

BRAD PITT RUSSELL CROWE NICOLE KIDMAN JOHNNY DEPP MERYL STREEP JACK LEMMON WILL SMITH CLINT EASTWOOD CARY COOPER PETER SELLERS  
JANE FONDA STEVE MCQUEEN JAMES DEAN WARREN BEATTY TOM HANKS GREGORY PECK ERROL FLYNN BETTE DAVIS DORIS DAY FRED ASTAIRE JUDY  
KATHARINE HEPBURN HUMPHREY BOGART GRACE KELLY JAMES LAGNEY HENRY FONDA JAMES STEWART GRETA GARBO JULIA ROBERTS PAUL NEWMAN

# TOM CRUISE

# MAYBE

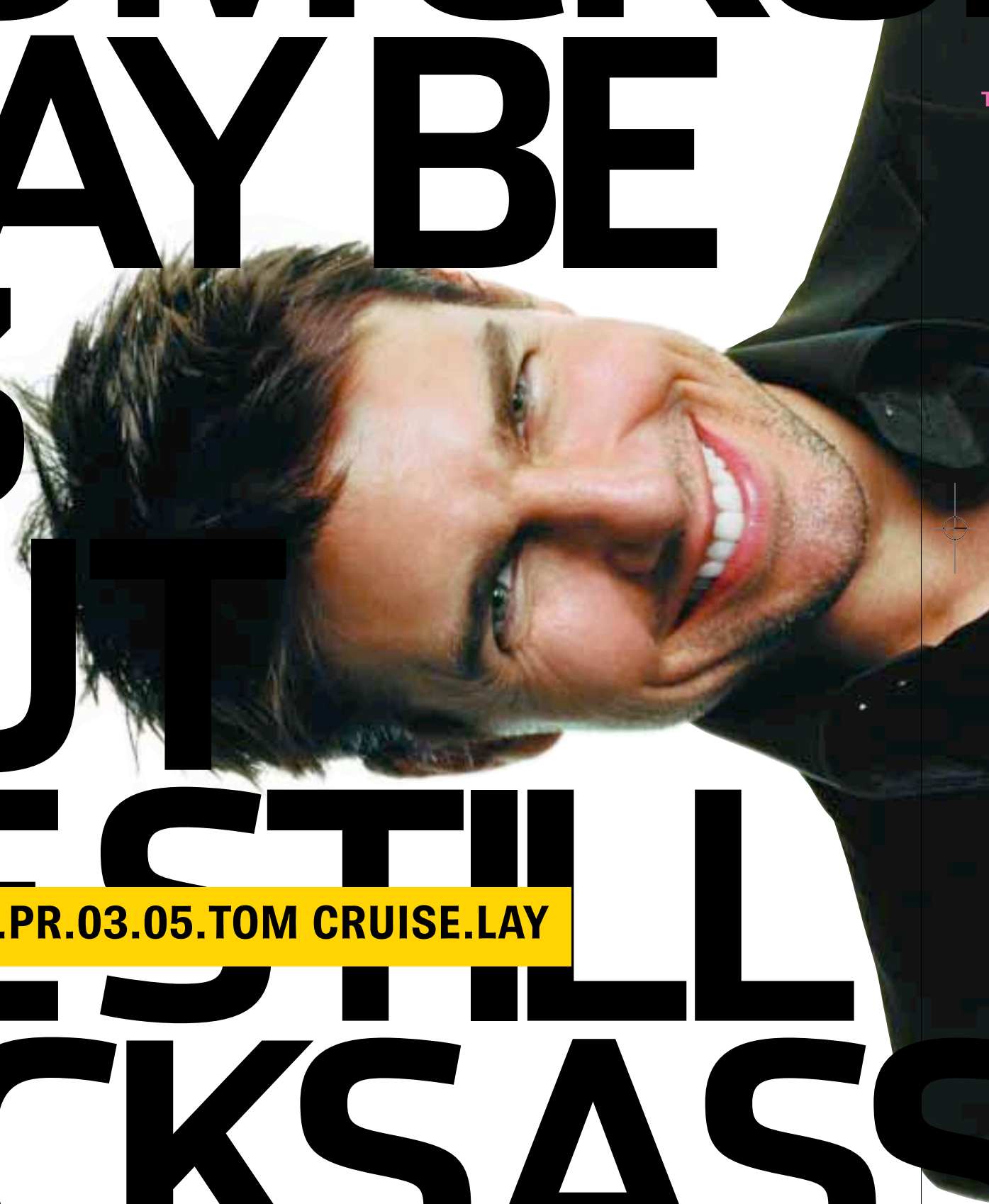
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# CRUISE

