

PLAYBOY

ENTERTAINMENT FOR MEN

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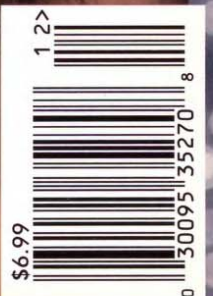
Gala
CHRISTMAS
Issue

**BERNIE
MAC**

**A HILARIOUS
PLAYBOY
INTERVIEW**

**DENISE
RICHARDS**
Drop Dead Gorgeous
**10 PAGES OF
EROTIC
NUDES**

**CELEBRATE WITH
NORMAN MAILER
DUSTIN HOFFMAN
PAT SCHROEDER
BILL ZEHME
GLEN DAVID GOLD
ANNIE PROULX
THE GODFATHER
RETURNS
NAS AJ BAIME
KANYE WEST
COLLEGE
BASKETBALL**



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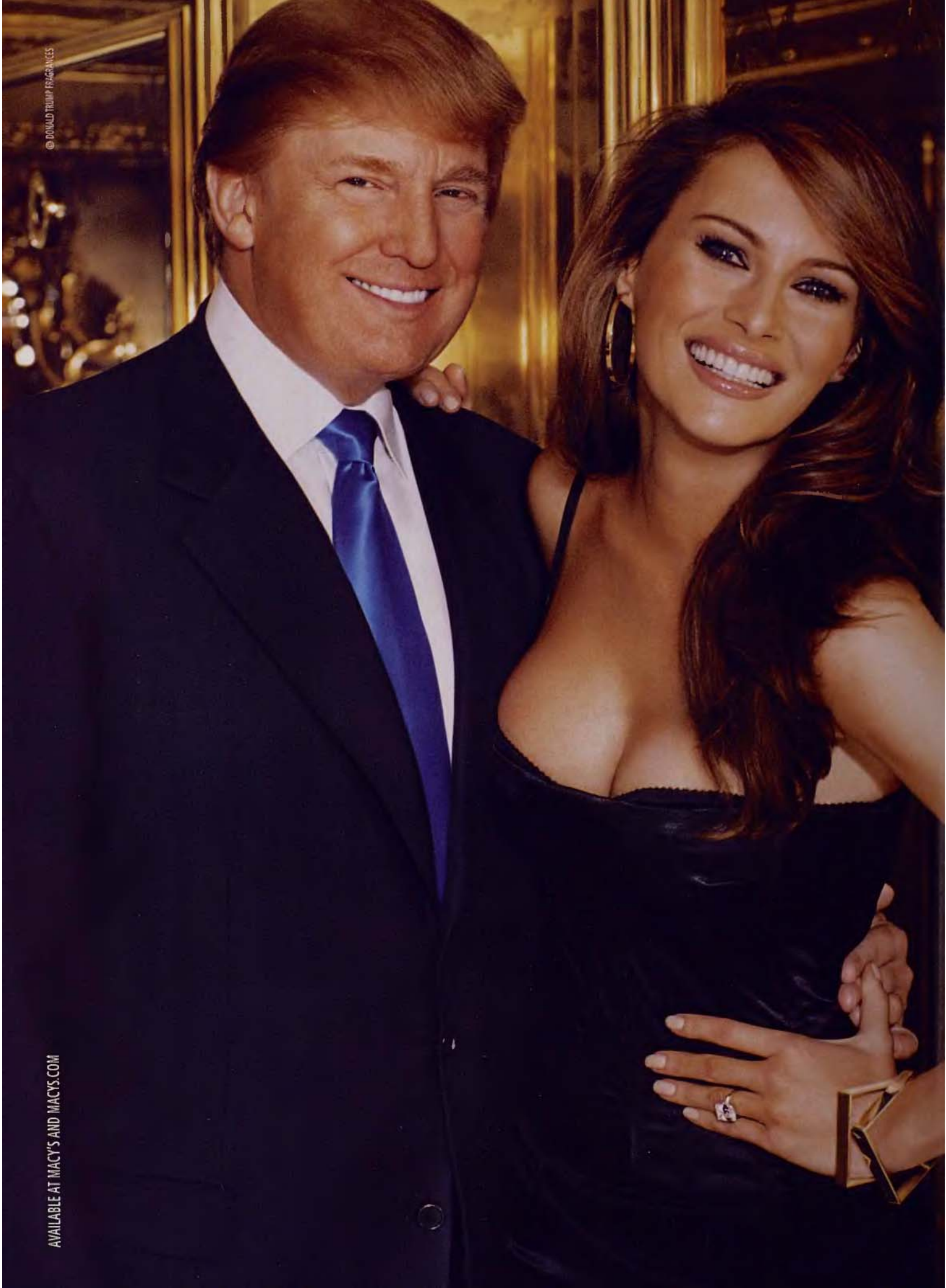
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FTC method. For more product information, visit www.rjt.com.

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DONALD TRUMP THE FRAGRANCE

The Official Miller Guide to

BEER PENALTIES

INELIGIBLE BEER IN THE COOLER

The presence of a Bud Light in a cooler otherwise filled with Miller Lite, which has more taste and half the carbs. Ineligible Beers are often brought to your party by uninvited guests, also known as Ineligible People on Your Couch.



GOOD CALL:

To avoid Ineligible Beer in the Cooler, fill only with great tasting, less filling Miller Lite. Make the call for more.

Miller
Good call.



Live Responsibly 

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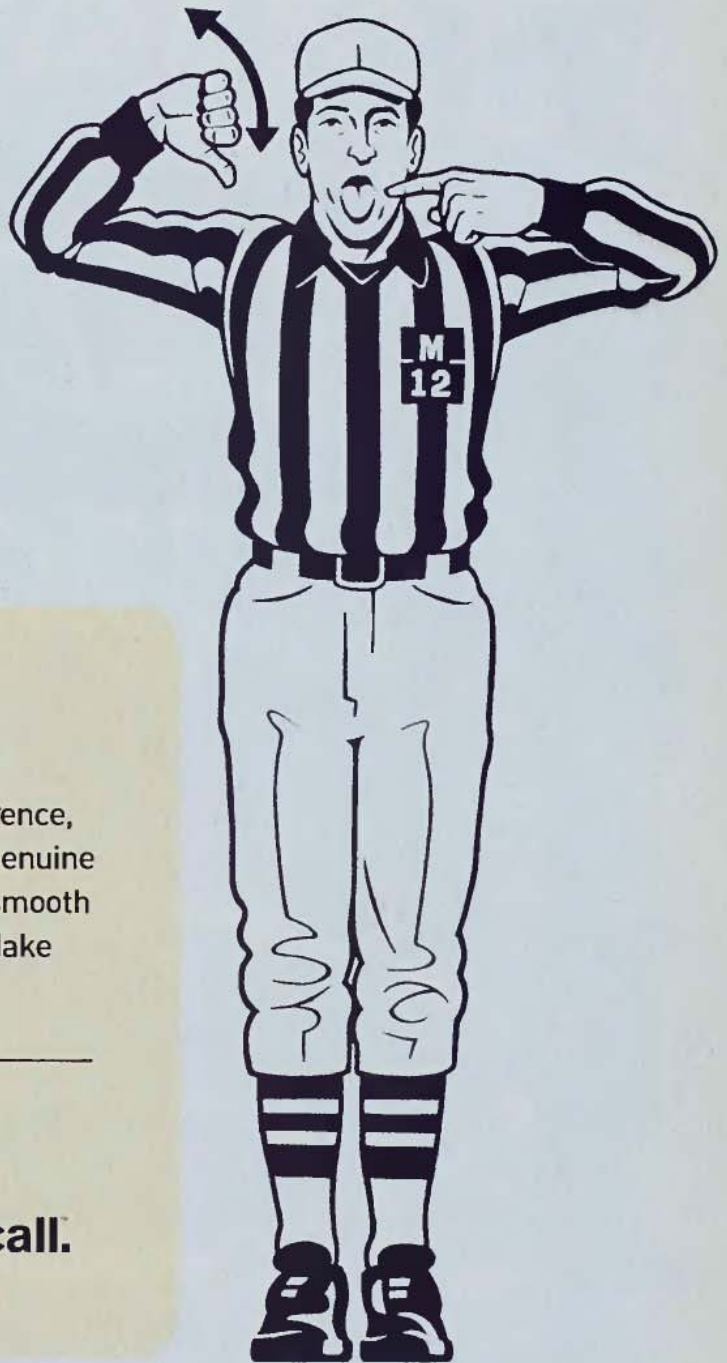
Per 12 oz., Miller Lite has 96 cal., 3.2g carbs., 0.9g protein, 0.0g fat and Bud Light has 6.6g carbs.

The Official Miller Guide to

BEER PENALTIES

FLAVOR INTERFERENCE

A common penalty that occurs when a "friend" hands you a Budweiser, and by doing so, denies you of a more flavorful beer experience. This is an automatic letdown.



GOOD CALL:

To avoid Flavor Interference, always give a friend a genuine flavored, cold-filtered smooth Miller Genuine Draft. Make the call for more.

Miller
Good call.

Live Responsibly 

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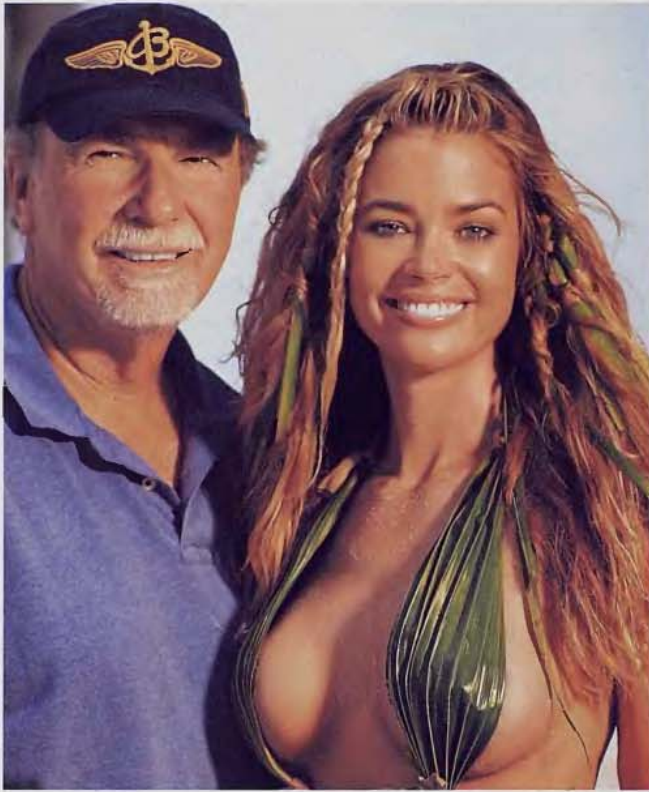
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 **NORELCO** AccuVac



Cover girl **Denise Richards** was shot in the British Virgin Islands by Senior Contributing Photographer **Stephen Wayda**. "The idea was that Denise is the ultimate girl to be stranded on a deserted island with. So we found a little spit of land all by itself, about 100 yards long and 30 yards wide, out in the middle of the ocean. Since Denise was supposed to be shipwrecked, stylist Rebecca Brough wove a bathing suit out of palms she found on the island. I wanted Denise to look as natural as she would running around on the beach without the camera. And that's what happened. She told me that five days after her return to civilization she was still getting the sand out of her hair. Denise is a great beauty with an incredible innate sexuality, so all it took was a bit of sand, a little water and the sun."



The Norman Mailer portrait accompanying *Reflections on Courage, Morality and Sexual Pleasure*, a Socratic dialogue between Mailer and his son John Buffalo Mailer, is by **Daniel Adel**. "I have always been fascinated by the face," Adel explains. "There is no visual experience more complex. You can get a whole life history from a face. As a portrait painter I often specialize in things having to do with studying a face, the architecture of a face. Norman's is an amalgam of unique features. You can sense that he is a passionate guy."



In *The Incredible Adventures of the Collector*, **Glen David Gold** delves into the world of hardcore comic-book enthusiasts. "I like stories about obsession," Gold says. "People have long been interested in comics, but most of the action took place at conventions. Since eBay started there's been an explosion of interest." Graphic novels get all the press, but for some adults *Spider-Man* still holds sway. "The article is also a way to justify my own obsession," he says. "I got into collecting for the same reason other people do—it fulfilled an emotional need. When you are a kid, the story lines blow your mind. But that changes over time. Now I enjoy the aesthetics of the art."



Annie Proulx won a Pulitzer Prize for *The Shipping News* and was the first woman to win the PEN/Faulkner Award, for *Postcards*. Now she's in *PLAYBOY*, with a new story called *The Old Badger Game*. "It is sort of a rural noir fantasy," she says. "Sometimes a story is there in your head, complete, and this was one of those." The flora and fauna of ranch life apparently provide ample inspiration. "There wasn't any watching of badgers or brooding on badger life," Proulx says. "But badgers have a great deal of personality, and it just seemed that badgers are missing from the literature of the day and it might be a good idea to write about them."



Dean Martin is famous for saying, during Hugh Hefner's celebrity roast, that Hef "is the only guy whose water bed has whitecaps." Now **Bill Zehme** lauds Martin, the Rat Pack's king of cool, in *The Importance of Being Dino*. "This isn't so much a profile as it is an invocation of a man and what he stands for. I have written books about two legends of cool: *The Way You Wear Your Hat*, about Frank Sinatra, and *Hef's Little Black Book*. My holy trinity has always been Frank, Hef and Johnny Carson. It's time to make room for Dino—he's back."

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IT'S NOT YOUR CAR.
IT'S NOT YOUR MUSIC.



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PLAYBOY

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Dean Martin, the Rat Pack's king of cool, is back. With his impeccable sense of humor and style as relevant as ever, it's time to reexamine the man's life and work—and uncover a little-known secret. BY BILL ZEHME
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Mr. 3000 inhaled deeply on the oxygen machine he brought along to this Playboy Interview before answering our questions about his difficult childhood, African American stereotypes and his gun collection. BY DAVID RENSIN



cover story

It's hard to say what we love most about Denise Richards. She's a Bond girl. Charlie Sheen gave up his playboy ways to make her a permanent part of his life. And she took part in the sexiest threesome ever seen in an R-rated film. She proves to Senior Contributing Photographer Stephen Wayda that she's still a wild thing. Our Rabbit thinks she's a jewel.





PLAYBOY MANSION WEST

THE GIRLFRIENDS

Sex and the City

My shoe-obsessed girls can't get enough of Carrie and her crew

SECURITY

The Wire

Just a friendly reminder of what it's like working the street

THE ZOOKEEPER

The Sopranos

Because he calls himself the "Boss of the Family" – even though he's referring to my family of squirrel monkeys

THE GARDENER

Curb Your Enthusiasm

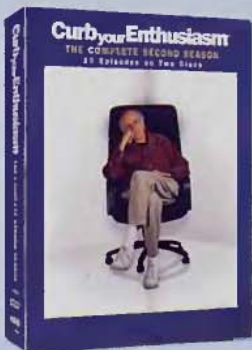
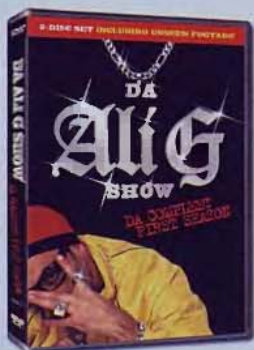
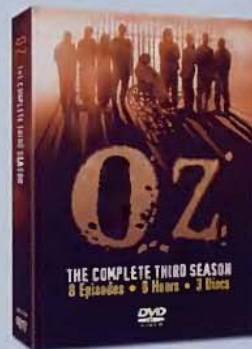
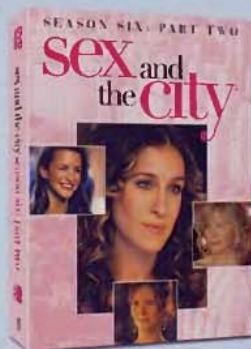
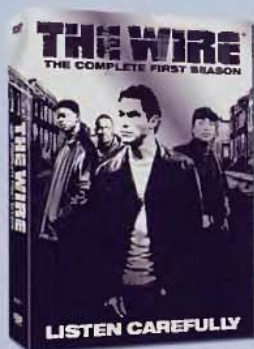
When he's not watering the peonies, this guy does a dead-on Larry David impression

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PLAYBOY

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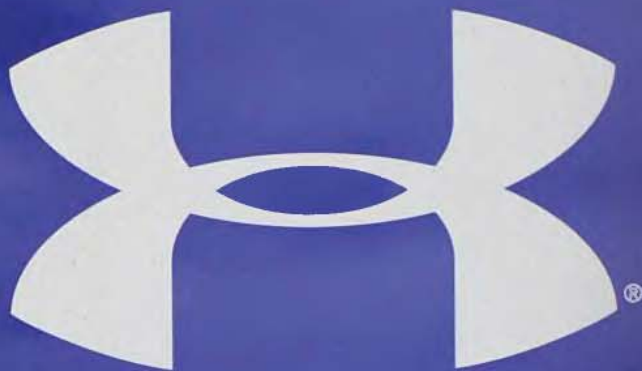
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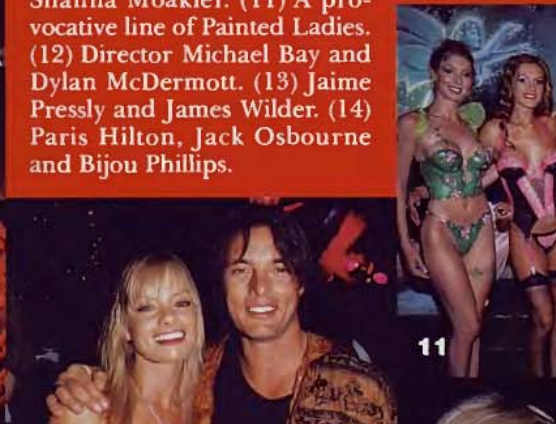
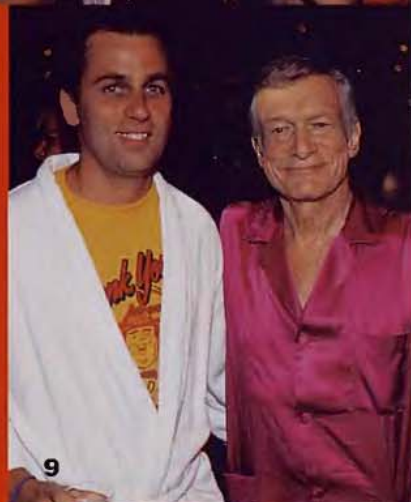


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DREAM
A LITTLE
DREAM



Hef's famous Midsummer Night's Dream party—a full-frontal fantasy fest that draws beautiful A-listers from around the globe—gave partygoers a dazzling night to remember. (1) Hef getting it on with girlfriends Kendra, Holly and Bridget. (2) Luke Wilson and James Caan. (3) Thora Birch and the Host. (4) Natasha Henstridge and Ryan Alosio. (5) *CSI*'s Archie Kao and friends. (6) *Jackass* star Johnny Knoxville with comedians Sarah Silverman, Jimmy Kimmel and Jeffrey Ross. (7) *The Life Aquatic*'s Bud Cort with some very pretty Painted Ladies. (8) Adrian Grenier of HBO's *Entourage* with Stacy Burke and Elizabeth Dindial. (9) John Heffron, the winner of NBC's *Last Comic Standing*. (10) Blink-182 drummer Travis Barker with his fiancée, Playmate Shanna Moakler. (11) A provocative line of Painted Ladies. (12) Director Michael Bay and Dylan McDermott. (13) Jaime Pressly and James Wilder. (14) Paris Hilton, Jack Osbourne and Bijou Phillips.



DREAM
A LITTLE
DREAM
continued



(1) Holly, Hef, PMOY Carmella DeCesare and Palms Hotel & Casino owner George Maloof. (2) Ron Jeremy and Rachel Elizabeth. (3) Soon-to-be-wed Playmate Barbara Moore and Lorenzo Lamas. (4) Jack Black with a nice pair: twins Julie and Shawnie Costello. (5) *Nip/Tuck* star Dylan Walsh with Jason Cerbone of *The Sopranos*. (6) Jamie Kennedy and Danielle Raushi. (7) Fred Durst tooting his own horn. (8) *10-8* star Travis Schuldt and *Eyes* star Natalie Zea. (9) Hef with Playboy models Suzette Johnston and Holly Laar. (10) Owen Wilson with a pretty party posse. (11) MTV *The Real World* alums Mike "The Miz" Mizanin and Randy Barry with friends. (12) L.A. pals Nicky Hilton, Kelly Osbourne and Bijou Phillips. (13) Centerfolds Stephanie Heinrich, Shannon Stewart, Nicole Wood, Jennifer Walcott and Julie McCullough. (14) Playmate of the Year 1996 Stacy Sanches. (15) *Malcolm in the Middle* star Frankie Muniz and Christina Murphy.



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GOOGLE ME

I'm not sure if Larry Page and Sergey Brin of Google are incredibly shallow on philosophical issues, incipient geek fascists or just greedy (*Playboy Interview*, September). But I am sure your interviewer left the room dizzy from the spin. After years of tracking Google at my site, Google-Watch.org, I'm amazed by the company's arrogance on privacy and every other social issue. Google is not doing anything magical, and other engines, such as Yahoo, produce better results.

Daniel Brandt
San Antonio, Texas

It's reassuring to know that at least two moguls have more on their mind than their next billion.

Margaret Sigman
Eustis, Florida

The solution to many of the problems facing search engines is to involve human editors to make choices about what would be shown in response to a query. But the major engines have fol-



The Google guys—good or evil? Or both?

lowed Google's lead in assuming that all things can be solved through automation and algorithms. I think Page and Brin have an honest desire to do the right thing. But people have learned not to trust corporations.

Danny Sullivan
SearchEngineWatch.com
Shrewton, U.K.

Contrary to Brin's claim, Xenu.net did not "sort of fold" after the Church of Scientology served Google with a specious trademark-infringement com-

plaint. I declined to file a response because to do so would subject me to the jurisdiction of U.S. courts. As a European citizen operating a European site, I saw no reason to do that.

Andreas Heldal-Lund
Tananger, Norway

How can these two be smart enough to make billions but dumb enough to wear sneakers with suits? Your fashion editor must have been aghast.

Frank Peters
Los Angeles, California

TERRELL SPOUTS OFF

I was surprised by Terrell Owens's insinuation that his former teammate Jeff Garcia is gay (*20Q*, September). I was also confused, because Jeff goes to bed with the Playmate of the Year (me) every night. I can assure you he's not gay. My concern now is being supportive of Jeff through football. Maybe football should be Terrell's focus as well. All I read about is how he's the missing link who will help the Eagles win the Super Bowl. Let's see it! Playing championship football should be Terrell's focus, because rumor has it he's not too good at other things.

Carmella DeCesare
Cleveland, Ohio

Owens is the last guy who should be hinting that someone is gay. He's single, flamboyant and obsessed with his body, and he parades around in Lycra. He also did the gayest thing I've ever seen on a football field when he shook pom-poms after scoring a touchdown in 2002. When he says "If it was a guy who was helping us win ball games, I'd have no problem with it," he sounds like the bigots of the 1960s who were antiblack except for certain entertainers they happened to like.

Jim Buzinski
Outsports.com
Los Angeles, California

Owens comparing gay men to vermin is a reflection of bigotry and prejudice that has serious consequences for millions of gay Americans. When football is no longer viewed as hetero-only, we'll all be the better for it.

Rita Addressa
Pennsylvania Lesbian
and Gay Task Force
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

If it looks like an idiot and acts like an idiot, by golly, it is an idiot.

Craig Austin
Vallejo, California

WINNING FORMS

Congratulations on your beautiful pictorial *The Olympians* (September). As an athlete and a feminist, I appreciate women's bodies when they are shown off for the right reasons.

Elizabeth Erlich
Owings Mills, Maryland



Amy Acuff finished fourth in the high jump.

It was refreshing to see hard-bodied, nonaugmented women in a men's magazine for a change.

Grant Thomas Michaels
Kapolei, Hawaii

Why didn't you include any Hispanics, Asians or Africans? The Olympic rings represent the five continents.

Lawrence Ellis
Fridley, Minnesota

We extended invitations to athletes of all nationalities. Our only criterion is beauty.

THE DIGITAL VOTE

Dan Baum's article *Machine Politics* (September) zeroed in on problems with electronic voting machines. Last year I prepared a report with three other researchers that was critical of Diebold's AccuVote machines. After its release I volunteered to become a Super Tuesday election judge for Baltimore County, which uses the machines. With few exceptions voters raved about their ease of use. The lightest moment came when a voter asked, "What do I do if it says it's rebooting?" Everyone fell silent until the voter laughed and said, "Just kidding."

I can see why people take offense at



Appleton Cosmo Encounter

1 1/2 oz. Appleton Estate V/X Jamaica Rum
1/2 oz. Triple Sec
Splash of Lime Juice
Cranberry Juice to taste

Combine ingredients in a shaker, mix well and serve in martini glass. Garnish with a twist of lime.



Appleton Exotic Bird

1 1/2 oz. Appleton Estate V/X Jamaica Rum
3 oz. Pineapple Juice
3 oz. Ginger Ale
1/2 Lime
1 tsp. Sugar

Cut up lime and mix with pineapple juice, rum, sugar and ice in a shaker. Strain into martini glass, top with ginger ale and garnish with pineapple.



Appleton Jamaican Ecstasy

1 1/2 oz. Appleton Estate V/X Jamaica Rum
2 1/2 oz. Cranberry Juice
3 1/2 oz. Orange Juice

In a highball glass, pour rum and cranberry juice over ice. Slowly add orange juice and garnish with an orange wedge.

www.appletonrum.com

Please be as mature as our Estate Rums. Drink responsibly.
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the notion that the machines are insecure. But I spotted weaknesses that we hadn't considered, such as the fact that all the results were loaded into a single machine at the end of the day, making it easier for a hacker to focus his efforts. I continue to believe the current crop of machines is a threat to our democracy. A few companies are now in a position to control U.S. elections. Results can be changed without anyone's knowledge, and meaningful recounts are impossible. We have great people working in the trenches, but the e-voting tidal wave has had a hypnotic effect. You can read more about our research and my experience at avirubin.com/vote.

Avi Rubin
Information Security Institute
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Only in America could badly written software tottering on an unreliable operating system (anybody happy about finding our democracy at the mercy of Microsoft Windows?) administered by legions of poorly trained septuagenarians for a populace still trying to master its VCRs be touted as a success.

David Allen
Blackboxvoting.com
High Point, North Carolina

Local communities need to demand that electronic voting systems be audited as part of every election, not just close contests. E-voting will become a nightmare only if we let it become one.

Lida Rodriguez-Taseff
Miami-Dade Election Reform Coalition
Miami, Florida

RED: OUR NEW FAVORITE COLOR

Playmate Scarlett Keegan (September) is the type of woman who steals a man's heart with a glance.

Rocky Harris
Menard, Illinois

Like Scarlett, I have freckles. I've always been teased about them. Now I see how sexy they can be.

Candy Born
Toledo, Ohio

OUTLAW HUMOR

Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin? *Heathers*, *Election* and *Wag the Dog*? Your rogue's gallery of outlaw humor (*You're Killing Me!*, September) is all over the map. It too often confuses comic with crude, which is now as common as in-law jokes were before Mort Sahl broke down the comedy-club doors with his political humor. Too many entries are simply hip (e.g., Redd Foxx, Roseanne Barr, Larry

David, *The Simpsons*, Andy Kaufman, George Carlin, Cheech & Chong), and others offer only attitude (Eddie Murphy, Hunter S. Thompson). As the author of a book on the rebel comedians of the 1950s and 1960s (*Seriously Funny*), I can say with some authority that the list excludes many cutting-edge wits, including Godfrey Cambridge, Bob and Ray, and Harvey Kurtzman, who before creating Little Annie Fanny co-founded *Mad*.

Gerald Nachman
San Francisco, California

How about cartoonist Ted Rall?

Antonio Guerra Burgos
Hollywood, Florida

No Smothers Brothers? Their acerbic wit and criticism of the Vietnam war led CBS to cancel their show.

John Rosin
San Francisco, California



Mad #4, with art by outlaw Kurtzman.

You include *Will & Grace* but not *Married...With Children*?

Greg Kessler
Columbus, Ohio

PIGSKIN PREDICTIONS

I can't believe you omitted West Virginia from the top 20 (*Pigskin Preview*, September). The team has 49 lettermen, 17 returning starters, a potentially exceptional quarterback and a reasonable road schedule.

Peter Cook
Cary, North Carolina

SKINTIGHT

Your *Painted Ladies* pictorial (September) took the boredom right out of watching paint dry.

Gavin MacKay
Victoria, British Columbia





RUM. ALL GROWN UP.

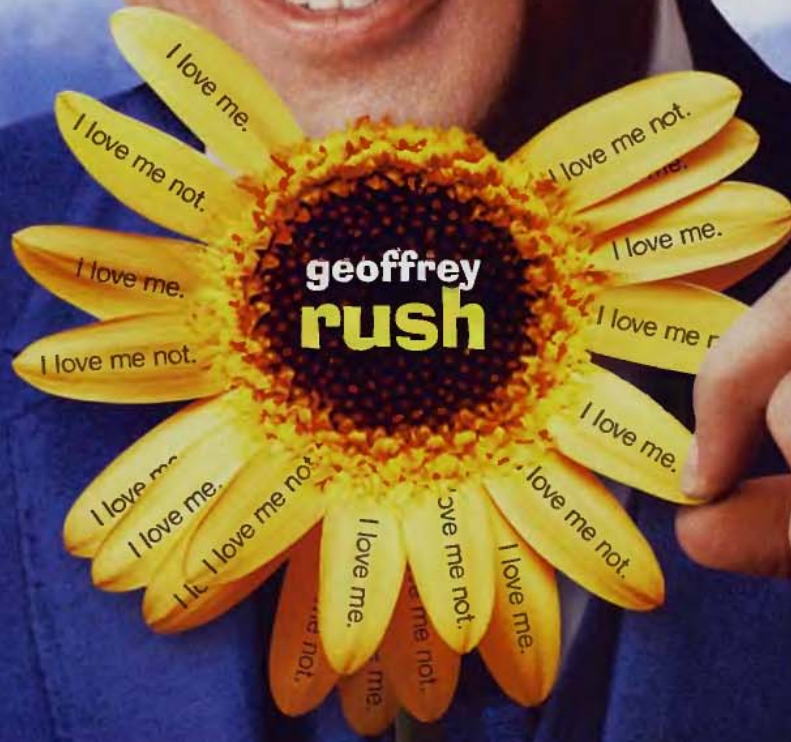


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I love me ...

I love me not.



a new movie by HBO Films

The Life & Death of PETER SELLERS

charlize **theron** john **lithgow** with **stanley tucci** and **emily watson**



HBO FILMS PRESENTS AN ASSOCIATED VENTURE **BBC FILMS** A **PARAMOUNT ENTERTAINMENT** AND **COMPANY PICTURES** PRODUCTION A FILM BY **STEPHEN HOPKINS** **GEORGE RUSH** "THE LIFE AND DEATH OF PETER SELLERS"
 CHARLIZE THERON JOHN LITHGOW AMIRAM AMIRKHANIAN STEPHEN FRY WITH STANLEY TUCCI AND EMILY WATSON CASTING BY NYRA GOLD MUSIC BY RICHARD HARTLEY COSTUME DESIGNER JOHN SMITH PRODUCTION DESIGNER NORMAN GARWOOD EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS PETER LEVY & C.S. ASHCROFT
 PRODUCED BY SIMON DOUBAGQUEL CO-PRODUCED BY FREDDY DAMANN GEORGE FAKERL CHARLES PATTINSON DAVID M. THOMPSON EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MICHAEL LEWIS PRODUCED BY CHRISTOPHER H. MARCUS & STEPHEN MCCOY DIRECTED BY STEPHEN HOPKINS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 9PM HBO

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babe of the month

Tamie Sheffield

This revved-up starlet takes it all with a shot of adrenaline

The word *relax* is not in actress-hostess Tamie Sheffield's vocabulary. "There is no winding down for me," she says. "I'm scared of routine and boredom. I have to be energized, entertained and excited." Tamie's farm-girl roots (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, anyone?) help her poke fun at the L.A. scene in the play *Pieces (of Ass)*. "I was going to do a monologue called 'Hot Chicks Suck,' but the director said I didn't look bitchy enough," she says. "I look pretty good. I've been in movies such as *Intolerable Cruelty* and *Confidence*,

"I can get decked out in a Prada gown or stay in a hut in Thailand."

but I'm not one of those L.A. chicks who just want to know how much you make and what you can do for them." The questions Tamie asks celebrities in her regular gig as a host of Showtime's *The Red Carpet* are considerably more provocative—pushing the envelope comes naturally for a girl addicted to exotic travel and extreme sports like hang gliding, white-water rafting and skydiving. "I like going outside the box and being the odd-ball," she says. "I'm the type of person who can get decked out in a Prada gown for a black-tie affair or stay in a \$6-a-night hut on a beach in Thailand. I need a guy who's spontaneous and has lots of energy. As James Dean said, 'Dream as if you'll live forever, and live as if you'll die tomorrow.'"



WILD CHILD

PUDDLE OF MUD: As a college cheerleader, Tamie thrilled male spectators with her spread-eagled acrobatics, but her most embarrassing moment occurred with her feet planted firmly on the ground. "It was pouring rain, and I was looking into the stands, probably at a hot guy—I looked good in a cheerleading skirt, and it was a great way to meet men. Then three football players barreled into me. I looked like an Oreo cookie. I was stuck in two inches of mud."

CARNIVAL KNOWLEDGE: Prior to corraling celebs on *The Red Carpet*, Tamie worked as a carny, daring suckers to pop her balloons. "I would say this about 5,000 times a day: 'Come on, folks. One dart, one dollar, one hit, one win.'"

MASTER THESPIAN: "People always ask if I'm a TV host or an actress. I'm both. Especially when I'm interviewing a boring person. That's when I act. It's all improv. I have to just smile and say 'God, you're so interesting.'"

MAN IN THE MIRROR: "I'm looking for a thrill seeker. He needs to be spontaneous, fun and able to keep up with me. I need to find the male version of me."



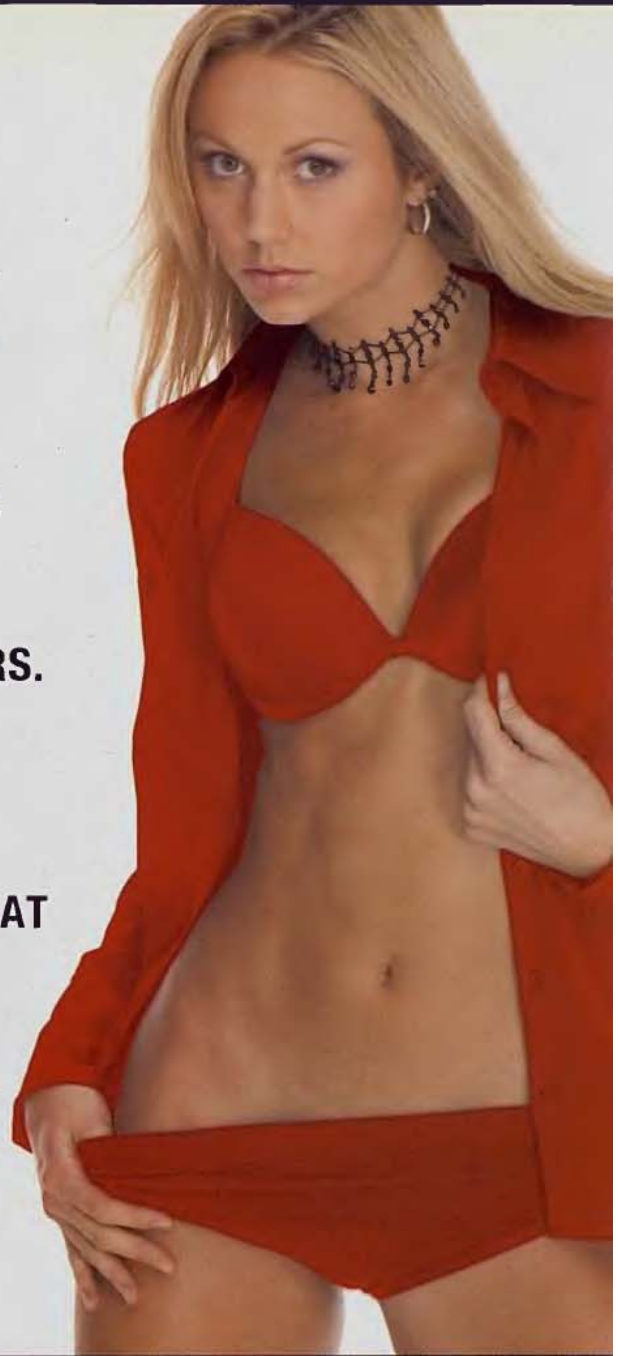
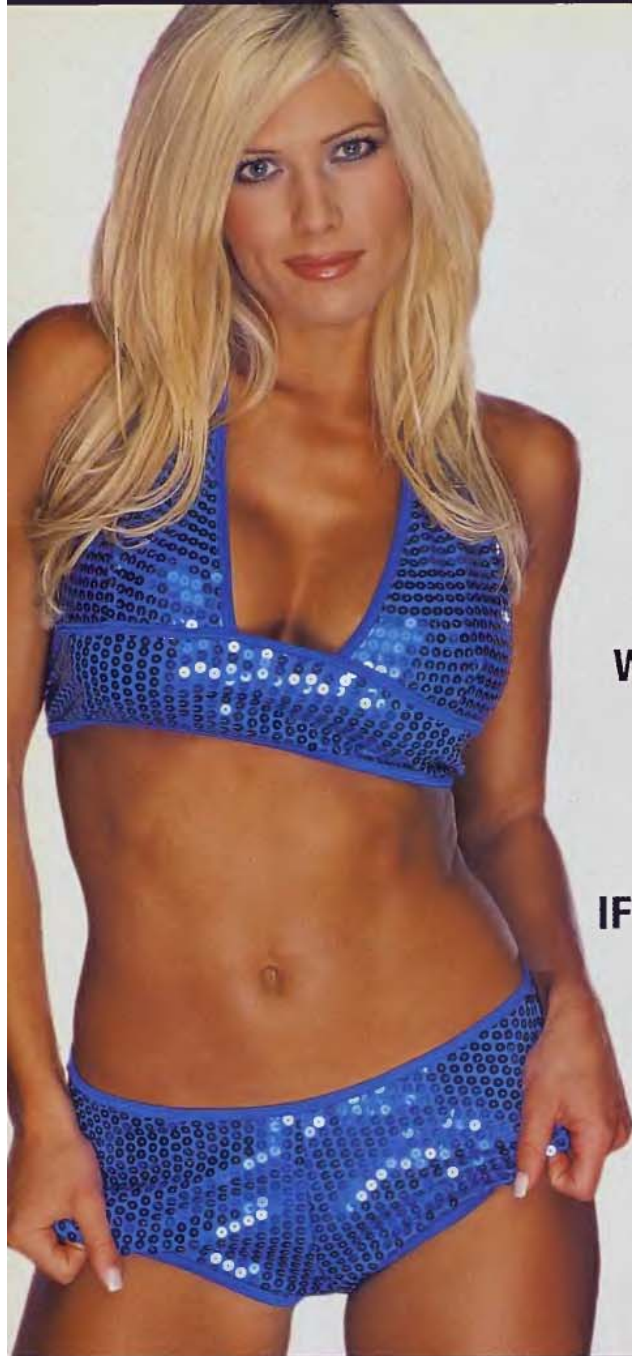
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PlayStation 2



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no thanks



BAD-IDEA HAIKU

THINGS YOU WON'T FIND IN OUR PAGES THIS MONTH

Not everything deserves to be in PLAYBOY. Some of the story ideas we had to turn down in recent months were so bad they drove us to commit haiku. Remember: You didn't hear about these from us.

Naked Women's Wrestling League (nwwl.com)

*Naked girls are good
For many things. Pile-driving
Doesn't spring to mind.*



Extreme ironing (extremeironing.com)

*Wacky guys pressing
Dress shirts on a mountain cliff.
Irony, please die.*

Rasputin's giant penis is on display in Russian museum

*Here's a travel tip
For anyone headed to
Moscow: Avoid this.*

Napa chef's secret ingredient: shirako (cod sperm)

*Sorry, we forgot
The name of the restaurant.
Have fun in Napa!*



Botox approved for halting underarm sweat

*Thank you for the tip.
Sounds like a great story for
Men's Health—or Details.*

Chessboxing (chessboxing.com)

*First they play some chess.
Then they box. Then chess. Then box.
Chess. Box. Get it? No.*

Staring contests

*In bars, hipsters lock
Eyes. Whoops—we actually
Wrote about this one.*

Pajama parties are sweeping the suburbs

*Wearing pajamas
At a party? Where do they
Get these cool ideas?*



the big sleep



SNOOZE YOU CAN USE

20 MINUTES, 14 BUCKS, 40 WINKS

In white-collar culture, a good snooze is hard to find—on *Seinfeld*, George Costanza built a bed beneath his desk, but few of us are so shameless. Thus the need for MetroNaps, a company in midtown Manhattan working to perfect brief sleep. In a dark room in the Empire State Building, workers doze in mod “nap pods,” fearless of discovery by a fuming supervisor—in fact, many are sent for the \$14, 20-minute rest by their bosses. “We’ve deconstructed what makes a good power nap and incorporated those elements into the pod,” explains co-founder Christopher Lindholst. For added efficiency, customers order lunch beforehand, then wake and feast. Just don’t try any funny stuff: “We don’t allow two people to share a pod for any reason,” says killjoy Lindholst. “What we’re running is a place to take a nap.” The determined can buy their own pods, but the \$8,000 price tag may be more stress-inducing than soothing.

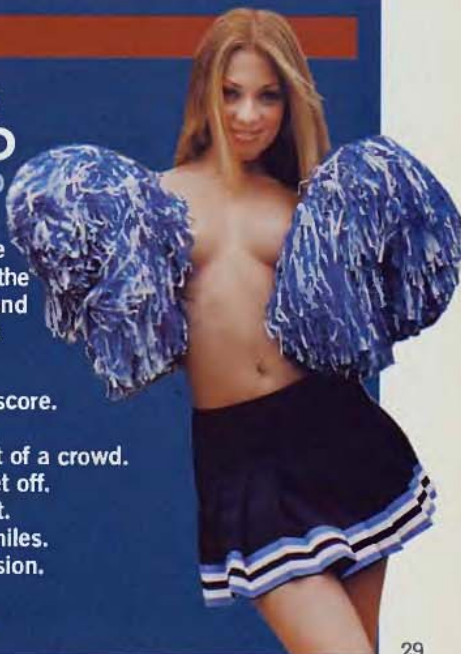
poor sportsmanship

TOP 10 REASONS TO CHEER NAKED

THE LUSTY LIST THAT RUINED UF CHEERLEADERS' REP

When coach Gene Moore's girls wore racy T-shirts at a cheerleading camp, the University of Florida pitched a fit and fired him. Here's the scandalous text:

10. All stunts are pump and go.
9. Players are not the only ones to score.
8. It's never hard to keep it up.
7. You get to do the humpty in front of a crowd.
6. You don't have to be on top to get off.
5. Dirty birds are slippery when wet.
4. You will love our girls' vertical smiles.
3. X-outs open a "hole" new dimension.
2. If you build it, they will come.
1. You get a week off every month.



guest spot: eddie izzard



SANTA CLAUS, JESUS, LETHAL GIFTS AND THE BLACK DEATH

FROM OUR MAN IN LONDON, A STEAMING MINCE PIE OF MIRTH AND MISERY

Santa Claus is more popular than Jesus. This is obviously blasphemy, and in the Bible Belt they should start burning Santa records. Jesus was a fantastic hippie, a sort of 1960s icon way back in the 30s—a guitar-playing, I'm-at-Woodstock, hanging-out, switching-off, tuning-up, blowing-up kind of guy. But that's not Christmas. Christmas is a large guy going down an unfeasibly narrow chimney in an impossible way.

Santa Claus never actually worked out that if he just left every kid cash, the kids could buy the presents themselves. I'm sure the kids would be fine with just cash, though it would take some of the magic out of Christmas.

I always wanted to be in school plays, but I never got picked. Then in 1969 there was a flu epidemic, and kids were dropping like flies, but I seemed to be of a sturdier constitution. So maybe it was just because I was alive that I was given a part in the Nativity play put on by the class below

me. I was a shepherd—the sharp shepherd—and the other two kids were dozy shepherds who just looked up at the ceiling. You look at these Nativity things and half the kids look like they're on crack, just seem really out of it. I didn't have much to say—just look at the roof, point and then complain about burning sheep. I would have liked to have been Gabriel—he's a bit like the Human Torch because of the head thing—or maybe Joseph and have a fight with the guy at the inn. But Mary's a no-good part. You just sit there. Baby Jee's no good. The three wise men are good, because you can fight, you can jostle for position. It's not too bad.

My family was non-Christian—ostensibly Church of England, but if you're C of E it's basically like saying you like to celebrate the birth of the son of God by watching the telly.

Christmas was nothing for Jesus. He had one good Christmas at the beginning, of course, when he got the gold, frankincense and myrrh—three good presents. Not much good for a baby, but, you know, the parents were probably happy.

I was in New Zealand, where they sell actual swords like the ones used in *The Lord of the Rings*. So I got my brother Bilbo Baggins's sword as a Christmas present. It's lethal. I have to get it ground down, otherwise someone's going to do himself damage. But it's not like you can pop into a supermarket and say, "Could you blunt the edges of my sword, please?" They don't really have that equipment anymore. In the old days they could have done that.

The worst Christmas in history was 1666, in England. The Black Death in London was in 1665, and the Great Fire was in 1666. So Christmas 1666 must have been like, "Bloody hell, what's going on here? One year everyone's dying and then everything burns to the ground." I suppose the glass-is-half-full people would celebrate just being alive. And with so many people dead, there would be a lot of job and relationship opportunities. But the glass-is-half-empty people are going, "Who drank half my glass?" Everyone's thinking, "What the hell could possibly happen in 1667? And *nothing* happened in 1667."

Comic Eddie Izzard recently released three DVDs in the U.S. He also appears in *Ocean's Twelve*.



pickup chicks



WINGWOMEN FOR SALE

IS SHE REALLY GOING OUT WITH YOU? NO, NOT REALLY

Danielle gets paid to have threesomes—all night long and as many as the client wants. A career counselor by day, the sultry 29-year-old works evenings as a WingWoman, part of an elite corps of lady aces who help men meet women in bars. "They're not dates," says WingWomen founder Shane Forbes of his fleet. "They're a dating tool." Forbes got the idea when he noticed he was more successful at meeting women when he was out with hot female friends. "I go out with a guy and he has total say over which girls he talks to," says Danielle, whose WingWomen sorties have all snared multiple phone numbers for her clients. Sneaky? Absolutely—but not foolproof. Once alone with a date he's scored, it's still up to a guy to hold his own—or crash and burn.

drink of the month



POP-
TOP
POP
BUBBLY TO
GO? CAN DO

Is that a Red Bull in your pocket? Hell no—it's six ounces of Sofia Mini Blanc de Blancs sparkling wine. Champagne dreams fill the air when sleigh bells ring—be revelry ready with a couple of cans of the stuff that gives 'em that warm, fizzy feeling.

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"WAS I SURPRISED THE PRIME MINISTER OFFERED ME THE USE OF HIS LIMO FOR THE EVENING? NO. WAS IT A GOOD IDEA TO KEEP IT FOR A WEEK IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE? PROBABLY NOT."

-BROCK SAVAGE



BROCK SAVAGE™ SAYS

"MAKE MINE A 'FIDDICH."

ring of fire



CHRIS BYRNE/AA

SMACKDOWN JESUS

PIOUS GRAPPLERS BODY-SLAM FOR THE LORD

Evangelism and ass kicking—together at last. For the true believers behind Ultimate Christian Wrestling, when it comes to spreading the gospel, parables and psalms can't hold a candle to brute force. We spoke with Rob Adonis, UCW's 295-pound founder and titleholder, and the hooded heel known only as the Prophet.

PLAYBOY: Does everyone think you guys are nuts?
PROPHET: People were surprised—"What, do you hit each other and say, 'God bless you?'" But in ministry, you change with the times.
PLAYBOY: What would Jesus think?

PROPHET: Jesus would be totally on fire for UCW.
PLAYBOY: What about the whole "turn the other cheek" thing?
PROPHET: It also says "an eye for an eye."

ADONIS: We're storytellers illustrating in the ring the battles people face in life. You're always fighting evil—addiction, abuse, promiscuity. You're going to have to body-slam those demons.

PLAYBOY: Would Jesus have been a good wrestler?
PROPHET: Jesus was a carpenter, so he was probably pretty buff. If Jesus were here now, he'd be the star babyface, the world champ.

fashion through the snow

WINTER WONDER WEAR

WEATHER THE BIG CHILL IN STYLE

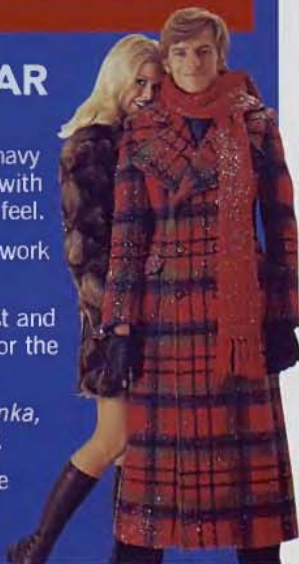
You need at least two overcoats: a classic navy or camel hair to go with your suits, and one with more style (say, tweed) and a less after-work feel.

When it snowed, Grandpa wore galoshes to work over his nice shoes. Grandpa was smart.

Cashmere is the king of wools—the warmest and lightest you can get. But keep an eye out for the next wonder weave: bamboo. Yes, bamboo.

A Russian fur hat with ear flaps is an *ushanka*, and there's no better lid in Siberian weather.

Yes, you can wear colored shirts in winter. Be bold but basic: a true red, a true green, even a true yellow. Give pastels the season off.



employee of the month



RADAR LOVE

NETWORK ENGINEER SHANNON LEA KEEPS JUMBOS ALOFT

PLAYBOY: What does your job entail?

SHANNON: I work for MCI. I monitor the network for the Federal Aviation Administration—communication between airport towers, airplanes, and weather radar. I supervise seven people.

PLAYBOY: Do you like being the boss?

SHANNON: My personality is very take-charge. The men in the office don't like to be bossed around, but in bed guys like it. I'm passive when I go out—men can be intimidated by strong women, so I let them do their little manly duties. But they enjoy a woman taking charge in bed.

PLAYBOY: What do guys notice about you at work?

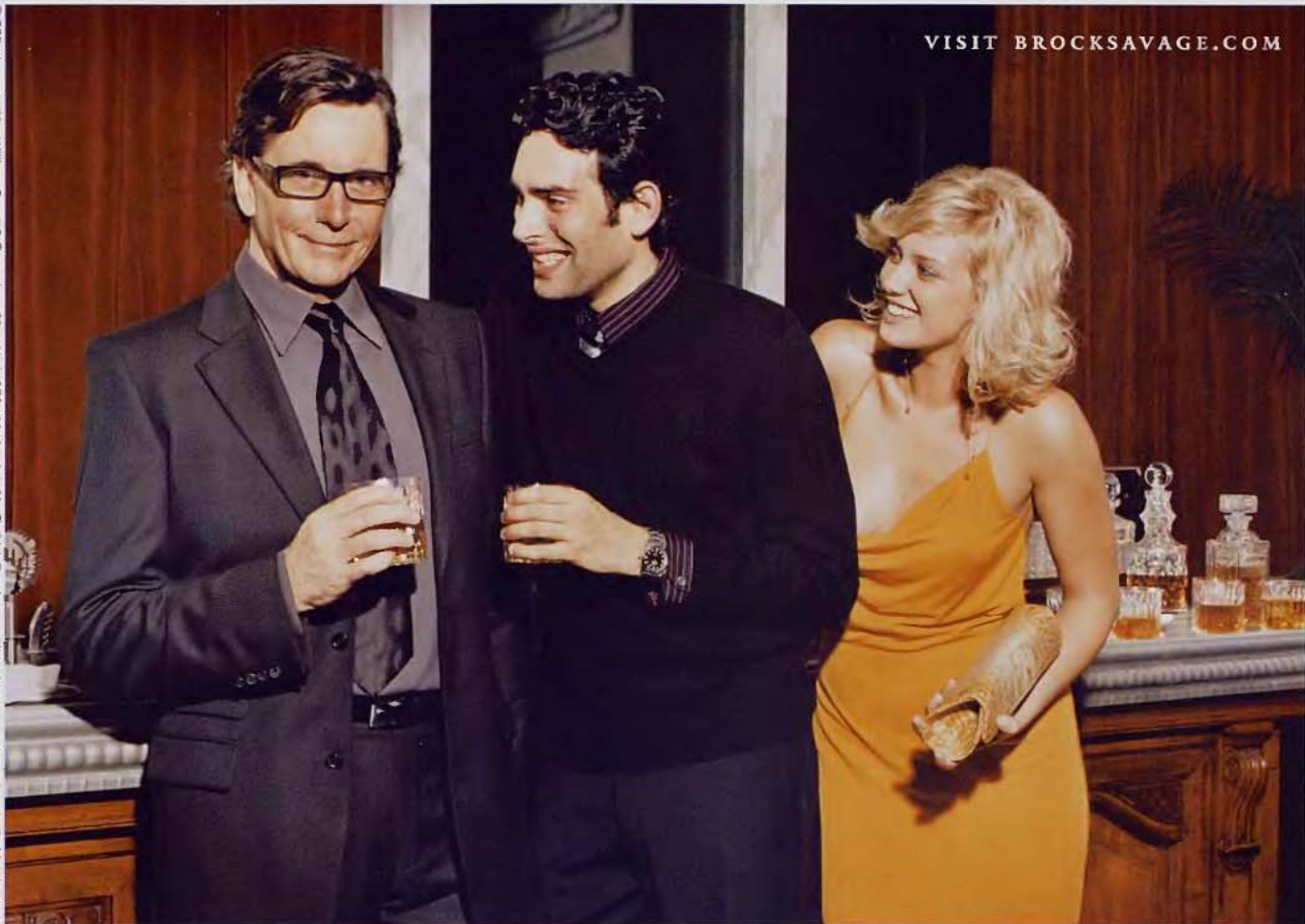
SHANNON: My best features are my breasts, eyes and lips, but my breasts get all the attention. Once I had lunch with a co-worker with my blouse unbuttoned, and he waited until afterward to tell me. He claimed he didn't see anything—but he paid the bill.



Employee of the Month candidates: Send pictures to PLAYBOY Photography Department, Attn: Employee of the Month, 680 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60611. Must be at least 18 years old. Must send photocopies of a driver's license and another valid ID (not a credit card), one of which must include a current photo.

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'DO YOU COME HERE OFTEN?' YES.
DOES IT WORK? YOU BET —
AS LONG AS YOU'RE ME."

- BROCK SAVAGE




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Big Tees

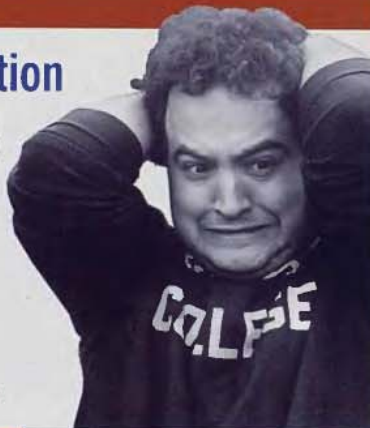
In 2003 the number of promotional T-shirts produced in the United States was **465 million**, which is **38 million** more than the combined populations of the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

The Bottom Five

Lowest Beer Consumption

Campuses where beer-drinking levels are dangerously low, as determined by the Princeton Review. FYI: Washington & Lee University topped the list of suds-soaked schools.

