

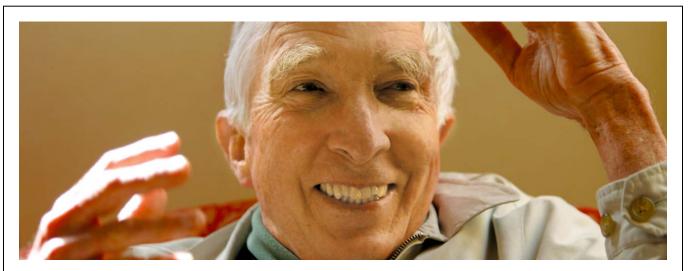
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One of America's leading men of letters, **John Updike** writes about discovering different cultures—and oneself—in *German Lessons*. "The story and characters originated in a mixture of memory and imagination," he says. "I suppose it was an image of the green feet of young women sitting on the grass in the 1970s. Flower children were just losing their petals." The piece tracks a man's midlife crisis in the fallout from the counterculture movement and its celebration of personal freedom. "Freedom can be an embarrassment as well as a triumph," Updike says. "If somehow you can't fulfill it, you encounter emptiness." Along with meeting a girl, the main character uses his freedom to learn German. "It's wonderful to learn languages, and English itself is amazing. In English there are endless nuances. There is always a better word, a right word—which makes it fun to write."

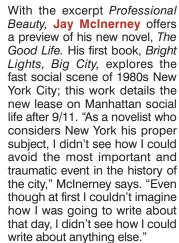
The artwork for Car Wars, PLAYBOY'S probe of the U.S. auto industry's struggles, is designed by Bosnianborn Mirko Ilić. "Growing up in Yugoslavia, I got into illustration for political reasons, so this kind of work is natural to me," Ilić says. His illustration exaggerates the battle between American and foreign car companies. "The idea is to make business seem like war. I had the background look like combat in Iraq but gave the piece the feeling of a video game. I wanted to keep it both realistic and surreal at the same time." Ilić is intense about his craft. "Sometimes words are not strong enough. Illustration is quite powerful in that it can tell a whole story with one picture."

"I think every man under 40 wants to be Mark Cuban," says Diane K. Shah, who sits with the outspoken owner of the Dallas Mavericks for this month's Playboy Interview. "I can't think of another owner who is making such an impact on professional sports. At first he was the wild card, and now he is what the NBA wants in the front office." Cuban was also one of the success stories of the Internet boom, selling his company Broadcast.com for billions. But he is far from sated. "He is now attempting to revolutionize the movie business," says Shah. "He's still young. Who can tell what he'll be best known for?"





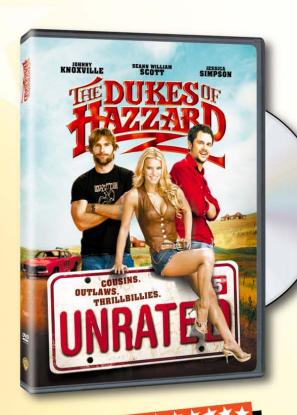
With a third version of the great ape movie hitting theaters, we tap Kathleen Sharp, author of Stalking the Beast: How King Kong Super-Sized Hollywood, to analyze the films in The Loves of King Kong. "When I visited Fay Wray I was struck by her beauty and integrity," Sharp says. "Those same qualities, which Kong found so disarming, are also present in Jessica Lange and Naomi Watts." Not only does Sharp think Watts is right for the part, she believes the time is right for a reimagining. "The other films were made during times of war and economic downturns," she says. "It seems a remake is due."







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Fay Wray, Jessica Lange and Naomi Watts have all played the beauty opposite the beast in major *King Kong* movies. Here's how having a relationship with a supersize simian affected their lives. BY KATHLEEN SHARP

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Artist, singer, author and bon vivant Shel Silverstein was an integral member of the PLAYBOY family for decades. As a new generation discovers his brilliance, we take a rollicking look at this American Renaissance man. BY STEVE POND

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For the better part of a century, what's been good for General Motors has been good for America. Now the world's number-one carmaker is about to be eclipsed by Toyota. Our eminent automotive expert went on a pilgrimage to Detroit to discover what went wrong and what's being done about it. BY ARTHUR KRETCHMER

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She's not a Goth, but she plays one in *Underworld: Evolution*. We find the striking actress surprisingly hilarious with tales of her "ghastly" industrial-safety video and why she ditched the alias Sigourney Beaver. BY JASON BUHRMESTER

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After he became one of America's richest men, he shelled out \$280 million for the Dallas Mavericks. Now the self-effacing tycoon comes clean about his rivalry with Donald Trump, his most extravagant toys and his plans to rewrite the Hollywood rule book. BY DIANE K. SHAH





COVER STORY

As a reporter for Monday Night Football and Best Damn Sports Show Period, Lisa Guerrero got up close to America's top jocks. Now she's game for new challenges, including acting in movies and writing a book titled Diary of a Naked Lady. She pitches photographer Antoine Verglas some serious curves. Our Rabbit reveals himself to be a real gold digger.



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We catch Lisa Guerrero—everyone's favorite female sports reporter-in Paris, preparing to paint the town rouge.

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Miss January was named for the goddess of war, but don't fight the urge to gaze upon her beauty.

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THE WORLD OF PLAYBOY

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OH. CAPTAIN

A bounty of comely beauties comes by the Mansion each Sunday for Fun in the Sun. The afternoon frolics feature swimming, sunning and a well-appointed poolside buffet, followed by an evening screening in the Mansion's private theater.



GOING DOWN UNDER

Johnny Knoxville joined fellow Tennessean Tiffany Fallon, 2005 Playmate of the Year, at the opening of the new Playboy Concept Boutique in Melbourne, Australia



THE COMPANY YOU KEEP

Playboy CEO Christie Hefner has been named to Forbes's list of the world's 100 most powerful women, joining an elite group of executives, celebrities and politicians.



HEY, BABY CAKES

Hef and number one girl next door Holly celebrated their fourth anniversary with a romantic Polynesian evening at Trader Vic's in Beverly Hills. Dinner, though certainly not the night, ended with a cake bearing an image of the pair.



KNOW GOOD

Actor Dorian Gregory, with Playmates Stacy Fuson and Shallan Meiers (above), and Eva Longoria, with the Spurs' Tony Parker (right), lent their support to a Special Olympics benefit party at the Mansion.

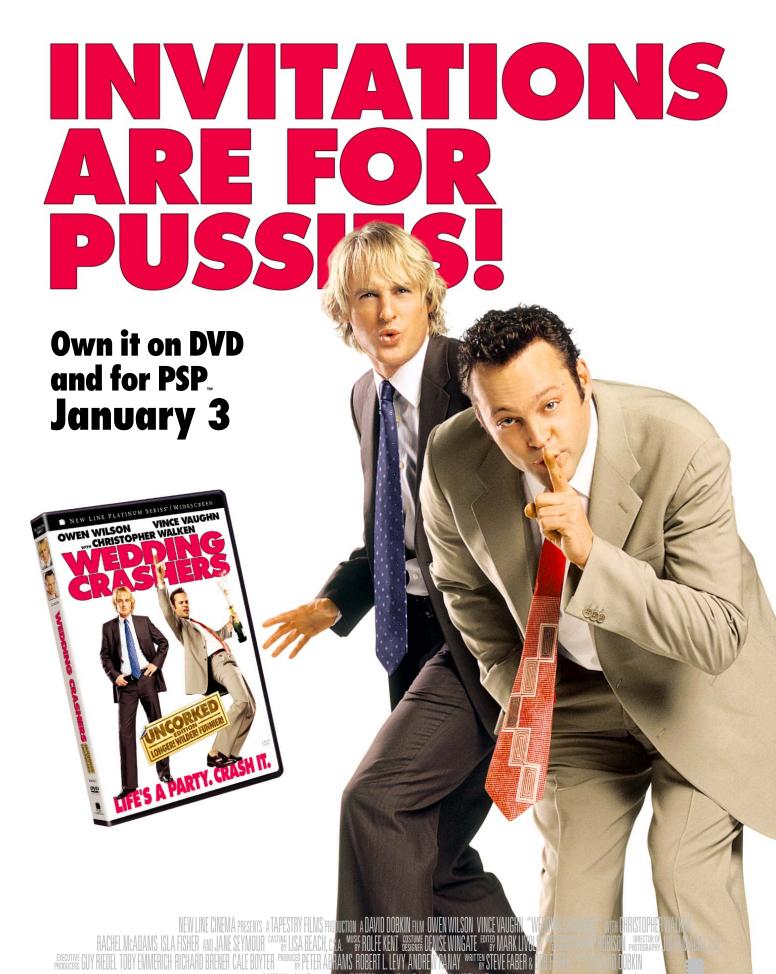




KNOCKING AROUND

It was a thrilling ESPN Fight Night at the Mansion when Carlos Quintana (above left, in white trunks) took Francisco Campos with a TKO in the sixth round. Tennis stars Andy Roddick and Maria Sharapova (above right) were among the many sports and entertainment celebrities on hand.



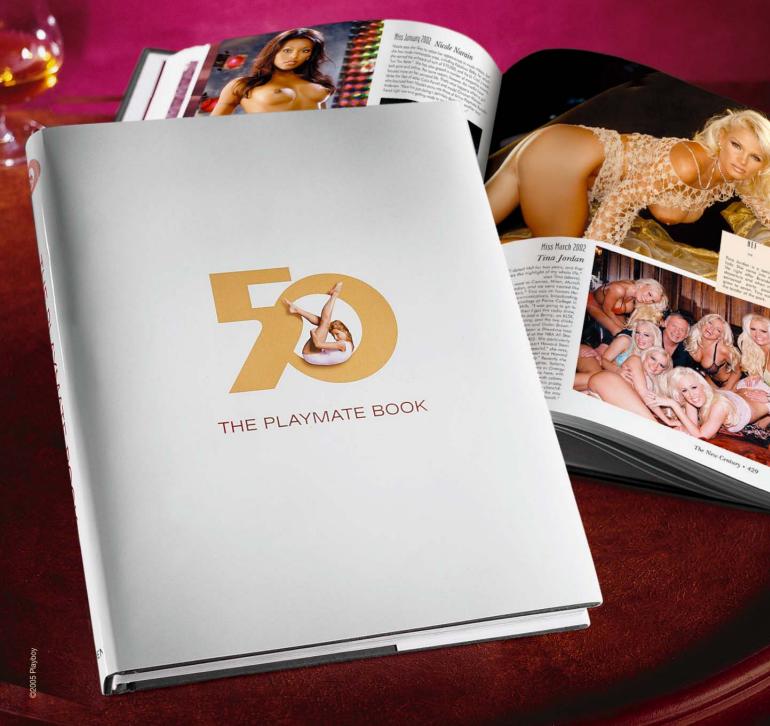


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EDUCATED RESPONSE

I lost my virginity today: I read my first issue of PLAYBOY. I absolutely loved it, but *Earnest Goes to College* (October) broke my heart. I am a junior at the University of Arizona, and I have always wondered where to find the fun colleges shown in movies like *Old School*. Instead, students today are expected to work 30 hours a week, volunteer at least 15 hours a week and have at least



College students today lack spirit.

two internships before they graduate. No wonder we're all depressed.

> Michaela Kulesha Tucson, Arizona

While the rules are getting stricter and Greek life isn't what it used to be, many students still take their time to graduate, party at least four nights a week and take part in all sorts of debauchery. The nation will never lack for leaders.

Eric Tritch Minneapolis, Minnesota

It's ironic that a society whose corporate philosophy made a cliché of "Think outside the box" is now grooming its children to hop back in.

Matthew McConnell Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

When I studied abroad in Australia, administrators accepted a certain amount of merrymaking. I never heard of anyone being hospitalized or driving drunk, both of which happened weekly at my school in the U.S. Today's students have seen the failings of those who thought they could change the world, and it makes

us cynical. We want our piece of the pie before everything goes to hell. My parents' generation experimented. My generation self-medicates.

> Vincent Mancini San Diego, California

Parties are where students learn to be social and communicate. The next time you meet someone who went to a school lacking in them, chances are he or she will be uncomfortable talking about anything other than school or work.

John Grace Santa Barbara, California

College today seems less like a traditional exercise in figuring out who you are and what you want to do with your life than one in learning how to be financially successful.

> Colin Planalp Columbia, Missouri

It's not fair to call the latest generation of students mild compared with those of *Animal House* days. Most battles for student freedoms have been fought, and there is no draft (yet).

Kingston Wood Miami, Florida

Most students I know don't seem to enjoy college. The minute you start having fun, you're made to feel you've done something morally wrong. Your article gave me a new perspective as I get bogged down with tests, law school applications and job interviews. I have the rest of my life to act old.

Dustin Bergman Atlanta, Georgia

SPORT OF THE SOUTH

I enjoyed NASCAR Crash Course (October) but feel it overlooks something important. Lee Petty and Junior Johnson were hardscrabble folk who made a living driving cars, as is Sterling Marlin. Their fans were the working-class poor. Each was too unsophisticated to be anything but friendly and courteous. The new NASCAR guys such as Jeff Gordon and Tony Stewart drive well but are no more Southern than the pope. NASCAR has lost its appeal for good old boys like me.

B.C. Hart Conyers, Georgia

FREE SPIRITS

College Sex 101 (October) confirms some results I'm getting from a study for my research firm, Social Inquiry, on attitudes among college students toward "hooking up." Some of the

responses from the young women you surveyed are flippant, which I take as a sign of progress. It shows that yesteryear's guilt about sex is gone. In their own way the results are a tribute to PLAYBOY, which has been a force in ridding us of the repression that was so prevalent when Hugh Hefner began his crusade.

Bernhardt Lieberman Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

WICCAN WOMAN

Imagine my surprise when I turned the page to find a fellow sister of the craft (*Spellbinder*, October). Thank the goddess! Fiona Horne is a beautiful woman and a wonderful witch.

> Amber Draper Norman, Oklahoma

CONFERENCE CHAMPS

Could you let Sara Jean and Oregon State University (*Girls of the Pac 10*, October) know that my transfer application is in the mail?

Brad Breslin Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



Sara Jean likes touch football.

I love the body-painted models on your October cover. If that is waterbased paint, I'm praying for rain.

> Bill Goodhart Carlisle, Pennsylvania

DIGITAL PLAYBOY

I "thumbed" through the first digital edition of PLAYBOY (October) and am astounded by its quality. I especially like the navigation and hyperlinks to retailers ("What store is that from?"). Of course, the women look stunning.

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> Robert Reyes San Antonio, Texas

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AMANDA PAIGE

As a Virginia Tech fan, I am supposed to loathe the University of Virginia. But after seeing UVA student and Playmate Amanda Paige (*Open Paige*, October), I say, "Go, Wahoos!"

Christopher Gray Radford, Virginia

How easily they turn.

I am a librarian, and I am frustrated by your Centerfold shot of Amanda, which shows her in a library, shushing. Few people realize the education and training required to become a librarian, and the photo adds to the misconceptions about our profession. If you're going to put a woman in that scenario, at least make her a real librarian.

Marion Duncan Philadelphia, Pennsylvania So librarians don't shush, but they hang out naked in the stacks?

A WORD OF ADVICE

In the October After Hours you offer recipes for the green gator and the bulldog highball. An orange drink for a Georgia Bulldog? We'd rather be invaded by the North again. It's red and black—always. To avoid getting your ass kicked at the game, I suggest adding half a penny's worth of grenadine or substituting cranberry juice.

Philip Herold Atlanta, Georgia

GEORGE CARLIN

Your *Interview* with George Carlin (October) is everything I hoped for: great questions and snappy answers.

Brian McMillan Longmont, Colorado

Most of us remember those conversations from our younger years when, fortified by recreational chemicals, we defined and solved the world's problems. Carlin stayed on the soapbox.

Royce Dahl Minnetonka, Minnesota

Carlin and Ozzy Osbourne (20Q, October) would be much more interesting if they used adjectives and adverbs other than *fucking*. Osbourne apparently doesn't know any. Carlin obviously does but includes the word

in useless bunches on what seems to be a random internal program.

Fred Waiss Denver, Colorado

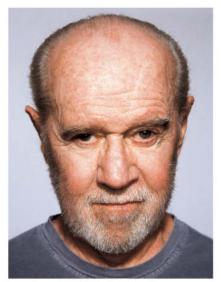
When Carlin rants about government giving "the people" high-tech toys to take their mind off the fact that they are being fucked, he fails to note that, in accepting these gifts, the people consent to be fucked.

Nick Neighbour Pasadena, California

After reading your interview, I'm convinced Carlin is the smartest man in America.

Larry Johnson Orlando, Florida

Robert Schimmel, Dom Irrera and Bobby Slayton would have been far better selections as the spawn of Carlin



George Carlin and his gutter mouth.

than Sarah Silverman, Alonzo Bodden and Carlos Mencia.

Jackie Mendez Hollywood, California

Carlin must realize that the same oxymoronic absurdities he sees in society are shaping his own beliefs. For example, he derides the Washington elite for controlling our lives. Yet he also says most Americans are "stupid folks who don't know how to protect themselves and operate in their own interest," implying that they need someone to make decisions for them. Perhaps Carlin is deliberate in his ambiguity. Could it be that he knows the danger of giving advice? When people follow it and it doesn't work out, you get blamed.

Dean Olson Royal Palm Beach, Florida



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PLAYBOY a f t e r h o u r s

Babe of the Month

Paige Peterson

ENOUGH WITH THE TOTO JOKES ALREADY

"I've always been very bendy," Paige Peterson announces over lunch at a hipster coffee shop a few blocks from her home in Studio City. She's touting her physical elasticity as a byproduct of a career path that went from kiddie gymnastics to dance lessons and eventually to acting. But still, "bendy"the mind races. Tanned, toned and stuffed into a skimpy SUGAR BABY tube top, she hardly seems deserving of the Dorothy-and-Toto jokes people crack when they learn she's from Lawrence, Kansas. "I finally just accepted it and went as Dorothy to a Halloween party," she says. "But I was the sexy Dorothy. I was Whore-othy in ruby stilettos. It was hot." At 25, there's not much Paige hasn't done-a sitcom (Scrubs), soap opera (The Young and the Restless), late-night talk show (Jimmy Kimmel Live) and film (The Hot Chick)—nor are there many fetishes left for her to realize. "I'm always a stripper, nurse or cheerleader," she sighs. "I'm probably being typecast, but it pays the bills, right?" Next up: sorority girl from hell, in House of the Dead 2. "My name is Tracy, and I get injected with zombie blood," she explains. "Then I go on a rampage and hunt down the guy who cheated on me. Of course I'm a scantily clad zombie-is there any other kind?" As she leaves the coffee shop, she flashes us a sheepish grin. "Don't make me sound slutty, okay?" Slutty? Never. Bendy's good enough for us.





Cheerleader of the Month

Pirate's Beauty

TAMPA BAY CUTIE KAYLA DRAWDY ROOTS, ROOTS, **ROOTS FOR THE HOME TEAM**

PLAYBOY: How did you get into cheerleading?

KAYLA: I cheered in middle school and high school partly because I liked the dancing and partly because I just liked to watch football. Buccaneers cheerleaders only have to be 18, so after high school I went straight to the big league.

PLAYBOY: What kind of women become NFL cheerleaders?

KAYLA: Everyone on the squad is either a student, like me, or a career woman. We have had an attorney, a dentist, a teacher and a speech pathologist.

PLAYBOY: Ever have ego clashes?

KAYLA: Our team is not catty—which is hard to find when you are dealing with more than 30 women who spend so much time together. We get along; we're like an NFL sorority.

PLAYBOY: Do you have a favorite moment?

KAYLA: When we won the Super Bowl in my first season. We spent six days in San Diego practicing what we'd do if we won. Then when we did, we were like, "What are we supposed to do again?"

PLAYBOY: What did you do?

KAYLA: We jumped up and down, we hugged, then we rushed onto the field and danced onstage with Jon Bon Jovi. It was surreal. He's an oldie, but he still kicks it.

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.



Dunk and Down It A CLASSIC FROM THE LADLE OF CIVILIZATION

Don't knock punch—a good one is nothing more than a big cocktail. Long before our vain age of bespoke beverages (shaken not stirred, very dry, hold the umbrella), party people jumbled their spirits en masse. To prove the point, here's a holiday picker-upper invented in the 1730s at the State in Schuylkill, a fishing club in Pennsylvania. Legend has it this drink knocked George Washington flat for a few days when he visited the club in 1787. Recipes vary considerably; this obviously modernized formula (note club soda) comes from Mr. Boston.

Fish House Punch

Powdered sugar

Juice of 1 dozen lemons 1 large block of ice

1½ liters brandy

1 liter peach-flavored brandy 16 oz. light rum

32 oz. club soda

16 oz. strong tea (optional)

Add powdered sugar to lemon juice until it is sweet. Pour over ice block in punch bowl and stir well. Add remaining ingredients. Stir well and decorate with in-season fruits (we suggest healthy chunks of apples, pears and blood oranges). Makes 40 servings.

Tip Sheet

neathage \nE-thij\ n, region of lower breast visible when a woman wears a short top or a very small bikini. Also known as underboob.

Moan Poems

A QUICKIE GUIDE TO THE LATEST AURAL SEX

These up-and-coming CD releases will have your iPod oohing and aahing.

SeXXXy Noises

Model Heidi Cortez ululates and compliments your enormous manhood.

Alternate title: The Very Best of 1-900 Numbers **Hot if:** You're a heterosexual

male. All right then. Live Orgasms in Concert

Moaning played over uplifting chill-out soundtrack. Alternate title: Moby Presents Enya Getting Herself Off

Hot if: Your fantasies always include a waterfall, a flute and a piano.

Jessica Vale Presents the Sex Album

Unrecognizable sounds of sexual acts reconstituted as dark ambient music.

Alternate title: My Frightening One-Night Stand With Fischerspooner

Hot if: You occasionally wear latex panties to work.



SELCUK DEMIR

Dave Barry's Investment Secrets

FINANCIAL ANSWERS FROM A GUY IN THE MIGHT-POSSIBLY-KNOW

In the forthcoming *Dave Barry's Money Secrets*, the columnist doles out unconventional wisdom regarding the green stuff. We hit up the self-styled money maven for some free advice.

When to start planning for retirement: Birth. Maybe sooner if your mom has a well-lit uterus.

Pros and cons of cattle futures:

The danger with futures of any kind, but especially cattle futures, is you'll forget to get rid of them before they come due and you'll wind up with a bunch of freaking cattle. If you hear unexpected mooing coming from your driveway, *sell the futures*.

How to improve a lousy credit rating: Next time you fill out a credit application, write "pope" as your current job title.

How to get rich on penny stocks:

You get a bunch of penny stocks, roll them into a cylinder and paint it red. Then you go to the bank and brandish your cylinder and say, "I have a stick of dynamite here! Give me a lot of money!" Note: This may not be totally legal in every state.

What to do when interest rates are low: You should either buy or not buy stocks. I can never remember which. But it's definitely one of those two. I think.

How the war in Iraq will affect the U.S. and global economies in the long run: There's a war in Iraq? Whoa. That doesn't sound good.

How to make lemonade out of lemons if, for example, you have killed a stranger in a dark alley only to find he has no cash in his wallet:

One word: kidneys.

The problem with gambling Social Security on the stock market:

If you do that, there is always the danger that some of it could wind up in the hands of your children.

Reader question: I'm an accomplished businessman who has run a few unsuccessful oil companies and gotten rich off a baseball franchise by cutting shady deals with family friends. What's my next move?

Come on. Nobody with those "accomplishments" has any chance of career advancement.

"A lot of funny things happened. Like I'd be walking through an airport and I'd see someone with the issue of PLAYBOY in their hands, and they'd see me, and their eyes would go right to my chest. Straight down—zap."

—two-time Olympic gold medalist Katarina Witt on posing for PLAYBOY in 1998, in her new memoir, Only With Passion





Rude Awakening MORNINGWOOD'S HARD ROCK IS SET TO EXPLODE

Has it really been 28 years since "Heart of Glass"? Chantal Claret, of the noise-pop outfit Morningwood, is just the kind of female role model New York rock grrrls need. Other members of the band (all dudes) come from groups such as Spacehog and Cibo Matto, but pedigree is irrelevant when the magnetic Claret takes the stage.

Playboy: There's a long history of groups with sexual names: the Slits, Pussy Galore, Hole, the Breeders. Was that the idea behind Morningwood?

Claret: Morningwood is a sweet, natural-sounding word if you don't know what it means. A lot of people don't, and we're not necessarily going to tell them. But we didn't consciously choose it because it's sexy. We can't help it—we're so sexy. Playboy: And your label doesn't mind? Claret: No. They said, "You have to keep this name." They were in love with it even more than I was.

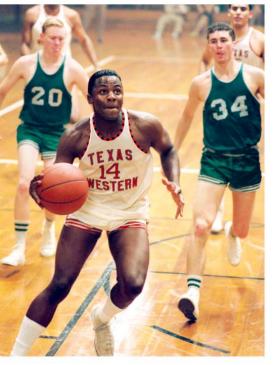
Playboy: Is there a female equivalent to morning wood?

Claret: Yeah—me. I'm pretty randy in the morning.

Playboy: How do you manage to maintain the incredible energy of your concerts?

Claret: We're up there to entertain people. Musicians I've seen recently don't take that into consideration. A show is a show,

even if it's in a tiny club. People pay money to see you play, and they deserve to get everything they want. Playboy: What else makes a Morningwood show different? Claret: We have a song called "Take Off Your Clothes." At every show I get somebody up onstage and get them naked. Then I molest them—a piggyback ride, a little making out, a touch and a slap and a tickle.

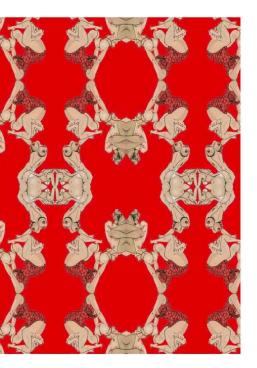


Derek Luke, Skywalker

THE FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS STAR SHOOTS BACK-IN-THE-DAY HOOPS

Glory Road is a film about the watershed 1966 NCAA basketball tournament final in which an all-white squad from Kentucky lost to a Texas Western team that started five black players. But it's not just a tale of a triumph over racism. It's also a story about young men in tight shorts and flimsy shoes. "The shorts they wore were cheerleader length," laments Derek Luke, who plays Texas Western star Bobby Joe Hill. "They were nut huggers, not flatteners. And these guys played with the old Converses. We used thicker soles and Dr. Scholl's inserts, but you couldn't find those in the 1960s. These guys were dunking in those shoes!" Luke is similarly amused by his period hairdo. "I looked pimped out," he proclaims, "It's what was called a conk. I looked like I was in the Platters or the Four Tops. I told the hairdressers, 'You better do this right.' If they do it right, it makes you look sweet, but if they don't, you look like one of Jerry's kids. I'm not talking Jerry

Lewis or Jerry Bruckheimer, I'm talking Jheri curl." Unfortunately, Luke never met the man he plays—Hill died in 2002—but the actor learned from those who knew him. The key to portraying Hill was understanding that he loved the game but wasn't possessed by it. "Many times Bobby Joe didn't feel like playing. He was bored," says Luke. "He wasn't controlling-not all the time—but if his team was losing, he would step up. It was like waking a sleeping giant." Don Haskins, who coached the 1966 Texas Western squad, was another useful resource. (Texas Western is now the University of Texas at El Paso.) "To this day Haskins doesn't see what he did as a big deal," says Luke. "When people ask him why he started five black players, all he says is, 'I played my best guys, and everybody on that team knows it.' His ideals and his way of doing things were so rare in the 1960s. In a way he was an artist, and he didn't even know it."



Walls Gone Wild

It's like Grandma said: Nothing brightens a staid sitting room like Mexican soft-core porn. WKRPinc. makes fabric and wallpaper from fragments of cheap sex comics. Just squint to see the rosebuds and pussy willows. More patterns at wkrpinc.com.

"DESIRE: Some men think they are paying us the most supremely flattering compliment when they tell us that they 'want' us. The approach is a little primitive because a woman who has never excited the desire of any man must really be completely repulsive, judging from the number of unattractive pregnant women you see in the streets."

—from *The Men in Your Life: Timeless Advice and Wisdom on Managing the Opposite Sex,* by 91-year-old style guru Madame Genevieve Antoine Dariaux

New Year's Diva A CLASSICAL BEAUTY'S FORBIDDEN FRUIT

The cover of Cecilia Bartoli's recent album *Opera Proibita* finds the mezzo-soprano cavorting Anita Ekberg–style in Rome's Trevi fountain. The girl knows how to have a good time. We asked her about revelry and repression.

What do Italians do on New Year's Eve?

"We call it La Notte di San Silvestro. On the 31st we eat lentils and *cotechino*, a sausage, to bring luck. I recommend staying inside on San Silvestro—Italians throw things out the window at midnight. In Rome it's not so bad, but in Naples they throw tables and chairs."

Opera Proibita means "forbidden opera." Explain.

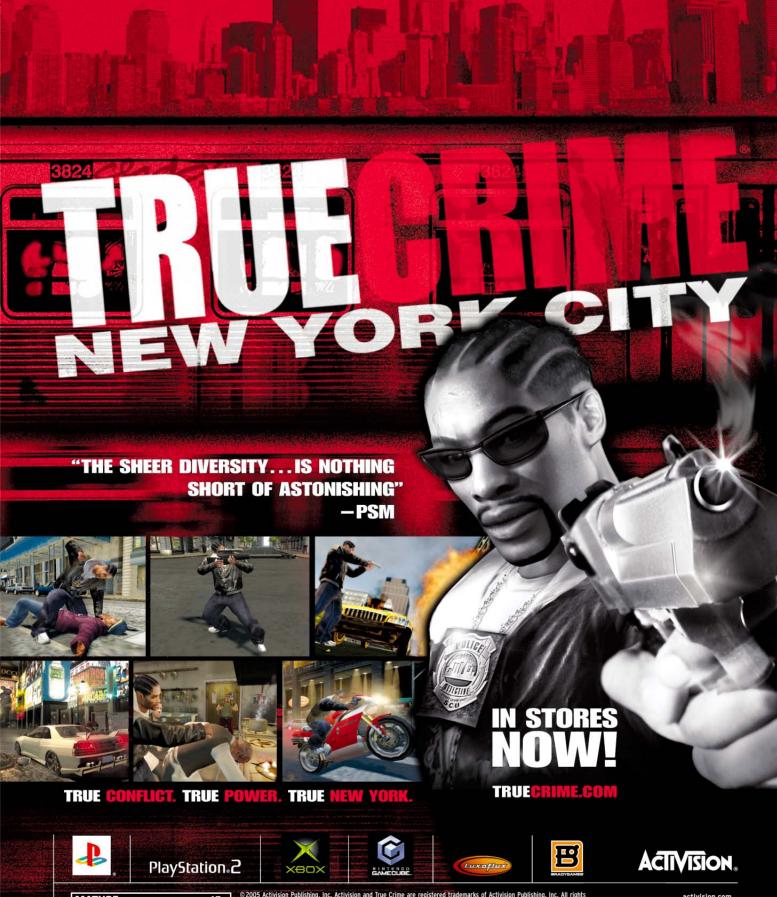
"In the 18th century the Vatican banned opera. The cardinals still loved it, though, so they permitted Handel, Caldara and Scarlatti to write sacred music. But it's full of passion, energy, drama—it's opera."

What's up with the Ekberg impression?

"When Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* was released, in 1960, the Vatican considered the film immoral and anti-Catholic. It was more or less the same story with opera 250 years earlier." *We hear opera singers can't drink wine.*

"Of course they can—just not during the performance. Smoking, air-conditioning and long flights are bad for the voice. And for me, boring people are bad. I have to stay away from them."





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PLAYBOY PICKS

your guide for living the good life

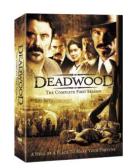
THE DUKES OF HAZZARD

Yeeee-haw! The unrated version of *The Dukes of Hazzard* comes to DVD on December 6, loaded with extras including deleted scenes, bloopers and Jessica Simpson's sizzling "Boots" music video. Original theatrical movie also available on DVD. dukesofhazzard.com



DEADWOOD: THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON

HBO Video. Bringing back the good gift. *Deadwood: The Complete First Season* is now available on DVD at amazon.com and wherever DVDs are sold



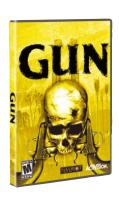


THE HAROLD LLOYD COMEDY COLLECTION

New Line Home Entertainment presents *The Harold Lloyd Comedy Collection* available on DVD November 15. This handsome 7-disc gift set features over 25 classic films all remastered, restored and rescored including hours of exclusive and never-before-seen extras.

GUN

Journey as Colton White in an epic tale that lets you experience the greed, lust, violence and brutality that was the West. gunthegame.com



BATMAN BEGINS

Coming to DVD October 18. Batman Begins is "the film of the year," raves Shawn Edwards of FOX-TV. With an all-star cast featuring Christian Bale, Michael Caine, Morgan Freeman, Katie Holmes and Gary Oldman, Batman Begins features non-stop action and mind-bending special effects that will blow you away! warnervideo.com



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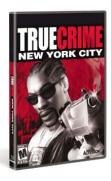
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SIGNIFICA, INSIGNIFICA, STATS AND FACTS



Getting a Leg Up

49% of female MBA graduates admit to flirting to try to advance their career.

Price Check

\$244,590.83

Amount paid at auction on German eBay by GoldenPalace.com, an online casino, for a 1999 Volkswagen Golf once owned (but never driven) by Pope Benedict XVI.

What Goes Around

Because the average salary of callcenter employees in India has risen from \$125 to \$182 a month, the country's 85% share of the world's third-party outsourcing market could fall to 45% by 2007.

Book of Pointless Records

Most TV Watched

69 hours, 48 minutes in one sitting, by Sri Lankan Suresh Joachim, holder of at least 16 world records.



Scholarship Enterprise

The Klingon Language Institute—an organization committed to the sci-fi warrior language from Star Trek—annually awards a \$500 grant to a creative college student who demonstrates a desire to go into language studies.

Built for the Road Ahead?



Miles per gallon for a 1908 Ford Model T: 13 city. 21 highway.



Miles per gallon for a 2006 Ford Explorer: 15 city. 21 highway.

Hot—or Not

In a poll conducted for Elexa by Trojan, women were given a list of female celebrities and asked to check off the ones they would like to "resemble sexually."



Angelina Jolie Halle Berry Jennifer Aniston

Participants could choose as many or as few stars as they wanted; almost half preferred not to look like any of them.

Down Town

5% The portion Detroit's total land mass that consists of vacant lots.

Puttin' on the Grits

Waffle House restaurants serve 3.2 million pounds of grits each year.

Playing

Instead of placing a personal ad in a newspaper, a farmer planted one in his field. The 50foot letters made from cornstalks read s.w.F GOT-2 ♥ FARM-N with an arrow underneath pointing to his house. In all, the message measured 900 feet by 600 feet. He received more than 700 responses.



Keep your homemade ornaments to yourself. Please. Popsicle sticks and pinecones. Fine for kids, just not adults. What ever happened to giving real gifts? Stuff that isn't made out of the remnants of frozen treats or found in the yard. Why not impress somebody with The Complete Fifth Season of The Sopranos®? It's a great gift for friends, family, union bosses and your consigliere.

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movie of the month

MUNICH]

Steven Spielberg gets serious

Expect no intergalactic invaders, rampaging dinosaurs or big-name stars in Steven Spielberg's new opus, Munich. Working from a screenplay co-written by Pulitzer winner Tony Kushner (Angels in America), Spielberg clearly intends something grittier and more timely, tackling a story about Israeli intelligence agents assigned to hunt and kill the Palestinian terrorists believed to have kidnapped and murdered 11 athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. The controversial project, formerly titled Vengeance, reportedly has less to do with chest-beating heroics than with the personal lives of the Mossad specialists assembled to execute the so-called Wrath of God campaign. Eric Bana

plays the leader of the agents, backed by Mathieu Kassovitz, Hanns Zischler, Ciarán Hinds and Daniel Craig. The movie avoided the usual Spielberg blood breeds publicity megablitz; the actors declined all interviews, and photographs were restricted.

"Vengeance doesn't work blood."

Before production began, Craig leaked information that the film is "about how vengeance doesn't fucking work—blood breeds blood." In a written statement, Spielberg said, "Viewing Israel's response to Munich through the eyes of the men who were sent to avenge that tragedy adds a human dimension to a horrific episode that we usually think about only in political or military terms." —Stephen Rebello

now showing

Fun With Dick and Jane

(Jim Carrey, Téa Leoni, Alec Baldwin, Jeff Garlin) Updating the 1977 hit comedy starring George Segal and Jane Fonda, Carrey and Leoni play upscale married suburbanites who become seriously strapped for cash and then, to save face, start fleecing their obnoxiously rich friends with a series of stickups and scams.

Casanova

(Heath Ledger, Sienna Miller, Jeremy Irons) This comedy romp from director Lasse Hallström casts Ledger as the 18th century seducer-spy-scalawag who sets out to prove himself worthy of a wily Venetian beauty (Miller) while a comically pompous bishop (Irons) tries to rain on the hero's erotic parade.

Underworld: Evolution

(Kate Beckinsale, Scott Speedman) This sequel to 2003's Underworld resurrects Beckinsale and Speedman as Romeo and Juliet caught in the bloody skirmish between vampires and werewolves. This time the sexy duo tries to learn the origin of their tribes' ancient feud before all-out war erupts.

Grandma's Boy

(Allen Covert, Linda Cardellini, Doris Roberts) Producer Adam Sandler gives his frequent cast mate Covert a chance to score as the screen's latest dorky virgin. Covert plays a video-game tester who is forced to move in with his grandmother (Roberts) after his roommate blows the rent money on hookers.

BUZZ Our call: The original flick's

satiric jabs still score, but unless you buy the twitchy Carrey and the twitchier Leoni making beautiful music together, the barbs won't mean much.

Our call: Historians may take a pass at the Monty Python-style sight gags, but fans of Tom Jones and Shakespeare in Love will feel right at home with this rip-roaring look at history.

Our call: If the bodacious Beckinsale kicking lycanthropic ass in her shiny black jumpsuit isn't enough to make you forget all the Goth-horror clichés, we don't know what to tell you.

Our call: We're sure Sandler means well, but this 40-Year-Old Virgin meets The Golden Girls proves that original ideas are harder to find than genuine virgins in Hollywood.





dvd of the month

WEDDING CRASHERS

Owen Wilson and Vince Vaughn are the life of the party

When it comes to comedy, fraud kills. Owen Wilson and Vince Vaughn snow the masses and generate loads of laughs as a pair of divorce mediators who crash nuptials for sport, preying on babes made misty-eyed by the whole bridal thing. These consummate players score like rock stars as they dance with the grannies, make balloon animals for the kids and deliver heartfelt toasts—all of which makes them irresistible.

The duo's deliciously cynical run comes undone when they sneak into a spectacular wedding thrown by Christopher Walken for his daughter and get mixed up with the bride's sisters (Rachel McAdams and Isla Fisher), one of whom Vaughn pegs as "a stage-five clinger." Vaughn hasn't been this funny since Swingers. and he ultimately carries the flick over its squishy threshold. **Extras:** The *Uncorked* edition adds nine minutes to the theatrical cut, including the guys' karaoke rendition of "99 Luftballons." *** -Greg Fagan



THE 40-YEAR-OLD VIRGIN (2005) Steve Carell plays an electronics-store clerk unable to generate real-life electricity with women. He endures his co-workers' Herculean efforts to get him laid (everything from speed dating to drunken pickups), while the hot single mother (Catherine Keener) he pines for provides only frustration. For a film that overdoses on raunchiness and stereotypes, it actually invokes sweet sentiments and sympathy. Extras: Deleted scenes,

a gag reel, chestwaxing documentary, sex-ed video and the extended "You Know How I Know You're Gay?" routine. ***

–Bryan Reesman



THE DUKES OF HAZZARD (2005) A freewheeling, Hemi-powered joyride, Dukes is blissfully, intentionally stupid, and that's the fun of it. That and Jessica Simpson as hot cousin Daisy, a woman with more deadly curves than all of Hazzard County's back roads. Extras: The unrated

disc features "How to Launch a Muscle Car 175 Feet in Four Seconds" and Simpson's "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'" video. **1/2

—Buzz McClain

THE RETURN OF THE PINK PANTHER

(1975) It took a decade to get *Panther* principals Peter Sellers and Blake Edwards together for *The Return of the Pink* Panther, the popular series's third film. and it was worth the wait. Writer-director Edwards borrows the plot from To Catch a Thief, sending the bumbling Inspector Clouseau (Sellers) off after the Phantom (Christopher Plummer), who he suspects has stolen the titular bauble. A polished gem in the uneven series, Return has aged well. But because it's the only *Pink Panther*

residing outside the MGM/United Artists distribution umbrella, it was not part of the DVD boxed set that came out in 2004.

Now you can put them together on the shelf and plan a complete Pink marathon. Extras: Non! But the price is right. 888



FOUR BROTHERS (2005) In this no-frills revenge flick, director John Singleton does not break the boundaries of his clichéd plot: Four foster brothers, two black and two white, return to their childhood Detroit home to avenge their saintly mother's murder. But Singleton does deliver

a first-rate cast, realistic locations and old-time mayhem. Extras: Director's commentary and a making-of doc. **\frac{1}{2}

-Matthew Steigbiger



THE SHIELD: THE COMPLETE FOURTH SEASON (2005) The FX series about a gangbusting police squad (led during this season by tough-as-nails captain Glenn Close) packs character development and double-fisted action into each episode. It brazenly depicts a ruthless renegade cop, Michael Chiklis, who is either a compassionate hero or a violence-prone villain,

depending on the circumstances. Extras: Eight of 13 episodes with running commentary by the cast and 42 deleted scenes.

—В.М.



tease frame

Leggy golden girl **Heather Graham** looks like an innocent, but she hasn't been so bashful about baring it all on-screen—especially in Boogie Nights (1997) as the pulchritudinous porn star Rollergirl. She teased us with a rough but non-nude sex scene in Two Girls and a Guy (1998) and as Felicity Shagwell in Austin Powers:



The Spy Who Shagged Me (1999), but in the steamy *Killing Me* Softly (2002, pictured) she opens a lot more than her big blue eyes. She'll keep her clothes on playing a hotshot book editor on ABC's comedy series Emily's Reasons Why Not and we can think of a few reasons why that's a dirty shame.

the critical collector

ADULT SWIM

Beavis and Butt-Head's creator picks cartoons that aren't just for kids

Ask Mike Judge (pictured inset), the man behind *Beavis and Butt-Head, King of the Hill* and the movie *Office Space* (1999), about his favorite adult-friendly animated movies and you'll be surprised which cult classics don't make the list. "I think subconsciously I hate stuff like *Wizards* (1977) and *Heavy Metal* (1981) because no one

wanted to do an animated Beavis and Butt-Head movie," he says. "Studios told me animation for grown-ups never works because all those Ralph Bakshi movies failed, so I have a grudge against them." In honor of the release of Beavis and Butt-Head: The Mike Judge Collection Volume One (pictured top), we asked him what titles a guy can watch without OD'ing on Disney-colored cuteness. "The Ren & Stimpy Show: The Complete First and Second Seasons (1991-1993, pictured bottom)," says Judge. "John Kricfalusi is the greatest animator of my generation." Another animation icon, Chuck Jones, makes the cut with the Looney Tunes: Golden Collection and Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas (1966). For inspiration, Judge likes the Peanuts Holiday Collection. "When I was first animating Butt-Head, I was thinking of Pig-Pen and the filth that floats around him." Judge also sings the praises of South Park:



Bigger, Longer & Uncut (1999). "For animation, writing and voices, South Park is one of my favorites. The movie was its peak." Also on the list is *The Animation Show Volume One* (2004), a collection of shorts shown at the festival of the same name co-produced by Judge and Don Hertzfeldt. Of his partner's animation, Judge says it's "the best of what's out there now." Heh-heh, toons rule.

—Jason Buhrmester

special additions

A closer look at poets, an infamous slacker and a questionable cop







With all the attention lavished on stars and directors, it's especially gratifying to see one of film's gifted artisans have a chance in the spotlight—specifically Academy Award winner John Seale, who conducts a "cinematography master class" on the new special edition of Dead Poets Society (1989). He reunites with director Peter Weir on the disc's commentary track as well.... Writer, producer and director John Hughes's 1986 hit Ferris Bueller's Day Off defines sweet, Hughesian teen rebellion at its most broadly appealing. The new Bueller...Bueller... edition includes featurettes such as "The World According to Ben Stein." Other goodies worth playing hooky for include anecdotes from the set, a featurette on the casting and a look back at the Ferris phenomenon.... Prolific director and occasional actor Otto Preminger made several sizzling film noirs for Fox in the 1940s, culminating with Where the Sidewalk Ends (1950), newly released on DVD, featuring Dana Andrews as a borderline bad cop and Gene Tierney as the angel who just might save him. The crisp black-and-white presentation looks great and benefits from a commentary track that adds welcome perspective to the unfolding thriller. Film noir specialist Eddie Muller shares his informed observations. —G.F.

SCANNER

ENRON: THE SMARTEST GUYS IN THE ROOM (2005) A look at the looting that left the nation's seventh-largest corporation bankrupt. This documentary could have been dry, but director Alex Gibney highlights the human drama of the crime story.

FANTASY ISLAND: THE COM-PLETE FIRST SEASON (1978) Ricardo Montalban and Hervé Villechaize are in the fantasy-fulfillment biz—well, if your fantasy involves Tattoo yelling "De plane!" to announce the arrival of 1970s B-list guest stars. **

DEUCE BIGALOW: EUROPEAN GIGOLO (2005) Somehow surviving the critics' pummelling after the first movie, Rob Schneider heads overseas to fine-tune his questionable skills as a first-rate he-whore. ¥½

THE TOMORROW SHOW: PUNK & NEW WAVE This intriguing collection of episodes from Tom Snyder's 1970s late-night show features interviews with and performances by the Ramones, Elvis Costello, Iggy Pop and the Jam.

KISS OF DEATH (1947) As the giggling, psychopathic hit man Tommy Udo, Richard Widmark flashes his pearly whites even when throwing a wheelchair-bound lady down a flight of stairs. Victor Mature co-stars as his prey in this superior noir flick.

2046 (2005) Director Wong Kar-wai's follow-up to *In the Mood for Love* details a fantasy story about a train that takes passengers to the year 2046, when nothing changes and people can relive their fondest memories. It's gorgeous and deliriously romantic.

Don't miss Good show

¥¥ Worth a look **¥** Forget it

this is it



DIFFERENT STROKES

The band's third album is a return to form

As the band that kick-started the rock revival, the Strokes were known as much for an aesthetic as for any one song. Of course, since their debut album delivered so many great songs, this wasn't an issue at the onset of their career. But then came the dilemma: What could the band do next after establishing such a self-consciously no-frills sound? After giving birth to a movement and seeing the White Stripes, the Hives and Franz Ferdinand take the baton and run past them to commercial success, the Strokes themselves didn't seem to matter anymore—and the lack of quality tracks on their second album, Room on Fire, reinforced that notion. Now comes another try, First Impressions of Earth. On it the boys have put to wax some tunes, including the single "Juicebox," that willfully eschew their earlier sound for something bigger in scope, recorded with the sorts of guitar effects that would once have been anathema. Elsewhere, though, a version of the band's original CBGB sound re-emerges, and these songs shine most. Why? The Strokes have found their melody mojo again. (RCA) **** —Tim Mohr

THE GOSSIP

Standing in the Way of Control

This trio echoes the Kills and Yeah Yeah Yeahs but adds a 1960s R&B aesthetic. Singer Beth Ditto coos, belts it Stax/Volt style and doles out sassy life lessons. Hand claps and cowbells leaven the band's intense Fugazi-like minimalist backbeat. (Kill Rock Stars) *** —T.M.



AMERICAN PRIMITIVE VOL. II

In the first years of the 20th century, record vendors recorded anything from kazoo bands to street singers to crazy preachers. This two-CD collection resurrects 50 otherworldly songs that possess a primitive immediacy rarely heard anymore. It is frightening misfit music. (Revenant)



OTIS RUSH

All Your Love I Miss Loving

Over a 50-year career Rush has established himself as the finest exponent of West Side blues. Recorded live in 1976 but never before released, this CD captures Chicago blues before it became a cliché—intense, tight and hot as a steel mill. (Delmark) *** Leopold Froehlich**



BUBBA SPARXXX * The Charm

With tracks produced by Organized Noize (largely responsible for OutKast's signature sound), impressive lyrics and new confidence, this is arguably the Georgia native's best work yet. And the Timbaland-produced "Hey," with a marching-band sound full of horns and chants, is a sure hit. (Purple Ribbon)



boxed sets for boxing day

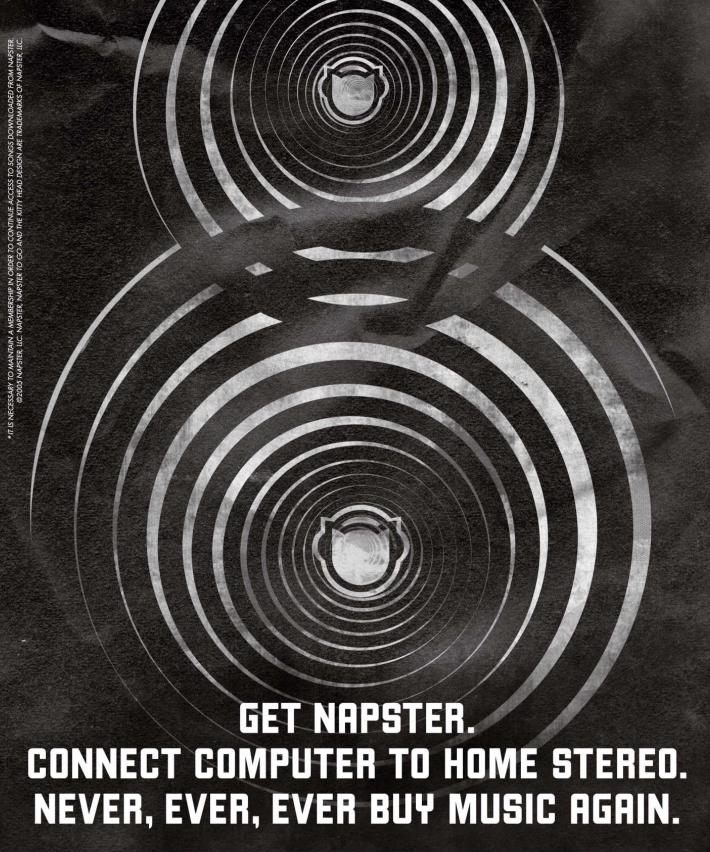
Have you had a lousy holiday season? There's no better restorative than self-gifting. New boxed sets available from six American musical legends offer ample opportunity. When he said he invented jazz, **Jelly Roll Morton** was bragging, but he may have been onto something. *The Complete Library of Congress Recordings* (Rounder) is an eight-disc set of sessions recorded late in Morton's life. In 1938 Alan Lomax persuaded

Morton to talk and sing and play jazz as it had been played during the pianist's early days in New Orleans. These may be the greatest recordings ever made of American music.... **The Band** was best known for the notes it didn't play, for tightness and restraint. In five CDs (and one DVD) *The Band: A Musical History* (Capitol/EMI) follows the arc of a unique outfit that fomented a revolution in American rock and roll.... By the start of the 1970s

Miles Davis had embraced a flat-out aggressive electric sound. With the incredible six-CD *Cellar Door Sessions 1970* (Legacy)—the basis of his *Live-Evil* album—it's apparent Davis was becoming even more pugilistic.... You can never get too much of the Man in Black. *The Legend* (Legacy) will keep you satisfied with 104 Johnny Cash songs on four CDs.... The works of another country giant are surveyed on the three-CD *Turn Back*

the Years: The Essential Hank Williams Collection (Mercury). Although his recording career spanned only six years, Williams managed to make 60 amazing songs....

