

GET OUT OF TOWN

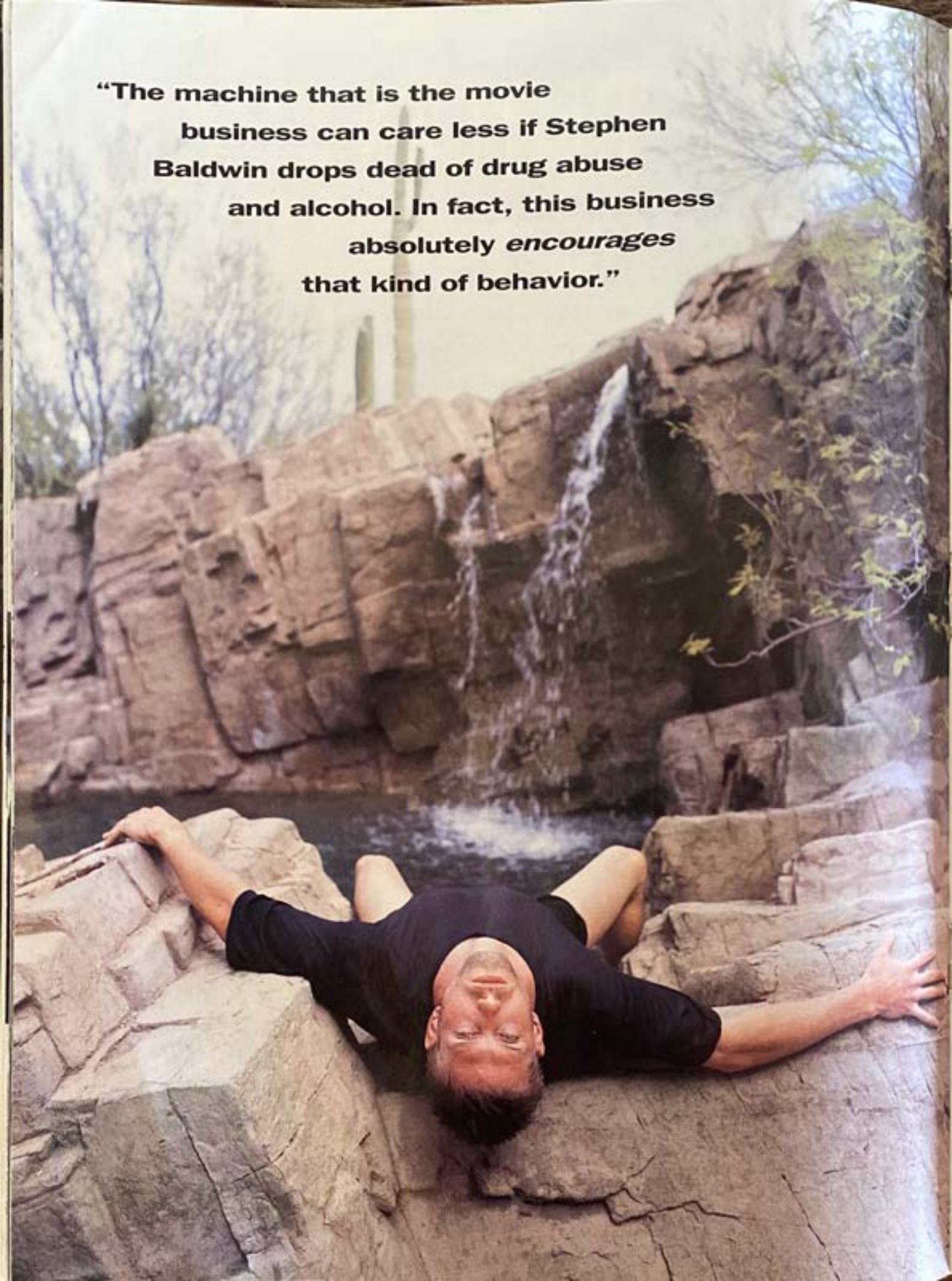
Everyone in show biz talks about moving away from L.A., but Stephen Baldwin, who describes himself as a "wienie actor from Hollywood," has actually gone the distance—all the way to Tucson. Our intrepid reporter takes a walk in the desert at Baldwin's favorite hideaway while the actor tells tales of rattlesnakes—the Tinseltown type as well as the variety found in Arizona.