- 353. Spelman College
- 354. CUNY-Queens College
- 355. College of the Ozarks
- 356. Wheaton College
- 357. Brigham Young University



Book of Pointless Records



Rex Regis

15,188 hours
Time logged on the small screen by *Live With Regis and Kelly* host Regis Philbin, making him the all-time boob-tube champ.



Triumph of the Wool

Shrek, a New Zealand sheep, avoided his annual buzz for six years, growing a fleece that weighed over **60 pounds**. It took a shearer **20 minutes** to remove the wool—enough to make about **20 men's suits**.

Lifelong Learners

20% of Texas college students graduate in four years, and only **43%** graduate in five.

Price Check

The Money Spot

\$167,500 Amount paid by a realty trust company for a **180-square-foot** parking space in the Brimmer Street Garage in Boston's Beacon Hill neighborhood. The proud owners must also pay a monthly condo fee of **\$168**.



Floor It

The elevators in Taipei 101, the world's tallest building, zoom upward at **38 miles per hour**, taking passengers from street level to the 89th-floor observation deck in **39 seconds**.

IM in Touch

54% of American kids in grades seven through 12 know more of their friends' instant-message screen names than their friends' home phone numbers.



Jingle Bell Shock

3,038 Americans are injured each year by Christmas tree lights. **4,542** hurt themselves putting up nonelectric decorations.

SALEM

2004

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movie of the month

[OCEAN'S TWELVE]

Clooney and company are leaving Las Vegas

If an action-caper flick like *Ocean's Eleven* succeeded in part because it has a great villain, *Ocean's Twelve*, the sequel, needs a bad guy who is twice as nasty. Enter Andy Garcia, trying to top his role as the suave and cold-blooded casino owner who matches wits with George Clooney, the hipster who robbed him not only of his fortune but also of Julia Roberts. Garcia turns the evil way up in the new movie, directed (again) by Steven Soderbergh and starring (again) Roberts, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon and Don Cheadle as the cool cats who band together to pull off heists, this time in Rome, Paris and Amsterdam. "This guy I play is a land shark, always moving, always hunting," says Garcia. The actor, who has no scenes with sizzling cast addition Catherine Zeta-Jones but does have one with the 12th member of Ocean's gang (spoiler alert: It's Roberts), says, "It's not rocket science to know that a sequel to a heist movie with a group of entertaining individuals is a foolproof situation. Steven Soderbergh is the rare director who can stamp his style on a film, and he doesn't do things casually." And what if Soderbergh casually announces he wants to do *Ocean's Thirteen*? "When he calls, you don't have to read the script," says Garcia. "You just ask, 'When do you want to start?'" —Stephen Rebell

"I play a land shark, always moving, always hunting."

now showing

BUZZ

The Aviator

(Leonardo DiCaprio, Cate Blanchett, Kate Beckinsale, Gwen Stefani) Martin Scorsese's modern epic follows Howard Hughes from the 1920s through the 1940s, when he romanced movie stars, dabbled in espionage and invented a flying boat. The drug taking and germ phobias will have to wait for the sequel.

Our call: This biopic could send both Marty and Leo soaring next awards season, unless they've turned out another long, flashy costume party like *Gangs of New York*.



Meet the Fockers

(Ben Stiller, Robert De Niro, Blythe Danner, Dustin Hoffman, Barbra Streisand) Those of us who wondered who would name their kid Gay Focker get our answer in this sequel to *Meet the Parents*. Stiller's uptight in-laws (De Niro, Danner) mix it up with his laid-back parental units (Hoffman, Streisand).

Our call: Bad sequels can be every bit as awkward and messy as meeting your in-laws, but watch for Hoffman and Streisand to totally fock things up—in a good way.



The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou

(Bill Murray, Cate Blanchett, Owen Wilson, Willem Dafoe) Wes Anderson's latest features Murray as a self-obsessed, washed-up documentary filmmaker-oceanographer coming to terms with his sorry life while sailing the seas with his oddball crew in search of the shark that gobbled one of his shipmates.

Our call: The season's best gift for fans of *Rushmore* and *The Royal Tenenbaums*—quirky, smart and touching. Wilson, Dafoe and Jeff Goldblum all give strong performances.



Beyond the Sea

(Kevin Spacey, Kate Bosworth) Spacey directs Spacey in this biopic about the turbulently talented 1960s singer Bobby Darin, who made "Mack the Knife" swing and life difficult for his teen-idol wife, Sandra Dee (Bosworth). Expect Sturm und Drang as Darin uncovers weird stuff about his childhood.

Our call: Darin won an Oscar nomination in 1963 for his supporting role in *Captain Newman, M.D.* Can Spacey do as well directing, producing, starring and singing in 2004?



dvd of the month

[THE BOURNE SUPREMACY]

Matt Damon proves that Bourne has staying power

Damon comes out swinging in round two as Robert Ludlum's memory-challenged über-operative Jason Bourne in this spy-vs.-spy popcorn picture that's old-fashioned only in its rudiments. Like *The Bourne Identity* before it, *Supremacy* includes a kinetic set piece—this time, a harrowing chase through the streets of Moscow. But director Paul Greengrass gets more with his handheld cameras, using them seemingly in bunches and cutting briskly within scenes. Rather than disorient the viewer, the effect simulates Bourne's perspective: the frenzied desperation of a genius assassin running from various competing teams of killers. Damon, ditching his chipmunk charm in favor of a leaner, world-weary gravitas, makes it work too: He underplays the role, rendering the whole preposterous affair entirely believable. **Extras:** Eight featurettes, plus deleted scenes and commentary. **★★★½** —Greg Fagan



sin and hostage are made believable thanks to Foxx's brave performance, with Cruise—in a silver stubble that matches his suit—seeming to enjoy the ride.

Extras: A double-disc deal, with behind-the-scenes footage, cast interviews and a commentary track by Mann. **★★★**
—Buzz McClain



HELL'S ANGELS (1930) The silver-screen breakthrough of Jean Harlow lifts this historic gem above and beyond the rank of curiosity to a must-see. She's a bad girl, the sort who eagerly comes between two brothers (Ben Lyon and James Hall), World War I English flying aces who are eventually shot down behind German lines and held captive. Ultimately directed by producer Howard Hughes, *Hell's Angels* also boasts truly spectacular dogfight sequences, eye-opening pre-code grit and the only known color footage of Harlow. **Extras:** Alas, none. **★★★★** —G.F.



CARNIVALE (2003) HBO's oddest hour-long drama series yet, *Carnivale* comes across like John Steinbeck via David Lynch. Set during the Depression, its simultaneous story arcs are linked through two young protagonists: carnival hand Nick Stahl, somewhere in the American dust bowl, and Clancy Brown, a preacher in California. They both suffer from visions, and the apocalypse is imminent. It's beautifully shot, and it grows on you. **Extras:** Commentaries and a featurette. **★★½** —G.F.



COLLATERAL (2004) What do Dustin Hoffman, Paul Newman and Cuba Gooding Jr. have in common? They each won an Oscar acting opposite Tom Cruise. Jamie Foxx might be next. The comic turned actor saves director Michael Mann's bacon in this big-budget *Speed-meets-Phone Booth B* movie. Foxx's self-deluding L.A. taxi driver, Max, digs deep to confront impossible evil when he is abducted by cold-blooded contract killer Vincent (Cruise). The soul-searching conversations between assass-

DODGEBALL: A TRUE UNDERDOG STORY (2004) The film's utter dopiness wins you over quickly. Yes, *Dodgeball* is ridiculous, and yes, Ben Stiller makes too many movies, but it works. **Extras:** Commentaries, deleted scenes, featurettes, a gag reel and an alternate ending. **★★½** —B.M.



SPIDER-MAN 2 (2004) This rare superior sequel spins webs around the original. Director Sam Raimi and stars Tobey Maguire and Kirsten Dunst return, with the wall crawler taking on Doctor Octopus (Alfred Molina). The villain is better, the tone is darker, and there's a satisfying spin to Spidey and MJ's sticky romance. **Extras:** Tons—a blooper reel, a pop-up trivia track and featurettes. The pricier gift set includes a reprint of the comic book on which the movie is based. **★★★★½**
—Robert B. DeSalvo



tease frame

Naomi Watts is a fearless actress, not only because she faces a demonic dead girl in *The Ring* (2002) and next year's *The Ring 2* but because she tackles roles that would rattle primmer actresses. Watch Watts play the unstable widow who beds the recipient of her dead husband's heart in *21 Grams* (2003) and you'll see.



In David Lynch's brain-bending *Mulholland Dr.* (2001) she generates excitement with Laura Harring in a hot topless encounter (left). The DVD has no chapter stops, but the best part starts at 1:40:09.

Hey Mister...

Look what you
can get if
you've been
good this year.



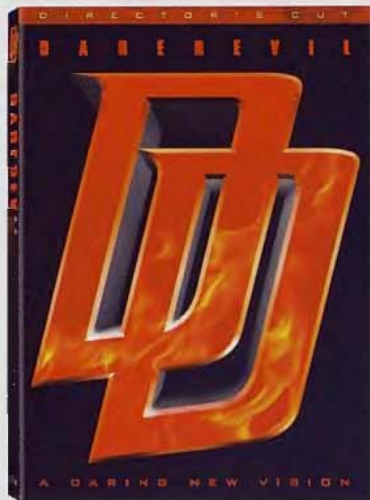
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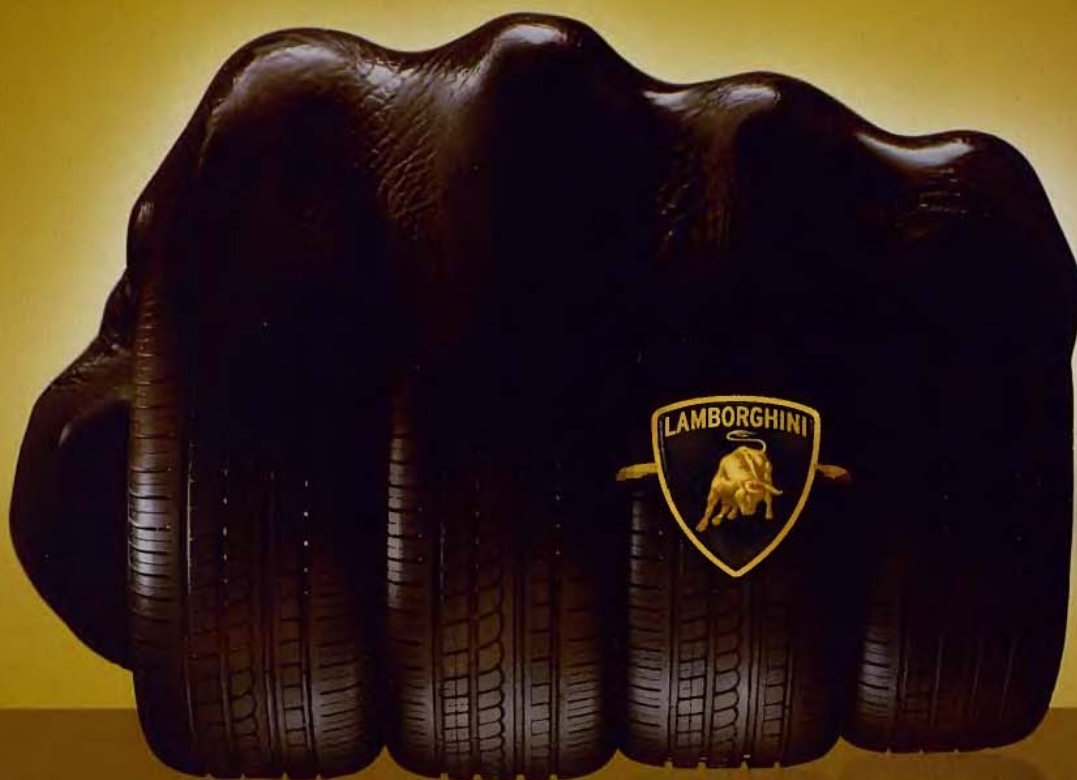
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SURVIVAL GUIDE



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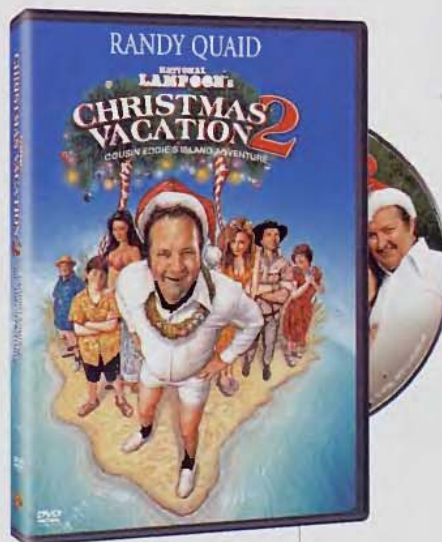


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NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CHRISTMAS VACATION 2: COUSIN EDDIE'S ISLAND ADVENTURE

Christmas Vacation is back! Randy Quaid stars as crude but loveable Cousin Eddie in this hilarious sequel to National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation. Be sure to check out former Playboy cover model Sung Hi Lee as island girl Muka Laka Miki...

the critical collector

[2004'S BEST DVD GIFT SETS]

Christmas shopping just got easier



THE ULTIMATE MATRIX COLLECTION: Do you go with the 10-disc *Ultimate Matrix Collection*—which includes the trilogy, *The Matrix Revisited* (2001) and *The Animatrix* (2003), plus five additional discs of bonus material—or must you have the limited-edition gift set? The latter has a far more awesome box, an 80-page booklet and a colorful Neo mini-bust....



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: SPECIAL EXTENDED DVD EDITION THREE-PACK: *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Two Towers* (2002) and the new *Return of the King* (2003), bound in leather, no less....



THE BOGART COLLECTION: The special editions of *Casablanca* (1942), *To Have and Have Not* (1944) and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948) make this the box to seek out. Throw in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *The Big Sleep* (1946) and you've got a box of Bogie that can't be beat....



BLAKE EDWARDS' THE PINK PANTHER FILM COLLECTION STARRING PETER SELLERS: With class, MGM reintroduced an aging franchise this year to an upmarket younger audi-

ence. The set features five films, including *The Pink Panther* (1964) and *A Shot in the Dark* (1964)....



THE CHAPLIN COLLECTION, VOLS. 1 AND 2: Charlie Chaplin's genius is showcased in these glisteningly remastered discs. They contain 11 films, including *The Kid* (1921), *The Gold Rush* (1925), *City Lights* (1931), *Modern Times* (1936), *The Great Dictator* (1940), *Monsieur Verdoux* (1947) and *Limelight* (1952)....



THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT! THE COMPLETE COLLECTION: The ultimate clip show, *That's Entertainment!* (1974) introduced a generation to MGM's movie-musical legacy. The box includes both sequels and a



THE MARX BROTHERS SILVER SCREEN COLLECTION: The first five Marx Brothers movies, ragged though they may be, remain essential cinematic documents. *The Cocoanuts* (1929), *Animal Crackers* (1930), *Monkey Business* (1931), *Horse Feathers* (1932) and *Duck Soup* (1933) are hilarious....



FILM NOIR CLASSIC COLLECTION: The five flicks assembled here rank among the best ever produced: *Murder, My Sweet* (1944), *Out of the Past* (1947), *Gun Crazy* (1949), *The Set-Up* (1949) and *The Asphalt Jun-*



W.C. FIELDS COMEDY COLLECTION: This five-film set helps correct the funnyman's woeful underrepresentation on DVD. The box includes *You Can't Cheat an Honest Man* (1939), *The Bank Dick* (1940) and *My Little Chickadee* (1940), among others....



ROCKY 25TH ANNIVERSARY DVD COLLECTION: Laugh all you like, but *Rocky* (1976) knocked down 10 Oscar nominations, won best picture and spawned a mini-industry that delivered the four sequels in this set.

SCANNER

THE TERMINAL (2004) Thanks to Tom Hanks and an amiable multicultural cast of concourse denizens, director Steven Spielberg nearly pulls off this Capra-esque tale of an Eastern European traveler stranded in New York City's JFK Airport. ♣♣

I, ROBOT (2004) Isaac Asimov's three laws of robotics are here, but the rest—including hip-hop cop Will Smith and his prejudice against supple-faced CGI robots—has little in common with anything Asimov wrote, and that's not good. ♣♣

WILD AT HEART (1990) David Lynch's violent fever dream about the tumultuous romance between Lula (Laura Dern) and Sailor (Nicolas Cage) debuts on a remastered DVD supervised by the director. Among the extras: a documentary and interviews. ♣♣♣♣

CATWOMAN (2004) A desperate reimagining of the comic-book feline, who forgoes Gotham City in favor of a garish feature-length R&B video. Watch Halle Berry make a case for the Academy to revoke her Oscar. ♣

DREAM ON: SEASONS ONE & TWO (1990–1991) Flashbacks of Brian Benben's childhood TV overexposure underscore his dating life. One of HBO's first sitcoms, it paved the way for *Sex and the City*. ♣♣♣♣

HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN (2004) Vengeful wizards, mythical flying creatures. Director Alfonso Cuarón adds a sense of preteen angst that provides alluring dramatic darkness. ♣♣♣

DR. STRANGELOVE OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB (1964) Stanley Kubrick's ultimate satire of Cold War politics celebrates its 40th anniversary with this new two-disc version. Tons of extras. ♣♣♣♣

THE REN & STIMPY SHOW: THE COMPLETE FIRST AND SECOND SEASONS UN-CUT (1991–1993) The adventures of batty Chihuahua Ren Höek and "eedit" cat Stimpie were subversive even when toned down for TV. The uncut versions are better. ♣♣♣♣

♣♣♣♣ Don't miss ♣♣ Worth a look
 ♣♣ Good show ♣ Forget it



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cd of the month

[LIL JON * CRUNK JUICE]

What? The mouth of the South capitalizes on a year in the spotlight



It's Lil Jon's time. Two of the year's biggest songs—Usher's "Yeah!" and Terror Squad's "Lean Back"—owe their success almost entirely to Lil Jon's work on them. His protégés the Ying Yang Twins, Ciara and Lil Scrappy blew up. Dave Chappelle—the year's breakout comedian—rode the King of Crunk's rising tide with parodies of Jon's signature growls of "What?" and "Yeah." Jon was even mashed online trading rhymes with Howard Dean after his primary meltdown. Not content to sit still, Jon is back with the East Side Boyz and better than ever on a bouncy new album of Pastor Troy-inspired shout-and-response party anthems. With Ice Cube, Snoop and Nas on this CD, Jon even unites the East and West Coast schools in the cause of taking the dirty South (and Atlanta's version of Miami bass) to the next level. (TVT) **★★★★½** —Tim Mohr

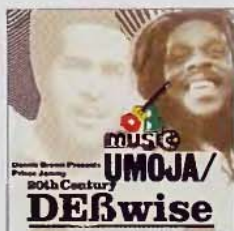
JOHN LENNON * Acoustic

Given Macca's ubiquity in recent years, it's easy to forget that Lennon was considered the genius of the Beatles (though George Harrison probably made the best post-Fab Four album). This CD contains 17 performances, seven of which have never before been officially released. The tracks are essentially bootlegs—and sound like it. But they also showcase Lennon's most impassioned guitar playing, whether he's mimicking gutbucket blues or strumming a heartfelt version of "Dear Yoko." (Capitol) **★★★★** —T.M.



DENNIS BROWN PRESENTS PRINCE JAMMY * Umoja/20th Century DEBwise

One of the most fertile scenes in 20th century popular music was Kingston, Jamaica in the late 1970s. With the exception of Bob Marley's work, the most enduring (and influential) reggae has been dub: smoky, mostly instrumental and stripped down to drums and bone-rattling bass, with strange echo and thick reverb. This CD captures a brilliant collaboration between Brown and Jammy in King Tubby's studio. (Blood and Fire) **★★★★½** —Leopold Froehlich



PLAYBOY JAZZ * In a Smooth Groove

Although often derided for its sameness and sterility, smooth jazz remains the most popular form of the music today. This two-CD survey covers the past quarter century and shows that the genre doesn't have to lack variety or soul. Consider it gateway jazz. Our favorites: saxophonist Gato Barbieri's "Last Kiss," guitarist George Benson's "Breezin'" and peripatetic percussionist Sheila E.'s contribution, "Heaven," on which she beats the drums and sings. (Playboy Jazz) **★★★** —L.F.



DFA * Compilation #2

The Strokes, Yeah Yeah Yeahs and Interpol notwithstanding, nothing better represents the sound of young New York than the production team and label called DFA. Here, for about \$22, you get two CDs of music straddling the line between angular, danceable indie rock (the Rapture and Pixeltan) and experimental electronica with a punk aesthetic (LCD Soundsystem, Black Dice and the Juan Maclean), plus a mix CD for the full-on underground clubbing experience. (DFA) **★★★★** —T.M.



reissues and rarities

[OLD GOLD]

Nothing's worse than taking your Christmas cash to the record shop to buy some Sinatra, Sonics or Fats Domino, only to realize you've bought a boxed set packed with shoddy live versions recorded in 1983. For major artists, you can trust Blue Note, Rhino and Legacy. But for specialty music, you need labels with taste and integrity. You can't go wrong with any of these.

ACE: Best of all are Ace's incredibly consistent compilations spanning girl groups, jump blues and rockabilly, along with showcases of vintage labels such as Specialty, King and Vanguard.

BEAR FAMILY: One of the best sources for roots music—from bluegrass to blues to a series on early rock, compiled by region.



BLOOD AND FIRE: The greatest reggae label of all time? Every release on Blood and Fire is awesome.

CRIPPLED DICK HOT WAX: Specializes in lascivious soft-porn and Eurotrash movie music, including the soundtrack to *Schoolgirl Report* and the *Beat at Cinecittà* and *Shake Savage* series. Impeccably sleek taste and cool cover art.

MOSAIC: The ultimate jazz aficionado label. Completists love the Sarah Vaughan and Bird sets, but the Grachan Moncur III is our favorite jazz release.

REVENANT: The grande dame of reissue labels doesn't mess around, as its recent nine-CD Albert Ayler set shows.

RPM: You can rely on RPM for obscure garage rock, R&B and easy beat. Not to be missed: the fabulous girl-group sounds of the *Dream Babes* series.

SOUL JAZZ: This imprint compiles priceless sides from Jamaica's Studio One, mines Miami and New Orleans for Southern funk and offers copacetic dance-floor fillers in its *Dynamite!* series.

SUNDAZED: A fantastic selection of surf, soul and—its specialty—1960s garage rock and psych pop.

TROJAN: An amazing catalog, as shown in its new *This Is Reggae Music: The Golden Era 1960-1975*. The three-CD boxed sets (*Trojan Dub*, *Trojan Ska*, *Trojan Roots*, et al.) are a godsend for less than \$20.

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game of the month

[KILLZONE]

Wars are never pretty, but this futuristic firefight is grittier than most

Urban engagements among burned-out buildings, savaged shopping malls and splintered streets are the order of the day in *Killzone* (SCEA, PS2). Your mission: Prevent planet Vecta from falling into a separatist faction's hands. Screams, curses and shots accompany the action when you sprint through the trenches as one of four characters—Templar, Rico, Luger and Hahka—with different special abilities. Single-player assignments such as seizing turrets, assaulting APCs and dropping paratroopers pale against online ops, which support up to 16 triggermen per game. Still, amazing artificial intelligence and exceptional production values (for example, grainy camera filters and gripping story sequences) make *Killzone* an explosive engagement online or off. And while the format is somewhat derivative, the presentation remains solid enough to pistol-whip even pacifists into compliance. See you on the front lines, soldier. **★★★★½** —Scott Steinberg



The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth (Electronic Arts, PC) If you bemoaned the fellowship's hapless strategies throughout the *Lord of the Rings* movies, it's time to prove your Middle-earth mettle. *The Battle for Middle-earth* lets you command all the key battles from the books, plus you can take charge of the ugly side and crush elves like so many bugs under a balrog. It's *Warcraft* in Elvish, and deep nerd-dom has never been so cool. **★★★★** —Joel Johnson



Prince of Persia: Warrior Within (Ubisoft, GameCube, PS2, Xbox) Darker in tone and aimed at a more mature audience than last year's *Sands of Time*, this superior sequel adds an improved fighting system and an arsenal of bloody finishing moves to the acrobatic puzzle-solving that set the original apart. The ability to time-travel distinguishes this game—changes you make in the past impact the future, exponentially increasing the replay value. A must. **★★★★** —John Gaudiosi



Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal (SCEA, PS2) Fans of gadgets, gizmos and grade-school humor, rejoice. Ratchet and Clank are back and armed with even more ways to make things go boom. The single-player mode rocks as usual, while split-screen and online multiplayer options allow for groundbreaking combat scenarios fueled by bizarre weapons (sheepantors, for example) and hard-core vehicular mayhem. Serious fun for the professional prankster. **★★★★½** —S.S.



GoldenEye: Rogue Agent (Electronic Arts, GameCube, PS2, Xbox) The world of James Bond is fantastic, but the man himself is such a prude. You, on the other hand, were fired by Her Majesty's Secret Service for "reckless brutality" and have teamed with Auric Goldfinger to seek revenge on Dr. No, using an implanted (and weaponized) golden eye. With solid controls, an original story, your favorite Bond villains and great multiplayer options, it's a gloriously amoral joy. **★★★★** —J.G.



gear

[GAMER GIFTS]

Bring yourself one step closer to gaming nirvana this holiday season with these killer accessories



Car freaks can finally cut the cord thanks to Intec's **Wireless Racing Wheel** (PS2 and Xbox, \$70, intelink.com).

Vibration feedback and a responsive 2.4-gigahertz wireless connection let you feel every bump, while analog pedals provide realistic acceleration and braking control.

Get intense rumbles delivered directly to your ears courtesy of these **Skullcrushers headphones** (\$90, skullcandy.com). They're the first to feature built-in vibrating subwoofer speakers and work with any audio input source.



Nyko continues the fight against sweaty palms with its **Air Flo Wireless** (PS2 and Xbox, \$40, nyko.com), a wireless version of its beloved fan-cooled controller. PC gamers can opt for the Air Flo Mouse (\$15) to keep them cool.



The ergonomically designed **Pyramat PM 300 Sound Lounger** (all consoles, \$150, pyramat.com) sports built-in speakers and a vibrating subwoofer in the backrest so that laid-back players can hear—and feel—every gunshot and scream. —Marc Saltzman



holiday gifts

[SANTA WORE BLACK]

Retro paperbacks for bad boys who love bad girls

Until the 1960s, mystery lovers got their thrills from cheap paperback crime novels popularly known as pulp fiction. The books are back, complete with world-weary detectives and con men. The Hard Case Crime series includes lost masterpieces such as Lawrence Block's *Grifter's Game* and new novels written in the same style as the hard-boiled classics. They put to shame the work of modern mystery writers whose plots rely on cell phones and terrorists. (*Hard Case Crime*) ★★★ —Patty Lambert



AUTOMOBILES OF THE CHROME AGE
Michael Furman

Postwar cars had a *va-va-voom* quality; their colors and styles reflected the optimistic mood of the era. It's easy to see how such autos played a part in creating suburbia, mass consumption and (in their generous backseats) many an SUV-driving baby boomer. (*Abrams*) ★★★ —Jessica Riddle



LOST ANGELES • Paul Jasmin

Photographer Bruce Weber says it best in the introduction to this collection of photos of Los Angeles desperadoes: Paul Jasmin's images are "like a modern version of Nathaniel West's *Day of the Locust*." Jasmin captures both extremes of L.A.—the down-and-out, who smoke cigarettes in motels, and the beautiful, who lounge around mansions. These photos remind us that no one is more romantic, or more hopeful, than the people who live there. (*Edition 7L*) ★★★ —P.L.



DIRTY FOUND #1 • Jason Bitner

Dumpster diving reaches new lows in this book featuring racy Polaroids, perverted illustrations and dirty notes. Each missive was sent to *Found* (a zine specializing in found objects) by fans. Although a few entries don't pack much raunch, readers will get a voyeuristic rush. Our favorite item? An anti-masturbation contract signed by "Tony" and discovered in a Kiss record sleeve. (*Found Magazine*) ★★★½ —Alison Prato



GRAFFITI WORLD • Nicholas Ganz

Graffiti is now a worldwide art form, with its own techniques, influences and museum shows. After giving a brief history (delinquent cavemen tagged their walls by blowing colored powder through hollow bones), the author devotes the majority of the book to surveying the work of groundbreaking artists from five continents. (*Abrams*) ★★★ —Emily Little



THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CHICAGO

J. Grossman, A. Keating and J. Reiff
America's third-largest city was home to the Lager Beer Riots and the Black Sox. Here is a truly formidable document: 1,152 pages of tragedy, comedy and farce. Beginning with abolitionism and ending with Zenith Radio Corporation, it's perfect for the history buff with an appreciation for human frailty. (*University of Chicago*) ★★★ —Leopold Froehlich



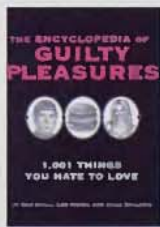
CHEF'S SECRETS • Francine Maroukian

In this cookbook, which has fewer recipes than tips, culinary masters dish out some covert tricks of the trade. Paul Wade offers a shock-therapy method to achieve sand-free clams, Sara Moulton breaks down how to dredge crabs through flour, and Bradford Thompson cracks the mystery of how to boil a lobster correctly. But some how-tos, such as the proper way to filet an eel, are probably better left to the sushi chef than to the gourmet lothario. (*Quirk*) ★★★½ —J. Jaroneczyk Hawthorne



THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GUILTY PLEASURES • Sam Stall, Lou Harry and Julia Spalding

This Abba-to-Zima compendium contains 1,001 entries on the cultural icons we hate to admit we love, such as TV shows like *ALF*, as-seen-on-TV Ginsu knives and Bioré pore strips. Interesting tidbits will make you the life of any party: There are between 6 million and 14 million ferrets in the U.S., and Betty Rubble didn't become a Flintstones vitamin until the mid-1990s. (*Quirk*) ★★★ —P.L.



the erotic eye



THE PHOTOBOOK: A HISTORY
Martin Parr and Gerry Badger

The history of photography cannot be told through single prints. Bound collections unify a photographer's vision. Parr and Badger have come up with a fine concept: a book based on books of photographs. The images herein are striking, but the design of the book is even better. (*Phaidon*) ★★★ —L.F.



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High Thai

Posh new hotel meets pristine jungle beach on Thailand's island of Phuket, with a wild nightlife district a cab ride away

DUSK IN THAILAND. You stroll through the sliding glass doors of your 2,000-plus-square-foot villa and ponder a dive into your private pool (pictured above). Down a slope dotted with lush palm trees, the last rays of sunlight are bouncing off the tropical Andaman Sea, where you spent the day lounging in the shallows, partaking in some unbelievable snorkeling. In the suite's king-size teak bed, your sun-bronzed paramour lies clutching a Black Cat (a brand of local whiskey), awaiting your next move. The night is long, the possibilities endless.

If you're looking for a romantic getaway, Trisara, a resort that opened in October on the Thai island of Phuket, is redefining the art of style and service for the international pleasure seeker.

Just 15 minutes from Phuket's airport, on the island's wealthy northwest coast, the resort has 33 poolside villas and 12 larger, more secluded villas with up to four bedrooms apiece. It's all tucked into a beachfront jungle with more than 150,000 plants cultivated by an on-site botanist, who will gladly take you on a tour if you ask. There's a spa, diving and yacht facilities, golf course access and a Euro-Thai restaurant. It's a veg-out kind of place, but if you get the urge, Phuket has it all (and we mean everything), from surprisingly sophisticated restaurants such as Watermark and Ka Jok See to Patong Beach, a red-light district on the sea. Poolside villas at Trisara start at \$675 a night, the private villas at \$1,100; book at trisara.com.



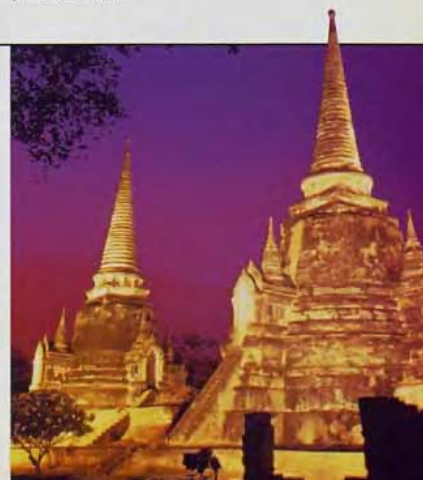
Word Play

Know your Thai slang

Katoey gai: chicken. *Slang:* a loose woman.
Ai hial: You monitor lizard! *Slang:* You asshole!
Li raet!: You rhinoceros! *Slang:* You bitch!
Chak wao: to fly a kite. *Slang:* to masturbate.
Sa moke: to smoke. *Slang:* to suck cock.
Farang dawng: pickled Westerner. *Slang:* white boy.
Khaw khaeng cang: You have a copper throat.
Slang: You can drink a lot.
Nagfaa jamh laeng: angels in disguise. *Slang:* transvestites (who can be hard to spot, so beware).

Season's Greetings

IF YOU DON'T hit Thailand this winter for the Phuket King's Cup Regatta, Southeast Asia's premier sailing event (December 4 to 11), or the New Year's Eve bash in Bangkok (we're not sure about the date on this one, but we'll get back to you), go for the Ayutthaya World Heritage Site Celebration (December 13 to 22, right). This trippy event pays homage to the ancient temples of Siam. Think *Apocalypse Now* with all the partying, minus the air strikes.





Rampaging Bull

PLAYBOY hits the California coast in the most powerful Lamborghini ever built

PAMPLONA HAS ITS RUNNING of the bulls, and every year America does too, only ours is less publicized—for good reason. The U.S. event involves Lamborghinis (the bull being the Lambo mascot), the owners of which gather to road-trip, hitting ridiculous speeds on public highways while deftly avoiding the radar gun. We could think of no better venue to test-drive the spanking-new Murcielago Roadster (pictured)—the most powerful, most expensive automobile ever to roll out of Lamborghini's Italian factory.

Nearly 50 Lamborghinis of all models and vintages gathered for the start in Santa Monica, and the moment we hit the highway, the Roadster's 580-horsepower V12 was scaring the bean sprouts out of California's Escort drivers. The car is basically a Murcielago Coupe refitted as a convertible, with the same six-speed manual transmission and the same mojo (0 to 60 in 3.9 seconds). The most notable difference is that approaching 200 miles an hour without a roof is like being duct-taped to the nose cone of the space shuttle at launch. In a good way. As we hammered the throttle, the car hugged the tarmac through every undulation, taking everything we could give it and roaring appreciatively. By the time we arrived in Monterey the next day, we were completely spent and dying for a smoke. It's a \$330,000 proposition, but this one is worth every lira.



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Cash on the Barrel

Prime scotch-drinking season has arrived. Our picks from this year's top-shelf single-malt releases

SINGLE-MALT SCOTCHES have an advantage over all other liquors that their fans love to exploit: Distillers put out special bottlings all the time, so the act of nipping and sipping becomes a never-ending intellectual exploration. Our picks from this year's gems, from left, all available in a good liquor store near you: The Balvenie Vintage Cask 1973 is a Highland malt that's complex enough for connoisseurs but fruity and smooth enough for the novice. It's an all-around winner. Only three 1973 casks were chosen, thus the \$399 price tag. The Stillman's Dram from the Dalmore (\$140) is like a perfect date—rich, 30 years old and elegant, yet willing to go all night. Ardbeg Uigeadail (\$70) is a treasure for Islay malt fans. You get all the sea smoke that makes this island whiskey a cult favorite, plus a fruity bonus—the 11-year-old scotch did a little time in sherry casks. Macallan broke with 180 years of tradition to make its 15-year-old Fine Oak (\$65), aging it for a time in American bourbon barrels (Macallan had always used sherry casks exclusively). The result is a lighter, more subtle whiskey—great for daytime drinking.

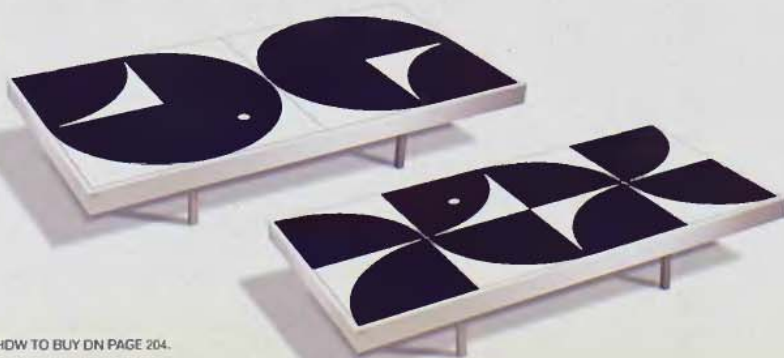


Clothesline: Peter Gallagher

PETER GALLAGHER PLAYS a laid-back Californian on *The O.C.*, but he's no slacker when it comes to dressing up in real life. "I tend to wear suits often because I grew up on the East Coast," he says. "I've collected a lot of the suits I've worn in my films, like the tailored ones made for me on *The Idolmaker*, the plaid tuxedo I wore when I took Cher out in *The Player* and the red-label Hugo Boss suit I've been wearing on *The O.C.*" Given Gallagher's style, it's no surprise that one of his role models is Cary Grant. "I met him decades ago. When I looked at him I realized why God invented the navy blue suit. Cary carried it off so well." And when Gallagher's not wearing a suit? "I'm most happy in my old Banana Republic T-shirt and Hurley jeans that are so baggy they almost fall off my ass."

Think Again: the Coffee Table

YOUR LIFE IS an ever-unfolding puzzle, and sometimes your furniture is too. Or should be. After 20 years as a graphic designer, Douglas Homer decided he wanted to "see what furniture was all about." Two years later we have the Thumb Puzzle coffee table (\$4,000), whose sliding tiles let you reconfigure its pattern and gain access to the storage areas inside. And while it might look like a museum piece, it's no cream puff: The tough acrylic Shinkolite tiles are virtually indestructible (not to mention fingerprint resistant), and they sit in a Corian frame on a stainless steel base. Try your hand at sliding the tiles around on Homer's website (douglashomer.com), and while you're there check out his other interactive pieces, a psychedelic cabinet and a chair that needs a haircut.



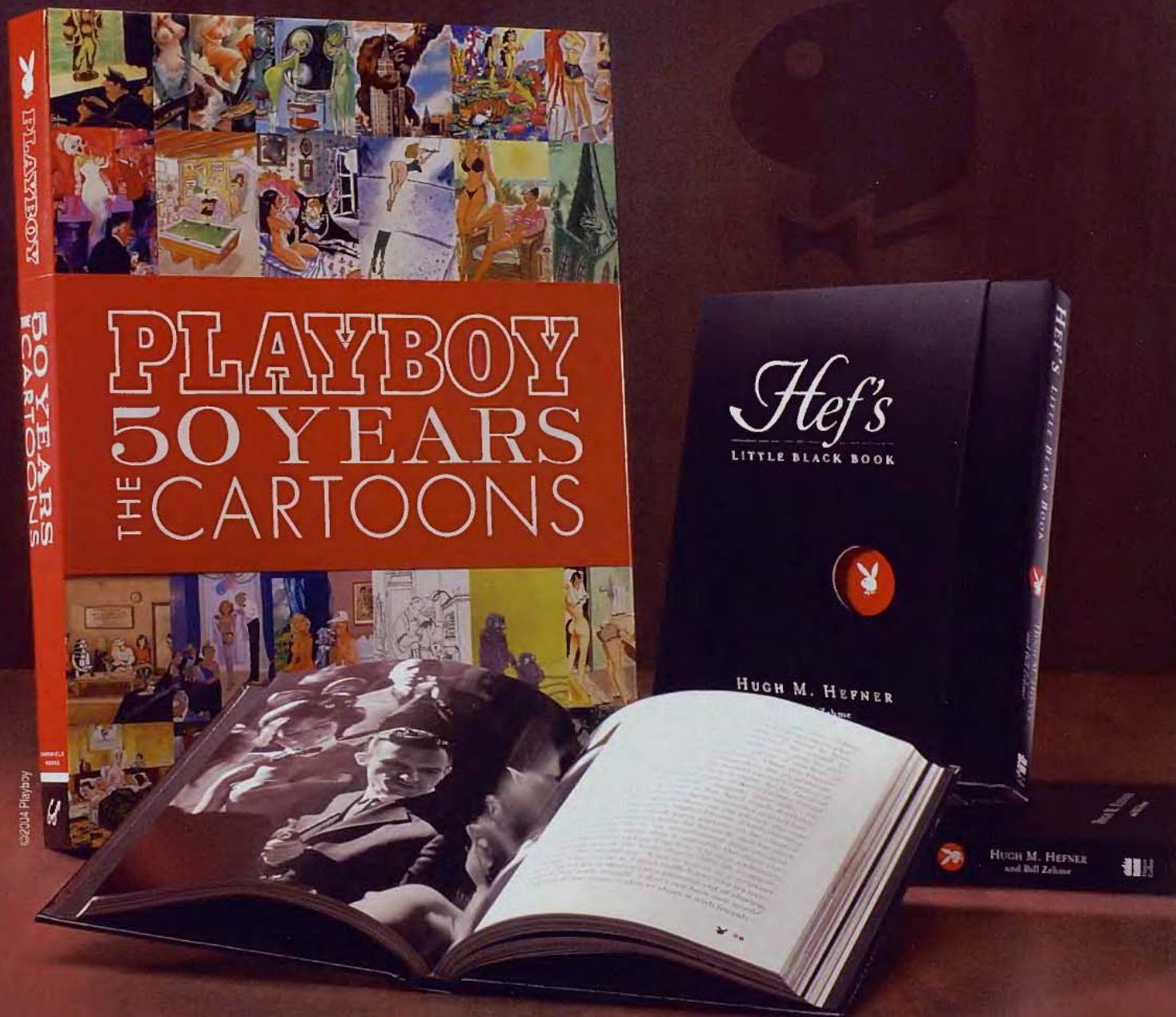
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The Playboy Advisor

How can I persuade my wife to have a threesome? And if I do, how should I arrange it?—B.F., Atlanta, Georgia

Your timing is perfect. Last month we printed a few of the hundreds of e-mails we received after asking readers about their real-life threesomes (see playboyadvisor.com). Here's what we gleaned: (1) Don't beg. You don't want your wife to do this as a favor, because that breeds resentment. It should come up as part of a discussion about fantasies. If she's curious about being with another woman, or being explored by four hands and two mouths, or sharing you with someone else, encourage her. If she isn't, back off. You may have planted a seed that needs time to grow. Or it may not be in the cards. As Hef notes in his *Little Black Book*, "It's foolish to squander the tomorrows that exist in a relationship for a momentary adventure. It's not a smart way to live your life." (2) Don't bring this up unless you have a strong relationship. Threesomes have been known to cause serious damage. That's why it's crucial, if your wife agrees to it, to establish ground rules. Can you kiss the other woman? Can you have intercourse with her? Does your wife want to have sex with the other woman? Will you use a condom? How about a dental dam? It isn't prudent to negotiate during the encounter. Regardless, your wife should command your full attention, particularly during the first experience. (3) Many three-ways develop naturally when a guy finds himself alone with two horny, intoxicated women (the women must kiss before anything else happens). Play it cool. If the women feel like they're part of your personal porn movie ("Yeah, baby!"), you'll kill the mood. Make the experience about their pleasure and you'll be rewarded twofold. One reader pointed out, "You have to be in the right place at the right time with the right women." (4) If your wife wants to experiment, there are two kinds of women you can approach: familiar and strange. For the former, your wife should invite an open-minded friend for dinner and drinks. Once everyone is cozy, either (a) invite the friend to your bedroom straight-out ("We both find you attractive and wonder if you'd like to stay") or (b) bring up the topic more casually by recalling past adventures, how men and women have different approaches to sex, why guys are turned on by women kissing, etc. Your wife will need to make the first move, usually by massaging her friend's shoulders or otherwise getting touchy-feely. There is a risk that the friend will react badly. She also brings her own fantasies and emotions to the encounter. So it may be better to recruit a stranger, preferably an escort, who doesn't expect anything but an envelope of cash on the dresser (never discuss the money—you're paying for her time; the sex happens because she likes you). You should budget \$500 or more an hour. Some couples compromise by



making fast friends in the swinger community, which has no shortage of bisexual women. Many swingers play only as couples, so make it clear you're looking only for a third. Is a threesome as great as you imagine? The men who wrote us thought so. "The best part was watching the women get dressed together in the morning," said one. "You wish every guy friend you've ever had was there to see it."

Can you explain the meaning of some hand gestures that seem popular among young people? A few are similar to those from my own youth but apparently have new meanings. One involves the upward pointing of the index finger and pinkie. In the past it meant bullshit, but a local weatherman signs off with it every day, and I've also seen it used during televised rock concerts. Another gesture I don't get is the thumb and pinkie extended at a right angle. Finally, I always took the V sign to mean victory, peace or vagina. Today, people kiss two closed fingers or pound their heart with a fist before giving the sign. The V is then pointed up or sideways. I interpret this to mean "kissing tight vaginas gives me heartburn." Am I close?—E.P., Great Falls, Virginia

Stay out of the hood. The changing meaning of hand gestures is one reason we stick with what we know: the raised middle finger. More accurately, it is a raised middle finger just below the dash, so as not to be fired on. The V sign originated in the 1940s with a Belgian activist as a symbol of victory over the Nazis. Hippies later adopted it as a sign of peace. Palm inward, it means "up yours." The chest-pound V translates as "peace out," a.k.a. shalom. According to Nancy Armstrong and Melissa Wagner, authors of the *Field Guide to Gestures*, the thumb-pinkie "hang

loose" sign was brought to Hawaii by Spanish colonists and meant "Let's drink." (It still means that, when done vertically.) Historians believe "the horns," a gesture at least 2,500 years old, may represent a bull, an animal that is typically castrated. It is made at men whose wives are cheating. If the fingers are pointed away instead of up, it becomes protection from the evil eye. Ronnie James Dio of Black Sabbath is credited with popularizing the horns among metal fans after learning it from his Italian grandmother. But rather than pointing out, he pointed up. Rock on, cuckolds.

I'd like to try my hand at Internet gambling but am afraid of getting ripped off. Any advice?—R.M., Seattle, Washington

With more than 1,400 casinos to choose from, you're going to encounter a few bad cherries—especially since you have little recourse if you get ripped off (whether it's even legal to gamble online is a gray area). Because word spreads rapidly online, the Net provides a relatively easy way to identify dubious operators. Visit the discussion boards at winneronline.com and bet2gamble.com, where players share their best and worst experiences. Crushing the Internet Casinos, by Barry Meadow (available at lvago.com), can also shorten your learning curve. While it's devoted mostly to the strategy of playing for deposit bonuses, the \$50 report includes tips on how to minimize losses to fraud. For example, Meadow says he gets suspicious if, over time, a virtual blackjack dealer winds up with 20 or better more than one time in four. Stick with casinos that use reputable software, such as that by Microgaming, Boss Media, Cryptologic or Playtech. The foremost challenge of gambling online is collecting your winnings. "It's better to have 20 casinos owing you \$500 each than one casino owing you \$10,000," says Meadow, who uses a database to track his plays.

I can't get over the fact that my girlfriend has had more lovers than I have. She is my first lover and is five years younger than I am. When I ask her for details, she refuses to say anything. That fuels my paranoia. I wish she would just tell me how far she went with the three guys I know about. If that would ease my mind, shouldn't she tell me everything?—J.C., Chicago, Illinois

Your inexperience shows here, because unless you're recruiting virgins for sacrifice, the number of notches on a woman's bedpost has nothing to do with the future or strength of her current relationship. Someday your girlfriend may provide her history, but she's a smart woman who recognizes that you're already judging her. We're often asked, usually by men, "How many is too many before I should get upset?" and find the question frustrating and ridiculous. (A few

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variations are below, with our responses.) We've never had any desire to know more than a woman volunteers; she's not a used car. We find it more useful to quiz a partner about the best and worst behavior of her exes so we can refine our moves. We don't have an easy solution to rid you of this insecurity. We suspect that as you mature and get more experience it will be less of an issue. You are worthy of being with this woman, and she wants to be with you. Don't let the saps she left behind sabotage what you have.

In the beginning of our relationship, my wife readily told me stories of her sexual past. I felt obligated to share my own experiences. It made me feel good to be honest with the woman I love. But my wife now says she made up most of her stories. I have asked for the truth, but she says it's none of my business. I believe she made it my business by listening to my confessions. What do you think?—M.M., Franklin, Minnesota

What else has she lied about?

I am a 27-year-old woman who has slept with 35 men. About a third were one-night stands, and five lasted more than a year. The problem is that guys flip out when they hear my total. What gives? I have started to hold back in bed so as not to seem too experienced. I can't understand why a guy would be willing to trade better sex for the idea that his girlfriend is "pure," especially since I always practice safe sex and get tested for STDs every six months. What should I say when a man asks me how many partners I've had?—M.J., Cleveland, Ohio

We would ignore such a question, because it's tacky. We love experienced women, and we love to provide experience to those lacking. If a guy insists on knowing how many men you've been with, he isn't going to appreciate what you have to offer.

The surveys I've seen about how many partners people have had in their lifetime never break it down by age. That is, a 24-year-old who has had 10 lovers is vastly different from a 50-year-old with 10. I have a female friend who estimates that most guys in their mid-20s have slept with 80 to 90 women. That seems high. I'm 36 and have been with 65 women. Is that above average? I had a 25-year-old girlfriend who had slept with 75 guys.—N.F., Austin, Texas

Those numbers are robust. In one study of 3,126 adults, about 10 percent of the respondents reported having had at least 21 lovers since age 18. That held true regardless of age, with the exception of 18- to 24-year-olds, who just need more time. The median was six partners for men and two for women, meaning that half the respondents had more and half had less. At the extreme, one man claimed 1,016 partners, and one woman said she'd been with 1,009. (What's more amazing—their promiscuity or that they were both so precise?) In 1982 we

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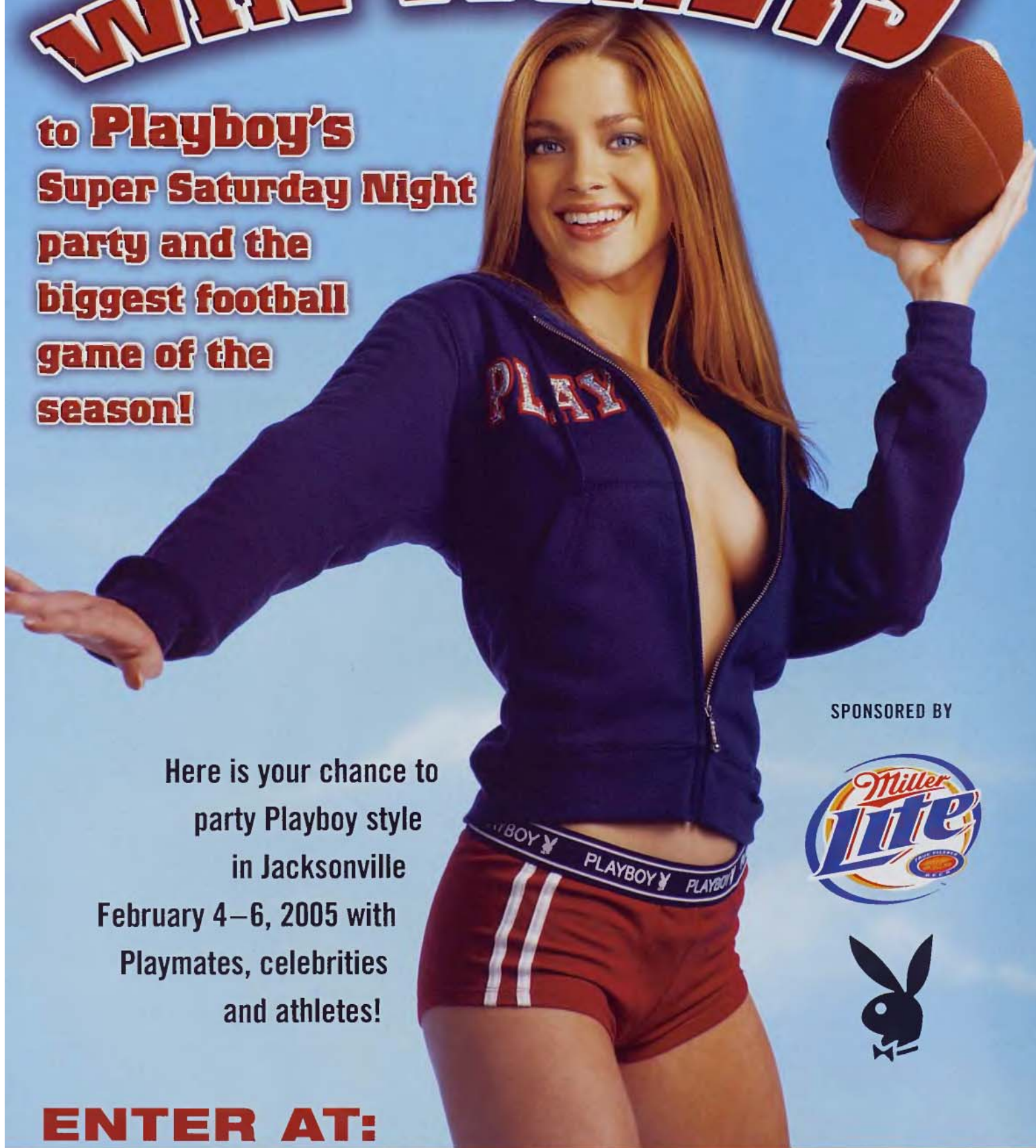
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surveyed 100,000 readers and asked them to tally their lovers. The median for men was 16; the median for women was eight. Which goes to show that reading PLAYBOY gets you laid more often—at least it did in the 1970s.

Further education on tipping (August): You should have reminded your readers that the federal government allows employers to pay tipped employees a wage of just \$2.13 an hour. So 15 percent is the least you should leave unless you're talking to the manager about your miserable experience. If you don't feel the need to tip, eat at a buffet.—A.R., Atlanta, Georgia

You should tip at a buffet. The staff is cleaning up after you. The feds and most states require employers to make up the difference if a tipped employee doesn't earn at least \$5.15 an hour including tips, although that's still hardly enough.

Tip well or you may get something unexpected in your food the next time.—R.O., Ludington, Michigan

A few servers who wrote made this threat, which we found to be unprofessional.

I've worked as a bartender for 15 years. If you get a drink at the bar, leave a dollar. If it's two drinks, leave \$2. And don't pick up your small change. It amazes me when a drink is \$5.20 and the person waits for his or her change and then retrieves a quarter. Are you that broke?—E.M., Centreville, Virginia

We follow the old standby at the bar, which is to leave 15 to 20 percent of the tab.

My friends and I conducted an experiment with our girlfriends and wives. Whenever we requested oral sex, we used the term "blow party" instead of "blow job." What woman wouldn't rather go to a party than a job? We found that, as a group, we were 35 percent more likely to get action when using "blow party." What do you think?—G.T., Huntington Beach, California

The revolution starts now. Just don't talk about your blow parties near any cops.

