

FASHION LIFESTYLE ART ENTERTAINMENT

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APRIL 2010

FREE

Olivia Munn

Edwin Habacon
is Acting Up

How Does
Jeannie Mai Look?

Enjoying Laos
At Its Own Pace

Hiroimi Kanda
Sings the Classics

yellowmags.com



Photo by Collin Kelly

This month, we introduce you to a few more entertainers than we usually do, hence, we dub this the Entertainment Issue. Our cover features the ravishingly beautiful Olivia Munn. You may be familiar with Olivia as she has graced recent covers of some of those “other” magazines, including *Maxim* and *Playboy*. She was a disappointment to many avid readers of *Playboy*, however – not surprising since she did not reveal any of the body parts that regular subscribers expect to see! That was okay with Olivia; she wanted to be in *Playboy* and she did it *her* way. If you have watched her co-host *Attack of the Show!* on the G4 network, none of this would be surprising. I can’t wait to see her this month in *Date Night* with Tina Fey and Steve Carell, and next month in *Iron Man 2* with Robert Downey, Jr. She could not reveal anything about her characters in our interview, so we’ll have to wait and see like everyone else.

Edwin Habacon is a Filipino-American actor trying to make his mark in show biz. He owned a successful t-shirt design company until he was thirty and then decided to satisfy his lifelong passion to be an actor. He does not mind being stereotyped, although, it is more often as a Latino tough guy than as a Filipino. Heavily tattooed, with a shaved head and rugged beard, this big guy’s interview will have you rolling, and will definitely make you a big fan. Edwin has been in three episodes of the popular new show, *Sons of Tucson* on Fox 26, and he is hoping that they pick up his character as a regular. I am rooting for him. After reading his story, you will, too.

It may be cliché to paraphrase the belief of those who say that the Japanese took American ideas and improved upon them (with such things as electronics and cars), but when you listen to Hiromi Kanda’s debut American album, the sultry songstress may very well convince you that she has accomplished the same miracle with her rendition of the songs of Sinatra, Ray Charles, and Nat King Cole. She delivers astonishingly beautiful vocals.

Filling out the remainder of this issue are tips for your Fashion Bucket List, ladies’ fashion tips galore in an interview with Jeannie Mai from *How Do I Look?*, and Matt’s visit to Laos during which he developed a taste for a meal that included ant larvae amongst its ingredients. I’d have to read that menu VERY carefully before I placed my order!

I hope you will be artfully entertained,

V. Van Hoang

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The color yellow has played a recurrent symbolic role throughout the history of Asian culture. It symbolizes the earth that sustains all life, yet has been embraced by Buddhist monks as an expression of unchallenged power. Such is the role of yellow: always revered but in different ways under different circumstances.

The mission of *Yellow Magazine* is to introduce our readers to the artistic, fashion, lifestyle and entertainment contributions made by Asian Americans. It is our hope that the depth and breadth of the topics and events we cover do justice to the pride that the color yellow has represented throughout the millennia. As the editor in chief of *Yellow Magazine*, my last name is Hoang, which also means yellow. Just as I am proud of my name, I am proud of my heritage, and proud of *Yellow Magazine*.

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On the cover:
Dress by Hernan Lander



Roughing It in the
Land of the Guardian Spirits

by **MATT SIMS**

Life on the Mekong

I eased down the muddy embankment doing my best not to fall or drop any of the heavy boxes of supplies I was carrying down to the edge of the river twenty feet below. It was nearly dark, and the footing was unsure. I had a vision of me tumbling down and watching the rice, meat, toilet paper, and cooking oil splash into the water while the villagers looked for a large stone to tie around my neck. I wiped the image from my mind and set the first of about ten boxes on the soft mud.

There were no steps and no dock for the boat that was to land there soon and take me across the river to a village I knew nothing about to stay with people I had never met. What I did know was that there in southern Laos, the Mekong River stretched a mile wide and it turned from green to purple to black in the fading sunlight.

One light was visible on the far side. I heard a small motor faint and distant, sputtering like a weed whacker engine. Eventually, the narrow, wooden long-tailed boat reached my side of the river and one thin, barefooted old man hopped off as agile as a monkey and began loading boxes. Soon, I was in the boat and crossing the wide Mekong slowly in the darkness. A cloudy night sky erased the stars, and we moved at a slow, steady pace that left me feeling as if we were tiptoeing across the river without permission. The woman sitting near me asked, "You can swim, right?"

On the other side, even fewer remnants of civilization greeted me. I used my flashlight to illuminate the path up the steep bank and onto a series of pathways between houses. Some were made of concrete blocks with tiled roofs, while others were more traditional wooden houses on stilts. Every so often a single light bulb glowed inside a window.

Almost as soon as I arrived at my destination, the house of my friend's grandmother, I was fed a delicious meal of beef brisket, spicy chicken larb, garden fresh vegetables, fiery light green peppers, kaeng nor mai soup, and the ever-present sticky rice. This pattern of showing up and being fed a tremendous meal was to be repeated almost everywhere I went. Lao people are very sociable and they love to eat.

Another thing that was repeated over and over again was the wonderful custom of tying white or yellow string around a person's wrists and giving blessings and good wishes. In the Lao tradition, the soul consists of many guardian spirits that occasionally wander away from their owner. These must be called back and bound to the body to ensure a person is properly protected before any important undertaking. My friend's grandmother and aunts gathered around me and tied several strands of white string around each wrist while whispering blessings. Although it was commonplace for them, this small act of kindness made me feel very welcome.

While the family members caught up on the day's events, I was led to a room adjacent to the house where I was shown the restroom facilities which were centered around a large 50 gallon barrel of water and a bucket which I was to use for manual, self-splashing showers and for pouring down the squat toilet. Not exactly the Ritz Carlton, but easy to get used to when surrounded by such kind and generous people. A creaking set of wooden steps led to an upper room where an aunt was setting up mosquito netting over a sleeping mat. This was home for the next few days while I explored Southern Laos.



For breakfast, I was introduced to one of my new favorite dishes: ant larvae larb salad. Not only does this dish made from ant larvae, chilies, lime juice, cilantro, and rice powder taste great, it gives you bragging rights you can stack up next to all those TV hosts of travel shows who eat unusual items. I knew I was going to like Laos.

The light of day revealed a small, but busy settlement resting on a plain in view of forested hills. The village, known as Veun Xay, is no more than a cluster of houses and a few farming plots along the river. There are no stores, no restaurants, and no hotels – just a real village full of people earning an honest and hard-earned living from what their fields and the river could provide. Everywhere I went, the local people were surprised to see an outsider among them, but I could feel the friendliness in their smiles and their greetings of "sabai dee." Some children shouted their greetings and ran, others stood and stared, not believing their eyes. Old women, red drippings of betelnut hanging on the corners of their mouths, stopped their basketweaving or washing and inquired as to who I was and what I was doing there in the village so far from home.

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In the early mornings, the first thing you notice is the smell of grass burning from the many small fires women and girls of the households set to burn their trash. We're talking really small fires to burn very little material, unlike the four alarm blaze it would take to burn the mound of trash we produce in a typical US household in a day. This ubiquitous smoke hangs over the village each morning like a cloud and then dissipates as the fires die and the sun rises. The mornings are also a busy time on the banks of the Mekong. There, people bathe and brush their teeth in the river water, while others haul heavy buckets up to their houses for use during the day. Bone-thin old men come down and tend to food plots along the banks or set lines to catch fish.

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Photos by Matt Sims



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Every moment in the village or in a boat on the river seemed to bring a new experience which made me love Laos more and more.

Continued from page 4

About this same time, several women gather along the main path and wait for groups of monks from the two nearest temples to come collecting rice. I sat quietly and observed as several old monks clad in flowing orange robes magically appeared through the smoke and approached the kneeling women. The women hold the containers of sticky rice up to their foreheads as the monks approach and place some in each monk's bag, which is then taken back to the temple and shared. This simple act of religious devotion was solemn and very moving even though it was an everyday occurrence. A village in Laos without a temple nearby is almost unheard of.

After walking up and down the village meeting people and taking pictures, I was taken to the closest temple, where the same string ceremony as before was repeated with the head monk giving blessings and tying yellow string around my wrist. In the shade of a freshly painted balcony overhanging the river, he discussed life in the village and the renovation of the temple. Everywhere I went in Laos, it seemed as if every temple was in a perpetual state of renovation – scaffolding partially assembled, religious scenes being repainted, mirrored squares being glued onto walls, cement blocks and wooden beams ready for use. It would seem that either monks like to renovate their space, or the tropical weather quickly takes its toll on buildings. A bridge between one temple and the village is said to be haunted, and many strange occurrences have been reported. I enjoyed my visit to the temple, but didn't hang around too long at the bridge.

While staying at the village, I was fortunate to be invited on a couple of other trips to places along the Mekong River in Champasak Province. The first was the waterfall at Li Pi, roughly translated as "spirit trap" or "ghost catch." It is thought that this set of fast moving waterfalls along a narrow section of the river serves as a sort of net catching the spirits of people and animals that died in the river. A narrow, rickety bridge made of bamboo poles and hastily placed stones connects some of the rock formations and allows for a really close-up view of the falls. I slowly and carefully made my way out across the bridge and maneuvered over the fence-like posts while the powerful current swept past. After taking a few photos and making it back safely, I breathed a sigh of relief. The very next week a Japanese tourist tried to cross, but fell into the water. His body was never found.

Although the falls are a natural wonder, the boat trip on the Mekong to get there is certainly just as fun and interesting as the waterfalls themselves since you get to see the real life of the river. Along the way, your long-tailed boat will gracefully slide past leafy green islands choked with jungle vegetation, water buffalo and local villagers bathing in the river, and petite young girls piloting small dugout boats and pulling in heavy fishing nets.

