



*CRAZY FOR TONY

AS GLORIA TRILLO ON "THE SOPRANOS," SHE HAD SEX WITH TONY SOPRANO AT THE ZOO, FLUNG A HUNK OF MEAT AT HIS HEAD AND DIED—OR SO WE WERE LED TO BELIEVE. WILL SHE RETURN THIS SEASON TO TORMENT TONY AGAIN? **MICHAEL HAINEY** TRIES TO TALK SOME SENSE INTO **ANNABELLA SCIORRA**

Photograph by **MARK SELIGER**



What was your first job? Lenny's Clam Bar or something, on Third Avenue. Then a French restaurant. I used to check coats there. I made so much money.

Because you could pick the pockets? Are you going to be like that?

Oh, I'm sorry. You'd rather have a really serious, somber talk. Why don't you just ask questions like "What's your favorite color?"

You have a reputation for not liking interviews. Sometimes people ask retarded questions. How about you ask me what my three favorite things are? Like one of my favorite things is going to Coney Island.

I love Coney Island. Really?

Yeah. You know how much I love Coney Island? I love Coney Island in the winter. I love Coney Island in the winter! Are you serious?

Yeah, that's when I go out there.

So what are your other favorite things? Eddie Murphy's *Delirious* and salsa dancing.

What is salsa? That's not tango, right? Tango is Argentine. It's not cha-cha, either. Cha-cha is like a synthesized version of salsa that they kind of invented for the gringos to do.

Do you have a partner you do it with, or do you go to a dance class? There's a whole group of us that always goes out dancing. I wouldn't go out salsa dancing and dance with a partner I didn't know because, number one, they could push up on you and, number two, they could not know how to dance.

I'd be one of those guys rubbing up. I know. You have that written all over your face.

What happens if a guy rubs up against you? What did you call it, "press up"? Push up.

Push up. Did you ever have that happen at a prom? I didn't go to my prom.

Why? Is this the part in the story where you say, "I was really ugly and never

had a date"? No. We just didn't do things like that.

Were you in a mental institution? Is it *Girl, Interrupted*? What happened here? I don't know. I was doing other things. I don't even know if there were dances at my high school. I was doing my thing, and you people weren't around doing my things with me. *You* were going to dances.

What was your high school's name? What? I'm not telling you.

See, this is the problem I was worried about. Mine was Maine South in Chicago. You know who went to my high school? Who?

Hillary Clinton. So where are you from? **Chicago. I just told you, if you would listen.** I've never been to Chicago.

We'll fix that when you come meet Mom. Were you in school plays? No. I was almost in a school play, and I went to one rehearsal and I decided it was much too amateur for me.

So you're a snob. Not anymore, but at the time I was doing little productions in the city, and my head was in some other things. But they didn't really do school plays, anyway.

Were you raised by wolves? What happened? Quite the contrary. I just was very focused.

People in drama class in high school were always the biggest perverts. They were having sex all the time. Did you know that? So having sex means you're a pervert?

Um, no, but that's part of my problem, obviously. You know what else is like Coney Island that's good is driving through the Meadowlands. It makes me happy. Where are the Meadowlands? **They're in New Jersey, where the Sopranos people get dumped. That's a show on TV. You might have heard of it.** I don't know the Jersey side.

What? C'mon. You're on your way to, say, Newark Airport. Okay. I get it. **We have to get the Sopranos thing out of the way.** Okay.

So, what are you going to tell me about the new season? I don't know. What do you want to know?

You're coming back? Am I allowed to say that?

I don't know. You read the contract. You wouldn't be doing this interview if you weren't coming back in some way, right? Let's talk about crazy obsessive women. Like Gloria? She was more than just crazy obsessive. She was aggressive. Like bananas. I always felt that Gloria had the same psychological makeup as Tony,

and I patterned her after a tormented child. She's kind of lost and damaged, so she wreaks havoc wherever she goes. I always kind of thought that when she went on Christmas vacation, she stopped taking her medication because she was, like, smoking crack. When she came back, that's when she kind of flips.

You know that scene where she channels Tony's mother and says to Tony, "Oh, poor you." Oh yeah.

