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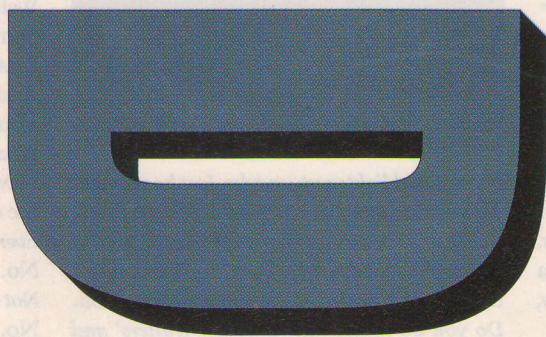
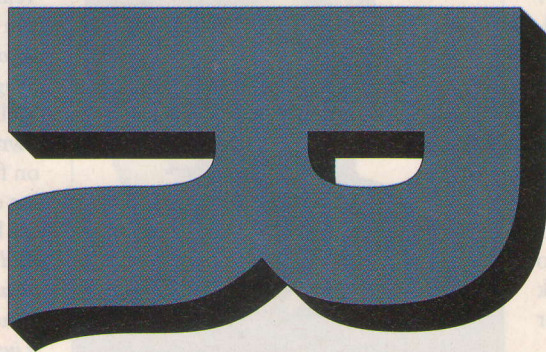
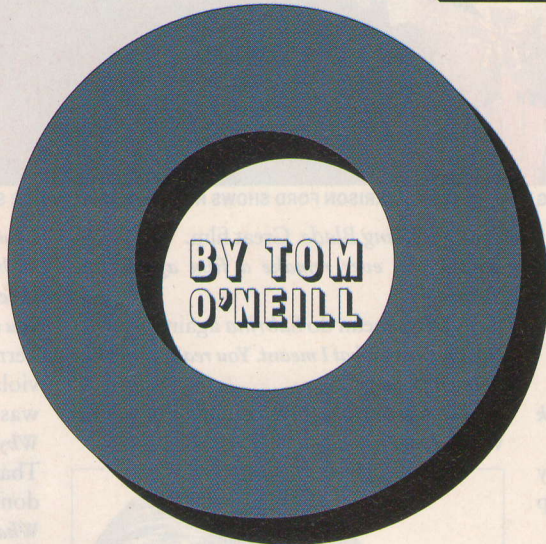
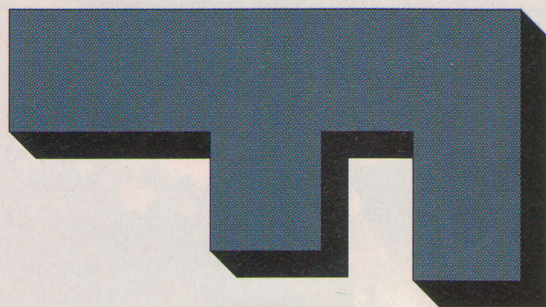
IS IT ANY WONDER THAT HARRISON Ford not only isn't frightened of earthquakes, he's sorely disappointed when he misses one? "Really? Last night?" asks the actor incredulously when informed that he slept through a 3.3 tumbler. "I missed the last big one, too, and was really sorry because I was here for the one before that and it was fantastic!"

This injection of movie-star bravado into the opening moments of our meeting is stunning in its simple, swift delivery. That it is barely 8 a.m. and Ford, in crisp bluejeans, button-down shirt and wire-rimmed glasses, has already managed to invoke his mythical persona is a testament to his subconscious marketing savvy. Yet, while it's difficult to forget that the man who sits before us has played, among others, Han Solo, Indiana Jones and Jack Ryan, there is also the disquieting reality that Ford — his love of earthquakes notwithstanding — is 54 years old, a grandfather and, well, maybe a little long in the tooth to be playing action heroes forever.

"I think he's aware of that," says Wolfgang Peterson, the director of Ford's new action adventure, *Air Force One* (opening July 25), in which he plays a U.S. president whose plane is hijacked by foreign terrorists. Peterson (*Das Boot*, *In the Line of Fire*) says the actor pulled off the grueling action sequences with "bull"-like proficiency, but he acknowledges that when he brought up the subject of Ford's age recently, Ford became silent. "It's hard to get that out of him," says Peterson. "He just nods and says, 'Yeah, yeah, you're right.'"

