



US

THE SECRETS OF
**Batman
Forever**

THE ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

In The Town

BRAD PITT

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GARY SINISE

**From 'Gump'
to the moon**

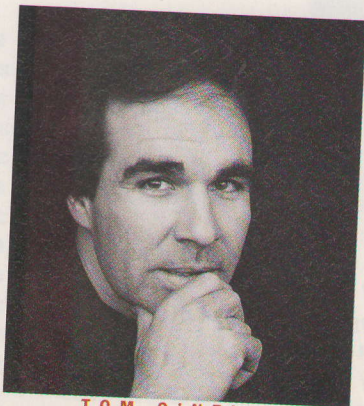
PAULA ABDUL

**Old troubles
and a new life**

RICHARD GERE

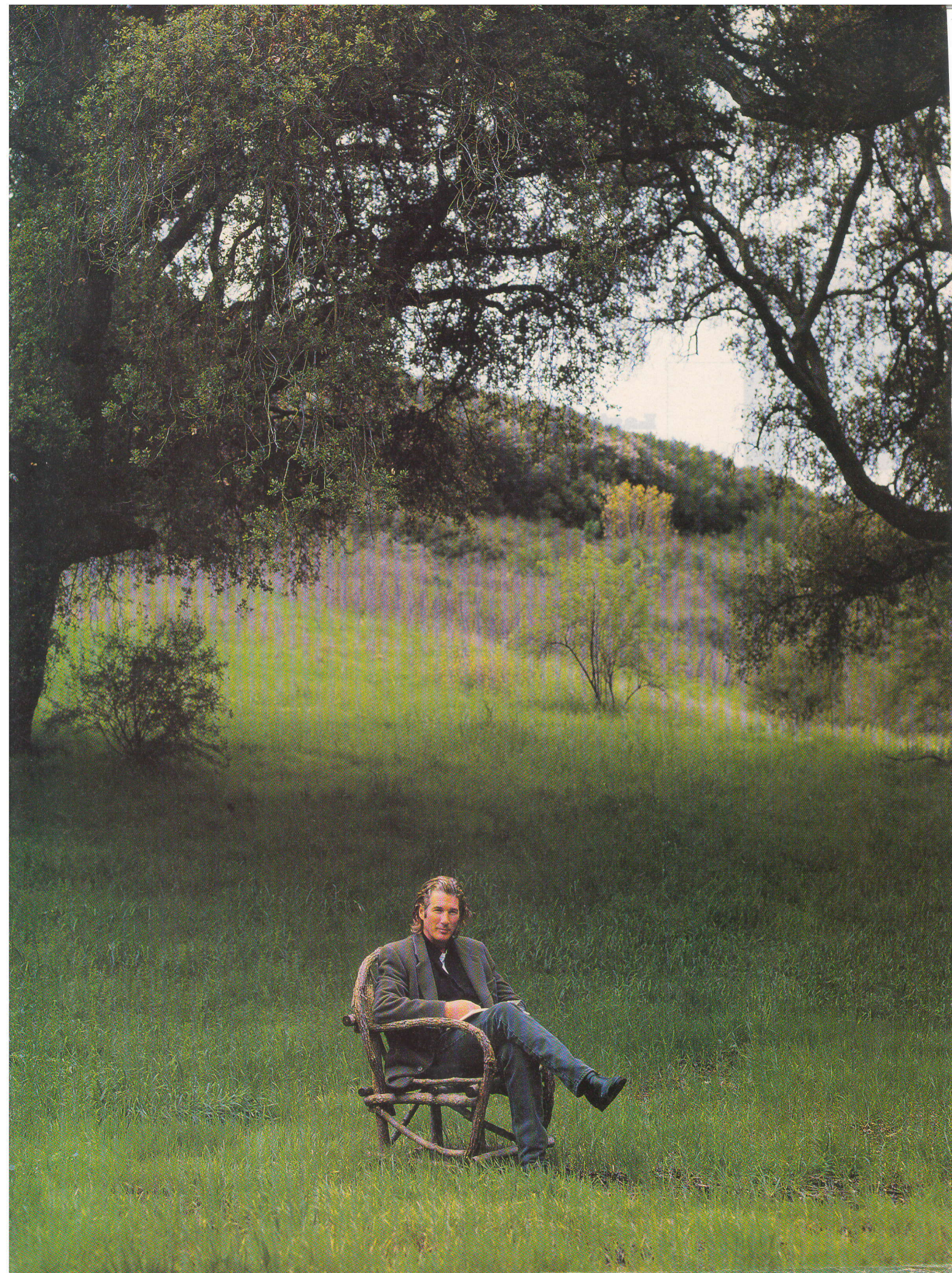
Life After Cindy

In Chicago with *First Knight* star Richard Gere (page 40), contributing editor **TOM O'NEILL** received the highest compliment he's gotten to date from a celebrity. "He's