Ray Charles's eight-disc Pure Genius: The Complete Atlantic Recordings (1952–1959) (Rhino) contains what is easily the best music of his career, a DVD of Charles at Newport and an extraordinary disc of outtakes, rehearsals and alternates.



TWO SMALL STEPS FOR MAN, ONE MASSIVE LEAP FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE MUSIC BUT DON'T HAVE MILLIONS TO SPEND ON IT. YOUR NAPSTER® MEMBERSHIP GIVES YOU UNLIMITED ACCESS TO OUR LIBRARY OF OVER 1.5 MILLION SONGS. WHICH YOU CAN DOWNLOAD ONTO 3 COMPUTERS AND 2 MP3 PLAYERS.* YOU NEVER NEED TO OWN MUSIC AGAIN. BROWSE, MAKE PLAYLISTS, CUSTOMIZE, WHATEVER. NEVER, EVER HAS NEVER BEEN SO EASY.

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Las Vegas AFTER DARK

Las Vegas has become a city of more, more: More outstanding restaurants and hotels. More burlesque. More plush nightclubs attracting more big-name DJs. And with more super chefs and more big clubs planning to make their mark on the Strip, there's no sign that Vegas will tap the brakes in 2006.



- >Best upscale restaurants: Bartolotta (in Wynn Las Vegas, 702-770-7000) is the top Vegas restaurant because its chefs don't gunk up the fresh seafood flown in from Italy with too much "presentation." If you're saving your yearly Italian meal allotment for *Sopranos* viewings, try the French fare prepared by Joel Robuchon at the Mansion (in the MGM Grand, 702-891-1111).
- >Best quick eats: Hue Thai's Sandwiches (5115 Spring Mountain, 702-943-8872) serves terrific foot-longs, stuffed with cold cuts or charbroiled meats, for unbelievably low prices.
- >Best ethnic restaurant: With such dishes as a seafood tostado, the chefs at Isla (in TI, formerly known as Treasure Island, 702-894-7111) nudge Mexican food out of its beans-and-rice rut.
- >Best hotels: Ask for a room with a view of the dancing waters at the Spa Tower (in the Bellagio, 888-987-6667). At the Four Seasons (3960 South Las Vegas Boulevard, 702-632-5000), you can enjoy the quiet luxury of a nongaming hotel.
- >Best dive bar: Because of the extensive beer menu, Crown & Anchor (1350 East Tropicana, 702-739-8696) is a hair above a true dive. But considering the eccentric carousers who hang out there, maybe we're wrong.

- >Best bar: The Peppermill (2985 South Las Vegas Boulevard, 702-735-7635) exudes unabashed Vegas swank. Get warmed up near the fire pit or by the waitresses in gowns. The cocktails (like the scorpion for two) defy mere trendiness.
- >Best wine bar: Okay, so it's not a wine bar, it's a wine store. But 55 Degrees (in Mandalay Bay, 702-632-7777) has an area in back where you can sip from hundreds of vintages amid one of the city's best-designed spaces.
- >Coolest nightclub: What's better than the sexy ladies on the dance floor at the Mix Lounge (3950 South Las Vegas Boulevard, 877-632-7800)? The floor-to-ceiling windows in the men's room. They offer unparalleled aerial views of Vegas.
- >Best place to watch sports: The Sports Book at Caesars Palace (702-731-7110)—a room filled with jumbo screens plus TVs at every table—is the only place to be on game day. Rumor has it that wagering is available, too.
- >Best music spot: Night in and night out, the House of Blues (in Mandalay Bay, 702-632-7600) keeps the musical pulse of Vegas going by booking not only the top touring acts but more obscure bands, too.
- >Best people watching: You'll be amazed by the variety of people who traipse through the Palms (702-942-7777) on a busy night: Beautiful people on loan from LA, local scenesters heading for the dance action at the Rain or Ghostbar nightclubs, and gawkers who've seen the hotel on TV.
- >Best florist: Whether you're enhancing your trip to Vegas or apologizing for it, arrangements from the Flower Affair (7380 South Eastern Avenue, 888-777-0117) can only help.
- >Best mode of transportation: Sure, there's a Strip-length monorail and the Civis, a system of Frenchmade buses that cruise the Boulevard. But who has time for that? Not you, sport. Hail a cab (Checker Cab, 702-873-2000).
- >Best drink: Las Vegas is awash in classy booze, but the crème of the liquor crop is the cable car served up by the mixologists at the Nobhill Bar (in the MGM Grand, 702-891-7337). The rum, Cointreau and melted sugar on the glass's rim go down easy but won't hijack your night.
- >Best shopping: Recent renovations have lifted the Fashion Show Mall (3200 South Las Vegas Boulevard, 702-369-8382) into the shopping stratosphere. Unrivaled in Vegas for variety—200-plus stores—it also has a terrific selection of restaurants when your feet need a rest.
- >Playboy pick: If the phrase "bawdy puppet musical theater" sounds promising, you'll be wowed by *Avenue Q* (in Wynn Las Vegas, 702-770-9966). Don't be fooled by the presence of puppets. This isn't for kids.



playboy's best games of 2005

best overall game



GOD OF WAR

Our judges select the perfect killing machine

With its seamless blend of action and storytelling set against a backdrop of Greek mythology, God of War (PS2) swept our panelists off their collective feet. The voting for top honors went overwhelmingly in its favor in our search for the best games of the year. "God of War really creates an epic atmosphere. It has that Harry Hamlin, Clash of the Titans kind of feel."-S.M.

"It makes you feel incredibly powerful right off the bat and then amps things up from there. Possibly the bloodthirstiest game ever made. Sequel, please."—S.A.

"The minigame system for killing creatures and bosses is brilliant and something we haven't seen before."—P.A.

"God of War is really tight from top to bottom. It's cool to watch and even cooler to play."—J.G.

Distant (yet worthy) second: Resident Evil 4 (GameCube, PS2) "Great controls, sick graphics, buckets of gore and a sprawling, deeply weird story. It's digital crack."—A.P. Runners-up: Battlefield 2, Psychonauts, King Kong

BEST ADRENALINE RUSH Burnout Revenge (PS2, Xbox): "The sense of speed is amazing; knocking traffic into your opponents is genius."—P.A. "The car-selection screen reads choose YOUR WEAPON. That says it all."—J.G. Runners-up: Serious Sam 2, SSX: On Tour



SMARTEST Psychonauts (PS2, Xbox): "Funny. Very, very funny."—P.A. "A completely original world."—S.S. "Goofy in a really smart way."—J.G. "Ten games' worth of ideas encased in a delicious candy-coated shell."—S.A. Runners-up: Indigo Prophecy, The Movies



MOST INNOVATIVE The Movies (PC): "It's the first game that's a full-fledged authoring tool as well."—C.H.

"The movies the computer puts

together on its own are so funny and

so insane, it's mind-blowing."—J.G.

Runners-up: Nintendogs, Indigo Prophecy

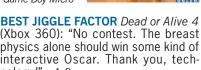


BEST NEW HARDWARE Sony's Play-Station Portable: "Portable gaming is finally at a point where grown-ups don't feel ridiculous while playing. Plus the PSP has useful functions—playing videos and MP3s, ripping DVDs. And it's tiny."—J.G. Runners-up: Xbox 360, Nintendo DS

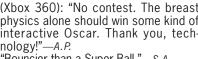
BEST ATTEMPT TO PANDER TO STONERS We Love Katamari (PS2): "It has a bizarre yet contemplative vibe that exists nowhere else in gaming."—A.P. "Twisted. You go from gathering teacups to gathering screaming people." Runners-up: Electroplankton, Lumines



BEST GUILTY PLEASURE *Nintendogs* (DS): "This game gets you to pet a puppy for three hours—and the puppy isn't even there. Frightening."—S.M. "I'm embarrassed to play this on the subway. Then I do anyway."—J.B. Runners-up: Lego Star Wars, Game Boy Micro



'Bouncier than a Super Ball."—S.A. "Pixels never looked so good."—J.B. Runners-up: Hot Coffee, Death by Degrees



BEST GAME TO PLAY WITH YOUR FRIENDS Burnout Revenge (PS2, XBox):

"You put this on at a party in crash mode and suddenly everyone's trying to grab the controller."—C.H.

"My friends all have broadband now. We just like to get together and drive really fast and talk a lot of shit."—J.G. Runner-up: Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory



duds of the year

Worst Movie-Based Game: Charlie and the Chocolate Factory Worst Game-Based Movie: Alone in the Dark Least Needed Sequel: Big Mutha Truckers 2

Joe Brown, associate editor of Popular Science (J.B.); Jeff Gerstmann,

senior editor of GameSpot (J.G.); Alex Porter of MTV.com Games

(A.P.); Tycho and Gabe, founders of Penny Arcade (P.A.); and regular

PLAYBOY contributors Scott Alexander (S.A.), Chris Hudak (C.H.), Steve

Morgenstern (S.M.), Marc Saltzman (M.S.) and Scott Steinberg (S.S.).

Most Spectacular Flameout: The Gizmondo handheld

PLAYBOY would like to thank our 2005 game judges:

Least Improved Game: NHL '06

Worst Name: S.L.A.I.: Steel Lancer Arena International **Buggier Than a Mexican Motel:** Advent Rising

All Sizzle, No Steak: Death by Degrees



book of the month

ROBERT COOVER

The author of A Child Again tells us what makes literature work

As a master of American postmodernism (and a frequent contributor to PLAYBOY), Robert Coover continues to amaze us with his ceaseless innovation. In his latest book, A *Child Again*, he uses the archetypes of childhood (Alice, Red Riding Hood) to elaborate anxieties that threaten American culture. We asked him a few questions about his work. Q: In *A Child Again*, you rely on fables and archetypes. Why?

A: All writers use them under one guise or another, for they are buried in the language we speak. We are born into the dreams and stories of the dead. I write to wake up. One immediate way to do that is to poke into the themes and stories

of childhood, let some fresh air into the tomb.

Q: Would you call yourself a fabulist?

A: An experimental realist, more like, though fabulation is at the heart of human discourse, and so part of the realist enterprise.

Q: Why have you used puzzles and riddles in your short stories? Is it an attempt to interest those who may be bored by narrative or character?

A: No, just more formal experimentation, in this case inspired by the kid-lit theme driving this particular collection. Puzzle pages, like the funny papers, were a good part of my childhood mind-making.

Q: Which of your books will get you into heaven? **A:** Spanking the Maid. God's deep into S&M.

Q: What are you working on now?

A: Right now I am about 130,000 words into a sequel to my first book, *The Origin of the Brunists*, a project inspired by the rise of fundamentalism all over the world, not least in our own benighted land. As with that first novel, the childish fiction being confronted here is that of the Bible and all its bizarre spin-offs, including the nonsense literature of theology. I can understand how illiterate people can be suckered by a book they can't read, but once you've learned your ABCs, there's no excuse.

Q: Is aesthetic creation quaint in a world where we can genetically engineer chickens and create pigs with human ears?

A: Pigs with human ears are quaint. Literature has been doing that for millennia; it's old hat. And literature will last as long as the world lasts (not long, maybe; no predictions here), whatever form it may come to take, for we cannot do without story, and story cannot do without its innovative masters. I worry more about storyless human mutants, creatures whose imaginations have been stripped by dogma, militancy, poverty, indolence, fear. In short, pigs without even human ears.

WARLOCK * Oakley Hall

Westerns are now a neglected genre, which makes this reissue of a 1958 classic all the more welcome. A dark and existential alle-

gory on the myth of Tombstone, Warlock details the fall of a place where nothing is as it seems. It's no wonder Thomas Pynchon called it "one of our best American novels."



******/2 —Leopold Froehlich

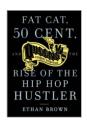
QUEENS REIGNS SUPREME

Ethan Brown

In 1994 Nas explained, "Somehow the rap game/Reminds me of the crack game." And for good reason: In the MC's borough, Queens, the lines between crime and rhyme were blurry at best. Relying

heavily on interviews with the drug lords who served as models for Nas, Jay-Z and 50 Cent, Ethan Brown's history should appeal to truecrime buffs and hiphop heads alike. ******



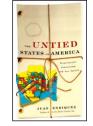


THE UNTIED STATES OF AMERICA

Juan Enriquez

Nations are historically unstable, and current trends—rich areas such as Slovenia seceding from larger entities, indigenous

peoples scoring legal victories, supranational economic integration—ensure that instability will continue. But be forewarned: While this worthy topic is well researched, the structure here is gimmicky in the extreme.



the erotic eye



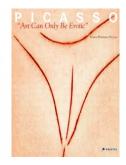
ART CAN ONLY BE EROTIC

Diana Widmaier Picasso

The mandate Picasso lived by—"Art can only be erotic"—isn't news to those familiar with his work. But this book does an excellent job of illustrating the powerful eroticism particular to his oeuvre. Perhaps no other artist

had the ability to convey the amatory in so many styles, from simple sketches and caricatures to colorful abstract portraits. While the later works are familiar, the earlier drawings startle.

-Jessica Riddle





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Woodford Reserve Distiller's Select Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey. 45.2% Alc. by Vol., Woodford Reserve Distillery, Versailles, KY.





Once Upon a Time in Mexico

There was a quiet romantic getaway set in a raging party town...

If you were to leave your New Year's plans to us, you know you'd be in good hands. Try this on for size. You wake up in your private four-bedroom, 5,200-square-foot palace at Villas Del Mar—a secluded enclave of beach villas in Los Cabos at the tip of the Baja California peninsula, where the Pacific Ocean meets the Sea of Cortés. You and your posse spend the day lounging by your infinity pool or on one of the most dramatic white-sand beaches you've ever seen while your personal chef and butler prepare margaritas and fresh local tuna. Recreational options abound to suit your mood. You're in the marlin sportfishing capital of the world, and the diving is outstanding. Or you could hit the 27-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed course while a masseuse at the spa primes your girl-friend for you. For dinner we recommend sampling the menu at Mi Cocina at the Casa Natalia hotel in town (casanatalia.com). And when you're ready to let loose? Club Ninety Six (pictured) at Villas Del Mar—with its two free-form pools and oceanside fire pits—is throwing a belated launch fiesta to ring in the new year. (The place opened in summer.) After midnight, a dip in the cool ocean will give you a second wind, so you can head back into town and dance with hot tamales until dawn. Talk about a tequila sunrise. Villas start at \$1,800 a night. Take a tour at villasdelmar.com and you'll see it's worth every peso. Would we steer you wrong?

World Party: Greeting 2006 in Style

Sydney: The early time zone makes it the first major city in the world to slam into the new year. Fireworks around the harbor set the tone for the dance-hall parties and outrageous masquerade balls that follow midnight. Bangkok: Lose yourself in the citywide street party, where ancient Thai ritual meets New World decadence. Never mind that Thailand's traditional New Year is in April. It doesn't get any weirder than this. Rio de Janeiro: Awash in a caipirinha buzz and summer sweat, 2 million white-clad Brazilians pack the sands of Copacabana beach and samba till dawn. St. Barts: The rich, beautiful and topless shimmy into midnight at clubs such as Nikki Beach, where it's de rigueur to be showered in Cristal. You gotta love that lather. Las Vegas: The mad, lubricated mob that fills the Strip, which is closed to traffic, looks like 1,000 points of happy light from on high at the Palms' 55th-floor Ghostbar roof deck.

Drink to This

WE DID A STUDY and learned that our readers gulp down more vodka than any other liquor. In the spirit of things, we blind tasted several topshelf brands and picked Jean-Marc XO (\$50, at fine liquor stores), a relative newcomer. The vodka is produced in the Cognac region of France using French grains and cognac-making methods. With herbal notes and an edge of anise and citrus, it's a vodka made to have flavor rather than lack it. How refreshing.





EVERYONE WANTS TO SHOOT like a pro, but no one wants to spend like one. Luckily there are cameras such as Olympus's Evolt E-300 (\$800 with a 14-to-45-millimeter lens, olympus.com). The eight-megapixel snapper shares many features with the company's pro-level E-1 model, including the digital-specific Four Thirds lens system and the ability to dust off its image sensor with supersonic waves. But it doesn't forget such newbie-friendly functions as optional autofocus and preset scene modes.





About Time

С

CUERVO Y SOBRINOS was once Cuba's answer to Cartier, but after Castro took over, the company crumbled. In 1997 a descendant of a board member relaunched the brand in Switzerland, infusing classic Cuban watches with enduring Swiss craftsmanship—and now they're available in the U.S. The Torpedo Chrono-Pulsometer (\$5,100, cuervoysobrinos.com) has a tachometer and a pulse timer, is encased in stainless steel and comes in a Spanish-cedar humidor.

Espress Yourself

CREMA (n): the light, caramel-colored foam cap that sits atop a perfectly pulled shot of espresso. It's the product of a flawless grind, proper packing and an exacting espresso machine—such as Illy's new FrancisFrancis X6 (\$430, illyusa.com). This Italian stallion may be the prettiest pro-level kitchen appliance ever made. Internal sensors monitor temperature and pressure, giving your beans a chance to fully express themselves, while a twist of the handle lets you run long, medium and short shots at will (for optimal crema, keep 'em short).

Now With Enhanced Audio Performance And Styling.

Think of them as a reprieve from the world around you.

Whether it's the engine roar inside an airplane cabin, the

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bustle of the city or the distractions in the office, Bose QuietComfort® 2 headphones help them fade softly into the background with the flick of a switch. You can savor delicate

musical nuances without disturbing others. And

when you're not listening to music, you can slip into a tranquil haven

— where you can relax and enjoy peace and solitude.

Clearly, these are no ordinary headphones.

It's no exaggeration to say they're one of those things you have to experience to believe.

Reduce noise with Bose technology. Our headphones were designed primarily for airplane travelers. But owners soon started telling us how much they enjoy using them in other places to reduce distractions around them. Bose QC™ 2 headphones incorporate patented technology that electroni-



cally identifies and dramatically reduces noise, while faithfully preserving the music, movie dialogue or tranquility you desire. *Technologyreview.com* reports, "It's as if someone behind your back reached out, found the volume control of the world, and turned it

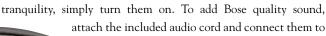
way, way, down." Perfect for listening to music, whether you're on the go, at home or in the office.

Enhanced audio from our best sounding headphones ever.

When QC2 headphones were first introduced, CNET said, "All sorts of music – classical, rock, and jazz – sounded refined and natural." Travel & Leisure Golf said, "Forget 'concertlike' comparisons; you'll think you're onstage with the band." With their enhanced audio performance, today's QC2 headphones are even better, delivering audio that's so crisp and clear you may find yourself discovering new subtleties in your music.

"The QuietComfort 2 lives up to its name...It's easy to forget they're on your head." That's what columnist Rich

your head." That's what columnist Rich Warren says. To enjoy peace and

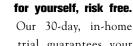


a home stereo, laptop computer, portable CD/DVD/MP3 player or in-flight audio system. They also offer improved

> styling and a fold-flat design for easy storage in the slim carrying case.

Use them as a concert hall – or a sanctuary.

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Call 1-800-417-2073, ext. Q4623 today. These headphones are available directly from Bose – the most respected name in sound. Order now and you'll receive a free portable Bose CD Player with skip protection –

a \$50 value. Plus, **shipping is free.** So call and discover a very different kind of headphone – Bose QuietComfort* 2 Acoustic Noise Cancelling headphones.



FREE Bose CD Player when you order by Jan. 31, 2006.

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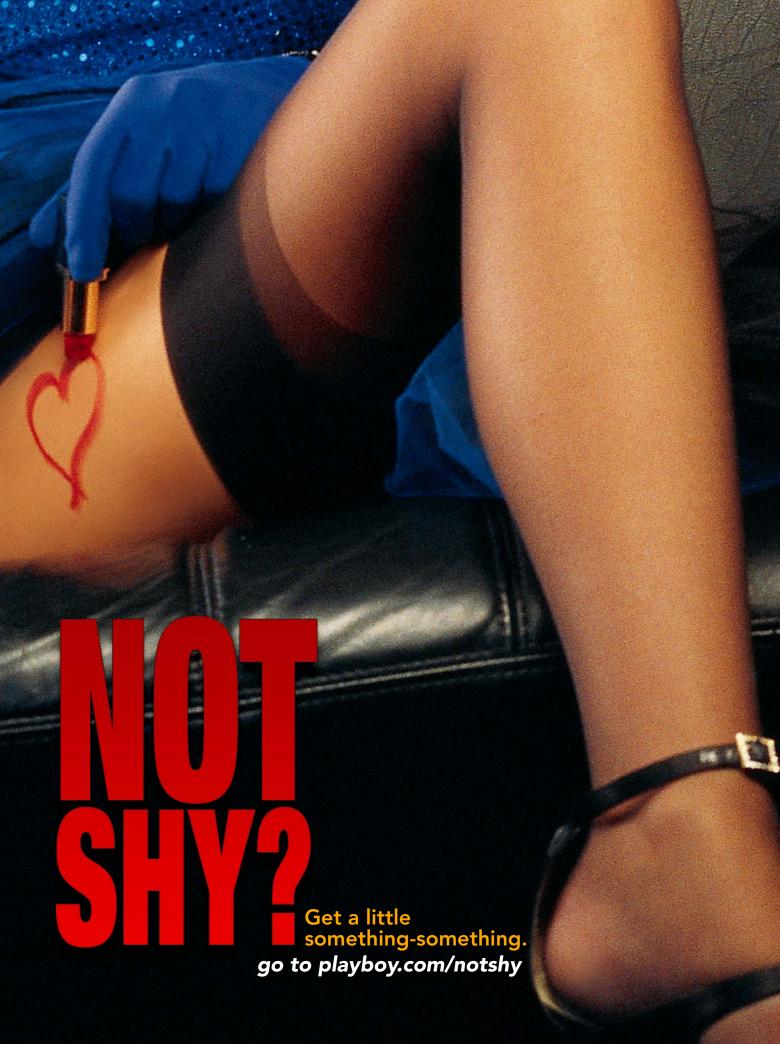
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The Playboy Advisor

On a new co-worker's computer I came across a chat room she visits while at work. I suspected that if she knew I was in the room, she wouldn't be herself, so I signed in using an alias. During the first session she offered me a blow job and told me she liked to masturbate at work. That's when the administrator of the room revealed that she and I had the same network address, so she knew it was somebody at work. She freaked out and signed off. I e-mailed her later, explaining that I had just been trying to see the real her. Needless to say she seems embarrassed and a little creeped out. Of course I was turned on by her dirty talk and want to make a move. How can I unleash her sexual side?—C.J., Louisville, Kentucky

It sounds like you already did, but you blew it by being sneaky. How did you happen to be on her computer? After you've both been fired, maybe you can commiserate over a beer.

What is the best way to quit a poker game early, especially if you're way ahead in chips?—J.K., Phoenix, Arizona

You should be able to cash out anytime. "The notion that you can't quit while winning is silly," says Doyle Brunson, author of Poker Wisdom of a Champion. "If you think you're outclassed, quit. If you're tired, quit. If you're feeling unsure about the honesty of another player, quit. But most of all, if you feel like taking your winnings home, quit. It should be understood that every player has the unquestionable right to leave at any time without being ridiculed." In practice this may not happen in a game with your buddies, but theoretically it's supposed to.

What do you say when a guy asks if his penis is too small? It seems like a no-win situation. If you say it's huge, he won't believe you. If you say it's small, he'll be hurt. Should you tell him, "Yes, but your tongue makes up for it"? And guys, this isn't a good thing to bring up when you're basking in the afterglow. It ruins the moment, believe me.—A.L., St. John, New Brunswick

You're right. You can't win. Say, "It feels wonderful to me."

enjoy having sex (and my husband enjoys my enjoying sex) when I'm high on marijuana. My sensations are heightened, and I can focus intensely. Sex without pot varies from standard to great, but if I'm high, it's guaranteed to be fantastic. I don't get high often-maybe once a month—but I would like to cut back or stop. Is there a way to get that feeling of focus and heightened sensitivity without an illegal drug?—C.A., Toledo, Ohio

Having sex in a public place does it for us, but that's also illegal. Partaking once a month hardly seems excessive, and a lot of anecdotal



evidence suggests that low to moderate intoxication can enhance sex. (Smoke too much and you'll be alone with your thoughts.) In Woman: An Intimate Geography, science writer Natalie Angier notes that, unlike booze, weed "distracts the intellect without dampening the body's network of impulse relays." Many of the 150 experienced smokers Charles Tart surveyed for his 1971 book, On Being Stoned, felt they were better lovers when high, especially if their partner had also smoked, because the marijuana brought on "feelings of tremendously enhanced contact, of being more sensitive, gentle, giving." In other words it slowed things down, which always makes for better sex. (Guys also typically report they have more control.) However, Tart noted that a quarter of respondents said weed didn't make them better in bed because it made them focus too much on their own pleasure. The real benefit of marijuana before sex may be that it helps some women achieve orgasm. Writing of her own experience, Angier says that marijuana "can be a sexual mentor and a sublime electrician, bringing the lights of Broadway to women who have spent years in frigid darkness. All the women in my immediate family learned how to climax by smoking grass. Yet I have never seen anorgasmia on the list for the medical use of marijuana." She later told High Times, "It definitely has something to do with the way in which marijuana releases the inhibitory mechanisms in the neocortex. That's why I say it's better for people who can't get there in the first place because they just don't know how mentally. Though women who can orgasm might continue to like marijuana for sex for the relaxing potential too.

In September a reader asked whether gas or charcoal grills are better. I am a propane cooker myself and challenge any briquette lover to serve a better meal. My secret is wood chips. Soak two cups of them in water for half an hour, drain and place in a foil pouch. Punch a few holes to vent and place as close to the flame as possible. You can buy smoking pellets, but they last only 15 minutes. Real wood chips smoke for up to 45. They also come in different flavors: hickory, mesquite, apple wood. Happy grilling!—C.T., South Lyon, Michigan

You're looking for trouble with that throwdown. But thanks for the suggestion.

am confused by the reader who in September complained that his blind date perfumed her pubic area. He took this to mean she had prepared for sex, which he felt made her a slut. An attractive blind date is a good thing. A woman who likes sex is a good thing. A woman whom you admire is a good thing. A woman who is wellgroomed and perfumed is a good thing. Some guys are never happy. I bet if she had refused sex, he would have written to ask how to get a blind date into bed. Besides, most women do not spray perfume on their genitals, as that would taste nasty for the guy. Instead, they dot it above the kissable zone.—A.M., Monrovia, California

Thanks for the insight. Should we stop spritzing our penis?

wonder what his date thought when she learned he had washed his balls.—P.Y., Metairie, Louisiana

For her sake we hope he did.

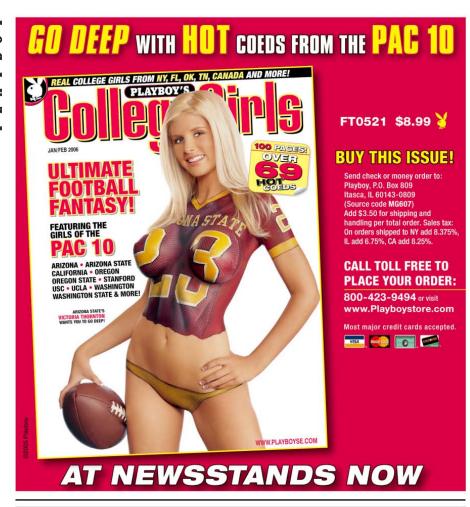
He wrote to ask if he's a prude, but he is actually a hypocrite. He too was ready and willing to go to bed on the first date.—B.A., Fairview, Oregon

Exactly. We're willing before the first date.

Have you heard of this trick? Supposedly if you lock your keys in your car, you can unlock it by calling someone who has your spare key-fob and having him hold it to the receiver and click the button while you put your phone near the car.—R.K., Baltimore, Maryland

It works with some models, but automakers don't publicize it because of its potential use by thieves. If it works for your car, e-mail help@motorwatch.com; the site is compiling a list. The thing is, most thieves don't need high-tech tools. They simply load the locked car on a flatbed truck and take it to an underground garage if they need to disable a tracking device.

My gambling in Las Vegas has drawn the interest of a casino host. My account has a four-figure balance. What should I expect, and how persistent can I be? I'd like to get tickets to a few sold-out 39





shows, but I'm not sure I should even ask. Also, should I tip her, and if so, how much?—P.H., Alpharetta, Georgia

Don't be afraid to ask. Her job is to make you comfortable while the casino takes your money, and your role is to get as much as you can in return. If she says no to a request, ask at what level you need to play. If it's within your normal range and can be accomplished by spending a little more time at her casino over another, fine. If not, forget it. It's not worth betting \$400 an hour for a free room or seats that are worth only \$100. You should tip in a measured way, buying small gifts, placing sports bets for her (all hosts are gamblers at heart) or even writing a complimentary letter to her boss. What matters is not so much the tip as the gesture that you are willing to do for her as she does for you.

My husband and I are full-swap swingers who have decided to see single men and women. However, my husband is jealous because many men show interest in me but no women are lining up for him. How can we make this work for both of us? And why is he freaking out now after watching me have sex with other men who are part of a couple?—H.P., Lexington, Kentucky

He may feel threatened because a single man has nothing to lose by stealing you away. Whatever the explanation, if it doesn't work for him, it doesn't work for you. That's the agreement you made when you got into the lifestyle and the relationship.

am getting swamped with e-mails from obscure locations, written by confused bankers, fearful heirs and the widows of dignitaries asking for my help in disposing of some large sum of money. The story is always the same: They need someone with a U.S. account to get the funds out of the country. I work for a firm that often gives its account number to customers to submit payments. But even with this number they can't withdraw money. So how does the scam work?—R.A., Newark, New Jersey

Once they have identified a mark, scammers ask for money to be wired to pay bribes, taxes or government fees so the windfall can be "released." Each time the mark pays, a new obstacle arises.

had a dream about a woman and woke up feeling in love but also at a loss because she is not real. Can you fall in love with a dream girl?—R.S., Scranton, Pennsylvania

No. That's longing, not love.

You mentioned in September that HPV-16 has been linked to penile cancer. Are you kidding? Can you actually get cancer in your penis?—H.M., Tampa, Florida

Unfortunately, yes. Because most tumors appear on the head or foreskin, one hypothesis is they are caused by secretions that become trapped when an uncircumcised penis is not washed regularly. Researchers are investigating the role of HPV-16 and HPV-18, which can

also lead to genital warts and have been found in a third of all penile cancer cases. In Western countries, where circumcision is common, only about 1,000 men are diagnosed annually. But in Asia, Africa and South America, penile cancer represents 20 to 30 percent of all cancers among men. It can strike at any age but typically affects men who are 60 or older. Left untreated, it can be deadly. In one study of 1,605 men diagnosed with penile cancer, 22 percent died. What to watch for: a lesion or growth that won't heal.

Often in porn you'll see a guy fuck a woman's pussy, switch to her ass and then back to her pussy. Are there risks in that?—K.L., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Yes. Unless you put on a new condom with each switch, you risk carrying bacteria from her anus to her vagina. The women in porn know they're taking a chance, which is why they usually charge more for it.

My husband put an ad on the Internet without my knowledge. It has all his data—height, weight, profession, favorite quotes—but a photo of his brother. He swears it's an ad for his brother, who is in prison, but I didn't know they were even in touch. My husband says he meets women through the ad and gives them money. He says they are interventions but won't explain what that means. He went to Vegas to meet one of these

women after telling me he was going to a different city on business. I found out only after he totaled our car. I am convinced he is cheating. He refuses to discuss it and says he is working on getting someone else in the family to take over his brother's ad. What do you think?—K.C., Walnut, California

Not only is your husband cheating on you, he's doing it badly, which is no tribute. You can probably do better for yourself without walking more than 50 feet in any direction.

Since I'm in my mid-30s, I thought it was time to get serious about exercise. Swimming seems to be a great all-around muscle and cardio workout, plus I was on the swim team as a kid. On the second day, I pulled a muscle, and now I'm sitting here with a heating pad on my crotch. It seems easy to overdo it. Can you suggest a good daily workout?—D.J., Denton, Texas

The last time we swam, it was across the Grotto to get another drink. So we called our favorite pro, Allison Wagner, who won silver in the 400-meter individual medley at the 1996 Olympics and is now coaching and training for 2008. We especially like Wagner because she paints nudes in her spare time. You pulled your groin because of poor technique, probably while doing the breaststroke. So first get a refresher course from either a trainer or a video, then during each workout spend some time stretching and concentrating

on form. Use the first five to 10 minutes of each session to warm up. During the 30 to 60 minutes you spend in the water, try to use all four strokes—breast, freestyle, backstroke and butterfly—so you hit a variety of muscles. For cardio, Wagner suggests intervals, i.e., swim a lap, pause 10 seconds to slow your heart rate, then swim another lap. FYI: Kicking on your side is good for your obliques (love handles), as is rotating your hips during freestyle.

have always had a hairy butt. None of my sexual partners has ever said anything about it, but even if one had said it didn't bother her, I would have just thought she was being nice. Is a hairy ass a turnoff for women? Is it necessary to shave your butt, and if so, how do you go about it?—E.G., Miami, Florida

We are far too lazy to shave our butt. Women just have to take it or leave it. They should be busy on the other side anyway.

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







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THE PLAYBOY FORUM

STEPFORD NATION

AS RUBBERNECKERS, AMERICANS KNOW NO EQUAL

BY FREDERICK BARTHELME

ack in the summer, while the electricity and water and everything else were out in Hattiesburg in observance of Hurricane Katrina, I watched the news on a battery-powered two-inch Casio I bought at pawn a decade ago for \$50. When a lucky few of us had power restored, I turned on the real TV and started scanning the news channels. That may have been a mistake.

The New Orleans horror show was everywhere. It was news, of course, but it was entertainment, too. We wanted to see Woman With Three Teeth on our big-screen TVs. We were enthralled by Dead Man in Wheelchair. We ogled Dead Person Under Sheet on Low Wagon as he was dragged past the convention center. We welcomed these images, and the TV kept dishing them up. If we had not wanted to see them—if someone had not wanted to see

them—they would not have been constantly recycled.

Our providers were much too interested in the pictures of this American Ethiopia and too little interested in everything else. Which brings us to note the difference between TV news's eagerness for tragedy and our appetite for it. The latter is well-known, of course, but the former seems fresh, an affliction particular to news gatherers that prompts them to see the world as an occasion for Special Reports, a sensorium of train wrecks, multicar pileups, abductions, airplane crashes, asteroids headed for Earth, tiger attacks and cataclysms of every stripe. The mind-set: Tragedy is Job One.

Katrina became the Flood of New Orleans, and the rest of the story slipped out of mind as image after image of the city "under-fucking-water," as a friend said in trying to explain (not absolve) the media's myopia, took over the tube.

New Orleans was a major American city everyone knew about—Bourbon Street, the French Quarter—and it was ultraphotogenic, so it got the coverage. It did not matter that the story was no longer the storm; it had morphed into New Orleans's problems, long known and unremarked on previously: extreme poverty, thousands of people with no way out, the failure of the city (and state and nation) to prepare for floods everyone knew were bound to come.

We spent weeks looking at terrifying and often exquisite pictures of New Orleans steeped in tragedy—guys wading chest-deep in rusty-looking waters, quaint houses dappled with shadow and

reflected in the suddenly calm floods, the explosive reds and yellows of a chemical fire against the night sky. When we saw these things on TV, were we not sometimes taking the pleasure we take in looking at the world in *Blade Runner* or *Mad Max*, the scary pleasure of thinking, *What would it be like to be trapped on a balcony as the water rises, then slows, then stops after just wetting the concrete under our feet? What is this pleasure we take in grief and catastrophe, in the wounds of others?*

Did we enjoy the destruction overmuch, encouraged by reporters gasping at every new horror, every new teddy bear dug out of the sludge, every new lost purse picked out with a flashlight beam, every new overturned car? Yes, *enjoy* is inflammatory. But is it close?

Maybe it was good old-fashioned rubbernecking. A

continually refreshed fountain of dismay, a feast of tragedies. In addition to 24-hour hurricane reportage (by now featuring film stars and singers in leading roles) we had a blizzard of hurricane programming all over the TV—hurricanes in history, an anatomy of the hurricane, how hurricanes work, hurricane-proof housing, dressing for hurricanes, etc. An announcer on the Speed Channel remarked that "the Formula One community," while carrying on its race schedule in Belgium that week, was deeply sorrowed by the events in New Orleans. Eventually the White House sent flacks to Pascagoula and similarly peripheral (unthreatening) areas to say what Bush's political advisors figured would be helpful to his numbers. It turns out what they thought would be helpful was Donald Rumsfeld haltingly pronouncing, "This is a very grave crisis," which completely revised and elaborated our understanding of the situation. Greta Van Susteren and the rest of the cable Howdy Doodys immersed themselves in the tragedy, the better to bring it to us firsthand and share it with us. Dr. Phil arrived at the Astrodome not to help anyone but to explain to viewers the deep trauma that victims were experiencing, the loss of everything they had known, their lives now scrunched into paper bags. Three weeks later all this was repeated when Rita arrived. The networks split their time between hyping the storm and congratulating Texas for its handling of the threat. Lessons Learned became the lead even









FORUM

as reporters in their bright slickers with the news-team logos stayed on the air 24/7. It did not seem to matter that Rita's winds were much less powerful than Katrina's. The reporters still managed to be buffeted dramatically.

Something is wrong with all this. There was a time, I think, though I don't quite remember it, when reporting was reporting, and it was reasonably measured, trustworthy, honest, decent, thoughtful and (occasionally) brave. My memory of Vietnam reporting, for example, is that reporters did not go looking for the most ghoulish and gruesome scenes, though they often found them. TV reporting then was not quite given over completely to the sensational. What we have now is a sideshow. Anything that can be made into a sideshow will be. Maybe reporters have learned that starring in a tragedy is the fast lane. Maybe producers are just feeding our insatiable desire.

I once wrote that CNN was our sociological novel, the novel whose absence from American literature Tom Wolfe was always yammering about. But now I fear that CNN and the others have become Peyton Place and Stepford Wives and Manchurian Candidate all rolled into one. News presents a metaworld that doesn't really exist, a collection of vignettes about our lives that now seems to define our lives. The anchors tell us what we think on Monday, and on Tuesday when the reporters in the field ask us, we repeat what we were told. This goes for politics, tragedy, human interest—you name it. The news is no longer an eyewitness to history; it manufactures history. It is peopled by a special class of surrogate experiencers who nightly tell us what we are all experiencing. They present tiny, detailed dramas filled with poignant and conventional portrayals of our lives, complete with our shared emotions, our fears for our fellow citizens and our profound sadness over the tragedies that have befallen us. The world they describe is horrifying and happifying in an easy black hat-white hat way. True human stories are made into parodies. We are not an inch closer to the experiences than we were while sitting in our living rooms in comfortable, well-lit, air-conditioned homes across America, but when we are told "these things have brought us together," we believe they have. When we are told "we all breathed a sigh of relief," we breathe that sigh. When we are told "these have been tough weeks, and we deserve a pat on the back for handling them so well," well, astonishingly, we believe that, too.

HOW CIVILIZATIONS FAIL

WHEN RESOURCES DWINDLE, NATIONS DIE



CLA professor Jared Diamond takes the long view—what he calls "the 13,000-year perspective"—on the big questions, having drawn on physiology, evolutionary biology and biogeography over the course of his career. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Guns, Germs and Steel, and in his most recent book, Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed, he argues that large-scale decline almost always has to do with resource management. For instance, the Easter Islanders destroyed the trees they needed to make canoes, and the Greenland Norse favored unsustainable farming over living from the sea. Not all of Diamond's examples are drawn from history; he claims the genocide in Rwanda could be interpreted as a conflict over dwindling resources. Nor are they physically remote. "Globalization means that societal declines are interlinked," he says. "Troubles in one country will be troubles in another country." We asked Diamond about where he thinks we stand today.

PLAYBOY: In *Collapse* you list the world's leading environmental trouble spots, many of which also appear on your list of political trouble spots. Basically you suggest that environmental-resource problems lead to political problems. Sometimes the connection is obvious, as in Somalia. But what about Iraq?

DIAMOND: Iraq once led the world in everything. This is where agriculture began (8500 B.C.), the first state governments arose (3500 B.C.) and the first bronze was made (3000 B.C.). Now it's at the bottom of the heap. It's been going downhill for a long time, partly because of deforestation and salinization, which were reported as early as 2500 B.C. near the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, where the first crops were grown. In the last century, colonization and the fall of the Ottoman Empire were factors, but if you want to know why Iraq and other Middle Eastern nations are no longer among the world's leading countries, the reasons for that long downward trajectory are predominantly environmental.

PLAYBOY: What other scenarios should we worry about?

DIAMOND: One scenario within the book's framework would be the spread of conditions such as those in Somalia and Haiti. Many governments have a good chance of failing within the next five years. Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, already has separatist movements. Pakistan is a good candidate. Nepal could fail within a year.

PLAYBOY: Nepal faces a Maoist insurgency. Can you really explain that in terms of environmental resources?

DIAMOND: Yes. It's a poor, dissatisfied country. Compare Nepal with Bhutan, which has made different decisions.



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FORUM

Nepal decided to attract cheap mass tourism a couple of decades ago, and Bhutan went for limited upscale tourism. Nepal also engaged in deforestation. It's crowded, with sewage all over the place. When people are rich and satisfied, they don't support Maoist guerrillas. You have Maoist guerrillas in the mountains of Peru. You don't have

them in Switzerland, Norway or Costa Rica.

PLAYBOY: What would be a less gentle scenario?

DIAMOND: When some states collapse, other states will see their interests affected and will intervene. If Nepal, which is adjacent to Tibet, collapses, it's unlikely the Chinese will stand by and allow it. It's even less likely that India will stand by. You'll get some interesting stuff if both the Chinese and the Indians decide to intervene.

PLAYBOY: What policies do you suggest the U.S. government should enact to stave off problems?

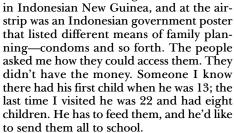
DIAMOND: We should get involved earlier and try to solve long-term problems rather than wait until after a disaster. Since September 2001 we've had two major military interventions aimed at short-term problems. Attempts at state building in Iraq came only after the short-term goal had been accomplished. Quite apart from being idealistic, these interventions are prohibitively expensive, and

about 25 countries are waiting to be the next Iraq. We just can't afford to do it. It would be much cheaper and more efficacious to do things aimed at preventing states from failing. And people becoming desperate is what pushes states to failure.

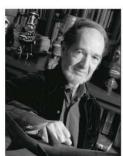
PLAYBOY: How can we forestall that?

DIAMOND: Address three things: public

health, the environment and family planning. In regard to family planning, the U.S. doesn't just fail to do good; it does harm. The present administration's policy is to oppose use of U.S. funds for family-planning purposes. But population growth is one of the big background problems. People in third world countries tell me they would like to have fewer children. I was in the most remote village I've ever visited



Interview by Rob Levine



Jared Diamond.

EBUNKER

MYTH:

ROSA PARKS WAS
THE ORIGINAL FREEDOM RIDER

REALITY: While Parks's refusal to give her seat to a white rider in December 1955 sparked the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott, two teenage girls had been arrested earlier that year for violating the same bus segregation law. However, because of the girls' youth and circumstances, local black leaders felt neither would withstand the scrutiny of an extended legal challenge. The first, 15-year-old Claudette Colvin, had been arrested on March 2. She caught the bus at the same place Parks would board nine months later, near Martin Luther King's church, on Dexter Avenue. When four whites boarded, the driver ordered Colvin and three other blacks to

move back. Colvin didn't respond and kept looking out the window. She was convicted of both violating segregation laws and assault (she kicked and screamed as police removed her), but the state dropped the segregation charges on appeal. Colvin also became pregnant out of wedlock that year. The second teenager, 18-year-old

Mary Louise Smith, had been arrested on October 21. Again, black leaders decided to wait, in part because of concerns that Smith's father was an alcoholic (the family denies he drank) but also because they had no courtroom verdict to appeal (her father had quietly paid the fine). In Parks, who said she did not plan to be arrested, activists found an upstanding and stoic defendant—she was older (42), had been married for 23 years, worked as a seamstress and served as secretary of the local NAACP. The next year Colvin and Smith were among four plaintiffs in the U.S. Supreme Court decision that banned bus segregation. Ironically, the racist practice

had been legitimized by an 1896 Court ruling involving another freedom rider, Homer Plessy. Police in New Orleans had arrested the shoemaker after he refused to leave a whites-only train car. The Court ruled against him in Plessy v. Ferguson, which was used to justify segregation for the next 60 years.

MARGINALIA

FROM A LETTER
written in 1954 by
then-president Dwight
Eisenhower to his brother:
'I believe this country is following a
dangerous trend when it permits to

dangerous trend when it permits too great a degree of centralization of governmental functions. But to attain any success it is quite clear that the federal government cannot avoid or escape responsibilities which the mass of the people firmly believe should be undertaken by it. This is what I mean by my constant insistence upon moderation in government. Should any political party attempt to abolish Social Security and unemployment insurance and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history. There is a tiny splinter group that believes you can do these things. Among them are H.L. Hunt and

a few other Texas oil millionaires and an occasional politician or business-

man from other areas. Their number is

negligible, and they are stupid."

FROM A DECISION by a Massachusetts appeals court: "The plaintiff and defendant were engaged in sexual intercourse. The plaintiff was on his back with the defendant on top of him when she decided to unlock her legs and place her feet on either side of his abdomen to increase her stimulation. The defendant landed awkwardly, causing the plaintiff to suffer a penile fracture that required emergency surgery. He sued for damages. However, in the absence of a consensus of community values or customs defining normal consensual sexual conduct, a jury or judge cannot be expected to resolve a claim that certain sexual conduct is

FROM A REPORT in The New York Times: "In New Orleans, the superin-

undertaken without reasonable care.

tendent of police said that
after a week of near anarchy,
no civilians will be
allowed to carry firearms. That order
apparently does not
apply to the hundreds
of security guards
with M-16s whom
businesses and
some wealthy indi-

viduals have hired to protect their property. Police said they had no plans to make them give up their weapons."

FROM A LETTER to the Kansas
Board of Education at venganza.org:
"I read of your hearing to decide
whether intelligent design should be
taught along with evolution. We can all
agree that it is important for students
to hear multiple viewpoints. I am concerned, however, that students will
hear only one theory of intelligent
design. I and many others are of the

(continued on page 47)

READER RESPONSE

FLYING WITH PLAYBOY

In your October issue a reader writes that a Southwest flight attendant told him he could not read PLAYBOY on the plane. His letter surprised me because I have flown Southwest, Continental, United, Song and a few others while reading the magazine and have never been asked to put it away.

Marc Stevenson Oakland, California

The letter reminds me of an America West flight to Telluride, Colorado my husband and I were on in 1999. We were discreetly reading the new issue of PLAYBOY together in first class as we waited to take off when a male flight attendant demanded we put it away. We refused, so the attendant notified security, which removed us from the plane. It was quite a scene, but we learned our lesson. When we finally got another flight several hours later, we waited until the plane took off to open the magazine.

Victoria Fuller Miss January 1996 Los Angeles, California

My husband and I enjoy PLAYBOY, but the airlines should be able to determine



what is appropriate on their flights. It would be difficult to read the magazine without others seeing it.

K.M. Hower Akron, Ohio

Aircrews are given powers akin to those of sovereign potentates via laws of dubious constitutionality for the sole purpose of preventing terrorism, not for bullying people into political correctness. If you won't help the guy, send him to me. I'll make it a point to read PLAYBOY whenever I fly



Victoria Fuller and her husband, Jonathan.

Southwest, and if I'm threatened, I'll front the money for a class action.

Chuck Hammill Los Angeles, California

We're with you, at least in spirit. Our lawyers have studied this from every angle and concluded that litigation would have little chance of success. Every court ruling we could find that addresses passenger rights has been decided in favor of the airlines.

I have been a flight attendant for 17 years and can tell you that not everyone is discreet. On a recent flight from Las Vegas a young man was reading PLAYBOY in first class and making sure everyone behind him enjoyed the Centerfold. I asked him to be more discreet. He put the issue away and fell asleep. As we descended and I approached to ask him to straighten his seat back, the attractive young woman next to him pointed at his jersey shorts. He must have had a hell of a dream, because he was at full salute (and was, I must say, very blessed in that department). After I woke him he quickly moved his cap to his lap.

Name withheld Boston, Massachusetts

We apologize for our more boneheaded readers, especially the ones who sleep on a long flight while sitting next to a beautiful woman.

Kudos to the airlines. Many Christians also fly, and they or their children may not wish to see the magazine as they walk the aisle or sit next to someone reading it. The reader showed no consideration for others on the plane.

Michael Covell Atwater, California

OUT ON THE STREET

Like Deborah Hobbs, whose boss told her to get married or be fired ("Newsfront," September), I also once nearly became a victim of North Carolina's ban on cohabitation. In 1997, as the lease on my house was about to end, my landlord discovered that my girlfriend had been staying with me. My landlord became furious, asked, "What would God think?" and threatened to call everyone from my mother to the police. At the time, my girlfriend and I were soldiers, and I had already served in two combat zones. One thing I will never understand is how we as a nation can be fearless about going to war while being so afraid of people who love and care for each other.

> David Reichenbach Allentown, Pennsylvania

THE WORLD BANK

Moisés Naím's essay on the World Bank ("A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing," October) is an eye-opener. One can see why U.S. monopolies despise nations such as Cuba and Venezuela. Multinational corporations have a hard time penetrating their economies and controlling their politics.

Jose Reyes Grants Pass, Oregon

As a criminal defense attorney for the past 41 years, I recognized the techniques described in your interview with "economic hit man" John Perkins (October) for what they are—loan-sharking and extortion. Rather than being feted



How the World Bank rules

as humanitarians, our noble leaders should be charged with racketeering.

