

Details



**The Death of
Generation X**

By Douglas Coupland

Anka

My Life as a Man

June 1995 \$2.00

Full Throttle

Big Bad Motorcycles
Sailing Over the Edge
Biking Down Cliffs

Summer Fashion

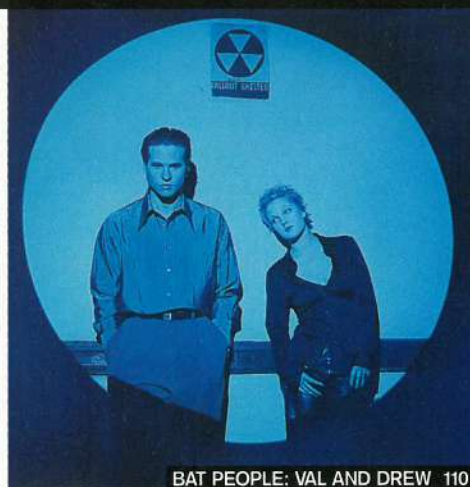
Cool Suits
Hyper Activewear
Best Beach Buys

VAL KILMER

STEPS UP TO BATMAN



BJÖRK ★ PJ HARVEY ★ PAULA BARBIERI ★ LORI SINGER ★ GILLETTE



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Cover: Albert Watson. Fashion: William Mullen. Grooming: Leonard Engelman for Taut Cosmetics. Lurex jacket by Jean Paul Gaultier. Cotton shirt and silk tie by Stephen Sprouse.



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CAPE FEAR

He's been a pilot, a cowboy, a pawn, and the Lizard King. But is Val Kilmer ready to be the man in the black rubber suit?

Bret Easton Ellis hangs with the new Batman.

THE WARNER BROS. LOT ON A THURSDAY AFTERNOON. IT'S THE NINETY-eighth shooting day (out of 107) on *Batman Forever*, which, according to Liz Smith's column this morning, is under budget and ahead of schedule. It is a closed set, but I am allowed to see Val Kilmer in his trailer, the one with the name BRUCE stenciled on its front door. Inside, the trailer is—predictably—the size of most people's apartments. Today the area around Val's eyes is blacked out (he looks like a raccoon) so it will merge with Batman's mask. Shirtless, he wears a parka and the bottom half of the Batsuit. He delicately puts on a pair of sunglasses, then sits in one of the recliners in the darkened trailer, fidgeting with a book of matches from the Bel-Air Hotel. One of his jiggling bare feet knocks against a table on which a videocassette of *Manhunter* lies. On the stereo, T. Rex, Jimi Hendrix, and late-'70s

FASHION: MARK WHITAKER; GROOMING: JACQUELINE COLLIGAN FOR ELIZABETH WATSON INC.
COTTON V-NECK T-SHIRT BY HANES; SILK-LINEN TROUSERS BY GIORGIO ARMANI

Photographed by Albert Watson

Bowie keeps playing: "We could be heroes/Just for one day..."

"The H factor is high today," Val announces.

The H factor?

"The humiliation factor."

What's the H factor today?

"Let's see—Batsuit? Very high!"

The Batsuit doesn't seem so bad.

"It's a relative thing. The only part of my body that can breathe is my lips. I am steaming myself; I'm a human rice cooker. It would probably be harder to be Superman—no mask."

Cynthia, a production assistant, comes in and tells Val they'll need him in about twenty minutes.

Do you have to get back into costume? I ask.

"I do."

Didn't you just get out of costume?

"I did." He lights a cigarette. "This is what is known as a *battering* experience."

How are you getting along with Chris O'Donnell, who plays your sidekick, Robin?

"He's kind of eternally preppy. The whole cast could easily start a religion. We're a very Christian group, extremely white. The black sheep of the family is Tommy Lee Jones, who may never recover from playing Ty Cobb."

Do you have any problem making a movie from a TV series?

"After *Mission Impossible*, what TV shows are left?"

Bewitched?

"Don't say that. Don't write it down. Erase it from the tape or we're gonna have to see it. (pause, then in a hushed whisper) They're doing *Lost in Space*. I'd like to see *I Spy*. Sean Connery and Laurence Fishburne? Let's pitch it."

When will *Batman Forever* be finished?

"It'll never be finished. It's not a job. It's a way of life. We started shooting this in September. That was September of a *different* year. Do you *understand* what I'm trying to tell you? (ominously) It's not a movie. It's a mythology."