by michael kaplan

Stephen Baldwin will not show me his tattoo. More precisely, he will not show me his *first* tattoo. The six that followed are fairly conventional Hollywood markings—among others, a tiger, his daughter's name and the triangular Alcoholics Anonymous symbol. Hidden in the folds of skin between his legs, right next to his crotch, however, resides the skin-art that piques my curiosity: a private nickname that he has for his Brazilian wife of four years. Probing a star's bush is not exactly my beat, but now that I've heard about it, I feel compelled to give it my best shot. "It would be in the name of journalistic research," I claim, playing to his vanity by insisting that his fans have a right to know. "How about a peek?"

Baldwin smiles, amused by the attempt, but shakes his head in the negative. Appar-

**"The machine that is the movie
business can care less if Stephen
Baldwin drops dead of drug abuse
and alcohol. In fact, this business
absolutely *encourages*
that kind of behavior."**



ently, this policy of hiding his genitals from reporters is part of the new Stephen Baldwin: over the past few years, he has consigned himself to one woman, eighty-sixed his drug and alcohol intake, and settled down far enough away from either coast to remain out of trouble. The guy even drives within the speed limit. At the moment, we're chugging down a winding, two-lane mountain road above Tucson, and Baldwin gingerly maneuvers his fire-engine-red Ford Bronco as if it's got nitroglycerin in the glove box.

Racing up behind us, a lane-bugging convertible seems poised to kiss Baldwin's bumper. The actor inches to the right and, in a mellow tone, says softly, "Come on, Speedy Gonzales, hurry up and pass me." As the driver complies, Baldwin pushes an Alice in Chains cassette into the car's deck, cranks up the volume to an ear-shattering level and bangs on the steering wheel in time to the first 45-seconds of some unrecognizable screechfest. After carefully negotiating a series of turns, Baldwin kills the sound and points out of the auto. "This is the spot where I flipped my last car," he explains. "Since then I've learned to take it nice and slowly." There is a tinge of remorse in his voice, the sort of wistful tone you hear from recovered heroin addicts who wax nostalgic about failed affairs with the needle. "But I guess I'll always have a little bit of a need for speed," he adds. "Sometimes I think I'd like to drive a Viper—and I could if I really wanted to—though this Bronco is what makes me happy right now."

This youngest member of Long Island's famous acting dynasty is the first to admit that five or six years ago, he could have been the tragic figure who spent his final living moments convulsing on the sidewalk in front of some Sunset Strip haunt. But for Baldwin—married, with child, occupying a rustic-looking home here in the desert outside of Tucson—that was a lifetime ago. Evidence of the actor's reformed ways hang from Baldwin's rearview mirror: when the truck hits a bump his

AA chips (which signify periods of sobriety) make a clacking sound. "There was a point when I wanted to live fast, make a zillion dollars, and do a James Dean off of Mulholland," he acknowledges, driving into a gorgeous sunset. "But that's boring. It's, like, so what?"

Fresh from the set of *Fall Time*, in which he stars opposite Mickey Rourke as a bank robber who gets kidnapped but winds up brutally torturing his captors, Baldwin wears his hair in a close-to-the-skull buzz cut that brings out the hard-angled curves of his face, giving him the physical demeanor of some '50s hayseed wise guy. Though he drives deliberately, he speaks with a staccato, pedal-to-the-metal delivery that belies his decidedly suburban status in real life—right now, we're en route to Home Depot, where he hopes to find a certain kind of wooden gate in order to baby-proof his home for his infant daughter, Alaia. He takes pains to point out that this mission was ordered by his wife, Kenya, whom he continually refers to as "The Boss."

