



Ben Affleck in "The X and Y Files"

MovieLine

100

QUESTIONS
WE WANT
HOLLYWOOD
TO ANSWER

Shagadelic

**KRISTEN
JOHNSTON**

in *Austin Powers*

**SHERILYN
FENN'S**

Rude Awakening

**AMERICAN
PIE** the

sickest flick
since *There's
Something About Mary*

**ESTHER
CAÑADAS**

the last
supermodel

PLUS:

Rene Russo's

SEXY STYLE

in *The Thomas
Crown Affair*

**BRENDAN
FRASER**

Mummy's Dearest

Joe Queenan
pretends he's

YODA

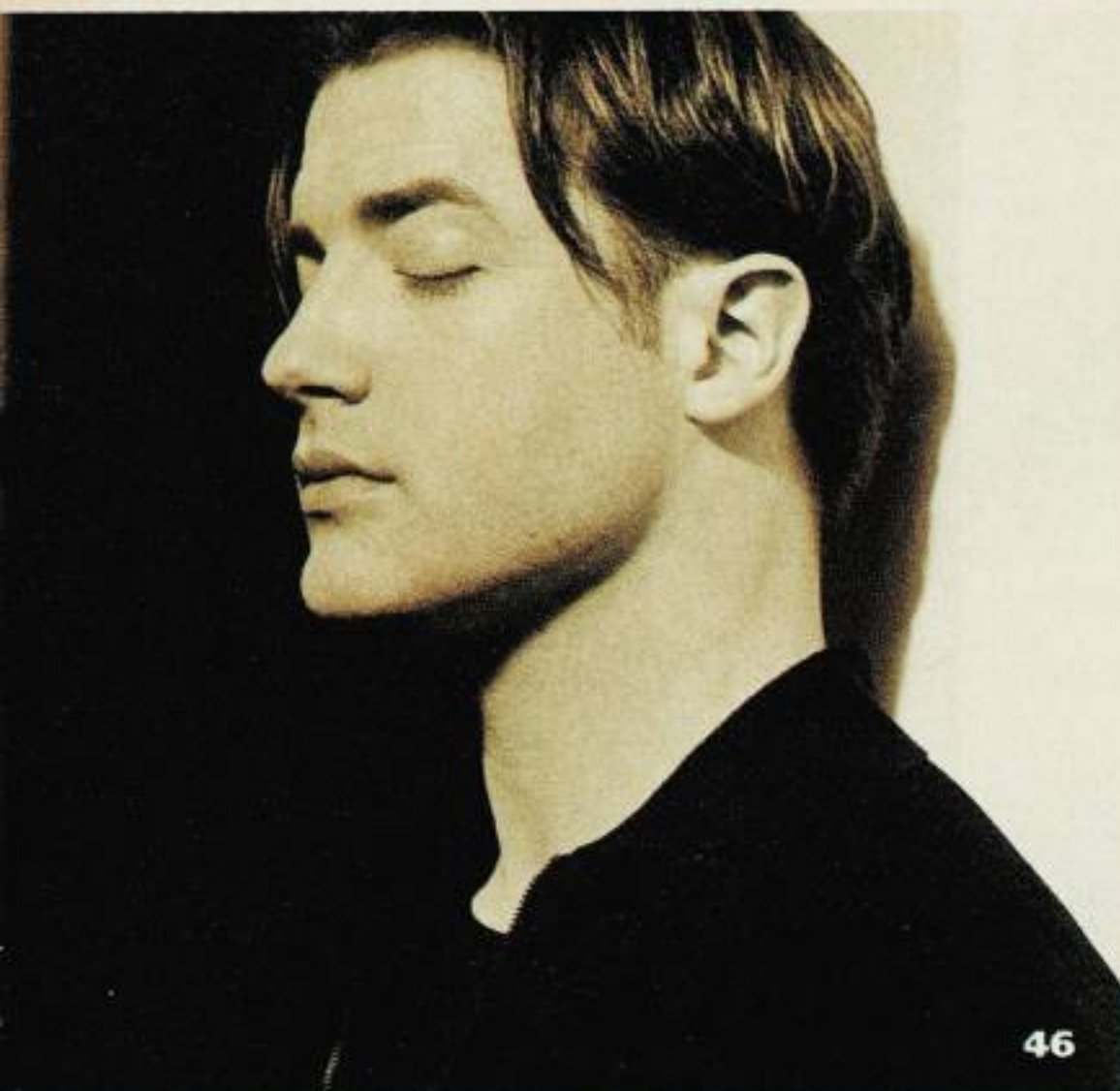
June 1999

\$2.99 U.S./\$3.99 CAN.