This area is known as Si Phan Don or the 4,000 islands and has become a haven for those wanting to relax and escape the worries of the modern world. Several islands here in the Mekong have modest tourist facilities including bungalows where a steady stream of European backpackers retreat from their Asian travel schedules for a few days or weeks.

Later the same day, we drove to another famous waterfall, Khone Phapeng, which is actually the largest in Southeast Asia in terms of volume. But unlike Li Pi, which felt remote due to the journey down the river, this attraction has the feel of a tourist trap where hordes of people crowd a small balcony to have their pictures taken against the backdrop of the falls and then rush to an area of stalls to buy cheap souvenirs before hurrying back into their vans and taking off. Although very common in other places, this style of hit and run tourism seems completely antithetical to the Lao way of life.

After a long day in which I witnessed two strikingly different visions of Lao tourism – one existing alongside traditional culture and one stomping it out, I was happy to return back to the village. Again we crossed the mighty Mekong in the small boat back to Veun Xay, but this time the sun had not yet set, and I could watch the current flow steadily across the stern of the boat and revel in the view of the distant mountains. Every moment in the village or in a boat on the river seemed to bring a new experience which made me love Laos more and more. Life there felt slower. I measured my time in days, not minutes as I do in the city, and I enjoyed each day as it came – the Lao way.



Photos by Matt Sims



On view at the studio:
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Let's Talk About
How You Look

Jeannie Mai by VI HUA

“Does this shirt look good on me?” “Is it too big or too small?” “How do I look?”

These are some of the questions that many of us have asked about our fashion choices. Jeannie Mai can answer all of these questions and more.

As an experienced make-up artist, fashion expert, actress and TV personality, Jeannie is a force who you want in your corner. She can do it all. A product of a hardworking immigrant Vietnamese father and a trendsetting mother from San Jose, Jeannie began her career educating women on how to “color in their spirit” through makeup and wardrobe. The people at MAC Cosmetics were impressed by her talent and promptly offered her an entry level position. Before long, she was travelling around the world dressing the faces of celebrities including Kelly Osbourne, Alicia Keys and Christina Aguilera. Currently, Jeannie is the host of the Style Network’s show *How Do I Look?* and several other shows. In this interview, Jeannie offers some ideas that will help guide your way to finding the right look for you.

I heard you recently went to Viet Nam. How was that?

Oh my gosh, it was really amazing...unbelievable. It was my husband’s first time and to just go out there to see how it had changed in 5 years was an experience. We did some volunteer work for a program called Heartbeat Viet Nam, where we help children with dental hygiene, volunteer in clinics outside the provinces of Saigon, more of the rural areas...that sort of stuff. It was also a romantic location.

While you were in Viet Nam, did you get any inspirations for future styling?

You know, it’s really funny that you asked that because I did. I met with two amazing designers, Rana Abodeely and Victoria Roe. They focus their designs around the body of Asian women with more signature, delicate prints and fabric. These two women are just happening with their styles. They really took a turn on the Vietnamese Áo Dài and made it more modern for today’s women while taking climate and weather in Viet Nam into consideration. So, I was able to take a few of their styles home with me to put on my show, *How Do I Look?* And it was also interesting meeting with a few other designers who want to start a Saigon Fashion Week, a first ever for Saigon. I am very, very, very excited about it.

Do you think you’re going to be involved with the Saigon Fashion Week?

Totally, absolutely, 100%. I just thought there were so many amazing up and coming designers with current designs...oh, and I didn’t know they had a Louis Vuitton store out there! I had no idea!

I was pretty surprised about that when I last visited. They’ve come a long way.

Oh my god, that just freaked me out all on its’ own. And to see so many new styles come out from people who are from *Project Runway* or have been inspired from shows like *American Idol*...it was different, just wonderful. It draws your attention to the impossible and the designers we have. There’s more of an outlook and available products in the stores. So, I’m definitely going to do whatever it takes to bring it.

That’s great. You mentioned your show, How Do I Look? Can you tell the readers what the show’s about?

Sure! *How Do I Look?* is a show about basically getting every single women out there to be able to ask the question we always wanted to ask but were too afraid to hear the answer. It kind of forces you to ask people that love you, “How do I look?” The show centers around one guest and three accomplices who strongly feel that she needs a makeover. It allows them to go through the chapters of understanding as to why a makeover is needed rather than just wearing the look.

Do you have favorite looks you like to rock?

I think everybody’s really into Lady Gaga, right now. Everybody’s got a little Gaga in them. So, shoulders are my favorite body part to accentuate. It makes the waist look smaller, they don’t require a lot of working out and the bigger I make them, the better my waist looks. I’m really into the fashion that’s going on right now. Anything that involves shoulder pads, shoulder ornaments and embellishments; I’m really feeling that, right now.

In your opinion what’s one style that had been out or unheard of that you would love to see “in”?

High-waters. Pants are starting to be cropped a little bit shorter and they’re not necessarily going to be Capris but a little bit of a throw back to a trendier Capri, like harem pants, otherwise known as hammer pants. Crops are going to start coming out a lot more. It’s going to be a throw back to a casual wear that’s going to be very avant-garde. That’s what I think will be in, big time. Another look to keep an eye out for, especially with the passing of Alexander McQueen, is that women are going to really pay tribute to the boyfriend blazer. We’re eventually going to go through the menswear like business shirts, suspenders and some other items, by making them sexier in an office way.



That’s good to know. I love menswear and can’t get enough of it. What is the best kept fashion secret?

Fashion’s best kept secret...let’s see...I don’t know if it’s a secret, but people who know it definitely have style. I feel if you don’t have fit, you don’t have style. If something doesn’t fit well, then it’s never going to look right. I don’t care if you’re getting on with the biggest trend or it is an attractive style out there on the runway; if it doesn’t fit you, it’s just not going to look right. Whether it’s too loose or too tight, people should really just nail the fit before it can look like an actual look.

Very true. It’s all about the fit.

I don’t care what it is or how perfect of a piece it is, I won’t wear it.

What are a few basics that every woman should have in their closet?

Over-the-knee boots. They are flattering on any woman and should have a little heel on them. It’s absolutely necessary for anyone 5’4” and under. Over-the-knee boots are something that’s just very sexy and the “go to” piece that fits with whatever outfit that you wear. It just makes your outfit look presentable. I also think wrap dresses – I love wrap sweaters – anything that has a beautiful soft cashmere feel or something that has a beautiful print to it. Whether you are off to work or just dashing out of the house, throw on the over the knee boots and a wrap sweater and it just looks like you’re in New York. I also think a huge “must have” is glasses. Women forget that accessories can totally change up an outfit and I don’t care if you have perfect vision, go and get a cute pair of glasses and just rock ‘em. They just give an immediate quick fix up and will give a little play for your day, too. You’ll feel like you’re a different person when you have a different look.

If something doesn’t fit well,
then it’s never going to look right.

You started out as a make-up artist. How did you crossover to being a stylist?

Well, basically, I started out as a trainer for MAC cosmetics. I always loved telling women how to get the newest smoky eyes, how to look skinnier and contouring techniques. Then, I found out that I was really good at being able to celebrate how women can look or love the way they look even more. I just started doing that more and more around my hometown, San Jose. Next thing I knew, I caught the attention of a local news program like *Good Morning Sacramento*. Before you know it, I was doing the same kinds of work on television and it made me realize what a powerful medium television is. My passion really is to celebrate women and to get females to recognize that whatever is imperfect about them, it makes them stand out in a most unique way that nobody can duplicate. That’s what my job will be till the day I die. It’s to get women to find out what it is that makes them stand out and rock it.

That’s nice that you play on women’s natural attributes rather than building them into something they’re not.

Style is so individualized; everybody should have their own unique style. That’s how we get trendsetters, how we get designers, and how we get inspired. I always try to focus on really loving yourself and people who know about it will have an amazing outlook.

Catch Jeannie Mai in
How Do I Look?
on the Style Network

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FASHION

Shoe to Hat
and Everything in Between

Fashion Bucket List by VI HUA

What do you want to do before you die? Well, let me rephrase that. What fashion trends do you want to try before you die? I was inspired after watching a show on MTV called *The Buried Life*, where four guys set out on adventure to fulfill their bucket lists. Life really is short and can be taken away at any moment, so why not live it to the fullest? I’ve decided to help readers out by composing a Fashion Bucket List (FBL). It includes trends or looks that readers just have to try whether they fall within “the norm” for them or outside of their comfort zones. Here are a few of my favorites that are on my FBL.

- 1. Wear all white** “There is something about wearing all white that just looks refreshing. It’s like the start of a new day. So, wear it from head to toe – you get bonus points if you do so after Labor Day.” – Julie Nguyen, fashion fanatic
- 2. Decade looks (20’s, 30’s, 40’s...)** The only reason we have such a variety of fashion from which to choose from today is because of the influence of designs from previous decades.
- 3. Elaborate hats** You don’t have to be going to church or a polo game to pull this look off. Just put a hat on and not only will you look fashionable but you’ll be protecting yourself from the sun’s UV rays. One of my favorites is from milliner Phillip Treacy.
- 4. Tube tops** “I have never worn tube tops before because I was afraid of showing too much skin. Now, I can’t get enough of them.” – Tree Vaello, make-up artist and beauty editor
- 5. Harem/Hammer pants** If MC Hammer can wear them, you can, too.
- 6. Metal spike stilettos** There is nothing sexier than spike stilettos; just make sure you can walk in them.



