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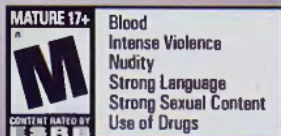
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"I was made to write stories, and I love to write stories," says **Stephen King**. "I really can't imagine doing anything else, and I can't imagine not doing what I do." We are thankful the American master is still writing goose-bump-inducing prose and happy he has returned to our fiction section. *Willa* is a chilling tale of passengers who explore a new environment after their train derailed in the middle of nowhere. Where does King come up with his stuff? Here's a little insight into his eerie, fertile mind: "I get my ideas from everywhere," he says, "but what all my ideas boil down to is seeing maybe one thing. In a lot of cases it's seeing two things and having them come together in some new and interesting way and then adding the question, What if? 'What if' is always the key question."



Political provocateur and author of *Point to Point Navigation* **Gore Vidal** discusses leadership and bloodlines in *Three Senators Gore*. "I have never been able to remember what relation I am to Albert Gore Jr., though his father, a senator, once explained it to me," Vidal notes. "I don't recall what he said, but he did say that had I been elected to Congress in 1960, our relationship would have been much closer—which perhaps says it all."



Celebrated screenwriter and former *Playboy* staffer **David Mamet** meditates on the state of American blood sports in *No Más!* With suspicious decisions in boxing and contrivances in wrestling, he concludes that the artistry and violence of the UFC offer the best entertainment. "It is always pleasing to see two guys pound each other into jelly," he says, "but to watch the application of skill under pressure is also rather gratifying."



Among the writers who reflect on great works of lubricious literature for *Erotic Passages* is Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist **Jane Smiley**. Her own titillating work *Ten Days in the Hills* will be published in February. "It is tricky to write good eroticism," she says. "For my book I had to learn the parameters of language use in sex writing. I want the story to leap off the page but not so much that the reader puts down the book and masturbates."



The **Dixie Chicks** are the best-selling female group of all time. Let that sink in. Whether you love or hate their music or political views, they influence a huge audience. We sent **Alan Light** to conduct the *Playboy Interview* with the trio. "Even with the recent controversies, they weren't calculating with their words," Light says. "They always shoot from the hip, which may be why they keep getting into trouble. Their political points were very frank but on message with what they have said in the past. Some new, fascinating information uncovered in the interview gives insight into their personal lives. You forget these superstars are three married women with children. Although it is unbelievable to hear about death threats against them, it is more interesting to learn intimate details about how their actions have taken a toll on their families."



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The planet's coolest star speaks his mind about rappers who can't act, people who give him attitude and his idea of female perfection. **BY STEPHEN REBELLO**

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They bad-mouthed the president and felt the backlash. Now the country trio talks about their new audience and redefining the meaning of success. **BY ALAN LIGHT**

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COVER STORY

Cindy Margolis is a one-woman empire: the most downloaded woman on earth, a poker ace, a sexy calendar model, a savvy businesswoman and an author-to-be. She is the ultimate girl next door who now feels comfortable enough in her own skin to show it all off. Senior Contributing Photographer Stephen Wayda captures the great unveiling. Our Rabbit watches from an enviable position.



Happy Holidays



Gene Brown



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BY JOSEPH DE ACETIS

this month on playboy.com

THE PLAYBOY.COM A-LIST

We name America's top hotel bars in the first installment of our new best-of feature.

THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS

PLAYBOY sports seer Gary Cole profiles five fantastic freshman hoopsters who may never see a sophomore slump.

DON'T SKIP THE FORMALITIES

One button or three? Vest or cummerbund? Find out in our guide to the essentials of formalwear.

THE 21ST QUESTION

Get the last motherfucking word from Samuel L. Jackson in this online exclusive.

DRUMROLL, PLEASE

Vote in our annual music poll and rock out to clips from the nominees.



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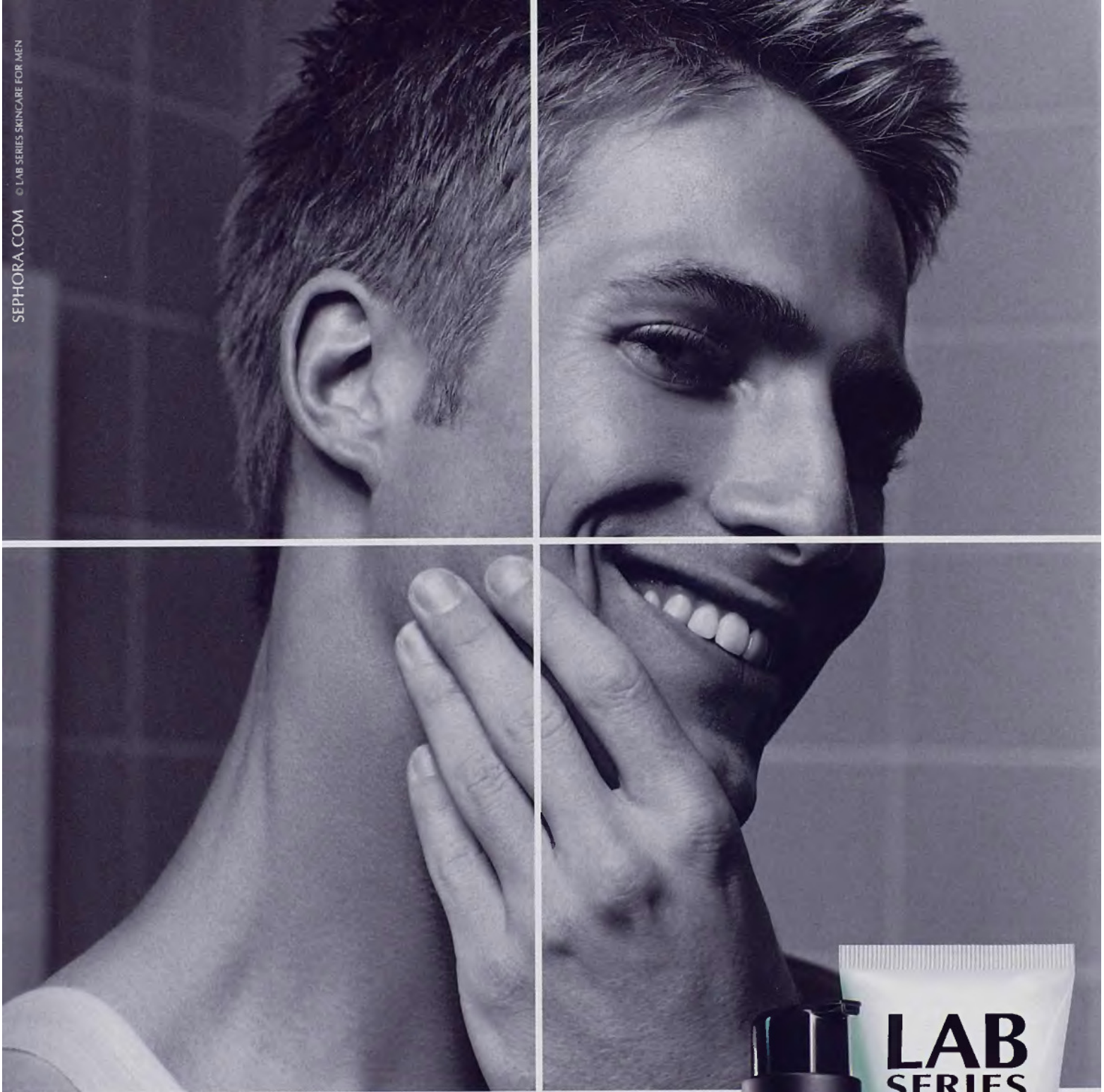
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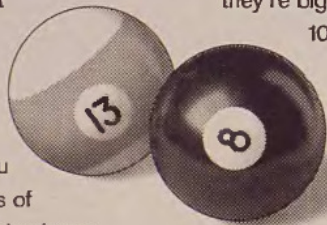
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ONCE UPON A DREAM



Lingerie or less! That's the only way you're getting into the Midsummer Night's Dream party at the Mansion, Hef's annual bash that draws the perfect mix of Hollywood players and scantily clad Playmates for a night of bacchanalian bliss. (1) The host and his Girls Next Door, Bridget Marquardt, Holly Madison and Kendra Wilkinson. (2) Playmate Pennelope Jimenez gets down with actor Jaleel White and the Chiefs' Freddie Mitchell. (3) Slugger Jose Canseco is a hit with the Mansion's famous Painted Ladies. (4) Deborah Gibson and the Hoff. (5) Actor Steven Weber and comedian Jeffrey Ross. (6) Nicky and Paris Hilton with the Man. (7) The darling Dahm triplets. (8) Actor Chris Evans and Playmate of the Year Kara Monaco. (9) Jack Osbourne and the Playboy X-Treme Team captain, Playmate Danelle Folta. (10) Verne Troyer, kickin' it with the ladies. (11) Matthew Perry on the loose. (12) UFC star Tito Ortiz with knockout Jenna Jameson. (13) Playmates Amber Campisi and Rebecca Ramos cozy up to Michael Clarke Duncan.



ONCE UPON A DREAM

continued



As the night heated up, some revelers took to the Mansion dance floor, where Bow Wow dazzled PJ-clad partygoers with silky-smooth rhythms. Others went for a midnight dip in the Grotto. (1) Marco and Michael Andretti and Playmate Jodi Ann Paterson share a smile with Mr. Playboy. (2) Model and actor Vinci Alonso with Playmate Tina Jordan. (3) *Entourage*'s Kevin Connolly, Miss August Nicole Voss and actor Michael Cade. (4) A lovely assortment of Painted Ladies. (5) "Weird Al" Yankovic and Seth Green trade yuks. (6) Kato Kaelin and guest go wild. (7) Kendra Wilkinson and the Playmates give jewelry designer "TV Johnny" Dang the Grotto treatment. (8) Comedian and commentator Bill Maher checks in with Hef and Holly. (9) Stephen Dorff and Playmate Katie Lohmann. (10) So many Playmates, so little time. (11) Playmate Hiromi Oshima charms Taye Diggs. (12) The ladies love Ron Jeremy. (13) Bow Wow performs for the mid-summer night's dreamers.





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THE GIRLS RETURN

Not only is your September cover a showstopper, but the *Girls Next Door* pictorial (*Love Thy Neighbor*) fed my addiction to a guilty pleasure. I hope you are planning a third season.

Christy Salisbury
Syracuse, New York

The cover is awesome. But despite what you claim in *After Hours*, the images don't quite match. For example,



A picture window with a stunning view.

the amount of space between Kendra's and Holly's arms and Holly's and Bridget's shoulders is different.

Dustin Kiehnau
Egg Harbor, Wisconsin

You're right. They aren't precise duplicates. As it happened, the best shot from the front and the best shot from the back didn't come from the same pair of rapid-fire exposures.

I used to give my fiancé a hard time about subscribing to PLAYBOY. But after becoming a fan of *The Girls Next Door*, I sat down to read an issue. I am sorry for misjudging you.

Elayne Russell
Peabody, Massachusetts

On a sailboat trip from Astoria, Oregon to San Francisco, we were surprised to find three stowaways: The wife of a crewmate had stashed the September issue in his gear bag as a gift to the four of us on the boat. We left the magazine, back cover up, on the table with the charts; it never failed to inspire smiles.

Angelfish crew
Seattle, Washington

MICHAEL BROWN

Your interview with former FEMA chief Michael Brown (*Playboy Interview*,

September) demonstrates that if someone—especially the politicians in Washington—wants your ass, they are going to get it. The federal government put Brown in charge, gave him zero support, then tarred and feathered him. He was railroaded because he went against the government mandate that honesty is not the best policy.

Ron Klukowski
Lakeland, Florida

Rather than interviewing Brown, it would have been better to ask a few questions of Department of Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff: (1) Who is in charge? Mr. Secretary, the American people expect the federal government to be there during times of disaster when state and local officials are overwhelmed. No one was sure at the time—or even now, more than a year after Katrina—who was leading the federal response. Whoever you designate must have the experience and the authority to direct the actions of the 32 agencies, including the military, that constitute the National Response Plan. (2) What happened to federal, state and local partnership? Will DHS/FEMA commit its resources to rebuilding the state and local emergency-management capabilities for natural disasters, as well as terrorism? Where are the funds? According to the GAO, 75 percent of DHS grant dollars for first responders focuses on terrorism training. (3) Have you given up on hazard mitigation? Isn't an ounce of prevention always worth a pound of cure? According to my calculations, since 2001 DHS/FEMA has reduced these postdisaster incentives by more than 60 percent. It's not too late to reverse this trend. State and local governments want to do the right thing, but without federal incentives it becomes much more difficult. As a nation, we cannot afford another response like that to Katrina.

George Haddow
Takoma Park, Maryland

Haddow served as deputy chief of staff for FEMA from 1997 to 2001.

I am surprised Brown doesn't accuse Chertoff or George W. Bush of writing those clueless, self-involved e-mails he sent after the hurricane. However, Brown does take credit for hugging a lot of people.

Alden Oreck
New Orleans, Louisiana

Anyone who flies into a city about to be hit by a category 5 hurricane so he can help during the aftermath is a hero.

We were without food, water or electricity for more than a week. Without Brown, there is no telling what would have happened. I hope the president knows what a good man he lost.

Kristina Brown
Gautier, Mississippi

I am a cryptologic technician in the U.S. Navy. Our helicopters flew day and night over New Orleans for weeks, plucking people off roofs. Hundreds of us went ashore. Despite this, I still heard people on the news saying, "Why isn't anyone helping us?" I wanted to scream, "You were told to leave! The government can't help you now because the bridges are out and the roads are flooded. Plus, you're shooting at us." The people who could have left but didn't are the ones to blame, not Brown. He had no control over the failing levees. I commend him for standing up for himself.

Andrew Mattheus
Norfolk, Virginia

You quote a pundit talking about Brown: "The more one learns about him, one is surprised he is in that job in the first place." There's more truth to



Michael Brown gives a heckuva interview.

that than many people realize. While Brown offers an often valid critique of the federal response to the disaster, he avoids the central question: Why did the president put him, of all people, in charge? For the real deal on Brown and Joe Allbaugh, the Bush appointee who brought Brown to Washington, and their improbable rise to the helm of FEMA, visit the Real News Project at realnews.org. After reading my

"There are only three sports:
bullfighting,
motor racing,
and mountaineering;
all the rest are merely games."
-Ernest Hemingway



LIFE TAKES POWER

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report, consider Brown's comment to *PLAYBOY*, "We cannot expect our government to do everything for us." The joke, of course, is that we can't expect much because the current administration is so hostile to the mission of government that it would put someone like Brown in such a sensitive position. He is just one example of many such appointees, most of them neophytes all too eager to outsource public services to their cronies. Whatever humiliation Brown has suffered, he went into the experience a completely unqualified, debt-laden small-time lawyer and emerged a celebrity able to market himself as a consultant despite the catastrophic performance of which he was a part.

Russ Baker
New York, New York

Brown screwed the pooch. Now, with Bush bashing in full swing (rightfully so), he sees a chance to tin-plate his reputation. He is a moron and is incompetent to criminal levels. His connections got him a cushy gig, but his comfort cost billions of dollars and hundreds of lives.

Scott Christensen
St. Paul, Minnesota

Brown says his job was "to get out there and find out what was happening." No, it was to select and train people who could carry out his directives. If the job is done well, give them credit; if it fails, take responsibility.

Paul Sloan
North Fort Myers, Florida

Brown repels each attack against him with aplomb. I'd side with him over Chertoff and Bush any day.

Morgan Klein
Los Angeles, California

I worked for the government for 26 years, and you could have interviewed any of thousands of federal employees at every level and heard the same story: It isn't my fault, this place is screwed up, and the people I work for are incompetent and never listen to me.

Jack Hingel
Fairfax Station, Virginia

RESCUE ME

I'm a firefighter myself, and Kelly Johnston (*After Hours*, September) is the hottest medic I have ever seen. She is sure to bring any guy out of asystole.

Larry Silva
Tacoma, Washington

RALPH ON HUNTER

As someone who was an avid window smasher in the early 1960s, I had to smile at *Smashing Windows* (Septem-

ber), Ralph Steadman's remembrance of Hunter S. Thompson. As Steadman notes, breaking glass makes a wonderful goddamn noise, and people do run around like rats in a firestorm. It was fun, but serving as a Marine in Vietnam cured me of the impulse. Grenades are much more exciting. After returning home I never broke another window.

Richard Simon
Palm Desert, California

SEEING DOUBLE

Your Paris Hilton look-alike is the second most beautiful woman in the world (*One Night as Paris*, September).

Jim Landis
Millersville, Pennsylvania

Anyone who thinks Natalie Reid looks like Paris Hilton must be high.

Steve Rademacher
Mission, Kansas

We've already seen Paris nude, in her video. If you're going to do look-alikes, how about women who resem-



A remarkable resemblance, if you ask us.

ble Salma Hayek, Halle Berry, Winona Ryder or Jennifer Aniston?

John McLaughlin
Lakewood, Colorado

ASSIGNED READING

Thank you for publishing T.C. Boyle (*The Unlucky Mother of Aquiles Maldonado*, September). I am a creative-writing major, and my professors routinely assign his fiction. When one asked recently if anyone had prior exposure to the author, I raised my hand. When he then asked which literary reviews I read, I said, "PLAYBOY."

Jackie Price
Sagamore Hills, Ohio

Read more feedback at blog.playboy.com.



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P L A Y B O Y

a f t e r h o u r s

"I thought my boobs were average size but quite pert."



babe of the month

Keeley Hazell

TO THE BRITISH, SHE'S JUST LIKE PAMELA ANDERSON, ONLY MORE SO

Not since William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings has one person so handily overwhelmed the menfolk of England. Twenty-year-old Keeley Hazell, winner of *The Sun's* 2004 "Page 3 Idol" competition, dominates the national imagination. (For those unfamiliar with the species, Page 3 girls are models who appear topless in the breezy British tabloid.) Blokes were blown away by her angelic face and hourglass figure, her natural 32DDs becoming a national treasure overnight. "I didn't think they were that big," Keeley says. "I was wearing a 36B bra. I thought my boobs were average size but quite pert, so that was a plus. I thought I was okay-looking and photographed well." Too right, mate. Victory and ubiquity followed, with each subsequent magazine cover coming as sweet revenge for a formerly flat-chested cutup. "I was in school at 15 or 16, and I was misbehaving in art class with my friends," she recalls. "We got the teacher's speech. You know, 'If you don't knuckle down and do your work, you're never going to have a career.' And I was like, 'Yes, I will. I'll be a Page 3 girl.' And she said, 'That's pathetic. Your boobs are too small.'" Never judge an English rose before she blooms.



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ladies in waiting

Female Bonding

WILL THE NEXT PUSSY GALORE PLEASE STAND UP?

Janet Hirshenson and Jane Jenkins know Bond girls—they've had a hand in casting nearly every 007 movie since *Octopussy*. In *Casino Royale*, Daniel Craig will have his hands full with Eurobabes Eva Green, Caterina Murino and Ivana Milicevic. We asked the authors of *A Star Is Found* to pick some femmes fatales of the future.



AS MS. QUALITY TAYLE?

JANET: Rachael Taylor is a brand-new girl out of Australia, and she's a piece of work. She reminds me a little of Nicole Kidman. Gorgeous. When we met with her, we looked at each other and said, "Hollywood will not eat this girl. This girl could eat Hollywood." Keep track of Taylor. **SEE HER IN:** *Transformers*, summer 2007.



AS PRINCESS AINODA KAMASUTRA?

JANET: If we needed to cast an Indian actress, Aishwarya Rai would be the likely suspect. **JANE:** I think she's the one. She's gorgeous, too, and what I've noticed from seeing her on talk shows is she's also very smart. She's sort of the Persis Khambatta of today. **SEE HER IN:** *The Last Legion* and *Provoked*, both opening in January.



AS PHYSICIST DR. LIVINA WILDELIFE?

JANET: We've seen Olivia Wilde on a couple of things recently, and I think she's total Bond material. She was on the TV shows *Skin* and *The O.C.* She's only 22 years old, but there's a real maturity. **JANE:** Actually, we saw her for *Casino Royale*. She's here in our book, with a big circle around her name. **SEE HER IN:** *Turistas*, opening December 1.

bent into shape

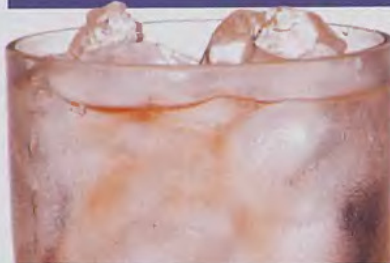


Dig the Chakras on Her

POP IN THE DVD AND GET COMFY ON THE COUCH—IT'S TIME FOR YOGA CLASS

Picture this: You're the only man in a room full of fit, flexible women wearing tight bikinis and arching their backs in unison. It's called yoga class, and guys who do it aren't stupid. Now the experience comes home with the *Yoga4Dudes* DVD, in which bikini models Noemie, Tara and Holly get wild on the ancient spiritual discipline. They're not exactly maharishis on the mat, but watching them thrust into the half wheel is nonetheless enlightening.

drinks of the month



Pass the Ammunition

ONE IF BY LAND, THE OTHER IF BY SEA

There aren't any BCS bids on the line or Heisman candidates on the field, but Army vs. Navy (December 2) is still a big game. This is passionate football played by courageous and patriotic kids—a display of American military might both red- and blue-staters can enjoy. Last year's Navy victory nudged the Midshipmen ahead of the Black Knights in the all-time tally, 50-49-7. We'll let the four-legged mascots fight this one out.

Horny Goat (Navy)

(house specialty of Chicago's Billy Goat Tavern)

2 oz. Bacardi Limón
Seven-Up
Splash of cranberry juice

Fill a highball glass with ice. Add rum, fill most of the way with Seven-Up and top with a splash of cranberry juice.

Go to playboy.com/magazine for weekly college drink matchups.

Francis the Mule (Army)

(created by Ted "Dr. Cocktail" Haigh)

2 oz. bourbon
½ oz. orgeat syrup
½ oz. fresh lemon juice
½ oz. cold coffee
2 dashes orange bitters

Shake ingredients with cracked ice and strain into a cocktail glass. Garnish with a lemon twist.

round 16

The Long and Winding Yo

A SIXTH ROCKY, A FOURTH RAMBO AND AN EDGAR ALLAN POE BIOPIC—HAS STALLONE GONE NUTS?

In 1976 a 30-year-old Sylvester Stallone conquered moviedom with *Rocky*, winner of the Oscar for best picture. Critics were quick to dub the film's writer and star (who would soon be directing) the next Brando. The comparison was less than prophetic. Thirty years later, the Italian Stallion is attempting a very deliberate return to his roots.

Playboy: How did the auteur of the early *Rocky* films end up making *Judge Dredd*?

Sylvester Stallone: I was there for the beginning of a different genre, the über-superhero. I got caught up in doing these action films that I enjoyed, but they didn't require a lot of soul-searching. And it became a habit—a bad one. It wasn't until my career began to slow down that I realized I had neglected my best asset, my writing.

Playboy: What was the reaction when people heard about a sixth *Rocky* film?

Stallone: That his story was passé. And I said that's how many people feel when they reach a certain age—passé. It's an interesting question: When is it time to fold up your tent, or is that ever required?

Why do you have to watch the parade when you feel you can still march in it? That's what *Rocky Balboa* is about—how do people address the last third of their lives? If you want to do something that perhaps doesn't conform with your age, you're ridiculed. I knew when I said I wanted to do this movie I would be fodder for a lot of jokes. But I think if you're willing to take the humiliation and embarrassment, then you're entitled to the opportunity.

Playboy: In your career, any lessons learned?

Stallone: Every performer has tremendous strengths and weaknesses, and if you feel the ride will be endless, you're doomed.

Playboy: Action heroes tend to wander into comedy.

Stallone: I should have asked myself, Would I want to see John Wayne in a comedy? You don't want to see a running back play quarterback. I don't care if you're the greatest singer in the world, nobody wants to see you act. They really don't. You can never shed that original costume. Everybody has a certain way of communicating. It's unfair to put an urbane, verbal actor into an action film. He's going to fail. And vice versa.

Playboy: When you were making movies you weren't directing, did the director inside you ever get squeamish?

Stallone: All the time. It's like being an airline pilot who is sitting in business class when the plane is going through some terrible turbulence. The pilot is flying headlong into the thunderheads, and you go, Wait a minute, I gotta take the wheel here.

Playboy: Why should people care about a fourth *Rambo* movie?

Stallone: The action genre today has been completely



reinterpreted. Once you have a stunt in which you jump into a room with 30 guys shooting at you and not one of them comes close, the audience goes, Okay, this could never happen. Modern CGI action is more like fantasy; mine has to be blood and guts. I would call it retro action. The best action film I ever made was *First Blood*, because it's borderline feasible. It *could* happen.

Playboy: If someone dropped *Driven II* on your desk, would you consider it?

Stallone: Not a chance. In fact, if I never acted again after *Rambo IV* and just dedicated myself to directing and writing, I would be more than happy. The one thing I'd like to do would be a sophisticated film about the contemporary underworld, where you take the journey with a John Gotti figure. If I were retiring from acting, that *might* bring me out.

Playboy: Are you really making a movie about Edgar Allan Poe?

I knew when I said I wanted to do this movie I would be fodder for a lot of jokes. But I think if you're willing to take the humiliation and embarrassment, then you're entitled to the opportunity.

Stallone: Yes, *Poe* is something I wrote in 1970, and it has gone through 15 face-lifts. Each of the 200 books on Poe I've read interprets him differently. So I'm putting my spin on him. To me, Poe represents the misunderstood artist in all of us.

Playboy: And you wouldn't act in *Poe*?

Stallone: Oh no, not at all. What would I do? "Yo, Poe!"



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employee of the month

Full Frontal Phlebotomy

BLOODLETTER KRISTIN MULLANEY LEAVES US FEELING A LITTLE LIGHT-HEADED

PLAYBOY: So what do you do?

KRISTIN: I'm a phlebotomist. I draw blood for testing.

PLAYBOY: Can you spell *phlebotomist*?

KRISTIN: Yes.

PLAYBOY: What led you to phlebotomy?

KRISTIN: I like caring for people, and I have a knack for finding a vein on the first try.

PLAYBOY: How long did it take you to perfect your skill?

KRISTIN: Not long. I'm a natural. When I was in training, my dad let me poke him with needles for practice at home.

PLAYBOY: Any horror stories?

KRISTIN: My very first patient passed out. I thought I'd killed him. Turns out he was diabetic and low on sugar.

PLAYBOY: Do men act macho before you draw their blood?

KRISTIN: Some guys talk tough to impress me, but I've noticed that the bigger they are, the more they fear the needle.

PLAYBOY: Do men notice your body when you're on the job?

KRISTIN: My boobs do get some attention when I wear just a tank top under a lab coat. They're real, and I'm proud of them. But usually I'm wearing a baggy pair of scrubs.

PLAYBOY: What's it like wearing scrubs to work?

KRISTIN: Fantastic. I get to wear pajamas all day.

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.

nuts and dates



DANIEL CHEN

Wiseass Book Lovers Seek Same UNAPPEALING PERSONAL ADS FROM THE NATION THAT BROUGHT YOU MONTY PYTHON

Dress up like a Viking and join me (M, 51) in my York farm dwelling. Not only will we experience crazy Jorvik mud-love but we'll get Local Heritage Initiative grant funding. Have cake—eat it. All at box no. 2187.

These ads try too hard to be funny. Not me, I'm a natural. Juggling, monkey-faced idiot (M, 36). Box no. 5312.

Your stars for today: A pretty Cancerian (35) will cook you a lovely meal, caress your hair softly, then squeeze every damn penny from your adulterous bank account before slashing the tires of your Beemer. Let that serve as a warning. Now then, risotto? Box no. 7394.

Slut in the kitchen, chef in the bedroom. Woman with mixed priorities (37) seeks man who can toss a good salad. Box no. 7421.

Less "Venus in Furs," more Derek in Buxton. Interested? Write to Derek in Buxton. Box no. 6385.

Bastard. Complete and utter. Whatever you do, don't reply—you'll only regret it. (Man, 38). Box no. 2817.

—from *They Call Me Naughty Lola: Personal Ads From the London Review of Books*, edited by David Rose

growing up gonzo

Fear and Loathing in the 12th Grade

"Do you realize that you are rapidly becoming a doomed generation?... Oh, ignorant youth, the world is not a joyous place. The time has come for you to dispense with the frivolous pleasures of childhood and get down to honest toil until you are 65. Then and only then can you relax and collect your Social Security and live happily until the time of your death."

Fearfully and disgustedly yours,
John J. Righteous-Hypocrite

—from a 1955 open letter by the young Hunter S. Thompson, published pseudonymously in his high school literary magazine and featured in *Buy the Ticket, Take the Ride: Hunter S. Thompson on Film*, airing this month on the Starz network

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YUKO SHIMIZU

Boneheads

In a Michigan State University study that ranked 34 major countries by their citizens' acceptance of the theory of evolution, the United States ranked second to last (thank you, Turkey). **39%** of our adult population rejects the concept.

Naming Wrongs

The Pink Taco restaurant chain offered the Arizona Cardinals **\$30 million** to rename their new stadium after the colorfully branded eateries. The team judiciously took a pass.

what they're thinking

Tune In, Turn On

Of women surveyed by the Oxygen TV network, **77%** would rather have a new plasma TV than a diamond necklace, **56%** would take the TV over a weekend in Florida, and **86%** would rather have a digital video camera than a pair of designer shoes.

Emerald Stylin'

The oldest known example of hair gel use by men dates back to Ireland's Iron Age, **2,300** years ago. The preserved remains of a well-coiffed man were found in a bog in Clonycavan, near Dublin.



What a Girl Wants, What a Girl Needs

Amanda Hearst, great granddaughter of publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst, is the new hot celeb. *Harper's Bazaar* reports the 22-year-old student's annual maintenance cost for clothes, vacations, etc., totals **\$136,360.50**.

No Jockstrap Required

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education found that **12** states allow public-school students to earn phys ed credits by attending online classes.

you bet

8:1

Odds for snowfall on Christmas Day in London.



Travelers' Checks

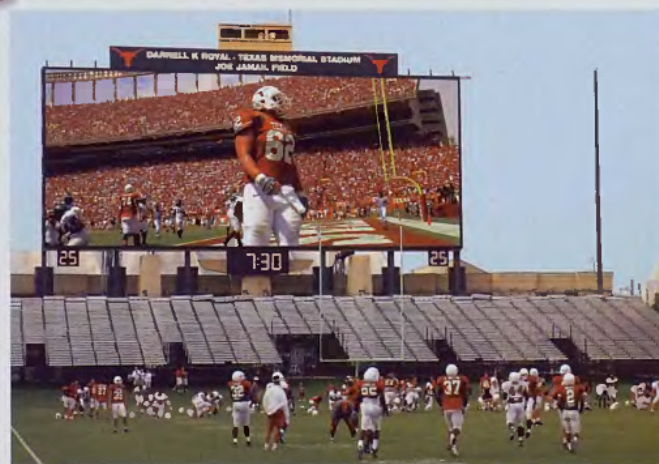
60% of Americans support airline-passenger profiling, according to a Quinnipiac University poll.

That's Cold

\$1.04: Amount teenager John Michael Jasset was charged for a bag of ice at a Boston-area Burger King after a car struck him outside the restaurant.

At First Sight

A study by Princeton University psychologist Alex Todorov claims it takes only **one tenth** of a second for people to determine if someone is attractive.



All Bevo, No TiVo

At **55 feet** tall and **134 feet** wide, the new scoreboard (nicknamed Godzillatron) at the Texas Longhorns' football stadium is the largest HDTV in the country. It cost **\$8 million**.

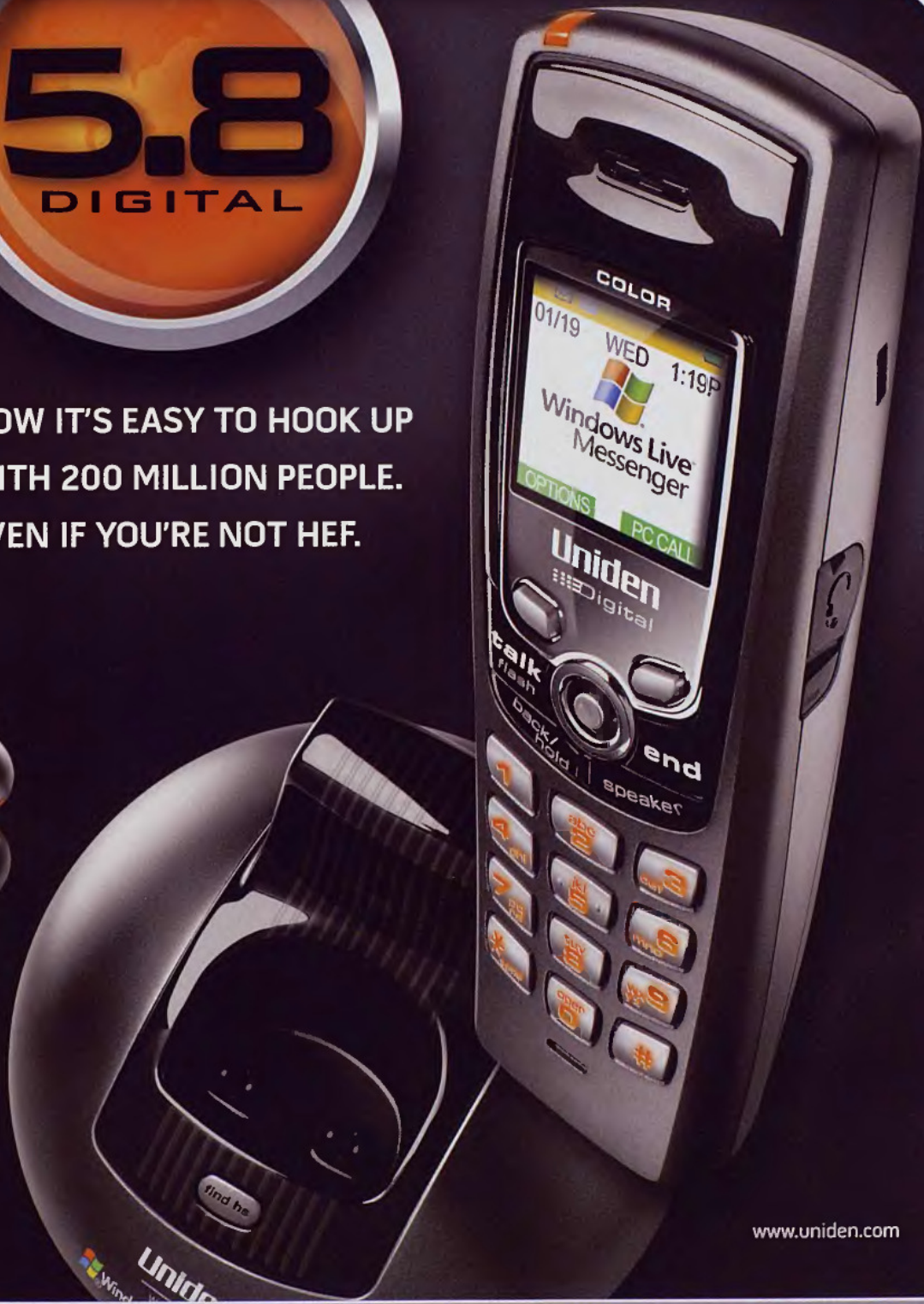
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the best of the month

[CASINO ROYALE]

Is the world ready for James Blond?

Bondheads shaken by the departure of Pierce Brosnan will have to cope with new guy Daniel Craig as he matches brawn and brains with a power-mad banker who launders money at a casino that funds international terrorism. Based on Ian Fleming's first Bond novel, which begins before the secret agent has earned his license to kill, the screenplay lets director Martin Campbell (*GoldenEye*) indulge in more grit than gadgetry. But the knockout Bond girls are here, including Solange, played by Italian-born beauty Caterina Murino, who advises us to chill out about Craig's take on 007. "When he kills, he looks like a real killer. When he makes love to me or Eva Green, he looks like a sexy, passionate man. When he fights, he has blood all over his face. He's going to be one of the best, if not the best, Bond in history," Murino says. "We're back to the roots, so Ian Fleming would be very happy. For the first time, a James Bond movie isn't a cartoon."

[BORAT: CULTURAL LEARNINGS OF AMERICA FOR MAKE BENEFIT GLORIOUS NATION OF KAZAKHSTAN]

Borat storms America in the funniest movie of the year

Brit comedian Sacha Baron Cohen brings to the big screen Borat, his hilariously naive, cluelessly offensive Kazakhstani character from HBO's *Da Ali G Show*. Borat's documentary-style movie debut, which has sparked laughter and outrage at film festivals, sends the TV journalist and his extremely obese producer to film everyday Americans so the duo's Kazakhstani homies can learn a thing or two about the USA. Borat's interactions with gun nuts, fundamentalists and frat boys—let alone his pursuit of Pamela Anderson so he can throw her into the "wedding sack"—will have audiences laughing and fearing for this country's future. Cohen says Borat is "based actually on a guy I met in southern Russia. I can't remember his name. He was a doctor. The moment I met him I was totally crying. He was a hysterically funny guy, albeit totally unintentionally." But very little Cohen does appears unintentional.



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[DÉJÀ VU]

A dark cloud hangs over this time-traveling thriller

Talk about omens. Producer Jerry Bruckheimer paid a reported \$5 million for the screenplay to this romantic action thriller, but one of the writers, Terry Rossio (*Shrek*), has publicly stated his discontent about director Tony Scott's script changes. And even before filming began, devastation from Hurricane Katrina threatened to cancel the New Orleans-based production. In the film, Denzel Washington plays an ATF man whose investigation of a New Orleans ferry bombing plotted by a monstrous terrorist (Jim Caviezel) leads him back in time to try to save the lives of hundreds of innocents, particularly a beauty played by Paula Patton. Washington, who last teamed with Scott for *Man on Fire*, calls their latest "an interesting picture that takes place in different times. It's a reverse love story with time travel. I wouldn't know what you'd call it. It's new technology. It's wild. I don't want to give it away."

[BLOOD DIAMOND]

Diamonds are no one's best friend in Sierra Leone

The setting is 1990s Sierra Leone during a bloody civil war that killed 50,000. With Leonardo DiCaprio as an opportunistic diamond smuggler, Djimon Hounsou as a fisherman hiding a priceless gem and Jennifer Connelly as a compromised journalist, this thriller from director Edward Zwick promises to pack a political punch while delivering pulse-pounding chases and a little romance. After all, the flick is about blood diamonds, gems mined in combat zones and smuggled out to finance devastating civil wars and such terrorist outfits as Al Qaeda. Says Hounsou, "Besides shedding light on blood diamonds, the movie exposes many things going on in Africa: children used as soldiers, government corruption, fair-trade rules between African countries and the West. In almost all our scenes together, Leonardo and I are running and dodging bullets. But even when he aggravated an old injury and had to have his knee drained, bandaged and stitched, he still ran and did all the stunts. He has heart."



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[THE GOOD GERMAN]

Steven Soderbergh offers an ode to 1940s gems

Every decade or so, a moviemaker grows nostalgic for wised-up, 1940s wartime-romance classics such as *Casablanca* and *Waterloo Bridge*. Taking a break from his *Ocean's Eleven* capers, Steven Soderbergh goes romantically retro here, signing on for the fifth time as the director of George Clooney, who plays an American war correspondent in post-World War II Berlin during the 1945 Potsdam Conference of the Allied powers. While there, the journalist becomes mired in the whys and wherefores of a GI's murder, a twisty mystery that reconnects him with former lover Cate Blanchett. Says the screenwriter, Paul Attanasio, "The hope is that the movie will be a very rich experience. We have a whole generation growing up without the slightest idea of what the film medium is capable of, who think *King Kong* is the height of moviemaking. But here you get to see moviemaking the way it's supposed to be."



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also showing

Stranger Than Fiction

(Will Ferrell, Dustin Hoffman, Emma Thompson) A man (Ferrell) freaks when he starts having aural hallucinations of his every action being chronicled by a narrator (Thompson). Then she gets freaked to learn that Ferrell, her new book's main character, actually exists and that her writing is shaping his life.

Our call: Ferrell sinking his chops into touching material should surprise even skeptics as he shows a new side à la Jim Carrey in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

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Apocalypto

(Rudy Youngblood, Dalia Hernandez, Gerardo Taracena) This action-packed epic set in Central America during the end days of the Mayan civilization kicks off when violent invaders abduct young Jaguar Paw (Youngblood), forcing him on a perilous trek from which he breaks free to return and try to save his people.

Our call: Directed by the now-notorious Mel "Sugar Tits" Gibson, with a no-name cast speaking subtitled Yucatec Mayan, this historical saga is the season's biggest oddball.



Bobby

(Anthony Hopkins, Demi Moore, Sharon Stone, Lindsay Lohan) Writer-director Emilio Estevez's sprawling drama follows the shattered lives of 22 fictional characters staying or working at the Ambassador Hotel in L.A. on the day in June 1968 when Senator Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in the hotel's kitchen.

Our call: Though Estevez's effort may be stronger on aspiration than achievement, Stone has a field day, and Lohan, as a girl who marries her friend so he can dodge the draft, is terrific.



For Your Consideration

(Christopher Guest, Catherine O'Hara, Parker Posey) Mockumentary god Guest drop-kicks Hollywood's megasize egos in his newest comedy, about the utter craziness that overtakes the lives of three actors when their performances in a sickeningly noble indie flick start getting hyped as award-worthy.

Our call: Peak-level Guest offerings such as *This Is Spinal Tap* and *Best in Show* are precious, so we consider ourselves lucky even when his movies fly only as high as *A Mighty Wind*.



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dvd of the month

[AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH]

Global warming is a hot topic for Al Gore

Part ecology lecture and part swipe at the current political administration, director Davis Guggenheim's documentary featuring Al Gore is a supercharged PowerPoint presentation on what the next 100 years hold for humankind if we do nothing about global warming. Gore is a compelling speaker, at once passionate, sardonic and even gently humorous in cajoling us to see simple facts through so much political haze. He presents a persuasive case that our rapid 200-year industrialization has superheated the planet and that we must act now to correct it. When he rails against three decades of U.S. administrations' near-inaction on this environmental crisis, you want to cheer, until you remember he was vice president for one fourth of that time—an inconvenient truth that gets little attention here. **Best extras:** A featurette on simple things you can do to fight global warming, along with a recent update from Gore. **★★★★** —Matt Steigbigel



director Richard Donner's jaunty new cut of *Superman II*, which is available in addition to the four-film *Christopher Reeve Superman Collection* (pictured). **Best extra:** Nine remastered 1940s Kal-El cartoons on the original *Superman* DVD. **★★½, ★★★★★, ★★** —Greg Fagan



THE SOPRANOS: SEASON SIX, PART I (2006) The Mob drama's last season comes out shooting as tensions between the two families ignite war, with New York boss Johnny Sack doing time and Tony nursing a bullet wound. Newly outed capo Vito has to face the consequences of chasing Mr. Johnny Cakes. **Best extra:** Aside from commentary tracks, fuhgeddaboudit (also available on HD DVD). **★★★** —Kenny Lull



THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA (2006) Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep) is the imperious and impossibly demanding editor of a high-fashion rag who wrings the sweet naivete out of her new personal assistant, played by Anne Hathaway. You've seen the coming-of-age story before—big city/big job complicates budding love life—but this film feels fresh, thanks to the appallingly ruthless Streep. **Best extra:** Not many accessories other than director David Frankel's commentary. **★★★** —Buzz McClain



THE DA VINCI CODE (2006) Ron Howard—a director usually so bland he's the Ryan Seacrest of film—helms this adaptation of Dan Brown's dark con of man about religious symbologist Robert Langdon (Tom Hanks), who is lured into a dangerous quest for the Holy Grail. Paul Bettany is menacing as a masochistic albino monk, and Ian McKellen's charisma compensates for Hanks's stiffness. Rich in history, Howard's *Code* may not be the Second Coming, but it's still Opie's day. **Best extra:** Hidden *Da Vinci Code* phrases on the packaging, viewable only under black light. **★★½** —Robert B. DeSalvo



PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST (2006) This sequel is just as much fun as the original, if not more. The shot of shifty swashbuckler Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) using a corpse's leg to row a coffin says it all. **Best extra:** A feature that reveals secrets about Sparrow with boatloads of trivia (that chicken foot on his belt is a fertility sign, FYI), available on the two-disc version. **★★★★** —Stacie Houglund



SUPERMAN RETURNS (2006), **SUPERMAN II: THE RICHARD DONNER CUT** (1980) and **THE CHRISTOPHER REEVE SUPERMAN COLLECTION** (1978–1987) *X-Men* veteran Bryan Singer knew the Man of Steel needed an upgrade. With Brandon Routh in *Superman Returns*, the director delivers a hero worthy of the tights. Still, one hopes the inevitable sequel will be a little less glum than this reinvention, which is often spectacular but is marred by the casting of Kate Bosworth as Lois Lane. The unevenness is apparent when you contrast *Returns* with

tease frame



Maggie Gyllenhaal is game for workplace violations in 2002's *Secretary* (pictured), in which she plays a troubled woman with a penchant for S&M and shows us that any similarities to her brother Jake end at the neck. One of indie cinema's go-to gals, she is now making a name for herself in mainstream movies such as *World Trade Center* and this month's dramedy *Stranger Than Fiction*—but we wouldn't mind seeing her back at the office.

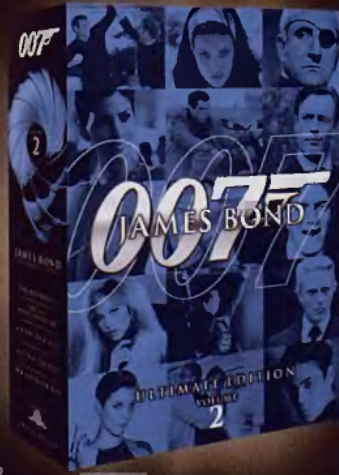
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the critical collector

[**MARKUP MADNESS**]

Some coveted out-of-print DVDs are worth their weight in gold

Committed DVD collectors—the kind with drool-worthy home theater systems—will go to almost any lengths to amaze guests with movies that not just anyone can own. When a DVD goes out of print, it becomes much more desirable and expensive, even if the movie is, well, *Mystery Science Theater 3000: The Movie* (1996). That one can fetch \$200 if it's still factory sealed and about half that if it's merely in good condition. Pier Paolo Pasolini's controversial 1975 film *Salò*, or *The 120 Days of Sodom*, about four libertines who capture a number of teenage boys and girls and perform unspeakably disgusting acts of torture, will cost you about \$600 used or up to a cool \$2,400 for an original. It's not even in stereo, but the Criterion Collection DVD is one of the rarest discs in the world, and collectors will pay top dollar to have it on their shelves. The same goes for John Woo's *The Killer* (1989); a sealed Criterion edition was offered recently for \$500 on Amazon.com, where Shohei Imamura's *Black Rain* (1989) was going for \$590. The three episodes of Masaki Kobayashi's *Human Condition* (1959, 1961), barely known to

anyone but film buffs, can bring in more than \$500 if sold individually. The 2001 DVD of Bruce Robinson's talking-shoulder-boil (don't ask) epic *How to Get Ahead in Advertising* (1989) fetches \$170. If you want to watch Mickey Rourke and Faye Dunaway get soused in myriad L.A. watering holes in 1987's critically acclaimed *Barfly*, you'll have to pony up more than a bar tab (as much as \$150 for a sealed copy or \$65 used) for the Warner Home Video disc. Disney perfected the limited-release concept—when they're gone, they're gone—with VHS and has continued it with DVD; thus a copy of the 2002 DVD of *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) may cost you \$150.



All this green for one DVD raises an obvious question: If there's enough demand to cause the sci-fi cult favorite *Liquid Sky* (1983) to go for \$50, why not press more copies? Well, those wouldn't be first editions and would therefore be less desirable. The collector mentality prizes original issues most, and we're grateful for it. A used 1997 Playboy DVD of *Farrah Fawcett: All of Me* (pictured) goes for \$100, if you can find it, and we intend to hold on to ours. —B.M.

holiday tips

[**2006 GIFT GUIDE**]

Here are the essentials for stuffing your stocking



ABC pulled the plug on **POLICE SQUAD!** (1982) after six episodes, but it became a cult hit, spawned the lucrative *Naked Gun* franchise and gets the last laugh in this complete set.... **BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD: THE MIKE JUDGE COLLECTION** (pictured top left) is a 10-disc set combining three earlier volumes with the new edition of the 1996 feature *Beavis and Butt-head Do America*.... Barbara Stanwyck and Jean Harlow do a surprising number of guys in *Baby Face* (1933) and *Red-Headed Woman* (1932, pictured center left), respectively, two of the precode delights included in the **FORBIDDEN HOLLYWOOD COLLECTION, VOL. 1**, along with James Whale's *Waterloo Bridge* (1931).... Paramount didn't bundle the Bernardo Bertolucci masterpieces **THE CONFORMIST** (1970, pictured bottom left) and **1900** (1976) together, but you should. Both are new to disc and superb.... A special edition of the stirring 1941 biopic *Sergeant York* anchors **GARY COOPER: THE SIGNATURE COLLECTION**, which introduces five classics to DVD, including *The Fountainhead* (1949) and *The Wreck of the Mary Deare* (1959).... **THE MARLON BRANDO**



COLLECTION packs five flicks, all of them debuts, including the sexy, soapy 1967 drama *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (pictured top right). A double-disc serving of *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962) is the find here.... **THE PAUL NEWMAN COLLECTION** premieres seven solid Newman outings on DVD, from his career-making turn in *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (1956) to both his stints as gumshoe Lew Harper, *Harper* (1966) and *The Drowning Pool* (1975).... The three Criterion Collection editions gathered in **OLIVIER'S SHAKESPEARE**—*Henry V* (1944), *Hamlet* (1948, pictured center right) and *Richard III* (1955)—remain fundamental for any serious collector.... With five films—including *It Happened One Night* (1934), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and the new-to-disc *American Madness* (1932)—plus new bonus materials and a 96-page scrapbook, **THE PREMIERE FRANK CAPRA COLLECTION** is a class act.... The **MASH MARTINIS & MEDICINE COLLECTION** (pictured bottom right) has 36 discs, including Robert Altman's 1970 film, every episode from the TV show's 1972 to 1983 run and two new bonus DVDs. Only a ferret face would complain. —G.F.





