



Marie Antoinette's bracelets dazzle at auction

Two diamond bracelets once belonging to Marie Antoinette and imbued with her "glamour, glory and drama" according to Christie's auction house, sold for more than \$8 million on Tuesday. It was the first time that the bracelets, made up of 112 old-cut diamonds, had ever gone under the hammer. Marie Antoinette, the last queen of France before the French Revolution, was guillotined in Paris aged

37 in October 1793. "Her style defines the unique aesthetics of Versailles: opulent and regal, yet youthful and romantic. A tastemaker extraordinaire, then and now," said Christie's Europe chairman Francois Curiel.

"Their royal provenance is impeccable; not only is their line of heritage unbroken and traceable from 1776 onwards, but the bracelets have been featured in two

famous historic paintings," said Curiel. "These bracelets travelled through time to recount a most important era of French history, with its glamour, glory and drama." The bracelets are 18.7 centimeters long and each weighs 97 grams. They sold for 7,459,000 Swiss francs (\$8.19 million), including premiums, at the auction in Geneva. They had been estimated to go for 2-4 million Swiss francs.

"The first bid was five million francs—that's how excited collectors were to try to acquire a real piece of history that has remained in the same family for 200 years," Rahul Kadakia, international head of jewelry at Christie's, told AFP. "In the end, the bracelets achieved \$8 million; really an astonishing price for a really, really great jewel." When king Louis XVI, his wife Marie Antoinette and their children

tried to flee the French Revolution in March 1791, the royal jewels were smuggled out of the country into the trust of a confidant in Brussels. They were then sent on to relatives in the queen's Austrian homeland and passed down through the generations. The bracelets were auctioned as part of Christie's Geneva Magnificent Jewels sale. — AFP



Flowers are seen on the Hollywood Walk of Fame star of actor Dean Stockwell. — AFP



'Quantum Leap' actor Dean Stockwell dies

"Quantum Leap" actor Dean Stockwell, who was a regular on film and television over eight decades, has died in Hollywood, his publicist said. He was 85. Stockwell died at his home of natural causes, according to the publicist. The son of acting parents, Stockwell began performing at the age of just seven, appearing in the Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra musical "Anchors Aweigh."

But his most memorable role was opposite a time-travelling scientist played by Scott Bakula in "Quantum Leap," which ran for five seasons. A lengthy screen career notched up credits in films such as Wim Wenders' 1984 classic "Paris, Texas" and David Lynch's adaptation of "Dune" the same year. Stockwell teamed up again with Lynch for "Blue Velvet," which also starred Dennis Hopper and Kyle MacLachlan, where he lip-synched the Roy Orbison song "In Dreams."

He picked up an Oscar nomination for his mafia boss Tony "the Tiger" Russo in the 1988 comedy "Married to the Mob." "Quantum Leap" earned him a Golden Globe and four Emmy nominations. He is survived by his wife and two children. — AFP

Escaped fox raised as a dog caught in Peru

An escaped fox, whose owners thought it was a dog, has been caught and sent to a zoo after terrorizing a Lima neighborhood, Peruvian authorities said Tuesday. The medium-sized, eight-month old Andean fox named Run Run wreaked havoc on small farms in the Comas neighborhood, eating ducks, chickens and guinea pigs much to the chagrin of its owners' neighbors. "Following a patient pursuit, the Forest and Wildlife Service (Serfor) managed to catch the Andean fox, called Run Run, while it wandered close to the Comas district," said the Ministry of Agrarian Development and Irrigation in a statement.

Serfor officials used a tranquilizer dart to catch the fox after throwing it food on Monday night, the ministry said. Run Run is in good health and has been taken to a Lima zoo, where the fox has quickly become the star attraction. A local newspa-



This handout picture released by Peruvian News Agency Andina shows an Andean fox named Run Run, at a local zoo following his capture in Lima. — AFP

per said Run Run devoured 15 guinea pigs and six chickens over the weekend alone. Another newspaper spoke to a neighbor who said she had befriended the fox and had been feeding it grilled chicken. The fox's former owners paid 50 soles (close to \$15) to buy what they thought was a Siberian Husky for their daughter at a back street animal market where they were conned by animal traffickers.

"They said it's a wolf-dog, but we didn't know it was a fox. It ate normally, like any

dog, but as it was growing it was clear that it wasn't a dog," Maribel Sotelo, who bought the animal for her daughter, told America Television. The government says the Andean fox is a victim of wild animal trafficking, a crime that is punishable by three to five years in jail. — AFP

Branagh draws on 'other lockdown' of Troubles for Oscar frontrunner 'Belfast'

"Belfast," a hot favorite to become the first Oscar best picture winner made during the pandemic, was inspired by the "other lockdown" of Northern Ireland's Troubles, its writer-director Kenneth Branagh said Tuesday. The critically acclaimed black-and-white drama-out Friday-received its glitzy Los Angeles premiere at the newly minted Academy Museum this week, as its studio Focus Features gears up for a lengthy award season campaign for the movie based on Branagh's childhood.