Murray Richman Bronx, New York

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

NEWSFRONT



The Executioner

BELLINGHAM. WASHINGTON—Most states require sex offenders to give their addresses to police to share with the public. Michael Mullen (far left) used an online registry to locate an apartment shared by three men who had done time for molesting kids. He killed two of them but spared the third so he would "get the message out to others that I am coming." Law professor John La Fond, author of Preventing Sexual Violence: How Society Should Cope With Sex Offenders, says many offenders are harassed or assaulted but believes these are the first killings. Posting addresses, he says, is "almost like a confession by the state that it cannot keep the community safe. It invites society to take care of it." He says vigilantism discourages offenders from registering, and one in five don't.

Drug War Casualty

SUNRISE, FLORIDA—A bartender who enjoyed smoking cannabis learned the hard way that being labeled a dealer can be lethal. When a SWAT team broke down Anthony Diotaiuto's door at 6:15 A.M. (some neighbors said they did not hear the officers identify themselves), the 23-year-old fled to his bedroom to grab his gun. Two officers shot him dead. "It was his choice not to follow orders and retrieve a weapon," a police spokesman said. The police said they recovered two ounces of marijuana.

Teen Sex

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A new government survey offers a fresh look at the sex lives of U.S. teens. A quarter of 15-year-old boys say they have had vaginal sex, 30 percent have gotten a blow job, 16 percent have given cunnilingus, five percent have had anal sex, and two percent have had sex with a male. Among 15-year-old girls, 18 percent have given a blow job, and seven percent have had sexual contact with a female.

Trojan Horse

SAN DIEGO—Loverspy is an \$89 software program that sends an electronic greeting card that records the e-mails and website visits of the person who opens it. A federal prosecutor here charged its maker and at least four of the estimated 1,000 people who bought it online with violating computer hacking and privacy laws.

Lick It Good

SEATTLE—A county judge ruled that police did not violate a suspect's privacy when they sent

him a letter claiming he had won money in a class-action suit. Police matched DNA from the saliva used to seal the return envelope to evidence from a 1982 murder.

"The Best Deal Ever!"

LOS ANGELES—In 2001 Sony Pictures used a fake critic to plug its movies in ads. A quick-thinking law firm filed a class-action suit on behalf of consumers who might have been duped. Sony argued that the blurbs were free speech but agreed to settle by giving a \$5 refund for each ticket purchased. After tallying all the claims, the studio paid a total of \$5,085 to consumers and \$458,909 to the lawyers.

Under Your Thumb

Biometric scanners are fast becoming part of daily life. To prevent membership sharing, many health clubs require visitors to present a finger



for a print scan. Piggly Wiggly offers "pay-by-touch," which links prints to bank accounts. And the National Park Service added fingerprint scan-

ners to lockers where visitors must store their bags before climbing the Statue of Liberty. The scanners convert each print into a code that can't be used to reconstruct it, which limits the potential for abuse. The latest technology also checks for heat and sweat to deter thieves from lopping off a victim's finger to use as a key for homes and vehicles with touch-pad security.

MARGINALIA

(continued from page 45)

strong belief that the universe was created by a Flying Spaghetti Monster. He built the world to make us think the earth is older than it really is. For example, a scientist may perform a carbon-dating process on an artifact and find it to be 10,000 years old. But what he does not realize is that every time he makes a measurement, the Flying Spaghetti Monster is there changing the results with His Noodly Appendage. We have numerous texts that describe how this can be possible. You also may be interested to know that global warming, earthquakes, hurricanes and other natural disasters are a direct effect

a direct effect of the shrinking numbers of pirates since the 1800s. I have included a graph that shows this

shows this statistically significant inverse relationship. I await your response and hope dearly that no legal action will need to be taken."

FROM AN ESSAY by George Friedman in The New York Review of Books: "During the Cold War, a macabre topic of discussion among bored graduate students who studied such things was this: If the Soviets could destroy one city with a large nuclear device, which would it be? For me, the answer was simple: New Orleans. If the Mississippi River were shut to traffic, then the foundations of the economy would be shattered. The industrial minerals needed in the factories wouldn't come in, and the agricultural wealth wouldn't flow out. Alternative routes really weren't available. The Germans knew it too: A U-boat campaign occurred near the mouth of the Mississippi during World War II. New Orleans was the prize. Hurricane Katrina's geopolitical effect was not, in many ways, distinguishable from a mushroom cloud."

FROM AN INTERVIEW with

physicist Edward Teller, father of the hydrogen bomb, in American Heritage: AH: How do you view your role in our thermonuclear defense strategy?

ET: The Soviet leaders after Stalin, who were not complete fanatics, realized that they could not win without terrific losses. Had they had the hydrogen bomb before we did, I don't know what would have happened.

AH: How do you respond to the reality that small, unaligned nations and even groups are trying to go nuclear?
ET: These things are not easy to do.
We found this out. You can do more damage with less cost with biological weapons. My hopeful answer is that our research in

counteracting contagion has gone so far that for the terrorists to overcome it is not easy. This is the case with nuclear weapons as well. Always there is a balance.

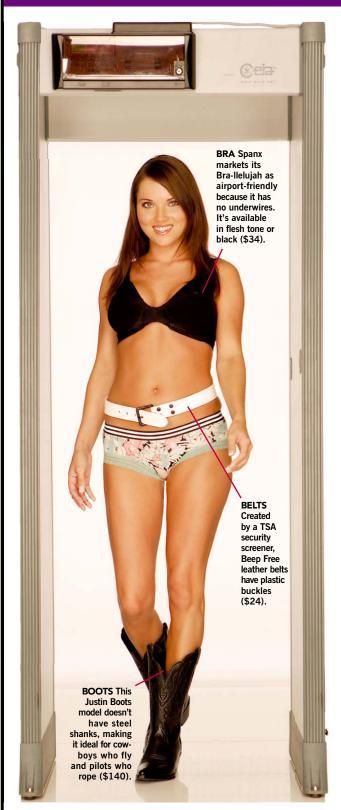


FORUM

FASHION ON THE RUN

HOPING TO AVOID THAT DREADED BEEP AT AIRPORT SECURITY?

THESE PRODUCTS COULD MAKE YOUR TRIP EASIER





SUSPENDERS
BuzzNot from the
Suspender Store will
"speed you through
metal detectors with
your pants up and
dignity intact." It
has plastic clips and
comes in black, blue
and tan (\$20). The
TSA also suggests
that you remove cuff
links and bolo ties.

LIGHTERS The Department of Transportation has approved the crush-proof, waterproof Zippo Cargo Case by Otterbox for holding a fueled-up lighter in checked luggage (\$13). The TSA prohibits any type of lighter, empty or full, from carry-ons.





SOCKS Although screeners generally don't ask travelers to remove their sandals, these socks by Cloudyreason make them easier to slip off and avoid contact between your naked feet and whatever germs reside on the airport's tile floor (\$10).

WHY YOU HAVE TO WAIT IN LINE

The photograph below—obtained by Rohan Gunaratna, director of the International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore, and published here for the first time—shows a fully functional shoe bomb that postal authorities intercepted in 2004 at a Carson, California mail facility. It was sent to the U.S. from Thailand and is powerful enough to bring down an airliner.



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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: MARK CUBAN

A candid conversation with the Mavericks' outspoken owner about his feuds with the NBA, his high-tech fortune and how he's conquering Hollywood

Six years ago Mark Cuban was just another multimillionaire dot-commer largely unknown to the public. But after he sold Broadcast.com to Yahoo for \$5.7 billion (pocketing \$1.9 billion for himself), he went on a shopping spree. He bought a 24,000-square-foot Dallas mansion, a 6,000-square-foot New York condo and a \$41 million Gulfstream jet. But cool toys don't make you famous. It took another of his purchases to achieve that: In 2000 he shelled out \$280 million for the Dallas Mavericks at the time the highest price ever paid for a basketball team—and promptly became one of the most colorful owners in sports, ranting and raving at referees and being hit with more than \$1 million in fines by the NBA.

Cuban paid a lot of money for a joke of a team that hadn't made the playoffs in 11 years, but he has turned the Mavs into contenders and introduced a new level of marketing savvy—and in-your-face antics—to a league that has been losing ground among fans. His crowning mouth-off came when he said of Ed Rush, the NBA director of officials, "I wouldn't hire him to manage a Dairy Queen," for which he was slapped with the biggest NBA fine ever, \$500,000. In response, Dairy Queen invited Cuban to run one of its restaurants for a day.

Now Cuban is getting even more heat by taking on the Hollywood establishment. He has

invested heavily in two high-definition TV networks, the Landmark movie theater chain and five independent movie companies, including Lions Gate Films and Rysher Entertainment. Armed with these new companies, he's rewriting the Hollywood rule book. He has partnered with Oscar-winning director Steven Soderbergh for six movies, one of which, Bubble, will be released simultaneously this month in Cuban's movie theaters, on DVD and on one of Cuban's HD networks. It will be the first time this has been attempted, and if it works, it could forever change the way movies are released.

The concept is risky and controversial. However, Cuban has made a fortune taking on difficult challenges. The son of a Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania car upholsterer, Cuban sold plastic garbage bags door-to-door at the age of 12; at 15 he attended stamp collectors shows, buying on one floor and selling at a profit on another. While majoring in business at Indiana University, he and some friends bought a pub and ran it until a wet T-shirt contest starring a 16-year-old got him in trouble with the authorities.

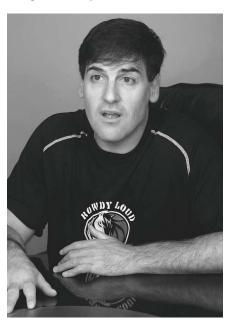
After graduating, Cuban drifted to Dallas and took a job servicing computers, which led to his first company, MicroSolutions, a systems-integration firm, which he sold seven years later to CompuServe. A multimillionaire

at 31, Cuban dabbled in acting before cofounding Broadcast.com, an online gateway to the broadcasts of hundreds of college and professional athletic events and radio stations around the world. Video streaming came next. When Cuban and his partner took the company public, the price of a single share of stock jumped in an afternoon from \$18 to \$62, a Wall Street record at the time.

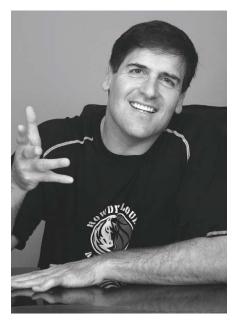
Now he has emerged as one of the nation's most influential movers and shakers in the fields of technology and—improbably—entertainment. PLAYBOY sent writer Diane K. Shah, who last interviewed Derek Jeter for the magazine, to Cuban's homes in Dallas and New York City to talk to the voluble tycoon. Shah reports she found him "the consummate salesman, aiming to please and easy to like. He comes across as affable, at times self-effacing—a straight shooter but not the terror he sometimes appears to be at Mavs games."

PLAYBOY: Of your many ongoing business roles, the one most people probably know is the crazy guy in the T-shirt who leaps out of a courtside seat at Mavericks games to scream at referees.

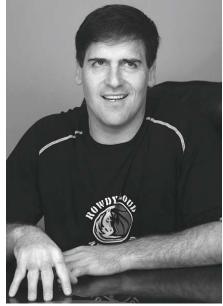
CUBAN: A lot of people say owners should sit in the skybox and chomp on a cigar. But when you build a company, there



"It's my job to be aggressive. If I'm upset about something, I'll let you know. You can tell me you don't like the way I communicate—that's your privilege, and we can agree or disagree—but I would be a far worse partner if I shut up."



"The smartest marketing person I ever met in L.A. is Paris Hilton. I put her up there with Dennis Rodman. They both know how to leverage the media and get what they need while pushing their own agenda. Amazingly brilliant."



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID ROSE

"My hope is that four or more schools drop out of the NCAA and start their own organization that allows kids to major in basketball. A guy who dreams of being an NBA player should have the same support as one who dreams of being a concert pianist."

are organizational dynamics. Who are the leaders? How do people interact with each other? How do they deal with pressure? You can't get that sense from the skybox. If you're removed, you don't know how to make decisions.

PLAYBOY: That may explain why you sit behind the Mavs bench, but not the \$1.2 million you've been fined for yelling at refs.

CUBAN: I'm in the game. I'm in the game. **PLAYBOY:** But what do you have against the refs? Do you blame them for your team's losses?

CUBAN: Maybe at the beginning, but I learned very quickly. I learned that some officials call traveling and others don't. Some guys will call technical fouls more often, which will come through in the

scouting reports for individual refs. That's not a deficiency; it's a personal proclivity. But when you see that somebody who never called defensive threeseconds is suddenly calling it a lot, and you see that a whole lot of refs across the league are doing it, you can tell they were instructed to do so. I asked why. That's how I got fined for the Dairy Queen remark. I thought we needed to have somebody come in and take an independent look at the system.

PLAYBOY: How did the league react to that?

CUBAN: A common refrain is "Hey, we've made it this far without you." But I think it's my job as your partner to be aggressive. If I'm upset about something, I'll let you know. You can tell me you don't like the way I communicate—that's your privilege, and we can agree or disagree—but I would be a far worse partner if I shut up.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel you've made any inroads?

CUBAN: Yes. A perfect example is the playoff series with Utah, right after I bought the team. John Stockton went to the line with 2.9 seconds left in the game and gave Utah the

lead. When he finished shooting his free throws, there were 2.2 seconds left. The clock is stopped for free throws, so something was obviously wrong. I went and pounded the scorer's table—a lot was at stake. After the game the officials confirmed the mistake. These things happen, right? But people asked NBA commissioner David Stern if he was going to suspend or fine me for ranting and raving. He said, "No. Mark probably cost his team that game." That's the only time I've ever been mad at him. But to make a long story short, the next year, all of a sudden there were independent timekeepers. Imagine that.

PLAYBOY: How do you get along with Stern now?

CUBAN: David's a master politician. When it's his idea and you're on his side, you're his best friend. When he doesn't feel the need to respond to something, he'll tell you to feel free to get the owners to vote him down, which he knows is very difficult. He's a master of divide and conquer.

PLAYBOY: Have you achieved other changes in the NBA?

CUBAN: Remember how Shaquille O'Neal used to get away with stepping over the free-throw line? I complained. All of a sudden they started watching for it. There are many other examples.

PLAYBOY: Did O'Neal get pissed off? CUBAN: At the time, I said, "Shaq should be on his hands and knees thanking me

Owning a share of stock

Owning a share of stock is not a whole lot different from owning a baseball card.

because if it weren't for my complaining, he'd still be stepping over the line and he'd go down in history as the best center ever except that he could never hit a free throw without doing that." A reporter told Shaq. He said, "Tell Mark I said thanks." Shaq's great. I love Shaq. PLAYBOY: Yet apparently you had a blowup doll made of him.

CUBAN: [Looking delighted] We did a thing when we played the Lakers a couple of years ago. We made a cartoon of a character like Fat Albert, put a Lakers 34—Shaq's number—and Shaq's head on him and played the video during the game. He said, "Hey, hey, hey, I'm Shaq Albert." It was hysterical. Shaq was bent over laughing.

PLAYBOY: David Stern wasn't.

CUBAN: The league said, "You're not allowed to make fun of other players." I was fined \$25,000. But it was such great entertainment, it was worth it.

PLAYBOY: Over the years, the league has implemented a number of officiating changes that you lobbied for. Is the refereeing better?

CUBAN: It's run much more like a professional organization than an old boys club. But despite its adding strong people, some remain who probably shouldn't be there. Until that changes, there will still be a little too much politics and not enough professional management skills. **PLAYBOY:** The general opinion about you in the league office seems to be that you

have good ideas but push too hard for immediate results. Given your background of running your own companies, you never had to be a team player. Is teamwork something you need to learn as one of 30 NBA owners?

CUBAN: I hope not. To me, a good partnership is one in which it's okay to say, "Shut the fuck up." I don't take it personally.

PLAYBOY: Do you take it personally when Donald Trump spars with you? Is it done with a wink, or is there an ongoing competition between you two?

CUBAN: It started with a wink. When I got my show, The Benefactor, he called me, saying, "Hey, this is Donald Trump. I just wanted to say congratulations. If anybody can do it, you can." It was very nice. Then I read a story in which he called the show a copycat. "I already know it's going to be terrible," he said. That's when it started. PLAYBOY: Had you met him before that?

CUBAN: Yes. The first time was at a Super Bowl party at his place Mar-a-Lago in 1999. My company Broadcast.com had just gone public. It was the biggest IPO in the history of the

stock market. I was there with someone from Yahoo, which was about to buy my company. Trump came over, and I was introduced. People were dining on a balcony above us, and he said, "Someday you'll be able to sit up there and eat with the rich people."

PLAYBOY: Is it true you tried to pitch him your Internet services?

CUBAN: A mutual friend suggested Trump invite me to his office to talk about Internet stuff. I went. It was a normal business meeting, uneventful except for one thing. Now, I figure the over-under on office pictures of yourself and your family is four or five. In his office, every inch of every wall was covered with pictures of himself. And I'm like, Note to self: If you

ever make it big, don't ever be like this.

After the TV show was canceled, Trump sent me a letter, which I framed, by the way. It says, "I told you, you never should have done the show. I could have told you it would fail." Totally low-rent, right? But I had pissed him off by saying in one of the show's promos that I could write a bigger check than Donald Trump and not know it was missing. He threatened to sue me. The point was not net worth but cash. Most of my money's in cash. If everything comes crashing down, I have cash. I have no debt. I told my lawyer, "Let's pray to God he does sue, because how much fun would that be? He would have to disclose everything. It was "I'll show you mine; you show me yours." But he never pursued it.

PLAYBOY: As Trump was eager to point out, *The Benefactor*, which aired in the fall of 2004, was canceled after six episodes. What went wrong?

CUBAN: I think it failed because I listened to the producers who created the show, rather than the people from ABC. The ABC folks told me to be myself and let it fly, but the producers kept telling me what to say. By the third episode I was like, Fuck it. I will do what ABC said—be myself and have fun. But it was too late. **PLAYBOY:** At the opposite extreme, some people have suggested that your latest venture is too early. How do you plan to pull off a company that delivers a movie to a person's home the same day it opens in theaters? It goes against the entire structure of the traditional movie business.

CUBAN: The idea is to give the consumer three choices: go to the movies, get the movie on pay TV or buy the DVD. All three would have the same distribution date. Here's how it came into being. Three years ago I started two high-definition networks, HDTV and HDNet Movies. They are both carried by most cable and satellite companies. That gives us content. Then we bought Landmark Theatres, which has 215 screens and gives us an outlet to show movies we produce. That led us to buy Magnolia Pictures, which distributes movies. We also bought Rysher Entertainment for its film and TV library.

PLAYBOY: Your upcoming release will be Steven Soderbergh's *Bubble*. Will it be available in theaters, on DVD and on HDNet Movies all at once?

CUBAN: Yes. That will be our first. Here's the thinking. Some people don't want to rush to a movie the weekend it opens. They say they'll wait for the DVD, but some percentage of the time they blow it off because the excitement of watching it at the same time as everybody else is gone. Meanwhile, the film studio is spending a whole new advertising budget to promote the DVD. Why bother? Why not compress it and charge a premium of, say, five bucks to get the DVD right away?

PLAYBOY: Because, according to the perspective of traditional movie studios, not to mention theater companies, you will lose money

ZILLIONAIRE BOY\$ CLUB

Mark Cuban is not the only controversial owner in sports



PAUL ALLEN

Age: 52. Owns: The NFL's Seattle Seahawks and the NBA's Portland Trail Blazers, which ESPN.com called "two of the most toxic dumps in professional sports." Net worth: \$22.5 billion, placing him seventh on the Forbes list of richest humans. Main business: Co-founder of Microsoft. Perks: His 413-foot yacht Octopus has two helicopters and a 60-foot submarine. Bad move: Marketing campaign in which the Blazers' Ruben Patterson, a registered sex offender, went door-to-door promoting Family Night. Temper temp: If Mark Cuban is a boiling 212 degrees, Allen is 32—he defends his privacy like Norton Utilities.

JAMES DOLAN

Age: 49. Co-owns: The NBA's New York Knicks and the NHI's New York Rangers, once proud franchises that now resemble a New Jersey landfill. Net worth: \$1 billion, including the wealth of his father, cable-TV mogul Charles, who brought him into the exec suite. Perks: Heli-commutes from his Long Island home to his Madison Square Garden office; sings in vanity band JD & the Straight Shot. Bad moves: Bought chain of Wiz stores, which promptly lost \$400 million; gave a \$100 million contract to the Knicks' oft injured Allan Houston, who couldn't even dunk on Whitney Houston. Temper temp: 195—a shouter known for blowing up at employees.



Age: 75. Owns: MLB's New York Yankees, traditionally despised by everyone outside New York. Net worth: Nearly \$1 billion. Main business: Made his first fortune in shipbuilding, but the Bronx Bombers are now number one in his heart, if he has one. Perks: Buys expensive Thoroughbreds like 2005 Derby horse Bellamy Road and perennial All-Star A-Rod; always eats a peanut butter and jelly sandwich before bed. Bad moves: Made felonious contribution to Nixon's 1972 presidential campaign (pardoned by Reagan); hired Bronx lowlife Howie Spira to dig up dirt on Yankee Dave Winfield. Temper temp: 212—when the spittle flies, the boss is still king.



Age: 76. Owns: The NFL's Oakland Raiders, traditionally despised by other NFL owners. Net worth: Over \$500 million. Main business: Raiders. After coaching them from 1963 to 1965 he bought a 10 percent stake for \$18,500. His nastiness set the tone for a team that starred safety Jack Tatum, whose fierce hit in a preseason game left the Patriots' Darryl Stingley paralyzed for life. Perks: He gets to hang with the behemoths he adores. Bad moves: Testified for the upstart USFL against the NFL in 1986, and in 2001 sued the NFL for \$1.2 billion—and lost. Temper temp: 175—mellowed with age but still nasty, baby.

ROMAN ABRAMOVICH

Age: 39. Owns: Despite being a Russian he bought England's Chelsea Football Club, a former soccer doormat, and has used his wealth to rule the league—to purists' horror. Net worth: \$22.3 billion, making him Russia's richest person. Main business: Until recently, top shareholder in Sibneft, one of Russia's giant oil companies. Perks: His \$100 million, 377-foot yacht Pelorus has a crew of 40, bulletproof windows, a missile-detection system and two helicopters. Bad move: Offered Chelsea stars a vacation to his hometown—in Siberia. Temper temp: Icy Abramovich chills at zero.



you would have made at the box office. **CUBAN:** The difference is that we're putting the consumer first, whereas Hollywood puts itself first. Hollywood is saying a movie has to go to theaters first, then to DVD and finally to TV. That's just the way it works. We're saying, "Do you know what? That's not the way it works, because that's not what's best for the consumer."

PLAYBOY: Theaters are threatened, though. They may lose considerable money from box-office receipts, as well as concession sales.

CUBAN: That's why we're willing to kick back a percentage of DVD sales to theaters.

PLAYBOY: Why?

CUBAN: Because they are in essence creating more value for the DVD sales. So why not reward them?

PLAYBOY: One studio head who has voiced some support for your idea is Disney's Robert Iger. Does this surprise you?

CUBAN: No, because every studio knows it makes more sense. They have to realize that they must return a percentage of DVD sales to theaters, though. Until they do, I don't expect theaters to let it happen. We can do it because we own a chain of theaters.

PLAYBOY: You've already had one minor hit, the documentary *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, which has grossed more than \$4 million so far. But in the Hollywood scheme of things, that's a pittance. **CUBAN:** I'm not making movies for \$100 million. I don't need blockbusters. I'm not going to make *Spider-Man 3*.

PLAYBOY: Then what's the goal of your entertainment company?

CUBAN: It's to have a vertical company that gives consumers in the 25-to-54-year-old age group great content when and where they want it. Through my production company HDNet Films I can make movies I know will be geared to the demographic that Landmark Theatres fits. If you want the DVD, you can purchase it through our distribution company the same day the movie opens. You just pay a small premium price. I have all the parts. I just have to do it well.

PLAYBOY: Are you doing it well enough yet to turn a profit?

CUBAN: Except for HDNet, all the parts of the company are profitable.

PLAYBOY: How long are you willing to lose money on HDNet?

CUBAN: I'll last. When I started it in 2002 I expected to lose money at the beginning, which I wouldn't have done unless I thought I could finish it. I gave it five years, so two more years to go. But remember, you have to look at it relative to my net worth. I'm taking a smidgen of my net worth and risking it to create a TV network.

PLAYBOY: In addition to Soderbergh's *Bubble*, what other films are in the works?

CUBAN: We have five more Soderbergh films coming, plus we had *The War*

Within, which opened in the fall. One Last Thing will open next month. These three movies, by the way, were all accepted into the Toronto Film Festival. We've heard the only other start-up company that did as well is Miramax.

PLAYBOY: How have you been accepted in Hollywood? Have you been impressed with the people you've met there?

CUBAN: A lot of great film and music people are incredibly impressive when you talk to them one-on-one. But so many of them just walk, talk and crap the company line when they actually have to make decisions. The smartest marketing person I ever met in L.A. is Paris Hilton. I put her up there with Dennis Rodman. They both know how to leverage the media and get what they need while pushing their own agenda. Amazingly brilliant. Between the two, I would have to give Paris the edge.

PLAYBOY: How smart is the NBA when it comes to marketing?

CUBAN: We have a great product, our players are charismatic and exciting, but we can't market our way out of a paper bag. On the networks that carry our

The Lakers are great by
default because they have a
great cable-TV deal. Jerry
Buss is incredibly smart.
He's the one owner I look up
to. The only one.

games you'll see lots of NBA promotions and teasers, but you're not going to see them anywhere else. We promote to the converted. I've tried to be very communicative with all media. I thought that if I opened the lines of communication, I could be a conveyer of stories instead of a reactor to stories. That has made a big difference. In a quick-response medium, like e-mail, you can leverage the media. I call that getting wide and fast, meaning if I think something is of value to a writer, I can pop him an e-mail.

PLAYBOY: Have you discussed the idea with other team owners?

CUBAN: Other owners don't get it. They don't look at it as their responsibility. I politely suggested that we need to be more guerrilla-like. We need to have a sense of urgency. I think you have to reearn your business every day. The studios are promoting a new movie every day that keeps somebody from going to a Mavs game on a Friday night, and we have to counter it. For a while every league was boasting how its revenue went from \$400 million to \$2 billion because TV rights were doubling every four to six years. I

came in January 2000, right at the peak. Then things changed real quick. It's no longer a world of "Wait it out. Only good is going to happen." You can't just watch the revenue and valuations go up. You have to create value. You have to stand out. When I look at the NBA or sports in general, I don't think any of the professional leagues are standing out, working as if we're in an MTV *Deathmatch*, if you will, for attention.

PLAYBOY: What else would you do to improve the business of basketball?

CUBAN: In any business you should have an understanding of what your optimal productivity is. In sales and marketing, in everything down to customer satisfaction and how fast tickets are processed and hot dogs are served, optimal productivity should be your goal. You need to figure out how close to your goal you can get this season if you work your ass off and everyone does his job. Those are called your benchmarks. In most businesses, if you exceed your benchmarks, you get rewarded. If you come close, you keep your job. If you fail, you're gone. The same should apply to how teams are subsidized by the league. Define goals and benchmarks for every team based on market size, stadium situation, etc.

PLAYBOY: Have you proposed this to the league?

CUBAN: Two years ago. They're studying it. They're figuring out how to do revenue sharing for teams that have performed to all their benchmarks but whose markets aren't big enough for them to keep up. The teams that are drags won't get revenue sharing. How the league will deal with them remains to be seen, but at least the bad businessmen will be identified rather than swept under the rug.

PLAYBOY: Which teams are poorly run? **CUBAN:** Probably four of them. Probably another 11 are okay but could do a whole lot better. Maybe 10 are good. Five are great.

PLAYBOY: Are you including the Mavericks? **CUBAN:** I put us in the "good" category. We're trying to be great. The Lakers are great by default because they have a great cable-TV deal. Jerry Buss is incredibly smart. He's the one owner I look up to. The only one.

PLAYBOY: Who else in the sports world do you admire?

CUBAN: Jerry Jones, Jim Dolan and David Stern. Dolan isn't afraid to take on anyone. You want to build a stadium that could impact my business in New York? Fuck you. Watch me muck it up by changing the game. That takes balls. Jones changed the economics of the NFL. He said, "The Cowboys are a national brand. We outdraw the home team in multiple cities. Watch me sign up Amex, Pepsi and others to big deals that all the other owners cry about." Hopefully I can get the Mavs to the point where we are an institutional brand with national impact too.



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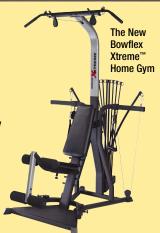
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PLAYBOY: Have you changed? It has been a while since you were fined for yelling at refs.

CUBAN: I'm still yelling at the refs. The only difference is they're getting used to me.

PLAYBOY: The NBA is drafting more players from overseas. With so many U.S. kids playing hoops, why can't the NBA fill its rosters from home?

CUBAN: The NBA is Darwinian. We will go to Mars if there is a martian who can take on Shaq. The reason more players are coming from ROW—that's the rest of the world-is simple. If a kid from outside the States dreams of being a professional basketball player, he can, at any age, join programs dedicated to making him a pro. While going to school, he can practice as many hours a day with professional instruction as he wants. In the U.S. we pretend athletics are only a complement to academics. Limits are put on how much students can practice. Rather than getting instruction that enables him to have his best shot at the NBA, a kid becomes a piece of meat for college coaches to use to further their career and increase their bank balance. This pulls kids away from their academic responsibilities and puts the emphasis on the coach's success.

PLAYBOY: Nevertheless, each year the NCAA seems to produce an impressive crop of top players.

CUBAN: What we get are kids who are sixfoot-two or shorter and who have been the star of their team. Their coaches have ridden them trying to win games. They play them at shooting guard or small forward, anywhere but the position that will give them the best chance to succeed in the NBA. When the kids leave school, they realize that at their size, unless they are the next Allen Iverson, their chances of making the NBA are greatly diminished because they have never been trained to be a point guard. To make the switch while trying out for an NBA team is almost impossible. Winning at every level in the U.S. is more important than the kids' future.

PLAYBOY: Is there a way to fix this system? **CUBAN:** My hope is that four or more schools will drop out of the NCAA and start their own organization that would have stringent academic standards but also allow kids to major or minor in basketball. Each team would have NBA-experienced coaches, allow one or two former NBA players on the team and have full-time tutors to support the kids' academic needs. Bottom line: Colleges need to recognize that, to succeed, a guy who dreams of being an NBA player should have the same support as one who dreams of being a concert planist.

PLAYBOY: Do you approve of the NBA's requirement that players be 19 years old to enter the draft? Some have charged that it's a racist policy.

CUBAN: I completely support it. The difference between a high school senior and

a 19-year-old with a year of college or the real world under his belt is huge. As for the racial stuff, anyone who says that is a moron. The only color the NBA sees is green.

PLAYBOY: After last season's Indiana-Detroit game at which a brawl broke out between fans and players and led to Ron Artest's suspension for the rest of the season, what steps would you take to prevent another such episode?

CUBAN: I think it was a one-off event. I don't think the league has to take any specific precautions beyond the security measures we already have. I would be shocked if anything similar happened again.

PLAYBOY: Should the emphasis be on controlling the fans or the players?

CUBAN: You can't control the fans. They can get nasty sometimes. I know—I get heckled far more than our players. I've had drunks come up and grab me or push me. We have to make sure our players know to get a security guard and not deal with the fan directly. If there is a problem on the players' side, it's because some like to think their manhood is being challenged when a fan says something overly critical. Even when fans are

I don't think athletes have the responsibility to be role models, because nobody ever knows the athlete. We know the media's interpretation of the athlete.

cruel, it's the most idiotic thing I have ever heard for a player to think his manhood is being attacked. Some players don't realize how stupid it is to give a loudmouth, dumbass fan the satisfaction that he got under their skin.

PLAYBOY: Is the league tough enough on players who misbehave, break the law or have substance-abuse problems?

CUBAN: Yes. But you have to put it in context. If the NBA is a company with 450 employees and five of them get in trouble with the law and all but one apologize and go through treatment, that's the best company in the world.

PLAYBOY: Athletes earn multimillion-dollar salaries and are viewed as role models. Don't they have additional responsibilities? CUBAN: Just because the media is following people with problems around doesn't mean they can self-correct on a timetable equal to the season. But that's what we expect, and it's inhumane. So the first thing you have to do is try to eliminate the media. I would tell the media, "Look, we have an issue with this person. I'm going to communicate with you as best I can, but the bottom line is, I don't give

a shit what you think. I have someone who works with me who I have to help." I don't think athletes have the responsibility to be role models, because nobody ever knows the athlete. We know the media's interpretation of the athlete, and it's not fair. We make a devil's bargain with the media. We've leveraged them because they're a great marketing tool for us, and we have to give them blood. We know that when chum is in the water, the sharks are going to come out.

PLAYBOY: But shouldn't some lines not be crossed?

CUBAN: Yes, for human beings. I don't think there are separate rules for athletes. PLAYBOY: How about you? You're a guy who obviously plays by his own rules. Did success breed that kind of confidence, or were you always pushing the envelope? **CUBAN:** Always. All the rules, the conventional wisdom, all the things that people said had to be done a certain way, I would test. Every chance I had and everyplace I went, I would put a toe in the water to see if those things were real. It taught me that just because something is the way everybody says it's supposed to be doesn't mean it shouldn't be questioned. More often than not, something is there, but most people simply take the path of least resistance.

My junior year in high school I wanted to take an economics class, but I wasn't allowed to because it was for seniors. So I dropped out of high school and took some night classes at the University of Pittsburgh. I did okay. The next year I enrolled and moved into a fraternity house when I was supposed to be a senior in high school. I remember I took my prom date to my fraternity house, and then we went to the prom. But I was always getting into arguments with teachers: "How do we know this is right?" I wasn't questioning did-we-land-on-themoon types of things, but I always took the opposite side to try to understand. I drove a lot of teachers nuts.

PLAYBOY: Being an alumnus of Indiana University, did you ever run into Bobby Knight?

CUBAN: The first time I met him was when former IU president Myles Brand had us in for this little tea, and I showed up in jeans and a sweater. Knight goes, "No suit? I like you already. We're going to get along." We kept in touch. After he got fired I stood up for him. My feeling was that he may not have been the right coach for IU, but this is not the way you handle firing somebody who's been with you 29 years. I don't care if it's the janitor. That's why I haven't given a nickel to the school since. PLAYBOY: You were 31 when you sold MicroSolutions in 1990. Then you went to Hollywood to become an actor. Was

that your biggest failure? **CUBAN:** Hell, no. It wasn't a failure. I did that to meet women.

PLAYBOY: Did it work?

CUBAN: It was a huge success. I had no intention of going to work on my craft. I had no illusions about the actor in me who was dying to get out. It was "Oh my God, I could meet really good-looking women." I wasn't looking for real life. I was retired. I had a couple million bucks in the bank. To me, that meant I could live like a student for the rest of my life. I bought a lifetime American Airlines pass for \$125,000. It was cool. Let's go to Las Vegas! The next day I was in Barcelona for the Olympics. From my perspective I was living the life.

PLAYBOY: Did you date any actresses?

CUBAN: I wish. There was a girl who was a backup singer for Mick Jagger and a couple who were cast in some movies. That was it. I was in a great acting class, though, taught by a guy named Aaron Speiser. With me were Kim Wayans, Shannon Sturges and Karyn Parsons, people who were all kicking ass on TV.

PLAYBOY: Your Hollywood phase lasted a couple of years, and

then you gave it up. Why?

CUBAN: I returned to Dallas to get back with a girlfriend. Todd Wagner, who I went to college with, had the idea of trying to get IU games through the Internet. Originally I was just going to give him some money. Then slowly I got more and more into it.

PLAYBOY: It was Broadcast.com, one of the rarest of dot-com successes. What did you do differently?

CUBAN: A lot of stupid people with some of the stupidest money were doing the stupidest things. They thought the world had changed. It hadn't. It was still about profit and cash. Actually, *profit* is a bad word because profits are very misleading. You can make a company look profitable on paper—see Enron—when it doesn't have any cash. We understood that, even more than profits, it was about generating cash flow. And that was our focus at Broadcast.com.

PLAYBOY: But you lost money for a while.

CUBAN: True. When I started my first company, MicroSolutions, we never had a losing month, never lost a penny. So for me, starting Broadcast.com and losing money was painful. But remember, I funded it. It was my money. We had probably a year and a half when we invested in the company to get it bigger. Most of that money was invested in the sales force and hard assets. A lot of companies were buying tons of advertising. We never spent a nickel on advertising. When we went public, in 1998, we were at cash-flow breakeven.

PLAYBOY: What was the difference between you and the dotcommers who failed: your products or the way you did business? CUBAN: Lots of people had good products, but they got caught up in drinking the Kool-Aid, thinking this was a new economy. I was out there giving speeches, saying 95 percent or more of these dot-coms were going to go out of business. It was unfortunate that so many people got caught up in the stock market and forgot the business side. Any company that runs its business for the market is going to get into trouble. Our stock would go up \$50 in one day and we'd be just as shocked as everybody else. We knew this was craziness, and that's one of the reasons we sold to Yahoo—liquidity.

PLAYBOY: But this craziness fueled your success.

CUBAN: Sure. We and Netscape were the first dot-com companies to go ballistic. We would go to mutual funds that had billions of dollars under management. Our job was to explain our company in a 15-to-30-minute meeting on a road show to get them to consider investing. They could ask questions. They were clueless. There were guys who asked us how many CD players we had. Since we played music on the Net, they figured there had to be a CD player for every person who wanted to listen. They were the dumbest questions you ever heard. The people at some of these companies didn't even ask questions. Yet every single company we talked to placed an order, even though they had no idea what we did. From our perspective, we couldn't just stand up and scream, "Hey, you idiots, ask questions!"

PLAYBOY: When you and Wagner sold the company to Yahoo in 1999 for \$5.7 billion, people said you were lucky, selling right before the market collapsed. Does that bother you?

CUBAN: Hell, no. I was lucky. How could I have predicted





the stock market would go nuts? But on the flip side, I had no doubt that the market was going to come back down, whereas other people thought it would go up forever.

PLAYBOY: Internet companies are again on the rise. Are you seeing the same irrationality as during the last go-around?

CUBAN: There's only one area of idiot behavior right now. It's the all-time scam business of the moment. Here's how it works. Have you ever mistyped a website name and been taken to something else? That's called domain parking. People buy websites using misspelled names and set them up with Google. When you inadvertently go to that website and click on the ads, the owner gets paid. Let's say someone sets up a website called Tomcruse.com. People mistype Tom Cruise's name and there they are. The scheme gets more complicated, but basically if a person can make more than the 10 bucks a year it costs to maintain the site, he makes money. I know a guy who makes \$150,000 a month-net! People are making all this money, and meanwhile advertisers think they're getting legitimate clicks when the clicks are accidental.

PLAYBOY: How pervasive is this?

CUBAN: Let's call it the underground digital economy. There could be more than 1 million people making more than \$1,000 a year. That's a billion-dollar economy.

PLAYBOY: There's an irony here. To engage in domain parking, people often use companies you own.

CUBAN: I'm a big owner in a company called Register.com and another company called Tucows. Both do domain registration, which I think is going to be big. People have to register their domain names somewhere, and our companies do that. PLAYBOY: You call it a scam, but you're

making money off it.

CUBAN: Not as much as I want to—yet. But yeah, basically.

PLAYBOY: What kind of relationships do you have with other CEOs in the tech world? **CUBAN:** I know some of them. The best story I have is about Bill Gates. After I sold Broadcast.com I decided not to give industry speeches anymore. Then I was asked to speak at some event right after Bill Gates. I got up there and said, "I've worked long and hard to finally get to the point where Bill Gates is my opening act." Being able to say that was the only reason I agreed to speak. Afterward his folks said he wasn't too happy about it.

PLAYBOY: What about Google, arguably the hottest technology company? Can it maintain its dominance and its sky-high share price?

CUBAN: There are risks. Forty-five percent of its business comes from non-Google sites. More competition for that business will come from Yahoo, MSN and AOL. Part of it comes from ads by Google, and it has to keep that growing. If the competition reduces that business by 10 percent, that will have a huge impact on the stock price. Google would have to compensate for that in a big way. I don't have an answer, but to me, that's a risk factor in Google. It's not a slam dunk.

PLAYBOY: What's your take on the future of AOL?

CUBAN: I think AOL will do great. It has recently become very aggressive. It understands what the business is now, that dial-up is not going to save it. AOL did Live 8, which was the largest streaming event ever. It's getting into original content and making its home page open for people. AOL is taking the best of Yahoo and Google and adding to it. It's not going to replace them, but it already has a built-in user base, so if it can make its users happy and attract to its site people who aren't dial-up AOL users, there's no reason it can't sell a whole lot of advertising.

PLAYBOY: In your blogs you talk about the stock market as if it were the world's biggest scam. Why?

CUBAN: In a nutshell, I think the stock market is broken. It has become a collectibles market. Owning a share of stock that

Business is the ultimate competition. If you compete with me, my mission is to put you out of business. If you are getting the money and somebody else is not, you win.

does not pay a dividend is not a whole lot different from owning a baseball card. The key to both is whether you can get someone else to give you more for it.

PLAYBOY: What's new about that?

CUBAN: Actually, there was a time when the majority of companies paid dividends. But in the 1990s the intrinsic value of companies didn't push the market. It was the ability of mutual funds and brokerages to market stocks. I don't have proof, but I am willing to bet that the stock market basically correlates to the amount of money spent on marketing by the mutual-fund and brokerage industries. If you sell something hard enough, you create demand. In essence, the financial TV networks have become QVC for stocks. As long as you make it look good, you can find someone to buy it. I am trying not to be hypocritical, because I will buy stocks if I think they will go up. But that doesn't mean I don't think the stock market is broken. It's the ultimate Ponzi scheme. The stock market is the only time we give other people our money and don't expect to get any cash back. I'll tell you what: If interest rates go up to 10 percent, you could see the Dow, which is at 10,000 to 11,000, plunge to 5,000. That's the other thing. No one knows. Do you think anybody really knows?

PLAYBOY: According to Forbes, you are the 164th richest American, with \$1.8 billion. How much money does one need?

CUBAN: It depends on what kind of lifestyle you want. If I were single, \$2 million in the bank would do me fine. Having a family now, I probably would want more.

PLAYBOY: Is money a way of keeping score? **CUBAN:** Absolutely. I mean, business is the ultimate competition. If you compete with me, my whole mission in life is to put you out of business. When we ran Broadcast.com, I was open in saying my goal was to stand in front of an antitrust committee. Yeah, you can split up my company. That just means I won and I will go do something different and do it all over again. To me, money is a scorecard. It lets you know how well you are doing. If you are in a particular industry, if you are getting the money and somebody is else is not, then you win. There's an old Andrew Carnegie article they made me read at Indiana University. I keep copies of it with me. It basically says it's patriotic to get rich.

PLAYBOY: With your wealth, have you moved into new social circles?

CUBAN: Most of my friends are the same ones I had before I had anything. I'm still good friends with my high school and college buddies, as well as ones from when I first moved to Dallas.

PLAYBOY: Tell us about your toys.

CUBAN: In Dallas, a yellow Hummer, a 2001 Ford Explorer and a 2004 Lexus coupe. I have a Lexus 450 truck in L.A. and the same in Miami.

PLAYBOY: What do you consider your biggest extravagances?

CUBAN: My Gulfstream G550 by far. Nothing better than having a plane at my beck and call. But I guess the biggest extravagance is not having to look at the price tag on anything. Have credit card, will buy.

PLAYBOY: What kind of boss are you? Do you tend to micromanage?

CUBAN: Typically, when I first get into an organization, I do because that's how I learn what people can do. But over time I'll fall off. Like now, from a management perspective, the Mavs for the most part run themselves. I have to devote only 30 percent of my time to them, and I can focus on the other things, such as marketing.

PLAYBOY: Are the Mavericks profitable? **CUBAN:** Not even close. It's because of my payroll. We have the second or third highest in the league, about \$95 million this year out of revenue that will be \$115 million. I didn't do it the right way. I listened to my basketball people a little too much.

PLAYBOY: As far as whom to sign? (concluded on page 170)









IN HIS 72 YEARS AS A SCREEN IDOL, CINEMA'S BEST-KNOWN BEAST HAS CO-STARRED WITH A MERE HANDFUL OF LEADING LADIES. IN HER LAST INTERVIEW, THE ORIGINAL BEAUTY, FAY WRAY, AND HIS LATEST OBSESSION, NAOMI WATTS, REVEAL WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE COUNTED AMONG

o speak of me is to think of him," says Fay Wray, sitting in an armchair that swallows her frail body. In a glass-walled den surrounded by a grove of tall trees, Wray is made up and dressed for the occasion, a trouper in a dark tweed jacket with a blanket across her lap. It is the summer of 2004, seven decades after her iconic turn as King Kong's sacrificial virgin, and she is here to talk about her most famous leading man.

At 96, Wray is feisty and still possessed of a star's presence. The enormous blue eyes that widened in terror at the sight of the beast have dimmed considerably, but they still sparkle when she discloses the appeal of what she considers

the most successful movie ever made.

"It can be summed up in one word," she says, leaning in to spell out her secret. "M-E-N." It seems like a witticism, and I laugh. But when Wray passes away peacefully seven weeks later, I reconsider her words. King Kong did not become a cinematic legend, a cultural icon and the inspiration for two major remakes because of the work of a cinematographer, screenwriter or director. King Kong was always about the girl and the visceral reaction men have at the sight of a screaming, kicking, helpless beauty. For Wray and her successors—the estimable actresses Jessica Lange and Naomi Watts-playing opposite the behemoth seems like a supporting part, but the role is deeply complex: The actress must play King Kong's lady, the object of his primal desire and the cause of his shocking death. In a movie full of fear, envy and evil, the women have to provide pleasure and sensuality, thereby humanizing the beast and turning the monster under the bed into a palpable reality. Not only did these actresses manage to do that, but each also created a character who reflected the preoccupations of her erathe Great Depression, the liberated 1970s, the anxious new millennium. Now, on the eve of Peter Jackson's much anticipated version, it seems appropriate to consider the loves of King Kong, the three actresses who starred opposite the big ape, the three beauties who killed the beast.

THE POWER OF INNOCENCE

Fay Wray worked in Hollywood during the Depression, when American capitalism was in profound crisis and Hitler was amassing power in Europe. "No one who made movies during that time considered it the golden age," she said.

Poverty and bad luck dogged Wray's childhood. Born in 1907, she was raised in hardscrabble towns from Alberta to Arizona, living a nomadic life that took her wherever her father sought work. Times grew desperate, and when she was 14, her mother entrusted her to a 20-year-old male family friend and sent her to find work in Hollywood. Imitating the sultry look of the silent-screen vamp Theda Bara, the nubile, curly-haired Wray began to find work as an extra in silent films. At a tender age, she already projected a smoldering sensuality and a pure, radiant presence. These qualities led legendary director Erich von Stroheim to cast the 19-year-old virgin in his masterpiece, The Wedding March. "Fay has spirituality and that very real sex appeal that takes hold of the hearts of men," he later explained. As she played the poor, beautiful girl who captures a Viennese prince's heart, Von Stroheim himself fell under Wray's spell and tried to seduce her. She demurred.

The Wedding March brought Wray fame and success, along with as many as a dozen movie roles a year. No labor laws or unions regulated movie sets, and Wray commonly put in 16 to 22 hours a day, six days a week, sleeping on sets and performing her own

dangerous stunts. All that work seems not to have impinged on her social life. With her enormous kohl-lined eyes and lily-soft complexion, Wray had a raft of admirers. She flirted with Cary Grant, warded off Gary Cooper and eventually married the hard-drinking screenwriter John Monk Saunders, known for having once engaged F. Scott Fitzgerald in a peeing contest off a Hollywood Hills balcony. After she separated from Saunders, Clifford Odets carried



THE POSTER FOR THE ORIGINAL FILM. SCENES OF FEMALE VULNERABILITY AND SEXUAL POWER WERE RACY STUFF FOR THE 1930S.

her off to bed, Sinclair Lewis wrote her love poems, and Howard Hughes took her for spins in his seaplane. She eventually married Robert Riskin, the noted screenwriter who penned *Meet John Doe* and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*.

Wray met a swashbuckling producer, Merian C. Cooper, along the way. "He was not a studio person," she said. Indeed not. Cooper was a jungle explorer, a pioneering documentary filmmaker and a World War I ace fighter pilot. Among his friends was W. Douglas Burden, a naturalist and explorer who had just returned from a steamer trip to a remote island where he had captured two Komodo dragons, the largest living lizards; he brought them back to New York. Cooper wanted to base his next project on that fantastic voyage.

His cohort was cameraman Ernie Schoedsack, who had filmed many documentaries. During one expedition, Schoedsack fell in love with a fellow crewmate, the versatile and plucky Ruth Rose, who cooked, kept a log of events and shot crocodiles when necessary. Rose joined Cooper and Schoedsack in their travels and even collaborated with them on *Kong*'s story. Indeed, after hiring and firing several screenwriters, Cooper turned to Rose, who improved the love story, wrote most of the dialogue and polished the final script. Rose became the model for the character Ann Darrow, and she drew heavily on Cooper and Schoedsack for the other key roles.

King Kong tells the story of an opportunistic showman, Carl Denham (Robert Armstrong), who hires a starving actress. Ann Darrow (Wray), to play in his jungle documentary. En route to Skull Island, where the natives worship a giant beast called Kong, Darrow falls in love with a crewman, Jack Driscoll (Bruce Cabot). Once they land, Denham tries to use his leading lady to entice the gorilla, but the beast kidnaps the beauty and takes her to his jungle lair. She later escapes, but the smitten Kong chases her back to the ship, where Denham traps him. "We're millionaires, boys!" the showman exults. "Why, in a few months, it'll be up in lights on Broadway: KONG, THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD."

At first Cooper planned for his ape to escape and climb the Chrysler Building, but when the Empire State Building opened, he switched. He also aimed to cast sexy Jean Harlow as Darrow, but Wray entranced him. When he told her that he recognized something in her eyes, she asked him what it was. "Truth," he responded. "I've never seen that before in a woman's eyes." Cooper then promised her he would hire "the tallest, darkest leading man in town." Thrilled, Wray expected Cary Grant.

To create Kong, the inventive Cooper used many innovations, including rear projection, miniature projection and stopmotion photography. Willis "Obie" O'Brien, a pioneer in stop-motion cinematography, made six 18-inch-high metal Kongs. He padded them with cotton and foam rubber and covered them with rabbit skins to simulate gorilla fur. He then constructed intricate miniature sets for his animated apes. O'Brien would pose a creature, shoot its picture in a frame, raise its arm the slightest bit, shoot another frame and so on. With each second of film using 24 frames, O'Brien would spend 12 painstaking hours to get one minute of film, onto which previously shot footage of Wray would be inserted using rear projection. For such a crude technique, the results were spectacular, particularly the memorable scene in which Wray cowers in the crook of a barren tree while Kong battles a ferocious dinosaur. Wray kicks her bare legs to fend off the creatures and writhes in agony as her flimsy gown flutters in the dwindling light. "It took 22 hours to make that scene," Wray said. The next morning, Cooper bragged about how hard he had worked her. He also chortled over his not having to pay Wray when she wasn't on the set. As a result Wray worked on three other movies while shooting Kong.