05 >

c o n t e n t s



features

46 the unexpected brendan fraser

For years **Brendan Fraser** had been thought of as a lovable lug. Then he showed off his dramatic skills in *Gods and Monsters*. In his new film *The Mummy*, he's the romantic lead. Could Fraser be close to having the well-rounded career he's always dreamed of? **by Lawrence Grobel**

54 fenn & now

Sherilyn Fenn achieved cult status as a saddle-shoed sexpot in "Twin Peaks." Now she's back on TV, this time as a former night-time soap star on the skids in Showtime's provocative "Rude Awakening." **by Dennis Hensley**

60 the star who fell to earth

Kristen Johnston, one of the aliens on "3rd Rock from the Sun," excels at playing outrageous characters, which is a good thing, because she portrays Russian spy Ivana Humpalot in *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*. **by Dennis Hensley**

64 yoda for a day

He'd sampled a day in the hard-lived life of **Mickey Rourke**. But that didn't prepare him for the challenge of impersonating the cryptic critter Yoda of the *Star Wars* films. **by Joe Queenan**

68 serendipity and the supermodel

Esther Cañadas, currently on-screen in *The Thomas Crown Affair*, may be the last of the supermodels, but she's probably the first of the models-turned-actresses who acknowledges that acting isn't as easy as it appears. **by Michael Atkinson**

70 his piece of the pie

A couple of years ago **Adam Herz** was a fresh-out-of-college Michigan transplant with unpaid bills. Today, thanks to his sickfest script *American Pie*, he's a hot Hollywood screenwriter with a studio directing deal. **by Stephen Rebello**

72 100 questions we honestly want to ask hollywood

What's going on with **Bruce** and **Demi**? What's wrong with **Calista Flockhart**? Why doesn't the Academy report totals in Oscar voting? We'd like these and 97 other questions about Hollywood answered. Now. **by David Thomson**

