

# THE COBRA'S NOSE

Vol. 12

Can you believe it's already November?

12 Nov. 1999

## The Cobra's Notes...

Many of you didn't even have your new Cobra's Noses yet, but the most common reaction to Vol. 11 was and continues to be, "Already?" Apparently my taking August off has lowered expectations of The Nose generally (a situation with which I am comfortable), though not enough for local subscribers to cry out, "Not *again*." Not out loud anyway. You out of town subscribers have been even quieter than usual, which I previously would not have thought possible. Desperate for affirmation, and because I love and revere her, I called my sister Lauren and queried, "So, what did you think of The Nose?" "It was cute," she said. "Did I happen to mention that I hate Mom?" I did receive this disturbing evaluation from an IKON employee, whom I choose not to name because that would only encourage him or her, "The Cobra's Nose makes for absorbing toilet reading material." I don't approve of the words "toilet," "absorbing," and "The Cobra's Nose" appearing in the same sentence. But the disturbing part is how that praise sounded next to what was coming out of Vivian Li a couple of weeks ago, yoy.

I was in the Ross on Pima Road, the one Pat Lang's husband manages, because I needed some stuff for the new apartment but as long as I was there thought I'd try on a frock or two. As I accepted from the Fitting Room attendant a plastic card labeled with the number of items I was carrying, I heard a sound like rolling thunder behind me—something like the elephantine, window rattling footfall of my upstairs neighbor at five-thirty every morning but much worse. Out of the corner of my eye I spotted Viv, who is normally quite demure, holding aloft a copy of vol. 11 of The Nose and screaming, "HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, McGOVERN." "I think you should call security or something," I murmured to the attendant and darted into the fitting rooms.

Time spent in the Ross Fitting Rooms creeps by as deliberation over exactly how fat does this outfit make me look is more painstaking than you would guess from the results. If I were trying on pants instead of dresses I would probably still be in there. So imagine my surprise when upon exiting Ross Vivian Li bounded over to my side from the Zuka Juice next door. She still had The Nose clutched in her left fist and the remains of a Zuka in the other. Her breath reeked of ginseng. I know she thinks she's being healthy when she chooses Zuka Juice over the Starbucks located on the other side of Ross, but in ordering the ginseng additive she may as well have mainlined an quadruple shot espresso vente, no foam. Her speech was very loud and fast.

"Boringandpretentious'? 'Boringandpretentious'? Howcouldyou writesuchathing? Computererrormyass. Iworkedreallyreallyhardon thatarticle, thenyoucallitnamesanddon'tevenprintit?!"

I knew this was coming. As Publisher, Editor, and Cobra-in-Chief of this publication, I not infrequently find myself in a stressful circumstance, such as last month when nearly all of vol. 11 disappeared from the computer disc I was using scant minutes from my deadline and I had to improvise graphics and columns of text. And that's not even to mention the equally stressful circumstance of nearly printing the following prose: "Even across an ocean, the precision with which it was designed impresses, the mystery of its makers' intentions tantalizes; it emanates its own importance, an example of prehistoric McLuanism—a message imparted by its medium." And this was just prelude to what she had written about Wayne Kimball's lithographs last month, which truly was lost to the angry gods of Microsoft Word '95. (I don't like to think of what sort of mood those deities might be in following the antitrust decision, or if they find out



**"Welcome to November's Cobra Qwiz!" Name that Scary Person.**

I'm going to buy myself an iMac. Wait a minute...should I have typed that? Anyway, if there's a chance they'd be appeased by human sacrifice I'll be willing to submit a list of candidates.)

"Now listen, Vivian," I began. "I think I could make this up to you. Sharon, who penned that libel to begin with, has been busy with moving stuff lately so why don't you take over as editor this time? That way, you could make the edition as boring and pre...that is to say, as erudite as you desire and nobody can stop you. Besides, Mr Enigma has been making some vaguely Nietzschean pronouncements lately and you could be just the gal to figure out what he's going on about."

