

Cannes Confidential VI: Canceled Appointments and Unisex Bathrooms

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By [Victoria Charters](#)
(from the [2011 Cannes Film Festival](#))

Day eight. I wake up at 5 a.m. and decide that today is not for me. Just after midnight, I'd sent out a request to cancel my 10:30 a.m. appointment.

At this point in the festival, everyone is getting a little ragged and the meetings begin to deconstruct. Text messages, e-mails and phone calls get messy, 10:30s become 3:30s, 12 p.m. appointments get canceled at 12:25 p.m. with apologies. Sometimes all you can do is sigh and head over to [the American](#) Pavilion where the Internet is fast and the laptops are new and delicious.

At 4:19 p.m. my 3:30's assistant texts to apologize for his standing me up because he "had to go to an emergency meeting with Mel Gibson's producer." [Jodie Foster](#)'s "[The Beaver](#)" premiered yesterday, so that is entirely plausible. I temped for some heavy hitters in my early years and

know this meeting dance ritual well. It's exhausting. My suitcase is straining under the weight of business cards, little squares on which I've scribbled the whens and wheres of my Riviera rendezvous.

Upon recommendation from a fellow Producers Workshop attendee, I head to Théâtre Croisette (500 seats) to see "Blue Bird" by Belgian director Gust Van Den Berghe, which is in the [Directors'](#) Fortnight. Held in parallel to the [Cannes Film Festival](#) official competition, this sidebar evolved as a type of cinematic salon following the 1968 student protests that brought France, and Cannes, to a halt.

Filmed in Africa on an Alexa camera, "Blue Bird" follows the odyssey of Bafiokadié and his sister Téné as they leave their village in search of their blue bird. When the director introduces his film with Goethe's quote, "Life is the childhood of our immortality," it seems we are in for something special. The entire film is infused with blue, which makes the already otherworldly African landscape hyper-real. Moving twixt life, [afterlife](#) and prelife, "Blue Bird" is a dreamy fable that suggests we'd be better off to not chase the bird but to instead capture its song. To the delight of the filmmakers, a standing ovation accompanies the credits.

7:30 p.m.: Champagne on a festival programmer's well-appointed balcony overlooking the harbor. A short walk to a fabulous dinner of *Les Moules et les Frites*. Funny thing about this restaurant is that although the bathroom door has a sign for both men and women, you're forced to pass the urinal to access the private stall. As I approach the open door, a gentleman is making use of the urinal. I get flustered. A bunch of other Americans arrive on the scene to use the facility, and we're all likewise confused by the layout. European unisex goes way beyond my "Ally McBeal" education.

After checking out a party at 47 la Croisette, we cross over to the Hotel Martinez to check out the Wednesday-night scene. The place is hopping, filled with the Côte d'Azur's most glamorous. There are cars and limos everywhere but not a taxi in sight. Mustering a morsel of energy, I take the 20-minute walk home. Time of arrival: 2:20 a.m. How did that happen?

Photo by [Victoria Charters](#)