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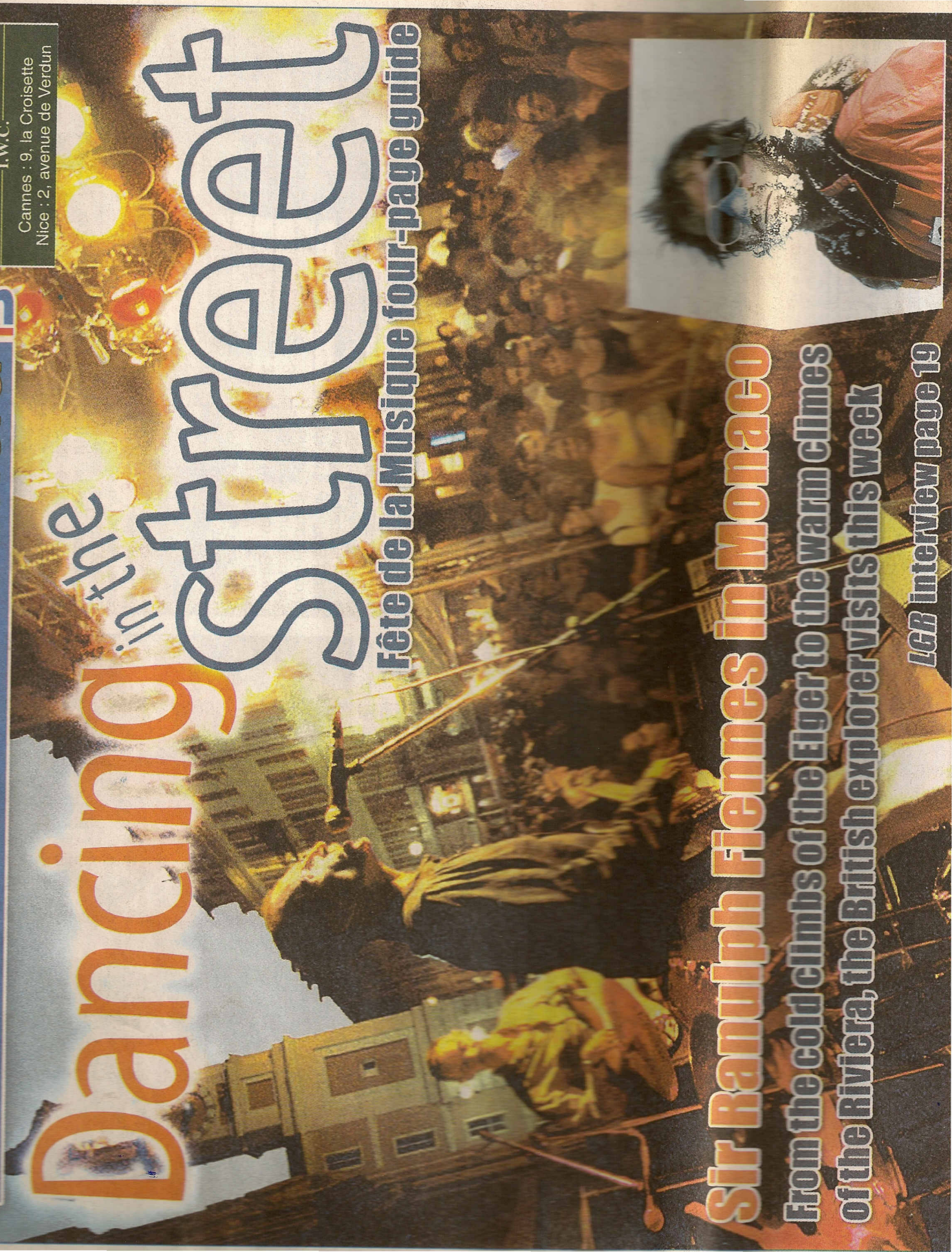
Dancing in the Street

Fête de la Musique four-page guide

Sir Ranulph Fiennes in Monaco

From the cold climbs of the Eiger to the warm climes of the Riviera, the British explorer visits this week

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BRITISH explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes is the guest speaker at the Monaco Celebrity Lunch on Friday June 22. Earlier this year, at 63, he scaled the north face of the Eiger, overcoming vertigo and raising more than £1.5million for Marie Curie Cancer Care. During his career he has visited both poles, taken a hovercraft to the source of the White Nile and run seven marathons in seven days.

