

STAR BURSTS

With *Pretty Woman* celebrating its 20th anniversary this month, Total Film looks back at Julia Roberts' dazzling arrival and nine other star-making performances...

WORDS **MATT MUELLER**



Julia Roberts

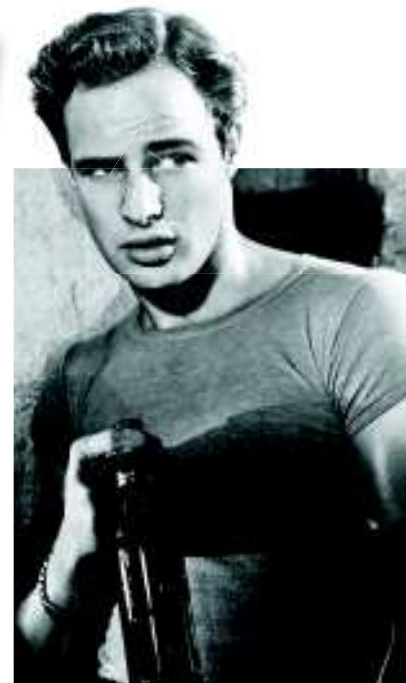
PRETTY WOMAN 1990

She was an ugly duckling (*Blood Red*, *Satisfaction*) before *Pretty Woman* transformed Julia Roberts into Hollywood's enchanting swan. As Vivian Ward, the happy hooker who falls for Richard Gere's corporate raider, she mixed sex appeal with sensitivity and understated intelligence with a toothy, mile-wide smile, stringing together a chain of irrepressibly engaging moments that made moviegoers fall harder for Roberts than they had for any other star, ever. From Walkman-singalongs in the bath to polo-match whooping, she's a gift-wrapped, wish-fulfilment charm bomb. Torn from a gritty script called *Three Thousand*, *Pretty Woman* was fluffed up into a consumerist *Cinderella*, with Roberts fully Disneyfied. "We shot her like Bambi," director Garry Marshall said. "She's there, she's beautiful, then – bam – she's gone." In an industry craving new stars, Roberts turned out to be the leggy Southern belle of their dreams – even if it was a body double on the poster.

Tom Cruise

RISKY BUSINESS 1983

It took all of a minute for Tom Cruise to slide to an advanced state of stardom, dancing in his skivvies and Ray-Bans to Bob Seger's jukebox classic 'Old Time Rock And Roll'. Strumming air guitar, flipping up his shirt collar and humping a sofa, years before he gave Oprah's a good pounding, he snared the '80s adolescent zeitgeist with Joel Goodsen, the budding teen capitalist in Paul Brickman's Reagan-era satire – torn between getting off and getting into college. Sex wins, responsibility loses (momentarily) – and moviegoers loved him for it. Brickman didn't want him at first ("The killer from *Taps*? Let him do *Amityville III!*"), but Cruise earned his trust and rewarded it in spades, not least with his largely improvised brief encounter – one line in the script that Cruise evolved into the perfect showcase for his talents. His sock-skidding secret? "I waxed half the floor and kept the other half dirty."



Marlon Brando

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE 1951

Bathed in moonlight and sweat, Marlon Brando's anguished wails of "Stella!" in the closing frames of *Streetcar* reverberate with primal need. Never before had an actor abandoned himself so completely on camera... and screen acting would never be the same. Elia Kazan spotted Stella Adler's volcano-hot protégé early and cast him in Tennessee Williams' slice of Southern-fried gothic, first on stage, then in the film version. As blue-collar tormentor to his damaged sister-in-law Blanche Dubois (Vivien Leigh), Stanley Kowalski is sadistic and taunting – and Brando played up to the image. On set, he tore away at Leigh's dainty respectability, telling her to stop being "so fucking polite" and making gruff comments on her "great tits and ass". On camera, he displayed a terrifying animal rawness, touching himself and yelling until spit flew into Leigh's face. It's a performance of such seductive talent and masculinity, even Brando was never able to better it. >>