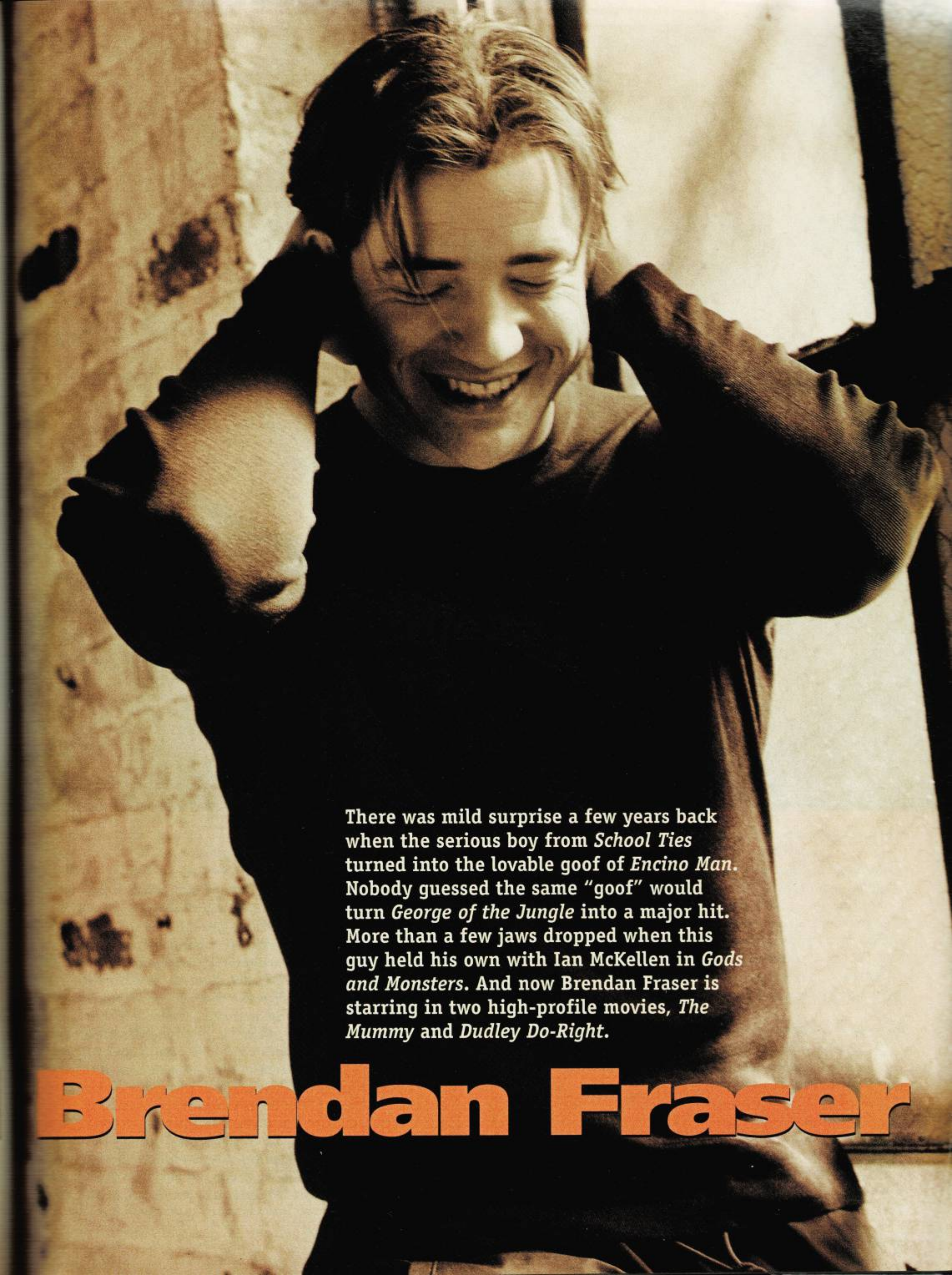


COVER STORY Brendan Fraser

The Unexpected

by **Lawrence Grobel**

photographed by **Naomi Kaltman**



There was mild surprise a few years back when the serious boy from *School Ties* turned into the lovable goof of *Encino Man*. Nobody guessed the same "goof" would turn *George of the Jungle* into a major hit. More than a few jaws dropped when this guy held his own with Ian McKellen in *Gods and Monsters*. And now Brendan Fraser is starring in two high-profile movies, *The Mummy* and *Dudley Do-Right*.

Brendan Fraser



Brendan Fraser is not your macho strutting type of actor. What comes through upon first meeting him is his sensitivity. He exudes a gentleness, and his soft-spoken voice is calming. He's a big guy (six-foot-three), but instead of using his stature and strength to play action heroes, he's made a strange career out of being the lovable doofus in films like *Encino Man*, *Airheads*, *George of the Jungle*, *Still Breathing*, *Blast From the Past* and this summer's *Dudley Do-Right*. That isn't what he started out to do—his first major role was in *School Ties*, where he played the vulnerable Jewish boy in a prep school that counted among its students then-unknowns Chris O'Donnell, Matt Damon and Ben Affleck. But the sweet-spirited looniness Fraser showed in *Encino Man* led to the improbable string of cartoonish portrayals that have overshadowed his work in less successful films like *Twilight of the Gods*. One person I spoke to about Fraser commented, "He's done career-suicide material so many times, yet his films grow in popularity. He's got some wholesome, transparent quality. You can't see his personality in the back of his

"I haven't made a foray into the 'darker, edgier' characters—that's my shortcoming. It's because I don't want to buy into this current trend of nihilism in filmmaking."

characters." Fraser's personal unobtrusiveness on- and offscreen may well be the result of growing up part of a family that moved so often he never became part of any community. His father worked for the Canadian government in Europe and the United States as well as Canada, and Fraser went from one school to another before finally getting his degree at the Actor's Conservatory at Seattle's Cornish College of the Arts.

The last couple of years have marked an unmistakable transition for Brendan Fraser. First, he turned 30. Second, he married his girlfriend of six years, Afton Smith, and settled down to a home life. Third, he surprised anyone who'd dismissed him as a lightweight by playing Clayton Boone, the good-hearted, hunky gardener, opposite Ian McKellen's over-the-hill Hollywood director James Whale in the award-winning *Gods and Monsters*. And fourth, he took on his first action-hero role in the big-budget pre-*Star Wars* *Episode I: The Phantom Menace* extravaganza *The Mummy*. Fraser has done lots of movies since he first got to Hollywood, more than most actors his age. Now what may have seemed until recently a lark of a career strategy looks like something a good deal more deliberate and enduring.