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the best gift sets of 2006

[BOX TOPS]

Like spiked eggnog, multidisc sets are a holiday tradition worth keeping

In a changing music business, it may turn out that what record companies do best are compilations and surveys of genres and musicians. This year brings a bumper crop of great boxed sets. **BLOWING THE FUSE** (Bear Family): An amazing 16-CD set of classic rhythm and blues from 1945 to 1960. You'll want to be at any party where this music is playing. **WHAT IT IS! FUNKY SOUL AND RARE GROOVES** (Rhino): Speaking of party music, this four-CD set surveys funk from 1967 to 1977. **WAYLON JENNINGS: NASHVILLE REBEL** (RLG Nashville/Legacy): An impressive four-CD collection of the outlaw's career from 1958 to 1995. **STEVE REICH: PHASES: A NONESUCH RETROSPECTIVE** (Nonesuch): In celebration of the minimalist's 70th birthday, this five-CD box gathers his best work. **BYRDS: THERE IS A SEASON** (Columbia/Legacy): For whatever reason, this seminal band hasn't always gotten the attention it deserves. This four-CD (and one DVD) set corrects that oversight. **POGUES** and **JESUS & MARY CHAIN:** Rhino has reissued the catalogues of two 1980s giants. The Pogues' gutter-punk take on Celtic music prefaced subsequent rethinks of traditional music. With their homages to 1960s girl-



group, surf and mop-top music, J&MC went a fuzzed-out step further down the path of pop classicism. **FEARLESS LEADER** (Prestige): John Coltrane is best known for his late-1960s work, but his early years are also impressive, as you can hear on this six-CD set with him as a leader. **CHARLES TOLLIVER** (Mosaic Select): Another in a fine series of releases of lesser-known jazz figures, this three-CD set captures one of the genre's most underrated trumpet players. **LEGENDS OF COUNTRY** (Shout! Factory): It's hard to limit the greatest country songs ever to just three discs, but this collection is hard to argue with. **SUGAR HILL RECORDS: A RETROSPECTIVE:** This four-CD set surveys 25 years of one of the best roots labels in the business. It's everything Nashville should be. **LEGENDS OF COUNTRY MUSIC: BOB WILLS & HIS TEXAS PLAYBOYS** (Columbia/Legacy): A master of American music finally gets his due with 105 tracks on four discs. **THE BEST OF STUDIO ONE COLLECTION** (Rouner): Coxsone Dodd was a reggae genius. This compilation covers his amazing work as a producer. **DOORS: PERCEPTION** (Rhino): Weighing in at six CDs and six DVDs, this exhaustive set embraces all six Jim Morrison masterpieces.

MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE

The Black Parade

There's always been a hint of theater behind MCR's emo-metal crunch. This time the band wears that on its sleeve—right next to the bleeding heart. The group aims for Queen-size grandiosity, and a Liza Minnelli cameo seals the deal. (Reprise) **YYY** —Jason Buhrmester



LUCERO

Rebels, Rogues & Sworn Brothers

Over four LPs and endless boozy tours, this Memphis band went from twangy alt-country to punked-up Springsteen. These songs could have been written out on Thunder Road, and "What Else Would You Have Me Be" is one of the combo's best ever. (Liberty and Lament) **YYY** —J.B.



WILLIE NELSON • Songbird

Nelson's a good choice for novice producer Ryan Adams—you can fuck him up only so much. This album hews closely to Willie's usual sound, but the devil is in the deviations. A Leonard Cohen cover flops, but when Nelson is ambushed by Adams-style guitars, it works. (Lost Highway) **YYY** —Josh Robertson



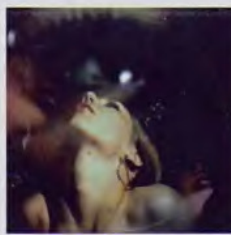
LLOYD BANKS • Rotten Apple

The self-proclaimed Blue Hefner is back to take the world on a ride through the streets of New York City with his sharp lyrics and slick talk. Production is top-notch, featuring beats from Eminem, Havoc and Ron Browz. The icing on the cake is 50 Cent's guest spot, sure to get hands in the air. (G-Unit) **YYY** —Dean Gaskin



DEFTONES • Saturday Night Wrist

A mix of metal chug and My Bloody Valentine atmospheric helped the Deftones transcend a musical movement filled with "Nookie" heads. Here the band returns to the experimental brilliance of *White Pony*, blending power-chord blasts with soft melodies. There's no other band like this on the planet. (Maverick Reprise) **YYY** —J.B.



GRAHAM COXON

Love Travels at Illegal Speeds

Since guitarist Coxon left Blur six years ago, his solo work has shown that he, not frontman Damon Albarn, was responsible for the band's sound. These tunes echo the classic Brit power pop of the Jam, the Kinks and Buzzcocks. Perfect. (Parlophone) **YYY** —Tim Mohr



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game of the month

[GET YOUR ASS IN GEARS]

The best game yet made for the 360 has arrived

When the original Xbox debuted, it had one big thing going for it, and that thing was called *Halo*. Although the 360's roster so far is probably stronger on balance, it hasn't shown anything approaching *Halo*'s level of innovation, graphical snap and pure wow factor. Until now. *Gears of War* is a third-person cover-based shooter that plays like a full-bore FPS thanks to a slickly intuitive control scheme. The engaging, cinematic single-player story is set amid crumbling ruins ravaged by the rapacious, grotesque Locust Horde. The four-on-four multiplayer matches reward cooperation and communication, and online co-op play lets you share the bloodshed with a pal. Weapons are visceral and satisfying, including the chain saw attachment on your rifle. Hearing that buzz when you cut online opponents clean in half never gets old. **★★★★** —John Gaudiosi



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS (PC, PS3, 360) Come on, think of a better setting for a counterterrorist game. This version has the most intuitive controls the franchise has seen so far. Simple squad commands put you in charge, and four-player online co-op shines. **★★★★½** —J.G.



GUITAR HERO II (PS2) The first *Guitar Hero* blew our minds with its sheer originality (and kickin' guitar controller). Now part two is here to cave in our skulls with a guitar-and-bass co-op mode and 55 new songs, including one by Spinal Tap. Somebody pass the groupies. **★★★★** —Scott Stein



DESTROY ALL HUMANS! 2 (PS2, Xbox) Crypto's back, only this time he's terrorizing the 1960s instead of the 1950s. And that means fun with peaceniks and KGB agents. Once you read a couple of hippies' minds, you won't feel so bad about calling in that meteor shower. **★★★** —Scott Steinberg



NEED FOR SPEED: CARBON (PC, PS2, 360, Xbox) Unlike many sports franchises, *Need for Speed* improves significantly every time out. In this one, drift racing is back, along with a Risk-like territory system that lets you and your wingmen vie for turf with rival crews. **★★★★½** —S.A.



FAMILY GUY (PS2, Xbox) With visuals virtually identical to the show's, a script and voices by Seth MacFarlane and his writers and actors, along with action that's straight out of the arcade and heavily larded with bad taste, this game will be manna to *Family Guy* fans. **★★★★½** —Scott Alexander



TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8 (Xbox) The Birdman goes back to the future in this welcome return to the exploratory, nonnarrative style found in his first few titles. It's enhanced by gorgeous next-gen graphical goodness and eight-person multiplayer. **★★★★** —Scott Stein



console watch

[GAMING THE SYSTEMS]

Wii and PS3 join the 360 in next-gen nirvana. Here's what to play

Nintendo's launch lineup is the beefiest in video game history because of its Virtual Console, which allows users to download and play NES, SNES and Nintendo 64 games. Between new and retro titles, the Wii will have approximately two dozen to start, including everything



from kiddie favorites such as **THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS** and **SUPER**

MARIO GALAXY to the badass bloodshed of **RED STEEL** (above), in which you'll swing a sword and shoot a gun using the Wii's unique motion-sensitive controller.

The rampant absurdity of **RAYMAN: RAVING RABBIDS** pits you against a



horde of moronic mammals (sort of like your morning commute). **MARVEL: ULTIMATE**

ALLIANCE (above) gets special mention for its Wii-centric control scheme, which lets you rotate the camera by twisting the controller in space. And in **MADDEN**

NFL '07 you'll snap the remote back, cock it over your head and then zip passes to your receivers. This is a very, very good thing. PS3 has a more powerful processor, but its launch is far



scrawnier. Sony brings the hack and slash with **GENJI**, its

feudal Japan brawler (above), while **FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3** adds a compelling first-person perspective to its bone-splittingly realistic mix. **FULL AUTO 2**

covers your quotas for racing, shooting and exploding, and it offers a new arena mode along with its classic race action. **RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN** (right) shows you what things would have been like if, instead of Hitler, aliens had tried to take over the world in the 1940s. Finally, **MOTORSTORM** brings the pure joy of off-roading to the comfort of your living room. You didn't have any plans for the next six months, did you? —S.A.

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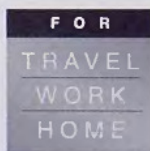


QC2 headphones (left).
New QC3 headphones (right).

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gift books

[BIBLIOPHILE'S HOLIDAY]

'Tis the season to load up on good books

The holiday season is too noisy. There's a lot of chatter about peace, but with all the shopping, compulsory parties, in-laws and oversugared children, where can you find it? How about in the pages of these new titles, guaranteed to serve not only as top-notch gifts but as refuges for you and yours from the static of beeping gadgets, Christmas carols and complaining stomachs? What could be more diverting than **THE NEW BEDSIDE PLAYBOY**, an impressive anthology of nocturnal fiction and nonfiction from more than six decades of *PLAYBOY*? The roster of contributors includes four Nobel Prize winners (Saul Bellow, Gabriel García Márquez, Nadine Gordimer and Isaac Bashevis Singer), comic genius P.G. Wodehouse and such lesser-known greats as J.G. Ballard. If a longer narrative is what you're after, William Boyd's **RESTLESS** presents what at first glance seems to be a look at an English widow's life but upon further reading becomes an urgent and intelligent tale of espionage, murder and lost love. The perfect gift for a lover of maps is Derek Hayes's **HISTORICAL ATLAS OF THE UNITED STATES**. With more than 500 maps, this beautiful volume covers half a millennium of geographical history. **THE 101 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE WHO NEVER LIVED**, a guide to fictional, mythic and television characters—including Odysseus (number 24), Sam Spade (68) and Archie Bunker (32)—reminds us that the imagination's progeny are often more memorable than real life's. James Bond is ranked 51st on that list, but for British publisher Simon Winder, Bond is number one. In his thoughtful exploration of the iconic figure, **THE MAN WHO SAVED BRITAIN**, he makes a compelling case for how 007 managed to keep his country from surrendering to full-scale marginalization on the world scene in the 1960s and 1970s. If your chosen heroes tend toward flesh and blood, you



GERARD DUBOIS

have a few options: **THE PARIS REVIEW INTERVIEWS, VOL. 1** is a collection of conversations on the art of writing and living with the likes of T.S. Eliot, Jorge Luis Borges and Dorothy Parker. These interviews offer some of the most acute insights into the defining literary figures of the 20th century. Another rich environment for the making of heroes and myths is the playing field; *New York Times* sportswriter George Vecsey knows this better than most and proves it in his heartfelt and richly detailed **BASEBALL: A HISTORY OF AMERICA'S FAVORITE GAME**. Sporting fun can also be had in **SPY: THE FUNNY YEARS**, the best of a magazine that kicked the culture in its complacent ass and was too smart, snarky and wonderfully silly to last. **A MILITARY MISCELLANY** is for those who (a) think they know everything about this country's conflicts and require a comeuppance, (b) don't know much about who won or lost what when, or (c) are so fatigued by shopping that anything more demanding than a lively and often surprising list of anecdotes and facts (such as a roster of heroes who later became mass murderers) would cause systemic surrender. If you've had it with all this frankincense and myrrh hokum, Richard Dawkins's **THE GOD DELUSION** is for you. The world's foremost Darwinist turns his attention here to the irrationality of religion. In **THE OXFORD COMPANION TO WINE**, our favorite wine writer, *Financial Times* columnist Jancis Robinson, demystifies the grape in witty, straightforward language. And finally, if all else fails and a kiss under the mistletoe doesn't relieve body or soul, spend some time with **NINA HARTLEY'S GUIDE TO TOTAL SEX**. Hartley is often referred to as the smartest woman in porn; she's certainly the most articulate when it comes to the how-tos of touching, kissing and coming.

the erotic eye



INGRES: EROTIC DRAWINGS
Stéphane Guégan

A critic once wrote that Ingres loved nudes and hated anatomy. The artist was hardly a stickler for proportion, but his idealized interpretations of the female form are sexually charged in ways that seem modern, considering their 19th century provenance. This collection of sensual drawings and paintings exalts the female figure to new heights.

KATLICK SCHOOL • Sante D'Orazio
Photographer D'Orazio presents the Catholic girl in all her pleated-skirt glory, as rebellious and perversely erotic as ever. These 130 schoolgirl images—as performed by a Latina named Kat—show her bored, flirtatious, louche and smoking. Is D'Orazio treating the school-uniform fetish with irony or unalloyed worship? —Carmela Ciuraru



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The High Life

Jackson Hole's Amangani brings sleek and sensual to the Wild West

Used to be that getting fancy in Jackson Hole, Wyoming meant asking the barkeep for a glass to go with your bottle of beer. But what was once a wild and woolly frontier has been massaged over the past decade into one of the Continental Divide's most refined hideaways. The skiing is to die for (alas, sometimes literally), and the living is just as grand. An assemblage of smart hotels spearheaded the ski town's evolution, foremost among them the Amangani (from \$565, amangani.com). Perched atop a tall butte, the transcendental 40-suite retreat is a calming yin to the jagged yang of the towering Tetons. Merging Far Eastern elegance and Old West Americana, the uncluttered interior—with restaurant, lounge, library, gallery and gym—features soft-hued sandstone and rich redwood trim adorned with Native artifacts. The high-ceilinged rooms lend themselves to indoor sports, with king-size beds, pewter-rimmed fireplaces, black slate window-side bathtubs and individual patios overlooking the Tetons. The mammoth Jackson Hole Mountain Resort is only a shuttle-bus ride away, and off the slopes, Teton Village offers a collection of restaurants and rowdy bars where you can rustle up a ski bunny or two for a soak, glass in hand, in the Amangani's steam-cloaked 80-degree pool.



Ski Lodges: A Quick Study

PLAYBOY'S guide to North America's sexiest ski lodges: **1.** The bar at the Sky Hotel (from \$330, theskyhotel.com) in Aspen is packed with tight-sweatered hotness. **2.** In Utah, Snowbird's Cliff Lodge (from \$330, snowbird.com) features a rooftop pool 10 stories up. **3.** The chocolates at Stein Eriksen Lodge (from \$400, steinlodge.com), at Park City, Utah's Deer Valley Resort, are as smooth as the groomed runs. **4.** The Fairmont Chateau Whistler (from \$320, chateauwhistler.com), in British Columbia, makes its mark with old-world charm. **5.** Fine vintages flow freely at NoCal's PlumpJack Squaw Valley Inn (from \$160, plumpjack.com), an extension of San Francisco's PlumpJack Wines.

Fire on the Mountain

IT WAS ONE of those mornings that begin in the afternoon. Bleary-eyed, head pounding, we found ourselves in a pub called Avalanche at the base of the Crested Butte ski mountain. After a house cocktail called an avalanche warning, we suddenly felt like a million bucks (or at least a hundred—who's counting?). It was so good, we had to ask for the recipe. *Avalanche warning:* one shot each of Southern Comfort, Jim Beam, Cuervo Gold and Yukon Jack, with a splash of sweet-and-sour and pineapple juice. Mix together, dump over ice in a hurricane glass and garnish with a cherry.



Projecting the Future

DLP REAR-PROJECTION TVS offer giant screens for reasonable prices, but they've got issues: They carry more junk in the trunk than their svelte plasma and LCD cousins, their use of a color wheel to produce hues can create a "rainbow effect" during fast motion, and their projector lamps can go *phht* after a few years. But here's some good news: Though Samsung's HL-S5679W model (\$4,000, samsung.com) is still zaftig, the company has eliminated both the rainbow effect and bulb burnout by using ultrabright LEDs. The upshot? True images and more than double the screen life at a price well under \$5,000.



Plasma Plus

FLAT-PANEL PLASMA SETS were the high-definition gold standard for years, but recently other display technologies moved to 1080p while plasma lagged. Now industry leader Pioneer closes the gap with its spectacular PRO-FHD1 (\$10,000, pioneerelectronics.com), a 50-inch beauty combining full 1080p resolution with a host of proprietary image-enhancement technologies. Pioneer's advanced video-processing system analyzes each frame to maintain detail in the shadows while keeping bright areas from blowing out. If \$10,000 seems steep, think of it as less than half a penny per pixel.



Small Is Beautiful

IF YOU LIKE the clean, modern design cues of the Macintosh but don't need a turtlenecked dork with an image consultant telling you what to buy, your new TV is ready. Oppo's 20-inch LT-2007 (\$600, oppodigital.com) may not be the largest set here, but for desks and small urban spaces it's a compelling blend of price, design and functionality. It has inputs for TV and video signals (composite, component, S-video and coax) and a VGA port that lets you use it as a computer monitor, plus it has a DVD player built right into its base. So when all the technical jargon about this year's TVs gets to you, you can pop in a disc and spend some quality time chilling with *The Girls Next Door*. Trust us, it's quite relaxing.



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Hey, Chappy

BACK WHEN MEN were men and an enterprising sheep could earn a pretty penny, a guy was willing to put up with saddle sores, gonorrhea and a chapped face. But this ain't *Deadwood*, partner. We now have ergonomic seating, antibiotics and fantastically soothing grooming products. With the cold, dry weather setting in, stow these three face-saving supplies in your saddlebag: Biotherm Homme's Self-Foaming Cleanser (\$16, biotherm.com), Facial Exfoliator (\$16) and Aqua Sensitive moisturizer (\$25). Rawhide be gone.



Rough Rider

JEEP'S RUBICON LINE takes its name from the place we tested it—the notoriously brutal trail from Georgetown, California to Lake Tahoe. The 2007 model (from \$26,750, jeep.com) has 237 foot-pounds of torque, a longer wheelbase, a wider track and a disconnecting front stabilizer bar that increases wheel travel by 28 percent—just the thing when you're rock climbing at two miles an hour.

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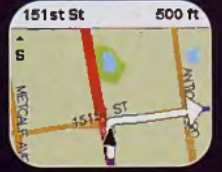
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The Playboy Advisor

My wife and I have been married for 18 months. Last week she told me she loves me but is not in love with me. I didn't know what to say. The next day she said she wanted an answer from me as to how I feel about her. I love her with all my heart and would do anything to make her happy. I am very confused. Can you help?—W.J., Albany, New York

We interpret her statement to mean she believes the marriage has no future. It's the equivalent of "I like you but not in that way." What if making her happy means you have to leave?

I am attending a wedding in Santa Fe. I have a navy-blue pin-striped suit and a white shirt. My only tie is a red power tie I bought for job interviews. Is that okay for a wedding? Is the white shirt?—C.C., Amarillo, Texas

The white shirt is okay, but don't wear the red tie, which will make you look as if you came from the office. Buy a few that are more subdued. Though the combination was discouraged in the past, a checked or polka-dot tie will look good with pinstripes; the recent launch of the "decade of individuality" allows you to show a little flair as long as you don't stray too far from the basic rules of fashion. Since the wedding is in Santa Fe, you could even go without the tie, but do wear a pocket square.

I am a 30-year-old Latino who doesn't speak much Spanish. I just don't interact with Spanish speakers that often. However, when I meet an attractive Latina and tell her I don't speak Spanish, I feel I am blowing any chance of getting to know her because of the language thing, even if she speaks perfect English. Does this sound like a legitimate concern, or am I thinking about this too much?—L.C., New York, New York

*Está pensando demasiado. You may find some women resistant in certain neighborhoods of Miami, but Valerie Menard, author of *Latinas in Love* (saesa online.com), says most young Hispanic women aren't going to measure your Latinoness by your language skills. "They will judge you much more by the confidence you show in yourself," she says. Your attitude toward modern women will also play a role. Menard says although some Latinas are reluctant to date cross-culturally because they don't want to be tour guides in a relationship, others disdain traditional attitudes of machismo so much that they gravitate to non-Latinos.*

In August a reader asked why he gets so turned on by his wife's moans and she has little reaction to his. You explained that evolutionary biologists believe a woman's moans may be designed to rein a man in and arouse him quickly. As a



woman, I was prompted to consider my own situation. When I perform fellatio, my partner's moans can turn me on to the point where I have a mild orgasm without any physical stimulation. Even if I've already climaxed, just listening to him can make me come again. Is this normal?—C.A., Scottsdale, Arizona

It's unusual but not abnormal. You're on the fun part of the bell curve.

Listening to a man moan is a huge turn-on. My partner doesn't make as much noise as I do, so when he's inside me and his eyes close and a moan escapes his lips, it's as though we're speaking the most primitive of languages. I moan from the moment he enters me until the moment he withdraws, which is my way of saying, "Don't take that away!" As for moaning during masturbation, I used to touch myself in silence, but that changed after I left home and no longer had to worry about waking my family. (Now I just wake the neighbors.) Moaning definitely improves the high I get from sex.—L.R., Raleigh, North Carolina

We hear you. Thanks for sharing.

What are your thoughts about ordering fish on Sundays? Some say it's not a good idea because restaurants supposedly can't receive seafood shipments then. Is that the case even at better restaurants?—S.M., Dallas, Texas

*Monday, not Sunday, is actually most risky. In his book *Kitchen Confidential*, chef Anthony Bourdain says he is wary of ordering fish then except at top restaurants or those specializing in seafood. "You walk into a nice two-star place in New York on a sleepy Monday evening and you see they're running a*

delicious-sounding special of yellowfin tuna," Bourdain writes. "Here are the two words that should leap out at you: 'Monday' and 'special.'" It's likely the fish was purchased on Thursday as part of a large weekend order, meaning by Monday night it has been on ice for four days, absorbing odors and enduring thousands of openings of the cooler door. "Why doesn't the restaurant owner throw out the leftover tuna?" Bourdain asks. "He can get a delivery on Monday morning, right? Sure he can, but what prevents his supplier from thinking the same way? He's emptying his refrigerator too." Serving fish can be a tricky business in general, Bourdain notes, because different fish spoil at different rates.

My husband had never been able to come while getting a blow job from me or anyone else. The other night we were in the 69 position (I prefer to suck his cock from that angle) when he started groaning and came so hard, I think it hit my brain. I was so excited he had climaxed in my mouth that I climaxed too. The next night we tried again, he came again, and I did too. I thought this may be useful to others who are having trouble getting off from oral.—T.D., Boulder, Colorado

Or even those who aren't.

I find it disturbing that any woman would be willing to give up her ability to have multiple orgasms to avoid the pain of childbirth (March). Childbirth is often painful simply because a woman will not allow her body to relax. I delivered after a difficult 24-hour labor but still experienced what could be called a birthgasm. I have multiple orgasms and I've had a birthgasm, and I would never want to give up either.—T.K., Oberlin, Ohio

We are happy to have your thoughts, but we will not embark on a discussion of why childbirth is painful. It's interesting to note that medical literature includes testimony from women who report experiencing spontaneous orgasms during labor and birth. One possible explanation is that as the cervix dilates and the fetus enters the vagina, its movement stimulates the same nerves that come into play when the G-spot is pressed. In fact, easing the pain of childbirth may have been the original adaptive function of the area. In one study, Beverly Whipple of Rutgers found that simply applying pressure on the G-spot increases a woman's pain threshold by 40 percent.

In July you mentioned alternative lubricants to Astroglide, which a reader found too slippery. You listed drawbacks of oil-based lubes but not of water-based ones. Water-based lubes are absorbed into your skin or evaporate because you and the air are also water based. To combat this problem, many companies add glycerin, a sweet, syrupy substance that

may contribute to yeast infections. It also makes the lube sticky. Silicone-based lubricants such as Eros Bodyglide are a better choice. Medical-grade silicone is hypoallergenic, can be used with latex condoms, has a neutral pH and is safe for ingestion. The lubricants are great for both vaginal and anal sex.—Bonnie Blagg, boutiqueg.com, Chicago, Illinois

You're right. The only caution we would add is that silicone-based lubes will damage silicone or CyberSkin toys.

A reader asked in August if being single can affect whether a person is hired or promoted. You wrote, "If there is a bias, it's against married people." My experience suggests you are 15 years behind the times. Many employers prefer married people, especially if they have families, because they are much less likely to move or quit. Married people are more fearful of losing their job so will take bad assignments and generally work harder. I believe I have been passed over for several promotions because I am single.—C.K., Grand Island, Nebraska

You may be right, but we doubt marital status is the deciding factor in most hiring or promotion decisions. Many single people also have families to support.

I posted my profile on an adult dating site but didn't get any responses. For a joke I created a second profile identical to the first except I claimed to be bi-curious. Now women are lining up. I started dating one who responded, and we get along great. But the other day she called my bluff and said she had found a guy for me to play with. How can I get her to drop this? If she finds out I lied, we're through.—J.L., Billings, Montana

Your only hope is that she is less interested in your appetites than her own. She may simply want to have sex with two guys at once, a fantasy you can help fulfill.

During a trip to Honduras I bought a bottle of *aguardiente*. I don't like the taste of it straight but haven't been able to find any recipes. Any suggestions?—N.L., Seattle, Washington

*As you discovered, *aguardiente* (which translates roughly as "fire water") is strong medicine. Many Hondurans mix it with Sprite. Those who prefer it straight often chase it by sucking on an orange wedge.*

In May you had a letter from a reader who introduced his wife to a friend he knew had a large penis and then allowed her to have sex with him. In September another reader wrote to say the guy was nuts for doing that, because the wife would never go back to normal. I don't understand this predilection for big cocks. The entire discussion proves what we know to be true: The average guy is a lousy lover. If you have a woman turned on, she's not going to whip out a ruler. I'm not overly hung, but I do a pretty

good job using less than an inch of my tongue. And I like full-body contact, so even if I had a larger cock, screwing a woman from a distance would not be a turn-on.—J.W., Anaheim, California

You make some excellent points. We would disagree only with the assertion that the average guy is a lousy lover. Instead we suspect he thinks as you do.

My husband is an ass man, but I am lacking in that department. I tried working out for the area, but it got smaller. I tried gaining weight, but it went everywhere else. My husband makes comments about the round, bubbly butts he sees in magazines and movies. I have told him this makes me feel insecure, especially in the bedroom. It's to the point where I don't feel comfortable being nude with him. Is there any way to overcome this insecurity? Why would he be with me in the first place if I'm not his ideal?—L.S., Brooklyn, New York

We suspect your husband isn't nearly as dismayed by your behind as you think he is. First of all, it's attached to you, and he's aroused by the entire package. This is the same advice we offer women who are insecure about their breast size or men who wish they had a bigger dick. That said, he could easily keep the commentary to himself and dramatically improve his prospects of getting laid. For you we offer the counsel of actress Audrey Tautou, who once fretted about her skinny legs. "If you obsess about some defect, you make it obvious to everyone and suddenly everyone is staring at just that defect," she has said. "The more you hide something, the more it shows. But when you accept your defect, suddenly no one sees it anymore. In fact, it becomes an asset." Keeping that in mind, instruct your husband to sit on the edge of the bed as you shake your gorgeous ass, bend over for him, squirm in his lap and slide up and down on his cock. He'll have no complaints.

As a PLAYBOY subscriber with my husband for many years, I wanted to share his story. Ladies, if you notice your partner seems to be having a midlife crisis and he says something feels wrong but can't pinpoint it and complains of mysterious lower-back pain, encourage him to investigate. My husband saw a doctor several times for his pain to no avail (that's another story), and earlier this year he went into cardiac arrest. It turned out testicular cancer had spread to his bones, lungs, intestines and lymph nodes. He was just 43 years old when he died, still hoping to see his Saints in the Super Bowl and restore his 1980 Firebird. I would ask any male reader who notices unusual swelling or has pain in his tailbone to prove to himself and those who love him that it's nothing.—C.M., Shreveport, Louisiana

We appreciate your thoughtfulness. Your husband was unusual in that testicular cancer typically strikes men in their 20s and 30s. Guys, it's time for our regular reminder to

fondle yourself for a higher purpose: After a long shower, feel each ball for lumps or swellings. Both testicles should feel smooth except for the epididymis, the bumpy sperm tube along the top and back. Lumps are among the early signs of a problem; lower-back pain occurs during later stages. You may also feel aching in your lower abdomen and heaviness in the scrotum; another symptom is breast tenderness or growth, which is caused by the hormones certain types of testicular-cancer cells secrete. The good news is that the cure rate is nearly 100 percent if the cancer cells haven't left the testicle and better than 70 percent even if they have. Scientists believe this may be because testicular cells weaken when they reach body temperature, making them more susceptible to radiation or other treatments. Unfortunately, a new study of 40,576 testicular-cancer survivors found they had a far greater risk than the general population of later developing a malignant tumor elsewhere in their body.

What is the best way to do push-ups?—C.H., Tucson, Arizona

There is no good way, according to trainer Phil Wharton, who with his father, Jim, runs Wharton Performance (whartonperformance.com). "We're totally against them," he says. "They are brutal on your rotator cuff, back, spine and wrists. That explains why you see so many shoulder injuries in the military," which uses push-ups as punishment. Wharton says you can strengthen the same muscles with much less risk by doing the chest fly. Lie on your back on a bench with your knees bent; while holding weights, extend your arms until they're parallel to the floor, lock your elbows and lift your arms until your hands touch. "If you have to bend your elbows, the weights are too heavy," he says.

Your response in July to the fellow who found out his wife could ejaculate is right on. When my wife read that many women visibly ejaculate with G-spot stimulation, she decided we had to try it. *Woo hoo!* My favorite part of sex is watching her get off, so the past few weeks have been great. I can't thank you enough. Her preferred method is 69. I cup a small vibrator in my palm so it rests on her clit while I stimulate her G-spot with my finger. Now my wife can come on my chin too.—J.L., Flint, Michigan

Glad we could help. We apologize for not printing that information years ago.

All reasonable questions—from fashion, food and drink, stereotypes 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 in 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. The Advisor's latest book, Dear Playboy Advisor, is available at bookstores, by phoning 800-423-9494 or online at playboystore.com.





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THE PLAYBOY FORUM

TOUGH LOVE

WE HEAR A LOT ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF A BLACK "UNDER-CLASS," BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WHITE PEOPLE MESS UP?

BY ISHMAEL REED

This past March CNN ran a story about prostitution. Although the face of a black former prostitute in Chicago was shown, those of customers—white johns—were hidden behind dancing checkers. This is how white and black dysfunction have been treated since the 1880s: Black social problems and criminality are played up, while those among whites are minimized, if reported at all. *The New York Times* sounded an alarm about the thousands of babies who have been abandoned as a result of their parents' addiction to methamphetamine. *Times* columnist Joyce Purnick has reported that three quarters of the people addicted to the drug are white. Yet there followed an article on the *New York Times* op-ed page by columnist John Tierney that dismissed meth as "a fad in some places." A letter writer challenged Tierney. "I urge him to venture out to America's heartland, where meth abuse is anything but a fad," wrote Bill Hansell. "Statistics show that meth use is increasing, yet the dangers associated with this drug are given short shrift by Mr. Tierney." But for Tierney and fellow *Times* columnist David Brooks to admit that meth use among whites in the heartland is a serious problem would dispute the neoconservative formula that inhabitants of red states are all God-fearing and virtuous and those of blue states secular and decadent—or that whites dwell in a sort of Lake Wobegon utopia, yet the problems of blacks can be traced to their culture. Tierney even blamed the plight of black Katrina victims on New Deal programs of the 1930s, though 80 percent of those who have benefited from Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security have been white.

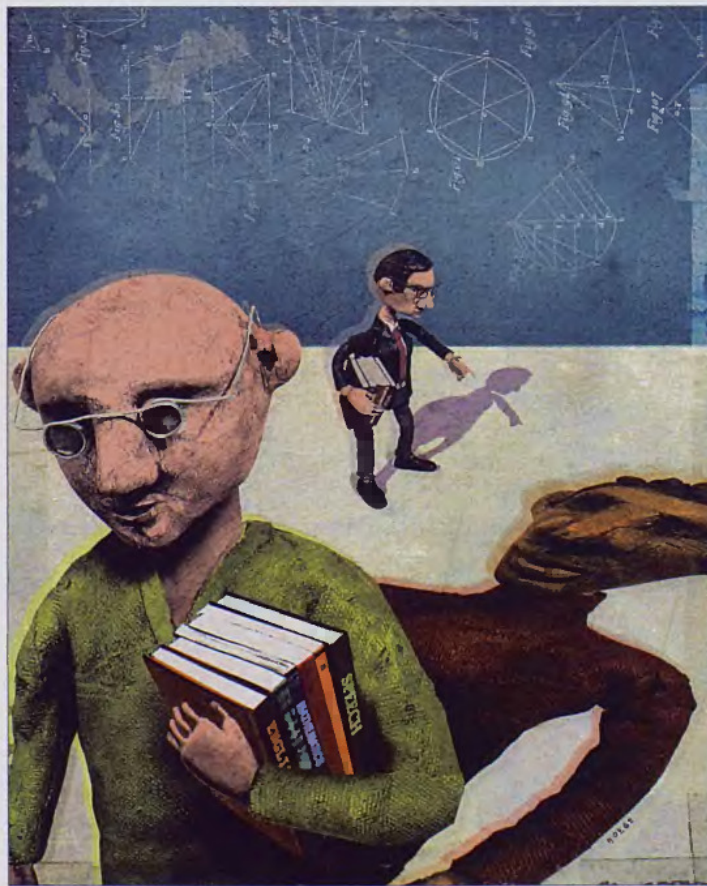
Brooks attributed President Bush's 2004 victory to states with "the highest white fertility rates" and "young families who wanted to move away from vulgarity." More recently Orlando Patterson, one of those blacks whose op-ed pieces reflect the

Times's editorial policy regarding the problems of blacks, attributed what he called the self-destructive behavior of some black males to hip-hop culture. The sharp rise in killings among black men, the result of competition over crack markets, began in 1984. Today's hip-hop artists were in elementary school at that time.

William Bennett is an old hand at blaming the country's social problems on the behavior of blacks. When he was secretary of education he blamed whatever problems occurred in education at the time on blacks. When he was drug czar, drug addiction and sales were painted black. So it came as no surprise when he said if we were to abort black babies, the crime rate would decline. Even the white progressives who responded failed to point out that 70 percent of those who are arrested for crimes in the United States are white; if one were to abort white babies, there would be an even more significant plunge in the crime rate!

Neocons such as Tierney, Brooks, Bennett and a tiny class of black intellectuals—their proxies—have succeeded in persuading the public that the only problem

confronting American education is the gap in scholastic achievement between white and black students. Yet this gap is narrowing. The majority of the pieces written by Samuel Freedman, the *Times* education columnist, say the crisis confronting American education proceeds from the unwillingness of young blacks to assimilate. Those who have been swayed by the numerous articles and books making this claim must have been astonished to read a recent study showing that 53 percent of the nation's white students (in Cleveland it's 74 percent) read below proficiency level. In another study only one third of college graduates were found to understand what they were reading or, in its words, to be able to "read a complex book and extrapolate from



RICHARD JORGE

CONSPIRACY OF DUNCES

IN SCHOOLS, MALE BEHAVIOR IS NOW A PATHOLOGY

By Gerry Garibaldi

it." Perhaps these white students view being able to read as "acting white."

What puzzles me is why there have been no tough-love op-eds and oversize books to lecture white students for their lack of literacy skills, their lack of "personal responsibility" and their being prone to "self-inflicted problems."

Some of the scoldings directed at black Americans have been printed under the guise of tough love. Some years ago the symbol of tough love toward black students was a school principal who went around threatening them with a baseball bat. Right-wing and conservative writers applauded him. Don't these writers love white students? If whites continue to dominate the major economic, social and cultural institutions, what will the future of these institutions hold if they are led by people who can't read? What will happen to

**A PRINCIPAL TOLD ME THAT
WITH DESEGREGATION HE
HAD TO END CORPORAL
PUNISHMENT—BRUISES WERE
VISIBLE ON WHITE KIDS.**

the quality of our national life if the number of white males attending college continues to decline? The situation has become so dire that some colleges have begun outreach programs to recruit males.

A principal of a black school in Chattanooga, Tennessee once told me he had to end corporal punishment when integration occurred, because the bruises on white children were visible. This is how the media treat white children's problems. They are reluctant to address the social problems of the white community because they see it as their main consumer base and feel that any unpleasant tough love may alienate it. This at a time when the white family has become so dysfunctional that Andrew Hacker, writing about the rise of illegitimate births among white women, notes that if Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan were around today, he could write about "the tangle of pathologies" in that community.

While black students have athletes, entertainers, neocons and just plain charismatics competing with one another to flagellate them with tough love, white students are failing without comment.

*Ishmael Reed's latest work is *New and Collected Poems, 1964–2006*.*

After working for two decades as a movie executive in Hollywood, I left southern California to teach at an urban high school in Connecticut. Feminism, I quickly discovered, is the dominant philosophy in our schools, and the pathology of males is a leitmotif woven through every plotline. It's a zero-tolerance world in which vigorous debate and competition are muscled aside by the feminist ideals of "co-operative learning," "mainstreaming" and "inclusiveness." Special education is now a river of no return.

On my first day of teaching I was given an eight-pound textbook and a district-wide curriculum guide. Flipping through the book, I noticed page after page of portraits of serious-minded, studious girls or of gleeful young women scoring winning goals on multicultural female soccer teams. There were far fewer photos of boys, particularly white boys—so few that I began to scrutinize the ethnic features of the males represented, hoping to find a boy I could honestly discern as white. A few could have passed for Italian or Jewish but were most likely Indian or Middle Eastern. To assure a level playing field, seemingly physically fit white boys appeared most frequently in wheelchairs.

The stories in the anthology kept this feminist soccer spirit alive. For each male writer, I found at least one and usually two female writers to compensate. Black and Hispanic female writers such as Nikki Giovanni, Sandra Cisneros and Alice Walker had clearly elbowed out the likes of Mark Twain, Joseph Conrad and William Faulkner. Their stories and poetry

I found simple, short and as thin as rice paper. Despite that, most of my white female colleagues in the English department—intelligent, witty, dedicated teachers—waxed rhapsodic at their mention.

As my first-period students trooped into my room on that first day, with them came my harried-looking special-education "co-teacher." She carried manila folders for all the kids in my class who were dubbed learning disabled or, more commonly, behaviorally challenged. Every one of these was a boy. In each case there was a list of modifications I was to make in my daily lessons to accommodate every perceived male disability. The special-education lingo was dazzling. "Touch-proximity control" and "mimed clues/gestures" were two suggested modifications given for a chubby, moonfaced kid who sported an ancient Kiss T-shirt

and a studded collar. "Multisensory approach," "extra test time" and "no spelling penalty" were for another. "Employ manipulatives" and "modify tests" was the advice for a third. There were five in all, two of whom were on Ritalin. Most had been in special ed since grammar school.

"How am I going to do all this?" I asked my special-ed advisor.

"I'll take care of it" was her seasoned response. "Don't worry."

My special-ed kids, I noted, drifted through every lesson like cosmonauts on a moon flight. In the course of the day they would meet with their special-ed advisor in the resource room. By the next day their modified assignments would be miraculously completed and on time. I became



suspicious when I discovered they couldn't perform the same tasks in class, away from the resource room. As long as these boys were passing, it was delicately explained, questions and paperwork would be kept to a minimum. *Modified*, it was plain, was a code word for *dumbed down*. With dramatically lower expectations for these boys came lower self-esteem and sharp hostility.

With rare exceptions girls avoided the special-ed club entirely.

The gender differences between my students quickly became apparent. Girls loved to write; boys hated to. Boys were argumentative and would challenge the value of each assignment before they would begin it. If your explanation didn't satisfy, soggy eraser bits would end up in the girls' hair and pen caps would whiz across the classroom. Girls were sweeter, tolerant of my inexperience and cooperative. They rarely questioned the value of any of my assignments. I found, however, that boys' relentless, often rude challenges forced me to defend, clarify and refine the point of every lesson.

Still, the notion that boys' behavior was problematic came up in many of the conversations in the lunchroom. Speculation as to why boys were so screwed up ranged from the effects of violent video games to absent parents to the mercury level in children's inoculations. Underlying this cluster of theories was the unexpressed assumption that these behaviors were symptoms of an incurable malaise: manhood.

But my first real sense of the institutional pressures on boys came not through the boys but from my own experience. One afternoon, at one of my first departmental meetings, I disrupted the collegial atmosphere by asserting that the celebrated Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison, the Paris Hilton of our curriculum guide, was the most overrated writer in the history of world literature. Every mascaraed eye in the room lit on me with alarm. It was as if I'd been caught naked in a hot tub

with George Wallace. Behind their opaque expressions, however, I read a hard political resolve and bristling resentment. It wasn't my literary judgment they found threatening but my aggressive challenge to the brick and mortar of today's feminist orthodoxy, which has been so carefully and painstakingly laid. Toni Morrison is black and female, and thus she holds claim to a higher order of understanding and acceptance. Period. Kindness was the driving sentiment in this group, as they saw it. I sensed that if I resisted, I would end up with a manila folder all my own.

It is precisely this tough political leather that impressionable boys have been up against for well over a decade now. In an atmosphere of inclusiveness and sunny cooperation, the native male instinct to vigorously—sometimes belligerently—attack ideas and demand proof of outcome for time invested has become nothing more than a symbol of male aggression. To many female educators it is essential to harness and control that element in the classroom. That is the battle raging in schools across the country. As special-education programs escalate year after year, the casualty rate for boys continues to grow. Without men at their sides, boys are in trouble.

Their dropout and failure rates are now at historic highs.

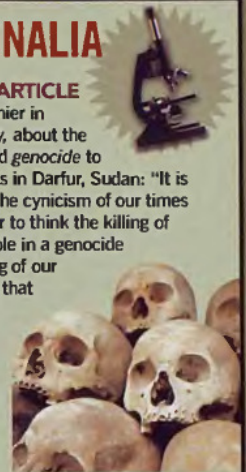
Victory, however, is a slippery slope. The great fear for women is to be marginalized by a society that has traditionally undervalued them. Education has become their terrain, and they defend it with the zeal of those striving to preserve their essence. Inside and outside the classroom they listen to my every utterance with the nuanced ear of a heart surgeon, probing for the vein of aggression they know exists in me. Though I have come to like and respect these women, I, like the boys, bridle at the reins of control they have cast over me. Neither side can countenance surrender. And so the battle grinds on.

IT WAS AS IF I'D BEEN CAUGHT NAKED IN A HOT TUB WITH GEORGE WALLACE.

MARGINALIA

FROM AN ARTICLE

by Gerard Prunier in *Current History*, about the use of the word *genocide* to describe events in Darfur, Sudan: "It is a measure of the cynicism of our times that we appear to think the killing of 250,000 people in a genocide more deserving of our attention than that of 250,000 people in nongenocidal massacres. The reason seems to be the media's need for mass-consumption labels. Things are seen in their capacity to create brand images, to warrant a 'big story' high in rhetoric. *Genocide* is big because it carries the Nazi label, which sells well. *Ethnic cleansing* is next best (though far behind) because it goes with Bosnia, which was the last big-story European massacre. Simply killing is boring, especially in Africa."

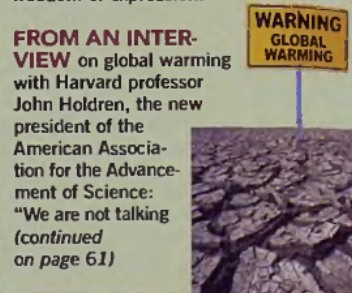


FROM AN EDITORIAL by conservative columnist George Will: "The London plot against civil aviation confirmed that better law enforcement, which probably could have prevented September 11, is central to combating terrorism. Cooperation between Pakistani and British law enforcement has validated John Kerry's belief that

'many of the interdiction tactics that cripple drug lords, including governments working jointly to share intelligence, patrol borders and force banks to identify suspicious customers, can also be some of the most useful tools in the war on terror.' In a candidates' debate in South Carolina, Kerry said that although the war on terror will be 'occasionally military,' it is 'primarily an intelligence and law-enforcement operation that requires cooperation around the world.'"

FROM A BILL, HR 5528, titled the Pornography Jurisdiction Limitation Act of 2006, introduced to the House of Representatives by Chris Cannon (R.-Utah) in June: "No court created by act of Congress shall have jurisdiction, and the Supreme Court shall have no appellate jurisdiction, to hear or decide a question of whether a state pornography law imposes a constitutionally invalid restriction on the freedom of expression."

FROM AN INTERVIEW on global warming with Harvard professor John Holdren, the new president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science: "We are not talking



NO CHILD LEFT UNRECRUITED

WHEN THE NO Child Left Behind Act was made into law, in January 2002, the secretary of education had 120 days to notify high school principals and administrators about section 9528 of the bill. This provision makes it mandatory that any secondary school or agency receiving federal funds



must share with military recruiters the names, addresses and telephone listings of its students. The only exception is for private schools with verifiable religious objections to service in the armed forces, and such objections must be included in the school's corporate or organizational paperwork.

READER RESPONSE

THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

The letter from Bill Brewer in September's "Reader Response" issues a challenge: "Show me an example in living memory when Christians have run amok in every major city, looting, burning and murdering in the name of Jesus. Then I'll agree that Christian fundamentalists are just as scary and dangerous as their Muslim counterparts." Christian fundamentalists don't have to do that. By means of polite violence they have condemned millions of AIDS sufferers to death and forced millions of women to deliver unwanted babies. They are willing to expose millions of young people to sexually transmitted diseases without benefit of new vaccines. They are passing laws to impose their views of morality on those of us who do not share those views. Due to the insistence of fundamentalist Christians that the war on drugs be punitive rather than corrective, that "war" has forced more misery on the U.S. and its citizens than the drugs themselves could ever have done. And the results of fundamentalist interference in U.S. educational systems have set our citizens behind third world countries' in the ability to think clearly. Christians' current politi-



He's not finding fans among our readers.

cal influence lets them practice tyranny via legal methods, but a fundamentalist is still a fundamentalist.

Paul A. Alter
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Today's Christian fundamentalists may not act in the same vein as violent Muslim protestors, but that's because Christians enjoy a level of political power in the U.S. unrivaled by any other group. Part of the privilege of being the dominant political force is that you don't need to stage violent protests to

receive apologies for an offense. Ask any kid who has had to transfer schools for being a "fag." Ask the families of doctors who were murdered for performing abortions. The day hate crimes with religious motives are addressed with punitive justice equal to that of other



Fundamentalism is as fundamentalism daes.

hate crimes, you can suggest that fundamentalists from various religions are different from one another. But in the meantime, fundamentalism is as fundamentalism does.

Sharlene King
Chicago, Illinois

I want to respond to Brewer's letter about using the same measuring stick for all fundamentalists. Has he forgotten the abortion clinic bombings, scare tactics and other illegal measures Christian fundamentalists have used, all of which occurred in living memory? Christians are happy to forget their own trespasses to condemn those of another faith. As Brewer says, let's start using the same measuring stick for everyone. Maybe we can begin by giving those prisoners in Guantánamo a fair trial, just as we did for abortion clinic bombers.

Scott Franks
Columbus, Ohio

TABLES TURNED

I was pleased to read John Dean's "Radicals on the Rise," as well as your "Open Letter to Our Readers" (August), both of which made a point I have been trying to put into words for years. About right-wing authoritarian followers, Dean writes, "They are uncritical in their thinking regarding their chosen authority and therefore often hold inconsistent and contradictory positions," among

many other unflattering things. The open letter then refers to a comment in a recent "Reader Response" indicating that many readers who call themselves conservatives are contradicting themselves by reading *PLAYBOY*. I think the correlation is phenomenal. While claiming to be Christians, conservatives support war in Iraq, torture of non-Americans, breeches of the Constitution by the current administration and vengeance against the September 11 attackers. Doesn't the Bible quote Jesus Christ as saying, "Love your enemy," "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," "Turn the other cheek" and, most notably, the greatest commandment, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself"? Does the Bible not elsewhere tell us "Vengeance is mine, says the Lord"? Does that not mean God, and only God, is the one to take action against those who harm us? Have they missed the section of the Bible in which Jesus says, "He who is without sin may throw the first stone"? I won't even get into the death penalty, immigration laws, equality in education and the rest. How can Christians support anything Republicans stand for? I love that



Uncritical in his thinking?

PLAYBOY has the balls to stand up for its beliefs and speak proudly. If not for *PLAYBOY*'s almost solo stance on truth in government and its willingness to expose our leaders' inconsistencies, the U.S. might well be further along the track to authoritarianism than it already is. In short, if *PLAYBOY* didn't exist, we'd have to invent it.

Joe Harman
Cumberland, Maryland

E-mail via the web at letters.playboy.com. Or write: 730 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10019.

NEWSFRONT



Mouth Beach

MIAMI—During the primary campaign for the Republican nomination to challenge Democratic incumbent Bill Nelson for one of Florida's U.S. Senate seats, then-U.S. representative Katherine Harris told *Florida Baptist Witness*, a religious journal, that separation of church and state was "a lie we have been told." She also said it was "wrong because God is the one who chooses our rulers." Infamous for her role in the 2000 presidential election when, as Florida's secretary of state, she oversaw the vote recount despite having served as George Bush's Florida campaign co-chairperson, Harris went on to warn that without religious advocates in office America would end up "a nation of secular laws" and that "if you're not electing Christians, then in essence you are going to legislate sin." She won the primary by a margin of 20 percentage points.

Jolly? Roger

SAN FRANCISCO—Pirate radio stations—that is, broadcasters without licenses—frequently run into trouble with the Federal Communications Commission. But Pirate Cat, broadcasting at 87.9 FM in San Francisco and L.A., has discovered a new lease on life. Whenever the FCC sends threatening letters, the station sends back a passage from the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, title 47, section 73.3542: "Authority is granted, on a temporary basis, in extraordinary circumstances requiring emergency operation to serve the public interest. Such situations include: emergencies involving danger to life and property; a national emergency proclaimed by the president or the Congress of the USA; and the continuance of any war in which the United States is engaged and where such action is necessary for the national defense or security or otherwise in furtherance of the war effort." So far, the FCC has not challenged Pirate Cat's assertion that the president's war on terror makes it legal to broadcast without a formal license.



Bra and Order

SNYDER, OKLAHOMA—This town's police chief, Tod Ozmun, landed on the hot seat after the discovery that his wife, Doris, had posed nude for an erotic website. Amid calls from some residents for Ozmun's head, Mayor Dale Moore reminded the community that Ozmun had "done more drug arrests and solved more crimes than any-

body else in town has ever done." While Doris Ozmun described the crisis as a "witch hunt," Ozmun himself felt that "what my wife does does not affect my job as chief of police. She is a grown 43-year-old woman who is free to make her own decisions." The city council and mayor agreed with him, issuing the following statement: "Under the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States and [as] adjudicated by the Supreme Court of the United States on many occasions, pornography or, in the case of Snyder, adult pictures, is a right under the First Amendment, and no laws have been broken." But after one council member resigned in protest at the body's inaction and the public outcry continued, Ozmun, Moore and another council member all resigned in disgust at the situation. As Moore put it, "I don't want to work in a community like this."

Scare Tactics

LAWRENCE, KANSAS—According to new data from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the media frenzy over Internet predators is not based on facts. In a study of 55,000 households, the institute found teens are being sexually solicited less despite spending ever increasing amounts of time online. And of the solicitations teens received, many came from other teens, not adults. "A significant portion of what they are calling sexual solicitation is merely teens being teens," the study concluded. "People have fears that these crimes involve offenders and predators who look at these sites and then seek to identify these kids. That's not really what's going on."

MARGINALIA

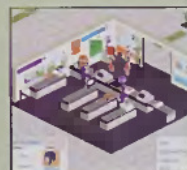
(continued from page 59)

anymore about what climate models say might happen in the future. We are experiencing dangerous human disruption of the global climate, and we're going to experience more."