OD CARY COOPER PETER SELLERS ELIZABETH TAYLOR DENZEL WASHINGTON ROBERT DE NIRO AL PACINO SEAN CONNERY HARRISON FORD RITA HAYWORTH SHIRLEY TEM  
DOR'S DAY FRED ASTAIRE JUDY GARLAND CLARK GABLE SIDNEY POITIER SPENCER TRACY AUDREY HEPBURN ROBERT REDFORD JACK NICHOLSON MARLON BRANDO  
BO JULIA ROBERTS PAUL NEWMAN INGRID BERGMAN JOHN WAYNE TOM CRUISE MARILYN MONROE CARY GRANT BRAD PITT RUSSELL CROWE NICOLE KIDMAN JOHNNY DEP

**THERE'S NO ONE LIKE HIM.** He's got the smile, the hair, the charm, and the confidence to back up any *Risky Business* he wants to get into. Now, the star of *War of the Worlds* is ready to save the world.

BY TOM ROSTON PHOTOGRAPHS BY TONY DURAN

# SS



BRAD PITT RUSSELL CROWE NICOLE KIDMAN JOHNNY DEPP MERYL STREEP JACK LEMMON WILL SMITH CLINT EASTWOOD GARY COOPER PETER SELLERS  
TEMPLE JANE FONDA STEVE MCQUEEN JAMES DEAN WARREN BEATTY TOM HANKS GREGORY PECK ERROL FLYNN BETTE DAVIS DORIS DAY FRED ASTA  
BRANDO KATHARINE HEPBURN HUMPHREY BOGART GRACE KELLY JAMES CAGNEY HENRY FONDA JAMES STEWART GRETA GARBO JULIA ROBERTS PA

1962-present **ESSENTIAL FILMS:** *Risky Business* (1983), *Top Gun* (1986), *Rain Man* (1988), *Jerry Maguire* (1996), *Mission: Impossible* (1996), *Minority Report* (2002)  
*Collateral* (2004) **OSCAR DISH:** Three nominations, for *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *Jerry Maguire*, and *Magnolia* (1999) **DVD YOU HAVE TO SEE RIGHT NOW:** *Magnolia*. Cruise, as a creepy self-help guru, gives a truly magnetic and honest performance.

**TOM CRUISE, OVERWHELMED WITH EMOTION,** beats his open hand over his heart. His eyes well up with tears. They widen, glisten, and then squeeze shut in a taut expression of sympathetic pain. And the guy isn't even on camera. This is Cruise between takes, interacting with his *War of the Worlds* costar, ten-year-old Dakota Fanning, whose performance is bowling him over. Cruise, the biggest movie star of our time, is *verklemt*.

The setting is a dirty old cellar on the ugly side of an alien invasion—there are broken boards, crumbling bricks, puddles of water on the ground, and a blinding background light that casts shadows and reflects ominously on the walls. Cruise and Fanning are acting out a scene in which he has just committed a violent act—there's blood dripping from his eyebrow—and Fanning's character is coping with the trauma.

After several more takes, director Steven Spielberg yells, "That's the one," and Cruise smiles, emitting a rat-a-tat-tat laugh of emotional release that echoes off the farthest corners of the vast Soundstage 15, on the Fox lot in Los Angeles.

A half hour later, sitting on a leather couch in

his trailer, Cruise tries to explain what *Worlds* means to him. "You have to understand." He pauses to emphasize each word: "I . . . love . . . movies." He slips off the couch, and crouches in a baseball catcher's position, with fingers pressed together, practically willing his words into physical existence. "I love telling stories."

Tom Cruise is intense. And he doesn't keep it inside—he wears his intensity like a second skin. We've seen it onscreen time and again: whether it's the adolescent joy he exudes dancing in his underwear in *Risky Business*, or the cocky determination he embodies in *Top Gun*, or the Shakespearean self-denial he wraps himself in, and then rips apart, in *Magnolia*. His characters are tightly wound, often on the brink, but they ultimately have perfectly calibrated clocks, and, unless they're antiheroes, they are always able to solve the crime, save the world, get the girl, and strut off the screen smiling.

