



BROODING: Ralph Fiennes



UNKEMPT: Rufus Sewell



RUGGED: Liam Neeson



SENSITIVE: Colin Firth

Farewell to last of the lover boys

By Caroline Phillips

THIS is a time of national mourning. Of women wearing black Armani armbands. Of not a dry high cheekbone in the country. This is the era of the distressed female.

The last male remaining on the shopping list of the world's most desirable men has just become unavailable.

The stocks of eminently eligible single men are now exhausted. Liam Neeson, Rufus Sewell, Colin Firth and Ralph Fiennes have all been snapped up, leaving just the Fairy Liquid on the shelves. And we're not at all sure about Daniel Day-Lewis either.

The last covetable single man, Gabriel Byrne, *The Usual Suspects* star — rugged, brooding looks and haunted Celtic character — has been taken by beautiful Julia Ormond, of *Legends Of The Fall* fame. Just as Gabriel became available after ending his marriage to actress Ellen Barkin, pretty star of *Sea Of Love*. Oh weep.

Gabriel, 46, was spotted cuddling Julia, 30, in Copenhagen cafes during the filming of *Miss Smilla's Feeling For Snow*. And seen here, exclusively, exchanging smouldering glances.

Last week the pin-up of *la femme qui pense* admitted that he is dating Julia. To rub our retrousse noses in it Gabriel confirmed, in a brief statement, that he was "happy" with his love life. If only Julia, she of the bee-stung lips, hadn't split with her gynaecologist boyfriend Will Eldridge.

We live in *If Only* times. Daniel Day-Lewis, firmly established as an actor and sex symbol, has a weakness for French actresses. If only he didn't. Still unmarried at the age of 39, we thought there was

hope. With that captivating smile, penetrating eyes, lean frame and plagued with personal demons, Daniel exudes sexual magnetism.

It was hard to bear when Daniel, the womanising doctor from the *Unbearable Lightness Of Being*, fell for the French actress Isabelle Adjani — and fathered her child. He then became free briefly when he walked out on her but went straight into the arms of Julia Roberts.

Their affair was brief, so perhaps there's some hope.

What about Rufus Sewell, tousle-haired lead in the BBC's *Middlemarch* and lusty, rustic Seth in *Cold Comfort Farm*? We held our breath last year when we heard that he had rejected the advances of Madonna, cutting short his dinner date with the queen of man-eaters. Here was hope at last.

We held our breath until we turned blue when Rufus split up with his actress girlfriend Helen McCrory, saying:

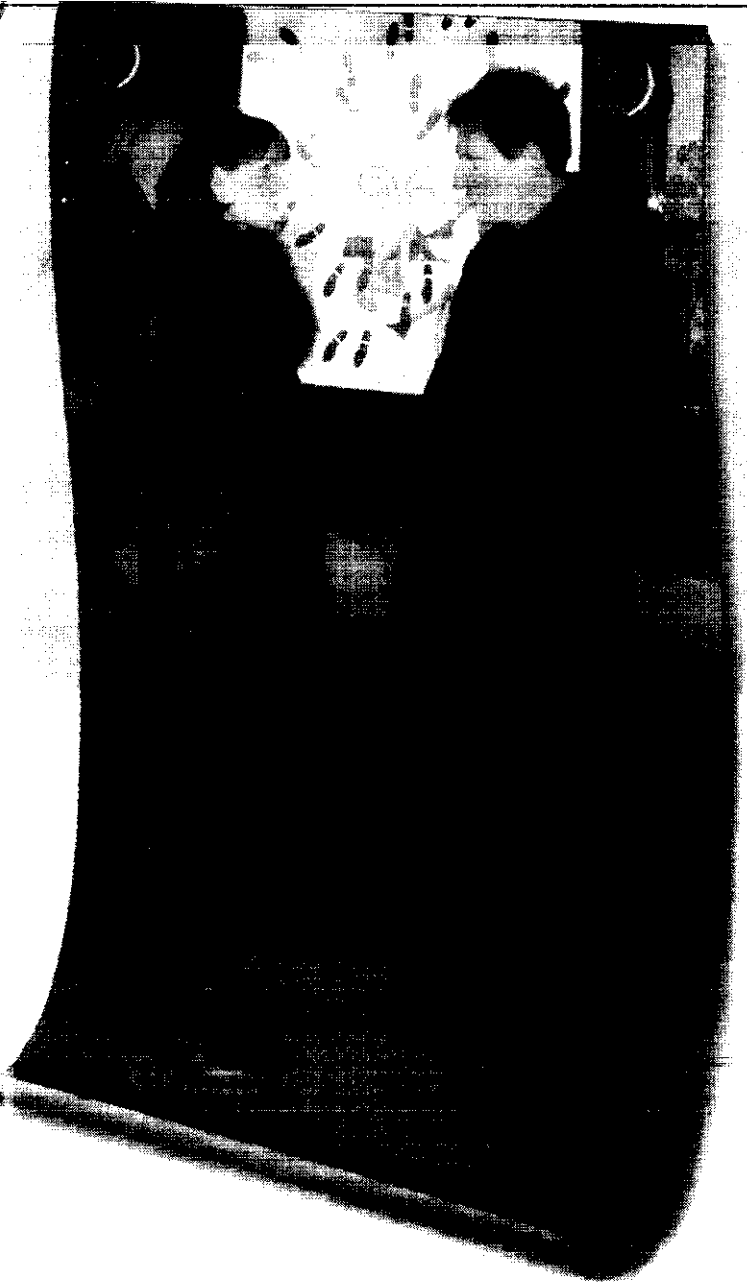
"I'm not the sort of person who needs the security of a relationship. I am not really looking."

