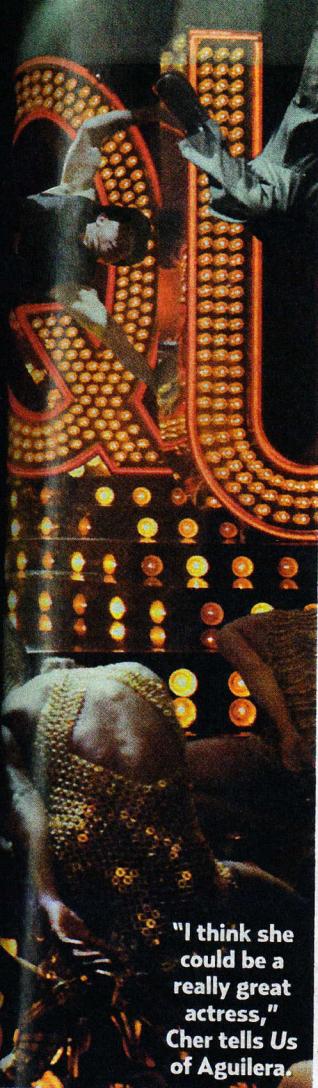
### Rachel McAdams

MORNING GLORY,  
NOVEMBER 12

**The story** A harried TV producer (McAdams, 31) manages bickering hosts (Harrison Ford, 68, and Diane Keaton, 64) and a romance with a colleague (Patrick Wilson, 37) in this comedy.

**The scoop** "When we began, Rachel said, 'Just to warn you, I'm not funny,'" director Roger Michell tells *Us*. "In fact, she is physically quite a funny performer!"



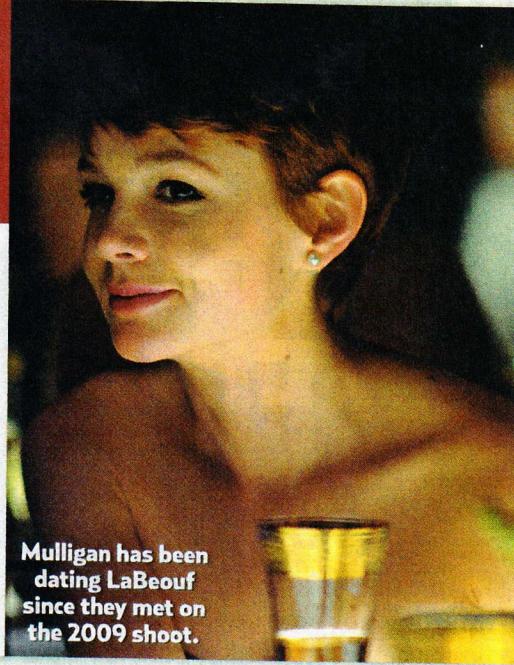


## Carey Mulligan

WALL STREET: MONEY NEVER SLEEPS, SEPTEMBER 24

**The story** Winnie (Mulligan, 25) feels love for her trader beau (Shia LaBeouf, 24) but disdain for her once-jailed finance tycoon father, Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas, 66), in this sequel to the 1987 drama.

**The scoop** "She can stand up to both men and still be lovely," producer Ed Pressman tells *Us*. Watch for the scene when she confronts Douglas. "She blames him for her troubles, and he tells her how much he tried," says Pressman. "It's powerful!"

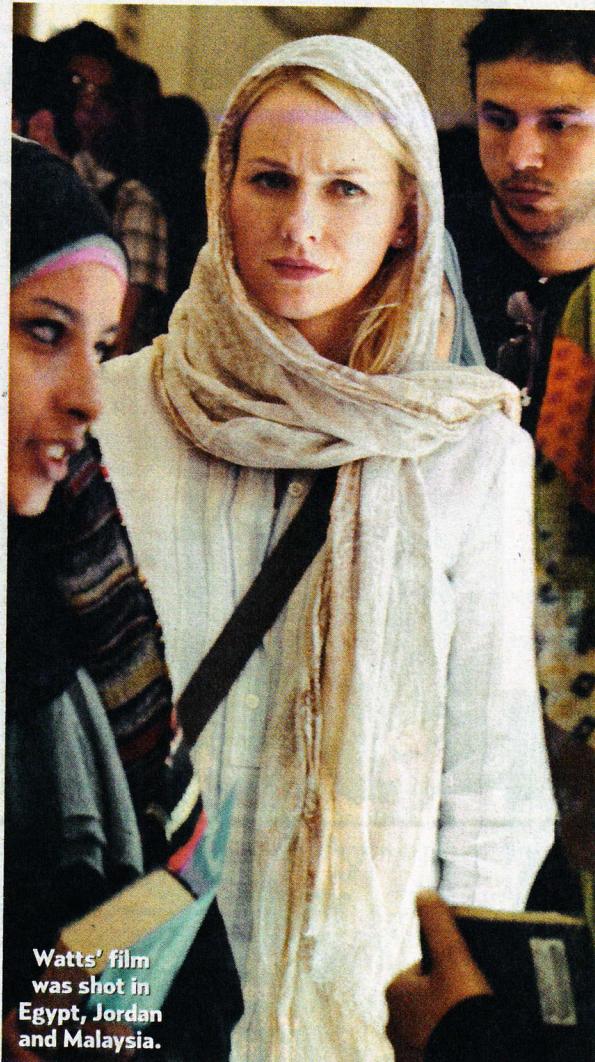


Mulligan has been dating LaBeouf since they met on the 2009 shoot.

"I think she could be a really great actress," Cher tells *Us* of Aguilera.



In the film, McAdams and Ford have a "father-daughter relationship," says Michell.



Watts' film was shot in Egypt, Jordan and Malaysia.

## Naomi Watts

FAIR GAME, NOVEMBER 5

**The story** Watts, 41, plays Valerie Plame, the real-life wife, mom and CIA spy whose cover was blown when the *Washington Post* printed her name in 2003. Sean Penn, 50, costars as her ambassador husband in this dramatic biopic.

**The scoop** "Naomi has the range to show both sides of Valerie: the steely CIA agent and also the vulnerable mother," producer Janet Zucker tells *Us*. Watts — who nursed son Samuel, now 21 months (dad is Liev Schreiber), during the shoot — spent two days at spy boot camp! "She did hand-to-hand combat and interrogations," says Zucker. "I would have recommended her to become an agent!"

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SCREEN GEMS/20TH CENTURY FOX; MACCALL POLAY; MERRICK MORTON  
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