TOM O'NEILL

not a dick," reported Gere to a publicist. "It was kind of nice to be decreed 'not a dick' midway through the interview," says O'Neill. "It shows his attitude toward the process: He doesn't enjoy it, but he does it because he believes in a film." O'Neill's article "The Incredible Shrinking Women of *Saturday Night Live*" (*US*, December 1994) recently won an Exceptional Merit Media Award from the National Women's Political Caucus and Radcliffe College.



Gere

RICHARD

THE US INTERVIEW

IT WAS THE DEAD OF WINTER IN Chicago — damp, blustery and

bone-chilling — when director Gregory Hoblit arrived to scout locations for *Primal Fear*,

which would start filming four months

later. Hoblit, an eight-time Emmy win-

ner for such seminal TV dramas as *Hill Street Blues* and *L.A.*

Law, wasn't all that thrilled about searching for shooting sites in January, but he knows such

unglamorous details are expected of him. What he and his team didn't expect, however, was to be met there by the film's star, Richard Gere. "There are actors who just

walk on the set and are ready to start, but Richard's different," says the still-astonished director. "We trotted

around, looking at this house, that church, endlessly hopping in and out of a van in freezing weather. • "I

think he was trying to get to know me a little bit and see what kinds of ideas were twirling around the execution

of the movie," Hoblit continues, adding, "You know, I've been working with high-profile actors a long time,

and I've never, ever, had an actor do that." • Richard Gere has a long history of doing things in ways other

stars never do. While peers like Sly Stallone, Bruce Willis and Arnold Schwarzenegger court the public via

appearances at Planet Hollywood and from the late-night talk-show couches, Gere conserves his energy,

preferring instead to throw himself into one of the two areas that seem equally to consume his life: movie-mak-

ing and spiritual enlightenment. The latter manifests itself in his 20-year commitment to Buddhism and

involves frequent travels to India to be near the Dalai Lama, the exiled leader of Tibet who is Gere's guru and

friend. • It was that sense of purpose and spiritual gravity that director Jerry Zucker (*Ghost*) had been franti-

cally looking for in an actor to portray Lancelot, the nomadic soldier in this summer's *First Knight*, a sweep-

ing retelling of the Camelot legend. Until one day, recalls Zucker, "we were sitting around the office, and

Richard's name came up. We all looked at each other and said, 'Richard Gere, of course!'" • Gere, who's

notorious for having to be talked into roles — he turned

down the lead in *An Officer and a*

HE'S MOVING INTO

A HUT AND

CONTEMPLATING KIDS.

WHAT'S THE DEAL?

Gentleman four times (as the story goes, then—

Disney honcho Jeffrey Katzenberg had to get down on his hands and knees

and beg), *Internal Affairs* several times and *Pretty Woman* twice — was eager to

play the swashbuckling warrior who betrays his king, Arthur (Sean Connery), for the

love of the beautiful Guinevere (Julia Ormond). Gere says he

was instantly attracted because

he saw a parallel between Camelot, as a utopian city of ideals, and Lhasa, the capital of Tibet (before it was

invaded by the Chinese). • In more practical terms, the \$75 million romantic adventure could return him to

blockbuster status — something that Gere, who hasn't enjoyed a big hit since 1990's *Pretty Woman*, could sore-

ly use. The second of five children born to an insurance salesman and his homemaker wife in Syracuse, N.Y., Gere

has endured the standard slumps of any star who has managed to stay in the business for more than two

decades. Though he became a player with his risky, bare-all performance (years before Harvey Keitel made male

frontal nudity fashionable) as a Hollywood hooker in 1980's *American Gigolo* and followed up with a heroic

turn in the 1982 smash *An Officer and a Gentleman*, he spent the remainder of the '80s in a decline. Since peak-

ing again in 1990 with *Internal Affairs* and *Pretty Woman*, Gere has returned to the zone of box-office

despair with back-to-back failures (*Final Analysis*, *Mr. Jones* and *Intersection*), relieved by only one blip of a suc-

cess, the Jodie Foster romantic drama *Sommersby* (which he also produced). • But it might have been more than a

potential rebirth at the box office, suggests Zucker, that caused Gere to take on such a ready-made role as Lancelot.