FROM AN ARTICLE by Tim Harford on Slate.com, about the rise in teen oral sex: "When the price of Coca-Cola rises, rational cola lovers drink more Pepsi. When the price of penetrative sex rises, rational teenagers seek substitutes. Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that even as the oral-sex epidemic rages, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the percentage of teenage virgins has risen by more than 15 percent since the beginning of the 1990s. Those who are still having sex have switched to using birth-control methods that will also protect them from sexually transmitted infections. Use of the contraceptive pill is down by nearly a fifth, but use of condoms is up by more than a third. The oral-sex epidemic is a rational response to a rise in the price of the alternative."



FROM THE DESCRIPTION of *Disaffected!*, a free video game available on the website of Persuasive Games, a company that helps clients such as Jeep, Cold Stone Creamery



and Cisco Systems "communicate effectively through electronic games":

"*Disaffected!* gives the player the chance to step into the demotivated position of real FedEx Kinko's employees. Feel the indifference of these purple-shirted malcontents firsthand and consider the possible reasons behind their malaise—is it mere incompetence? Managerial affliction? Unseen but serious labor issues?"

FROM A STATEMENT by Brigadier General Mike Sango of the Zimbabwe Defense Force, supporting a law introduced by President Robert Mugabe's government to allow monitoring of domestic Internet, telephone and other communications: "The advancement in technology today means that no one is safe at all from the source of terrorism, mercenarism and organized crime. A piece of legislation has been long overdue on this particular problem."



THEY WERE RIGHT

THINGS ONCE CONSIDERED TO EXIST ONLY IN THE MINDS OF PARANOID CRACKPOTS ARE NOW THE STUFF OF EVERYDAY LIFE

During the early 1990s putative freedom fighters—a surprising number of whom were not whacked-out survivalists—believed the federal government had a secret plan to spy on, control and incarcerate citizens of our great republic. These militiamen were roundly reviled for their absurdly libertarian fantasies. The antigovernment

militia movement ended in 1995 when Timothy McVeigh bombed a federal office building in Oklahoma City, but much of what had been predicted—shadow-government sites, chip implants in humans, black helicopters, secret concentration camps—has come to pass. Turns out the crazy dude in military fatigues outside Home Depot was right.



Officers monitor surveillance-camera feeds in a command center built at police headquarters in Washington, D.C. after 9/11.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: The FDA has approved RFID chips like this one for human implantation; Camp X-Ray prisoners are not covered by U.S. law; this bunker is part of a secret government-continuity facility at Greenbrier, West Virginia; special ops fly Pave Low helicopters—painted black—for low-altitude infiltration, while unmarked jets are used in the rendition of prisoners to secret interrogation centers; these Indianapolis rail yards are rumored to house FEMA facilities.



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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: DIXIE CHICKS

A candid conversation with the best-selling female group in music history about fickle fans, angry DJs, friendly critics and pissing off President Bush

It is March 10, 2003. The Dixie Chicks—Martie Maguire, Natalie Maines and Emily Robison—are playing an SRO show in London at the height of their astonishing career. The band is the biggest-selling female music group of all time and one of only eight bands in history, on a list that includes the Beatles, the Eagles and Pink Floyd, to have more than one record sell more than 10 million copies. It also happens to be the eve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and singer Maines, before belting out their current single—ironically enough, a love-lorn GI's lament called "Travelin' Soldier"—quips, "Just so you know, we're ashamed the president of the United States is from Texas."

It was a line heard round the world. Though rock stars from John Lennon to Bono and Bruce Springsteen are well-known for their liberal politics and activism, country musicians and the industry behind them are solidly red-state conservative. The backlash was instant and fierce. The Dixie Chicks were lambasted by radio jocks, denounced by their country-music peers and blacklisted by the same country radio stations that had helped make them stars. At his concerts Toby Keith projected doctored photos showing Maines embracing Saddam Hussein. At organized protests bulldozers buried tens of thousands of Dixie Chicks CDs. There were death threats, and the White House released a simple statement: "Their fans have spoken."

Many people wrote the Dixie Chicks off, and indeed the band could easily have faded from the spotlight. Rather than back down or beg for forgiveness, however, the musicians fought back in ways that further inflamed their original fans. They posed nude on the cover of *Entertainment Weekly*, their bodies painted with such slogans as "Saddam's Angels." Newly politicized, they were committed participants in the Vote for Change tour leading up to the 2004 presidential election. In interviews they continued to speak out against the war and the president.

Meanwhile, no longer embraced by the country-music establishment, the band changed artistic direction, enlisting master producer Rick Rubin (*Red Hot Chili Peppers*, *Beastie Boys*, *Johnny Cash*) for its newest CD, *Taking the Long Way*. The album's first single, "Not Ready to Make Nice," is a defiant response to the detractors. Though the song was predictably barred from most country radio stations, it sold briskly to a new fan base, and music critics raved. The CD hasn't sold on the scale of the band's earlier releases, but it went double platinum, selling more than 2 million copies by our press time and becoming one of 2006's best-sellers.

The band also went on the road for what it wryly dubbed the *Accidents & Accusations Tour*. Although the shows sold out quickly in some cities, other performances were canceled or post-

poned because of slow ticket sales. But the band was undeterred, continuing to add new dates to coincide with the release of *Dixie Chicks: Shut Up and Sing*, a documentary by Oscar-winning filmmaker Barbara Kopple and Cecilia Peck, which got good reviews at the Toronto Film Festival. *Variety* said the movie "should win over fans of the Chicks on the fence...and perhaps create a cultural stir as well."

The Texas-based Dixie Chicks have humble roots as an old-school cowgirl-style string band. Sisters Robison (banjo) and Maguire (fiddle) first formed the group with two young female singers backed by a band that sometimes included pedal steel guitar player Lloyd Maines. They took their name from the Little Feat song "Dixie Chicken."

Maines had a daughter named Natalie who was a singer and had briefly attended the Berkeley College of Music. When the vocalists left the group, Natalie joined Robison and Maguire. The combination took them to unprecedented heights in country music. Their back-to-back albums *Wide Open Spaces* (1998) and *Fly* (1999) each topped the charts for months. Their tours broke ticket-sales records, and they racked up numerous Grammy awards. The band's 2002 CD, *Home*, featured a more intimate, acoustic-based sound than the buoyant country pop that had defined them, but it still sold 6 million copies.



ROBISON: "Read the stuff on the Internet: 'Just tell that bitch to shut up.' They don't want to hear mouthy women. A guy would have been an outlaw, the Johnny Cash or Merle Haggard of his generation."



MAINES: "Some people call me brave because of what I said, but I don't think it was brave at all. Brave is Kanye West, after Hurricane Katrina, saying George Bush doesn't care about black people. I'm a coward compared with him."



MAGUIRE: "Maybe I'm a snob, but in my mind, stuff that sells the best usually isn't the best stuff. How many records does Sheryl Crow sell? Not 10 million. Maybe it's snotty to say, but I think the popular stuff is the crappiest."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID ROSE

Maguire, 37, Maines, 32, and Robison, 34, are all married (or remarried) and mothers of children under the age of five. We sent freelance journalist **Alan Light** to talk to the Chicks as they hit the road with a retinue including three nannies who take care of the women's seven children. Light, who met with them at Atlantic City's Borgata Hotel, Casino & Spa during a stopover on the tour, reports: "The girls are smart, funny and at ease with one another—and truly fearless, too. They casually offer their thoughts on even the most sensitive subjects. Maines is both the focal point and the ringleader, but the other two can give as good as they get."

"While their kids went to the pool and hung out in the playroom next to the band's dressing room, the trio—in jeans and flip-flops, with no makeup—sprawled across the suite's sofas for a lengthy discussion of music, marriage and their unlikely role as the world's most notorious band."

PLAYBOY: Natalie, when you went onstage that night in London, did you think you were about to rip into the president of the U.S.?

NATALIE MAINES: I don't even remember. We had talked beforehand about how lame it felt to be doing shows on the eve of a war. I needed to acknowledge that we weren't oblivious to what was going on in the world, just not to feel shallow. But I never liked to get serious onstage. I felt pressure to entertain, and people aren't at your show to feel down. Now, when I watch the clip of my saying it, I see I'm trying to keep it light-hearted but still acknowledge that I'm not some flighty blonde. But no, I hadn't planned out what I was going to say.

PLAYBOY: Emily and Martie, what was your reaction?

EMILY ROBISON: I had a physical reaction, like when you slip in the lunchroom and wait to see who saw you. Heat from the head all the way down, that's what I felt. It was the president, you know? It was kind of like the feeling you'd get when you were called into the principal's office.

MARTIE MAGUIRE: I didn't even remember her saying it. A couple of days later, when the news started coming back really bad, I thought, I could easily have said it. I would talk onstage too sometimes. To me it was just more patter.

ROBISON: We were playing a gig once in New Mexico at a time when a mysterious illness was going around out there. Native Americans were dying in the des-

ert, and they hadn't yet figured out that the disease was coming from deer urine. We were interviewed on the six o'clock news, and someone said, "You're the only band that would come here. Aren't you scared?" Martie said, "Well, only 12 people have died." [laughter]

MAGUIRE: That was just stupid, not controversial.

PLAYBOY: When did it become apparent to you that the Bush comment wasn't going to slip by unnoticed?

MAINES: When the AP picked it up. I knew we would be used to draw attention away from the things that were going on. I knew the far right and the religious right were capable of sabotage, so I wasn't surprised by any of that. Our manager said, "It'll blow over in three days tops," but right then I



"We never felt cool by any means. Shania was the hot one, and Faith was the beautiful one. And we were like, 'Well, we have talent.'" —Natalie Maines

said, "You're wrong." Still, there were daily shocks.

PLAYBOY: Such as?

MAINES: The Red Cross not taking our money. It went way beyond people not wanting to buy our record or play us on the radio.

MAGUIRE: I couldn't believe people would bulldoze music.

PLAYBOY: Were you afraid of the fallout?

MAGUIRE: I wrote it off as being from stupid people—and you've got to ignore that kind of ignorance. But then I thought, Wait, the media is using *this* as their lead story? There's a war going on! What are they trying to cover up? It just made me sick. And it made me think, Well, I guess we must be pretty big. Nobody ever informed us we were this big, but we must be for people to be talking about what the lead singer of a country band said in a smoky little club.

PLAYBOY: Rock stars such as Bono and Neil Young have openly opposed the war. Was the difference that you were country stars?

ROBISON: To me, one of the big things we learned was how country radio could eat its own so quickly. There's the whole struggle between pop and country and who's going to cross over; they thought they were losing Faith Hill and Shania Twain. At the time, we felt we were sticking in there and waving the country flag, but everything turned so quickly. It put country music on the front page, and the radio people were kind of enjoying the limelight. They were doing it for their own purposes—not out of principle against what we said but because it was good entertainment.

MAINES: Country music was being talked about outside country music—that never happens. They loved that the words *country radio* were on CNN.

They fed it, I think, innocently, not knowing how serious it was.

ROBISON: Yes. It got out of control. They fed the fire, and then it was too late to pull back. They did a disservice to themselves; a lot of people wanted us to remain a part of country music for the genre's sake. They shot themselves in the foot.

MAINES: At the Country Music Association Awards show, Vince Gill said of us, whether you agree with them or not, they've got the right to say what they want. Then he started getting all this flack. It was a lesson in keeping your mouth shut. But we got lots of letters and support from actors and rock musicians. Rosie O'Donnell sent champagne. I

always felt more of a connection with those people anyway.

PLAYBOY: Were you surprised when Howard Stern came around and supported you?

MAINES: I was very emotional and happy when he did. He hadn't been nice to us, but he apologized because he was a Republican at the time and fell for all the links between Iraq and 9/11. He's very honest about admitting that now. I love it when people admit they were wrong. He wasn't apologizing for what he said; he was apologizing for being completely wrong.

PLAYBOY: You've generated more controversy of late. In New York you dedicated the song "White Trash Wedding" to Mel Gibson a few days after his arrest. Was that one planned?

MAINES: No, I didn't plan to say anything about him. It never crossed my mind until I said it.

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PLAYBOY: As victims of attacks by the press, are you more sympathetic when someone like Gibson or Tom Cruise gets in trouble and the press runs wild with the story?

MAGUIRE: People put what happened to us in the same category as those sorts of things, but it's different. Those are character lapses or substance-abuse problems or whatever. This was not that. You can't go to rehab for feeling a certain way.

MAINES: No, but I could have been wasted and on drugs and gone to that kind of rehab.

PLAYBOY: Americans seem to love it when a celebrity blows it and then apologizes.

ROBISON: It's the redemption, the confession.

MAINES: The public like to see that you're more fucked up than they are.

MAGUIRE: "Oh, I screwed up; I was really drunk" is harmless because you're not going to be drunk every day of your life. But it's more dangerous for Natalie to really believe in what she said, for us to really believe in what she said. She said it sane and very sober and meant it. When you've got a fan base and you're selling that many records, that's propaganda they don't want out there.

MAINES: I think a lot of people look at me as if I'm nuts and that I care more about living with myself as a person than about my career. I start thinking, Maybe it is immature to stick to your guns that much; maybe there's something wrong with that. But people believe there's ultimately some plan because there's just no way I could be so stupid when it would have been so easy to make it all go away.

PLAYBOY: How important was the timing of your remark, Natalie? If you were to say it now, with the president's approval ratings and support for the war near all-time lows, would it be as big a deal?

MAINES: It would be a blip. Nothing. They might talk about it on some morning shows. But that just makes me feel more justified that I didn't do anything wrong.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel brave for having spoken out at a time when most Americans supported going to war?

MAINES: Some people call me brave, but I don't think what I did was brave at all. I do think we've been brave since. Brave is Kanye West, after Hurricane Katrina, saying George Bush doesn't care about black people. That was one of the greatest television moments of all time. I would never have said that. I'm a coward compared with him. It was so honest and sincere, and he knew what he was going to say. I would have chickened out. That was just so brave. And true.

PLAYBOY: How much of the negative reaction came because you are women?

MAINES: Some people say the anger was because we're women, but I don't believe that. I think it's because we were country-music singers. If Tim McGraw had done exactly what I did, he would have gotten the same fallout.

Honky-Tonk Women

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◀ Shania Twain

Her *Come on Over* is the all-time biggest-selling album for a female artist.

Appeal: Thanks to her famous midriff, even noncountry fans can stomach her poppy music.

Roots: Hundreds of miles from Nashville—she's Canadian.

▶ Martina McBride

The farmer's daughter has had five honky-tonk hits sit atop the country charts.

Appeal: Her piercing blue eyes and siren voice.

Dubious achievement: "Independence Day" is used as the introductory music for *The Sean Hannity Show*.



◀ Gretchen Wilson

Raised in a trailer park, this no-frills filly went on to win a Grammy for her debut record.

Appeal: Blessed with great lungs and a strong singing voice, she uses both to showcase a trucker's vernacular.

Before she made it: Pulled pints of a honky-tonk dive bar.

▶ Carrie Underwood

Since winning a contest involving Simon Cowell, she has received plenty of idol worship.

Appeal: Her precocious all-American charm.

Cause du jour: Following in Twain's footsteps, she was named the world's sexiest vegetarian by PETA in 2005.



◀ Faith Hill

Like many of the women on this list, she has crossover allure; her past three albums hit the top of the pop charts.

Appeal: The former face of CoverGirl possesses classic model looks.

Dateability: Has three kids with husband Tim McGraw.

▶ SheDaisy

Sisters Kosidy, Kelsi and Kristyn Osborn are country music's quirkiest girl group.

Appeal: Simple moxie makes them three times sexier.

Versatility: When Kelsi was pregnant with twins, Korli, a fourth sister, filled in on tour.

—Rocky Rokovic



MAGUIRE: I don't agree. There would have been some fallout but not even close.

ROBISON: It's way worse. A guy would have been an outlaw, the Johnny Cash or Merle Haggard of his generation.

MAINES: Yeah, but they didn't say what I said on foreign soil on the eve of war. Country has had rebels, but nobody ever did that.

ROBISON: Read the stuff on the Internet: "Just tell that bitch to shut up." They don't want to hear mouthy women to begin with. Forget about its going against their political grain.

MAINES: Well, I don't think so. I truly don't think it has anything to do with our being women. I don't.

PLAYBOY: Martie, you have said the experience helped you find out who you are. What did you learn?

MAGUIRE: That I was willing to lose everything for what I knew was right. It was what made me open my eyes to who I am and be proud of myself and my principles. In the past I had tried to micromanage everything to ensure that this career would last forever—that I could play music forever or at least until I couldn't do it anymore. I was willing to put that on the line. I didn't care at all. The light just went on. I went, Okay, now I know who I am and what I stand for, and it doesn't matter what we lose along the way. People said, "You don't question the commander in chief. You don't criticize the president." That went against everything I was ever taught, everything I ever believed about our country.

MAINES: I got in a huge argument with a DJ in Dallas last week. His brother is in the military. He said, "Don't you think about the soldiers over there, fighting for your freedom?" I personally don't believe they're fighting for my freedom, but I understand if they need to believe that to risk their lives; I would have to find a reason if I were giving up my life for something. Then later in the conversation, of course, he told me I'm not allowed to say what I said. So I stood up for myself and told him I'd said it because of his brother. I wish I had said, "I thought they were fighting for my freedom, but then I'm not allowed to use that freedom? I'm confused." They always do that: "They're fighting for your rights to be able to say that—but you can't say it."

PLAYBOY: Much of this is shown in the film *Dixie Chicks: Shut Up and Sing*. What prompted the documentary?

ROBISON: It started three and a half years ago when we sang the national anthem at the Super Bowl. We felt we were at a point in our career when we could turn some day-in-the-life or year-in-the-life thing into a DVD or something for our fans. That was in January, and then, in March, Natalie said what she said. The second the shit hit the fan, it was clear this was about something heavier. We let it unfold on film, which is kind of scary because after about half a year you forget the cameras

are there. Once we knew what the potential was, we took it a lot more seriously and let the cameras in when we ordinarily wouldn't. We felt it was important to have the good, the bad and the ugly. Barbara Kopple, the director, caught the humanity of it all. We were so demonized—made into these traitorous sluts. People forget we're also moms and wives and living a normal life outside this controversy.

PLAYBOY: How has the dispute changed your audience?

ROBISON: Almost every night on our tour Natalie asks if anyone has never seen us before. About half the crowd raise their hand, which is exciting.

MAGUIRE: We're playing to about half as many people a night as we did on the Top of the World tour, but if you're reaching that many new fans, you know you've won them over for the right reasons. It's either been driven by the music first and they don't mind our politics, or they're drawn in by the politics. Either way it's win-win. When you look out into the crowd, it's digging the music.

MAINES: On the previous tour, after what I said, we felt this returned love—as

We heard about a DJ riding in a station van with our picture on the side, and a guy pulled out a shotgun as if he were going to shoot up the van. It takes only one wacko.

though the audience thought it was necessary to show support. On the new tour I thought that would be over. But for all the new people who couldn't see the past tour because it was already sold out, this is their first chance to come and show that support. In New York a fan printed hundreds of thank-you signs, and the crowd all raised them up. That takes you by surprise. I really had to focus on the song because you just don't expect to get things back from your crowd like that.

ROBISON: Another change is that there are lots of gay men in the audience. I think they rightfully assume that if you're liberal on one issue, you're liberal across the board.

MAINES: I feel we have a connection with them because we've felt discrimination. We now know what it's like to be hated for no reason, just because of who we are. The other cool thing is there are way more men in general. We never really had men in our crowd. Or it always seemed as if they didn't want to be there—that they brought their girlfriends, thinking for doing that they were going to get laid afterward.

ROBISON: Last night in Washington was the best crowd we've had for the whole tour, but it was interesting to find out after the fact that the venue didn't have metal detectors, as it's supposed to.

PLAYBOY: Metal detectors? Is that a precaution because of death threats? How serious were they?

ROBISON: We heard a lot of stories. We heard about a radio DJ riding in a station van with our picture on the side, and a guy pulled out a shotgun as if he were going to shoot up the van. It takes only one wacko.

PLAYBOY: How did that impact your lives?

ROBISON: We were always aware of threats as a possibility, yet we didn't want them to ruin our lives. But it was important to hire real security so we could sleep at night. They weeded out a lot of stuff we were never made aware of.

PLAYBOY: At least one threat was credible enough that you wrote about it on the new album.

ROBISON: That one was sent to a Lubbock radio station; it was a threat for a Dallas performance. The guy had made threats before and been arrested before. He had a track record. Martie and I told Natalie we would be happy to cancel that show for her sake, but she said, "No, I'm not going to let someone scare me out of doing my job." It was very brave, but it was a very scary night. I'm of the mindset that if someone's going to do it, he's going to do it if he's determined enough. There just aren't enough safeguards in the world to protect us. I just found out about Google Earth—anyone can basically zoom right in on your house—and how easy it is to get information these days. But I refuse to walk around with security all the time. I want to go to the grocery store, take my kids to school. I want to do normal things. If I've got security, I'd rather the guards go to the zoo with my kids and the nanny than stay with me. I'm more worried about their safety than my own.

PLAYBOY: After everything that has happened, do you still relate to your earlier music, the big country hits that came out before you became pariahs in the country-music world?

MAGUIRE: "Top of the World" has a whole new meaning to me now. Every time we sing, "There's a whole lot of singing that's never gonna be heard./Disappearing every day without so much as a word," I think about soldiers being gone. They'll never be heard from again. I see that the crowd is thinking that too. So I still feel "Top of the World" every single time, but I don't feel "Wide Open Spaces" the way I used to.

MAINES: Yeah, on "Wide Open Spaces" I just feel the crowd. I remember when we recorded that song. It felt as though that was our journey. We were on the path to greatness—young and hopeful. Now we're pretty much jaded and over it. I see the young people; it's their anthem. It used to be ours.

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PLAYBOY: For your newest record you came out swinging with "Not Ready to Make Nice" as the first single.

MAINES: We actually thought that was going to be the one song people wouldn't relate to, because it's very self-indulgent, specifically about us and what we went through. But we get a lot of letters from people who are in abusive relationships or any sort of struggle, and they find they're getting power from that song.

ROBISON: I didn't have any preconceived notions about how the album would do or who would buy it. I guess I'm surprised by how much word of mouth it's getting, because there's been no radio support. The music has gotten out there from fans talking on the Internet and from iTunes and the other ways people find music these days.

PLAYBOY: There have been more negative reactions, too. A country-radio program director said, "Putting that single out was just a fuck-you to our audience."

MAINES: I never believed radio programmers would play any of our songs, and I still don't. We gave them an easy song to distance themselves from, but they got another song after that and it didn't take off either. They're just not going to play us, and that is more than fine. It's bullshit to say we dissed their audience. The minute they got calls about any song, they would have taken it off the playlist because they're all looking after their own ass and their own job, and they are cowards. They're the ones who dropped us in 24 hours after a seven-year working partnership for country music—on a number one single about soldiers, no less.

MAGUIRE: It would be fair to say we didn't consider them or people who don't like us. It never entered our minds that they were people we had to answer to.

MAINES: If we had put out something other than "Not Ready to Make Nice," the grassroots passion would not have been there. That song got people active and moving and sharing it. Another song wouldn't have had that bang. Ultimately, I think you put your best song out first, and this was our favorite.

PLAYBOY: After your having two of the biggest-selling records ever, are sales of the new record—a million and a half at the time of this interview—disappointing?

MAINES: We care what critics think, so I wanted to be assured that it was a good record. Obviously, you want as many people to listen to it as possible, but it sucks when you're questioning what you're doing creatively. That would've been a hard place to be.

ROBISON: To me it was a matter of slow burn, and we're prepared to view it as a two-year instead of a one-year campaign. I think that's just part of the nature of rebuilding, and that's okay.

MAGUIRE: Maybe I'm a snob, but every time I see the shelf at the end of the row in the record store, with the featured

artist or whatever, I always think I'm not looking for that music. In my mind, stuff that sells the best usually isn't the best stuff. How many records does Sheryl Crow sell? Not 10 million. So I just never gauge music by that. Maybe it's snotty to say, but I think the popular stuff is the crappiest.

PLAYBOY: But you are one of only eight bands to have more than one 10-million-selling album—a list that includes the Beatles, the Eagles and Pink Floyd. Does it mean anything to you to be in that exclusive club?

ROBISON: Like when the guy in the cafeteria today wouldn't let me get any Raisin Bran because I didn't have a pass? No, I don't feel that.

MAINES: Yes, it is bizarre to me that we can connect to that many people and still be unrecognized. We're able to walk anywhere and not be recognized. Then there's Jessica Simpson, who doesn't really sell records and can't go anywhere. I mean, it's a nice place to be, but I have no idea how to make sense of it or explain it. Bill Maher—I if I may name-drop—was at my house the night we were on *Letterman*, and he heard David Letterman say we were the highest-selling female group of all time, and he looked at me and said, "You are not." Then I was kind of embarrassed and said, "Well, yeah, we are." And he's like, More than the Supremes? More than the this, more than the that? I said, "I know, I know. It's not right. I can't help it." I remember in the *Wide Open* and *Fly* era, people would ask us, "How do you stay levelheaded?" Any time there was too much good news or success Martie always said she would just look at her naked butt in the mirror.

ROBISON: Martie, who has the smallest butt of anyone, had a run-in with a homeless guy who told her she had a fat ass.

PLAYBOY: When did that happen?

ROBISON: She was lying out in the sun at the Hampton Inn in Nashville, and this homeless guy came up to the fence and kind of scared her. She grabbed her towel and was trying to be nonchalant, and he got pissed off, so he goes, "You got a fat ass, you know that?"

MAGUIRE: And I literally went up to my room and looked in the mirror at my ass and was like, "I got a fat butt?" This homeless person really affected my self-esteem.

PLAYBOY: Your recent tour hasn't sold as well as past tours; you've even had to cancel or reschedule some shows.

MAINES: I haven't had one letdown moment about album sales. Usually I've been pleasantly surprised. But yeah, the only letdown is the tour not selling. It's like a telethon where the phone doesn't ring. I felt bad for everybody around us, as though we'd let them down. We sold 6 million records in the past, or 10 million of certain records, and on a big sold-out tour, we played for a million people.

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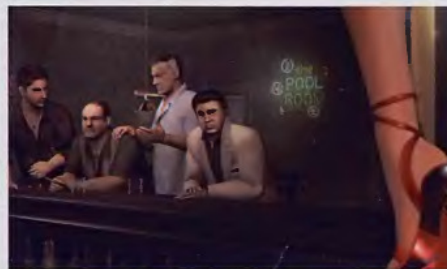
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We always hash everything out, and I'm mad about the tour. I think the one big mistake we made was doing it so quickly. That was dumb, dumb, dumb, dumb.

MAGUIRE: We were so focused on the record, we never even talked about the tour in all the interviews. But it's so obvious: If you have new fans, they have to live with the music first. A lot of people bought the CD and kept it in the shrink-wrap for the first week. They bought it as a statement. We were confident they would love the music eventually, but you have to listen to it a few times.

ROBISON: It takes a lot of motivation to go to a concert. I think the lack of talk on the radio had an effect. That's not there anymore.

MAINES: Of course, Canada sold out in eight minutes.

PLAYBOY: And you continually piss off fans—even before you took on the president. It started when Natalie joined.

MAGUIRE: When Robin and Laura, the original singers, left, we would get messages like "You have to get Robin back in the band!" Why do these people care? They associate so closely with a music group, they feel as though you're theirs. One woman said we were the devil's spawn because we got drums.

ROBISON: This was back before the Internet was big. It was the anonymity of calling our office and leaving messages on our answering machine.

PLAYBOY: How did things change when Natalie joined?

MAGUIRE: One thing I knew about Natalie from day one is that she has to be her. She has to be real. I was raised to do the Southern-hospitality thing: smile at the gigs when people aren't listening, schmooze and all that. I'm proud I can do that, because I can be in any circle of people and do what I need to do—make them feel good. That gets you somewhere too. But I've always respected that Natalie is like, "No, that's wrong." That has led the way we're perceived now. It's changed me, too. Before she said what she said, I don't think I ever took a stand about anything. Then the bottom fell out, and I found myself at the age of 34. I knew what I believed in, but I always saw both sides. I was always the person at the Thanksgiving table going, "Yes, but you see their side and then their side," always trying to be the mediator.

ROBISON: Martie and I cared so much about what people thought of us, for whatever reason. This controversy taught me that not everybody is going to like me and that's okay. It's liberating. Enough people in the world will like me and my music. I don't have to work so hard to convince everyone. It has been a great growing experience. As artists, anytime you're not just in the middle of the road singing ditties, you're going to stir things up. To me, that has always been what endears people to us. You see sports stars

who go through media training, and then when they're asked a question they say absolutely nothing. I don't think people can connect to musicians who do that.

PLAYBOY: What was your first impression of Natalie when you met?

ROBISON: Man, those mall bangs are big!

MAINES: It was the Lubbock version of the Jennifer Aniston thing.

MAGUIRE: I thought she was too cool for us.

MAINES: I was!

ROBISON: We were going to sing a demo just to see how our voices sounded together. I remember Natalie had gotten all made up, and her hair was done. Her dad didn't let her get away with it. He was like, "Ooh, you got all fancy for the demo session."

MAINES: Like in *Uncle Buck*: "What's all that makeup for? We're just going bowling." It was embarrassing. Well, Emily was a beauty queen.

ROBISON: Natalie's mom told her, "You better stand up straight. Emily was in pageants."

MAINES: Finally one day I said to Emily, "You were in pageants?" And everyone turned around and went, "What?" The

I felt that once people saw us live, the music would ultimately win them over. So we didn't have to focus on being PR or fashion darlings. That gives us confidence.

pleasure I got from calling my mom and saying, "Emily wasn't in beauty pageants. Why did you think that? She's disgusting, as a matter of fact. And I stand up straighter than anybody!"

MAGUIRE: I wonder where your mom got that.

MAINES: In Lubbock we think anybody from Dallas is in pageants.

MAGUIRE: Maybe you saw her glamour shot in her high school yearbook.

ROBISON: Maybe it was the banjo.

PLAYBOY: Martie once said that in the Dixie Chicks family, she's the mom, Emily is the dad, and Natalie is the obnoxious teenager. Does that sound right?

MAGUIRE: We almost got in a fight over that. I don't think I'm the mom anymore. I've chilled out a lot. I used to think I could control everything and keep my chicks in line. It stressed me out because I knew I couldn't do anything else. "Please behave because this is my life, here." Now I'm way more laid-back.

PLAYBOY: Did the media storm change the dynamic between you?

MAGUIRE: It's hard to say because so much changed for us personally at the same

time; we were having kids and giving up any sense of control over our lives. That changed our career just as much as the controversy did.

MAINES: I think we became more alike. I wouldn't call Martie the mother hen anymore. Now *she* may be the bratty one.

PLAYBOY: The homeless man's comments about Martie's ass notwithstanding, how do you feel when people talk about your being sexy or cool?

MAINES: We never felt cool by any means, and we were never talked about as being hot or pretty. Shania was the hot one, and Faith was the beautiful one. And we were like, "Well, we have talent."

MAGUIRE: I felt that once people saw us live, the music would ultimately win them over. So we didn't have to focus on being PR or fashion darlings. It was nice to have that security in our back pocket: We know we can play, and we know Natalie can sing. That gives us a confidence we can take through our career and all the highs and lows.

MAINES: I think we would've liked to have been called the pretty ones, but ultimately we always wanted longevity. So it meant more to be recognized strictly for our talent than to be the hot ones.

PLAYBOY: Natalie and Martie, was the demise of your first marriages the result of the band's success?

MAINES: Definitely. I remember standing in the shower a lot, just crying that I was so young and stuck in my relationship forever. I would truly think, How old will he be before he dies? Which is horrible. [laughs] I was never going to kill him, but that's how stuck I felt. Everyone who has been divorced has thought about that. It never even crossed my mind that I could get out of it with a divorce. My parents were married forever. When I got so happy in our career, it made me wake up and realize I should be that happy in my personal life. I was going to have to buck up and own up to my mistake. I didn't like making mistakes, and that was a huge one. I realized I'd rather be alone than with this person. Nothing against him—he wasn't mean or anything. I was just really young, and I still had that small-town mentality that getting married is something to check off the list. So yeah, if we hadn't been successful, I would probably still be married to him. If I had stayed in Lubbock and gotten some nine-to-five job, I wouldn't have known anything else existed. And then when I met my husband Adrian Pasdar, I wasn't looking, just being a ho. [laughter] Nope, never had the chance.

MAGUIRE: We've all tried. It just doesn't seem to work.

MAINES: I never even got to try!

MAGUIRE: I think I could have been a ho. I just didn't have time to prove I could be one.

PLAYBOY: Martie, was your divorce related to the band's success too?

(continued on page 192)

IT TAKES 8 YEARS TO AGE AND
CONSIDERABLY LESS TIME TO JUDGE.

Rating	Whiskey
93	Jim Beam Black®
90	Woodford Reserve®
89	Wild Turkey® 101®
83	Crown Royal®
83	Gentleman Jack®
81	Jack Daniel's®

—Beverage Testing Institute



Jim Beam Black® Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, 43% Alc/Vol
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smart

THE STUFF INSIDE MATTERS MOST.™





THREE SENATORS GORE

*As cousin Al's revival proves,
courage and foresight are at the heart
of this intriguing political dynasty*

by Gore Vidal



For Americans in general, history is most notable for teaching no useful lessons. Thanks to a haphazard educational system and a media that reflects the fantasies of whatever governing clique happens to control opinion through publicity, we often behave like new-minted amnesiacs, with no sense of a national past. Today only the dwindling company of those of us who served in World War II seems to have a sort of generational memory of another America drastically different from the one that we are marooned in today. For us there was, first, the relative prosperity and sense of the modern that we were born into during the 1920s and then the shock of how fragile it all was when Depression struck. Meanwhile, upstairs in the attic there were the picture books of World War I, a war in which our fathers had gone overseas to fight to no apparent good end. For ghoulishly inclined boys, certain books hidden in the attic were irresistibly fascinating: photos of dead soldiers—ours and theirs on the European western front, like an ongoing real life/death Halloween. My own father was a pilot in the original U.S. Army Air Force. Movies of the period testified not only to the glamour of flight but to chivalric knightly duels in the air, all of which left my grandfather (the first Senator Gore, 1907–1921, 1931–1937) cold. Of course, he was blind; more to the point, in the Senate he had fought President Wilson's efforts to get the United States into what Gore presciently called *World War One*, a European affair whose deep roots were of perfect irrelevance to American interests: After all, what was it to us whether the German kaiser or the French republic dominated western Europe?

Illustration by Roberto Parada

In 1912 Gore had been in charge of much of Wilson's successful campaign for the presidency. Once Wilson was elected, Gore pressed for domestic reforms, particularly in agriculture. But Wilson, an Anglophile, was ever more concerned with the European war. By 1916 the two men were less than congenial. Since Gore suspected that Wilson was eager for us to go to war against Germany, he decided to sit out the 1916 presidential election. But he was needed to campaign for the party. Gore said he would help out only if the slogan were "He kept us out of war." Wilson agreed; Gore stumped California. Election night the California vote, thanks to the continental time difference, had not yet come in, and Wilson went to bed convinced that Charles Evans Hughes, the Republican candidate, had won. Then Gore telegraphed from California, predicting Wilson's margin of victory in the state and in the nation. Safely reelected, Wilson forgot his pledge to keep us out of war and

broke with the first Senator Gore as he set about his weird plan to make the world "safe for democracy," a notion as batty as wanting to make the world safe from greed or bad temper or terrorism. Thanks to a flood of hypocritical rhetoric this odd schoolteacher was the uncomprehending director of what was to be a modern age in which the political climate everywhere changed as nationalism replaced patriotism or, to quote the faith-based historian John Lukacs,

"Nationalism, rather than patriotism; the nation rather than the state; populism rather than liberal democracy, to be sure." After Wilson successfully remade the map of Europe, a new spirit was abroad. Baron Frankenstein's monster "nationalism" came to life with a number of bolts of lightning in history's lab. The monster then metamorphosed into a veteran of World War I, Adolf Hitler, who confessed that despite his German Iron Cross, "I was not a patriot; I was a nationalist." Though his natural fatherland was Austria and his adoptive homeland, as our heel-clicking neocons would say, Germany, his primary loyalty was to *der Volk*, the whole Germanic tribe, a Wagnerian concept, a bit heavy on the percussion side, and so a dreadful new game was now afoot.

But back in 1914 our fathers' generation was simply faced with the rise of nationalism, sometimes known as nativism. The clans were only starting to gather, as they are doing today in the Mideast: Sunni, Kurd, Shia. As of 1939 Hitler was conducting Europe's nationalist orchestra. Lukacs usefully writes, "Patriotism is the love of a particular land, with its particular traditions; nationalism is the love of something less tangible, of the myth of a people, and is often a political and ideological substitute for religion both modern and populist."

Arguably the Age of Modernism gave us the nation-state in which we can all be reduced to administrative numbers, while nationalism and its first cousin racism are on the rise. That is the background to our somewhat incoherent American present: a sort of replay of 1914. During the ill-omened year 2006 the sky god (no populist he) has subjected us to every sort of trial by weather. We now face the midterm election, when a feckless media will tell us nothing we need

to know about either politics or the weather. Similarities to 1914? The principal world currency of that era, the British pound sterling, had been barely rescued from collapse by the American banker J.P. Morgan, who had also been aware that no single banker could for long sustain a world currency, a role best played by a wealthy allied state at war alongside Britain. Wilson, reelected in 1916 with the Gore slogan, "He kept us out of war," brilliantly spun us into a war to make the world safe for democracy.

In 1914, as now, war clouds cast great shadows across the land, and the dollar, like the pound before it, is weakening.

Today, as the American republic crumbles at home and stumbles abroad, we face two crucial elections: one to decide whether or not the gas-oil junta will continue to control the legislative branch, and a second election (2008), which will reveal whether or not we have drifted into a nationalist dictatorship with a chief executive

who claims to have inherent rights to spy on us the people while imprisoning, without due process of law, anyone suspected of past, present or *future* terrorism—this last category the dream of every dictatorship. Amnesiacs in chorus can now be heard chanting "It can't happen here," but, dear Virginia, it is happening here. Read the extraordinary Professor Yoo, whose bulletins from the Justice Department admitted that, although the Constitution does enumerate the actual powers of the



Al Gore and former New Hampshire governor Jeanne Shaheen row the Connecticut.

president in both war and peace, it also somehow leaves room for great brutal *inherent* powers of the sort that Professor Yoo, now retired to academe, would like to see codified as additional powers for the leader of the homeland. G.W. Bush, whose Attorney General Gonzales regards the Bill of Rights as a negligible barrier to an omnipotent unitary executive shorn of every check and balance the founding fathers put in place to preserve for us those liberties we had won from our royal master, England's king—rights later to be enshrined in the national psyche by civil war at home and by two foreign wars against totalitarian governments.

Had we the good luck to possess a patriotic rather than nationalist media the alert part of the dozing populace might have understood a most revealing exchange on just how we are governed when C-SPAN showed us a Senate committee coping with Attorney General Gonzales's evasions. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D.-Cal.) quizzed Gonzales on why the administration preferred to wiretap American citizens without a federal warrant as law required. Gonzales simpered adorably, saying, in effect, what, after all, did it matter? The war on terrorism is the most vicious war in human history. And we are confronting Satan himself. The Lord of the Flies. If a few rules and regulations get broken, you can't break eggs without making an omelet or something. I'm not, of course, reproducing the great lawman's actual winged words. For those curious, here is the actual exchange:

FEINSTEIN: Congress did not leave the question open. FISA explicitly says that warrantless surveillance can only continue for 15 days after a declaration of *(continued on page 176)*



"I was so afraid you wouldn't get my change-of-address card!"

MISS GREAT BRITAIN

Meet the other queen of England, Liverpool's Danielle Lloyd



The first thing you notice about Miss Great Britain Danielle Lloyd—after her face, of course, and her hair and her perfect body and the smoothness of her radiant skin—is her voice. Danielle's breathy British accent would give Austin Powers the shivers. Listening to her talk about her days at an all-girls school in her hometown of Liverpool is almost too much to bear. "We wore knee-high socks and five-inch heels," she says, "with our skirts rolled up. The female teachers often complained—though funnily enough the male teachers never did."

Danielle is 22 now and enjoying the spotlight as Miss Great Britain. She no longer lives in Liverpool, but the way she talks about it would make any American man want to move lock, stock and barrel to the Beatles' birthplace. "All the girls from Liverpool are gorgeous," she says, pushing her luxuriously long auburn hair out of her eyes. "It's one of those cities where girls take care of themselves, so it's like a daily competition. I'm glad I'm in London now, where I can go out in tracksuits."

Early on, Danielle started down a different path, beginning university with a desire to become a forensic scientist. Then one day, she says, "I realized I didn't like the sight of blood." Her transformation happened recently, and we're pleased with the results. "I've only really just grown up over the past year," she says. "I was a child before. Now when I want to attract a man, I give him the eyes." She demonstrates, and it works. Case in point: When a judge at the Miss Great Britain pageant, English soccer star Teddy Sheringham, asked Danielle who her favorite soccer player was, she answered, "You, of course." Then she gave him the eyes. No surprise, she won the pageant. And now she's dating Sheringham.

What's up next for Danielle? She says she may do some TV work in the near future, perhaps even in the States. Asked about the differences between British and American men, she says, "I don't know. I haven't really met any American men. I'd like to, though." A pause. "My boyfriend's going to kill me!"

We asked the newly crowned Miss Great Britain Danielle Lloyd what part of her extraordinary frame she favors most. After a laugh: "My bottom. I just like it. It's nice. There was a picture of me in the newspaper that a paparazzo shot at the beach. I had a thong on. Several friends told me, 'You have a round, lovely peachy bum!' I was like, 'Thanks!'"











See more of Danielle at cyber.playboy.com.



By
Neil Cohen

So I'm like this guy you meet in a bar who has a crazy story to tell. It's about a one-of-a-kind old lady who lived next door and, I'm pretty sure, was J.D. Salinger's secret sweetheart while he was writing *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Her name was Becky Hallman or Becky Gehman, a.k.a. Rebecca Tugel: These were all her names, and she had quite a life, filled with lovers. But don't waste time googling her; you won't find any reference to her or any mention of her in any of the Salinger biographies. Believe me, I've looked. Besides, you know how it always is when you read about some celebrated literary femme fatale: The love affairs always sound so sexy and so provocative, you're just dying to know what the object of desire looked like, and then you finally see a picture of this alleged irresistible beauty--and she looks like Tallulah Bankhead. It's always a buzz kill. But in this case, with the pictures I've got, the femme fatale thing makes sense. And I've got a letter, a torn, damp-stained letter from J.D. Salinger himself that starts with "Dear Becky" and ends with "Love, Jerry."

Did the reclusive author of the favorite novel of, what, one, two generations and counting once have a thing for my neighbor? And is she the missing link that might challenge at least 50 years of Salinger scholarship? I hope so.

Even in her old age, Becky was a witty and well-read combination of Audrey Hepburn and Calamity Jane, with blazing green eyes. She never said she was J.D. Salinger's girlfriend, but her friends did. They would come visit--aging beatniks, artists, the occasional retired insurance guy wearing a rakish hat and driving a classic MG--and every so often one of them would have a beer too many, wander over to my place, take my wife and me aside and say things like "You know about Becky, right? She was Salinger's girlfriend when he was writing *The Catcher in the Rye*." They'd insist that she was the first person to read the entire manuscript and that Salinger sat with her in her apartment in New York, watching her while she proofread it.

It was a sweet story, and if you knew Becky, you could believe it. But that didn't mean it was true. What I knew was that she was from Spearfish, South Dakota--sometimes she said Sioux City, Iowa--and that she had landed herself in the middle of the New York literary scene in the 1940s. My wife and

*A forgotten letter
adds a new dimension
to our understanding
of an American
literary genius*

Love,

Jerry



REBECCA HALLMAN IN THE 1950S. FROM TOP: TWO PHOTOS OF BECKY MODELING MEXICAN JEWELRY; WITH HUSBAND AKE TUGEL (PRONOUNCED OH-KA TOO-GULL) IN FRONT OF THE STONE FARMHOUSE IN RURAL SWEDEN WHERE THEY LIVED FOR A YEAR; NEW YORK MIDCENTURY GLAMOUR SHOT 101; THE GIRL THEY ALL LOVED, WITH TUGEL, IN EITHER CUERNAVACA, MEXICO OR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

I were friends with her and her husband, an elegant old Swedish guy named Ake Tugel, and even he told us all the fabled moment were nuts for her. But Salinger?

Becky and her Swede owned the property adjoining our place in upstate New York. They would invite us to their converted barn on cold March afternoons, where we would join them for a lunch of freshly made pea soup with ham, good bread, a big wedge of cheese, dark beer and aquavit. The meal would be lit by candlelight, with Stan Getz or Bach crackling from an old record player. Ake adored her. They'd whisper jokes, tell us about their adventures and pour more drinks. He'd show us the watch Becky bought him many years ago, an anniversary gift that she borrowed money for. It was a pink-gold Breitling Premier, and she had had it inscribed to him: ANYPLACE, ANYTIME, ANYWHERE. It was like having those suave, cocktail-swigging ghosts from the classic movie *Topper* as neighbors, and we were thoroughly charmed.

In our naivete my wife and I assumed their increasingly eccentric lifestyle was, well, a lifestyle. It took us a while--too long--to realize they were in fact desperately poor and in trouble. Now, I'm not going to get into the story about the large local females who moved in and seemed to take over their lives or the teenagers who began using their barn for black-magic ceremonies, and I'd especially like to forget the near-deadly episode when a neighbor's house was robbed by a local punk who ran off with a motorbike and a revolver--a loaded revolver--which he then buried in Ake and Rebecca's overgrown backyard. Let's

just say that at a certain point things for Rebecca and Ake were not going well.

Yet they had been around the world together and had a barn filled with boxes stuffed with their "collections," which they said they'd eventually open and sort through--abandoned boxes that leaked and became more lopsided and waterlogged with every winter. We'd notice items we knew they could sell--Pynchon and Hemingway first editions, 17th century baroque carved heads--going moldy or being crushed: The deadbeats living in their barn deemed all those old books to be of excellent use as blocks on which to rest junked cars, never dreaming that the volumes might be more valuable than a rusted Dodge Charger in need of a lube job.

We offered to sort their stuff with them; maybe there were still undamaged treasures of value that might help them through their ever-mounting financial crisis. They'd say yes, we'd sell a few items for them--buy them some time--then they'd lose focus. Things had gotten away from them. There were increasingly serious illnesses; we were in denial about how sick they both were. At the time, my wife and I were kids, really, and we never recognized the profound but unspoken sadness they shared from the secret disasters of their shattered parenthood. We'd glimpsed a strewn letter from a 1960s juvenile psychiatric facility with allusions to the horrible shit every parent fears (under the heading "Symptoms": "State as nearly as possible the date of the beginning of [your son's] mental symptoms and describe them as completely as possible"). This part of their lives was

(continued on page 170)



OLIVIA
"Holly"

"I know what you want for Christmas, but I don't know how to wrap it!"

SEX in CINEMA 2006

JUST ASK ANGELINA, JENNIFER, SALMA AND
SCARLETT—THERE WAS LOTS OF OH! SEX IN '06



Over the decades, every practice, preference and kink has enjoyed the Hollywood spotlight, but not since the era of Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn has married sex had such a moment as it did this past year. Sparks flew between wives and hubbies Rachel Weisz and Ralph Fiennes in *The Constant Gardener*, Maria Bello and Viggo Mortensen in *A History of Violence*, Vera Farmiga and Paul Walker in *Running Scared* and Angelina Jolie (pictured) and Brad Pitt in *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*. But it wasn't just the wedded who were enjoying bliss. In other memorably erotic films, Sharon Stone slashed again in *Basic Instinct 2*, Gretchen Mol saluted an erotic legend with a breakthrough bare-it-all performance in *The Notorious Bettie Page*, Scarlett Johansson

BY STEPHEN REBELLO

warmed up Woody Allen's *Match Point* with her affair with Jonathan Rhys Meyers,

Eva Green fired up new James Bond Daniel Craig in *Cosino Royale*, and Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal broke new ground with *Brokeback Mountain*, a critically acclaimed, box-office-supported gay romance. Among the independents, writer-director John Cameron Mitchell's sad, funny *Shortbus* further blurred the line between mainstream movies and porn with unsimulated scenes of autofellatio and an orgy, while Kirby Dick's smart, ironic documentary *This Film Is Not Yet Rated* exposed the capricious and small-mindedly quotidian process that constitutes the powerful and much abused movie-ratings system. Be warned: This pictorial is not yet rated either. Nor will it ever be.



Maid to Order

One look at Jennifer Aniston (above) in this maid's outfit—a highlight of Nicole Holofcener's *Friends With Money*—and it's clear why the French go in for such big châteaux. Feather dusting has never been more provocative.

When You've Got It, Flaunt It

Fourteen years after a thigh spreading that's become as iconic as Charlton Heston's Moses parting the Red Sea, the diabolically devious Sharon Stone (below left) jumps the pond to Britain to revive her ice-pick shtick in *Basic Instinct 2*.

Short Cuts

Are they watching the ending of *Million Dollar Baby*? Did the Cialis not work? No, this is detective Josh Hartnett and heiress Hilary Swank (below right) ruining their post-coital bliss by thinking about the fate of *The Black Dahlia*.





Sex Education

In *National Lampoon's Dorm Daze 2*, lovelies Lola Davidson, Heather Storm and Suzy McCoppin (above

left) get the party started, while a comely coed (above right) comes clean after boning up on her studies.



Sexual Crusader

Beauty Eva Green griped that "all the best bits" of her hot sex scene with Orlando Bloom had been cut from the 12th century Crusades saga *Kingdom of Heaven* (above). When the three-hour-long director's cut appeared on DVD, Green's case was proved.

Howdy, Neighbor

Again, the predicament of being thrust into bed with a Hollywood beauty—this time Lucy Liu in *Lucky Number Slevin* (below left)—brings a glum expression to Josh Hartnett's mug. Here's hoping he's perkier in his lower latitudes.

Vince, Is That You?

Indeed it is, though it's Vincent Cassel the psychopath, not Vince Vaughn the motormouth, interrupting lovers Jennifer Aniston and Clive Owen in the thriller *Derailed* (below right). Perhaps he just wants to sign up for maid service.





L.A. Breakdown

In writer-director Robert Towne's *Ask the Dust*, waitress Salma Hayek and writer Colin Farrell (above left and

right) find all the fun that Depression-era Los Angeles offers, until racial conflicts and tragic irony interfere.



Spice Girl

What naked Mena Suvari did for rose petals in *American Beauty*, gorgeous Aishwarya Rai does for red-hot chili peppers in *Mistress of Spices* (above). Dylan McDermott is her lucky companion.

Think of England

Bare Brit beauties are a main asset of *Mrs. Henderson Presents* (top right), a movie about naked women who helped win WWII.

A Girl in My Soup

It's gross when waitress Alanna Ubach puts pubic hair in a customer's food in *Waiting...* (center right), but the harvesting scene is fun.

