

Queer eye for the scary guy

People: 'Clerks' sequel ... Bobby Brown may get real on television.

From Press-Telegram wire reports

How would the guys from "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" make over the black-and-white makeup of Kiss? We may get to find out.

Gene Simmons, the tongue-wagging bassist of Kiss, is considering an appearance on the Bravo reality show. On his Web site, Simmons says producers have asked him to join the **Fab Five** for an episode.

"They called me and asked me if I would do it. I'm a fan of the show. We may shoot on the 28th of September," Simmons says.

Bravo publicist Bill Brennan told The Associated Press on Friday that the network has had discussions recently with the rocker.

"Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" is now in its second season, airing on Bravo Tuesday nights.

Back in business

Kevin Smith is making another convenience store run.

The writer-director of "Dogma," "Chasing Amy" and "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back" told the Associated Press on Friday that he has begun work on a sequel to "Clerks," his homemade indie classic from 1994.

That \$27,000 movie, shot at night in a store where Smith worked, chronicled the adventures of Dante and Randal, two guys who talk about life, death, sex and movies while working at neighboring stores.

The sequel picks up 10 years later.

"It's about what happens when that lazy, 20-something malaise lasts into your 30s. Those dudes are kind of still mired, not in that same exact situation, but in a place where it's time to actually grow up and do something more than just sit around and dissect pop culture and talk about sex," Smith said during an interview at his Hollywood office. "It's: What happened to these dudes?"

A new 10th anniversary DVD of "Clerks" debuts Sept. 7 and



Gene Simmons, the tongue-wagging bassist of Kiss, is considering an appearance on the Bravo reality show "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy."

Mark Weiss / Associated Press

Smith said working on that three-disc set inspired him to write about what became of those characters.

The sequel — titled "The Passion of the Clerks" — is set to begin shooting in January.

Bravo for Bobby

Wasn't it bound to happen? **Bobby Brown** is in negotiations with Bravo for a reality series about the singer's troubled life, reports Billboard Online.

Sources say the deal is not final because of haggling over how much of a presence Brown's wife, pop star **Whitney Houston**, would have in the program.

"We are in negotiations, and it has not yet been decided as to what, if any, Ms. Houston's participation will be," said a representative for Houston who asked to remain anonymous. A Bravo spokesperson was unavailable for

comment.

Brown has been shopping footage shot by his own production company, B2 Entertainment, since early April, when he was released from jail and his wife was in a rehab center.

The couple proved last year they were a TV draw with a high-rated "Primetime Live" interview with **Diane Sawyer**, in which Brown and Houston discussed their drug use and marital troubles.

Pretty promises

A young star on the rise is sticking with a boy her own age. That would be the genuinely likable **Lindsay Lohan**, who is sporting a ring from her 24-year-old honey, **Wilmer Valderrama**. But the 18-year-old "Mean Girls" actress' new bling is just a "promise ring" and signifies no impending nuptials. What precisely the Venezuelan American star of

"That '70s Show" promised Lohan is unknown.

Porn-star welcome

Elisha Cuthbert, who stars in Fox's hit drama "24," opens up to Sync magazine about her complex feelings on her film role in the porn-themed comedy "The Girl Next Door." Cuthbert plays a porn star who moves next door to a sweet teenage boy, fulfilling some of his less-than-innocent fantasies. (They end up falling in love in a sweet, unporn kind of way, though.)

Cuthbert says that after making the movie, she was warmly received by porn-industry pros: "They come up and talk to me. They're always very sweet and supportive." In an analogy that is either naive and meaningless or just plain grody, she said the film is "like what 'Pretty Women' was for hookers. ... They're really jazzed."

Oprah courts jurors

Oprah Winfrey worked through her recent experiences serving on a jury in a Chicago murder trial by having fellow jurors on her show Thursday. She said she wouldn't want to repeat the task — the panel convicted 27-year-old Dion Coleman of the 2002 shooting death of Walter Holley, 23, over a counterfeit \$50 bill — but she enjoyed sharing warmth and camaraderie with jurors.

The segment's highlight was a testament to that camaraderie. One of Winfrey's fellow jurors said the billionaire talk-show queen asked them all to sing whenever she went to the rest room adjoining the jury room to, uh, you know, drown out the noise and ease the embarrassment of it all. Winfrey verified the tale, saying one of the songs they sang was that ultimate celebration of comradeship, "Kumbaya."

Another year older

Actor **Ben Gazzara**, 74 ... Actor **David Soul**, 61 ... Baseball manager **Lou Piniella**, 61 ... Country singer **Shania Twain**, 39 ... Actors **Jack Black** and **Jason Priestley**, 35 ... Country singer **LeAnn Rimes**, 22.