How does a person make a citizen's arrest?—H.N., Washington, D.C.

Hubby asking for anal sex again? It's legal now. You can make a citizen's arrest in every state and D.C. if you suspect that a felony has taken place. A few states, notably California, allow citizen's arrests for misdemeanors if you witness the infraction. That's in part why the LAPD processes more than 6,000 citizen's arrests annually, while D.C. seldom has one. Rarely is it necessary to detain someone, which can be risky and lead to a lawsuit if you don't have your facts straight. Instead, the typical arrest involves calling the police, giving a statement and signing a complaint. The police must agree that a crime has taken place, which is why arresting a politician for voting to invade Iraq or a police officer for speeding usually won't get you far. (Earlier this year at San

Francisco City Hall a citizen attempted to arrest a volunteer conducting gay civil unions but couldn't find a cop who would help.) Police say they appreciate citizens getting involved but find that some get a little too involved. For example, a motorist in Wisconsin last year pulled a gun and handcuffed another driver for playing his music too loud and squealing his tires. In Oklahoma in May, a homeowner chased a 19-year-old he saw throwing bottles from a pickup, set up a roadblock, ran the truck off the road, broke a window to grab the kid, applied cuffs and called police. Once in a while you read about the real deal, such as the Norfolk, Virginia mechanic who last year witnessed a hit-and-run that killed a teenage boy. He chased and detained the driver.

A woman wrote in August because her husband wanted the two of them to perform fellatio on another man. Years ago my wife and I were using a dildo when she told me to lick and kiss it. When she saw how much it turned me on, she bought a strap-on. We did 69s, and now she sometimes demands that I fall to my knees and service her. She also gives me an ass pounding two or three times a month. I imagine these two letters will open a lot of eyes.—R.S., Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

You bet. One couple with experience in this scenario, M. and B. in Chicago, wrote to say that our suggestion that the reader use a dildo to fulfill her husband's fantasy missed the mark. In their view, he found the idea of giving a blow job exciting simply because it involved his wife having sex with another guy. "He wants to share the pleasure she feels," they wrote, "and also feel the other man's pleasure as his wife sucks him. His wife, not the guy, is the focus of his desire. If he just wanted to suck a cock or receive anal sex, he could do that without her." Which is a good point.

I don't like my husband going to strip clubs because of the way he treats me afterward. He says every man either has to watch dancers or cheat on his wife. Otherwise he becomes "a shell of himself." What do you think?—R.R., Colorado Springs, Colorado

Your husband sounds like a single guy living in a married man's body. There's nothing wrong with a guy visiting a strip club but only if it doesn't cause a rift in the relationship. When it does, he continues at his peril. Your husband is in a sad place indeed if he feels empty without strippers in his life.

All reasonable questions—from fashion, food and drink, stereo and sports cars to dating dilemmas, taste and etiquette—will be personally answered if the writer includes a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The most interesting, pertinent questions will be presented on these pages each month. Write the Playboy Advisor, 730 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10019, or send e-mail by visiting our website at playboyadvisor.com.



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BOOK 'EM

SINCE SEPTEMBER 11, IT'S BEEN EASIER FOR THE FEDS TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU'RE READING

BY PATRICIA SCHROEDER

We all know instinctively that what we read is nobody's damn business but our own—and it's certainly not the government's. The freedom to read what we choose and to choose what we read with no one looking over our shoulder is bound up with the freedom to think independently and critically. You cannot undermine one without crippling the other, and you cannot have a free society and a functioning democracy without both.

The major task facing this country since 9/11 has been to prevent acts of terror. This reality at times collides with the need to protect our freedoms. Nowhere has this tension been more evident than in efforts to rein in the excesses of the USA Patriot Act, particularly provisions that give the FBI virtual carte blanche to poke into the reading habits of Americans. Under Section 215 of the act, the FBI can seize "any tangible thing," including "business records," that it claims is relevant to an investigation, without having to show probable cause or demonstrate that the individual whose records are sought might be involved in criminal activity or might be an agent of a foreign power. The FBI simply needs to get an order from a secret court—virtually a rubber-stamp process. The act's definition of "business records" includes public library circulation and Internet use records, as well as those of purchases by bookstore patrons. There is no opportunity for an adversarial hearing. There is no appeal. And it is forbidden to disclose that records have been seized.

The Patriot Act was rammed through Congress six weeks after the 9/11 attacks. In the three years since, we have learned that before the vote few members of Congress had read the bill, much less given thought to its provisions and implications. Many of the sweeping new powers granted under the Patriot Act had long been on the wish lists of the FBI and other law enforcement agencies. Sneak-and-peek searches and roving wiretaps were on these lists, as was the ability to examine records of what books an individual might have purchased or borrowed



or lists of individuals who might have purchased or borrowed a particular book. While the government has always had the right to obtain these records if it met a standard of judicial review, Section 215 of the Patriot Act eliminates this check on the government's power.

"Libraries and the FBI have a chilling history," former public librarian Mary Minow reminded her colleagues in an article in *Library Journal*. Bookstores do too. The online newsletter CounterPunch reported on a 1984 run-in between bookseller Arline Johnson and the FBI: According to Johnson, a week after the Naval Institute Press shipped three copies of *The Hunt for Red October* by first-time novelist and virtual unknown Tom Clancy, the FBI showed up at her store in

Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, asking where the books were and who had purchased them.

Traditionally, librarians and booksellers have protected their patrons' privacy. That spirit of resistance has continued in the wake of the Patriot Act's passage. At a national teleconference convened in December 2002 by a host of regional library associations, librarians from all over the country agreed that the fewer records maintained, the less information the government can see. Some booksellers are also reported to be purging computer files.

Still, the most important weapon in the fight to restore privacy safeguards for library and bookstore records has been public awareness. Initially, the alarm was raised by a few lonely voices—publishers, librarians, booksellers, authors—with little hope that such concerns would be heard as the nation struggled to recover, physically and psychologically, from 9/11. But the message got out, and it resonated with individuals and groups across the country. Members of Congress began hearing from constituents. Op-ed pieces and editorials began appearing in newspapers.

Remarkably, the concern crossed party lines. When legislation was introduced in the House to exempt libraries and bookstores from the provisions of the Patriot

Act and return to the earlier, more stringent judicial safeguards when the government seeks these records, liberal Democrats joined libertarian Republicans in signing on as co-sponsors. Similar legislation emerged in the Senate, with similar support. Groups representing booksellers, librarians, authors and publishers launched a petition drive, the Campaign for Reader Privacy, with the objective of obtaining a million signatures. The groundswell had its effect. As the Bush administration sought to justify the most extreme provisions of the Patriot Act and convince Congress it should grant even broader powers under a proposed Patriot Act II, Attorney General John Ashcroft grew more strident in his attacks on critics. In September 2003 he accused the American Library Association of generating "baseless hysteria," claiming that Section 215 had never been used to seek records. According to government documents released in June under a Freedom of Information Act request, the Department of Justice did invoke Section 215 less than a month later. Even more damning, an FBI report to Congress released in July acknowledged that the provision had also been used to obtain information about people who are not suspected terrorists.

That same month, with the original bill locked up in the House Judiciary Committee, Vermont representative Bernie Sanders suggested a Freedom to Read Amendment to a Justice Department appropriations bill that would deny funding for Section 215 searches of libraries and bookstores. The amendment had broad bipartisan support and a clear majority of votes—until the Republican leadership, facing the preemptive threat of a veto from the White House, held the vote open for 23 extra minutes so it could arm-twist party members back into line. The amendment went down to defeat with a tie vote of 210 to 210.

Some of the most questionable provisions of the Patriot Act are due to expire next year. Since September 11, 2001, Americans appreciate the need for accurate intelligence and heightened security to prevent acts of terror. But we also understand that unless we protect ourselves without sacrificing civil liberties, any "security" we achieve will be meaningless. Every person in this country who cherishes the right to read freely must now make his or her voice heard, demanding that the safeguards on our privacy and our freedom to read be restored.

LUST IN TRANSLATION

SHANGHAI'S KARAOKE GIRLS SING FOR SAFE SEX



By Ted C. Fishman

These days nearly every type of business in China is big. Name one—phones, cigarettes, cars, petrochemicals, almost anything—and the country's share of it is likely to rank in the top five worldwide. The sex industry is no different. And like so much else in the Chinese economy, it was hardly a business at all before China started experimenting with free markets, beginning in 1978. While in other spheres China often copies the business models of the outside world, its sex trade is uniquely Chinese. There are an estimated 2.8 million sex workers in China. For the most part, they are spared the brutality and stigma that accompany the trade elsewhere. Sex workers also play such an important role in the country's economic development that until recently they were assured an easy pass—and sometimes even support—from government authorities. That may be changing as a result of the one modern innovation the Chinese have been slow to adopt: safe sex.

Modern China is a country on the move. More than 100 million people have left farms and dead-end towns to find a better life in factories and bigger cities, and hundreds of millions more are expected to follow them over the course of the decade. The reason is

poverty: In China's rural regions, annual incomes are about \$400, and China's booming factories can be a ticket out of crushing poverty. But China is a workers' state no more, and bosses can require 100-hour workweeks, pay only a few dollars a day and force workers to risk life and limb.

Victor Yuan, a Harvard-trained pollster who runs Beijing's Horizon Group, a consultancy and research firm, led an exhaustive study of China's sex industry last year as part of a multinational effort to understand the source of the country's AIDS problem. "Many girls," says Yuan, "do not see a factory job as a way to advance. The wages are low, and they have expenses to meet when they work away from home. If they work three or four years in a factory, their life and prospects really have not improved at all." In many of China's factories, there is a real chance their lives will get worse. Official Chinese statistics, which tend to be on the rosy side, claim that 387,000 workers died of occupational illness in 2002. More than 350 employees die in workplace accidents every day. Every year 40,000 workers lose hands or fingers. Against this backdrop is another urban lifestyle: the glamour of Beijing and, even more so, Shanghai. Last year Shanghai's population officially topped 20 million

with the addition of 3.8 million migrants. Twenty years ago there were virtually no foreigners in Shanghai; now there are about half a million. The average income there is \$10,000—10 times the national average—but the average hardly conveys the ostentation of a city paced by millions who are well above average. A boom in luxury cars, high rises, restaurants, shops and cell phones makes Shanghai one of the world's most vibrant playgrounds.

One group that has arrived in droves can be found in the city's karaoke clubs. Chinese karaoke clubs are to those in *Lost in Translation* what the Great Wall is to a backyard fence. Shanghai's clubs are the size of Las Vegas casinos; hundreds of rooms are outfitted with plasma screens and state-of-the-art sound systems. The biggest clubs can have more than 1,000 women around. They look great; they sing, sit close, flatter and jibe. In Yuan's survey, the young women almost always come from outside the area in which they work. They can make eight to 10 times what they might at a factory. The women themselves decide how much to offer clients. Some just sing. Some are touchy-feely. Some join the ride home and romp. Still others move in with a client, often one of the hundreds of thousands of expatriate Asian men (most from Taiwan). Ultimately, the game plan for the women is to return to their hometown, open their own business, support

their parents and, with money, find a better husband. "No one asks what they did while away," Yuan says. "It doesn't matter."

The sex industry is one of the few robust conduits of money to China's impoverished areas. No official estimates exist, but judging from patterns in other countries the amounts may extend into billions of dollars. Is the Chinese sex industry victimless? Hardly. It's a big country with plenty of unpoliced brutality. And one local trend adds danger: Men in China strongly prefer unsheathed sex. It is no surprise that sexually transmitted diseases are a big problem. Recent estimates put the number of hepatitis B carriers at 120 million and HIV-positive Chinese at close to 1 million. Yet until this year government authorities were nearly silent and prevention campaigns nonexistent.

There is hope. In May the central government announced newly aggressive programs requiring local governments to monitor and treat the spread of HIV. It may be no coincidence that these disease-prevention programs come at a time when China is increasingly worried about the disparity of income between prosperous eastern cities and the rest of the country. Life in many Chinese workplaces can be far too disposable. Thank goodness, then, that China's sex workers—a group that in other countries is often regarded as expendable—are gaining value.

MARGINALIA



FROM A PLEDGE SHEET

by Fuck the Vote (fthevote.com), a project devoted to the belief that "even the most deeply rooted right-wing ideologue can be manipulated by sex": "I, the undersigned, acknowledge that in exchange for physical affection (defined as any contact between consenting adults that entails one, several or all of the following: intercourse, fellatio, cunnilingus, anilingus, manual genital stimulation, use of marital aids or other devices which cause arousal, as well as any other activity that leads to sexual gratification, which by no means implies the necessity of orgasm) from the co-signee, I will cast my vote for any candidate other than George W. Bush."

FROM A REPORT by Herbert Friedman titled "Sex and Psychological Operations," posted at psywarrior.com. It describes historical efforts to distract enemy troops by dropping pornographic leaflets, such as this fake *Life* cover, behind the lines

(the back has an image of a skull in a GI helmet): "Did they work? Hardly. Instead, they became collector's items that, if anything, boosted morale.



One professor notes that, during World War II, "the troops kept the pornography and despised the Japanese as queer little people for having sent it." Did the U.S. create sex leaflets? Officially, they have always been forbidden. However, their clandestine use is documented in Office of Strategic Services files that came to auction in the 1970s. A section called "Sex Leaflets" in a report covering July 15, 1944 to May 15, 1945 states that 79,000 were produced, with 16,000 sent to Algeria, 3,800 to Bari, 41,500 to Brindisi, 500 to northern Italy, 3,600 to France and 13,500 for special missions."

FROM A REPORT in *Mother Jones*:

"In 2002 Redding Medical Center in northern California reported \$92 million in pretax income. Its similarly sized neighbor, Mercy Medical Center, brought in \$4 million. There wasn't an \$88 million difference in the services they offered. Fraud by two surgeons was part of it, but the hospital was also using a complex billing category known as 'outlier payments.' Intending to support the care of particularly sick patients, Medicare essentially allowed hospitals with very high patient costs—which were determined by whatever amounts the hospital chose to put in its bills—to charge the government higher fees. To qualify for more outlier payments, the hospital's owner, Tenet Healthcare Corporation, hiked prices. By 2002 the company was earning

(continued on page 71)

5 WAYS TO FIX

THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

BY JOHN ANDERSON

(1) Institute instant runoff voting. Our first-past-the-post system has produced a duopoly of political power. Any third-party candidate is labeled a spoiler. In an instant runoff system, voters can rank candidates, naming a second or third choice. If one candidate receives a majority, the counting is over. However, if there is no majority, the candidate with the fewest first choices is eliminated. Those ballots are recounted for the voters' second choice. This process continues until a majority winner can be declared.

(2) Create multimember districts. In the 435 House elections of 2002, only four incumbents lost. In state legislative races, only one major party places a candidate on the ballot in about four out of 10 contests. Multimember districts would assure minorities the chance to elect someone of their choice. Such a system—known as cumulative voting—was used in Illinois from 1870 to 1980.

(3) Finance campaigns publicly. Our political campaigns are considered the costliest in

the world, yet among the world's democracies we rank near the bottom in voter participation. Maine and Arizona, with true public financing in state elections, have seen increases in voter participation and competition.

(4) Open the debates. Replace the misnamed Commission on Presidential Debates with an apolitical body. Participation in the debates would be a condition precedent to the receipt of public financing and would be determined by a national poll. A candidate would have to be chosen by half the respondents to be included in the debates.

(5) Abolish the Electoral College. It is unfair to independents, third parties and millions of voters in battleground states because of its winner-takes-all approach, even if the victory occurs by the narrowest of margins. Until abolishment, states could apportion their electoral votes by the percentage of the vote each candidate receives.

Anderson ran for president in 1980 as an independent.



READER RESPONSE

WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

Despite what Arthur Schlesinger Jr. says in his September essay, "Who Rules America?," George Bush did not make "the fatal turn to a preventive-war policy all by himself." According to polls at the time, more than 75 percent of Americans supported going to war with Iraq.

Andrew Fox
Massillon, Ohio

I am pro-choice and pro-marijuana but voted for George W. despite your efforts to demonize him. Schlesinger took his shot by quoting Abe Lincoln:



More history by mistake than by design.

"Allow the president to invade a neighboring nation whenever he shall deem it necessary to repel an invasion and you allow him to make war at pleasure." That's ironic, given that Lincoln called up troops to invade his own country and then broke almost every rule of war to win. If he hadn't done that, the Confederacy would have been victorious and, as Hank Williams Jr. sings, "If the South woulda won, we'da had it made!"

Brandon Gabbard
Shelter Island, New York

Who rules America? Short answer: the pharmaceutical industry.

Donald Bondank
Shawnee, Kansas

While I agree with Schlesinger's contention that a single man can change history, using Bush's decision to invade Iraq is not the best example. Other factors such as the conservative tilt of the U.S. and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism made this decision likely regardless of Bush's involvement. The power elite has been working toward this decision for the past decade. Even if Al Gore had been elected, there is a strong pos-

sibility that some form of invasion would have taken place.

Gopi Mattel
Half Moon Bay, California

TEXAS PRISONS BAN PLAYBOY

Once again the Texas Department of Criminal Injustice has imposed a policy that erodes prisoner rights. It plans to search letters sent to law enforcement officials, including those who investigate prisoner abuse, in cases "where there have been known problems." Prisoners can also no longer receive nude photos from lovers or subscribe to publications that print nudes, including *PLAYBOY*. They say it contributes to deviancy.

Von Michael Short
Huntsville, Texas

BIG BROTHER IN SMALL PLACES

In June you ran an A-to-Z guide to the many uses of radio-frequency IDs. While I was watching the news about yet another kidnapping in Iraq, it struck me that these chips would be useful to track down hostages. Every foreigner in Iraq should be required to have an RFID chip implanted for his or her own safety.

Bob Smith
Cleveland, Ohio

The attorney general of Mexico had the same idea. He claims he has an RFID implanted in his arm and that 160 of his employees have also been chipped. This gives them access to a high-level database and also ostensibly discourages kidnappers. But a privacy activist pointed out in the Christian Science Monitor that the chips work only when read by RFID scanners. "This isn't a device where you push a button and a light comes up on a board showing where you are," she says. Plus, kidnappers can use another device to extract the chip: "It's called a knife."

ASHCROFT'S SECRET WEAPON

Neal Pollack labels U.S. Attorney Mary Beth Buchanan as "Ashcroft's Enforcer" (September). My organization, the Pittsburgh Bill of Rights Defense Campaign, along with the ACLU, went toe-to-toe with Buchanan during a campaign to persuade the city council to pass a resolution opposing portions of the Patriot Act. After the resolution passed, Buchanan claimed it made us "all less safe and secure." Yet the year before, she said these types of resolutions "do not stop law enforcement from doing what they need to do to protect the public." Why the flip-flop? Many believe she changed her view in

service to her boss, John Ashcroft. What does that say about our justice system?

Buchanan has said that the council bowed to a vocal minority. Yet other than the police officials brought in by Buchanan, each of the 150 people recognized at the meeting spoke for the resolution. In Pittsburgh and nearly 350 other communities, citizens have spoken up for their rights. It's time for our leaders to follow the people.

Dean Gerber
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

As a lawyer who primarily practices criminal defense, I feel compelled to respond to your attack on Mary Beth Buchanan. I don't agree with all her beliefs or the necessity of some of her prosecutions, but I have always found her to be fair, professional and accessible. I don't perceive her office to have adopted a "take-no-prisoners attitude toward sentencing." Instead I find her willing to be as reasonable as one can be under federal guidelines. The drafters of the laws have caused the problems. While one may not agree with the necessity of the law criminalizing head shops, it exists. Imposing financial sanctions might be a more appropriate resolution, but the guidelines usually require imprisonment. Defense lawyers regularly decry the use of anonymous sources by the government to further its cause. It is no



Mary Beth Buchanan—were we fair?

more appropriate for you to use statements from unnamed individuals to disparage Buchanan.

Charles Porter
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

E-mail: forum@playboy.com. Or write: 730 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10019.



"FINE FORM"

by KARIM RASHID

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NEWSFRONT

**Hands Up, Finger Out**

MINNETONKA, MINNESOTA—The day may soon arrive when police ask not for your ID but for your index finger. The biometrics firm Identix markets to law enforcement a wireless device that scans a person's fingertip and beams the print to a database to look for a match. Known as IBIS, the \$4,000 handheld can also snap a mug shot. Identix says the technology improves safety and saves officers time by positively identifying people they stop. Over a four-month period last year, police in Ontario, California used their 65 devices to collect 3,000 prints. The computer found 700 matches, resulting in 170 arrests. Police in Hennepin County, Minnesota (70 devices) and Portland, Oregon (29) are other early adopters. Identix's line of products includes handprint scanners and inkless fingerprint consoles for police stations.

Who's Your Daddy?

LOS ANGELES—In 1996 L.A. County told Manuel Navarro that a woman had identified him as the father of her newborn twins. A judge ordered him to pay \$247 a month in support. Five years later, when a DNA test showed that Navarro was not the father, he asked a court to set aside the judgment. Because such appeals must be filed within six months, the county argued that Navarro still had to pay. An appeals court ruled otherwise. Undeterred, county officials have asked the state supreme court to "de-publish" the decision so it can't be used as precedent in similar cases. They have reason to be concerned. In its most recent annual survey of accredited DNA centers, the American Association of Blood Banks found that 29 percent of 340,798 men tested were not the fathers.

Hanging Verdict

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK—Daniel Critchlow enjoyed making himself light-headed with a system of ropes and weights while masturbating. One day his mechanisms failed, and he hanged himself. When his mother attempted to collect on a life insurance policy, the insurer said it didn't pay for self-inflicted injuries. A federal court ruled against the company, concluding that because Critchlow had masturbated this way for years (his father caught him at it in the 1980s), he had expected to reach orgasm unscathed.

Grate Expectations

EAST HAVEN, CONNECTICUT—Mayor Joe Maturo is a handy guy, so when he saw that a storm grate had fallen into a sewer, he stepped down to

retrieve it. "It took three minutes," he said. The municipal workers' union filed a grievance, saying its contract requires that four workers—a laborer, dispatcher, driver and foreman—be called in for the job at four overtime hours each.

A Man and His Wives

SALT LAKE CITY—Three Mormons who hope to live together as husband, wife and wife sued in federal court after being refused a marriage license. The threesome cited a 2003 Supreme Court ruling that overturned the last state bans on private sexual behavior. Utah says the ruling doesn't apply to marriage and countered with an 1878 Supreme Court decision that upheld the polygamy conviction of Brigham Young's personal secretary.

**Careful What You Say**

LEBANON, PENNSYLVANIA—When Keith Emerich went to the emergency room with a heart murmur, a doctor asked whether he drank. He answered honestly, saying he had six to 12 beers a day. The physician checked a box on a form and, soon after, the DMV revoked Emerich's driver's license. Pennsylvania requires doctors to report patients with alcohol or drug habits that might impair their driving. If they don't, and there's an accident, the doctor can be liable. Emerich, who weighs 250 pounds, says he never drinks and drives and notes that his last traffic violation was a DUI 23 years ago.

MARGINALIA

(continued from page 67)

\$800 million a year on outlier payments. That year, its CEO cashed in \$111 million in stock options a few months before resigning. Once Medicare cracked down, Redding fell deep into the red. In 2003 it lost \$30 million."

FROM A REPORT in the London *Guardian*: "Military police yesterday raided a building where prisoners were allegedly being abused by Iraqi interrogators. The raid appeared to be a violation of the country's sovereignty, leading to angry scenes between Iraqi police and U.S. soldiers. An intelligence officer named Nashwan Ali said, 'An American MP asked me why we beat the prisoners. I said we beat the prisoners because they are all bad people. But I told him we didn't strip them naked, photograph them or fuck them like you did.'"

CRIMINAL CODES

from New York that can be placed on shirts sold online by

Penal T's (penalts.com): Section 221.05 (possession of marijuana), Section 230 (prostitution), Section 245.01 (indecent exposure), Section 240.20 (disorderly conduct), Section 156.05 (computer hacking), Section 200 (bribery). The site also offers California codes, including Section 281 (bigamy), Section 647f (public intoxication), Section 499b (joyriding) and Section 288a (oral sex in public).

FROM THE TESTAMENT of Italian journalist and blogger Enzo Baldoni (bloghdad.splinder.com), posted online by a colleague after insurgents executed Baldoni in Iraq: "At my funeral I want people to smile. Have you noticed that funerals always end with someone smiling? It's natural, life taking over death. And let people smoke freely anything they like; I'd also be pleased if new love stories would come out, and I'd even consider some aloof sex as an offer to life rather than an offense to death. With little or no ceremonials, bring my coffin silently to the crematory while the party and the music should last until late night."

FROM A DIRECTIVE issued last year by the Affirmative Action Office at Central Michigan University: "During the holidays it is important to realize what may be offensive to others within a place of employment. It is inappropriate to decorate things with Santa Claus or reindeer or other Christmas decorations. Good ideas for decorations are snowflakes, snowpeople and poinsettias to give a feeling of the winter. Please be respectful and don't put up specific holiday decorations."



ADVANCES IN CROWD CONTROL

TAKING LESSONS FROM CHICAGO (1968) AND SEATTLE (1999), POLICE KEPT SUMMER PROTESTERS AT BAY WITH CAGES AND TECHNOLOGY



"FREE-SPEECH" ZONES If you expect crowd control to be a problem, move the crowd. That was the strategy at both conventions, where police built cages for dissenters. After the New York Civil Liberties Union sued over the practice, a federal judge ruled that control pens must have exits and that police can't use them to prevent protesters from reaching rallies.



NETTING When police in New York needed a quick way to move or corral protesters, they unrolled durable mesh netting. In Boston a legal advisor to the police department said its nets were designed to keep protesters from throwing things at Democratic delegates while still allowing "sight and sound access" for the hurling of invective.



SOUND OFF The NYPD had at the ready two Long-Range Acoustic Devices, capable of blasting up to 150 decibels, to disperse protesters of the RNC. The Pentagon is developing more hard-core machines, such as a dish that fires microwave bursts that cause intense, burning pain without leaving marks. Several firms are also creating laser and plasma shock guns.



PLASTIC CUFFS For companies such as Tuff-Tie, EZ Cuff and Monadnock, protests are great for business: All of them make plastic restraints. Police like disposable cuffs because they cost less than \$1 each (compared with \$30 for a metal pair) and an officer can carry a dozen on his belt at a time. Plastic "zip" cuffs, which must be cut off, can be tightened but not loosened.



SURVEILLANCE During the RNC, officers from a variety of military and police units kept tabs on the city from a secret command center in a windowless room in Manhattan. Also on guard: 200 Federal Protective Service officers, many equipped with helmet cams. The agency says its surveillance is designed only to protect federal property.



IT'S A GAS This isn't your father's pepper spray. Rather than using the aerosol cans of old, police now fire pellet guns or throw pellet-filled grenades to disperse gas faster and from a safer distance. For extreme situations the U.S. military has been working for years on a Mobility Denial System that dispenses a wide swath of thick "anti-traction" gel.

MAKE PLANS OR BUST HEADS

The police have two textbook approaches for dealing with protesters: escalated force and negotiated management. The former was popular during protests against the Vietnam war. Police showed up in riot gear and looked to knock heads. Paul Browne, a deputy commissioner at the NYPD, recalled those days for *The Washington Post*. "There was no conversation at all, and that didn't help anyone," he said. "Now there's negotiation, and that opens

some groups up to charges they are being co-opted." It also can leave police scrambling. Before the WTO protests in 1999, Seattle police negotiated the peace with protest groups. But they had no forceful plan to counter the ensuing rampage, when rock-throwing ninjas trashed downtown shops. At the summer political conventions, police searched for a middle ground. Boston cops arrested six protesters; the NYPD arrested nearly 1,800.



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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW:

BERNIE MAC

A candid conversation with the comic actor about overcoming poverty, conquering Hollywood and surviving George Clooney's endless pranks

Some celebrities show up for interviews with an entourage. Bernie Mac shows up with medical equipment. After a hospital stay and three weeks flat on his back fighting a case of pneumonia, the comedian turned actor is having trouble breathing and is tethered by a tube to a nearby oxygen tank. A lesser man might have taken the day off. Not Mac. Although being linked to the tank hinders his body language and his energy level is low, Mac perseveres. When you've been through what he has, a bout of pneumonia is no big deal.

Mac grew up in the toughest of circumstances: living in poverty, rarely seeing his absentee father and suffering through the death of almost every family member he was close to while he was still young, including his mother, two brothers and his grandmother and grandfather. Angry and confused but focused on the lessons he had learned from his mother, he found a series of odd jobs in Chicago, including driving a Wonder bread truck, working as a cook and delivering appliances for Sears.

But through it all, he was funny. As early as elementary school he found he had a knack for telling stories and making people laugh. He took a while to focus, but eventually he tried his hand at comedy full-time. At first he met with only modest success, playing local clubs and theaters in Chicago. Then came Russell

Simmons's Def Comedy Jam and the Kings of Comedy tour, with Steve Harvey, D.L. Hughley and Cedric the Entertainer, where he scored big-time with his streetwise and mostly scatological musings about men, women, sex and family—all liberally spiced with the word "motherfucker" and all based on his own rough background. That led to small movie roles and, finally, his own sitcom.

The Bernie Mac Show is in its fourth season, and Mac has been nominated twice for an Emmy for outstanding lead actor in a comedy series. The show, about a 40ish, childless comedian named Bernie Mac who takes in his sister's three kids when she enters rehab, is partly based on Mac's own life and his strong opinions about how children should behave.

The TV show opened the door to better film roles, and Mac appeared as Chris Rock's older brother in *Head of State*. He also played the deadpan retail security chief in *Bad Santa*, with Billy Bob Thornton, and took the Bosley reins from Bill Murray in the sequel to *Charlie's Angels*.

This fall, at the age of 46, Mac grabbed his first lead role, as a big-league hitter desperate to be in the Baseball Hall of Fame, in *Mr. 3000*. He also returns as part of the neo-Rat Pack in *Ocean's Twelve* and will soon co-star with Ashton Kutcher in a modern-day

retelling of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, currently titled *Guess Who*.

Contributing Editor David Rensin, who did our 20Q with Mac in 2003, met with the actor-comedian recently in Los Angeles as he began filming *Guess Who*. Reports Rensin, "Both at his house and in his trailer on the set of the movie, Bernie needed oxygen from his always-nearby tank. But Bernie was still Bernie—the man who can answer a simple question with a 30-minute story—and he wasn't going to let his health slow him down. He began the interview playing the host, not the patient."

MAC: You want some water? You want some snacks? You like sweets? We got sweets. Okay, let's do it. [sneezes]

PLAYBOY: You've been pretty sick.

MAC: Yeah, I'd never been sick in my life before. Forty-six years of playing sports, humbergging, football, baseball, basketball, never had nothing broken. Never was in the hospital. I was hospitalized about 2:30 last Thursday morning, and after some chest X-rays at three they told me I got pneumonia. But I've been recovering real quick. Today I went to the doctor, and everything is going real good. I've been walking with this oxygen stuff sometimes. Before, I couldn't even walk across this



"Every time you see a black romance it's over-the-top. There always has to be extreme hostility between the sexes. He has to cheat. She has to show him how independently strong she is, not just as a woman but as a black woman."



"I was living in a place where I was harming myself. I was irresponsible. I'd lost several apartments. I couldn't hold a job. I was tired of being a no-good son of a bitch who called himself a man but was just a grown boy."



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLAUDETTE BARIUS

"I have Glocks, .45s, Berettas, Remingtons. I like the marksmanship and the discipline that it takes to be a gun owner. I like the machinery. Being able to take it out and clean it is even more fascinating than having the gun."

living room. It was tough. Of course, the only thing you can do with pneumonia is what I'm doing—sitting down and talking to you. But that's okay. I figure if I wasn't taking care of myself, if I wasn't doing the proper things, I probably wouldn't be sitting here at all.

PLAYBOY: That must have been scary. Your first book is called *I Ain't Scared of You*. Are you afraid now?

MAC: When I was coming up I appeared on *Def Jam*. The comic on before me died a miserable death—all the comedians backstage were laughing and enjoying his failure. The audience was so hostile that when I got out there my adrenaline was pumping and the words just came out: "I ain't scared of you!" Then I killed.

PLAYBOY: Is that your philosophy?

MAC: Well, I'm not afraid to fail. Sometimes when you lose, you win. Sometimes when you win, you lose. It took me a long time to get to where I'm at, in my career and as a man. I was going through my trials and tribulations in life, and it gave me the strength to tackle things that have come my way.

PLAYBOY: Still, something must scare you.

MAC: Not being able to give my best. I get anxious about taking new material to the people. When I don't give my best it taunts me. It tears me apart. It's almost like cheating on a test: You passed, and everybody thinks you're great, but you know you don't know shit. Whatever success I've had, I always like to top it.

PLAYBOY: Now you're trying to top the success of *Ocean's Eleven* with *Ocean's Twelve*. Which of your co-stars made you laugh the most?

MAC: George Clooney. He's a practical joker. He can bust balls. You've got to watch yourself at all times. You open a door, you better make sure a bucket of water don't fall on you. George'll put gum in your drink after he's chewed on it. You better watch when you sit down, make sure the chair don't fold up on you and there ain't no tacks on it. He's a mofo. George is constantly needling you.

PLAYBOY: Does he do that with everyone?

MAC: Only with people he likes. Unfortunately, on the second movie George and I didn't spend much time together, but on the first one he'd hit me and I'd hit him right back. Then Brad would jump in. It was a free-for-all every damn day. Even Carl Reiner got in a couple of times. That was probably the highlight for me on *Ocean's Eleven*, talking to one of the gurus of the sitcom. He's awesome.

PLAYBOY: A while back we asked if you'd formed any friendships on *Ocean's Eleven*,

and you said you were too busy working to have hang time. Did that change on *Ocean's Twelve*?

MAC: We hung. Especially that group. We hung as men.

PLAYBOY: Meaning?

MAC: We played poker, had cigars, had dinners all the time, parties. It was just a good time. Jerry Weintraub, the producer, might be a pain in the ass, but he really knows how to treat his actors. Top-shelf. We were the Rat Pack.

PLAYBOY: *Mr. 3000* was your first lead role in a movie. Why baseball?

MAC: I love baseball. My uncle Mitch was on a St. Louis Cardinals farm team. My character, Stan Ross, is based a bit on Mitch. I also used Roberto Clemente and Rod Carew for my hitting. When I played



I'm not a star, and I don't want to be a star. Stars fall. I'm an ordinary guy with an extraordinary job.

I could always hit. They used to call me the Water Hose because I sprayed the field.

PLAYBOY: And yet the movie is less a comedy than a challenge for you to show some acting range.

MAC: I didn't want to do any buffoonery. I wanted it to be different, solid, but at the same time I wanted to be the Bernie Mac people know. The script had been around awhile and was given to much more successful actors than me: Denzel Washington, Tom Hanks, John Travolta, Richard Gere. But it's all about timing, and it came to me at the right time. It fit me. I knew this guy. There was humor, but he wasn't just a funny man. Athletes are so doggone powerful and bigger than

life that it seems they can't get ill or be hurt or emotionally touched. I wanted to go against the clichés, to reveal the chops of Bernie Mac. And I wanted to show a love affair from a minority's point of view, which is rarely seen.

PLAYBOY: Rarely seen?

MAC: Every time you see a black romance it's over-the-top. There always has to be extreme hostility between the sexes. He has to cheat. She has to show him how independently strong she is, not just as a woman but as a black woman. I wanted to stay far away from that. In the love scene between Angela Bassett and me, I didn't want you to see me stirring spoon with her. I didn't want you to see me knocking the boots. I wanted you to use your imagination and see the love. I

didn't show you any skin. You saw Angela in her underwear, putting on her slacks because she had to go, and you saw me grab a sheet and chase her down the stairs. I wanted you to see that the roles were reversed.

PLAYBOY: Did you ever consider dropping the sheet as you walked back up the stairs—for comic effect?

MAC: Nope. You don't want to see my backside.

PLAYBOY: Much of your comedy is based on your own vulnerabilities and pain.

MAC: The pain is not self-pity pain; it's a pain of strength. My humor comes from telling stories based on my life that everyone can relate to. What you see is what you get. There ain't nothing fictitious. I've never had anyone write my humor for me. I'm scanning, watching, something will happen, and I'll think, Man, that's funny. Goddamn, that's funny! I'm always watching and listening and laughing to myself.

PLAYBOY: All joking aside, your family life was pretty rough.

MAC: I never really knew my father. He was a smooth-dressing Gatsby who was never around. I met him maybe 12 times. I lost

my little brother Howard when he was a few months old. I lost my mother when I was 15 and then my big brother, Darryl, a year later. Three years after my mother passed, my father died penniless, and I had to bury him. My grandmother and grandfather—who I found out after he died wasn't really my grandfather—raised me after that. At some point there were 12 of us in one home. We weren't all brothers and sisters, but we were very close, and close in age, so everyone thought we were—my uncle Mitch and his son Greg, my aunt Jackie, my aunt Evelyn and her kids, Tony, Kim and Vicky, who died of strep throat when she was 10.

I was born on 66th and Blackstone in



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Chicago. It was rat-infested. The city tore down that building and found us an apartment on 69th and Morgan, in Burning Bush. We had a bedroom in the front that I shared with my mother. My grandmother and grandfather had a bedroom, and there was one for Evelyn, Kim and Jackie. Mitch, Darryl, Tony and Greg slept in the rec room in two big beds.

PLAYBOY: It sounds as though you were surrounded.

MAC: Yeah. God took me on a ride. But my grandmother didn't want me to fall into self-pity. She hated that. She would always say, "The world doesn't owe you nothing. It's what you owe the world." I didn't really understand that then, but I do now.

PLAYBOY: We assume that as a result you pretty much take Hollywood in stride.

MAC: Hollywood didn't make me. I'm so far away from Hollywood it's unbelievable. Hollywood didn't know anything about me. When I got here they were afraid of me.

PLAYBOY: Why?

MAC: They said my personality was too powerful. When I read for parts in the early 1990s they said my presence was too strong and it took away from what I was trying to do.

PLAYBOY: How much did that bother you?

MAC: It made things tough, but I didn't let it bother me. I was taught to give my best, to raise my game. My grandmother always said, "Don't you come down. You let them come up to you." She also told me, "You keep doing what you're doing. If you do it from here [points to heart], it'll happen by itself." So I never really got upset. I never looked for anything from anybody. When I'd get turned down, that was great for me.

PLAYBOY: Now that you've spent so much time on the West Coast, can you make fun of showbiz and get a laugh?

MAC: You can, but some will say it's a rich guy cranking and moaning, so I don't really go there. My comedy has always been internal, personal experience. I don't talk about the TV show or Hollywood in my act. In fact, what made my comedy successful was that I stayed away from that kind of stuff.

PLAYBOY: You don't find it funny or don't want to bite the hand that feeds you?

MAC: Hollywood don't feed me.

PLAYBOY: Come on. What about the TV show, the movies?

MAC: Those are separate from my stand-up. With stand-up I'm the director, writer and producer. I can talk about whatever I want.

PLAYBOY: What else is off-limits?

MAC: I don't tell God jokes.

PLAYBOY: The comedy business changes rapidly. How has it evolved since you began your career?

MAC: Everything is micro-driven. Everything is fast. Hardly anyone studies the craft. Few have a style of their own. What used to make comedy so interesting to me was individuals who had their own style:

When Sidekicks Steal the Show

Sometimes the big stars end up playing second fiddle



Bernie Mac vs. Chris Rock in *Head of State* (2003) Playing the Chicago bail bondsman turned running mate of presidential candidate Rock, his little brother, Mac shows up late in the action. Working the flashy suit and advising his baby bra to ditch the red-white-and-blue ties and pinstripes for a tracksuit, Mac is so on fire, you want him to run away with the whole movie. Which he does.



Owen Wilson vs. Ben Stiller in *Zoolander* (2001) Stiller gets laughs playing the terminally vacant male supermodel, but Wilson scores big playing his archrival (and eventual pal), who philosophizes like a surfer-stoner idiot savant: "Sting would be another person who's a hero. The music he's created, I don't really listen to it, but the fact that he's making it, I respect that."



Will Ferrell vs. Mike Myers in *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999) Nobody earns bigger laughs in Myers's secret-agent spoofs than Myers himself—except when Ferrell plays Mustafa, Dr. Evil's fez-wearing henchman. Are rumormongers just talking trash when they say Ferrell pocketed so many scenes that Myers killed off his character out of self-defense? Oh, behave.



Vince Vaughn vs. Jan Favreau in *Swingers* (1996) Favreau wrote himself the killer role of the unlucky-in-love struggling actor-comic, but it's Vaughn who's money, baby. Playing the fast-talking best pal who counsels Favreau on how to score with the beautiful babies, Vaughn says, "I want you to be like the guy in the rated-R movie. You know, the guy you're not sure whether or not you like yet."



Chris Tucker vs. Charlie Sheen in *Money Talks* (1997) Playing a ruthless, uptight reporter in this *48 Hrs.* lite directed by Brett Ratner, Sheen is the star, but Tucker's law-life, hilariously foul-mouthed prison escapee really delivers the goods—especially when riffing an Al Pacino's hammy accent in Scarface or calling a sexy thang "Phat. P-H-A-T—pretty, hot and tempting."



R2-D2 vs. C-3PO in *Star Wars* (1977) Sure, C-3PO—that prissy golden droid who sounds like a robotic Frasier—nabs all the good lines, like "Don't call me a paintless philosopher, you overweight gob of grease." But pint-size R2-D2—Laurel to C-3PO's Hardy—gets his licks in taa, making him the people's choice. He definitely makes mincemeat of Mark Hamill and Harrison Ford. —Stephen Rebella

Joey Bishop, Jerry Lewis, Dom DeLuise, Flip Wilson, Redd Foxx, Tom Dreesen, Tim Reid, Jackie Mason, Rodney Dangerfield. They went on Johnny Carson and did five-minute routines. Now everyone goes to the Aspen and Montreal comedy festivals. They have no following, no comedy base. I realize lots of them are just trying to get exposure, but when someone new gets a sitcom, the show doesn't last because the comedian's not ready.

PLAYBOY: How did you know that you were ready?

MAC: Let me tell you a story. When I was about eight years old I was clowning in class. The teacher said, "Mr. Mac, why don't you come up here and share with us, since you've got everybody laughing." I said, "Okay." I got up and did whatever I'd been doing. She said, "That's fine and dandy. Now sit down." That Friday we had recreational day, with art, music, stuff like that. The teacher, Miss Cochrane, said, "Class, I'm going to have Mr. Mac come up and tell us one of his hilarious stories, since he likes to tell stories." I didn't know it was coming, but I said, "Okay." I did about 30 minutes. Afterward she asked me where I got the story. I told her I did it off the top of my head. She said, "Don't lie to me." I said, "No, ma'am. I did it off the top of my head."

PLAYBOY: Honestly?

MAC: Never thought about them. Even today people ask me, "What you gonna do tonight, Mac?" I say, "I don't know." Give me 50 minutes and I can do two hours. Anyway, the next recreational day another class joined mine. The principal came too. Miss Cochrane said, "Mr. Mac, please tell the class another story." I said, "Okay." I did another 30 minutes. Later the principal asked me, "Where did you get that story?" I told her that it just came to me. The following week was the same thing. Afterward the principal said, "I'm going to put you in a district talent competition next month." She called my mother and told her. My mother asked me, "You want to do it?" I said, "Okay."

At the assembly I wore my one suit. My mama had cut my hair. I sat in the back playing with my little Army men, watching a girl onstage doing her thing and the audience going crazy. A few of my schoolmates were behind me whispering, "You're gonna freeze. Choke. You ain't gonna do it. You're gonna make us look bad." Miss Cochrane said, "Take your time. Just get up and do your story." "Okay." All of a sudden I heard my mother go, "*Psst!*" She said, "You be yourself. If you be yourself all the time, you'll never lose. Don't hear the voices." I said, "What voices, Mama?" She said, "You'll find out. Just don't hear the voices." I said, "Okay." Someone said, "Ladies and gentlemen, Bernie Mac." Behind me I heard, "Freeze, freeze, freeze!" I went up and said, "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Bernie Mac, and I'm eight years old.

I'm here to tell you a story about how hot it was. Two hundred degrees. There was no water in the world. One guy had all the water and wouldn't share it with anybody. It was so hot the birds were dropping dead." I did about 30 minutes. I won. Backstage my sister was jumping up and down, but my mother just looked at me and smiled. She knew I hadn't listened to the voices. She said, "We're going to celebrate. What do you want?" I said, "Mama, can I have a hamburger, a cheeseburger and a shake?" She said, "Okay." I'm like that to this day. I just don't worry about things. People can put fear in you only if you let them.

PLAYBOY: So if it wasn't because of fear, why did you spend years working at Sears and General Motors, being a fry cook and delivering Wonder bread instead of doing what comes naturally to you?

MAC: Good question. Around when my grandfather died, I was living in a bad place, not in terms of harming others but of harming myself. I was irresponsible. I ran the streets, and my priorities were all messed up. I'd lost several apartments, furniture. I had to move in with people constantly. I couldn't hold a job, and I

"Cable ruined comedy clubs. Def Comedy Jam helped ruin them."

was the talk of the family. Like my mother and grandmother, my wife was one of the best people in my life, and I couldn't understand why I was always hurting people who loved me. I was tired of being a no-good son of a bitch who called himself a man but was just a grown boy. Living check to check, blaming people and mad at other people's fortunes.

PLAYBOY: What turned it around?

MAC: My mother died when I was 15, and I couldn't feel anything. I was blank. I faked the tears when she passed because I thought that was the right thing to do. I mean, people are looking at you, and you're supposed to be crying. I finally cried for real in 1991 at a comedy club. It was summertime. I had three shows and got about eight standing ovations. At two in the morning it was over, and outside it was raining cows and pigs. I had a few beers, and I was on a high. I kept saying, "Thank you, Lord." I'd finally given myself over to doing only comedy, and I felt the transformation. I felt myself coming around. I was really dedicated to what I believed in. My family life was coming together, and I appreciated it.

I left the club and drove down Lake Shore Drive. I lived on 107th and King Drive. A church song was on the radio. I got so full of emotion that I pulled over.

I got out of the car and started walking on the beach. I was drenched. Then I just started screaming my mother's name and telling her I was sorry. For the first time I legitimately cried. I got home about 5:30 or six in the morning. The rain had stopped. My wife ran out as soon as I pulled up and said, "Bernie, I worried to death!" She saw my eyes were red like fire. My head was hurting, I'd cried so hard. She looked at me, and I looked at her. She said, "Come on in." I said, "I'm sick of this shit." That's all I said. That was the turning point.

PLAYBOY: How tough was it for you when you finally decided to put all your energy into your career?

MAC: I remember everybody telling me, "The only way you can make it is to come to L.A." I'd saved \$400 or \$500, and a friend who worked at United Airlines got me bootleg tickets. I'd never been on a plane in my life. I took my wife. It was our first vacation, too. Before I left Chicago I did my homework. I made all the calls—Laugh Factory, Improv, Comedy Store.

I was supposed to perform at the Comedy Store. Mitzi Shore, the owner, never gave me a minute of her time—but no hard feelings. I got there at seven P.M. to go on about 7:45. They bumped me. They said, "So-and-so came in. Go eat something." Somebody else came in; they bumped me again. No problem. "You'll go on at nine-something." They bumped me. Richard Pryor arrived in a wheelchair. He went on at 10:30. No problem. I'm watching Richard Pryor. My wife's tired: "When are we going to go home?" I didn't want to be a pest. I'm trying to follow the rules. I ask the guy, "Can you give me an idea of what time you think I'm going on?" "Who are you again?" I said, "My name is Bernie Mac. I was here for seven o'clock." "Oh yeah, we'll let you know." Eleven o'clock, 11:30. "We're gonna put you on at 12:30, man. You're gonna go up, okay?" Rhonda said, "Can you take me home? I'm tired." Okay. I ran Rhonda home. Came back about 12:15. I said, "I'm going on at 12:30." He said, "Ah, we bumped you, man. You'll go on around one o'clock." Okay. I sat down. They bumped me again.

PLAYBOY: Was the unflappable Bernie Mac finally getting pissed?

MAC: Nope. A black guy came to me and said, "Hey, man, you still wanna go up, man? You want to go on around 2:30?" The place was about empty, maybe two or three people in there. I said, "Yep." I went up. Took 25 minutes. He came onstage and said, "He was pretty funny, ladies and gentlemen. What's your name? Bernie Mac? That was pretty impressive, man." I sat down. I didn't say nothing. He came over and said, "That was pretty funny, bro." I said, "Okay." He said, "Come tomorrow, man. We'll see what's up." I said, "Sure." I got home around three-something. I didn't want to wake my wife, but she rolled over in bed

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and said, "You go up?" I said, "Yeah." She said, "What's wrong?" I said, "Rhonda, they asked me to come back tomorrow, but I'm not going. Next time L.A. calls me, they're gonna come to me. I want to go home." I went home.

PLAYBOY: Discouraged?

MAC: I figured if that was what I had to go through to make people laugh, it was bullshit. But I never got discouraged.

PLAYBOY: How did you get *The Bernie Mac Show*?

MAC: It was great timing for me. Had I waited another year my show would have suffered because of all the reality shows that came out, all the instant ratings getters. I was hot, coming off *The Original Kings of Comedy*, and I found a network, Fox, that needed something. I'd been on shows before that had been canceled, and I'd been pitched shows—stupid shit with me playing an architect or something like that and having kids who look nothing like me—but I'd always cut them off and said, "Not interested." When I went in with this one I figured the only way I could keep the networks from tampering with me and my premise was to play myself. It's hard for a network to tell me how to play myself. I'm 46 now; I've got 46 years of experience of who Bernie Mac is. So I pitched myself, knowing I'd have the power to be more creative and dictate the details I already knew—because my show is based on true stories from my life.

PLAYBOY: On *The Bernie Mac Show* there's no laugh track, and you break the fourth wall and speak to the audience. And although you're really Uncle Bernie to your TV kids, you're a different kind of TV dad. How difficult was it to get Fox to agree to everything?

MAC: Not difficult. In fact, in four years I've had no problems with Fox except that it keeps changing the time slot without putting out any publicity about it. I know it's the nature of the TV beast and it's not personal. Put me on whenever, but tell people!

PLAYBOY: In his book *America Behind the Color Line*, Henry Louis Gates writes that on your show you aren't working against racial stereotypes as much as against TV stereotypes. True?

MAC: Television is full of stereotypes because they all follow each other. Whatever works, okay, let's all jump on it. Some authentic shows get through, but then greed sets in and they're copied. You see one story on CBS, and when you turn the channel you see the same story.

PLAYBOY: If you could, which classic sitcom would you revive and star in?

MAC: *The Andy Griffith Show*. People forget that Andy was once a stand-up comic. They don't realize how secure he was. He had to be. How else could he have had Don Knotts, Opie, Gomer, Goober, Aunt Bee, Clara, Floyd and Ernest T. Bass and let them all get off? That was brilliant.

PLAYBOY: And unlike many contempo-

rary TV dads, Andy inspired respect. Why are today's TV dads so hapless?

MAC: Cheap laughs and easy jokes. Look at *Father Knows Best*, *Leave It to Beaver*, *Dick Van Dyke*. The fathers were the breadwinners, the strong individuals. When Wally and the Beaver had a problem, Ward would go upstairs and give them everyday lessons. Now it's the quick joke. You've got guys in charge of shows who probably went to school for chemistry, and now they're executive producers.

PLAYBOY: When are you going to do some more stand-up?

MAC: Thirty dates next spring, when I'm finished with the show for the season. After *The Original Kings of Comedy* and the show and the movies, the anticipation is just where I want it. But it kills me not to have touched the mike for so long. In the past, if I felt something, if I'd get an idea, I could go onstage two days later and work it out. Haven't been able to do that.

PLAYBOY: How do you keep up the comedy chops?

MAC: I'm a great listener, a great observer. It looks like I'm talking or laughing to myself, but I'm just working new ideas and using my tape recorder.

"I'm not living for approval. That's not arrogance; that's reality."

PLAYBOY: Now that you're in the mainstream with the TV show and movies, will you keep working blue?

MAC: I have to be myself. It's comedy. It's jokes. It's what got me here.

PLAYBOY: Which comics influenced you the most?

MAC: Red Skelton used to tear me apart. At the end of his show a tear would roll down my cheek when he'd say, "God bless." He did all his characters with his heart. Richard Pryor taught me how to talk about myself. Redd Foxx taught me how to speak the audience's language. I also learned from Bill Cosby, about how to handle myself in business.

PLAYBOY: You once delivered appliances for Sears. Do you still shop there?

MAC: Sure. Depends on what I'm looking for. I don't have hang-ups like that. You know how people say, "This is a Johnny Gucciani shirt I'm wearing"? I've never been into that. I am into suits, though. My grandfather always told me a man should look his best at all times, so I promised myself that if I could get a hand on a dollar I'd wear suits. I get mine tailor-made.

PLAYBOY: What's the first thing you got when you had the money to get anything you wanted?

MAC: I got my wife a real wedding ring.

Before that she had bullshit. I might have just found that motherfucker. Then I bought her a nice condo downtown and started a college fund for my daughter.

PLAYBOY: How many big-screen TVs do you own?

MAC: Several.

PLAYBOY: How big is too big?

MAC: I've got an 80-something-inch screen. I also have a movie screen. I love movies. I saw *At Close Range* again the other day, with Chris Walken and Sean and Chris Penn. Man, I love that movie. Sometimes my wife and I will watch three or four movies a day. I'm a home cat. I get up at seven or eight o'clock. I work out from 10:30 to 11:30. I shower, steam—I don't like saunas—put my clothes on. At two I go to lunch. After that I go to the office, go to the gun range, hit some golf balls—whatever I have that day. Six o'clock, seven, I come home and eat. After that I watch a movie, watch me another movie. If it's raining, I might watch three movies.

PLAYBOY: We hear you also collect guns.

MAC: For 20 years now. I have Glocks, .45s, Berettas, over-unders, Remingtons. I like the marksmanship and the discipline that it takes to be a gun owner. I like the machinery, breaking it down. Being able to take it out, clean it and put the spring back in is even more fascinating than having the gun.

PLAYBOY: How'd you get into it?

MAC: Being black and in the neighborhood. You had to have something to protect your home. The first thing I had was a revolver, because it's safe. Everyone in the house knew. My daughter knew. I kept the revolver in a box with a lock on it. Once I had the revolver I went to the government and registered for a firearm. Then I practiced shooting. After seven years I graduated to an automatic. My father-in-law taught me how to handle it.

PLAYBOY: Has anybody ever pulled a gun on you?

MAC: Yes, several times.

PLAYBOY: What did you do?

MAC: Obeyed. That was the neighborhood I lived in. You became used to it. We used to hear shooting. We'd wait 20 minutes and then walk to the store. I'm not proud of it. It's sad.

PLAYBOY: Did you ever have to pull your revolver out of the box?

MAC: Never had to and I hope I never will.

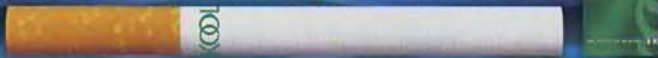
PLAYBOY: You're also passionate about golf. What's the best golf joke you've ever heard?

MAC: The guy said he had to hit the ball 275 yards up the middle and a little to the left on the 13th hole. For the approach shot he had to go through this little gate. He shot the ball, and it went through the gate, hit a tree, came back, struck his wife in the temple and killed her. He didn't play golf for a while. He came back about six months later and played the same course. Thirteenth hole, 275 yards, right down the middle and a

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little to the left. Approach shot he had to go through the little gate to get to the green. Same shot. He stood there. Everybody got silent. Someone asked if he was okay. He said, "Yeah. Last time I double-bogeyed this hole."