Visiting the Grand Tetons

The manwich moments in *Brokeback Mountain* got buzz, but Anne Hathaway (bottom right) made us say, "Whoopee ti yi yo."





Euroslash

In the horror flick *Hostel* (above), backpacking through Europe and staying at places where the saunas are stocked with gorgeous Eurogirls can lead only to torture and dismemberment. Yes, that's right—saunas stocked with gorgeous Eurogirls.

Not So Scary

Among the highlights of *Scary Movie 4* are a parody of *The Grudge* featuring three bouncy, brainy blondes (below left), a bottle of Viagra gulped by Charlie Sheen and a lethal erection. In the same flick Carmen Electra (below right) spoofs *The Village*.

Ready, Set, Stop

The French drama *5 x 2* begins with a couple about to sign divorce papers and proceeds backward through their relationship to their wedding night, when the drunken groom passes out on the lovely Valeria Bruni Tedeschi (bottom left). Costly error.





X Marks the G-Spot

In *X-Men: The Last Stand* (above left) Famke Janssen's Jean Grey (a.k.a. Phoenix) doesn't need superpowers to figure out that Hugh Jackman's Wolverine intends to ravish her—but in a good way. Hope he remembered to trim his nails.



Saturate Until Satisfied

In *Casino Royale* (above right), Daniel Craig as James Bond wears the serene look of a man who has closely searched Eva Green and knows she isn't hiding his locker key. (Unlike Josh Hartnett, the delectable Ms. Green always looks interested in her co-stars.)

Love Bites

Underworld: Evolution, the Goth vampires-vs.-werewolves sequel to 2003's *Underworld*, offers such sensual visions as a vampire ménage à trois (below) that's guaranteed to raise the dead. Fangs for the memories!



Beer Goggles Extra

In *The Weather Man* Nicolas Cage in Lincoln drag (Why? Rent the DVD) picks up a beerfest maiden at a local fair (bottom left), and she gives him a schtupping he'll remember for four score and seven years.

Battle Royal

The Mexican film *Battle in Heaven* begins with a general's daughter moonlighting as a hooker and fel-lating a fat, expressionless middle-aged chauffeur (bottom right). It's completely unbelievable. He should be a producer.





Life of Brian

In *Stoned*, about Rolling Stones co-founder Brian Jones, Tova Novotny (above left) plays Jones's girlfriend Anna Wohlin, and Monet Mazur (above right) is Anita Pallenberg, who left Jones for Keith Richards.



Freedom Riders

In the sexually explicit *Shortbus* Lindsay Beamish (top left) has a mighty dildo collection and an inability to connect emotionally.

Put Me In, Coach

Maria Bello plays cheerleader while Viggo Mortensen mows the lawn in *A History of Violence* (above).

Pinup Girl

It's not easy portraying an icon, but Gretchen Mol (far left) meets the challenge head-on in *The Notorious Bettie Page*, about the tumultuous life of one of the most photographed beauties of all time.

Cover-Up

Kirby Dick's shrewd documentary *This Film Is Not Yet Rated* skewers the hypocrisy of the Motion Picture Association of America, which runs the film-ratings board—the people who say it's okay to show a head being blown off but not okay to show someone getting head.

Sowing the Seeds

In the political thriller *The Constant Gardener* (left) Rachel Weisz plays the wife of diplomat Ralph Fiennes. Why he spends his time constantly gardening is the mystery.





Crapshoot

In *Bachelor Party Vegas* five best buds go on a wacky road trip that detours to a porn shoot (above left)

and Kal Penn's fantasy encounter with a pair of fully loaded porn princesses (above right).



Bellucci Coochy Coo

How much do we love Monica Bellucci? Enough to suffer through *Combien Tu M'Aimes?*, in which she plays a hooker whose services are purchased by lottery winner Bernard Campan (above). Why can't Hollywood find something for her to do?

Love for Sale

Claire Danes offers a curvy dorsal view to middle-aged mope Steve Martin in *Shopgirl* (below left), about a woman caught between an older man and a younger guy. If only Martin had serenaded her with a banjo and an arrow through his head.

Sporting a Woody

Woody Allen's muses have included Diane Keaton and Mia Farrow. Seeing Scarlett Johansson change foggy London to steamy London by necking with Jonathan Rhys Meyers in *Match Point* (below right), one can explain Allen's recent success.







WILL

WILL

FICTION BY STEPHEN KING

GETTING STRANDED IN THE
MIDDLE OF NOWHERE MAY
BE HEAVEN FOR SOME—BUT
FOR OTHERS IT'S HELL

You don't see what's right in front of your eyes, she'd said, but sometimes he did. He supposed he wasn't entirely undeserving of her scorn, but he wasn't entirely blind, either. And as the dregs of sunset faded to bitter orange over the Wind River Range, David looked around the station and saw that Willa was gone. He told himself he wasn't sure, but that was only his head—his sinking stomach was sure enough.

He went to find Lander, who liked her a bit. Who called her spunky when Willa said Amtrak was full of shit for leaving them stranded like this. A lot of them didn't care for her at all, stranded by Amtrak or not.

"It smells like wet crackers in here!" Helen Palmer shouted at him as David walked past. She had found her way to the bench in the corner, as she always did, eventually. The Rhinehart woman was minding her for the time being, giving the husband a little break, and she gave David a smile.

"Have you seen Willa?" David asked.

The Rhinehart woman shook her head, still smiling.

"We got fish for supper!" Mrs. Palmer burst out furiously. A knuckle of blue veins beat in the hollow of her temple. A few people looked around. "First one t'ing an' den anudder!"

"Hush, Helen," the Rhinehart woman said. Maybe her first name was Sally, but David thought he would have remembered a name like that; there were so few Sallys these days. Now the world belonged to the Ambers, Ashleys and Tiffanys. Willa was another endangered species, and just thinking that made his stomach sink down again.

"Like crackers!" Helen spat. "Them dirty old crackers up to camp!"

Henry Lander was sitting on a bench under the clock. He had his arm around his wife. He glanced up and shook his head before David could ask. "She's not here. Sorry. Gone into town if you're lucky. Bugged out for good if you're not." And he made a hitchhiking gesture.

David didn't believe his fiancée would hitchhike west on her own—the idea was crazy—but he believed she wasn't here. Had known even before counting heads, actually, and a snatch of some old book or poem about winter occurred to him: A cry of absence, absence in the heart.

The station was a narrow wooden throat. Down its length,

IN PLACES LIKE THIS PEOPLE WAITED FOR WHAT- EVER HAD GONE WRONG TO BE MADE RIGHT SO THE BROKEN JOURNEY COULD BE MENDED.

people either strolled aimlessly or simply sat on benches under the fluorescent lights. The shoulders of the ones who sat had that special slump you saw only in places like this, where people waited for whatever had gone wrong to be made right so the broken journey could be mended. Few people came to places like Crowheart Springs, Wyoming on purpose.

"Don't you go haring after her, David," Ruth Lander said. "It's getting dark, and there's plenty of critters out there. Not just coyotes, either. That book salesman with the limp says he saw a couple of wolves on the other side of the tracks, where the freight depot is."

"Biggers," Henry said. "That's his name."

"I don't care if his name is Jack D. Ripper," Ruth said. "The point is, you're not in Kansas anymore, David."

"But if she went—"

"She went while it was still daylight," Henry Lander said, as if daylight would stop a wolf (or a bear) from attacking a woman on her own. For all David knew, it might. He was an investment banker, not a wildlife expert. A young investment banker, at that.

"If the pick-up train comes and she's gone, she'll miss it." He couldn't seem to get this simple fact into their heads. It wasn't getting traction, in the current lingo of his office back in Chicago.

Henry raised his eyebrows. "Are you telling me that both of you missing it will improve things somehow?"

If they both missed it, they'd either catch a bus or wait for the next train together. Surely Henry and Ruth Lander saw that. Or maybe not. What David mostly saw when he looked at them—what was right in front of his eyes—was that special weariness reserved for people temporarily stuck in West Overalls. And who else cared for Willa? If she dropped out of sight in the High Plains, who besides David Sanderson would spare a thought? There was even some active dislike for her. That bitch Ursula Davis had told him once that if Willa's mother had left the *a* off the end of her name, "it would have been just about perfect."

"I'm going to town and look for her," he said.

Henry sighed. "Son, that's very foolish."

"We can't be married in San Francisco if she gets left behind in Crowheart Springs," he said, trying to make a joke of it.

Dudley was walking by. David didn't know if Dudley was the man's first or last name, only that he was an executive with Staples office supply and had been on his way to Missoula for some sort of regional meeting. He was ordinarily very quiet, so the donkey heehaw of laughter he expelled into the growing shadows was beyond surprising; it was shocking. "If the train comes and you miss it," he said, "you can hunt up a justice of the peace and get married right here. When you get back east, tell all your friends you had a real Western shotgun wedding. Yeehaw, partner."

"Don't do this," Henry said. "We won't be here much longer."

"So I should leave her? That's nuts."

He walked on before Lander or his wife could reply. Georgia Andreeson was sitting on a nearby bench and watching her daughter caper up and down the dirty tile floor in her red traveling dress. Pammy Andreeson never seemed to get tired. David tried to remember if he had seen her asleep since the train derailed at the Wind River junction point and they had wound up here like someone's forgotten package in the dead letter office. Once, maybe, with her head in her mother's lap. But that might be a false memory, created out of his belief that five-year-olds were supposed to sleep a lot.

Pammy hopped from tile to tile, a prank in motion, seeming to use the squares as a giant hopscotch board. Her red dress jumped around her plump knees. "I knew a man, his name was Danny," she chanted in a monotonous one-note holler. It made David's fillings ache. "He tripped and fell, on his fanny. I knew a man, his name was David. He tripped and fell, on his bavid." She giggled and pointed at David.

"Pammy, stop," Georgia Andreeson said. She smiled at David and brushed her hair from the side of her face. He thought the gesture unutterably weary, and thought she had a long road ahead with the high-spirited Pammy, especially with no Mr. Andreeson in evidence.

"Did you see Willa?" he asked.

"Gone," she said, and pointed to the door with the sign over it reading TO SHUTTLE, TO TAXIS, CALL AHEAD FROM COURTESY PHONE FOR HOTEL VACANCIES.

Here was Biggers, limping toward him. "I'd avoid the great outdoors, unless armed with a high-powered rifle. There are wolves. I've seen them."

"I knew a girl, her name was Willa," Pammy chanted. "She had a headache, and took a pilla." She collapsed to the floor, shouting with laughter.

Biggers, the salesman, hadn't waited for a reply. He was limping back down the length of the station. His shadow grew long, shortened in the glow of the hanging fluorescents, then grew long again.

Phil Palmer was leaning in the doorway beneath the sign about the shuttle and the taxis. He was a retired insurance man. He and his wife were on their way to Portland. The plan was to stay with their oldest son and his wife for a while, but Palmer had confided to David and Willa that Helen would probably never be coming back east. She had cancer as well as Alzheimer's. Willa called it a twofer. When David told her that was a little cruel, Willa had looked at him, started to say something and then had only shaken her head.

Now Palmer asked, as he always did: "Hey, mutt—got a butt?"

To which David answered, as he always did: "I don't smoke, Mr. Palmer."

And Palmer finished: "Just testing you, kiddo."

As David stepped out onto the concrete platform where detrainning passengers waited for the shuttle to Crowheart Springs, Palmer frowned. "Not a good idea, my young friend." *(continued on page 182)*



SUPPORT THE TROOPS

BLACK TUX.....\$1,920
By **VERSACE**
WHITE SHIRT.....\$359
By **CANALI**
BOWTIE & CUFFLINKS.....\$360
By **ROBERT TALBOTT**
SHOES
By **J.M. WESTON**

DRESS.....\$3,875
By **ALVIN VALLEY**
GLOVES.....\$50
By **LA CRASIA**
NECKLACE & EARRINGS..\$10,420
By **GURHAN**
SANDALS.....\$495
By **VANESSA NOEL**

BLACK TUX.....\$2,595
By **GIANLUCA ISAIA**
SHIRT & POCKET SQUARE...\$230
By **ROBERT TALBOTT**
BOWTIE & CUFF LINKS...\$350
By **ROBERT TALBOTT**
SHOES.....\$188
By **JOHNSTON & MURPHY**



welcome to a

BLACK-TIE EVENT

THIS FUND-RAISING SEASON, KEEP THESE WORTHY CAUSES—AND TUXES—IN MIND



12/01/06

any SOLDIER

After hearing that their son was sharing his care packages with members of his unit who had no support from the States, Marty and Sue Horn started Any Soldier. Thanks to their network you need not know someone serving overseas to send our armed forces a taste of home. anysoldier.com

FASHION BY
JOSEPH de acetis
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
ANTOINE VERGLAS
STYLING BY
JENNIFER RYAN JONES



AIDS RESEARCH

↙
WHITE TUX.....\$950

BY RICHMOND X UOMO

RED SHIRT.....\$350

BY RICHMOND X UOMO

SHOES.....\$1,440

BY JOHN LOBB

DRESS.....\$2,700

BY LUCA LUCA

EARRINGS.....\$2,120

BY GURHAN

BRACELET.....\$5,040

BY GURHAN

SANDALS.....\$495

BY VANESSA NOEL
→

DIFFA

A leader in the crusade against AIDS, the Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS has, for more than 20 years, provided \$35 million to hundreds of treatment and education centers. diffa.org

HUNGER

DRESS \$850
By abaeté
EARRINGS & RING . . . \$10,500
By GURHAN
BANGLE \$3,600
By GURHAN
SANDALS \$495
By vanessa noel

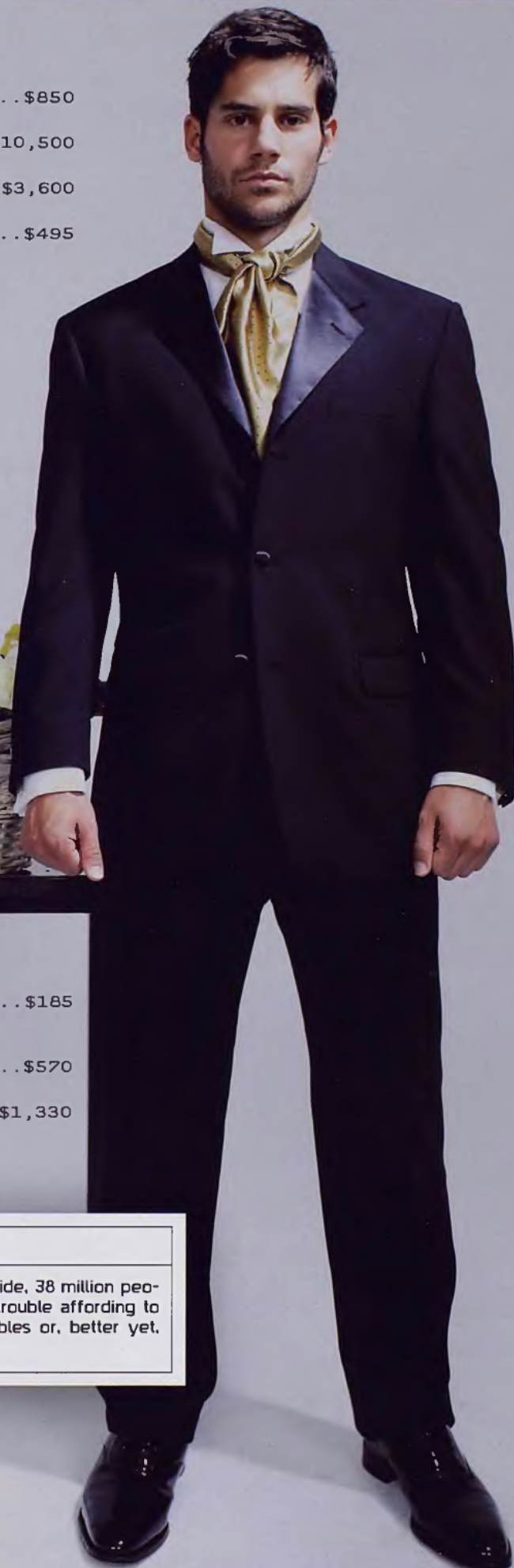


BLACKTUX
By PIERRE CARDIN
WHITE SHIRT \$185
By ROBERT TALBOTT
PROTOCOL
ASCOT & CUFF LINKS . . . \$570
By ROBERT TALBOTT
SHOES \$1,330
By JOHN LOBB



HUNGER

Even as obesity levels rise nationwide, 38 million people in the United States still have trouble affording to eat every day. Donate nonperishables or, better yet, your time to a local soup kitchen.



HOUSING

BLACKTUX.....\$2,995
By **GIORGIO ARMANI**
WHITESHIRT.....\$725
By **GIORGIO ARMANI**
BOWTIE & STUDS.....\$540
By **ROBERT TALBOTT**
SHOES.....\$188
By **JOHNSTON & MURPHY**

BLACKTUX.....\$1,595
By **JOHN VARVATOS**
BLACK SHIRT.....\$225
By **JOHN VARVATOS**
BOWTIE.....\$75
By **ROBERT TALBOTT PROTOCOL**
SHOES.....\$1,330
By **JOHN LOBB**

BLACKTUX.....\$2,750
By **BELVEST**
WHITE SHIRT.....\$185
By **ROBERT TALBOTT PROTOCOL**
BOWTIE.....\$75
By **ROBERT TALBOTT**
CUFF LINKS
By **PAUL STUART**
SHOES.....\$365
By **SALVATORE FERRAGAMO**



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

This organization helps provide quality housing for low-income families through volunteer labor and donations of money and materials. Since its founding in 1976 Habitat has helped build more than 200,000 homes. habitat.org

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

GOWN.....\$4,800
By JOANNA MASTROIANNI
NECKLACE & BANGLE...\$5,680
By GURHAN
RING.....\$2,780
By GURHAN
SANDALS.....\$690
By VANESSA NOEL

BLACK TUX.....\$2,590
By DIOR HOMME BY HEDI
SLIMANE
SHIRT & BOWTIE.....\$660
By DIOR HOMME BY HEDI
SLIMANE
TOP HAT
By VILLAGE HAT SHOP
SHOES.....\$370
By SALVATORE FERRAGAMO



ACLU

The American Civil Liberties Union exists to uphold the constitutional rights of every American. ACLU cases have helped shape U.S. law—the group provides legal counsel when it feels our fundamental freedoms are at risk. aclu.org

HUMAN RIGHTS

BLACKTUX

By PAUL STUART

SHIRT.....\$185

By ROBERT TALBOTT
PROTOCOL

CUFFLINKS.....\$265

By ROBERT TALBOTT

BOWTIE.....\$95

By BRIONI

BLACKTUX.....\$695

FROM ENDURANCE By TED
BAKER LONDON

SHIRT.....\$185

By ROBERT TALBOTT
PROTOCOL

POCKET SQUARE.....\$45

By ROBERT TALBOTT

BOWTIE.....\$75

By ROBERT TALBOTT
PROTOCOL

CUFF LINKS.....\$465

By ROBERT TALBOTT

SHOES.....\$1,330

By JOHN LOBB

BLACKTUX.....\$950

By ALEXANDER JULIAN
PRIVATE RESERVE

SHIRT.....\$185

By ROBERT TALBOTT
PROTOCOL

POCKET SQUARE.....\$45

By ROBERT TALBOTT

BOWTIE.....\$85

By ROBERT TALBOTT

CUFF LINKS.....\$465

By ROBERT TALBOTT



amnesty INTERNATIONAL

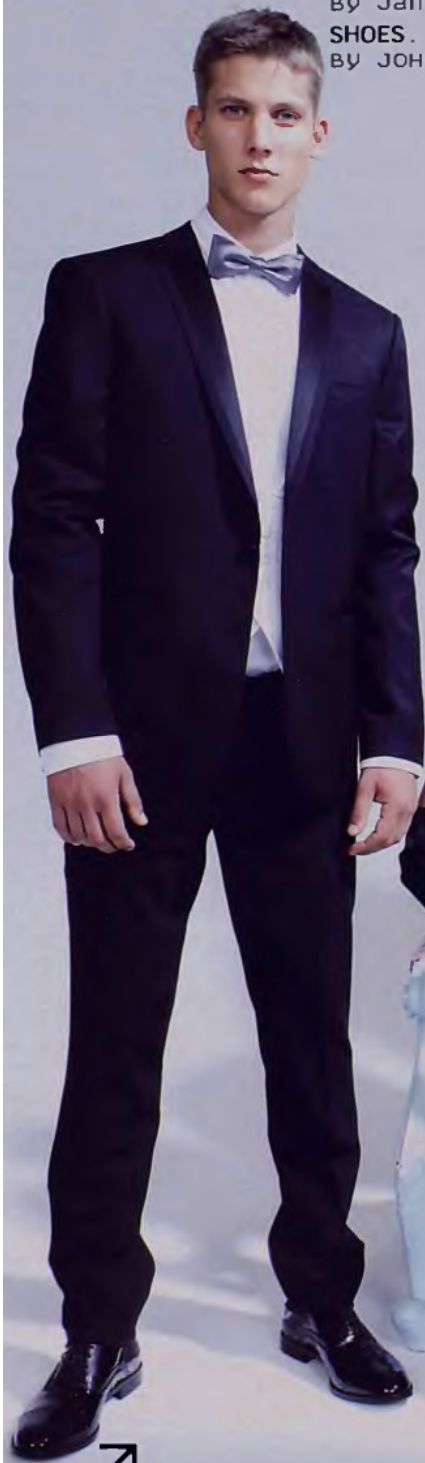
Dedicated to peacefully liberating political prisoners, this organization received the Nobel Peace Prize for its ongoing campaign to ensure that the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights is respected worldwide. amnesty.org



FAMILY PLANNING

BLACKTUX&WHITESHIRT..\$2,240
 BY DSQUARED
BOWTIE.....\$75
 FROM BEST OF CLASS
 BY ROBERT TALBOTT
CUFFLINKS.....\$375
 BY Jan LESLIE
SHOES.....\$188
 BY JOHNSTON & MURPHY

BLACK TUX.....\$1,895
 BY VALENTINO
WHITE SHIRT.....\$595
 BY VALENTINO
BOWTIE.....\$110
 BY CANALI
SHOES.....\$365
 BY SALVATORE FERRAGAMO



BLACKTUX.....\$925
 BY J.LINDBERG
SHIRT & VEST.....\$590
 BY J.LINDBERG
BOWTIE.....\$100
 BY J.LINDBERG
SHOES.....\$188
 BY JOHNSTON & MURPHY



DRESS.....\$640
 BY BABY PHAT BY KIMORA
 LEE SIMMONS
GLOVES.....\$125
 BY CAROLINA AMATO
SANDALS.....\$690
 BY VANESSA NOEL

PLANNED PARENTHOOD

Helping both men and women meet their sexual- and reproductive-health needs, Planned Parenthood offers professional medical services, including birth control, gynecological care, pregnancy testing and STD testing and treatment. plannedparenthood.org



THE ENVIRONMENT

DRESS.....\$1,295
By SYLVIA HEISEL
NECKLACE.....\$2,700
By GURHAN
BRACELET.....\$4,020
By GURHAN
SANDALS.....\$495
By VANESSA NOEL



VELVETTUX.....\$4,300
By BRIONI
WHITE SHIRT.....\$150
By CHRISTOPHER BLAKE
COLLECTION
BOWTIE.....\$110
By CANALI



COUSTEAU SOCIETY

Founded by celebrated marine biologist Jacques-Yves Cousteau, the society carries out conservation, exploration, research and education programs. Its mission is "to understand, to love and to protect the water systems of the planet." cousteau.org



LEARN ABOUT THE ESSENTIALS OF FORMALWEAR
AT PLAYBOY.COM/MAGAZINE

WHERE AND HOW TO BUY ON PAGE 101.



THE ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP IS MORE THAN
THE BIGGEST, MOST VIOLENT SPECTATOR SPORT OF
THE PAST 10 YEARS. IT'S THE NEW ART OF KICKING ASS

¡NO MÁS!



The world, we see, is interested in soccer, and the United States, as a real, if reluctant, part of the world, is beginning to take notice.

In my day, however, we played football. For a lad to have expressed a preference for soccer would have been tantamount to his asking Santa for a sundress.

I grew up in a more pugnacious time. We boys came home from school regularly a bit smashed up. And even the organizations charged with our care—the Scouts, the Y—would suggest an otherwise insoluble difference of opinion might be addressed by “putting on the gloves,” and the *ultima ratio* of kids, as of kings, was taught as “What part of a punch in the nose don’t you understand?”

As both an ex-boy and the father of a son, I’m all for it. Yes, I know that a hard glance from one kid to another may have the folks at school calling the cops, but I believe in what used to be known as the manly art of self-defense. Our teachers and our parents taught us that it was wrong to pick on someone smaller than oneself, but it was the schoolyard that taught us to extend the proscription to someone larger. In the boxing and the wrestling rings or on the football field, we learned that getting hurt was not the same as dying, that in order to make one’s point, sometimes it is necessary to put something at risk, that there is such a thing as *will*, and that often it will, as Kipling told us, win out when heart and nerve and sinew are gone.

In the contact sports it became clear that the big tough-looking fellow is as subject to the laws of inertia and gravity as the little

BY DAVID MAMET

PHOTO BY JAMES IMBROGNO

guy—that most alleged absolute attributes come at a price (gain bulk and lose speed), that the race is not always to the swift, that many people fight dirty when the ref ain't looking, that one must protect oneself in the clinches and that everybody bleeds red.

There was and is a cost for these lessons, as for any worthy of the name, and our postmodern society has largely, it seems, agreed that the cost in litigation, in parental anxiety, in the risk of serious injury may be too high. And so we have forgotten the distinction between rowdiness, high spirits and crime—and treat all as the last.

Boxing has faded from its preeminent position as an American spectator sport, its fall counterbalanced by the rise of professional “wrestling.” This, of course, was and is not wrestling at all but a not unenjoyable, many times diverting charade of personal combat. The wrestlers, actually stuntmen, stage a scripted and/or improvised morality play: Good is down-trodden but eventually triumphs over evil.

On one hand this wrestling show addresses the human desire to enjoy the spectacle of a couple of guys pounding the spit out of each other. We may decry this desire as vicious bloodlust and say boo hoo, but there is another aspect to professional wrestling's popularity. When kids fight or fought on the playground, when guys fought in the bar or parking lot, the *casus belli* was fundamentally a philosophical dispute. Traditionally, one party asserted something as fact, which the other suggested should be reclassified as either opinion or error. The disputants, discovering they had no mutual vocabulary capable of allowing them to address the problem logically, pressed home their point by other means. That put forward as fact, granted, was usually something on the level of “Your mother's a whore,” rather than “Any right-thinking being would prefer Tolstoy to Dostoyevsky,” but the fight was understood, by the combatants, *au fond* as a search for truth.

Curiously, it was also so understood by the onlookers. How do we know? This is the essence of professional wrestling. Here again, a philosophical proposition is stated—“Good, being *better than*, must eventually overcome evil”—and we, the audience, are entertained by the working out of the proofs. If both participants in the charade are “good,” and they aren't actually fighting, what the *deuce* are we looking at? Big hunks doing backflips off the ropes. It is the playing out of the philosophical proposition that interests us. The human combatant

feels not only “I will prove I am stronger than you” but “I will thus prove I am right.” And that's what we spectators experience vicariously at any staged combat.

We look back at the fight and say, “Of course, X lost *because* he trained too hard, not hard enough, he wasn't confident enough, he was overconfident, he was too offensive, too defensive, he is too old, he is too inexperienced,” etc. Note that any of these seen to be probative *after* the fight might have been predicted *before* the fight, but their truth could not have been known *until the trial in the ring*.

We do not say, “The one guy beat the other guy up,” but rather, “This goes to prove the following

universally true proposition: In a fair fight, a good big man will beat a good little man every time.” “My hockey player can beat the shit out of your honor student” appears to make a lot of sense. The actual truth, however, can't be known until after the matchup.

Asian martial arts for centuries addressed the proposition of the big guy versus the little guy. The observant noted that indeed the good big man was an odds-on favorite to beat the good little man and addressed the problem. All right, they reasoned, *why* should the big man usually win? Because if he is as skilled as the little man and can move as quickly, his blows, as he is heavier, must fall harder.

But then, they observed, if the big man cannot deliver blows, if he can neither punch nor kick, what happens to his advantage? It disappears.

The West became enamored of the Asian striking forms (kung fu, karate, etc.) in the 1950s and 1960s with Akira Kurosawa films and Bruce Lee as Kato in *The Green Hornet* (1966 to 1967), and in

the 1970s as the delighted audience of David Carradine's TV show *Kung Fu* (1972 to 1975) and the films of Chuck Norris and Lee. The grappling forms, judo and jujitsu, largely stayed beneath the national consciousness. Why? Because they are difficult to film.

In jujitsu the combatants will generally both tie up and go to the ground early. The struggle to gain an advantage may then take up quite a bit of time and involve the laborious or skillful repositioning of an elbow, arm or leg, during which struggle the canny viewer will probably go get a beer. A fight, to be *dramatic*, must allow the viewer to see the combatants now coming together, now separating (vide: boxing, wrestling). Jujitsu, the art that allows the smaller and weaker to defeat the larger, involves tying up—that is, closing the (continued on page 194)



Top: Royce Gracie and Matt Hughes battling in UFC 60 at L.A.'s Staples Center on May 27, 2006. Middle and bottom: Pieces from Mamez's collection of vintage jujitsu how-tos and ads.



"Here's to the ham, here's to the duck. Let's all eat, and then we'll fuck!"

Although clearly a wonder of womanhood, Kia Drayton knows how to get in touch with her masculine side. "I'm a tomboy who grew up around a lot of boys," she says. "I have many guy friends because I love sports and manly things, like Harleys. And sometimes these friends want to take it to the next level, but what can I do? I'm kind of torn, but I don't know how to ice down." Which is all for the best, since this 23-year-old mix mistress spends her nights generating plenty of heat on the dance floors of Atlanta. "When it comes to getting on the turntables, I have an alter ego," she says. "I'm not just Kia—I'm DJ Jazzy Belle. Some people see me as a model who has just taken up a new hobby, but I prove them wrong. I've been collecting since I was eight and have more than 20,000 records in my garage."

Miss December had to tote that collection all over the country when she was growing up. "My dad was in the Air Force, so I spent a lot of summers wherever he was stationed," she says. "It was hard for



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
STEPHEN WAYDA

me to make friends because I was always the new girl." Part African American, part Polynesian and part Cherokee, Kia says she got picked on as a child for looking different. Now she is comfortable in her own exotic skin and declares that she is an unapologetic flirt. When we ask her to tell us the difference between a flirt and a tease, she laughs and ponders the question. "How about if I say from a flirt you might potentially get it, but from a tease you definitely won't?" This is the best thing about hanging out with Kia—she's relaxed and fun, and she puts everyone at ease. She also has a big heart and is hoping to plan a fund-raiser for the Make-a-Wish Foundation this Christmas. Kia's personal holiday wish, however, is to get married and have lots of kids. "My grandparents have been married for 60 years," she says. "My grandfather says that every time he looks at my grandmother he falls in love all over again. I want to find that love."

ROLLING With KIA

Miss December will spin you round like a record, baby















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

MISS DECEMBER

PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH



Hyla Brunson

PLAYMATE DATA SHEET



NAME: Kia Drayton
BUST: 34c WAIST: 24 HIPS: 34
HEIGHT: 5'9" WEIGHT: 118

BIRTH DATE: 4-11-83 BIRTHPLACE: Goldensboro, NC

AMBITIONS: To be successful in all that I do and to have a great impact on the lives of others.

TURN-ONS: Intellectuals, dimples, tattoos, a great sense of humor, sports and the smell of D&G and Sean John Unforgivable colognes.

TURNOFFS: Negativity, jealousy, laziness, shallowness, poor manners, bad breath - not to mention liars!!

WHY I GOT INTO INTERIOR DESIGN: Being very artsy and creative, I've always been fascinated with decorating and design. It gives me the opportunity to show my creative side. ☺

A FEW WOMEN I ADMIRE: My Mom ; grandmother, Aaliyah, Dorothy Dandridge, Princess Diana, Maya Angelou and Tyra Banks.

MY CHRISTMAS WISHES: A true love, to have my very own show on Sirius's Playboy Radio, to have all doors of opportunity open to me.

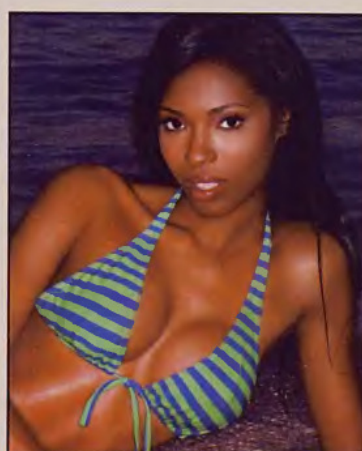
MY FAVORITE SPORTS TEAM: Pittsburgh Steelers. (Go, Steelers!!)



Daddy's little princess.



I guess you can say it was meant to be.



And then there were boobs!! Me, posing in Miami.



PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

Why are women's breasts like a train set under the Christmas tree?

Because they were made for children, but Dad wants to play with them.

The Sunday before Christmas, a pastor told his congregation that the church needed some extra money. He promised that whoever gave the most would be able to pick out three hymns. A spinster ran up to the altar, handed the priest a check for \$50,000 and said, "I'll take him, him and him."

How do you get rid of unwanted pubic hair? Spit.



Why doesn't Santa have any children?

Because he comes only once a year, and when he does, it's down the chimney.

I value a good education," a busy executive told a young man looking for a job. "Where did you do your schooling?"

"Yale," the candidate replied.

"Me too," the CEO said. "You're hired."

"Thank you, sir," the new employee said as the boss rushed out the door. "And by the way, the name's Yackson."

Why is Christmas just like a day at the office?

You do all the work, and the fat guy with the suit gets all the credit.

A gold miner was injured at work and had to have his right leg amputated. After the operation he mournfully complained to a fellow miner, "I suppose I'm fucked now. Who would ever want a one-legged gold digger?"

"Try Paul McCartney," his friend replied.

Come on, honey," a frustrated husband said to his wife. "I can't remember the last time we made love."

"Well, I can," she replied, "and that's why we're not going to."

Did you get what you wanted for Christmas?" one guy asked a friend.

"No," the friend replied. "I got a sweater, but I asked for a screamer."

A man visiting America from India went to a brothel. He told the madam he was on a budget, so she directed him to the least expensive prostitute in the house. He looked her up and down and then walked over to her. Licking his chops he said, "I sure would love a little pussy."

"So would I," she said. "Mine's as big as your turban."

For Christmas a couple bought themselves a water bed to improve their sex life, but they ended up just drifting further apart.

The Iranian ambassador to the UN had finished his speech and walked out into the lobby, where he met President Bush. "You know, I have just one question about what I have seen in America," he said. "My son watches *Star Trek*, and on it there is Chekov, who is Russian, Scotty, who is Scottish, and Sulu, who is Japanese, but no Iranians. My son is very upset and doesn't understand why there aren't any Iranians on the show."

President Bush laughed and replied, "That's because it takes place in the future."

How are a Christmas tree and a priest alike? They both have ornamental balls.



An elderly couple had dinner at another couple's house. After eating, the wives left the table and went into the kitchen. The two elderly gentlemen were talking, and the first one said, "Last night we went out to a new restaurant, and it was fantastic. I really recommend it."

"What's the name?" the other asked.

The first man thought for a second and then said to the other, "Um, what's the name of the red flower you give to someone you love?"

"A rose," his friend replied.

"Thanks," the first man said. He then turned toward the kitchen and yelled, "Hey, Rose, what's the name of the restaurant we went to yesterday?"


Send your jokes to Party Jokes Editor, PLAYBOY, 730 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10019, or by e-mail through our website at jokes.playboy.com. PLAYBOY will pay \$100 to the contributors whose submissions are selected.



"She's a poor little match girl on Christmas Eve. You got a problem with that?"

PLAYBOY'S HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

YOU'VE BEEN NAUGHTY ALL YEAR LONG. IT'S TIME YOU REWARDED YOURSELF. BEHOLD OUR COLLECTION OF THE GREATEST GIFTS ON EARTH



◀ Anthony Gallo's Nucleus Reference 3.1 speakers sound like heaven and look like angels. So why does a pair cost only \$3,000? You worry too much.



▲ Good things take time. We've been waiting years for Leica's M8 (\$4,800), the digital version of the company's legendary range finder. Quiet majesty comes standard.



▲ Buying a rare vintage Alfred Dunhill Tweenie car from 1912 will cost you junior's college fund. Accessories with the Tweenie devil logo are slightly more reasonable. The cuff links are \$250; the stainless steel flask is \$220. ▼

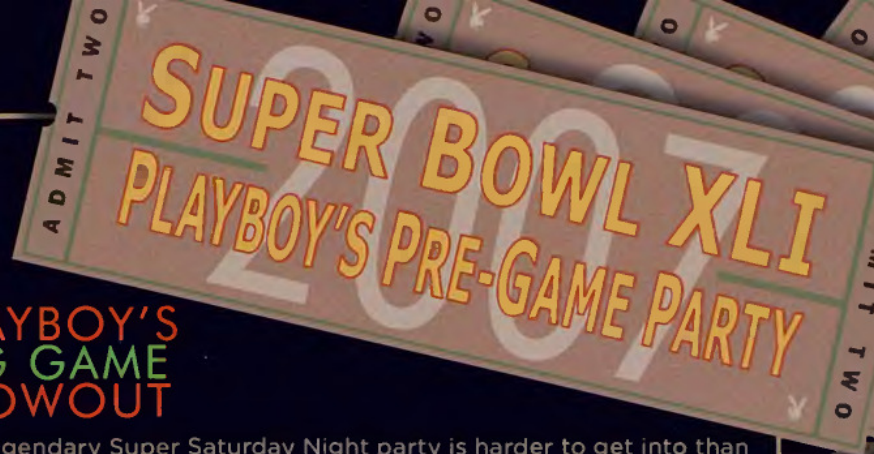


▼ Breville's die-cast 800ESXL espresso machine (\$500) isn't just a pretty face—it also delivers world-class happy juice with sumptuous crema.



PLAYBOY'S BIG GAME BLOWOUT

Our legendary Super Saturday Night party is harder to get into than the pigskin ballet that takes place the next day, otherwise known as the Super Bowl. Why? You know full well why. This February, 20 lucky readers will get to schmooze it up with us (not to mention a host of models, actors, rockers and athletes) in Miami. An even \$20,000 gets you two tickets to Playboy's Super Saturday Night party, two tickets to Super Bowl XLI, four nights in a swanky nearby hotel, a gift basket and a Hef-autographed football, as well as two tickets to our first-ever Friday-afternoon pool party (which promises to stretch into the evening). Between shindigs you'll spend your time taking in the ongoing 24/7/365 party that is the city of Miami, complete with bethonged bottoms and hot-blooded Cubans. As for getting a table at Joe's Stone Crab, you're on your own.



▲ Breguet's La Tradition (\$23,000) has an 18-karat silvered-gold case, a sapphire-crystal case back and a 50-hour power reserve. Every mechanical piece is carved by hand, as if by magic gnomes. Timeless.




▲ Like a polished Smith & Wesson or a great set of breasts, S.T. Dupont's Fuente Opus X lighter (\$3,590) and fountain pen (\$890) make you feel all-powerful when you clutch them in your paws.


▼ If a gadget could surf the web and do e-mail and IM, as well as play music, movies and pictures, would you still need a laptop? The Pepper Pad 3 costs \$700 and kicks ass.




◀ In the ClearAudio Master Reference Turntable, form and function meet on a transatlantic flight, laugh at each other's jokes, fall in love and have musical babies, all right there in your living room. It also sounds pretty good. The way we see it, \$19,000 is a small price to pay to witness true romance.




◀ Before the laptop computer there was this: the portable campaign desk. You carried it like a suitcase and unfolded it into a writing station. We like this one from Newland & Tarlton (\$820) as an accent piece in the study.




▲ For those who don't need to land a 720 stalefish to feel relevant, Rome Snowboards's Anthem (\$480) carves like a dream.



▶ Neo-chinoiserie is all the rage. Witness Hommage's Shanghai Groom Center (\$350), a bold red take on the razor-and-brush set.



▼ This Ferrari 250 GT SWB Berlinetta (\$245) is a one-eighteenth-size model of the 1961 masterpiece. One-eighteenth-size girlfriend to ride shotgun not included.



◀ Specialists at an Ely Callaway Performance Center will calibrate a one-of-a-kind FT-3 Fusion Driver, a.k.a. Big Bertha (\$500), to your swing. Now you have no excuse.

▲ Microsoft's Zune player (\$250) holds 30 gigabytes of files you can share with other Zunies via wi-fi.

▶ Re-create gridiron action on a different playing field with NFL pool balls (\$20 a ball). Nice rack.

▼ Glenmorangie Margaux Cask Finish single malt (\$450) did a little time in Margaux barrels. Scotland, meet France.



◀ Triumph's middleweight Daytona 675 offers a one-two punch of eye-grabbing flair and adrenaline-pumping performance. With its 123 horsepower, top speed of 155 miles an hour and list price of \$9,000, the two of you should be very happy together.





"Oh what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh!"

Centerfolds on SEX



Victoria Fuller

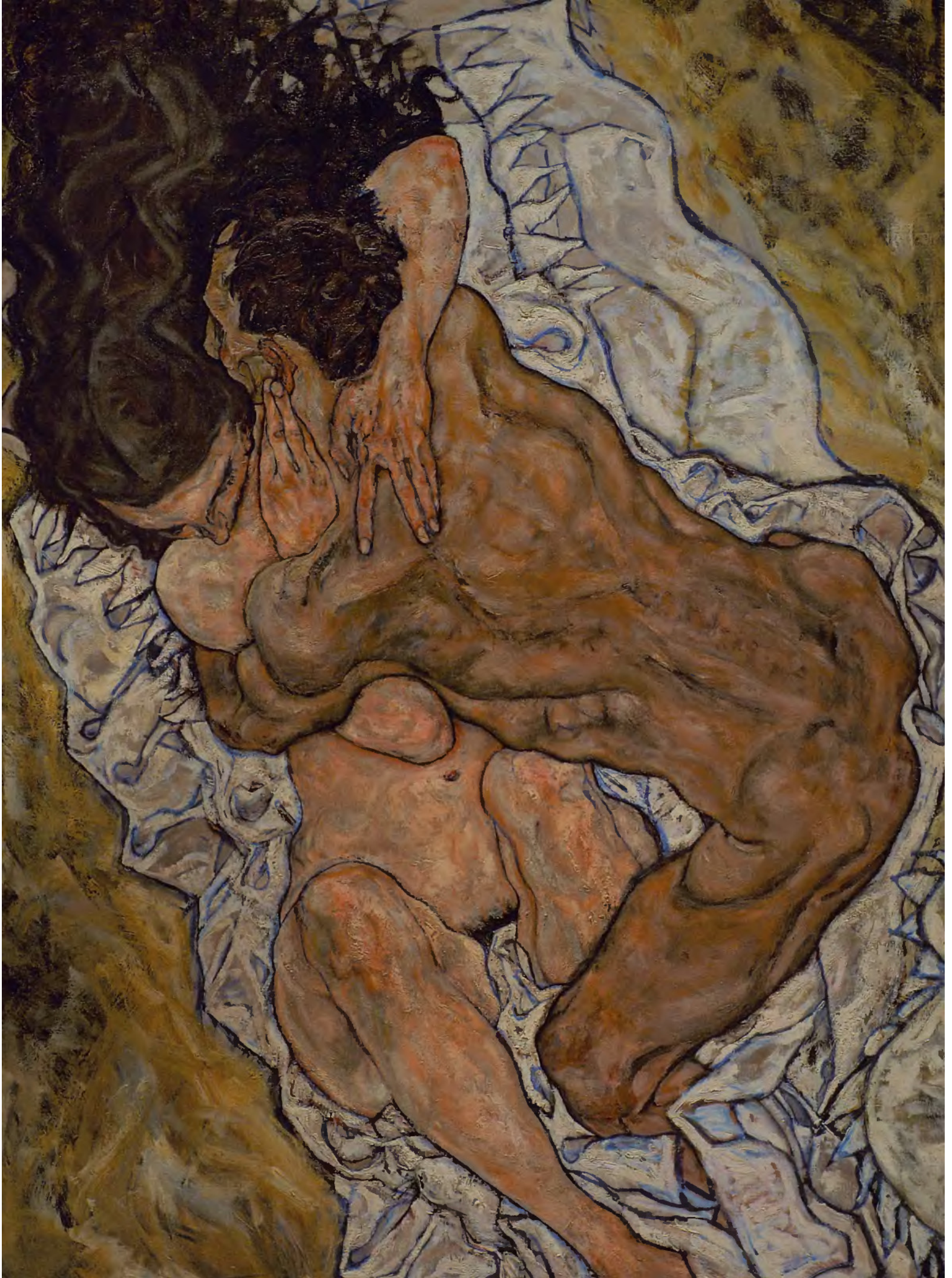
WHEN IN ADDIS ABABA

When Jon and I were on *The Amazing Race*, it was difficult to find ways to be alone, but in every country we were able to get away and have sex. Even when we were in a little hole in the wall in Ethiopia I was like, "We're never going to have another chance to do it in Ethiopia. We have the room for only another six hours, so we have to do it now!" He always wanted to have sex on the plane. Even though the microphone was on and people were watching us all the time, we just had to do the mile-high thing, so we sneaked into the bathroom. It got a little crazy.



IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY

There's no comfortable way to have sex on an airplane. We were able to do it only once, and it was very memorable. A plane with bathrooms in the rear is better than one with bathrooms up front, and it works best on a red-eye with the lights off. The trick is to fool around in your seats and be ready to go before you get to the bathroom.



Erotic **PASSAGES**

What makes a story erotic? That's not as straightforward a question as it may seem. Writers A.S. Byatt, Junot Díaz, Jay McInerney, Jane Smiley and Lauren Weisberger tell us what works for them and why reading sex is a many-splendored thing

Lust is a world of bewildering dimensions, for it is that power to take over the ability to create and convert it to a force. Curious force. Lust exhibits all the attributes of junk. It dominates the mind and other habits, it appropriates loyalties, generalizes character, leaches character out, rides on the fuel of almost any emotional gas—whether hatred, affection, curiosity, even the pressures of boredom—yet it is never definable because it can alter to love or be as suddenly sealed from love, indeed the more intense lust becomes, the more it is indefinable, the line of the ridge between lust and love is where the light is first luminous, then blinding, and the ground remains unknown.”

—Norman Mailer in defense of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Capricorn*, from Mailer's landmark work *The Prisoner of Sex*



JAY MCINERNEY The erotic is a treacherous mode for literature, which is why even the best-read among us can count the great successes of erotic literature on two hands. And even some of the alleged successes, read with a fresh eye, can seem ridiculous to the contemporary reader, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* being my favorite example of the kitsch of euphemism. (Molly Bloom's soliloquy, to my mind, holds up nicely.) Generally speaking, the most successful erotic writing is unself-consciously pornographic and utilitarian, written with the primary goal of stimulating sexual arousal—*The Story of O* or *My Secret Life* comes to mind. Why this should be so seems both self-evident and baffling.

Like the best children's stories, good pornography depends on formula and repetition to achieve its effects. Readers of both genres want the semblance of surprise and novelty, but in the end they know what they want, and they do not wish to have their tastes and predispositions challenged. The princess must eventually be rescued; the maid must submit to her punishment. Neither type of reader is apt to complain about clichés, formula and ritual being the point of the exercise. Literary fiction, on the other hand, aspires to originality of expression and form. Occasionally, in the hands of an artist, utilitarian prose rises above the level of utility and approaches the condition of literature, but typically the creative and experimental impulse to reconfigure form and language is at odds with the aims of pornography. Hence the dearth of erotic literature.

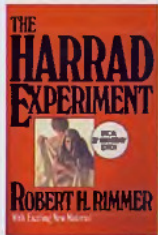
One of the best and best-known examples—at least among writers and students of contemporary literature—is Harold Brodkey's "Innocence," a 20-page account of an act of cunnilingus, which in turn was probably the inspiration for Susan Minot's *Rapture*, an entire novella devoted to a blow job. Both Brodkey and Minot are heavily digressive, the act itself leading to reflection and association, both ultimately more mental than physical. Not so with part four, chapter 28 of Bret Easton Ellis's *Glamorama*, one of the steamiest and sexiest pieces of writing in recent decades. Ellis's exhaustive account of an hour

in the life of a ménage à trois. It's purely mechanical, like a very well-written transcript of a hard-core porn film scene—and indeed it's not entirely clear that what we're reading isn't a scene in a film, although that's too long a story to get into here; we need to stay focused, unlike Brodkey and Minot, on the sex. One thing that distinguishes it as a piece of writing is its utter unself-consciousness, its near total avoidance of euphemism and metaphor.

When I first read the scene—two scenes if you count the fact that it moves from the shower to the bedroom, several dozen if you count each sex act—I was almost embarrassed at how stimulating I found the experience. Embarrassed because this is a threesome that involves two men and one woman, and virtually no permutation of that configuration is left unexplored. And the orgy is presented in the most direct and seemingly transparent fashion—devoid of hyperbole and/or literary indirection. I have since compared notes with other practicing heterosexuals of both sexes, and I've heard the same reaction: *Hey, like, I'm not...you know...I mean, I have nothing against it, but I'm not usually turned on by, you know.... And yet....*

Perhaps my sample group and I are not representative, perhaps we are more sexually ambiguous than the mainstream, or perhaps Ellis knows that most of us are more polymorphously perverse than we imagine ourselves to be. In Ellis's fictional universe sexual identity is inherently fluid, and by the time we arrive at this little orgy, some 400 pages into the novel, it seems like an almost painfully delayed and diverted climax to the ambient sexual tension of the story. After a daisy chain of numbingly glamorous parties and fashion shows and nightclub openings, this sexual outbreak seems like an explosion of authenticity. The rapid progression of events and sexual acts seems ineluctable and inevitable. Somehow Ellis manages to hypnotize the reader into checking his judgment at the shower door, although somewhere along the way he may find himself amazed and possibly even a little shocked at his own complicity.

Jay McInerney's most recent book is A Hedonist in the Cellar: Adventures in Wine.



JANE SMILEY “Stanley...Stanley...” I whispered undulating in response to him. ‘We’ve done remarkable [sic] well for our first attempt. Don’t you agree?’

Watts’s book thudded on the floor beside the bed.

‘Unquestionably, Sheila.’ Stanley grinned at me.

‘Do you want to fall asleep this way?’

‘I’m afraid I’ve passed the point of no return.’

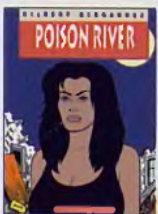
I kissed him wildly. ‘Oh, God! Darling...darling...so have I. So have I!’”