Welcome to the club, Wolfgang. Famed in journalistic circles for being a tough, if not impossible, interview, Ford meets his interrogator with all the enthusiasm of someone arranging his own funeral. Disarmingly direct and humorless, the actor speaks in a low, barely audible monotone, doing little to conceal his disdain for the process. Which made it all the more fascinating when, this

# HARRISON



spring, the reclusive star was forced to exert some very public damage control after his new movie came under attack — from his own co-star.

Coming off the fizzle of his last feature, the woefully inept remake of *Sabrina*, in 1995, Ford had more than a vested interest in the success of *The Devil's Own*. He was justifiably concerned when Brad Pitt lashed out at the film in *Newsweek*, calling it "irresponsible filmmaking," while industry wags whispered that the younger star's grievances were really with his leading man's self-serving script changes. Having already endured, for the first time in 30 years in the business, smears in the tabloids, Ford couldn't have been pleased when the press reported that during the making of the film, he was boozing until all hours of the night with a woman decidedly not his wife. (Ford has been married to screenwriter Melissa Mathison for 14 years and has two young children with her and two grown sons from a previous marriage.) Pitt eventually retracted his comments. Ford never addressed the tabloid reports. But the damage had been done. Looking like he'd rather be anywhere else than in such company, Ford made the rounds of the talk shows, including *The Barbara Walters Special*, *Today* and *The Rosie O'Donnell Show* (during which the increasingly anxious hostess pleaded with her guest to sing with her; he didn't).

There will be no singing today, either, it quickly becomes apparent, as the actor sets the tone for the interview by referring to the afternoon's pre-scheduled EPKs (electronic press kits) as "electronic pest kits." More visible now than ever, thanks to the re-release of the *Star Wars* trilogy, Ford opens his Brentwood home to this reporter (he also has homes in New York and Jackson Hole, Wyoming) but still guards his interior life with a vengeance.

*Is it strange to have a current version of yourself [in 'The Devil's Own'] competing with a 20-year-old version [in the*

Still playing the hero, the star finally elects to be president in 'Air Force One'





AS MAN OF THE YEAR AT HARVARD'S HASTY PUDDING BASH IN 1996, HARRISON FORD SHOWS HE ALSO HAS A LIGHTER SIDE.

'Star Wars' trilogy] on movie screens? Strange enough so that I haven't wanted to go out and see it.

Really? When was the last time you saw any of the 'Star Wars' films?

Um, after they were made.

I was wondering how you thought your work held up.

Uh, I would not, uh, probably have a very good opinion of myself. That's why I keep myself from seeing [the films].

How did you choose a film like 'Air Force One'? When I read it [I thought] it was a high-quality commercial movie...and I haven't done a full-out action-adventure movie in three or four years, so I was anxious to do it.

What are your feelings about the big event movies of the summer? Do you think Hollywood is out of control with its over-the-top spending? You know, I don't really pay too much attention to the business except in respect to how I make my choices. I don't really think much about what other people are doing or general trends or any of the rest of it.

You don't read 'Variety'?

I don't, actually. I don't think it helps me do my job any better to be totally immersed in the movie business.

Are there any summer films you're going to rush out to see?

I don't know what's coming out. [But] probably not, 'cause I don't rush out to see anything. I'm really not much of a moviegoer. Every once in a while I take my kids to a movie that I think they'd like, but I'm pretty, uh, probably the word is irresponsible.

Have you liked anything this past year?

I've liked things, and I've liked parts of things.

I enjoyed *Sling Blade*. Great film.

Would you ever remake a film again, like 'Sabrina'?

[Icily] You mean do *Sabrina* again?

No, that's not what I meant. You really don't like doing this, do you?

[Shifts uncomfortably] Um, it's not my favorite part.