- 7. Leather pants or skirt** “I don’t care what size you are, find one that fits and just rock it!” – Jeannie Mai, stylist and host of *How Do I Look?*
- 8. Fur** There are so many options out there including coats, hats, vests, and the trimming on outfits. It can be real or faux, the choice is yours. Just make sure you’re not around any members of PETA if you’re sporting a real one.
- 9. Accessories overload** Try piling them on over a simple black outfit. Your accessories will stand out and make a statement.
- 10. Minimalist look** “I love being a minimalist. Wearing jeans, t-shirt and heels is sexy and simple. It’s fierce.” – Lily Bui, make-up artist
- 11. Mixed prints** Try a colorful floral print skirt with vertical striped blouse. You’d be surprised how great it actually looks.
- 12. Cultural outfits** There are so many different cultures out there living in one world. So, why not share with everyone what other cultures have to offer?
- 13. Lady Gaga looks** Yes, she is willing to go the distance and take risks but you don’t have to try to pull off her entire look. Maybe, try her outrageous looking hairdo, unique tights, or extreme bodysuits.

A Tribal Son Joins
Sons of Tucson

Edwin Habacon

by HENRI MERCERON

It is so refreshing to interview a rising star before he actually becomes a star and is swept away by fame and fortune. We believe that Edwin Habacon may be one such star. He hopes so, too. After reading his very entertaining perspective on starting an acting career later than most (at age 30), you cannot help but wish him well. Last month, *The Sons of Tucson* premiered on Fox 26 (in Houston) and has been very well received. We think his appearances were instrumental in reaching the high ratings.

You began your acting career when you were 30 years old because your parents wanted you to be a doctor, lawyer, or other respectable professional. What did they say when you abandoned your t-shirt design company, Tribal Pinoy, to become an actor? How has their thinking changed in nine years?

They really didn't say anything. I think they just knew that whatever they would say was gonna "go in one ear and out the other". I've been stubborn all my life, so I think they're just used to it; they should be, by now.

I think they are more accepting now because they've actually seen me on T.V. and film. Something is happening. If nothing was happening in my career, then it might be a different story. But you just never know with Filipino parents. I'm sure they brag a little to their friends, but it's like, "Oh you're on t.b.? Oh, that's guuuud... O.K. I'm playing Majong now, leeb me alone."

Do you have any regrets about not starting your acting career earlier or about leaving your design company?

At times, I regret not starting in my early 20's. It takes time to get your feet underneath you in this business. I've learned so much in the past 9-10 years, and I'm just now utilizing it and actually understanding it. On the other hand, when I did start, I was a lot more mature. In my 20's, I had experienced things most people had not by being a community and political activist for the Filipino-American community and the Philippines. Much of what I lived during that time, definitely, molded who I am now, as an actor and as a person.

I have absolutely no regrets about folding up Tribal Pinoy/Pinay. It was just time. I didn't enjoy it anymore. When I started it, it was never about the money; then, it became all about the money.

Did you think an acting career was going to be easier than it has been?

I knew it was going to be difficult. Especially, because of the way people perceive me. I just didn't know how difficult it was going to be. I'm not your typical looking Filipino or Asian. I admit that I'm the complete opposite of what the general American public perceives us to be, if they even perceive us, at all. I'm used to working hard and achieving success at everything I do in a relatively short amount of time. But in this industry, you really have to be patient and keep pushing harder, at the same time. Although I have primarily focused on the craft itself and really respecting acting, you have to learn the business side of it all, too.

Why do you enjoy being an actor so much?

Because when times are good, I don't have to find a regular job! You know, it's really hard to explain. It is hard to describe the feeling I get when someone comes up to me after a performance and says, "That was absolutely amazing". I'm always uncomfortable in those situations and usually take them with a grain of salt because I'm never happy with my performance. I always feel I could have done better, but I guess... Manny Pacquiao said it best, "I just want to make the people happy." If I could make the audience and the people that I'm working with "feel" what's going on, then I'd be somewhat content. The challenge of doing that is as thrilling as the accomplishment.

Do you get more dates being an actor than being a t-shirt designer?

Ha Ha! That's a double edged sword. As the owner of a T-shirt company, I had some money! As an actor, I have potential... which usually means I'm broke as hell, but I got potential ladies! Talent doesn't usually pay the bills, but hard work does. You know the ladies out there are a lot more demanding of the guys they date, as they should be, but their ring tones are like, "Don't Want No Scrubs" or "To the Left, To the Left, Everything you own is in the box to the Left..." It's hard to stay confident when you hear that, when you know you're struggling to make it in this business. POTENTIAL LADIES!!! It's gotta count for something, right? LOL!!!! Holla at me, ladies... just kidding... but not really.



Photo by Bjorn Photography

How exactly did you plan to become an actor? As a practical matter, how did you support yourself? Did you take acting classes? How do you continue improving your skills?

I didn't have a plan. Once people get to know me, they'll realize that "plans" really aren't a part of my plan, they just get in the way of what I want to do. I just went out and did it. I just had to take the chance and pursue something I knew might not pay off. I guess that's where the typical Filipino comes in; I have to gamble! The bigger the risk, the bigger the reward; win big or go home baby!

I pretty much did whatever. I took (and still do) odd jobs to stay afloat. From bouncing at a strip club to gripping on indie films to being a loan officer for my cousin's real estate firm. I'm a jack of all trades. In fact, is anyone hiring right now?

Although I have primarily focused on the craft itself and really respecting acting, you have to learn the business side of it all, too.

I took acting classes with Scott Colomby and pretty much stayed with him. He has such a keen eye for character and scene details which takes a long time to learn. I learned so much through him. He taught me to be the best actor I can be and not just a character actor. I covered all the bases with him from classical to modern plays, auditioning, producing, directing, and a little bit of writing. His acting pedigree is from such teachers as Lee Strausberg and Peggy Fury, and his mentor, John Len, just to name a few. Those were some heavyweight teachers.

The only way to improve your skills is to constantly do the thing that you're supposed to do. I also watch a lot of old movies and study and analyze great actors and films. I study about writing to learn how writers form their characters. I try to learn how to relax and not tense up. I scream a lot in my car. That last one may sound funny, but it's true, because I'm working on my voice and breathing (except when I'm actually cussing someone out for cutting me off). It's good for the voice though.

How has your life changed from when you were a t-shirt designer?

Financially, I was better off and had a steady income. They both demand hard ass work to be the best I can be. They both required me to find ways of being creative, to do my best to make people happy with the product, whether it is a piece of clothing or a performance.

As for acting, the future is still an unknown. It can be a little unsettling thinking about being successful in this business.

What did you learn about yourself during this nine year quest?

I learned that I had to "learn" to be a good actor and that there's never an end to that learning. I'm more resilient than I thought I would be; that might just be my stubborn nature. Most of all, I learned that this is what I was meant to do.

Sons of Tucson airs
Sundays at 9:30pm
on Fox

Tribal Pinoy was founded on your strong Filipino pride. How does that passion manifest itself now, especially, since it appears that a number of the roles you have played are of a Latino and not Filipino-American?

It is what it is. If you asked this question when I was in my 20's you probably would have gotten a different answer, a more militant and combative one at that. As far as my identity, I've grown into it. I'm not insecure about who I am and don't feel the need to be vindicated or even validated. My journey has given me the self confidence to stand in any room with anybody and feel at ease. The Filipino "thing" was just a part of that journey, albeit, a major part, of who people see today.

Anyone that has gone thru this "journey" *has* to be passionate and passion *has* to translate into hard work and that is what I bring to everything I do. Honestly, I'm still going thru my journey.

As far as the roles, I probably have played more Latino roles. I don't think I've ever played a Filipino-American.

Are you often mistaken as being a Latino, especially Mexican, since you grew up in California? How does that make you feel given your strong Fil-Am pride? Do you care?

Sometimes, I can be mistaken for Mexican, especially when I grow my beard, which makes me unique with Filipinos, cuz it's a full beard; must be the Spanish blood in me. I think it scares Filipina girls and their parents. I've also been mistaken for Samoan and Japanese and, of course, Hawaiian. No, it doesn't bother me at all, unless they say something shitty. Then, it's on!

What's up with all your tattoos?

My tattoos are a part of who I am. For a long time, they were forbidden and were starting to be lost in our culture. I just wanted to have something that paid homage to the people we once were and be able to share that with others. Plus, I'm just a rebellious son-of-a-bitch!

I understand that it could hurt my chances at certain roles, but that's just another challenge. Just because I have a lot of tattoos doesn't mean I can't play a father, a husband, Henry V, Richard III, or even a transvestite (which I've played...twice, as a *character*...not in real life...) LOL.

You've gotten parts in some well known shows and movies including Mind of Mencia, Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End, Southland, and, most recently, a recurring role in Sons of Tucson. In most of these roles you are kind of typecast as a tough guy. How does this fit into your broad plan for the future and the roles you will be offered?

I'm not going to fight my "type". I'm going to work to be the best at it. Work, as an actor is like Willy Wonka's Golden Ticket; it can be rare and everyone wants it. I've been fortunate to be able to get work and I will never take that for granted at any stage of my career. I have friends that are great actors who haven't been as fortunate as I. This is a brutal business.

Every role I get is another step forward. Of course, I would like to show my wide range as an actor. That time will come but you have to start someplace.

You said you played a transvestite in an indie film. Was it a comedy? There is very little about your appearance that is in any way like a transvestite.

Ha Ha! Yes, it was a comedy called "Stress, Orgasms and Salvation". Unfortunately, it never got distributed. It was my very first acting gig. They Taft Hartley-ed me for that. Talk about being thrown in the fire. I was soooo green. I had done a similar character in a play called "The Shawl" in Scott's class and he was already cast in the film. I think they were having trouble casting that role when Scott recommended that they audition me. I auditioned and the rest was history. I really held back a lot in that role because it was my very first one. Give me the same character now, and I'd be FIERCE!! LOL.

Without jinxing it, what does the possibility that you could become a permanent part of the cast of Sons of Tucson mean to you in personal and professional terms?

That would be like winning the lottery! Personally, it means that all the hard work I've done has finally got me a chance at bat. All an actor can ask for is the chance to show that he can do the work. I'm extremely appreciative of it. Professionally, the sky's the limit. It could propel me to other great projects.

What is a "dream" movie or "dream" role that would really fulfill you? Do you have a "dream" leading lady with whom you would like to work?

