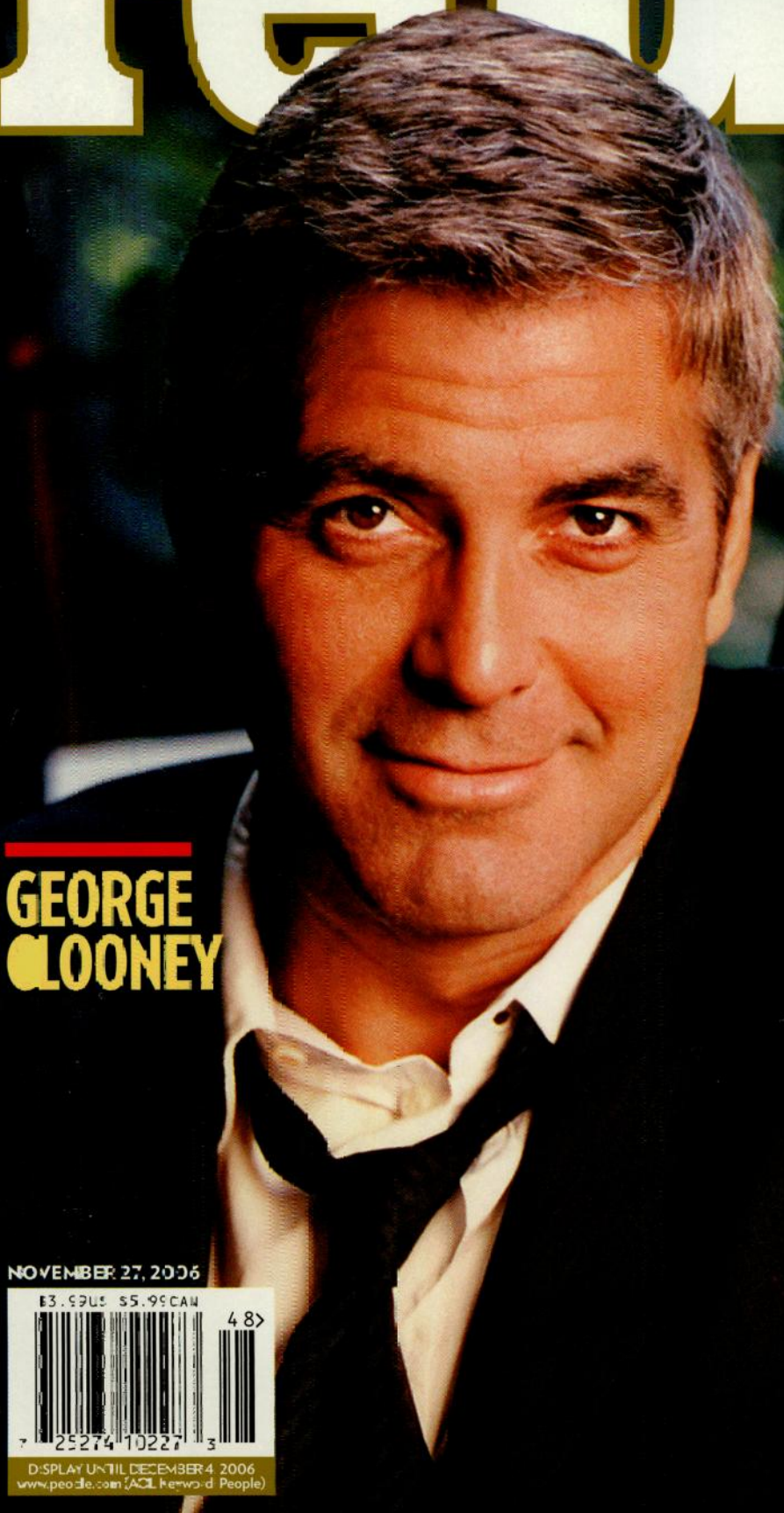


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People



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THE SEXY INTERVIEW

GEORGE CLOONEY

He kicked off the year in dapper style to accept his first-ever Oscar, but on this cool L.A. evening, George Clooney is movie-star dazzling in an offhanded way: jeans, scuffed Harley motorcycle boots, a black tee and a green rubber bracelet that reads "Not on Our Watch," a reference to his activism on behalf of the troubled Darfur region of Sudan. He's just caught a screening of *Ocean's 13* (due next summer) and exchanged a friendly hello with Clint Eastwood, whose office is next door. Now Clooney settles into a leather chair in his own modest office (think basketballs and a plastic Batman mug) to sit down and chat with West Coast bureau chief Elizabeth Leonard. Relaxed and gracious, Clooney, 45, is thoroughly the Hollywood gentleman—and, now, the Sexiest Man Alive 2006.

Photograph by JAMES WHITE

GEORGE ANSWERS THE BIG (AND NOT-SO-BIG) QUESTIONS

What's it like to go on a date with you? I don't go on that many dates, because the truth is, anytime you go out in public with a girl when you're well-known, there are pictures of you everywhere and it's like you're a thing. So mostly I spend time getting to know people at work or a party at a friend's house before I'm willing to go out to a restaurant and get clobbered by photographers. It puts so much pressure on dating immediately, and you just go, "Uh, sorry"—you're just always apologizing.

What's your perfect first date? Not getting your picture in the paper. The second date, take your hits—but it would be nice to see if you have anything in common before it's in the paper.

What's your "type"? All different types. . . . Everybody says this, but sense of humor is No. 1 for me. It's certainly what's most attractive. It's not the first thing you notice at 21, but it's the first thing you notice now. You also have to have a sense of humor about my life. It certainly has had an effect on relationships, but I would bet less of an effect than my own issues or insecurities. You can't really blame outside forces for things not working out. You have to take some responsibility.

You told Barbara Walters back in 1995 that “I’ll never marry again.” Have you changed your mind?