—from Robert H. Rimmer’s *The Harrad Experiment*, page 167 (25th anniversary edition)

I read this exchange now and it makes me laugh—college students Stanley and Sheila are expanding their sexual powers by attempting to have penetration and read up on erotic theory at the same time—and there’s also a comma missing between *whispered* and *undulating*. It is Alan Watts, author of dozens of books on Buddhism and the West, who is the climax. No doubt the book that thuds on the floor is *Nature, Man and Woman*, Watts’s Taoist-inspired treatise on human relationships and man’s relationship to, well, nature. Though I hadn’t personally read any Watts by the time I discovered *The Harrad Experiment*, at 18, I was willing to believe its author, Robert H. Rimmer, of whom I also hadn’t heard (and who subsequently wrote a guide to X-rated videotapes, among other works), probably because Rimmer’s very name evoked mysterious sexual practices simultaneously with professorial erudition. As for me, I was tall. I wore glasses. I was almost uniquely naive because I was from the Midwest and my family never ever talked about sex. I went to Vassar. I read *The Harrad Experiment* alone in my upstairs bedroom, between my freshman and sophomore years, the summer sunshine streaming through the windows. The six student protagonists plan to engage in every form of sexual congress and also transform the very nature of male-female relationships. Although there’s hardly any actual evocation of erotic arousal, this passage excited me, and because of it I planned to lose my virginity very soon—and as intellectually as possible. Within six months I did. He was Yale, Marxist, a Presidential Scholar, an ideal candidate for admission to Harrad College.

But we made a few mistakes. Sometimes he would “borrow” books from the stacks at the Yale library. Unfortunately, he never brought home Watts, the Kama Sutra or even *My Secret Life*, Victorian porn that the other boys were reading. It was always William Carlos Williams’s very own copy of *The State and Revolution* (by V.I. Lenin) or a volume of Hegel. And then, the next summer, when we should have been lolling on a beach somewhere, eating oysters and learning foot massage, we were living, not in a Harrad-like group of lovely young persons who were comfortable having sex with each other in every permutation, but in a quite puritanical Marxist commune where most of the members weren’t having sex at all and those of us who were did our best not to offend the others by flaunting it. All over America the revolution was caving in to free love, but not in New Haven. Our ideal was a “good-struggle relationship.” (I never quite understood what that was, but it had something to do with thesis, antithesis and synthesis.) We worked in factories and discussed the Vietnam war and the bourgeois commodification of sexuality. It was such a setback to my Rimmerian aspirations that when I met my next partner—who had blue eyes and dark luxuriant ringlets, who tended bar, drove a motorcycle and visibly, even to me, lived for getting laid—I automatically asked him if he considered himself “elitist” in his views of the working class. Marx had won! But he humored me, sat me right down on the back of his motorcycle. Still, while we once looked into the Kama Sutra, we actually never did get around to reading the Watts. Since then, I’m afraid, I’ve passed the point of no return. Oh, God.

Jane Smiley's new novel, Ten Days in the Hills, will be published in winter 2007.



JUNOT DIAZ Like a lot of brothers of my generation, I grew up with a whole grip of erotic material at my disposal: movies, magazines, books, you name it. (This was before the Internet made porn more common than air.) I might have had a wider variety than most since I lived right next to an active landfill, and the men who worked there made a habit of piling up all the porn they came upon in fantastic mounds near the front entrance, a pile we local boys would happily raid on a weekly basis. Kind of ironic then that I learned to write about sex, desire and the consequences of both from a comic book, the groundbreaking and much lauded *Love and Rockets*. Specifically Gilbert Hernández’s magnum opus, *Poison River*, which began appearing in 1988, just as I arrived at college a wannabe writer desperate (continued on page 198)



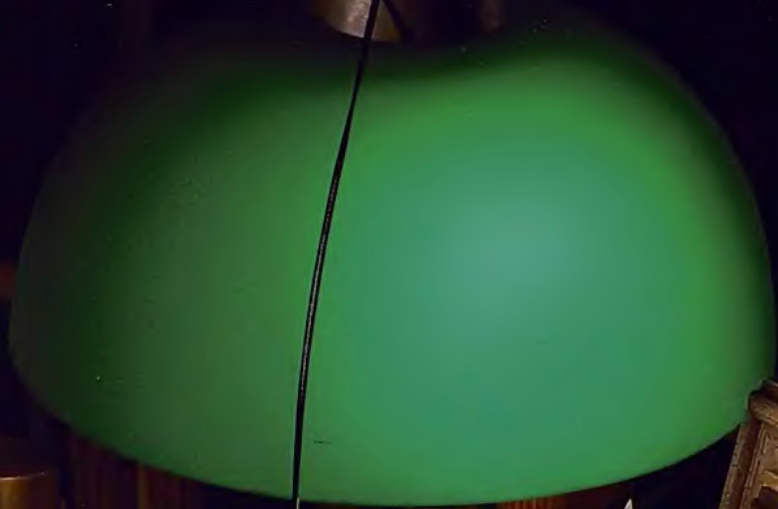
"The bra says 'Merry Christmas,' while the crotchless panties say 'Happy New Year.'"

James Bond's Desk

Even an international man of mystery needs a place to sit

If only to have a place to rest his feet when he is not on assignment. Or to fill out his expense reports. ("Vintage Dom Perignon, James? Couldn't you have ordered a cheaper brut?") Of course 007 needs a desk. And who better than *PLAYBOY* to show it to you? After all, *PLAYBOY* was the first American magazine to publish a Bond story—*The Hildebrand Rarity* (March 1960). Ever since, readers and moviegoers around the world have exhibited an unquenchable thirst for everything 007. To coincide with this month's *Casino Royale*, the film version of Ian Fleming's first Bond novel, we're offering you a peek into 007's world that no other camera lens has captured. Everything you see on Bond's desk is from a specific moment in his spy career. Any idea about the provenance of the firearms? The significance of the domino? And Honeychile Ryder—whatever became of her? For the origin of every item here, log on to playboy.com.





ENTERTAINMENT FOR MEN
PLAYBOY
FEBRUARY 1967 - 75 CENTS
ENTERTAINMENT FOR MEN
PLAYBOY



IAN FLEMING
The author of the James Bond novels is the subject of a new biography by Ian Fleming. The book is titled 'The Man Who Was James Bond' and is published by Doubleday. It is a hardcover book with a gold-colored spine and cover. The book is open, showing a page with a portrait of Ian Fleming and some text.

Blades
L. Martini
Lee



+ Playboy's

MUSIC POLL 2006

GRAB THE BALLOT.
CAST YOUR VOTE

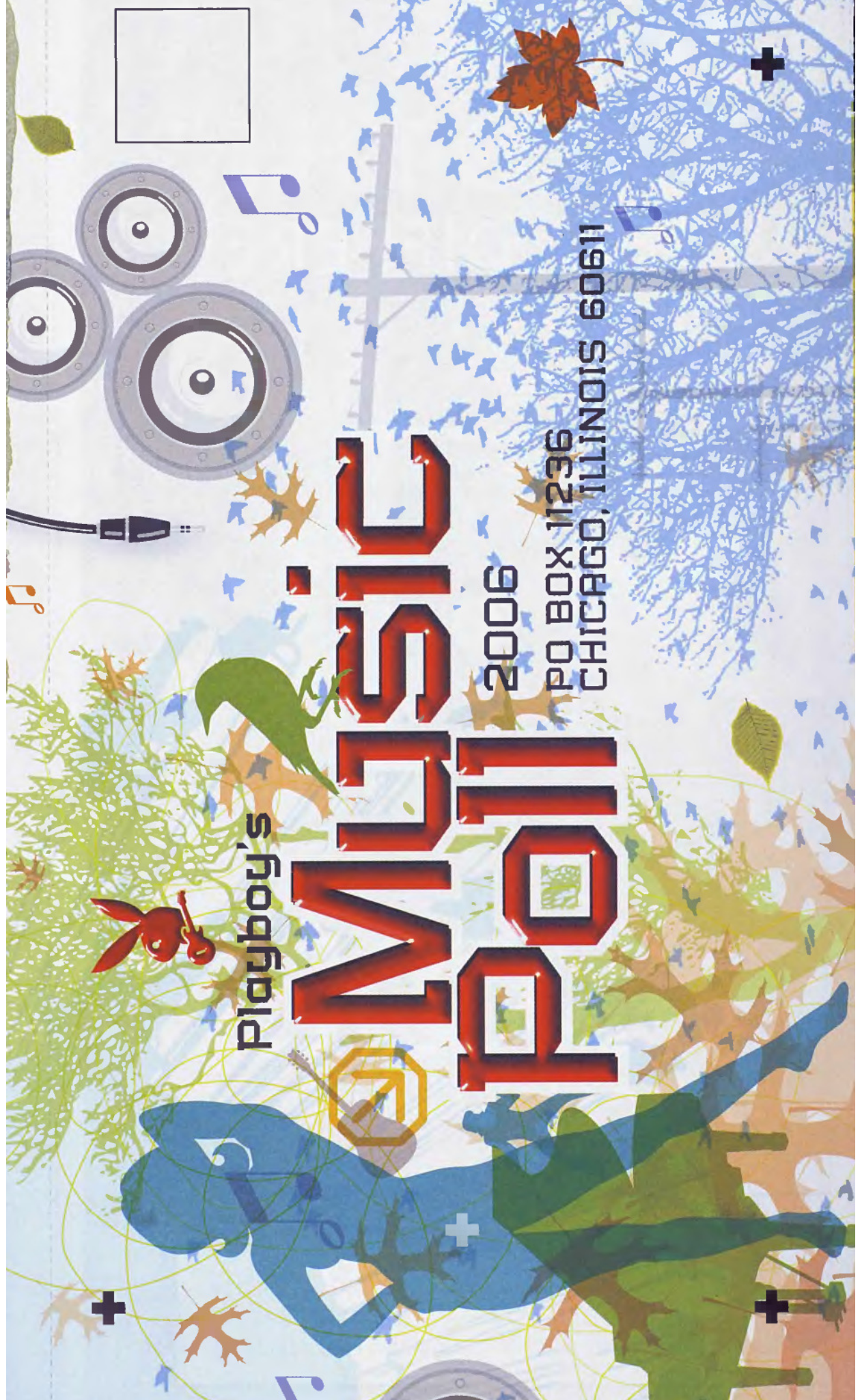


In a few years we may recall 2006 as the end of an era. It marked the final days of a decades-old ritual familiar to all but the youngest music heads: pissing away the afternoon at your favorite record shop. We realized recently it had been six months since we last stopped in a music store—and then realized our regular store had closed down at some point during those six months. No wonder the chains have abandoned CDs in favor of DVDs, video games and merchandise. Say what you want about the sound quality of MP3s, but the electronic distribution of music is a fait accompli. A lit major may try to suggest that the amorphous, technological nature of our new computer-based music consumption has led to a reactionary return to primitivist rock and roll. We just say, "Hell yeah." Good old-fashioned geetars screeched out across dorm rooms and clubs as they hadn't for years. And as if a memo had gone out after Mariah Carey resurrected her career last year, a slew of other divas also tried to creep back into the limelight: Madonna, Janet Jackson, Jessica Simpson, Beyoncé, Christina Aguilera—even Justin Timberlake came out of retirement. They were joined by a squad of would-be next-generation starlets, led by team captains Rihanna, Ciara and Cassie. But of all the luscious ladies making noise this year, we enjoyed Nelly Furtado (right) the most. There's something compelling about her grown-up version of the good-girl-gone-bad story line. And *promiscuous* is one of our favorite words when uttered by a hot brunette. As James Blunt would say, Nelly, "You're beautiful." But forget us. Let's talk about you. This is your chance to vote in our annual music poll and tell the world where the industry can stuff those last few CDs. Vote early and vote often. Rock and roll!



VOTE AND HEAR CLIPS AT PLAYBOY.COM/MAGAZINE.





Playboy's

MUSIC PO1

2006

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HERE'S THE OFFICIAL BALLOT. RIP IT OUT, VOTE AND THEN MAIL IT IN. YOU CAN TICK OFF BOXES, OR, IF YOU THINK YOU'RE SO DAMN SMART, WRITE IN YOUR OWN FAVORITE ARTISTS. STILL TOO MUCH TROUBLE? YOU CAN ALSO VOTE ONLINE > PLAYBOY.COM/MABAZINE



CHECK BOXES FOR FAVORITE IN EACH CATEGORY

BEST ROCK ALBUM

- STADIUM ARCADIUM, RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
- SAM'S TOWN, THE KILLERS
- STILL THE SAME, ROD STEWART
- THE BLACK PARADE, MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE
- 10,000 DAYS, TOOL
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

BEST HIP-HOP ALBUM

- FISHSCALE, GHOSTFACE KILLAH
- MY GHETTO REPORT CARD, E-40
- THE BIG BANG, BUSTA RHYMES
- GAME THEORY, THE ROOTS
- KING, T.I.
- WRITE-IN VOTE:



BEST ELECTRONIC ALBUM

- DESTROY ROCK & ROLL, MYLO
- THE ERASER, THOM YORKE
- PAPER TIGERS, WOMO
- THE WARNING, HOT CHIP
- SEXOR, TIGA
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

BEST COUNTRY ALBUM

- PRECIOUS MEMORIES, ALAN JACKSON
- TAKING THE LONG WAY, DIXIE CHICKS
- LIVE THOSE SONGS AGAIN, KENNY CHESNEY
- REAL FINE PLACE, SARA EVANS
- BLACK CADILLAC, ROSANNE CASH
- WRITE-IN VOTE:



SARA EVANS

BEST JAZZ ALBUM

- OUT LOUDER, MEDESKI, SCOFIELD, MARTIN & WOOD
- SOUND GRAMMAR, ORNETTE COLEMAN
- BRAGGTOWN, BRANFORD MARSALIS
- HOUSE ON HILL, BRAD MEHLDAU
- TIME LINES, ANDREW HILL
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

BEST SOUNDTRACK ALBUM

- IDLEWILD
- AMERICAN HARDCORE
- CURIOUS GEORGE
- THE LAST KISS
- STICK IT
- WRITE-IN VOTE:



THOM YORKE

BEST WORLD MUSIC ALBUM

- YOUTH, MATISYAHU
- MY NAME IS GYPTIAN, GYPTIAN
- UNIVERSO AD MEU REDD, MARISA MONTES
- LAMP FALL, CHEIKH LO
- JMT, VYBZ KARTEL
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

BEST SONG

- "YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL," JAMES BLUNT
- "PROMISCUOUS," NELLY FURTAO
- "CRAZY," GNARLS BARKLEY
- "SEXYBACK," JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE
- "GOLD DIGGER," KANYE WEST
- WRITE-IN VOTE:



GNARLS BARKLEY

↑ FOLD HERE ↑

↑ FOLD HERE ↑

BEST LIVE ACT

- GEORGE STRAIT
- RASCAL FLATTS
- NICKELBACK
- FALL OUT BOY
- PEARL JAM
- WRITE-IN VOTE:



PANIC! AT THE DISCO

↑ FOLD HERE ↓

BEST NEW ARTIST

- PANIC! AT THE DISCO
- ARCTIC MONKEYS
- EDITORS
- GNARLS BARKLEY
- LUPE FIASCO
- WRITE-IN VOTE:



THE KILLERS



DIXIE CHICKS

BEST REISSUE ALBUM

- MERLE HAGGARD SERIES
- PET SOUNDS 40TH, THE BEACH BOYS
- ICE CREAM FOR CRDW, CAPTAIN BEEFHEART
- PINKFLAG (AMERICA), WIRE
- PSYCHDCANDY, THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN
- WRITE-IN VOTE:

GHOSTFACE KILLAH



NICKELBACK

Hall of Fame 2006



■ R.E.M.

More than 25 years on, R.E.M. is issuing a major retrospective of the first part of its career, to remind us why it ruled the indie scene in the 1980s: The jangling guitars and Michael Stipe's murmured vocals and brooding lyrics about, say, Cleveland's burning Cuyahoga River, still impress. And original member Bill Berry rejoined the band for its induction into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame in September.

■ SONIC YOUTH

While R.E.M. looked back to bring music forward in the 1980s, Sonic Youth looked to outer space, harnessing detuned guitars and white noise to make a sound both thrillingly unfamiliar and really loud. The band threw open the floodgates of alt-rock creativity, prefiguring grunge, shoegazing and the psych-out strangeness of acts like the Flaming Lips. And this year the combo put out yet another noisy, cool album.

■ MORRISSEY

He is the sun and the air. He is human and he needs to be loved. The Manchester warbler transcends the mopey genre he helped create through the maudlin songs he wrote with the most important British band

of the 1980s, the Smiths. His self-pitying lyrics gave birth to Kurt Cobain's bathos, emo and whole swaths of today's music. (But don't blame him for that.) And with this year's solo LP, the second great one in a row, Moz shows he's still as good as ever.

■ DEPECHE MODE

This band should have been a one-hit blip-pop wonder, the answer to a 1980s trivia question. Instead it has embarked on one of the most adventurous music careers of all time, constantly mastering new technology, writing dozens of stirring songs and charming millions of fans all over the world. This year DM toured an amazing new album and put out its first-ever best-of compilation.

■ JOAN JETT

It's baffling that she's not always mentioned in the same breath as Iggy Pop and the Sex Pistols, because Joan Jett is that punk. And unlike those more revered artists, she has managed commercial success, as well. Talk about good taste: This year's album features a cover of "Androgynous," originally by the Replacements! We know she loves rock and roll. If you do too, go see her live immediately.

■ WRITE-IN VOTE:



R.E.M.

SONIC YOUTH



MORRISSEY

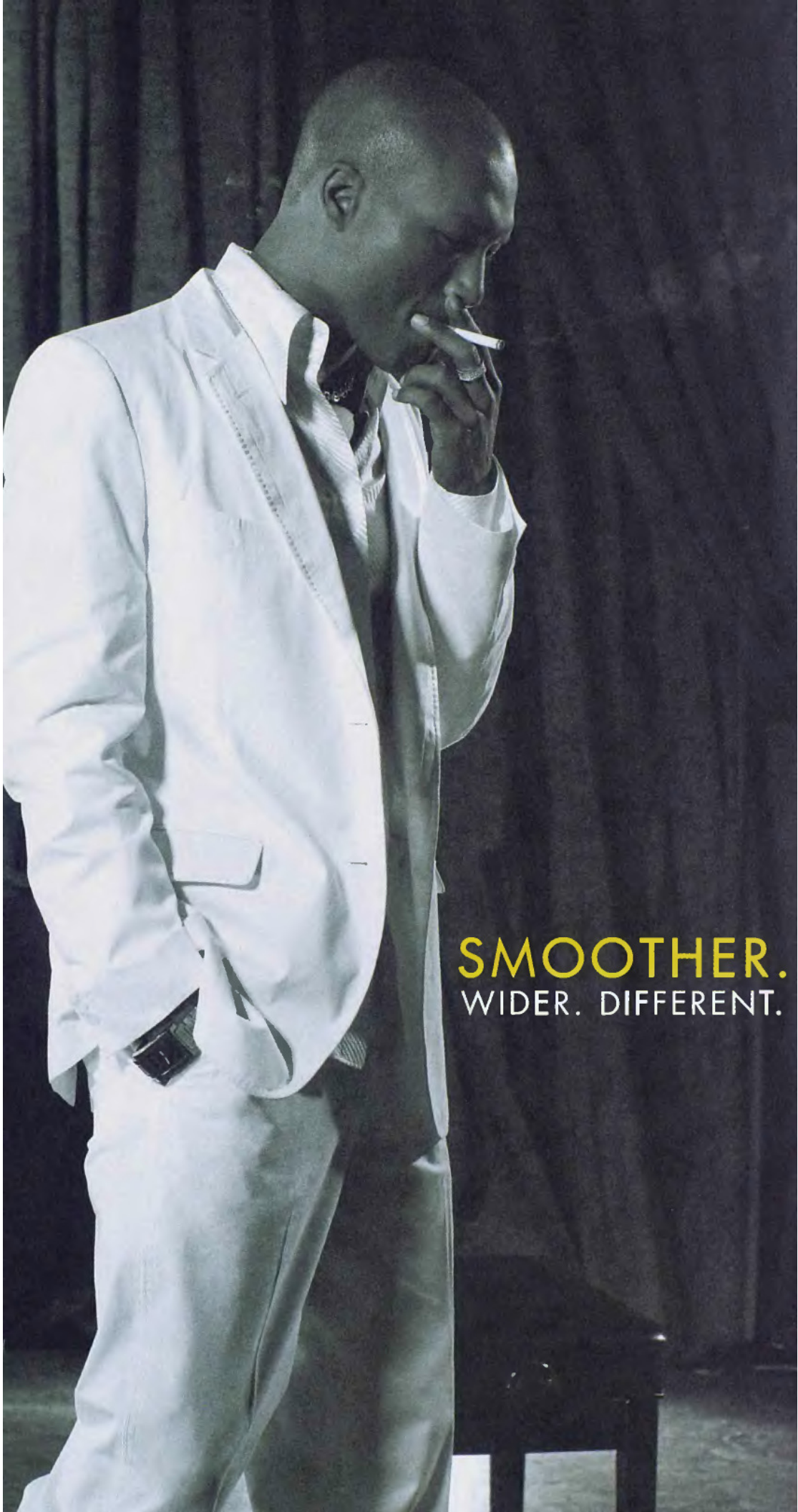
DEPECHE MODE



NEW

XL





SMOOTHER.
WIDER. DIFFERENT.



SMOOTHER.
WIDER. DIFFERENT.



KOOL
BE TRUE.

17 mg. "tar", 1.2 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method. Actual amount may vary depending on how you smoke. For T&N info, visit www.rjrtarnic.com.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, And May Complicate Pregnancy.

HOOP, THERE IT IS

MIAMI'S DJ IRIE STARTED A COURTSIDE CRAZE



DJ Irie became the first-ever official NBA team DJ when the Miami Heat plucked him from the local club scene and set him up with a couple of turntables in a courtside booth. Now that the team has added a championship trophy to the arena's hardware, the rest of the league is scrambling to catch up.

PLAYBOY: How did you get into deejaying?

IRIE: I went to school in Jamaica for a few years, and I ended up living with a family who owned the nightclub in town. I was 14, in the club, getting to see how the DJ rocked the party. Reggae DJs put on a show like live performers. They're on the mike; they use all sorts of sound effects. I took that animated style back to Miami.

PLAYBOY: How did you become the Heat's official DJ?

IRIE: When the team moved into its state-of-the-art arena, it wanted new entertainment, and one idea was to get a DJ. A guy on the committee making these decisions used to come to one of my clubs every Saturday, one of the hottest clubs on the beach. He convinced me to do it. My first game, I bombed! It was bad. I thought they were going to carry me out of the arena. But I got better and better. After a couple of months, the fans were giving me great reviews. Now I've done six seasons. The biggest nod to how well it has worked out came when the Golden State Warriors called me and said, "Listen, we've seen you in action a couple of times, and we want to bring that same element. Can you help us get somebody for our team?" Since then DJs have started at Golden State and in Indiana, Sacramento, Philly, Cleveland and New Jersey—all across the NBA.

PLAYBOY: Do the Heat players make requests?

IRIE: No doubt! These guys love hip-hop. But one game, Shaq sent the ball boy over to tell me to play Kelly Clarkson's "Since U Been Gone." Everyone knows Shaq is a comedian, so I thought he was just joking. But when I put on the song, he went nuts, jumping around, getting all hype. It was the funniest thing.



WOOD VIBRATIONS

JAM ON IT: MEDESKI, SCOFIELD, MARTIN & WOOD



Despite their chops, Medeski, Martin & Wood were never your dad's jazz band. Their catholic tastes—taking in rock, funk, reggae, trip-hop and even loops and turntablism—have made the improvisational trio a hipster favorite among the jam-band and chill-out crowds. The group signed to Blue Note in the 1990s, but it was a spot on the HORDE tour, a sort of jam-band Ozfest, that put them over the top 10 years ago. This year the boys—John Medeski, Billy Martin and Chris Wood—teamed up with guitar guru John Scofield for one of the biggest jazz records in years. *Out Louder*.

PLAYBOY: You guys cover Peter Tosh's marijuana anthem "Legalize It." Do all jam-band guys get high?

MEDESKI: It's all musicians. We've all experimented with things. None of us can do it like we used to—at a certain point it catches up with you. But it's important to expand your mind.

PLAYBOY: Scofield, you've worked with jazz legends Charles Mingus, Chet Baker and Gerry Mulligan. You also played with Miles Davis, who was notoriously hard on musicians. Ever get slammed by him?

SCOFIELD: If you were in Miles's band, you got burned and slammed. It was part of the deal. He would do that, and then the next day he would usually compliment you greatly. He was our idol, so we put up with the stinging criticism and verbal abuse. Some guys in the band weren't jazz guys; they were from the R&B world, and he wouldn't mess with them because they would quit right away if he pulled that shit on them.

PLAYBOY: Do you guys ever just want to end the jam and play a three-minute pop song?

MEDESKI: It's not in my nature to play something the way somebody else did. I'd rather come up with something of my own or find a way to make it personal. I want to do what these people do: I don't want to just do what these people did. Jamming is also a great way to work and get ideas.



GREAT SCOT

ROD STEWART RETURNS TO RAGGED GLORY



Rejoice: The grittiest voice of the original British Invasion is belting out rock and roll again. For all of us who hold a special place in our record collection for his work with the Faces and his soulful, raucous solo outings during the "Maggie May" era, the turn from jazz standards to his *Gasoline Alley* origins is a heap of good news.

PLAYBOY: The four volumes of your *Great American Songbook* standards collection sold a total of 14 million copies. Did you know it would sell that well?

STEWART: Not at all. Before the first one was released I tried to back out. I felt like a rock-and-roll traitor. I didn't know how people were going to accept the songs.

PLAYBOY: How did the idea for this album come about?

STEWART: Originally I wanted to do a white soul album, which eventually I'll get around to, but it was time for a rock album. There's no "Stairway to Heaven" or "Brown Sugar" on it. The songs are all ones we felt needed a revisit.

PLAYBOY: Which of the songs was the toughest?

STEWART: Cat Stevens's "Father and Son" was a hard one, but the rest of them were easy. It's the way Cat jumps into almost a falsetto when he does the boy's part: that was the most difficult thing. I'd love to hear how Cat handles that now, since he recorded it in the 1970s.

PLAYBOY: You've covered Stevens before. Is he a favorite writer of yours?

STEWART: Yes, he's always been. I think "The First Cut Is the Deepest" is the first of his songs I did, back in 1976. I've admired him for a long time. I always refer to him onstage as "my friend, the terrorist."

PLAYBOY: You're a great songwriter. Do you still write?

STEWART: It's difficult to get airplay these days when you're in my age group. Elton John, Paul Simon, the Stones and Paul McCartney have all written great songs recently, but none of their singles made it into the top 20. It's a strange phenomenon, but it's hard to get airplay for new stuff. Still, I'd like to try it sometime again.

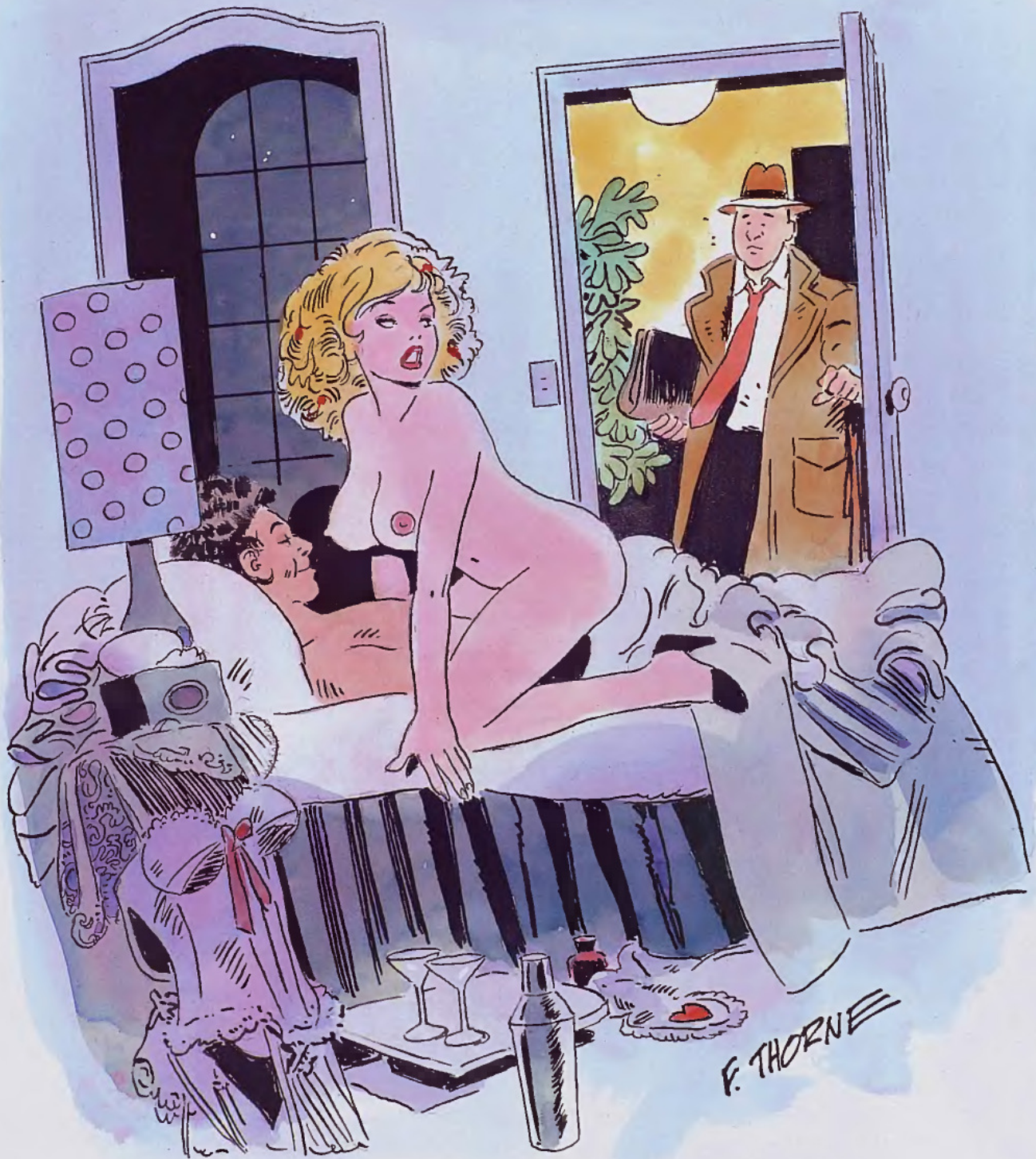


HOT TUNES



GO GET THESE OVERLOOKED GEMS OF 2006

- 1 **"OVER AND OVER,"** Hot Chip
What is greatness? The line "Like a monkey with a miniature cymbal."
- 2 **"RANDOM,"** Lady Sovereign
Def Jam's wee London MC is the real deal. Absolutely wicked.
- 3 **"OOH LA LA,"** Goldfrapp
Think of this as a seductive electro take on "Spirit in the Sky."
- 4 **"18,"** The Harlem Shakes
The attitude and excitement of the Strokes with a doo-wop aesthetic.
- 5 **"FRAUD IN THE '80S,"** Mates of State
Organ-based, kaleidoscopic pop genius from oddball married duo.
- 6 **"LA ROCK 01,"** Vitalic
Remember the rush you got from Daft Punk's first album? It's back.
- 7 **"SHIVERS,"** The Wedding Present
Indie heroes jettison their guitars for a bit of synth melancholia.
- 8 **"SILENT SHOUT,"** The Knife
Wow. Somewhere between Depeche Mode and Gus Gus. Very dark.
- 9 **"REAL ROCK,"** Sound Dimension
Organ-blasting reissue from vintage Jamaican all-star combo.
- 10 **"AT LEAST,"** Baby Dayliner
If the idea of a tinny synth-based Morrissey appeals, you're in luck.
- 11 **"DEATH AT THE CHAPEL,"** The Horrors
Unhinged Music Machine-inspired zaniness hints at a bright future.
- 12 **"BACKYARD BETTY,"** Spank Rock
This potty-mouthed MC gives Kool Keith a run for his money.
- 13 **"PANGEA,"** Someone Still Loves You Boris Yeltsin
The band name is good, but this mellow tune is even better.
- 14 **"SEE THE WORLD,"** The Kooks
The new Arctic Monkeys? More like the new Supergrass. Perfect.
- 15 **"FLY LIKE AN EAGLE,"** Steve Miller Band
Anniversary reissue of the spacey—and remarkably funky—1970s classic.
- 16 **"GO FOR YOURSELF,"** Kenny Smith
Gritty 1960s R&B from a series of Midwest-soul reissues on Shake It Records.
- 17 **"BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE,"** Tiga
Lascivious electronic Talking Heads cover from the terrific *Sexor* LP.
- 18 **"NY LIPPS,"** Soulwax
The name—and cowbells—are from "Funky Town." The result is a party.
- 19 **"WHEN THE NIGHT FALLS,"** The Eyes
Reissue of cult mid-1960s mod masterpiece with menacing guitars.
- 20 **"EXIT MUSIC (FOR A FILM),"**
Easy Star All-Stars & Sugar Minott
Godlike reggae reenvisioning of the morbid Radiohead favorite.



"Well, you know how easily I make friends!"

PLAYBOY'S
COLLEGE
BASKETBALL
PREVIEW



Buckeye fans are foaming at the mouth over freshman phenom Greg Oden. Will he live up to his billing?

CENTER OF ATTENTION

Keep your eye on the ball: The college game just got a lot better



BY DAVID KAPLAN

Basketball fans lately bemoaned the fact that so many top high school players were bypassing the college game to jump to the pros. It mattered little if those prospects were still too green to compete at that level; the lure of the almighty dollar proved too strong for the kids to pass up. While some succeeded in the NBA, many promising players (Korleone Young, Ronnie Fields, Leon Smith) fell short of their goal to make it there. And according to the rules, once a player fails to make a pro roster, his options are few. College is out, and while some have found decent jobs in European leagues, a lot of talented athletes have seen their career grind to a dismal halt.

The situation's shortcomings were clear. On the whole, critics thought teenagers were becoming detrimental to the overall health of the NBA. The fundamentals took a major hit, with many inexperienced team members commanding large salaries and considerable court time. Meanwhile, the

college game also suffered, for obvious reasons—much blue-chip talent never set foot on a college campus.

Thankfully, in 2005, NBA commissioner David Stern stepped in and ended the exodus of preps to the pros. Very simply, the league banned anyone who wasn't at least 19 years old and one year removed from high school graduation. Pro clubs were suddenly doing less day care, and more high school All-Americans are headed to college this year than at any time in the past decade. The most notable new arrival is seven-foot Greg Oden (pictured), who enters Ohio State with more fanfare than any freshman in years, causing Buckeye fans to salivate over dreams of their first national championship since 1960. But they shouldn't become overconfident. North Carolina, Texas and defending champion Florida have sensational enrolling classes as well. Two things are sure: The title is up for grabs, and the college game will be the best it's been in a long time.

1. North Carolina After losing most of his 2005 national championship talent, coach Roy Williams did a great job last season leading the Tar Heels to a 23–8 record. The team was dominated by freshmen, including All-American Tyler Hansbrough, who led the Tar Heels in scoring and rebounding. He spurned the big NBA money to stay at UNC, where he and his teammates believe they can return to the title game. Other UNC players you'll see on highlight reels are forward Reyshawn Terry, who shot 80 percent at the free-throw line last season, and Bobby Frasor, who will handle point guard duties. **Burning question:** Will UNC's hot incoming class jell with the returning starters? If anyone can manage this much talent, it's coach Williams. That's why UNC is our pick for NCAA champion. **Key matchup:** At Arizona, January 27.

2. Florida All five starters from the Gators' 2006 NCAA

O U R T O P T W E N T Y - F I V E

1. NORTH CAROLINA	6. OHIO STATE	11. SYRACUSE	16. CONNECTICUT	21. TENNESSEE
2. FLORIDA	7. GEORGETOWN	12. TEXAS	17. GEORGIA TECH	22. BOSTON COLLEGE
3. KANSAS	8. PITTSBURGH	13. DUKE	18. GONZAGA	23. LOUISVILLE
4. WISCONSIN	9. MEMPHIS	14. ARIZONA	19. WASHINGTON	24. WICHITA STATE
5. UCLA	10. LSU	15. ALABAMA	20. TEXAS A&M	25. XAVIER

PRESEASON
COLLEGE
ALL AMERICA
BASKETBALL
TEAM

GUARDS

Morris Almond
6'6"/215
Senior/Rice

Taurean Green
6'/177
Junior/Florida

Ronald Steele
6'3"/185
Junior/Alabama

Alando Tucker
6'6"/205
Senior/Wisconsin

FORWARDS

Glen Davis
6'9"/289
Junior/LSU

Nick Fazekas
6'11"/240
Senior/Nevada

Tyler Hansbrough
6'9"/245
Sophomore/UNC

Jason Smith
7'/230
Junior/Colorado State

CENTERS


Joakim Noah
6'11"/230
Junior/Florida


Greg Oden
7'/270
Freshman/Ohio State


COACH OF THE YEAR

Billy Donovan
Florida


championship squad return. Joakim Noah may be the best player in college basketball; his interior presence makes Florida a major defensive force. Taurean Green is among the superior point guards in the country, and Lee Humphrey set a Florida record for three-pointers last season, with 113. The small forward is six-foot-nine Corey Brewer, UF's third leading scorer. Sprinkle a solid group of recruits on top and coach Billy Donovan has it rolling big-time in Gator country. **Burning question:** Not since the 1991 and 1992 Duke Blue Devils has any school won the championship twice in a row (before then you have to go back to the early-1970s UCLA squads). Is this team that good? **Key matchup:** Get the beer chilling. Ohio State's arrival in Gainesville two days before Christmas should make for a hell of a showdown.


 **3. Kansas** Just three years ago coach Bill Self left a loaded roster at Illinois for his dream job at Kansas. Now he finally has the program where he wants it—stocked with players who fit his style and are ready to make a run at a national championship. Brandon Rush, Julian Wright, Sasha Kaun and Mario Chalmers are key, along with C.J. Giles, a junior center who is shooting again after surgery in June to correct torn ligaments in his right thumb. Sure, KU's most recent game was an upset loss to Bradley in the first round of the NCAA tournament, but that should motivate this group. **Burning question:** Will freshmen Darrell Arthur, Sherron Collins and Brady Morningstar bring the level of play Kansas needs from them to boost the school to the big one? **Key matchup:** At home against Texas on March 3.


 **4. Wisconsin** Four starters return to the Badgers, who set a school record in 2006 with their eighth straight NCAA tournament appearance. Wisconsin has won at least 19 games in each of coach Bo Ryan's five seasons, and this year should be no different. UW is drenched with talent. Senior Alando Tucker led the Big 10 in scoring in conference matchups last season (20 points a game), and he should be Ryan's go-to guy again. The backcourt star is Kammron Taylor (14.2 points a game a year ago). Up front the Badgers have 87 percent of their rebounding back, notably from six-foot-11 Brian Butch and six-foot-10 Jason Chappell. **Burning question:** There is none. Wisconsin will be a treat to watch. **Key matchup:** At Ohio State on February 25.


 **5. UCLA** The Bruins lost Jordan Farmar, Ryan Hollins and Cedric Bozeman from last year's lineup, but forward Luc Richard Mbah a Moute was the driving force behind the resur-

gence the team enjoyed during coach Ben Howland's third season in Westwood. Darren Collison is now thrust into the starting point guard role; he'll get the job done. **Burning question:** Are wingman Josh Shipp's injury problems behind him? **Key matchup:** At West Virginia on February 10.

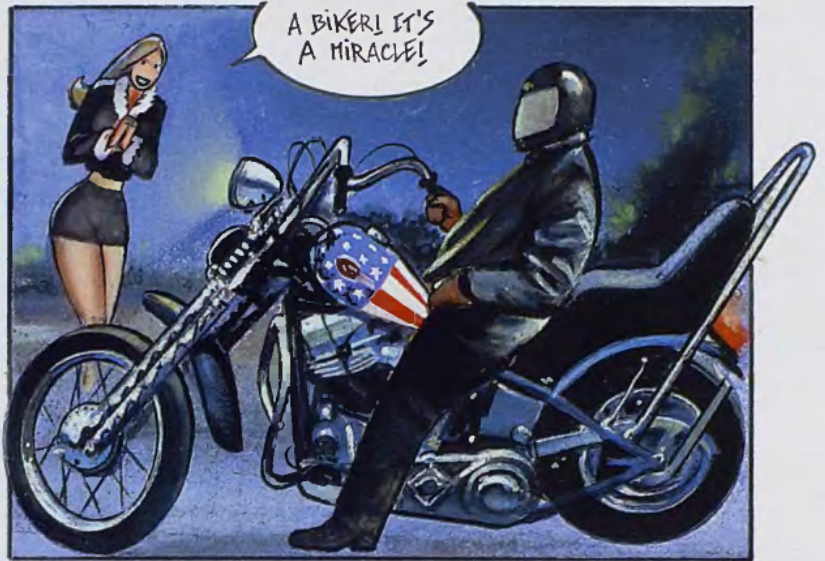
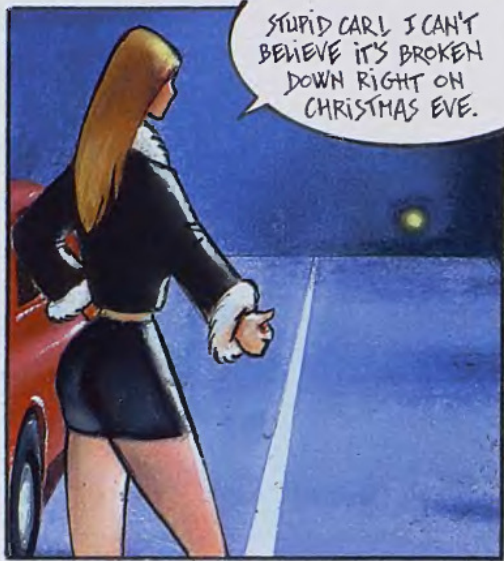
 **6. Ohio State** Thad Matta's meteoric rise as a college head coach has heads spinning. He had a great rookie season in 2001 at Butler, departed for Xavier, where he set the Musketeers moving, and then got the job at Ohio State. Now he has one of the greatest recruiting classes in recent memory, including two-time Gatorade National Player of the Year Greg Oden at center and Oden's high school teammate point guard Mike Conley Jr. Returning talent includes forward Ivan Harris and guards Jamar Butler and Ron Lewis. **Burning question:** The Big 10 is mighty. Ohio State also faces Florida in a nonconference matchup. Can the Buckeyes survive an unrelenting schedule? **Key matchup:** Where do we start? How about that game in the Sunshine State on December 23?

 **7. Georgetown** This will mark a pivotal season in the Hoyas' quest to return to respectability. But who will shoot the basketball? Georgetown sometimes struggled from the outside last year, and scorers Ashanti Cook and Darrel Owens have graduated. Roy Hibbert could be a tremendous player, but he must improve in order to dominate as he should at seven-foot-two. Returning power forward Jeff Green also needs to step up his production. A talented group of freshmen will provide much-needed depth. **Burning question:** Who isn't curious about Patrick Ewing Jr.? Little Ewing (six-foot-10) transferred from Indiana and is now eligible after sitting out a season. **Key matchup:** At Duke on December 2.

 **8. Pittsburgh** When you lose a player like Carl Krauser—one of Pitt's all-timers—you're screwed. Unless you have what Pittsburgh has: eight of the team's top 10 guns returning, notably center Aaron Gray, named the Big East's most improved player last year. He will have plenty of opportunities in the post because the backcourt is loaded with Antonio Graves, Ronald Ramon and LeVance Fields. **Burning question:** Can the solid recruiting class step up and fill some of the hole Krauser's exit has left? If so, coach Jamie Dixon has a shot at a magical season. **Key matchup:** If Pitt can handle Georgetown at home on January 13, things should look pretty good as the tournament approaches.

 **9. Memphis** Head coach John Calipari received offers to leave Memphis but (continued on page 190)

Far From Home



JUNY VIVAREN. G. JORGE G.



SAMUEL L. JACKSON

THE COOLEST MOTHERFUCKING STAR ON THE PLANET SPEAKS HIS MIND ABOUT RAPPERS WHO CAN'T ACT, PEOPLE WHO GIVE HIM ATTITUDE AND WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE EVERYONE WATCHING YOU

Q1

PLAYBOY: Everybody has an opinion about the war. Now you're courting controversy with the film *Home of the Brave*, with 50 Cent and Jessica Biel, about American soldiers struggling to readjust after serving in Iraq.

JACKSON: *Home of the Brave* is interesting because it's not necessarily an antiwar film, even though it has antiwar sentiment in it. Some characters are rah-rah about going back to Iraq, but it's more about people not understanding why they feel alienated when they come home and how they're unable to get rid of guilt about things that happened there or not being able to do enough when they were there. It's going to get an interesting reaction, particularly from people with relatives who have come back from Iraq or went there and didn't come back.

Q2

PLAYBOY: You turned down *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* with 50 Cent because of your strong feelings against rappers getting big movie roles. Did things get dicey between you two while you were making *Home of the Brave*?

JACKSON: People tend to think we're beefin', but we're not. We had an interesting conversation about it, actually. He has my phone number. We talk. I have this thing about acting being a craft, something some of us spent time learning to do. When they ask me to validate the career of somebody who comes from another venue by co-starring in a film with him, the number one insult is to say this other person is the actual star of the film. They want you to prop that person up by co-starring with him. That means if I take a lesser role and let them put that person's name above mine, I'm condoning it. I can't do that, because other young actors are doing the same thing I did, pounding the pavement day after day, going to school to get a degree in drama or theater, going on audition after audition, trying to get a job. I would be doing a great disservice by saying someone who hadn't done all that is good enough to be on-screen with me.

Q3

PLAYBOY: But over the years you've worked in movies with many rappers.
JACKSON: I've done a couple of movies

with LL Cool J, but he was on the series *In the House* for years, so he spent some time learning the craft. I like him, and he's smart. He'd come to my trailer and say, "Okay, we have to do this scene, and I need to figure out how to get from this place to this place. Can you help me?" I'd do it. I had the same thing with Dana—Queen Latifah—when she was in *Sphere* and with Busta Rhymes when he showed up in *Shaft*. It has nothing to do with my disliking 50 Cent. Asking me to prop up a person who comes from another venue is like somebody saying to the Lakers, "Sam Jackson wants to play with you guys tonight. We're going to give him a uniform, and we're going to start him." What the hell are the Lakers supposed to think?

Q4

PLAYBOY: Being so respected for your work in such movies as *Jungle Fever*, *Pulp Fiction* and *Jackie Brown*, how much heat did you take for tackling *Snakes on a Plane*?

JACKSON: People criticized me for doing the film, like, "How can you do something so (continued on page 178)

TWISTED CHRISTMAS

We all love the holidays.
It's just that we all love them
in our own particular way



A Deadwood Christmas

BIG AL SWEARENGEN:
*Chestnuts roasting on the fucking fire
Jack Frost, that cocksucker, nipping at
your motherfucking nose....*

An Owen Wilson—Vince Vaughn Christmas

WILSON: 'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even—

VAUGHN: Let me ask you: Ever live in a house where the mice weren't working overnight? I mean, if you're a mouse, nighttime is the right time, right, baby?

WILSON: The point is that it was quiet.

VAUGHN: Just get back to the poem.

WILSON: And Mama in her kerchief, and I in my cap—

VAUGHN: I've never been into the kerchief look, myself. I mean, what chick thinks she looks good with her hair tied up in some kind of cowboy scarf?

WILSON: I kind of dig the kerchief look. It's the whole peasant thing, y'know?

Doctor Zhivago?

VAUGHN: It makes me think of girls with big haunches.

WILSON: Naw, man—it's, like, girls with wispy blonde hair, and you can be, like, lord of the manor, rolling around in a haystack. You know—milkmaids!

VAUGHN: The poem? Please?

WILSON: When out on the roof—

VAUGHN: Yeah, just skip it.

WILSON: Tore open the shutter—

VAUGHN: Move on!

WILSON: The moon on the breast—

VAUGHN: Get to the good stuff!

WILSON: When, what to my wondering eyes should appear, but a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer—

VAUGHN: How tiny?

WILSON: You're ruining this. Just

accept that the reindeer are tiny, okay?

VAUGHN: But Santa himself is this fat guy. How does that work?

WILSON: It's Christmas magic.

VAUGHN: Let me tell you about Christmas magic. Christmas 1978. I made my parents swear to get me the Han Solo action figure. Who'd I get? That fucking Skywalker. There's your magic.

WILSON: You asked the wrong guy.

VAUGHN: Who's the right guy? Will Ferrell in *Elf*?

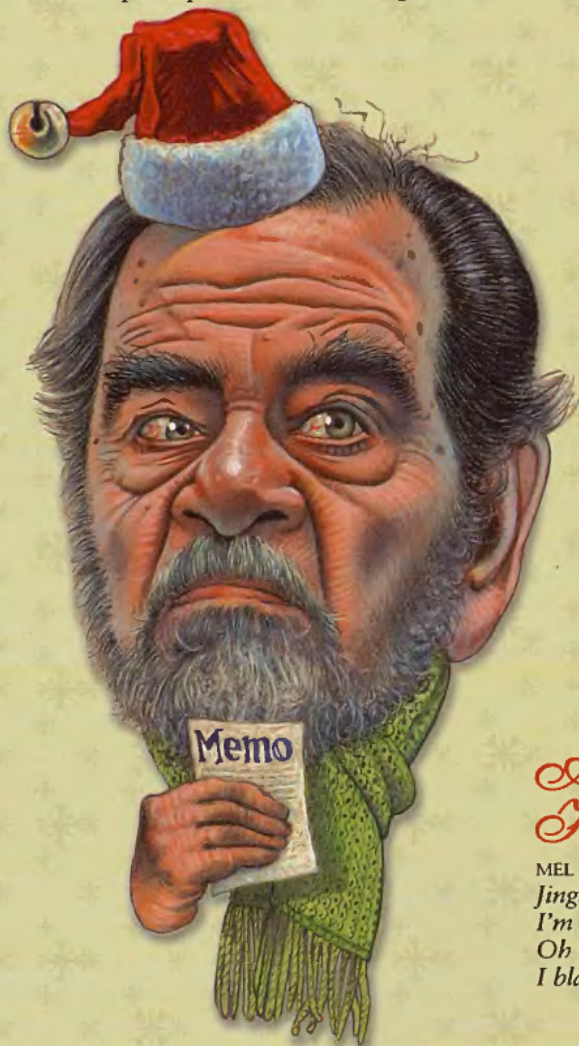
WILSON: Eyes—how they twinkled? Dimples how merry? Round jelly belly?

VAUGHN: Now I get you. All right, go ahead and finish the poem.

WILSON: Happy Christmas to all, and to all—hey, are you and Aniston engaged yet?

An Ann Coulter Christmas

TV INTERVIEWER: Is Christmas fair toward conservatives?
 COULTER: Well, Matt, of all the liberal schlock that makes me sick during the Christmas season, it's the incessant airing of *A Christmas Carol* that's the worst. It's a story about a self-made man who achieves independent wealth and is then guilted into using it to support welfare babies. The proverbial straw that breaks Scrooge's back is of course a lame, simpering child, Tiny Tim. But you can't respond to Tiny Tim. That is the point of liberal infallibility. Let me ask you—why doesn't Bob Cratchit open a private health-savings account?