Miniature projection allowed Wray to sometimes appear doll-like, particularly when Kong carries her to his vaporous cave, where (continued on page 72)



"I hope I'm not overdressed for the occasion...!"



Actor, cheerleader, former Monday
Night Football
reporter—Lisa
Guerrero has done
it all. Now she's
taking her game
to the next level

ARE YOU READY FOR SOME LISA?

By David Hochman

f all the lessons Lisa Guerrero has learned in her career as a sports reporter, undoubtedly the most valuable is how to handle being a gorgeous woman in a locker room full of sweaty, half-naked pro ballplayers.

"Occasionally there would be whistles or comments in my direction or maybe

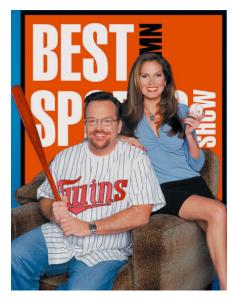
"Occasionally there would be whistles or comments in my direction or maybe a guy who wanted to show me, you know, what he was made of," says Lisa, who got up close and very personal with America's top athletes as the sideline reporter for ABC's Monday Night Football and, before that, as anchor babe on Fox Sports Network's Best Damn Sports Show Period. "So I would turn to my cameraman, who would switch on his lights and point the camera straight at him. It worked every time. That is the power of the media!"

Lisa made a name for herself not only by prettying up a profession famous for ugly blazers and hairpieces but also by landing sit-down interviews with athletes who normally hate talking to the press—Barry Bonds, Brett Favre, Terrell Owens and Kobe Bryant. And since 2004, when she was unceremoniously replaced on *Monday Night* after having been written off as eye candy by critics (or, as she calls them, "mean-spirited old white men who weren't in touch with the fans at home"), Lisa, now a correspondent for Court TV, has been aching to get back in the game of covering sports.

"I definitely miss it," says the California native, who spent the past year acting onstage and playing the role of baseball wife to her husband of two years, Scott Erickson, a major league pitcher. "We'll be home watching sports, and I'll have so many questions for the players, the

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANTOINE VERGLAS









"When I told my dad I got a job on Monday Night Football, he cried," says Lisa Guerrero. From top: Lisa with Tom Arnold on Fox's Best Damn Sports Show Period; interviewing 49ers quarterback Tim Rattay on an MNF broadcast; and goofing with Arizona Diamondbacks first baseman Mark Grace before a 2002 game.







managers, the fans," she says. "I miss the action. I miss the spray of champagne after a championship game."

That's nothing compared with how much we miss her. By combining a sports nut's brain for scoring strategies with, well, just look at her, Lisa became the fantasy girl of every guy who was ever busted for skipping out on a wedding to catch the playoff scores. Here at last was a woman who could look great in high heels and rattle off the starting quarterback of every team in the NFL, not to mention the coaches and maybe even the water boys.

Lisa likes meat and potatoes and beer and "isn't big on salads," she says, biting into a second slice at a pizza place near her Los Angeles home. (She's wearing a thin sweater, tight jeans and gold stilettos. Heads are turning.) She's a dog person and gets off on heavy metal. What's next? Does she love vacuuming in the nude? "Actually," she says, "when I'm home you'll usually find me lounging around wearing sweats and reading the sports page."

And that...ball...is...outta here!

Credit Lisa's father with getting her hooked on sports. "My mom died when I was eight," she says. "My dad raised my brother and me, and sports was always the major point of discussion." Her family held season tickets for the Chargers and followed the Lakers when the team was dominating with such players as Byron Scott and Magic Johnson. Soon enough, Lisa was fronting for the then-Los Angeles Rams as a cheerleader. She later worked for the Rams, Falcons and Patriots in front-office jobs as she figured out how to make a career in sports. "It wasn't as though the sports world was calling out for more women reporters," she says. "There was Phyllis George, but she was a former Miss America. The rest of the women were former athletes."

That explains the kooky advice Lisa got as she rose through the ranks from radio commentator to what a Los Angeles Times columnist once called the hardestworking person in sports. "When I started as a broadcaster, they all said, 'Cut your hair, don't wear lip gloss, don't smile too much, and never ever let them see your cleavage," says Lisa, whose voluminous tresses, halogen smile and mile-long legs (her mom was a flamenco dancer) are, when you meet her, cosmic payback for years spent staring at guys like Marv Albert. "I'm Latin," she says. "I like my hair long, I like to wear eyeliner, and I'm certainly not going to cover up my being blessed with good genetics.'

Of course, she never needed to. The people Lisa interviewed dug her just as she was. How else to explain her sitting down twice with Oakland Raiders owner Al Davis when he wasn't talking to anyone else? Or making Dennis Rodman cry at a (text concluded on page 158)







KING KONG (continued from page 62)

The idea of a gorilla lusting after a dimunitive blonde suggested notions that nice girls did not discuss.

she shrieks in terror, her tattered dress barely covering her thighs and bosom, her captor roaring in primal, prenuptial triumph. That was pretty racy stuff for the 1930s, but it's not the only suggestive moment; scenes of female vulnerability and sexual power define much of Darrow's character. We first meet her on the Bowery; she is destitute and walking the streets with prostitutes. When Denham offers her a job, she wonders if he's buying her. When he screen-tests her, he dresses her in a gauzy, off-theshoulder gown with a belt encircling her waist and loins. She looks like a Lost Generation damsel in distress, complete with chastity belt. During the test Denham near sadistically badgers her to "scream for your life." Wray responds in her distinctive coloratura with an aria of anguish that trailed her for decades. "It was too much screaming," Wray tells me. But the studio men loved it.

King Kong was scheduled to open in New York on Thursday, March 2, 1933. On that day, banks across the country were running out of cash; on Friday many would close their doors. But by Sunday night the film had broken all attendance records for any indoor attraction—raking in \$90,000 at a time when a movie ticket cost 15 cents.

Audiences lapped up the film's salacious scenes, especially the one in which a curious Kong gingerly strips Wray's skirt after she faints. He then smells his fingers and continues disrobing her, as though he's peeling a banana, until she is practically nude. The sexual tension is finally relieved when Kong tickles Wray. Audiences laughed, but Hollywood's censors, the Hays Commission, ordered that and 28 other scenes cut. Still, the film played well for decades in no small measure because of Wray's innocent allure. The idea of an enormous gorilla lusting after a diminutive blonde suggested notions that nice girls didn't discuss but boys could depict. And the last line—"'Twas beauty killed the beast" emphasizes the woman's centrality to this modern fable.

THE RELUCTANT SIREN

Forty years later King Kong's censored scenes had been restored, and the film found new life on college campuses. At the same time, Italian producer Dino De Laurentiis, the man who brought the world a sexy Jane Fonda in Barbarella, thought to do a remake. His idea was a breezy, funny, tongue-incheek riff on the original, and he hired Lorenzo Semple Ir., the writer who had provided the 1966 Batman TV series with its famously campy tone, to compose a comic-book romp with witty references to political corruption and corporate greed.

So the Broadway showman became a corporate conquistador, Fred Wilson (Charles Grodin). Looking for oil in the South Seas, Wilson is accompanied by a hippie paleontologist, Jack Prescott (Jeff Bridges), who believes a great beast lives near the oil deposit. And then there's Beauty, whom we meet in an extended erotic scene. Wilson and his crew come upon an unconscious woman floating in a rubber raft and looking like a sea nymph in a cocktail dress. (To get her to glisten, Lange was repeatedly drenched with buckets of cold water.) When Dwan, as she's called, regains consciousness, we learn that she is an aspiring movie star. She had been enjoying a day on the yacht of the producer who discovered her when the ship mysteriously exploded while everyone else was watching a pornographic film she had declined to see. "Did you ever meet anyone before whose life was saved by Deep Throat?" Dwan asks her rescuers in a little-girl voice. The camera lingers on her in an unbelievably long close-up.

Semple had written his script with Faye Dunaway in mind, and De Laurentiis had also considered Barbra Streisand, Cher and Bette Midler. But the part went to Jessica Lange, a waitress and occasional model who was auditioning for her first lead role. Standing five-foot-eight, Lange possessed a fresh, open face, a curvaceous body and a mischievousness that were all part of her allure. Co-star Bridges calls her "a free-spirited artiste," and in many ways her life experiences her time as an art student and war protester, a romance with an avantgarde photographer—qualified her to represent hip, young 1970s American womanhood. De Laurentiis not only cast her as the lead, he signed her to an exclusive seven-year contract.

"Dino owned her," Semple says. He told her to gain 10 pounds, have her braces removed and dye her hair. He and director John Guillermin turned

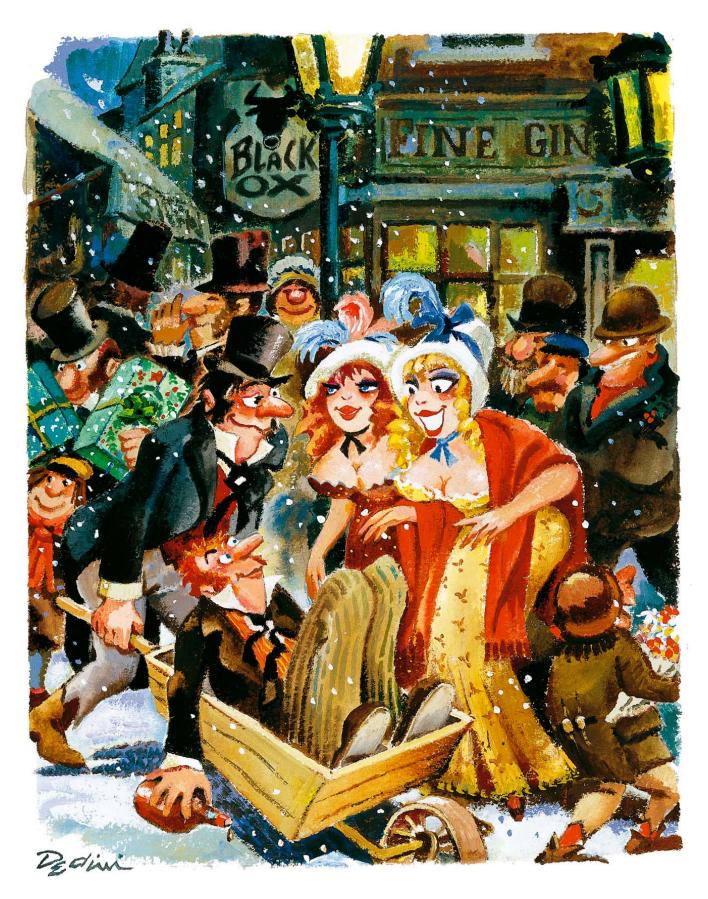
her into a contemporary version of Marilyn Monroe, with a breathy voice, giggly demeanor and kooky style associated with the free-love era. De Laurentiis took the then unusual step of holding a press conference before a frame had been shot. "Jessica is living proof that the great Hollywood dream can still come true, that a pretty girl can be magically discovered and made a star overnight," writes Bruce Bahrenburg, a Paramount publicist, in a book called The Creation of Dino De Laurentiis's "King Kong." "Her sweet sincerity—next to big breasts and firm buttocks—is what the press likes best in leading ladies."

"Jessica's physical beauty is the first thing that hits you square in the face," Bridges says. "She's just a gorgeous girl." Seldom does the film forget this. As the explorers hike into the mountains, Dwan scampers ahead, dressed in a cropped top and tight shorts, the camera zooming in on her derriere. Later the island's natives kidnap her and offer her as a sacrifice to Kong, dressing her in a skimpy strapless top and white beads. Oddly, though Dwan is supposed to be the one in a drugged stupor, it seems as if many of the scene's extras are high. About 300 people were hired off the street to play natives for \$25 a day. According to one, fledgling actor Ross Johnson, alcohol and marijuana use were rampant among the extras. Halfnaked men jammed on drums while hula-skirted women danced with frenzied abandon. Some extras had sprinkled angel dust on their marijuana, prompting at least two overdoses. "It was one big party scene," Johnson says.

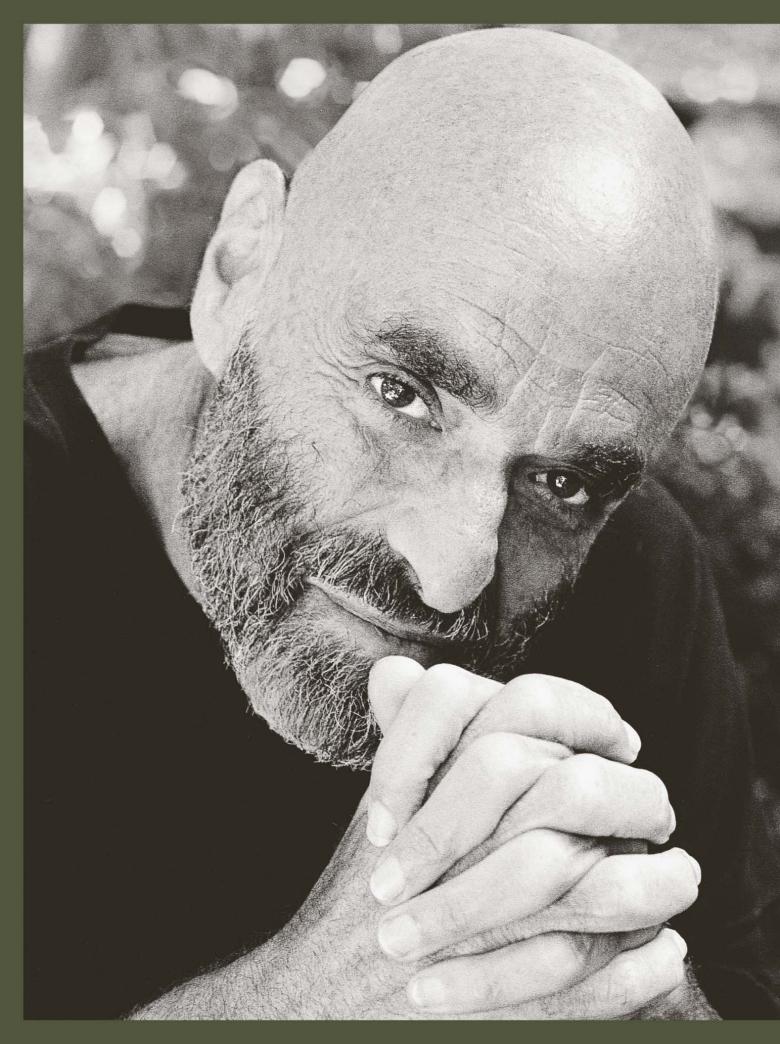
Dwan's Kong, unfortunately, was a disappointment. He was supposed to be a 40-foot-high, \$2 million colossus made of horsetail hanks stuck on a three-ton frame, but De Laurentiis's Italian special-effects team couldn't communicate with the film's American engineers. "Our Kong looked hokey and corny," Bridges says.

During filming, a tired, bruised Lange frequently found herself working solo, playing love scenes opposite a six-foot mechanical hand whose clumsy operator often came close to crushing her. Even so, the young actress managed to convey some real emotion. After Kong takes Dwan to his grotto, he touches her gingerly, peeling off her gauzy blouse and ropes of necklaces. Lange regains her composure with a doe-eyed look that sparks a connection between her and the ape. Whereas Wray shrieks when Kong lifts her, Lange gazes into his eyes. She has quickly sized up her suitor,

(continued on page 173)



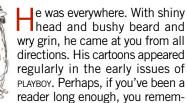
"Do you gentlemen need professional help?"



THE MAGICAL WORLD SILVERSTEIN

IF YOU ARE A DREAMER, COME IN,
IF YOU ARE A DREAMER, A WISHER, A LIAR,
A HOPE-ER, A PRAY-ER, A MAGIC BEAN BUYER...
IF YOU'RE A PRETENDER, COME SIT BY MY FIRE
FOR WE HAVE FLAX-GOLDEN TALES TO SPIN.





ber his days as the magazine's designated world traveler, armed only with his passport, expense account and sketch pad in Tokyo, London and Nairobi. If you're younger, you may have come aboard with his children's books, shots of delightfully twisted cynicism in a market awash in fey fantasy. Maybe you've heard his songs or seen his plays. Maybe you just remember him as one of the most extraordinary men you've ever encountered.

For half a century Shel Silverstein plied his trade in these pages and elsewhere. His work charmed or cut or seduced or startled; it still reverberates. With rhymes both internal and infernal, with wicked wit and gentle sentiment and a delirious joy in strutting his stuff, this freaky folkie jazzbo and best-selling tunesmith sang songs, told tales, sketched new worlds and worked words like nobody's business.

You know Silverstein. He's this: "We take all kinda pills to give us all kinda thrills/But the thrill we've never known/Is the thrill that'll get ya when you get your picture/On the cover of the Rolling Stone." And this: "Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout would not take the garbage out!" He's "My name is Sue. How do you do? Now you gonna die!" And "There's a polar bear/In our Frigidaire/He likes it 'cause it's cold in there." And "There's gonna be a Freaker's Ball tonight at the Freaker's Hall." And "There was green alligators and long-neck geese/Some humpty-back camels and some chimpanzees/Some cats and rats and elephants, but sure as you're born/The loveliest of all was the Unicorn."

But Silverstein was more than a list of famous lines, more than hits like Johnny Cash's "A Boy Named Sue," Dr. Hook's "Cover of the Rolling Stone" and the Irish Rovers's "The Unicorn," more than the classic books The Giving Tree, Where the Sidewalk Ends and 2005's bestselling Runny Babbit, published more than five years after his death in May 1999. He created 19 books, 800 songs, a few hundred published and unpublished plays, nine albums, four movie scores, one screenplay and 400 poems. (These figures are approximate and maybe even irrelevant; you can't pin Silverstein down

BY STEVE POND

with numbers.) He acted in movies and appeared on TV as much as he wanted and less than he could have. He drew cartoons and wrote humor for PLAYBOY from 1956 until his death. He stayed at the Playboy Mansion and hung out with Lenny Bruce, Jules Feiffer, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash, James Baldwin and a good chunk of the other people worth knowing during the past 50 years.

"He was a true Renaissance man, a man of multiple talents beyond the art and the humor I initially saw in him," says Hugh Hefner, PLAYBOY Editor-in-Chief, who in 1956 jump-started Silverstein's post-Army career with a check for several hundred dollars.

In an article he wrote for *The New York Times*, playwright David Mamet, a fellow Chicagoan and a longtime friend of Silverstein's, got right to the point: "Where I come from," he began, "Shel Silverstein was a demigod." Country singer Bobby Bare, who had hits with Silverstein songs ranging from the sentimental ("Daddy

What If") to the raucous ("The Winner") to the weird ("Marie Laveau"), says, "I think he's probably the best songwriter ever, in country music or any other field." Rik Elswit, a member of Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show—the beneficiary of three albums' worth of Silverstein lyrics—once wrote, "He lived on his talent, wit and charm, and he was oversupplied in all."

But then, Silverstein knew that: "Tell me I'm clever,/Tell me I'm kind,/Tell me I'm talented,/Tell me I'm cute,/Tell me I'm sensitive,/Graceful and wise,/Tell me I'm perfect,/But tell me the truth." ("Tell Me," from Falling Up, 1996).

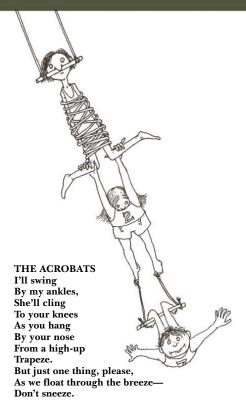
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Silverstein didn't like to explain himself, and for the last 25 years of his life he refused virtually all interview requests. But in 1986 he sat down with Hefner and provided hours of unpublished reminiscences, from which his quotes for this story are taken. In a way, the clearest picture of Silverstein comes from his work: the gleefully deranged children's books, in which most of Uncle Shelby's fairy tales assuredly do not have happy endings; the sharp, skewed wit of the cartoons; the tear-jerking ballads and raucous hymns to

excess and indulgence; the sheer bulk of his unclassifiable, uncategorizable, uncontrollable imagination.

"In some cases, what writers do on paper or onstage is a far cry from their other life," Hefner says. "But that's not the case with Shel. He was Uncle Shelby. He was the dreamer. He was his work."

Maybe the best way to proceed is to start with Silverstein's introduction to PLAYBOY. It was 1956; Shel, the eldest child of Nathan and Helen Balkany Silver-



stein, a working-class couple from Chicago, was in his mid-20s. He had just come home from Japan, where he'd been stationed in the Army and become something of a celebrity with his *Stars and Stripes* cartoons about military life; he even collected them into a book, alternately titled *Take Ten* and *Grab Your Socks!* In Chicago he was a scuffling civilian trying to sell cartoons to anybody—including a new magazine that was being produced out of a four-room office on East Superior Street.

"He brought some cartoons in and left them with a secretary," Hefner remembers. "And after not hearing from us for a few weeks, he came in and wanted them back." As Silverstein watched, Hefner found the cartoons, looked through them, bought more than half and wrote a check on the spot. Silverstein had his doubts about the new magazine's solvency, so he immediately searched for a place to cash the check. "I really thought at the time that I was meet-

ing a guy who just woke up, which is a legitimate concern, you know?" he said, laughing about Hefner's disheveled appearance. "And it wasn't just a coincidence that he happened to give me the check at five minutes to five on a Friday. Of course not only will the check not be good, but when I get back, he won't be there."

He cashed the check and took the stack of small bills—about \$500, more than Silverstein's father made in a week—home to his parents. "I threw the money in the air and then saw the sadness in my father's face," he said. "He was broke and had gone out of business and had always considered me just a useless guy. And now my scribbles brought this, and a lifetime of work brought him nothing. What I wanted was an Andy Hardy solution, but I saw this face of bewilderment and disillusion. He didn't connect to the world anymore, where a kid could go out and bring this back."

*

"Listen to the MUSTN'TS, child,/Listen to the DON'TS/Listen to the SHOULDN'TS/The IMPOSSIBLES, the WON'TS/Listen to the NEVER HAVES./Then listen close to me—/Anything can happen,

child,/anything can be."

—"Listen to the MUSTN'TS," from Where the Sidewalk Ends, 1974

*

As PLAYBOY's resident cartoonist, Silverstein exhibited derring-do that knew no bounds, as the above 1963 photograph from the Sunny Rest nudist camp demonstrates. Not all the women looked this good.

It didn't take long for Silverstein to become more than just another PLAYBOY cartoonist. "In effect," Hefner says, "he became our house humorist." He created cartoons and wrote poems and a feature called *Teevee Jeebies*. In his best-known regular feature, he went around the world and sent back sketches illustrating his adventures. It



"Tighten up that sling!"

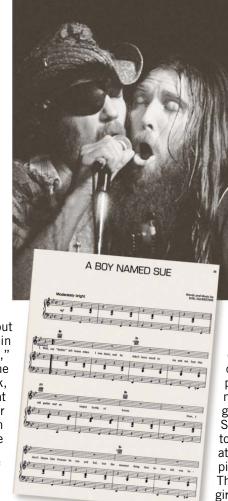
was Hefner's idea to have Silverstein put himself in the cartoons, but Silverstein initially resisted. "I thought it was vain," he said. In fact he tried to turn down the assignment and give the money back, worried that he couldn't guarantee that PLAYBOY would get what it wanted. Hefner refused. "It was the utmost expression of confidence," said Silverstein. "More than I had in myself."

The series helped make him one of PLAYBOY's early stars, alongside luminaries ranging from Ray Bradbury and Ian Fleming to Jules Feiffer and LeRoy Nei-

man. "Shel and I were a team for years," Neiman says. "We'd go out and see a knockout girl walking down the street, and we'd go up and tell her we represented PLAYBOY magazine and ask if she wanted to be a Playmate. Of course we had no official sanction to do anything like that. Most of the girls told us to get lost. But if they were at all interested, we'd pull out a tape measure and tell them we had to measure them on the spot to see if they had the qualifications. Shel was a master at that."

IT'S DARK IN HERE
I am writing these poems
From inside a lion,
And it's rather dark in here.
Which may not be too clear.
But this afternoon by the lion's cage
I'm afraid I got too near.
And I'm writing these lines

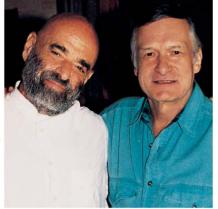
I'm afraid I got too near.
And I'm writing these lines
From inside a lion,
And it's rather dark in here.



Hefner sought to reinvent himself, to define what he calls "a whole new iconoclastic sensibility that defied the status quo of the 1950s. It was a freedom to pursue your own particular desires and not be locked to the past." The men he gathered around him were doing the same. Silverstein started out as a frequent visitor to the PLAYBOY offices and ended up staying at the Playboy Mansion, where he occupied the Red Room for months at a time. The kid who'd never had much luck with girls was surrounded by the most beautiful women in Chicago. He was becoming a star in his hometown.

"Making it big anywhere, when you had nothing, has to be a wonderful experience for a young man," said Silverstein. "Making it big in your hometown, on the streets where you scuffled, is beyond anything."

Particularly after the early 1960s, when he began publishing books such as *Lafcadio*, the *Lion Who Shot Back* and *A Giraffe and a Half*, Silverstein was a success in two disparate arenas. "He had one foot in the world of children's







Clockwise from top left: Silverstein got his start as a cartoonist for *Stars and Stripes*, but he hit the big time with "A Boy Named Sue" and "Cover of the *Rolling Stone*." One of Silverstein's favorite abodes was in Sausalito. He remained a true friend to Hef until the end.

books and one foot in the adult Disneyland of PLAYBOY," says his nephew, writer Mitch Myers. "Roald Dahl is really the only other person who did that." In fact, Silverstein was one of the most successful authors of children's books to come out of the 1960s. But he embraced the PLAYBOY lifestyle, not the more sedate role of a children's author. When Ursula Nordstrom, his editor at Harper & Row, asked him over lunch if psychotherapy was responsible for his easygoing state, he loudly explained that he had no need for a shrink. "If I were hung up on goats," he

said, "why, I would just find myself the sweetest, prettiest, cleanest goat in the world. That's what I'd do." (In a letter to a friend, Nordstrom wrote that she then quickly changed the subject.)

Silverstein enjoyed the company of Playmates and Bunnies and palled around with rising stars such as Bill Cosby and Lenny Bruce. In 1963, on the night before Bruce went to trial on an obscenity charge in Chicago, he took refuge with Silverstein at the Playboy Mansion, and the two stayed up all night, talking. The next morning, Silverstein provided Bruce with a shirt (Hefner lent a tie) so the celebrated defendant would look more presentable in court.

Talking to Hefner years later, Silverstein summed up the appeal of PLAYBOY'S life of reinvention. "You were always so support-

ive of the individual fulfilling what he had to do," he told Hefner. "Those of us whose dreams were different from yours were still able to have the kind of life we wanted. LeRoy Neiman's dream was to be in cafe society and have a long mustache. Vic Lownes wanted to be a country gentleman and could be a country gentleman. Those who wanted to go out and live quietly could take it wherever they wanted to."

At the time Silverstein said this, he didn't elaborate about the particular dream PLAYBOY had allowed him to achieve or the persona he chose to adopt. But 20 years later, Hefner thinks he knows what Silverstein had in mind. "Look at the fact that while he was spending so much time at the Mansion, he also had a house-boat in Sausalito, a place in New York, a place he stayed in

Nashville," Hefner says. "I think he wanted to be a folk hero, a Renaissance man, which is exactly what he was."

*

"I asked the zebra,/Are you black with white stripes?/Or white with black stripes?/And the zebra asked me,/Are you good with bad habits?/Or are you bad with good habits?/Are you noisy with quiet times?/Or are you quiet with noisy times?/Are you happy with some sad days?/Or are you sad with some happy days?/Are you neat



"Just think of it, comrade—under the Communist system of equal distribution, once every eight years the White Sox would win the pennant!"



Silverstein was able to refine the world through his peculiar vision. Above, in Moscow in 1958 he encounters a line of people waiting to enter Lenin's tomb, but his thoughts are of home.

with some sloppy ways?/Or are you sloppy with some neat ways?/And on and on and on/And on and on he went./I'll never ask a zebra/About stripes again."
—"Zebra Question," from A Light in the Attic, 1981

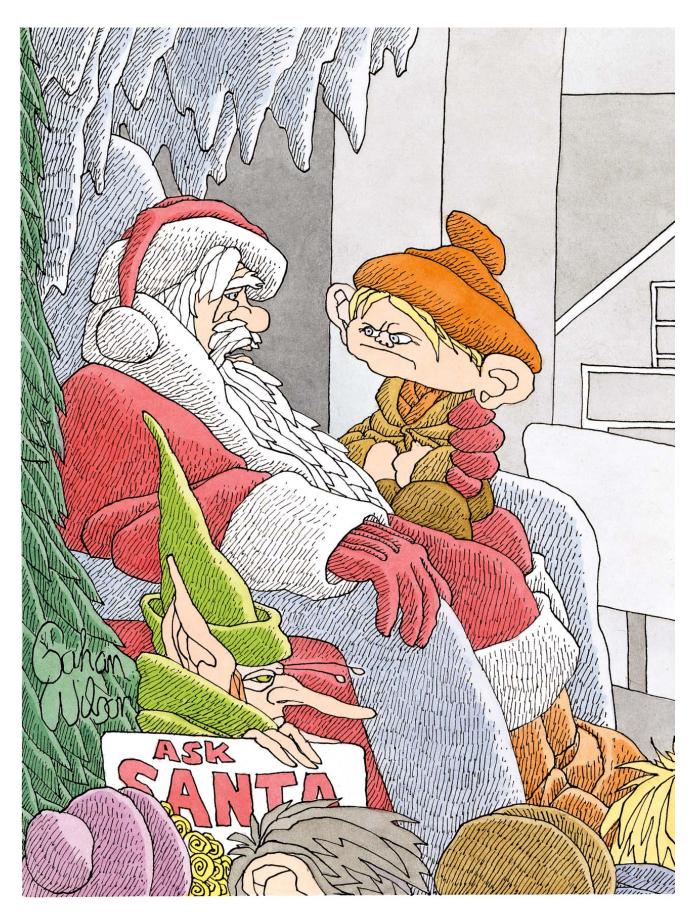
Silverstein was many different things. Here are nine things we know about him:

1. If he wasn't at his desk when inspiration struck, he'd write notes on his hand. When he ran out of space there, he'd continue up his arm.

2. He sported a full beard from the beginning of his career, but by the end of the 1960s he started shaving his head. "He was one of the first men who could pull off the shavedhead look," says Neiman. "He always complained that Yul Brynner and Telly Savalas shaved their heads

because he shaved his." Neiman laughs and says, "Shel was jealous because these two guys had bald heads, even though he wasn't the first one to do it."

- 3. He admitted to having a tough time with people he didn't know and sometimes made himself scarce when famous people—say, the Rolling Stones—came to visit the Playboy Mansion.
- 4. He had a reputation for being cranky around kids, which he played up in works such as *Uncle Shelby's ABZ Book*, a twisted primer intended for adults but written as if it were addressed to children. And yet everyone has stories about how good Silverstein (who had a daughter in 1970 and a son in 1984) was with kids. He was a big hit when he read his stories to the *(continued on page 151)*



"Sorry, kid, but I don't whack parents."





ILLUSTRATION BY TIFENN PYTHON

JOHN UPDIKE

HE FOUND ADVENTURE AMONG FORMER FOES AND WAYWARD SOULS, AND BRIEFLY ACQUIRED A FEW FOREIGN THOUGHTS

GERMAN LESSONS

oston had a patchy, disconsolate feel in those years, the mid-Seventies. Girls with long hair and long skirts still walked along Charles Street in bare feet, but the Sixties bloom was off; you found yourself worrying that these flower children would step on broken glass or that parasites would penetrate the dirty soles of their naked feet, which were stained green from wandering on the Common. The cultural revolution had become saturated in uncleanness. Ed Trimble felt unclean and guilty. He had moved to the city alone, having left a family behind in New Hampshire. His wife and he ran a small real estate firm in Peterborough. and Arlene made most of the sales. She had more gusto and social grace; she didn't let her real feelings about a property sour her pitch. He resented her superior success; he knew she could hold things together if he pulled out for a time. He needed space; things were up in the air. In this interim, with the begrimed conveniences of a city all about him, he saw a chance to fill some of his gaps. Guided by the yellow pages, he enlisted in German lessons at a so-called Language Institute in Cambridge.

The Institute turned out to be an ordinary wooden house north of Central Square, and the class a ragged handful of other gap fillers, some of them not much younger than he, and the classroom a small basement room where an excess of fluorescent lighting blazed as if to overcome the smallness with brightness. Their teacher was Frau Mueller—Müller in Germany—and their textbook was *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, a slender blue tome designed, as the multilingual cover announced, for speakers of any other language. It was illustrated with photographs that Ed found alienating—the people

in them could have been Americans but for an edge of formality and the ubiquity of Mercedes cars. The men, even the auto mechanics, wore neckties, and the young women sported slightly outdated miniskirts and Jackie Kennedy hairdos, teased into glossy bulk. Ed's older brother had acquired a shrapnel wound and a lifelong limp in the Ardennes Offensive, and Ed rather resented the prim, bloodless prosperity revealed in these lesson illustrations. Now, while the U.S. was risking troops and going broke protecting what was left of their country from the Russians, these defeated Huns, sleek and smug, were wallowing in an ideal capitalism.

Frau Mueller did not look like the well-groomed women in the photographs. Her hair, straw color fading to gray, had been pulled back into a streaky ponytail; stray strands fell untidily around her face. She dressed in the absentminded Cambridge manner, adding woolly layers as the summer waned and autumn deepened into winter. To Ed she seemed much older than he, but perhaps the difference was as little as five years; she had just been through more. Her nose came to a sharp tip reddened by perpetual sniffles; her thick spectacles magnified pale-lashed eyes that twinkled sometimes as if remembering a joke it would be too much trouble to explain.

She was on the small side, with the wide-eyed, washed-out face of an aging child.

While Deutsch als Fremdsprache contained no English, Frau Mueller's accompanying guidance contained plenty of it, much of it focused on fine points of English grammar. Ed knew this was wrong; he had taken enough language courses—French, Spanish, both mostly forgotten—to know that the modern method, proven over and over, was immersion, no matter how painful at first for the students and the native speaker leading them. When they came, after 10 or so lessons, to the German subjunctive, she informed the class, "Your English subjunctive fascinates me. It does not seem—how can I say this?—quite serious. When does one employ it? Give me examples."

"If I were king," Ed hesitantly offered.

"If any man sin," timidly chimed in a student called Andrea—quoting, Ed was touched to realize, *The Book of Common Prayer.*

Frau Mueller's eyes, twinkling, darted around her mostly silent little flock. "Ah," she triumphantly told them, "you must *think* for examples. If the subjunctive in English did not exist—if it exist not, would it be correct to say?—no one would miss it! No one would notice! That is not the case in German. We use it all the time. Not to use it would be a serious discourtesy. It would sound—can I use the word?—*pushy.* Germans are always being described as pushy, yes? I think it is fascinating, the looseness of English."

"Aber—Englisch hat Regeln," Ed protested, hoping that that was the plural of Regel, and the accusative.

The rest of the class looked at him as if he were crazy trying to communicate in German.

"Regelung," Frau Mueller smiled. "Eine kleine."

Ed found German disagreeable and opaque; its closeness to English clouded his mind. Reading, in the lesson *Im Restaurant*, the fictional Herr Weber's polite request, "Vielleicht haben Sie einen Tisch am Fenster?" he had to fight the impulse to make Tisch into dish and Fenster into fender. He might have quit the class but for Andrea. In this disordered period of his life, she radiated, though well advanced into her 30s, a healing innocence. She was on the small side, with the wide-eyed, washed-out face of an aging child, her lips the same color as her cheeks and clear brow. As winter closed in, her delicate lips cracked, and she kept applying a lip balm that made them, under the harsh fluorescent lights, gleam.

Frau Mueller not only spoke too much English, but when it came time for the class to examine the assigned German texts, she waved them aside as if their meaning was obvious to all. Little was obvious to Ed, including the differences between noch and doch. Doch seemed to be untranslatable, sheer padding, like the English word well—but the utility and sense of well were inexpressibly apparent. Andrea was less indignant than he, coming up against the language barrier. He and she began to sit side by side in class and to arrive with lessons they had worked up together, either in the underfurnished two rooms he rented in the South End or on the sofa or bed of Andrea's apartment, the third floor of a stately Cambridge house on Fayerweather Street; the genteel landlady was a professor's widow. Andrea shared the third floor with a female cellist who was often away, performing. She herself was a parttime librarian, on duty evenings at an East Cambridge branch of the city system. Her immurement in books and her acquired skill at aurally deciphering what the library's minority patrons wanted enabled her to see through the opacity of the German texts into a sphere of human meaning. He even once caught her, as they coped side by side with a set passage from Brecht, laughing at a joke that had leaped out at her. Feminine intuition: Arlene back in New Hampshire had possessed it also but had used it less and less to fathom his desires. When he and this new mate, an aging flower child, a vegetarian and peacenik, made love, she seemed a filmy extension of his wishes. Her gentle shyness merged with a knowingness, an experience of other partners, that slightly unnerved Ed. She had been, in a sweet way, corrupted.

His and Andrea's becoming a kind of couple in German class, and being somewhat older than the other students, won them an unlooked-for honor; before Christmas, as the first term was ending, Frau Mueller invited them to tea. "Only if you like," she said.

"You've used the subjunctive!" Ed told her.

She half-smiled—her smile was rarely more than half, diluted by a nagging wariness—and said, "I think it was merely the conditional."

She lived in one of three squat brick apartment buildings built on an old Kenmore Square industrial site; the complex had the small-windowed look of a modern prison but lacked the *(continued on page 148)*



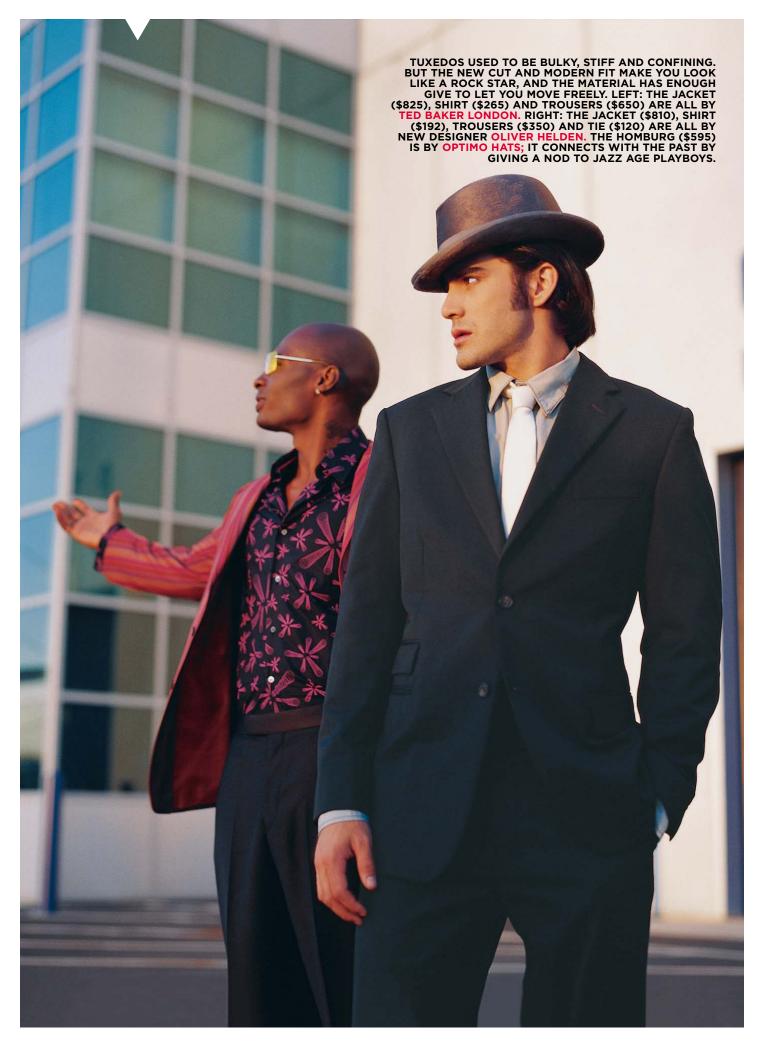
"You did? Hey—that's real sad! Speaking for myself, I've had a really great year!"













THE BATTLE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY





By 2010 Toyota will overtake GM as the biggest carmaker in the world. But Detroit isn't going down without a fight

ARTHUR KRETCHMER

arking lot of a sleek furniture store, early morning. Salesgirl in her 20s.

"May I ask you a question?" "Sure."

"Did you drive here this morning?

"Yup. In that Toyota pickup. Twelve years old. Runs great. I love it."

"Ever think about getting a new one?"

"Actually, my husband and I are talking about getting a new car."

"What are you thinking of?"

"A 4Runner."

"Any other possibilities?"

"We've talked about a Tundra pickup, but I think it'll be an SUV."

"When you shop, will you look at any of the American car brands?" "You mean other than Toyota?"

Summer 2005 was a good season to buy a car because it had been a bad spring in Detroit. The first quarter of the year was a disaster for General Motors, which announced a \$1.1 billion loss. In the second quarter it lost \$286 million, and Ford started bleeding dollars too. Standard & Poor's reduced the rating of both corporations' bonds to junk. The media was alive with the car business. For a while the GM story was the lead item on the evening news. Critics excoriated the corporation daily for its outdated thinking and irrelevant models. There was even a blog called GM Death Watch.

GM has a blog of its own, but no amount of blogging could stanch the bleeding. Anyone with a keyboard was ready to attack the company for betting

ILLUSTRATION BY MIRKO ILIĆ

its future on large SUVs when gas prices reached new highs daily. It was a media feeding frenzy. As the press saw it, the menace that was going to kill off the two weakened American giants was a humpbacked little creature called the Toyota Prius.

Late in the spring Toyota announced the consolidated results of its most recent fiscal year. Its net profit was 1.17 trillion yen. In case you think that's Monopoly money, on the day the company reported its results, the yen was valued at 105 to the dollar. Last year Toyota's profit was more than \$11 billion, nearly all of it from the vehicle business. That number towers over the industry.

No conversation about the state of the car business goes on for long without focusing on Toyota and GM. Both companies want to discourage the idea that we are witnessing a clash of titans. In the U.S., 12 major car brands sell their wares, producing about 250 separate models of cars and trucks. If the number one and number two companies were obliterated by martians tomorrow, we could still drive Fords, Hondas, Chryslers, Nissans and a BMW or two. But Toyota and GM overwhelm all discussions. GM is number one by definition; it manufactures and sells more vehicles than anyone else. Its Chevrolet brand, for example, outsold Toyota's cars last year. (That won't happen this year.)

But total vehicle sales are a deceptive measure. By every criterion you'd apply to your own business, Toyota is number one. It is the most profitable. It increased sales by more than 193,000 units in the U.S. last year, while GM lost more than 59,000 units. This year Toyota increased sales every month without rebates, while GM was

As the press saw it, the menace that was going to kill off the American giants was a creature called the Prius. clawing its way back from disaster in the U.S. with a fire sale called Employee Discounts for Everyone. Last year Toyota sold more than 2 million cars in the U.S. for the first time, and it has raised its projection significantly for 2005. It will sell 2.5 million vehicles here by year's end.

In 2003 Toyota passed Ford in total vehicles sold worldwide. *Automotive News* anticipates that Toyota will pass GM in worldwide sales in 2007, although that seems premature. More important, all trends favor Toyota and threaten GM.

In 2004 GM sold 4.7 million vehicles in North America (almost 9 million worldwide) and held 27 percent of the market. If you're taking the doomsday tack on GM, you may not want to know that automobile production in the U.S.

accounts for four percent of annual gross domestic product, with GM representing 25 percent of that. Yes, GM is responsible for one percent of the GDP of the United States. Between its paid workers and those employed by its suppliers, GM accounts for 1.1 million jobs.

Could the stakes be any higher? Well, yes, they could. The industrial foundation of the world's largest economy is on the line. Before World War II, when Japan's legendary admiral Yamamoto tried to persuade the Japanese high command not to wage war on the U.S., he said, "The Americans cannot be beaten in a modern war. I know. I have seen Detroit."

That was then; this is now. Being the world's leading economy is easy until you find out one morning that the party has ended, someone else has taken your girl, and your credit card has been canceled. Five of *Fortune*'s top 10 corporations are manufacturing companies: General Electric and four carmakers. Of the four, GM is in serious trouble, DaimlerChrysler flirts with trouble on a regular basis, Ford is a disaster waiting to happen, and Toyota is the picture of health. No doubt you've noticed that the troubled companies are the ones in Detroit. Free-trade zones will not cure what ails Motor City. This could get serious. PLAYBOY decided to send an investigator. It looked for an inquisitive journalist with the soul of a car guy and time on his hands.

It found me.

Inside Linens 'n Things. Woman in her early 50s.

"May I interrupt you for a second? I'm writing a magazine article on the car business. What kind of car do you drive?"

"A 1995 Camry."

"Did you buy it new?"

"Yes. It's the best car I've ever owned."

"It's 10 years old now. Will you get a new one?"

"I am never getting another car."

"Not even a new Camry?"

(continued on page 160)



The World According to Robert Lutz

A giant of the Detroit automotive industry sounds off

obert Lutz is vice chairman, product development, of General Motors. He is a former president and chief operating officer of Chrysler and previously worked at BMW and Ford. He's known as a visionary car guy with an eye on performance and pizzazz. The Dodge Viper was Lutz's baby at Chrysler. His personal car collection includes a 1952 Aston Martin DB2 Vantage, "beautifully restored"; a 1934 Riley aluminum-bodied sports car built to compete at Le Mans; a Steyr-Pinzgauer Swiss military vehicle, "maybe the world's most competent all-wheel-drive vehicle"; and an aluminumbodied Cobra. He sat down with us and talked not only about the turmoil at GM but also about MapQuest, health care and women.

On the new Corvette vs. the Porsche

Even the European publications are coming around. They're now saying some of the ultimate Porsches still slightly outperform the regular Corvette. But holy smoke, when we get the 500-horsepower Z06, it will bury all these Porsches that narrowly beat the Corvette in ride and performance but at two and a half times the price. On marketing cars to women

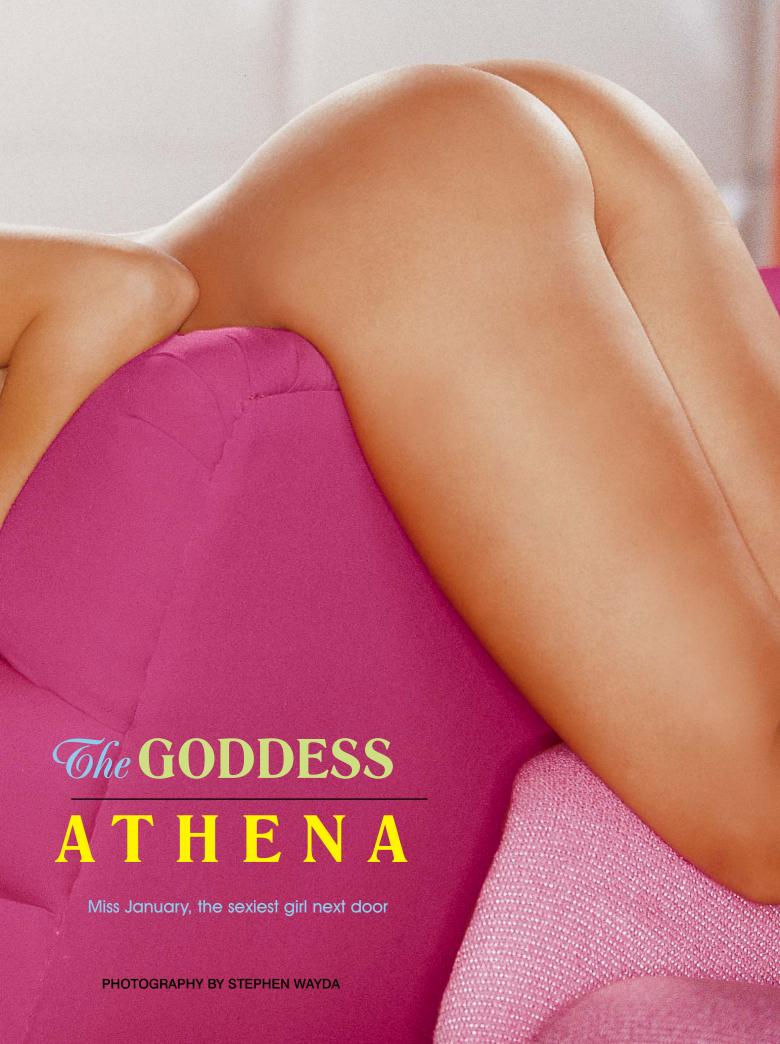
Women are security-oriented, and OnStar is strongly targeted at women. It permits them to open their car if they've locked themselves out—and we have some 10,000 unlockings a week. It also has airbag deployment and automatic 911 and emergency-service notification. So OnStar has a strong feminine appeal. By and large, the same sorts of things appeal to women and men, including attractive design and good proportion. I'd say women are perhaps more sensitive to the excellence of the interior. Visibility and being able to survey the whole car from the driver's seat also tend to be more important to women, though I suspect that may be because of stature more than gender.

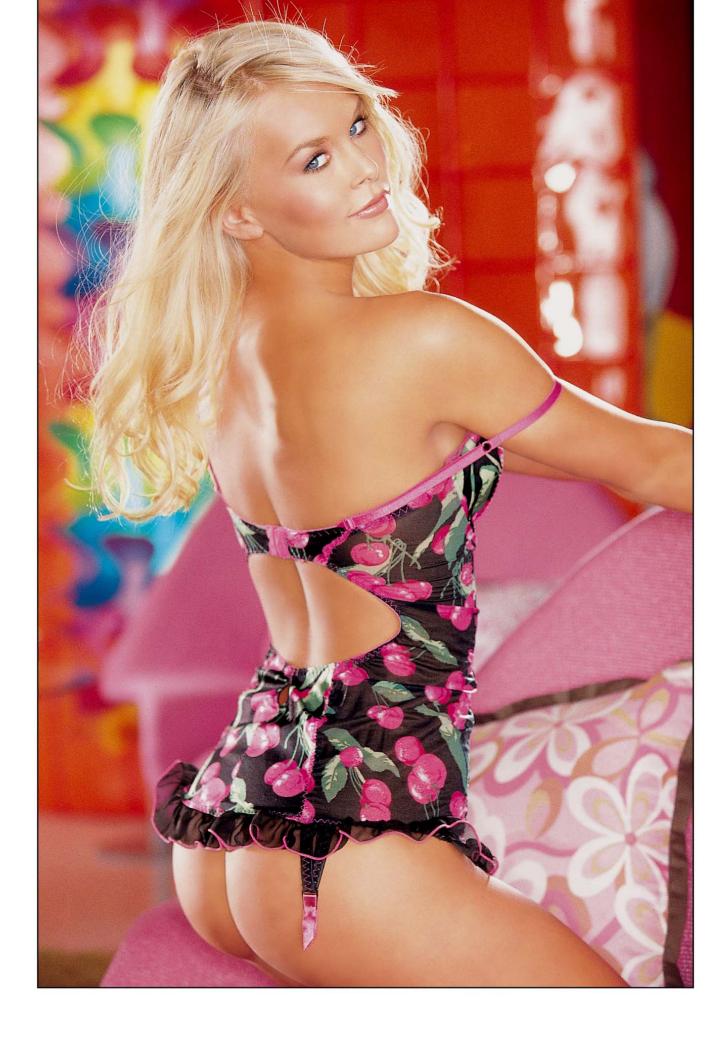
You have to be careful when designing a car that you don't (concluded on page 146)



"I think what made it so special was you humming the Christmas carol when I came...!"