"DONE," she shouted. She threw her Zuka to the ground and held out her hand to shake, but I shrank back from the spray of Caribbean Passion with my Ross bags and told her to mind the dry clean onlies.

So, dear readers...

This complaint just in: The Big Toe of in the Know, objected an article in which King James the Almighty Product Manager Amen was characterized as "a veritable Entire Foot of in the Know." Mr. Toe assured me that the other party would acknowledge his (Mr. Toe's) omniscience and grovel before it, and therefore my awarding him the name of a larger appendage of of the Know was unwarranted, and that the metaphorical shoes of of the Know are simply too immense to be filled by the likes of King James the Almighty Product Manager Amen. I am so certain this is true that I didn't bother to research the proposition further. Mr. Toe also copped to making the kitchen sponges unspeakably filthy by using them to clean IKON merchandise, printers or something I think. I threw out another one last week and now we have no kitchen sponge.

But anyway, I left Vivian Li in charge so if you have any complaints direct them to her while I ponder pressing imponderables such as, "if Zest is not soap, then what is it?" and "why should that guy put down the chalupa?"

Until next time then, I remain...

Sharon C. McGovern  
Publisher, Cobra-in-Chief

# The Art of the Deal Breaker

Mr Enigma asked if my car was a stick shift and I proudly answered yes because I believe driving such a vehicle is a dying, if somewhat inconvenient, art. Not that I wouldn't happily give it up for an automatic, which would allow me to delegate more attention to other pressing driving matters like not running into stuff, but it wasn't a Deal Breaker. "That would be a deal breaker for me," he said. You see, he recently abandoned his stick shift Honda Accord for a fancy pants silver *automatic* Y2K Honda Accord. "You know what else?" he continued. "A girl in a pick up." Pause. "Moustaches, blech."

Clearly we had moved into new territory...the frightening terrain of Mr Enigma's personal preferences. He has shared a number of these with me over the months, tidbits such as how he (like most men) really prefers blondes, finds curly hair repulsive, and is ill at ease with tall women. In short, every moment with him is a miracle of affirmation for me. Somehow he intends this sort of candor as complimentary, like the creepy men in cars that would shout "WHORE" at me on my evening constitutionals. "They're saying they would pay to sleep with you," he volunteers. "That's got to make you feel pretty good." I've tried to explain the difference between a shout of "WHORE" and one of, say, "PARDON--HIGH PRICED CALL GIRL!" because if I must be taken for a prostitute I'd prefer it be the kind that would have to be saved for, but the distinction is lost on him. But I'll admit, sometimes compliments are tricky and the verbal space around them infested with psychic landmines. I'll give you a famous family example. Soon after my mother and dad married, he told her she would look really good when she got old. Forever after he would protest that his meaning was, "Good as you look now--and that's very good by the way--you have the kind of face and bone structure that will endure and even improve over time so that later in life you will truly be an exquisite creature." But since the immediate impression was, "Well...maybe you'll pull it off eventually" the would be compliment was chained to him like a dead albatross for decades. Or to cite a recent near miss, I was telling a regular customer of Pat's at Café Nikos that my brother tries to regulate the amount of cream and sugar I use in my coffee, but before I could explain that he does so because he believes coffee that is any paler than a Hershey Bar is an abomination, the customer (whose name is Greg Moody just in case you want to find him and give him a hard time) leaned forward and in a conspiratorial whisper asked, "Is it because he thinks you're too fat?" I'm guessing I seemed surprised at the query because he immediately shrank back and stammered, "Because I don't think you are." "Too late, pal," I told him, "You are *so* in The Nose." Which is not to say every compliment should be of the "all that's best of dark and bright/ Meet in her aspect and in her eyes" variety, but it seems to me that compliment giving may be going the way of the stick shift.

Which reminds me that this article is about relationship Deal Breakers.