The truth is, I haven’t softened my position on anything, but it’s not something I deal with on a regular basis. Who knows? I’ve been married [in the early ’90s, to actress Talia Balsam]. It’s not something I’m looking out for. The truth is, I’m really happy. People always go, “Aren’t you afraid of being alone or dying alone?” And I just go, “I’ve also been in relationships where I’ve been shockingly alone.” I don’t agree with the idea that you have to have that or it’s a failed life. I’ve been my most happy and my most unhappy in relationships. I have family and friends and people I care very much about. I’ve got a really, really, really good life.

“It’s not something I sit around saying: ‘I’m never having kids! I’m never getting married!’ That’s not how I live my life. My life is really about work and friends and those kinds of things”

Will you ever have kids? I think it’s the most responsible thing you can do, to have kids. It’s not something to be taken lightly. I don’t have that gene that people have to replicate. But everything in my life has changed over time.

What do you love about Italy? I think people in Italy live their lives better than we do. It’s an older country, and they’ve learned to celebrate dinner and lunch, whereas we sort of eat as quickly as we can to get through it. We’re constantly going—work, work, work. Italians have taught me about stopping.

What have you learned from your family?

My father [broadcast journalist Nick Clooney], my mother [Nina], my aunt [the late singer Rosemary Clooney]—they all had talent, but they also had that thing that I’ve always admired: the willingness to get beat up for the right reasons. I always liked that, and that’s one of those things you aim for in life. In my family we’ve all flopped pretty badly over the years at times, and that’s always okay. What wouldn’t be okay is to fail in integrity. When we were growing up [in Kentucky], it was the middle of the civil rights movement and we were around people who were certainly fairly bigoted at times. And I remember if someone would even just make a reference to “those people,” my sister and I knew to start pounding the food if we were out at a restaurant, because my dad was going to make a scene and we were going to leave. That happened all the time. As a kid, I was kind of embarrassed by it. As an adult, I am immensely proud of it.

How does it feel to grow older in Hollywood?

