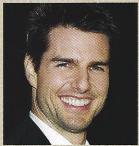
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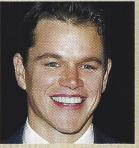
WHO AM I? SEE PAGE 20



TOM CRUISE



GWYNETH PALTROW



MATT DAMON



JULIA ROBERTS

Summer Movie Blockbusters!

Erin Brockovich The Real-Life Sequel

The Changing Face of Cosmetic Surgery

Gloria Vanderbilt

BEN AFFLECK...GLORIA VANDERBILT...ERIN BROCKOVICH

A Life of Great Privilege, Great Wealth, and Unimaginable Heartache

Willem Dafoe

Serious Actor Plays Comic Book Villain... and Loves It!

Ben Affleck

On Fame, His Latest Film & Longtime Friend Matt Damon

JULY 2002 /\$3.95 USA, \$4.95 CANADA www.biographymagazine.com

Ben Affleck on stardom, settling down, and working with best buddy Matt Damon

wer since their 1997 Oscar for Good

Will Hunting, no matter what Ben

Affleck and Matt Damon do solo,

it's hard to envision them as anything but in-cahoots. Any time
one of them is mentioned, the other's name
comes up.

So, is it fluke—or fate—that Affleck and Damon are both starring this summer in spy thrillers based on bestselling book series?

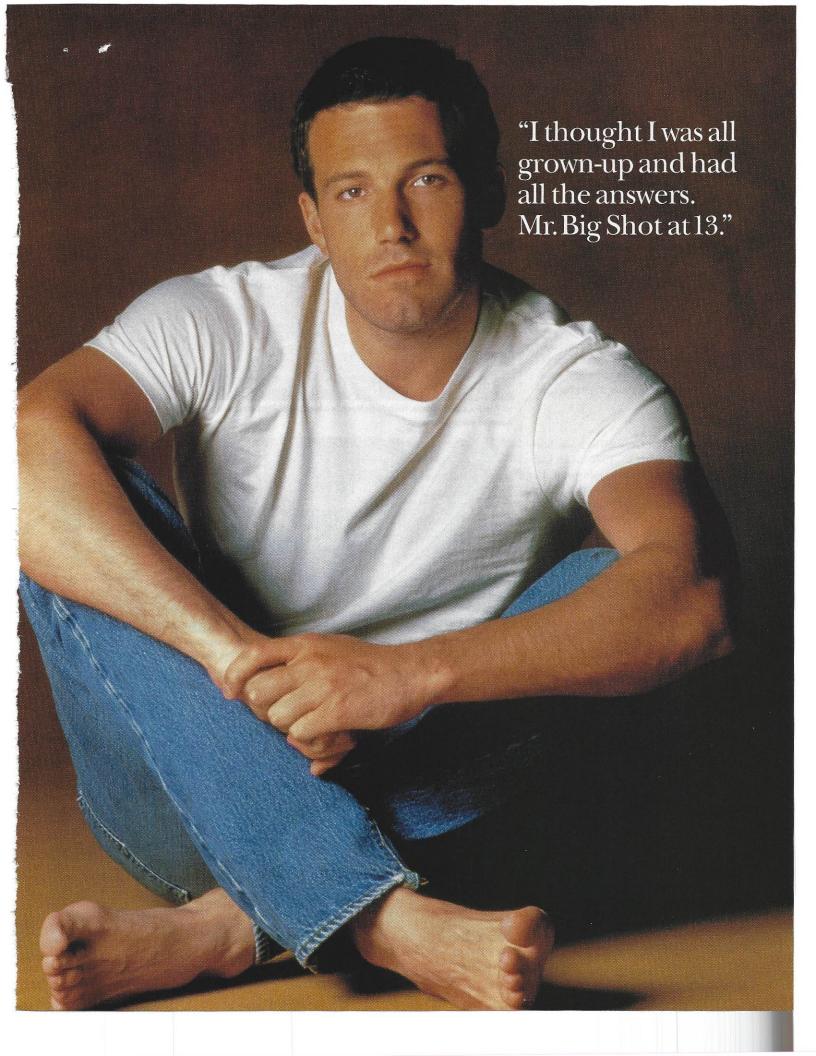
Affleck plays Jack Ryan in *The Sum of All Fears*, while Damon is Jason Bourne in *The Bourne Identity*.

