


PLAYBOY



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QUENTIN TARANTINO

As we learned from his impressive 1992 directorial debut, "Reservoir Dogs," Quentin Tarantino has a gift for creating human-scale thugs. What's spellbinding about his gun-waving sharpies is that their conversations have an everyday ring, as do their frequent screwups. The fun couple in "True Romance," which was directed by Tony Scott from a script by Tarantino, seem to make nothing but wrong moves. Tarantino's latest movie, the award-winning "Pulp Fiction"—which he wrote, directed and acted in—is a quirky, blood-spattered ensemble film populated by earnest-talking sociopaths.

As it happens, 31-year-old Tarantino is the regular guy his fans would want him to be. He loves Big Gulps, wears stretched-out T-shirts and seems uninterested in the show-biz gewgaws he can now afford. The dank, toy-packed bachelor cave that is Tarantino's one-bedroom Hollywood apartment contains no chirping fax machine. When he wants to read "Variety," he swipes his neighbor's.

We sent writer Margy Rochlin to speak with Tarantino. She reports: "Quentin is friendly, quick-witted and unlikely to censor himself. We met at Barney's Beanery, where, over cheeseburgers and beer, he lived up to his reputation as sweet-natured and long-winded. At no point did he sing—or even hum—'Stuck in the middle with you.'"

1.

PLAYBOY: You make quintessential guy movies. Do you have any secret nonguy hobbies?

the darling of postmodern film noir explains the roots of violence, how madonna set him straight and why his ride of choice is a geo metro

TARANTINO: It's more a matter of guy things that I don't do. I don't hang around pool halls. I don't play poker. And I don't go to sporting events. To me, torture would be watching sports on television. If I go to Dodger Stadium, that's OK, because the game is secondary to the beer and the environment. One thing I don't understand is that average American moviegoers cannot watch a movie for three hours, yet

they'll watch a stupid, boring, horrific football game for four hours. Now, that is boredom at its most colossal. I have a lot of little theories, and one of them is that nobody really likes sports. But men feel they should like sports, so they act as if they do. I also feel that way about the Who. I don't think anybody really likes that band. Everyone thinks they're supposed to like the Who, so they just pretend. They're afraid to say that the emperor has no clothes.

2.

PLAYBOY: What's the difference between Los Angeles Italians and New York Italians?

TARANTINO: There really is no such thing as a Los Angeles Italian. In New York there are Italian neighborhoods. In Los Angeles there aren't. There's no ethnicity here. You just are who you are. Of course, most of that Italian stuff is learned from movies like *Mean Streets* anyway. It's that whole attitude, that "Hey! Yo, yo, yo, mah friend. I'm feelin' fine." You know, that classic Italian car-coat-cigarette-Bogarting thing. But can I tell the genuine-article Italian from the poseur Italian? No. [Laughs] To me they all seem like poseurs.

3.

PLAYBOY: There are people who derive their identity mainly from their automobiles. Just how hip does a man's car make him?

TARANTINO: Well, I'm not into cars. A car is something that simply takes you from one place to another. The red Chevy Malibu that John Travolta drives in *Pulp Fiction* is mine. I could give a shit about it. It's actually a big pain in the ass. I keep it in storage so I don't have to deal with it. I was trying to sell it on the set. It's in mint condition and everyone was always creaming over it. But they sort of assumed that something must be horribly wrong with the car because I cared so little about it. And I was like, "No! I just don't want it. I hate it, actually. Pay me what I paid for it and it's yours." I'd much rather drive around in my little Geo Metro.

4.

PLAYBOY: Here's a list of modern conveniences. Please identify them as guy or nonguy. Microwaves. Fax machines. Stair Masters. Bike shorts.

TARANTINO: Microwaves are definitely guy. Bachelors don't want to spend their time cooking because for some reason you don't enjoy the taste of your own food. So to spend an hour doing it just doesn't seem right. I mean, you're probably going to end up eating while standing in the kitchen anyway.

Fax machines aren't something I would break down as a guy or nonguy thing. They're more about class lines: over minimum wage or under minimum wage.

Stair Masters are definitely nonguy; Lifecycles are closer to a guy thing. Mostly, guys want to pump iron.