"Richard always plays the guy without a home," notes the director. "It's not so much that he's a wanderer, but

he's someone who's always searching for something that he hasn't found yet." • Indeed, the actor has been known

to literally wander the earth during his travels — which doesn't make it easy on those trying to interest him in a

film. His agent of 25 years, ICM's Ed Limato, says he's become adept at locating his client. "I've

tracked him down in the wilds of New Delhi and the

BY TOM O'NEILL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LANCE STAEDLER

THERE'S NO

slums of Calcutta," says Limato. "I'll find someone who knew what camel driver he hired or whatever, and manage to get word to him that way." He admits to being truly frightened only once, when Gere disappeared in the jungles of New Guinea a few years ago. "His plane ran out of gas, and he and a lady friend [artist Sylvia Martins] had to camp for two days beneath the plane's wing. It was a very uncivilized part of the country — there were headhunters."

Onscreen, Gere's journey as Lancelot ends when he finds a home in Camelot, and love in the arms of Guinevere. Offscreen, things haven't worked out so well. Shortly after he arrived in London last summer to make the film, his three-year-old marriage to supermodel Cindy Crawford unraveled. While they didn't officially announce their separation until December, their split came only two months after the couple took out a now-infamous newspaper ad declaring their mutual monogamy and heterosexuality. The notorious British press corps smelled a story and dogged Gere throughout the shoot.

"Just walking out of his apartment to the car or leaving a restaurant with a woman who was an old friend was like dropping \$100 bills out of a window to the press," recalls Zucker of the media hysteria that surrounded Gere's every move. Among the *paparazzi's* finds were fuzzy photos of 22-year-old model Laura Bailey purportedly scampering over the actor's garden wall in the early morning. *First Knight* co-star Julia Ormond — who's now experiencing some of the scrutiny that comes with stardom — says that Gere never let the frenzy affect his performance. "Richard builds bridges through his constant generosity — in his craft but, most of all, in spirit," she says. "He takes his work seriously but never lets it get the better of his humor."

Today, the actor, who says he's unloading most of his worldly possessions and retreating further and further into his spiritual life, appears, at least on the surface, to be relaxed and at peace. Though he refuses to directly discuss his estranged wife, Crawford's presence is felt in every heavy pause that punctuates his comments about having children, and in references to his own rootless wanderings.

Bounding into the Chicago hotel he'll call home for the duration of *Primal Fear*, Gere arrives two hours late (he's just toured the studio of his favorite architect, Frank Lloyd Wright) but in good spirits. Dressed casually in blue jeans, T-shirt and

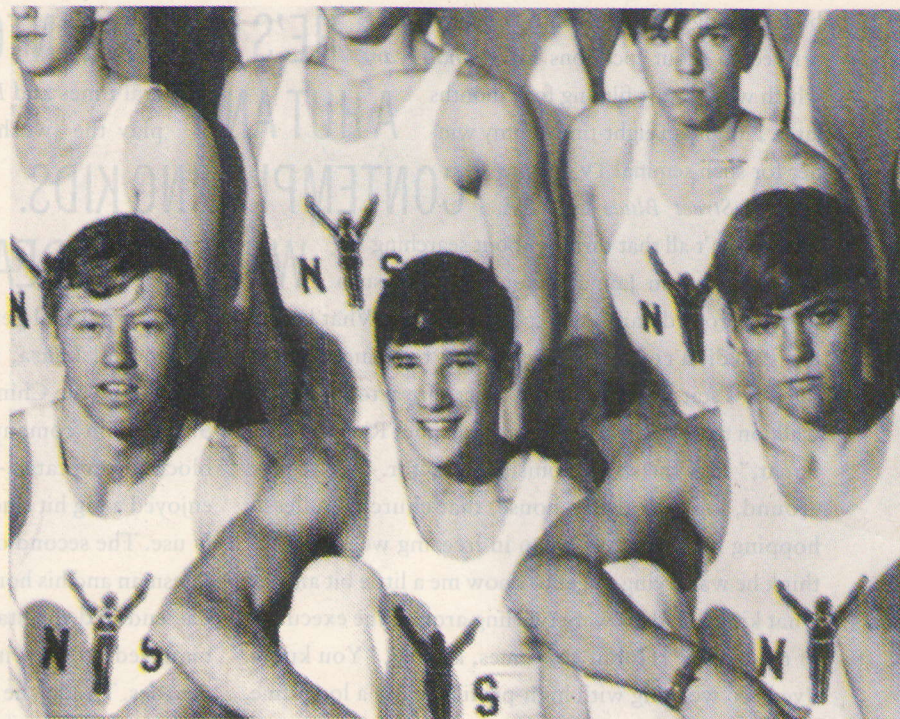
WAY — NO MATTER HOW SMART YOU ARE — TO EVER KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO GO THROUGH [BECOMING FAMOUS]. IT'S A NIGHTMARE.