AFTER THE \$700 MILLION-PLUS COMBINED WORLDWIDE GROSSES on Tim Burton's *Batman* (1989) and *Batman Returns* (1992), Michael Keaton bowed out of the title role. It might have been about money: Keaton was rumored to be asking for \$15 million. Or it might have been artistic: a wariness that the villains (Jack Nicholson, Michelle Pfeiffer, Danny DeVito, and now Tommy Lee Jones, Jim Carrey, and Drew Barrymore) were the real draw. After Keaton dropped out, *Batman Forever*'s director, Joel Schumacher (*The Client*, *Falling Down*), said that his only choice was Val Kilmer. Kilmer was in the Kalahari Desert in Africa researching a story he's writing about witch doctors when the call came.

To protect their investment, Warner Bros. signed Kilmer up for an unspecified number of sequels. "Did you know that McDonald's has something like a \$35 million merchandising contract with Warner Bros. for *Batman Forever*?" he asks me. "I didn't know this when I took the gig, but Warner Bros. has made something like \$2 billion off *Batman*. They own the comic book and the TV show and the animated TV show and baseball cards—virtually anything you can imagine. I've had to approve my likeness on plates, pillows, cookie jars, and coffee cups. The cookie jar got to me because it is my *actual* size. Someone out there in Consumerland wants a very large cookie jar."

Bret Easton Ellis is the author of Less Than Zero and American Psycho.

FEBRUARY 1995 IN LOS ANGELES AND IT'S NINETY-FOUR DEGREES on President's Day. *Melrose Place* is not a cliché, it's a reality on this Monday. The O.J. Simpson trial isn't on, so millions rush to the beaches; palm trees seem greener, healthier, rat-free; all the girls look like Pamela Anderson. It's a day where it's possible not to see a single pair of eyes because everyone, even waiters, is wearing sunglasses. A day where meeting the new *Batman* for sushi doesn't seem odd or strange but more like how most afternoons in L.A. end up, and it almost makes you forget that later, when it gets dark, the city will become Gotham and helicopters will circle the skies until dawn while cars burn on the sides of freeways as other cars pass by and "Bad Moon Rising" seems to be the only song playing on oldies stations.

But Val Kilmer embodies the lightness of a mellow Southern Californian, and his presence pulls you out of such dark thoughts. In movies he has the open-faced, slightly flawed, amiable American beauty that Bruce Weber taps into: a thick-lipped insolence (the most innocent smile can't help but look like a lewd come-on), a sweetly dim disposition, a masculinity so effortlessly ideal it borders on the perverse. But he's not as flawless in person as he is on-screen. The lower teeth are slightly jagged (but for someone thirty-five they're extremely white); the nose bears small pits from teenage acne; the body is average, nice, okay; his thick dark blond hair is slicked back, anonymous. Looking at him, you're confronted with the mystery of why some people become movie stars and others don't. But his face breaks into huge smiles easily, and when this happens, that question is no longer applicable.

Kilmer has been in L.A. for the last six months, shooting *Batman Forever*, which opens this June. Kilmer, his wife—the actress Joanne Whalley-Kilmer—and their three-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Mercedes, have moved from Santa Fe to L.A. for the duration of the shoot. On the deserted patio of Sushi-Ko he talks about growing up in the Valley and watching Los Angeles change sadly and irrevocably: "What's always bothered me viscerally about Los Angeles is that it's the most tragic modern city, because it had the potential to be the greatest city on the planet." He talks about some of his other projects: appearing in *Wings of Courage*, an IMAX 3-D film about the early days of airmail pilots; playing a safecracker alongside Robert De Niro in Michael Mann's upcoming *Heat*; and possibly doing a remake of *La Dolce Vita*. He doesn't talk much about himself.

But then, Val Kilmer's story is not particularly sexy: He's been married for the past seven years, lives in a simple adobe house in New Mexico. He is a movie star who reads Neil Postman, speaks rhapsodically about Picasso, Rembrandt, Van Gogh; who has played Richard III, Macbeth, and Hamlet onstage; who feels television is the Antichrist. "Television reduces the standards of the culture to the standards of television. There's a basic intrigue, a frivolousness about what people think they should know about other people. What people do these days amazes me. They go on TV and say, 'I slept with my father and then I had the baby and then I killed the baby and then I decided to sue my father and now I'm writing a book about it.'"

I tell him I'm embarrassed to ask the questions I was asked to ask: They are fairly harmless, I say—along the lines of Have you ever been arrested. Do you read *Details*?

"I have been arrested, but it was for reading *Details*," he laughs. "It was in a small Southern town and there was nudity and profanity and I was reading it casually in Jane Smith's diner with my

coffee cups. The cookie jar got to me because it is my actual size. Someone in Consumerland wants a very large cookie jar."

best friend, who says things like 'Yikes!' almost daily. Can you make sure you put that quote in? It'll mean a lot."