LAWRENCE GROBEL: Are you aware of the Brendan Fraser Shrine on the Internet? **BRENDAN FRASER:** I looked at it about a year ago and it was like opening a Pandora's box. I freaked out and haven't done it since. I don't want that much information printed about me. I appreciate that there are fan sites, that's wonderful, but there's part of me that says: beware. The Internet is a big, scary vehicle and we don't know exactly what it's going to do. It's just a little too easy to find things out.

Q: Do you have a lot of skeletons in your closet that you don't want exposed? **A:** No, I don't.

Q: You've made a long list of movies to build up the fan base that likes to follow every detail of your life. What character in your films is closest to who you are? **A:** The truth is you have to put a piece of yourself into every part. Otherwise it's cheating. But my work in *Gods and Monsters* symbolically said a lot about how I have felt about my place in the world—it's about a man who learns to be a man.

Q: Would you agree that the shape of your career is very different from any of your peers? **A:** Yeah. It fibrillates in many different ways.

Q: For example, you've never done a typical leading-man role in a thriller or romantic drama. **A:** *The Mummy* is a first-time leading-man hero type of role for me.

Q: How seriously is the *Mummy* character taken in this film? **A:** He's powerful and has an army of mummies at his control, and he uses magic. And he has a strong sexual tension around him.

Q: Can the *Mummy* get laid? **A:** [Laughs] He's trying to! He's been buried for 3,000 years until treasure seekers unwittingly awaken him and he sees his mistress, who's been reincarnated as an archaeologist.

Q: And he goes after her, and you do battle with him? **A:** Oh yeah, again and again and again.

Q: The role you played in last year's *Gods and Monsters* made critics take a different look at you. Were you intimidated working with Ian McKellen? **A:** At first, but then he completely put me at ease. He's such a nice, soft, thoughtful man. He has the acting chops that come from the mind of the very brilliant. I admired him from the time I first started to act. I introduced myself to him through a letter when he was doing the film *Richard III*. I wanted to be in that film very much. The casting director wanted nothing to do with me, so I decided to take the bull by the horns and write him a thinly disguised fan letter, asking if there was anything I could do. I got a reply from him on a notecard saying, "We could use somebody of your enthusiasm but I just don't have a part for you right now. Hope to see you in the future. All the best, Ian McKellen." I stuck that card in a book.

Q: When did you begin to feel comfortable with the fact that

you were going to be acting with McKellen? **A:** The first time we met was for a benefit premiere at a theater in L.A. Lynn Redgrave was also there. At a press reception afterwards, Ian said he was going to be starting this film and working with Lynn Redgrave and Brendan Fraser. To hear him speak my name, from row 15 in



HIS LEADING LADY: Fraser with new wife Afton Smith at this year's Golden Globe Awards.

this theater, just electrified me. Like a diamond epiphany bullet right between my eyes—that's when it became real.

Q: For the women in the audience—were you totally nude when you dropped that towel in front of McKellen? **A:** That was shot with frame lines, defined with a piece of tape. [Laughs] That's an integral scene in the film because it says that Whale has something to offer Boone that's far more disturbing than sex: redemption through an act of violence, and it goes horribly wrong. It was an ugly scene to shoot. We broke everything in the room. I don't remember ever weeping that deeply—I'd never had something that horrible happen to me that made me feel that sense of despair.

Q: Do you like to shoot a lot of takes for each scene of a movie? **A:** I'm a take one or two kind of guy. I'm selfish and don't want to give them too many choices. [Laughs] Also, it's fresher and better.

Q: Though you claim to like all of your films, are there any you'd like to reshoot? **A:** I would have liked to have left the ending of *School Ties* alone. We did a reshoot on that. Matt Damon's character, Dillon, who's just been expelled, says to my character, David, "You know something? I'm still going to get into Harvard. And in 10 years nobody's going to remember any of this. But you'll still be a goddamned Jew," and David says, "You'll still be a prick." If you look at the way the scene is shot, the reaction takes less the weight of the dialogue, because they had

me come back and do a take where I didn't really let him have it. I just sort of winced or smiled and looked over to the corner. It didn't turn the screw nearly as much as I wanted it to.

Q: *School Ties* is one of those pictures that will be looked at to spot all the famous actors before they became famous. What were the dynamics between you and Chris O'Donnell and Matt Damon and Ben Affleck? **A:** There was a healthy sense of rivalry in the group. Any time you stick young men together there's going to be competition, mock fighting, displays of attitude, jockeying for position. Either by accident or design. At that point I was expecting someone to hand me a towel and say, "Brendan, it's time to go back to Seattle." I'd met Matt at my screen test. He came in from Boston to read with me. I was struck by his amazing ability to speak with such a natural quality no matter what you handed him. He owns what he says. I thought, "I'm never going to be able to do that." It was movie acting, and I came from the theater. All I knew came from a book by Michael Caine about tuning it down for the movies. I felt good that, if it was possible for me to get the role, I'd be going elbow to elbow, shoulder to shoulder, and ultimately toe to toe with Matt. He's a great, really solid guy.

