



WHIPS UP 'THE RIVER WILD'

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Entertainment WEEKLY

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1994

NEWS & NOTES

8/Generations Flap Is the new *Star Trek* feature in turmoil? ...Metallica tries to ditch its label...HOT SHEET...and more.

FEATURES

22/COVER The Perils of Meryl BY JAMES GREENBERG Though Meryl Streep has given many moving performances, in *The River Wild* she proves how far (and fast) she can go.

30/Burt Offerings BY REBECCA ASCHER-WALSH New author Burt Reynolds opens up about his loves, his divorce, and his admiration for Ricardo Montalban.

34/On a Ka-ching! & a Prayer BY JEFF GORDINIER Good God! Once, sex sold. Now, in many media, spirituality is the way.

42/More Power to Her BY LISA SCHWARZBAUM Taking no guff, especially from producers, tough-talking Brett Butler makes *Grace Under Fire* a sizzling comic hit.

50/Mr. October? BY REBECCA ASCHER-WALSH Brendan Fraser is no big leaguer but gets the laughs out in *The Scout*.

REVIEWS

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66/BOOKS BRUCE FRETTS on *Saturday Night Live: The First Twenty Years*; also Burt Reynolds' and Lauren Bacall's memoirs.

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80/VIDEO ALAN MIRABELLA on Hollywood editions of the newsroom; also *The Inkwell*. **PLUS:** Anson Williams, unlikely auteur.

88/KIDS PARENTS' GUIDE to recent films.

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16/Trends *Myst* isn't just a mega-selling CD-ROM game. It's an experience so intoxicating it redefines the medium.

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92/Encore Oct. 5, 1969: *Monty Python* redefined silliness.

Cover MERYL STREEP PHOTOGRAPHED FOR EW BY KURT MARKUS; STYLING: EILEEN KASOFSKY; HAIR: MONICA DIVENTI; MAKEUP: VINCENT LONGO; COAT: ROMEO GIGLI. GUMP: PHILLIP CARUSO; ANGEL: ILLUSTRATION BY SUE COE.

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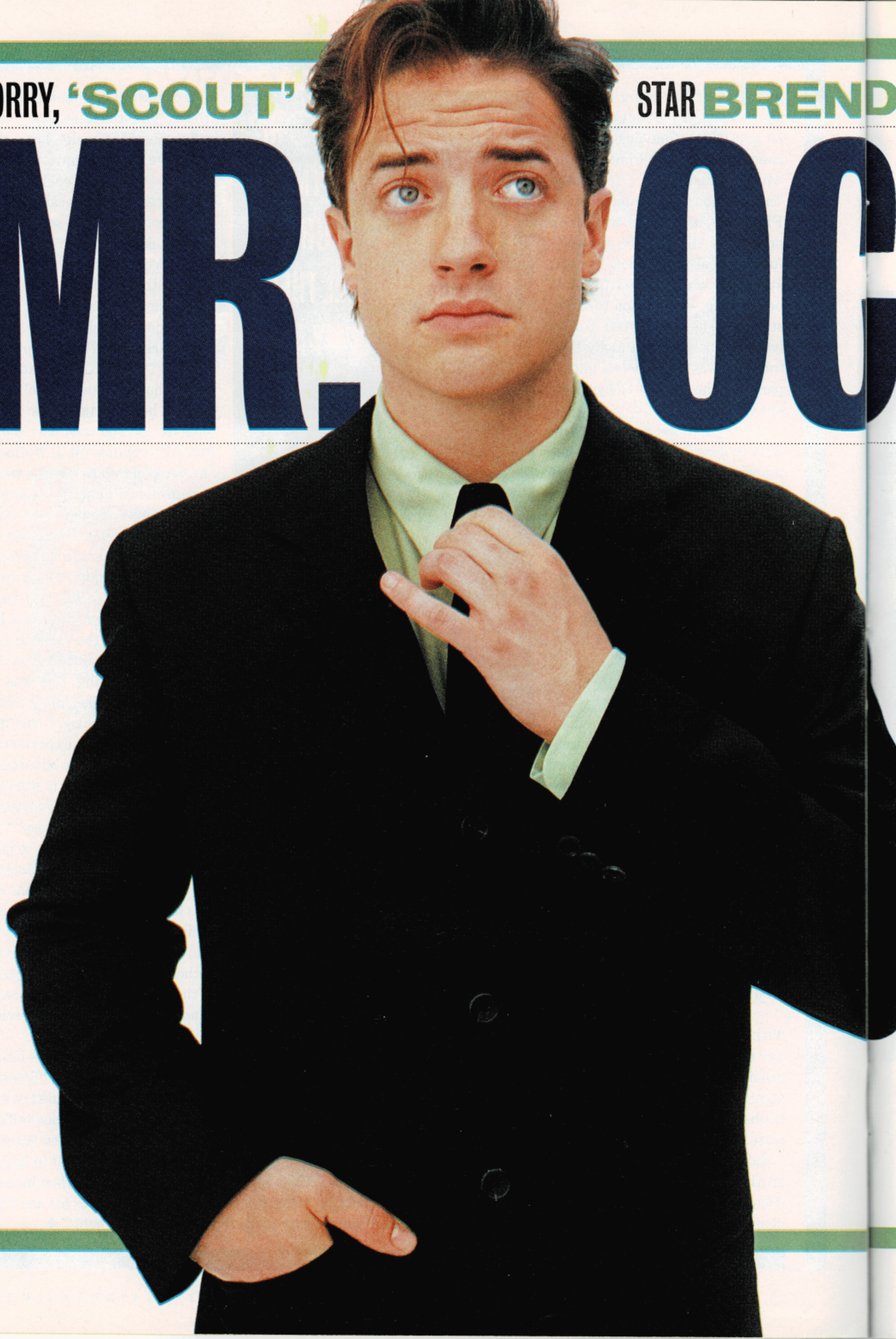
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SORRY, 'SCOUT'