He's without everything we relish complaining about in other actors: sexual misbehavior, bad conduct, a general scumminess. "No," he says with a shrug. "No drinking, no whoring, no murder... I don't even cook." He's had women in his life, "but except for one or two, I don't get asked about them, because people don't know who they are." (The "one or two" are probably references to a brief dalliance with Cher in 1983 and, later, dates with Michelle Pfeiffer, about whom Kilmer presumably wrote "The Pfeiffer Howls at the Moon" in a self-published collection of poetry called *My Eden After Burns*.)

When people are asked about Val Kilmer, responses vary from "Totally uninteresting" to "Gave two of the greatest performances of his generation in *Tombstone* and *The Doors*" to "Who?" And after hanging out with him you realize that the last response would not bum him out at all.

YOU CAN LOOK AT THE MAJORITY of films that Kilmer has made (only ten) and interpret them as a series of tests he needed to pass. Some of these films could have ruined the career of a lesser performer or someone who cared more. But American movies don't allow this country's best young actors any kind of madness; only silence, anger, muscles, sexual proficiency, a slow burn, a capability for slaughtering hundreds in tight pants and great hair.

After his debut in the farcical, *Airplane-style Top Secret!* and the teen comedy *Real Genius*, Kilmer directed *Journey to Victory*, a documentary about nuclear weapons, and costarred in *Top Gun*. He got all buffed out for the role of Ice-man, Tom Cruise's adversary, and while he didn't like the script ("I turned it down at first, but Paramount had an option they exercised, so I had to do it"), *Top Gun* remains a key film of the '80s—the most representative of not only what was wrong with movies but what was wrong with this country's values. It's also the most unintentionally gay movie ever made by a big studio, so homoerotic it's like some kind of camp joke. It's impossible to watch it without thinking of Quentin Tarantino's hilarious monologue about the movie's gay subtext in the we're-hip-screenwriters-in-Hollywood flick *Sleep With Me*, which Kilmer hasn't seen. All he'll say about the above, while slyly smiling, is "Oh yeah?"

George Lucas's 1988 fantasy *Willow* was supposed to make Kilmer a box-office star. Instead it was an expensive disaster, the kind of tacky, medieval epic that proudly proclaims SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY BILLY BARTY in its opening credits. But it was

on this set where Kilmer met the young British starlet Joanne Whalley. When *Willow* was finished, they were married and then costarred in *Kill Me Again*, John Dahl's directorial debut.

Real stardom came with *The Doors*, Oliver Stone's extravaganza on the life of Jim Morrison. Its silly big-scale seriousness is endearing and its evocation of '60s L.A. beautifully rendered, surreal but authentic. Yet it's as sentimental as any standard biopic and it's a movie for cokeheads: all sensation and meaningless introspection. The best thing you can say about it is that Kilmer—who lobbied for the part by making a video of himself as Jim and sending it unsolicited to Stone—sounds and looks exactly like Morrison. (Most of the live singing in the film was Kilmer's, and at one point there was talk of him making a record.) It's a great impersonation, but is it a great performance?

You keep wondering if Kilmer took the goofiness seriously. Rumors from the set argue he did—that he wasn't just acting, he *was* Morrison, and that everyone had to call him Jim.

Is this true?

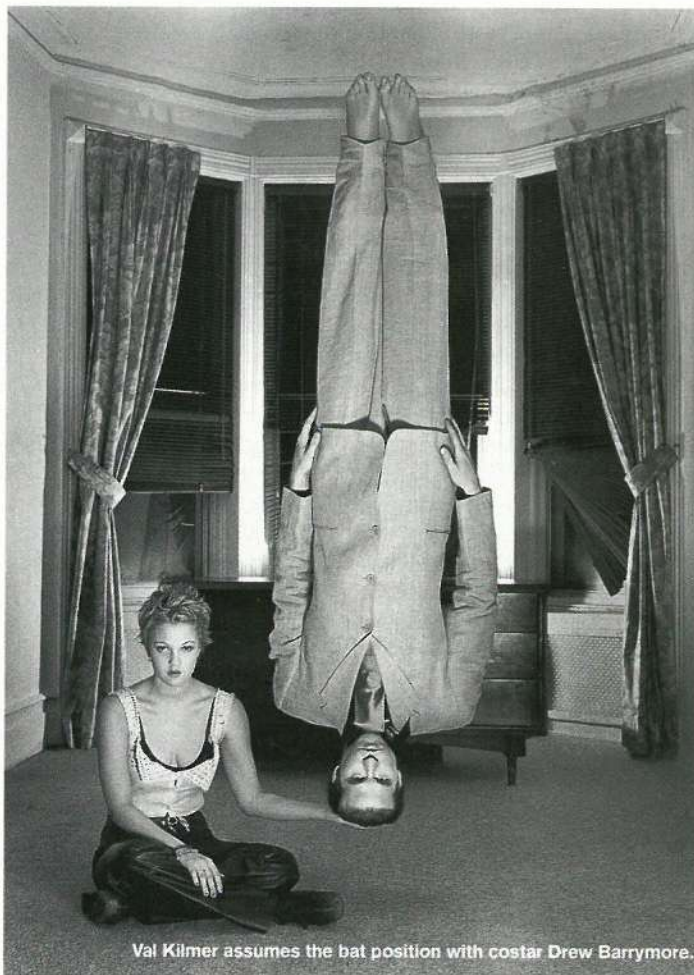
"Being called Jim made it easier for Oliver and probably for me. In the end that approach was healthy because I don't believe you've got to go out and shoot dope to play Jim Morrison."