Golf will change your life. That game is something else, man. But it's fun. All of a sudden you'll hit the perfect fucking shot to keep you coming back. I love the camaraderie. I love playing all these beautiful courses. I love the aftermath—the beers, the cigars, the good food. I like meeting good people. I don't deal with toxic waste. When I get a chance to play golf or go on a boat with good people, take the boat out and put some lobsters on the grill, get the ice-cold beer and the cigars—that's heaven here on earth.

PLAYBOY: Do you think cable TV has helped or hurt comedy?

MAC: I don't know about comedy, but cable ruined comedy clubs. *Def Comedy Jam* helped ruin them.

PLAYBOY: Russell Simmons, in his book, says that whites who watched the show got to see how angry black people were and that the anger was over white people not knowing that black people are as good as they are. True?

MAC: Whatever way he sizes it up, that's his thing. But it took away. I learned about putting a routine together from the pioneers I mentioned earlier. Then everything became hostile. That's not comedy.

PLAYBOY: Clearly you know your own mind and aren't afraid to say so. How tough is it to stay that way in a business that often labels entertainers who think for themselves as difficult?

MAC: [Laughs] I have a problem with this when I do interviews, because for some reason people don't get it. It ain't arrogance. I'm not vain. I'm just trying to be the best I can be, and I count on myself, my own instinct. I listen to what others have to say, but in the end it comes down to me. That's not arrogance; that's reality. I'm not living for approval. But I know some people might dislike me because I stand alone. I get it sometimes: antisocial, know-everything, not for the people. That does hurt me. But in the big picture, so what? My family, my wife and daughter all understand me. It's not like when I was growing up and had to go to school with you even though I never liked you. Today I love everybody, but there are a few people I don't like. I don't like their ways, how they treat people, their personality. But that's not standing off; that's my choice about choice. Do I want to have coffee with you? No. Do I want to call you and say, "Let's go smoke a cigar"? No. In the end I get most of my pleasure from being creative. When they leave my show and say, "Bernie Mac is something else! Man, that son of a bitch is funny"—that's my applause.

PLAYBOY: You got that reaction from being in *The Original Kings of Comedy*. Would you do another?

MAC: No, I'd do my own. *The Original Kings of Comedy* was great, but I don't think there's room for a part two.

PLAYBOY: As we speak you're making *Guess Who*, with Ashton Kutcher, a remake of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. Why gamble on redoing a classic?

MAC: I didn't want to do an actual remake of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, because I have too much respect for it. So we flipped it, and it worked. I'm in the Spencer Tracy role. Ashton plays Sidney Poitier's part. Zoe Saldana is my daughter. My wife is Judith Scott. I love bringing something different to the party. Coming off *Mr. 3000* and *Ocean's Twelve*, I wanted to show people my chops, show them substance and quality and that there's more to me than they thought.

PLAYBOY: But it's still about your daughter bringing home a boyfriend of a different color, only this time he's white.

MAC: It's not just about her bringing home a white guy; it's that there's so much going on that weekend—I'm having a 25th anniversary party—and she didn't tell us. Plus, the guy has problems. It's a love story about four people, not just him and my daughter.

PLAYBOY: You have a hit TV show, a growing movie career, two best-selling books and a big stand-up act. Now that you've made it, are you tempted to just play it safe with your stardom?

MAC: No, though that's sometimes what others want you to do. A lot of people, when they get on a successful ride, they change their style. They hear the voices, and they let everybody on the outside—people who know everything about absolutely nothing—tell them what they need to do and how they need to do it. Besides, I'm not a star, and I don't want to be a star. Stars fall. I'm an entertainer, a performer. I'm an ordinary guy with an extraordinary job. I'm a comedian, a clown, and that's fine with me. I'm the guy who takes people away from their problems for an hour and a half or two.

PLAYBOY: When you're gone, what would you want people to say and remember about you?

MAC: I want them to say that Bernie gave his best every damn day. I want them to say that he brought quality and substance to everything he touched. It's the way I feel about Marvin Gaye and Earth, Wind & Fire. They never cheated their fans. That's my elation. That's my applause. That's bigger than dollars and cents. I want to be the best I can be—first a better man, then a better husband and father, then a better friend. Then I want to be a great associate. After that I want to be the best entertainer in the world—in my world. Then I'll walk off like Johnny Carson and Flip Wilson. You'll see me no more. No more interviews. I'll get on my boat and sail away. I'm going to live my life. I'm gone.





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REFLECTIONS

on

COURAGE,

MORALITY

and

SEXUAL PLEASURE

A SPIRITED EXCHANGE
BETWEEN FATHER AND SON

by

*Norman Mailer
and John Buffalo Mailer*

PLAYBOY: You stay all year round in Provincetown, Massachusetts now. How is it to live in a place that seems abandoned and bereft in winter? Is it better than during the high season?

NM: For a writer of my age, it's better in the off-season. There's an old saying about P-town that in the winter you can roll a bowling ball down Commercial Street and it'll never hit anyone. So it is lonely here in February and March, and mean and cold. It's damp, it's lonely, and I love it. It fits my mood. It's much easier to spend the day writing if it's gray outside. Besides, the people I used to know here years ago are dead now, most of them from drink. Provincetown has changed profoundly since. In summer it's now

the gay capital of the Northeast. Forty or 50 years ago, it used to be the Wild West of the East—you had motorcycle gangs coming in on Saturdays. And at one A.M. on Sunday you'd have people going up in the hills for bacchanals, everybody carrying booze or beer. Marriages broke up and serious affairs started on many of those nights.

JBM: Well, you still have motorcycle gangs coming in—it's just that now they're wearing leather chaps and nothing else.

NM: [Laughs] All right.

JBM: Having spent a lot of time in Provincetown growing up, I don't think of it as a gay town. As a member of the heterosexual underground, I see it

as a very libertarian place. As long as you're not hurting anyone else, whatever you're doing is cool. And because there is so much sexual energy flying through the air, the hetero nightlife is jumping.

NM: Good to hear that. There's always been so much going on in Provincetown. There are amazing contradictions here. After all, this is the place where the Pilgrims first landed.

IBM: Why did they leave?

NM: Like all good white people who are righteous and not quite aware of how mean they can be underneath their righteousness, they were full of themselves. After all, they had dared to leave their roots and sail across the Atlantic cramped in a small boat. They got here through true difficulty. At the end, it was even hard to navigate the waters around Cape Cod, but there is a natural harbor in Provincetown, where the land curls around in a spiral. So they made anchor in this harbor—parenthetically, the spot where they first rowed their longboat to land now offers a huge motel. We are nothing in America if not ready for profit. The Puritans, however, found the soil not particularly welcoming, full of sand and brush pine, not good for farming. They were in search of food, went scouting around. While reconnoitering eight miles south of Provincetown, they found a place in Truro, now called Corn Hill, where the Indians had stored their grain for the coming winter. So the Puritans brought the corn back to the *Mayflower*, and in the reverberations of that action, one of those Puritans probably said to another, "Prithee, brother, let's get the fuck out!" So they sailed to the other side of Massachusetts Bay, some 50 miles across the water, and moved into Plymouth, which then became the founding place of America.

Well, a couple of hundred years later the locals here became furious at the ongoing self-serving pride of Plymouth. How did that town dare call itself the founding place of America? So they started petitioning Washington, D.C. By 1907 that got so hot that a first cornerstone was laid by Theodore Roosevelt in a Masonic ceremony, and by 1910—a formidable tower (a copy of an Italian tower in Siena) having been erected by subscription—President Taft arrived for the opening festivities. This exceptionally phallic tower is now called the Pilgrim Monument.

IBM: So America started with white people stealing corn and going on the lam.

NM: Yes.

PLAYBOY: "I did something for the worst possible reason. Just because I could." Thus President Clinton explained the motive for his affair with Monica Lewinsky. This would appear to be the motive for much of boomerdom: "I did drugs because I could." "I had sex because I could." It is not so much immorality as amorality that drives such behavior. In the absence of moral order or authority, the fool is free to pursue all courses with abandon. Is amorality more troublesome than immorality?

NM: Immorality is a clearer concept. We know we're up to something that by our moral logic is forbidden. "Amoral" is more ambiguous. It falls into several categories. People can be amoral in business or in their loyalties, but generally speaking we think of an amoral man as a sexist. Even that

word has its subcategories. One type doesn't give a damn about the partner. His pleasure goes into achievement. Such a dude will measure prowess by how many times he gets laid. Even more important: What rating did the woman give him?

Then there's biological amorality. The man is suffering a heavy physical need. The need is more important to him than the partner. That's animal, if you will, but it is not as related to the ego.

IBM: Can there ever truly be amorality? For me, everybody—whether they know it or not—lives by a code, and when they break their own code, it bothers them.

NM: Okay, some amoral people do work by a code. That's more interesting. Let's say that for them the whole moral system is a lot of crap. So ignore it. They believe that any orthodox moral system breeds illness, pain, frustration and deception of oneself. The old Playboy Philosophy used to weigh in on how we have to change our sexual mores. "Stick to one woman" was not what Hef was all about.

I would say this aspect of amorality can be justified. One can argue that we have the right to make many sorties into sex when we are single and to find new partners all the time. The underlying notion is that sooner or later, the cumulative knowledge we gain will ready us for a serious love. Many a sexist who has a rep as a good lover might, under all that, be dreaming of a great love to come. Such studs are getting ready for the big meeting by having many affairs en route to the championship. More than one movie star subscribes to this psychology. Seen as a vehicle to increase one's knowledge, amorality becomes more interesting.

I'm damned if I can find the source, but Henry Miller did say something to the effect that there's no such thing as a bad fuck. I think he meant that no matter how horrible it can get, you always learn something about the woman and about yourself. Some people do dig into fucking like gold miners. They're not worrying about the earth—they want the goddamn gold. If the pickax strikes rock, they'll go elsewhere.

IBM: Do you learn more from sleeping with 10 women or from sleeping with one woman for 10 years?

NM: A man full of sensuality would probably opt for the first course. You need to feel extraordinary love to be faithful to someone for 10 years. After my own checkered career—being married six times, with eight children and one terrific stepson—I've been on both sides of that question.

I've certainly been amoral in my day. Cold as ice with a few. But on the other hand, I've been attracted immensely to the qualities that women have. My amorality—if we're going to get into it—was a search. I wanted to learn more about sex. I sometimes think if porny films had come along when I was a young man, it would have dispensed with a lot of friction in my personal life. Because you do learn a lot from them. Women's animal qualities are exemplified positively or negatively. Besides, you might be a little less likely to marry the first woman you find who is highly sexual.

IBM: I want to get back to Clinton's quote: "Just because I could." What are your thoughts on the way he refers to Monica Lewinsky in his book?

NM: As people go, Clinton is not the worst guy you're going to meet. He has a lot of natural (continued on page 98)

I SOMETIMES
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PORNY FILMS HAD
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SEX IN CINEMA

2004

THE MOVIES KEEP EXPLORING THE WORLD'S
MOST FASCINATING SUBJECT



It's a peculiar year when the three most talked about films—*The Passion of the Christ*, *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *Kill Bill Vol. 2*—are virtually sexless. Fortunately, Mel Gibson, Michael Moore and Quentin Tarantino weren't the only directors working. The year's best film about sex was Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Dreamers*, which tells the story of an American and a French brother and sister who discover sex in the politically enraged Paris of 1968. Michael Pitt shows the young American's intelligence and naïveté, and Eva Green demonstrates why it sometimes seems that nothing on earth is more like a goddess than a 19-year-old woman. Much attention fell to Vincent Gallo's *The Brown Bunny*, a strange but frequently dull film most notable for Chloë Sevigny's on-screen fella-

tio. Far more attention should be paid to more provocative and thoughtful films such as Catherine Breillat's *Sex Is Comedy* and Roger Michell's *The Mother*. But sex is too important to be left to philosophers. Sex is fun in *Wimbledon* (featuring a sweaty and fit Kirsten Dunst) and *Eurotrip* (get the unrated version on DVD). For sexy star power, see how Leonardo DiCaprio, Gwen Stefani, Kate Beckinsale and Cate Blanchett portray Hollywood's golden age in *The Aviator*. Charlize Theron, in *Head in the Clouds*, makes us forget how she looked in *Monster*, and Halle Berry makes *Catwoman* worth watching. Finally, recall the face of Diane Kruger, who plays Helen in *Troy*; it may not exactly launch a thousand ships, but surely her marina will never lack for a dinghy.

Gwen Stefani (above) embodies proto-bombshell Jean Harlow in *The Aviator*.



GOT WOOD?

In *Kinsey* (above), Liam Neeson and Laura Linney, as sex researcher Alfred Kinsey and his wife, appear to be awfully impressed at the sight of a fully erect tongue depressor.

ALL HEAT, NO BURN

In *Eurotrip* (below left), Edita Deveroux and Petra Tomanková demonstrate standard operating procedure on one of France's many all-female, all-nude beaches.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

In *Lost in Translation* (below right), Bill Murray plays a man for whom life has lost all meaning. Then he meets Scarlett Johansson in a Tokyo hotel bar.





THREE'S A WHAT?

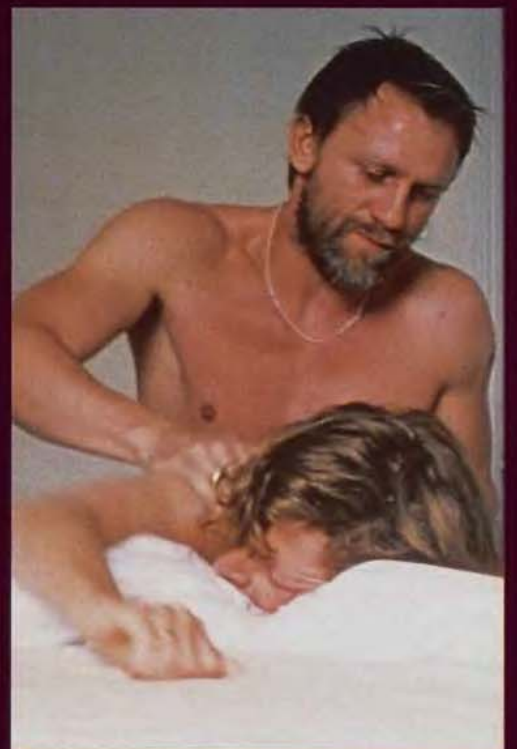
Bertolucci's *The Dreamers* (above, all), with Eva Green, Michael Pitt and Louis Garrel, shows that when you're young and rebellious, three doesn't have to be an odd number.

CARE FOR A DIP?

In *Swimming Pool* (below left), Charlotte Rampling seems to be perturbed that she is unable to discover any flaws in Ludvine Sagnier's breasts.

GETTING OUT THE KINKS

In Roger Michell's *The Mother* (below right), grandmotherly Anne Reid has a rejuvenating affair with her daughter's virile lover, the much younger Daniel Craig.





THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A BAD GIRL

In *Murderous Maids* (top), Sylvie Testud and Julie-Marie Parmentier play a pair of incestuous sisters who decide to murder their employer and her daughter. But their floors are so clean you can eat off them.

HEY, DO MY FEET STILL SMELL?

In *Head in the Clouds* (middle), which is set in the days prior to World War II, you can tell that Charlize Theron and Stuart Townsend are devil-may-care *bons vivants* because they wear their lids in the bathtub.

IT'S HARD TO LOOK ANGRY WHEN YOU'RE NAKED...

Yet in *Thirteen* (bottom left), a movie about a teenage girl's rebellious entry into adolescence, Holly Hunter manages to seem really ticked off.

I'D WALK A MILE FOR A CAMEL, AND EVEN FARTHER FOR A...

Civil War deserter Jude Law has a long and arduous journey home in *Cold Mountain* (bottom right), but when he gets there, Nicole Kidman provides him with an especially warm welcome.





CHEER UP

Why does Naomi Watts (above left) look so sad? Did she have to spend the night on the wet spot? Has she forgotten where she left her clothing? Is she thinking, Should I try to wake up Bret? Or is his name Bart? Or Bradford? Watch *21 Grams* to find out.

OUCH!

For a while, rough sex is all fun and games for Ewan McGregor (above right) in *Young Adam*. But the young drifter subsequently reveals himself to be more murderous than sexy. In this scene McGregor appears to be having a hard time folding up his girlfriend.

MIXED SIGNALS

We're not exactly sure what's happening in this scene from *Seeing Other People* (below left), but it certainly looks as if Miss December 2001 Shanna Moakler wants to talk and Jay Mohr is thinking, Doesn't she know there's no talking once the bra comes off?

THERE'S GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS

In Jane Campion's *In the Cut* (below right), writing teacher Meg Ryan seems not to know whether to laugh or cry, a common predicament when one starts to suspect that one's detective boyfriend could actually be a serial killer.





ANYONE HERE GOT A RHYME FOR NANTUCKET?

In Christine Jeffs's *Sylvia* (top left), a biopic that details the tragic story of American poet Sylvia Plath, a contemplative Gwyneth Paltrow appears to be waiting for a visit from her own Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

THIS CHICK IS SSSSMOKIN'...

Which is how you can tell that Amanda Swisten (top right), who plays an actress of the X-rated variety in *The Girl Next Door*, has naught but disdain for bourgeois morality. Otherwise you couldn't tell the difference between her and Laura Bush.

IS THAT A PISTOL IN YOUR POCKET, OR ARE YOU A BROTHER?

In *White Chicks* (bottom left), Marlon Wayans plays a black male FBI agent who disguises himself as a white woman. Here he's on the verge of having his secret identity released into the wild.

HEY, ISN'T IT TIME FOR SPONGEBOB?

We're not sure what Mario Van Peebles and his two delectable friends are looking at in this scene from *Baadasssss!* (bottom right), but aren't these perhaps the three most supremely distractible people on the face of the earth?



PALM READING

In *Twenty-nine Palms* (left), Katia Golubeva uses her palm to tell David Wissak that it's okay for him to take off his boots and stay awhile.

HERE, PUSSY PUSSY PUSSY

Catwoman was a dog, but if anyone saw Halle Berry (above) in her cat suit and didn't think *purrfect*, then they just don't know word one about bad puns.



"AT WHICH POINT HEF SAYS, 'WHERE THE HELL WERE ALL THE BUNNIES?'"

In *The Brown Bunny* (left), Chloë Sevigny kisses Vincent Gallo's lips early on in a scene that will inevitably be mentioned in every article that will ever be written about the movie.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

In *The Human Stain* (above left and right), Robert Benton's film version of the Philip Roth novel, viewers have to suspend disbelief enough to accept that Anthony Hopkins could be an African American and—even more of a stretch—that Nicole Kidman could be a janitor.





WHO'S ON FIRST?

In Catherine Breillat's *Sex Is Comedy* (above), Roxane Mesquida and Grégoire Colin ponder their choices. Should they slip on a banana peel, start a fight or make love?

GRAB 'EM IF YOU GOT 'EM

13 Going On 30 is a film about a girl who wakes up to find she's 30 years old. Jennifer Garner (left) is delighted to discover she has developed breasts. As are we all.

"I TOLD YOU NEVER TO CALL ME WHEN I'M WAITING!"

In *Heights* (below), Jesse Bradford passes out pigs in blankets at what appears to be your run-of-the-mill Republican fund-raiser.



Mailer (continued from page 88)

Power is not interested in metaphor. Metaphor pushes you to think in poetic and contradictory ways.

warmth, plus a good deal of everything else a president needs—calculation, manipulation, interest in his work, all of that. In this case, I thought his particular remarks were needlessly cruel. I believe he would have preferred to speak nicely about Monica Lewinsky, but you've got to remember he has an angry and injured wife on his hands. He had to weigh in with something to satisfy her. Hillary was on his mind more than Monica.

"Just because I could" is an empty remark. Anyone who's met Monica knows she's very attractive. She's got beautiful coloring, she's intense, she's bright—that's the real reason he did it.

And for another reason entirely, which may be richer, although it is certainly meaner: A bright woman I know once said, "Clinton lived in a minimum-security prison. Every 15 minutes security checked up on where he was." I thought, She's absolutely right. What we're dealing with here is an incarcerated man. It's as if he were in the finest, grandest minimum-security prison in the world, the White House. In that sense, five percent of him is a convict.

JBM: And once you're in prison, you do what you can get away with.

NM: Exactly.

JBM: Then his remark is not so hollow.

NM: I see what you're saying—yes, it's not as hollow as I thought. He did it not because he could but because he wanted to get away with it. He could turn his incarceration a little bit around. Nonetheless I still think the style of phrasing comes because of his wife. Having been married six times, I have some idea of what one says on such occasions.

JBM: You're a good one to talk to about that. But more to the point, Clinton has a wife who will likely run for higher office. Is it immoral or amoral to make a calculated decision to strip humanity away from Monica in order to protect the image of his wife as a strong potential candidate?

NM: Both. Immoral in that he is most calculatedly not telling the truth about his real feelings. It's amoral because he wants to keep the political process going: All politicians have to be amoral to a degree. It's a question of how much. Are they 44 percent amoral or 88 percent? Politicians cannot possibly afford morality except as a series of specious sentiments ready to be uttered as patriotic or theological slogans. A

politician has to deal with the given. That means they can even tell the truth at times. Usually they're only pretending. Politicians build up profound habits of not addressing the truth head-on. In practice they have to shake hands with people they can't bear and proffer patriotic remarks that don't come from the heart.

Now, whether immoral, amoral or both, it was finally a necessity. It was—the two holy words for politicians—the given. JBM: Isn't it possible for a politician to live by his own code today?

NM: No. Not a successful politician.

JBM: Was it possible in FDR's day?

NM: It was never possible. Go back to Bismarck—"Politics is the art of the possible." What's important is to get some part of what you want done. That's how a democracy works—by pieces and parts.

The irony is, the only way you can come near a direct expression of your personality is in a dictatorship. Of course, as Democrats we feel instinctively that no human being is good enough to be entrusted with that kind of power. So in a democracy, change always comes from negotiation, which leaves each side a bit dissatisfied.

JBM: I'm still too much of an optimist. I think that's choice B.

NM: Well, if you ever get into politics, you're going to discover how many compromises have to be made willy-nilly.

JBM: I suppose that's true. In the end, the distinguishing factor between a decent politician and a corporate puppet is not *if* he is willing to compromise but *what* he is willing to compromise.

PLAYBOY: You've written about the cultural necessity of literature. Yet we now live in a time when the novelist and literature itself are borderline irrelevant. There's an absence of interiority, of serious, concentrated thought. We may be in danger of losing literature forever. What would this mean for American culture?

NM: As a novelist I'm now speaking from my vested position. My profession is being eroded. When I began, good novelists were more important in the scheme of things. The irony is that the great novelists like Hemingway and Faulkner probably didn't sell as many copies per book as a few serious novelists sell now. But they were revered. They affected history. They had their impact on America. Hem-

ingway was a prodigious influence for young American writers. He taught a lot of us how to look for the tensile strength of a sentence.

I think a nation's greatness depends to a real extent on how well-spoken its citizens are. Good things develop out of a populace that really knows how to use the language and use it well. Would Great Britain have been able to manage its empire in the 19th century without the 300 and more years of reading Shakespeare? Where would Ireland be today without Joyce? Not as prosperous, I expect. As a language deteriorates—becomes less eloquent, less metaphorical, less salient, less poignant—a curious deadening of the human spirit comes seeping in.

America has shifted from being a country with a great love of freedom and creativity—in constant altercation with those other Americans who wanted rule and order—into a country that's now much more interested in power. And power, I can promise you, is not interested in metaphor. Metaphor is antagonistic to power because it pushes you to think in more poetic and contradictory ways. Power demands a unilinear approach. Power does not welcome poetic concepts.

JBM: But hasn't power always been a driving force in society?

NM: Always. But it was situated among other driving forces, such as culture and art and love of sports and good architecture. Now it's as if corporate power has become the most dominant theme of our lives. In 10 more years, will we find a professional stadium that has not been named for a corporation?

JBM: Or a Broadway theater. The lack of rage against that from the artistic community is depressing but not surprising. The majority of the biggest celebrities today are manufactured by the largest corporations. It's hardly in their interest to attack the money, even if their benefactor is turning the name of a theater into an advertisement for the company. Gone are the days when writers had the same influence as rock stars. Justin Timberlake, who I'm sure is a nice guy, should not be influencing a generation. He's a pop singer. He was created by Disney. Part of his job is not to have an opinion. Somewhere between the lines, I'm not sure where, it shifted from great minds speaking to the masses to celebrities speaking to the masses.

NM: Be careful. You're too young to know how it was back then. Great minds almost never speak directly to the masses.

JBM: Not directly. But Hemingway would write a piece, you would write a piece, and people would discuss it and debate it, go back and forth—

(continued on page 190)



"Well, don't you think impulse purchases are the most fun?!"



The Importance of Being Dino

WHY DEAN MARTIN IS THE COOLEST DEAD MAN WHO EVER LIVED

by Bill Zehme

Will you look at this beautiful bastard. Just look at him. Makes you feel better when you do, right? That's Dean all over. That's what he does without doing anything, what he does without actually even breathing anymore, come to think of it. Dead, he's still just that good. Never had a care, not him. Problems weren't his to ponder or possess. Never wanted you to have any, either. You were his pally—everybody was, whether he knew them or not. For instance, just the other day his grandkid Alex Martin told me, "For the first 15 years of my life, I thought my name was Pally." About which what's not to like? He was crazy, too. Frank Sinatra said so, which made it true. "My friend Mr. Dean Martin," Sinatra said, "if he was in a casket, he would sit up and get funny, this guy. I'm serious." (Sinatra's problem was he was always serious. Said Dean, simple as could be, "Frank takes things seriously. I don't.") Dean saw things funny, famously. "How did all these people get in my room?" he'd ask onstage, gazing through drooped lids at those who came to love him so nice. To be in Dean's room, well, that was all you ever wanted—

real easylike, metaphysical, very comfortable place, plenty warm, transcendent, cool, not too exciting (Sinatra was all about the exciting ring-a-ding whatever the hell it was), always sexy, always fun, just right. "I was loose as a deuce; I was as light as a kite," he sang with some pretty little French broad 50 years ago on a record called "Relax-Ay-Voo." You probably heard it, sounding timeless as air, in a Microsoft commercial not so long ago, since this is the ultimate object of modern life, to relax-ay-voov, what with the world forever going to hell and all, which is why we can never get too far away from Dean's room, no matter how dead he is.

"Am I in town?" he often asked anyone within earshot, sublime existentialist that he was. (Always and no matter where this occurred, the answer would be in the affirmative, in case you were wondering.) Conversely, however, and all the more so with each passing year, wherever you are, so too is Dean. Just as he did four decades ago, he has slipped out from under the (retro) rubric of Rat Pack nihilism—of ephemeral cocktail consulship with leader Sinatra and the great Sammy





Davis Jr. and, in minor chords, Peter Lawford and Joey Bishop—and stepped forth into a sleek ubiquity all his own. (He never much went for crowds, anyway.) So here now is a plethora of Dean, singing all over movie and television soundtracks—*The Sopranos*, *Swingers*, *Goodfellas*, *L.A. Confidential*, *Donnie Brasco*, *The West Wing*, *The Mexican*, *Return to Me*, *Payback*, *Panic, Made*, *Mickey Blue Eyes*, *Vegas Vacation*, *Babe: Pig in the City*, *A Bronx Tale*, *Home Alone 3*, *Lost and Found*, *Striptease*, *Reindeer Games*, *Moonstruck*—how many italics do you want, because I could go on for a while. And there he is, sending glissandos unending across the glib commerce of Ragú, Nissan, Heineken, Audi, Kodak, Peugeot and Marriott—just for starters. Last June Capitol released a remastered 30-hit compilation, *Dino: The Essential Dean Martin* (“He was the coolest dude I’d ever seen, period,” Stevie Nicks declares in the liner notes), which debuted at number 28 on the *Billboard* Top 100, was the fifth most downloaded album that week on iTunes and became his first gold record in 30 years. Differently than Sinatra (he of the bipolar genius and swaggering empowerment), Dean provides smooth, winking succor to generations anew: “I love him so much,” a bright 20-something female comedy professional wrote me in an e-mail, after letting on that Dean, bare-chested and with guitar, acts as her PC screen saver. “I can think of no better way to spend the day than sitting with Dean Martin. He epitomizes cool, easy fun.”

Well, yeah.

Said Dean, “You gotta have fun, right? If not, you might as well lay down and let ‘em throw dirt on you.” And so it was that his cab came—he more or less called for it himself—a few hours before dawn nine Christmases ago. (*Christmas With Dino*, by the way, is Capitol’s newest remastered collection, now in stores everywhere!) He was 78 and ready for the big relax-ay-vooo so as to doze eternally, in his tuxedo with red pocket hanky and shiny black boots, shelved snug in a marble drawer 10 minutes from home. The forever formal wear was supposed to be some giant secret—“Nobody knows that!” his agent blurted after the interment (he forgot he’d already told me)—but who are we kidding here? “In regular clothes, I’m nobody,” Dean always said, too modestly. “In a tuxedo, I’m a star.” Which isn’t to suggest he’s overdressed for oblivion. “Dean looked more comfortable in a tux than most people do in their pajamas,” notes one of his TV producers, Lee Hale, in his memoir *Backstage at the Dean Martin Show*. On that remarkable variety hour, the bona fide cornerstone of NBC’s Must-See-TV Thursdays from 1965 to 1974,



Two Dinos duke it out at the kitchen table (above left): When Dean Paul died in a 1987 plane crash at the age of 36, his father spiraled into a depression and never fully recovered. The comedy team of Martin and Lewis (above) ruled showbiz from 1946 to 1956: "You never had a handsome man and a monkey," said Jerry Lewis. "Sex and slapstick—that's what we were." Out on the town with wife Jeanne (left): "Naturally women are attracted to him. It doesn't bother me at all. Where would he be if women weren't attracted to him?" she said in 1968. Ten years later she said, "When I met Dean Martin it was love at first sight. I married him knowing nothing about him. I divorced him 23 years later, and I still know nothing about him."

black tie wasn't optional for anyone. Dean performed even the sketches in swank midnight attire with omnipresent cigarette, making most surreal his sales clerks, doctors and barbershop loiterers. The best of those shows—sparkling music segments especially—have now been spliced into home-video bounty, as was done with a later series, the quite awful, zillion-selling *Dean Martin Celebrity Roasts*, offered via peppy insomniac infomercials (or at www.deanvariety.com) to a world in which men like Dean dwell no longer. "Wanna know why the show's a hit?" he once said of his variety show. "The reason is that it's the real me up there on the screen. Nothing phony. You take everybody else on TV, they're putting on an act, playin' something they aren't. But when people tune me in, they know they're getting Dean Martin."

I've got the real Dean Martin's tuxedo pants, by the way. Well, a pair of one of the hundreds he used to tug on, one leg at a time. I bought them for 80 bucks, I think, at a long-gone Santa Monica boutique called Star Wares. According to the authentication papers, somebody who worked for Shirley MacLaine brought them in (I refuse to consider the implications). His name was sewn into the waistband by the Las Vegas custom tailor Carmen-Lamola and dated October 1986 (which means Dean was 69 when he first wore them), two years after his appearance in *Cannonball Run II* (very sad) and less than two years before he, Sinatra and Sammy Davis embarked on the hopeless "Together Again" arena tour, which Dean quit after a week (sadder still). Never have I dared try them on (his measurements, in case you're wondering: waist 34, length 32), but a leggy blonde of my acquaintance did one memorable night, executing living-room grand pirouettes to moon-eye-pizza-pie accompaniment on the stereo. (I figured Dean wouldn't mind.) Otherwise they've stayed in the closet, except for once when I brought them (in a shopping bag) to a Rat Pack panel discussion in New York, where my friend Nick Tosches, author of the seminal, unauthorized 1992 masterwork *Dino: Living High in the Dirty Business of Dreams*, offered me \$500 on the spot for them. I laughed in his face.

Dean never read *Dino* (it preceded his departure by three years). Legend has it he read *Black Beauty* at age nine, cried and swore off all books thereafter. Upon meeting anyone who ever wrote one, he'd say, "Congratulations. I read one." ("He used to love comic books," his former monkey partner Jerry Lewis has said. "I used to buy most of them for him, because he wouldn't go to the fuckin' newsstand.") Let me say this: Tosches's book, much like Tosches, is a dark, gorgeous motherfucker, in which Dean—born Dino Crocetti in hard-scrabble Steubenville, Ohio on June 7, 1917—is also a dark gorgeous motherfucker, albeit one who got extremely rich and famous. Think Kafka goes to Hollywood, with music and pasta. Tosches's Dean swirls alone in haunted breezes, a tragic *menefreghista*—"one who does not give a fuck," in the classic Italian—bent on enforcing, per Tosches, "the taciturn harboring close to the heart of any thought or feeling that ran too deeply; that emotional distance, that wall of *lontananza* between the self and the world." Well, yeah. That was Dean all

over, except—according to those who loved him best—he wasn't one who did not give a fuck bitterly so much as in a fluffy, pleasant, I'm-just-gonna-go-play-golf-now-darlin' kind of way, which is a distinction that seems worth noting. Anyway, Warner Bros. bought the book for Martin Scorsese to direct and for Nicholas Pileggi (*Goodfellas*, *Casino*) to adapt for the screen, which he did (brilliantly, apparently). Tom Hanks was attached to star. Scorsese then decided to make *Gangs of New York* instead, and everything fell apart. A guy I know who read the Pileggi script says, "It was beautiful, heartbreaking. It would have been—or still will be—amazing to watch Marty make a weepy."

What, you might wonder, would Dean have made of such a film? It's hard to judge for certain, but I do know that once, to Sinatra, apropos of not much, he uttered the following: "If you gonna go that way, I say remember the great words of Chef Boyardee, who said, 'Get your balls out of my spaghetti!'" (All in all, Dean preferred Westerns; his own work in Howard Hawks's *Rio Bravo*, with John Wayne, remains splendid.) Somewhere in the troubling screenplay, however, as maybe he did in life, he reportedly explains that if you don't complain about your problems, they don't exist. (About which, again, what's not to like?) Always he stuck fast to his story. "I'm a very happy man," he'd say, and said it again, with much validity, to *bellissima* journalist Oriana Fallaci in 1967—the very year he released his 30th album, *Happiness Is Dean Martin*, and signed a record-breaking three-year, \$34 million contract with NBC, which allowed him to skip all rehearsals and work only one day a week, for taping. ("God!" he told Fallaci. "I am not worth it. What do I do? I do an hour, and out of that hour I sing maybe 10 songs. The rest, I talk. And I make fun of my wife, of my children, of my mother-in-law, of myself, of my drinkin'.") Observed Fallaci, ever astutely, "Happiness for him means avoiding boring complications, then aging in a comfort earned through a success that was to him a continuous surprise." Said Dean, "You see, I'm a simple man."

Back to the real Dean, also known (in waves of maturation) as Dino Martini; the Boy with the Tall, Dark, Handsome Voice; Admiral and Second-in-Command of the Rat Pack (no commanding required—Sinatra did all of that); Dag (as in dago, this being Sinatra's private endearment for him); King Leer (he was TV's preeminent rascal); and maybe best for posterity, King of Cool (Elvis, who worshipped Dean, hung that one on

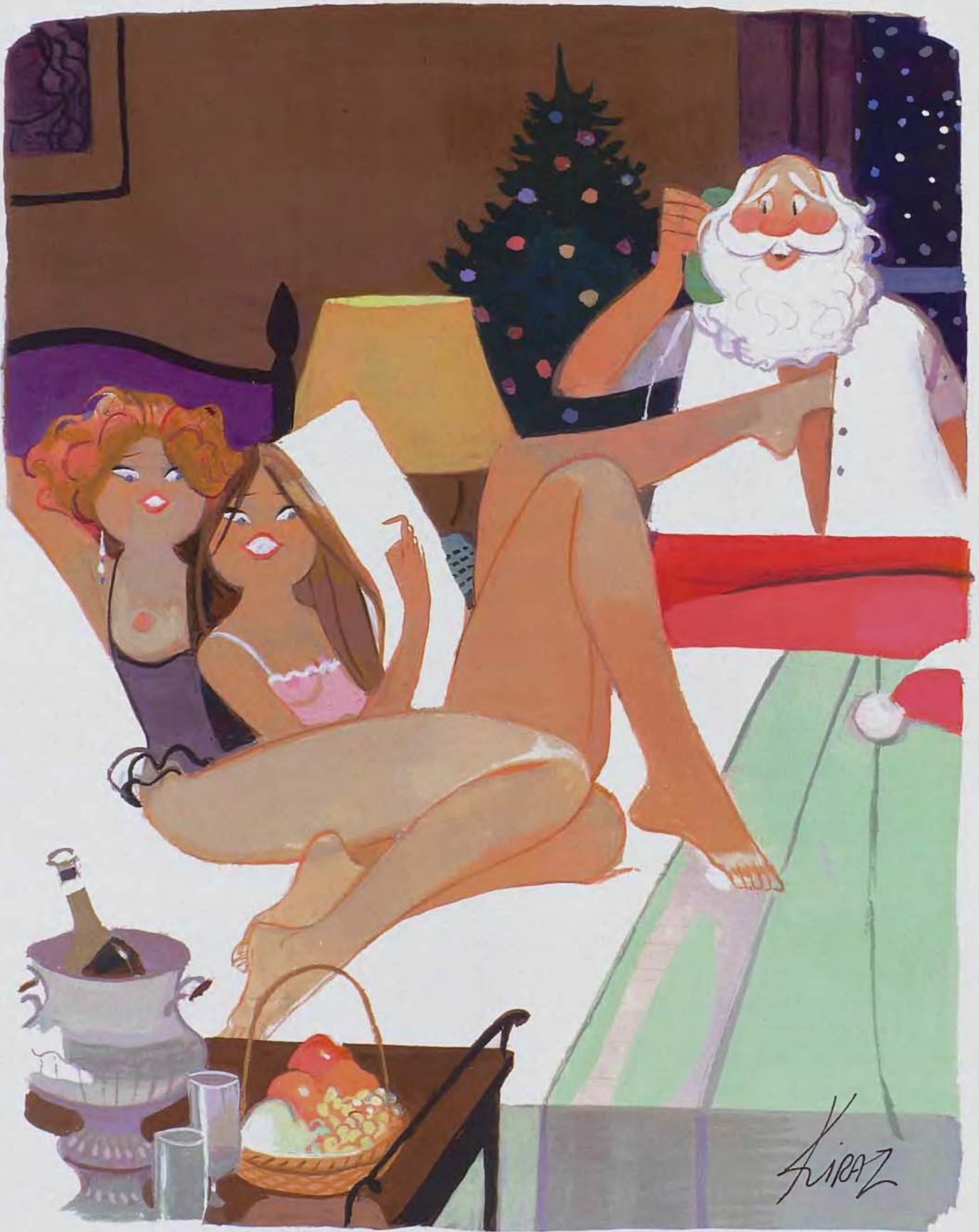


him). As for his quintessence, I am keen on Tina Sinatra's privileged assessment. "The Sinatra children knew him as Uncle Dean," she writes. "He was warm and reliable, a big man with big hands, and he hugged like a bear. Though he had an air of authority, he was never intimidating—just the opposite, in fact. He loved to kid around. He approached young people at their level; he wasn't your typical patriarch." To that end, on-stage he'd offer, "I have seven beautiful children. What are you applauding for? It took all of seven minutes! The three most popular phrases in my house are *hello*, *good-bye* and *I'm pregnant*." His first marriage produced four children (Craig, Claudia, Gail, Deana), his second another three (Dean Paul, Ricci, Gina). He and the former Jeanne Biegener, whom he married in 1949 and divorced in 1973 (to his dying day he nevertheless called her "my wife, Jeanne"), raised the full litter atop Mountain Drive in Beverly Hills, a riotous household whose slippery master made sure, at most and least, to be present for family dinnertime. ("Save me a seat!" he'd holler, happily inferring that he was ever screwing himself out of one.) Ricci and Deana Martin have each published fine, honest memoirs of life with father—*That's Amore* (2002) and *Memories Are Made of This* (2004), respectively—companion son and daughter accounts, both of which grapple with and ultimately accept sweet paternal elusiveness. Both offspring recall savoring Dean's cleated footfalls on the kitchen tile upon his return (*continued on page 186*)

"Dean Martin was my brother—not through blood but through choice," said Sinatra. "We were there for each other. He has been like the air I breathe."

Boys night out with Sammy and Frank (above): "The three of us, we love each other, and we have more fun than the audience has," said Dean. With Jeanne and baby Gina (below left). Milton Berle and a friend visit (below right): Berle talked to Dean shortly before the end. "I said, 'Hello, baby,' and kissed him on the cheek," recalled Berle. "He said, 'So long, pal.'"





"And cancel all my other appointments until after the first of the year."



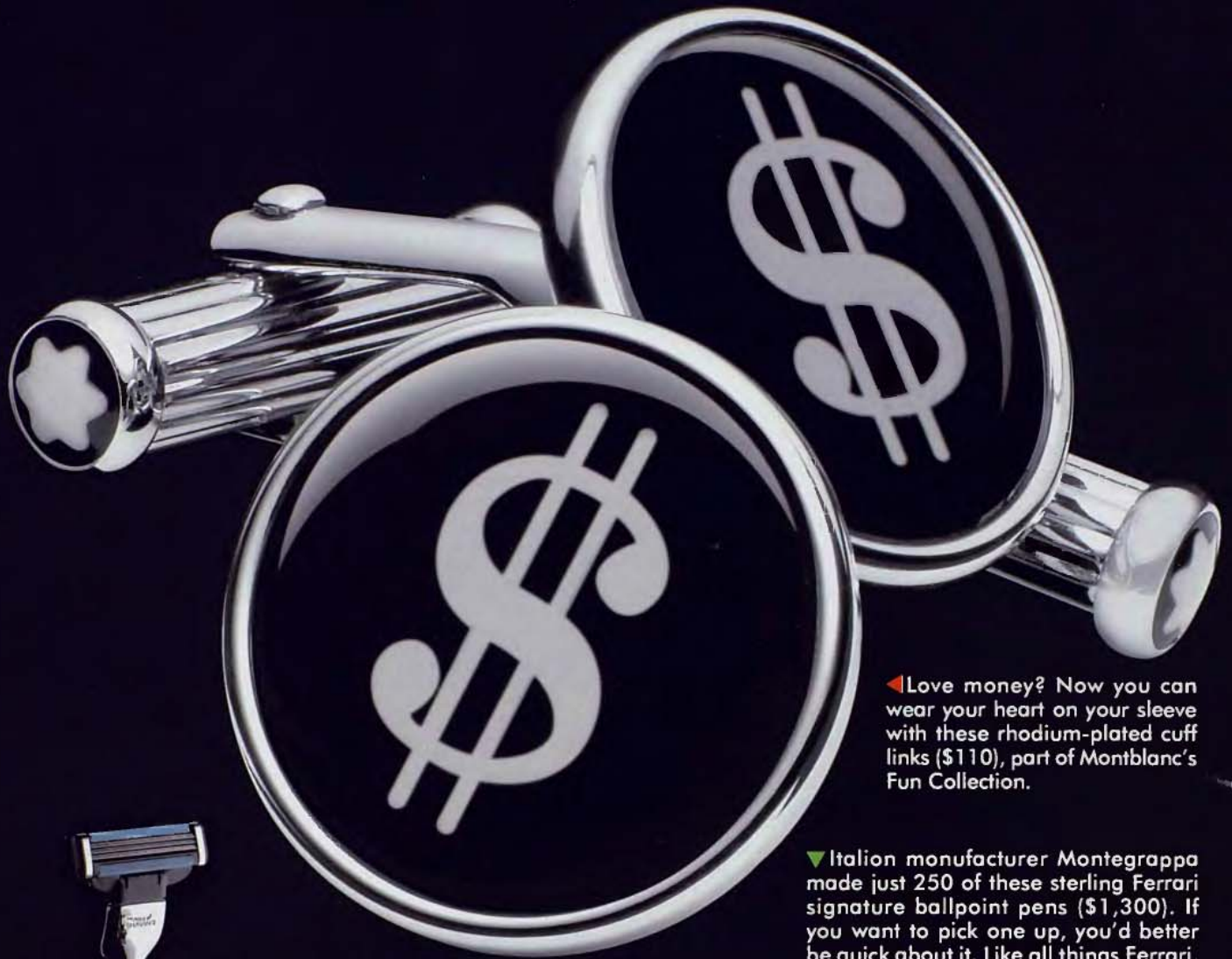
PLAYBOY'S HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Don't worry about making that holiday wish list this year—we've taken care of it for you

◀ Now you have something to look at even when nothing good is on. Predicta's Meteor TV (\$3,600) is a Buck Rogers-ero dream, spectacularly reimagined with up-to-date technological guts, including a remote control and all the inputs for today's mediascape.



▲ With its intuitive, iPod-style LCD-screen remote, Sonos's multi-room digital music system (\$1,200) makes it easy to play your MP3 collection throughout the house.



◀ Love money? Now you can wear your heart on your sleeve with these rhodium-plated cuff links (\$110), part of Montblanc's Fun Collection.

▼ Italian manufacturer Montegrappa made just 250 of these sterling Ferrari signature ballpoint pens (\$1,300). If you want to pick one up, you'd better be quick about it. Like all things Ferrari, these babies are going fast.



▲ This is your face we're talking about—treat it with respect. Start with the Mach3-friendly nickel shaving set (\$750) from the Art of Shaving.





◀ New lens technology lets Casio pack a 2.8X optical zoom and a 3.2-megapixel sensor into the ultraslim chassis of the Exilim Card EX-S100 (\$400).



▲ Breitling added a second time-zone display to its classic Navitimer chronograph. The result: the new Navitimer World (\$5,350). Time zones for major cities are engraved on the case back.



▲ Samsung's YP-T5V MP3 player (\$180) is small enough to be worn as jewelry but has space for more than four hours of music. Plus, WOW sound technology enhances MP3 playback quality.

▶ Tour Edge claims its new Exotics 3-wood (\$400) can outdistance all others. Plus, it's sexy, in a golf club kind of way. Of course, that won't help if you can't hit straight. Keep that head down!

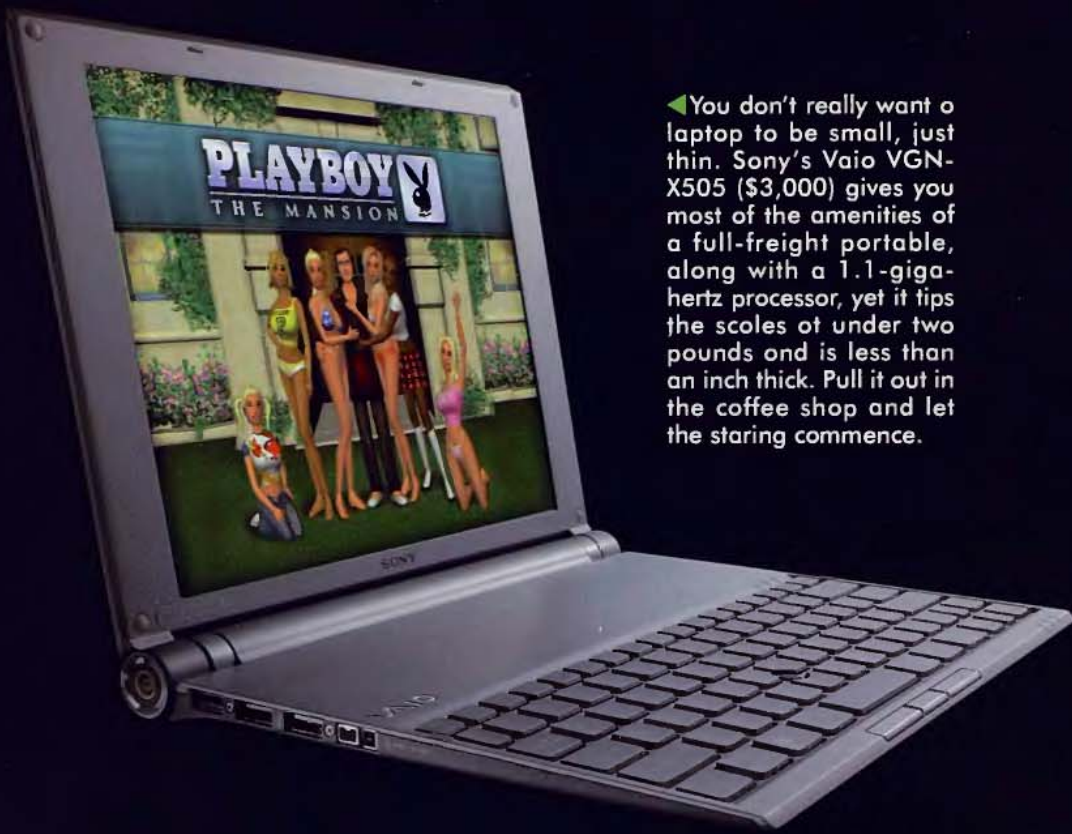
▼ The apex of easy-to-set-up home-theater-in-a-box systems, Klipsch's Cinema 10 speakers (\$1,545) immerse you in 575 watts of surround, and they look as good as they sound.



▼ A slim profile and a single-piece etched metallic keypad make Motorola's Razr V3 (price not set) as much at home in *Minority Report* as on the runways in Milan.



◀ Rawlings's three-gusset computer briefcase (\$345) is made of the same leather the company uses in its top-end baseball gloves.



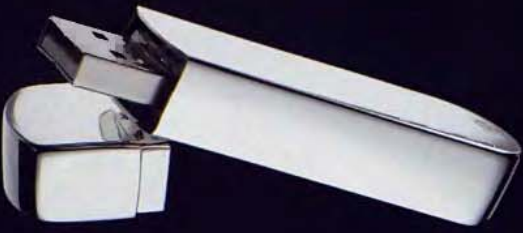
◀ You don't really want a laptop to be small, just thin. Sony's Vaio VGN-X505 (\$3,000) gives you most of the amenities of a full-freight portable, along with a 1.1-gigahertz processor, yet it tips the scales at under two pounds and is less than an inch thick. Pull it out in the coffee shop and let the staring commence.




▲ Need a light? S.T. Dupont's midnight blue Gatsby (\$690) is the Jaguar of lighters: sleek, sexy and gas powered.

▼ This is not your father's Harley. Nor is it your mother's. It's all yours—merry Christmas. The 2005 Harley-Davidson V-Rod cruiser (\$16,500) combines serious muscle with lots of class. The muscle: a 1,130cc liquid-cooled, fuel-injected V-twin engine that pumps out a meaty 115 horsepower and redlines at an impressive 9,000 rpm. The class: You're looking at it. Hop on. You can thank us later.





▲ Geek, meet chic. The silver-plated USB Flash Data Disk by Links of London (\$150) is the first tech gizmo to complement a tailored suit.



▶ Sony's Qualia 010 headphones (\$2,600): beauty, comfort and true high-res audiophile sound all rolled into one. Delicious.



OH, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE!

Sometimes a
simple thank-you
note can
say it all

Dear
Genetics,

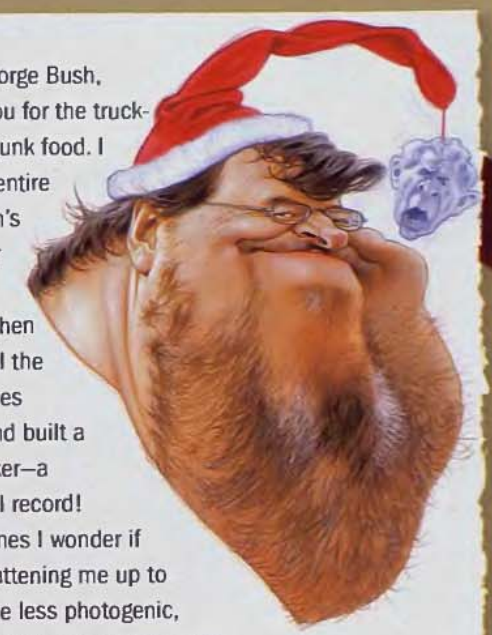
Thank you for the
boobs! YES, they
FIT!!! I use them
every day. I did
Jimmy Kimmel's
show, and he stared
at my boobs! I did
The View, and Joy
Behar stared at my
boobs! I did the
MTV Awards,
and the whole planet
stared at my boobs! My boobs rule! People thought the
Olsen twins were such hot jailbait until—bazoom! Old
guys everywhere are all staring at my boobs, especially
now that I'm legal! I win! I win!

 Lindsay Lohan



Dear George Bush,
Thank you for the truck-
load of junk food. I
ate the entire
Whitman's
Sampler
in one
sitting, then
I took all the
Moon Pies
apart and built a
17-decker—a
personal record!
Sometimes I wonder if
you're fattening me up to
make me less photogenic,
which would enhance my raving-
lunatic persona, which would discredit my movies,
which would make the Iraq war look like a good
idea, which would make you look like a good presi-
dent. Nah—couldn't be. Just being paranoid, I guess.
Big daddy has a sweet tooth—keep it coming.

Michael



Dear Coach Wannstedt,
I'm so stoned! Holiday greetings from
Asia! Thanks for all the times when,
after I was pulverized by some 400-
pound lineman, you called me a panty-
waist or a girlie man. If not for that, I
wouldn't be here in Bangkok smoking
hash with this really hot naked girl!
(See enclosed photo.) Yesterday I
prayed with the Dalai Lama. He's a
renowned holy man who you'd probably
call a bald-headed pussy. I love that!
Boy, do I miss having my ribs cracked
all the time! This afternoon I'm getting
a massage from Miss Cambodia.

Happy ending?
You know it!

Best,
Ricky Williams



Dear Paris,

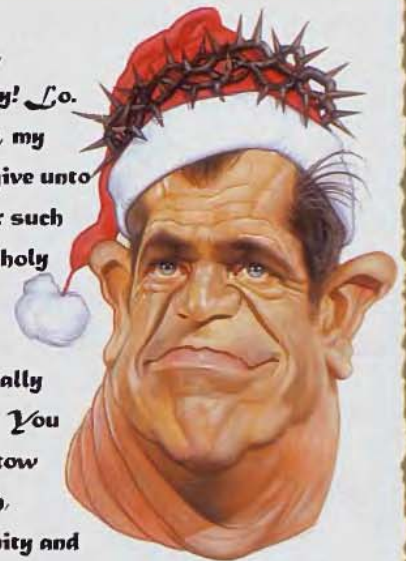
Thanks for being the maid of honor at my quickie Vegas wedding. Being married is neat, even if I don't understand half the shit my 33-year-old Ivy League groom says. Who is this Zelda Fitzgerald he keeps comparing me to? Whatever. You stood by me during my engagement—it was a tough 45 minutes, especially since I was so wasted. Wait till you see the videos we made on our honeymoon—they make your tape look like *Joanie Loves Chachi*. My elbows are still sore.

Love,
Nicky



Dear Jesus,
Happy birthday! Lo.
I beseech you, my Lord. And give unto thee thanks for such a wonderfully holy and—how shall I put this?—spiritually lucrative year. You saw fit to bestow upon me health, wisdom, serenity and roughly \$370 million in box office gross. Amen to that! Praise Jesus, for he is good! He is very good! I spendeth much in thy honor on whatever the hell I want! Lo. And in this note I give unto thee thanks.

Love,
Mel Gibson



Dear Doc,

Happy Hanukkah, and thanks again for the methylchlorosolophaniminine and the megapropostalizonyninol. The French and Germans are right, as always. They just have no idea how much I cheat! The other day I cut my finger

accidentally and green goo poured out! How cool is that? Also, Sheryl wanted to thank you for that age-reversing serum. Who knew she was actually 72 years old? She's a little piece of chicken, ain't she? Here's to another year of fun and games.