Q: Did you feel during the making of this film that you were the odd man out, as your character was? **A:** I did feel that. All the others already had the jobs when I did my screen test. I didn't know if I was ever in their group.

Q: Did you pick up on the closeness between Damon and Affleck? **A:** They were a team, and I admired their friendship. They'd known each other since they were little knee biters. In my life, every three or

Q: You were very focused when you came here, weren't you?

A: I came from a Teutonic work ethic. And I was an actor whether I was in Hollywood or not. Seattle was a highly artistic, culturally proficient place for artists. It's funny that when the whole boom happened with Seattle, I left.

Q: Were you glad to get out of the gloomy Seattle weather? **A:** No. I'm a real overcast sky, emerald green forest, sweater, coffee kind of guy.

Q: Let's talk about the job that got you into the Screen Actors Guild. A film called *Dogfight* with River Phoenix. You had one line? **A:** Yes, it was my first day on an actual film set. I met River Phoenix at the end of the night and he said, "I'm sorry we didn't get a chance to work with each other." That meant something to me. Later on, at the wrap party, some guy was doing the talk to River, belching all this crap at him, like, "Right man, I'll see you in L.A. We'll get together." River was being agreeable, but after the guy walked away he said, "I don't even know who that guy was." I thought, "Man, get a good look, Brendan."

Q: Let's talk about some of the movies you went on to do. You were the lead singer of the rock band in *Airheads*—was that ever a personal fantasy of yours? **A:** Only in the shower.

Q: Adam Sandler was in *Airheads*—did you sense he was going to be a star? **A:** [Laughing] Actually, yes. Oh yeah. Adam was the heart of that movie.

Q: What kind of diet did you go on to buff yourself up for *George of the Jungle*? **A:** High-protein, low-carbohydrate. And

"I'm a real overcast sky, emerald green forest, sweater, coffee kind of guy."

four years I was always moving to a new house and making a new set of friends, so I found it touching that they were really watching out for each other. I was standing on a chair making a complete ass of myself when they won their Oscar for *Good Will Hunting*. I was so happy for them.

Q: I heard that Damon and Affleck were considered for *The Mummy*. **A:** Really? It makes sense. I heard Chris O'Donnell was too, and Matt McConaughey. Every time a film comes up, these lists come out.

Q: How well did you understand prejudice and snobbery in prep schools? **A:** I had a taste of it from my formal education. I went to the American school in the Hague in Holland for three years when I was in elementary school. Then back to Seattle for some more schooling. Two different schools there. Then to boarding school in Toronto. Then back to the U.S. for college. I don't know if I saw prejudice, but there was a disparity between privilege and non-privilege. I was not allowed to go back to my senior year in Canada because we didn't have the money.

Q: Was prep school seductive? **A:** Yeah, because I wanted the things it had to offer.

Q: Did you ever suffer through any hazing rituals? **A:** I was pulled from my bed when I was 13 and thrown in the trunk of a car, then tied to playground equipment with a pillow case over my head. They ripped my pajama top off and tried to rip the bottom off but I kicked some guy in the head. Firecrackers were thrown at me. Horrible. The car took off and I realized that I was tied up by the local girl's school. When I got loose I ran back to the dormitory and, ah, the nice guys, they gave me the house tie. I got made.

Q: You attended college in Toronto and Seattle. What did you get out of it? **A:** The boarding schools gave me a broad classical education based on the English public school system, strong in arts and humanities, and in math and the sciences. When I left, I knew I wasn't a mathematician or a scientist. I first started doing plays while I was in Upper Canada College. Later [after getting my degree in Seattle] I had a scholarship to go to Southern Methodist University but I came to Los Angeles instead.

I worked out five days a week, two or three hours a day.

Q: Did you do any of the stunts yourself? **A:** If you count a monkey sticking his tongue in your ear as a stunt, then, yeah, I did stunts. If you saw my face, it was me.

Q: You gave a lot of credit to your stunt double, Joey Preston, for creating George, didn't you? **A:** He *was* George. And he wasn't an idiot. He's an acrobat, and he's got an angel on his shoulder—he's indestructible. He's going to do my next film, *Monkey Bone*, too.