His best film came next. *Thunderheart* was a smart, ominous mystery in which Kilmer played an FBI agent sent to solve a murder on an Indian reservation. It was followed by *Tombstone*, which contains what most people think is his best performance. He brings something almost tragic to his tubercular dandy, Doc Holliday. It's an audacious, highly stylized performance that takes huge risks and pays off. In the context of his career, it's revelatory. It wipes out all the false starts,

the looking-good-but-looking-lost syndrome that had been summing up his work. And now there is Batman.

HIS WAS AN L.A. BOYHOOD WHOSE HISTORY FEELS ALMOST archetypal. Born on New Year's Eve in 1959, Val Kilmer grew up in Chatsworth, California, out on the edge of the San Fernando Valley, part of the time living in Roy Rogers' old house. His mother was a housewife, and his father (who died last year) was an aircraft-parts distributor turned real-estate developer.

"My dad was very eccentric, extreme in his personality, elusive, powerful but shy. He was born in Texas but grew up in New Mexico and had an attitude about life from being raised in the



Val Kilmer assumes the bat position with costar Drew Barrymore.

"We started shooting *Batman Forever* in September. That was September of a different year. It'll never be finished. It's not a movie. It's a mythology."

wilderness that never left him. My grandfather built the house that he was raised in. They were attacked by Indians, robbed by Mormons. My grandfather and his gold-mining partners killed a bunch of Italians, blew 'em up inside the mine. At one point my grandfather was knocked unconscious either by a tomahawk, a rifle butt, or a rock, and was in a coma for the better part of a year. Finally he got a metal plate in his head, which would make him go crazy in the winter when it got cold. My grandmother was younger and couldn't take him being crazy anymore—sixty-seven years old and still living outside—so she came to California."

Val was serious about drama as early as elementary school. He wasn't a great student: "I had trouble with tests. I'm spiritually dyslexic: If I'm interested in something I can remember it forever; if I'm not, I have to find a trick. I had a great chemistry teacher, but her shoes, her smock, how she smelled were more interesting than chemistry." High school was mostly at Chatsworth High, and his girlfriend there was the actress Mare Winningham.

But there was also a darker side to his childhood: One of the Manson Family members would ride horses with Val on the trails above the Spahn Ranch, where the Family lived; his parents divorced when Val was nine and his mother moved to Arizona, where she still lives; a younger brother drowned the day before Kilmer was to leave for the Juilliard School in New York. It was the fall of 1977, and seventeen-year-old Val Kilmer was the youngest student ever admitted to the drama division. "I was a real snob. I was interested in classical theater simply because it was the hardest thing to do. It was a very good thing for me, because the school was very tough. It was a place to make sense of my brother's death, to apply it to my life. That is the only value those of us living can take out of someone passing."

IN THE TRAILER, THE PHONE RINGS. "THAT'S NOT A RING," KILMER says, staring quizzically at the phone. "That's a gurgle." He picks it up cautiously. "Hello?... Who's this?... Are you barefoot?... Are you in the kitchen?... Are you cooking something?... Don't forget you're pregnant... Sit down, put a hot towel over your head... Rest, damn it... Yes I decided to introduce De Niro... On Sunday... Yeah... Will you wear a miniskirt?... Borrow something from our child... I can't chitchat... They've called me to work... Yes... Okay, no... I'm going over to the other studio afterwards... Yeah, yeah... I have no idea... 'Cause I don't know when I'm finishing here... It might be earlier than last night... Okey-dokey." He hangs up. "Would you like to guess who that was?"