Apparently, notions of what constitutes a Deal Breaker began to flit around Tech Support, and later King James the Almighty Product Manager Amen took the question on the road with an informal poll. I was present when he returned with some initial results which he presented in Mr E's cube before Mr E, The Man, myself, and for all intents and purposes everybody else in Tech Support, including Mr. Flintstone's proteges Barney and Bam-Bam, as they all have ears like bats and gossip like old women.

Up to this point my own reflections on relationship Deal Breakers had resulted in a single item, that any demonstrable interest in me by any male was evidence of a fatal flaw that would lead to the eventual termination of the relationship. This is known as the Groucho Marx

Principle, and embroidering upon it strikes me as baroque. But others have a ready list of picayune demands.

"Long fingernails were mentioned a couple of times as a deal breaker," King James began.

"Oh, yeah, I hate that," murmured The Man. The Man is very low key. "Murmured" for him is like "declared" for anybody else, so I guess this fingernail thing really hit a nerve. King James concurred in this sentiment, but Mr Enigma entered in a strongly worded descent. "Oh I love long nails," he opined. "Stubby nails are almost a Deal Breaker for me."

And so it went--too religious, too bulky, too timid. And with each entry to the list I found myself becoming more erotic. I mean, *neurotic*. Here's the thing: every time I heard I Deal Breaker, I personally felt broken by it. And the applicability of the Deal Breaker mattered not a whit. If someone uttered a prejudice against a gay Haitian military strongman, I would have felt slighted. Bad enough sitting with my hands folded into fists thinking, "Are my fingernails too long? Are they long enough? Was 'Summer Lovin'" a suitable choice for a color and will the fact that the paint has nearly chipped away put me in better stead with the anti-manicure set?" So although as a former student of Anthropology, I was edified and enlightened by King James's data (and would be interested in hearing any exotic deal breakers from you readers [please don't offer the likes of "wife beater," "pedophile," or "crack whore" as they are a huge bummer; we're willing to just go ahead and take them and any other really super illegal thing as a given]), the non-former student of Anthropology parts of my psyche were running for cover like ants in a rainstorm. All these parts were chanting, "You're fat fat fat."

On reflection, I've decided that Deal Breakers are not as much about judging others as a path to self knowledge. Length of fingernails, for instance, can indicate a person's aptitude for physical activity; hence the formula Long Fingernails=Less Activity. One looks at hands then not for aesthetic purposes, but as a gauge of lifestyle compatibility. "Am I the sort of person that could deal with a potential mate's circumscribed activity due to fingernail length," one would have to ask oneself in interviewing candidates for the job. Well not me necessarily. Less Activity would be fine, but Long Fingernails on a guy is icky. Anyway, you get the idea.

So I crossed the Groucho Principle off of my list (telling though it is) and began a new list of Deal Breakers for myself. It has two items so far: Long fingernails, and Babbles incessantly during movies.

It's a start. ♀♂♀♂



# Neruotica

So I'm sitting here at work trying to decide which of the tasks awaiting my attention would be least odious. I focus my turbo powered I hate you glare on those stupid fliers that Audrey (who in other respects is a nice person) left on my desk for me to fold, and think, "Fahrenheit 451...the temperature at which paper catches fire and burns..." It hasn't worked yet, but I it will eventually. Anyway I prefer practicing my Uri Geller routine to just doing the job. That's when Mr Enigma sidled up to my desk and whispered, "You did something very erotic today." I was somewhat alarmed at this news because usually when somebody says to me, "You did something very erotic today" they actually said, "You did something very neurotic today" and I misheard. But Mr E had a gleam in his eye which told me this was the exception.