A Mel Gibson Hanukkah

MEL GIBSON:
*Jingle bells, bingle jells
 I'm almost out of booze
 Oh what fun, a DUI
 I blame it on the Jews.*



A Saddam Hussein Christmas

To: Faithful servant Ahmed
 Re: Xmas thank-yous

Ahmed,
 The following friends (and enemies of my enemies) must be thanked for their thoughtful holiday remembrances. Please instruct my unrepentant Ba'ath Party loyalists to compose a few notes on my behalf. Use official palace stationery, if any can be located.

Bashar al-Assad: I'M TOTALLY SYRIA'S mug
 Osama: Afghan (Feels like regifting, but the guy is living in a cave.)

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: *101 Bushisms* book (hilarious!)
 Tom Cruise: L. Ron Hubbard library (I'm interested but not sure I can do it from a secret Iraqi prison. Pls. ask him for more info.)
 Kim Jong Il: Taepodong silo boxer shorts (too small, but a good gift)
 Fidel Castro: Cigars (Probably from Raúl; he's the thoughtful one.)
 Taliban: Festive tin of caramel-, cheese- and plain-flavored heroin
 Death to America, S.H.

DESPERATELY SEEKING CINDY

In a conference room at Playboy Studio West, Cindy Margolis can't contain her glee. Blonde, buxom and squeezed into a tight T-shirt that reads GO AHEAD AND STARE, she's grinning from ear to ear as she surveys a long table covered with many of the photographs you see on these pages. It's the first time she's seen the results of the photo session that took place a couple of weeks earlier, documenting a different side of a woman who made her name and fortune with a distinctly PG-13 website and modeling career.

"For me even to be in this building, let alone look at myself with no clothes on, was a monumental leap," she says. "And to my pleasant surprise, I loved every minute of it, especially coming here today and being wowed by the pictures. Hey, I look pretty good naked—who would have thought?"

A few of you may have guessed. You know Cindy Margolis under a variety of guises: the queen of the



Internet, Guinness Book-certified most downloaded woman on earth, former host of the late-night variety program *The Cindy Margolis Show*, subject of the reality series *In Your Dreams With Cindy Margolis*, one of the fembots from *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*, the face and body on a million posters. She's all those things, certainly, and plenty more: poker ace, car collector, savvy businesswoman, mother of three, author-to-be, the ultimate California girl. But for all that, you probably didn't expect to see her on these pages in this state—and neither, to be honest, did she.

"I was 18 when PLAYBOY approached me for the first time," says Margolis, a Valley girl born and bred in southern California who has been on the magazine's radar screen for a couple of decades. "Every other year since then I would get a wonderful call from them, and I would very graciously decline. But when they called on my 40th birthday not only to wish

Cindy Margolis and the making of a 21st century icon

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN WAYDA













me a happy birthday but also to make the offer again, I thought, Wow, they still want me. And at this stage of my life and career it's empowering and inspiring."

She laughs. "You know what? Now is the time. If I had done it in the past, it would have been for gratuitous reasons or money or to help my career. And I don't need any of that now. I've made it to the point where I just think, Yeah, PLAYBOY'S COOL."

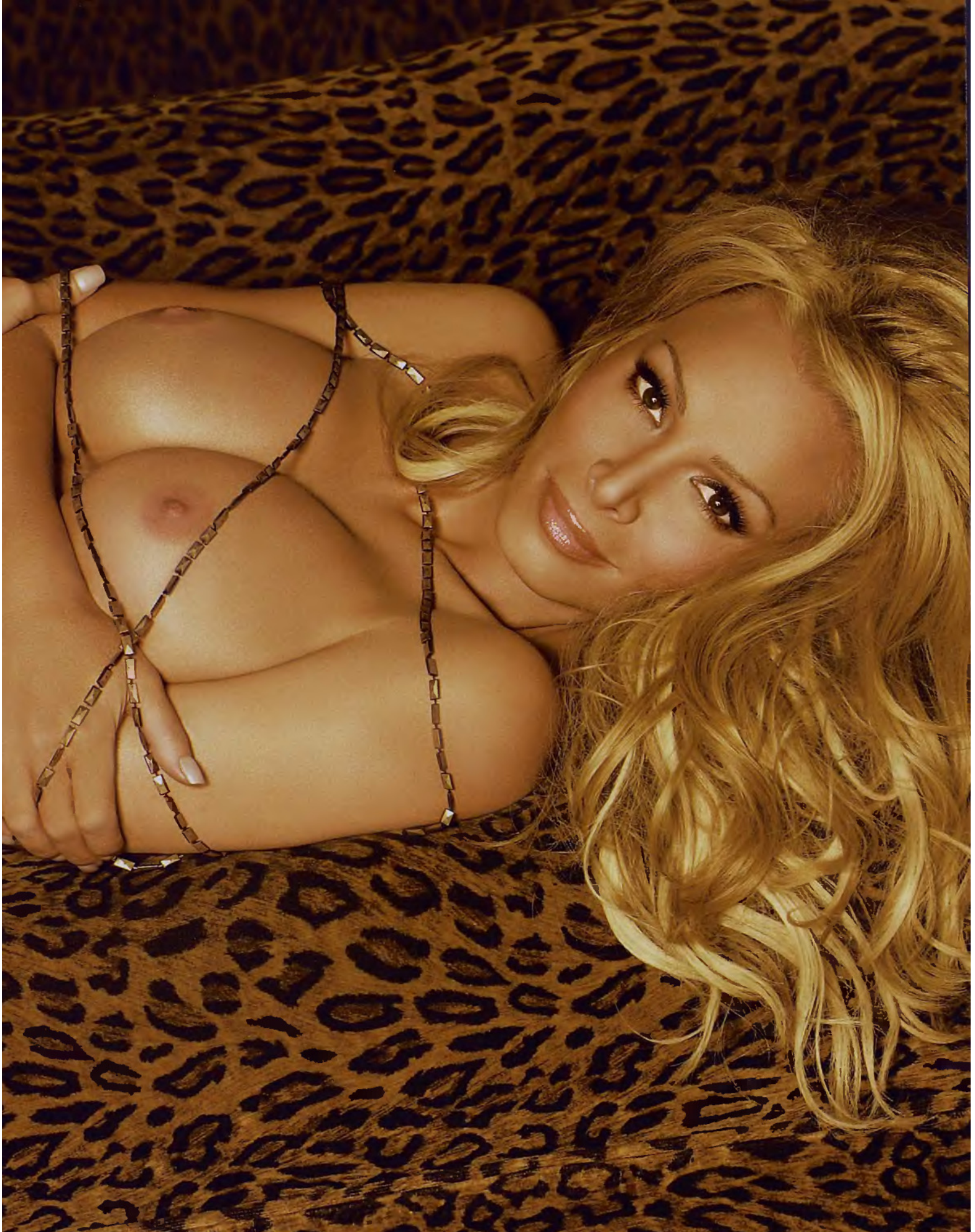
In many ways Cindy is the ultimate self-branding star of the Internet age, having latched onto the new technology in the medium's early days (she didn't know what downloading was, only that she'd been told people were doing it to her—a lot). "To make it, you have to have more than a killer body and a great smile. Otherwise everyone in L.A. would be on the cover of PLAYBOY," she says. "You have to have the brains and the drive to invent yourself. I came from a divorced family with a single mom in a one-bedroom apartment, and I'm proud I was able to build something on my own and can be sitting here today with everything I have."

An aspiring model who couldn't land an agent, Cindy found a novel way to get her foot in the door. She was taking an introductory class at a Los Angeles university when the professor gave a standard Business 101 assignment: Come up with a plan for your own business. Cindy took some sexy photos of herself, slapped them onto the front of makeshift greeting cards and distributed them to the class. "The professor was like, Did she just pass out lingerie pictures of herself to a class of 18-year-olds?" she says. Not only did she do that but she sold the cards to stationery shops, car washes and the like, and before long she was selling them out of the apartment where she and her mom lived. In a sign of desperation or naivete, she put her home phone number on the back of the cards. ("I would not recommend doing that today," she says.)

The cards led to offers for posters, the posters got her a gig on *The Price Is Right*, and the TV exposure led her to the Internet. By the late 1990s plenty of people
(text concluded on page 175)







See more of Cindy at cyber.playboy.com.

Love, Jerry (continued from page 88)

I found, in a drawer filled with cheap plastic bracelets, a letter signed "Jerry Salinger."

never discussed, and they drank as if it were still 1952 and they were in their prime. With smiles and jokes that recalled memories of pleasant adventures, they drank and smoked, hemmed in by the strange people who had invaded their barn, and they didn't really want outside opinions or judgments from us.

Should we have called the authorities, with the result that their lives would be put under the control of some county bureaucrat? No way. They were 30 years older than we were and not our parents. They were the ghosts from *Topper*. They were Nick and Nora from *The Thin Man*. They were our friends.

When it finally dawned on us how difficult things had become for them, with the bank threatening foreclosure, we had to invent some way to keep them from getting tossed into the street. So with what cash we had, little by little we started buying their ruined stuff and let them keep it all in their place. Then we finally scraped together enough money to buy their house, and we let them stay there, surrounded by their history, for the rest of their lives. And we talked to the cops and a local lawyer who knew a big guy with a ponytail and a big motorcycle, and soon the people who had taken over their lives were gone. You've got to understand that this was a few years ago in rural upstate New York, and things were more informal then.

It was the booze that finally got her. It was the cigarettes that got him. Booze and cigarettes were at the heart of the era that defined them, with a few wild experiments in living thrown into the mix. But even at the end, she kept her sense of style and humor, still played elaborate practical jokes on us, fixed up her place funny-creepy for Halloween, loved to laugh, never gossiped and somehow retained her dignity—with a lifetime of sad secrets—and her blazing green eyes.

After they died it was a struggle to keep their old place from collapsing, but once we had it stabilized we started picking through the piles of rags, junk and rain-soaked books we had bought along with the house. That's when we started finding pictures—and the letters.

The first batch were from "Sid"—S.J. Perelman, the now mostly forgotten

but then defining 20th century American humorist who wrote for the Marx Brothers and *The New Yorker* and won an Academy Award for his work on *Around the World in 80 Days*. A typical "Dear Becky" letter he wrote to her in 1955 started out with "How could I be so paltry as to fritter away seven weeks before replying to a hazel-eyed brunette with a 34-inch bust will have to be one of those questions that my biographers puzzle over endlessly"; Sid added that "having been a longtime admirer of yours and one who, when the conversation turns on attractive girls, says, 'Yes, but you never met Becky,' ... I'm a paid-up and worshipful fan."

Among the jumble of moldy books, we discovered a collection of Perelman's titles, all inscribed "Dear Becky," including *Baby, It's Cold Inside* (1970), dedicated to J.D. Salinger. Turns out Perelman and Salinger were friends. In *The Last Laugh*, a posthumous compilation of Perelman stories, Paul Theroux's introduction makes that clear: "[Perelman] was the only person I have ever known who dropped in on J.D. Salinger, whom he called Jerry." According to Paul Alexander's *Salinger: A Biography*, Perelman and Salinger also shared a literary connection: They were the only *New Yorker* authors who were edited exclusively by the legendary William Shawn. Author Leila Hadley, with whom Perelman had a "long, intense relationship" (Dorothy Herrmann, *S.J. Perelman: A Life*), noted that "Jerry was a great friend of Sid's in those days—they used to have lunch together quite a bit," and the biographies of both writers state that Perelman was among the few who would regularly visit Salinger's hilltop New England retreat. One of the things I can imagine they might have discussed, beyond their shared editor at *The New Yorker*, was that they were both nuts for a certain hazel-eyed brunette.

I soon found a box of photographs of Becky when she was young—1950s modeling shots, pictures of her in Mexico, even goofy shots of her when she was a kid, posing at a waterfall somewhere in the Black Hills in an old-time bathing suit, shaking hands with an Indian chief. The girl could not take a bad picture. This was definitely not Tallulah Bankhead but someone at that crossroads where old-fashioned beauty met a more modern look that still works today. Then, at the

point when I had to reassure my wife I was not developing a film-noirish obsession with a dead girl's pictures, I found a copy of *Good Housekeeping*.

Becky had kept piles of French style magazines from the 1950s and old *New Yorkers* and *PMs*. Becky was into lots of things; she had weaknesses and strengths, but one of her strengths was not good housekeeping. So why was she saving this February 1948 issue? Was there a recipe inside for pea soup with ham?

When I flipped through the damp pages, I found "A Girl I Knew," by J.D. Salinger.

This unknown-to-me Salinger story was illustrated with a pretty young woman looking out from a balcony. And this illustration looked exactly—right down to the body language—like those photos of Becky. Was it her? This was, from what I'd been told, precisely the moment when she may have been dating Salinger. Thanks to this find I had to up the ante, proudly admit I was obsessed and dive back into all the rest of the junk.

After I unearthed more gushing letters from Perelman, I found, in a drawer filled with leaky Eveready batteries and cheap plastic bracelets, a letter signed "Jerry Salinger."

Hate to say this, but I whooped. I howled. I screamed.

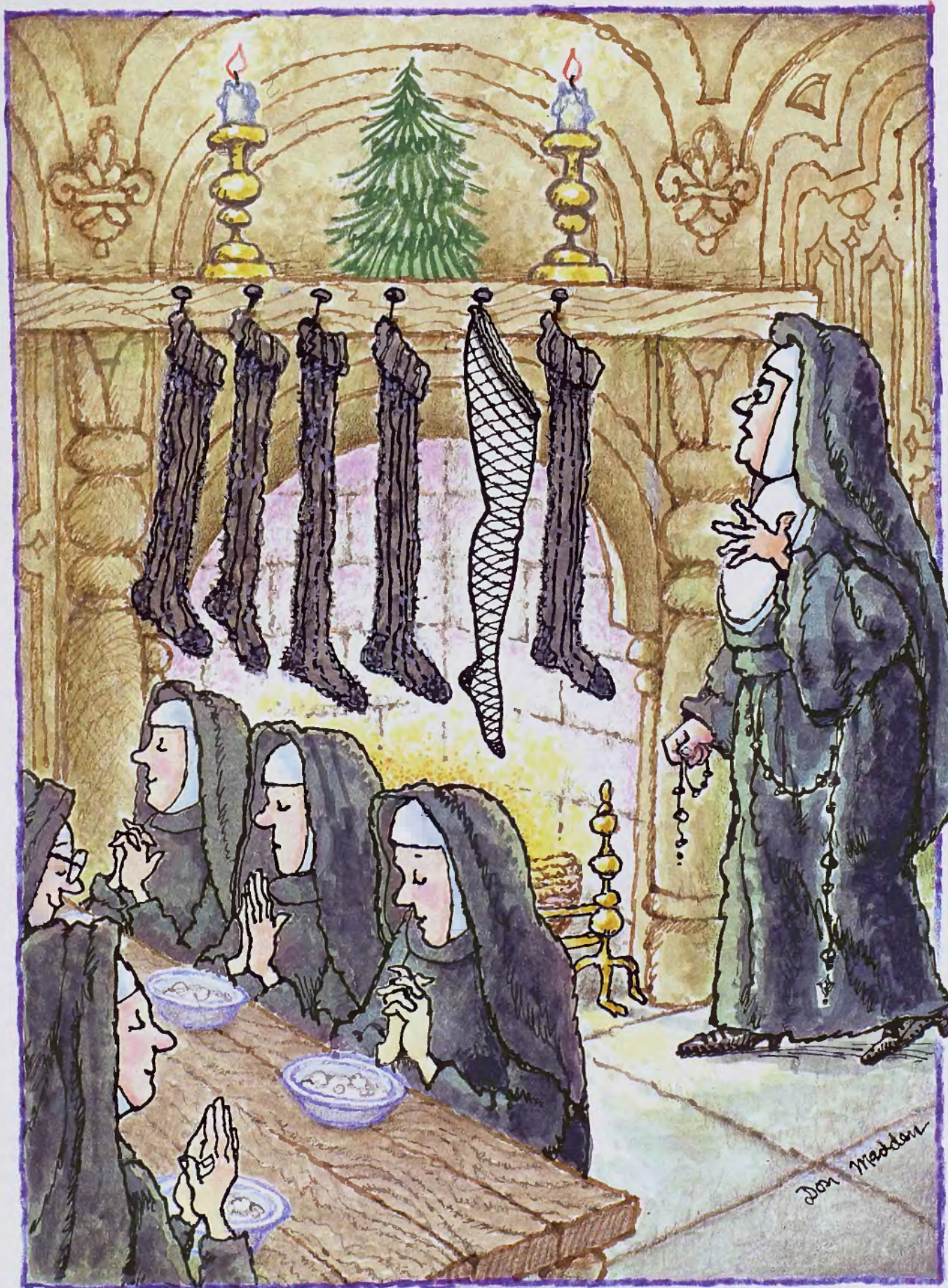
I was not unaware that a Salinger signature might be a very valuable commodity. I was not unaware that this same signature on *New Yorker* stationery might go a long way toward paying next winter's heating bill. The howl, though, was the result of my playing a high-strung anti-Sherlock Holmes who had just found a very pertinent clue. The Becky-as-Salinger's-girlfriend story was actually starting to piece together, and I was the only guy who could prove it.

The note was dated August 1951, a month after the publication of *The Catcher in the Rye*. It was addressed "Dear Mr. Hallman."

Mr. Hallman was Becky's father.

In the note Salinger makes a cheerful reference to Hallman's "wandering daughter" and apologizes for a wisecrack he'd made about Hallman's hockey playing. Here at last was the first bit of real proof that Salinger actually *did* know Becky, which proved—not much. All I'd uncovered was that Salinger was pen pals with her dad. I had been hoping for something juicier or transcendental, and all I got was a hockey joke.

So I dug deeper into the drawer. I found a poem to Becky in Spanish with a picture enclosed of a suave Mexican guy. Then I found a different letter to



Hallman, from Eleanor Roosevelt. (She thanks him for his January 1950 letter describing a Mexican celebration.) Then I found a small envelope.

It was addressed to Mrs. Ake Tugel. That would be Becky.

Return address: "Salinger, Windsor, Vt." I took a breath and very gently pried it open.

Empty. No letter inside. Damn.

Okay, maybe this was just the envelope the *New Yorker* note came in. It was the right size. But why would it be addressed to Mrs. Ake Tugel when that 1951 note was to Becky's father? So I checked the postmark: It was stamped 1962, which proved, even without a letter inside, that Salinger was still connected to Becky long after the first letter. Here was a pretty serious suggestion that at least part of the legend of Becky and Salinger was real—not necessarily that they were lovers, but certainly they were

friends—documentary evidence that there was some form of communication for more than 10 years.

What made this so intriguing was that by now I had studied all the available sources on Salinger's life in search of Becky. She isn't mentioned in either Ian Hamilton's or Paul Alexander's Salinger biography, both of which go to great and often salacious lengths trying to prove that Salinger could not sustain a healthy relationship with a woman, that he was interested only in inappropriately young women and that there was a pattern: He would meet someone, become infatuated, barrage her with notes and letters, then suddenly come to loathe her within a month's time and never speak or write to her again. But the correspondence I'd discovered, with its postmarks, suggests J.D. Salinger wasn't so easily defined by some neurotic's MO but could be quite simply a friend. Here was Becky Hallman Gehman Tugel (we'll get to the Gehman

part in a minute), with whom he was in contact for more than a decade. Perhaps the tabloid-level scholarship had Salinger all wrong. The proof of his redemption may be whatever was written in the letter that went with the 1962 envelope, and I was determined to find it.

Now, I'll admit when this all started I was more interested in the idea that my neighbor might have been romantically linked to someone famous and in the possible value of a rare signature than in J.D. Salinger or his writing. I had read all the gossip about his reclusive life and odd behavior, but I had never read his books. I do remember testing a few pages of *The Catcher in the Rye* when I was around 15 and then promptly putting it aside. It's not that I was illiterate, but I preferred reading the encyclopedia. ("Hey, Ma, did you know Utah was the Beehive State?") Yes, I did force myself to skim *Moby-Dick*, but that was because I was willing to wade through all that detailed character and plot development to get to all the fun stuff about whales. My dad and his brothers owned a toy store on one of the toughest blocks of the Lower East Side. My mother and grandmother spoke 15th century Spanish (long story there). My older brother built a floor-to-ceiling rocket ship in our small apartment's living room that remained in place as an accepted piece of furniture, with lights flickering, for months. It was going to be a long stretch for me to find a point of entry into an angst-ridden book about a kid unhappy with prep school. I distinctly remember asking my mother, "What's a blazer?" before giving up completely. But with these Becky-Salinger myths now part of my life, I figured I should make another attempt to read Salinger. At least now I knew what a blazer was.

Maybe it's because I missed the book as a teenager and neglected it in college, but reading *Catcher* as an adult blew me away. What's striking is not only the unique character of Holden Caulfield but how extraordinarily well presented all his antagonists are. Everyone Holden finds phony, idiotic, cruel or simply disappointing is drawn with such accuracy and empathy that any adult reader can easily support why they all might find Holden insufferable. The dumb jock Stradlater, Jane and Sally, Sunny the hooker and her elevator-operator pimp, the teacher who makes a pass at Holden, everyone he encounters, including cabdrivers and nuns—their reactions to Holden and his acceptance of the logic of their reactions is, I've come to think, the ingredient that gives *The Catcher in the Rye* its permanence. That and how damn funny it is.

It was a couple of years later when I did find it.

The Big Letter.



"I didn't think anything could spoil this view. However, my wife banging the ski instructor comes close."

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No, not the missing letter from 1962, a different one. It had been resting in a pile of garbage for several years, stuck between moldy 1950s utility bills in a plastic bag destined for the town dump. But it never made it there because by now my fixation had worsened. I'd get into a frenzy to clear out the barn, finally tossing things out, but then I'd promptly change my mind and bring the garbage back to pick through one last time, just to be sure. To anyone watching, it would seem I was a man conducting an investigation into his own life by going through his own trash, allowing nothing to be discarded unless it was checked and double-checked. And one dank afternoon, while shuffling through papers I had gone through many times before, there it was: a by now almost transparent folded page that seemed—as in some stupid occult movie—to glow. I knew it right away, knew what this little yellow missive could be, and as I carefully peeled the folds open I saw the words *Love, Jerry*.

It was a letter from 1959, 600 words, beginning with "Dear Becky." With its references to Isak Dinesen, Truman Capote, their mutual pal Sid, devious agents, comical librarians, snarky critics and Salinger's own lonely self-imposed exile in New England, the letter was a snapshot of a literary moment in time, but more important, this slyly sexy missive—with its typos, hep syntax, jokes, sense of generosity and affection for a beautiful, whip-smart knockout from the Black Hills of South Dakota—suggested all the rumors about my friend and neighbor may actually be true.

Finding this letter did not make me do a victory dance. Instead, after brushing away 50 years of accumulated grime, feeling with my fingers the indentations made by Salinger's typewriter, knowing he had touched this, Becky had read

it, and now I was reading the breezy, unmistakable voice of J.D. Salinger, it made me smile. And it gave me a sense of relief. Despite all the aspersions cast on Salinger by his biographers, so assured in their insistence that he was a misanthropic curmudgeon without any female friends, in 1959 he was exactly what three generations of fans had always hoped he was: a decent, modest and very droll guy with a spot-on knack for telling a story. And the letter's reference to a movie date with Becky in 1947, when added to the note I'd found written to her dad in 1951 and the forlorn little empty envelope addressed to her in 1962, provided the irrefutable proof that J.D. Salinger had a heretofore unknown warm friendship with my neighbor Becky—a friendship that spanned not one but *three* decades.

So why does Rebecca Hallman Gehman Tugel's name not appear in *Salinger: A Biography* by Alexander, or *In Search of J.D. Salinger* by Hamilton, or *Dream Catcher* by Salinger's daughter Margaret, or the biography of S.J. Perelman by Dorothy Herrmann? How did they all miss what I found? The answer: They all came very close. There is a trace of Becky, however faint, in all those books.

Becky made "the mistake" (as she referred to it) of marrying the wrong writer: Richard Gehman, a then prolific scribe known at the time as "the king of the freelancers." According to Becky and Ake, Gehman could be very abusive. (You can google this guy; you'll find that even the website of the college that holds his papers offers, diplomatically, that Gehman was "emotionally troubled.") They had a child, but the marriage ended poorly, and Gehman would wed several times, including a marriage to Academy Award-winning actress Estelle Parsons. Gehman's name

may ring a bell for vinyl collectors—among his output are liner notes to a couple of albums by Allan Sherman, of "Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh!" fame; for modern-lit historians he's also noted for his feud with, of all people, Mr. S.J. Perelman.

Perelman's brother-in-law was the author Nathanael West, and 10 years after West's death in an automobile accident, Gehman somehow got the gig of writing the intro notes for the New Directions edition of West's *The Day of the Locust*. Perelman, according to Herrmann's biography, "particularly objected to" the "opportunistic" intro Gehman wrote. Hamilton also alludes to a Salinger beef with Gehman, whom he calls Salinger's "old *Cosmopolitan* adversary." These literary footnotes are puzzling: Why even mention someone nobody's ever heard of today? Did the biographers sense something? Of course none of them knew about Becky, so none of them could make the leap that Gehman just happened to marry the girl both Salinger and Perelman seem to have loved. That's an excuse to dislike someone. Yet what's fascinating is that in neither Perelman's nor Salinger's correspondence does either guy take Becky to task for marrying a jerk. Admirable restraint.

Becky ran away from this marriage and made her way to Cuernavaca, Mexico, where Mom and Dad Hallman were wintering. In 1952 Salinger made a mysterious trip to Mexico. (According to Hamilton, "We know nothing of what happened there.") Maybe he was chasing Becky; if so, it was too late. In Cuernavaca Becky had already met Tugel, the young, gentle, guileless Swedish artist with whom she stayed for the rest of her life.

In Mexico more connections can be gleaned: Tugel was there visiting with his mother, an international adventuress of sorts, who, according to the Cuernavaca gossip pages, was friends with Martha Gellhorn, the fearless war correspondent who was Hemingway's third wife (and the only wife to leave him). Salinger and Hemingway had met in Paris during World War II, just after Salinger had survived D-Day and shortly before he was to fight in the battle of the Hürtgen Forest—one of the most disastrous and bloody American campaigns in Europe, according to historian Stephen Ambrose. (As for meeting Hemingway, writes Hamilton, after his experiences in combat "Salinger...had little patience for Hemingway's macho posturing.")

Now I've got a harebrained theory about the war's effects on Salinger: He served in the 12th Infantry Regiment of the Fourth Division, he was in the thick of combat, and I'm of the opinion that his now out-of-print story "The Stranger" (*Collier's*, December 1945) ranks with the finest stories ever written about a soldier's post-traumatic stress. I can get overheated about this tangent. I



C. Barsootti

"Oh, I do love the grand old traditions."

mean, Salinger was in the midst of the slaughters that were D-Day, "the bloody Mortain" and the Hürtgen (where, per Hamilton, "casualties were of a scale that appalled even D-Day soldiers"), and his regiment sustained a casualty rate of 130 percent in the summer of 1944—4,034 killed or wounded out of an original 3,080 men. So let's assume that, like any sane person, Staff Sergeant Jerome Salinger might have been haunted by these events.

According to Salinger's daughter Margaret, "My father has never taken being warm and dry and not being shot at for granted—the constant presence of the war, as something not really over, pervaded the years I lived at home." She recalls at the age of seven "standing next to my father...as he stared blankly at the strong backs of our construction crew of local boys.... Their T-shirts were off, their muscles glistening with life and youth in the summer sun. After a long time he spoke to me, or perhaps just out loud to no one in particular, 'All those big strong boys...always the first to be killed, wave after wave of them.'"

And then, she adds, he would tell her, "You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose entirely, no matter how long you live."

If J.D. Salinger could, after all that, still find the clarity, chops and goodwill needed to write *The Catcher in the Rye*, then perhaps we could cut the guy a little slack for his impatience with biographers, journalists and cocktail chatter. Tangent over. What is actually pertinent here for my story is that in Mexico, Becky Hallman and Ake Tugel fell in love.

Soon they were traveling the world together—Sweden, Scotland, South Dakota, even Hollywood, where Tugel's paintings were bought by Ingrid Bergman and Anthony Quinn. The couple returned to New York and settled in the then bohemian community of Sea Cliff, Long Island. Things went well in Sea Cliff for a long time; then, it seems, they did not. In the 1980s they moved into the dilapidated place next to our dilapidated place in upstate New York, and that's how this all began for me.

Clearly, though, Becky stayed in touch with her old friend Jerry. Her husband was not the jealous type, and besides, when a woman gives you a pink-gold watch she can't afford inscribed with ANYPLACE, ANYTIME, ANYWHERE, you shouldn't object to her getting a letter from time to time from J.D. Salinger. As for me, unless that 1962 letter surfaces to prove different, the story I'm sticking with is that J.D. Salinger is just who all his fans—me included now—would like to think he is: a hell of a writer, a good friend and someone who could conclude a letter to an old flame by saying that, despite the many vicissitudes, horrors and promises of life, what he'd really prize is "a naughty picture of Becky."



CINDY MARGOLIS

(continued from page 166)

were starting to take notice. "The minute you're somebody, William Morris and Elite won't stop calling you," she says. "But at the beginning you're banging on the door and nobody answers. So the Internet was a great way into the entertainment world for me." Still, traditional media remained suspicious. "It did take some banging on those doors, saying, 'Hello, I have an audience of 70 million people. Do you want them?'"

It didn't take long for everybody to say yes. The Cindy Margolis empire—and yes, that's exactly what it is—starts with her multifaceted website, *Cindymargolis.com*, with its free photos and video, merchandise and a section devoted strictly to female fans. But it extends far beyond that. At the moment, she's designing a line of women's T-shirts and tank tops, called the Tattles; she's working on an animated late-night series, *Cindy B.C.*; and she's the cover model for the *Tenth Muse* comic-book series.

"I've always been ambitious and thought, 'What should my next thing be?'" she says. "I'm probably the only person who can go on *Howard Stern* in the morning and play with him and then in the afternoon go on the Home Shopping Network and sell beauty products."

She's now writing a book about her biggest tribulation, the struggle she and husband Guy Starkman went through to have

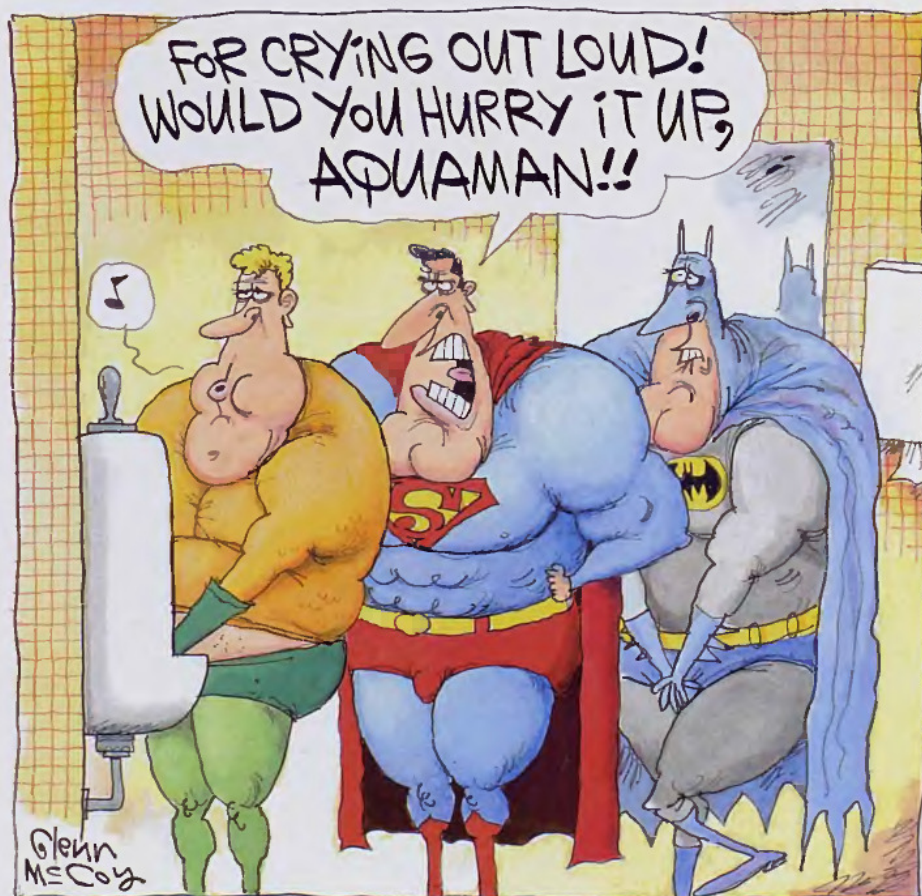
children. The couple tried a variety of treatments over several years before she gave birth to the first of their three children, in 2002. Cindy is now the spokesperson for RESOLVE, a national infertility association; a portion of the sales of this issue will go to her own charity, the Cindy Margolis Get a Download of This Fertility Fund.

"I told Mr. Hefner that this will be the magazine's best-selling issue of the year," she says with a laugh. "And I'm determined that it will be, not just to prove to him that I'm right but for my charity as well."

Chances are she's not just making an idle boast. When Cindy sets her mind to something, she tends to succeed. Just ask the competitors on NBC's recent *Celebrity Cooking Showdown*, which she won, or on the World Series of Poker's celebrity open, in which she outlasted every other celeb. "I never cooked before, couldn't even boil water," she says. "Then I win a cooking show. Never played poker, and I take down Jennifer Tilly. Give me a challenge and I do it."

For now, though, she'd rather bask in another accomplishment—the one documented in the photographs sitting in front of her in the Playboy studio.

"I love it," she says, looking across the table. "Me, of all people, the ultimate girl next door, the one who made it by not taking off her clothes. And now my crowning achievement is doing PLAYBOY and being comfortable in my own skin."



GORE

(continued from page 78)

war. Now that you've had an opportunity to examine *Hamdan*, is it still the Department of Justice's opinion that it does not affect the legality of the Terrorist Surveillance Program?

GONZALES: Of course there's been no declaration of war here, so we can't take advantage of that particular provision. Our judgment is that it does not affect the legality of the Terrorist Surveillance Program, but let me explain—

FEINSTEIN: Whoa, but if I might just interrupt you. Then you're saying clearly that the Authorization for Use of Military Force does not carry the full constitutional weight of a declaration of war?

[Pregnant pause]

GONZALES: Yes, that is corr—. When you declare war—well, when you declare war—

FEINSTEIN: I understand that—

GONZALES: That triggers diplomatic relations that maybe nullify treaties, so there's a big difference. There's a reason why Congress

hasn't declared war in 60 years. But they, they, they've authorized the use of force several times. Clearly there's a difference, yes.

FEINSTEIN: But you're creating a caveat now and saying that the 15 days does not extend to the Authorization for Use of Military Force.

GONZALES: No, what I said was, was we can't take advantage of that provision under FISA because there's been no declaration of war. Maybe I misunderstood your question. I'm sorry, Senator.

•

And thus it was that Gonzales gave the game away. We are not at war except for the one Bush has unconstitutionally declared on his own so that he can keep quacking, "I'm a wartime president," while Gonzales has been inspired to justify the illegal Iraq war by involving all sorts of Yoo-esque "inherent" powers that accrue magically to a wartime president even, apparently, in the absence of such a war.

Now let's shift the angle of our ongoing narrative.

In an earlier America we could, at the polls, rid ourselves of a Congress and president so at odds with the Constitution and the decent opinion of the American people. Unfortunately, even if a clear majority should vote against the junta in November and again in 2008, certain interested managers can electronically reverse the vote and continue the totalitarians in office. Already stories have begun to appear that there had been talk of suspending the 2004 presidential election as potentially divisive (one would hope so!); 2008 will be even more so. Historically, most republics tend to turn imperial, thus stimulating presidents or their heirs to become hereditary royals: Julius Caesar, Napoleon (I and III), the Genius of North Korea. And now the Family Bush. The first royal dynasty of England, as readers of Shakespeare well know, was the family known as Plantagenet. Has W, the first or last, noted the similarity in name between the Bush dynasty of Kennebunkport, Texas (yes, I've moved it) and the Plantagenets, who were a Norman French family that had taken its name from the golden flower of a plant known as *genet*, or broom—a shrub or (!) a bush?

I am striking the imperial note because some journalists are beginning to take seriously the pretension of various Bush family courtiers. The word *dynasty* is often used ironically in dealing with American families that go into politics and often get lost there. But this is a father-to-son presidency each in his way incompetent, so unlike the Adams family—which produced two of our most brilliant presidents—or the two presidents Roosevelt, who were distant cousins. The proudly undistinguished Bush family is in place only because vast corporate interests placed them there to exempt the very rich from fair taxation, while quietly giving the knife to those socially meliorating policies of Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, two emperors that did well by the people at large as each was highly alert to the intricacies of empire management. Those innocents who still think that our electoral processes will presently produce the best man or woman to rule over us must realize the fix is probably already in. Even without hackers changing the tallies of electronic voting machines, corporate money spent in great quantities will determine the succession. Unless, of course, we the people focus both on a wise leader and a coherent cause, we will never again decide an election. So, can such a person be found? Or be elected?

As I write, the presidential field is teeming with me-too nullities. In addition there is the intelligent Mrs. Clinton, who somehow managed not to grasp that the war and all that it stands for is only the second most important issue before us. If she has been edgy on the subject, she has herself been the victim of so many smear campaigns by a Republican machine that has no other politics than energetic libel and slander on a monumental scale. Why is war the second great issue? Because in back of it are great financial forces whose outriders are neocons,



"That reminds me. My tree still isn't hung."

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For the past few weeks, I've been having some difficulty performing. I am 32 and for the first time in my life, I have a "drop dead gorgeous" 24 year old girlfriend, so every time we have sex, it's really important to me that I "perform like a champ". Basically, I'm not sure if it's nerves, but my erection just isn't as firm as I would like it to be. I don't think I need a prescription, and "Herbal pills" never live up, I know, I've tried them! Is there anything out there that can get me "over the hump" faster or more effectively? I need something fast before she starts looking at younger men!

Kevin R.
Cincinnati, OH

A: Kevin,

When it comes to the "hump", I'm a bit of an expert, and this question is a pretty common one, so Kevin you're not alone!

My fiancé is about your age, and when he had some trouble with the "hump", I noticed how much it really affected his performance in and out of the bedroom and believe me, I wanted him back on top of his game as much as he did! So, we did a little research, we spoke to his doctor and got on the Internet. We learned that male enhancement is all about stimulation and for lack of a better term, "exercise".

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Needless to say, later that night, we had the most phenomenal, mind blowing sex, EVER.

He took control right from the start and I had never seen him more confident (or rock hard!). He was truly "confident and in charge"! And believe me, it just keeps getting better and better. It's an understatement to say that we're both huge fans of Maxoderm!

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preaching perpetual war for other Americans to fight and a handful to profit from.

What then is the most important issue? The preservation of a poisoned planet. Here a member of the Gore cousinage, Albert, a former vice president as well as himself Senator Gore the third, has taken his stand with apparently no scrutiny of recent polls—or even significant support from those who like to call themselves progressives. Not unlike Senator Gore the first, he has taken an original if somewhat lonely course based upon intelligent conviction and years of study, which has now caused him to tell us “inconvenient truths” about our shaky environmental estate—much as the first Senator Gore warned us in 1917 about the folly of joining in a European war. Thomas Pryor Gore was no pacifist, but when Wilson proposed conscription of free Americans to fight his war for him Senator Gore the first warned of Wilson’s “unique attempt to substitute democracy for military despotism in Germany.” Installing Wilson’s conscription, the senator noted, “would incur the risk of substituting military despotism for democracy in America.” Also, in his opposition to the approaching World War, he introduced a joint resolution in the Senate proposing an amendment to the Constitution that would require a popular vote *before* a declaration of war could be made by Congress. Had such an amendment passed we would have been spared Vietnam and the Bushite wars for oil and profit. Gore the second was very much school of Gore the first in constitutional matters. And now his son, the third Gore, proves to be willing to go to the root of what is ailing us: corporate America in its joyous stripping of the world of any barrier or safeguard to obtain fossil fuel.

Senator Gore the first knew he risked his Senate seat by taking on President Wilson’s dreams of glory through war. Senator Gore the third emphasizes that his father, Albert Sr. (Senator Gore the second), “was ultimately defeated by the Nixon-Agnew team,” a cabal up to no good, “because [Gore II] opposed its onslaught on the constitutional principles” that each of the three senators had sworn to defend and uphold. Politicians who back such positions against our corporate rulers then and now usually suffer. Gore the second was smeared and defeated for the Senate, and his son felt that politics had no more appeal to him personally. Gore the first, when ordered by the Chamber of Commerce of Oklahoma City to vote for war or face political oblivion, wired them back: “How many of your membership are of draft age?” After three terms in the Senate he was defeated in the Democratic primary of 1920. In 2000 Gore the third was defeated for president despite a strong majority of the popular vote in an election of great corruption, as yet uninvestigated. He can take comfort that his predecessor, Gore the first, was reelected in 1930 on exactly the same platform that he lost on in 1920. The voice of the people is not the voice of God, but when they are relatively unpropagandized they will declare and vote their interests. Yes, the third Senator Gore, in his campaign to save the planet for everyone, could easily prove to be the winning candidate for 2008. Corruption has had its lush innings. Now it is the patriots’ duty to rebuild the republic and—well, why not?—save the world at the same time.



JACKSON

(continued from page 157)

lowbrow?” Because it’s entertainment, that’s how. When we went to the movies as kids, we didn’t go to re-create our day-to-day problems; we went to escape into Westerns, war pictures, horror movies, gangster pictures, romances, comedies, monster pictures. We went to scream, chase each other, laugh and have fun. That’s why I did *Snakes on a Plane*.

Q5

PLAYBOY: Do you think you were criticized because we’re not accustomed to seeing first-rate actors in purely fun stuff?

JACKSON: Bullshit. I see nothing wrong with taking time off from my “heavy dramatic schedule” and doing something that allows me not to have to think about what my motivation is except, “There are snakes on the plane, and they’re going to kill you if you don’t kill them! Let’s see if we can survive. Let’s scream and holler and have fun.”

Q6

PLAYBOY: Did you ever miss out on a killer movie role?

JACKSON: I read *Hotel Rwanda* and couldn’t figure it out. I knew it was a passion project, and I knew about the state of people in Rwanda. I didn’t know if people wanted to come to the movies and see it. Don Cheadle did a fantastic job, and I’m exceedingly glad he got the Academy Award nomination and it moved his career in another kind of way. It’s interesting that when a black actor gets a particular part, all of a sudden people look at him and other black actors as though they’re adversaries. Nobody ever said that to Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, George Clooney and those guys. There are enough jobs out there for all the black actors.

Q7

PLAYBOY: Some fans were let down by the three *Star Wars* flicks in which you played Jedi master Mace Windu. Did they turn out the way you’d hoped?

JACKSON: Sure. From the time I sat in the theater and saw the first *Star Wars*, I’d been trying to figure out how I could fulfill a fantasy of being in a room full of things that are eight feet tall, some with one eye, some green and some with lightsabers. How can I be flying a big fast rocket ship? I was an only child, so when George Lucas put me by myself in that big green room and I had to talk to and fight against things that weren’t there, it was like being an only child in my room, having a great time fighting all those things I saw at the movies.

Q8

PLAYBOY: Not counting when you’ve said it on-screen, when did you last get great satisfaction from saying *motherfucker*?

JACKSON: Motherfucker. So just now.



“This one? It’s a Christmas ornament.”



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[laughs] It's always satisfying, you know? It's part of my lexicon every day. I golf a lot, and people know me for it all over the golf course. If I hit a bad shot, I'll go, "Motherfucker!" and golfers who didn't even know I was there go, "All right, Sam's over there." Or if it's a great shot—*pow*, right on the pin—I'll go, "Yeah, motherfucker!" and they'll actually know the difference.

Q9

PLAYBOY: Why is golf your game?

JACKSON: Having been an only child, I'm used to taking credit for things I do. Team sports are okay, but there's always somebody to blame. Golf is the one sport that has no outside influences. The ball is sitting still. It's your responsibility to move it forward to the place you want it to go. When you put the ball in the hole, it's all because of something you did, not because somebody gave you an assist or made a block for you. You get all the credit, but you also get all the blame. It's the greatest game of personal responsibility you can have.

Q10

PLAYBOY: Would you get a bigger kick from winning an Oscar or winning on the PGA Tour?

JACKSON: It would give me a much greater thrill and sense of satisfaction—and make a much more lasting impression on the world—to win on the PGA. The Oscar is not a real gauge of the best performance for that particular year. Ask 80 percent of the people who watched the Oscars who won last year and they can't tell you. You make a lasting impression and get a lot more benefits winning PGA Tour events than you do winning an Oscar.

Q11

PLAYBOY: Your screen career kicked into high gear in 1991 with *Jungle Fever*. You played a crackhead, a role you knew inside out from your days as an addict.

JACKSON: There's a direct correlation

being my success and being an addict. When I was doing all that shit, I didn't have shit. As soon as I stopped and did *Jungle Fever* as my first thing after I got clean, I started coming to lunch in Hollywood. In my mind, if I do any of that shit again, I'll go right back to what I was before, which is penniless, crazy, nasty, stinking and out of my mind. So it's easier for me to be this than it was to be that.

Q12

PLAYBOY: Do you miss cocaine?

JACKSON: I don't miss drugs. I used to have drug dreams all the time, but I haven't had one for years. You know, the kind where you're out somewhere and you've got a big-ass softball-size ball of cocaine, everybody's getting high and you're getting high. It's really fucked up, because you're like, What if somebody sees me? You wake up the next day feeling horrible even though you only dreamed you were sneaking around. That's one sign to let you know you're not well. It sounds like bullshit when you go to AA meetings and hear, "Your addiction is doing push-ups, getting stronger every day, waiting for you to make a mistake." You're like, Shut up! But then you have a drug dream and realize, Yeah, all it takes is one little slip.

Q13

PLAYBOY: How do you handle a co-star who's high?

JACKSON: I just make sure that if we're using sharp instruments in a scene, they're stunt instruments, not something he brought with him. [laughs] If he's going to be using a gun, don't put it in his hand until they say action. Make sure he doesn't turn his back and put in any real bullets. Also make sure he hasn't been in his dressing room, smoking crack, saying, "We're gonna do this for real."

Q14

PLAYBOY: When you were a struggling actor, in the 1980s, one of your gigs was

being Bill Cosby's stand-in on his TV show. How did he treat you?

JACKSON: I never intruded on him. I never tried to get on the show. When he would occasionally walk by and go, "Hey, how are you doing?" I'd go, "Hey, Mr. Cosby." By the time I stopped doing that job and ended up where I was, it was amazing to me when he talked to me one day and said he remembered my being there.

Q15

PLAYBOY: Another of your early gigs was as a doorman in New York at Manhattan Plaza, a subsidized apartment complex popular with actors. Did the actors give you a lot of attitude?

JACKSON: I still meet actors who treat me like that. It depends on how much of their own press they've read, how full of themselves they are. The majority of actors I've met who treat people as beneath them are actors who, number one, I don't think are very good and, number two, are not very secure in who they are or how long they're going to stay where they are. One of the first big movies I did was *Ragtime*, and I used to have lunch every day with James Cagney. Stars don't come bigger, yet he would hang out and talk with us about old Hollywood, what it was like to be there and how he got there. My wife says, "You're too normal." I don't have bodyguards. I don't travel with an entourage. I travel as low-key as I possibly can.

Q16

PLAYBOY: You and your wife, actress LaTanya Richardson, have been married since 1980. How do you handle fidelity in a business so rife with dogging around?

JACKSON: It was easier for me to be promiscuous when nobody knew who I was. Temptations are always flying around, but at the same time, 8,000 pairs of eyes are watching you, hoping you'll do shit so they'll all have a better story to tell. If you're not the kind of guy to take advantage of all the hot young chicks on set, it's like, "Well,



damn, is he gay?" You're damned if you do and damned if you don't. But you may as well be damned if you don't, because then you keep all your money.

Q17

PLAYBOY: What physical feature of a woman most revs your engine?

JACKSON: Her ass—a woman with a great ass. All kinds. Not fat, not skinny—round, plump, jiggling asses, yes. [laughs] I love watching women walk away from me. Their eyes, too, as they come toward me. But walking away from me, especially—that ass, yeah.

Q18

PLAYBOY: What famous woman is your idea of perfection?

JACKSON: Monica Bellucci. She's full-bodied but not girlie-girlie or kind of cutie cutesy-cutesy. She is drop-dead gorgeous. I don't care if you see her early in the morning or late at night—which I had the opportunity to do when I was on the jury at Cannes this year. I'd see her at seven in the morning, and she'd be just as gorgeous as she was at one A.M. or eight P.M. in a gown. That's with or without makeup. And she's a very nice human being. Vincent Cassel is a lucky man.

Q19

PLAYBOY: Who would you temporarily swap bodies with—Cassel included?

JACKSON: I'd like to swap bodies with Tiger Woods for 18 holes, just to see what it's like to do anything I want with a golf ball whenever I feel like doing it—to have that amount of skill and not have to ask myself, What am I going to do with this particular shot?

Q20

PLAYBOY: You're always described as the essence of cool. Does that ever get old?

JACKSON: I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in. For so long I was uncomfortable being who I was. I did drugs, drank and did all that other shit to kind of keep the world off me, keep myself from feeling the stuff I was feeling. I was insecure, worrying about my stutter, about not having a job, about not being as rich or successful as the next guy. Those things don't bother me anymore. I've been fortunate enough to play some characters people perceive in a certain way. That's rubbed off on me, so people attribute those character traits to me. Most people would be surprised at how boring my life actually is. I sit at home a lot and watch sporting events. I get up in the morning and I play golf, read a book, read two or three scripts, hang out with my wife. The supercool people are going to clubs and hanging out with Lindsay Lohan. I'm too old for that. [laughs] My life's not the life of the supercool.



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 42, 47-50, 102-109, 128-133 and 208-209, check the listings below to find the stores nearest you.

GAMES

Page 42: *Destroy All Humans! 2*, thq.com. *Family Guy*, 2kgames.com. *Fight Night Round 3*, easports.com. *Full Auto 2*, sega.com. *Gears of War*, epicgames.com. *Genji*, playstation.com. *Guitar Hero II*, redoctane.com. *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*, nintendo.com. *Madden NFL '07*, easports.com. *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance*, activation.com. *Motorstorm*, playstation.com. *Need for Speed: Carbon*, ea.com. *Rayman: Raving Rabbids*, ubi.com. *Red Steel*, ubi.com. *Resistance: Fall of Man*, playstation.com. *Super Mario Galaxy*, nintendo.com. *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas*, ubi.com. *Tony Hawk's Project 8*, activation.com.

MANTRACK

Pages 47-50: *Amangani*, amangani.com. *Biotherm Homme*, biotherm.com. *Cliff Lodge*, snowbird.com. *Deer Valley Resort*, deervalley.com. *Fairmont Chateau Whistler*, chateauwhistler.com. *Jeep*, jeep.com. *Oppo*, oppodigital.com. *Pioneer*, pioneerelectronics.com. *Plumpjack Squaw Valley Inn*, plumpjack.com. *Reality Bedding*, realitybedding.com. *Samsung*, samsung.com. *Sky Hotel*, theskyhotel.com. *Stein Eriksen Lodge*, steinlodge.com.