And when you say a house...

A hut.

What kind of amenities?

Well, it's one big room, about like this [indicates corner of the hotel suite, about 10 feet by 15 feet], maybe even smaller. Enough for a bed, a desk and a space to do prostrations. And there's a



THE SPORTING LIFE: THAT'S GERE (CENTER) POSING WITH HIS GYMNASTICS TEAM FOR THE 1966 NORTH SYRACUSE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK. THE ACTOR WAS 17 YEARS OLD AT THE TIME.

V-neck sweater, the actor has traded the armor and long tresses of Lancelot for the clean-cut look of the defense attorney he plays in the courtroom thriller. Flopping down in a suite's overstuffed couch, Gere is tanned and fit, but hardly the silver-haired guy so many of us admired for refusing to dye his hair for *Pretty Woman*.

What's with your hair? I thought you were letting the silver grow back.

This is my hair, but it actually is growing in darker than it was. I just cut off the ends of the [dyed] hair that I had in *First Knight*. It's peculiar, I can't figure it out. [Smiling] Spend three months with the Tibetans. Maybe that was the thing that changed it.

Can you put things in better perspective when you're there?

I don't know if it's a question of that. I just like being around my teachers. His Holiness [the Dalai Lama] is there, and I have a lot of other teachers there. Plus there's a community of us now. I've always liked being in India, but it's become almost more comfortable, more familial, there than here.

Do you ever envision yourself living there?

Oh, yeah. In fact, I'm getting a house there.

functioning bathroom with a toilet, sink and a spigot for a shower. No kitchen — I can use the kitchen of this other place.

So it's a long-term place? As in "the rest of your life"?

Yeah, whenever I'm there.

Richard, feel free to use this story to announce your plans to become a monk.

In many ways I am a monk already. I've probably crossed those lines.

In what ways, exactly?

This practice of watching the mind and trying to work out the mind has, over the last 20 years, become probably the most important thing to me...[but] I don't think it's a question of being physically in a monastery, wearing robes. I think it's about committing to an approach to life, which is something you take everywhere with you. Whether you're in a monastery, which I am sometimes, or making a movie or whatever it is.

What do the people closest to you, like your family, say about the changes since you became a Buddhist? Do they say you're easier to be around? That you're happier?

[Laughs] I don't know.... These are inter-

nalized things. I don't know anyone who, through the process of life, doesn't [learn] that certain things are important and certain things aren't. Just getting older, I think, softens everyone a bit. And a certain amount of generosity and patience starts to emerge. I don't know if there's anything special about me.

There's a striking contrast between the non-violence of Buddhism and the often violent roles you choose, like 'First Knight.'

I wouldn't say all of my characters are violent characters — some are quite gentle. But, yeah, I play violent characters because they're going through a process. They usually come to terms with a certain violence in themselves. Our greatest dramatists from the Greeks to Shakespeare certainly used violence as a mode to deal with all the negative qualities of the mind in literature.

And Julia Ormond?

I really like her a lot. She's of the American extreme of British acting [*laughs*]. She's an emotional person and an emotional actress, and willing to shake it up. She wants to make something happen. She doesn't rely on technique. We had a lot of fun.

She's becoming a big star pretty fast. How do you think she's handling her transformation?

There's no way — no matter how smart you are, no matter how much research you do — to ever know what it's like to go through it.... It's a nightmare.

Did you give her any advice?