I feel as if I’m gently working my way into being a character actor along the way. I like it. And I vacillate whether I can pull off [playing] the leading man anymore. You look at Brad [Pitt] and Matt [Damon] and Don [Cheadle], and they all look pretty much the same after six or seven years [of shooting the *Ocean’s* series]. I’m probably the least mature of all of them, but I’m still the dad figure. They always give me s---. It’s always like, “Okay, old man.”

Will you ever run for office?

No. I can get more done from where I am on issues than I could trying to make policy. I don’t have to compromise on anything. I don’t have to worry about alienating anyone. I can go in headfirst.

What’s your take on celebrity swag?

I don’t need a phone with sequins on it—it makes actors look bad.





BEING GEORGE

On his screen saver:

A picture of my two bulldogs Bud and Lou, both of whom have passed away. They're gone, but I keep them on my screen saver because they're my buddies.

On his iPod: I'm really fond of this kid Peter Cincotti and of Michael Bublé. They sing some of the same arrangements that my Aunt Rosemary used to do. I just downloaded 25 or 30 songs from iTunes from a bunch of Rosemary's albums because I didn't really have my version of her greatest hits. There are certain songs she did better than anybody. She has a version of "Don't Fence Me In" that is mind-bogglingly good.

On his TiVo: Jon Stewart.

I always put on the three network news channels. Keith Olbermann. I still love *Letterman*. *The Office*.

In his shower: A steam room. Growing up, in my early 20s, we'd go to the Desert Inn and they had this great steam room, so I built one. There is eucalyptus for the steam and then a big tub of generic shampoo and some generic conditioner. I have no hair products and no great grooming habits. I use ivory soap. But I have an old-fashioned shaving brush, and you can get a really good foam going with the soap. I like the normal disposable razors.

In his refrigerator: Burrito makings. I always have tortillas, ground beef, a little lettuce and tomato and salsa and cheese. You can make an entire meal in seven minutes. Throw it all together, with guacamole. And it makes me happy when I eat it.



GEORGE'S WORLD

He fills in the blanks—with lots of surprises

My first car was . . .

a 1976 Monte Carlo. It was maroon and all covered in rust. It had a Landau top, but it peeled off.



George's first car

The medical term I still remember from ER is . . .

"supraventricular tachyarrhythmia" [a fast heart rate]. I did 20 takes and never got it right. I still wake up in the middle of the night screaming "supra . . ." and I've never gotten it wrong since.

The first thing I read in the morning is . . .

The New York Times. Always. I start with the front page and then go right to the op-ed.



out question, it's the best thing I've ever done in my life in terms of lifestyle. You've got to disappear sometimes.

An ex-girlfriend is good for . . .

a lot of things. It's all very good, because I get along with them. They're good for advice. I've been very lucky in that sense because there's no great animosity.

I keep my

Oscar . . . in a tiny room, a library.

It has a bunch of books by people I like, and it has a couple of Golden Globes and SAG awards. It's not a place where people really go. I'm proud of it, but it's not something you go in and polish up every day.

The movie that makes me cry is . . .

Batman and Robin.

I get my hair cut every . . .

month, by Waldo. He's one of my closest friends for 15 years. He worked on *ER*.

I got my first gray hair at . . .

18. It was shocking. And then I looked over at my dad, who I was this exact replica of, and he was completely gray at 35. I thought, "Oh man." I've never dyed it.

What I did most at Northern Kentucky University was . . .

avoid going to class. It was 1979, so it was the end of

My favorite cocktail is . . .

vodka and soda, unless I am in Italy. I drink Absolut. I'm old-school that way. But the entire summer in Italy I drink red wine. I drink my friend Maurizio Zanella's wine.



How to Wear a Tux

BY GEORGE CLOONEY

I have one tux. Just one. It's a single-button (Armani). There's on y one mistake guys can make, and that is to try to do anything fancy. Just put on a tux. Just put a tie on, put a plain shirt on, don't wear a bolo tie, and don't wear a cummebund that's crazy.

Between Brad and Angelina, I'd rather be piloted by . . .