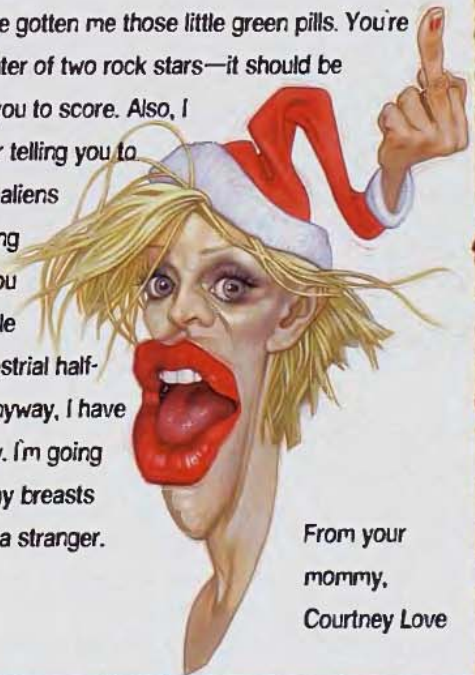
Best,
Lance Armstrong



Dear little Frannie Bananie,

Thanks so much for your handmade card and poem. You're getting so grown up! I love and miss you, baby, but this is not what I asked for. Remember when I said either horse or blow? I can't snort a poem. You at least could have gotten me those little green pills. You're the daughter of two rock stars—it should be easy for you to score. Also, I remember telling you to make the aliens stop boning me! Do you want a little extraterrestrial half-sister? Anyway, I have to go now. I'm going to have my breasts licked by a stranger.

From your
mommy,
Courtney Love



A MASTER OF CHARM, HE COULD TALK A WOMAN OUT OF HER CLOTHES

REMEMBERING POMPEO POSAR



Pompeo Posar was the dean of PLAYBOY photographers, with 65 published Playmate Centerfolds and 40 PLAYBOY covers to his credit. He traveled the world for the magazine, shooting celebrities, fashion, food, cars and, most of all, beautiful women. Thousands of beautiful women. He loved them, and they loved him. His greatest talent wasn't his technical expertise with cameras and lights. It was his charm.

Posar was born in the Adriatic port city of Trieste, on the border of Yugoslavia and Italy. In early 1960 he took his camera to a local television station in Chicago to photograph a show about folk dancing. Hugh Hefner and the original *Playboy's Penthouse* TV show were being filmed on an adjacent stage. Posar used the opportunity to take photos of Hefner and his guests and eventually sent the pictures to Hef. Soon Posar was working as a staff photographer for the magazine, and he quickly emerged as PLAYBOY's number one photographer of women.

Now he is gone. We'll carry on with the job of photographing beautiful women, but Pompeo Posar will not be replaced. He was one of a kind and truly the prince of PLAYBOY photography.

Posar was a master with the large-format 8 x 10 Deardorff camera (above). Expressive Donna Michelle (top) was PLAYBOY's December 1963 Playmate. Posar found Playmate Patti McGuire (right) in the St. Louis Playboy Club, where she worked as a Bunny. Opposite page: A collaboration with Salvador Dalí, *The Erotic World of Salvador Dalí* (1974).







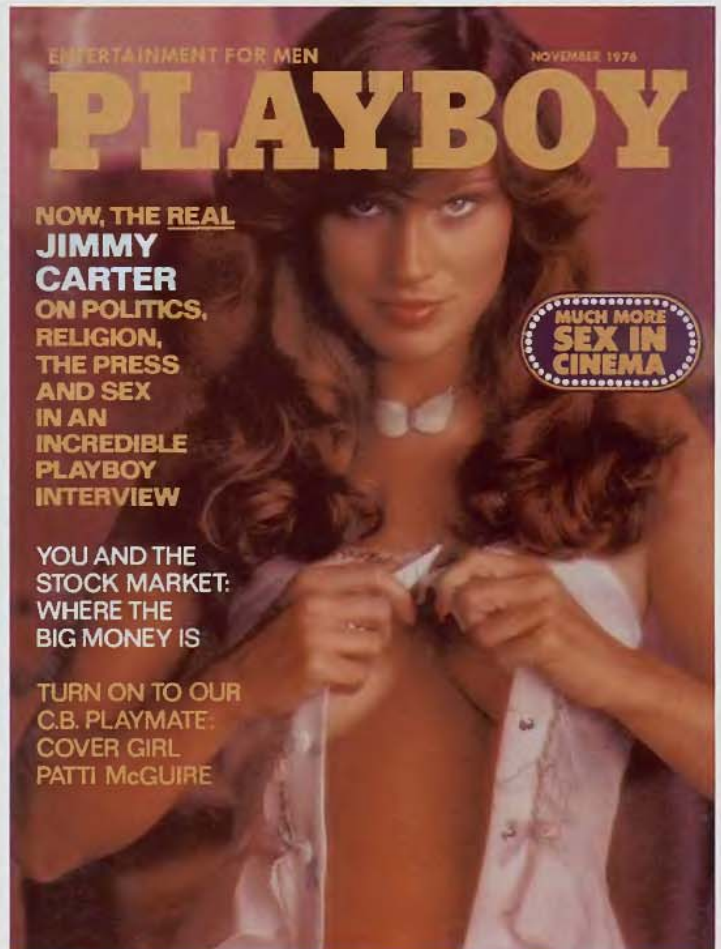
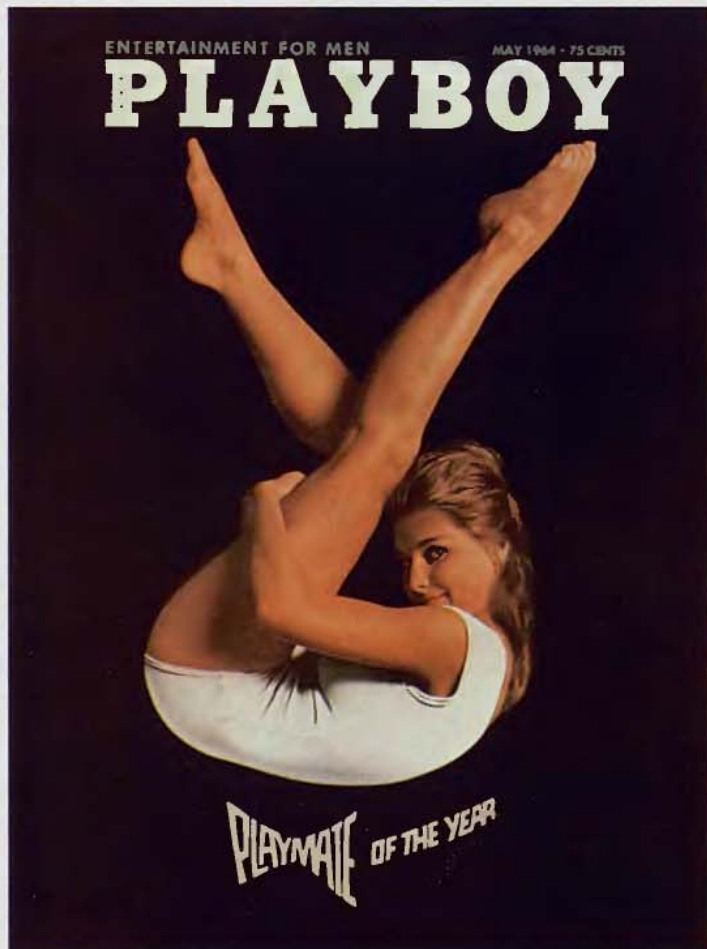
Beth Hyatt Cover, November 1965



Helen Kirk Cover, February 1967

Donna Michelle Cover, May 1964

Patti McGuire Cover, November 1976





Donna Michelle Playmate of the Year 1964



Laura Young Centerfold, October 1962



Cyndi Wood Centerfold, February 1973



TALES

of

ACCUMULATION & EXCESS

The INCREDIBLE
ADVENTURES

of the

COLLECTOR

by Glen David Gold



WHEN YOU'RE WILLING TO PAY \$10,000 FOR COMIC-BOOK PANELS, YOU TEND TO BECOME OBSESSED. TOO OBSESSED.

SO ONE EVENING IN 1997, a comic-book artwork restorer named Rick returned to me a piece I'd sent him more than a year earlier. He returned it only under duress. More precisely, he was limping and had a black eye.

When I'd given him the cover of *Captain America* #117—which featured the initial appearance of one of the first African American superheroes, the Falcon—he said he would have it back in three weeks. Three weeks became six, then a year, and then I got a phone call from someone who trafficked in comic-book-artwork rumors. Rick, I was quietly informed, had been helping himself to some of the pieces with which he'd been entrusted, and he'd finally taken high-end material from a man who had ugly connections, a man who now owned Rick. If I wanted my art back, I should call a phone number with an area code encompassing a somewhat northern area of New Jersey.

When I did so, a polite voice on the other end told me I'd get my art back in 48 hours. "We simply have to remind Rick he can be touched," the voice explained. Click.





IN THIS FAMOUS BATTLE, SPIDER-MAN TAKES ON DR. OCTOPUS. PENCILLED BY GIL KANE AND INKED BY JOHN ROMITA IN 1970, IT ENDS WITH THE DEATH OF GWEN STACY'S FATHER. NOTE THE CONTORTIONS, FORESHORTENING AND IMPOSSIBLE PERSPECTIVES OF THE IMAGES. GOT THE BUG? GO TO GROUPS.YAHOO.COM/GROUP/COMICART-L FOR COLLECTOR CONTACTS, AND TO WIZARDUNIVERSE.COM/CONVENTIONS AND COMIC-CON.ORG FOR INFO ON SHOWS.



NEXT
ISSUE

AND DEATH DOES COME!!

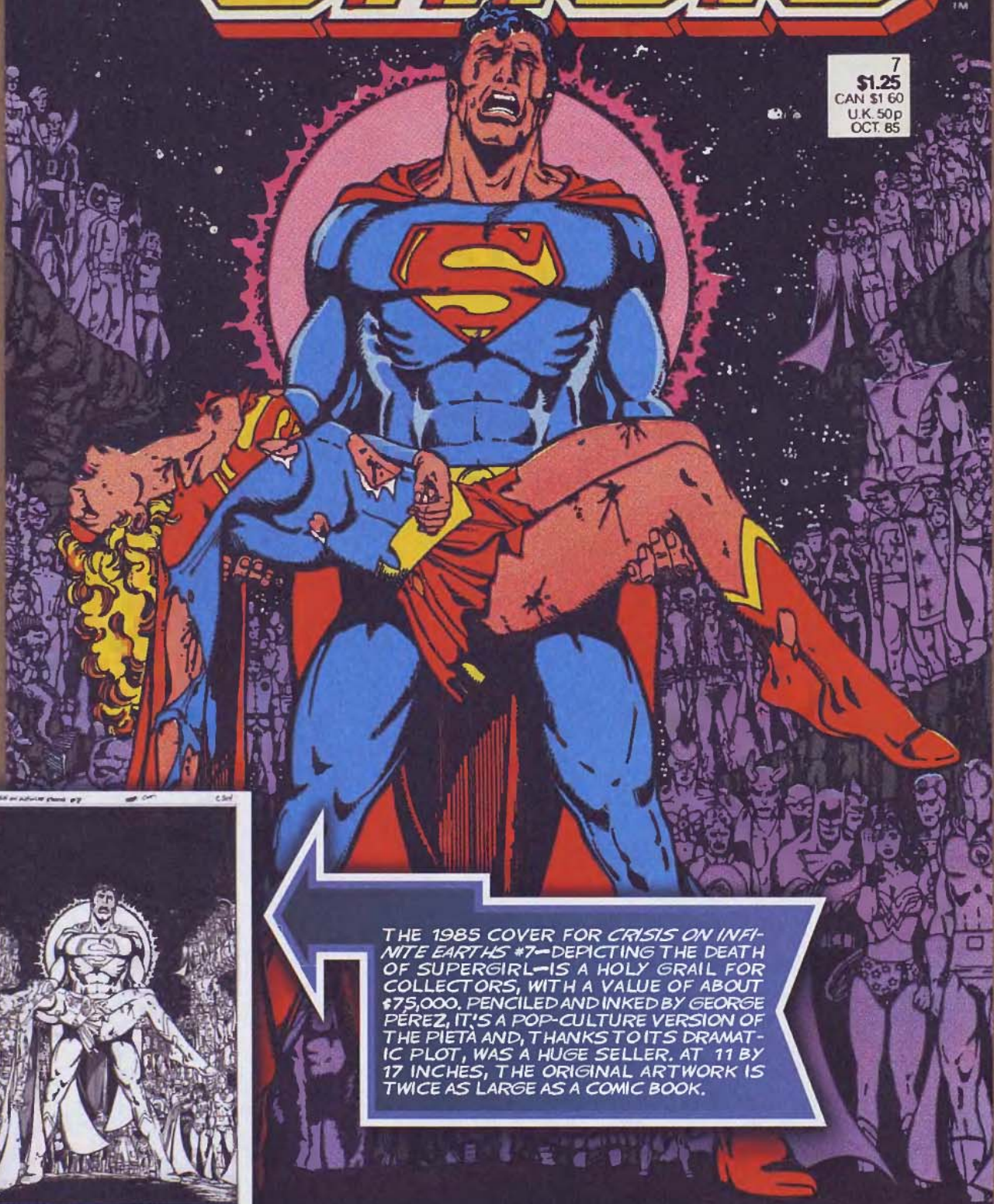


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CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS

7
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OCT. 85



THE 1985 COVER FOR *CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS* #7—DEPICTING THE DEATH OF SUPERGIRL—IS A HOLY GRAIL FOR COLLECTORS, WITH A VALUE OF ABOUT \$75,000. PENCILED AND INKED BY GEORGE PEREZ, IT'S A POP-CULTURE VERSION OF THE PIETA AND, THANKS TO ITS DRAMATIC PLOT, WAS A HUGE SELLER. AT 11 BY 17 INCHES, THE ORIGINAL ARTWORK IS TWICE AS LARGE AS A COMIC BOOK.

And so Rick showed up at my neighborhood Starbucks two days later holding the newly restored *Captain America* cover in its Mylar sleeve, looking as if he was about to cry and turning his black eye away from me.

"They said they were going to break my legs," he whispered. "Please don't call them again." I assured him I wouldn't. But for me it was in one ear and out the other: The important thing was that he'd removed the glue residue and staining from my artwork.

As he limped to his car, I kept holding the cover up to the cafe lights to admire it. Great cover. Subtle Gene Colan pencils, bold Joe Sinnott inks, dramatic staging of the Falcon, Cap and some low-rent villains. Absolutely worth the thousand bucks it had cost in the first place, the \$200 to restore it and the efforts I'd made to get it back.

When I told my girlfriend about all this, she was horrified. I'd found out that the black eye wasn't because of my phone call but had appeared courtesy of yet another client whose stuff Rick had stolen, but she wasn't mollified. "What are you getting yourself into?" she asked, and I couldn't exactly answer her.

USA Today once published a pie chart showing what keeps people up at night—career worries, their children's future. I couldn't sleep some nights because I wondered where all the pre-1965 twice-up Marvel Comics covers were. Why wouldn't Walt Simonson sell his *Thor* art? Why did only unpublished H.G. Peter *Wonder Woman* pages turn up?

For reasons not entirely explicable, I buy, sell and trade the artwork from comic books. This is embarrassing. I would like to pretend the embarrassment is mitigated by the new respect paid to comics via Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, but citing those names is rather like rattling off champagne vintages in some half-slurred defense of my prone position in the local gutter. Tom Field, a friend who thought he could stop collecting after buying one *Tomb of Dracula*

page (he now has 175 of them), has quantified the hobby for me: Comic books, even rare ones, exist in multiple copies. But there's only one of each page of original artwork. If comic books are like cocaine, artwork is like crack.



For years, when a comic artist sat down at his table, the drawings he penciled and inked were valued only until the funnies were printed; then they could be discarded or, as King Features allegedly did with *Prince Valiant* artwork, used to plug a leaky roof. Over the years, employees spirited thousands of pages out of publishers' warehouses, either because they loved the stuff or because they realized they could sell it to a slowly growing fan base. By the mid-1970s, when comics themselves were becoming valuable, artists got their work back contractually and sold it to people like me.

THIS CLASSIC COVER FROM MARVEL COMICS' SILVER AGE, WITH JACK KIRBY PENCILS AND JOE SINNOTT INKS, IS WORTH \$75,000.



My origin story, lame by any standard, fits the pattern of my peers. I read comic books from 1972 to 1977, from the age of eight to the age of 13, when my parents' divorce was at its most ruthless. The three-second psychoanalysis is exactly correct: I remember those four-color funny books as friendly islands of solace during painful times. When I shuttled to my father's new home in Chicago and he held hands with his new wife, it was easier for me to pay strict attention to the latest Marvel Treasury Edition. When I was back in San Francisco and my mother was out on a date, I would stay up reading and rereading the gloomy and unsettling *Giant-Size Man Thing* #4 until I heard her key in the lock, and then I'd slap off the light and pretend to be asleep.

I did odd jobs and collected soda bottles in the summer of 1977, and in August of that year I went to a comic-book convention and bought page 30 of *Fantastic Four* #183 for \$12. And there the awful slope began. By 1997 I was buying up to \$9,000 worth of art at a time. I should mention that I was a graduate student then, making \$12,000 a year. I managed because I had an outstanding talent for playing credit cards—I was the John Coltrane of balance transfers.

Though this is clearly insane, my father has always understood it. Dad—who at the age of 73 cruises eBay for scientific instruments, watches and slide rules—has passed to me whatever defective gene treasures material things above the company of people. But collecting never actually makes you happy, except for a moment. All collectors, including myself, are programmed to forget this at key moments, such as when a new object appears before our now occluded vision. Right before doing a deal, we have the anxiety, the sweaty palms, the desire. After the deal there's the swaggering feeling of having bagged a trophy: the careful admiration of the pen work, the drafting, the heroic poses, the subtle details—half-erased pencil marks, margin notes, the Comics Code Authority stamp—and the production detritus such as Wite-Out, pasteups, "continued page after next" stats, the coffee-like stain of printer's ink. And then, when it goes into your portfolio or onto the wall, there's this creeping urge, a need for more. It's a little like the most (continued on page 200)

BELOW, TWO LANDMARK ISSUES. THE ARTWORK OF THE 1981 X-MEN SPLASH PAGE (JOHN BYRNE PENCILS; TERRY AUSTIN INKS) RUNS ABOUT \$35,000. SPIDER-MAN'S DEATH OF GWEN STACY (RIGHT) HAS PENCILS BY GIL KANE, INKS BY JOHN ROMITA AND A PRICE TAG OF \$250,000 FOR THE WHOLE BOOK.



BLACK GOLIATH #5, FEATURING GIL KANE PENCILS AND AL MILGROM INKS, IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF 1970S BLAX-PLIOTATION ARTWORK. PRICE: \$2,500.



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"MOON OF THE WOLF!"



TRADED RECENTLY FOR ABOUT \$55,000, THE 11-BY-17-INCH PANEL ABOVE IS THE LAST *BATMAN* COVER PENCILED AND INKED BY NEAL ADAMS (HE OFTEN INSISTED ON INKING HIS OWN PENCIL WORK). *BATMAN* WAS DARK AND NOIRISH IN THE 1940S, THEN TOOK ON A CAMPY TONE IN THE 1960S DUE TO THE TV SHOW. WITH HIS ABILITY TO PORTRAY ANGUISH AND STRAIN, ADAMS RETURNED THE COMIC TO ITS DARK ROOTS. THE LACK OF TYPE AND CAPTIONS ADDS TO THIS PIECE'S ARTISTIC MERIT.

S-1299

TO CREATE A FLAWLESS ROMANTIC DINNER
FOR TWO, ALL YOU NEED IS THE RECIPES,
THE INGREDIENTS AND THE AMBIENCE—
SHE'LL DO THE REST

BY A.J. BAIME

THE PERFECT NIGHT

Surely, it's the oldest trick in the book. Man cooks dinner for woman, thinking he'll be rewarded for his toil and that he'll have her for dessert. But it's such an old trick, it's practically a lost art. In our office alone, tales of failure abound. One guy lops off his thumb and loses it in the folds of his lasagna. Another guy ignores his date the entire evening as he crashes around the kitchen, tenser than the trout he's got in the oven as he wades through the snowdrifts of flour he's spilled on the floor.

A simple truth: If done right, a candlelit dinner for two will have the woman in your life eating out of the palm of your hand. An evening of elegant food, drink and ambience is every woman's weakness, and the holidays are the perfect time to create a romantic hideaway in your own home. She's tired. She's been elbowing her way through the bargain-shopping mobs, enduring catcalls on the street from drunk guys in Santa suits. She's steeling herself for the trip home, where she'll find a stocking stuffed with family drama. She's also the most beautiful woman you know (or at least the most beautiful one sleeping in your bed at the moment), and there's no better way to express your respect and desire for her than by sweating it out in the kitchen. Just beware: The notion of food as foreplay can be a cliché. Your dinner must be handled with tact and originality.

RULE NUMBER ONE: The key to a successful evening is getting all the work done in advance so you can enjoy yourself as it all goes as planned. You're the host as well as the chef, and you have to be free to keep her company. Think of the night as a fantasy; as with any good fantasy, the details bring it to life. The wine, the napkins, the lighting—your style choices should coalesce like the ingredients in a soup. You're creating a perfect balance, just the right vibe. Fine dishes and

silverware can make any cook seem more skilled than he actually is, just as the right clothes enhance his appearance. A fire is a no-brainer as long as it's in the fireplace, and candles are imperative. Candlelight brings out the highlights in food and makes you both better looking. It can also hide imperfections in the room. As one writer once noted about a dinner party, "If people can't see and they have plenty to drink, you're already on the road to success."

Most important, beware of mood killers. Red roses and cologne miasma are clichés; yellow roses and a bathtub full of champagne (or prosecco, if you prefer) are not. The ultimate gaffe? Trying too hard. The ultimate goal? To make your date excited yet comfortable enough to want to take her clothes off. Nudity is never a bad thing at a dinner party, unless you're the only one who's naked.

RULE NUMBER TWO: When it comes to music, make sure to hit the right note. Music is like salt in that it complements everything. But if you add too much, it takes charge. Ella Fitzgerald, for example, can make an overcooked steak taste like a perfect medium-rare. Courtney Love can make a steak taste like Hole, and that's a little scary. When laying out the soundtrack, follow your date's cues. If she's wearing khakis and a yellow cardigan, avoid Ol' Dirty Bastard. Red light: Barry White, Sade, Marvin Gaye. Green light: Al Green, early Sinatra, Portishead. Keep the volume low, and never stop her in mid-conversation to change the CD.

RULE NUMBER THREE: Do not stuff a woman the way you would a sausage casing. Portions and pacing are key—not too much, not too quickly. The cocktail comes first, of course. You should also have some delicate noshes ready when she arrives, simple pleasures such as quality olives and cheeses that aren't too quotidian. If there's a lull



in the conversation, you can always talk about what's on the table: "Cheese is fascinating. Wherever you go it's different. Charles de Gaulle once said, 'How can you govern a country that has 246 varieties of cheese?'" After the drinks are polished off—two if she's a party girl—it's dinnertime.

We've chosen our menu carefully. It's seasonal, and you can get most of the work done the day before (the food will taste even better) so that you can attend to her whims when she shows up. And while these dishes don't call too much attention to themselves, they do offer the opportunity to show some skill and sorcery. A great dish will leave a guest not only delighted but slightly confused, wondering how you pulled it off. That's the magic.

FIRST COURSE: CHESTNUT SOUP

This holiday classic couldn't be more elegant or less labor-intensive. The recipe is courtesy of *New York Times* cooking columnist Mark Bittman (a.k.a. The Minimalist), with one suggested addition. See *Where and How to Buy* on page 204 for suggestions on where to get the finest ingredients.

10 chestnuts (frozen if you can't find fresh)
2 cups chopped celery
½ cup chopped white onion
1 tablespoon butter
4 cups good chicken stock
Salt and pepper
1 piece minced crispy bacon for garnish
Optional: 2 tablespoons heavy cream

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and roast chestnuts for 15 minutes. Cutting an X into the shell beforehand will cause the skins to break open when they heat. Let them cool, then peel (skip this step if you get frozen nuts). In a soup pot, sauté the celery and onion in butter for 10 minutes over medium heat, being careful not to brown them. Add chestnuts and chicken stock, season with salt and pepper, and bring to a boil. Lower heat and simmer, partially covered, for 30 minutes. Stir in cream if you want to use it, then puree the soup and pass it through a fine strainer. Add water if the soup is too thick. Serve hot and garnish with minced bacon.

ENTRÉE: COQ AU VIN

This version of the classic dish is Julia Child's, with some tweaks. Serves four (you won't mind the leftovers, trust us).

½ cup chopped bacon
1 three-pound chicken, butchered (two thighs, two breasts, two drumsticks, all on the bone)
1 cup flour
Butter for sautéing
1 large carrot, peeled and chopped
1 medium white onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1½ cups chicken stock
3 cups hearty red wine
1 teaspoon tomato paste
2 sprigs fresh thyme (or ½ teaspoon dried)
1 bay leaf
Salt and pepper

12 small pearl onions, peeled
3 cups cremini mushrooms (substitute: white mushrooms)
Chopped parsley for garnish

Sauté bacon in a large casserole until crisp, then set aside, leaving the fat in the pan. Season and flour the chicken parts and brown them in the bacon fat and a little butter. Set them aside with the bacon. Sauté the carrot, white onion and garlic over medium heat for about six minutes, scraping up the bits from the bottom of the pan. Add the stock, wine, tomato paste, thyme and bay leaf, and season with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, stir, and then add the chicken parts and bacon back in. Turn the heat to low, cover, and read *Remembrance of Things Past* for the next hour, basting the chicken occasionally, flipping it once or twice. (You can also use this time to peel your pearl onions, which can be a bitch.) Turn off the heat, remove chicken parts, and set them aside.

Once the sauce has cooled, skim off as much fat as possible, then pour it into a fine strainer over a container, squeezing out every last bit of juice. To finish the dish, wash out the casserole, then lightly brown the pearl onions in butter. Add mushrooms, sautéing another two minutes, then put the chicken parts and sauce back in. Cover and simmer on low heat for 20 minutes, and it's done. If the sauce is too thick, add a little water; if it's too thin, uncover and cook some more. Plate two pieces with mashed, roasted or boiled potatoes, garnish with parsley, and serve with a medium-bodied red wine—a merlot, Côte du Rhone or chianti, for example.



There's a reason the recipe for coq au vin hasn't changed much in centuries. It's all about patience and tradition.

DESSERT: CHOCOLATE POT DE CRÈME

If a pot de crème does not bring about the desired result, the evening is a wash. Forget about it. This version comes from *The Balthazar Cookbook*. Serves three.

¾ cup heavy cream
¾ cup whole milk
¼ cup sugar
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
4 ounces semisweet chocolate in pieces
3 large egg yolks

Preheat oven to 250 degrees. In a saucepan, mix the cream, milk, sugar and vanilla and bring to a boil over medium heat. Remove from heat and slowly whisk in chocolate until smooth. In a large bowl, beat the egg yolks for one minute, then stir in the chocolate mixture (make sure it's cooled a little so it doesn't cook the yolks). Whisk until smooth. If there are any chunks, pass through a strainer. Pour the mixture into ramekins and place them in a casserole or baking pan. Fill the pan with cold water so that it creeps halfway up your chocolate dishes. Cover the pan with foil and carefully put in the oven for one hour and 15 minutes. When done, the custard will jiggle slightly in the center. Take the pots de crème out of the water, let them cool for half an hour, and then refrigerate. Serve cool, no garnish necessary.





"Then again, there is also much to be said for the 12 nights of Christmas!"



THE REVENGE OF THE

GODFATHER

A STARTLING PREVIEW

OF THE NEW SEQUEL

TO MARIO PUZO'S

THE GODFATHER

On a cold spring Monday afternoon in 1955, Michael Corleone summoned Nick Geraci to meet him in Brooklyn. As the new don entered his late father's house on Long Island to make the call, two men dressed like grease monkeys watched a television puppet show, waiting for Michael's betrayer to deliver him and marveling at the tits on the corn-fed blonde puppeteer.

Michael, alone, walked into the raised corner room his late father had used as an office. He sat behind the little rolltop desk that had been Tom Hagen's. The consigliere's desk. Michael would have called from home—Kay and the kids left this morning to visit her folks in New Hampshire—except that his phone was tapped. So was the other line in this house. He kept them that way to mislead listeners. But the inventive wiring that led to the phone in this office—and the chain of bribes that protected it—could have thwarted an army of cops. Michael dialed. He had no address book, just a knack for remembering numbers. The house was quiet. His mother was in Las Vegas with his sister Connie and her kids. On the second ring Geraci's wife answered. He barely knew her but greeted her by name (Charlotte) and asked about her daughters. Michael avoided the phone in general and had never before called Geraci at home. Ordinarily orders were buffered, three men deep, to ensure nothing could be traced to the don. Charlotte gave quavering answers to Michael's polite questions and went to get her husband.

Nick Geraci had already put in a long day. Two heroin-bearing ships, neither of which was supposed to arrive from Sicily until next week, had shown up late last night, one in New Jersey, the other in Jacksonville. A lesser man would be in prison now, but Geraci had smoothed things over by hand-delivering a cash

FICTION BY MARK WINEGARDNER

131

donation to the pension fund of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, whose men in Florida had performed like champs, and by paying a visit (and a sizable tribute) to the Stracci family capo, who controlled the docks in north Jersey. By five, Geraci was exhausted but home, in his backyard in East Islip, playing horseshoes with his two girls. A two-volume history of Roman warfare he'd just started reading sat next to the armchair in his den, in position for later tonight. When the phone rang Geraci was a few sips into his second Chivas and water. He had T-bones sizzling on his barbecue and a Dodgers-Phillies double-header on the radio. Charlotte, who'd been in the kitchen assembling the rest of the meal, came out onto the patio, carrying the phone with the long cord, her face drained of color.

"Hello, Fausto." The only other person who called Nick Geraci by his given name was Vincent Forlenza, who'd stood as Geraci's godfather in Cleveland. "I'd like you to be a part of this thing Tessio arranged. Seven o'clock at this place called Two Toms. Do you know it?"

The sky was blue and cloudless, but anyone watching Charlotte rush to herd the girls inside might have thought she'd learned a hurricane was bearing down on Long Island.

"Sure," Geraci said. "I eat there all the time." It was a test. He was either supposed to ask about this thing Tessio had arranged or he wasn't. Geraci had always been good at tests. His gut feeling was to be honest. "But I have no idea what you're talking about. What thing?"

"Some important people are coming from Staten Island to sort things out."

Staten Island meant the Barzini, who had that place sewn up. But if Tessio had set up peace talks with

Michael and Don Barzini, why was Geraci hearing it from Michael and not Tessio? Geraci stared at the flames in his barbecue pit. Then it came to him what must have happened. He jerked his head and silently cursed.

Tessio was dead. Probably among many others.

The meeting place was the tip-off. Tessio loved that place—which meant that most likely he'd contacted Barzini himself and that either he or Barzini had set up a hit on Michael, which Michael had somehow anticipated.

Geraci poked the T-bones with a long steel spatula. "You want me there for protection or at the table or what?" he said.

"That was a hell of a long pause."

"Sorry. Had to get some steaks off the grill here."

"I know what you're worried about, Fausto, but not why."

Did he mean Geraci had nothing to worry about? Or that he was trying to figure out what if any role Geraci had played in Tessio's betrayal? "Well, pilgrim," Geraci answered in his best John Wayne, "I ain't so much worried as I am saddle sore and plum tuckered out."

"Excuse me?"

Geraci sighed. "Even in the best of times I'm a worrier." He felt a tide of gallows humor rise in him, though he spoke flatly. "So shoot me."

"That's why you're so good," Michael said. "The worrying. It's why I like you."

"Then you'll forgive me if I point out the obvious," Geraci said, "and tell you to take a route there you'd never ordinarily take. And also to avoid Flatbush."

Now it was Michael's turn for a long pause. "Flatbush, huh? How do you figure that?"

"Bums're home."

"Of course," Michael said.

"The Dodgers. Second (continued on page 213)

FILLING PUZO'S SHOES

A Q&A WITH MARK WINEGARDNER, THE NEW DON OF MOB FICTION



Sometime after Mario Puzo died in 1999, Random House began to consider finding an author to write a sequel to The Godfather. How did you end up being the lucky guy?

The editor in chief at Random House sent an e-mail to a handful of writers he thought might do a good job and asked for a proposal. Somebody leaked the e-mail to *The New Yorker*, and the search became a media circus. Random House was inundated with proposals. They ended up narrowing it down to three dozen writers. At the end of the day they picked me.

If people haven't read the book but have seen the movies, will they understand The Godfather Returns?

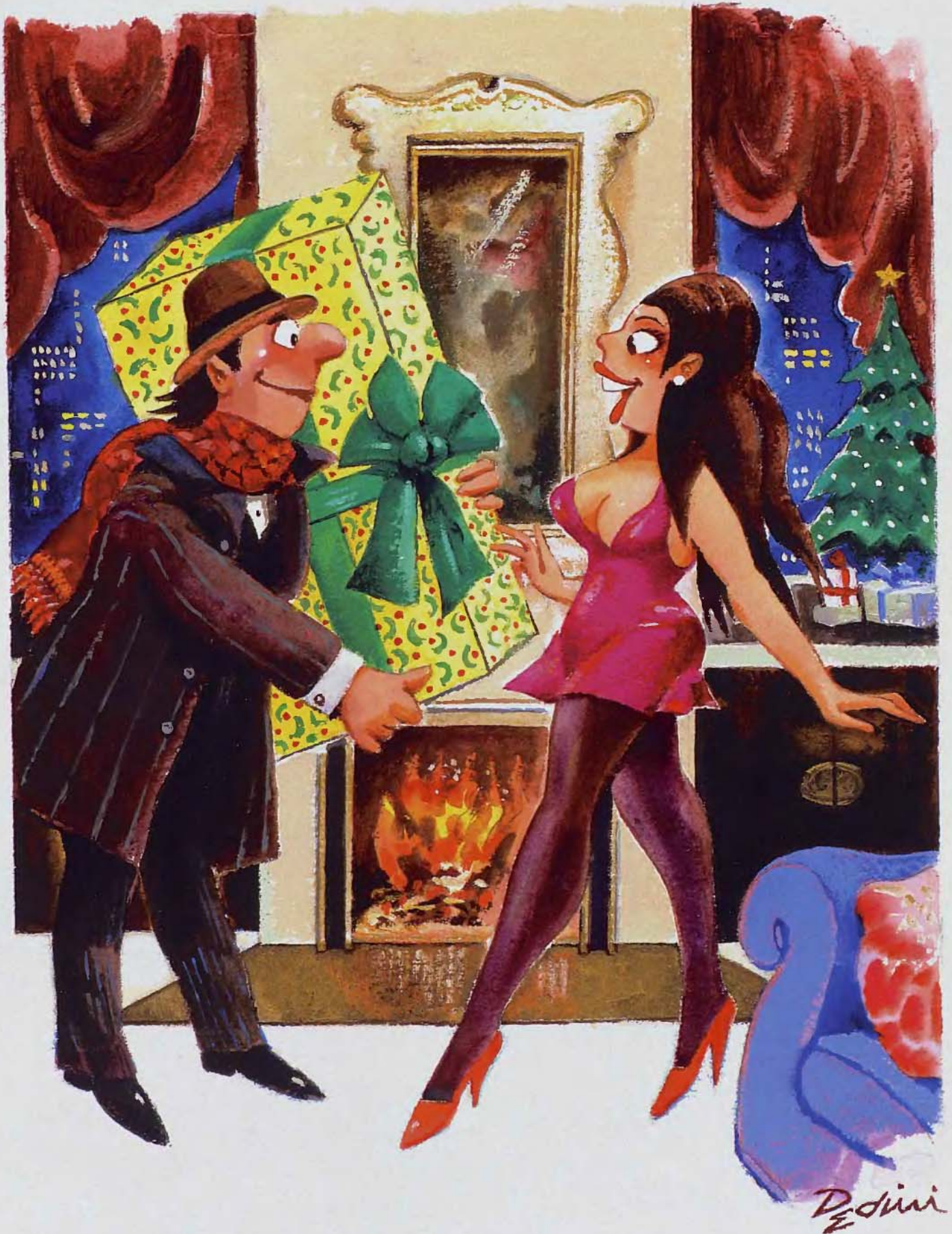
I didn't have any obligation to the movies, because this is a sequel to the novel. But I knew that although tens of millions of people have read *The Godfather*, hundreds of millions have seen the movies. So I neither mention nor contradict anything in the movies.

What unique elements do you bring to the Godfather story? What did Puzo leave out?

I make how Fredo dies more explicit. In *The Godfather II* the Corleones have relocated to Nevada; I show them actually moving. Neither the book nor the three movies show anyone getting initiated into the Corleone family. The Mafia has these intricate, operatic initiation rites, and I thought that was too juicy to avoid. The movies don't dig into the fact that if Michael Corleone had been a real person he would have been the second-youngest Mafia don ever. His youth and inexperience don't ever surface as an issue; in real life they would have. It's actually very uncommon to hand off power in the Mafia from father to son. If the Corleone family were real, Michael's father, Vito, would probably have let Tessio or Clemenza run things, with Michael as the heir apparent until he was ready. The old guys who were passed over to head the family would have sought revenge because Vito gave the top spot to a kid who had never earned five cents for the organization.

Do you think Puzo would have liked your book?

I never met Mario, but I'm told he was a risk taker. And I think the hoopla surrounding the publication of *The Godfather Returns* would have warmed his heart.



"But, darling, I thought I got everything you had last Christmas!"

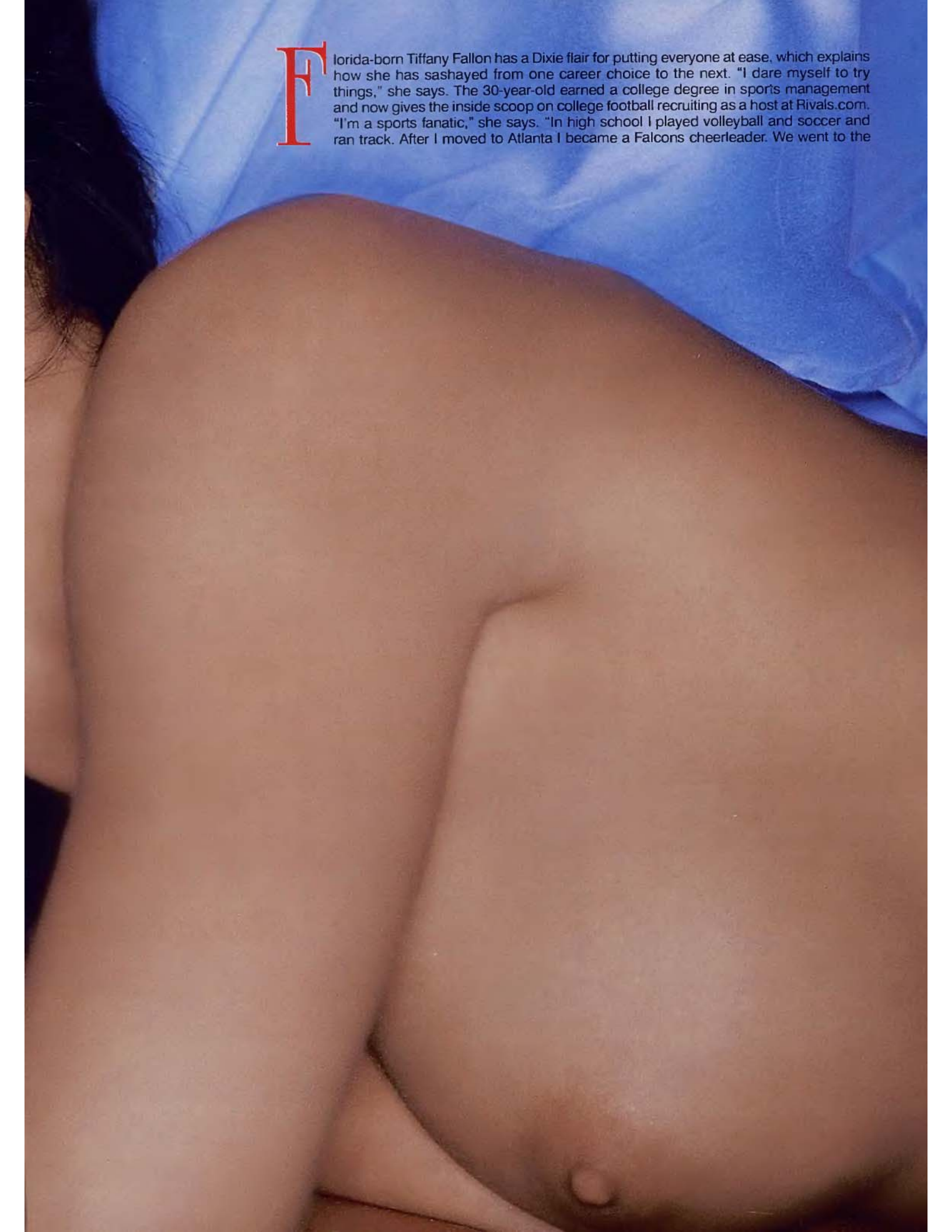


CHRISTMAS

WITH
Tiffany

Miss December
arrives unwrapped

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN WAYDA



Florida-born Tiffany Fallon has a Dixie flair for putting everyone at ease, which explains how she has sashayed from one career choice to the next. "I dare myself to try things," she says. The 30-year-old earned a college degree in sports management and now gives the inside scoop on college football recruiting as a host at Rivals.com. "I'm a sports fanatic," she says. "In high school I played volleyball and soccer and ran track. After I moved to Atlanta I became a Falcons cheerleader. We went to the



Super Bowl in 1999 against the Broncos and lost, but I was happy just to be there. I had never cheered or danced professionally before." Her next adventure involved entering the Miss USA pageant, where, as Miss Georgia USA 2001, she finished as second runner-up. "The idea to do a pageant came after I worked as a flight attendant," she says. "I enjoyed being social with the passengers. I tried to look tailored—to be a throwback to the good old days. Sometimes I'd get in trouble because my skirt was too short or my hair wasn't right. I'd be like, 'I'm just trying to look fabulous, people!'"

Next, country music star Toby Keith cast Tiffany as the playful vixen in his "Who's Your Daddy?" video. "Now I get recognized anywhere country music is popular," she says. "I have spoofed myself in other videos, playing everything from a farmer's daughter to a tap-dancing envelope. Glamorous, huh? But I like to make people laugh."

Miss December's large extended family has holiday cheer to spare, dressing as pilgrims and Indians on Thanksgiving and as elves for Christmas. "For years I thought everyone did it," she says. "Now I look at pictures and think, Lunatics!"

When asked what she wants from Santa Claus this season, Tiffany responds with a knowing smile. "I'm a low-maintenance person, I swear," she says. "I drive a pickup truck and wear jeans and a T-shirt every day. I've dated poor guys, millionaires and men in between. But there is a side of me that likes being spoiled. I love jewelry and I like tokens of affection, but I would just as well go to a football game and eat a hot dog and nachos. I just happen to love the old-fashioned way of being courted."

"It's definitely advantageous for a woman to have a Southern accent," says Miss December, who was born in Florida and lives in Tennessee. "It just seems like people love to hear you talk. Oftentimes people think you're extremely charming and demure, like a Southern belle."









See more of Miss December at cyber.playboy.com.



MISS DECEMBER

PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH

Tiffany Foster

PLAYMATE DATA SHEET



NAME: Tiffany Gullon

BUST: 34C WAIST: 23" HIPS: 35"

HEIGHT: 5'6" WEIGHT: 115

BIRTH DATE: 5-1-74 BIRTHPLACE: St. Lauderdale, Fl.

AMBITIONS: I'd love to continue my career in the sports and entertainment industry.

TURN-ONS: Cowboy boots, good manners, tattoos, sincerity, integrity and diamonds.

TURNOFFS: Tardiness, yelling, lying, man-sandals and piercings.

ADS I'VE APPEARED IN: Ford trucks, Virginia Slims, Longhorn Steakhouse, Turner South, ESPN/Capital One.

MY WHEELS: 2002 Chevy Avalanche

WHY I LOVE TENNESSEE: Country music, cowboys, Braceland great football and Southern Hospitality.

MY FIVE FAVORITE MUSIC ARTISTS: John Mayer, Alicia Keys, Waylon Jennings, AC/DC & Stevie Wonder.



16 years old.



Miss Georgia USA 2001.



my head shot.



PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

What is the real reason the Ten Commandments have been banned from America's public buildings?

It creates a hostile work environment to post THOU SHALT NOT STEAL, THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY and THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS in a building full of lawyers, judges and politicians.

BLONGE JOKE OF THE MONTH: What's the first thing a blonde does in the morning? Goes home.



One afternoon, two women were sitting on a front porch. The first woman said, "Here comes my husband with a bunch of flowers. That means I'll be on my back with my legs in the air all weekend."

The other woman asked, "Why? Don't you have a vase?"

A man walked into church on crutches. He stopped in front of the holy water, splashed some of it on his legs and then tossed aside his crutches. An altar boy witnessed the event and ran to tell the priest what he'd just seen. The priest said, "Son, you've just witnessed a miracle. Tell me, where is this man?"

The altar boy replied, "Lying on the floor next to the holy water."

Two bees met in a field. One said to the other, "How are things going?"

"Terrible," the second bee said. "The weather has been cold and there aren't any flowers, so I can't make honey."

"No problem," the first bee said. "Just fly down five blocks and turn left. Keep going until you see all the cars. There's a bar mitzvah going on, and there are all kinds of fresh flowers and fruit."

"Thanks for the tip," the second bee said.

A few hours later the two bees ran into each other again. The first bee asked, "How'd it go?"

"Great," the second bee said. "It was everything you said it would be. There was plenty of fruit and huge floral arrangements on every table."

"What's that thing on your head?" the first bee asked.

The second bee said, "That's my yarmulke. I didn't want them to think I was a wasp."

A teenage girl told her mother, "Mom, I'm pregnant."

"How can that be?" the mother replied. "What did I always teach you about sex?"

The girl replied, "That I should take measures."

The mom said, "Well, you didn't take measures, did you?"

The girl said, "Actually, I did. I went with the biggest."

A guy ran into an ex-girlfriend on the street and said, "You know, I was with another woman last night, but I was still thinking of you."

She said, "Why, because you miss me?"

He replied, "No, because it keeps me from coming too fast."

A man brought his friend home for something to eat. They walked in and found the man's wife having sex with the mailman on the couch. The man went into the kitchen and started making two sandwiches. His friend followed him in and said, "What about the mailman?"

The man replied, "Screw him. He can make his own sandwich."

How did the nymphomaniac describe herself in a personal ad?

As a no-holes-barred type of girl.



A man visited his elderly father in a nursing home. He noticed that the nurse gave his father hot chocolate and Viagra. The man asked, "Why are you doing that?"

The nurse said, "The hot chocolate will help him sleep."

The man said, "And the Viagra?"

The nurse replied, "That keeps him from falling out of bed."

What's the downside of wife swapping?

Eventually you get yours back.

Send your jokes to Party Jokes Editor, PLAYBOY, 730 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10019, or by e-mail to jokes@playboy.com. \$100 will be paid to the contributor whose submission is selected. Sorry, jokes cannot be returned.



"...Never mind what it's for...it's a stocking stuffer, okay?"

**PLAYBOY'S
COLLEGE
BASKETBALL
PREVIEW**



In the Paint

By David Kaplan

COLLEGE BASKETBALL STARTS ITS PATH TO THE FINAL FOUR

We know NBA basketball is boring. But after the U.S. Dream Team embarrassed itself in the 2002 World Championship and then in this year's Olympics, we also realize that the NBA isn't quite as good as it's cracked up to be. Spoiled, self-interested superstars, lackadaisical effort over an interminable season and—as revealed in Athens—flawed fundamentals from players who make careers out of thunder dunks but can't hit a jump shot have cast a cloud over America's game.

No wonder Duke's Mike Krzyzewski spurned the richest contract ever offered to a basketball coach when he said no to the Los Angeles Lakers' reported five-year, \$40 million deal. Michigan State's Tom Izzo has also resisted offers to coach in the NBA. "I love my players," he says. "Our program is like a family. And college basketball is just where I feel most comfortable." There's also more job security on the college campus, as Mike Montgomery, former coach at Stanford, will undoubtedly find out now that he's head coach of the Golden State Warriors.

The college game has its own problems, however. Star players who stay in school for four years are now the exception rather than the rule. Some of the best high school players bypass college altogether. And the old worries—under-the-table payments, phony test scores, recruiting improprieties—still plague schools in big conferences and small. But the game survives and thrives because nothing matches the energy and excitement of Duke versus North Carolina, of Temple coach John Chaney's matchup zone, of a 19-year-old freshman coming off the bench for silver-haired Lute Olson to knock down a three and send Arizona into overtime. And March Madness is still one of the great spectacles in sports. Here's our rundown of the best teams this season.



1. Illinois It's time for the Illini to step up to the big time. Bruce Weber's team is loaded with talent, leadership and scoring ability. Strong guard play is essential for a run at the national championship, and no team has a better pair of guards than Deron Williams and Dee Brown. The strength inside will come from six-foot-10 James Augustine and seven-foot-two Nick Smith. Add to the mix six-foot-six Roger Powell and the heady play of Luther Head, and the state of Illinois could get its first national champion since Loyola of Chicago back in 1963.



2. Kansas How can you lose a player as pivotal as David Padgett, who transferred to Louisville in the off-season, and still be a national title contender? Coach Bill Self has done it with quality recruiting and by keeping Wayne Simien around for his senior year. Veteran guards Keith Langford and Aaron Miles give the Jayhawks solid control of the backcourt. The best talent on Kansas's roster may be J.R. Giddens, who last season showed signs of becoming a dominant player.



3. Wake Forest The Demon Deacons have one of the finest point guards in the nation in Chris Paul. He and backcourt mates Justin Gray and Taron Downey give Wake a lethal attack from the perimeter, while coach Skip Prosser will depend on Eric Williams and Vytas Danelius to get the job done in the paint. If the big men come through, Wake has a chance to cut down the nets in April.



4. Georgia Tech After making a surprise run at a national title last season only to lose to Connecticut in the championship game, Georgia Tech won't sneak up on anyone this time around. Paul Hewitt, one of the best young coaches in the nation, returns a ton of talent, including standout guards Jarrett Jack and Will Bynum. Swingman B.J. Elder is a powerful defender, and seven-foot-one center Luke Schenscher gives the Yellow Jackets a legitimate scoring threat from the low post. If Tech lives up to expectations, it could find itself in another Final Four.



5. North Carolina It didn't take long for Roy Williams to turn things around in Chapel Hill—the Tar Heels will be back where they belong as one of the superpowers of college basketball. Up front, the Heels return Sean May, who averaged 15.2 points and nearly 10 rebounds a game last season, and six-foot-nine Jawad Williams. Also look for big things in the low post from freshman Marvin Williams. Carolina has talent on the perimeter as well with Rashad McCants, Melvin Scott and potential superstar Raymond Felton.



6. Connecticut Despite the losses of NBA lottery picks Emeka Okafor and Ben Gordon, Jim Calhoun's Huskies can be penciled in as a contender for a top-10 finish and a Big East title. Forwards Josh Boone and Charlie Villanueva are the backbone of one of Calhoun's deepest teams. The key to the Huskies' success will be at small forward, where Calhoun expects freshman Rudy Gay to get the job done. Gay is one of the top recruits in the nation and could be the next

Top 25 TEAMS 2005

1. Illinois
2. Kansas
3. Wake Forest
4. Georgia Tech
5. North Carolina
6. Connecticut
7. Syracuse
8. Oklahoma State
9. Michigan State
10. Texas
11. Arizona
12. Mississippi State
13. Duke
14. Wisconsin
15. Florida
16. Louisville
17. North Carolina St.
18. Kentucky
19. Maryland
20. Alabama
21. Michigan
22. Pittsburgh
23. Washington
24. Boston College
25. Notre Dame

NBA lottery pick out of UConn. He would have been a first-round pick had he decided to skip college.



7. Syracuse Two-time Playboy All American Hakim Warrick will be the heart and soul of this year's Orange. He can pass, shoot, drive and run the floor, and his defensive skills get better each time he steps onto the court. A strong backcourt will be led by junior guard Gerry McNamara, one of the deadliest outside shooters in college basketball, and Billy Edelin, whom the team hopes to get back after he missed half of last season. If Edelin can't return at the point, freshman Josh Wright will be a capable replacement. Longtime Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim expects seven-foot Craig Forth and six-foot-six Josh Pace to provide bang off the boards.



8. Oklahoma State The good news is that the Cowboys have almost everyone back from last season's Final Four team, including standouts Ivan McFarlin and Daniel Bobik. The bad news is that they don't have Tony Allen, last year's Big 12 Player of the Year and OSU's leader in almost every statistical category. The success of this year's team will depend on whether someone can replace his scoring and leadership skills. Point guard John Lucas will run Eddie Sutton's offense, typically looking for forward Joey Graham on the give-and-go.



9. Michigan State Tom Izzo and the Spartans aren't accustomed to heading back to East Lansing from the NCAA tournament as early as they did last season. They'll be on a mission this year not to repeat that performance. MSU is loaded on the perimeter, with Maurice Ager, Shannon Brown, Alan Anderson, Chris Hill and Kelvin Torbert vying for playing time. Freshman point Drew Neitzel will also be a factor. Junior Paul Davis, who came to MSU in 2002 as one of Izzo's most heralded recruits, is a preseason Wooden Award nominee. If the Spartans can improve defensively and shoot consistently from the outside, they'll make a run at the Final Four.



10. Texas Coach Rick Barnes had good players leave and good recruits arrive. Two returning starters—forwards P.J. Tucker and

Jason Klotz—will play a major role in the Longhorns' success. Barnes has talent in the backcourt in Kenny Taylor, Kenton Paulino and Edgar Moreno, but he lost a lot of points and leadership with the departures of Royal Ivey and Brandon Mouton.



11. Arizona Ageless Lute Olson will again be working the sidelines for the Wildcats, and as usual he has the best team in the West. Channing Frye, at six-foot-11, will provide plenty of scoring punch and rebounds inside. Frontcourt mate Isaiah Fox returns after missing nearly all of last season with a knee injury. The perimeter will feature Hassan Adams, Mustafa Shakur and Salim Stoudamire, three guys who can nail it from beyond the three-point line and take it into the paint. How far the Wildcats go will depend on how well Shakur handles his role as floor leader.



12. Mississippi State Looking for a dark-horse contender for the national title? Bet on the Bulldogs, thanks in large part to the return of Lawrence Roberts, who pulled his name out of the NBA draft. Roberts, a transfer from scandal-plagued Baylor, starred for coach Rick Stansbury and the Bulldogs last year. He thought he was ready for the pros until he scrimmaged at the NBA pre-draft camp in Chicago, where he learned otherwise. Good play from point guard Gary Ervin will be key to getting Roberts better looks at the basket.