He met Joanne Whalley while making *Willow*. "We actually met before we met," Val has said. When he was making *Top Secret!*, in London, he used to sneak into the second act of a play called *The Genius*. He fell for a young actress who played a physicist. He used to wait outside, even when it rained, and follow her to a local bar. He never got up the nerve to approach her. When they met on *Willow*, he fell for her again, though he didn't remember her from the play until much later. He asked her out to dinner and the theater; he sent her flowers; he told her outrageous stories. She was professional, nothing more, perhaps even a little wary. Eventually, Val recalls, "I guess I just wore her out."

WHEN HE TALKS TO YOU, VAL KILMER OFTEN LEANS FORWARD. His wide face is patient, and when he formulates answers to questions he's very deliberate (he squints) and not because he's hiding

anything but because he wants to make himself completely clear. His speech pattern runs slow, and if you listen long enough you recognize a Native-American cadence that helps structure his sentences. He is laid-back, questioning, elliptical, surprised at the connections he sometimes makes with a sense of humor so unforced it doesn't quite register, totally unmanic. As with so many men of my generation, casual sarcasm is a constant; a kind of mock courtesy, a dig at formality. It layers phrases, sentences, whole monologues, informs entire conversations. Kilmer, however, can also be incredibly nonspecific: Yes-or-no answers do not interest him, and he responds to the simplest questions with a circularity that's slightly frustrating.

After long periods of silence, Val staring out the trailer's open door, I ask him about Wesley, the brother who drowned. Val finally turns to me and says, slow and measured, "Wesley was a genius... I don't use that word lightly... He did everything: acting, directing, skits... He even started making films. He became obsessed with *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* for no apparent reason and decided to remake that film."

Val looks directly at me through the darkness of the trailer. "But he couldn't get the miniatures to look right. So one day I come home from high school and I go up to my room and my clothes are all over the floor and everything's been pulled out of my closet. I'm looking around thinking maybe I did something to send Wesley into a rage. Nothing was stolen but it looked like someone had lost their mind in my room. As I looked around, it hit me: My hangers are missing. And then I noticed all my sheets on the bed were gone and the foam from the sofa had been pulled out. So I started calling out, 'Wesley! Wesley! Where are you?' I found him in the rec room, the place where Roy Rogers had his horse Trigger stuffed and mounted on two hind legs, and Wesley is in there with this twenty-foot octopus. He'd taken all the coat hangers, wrapped them in foam, and was filming this octopus."

"Anyway, I burst in and he said, 'Shut up, shut up,' and you just couldn't help but be involved—immediately—because there was a twenty-foot octopus in the room. He'd get obsessed. And he really didn't care what you'd think. He had an immediacy that made him... very free..." Val clears his throat.

"He drowned when I was seventeen... I started at Juilliard a week later..." A deep, heavy sigh. A knock on the trailer door, even though it's not closed. A P.A. tells Val that someone named Vera is ready. Kilmer nods, says, "Okay... soon..." He looks back at me as if he's trying to study me for a reaction. Finally he says, "The understanding he gave me about art and life was... a gift."