While angling his Bronco into a parking space, Baldwin reveals a side of his personality that differentiates him from most of Hollywood's formerly substance-abusing crybabies. Unlike the Sheens, Sutherlands and Coreys (Feldman and Haim), Stephen Baldwin is realistic enough to view the movie industry as a dubious place for those struggling to stay on the straight and narrow. "A very serious danger was that my career did not suffer when I was out of control," he says. "The machine that is the movie business can care less if Stephen Baldwin drops dead of drug abuse and alcohol. In fact, this business absolutely encourages that kind of behavior. It's an industry that always has and probably always will survive on the weaknesses of others and the ability to manipulate them in order to make money. Essentially, its essence is greed. But that's okay, for I have come to understand how the machine sees me: to it I am a possible means of making money. In turn, I now see the machine as my own vehicle for mak-

ing money. Ultimately, when I treat the machine like the machine treats me, it all comes out in the wash. There's mutual respect."

To illustrate Hollywood's role in the codependent daisy chain, Baldwin recalls a recent night he had spent at a Planet Hollywood opening. "I was looking at Arnold and all these movie stars and feeling completely star struck," he says as we wander through Tucson's Home Depot. "But then I saw a guy, a huge star, who was completely out of it—so out of it that four people had to practically carry him from the place and into his limousine while all of these fans were standing there, screaming for this multimillionaire actor."

"I wasted a lot of my time thinking that was the way I had to live. Now all I want to do is play with my kid. I can't do that if I'm drunk or worrying about how much money *Threesome* made."

Baldwin first came to Tucson six years ago, back when he was shooting "The Young Riders" TV series here. Though he insisted that the sleepy town wasn't exactly his kind of place, his wife-to-be refused to move to Hollywood, so they agreed to give Tucson a try. Now he commutes to the sets of locally shot films like *8 Seconds* and *Posse* or travels to locations with his family in tow, managing to build a life for himself that he says is financed by—but untarnished by—the hustle of Hollywood.

Baldwin realized that he'd found a home here when locals began treating him in the manner that makes him comfortable. "I sometimes shoot pool with a bunch of neighborhood guys," Baldwin explains. "Every time I walk into the pool hall, they yell over the crowd, 'Hey, here comes the schmuck from TV!' That's what I like about Tucson—I'm that 'schmuck from TV'—it keeps me grounded."

