



11 P.M. WEDNESDAY Never mind the red carpet, Jennifer Tilly, right, works a white party.

8 P.M. TUESDAY The crowds were thick as smoke at a benefit auction at the Ace Gallery. The model Alec Wek, top left, was one of many told to move along by fire marshals.

9 P.M. WEDNESDAY J. T., call home. Jennifer Tilly, left, multitasks at the Gucci party at the store in Beverly Hills.

MATTHEW KURTZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

'My Agent Told Me I Better Show Up at Some Events'

In a mad whirl of parties before Oscar night, Hollywood insiders advance their careers, one air kiss at a time.

By **BOB MORRIS**

LOS ANGELES

ORSON WELLES called Hollywood a "bright, guilty place," but there was little trace of guilt in the air all last week as parties overtook the town in anticipation of tonight.

Despite the recent firing of 75 Miramax employees, the announced layoffs of 300 Disney animators and the more sober mood of the entertainment industry since Sept. 11, thousands of people in the movie and fashion worlds rode a tidal wave of A and B-list bacchanalia with unrepentant glee.

"It's spring break for insiders," said a young, sociable agent at the Endeavor talent agency, who would not give his name for fear of being compared to Sammy Glick, the mythically pushy operator of "What Makes Sammy Run?" Young agents are notorious party mongers. But then, they have to be, not just to shmooze, but to show other players that they're on the

same lists. But what if you're an actress? Do you go out or stay in?

For Jennifer Tilly, out has been the way to go all week. "My agent told me I better show up at some events so people will remember who I am," she said on Monday night at a premiere party for "The Panic Room" at a nightclub in Century City. "He told me my Greta Garbo routine was costing me jobs."

Ms. Tilly is no Garbo. But after being in New York over the fall in the Broadway production of "The Women" and perhaps because of a boyfriend she described as "agoraphobic," she hasn't been getting around quite as much as she used to.

"If the press doesn't see you out, after a while they think you've fallen off the A-list or gotten into drugs," said Ms. Tilly, who appears next month in Peter Bogdanovich's "Cat's Meow," but who has not been signed up for a next movie role.

So when a friend asked her to score premiere tickets to "The Panic Room," starring Jodie Foster, she had her publicist do so. Poof, there she was, walking the red carpet, signing autographs, joking with the paparaz-

zi who adore her, and trawling a nightclub later that was as stocked as a harem tent with food, liquor and beautiful people.

In a week in which Hollywood skipped from party to

party, there were eight million stories in the overdressed city, eight million people with an agenda to their merriment. Jennifer Tilly was one. "I mean why stay home getting a vicarious thrill from TV when you can go out and see people you know and be fabulous yourself?" she said.

Well, for many reasons, actually, like being scrutinized the wrong way (Ms. Tilly occasionally appears on Mr. Blackwell's Worst-Dressed list) or for having an unflattering picture taken that could appear in tabloids if a drug problem happens to occur. Another good reason not to go out is to protect a delicate ego.

"Look at the way they have all the V.I.P.'s penned into the middle of the room with Jodie Foster and Brad Pitt," said Ms. Tilly as she eyed them from afar with her date. "There isn't a minute in this town when you aren't keenly aware of exactly where you stand career-wise."

As an acknowledgment of her precise place in the hierarchy here, Ms. Tilly decided early on in her career

Continued on Page 6

INSIDE

HOLLYWOOD JOURNAL

The view from the Grill, a power-lunch counter.

PAGE 2

CRITICAL ACCLAIM? NO

David Manning, the real one, reveals his Oscar picks.

PAGE 6