And Tony flips out because that's what his mother taunted him with. Do you think all guys are hung up on their mothers? No. I wouldn't think so.

Do you think I am? You're a whole case. That's a whole other conversation.

What about that scene, which still makes me uncomfortable, where she begs him to kill her? I can't watch that scene.

It's terrible. It's weird, because I didn't understand how far it was going when we were filming it. You make certain choices about who a character is, and it's very extensive and very detailed and very meticulous. I'm not, like, Method. I would pop up after each take and be like, "All right." Jim [Gandolfini] was like, "You're crazy. Did you just spit at me?" I was like, "Did I just spit at you?" And I wouldn't even know. When I first got the character, in trying to understand her I always thought that her main objective was to die.

That was what you realized in your head? David Chase didn't tell you that? No. That's what I always thought.

So what happens next? I actually really don't know.

You've filmed it already, right? Yeah. **Okay. You weren't paying attention.** No, no, no... What's your last name? I think it's with an *H*, right?

I'm not telling you. You might Google me. You ever do that? Do you ever Google people? All the time.

Do you ever Google blind dates? Blind dates?

Do you ever go on blind dates? I never go on blind dates.

Do you ever get set up? No. **I have.** Really?

Yeah. How did it work out?

I'm still single. But at least they didn't find my prison record. Did you Google me?

A couple of times. There's nothing much on you. There's a Web site that a guy used to do, and he stopped doing it. There's still a message board or something, and they talk about the most ridiculous things. These people, they're not even talking (continued on page 229)

together. A lot better than separately.” There is some laughter.

These can be harsh and judgmental times for anyone who chooses to express contrary political views, particularly if you are primarily known as an actor. (One of the many finely tuned contradictions thrown up by today’s overheated celebrity culture is the way entertainers are revered beyond all sense and yet are readily assumed to combine ignorance and arrogance in monumental quantities.) As an interview subject, Viggo certainly doesn’t go out of his way to impose his political opinions—we only talk about such matters when I bring them up, and he doesn’t encourage me to come to this event—but he is clearly interested. He had planned a visit to Iraq in winter 2002, to take photographs and to see for himself, but under pressures from movies and family life he ran out of time.

Earlier in the week, he was attacked on the editorial pages of *USA Today* by the conservative film critic Michael Medved, in an essay titled “Actors’ Politics Pollute ‘Ring.’” Medved argues that Viggo has been spoiling the movies’ pure entertainment by using his role “to trumpet his antiwar and anti-Bush views.” Taking him to task for his “pacifist preening,” Medved says Viggo has turned up “for numerous interviews wearing a NO MORE BLOOD FOR OIL T-shirt” and appeared at an antiwar rally in Washington, D.C., where he “read an interminable original poem about exploding bombs, burning flesh, flattened huts and American guilt” (this is a farcically inaccurate characterization of the poem Viggo has just read).

Mortensen counters that the rally had nothing to do with his film career and that he doesn’t conflate the two. Ironically, Mortensen considers the one occasion on which he deliberately did bring up current events in the context of the movies—hand-making the NO MORE BLOOD FOR OIL T-shirt with a Sharpie to wear on *The Charlie Rose Show* (and his other interviews on that one day)—as a response to others imposing what he considered an unacceptable political interpretation on movies he felt should be left free of such pollution. The particular instance that fired him up was a review by *Time* magazine film critic Richard Corliss:

It is hard to miss connections with a new struggle. The Fellowship can be seen as Western democracies now besieged by the lunatic faction of Islamic fundamentalism. (Saruman, as played by the tall, lean, bearded Lee, looks eerily like Osama bin Laden.)...“So

much death,” King Theoden says. “What can men do against such reckless hate?” Aragorn replies, “Ride out to meet them.”

Incensed, Viggo wrote to *Time*, taking issue with what he considered a crass and inappropriate interpretation. In his letter, which *Time* did not publish, he replied, in part:

Your comparisons display the simplistic, xenophobic & arrogant world-view that often makes the government of the United States of America feared and mistrusted around the globe. Please consider the following from Tolkien himself: “Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men. It is a man’s part to discern them, as much in the Golden Wood as in his own house.”