Angelina. She's got more experience. I was watching one of the entertainment shows and watched Brad bounce the plane along the tarmac five or six times. I talked to him the next day and told him I am not flying with him. He's actually getting really good at it. But for now, I'll go with Angelina.

I found my villa in Lake Como, Italy, when . . .

I was motorcycling through the Alps. . . . It was the most beautiful house I'd ever seen. With-



George's dream girl: Sophia

the disco era and it was so exciting to go out and go to clubs. The drinking age was 18.

My father taught me... most things.

If there were a fire in my house, I would take... Max [his 17-year-old potbellied pig]. He moves very slowly now. He's like Tim Conway in *The Carol Burnett Show*.

He's my longest relationship.

When a date meets Max, they... are not surprised. Most people know I have a pig. I will tell you, though, because he sleeps across the front doorway, you literally have to step over him to get into the house. People never know if he's dangerous or not. He's not.

Watching Brad and Matt with their kids... is really natural. I knew they were going to have kids. There was no question they were going to do it. They're great kids and a lot of fun. They're immensely happy. It's amazing.

On the [*Ocean's 13*] set, everyone had kids. Julia [Roberts] shows up with her two kids to visit. Casey [Affleck]'s got his kid. I'd sit there, and there were kids everywhere.



My all-time celebrity dream date would be... Sophia Loren. Oh my God. I met her in Milan. She's unbelievably beautiful, unbelievably fun. She walks in a room and there's no question that a giant movie star has walked in. I don't think we have stars like that anymore.

On the set, my favorite sport to play is... basketball. In your head, you're still 18. I'll be on the phone and someone will say, "What're you doing today?" and I'll be like, "I drove by this 21-year-old with my left today, made a reverse in his face." It makes you feel like a king.

My signature meal is... tacofest, on Sundays, and Thanksgiving and Christmas [dinners]. Christmas at my house is huge: stuffing, gravy, turkey, the whole thing. And people come to my house for tacofest.

The boys come over to play basketball, and then later the wives come and we all watch a movie. This Sunday we're watching *Borat*. I've been through life with these people. I've been best man at their weddings, I'm godfather to a bunch of the kids. It's a close-knit family.

The last time I was rejected by a woman was... I don't know. I don't approach them, really. My

relationships have evolved mostly out of friendships. But I've said "Hey, let's go to dinner" before, and they've said no plenty of times.

I work out... every single day. On the elliptical machine or the bicycle, or I'll ride my bike up and down the hill or something. Seven days a week, it's an hour a day no matter what I do. It's less about vanity and more about just physically being able to do the things you want to do.

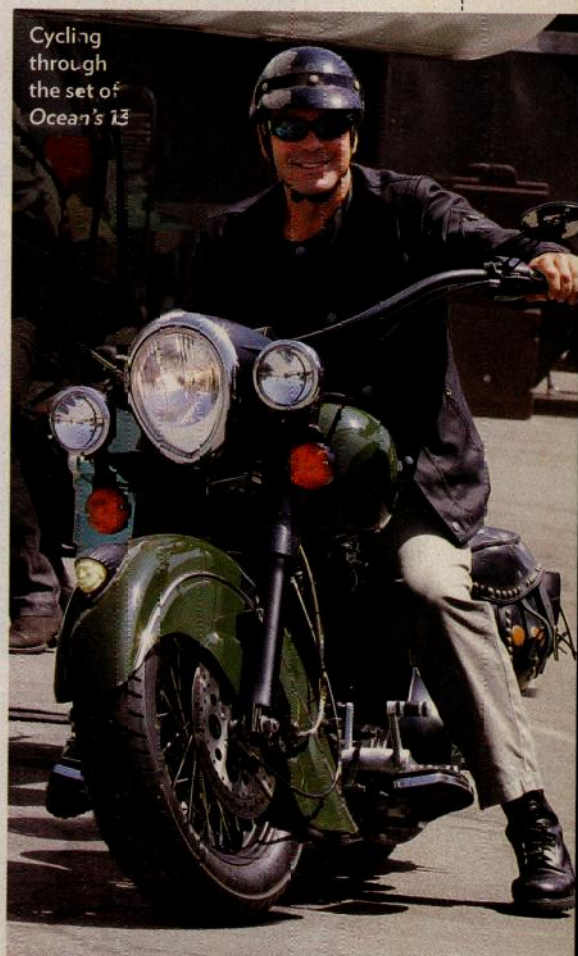
When I'm in the tabloids... I usually don't notice anymore. The funniest thing is that recently a story came out that I was with some girl from *Deal or No Deal* whom I had never even met.