I would love to play Richard III or Henry V. Maybe, one day, someone will be progressive enough to cast me in those roles. As for leading ladies - - Helen Mirren, Meryl Streep, Jodie Foster and Lily Taylor; the list can go on forever.

I would love to play Richard III or Henry V. Maybe, one day, someone will be progressive enough to cast me in those roles.

What is your favorite movie era?

The 50's. The time of Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, James Dean, Andy Griffith in "Face in the Crowd". Elia Kazan is one of the best directors of all time and Bud Shulberg is one of the best writers of all time. I also like the 70's with a young Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Dustin Hoffman, Jack Nicholson etc... For me, these are the golden eras.

Obviously, your appearance conveys a certain stereotype. Do you have any funny stories about this...like watched people cross the street when they saw you coming towards them?

Actually, that really has happened! They always try to play it off like they meant to cross the street, anyway. No eye contact, except for the corner of their eye, brisk paced walking, keys clenched in between their knuckles, ready to gouge out my eyes.

What would be the biggest misconception about you that would surprise people?

That I am really proficient at acting in classical pieces. It trips people out when they see someone like me play Tartuffe or Mark Antony in a moving way. Don't let the tattoos fool you; I am a legitimate actor who has worked hard on a very wide range.

Where do you hope to be five years from now?

On the set or stage doing what I love most, and being paid a ridiculous amount of money doing it. LOL. Actually, just being able to make a decent living doing what I love doing would be fine.

What is your favorite pastime?

Golf. I'm not very good at it, but I can't let some little white dimpled ball get the best of me.

How did you get involved in so many martial arts including: boxing, Muay Thai Boxing, Brazilian Jui Jitsu, combat submission wrestling, Kali (Filipino stick fighting) and Sayoc Kali (Filipino knife fighting)?

You know, I've always been an aggressive guy. Martial arts was my life when I was child. I remember that my friends and I could re-enact every scene and every word from *Enter the Dragon*. We made nunchuks from our parents' broom handles and throwing stars from sheet metal in wood shop class. We were the only Asians in our little town of Broadview, Illinois, so Bruce Lee was our hero.

I'm not an expert at any of the styles, I just know a few things from every style, but that's the beauty of film, they can make you look like an expert!

Photo © 20th Century FOX



Edwin Habacon and Tyler Labine in *Sons of Tucson*



Olivia Munn on Attack! A Date Night with Iron Man

By Henri Merceron

Olivia Munn is the wildly popular co-host on the G4 network's hugely popular teckie oriented program, *Attack of the Show!* She was invited to pose for the cover of the July-August issue of *Playboy* magazine, which she managed to do...without nudity! Some in the blogosphere were not pleased but Olivia and her fans were fine with her doing it her way. And "her way" is accelerating her career along a path that is steeply pointing up. This month, Olivia can be seen in *Date Night* with Tina Fey and Steve Carell along with a veritable constellation of stars who make cameo appearances. Next month, she can be seen with Robert Downey, Jr. and Mickey Rourke in *Iron Man 2*. She is so busy that I raced through as many questions as I could in the fifteen minutes we had available before she had to be on set. I could hear the furious tapping of her fingers on her PC's keyboard, demonstrating that she is also an accomplished and effective multi-tasker.

Photographer **Mitchell Nguyen McCormack** Fashion Stylist **Marc Sifuentes** Hair **Jeffrey Jagged/Aim Artist** Makeup **Diana Oh**
Photo Retouching **Megumi Okasaki for Sous Les Etoiles** souslesetoiles.net
Location **Andaz West Hollywood**

Top and skirt by Shelly Steffee



It takes a lot
to do comedy.

Dress by Hernan Lander

Olivia, congratulations on all your upcoming movies.

I feel like I'm under water, right now. There's a lot going on. I'm sorry that I only have fifteen minutes to talk before I have to be on set.

Okay, then, let's get right into it. What was the best thing about being a part of *Date Night* and *Iron Man 2*?

Definitely, it was working with the people I got to work with. Both movies are filled with stars. *Date Night* had a cameo with every celebrity you could think of and everyone you know is in *Iron Man 2*. It was nice to be on set and learn from these people, to work with them and just to be part of the experience. It was kind of like a Hollywood dream to be on the set of these movies...I would have done catering on either of these movie sets to be involved.

Was there any memorable anecdote that you could share or anything surprising about the stars?

Not so much anecdotes. The amazing thing is that I think what many people don't realize is that it takes a lot to do comedy. It's a lot of fun but, really, it takes a lot of energy and focus. The biggest thing about walking away from both of the movies is...well, Robert Downey, Jr. just might be as best as they come. He is fantastic and he is everything that you'd want him to be as a person. He is such a nice, pleasant, sweet, smart, talented, and funny guy. He takes his work very seriously.

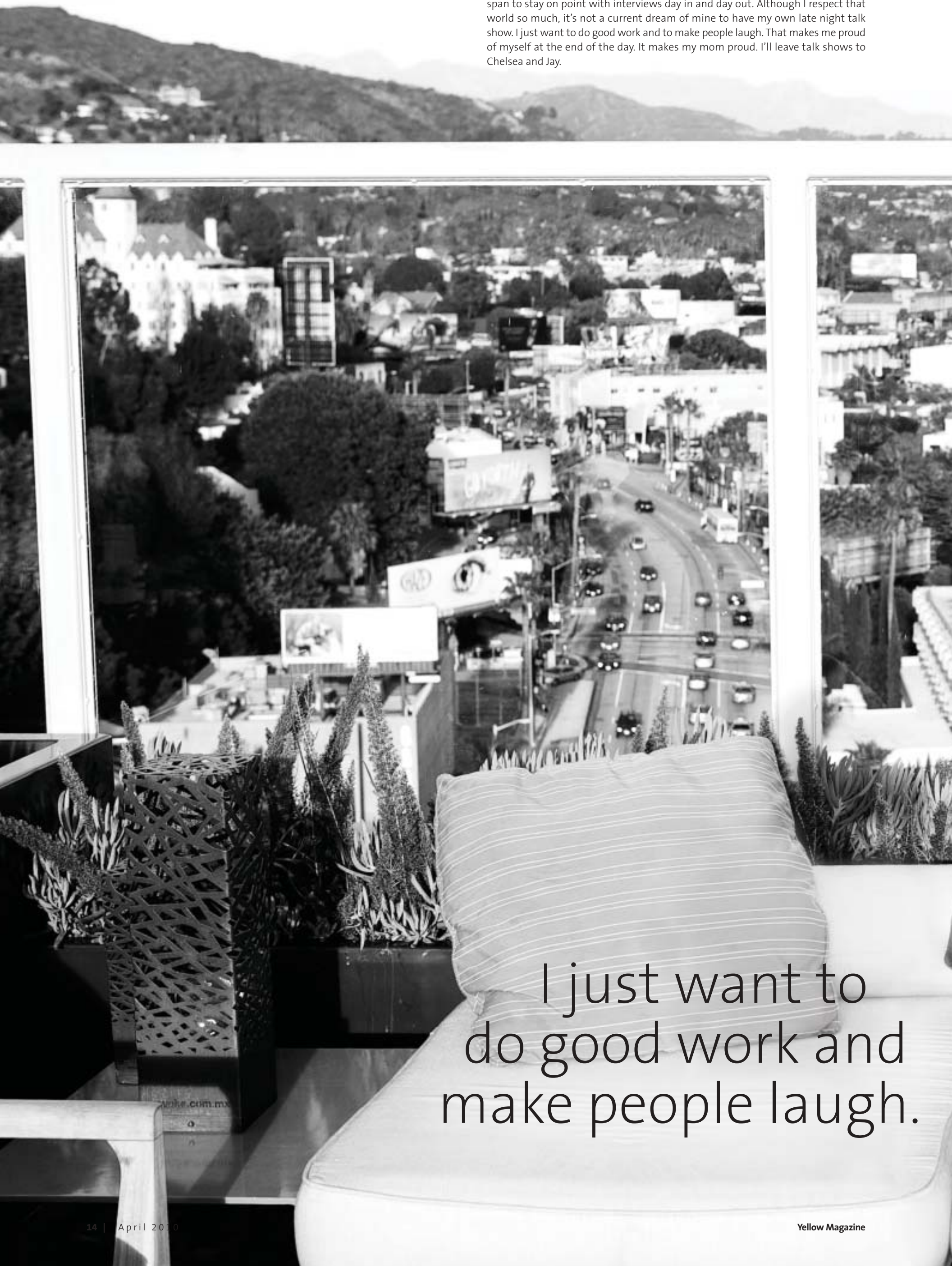
And when you're working with Tina (Fey) and Steven (Carell), they may just be the nicest people in the whole entire world...who ever walked the earth. They're unbelievable. Tina Fey makes Mother Teresa look like a bitch by comparison because she is so nice. She's the nicest and warmest person I've ever met. We'd be doing scenes and then drop down and talk about interior decorating and restaurants, joking around and laughing the whole time. The biggest surprise that people might have is that when we stop rolling, everyone just kind of sits down and talks. It's not about being jokey all the time but just sitting down and being real people.

Do you have to memorize lines for *Attack of the Show!* (AOTS)? Even though it is live, it looks as though it is all improv. How does it work?

We have amazing writers who come up with really funny jokes. Kevin and I really add in what we want. Our prompt operator deserves a lot of credit for being able to keep up with us because we are on and off script quite a bit. It's definitely a team effort on our show. It's a fine art that I am proud of and I don't think can be done as well anywhere else.

Your brand of humor reminds me of Chelsea Handler on her show, *Chelsea Lately*, with its irreverence and rawness. Your comedic timing and facial expressions are fantastic. Would you ever consider doing something similar, like *The Olivia Munn Show*?