FORD BEFORE HE TOOK OFF IN 'AMERICAN GRAFFITI'

If you could lighten up, maybe. Just be yourself. This, unfortunately, is myself. I've been doing this for 25 years, and people have gotten dries and drabs of who I am, and there is not that much more for public consumption. Do you do shows like 'Barbara Walters' and 'Rosie O'Donnell' because you enjoy it or because there is pressure from —

Nobody pressures me into doing anything. I do what I think is right for the film. I do what I think is correct to preserve other people's investment in the process. And certainly, I'm in the best position to do promotion of the film.

And hopefully people will read this and want to see yet another one of your films.

If so, it won't be — forgive my saying — from reading this piece. It'll be because of an overall history of...It will be because they think there's something...[waves his hand to dismiss what he was going to say].

No, continue, please.

I was going down a blind alley. What I'm trying to do is find out something about an actor who's had a pretty phenomenal career —

All that, without public embarrassment.

I don't know if it was because you were working with Brad Pitt, or just because you were on the streets of New York, but for the first time, last year, you were all over the tabloids. How did that feel? Terrible! Terrible! I felt terrible. It was a real violation and because, also, a great deal of it was not true. That hurt a lot.

Why didn't you deny the most hurtful stuff?

That's just another page in the story. So I just don't do that. I just ignore it.

What's the antidote to that? Not going out?

Yeah.

You live a good part of the year on a ranch in Wyoming. I understand you take care of the endangered species on your property.

Well, most of the animals are left to do their own thing. I have worked with eagle experts on fostering orphan birds and radio-collaring eagles, things like that, but I'm not Doctor Dolittle out there.

And you've recently taken up flying. Tell me, please, what is it about actors and planes? John Travolta flies, Patrick Swayze, Treat Williams. Is it just another form of escape?

Well, it certainly is that, but it's also the development of a skill completely separate from whatever skills are required for the other job. And it's certainly a responsibility that you assume when you start flying people around. What's the farthest distance you've flown?

New York. I've been back and forth across the country three or four times.

Ever alone?

No.

Not safe?

No, it's fine. It's just a question of there's nobody there to admire your landings.

I'm noticing a theme [Continued on page 122]



## HARRISON FORD

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here. Would you call yourself a perfectionist?

I am a reasonable perfectionist.

Do you consider yourself an artist?

I consider myself a craftsman.

Sounds like you've been asked that question before.

Hey, I don't know how anybody could think of new questions that I'd be willing to answer.

OK, here's one: How come you've played only heroes after 1990's *'Presumed Innocent'*? Will you ever play a role like the one in that film again, or the kind of villains John Malkovich has been cornering the market on lately?

Um, I think John Malkovich does the John Malkovich roles really well, and I don't think that's my perceived utility.

But don't you think you could do it?

Yeah, I could do it, but a character who finds new and interesting ways to kill people is not as interesting to me as a character who does something else.

Well, what new ground can you break as an actor?

There probably isn't new ground for me.

Because you've done it all?

No, I don't mean that I've done it all, in a prideful sense. But after 25 years, I probably have done a variety of things, and I think I have a pretty clear idea of where I'm useful. I also feel that I can unhinge a film because I'm so well-known. That's a kind of baggage I have before I even show up.

Would you be willing to do an independent feature, say, for a lot less money?

If it was presented that way? "Would you like to do an independent picture for a lot less money and still stay away from your family for the same amount of time and still have the same amount of responsibilities and the stress?" And I'd say to you, "How good is the script? What's the script?" You know, "What are you talking about here?"

A script called *'Sling Blade'*?

Well, how interested would the audience be in seeing me do a very strong character part?

It's interesting to hear what someone of your stature feels he owes to his audience. But as far as your expectations of what will please them and what won't please them —

I don't think of that as a responsibility to them. I think of that as a responsibility to myself. I think part of what has led me to a commercially successful career has been a certain wisdom about choosing projects, and choosing movies that people might want to see. This is a business, and I'm in the business of making movies.

It's also considered an art form by some people.

I don't argue with people who consider it an art form. I just tell you that from my point of view, I am clearly an interpretive player.

That's a very humble sentiment.

Not at all. I don't write. I don't direct.

I think you're capable of quite a bit more.