On the Ocean's sets, my favorite prank was... There were so many. It's a constant battle of evil, rotten things.

My second language is...

Italian. Well, I'm learning. I have been studying for four years. But if you get a couple of drinks in you, it's easier to speak. I think it's a confidence thing. And I have absolutely no confidence in it. But if I've had a couple glasses of wine, I can have a conversation, or enough of one. Or fake it. You can use your hands a lot to talk...

THE SEXY INTERVIEW



Cycling through the set of *Ocean's 13*

I get around today in...

two cars and three motorcycles. But 90 percent of the time I ride motorcycles. I have a Harley, an Indian and a bike called an Exile that's a chopper.



Lake Como: Clooney's escape

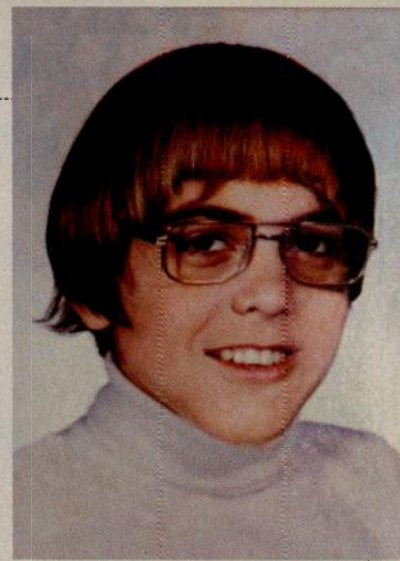
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: EMILIO FLORES/EVRETT; © 1978 GM MEDIA ARCHIVE; EVRETT; BANNEY; GIOVANNI BONELLI/GRANATA; PHOTOLINK; JUPITER IMAGES; ALAMY; MAURIZIO ZANELLA; PEOPLE

BECOMING GEORGE

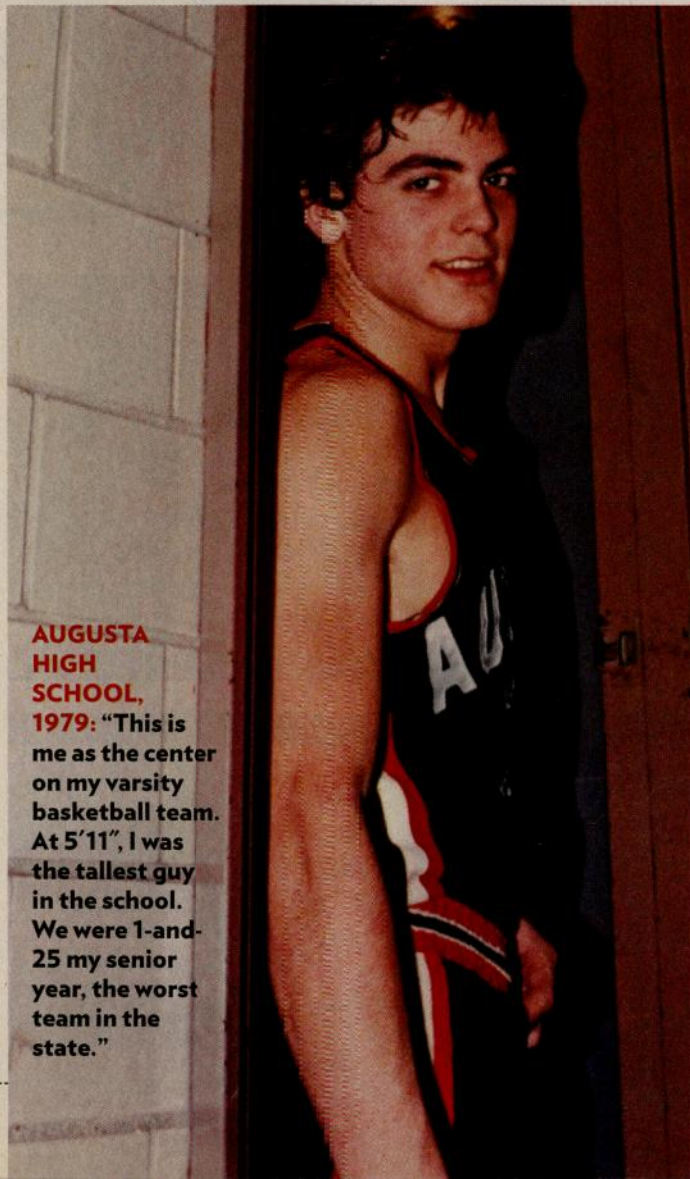
Our man looks back at life before he was sexy