John Travolta

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER 1977

"Well, you can tell by the way I use my walk/I'm a woman's man, no time to talk..." So squeaked the Bee Gees on the *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack, and so demonstrated John Travolta in this disco-age definer's opening pavement strut, still the most iconic cinema stroll ever. Lean, 23, and decked out in leather jacket, tight bellbottoms and red high-collared shirt, Travolta prances down a Brooklyn boulevard like a preening cock-of-the-walk – swinging a paint can, no less. White-suited disco king Tony Manero is all swivel hips and snaky moves, which Travolta trained brutally for six months to acquire. "That was the tone of the day – the new gauntlet had fallen," says Travolta, who threatened to walk when original director John Avildsen wanted to axe Manero's introductory amble (goodbye Avildsen, hello John Badham). Travolta grounds Manero with substance and pathos, and was Oscar-nommed for his troubles. But his dancefloor-Adonis legs remain *Fever's* undisputed stars.



Brad Pitt

THELMA & LOUISE 1991

As the sweet-talking, cobra-hipped bandit who coaxes Geena Davis into bed – and a \$6,000 orgasm (the amount he purloins from her purse) – Pitt made white-trash deadbeats sexy. Graced with Midwestern charm and the most rippling six-pack outside the Olympics, Pitt made us buy Davis' carnal abandon at the drop of his Stetson, before exiting with a cheeky, hip-thrusting reminder of his sexual exploits to Thelma's enraged husband. The fact that he was called JD unleashed James Dean comparisons, which Pitt laughed off. "It would be a compliment if you could take it seriously," said the actor, who only landed the 15-minute role when William Baldwin vacated to do *Backdraft*. "I knew that part was going to come along," he said later. "I can't explain it but I knew it." It had consequences, though: Pitt admits he's never lived up to that \$6,000 orgasm.

Robert De Niro

MEAN STREETS 1973

Scorsese's camera tracking him like a panther, De Niro's Johnny Boy parades through a dank, sleazy saloon, floozy on each arm, to the magnificent, wall-blasting chords of the Rolling Stones' 'Jumpin' Jack Flash' – a slow-motion vision of leering, smirking animal magnetism. When Scorsese offered De Niro *Mean Streets*, he instructed him to pick any role except Harvey Keitel's Charlie. Naturally, the young tyro waltzed straight up to Keitel and asked for *his* part. "I was honest with him," says De Niro, "but Harvey said, 'No, it's the Johnny Boy character you should do.'" A wiry, volatile loose cannon, Johnny Boy instigates senseless pool-hall smackdowns ("C'mon, fuck-face!") and floats through his squalid existence with a clear death wish. In Scorsese's perceptive, tragic tale of growing up gangster, De Niro made Johnny Boy the violent, uncontrollable id of low-rent street life – and carried that urgent desperation through two more decades of excoriating performances.



Lauren Bacall

TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT 1944

Waist cinched in a silk bathrobe, Lauren Bacall unlocks herself from a deep kiss with Humphrey Bogart, stands in sultry repose in the doorway and utters, "You know how to

whistle, don't you Steve?

You just put your lips together and... blow."

Cut to Bogie's stunned, blinking gaze. He's just been wholly seduced (he went on to marry Bacall) and so have we. Bacall was just 19 when she conveyed a lifetime of world-weary wisdom and smouldering sexuality as Slim Browning in Howard Hawks' ace anti-Nazi melodrama. It was Hawks' idea to cast the unknown model as the love interest, and Bacall quite literally burned up the screen (surely setting the fag-intake record for one film). Hawks' *The Big Sleep* aside, she never quite lived up to the promise.



Vivien Leigh

GONE WITH THE WIND 1939

What is Scarlett O'Hara but a spoilt southern belle, out to steal Ashley Wilkes away from his meek cousin Melanie? And what is Vivien Leigh but the only actress who could have done proper justice to her, chosen over legions of jealous Hollywood rivals? Just watch Leigh – then, a Brit nobody – work Scarlett's charms at the Wilkes' BBQ and all is clear. Between damning Melanie with faint praise and eyeing up Rhett Butler, Leigh is all secret smiles and glinting, mischievous eyes, displaying the coquettish qualities that made audiences fall for cinema's most infuriatingly captivating heroine. As the *New*

York Times swooned: "Leigh's Scarlett is so beautiful she hardly need be talented, and so talented she need not have been so beautiful."