"I know what it looks like," Affleck admits, "that we somehow planned it this way. But I swear it just kind of happened. The fact



that the movies were released around the same time was just a bizarre coincidence. I mean, there aren't all that many weekends in the summer, right?"

Actually, Affleck doesn't seem to mind having most of America think of him as half of the Ben-and-Matt team. "We've known each other since we were 8 or 9," he says of his longtime pal/writing partner. And they intend to be part of each other's future: Between their individual acting jobs, they're thinking up new projects under their multimedia production company LivePlanet (see sidebar, page 40). "We'll be writing together for a long, long time," Affleck predicts. "We're on the same page because we share a lot of the same life experiences. It's nice to have someone who understands where you're coming from." BY SHERYL BERK



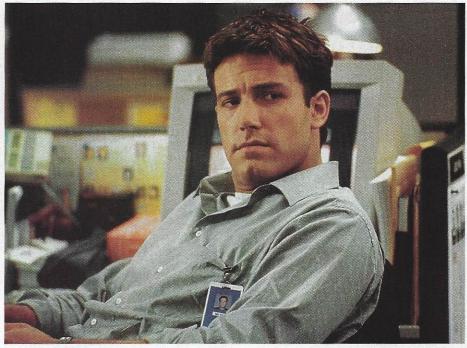
Celebrity Dossier

NAME: Benjamin Geza Affleck
DATE OF BIRTH: August 15, 1972
PLACE OF BIRTH: Oakland, California
PARENTS: Tim, a drug rehabilitation counselor; Chris, a teacher (divorced)
SIBLING: Younger brother, actor Casey
EDUCATION: Attended the University of
Vermont in Burlington

FVI: The plot of *The Sum of All Fears* centers on terrorists threatening the U.S., and its star is well aware that the events of September 11 might impact how audiences react to it. "I do think that 9/11 changed the movie without the movie changing at all itself," says Affleck. "It went from an escapist political thriller to a drama. To me, that makes the movie more affecting. But I suspect that people's reactions will be varied. You can't please everybody. You can only make a movie that you're proud of, and hope for the best."

enjamin Geza Affleck was born on August 15, 1972, in an Oakland, California, hospital. His father, Tim, had a range of jobs, from auto mechanic and electrician to bartender and janitor (he is now a photographer and a counselor at a California drug rehabilitation center), while his mother, Chris, was (and still is) a school teacher. His family lived briefly in Berkeley, California, before moving to Massachusetts when Affleck was 2. "My brother, Casey, was born in Falmouth shortly before my third birthday," Affleck recalls. "We knew he was coming, so my parents threw a party for me three days early so I wouldn't miss it. But Casey decided to steal the show anyway: Right in the middle of my party, we had to rush to the hospital."

At age 5, the family moved to Cambridge and young Ben attended the public schools where his mom taught. But it was actingnot academics—that mainly interested him. "My father had a theater background-he worked with a theater company in Boston before I was born. He and my mom had a lot of friends who were actors, and I was around them all the time and it rubbed off." One of his mother's college friends ran a local casting company in Boston, and her husband was an independent movie director. He needed a 7-year-old boy for a film and Affleck volunteered. "After that, I wanted to do more. Maybe I was precocious; maybe I was just fooling around."



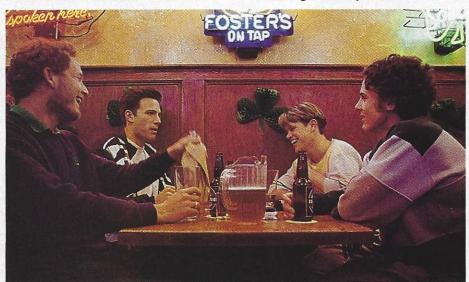
In *The Sum of All Fears*, hero Jack Ryan is a wet-behind-the-ears CIA analyst. Says Affleck, "He doesn't have all the answers yet"