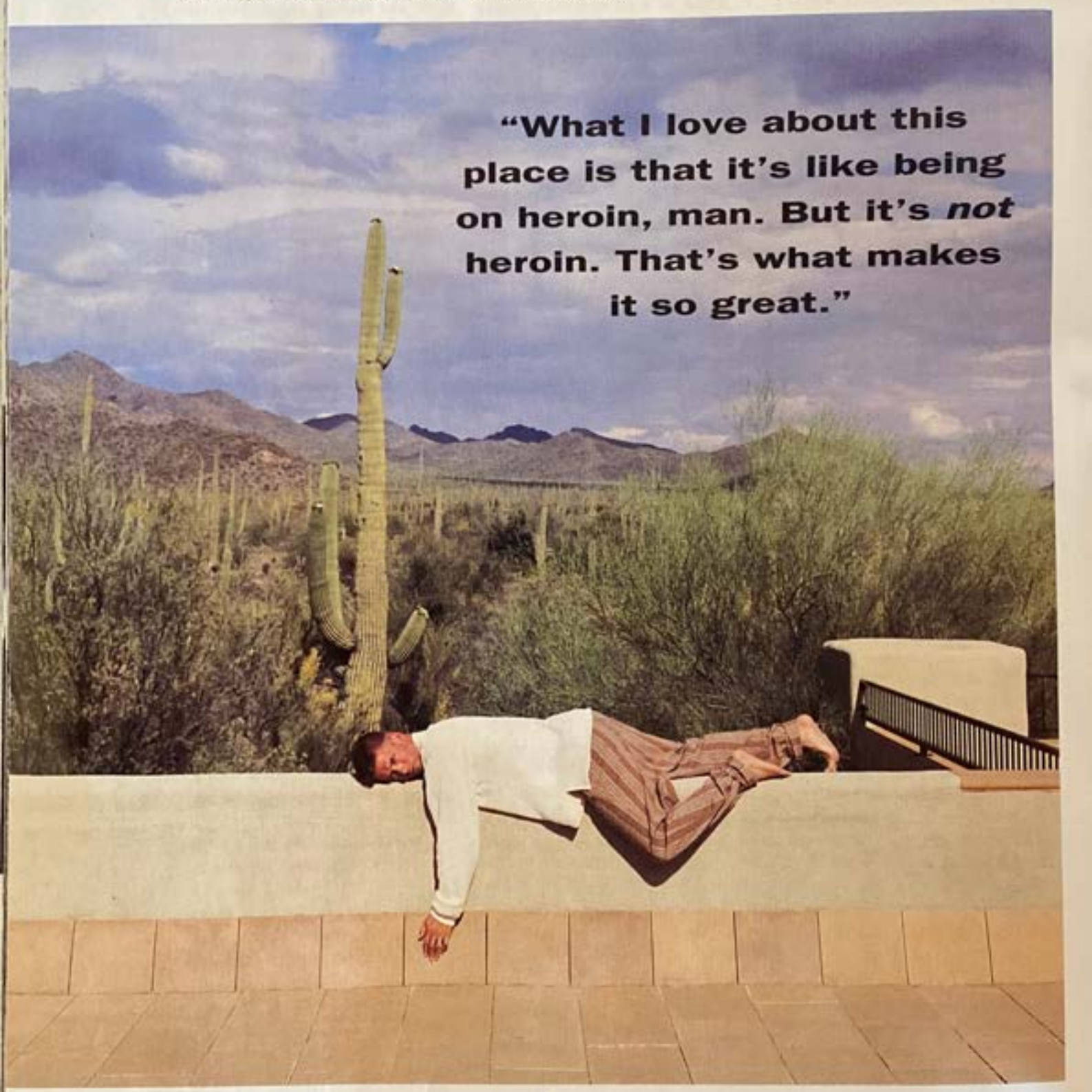
As we troop past wheelbarrows and pickaxes, Baldwin, the only person in the store sporting sunglasses and Armani shorts, observes, "It is so freaky in here. I get stoned walking around Home Depot. It's almost as

surreal as the desert, but on the opposite end of the spectrum. The other day I was in here and saw a guy wearing a \$2,500 suit getting his paint mixed. I was like, "Wow. *That's* cool."

When Baldwin can't find what he wants, we hit a couple of other hardware emporiums. If none of them

accommodate his paternal needs, all nevertheless serve to bolster his personal standing as a celebrity: in a town where movie stars are about as common as oceanfront views, I can see that Baldwin is constantly getting checked out by people who are sure they know him from somewhere but can't quite place him.

Some of that uncertainty may change with the release of *A Simple Twist of Fate*. Baldwin says he got his role in this movie, written by and starring Steve Martin, by being a little crazier than his competition while auditioning for the role of Gabriel Byrne's bad-seed brother. "I was reading a scene in which Byrne's character



"What I love about this place is that it's like being on heroin, man. But it's *not* heroin. That's what makes it so great."

physically and violently throws me up against a wall and threatens me," he says, driving towards his favorite steakhouse. "I have a line where I sarcastically say, 'Whatever happened to brotherly love?' When I auditioned, I kissed the reader before I said that line. I'm not saying I got the role because I kissed the guy, but I don't think anybody else did anything like that."

As we enter Lil Abner's Steakhouse, a big barn of a place with an open-pit barbecue and a country-western band, Baldwin can't resist comparing this down-home setting with the power-meeting that he does during his trips to L.A. "For me, eating at Le Petit Four in Sunset Plaza is purgatory," he explains. "It's not about who you are, but who you think you are. And that can be very physically and emotionally debilitating. I don't want to get up every morning and put on my Hollywood mask and my wet suit of armor that will make me impervious to the things that eat away at you in that town."