There's a reason that PREMIERE's editors believe 42-year-old Cruise is the greatest movie star working today. He may not have the lovable warmth of Hanks or the heroic dignity of

Washington or the angelic looks of Pitt. But he's definitely the most attractive. There's a luminosity and fierceness to him. Think of a wolf. There is a feral quality to him, after all—strong bone structure, thick hair, big teeth, and expressive, urgent eyes—that makes him seem a little bit wild (something both women and men can appreciate for different reasons). And then there is his exuberant, cocksure smile, which radiates off the screen, wrapping audiences in its glow, signifying to all that there's a movie star up there, and he's loving the part.

"When you hear that someone has a strong presence, it can bring to mind military or business leaders, heads of state," Spielberg says. "It's that *je ne sais quoi* you experience in a crowded room, when one person who you have never seen before stands out. It's like they're plugged into a wall outlet while everyone else around them appears to be standing in the dark. Tom just happens to burn brighter than most, and that's before you even factor in how talented an actor he is."

Ask Cruise whether audiences see him as an actor or a movie star, and he says, after a long pause, in an almost inaudible whisper:

"It doesn't really matter to me."

Talking to Cruise about what a big movie star he is is a little unseemly. It's stating the obvious. Tell him that audiences go to his movies not so much to see his characters, but to see him, and his eyes narrow.

"That's a real honor," he says. "Some people will hook into a character or story more. I don't know. . . . But actor-movie star . . . I just do it."

Tell him how much audiences adore seeing him propel down that wire in *Mission: Impossible*, and he resorts to a deafening laugh:

"HE HA HA HA HA HA HA. That's funny. That's funny." (Cruise is that rare person who actually laughs literally as written—with clearly enunciated, hard "h" and elongated "ee" and "aa" sounds.)

Push him to uncomfortable limits on the subject, saying that you heard that on the set of *Collateral*, Jamie Foxx's friends were riffing on how much they loved to see "the Tom Cruise run," and he laughs again:

"He he ha ha ha ha ha ha."

And remind him of how iconic his smile is:

"Ha ha ha ha ha."

And that it's been talked about how his bristling physicality lights people up, notably when his characters freak out, as in the bathroom in *Jerry Maguire* or on the road in *Rain Man*:

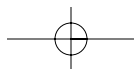
"HA HA HA," he bellows. Then, shifting in his seat, he says quietly, "That's nice to hear."

(But what's he supposed to say? "That's right, mortal. Bow before your god"?)

Cameron Crowe, who (Continued on page 110)

**"TOM JUST HAPPENS TO  
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SPIELBERG.**





## Tom Cruise

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directed Cruise in *Jerry Maguire* and *Vanilla Sky*, recalls a similar jocular exchange while working on *Maguire*, when Cruise joined him in the editing room and watched himself flash his brilliant smile at costar Renée Zellweger. "He was just laughing when he saw that, because it wasn't calculated," says Crowe, who believes Cruise's giddiness in such instances is "really genuine because he can't totally judge his own performances."

Growing up, Cruise was enamored with tough-guy movie legends such as Paul Newman, Clint Eastwood, and John Wayne. As he got older, he was moved by Dustin Hoffman, Jack Nicholson, and, eventually, Robert De Niro. "To think that people are out there seeing that," Cruise says, slapping his hand on his leg. "I want to take them on that journey because I know what that was like for me."

Cruise has held his own with many of his heroes (Newman in *The Color of Money*, Hoffman in *Rain Man*, Nicholson in *A Few Good Men*). But with *Worlds*, he is finally sharing the screen with something as larger than life as he is—albeit, computer-generated. "I don't think Tom's going to have too much difficulty holding the screen against these invaders," Spielberg says, "but despite how big a movie star Tom Cruise is, I have to tell you all eyes are going to be on the aliens when they first arrive on Earth."

Spielberg's adaptation of the 1898 novel by H.G. Wells, which created the template for the alien-invasion genre, is set in the present. Other notable versions were the 1938 Orson Welles radio play—which was famously mistaken to be real by some listeners, causing a panic—and the Cold War-era 1953 film of the same name.