Yeah...but maybe not how Chelsea does it. I think she does a really good job with what she does and with her humor. I don't know if I am the best at interviews. When I do interviews, they are literally about nothing! "What did you have for dinner tonight?" The publicists all go crazy 'cuz they're like, "She's not talking about their movies. She's talking about other things." I don't know if I have the attention span to stay on point with interviews day in and day out. Although I respect that world so much, it's not a current dream of mine to have my own late night talk show. I just want to do good work and to make people laugh. That makes me proud of myself at the end of the day. It makes my mom proud. I'll leave talk shows to Chelsea and Jay.



I just want to
do good work and
make people laugh.

You don't seem like someone who embarrasses easily. Can you reveal your most embarrassing moment, if there is one?

In life or in the show?

Whichever comes to mind.

I have this horrible cringe factor to the nth degree. You know how sometimes you do something and you think to yourself, "I can't believe I just did that. Argh!" With me, it stays with me for like a year. I'll do something in front of a guy or do something stupid and, in the moment, I don't feel embarrassed but, afterwards, I think, "Oh my God, that is so horrible." It's hard to embarrass me because I think, you know, whatever it is, it is just life. Sometimes we say stupid things. Sometimes we do stupid things.

One of my biggest pet peeves in life is when you're sitting in the car with other people singing a song and miss a verse or sing the wrong chord and someone in the car goes, "Oh, you missed that!!!" As if we don't all do that at one time or another. It's so annoying! Whatever, I missed a note. Singing is fun and sometimes I'm singing the wrong lines. I think whenever I do something on set that may be embarrassing, I just think, "Hey, it's just life" and move on. I only get really

embarrassed when I do something stupid around a boy. That's why I try to stay away from boys. I don't want to ever embarrass myself.

Are you a practical joker? With this being April, what is the best April Fool's joke that you have pulled or that has been pulled on you?

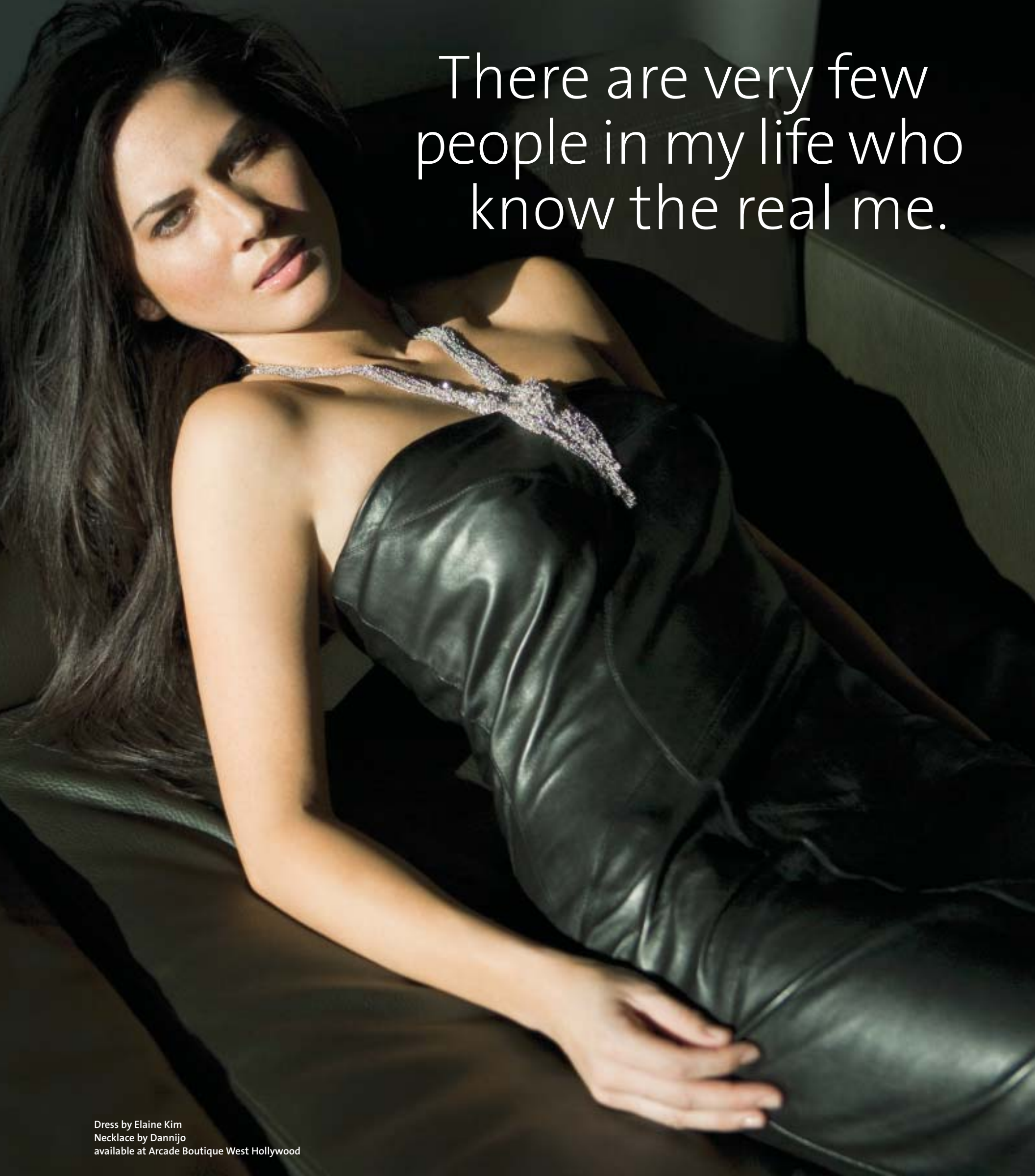
None. I am not a prankster. It takes too much energy and I am definitely a person who is afraid that things won't go as planned. What if the person doesn't think it's funny and gets mad? That'd kind of suck. But I will text things in a jokey way. If it's a guy I'm dating, I'll text him, "Hey, are you sitting right now? We need to talk about something." He'll respond, "Yeah, what is it?" and I'll say, "Do you like the Olive Garden because I want to go there tonight." That's as far as I'll go with any kind of prank.

Do people generally know you are of Asian ancestry? Personally, I would not guess that you are half Chinese. You look exotic to me. I have noticed that you freely mention your ancestry with pride. Can you say something about this?

Most people are racists. They think you got to look a certain way to be a certain way...I'm just kidding! I think it's hard to be around me and not know about my ethnicity because I'm always talking about my family.



Dress by Mara Hoffman
available at Arcade Boutique West Hollywood



There are very few
people in my life who
know the real me.

Dress by Elaine Kim
Necklace by Dannijo
available at Arcade Boutique West Hollywood

Your chemistry with your *AOTS* co-host, Kevin Pereira, is undeniable. There's a site called [WhosDatedWho.com](#) which has posted results of a vote on who your top romance should be: Bryan Greenberg (60); Kevin Pereira (48) and Chris (Captain Kirk) Pine (5). What do you have to say about that since Pine is your most recently referenced beau?

Who's Dated Who.com? And they like Bryan the most? Bryan is a really good guy. He's a really great guy. I'll give you that. Out of those guys, Bryan might be the...well, I've never dated Kevin. I'm reading it right now (the website). You're reading it wrong. "Should Olivia keep dating Bryan Greenberg?" 63% said, "No, she can do better."

No, I did not see those numbers. I'll have to go back to the website and see what I read.

It may be a different site that literally asks, "Who is better than who? Should Olivia keep dating Bryan Greenberg" 63% say "no". Then, it asks, "Is Chris Pine good enough for Olivia Munn?"...let's see what they say...the votes are coming in...81% say "no, *she's mine!*"

Do you prefer dating actors to "regular" guys?

I just prefer cute guys.

Can they be geeks?

If they're cute and they're sweet and they're funny, I'm good.

If you could go to a factory and place an order for your "perfect" man what characteristics would he have?

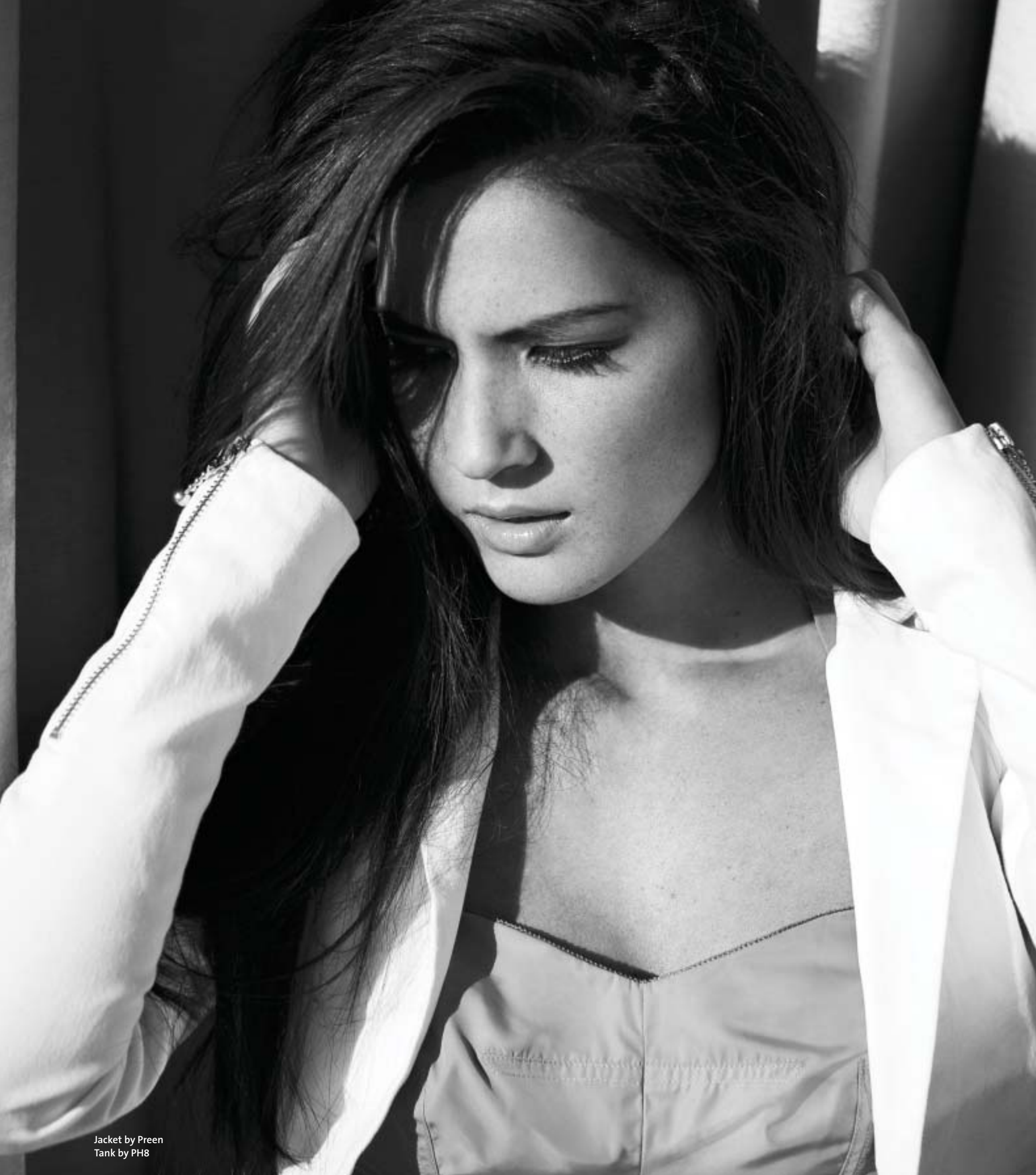
A hover board, an ability to travel through time and a love of all things Olive Garden.