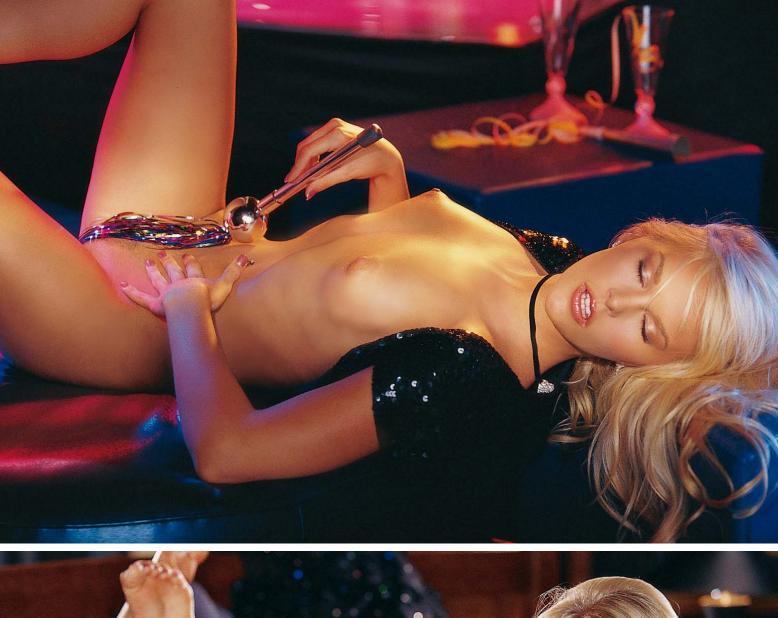
























PLAYMATE DATA SHEET

NAME: Athera Lundberg

BUST: 34 B WAIST: 25 HIPS: 36

HEIGHT: 5'6" WEIGHT: 1/9

BIRTH DATE: 4-12-86 BIRTHPLACE: Mountain VIEW, CA

AMBITIONS: To become a successful model and be

alole to help the people I care about the most.

TURN-ONS: A guy with a great smile, someone who likes

to cook for me and has a sense of human.

TURNOFFS: Cheaters, lians, poor hygiene, being selfish

and disrespectful.

EVERY WOMAN SHOULD HAVE: The ability to Love herself.

FAVORITE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES: I Love to be in the water, whether it's the ocean or a lake. I have boothing and also haseback riding.

FAVORITE MOVIE AND WHY: Sin City because it's completely different from any other movie I've seen. There's humor, violence and Love, all in one movie.

Greece - places that remind me of paradise.



I look like a boy! (8 yrs.)



Wait...Still not cutell (14 yrs.)



Okay, a little better. (18 yrs.)





PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

What was George W. Bush's position on Roe

He didn't care how people got out of New Orleans.

A man went to the doctor and said, "I was thinking about getting a vasectomy.'

'That's a big decision," said the doctor.

"Have you talked about it with your family?"

"Yeah," said the man. "They're in favor of it 15 to 7."

 \mathbf{W} hy do women fake orgasms? Because they think we care.



How many desperate housewives does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

Housewives don't screw in lightbulbs. They screw in SUVs.

An old rancher died, leaving everything to his devoted wife. Needing help, she decided to advertise for a ranch hand. Only two men applied. One was gay and the other a drunk. She thought about it and hired the gay guy, figuring it would be safer to have him around.

He proved to be a hard worker who put in long hours and knew a lot about ranching. To reward his good work she let him have the night off to go into town for some fun.

Later that night he returned to the ranch house. Halfway to his room, he saw the woman standing beside the fireplace, a glass of wine in her hand. She called him over.

'Unbutton my blouse and take it off," she ordered. Trembling, he did so.

them down.

"Now take off my boots," she said.
"Now my socks." The hired man complied.

"Now take off my skirt." He unzipped it.

"Now take off my bra." He did as he was told. "Now take off my panties." He slowly pulled

She fixed him with a determined gaze and said, "If you ever wear my clothes into town again, you're fired."

Two hillbillies were out fishing one afternoon. The first said to the second, "Supposin' I was to sneak over to your place Saturday and make love to your wife while you was off huntin', and she got pregnant and had a baby. Would that make us kin?'

The second replied, "I don't know about that, but it sure would make us even.'

What do tight pants and a cheap motel have in common?

No ball room.

A guy was at the supermarket when a sexy blonde raised her hand and smiled at him.

He was taken aback at such a looker waving to him. Unable to place her, he said, "Sorry, do you know me?'

She replied, "I may be mistaken, but I think you might be the father of one of my children."

His mind shot back to the one and only time he had been unfaithful. "Holy shit," he said. "Are you that stripper from my bachelor party who I screwed on the pool table in front of all my friends while your girlfriend whipped me with wet celery?"

"No," she replied, "I'm your son's teacher."

A gorgeous young woman asked the manager of a designer boutique, "May I try on that dress in the window?'

"Go ahead," the manager replied. "Maybe it'll attract business."

How do Arab women lose 20 pounds every night?

They get undressed for bed.



Monica Lewinsky was walking along a beach when she tripped over a clam. A genie popped out of the clam and said, "You have released me from 1,000 years of imprisonment, but since you've been a bad girl I will grant you only one wish instead of three.'

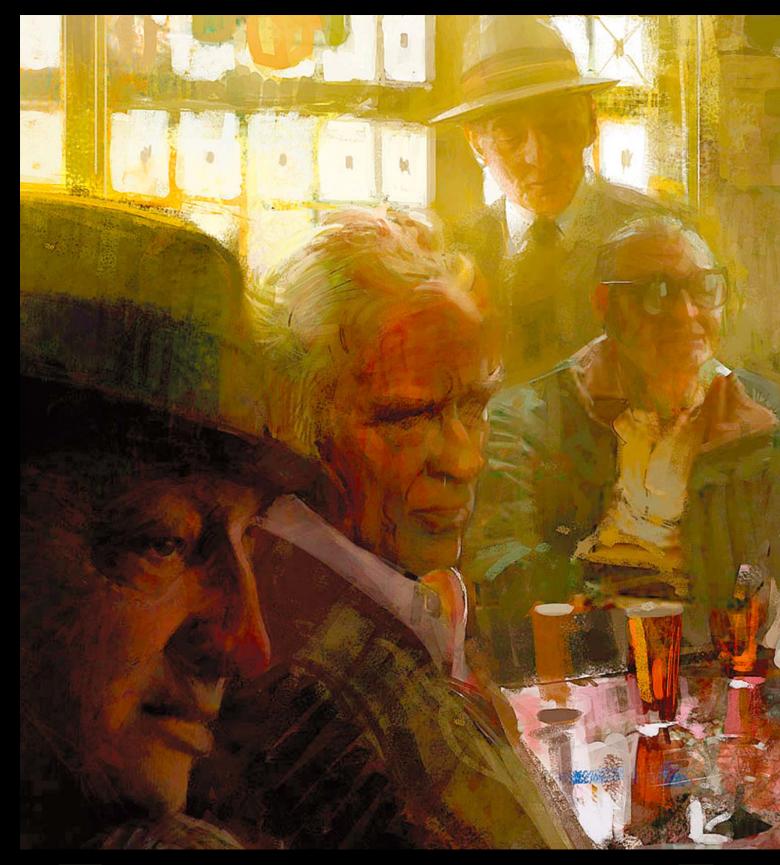
Monica thought and said, "Well, I'm already rich from my best-selling book. I've already had relations with a powerful man. Can you make my love handles disappear?"

"Your wish is granted," said the genie, and with a nod of his head—poof!—her ears vanished.

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.



 $"Welcome\ to\ the\ Nutcracker\ Suite."$



PUBBING ELBOWS BY BRUCE JAY FRIEDMAN



middle-aged woman approached a table that had been set aside for writers at a Manhattan restaurant.

"How I yearn to be a writer," she said.
The playwright Jack Richardson asked pleasantly, "Do you

have anything to say?"

The woman was shaken by the question. She'd been in love with the idea of becoming a writer, the romance of it,

but had never considered there might be more to it than that.

Some writers have succeeded with little to say by having known how to say it grandly. Others with much to say haven't known how to say it well and have struggled to survive. In the past decades I've had brushes, encounters and friendships with many of the great and near great of American letters. Here are some impressions of what Henry James called "our little tribe."

The Salinger mystique continues to resonate. Is he aware of Lindsay Lohan? What does he make of Rummy and Condi?

THE MASTER

I've known only two people who felt comfortable referring to J.D. Salinger as Jerry. One was A.E. Hotchner, author of *Papa Hemingway*.

"Of course I knew Jerry," he said. "Jerry and I played poker once a week at Chumley's in the Village. He didn't care much for American writers, although he did feel Melville had ability."

The other was Hollis Alpert, who bought and published my first short story at *The New Yorker* in the early 1950s. He invited me to visit the fabled magazine's offices.

"Have you ever met J.D. Salinger?" I asked as we strolled through the hallowed corridors.

"Many times," he said. He pointed to a desk in an unoccupied office. "That's where Jerry put the finishing touches on 'Bananafish.'"

After that brief meeting I did not see Alpert until decades later, on a street in Sag Harbor, New York.

later, on a street in Sag Harbor, New York.

"I discovered you, Friedman," he said. "Discover me back."
Then he added, "Incidentally, I haven't been in touch with Jerry in quite some time."

The Salinger mystique continues to resonate. Has he been writing all these years? Will we ever get to read this work? Is he aware of Lindsay Lohan? What does he make of Rummy and Condi? Does he know of Manu Ginobili and Chauncey Billups? Did the photographs of Saddam in his underwear amuse him? What is his take on chick lit? Has he ducked in to see *Spamalot*? What on God's earth is he doing up in New Hampshire? And aren't we entitled to know? Or does he just want to make us crazy?

As to his literary output in decades past, the theater director Jacques Levy said dismissively, "He's probably just got a lot of stuff about Truman."

I thought this was unkind and far off the mark. I prefer to think the Master—and he remains the Master—has produced boundless treasures and we will get to devour them.

But would it kill him to give us just a hint of what he's been up to?

BELLOW, ROTH, RICHARDSON, PLIMPTON

Along with Hollis Alpert, the novelist Saul Bellow claimed the questionable honor of "discovering" me. He was convinced he had published my story "The All-American" in his magazine *The Noble Savage*. This was not true, although he may have considered publishing the story and changed his mind. Still, I was pleased he was aware of me at all.

I had only a single encounter with the future Nobelist, on a movie line in midtown Manhattan.

"Answer one question for me, Friedman," he said. "How can you live in this ungodly city?"

In the mid-1960s, at a cocktail party given by George Plimpton, I met Philip Roth. It was the first of several brief encounters.

"Saul Bellow," he said, "am de daddy of us all."

I disagreed Though I admired *The Victim* and *Danol*

I disagreed. Though I admired *The Victim* and *Dangling Man*, I did not feel Saul Bellow was my daddy.

"If anyone is my daddy, it is J.D. Salinger or James Jones or Evelyn Waugh."

He considered this and suggested I read I'm Not Stiller by the Swiss novelist Max Frisch. "It will speak to you," he said.

I read the novel—and it did. But he did not become my daddy.

My wife at the time aspired to be an actress. An agent learned she was married to me.

"So you're Friedman's wife, eh? Isn't he the guy who writes like Philly Roth?"

At the same Plimpton party, I met the dashing playwright Jack Richardson (*Gallows Humor*), who wore a cloak. I became envious when he used the cloak to envelop two Swedish models and sweep them off to attend rehearsals of his new Broadway play. Soon after, his wife filed for divorce.

It's become clear since his death that Plimpton took up a great deal of space. He was the social glue that held the East Coast literary world together, and it is difficult to imagine anyone coming forth to replace him. He managed to be distant and also warm and convivial. And he enjoyed speaking. Robert Brown, a Shakespeare scholar and Plimpton friend, said, "Whenever George saw a group of people, he felt compelled to address them." Yet he had the strangest accent—part Princeton, part Eton, part God knows what. When he spoke I closed my eyes and felt I was listening to Audrey Hepburn. The essayist Roger Rosenblatt was the only one brave enough to challenge him on this peculiar manner of speech.

"What on God's earth is that accent of yours, George?" he asked from a podium at Southampton College.

In a fine moment Plimpton replied, "Affectation, my dear boy, affectation."

MALAMUD

Writers tend to forget people actually read what they've written or see the plays they've created. In my play *Scuba Duba* I include an homage to the great Bernard Malamud. Midway through the second act, I have an actress who plays a Paris Hilton type announce that she adores his work.

"I can't get enough of him. Reading Bernie Malamud is just like eating potato chips."

One night, on a buffet line at Sardi's, I found myself standing next to the distinguished novelist.

"So it's Bernie Malamud, is it?" he said with a raised eyebrow.

BEING SHOVED OVER TO FAMOUS WRITERS

There were few books in my family's small apartment in the Bronx. *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* was one. I believe my father won it in a contest. Yet from an early age and for some unfathomable reason, I've always been in awe of writers. The way they spoke, the way they dressed. The idea that someone knew enough to fill an entire book was astonishing.

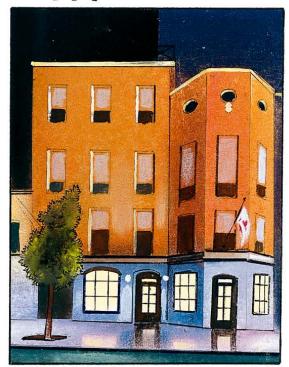
The first writer of note I met was Herman Wouk (*The Caine Mutiny*) on the island of St. Croix. He was on the phone with his publicist.

"Tell him you're a writer," my wife said. She then shoved me over to him. We have a tradition in our family of shoving people over to celebrities. My mother once shoved my wife over to Frank Sinatra, who was shopping for ties at Nat Lewis's clothing store in midtown Manhattan. ("Go over and show him how gorgeous you are" was my mother's instruction.)

"I'm sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Wouk," I said, "but I am a young writer who is yet to be published."

"Maybe you will be," he said and turned back to his publicist. I'm not entirely sure how I expected him to react, but I was let down by his frosty response. (continued on page 154)

Happy New Year?





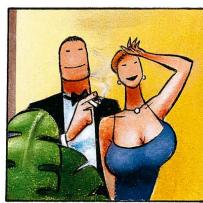


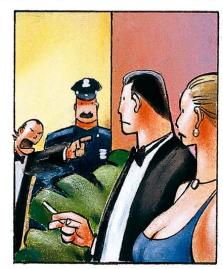
















CARS OF THE YEAR

WHAT'S NEW ON THE ROAD THIS YEAR? FUTURISTIC TECHNOLOGY, SHOCKING AMOUNTS OF HORSEPOWER AND UNPARALLELED AESTHETICS. YOU MAY COMMENCE DROOLING



better with the top down.



nce again the PLAYBOY driving team redlined dozens upon dozens of great models on challenging roads, from Tuscan autostradas to California coastal highways to Virginia's twisty Blue Ridge Parkway, so we could select the best of the bunch. This year, high tech rules. The class of 2006 offers sophisticated new electronics such as throttle and brakes by wire, multiple displacement systems for better fuel economy, road-sensing suspensions for optimal ride and handling, and seven-speed electrohydraulic gearboxes for slick, quick shifting. If it's speed you crave, three of our winners offer more than 500 horsepower, and a couple of others are close. Because the subject is the best new cars of the year, we refuse to compromise on performance, which means no hybrids make the list—this year. (We already have our eyes on a couple of hybrids for the 2007 lineup.) Our picks are fast, sexy and great looking—some of the most remarkable achievements in automotive design ever. Rev 'em up and get ready for a spin.



*BEST INTERSTATE CRUISER Cadillac has discontinued the DeVille name, but the 500-mile-a-day, go-long, go-really-long spirit of this all-American cruiser is alive and well. The new DTS is big and plush, but edgy new styling touches should quell preconceptions about the brand without losing the loyalists. The performance package (\$49,700) includes a 291 hp Northstar V8, electronic suspension and creature comforts to excess, making long-distance cruising supremely pleasurable. Most remarkable, these Cadoos no longer float. The ride is firm and roadworthy. On a Monday morning we roared down Interstate 66 outside Washington, D.C. in a DTS, blended into rush-hour traffic and felt like a lobbyist on his way to a power lunch. Point this baby west, we thought, and tomorrow we could be hanging out at the Mansion.



•MOST FUN ON WHEELS A longer wheelbase, multilink suspension and a powerful 170 hp twin-cam four cylinder make this MX-5 the best-driving, most-refined Mazda sports car ever. Though the company has buried the Miata name, it has given us another sports car bargain. For \$25,000 you get a six-speed trans with triple-cone synchros on the first four gears for speed shifting. (An automatic with a paddle shifter is also available.) The soft top is still easy to flip open and close from inside with one arm. We drove the MX-5 in Hawaii on the Big Island's back roads, which curve around ancient volcanoes. With its tight steering, fade-proof brakes and rigid chassis, the car dove merrily into decreasing-radius turns. Mazda engineers say they are striving for a spirit of jimba ittai, or horse and rider as one. A nice thought, but we'll take this car over a Thoroughbred any day.



*BEST SUV The shadows of the Hummer H3's predecessors make it difficult to assess this car fairly, but trust us—it's a winner. Full-time four-wheel drive, a two-speed low-ratio transfer case and a locking center differential make this slimmed-down beast showroom-ready for serious rock climbing. Its road clearance is a whopping 8.5 inches, and fitted with the optional oversize tires, it can clamber over a 16-inch vertical barrier or ford a two-foot-deep stream. All this for under \$30,000—and the H3's interior is surprisingly plush. In the rugged Blue Ridge Mountains, we scrambled over sunken logs and waded through tricky rivulets. Scared a few cows. The 220 hp five-cylinder engine grunted past all the obstacles we encountered. For those serious about on- and off-roading, this SUV's combination of comfort and terrain-conquering tenacity is hard to beat.



*BEST CAR TO TAKE TO YOUR HIGH SCHOOL REUNION The \$165,000 Bentley Continental Flying Spur doesn't just say you've arrived, it says you deserve to be there. The sumptuous leather and smooth burl-walnut interior is fundamental in this price range, but the Bentley's six-liter, 551 hp twin-turbo W12 engine and the wheel-mounted six-speed paddle shifter raise cruising to another level. Simply put, this is the fastest production sedan ever to roll out of a factory. On California's snaky Route 92, which plunges out of the Diablo Mountains down to Half Moon Bay, this British beauty hit 60 mph in 4.9 seconds. The Flying Spur is big, but all-wheel drive, computer-controlled air springs and 19-inch Pirelli P Zero tires give it the road-hugging manners of an Italian exotic.



*BEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK A four-door Dodge Charger? We have no problem with that. The first new Daytona in 29 years is a big, husky rear-wheel-drive sedan. Its edges are softer than those of the angular Chrysler 300, but fitted with the optional R/T suspension package, which features larger sway bars and brake pads along with a rear spoiler, the Charger is our pick. Considering its size, it delivers an incredible zero-to-60 time of under seven seconds. Top speed is just over 140 mph. The Daytona draws on Dodge's link to Mercedes (DaimlerChrysler is parent to both) for the fully independent suspension, electronic stability control and oversize disc brakes. The 350 hp Hemi V8 is a homeboy contribution, as is the AutoStick transmission. The \$32,000 Dodge Charger Daytona—a classic American muscle car is back.



*BEST SPORT SEDAN The BMW M5 is every other sport sedan's benchmark. At \$82,000 it isn't cheap, but the premium prices that vintage M5s fetch justify the cost as an investment. The 2006 model raises the bar with its lowered suspension, modified air dams, unique side air vents, 19-inch wheels and oversize tailpipes. At Connecticut's historic Lime Rock racetrack we tore down straights and plunged into the treacherous Big Bend curve with nary (well, nearly nary) a worry. The 500 hp V10 power plant got us to 60 mph in a mind-blowing 4.5 seconds. Zero to 120 took 13 seconds. It feels like an \$82,000 car even when you're idling at a stoplight. BMW's engineers insist that the M5's V10 mimics the shriek of their Formula One engine. It sounded good to us.



*BEST AFFORDABLE ROADSTER The Pontiac Solstice is sizzling. No one in the heart of the market—not Audi, not Honda, not Nissan—makes a roadster more satisfying or more beautiful than this. The striking grille, the flared headrests on the rear deck, the wide stance—these set the stage for the Solstice's remarkable performance. The steering, road holding and braking are on the money. (And speaking of money, the base tag is \$20,000.) The short-throw five-speed transmission is well matched to the 2.4-liter, 177 hp overhead-cam engine. Zero to 60 takes about seven seconds. The seats are inviting, visibility is excellent, and the exhaust system plays a high-energy tune. True, cargo space is scant and you have to get out of the car to put the top up or down, but if you didn't, you'd become a car potato.



*BEST SPORT WAGON You won't be able to tote four-by-eight-foot sheets of plywood in the Audi A3 2.0T, and you won't care. For about \$25,000 you get a sport hatch with a 200 hp twin-cam turbocharged four cylinder, independent front and rear suspension, electronic stability control, traction control, a six-speed manual or a sequential manual (essentially an automatic) transmission and an electronic distribution system that balances braking force in a panic stop. Not to mention the high level of fit and finish inside that you'd expect in an Audi. We drove the A3 on Napa Valley roads that were as twisty as the grapevines growing alongside them. Although we didn't reach the 130 mph top speed, we nonchalantly sprinted from zero to 60 in under seven seconds. Dollar for dollar, you can't find more sport in a wagon.

*CAR OF THE YEAR The Porsche Cayman S fulfills an automotive fantasy—an affordable Porsche that can compete with the 911 Carrera. Some critics are calling the new Cayman the best Porsche ever. Blazingly fast and wondrously agile, it is whisker-close in performance to the 911 but at \$58,900 costs \$12,000 less. Under the hood is a 3.4-liter, 295 hp flat-six-cylinder engine located midship for perfect balance. The car's interior is impeccable: easy-to-read instruments, your choice of wood, carbon or aluminum trim, and the most adaptive bucket seats we've ever sat in. And the shapely body? It speaks for itself. Tested in Tuscany on looping mountain roads, the Cayman S rocketed to 60 mph in 5.4 seconds (that's only 0.4 seconds slower than a 911) and whooshed down the autostrada at 171 mph. Porsche's electrically controlled active suspension management lowered the car 0.4 inches at high speeds for better handling. Huge cross-drilled, vented disc brakes repeatedly stopped us cold. We love the improved short-throw six-speed manual gearbox, and the optional five-speed Tiptronic alternative is only fractionally slower. The hardtop makes the Cayman S's body twice as stiff as a Boxster's, and the rear trunk is twice the size. Forget the \$8,100 optional ceramic-brake package, but get the alloy wheels and 19-inch performance tires. It's not every day that Porsche unveils a new model. There's only one way to celebrate.







PROFESSIONAL BEAUTY

AT A SOCIETY BENEFIT AT THE ZOO, HIS WIFE IS THE WILDEST ANIMAL ON DISPLAY

FICTION BY JAY MCINERNEY

asha was one of those celebrated beauties—women for whom the drape of a garment and the shape of the eyebrow were subjects of advanced study, who submitted themselves not only to trainers, hairdressers and stylists but even unto surgeons' scalpels in pursuit of a feminine ideal that they, in turn, took their modest part in shaping after their pictures appeared in the party pages of *Town & Country* and *W.* She was, in one sense, a professional beauty. In fact Luke was still proud of her on that purely superficial level, of making an entrance with Sasha on his arm.

Tonight the couple had made their entrance at the Central Park Zoo amid dark waves of paparazzi surging and yearning on either side of them. It was a benefit. Ten thousand dollars a table—one table for him and his wife and friends and another for his teenage daughter Ashley and her friends. After they were past the gauntlet and had emerged into the courtyard of the zoo, Sasha asked for the drink Luke, out of habit, was already on his way to retrieve.

At the bar Luke stood behind a redheaded socialite known for her wit. "I was married to Tom for six months," she said to her girlfriend. "It was a case of mistaken identity basically. Someone said he was the biggest prick at Time Warner and I misheard the verb."

She'd said the same thing to Luke at a previous benefit, when she was still married to the man in question, who had subsequently moved into the Carlyle when the couple split. Word was that he'd left her after catching her with her head between the legs of his partner's wife. To which one listener replied, "Yeah, but why did he leave?"

Carrying the two drinks, he looked around for Sasha and caught sight of her huddled with Bernard Melman. He watched from a distance as Sasha whispered in Melman's ear while the deputy mayor waited respectfully for his moment. Melman was perhaps not quite as small as Luke liked to imagine him, although the hulking bodyguards who accompanied him everywhere—which some saw as an affectation to underline his importance—did nothing to make him seem taller. Bernie was one of the few corporate raiders of the 1980s to have flourished in the subsequent decade. During his early years in New York, he had

been caricatured as a barbarian and a parvenu. His current eminence and good press stemmed as much from genuine admiration for his vast fortune as from fear of his power and influence, which now included certain branches of the media. The rumors of his impending divorce seemed conceivable-Melman and his wife hadn't been photographed together in months. There was also, Luke knew, a certain buzz surrounding his friendship with Sasha. They had been spotted lunching together recently, not at the Four Seasons or Aureole, but at a dowdy Italian spot on Third Avenue in the 50s. Sasha explained the rendezvous plausibly enough—she was hitting him up for a big donation on behalf of the ballet, on whose board she served. As it turned out, some helpful soul called in the sighting to the Post's Page Six, which reported it the next day with the comment that the restaurant in question hadn't seen such glamorous diners since Kennedy was president.

He had been sitting at the table with his and Sasha's drinks untouched for 20 minutes when Sasha finally appeared with Casey Reynes, their eyes all glittery and bright. Casey was one of Sasha's druggie friends. Luke had somehow been under the impression that coke had largely disappeared from their circle a decade before and was uncertain whether his wife's indulgence was a recent revival of an old party habit or if he simply had failed to notice it all these years, as he apparently had failed to notice so many other things while he was so single-mindedly pursuing his career, bringing home the prosciutto.

Sasha took a chair at the other end of the table between Casey's husband, a partner at Goldman Sachs, and an actor invited to punch up the mix. Luke found himself seated next to Sloane Cafferty, a fierce young trader a few years out of Radcliffe, who was morbidly fascinated by his ronin status.

"What do you do all day?" she asked as the waiters served the salad course.

"I read," he said. "Today, I went to the Whitney and looked at the Hoppers. And then I went to a class at the New School. Socratic Humanism."

RUMORS OF SEXUAL MALFEASANCE SEEMED ONLY TO ENHANCE HIS MYSTIQUE.

"Don't you miss, you know, being in the game?"

"Not really. To tell you the truth, by the end, I really hated

my job."
"Word is you would've been running the firm in two years if you'd stayed."

"Luke's writing a book," said Casey, jumping into the conversation. "You know, I really should introduce you to my friend; he's an editor at one of the big houses....

Yet again Luke wished he'd never announced his intention to write. The secret ambition that had animated him in his 20s, the one he had not announced—to write a novel—seemed even more implausible. He was discovering that it was difficult to adjust to the solo formlessness and fluidity of his days after spending half a lifetime enslaved to the rhythms of the financial markets, engaged in the rigidly structured rituals of corporate enterprise. Sometimes he was surprised how easy it was to fill a day, and sometimes he was horrified.

"What are your goals?" he asked Sloane, turning the question back on her.

"I don't know. I guess I'd like to run my own fund."

Looking into her eager eyes, Luke tried to remember when all of this had stopped making sense to him.

The conversation was blessedly truncated by the speeches and awards portion of the evening. Who has done so much for this city. Needs no introduction. Cause dear to our hearts. Luke looked across the table at Sasha just as she exchanged a glance with Bernard Melman, who was seated at the table behind her.

Over the course of dinner Sasha repeatedly beckoned the waiter to fill her wineglass and pressed close to the actor. At one point she noticed Luke watching her and stuck out her tongue, then held out her glass for more chardonnay. Her laughter carried across the table as if she were determined to be the life of the party. He caught snatches of her conversation, her voice metallic and shrill. Isn't it to die? When the band started playing, she rose from her seat. "I'm in the mood to dance," she said, looking at Luke. "But my husband is looking at me censoriously. And he's not much of a dancer anyway. Perhaps you'd take me for a spin," she said to the actor, who replied that he would be delighted. Luke watched as they walked out to the open area of the pavilion.

After listening to Sloane discourse about the euro, he looked up to see Melman cutting in on the actor with the air of a suitor supremely assured of his welcome. Although he looked slightly ludicrous, Melman was, if anything, a little more confident than most of the other paunchy middle-aged men who'd been coaxed out onto the dance floor.

Luke excused himself from the table and went off to look for Ashley, exchanging greetings with friends and acquaintances before finally spotting her at the so-called children's table, taken aback to see his 14-year-old daughter deep in conference with Anton Hohenlohe. All of the young men at the table were at least a decade older than Ashley and her friends, and Hohenlohe, a friend of Sasha's, was closer in age to the mother than the daughter. To his admirers he was a stylish boulevardier, a living link to a lost continental world of Ferraris, Côte d'Azur casinos and polo. He was ubiquitous in Paris and Palm Beach as well as New York, and rumors of sexual malfeasance seemed only to enhance his mystique.

He'd turned up here after a sojourn in Hollywood, where he'd first come into his inheritance and set himself up as a producer. The motion-picture business had a tradition of hospitality toward rich young men who wished to share their wealth in exchange for sex with aspiring actresses. If the

girl whose night with him ended in the emergency room of Cedars-Sinai with nearly toxic levels of Rohypnol and cocaine in her bloodstream and some very nasty bruises had been without connections, or if Hohenlohe himself had been more established in the community, the incident probably would have been hushed up or allowed to fade away, but under the circumstances, he decided that Los Angeles wasn't truly glamorous. Luke was appalled that this was Sasha's idea of suitable company for their daughter and her friends—she, after all, had set up the table, which Luke had paid for.

Luke watched as Ashley threw back her head and laughed at some remark of Hohenlohe's, her manner and gestures reminding him all too much of her mother—a resemblance that was sealed when she lifted a champagne flute and tilted it upright between her lips—afraid that if he went over to the table, he might lose control of his temper. It occurred to him he could solve two problems at a single stroke, interrupting Sasha's dance with Melman in the name of urgent parental business. He would tell her that he was taking Ashley home immediately and, if possible, send her over to make this announcement to their daughter herself. He was counting on his righteous indignation and Sasha's vestigial sense of guilt to work in his favor, but when he spotted her among the dancers, he began to wonder if guilt was a concept with which she was familiar.

To the tune of "Bootylicious," one of the season's hits, Sasha was grinding her pelvis into Melman's, her hands on his shoulders. Even more than her posture and the burlesque motions of her hips, it was the expression on her face, a kind of liquid abandon combined with an intense focus on the eyes of her partner, that made the scene so lurid to Luke and, he realized, looking around, to a great many of the assembled guests. Any other couple might have engaged in a similar display without attracting quite so much notice, but the eminence of both parties guaranteed them an audience; it was as if a spotlight followed them, casting giant shadows that magnified the pantomime of their desire.

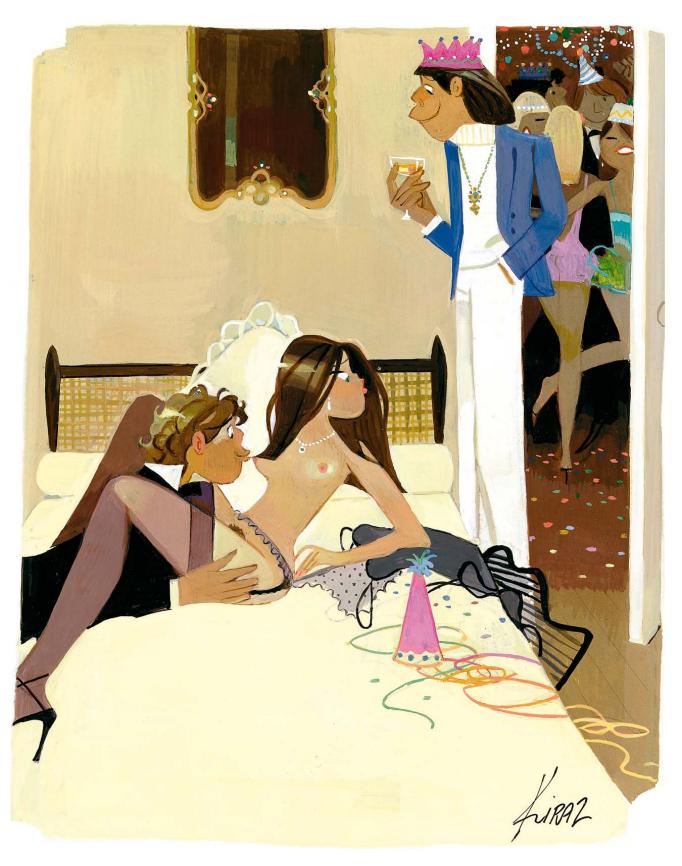
Without a context the dance might have been innocent enough. But clearly this was richly contextualized. It was in the eyes of the riveted tribe, the pity with which they regarded him, unable to keep from looking even as they wished at all costs to avoid his gaze, and in the way he saw women whispering to their neighbors. The community knew how to interpret this performance because they had been prepared for something like it—a confirmation of the buzz and rumors. This, if nothing else, was what Luke learned tonight—that his suspicions, far from being paranoid, were pretty general throughout the 10021 zip code, where even the clueless husbands seemed to know.

Luke could either put an end to this by cutting in on the dance or he could walk away and postpone the reckoning. But he couldn't continue to stand here watching and being watched, so he retreated to the back of the tented area to compose himself. Leaning against the railing of the snow monkeys' enclosure, he regarded the sign attached to the fence.

Separate Lifestyles

Male snow monkeys have larger canine teeth, a fuller mane of hair and weigh 20 percent more than females. Females remain with the group in which they were born for life. Males leave when they reach sexual maturity and may join several different groups during their lifetime.

There was no trace of these anthropomorphs, male or female, and Luke turned away with an urgent sense of finding his daughter, of saving her somehow. (concluded on page 169)



"Be patient, Harry. You're next."

THEYEA



victims of Hurricane Pat O'Brien



EXHIBITIONISTS AT PICTURES

During a heat wave, officials at Vienna's normally staid Leopold Museum granted nude or barely clad viewers free admission to its Naked Truth exhibition of early-1900s erotic art.



fee-table book 4

Inches, featuring celebs (here Kate Moss, on book cover, and Rachel Hunter, above) in Jimmy Choo shoes and Cartier jewels, period, go to the Elton John AIDS Foundation.



BURNT SIENNA

Fiancée Sienna Miller freaked when Jude Law copped to corner-pocketing nanny Daisy Wright (inset) on a pool table. A month later, frontal nude paparazzi photos of Law drew snickers about the size of his cue stick. But he did win a "best butt" poll. We say the glass is one-third full.



THE YEAR IN SEX



MOONS OVER MEZZANINE

Shutterbug Spencer Tunick is at it again, this time filling the Stadschouwburg Theater in Bruges, Belgium with volunteers' bare behinds.

Mi hombre no necesita huevos de

ortuga.

⊪ 01800-7703372 (PROFEPA)

\$126,336.29

BREAST EXAM

You've been studying these things all year









Sophie Marceau B. Bijou Phillips

C. Sharon Stone D. Anna Nicole Smith

E. Tara Reid F. Sadie Frost

Answers: 1. D, 2. B, 3. C, 4. E, 5. F, 6. A.

A FASHION TREND MORE

WOMEN SHOULD GET BEHIND Paulina Rubio (right) and Margo Stilley (far right) bare their buns at the MTV Video Music Awards Latin America and a MAC cosmetics launch in London, respectively. We'll give you \$5 if you can land this grape between Margo's cheeks.



CAREFUL, TILTS EASILY

Artists Ed and Nancy Kienholz dreamed up this more interactive Playboy pinball machine, exhibited at London's Haunch of Venison gallery.



Racy anti-poaching ads battle tradition, criti

Local feminists condemned this racy ad meant to discourage Mexican men from gobbling an endangered sea creature's eggs, believed by some to boost virility. (Translation: "My man doesn't need turtle eggs because he knows they don't make him more potent.")



SHOWCASE SHOW-OFF

Producers of the Australian version of The Price Is Right sacked Samantha Steele after racy pictures of her surfaced on the Internet. There is a God: She got better job offers, and the show tanked.





\$6900



GO GREYHOUND AND LEAVE THE WEDDING TO US

After a costly nationwide search for her, Jennifer Wilbanks claimed she had been kidnapped and raped. Turns out the runaway bride had just hopped a bus to Vegas. She's doing community service; the groom's still waiting.

MS. CAREY GOES TO WASHINGTON

Adult filmdom's Mary Carey, on attending the GOP's President's Dinner: "Republicans can party almost as much as porn stars. There were some really drunk guys. I was getting propositions to have threesomes with wives or mistresses."







STREAKY FRIDAYS

To "bring a smile to people's faces," Andrea Hall streaked for peace on three consecutive Fridays down Manchester, U.K.'s busy Tib Street.



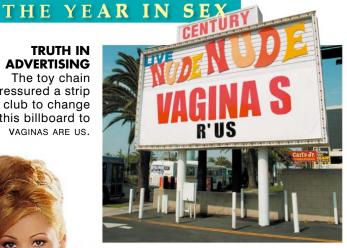
DAMN SHAME

The case of the disappearing boobies: at far left, Lindsay Lohan on New Year's Eve 2004 in Manhattan; at left, six months later in Hollywood.





The toy chain pressured a strip club to change this billboard to VAGINAS ARE US.



ventures: being turned away from

restaurants because of Travis's

DO YOU FEEL LUCKY, PUNK? A blend of sex, love and rock and roll, MTV's Meet the Barkers follows Playmate (and former Miss USA) Shanna Moakler and her husband, Blink-182's Travis Barker. Among the couple's misad-

extreme tattoos.

That's

AND TONIGHT'S DRESS CODE IS...

Nudists socialize at the bar before their monthly "clothing optional" dinner at a Manhattan restaurant. There's one requirement: Diners must bring something—a towel, a scarf—on which to sit.





Parents who seemed blasé about murder and hooliganism in Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas objected when a downloadable patch revealed embedded sex scenes. The game was pulled from most mainstream retailers.



SEX: STILL SELLING

Mexican feminists notwithstanding, consumers remain keen on this tried-and-true advertising principle, seen here boosting demand for Diesel boots and Obsession scents.

BSESSION



THE YEAR IN SEX

COLOSSAL ERRORS IN JUDGMENT

Clueless on career day: At

a Palo Alto junior high, management consultant William Fried told

consultant William Fried told eighth-grade girls that stripping could be lucrative, pointing out that a woman could make up to \$250,000 a

year, depending on her bust size.

Royally screwed:
Monaco's Prince

Albert fessed up to fathering a child

with former Air France flight attendant Nicole Coste, and he thinks there may be more out there. But he's not sure. The changing priesthood: Monsi-

PC CHIP

MISSING

gnor Eugene Clark of New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral

CHASTITY

CHIP MISSING



resigned after being videotaped entering a motel with his secre-

tary—and exiting hours later wearing different clothes. More fun with Catholics: What were Taiwanese anti-AIDS activists

thinking when they devised ads showing a nun holding a con-

dom? "Although I don't need one, even I know," says the sis. Outrage ensued, and the campaign was swiftly aborted.

WHAT LIES BENEATH

Fred takes Wilma Dino-style: Archaeologists in Germany found what may be the oldest example of hard-core pornography: a set of 7,200-year-old clay figurines that seems to depict a man penetrating a woman from behind. Eternal beauty: In Australia, scientist and landfill diver Fabiano



Ximenes determined that magazines with glossy photos are more resistant to decay than other printed material. As proof he produced a mint-condition 1979 PLAYBOY.

THIS YEAR'S SCIENCE

More interested in cheating on diets: Fat men are more faithful. A German study says 23 percent of men of normal weight admit they are interested in having an affair; just 11 percent of tubbers are. A real turn-on: In its first major test, the Orgasmatron device increased sexual stimulation in 91 percent of female volunteers. The electronic gizmo is implanted in the buttocks. Candy is dandy: Italian researchers found that women who eat

chocolate daily experience higher sexual arousal and are more

arousal and are more sexually satisfied. What are

you doing in there, curing cancer?: Researchers found that 20-something men who ejaculate more than five times a week can cut their chances of getting prostate cancer by one third. They also said that self-love may be better than real sex because infection is not a risk. Findings met with (cautious) beard-stroking: Men who don't shave every day have less sex and are 70 percent more likely to suffer a stroke than daily shavers, says the U.K.'s University of Bristol.

CRIMES OF PASSION

Cheapskate: In Oceanside, California Marcus Threats was accused of attempted rape but claimed he thought his victim was a prostitute whom he

planned to pay for sex. Police doubted his story when they found he had just \$1 on him. **Not smart:** Michigander Timothy Huffman was

found guilty of indecent exposure for "Dick Smart," a skit on public-access television that featured a joke-telling penis. Huffman protested that Schindler's List contains nudity. The response: "You're no Steven Spielberg." Panty raider: "Knicker thief" Andrew Stephan has been banned from Britain's Isles of Scilly for seven years for stealing women's undies from their homes. Stephan was busted when a cache of panties turned up in his estranged wife's house. Not your average PTA: Nashville mom Anette Pharris faced criminal charges for

hiring a stripper for her 16-year-old son's birthday party. Her real mistake was taking photos to be developed at a nearby drugstore, where employees turned her in. **Timing is everything:** In Brazil, armed bandits robbed a postal vehicle of more than 400 breast implants during winter school holidays, when most women schedule enhancement surgery to pump up before beach season.

SEXUAL ANIMALS

Easy, big girl: One-anda-half-ton 53-year-old Bullette, Europe's oldest hippo, has been put on the pill to curb her robust sexual appetite. Such tight

sexual appetite. **Such tight tuxedos:** Bremerhaven, Germany zoo officials fig-

ured out that their copulating penguins weren't producing offspring because they were in same-sex relationships. Gay and lesbian activists

protested the importation of sexy female birds from Sweden. **Just report her to HR:** Genius gorilla Koko has a thing for breasts; three female employees insulted by a translator who said Koko requested to "see nipples" have sued the Gorilla Foundation for sexual discrimination.

FADE TO WHITE

Pink Cheeks, a Sherman Oaks, California salon, offers body waxing and bleaching—including lightening butt holes from brown to pink.



GETTING JUGGY

In 2005 ladies had much to say about their girls:



"I thought my boobs looked good. At least I had that going for me."—Cameron Diaz, in court over unauthorized photos

"I screamed and slammed on the brakes. It's very strange to see my cleavage the size of a brontosaurus."



—Scarlett Johansson, on seeing her image on an L.A. billboard



"I'd kill for a body like Scarlett Johansson's. I don't have breasts. I have pecs." —Keira Knightley



"Mine are definitely real. I feel they make my outfits look better. They're like an accessory."

—Jessica Simpson

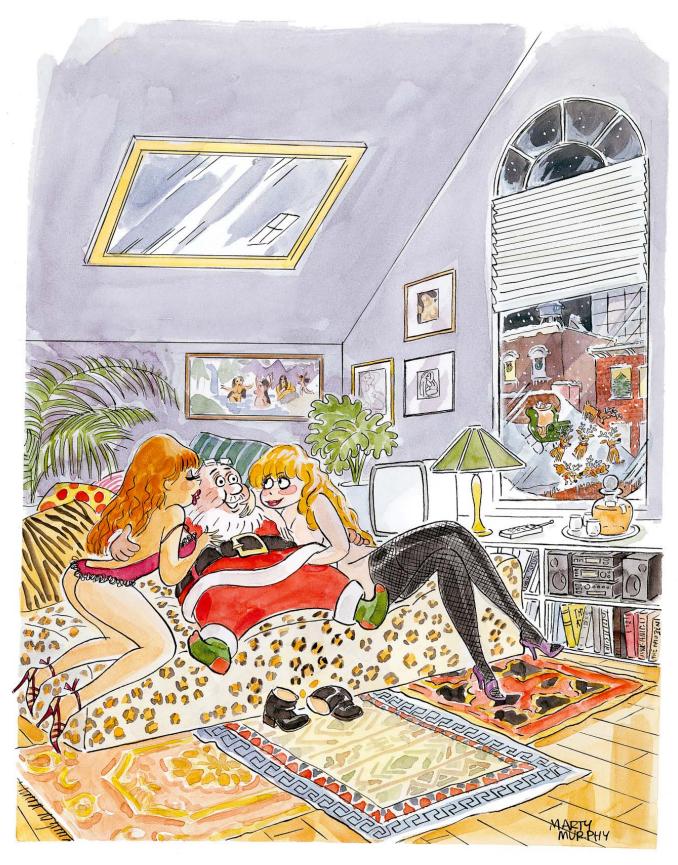
"It was a sad day when
I had to retire the
bra to the underwear
drawer. I don't get
to keep the C cup."
—Renée Zellweger,
on slimming down after
the Bridget Jones sequel



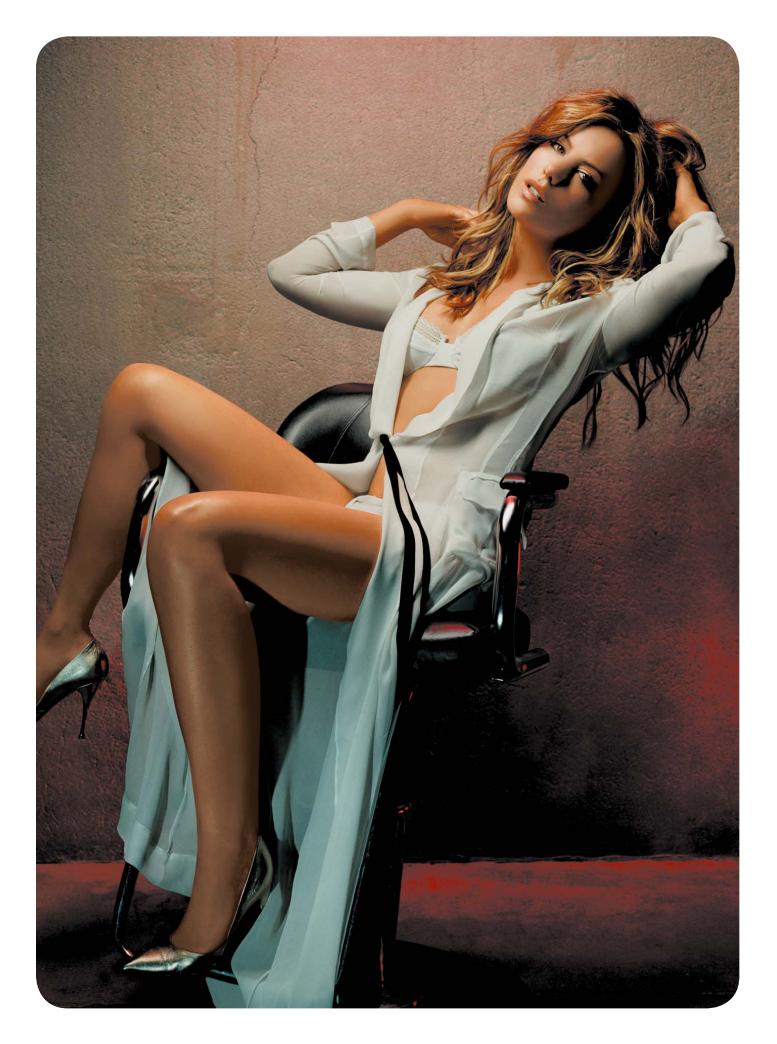


"When it's cold and you're shooting outside in a T-shirt, things arise. Apparently they've spent, like, thousands of dollars digitally removing my nipples

from the show."—Teri Hatcher of Desperate Housewives



"So we were just about to head back north when I thought, Have I forgotten anyone...? And the answer was me!"





THE MOVIES' GOTHIC GODDESS REVEALS THE PAIN OF BEING VOTED THE SIXTH MOST BORING PERSON AT COLLEGE AND WHY SHE NO LONGER USES THE ALIAS SIGOURNEY BEAVER

Q1

PLAYBOY: *Underworld: Evolution* is your third movie with vampires. Do you have a thing for the undead?

BECKINSALE: Not at all. I've never been interested. I did the first *Underworld* because I love action movies. I like all the *Die Hard* films and all the *Terminators*. I'm quite a fan of *Rambo*. It's what I grew up on. At that point there weren't many opportunities for a girl to play the hero in a movie. I thought *Underworld* having a female hero was really cool. Then *Van Helsing* was a whole different thing. It seemed different to me because I didn't play a vampire. But I seem to have acquired this Goth reputation that I'm not into at all.

Q2

PLAYBOY: Which was harder to get into, your outfit for *Underworld* or the one for *Van Helsing*?

BECKINSALE: Van Helsing's. We burned it when we finished shooting. I was desperate to burn it the minute I put it on. I did not want to wear those boots ever again. The boots alone took about 20 minutes to put on. The costume designer wanted everything to be authentic, so it was buckle after buckle. My assistant would buckle one, and someone else would buckle the other. They ended up with giant calluses on their hands. It was really horrible. The *Underworld* costume

wasn't that bad. It was a bit stretchy and not that restrictive. As long as you don't have to pee 25 times a day it's okay.

Q3

PLAYBOY: As a teenager you appeared in an industrial-safety film. What was your role?

BECKINSALE: It's hideous. I would never show you. I was probably 17 or 18, and it was a training video about safety. I played a factory worker who dreams of being a pop star. Then I run down a corridor, skid on some cleaning fluid and become a paraplegic. It's fantastically bad. I look terrible, and the whole thing is ghastly. It's one of those things I put every boyfriend through to make sure he can actually handle being with someone who has done something so appalling. It's like telling them I've had a sexually transmitted disease and asking, "How do you feel about me now?"

Q4

PLAYBOY: You've spent the past 13 years with only two men—Michael Sheen, the father of your daughter, and Len Wiseman, your husband and the director of the *Underworld* movies. Do you feel you've missed out?

BECKINSALE: No, I don't. You gain something and lose something by that. I remember being 13 or 14 and everyone was going to parties and making out with everybody

else. My mom told me, "Just bear in mind that you don't want loads of people to be able to say they've had you. Make it special." I thought that was really cool, and I still do. It's not a gift you bestow on any old sucker. You have to be privileged.