STAR BREND

MR.

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BRENDAN FRASER IS THE ONLY BASEBALL HERO TO SEE THIS MONTH

OCTOBER?

BRENDAN FRASER IS glorying in a geek's revenge. "Of course I was a dork," the actor admits when asked about his less-than-illustrious early years. "But that's okay, because the coolest people I know now were all dorks."

Easy for him to say. At 25 and safely out of any adolescent awkwardness—real or imagined—Fraser is becoming famous enough that no one minds if he's shy or somewhat bumbling. He slouches, he plays with his ear, and while he's willing to talk, he doesn't think he's very good at it. What he *is* good at is letting loose in front of the camera. As Steve Nebraska in *The Scout*, Albert Brooks' baseball comedy, Fraser plays an unsocialized, out-to-lunch hitting-and-pitching phenomenon with a gleeful lack of self-consciousness.

While the role may be the first to combine Fraser's silliness and his sexiness, "there's a [connecting] line between all the characters I play," he says. "They arrive in a world that they don't understand and want to become like everyone else." As a Stone Age relic in 1992's *Encino Man* and a Jewish football player facing anti-Semitism in *School Ties* that same year, Fraser has played characters who often find themselves forced to go against the grain. As for Nebraska, a semi-amnesiac who's comfortable upstaging the film's cameo crooner Tony Bennett but is scared to be alone, "he's lost," says Fraser. "He is *lost*."

The son of a former Canadian tourism official whose job forced the family to move often, Fraser clicked with Nebraska's "journey...to adapt to new surroundings. I remember being the new kid all the time, and that causes a lot of anxiety. But there was a joy in redefining yourself each time."

There are limits, however: Fraser is no Roger Clemens, no matter how well he acts. "I was asked to pitch the opening pitch of a Mariners game," he says, "and it was miserable. I pitched the worst slider you've ever seen." Three weeks of training with USC's baseball coach near his home in Los Angeles yielded results that were no more impressive:

"I broke some very expensive camera equipment," he says of his throwing arm. "On location in Mexico, the extras would yell, 'Break something else, señor!'" Still, he got the ball over the plate "three times out of five. Or maybe seven," he falters. "If I'd been really bad, they would've used a double."

Unlike Nebraska, Fraser "is not a lunatic; he's just odd," says the film's costar and cowriter, Brooks. But "he's funny and doesn't know he's funny, which is the best kind of funny." Despite doing a dead-on imitation of Melanie Griffith posing as a spy in Germany in *Shining Through* ("I made some strudel! Eat the strudel!"), Fraser insists, "I take myself very seriously.... I'm really into seat belts and helmets." And when he's not working, "I read books, and I organize slips of paper. I'm pretty obsessive."

Luckily, there's been plenty to keep him busy. His projects aren't all hits—"No one saw *Airheads*," he says nonchalantly of the recent comedy in which he played a frustrated musician. "It was out for two seconds." But with six movies in just three years on his résumé, he's definitely playing in the majors—although some cities are more hospitable than others. "Usually when I'm recognized, it's, 'You're the guy from the movies, right?' In New York, they know me. But in L.A.," he says, "it's, 'You're not Tom Cruise—*siddown*.'"



THE PLAYING CARD

Fraser is looking to break his recent string of no-hitters with his role as *The Scout's* goofball pitching phenom

BY REBECCA ASCHER-WALSH