"Another side to what I'm saying is that now I don't mind going there so much," he continues. "I find it amusing to see the image that everybody is projecting and to try to figure out who the real *them* is. The sad truth is that L.A. is like a record that skips. Every day it's the same thing, the same deal-making scenario: *Pitch me. Babe, how are you? Your new face-lift looks great!* When I see that stuff, I wonder how those people can do it every day. It's like falling asleep and waking up in a scene from *The Player*. Each one is making a stab at being a producer, meeting some girl that he saw at a club last night. She's a model fresh from Iowa and he's trying to get her to do . . . God knows what. It's *Hollywood, man*."

This monologue is interrupted by the appearance of a tittering waitress who not only recognizes Baldwin, but reminds him that he'd chatted her up during a prior visit to Lil Abner's. Baldwin responds with a bona fide courtliness that most people reserve for real acquaintances. Either Baldwin gets off being a big fish in a small

pond, or he simply does not have it in him to be unkind with fans. When the woman departs, I ask him whether either of these guesses is correct.

Baldwin says his own attitude can be traced back to an encounter he once had. "I was outside of Manhattan's Four Seasons Restaurant and one of the members of the *Starship Enterprise* was the biggest asshole in the world to me," says Baldwin, who won't name William Shatner, but smiles knowingly when I do. "I very apprehensively and cautiously approached him and said, 'Excuse me, I don't mean to bother you or anything, but I just want to say that I've been a fan for a long time. I'm an actor, I'm just starting out, and I want to say thanks for your work.' In the most bastardish way possible, this guy brushed me off without even bringing his eyes to mine. It was like someone had shot an arrow through me. I was devastated. A few experiences like that made me swear that I would never be a prick toward any fans."

After dinner, we stroll through the Old Town Artisans section of Tucson, a down-at-the-heels district that has recently become thick with street performers. Baldwin ducks into a thrift shop where he buys a hat, then suggests that we stop and have a couple of iced mochas. The place he chooses is a café near The University of Arizona. After walking around like he owns the place, maintaining that the *Threesome* poster taped to a wall near the telephone arrived there of its own accord, and asking a journal-scribbling student what brand of sport sandals he's wearing, Baldwin finally settles down at a table. He keeps his hat on, explaining that he was drawn to the vintage chapeau because it reminds him of the headgear that his homicidal *Fall Time* character, Leon, would wear. "I reached into my imagination for that role," he says, adding that he and co-star Mickey Rourke both employed an intense Method acting technique. "Some people enter the dark parts of their souls and imagine what it's like to be a murderer. I was dreaming about it."

Turn to page 86

Let your senses blossom.

Rejuvenate your

body and soul

with natural hot mineral baths,

soothing massages and

invigorating skin care treatments

at Beverly Hot Springs.

308 N. Oxford Avenue

Los Angeles

213-734-7000

K A T E MANTILINI

DINE ALONE
SIP SOME WINE
WATCH THE COOKS
SAVOUR THE FOOD

SIP A STEAMING
HOT CAPPUCCINO

PAY THE CHECK
AND
GO HOME

WE LOVED HAVING YOU

Marilyn & Harry Lewis

Wilshire at Doheny
Beverly Hills
Valet Parking
(310) 278-3699

Stephen Baldwin

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 51

"What kind of dreams?" I ask.

"Violent dreams," he says. "That was the kind of frame of mind that I had put myself in. I developed some very perverse ideas about what this guy would do."

"Did you interview murderers?"

"I didn't need to. I used my imagination."

"I guess you'd have to," I offer. "Presumably you haven't really experienced that dark of a life."

"Not in *this* life at least," Baldwin replies, practically begging me to ask the next question.

"Your other lives were darker?"

"I definitely think so," he replies. "I figure that maybe I murdered someone. For me, it's just a matter of how much you're willing to believe your own imagination. The more I'm willing to allow my imagination to run free and the more I'm willing to accept where it will go, the better I can perform."

Our conversation continues in this vein for a while, as Baldwin pontificates about actors' motivation, but eventually I get a word in and ask about his recent turn as the perpetually over-sexed college stud Stuart.