Q5

PLAYBOY: We hear that you and your husband use webcams while you're apart. Is that true?

BECKINSALE: Yes. We play with those all the time. It was his idea. He bought them and set them all up. Then he gives me orders as to what sort of outfit I should wear each evening. It really helps.

Q6

PLAYBOY: Should we assume you guys are keeping it clean?

BECKINSALE: No way! That's the whole point. It's like when you get a photocopier, you have to do a print of your bottom. It's one of those rules of life.

Q7

PLAYBOY: You don't drive. How do you survive in L.A.?

BECKINSALE: I rely heavily on favors from my husband and friends. I haven't been married that long, so I can still get away with it. Give it a few years and I may be taking the bus. It's getting ridiculous now, though. After this movie

I decided that since I had mastered the golf cart on the lot, I would progress to a grown-up vehicle. I'm not worried about finding my way around. I'm just going to see if I can make it start and stop and turn corners.

Q8

PLAYBOY: You're now 32 years old, one year older than your father was when he passed away. How does that feel? BECKINSALE: It was a strange year—my daughter was the age I was when he died. It made me reevaluate where I am in a way that was really good. It was painful but also exciting. I felt as if I'd gotten my get-out-of-jail-free card and entirely owned my life just as myself.

Q9

PLAYBOY: When you were nine your mother moved in with your stepfather, and you suddenly went from being an only child to having four brothers and a sister. How did you adapt?

BECKINSALE: Luckily, they didn't all live with us—just the two youngest boys, who were about my age. It was great. I was a tough kid, and we would fight, but we're really close now. I became a bit less of a princess quite quickly. I think it made me a more well-rounded person. I now have a temporary pass to the boys' club, which I like to use now and then.

Q10

PLAYBOY: During a break between movies, you once worked as a waitress. Couldn't you find a better way to use the time? BECKINSALE: I got really bored. I was in my early 20s and had no real reason to do anything. I needed some structure to my day. I walked into a restaurant and asked if I could have a job. They looked at me like I was crazy. I was surprised by how much wiping was involved. I pictured myself in a cute outfit, asking perky questions and bringing people things—sort of like a porno waitress. Instead, I was constantly wiping down brass things and cleaning the floor. I hated it. Then I got a part and quit. I was probably there only eight days.

Q11

PLAYBOY: Later this year you have another movie coming out, *Click*, a romantic comedy with Adam Sandler in which he plays a busy architect who finds a remote control that allows him to rewind and fast-forward his life. Are there parts of your life you would skip or live again? BECKINSALE: I wouldn't mind skipping several parts. [laughs] My husband would probably skip my PMS. The movie is about what's important in life—even the boring bits. Life is a mixture of everything, and it doesn't balance very well if you try to avoid the hard stuff.

It's all part of what makes you who you are. I'm such a snob. I don't find many romantic comedies funny. They are usually romantic and a bit witty but not very funny. This is the first script I've read that made me laugh out loud. I grew up with four brothers and fart jokes and wedgies, so that's what I find funny.

Q12

PLAYBOY: Do you still check into hotels under the name Sigourney Beaver? BECKINSALE: I'm not allowed. My husband put his foot down on my using Sigourney Beaver. He doesn't like it when they call to ask him about something and they say, "Hello, Mr. Beaver." He always gets caught being the mister to whatever name I use.

Q13

PLAYBOY: Is it true you were voted the sixth most boring person in your college?
BECKINSALE: I was. Oxford is a big party campus. It has an old drinking tradition in which you have to drink a pint of vodka from the shoe of the person on your left. I wasn't into it. I won the prize for the most interesting hairstyle, though. I used to think geisha girls were really cute, so I would pile my hair up on my head and wear pale makeup. So it wasn't a totally fallow year for me.

Q14

PLAYBOY: In your teen years you developed anorexia. At what point did you realize it was out of control?

BECKINSALE: It was a very brief moment that has been made into a big deal. But I think being an adolescent is a tough thing, and I wouldn't wish it on anybody. I find it hard even to categorize myself as having been anorexic. I just had a miserable six months. I was a nice posh girl from West London, so I probably wasn't going to become a crack addict. It was going to be something else, and that's the thing you do if you're a girl who grew up in a private school. Luckily, I had a good family who helped me, so it didn't last very long.

Q15

PLAYBOY: You had to gain 20 pounds for the role of Ava Gardner in *The Aviator*. How did you do it?

BECKINSALE: I had already gained 10 pounds for another movie, so it was just another 10. It's surprising how eating vast amounts of chocolate really works. Everything became slightly bigger all over. I suddenly had a bigger bottom and bigger boobs. I couldn't fit into my jeans anymore. My husband got to enjoy a voluptuous body for a while. And it was nice to see that he didn't run away screaming, so he'll be around when I do decide to let myself go.

Q16

PLAYBOY: You've been accused of having plastic surgery. Do you get tired of hearing that?

BECKINSALE: It's quieted down a bit. My boobs did get bigger when I got a bit heavier, and suddenly the reports said I'd had a boob job. Then as soon as the weight was gone, people stopped saying that. I read recently that the Click producers asked me to have Botox in my bottom. I don't even know if you're allowed to have Botox in your bottom, and I'm not entirely sure what that's for or why you would need it. I have no interest in plastic surgery right now. I think you should never say never about anything, but plastic surgery is not on my agenda. I have no desire to look like Nancy Reagan yet.

Q17

PLAYBOY: Did you go through any nurse training for *Pearl Harbor?*

BECKINSALE: I had a scene in which I had to give someone a shot. The extensive training for that was mind-boggling. I couldn't believe it. I had all these military guys lining up and dropping their shorts so I could inject them with saline solution. I thought that was taking it a bit far. It was very sweet of them to volunteer, though. I was sitting at a desk, and all these boys would come in and drop their trousers, and I would stab them and inject them. It was an odd day. There were a few screams and winces, but that was it.

Q18

PLAYBOY: You have been mentioned as a possible star in a Wonder Woman movie. Is that something you would do?

BECKINSALE: No! I went to the Comic-Con convention this year because I have Underworld: Evolution coming out, and a roomful of journalists asked, "Do you want to play Wonder Woman?" I said, "Oh no. I already dressed as her last Halloween. I'm not looking to do that again." There were even reports that I dress as Wonder Woman in the bedroom for my husband. Oh please! He may be a geek, but he's not that bad.

Q19

PLAYBOY: It's rumored that when you were younger you once urinated into a director's thermos. Are you ready to come clean? BECKINSALE: No. [laughs] I'll never talk about that. All I'll say is crimes were committed. I was at the age when that was the only solution.

Q20

PLAYBOY: So you're not confirming or denying that it happened?
BECKINSALE: No. But he deserved it.



PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATE REVIEW



Which of these beauties should be our next Playmate of the Year? Take your pick

y now you're well acquainted with the 12 genetically gifted women you see here. One is about to get a lot more exposure—as the Playmate of the Year. Will it be the Italian restaurateur? One of the curvy college coeds? America's sexiest (former) bartender? Or perhaps Miss March, the Playmate chosen by Howard Stern? These women have diverse backgrounds, but they have one thing in common: They need your support to win. Go to playboy.com and choose your favorite for PMOY.

























Miss February AMBER CAMPISI

Things are really cooking at Campisi's Restaurant in Dallas, where Miss February still works as a manager. "People are always asking me to sign napkins," says the 24-year-old. "I say, 'No, I've got something better. I keep head shots in the office." To help customers recognize Amber, the restaurant has hung curtains just like the red-and-white checkered apron she wore in the pictorial. Meanwhile, our favorite Italian dish is scoring a pile of frequent-flier miles doing promotions around the country for PLAYBOY, but her next trip is all about vacation. "I'm going to Costa Rica for a week of yoga and relaxation," she says. "No cell phones and no computers. I'm going to get a badass suite and splurge on massages."

Miss January DESTINY DAVIS

When Miss January isn't cracking her economics and business-law books at her Las Vegas college, the 20-year-old fills her time doing promotional work for PLAYBOY. "I don't know how I have the energy to do it all," Destiny says with a laugh. "It's a crazy life, but I get really excited about going to school. I'm a big nerd like that." She has also appeared on an episode of *The Girls Next Door* with good friend and November cover girl Kendra Wilkinson. "She's my girl," says Destiny, who adds that she's thrilled to hear from fans and meet them at events. "I'm constantly getting the nicest letters and presents," she says. "Thanks for all the love."





Miss November RAQUEL GIBSON

It's hard to find a background much more exotic than that of the half Filipino, half Italian Miss November. The 20-year-old Floridian has appeared on *The Girls* Next Door as the new Playmate Hef's girlfriends take out. "People recognize me all the time from that show," the knockout says with a touch of amazement in her voice. "The pictorial and the TV show at once were overwhelming. Still, none of this attention will keep her from participating on the USA National Bikini Team or pursuing modeling opportunities with her gorgeous sister, CJ. If you can't get enough of Raquel (we can't), visit raquelgibson.com. "I try to write back to everyone," she says, "even if it is two months later."

Miss October AMANDA PAIGE

"I don't have much of a social life right now," says Miss October with a bit of a frown. That's because Amanda is devoting lots of time to finishing her thesis on artificial reproductive technology at the University of Virginia, as well as traveling for PLAYBOY. On the bright side, she gets a great deal of fan mail. "It's so flattering," she says. "Sometimes I get weird requests, though, like when one dude asked for a pair of my panty hose." Thoughts for the future? "When I graduate in May I want to move to L.A. and model for the next three years," the 21-year-old North Carolina native says. "Later I plan on going to graduate school."

Miss March JILLIAN GRACE

Miss March's road to the Mansion is unique in PLAYBOY history. Her mother wrote to Howard Stern, asking for his help in getting Jillian, now 20, a spot as a Playmate. Stern had her on his show with one of our photo editors, who was quick to recognize that the pretty girl from rural Missouri had the qualities needed to be a Playmate. "Howard still keeps tabs on me," says Jillian. "He always asks about Hef and the other Playmates and if I've dated any celebrities." Jillian moved to the Bunny House down the street from the Playboy Mansion last April; her mom helped her move. "Becoming a Playmate was my ultimate dream," Jillian says, "so PMOY just seems like a fantasy. I think we need a blonde one."





Miss June KARA MONACO

Attentive readers will recall that prior to becoming Miss June, Kara appeared on these pages as one of America's sexiest bartenders. Alas, while there will surely be many tears in many beers, we must report that Kara is no longer earning her keep as a cocktail genie. "I've retired the shot glasses," she says. Instead, she has moved from Orlando to L.A. to pursue more modeling work. "My family and friends were upset about my leaving, but it's for the better," she says. Seeing those sparkling eyes and that shapely figure, we expect the 22-year-old will do just fine. For starters, you can find out how Kara keeps her body taut in *The* Envy Series workout videos.

Miss August TAMARA WITMER

Since she became Miss August, this 2I-year-old Californian has been quite occupied. Along with pursuing a number of modeling offers, she participated in a tour sponsored by the Miller Brewing Company to promote PLAYBOY in Chicago, New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C. "I'm always happy to sign stuff for guys," she says. "I appreciate the fans, and I try to accommodate all their requests." If you like what you see here, you're in luck—you'll be seeing more. "I'm modeling for magazines," she says, "and I'd like to eventually have my own swimsuit calendar. But I'm just taking it as it comes. So far so good."





Miss April COURTNEY RACHEL CULKIN

"I'm the only Playmate on Long Island, and my license plate is PLBYBUNY, so people wave to me all the time," says 22-year-old Miss April. "Once, my car was parked in front of my grandma's house, and three police officers stopped to get autographs. It's been great." Along with performing charity work with the New York Knicks and traveling to promote PLAYBOY (she scored a trip to Japan), Courtney is hard at work wrapping up her undergraduate degree in psychology. "I plan to get my master's in social work and work with children in my own practice," she says. Will there be more modeling? "I feel totally comfortable in front of the camera," she says. "I hate clothes. I really do."

Miss September VANESSA HOELSHER

As it turns out, this 23-year-old Georgia peach who works in the wine business in Atlanta knows a thing or two about the grape. After she appeared as Miss September, Wine Enthusiast Magazine interviewed her about her oenophilia, which is both deep and wide. "I'm developing my own label for an Italian wine called Bellisima," she says. "It's a Tuscan red, and I'm working with a great winemaker in Italy. It's set to debut in February, so I'm very excited about it." Vanessa finds plenty of time for fun outside of work (Falcons games, a good book). "I don't have many people to answer to, so I can pretty much do whatever I want," she says. "That's the beauty of working for yourself."

Miss July QIANA CHASE

The folks at the MAC cosmetics store where Qiana works have been simply overjoyed about all the customers she has attracted since becoming Miss Julyeven if all of them aren't interested in buying makeup. "One guy with a camera was pretending to look for lipstick," says Qiana, "and then he turned around and—click." Not exactly the old routine, eh? "Being a Playmate has been a lifechanging experience and a lot of fun,' says the statuesque 24-year-old L.A. native. "But in my mind I'm still kind of dorky and don't know why anyone would want my autograph." Qiana may be modest, but she also knows what she wants: "Being Playmate of the Yearthat would be the ultimate prize."





Miss May JAMIE WESTENHISER

Florida-based Miss May is a real gogetter. She hosts PLAYBOY parties in cities around the country and poses for catalogs. (She's a former Body Glove swimsuit model, and she does lingerie as well.) She is also hard at work studying for her real estate license, which she hopes to have by the end of the year. Already thinking like an investor, she knows how she'd spend her PMOY winnings. "If I won the hundred grand, I'd buy some low-end houses, fix them up and resell them," says the angel-faced 24-year-old. But money isn't everything. "I wouldn't mind marrying a rich guy, but I'm single now, and I like it." Could that help her win support? "If that's what it takes!" she laughs.

Miss December CHRISTINE SMITH

Miss December seems always to have had a connection to PLAYBOY. Not only has she worn Playboy clothes and a Rabbit Head navel ring for years, but she was born on Easter. "The girls have always told me I should be a Playboy Bunny," says the 26year-old Californian. Christine loves all furry creatures and has operated her own animal rescue service since she was 18. "It started after neighbors asked if I would mind fostering animals, and then it snowballed," she says. "I keep the abused ones until they are socialized and have placed 53 of them. I eventually want to go to veterinary school." But first she has a modeling career to attend to. One look at Miss December and you know she'll never lack for pets.

Pick your favorite Playmate at playboy.com.



Robert Lutz

(continued from page 92) send signals that subliminally tell women they're less than adequate drivers. For instance, Volvo recently had a team of women design a car for women. It features such things as a gigantic rubber bumper around the car for ease of parking. If a bunch of GM designers had put that thing on the stand and said, "Here it is, girls. We designed it because we know you don't park very well," we would have been slaughtered in the press.

ON MAPQUEST

If you follow MapQuest, you are bound to get lost. It is the worst Internet-download map service. I have never found its directions to be reliable or worthwhile.

ON DRIVING THE WHEELS OFF

We find that Toyota and, to some extent, Honda do a good job of optimizing a car for the envelope where most people drive 90 percent of the time. If you take a Toyota Avalon and start pushing it harder, though, things start wobbling and you get a lot of fight in the steering wheel. But that's when you're almost abusing it. You can take a lot of our cars very close to the limit, including the LaCrosse. You can basically use it as a high-performance sedan and it will retain its composure. The first to evaluate our cars tend to be the expert media—Car and Driver, Road & Track, Motor Trend, Automobile, AutoWeek and so forth. They will drive the car to the limit, and their opinions shape the opinions of everyday journalists. While we would enjoy being automatically on everyone's shopping list so we wouldn't have to make dynamically excellent cars and could tune them the way Toyota tunes its cars, we don't have that luxury. We have to target the best of the best with every car we make and do it from a standpoint of vehicle dynamics at all speeds, including abusively high. We increasingly adopt the German philosophy that a car that is capable at high performance levels will be safer and more agreeable to drive at saner speeds.

ON WHERE DETROIT WENT WRONG

We stopped being design-driven. We tried to create cars according to the rationalman theory, which is to make the car as roomy as possible, give people a lot of value and never mind what it looks like. Here was a fundamental error in thinking. We researched everything together. We'd get the respondents in and show them the exterior. They'd say, "Well, I don't like the outside very much." "Okay," we'd say, "but how about the inside?" They'd say, "Um, yeah, the inside's pretty nice." "Okay, the outside is a red light, and the inside is a yellow light; now let's talk about features and price." And they'd say, "Wow, now that you show me all these

sun visors and cup holders and these neat seats that slide back and forth, there's a lot of stuff here. I'll give that a green light." Then we'd show them the price, and that would be a green light too. We'd say, "We got a red on the outside, yellow on the inside and two greens, which adds up to greenish yellow. We have ourselves a winner here." We erred in thinking that the judgment happens simultaneously; it happens sequentially. The first gate is "Do I like the outside of the car?" Only if that gate is a yes do they go to the dealership and look at the inside of the car.

ON REVIVING CHEVROLET

Part of my philosophy is that there's nothing wrong with Hollywood that good movies wouldn't fix, and Chevrolet is going to get new products that are not only intriguing but represent high value with a lot of attention to perceptional quality inside and out. The last Impala had many strange design elements, and the inside was particularly noncompetitive. The new Impala was greeted with a standing ovation every time we showed it to Chevrolet dealers.

ON MOTIVATING DESIGNERS

People used to say, "Boy, the best thing Chrysler ever did was fire all those K-car designers and replace them with a new batch." I'd say, "Guess what—same guys." We didn't change a single designer there, and we haven't changed any designers here. Designers respond to management input. I'm not a designer, but I know how to articulate design and encourage and empower designers. I know how to drive them to be bolder.

ON AMERICAN QUALITY

Foreign carmakers have better reputations, but in reality, today there's no difference. If you look at Consumer Reports, you'll find that the lowly Buick Regal and Century, now called LaCrosse, are of the highest quality, which is confirmed by J.D. Power. You can turn the reputation problem around because images and perceptions have a lag effect of about five years. You have to hang tough and make superior products and probably offer superior value for a while. We'll probably price a lot of the stuff we're launching lower than we should because we have to compensate for the lack of positive image. We have to offer greater value. We are in a reinvestment phase because GM's history on design, vehicle attributes and reliability has been spotty over the past 20 years. We think we're doing the best job in our history now, but it will take time, and I would say the general press is not helping.

ON JAPANESE HYBRIDS

It was a bold PR move. Senior Japanese executives I met when I was at

Chrysler in 1998 said, "We're doing this because the environmental movement in Japan is so strong." I said, "Does it make business sense?" They said, "No, we're going to lose a lot of money, but we're doing something we feel we have to do." I said, "Well, good luck." We had the technology at GM. In fact, I could show you a book from 1968 called GM World of Technology that has running gaselectric hybrids. It's beyond belief. We looked at the investment, the piece cost and how many we would sell and said, "This doesn't make any sense. We can't use the shareholders' money to do cars that we'll lose \$3,000 or \$4,000 per car on." Look at our responsibility vis-à-vis the shareholder. We would have been declared insane. Toyota didn't look at it as a business case but as an alternative form of advertising. The demand for hybrids is so high now, Toyota is able to charge most of the additional cost. If Toyota claims the hybrids are profitable, I would tend to believe it. But for the first few years they definitely weren't. So we're late. We're going to come in with a system we think is better than Toyota's.

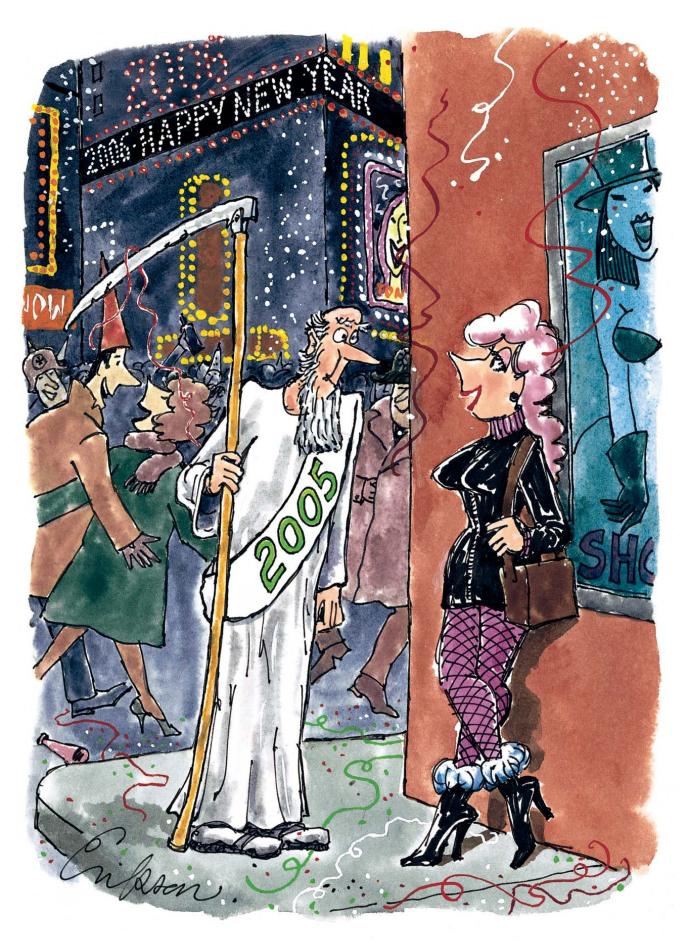
ON GOVERNMENT-SUBSIDIZED HEALTH CARE

I think it was Goethe who said, "Two souls dwell within my breast." On one hand you want this to happen to level the playing field between us and the foreign companies; on the other hand I find it hard to hide my personal distaste for government schemes. In a way it would be a good thing because it would provide a base of minimal health care for everyone. In countries that have nationalized health care, superimposed on top of that are privately funded health care schemes, so people who want better treatment and don't want to stand in line for six months for a kidney operation can go private. But you have that base-level health care available for all citizens. One thing is certain, whether you like so-called socialized medicine or not: If we had it in this country, it would make American industry vastly more competitive in the international arena. That one's for sure.

ON GM AS NUMBER TWO

If you look at where Toyota is expanding, in Asia or Eastern Europe, its footprint is in high-growth areas. Our footprint is in stable markets. Am I comfortable with that? No. But I'd rather be number two for a while and challenge Toyota for number one again than be in an endangered and constantly declining number one position. I'd rather be a strong and resurgent number two than a sick number one—not that we're sick, but things could be better.





"It's after midnight, Pops. Aren't you supposed to be history?"

GERMAN LESSONS

(continued from page 82)

barbed wire and guard towers. Ed and Andrea would not have gone except that they did not know how to decline an invitation that clumsily crossed the American line between paid instruction and social friendship. "What do you say? Nein, danke?" Ed asked.

"You don't want to hurt her feelings," Andrea pointed out. This excursion was a step for them, too, venturing forth for the first time to be entertained as a couple. As a present they took something that they considered, after much deliberation, to be uniquely American—a tin log cabin full of maple syrup. Though, without pancakes, did maple syrup make any sense?

They were taken unawares when a man, speaking in the thick, comical accent of a stage German, responded over the security speaker at the entrance and then greeted them in the dark hall. "I am Hedwig's husband, Franz," he told them, pronouncing the name "Hettvig." "It is werry obliching of you to come." He too sensed something strange about the occasion, its awkward reaching out.

Tea, it developed, was not offered, though cookies, sprinkled with red and green sugar in honor of the Christmas season, had been set out, along with some miniature fruit tarts still in their pleated wax-paper cups from the deli. Franz urged a beer, an imported Löwenbräu, upon Ed, and for Andrea, who did not drink or smoke or eat meat or fish-"nothing with a face" was her creed—he found a Coke in the back of the refrigerator. She did not drink caffeinated soft drinks, either, Ed knew, but with a docility that broke his heart she accepted this offering from her host. Franz was plump but energetic, with thinning blond hair combed straight back on his skull; his scalp was dewy and his shirt damp, as if in silent comment upon the overheated airlessness of this rented flat.

In her husband's presence, an invisible burden seemed to slip from Frau Mueller; she became languid and betranced, sipping an amber drink that he quickly replenished when the ice cubes settled to the bottom. She seemed pleased to have the conversation focus on Franz. He was a photographer-weddings, graduations, bar and bat mitzvahs. "To the Orientals especially," Franz explained, "the photographer is more important than the minister. He iss the minister, in practical fact. He iss the Gott who says, 'Let sare be light' and this passink event be – Was ist 'ewig,' Liebchen?' made—

"Eternal," Frau Mueller supplied, out of her smiling, drifting state.

The living room was configured like a basement: Steps led up to a floor above, and the triangular space beneath the stairs was filled with stacks of maga-148 zines. Ed, who had taken the easy chair nearest the stairs, slowly saw that most of the saved magazines were PLAYBOYS and Penthouses and Hustlers. On his second Löwenbräu Ed felt empowered to remark upon this unusual domestic archive. His zealous host hopped up and placed a few in his hands, urging him to flip through. The glossy pages reminded Ed of a rose grower's catalog, so many vivid shades of pink and red, even purple; Franz explained, "They use mirrors, to focus light upon"-he hesitated, glancing toward Andrea-"chust that spot."

Ed too glanced at Andrea and was startled by the angelic beauty of her face, blankly gazing elsewhere in serene ignorance that the men were discussing mirrors focused on vaginas. She was a silverpoint beauty, all outline, transparent to the radiance beneath things: The sudden contrast, perhaps, with the dirty girls of *Penthouse*, their spread legs and strained leers, created the impression. She was so good, so abstemious, that Ed saw, sinkingly, that she could never be his. This glimpse of truth persisted when most of the details of the slightly mad tea party had faded.

The Muellers wanted, it seemed, to talk about themselves. Of this couple, the man was the natural teacher, the natural sharer and salesman. Franz had been a young soldier in the Wehrmacht and had ingratiated himself with the two great armies that had worked defeat upon his own. As a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union he had learned enough Russian to make himself useful and win favored treatment in a harsh environment. Then, repatriated to the Western zone, he had learned the American version of English. He had acquired skills, photography being only one of them. Weekdays he worked at MIT as a lab technician. Hedwig and he had come to the United States nearly 10 years ago, already linked by marriage.

If they ever described how they had met, or what dream had brought them to the United States, Ed, mellow on Löwenbräu, let it slip through his mind.

As Hedwig's third tea-colored drink dwindled before her, her languid passivity warmed into lax confidingness. She called Franz by a nickname—"Affe," and he responded with "Affekind." Monkey and baby monkey. She shocked Ed by referring, out of the blue, to Franz's "cute little heinie." The word heinie was one Ed had not heard since his childhood, and American women in the Seventies still kept to themselves any interest in men's derrieres—the words bum and butt and ass were saved for intimacy. He reasoned that the two Germans, childless, in strange and formerly hostile territory, would make much of their sexual bond. But here among the four of them it was as if, in their eagerness to achieve closeness, the couple were using sex as

a stalking horse for darker confidences. These were real Germans, Ed told himself—the people his brother had fought against, not the "Dutch" who had come to this country in the last century to be farmers or brewers, and not the Jewish Germans who had come here to flee Hitler. These Germans had stayed home, and fought.

Late in their little party, the early December night tightening cozily around them, Hedwig announced, with a smile rather broader than her usual wary one, "I was a Hitler bitch." She meant that she had been, in her teens, with millions of others, a member of the BDM, the Bund Deutscher Mädel, the League of German Maidens. The matter had arisen from her description, fascinating to the Americans—Ed had been a boy during the war and Andrea was not yet bornof the Führer's voice over the radio. "It was terrible," Hedwig said, picking her words with special care, shutting her eyes as if to hear it again, "but exciting. A shrieking like an angry husband with his wife. He loves her, but she must shape up. Both of you know, of course, how in a German sentence the verb of a compound form must come at the end of a sentence, however lengthy; he was excused from that. Hitler was exempted from grammar. It was a mark of how far above us he was."

And Ed saw on her face a flicker of grammatical doubt as she rechecked the last sentence in her head and could find nothing wrong with it, odd as it had sounded in her ears.

Two other shared occasions, on the scant social ground where Ed and Andrea and Franz and Hedwig met, remained, decades later, in Ed's leaky memory. First, there was a bitter cold January night in which the two couples and another (if Luke and Susan, also from the German class, could be called a couple, Luke being generally thought to be gay) had gone out to eat together. In the class, where dwindled enrollment encouraged an even looser informality, Hedwig, digressing from the lesson on weil, um zu and damit, had expressed a desire for more authentic Cantonese cuisine than the "mongrelized"-she pronounced the English word deliberately, in apparent innocence of its evil connotations-fare offered as Chinese food. Susan, a large-framed, exuberant brunette given to sweeping pronouncements, had responded that she knew just the place, an unbelievably tiny family restaurant in Chinatown. It was agreed that after the next lesson—lessons occurred in the late afternoon, the students emerging from claustrophobic brightness into the January dark—Franz would pick up the five of them in his car, which turned out to be an early-Sixties Buick, proudly maintained. The Americans, climbing in,

giggled at its largeness, its inner swaths of soft velour, reminiscent of their parents' more expansive America. Chinatown proved too cramped and crowded for the spacious car, and Franz finally took a spot at a corner on Beach Street, his front bumper and knobby chrome grille protruding almost into traffic.

The meal, deftly served in a smoky, clattering congestion by what seemed a pack of children in slippers, fell short of Susan's expectations, but no one else complained. The Tsingtao beer tickled Franz's palate, and he insisted, against feeble objections from his impecunious crew, on picking up the check. When, however, overfed and overheated and talking too loud, they all went back out into the freezing January night, the spot on Beach Street where Franz's car had been parked was empty. The nostalgic big Buick was gone. It had vanished.

Ed, at heart a country boy, assumed the worst: The car had been stolen; the loss was total and irremediable. He could walk back to the South End, and he resentfully pictured the long trek, by taxi or T, that he must endure to return Andrea to her Cambridge widow's house. The others, more city-smart, took a less dire view of the disappearance. Franz and Luke agreed that the car, illegally parked, had been towed by the police, and a call, from an imperfectly vandalized pay phone, with Luke doing the talking, confirmed that this was the case. The car was being held captive at the great fenced-in impoundment lot beyond the Berkeley Street overpass of the Massachusetts Turnpike, to be released upon payment of fine and fees. The Muellers offered to say good night on Beach Street right then and take a taxi to ransom their automobile, but the Americans would not hear of it. There were too many for a cab, so all walked together, their cheeks on fire with the cold, the mile to the dismal civic site.

Susan, in white earmuffs and a long striped scarf wound around her neck, led the parade, her dark hair gleaming beneath the streetlights as broken glass glittered all around. Andrea, it seemed to Ed, glowed in a religious rapture; the physical challenge of the trudge through the litter and the desolate urban margins of the then-new turnpike, with a group goal of redeeming a lost thing, spoke to her ascetic spirit. As their parade moved through the blasted cityscape, its rubble and battered wire fencing and hard-frozen puddles, Ed kept thinking of bombed Berlin, and of cities Berlin had bombed, and of the black-and-white wartime movies that had communicated to his childhood the secret exhilaration lodged within disaster and ruin.

It was an episode of unequaled solidarity and spontaneous fun with the Germans. Franz had paid for their feast in cash, in those days before credit cards were universal tender, and found himself lacking the dollars that the heavy-lidded, implacable police clerk demanded from within his fortified and snugly heated shack. The others quickly made up the sum, raising their American voices as if to hide Franz's accent. The cop did not like the accent, nor Franz's ingratiating manner; he suspected that his leg was being pulled. He was used to sullen hostility, not a cluster of tow-truck victims happily gabbling. The German students clambered into the liberated vintage sedan like schoolmates on an educational outing that had gone slightly, delightfully awry.

And then there was the spring party, the end of German lessons. It took place not in the Muellers' dank ground-floor Kenmore Square apartment but in a new, more spacious one, on a fourth floor, in Boston, near the Massachusetts College of Art and, across the trolley tracks, Mission Hill. Out here, beyond the Museum of Fine Arts, the city had a rakish low-rent feeling, a bohemian swagger. The festivity was ambitious: all the students from both terms had been invited, with their significant others, plus associates in the photography studio where Franz worked and various other strays the Germans had rounded up. In this ungainly gathering Franz gamely bustled back and forth, transporting beers and other beverages, an adroit, cheerfully sweating factorum, while Hedwig seemed paralyzed and dazed by the extent of her hospitality.

Some of the female students had brought hors d'oeuvres—raw vegetables with a hummus dip, tepid cheese puffs but as the hours went by these morsels evaporated, as did the initial abundance of goodwill and forced conversation. A table by the big bay window had been set with paper plates and napkins and cutlery, but where was the food? Frau Professor sat in a thronelike ladder-back chair while her guests circulated with less and less energy, and it came to Ed that he had no business here, among these young and would-be young, these parttime students and half-baked culture workers. Spring was the liveliest time for real estate in Peterborough, and his lawn and garden would need tending. Andrea came up to him with her version of the same feeling. She had finally disengaged herself from an elegant black photographer's assistant, in torn jeans and a purple dashiki, who kept blowing some sort of smoke into her face. She was uncharacteristically querulous. "I'm starving. What's happening?" she said.

"Ask Hedwig."

"That would be rude, wouldn't it? We're guests. We take what comes." Ed heard in this the implication that he too, in his city sojourn, had taken what came.



He stuck to the immediate topic. "But nothing is coming. Forthcoming."

"She doesn't move."

Over Andrea's shoulder Ed saw Frau Mueller still in her chair, smiling even though no one was talking to her, and it came to him that she was stoned. If not stoned on a controlled substance, then on a cumulative dose of being German, a Hitler bitch in a foreign land where the subjunctive was withering away and everything was mongrelized. America had worn her down. In a corner of the room, Franz, sweating, was on the telephone. What seemed another hour later, a Hispanic deliveryman came through the door bearing a baby-size bundle wrapped in butcher paper. Hedwig made a helpless welcoming gesture by raising one arm and called, "Franz!" It was, rumors ran through the sagging party, a pork roast, and Franz was now placing it in the oven. Andrea said to Ed, "Ît'll take till midnight. I want to go home."

"Me too, Liebchen." Ed had had one too many Löwenbräus.

"Would it be too rude to leave?"

"I don't think it'll be noticed."

"Should we say good-bye to the Muellers?"

"No. It'll hurt their feelings. Anyway, this whole party is a good-bye. Verstehen Sie?"

She looked up at him with her childlike face, her pale eyes wide and her lower lip retracted beneath the upper, and understood. "Ja," she said. He sensed she was trying not to cry, but he lacked the energy to put his arms around her. The only trouble with Andrea was that she made no resistance: There was not enough to push against. She had been a silverpoint outline.

Word filtered back to him in New Hampshire, over the years, of the two Germans. Andrea wrote him several times at first, assuring him that his decision to return was a wise one-"Your dear heart never seemed to be in Boston." Luke and Susan sent annual

Christmas cards. They had taken up living together, though they never announced a marriage. Franz and Hedwig, they wrote, had left New England for the Southwest, where they were swallowed up like raindrops in the desert. It was as if they had sought to lose themselves in the American landscape that least resembled damp, planned, crowded Germany.

Word came through, in the 1980s, that they were divorced. Franz had moved to southern California, the Vatican of camera work. But he was long out of photography and with his new wife had begun a catering service. Then, Susan's florid, big handwriting confided, her cards to Hedwig were returned by the Phoenix post office, and it seemed likely that without Franz to take care of her she had died. But an old photography associate of Franz's later told Luke, at a wedding in Brattleboro, that it was Franz who had

died, of a heart attack.

In the late 1990s Arlene began to agitate for foreign travel, before they became too old and lame a couple to manage it. At the turn of the century they signed up for a cruise of the Elbe and then three days in reunited Berlin. One of their young guides, slim and sharp-featured, with straw-colored hair, reminded Ed of Hedwig, with her wary half-smile and her relentless seriousness. Her name was Greta. At the tour stop in Potsdam she lectured their group of footsore, aging Americans too lengthily and dogmatically, insisting that Truman and Atlee had been babies in 1945, new to power, and at the mercy of canny Joe Stalin, so that a great chunk of Germany had been stolen and given to Poland. "They were babies," she repeated. Her English was almost flawless and so fluent that the group tended to drift toward the other, less opinionated guide. Greta was what Hedwig might have been had she had a grievance, a sense of having been wronged instead of the opposite. She had grown up under East German Communism, lived by her wits in the capitalist economy fallen upon her, and was ready to fight, without apologies to anyone.

Though Ed listened carefully on all sides of him, on the street and at the opera house and in restaurants, he almost never recognized an expression or phrase; it was as if he had never taken German lessons at all, except that a waitress in Wittenberg complimented him, in English, on his pronunciation when he read aloud his choices to her

from the menu.

"Why, darling!" Arlene said dryly beside him. "That was very impressive."

"I was not," he told her, remembering how Andrea with such dear sad expertise would fit her small but wiry body to his, "much of a student."



"Liza is fabulous—she makes sex seem dirty again."

SHEL SILVERSTEIN

(continued from page 78)

kindergarten class of Hefner's two sons. He'd call Bobby Bare's daughter and talk for an hour in the character of Mrs. Mouse. He'd assume the voice of an ogre and ad-lib a new tale every time Mamet's daughter knocked on the door of his Martha's Vineyard house. Whenever a child asked for an autograph, he'd write his or her name and then deftly turn it into an animal of some sort. Much of Silverstein's affinity for children came from his feelings for his daughter, Shoshanna, who died of a brain aneurysm when she was 11. "It was the single most devastating event of his life," says Hefner, "and I don't think he ever really recovered from it."

5. In restaurants, he was known for sending back dishes.

6. When he heard something funny he'd usually shrug his shoulders, cock his head and grin. It took a lot to get more than that out of him. "Some of my fondest memories are of us making Shel laugh," says Dennis Locorriere, lead singer of Dr. Hook and a lifelong friend. "One of my prize moments of all time was the sight of coffee coming out of Shel's nose.'

7. He liked fame—to a certain degree. "I wanted to be famous," he admitted to Hefner. "I wanted to have a beard and a trench coat, you know?" But once he became famous, he backed off. At one point he decided he didn't want to appear on TV anymore, though he'd been a guest on Johnny Carson's show and continued to receive offers. "I'm famous enough," he told Locorriere. Silverstein believed fame was like money: If you squander it, you have nothing left.

8. He was a perfectionist when it came to lyrics, but less so about music. "He'd sing the song, and he'd sing you a different melody every time," Locorriere says. "He'd say, 'Sing the melody that suits you, but don't change a fucking word.'" When he gave "A Boy Named Sue" to Johnny Cash, the song was nothing but lyrics. Cash read the words off a sheet of paper when he played the song for inmates at San Quentin in 1969 and scored the biggest hit of his career.

"He was untouchable when it came to lyrics," Bare says, "but he had only three or four melodies, which made my job easier. When you got a new song from Shel, you knew you could concentrate on those lyrics.

9. A teenage baseball fanatic and a big fan of the Chicago Cubs, he'd been a peanut vendor at Wrigley Field. "That's where he developed that voice of his," Neiman says. When Silverstein recorded audio versions of his children's books, he grunted, shouted, chortled and unleashed an array of sounds in his sly, gravelly croak of a voice. But when he sang, it was a unique sound. "We were rehearsing one night at the Holiday Inn because I wanted to make sure I had some phrasings right,"

Bare says. "We'd been going over stuff for about two hours, and finally he got frustrated with something I was doing. He said, 'No, I'll show you. It goes like this.' He sang a couple of lines, and right away there was a pounding on the wall from the room next door, and a woman screamed, 'Shut the fuck up!' I said, 'Shel, I've been sitting here singing for two or three hours and nothing happened. You open up your mouth once and that voice slashed through the wall and woke that woman up."

If you want to marry me, here's what you'll have to do:

You must learn how to make a perfect chicken-dumpling stew.

And you must sew my holey socks, And soothe my troubled mind, And develop the knack for scratching my back,

And keep my shoes spotlessly shined. And while I rest you must rake up the leaves,

And when it is hailing and snowing You must shovel the walk...and be still when I talk,

And—hey—where are you going?

-"My Rules," from Where the Sidewalk Ends

Silverstein never married. He lived his life, often as not, surrounded by beautiful women, whose attention he accepted, as he once commented, with "surprise and gratitude." He claimed to have rarely pursued for long: After two rejections, he said, he'd give up. "I deeply believe that if she rejects me at first,' he explained, "then I will never create the magic in her." Then again, he didn't have to do much pursuing. "He was very attracted to hippie chicks," says Hefner, "and they were very attracted to him."

To outsiders, the Playboy Mansion was a smorgasbord of delights for the handful of men-Hefner, Silverstein, Playboy Club executive John Dante and no more than a couple of others at most times—who played within its walls. But it was also a world with responsibilities and a few hard realities. "I remember one time I was in the Red Room when somebody else was in the Blue Room, and the closet was open. You could really hear it through the wall," Silverstein said. "It happened to be a girl I had fallen in love with at a distance who decided she didn't want any part of me. She wound up staying with my neighbor in the room, and all night long I heard the screams and groans. I remember lying there thinking, You better be able to take this, because this is a part of the dues. If you can't take it, go out where you're safe—where you'll never hear it, but you'll never have it, either."

Silverstein took it—relished it, in fact. He was, after all, living the revenge of the awkward, unathletic youngster who had never been too successful with girls growing up. (The Dr. Hook hit "Sylvia's Mother," about a guy who phones his girlfriend as she's leaving to marry someone else, is a true story.) "I believe that the guys who get it early never develop the qualities needed to get it for the rest of their life," he said. "If I had my choice, I would have been a great third baseman with three girls on my arm." It was his initial lack of success in that arena, he said, that drove him to develop other talents. "By the time I could get the girls, I already knew how to write poems and draw pictures. Thank God I was able to develop these things, which I could keep, before I got the goodies that were my first choice."

He eventually did get the goodies. "I remember him calling the front desk one night at the Ramada Inn in Nashville, where he had a room for a while," says Kris Kristofferson, who co-wrote a number of songs with him. "He was entertaining a lady in his room, and he didn't want to turn the lights on. But he wanted a little light, so he called the front desk and asked if they could turn on the red message light on his phone. They turned it on, and he used it as his mood light."

VALERIE: You are destroying my sanity. LEONARD: You'll be better off without it. Mine got destroyed years ago-I don't miss it a bit.

—from Click, from Shel's Shorts, 2003

For a while Chicago was home, but that couldn't last indefinitely: Silverstein needed to leave the Red Room, however delightful it may have been, to realize all his ambitions. He got an apartment in Manhattan's SoHo district and became a part of the Greenwich Village folk scene. Judy Collins, the Brothers Four, the Smothers Brothers and even the Serendipity Singers recorded his songs. He also hung out with the playwright and screenwriter Herb Gardner (A Thousand Clowns) and the humorist Jean Shepherd (A Christmas Story). Silverstein helped Shepherd, a popular late-night radio personality in New York, get started as a writer, encouraging him to tape-record and transcribe his reflections on his childhood, which Shepherd eventually submitted to PLAYBOY.

Later Silverstein set his sights on Nashville, where witty songs were always in demand and it was easy for a wild man on leave from the Playboy Mansion to distinguish himself. "He stood out, especially early on," Bare says. "People in Nashville were conservative, and Shel was kind of freaky looking."

For much of Nashville, though, Silverstein's history more than compensated for his freakiness. "Like everybody else I knew, I was in awe of PLAYBOY magazine,' says Bare. "In those first years of PLAYBOY, I'd seen all the goofy things Shel did, traveling around the world and doing cartoons. I saw the picture of Shel naked in London with a guitar in front of him, and I was impressed."

Cowboy Jack Clement, a Nashville 151

rebel who'd worked in Sam Phillips's Sun Records studio in the 1950s, remembers that Silverstein quickly charmed Music City. "I don't remember anybody not liking him," Clement says. "People really got a kick out of the fact that he was writing children's books and doing cartoons for PLAYBOY at the same time. But even more, he was a magical kind of guy. It was obvious he was some kind of genius."

When Silverstein came to town, Kristofferson was part of a gang of talented but scuffling songwriters who were trying to interest the Nashville pros in their material. "I was living in a tenement in a condemned building, in an apartment that cost me \$25 a month," he says. "When Shel got there, all the wheelers and dealers in Nashville—Chet Atkins and all of those big guys-wanted to hang out with him, mostly, I think, because of his relationship with PLAYBOY. But instead Shel hung out with me and this group of songwriters who were trying to make it. Of course he was a hero to us, because he had written 'The Unicorn' and 'A Boy Named Sue.' He had credentials, which none of us had." Silverstein's songs were recorded by Bare, Loretta Lynn, Tom T. Hall and many others. "He wrote all the time," says Kristofferson, who figures he co-wrote more songs with Silverstein than with any other songwriter. "He was on fire."

I went to find the pot of gold That's waiting where the rainbow ends.

I searched and searched and searched and searched

And searched and searched, and then—

There it was, deep in the grass, Under an old and twisty bough. It's mine, it's mine at last... What do I search for now?

—"The Search," from Where the Sidewalk Ends

Hefner moved west in the early 1970s. Silverstein stayed at the new Playboy Mansion in Holmby Hills when he was in Los Angeles, but it was never home the way the one in Chicago had been. He had a place in New York and homes on Martha's Vineyard and in Key West. He bought a luxurious houseboat in Sausalito, an arty community across the bay from San Francisco. There he entertained such visitors as Bob Dylan, who dropped by in 1974, pulled out a guitar and asked for Silverstein's opinion as he played all the songs that would make up the classic *Blood on the Tracks*.

His lifestyle was not luxurious, but he was comfortable. "Shel was a millionaire, but he didn't live like one. He never showed off with money," Neiman says with a chuckle, "and he was the greatest freeloader I ever knew."

Silverstein increasingly moved into the world of theater, writing dozens of comedic one-act plays and befriending Mamet, who met him when the two were part of an evening of three one-act plays in Chicago. (Elaine May wrote the third.) The night they met, Mamet once explained, they closed down a fish joint and then quoted Kipling to each other all the way up and down North Michigan Avenue. They cowrote the 1988 movie *Things Change*. In the late 1980s Mamet and Silverstein each wrote one-act plays that ran together for three

months at Lincoln Center. Silverstein's was an hour-long monologue adapted from his story *The Devil and Billy Markham*, which was originally published in PLAYBOY. He prevailed on Dr. Hook's Locorriere to perform it because, he told the singer, "I don't want to explain myself to actors."

In 1986, when Silverstein sat down with Hefner in L.A. to talk about the old days, he was reflective. "I imagine myself in Chicago now, at this age, in this state of mind, and there would be no place I would rather be," he said. "It was the friendship, the camaraderie. There were my closest friends, there were the choice women. What more did I ever want anyway?" He thought back to his childhood, to parents who were approaching 40 when he was born, and to how at a certain point their friends started dying. "It was a part of me that was going," he said, adding that the older he got the more he valued his own friends and was willing to forgive slights. After all, he said, the harm that other people had done to him "was nothing compared with what I did to myself and do to myself daily."

Travel, he said, meant less and less to him. Instead he was turning to the time he spent with his son and other loved ones. "Closeness with real friends is becoming the most valuable thing of all," he said. "It always was valuable for me, but in my younger days getting the new fuck that night would break up any conversation." He thought for a moment about what he was saying and clarified his thinking. "Not that it still wouldn't, but she might not be invited two out of three nights."

All this domesticity went against the image Silverstein had cultivated for most of his life. But at a time when, he said, he was "counting the years, counting the friends gained and the friends lost," the man who had reinvented himself three decades earlier was unapologetic about his new set of priorities. "When fighting all the systems and all the guardrails, breaking down barriers and getting rid of the images other people are laying on you-those of us who do that find we then create our own," he said. "If I've created an image of a world traveler, an adventurer, and the fact is that I fucking want to sit down and grow roses and live with Suzie Q, then I'm going to do it. It's funny that that's the hardest fight to win, but I have a right to do that. I'm not going to be bound by my own shit."



"I've had it with trying to remember sizes. So this year I'm only giving fruitcake and blow jobs."

I've got a couple more years on you baby, that's all

I've had more chances to fly and more places to fall

It ain't that I'm wiser

It's just that I've spent more time with my back to the wall

I've picked up a couple more years on you baby, that's all.

—from "A Couple More Years," recorded by Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings, 1977

The songs and plays and stories and cartoons kept coming. Silverstein lived in Key West during the winter and Martha's Vineyard during the summer. He headed to his other homes when the mood struck him. He wore baggy pants, unbuttoned shirts and an old leather jacket. He turned down invitations to most parties and events. He helped friends like Mamet when they needed a quick joke. He won an Oscar nomination for the song "I'm Checking Out," from Postcards From the Edge. At one point he wrote a batch of raucous new tunes ("Greasy Grit Gravy," "Elvis Has Left the Building," "I Don't Do It No More") and rounded up Bobby Bare, Waylon Jennings, Jerry Reed and Mel Tillis—four old-timers with great voices and keen senses of humor. When they weren't laughing, they recorded two albums' worth of material. They called it Old Dogs. "It was the most fun I ever had with my clothes on," Reed said.

At Christmas in 1998, Locorriere and his son were walking in Greenwich Village when they ran into Silverstein. "He was halfway down the street, looking real bohemian," he says. "He had words written all over his hand and up his arm, which he always did. We talked for a little bit, and I told him I was going to England. He said, 'Do you think they remember me over there?'" Locorriere recalls that the winter night was dark, cold and gray and that Silverstein seemed far away.

Five months later, in early May, Bare had one of his daily telephone conversations with Silverstein, who was in Key West. "He said, 'I've got a feeling I have a flu bug or something,'" Bare says. "I said, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'I'm in bed.' I said, 'Damn, you must be sick.' It was six o'clock there, and there was no way Shel would be in bed at six o'clock. The next day Herb Gardner called me and said, 'I've got some bad news.'"

Silverstein suffered a fatal heart attack on May 10, 1999, at the age of 68. The news hit his friends hard; Bare says it took him a year or two to get over the depression. "Shel was the only person I knew who took care of himself," he says. "He ate right. He wasn't doing drugs or alcohol."

Then again, Silverstein had already explained things in "Still Gonna Die," a song he'd given to Bare for the *Old Dogs* project. The intro laid out the sad truth:

So you're taking better care of your body,

Becoming more aware of your body, Responding to your body's needs,

Everything you hear and read about diets, nutrition and sleeping position

And detoxifying the system,

And buying machines that they advertise to help you exercise,

Herbs to revitalize you if you're traumatized,

Soaps that will sanitize, sprays to deodorize.

Liquids to neutralize acids and pesticides,

Free weights to maximize your strength and muscle size,

Shots that will immunize, pills to reenergize you.

But remember, that for all your pain and gain,

Eventually the story ends the same.

But of course the story didn't end. In 2002 Silverstein was posthumously inducted into the Nashville Songwriter's Hall of Fame. Gardner wrote the speech, and Bare delivered it. In 2005 Runny Babbit became a best-seller. Locorriere recorded the audio version, navigating line after line of torturous spoonerisms the way he thought Silverstein would have. This past August, Legacy Records released The Best of Shel Silverstein: His Words His Songs His Friends, which contains 15 of Silverstein's own recordings, plus tracks by Cash, Bare, Dr. Hook, Kristofferson, the Irish Rovers, and Jennings and Nelson.