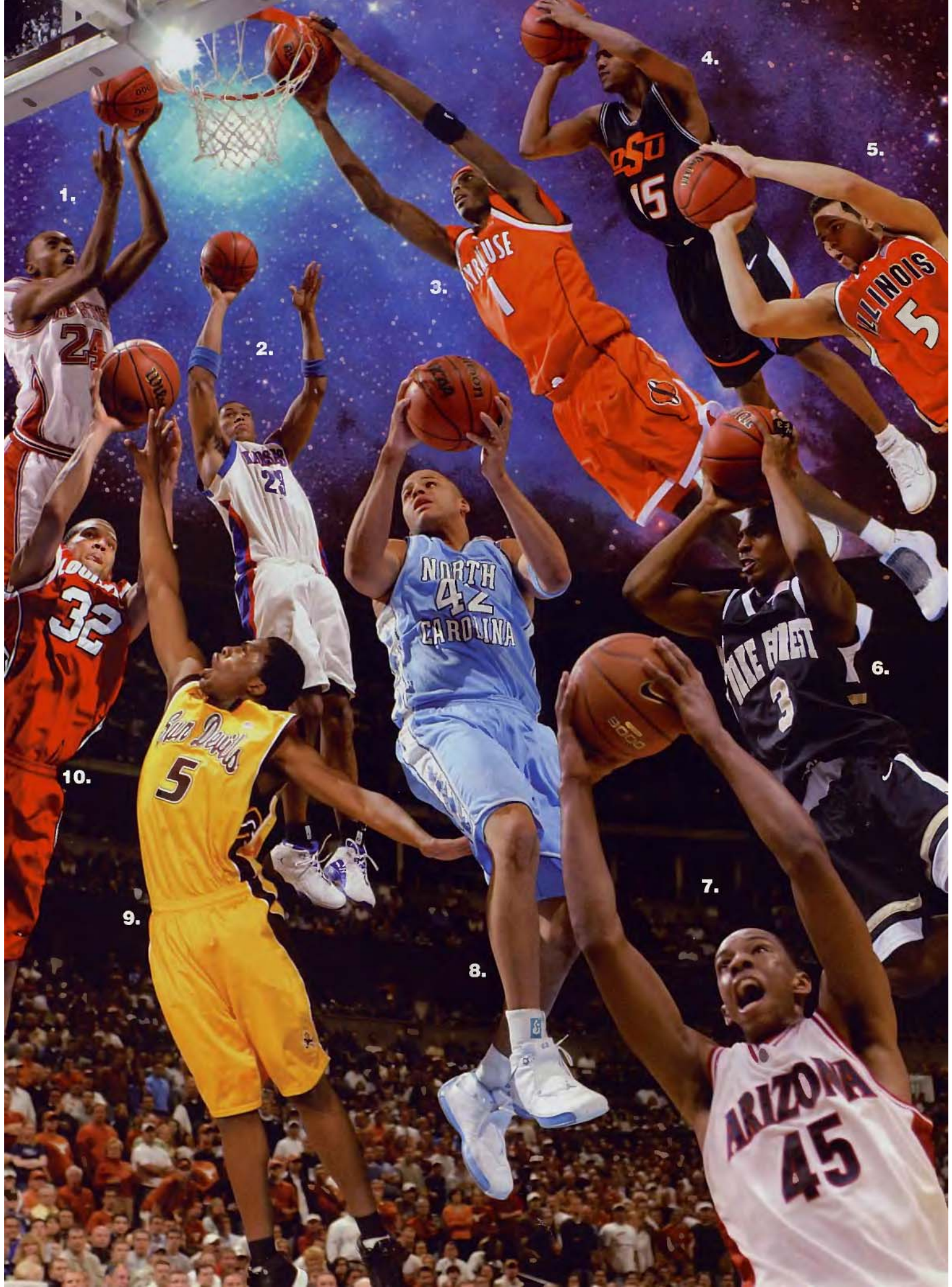
Playboy's 2005 All America TEAM

Here are our selections for the best collegiate players in the nation this season

1. **Julius Hodge**
North Carolina State
senior guard, 6'7", 205 pounds
2. **Wayne Simien**
Kansas
senior center, 6'9", 255 pounds
3. **Hakim Warrick**
Syracuse
senior forward, 6'8", 185 pounds
4. **John Lucas**
Oklahoma State
senior guard, 5'11", 152 pounds
5. **Deron Williams**
Illinois
junior guard, 6'3", 210 pounds
6. **Chris Paul**
Wake Forest
sophomore guard, 6'0", 168 pounds
7. **Channing Frye**
Arizona
senior center, 6'11", 248 pounds
8. **Sean May**
North Carolina
junior forward, 6'9", 260 pounds
9. **Ike Diogu**
Arizona State
junior forward, 6'8", 250 pounds
10. **Francisco Garcia**
Louisville
junior forward, 6'7", 185 pounds



13. Duke How many programs could lose two players (Luol Deng and Chris Duhon) and a top high school recruit (Sean Livingston) to the NBA and still be one of the best teams in the nation? Obviously Coach K still has his mojo. Maybe that's why he decided to stay at Duke as a millionaire college coach instead of accepting an offer to be a multimillionaire NBA coach. What does he have left? For starters, guard Daniel Ewing, big men Shavlik Randolph and Shelden Williams, and one of the nation's best shooters in J.J. Redick. Duke's stars of



1.

4.

5.

3.

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8.

ARIZONA
45

the future include McDonald's All-American DeMarcus Nelson and Connecticut High School Player of the Year David McClure.

14. Wisconsin With seven players on the roster who stand six-foot-eight or taller, the Badgers won't be outmuscled by many. So who will get the job done on the perimeter? Boo Wade is back, as is Alando Tucker, who was on the Big 10 All-Freshman team two years ago but sat out most of last season with a foot injury. Strong play from Penn State transfer Sharif Chambliss would provide a big lift. Chambliss averaged 14.7 points a game and led the Big 10 in three-pointers when he was in Happy Valley.

15. Florida Coach Billy Donovan has been licking his chops ever since Anthony Roberson, who averaged 17.9 points a game last season, decided to stay in Gainesville for another year. The Gators, in fact, have all five starters returning from last season's 20-win team. David Lee should be one of the best big men in the SEC, and Donovan's recruiting class, which features six-foot-eight Corey Brewer, is impressive.

16. Louisville Coach Rick Pitino can only hope that forward Ellis Myles returns full strength after missing last season because of a ruptured right patella tendon. A healthy Myles would make a big difference on the boards. The superstar of this team, however, is forward Francisco Garcia, who will be looking to improve on his average of 16.4 points a game. If star recruits Sebastian Telfair and Donta Smith had decided to take the school bus to Louisville instead of the fast track to the NBA, this team would have been a top-five choice.

17. North Carolina State Coach Herb Sendek considered a position in the NBA but realized he's happy where he is. One reason was the decision of stud guard Julius Hodge to stay another season rather than jumping to the NBA. At six-foot-seven, Hodge is silky smooth in the open court and has tremendous scoring ability from the perimeter and in transition. Big Ilian Evtimov hopes to come back at full strength after tearing up his knee two seasons ago, while in the backcourt Engin Atsür will run the show. Sendek also has promising recruits in the wings.

18. Kentucky Coach Tubby Smith has a team short on experience but long on talent. This is one of the Wildcats' youngest teams in years, but it could be ready to roll by March. The team features three McDonald's All-Americans—six-foot-11 Randolph Morris and guards Rajon Rondo and Joe Crawford—along with veterans Chuck Hayes and Kelenna Azubuike.

19. Maryland Coach Gary Williams likes to fret, but in the end he usually wins a lot of games.

His primary ingredients this season are six-foot-eight Nik Caner-Medley, one of the best shooters in the nation, and six-foot-three jumping jack John Gilchrist, an outstanding point guard. A major setback for the Terps came last May when prize recruit Sterling Ledbetter was injured in a car accident. It's unclear whether he'll be able to play heavy minutes once the season gets rolling.

20. Alabama The Tide got to within a win of the Final Four last season, but coach Mark Gottfried is reluctant to set expectations as high this year because of the graduation of point guard Antoine Pettway, who spearheaded last year's attack. Gottfried hopes top recruit Ronald Steele can fill Pettway's leadership role and complement the fearsome frontcourt duo of Kennedy Winston and Chuck Davis.

21. Michigan Michigan hasn't made the field of 64 since 1998, thanks in part to NCAA penalties that contributed to the program's recent decline. But coach Tommy Amaker is eager to move the Wolverines in the right direction. They ended last season on a positive note by winning the NIT, often an indicator of NCAA tourney success the following season. With 13 players returning, Michigan looks ready to make its mark. Daniel Horton, Dion Harris and Lester Abram are the powers in the backcourt, while Graham Brown and Courtney Sims will man the middle.

22. Pittsburgh Pittsburgh isn't generally thought of as a national power in basketball, but the Panthers won 31 games last season and reached the Sweet 16 for the third consecutive year. Despite the loss of key starters, Pitt has enough talent to make it four in a row. Reigning Big East Rookie of the Year Chris Taft is a six-foot-10 block of muscle and (concluded on page 200)

How High School Players Have Changed the College Game

College basketball has clearly suffered as a result of the many great players who have left school early for the NBA. No university is immune to the phenomenon, as even coach Mike Krzyzewski and Duke have learned in recent seasons. Perhaps more troubling is the trend of high school stars skipping college altogether. A prep star one day, an NBA multi-millionaire the next. Certainly not every high school kid who sets his sights on instant NBA stardom can successfully make the leap, but it's hard to blame those who are good enough for taking the money. In fact, baseball and hockey players



bypass college to turn pro all the time. Still, for fans of college basketball, something has been lost. The first player to skip college and turn pro was Moses Malone, who was drafted by the American Basketball Association in 1974. In 1975 Philadelphia selected Darryl Dawkins in the NBA's first round, and Atlanta picked Bill Willoughby a round later. But the trend didn't hit its stride until 1995, when Minnesota drafted Kevin Garnett—a rare blend of intelligence, skill and athleticism in a six-foot-11 frame—and opened the floodgates. Twenty-nine players have since been drafted, with many failing to make the adjustment, succeeding only in cashing a paycheck. And even those who have been unqualified successes

have needed a few seasons to make an impact. Because of this, teams' motives for drafting players straight out of high school have changed. Now, similar to the baseball draft, players are selected more for their potential than for what they can contribute right away. While no high school student this year has the apparent talent of a LeBron James or a Kobe Bryant, several will no doubt be taken in the draft, continuing the trend.

Here is the complete list of players who have bypassed college to enter the NBA draft.
 1975: Darryl Dawkins, Bill Willoughby
 1995: Kevin Garnett
 1996: Kobe Bryant, Taj McDavid, Jermaine O'Neal
 1997: Tracy McGrady
 1998: Al Harrington, Rashard Lewis, Ellis Richardson, Korleone Young
 1999: Jonathan Bender, Leon Smith
 2000: Darius Miles, DeShawn Stevenson
 2001: Kwame Brown, Tyson Chandler, Ousmane Cisse, Eddy Curry, DeSagana Diop, Tony Key
 2002: DeAngelo Collins, Lenny Cooke, Giedrius Rinkevicius, Amare Stoudemire
 2003: Ndudi Ebi, LeBron James, James Lang, Travis Outlaw, Kendrick Perkins
 2004: Jackie Butler, Dwight Howard, Al Jefferson, Shaun Livingston, Josh Smith, J.R. Smith, Robert Swift, Sebastian Telfair, Dorell Wright.
 —Ryan Blake



"The freezer's almost empty, so be sure to bring back more bad boys and girls than you did last year!"

Fashion by **JOSEPH DE ACETIS**

T I M E F O R T O P C O A T S

THIS CHRIST-
MAS BUY
YOURSELF A
GIFT AND GET
THE RIGHT
WRAPPER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

ANTOINE VERGLAS

PRODUCED BY

JENNIFER

RYAN JONES

PLAYBOY
FASHION

Grooving to the Soul Rebels Brass Band at New Orleans's Preservation Hall, Smiley is in a coat with velvet trim (\$1,030), pinstripe suit (\$1,415) and ruffled shirt (\$360), all by **MOSCHINO**. His belt is by **TORINO** (\$55), and his shoes are by **D&G** (\$325). Her dress is by **D&G** (\$870); her fur jacket (\$3,995) and crocodile boots (\$245) are by **BOSS HUGO BOSS**.



Caboose, at left, is in an alpaca steamer coat (\$2,395) and trousers (\$395) by **GIANLUCA ISAIA**. His sweater is by **JUST CAVALLI** (\$550), and his scarf is by **D&G** (\$80). His shoes (\$295) and gloves (\$125) are by **BOSS HUGO BOSS**. Little Middle wears a coat (\$1,420), shirt (\$350), pants (\$354) and scarf (\$115), all by **D&G**. His shoes are by **MORESCHI** (\$498); his belt is by **TORINO** (\$345). Duster is in a trench (\$3,130), pants (\$1,025), blazer (\$2,180) and silk shirt (\$291), all by **JEAN PAUL GAULTIER**. His boots are by **D&G** (\$365).



Mr. Giggles is in a leather barn jacket with plaid lining (\$1,760), print cotton T-shirt (\$95) and plaid denim pants (\$195), all by **D&G**. As for his boots (\$285), **GORDON RUSH** makes them. She's in a fur-trimmed coat (\$850) and bustier (\$150) by **BOSS HUGO BOSS**. The charcoal trousers are by **DSQUARED2** (\$565).



Sweetness, at right, wears a blouse by **BINETTI** (\$355), a skirt by **D&G** (\$500) and a necklace and earrings by **LORENZA**. Light, at left, is in a denim coat with fur trim (\$695) and flat-front trousers (\$195) by **PAUL LA FONTAINE**. His boots are by **GF FERRÉ** (\$450), and his cashmere turtleneck is by **GRAN SASSO** (\$345).



It's dawn of the dead, Big Easy style—that is, zombies with hangovers. The Count is in a leather coat with fur lining (\$6,995), sweater (\$3,595), belted trousers (\$695) and silk scarf (\$265), all by **GIORGIO ARMANI**. Vampira's in a dress (\$1,298) and fur vest (\$998) by **EMPORIO ARMANI**. The rhinestone Rabbit necklace is available at playboystore.com (\$45).



Igor, at left, is in a military-style coat (\$995), shirt (\$195) and V-neck sweater (\$195), all by **PAUL LA FONTAINE**. Dr. Frankenstein, with the walking stick, is wearing a coat (\$2,650), piqué shirt (\$575) and wool pants (\$595), all by **GIORGIO ARMANI**. His gloves are by **EMPORIO ARMANI** (\$148). **BOSS HUGO BOSS** makes his shoes (\$295).

RICHMOND X outfitted Heat Miser, at left. That's a zip-front coat with a fur-trimmed hood (\$1,610), wool trousers (\$370) and a Richmond Rocks belt (\$250). His boots are by **GORDON RUSH** (\$295). Chilly, at right, is in a parka with fur-trimmed hood (\$348) and cords (\$70) from **MICHAEL MICHAEL KORS**. His turtleneck is by **GRAM SASSO** (\$345), and his shoes are by **BOSS HUGO BOSS** (\$295). Her dress is by **GAJ MATTIOLLO** (\$1,080), her jacket is by **GF FERRÉ** (\$4,775), and her pumps are by **HUGO HUGO BOSS** (\$185).





Santa's wingman, seated, is in a coat by **PERRY ELLIS** (\$875), jeans by **CALVIN KLEIN** (\$50) and a turtleneck by **D&G** (\$300). His loafers are by **MARK NASON** (\$250). Saint Nick, finding out whether she's naughty or nice, is in a shearling coat (\$3,000), jeans (\$190), sweater (\$560), python loafers (\$730) and cashmere scarf (\$295), all by **SALVATORE FERRAGAMO**. His belt is by **TORINO** (\$55). Her fur-trimmed top (\$1,395) and wide-leg jeans (\$395) are by **MICHAEL KORS**.

WOMEN'S STYLING BY MERIEM ORLET

WHERE AND HOW TO BUY ON PAGE 204.

PLAYBOY'S

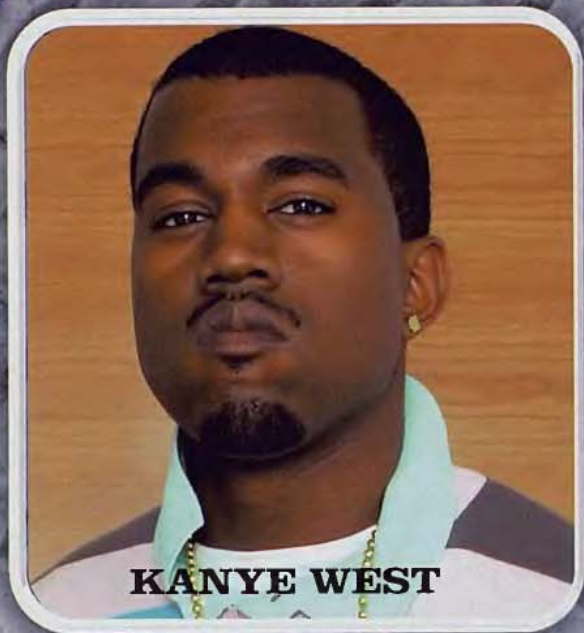
MUSIC POLL

THIS IS PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT ELECTION OF YOUR LIFE

THE YEAR IN MUSIC WASN'T AS BAD AS WE HAD EXPECTED. BEASTIE BOYS RELEASED THEIR FIRST CD IN SIX YEARS. U2 HAD ITS CD GANKED AT A PHOTO SHOOT. USHER, LIL JON AND LUDACRIS HAD EVERYONE SHOUTING "YEAH!" KANYE WEST AND TWISTA PUT CHI-TOWN HIP-HOP ON THE MAP. GORGEOUS COUNTRY CROONERS GRETCHEN WILSON AND JULIE ROBERTS CAME POURING OUT OF NASHVILLE. AND THERE WAS NARY A BOY BAND IN



SIGHT (UNLESS YOU COUNT THE HIVES). IF YOU IGNORE CONCERT VENUES, THE MUSIC BUSINESS SHOWED SIGNS OF REVIVAL. BEHIND THE SCENES, A MERGER MADE SONY-BMG THE SECOND-LARGEST RECORD COMPANY IN THE WORLD (VIVENDI'S UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP IS FIRST), WITH COMBINED SALES OF MORE THAN \$8 BILLION. WHAT MADE YOUR 2004 UNFORGETTABLE? VOTE BY TEARING OUT THIS PAPER BALLOT OR GOING TO PLAYBOY.COM.



KANYE WEST

HOW THE WEST WAS WON, IN WHICH A YOUNG CHICAGOAN TURNS HIP-HOP ON ITS HEAD

weren't like, "Oh shit, he's gonna be good." Because it was wack. I just focused and got better and better.

PLAYBOY: Hold on. Aren't you known for being arrogant?

WEST: I'm grounded. When you get an opportunity to shine, to accomplish your dreams, are you supposed to say thanks, or are you supposed to go, "Yeah, motherfucker! I told your ass"? That's what I'm doing. That doesn't mean I'm arrogant. It means I'm happy. I became a celebrity overnight. I work hard. I love my shit. Have you heard the songs? How could you expect me to be modest? I made those! For me to say "Jesus Walks" is not one of the best songs this year would be stupid.

PLAYBOY: Tell us about your parents.

WEST: My mom was my first manager. When I was growing up, she put me in karate class, swimming class. My dad told me his life philosophies. He taught me that guys do everything for pussy. People end up dying over it. Some songs out there glorify that.

PLAYBOY: You're known for a more positive message.

WEST: I live positively, but I'm not a saint. Think of "Slow Jamz"—"I'm gonna play this Vandross/You gonna take your pants off." I'm a real person. When Biggie came out, all I listened to was gangsta rap. I love white music—alternative shit. My favorite group of all time is the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

PLAYBOY: Do you think you'll win any Grammys?

WEST: I don't know. I thought I was gonna win some VMAs. But yeah, I want the accolades. I want it all. What the fuck, you're not supposed to want it all? I'm blessed, with or without awards. I'm happy to have a job I love, where I'm able to perform for so many fans. But I'd rather have all the awards.

PLAYBOY: Do you still have flashbacks of the car accident?

WEST: Occasionally. I think about how I could have died and how I must be here for a reason. When I do something wrong, my conscience speaks to me. God watches every move I make.

Music's class of 2004 is led by college dropout Kanye West, the producer and performer who cheated death in a car accident two years ago and rapped his breakout hit, "Through the Wire," with his jaw wired shut. West called us from Las Vegas, where he was named best new male artist at the World Music Awards.

PLAYBOY: You've produced tons of hits, including Jay-Z's "Izzo" and Alicia Keys's "You Don't Know My Name." When did you realize you were talented?

WEST: I was never really talented at anything. I just had the ability to learn. When I first started rapping, people

BE COUNTED. SEND IN YOUR BALLOT TODAY!

★ 2004 ★

OR VOTE ONLINE, WWW.PLAYBOY.COM/MUSICPOLL

MUSIC POLL

2004



SPIDER-MAN 2

BEST ROCK ALBUM

- FRANZ FERDINAND—FRANZ FERDINAND
- GREEN DAY—AMERICAN IDIOT
- MODEST MOUSE—GOOD NEWS FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE BAD NEWS
- U2—HOW TO DISMANTLE AN ATOMIC BOMB
- VELVET REVOLVER—CONTRABAND
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

BEST HIP-HOP ALBUM

- LI'L FLIP—U GOTTA FEEL ME
- MOS DEF—THE NEW DANGER
- NAS—STREET'S DISCIPLINE
- THE ROOTS—THE TIPPING POINT
- KANYE WEST—THE COLLEGE DROPOUT
- WRITE-IN VOTE:



JULIE ROBERTS

↓ FOLD HERE ↓



BEASTIE BOYS FATBOY SLIM BLONDIE RAY CHARLES THE HIVES

CHECK BOX FOR → YOUR VOTE

BEST ELECTRONIC ALBUM

- FATBOY SLIM—PALOOKAVILLE
- FENNESZ—VENICE
- ORBITAL—BLUE ALBUM
- THE PRODIGY—ALWAYS OUT-NUMBERED, NEVER OUTGUNNED
- THE STREETS—A GRAND DON'T COME FOR FREE
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

BEST COUNTRY ALBUM

- KENNY CHESNEY—WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN
- ALAN JACKSON—WHAT I DO
- JOE NICHOLS—REVELATION
- JULIE ROBERTS—JULIE ROBERTS
- GRETCHEN WILSON—HERE FOR THE PARTY
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

BEST JAZZ ALBUM

- FRED ANDERSON AND HAMID DRAKE—BACK TOGETHER AGAIN
- RAY CHARLES—GENIUS LOVES COMPANY
- DAVE DOUGLAS—BOW RIVER FALLS
- GROUNDTRUTHER—LATITUDE
- JOE LOVANO—I'M ALL FOR YOU
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

↑ FOLD HERE ↑

BEST SOUNDTRACK ALBUM

- 50 FIRST DATES
- THE LADYKILLERS
- METALLICA—SOME KIND OF MONSTER
- RIDING GIANTS
- SPIDER-MAN 2
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

BEST WORLD MUSIC

- CAPLETON—REIGN OF FIRE
- BEBEL GILBERTO—BEBEL GILBERTO
- JUANA MOLINA—TRES COSAS
- GILBERTO SANTA ROSA—AUTÉNTICO
- ROKIA TRAORÉ—BOWMBOÏ
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

BEST LIVE ACT

- BEASTIE BOYS
- THE HIVES
- THE POLYPHONIC SPREE
- PRINCE
- CHRIS WHITLEY
- WRITE-IN VOTE:



GRETCHEN WILSON

→ MAIL IN YOUR ENTRY NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 15, 2004

BEST REISSUE

- BLACK SABBATH—*BLACK BOX*
- BLONDIE—*SINGLES BOX*
- CAN'T YOU HEAR ME CALLIN'—*BLUEGRASS: 80 YEARS OF AMERICAN MUSIC*
- DEAN MARTIN—*DINO: THE ESSENTIAL DEAN MARTIN*
- THE STANLEY BROTHERS—*AN EVENING LONG AGO: LIVE 1956*
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

BEST SONG

- "ALL FALLS DOWN"—KANYE WEST FEATURING SYLEENA JOHNSON
- "ARE YOU GONNA BE MY GIRL"—JET
- "COMFORTABLY NUMB"—SCISSOR SISTERS
- "THIS LOVE"—MAROON 5
- "YEAH!"—USHER FEATURING LIL JON AND LUDACRIS
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

NEXT BIG THING

- LLOYD BANKS
- JADAKISS
- THE KILLERS
- LE TIGRE
- THE LIBERTINES
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT

- THE CURE—*THE CURE*
- LENNY KRAVITZ—*BAPTISM*
- MORRISSEY—*YOU ARE THE QUARRY*
- R.E.M.—*AROUND THE SUN*
- WILCO—*A GHOST IS BORN*
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

↓ FOLD HERE ↓



MAROON 5 JADAKISS LE TIGRE DEAN MARTIN THE PIXIES USHER JET
STAMP

PLAYBOY'S

MUSIC POLL

2004

P.O. BOX 11236
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60611

↓ FOLD HERE ↓

**HALL OF FAME****CHUCK BERRY**

Chess Records' celebration this year of 50 years of rock led to the reissue of two Berry classics: 1957's *After School Session* and

1964's *St. Louis to Liverpool*, the bookends of his golden era. The albums show why John Lennon gasted that the name *Chuck Berry* could be used interchangeably with the term *rock and roll*.

DAVID BOWIE

He set the bar for sheer showmanship. Despite a string of inventive albums and three decades of worldwide hits, Bowie never stopped reworking his image and his music, making glam masterpieces, slinky faux soul, indie rock and even drum and bass. The concert tour for his latest CD, *Reality*, was so successful

it boosted Clear Channel's earnings and warranted its own DVD.

THE PIXIES

With surf guitars, ethereal sounds of England's Creation and 4AD labels, and lyrics about Andalusian *chiers*, the Pixies brought intelligent energy to the American underground. Disciples Nirvana and Smashing Pumpkins made the quiet-bit, loud-bit trick the sound of a generation. The Pixies are back on tour, and their music's edge remains sharp.

NANCY SINATRA

Her eponymous comeback CD features songs written for her by Mor-

rissey, Pete Yorn and members of Pulp, Sonic Youth and Calexico. No wonder she's got such a fan club—she wrote the book on tough-girl shtick with "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'" and the junkie ballad "Some Velvet Morning." And her James Bond theme, "You Only Live Twice," could be the best in the 40-year history of the series.

TALKING HEADS

Along with the Ramones and Blondie, the Heads changed the music industry. Their jittery rhythms and quirky lyrics threw open stylistic doors—suddenly anything was

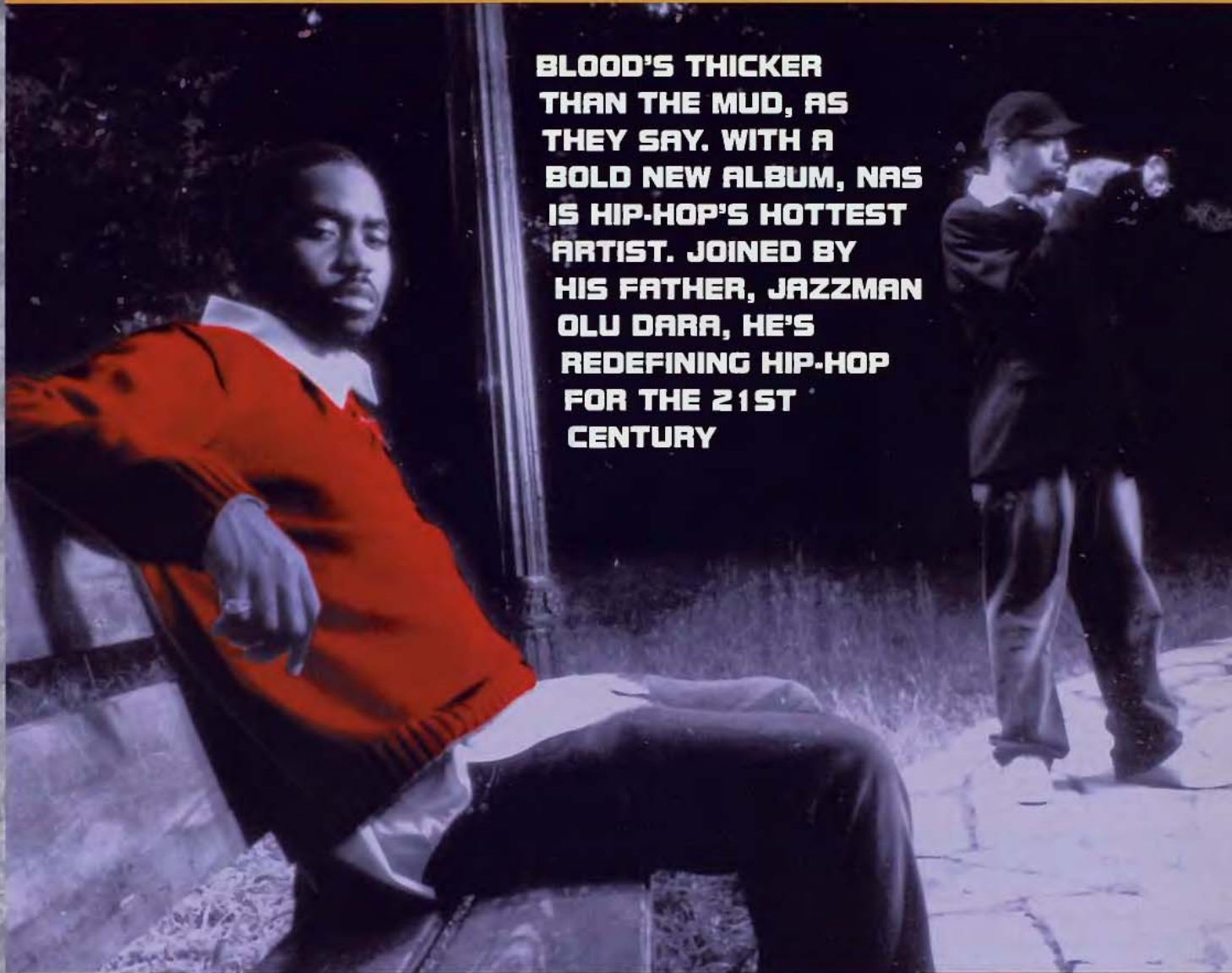


commercially viable. The first genre rockers, they created a sound that presaged that of many of today's bright lights, such as Franz Ferdinand, Radio 4 and the Rapture.

 WRITE-IN VOTE:

↓ SEAL TAPE ↓

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR



BLOOD'S THICKER THAN THE MUD, AS THEY SAY. WITH A BOLD NEW ALBUM, NAS IS HIP-HOP'S HOTTEST ARTIST. JOINED BY HIS FATHER, JAZZMAN OLU DARA, HE'S REDEFINING HIP-HOP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHIAS CLAMER

Ten years ago Nasir Jones busted out of Long Island City's Queensbridge projects with a masterpiece, *Illmatic*. With its stripped-down East Coast sound and moral complexity, *Illmatic* altered the course of hip-hop. Over the past decade Nas has tried, with varying success, to recapture the magic of that first release. In 2001 he found himself in the middle of a bombastic feud with fellow New Yorker Jay-Z, which seemed to revive Nas's career. In 2002 he returned strong with *God's Son*, which pointed the way to a new, mature style.

Hip-hop isn't a musical form given to reflection. But with his new two-CD set, *Street's Disciple* (Columbia), Nas hopes to change that. At the age of 31 he has matured, addressing the changes wrought by time, family, growing up, getting married (to singer Kelis) and taking care of business.

Nas has an intriguing pedigree. Born in Brooklyn in 1973, he grew up in Queens. His father is Olu Dara, a trumpeter and a compelling musician in his own right. During the 1970s Dara played with many jazz masters in New York's loft scene. Since then he's worked with his own band, which plays a stylish mix of Afrobeat, jazz and blues.

The jazzy feel of *Street's Disciple* owes a lot to Nas's father.

Dara plays and sings on "Bridging the Gap," the first single from the new album. With references stretching from Muddy Waters and Hustlers Convention to Chic and A Tribe Called Quest, *Disciple* is more than a survey of the past decade of hip-hop. Nas isn't only a disciple of the streets but also of the traditions that inform American music. We sat down with Nas and Olu in Georgia to talk about the family business.

PLAYBOY: Nas, what do you think about your father's music?

NAS: When I was growing up, not everyone my age was being exposed to jazz as I was. That was a good opportunity for me. I was lucky to hear more music than the average kid—and it was true music. His music came out the way I see my music today. The way I heard his music then, that's how I try to record. It means having no inhibitions, going for it, doing what you like. His music is based on stuff he grew up on. My music is based on the music I grew up on, which is hip-hop.

PLAYBOY: What jazz do you listen to now?

NAS: *Bitches Brew*. Miles was the first thing I got into. As far as other jazz, I listen to John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Nancy Wilson.

PLAYBOY: Olu, what do you think about your son's music?

OLU DARR: His music is a continuation of what was going on before he came onto the earth. I know my music is a continuation of what my father, grandfather and grandmother were doing. When I hear his music, he reminds me of myself.

PLAYBOY: What sort of hip-hop do you listen to?

DARR: I like all of it. I don't think I've heard any hip-hop I don't like, whether lyrically or musically or a combination of both. Hip-hop is the music I was always waiting to hear. It's something that was always missing in music in America. It's a culmination of everything. You can find music of all cultures merged into hip-hop. You can even hear European music in there. Dr. Dre is a good example of that. It's funny that Nas said he grew up listening to Miles and Coltrane, because I grew up in Mississippi listening to blues and rhythm and blues. I didn't hear any jazz. I knew hardly anything about jazz. I had no interest in it. But when I got to college, in Tennessee, my roommate had these jazz records. They were Miles and Coltrane, so I got interested in the same music Nas did by listening to records.

PLAYBOY: Can you tell us something about your grandfather?

DARR: I never met him. I only heard stories about him. He built roads in the South. He made up songs. From what I heard, Zora Neale Hurston got songs from him. My father was a singer in a jazz quartet doing Mills Brothers-type music. My great-uncles were entertainers in tent shows.

PLAYBOY: Is hip-hop stuck? It doesn't seem to have moved forward in years. Will a time come when it exhausts itself?

NAS: I've thought about that happening for a while. But it doesn't go away. I thought it would have been gone a while ago, but there's a new fan for hip-hop every day because it's such a young music. It has started to follow what happened to other black music. And there was always a threat it would become too young. There are so many threats. So much controversy has been created by corporations and politicians who want to shut it down. There are a lot of ignorant rappers, but the music remains.

PLAYBOY: In the 1940s jazz was a popular form of music, the music everybody

listened to. Now look what's happened to it. Does the same fate await rap?

NAS: I feel at some point hip-hop will have to end. When, I don't know.

PLAYBOY: And how about jazz?

DARR: Well, it started out as a black art form. Jazz was postslavery blacks playing European instruments for the first time. It was an anomaly because of that. But now it's dormant. I worked in jazz almost exclusively for years. I made my name in jazz. But white musicians are basically taking that over now. Jazz as I know it has stayed the



PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHIAS CLAMER

THIS IS THE HAPPIEST I'VE EVER BEEN MAKING ALBUMS. THAT SCARES ME, BECAUSE A LOT OF GREAT WORK COMES OUT OF PAIN.

same. It's supposed to be a music of exploration. By the 1960s it had been explored already. I think even in the 1930s it had already been explored. The musicians got everything they could out of their instruments. They overpowered them. There's not much that can be done after Coltrane, Miles and Louis Armstrong.

PLAYBOY: You could say the same thing about hip-hop, right? Is there more room to explore there because you have different technology?

DARR: Not only technology. Hip-hop is just a name. Once you take the name off the music, you can just call it music, black music. Hip-hop is more universal than jazz. It's unique because it includes all elements of music. So as we know it, hip-hop may not be the same in the

future, but the same people will be doing something else. Hip-hop is just a new version of rhythm and blues.

PLAYBOY: Nas, what kind of R&B did you listen to when you were a kid?

NAS: Evelyn "Champagne" King, Rick James, Michael Jackson, DeBarge, 1980s stuff. And before that the Isleys, Otis Redding, Sam Cooke.

PLAYBOY: Tell us about the new album. It's a two-CD set, right, like Biggie's?

NAS: Yeah. It's just me having fun. Most music comes and goes. It's entertainment or gimmick. I've been in rap music a long time. Compared with every other music genre, it's not a long time, but in rap, 10 or 12 years is forever. So at this point I'm reflecting on my entry into making records, which was 1991. I have an early-1990s hip-hop sound on some of it. I can't help but express my life in the lyrics. But I'm just having fun. This is probably the happiest I've ever been making albums. That scares me, because a lot of great work comes out of pain and hurt. Rap deals with struggle a lot. I deal with struggle on *Street's Disciple*, but different sorts of struggles. Like I said, I was really happy making this album, as opposed to my other albums.

PLAYBOY: Did Nas play trumpet when he was four years old?

DARR: Yeah, he fascinated me and the people who saw him. He probably doesn't even remember it, but we would play together. He could touch any instrument at the time and make it sound musical. A lot of people thought he was some

kind of instrumental genius or whatever, but he was just going to play. It's still vivid in my mind. On the street, on the stoop, on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. I had a friend who played drums, and Nas would go out every afternoon with Billy and my trumpet. I'd go out there with him while he sat on the stoop. People used to be waiting. People would wait after work to see if he was going to play. He was a natural trumpet player. At the time, I thought, Miles is going to be scared to death.

PLAYBOY: What's more important, family or art?

NAS: Obviously family always comes first to me. Art is second.

PLAYBOY: Olu, what do you say?

DARR: Well, to me family is art. Art is a product of family.

Chat Room





Dustin Hoffman

Everybody's favorite graduate talks about Brando, Eastwood, Stiller and sex—past and present

1

PLAYBOY: After taking some time off, you've returned in four high-profile movies—*I Heart Huckabees*, *Finding Neverland*, *Meet the Fockers* and *Racing Stripes*. What made you decide to come back in such a big way?

HOFFMAN: I'm working differently from how I worked in the past. Five years ago I reached a point where I had become disenchanted with the stuff I was being offered. I said to my wife, "I'm not going to work anymore." Suddenly, three or four years had gone by, and I missed working. I'd always had the luxury of picking from many scripts. It was calculated: Is the character something I want to do? Is this a good script, a good cast? My wife said to me, "Why don't you just throw all that out?" And replace it with what? "Why don't you just work without regard to the script?" I said, "Then what's the criteria?" "The director. Do you feel you're going to have a creative experience? Will you have a good time?" It was earth-shattering, and that's what I did. I chose these movies because of their directors.

2

PLAYBOY: What did these directors offer?
HOFFMAN: *Huckabees* was made by David O. Russell, who made *Spanking the Monkey*, *Flirting With Disaster* and *Three Kings*. When I first read the script I didn't understand a fucking word of it. *Neverland* was directed by Marc Forster, a terrifically interesting guy who directed *Monster's Ball*. I knew more about *Meet the Fockers*, of course. I had seen *Meet the Parents* and thought it worked as a comedy. I liked that Ben Stiller was the Jew and De Niro's daughter, whom Ben wanted to marry, was the shiksa goddess. They were the Jewish and Christian parts of the Judeo-Christian culture in America, a split that has existed for many years. With Barbra Streisand and me as Stiller's parents in the sequel, we

were able to do more provoking related to that split. I didn't have to walk far to tackle the part.

3

PLAYBOY: In *I Heart Huckabees* you play an existential detective. What is it, and would you ever go to one?

HOFFMAN: The director, David O. Russell, and I have both been in and believe in therapy. My kids affectionately call David "David O'Crazy," which is a compliment. The existential detective is a fantasy for those who are in therapy trying to understand how their defenses have built up. Here the therapist follows you around wherever you go and helps make connections that in real therapy are far more subtle. The idea of the therapist following you around is everybody's dream. It's the safety of someone taking care of you.

4

PLAYBOY: What are some of the things you've learned from therapy?

HOFFMAN: We think we're the modern ones because we're the now. But Dickens and those of his time, for instance, thought they were modern. You begin to see how primitive we are. In 100 years they're going to look back at us and wonder why we wouldn't approve stem cell research. It's humbling. Also, most of humanity hasn't yet been born, and much of the rest is already dead. We're this little part in the middle. I have two dogs. I love to watch them romping in the ocean. If a lot of dogs are on the beach, the first thing they do is smell each other's asshole. The information that's gotten somehow makes pacifists out of all of them. I've thought, If only we smelled each other's assholes, there wouldn't be any war.

5

PLAYBOY: How well did you know Marlon Brando?

HOFFMAN: I never met him. Brando was

my generation's icon. When I first saw him I didn't know I wanted to act. I was in high school. I saw *On the Waterfront* and had an experience I'd never had at the movies before and didn't know why. He was about 80 when he called me. I was in my backyard with a cell phone. He wanted me to be part of a show he wanted to do about creativity. I said of course I'd do it, whatever he wanted me to do, but I wasn't going to hang up without letting him know what I'd wanted him to know since *On the Waterfront*. The conversation lasted until the battery went out more than an hour later. I named performances and moments. I couldn't let him off the phone.

6

PLAYBOY: What inspired you to become an actor?

HOFFMAN: A couple of years after seeing *On the Waterfront*, it still hadn't crossed my mind. When I was in junior college and failing, they told me, "You don't get credits for Fs." So somebody said, "Take an acting class. It's three credits, and nobody fails acting." That's the only reason I took an acting class.

7

PLAYBOY: You're famous for being a method actor, which apparently amused or annoyed Lord Laurence Olivier, with whom you acted in *Marathon Man*. After you had been awake for two days, you showed up on the set to play a scene in which you were to appear exhausted. Olivier famously said, "Why don't you just try acting, dear boy?" Well?

HOFFMAN: The story originated, if my memory serves me correctly, in *Time* magazine. They made it a better story, altering it to give it the kind of irony they wanted. I was shooting in New York and Olivier (continued on page 208)



"Oh, for heaven's sake—he's only an elf!"

CENTERFOLDS ★ ON SEX ★

NICOLE WOOD

...AND SHE'LL SHOW YOU HERS

If a man can kiss a woman passionately, she knows they'll have unbelievable sex. So don't just stick your tongue down her throat. Practice on an orange. If a woman lets you perform oral sex on her, it means she's comfortable with you and feels chemistry. Pay attention to her body language. If I'm enjoying myself, I rub up against a guy a lot and touch him. But if I'm not having a good time, I'm kind of stiff, as if to say, "All right, that's enough. Let's watch TV now." You may know what turns a woman on, but don't get into a routine. Change it up. Otherwise it's like eating the same thing for lunch every day.

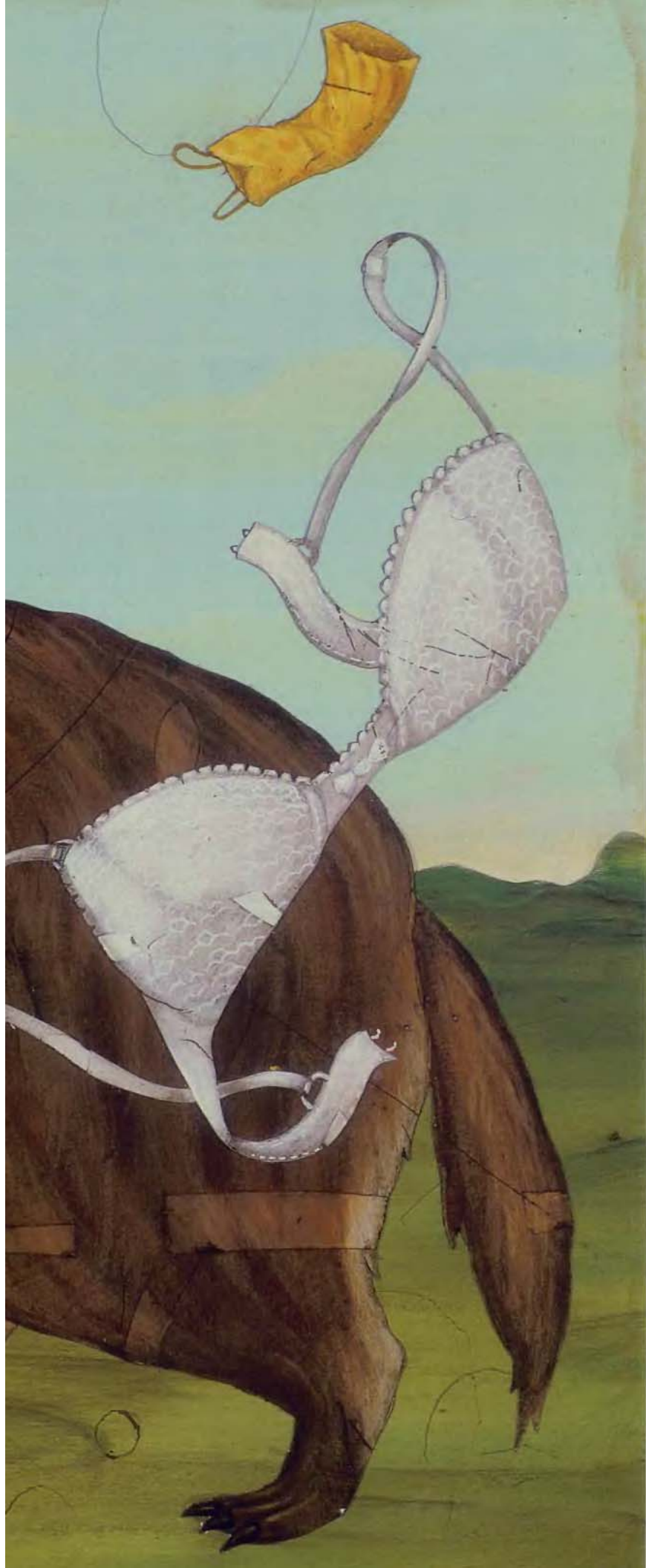
SHOW HER SOME SKIN...

I own a day spa. I've discovered that men who get facials have more confidence. Guys who use eye cream find that women will approach them and say, "Wow, you have such beautiful skin." So go to a hip, trendy salon and tell them, "Bring me up-to-date and teach me some new things." And why not go to a place where beautiful women work? Have them pamper you. Look at how much money women spend on skin care. Why shouldn't you do the same? You have skin too. Look in magazines at what men are wearing. You don't have to dress like an 18-year-old, but dressing well will increase your self-esteem.

Nicole Wood







FICTION BY ANNIE PROULX

THE OLD BADGER GAME

MRS. FRINK LOVED RED'S FUR—
THAT MUCH HE KNEW. NOW
WAS TIME TO SEAL THE DEAL

This happened last year east of the Powder River country, somewhere in the Wyoming breaks. It's not much of a story, the kind of thing you might hear on a sluggish afternoon in Pee Wee's.

Three old bachelor badgers lived a certain distance from one another in a piece of rough ground in the back pasture of Frank Frink's ranch. The badgers were concerned with food, sunbathing and property lines. Their territories came together in a stony outcrop that faced south and where the scenery flung out like an opened fan. Here, in the morning sunshine, the three badgers met and exchanged remarks on the vagaries of life and recent wind speeds in the whistles, grunts and growls that pass for communication among them. One of the badgers had held down a teaching job at the university up in Bozeman for a few years—creative writing or barge navigation—but had retired to the ranch. Two of the trio, including the university badger, were stout and ordinary. The third had a reddish tinge to his fur but was as ignorant as a horseshoe.

The Frink ranch started 114 years ago with some Texas longhorns and a restless pair of cowboys blackballed out of the Lone Star State for their sympathies with the LS cowboy strike of 1883. After that, the place rolled through a dozen sets of hands until it came to Frink.



Frank Frink took an interest in immortality and fountains of youth, eternal flames and the like, and because he had convinced himself that he was going to live, if not forever, at least to be 200, he was conservation-minded and absolute death on overgrazing. He was constantly shifting his cattle to different pastures and had an immense and complex chart on the pantry door that showed the schedule of short-term grazing he had worked out. One delicate pasture with live water held cattle for no more than three hours before they were hustled off to coarser grass.

Frink was always shorthanded. You ranchers know how hard it is to get good help. He found it just as hard to get bad help as he skimped on pay in favor of saving up for his long twilight years. At roundup time he was shorthanded and begged his wife to help drive.

"Oh, all right," she said, "but I'm

telling you right now that I need a new winter coat, and after we ship the cattle I better get it."

"Haaaah," said Frink, who had heard of the coat before.

On the circle drive, the rancher's wife came out of a draw, and as she trotted past a saltbush, a badger appeared.

"Good-looking badger," she said aloud, imagining herself in a coat of the same red hue. Not necessarily a fur coat—faux fur would do or even tweed with a monkey-fur collar.

Toward dawn the three badgers congregated at the stony outcrop.

"Have a good hunt?" asked one of the ordinary badgers.

"Not bad," said the other. "You?"

"Fair. How about you, Red?"

"Well, Great Badger Almighty, the rancher's wife has fell in love with me. I suppose she'll be pesterin me all the time now."

"What? What are you sayin'?"

"Aw, she seen me over in the saltbush draw, says, 'That's the handsomest badger I ever seen. I'm crazy about him.'"

The other badgers laughed and made coarse jokes about possible and impossible sexual conjunctions between the red-haired badger and the rancher's wife. Inevitably the talk turned to the story that went back to the 1880s of a desperate cowboy who forced himself on an ill-tempered grandmother badger and the violent consequences that still tickled a low sense of humor.

"I haven't got time to lay around," said Red, and he ambled away, taking a route through a deep draw where a number of noxious exotics, including a monstrous teasel plant, grew. He dragged himself through the teasel bush until his fur was sleek and shining.

"She should see me now," he said to the teasel.

Frank Frink and two of his cronies came out of the kitchen door, their hands full of ginger cookies shaped like steer heads with frosting eyes. The rancher stopped dead.

"Look at that. There it is again."

"What?" said Crisp Braid, scanning near and far, seeing nothing unusual.

"In the ditch. The biggest goddamn badger I have yet saw. Make a rug half as big as a steer hide. This is about the 10th time I've sawn the bastard. Havin coffee the other mornin and I look out the window over the sink, there's this bugger layin on a rock all spraddled out, takin its ease and airin its balls like it was in a hammock. I went for the .30-06, took a shot and missed. Know what he done? Kicked dirt at me. Damn these cookies or I'd run get the 06 now." He ate two steer heads at once and choked a little, the sound enough to send the badger into the weeds.

"How's that love affair, Red?" asked one of the dull badgers a few weeks later. "Got her down yet?"

"No. Rancher caught on and he's crazy jealous. Can't get near her he's jumpin up after a gun."

The university badger remarked that that was how the old badger game went—what seemed imminent somehow never came to pass. Life, in short, was a shuck. But then, he'd been denied tenure and was a little sour on things.





*"You looked out and saw that your vehicle was missing.
Can you describe it?"*



WILD THING

For Denise Richards,
there's no time
like the present

Throughout her career Denise Richards has embraced uninhibited and often outré parts. She battled giant space bugs in her breakout role in 1997's *Starship Troopers*, then went on to play a murderous Lutheran beauty queen in *Drop Dead Gorgeous* and nuclear scientist Christmas Jones (who shows James Bond that Christmas comes more than once a year) in *The World Is Not Enough*. But in her role as a trust fund nympho in *Wild Things*, Denise, along with guidance counselor gone bad Matt Dillon and goth fox Neve Campbell, set the standard for on-screen three-ways. Never in the history of cinema has an actress worn 750 milliliters of champagne so well. When we sat down with this radiant 33-year-old, our first question was, naturally, about her spectacular sapphic liplocks. "Those were the only love scenes I've ever done with a girl," she says. "The director said, 'Please have a drink before you do the pool scene,' so we went into Neve's trailer and made margaritas. We just went for it. We had to." Now that Denise is married to Charlie Sheen, are the sex scenes more awkward? "I had more fun doing one with Neve than I have with a guy," she says. "With a girl you can be comfortable and laugh or say, 'Hey, I don't want this part to show. Can you move your hand?'" She's a much better kisser than some of these guys, and her lips are softer. But Charlie and I don't get jealous. I'm sure if I had an explicit love scene coming up

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
STEPHEN WAYDA





we would discuss it at length, but we haven't come to that bridge yet."

Sheen has been so supportive that he encouraged Denise to pose for *PLAYBOY* only a few months after the birth of their daughter, Sam. "He's been a fan of the magazine for years and thought it would be pretty cool to have his wife in it," she says. "I thought it was the perfect time in my life to do this, and it pushed me to get my ass in shape!" Denise and Charlie met on the set of *Good Advice* but didn't get together until she did a guest stint on *Spin City*. "We were smitten with each other when we first met," she says. "There was a huge attraction, but the timing wasn't right." The two had a blast spoofing *Signs* in *Scary Movie 3*, and Denise has appeared on Charlie's latest TV show, *Two and a Half Men*. She's clearly Charlie's angel, but she doesn't take credit for taming the former wild man. "He straightened out before we met and had been sober for three years," she says. "He was definitely in the right place to meet someone and settle down. Our daughter brought out more playful sides in him. For example, Charlie was filming Sam's birth, and I thought he looked sexy in scrubs. I said, 'You've got to take these home with you.' He did, so now we can play doctor. We're best friends and lovers, and I really think we complement each other."

We'll be seeing a lot more of Denise, which—as our island adventure makes abundantly clear—is a good thing. She plays John Corbett's high-maintenance wife in *Elvis Has Left the Building*, a wedding planner in Lifetime's *I Do (But I Don't)*, a salesgirl in *Fat Albert* and a wide-eyed innocent who gets lured into a call girl's world by Daryl Hannah in the provocatively titled Spanish film *Whore (Yo Puta)*. "I got to work with a talented female director and do something different," Denise explains.

"I don't have any regrets about the things I've done in my life," she says. With that attitude, she's perfectly equipped to handle Hollywood or, for that matter, a day at the beach.



“I’m spontaneous,” Denise says. “I love
going from one thing to something else and not
knowing what I’m going to do next.”











“I found out early I could make more
money modeling than I could waitressing and scooping
Häagen-Dazs. But I always wanted to be an actress.”



See more of Denise at cyber.playboy.com.

Dean Martin (continued from page 104)

"It's the real me up there on the screen. Nothing phony. Everybody else on TV, they're putting on an act."