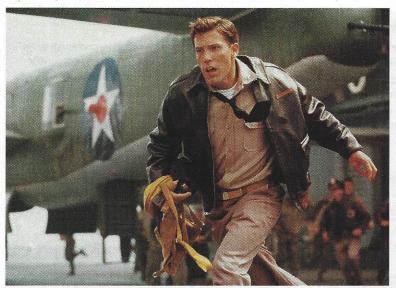
Changing Lanes depicts Affleck as a lawyer whose life collides with Samuel L. Jackson's



Bounce paired the actor with his real-life former girlfriend Gwyneth Paltrow



The gang's all here: (from left) Cole Hauser, Affleck, Matt Damon, and Casey Affleck as pals in *Good Will Hunting*



Pearl Harbor (2001) showcased Affleck as a war hero



Hamming it up in 1998's Shakespeare in Love



At age 14, with Madeline Kahn in the TV movie Wanted: The Perfect Guy



"I think we have a great dynamic," Affleck says of working with Damon (here in the movie Dogma)



Chasing Amy made Affleck (pictured with Joey Lauren Adams) an independent film star. He worked with director/writer Kevin Smith on Mallrats and Dogma as well

When a casting call went out for a PBS kids educational show called The Voyage of the Mimi, Affleck tried out for the partand landed it. "I don't think at the time I had any clue how lucky I was," he says. "I didn't realize that most people audition and don't get the role." The pilot was shot in Maine, and the science and math series eventually got funding and a go-ahead. Around this time, the Afflecks divorced, leaving Chris to raise her sons single-handedly. When it was decided that season two of Mimi would be shot in Mexico, Ben's mom accompanied him on location.

"She was great—she was tutoring me. It was always very important to her that I have as normal a childhood as possible," Affleck says. Before the shoot was over, Chris got pneumonia and had to go home. She was assured that Ben would be safe and supervised, but "I was pretty much on my own down there, getting into trouble. I was earning money and I had my own hotel room; I thought I was all grown-up and had all the answers. Mr. Big Shot at 13."

When the series ended, Affleck returned home and started his freshman year at Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School. He began to plot a path to Hollywood and enlisted the support of an old elementaryschool friend, whom he nicknamed Matty D. Affleck and Damon would hold "business lunches" in the cafeteria and go to New York on auditions (Affleck even helped Damon find an agent). "In high school, our friendship got more intense as we realized how much we both had similar goals," Affleck says. "We had these fantasies about all the things we were going to do, and they were all sort of silly and romantic and half-baked. We never really imagined that any of them would come true."

One of those "half-baked" fantasies began with a 40-page script that Damon wrote in his Harvard playwriting class in 1992. Affleck had dropped out of the University of Vermont to pursue acting and was struggling in L.A. ("barely able to pay the \$300 a month for a one-bedroom hole") when Damon sent the story to him. The pair agreed it had the makings of a great movie—and they were right. It eventually became *Good Will Hunting*.

"It probably had a million different incarnations," says Affleck. "I was 19 when we



Affleck with younger brother Casey at The Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah

wrote the first version. There was one where my character was supposed to die. One where the government was after Will." The project sat on the back burner as Affleck found his niche in independent films. Damon continued to act as well, but both were frustrated with the lack of quality roles being offered to them. They returned to their script, eventually completing 1500 pages.

"We would just sit around BS-ing and kicking things back and forth," Affleck says. "We'd talk it out and it would fall into place. I think we have a great dynamic. In our case, two heads are definitely better than one."

They gave the finished script to their agent who showed it to a few studios. It was accepted by Castle Rock for \$600,000. "It was like we won the lottery," Damon once remarked. But a year later, the project remained in limbo—the studio wasn't will-

First-Time Oscars

ctor Ben Affleck's first attempt at a screenplay couldn't have been more encouraging: He and co-writer Matt Damon earned an Academy Award for penning the script of *Good Will Hunting*. It's actually not so uncommon for Oscar to go home with a first-time performer, writer, or director. In other instances the winner is a veteran of one field but trying his hand at another, such as a successful actor making his debut behind the camera, or a television director making the jump to the silver screen. Here are some contemporary heavy-hitters who got off to a big start:

Person	Film	Won Oscar for
James L. Brooks	Terms of Endearment, 1983	Best Director
Kevin Costner	Dances With Wolves, 1990	Best Director
Timothy Hutton	Ordinary People, 1980	Best Supporting Actor
Tatum O'Neal	Paper Moon, 1973	Best Supporting Actress
Marlee Matlin	Children of a Lesser God, 1986	Best Actress
Anna Paquin	The Piano, 1993	Best Supporting Actress
Robert Redford	Ordinary People, 1980	Best Director
Barbra Streisand	Funny Girl, 1968	Best Actress (tie with Katharine Hepburn)

Ben's Big Business

n June 2000, Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Chris Moore, and Sean Bailey founded LivePlanet, a company that "creates entertainment experiences that break down the barriers between traditional media, new media, and the physical world." Translation? The foursome and their team come up with outrageously creative, one-of-a-kind projects that allow audience members to not only participate (through TV, film, wireless, the Web, etc.) but in many ways, influence the final outcome.



Project Greenlight gave Pete Jones (center) the chance to make a movie

It all started with *Project Greenlight*, a 13-episode documentary series on HBO last year that chronicled the nuts and bolts of making an independent feature film. Matt and Ben announced an Internet competition, and 10,000 aspiring filmmakers sent in their scripts. From them, Pete Jones' *Stolen Summer* was chosen as the winner, and Miramax agreed to foot the bill to produce it (it was released this past spring).

"I hope that young writers are encouraged by us," Affleck says. "And as long as our partners, HBO and Miramax, are ready and willing, we want to keep it going. We want more first-timers to have this great opportunity."

Also in the works is *Push*, *Nevada*, a 13-episode ABC-TV series that blends elements of fact and fiction, drama and reality. The show centers on a series of strange events that occur around a missing seven-figure sum of money. By following the show—and participating online—audience members garner clues that will lead them to a genuine bankroll hidden somewhere in the U.S.

"The idea of LivePlanet is to change the way you can tell a story, and to change the degree of involvement the audience can have with it," explains Affleck. He expects LivePlanet's wild ideas to raise a few eyebrows: "You have a much higher risk of failure when you're doing something that's never been done before. But that's also the fun of it, the excitement, and to me, the most fulfilling thing I can do in my career."

ing to give Affleck and Damon the creative control they wanted (not only did they want to star in the film, they wanted it shot on location in their native Boston). It took clout and connections to turn things around: Damon had just starred in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Rainmaker* and was suddenly on Hollywood's radar screen; Affleck's director/friend Kevin Smith was willing to take the script to top execs. It was Miramax's Harvey Weinstein who saved

the day and agreed to pick up *Good Will* for \$1 million.

"Harvey really believed in us and told us it was okay to take some more risks, to go with it," says Affleck. "So we had the opportunity to write the story that we really wanted to write, as opposed to what we thought somebody else would like."

The film was a hit, both critically and at the box office, pulling in a total of \$226 million worldwide. It was nominated for nine Academy Awards; it received the Oscar for Best Screenplay, and Robin Williams won Best Supporting Actor. "That night, I remember feeling like I had just been in a car accident," Affleck says. "It was that same feeling of shock, of 'What just happened?' I remember Billy Crystal did his song montage to open the show, and we were part of it. He was singing 'Matt and Ben, Ben and Matt,' and I turned to Matt and went, 'Man, this is crazy! Surreal!' I mean, we were a joke that people got. And then Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau announced our category, opened the envelope, and read our names. I expected As Good As It Gets to win, but instead, it was us. All I know is I staggered up there—it was like this weird out-of-body thing followed by exuberance and screaming my head off."

From that day forward, Ben and Matt were Hollywood legend: the 25- and 27-year-old writing wunderkinder who won Oscars their first time out of the gate. Along with the notoriety came the trappings of stardom. Affleck bought homes on both coasts (a three-story Hollywood Hills spread complete with five motorcycles and two Cadillacs, and a New York City pad outfitted with his favorite vintage arcade games) plus a house in Cape Cod for his mom. He even dated an It Girl-Gwyneth Paltrow-for over a year (they're still friends) and has been linked in the tabloids with (among others) Mariah Carey, Chelsea Clinton, Sandra Bullock, and Britney Spears. (For the record, he has denied being involved with any of them.) He also went through a period of partying too hard and, a year ago, decided it was time to get his life back on track. These days, he's much more future-focused and serious.