Scarlett Johansson

LOST IN TRANSLATION 2003

She'd already scored buzz in *The Horse Whisperer* and *Ghost World* but when Scarlett Johansson was filmed for the gauzy opening of Sofia Coppola's Tokyo story, languishing in pink transparent underwear, it wasn't just men in overcoats who became fans. Next time we see her, it's 4am and she's gazing out over nighttime Tokyo. In these intimate moments, Coppola pries open the soul of Charlotte. The husky-voiced ingénue was all of 18 when she played the marooned young wife and she met the challenge, displaying nuance and sensitivity. She was happy with that arse shot, too. "The director of photography came through," she laughed. "My arse looked OK..."



Cameron Diaz

THE MASK 1994

Like a mirage, Diaz strolls into *The Mask* in what has since become enshrined as one of the most sensational movie entrances ever. Coming in from the rain, her nightclub singer Tina Carlyle sweeps into a cavernous bank atrium, wearing a spray-on red dress, and giving her blonde mane a sensuous toss as she shimmies sublimely into Jim Carrey's life. Instantly, Diaz became both movie star and worldwide lust object, although it took 12 auditions, two months and one ulcer before New Line agreed to cast the 21-year-old in Chuck Russell's loony-tunes smash-up. Her talent was pure, raw and intuitive. "I had no idea about the responsibility of acting," says Diaz. "A month in, I said, 'This is kind of a big film, isn't it?' They said, 'Yes Cameron. Yes it is!'"

HOW I MADE JULIA A STAR

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Starry romcom Valentine's Day reunites director Garry Marshall and Julia Roberts on the 20th anniversary of *Pretty Woman*. Here Marshall writes about how he uncovered the biggest female star of our times...

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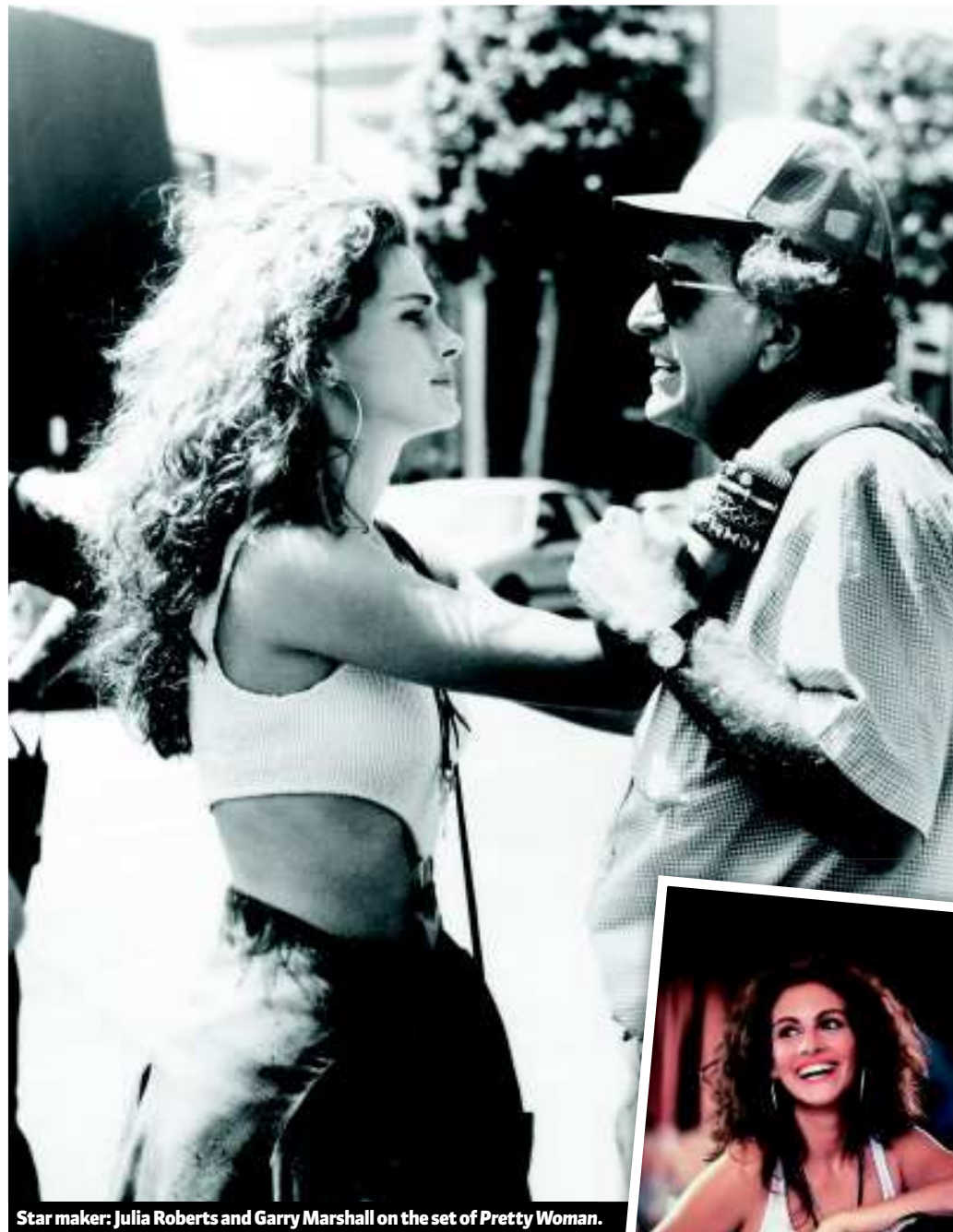
WORDS **GARRY MARSHALL**