AUGUSTA, KY., 1964:

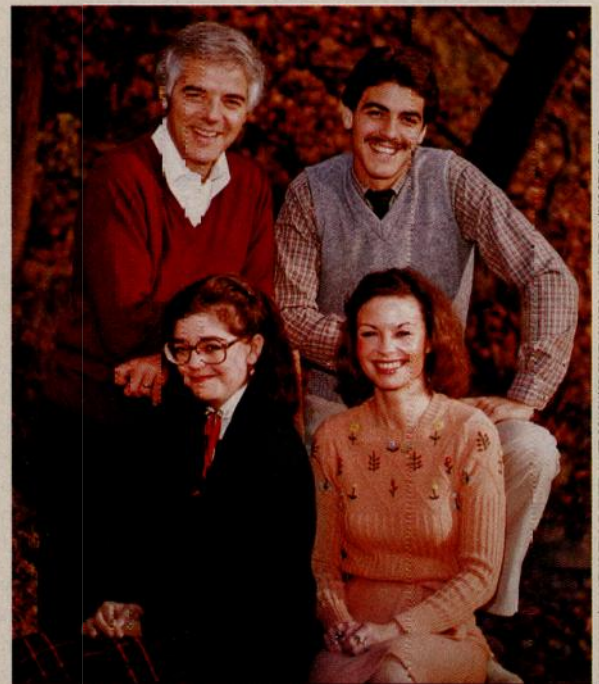
"My sister and I are on my dad's 1959 Corvette. My mom didn't dress me up a lot, so clearly there was some event going on. . . . I look like Little Lord Fauntleroy. I don't know why either of us is in black velvet."



SCHOOL PORTRAIT, CA. 1970: "This is when my mom took her first crack at cutting hair. She also made all my clothes when I was growing up, including a fake leather suit."



AUGUSTA HIGH SCHOOL, 1979: "This is me as the center on my varsity basketball team. At 5'11", I was the tallest guy in the school. We were 1-and-25 my senior year, the worst team in the state."