Olive Garden, huhh? Is that your favorite spot?

It's about the bread sticks. That's the deal of the century! I mean you can get free unlimited salad *and* bread sticks.

Are you pretty much a WYSIWYG kind of person or is there something about you that would really surprise fans, family and/or friends?

I would not say that I am a What You See Is What You Get kind of person. I'm more of a WYSIWYTS – What You See Is What I Want You To See kind of person. There are very few people in my life who know the real me. Especially, for an entertainer, I think it's important to keep that for yourself. You can't put everything out there because, then, what do you have left for those who've put time in getting close to you?



Jacket by Preen
Tank by PH8

On the street, do fans recognize you more for having been on *Playboy* or *AOTS*?

If they know me from the *Playboy* cover, it's only because they know me from *Attack of the Show!* and they're fans.

Do you have any experiences with paparazzi?

Yeah, un-hunh. They're outside of my house. They follow. They do the whole thing. It's not fun.

Being such a teckie, do you ever scan the Internet to see what people are saying about you?

I used to when I first started but I think reading forum comments reels you in because you read the good stuff and it entices you to go back for more. And then you read the bad stuff and you leave. I consider it to be like an old creepy guy who offers you candy to come inside his house. When you leave, you realize that you were gang banged. Well, that sucked. That's kind of what the Internet forums are like to me.

You like gadgets. But the Blackberry over the iPhone??!! How come?

I'm always going nonstop. I'm even texting and emailing during makeup. I like that you can feel the buttons on the Blackberry. On the iPhone, I'd have to be able to text blind. Also, I carry netbooks with me everywhere I go to access the Internet. I'm not listening to music all the time. I'm not looking for pictures on my phone. I need a phone that's going to give me email, Internet (occasionally), and on which I can make calls and get and receive text messages. That is it.

I noted that in previous interviews you could not say anything about your roles in *Date Night* and *Iron Man 2*.

Still can't. Sorry. And we went a bit over and I have to get on set.

Thanks for sharing the little bit of free time that you have with us.

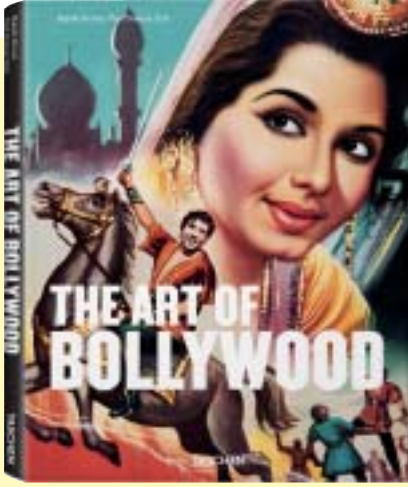
Bye.

*(I was disappointed that I ended the interview having learned nothing about Olivia's roles in *Date Night* and *Iron Man 2*. I just need to find her hover board riding time travelling "perfect" man and ask him for a sneak preview!)*

From the Latest Technology
to Old-Fashioned Print

Artful Entertainment

Maybe you like to curl up with a good book. Or rock out to some retro music. Or watch the latest YouTube videos while reading a book and playing a video game, all at the same time. Check out a few entertainment options that we recommend this month.



Movie Art

Taschen, the leader in art books, has just published this comprehensive collection of a wide range of hand-painted images pulled from reprints and collector hand-me-downs. The Art of Bollywood specializes in hard-to-find shots as well as street publicity campaigns and cinema displays.

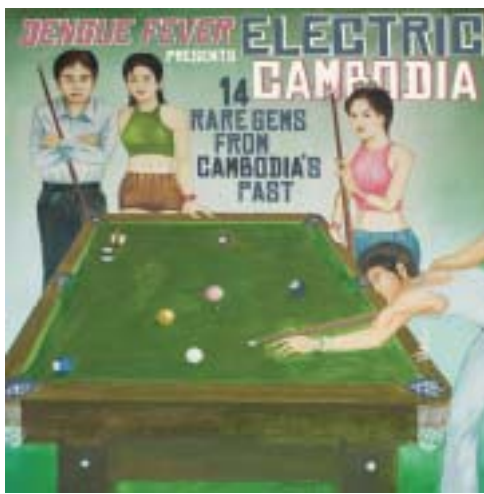
The Art of Bollywood, 192-pages \$30
taschen.com



All Together Now

Web, email, photos, video, games, books, YouTube, iTunes – it's all in one place, beautifully designed and incredibly compact. With a large, high-resolution LED-backlit IPS display, responsive Multi-Touch screen, and extended battery life, the ultra thin and super light iPad is a game changer. Built-in Wi-Fi and 3G availability let you roam free while still being connected. You may not know you want one, but you will want one!

iPad, starting at \$499
apple.com



Get Electric

The members of the band Dengue Fever has put together a collection of Cambodian rock and roll music recorded in the 1960s and early '70s, a period of time soon after Cambodia became an independent nation. The music is a unique combination of the traditional and the modern, and a golden era to be remembered.

Dengue Fever Presents: Electric Cambodia, \$14
amazon.com



Charge Up!

New from Idapt, the i4 lets you charge up to four gadgets at once. So instead of having twenty cords running every which way, just plug in your iPhone, iPod, game controllers, digital cameras, Nintendo DS, and more, in one central location, cord-free. LED lights let you know when you are ready to go.

Idapt i4, black or white \$60 (available in May)
idapt.com



Digital Entertainment On Demand

Why just watch TV when you can check out Tweets, stock quotes, news headlines, and more at the same time. The new Toshiba UX600 LED TV offers breakthrough picture quality with advanced interactive features. The UX600 features NET TV™ to let you keep in touch while watching TV through social networking applications like Facebook® and Twitter®, plus YouTube™, Flickr®, and Picasa™ Web Albums.

Toshiba UX600, 40" \$1,400, 46" \$1,700, 55" \$2,500
Available at various electronics retailers



Kurosawa Classics

On the centenary of the birth of Akira Kurosawa, Criterion has released this amazing collection spanning his incredible career. AK 100 is the most complete set of Kurosawa works ever released in the US, and even includes four rare films that have never been available on DVD. Enjoy such classics such as *Rashomon*, *Seven Samurai*, and *Ikiru* in beautifully restored clarity.

AK 100: 25 Films of Akira Kurosawa (Criterion Collection), \$319
criterion.com



Build A Game

LEGO® Games is the world's first collection of games that you build, play, and change. In the new Creationary game, you roll the unique buildable LEGO Dice to select one of four building categories: vehicles, buildings, nature, or things. Then you build while other players try to guess what you are creating. If you like Pictionary, you'll love Creationary!

LEGO Creationary, \$35
lego.com

Creating New Classics
in Her Own Style

Hiromi Sings

by LEO SIPRAS

Japanese songstress, Hiromi Kanda, introduced her debut American album, *Hiromi in Love*, last month. Filled with classical favorites originally sung by an array of illustrious artists such as Ray Charles, Frank Sinatra, and Nat King Cole, Hiromi's pristine voice does great honor to this quintessentially American musical era. If you are a lover of this genre of music, you will absolutely want to listen to Hiromi's interpretations of such classical songs as *My Funny Valentine*, *In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning*, *Cry*, and many more.



Hiromi Kanda's new CD, *Hiromi in Love*, is available on Amazon, and you can see some of her videos on YouTube.

Have you always loved "the classics"?

Yes. The classics that are on my CD are songs that are special to me.

Who is your favorite American singer?

Frank Sinatra. He had a wonderful voice from the heart, and a special singing technique.

Is there a singer you would like to perform a duet with?

Boz Scaggs!

Is it difficult attracting an audience in Japan when singing American pop/jazz standards? Are Japanese audiences familiar with the songs?

Yes, I think singing American pop/jazz standards is difficult. The older Japanese audience is familiar with the songs, but most of the teenagers and younger generation are not.

Is there a favorite song on your new album?

All are wonderful!

What brought you back to recording?

I think it is destiny. But I think I also decided that maybe I wanted to sing again. And I believed in my husband Yusuke's talent as a musical composer. I wanted him to make some great music again also.

What is it like working with your husband?