So now I was faced with two worries: first, how humiliating would this so called erotic thing turn out to be? and second, would it be repeatable? Both scored pretty high in the affirmative, but as I have already inequitably traded the story with my mother for a tiny little piffle of an anecdote that involved her blushing I may as well go ahead and tell you all what it was. It seems that in events related to painting my toenails one Wednesday night (as is my custom) I inadvertently died half of my right foot blue. No, that's not it. I don't want to meet the person who has that low a threshold for the erotic. Hang on—I take that back. So I was sitting in Mr Enigma's cube telling him about my blue foot and was getting his typical languid response when I unsheathed it and showed him. Suddenly the story seemed to fascinate. He leaned forward, eyes wide, captivated. *He asked questions.* That should have sent my antennae up immediately, but I chose not to delve.

Now, flash forward to me trying to incinerate a big pile of Audrey's hard work (I honestly think she's destined for better things) using the power of my brain and Mr Enigma making his astonishing claim. After making me assure him he had done nothing wrong and swear that whatever this so-called erotic thing was it was entirely my responsibility and he could not be faulted for innocently being subjected to it, and any arousal pursuant to said action could be traced to me and me alone I'm such a slut okay okay *okay* (in his spare time Mr Enigma draws up Satan's contracts for the purchase of souls), he finally hissed that when I showed him my foot I had inadvertently flashed him.

Oh that explains *so* much. Although I average three or four embarrassments of that caliber every day before I get to work, it's usually without the benefit of an audience. Which makes all the difference. So I had Mr Enigma chortling away at the reception desk when I offered the following challenge to his honor: "Well, you know what a gentleman would have done!"

"Nope," he said, with slow, extravagant shakes of his head. "Don't know, don't care." Lifted up his hands, palms outward, "Not even interested." Then he went on his way.

So I called the gentlest person I know, which would be Lee. Well, Kathie Bloodworth is darned gentle as well, but she is the wrong gender for this experiment. I related the above and awaited his reaction. Lee said, "What *would* a gentleman have done?"

I had to confess I didn't know, but I was disappointed in him and I'll bet his mom would be too if she ever found out. So I asked around a little bit, to folk less gentle than Lee, but no villains certainly and haven't received a satisfactory answer. So finally I concluded that the gentlemanly thin would have been to keep quiet about the whole thing, which I myself have failed to do.

Which is what's wrong with America today. ♀♂♀♂



## Little Willey Style

Some people have babies and you think, "What a good idea the propagation of the species is!" Others you look at and hope they will provide the kind of dysfunction that produces a Beethoven rather than a Bundy. Kelley and Ron, my cousin and cousin-in-law respectively, are in the former category, as are recent parents Paul and Gina with little second-cousin-once-removed Benjamin, Emma and Joe with little baby Sara or Max or both (our correspondence has been on the sketchy side), and Katy and Curt with little baby TBA. I recently brought home my own Little Bundle of Joy, and hope you will all join me in a hearty, "Hi, Mac!" to my darling pink iMac (I know, I know—*strawberry*, yum). But more about that as I learn to operate it.

As the only party above to have invited me to a party to celebrate the impending birth, the rightful focus of this article will be Kelley "savatrl" Arredondo-Willey. Or, more accurately, the party itself. Although affiliation with the Arredondo clan guarantees a good time, the hostess for the event was my splendiferous Aunt Jan's good friend who is also conveniently named Jan. She has a wonderful house in Phoenix with a view from the back of a foothill, enough to make you think there are still wide open spaces in the valley even though there aren't. Please note the new pool. In the dining area next to the kitchen was a buffet style spread in which every kosher rule I knew of was violated at least once (which I think is just super, by the way). At the center of the table was a cake frosted to look like a child's quilt, with the words "The Littlest Willey" adorning the center panel.

Which takes us directly to the question of the child's name, which is as yet undetermined. A joke of relatively long standing has emerged from the situation, that if the infant is a boy he should be named "Purple," which sounds almost noble until it dawns on you that Purple Willey may as carry the moniker Blue Balls. Strange that Kelley is wavering on this issue as she has a knack for naming things. Like her car—Liam Nissan. Or a baby tortoise with a bent shell—Quasimodo. Her own child—\_\_\_\_\_. Not that she hasn't been getting suggestions. Pat, for one, offered "Patrick" as worthy choice.