By Peter Hawkins

What's the next plan?

I never talk about the thing I'm going to be doing until it's completely ready. In the past we have one or two occasions where our rivals have thought 'that's a good idea' and gone there first.

What motivates you?

I do it for a living. On passports where you have an occupation I have for 36 years always been described as a travel writer.

You don't make money from the actual expeditions. It can take several years of full-time unpaid work to plan them. What you have to do is give talks and write books, so travel writer is probably the more accurate term.

we raising money for this time?'

I did a double-take and said we weren't raising money for anyone, so he said we had better start. Since then we have raised £10m for UK charities.

What challenges are left?

Very few people can get into the select bunch who are able to explore the world's oceans.

There are not many opportunities to be an explorer under the sea or in space. Challenges need sponsorship and you really need to be doing a world first to get big sponsorship. In terms of polar stuff you are a bit late because people like myself and our Norwegian rivals have knocked off the polar trips. There are still challenges in climbing.

There are huge opportunities for brainy people. If you're a medical botanist and go to the Brazilian jungle you will be able to discover new chemicals and flowers.

There's plenty of room for hi-tech pioneering and discovery.

What's the nearest you've come to death?

I think in my late wife's minivan in Greenwich having just done 52,000 miles traveling the earth on its Greenwich axis.

At no point during the past three years had she moved more than 3mph. She should have realised after that, that you should not get into traffic. We had a near death experience. There was that and fighting Communists in the army.

You climbed the north face of the Eiger - despite being afraid of heights. Is there anything you are still afraid of?

One of the reasons for doing it was to get rid of that phobia completely, because it's irrational. It's quite possible if you get taught by the right people to stop



Photo: Kenton Cool

PHOBIA: Sir Ranulph faced his fear of heights climbing the north face of the Eiger in March this year

yourself. I got taught not to concentrate on anything other than the next move in an upward direction. It was going very well until the Traverse of the Gods where there's no question of being able to look up, you have

"TRAVEL WRITER IS PROBABLY THE MORE ACCURATE TERM FOR ME"

to look down. That happened very near the top. I lost my cool on that particular occasion.

I realised that I had not got rid of this terror, so I won't be going back to vertical expeditions.

That particular side of the challenge was a failure.

The aim of raising £1.6million for Marie Curie Cancer Care we managed to complete by the time we got back to the UK. The account is still active.

Do you have any other fears?

The only other phobia that I dealt with successfully was arachnophobia.

It probably came because of my experiences as a child in South Africa.

Working with the Arab army in the 1960s, for two years we were sleeping rough with camel spiders. Showing fear in front of the Arabs was worse than the spiders. In the end I just got blasé about them.

Who inspired you to become an explorer?

I don't think anything or anyone inspired me except the requirement to make an income.

The only thing I could do was to teach soldiers what they call adventurous training.

As with any job and business you get more experience and it is easier to get the support.

Who would be a good successor as the next big British explorer?

In the sailing world there are names that are well known - there's (Dame) Ellen MacArthur and (Sir) Robin Knox-Johnston. In the climbing world there's (Sir) Chris Bonington.

On the subject of Sir Robin Knox-Johnston (who just completed the Velux 5 Oceans Race around the world at the age of 68) when will you call it quits?

I didn't do so well on an expedition when I was in my 50s and all those journalists put their teeth in and said he's too old. When it happens, it happens. If I break a leg on an expedition it happens sooner.

■ For the full Monaco Celebrity Lunch programme visit www.azurproductions.com

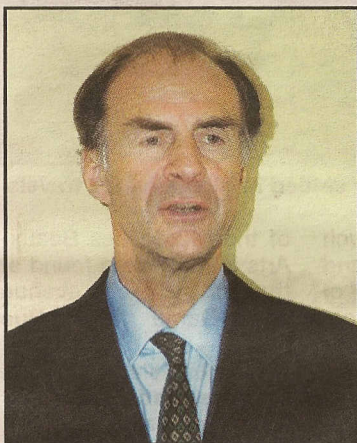


Photo: Westward Ho

SUITED: Sir Ranulph Fiennes

Does raising money for charities help?

Raising money for the causes didn't start until 1984 and I have been doing expeditions since 1968. It so happened that the patron of the expeditions was Prince Charles. In 1984 I was explaining the details of the next expedition and he said 'who are