Yeah, we talked about this stuff. She didn't really want to believe it was happening. I told her she would have to have some press people around her just to say no, so *she* wouldn't have to be saying no all the time. Some guidance that way, just in terms of

Why haven't you done another?

They just don't write many scripts. This is a cliché, you hear it all the time, but it happens to be true. I mean, name the movies since then. There haven't been many.

'Sleepless in Seattle' was good.

I would've done that.

Did you express any interest in it?

[Nods] It was brought to me by the studio in an earlier incarnation, which didn't work at all. Then Nora [Ephron, who rewrote and directed the film] got involved, and she turned it into something quite special. I would've done it, but I wasn't asked to.

Are there other roles you would have done?

Sure, I would've done any of the ones that Tom Hanks has done.

Like 'Forrest Gump'?

I don't think I would've been right for it. Maybe more of the way the book was.

Because there was more of a dark side to him [in the novel].

Were you interested in 'Philadelphia'?

Yeah, I wasn't offered it, but sure, I would've done it.

You've produced three of your movies. Ever want to direct?

Not really. Not enough to do it. I like to go to India six months a year, you know? [*Laughs*] It fits my lifestyle better to do some work and then go to India or wherever I want to go. Going back and forth is great, I like the mix of those worlds.

Do you have roots anywhere?

Less and less, probably, as I get older.

And that's all a part of your spiritual journey?

No, not necessarily. I think it's just kind of worked out that way. I just feel really comfortable in Dharamsala [the northern Indian home of the exiled Dalai

Lama] with my friends. [*Pause*] I suppose, in a way, that's a root that's become very strong. And I have a place on the East Coast that feels like home to me. It's in the woods.

And you have two houses in California —

I'm selling all that stuff.

Any reservations about leaving L.A.?

[*Winces*] I was never really in L.A. I go there to work. I've not made a deliberate choice to be there or not be there. When I work there, I'm there. When I'm not, I'm not.

You don't do the Hollywood thing — hitting the party circuit, courting the press. You don't really play the game.

I do the interviews when a movie opens. I think that's part of the game.



KNIGHT MOVES: GERIC PLAYS LANCELOT TO JULIA ORMOND'S LADY GUINEVERE IN THIS SUMMER'S 'FIRST KNIGHT.' OF HIS LEADING LADY, HE SAYS: "I LIKE HER A LOT. SHE'S WILLING TO SHAKE IT UP."

Someone who is perfect is not dramatic.

I hear violence got the best of you during the shooting of 'First Knight.'

Oh, I got clobbered! I had stitches here [*indicates forehead above left eyebrow*]. The horse threw his head back when we were going under a branch — he butted me really good. Then I had cracked fingers and a chipped tooth that had to be repaired.

I guess Sean Connery could relate to hazards like that. What's it like working with Bond?

Sean Connery's a mountain. He's Mount Rushmore. He just walked in, and everything that makes him Sean Connery made him perfect to be Arthur. He immediately had respect and command of everyone.

time and energy effectiveness. At that point no one had any idea what would happen with *Legends of the Fall*, and no one knew she would be starring in *Sabrina*. So she was there pretty much just to do the work. I saw her three or four weeks ago, and she seemed tired because she's done these three films back-to-back. She was holding up real well, but it's hard.

And for you — are movies still fun to make?

It's fun to do them if they're archetypically right, which *First Knight* was. And *Pretty Woman* was fun to do. Obviously a different kind of movie, but it was archetypically right, and the people were great.

It's your biggest hit and your only comedy.

Yeah, but you're not there at Planet Hollywood with Sly and Arnold.

No, I have no interest [in that]...but I like making movies. I like everything about it. I like the money.

Does that jibe with your Buddhism?

I like being able to live well, sure. I like being able to give a lot of money away. I like all of it. It doesn't bother me in the least. Do I need it? No, I don't.

You've been very active in AIDS education and treatment, long before most of your colleagues were willing to take a stand.

It was never an issue for me. I never quite understood why it would be an issue for someone. I know superficially why, but it's not a big problem. [Pause] I don't know why everyone gave [President] Clinton a break on this. He made a very, very clear promise before he was elected, to the gay community and to others of us who were working on the issue, that AIDS would be an A-1 priority. He would create a Manhattan Project to find out what this disease was and come up with a cure, and it never happened.

Do you maintain any kind of relationship with the President?

Since the election? No.

Is that frustrating for you?