BLACK-TIE EVENT

Pages 102-109: *Abatei*, 212-334-4755. *Alexander Julian Private Reserve*, available at Julian's College Shop in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and Gary's in Newport Beach, California. *Alvin Valley*, 212-253-0095. *Baby Phat by Kimora Lee Simmons*, 212-391-9443. *Belvest*, belvest.com. *Best of Class* by Robert Talbott, roberttalbott.com. *Briani*, 212-376-5777. *Canali*, www.canali.it. *Carolina Amato*, carolinaamato.com. *Christopher Blake Collection*, 212-840-0666. *Dior Homme* by Hedi Slimane, dior.com. *Dsquared*, dsquared2.com.



Endurance by Ted Baker London, 212-940-2608. *Gianluca Isaia*, isaia.it. *Giorgio Armani*, giorgioarmani.com. *Garhan*, garhan.com. *Jan Leslie*, janleslie.net. *J.Lindeberg*, jlindeberg.com. *J.M. Weston*, jmwatson.com. *Joanna Mastroianni*, joannamastroianni.com. *John Lobb*, johnlobb.com. *Johnston & Murphy*, johnstonmurphy.com. *John Varvatos*, johnvarvatos.com. *La Crasia*, wegloveyou.com. *Luca Luca*, lualuca.com. *Paul Stuart*, paulstuart.com. *Pierre Cardin*, available at JC Penney. *Richmond X Uomo*, johnrichmond.com. *Robert Talbott*, roberttalbott.com. *Robert Talbott Protocol*, roberttalbott.com. *Salvatore Ferragamo*, ferragamo.com. *Sylvia Heisel*, sylviaheisel.com. *Valentino*, available at Valentino boutiques nationwide. *Vanessa Noel*, 212-906-0055. *Versace*, versace.com. *Village Hat Shop*, villagehatshop.com.

PLAYBOY'S HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Pages 128-133: *Alfred Dunhill*, dunhill.com. *Anthony Gallo*, roundsound.com. *Breguet*, breguet.com. *Breville*, breville.com. *Callaway driver*, callawaygolf.com. *ClearAudio*, clearaudio.de. *Ely Callaway Performance Center*, 888-223-7842. *Ferrari model car*, legacydiecast.com. *Glenmorangie*, glenmorangie.com. *Hommage*, on-the-fly.com. *Leica*, leica.com. *Microsoft*, microsoft.com. *Newland & Tarlton*, bauerinternational.com. *NFL pool balls*, poolndarts.com. *Pepper Pad 3*, pepper.com. *Playboy's Super Saturday Night*, 212-261-4991. *Rame Snowboards*, romesnowboards.com. *S.T. Dupont*, stdupontlighters.com. *Triumph*, triumph.co.uk.

POTPOURRI

Pages 208-209: *Artisanal*, artisanalcheese.com. *G-string*, candisupply.com. *Leatherman*, leatherman.com. *Playboy Poker Camp*, playbogaautomuseum.org. *Racing With Mercedes*, saratogaautomuseum.org/fichbook. *Red Rider Leg Lamps*, redridderleglamps.com. *Shot glasses*, sailorjerry.com. *Slim Devices*, slimdevices.com. *Suck UK*, www.suck.uk.com.

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WILLA

(continued from page 100)

Something—it might have been a large dog but probably wasn't—lifted a howl from the other side of the railway station, where the sage and broom grew almost up to the tracks. A second voice joined it, creating harmony. They trailed off together.

"See what I mean, jellybean?" And Palmer smiled as if he'd conjured those howls just to prove his point.

David turned, his light jacket rippling around him in the keen breeze, and started down the steps. He went fast, before he could change his mind, and only the first step was really hard. After that he just thought about Willa.

"David," Palmer said, not joshing now, not joking around. "Don't."

"Why not? She did. Besides, the wolves are over there." He jerked a thumb back over his shoulder. "If that's what they are."

"Course that's what they are. And no, they probably won't come at you—I doubt if they're specially hungry this time of year. But there's no need for both of you to spend another God-knows-how-long in the middle of nowhere just because she got to missing the bright lights."

"You don't seem to understand—she's my girl."

"I'm going to tell you a hard truth, my friend: If she really considered herself your girl, she wouldn't have done what she did. You think?"

At first David said nothing, because he wasn't sure what he thought. Possibly because he often didn't see what was right in front of his eyes. Willa had said so. Finally he turned back to look at Phil Palmer leaning in the doorway above him. "I think you don't leave your fiancée stranded in the middle of nowhere. That's what I think."

Palmer sighed. "I almost hope one of those trash-pine lobos does decide to put the bite on your city ass. It might smarten you up. Little Willa Stuart cares for nobody but herself, and everyone sees it but you."

"If I pass a Nite Owl store or a 7-Eleven, you want me to pick you up a pack of cigarettes?"

"Why the fuck not?" Palmer said. Then, just as David was walking across NO PARKING TAXI ZONE painted on the empty curbside street: "David!"

David turned back.

"The shuttle won't be back until tomorrow, and it's three miles to town. Says so, right on the back wall of the information booth. That's six miles, round-trip. On foot. Take you two hours, and that's not counting the time it might take you to track her down."

David raised his hand to indicate he heard, but kept going. The wind was off the mountains, and cold, but he liked the way it rippled his clothes and combed back his hair. At first he watched for wolves, scanning one side of the road and then the other, but when he saw none, his thoughts returned to Willa. And really, his mind had been fixed on little else since the second or third time he had been with her.

She'd gotten to missing the bright lights; Palmer was almost certainly right about that much, but David didn't believe she cared for nobody but herself. The truth was she'd just gotten tired of waiting around with a bunch of sad old sacks moaning about how they were going to be late for this, that and the other. The town over yonder probably didn't amount to much, but in her mind it must have held some possibility for fun, and that had outweighed the possibility of Amtrak sending a special to pick them up while she was gone.

And where, exactly, would she have gone looking for fun?

He was sure there were no what you'd call nightclubs in Crowheart Springs, where the passenger station was just a long green shed with WYOMING and "THE EQUALITY STATE" painted on the side in red, white and blue. No nightclubs, no discos, but there were undoubtedly bars, and he thought she'd settle for one of those. If she couldn't go clubbin', she'd go jukin'.

Night came on and the stars unrolled across the sky from east to west like a rug with spangles in it. A half-moon rose between two peaks and sat there, casting a sickroom glow over this stretch of the highway and the open land on both sides of it. The wind whistled beneath the eaves of the station, but out here it made a strange open humming that was not quite a vibration. It made him think of Pammy Andreeson's hopscotch chant.

He walked listening for the sound of an oncoming train behind him. He didn't hear that; what he heard when the wind dropped was a minute but perfectly audible click-click-click. He turned and saw a wolf standing about 20 paces behind him on the broken passing line of Route 26. It was almost as big as a calf, its coat as shaggy as a Russian hat. In the starshine its fur looked black, its eyes a dark urine yellow. It saw David looking and stopped. Its mouth dropped open in a grin, and it began to pant, the sound of a small engine.

There was no time to be afraid. He took a step toward it, clapped his hands and shouted, "Get out of here! Go on, now!"

The wolf turned tail and fled, leaving a pile of steaming droppings behind on Route 26. David grinned but managed to keep from laughing out loud; he thought that would be tempting the gods. He felt both scared and absurdly, totally cool. He thought of changing his name from David Sanderson to Wolf Frightener.



Ruthenberg

"...And keep him off the Playboy channel."

That would be quite the name for an investment banker.

Then he did laugh a little—he couldn't help it—and turned toward Crowheart Springs again. This time he walked looking over his shoulder as well as from side to side, but the wolf didn't come back. What came was a certainty that he would hear the shriek of the special coming to pick up the others; the part of their train that was still on the tracks would have been cleared away from the junction, and soon the people waiting in the station back there would be on their way again—the Palmers, the Landers, the limping Biggers, the dancing Pammy and all the rest.

Well, so what? Amtrak would hold their luggage in San Francisco; surely they could be trusted to get that much right. He and Willa could find the local bus station. Greyhound must have discovered Wyoming.

He came upon a Budweiser can and kicked it awhile. Then he kicked it crooked, off into the scrub, and as he was debating whether or not to go after it, he heard faint music: a bass line and the cry of a pedal steel guitar, which always sounded to him like chrome teardrops. Even in happy songs.

She was there, listening to that music. Not because it was the closest place with music, but because it was the right place. He knew it. So he left the beer can and walked on toward the pedal steel, his sneakers scuffing up dust that the wind whipped away. The sound of the drum kit came next, then a red neon arrow below a sign that just read 26. Well, why not? This was Route 26, after all. It was a perfectly logical name for a honky-tonk.

It had two parking lots, the one in front paved and packed with pickup trucks and cars, most American and most at least five years old. The lot on the left was gravel. In that one, ranks of long-haul semis stood under brilliant blue-white arc sodiums. By now David could also hear the rhythm and lead guitars, and read the marquee over the door: ONE NIGHT ONLY THE DERAILERS \$5 COVER SORRY.

The Derailers, he thought. Well, she certainly found the right group.

David had a five in his wallet, but the foyer of 26 was empty. Beyond it, a big hardwood dance floor was crammed with slow-dancing couples, most wearing jeans and cowboy boots and clutching each other's butts as the band worked its way deeper into "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights." It was loud, lachrymose and—as far as David Sanderson could tell—note perfect. The smells of beer, sweat, Brut and Wal-Mart perfume hit him like a punch in the nose. The laughter and conversation—even a footloose yeehaw cry from the far side of the dance floor—were like sounds heard in a dream you have again and again at certain critical turns of life: the dream of being unpre-

pared for a big exam, the dream of being naked in public, the dream of falling, the dream in which you hurry toward a corner in some strange city, sure your fate lies on the far side.

David considered putting his five back in his wallet, then leaned into the ticket booth and dropped it on the desk in there, which was bare except for a pack of Lucky Strikes sitting on a Danielle Steel paperback. Then he went into the crowded main room.

The Derailers swung their way into something upbeat and the younger dancers began to pogo like kids at a punk show. To David's left, two dozen or so older couples began a pair of line dances. He looked again and realized there was only one line-dancing group, after all. The far wall was a mirror, making the dance floor look twice as big as it really was.

A glass shattered. "You pay, partner!" the lead singer called as The Derailers hit the instrumental break, and the dancers applauded his wit, which probably seemed fairly sparkling. David thought, if you were running hot on the tequila highway.

The bar was a horseshoe with a neon replica of the Wind River Range floating overhead. It was red, white and blue; in Wyoming, they did seem to love their red, white and blue. A neon sign in similar colors proclaimed YOU ARE IN GOD'S COUNTRY PARTNER. It was flanked by the Budweiser logo on the left and the Coors logo on the right. The crowd waiting to be served was four-deep. A trio of bartenders in white shirts and red vests flashed cocktail shakers like six-guns.

It was a barn of a place—there had to be 500 people whooping it up—but he had no concerns about finding Willa. My mojo's working, he thought as he cut a corner of the dance floor, almost dancing himself as he avoided various gyrating cowboys and cowgirls.

Beyond the bar and the dance floor was a dark little lounge with high-backed booths. Quartets were crammed into most of these, usually with a pitcher or two for sustenance, their reflections in the mirrored wall turning each party of four into eight. Only one of the booths wasn't full up. Willa sat by herself, her high-necked flower-print dress looking out of place among the Levi's, denim skirts and pearl-button shirts. Nor had she bought herself a drink or anything to eat—the table was bare.

She didn't see him at first. She was watching the dancers. Her color was high, and there were deep dimples at the corners of her mouth. She looked nine miles out of place, but he had never loved her more. This was Willa on the edge of a smile.

"Hi, David," she said as he slid in beside her. "I was hoping you'd come. I thought you would. Isn't the band great? They're so loud!" She almost had to yell to be heard, but he could see she liked that, too. And after her initial glance at him, she went back to looking at the dancers.



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"They're good, all right," he said. They were, too. He could feel himself responding in spite of his anxiety, which had returned. Now that he'd actually found her, he was worried all over again about missing that damned pick-up train. "The lead singer sounds like Buck Owens."

"Does he?" She looked at him, smiling. "Who's Buck Owens?"

"It doesn't matter. We ought to go back to the station. Unless you want to be stranded here another day, that is."

"That might not be so bad. I kind of like this place—whoa, look out!"

A glass arched across the dance floor, sparkling briefly green and gold in the stage gels, and shattered somewhere out of sight. There were cheers and some applause—Willa was also applauding—but David saw a couple of beefcakes with the words SECURITY and SERENITY printed on their T-shirts moving in on the approximate site of the missile launch.

"This is the kind of place where you can count on four fistfights in the parking lot before 11," David said, "and often one free-for-all inside just before last call."

She laughed, pointed her forefingers at him like guns. "Good! I want to see!"

"And I want us to go back," he said. "If you want to go honky-tonking in San Francisco, I'll take you. It's a promise."

She stuck out her lower lip and shook back her sandy-blond hair. "It wouldn't be the same. It wouldn't, and you know it. In San Francisco they probably drink...I don't know...macrobiotic beer."

That made him laugh. As with the idea of an investment banker named Wolf Frightener, the idea of macrobiotic beer was just too rich. But the anxiety was there, under the laughter; in fact, wasn't it fueling the laughter?

"We're gonna take a short break and be right back," the lead singer said, wiping his brow. "Y'all drink up, now, and remember—I'm Tony Villanueva, and we are The Derailers."

"That's our cue to put on our diamond shoes and depart," David said, and took her hand. He slid out of the booth, but she didn't come. She didn't let go of his hand, either, though, and he sat down again feeling a touch of panic. Thinking he now knew how a fish felt when it realized it couldn't throw the hook, that old hook was in good and tight and Mr. Trout was bound for the bank, where he would flop his final flop. She was looking at him with those same killer blue eyes and deep dimples: Willa on the edge of a smile, his wife-to-be, who read novels in the morning and poetry at night and thought the TV news was...what did she call it? Ephemera.

"Look at us," she said, and turned her head away from him.

He looked at the mirrored wall on their left. There he saw a nice young couple from the East Coast, stranded in Wyoming. In her print dress she looked better than he did, but he guessed that was always going to be the case. He looked from the mirror—Willa to the real thing with his eyebrows raised.

"No, look again," she said. The dimples were still there, but she was serious now—as serious as she could be in this party atmosphere, anyway. "And think about what I told you."

It was on his lips to say, You've told me many things, and I think about all of them, but that was a lover's reply, pretty and essentially meaningless. And because he knew what thing she meant, he looked again without saying anything. This time he really looked, and there was no one in the mirror. He was looking at the only empty booth in 26. He turned to Willa, flabbergasted...yet somehow not surprised.

"Didn't you even wonder how a presentable female could be sitting here all by herself when the place is juiced and jumping?" she asked.

He shook his head. He hadn't. There were quite a few things he hadn't wondered, at least until now. When he'd last had something to eat or drink, for instance. Or what time it was, or when it had last been daylight. He didn't even know exactly what had happened to them. Only that the Northern Flyer had left the tracks and now they were by some coincidence here listening to a country-western group called—

"I kicked a can," he said. "Coming here I kicked a can."

"Yes," she said, "and you saw us in the mirror the first time you looked, didn't you? Perception isn't everything, but perception and expectation together?" She winked, then leaned toward him. Her breast pressed against his upper arm as she kissed his cheek, and the sensation was lovely—surely the feel of living flesh. "Poor David. I'm sorry. But you were brave to come. I really didn't think you would, that's the truth."

"We need to go back and tell the others."

Her lips pressed together. "Why?"

"Because—"

Two men in cowboy hats led two laughing women in jeans, Western shirts and ponytails toward their booth. As they neared it, an identical expression of puzzlement—not quite fear—touched their faces, and they headed back toward the bar instead. They feel us, David thought. Like cold air pushing them away—that's what we are now.

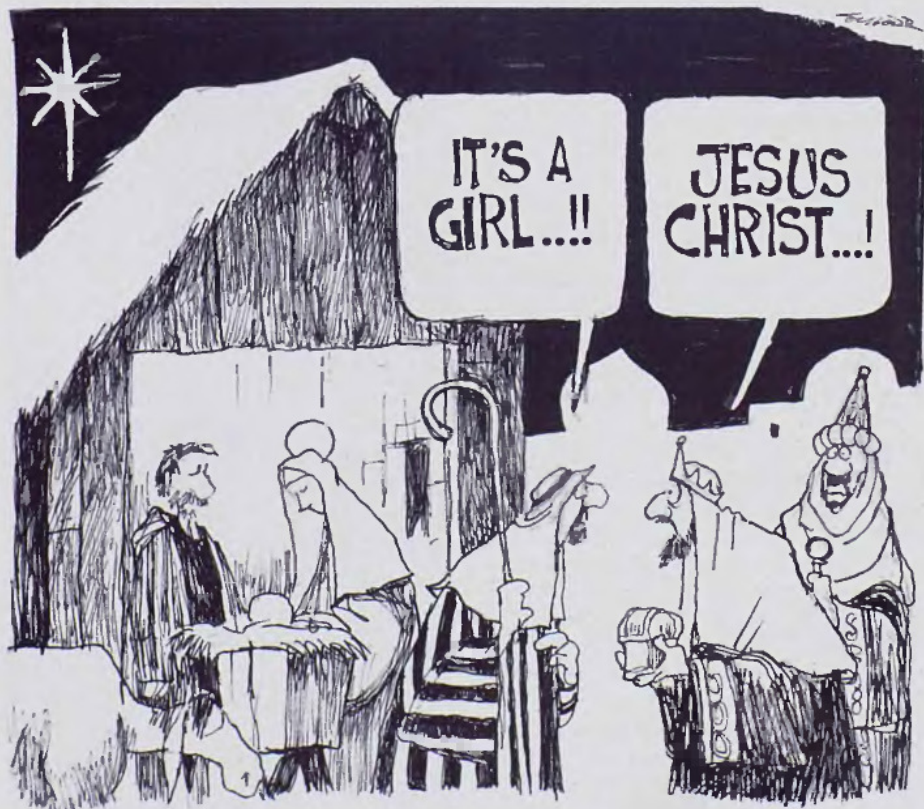
"Because it's the right thing to do."

Willa laughed. It was a weary sound. "You remind me of the old guy who used to sell the oatmeal on TV."

"Hon, they think they're waiting for a train to come and pick them up!"

"Well, maybe there is!" He was almost frightened by her sudden ferocity. "Maybe the one they're always singing about, the gospel train, the train to glory, the one that don't carry no gamblers or midnight rambles..."

"I don't think Amtrak runs to heaven," David said. He was hoping to make her laugh, but she looked down at her hands almost sullenly, and he had a sudden



intuition. "Is there something else you know? Something we should tell them? There is, isn't there?"

"I don't know why we should bother when we can just stay here," she said, and was that petulance in her voice? He thought it was. This was a Willa he had never even suspected. "You may be a little nearsighted, David, but at least you came. I love you for that." And she kissed him again.

"There was a wolf, too," he said. "I clapped my hands and scared it off. I'm thinking of changing my name to Wolf Frightener."

She stared at him for a moment with her mouth open, and David had time to think: I had to wait until we were dead to really surprise the woman I love. Then she dropped against the padded back of the booth, roaring with laughter. A waitress who happened to be passing dropped a full tray of beers with a crash and swore colorfully.

"Wolf Frightener!" Willa cried. "I want to call you that in bed! 'Oh, oh, Wolf Frightener, you so big! You so hairy!'"

The waitress was staring down at the foaming mess, still cursing like a sailor on shore leave. All the while keeping well away from that one empty booth.

David said, "Do you think we still can? Make love, I mean?"

Willa wiped at her streaming eyes and said, "Perception and expectation, remember? Together they can move mountains."

She took his hand again. "I still love you, and you still love me. Don't you?"

"Am I not Wolf Frightener?" he asked. He could joke, because his nerves didn't believe he was dead. He looked past her, into the mirror, and saw them. Then just himself, his hand holding nothing. Then they were both gone. And still...he breathed, he smelled beer and whiskey and perfume.

A busboy had come from somewhere and was helping the waitress mop up the mess. "Felt like I stepped down," David heard her saying. Was that the kind of thing you heard in the afterlife?

"I guess I'll go back with you," she

said, "but I'm not staying in that boring station with those boring people when this place is around."

"Okay," he said.

"Who's Buck Owens?"

"I'll tell you all about him," David said.

"Roy Clark, too. But first tell me what else you know."

"Most of them I don't even care about," she said, "but Henry Lander's nice. So's his wife."

"Phil Palmer's not bad, either."

She wrinkled her nose. "Phil the Pill."

"What do you know, Willa?"

"You'll see for yourself, if you really look."

"Wouldn't it be simpler if you just—"

Apparently not. She rose until her thighs

"Considering I can't remember the last time I ate a meal or drank a glass of water? Not too odd. If you had to guess, what would you say? Quick, without thinking."

"Nineteen...eighty-eight?"

He nodded. He would have said 1987 himself. "There was a girl in there wearing a T-shirt that said CROWHEART SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF '03. And if she was old enough to be in a roadhouse—"

"Then '03 must have been at least three years ago."

"That's what I was thinking." He stopped. "It can't be 2006, Willa, can it? I mean, the 21st century?"

Before she could reply, they heard the click-click-click of toenails on asphalt. This time more than just one set; this time there were four wolves behind them on the highway. The biggest, standing in front of the others, was the one that had come up behind David on his walk toward Crowheart Springs. He would have known that shaggy black pelt anywhere. Its eyes were brighter now. A half-moon floated in each like a drowned lamp.

"They see us!" Willa cried in a kind of ecstasy. "David, they see us!" She dropped to one knee on a white dash of the broken passing line and held out her right hand. She made a clucking noise and said, "Here, boy! Come on!"

"Willa, I don't think that's such a good idea."

She paid no attention, a very Willa thing to do. Willa had her own ideas about things. It was she who had wanted to go from Chicago to San Francisco by rail—because, she said, she wanted to know what it felt like to fuck on a train. Especially one that was going fast and rocking a little.

"Come on, big boy, come to your mama!"

The big lobo came, trailed by its mate and their two...did you call them yearlings? As it stretched its muzzle (and all those shining teeth) toward the slim outstretched hand, the moon filled its eyes perfectly for a moment, turning them silver. Then, just before its long snout could touch her skin, the wolf uttered

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pressed against the edge of the table, and pointed. "Look! The band is coming back!"

The moon was high when he and Willa walked back to the road, holding hands. David didn't see how that could be—they had stayed for only the first two songs of the next set—but there it was, floating all the way up there in the spangled black. That was troubling, but something else troubled him even more.

"Willa," he said, "what year is it?"

She thought it over. The wind rippled her dress as it would the dress of any live woman. "I don't exactly remember," she said at last. "Isn't that odd?"

a series of piercing yips and flung itself backward so sharply that for a moment it rose on its rear legs, front paws boxing the air and the white plush on its belly exposed. The others scattered. The big lobo executed a midair twist and ran into the scrubland to the right of the road, still yipping, with his tail tucked. The rest followed.

Willa rose and looked at David with an expression of hard grief that was too much to bear. He dropped his eyes to his feet instead. "Is this why you brought me out into the dark when I was listening to music?" she asked. "To show me what I am now? As if I didn't know!"

"Willa, I'm sorry."

"Not yet, but you will be." She took his hand again. "Come on, David."

Now he risked a glance. "You're not mad at me?"

"Oh, a little—but you're all I've got now, and I'm not letting you go."

Shortly after seeing the wolves, David spied a Budweiser can lying on the shoulder of the road. He was almost positive it was the one he had kicked along ahead of him until he'd kicked it crooked, out into the sage. Here it was again, in its original position...because he had never

kicked it at all, of course. Perception isn't everything, Willa had said, but perception and expectation together? Put them together and you had a Reese's peanut butter cup of the mind.

He kicked the can out into the scrubland, and when they were past that spot, he looked back and there it lay, right where it had been since some cowboy—maybe on his way to 26—had chucked it from the window of his pickup truck. He remembered that on *Hee Haw*—that old show starring Buck Owens and Roy Clark—they used to call pickup trucks cowboy Cadillacs.

"What are you smiling about?" Willa asked him.

"Tell you later. Looks like we're going to have plenty of time."

They stood outside the Crowheart Springs railway station, holding hands in the moonlight like Hansel and Gretel outside the candy house. To David the long building's green paint looked ashy gray in the moonlight, and although he knew WYOMING and "THE EQUALITY STATE" were printed in red, white and blue, they could have been any colors at all.

He noticed a sheet of paper, protected from the elements by plastic, stapled to one of the posts flanking the wide steps leading up to the double doors. Phil Palmer still leaned there.

"Hey, mutt!" Palmer called down. "Got a butt?"

"Sorry, Mr. Palmer," David said.

"Thought you were going to bring me back a pack."

"I didn't pass a store," David said.

"They didn't sell cigarettes where you were, doll?" Palmer asked. He was the kind of man who called all women of a certain age doll; you knew that just looking at him, as you knew that if you happened to pass the time of day with him on a steamy August afternoon, he'd tip his hat back on his head to wipe his brow and tell you it wasn't the heat, it was the humidity.

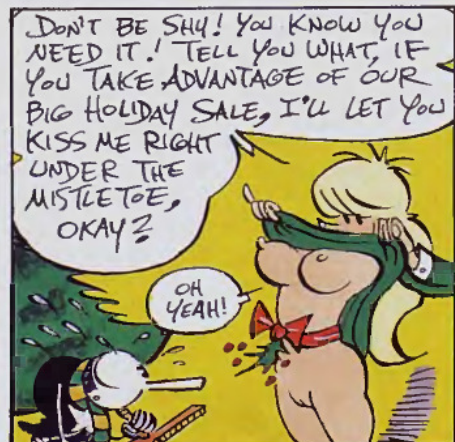
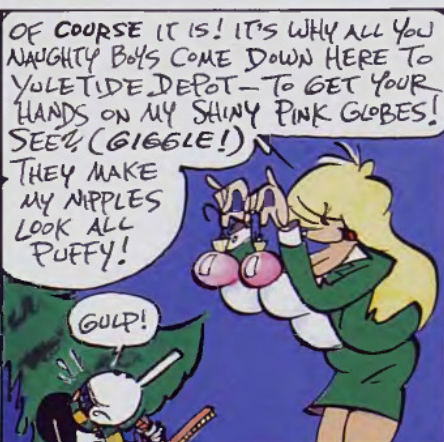
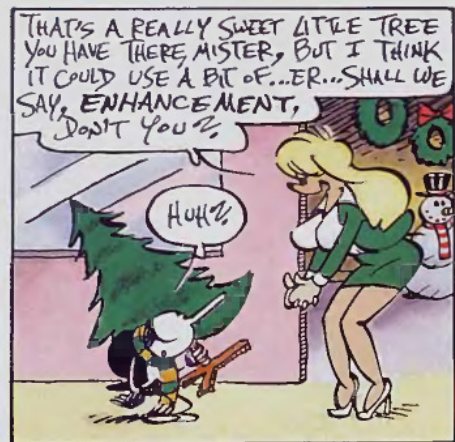
"I'm sure they did," Willa said, "but I would have had trouble buying them."

"Want to tell me why, sugarpie?"

"Why do you think?"

But Palmer crossed his arms over his narrow chest and said nothing. From somewhere inside, his wife cried, "We got fish for supper! First one t'ing an' den anudder! I hate the smell of this place! Crackers!"

Dirty Duck ^{by Bobby London}



"We're dead, Phil," David said. "That's why. Ghosts can't buy cigarettes."

Palmer looked at him for several seconds, and before he laughed, David saw that Palmer more than believed him: Palmer had known all along. "I've heard plenty of reasons for not bringing someone what he asked for," he said, "but I have to think that takes the prize."

"Phil—"

From inside: "Fish for supper! Oh, gah-dammit!"

"Excuse me, kiddies," Palmer said. "Duty calls." And he was gone. David turned to Willa, thinking she'd ask him what else he had expected, but Willa was looking at the notice posted beside the stairs.

"Look at that," she said. "Tell me what you see."

At first he saw nothing, because the moon was shining on the protective plastic. He took a step closer, then one to the left, moving Willa aside to do it.

"At the top it says NO SOLICITING BY ORDER OF SUBLETTE COUNTY SHERIFF, then some fine print—blah-blah-blah—and at the bottom—"

She gave him an elbow. Not gently, either. "Stop shitting around and look at it, David. I don't want to be here all night."

You don't see what's right in front of your eyes.

He turned away from the station and stared at the railroad tracks shining in the moonlight. Beyond them was a thick white neck of stone with a flat top—that that's a mesa, pardner, jest like in them old John Ford movies.

He looked back at the posted notice, and wondered how he ever could have mistaken TRESPASSING for SOLICITING, a big bad investment banker like Wolf Frightener Sanderson.

"It says NO TRESPASSING BY ORDER OF SUBLETTE COUNTY SHERIFF," he said.

"Very good. And under the blah-blah-blah, what about there?"

At first he couldn't read the two lines at the bottom at all; at first those two lines were just incomprehensible symbols, possibly because his mind, which wanted to believe none of this, could find no innocuous translation. So he looked away to the railroad tracks once more and wasn't exactly surprised to see that they no longer gleamed in the moonlight; now the steel was rusty, and weeds were growing between the ties. When he looked back again, the railway station was a slumped derelict with its windows boarded up and most of the shingles on its roof gone. NO PARKING TAXI ZONE had disappeared from the asphalt, which was crumbling and full of potholes. He could still read WYOMING and "THE EQUALITY STATE" on the side of the building, but now the words were ghosts. Like us, he thought.

"Go on," Willa said—Willa, who had her own ideas about things, Willa who saw what was in front of her eyes and wanted you to see too, even when seeing

was cruel. "That's your final exam. Read those two lines at the bottom and then we can get this show on the road."

He sighed. "It says THIS PROPERTY IS CONDEMNED. And then DEMOLITION SCHEDULED JUNE 2007."

"You get an A. Now let's go see if anyone else wants to go to town and hear The Derailers. I'll tell Palmer to look on the bright side—we can't buy cigarettes, but for people like us there's never a cover charge."

Only nobody wanted to go to town.

"What does she mean, we're dead? Why does she want to say an awful thing like that?" Ruth Lander asked David, and what killed him (so to speak) wasn't the reproach in her voice but the look in her eyes before she pressed her face against the shoulder of Henry's corduroy jacket. Because she knew too.

"Ruth," he said, "I'm not telling you this to upset you—"

"Then stop!" she cried, her voice muffled.

David saw that all of them but Helen Palmer were looking at him with anger and hostility. Helen was nodding and muttering between her husband and the Rhinehart woman, whose first name was probably Sally. They were standing under the fluorescents in little groups... only when he blinked, the fluorescents were gone. Then the stranded passengers were just dim figures standing in the shattered moonlight that managed to find its way in through the boarded-up windows. The Landers weren't sitting on a bench; they were sitting on a dusty floor near a little cluster of empty crack vials—yes, it seemed that crack had managed to find its way even out here to John Ford country—and there was a faded circle on one wall not far from the corner where Helen Palmer squatted and muttered. Then David blinked again and the fluorescents were back. So was the big clock, hiding that faded circle.

Henry Lander said, "Think you better go along now, David."

"Listen a minute, Henry," Willa said.

Henry switched his gaze to her, and David had no trouble reading the distaste that was there. Any liking Henry might once have had for Willa Stuart was gone now.

"I don't want to listen," Henry said. "You're upsetting my wife."

"Yeah," a fat young man in a Seattle Mariners cap said. David thought his name was O'Casey. Something Irish with an apostrophe in it, anyway. "Zip it, baby girl!"

Willa bent toward Henry, and Henry recoiled from her slightly, as if her breath were bad. "The only reason I let David drag me back here is because they are going to demolish this place! Can you say wrecking ball, Henry? Surely you're

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bright enough to get your head around that concept."

"Make her stop!" Ruth cried, her voice muffled.

Willa leaned even closer, eyes bright in her narrow, pretty face. "And when the wrecking ball leaves and the dump trucks haul away the crap that used to be this railway station—this old railway station—where will you be?"

"Leave us alone, please," Henry said.

"Henry—as the chorus girl said to the archbishop, denial is not a river in Egypt."

Ursula Davis, who had disliked Willa from the first, stepped forward, leading with her chin. "Fuck off, you troublesome bitch."

Willa swung around. "Don't any of you get it? You're dead, we're all dead, and the longer you stay in one place, the harder it's going to be to ever go anywhere else!"

"She's right," David said.

"Yeah, and if she said the moon was cheese, you'd say provolone," Ursula said. She was a tall, forbiddingly handsome woman of about 40. "Pardon my French, but she's got you so pussy-whipped it isn't funny."

Dudley let out that startling donkey bray again, and the Rhinehart woman began to sniffle.

"You're upsetting the passengers, you two." This was Rattner, the little conductor with the apologetic face. He hardly ever spoke. David blinked, the station lensed dark and moonlit again for another

moment, and he saw that half of Rattner's head was gone. The rest of his face had been burned black.

"They're going to demolish this place and you'll have nowhere to go!" Willa cried. "Fucking...nowhere!" She dashed angry tears from her cheeks with both fists. "Why don't you come to town with us? We'll show you the way. At least there are people...and lights...and music."

"Mumma, I want to hear some music," Pammy Andreeson said.

"Hush," her mother said.

"If we were dead, we'd know it," Biggers said.

188 "He's got you there, son," Dudley said,

and dropped David a wink. "What happened to us? How did we get dead?"

"I...don't know," David said. He looked at Willa. Willa shrugged her shoulders and shook her head.

"You see?" Rattner said. "It was a derailment. Happens...well, I was going to say all the time, but that's not true, even out here where the rail system needs a fair amount of work, but every now and then, at one of the junction points—"

"We faw down," Pammy Andreeson said. David looked at her, really looked, and for a moment saw a corpse, burned bald, in a rotting rag of a dress. "Down and down and down. Then—" She made a growling, rattling sound in

off the tracks and into the gorge! Now I remember, and you do too! Don't you? Don't you? It's on your face! It's on your fucking face!"

Without looking in her direction, Georgia Andreeson flipped Willa the bird. Her other hand shook Pammy back and forth. David saw a child flop in one direction, a charred corpse in the other. What had caught fire? Now he remembered the drop, but what had caught fire? He didn't remember, perhaps because he didn't want to remember.

"What do we know about lying?" Georgia Andreeson shouted.

"It's wrong, Mama!" the child blubbered.

The woman dragged her off into the darkness, the child still screaming that one monotonous note.

There was a moment of silence in their wake—all of them listening to Pammy being dragged into exile—and then Willa turned to David. "Had enough?"

"Yes," he said. "Let's go."

"Don't let the doorknob hitcha where the good Lord splitcha!" Biggers advised, madly exuberant, and Dudley yodeled laughter.

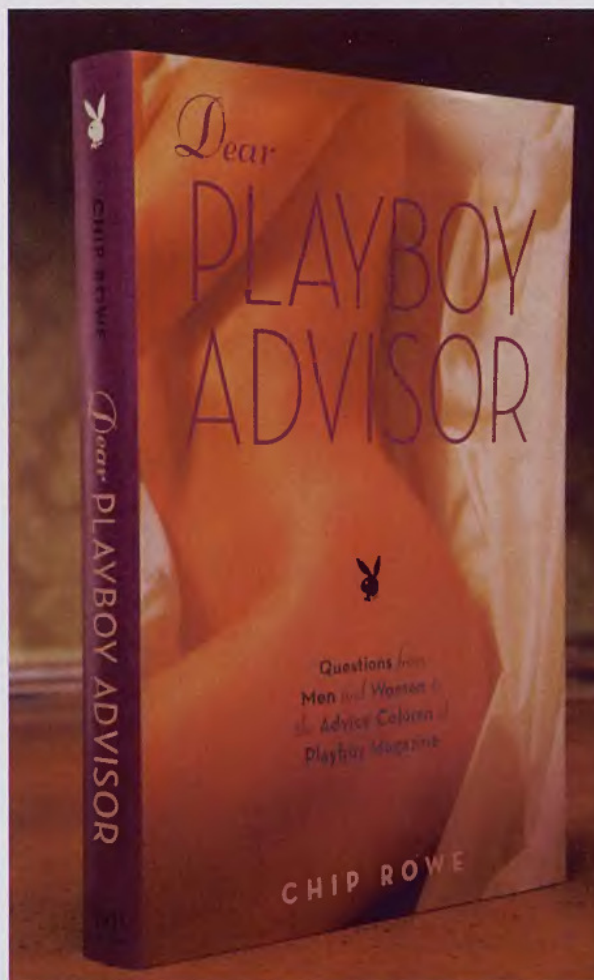
David let Willa lead him toward the double doors, where Phil was leaning just inside, his arms still crossed on his chest. Then David pulled free of Willa's hand and went to Helen Palmer sitting in the corner, rocking back and forth. She looked up at him

with dark, bewildered eyes. "We got fish for supper," she said in what was little more than a whisper.

"I don't know about that," he said, "but you were right about the smell of the place. Old dirty crackers." He looked back and saw the rest of them staring at him and Willa in the moonlit dimness that could be fluorescent light if you wanted it to be badly enough. "It's the smell places get when they've been closed up a long time, I guess," he said.

"Better buzz, cuz," Phil Palmer said. "No one wants to buy what you're selling."

"Don't I know it," David said, and followed Willa into the moonlit dark.



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her throat, put her small, grimy hands together and tossed them apart: every child's sign language for explosion.

She seemed about to say something more, but before she could, her mother suddenly slapped her across the face hard enough to expose her teeth in a momentary sneer and drive spit from the corner of her mouth. Pammy stared up for a moment in shocked disbelief, then broke into a strident, one-note wail even more painful than her hopscotch chant.

"What do we know about lying, Pamela?" Georgia Andreeson yelled, grabbing the child by her upper arm. Her fingers sank in almost out of sight.

"She's not lying!" Willa said. "We went

Behind him, like a rueful whisper of wind, he heard Helen Palmer say, "First one t'ing an' den anudder."

The miles back to 26 made their score nine for the night, but David wasn't a bit tired. He supposed ghosts didn't get tired, just as they didn't get hungry or thirsty. Besides, it was a different night. The moon was full now, shining like a silver dollar high in the sky, and 26's front parking lot was empty. In the gravel lot around to the side, a few semis stood silent, and one rumbled sleepily with its running lights glowing. The marquee sign now read: COMING THIS WEEKEND THE NIGHTHAWKS BRING YOUR HONEY SPEND YOUR MONEY.

"That's cute," Willa said. "Will you bring me, Wolf Frightener? Am I not your honey?"

"You are and I will," David said. "The question is what do we do now? Because the honky-tonk is closed."

"We go in anyway, of course," she said.

"It'll be locked up."

"Not if we don't want it to be. Perception, remember? Perception and expectation."

He remembered, and when he tried the door, it opened. The barroom smells were still there, now mixed with the pleasant odor of some pine-scented cleaner. The stage was empty and the stools were on the bar with their legs sticking up, but the neon replica of the Wind River Range was still on, either because the manage-

ment left it that way after closing or because that was the way he and Willa wanted it. That seemed more likely. The dance floor seemed very big now that it was empty, especially with the mirror wall to double it. The neon mountains shimmered upside down in its polished depths.

Willa breathed deep. "I smell beer and perfume," she said. "A hot rod smell. It's lovely."

"You're lovely," he said.

She turned to him. "Then kiss me, cowboy."

He kissed her there on the edge of the dance floor, and judging by what he was feeling, lovemaking wasn't out of the question. Not at all.

She kissed both corners of his mouth, then stepped back. "Put a quarter in the jukebox, would you? I want to dance."

David went over to the juke at the end of the bar, dropped a quarter and played D19—"Wasted Days and Wasted Nights," the Freddy Fender version. Out in the parking lot, Chester Dawson, who had decided to lay over here a few hours before resuming his journey to Seattle with a load of electronics, raised his head, thinking he heard music, decided it was part of a dream he'd been having and went back to sleep.

David and Willa moved slowly around the empty floor, sometimes reflected in the mirror wall and sometimes not.

"Willa——"

ment in the mirror next to the dance floor or the one in the lounge. Usually just from the tail of the eye. David thought they could have finished up in better places, but on the whole, 26 wasn't bad. Until closing there were people. And there would always be music.

He did wonder what would become of the others when the wrecking ball tore apart their illusion—and it would. Soon. He thought of Phil Palmer trying to shield his terrified, howling wife from falling debris that couldn't hurt her because she was not, properly speaking, even there. He thought of Pammy Andreeson cowering in her shrieking mother's arms. Rattner, the soft-spoken conductor, saying, Just be calm, folks, in a voice that couldn't be heard over

the roar of the big yellow machines. He thought of the book salesman, Biggers, trying to run away on his bad leg, lurching and finally falling while the wrecking ball swung and the dozers snarled and bit and the world came down.

He liked to think their train would come before then—that their combined expectation would make it come—but he didn't really believe it. He even considered the idea that the shock might extinguish them and they'd simply whiff out like candle flames in a strong gust of wind, but he didn't believe that, either. He could see them too clearly after the bulldozers and dump trucks and back-end loaders were gone, standing by the rusty disused railway tracks in the moonlight while a

wind blew down from the foothills, whining around the mesa and beating at the broomgrass. He could see them huddled together under a billion High Country stars, still waiting for their train.

"Are you cold?" Willa asked him.

"No—why?"

"You shivered."

"Maybe a goose walked over my grave," he said. He closed his eyes, and they danced together on the empty floor. Sometimes they were in the mirror, and when they slipped from view there was only a country song playing in an empty room lit by a neon mountain range.

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"Hush a little, David. Baby wants to dance."

David hushed. He put his face in her hair and let the music take him. He thought they would stay here now, and that from time to time people would see them. 26 might even get a reputation for being haunted, but probably not; people didn't think of ghosts much while they were drinking, unless they were drinking alone. Sometimes when they were closing up, the bartender and the last waitress (the one with the most seniority, the one responsible for splitting the tips) might have an uneasy sense of being watched. Sometimes they'd hear music even after the music had stopped, or catch move-

wind blew down from the foothills, whining around the mesa and beating at the broomgrass. He could see them huddled together under a billion High Country stars, still waiting for their train.

"Are you cold?" Willa asked him.

"No—why?"

"You shivered."

"Maybe a goose walked over my grave," he said. He closed his eyes, and they danced together on the empty floor. Sometimes they were in the mirror, and when they slipped from view there was only a country song playing in an empty room lit by a neon mountain range.



BASKETBALL

(continued from page 154)

turned them down in large part because of the quality of this year's team. Memphis did lose Rodney Carney, Darius Washington Jr. and Shawne Williams to the NBA. But the solid backcourt of Chris Douglas-Roberts and Antonio Anderson returns, and the frontcourt is deep and athletic with Joey Dorsey, Robert Dozier and Kareem Cooper. **Burning question:** The scouts are talking about jet-quick point guard Willie Kemp, who will challenge for a starting job from the first practice. Just how good is this freshman? **Key matchup:** February 17 at Gonzaga.

10. LSU Last year Tigers fans were enchanted by coach John Brady's young squad and its amazing run to the Final Four. Superstar forward Tyrus Thomas headed to the NBA, but Glen "Big Baby" Davis returns up front. He led the Tigers in scoring. With the experience gained from starting all 36 games as a freshman, Tasmin Mitchell should see his productivity jump. In addition, Marquette transfer Dameon Mason, who averaged double figures for the Golden Eagles as a sophomore in 2005, is eligible and should start at small forward. **Burning question:** Junior Tack

Minor returns at point guard after playing only three games last season because of a suspension and an injury. Does he have the maturity to run this offense? **Key matchup:** At home against Florida on February 24.

11. Syracuse Since Jim Boeheim started as head coach 31 years ago, the Orangemen have been tremendous. They stand to make a lot of noise in March despite the graduation of Gerry McNamara, the team's heart and soul. Syracuse returns four vets, including three seniors who started every game last year. At six-foot-eight, top scorer Demetris Nichols (13.3 points a game) can do damage inside and out. He will join six-foot-nine Terrence Roberts and six-foot-11 Darryl Watkins in manning the front line. The backcourt features shooting guard Eric Devendorf, who started as a freshman last season. **Burning question:** Who will play the point? The answer could make the difference between a good team and a great one. **Key matchup:** Oklahoma State in the Jimmy V Classic at Madison Square Garden on December 5.

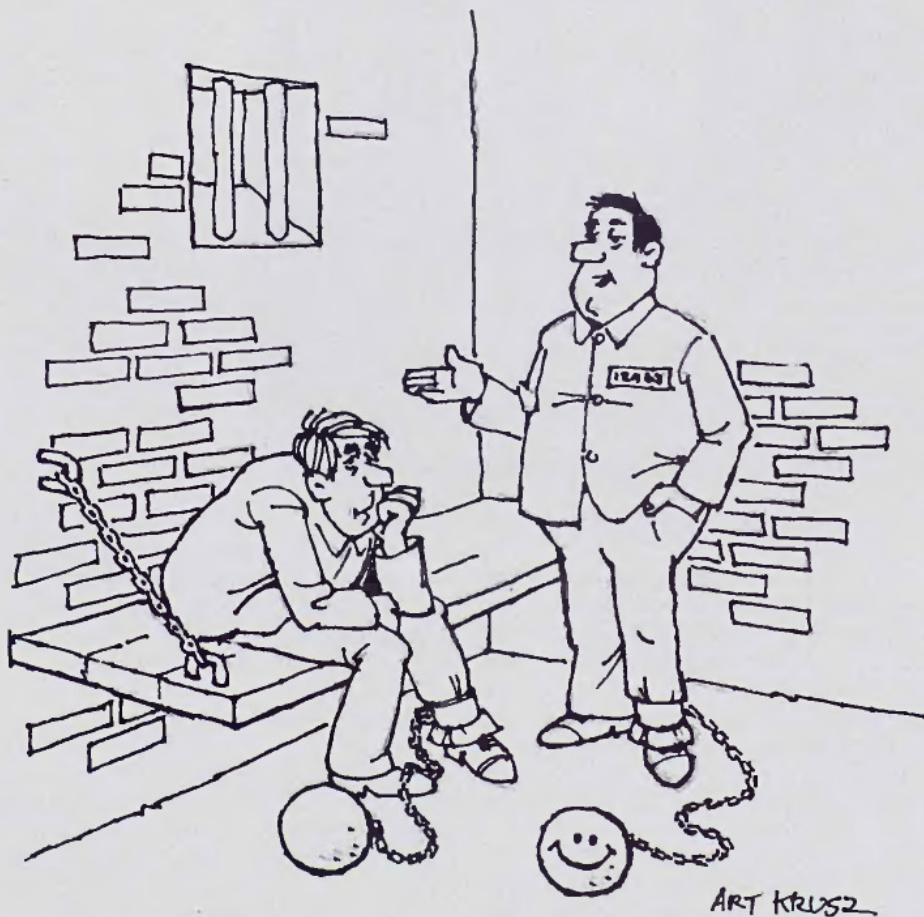
12. Texas Last year the Longhorns made a great run to the Elite Eight, behind big man LaMarcus Aldridge, taken second overall in the NBA draft. Whether UT can replace his inside presence remains to be seen, but coach Rick Barnes has

plenty to work with, including one of the nation's best recruits—six-foot-nine forward Kevin Durant. The seven newcomers are all capable of big-time contributions, but the key will be point guard A.J. Abrams, who needs to play big minutes at a very high level. **Burning question:** Size will be a concern; the roster is loaded with wings but lacks depth inside. Will the Longhorns get beaten up in the paint? **Key matchup:** A road trip to Kansas on February 3.

13. Duke The Blue Devils are used to beginning the season in the top five. Not this year. Starters Josh McRoberts and Greg Paulus, both of whom appeared in all 36 games last year, will have to help a top-flight recruiting class adjust to the big time. The newcomers are led by six-foot-five Jon Scheyer, a *Parade* All-American and one of the greatest high school players in Illinois history. **Burning question:** Without J.J. Redick and Shelden Williams, two stars taken early in the NBA draft, can the team still compete in the ACC? Duke fans will count on Mike Krzyzewski—the best coach in the college game—to make it all click. **Key matchup:** At home against archrival UNC on February 7.

14. Arizona Tucson breathed a major sigh of relief when point guard Mustafa Shakur and wing forward Marcus Williams elected to stay in school. Shakur should provide leadership, while Williams, who put 24 points on the board in an NCAA tournament loss to Villanova, should be a prime-time scorer. Power forward Ivan Radenovic and center Kirk Walters will also lead, and guard Jawann McClellan should improve his tallies. **Burning question:** Chase Budinger, a six-foot-seven forward, is the most highly anticipated freshman. Coach Lute Olson has called him arguably the best player he ever recruited to Arizona. After Sean Elliott, Mike Bibby and Gilbert Arenas, that's saying something. Can Budinger handle the expectations? **Key matchup:** UNC comes to Tucson on January 27.

15. Alabama Coach Mark Gottfried has four starters back from an 18-13 squad that made it to the NAAs and beat Marquette before falling to championship-game-bound UCLA by just three points. Top among these is Jermareo Davidson (six-foot-10), who averaged 14.3 points and nearly nine rebounds a game last season. He is one of the greatest frontcourt players in the country, and when he is rolling, the Tide will be tough to stop. A standout backcourt also returns in Ronald Steele and Brandon Hollinger. **Burning question:** After forward Chuck Davis's season-ending knee injury, Alabama appealed to the NCAA to grant him a medical redshirt. Davis entered the NBA draft but was not selected, and the NCAA denied the appeal. What will happen now? **Key matchup:** Oklahoma comes to town on New Year's Day.



ART KRUSZ

"After a while, you find little ways to keep your spirits up."

16. Connecticut No team in college basketball lost more talented players than UConn. Four were chosen in the first round of the NBA draft and another in the second, and one signed with the St. Louis Rams of the NFL. With Hall of Fame coach Jim Calhoun patrolling the sidelines, however, and a top-flight collection of freshmen on the roster, expectations are still high. Returning forward Jeff Adrien had a solid freshman year; he should be the main guy up front. **Burning question:** Guard A.J. Price has been medically cleared to return after a brain hemorrhage took him out of action in October 2004. When he rounds into shape he could be among the best Big East guards. Even opponents are pulling for him. **Key matchup:** January 20 at home against Indiana.

17. Georgia Tech Last year a youthful lineup contributed to the Yellow Jackets' dismal 11-17 record. This year six of the seven top scorers are back, including big guns Anthony Morrow (16 points a game), Ra'Sean Dickey (13.2) and Jeremis Smith (11). A gifted freshman class is highlighted by six-foot-eight forward Thaddeus Young and point guard Javaris Crittenton, who were rated among the top 10 recruits nationally. **Burning question:** The season hinges on the young players' ability to hit the ground running. Will they? **Key matchup:** February 11 against UConn at the Georgia Dome.

18. Gonzaga Senior guard Derek Raivio is Gonzaga's top returning scorer with a modest 11.1 points a game. For coach Mark Few to keep his program among the nation's elite after the NBA took Co-National Player of the Year Adam Morrison, he'll need strong numbers from Sean Mallon, Jeremy Pargo, Pierre Marie Altidor-Cespedes and big man Josh Heytvelt at center. This team could use an up-tempo attack to compensate for lack of an inside punch. The recruiting class is small, but seven-foot-four center Will Foster could make a defensive contribution. **Burning question:** Gonzaga has had a great run over the past few seasons. Are the team's glory days over? **Key matchup:** At home against Washington on December 9.