But now, alas alack, *Sense And Sensibility* actress Kate Winslet has offered him the security he doesn't need. Rufus has jumped off the shelf into her arms.

Colin Firth, *Mr Darcy* of the BBC's *Pride And Prejudice*, was another one. All sideburns and sensitivity, he upset the emotional equilibrium of every female on the globe.

Like Rufus, he declared: "I don't need a woman around." And then fell hopelessly for Livia Giuggioli, Italian beauty and assistant to the producer of *Nostromo*, the forthcoming TV adaptation of

'The stock of eligible bachelors has now run out'



EYE CONTACT: Julia and Gabriel exchange smouldering looks on the film set

Joseph Conrad's book about a South American country in revolution.

Now Colin is to star in Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch*, about the problems of growing up an Arsenal fan. Such problems are insignificant compared to the news that his fan Livia is about to kick him up the aisle.

Then there is Ralph (call me Rafe) Fiennes, the Amon Goeth of *Schindler's List*, and about whom Steven Spielberg said: "He has a very keen sense of his own sexuality."

Until last October, Fiennes's broody sensibility was protected by his wife, actress Alex Kingston. But now, as the shy, reserved actor becomes variously known as the new O'Toole, new Olivier and new James Bond, the couple are estranged. Hurrah! said the girls.

But then wayward Ralph, 33, developed an intense bond with actress Francesca Annis who, at 18 years his senior, should be past her sell-by date. Boo! said the girls.

Suddenly Ralph was off the shelf. Last month the couple moved in together and were said to be deeply, madly in love.

There is a glimmer of hope, however. New stocks may soon be available.

Actor Sean Bean recently parted from his actress wife Melanie Hill, of Bread fame, on the unusual grounds of his obsession with football. With his bruising masculinity, deep-seated chivalry and football tattoo on his shoulder, Sean was once voted Rear Of The Year.

He shot to fame after taking exercise with Joely Richardson in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Undeterred, he went on to bare all in *Stormy Monday* and *A Woman's Guide To Adultery*. His wife joked then that he had written into his contracts that he had to take his clothes off in

every part. If you like laddish behaviour, he may soon be back on the shelves.

Finally, take Liam Neeson. (If only I could, I hear you say.) Our hearts soared when Liam, actor and rugged former forklift truck driver, ended his liaison with Julia Roberts. Liam, 43, the Oskar Schindler of *Schindler's List*, gives off electricity, which has nothing to do with his stocky neck or bent nose.

As Jessica Lange said: "It's not hard to imagine being in love with him or married to him." But then, oh woe, the smouldering Irish star married actress Natasha Richardson — who had only

been married to her first husband, British producer Robert Fox, for 15 months when she fell for Liam.

Recently, Liam's marriage to the pregnant Natasha was rumoured to be heading for disaster, although they looked happy together when pictured last week walking hand-in-hand along a beach.

Liam's latest role is in *Before And After*, in which he plays the protective father of a sullen teenager suspected of murder. Meryl Streep co-stars as his sensible wife.

He admits accepting the role largely because of her presence. We must hope Liam wants a sensible wife in celluloid alone.

Back to Gabriel Byrne and Julia Ormond. The film of *Miss Smilla's Feeling For Snow*, based on Peter Hoeg's best-selling book, has an inhospitable, wintry heroine and central characters who reject the modern urban world.

Little did the crew know as they filmed the melancholy and beautiful journey through the ice that Gabriel's behaviour would soon be freezing the female hearts of the world. This is indeed a time of national mourning.

**‘Sean Bean
may soon
be back
on the
shelves’**