After Cruise and Spielberg finished 2002's *Minority Report*, the director and actor agreed to work on *Worlds* next. Prior commitments pushed the shooting to a distant future, but when a hole opened up in their schedules (Cruise's third *Mission: Impossible* installment was delayed), the Hollywood machine spun on a dime, and managed to slip *Worlds* in. (*M:13* will now begin shooting this summer, set for release next summer.) It's yet another testament to Cruise's star power that a \$128 million Steven Spielberg film could be rustled up so quickly.

In *Worlds*, Cruise plays a New Jersey dead-beat dad, named Ray Ferrier. He hasn't seen his kids (played by Fanning and newcomer Justin Chatwin) in weeks, but when extraterrestrials threaten to exterminate the human race, he must finally heed the call of responsibility. "Our story doesn't center around scientists or military strategists trying to find a way to win the war," Spielberg says. "It's more about a parent just trying with all his might to save his own family."

Cruise shares the same focus. "I always wanted to make a movie about the family, and how much I love my own children [Connor, 10, and Isabella, 12]," he says, repeating himself, applying greater emphasis to the word "love" each time, as if weighing its meaning. "How much I love my children. I love them."

It's hard to match Cruise's intensity. He is so earnest about his family, just as he is about his

work, that it's almost off-putting. At the same time, he's friendly and accommodating; during the course of an interview, he allows himself to be steered from one subject to another, without trying to control the conversation. He's boyishly physical, warmly double-punching this writer's chest when discussing the joys of fatherhood.

And when one might think he'd be protective when asked about his devotion to Scientology, the belief system created by L. Ron Hubbard, he's not: He's effusive. He unabashedly claims that Hubbard, who was a pulp-fiction writer, was "the Spielberg of his time."

"Scientology is an applied religious philosophy," Cruise says. "[Hubbard] gives tools to an individual to improve their conditions: tools that I have learned in terms of literacy [Cruise was diagnosed with dyslexia when he was a boy] that allow me to fly airplanes, produce movies; my literacy level is . . . IQ . . . all those things go up," he says with the fervor of the faithful. "I know I can learn anything."

A recurring principle in Scientology literature is reliance on the power of the self, something that Cruise exudes. The close relationship between Hollywood and Scientology might leave some skeptical, which is addressed on a DVD called *This Is Scientology* when a speaker describes why they have a Celebrity Centre. He obliquely says, "The world is carried on the backs of a desperate few."

That would make Cruise desperate, right?

"If you really want to see your fellow man and you really care, how can you not feel desperate these days?" Cruise says solemnly. "When you talk about the level of illiteracy. The level of drug addiction. When you look at the World Trade Center." He pauses. "It's about caring," he whispers, "about caring about people."

The road to stardom has to be paved with smart business decisions—Cruise, along with producing partner Paula Wagner, has picked the most promising projects with the best directors (from Scorsese to Spielberg). But it's his empathy that makes him our hero. In addition to seeing a star, we see his humanity. It's in the panic in Jerry Maguire's eyes when his life is in a tailspin. Cameron Crowe saw it on the set every day. "He always says, 'I will not be able to make all the movies that I want to make in my life, so I want to make each one matter,'" Crowe recalls. "So he has a whole life going on with every character in the movie. He is always living the part. It's not, 'Put the camera on me, I'm going to give you my compassionate mode.' Tom is never like that. Nor will he take glycerine in his eyes to cry—he'll cry."

Crowe can't quite say what exactly makes Cruise such a star, but he thinks that's as it should be. "It's the wild, electric variable that is stardom," Crowe says. "It's the fun, funny thing about loving movies."

And Cruise, rather than marvel at his stardom, would prefer to laugh about it. Toward the end of the interview, asked if he puts one pant leg on at a time like the rest of us, he excitedly screams, "Oh, no. I put them both on at the same time." He laughs, "HA HA HA HA HA! I usually step up on my bed in the morning, like this," and he leaps up on the couch. "And I go, SHUZZZZZ." He jumps, simulating a turbo-quick, pant-pull-up maneuver. After landing on the ground, he relishes the act. "WHAAOOOO!" ■