Q: You got to pitch to Keith Hernandez at Yankee Stadium when you did *The Scout* with Albert Brooks. Did you throw any strikes? **A:** Yeah. I got it in the strike zone. But they were nice juicy balls that he could have knocked all over. I was the only working Yankee that year, because of the baseball strike.

Q: What was your initial impression of Christopher Walken when he played your father in *Blast From the Past*? **A:** He seemed very cryptic, but beneath it, he had a wry sense of humor. At the reading when I met him, he was eating a bowl of jalapeño peppers as if they were lozenges. [Laughs] And I thought: that's my dad! I'd loved him from *The Dead Zone*, that was a favorite film of mine. He's an entertainer of the highest order.

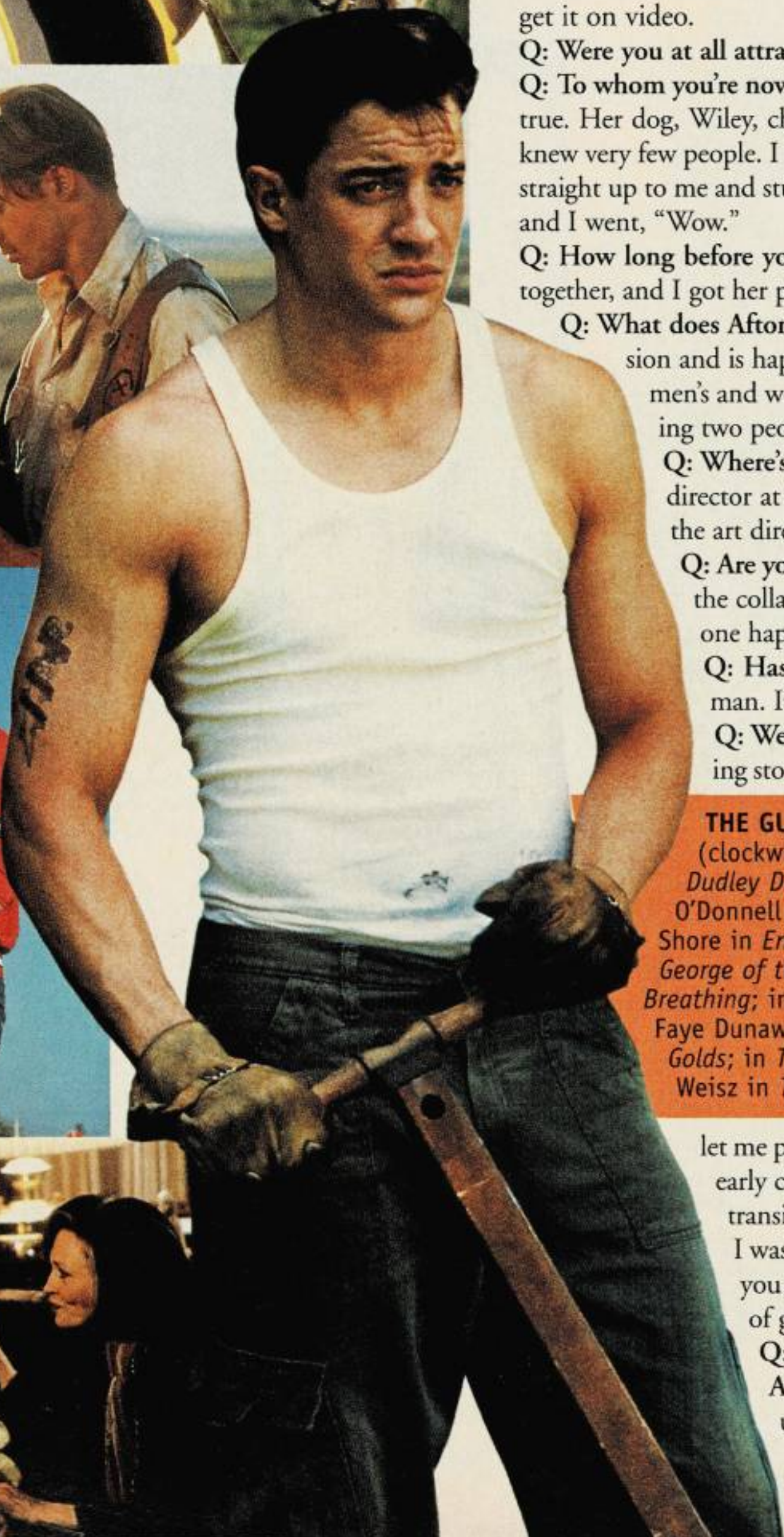
Q: Did you notice how compulsive he is? **A:** He had a ritual—he'd suck lemons before he had to speak a mouthful of dialogue. So there were little chewed-up lemon wedges hidden all over the set, in his pockets, in his bathroom. And he ate a lot of garlic, too. I think he's based on his taste senses.

