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Style

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A Beautiful Cause for Angelina Jolie

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In a perfect world, a gorgeous Hollywood actress donates time and money for her humanitarian work, is honored for said work and uses her celebrity to raise consciousness and hope. This being an imperfect world, the presence of Angelina Jolie at any event turns collected sophisticates (especially men) into lovesick adolescents.

Such is the life of a benevolent sex goddess.

Jolie, along with former secretary of state Colin Powell, was honored last night at the Kuwait Embassy for her work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The black-tie dinner, hosted by Ambassador Salem Sabah and his wife, Rima, raised more than \$1 million to help Iraqi women and children return to their country. The 100 guests, including White House deputy chief of staff Karl Rove, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia and Anthony Kennedy, Joint Chiefs Chairman Richard Myers, Mayor Tony Williams and emcee Paula



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Angelina Jolie and Colin Powell at the benefit dinner for Iraqi refugees.

Zahn, nibbled on lobster, listened to Marvin Hamlisch and sneaked furtive glances at Jolie.

"She'll do in a pinch," teased Ken Duberstein.

The face that launched a thousand fantasies was demure, hair pulled back, with Jolie in a conservative black jacket, shell and fishtail shirt. She was gracious, self-effacing and knowledgeable. And beautiful, in that extravagant way that eclipses everything else.

"I feel like a little kid," she said before accepting her award. "I'm just in awe how everyone's speaking from the heart and how everyone really cares."

The 29-year-old actress was in Washington this week as goodwill ambassador for the UNHCR on a two-day trip that included an appearance at the National Press Club, a lobbying trip to the Hill, the launch of a legal center for refugee children, an interview on "Nightline" and last

night's dinner. Her every move was shadowed by reporters and photographers.

"She is serious about what she does," Powell said. "They couldn't have a better goodwill ambassador."

Or a hotter one, celebrity-wise. (Okay, she was just voted "Sexiest Woman in Hollywood," if you keep track of that sort of thing. Anyway, she's hot.) During the hour that Jolie spoke at the press club, camera shutters constantly clicked while she answered questions about international affairs and refugee policies.

"I'm always so nervous answering these questions because I feel I come from a place from my heart and my gut," she told the audience. In the hands of someone pompous, the whole "star reaching out" persona is off-putting. But Jolie is careful not to speak beyond her experience, or preach and deflects the spotlight to the reason she is there.

"She really cares about the plight of refugees," said Rima Sabah, who chaired the benefit. "She really wants to help. Every word comes from the heart."

So in terms of drawing attention to the cause, the good news is Jolie gathers headlines wherever she goes. The bad news is Jolie gathers headlines wherever she goes. The Oscar for Best Supporting Actress at the age of 24 for "Girl, Interrupted." The "Tomb Raider" movies. The marriage to Billy Bob Thornton. The rift

A Dinner's Exquisite Centerpiece

DINNER, *From C1*

with father Jon Voight. The lips. The tattoos. The “did she or didn’t she?” rumors about Brad Pitt.

Her expressed interest in refugees initially was greeted with raised eyebrows. Her first exposure to the subject came in 2001 while filming in Cambodia (she adopted her 3-year-old son, Maddox, from there).

“It was very clear to me there was a lot about this world that I didn’t know,” she said. “I felt really ashamed and ignorant It just changed my life.”

She contacted the United Nations and spent almost a year traveling to refugee camps around the world before becoming a goodwill ambassador. She wrote a book about her travels, produced a documentary and recently donated \$500,000 to establish the National Center for Refugee and Immigrant Children, which is designed to provide pro bono legal representation for refugees in immigration court. There are plenty of experts on refugee issues but not many who get an invitation from Davos to speak in front of the world’s economic power brokers. The net effect is probably positive, both for the refugees and for Jolie.

“Celebrity is ... a weird thing,” she told “Nightline,” “and it can feel very empty at the end of the night to think... why is anybody giving any attention to — because I made a film? Because I wore a dress to some — it’s silly, and it feels very shallow because you’re aware of how empty it can be. So, when you’re doing something good, and you can bring attention to that or discuss that, then it feels like you have



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Carl Rove is kissed by Rima Sabah, as her husband, Kuwaiti Ambassador Salem Sabah, looks on.

some sense in your life.”

Last night’s dinner was originally planned, sans Jolie, as a benefit by the Kuwait-America Foundation for the 400,000 Iraqi refugees (mostly women and children) registered with UNHCR in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other countries. Many of their husbands and fathers have returned to Iraq, but their families are waiting until they can rebuild their homes. The UNHCR provides them with cash grants, basic household supplies and transportation back to Iraq.

The force behind the night, noted a number of speakers, was Rima Sabah. “She’s driven us all crazy,” teased Powell. “I can only handle Rima once a year.”

Sabah assembled an impressive guest list—White House social secretary Lea Berman, Esther Coopersmith, Reps. John Dingell and Ed Markey, Joint Chiefs Vice Chairman Peter Pace and Molly Raiser, head of the United States Association for UNHCR, rounded out the crowd and raised \$1 million from underwriters ChevronTexaco and

Dow Chemical, and sponsors including Boeing, ExxonMobil, Occidental Petroleum, ConocoPhillips, General Motors, Kuwait Petroleum and the Kuwait Embassy.

“Kuwaitis, like Iraqis, have experienced firsthand the brutality of Saddam’s regime, and victims help each other,” said Rima Sabah. “By helping Iraqi refugees return to their homeland, we are contributing to a more promising future for Iraq.”

The embassy was filled with roses and candles, some of which floated in the fountain inside. The menu included lobster, risotto with white truffles, leg of lamb and baked Alaska. Hamlich performed with the Master Chorale of Washington and the Children’s Chorus of Washington.

Everyone went home feeling charitable and noble and warm—“I am leaving here with my heart really full,” Zahn said. And they knew the first question they’d hear today is, “What did Jolie look like?”

She looked like every sex goddess goodwill ambassador should.