

LIFESTYLE ENTERTAINMENT



**White House Alice in Wonderland party under fire** An apparently lavish Alice in Wonderland party at the White House has been criticised in a new book. The 2009 event saw the State Dining Room redecorated by film director Tim Burton, and was attended by Johnny Depp, President Obama and his wife. It was described by New York Times correspondent Jodi Kantor in her book, *The Obamas*. She says officials kept details under wraps because they

were "nervous" about how the party would appear to voters. After excerpts from the book were published, Britain's *Telegraph* newspaper described the Alice In Wonderland event as "an embarrassment for a White House that seems not to have heard of the age of austerity". But a White House official said the party was "no secret". The *Telegraph's* Alex Spillius wrote: "Depp greeted guests in the costume he had worn in a film version of the Lewis Carroll story released around the same time by (Tim) Burton - the film's director - who was given carte blanche to transform the state dining room into a Mad Hatter's tea party." In Kantor's book, *The Obamas*, she states: "White House officials were so nervous about how a splashy, Hollywood-esque party would look to jobless Americans or their representatives in Congress, who would soon vote on health care, that the event was not discussed publicly and Burton and Depp's contributions went unacknowledged." She describes a long table at the party as being "set with antique-looking linens, enormous stuffed animals in chairs, and tiered serving plates with treats like bone-shaped meringue cookies". But White House spokesman Eric Shultz denied Kantor's version of events. "This was an event for local school children from the Washington DC area and for hundreds of military families. If we wanted this event to be a secret, we probably wouldn't have invited the press corps to cover it, release photos of it to Flickr, or post a video from it on the White House website," he said in a statement released to Politico, a political news website. *BBC*



**William Shatner heads to Broadway with solo show** Actor William Shatner, best known as *Star Trek's* Captain Kirk, is to return to Broadway after 50 years to stage a one-man show. The 80-year-old will deliver a two-hour monologue in *Shatner's World: We Just Live In It* at the Music Box Theater. The show is billed as a "voyage through Shatner's life and career, from Shakespearean stage actor to internationally known icon". He last appeared on Broadway in 1962, in

the premiere of *A Shot In The Dark*. The play, adapted from French playwright Marcel Achard's *L'Idiot*, later became the basis for a *Pink Panther* film. Shatner played magistrate Paul Sevigne, and was praised for being the play's "straight man". Following that role, Shatner branched out into film and television work, making guest appearances in shows including *The Twilight Zone* and *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* But he did not find mainstream success until he landed the lead role in the original *Star Trek* TV series in 1966. The sci-fi show led to a successful film series, and Shatner has also appeared in TV shows including *TJ Hooker* and *Third Rock From The Sun*. He has also released a series of cult albums, featuring his spoken-word interpretations of hits like *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*, *Common People* and *Space Oddity*. It has not been confirmed whether he will recite any of these songs on Broadway. The show opens for previews on 14 February and closes on 4 March. The theatre will then stage the first US production of hit West End show *One Man, Two Guvnors*, starring James Corden. *BBC*



**World Service 'advert plan' attacked by former director** Plans to run adverts on the BBC World Service have been attacked by one of its former managing directors. The scheme to insert advertising into World Service English output on the Berlin FM frequency is "the worst of all possible worlds", Sir John Tusa told Radio 4's *The World At One*. He said it would breach a "crucial" principle and "not raise much money". The scheme follows a

government request that the Service generates £3m from commercial activities by 2013/2014. Advertisements will also be put on the World Service's Arabic, Russian and Spanish websites. "You can't be a little bit commercial," said Sir John, who was head of the World Service from 1986 to 1993. "It's not a trivial matter or a trivial moment." Jim Egan, acting director of global news at the BBC, accepted it was "a significant moment" but said the plan would provide "a significant contribution to the £3 million target". He refuted Sir John's suggestion that it represented "the thin edge of the wedge" and would lead to advertising across the BBC. The World Service started broadcasting in 1932 and has a worldwide weekly audience of 240 million across radio, television and online. In 2010 the government reduced its annual £270m budget by 16% and said the Foreign Office would no longer fund it from 2014. *BBC*

