

A photograph of a man, Rupert Everett, standing on a small balcony of a stone tower with a conical roof. A black dog is lying on the balcony next to him. The tower is surrounded by dense foliage and trees. The man is wearing a light-colored shirt, a dark jacket, and light-colored trousers. The dog is a black Labrador Retriever.

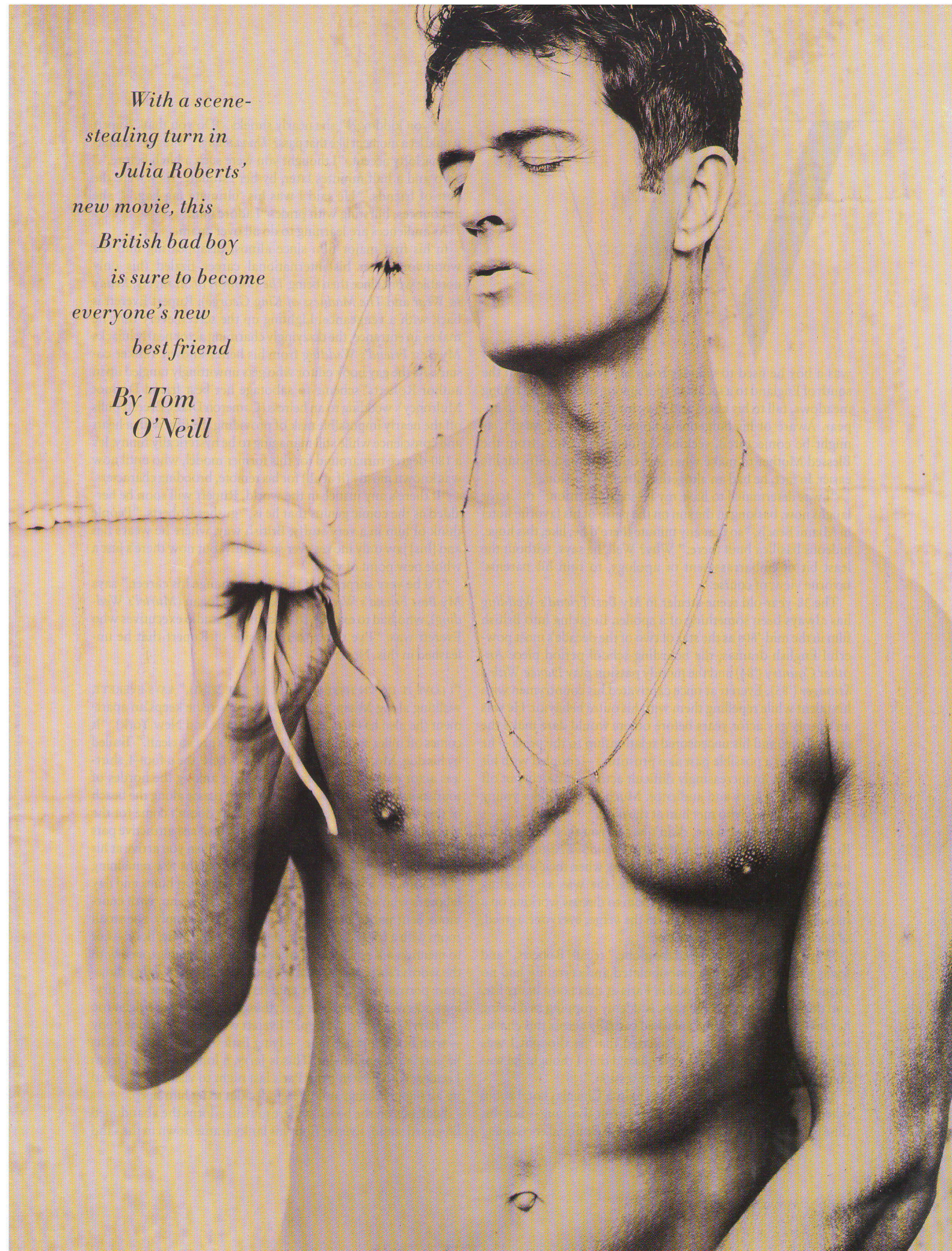
# RUPERT EVERETT

Photographs by ROBERT PAUL MAXWELL

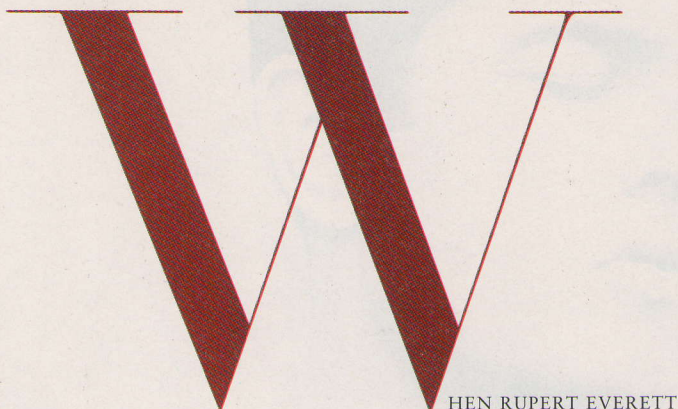


*With a scene-  
stealing turn in  
Julia Roberts'  
new movie, this  
British bad boy  
is sure to become  
everyone's new  
best friend*

*By Tom  
O'Neill*







WHEN RUPERT EVERETT

was a boy he used to wander from his parents' house in the south of England to a secluded spot among the trees and rolling meadows, fall to his knees and pray for the Virgin Mary to appear. Aware of his burgeoning homosexuality, he wasn't, as might be conjectured, seeking divine intervention from the Blessed Mother to make what was bound to be a difficult life easier. In fact, he had an altogether different mission.

"I was determined to have my f---ing apparition," the actor laughs now, basking in the sun on the patio of his favorite hotel in Miami Beach, "so that any minute there'd be, like, this huge, hideous basilica built there." Why? Well, he says, without the least bit of embarrassment or apology, to ruin his parents' favorite view, of course.

The 38-year-old scene-stealer in *My Best Friend's Wedding* has always been something of a spoiler. Breaking into British film in the mid-'80s as the star of two of the decade's most powerful English dramas, the boarding-school period piece *Another Country* ('84) and the moody passion play *Dance With a Stranger* ('85), Everett at once captivated his countrymen with his talent while repelling them with his outré behavior. He was