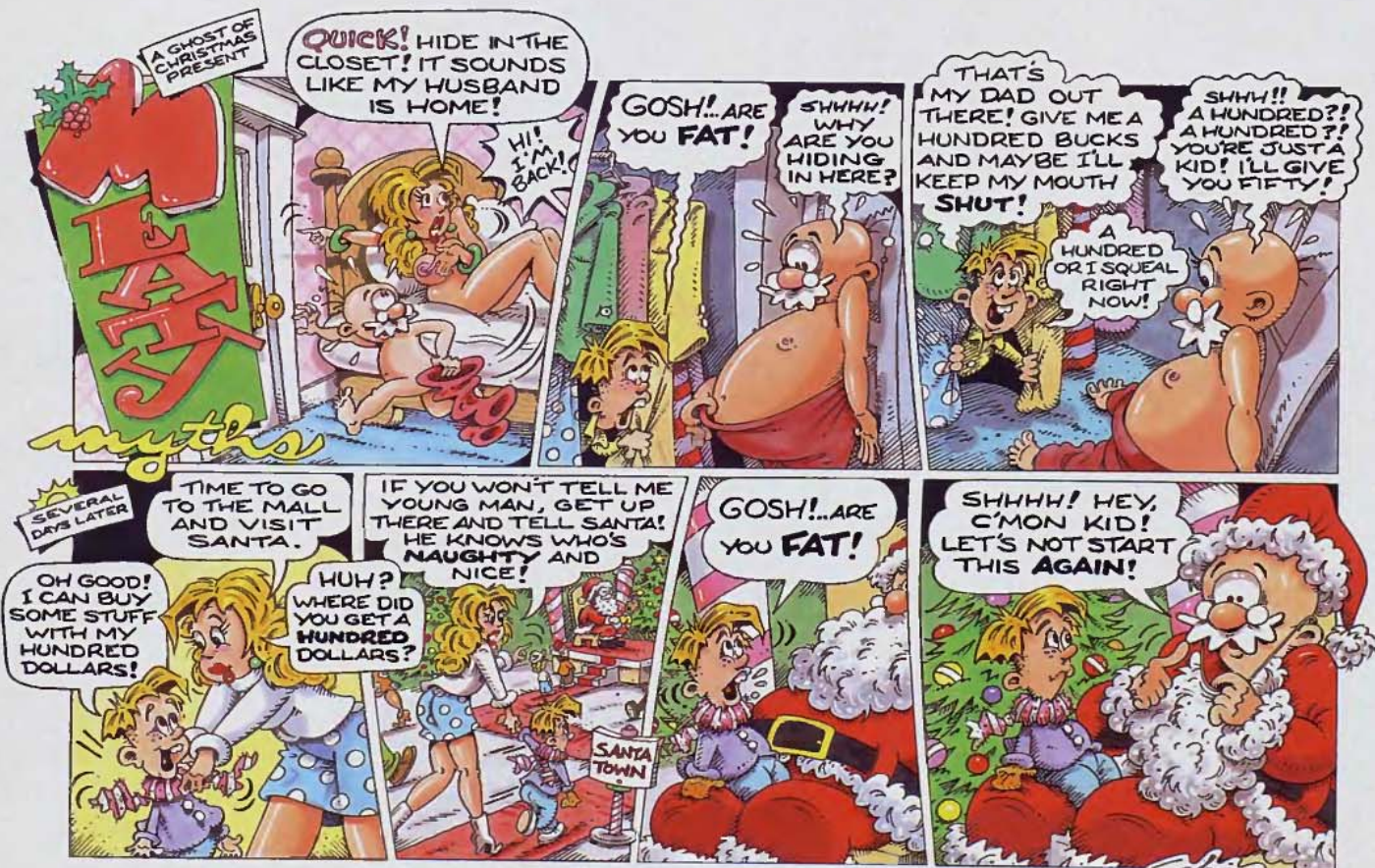
from daily golf games ("Dad's home!"). Per ritual, he'd go straight for the bread box, butter up a slice of white, "fold it in half and take a big bite off the end," writes Ricci, who watched raptly. "Now, that's livin', pally!" Dean would then declare, chewing the mouthful of metaphor. ("See, I'm a simple man.")

"Really, his mystique is intangible," Deana Martin told me. "He was just bigger than life and like no one you've ever met before. He made people feel comfortable because he was so comfortable with himself. He liked to be alone, but he was never lonely." Possessed of gorgeous indifference, he kept to a path of his own quiet design. Jeanne once noted, with no small sigh of resignation, "He has made a pattern of his future, and he follows it stubbornly, with a total lack of curiosity. What he sincerely cares for, after his work, is golf. Golf is his real, honest love." Thus he would lie to Sinatra, "I've got a girl in my room," to excuse himself from requisite nocturnal Rat Pack revelries. Sinatra knew he was lying and let him go. Dag loved to find sleep early, nursing his six handicap for the morning links ("He likes golf-ball thumpin' like I like humpin'—to each his own!" Sinatra sang of him at a Friars

roast). Then there is that most cherished of Dean anecdotes, whose variations are countless. To Fallaci he told it this way: "Three years ago Jeanne and I had a party on our anniversary here at home. At midnight I went upstairs and called the police. I said, 'I'm a neighbor of the Martins. Will you tell 'em to hold that band down?' So they came and stopped the band, and Jeanne came runnin'. 'Hey, Dino, the cops are here. Some neighbor wants to stop the party.' And I said, 'Too bad.'" Which was to say, fun is fun, baby, but bedtime is bedtime.

"You know, sometimes I think I give off a scent or something, arouses the female," he informed Montgomery Clift in *The Young Lions* (1958), his first real picture after busting up with Jerry Lewis. (Dean winningly portrayed a reluctant playboy draftee who kills Marlon Brando, a very likable Nazi.) For the record, his scent was Fabergé's Woodhue (now defunct), diluted with a few drops of water. Notwithstanding, he drew swoons as effortlessly as he managed all else. "I don't need money," he noted as a boy singer on the make. "I'm

good-looking." He knew where his gifts shined. Onstage, he'd forever tug at his thick black hair: "I want people to know that it's mine," he told his daughter Gail. Throughout his life he carried a split lower lip scarred from boxing, curling it into myriad smiles of debonair devastation. "This guy had 14 shades of a smile," marvels his longtime TV producer, Greg Garrison. "It took me 35 years to figure them all out, and I'm still not totally sure." While he dallied his share (legendarily, with Rita Hayworth, June Allyson and Petula Clark), in truth, women were not his thrill. "The truth is I bore the hell out of Dean," said the radiant Jeanne in 1968. "Most women do. He's not a ladies' man. He's a man's man, and I like that about him." Dean's logic, which you may take for the ages, was: "Men are down-to-earth and more honest, and I can get a repartee with them, have fun. Women instead are crazy, crazy, crazy, and they're flighty, and they are always lookin' for somethin', and they always tell you how good they are. I don't wanna know how good they are." Therein lay his particular genius as an entertainer: "You know, more men want to see me than girls," he once explained. "You know why? I never sing to the girl. I figure that some guy is paying the bill, and here I am singing to his girl, then he's going to get threatened. I don't flirt with the girls like Wayne Newton does. I sing over their heads. This way, the guy comes back with his girl. Or maybe he comes



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back with a different girl." Dean smiled here, in case you were wondering.

"Do you know that I spill more than he drinks?" Sinatra liked to say. "That's an actuality." Famously, Dean's license plate read DRUNKY, but he relished being a lightweight who fooled the world. After bolting from Lewis—Martin and Lewis, please note, were merely considered the biggest act in the history of show business (look for Jerry's memoir *Dean and Me: A Love Story* in bookstores next year)—he invented a new public persona to lighten his workload and stay funny. "Everybody loves a drunk," he said, which rang true enough back then. Thus, he openly copped from the great saloon comic Joe E. Lewis: "You're not drunk if you can lay on the floor without holdin' on." The laughs were huge, conspiratorial. "I feel sorry for people who don't drink," he'd maunder with glass in hand, "because when they wake up in the morning that's as good as they're gonna feel all day." But onstage it was mostly apple juice. "And here's the topper," he once revealed. "I hate apple juice."

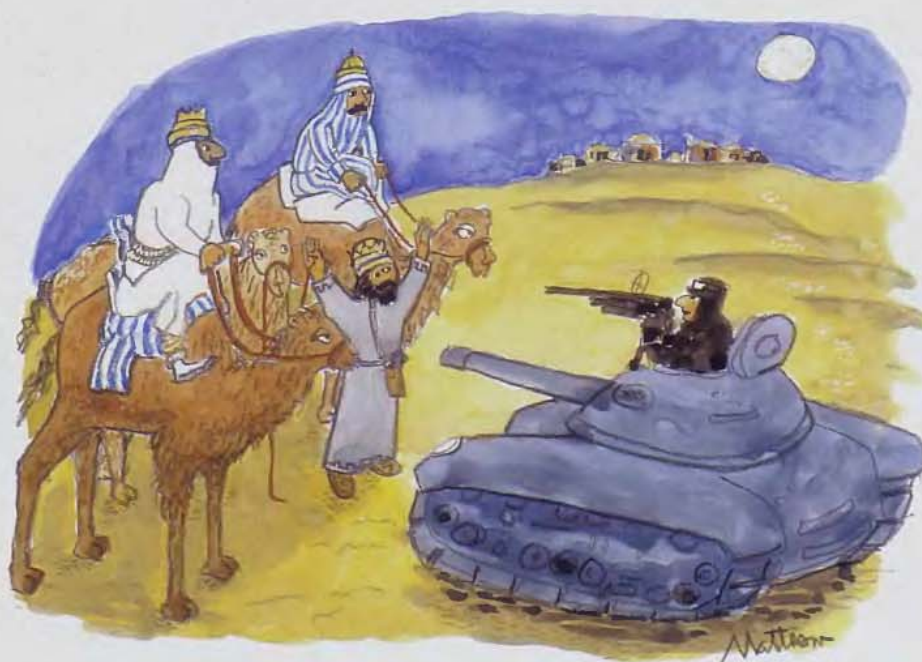
"No one has ever seen me drunk," he said at his height of fame. I know I never did some 25 years later when I discovered that he drank and ate alone nightly at a Beverly Hills Italian joint called La Famiglia, which eventually closed and forced him a few blocks away to another one called Da Vinci. Like clockwork he was delivered by seven in his white Rolls-Royce and seated at his booth near the bar, where his records quietly played on the sound system. Sometimes he would softly sing along with himself—"God

didn't make little green apples." Once in a while Jeanne and his actor grandson Alex Martin (*Josie and the Pussycats, Can't Hardly Wait*), son of Dean Paul, would join him—for drinks only. Dean preferred to eat alone. Alex remembers a knowing look exchanged by his grandparents one night as the music crooned on. "What?" he asked them. Said Dean, gesturing toward the air, "There was a key change there, pally. I went up a big octave." (Alex, by the way, got his grandfather's latest hit collection off iTunes, "legally.") Such was Dean's life in the homestretch, which arrived when Alex's father, the actor turned pilot, flew his Phantom fighter jet into a mountain on March 21, 1987. Dean, who despised flying and had barely overcome a mortal fear of elevators, began his own death march that same day. "He was never the same," says, well, everyone. Performing was kept to a bare minimum. Sinatra drove him nuts during the goddamn 1988 Rat Pack tour (launched mainly to cheer up Dag), pretending they were all still young gods. Dean went home after a week (pissing off Sinatra royally) and gave up Vegas altogether three years later—but not before Madonna and Sandra Bernhard, whoever the hell they were, went one night to see him. By then, golf was no more—too many aches and pains—so all that remained for him to do, quite happily, was spend days in bed watching television (any cowboy show would do) and nights at the restaurant, where he shook the hands of the nice folks who still remembered him. (Always he stood if a woman approached.) Usually he would smile and wave to the paparazzi who came to capture his with-

ering shell, once so immaculate and proud. "He knew the game," writes Ricci, who stifled his own outrage. "That was Dad. Take your pictures."

Anyway, I went to see him dozens of times during those last years—oddly, just to make sure he was okay. (In the old days, I might add, Elvis would drive past Dean's house late at night to savor mere proximity to his hero.) Sometimes I took friends who knew his greatness, one being Dean's eternal number one fan, Regis Philbin, who was there the evening of O.J. Simpson's Bronco chase; Dean watched the drama unfold on the bar TV along with everyone else. "It was like going to see the Eiffel Tower," acknowledges Joe Mantegna, who played Dean beautifully in the bad HBO film *The Rat Pack* and saw him once at the Hamburger Hamlet on Sunset, Dean's Sunday haunt. "You got ease from just looking at him." There was, in fact, something noble and heroic about him no matter how enfeebled he became. Toward the end, he brought his teeth in the pocket of his navy Members Only windbreaker. Meticulously, he would measure three spoonfuls of club soda to mix into his J&B scotch ("It stands for Just Booze," he used to shrug). The process was unhurried and lovely. Normally I gave him a brief "How are you, sir?" and let him be. The last time I saw him was the night after I'd gone to the Shrine Auditorium for Sinatra's 80th birthday extravaganza, where Springsteen, Dylan and others serenaded the cantankerous leader. I told Dean that Frank clearly hated it. He smirked. ("Whenever he talked about Frank," says Alex Martin, "he would have a smirk.") I also told him, for whatever it was worth, that everybody still knew he was the cool one. "Thanks, pal," he said and gave me his giant paw. He quit going to the restaurant a couple of weeks later—quit eating all but entirely, I learned. Days later he was gone. "He did absolutely what he wanted to do, and he went the way he wanted to," his agent Mort Viner told me at the time. "He went to sleep on Christmas Eve, and that was it."

Long before, at another Beverly Hills restaurant, he'd stepped outside after dinner with his family and given the parking valet the stubs for their two cars. "We always had to have two cars, because there were so many of us," his daughter Gail told me. "So we were waiting and waiting, and the valet couldn't find Dad's car. Dad waited a little longer, then walked across the street to the Jaguar dealership and bought a new one. He said, 'Jeanne, bring them home.' And off he drove." Apparently, wherever he performed, he pinned to the dressing room wall a cartoon someone once clipped for him in which one grunt office worker says to another, "When I die, I want to come back as Dean Martin." Same goes for me, pally. At least I have his pants.



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(continued from page 98)

NM: Leave me out of it.

JBM: To this day people who read "The White Negro" when they were teenagers come up to me, and they want to argue with me about it. It still affects them nearly 50 years later. I don't think any essay written by anyone today could do the same. There are too many other forms of media that are digested more easily, too easily.

That's one reason Michael Moore is interesting. He's aware that while his books are good and serve his purpose, he is going to reach so many more through his movies. The problem is you can't get the same depth of an idea across in a sound bite. There's no way.

NM: Why not use a rating system for ideas? The most profound ideas are those one is willing to die for. By that measure, Karl Marx has to be one of the greatest writers who ever lived, because hundreds of thousands of people in his time and after were willing to die for his ideas. All over the world, millions were willing to go to prison for them.

This is not to raise a latter-day defense of Marx. He had incredible virtues as a thinker. From my point of view, he also had his lacks. He certainly didn't understand that atheism is not a way to win the world. You can't—not by that route. Half the people alive—or is it three quarters?—have instinctive notions that God exists. I think the real failure of Bolshevism, and then Stalinism, was clinging to the idea that religion is the opium of the people. Organized religion may well be its own species of narcotic, but the con-

cept that we are part of divine creation is something else altogether.

If we're ever going to have a great society in the future—which is hardly a guaranteed conclusion—if we ever build a world with real freedom, we may have to arrive at the recognition that we can dispense with fundamentalism and live instead with the idea that God is a Creator, not a lawgiver.

JBM: To shift the subject back to your home turf, who is going to be the last novelist?

NM: Probably someone analogous to the poor poet today who is writing five-act verse plays in iambic pentameter. I do foresee a day when very few will look at serious fiction. Instead they will read computer novels. The computer is better suited than a mediocre novelist to turn out a best-seller. But not too many people will still be interested in serious literary work. Whole populations will be looking for technological power rather than exploring those moral questions they hope to ponder anywhere but in the serious novel.

The best fiction has always been the seedbed for the most interesting and subtle moral questions—questions that at best go deeper than the wisdom you can receive in any church or synagogue or mosque. When it comes to moral paradox, theology is limited. It's too structured. Interesting morality almost never fits prearranged moral codes. It's only the novelist—the very good novelist—who can deal with such moral issues as "Am I on balance a good person or a bad one?" You don't find that out by declaring, "Well, I'm good because I obey the Ten Commandments." That doesn't

make you good. You can still be a horror if you restrict the lives of others with your piety. The real question is, How do you affect other people's lives? The best novels are marvelous for delving into the subtler questions of our nature.

After all, what is human nature? We're still finding that out. It is immensely various, even as God, I believe, is immensely various. We're the children, if you will, of the Creator. I believe that God doesn't want to give us orders from above; rather, He wishes us to discover things about our nature that we can send back to Him. Or Her. Does the parent always wish to be superior to the child? No. Most parents want their children to surpass them.

JBM: One would hope that very reason is enough to keep the novel alive.

NM: You're leaving out the social imperatives of the people who run things. An immensely powerful global capitalism is shaping up. That capitalism does not need or look for inquiry into delicate matters. Its need, rather, is to keep the bullshit train running at top speed. It has to enforce the self-serving notion that corporations are good for human existence. It needs to have most people believing that big business is the only way to do it. The last thing those gentlemen need is novels.

Part of the genius of corporate capitalism is that it has found much subtler ways to control people than the old Stalinist procedures. Those methods were brutal, dull, cold, stupid and openly oppressive. The modern form of oppression is nuanced; it gets into your psyche—it makes you think there's something wrong with you if you're not on the big capitalist team. So corporate capitalists don't want writers exploring into morality. They want one morality, theirs. Unlike Stalinism at its worst, it's more of a benign regime, superficially open and ready for the development of technology that will make all our lives extraordinary. Sure, technology will end up keeping us alive until we are 150 years old, even if three quarters of each of us will be replacement parts. "I'm on my fourth heart," says the man who is 200. I'm not sure that's either God's intention or the real human intention. It may be an ultimate destruction of the human spirit to stay alive beyond a certain point. Maybe death is as important to life as life itself. To keep extending the years of your life—that could be one more form of evil. Much too much is being taken for granted today.

But I must go back to the original point: The good novel, the serious novel, is antipathetic to corporate capitalism. The best-seller is one of the props of corporate capitalism precisely because it's an entertainment. "At the end of the day, I want to have fun," says the nine-to-five. "Give me asshole TV shows, exploitation films with lots of



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bang. I don't need to read a good book—I want a page-turner." Well, every time there's a page-turner to read, someone's mind is being dulled. Even page-turners can get into interesting questions, but dependably they will always veer away from moral exploration.

JBM: You're talking about good art, which pushes you. I think the challenge, though, is to make a serious novel entertaining so people can't put it down. That's the only way to compete with the various other forms of media.

NM: I started as that kind of writer, and I know how easy it is. It's routine to write a page-turner. There are such simple rules. I can teach any mediocre writer to turn one out. But I'm interested in something that's good enough and well enough written so that you have to stop on the page and read a sentence over a few times. Why? Because it vibrates within you. A page-turner is equal to a fast-paced sitcom.

JBM: What are your thoughts on the power that Oprah Winfrey wields over a book? You know, recently she put *Anna Karenina* on her book-of-the-month list, and it became a best-seller again.

NM: I salute her for that. It so happens *Anna Karenina* is one of my all-time favorite novels. I had that and *War and Peace* on my desk while I was writing *The Naked and the Dead*. To get steamed up to write every morning, I'd read five or 10 pages of *Anna Karenina*. So yes, I applaud her for that.

JBM: Because she has such mass appeal, she can take something that is hard to read and make it a best-seller. That gives me hope.

NM: But if she keeps doing it, her popularity will begin to diminish and then we'll begin to see the real test of her character. Is she devoted to great literature or is she, quite naturally, a little more devoted to the power of her own career?

JBM: Perhaps through the power of her own career she can raise great literature back to the popular level of best-sellers.

NM: No. No person can do that. You're so young you still believe in the power of individuals. The hard fact—which I would like to see develop in you, my friend, over the next 10 years—is a much deeper sense of social structure. Because society is paramount. It's as if we're little animals running through the machine. Occasionally we touch a switch, something starts, we start another little machine, but we can't really alter the nature of the machine that much. Not without great study and long-term devotion, plus willingness to get into the grease of the gears.

JBM: And great luck. No, I respect the complexity of the social machine—I don't think one person can change it by himself, but I do agree with Robert F. Kennedy that every action you take sends ripples out into the pond. Those ripples affect the machine.

NM: The ripples die out.

JBM: Unless they're strong enough.

NM: How many times has a ripple in a pond changed the nature of the shoreline? Let's stop the crap.

PLAYBOY: Women. Did female sexuality shape human evolution? According to a theory in Leonard Shlain's recent book, *Sex, Time and Power*, menstruation is what enabled women to develop a sense of time and forethought. Language evolved, he says, primarily because men and women had to negotiate sex. Women became expert at reading between the lines of various Pleistocenes. Beauty was developed to maintain the interest of men. Is this why women control men?

NM: I haven't read the book, but that theory does strike me as wobbly. For example, negotiating sex. Where is the new idea there? After all, animals certainly negotiate sex. I had two standard poodles once, many years ago, Tibo and Zsa-Zsa, and Zsa-Zsa was one hell of a bitch, always nipping at Tibo's nuts. I was afraid Tibo would end up as no man at all by the time he came of age—we first had them when they were pups. How she dominated him! She had fierce teeth. He'd have to duck and sit down fast. These earlier negotiations taught him a lot, however. He came to see what was not yet called for. The moment Zsa-Zsa came into heat for the first time, however, he was ready and seized her without a by-your-leave and impregnated her. Nine pups for one coupling. Over the next three years, before they were done, they created 34 new standard poodles. Negotiations never ceased. Animals not only have a great deal of language in their grunts, their groans, their whines, their moans, their baying at the moon, but in their scents. Odor used to have more to do with sex than language—at least until deodorants came on the scene. But before the advent of whiff-deadening products in spray cans, any combination of strong genital odor mixed with perfume was pretty damned aphrodisiacal, yes sir—all through every barnyard and royal court of Europe right through the Second World War. So the notion that language had to be developed to facilitate sex cannot, by my lights, make it as the logo on a T-shirt.

JBM: How about this sense of time and forethought Shlain claims was developed through menstruation?

NM: That's too large a question for me.

JBM: Well, how about one that is not: Do women control men?

NM: Completely.

JBM: I'm glad you agree.

NM: Before women's liberation came along, men used to have some purchase on control in a marriage. Perhaps 35 percent. The woman had the remaining 65. Now, after women's liberation, it's up to 95 percent.

JBM: Wow!

NM: I could be wrong, maybe it's only 85 percent.



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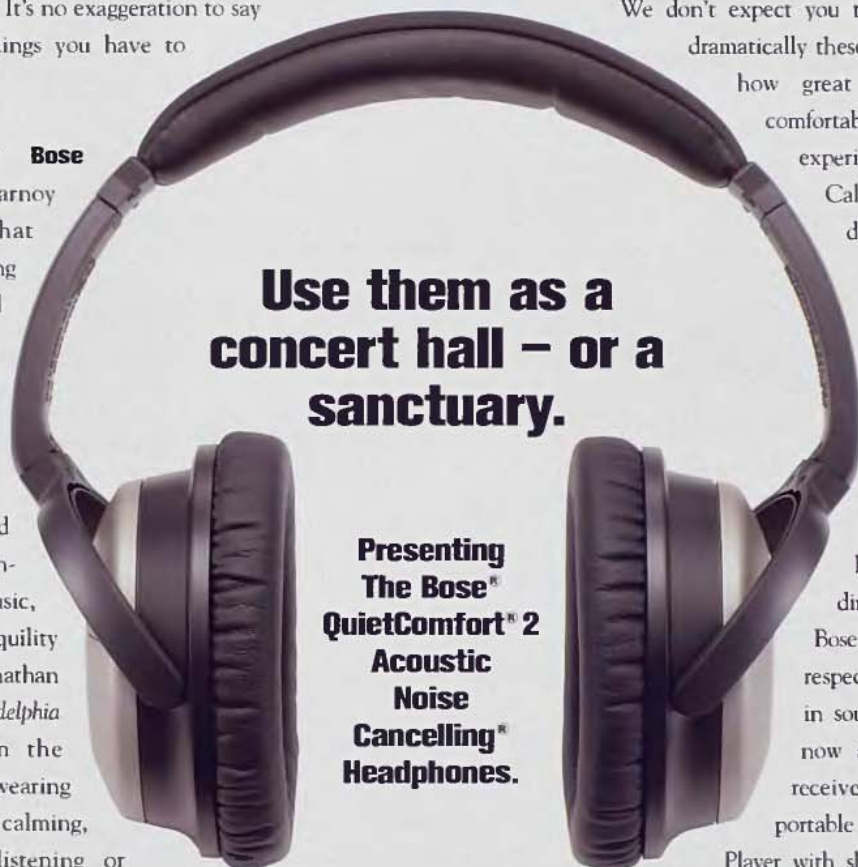
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JBM: Is this why men are forever at a loss in regard to the dominance of women?

NM: Well, women are closer to creation than we are. So they have deeper instincts.

JBM: They create life; we destroy it.

NM: Oh, let's not get into that. Women have deadened as many men in subtle ways, for subtle reasons, as men have beaten women down in more overt fashion.

JBM: I'm not saying one is more vicious than the other. I'm saying, traditionally, men have gone to war, and women have raised the children. That's changing. Women are going to war, and we've seen what happens at Abu Ghraib.

NM: Yes, that poor pregnant girl....

JBM: I feel for her.

NM: You do?

JBM: She was in the wrong place with the wrong guys, feeling the wrong pressures, and now she's all alone.

NM: She really is. I can also see how wild the parties are getting all over America this season. The key factor at Abu Ghraib was "Hey, none of you at home are going to believe this until you see our photographs." While a lot of that picture taking was probably given a subtle go-ahead by their superiors, and

some of the photos could obviously be employed to goad the prisoners into talking—"You don't want your family to see you like this"—the Abu Ghraib gang was also delighted to send a lot of the good stuff home to friends. Just think of the kind of party that's been going on back in America while Bush keeps talking about how splendid a Christian nation we are. You know, I love this country with all its faults—it's been good to me—but one of our huge spiritual crimes is that we're the bullshit kingdom of all time.

JBM: The bullshit kingdom of all time? Well, that's a piece in and of itself. Let's stick to men and women for the moment. What do you think of gender roles now that women are expected to raise a family and be successful in the workplace?

NM: For me, any notion that males are superior to females or females superior to males is, I'd say, like comparing dogs to cats. To my mind, it's a hopeless argument. Men are so fundamentally different from women.

I still have to say that the desire for power in women that has revealed itself in the past 35 years is not attractive. The

power they used to have was vastly more interesting. It used to be fun to realize a woman was smarter than you. In the course of living one's life and learning how to handle oneself, there were women who developed such tasty subtleties about how to control us. They were like animal handlers, if you will. And the animal, even the lion, almost always adores the handler. Now they're dominating us openly and in the worst way—by ideology. "The whip and the knout for you, buddy. We are the politically correct."

JBM: I don't think I agree with that. It's changing. There was the height of political correctness that bordered on fascism, and it was terrifying. But the majority of the women I know, they want a real man—they don't want a man they can walk all over.

NM: Well, good. I'm 81, and these unhappy experiences happened to me 30 years ago.

JBM: You were living then at the peak of the gender war. But what's truly encouraging now is that I believe both sides are beginning to realize that we need more women in power but women who do it the way a woman does it, not the way a man would do it if he were a woman.

NM: How is that relevant to what we're talking about?

JBM: Well, we're just now starting to see women getting into power positions and still being allowed to be women. They don't have to pretend to act like a man.

NM: Name a few, would you?

JBM: Arianna Huffington, Laura Dawn of MoveOn.org, Hillary Clinton in her way.

NM: Hillary Clinton is a very good example. I met her many years ago when she was the governor's wife in Arkansas. Probably in 1984. She was immensely intelligent. I happened to sit next to her at dinner, and we had a very good conversation. I was impressed with how bright she was, how open, and what a fine mind she had. She's not as interesting now. Today she's a politician. She's very cautious. Her books are boring. What's that one, *It Takes a Village*? Full of cant, the way Maggie Thatcher was full of cant. You say what's useful to say, not what you believe. You never speak from the heart. Hillary is always watchdogging her tongue these days. Totally unspontaneous in exactly the way an average mediocre-to-good, effective politician oversees his spiel.

JBM: But as we said before, she's a politician at a high level—she has no choice.

NM: So why get excited about her as a role model?

JBM: I'm not saying we're there yet. But I do have hope that the future players are beginning to emerge.

NM: All right. I can see a time when women will be more important politically than they are now, and for better reasons, but that doesn't mean anything much is going to change. In a certain



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sense, a politician, regardless of gender, is neutered politically by the process. A lot of politicians may be attractive in person because, after all, they're pressing the flesh. All the time. Shake a thousand hands in a morning and an afternoon, and you're horny by the end of the day. The hands are telling you something. Where's the guy who won't get a hard-on if he's admired by a lot of women? Nonetheless, politics dehumanizes you. I don't say this out of sour grapes, because when I ran for mayor in that Democratic primary back in 1969, I considered it my duty. Believe it or not, I felt God wanted me to go into politics to save New York. I was a high-octane fool. And I wasn't nearly as good as I thought I'd be. All the same, I was prepared to pay the price. I knew I would never write again in any serious way if I got elected. I knew I would use up my soul in hard work of a sort that would not be happy for me. But I felt, "I haven't been a good guy; I want to save my soul." Now that was not only simplistic thinking—which is no drawback to running for office—but I turned out to be an ineffectual politician. All the same, I was ready to bite the bullet. What I learned from the effort and the defeat is that politics can be a tremendously difficult business. You know, we respect even mediocre professional basketball players because they have stamina. Well,

very few humans can become good politicians due to the amount of work you run into. The responsibilities. The number of distasteful things you have to do. So I don't sneer at politicians. I think they're entitled to the same kind of respect we give reasonably good athletes. Stamina is impressive. But I don't have any illusion that in becoming a politician you become a nobler person—very rarely does that occur. The only reason it happens once in a while is because it's an impossible creation if you can't have exceptions to every last rule.

PLAYBOY: You've said, "As many people die from an excess of timidity as from bravery. Nobody ever mentions that." Would you care to give an explanation of courage?

NM: I have one. It's ready-made. Courage can be measured only by the place from which you start. Picture an old lady who is ill in every joint, terribly arthritic; nonetheless she has to cross a busy street, and she can't quite keep up with the lights. Still she feels an inner imperative to do it. And she does manage to get across even though she's terrified. I would call that courage. I would say it is analogous to the case of a well-trained Marine, a good kid, who gets into combat, sees his buddies wounded, sees a good friend killed, goes through hell. He gets to the point where he expects he will die. Until

that moment, you can't really speak of his courage. He's been trained to be brave—you can motivate young people to be brave. But when you get to that crux in combat where you say, "It's not worth it. I'm scared shitless, I can't go on, I want to quit, I don't care about my buddies, fuck it all, I want to quit," and then another side of you takes over and says, "You will go on, whether you die or not, you will go on"—that's courage.

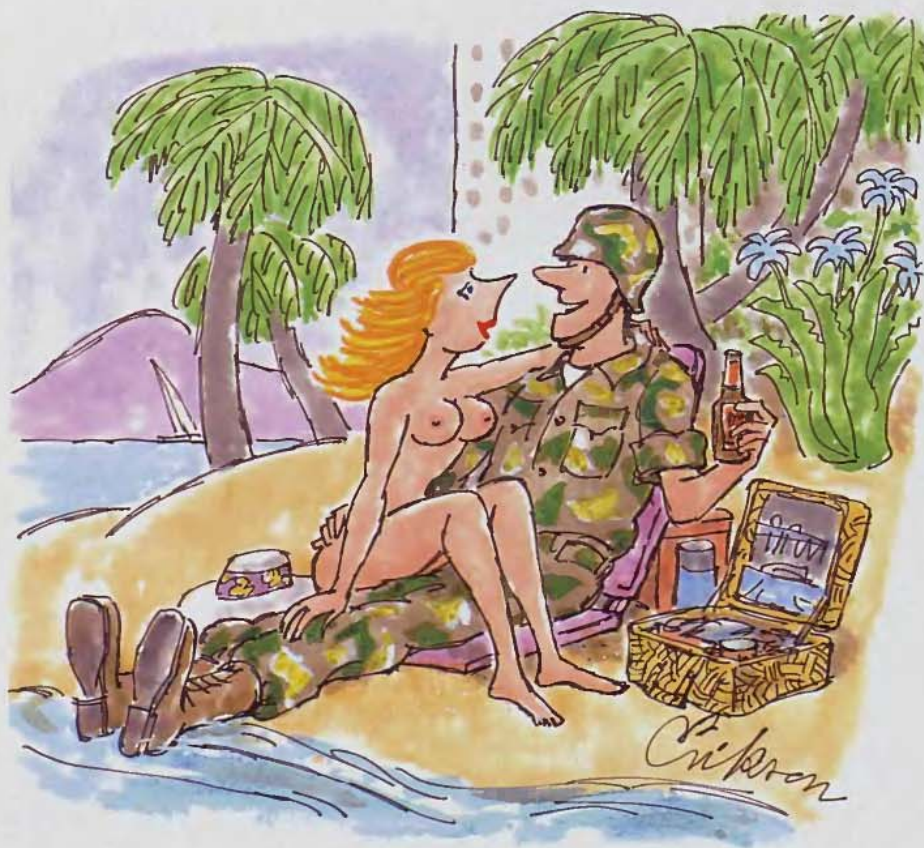
Otherwise courage can be meaningless. If you're in a very easy war and very well trained in your martial skills, you may feel panic, but you're prepared to be brave. So I would say courage is transcendence. Whatever our level of competence at more or less hairy activities, we are still obliged to go beyond ourselves, to transcend ourselves, if we wish to rise so high as courage itself.

That's why I say timidity kills. It kills more people than bravery because every time one is timid, one is pulling back creative impulses in oneself, denying them. One is denting one's ego. And as an ego contracts out of shame, illness begins. This is my opinion.

JBM: So courage is always a virtue?

NM: Absolutely! Make it *the* virtue. I would go so far as to say that it's very hard to feel love if you're full of shame. We can feel love for someone else only when we have gained respect for ourselves—it's why we have this endless obsession with courage. Where is the man who can ignore it? It's analogous to a woman who will wear no makeup, no jewelry, won't comb her hair, because she hates women who are elegant, feels those women are phony. "I want to be seen as my natural self." Yet that woman can never sneer at elegance with full confidence. A part of her feels there's something wrong with her. She isn't ready to get the utmost out of herself. By the same token, some men sneer at bravery, always ready to point out how much trouble it breeds. Of course it does. A macho brute is a macho brute. But not even a saint can sneer at bravery with a completely clear and open heart. Not even a saint.

JBM: You know, one of the outcomes of living in such an organized society where everything is taken care of for us—men don't go out and kill their food for survival, etc.—there's a complicity, almost a sense of deliberate amnesia that what it all comes down to is ultimately we're fucking animals. And we will fight each other and if necessary kill when our own is attacked. And I don't know if this is true for every man out there, but I would say 90 percent of the men I know, when they meet another man, under the pleasant conversation is the question "Can I take you, or can you take me?" And usually it's a kind of fun, but regardless it's always there. Something like 9/11 reminds us all on a national level that tomorrow, like that



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[snaps fingers], all of this societal bullshit could be gone and we're back to grunting and defending our fire. That's important. I think it's one of the major differences between the mentality of a man in the new millennium and the mentality of a man in the 1990s, when political correctness was all the rage and the sensitive ponytailed guy was getting laid more than he should.

NM: Well, I think you have an unbalanced situation when the sensitive—or over-sensitive—ponytailed guy is getting laid more than the macho brute.

JBM: I don't know that he was getting laid more than the macho brutes, but he was certainly getting laid more than he should. And for too little.

NM: Oh, you're a bigot.

JBM: I've got my prejudices.

NM: Yes, you may have received them from your father.

JBM: It's a distinct possibility.

PLAYBOY: In his essay "The Uncanny," Freud cited Ernst Jentsch in contending that the strongest instances of the uncanny involve "doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate." We live in an age when such distinctions have become even less clear. This is indeed frightening. We're overmatched by our technology. Our ability to comprehend is exceeded by the ability to construct and fabricate. You have spoken of the inanimate—that which cannot be animated. Increasingly, it seems, we are overcome by this uncanniness. Is there more of it to come in our future?

NM: I say absolutely yes. As long as technology expands and expands, we're going to have more of such uneasiness. I remember back in 1969, I was down at the Manned Space Flight Center, south of Houston, covering the first landing on the moon, the flight of Apollo 11. In the book I later wrote about it, there was a concept called the psychology of machines, which discussed the immense amount of attention these NASA technicians gave to glitches. It truly worried the venture—there was something so spooky about glitches. NASA had the best technology available, yet the most inexplicable little malfunctions would occur. It obsessed them. The real question, I decided—even though they would never admit it to themselves—was "Do machines have a psychology?" Do things go wrong because machines have temperaments?

JBM: Are we talking about a psychology or a soul?

NM: You're beyond me on that one. I was asking if there was an inner life in the machine that we were not in touch with. You rarely find a person now who has a computer who doesn't feel his magic box has a personality. Or cars—everyone feels that his car has its own presence. Of

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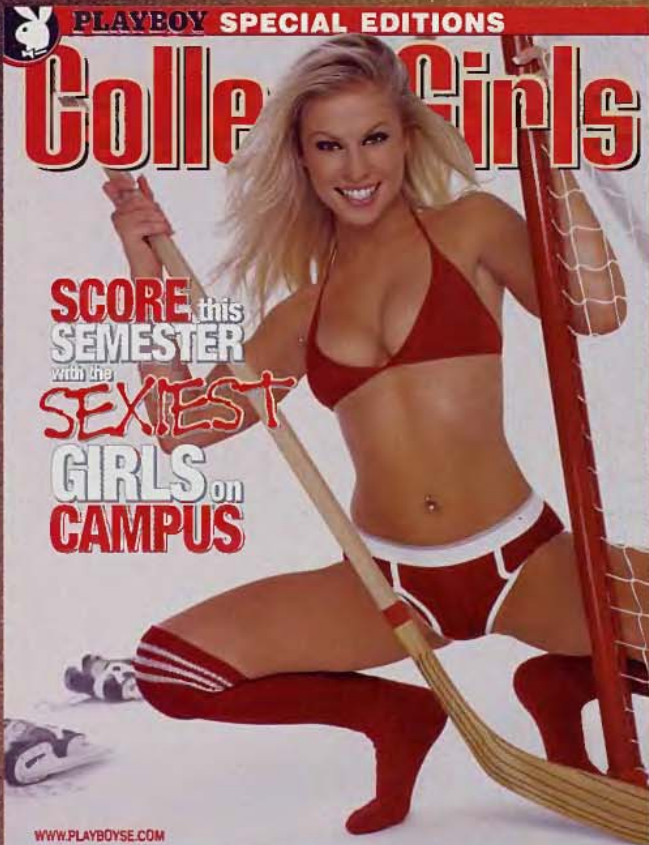
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AT NEWSSTANDS NOW

course, this last is a case in which the uncanny doesn't scare us; it pleases us almost.

JBM: You know, whenever I hook my computer up to the Internet, I feel as if I have allowed 10,000 phalluses to enter her uninvited. I am left with the realization that I may have cheapened the relationship. An intimacy we once shared of only my fingers on her keys is lost. As a result, she does not work as well for me.

NM: I think Freud put his finger on the nature of the uncanny. Part of what is so depressing about modern technology is the way it cuts off our senses. One of the things most awful about plastic—and I've been fulminating against plastic, most unsuccessfully, for the past 30, 40 years—is that plastic is not uncanny. It's just there, inert. It's very hard to conceive of any kind of soul or spirit inhabiting the stuff, because it doesn't come out of nature but from a truly evil-smelling set of factory processes. Even a wooden cane has a touch of personality, but plastic doesn't. I've always felt it is the handmaiden to technology. Why do people love technology? It gives you more power than you'd have without the technology, but you pay a heavy price. You become a little more inert in your finer sensibilities.

JBM: Where is our technology leading us? A car is certainly a piece of technol-

ogy, but not until recently was there plastic all over it.

NM: Yes, as they make plastic stronger and more analogous to steel—which they will—so, in turn, cars are going to be made entirely of plastic because, economically speaking, the plastic substitute is cheaper to work with and so offers more profit. No surprise then if the mediocrities have taken over the world under the banner of technology, corporate vision and the unholy urge to purvey democracy to all countries of the world, whether they're ready for it or capable of it. But we tell them, in effect, "You are going to end up a democracy whether you want it or not." This turns democracy into a farce. Because democracy is a grace. Any true democracy is sensitive enough to be perishable, and we're in danger right now of losing our democracy right here. The people who are running the world at present, very badly in many places, have the feeling that successfully controlled direction is the only answer. My feeling, of course, is exactly the opposite. Global capitalism does not speak of a free market but of a controlled globe. It is alien to the creative possibilities that have not yet been tapped in legions of people who've never had a chance to be creative, who work and die without creative moments in their lives. But their hopes have, I believe, been

buried in their gene stream for generations and so are passed on. When talented people emerge from no apparent cultural background, I see them as the product of these 10 generations of frustration from people who wanted to be more than their lives gave them. Such an artist is now receiving the bounty that was packed into the dreams of his or her forebears. This premise also works in reverse. Restrained evils, withheld evils, extended over many generations can end by producing a monster of a dictator.

JBM: There's an argument that our technology is stunting our evolution. Were we not spending so much time going out into the computer, focusing on TV, processing the constant slew of advertisements, more people would be taking the inner journey and evolving, perhaps, to a higher psychic level. Instead we're developing a technology in which every day we get closer to having one device that will be your phone and your e-mail, your this, your that, your Internet access—a little device you carry with you at all times, programmed to know your likes and dislikes. This device will send out a signal, broadcasting your information to all the other devices of the same nature; as you pass a stranger on the street, say you both like to watch *Star Trek*, a little bell will go off on your respective machines. It will tell you that compatibility is nearby. Why are we doing this?

NM: Because of a deep fear. We've lost the often crippling but nonetheless intense consolations of religion. Formal, organized religion introduced many perversities into our nature, but it also offered many poor people some hope—if you were a good enough person, you'd enter heaven. But religion also stood in the way of development of capitalism and technology, corporate capitalism. A man running a small business is living by his wits, but people enter corporations in order not to have to live by their instincts—or, most important, their fears. Only a few have to take responsibility. The corporation can be a relatively benign organization, but it is still subtly totalitarian. And this is spreading. People at the top want to control the world because they're in terror that otherwise we who are down a little lower are going to blow it up. My feeling is, if the corporations take over the world, the globe will indeed blow apart, because technology could end by violating too much of human nature.

JBM: Hasn't technology taken over the world already?

NM: Not completely, not completely. There are still corners and avenues, games and places.

JBM: There is still an underground.

NM: That underground has to go a long way before I will take it seriously, and yet I am ready to drink to that idea.

JBM: Cheers.



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BASKETBALL

(continued from page 152)

skill who averaged 7.5 boards a game last season, and Chevy Troutman is another horse. The two make Pitt one of the best rebounding teams in the nation. Another returnee who will make a difference is guard Carl Krauser, who last year averaged 15.4 points a game.



23. Washington The Huskies return all five starters from last year's Pac-10 runner-up and NCAA tournament team, so optimism is running high. The key to Washington's continued success will be the play of guard Nate Robinson. He wowed NBA scouts at the predraft camp but changed his mind about going pro and returned to school. He'll get help from Will Conroy and Brandon Roy in the backcourt. Sharpshooter Tre Simmons and inside guys Bobby Jones and Mike Jensen will also contribute.



24. Boston College This will be the Eagles' last season in the Big East. Next

year they'll move to the ACC, which figures to be a boon for their recruiting. Craig Smith, who averaged 16.9 points and more than eight rebounds a game last season, will lead the Big East lame duck. Jared Dudley, Sean Marshall and Louis Hinnant also should help keep the Eagles soaring. The club lacks depth past the first five, so injuries would hurt big-time.



25. Notre Dame Basketball in South Bend doesn't get the ink that football does, but that doesn't mean the Irish are hoops pushovers. Their high-powered offense will be led by Chris Thomas, a prodigious scorer who averaged 19.7 points a game last season. Forward Torin Francis and guard Chris Quinn each netted just over 14 points a game. Role players Jordan Cornette and three-point threat Colin Falls will also contribute. This team is good enough to keep coach Mike Brey smiling even after St. Patrick's Day.

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COLLECTOR

(continued from page 125)

shameful side of sex. When a man buys art from me and has it shipped to his office, he's usually hiding it from his wife, as though it were a mistress. At comic-book conventions, you can spot the collector who has completely displaced his desires, the guy who cranes his neck to look past the gorgeous women in scanty costumes to better see the display of Sunday *Pogo* pages.

Such sightings are few lately, as the Internet has supplanted the convention floor. The online Comicart-1 discussion group has more than 1,700 members, and we swoon over, or seethe about, one another's acquisitions. There is boasting and swaggering and jealousy and the occasional burst of camaraderie, all done via unbreachable virtual intimacy. The most pathetic moments occur when collectors try to share tangential passions—for model trains, animation cels or (as I once mistakenly did) old magic posters. There follows some polite response, but a pall hangs over the discussion, as if someone in a perfectly good leg-fetish forum had said, "Hey, guys, what about jugs?"

I once asked if anyone bought art not because they wanted to but because they felt they needed to buy something. You could almost hear online crickets chirping.

My best friend in this racket is Will Gabri-El, 34, whom I've known for a decade. We've never met. Maybe that's hard to imagine if you're not a collector, but we don't need to meet—I know how he does deals, and that's a full Rorschach personality test. He's got a calm demeanor, speaks carefully, can do long division in his head and plays his cards close to his chest. It took me years just to find out what he looks like (he turns out to be a handsome guy in the mode of Prince). He enjoys standing in the shadows, quietly helping people make deals from the sidelines, though his online persona is aggressive, especially when it comes to John Byrne artwork. He reminds me of my cousin, who is as gentle and calm as a Zen master until someone stands between him and his morning cigarette.

Will and I are friends because we egg on each other's obsessions. In one six-month period I called every comic-book store in 24 states, about 1,000 places. I found three pieces of art, and though you might think I was an idiot—1,000 phone calls?—I received heartfelt congratulations from Will: Three pieces! Cool! In return I encourage him when he's spending three or four times the going amount, crazy money, on pages from *Fantastic Four* #243. "Will, what are you going to do?"



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It's Galactus versus everybody. You gotta have it, man."

Bragging rights evolve from the difficulty of a deal, the intransigence of the seller, the hoops through which people jump. Mike Burkey, the world's foremost collector of *Spider-Man* artwork, a guy who is single-minded even by my standards, loves the artist John Romita and wants to own at least one page of artwork from every issue from Romita's heyday, *Amazing Spider-Man* #39-132. Another collector had the complete *Amazing Spider-Man* #121 (the death of Spider-Man's girlfriend Gwen Stacy), which at the time was worth about \$3,000. The collector would sell only if Burkey located and gave him a specific \$10,000 piece of art available only as part of a \$50,000 package.

For the deal itself, Burkey drove eight hours from Ohio to New York, then his car—rather, his father's car—broke down, then Burkey borrowed a car from the guy he was doing the deal with, got lost in a blizzard on the way home, plowed into a snowbank, ended up snowed in at a motel, called in sick to work for four days and paid \$2,000 for a new transmission. But now Burkey has the complete *Amazing Spider-Man* #121. "That was my best deal," he tells me.

Burkey exemplifies the terrible balance between loving stuff and loving people. Recently he e-mailed to Comicart-1 a chilling note about his engagement and its doom. Two months before the wedding day, the girl dumped him, cleaned out his bank accounts and sold a house he'd helped restore. She then married another guy—on the very day she had planned to marry Burkey. But Burkey didn't feel too embittered toward her, because a certain line was never crossed: "If we'd gotten married," he wrote, "and she tried to take *any* part of my *Spider-Man* collection, the kid gloves would have come off! *Seriously!*"

On the non-wedding day, his family took him out to nurse his wounds. "I decided to call John Romita on my cell phone, and my entire family and a few friends all got to talk to him one by one for about 45 minutes total! It was a blast!"

Somehow, though, the relief Burkey felt while talking to his hero makes me queasy. What's the moral of a story that begins with a woman dumping you and ends with your passing a cell phone around so your family can talk to the man who drew the funny books you read as a child? It seems like the outer edges of a bog that Swamp Thing himself would find depressing.

A couple of years ago the downside of this hobby started bothering me. The bright sparks I felt when acquiring artwork didn't help. I kept thinking about the emptiness I saw in some of my peers'

eyes, about how one guy had a dealer meet him at his current residence, a homeless shelter.

My father sent me a copy of Werner Muensterberger's *Collecting: An Unruly Passion*, a psychoanalytic treatise on collectors. I found it devastating. Muensterberger argues that, for collectors, items become invested with *mana*, or magical power, the way a teddy bear or any transitional object does for a child. Teddy won't leave you when Mom dies. Teddy will protect you from the darkness. Eventually, since people—like Burkey's ex-fiancée—fail you, having the best damned teddy bear on the block can be your reason to get out of bed in the morning.

Muensterberger concludes that, regardless of what is being collected, "the objects are all ultimate, often unconscious, assurances against despair and loneliness." And unfortunately, no stockpile of bears is ever good enough. The despair always returns.

Viewed through that black lens, the discussions on Comicart-1 veer past the pathetic and into the bleak. Around Christmastime last year, a San Francisco collector named Bill Howard announced it was his 49th birthday, a celebration made melancholy by his chronic lymphocytic leukemia: "I get to spend the day with the drip, drip, drip of chemo, but what the heck. I'm still kickin', and there's always Comic-1 to help relieve the days of recovery."

There was a funereal gloom to this, and as I read the respectful responses, they felt like condolence cards, black-bordered announcements. No matter how much art you owned, you couldn't turn back your mortality. It was a grim day.

But then a guy named Jon Mankuta posted a response: "*Happy birthday, buddyyyy!* I've taken your house key...and I sealed off your garage and filled it with Jell-O, so we have a wrestling ring. Candy and Tanya installed a trapeze over your new vibrating, heart-shaped water bed. In the kitchen, there's a big cage filled with 43 ferrets. Be careful [sic], they've been dipped up to their necks in warm vasaline [sic] (I'll get to that later...)"

And so on. Mankuta, a frequent poster to the list, had outdone himself. Midgets, dildos, Hostess Twinkies—a long-winded dumb joke whose vitality was so wrong it was right. His jolly giving the finger to death shook me up. Maybe I was wrong to think the hobby was a kind of pathology. Maybe it was just fun, and the addiction and the 12-stepping was my gilding the psychological lily, finding problems where no problems actually existed.

Which brings me in a larger way to Mankuta, whom, God help me, I envy in a certain way. I've met him numerous times, and he's hard to ignore. He's an

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VF8901 Weekend Thong Set \$29

WHERE

HOW TO BUY

Below is a list of retailers and manufacturers you can contact for information on where to find this month's merchandise. To buy the apparel and equipment shown on pages 46, 51-54, 106-111, 126-128, 154-161 and 224-225, check the listings below to find the stores nearest you.



GAMES

Page 46: *Electronic Arts*, ea.com. *SCEA*, scea.com. *Ubisoft*, ubi.com.

MANTRACK

Pages 51-54: *Ardbeg*, *Balvenie*, *the Dalmore* and *Macallan*, all available at liquor stores. *Douglas Homer*, douglashomer.com. *Lamborghini*, available at Lamborghini dealerships. *Trisara*, trisara.com. *Wavac*, tmhaudio.com.

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Pages 106-111: *The Art of Shaving*, theartofshaving.com. *Breitling*, breitling.com. *Casio*, casio.com. *Ferrari*, ferrari.com. *Harley-Davidson*, harley-davidson.com. *Klipsch*, klipsch.com. *Links of London*, linksoflondon.com. *Montblanc*, montblanc.com. *Motorola*, motorola.com. *Predicta*, predicta.com. *Rawlings*, rawlings.com. *Samsung*, samsung.com. *Sonos*, sonos.com. *Sony*, sonystyle.com. *Sony Qualia*, qualia.sony.us. *S.T. Dupont*, st-dupont.com. *Tour Edge*, touredge.com.

THE PERFECT NIGHT

Pages 126-128: *Applewood smoked bacon*, nuneskes.com. *Organic free-range chickens*, dartagnan.com. *Pacific Foods organic free-range chicken stock*, available at select food stores, such as Shaw's, Shop Rite and Safe-

way. *Pesticide-free California chestnuts*, chestnutsforsale.com. *Valrhona semisweet chocolate*, zingermans.com.

TIME FOR TOPCOATS

Pages 154-161: *Biotti*, 212-727-2031. *Boss Hugo Boss*, 800-HUGO-BOSS. *Calvin Klein Jeans*, available at Macy's. *D&G*, 212-965-8000. *DSquared2*, available at Bergdorf Goodman. *Emporio Armani*, emporioarmani.com. *Gai Mattiolo*,

212-246-6724. *GF Ferré*, 702-632-9354. *Gianluca Isaia*, 888-996-7555. *Giorgio Armani*, giorgioarmani.com. *Gordon Rush*, gordonrush.com. *Gran Sasso*, gransasso.com. *Jean Paul Gaultier*, available at Jean Paul Gaultier in New York City. *Just Cavalli*, robertocavalli.net. *Mark Nason*, available at Bloomingdale's. *Michael Michael Kors*, available at Macy's and Bloomingdale's. *Michael Kors*, available at Michael Kors stores. *Moreschi*, 212-644-4199. *Moschino*, available at Saks Fifth Avenue. *Trafic* in Los Angeles and Skye in Denver. *Paul La Fontaine*, available at select Bloomingdale's and Nordstrom stores. *Perry Ellis*, perryellis.com. *Richmond X*, 212-246-6724. *Royal Chie*, 212-588-0555. *Salvatore Ferragamo*, ferragamo.com. *Torino*, available at Nordstrom.

POTPOURRI

Pages 224-225: *Applied Organics*, organic lubricant.com. *Bottle Cap Tripod*, semsons.com. *Braille T-Shirts*, notvanilla.us. *CycleOps*, cycle-ops.com. *i-Top Pro*, itoys.ca. *Let the Buyer Beware*, shoutfactory.com. *Martiniware*, martiniware.com. *Palm Pak*, thepalm.com. *Skybox*, bestbuy.com.

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absurd clotheshorse, sporting pirate shirts and trendy pants. His looks are average (his most defining characteristic is his relatively curly, preened-over black hair), but he has the confidence of a rock star. We on Comicart-I know each and every detail of his love life. He dates strippers and has "friendships with benefits" with various other women. We've heard how, when he brings a woman to his home in his Porsche 928S, she sees on arrival a Mercedes CLK 320 coupe in the driveway of a nearly all-glass house that, to Mankuta's eyes, is rather like a starship. But I do not envy him his sartorial splendor, his cars or his women.

No, the key to Mankuta is in his house, for when he has a woman over she lies in a bed flanked by six-foot posters of 1940s comic-book covers. Mankuta made them himself, cutting and pasting blown-up photocopies to create life-size Spectre, Doctor Fate and Sub-Mariner figures. And in the closet is the heart of his passion: portfolios stuffed with 400 pieces of original comic-book artwork.

Yet even this isn't what I envy the most about him—it's his attitude. Mankuta is a man profoundly untroubled by anything.

When I've gone to the San Diego Comic Book Convention, I've increasingly watched Mankuta as if he were my alter ego. He is always good-natured, juvenile and relentlessly self-promoting. Walking through crowds as if flashbulbs were going off in his face, he pulls out his portfolio, usually with some idiotic quip and an eye on some slinky babe across the room dressed as Vampirella. Unlike most collectors, he sees the women and—holy moley!—even talks to them. (His banter is idiotic but sincere; for reasons I don't claim to understand, at least one woman in 20 seems to respond well.) He has no worries about spending four hours at a time standing in front of a folding table, trying like hell to trade two *Shogun Warriors* covers for a Herb Trimpe *Hulk* cover so he can turn it around and get that *Godzilla* cover off someone else.

I can't help wondering, Is it possible that Mankuta, who calls himself the David Lee Roth of comic-book collecting, actually does this with the same angst that I do?

That just doesn't seem likely.

He is eager to be studied, explaining to me that, first, attention in a national magazine will alert people to his want list, and second, he figures it can advance his acting career. One evening on the phone, I read Mankuta a quotation from Muensterberger about controlling loss and despair. It's like talking to my dog. On the other side of the conversation is a friendly intelligence that in no way speaks my language. "No," he finally says, "I don't look at my art that way. I remember where I was when I bought the comic and it brings back the flood of good memories. What could be more golden than childhood?"