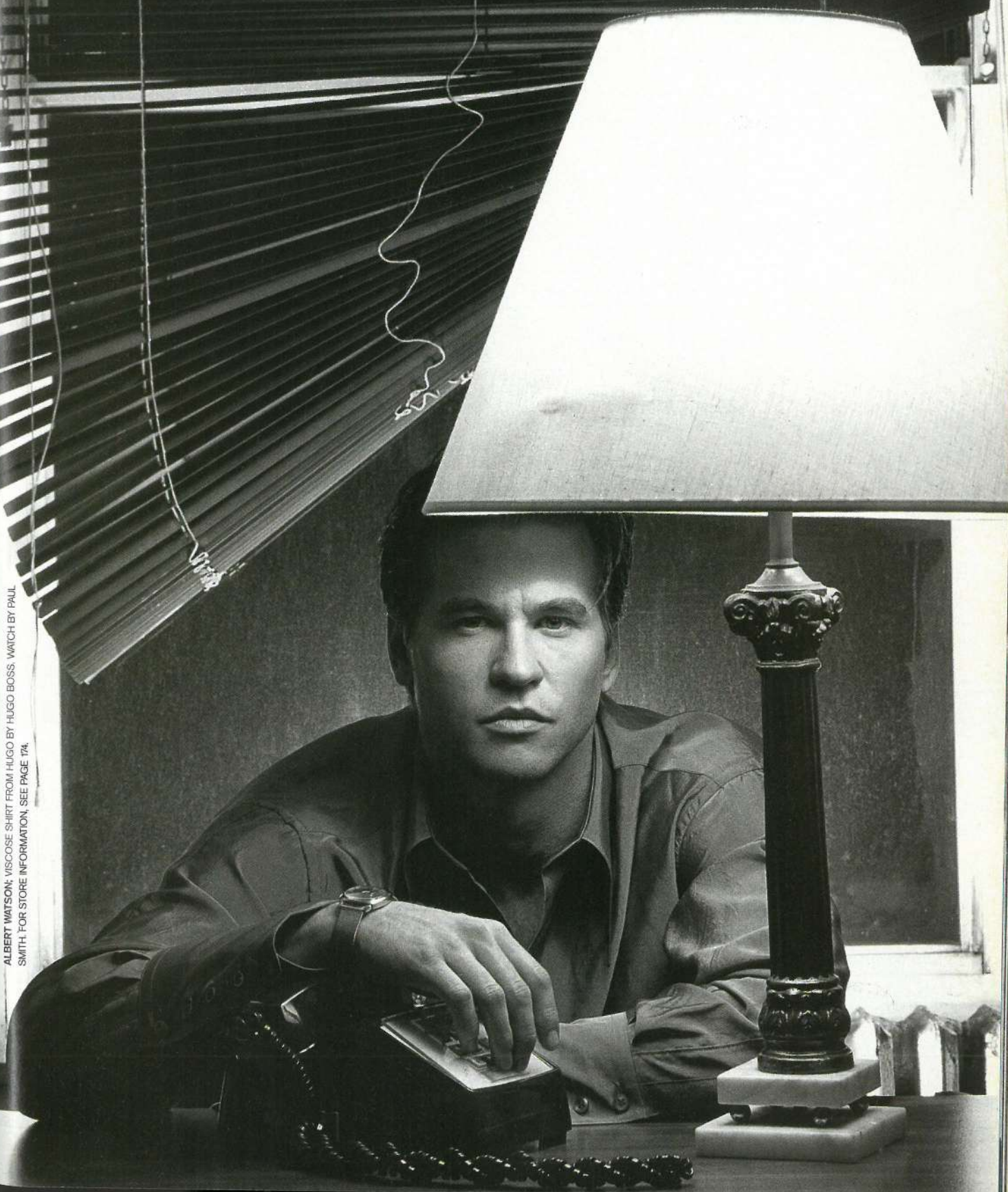
AFTER SCHUMACHER CALLS IT A WRAP FOR THE DAY, VAL SITS IN front of a makeup table, staring intently into a mirror. Leonard, the makeup man, is applying a scar. We're about to drive over to Culver City, to the set of *Heat*, Michael Mann's new crime thriller starring Al Pacino and Robert De Niro, where Kilmer will do wardrobe and makeup tests for his supporting role as a young safecracker.

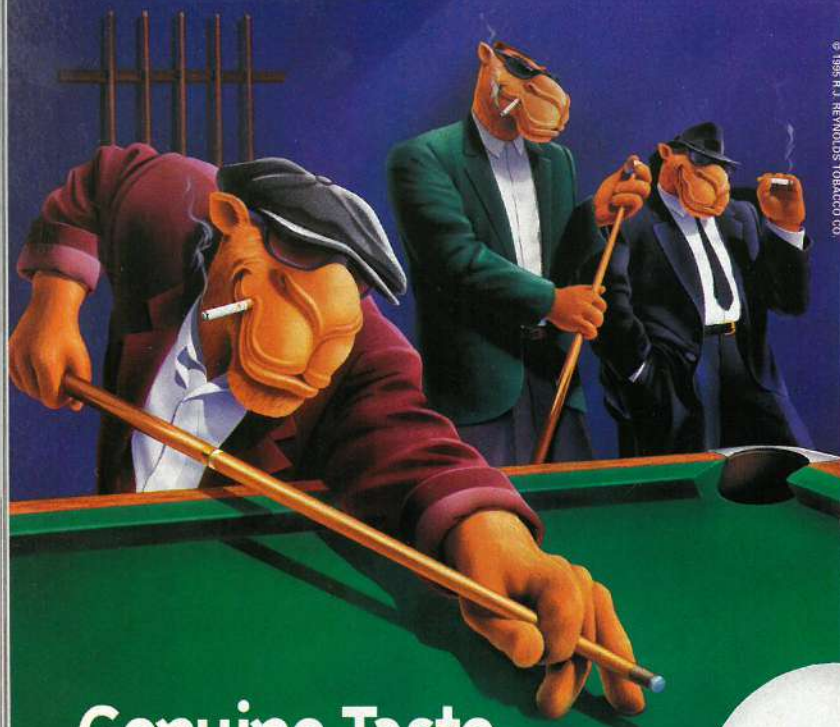
On the way to the car, a passing P.A. drops something and curses. Val admonishes him as we walk by: "Please don't cuss on this set. It's a family picture."