an openly gay actor years before others would dare make the same claim, and his uncensored relationship to the press — he teased about a possible past as a prostitute — coupled with his reputation as an increasingly difficult actor, ultimately put off his contemporaries and audience. Much as it would a young American actress who met him at the time.

"I thought he hated me, didn't he tell you this?" asks Julia Roberts, the leading lady in *My Best Friend's Wedding*, about her first meeting with Everett years before, when their situations were decidedly reversed. At the time, she was a struggling actress brought to his Paris hotel room to discuss working on a movie, and he was a sensation, on the verge, everyone agreed, of becoming an international star.

"I had just circumnavigated the globe," recalls Roberts, "and I was exhausted and discombobulated and certainly had no business being in a fancy hotel in Paris at that point in my life, and there was Rupert," she says, suddenly stopping as if losing her breath all over again, "splashed casually across this chaise, looking divine. I was so intimidated that he thought I was aloof, and he was so chatty and relaxed that I thought he was conceited. It wasn't a great first impression."

Years later they would meet again in a Chicago hotel room when he arrived for his first day of work on *Wedding* — but this time he came to her. And did he bring up their initial encounter?

"Are you kidding?!" she nearly shrieks. "Do you think Rupert would let a moment like that pass? 'Daaaahling,'" she says, imitating his lofty accent, "I thought you were such a bitch before." Two and a half minutes later, by her estimate, they were the best of friends. "He said I was his 'ultimate fag hag,'" she announces, bursting with pride. "I adore him."

As audiences are learning to do all over again.