If you want to talk real guy-guy, I would say that bike shorts are nonguy. I mean, a lot of guys in Los Angeles wear them, but how many wear them in Detroit? I don't think too many. [Thoughtful pause] Can I tell you another definitely nonguy thing? When you're dancing and you put your hands way above your head—that's very nonguy. There's a kind of homosexual line that exists right above your shoulders. You can dance like this [waves his fists at rib-cage level] all day. But the minute you start going like this [waves his hands above his head], that's very nonguy.

5.

PLAYBOY: *Reservoir Dogs* opens with a hoodlum postulating about Madonna's *Like a Virgin*, which, to him, is about "this cooze who's a regular fuck machine. I'm talking morning, day, night, afternoon . . . dick, dick, dick, dick." What was the pop star's assessment of your take on her lyrics?

TARANTINO: After she saw the movie, she wanted to meet me. So I met her at Maverick, her film company. She told me that that wasn't where she was coming from. [Laughs] But I think she really got a kick about the fact that I thought that, because she signed my *Erotica* album, "To Quentin—It's about love, not dick. Madonna."

6.

PLAYBOY: Certain scenes in your films are not for the squeamish. When you're watching a movie, what makes you cringe?

TARANTINO: Actually, a lot of things. I mean, somebody's head could be blown off with a shotgun and that would not affect me. A decapitation can be enjoyed as (continued on page 166)

Motors late last year. The 1997 model Lotus Esprit 2+2 will be V8 powered. There are no plans to revive the short-lived Elan roadster, but Lotus is reportedly developing a lightweight two-seater to compete with upcoming cars from Porsche, Mercedes-Benz and BMW.

Lamborghini celebrated its 30th anniversary just as Chrysler sold its stake in the company to Megatech, an Indonesian consortium. It's the same group that bought another exotic-car manufacturing company, Vector, in 1993. The \$198,000 1995 Vector Avtech SC may have a Lamborghini V12 engine. Bolstered with new financing, Lamborghini USA is adding dealers and planning an ambitious new product program that will include the world's fastest off-road vehicle. The company will also supplement its \$239,000 all-wheel-drive Diablo VT with a limited-edition (25) 492-hp Diablo SE. If you have to ask the price, you can't afford it. So, we'll tell you: It's \$255,000.

JUST DOWN THE ROAD

The advent of sophisticated computers has opened up a wealth of technology designed to increase driving pleasure, safety and longevity. Antilock brakes are almost universally available now. Electronic traction control systems enable

rear- and front-wheel-drive cars to match the performance of four-wheel-drive models on wet or snowy roads.

Robert Bosch has announced an intuitive steering system that will appear on top-line German makes. Using steering and wheel sensors, the system senses where the driver wants to go and progressively applies brakes in individual wheels to ensure that the correct direction is maintained. Look for it by 1996.

On-board navigation systems are already being used in Germany. Oldsmobile is testing a system here that could be an option in 1995. Today's best and most sophisticated sound installations are designed by the leading audio companies in conjunction with car manufacturers. This way, the audio systems are designed from the vehicle's inception—something even the best car-stereo installers can't match. And chlorofluorocarbon-free, environmentally safe air-conditioning systems, water-based paint processes and recyclability of most parts prove that the auto industry is taking its environmental responsibility seriously.

As 1995 and even a few 1996 models appear in showrooms, one thing is certain: These cars are better built, more reliable and more fun to drive than ever before.



QUENTIN TARANTINO

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just a cool special effect or for how it works in the piece. What affects me are real-life human things. If someone gets a paper cut on a movie set, I'm like [shivers], because I can relate to that. Being shot with an Uzi—that's harder to relate to.

7.

PLAYBOY: You once appeared as an Elvis impersonator on *The Golden Girls*. Do you consider that a high point or the nadir of your acting career?

TARANTINO: Well, it was kind of a high point because it was one of the few times that I actually got hired for a job. I was one of 12 Elvis impersonators, really just a glorified extra. For some reason they had us sing Don Ho's *Hawaiian Love Chant*. All the other Elvis impersonators wore Vegas-style jumpsuits. But I wore my own clothes, because I was, like, the Sun Records Elvis. I was the hillbilly cat Elvis. I was the real Elvis; everyone else was Elvis after he sold out.

8.

PLAYBOY: Describe the dramatic richness of the Mexican standoff.

