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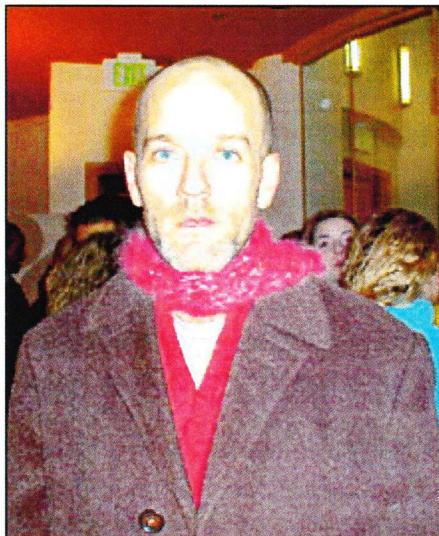


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Martine Williamson / Revlon

Michael Stipe showed up at the Revlon/InStyle party at Sundance

Goodbye Party

As with the screenings, some Sundance parties delight you, others leave you dissatisfied

By B.J. Sigesmund
NEWSWEEK WEB EXCLUSIVE

Jan. 24 — On my first day at the film festival, I went to three screenings and had no party invites. Yesterday, my last full day here, I was on the guest list at three affairs and skipped the movies entirely. Glad I finally got my priorities straight!

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MY DAY as a party boy started off pretty peachy. First came the luncheon thrown by Entertainment Weekly, one of Sundance's biggest sponsors. Held at the Lakota restaurant, it was really two separate gatherings: one at the buffet and one at the bar. Where would you hang? As we drank and blew smoke in one another's faces, I had a great, giggly time barreling through lots of buzz. "Have you seen 'Chopper'?" "Awesome." "Memento?" "Great, but didn't it play at Toronto's festival?" "Caveman's Valentine?" "Eeesh." Celebs on the scene: Tilda Swinton ("The Deep End"), John Cameron Mitchell ("Hedwig"), Jacqueline Bisset ("Sleepy Time Gal"), directors Jonathan Glazer ("Sexy Beast") and Gus Vant Sant. Through the haze I also saw William Mapother, better known (for now) as Tom Cruise's cousin, who co-stars in "In the Bedroom."

Next came the Revlon/InStyle magazine bash at the "Revlon Skinlights Lounge" on Main Street, an event featuring DJ Paul Sevigny (Chloe's brother). The crowd was large, the venue too small. And annoyingly, even though the quarters were so crammed, I somehow missed the celebrities who were there: Michael Stipe, Ana Reeder ("Diary of a City Priest") and actress-singer Ann Magnuson. The best thing about the party was the gossip I picked up: that Courtney Love was reportedly seen exiting Russell Crowe's hotel room over the weekend. I thought it was too scandalous to be true, but then it was "confirmed" this morning by the New York Post's Page Six. That's an advantage of schmoozing at showbiz ground zero: you hear it first.

The last event of the day was the much-discussed CAA party where I experienced first-hand the classic Sundance don't-you-know-who-I-am? guest-list humiliation. I think it might have been easier to land a CAA agent than to be granted access to this affair.



Newsweek
B.J. Sigesmund
GENERAL EDITOR



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First of all, you couldn't walk or take a cab to this party, which was held high in the hills of nearby Deer Valley. You had to go to a location on Main Street, check in, and be shuttled up to the event. I was promised early in the day that I was on the list. And if I somehow was not on the list, I was told to say that "Brad Simpson put me on Kevin Iwashina's list"—not that I knew who either Brad Simpson or Kevin Iwashina were.

Needless to say, I was not on the list. The woman with the clipboard was very nice and said she'd call Kevin via radio and check if she could let me in. At this time, there was just me and one other guy waiting. Then more people—producers, actors—arrived at the check-in point. They weren't on the list either, and most of them also dropped Kevin Iwashina's name. Minutes past, and the woman with the clipboard grew increasingly frustrated. She still wasn't hearing back from the elusive Iwashina. "I need Kevin on the radio immediately," she said into her walkie-talkie. "There are like 20 people down here who say he invited them." For a moment, the tension lessened: A professor from USC's film department arrived, and she was actually on the list. The crowd broke out in applause.

Finally, Kevin's assistant called. He let in the producers. He let in the actors. The crowd got their stamps and headed toward the shuttle. Then the nice clipboard woman asked them about little old me. A beat. Then word from the radio: "Kevin says let him up." And I thought that getting an A in pre-calculus junior year was an achievement!

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It was a 10-minute ride up to the two-story house, which felt like someone's winter home, although there was no furniture. It was dim and, as usual, there was good music and food and lots and lots of candles. The crowd was very industry heavy; there

wasn't a famous face in the bunch—unless you count Kevin Iwashina, who was pointed out to me from a distance. I still have no idea who he is. I met the director and producer of "Donnie Darko," the festival's love-it-or-hate-it film. At another point, I was surrounded by cast members from "Lift"—men who might be famous six months from now but at this point

are just regular folk like you and me. Kasi Lemmons, director of "Caveman's Valentine," was friendly, but I didn't speak with her for long. (What do you say to someone whose movie is being trashed?)

Frankly, I don't really have much else to say about the party. Like many things in life, getting in—the chase, if you will—was the best part.

And unfortunately, I won't be running around after Sundance's celebrities much longer. My flight back to New York leaves in a few hours. And, wouldn't you know it, the day I leave is the day Courtney Love arrives. I never got to drink that cosmo with her. Oh well, there's always Oscar night.

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