"What did you do to prep for *Threesome*?"

"Wow," he says, cracking up. "You've stumped me."

"I figured that you masturbated until you reached the brink of orgasm so that you would be completely horny."

"No, man," he replies. "It was just the opposite. I would lie there, completely still. I had to conserve as much energy as I possibly could." With that, Baldwin drains his drink and announces, "Wanna get outta here," forgetting to make it sound like a question.

The next day, Baldwin and I are scheduled to meet at his "secret spot," a place called Rancho Quieto (pronounced key-eh-toe) located up in the hills above Tucson. Baldwin calls Quieto—a bed and breakfast place that's as peaceful and picturesque as a monastery—his second home, explaining that it's where he goes to write poetry and depressurize. The grounds are dominated by a large adobe-like guesthouse, surrounded by acres of cactus-filled desert. I find Baldwin emerging from a rock-bordered swimming pool, replete with waterfall. Toweling off, he suggests I stop asking questions long enough to listen. As if on cue, a whooshing wind swoops in from the desert. "What I love about this place," Baldwin says, "is that it's like being on heroin, man. But it's *not* heroin. That's what makes it so great."

Baldwin explains that his wife first brought him to Rancho Quieto for a surprise night away from their nearby home. "She blindfolded me, then drove me out here," he says. "It was very cool." Baldwin goes inside to get dressed, then returns to stare out at the endless desert. "You should see the javelina, the wild pigs with fangs," he tells me. "They are amazing. They come out at night. That's when you can watch packs of these big, fat, black, snaggle-toothed pigs. They look like they'd rip your legs off but they're the sweetest things in the world."

As Baldwin talks about the desert, he steps past the Jacuzzi and walks onto the sandy perimeter. Reluctantly, I follow, figuring that I need to be close by for my tape recorder to pick up everything he says. We pass his Suzuki motorcycle that is propped in front of the

house, and make our way out onto uncharted desert terrain. I think I see some sun-bleached animal bones. This is when Baldwin stops and looks down, checking out my Florsheim oxfords and his own canvas slip-on shoes. "Too bad we don't have the right shoes," he says. "We really shouldn't go so far into the desert."

I breathe a sigh of relief, but then Baldwin does precisely what he says we shouldn't do. I follow him farther out onto the sand. "That whole thing about past lives and the desert is interesting," he ruminates, squirming through a tight lane of elongated thorns. "Isn't it true that this used to be the bottom of the ocean? I figure that maybe I was once a crustacean down there. Because I lived one life like that, I now get to be a wienie actor from Hollywood who can relax out here every now and again."

Baldwin keeps walking, mentioning in a supremely nonchalant manner that the little holes in the ground all around us have probably been made by rattlesnakes. "If you see one," he says, "don't freak. It won't come after you unless you scare it. And whatever you do, don't try to run. If you're within six feet of a rattlesnake and happen to move suddenly, startling it, the snake could easily get ahold of you."

"Okay," I say. "Let's just suppose that a snake *does* bite me. Does that mean I could die?"

"Probably not," says Baldwin, "but it depends on how much venom the snake gets in you. I hope you realize, though, that if a rattlesnake were to bite me right now, you would be down on your knees

in two seconds, sucking out the venom."

"Hey," I ask, "are you busting my chops?"

"Yeah," he declares without breaking stride. "I'm just busting you."

We return to the guesthouse and stand alongside Baldwin's motorcycle.

"How many other interviews have you done in the desert?" I ask.

"None," he replies, fiddling with his wraparound shades. "Nor have I ever had to lie to an interviewer about rattlesnakes so that he would not stand, frozen with fear, in the desert."

Resembling an extra from some *Road Warrior* sequel, Baldwin slides on his helmet, revs his motorcycle and says that he's got to head back to Tucson. He's heard about a store where they might have precisely the childproof gates for which he has been searching. "Great," I tell him. "Maybe you'll get lucky."