More will follow. In the works are rereleases of Silverstein's recordings, all the way back to his first, 1959's aptly titled *Hairy Jazz*. Simon & Schuster plans a compilation of his PLAYBOY travelogues. His other books, meanwhile, aren't going anywhere—they're mainstays in bookstores and libraries.

Silverstein left behind a patchwork of relationships, of friends and relations,

cohorts and colleagues, aiders and abettors. One of them, Locorriere, remembers looking around the memorial service held for Silverstein in Nashville. "It struck me," he says, "that a lot of us knew about each other, but we didn't really know each other. We knew only Shel. We were connected but only through Shel." He laughs. "Shel knew Jules Feiffer, Shel knew Bobby Bare. You think Jules Feiffer and Bobby Bare would have a lot to talk about over dinner? Or me and Hefner? I looked too disgusting to get into a biker bar back then, but Shel got me into the Playboy Mansion."

In the end it comes down to Silverstein's humanity, his heart. In 1981 he wrote a poem called "How Many, How Much." It reveals the sentimental side of a man who didn't always show it:

How many slams in an old screen door?

Depends on how loud you shut it. How many slices in a bread? Depends on how thin you cut it. How much good inside a day? Depends on how good you live 'em. How much love inside a friend? Depends on how much you give 'em.





"And then the conservatives got in, and—wham!—it's breaking and entering."

RUBBING ELBOWS

(continued from page 110)

"Mr. Friedman," said Isaac Bashevis Singer, "would you mind exchanging my meat for your spinach?"

Is there a lesson in this? As a young writer, do not allow yourself to be shoved over to a famous novelist.

HEMINGWAY'S BROTHER

In the 1960s I worked for a publisher called Magazine Management. Ernest Hemingway's brother, Leicester, came by with a short story in hand. He was a bluff, hearty-looking man who lived on a fishing boat and looked more like Ernest Hemingway than his famous brother did.

"Ernesto thought you might enjoy this," he said as he handed me a baitstained manuscript.

I found Leicester enormously likable and wanted nothing more than to love and publish his story in one of our men's magazines. But it was a nautical piece that seemed to be targeted at young boys just beginning to read. "Hi ho, me hearties" is how it began. "Oh, you son of a sea dog," it continued. I was put in the awful position of having to reject a story by Hemingway's brother. (In retrospect, he may have been more in touch with our readership than I was.)

At a cocktail party soon afterward (there were always cocktail parties), I met Mary, the fourth and last of Ernest Hemingway's wives. I told her I had run into Leicester and how charmed I was by him.

"That swine," she said. "You dare to mention his name to me." She stormed off but soon returned to apologize, saying she hadn't meant to be rude. The Hemingways were having awful litigation problems, and poor Leicester had come to be seen as some kind of black sheep of the family.

THE SHORT STORY

Hemingway cyclically falls into critical disapproval, particularly for his arch and mannered dialogue between men and women (which served, incidentally, as a model for many of us in our early romantic endeavors. We could hardly wait to get started on a failed romance). But nothing in the English language compares to the descriptive power of his collected short stories.

In my experience novelists do not enjoy being complimented on their short stories. They would rather receive praise for their weakest novel. Norman Mailer has called short-story writing "the jeweler's art." More often, the writer of short stories is likened dismissively to a singles hitter. But what about Pete Rose, the baseball legend, who for the most part hit singles?

I've read very few big novels that

couldn't profit from being cut by at least a third. A few exceptions are *Middle-march*, *Lonesome Dove* and Trollope's great *The Way We Live Now*.

TERRY SOUTHERN

The master satirist Terry Southern wandered into my rental house on Fire Island in the 1960s and presented me with the album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. I had written several plays; he was taken up with the movies. We argued long hours into the night about the relative merits of theater and film.

"But Bruce, if you sit in the audience of a stage play, you can see the actors spit," he said.

"Not in my plays," I assured him. "During auditions we eliminate the spitters."

(That same summer of momentary affluence, the great Nelson Algren stayed with us on Fire Island and fell in love with Isabel Sullivan, our housekeeper. He had just ended a widely publicized affair with Simone de Beauvoir. "Will that woman never shut up?" he'd said famously. The author of *The Man With the Golden Arm* went directly from the arms of the famed French philosopher into those of the plump and grandmotherly Mrs. Sullivan. Very strange, although she was a charmer.)

At a memorial for Southern sponsored by the Virgin Atlantic company, I received the biggest laugh of my life by quoting a line from his novel *Blue Movie*.

A Hollywood starlet has slept with a producer, then been turned down for a part in his movie. The starlet says to her agent, "That's the last Jewish cock I'll ever suck."

The executives, who were convulsed by this line, could not quite put it together that I hadn't actually written it and kept showering me with film and recording deals and pressing me to come work for the company.

LAST WORDS

The deathbed pronouncements of writers often have a scripted feel, as if they'd been prepared in advance. But Southern's final words feel spontaneous.

"What's the delay?"

Mario Puzo's last words were to his longtime companion, Carol Gino. "I'm still here. And you said you'd knock me off," he said.

She responded, "I am not knocking you off, Mario."

My favorite deathbed exchange was between a 19th century literary figure and his priest.

"Father, is it true that I'm dying?"

"I'm afraid so, my son."

"And there's no hope?"

"None."

"Then I can say it: I never cared for Dante."

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Meeting literary heroes can be disappointing.

A friend introduced me to Barbara Tuchman, who wrote one of the great works of history, *The Guns of August*.

"Mr. Friedman is a novelist," said the friend.

"I don't read novels," she said and turned away. (But at least she didn't storm off.)

At a dinner party, Ralph Ellison, author of *Invisible Man*, irritatingly kept referring to me as Mr. Stern (*Stern* being the title of my first novel).

At yet another dinner party at the Hotel Avila in Caracas, Robert Lowell suddenly turned in my direction and mystifyingly berated me for joining in on the oppression of the Kurds. I had never met or spoken to the great poet before. Nor had I ever thought much about the Kurds—other than wishing them well.

My one encounter with John Cheever—at the Playboy Mansion in Chicago—was brief and (for me) memorable. There was a great deal of drinking going on. At some point I may have taken a few sips of Cheever's cocktail. When a waiter asked if he could refill our glasses, the great short-story writer said, "Mr. Friedman and I appear to be sharing a drink."

I accepted an award that day of \$500 for a story I'd written for the magazine. My entire speech was as follows: "Thank you. I need the money."

The normally reserved John Updike cried out, "Hear, hear," and shook my hand.

ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER

I had an exchange that lingers with Isaac Bashevis Singer at lunch during a symposium in North Carolina. The Nobelist leaned across the table toward me during lunch. I leaned toward him, expecting to hear a weighty philosophical pronouncement, one that would no doubt involve Spinoza.

"Mr. Friedman," said the legendary vegetarian, "would you mind exchanging my meat for your spinach?"

After Singer's death I made my first and only literary pilgrimage, to his home in Florida. Not only was I in awe of his great body of work but it intrigued me that he was the only Nobelist to use his prize money to buy a condo in Miami Beach. I never got to see the condo itself, but I was able to talk to his widow, Alma, on the building intercom.

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Friedman, he wasn't that happy in this apartment, and I couldn't do a thing with him here. Broadway is where he was happy. And I would love to talk to you some more, but

I just got back from shopping and my feet are killing me."

Two elderly women, condo owners, overheard this exchange in the lobby. One of them reported that Singer had behaved disgracefully at the synagogue.

"He told stories that were filled with schmutz," she said, using the Yiddish for filth, "and when he looked at you, all of a sudden you didn't have any clothes on."

"Not only that," said the other, "but he went around with a crony even worse than he was."

I wondered who the crony was.

That night in my hotel room I toasted Singer, who was in his 80s when he scandalized the synagogue.

Singer once asked me if I knew of a place in Manhattan where writers congregated. I thought of Elaine's but didn't mention the restaurant. My feeling was that he wouldn't care for it, since the writers there spoke of sex and money and rarely discussed literature. I realized later that this was exactly the kind of place he was looking for. This bothered me until Jack Richardson eased my conscience.

"Elaine would have been impressed by his Nobel Prize. But if he ordered one of his vegetarian platters, she would have told him to leave immediately."

BOOK-JACKET QUOTES

Writers are often put in the position of writing jacket quotes for books they don't particularly admire. I found myself in that situation when asked to read a dreary novel about golf written by a waiter I'd gotten to know at a midtown

I thought for a bit and sent along the following quote: "This book is loaded with energy.

The waiter and his publisher were delighted-so much so that two years later the waiter approached me with a second unreadable novel.

"This book," I wrote the publisher, "has even more energy than the last one.'

A friend asked me for a quote for his wife, who had written a bland, innocuous book of historical anecdotes. I wrote the publisher, "This book gave me more pleasure than I deserve."

The mystery writer George Fox was pleased by a quote for his book in the Times and used it in the promotion: "Fox's novel is above the routine ruck."

A woman approached me at a book party in Toronto and said she had never read a word of mine. "But I love your book-jacket quotes."

The Viennese writer Frederic Morton (A Nervous Splendor) may be the only living author whose book jackets have quotes from Thomas Mann. He interviewed Mann in Switzerland on the world-famous but impoverished writer's 80th birthday.



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 32, 35-36, 48, 84-89 and 178-179, check the listings below to find the stores nearest you.

GAMES

Page 32: Burnout Revenge, ea.com. Dead or Alive 4, tecmoinc.com. God of War, playstation.com.

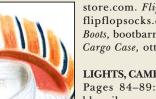
The Movies, activision.com. Nintendogs, nintendo.com. PlayStation Portable, playstation.com. Psychonauts, majesco games.com. Resident Evil 4, capcom .com. We Love Katamari, namco.com.

MANTRACK

Pages 35-36: Casa Natalia, casanatalia .com. Cuervo y Sobrinos, cuervoysobrinos .com. Illy, illyusa.com. Jean-Marc XO, available at fine liquor stores. Olympus, olympus .com. Villas Del Mar, villasdelmar.com.

FORUM: FASHION ON THE RUN

Page 48: Beep Free belt, beepfree products.com. Bra-llelujah!, spanx .com. BuzzNot suspenders, suspender



store.com. Flip-flop socks, flipflopsocks.com. Justin Boots, bootbarn.com. Zippo Cargo Case, otterbox.com.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, TUXES Pages 84-89: Blue Nile, bluenile.com. Brioni, 212-332-6900. DSquared, available at H. Lorenzo, Los Angeles. Dunhill, 800-776-4053. *Ice Tek*, icetek watch.com. John Varvatos, johnvarvatos.com. Kenneth Cole New York, 800-

KEN-COLE. Multi by Bree, multibybree .com. Oliver Helden, 718-782-0521. Optimo Hats, optimohats.com. Perry Ellis, perry ellis.com. Proenza Schouler, proenza schouler.com. Robert Talbott, roberttalbott .com. Ted Baker London, 212-343-8989. Tracy Reese, saks.com.

POTPOURRI

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THE THEATER

At a cafe in Reykjavík an ancient, bearded poet said he would put me up for the Nobel Prize for literature. He knew the judges. He assured me there was a good chance I would win.

"But first," he said, "you must arrange a meeting for me with Michael Ovitz," who was then president of the fabled Hollywood agency CAA.

Such is my ego—such is the secret ego of every writer, no matter how far down the food chain—that for a split second I believed him.

TENNESSEE

Toward the end of his career—and of his life—Tennessee Williams left a note in Gaelic on a table at Elaine's. A bartender translated it as "I have lost my way."

Writing plays brought me into contact with Peter Schaffer, who had written the classic drama *Equus*. After watching a performance of my play *Steambath*, he put an affectionate arm around my shoulder.

"You can write for the theater," he said.

I took this as an enormous compliment until I realized I already did.

•

There was a dinner at the Algonquin with Sir Harold Pinter and the novelist Edna O'Brien. Each of us took turns telling a story. I thought I did well by describing a tableau I'd witnessed while driving into Manhattan that night from Long Island: Two drivers had gotten

out of their cars and begun a murderous fight on the expressway. Pinter followed with two of the most exquisitely chiseled word-perfect stories I'd ever heard, both delivered in the formidable voice of a trained actor (which he is). One involved a massive wrought-iron chair somehow thrown through a small window at a party to the courtyard below. So masterful were the stories and so brilliantly were they told that I vowed never again to speak at a dinner party. A bit later, in London, I described the evening to Max Rosenberg, who had produced Pinter's film *The Birthday Party*.

"Oh for God's sake," he said. "Those are two plays. Harold has been trying them out at dinner parties for years."

At a time when he was putting together the revue *Oh! Calcutta!* the critic Ken Tynan invited me to lunch to explain the concept. He felt the show would give me a chance (finally) to exercise my sexual fantasies.

"Surely, Bruce, like all of us you've felt an occasional urge to tie up your housekeeper, force her into a corset, spank her with a fish and then watch her go rolling down a staircase."

"No, Kenneth, I don't believe I've had that one."

"You haven't?" he said with surprise. "Well, then, let's try another. Suppose you're stranded in a motel with a one-legged Eskimo hooker...."

THE LUNCH

At a literary luncheon held once a month in Southampton, the screenwriter David Zelag Goodman announced he had just completed a script for Sophia Loren. "She was so pleased with it that she personally cooked a plate of spaghetti for me," he said.

"I like the story," said Joseph Heller, "but it would have been much better if she had given you a blow job."

Southampton has always been a magnet for artists and writers, but the social currents can be treacherous.

The author Willie Morris (North Toward Home), a Water Mill resident, was said to have been driven back to Mississippi by a single remark an elderly doyenne made at a cocktail party.

"Willie Morris?" she said when introduced to him. "You never did pan out, did you?"

Inevitably at one of the Southampton literary luncheons the subject of Viagra came up.

Speed Vogel, Joseph Heller's writing partner on *No Laughing Matter*, said he'd heard that nine out of 10 men use the pill for sex with women other than their wives.

"Ten out of 10," said Heller.

The author of *Catch-22* claimed to know nothing of the personal ads, in which it was possible to meet women of



"Goodness gracious! Can it really be a whole year since you two girls bounced me on your knees?"

every variety. Heller had his doubts.

"Certainly not girls with big bushes," he said.

"Absolutely," I assured him. "There are long lists of them."

"That's wonderful," he said.

To show his appreciation he told me about passes that seniors could use to ride Manhattan buses and subways for half fare. And that was our exchange: senior bus passes for girls with big bushes.

The Southampton luncheons, held at Barrister's restaurant, were casual, but it wasn't that easy to get a seat at the table.

The regulars were Heller, Puzo, David Zelag Goodman, George Mandel and Speed Vogel. I was there because I'd given Puzo what he described as his first straight job, in 1960, as an assistant editor of *True Action* magazine.

William Gaddis, author of *The Recognitions*, was proposed for membership in the group. All agreed he was the most charming of men, but there was a sheepish awareness that no one in the group had read his books.

"That's all right," Candida Donadio, who had been his agent for many decades, assured us. "No one has read his books."

I suggested James Salter, whose stories were like rare diamonds.

Puzo considered this, then said no. "He is too good a writer."

Yet another distinguished novelist was rejected because of his continual reference to his membership in the National Academy of Arts and Letters. ("As I was saying to my friends in the National Academy of Arts and Letters the other day....")

"It's an organization for guys who can't get film deals," Puzo said.

Mel Brooks would join the group on occasion.

"Is it true," Puzo asked him, "that to be a successful screenwriter you have to know how to write explosions?"

"Yes," said Brooks, "but they have to be the right explosions."

Brooks was unusually quiet and introspective through this period. He was in his own world and for the most part hummed to himself. We realized later that he'd been composing music for *The Producers*.

I saw the monster hit and sent him the following telegram: "I don't care what anyone said. I loved it."

PUZO AND HELLER

Though the talk at the monthly luncheons was generally about sex and money, on rare occasions it turned to literature.

PUZO: I have finally figured out John Grisham's success. He writes so that a 10-year-old can read him.

HELLER: I can't read light fiction. It's too

heavy. [He also felt decaf had more caffeine than regular coffee.]

PUZO: I don't get this guy Borges.

HELLER: I can't stand science fiction. And I'm not too crazy about Shakespeare, either.

PUZO: A novelist must have meat on his bones.

I said I couldn't write effectively from the female point of view.

"Who can?" said Puzo.

The annual Nobel Prize for literature was about to be announced.

"This year," Heller announced confidently, "it's either me or Gore." (The winner that year was an obscure Finnish novelist.)

Puzo felt Heller hadn't written enough to qualify for the prize. And though he never thought of himself as a prizewinner of any kind, he felt he also hadn't written enough. I've never met a writer who felt he'd written "enough." I'm sure that would have included Trollope, who wrote almost 50 novels.

Puzo reported he had read Norman Mailer's novel *Harlot's Ghost* in bed at night. The two had had a long, low-simmering feud dating back to an *Esquire* article in which Mailer had been critical of Puzo's literary hero, William Styron.

"I was halfway through the book," said the author of *The Godfather*, "when I became aware of a heaviness on my chest. I thought I was having a heart attack. Then I realized it was the weight of the book."

"So what did you do?" asked Heller. "I cracked it in half."

I mentioned I'd been offered a cameo role in a Woody Allen movie. A pall came over the group. Writers for the most part are supportive of one another and, with exceptions, won't begrudge a colleague's success, i.e., a book contract or a film sale. But acting roles are a different story. You can hear the unspoken questions: How come I didn't get the part? I'm much better looking than he is.

"Aren't you afraid he will exploit you," asked Puzo, "and make you look ridiculous?"

I said I didn't mind playing the fool. Seeing yourself on-screen is the greatest diet of them all. You immediately want to lose 20 pounds. And in the case of most writers, myself included, more people will see you on the screen than have read all your books combined.

"Also," I said, sounding like Puzo for the moment, "it beats working."

Inevitably, a woman—and a fan—would approach Puzo and ask him if he was "connected." How else could he have written so accurately about the Mob?



"The closest I ever came to what looked like the Mafia," he would insist, "was when I sat across the table from three executives at the Warner Bros. commissary."

A wide-eyed college student would come up to Heller and ask if he had any advice for the future generation.

"Frankly," Heller would say, "I don't give a shit about the future generation."

Puzo became ill and retired to what had become an estate in a working-class section of Bay Shore, New York. That brought an end to the lunches. I saw Heller a few times after that, once by chance at Elaine's. He'd been looking around for a dinner partner and seemed relieved when I turned up. A few pretty young fans came over and took turns sitting on his lap. I've known writers to embrace women, even fondle them. Heller is the only one I knew who openly copped feels. We talked about how much we missed Mario.

The 76-year-old writer made a touching confession. "I'd like to fall in love," he said.

Always the model of propriety, I reminded him of his beloved wife.

"I know, I know," he said, but he was talking about something else.

As we left, Elaine pulled me aside. "Did Joe have a good time?" she asked, untypically anxious.

"He had a great time."

"Thank God," she said and smacked

the table, as if she'd gotten good news from a doctor.

Heller called a week later and asked if I'd like to go to dinner.

I was free that night, but I was too lazy to leave the house and said I had another engagement.

"You'll regret that," my wife said.

She was right.

A week later he died.

MOVING ALONG

Puzo, Heller, Cheever, Southern, Algren. Giants all. Gone now. Others moving along. Some of the greats disappear. Who remembers Elizabeth Taylor, one of the finest story writers in the English language? Do students read Algren? The critic Robert Phelps called the writing profession "a mug's game." Lawrence Kasdan—a screenwriter, of all people—offered the best description of the work:

"A writer is someone condemned to do homework for the rest of his life."

It can be a dreary business—dizzying highs, abysmal lows. The early reviews of "Jerry" Salinger's Catcher in the Rye were mixed. The Times dismissed Catch-22 in a nasty little paragraph. But there isn't a single ink-stained wretch who, when asked his profession at Customs, doesn't feel like royalty when he gets to answer with a word that suddenly feels proud and elevated: writer.





LISA GUERRERO

(continued from page 68)

press conference? Or scoring an interview with Brett Favre the day after his father died? Getting Barry Bonds to admit for the first time that he was taking supplements?

That combination of gumption and good looks got her the job at Monday Night Football. At the time, ABC wanted to freshen up the broadcast and take it beyond X's and O's. Says Lisa, "When I was hired, they told me they wanted the sideline reporter to cover lifestyle and entertainment." The trouble was, even before that season, critics had been barking that Monday Night Football was going soft, a rant that escalated when Lisa made a flub during her first appearance: She asked Washington quarterback Patrick Ramsey what it was like to play against his former teammate Laveranues Coles, when they actually were current teammates. "I knew I'd misspoken and tried to retract it immediately," she says, rolling her eyes. "Let the record show it never happened again!"

What did happen was that *MNF*'s ratings went up from the year before. Co-host Al Michaels called it the Lisa Guerrero Factor, but the heat was too much for the network. The suits upstairs got nervous "not just about my sex appeal," she says, "but about the element of entertainment I was bringing to the show, even though that's exactly what they hired me to do."

Speaking of entertainment, let the record also show that PLAYBOY asked Lisa to pose 20 years ago when she was a cheerleader. She said no, but what a difference a couple of decades makes. "I'm proud to say I'm 41 now and have never felt better or sexier," she says. "In your 20s you're just developing your sexuality. Now I know that sexiness comes from the inside, and for me it's about being confident in who I am."

It's also about opening new horizons, she says, which is why she picked Paris, a place she'd never visited, as the backdrop for her pictorial. "I'd always heard there was a relaxed attitude about sex and nudity there. After taking in the Champs-Elysées and the Moulin Rouge, I'd say it definitely lives up to the magic."

Back in L.A., Lisa is making magic of her own. She was recently cast as a lead in *A Plumm Summer*, a film based on a true story about a kidnapping involving the star of a local kids' TV show in Louisiana. She's also pitching a reality series with her husband about the crazy life of sports wives. Then there's her dream of having her own sports talk show. "Something that goes deeper than a seven-second update from the sidelines," she says with a wink.

What's really exciting her, though, is a book project that's an account of all the adrenaline-filled moments that led up to her posing for PLAYBOY. The book is in the draft stage, but like most things Lisa does, it is bound to be a showstopper. Hell, she had us at the title: *Diary of a Naked Lady*.



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CAR WARS

(continued from page 92)

"I'm never getting another car. This car is perfect for me. I like to be in it. I change the oil, I put in gas, and that's it."

THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT

Before boarding an airplane to talk to people in the car business, I thought I should spend time talking to people who aren't. Whatever is going on in Detroit, the customer is you and me. Cars are like opinions: Everybody has one. The only adults I've known who don't drive are Ray Bradbury and Hugh Hefner.

I did hours of on-the-spot car research in upscale and downscale malls, supermarkets, Starbucks and 7-Elevens in four widely separated states. It took only two minutes to find out if drivers thought their car was satisfactory, sporty or practical; if their next one would be the same make; if their car was quick enough, safe enough or pretty enough. It turns out that people, especially women, love to talk about their cars.

I began to formulate an idea or two about the qualities that create brand loyalty. But my intention was to go to Detroit with questions, not conclusions, so I packed my hunches along with my tape recorder and set off. Before I got on the plane I spent months researching the car business, and the only thing I was sure of was that hell could freeze over and Toyota would still sell 40,000 Camrys a month.

If you ask Toyota what drives the company, it will say the voice of the customer. In truth, everyone in the car business talks about the voice of the customer. Toyota hears that voice clearly. When it thinks it has it right, it doesn't hesitate to defy automotive convention. I had my comeuppance in 1998 when I slid into the driver's seat of a Lexus RX300, one of the first luxury SUVs. "This is a Camry on stilts," I said scornfully. "It's an SUV for girls." What should have been muscular about the interior was soft and girly comfy, with leather upholstery more tufted and squishy than that of, say, a Mercedes ML320, plus wood accents and subtle tonalities. And the RX300 was available only in front-wheel drive-what sort of SUV was that?

It was a brilliant one.

When I tell that story to Mike Michels, Toyota's corporate communications manager, he says, "An SUV for girls? I wouldn't disagree with that. The RX300 was feminized. The predominant buyers and drivers of SUVs were women. SUVs had become the family wagon, and very few of them went off-road. Customers told us they liked SUVs. But here's what they didn't like: SUVs are trucklike, they ride terribly, and they have crummy fuel economy. But customers still like them.

'When we showed the concept car, the 160 off-road-enthusiast press slammed it, and journalists didn't understand it. But for consumers, it was a product they didn't know they wanted until they saw it."

Here's where my on-the-street interviewing led me. Detroit is fighting for its life because, in the 1970s and 1980s, young women got the freedom to be on the road from Toyota, Honda, Nissanand the automatic transmission. Women fell in love with cars that were easy to drive, that were lively, responsive and small. They could see the fenders over those short, angled hoods. Think of the late 1970s, a time of Ford Gran Torinos and Chevy Impalas with hoods the size of flight decks. Those cars were a nightmare for women; Hondas and Toyotas fulfilled a dream.

It's hard for men to understand that manageable size and mechanical perfection gave women security in the driver's seat, which allowed them to discover performance within their control. Honda's engineering excellence did for the Japanese car business what Nikon had done for the Japanese camera business. Toyota relentlessly pursued mechanical perfection down to each bolt and cam. Women drivers could zip around without fear of being left stranded and helpless, the precise fear they had when driving big American cars. And as Business Week noted, the Japanese devoted more attention to the parts of a car that people touch: the knobs, the steering wheel, the handles. That stuff worked well with women.

Women were the tipping point.

Not the oil crises in the 1970s, not vehicle dynamics or low cost. That's not to say that men didn't take to Accords, Supras and 240Zs or that the Road & Track and Car and Driver audience didn't play a role in Detroit's decline. But the main reason is women. They brought the U.S. auto industry to this apprehensive state.

Publix supermarket, Estero, Florida. Senior citizen couple getting into a Buick Century.

"How do you like this car?"

"Oh," the husband says, smiling. "Very good. It's a wonderful car."

"Would you buy another Buick?"

"Yes. We were T-boned in this car and came away unhurt. I'm very happy with this car."

DETROIT BY DESIGN

When the car-rental bus drops me at my zone, I choose a Chevy Malibu, the car GM builds to compete with the two best-selling sedans in the U.S., the Toyota Camry and the Honda Accord. I've never driven one before. The steering is a little light, but on the road the Malibu surprises. The suspension is solid, the visibility is outstanding, the interior is spacious, and the car is responsive.

As an automotive journalist, I drive about 30 new cars a year for a few days at a time, and I review a select group of

them in the pages of this magazine. Many car journalists drive triple that amount, but 30 is a decent sample. Cars have personalities as surely as people do—often more agreeable ones. I've been to highperformance-driving schools and, though I'm no race driver, I have driven at high speeds on difficult racecourses. In cars, I prefer feedback, flat cornering and lively engine response. Like every other driver, I think I am an arbiter of good design both inside and out. In the context of my driving universe, the Malibu holds its own. My only complaint is that the center stack—the space in the middle of the dashboard where the vents, stereo and climate controls are nested-seems to have been an afterthought, as if the pieces were chosen and installed after the car was built. It's not wrong, but it's not terrific. This car needs help; it needs a session on Queer Eye.

I start my Detroit sojourn at Daimler-Chrysler because if there's true life in the domestic car business, it's at Chrysler's world headquarters in Auburn Hills. After Daimler-Benz and Chrysler merged, in 1998, the German leadership originally installed at the Chrysler Group, Dieter Zetsche and Wolfgang Bernhard, fostered an energy that one can sense in Chrysler's new cars. The 300C has a notable design and is a commercial success. With its high belt line, reduced windows and squared elegance, it has been called a Bentley for the ordinary man. It has the sense of privacy—and the blind spots—that go with the look. The 300C hasn't tallied blistering sales, but it has been solid, outselling the Chrysler models it replaced.

The 300C and the Dodge Magnum and Charger are products of a design group headed by Ralph Gilles, a New Yorker by birth who was raised in Montreal and lives in Detroit. He is black, laid-back and unostentatiously hip. In Chicago I saw Gilles cast a beneficent spell on a group of community leaders and design students. Speaking of the Chrysler 300, Gilles said, "We wanted to reinvigorate the American sedan, to make a car that would turn anyone's head. Even my mother, who doesn't notice any cars, notices the 300. We went to research, and they told us, 'The grille's too big. The windows are too small.' We said, 'Yup, the grille's too big. Yup, the windows are too small.' The more rules you break, the more people take note. The car's not just transportation. It's an experience.'

A member of the audience asked Gilles, "The 300 has been received well by people of color. Was that intentional?'

"There's a certain flamboyance," he answered. "It says something about you. How do you make a \$30,000 car look like \$100,000? Details—the chrome rings around the clock. They remind you that your choice was right.'

Having recently driven a 300C SRT8 equipped with the bigger, 6.1-liter Hemi engine, I can tell you that it is unreal. It's no surprise that it's fast, but it's also nimble. It sets up flat-level through extreme cornering, and it turns heads, if that's important to you. Because Chrysler engineers have access to quality underpinnings from the Mercedes parts bin, the 300C, at \$42,000, is in effect the cheapest big-engine Benz you'll ever be able to buy.

Depending on the size of its engine, the 300C can compete anywhere from the middle of the family-sedan market to the low end of the luxury-sedan market. Selling cars segment by segment is how auto executives think. At Chrysler, analyzing the competition segment by segment is the job of Joseph Eberhardt, executive vice president of global marketing, sales and service. He worked for Daimler-Benz from 1982 until the merger. He has been with the Chrysler Group since 1999.

The Daimler-Chrysler merger was denounced in Detroit as a clandestine takeover of Chrysler. Daimler executives took the strategic executive positions. Dieter Zetsche was CEO of the Chrysler Group until this past August, when the Daimler board requested he return to Germany to run the parent company. As automotive reporter Michelle Krebs tells me, "When the merger began, all you heard in Detroit was 'Those damn krauts.' Now all you hear is 'Thank God for the Germans.' Everyone loved Dieter in Detroit."

I catch Eberhardt between a day of meetings and an overnight flight to Europe, where he is scheduled to drive the next day in the famous Italian road race the Mille Miglia. He joins me in a small conference room.

PLAYBOY: Will your day of meetings lead to a strategy?

EBERHARDT: I'd like to know the answer to that one. Our target is to lead in three areas by 2007. The first is product. The second is operational excellence in terms of cost and efficiency. The third is the customer's experience, how well the product is looked after if something happens.

PLAYBOY: You produced two winners since the merger, the 300C and the vans with Stow 'n Go seating. Where do you go from here?

EBERHARDT: The priorities were to defend our territory and get our truck, minivan and large-car segments back on track. Now we're working on the compact and midsize sedans. The Japanese have done a lot of things right. One of them is a continuous approach to improvement. Toyota brings out the best Camry it can, no compromises. Then it tries to make it better.

PLAYBOY: Did American companies abandon cars to the Japanese?

EBERHARDT: Not consciously. We lost significant share. It wasn't that the public didn't want to buy American cars all of a sudden. But maybe we didn't give them the quality they were looking for. Studies report that more than two thirds of

product decisions are made on the basis of quality and cost of ownership. We had shortcomings compared with imports in the car sector. It's going to be a hard road back for us. I don't think you can just make ads that say, "Come back. Trust me, we're different. We used to build very bad cars. Now we build better cars." We need to build cars whose style and performance will bring customers back and make sure we don't disappoint them.

PLAYBOY: Do you work on strategies to sell cars to women?

EBERHARDT: Not by having a female team that works on a female car and a male team that works on a male car. We try for the best blend. I think safety is probably more important for women. I would say women influence close to 100 percent of purchases in one way or another. But the industry does not attribute some needs to women. One is performance. It drives me nuts in our internal discussions when we say that guys want performance and women are more interested in other things. I say no. The performance women want is probably not overt, boyracer-type performance. It's not "Can I smoke the tires?" but "Does my car allow me to change lanes when that 18-wheeler pulls up next to me?" Performance gives a sense of security and safety. The Japanese have perfected off-the-line performance. When you look at their engines, whether four or six cylinder, they are fantastic. Visibility is an absolute key as well. That's why I don't understand why a lot of women drive these huge SUVs, because you can't see anything from front or back. The only thing you can say is "If I hit something or something hits me, I'm in a big thing.'

THE TOYOTA WAY

Toyota slips into nearly every conversation about productivity, just as it slipped into Eberhardt's. The company is the industry's benchmark manufacturer. Ford made 6.4 million vehicles worldwide last year with 350,000 employees. Toyota made 6.7 million vehicles with 264,000 employees. Harbour Consulting, a Troy, Michigan firm that specializes in automotive-manufacturing management, estimates that Toyota has a \$350 to \$500 manufacturing cost advantage per vehicle over every one of its competitors. It is estimated that Toyota earns an average profit of \$1,700 a vehicle.

Toyota is both the most efficient and the highest-quality manufacturer. No one has ever done that before. At the height of the Big Three's productivity in the U.S., efficiency meant volume. Mass production coexisted with a tolerance for defective products. Shutting down the assembly line to fix a problem cost money. A mistake could go on for hours and produce defect after defect before management would stop the line.

Then came Toyota and the Toyota production system. It has self-correcting



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assembly lines. It has the widely imitated just-in-time inventory system. It has the best relationship with suppliers and gets the most innovative work from them.

It also gets the most out of every factory man-hour and assembles each car in less time than any other company. It's not enough to make pretty cars or to choose the right car for a segment and price it attractively. Success depends on manufacturing consistency, quality and cost control. My favorite example of Toyota's place in the industry's mindset comes when I visit a renovated Ford assembly plant on Chicago's South Side. In this ancient building, union workers use new automated equipment to put together the Ford Five Hundred sedan. During a conversation about manufacturing ideals with the plant's manager, Anthony Hoskins, he turns my attention to a shelf holding a game ball from his college years. He played football at Iowa State while he studied engineering. "It's all in there," he says, pointing to a book next to the ball. The book is The Toyota Way: 14 Management Principles From the World's Greatest Manufacturer.

GOING TO THE RIVER

One of GM's dazzling answers to Toyota's reputation for quality manufacturing is the Lansing Grand River Assembly Plant in Michigan, which makes Cadillacs. In 2004 Lansing GR was J.D. Power's highest-ranked automobile plant in North America and the third highest in the world. The plant also has the best safety record in North America. In a 2004 speech to Cadillac dealers, John Smith, GM's vice president of global marketing, said government reports show Toyota to be 10 years behind GM in plant safety.

I visit the plant the morning after my conversation with Eberhardt. The plant building is laid out in the shape of a T, with a T-shaped assembly line inside. Generally cars are assembled single file on a moving line. The plant's narrow shape allows every station on the line to be near an outside delivery dock. Sup-

plies can be unloaded where needed. Operators work in teams with a leader. If there's a problem, any operator can consult the leader, who will stop the line. If there's a big problem, an operator can pull the Andon, a cord that stops assembly the way an emergency cord stops a subway train. Each team leader carries measuring tools to check gaps, fits and welds. The place is airy and bright.

The day after I visit Lansing, I meet with GM vice chairman Robert Lutz in the design and research center in Warren, Michigan. Lutz is the executive in charge of all product development. He is a well-known figure in the car business, having worked earlier stints at GM and BMW before becoming an industry legend at Chrysler, where he rose to president and chief operating officer. Among other things, Lutz is credited with being the guiding force behind the spectacular 12-cylinder Viper sports car, an audacious ploy from Chrysler at the time. Lutz also spent some of his youth as a Marine fighter pilot and is known for his zeal and skill at the controls of any capsule with a motor attached to it. GM CEO Rick Wagoner lured Lutz to GM specifically to put a product guy in charge of the product, a novel idea inside the company's financially driven bureaucracy.

The lobby of the design center is spacious and serene. A wide, dramatic staircase descends from above, its gorgeous wood steps suspended on steel rods. The polished steel verticals make a strong design statement. The tech center was designed in the early 1950s by Eero Saarinen, the legendary Finnish architect. GM would have fewer problems if it could design cars as striking as Saarinen's staircase.

We go upstairs to a comfortable conference room for the interview. (For more of Lutz's comments, see "The World According to Robert Lutz," on page 92.) After we finish the taping session, Lutz, Michael Simcoe, GM's recently appointed design director for cars, and I walk downstairs to the studios.

The space is what you'd expect to see if you were watching a Discovery Channel show—full of people, computers, clay models and detailed, full-size foam models of cars approved for production. It's a terrific room, almost a haven. It has the feeling of a stage set made with a minimalist's sense of color. The space is white and open, and the floor is uncluttered. The foam models are large, silent mounds of color displayed like sculptures in a museum.

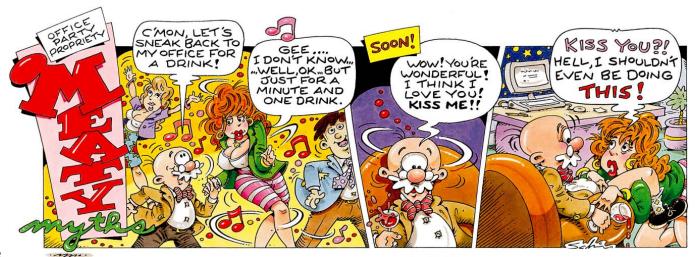
Lutz shows me the new Saturn Ion. I like it and say so. But I tell him I think the design of the current Ion is awful. Lutz stares at me tolerantly for a second, but I think I see Simcoe tacitly agreeing with me. The new design director for passenger cars is a lean, handsome Australian who dresses like an art director. He seems a little out of place in the buttoned-down world of GM. He might be just what they need.

He shows me the new Chevy Malibu. Upstairs Lutz said, "When you see the next-generation Malibu, you're going to say, 'Holy shit.'" Here it is. It doesn't cause an exclamation, but the new Malibu has a more emphatic design than the current version. It looks like a car aimed at Camry buyers.

Then we look at the Saturn Aura. It's terrific, a design that doesn't need to be defended. The automotive press may find it similar to the Toyota Avalon. Of course the Avalon looks like an inflated Acura TL. Imitation and adaptation come naturally in this business.

Moving on, we look at the next generation of Cadillacs, which is as striking as the last. Maybe a distortion factor is at work here. Perhaps all car designs look better in foam than they ever will in steel, just as an architect's scale model almost always looks better than the finished building. After all, about eight years ago, someone designed and someone else approved the embarrassingly unsuccessful Pontiac Aztek SUV at GM.

"Do you think," I ask Lutz, "if you had called the Aztek something high-tech,



like the P-tek or something, it would have done better?"

"No," he says, "I have a different proposition. If the Aztek had been called the Honda Aztek or the Toyota Aztek, it would have been greeted with 'Oh my God, leave it to the Japanese to make this incredibly intelligent automobile. Who are we to question Honda or Toyota?' Coming from Pontiac's low credibility base, it was hopeless."

A few days later I see a Pontiac G6 sedan on the street. It has a swooping, curvy design that looks terrific from the back, but for the first half of the year it hadn't sold as well as the Grand Am it replaced. In July 2005 Pontiac sold 10,000 G6s with the help of employee discounts. In July 2004 Pontiac sold 10,000 Grand Ams. Did GM spend about a billion dollars to bring out a car that isn't going to move the needle? Can you blame it all on design, or is something missing in the experience of the car? Could it be a Pontiac curse?

I've driven the new Chevy Cobalt as well. The coupe is good-looking and great fun to drive. It has the character that for years had been missing from the dreary Cavalier it replaced. Chevrolet sold 27,500 Cobalts in July 2005, about 7,500 more than the number of Cavaliers sold the previous July. To keep things in perspective, Toyota sold 21,000 Corollas in the same month.

At GM's design studio I meet young designers at their computers. On the walls are strong images, all of them automotive. At one point I tell Lutz and Simcoe that some of what goes on in the studio reminds me of the magazine business: You find an image for a layout, then tamper with it in a search for one version that's better than any other. Ideally, the artistry of the thing and its purpose reach a balance. You hope you've guessed right and it will grab the reader's attention.

"Very much like the magazine business," Lutz replies. "Very much. But I'll tell you what business it's really like. It's like Hollywood. This is another form of the movie business. What we need at GM are blockbusters, home runs."

Coffee station at a 7-Eleven. Well-dressed adult male in his early 40s. He asks me if I see the decaf. I ask him what kind of car he drives.

"Nissan Maxima. Six months old. It's my second one."

"What did you do with the first one?"
"My daughter's driving it."

"Is that the V6?"

"Two hundred sixty-five horsepower."
"Have you always driven Nissans?"

"No. I like American cars. I had a bunch of them. Thunderbirds and others. Then I bought a 1991 Honda Accord. I'll never go back."

"Because?"

"Oh, they're good cars, the American

cars. But they're not like Japanese cars. Once I drove that Accord, then my first Maxima—I just really like their cars."

DON'T BORROW, STEAL

The car business is an exhilarating combination of imagination, engineering and big machines that stamp steel. Talent comes into play at every step, but how good is your management? Once again Lutz's Hollywood comparison comes to mind. Investment in new car models dwarfs the costliest movie budget. Even low-volume Porsche, working on an allnew four-door sedan, will spend \$1.2 billion to build it.

It's no surprise that Daimler executives brought fresh thinking to Chrysler. Detroit is a closeted place with a comfortable, insular culture all its own. For years automotive writers criticized Detroit executives because they inhabited a world separated from the real one. They lived in the same upscale suburbs. They drove their company cars and never had to service them. Their sense of permanence and corporate entitlement betrayed them. Cut off from the broad cultural changes of the second half of the 20th century, they were—impossible as it sounds—caught by surprise when they finally digested the fact that imported cars weren't just econo boxes for the poor or Volvos for eggheads. Detroit executives didn't like change and never caught on that for the past 50 years the rate at which things change has been as important as change itself.

Today in Detroit the rate of change has been caffeinated. This year's new car is yesterday's news; next year's car isn't coming soon enough.

The next day, back at Chrysler Group world headquarters in Auburn Hills, the atmosphere is different from the serenity at GM. The Chrysler building is enormous, with two wings: the corporate offices and a tech center. The hallways are wide and brightly lit, mostly by daylight from enormous windows. Staircases and escalators fly off into space; corridors are endless and curve above huge atria. People seem to be in constant motion. There are those who believe work-space design significantly affects workers, and I wonder if this environment produces a different design mentality than GM's. I ask my guide at Chrysler, Sam Locricchio, if he knows anything about how the building came to be. He says, "Years ago Lee Iacocca told the designers they should design something that someone could buy and turn into a mall in case the company went bankrupt."

David McKinnon, the DaimlerChrysler VP who runs the passenger car and family vehicle design group, and Joseph Dehner, the director of interior and exterior design, are in the tech center. Both were involved in every step of the 300C's design, and the Magnum came out of Dehner's design studio as well. Both are





long-term Chrysler employees and have firsthand experience of the effects of the Daimler takeover. The 300C was in an advanced stage of its infancy at the time of the merger.

The 300C is bolder than any car GM or Ford would have made. I ask where that energy came from. "Everybody was doing lower belt lines with a lot of glass. That wasn't the look we wanted," McKinnon says. "When Trevor Creed became the head of the design office, he had to say, 'Look, you've got to trust me, but this will sell.' And the guy running the company has to believe that.'

"We've always been rewarded at this company for doing different," Dehner says. "We take our show cars to reality," McKinnon adds. "The Viper was probably the initial inspiration for that, and the Crossfire happened because of that. A few years ago design started to have a stronger voice here. The people who run a company don't always know what a product should be. They get together and talk about numbers and segments, but you have to have conviction.

"Look at J.D. Power," Dehner says. "Those quality numbers are very close to each other. Design is becoming the differentiator in the marketplace. Other cars came out at the same time as the 300C-well, I don't want to mention any names."

"You're in a competitive business," I say. "Why don't you want to mention the competition?"

"Well, the Ford Five Hundred. Ford is touting the fact that it built in blandness. That doesn't make sense. That car is almost like an appliance."

"Aren't there many people who are looking for appliances?

"But you can have appliances that make a statement, like a Viking stove. It has to be aspirational. Cars are emotional purchases.

"The interiors of the new cars are a break from the past. Did the Germans bring that?"

"Creed was brought into this company 20 years ago to upgrade our interiors," McKinnon says. "For his first 15 years, people didn't listen to him. He finally found two guys, Bernhard and Zetsche, who were going to spend money in the right spots.

Dehner adds, "When the Audi A6 came out in the late 1990s, Creed saw it at the Geneva auto show, came back and put together a binder of all the things that were right about its interior. The Pacifica interior was the first product that reflected that—soft touch areas, the instrument panel."

In other words, steal. U.S. car people accuse the Japanese of imitation as if it were a sin. But if you ask me, one of GM's and Ford's problems has been that they haven't been imitative enough. It takes talent to recognize good ideas and 164 adapt them. Or do you think in two years the Honda Ridgeline will still be the only pickup with a lockable trunk hidden under the open truck bed?

WE ARE ALL IMMIGRANTS

When I tell Toyota's Mike Michels about the woman I spoke with who thinks Toyota is an American brand, he says, "Our message must be getting across." Toyota devotes some of its ad budget to telling the story of its presence in the U.S. It creates jobs here. It assembles cars and builds engines here. It supports U.S. suppliers and invests in the community. That message doesn't sit well in Detroit. Automotive journalist Gary Witzenburg thinks the transplants are poorly understood. "Americans should comprehend that nearly every vehicle built by every Toyota or Hyundai plant in North America will eventually be sold, and one fewer vehicle will be sold by someone else—usually a U.S. company that supports American jobs and whose success is highly important to our economy," Witzenburg has written. "Foreign-brand vehicle choices-regardless of where those vehicles are assembled-send dol-

U.S. car people accuse the Japanese of imitation as if it were a sin. But one of GM's and Ford's problems has been that they haven't been imitative enough.

lars and jobs overseas. GM, Ford and Chrysler manufactured more than 75 percent of all vehicles built in the U.S. last year. And their average domestic content is 82 percent. Toyota's is 40 percent. (Lexus's is three percent.)"

Those figures don't mean much at the state level. Southern states, with their nonunion workforce, have attracted carmakers from Japan, South Korea and Germany. Governors in those states just about wrestle each other to the finish in attempts to win new transplant factories. Assembly plants help state economies; they create jobs and capital that would never have existed without them. Hyundai built its first plant in Alabama. Toyota has eight plants in the U.S. and is building two more, one in Texas and one in Tennessee. Recently the governor of Michigan was in Japan, trying to entice new import investment in Detroit's home state.

On the way to the airport after dropping off my rental car, I talk to the female bus driver.

"What kind of car do you drive?"

"An Impala."

"Are you happy with it?"

"Yes. Very much. I like a full-size car." "Any problems?"

"Not one."

"Would you buy another one?"

"Oh yes. I don't like that low, downto-the-ground feeling. The Impala is a good car, and it's a good size for me."

THE DEBATE ABOUT LEGACY COSTS

Here's USA Today's version of a primary problem at GM: "GM might be able to handle its problems if it could control its health costs. It spends about \$1,500 on health care for each car it makes in the U.S., about twice as much as it spends on steel. This is driven by benefits for 1.1 million workers, retirees and families."

The Detroit News repeated the \$1,500 figure in early July. The number sticks in people's minds. GM says it will spend \$5.6 billion on legacy costs—health care and retiree benefits-for past and present union members in 2005, an increase of \$400 million in a year. It's a huge expense that won't improve a single engine or floor mat.

But no one mentions that GM would be in even better shape if it weren't for the fixed retirement costs of its white-collar retirees. For example, we never hear about the retirement benefits of the legendary Roger Smith (of Roger & Me fame) or any of the past CEOs, not to mention the thousands of retired managers, accountants and engineers, some of whom created the retirement plans that now support them. GM spends \$7 billion annually for 450,000 retired white-collar workers—\$7 billion. USA Today isn't writing about those expenses. It's simpler to blame the union.

And the union is feeling the heat. The recent bankruptcy filing by giant auto supplier Delphi, formerly a part of GM, set the stage for the recent agreement by the United Auto Workers that will allow GM to introduce some hard medical-insurance realities to retirees and working union members. Individual co-payments and monthly insurance fees, once exceptions in the GM-UAW medical plan, will likely become the rule.

Another element of the financial blame game is GM's executive-compensation program, which uses a step system to kick in a bonus structure at specified levels of profit. The 2004 GM annual report informs us that although the year's results were "below target," they were "above threshold." This triggered \$2.5 million in bonus payments to CEO Rick Wagoner, making his total compensation for 2004 more than \$4.7 million. (In 2003 he earned more than \$8 million.) Other bonuses on a sliding scale were awarded to many managers. The 2004 executive-compensation program kicked in during a year when GM's vehicle-manufacturing division lost almost a billion dollars. GM's 2004 net profit of \$2 billion came from earnings at General

Motors Acceptance Corporation, which is primarily a home-mortgage lender. No wonder GM is sometimes called the bank that makes automobiles.

I WORK FOR THE UNION

Since the union is assigned a large share of the blame for GM's problems, I contact the UAW representative at the Lansing plant, Art Baker, chairman of Local 652. He has worked at GM since May 1961 and was elected chairman of the local in 1984. "I've been bargaining my whole life," Baker tells me. "I started in the old Oldsmobile plant."

PLAYBOY: Do you drive a GM vehicle? BAKER: Yes, sir, I drive a Chevy Tahoe, and my wife drives a Suburban.

PLAYBOY: Have you ever driven your competitors' vehicles?

BAKER: We do drive-outs. The perception is that Toyota has better quality. The truth is that it's hard to beat our quality anywhere. The Pontiac we built at Lansing—we don't build it anymore—was the highest-quality vehicle anywhere. Now we have the Cadillacs, and you can't buy a better-quality vehicle.

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about the claim that the union's legacy costs are the overwhelming burden at GM?

BAKER: You'd think GM would prepare for that, factor in the costs. If we were to go to the tech center, we'd see row after row of engineers. We've got all these brands. GM has a responsibility to quit duplicating. GM does a dipstick, but it has a hundred dipsticks, all different shapes and colors. Every engineer wants to put his signature on the car. Why isn't there one GM cigarette lighter, one shape for the bumper trim? Get the basics: springs, driveshaft bearings, taillight bulbs.

We have a lucrative labor agreement, but it's most lucrative at the top. GM is big, with lots of chiefs. On the factory floor, you're getting 58 seconds a minute, 59 minutes an hour from each worker. We have the most advanced technology, the lowest manufacturing costs and the highest-quality products. There's just not much more a worker can do.

PLAYBOY: Do the guys on the floor talk about management's compensation?
BAKER: Absolutely. On the floor, members say, "There's some give inside our agreement. There's room to help, but you have to stop paying those bonuses."
GM also has to design cars people want. GM took a long time coming around to the idea that employees know their business. Today GM understands that when an operator cross-threads a bolt, you have to stop the line.