Yeah. To think that I helped elect this guy — and, certainly, he was soliciting my help before the election — and then it became perfunctory and superficial afterward.

Do you feel betrayed or used?

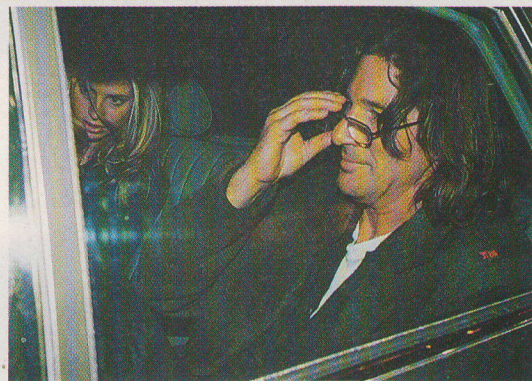
I think a lot of us who had expectations feel that way. On the issue of China? The same thing. We had discussions about human rights in China and, specifically, in Tibet, and he walked away from all of that, too.

Would that affect your getting involved in another political campaign?

Oh, if I believed someone, I still would help them. It wouldn't stop me. It's just like, you know [laughs uneasily]... I was gonna say that just because my marriage f---ed up doesn't mean I wouldn't get married again. You do the best you can.

Since you brought it up...

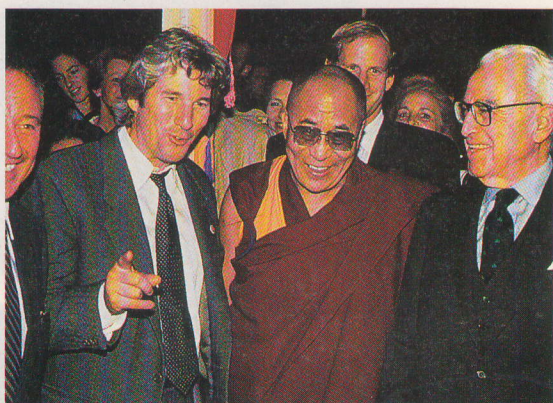
I don't want to follow up on that. I gave you that as a gift, OK? [Laughs nervously.] C'mon — here's an opportunity to set the record straight, change any misperceptions... [Firmly] No. I have no interest. It's no-



IN MANY WAYS

I AM A MONK

ALREADY. IT'S ABOUT COMMITTING TO AN APPROACH TO LIFE, WHETHER YOU'RE IN A MONASTERY OR MAKING A MOVIE.



PERSONAL QUEST (FROM TOP): GERE WITH ESTRANGED WIFE CINDY CRAWFORD IN 1993; WITH BRITISH MODEL LAURA BAILEY IN LONDON, 1994; WITH FRIEND AND GURU THE DALAI LAMA, 1991.

body's business.

I guess that goes for the ad, too?

[Nods yes.]

And who you're dating?

[Nods again, smiles.]

OK, well, congratulations anyway. I understand, according to a certain tabloid, that you and Julia Roberts are getting married.

[Bursts out laughing] That happens to be true, actually!

Right. But you two have met about doing a 'Pretty Woman' sequel, right?

Yeah. There was a script that was presented. I wasn't knocked out by it. I had a meeting to comment on my feelings about it, and now some mysterious people are off doing mysterious things with this mysterious script.

Can we talk about children without getting into that forbidden zone?

[Long pause] Well, we'll see where you want to go.

Do you see children as something that could enrich your life, perhaps in the same way your spiritual journey has?

Yeah. I think it depends on motivation, like everything does, [and] on how deep a level one's really capable of giving. If it's about attachments — like "my child, my family, my house," or, like, "I want to cast my life: I want a kid, I want a thing" — then I don't think it's probably going to have a very positive outcome. [Pause] I guess what I'm trying to say, and I've never quite talked about it like this before, is that I would rather be able to think of all creatures as my children. If I could do that, then I think I would be happy with the

way I would raise a child.

But it may be too late by then — you'll be a monk.

I'm not celibate, you know.

That's not my thing. I'm talking about a utopian situation. Ideally, you want your parents to be as perfect as they can possibly be. I'm just saying that I want to be as perfect as I can possibly be before I do that. I'm in more of a position now to have kids and be successful as a parent than when I was 20. No question about it.

It's something you'll do someday.