We drive through the deserted lot, past a massive, four-story poster painted on the side of a building for *Boys on the Side*. "That's a terrible poster," Kilmer says. "Drew's a beautiful girl—"

(Continued on page 170)

ALBERT WATSON; VISCOSE SHIRT FROM HUGO BOSS. WATCH BY PAUL SMITH. FOR STORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE 174.





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Genuine Taste, Corner Pocket.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

Cape Fear

(Continued from page 115)

she glows in the dark—but she looks like the official Munchkin in that poster.” The car cruises onto the Ventura Freeway, and Val is muttering under his breath, “I hate the freeways.” He calms down once we start talking about his thirty-acre ranch in Santa Fe.

“Let’s talk about buffalo,” he says.

Why?

“Because I love them and own them.”

How many?

“Three.”

What are their names?

“We didn’t name them because they’re prehistoric animals.”

I see.

“Names, however, sort of emerged. One had a foal, and our daughter named her Bambi. The mother looked like a hard-drinking gal, a kind of floozy who’s been around, so we named her Jezebel. Buffalos love the snow and a full moon, and they go off on that and they dance. And this bull was dancing in the snow, and icicles had given him dreadlocks and he was just James Brown-ing out and so we named him James.”

Suddenly, there are miles and miles of tail-lights. “Ooh, bad accident,” Val says. “Maybe we’ll get off the freeway.” He takes the

Westwood exit. As we head down San Vicente, I ask Val if he’s following the O.J. Simpson case.

“What the trial reflects I find too crippling to take in. However, I did watch this thing on CNN about the jurors and which movies and TV shows they can watch. They couldn’t see *Speed* but they could see *Tombstone*.”

He pauses, looks over at me. “Explanation?” I explain: One of the reasons I asked about O.J. Simpson is that Kilmer has acquired the rights and is adapting for the screen Jim Thompson’s macho-nihilist novel *The Killer Inside Me*. Kilmer will play Lou Ford, the smiley psychopathic deputy sheriff of a small Texas town in 1952, whom nobody suspects of being a crazed serial killer.

Passing the Burger King where Simpson allegedly bought crystal meth on the night of the murders, I’m moved to ask: Why Lou Ford? Kilmer stares ahead, thinking about this or maybe not, until he finally says, “Without understanding, we cannot heal this disease of ultraviolence. Anyone who’s killed more than four people, every single one of them wants to get caught. They know they’ll die if they keep doing this. They want to die. They know half the time that they’re quite brilliant, they know in some conscious way what they’re doing, but it’s a dreamlike state. I don’t feel the need for another extremely

violent film to be made. But I want to confront my own fears about violent impulses.”

WHEN HE WAS AROUND TWELVE, A FRIEND AT school whose father managed the Osmonds had an agent friend who came to see Val after a school play. As we’re driving, Val tells me the story. “He sat me down and asked me if I’d like to ‘do acting, son?’ And I said sure, sounds fun. So he explained to me how you ‘do’ acting, and he got me a commercial for a, um, hamburger franchise which will go nameless. The director was upset because I guess I wasn’t giving him what he wanted. Even then I was like this junior Method actor. They were trying to be friendly, but I knew they just wanted to scream, ‘*Why the fuck aren’t you doing it right!*’ But I was honest and said, ‘I don’t like these hamburgers.’ And the director said, ‘Yes, but can’t you convince us that you do?’ And I said no.”

Is this a problem?

“Well, I was never really satisfied at Juilliard. There were things I had to do my own way, even at the risk of getting kicked out. I said, ‘Listen, if I get hung up on something and it paralyzes me all day and it makes me obsess on how to do a certain speech or scene, isn’t that what the school should be about? They were right and so was I.’”

What happens if you have this same attitude while making a movie?

“Oh, I have—all the time. I messed up certain relationships because of that. When I worked on *Willow*, I should have just relaxed. If *George Lucas* was happy, I should have been happy.” He pauses, pushes in the car’s lighter; a cigarette hangs from his mouth. KROQ plays Chris Isaak’s “Wicked Game”; the air-conditioning is on; Val’s cellular phone rings, but when he picks it up, no one’s there.

“Acting is not a science,” he says. “Anybody who believes that their success exists in relation to their goals is deluding themselves—unless you think of a career in terms of financial goals. I have nothing against Tom Cruise, but he must have a large capacity to deal with the business side of movies.”