— Edited by Minal Gandhi

A/25/04

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Kerry having an identity crisis

Politics: Analysts say hopeful suffers without own label.

By David Jackson

The Dallas Morning News

NEW ORLEANS — Supporters touted Bill Clinton as a “New Democrat.” George W. Bush preferred “compassionate conservative.”

John Kerry?

Depends on whom you ask.

There’s the decorated Vietnam veteran; the tribune of a burdened middle class; a former prosecutor and 19-year Senate veteran; a self-described “entrepreneurial Democrat” who wants businesses to grow; or the internationalist who can fix frayed global relations.

Kerry hasn’t been able to get any of those labels to stick, despite extensive media coverage. He has little more than six months to make a firm impression on voters, say pollsters, political analysts,

Democrats, and even the candidate himself.

“A lot of people still don’t really know who I am,” Kerry told donors in New York recently.

Bush aides, meanwhile, said the reason Kerry is having a hard time establishing a clear identity is that he doesn’t have one.

Tagging their opponent “the Boston Fog” and an “International Man of Mystery,” Bush strategists contend he shifts positions to disguise his “Massachusetts liberal” love of taxes.

“It’s very difficult to understand what he is saying on occasion because it is so vague and so fluid,” said Bush campaign chairman Marc Racicot.

With a fund-raising tour of the South last week, Kerry tried to raise his identity quotient. The money gathered will pay for tons

of biographical television ads. But he’s also delivering several speeches and media interviews, looking to counter worries that the Bush camp’s definition is taking hold in voters’ minds.

“It’s a big problem,” said Democratic pollster Celinda Lake. “They don’t know him very well. They know a little bit of his personal story (in Vietnam), but not even much about that.”

Kerry is also something of a victim of world events that are overshadowing the pre-convention phase of the campaign, analysts said. With lots of news coming from Iraq, Kerry “just hasn’t been in the news the way the president has,” said Karlyn Bowman, who analyzes polls for the Washington-based American Enterprise Institute.

Kerry aides predicted the landscape would soon shift in their favor, thanks to the ads and more candidate appearances across the country. Some said that Kerry has the only identity that really matters: He’s not George W. Bush.



Kerry

1/20/04

Young hobbits die hard

People: Actor plays part ... Artist alleges illegal reproduction.

From Press-Telegram wire reports

Sean Astin is ready to pack up his hobbit stuff as soon as he can.

"I've been ready to move on since we finished principal photography," Astin told Newsday during a round of publicity for "Return of the King," the final installment of the **J.R.R. Tolkien** adaptation. "But the rest of the world won't let me."

In all three parts of "The Lord of the Rings," Astin plays hobbit Samwise Gamgee, the devoted sidekick to gallant Frodo Baggins, played by **Elijah Wood**. Astin, who previously charmed audiences in "Rudy," is being mentioned as a possible Academy Award nominee this year.

The buzz is something that Astin, son of actor **John Astin** and Oscar-winning actress **Patty Duke**, hopes to capitalize on.

Astin isn't altogether sure why his performance in the third film has generated so much acclaim.

"I'm guessing that a lot of people connect with Sam because he's the one who's obviously the most emotionally fragile and yet he carries on and, in the end, survives," he says. "Maybe he connects with the fragile part in all of us that we have to cope with when we're confronted with something bigger than we are."

Art imitating life

Charlie Sheen says he's having fun portraying a toned-down version of his former self on the CBS comedy, "Two and Half Men."

Sheen's character plays a hard-partying, womanizing bachelor — like the actor's past single days.

"It's fun to embrace that guy that doesn't exist anymore," said

RAP THE VOTE



Hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, **Def Jam Records** president **Kevin Liles** and recording artist **LL Cool J**, from left, join others as they raise a finger during the launch of the "One Mind. One Vote." campaign Monday. The campaign hopes to register 2 million voters in 2004.

Tina Fineberg / AP

Sheen. "If we pursued the themes as they were true to life, I don't even think we could be on cable."

He was a bit suspicious with the idea of the series, but said he was convinced when he saw the quality of the pilot's script.

Sheen has starred in "Spin City" and has appeared in "Platoon," "Wall Street" and other films.

Artist accusation

Renowned Americana artist **Jane Wooster Scott** couldn't believe her eyes: Four of her canvases were reproduced on cookie tins for sale in an office supply store.

"I checked with my licensing agent to see if they were authorized and nobody knew anything about it," she said. "Well, like other artists, I resent people who steal your work."

