

## Sexiest Arab pop star says 'I do'

**BEIRUT:** Lebanese singer HAIFA WEHBE, the biggest sex symbol in the Arabic pop scene, was celebrating her wedding at a star-studded party last night, a day after a hush-hush private ceremony.

The voluptuous 35-year-old brunette model-turned-singer, known for her revealing outfits, said "I do" at a private wedding service in Beirut on Thursday, her agent said.

*Al Akhbar* newspaper identified the lucky man who won Haifa's heart as Egyptian entrepreneur AHMAD ABU HUSHEIMA, one year her junior.

Guests at the party included American glamour model CARMEN ELECTRA, who gained fame by appearing in *Playboy* magazine, and singer ANASTASIA, the newspaper said.

Haifa started a trend across the Arab

world in 2002 with her long dark hair and sultry looks and does not shy away from sexually suggestive songs that are often the centre of controversy and blatant outrage.

The pop star is a self-professed fan of Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of the militant group Hizbollah which fought a deadly 34-day war with Israel in July 2006 that killed more than 1,200 Lebanese and 160 Israeli troops.

"I admire his wisdom, his charisma," Haifa said in a Lebanese television interview after the war, adding that her admiration for Nasrallah grew after the war.

Haifa fled Lebanon to Egypt during the conflict but refused to sing in public until peace was restored in her home country.

Some more conservative Arab countries are highly critical of Haifa, who found fame

with a music video that featured her dancing in the rain in a red dress.

In April 2008, Bahrain's parliament approved a motion asking the government to ban a performance by Haifa on moral grounds – despite assurances by organisers that the superstar would dress modestly.

Nevertheless a prim Haifa dressed in a floor-length, V-neck emerald gown sang for her Bahraini fans in Manama a few days later.

Her portfolio mainly seductive love songs but she has also released children's song, including one with the English title *Naughty* and a track called *Buss al Wawa*, or *Kiss my little wound*.

▲ Wehbe ... wedding



# Crisis strikes a sour note...

**LONDON:** The finances of Britain's top music stars, including **ELTON JOHN**, **PAUL McCARTNEY** and **ROBBIE WILLIAMS**, have been badly hit by the recession, figures from the *Sunday Times* Rich List showed yesterday.

John's personal fortune fell 26 per cent in the last year, from £238 million to £175m (BD94m) in 2009, according to a preview of the list of Britain's 1,000 wealthiest people.

Former Beatle McCartney has also reportedly seen his fortune fall by £60m to £440m (BD242m) in the past 12 months due to



▲ McCartney, Elton John and Williams ... crunch times

falling property and share values.

Ex-Take That star Robbie Williams lost £25m and now has £80m (BD44m). Welsh crooner **TOM JONES'** wealth dropped 24pc to £130m (BD72m) and **CLIFF RICHARD'S** fell by a fifth to £40m (BD22m).

Troubled singer **AMY WINEHOUSE**, pictured in recent weeks taking it easy on the Caribbean island of Saint Lucia, saw her fortune halve from £10m last year to £5m (BD2.76m) this year.

Her record company is still waiting for her to record a follow-up to her award-winning 2006 album *Back To Black* as she battles problems in her personal life.

Ian Coxon, the list's editor, said that performers who relied on their investments to generate wealth had been the worse hit.

"Robbie Williams is run as a business and there's been a profit fall in 2007, so that's had a knock-on effect and he's not been doing so much recently," Coxon said.

"He's never quite fulfilled the promise that he had a few years ago."

## Beckham 'is richest athlete in Britain'

**LONDON:** **DAVID BECKHAM** has been confirmed as Britain's richest athlete by The *Sunday Times'* annual Rich List.

The 34-year-old former England captain has amassed a fortune estimated at £125 million (BD69m), almost 40 per cent greater than retired heavyweight boxer **LENNOX LEWIS**, who is in second place.

Beckham's fortune, buoyed by his spells with Major League Soccer's Los Angeles Galaxy and Italy's AC Milan, put him tied for 426th overall in Britain, on a list which was headed last year by steel magnate **LAKSHMI MITTAL**.

In the list of athletes, the next seven places are occupied by current or former Formula One figures, with world championship leader **JENSON BUTTON** tied for ninth place with England striker **MICHAEL OWEN** on £40m (BD22m).

The list includes those who either live or predominantly work in Britain.

## Dramatic makeover for Boyle

**LONDON:** The economy is scary, jobs are disappearing and taxes are going up. But Britain is buzzing over something else – **SUSAN BOYLE'S** new hairdo.

Some say the overnight singing sensation who rocketed to fame after a phenomenal performance on *Britain's Got Talent* has every right to upgrade her dowdy appearance.

Others fear she may lose her authenticity – and her amazing connection with the TV audience – if she goes too far in the image makeover department.

The change is startling. Gone is the fusty woman with graying, frizzy hair and a jowly face who joked on air that she had never been kissed, replaced by a stylish, freshly-coiffed lady in fashion-



▲ Boyle ... hairdo

ionable leather jacket and what looks to be a Burberry scarf. The dark, unkempt eyebrows have been shaped and coloured.

Fashion experts say she's taken years off her looks, but should think twice about making more improvements, particularly if they go beyond styling and involve artificial enhancements.

"She looks 10 years younger," said Toni Jones, assistant fashion editor at *The Sun* tabloid newspaper, which featured the new look Boyle on its cover on Friday. "Compared to what she had, it's a 200 per cent improvement. But our readers think this is as far as she should go.

We want her to stay one of us."

## Jay Leno misses first show in 17 years

**LOS ANGELES:** **JAY LENO** checked into a Los Angeles hospital yesterday with an undisclosed illness, forcing the US comedian to cancel a taping of *The Tonight Show* for the first time in his 17-year tenure. His representatives did not say what he was treated for at the hospital. Leno, 58, has not missed a scheduled appearance on the show since he started hosting it in 1992, except for a show a few years ago in which he traded places with Katie Couric, NBC said.

## Naked row Japan singer says sorry

**TOKYO:** A Japanese pop star apologised to his fans yesterday after being arrested for allegedly being naked and drunk in a Tokyo park. "I drank a lot, and did not know what I was doing. As an adult, I did something shameful," **TSUYOSHI KUSANAGI**, a 34-year-old member of the hugely popular group **SMAP**, said.

## Battle of Bulge director Annakin dies

**LOS ANGELES:** British-born film director **KEN ANNAKIN**, the man behind war film *The Battle of the Bulge* and *Swiss Family Robinson*, has died at his Beverly Hills home in America at the age of 94, his family said. Annakin, who was born in Yorkshire, England, made more than 60 movies, ranging from comedies and adventure to documentaries, his daughter Deborah Peters said.

## Snoop Dogg beating case hearing begins

**SANTA MONICA:** Opening statements have begun in a civil case brought by a man who alleges he was severely beaten in 2005 by US rapper **SNOOP DOGG** and his entourage. Richard Monroe Jr claims he suffered serious injuries after jumping onstage during a Seattle concert. Monroe seeks \$22 million (BD8.2m) in damages and punitive penalties against the rapper, whose real name is Calvin Broadus.