In his first major film since almost disappearing into the woodwork after his international career fizzled (his only notable work since then being *The Comfort of Strangers*, *Ready to Wear* and *The Madness of King George*), Rupert Everett is back with a vengeance. Lighting up the screen every time he makes an entrance, the dizzyingly charming actor nearly hijacks *My Best Friend's Wedding* from his better-known Yankee co-stars. As the gay book editor who gets unwittingly tangled up in author Roberts' scheme to sabotage her best friend Dermot Mulroney's wedding to an heiress (Cameron Diaz), Everett pulls off the nearly impossible task of providing the film with a heart and conscience while still managing to be hysterically funny. It's a 180-degree turnaround for this former model, who until now was known mostly (if at all) for his remote, brooding characters.

"If there's any justice in the world, Rupert will soon be heralded as the comic genius that he is," gushes Roberts. "People think of him in a very stuffy, British way, where he wears ties and [his] jaw only moves ever so slightly. But now there's just a whole new point of view."

"I'd be very surprised if this didn't change his career," says *My Best Friend's Wedding* director P.J. Hogan (*Muriel's Wedding*), who had to explain to unknowing studio executives who Everett was. "I've never seen the side of Rupert that he unleashed in this. Never."

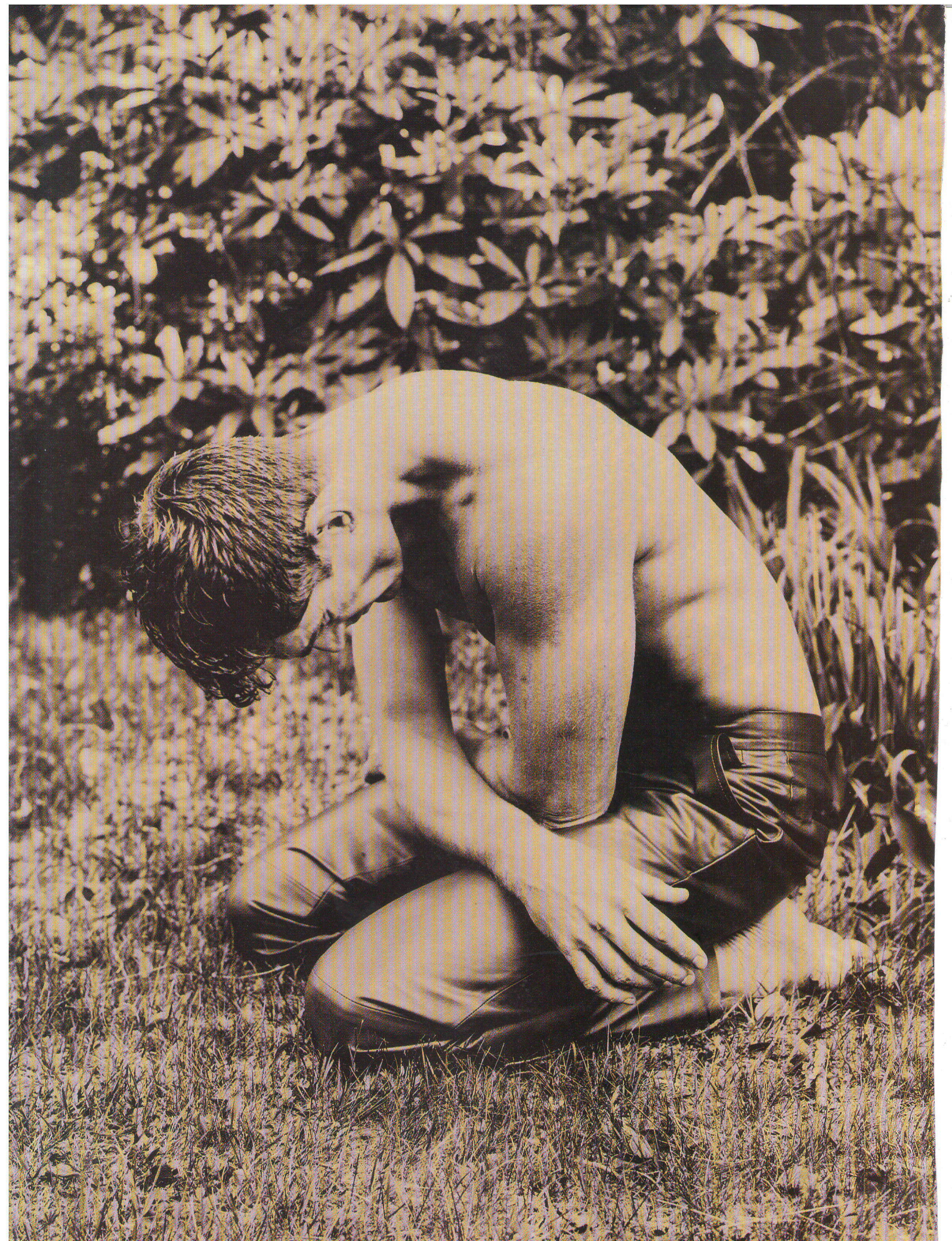
"I LOVE IT DOWN HERE BECAUSE OF THE WIND," SAYS EVERETT, walking along Miami's South Beach, where he keeps an apartment (he also has homes in England, Paris and New York). "It comes off miles and miles of ocean, and it's just so clean." Trailed by his dog, Mo, who follows him everywhere, the 6-foot-4, shirtless actor cuts a striking figure strolling among the hordes of tourists and wannabe models moving en masse along the beach of this thriving, glitzy community. But he doesn't come for the glamour. In fact, he maintains that that's the least attractive part of Miami. And he proves true to his word when you arrive at his apartment on the seedy edge of town, where the few remaining pensioners have been pushed, along with the surf bums and day laborers who work at the hotels. Facing the ocean, with enormous bent palms in front, the apartment is simply one small room with a fridge, couch, dresser and a futon on the floor — not to mention a Kurt Cobain poster on the wall, emblazoned with the words I HATE MYSELF AND I WANT TO DIE, an unearthly dime-store portrait of Jesus ("My cute Jesus") on the dresser and drying underwear draped over everything, including the refrigerator.