PLAYBOY: Why has the UAW failed to unionize foreign car plants in the South? BAKER: It's generational. Workers of my generation went to the factory floor when they were 16 to 18 years old. We weren't supported by our parents for as long as

we wanted. The generation that came after us just kept handing the pie to the generation after it. The kids had cars and whatever they wanted before they went to work. They never learned the value of the highest possible living wage. They've got a lot of easy credit, and they're used to debt, so they still have everything they want. It's just different.

"I'll bet that's not your first Explorer."

"No, it's my second."
"You must like them."

"They're all right. I'm a Ford man. I'll tell you what I like—that Freestyle."

"Thinking of buying one?"

"I bought one. I was at the dealer with my daughter. I had just bought a Ford van. While she looked at the Escape, I said, 'What's that?' I went and sat in the Freestyle. The salesman gave me the keys. I took it for a drive, took it back, went home, drove the van to the dealer, traded it in on the spot and got my Freestyle. There's nothing like it. I'm telling you, that's the right vehicle."

TO THE EDGE AND BACK

Just ahead of us on GM's road course in Milford, Michigan is a wide, skewed checkerboard of concrete. Lutz added this banked curve, a copy of a famous one at the Nürburgring racetrack. At this second it seems as though we're about to leave the flat earth and take a ride on the wall of the Hoover Dam. At the wheel of the C5 Corvette is GM's traffic-safety manager, Frank Taverna. He has decided we ought to try a speed we'll call screaming fast. He has the Vette in fourth gear with the tachometer needle tucked just under the redline. Concrete rises to the sky on my right as far as I can see as we slice diagonally from top to bottom across the bank. At sea level we exit the curve flat out, in fifth gear going for sixth.

While we are on the wall, I lean over to try to read the speedometer, but it is not visible to the passenger, who is not supposed to know what it says anyway. In that instant of trying to focus on something I can't see while the car fast-crabs across the wall, I feel a hint of nausea. It would be bad form to throw up on



"Thanks for the present, Santa. I can take it from here."

the director of safety, and I use all my willpower to center myself against the g-forces. While I am in this condition, we lap one of the best multi-elevation test tracks in the world half a dozen times, going faster with each go-round.

After two months of striving to get inside the mind of the average driver, I would generalize that men drive to get somewhere but that women live in their cars. For men, a car is a machine; for women, it's an environment. To Lutz's credit, he wants GM to improve the soul and the sticking power of its machines, but cuter interiors are probably more important to GM's future. The only performance most people feel a need for is the get-up-and-go at the low end of the speedometer because of the endless stop signs and traffic lights of daily driving.

Maybe there ought to be an alternate test track at Milford. It would look like that fake version of Manhattan where Seinfeld was taped. On this track you'd have relatively straight streets with traffic lights. No one would ever go more than 45 miles an hour before a stop sign put a halt to the motoring. At one end you'd have a dry cleaner, at the other a Starbucks, and an elementary school, where real school buses come and block traffic, would be in between. The track would be called the Milford Errand Course. Cars on the MEC would be tested by secretaries, mail-room guys and midlevel executives.

A car that pays off at 115 miles an hour is a jewel. But a car that pays off while you're doing the weekend chores, that tells you that you made the right decision, whose interior feeds your sense of satisfaction—that car is going to sell 250,000 units a year. While it should be unembarrassed on the track, it would be on the money outside the dentist's office.

NOBODY'S PERFECT

In a recent *Detroit News* story, Chris Denove, a partner in J.D. Power, wrote, "People tend to think import vehicles are a little better than they are, and they tend to think domestic vehicles are a little worse. There's still a gap between perception and reality." Lutz and Chrysler's Eberhardt are preoccupied with the quality-perception gap. Lutz says GM is making not just the best cars it has ever produced but cars as good as anyone's, by any standard. But it can't get its due.

GM's John Smith expressed the company's frustration in a speech a year ago: "Toyota gets a free ride from a lazy and complicit media. How many of you are aware that, according to J.D. Power, GM was the number one multiline manufacturer in sales satisfaction last year? Do you know where Toyota finished? Seventh place. And that included Lexus. We beat the hell out of Toyota in customerservice satisfaction, too. We ranked second of all multiline manufacturers in customer satisfaction last year. Toyota was in fifth place. It wasn't even close."

As it happened, on the last day of June, J.D. Power's annual study of long-term quality reported a general improvement for all GM brands and noted that GM had the most dependable vehicle in eight of 19 categories. Toyota was first in four.

The Chevrolet Malibu and Buick Century took top honors in two midsize-car segments. They beat the Accord, Camry and Avalon. Ironically Buick is ending production of the Century this year, along with the LeSabre, which also did well. So much for continuity.

Lutz also blames some of GM's perception problems on the automotive-enthusiast press. He mentions *Car and Driver*, which he says has enormous influence on reviewers who speak to the car-buying public.



"It's our Christmas special tonight—visions of sugarplums."

After leaving GM I read a sampling of Car and Driver reviews online. In its most recent evaluation of the Malibu, the magazine expresses more enthusiasm for it than I did, giving it a near rave review. Perhaps Car and Driver isn't at the heart of the problem. Reviews of the Malibu on Epinions.com and Canadiandriver.com, a terrific place to get practical, occasionally spirited car reviews, are positive. And according to Consumer Reports New Car Ratings and Reviews 2005, "the Malibu is a solid and well-rounded car, but fit and finish are unimpressive. Handling is responsive and secure, and the ride is supple and steady. Good offset crash-test result is a plus. First-year reliability has been sub par." But that last comment conflicts with the reliability history of the 2003 and 2004 Malibu printed in the same publication. The Consumer Reports charts indicate outstanding reliability for the most recent versions of the Malibu. Once again, the perception gap.

ITEM ONE

Warren Brown is the *Washington Post*'s car guy. In his reviews he maintains an interesting balance of the practical and the passionate, with a tilt to the practical. Here's part of a weekly chat he hosts online called Real Wheels. The subject is automobile quality:

If GM made a hybrid car that stalled out in traffic, everybody would be saying, "Ah, what do you expect?" Toyota makes one, the Prius, that stalls out, and the media essentially gives Toyota a pass.

If GM recalls 750,000 trucks for faulty suspension work, everybody says, "Ah, what do you expect?" Toyota recalls 750,000 trucks for faulty suspensions, and the media gives Toyota a pass.

Toyota makes lots and lots of big trucks and SUVs, but Toyota is hailed as a green company. GM makes lots of trucks and SUVs. GM is regarded as a dumb and dirty company.

GM sweeps the quality-plant rankings in the latest J.D. Power surveys, taking first, second and third place. The media yawns. Toyota gets top marks for plant efficiency in the latest Harbour Report. The media applauds. But the same report shows that GM has the biggest overall gain over five years, and the media yawns.

ITEM TWO

From the first long-term road test by Edmunds.com of a 2003 Honda Pilot:

Most editors still liked the Honda Pilot and ranked it among their favorite midsize SUVs, but it tested our love. The biggest of these tests happened to come on a remote stretch of Interstate 70 in Utah when the timing belt snapped, stranding our editor in chief, his wife and their two young children. Granted, the breakdown was the result of a missed recall notice, but you never expect a modern-day vehicle to leave you on the side of the road—especially not when it's wearing the H badge.

Although the Pilot made a full recovery from this incident, our confidence in Hondas was shaken a bit. Fortunately, as you'll read in the consumer commentary section, none of the readers who wrote in to tell us about their Pilots had anything close to a breakdown. For now, it appears that our experience was one of a handful of anomalies rather than a widespread blow to Honda's legendary reputation for dependability.

People who buy Toyotas and Hondas accept a misstep because they are confident that it is an anomaly, not a tradition. In a food court in the Denver airport, I ask a young woman from Missouri what she drives. "A Corolla," she says. I ask what she likes most about it. "It's so reliable. Even if there's a problem, they fix it once, and that's it," she says. When I ask John Mendel, Honda's senior vice president, auto operations, what happened to the supplier that made the Pilot's defective water pump, he says, "A SWAT team of Honda engineers showed up at the supplier. They went over everything from the original design to the manufacturing to the package it was shipped in. It turned out to be a casting problem. It's not a problem any longer.'

I call Tony Swan, executive editor of Car and Driver, a likable, sophisticated man as well as a way above average driver who races in Sports Car Club of America events on weekends. I tell Swan that Lutz thinks the editor and his brethren impose unrealistic, expert standards in their car reviews. "Lots of people think it's wrong to talk about vehicle dynamics in consumer cars,' Swan says, "but there's no question in my mind that good dynamics contribute to safety."

"To be fair, Lutz would agree with that," I say. "But he says GM's improvement isn't recognized.'

"We've recognized it," Swan says. "The cars have been getting better, but they're not capturing anyone's imagination. They have to turn a tough corner. They have to turn people's heads."

"Is GM on the right track?" I ask.

"It does too many focus groups and gets too much input from dealers. The LaCrosse was a good car that was lost in production. It's not new; it has an old engine. The feel is tighter, but it's the same stuff, refined somewhat. The corporation doesn't understand. Right now Daimler-Chrysler is re-creating the American automobile in the 21st century. The Crossfire—what a fashion statement. The 300?

Wow. The Magnum? Wow. It's a new feel. GM isn't living it. Chrysler is living it."

Golf course parking lot. A father and son get out of a Lexus ES300 sedan in the space next to me.

"Do you like your ES?"

"Not really. At 65 in a crosswind, you can feel it. The body's too high. The performance is okay. It rides soft, and I like that. I like the steering."

"Are you looking for another car?"

"Yeah. I've had Lexuses before, and I'm thinking the LS or the GS. I'm telling you what else I've been thinking of—the Cadillac STS. But what I'd really like to do is get what you've got." He points to the Honda Element I'm driving. "That looks like it would be great. And that Toyota hybrid."

"The Prius?"

"Yeah. Those would be two cool cars to own.'

MARKETING 101

According to The Washington Post's Brown, 46-year-old marketing vice president Mark LaNeve is going to save GM. He has been credited with re-creating Cadillac, giving an edge to a brand that had stood for sclerotic design. Now he's simplifying GM's brands and clarifying its messages. LaNeve is personable, unhurried and steps lightly through an interview.

PLAYBOY: We have research that says women are responsible for 50 percent to 60 percent of car-buying decisions.

LANEVE: That matches our data. They either make them or strongly influence them. As we know, women influence a lot of decisions.

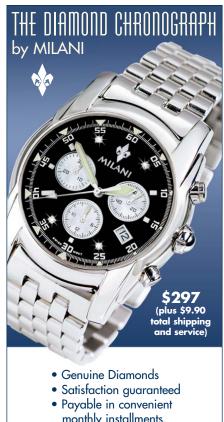
PLAYBOY: Have you ever considered developing a brand to direct toward one gender?

LANEVE: If you look at automotive brands, the Japanese ones tend to be feminine. They've had success positioning with women. We have masculine brands—say, Chevy trucks—but they appeal to women the same way Marlboro cigarettes did. I think you can get at it either way.

PLAYBOY: Robert Lutz says if the Aztek had been a Toyota, the press would have reacted differently.

LANEVE: I don't know about that. No comment. Look at it this way. We were so big for so long, the tendency is to pile on GM. We believe the first chapter of the Japanese entrance into the market has been written. Toyota, Honda and Nissan's combined share last year was greater than GM's. I'm the first to say to my team, "Look, they've won that quarter, and we have three quarters left to play." The focus is on GM, but when you get outside Detroit, what people really care about are the products. We have the products. Far and away GM is still the country's leading company.

PLAYBOY: How do you shift from sending a message about quality to securing customer loyalty?



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LANEVE: The LaCrosse is a great story. The LaCrosse thumped Toyota in J.D. Power's initial quality studies. But if you ask 100 people which has better quality, Toyota or Buick, not too many will say Buick. If you took the current LaCrosse and put a Camry badge on the back and a Toyota sombrero on the front, it would sell as much as the Camry.

THE NUMBER OF POSSIBILITIES

But the LaCrosse doesn't outsell the Camry, and it's not supposed to. They aim for different segments of the market. But a look at the Camry segment, the compact sedan, is instructive. Toyota sold 43,000 Camrys in July 2005. Honda sold 36,000 Accords. No one else comes close in the segment. The next closest, Chevrolet's Malibu, sold 14,600 units. The Taurus will be discontinued next year and replaced with the new Ford Fusion. Ford sold 12,300 Tauruses in July, plus 2,000 nearly identical Mercury Sables.

The LaCrosse falls into another segment, the full-size, five-passenger car, the standard American sedan. Chrysler sold 10,500 of the hot 300C in July. That's a significant number for the company, exceeding sales of the car the 300C replaced. Also, it sold most of those 300Cs without the deep discounts that swept the domestic industry that month. Yet Chevy sold 17,250 Impalas in July, and Ford sold 13,500 of those "boring" Five Hundreds, which proves the Big Two still exert pressure on the market.

But the numbers need a context. Selling about 17,000 Impalas-6,000 fewer than the year before—isn't good enough for a company the size of GM, not even for a car on the verge of a model change. At Chrysler, 10,500 sales of the 300C in July is significant, although not as good as the previous year's 12,000.

Buick sold 13,300 LaCrosses in July, but you could buy the least expensive one for just more than \$20,000, a bargain that runs counter to GM's plan to position Buick against the midlevel luxury cars from Lexus, Acura and Infiniti. The LaCrosse epitomizes the failure of nerve that Car and Driver's Swan mentioned. It was a beautiful concept car, but Lutz, among others at GM, didn't trust Buick's audience to accept a bold design. Perhaps they needed the ghost of Soichiro Honda at the meeting. He always said you must take the customer to a new place.

Most telling, Toyota sold 9,400 of the new Avalon, its entry in the full-size family car segment, nearly tripling July sales of the previous version and signaling an important change to anyone in Detroit paying attention.

Detroit originally gave away the smallpassenger-car business because it thought the Japanese might as well dominate the low-profit mini league. This misstep coincided with the beginning of a dramatic 168 30-year increase in the number of licensed women, a previously underappreciated group of consumers. As it turned out, Toyota, Honda and Nissan were creating customers for future products. They stepped those customers up from Civics and Corollas to Accords and Camrys, and then to Odysseys, 4Runners and RX330s.

It's important to remember that the best-selling vehicle in the U.S. is Ford's F-series pickup truck. Ford sold 939,000 of them in 2004 and an astonishing 126,000 in July 2005 during its own version of the employee discount sale. Last year was the first in which light trucks outsold passenger cars in the U.S., and the trend will continue now that the import brands have become significant participants in the truck market. We now have Nissan Titans, Toyota Tundras and Honda Ridgelines, trucks built with the same eye for detail and convenience evident in Maximas, Camrys and Accords.

Chevy's HHR wagon shows there's life at GM when it comes to convenience, storage and nice touches in new vehicles. But GM, Ford and Chrysler are about to be shocked by the innovations the

When Leonardo DiCaprio and Robin Williams showed up at the Oscars driving Priuses, it was a more significant score than an invitation to the Vanity Fair party.

Japanese are going to bring to each new generation of pickup truck. The Honda Ridgeline, with its fold-up backseats and hidden storage space, is simply the first trick on the table. Next will come folding, stuffing, clamping, storing and towing at the back end as well as advanced power trains, fuel economy, horsepower and towing ability at the front. A ferocious battle is coming. It will be much harder for GM to convince people to replace Civics with Cobalts than for Toyota to sell Tundras to Texans.

At the other end of the vehicle spectrum, we have the spectacular marketing story of the Prius. In 1998 I tested a right-hand-drive Japanese-market Prius. It was cute, and the display that tells you which engine is running and how many miles a gallon you're getting was addictive. The first Prius was unprofitable as well as disappointing in the mileage it achieved. "Don't forget," Toyota's Michels says, "the first Prius was an environmental contribution; it was about air quality and meeting California's smog emissions standards. Gas was 90 cents a gallon when we made the first version." Toyota stayed with the project even though it was unprofitable and appeared unlikely to become profitable anytime soon. The second Prius is a tribute to marketing in all its dimensions. When Leonardo DiCaprio and Robin Williams showed up at the Oscars driving Priuses, it was a more significant score than an invitation to the Vanity Fair party. Put it this way: DiCaprio and Williams didn't show up at the Oscars in Azteks.

Right now the combination of Toyota's engineering excellence and deft American marketing best explains how Toyota has been transformed from a modest car company to the mightiest. Without a more ambitious home office and the contributions of American marketers such as Robert McCurry, David Illingworth, James Press and many others, Toyota wouldn't be writing this chapter of its history. Press recently became president of Toyota North America sales, the highest position within the corporation ever achieved by an American. Among other things, he is credited with the decision to build a factory to make full-size trucks in Texas, the largest U.S. market for big pickups.

IF LOOKS COULD KILL

In February 2003 Toronto Star journalist Jim Kenzie wrote a mostly negative review of the Pontiac Grand Prix, complaining of an inadequate engine and a harsh transmission. It's the sort of statement that hard-core automotive critics toss off without ever being called to account. Vice chairman Lutz, however, maintained that the Grand Prix is tuned to a high standard and handles as well as more expensive European cars. He issued a gentleman's challenge to Kenzie, inviting the writer to GM's Milford track and offering him his choice of vehicle. Kenzie chose a Nissan Maxima, a car GM named as one of the benchmarks for the segment. Lutz took a stock Grand Prix and trounced Kenzie's Maxima. Lest the victory be chalked up solely to Lutz's expertise behind the wheel, Kenzie took some laps in the Grand Prix and found his own times had improved.

At the beginning of my Detroit adventure, automotive journalist Michelle Krebs told me that one of GM's problems is that "it doesn't have a plan. A vague statement to build better cars is not a plan." The first time Lutz told me he thought the heart of the business was to "hit home runs," I thought Krebs was right. That's not a plan.

Many months later I stood next to a 2006 Chevrolet Impala, and if the earth didn't move, it at least shuddered. For the first time, I got it. This was the plan. First, remake the manufacturing system. Then try to face off against Toyota on quality. Then show improvement in the key product. The new Impala is terrific, with a vastly improved interior and exterior. The fit and finish are at a high level, and the car is solid and quiet. Visibility is



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excellent. Chevrolet is reminding everyone that it owns the keys to the standard American sedan.

Looking back, I see that GM's enemy hasn't been Toyota or the Koreans. GM's enemy has been the ghost of GM—more than two decades of sometimes awful and sometimes merely ungainly vehicles. What GM needed was to maintain a higher level of quality across the brands without breaking the bank. With the exception of that darn LaCrosse, it looks as though Lutz has done the job.

If the machines are better conceived and better to drive—not incredible, not cutting-edge, just better—they will, as Bobby Knight used to say, get GM in position to be in position.

GENTLE FEROCITY

For the rest of the car business, faultless engineering, way-cool industrial design and ferocious competition are the future. In his 1986 book on the car industry, The Reckoning, David Halberstam writes that one of the things Americans didn't understand about early Japanese imports was that the companies that came here had survived an intense culture of competition in Japan that would have appalled the gentlemen scoundrels who ran Detroit. The Japanese were honed on fierce competition—in essence, to the death. But unlike Detroit, Japan made constant improvement of the product its key competitive weapon.

For the past two years Nissan, in the midst of a turnaround, has brought forth a series of aggressively designed SUVs and spectacularly engineered sedans. For example, that portion of the automotive press that likes to break cars on the rocks of absolute performance has called the new Infiniti M series Japan's first serious challenge to BMW's long reign as the performance leader.

Toyota is on its own design-andengineering tear, primarily using the Lexus division to bring out models with advanced traction controls, driverwarning systems and stabilizers. Both the TV show *MotorWeek* and the enthusiast journal *AutoWeek* complained that the new GS430 was so skidproof that testers didn't enjoy trying to break it. But Toyota knows its customers, and these features will make ordinary drivers safer in dicey conditions. It will also allow them to drive faster in safe conditions and satisfy the need for speed in leathery surroundings.

A hundred years of the car industry has led to a point at which microengineering, macro-thinking and cool industrial design are the crucial tools of the business. But management does the winning and losing. Each new generation of men and women is a battleground. Toyota knows that. It will be interesting to see if Detroit figures it out.

PROFESSIONAL BEAUTY

(continued from page 122)

She was laughing at something Hohenlohe was whispering in her ear, and from a certain liquidity in her posture, Luke could tell she was drunk. He approached unobserved and put his hand on her shoulder. She looked up, the blurred giddiness of her expression coming into a wary focus at the sight of his face.

"We're going home," he said.

The expression she directed at him over her creamy shoulder was like some terrible composite of a petulant seven-year-old's with her mother's worldliest smirk. For all of his own indignation, he was shocked by the look of loathing—the glower of a drunken 14-year-old—deforming her beautiful face.

"Let's go," he said, steeling himself and glaring at Hohenlohe.

She turned away, took a swig from the champagne glass and rose slowly to her feet, attempting to convey a sense of outraged dignity as she struggled to establish her balance. Hohenlohe, observing proper form, rose beside her, napkin in hand, while her friends averted their eyes and bowed their heads.

"I assure you I was——"

"We were just having a conversation," Ashley said. "You can finish it when you're 18," Luke said.

"It's not like this is the first time I've had, like, a glash of sampagne."

"Aren't we sophisticated? How many glashes have we had tonight?"

Her friends giggled nervously.

"Just because you're having a lousy time," she said.

"We'll finish this conversation at home," Luke said, taking her hand and leading her away from the table.

"I hate you," she muttered once they'd passed out of earshot.

At that moment a seal rocketed out of the zoo's pool, glistening in the artificial light against the backdrop of the trees and, above them, the cream-colored pueblos of Fifth Avenue, splashing down sideways and sending a luminescent wave over the edge of the wall. The night air was perfectly balanced between the heat of summer and the cool of the approaching autumn as they walked out, alone together, among the partygoers. The women were beautiful in their gowns, or at least glamorous in their beautiful gowns; their escorts rich in this richest of all cities, and Luke had never felt less like one of them, reminded now of the figures he'd seen this summer in Pompeii and Herculaneum, frozen in their postures of feasting and revelry.

From Jay McInerney's new novel, The Good Life, published by Knopf this month.



MARK CUBAN

(continued from page 58)

CUBAN: And the price to pay. It's about building a team and what you do if you make a mistake. I was told, "This guy can put us over the top. Spend the money." To get those kinds of guys you often have to take their bad contract. So we got stuck with all these bad contracts and maybe paid too much. And maybe they weren't over-the-top guys. It added up and killed our flexibility. We're just getting out of that now.

PLAYBOY: Last season the Mavs made it to the Western Conference semifinals and then lost to Phoenix. Is winning a championship proving tougher than you thought?

CUBAN: Not tougher, but it is more frustrating to get so close and blow it.

PLAYBOY: What changes have you made this season?

CUBAN: Hopefully we're a defensive team, one of the better defensive teams in the league. Our big challenge is going from being all offensive all the time to being a team that can defend.

PLAYBOY: Is it true that you're superstitious? **CUBAN:** Yes.

PLAYBOY: Don't tell us you never change your underwear.

CUBAN: I don't wear underwear.

PLAYBOY: Okay, then what?

CUBAN: If I told you, I'd have to kill you. **PLAYBOY:** It's that bad?

CUBAN: No, it's just completely stupid. If I'm chewing a piece of bubble gum and we're winning, I don't care how nasty that piece of gum gets, I chew it. But it's going to last only one game. I don't wrap it up and put it in the freezer for the next game. One year I had to walk a certain way to my seat. Even in my house there were certain tiles I wouldn't step on. But I was seriously disgusted with myself for doing it. I was like, "Come on!" Then I'd sidestep it. It was completely stupid.

PLAYBOY: You have a two-year-old daughter. Has being a dad changed the way you look at your life?

CUBAN: Dramatically. Now we can lose a game, but when my daughter comes running to the door and says, "Daddy, I love you," that's what matters. It's no longer "How am I going to feel when I'm 80?" It's "I hope my daughter's healthy." It's "Whose ass am I going to have to kick when she starts dating?" I tell my wife, "I don't care how pretty she is, but she has to have fat ankles." Fat ankles will at least cut the population chasing her in half. I'm sorry, but I want her to have fat ankles.

PLAYBOY: What do you do when you're not working?

CUBAN: I love what I do, so I never look at it as work. But I love to play basketball, read, work out and, most of all, hang with my wife and daughter.

PLAYBOY: We've spent a lot of time together in two different cities and not once have you behaved like the crazy guy at Mavs games. How do you explain the disconnect?

CUBAN: I have to let out the aggression somewhere. For whatever reason, when I play sports or watch basketball or rugby, I get really into it, over-the-top. Not football, not baseball—basketball and rugby. Go figure. Even before I bought the Mavs, when I was a season-ticket holder, my wife used to try to settle me down at games. In leagues at the gym I was always at the top in technical fouls. I was even in a fight every now and then. I became friends with the guy who became CFO of Broadcast.com when we got into a fight playing basketball.

PLAYBOY: Would you change your temper if you could? In fact, is there anything you would like to change?

CUBAN: I'll paraphrase a quote from Allen Iverson: I'm working the job I always wanted. I'm living the life I've always dreamed of. I love what I do, and I'm having fun. Why would I want to change it?

X

Dirty





Duck





by London





PLAYMATE & NEWS



BRAVE HEART

Before Miss May 1983 Susie Scott Krabacher made her first trip to Haiti, in 1994, she was at a crossroads. Her Aspen antiques business was losing money, and she was looking for a change. A television documentary about abandoned children made her think she

wanted to help orphans. "I said, 'Why can't I do something like that?'" she later told a reporter. "I could sell all my antiques and build orphan-ages." Susie soon accompanied a friend on a mission to Haiti, and she began her own charity and relief efforts on the spot. That was the start of her Mercy and Sharing Foundation, and now, 12

years later, she serves approximately 1,600 children through five schools, two critical-care units, one orphanage and one clinic. From the beginning Susie has displayed startling bravery.

She has dealt with the strain of extreme political unrest, contagious disease, a dev-

Susie Scott Krabacher

has garnered extensive

media coverage for her

charity work in Haiti.

astating hurricane, thieves, crooked politicians and violent gangsters. "I've already been to hell," she has said. "So when someone puts a gun to my head my reaction is, Oh please. If you're going to threaten me, at least cock the thing." Susie commutes from Aspen

to Haiti every other month, and with her husband, lawyer and businessman Joe Krabacher, she covers all her own expenses to funnel as much money as possible into relief. The Playmate has been recognized for her work by The Times in London, The Wall Street Journal, The Denver Post, The Aspen Times and

Aspen Philanthropist, as well as the People's Princess Charitable Foundation, which presented her with its Rose Award at Kensington Palace in London in 2004. "I always knew I

wanted to be remembered for doing more than posing for PLAYBOY," she said.

35 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

At the time of her pictorial in January 1971 Liv Lindeland was developing an

acting career for both the screen and the stage. "In the theater you're aware of the quality of your own performance," the archetypal Norwegian blonde declared. Still, she would appear in popcorn fare such



as The Yin and Yang of Mr. Go, Evel Knievel and Dirty O'Neil. Liv's most notable role, though, would be 1972 Playmate of the Year.

LOOSE LIPS

sit through that movie.' —Anna Nicole Smith on Seed of Chucky



AT THE HOP



A party just isn't a party until the Playmates roll up. From far left: Jenny McCarthy has nothing to hide at Hollywood's Kodak Theatre; a kittenish Brande Roderick pounces at the Figueroa Hotel in L.A.; a succulent Rhonda Adams descends on Cinespace in Hollywood; Cara Zavaleta shimmers at the Palms in Las Vegas; fashion plate Summer Altice is found in Space in Miami.

:









POP QUESTIONS: GILLIAN BONNER

Q: So what are you up to these days?
A: Aside from raising a four-yearold, I'm running my company, Black

Dragon. We produce integrated marketing programs for big corporate clients. Since 1995 I've been creating entertainment with computers. We went to the web when it was beginning to explode, and when it all crashed we survived because, unlike most companies, we ran lean and mean.

Q: What's the most exciting thing you're working on right now?

A: I'm working with 213—

Snoop Dogg, Nate Dogg and Warren G. We're producing a DVD of 213 in

concert. I've been editing the footage for what seems like forever, but every time I work on it, I still sit there and

crank it up and jam.

Q: Have you always been driven?

A: Whatever I have my mind on at the moment, I'm going to go after full bore. I'll always have lofty expectations of what I can achieve, which in some ways is good, but in some ways it's like, Well, did I really think I could do that?

Q: What's it like being a mom and running a company?

A: You have no time. After I had a baby everything else came

second. I'm trying for another baby, and if that doesn't work, I'm going to adopt.

Congratulations go out to Erica
Dahm and Heather Kozar. Erica
was recently engaged to author Jay
McGraw, son of Dr. Phil, while
Heather and husband Tim
Couch make room for baby
boy Chase Scott Couch....
Oklahoma Sooner Candy
Loving earned a few pages in
Rivalry Saturday, a book about
college football. In it she discusses
her experience of being selected as
the 25th Anniversary Playmate....

PLAYMATE GOSSIP



Hiromi Oshima and Courtney Culkin.

Hiromi Oshima and Courtney Culkin invaded Tokyo to promote Playboy Fashion at the Playboy Concept Boutique, as well as at the department store Marui. Law & Order fans should also look for Courtney, a New York-area native, to appear in the long-running crime-drama fran-

crime-drama frachise.... Ava
Fabian, Stephanie Heinrich
and Nicole
Wood lend
their talents
to country
star Joe
Nichols's
video for "Tequila Makes

Her Clothes Julie gets bawdy. Fall Off"....

Julie McCullough, a longtime actress who had a recurring role in the series *Growing Pains*, returned to the stage for a production of the sex farce *Pajama Tops* in Calgary, Alberta.... In the September edition of *Playmate News* we incorrectly credited Lauren Michelle Hill as the pictured Guess billboard model.



See your favorite Playmate's pictorial in the Cyber Club at cyber.playboy.com.

ANIMAL ATTRACTION



Colleen Marie, Miss August 2003, recently moved to New Jersey, where she passed the state veterinary exam. Though she now works with an established practice there,

Dr. Marie continues to model part-time. "I was upfront with my boss and told him I'm a Playmate," she says, "but because I look so different at work, clients never have a chance to recognize me.'



As a boy, Jackson was so enthralled by Kong that he cut up his mother's fur to make a miniature ape to film.

and what she sees is less a monster than just another lonely, misunderstood guy. Kong's inherent tenderness is evident in several scenes, notably one in which he washes Dwan under a waterfall, then blows her dry with his breath. It suggests Botticelli's Birth of Venus, in which Favonius, the god of the western wind, blows the goddess of beauty ashore. The wickedly droll touch would later come across as camp to another King Kong screenwriter. "The 1976 version was infused with this Italian male thing," says Fran Walsh, co-writer of the 2005 remake.

Kong II's denouement again comes in New York, where the captured beast is displayed. Alarmed by the horde of paparazzi photographing Dwan, who is wearing a dazzling backless silver lamé dress, Kong busts out and grabs her; she looks as regal as Grace Kelly, talks as fast as Carole Lombard and proposes marriage like a true feminist. The end comes atop the World Trade Center, as new in 1976 as the Empire State Building had been in 1933. Helicopters replace biplanes in attacking the ape. "Hold on to me or they'll kill you," Dwan screams, but the wounded beast can only give her a final glance before plunging to his death. Audiences reacted as De Laurentiis had predicted: "Monkey die, everybody cry.

The initial reviews were lavish—the Los Angeles Times called it as good as the original. And though it would rank among the five highest-grossing films of the year, King Kong: The Legend Reborn did not become a blockbuster, earning only \$52 million, about twice its exorbitant cost. When the picture didn't live up to its hype, the critics turned nasty. "I've written a lot of trash in my time," Semple says, "but this was the only film I thought was unfairly panned.

Reviewers were especially hard on Lange, "that notoriously inept model." The attacks hurt, Bridges recalls. "She did such a great job that people thought she really was this ditzy blonde." Lange managed to extricate herself from her contract with De Laurentiis and temporarily left Hollywood. "She hated the movie," Semple says. She doesn't even list it among her credits.

A DESPERATE WOMAN REDEEMED BY LOVE

Today, nearly 30 years after the remake and seven decades after Wray's hit, Kong is back. The World Trade Center has been destroyed, oil prices are at historic highs, and America has sent troops halfway around the world to fight an intangible enemy, terror.

But love, not fear, is what brought Peter Jackson to the movie. If it hadn't been for his crush on Wray, the visionary director behind the epic Lord of the Rings movies might not be making films at all. But when he saw the original movie on TV more than 30 years ago, young Jackson was, in his own estimation, "gobsmacked." He was so enthralled that he cut up his mother's fur to make his own miniature ape, built an Empire State Building out of cardboard and used his parents' Super 8 camera to film Kong against the Manhattan skyline.

He also wrote a fan letter to Wray, to which she responded. Jackson kept her letter, bringing it out when, just days before The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King won 11 Oscars, he went to visit her. "Imagine that," Naomi Watts says. "He's getting to meet the woman he fell in love with at the age of nine." Wray knew he wanted to remake her famous film. Initially she was anxious, but he won her over. "I liked his spirit," Wray tells me. She gave her blessing to both Jackson and her new on-screen successor, Watts.

Jackson had long wanted to remake Kong. In 1996 he and his wife and collaborator, Fran Walsh, had written a humorous screenplay, envisioning Carl Denham as a man in love with his legend-part Orson Welles, part John Huston. In it Denham talks about his latest film documentary, Indonesia: Hell Hole of the World, and boasts that "Ernie Hemingway's agreed to write the narration." He asks a Sumatran if native women still appear in traditional dress, but the official looks at him blankly. Denham finally blurts out, "Hooters, Mr. Ginting! There's nothing the public likes to see more than native hooters."

When Universal canceled the project, Jackson was devastated. But after his coup with the Lord of the Rings trilogy, the studio offered him an unprecedented deal to film his dream come true. He, Walsh and their screenwriting partner Philippa Boyens started from scratch, reviewing the original movie, with its undeveloped characters, as well as the 1976 version. "We loved the silver lamé dress from that film," Boyens says, "but that's probably about it."

In late 2003 the three began outlining the new version. Mindful of the critical scorn heaped on the previous remake, the New Zealanders were determined to deliver something worthy. Rewriting the classic was "a bit scary," Walsh says.

But the key was to develop strong characters, including a complicated, vulnerable beast. They decided that their Kong would be an old gorilla who never felt an ounce of empathy for another creature. Their story would tell what happens when he meets a young woman. At first the ape believes she's going to kill him. Then he realizes she won't. Their relationship deepens to explore that murky psychological realm that can doom even the most highly evolved romances.

Having established those cornerstones, Walsh and Boyens went off to write the script. "Peter provides the action, Fran provides the heart, and Philippa acts as the bridge between the two," says Paul Voight, head of New Zealand's film fund, which helped launch Jackson's career. This writing team evokes memories of the trio that wrote the original King Kong in 1933.

The 21st century version returns to the Depression. Ann Darrow is now a vaudeville actress who finds herself out of a job. Her luck changes when she meets Carl Denham (Jack Black). He's a raconteur, adventurer and filmmaker who will do anything to make it big in show business. Jack Driscoll (Adrien Brody) is a cerebral New York playwright assigned to write the jungle adventure that Denham is filming. Neither is a likely action hero.

Kong III's beauty is Watts. At 37 the actress is a bit of a late bloomer, having spent two decades honing her craft before winning acclaim for performances in Mulholland Drive and 21 Grams, for which she earned an Oscar nomination. Watts's characters are often eccentric but not weird, lonely but not alienated. They frequently wind up in a claustrophobic bad dream—as Watts has herself.

In 1968, when she was born, her father, Peter Watts, was Pink Floyd's soundman. His talent at building stereophonic equipment helped lift the group from cult status to stadium fame. His lunatic laughter is a signature on the Dark Side of the Moon track "Brain Damage."

But Peter lived the rock-and-roll life to the hilt, and when Naomi was four, her parents divorced. They were considering reconciliation when Peter died of a heroin overdose. Naomi, her mother and brother wandered for a time before settling in Australia, where she took acting lessons and began appearing on TV.

She met Nicole Kidman, now her best friend; they appeared together in a film called Flirting (1991). She then came to Hollywood. While Kidman attained stardom, Watts begged for parts she could barely tolerate. She hoped her role in the cult hit Tank Girl would further her career, but it didn't; at the age of 32 she despaired of ever attaining success. But then came David Lynch and Mulholland Drive, then the hit remake of the creepy Japanese film The Ring, and then 21 Grams, which led The New York Times to proclaim her "one of the most critically acclaimed actresses 173 of her generation." It may seem like a happy ending, but don't expect any happy endings for her *King Kong*.

Ann Darrow's prospects are bleak indeed as the new *Kong* begins. "She reaches an all-time low once the theaters close down," Watts says. Wandering through Times Square as it was 75 years ago in scenes that were digitally reproduced using original blueprints and historical records, Darrow even wears a replica of the flapper hat Wray wore in the same scene. "I love this," Jackson says. "This is a little tribute to Fay."

After Denham finds Darrow stealing food, he offers her a mysterious job. The position takes her to "the jungle from hell," a Stygian underworld that hisses and roars with skin-crawling dread. When the fragile blonde runs through the jungle, barefoot and screaming in her ripped, diaphanous gown, she could frighten the ghost of Fay Wray.

Like his predecessors, Kong picks up Darrow, and like her predecessors, she's frightened at first. But when Kong saves her from a ferocious *Tyrannosaurus rex*, Darrow begins to soften. "How can you not fall in love with Kong when he's physically protecting you time and again?" Watts says. "To watch a man who is that full of rage turn into such a beautiful, gentle soul because he's moved by his emotions is transcendent."

To film those scenes, the actress spent days in Kong's six-foot-high motorized

hand, sometimes sleeping in it. She was strapped into a rubber ring at the top of an apparatus that had a huge rocking base. For violent action scenes, she was jerked into painful contortions. "There were times I'd dread getting into that thing," she says. But at other times Kong's hand became a nest, a chair, an embrace. When Kong rocks her gently, Darrow's sweet face lights up like a child's, her eyes closed ecstatically above a beatific smile. When she does open her eyes, it's to stare into the bones of the primate's scarred, loving face. In those moments, this odd human-simian couple seems like the most natural thing in God's kingdom. As Watts says, "Kong is the ultimate man. He lives and breathes strengthnot just in the physical sense but emotionally as well.

No wonder that when Darrow leaves Kong, his fury knows no bounds. He tracks her down, then tries to escape atop the Empire State Building, where he encounters the old biplane problem. Watts was nervous about playing the finale because the ending is so charged. "The other actresses, Fay and Jessica, had done it so well that you get scared," she says. But she used the pressure to deliver the right amount of emotion and empathy. Her saving grace turned out to be Kong's burning, questioning eyes. Without giving away the ending, Watts says her character is absolutely changed in a way similar to her predecessors. "It's not black-and-white, but she's made a choice she can live with."

Is there a jinx on the actresses who play opposite the ape? After Kong, Wray worked in 41 films and a dozen TV projects, but nothing ever matched the primordial heat of Kong. She felt stymied and frustrated until the 1950s, when TV began airing her most famous film. After that she devoted much of her life to promoting the movie, appearing at festivals, responding to fan mail and giving interviews. The studios pocketed hundreds of millions of dollars exploiting her as the Queen of Scream; her take was \$3,000, but she was never bitter. "I was just looking to do some valuable work as a woman," she tells me.

Lange fared better. Her much maligned debut forced her to retreat from the screen, but she later roared back to produce a body of work that includes *The Postman Always Rings Twice, Frances* and *Tootsie*, which won her the first of two Oscars. After *Kong*, though, she never again lived in Hollywood.

Of course it's too soon to tell how Watts will fare. When asked if she's afraid the new *Kong* will be the thing she'll be remembered for most, she cringes. Who knows what price will be exacted for capturing the fancy of the Big Guy? "I try not to think about any of that," she says.



Playboy On The Scene

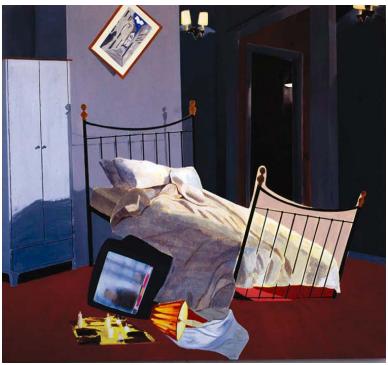
WHAT'S HAPPENING, WHERE IT'S HAPPENING AND WHO'S MAKING IT HAPPEN

Feminem

Will budding hip-hop star Lady Sovereign be the female you know who?

ard to believe, but in the inevitable race to be tagged the female Eminem, pole position belongs to Lady Sovereign, a pint-size British MC whose inventive spitfire delivery is as striking and original as Shady's. "When I was growing up, U.K. hip-hop was unheard of," says the 19-year-old Wembley native. Artists such as Ms. Dynamite, M.I.A. and the Streets changed that a bit, but here in the cradle of hip-hop, British MCs are still cult acts. Not for long: Jay-Z has taken Lady Sovereign under his wing, signing her to a contract. "He sent down a few people to a show I did in New York," she says, "and they gave him good feedback. It's so weird to hear that Jay-Z is after you." Though her rhymes translate across the Atlantic, Lady Sovereign's sound is still British, with touches of dancehall and electronica. She says it won't change even as she begins to collaborate with American producers. "I'm open to ideas, but I know what I want. And if I don't get it, I will kick up a fuss. If a track doesn't suit me, fuck it. I won't use it. I prefer the more quirky, weird, twisted sort of beats rather than your standard hiphop beats." And when she's not holding a mike? You're likely to find Lady Sovereign on a soccer pitch. (She even earned a tryout with Arsenal Ladies.) With the World Cup on the horizon, she's fussing about the coach of the English national team: "That guy needs a kick up the arse. He's rubbish."





The Real Thing

Charles Saatchi gives his London art gallery a new coat of paint

he contemporary art world teems with video installations, collages and sharks floating in tanks of formaldehyde. But representative painting? Isn't that a bit 18th century? Not according to multimillionaire adman Charles Saatchi, arguably the world's most prominent collector. In a two-year-long exhibit titled the Triumph of Painting at his London gallery, Saatchi showcases more than 40 emerging and established artists. These include Dexter Dalwood, who paints rooms in which infamous events took place: his Room 100, Chelsea Hotel, pictured left, depicts the one where Sid Vicious stabbed his girlfriend. The new exhibit is a far cry from Saatchi's last touring collection. Sensation, with its big dead shark. But as the elusive collector told The Art Newspaper, "For people with good eyes who actually enjoy looking at art, nothing is as uplifting as standing before a great painting, whether it was painted in 1505 or last Tuesday." For more info, log on to saatchi-gallery.co.uk. 175







We won't lie: FERGIE's "My Humps," off the Black Eyed Peas' Monkey Business album, is not a great song. But it's true—she does have "lovely lady lumps/In the back and in the front."



Potpourri

SEASONING YOUR DRUMSTICKS

For 40 years Vic Firth has been churning out the finest drumsticks in the biz from his Newport, Maine factory, for garage rockers and great jazz drummers alike. Somewhere along the line, he must've gotten hungry. His latest (drumroll, please): a line of handcrafted wooden salt and pepper mills, available at vicfirth.com. Pictured from left: the Tronco (\$40 to \$44), the Mario Batali Signature Series (\$31 to \$63) and the Lighthouse (\$33 to \$40). Price depends on size and choice of wood.



CASE IN POINT

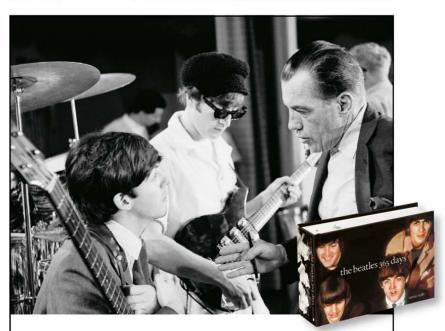
As poker settles in as the new national pastime, you'll need something to distinguish yourself from the throngs of rookies and poseurs who learned the game watching basic cable. The Playboy Casino Grade 300 Poker Chip Set (\$250, playboystore.com) houses 300 professional-quality discs in an aluminum-alloy case that would be right at home in a Cold War spy flick. Handy tip: If you need help figuring out which case holds your pocket nuke, ours is the one with the Rabbit Head on the side.





SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Sickafus Sheepskins has been making ruggedly luxurious shearling vests and coats (\$170 to \$1,500, sheepskinsusa.com) in the spirit of snowbound winter Westerns for 40 years. This shearling is the genuine article—the owner, Pat Garrett, even shares his name with a legendary lawman. His Pennsylvania shop makes more than a dozen men's and women's styles. Garrett takes custom orders, and his coats have draped country icons such as Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn. No sheep.



ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE (AND THIS BOOK)

They were just four lads from Liverpool. But they were the biggest rock stars the world has ever known. But they were just four lads from Liverpool. Somehow, through all the fame, fights, money and groupies, the Beatles still had the power to knock us sideways with their simple, beautiful humanity. Who else records a song like "Octopus's Garden" after they're famous? The new book The Beatles 365 Days (\$30) is thick with some of Getty Images' best shots of the boys, capturing unguarded backstage scenes at The Ed Sullivan Show (above), obscure promotional appearances and endless goofing about. Pick up a copy, then go turn Revolver up to 11.

ALL-STAR PLAYER

Tech rule number one: Gadgets should bring joy, not frustration. It seems simple, but many manufacturers flub this most basic law of electronics. Creative Labs, however, gets it big-time. Not only does its new Zen Vision (\$400, creative.com) play music and video and catalog photos, it also has an enormous screen, a built-in speaker, a 30-gigabyte hard drive and a phenomenal interface. Plus it fits comfortably in your pocket. It's joy in a box, just the way we like it.



TO MARILYN Talk about a wine with great body. What you see here is the stunning photo of Marilyn Monroe that fledgling publisher Hugh Hefner chose for the Centerfold of PLAYBOY's first issue, now gracing the bottle of the new Velvet Collection 2003 Napa Valley wine (about \$225, at select stores; for info go to marilynwines .com). Peel back the sparkling red overlay to expose the fully nude photograph beneath. Like the cabernetmerlot blend in the bottle, this photo gets better with age.

GETTING THE BOOT

They're beauties, aren't they? You just want to reach out and fondle them. Those breasts are pretty nice too. Blundstone's new #490 boots (\$140, blundstoneusa.com) commemorate the company's 135th anniversary. With the same trademark design (stretchy nylon sides, tags at the top, rubber soles and no laces) and the amazingly plush oil-tanned leather, they're what you'd expect from a company that still uses the same Tasmanian tannery the founding family built in the 19th century. A classic boot. The longer you wear them, the more comfortable they get.





SAY HELLO TO MY LEETLE FRIEND

The next time you have the pastor over for lunch, introduce him to *your* co-pilot. Yes, indeed, it's Tony Montana, mang. Though he claimed that in this world he had only his balls and his word, he also had a pretty slick ride—a 1963 Cadillac Series 62, reproduced here *Scarface*-style with real fabric and trim (\$40, jadatoys .com). At one-eighteenth scale, it's 12 inches long. Pass this baby up and you might as well stick jou head up jou ass.

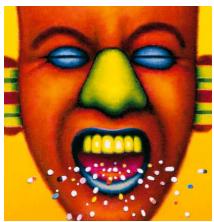
THIS BLOWS

To update *Forrest Gump*, useful is as useful does. But leave a little room for whimsy, will you? We were sold on Thanko's adorable USB-powered fan (\$50, audiocubes.com) merely because of its cooling power combined with the handy USB hub in its base. Plug it into a USB port on your computer and suddenly you have four USB ports on your desk. Then we found out it has pretty lights. Usefulness and uselessness both wrapped up in one funky imported Japanese gadget? Somebody pinch us. If you're all set in the USB-port department, the fan is also available with a memory-card reader instead.



Next Month





DIARY OF AN AMERICAN HEALTH FIEND



GETTING A GRIP ON LIFE.



WE GIVE LINGERIE FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

ADRIANNE CURRY—AMERICA'S TOP MODEL STRUTS HER STUFF FOR US BEFORE BECOMING PETER BRADY'S BRIDE. THIS PICTORIAL WON'T MAKE THE WEDDING ALBUM.

HUGH LAURIE-THIS EMMY-NOMINATED BRITISH ACTOR VIVIDLY PORTRAYS A PILL-POPPING AMERICAN CURMUD-GEON ON HOUSE M.D. THE GOOD BUT ORNERY DOCTOR IS INTERVIEWED. 20Q BY DAVID RENSIN

MY NEW CAREER IN MEDICINE—A YOUNG LADY'S LIFE IS OUT OF CONTROL UNTIL SHE TAKES IT—AND MEN—INTO HER OWN HANDS. THROUGH AN IMPULSIVE VOCATIONAL DECI-SION, SHE SOON LEARNS HOW TO GET A GRIP. FICTION BY **MICHELLE RICHMOND**

AL FRANKEN—AN ORIGINAL SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE WRITER AND HOST OF AIR AMERICA'S FLAGSHIP RADIO SHOW DIS-CUSSES WHY HE IS GOOD ENOUGH, SMART ENOUGH AND, GOSH DARN IT, WHY PEOPLE LIKE HIM MORE THAN BUSH. AN UPROARIOUS PLAYBOY INTERVIEW BY WARREN KALBACKER

SEX.COM—BOTH GARY KREMEN AND STEPHEN MICHAEL COHEN CLAIMED TITLE TO THE MOST RECOGNIZABLE DO-MAIN NAME ON THE SKINTERNET. MICHAEL GROSS TAKES YOU THROUGH A NINE-YEAR LEGAL ORDEAL THAT FEATURES A PORN STAR, A SWINGERS CLUB AND A DASH FOR THE BORDER. THE GOOGLE GUYS THEY ARE NOT.

TAKE TWO-WITH THE MULTIPLEXES STUFFED WITH MEDI-OCRE REHASHES OF MEDIOCRE MOVIES, ELVIS MITCHELL SCANS HIS DVD COLLECTION AND FINDS SOME GEMS THAT DESERVE A REDO.

OYSTERS-PEARLS OF WISDOM ABOUT THE MOST DELEC-TABLE OF MOLLUSKS. A.J. BAIME MAKES SURE YOU WON'T GET A RAW DEAL.

DIARY OF MY HEALTH—KNOWN FOR HIS CONFRONTATIONS WITH MORTALITY AND PAIN IN HIS INTENSE FICTION, THOM JONES GOES 10 ROUNDS WITH HIS OWN HEALTH ISSUES. IN THIS EQUALLY INTENSE MEDICAL JOURNAL, THE WOULD-BE HYPOCHONDRIAC TAKES A THERMOMETER-IN-CHEEK LOOK AT VARIOUS AILMENTS, REAL AND IMAGINED.

GOLF GARB-YOU WANT LOW SCORES ON THE LINKS, BUT MAKE SURE YOUR WARDROBE IS WAY ABOVE PAR. YOU CAN'T TAKE A MULLIGAN ON YOUR LOOK.

PLUS: CHAMPAGNE, BOXER SHORTS, CARA WAKELIN'S SEX SECRETS, GIRLS OF TUSCANY AND OUR VALENTINE, MISS FEBRUARY CASSANDRA LYNN.

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Bold juicy flavor that lasts a long time. Go ahead, take a dip.