"Why not?" he asks, before heading down the dirt road. "I've been lucky so far. I live in Tucson, I've made some really good money acting in movies, I have a great wife and kid. I could be in Long Island right now—smoking joints, drinking beer, working for the town of Oyster Bay. I've definitely been lucky."

Michael Kaplan interviewed Sandra Bullock for the August Movieline.

Autographed *Movie Collectibles*

Personally Signed by Your Favorite Stars & Guaranteed Authentic for Life.

P. Arquette - \$45	L. DiCaprio - \$55	J. Jason Leigh - \$45	Schwarzenegger - \$110
Alec Baldwin - \$55	Stephen Dorff - \$35	D. Day Lewis - \$65	A. Sciorra - \$45
W. Baldwin - \$55	M. Douglas - \$60	Juliette Lewis - \$45	Steven Seagal - \$60
Ellen Barkin - \$50	R. Downey Jr. - \$45	A. Macdonald - \$50	Charlie Sheen - \$40
D. Barrymore - \$45	C. Eastwood - \$65	K. McGillis - \$50	Christian Slater - \$45
E. Basinger - \$60	Erika Eleniak - \$55	P. Ann Miller - \$45	Wesley Snipes - \$45
A. Benning - \$50	E. Estevez - \$50	Demi Moore - \$110	Steven Spielberg - \$75
Lara F. Boyle - \$40	Bridget Fonda - \$75	Eddie Murphy - \$75	S. Stallone - \$75
S. Bullock - \$55	Harrison Ford - \$150	Paul Newman - \$65	Sharon Stone - \$75
Tia Carrere - \$55	Jodie Foster - \$150	J. Nicholson - \$45	Madeline Stowe - \$60
Jim Carrey - \$55	B. Fraser - \$45	Nick Nolte - \$55	Meryl Streep - \$50
Cher - \$65	Andy Garcia - \$45	Gary Oldman - \$45	K. Sutherland - \$35
S. Connery - \$125	R. Gere - \$75	Al Pacino - \$60	P. Swayze - \$45
K. Costner - \$65	Mel Gibson - \$75	M. Pfeiffer - \$125	Emma Thompson - \$45
Tom Cruise - \$65	Tom Hanks - \$45	River Phoenix - \$95	Uma Thurman - \$45
M. Calkin - \$40	D. Hannah - \$50	Brad Pitt - \$45	Marisa Tomei - \$65
J. Lee Curtis - \$50	Ethan Hawke - \$45	R. Redford - \$75	Kathleen Turner - \$45
L. Davidovich - \$55	Goldie Hawn - \$40	Keanu Reeves - \$50	J.C. Van Damme - \$60
Gena Davis - \$75	Holly Hunter - \$40	Julia Roberts - \$195	D. Washington - \$45
R. Demornay - \$45	T. Lee Jones - \$60	Meg Ryan - \$75	S. Weaver - \$35
R. Deniro - \$45	Moirra Kelly - \$40	Winona Ryder - \$95	Robin Williams - \$40
Laura Dern - \$55	N. Kidman - \$50	Greta Scacchi - \$45	Bruce Willis - \$65



QUANTITIES ARE LIMITED - ORDER TODAY

MAIL CHECK OR MONEY ORDERS TO: CPG Direct, Dept-M,

P.O. Box 1020, Valley Cottage, New York 10989.

Shipping: Please include \$5.95 & add \$1.00 for each additional item.

We Accept Visa, Mastercard, Discover & American Express

CALL 1-800-382-3075 24 HOURS



- 30 DAY UNCONDITIONAL MONEY BACK GUARANTEE.
 - ALL ITEMS ARE MATTED & READY FOR FRAMING.
 - ALL AUTOGRAPHS ARE GUARANTEED AUTHENTIC.
 - ITEMS INCLUDE A CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY.
 - HUNDREDS OF STARS AVAILABLE - SPECIAL COLOR CATALOG OF SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT AUTOGRAPHS
- included free with every order. If you are not ordering at this time, just send us \$2.50 along with your - name, address, and telephone number - and mail to CPG Direct.