TARANTINO: In movies, I never saw the Mexican standoff taken to what I consider to be the logical conclusion, which is when everyone fucking shoots everybody else because there is nowhere else to go. In most movies, they always have their guns on everybody and they go, "The cops are outside," and then it's defused in some way. Or somebody drops their gun or whatever. This doesn't seem to be the case in real life. What's cool about the Mexican standoff is that it's the end of the line. And what's really exciting to me, for the kind of crime story I like to do, is using that one second before the explosion as the point where there's a little bit of discussion. It has a reality to it. It takes the rubber band and stretches it as far as it can go.

9.

PLAYBOY: Describe, if you can, the purest example of the tension between men and women.

TARANTINO: Walking down the street, women experience tension all the time. They're walking down the street and some guy is walking behind them and all of a sudden there's this tension. Is this guy going to do something? What's going on here? They're feeling it. And guys feel it too. I feel it. And I'm like, Hey, I'm just walking down the street. I just happen to be going the same way. I'm walking behind this woman, and she's thinking I'm a rapist. And now I'm feeling guilty for being a rapist when I haven't fucking done anything. So now I'm feeling guilty and feeling a little angry

because I'm minding my own business. Like, I'm sorry I'm walking behind you. And she's thinking, Why the fuck can't I just walk down the street? All of a sudden there's this tension and anger about nothing.

10.

PLAYBOY: If the offices of Hollywood are filled with yuppie wusses, does having the reputation of a tough guy give you an edge?

TARANTINO: From time to time people assume that I'm this hard-core New York case, which I'm not. I will say that I probably have different rules about life. I'll be hanging around executives, filmmakers, agents, whatever. They'll start talking really cattily about other artists, and they'll do it in front of me. And I always think, Do they think I'm fucking stupid? In other words, they might not talk about me that way at that moment—but tomorrow is another day. They'll just as easily rip on me as somebody else. That horrible attitude is the single worst

thing about this business. People are so negative about everything. They're lucky to be in this business, which is one of the greatest. Especially because they're really not contributing anything. Enough good movies come out by the end of the year to justify their jobs. I mean, if at the end of the year you can say that you saw ten perfectly no-excuses good movies, well, that's a pretty goddamn good percentage.

11.

PLAYBOY: The women who are cool in your films like hamburgers, Sonny Chiba movies, Elvis Presley and Janis Joplin. What other things do cool women appreciate?

TARANTINO: If a girl likes to sit in the third row at the movies, that's great. I could be serious about that girl; it could be something that could last for a long time. Also, she shouldn't be a stickler when it comes to my personal hygiene. She has to cut me a little bit of slack. I'm not speaking about B.O. But people

have a natural smell, and she has to like my smell. If she has a big problem with it, that's sort of the beginning of the end. A girlfriend, the one who was the love of my life, once told me, "I like your smell." To me, that was the most romantic thing.

12.

PLAYBOY: What do men learn about women from listening to girl groups?

TARANTINO: I love girl groups. [Laughs] But in the Sixties, pretty much all they ever sang about was their boyfriends: "He's so cool/he's so tough/I'm not too young to get married." The Go-Go's were terrific, and their songs seemed poignant and real. But even they were basically singing about their boyfriends, too. So I don't know if you actually get insight from girl groups. If you want to learn about how a woman feels, you might want to listen to someone like Suzanne Vega.

13.

PLAYBOY: Movies have the potential to instruct. Do you recoil from that opportunity or embrace it?

TARANTINO: Any time you try to get across a big idea, you're shooting yourself in the foot. First, you need to make a good movie. And in the process, if there's something in it that comes across, that's great. And it shouldn't be this big idea. It should be a small idea, from which everyone can get something different. I mean, if you're making a movie and your big idea is that war is bad, why do you even need to make a movie? If that's all you're trying to say, just say it. It's only two words: WAR IS BAD. Wait, wait. That's three words. Two words would be even better: WAR BAD. In some ways, that has even more power.

14.

PLAYBOY: Does the government have the right to tell citizens whether they can own guns?

TARANTINO: I don't own a gun. But if gun control were to happen in America, I would have no problem with it whatsoever. Gun control would probably do wonders here. The street violence in America is horrific. When you go to Europe, you actually feel like you take a vacation from the threat of violence. Not that people don't get killed and raped in Europe. But it seems like they don't in comparison with here. But I also feel there's a slight hypocrisy about gun control. America was founded on people grabbing guns and just taking it. We are basically a nation of warriors. We're very easily pumped up. For good reasons, sometimes.

15.

PLAYBOY: What's the best thing about breakfast cereal?