A small group of us were discussing this matter among others when Jan the hostess's daughter brought us pieces of cake, dark, rich carrot cake. She handed Pat a piece with pink frosting. Then she took it back fearing she had insulted his masculinity with the color, and handed him a replacement piece that had white frosting on it—and "Little Willey" written on top. Which leads one to imagine that whatever name this child receives, his or her life will seem awfully long. ♀♂♀♂

# Sharon Moves and Grooves

As many of you know, I have again relocated. This I hope will be a welcome interlude in my recent nomadism. The moving process was blessedly dull; though the movers—while courteous and muscular enough—turned out to be both dim and corrupt. But that's okay, they didn't break anything. And now Pat and I live in Scottsdale's green belt, about a block away from Café Nikos and the best food in the state at Carl's Jr. (just kidding, Nick), with a golf course for a ba30

Backyard, plus a hot tub from which you can watch people working out in the exercise room. Not that I won't miss the streetwalkers and the notes from the police asking we call them for a chat about recent shootings (yeah, Mom, like I'd tell you about that stuff while we lived there)...no I take it back, I won't miss that stuff at all. Mill Avenue is pretty much out of reach though, which is a shame.

Anyway, now that I have a lease, I expect the only thing I expect to move for a while is my groove thing. A couple of Tuesdays ago at Axis I received instruction in that discipline from that Dictator of Dance, my own brother Pat. We were having a festive time, though we sorely missed the presence of our dear cousin Kerrie.

Pazzport was in splendid form and between songs Shalom would point out various luminaries in the crowd, including "Patrick McGovern and his sister." So nice to be acknowledged. Pazzport mom Deborah was working the crowd when she came upon Pat and me. She and Pat boogied for a song or two, then for some reason they seemed to think I should get involved even though I was perfectly content standing around stabbing the ice cubes in my drink with a straw. Correct me if I'm wrong, but dancing seems to be the rhythmic movement of several body parts simultaneously. It's that last part that trips me up. I've found moving one body part in a rhythmic fashion takes all of my concentration. Yes, that includes clapping—one hand must remain rigid or I lose my balance and stagger around as if drunk. So if you've heard rumors, seen security footage, or even read police reports alleging my public drunkenness, it was only me dancing, John.

Now I'm appealing to you. Short of having a gyroscope installed in my medula, what can I do to fix this dancing problem I have? I've seen some of you guys get down....

Ooops...gotta go.



"I'll be the one dressed as a chef."

## Cookin' with Zierle

The Cobra's Nose would like to extend congratulations to William Zierle, who was recently (well, not so recently, but this is the first month I've had a picture of him) named Head Chef at the University of Utah Hospital Cafeteria. I know that the first low impulse of many of you is to launch into a series of Hospital Food Jokes, but I wouldn't recommend it for two reasons. First, the food really is good. I've eaten there and even toured the facilities, and am happy to note the prevalence of hairnets and the near absence of disgruntled, I'm going to spit in your food type cooks. Second, William's wife Sue Zierle is protective of her man and may well kick the head off of your body if she catches you slandering him. Just as soon as she gets back from San Diego.

So the next time you visit the Hospital, to give blood perhaps, or as the result of a skiing mishap, mosey on down to the caf and look for William. He'll be the one dressed as a chef. ♀♂♀

# Look Closer...

A fallacious rumor has been sweeping the nation and I think it should end right here. *American Beauty* is not one of the year's best films. In fact, it is not even good. Now I know you all think I take these things way too seriously, but I find it's popular and critical endorsement disturbing. *American Beauty* is an obvious, simple-minded, vaunting of adolescent values (such as they are) masquerading as biting and insightful social commentary. It is a thesis on the abdication of responsibility. Its hero is a gentle, dreamy drug dealer. Its villain is a repressed (it's supposed to be a surprise, but I guarantee you will see it coming from fifty thousand miles away). It does have a saving grace in Kevin Spacey, who has been justly lauded for his performance as an upper middle class loser. Strangely, critics and viewers have been citing this effort as an oddity in Spacey's gallery of creeps completely ignoring a better performance in better movie from five years ago—*The Ref*.