I think we complement each other's talent.

You have done a series of videos for most of the songs on the album. Is there a reason?

I like YouTube. Many people who do not know me, they need such resources to be able to see and hear my performances.

Do you think the videos are essential to marketing your album?

Yes, for a similar reason, to help people learn about me and my music. The video serves to introduce me. My world is like this...

How do you decide what visuals you want to include when creating a video?

These songs have romantic love messages, so I need to carry the same essence of romance in the videos.

Do you have a favorite writer/lyricist?

My favorite writer is Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. As for lyricist, there are many, including Ira Gershwin, Harold Adamson and more...

Do you write music yourself?

Yes, I write lyrics.

Is this the first of many new CDs including pop/jazz songs?

I hope so. On this album, Yusuke and I created two original songs, but the others are classic musical pieces that we re-worked.

Do you plan to include any of your own songs on future CDs?

Yes. We will write some new songs and we now know some great American composers and songwriters. In the future, we are going to ask them to work with us.

Will you be performing in Houston anytime in the future?

I hope so! I have never been Houston. I want to go Houston! Mahalo.



I think it is destiny. But I think I also decided that maybe I wanted to sing again.

Some Things Just Never
Go Out Of Style

Style Classics

Knowledgeable fashion sources will tell you over and over: buy quality, not quantity. Investing in the right pieces will pay off for years and years. Some items we consider classics have been around seemingly forever, while others are more recent yet are still destined to be considered long-lasting style icons.



Black silk YSL tie
\$185

**Versace Flamed
light denim jeans**
\$495

**Santos de Cartier
“galbee” watch,
extra large model in stainless steel**
\$5,150

**Fendi leather bracelet
with stainless steel logo**
\$110

**Ralph Lauren Purple
Label folding sunglasses**
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The Balvenie 12yr Scotch
\$46

Leica D-Lux 4 camera
\$800

Photos by Collin Kelly

Japan America Society Houston Gala

Held at Westin Galleria Hotel

More than 200 guests attended the Japan America Society (JASH) Gala which celebrated 41 years of contributions made to the community. This year's gala focused on JASH's success in education. The evening kicked off with a spirited performance of Ryukyukoku Kingdom Festival Drums by the Ryukyukoku Marsuri dance group which showcased the lively style and energy of Okinawa. JASH president, Gregory Crowe, spoke of the organization's commitment to education and bringing culture together. Mr. Jeff Smisek, Continental Airways CEO, highlighted his company's role in serving as a bridge between Houston and Tokyo, while Mayor Anise Parker proclaimed January 28, 2010, "Continental Airlines Day".



The Honorable Tutsomu Osawa and Mrs Eiko Osawa



Javed Meghani, Jeff Smisek



Gala Chair Yuki Rogers and Houston Mayor Anise Parker



JASH President Greg Crowe, Dr. Toshiko Satake



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Ryukyukoku Marsuri Dance Group

AAREA Gala

Held at Kim Son Restaurant

The 7th Annual Asian American Real Estate Association Spring Gala (AAREA), formerly known as The Greater Houston Chinese Real Estate Association, was held at Kim Son Restaurant. The AAREA is a non-profit organization formed in 2003 to acknowledge the growing Asian market in the greater Houston, Texas area. AAREA is dedicated to furthering the Asian American presence in Houston and the surrounding areas. The gala celebrated the successes and accomplishments of Asian American realtors, developers and others actively involved in home purchases. In addition, the 2010 AAREA's Board of Directors was installed during the event.



Bob Cai, Ben Ho, Dan Goon, Ben Huynh, Paul Lim, Trish Bui



Lisa Tam, Houston Mayor Anise Parker, Lauris Tam



Vietnamese recording artist Quinn Luong, Michael Pham, Trish Thuy Trang



Viet Hoang, Na Li, Trish Bui, Kevin Hoang

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New NYC

by LEO SIPRAS

On your next visit to see the latest Broadway shows in New York City, make sure to book a stay at Distrikt Hotel, a newly constructed boutique hotel in the heart of Midtown Manhattan. The 32-story hotel pays homage to Manhattan's diverse "distrikts" with neighborhood-themed floors that go from the Financial District on the bottom of the building to Harlem on the top.

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The hotel was designed by New York-based OTTE Architecture, who hired renowned artist Chris Rubino to create giant, back-lit collages composed of more than 10,000 pictures on each floor that represent iconic neighborhoods like Chelsea, The Village, Central Park, and Soho. The contemporary lobby features a 14-foot "living wall" of green plants arranged in the shape of Central Park. Each of the guestrooms mixes comfort and luxury, with plush Frette bedding and ECRU New York bath amenities.

Tech-friendly comforts include free Wi-Fi, iHome docking stations and flat-panel televisions. Stay in an upper floor room and enjoy sweeping views of the New York skyline and Hudson River. And don't forget to check out the stylish Collage restaurant with its signature cocktails, farm-fresh local produce and delicious microbrews.

New York City can be a tough place to find a hotel that gives you both style *and* affordability. Distrikt Hotel offers a perfect mix that could make it your home-away-from-home in the big apple.



Who Said Wine
Needs To Be Complicated?

Wine Basics

by PHILIP CUISIMANO

Spring is the season of transition and an opportune time to review the fundamental building blocks on which to expand our knowledge of wine. We do so in the hopes of helping to transition a blossoming wine aficionado into a more confident consumer. And, as for us seasoned wine-drinkers; none can deny the efficacy of review. So, with this in mind, we offer a crash course on the "Basics of Wine".

First, we must define wine which is in its elemental form simply "fermented grape juice". Fermentation is the chemical process by which sugar is transformed into alcohol. As grapes are crushed, their juice naturally begins to ferment and, if not arrested, will continue until all of its sugar becomes alcohol, leaving us with a rather nasty beverage. So, at some point, the fermentation must be stopped, resulting in a balance or ratio between the alcohol and leftover (residual) sugar. A wine's ratio of alcohol to sugar is often described in terms of dryness. A higher level of alcohol to sugar will produce a drier wine while one with a greater residual sugar will be less dry.

Now, we address the categorization of wine and this is at the crux of understanding the product. For all practical purposes, there are only three major categories.

Sparkling wines are fermented a second time. Sugar and a fermenting agent (yeast) are injected into a still wine, initiating a secondary fermentation. During this process, carbon dioxide is released, creating the signature bubbles.

Fortified wines is a category in which spirits are added to the wine, thus "fortifying" the beverage. In the case of Ports, the alcohol is added prior to fermentation while with Sherry, the spirits are introduced after fermentation.

Table wines, the largest and perhaps most ubiquitous class, are produced to go with foods and typically contain less than

15% alcohol. Now, for the really cool part; in general, there are only three types of table wine that are essential to know.

We begin with varietal wines; these take the name of the grape from which they are made and the consumer is guaranteed that a majority of the wine's blend is from that specific grape. Currently, in California, for the wine to carry the name of a grape on the label, at least 75% of the blend must be from that grape.

The next category is generic wine; these can be made from a single grape or a blend but the wine takes its name from the area in which it was produced. The designated wine region must have defined territorial boundaries while wine production is regulated by common rules established and enforced by an objective body. Well known generic wines include Chianti, Bordeaux, Barolo, Burgundy, Rioja, Rhine, and Moselle. The United States currently produces no generic wines.

Our final class of table wine is called proprietary. With these, a certain producer creates a wine (typically a blend), gives it a special name and that name (and wine) becomes the winery's property; no one else is allowed to use that name. Perhaps, the best known proprietary label is Opus One, a Cabernet-Merlot blend from California.

You have just completed your basic wine review. Remember, wine is simple. Do not allow yourself to be bullied or intimidated by those who choose to complicate what is easy; to this point, I recall the tale of the man to whom if you asked him, "What time is it?" he would proceed to tell you how to make a watch. Master the simple basic tenets laid out above and you will be well equipped to continue your journey into the world of wine.

Here is a mix of wines based on the choices we've been talking about:

Colli Senesi 2007

Chianti is a generic wine and this is a nice everyday quaff featuring a violet nose infused with peppers and spices. The taste is velvety with nice red berry fruits; the tannins are soft but the body is well built and sturdy. Serve with pasta and grilled meats, both red and white. \$21.94

Volker Eisele "Gemini" 2006

Gemini is the proprietary name given this wine from the Napa Valley producer, Volker Eisele. This is an interesting blend of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc grapes that are grown organically. The cuvee is crisp and dry with notes of melons and mango; very tasty and refreshing. This is perfect for spring and summer. Try it with Asian cuisine. \$25.85

Calistoga Cellars Napa Cabernet 2006

This is a varietal wine comprised of 100% Cabernet Sauvignon (remember it only needs to be 75% Cabernet to take that name). A very nice wine, especially for the money, as this is produced from Napa Valley grapes and is aged in French oak. The wine is smooth with notes of plums, cherries, a hint of chocolate and a touch of oak, all in fine balance. Serve with red meats. \$24.63



Wines available at Spec's Wines, Spirits, & Finer Foods, various locations. Visit specsonline.com for the store nearest you.

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Dining Guide

Yellow Magazine's featured restaurants

JAPANESE

Shabu House

8719- Bellaire Blvd., 713.995.5428

Only beef or seafood items are served and will be cooked with the classic shabu shabu style. Boiling broth is situated at the bar. When the food arrives, place everything in the broth and begin the unique experience.

Tokyo One

7465 W. Greens Rd., 281.955.8898

2938 W. Sam Houston S., 713.785.8899

Tokyo One is a sushi buffet restaurant, situated in a fancy boat house with an outside deck. The food is fresh and is constantly replenished. Selections include: salads such as sea weed, beef, squid, salmon and watercress. Sushi includes a variety of rolls and sashimi. A "must have" is the escobar. There are also a variety of fresh crabs during dinner. Great price and great atmosphere.