When I first met Julia I didn't know she was a diamond waiting to be discovered. But once I got her on film I knew I had something special. She was a 20-year-old kid who came in for the part of Vivian. I watched her talk and test with a bunch of people. But I think the moment I saw she was a star was in the middle of the test.

We tested her with various people and one of them was Charles Grodin, a very funny fellow. I said to her, "This guy is going to ad-lib, so go with it." So she did the test and she stayed with him — she was totally comfortable. Whatever he said she had an answer for him. Julia had that champion quality; she wasn't going to be blown out of the scene.

The biggest crowd I ever had at a test was at Julia's. And when I saw her on film and that smile light it up. It wasn't just me — I think the gate guard knew she was going to be a star! I remember calling up the head of the studio and saying, "We're going to be fine."

The first time we worked together she was coming up; in fact, we celebrated her 21st birthday on *Pretty Woman*. She didn't even have a cellphone then so we did a lot of sitting around and chatting. The paparazzi weren't sure who she was



Star maker: Julia Roberts and Garry Marshall on the set of *Pretty Woman*.



so we didn't get a lot of them around the set. But when we did *Runaway Bride* they were really sure — it was the most paparazzi I've ever had. They were always there, even up in the trees. We would lean over and hug, Julia and I. She would put her forehead on my forehead. Someone said, "What is it you say to her?" I said "Nothing. She's just looking for the paparazzi in the trees!"

Now, of course, she's used to it. It's a pleasure to work with her because she's much calmer. She's a mom with three kids now so she's much more calm about life. I think that she's less

worried about her career now and she is more comfortable as a movie star. What's expected of her she delivers.

It was kind of a reunion on *Valentine's Day*. We had the same cinematographer that we had on *Pretty Woman* [Charles Minsky] and a number of the same crew, so she got quite dizzy saying hello. In the first scene she was on an airplane with Bradley Cooper [*The Hangover*] and I had a steward come down the aisle. When Julia looked up it was Hector Elizondo, the hotel manager in *Pretty Woman*! It was nice to surprise her.

She was the first one to come aboard on this film. I heard that when they asked her to give me a few days, she said, "Why wouldn't I give a few days to the guy who helped start my career?" That was a wonderful thing to say. **TF**

'When I saw her on film and that smile light it up, it wasn't just me — the gate guard knew she was going to be a star!'

GARRY MARSHALL

***Valentine's Day* opens on 12 February and will be reviewed next issue. For the latest features, check out tinyurl.com/tfval**

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