

## Toronto: Sands Shift In ‘Queen Of The Desert;’ Nicole Kidman Eyed To Replace Naomi Watts As Gertrude Bell

By MIKE FLEMING JR | Saturday September 7, 2013 @ 8:00pm PDT



**EXCLUSIVE:** Looks like director **Werner Herzog** is going to get a new *Queen Of The Desert*. I'm hearing that **Naomi Watts** is exiting the film about the early 20th Century explorer Gertrude Bell, and that **Nicole Kidman** is in talks to take the plum role.

This follows a switch of the male leads earlier this year, when **Jude Law** departed and **James Franco** replaced him. Robert Pattinson also stars. Bell is the iconic explorer, writer, archeologist and attaché for the British Empire who is credited with helping to catalyze the formation of the Middle East at the dawn of the 20th century. The story plays with the sweep of *Lawrence Of Arabia*, potentially, and Kidman seems a nice match for the material.

Nick Raslan is producing through his Palmyra Films banner along with Cassian Elwes and Michael Benaroya. Benaroya's **Benaroya Pictures** banner will finance the film. Sierra/Affinity will handle international sales.

Kidman is here in **Toronto** where her new movie *The Railway Man* premiered Friday evening. That Jonathan Teplitzky-directed film, about a brutalized WWII POW who gets to confront his Japanese torturer, is considered a prime acquisition title here in the festival here. Kidman also stars in the Olivier Dahan-directed *Grace Of Monaco*, which The Weinstein Company releases November 27, in the head of the Oscar race. Kidman is repped by CAA and Media Talent Group.