Scott's legal adviser in Denmark notified the Danish cookie company **Ripensa** that it illegally reproduced her canvases on a decorative tin of holiday cookies.

"The pieces they used are rectangular and they cut them into ovals to clearly cut my name off it," Scott said. "It's very discouraging."

Steen Thy Jensen, managing director of **Ripensa**, said he was not aware of Scott's claims and said the company buys the rights to artwork before reproducing.

Assault on Hawking?

British police are investigating an allegation of assault on astrophysicist **Stephen Hawking**, news reports said Monday.

The **Daily Mirror** newspaper said Hawking's adult children were worried about a series of unexplained assaults. The inquiry was triggered by nursing staff who contacted police in the summer after Hawking, 62, who is paralyzed and uses a wheelchair, had been left stranded in his garden on the hottest day of the year and suffered severe heatstroke and sunburn, the paper said.

Police on Monday confirmed that they are "investigating an

allegation of assault on a 62-year-old man from Cambridge" but, as is customary, would not identify the alleged victim or give details of the accusation.

Hawking, 62, is a **Lucasian Professor of Mathematics** at **Cambridge University**, authored the best-selling "A Brief History of Time."

He has suffered from motor neurone disease for more than 40 years and is paralyzed except for the ability to move some fingers. He speaks with a computerized voice box.

Another year older

Singer **Slim Whitman**, 80 ... Actress **Patricia Neal**, 78 ... Comedian **Arte Johnson**, 75 ... Director **David Lynch**, 58 ... Guitarist **Paul Stanley** (Kiss), 52 ... "Politically Incorrect" host **Bill Maher**, 48 ... Actor **Lorenzo Lamas**, 46 ... Country singer **John Michael Montgomery**, 39 ... Singer **Edwin McCain**, 34.

— Edited by Minal Gandhi

Hot (news) flash about HRT

BOSTON — When they write the history of hormone therapy, you can bet that they'll begin with Dr. Robert Wilson.

In the 1960s, Wilson promoted estrogen as the older woman's salvation — and I mean that literally. "Feminine Forever," his blockbuster book about menopause as an illness and estrogen as the cure, begins with a husband's complaint about "the change" in his wife.

"Doc," the man said, "they tell me you can fix women when they get old and crabby." His complaint? "She's driving me nuts. She won't fix meals. ... She picks on me all the time." Then came the clincher. The husband reached into his pocket and laid a gun on the doctor's table: "If you don't cure her, I'll kill her."

Wilson finished this tale by musing, "I have often been haunted by the thought that except for the tiny stream of estrogen ... this woman might have died a violent death at the hands of her own husband."

Does this sound like a scene from "The Vagina Monologues"? The doctor's book and speeches that put hormones on the map and in the medicine cabinet were, according to his son, funded by Wyeth, the company that made the drug.

But Wilson's saga of hormone "salvation" is just the opening tale in this history lesson. In the 1980s, a compelling ad showed a middle-age woman anxiously observing an elder with a dowager's hump. The choice was humps or hormones.

In the 1990s, another ad promoted Hormone Replacement Therapy as the one beauty treatment to take to a desert island. In this century, Lauren Hutton and Patti LaBelle model their medicated menopause.

But we may have read the final page — or at least the denouement — of the hormone

ELLEN GOODMAN COMMENTARY



history book. It comes in a letter to the women who took a combination of estrogen and progestin as participants in the massive Women's Health Initiative study: "Stop taking your study pills." HRT does more harm than good.

This is not just another in the dueling studies that have driven us more "nuts" than the husband in Wilson's fantasy. For a decade, we've had a raging hormonal debate about heart disease and breast cancer, osteoporosis and uterine cancer.

But this is the gold standard of research, comparing placebos and HRT among 16,000 women during an average of 5.2 years. The women who had not had hysterectomies and took the combination therapy faced risks that outweighed benefits. They experienced small but real increases in breast cancer, heart attacks, strokes and blood clots that outbalanced decreases in colorectal cancer and hip fractures. The National Institutes of Health called an early halt because the verdict was in: Stop.

What then is the history lesson for the 6 million women on HRT? Is hormone therapy a massive drug company conspiracy? Were doctors duped and patients conned?

It's not that simple by a long shot. HRT is no fen-phen, the deadly diet drug. Hot flashes aren't fantasies, and hormones offer relief to symptoms. The smorgasbord of observational studies seemed to promise protection against heart disease.

But it's also fair to ask whether the millions of prescriptions that put healthy women on a drug for life were, as Cynthia

Pearson says, "a triumph of marketing over science."