What happens when that artistic instinct keeps bumping up against the business aspect of the industry?

“Well, I don’t want to insult anyone I’ve worked with, but that’s how I pretty much view my entire career.” He bursts out laughing. “I’ve done a lot of jobs that were just for money or were just the best things around at the time.”

On what movie did you feel this tug between art versus commerce the least?

"Are you talking about the movie or the role in which I was most able to represent the deepest aspects of my soul?" he asks.

"Well," he answers himself, "*Batman Forever*, of course." And again he laughs.

Turning onto Lincoln Boulevard, he asks, "Are we lost yet? Oh, hell, let's go down Lincoln for a while." He starts cracking up. "We're near," he says, intoning dramatically. "Can't you feel the *heat*?"

On surface streets the city looks barren, too modern to look haunted. Val unrolls the window. The night sky looks metallic and it's winter but it feels like June. Limousines glide by, chauffeurs talking lazily into car phones. Misspelled obscenities are spray-painted on a freeway overpass, mattresses lie on the side of the road, billboards show off torsos the color of sand. We pass hundreds of empty bus benches, vacant lots, orange-tiled roofs, the monotony broken only by the faded neon lights from an occasional cocktail lounge. And Val Kilmer says, "It doesn't matter how we get there as long as we get there, right?" •

Tales From the Scripts

(Continued from page 129)

"Why are you still here?" he asked.

"I never leave before you," she informed him.

There's plenty to do. She could be there twenty-four-seven. Producers-to-be read a couple scripts a night, more on weekends—perhaps a thousand a year. Jen totes her weekend read home in a canvas bag with her initials stitched on it. If her bosses are at the office late, she'll sit in hers and dig into her script pile.

That kind of devotion can be trying on romances. Jen's boyfriend, who's in real estate, is understanding, even on those late nights when she calls him, almost in tears, and says, "I'm sorry, I *want* to come home."

WHEN, ON SATURDAY EVENING, I STOP BY Andrew's apartment to see how a producer-to-be lives, Marion is there. She is wrapped in a bulky navy blue jacket, and seems on the point of leaving, except that she keeps fussing. She talks about mending the pillows that Andrew has let go to ruin. Marion, it dawns on me, is Andrew's former girlfriend; I remember the photo of her in his office. They lived together for two years. She's a painter; one of her works is propped against the wall, another one hangs in his office. I wonder what she thinks of the movie business.

"Movie-business people are dolts," she says.

"Dolts?"

"Dolts," she insists.

She recalls how at one party, a development exec approached her. "Do I know you?" he inquired. She explained that she was a painter, then teased, "I'm the person no one talks to at parties." He turned and left.

As Marion talks, Andrew moves around the apartment. He goes into the bathroom, then comes back out with mousse in his hair. "I taught him how to use mousse," Marion says. It's a fond remark, and possessive, though the possessiveness has mostly gone out of their relationship. In fact, Andrew seems edgy, almost anxious for Marion to depart. When she does, the reason becomes clear: He quickly takes out a pack of cigarettes. "She doesn't like when I smoke," he explains.

Andrew's apartment is so sparsely furnished that the few items in it seem to float on the creamy gray carpet. A futon is folded up on the floor. There are two chairs, donations from a friend. The kitchen has never been used. He has a tall halogen lamp in the living room, but it's never been used, either. It has no bulb. "I think about getting one every day," he says. "But I don't know where you'd get it." So the room's only illumination comes from a nightlight and then from the match Andrew brings to his cigarette. Sometimes Andrew

thinks it would be more efficient to just move a cot into his office.

By one view, Andrew should be on top of the world. A year ago, Permut promoted him to vice president for development. Then in February, he was made vice president for production. He runs a company which actually does make movies—they're shooting Whoopi Goldberg's *Eddie* this summer. Maybe a part of Andrew really is celebrating. If he continues along the producer track, then he might go on to run a larger company, then work as an exec at a studio, then land his own producing deal. "My dream," he tells me, "is to make a movie that affects people profoundly." Still, every tracker dreams that dream. It's not enough. "We become corrupted," warns Jen. I don't think she means that the dream fades. On the contrary, it takes over. "We all say we'll never be like our bosses," she says. "Mark my words, in two years we'll all be like our bosses." Not mean or ruthless—just consumed.

Andrew's living room is as dim as a movie theater. Outside it's pouring. "Marion hated going to the parties, and rightfully so," Andrew says. "We'd try to do stuff, but I had to read scripts, and if that's a whole day on Sunday, what are you going to do? You see each other



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