Now much as I like *The Ref*, I can't call it great. In its own small, strident way, however, it kicks the quite similar *American Beauty*'s pretentious butt, and Spacey takes a role with potentially limited scope and turns it into a *tour de force*—arguably his best performance to date.

*The Ref* is about a dysfunctional family whose lives are disrupted by a criminal who takes them hostage, and whose presence compels uncomfortable truths to the surface. *American Beauty* is about a dysfunctional family whose lives are disrupted by a criminal who moves in next door and whose presence compels uncomfortable truths to the surface. In each, Kevin Spacey plays a family patriarch keenly disappointed in the direction his life has taken, and burdened by the responsibilities he has accrued in his life. In each, he has a wife who busies herself with projects as a way to avoid day to day personal obligations. (Judy Davis and Annette Bening who play the wives are uncannily physically alike—just look at the photos—though Davis's hair in *The Ref* is wrought in all directions, a victim of her endless, directionless stress, whereas Bening's bangs hang in her eyes to indicate her blinkered perception of life; even the characters' names are close, Caroline in *The Ref*, Carolyn in *AB*.) In each, he has an unhappy child who hates him. The crux of the difference in these parallel stories of discontent is how the characters deal with responsibility.

In *American Beauty*, it is something to be discarded as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. Spacey's character Lester is miserable in his job in an ad agency (jobs in advertising have become in movies a quick and easy means of identifying characters as morally bankrupt sellouts), so he uses blackmail and the sleaziest of threats to force his employers to release him with a year's severance pay. Nostalgic for his teen years, he finds work flipping burgers in a local fast food joint. Of all teen pastimes, why would Lester choose the greasiest, most tedious, socially reviled one of all? It's not like he pierced his nose and eyebrow and got a cool job at Tower, he voluntarily donned the paper hat, the international symbol of the bottom rung of employability, and work to which nobody ever willingly returned. Lester then resumes a pot habit and engages in a workout regimen with the sole purpose of seducing his teenage daughter's friend. In abandoning this last goal due to another wildly improbable, yet utterly predictable, revelation, the movie would have you believe Lester has achieved a high level of morality; but a failure to commit statutory rape is an abysmally low standard of behavior, and the last minute restraint plays like dramatic chicken droppings. Humbert Humbert never looked so good.

In contrast, Spacey's Lloyd from *The Ref* labors as an indentured servant in his usurer mother's antique shop (which could connote an unnatural attachment to the idea of things and values of the past). It's a superficially less humiliating work than fast food, but he is every bit as much a wage slave. So why does he put up with it? In frustrated he explains, "...someone has to be responsible. I'd love to run



**Bound:** Kevin Spacey with Judy Davis in *The Ref* (above), and with Annette Benning in *American Beauty*.

around and take classes and play with my inner-self! I'd love the freedom to be some pissed-off criminal with no responsibilities, except I don't have the time! But you don't see me with a gun. And you don't see me sleeping with someone else. You think my life turned out the way I wanted because I live in this house? You think every morning I wake up, look in the mirror and say 'Gee I'm glad I'm me and not some 19-year-old billionaire rock star with the body of an athlete and a 24-hour erection!' No I don't! So just excuse the [expletive deleted] out of me!" Lloyd may be embittered by life, but he is unwilling to use his discontent as a justification for antisocial behavior of his own or that of others. Except for the non-stop fighting with his wife.