"Jerry? Jerry? You asleep?" Everett whispers to a prone body — with bright orange hair — lying listlessly across his bed, as he enters the apartment. This is Jerry, a longtime friend from London who flew in from Paris last night to visit. They stayed up all night talking, and Everett decides to let him sleep.

Back out on the beach, where graffiti adorns the abandoned lifeguard stand, Everett flops his lanky frame down in the sand

STYLING: TERENCE MCFARLAND; GROOMING: MATT SEAN FLYNNORIBE; CLOTHING: PAGE 64: JACKET: DONNA KARAN; SHIRT AND PANTS: MARC JACOBS; SWEATER: JIL SANDER; PAGE 65: NECKLACE: TEN THOUSAND THINGS; PAGE 67: SHIRT: ALEXANDER MCQUEEN; PANTS: V ZONE; SNEAKERS: NIKE











and nods past the surfers to the huge freighters on the horizon. "I love to look at the ships out there and imagine all the fabulous places they're going."

Everett is surprisingly honest about his fall from grace in the '80s. Of his reputation for being difficult, he acknowledges that it was well-earned but adds that it mustn't be overlooked that his best performances were given under circumstances in which he "was incredibly strident about what I believed was right."

While his journey to Hollywood after his British successes was a bust ("I didn't fit into the Brat Pack vibe of the movies they were making at the time"), his pariahlike treatment back at home was disheartening. It didn't help matters that he'd committed acts of near-treason, like turning down a Merchant Ivory production (the *Room With a View* role that made Daniel Day-Lewis a star); mumbling through a performance of Noel Coward on the West End (and then sending a fistful of his pubic hair to a dissatisfied customer); and continuing to make outrageous claims about his prodigious talents.

In fact, the notoriously vengeful British press seemed to be in a competition to see who could most ceremoniously hang him out to dry. "He's rude, difficult, intolerant, given to the sort of bad behavior that involves walking out of an interview, a restaurant or a relationship," hissed the *Daily Mail*. "If politeness were pounds he'd be penniless, and if petulance was pennies he'd be a wealthy man," one-upped the *Times*. The more conservative *Observer* simply asked, "Will Rupert Everett ever be as good an actor as he says he is?"