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VISA DISCOVER

TARANTINO: Breakfast cereal is one of my favorite foods because it's so easy to fix and it tastes so incredibly great. Cap'n Crunch is, of course, the crème de la crème. Most cereals, unfortunately, do not have a long life; they're around for about a year and then they go. But the best of the newfangled cereals, far and away, was Bill and Ted's Excellent Cereal. It was fantastic. It was like a particularly terrific Lucky Charms.

16.

PLAYBOY: Skinny ties, white shirts, black suits and sunglasses. How do you feel about the appropriation of the *Reservoir Dogs* look?

TARANTINO: I think it's great. If an action movie is doing its job, you should want to dress like the hero. After I saw Chow Yun-Fat in John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow, Part II*, I immediately bought a long coat and glasses and walked around with a toothpick in my mouth. Any time a character is really cool in a movie, you should want to dress like him or drink the beer he drinks. I thought Kevin Costner was so fucking cool in *Bull Durham* that I drank Miller High Life for a while.

17.

PLAYBOY: Where does real-life violence come from?

TARANTINO: It comes out of nowhere. You can be sitting there laughing, and all of a sudden you're in reverse. A girl takes off her high heel, clocks a guy on the head and splits his skull open.

Once, I was waiting for a bus at midnight on Western and Santa Monica, where a lot of hookers hang out. So a black transvestite hooker is standing next to me and suddenly this van pulls up and a Mexican kid jumps out with a baseball bat and comes up behind her. It was surreal. I couldn't even say anything. So the transvestite sensed something, turned around and saw that the kid was ready to hit her. She said [*menacingly*], "Don't do it, I'm vice," which was a terrific response. I was awed by that response. Meanwhile, the Mexican kid has the bat over his head and he's thinking about it. And she's saying, "Don't fucking do it—" And then—boom—he hits her anyway. The hooker starts fighting back a little, and all of a sudden six other guys come out of the van. At that point I took off and she took off. Now that's real-life violence.

18.

PLAYBOY: After *Reservoir Dogs* failed to win anything at the 1992 Sundance Film Festival, you swore you would never again attend an awards ceremony unless you knew you would win. Was it not winning, or what it felt like to lose in public, that prompted this vow?

TARANTINO: Ultimately, I don't care. I mean, if I read it in the newspaper and I don't see my name, my response is,

"Damn." But when you put on a tuxedo and endure the evening and you don't get called, it hurts your feelings. By showing up with that tuxedo on, I'm saying, "Your decision means something to me," when it really doesn't. When I went to the Sundance ceremony and didn't win anything for a movie I was really happy with, it made me feel bad. At that point, I decided that I was never going to give anybody permission to hurt my feelings that way again.

19.

PLAYBOY: You were hired to do a rewrite of *It's Pat*. As one now familiar with the perspiring androgynist from *Saturday Night Live*, is Pat a he or a she?

TARANTINO: The androgyny aspect is only a part of Pat's appeal. What I love about the character is that Pat is so fucking obnoxious. To tell the truth, I don't know what Pat is. But I know what I want Pat to be: I want Pat to be a girl. There was only one sketch that Julia [Sweeney, the actress who plays Pat] did on *Saturday Night Live* that gave a clue to what Pat is. It was the sketch that Pat did with Harvey Keitel. They're stranded on a deserted island and they have sex—and Harvey still doesn't know what Pat is. And the thing is, they kissed in it. At one point they were thinking of taking the kiss out of the sketch. But Harvey, being Harvey, demanded they keep it in, that there'd be no integrity without the kiss. So that was the first time we'd seen Pat in an intimate situation—a smooch. There is a certain way that you hold your head, the way you come in for a kiss. And sitting there, watching it, I thought that Pat didn't kiss like a guy. Pat kissed like a girl.

20.

PLAYBOY: Give us an example of when self-confidence has served you better than modesty would have.

TARANTINO: I was a film geek. Film geeks don't have a whole lot of tangible things to show for their passion and commitment to film. They just watch movies all the time. What they do have to show is a high regard for their own opinion. They've learned to break down a movie. They understand what they like and don't like about a film. And they feel that they're right. It's not open to discussion. When I got involved in the movie industry I was shocked at how little faith or trust people have in their own opinions. They read a script and they like it—then they hand it to three of their friends to see what they think about it. I couldn't believe it. There's an old expression that goes something like, He with the most point of view wins. [*Laughs*] When I walk into a room, I always have the most point of view.