That was more than a year ago. Viggo is clearly a little perturbed by this recent attack, which he characterizes as both crude and shoddy. “I mean, it was very clear what he was saying to me: ‘Shut up. And do what you’re supposed to do. You’re an actor. Act.’”

He’s not too bothered, no matter how he may be branded. “I’ve been around a long time,” he says. “I’ll probably still be able to make a living if I feel like being in movies of some sort. That’s not the reason to say or not say something. The reason to say something is as a human being. If I can remember it, Joyce said something about the time he was living in and the place he was living in that can certainly be applied to the time we are talking in and the place we are talking in. Something to the effect that: When a man’s soul is born in this country, nets are flung at it to hold it back from flight. You speak to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets.”

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VIGGO MORTENSEN has a TV he watches videos on, but he watches no TV. To take a measure of his detachment from

modern popular culture, I give him a brief test. He can name two Simpsons, Homer and Bart, from reading his teenage son’s comics and catching the odd moment on TV at his ex-wife’s house. Unprompted, he also mentions *King of the Hill*. But he can name none of the characters on *Friends*.

“I know it’s Brad Pitt’s wife,” he says. “What’s her name?”

Jennifer Aniston.

“Yeah. I mean, I know what they look like.” (He asks me whether I know their character names and seems slightly surprised, and maybe a little bit disappointed, that I do.) He has never watched an episode of *The Sopranos*, though he’s heard it is good and thought highly of James Gandolfini when they acted together in *Crimson Tide*.

He last watched an Academy Awards TV broadcast in the mid-’80s in New York. For a couple of years, he went to a friend’s house for pizza and Oscars, but he found that the spectacle troubled him, the wrong films being nominated and the wrong films winning in a weird business-driven popularity contest. Later, he would also learn to dislike the way the lure of such awards would affect the way some actors did their job opposite him, grabbing attention for themselves to the detriment of the scene, the story and the character.

A couple of years back, at his brother’s house, he was curious enough to watch a little of the ceremony once more, but after ten minutes he had all he could take and retired to the kitchen. “It just seemed absurd,” he says.

The opportunities and rewards he seeks lie elsewhere. And if they do not readily present themselves, he will find them, and find within them the ordeal that makes them of value to him. That is but one more of Viggo Mortensen’s many diverse talents.

“However simple the task,” he says wryly, “I always turn it into an ordeal.” ☘

CHRIS HEATH is a GQ writer-at-large. This is his first piece for the magazine.

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about me anymore.

You should just log on and say, “Hey, it’s me. I’m the center of attention. Let’s keep it focused.” I sent them something once a long time ago, but they didn’t believe it.

What did you say? I was just like, “Hi. Thanks for the Web site.” I don’t even know, because I was with my brother, and he made me do it. My brother goes on there

and answers questions.

Here’s a question. I’m obsessed with Christopher Walken. So I want three words to describe Christopher Walken.

Three words to describe Christopher Walken. **Three words.** Hilarious, honest.

That’s only two. It has to be just a word? **Whatever.** Great dancer. He’s a really good tap dancer.

Is he as crazy as everyone thinks he is?

He's brilliant. I have a little book about him.

That you're writing? I'm not going to publish it—not without asking him, anyway. It's called *Things Chris Says*.

Can you give me one of them? I don't want to jeopardize our friendship. Did you see *Punch-Drunk Love*? It's amazing. The man? That's me.

The Sandler character, that's you? How so? I don't know. I watched it, and I was just floored. This man, just the shyness and inability to communicate something. Then the joy. I don't know. There was something about that. I was like, that's *me*.

So what else makes you happy? Graffiti is another thing that makes me happy.

Did you ever do it? Only a little.

What was your tag? Tango 2.

So where did you tag? Just all over the schools and, you know, Burger King.

With a Magic Marker or spray paint? A Magic Marker. But I wasn't very good at all. I gave it up.

My impression of graffiti was from watching the opening scenes of *Welcome Back, Kotter* and seeing the subway. That was on 86th Street. There was a layup right there.

A layup? A layup, where trains stop for a little while.

I read a Q&A you did in *In Style* magazine where you said you took four

baths a day. God, I know. I never said that. Then I read someplace that Jennifer Jason Leigh said the same thing.