19. Washington UW took a beating in the off-season, losing first-round NBA draft pick Brandon Roy, as well as four seniors. The Huskies will build around a core of returning players—forward Jon Brockman (8.4 points a game, 6.5 rebounds), sophomore guard Justin Dentmon (8.3 points a game) and junior guard Ryan Appleby. At six-foot-11, recruit Spencer Hawes has a chance to step right in and be a factor at both ends of the floor. Two other key freshmen are Quincy Pondexter, who could start at small forward, and Adrian Oliver, who could play at either guard spot. **Burning question:** Will freshman Hawes bring the prime-time play that

put scouts on the edge of their seats? **Key matchup:** A February 3 road trip to Arizona's McKale Center, where the Wildcats are hard to beat.

20. Texas A&M Coach Billy Gillispie has been slowly rebuilding the Texas A&M program, and last season he finally broke through with a 22-9 record and a trip to the NCAA tournament. Now four starters and 13 lettermen are back, including six-foot-three guard Acie Law IV (16.1 points a game), six-foot-nine forward Joseph Jones (15.3 points), six-foot-three top defender Dominique Kirk and six-foot-10 center Antanas Kavaliauskas. **Burning question:** In the feisty Big 12 this club will have to put points on the board. Is the offensive explosiveness there? **Key matchup:** The Aggies will head 120 miles southwest to face Texas in Austin on February 28.

21. Tennessee Talk about a coach with major impact: Prior to last season the Volunteers were predicted to finish fifth out of six in the SEC East. Enter Bruce Pearl and—voilà—the Vols dominated the SEC, earning a high seed in the NCAA tournament. But having lost five seniors to graduation, Pearl has his work cut out for him. Returning guard Chris Lofton, the team's top scorer at 17.2 points a game last year, should improve on that number in Pearl's run-and-gun attack. **Burning question:** Can senior Dane Bradshaw at guard provide a steady influence on this young team? **Key matchup:** A rough road trip to Ohio State on January 13.

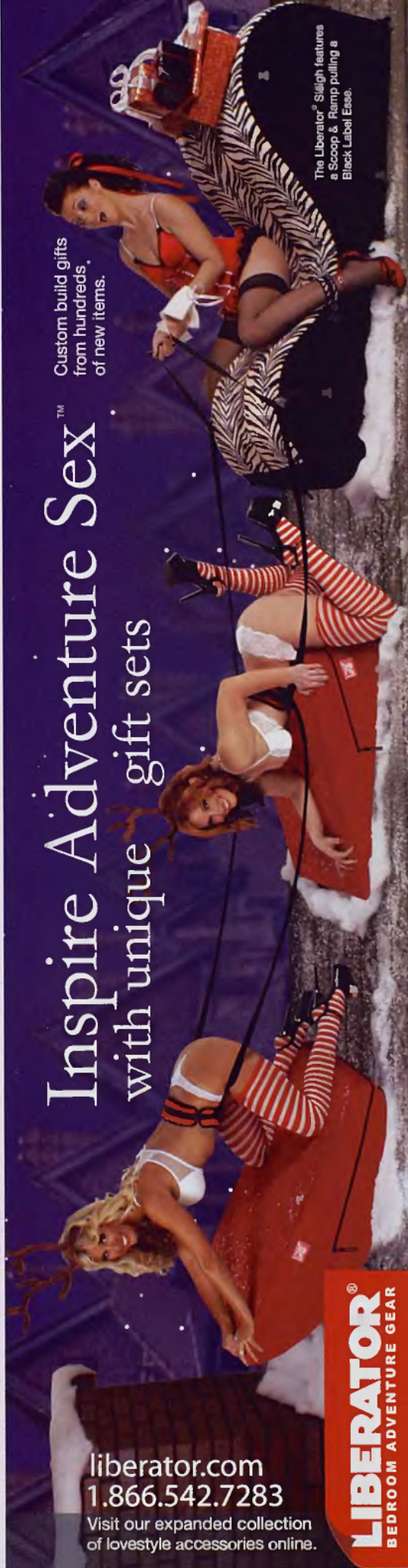
22. Boston College The Eagles need to regroup after saying good-bye to seniors Craig Smith and Louis Hinnant. Jared Dudley, last season's second leading scorer and rebounder, is a performer up front who started all 100 games he has played for the Eagles. Sean Marshall (six-foot-six), Sean Williams (six-foot-10), Akida McLain (six-foot-eight) and Tyrelle Blair (a six-foot-11 transfer) give Boston College excellent depth along the front line. **Burning question:** What will happen in the backcourt? Tyrese Rice should be the main man for coach Al Skinner, and Marquez Haynes will get a chance to up his play after appearing off the bench in nearly every game last year. If the guards work well with the front line, Beantown will be rocking. **Key matchup:** On February 17 the UNC Tar Heels roll into town.

23. Louisville An NCAA tournament without Louisville is as unusual as a skinny opera singer. Last season the Cardinals suffered key injuries and ended up in the NIT, which didn't sit well with coach Rick Pitino. Four starters are back, and the Cards attracted a great recruiting class. However, the only returning scholarship senior, six-foot-three Brandon Jenkins, broke his leg this summer. His return is pivotal. **Burning question:** Can the front line stay healthy? Forward

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David Padgett has recovered from a knee injury and appears ready to achieve the glory predicted for him when he was a high school All-American. Juan Palacios, who has also battled injuries, anchors the other low post. **Key matchup:** If ever there were a reason to buy a bottle of your favorite bourbon, Louisville takes on Kentucky at home on December 16.

24. Wichita State Last season was supposed to be a rebuilding year for the Shockers, who had a single starter return from 2004–2005. Instead WSU took the Missouri Valley Conference title and enjoyed an unbelievable ride to the Sweet 16. This year four starters are back, including some cogs from last year's victory machine—six-foot-two Sean Ogirri (12 points a game), six-foot-eight Kyle Wilson (11.3) and six-foot-three P.J. Cousnard (10.2). But now there are expectations. **Burning question:** Were the Shockers a fluke last season, or is this team really that good? **Key matchup:** December 2 at Syracuse.

25. Xavier Not many programs can match Xavier's consistency—nine 20-win seasons and seven postseason tournament berths in the past 10 years. All five starters are back from last year's 21–11 team. Senior forward Justin Cage was named the Atlantic 10 championship's Most Outstanding Player; joining him up front will be Justin Doellman, who led XU in rebounding for the second consecutive time and also dominated in steals and blocks. The backcourt—Stanley Burrell and Drew Lavender—could be one of the best in the country. **Burning question:** Why isn't this team ranked higher? Perhaps in the end, it will be. As we said in our introduction to this story, the quality of play across the NCAA this season will be as good as it's ever been. Tune in and see for yourself. **Key matchup:** December 29, when Illinois and Xavier square off at U.S. Bank Arena.



DIXIE CHICKS

(continued from page 74)

MAGUIRE: I think it made my ex-husband feel better that I could admit the divorce wasn't necessarily about him—that we did get married totally in love and for the long haul and everything. Like I said before, I didn't know who I was. I didn't get married that young. I was 25. I stayed in the marriage for four and a half years, and I had a stepson. It wasn't that I couldn't say the *D* word; I just couldn't desert this child who had already been through so much with a new stepmom. It was more about him and my guilt. Our parents got divorced when both of us were teenagers, a very pivotal time in our lives, so I was looking for something secure and safe. And my ex-husband was good-looking, successful, stable and didn't have baggage. He was that candidate for marriage who looks so good on paper, but he had none of the fire or creativity. My career showed me that somebody has to have some kind of artistic passion for me to fall deeply in love with him.

PLAYBOY: On the new record, in "So Hard," you sing about your infertility and the struggle to get pregnant. Were you reluctant to write about something so personal?

ROBISON: I don't think we set out to write anything about in vitro or infertility. The song had already been started and was more about a relationship. Then the infertility idea kind of came about when we began writing the second verse, when the question came up about how to make it palatable as a subject. The song had to be about the relationship aspect.

But two thirds of the band has had issues with infertility. It takes over your life for a period of time. I know when I was going through it Martie and Natalie had to go through it with me. And then subsequently Martie went through it, and the same thing happened. In hindsight it's so bizarre, all the frustration and the not knowing. I find it hard to remember a lot of it now that I have three children. Once I had my first son I was okay with whatever I had to do to get the other ones.

MAGUIRE: I forget how many times you had to have treatments before they worked—once or twice?

ROBISON: Three times. The third time I got pregnant but had a miscarriage. Then I got pregnant the next time. But now it's just like any struggle; you just feel you've gotten to where you are. And I look at my kids—they owe me a lot. [laughter] "You're going to build a fence on the ranch, kids!" I hate to complain about this stuff because, God, we had the means and the ability to do it, and so many people don't. I watched the heartache of friends who had run out of money. It's terrible. So



"If you remember correctly, dear, you're the one who insisted on putting up the extra mistletoe."

I just feel lucky in so many ways that I was one of the success stories.

MAGUIRE: I learned a lot about different cities when I had to see doctors. I did the gynecological world tour. I can't tell you how many people have seen me naked. I'm very modest in general but had to lose all that. When I went to the doctor in—where were we? Germany? No—Sweden, I found out he was a trainer for the Klitschko brothers, the boxers. And I was like, "I'm going to see a sports trainer? I'm really going to spread them for a sports trainer?" The office had books stacked everywhere and papers and files and the table right in the middle. It felt as though I was in a backstreet abortion clinic. It was horrible. But he was so nice. And he was the one who told me I was pregnant.

PLAYBOY: Looking at other musicians who have weathered personal and political hailstorms, whom do you admire? Do you have role models in your business?

ROBISON: U2 has been great—musically reinventing itself, staying relevant, touring. It's rock and roll, though. It's hard for us to emulate because the rock world is so different.

MAGUIRE: Emmylou Harris. She's not selling that many records, but she still has the passion to go out and tour and work with all sorts of people. She has reinvented herself several times and continues to take chances and do things because they move her musically.

MAINES: I don't think there are any role models in our situation, with kids and a family. If you're a guy, it's okay to leave the family back home—not that I want to leave my family back home. But even Emmylou didn't take her daughter on tour. Faith and Tim have kids, but they tour only in the summer and live with the family on the bus. So I don't see anybody who's dealt career-wise with what we're dealing with. I take pride that maybe we're becoming role models. I can always sing and play music, but I don't have to tour or be in front of an audience. It's very expensive to live the life we live and be able to have our kids come along with us. It's not just that we want our kids with us; we can afford to have them with us. If we couldn't, I wouldn't be doing this. It's not worth it. I can play music, and that's what makes me happy. But I don't do it just for the fun of it.

PLAYBOY: How is it to tour for the first time with this fleet of kids?

MAINES: They're all different ages, so they're not all together that much. Mine are going swimming today. I think Emily's are going to go, but they're not all planning to go together; they'll see each other there. I think only once were all seven actually out on the same day.

MAGUIRE: It's hard to find nannies willing to live on a bus, sleep in a bunk and be in a different place every day, with

the hours they're working, and just go with the flow. I found out my nanny was showering in the kids' bath—a sink we're using as a bathtub. She was crouching in there and showering. I plucked this great girl from waiting tables in Austin, and now she's living on a bus and showering in the sink.

MAINES: Are we living in a third world country? Didn't you ever wonder how she was getting clean? Did it ever cross your mind?

MAGUIRE: We kept asking her! Then we thought maybe she would be offended that we kept asking whether she'd showered, so we stopped. I thought maybe she's not the kind of person who needs a shower at least every other day, more like a go-three-days kind of girl.

PLAYBOY: Martie, you told *Time* magazine you wouldn't want your CD to be in a changer next to Toby Keith's and Reba McEntire's. Why?

MAGUIRE: I was trying to say that people are drawn to music that says a certain thing and are turned off by music that says something else. Our music says something very specific, so I would be shocked if I saw it in somebody's personal collection with music that was the polar opposite.

MAINES: Ultimately what you were saying is true. The problem came from naming names. But it's the same thing radio is telling us: "It doesn't fit with our playlist." And we're saying, "Yes, we agree. It doesn't fit."

ROBISON: I think people took it as though she were saying our music wouldn't be appreciated by all country-music fans, which I don't think Martie meant. But it's a mistake to think you can determine who your audience will be. The songs have to lead people, and I think that's happening right now. People are coming who react to this music versus other music.

PLAYBOY: And it's okay with you even if the other music—your older records—sells far more copies? People have felt sorry for you.

MAGUIRE: But why? What baffles me is that they would care. People bring that up a lot and feel so sorry for us, but I don't feel any loss at all. It is hard for certain artists to come down a notch from where they've been, but that can happen anyway. Being new on the scene and inspiring people with something fresh will wear off eventually. Even if Natalie hadn't said what she said, we could have been faced with a smaller audience.

ROBISON: Meanwhile it's such an exciting time. As far as energy and purpose go, it's like a breath of fresh air. I feel that fire you get when you've been knocked down. For a band going into—how many years has it been?—it's like being given a second life.



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INO MÁSI!

(continued from page 112)

distance and *keeping* it closed, thus prohibiting the opponent from striking. It is not dramatic. It is just effective.

So the American public saw the Karate Kid, *Kung Fu's* Caine and Steven Seagal doing aikido. These forms are beautiful but substantially ceremonial, as compared with the grappling form.

How do I know? Chuck Norris brought the Gracies, the jujitsu dynasty, up from Brazil in the 1980s, and they kicked the ass of everyone from every discipline who got into the ring with them.

The Gracies—including Royce, Rorion and Rickson—their cousins the Machados, and Renato Magno went forth from their mat-lined garages outside L.A. and showed the fighting world (the wrestlers, boxers and kung fu and karate fighters) the value of what quickly came to be known as Brazilian jujitsu.

This was jujitsu (wrestling, in the main, ground grappling) adapted from the traditional Japanese form and filtered through the experience and wisdom of the elder Gracies in Brazil, Helio and Carlos.

Boxing, we will recall, was generally regarded as fixed (probably because it is fixed) and professional wrestling as a subspecies of modern dance. The world, as always, wanted to see the two guys in the arena.

Well, then, the Gracies observed,

why not take that same storefront-dojo contest that brought us our deserved notoriety and *stage* it in an arena? Why not mix the forms? Thus the UFC.

America had known of the Japanese forms of jujitsu and judo since the late 19th century. Teddy Roosevelt, when police commissioner of New York City, studied jujitsu and had his teacher teach it to his cops. They may have learned a thing or two, but jujitsu in the main languished in the American imagination as a subspecies of orientalism, akin perhaps to opium eating, something pursued only after dark and in a part of town smelling of incense.

One finds adverts from the turn of the 19th century through the 1960s in the back

of magazines, in proximity to the coy and forbidden: "Learn Jujitsu," "Secrets of Picking Up Girls," "50 Beautiful Art Poses," "Magic Explained" and so on. The line drawings and photographs show various moves—chokes, throws, trips, come-alongs—and they are remarkable, to me, for their impracticability.

The moves described *might* be effective on an opponent who was (1) somnolent, (2) completely ignorant of one's intentions or (3) compliant. Perusing these drawings, a contemporary practitioner of Brazilian jujitsu would have to conclude that the Japanese understanding was outmoded and/or that the Japanese were keeping the good stuff to themselves.

According to Helio Gracie's book *Gracie*

moves they learned from Esai Maeda, their refinements—those they found in books, on the street and those they imagined—were tested, developed and refined *practically*, for use in the real world, against a determined and skilled opponent. Q: How may one develop a front headlock from which one absolutely cannot escape? Q: Now how may one escape from that headlock?

What is the underlying principle?

That there is no situation from which one cannot escape, that *any* opponent may be defeated through skill, endurance and the courage to hold to these first principles.

A man off balance, confused, distracted, panicked or exhausted is defeated. The man who can hold out longer can, at the moment of his opponent's weakness, employ his submission skills to defeat him.

So the Gracies went forth and conquered, both in Brazil and America.

And the GIs in the 1940s came home from the Pacific having learned a thing or two themselves.

We cannot underestimate the influence of the Pacific war on the American notion of personal combat. The Japanese did not surrender—they fought until they killed or were killed, and the methods of close combat to the death, always understood but never politely acknowledged, became part of the American lexicon of fighting.

These were classed, in my youth, under the head "Dirty Fighting" and included,

notably, kicking in the balls and eye gouging; and, on level two, head butting and strikes with the knees and elbows—the techniques, in short, that could maim or kill.

Brazilian jujitsu evolved as the particular expression of that level of combat falling between the purely formal (boxing) and the intrinsically lethal (trench warfare)—and known, generally, as street fighting. That is, yes, this conversation may proceed to the death, but the unstated (though sometimes violated) rule is that it will not: Friends will separate us should the contest devolve past the understood limits, or the fistfight in the street will end when one opponent has been

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Jiu-jitsu, "It wasn't until the early 1900s that a seed from the strong Japanese jujitsu tree found its way to South America. Mitsuyo Maeda was a jujitsu teacher who was aiding a Japanese immigration colony in northern Brazil. Gastao Gracie helped Maeda get established in his new land. To express his gratitude, Maeda introduced Gastao's eldest son, Carlos Gracie, to the principles of Japanese jujitsu."

What did the Gracies have? The best of all things an artist may possess: time and a laboratory. Carlos, his brother Helio and their families and students had first one, then several, academies devoted to the perfection of this mystery with which they were in love. The

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knocked unconscious (and perhaps received a salutary kick or two); the jujitsu fighter will release an opponent who has "tapped out" (surrendered) or will walk away when he has been "choked out" ("given a little nap").

The Gracies employed their particularly evolved system of street fighting (based on jujitsu, that is, a grappling form), and they defeated the American strikers and codified and capitalized on their garage challenge by inventing the phenomenon of mixed martial arts: Take whatever you got, get into the cage, and let's talk about it. We Americans recognized the idea that formal personal combat had perhaps evolved too far from the fight on the street, the close combat of war—the reality—and so the "philosophy" had been taken out of the thing, and we missed it.

And then we said, "...but wait." And here, I think, is the beauty of America: We love invention. Our industrial and technological might has always stemmed not from the elite philosopher, scientist or mogul but from the shade-tree mechanic ne'er-do-well and misfit who had a better idea (Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Bill Gates, Ulysses S. Grant, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Muddy Waters). And, I will add, Matt Hughes, who defeated Royce Gracie in the main event of the May 27 Ultimate Fighting Championship.

Matt Hughes is 32, with a mixed-martial-arts record of 40-4-0. He is very aggressive and is known as a striker. He was pitted against one of the great grapplers of all time, Royce Gracie (39 years old, 13-1-2), one of the creators of mixed martial arts—the first and most celebrated champion of "the cage" (the arena of the UFC).

It was, we at ringside informed each other, going to be a test of opposing techniques: If Hughes got in close enough to hit, he'd odds-on pound Royce Gracie into mint jelly; if Royce could close, tie up and take Hughes down to the mat, Hughes didn't stand a chance.

The UFC put on a great show. The Staples Center in L.A. was full; there was a lot of enjoyable overhead projection of

video promotion, background info, advertising and guff from the fighters. Hughes: "I'm going to send him home or back to school." Gracie: "I built this house."

On the undercard Mike Swick beat Joe Riggs in the first round, with a simple blue-belt guillotine choke; Brandon Vera beat Assuerio Silva with the same beginner's move—straight-up jujitsu.

Dean Lister went to the ground, pulled guard (that is, went to his back and put the other guy between his locked legs) and beat Alessio Sakara with a triangle (put the guy on top's head and one arm between your legs, lock one of your legs behind his head and behind your other knee, pull his head down, continue till he passes or taps out). In the welterweight bout Diego

Here comes Matt Hughes down the aisle: He has trained down, all shoulders, no waist; he looks like an American college wrestler. And here comes Royce Gracie, lean and rather sleek like many of the Brazilians, built more like a long-distance swimmer. They enter the cage of the UFC, of which venue Royce said, "I'm not part of the history; I am the history," and Matt Hughes gives him a spanking.

How did he do it? He took Royce to the mat. When Royce tried to escape from Matt's side control, Hughes went to the back, with Royce facedown, and proceeded to whomp him till the ref called the fight at 4:39 of the first round. Hughes, the striker, in short, beat Royce using jujitsu.

There was for the friends, admirers and students of the Gracies—myself included—little joy in Mudville, until one reflected, after some hours of head shaking and lubrication, that they had, most absolutely, been vindicated.

Not only had their physical technique been shown to be successful, the superiority of their philosophy had been proved: For, to take the macro view, Hughes, employing a first principle of jujitsu, "used the other fellow's strengths against him."

The Gracie challenge to America was "Use any form you please," and Hughes observed, studied and responded, "I'll use yours."

Q: Is fighting "a good thing"?

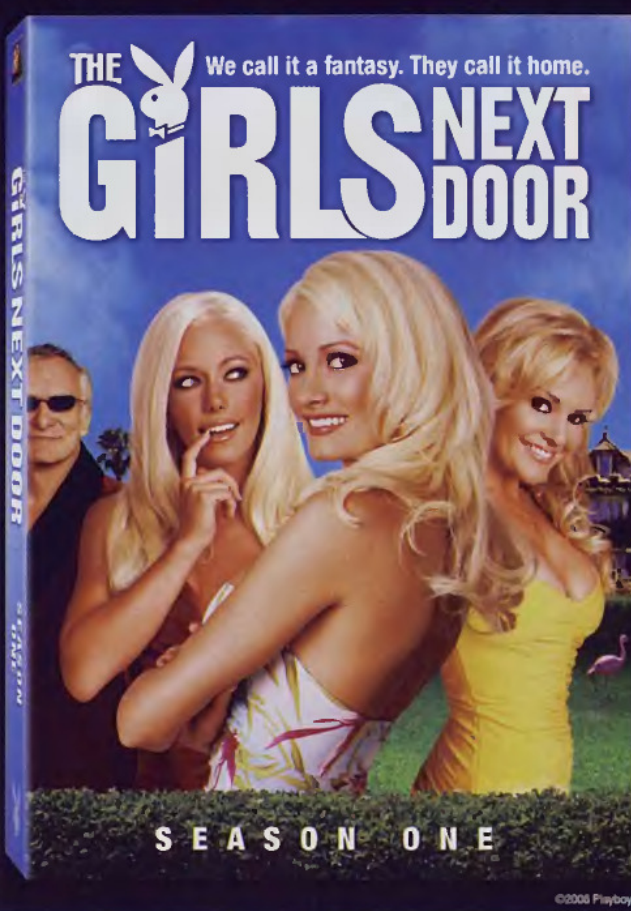
A: Training to fight is a good thing; if involved in a fight, winning is a good thing. Lest we forget.

Our American spirit loves the zero-sum game. We frontier folk like our sport a bit more blunt (whoever got spiked in cricket?) and will continue to hold to our preference for some semblance of two guys in a bar.

The brawl got bifurcated 60 years ago into wrestling (honest pretense) and boxing (honest crime).

The two discredited rings will now, for a while, be supplanted by the cage, and mixed martial arts will be acknowledged as the correct venue for the study of philosophy.

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Sanchez went to the back of John Alessio, was choking him out when the last round ended and he got the decision.

What was common to all of these fights?

Each group of two guys was allowed to do to each other most anything under the sun, and each won by employing the simplest, most basic, learn-it-in-the-first-month moves of Brazilian jujitsu. (The moves can be demonstrated in five minutes; to be able to employ them effectively, on an opponent who would rather you did not, and to be able to recognize the opportunity for their employment, takes a certain amount of dedication.)

But how would the tale unfold in the main event?



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Erotic PASSAGES

(continued from page 138)

for models, for compasses, for anything to show me the way.

Poison River. The mad, epic tale of the young, preposterously buxom Luba and her love affair with her musician gangster, Peter Rio, set in Mexico's violent, phantasmagorical underworld. There was nothing like it then, and I'll wager there's very little like it now. One of the greatest works of contemporary U.S. literature—I don't give a shit if you don't consider comics literature—and also one of the most profoundly erotic. Yet flipping back through the comic after all these years I'm struck by the fact that the actual quantity of sex in *Poison River* ain't all that high. The acts themselves appear sparingly, no more than a panel or two, optical lightning, and all the more powerful for it. (If you want Beto at his most pornarific, you'd have to read his "erotic" graphic novel *Birdland*, where the semen flows like blood in a Kinji Fukasaku film.) But what Hernández withholds in terms of quantity, he more than makes up for with the giddy heterogeneity of his erotic vision. In *Poison River* all kinds of bodies have sex in all kinds of combinations, represented with such a frank, matter-of-fact authority that it feels less like a point of view than a shout-out from life itself. And while this may say a lot about my own limited upbringing, Hernández was the first ostensibly straight male artist I encountered who drew as much dick as he did tit, who was as energetic at portraying boy-on-boy sex as he was girl-on-boy sex. (Peter Rio, after all,

was not only Luba's lover; he was also married to Isobel, who happened to be a pre-op transsexual.) Hernández, in other words, tossed the entire straight-male-gaze formula I'd been weaned on right out the window. I'm sure the fact that he is a U.S. Latino made the whole thing even more acute for a young Dominican writer like me; at a personal, artistic and cultural level Hernández's sexual aesthetic challenged the shit out of me—one of those crucial moments as an artist when you realize that either you grow or you die.

Those first years in college, while a lot of the other young writers I knew were wrestling with Morrison with Walker with Crouch with Reed with Álvarez with Thomas with Rivera with Cisneros with Carver, I was losing sleep over a comic book.

It would be too much to say that Hernández gave my young writer self the world. But he did give me my first real map of it. A map that took me a long time to decipher but, after much struggle and introspection, led me into another, better world altogether.

Junot Diaz's new novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar*, will be published in spring 2007.

A.S. BYATT When I was a young and innocent girl I was very nearly expelled from school for having got hold of a copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which I solemnly read. The authorities needn't have worried—I was vaguely repelled by the preachiness of Lawrence's descriptions of sex and turned off, rather than on, by being exhorted to use the words *fuck*, *cunt*, *shit* and *piss*. Much more

stimulating and dangerously exciting was a 17th century poet I was being encouraged to admire for linguistic daring, John Donne. He is one of the two great English love poets—the other is Robert Graves—mostly because he is more interested in women than he is in himself and talks to them, not at them, in every possible tone of voice. What women like (to answer Freud's question about what women really want) is to be talked to, as people. That is the attraction of Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*—it's not his craggy face and black brows; it's the fact that he argues with Jane. The short-story writer Frances Towers once remarked that Donne makes you feel that he has seduced you. He does. Or he makes you wish it were you he is trying so wisely and wittily to seduce.

Probably his most famous sustained piece of erotic writing is the elegy "To His Mistress Going to Bed." It begins, "Come, madam, come, all rest my powers defy; / Until I labour, I in labour lie." The poem undresses the woman, girdle, gown, headdress, and makes—as Donne continually does—religious comparisons that are on the edge of blasphemy. She is a good spirit, not an evil one: "Those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright." He has a great gift for insinuating a description of an erection. I missed most of these as a schoolgirl and took pleasure in them as a student. He follows this hint with some of the most famous lines in erotic poetry: "Licence my roving hands, and let them go / Before, behind, between, above, below."

Five dry prepositions with not a trace of squeezed breasts or crushed lips. And yet the female body responds to them—because they hint and do not make explicit—with an arousal Lawrence can't exact. Lawrence is odd because he can put himself, imaginatively, inside a woman—Frieda instructed him—but he can't make his men attractive to women. Donne ends his poem with a demand that the woman show herself to him without guilt or innocence: "To teach thee, I am naked first; why then, / What needst thou have more covering than a man."

Again he makes the woman reader imagine his body and what is going on, or about to go on. He does it with plain words and a conversational voice.

He believed in sex, as in "Love's Progress": "Whoever loves, if he do not propose / The right true end of love, he's one that goes / To sea for nothing but to make him sick."

In "Love's Alchemy" he shows how good he was at disgust and contempt: "Hope not for mind in women; at their best / Sweetness and wit, they are but mummy, possessed."

And yet that, too, I found encouraging as a young reader—to write those lines, he had to have hoped for mind in



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women, not just seen them as objects of desire. His descriptions of the perfect moment of requited desire and sexual happiness are the words my generation—men and women—used to express bewilderment at happiness. “I wonder by my troth, what thou and I/Did, till we loved? were we not wean’d till then,/But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?”

Or the great poem which adjures that “Busy old fool, unruly sun” not to peer in at the windows or disturb the lovers, who are in fact the whole world: “She’s all states, and all princes, I,/Nothing else is./.../Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;/This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere.”

He has an absolute way of centering his world—and therefore the whole world, and the light and heat of the sun—on the bed in which they are. Anybody *could* say, at the moment of perfect happiness, “Nothing else is.” But it was Donne who did say it, and Donne we quote, and imagine. The great writers about sex are not always the great writers about love—Donne could do both, together and apart.

Love poems, we were taught, compared women to flowers, and happiness to spring, etc. Here is Donne, in a poem called “Love’s Growth,” which is indeed about the spring: “Gentle love deeds, as blossoms on a bough,/From love’s awakened root do bud out now.”

As a young girl I didn’t get the precision of that “awakened root.” Once I did, I was pleased and excited by the further precision of “blossoms on a bough.” (You couldn’t paint it as an image of an orgasm, but you can pre-

cisely feel it in the language.) Or, from the same poem: “If, as in water stirred more circles be/Produced by one, love such additions take”—which is a better description of female pleasure than D.H. Lawrence’s swooning bliss. Donne knows what is going on. He is assured and male. But the “love deeds” rising from the awakened roots are “gentle,” and that is somehow enticing, as well as reassuring. Donne’s brief metaphors are infinitely more exciting than Connie winding flowers in the red pubic hair round Mellors’s John Thomas.

A.S. Byatt is at work on a new novel, her ninth.

LAUREN WEISBERGER To this day my mother does not know we were reading soft-core porn on the Parkway Manor Elementary School playground in suburban Pennsylvania. Never mind that it was soft-core porn she had selected and purchased and bestowed upon me with a smile. “Enjoy it, honey,” she said as she handed me the paperback. Mom thought *Forever...* was just another Judy Blume classic, an age-appropriate novel no more titillating than *Superfudge* or *Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret*, a book that might mention tampons or first kisses but no s-e-x.

Thankfully, Mom was very, very wrong.

The truth is that from the opening chapter to the closing paragraph, there’s more memorable groping in *Forever...* than in any desperate housewife’s bodice ripper. I can’t always remember the names of ex-boyfriends—or sometimes current ones—but I can quote the sex scenes in *Forever...* with a court reporter’s

accuracy. I am not alone. Merely mention the book’s title and women of every age swoon. “You’re going to write about Kath and Michael going at it on the woven rug in her parents’ den, aren’t you?” a 36-year-old friend pleaded as she moaned audibly and white-knuckled her coffee cup. Another girlfriend recited verbatim the scene in which the young lovers spend an unchaperoned weekend at an older sister’s ski house. A third pronounced—with husky voice and lowered lashes—that she was “physically, emotionally and spiritually awakened” after first reading the book. *Forever...* is to young girls what a sneaked copy of *PLAYBOY* is to prepubescent boys: an earth-shattering introduction to the Good Stuff.

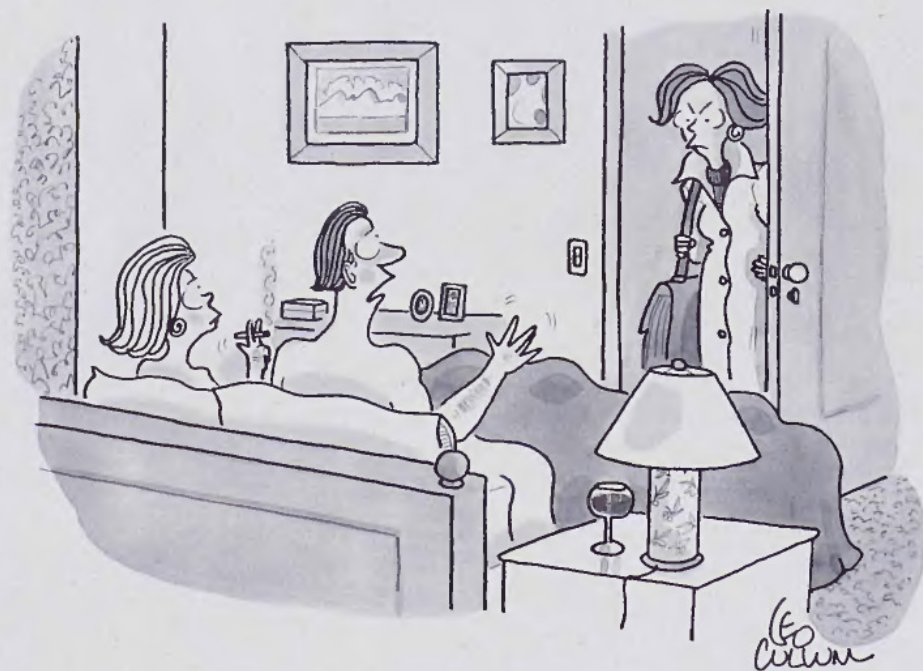
From the electrifying descriptions of heavy petting to the sweetly fumbled attempts at actual intercourse, the girls of Parkway Manor and I read with such fervor that the pages of my book detached from the binding. It was delicious reading then, but it wasn’t until recently, in my late 20s, that I realized the book is so intensely erotic not for what it describes but for what it leaves out.

In my favorite passage—both then and now—Katherine and Michael get excited by a soapy water fight as they do the dishes together. Afterward they shampoo each other in the bathroom sink and take turns towel-drying each other’s hair. When he follows her to the bedroom so she can change out of her sopping shirt, Michael swears he’ll just watch. But when she removes her wet, clinging bra and reaches for a dry one, he presses his body against hers, cups her breasts from behind and kisses her neck. They are interrupted before anything else happens, but I don’t really mind.

Blume, like her young heroines (and “good girls” the world over), understands that the heat of sexual tension comes from frustration, and frustration comes from abstaining. In actuality a whole lot of nothing happens in Katherine’s bedroom, but it is because of this—and not in spite of it—that the passage is so powerful. Noticeably absent is any suggestion from Michael that he has a bondage fetish or desperately wants to have a threesome with Katherine’s best friend or thinks it would be “awesome” if she got implants. Nowhere does he advocate crotchless panties. Or anal sex. He’s happy just to be close to her, and he desires her in the pure, blindly appreciative way only a man who has yet to sleep with a stripper, cheat on his wife, request a happy ending or watch *Sorority Girls IX* can manage.

Lauren Weisberger is the author of The Devil Wears Prada and Everyone Worth Knowing.

For the most provocative excerpts in modern literature, go to playboy.com/magazine.



PLAYMATE NEWS



NICE PAIR

Hollywood tends to produce interesting pairings. Some are immortal (Liz and Dick), some perplexing (Carlo Ponti and

christen them... Jimny McCarrey? Nope. How about Wacky and Wackier? That's more a movie title. JimJen? Sold!



Jim and Jenny are caught red-handed catching a flight for a weekend getaway.

Rumors of the pairing first circulated in September 2005 with a mention in the *New York Daily News*. During the months that followed, the couple would deny, deny, deny, even as sightings of the two together at such places as M Café de Chaya in L.A. became more frequent. Finally *People* magazine confirmed the rumor and in June caught JimJen, if not flagrante delicto, then at least holding hands at a heliport (left). Since then the pair have been letting it all hang out, attending



a Radiohead concert in L.A. and staying together at the Palms in Las Vegas. In September they appeared at the U.S. Open

in New York City, where Carrey donated \$7,500 to the USTA Tennis and Education Foundation and played against tennis great Stan Smith while Jenny cheered him on.

It hasn't been all play for the Playmate. With her book *Life Laughs* recently released and several TV and film projects on the way, Jenny is as busy as she's ever been. In the meantime we'll be writing the treatment for *Wacky and Wackier*.

Sophia Loren), others satisfyingly appropriate. The match of Jim Carrey and PMOY 1994 Jenny McCarthy belongs firmly in that last category. And like Benifer or TomKat, this high-profile couple needs an amalgamated name. We hereby

35 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

Karen Christy was a blonde Texas beauty who left the Lone Star State to become a Bunny at the Playboy Club in Chicago. She took up residence at the Chicago Mansion and became Miss December 1971. She was also one of Hef's "special ladies," even during the time he was seeing Barbi Benton, a period he calls his Captain's Paradise, after the Alec Guinness movie.



LOOSE LIPS

"It feels great to break the curse!"

—Kara Monaco, the first Miss June to become Playmate of the Year



KELLY MONACO: GIRL ON THE GO



When we first met Kelly Monaco she was an East Coast girl with big Hollywood dreams. After being named Miss April 1997, Kelly went on to rule the daytime airwaves with roles on *Part Charles* and *General Hospital*, and her A-list status was sealed with a Daytime Emmy nomination followed by a standout performance on *Dancing With the Stars*.

HOT SHOT



TAYLOR JAMES

MY FAVORITE PLAYMATE

By Miguel Ferrer
of *Crossing Jordan*

My favorite is Playmate of the Year 1989 Kimberly Conrad Hefner. She's spectacular by any measure.



POP QUESTIONS: CARRIE STEVENS

Q: Tell us about the column you've been writing for the HotMomsClub website.

A: The site got 600,000 hits in August, and it's a huge success. I pitch my idea every month, and I'm having a lot of fun with it. We recently published one called "Are You a Gold Digger?" and I wrote another with a back-to-school theme in which I offer relationship lessons to guys.

Q: Like what?

A: In lesson one I explain to guys that texting is not a substitute for real conversation. Also, you should never ask a woman for a date in a text message.

Q: Any plans to write a book?

A: I have six pages to go on a book proposal, and I have some big ideas for that, including a stage show—something with celebrities and moms presenting their own writing, kind of like *The Vagina Monologues*. That's my big project.



Q: Are you still acting?

A: I have offers for a TV commercial and a movie on the table. I'm definitely doing

the commercial, but I need to read the script before I accept the movie. It's called *Cheerleader Massacre*.

Q: Do it!

PLUG AND PAUSE

Our favorite part of Mel Brooks's *History of the World Part I*, updated and rereleased on DVD, would have to be the vestal virgins scene in Caesar's Palace, which showcases a record seven Playmates (joined by three PLAYBOY models). Three other movies share the record: *Picasso Trigger*, *Beverly Hills Cop II* and *Pauly Shore Is Dead*. Now...freeze-frame!



PLAYMATE GOSSIP

Miss February 1990 Pamela Anderson can currently be seen running from Sacha Baron Cohen in *Borat*, a mockumentary based on his character's cross-country quest to find and marry the Centerfold....

Miss December 2001 Shanna Moakler appears on this season's *Dancing With the Stars*.... PMOY 1997 Victoria Silvstedt is the new face of Lynx Boost men's shower gel. Her bikini-dad image appears on billboards throughout the U.K....

Miss November 1992 Stephanie Adams is filing a \$5 million suit against the New York City police, citing excessive force used during an arrest last May.... Congratulations to PMOY 2001 Brande Roderick, who became engaged to former NFL linebacker Glenn Cadrez....

PMOY 1982 Shannon Tweed appears in the A&E reality series *Gene Simmons Family Jewels*. She should—Gene is her boyfriend, and their children, Nick and Sophie, steal the show....

Misses July 2003, July 1996 and November 1998 Marketa Janska,



Victoria can't keep a secret.



Shannon and Gene star in *Family Jewels*.



Playmates Marketa, Angel and Tiffany are the highlight of Comic Con.

Angel Boris and Tiffany Taylor delighted fans at Comic Con International in San Diego, a convention for comic-book fans.

MORE PLAYMATES

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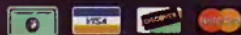
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Playboy On The Scene

WHAT'S HAPPENING, WHERE IT'S HAPPENING AND WHO'S MAKING IT HAPPEN

Storming the Reality Studio

The free software that will power tomorrow's garage animators

Want to create the next *Shrek* or *The Incredibles*? You'll need more than a great premise and sharp writing; you'll need some advanced software. Problem is, fees for the stuff the pros use can be thousands of dollars a year, effectively excluding those outside the corporate mainstream. But that may change for the next generation of digital animators, thanks to Ton Roosendaal, a Dutch programmer who created a three-dimensional rendering program called Blender and released it as open-source software, meaning anyone can download it and use it for free. Can Blender hang with the pros? It took six developers less than a year to create an 11-minute short film called *Elephants Dream* using only Blender and other free tools. Log on to elephantsdream.org and judge the results for yourself.



Best Guest

In his latest offering, Christopher Guest turns his eye to Hollywood during Oscar season

It's about people and how they react to certain things, in this case awards buzz," Christopher Guest says of his new film, *For Your Consideration*. Reminiscent of *Waiting for Guffman* and *A Mighty Wind*, it focuses on the vanities and vulnerabilities of a small subculture. *For Your Consideration* follows the cast of "Home for Purim" as Oscar whispers run through the film set like salad through a supermodel. Though the movie-within-a-movie bears the standard Guestian earmarks—brilliant use of improvisation and vérité fly-on-the-wall camera work, and the usual suspects from his acting troupe (with the welcome addition of *The Office*'s Ricky Gervais as a smarmy producer)—it drops the faux documentary style for a more conventional narrative. Guest is also, for the first time, taking on a subject he knows as an insider. "I can make these observations because I've been in this business for 40 years," he says. The result is a film a few shades darker than his previous explorations. "I'm hoping to get to some kind of truth of what happens when people are put through this thing. This one is way more brutal in the end."



News Flash!

Tops fall down. Shirts get wet. Hell, in France they don't even wear bikini tops. But when the fugitive boob belongs to LINDSAY LOHAN, the world's most desirable starlet, it ends up in PLAYBOY. Every goddamn time. We promise.



The Simpsons

Her marriage went down the tubes, and critics panned her album *A Public Affair*. JESSICA SIMPSON doesn't need any more hassles. Yet judging from the what-the-fuck-do-you-mean-my-dress-is-transparent look she's giving her stylist, her troubles aren't over yet.

Gong Show of Support

Earlier this year the ever curvaceous GONG LI was voted the most beautiful person in China in a *Beijing News* poll—not bad for a babe who'll turn 41 (yes, 41) on New Year's Eve.

PAUL SMITH/FEATUREFLASH/RETNA



ODETTE SUGERMAN

BARNEY PHOTO

Dear Ben and J. Lo: Thanks for Gigli

Nothing in this world is all bad, not even *Gigli*. The high-profile 2003 flop boosted, in that odd Hollywood way, SHELBY FENNER's résumé. (She played a dancer.) Catch her now in *The Guardian*, with Kevin Costner, and next year in the star-studded *Vantage Point*.

Grappling Partners Needed

They didn't win, but kudos to Cybergirl REBECCA DIPIETRO (left) and Special Editions model MARYSE OUELLET (below) for making the final eight of the WWE's 2006 Diva search. May we suggest they form a tag team?



PAUL BUCKLEY

The Other Boz

University of Oklahoma star linebacker Brian Bosworth won the Butkus Award twice, but his pro career was cut short by a shoulder injury. Where is he now? Hell if we know. You'll have to make do with this picture of the stunning KATE BOSWORTH.





WHERE THERE'S SMOKE...

This fire-and-rescue G-string (\$12, candfsupply.com) comes from a men's gift boutique in New Jersey called Cigars and Fire Trucks, the only store we know of that specializes in both high-end smokables and fire-extinguishing memorabilia. (The owners also have a fetish for Formula One—go figure.) Need a stocking stuffer? There's nothing like smoking-hot panties to put the spark in an old flame. Some answers to FAQs: No, the panties are not fire-proof. No, they should not be used as real fire-safety equipment. Yes, they come in small, medium and large.

SHOOTING GALLERY

A long time ago there was an old salt called Norman "Sailor Jerry" Collins. Legend has it he was a rough-and-tumble type who served in the Navy and eventually settled on a career as a tattoo artist. His classic designs have been reborn on these cordial and shot glasses (\$36, sailorjerry.com), available in sets of four. We're reasonably sure they're what Sailor Jerry would have used around breakfast time.



SPEED READING

Simply put, John Fitch's *Racing With Mercedes* (\$30, saratogaauto.museum.org/fitchbook), a memoir of speed and adventure in the 1950s, is a must-read for auto-racing fans. The only American ever to compete for the Mercedes factory team during the sport's golden age, Fitch puts you at the wheel of two of the greatest racing cars in history—the Mercedes 300 SLR prototype and the 300 SL gull wing—at Le Mans, the Mille Miglia and other legendary events. You also meet Fitch's friends, including such gallant daredevils as Stirling Moss and Phil Hill. The book's plentiful photos and vivid prose make you smell the exhaust fumes. Helmet and goggles not included.

TOOLING AROUND

Leatherman made its name on folding, pliers-enabled gadgets. We're happy to report it's branching out with its designs but still packing them with useful features. Take its K502x (\$80, leatherman.com). Not only does it have a three-inch utility blade and de rigueur bottle and can openers, it also sports a bit driver and six interchangeable bits. Now you'll never be caught flat-footed when a bed frame needs tightening.



A LEG UP

"Only one thing in the world could've dragged me away from the soft glow of electric sex gleaming in the window," says the narrator of *A Christmas Story*, the 1983 movie classic whose roots are in a PLAYBOY story by Jean Shepherd. Red Rider Leg Lamps (\$140, redriderleglamps.com) makes life-size reproductions of the flick's famous fixture. The company will even ship your lamp in a replica wooden crate boldly marked FRAGILE. If not for yourself, get it for Dad, set it up in your parents' living room and marvel at the battle of wills when Mom tries to take it down.



WRAPPER'S DELIGHT

They say it's the thought that counts, but we all know redeeming a crappy gift takes more than thinking. It takes naked ladies. Apply Suck UK's Raunchy Wrapping Paper (\$5 a sheet, www.suck.uk.com) raunchy side in and it can sit innocuously under the tree for weeks like a smutty time bomb. In our experience, your cousin will be so pleased, he won't even notice you're regifting the Pocket Fisherman he got you two years back.



MUSICALLY GIFTED

Back in 2003 Slim Devices brought out the Squeezebox, an inexpensive gadget that lets you play music from your PC in any room in your house. The Transporter (\$2,000, slimdevices.com) does the same trick but with audiophile-level sound processing and components. This beamer is easy on the eyes and even easier on the ears. We hope you ripped those CDs at top quality.

HAVE YOUR CAKE

We here at PLAYBOY have been serving up cheesecake for more than 50 years, so we know how to pick the good stuff. And if anyone is going to sling fine cheese-based comestibles, it's Artisanal, the premier stateside cheese monger. It was only a matter of time before chef Terrance Brennan would come up with his own take on the American classic (\$45, artisanalcheese.com). The cake is fantastically decadent, but the pecan-shortbread crumb crust and pecan-praline topping push it clear over the edge. Cigarette?

WHAT UP, PLAYA?

Sleepaway camp was nothing like this. From January 17 to 21, poker legend Chris Money-maker will host Playboy Poker Camp at the Morongo Casino Resort and Spa in southern California (\$5,000 to \$7,500, playboypokercamp.com). Get one-on-one instruction or try your hand at tournament play with the pros. And when you're ready to cash out, the party begins. Playmates will be on hand, and the whole shebang is capped off with a soiree at the Mansion. Ante up.



Next Month



STACKED.



THE SHELBY MUSTANG LIVES: A CAR-OF-THE-YEAR NOMINEE.



MEN WITHOUT PANTS.



WHAT DITA VON TEESE GAVE HEF FOR HIS 80TH.

PAM ANDERSON—NEXT MONTH'S PICTORIAL PROVES THAT THE LUCKIEST MAN IN THE WORLD IS A KID—KID ROCK.

SPORTS HEAVEN—JUMP ON THE WAYBACK MACHINE AS **CHRIS BERMAN**, **KEITH OLBERMANN**, **DAN PATRICK** AND OTHER *SPORTSCENTER* ANCHORS FROM OVER THE YEARS DELIVER THE ULTIMATE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BIG SHOW. AN ORAL HISTORY, AS TOLD TO **KEVIN COOK**

THE YEAR IN SEX—FROM **DITA VON TEESE**'S BURLESQUE SHOW FOR HEF'S BIRTHDAY TO NEWS OF **HEATHER MILLS**'S EARLY ESCAPADES, 2006 WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR.

THE MYTH OF SISYPHA—CELEBRATED MYSTERY NOVELIST **WALTER MOSLEY** TURNS FROM HARD-BOILED TO HARD-CORE IN THIS EXCERPT FROM HIS EYE-POPPINGLY EXPLICIT NEW WORK *KILLING JOHNNY FRY: A SEXISTENTIAL NOVEL*.

CASH AND CAROLS—EVERY YEAR FOR A FEW SCANT WEEKS A FAMILIAR HANDFUL OF YULETIDE TUNES RECEIVE MORE AIRPLAY THAN ANY POP-CHART HIT. **CHRIS MARTINS** LOOKS AT THE LUCRATIVE BUSINESS OF PLAYING TIMELESS CHRISTMAS CLASSICS.

T. BOONE PICKENS—THE VENERABLE OIL TYCOON MAY BE OLD-SCHOOL (HE USES *BULLY* AS AN INTERJECTION), BUT IN THIS *PLAYBOY* INTERVIEW THE FOSSIL-FUEL MAGNATE SHOWS HOW

FORWARD-THINKING HE CAN BE AS HE TELLS **DAVID SHEFF** THAT PEOPLE SHOULD BE FORCED TO CONSERVE GAS AND THAT THE TERM *LIQUID GOLD* MAY SOON DESCRIBE WATER.

MARRIAGE AND MAGAZINE STREET—BEFORE JOINING THE LEGENDARY MERRY PRANKSTERS, IN THE 1960S, **ROBERT STONE** HAD A WILD TIME LIVING IN NEW ORLEANS. THE NOVELIST CONSIDERS THE PLACE THAT SHAPED HIS ADULT LIFE, A CITY THAT CAN BE REBUILT BUT WILL NEVER BE AS IT ONCE WAS.

CARS OF THE YEAR—SNEERING AT GAS PRICES, OUR VAUNTED AUTOMOTIVE TEAM LOGGED SERIOUS MILES, CROSSING THE GLOBE IN SEARCH OF THE BEST VEHICLES FOR 2007.

THE DIRTY SECRET ABOUT THE IMMIGRATION MESS—AS HE CONSIDERS WHETHER ILLEGAL-IMMIGRANT LABOR IS ESSENTIAL TO THE ECONOMY, **JIMMY BRESLIN** STUDIES THE PEOPLE WHO RISK THEIR LIVES TO WORK HARD JOBS FOR HUMBLE WAGES AND WONDERS WHY ANYONE WOULD WANT TO KEEP THEM OUT.

ELLEN POMPEO—THE MILKY-SKINNED PHYSICIAN OF *GREY'S ANATOMY* DISCUSSES WORKING FOR WISEGUYS AND HAVING SEX ON A SHEEPSKIN RUG, IN A 20Q WITH **STEPHEN REBELLO**.

PLUS: OUR *PARTY OF THE YEAR*, THE 2006 PLAYMATES EN MASSE AND A BABE FOR THE NEW YEAR, MISS JANUARY **JAYDE NICHOL**.

**THE BOTTLE IS FAMOUS
BUT IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE
THAT MAKES IT THE**



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