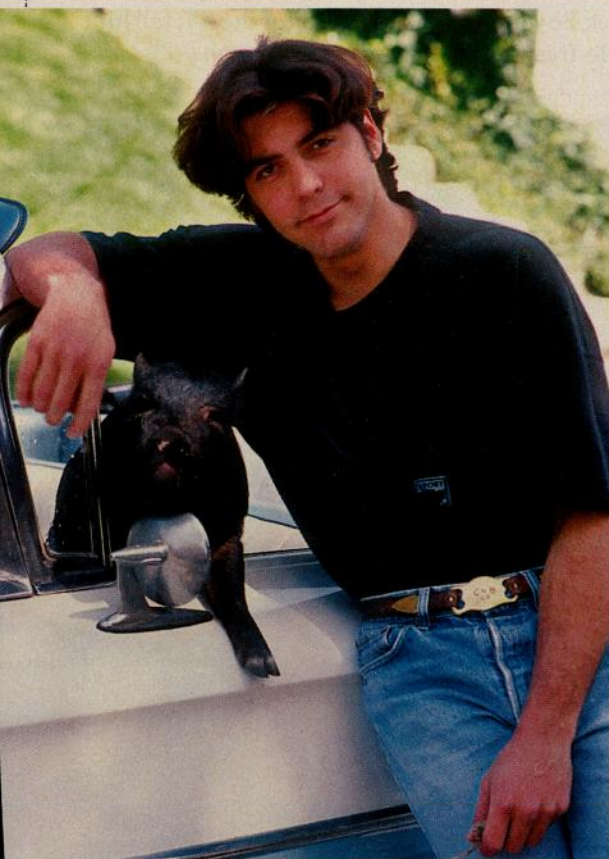
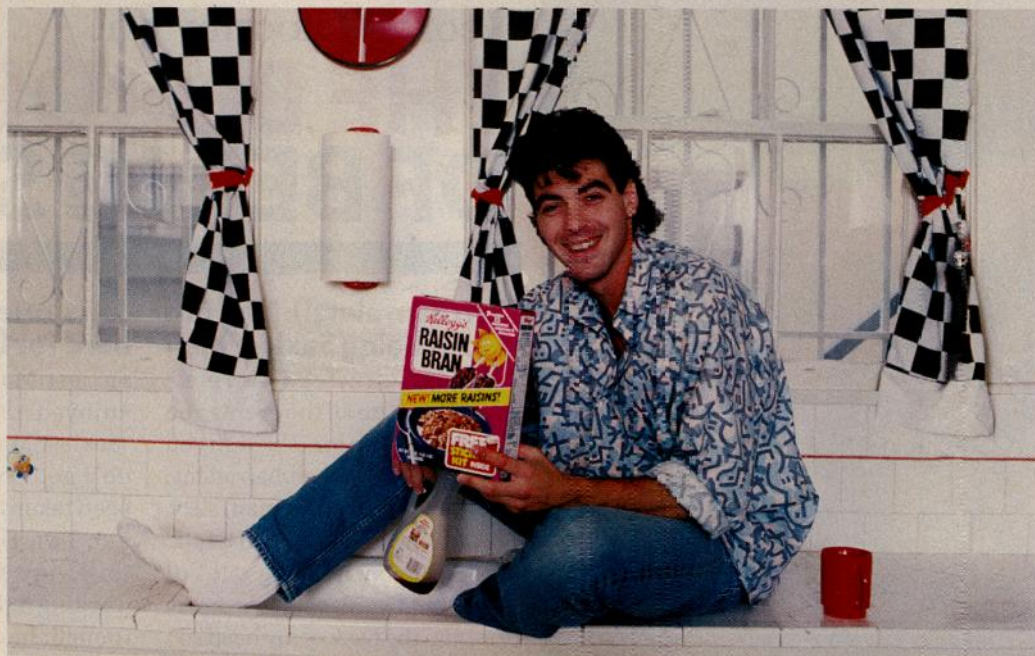


FAMILY PORTRAIT, 1979:

"This is my freshman year in college, and I decided to try a mustache out. You can't see, but the shoes I'm wearing are also fantastic, sort of a fishnet with white sponge bottoms."

LOS ANGELES, 1985:

"I'm not actually doing a commercial for Raisin Bran. I'm just fooling around. I made those curtains out of pillowcases. I didn't have any cash. It was my first apartment, and I was just getting things started."



BEVERLY HILLS, 1989: "There's my buddy Max, and that's my 1960 Oldsmobile Dynamic 88. I gave that car to Noah Wyle. I was living with Kelly Preston and doing the *Roseanne* show then, and Max was a little baby pig. And now he's a hog. He's just hanging out."