And you had a lot of candles. Yeah, I read that too.

You didn't say either? I like candles, but I don't think any more than anybody else.

I hate candles. You know what I hate? When you go in a girl's bedroom and she lights candles. I always feel like I'm in a bordello. Yeah, that seems like a bad seduction scene from a Lifetime TV movie.

Why do girls do that? I don't know. You're scoring with the wrong girls. ❌

MICHAEL HAINES is *GQ's* deputy editor.

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naturally makes you feel better about yourself.

In Smiths songs, there was no harsher criticism you could lay on someone than telling them they were "tired" and "old."

Now that you're getting older, do those lyrics come back to haunt you?

No, they don't, really.

Do you mind getting older?

I absolutely love it. The older I get, the better I feel. I'm fascinated by people in their eighties and nineties. Especially those who are still creating and living in an interesting way. I am fascinated by them because they have so much to say now that they've lived for so long. I always felt more relaxed with people who were much older than me, and I still do. Young people for the most part are absolutely boring. There's nothing automatically interesting about being young. Simply because you are 20, it doesn't mean that you have anything useful to offer anybody. I think it's fascinating to survive to 80, when you consider how much is against all of us every day, whether it's illness or just defeatism or this absurd planet that we're stuck on. It's a miracle you can glue yourself together through your thirties and forties, then burst into your fifties. It is astonishing. And if somebody reaches 80 or 90, then they have survived. And I must ask them how.

You're impressed.

I am very, very impressed.

And you're not very impressed with the young.

I am not automatically impressed with children. I don't sort of gravitate toward the child, and I don't find them fascinating just because they're 3 and

bouncing. That to me doesn't warrant any particular attention. And blond curls are absolutely immaterial to me. People have to prove themselves. You can't simply sit in a corner and expect people to be magnetically drawn to you.

Do you despise children?

I don't. But I don't make any allowances for them just because they're 6 and full of freckles.

Is it their cuteness that bothers you?

Cute? What's cute? What is cute?

Cute is knowing that you're adorable.

Oh yes, I can't stand anybody with an attack of the cutes, whether they be 4 or 54. And that brings us to American television. Everybody has a crushing attack of the cutes. It drips from the screen, and it does the country absolutely no good. America is rife with gifted and intelligent people, but these people are never ever conveyed on the American screen. America seems locked in this belief that we can only convey frothy people. Anyone else shouldn't be seen. But it's the people who are not seen who change art and culture and fashion and music. It's the people who are constantly pushed away who change the world and all this frothy fluffiness.

Are we a vulgar culture?

I don't think so. Yes, lots of American people talk very loudly, and nobody understands why. But a lot of people don't, so therefore I think we're just paying attention to the unintelligent aspects of American culture. Because let's face it, most people, there's nothing there. There's nothing—there's nothing to know.

Is there anything on TV you like?

Well, American television is quite difficult. I like certain witty situation

comedies. There's not many of them. And most of them are quite old.

Which ones?

I'd rather not say. But it's not *Leave It to Beaver* or anything like that. I have always been obsessed with film scripts and television scripts, and as a child I would take television programs and big old reel-to-reels and listen back to the dialogue, and God knows what the hell I was doing. I really don't know. A more pathetic side you couldn't really conjure up, but there I was at the age of 9 with a reel-to-reel, taping drab northern television programs. But then, I was always terribly critical, so I viewed television as an acidic television-critic reviewer. I didn't walk away. I sat there moaning to the screen and pointing at characters and chiding them. It was just quite pathetic.

You've talked about how, when you were young, you were swept away by what you thought was glamorous. It seems to me that you're still looking for glamour.

It seems to be gone. Whereas if you seek footage from fifty years ago, everybody seems to be naturally glamorous. But yes, I think glamour has gone.

I think you're glamorous.

Well, you might be wrong.

But you're still drawn to some idea of pop glamour.

Yes, I still do love the whole thing, even though I'm a severe critic, and I'm watching all the time, and I very rarely see modern glamour. But I don't stop looking for it, because when you do get those flashes, and when you do come across somebody who is radiant physically or artistically, then they really are worth the search. I felt that way when