"All those types of things, you get over them, don't you?" says Everett, stretching out in the sand. "It's like being a prostitute. The first time out is fine, and then you get knocked about a bit on your third night of work, and you go back four days later with a bruise and you get knocked about again, but you've got a knife, so you're OK. It becomes second nature."

Interesting analogy, considering the actor has admitted to, but never elaborated on, being a member of the world's oldest profession.

At the time he was a struggling actor in London who simply got propositioned outside a subway station one day and "sort of fell into it."

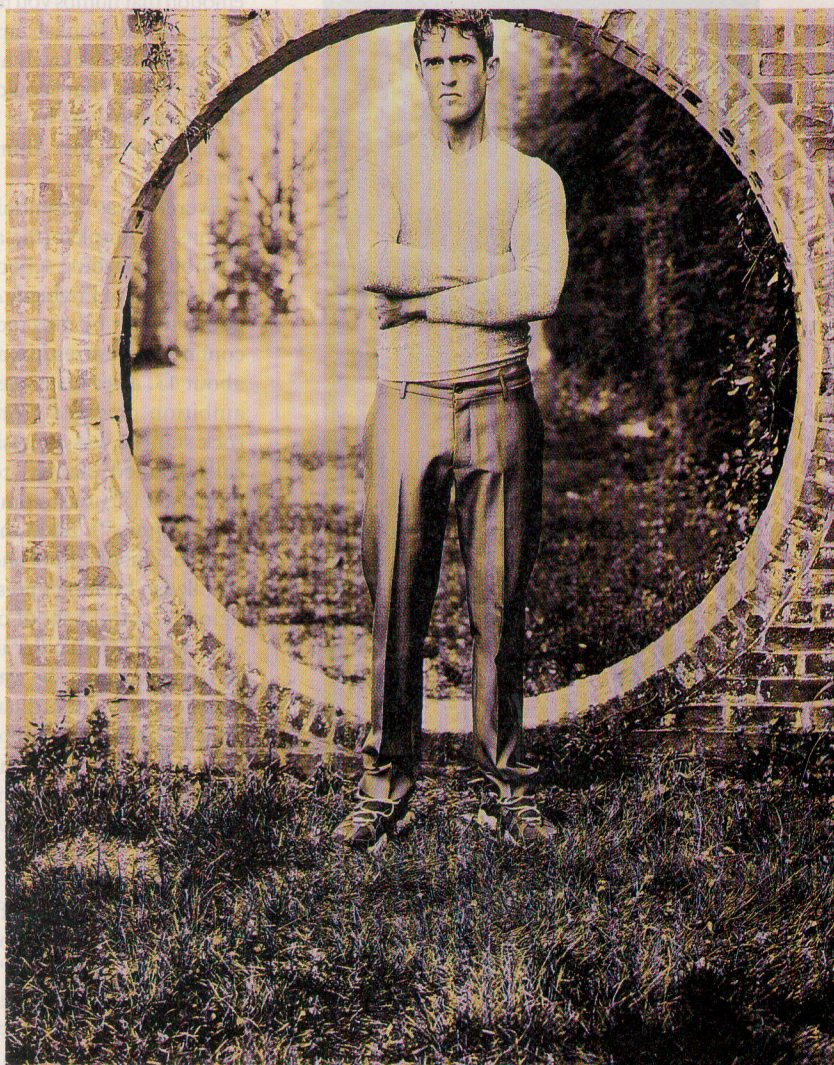
"I didn't set out to hustle," he explains, "but this guy offered me such a massive amount of money, well, it was like a year-and-a-half's pocket money, and it just came in really handy."

And while to some it might appear to be just an extreme form of rebellion against an upper-crust upbringing, Everett says it was hardly anything of the sort; it was a lot more practical than that. "Like a lot of upper-class people, I was given no money," says Everett, and after a little prodding, he admits that once he got the hang of it he had "all sorts" of clients and basically relied on the work as his main source of income for a year or two.

Perhaps, then, this explains his rather strong reaction to fel-

low thespian Hugh Grant, when his name comes up.