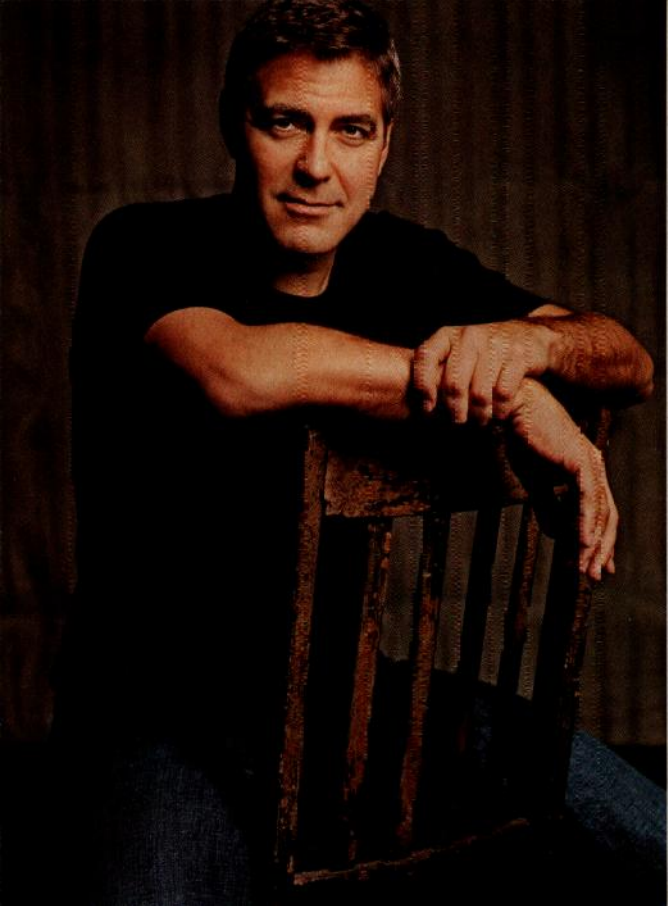
AT THE PREMIERE OF RED SURF, 1990:

"I have three chest hairs. I got ripped off in the chest-hair department. That's a bad look too. But I do still have that leather jacket."



WITH CONNIE SELLECCA IN BABY TALK, 1990:

"This worries me on so many levels. I think that's a hat in my back pocket. If not, it's a bag of popcorn. There is no baby in there. It's clearly a dolphin!"



George Clooney on

THE BURDEN OF BEING SEXY

(Sarcasm alert!): The flip side of being Sexiest Man Alive is...

There's a lot of pressure. There are all the events you have to show up for. The sash you have to wear that is embarrassing. There's pressure to remain sexy. That's why I do a lot of cosmetic work. I've been doing a lot of Botox, but I've also started on my back and the back of my head so I could see how it works. You should see the back of my neck. So young. So smooth, so wrinkle-free.

This one's going to be hard for Brad

since he's been Sexiest Man Alive twice. He's enjoyed that mantle. I'd say "Sexiest Man Alive" to him and he'd go, "Two-time." So that's been taken away. We used to call him Two Time. So Brad's going to be upset too. Brad's been working out a lot. After *Troy*, he thought he'd be named it a third time—pull the hat trick, as we called it. But for me, I'll tell him this is my last hurrah.

FROM TOP: JAMES WHITE/CORBIS OUTLINE; ANDREW ECCLES/IMG PHOTO

EXCLUSIVE! GEORGE REVEALS

His Pick for Sexiest Man Alive

I gotta say, this is a very big disappointment for Matt [Damon], because he did run a very good campaign. The belief is that he just ran out of money in the end. If you've been around him, you know he's sexy. His eyes pop. They have a twinkle. He's got a good smile. He's quite the dancer. He does rock a Speedo in *Ocean's 13*. Because I was Sexiest Man Alive nine years ago, in 1997, Matt came to me for advice—like a politician would go to Clinton—and asked how he should run the campaign. I'm afraid he's going to think that I was using my influence to quietly, secretly take him down. But really, Matt's got a couple of years left before it's time for him.

GEORGE TO MATT:

"I think you should go with the snake-skin suit and some mousse and give a sort of up-on-your-toes pose"



Damon in November 1997. Photo provided by George Clooney.