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**Jay-Z posts song about his first child with Beyonce** Jay-Z has posted a song about the birth of his first child with Beyonce, Blue Ivy Carter. The track, *Glory*, made its debut on his social network website *Life and Times*. The couple also released an official statement confirming the birth saying their daughter was "the most beautiful" girl in the world. "Her birth was emotional and extremely peaceful, we are in heaven. It was



the best experience of both of our lives," it said. "We are thankful to everyone for all your prayers, well wishes, love and support." The couple said the baby was delivered naturally and weighed seven pounds (3.2kg). In Jay-Z's new track, he reveals that Beyonce suffered a miscarriage before the birth of Blue Ivy Carter. The lyrics read: "Last time the miscarriage was so tragic/We was afraid you'd disappear/But nah baby you magic." It also talks about the child being conceived in Paris with the sound of a baby's cries ending the song. Many stars took to Twitter at the weekend to pass on messages to the new parents. Beyonce's sister Solange, Rihanna, Gwyneth Paltrow and hip hop mogul Russell Simmons all tweeted their congratulations. Beyonce announced she was expecting her first child in August 2011 at the MTV VMAs held in Los Angeles before performing on stage. Together since 2002, the rapper and singer married in April 2008. *BBC*



**Roald Dahl stamps honour writer's most popular characters** A series of stamps celebrating Roald Dahl's classic children's books have been released by the Royal Mail. They include illustrations of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and *Fantastic Mr Fox*. The Cardiff-born author's other books featured on stamps are *James and the Giant Peach*, *Matilda*, *The Twits*, *The Witches* and *The BFG*. Ophelia Dahl said her father, who died in 1990, would

have been "thrilled" by the tribute. Each stamp features illustrations by Quentin Blake, whose drawings are synonymous with the children's classics. The 30th anniversary of *The BFG*, or *Big Friendly Giant*, one of Dahl's most popular characters, is marked by a sheet of four stamps all of which feature scenes from the book. His daughter said: "My dad wrote thousands of letters home throughout his life and never dreamed that one day one of his own characters would grace a stamp. He'd be thrilled. This is an excellent way for us to kick off a year of celebrations to mark 30 years in print for *The BFG* and it's great that the stamps include a collector's set, devoted to *The BFG* and other characters from this book." Dahl was born and grew up in Llandaff, Cardiff, and spent his later years in Buckinghamshire. *BBC*

**The Devil Inside tops US box office**

Low budget horror film *The Devil Inside* has spirited its way to the top of the North American box office, taking \$34.5m (£22.4m) on its opening weekend. It is the tale of a woman investigating exorcisms performed on her mother. Like *Paranormal Activity* and *Cloverfield* before it, the film is released by studio Paramount and is filmed in a mock-documentary style. Last week's number one, *Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol*, dropped to two, with receipts of \$20.5m (£13.3m). As with 2007's *Paranormal Activity*, which has gone on to spawn two sequels, and 2008's *Cloverfield*, which topped the US and Canada box office in January 2008, *The Devil Inside* benefited from a cryptic online marketing push. Don Harris, president of domestic distribution for Paramount, said: "The marketing campaign was very much like *Paranormal [Activity]*. "It was online, trying to find the younger movie-goer, the fans for this genre." Paramount bought the independently-produced film - which has been widely slated by critics - for just \$1m (£648,000). The success of the film, the only new release in the US last week, took many industry experts by surprise. "This one caught everyone looking, but the devil got his due," said Hollywood.com analyst Paul Dergarabedian said. "It's just very difficult to track the horror fan base, no question about it." *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* dropped a place to number three, taking \$14.1m (£9.1m). Guy Ritchie's film, starring Robert Downey Jr and Jude Law, has now taken \$157.4m (£102m) in North America since its release on 16 November. David Fincher's film adaptation of Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* climbed a place to number four, with \$11.3m (£7.3m). And family film *Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked* dropped two to five, taking \$9.5m (£6.2m). *BBC*



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