Q: What was Alicia Silverstone like? **A:** She has an uncanny ability, which I envy, to get to the point. She's like a doweling stick in that way. Sometimes I'd just start talking about things on my mind in her presence and she'd hand me the answer like it was a piece of popcorn. And she has an ability, almost in the same way Ian has, to listen very well. She takes the information in and you can see the changes happen behind her eyes. She has big green eyes that are pretty to look at.

Q: *Daily Variety* wrote of you: "Fraser has played lovable naïfs so



styling by jessica paster for
artist group management •
grooming by robert hallowell •
photo assistants: steven krauss
chad batka • all clothing by
gucci • see buyer's guide for
shopping details



many times by now he pretty much owns the patent." A: Wow, cool. I guess there's something I know how to do. I don't know if I agree with that, because I always thought that I was making diverse choices. If I own that patent, maybe it's time to apply for a new patent.

Q: Alek Keshishian, who directed you in *With Honors*, said you're an egoless actor. Is there such a thing? A: No. I think he was expecting his actors to throw temper tantrums if they didn't get their way, but that's because the film he did before *With Honors* was Madonna's *Truth or Dare*.

Q: Parker Posey described you as a little kid in a man's body. A: I accept that from Parker. She's like a tiny little bird, with a crisp intelligence. Sometimes dour, like a Degas etching—world-weary.

Q: Sherry Lansing said you combine incredible looks and sexiness and vulnerability with serious talent. How do you keep such praise from going to your head? A: You can siphon the benefit. It's going to make you feel good and confident and that's what you need to be at your best when you're acting in films.

Q: You've said that you know your range, and that you're aware of your shortcomings. Elaborate. A: I haven't made a foray into the "darker, edgier" characters—that's my shortcoming. It's because I don't want to buy into this current trend of nihilism in filmmaking. But I guess I have to work to change the perception of myself, since I now own the patent on being a naïf.

Q: An odd film you made that came and went was Philip Ridley's *The Passion of Darkly Noon* with Ashley Judd. Was it ever released? A: It got released in film festivals in Germany. Ridley, who is the Cocteau of the latter half of this century, wrote, directed and sometimes shot it. It's a dark fable about religious persecution. You can get it on video.

Q: Were you at all attracted to Ashley? A: No. I was in love with Afton.

Q: To whom you're now married. Is it true Afton's dog brought you two together? A: It's true. Her dog, Wiley, chose me, I suppose. Now she's my dog. It was at a party where I knew very few people. I had my back to the wall in the kitchen and a dog burst in and ran straight up to me and stuck her snout right to my pocket, and the owner was right behind and I went, "Wow."

Q: How long before you started dating? A: For the rest of that afternoon we hung out together, and I got her phone number.

Q: What does Afton do? A: At the time she was an actress. Now she's left the profession and is happier. In the world of filmmaking there's such a disparity between men's and women's careers. If anything, it's much easier to run one career having two people behind it in a partnership.

Q: Where's she from? A: Northport, Long Island. Her mom works as an art director at *Newsday*. I got a great spread out of an article they did on me—the art director made sure the pictures were beautiful, the print was huge.

Q: Are you thinking about children? A: Right now we're more interested in the collaborative process of children than in the result. [Soft laughter] But one happy day, yeah.

Q: Has marriage changed you at all? A: It's made me a much happier man. It's allowed me to feel a sense of calm, optimism.

Q: Were you pessimistic? A: Yeah, who isn't? My 20s were such a grinding storm of effort. I used them to set myself up for my 30s. At least that's

what I was telling myself. To pass through a threshold of having a very authentic relationship with my best friend, my lover, my wife, just makes me feel much stronger. No matter what happens, it's going to be cool.

Q: With all your moving around, have you had any lifelong friends?

A: I'm not a complete loner, don't

let me paint this tragic portrait of myself. But no, I don't have friends from early childhood. The pattern of my childhood and schooling was always transition transition transition, because my family traveled a great deal. I was prepared for being an actor, constantly in a state of changing who you are from role to role, living out of a suitcase and not feeling a sense of groundedness.