Zushi Japanese Cuisine

5900 Memorial Dr., 713.861.5588

Zushi serves extremely fresh and high quality sushi. Stand out items are the sashimi appetizers served with perfectly paired sauces or any one of the many house specialty rolls.

Uptown Sushi

1131 Uptown Park Blvd. #14 713.871.1200

Uptown Sushi personifies an upscale sushi restaurant located near the Galleria in the swanky Uptown Park Plaza. The menu offers Japanese fusion dishes and a great selection of high-end sashimi and sushi. Side note: Uptown Sushi has "off-the-menu" specialty rolls served daily!

Rickshaw Bambu

713.942.7272

So many great dishes and variety to match, picking a favorite seems to be a daunting task. The East West Chicken Wraps, Mandarin Beef and Rickshaw's Pad Thai are favorite Pan Asian dishes. The sushi menu has seventeen specialty rolls and, of course, nigiri and sashimi.

CHINESE

Auntie Chang's

2621 South Shepherd #290, 713.524.8410

Auntie Chang's offers the most flavorful home-style Chinese cuisine around. Although known for their dumplings, any of your favorite classic Chinese dishes are done extremely well.

Hong Kong Food Street

9750 Bellaire Blvd., 713.981.9888

Peking duck and roasted pork hang from cleavers in a front window display giving a Hong Kong street market feel. In addition, the menu is divided into sections including Seafood, Hot Pot, Special Stir Fry, Sizzling and Chef Specials. The Peking duck, Beef Pot and Dry Scallops are recommended items.

San Dong Noodle House

9938-F Bellaire Blvd., 713.271.3945

Authentic hand pulled Chinese noodle dishes are served at a reasonable price. A few favorites include the Roast Beef Noodle soup served in a beef broth accented by ginger and soy, or the oh so addicting pan fried dumplings.

Sinh Sinh

9788 Bellaire Blvd., 713.541.0888

The seafood at Sinh Sinh is quite exciting because everything served comes from live tanks. Prawns, Australian king lobster, King crabs, Coral Leopard trout, Surf clams, Geoduck clams, Trunk clams, Elephant clams, etc...are all featured as live seafood.

Arco Seafood

9896 Bellaire Blvd., 713.774.2888

A refreshing take on Chinese seafood offering an upscale ambience. Subtle flavors allow the natural taste of the seafood to emerge. Dishes to try: Sea Cucumber, Crab Meat and Fish Maw Soup, Noodle's with Abalone Sauce, Sautéed Snow Pea Leaf or the Steamed Whole Tilapia.

KOREAN

Arirang Korean Restaurant

9715 Bellaire Blvd., 713.988.2088

From the décor to the cuisine, everything about this place exemplifies tradition. The Moh Dum Bulgogi is a classic family style dinner which includes barbecued short ribs, squid, chicken and a vast assortment of side dishes such as the potato salad, kim chi and spicy cucumber salad.

Korea Garden Grille

11360 Bellaire Blvd #990, 281.568.0008

Clean with nice ambience and quiet atmosphere all you can eat Korean BBQ style. Serving of endless good quality Korean BBQ, steaks & seafood along with traditional side dishes, BYOB.

ITALIAN

Da Marco Cucina E Vino

1520 Westheimer Rd. 713.807.8857

If you are looking for authentic Italian food, Da Marco is the place to find it. It has a charming atmosphere to go along with the excellent fare. All of the entrees are subtle and prepared nearly perfect. Must try Sweet Corn Ravioli and Lobster and the Sea Bass with Aceto Tradizionale.

THAI

Thai Spice

8282 Bellaire Blvd. 713.777.4888

Thai Spice on Bellaire is a foodies dream. It's a casual place that serves Thai dishes you won't find anywhere else in Houston, with a huge selection of interesting, rare, tasty dishes at excellent prices. A must have is the whole fried tilapia with hot and sour dipping sauce and papaya salad and Tom Yum soup.

Nit Noi

6700 Woodway Pkwy., Suite 580

281.597.8200

Nit Noi means "a little bit" and Thai food lovers pack Nit Noi restaurants and cafes all around Houston. Nit Noi will always be known for their Pad Thai, but other must try dishes include PadThai Korat (flat noodles stir-fried with chicken, pork or shrimp with vegetables) and Tom Yum Goong (spicy and sour shrimp soup).

Red Basil

11322-C Westheimer Rd., 281.293.0426

A gourmet take on traditional Thai cuisine, Red Basil offers fabulous food at a reasonable price. If you are a fan of Thai soup try the Tom Yam with shrimp. It will evoke all of your senses of taste with its sweet, sour and spice flavors. The papaya salad and the Massaman curry beef are a few others to try.

Tony Thai

10613 Bellaire Blvd., 281.495.1711

A sophisticated approach to traditional Thai cuisine, Tony's executes with perfect balance and pizzazz. Tony's Wings, wet or dry, and the Steamed Mussels are popular appetizers. For the main course try the Basil Lamb, Garlic Salmon or the Steamed Fish with Chili.

INDIAN

Kiran's Restaurant

4100 Westheimer Rd. #151, 713.960.8472

This northern Indian style restaurant embodies a fusion approach to its cuisine. With a focus on well balanced flavors rather than spice, the Flaky Halibut Swimming in Watermelon Curry sauce and the Tandoori Platter typify this perfectly.

VIETNAMESE

Kim Son Restaurants

2001 Jefferson (and other locations),

713.222.2461

The menu is the most imposing part of this casual, highly regarded landmark Vietnamese restaurant. There are no poor choices among the 100 or so options. Enjoy finely prepared delicacies as well as the expected fare, such as the pork vermicelli and fried eggroll. Must try is their black pepper softshell crab. Expansive banquet and special event facilities are also available.

Vietopia

5176 Buffalo Speedway, 713.664.7303

Trendy yet elegant, Vietopia delivers top notch Vietnamese cuisine at reasonable lunch prices and a stellar dinner menu. The lounge at Vietopia works perfectly for those who want a less formal dining experience but still want to enjoy quality food.

Van Loc Restaurant

3010 Milam St., 713.528.6441

A great lunch time eatery serving classic Vietnamese cuisine which, according to the establishment, has around "200 menu items that come straight from mama." Dishes to try are the Vietnamese egg rolls and the beef cubed steak with lettuce and tomato.

Mo Mong

1201 Westheimer Rd. #B, 713.524.5664

This Trendy Montrose establishment has a great lunch crowd as well as a packed martini night on Wednesdays. But the real draw is the food-traditional family recipes mixed in with some tasty modern dishes. Must try items include the Mango Spring Rolls, Shrimp and Avocado Spring Roll, Volcano Chicken, and the Bo Luc Lac.

WINE BARS

So Vino Bistro & Wine Bar

507 Westheimer Rd., 713.524.1000

So Vino highlights the unique tastes and styles of Southern Hemisphere wines. The pairing of stellar wines with the new interpretations of traditional world cuisine is the passion of co-founder Elizabeth Abraham. Must try include cooked mussels served with a soy potatoe patty and topped with a mushroom ragu, also the short ribs.

The Tasting Room

1101 Uptown Park Blvd. #18, 713.993.9800

Each of The Tasting Room's three Houston locations offers a unique food and wine experience. Uptown has a more sophisticated feel that attracts a hip, professional crowd. It is the newest "in" spot to sip and be seen. Check out the Sunday Brunch Buffet for \$24, or their delicious thin crust pizza anytime.

CONTINENTAL

Backstreet Café

1103 South Shepherd Dr., 713.521.2239

A well hidden restaurant with one of the nicest patios in town delivers the best Prosciutto Wrapped Scallops in town. The tasty New York Strip is an 11 oz Black Angus encrusted with white, pink, black and green peppercorns and pan seared. Highly recommended if you are looking for a romantic place for dinner.

Bistro Calais

2811 Bammel Lane, 713.529.1314

French and Continental fare with some Southern favorites. Must try are the Gumbo (if you like it spicy) and Lump Crab Cakes (all crab with minimal breading), the best in town. Experience their Sunday Brunch, which was voted best "Morning-After Brunch" in 2008 by Citysearch.

Voice Restaurant & Lounge

Hotel Icon, 220 Main, 832.667.4470

The impressive décor has thoughtfully transformed the space of an old bank lobby into a warm cozy and elegant dining area. Try the Mushroom Soup "Cappucino", reduction of garlic, onion, crimini mushrooms topped with frothy truffle foam, and the Bryan Farms Roast Chicken, a free range and 100% corn fed chicken.

Colombe d'Or Restaurant and Hotel

3410 Montrose Blvd. 713.524.7999

Built in 1923 and originally the mansion of Walter Fondren, one of the founders of Humble Oil, Colombe d'Or Hotel is considered a Texas historical landmark. Featuring French and Continental fare, we recommend the Carre d'Agneau, individual rack of baby lamb grilled with natural herbs and red wine sauce.

To have your restaurant featured in Yellow Magazine, or to recommend a restaurant that you enjoy, please email the information to dining@yellowmags.com.



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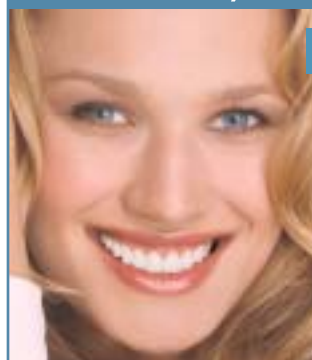
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MAGAZINE



ARCH SOFA
Design by J. M. Massaud

Lightness, comfort, elegance and timeless style characterize this new sofa system. Its peculiar identity is given by the thin arch-shaped aluminium frame. The sofa rests on an 8 mm thick aluminium stand joined to the foot through a slightly curved arch, in white or black lacquer, or satin finished aluminium. Sectionals allow for a variety of linear corner or curved configurations. Intermediate elements come with internal recessed feet so as not to interrupt the linear design of the aluminium frame. The removable upholstery is available in either fabric or leather options.

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