The conceit in *The Ref* is that Lloyd and Caroline are so preoccupied by their arguing that the only time they stop is when they are ordered to at gunpoint. Their battles are so notorious that their niece and nephew frankly look forward to the spectacle. Their fights are proof of an emotional engagement and commitment they would be reluctant to consciously acknowledge, but which is nevertheless so self-evident that when Caroline proclaims she will seek a divorce the whole family is stunned into silence and her brother-in-law, dumbfounded, asks, "Why?"

The Burnhams in *American Beauty* drifted apart as quietly as the Chassuers in *The Ref* noisily clung together. This is not unreasonable in and of itself, but what the Cahassuers recognize as dysfunction the Burnhams embrace as the path to mental health. For instance, both Caroline and Carolyn have affairs, but whereas Caroline's is a symptom of an unsatisfactory marriage and an example of one of her randomly adopted and quickly discarded projects, Carolyn's is a joyous, liberating endeavor. (cont. on pg 6)

(cont. from pg. 5) In letting a professional rival, whose acumen she has long admired, seduce her, Carolyn becomes more confident and less frigid. At her lover's suggestion, and in an obvious and insulting trope of empowerment, she buys a pistol and becomes a regular at the target range. She takes to the weapon as passionately as Lester did to exercise, as if to be ever more robustly male is key to a happy, settled life. Indeed, the most congenial, contented, physically fit family in the neighborhood is the gay couple next door. In the end, marital fidelity presented as just a drag, a chain, a bummer, and an impediment to the all important attainment of personal fulfillment. In fact, anything that impedes that fulfillment is demonized in *American Beauty*, and anything that facilitates that end is conversely elevated even if it violates social conventions like throwing plates at the dinner table, or is blatantly illegal like surreptitiously videotaping your neighbors and trafficking in drugs.

The last two offenses are committed by the character who represents *American Beauty's* pure soul, Ricky the drug peddler. Like the kidnapper-thief Gus in *The Ref*, Ricky is a catalyst for revelation and change. But where Gus is worn down and sick of the inconveniences attached to a life of crime, Ricky only feels the oppression of law-abiding squares like his ex-Marine father, who as the most conspicuous token of civil authority in the movie is also physically abusive toward his son, implicitly responsible for his wife's near catatonic silences, and (this is the surprise I mentioned before) a repressed homosexual and murderer. *AB* suggests that the repression is the source of his bad acts. Why oh why couldn't he simply be *free* like extortionist, juvenile, would-be pedophile Lester, his adulterous wife Carolyn, or his drug dealing voyeur son Ricky? The movie envisions a naïve paradise of selfishness Ayn Rand would found offensive.

The movie ends with two shattered families, one containing a murderer and the other his victim. The viewer is lead to believe Ricky will run away with Lester's daughter to New York City, which is not exactly famous for its charitable treatment of runaway teenage drug users, but a conclusion that impersonates romance. Gus also gets away at the end of *The Ref*. The original ending showed him getting arrested as a negative example to Lloyd and Caroline's son, a budding criminal in his own right. Although this would have been an ending that would have made the Hollywood censors of the thirties and forties proud, in this case I think it would have been a heavy handed coda to a bracingly scabrous comedy of disillusionment. The thief returns to his life and its attendant problems, the family to theirs. Lloyd and Caroline are last seen literally bound together in their house, willing, even affectionate prisoners of one another. They understand that release from each other, from their conflicts and responsibilities, is possible, but ultimately not desirable.

Now that's romantic. ♀♂♀♂



## Cobra Cwiz Answers

Page Two: Rod Serling

Page Three: David Cronenberg

Page Four: Sonny and Cher

Page Six: Microsoft's Originators

Give yourself one million points for each correct answer. I know the Serling image was lousy, but no you don't a break if you could identify him. You should be able to handle that sort of adversity by now. And who is the scariest of them all? Me of course, on page one dressed as Pima Road.

I hope you all had a happy Halloween.

♀♂♀♂