Q: You were very successful in your 20s—did you feel successful?

A: The day that I start believing that is the day that I need to reevaluate what I do. Part of me still can't believe that I'm a working

THE GUY'S BEEN BUSY:

(clockwise from top left) in *Dudley Do-Right*; with Chris O'Donnell in *School Ties*; with Pauly Shore in *Encino Man*; in *Airheads*; in *George of the Jungle*; in *Still Breathing*; in *Gods and Monsters*; with Faye Dunaway in *Twilight of the Golds*; in *The Scout*; with Rachel Weisz in *The Mummy*.

actor. The efforts I've put forth to secure my place in the Industry didn't happen by accident. I made calculated runs at every part as if it was the last time I was ever going to do it. Because it always might be.

Q: You have a second film coming out this year, this summer's *Dudley Do-Right*, which, like *George of the Jungle*, is based on a Jay Ward character. A: That's right, this is my homage to Nelson Eddy in MGM's *Rose Marie*, for sure. My great-great-grandfather was a Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman, so I felt a strong sense of heritage. Look up any book on Mounties, he's in the front with the handlebar mustache.

Q: Have you seen the film yet? A: Yes, the first cut. It's very funny. "George of the Jungle," "Dudley Do-Right," "Rocky and Bullwinkle," the "Fractured Fairy Tales"—all of those were 10-minute animateds that followed one basic structure, but they snuck a lot of social satire right under the radar. They were the "South Park" or "King of the Hill" of their day.

Q: Sticking with cartoon characters, aren't you the voice of Sinbad in the upcoming animated feature? A: Yes. My voice was shipped off to a huge computer processing plant somewhere in India where they're doing way heavy-duty animation.

Q: How into comics and cartoons were you as a kid? A: My diet of comic books was *Dennis the Menace*, the early *Richie Rich*, and I liked Charlie Brown when his head was very round and cute. I graduated in high school to heavy metal and got lost in the text. With cartoons, Warner Bros. and Jay Ward were my favorites—they had a subversive quality to them. Now I'm into Robert Smigel. [Laughs]

Q: What about someone like *The Far Side's* Gary Larson? A: I loved *The Far Side*. Gary Larson is from Seattle. We used to talk about Gary Larson sightings. One of my friends had a job cleaning up after the animals at the zoo, and we'd see Gary Larson there. The rumor was he was allowed to have a bicycle where no one else was. He'd be on his granny bike with a basket in front, or you'd see him huddled in some corner staring down an iguana.

Q: What films of the last few years did you really want to be in? A: *The Thin Red Line* I wanted to be in very much.

Q: You were, but your part got cut out. A: [Big laugh] OK, next question.

Q: Are you getting a lot of scripts now? A: Actually fewer, but better ones.

Q: I read somewhere you were considered to play James Dean for director Michael Mann.

A: Maybe on paper. I read the script—it was a drama of James Dean trying to get back to his father, the story of the night he took his car out and crashed it. Someone wrote that Brad Pitt or I was going to do the part. I don't know if I'm a James Dean. Of any of the guys, Leo DiCaprio is a James Dean.

Q: Who would you say is the actor of your generation? A: Is Nicolas Cage my generation? I admire his career very, very much. That's who I'd say.

Q: Any particular painter hold your interest?

A: Magritte—I saw an exhibit in Chicago when I was there doing *With Honors*. Talk about texturing your imagination—regular objects in an incongruous state. The one Magritte that really caught my eye is the massive floating stone. I used to have nightmares about large objects—that was a fear of mine.

Q: What's your favorite junk food? A: Baked Lay's.

Q: Wines? A: Wines, yeah I like an Opus One. Very expensive, so it must be good for you.

Q: Favorite films? A: I own *Waiting for Guffman*, the director's cut, on laser disc. And I own the director's cut of *Blade Runner*, which I prefer to the studio-released version, because there's no narration on it.

Q: Why won't you talk about religion or money? A: They have too much to do with each other.

Q: Is money important to you? A: Less and less, now that I have it.

Q: What women do you consider sexy? A: Luanne from "King of the Hill."

Q: What would you like on your tombstone? A: I'd like the marker to be clean and simple and granite. And I'd like my birth date and my name spelled correctly for a change.

Lawrence Grobel interviewed Liam Neeson for the May issue of *Movieline*.