As head of the National Women's Health Network, Pearson has every reason to say, "I told you so." When the drug was promoted for everything from A to Z or Alzheimer's to Zest, the network kept demanding proof. When Wyeth wanted to promote HRT as a way to prevent heart disease, these advocates joined the women in Congress lobbying for a random, controlled study.

Now 6 million alarmed women — surely even Patti LaBelle — are asking what's next. Cold turkey, hot flashes? Will some use HRT for short-term symptoms? Will others decide that the individual risks are minimal and keep taking pills?

Somewhere a drug company or an advertising agency also is asking what's next. Will they now market hormones, such as Femhrt, as a "cosmeceutical," an anti-wrinkle pill? Will they produce and promote a lower-dose, different hormone that isn't the "bad" one? Jacques Rossouw, the Women's Health Initiative study's director, says, "We hope that truth will win out over advertising."

We have come far since Wilson declared that "all postmenopausal women are castrates." This generation of middle-age women invented "postmenopausal zest" and wears buttons boasting: "These aren't hot flashes, they're power surges."

But most of us, I suspect, are still vulnerable to fears of aging, to hopes and hype for health. What we can take from this stunning chapter of history is that other side effect of age: experience. And with it a healthy dose of skepticism.

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The granddaddy of the mall

Minnesotans were initially skeptical of the center's success.

BY EVAN RAMSTAD
The Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — Toy store owner Al Batzel thought the 4.2 million-square-foot Mall of America would never work. It was too big and complicated to attract shoppers — and too expensive for retailers, he thought.

But he visited the mall shortly after it opened and liked it. And when one of its leasing agents later stopped in his Rochester, Minn., store, Batzel decided to open a second shop, Al's Farm Toys, in the megamall. "A lot of people said we wouldn't make it," he said.

Many people said the same about the Mall of America itself. But with the 10th anniversary of the mall this month, those doubts are long gone. The skepticism of its development and construction is nearly forgotten.

Today, the mall is one of the best-known shopping centers in the world. It draws 40 million people a year, more than Walt Disney World and Disneyland combined, and is by far Minnesota's most-visited place.

While its gigantic size certainly distinguishes the Mall of America, it succeeded by proving the irony that, with things to do besides shop in a mall, peo-



JIM MONE / The Associated Press

THEY COME IN HORDES: Shoppers browse the first level of the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., on Thursday as the megamall prepares for its 10th anniversary. The mall draws 40 million people per year and is one of the best-known shopping centers in the world.

ple tend to shop more.

Its success lifted the fortune of its developers, particularly the company that now is majority owner, Indianapolis-based Simon Property Group.

Few people imagined such results when the megamall was proposed by four businessman brothers

— Bahman, Eskander, Nader and Raphael Ghermezian — from Canada in 1985. They were building, in phases, a similar giant mall in Edmonton at the time.

The city of Bloomington had asked developers for ideas to reuse 78 acres left empty by the demolition of the Metropolitan Stadium,

former home of the Minnesota Twins and Vikings. The city selected the Ghermezians' megamall idea.

Gov. Rudy Perpich provided early backing, helping steer legislation for improvements around the property. And the city of Bloomington loaned money to speed road construction.

The Ghermezians tried hardest to win validation from Dayton Hudson Corp. (now Target Corp.), the Minneapolis retail giant that anchored every other major mall in the Twin Cities with a Dayton's department store. But

SEE MALL / 7B

MALL

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Dayton's executives declined.

Weeks later, Simon Property Group, then running about 70 U.S. malls, joined the venture, and construction of the \$650 million building began in 1989.

But even as the mall began to rise, few in the Twin Cities

believed it would succeed.

"A lot of people thought it was going to be a flash in the pan at best," said Buzz Anderson, a former state legislator and current president of the Minnesota Retailers Association. "Today, it's a big economic engine."

From its opening on Aug. 11, 1992, the mall attracted both tourists and local residents.

In addition to Nordstrom's, Macy's and Bloomingdale's, the

mall is peppered with unique stores like Al's Farm Toys. And in Minnesota's long winters, the mall's diversity of stores and entertainment is a place where people can shed their coats and spend a long time doing different things.

"It really is one of the few places in this entire region where you see everybody who lives here," said Judith Martin, a professor of urban geography at the Universi-

ty of Minnesota and a former critic of the mall. "I don't think of it as a community space, but as a space where many communities find a place and see people who are not part of their community."

The Mall of America opened with 71 percent of its space leased. That grew to 83 percent at the end of its first year. It's now 99 percent leased with 520 stores, 20 sit-down restaurants and 30 fast-food places.