I just like to fold whatever capacity I have into this job. I don't feel that I just roll out of bed and do it. It's always challenging.

You've been in the business a long time. What lessons have you learned?

That it finally comes down to pleasing yourself. You really have to figure out what engages you. And at the same time, it's just a job, and you have to provide service and get on with it. Do the job and get on with it. It's a service occupation.

Hardly the kind of words that are going to win you any friends at the Academy.

[Hint of a grin] It's all I know. ■

Tom O'Neill interviewed Michael Richards for the May issue of *'US.'*

## ALICIA SILVERSTONE

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thought it was just funny," she says. "It didn't torture me, because I've been the same weight since I was, like, 16. And the last thing I wanted to have happen was [for] young people to think I'm going to now worry about my weight. Because I'm never going to. I don't give a s---. I think it's the most absurd thing you can do to a young person." Silverstone chuckles at reports that the *Batman and Robin* production team put her on a weight-loss regimen. "Everyone had to have a trainer," she points out. "Even Arnold [Schwarzenegger]. And he's not fat."

The *Batman and Robin* set was like a summer camp for costumed actors. Some postcards: George Clooney and Chris O'Donnell serenading Silverstone with mock opera; the crew laughing; Schumacher yelling at everyone to get serious and remember they have a movie opening on June 20. Silverstone approached the role as methodically as she would a summer job: Get in, wear the heavy rubber suit, act, get the rubber suit off, drive home to the dogs. "Uma [Thurman, who plays villainess Poison Ivy] was more like me," Silverstone says. "Just go do your work, get it done."

Signing up for a *Batman* movie can mean years of rubber suits, and Silverstone is prepared. "But who knows?" she says, laughing. "If everybody hates me, maybe they'll write me out of the next movie. They'll say Batgirl died in the first scene." There doesn't seem to be much chance of that. "We had a test screening in Las Vegas," says Schumacher, "and Alicia was fabulous, one of the true hits of the movie. One of the reasons I wanted Batgirl in the movie — and Alicia — is

that I looked at our culture. There are no teen-age heroines. This gives the audience a young woman who's just as strong, just as smart and just as heroic as the guys."

Silverstone may be strong and smart, but she also knows she still has a lot to learn. "I just went with my instincts," she says of her leap into producerdom. "But who's ready to do anything? I don't know if I was ready to be born, you know what I mean? I don't know if I was ready to go to school. I don't know if I was ready to cross the street. Everything you do, you do it instinctually and you do it taking risks." Her production company is named First Kiss Productions, because, she explains, "this is a completely vulnerable first experience. Who knows what can happen?"

Silverstone has maintained she wanted to be an actress without being a celebrity, which is a little like wanting to be a politician without campaigning for office. "She doesn't seem to be attracted or influenced by any of the things a lot of the young people in Hollywood are interested in," says Schumacher. "She doesn't seem interested in sunglasses and autographs." And although the actress has been romantically linked with stars like Adam Sandler, she doesn't seem to date inside the Hollywood community; she's still getting used to being famous.

"Just being watched is weird — walking into a room and, as shy as I am, being stared at," confesses Silverstone, who socializes as often with manager and producing partner Carolyn Kessler and Kessler's husband as she does with friends her own age. "A lot of times I forget. Sometimes I think I have something on my face. I go, 'What are they looking at? Do I have s--- in my teeth?' And my friends will be like, 'No, Alicia, it's just...' And I go, 'Oh. OK. F---. Now what?'"

For now, Silverstone is poised at the precipice of the summer, waiting (with the rest of us) to find out how she does. "It's like I consider these my college years," she says philosophically. "I'm working really hard, and I'm working really stressfully. But I think that by the time I'm 22, if I want to, I can give it all up. And then after that I should probably consider a real career. If I choose acting and producing to be that career, great. But I have that time." And with that, Silverstone walks to the parking lot and straps herself into her Land Rover. Then she puts on her blinker and rolls off into traffic, where she becomes just another girl who may or may not be a star, a girl who may or may not have something in her teeth. ■

David Lipsky wrote about the life and death of *'Rent'* composer Jonathan Larson for the November 1996 issue of *'US.'*