"It came out of that silence that a lot of us stared into at the beginning of the lock-

down and it certainly sent me back to this other lockdown that we experienced where both ends of the street were barricaded," said Branagh. The Shakespearean stage actor-turned-movie star and director moved with his family to England in the late 1960s to escape escalating violence in Northern Ireland. The movie begins with a scene of street violence in the summer of 1969, when Protestant gangs attack Catholic families to force them out of streets where the two groups had lived side by side.

"I was 16 when 1969 arrived and I have memories of the thrill of this explosion, and it was only a day later that I started to see the menace of it," said co-star Ciaran Hinds, who, like many of the cast, grew up in Belfast. "My childhood at that time was the sound of the city at night, and explosions in the distance echoed off the hills of Belfast, or gunfire at night." The so-called "Troubles" would blight the British province for the next three decades, dividing communities along religious and nationalist lines. Set against the outbreak of that violence, the film cen-

ters on a family whose young father (Jamie Dornan) reluctantly wants to leave Belfast to secure a better future.

His wife (Caitriona Balfe) and young son (Jude Hill) wish to remain in a tightly knit neighborhood where they have deep roots. "Belfast" entered production in August of 2020, with daily Covid-19 testing and departments such as props and sound given strict windows to set up in isolation. "I wanted to shake hands with that nine-year-old kid, and also try to understand what my parents have gone through," said Branagh. "In this pandemic a lot of people have made enormous numbers of sacrifices. And I think in this time, and in these communities, people did (too)."

'Emotional release'

The film blends humor and emotional family scenes, with wry performances from Hinds and Judi Dench as young Buddy's ailing but quick-witted grandparents also earning rave reviews. "I think it's to do with maybe us not being fully put back together again, after what we've been through," said Branagh, of the film's popularity. "There's still a couple of layers of skin missing. And maybe we need some emotional release, and storytelling has always helped provide that." The movie presents a chance for Branagh, 60, to win a first Oscar after five Academy Award nominations—all in different categories.

His first nods came in 1990 — best actor and director for "Henry V"—and three years later he was nominated again for best live action short film for "Swan Song," before another for the adapted screenplay of "Hamlet" in 1997. Having lost his Irish accent as a child who "just wanted to not stick out" in England, Branagh said theater and film had finally enabled him to reconnect with his roots. In recent years, Northern Ireland has emerged as a major film and television production hub, providing many of the settings for smash hit series "Game of Thrones." "The Irish were born for leaving, but that leaving comes at a price," said Branagh. "I most certainly lost my way for quite some time, I would say. It took me a long way to find our way back home. And with this film I did." — AFP



(From left) Director Kenneth Branagh, actors Ciaran Hinds, Caitriona Balfe, Jude Hill and Jamie Dornan attend the premiere of Focus Features' "Belfast" at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles. — AFP



In this file photo Rapper Travis Scott performs. — AFP

Travis Scott sued by family of nine-year-old coma patient

Travis Scott is being sued for \$1 million by the family of a nine-year-old boy who was "nearly crushed to death" at Astroworld Festival. Ezra Blount is currently in a medically-induced coma as doctors attempt to alleviate the trauma he suffered to his brain, liver and kidney when he was "kicked, stepped on, and trampled, and nearly crushed to death" during the rapper's set at his event in Houston, Texas on Friday. The complaint stated: "To his young, growing body, these injuries will have life-long effects, impairing his quality of life and ability to grow and thrive as he would have had he not been subjected to this incident."

The lawsuit - which refers to the youngster only as E.B. - has alleged "negligence in a great number of aspects, including crowd control, failure to provide proper medical attention, hiring, training, supervision and retention" from Travis, Live Nation Entertainment, Scoremore Mgmt, and others involved in organizing the event at NRG Park. Personal injury attorney Ben Crump explained the lawsuit had been filed in court so independent experts commissioned by the Blount family's legal team would be able to access the roped-off crime scene at the venue, where hundreds

were injured and eight died following a crowd surge.

He added: "The suffering that this family is going through is immeasurable. This little boy had his whole life ahead of him - a life that is currently hanging in the balance because of the reckless mismanagement that ensued at the Astroworld Festival. "We ask everyone to send up the most powerful prayers they can as this family tries to grapple with the undoable damage that has been done to their son. We demand justice for EB, his family, and all of our clients that left Astroworld with trauma." The defendants are accused of failing to stop the 'Sicko Mode' hitmaker's performance until more than 40 minutes after the "mass casualty event" started and the family are seeking damages "for negligent and grossly negligent conduct".

Live Nation said in a statement to People magazine: "[We will] continue to support and assist local authorities in their ongoing investigation so that both the fans who attended and their families can get the answers they want and deserve, and we will address all legal matters at the appropriate time." Ezra had been at the concert with his father Treston. — AFP