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Maybe not living with your parents? You see, Mankuta—leaning hard on 30 years old, the David Lee Roth of comic-artwork collectors—still lives with his mother and father.

This last detail seems like the graceless capper to the life of an über-nerd—granted, a sexually successful über-nerd—but there's a little more to this story than a guy just trying to save rent money to pursue his obsession.

Once upon a time Mankuta lived in New York City's West Village. He moved back home and pays the mortgage because his parents are terribly ill. His father has diabetes so advanced that pieces of his foot have been amputated. His mother has leukemia.

It sounds grim. He says, as if he tells himself this a lot, that at least his parents give him more privacy than his roommates in the Village did. Still, he's been wondering what it would be like to own property. "Something in Los Angeles, maybe," he says. "My aunt and uncle bought something in Florida with a big pool and palm trees in the backyard, and I keep thinking about it."

The keys to this dream are in Mankuta's hands.

The highest prices are paid for "historic" pieces, the birth or death of a character or other milestone events. And while calling the origin of Matter-Eater Lad historic might be demeaning to the Battle of Gettysburg, it does command the cash.

So what then is the ultimate historical artwork? In 1985, DC's 50th anniversary, a 12-issue adventure called *Crisis on Infinite Earths* reduced all the parallel Earths (a staple of science fiction) to but one world, wiping out 50 years of continuity and starting over. This thinned out the herd of multiple Supermen, Batmen, et al., generally combining them rather than resorting to murder. The key moment, however, came when the one and only Supergirl was killed. As in killed and doesn't come back.

The cover of #7, by George Pérez, with Superman crying and holding Supergirl's lifeless body, hits all the notes: It isn't just memorable and historic, it's a striking image reminiscent in its own pop-culture way of Michelangelo's *Pietà*. It's been used on dozens of other covers as homages, rip-offs, parodies. And just about any superhero collector would rank it, for its combination of nostalgia value, significance, emotional impact and aesthetics, as the ultimate prize, the Holy Grail.

Lord knows Jonathan Mankuta wanted it. Amazingly, one of his earliest deals, in 1997, was for all 12 covers of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, including #7. He paid roughly \$6,000—a steal even then.

People in the hobby have an escalating idea of prices: a lowball price, then fair market, then a high auction price, then crazy money or stupid money, something only an idiot would pay. Far off in the clouds, way above that, is life-changing money.

Mankuta tells me, "Right after I got the *Crisis* covers, a guy asked, 'What would it take for you to sell them?' I said \$100,000." But the guy couldn't come up with it. Later another guy said the same thing: "What would it take?" Mankuta told him \$125,000. When this guy was ready to pull the trigger, Mankuta got cold feet. There were certain covers he couldn't imagine living without.

"They're like his lifeblood," says Will Gabri-El, the third person to ask the magic question. And as in all good stories, the third time was the charm. "What would it take?"

"I told him \$150,000," says Mankuta. "That's half a house."

It was also too rich for Will. But he didn't say no, because that's not his way. I have done phone autopsies with Will of deals I screwed up, and he always has instant, quiet, John Madden—perfect color play on what I could have done. To close a deal, Will has patience and persistence and can think three steps ahead, which came in handy with Mankuta.

It took a couple of years. They started e-mailing and phoning each other with trade and cash counterproposals. Will says, "Jon was friendly, but sometimes he'd say stuff like 'I'd rather whore my mom than sell this piece.' And his mom would be right there in the room."

Ultimately Mankuta couldn't stand to give up #7, the death of Supergirl. He pulled it back and kept it and a few others. He threw in some substitutions instead, and in late 2002 they came to an agreement. Will had a year to pay it off.

The final price?

Will is, as usual, circumspect. "It might not be good for the market," he finally says, "to let those numbers out." It was nowhere near the asking price, but it was new territory for Pérez. Still enough to make a down payment on a house? Oh yeah, and then some.

The withholding of #7 caused Will some distress; successfully prying it from Mankuta would have been a terrific difficult-deal story, the kind of thing the rest of us would have shaken our heads at and slapped Will on the back for, telling him that cover was rightfully his. And what would it have been valued at—\$50,000, \$75,000? Hard to say.

Mankuta says something I accept at first: "No amount Will could offer me could get me to part with it. The #7 is more important than money." But as I think about it, the phrase begins to strike me as some kind of open-sesame to understanding why he was really keeping it.

After I read Muensterberger's book on collecting, I had a dark night of the soul, one of those nights that last about three weeks. I went back to my art portfolio with a critical eye. It seemed like a sprinkle of diamonds cast among a ton of cinder blocks. Some pieces pleased me aesthetically—there's something attractive about the joining of words and pictures to form a narrative. But others were clearly inferior—dead space, sloppy inking, placeholders. Here was my 1921 George Herriman *Krazy Kat*, a stellar example of a strip whose artistic lines Picasso and James Joyce admired, but here also was a late *Howard the Duck* wash page by a writer and an artist I didn't like, from a story I'd never read and that I'd bought because, at the moment, I'd needed it. It was as plain as the difference between sipping a 1982 Chateau Mouton Rothschild and drinking it down to the stem of the glass, urgently finishing the bottle.

The final arbiter was my wife, whose Episcopalian good taste my hobby had challenged long enough. She recommended keeping the Edward Gorey, the Lynda Barry and some of the Kirbys but for God's sake to thin out the stuff whose nostalgic value outweighed its artistic merit. My grip slowly relaxed. I sold more than half my collection, and I haven't regretted a single departure. God bless eBay. God bless other people's nostalgia.

I continue collecting but not in the same way. I sell more than I buy. I don't have that fever when I go to a convention. Sometimes when I'm feeling stress, I find myself cruising eBay the way a binge eater pages through the Williams-Sonoma catalog. But I catch myself. Usually. I wrestle with each purchase as if it were the one that could send me off the ledge and back into the pit.

Twelve pieces of artwork hang in my office. Each has a reason for being there. For instance, right over my desk is a Jack Kirby collage in which Mister Fantastic, floating over a weird geometric planet, is saying, "I've done it!! I'm drifting into a world of limitless dimensions!!" Which is exactly how I like to feel when writing. Below it is a Gene Colan splash with Doctor Strange helpless and paralyzed in a maelstrom; the text tells us only that "planet Earth is no more." This is too often how I feel when writing.

Puzzling over the emotional resonance art has, I make a phone call to Mankuta one night. We have an oddly personal conversation; though I've known him for years as a collector, the fact that I'm writing an article has made him eager to expose every detail of his life. His favorite TV show at the moment is *Survivor*, and the idea of that kind of warts-and-all attention is arousing for him. "Ask me anything," he says. "No, really. Really."

It turns out he hasn't used the *Crisis*

money to buy a house, though it seems to be well on its way to spent. He's thinking of selling something else, and this time he's sure he'll use the money to buy property, but he hasn't really nailed down any specifics yet.

After some light chat, with Mankuta doing silly characters—he hopes for a career in voice-over work—I burrow down without much grace and ask, as carefully as I can, "When did you find out your mother had leukemia?"

His voice changes. It becomes less cocky and more strained as he tells me the sad story of where she told him: at the Honda dealership where he worked. She wore sunglasses; he could see her crying; it tore him up. But he can't pinpoint a year. "Nineteen ninety-six? Maybe."

"And when did you start collecting art?"

He can't remember this, though he's told me a few times already: 1996. We talk it through until the chronology is right. She told him, he moved back home, and he almost immediately started collecting artwork. But he really doesn't see a connection.

All he knows is that his mother's leukemia is even worse than the death of his dog. "He was the closest thing I had to a brother. He died in my arms," he says. "He was a Dobie-coonhound mix—looked like Krypto," he adds, referring to Superboy's dog.

"What was his name?"

"Krypto." He pauses here. This is a different Mankuta from the one I've been talking to. He's definitely shaken by this. "You know what's ironic? My dog died in my arms the day after Superman died in the comics. That was so fucked-up. That was literally the worst moment in my life. My best friend."

I can see it clearly—his cradling the poor dog, the raw emotion on his face, the loss, the utter desolation—and I realize I can visualize it very well indeed. Chilled, I ask, "Is it coincidence or something more that you love *Crisis* #7 so much?"

"What do you mean?"

"What's on that cover?"

There is a long pause, a rare thing when talking to Mankuta. "I never even thought about it. Wow, that's amazing." He's talking now as much for himself as for me. "I'm looking at the art right now. Superman is devastated, and his world has crumbled, and that's all I could think of: This dog was such a sweetheart. Why is he suffering? Please, Lord, take him quietly. I was selfish because I wasn't willing to let him go when the doctor said, 'Let me put him to sleep.' I said, 'There's always hope.' And because of that, I caused my best friend to have a painful death in my arms. I would give up everything I own to spare him that pain."

There's a quiet moment here, and it's

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awkward for both of us. Then he puts me on the phone with his mother, Berta.

She's sweet and funny and a bit shy. She thinks the world of her son. "He looks like a rock-and-roll guy," she says, "and he dresses flashy, I guess. He goes with a lot of different girls. But he's the sweetest guy inside. I don't think he's interested in settling down with a family the way I hope he would." She pauses. "He can do any voice. And he's not ashamed to do them for anyone." She laughs in a way that announces she's self-aware, that she knows how her son might come off, but she loves him anyway.

Her medication, Glevic, is working wonders. She's off the interferon, so things are okay. We say good night, and I hurry off the phone.

It's dark in my office. I think a bit about Superman, the last son of the destroyed planet Krypton. An only child, like Mankuta, but he's also an

orphan. And that word, *orphan*, won't go away right now. There's Superman on the cover of *Crisis* #7, cradling in his arms Supergirl—Kara, his only relative—realizing that now he is the sole survivor of his race and completely alone in the universe in a way none of us could understand.

I try to see the art through Mankuta's eyes, and I find not just the past but what might be coming. The cover is a talisman and a life raft. It is literally priceless. It's like a ritual Day of the Dead painting of skeletons by an artist attempting to control death—only in this case with an even tighter fist, because Mankuta actually owns it. The problems Mankuta has already suffered are hard enough, but he is banking against far more intimate losses, and no amount of crazy money can buy that kind of hope.



"Sorry, kid—no Game Boys this year. Santa's saving all his money to buy his little helper here a new set of knockers."

Dustin Hoffman

(continued from page 169)

was in Los Angeles, and we were away from each other for a few days. I came back to L.A. and told him there was hardly any dialogue in a scene I had to shoot on a certain day. I was supposed to be exhausted from running away from him for three days, so I said I'd stayed up all night for a couple of days, and I winked at him. I was kidding. It was the days of Studio 54, and it was my way of saying I'd partied all weekend. We laughed about it. He said something like, "Well, why don't you try acting next time." It was fun.

8

PLAYBOY: Does effusive praise turn you off?
HOFFMAN: It's discomfiting. When I was studying autism for *Rain Man*, I was trying to figure out how I could bring it to something close to me that I could understand. I knew all the outer things—autistic people don't make eye contact; they don't want to be touched. One thing most of us can do is praise the other guy, sometimes lavishly. But the hardest thing is to get praise. We become autistic. We stop making eye contact. It's too powerful. I tracked down the author of *Emergence: Labeled Autistic*. She said something that made me understand. She said the one thing she wanted more than anything else in life was for someone to hug her, but the second anyone did, she couldn't bear it. That sentence just destroyed me. On a certain level, that's all of us. We want praise more than anything, but once we get it it's sometimes painful.

9

PLAYBOY: Have you ever been typecast?
HOFFMAN: No. You don't need to go further than *The Graduate*. In the book, and originally in the script taken from the book, Benjamin Braddock is a New England Protestant, head of the debate team, track star. I mean, he looks like Redford, and that's how everyone expected Mike Nichols to cast him. In fact, when he previewed the film, people were coming up to him and saying, "God, it's such a good movie—it's a shame you miscast the lead," because they couldn't process me in that role. I was not typecast, and typecasting is the least interesting way to go, always.

10

PLAYBOY: What about other actors? Who else has been successfully cast against type?

HOFFMAN: I once met Clint Eastwood, and it was remarkable. I studied him as I spoke to him. I looked down, and his pants were a little short—they showed a bit too much of his socks. There was something so timid and shy and almost

gawky about him in real life. I remember thinking to myself, Someone should have cast him in *Meet John Doe*, the Frank Capra movie, because that's the real him. There's not a wisp of aggression about him. That's the real essence, not the guy who says, "Make my day."

11

PLAYBOY: What young actors do you admire?

HOFFMAN: Mark Ruffalo is a wonderful actor. I've worked with talented people—Jake Gyllenhaal, Jason Schwartzman. I don't know how young is young, but I just worked with Ben Stiller, and I think he's as sharp a comedian as one could wish for. Adam Sandler is the only actor I ever called up to meet out of the blue. It wasn't for me but for my kids. They kept talking about him. They saw his movies—those early ones, *Happy Madison* or whatever it is. They'd never asked if we could meet anybody, but they wanted to meet him. I got his number and called. I said, "I don't know you, but would you do it?" He said yeah. He was shocked. He was an hour late to the house and later admitted he was so nervous that he went around the block for 45 minutes. He couldn't even talk. He's a great basketball player. He played with my kids. I told him I loved *Punch-Drunk Love*, that it was one of the best performances of the year. He's a lovely man.

12

PLAYBOY: Would you rather hang out with men or women?

HOFFMAN: For whatever reason, I was never one of the guys. I wasn't on a football team. I played tennis because of my lack of stature. I was never in a club in high school. I would rather be in no club than in the club that takes anybody. I was never in a fraternity. The minute I finished high school and left my parents' home, I became aware of how extraordinary it could be to be with a woman on a daily basis. That's what I did. I got into relationships. The most wonderful thing was to hang out with your girlfriend. I don't understand the world of men. It's a foreign land to me. Men hang out. I never hang out with men. I have a passion for sitting down with a group of gals. I like the energy of women when they're together. They don't seem to have the same anxiety as a bunch of men looking around at who to fuck or discussing the deal they did or didn't make.

13

PLAYBOY: In *The Graduate*, you were seduced by an older woman, played by Anne Bancroft. But she wasn't that old, was she?

HOFFMAN: I was 30 and Anne was 35. It's all lighting.

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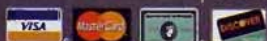
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PLAYBOY: What was your most embarrassing moment?

HOFFMAN: In the 1950s I would go to the drugstore, and it was no big thing. My mother wanted Kotex or something, and I had no problem. But to go to a drugstore to get what we then called prophylactics was different. I wouldn't dare ask a woman. I saw a male and thought, Okay, I can ask that guy. Sure enough, just before he got to me a woman came up, and I asked for two boxes of Band-Aids or something.

15

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about sex. How did you lose your virginity?

HOFFMAN: My parents went to Las Vegas one New Year's Eve weekend, and my brother Ronny threw a party. I loved that he let me be part of it—I was 15, and he's seven years older. I cooked steaks. It was one or two in the morning, and I saw a line of guys standing outside a bedroom door. They said, "Do you want to go next?" "What do you mean?" "Barbara's in there." I had met Barbara, a beautiful older woman, about 20. She was what in those days we called a nymphomaniac, which is not a word you hear anymore. She was servicing these guys, one after the other. I had never been laid, and I couldn't believe my good fortune. I went in. It was dark, and she said, "Is that you, Ronny?" I said yes, lying for fear that she'd reject me. I wasn't old enough to drive a car, so I thought maybe I wasn't old enough to drive a woman. I remember whistling because I wanted to appear relaxed as I was taking off my clothes. It was wonderful. I came quickly and kept humping and humping. I thought, Is that all there is? I kept waiting for the next fireworks. The humping went on for about 20 minutes until somebody opened the door. It was just like a movie: A shaft of light was thrown from the hallway onto my face, and she screamed because I wasn't my brother.

16

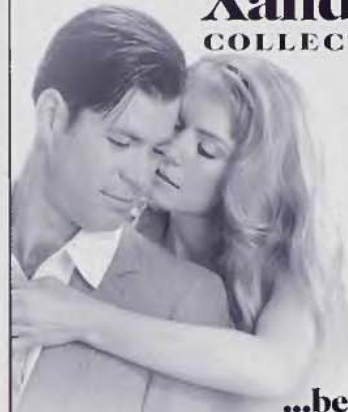
PLAYBOY: Were you traumatized? Was she? Have you recovered?

HOFFMAN: She was shocked just because I wasn't my brother. I jumped off her, stark naked, and left the room. I was kind of shocked and dizzy. I wound up in the living room, and guys were sitting around having beer and talking, and I was naked. This may have been the beginning of my acting career without my knowing it, because they stood up and applauded, and I liked the applause. What was disturbing about it was that I couldn't get laid again for another two years.

17

PLAYBOY: Do you think you've ever gone too far in researching a role?

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HOFFMAN: No. My wife told me on a couple of occasions that I carry baggage home with me after work. It's not that you're in character, because I've never understood what that means. You're not some character, you're just yourself, always, and you're just messing with yourself. You're more in an exaggerated zone of yourself, and that happened to me in *Straight Time*, certainly. I hung out with convicts for a couple of years. That was the hardest time my wife had living with me. The easiest, she says, was during *Tootsie*. She said I was the best girlfriend she's ever had.

18

PLAYBOY: How do you react when people approach you and imitate one of your characters or quote a famous line?

HOFFMAN: People tend to think they're the first ones to say what they say to you. People have come up to me for 35 years and said, "Plastics." But they look at me like no one else has ever said it, and that's what's amazing. You think to yourself, Well, that's about 4,500.

19

PLAYBOY: *Midnight Cowboy* was one of the first mainstream movies to be rated X.

Looking at it now, it seems tame.

HOFFMAN: When we were rehearsing it, Jon Voight and I suddenly said to each other—because we'd read the book by James Leo Herlihy—"These guys are gay." So we went to Schlesinger, who was openly gay, and said, "John, why aren't we just playing these guys gay? We avoid seeing them sleep together on the same dirty mattress on the floor in their abandoned dwelling." And John said, "Oh my God, I had enough trouble trying to get the studio to give me money, and now you want to do this? Nobody will come see this." I understood, and we laughed. When I did *Hook*, Bob Hoskins and I were rehearsing, and suddenly we looked at each other and realized it at the same time. We said, "These guys are gay!" Hook and Smee are a couple of old queens, and it was fun. Suddenly we rehearsed it that way. "Get over here, Smee. Give me a foot massage." We went to Spielberg, and he had the same reaction Schlesinger had had years before, because he said, "This is a kids' movie." But suddenly it made all the sense in the world. They were really good friends. They lived on a ship. They were devoted to each other.

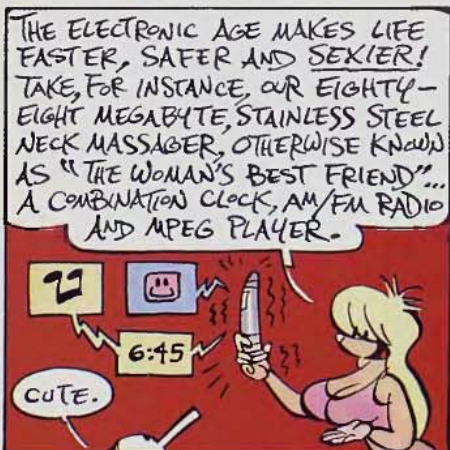
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PLAYBOY: You once said, "In middle age, you're no longer chained to a maniac." What did you mean?

HOFFMAN: One of the best things about middle age is that you wake up and you're no longer chained to a maniac. If you're a man, the maniac is your libido. You still have it; you're just not chained to it, meaning you're not dragging it around like an iron ball in the same way. You're still thinking about getting laid. It's just that other things start to permeate. Suddenly I'm walking on the beach and looking at shells, and I'm preferring the shells to women walking by in bathing suits. Someone says, "Geez, look at that girl." "Yeah, but look at that shell." I just turned 67, and I'm still at the age—knock on wood—when I can say and feel, "Okay, if I stopped aging right now I'd take this." I'll take 67 to the bank for the next 30 years. I want the chance to get older and older and older. George Burns said it best. When he turned 90 they asked, "Do you still have sex?" and he said, "Sure." They said, "What's it like?" And he said, "Did you ever shoot pool with a piece of rope?" God bless him.



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GODFATHER

(continued from page 132)

game of a twin bill with Philadelphia."

"Right," Michael said.

Geraci lit a cigarette. "Not a baseball fan, eh?"

"Used to be."

Geraci wasn't surprised. Seeing the business side of gambling ruined sports for a lot of the smarter guys. "This could be the Bums' year," Geraci said.

"That's what I keep hearing," Michael said. "And of course you're forgiven."

"For what?"

"For pointing out the obvious."

Geraci lifted the steaks off the grill and onto a platter. "It's a gift I have," he said.

An hour later Geraci arrived at Two Toms with four of his men and positioned them outside. He took a seat alone and sipped an espresso. He wasn't afraid. Michael Corleone, unlike his brothers—the brutish Sonny and the pathetic Fredo—had inherited the old man's deliberate nature. He wouldn't order a hit on a hunch. He'd make sure, no matter how long it took. Whatever test was coming, however galling it was to be tested by the likes of Michael Corleone, Nick Geraci would respond with honor. He was confident he would emerge unscathed.

Though he'd never heard Salvatore Tessio say a bad word about Michael, Geraci didn't doubt that Sally had thrown in with Barzini. He had to be angry about the nepotism that made a don out of a greenhorn like Michael. He had to see the folly of cutting the organization off from its neighborhood roots to move west and become—what? Geraci had taken over countless once-thriving neighborhood businesses built by industrious, illiterate, immigrant fathers and ruined by American-born sons with business degrees and dreams of expansion.

Geraci checked his watch (a college graduation gift from Tessio). Michael certainly hadn't inherited the late don's legendary punctuality. Geraci ordered a second espresso.

Time and time again, Geraci had proven himself a loyal member of the Corleone organization and, still shy of his 40th birthday, maybe its best earner. Once he'd been a boxer, a heavyweight, both as Ace Geraci (a boyhood nickname that he let stick, even though it mocked him for acceding to the American pronunciation of his name: *Juh-RAY-see* instead of *Jair-AH-chee*) and under numerous aliases (he was Sicilian but fair-haired, able to pass as Irish or German). He'd kept his feet for six rounds against a man who, a few years later, knocked the heavyweight champion of the world on his ass. But Geraci had hung around gyms since he was a little kid. He'd vowed never to become one of those punch-drunk geezers shuffling around smelling

of camphor and clutching a little bag of yesterday's doughnuts. He fought for money, not glory. His godfather in Cleveland (who was also, Geraci gradually learned, the Godfather of Cleveland) connected him with Tessio, who ran the biggest sports gambling operation in New York. Fixed fights meant fewer blows to the head. Soon Geraci was called on to give out back-alley beatings (beginning with two kids who'd assaulted the daughter of Amerigo Bonasera, an undertaker friendly with Vito Corleone). The beatings punished deadbeats and loudmouths who had it coming and earned Geraci enough money to go to college. Before he was 25, he'd finished his degree, left the enforcer racket and was a rising man of promise in Tessio's regime. He'd started out with some dubious qualities—he was the only guy hanging out at the Patrick Henry Social Club who hadn't been born in Brooklyn or Sicily, the only one with a college degree, one of the few who didn't want to carry guns or visit whores—but the best way to get ahead was to make money for the people above him, and Geraci was such a gifted earner that soon his exotic flaws were forgotten. His most brilliant tactic was to exaggerate his take on every job. He handed over 60 or 70 percent of everything instead of the required 50. Even if he had been caught, what were they going to do, whack him? It was foolproof. His overpayments were an investment with jackpot-level payouts. The more he made for the men above him, the safer he was and the faster he rose. The higher he rose, the more men there were underneath him paying him 50 percent. And if the greedy morons held out on him, he was smart enough to catch it. It became clear all over New York that there was a difference between getting hit by the toughest guy you ever fought and having your eye socket flattened into a bloody paste by a blow from a former heavyweight prizefighter. The threat of what Geraci could do became a part of the mythology of the street. Soon he rarely needed to do anything to get his money but ask for it. If that. Intimidation is a better weapon than a fist or a gun.

During the war Geraci mastered the ration-stamp black market and held a draft-exempt civilian position as a loading-dock inspector. Tessio proposed him for membership in the Corleone family, and at the ceremony his finger was cut by Vito himself. After the war Geraci started his own shylock operation. He specialized in contractors, who at first never realized how front-loaded their expenses were and underestimated how tough it was, at the end of jobs, to get everyone who owed you money to pay (here, too, Geraci could be of service). He also targeted business owners who were degenerate gamblers or had any other weakness that made them seek quick cash. Before long

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Geraci was able to use those businesses to launder money and give wise guys something to put on their tax returns—at least until the time came to bust the place out. For 30 days deliveries streamed through the front door and went straight out the back: presents for wives and girlfriends, gestures of friendship to cops, but otherwise sold to bargain hunters from the neighborhood. Once the bills came, so too would a mysterious fire—dago lightning. Geraci hated both the term and the crude endgame strategy, and he put it to rest by working on a night-school law degree and supplanting the fires with perfectly legal bankruptcy proceedings. He incorporated every business in question (Geraci had a guy in Delaware), sheltering the owner's personal assets. If the owner was a good sport, Geraci tossed in a thousand bucks and some land in Florida or Nevada. When Michael Corleone took advantage of his father's semi-retirement and covertly got involved with prostitution and narcotics, the businesses Vito had refused to enter, he'd put Geraci in charge of narcotics and let him hand-pick several men from Tessio's regime and from what was left of Sonny's. Within months Geraci worked some things—with the great Sicilian don Caesar Indelicato, with the powers that be on the docks in New Jersey and Jacksonville, and with airports in New York and the Midwest, where he operated several small planes owned by companies the Corleones controlled but did not on paper own. The Corleones, unbeknownst to most of the men in their organization, were making as much from narcotics as anybody in America. Without that money they could never have amassed a war chest big enough to go after the Barzinis and the Tattaglias.

Finally, just after nine o'clock, Peter Clemenza and three bodyguards walked

into Two Toms and sat down at Geraci's table. Geraci took it as a bad sign that Michael didn't come, that he'd sent his caporegime instead, the one who over the years had supervised the family's most important hits. Which sealed it: Tessio was dead.

"You eat?" Clemenza said, wheezing from the effort of the walk from his car to the table.

Geraci shook his head.

But Clemenza waved a meaty paw to indicate the restaurant's aroma. "How can you resist? We'll get a little something. Just a snack." Clemenza ordered and devoured an antipasto cruda, a plate of caponata, two baskets of bread and linguine with clam sauce. Last of a breed, Clemenza, almost literally so—the last capo Michael had inherited from his father, now that Tessio was dead.

"Tessio's not dead," Clemenza whispered to Geraci on the way out.

Geraci's stomach lurched. They were going to make him pull the trigger himself, a test of loyalty. Geraci's certainty that he would pass was no solace at all.

Darkness had fallen. He rode in the backseat with Clemenza. On the way, Clemenza lit a cigar and asked Geraci what he knew and what he could guess. Geraci told the truth. He did not know, yet, that earlier that day the heads of the Barzini and Tattaglia families had both been killed. He couldn't have known the reason Clemenza was late: because he first had to garrote Carlo Rizzi, Michael Corleone's own brother-in-law. These and several other strategic murders had all been made to look like the work of either the Barzinis or the Tattaglias. Geraci didn't know that, either. But the things Geraci had been able to surmise were in fact correct. He took the cigar Clemenza offered him but didn't light it. He said he'd smoke it later.

The car pulled into a closed Sinclair station just off Flatbush Avenue. Geraci got out and so did everyone in the two cars that had pulled in beside them, one with Clemenza's men, one with Geraci's. Clemenza and his driver stayed in the car. When Geraci turned and saw them there, an electric ribbon of panic shot through him. He wheeled his head around, looking for the men who would kill him. Trying to guess how it would happen. Trying to figure out why his own men stood by, passive, watching. Why they'd betrayed him.

Clemenza rolled down his window. "It ain't like that, kiddo," he said. "This situation here is just too...." He put both palms to his jowly face and rubbed it fast, the way you'd scrub a stain. He let out a long breath. "Me and Sally, we go back I don't want to think about how long. Some things a man just don't want to see. You know?"

Geraci knew.

The fat man wept. Clemenza made little noise doing it and didn't seem embarrassed. He left without saying anything more, waving to his driver, rolling up his window and looking straight ahead.

Geraci watched the taillights of Clemenza's car disappear.

Inside, toward the back of the first filthy service bay, two corpses in jumpsuits lay in a heap, their blackening blood together on the floor. In the next bay, flanked only by Al Neri, Michael's new pet killer and an ex-cop Geraci had some history with, was Salvatore Tessio. The old man sat on a stack of oil cans, hunched over, staring at his shoes like an athlete removed from a game that was hopelessly lost. His lips moved, but it was nothing Geraci could understand. He trembled, but he had some kind of condition and had been trembling for a year now. There was only the sound of Geraci's own footsteps and, wafting in from another room, thin, distorted laughter that came from a television set.

Neri nodded hello. Tessio did not look up. Neri put a hand on the old warrior's shoulder and squeezed, a gesture of grotesque reassurance. Tessio went straight from the chair to his knees, still not looking up, lips still moving.

Neri handed Geraci a pistol, butt first. Geraci wasn't good with guns and didn't know much about them. This one was heavy as a cash box and long as a tent spike—a lot more gun than seemed necessary. He'd been around long enough to know that the weapon of choice in matters like this was a .22 with a silencer—three quick shots to the head (the second to make sure, the third to make extra sure and no fourth because silencers jam when you fire too many shots too fast). Whatever this was, it was bigger than a .22. No silencer. He stood in that dark garage with Tessio, a man he loved, and Neri, who'd once cuffed him, chained



"Don't worry, hon. If your husband still believes in Santa Claus, he'll believe anything you tell him."

him to a radiator, punched him in the balls and gotten away with it. Nick Geraci took a deep breath. He'd always been a man who followed his head and not his heart. The heart was just a bloody motor. The head was meant to drive. He'd always thought there would come a time, when he was old and set, when he would move down to Key West with Charlotte and play the affluent fool.

Now, looking at Tessio, he realized that would never happen. Tessio was 20-some years older than Nick Geraci, which until that moment had seemed like a long time. Tessio had been born in the last century. He would die in the next minute. He'd lived his life governed by his head and not his heart, and where had it gotten him? Here. A man who loved him was about to reduce that same head to blood and pulp.

"I'm sorry," Tessio muttered, still looking down.

This may have been directed at the Corleones or Geraci or God. Geraci certainly didn't want to know which one. He took the gun and walked around behind Tessio, whose bald spot, lit only by streetlights, gleamed in the darkness.

"No," Neri said, "not like that. In front. Look him in the eyes."

"You're fucking kidding me."

He cleared his throat. "I don't suppose I look like I'm kidding you."

"Whose idea is that?" Geraci said. Neri didn't have a gun in his hand, but Geraci could not leave this scummy garage alive if he shot anyone but Tessio. From that back office, the television set erupted in a gale of tinny applause.

"Don't know, don't care," Neri said. "I'm just the messenger, sir."

Geraci cocked his head. This dumbass didn't seem witty enough to make a joke about shooting the messenger. But he did seem sadistic enough to take it on himself to make the killing as cruel as possible. And sir? How did he mean that? "Salvatore Tessio," Geraci said, "no matter what he's done, deserves more respect than that."

"Fuck youse!" Tessio said, loud now, but eyes still on the slimy floor.

"Look up," Neri told Tessio. "Traitor." Trembling no worse, the old man did

as he was told, eyes dry, staring into Geraci's but already far away. He muttered a rapid string of names that meant nothing to Nick Geraci.

Geraci raised the gun, both sickened by and grateful for the sight of his own steady hand. He pressed the barrel gently against the old man's soft forehead. Tessio did not move, did not blink, did not even shake anymore. His saggy flesh pillowed around the gun sight. Geraci had never before killed a man with a gun. "Just business," Tessio whispered.

What made my father great, Michael Corleone had said at his father's eulogy, was that nothing was ever just business. Everything was personal. My father was just a man, as mortal as anyone. But he

him, obliterating the hesitation he'd felt. He felt no remorse, no fear, no disgust, no anger. I am a killer, he thought. Killers kill.

He spun around, laughing not out of madness but joy—more intense, better than the rush he'd gotten the time he sampled his own heroin. He knew what was happening. This was not the first man he'd killed. Sometimes when he killed he felt nothing at all, but even that might have been a lie he told himself. Because the plain truth was that killing people felt good. Anyone who'd done it could tell you that, but they won't. They won't! A book Geraci had read about the First World War had a whole chapter on the subject. Hardly

anyone will talk about it because for most people the bad feeling that comes later, after the good feeling, shuts them up.

Plus, any shithead could guess that everything that would happen after a person had proclaimed it felt good to kill people—and after he had convinced his listeners that he was serious—would be entirely bad. Still, it felt good. Almost sexual (another thing any shithead could guess would be bad to admit). You're powerful and the dead guy's not. You're alive and the dead guy's dead. You've done something everyone on earth has at some heated moment wanted to do and that most never will. It was easy and it felt magnificent.

Geraci practically skated across the scummy floor of that garage, certain that, this time, the bad feeling would not come later. There would be no later. Everything would always be now. Everything is always now.

Geraci wanted to give every live man there a bear hug and a highball, but he settled for striding toward them, raising his pistol before they could raise theirs. Being the cowardly cocksuckers that at heart they surely were, they hit the ground, which gave him a clear shot through the doorway to the office at his target: the rectangle of hazy blue light behind them. Geraci fired. The shock he felt at the recoil (was Neri really stupid enough to give him a gun with more than one bullet? What a dumbass!) gave

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was a great man, and I am not the only person here today who thought of him as a god among men.

"What are you waiting for?" Tessio whispered. "Sono fottuto. Shoot me. You pussy."

Geraci shot.

Tessio's body flew backward so hard his knees made a sound like snapped roof shingles. The air was filled with a glowing pinkish-gray mist. A yarmulke-size piece of Tessio's skull caromed off the wall of the garage, smacked Neri in the face and clattered to the floor. The tang of Tessio's airborne blood mixed with the smell of his shit.

Nick Geraci rubbed his shoulder—the pistol kick was like a savage right cross—and felt a wave of euphoria wash over

way a split second later to a dull pop, a puff of toxic smoke, a belched little fireball and a tiny, satisfying afterglow of falling glass. Human beings have never built a machine more satisfying to destroy than a television set.

And then silence.

For Geraci it seemed like an awfully long silence.

"Hey!" shouted a raspy-voiced man, one of Geraci's guys. "I was watching that."

It cracked everyone up. Just what the doctor ordered. Neri patted Geraci softly on the back. Geraci handed him the gun. Then everyone went to work.

Clemenza's men used a bone saw on the two corpses who'd been assigned to kill Michael Corleone. Geraci sat on that stack of oil cases and watched, so flooded with ebbing adrenaline that everything seemed like the same thing. Grimy window. Calendar with topless wrench-wielding dairymaid. Fan belts on metal hooks. Friend's corpse. Button on cuff. A universe of undifferentiated equivalency.

When the men finished, Neri, at gunpoint, handed Geraci the bone saw and pointed to Tessio's head. Around the gaping entry wound, the dead man's flesh was already proud.

Numb, Geraci took the saw and dropped to one knee. Later he would look back on this moment with fury. But at the time, Geraci could have been checking the pH in his pool. When a man sees things for their essential literalness, how is sawing off the head of a dead

father figure so different from separating a succulent turkey leg from the carcass? A thicker bone, true, but a bone saw is a better tool than some knife your brother-in-law got you as a wedding present.

Nick Geraci closed Tessio's bulging eyes and drew back the saw. Later had come—sooner rather than later, which in a moment of clarity Geraci recognized as later's way.

Neri clamped his hand on Geraci's forearm and took the saw.

"That was an order too."

"What was an order?" Geraci said.

"Seeing how willing you were to do it."

Geraci knew better than to ask how willing he'd seemed or, worse, who'd given the order. He merely stood and said nothing, went blank and revealed nothing. He motioned toward the pocket of his bloodied suit jacket. Neri nodded. Geraci took out the cigar Clemenza had given him, a Cuban the color of dark chocolate, and sat back down on the oil cans to enjoy it.

Clemenza's men stripped the assassins naked and stuffed their clothing and the 10 severed body parts into a suitcase. Tessio's corpse was left alone.

Which was when Geraci figured everything out.

There was no need to send a message to the Barzinis. Everyone involved with Tessio's betrayal was already too dead to benefit from messages. And of course the Corleones wanted Tessio's body found. This part of Brooklyn was identified with

the Barzinis. The cops would presume they had ordered the hit. The detectives would puzzle over the unidentifiable corpses of the assassins, and none of the conclusions they'd draw would involve the Corleones. The Corleones wouldn't even need to trouble their judges or their people in the NYPD. And it wouldn't take the usual forgiven gambling tabs and extended grace periods on loans to get the newspapers to fall in line. They'd play this just the way Michael Corleone wanted and would feel virtuous about every squalid inch of type.

It was, Geraci had to admit, brilliant.

With a final glance back at the corpse of his mentor, Geraci got into the back of a car with Al Neri. Geraci wasn't afraid or even angry. For now, he was only a man, staring straight ahead and ready to confront whatever came next.

The crematory was owned by none other than Amerigo Bonasera. Neri had his own key. He and Geraci went right in the front door, stripped out of their bloody clothes and stepped into the best of what they could find in a back room. Geraci was a big man. The closest thing to a fit was a linen suit the color of baby shit and two sizes too small. Bonasera was semi-retired, living most of the time in Miami Beach. His son-in-law took the suitcase and the wad of bloody clothes from Neri and didn't say a word.

One of Geraci's men drove him home. It wasn't even midnight. Charlotte was still wide awake, sitting up in bed, doing the *Times* crossword puzzle. She was good at crossword puzzles but only did them when something was eating at her.

Nick Geraci stood at the foot of their bed. He knew how he looked in that suit. He cocked his head, arched his eyebrows in a way he hoped was comical and thrust out his arms the way a vaudevillian would as he said ta-da!

His wife did not laugh or even smile. The "gangland-style slayings" of Phillip Tattaglia and Emilio Barzini had been on the television news. She tossed the *Times* aside.

"Long day," Geraci said. "Long story, okay, Char? Let's leave it at that."

He watched her size him up. He watched her face go slowly slack, watched her make herself not say she wasn't going anywhere, watched her swallow her desire to ask to hear the story. She didn't say a word.


Nick Geraci got undressed, tossing the suit over a chair. In the time it took him to piss, brush his teeth and put on his pajamas, Charlotte managed to make the suit disappear (Geraci never saw it again), turn off the lights, get back into bed and pretend to have fallen asleep.

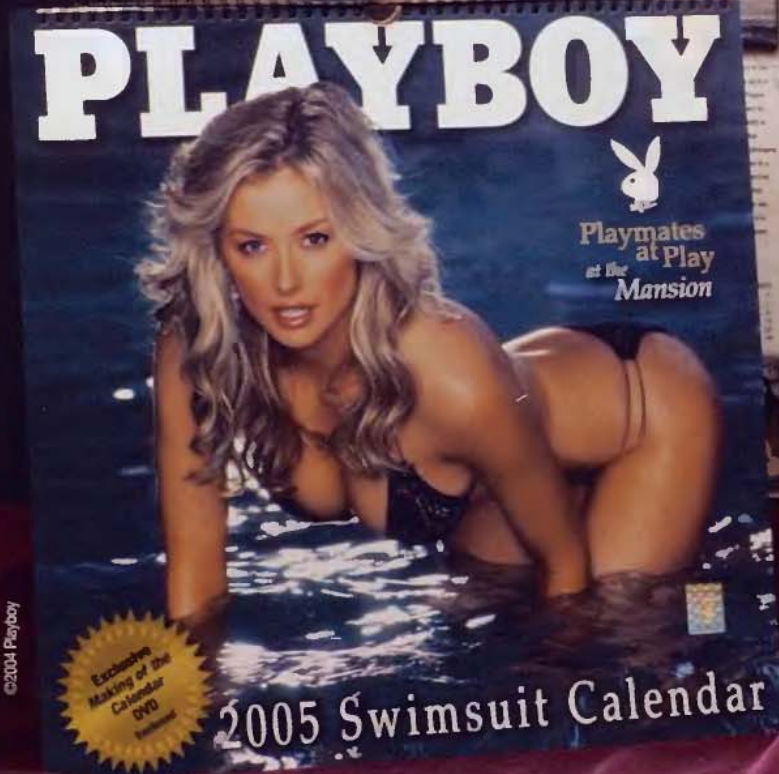


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PLAYMATE NEWS



On *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*, Pam makes her mark as a woman of letters.

PAM'S NOVEL IDEA

The professors in writing programs tell you to write what you know—and Pam Anderson certainly lets some of herself slip into her debut novel, *Star*. The book follows a small-town girl, Star Wood Leigh, who finds fame when she poses for *Mann* magazine, appears on *Lifeguards, Inc.* and beds a string of bad boys. To promote her book Pam went on *The Tonight Show* and bantered with Howard Stern. *Star* got rave reviews—Anne Rice



called it “an absolute frolic.” Pam, who pens a column for *Jane* magazine, told *People* that the leap to writing a novel was a natural progression. “I’ve kept a journal since I was young,” she said. “I love telling stories.” In the book Pam’s alter ego enjoys a number of steamy sex scenes that may or may not have been inspired by her real-life romps with the likes of Tommy Lee and Kid Rock. (It’s dedicated to “all the men I’ve loved before.”) Even nonliterary Pamela devotees can safely judge this book by its cover—she appears nearly naked on the book jacket. Watch out, F. Scott Fitzgerald: Pam is already working on the sequel.



20 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

Miss December 1984 and PMOY 1985 Karen Velez not only discovered wild parties at the Mansion, she found her future husband there. Karen met Six Million Dollar Man Lee Majors at one of Hef’s movie nights, and the two later got married and had two children. After 11 years the marriage ended, but Karen and Lee remained close. “I love him to death,” she told us.



LOOSE LIPS



“Marilyn Monroe. I thought she was funny, complicated and obviously very attractive, very beautiful.” —**John Kerry**, on who he thought was the sexiest Hollywood starlet when he was 20 years old



RED CARPET DIARIES



Centerfolds and video games go hand in joystick, as our girls proved in Los Angeles at G-Phoria: The Award Show for Gamers. From left: Julie McCullough, Brande Roderick, Pennelope Jimenez and Anna Nicole Smith, with a hot shoulder. Right: Devin DeVasquez of Avalon nightclub in Hollywood for Bench Warmer’s Third Annual Summer Party.

HOT SHOT



CHRISTINA SANTIAGO & LAUREN MICHELLE HILL

THREE THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT PILAR LASTRA

1. She has a role in the forthcoming movie *Malibu Spring Break*.

2. She is in touch with her Latin background. "I love salsa dancing," she says. "There is something about Latin music that takes over your entire body. It just makes you want to move."

3. After reading a book that was written by a friend, *The Complete Asshole's Guide to Handling Chicks*, Pilar was inspired to present a female perspective on dating. She is currently at work writing *The Complete Chick's Guide to Handling Assholes*. "You have to tame the bull before you can ride it," she says.



POP QUESTIONS: DALENE KURTIS

Q: What do you remember most about living at the Mansion?

A: I lived there for three months. Everything was great, but what I hold closest to my heart is seeing Hef walking around in his slippers and bathrobe.

Q: Are you really dating Nick Carter?

A: Gosh, that photo was everywhere! He is a great guy. It was said we were dating, but we just hang out as friends.

Q: Are you typically stalked by the paparazzi?

A: No, that was my first experience with that. I keep a low profile.



MY FAVORITE PLAYMATE

By Kerri Kasem

My favorite Centerfold is Miss March 2002 Tina Jordan. Tina has been my best friend since she

moved into the apartment next door to mine three years ago. We do everything together. Sometimes I babysit for her daughter. Tina's so genuine and kind, and she always has a smile on her face. She has an incredibly positive attitude toward life.



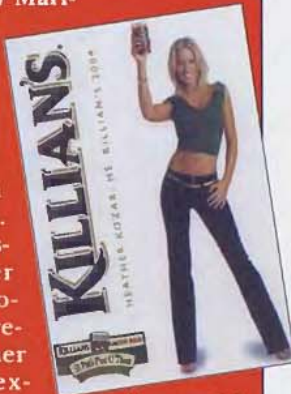
RABBIT RADIO

Howard Stern's show is taped down the street from our New York City office, so when the Playmates are in town they usually stop by to hang with the King of All Media. On a recent morning Cara Wakelin promoted Playboy's first-ever swimsuit calendar. (That's her on the cover.) On another day wannabe Playmate Jillian Grace (right) was evaluated by Senior Photo Editor Kevin Kuster. The great news? She may appear as a Playmate in a future issue.



PLAYMATE GOSSIP

Anna Nicole Smith spent a week in Nebraska City, Nebraska at Camp Kindle, a retreat for kids whose lives have been affected by HIV. In typical Anna fashion, she asked her stylist to redecorate her room with scented candles and some fancy pillows.... PMOY 1999 Heather Kozar (below) is the new Killian's beer poster girl.... Miss March 1987 Marina Baker has been elected as mayor of a small coastal town in the south of England. She has discussed her lifelong political awareness and her Playmate experiences on BBC radio....



Have a pint for Heather.

PMOYs Julie Cialini and Stacy Sanchez flanked Palms Hotel & Casino owner George Maloof (below) at a Playboy Home Entertainment VIP party in Vegas.... Jenny McCarthy signed a multipicture deal with Beverly Hills Film Studios. The first project is *Dirty Love*, which is directed by her husband, John Asher.... Jodi Ann Paterson appears in commercials for Taco Bell and Bacardi.... During the



Viva las Playboy!

American Meat Institute's annual Hot Dog Lunch on Capitol Hill, animal rights activists Kari Kennell and Lauren Anderson donned lettuce bikinis on behalf of PETA. Not surprisingly, even the carnivores were captivated.

cyberclub

See your favorite Playmate's pictorial in the Cyber Club at cyber.playboy.com.



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Playboy On The Scene

WHAT'S HAPPENING, WHERE IT'S HAPPENING AND WHO'S MAKING IT HAPPEN



Easy Rider

To live the dream, Jake Burton Carpenter first had to invent it

The closest Jake Burton Carpenter has come to dying was not on a mountain. Nearly 30 years ago, when he was making snowboard prototypes, a couple of the new contraptions rocketed out of his pin router and right through a wall. "Man, it was scary," he laughs. "I was a total loser in shop class." Carpenter has come a long way since the days when he'd load up his station wagon with boards to hawk at trade shows and ski resorts. (Pictured at left is an early Burton board.) Snowboarding is now one of America's fastest-growing sports, Burton Snowboards holds a third of the market it created, and Carpenter—generally credited with inventing the pastime—is a hero to the millions who strap in every year. "I never dreamed it would get as big as it did," he says. "I just thought I could make a living doing something cool." While active in the running of his company, he still gets 100 days of slope time a year, along with 60 days of surfing. Last year he took his family on a 10-month, six-continent surfing-and-snowboarding tour. Now 50, he is in many ways the same chill NYU grad who left Manhattan for New England 27 years ago—living day to day and taking it all in stride. "If I got buried in an avalanche tomorrow," he says, "I would have no regrets." —David Critchell 221

Grapevine

Meet the Simpsons

No wonder censors wanted to nip Janet Jackson's exhibitionism—wardrobe malfunctions are catching. Here **JESSICA SIMPSON** sings her chest out at an L.A.-area concert. You have to love how she hits those high notes.

GALAXYSTARMAKING.COM



Fanning the Flame

Mark our words: **PENNY FLAME** is going to blow up. Thanks to an Audrey Hepburn look and a smoking role in the hotbody.com film *Undress for Success*, her image has burned its way onto our retinas.

LAWRENCE LUCIFER FILMMAKING.COM



Incubust

Adhering to the model-rock star dating mandate, **CAROLYN MURPHY**, the face of Estée Lauder, has been linked to Incubus lead singer Brandon Boyd. At the CFDA Fashion Awards, she put the rack into rock and roll.



Cat on a Hot TV Show

When she's not playing Emily, the sexy assistant on *Entourage*, SAMAIRE ARMSTRONG knocks faux-leather boots with L.A.'s Pussycat Dolls. In one episode, her boss asks, "Do you think my assistant is hot?" The unanimous answer: "Meow."

Give Peas a Chance

When the Black Eyed Peas perform, we can't see past the newest member, singer FERGIE. At a T-Mobile Sidekick II launch party, she shook up the Peas' hit "Where Is the Love?" Right here, Fergie.



CHRIS WITCKO/WIREIMAGE.COM

Royal Flesh

In the gritty film *Havoc*, *Princess Diaries* star ANNE HATHAWAY ditches her aristocratic ways. But in this shot her royal charms are still on display.



RENA GOODMAN/ELISA PRESS



Lucky Sevigny

Or should we say lucky Vincent Gallo? If you've seen the provocative movie *Brown Bunny*, you know exactly what we're talking about. At the Viva Glam Casino to benefit DIFFA in NYC, *Bunny* star CHLOË SEVIGNY pleases the paparazzi.

JAMES DEVANEY/WIREIMAGE.COM

Potpourri



NOT SEEING IS BELIEVING

Reading braille is tough if you've never had lessons. But if you slide one of these tight T-shirts over your favorite pair of breasts and dance your fingers all over them, you'll get the message right away. Braille T-shirts (\$30, notvanilla.us) come with your choice of phrases—"Harder faster deeper," "I need a licking," "Cheap and easy" and "Spank it"—written across the chest in high-density rubberized ink. (An English translation is printed inside the hem of the shirt for those who need it.) The cotton tees come in two colors: "pure black" and "dirty white."

WHIRLED PIECE

When the i-Top Pro (\$15, itoys.ca) first landed in our offices, we almost tossed it. Now it's our default conflict-resolution tool. Key to the top's appeal: It can display words and numbers as it spins, thanks to eight red LEDs that "write" on the air. The top is programmed with five different spinning-oriented games and remembers high scores. If you can beat 763 revolutions, we'll see you in the national championships.



THE ORIGINAL KING OF COMEDY

Since the world no longer has Lenny Bruce to kick around, we'll have to settle for *Let the Buyer Beware* (\$70, shoutfactory.com), a comprehensive new collection with six discs full of classic stand-up, interviews, rarities and historic moments such as an onstage bust and a 1959 conversation between Lenny and Hef. Lovingly packaged in an oversize hardcover book, this is a bona fide Bruce-ophile's dream. And don't worry about leaving it on your coffee table—if anyone balks at titles such as "How to Relax Your Colored Friends at Parties" or "Sign a Release? I Didn't Do My Fag at the Ballgame Bit Yet!," you can remind them what Lenny taught us: "The truth can never be offensive."

SOMETHING TO CHEW ON

There's a knock on the door. You open it, and—merry Christmas!—your mailman hands you a box full of premium aged steaks. What gift tops that? The Chef Special Palm Pak (\$340, thepalm.com) from the esteemed Palm Restaurant franchise features four New York strips, four porterhouses and four filet mignons, packed in a cooler with dry ice. We sampled these babies, and they're better than what you get in most steak joints.





FAR-OUT SOUND

Despite tons of in-car receivers, stand-alone options for satellite radio have remained scant. Now XM and Audiophase have cooked up the Skybox (\$200, bestbuy.com), a bug-eyed boom box that has not only a satellite receiver but also an AM-FM terrestrial radio tuner and a CD player that can handle both standard CDs and MP3 discs. It's a mobile sonic smorgasbord.

SECRET RITUAL

Prohibition was an amazingly innovative time for drinkers, distillers and barmen, with all of them trying to outwit the law. Mixologists, for example, couldn't leave their barware lying around, so it went incognito. You can celebrate that era today with these secret shakers: a 14-inch lighthouse (\$195) and a ship's light that comes in red or green—port and starboard beacons—for the left- or right-handed bartender (\$130). Both are made of nickel-plated brass; available at martiniware.com.



HEALTHY SNACK

Nude, from Applied Organics (\$20, organiclubricant.com), is the world's first USDA-certified organic lube. Think of it as a sex grease that doubles as a nourishing moisturizer for those hard-to-reach places. "It's odorless and slick as hell, and it lasts all night, so you don't have to keep reapplying," says our road tester. "Thumbs-up."

POWER TRIP

The steel-framed CycleOps Pro 300PT exercise bike (\$1,700) can measure speed and heart rate and download the data to your computer. But what really makes it different is the PowerTap mechanism, which measures in watts the energy you produce so you can quantify your workouts. Lance Armstrong can pump out 460 watts an hour, enough to power almost eight 60-watt bulbs. Go ahead, Mr. Edison, try to match that!



THE LENS CAP

Few casual photographers keep a tripod in their jacket pocket, yet almost all consumer cameras feature that funny screw-in mount on the bottom. To let you finally take advantage of this sorely underused socket, Japanese gizmo importer Semsons & Co. offers the Bottle Cap Tripod (\$15, semsons.com), which screws onto the top of any standard plastic beverage bottle. Now you can put together a quick camera stand anywhere there's a vending machine.



Next Month



JENNY IS BACK.



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CRITICAL CAR: WHAT TO DRIVE RIGHT NOW.



2004 PLAYMATES: A LOOK BACK (AND FRONT).

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JENNY MCCARTHY—AFTER BEING CROWNED PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR 1994, THE FLY MC WAS EVERYWHERE. FROM MTV'S *SINGLED OUT* TO THE COVER OF *TV GUIDE*. NOW JENNY HAS SIGNED A MULTIPICTURE DEAL WITH BEVERLY HILLS FILM STUDIOS. TO CELEBRATE, THE BEAUTIFUL GOOFBALL GRANTS US ONE WISH: A BRAND-NEW PICTORIAL.

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THREESOMES—A RIVETING ACCOUNT OF ONE WOMAN'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH A WELL-KNOWN TV PERSONALITY. THAT'S ALL WE CAN SAY. BY **ANONYMOUS**

JAMES CAAN—THE STAR OF TV'S *LAS VEGAS* HAS SURVIVED FAME, DRUGS, RUMORS OF MAFIA TIES, FAILED MARRIAGES AND DUBIOUS MOVIE CHOICES. NOW CAAN TALKS TOUGH IN A FEARLESS *20 QUESTIONS*. BY **STEPHEN REBELLO**

HOWARD HUGHES—IN TRUTH, HE WAS A BAD BUSINESSMAN AND ALMOST TOTALLY LACKING IN PERSONAL CHARM, COMPASSION, DECENCY AND MAGNETISM. SO HOW DID HUGHES BECOME THE MOST FAMOUS BILLIONAIRE IN AMERICAN HISTORY AND A CULTURAL ICON? **NEAL GABLER** HAS SOME ANSWERS.

THE YEAR IN SEX—JANET JACKSON'S SUPER BOWL WARDROBE MALFUNCTION! BRITNEY'S TWO WEDDINGS! PARIS HILTON'S SEX TAPE! AND THAT'S JUST PAGE ONE. IT WAS A RAUCOUS YEAR IN SEX. AND WE RELIVE THE MOST PHOTO-WORTHY MOMENTS.

PLUS: GREAT FICTION BY **NEIL LABUTE** AND **CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY**, CARS OF THE YEAR, NEW CHAMPAGNE COCKTAILS, DAPPER TUXEDOS, HOW TO MAKE EXCELLENT JAPANESE FOOD, HAMILTON VERSUS JEFFERSON BY **GORE VIDAL**, A MEMORABLE PLAYMATE REVIEW, BABE OF THE MONTH **CHANEL RYAN** AND OUR FIRST PLAYMATE OF 2005, MISS JANUARY, **DESTINY DAVIS**.