"Hugh Grant I was kind of with until he said that getting sucked off by Divine Brown was — what was the word he used on his big apology tour? 'Abominable'?" asks Everett, referring to Grant's infamous appearance on *The Tonight Show* shortly after he was arrested for lewd conduct. "I thought how fantastic for him to have been given head by Divine Brown and how brilliant a career move it was, but the moment he said it was an



abomination, he really lost me. Because that poor prostitute, having to suck his meaty little d--- anyway, why should she be roped into his apology? I think that's one of those moments when you just say, 'If you don't want me, you don't have to have me. That's what I did. I got a blow job — what of it?'"

When it's suggested that maybe this was the only way Grant could get back his girlfriend, Elizabeth Hurley, Everett rolls his eyes and says, "Oh, please! She's like a boomerang, darling, she's always going to come back."



Milano 2:30 am



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## RUPERT EVERETT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 59

EVERETT WAS BORN THE SECOND OF TWO SONS to a career army officer and his aristocratic Scottish wife in a small town in England. While he wasn't raised in castles, he had a childhood that he describes as idyllic until, like so many upper-class kids, he was sent away by his family. "When you get left at boarding school at the age of 7 by your mother, there's a kind of cauterization of emotion that numbs you forever. That's something all the English upper class have in common. I wasn't lonely at boarding school," he continues, "but I could never understand the rejection you have from the mother when you're just dumped away from home."

Everett was essentially raised by the monks at Ampleforth, a highly esteemed Catholic boarding school in the north of England. A good student by most accounts, he grew restless at about 13, after his career ambition changed from rock star (he was a classically trained pianist) to movie star ("I used to pray to be famous"). At 15, he dropped out of school and enrolled in London's prestigious Central School of Speech and Drama. But in less than two years he was expelled for insubordination; he then delved into the subculture of the streets and clubs of London before moving to Milan and becoming a successful model.

About his youthful life on the edge, the actor remains philosophical. "It was very character forming in a sense," he says. "Considering what my background is, if I hadn't been queer and gone into the club scene, I'd have lived the most incredibly protected, tiny little existence, and I think an actor needs to do things, have a life, be exposed."

"This is a man with enormous sex appeal," says Julia Roberts. "He's handsome and clever and smart."

"We were dancing in one scene," she recalls, giggling, "and he was being all sexy with me, saying hilarious stuff like 'Darling, can't you see it? My last ray of heterosexuality is shining on you.'"

In the past, Everett has told inquiring

minds that he doesn't believe in relationships, or at least doesn't have time for them (currently, he's not in one, he admits). "I have a crashingly huge ego," he's been quoted as saying, "and when you boil it down to bones, in the bed and relationships it all has to be about me." But now, as he approaches middle age, he seems to be softening his anti-relationship stance, well, at least a little. "Maybe homosexuality is better casually," he muses. "Maybe it's just an extension of buddydom."

But Roberts isn't buying Everett's sentiments for one minute. He's "completely" looking for love, she says, and "he'll absolutely find it." Although, she's quick to add, "He'll never find a greater love than I."

For now, his greatest love, by all appearances, is Mo, short for Moise. Everett bought the dog from a champion black-Labrador breeder in France seven and a half

years ago and dotes on him like one would a child, organizing his travels around him, even hiring a full-time "nanny" to take care of him when he's not around. The two of them are a common sight together on South Beach, walking along the strand or through town, with Mo always 10 to 20 feet behind.

For someone so independent, his attachment to the dog is an idiosyncrasy that reveals a side of the actor not easily seen on screen or even in person. But it's there.

Earlier, a daily ritual is observed. It occurs after Everett's morning laps at a nearby hotel. "Hang on a minute," says Everett to

a visitor. "Got to let Mo have his swim, too." He discreetly opens the gate of a fancy apartment building, the pool of which is unoccupied. "There's never anyone here at this time of day — dunno why," he says (his own crumbling building doesn't have a pool), and the trespassing dog lumbers over and dives in.

As Mo splashes around in the crystal blue water, Everett watches quietly and laughs. Just as the basilica would've ruined his parents' view if he'd had his apparition, the sight of the dog swimming would undoubtedly upset the tenants of this tony apartment complex — and *that* seems to please Rupert Everett as much as his dog's own pleasure. ■

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