Oh, yeah. I have nothing against it at all. I mean, the alchemy of finding the right person to have them with at the right time — who knows when that happens? I remember I asked His Holiness a similar question years ago. And he asked me: "Why? Why would you want to have kids?" And I said: "Because I think it might open my heart more. This process I'm trying to do anyhow." He looked at me — and I could tell he was seeing a larger vision of things — and said, "It might be a small love." It might be more egocentric than something I was looking for. I really think that happens a lot. I think there's a lot of egocentricity in all of our relationships.

You could ask him again.

Yeah, it could change. He could've been, very simply, a mirror to my own thoughts, who

I WAS JUST

**GONNA SAY THAT BECAUSE
MY MARRIAGE F---ED UP DOESN'T MEAN
I WOULDN'T GET MARRIED AGAIN.
YOU DO THE BEST YOU CAN.**

knows? But it's a valid thing. It's like someone saying, "I want to get married and have kids!" Now, do they know what it means? No. They don't have a clue what it means. "But I want to do it." Why? "I don't know, I just want to do it."

Well, you at least seem to have developed all the important dad qualities: patience, forgiveness, not letting things piss you off like you used to.... Uh, correct me if I'm wrong here.

Hmm. What gets me f---ed up? What gets me f---ed up is when the *paparazzi* jump out from behind bushes in the middle of the night and start shooting. That still makes me nuts. If I could wring their necks right there, I'd probably do it.

But you don't.

There's no gain. There's always another photographer there who will get the shot of you attacking the *paparazzi* who are attacking you, and the picture will end up looking like you're an animal.... I still have those seeds of anger and violence in me that being caught off-guard will bring up. I don't think if the Dalai Lama had *paparazzi* jump out from the bushes, he would have that sharp, instinctive defensive mechanism. I don't think he would, and I don't think Jesus Christ would. In a way, one of the good things that happens is that you're constantly being reminded there are things to work on. It's one of the things to be thankful for.

Describe the last time you got truly angry.

Recently in London the *paparazzi* were attacking a friend of mine. Physically attacking a friend of mine. There were, like, five of them. They shoved her up against a grating. She got a cut over her eye. She was crying. It was astonishing.

Sometimes people can get a little angry at you, say, over your appearance at the '93 Oscars when you made that speech about the Tibetans. We haven't seen you on the telecast since. Coincidence?

No [laughs]. I've been asked not to come

back. [My publicist] told me a few weeks ago, "They'll consider having you back, but you have to sign a statement assuring them that you will not say anything other than what's on the monitor." [Grins] I said, "I'll sign a statement saying that I guarantee to say something that's not on the monitor."

You must've gotten a lot of flak for that.

I wasn't aware of the flak. I was aware of Chinese people thanking me — and, obviously, the Tibetans. To give back to the Tibetans — after all I've received from them — gives me such joy that it totally outweighs any of the negative flak I get.

Well, I guess the only way you'll get back on is if you win one.

That's the only way [laughs].

Enough of this heavy stuff. Do you ever just kick back and have some fun?

You want to know the best fun I had in many, many years? I was doing a benefit in London last year and I asked Van Morrison to play. He's one of my favorite musicians, if not my absolute favorite. He called me up onstage. [Grins] I wouldn't get off.

So you're up there playing guitar? On which songs?

Just anything. I know all of his music, so it was easy and fun. We got along great, and he thought I was good enough to be in his band. He said, "Anytime you want to play, just come by." So I ended up doing five gigs with him around London and in Europe. We did a blues festival! It was great. I would say all the fun put together in my life was not as much fun as being onstage with Van Morrison. There was a moment when I was introducing a song, and I found myself doing some kind of mad rap. I turned and nodded to Van, and he was laughing, and we kicked into this song together, and the whole universe was right.

What was the mad rap about?

I was, um, a little drunk at the time, so I don't know exactly [laughs].

Aside from the occasional musical interlude, you've been making movies for 20 years now. That long? It could be.... I actually started when I was 19, so that's 26 years now.

What's it like to see someone like Brad Pitt go through the same thing you did?

I have no idea what he's going through. I was having a really good time. I hope he is. I think most people are much more mature than I was at the time, anyhow.

Probably not. Nobody is ever really as mature as they'd like to be, or think they should be.

Well, I think when I was 26 years old, I was really acting more like 20.

And at 45? How old do you feel now?

[Grins] Fourteen!