"If I were to guess what the next 10 years of my life would be, I would think they'd involve less acting, particularly the kind of acting that requires you to do a bunch of publicity, the kind that changes the quality of your life as a person," he says. "Eventually, I think I'll tone down the degree to which I expose my whole life to the world and put myself out there. If I was doing less of that, I feel it would be more conducive to settling down, getting married, and having a family. That's important to me."

What's also important is the quality of his work, although it doesn't hurt to command upwards of \$12 million a picture. Since *Good Will Hunting*, he has starred in more than 10 films, including *Shakespeare in Love, Armageddon, Bounce, Pearl Harbor*, and *Changing Lanes*. Affleck insists it's the story, not the paycheck that convinces him to sign on the dotted line. Case in point: *The Sum of All Fears*.

(Continued on page 99)

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it does—but it intrigues simply because it is so far north, so barren, and because, during school months, its population increases by 8000 university students who attend classes in endless night. Even in summer, this city celebrates winter. A ski jump looms behind the hospital. The white, V-shaped Cathedral of the Arctic creates the illusion of walking into an iceberg; its chandeliers resemble icicles.

Later, we disembark in a small village on Saturday night just as a carnival, briefly in town, is shutting down the Tilt-A-Whirl. It is almost 11 P.M., dusk is falling, and blond teens stroll the street along the water-front—girls in one group, boys in another. What do they look forward to, I wonder, in a place that lacks even a road leading out of town? The next morning, a woman with a Russian license plate pulls up to the ship, whips open her trunk, and displays crudely knit socks and hats. She looks desperate to make a sale. As our gangplank rises, she gives a grim wave and drives off, back across the border, to her poverty.

Nearing the North Cape, we see rainbows everywhere as sun and rain compete to dominate the top of Europe. The land here

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is barren tundra, covered with herds of grazing reindeer owned by Norway's indigenous people, the Sami. Nomads until recently, the Sami have now flown into the modern age, herding their animals with helicopters. Cod drying racks line the shores and heavy avalanche fences protect the valleys. My search for green has turned to brown and gray here in the far north, with its own kind of chilly beauty.

I have had my "green" trip and feel restored. Jim and I pose for a picture in front of the marker indicating the northernmost point in Europe, snowflakes dancing in front of our faces, then head on to Kirkenes, to the very edge of Russia, and our journey's end. •

MELISSA BURDICK HARMON IS THIS MAGAZINE'S TRAVEL EDITOR.

Affleck from page 41

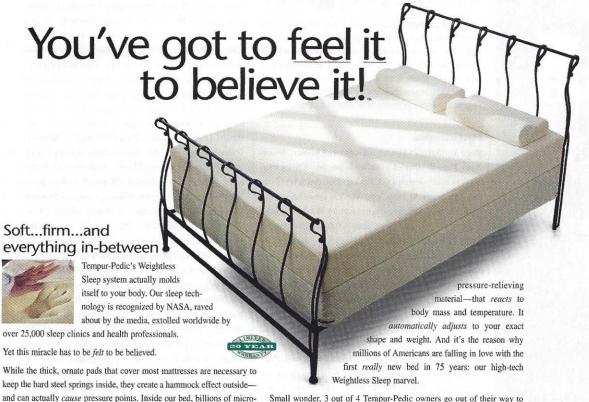
He knew that the role of Jack Ryan, hero of Tom Clancy's popular novels, came with baggage. "Two fine, fine actors, Harrison Ford [in *Clear and Present Danger* and *Patriot Games*] and Alec Baldwin [in *The Hunt for Red October*], already played Ryan. You know people will always be comparing you—there

will be guys on the Internet discussing how I measure up. What can you do? Just your best and be true to the story."

"It was very courageous of him," says the film's director Phil Alden Robinson, who describes Affleck as "a member of the team, a people person, a hugger. He's genuinely a modest fellow who gives it his all. The fact that it was a challenge only makes him work harder."

What appealed to Affleck was the concept of creating Ryan's early years—giving new depth to the character. The film is a prequel to the other three: Ryan must confront terrorists who have possession of a nuclear weapon they plan to detonate at the Super Bowl.

"This is a different Jack Ryan," he explains. "He doesn't have all the answers; he doesn't have it all together. He hasn't yet become the U.S. Intelligence superhero. He's starting out, just getting his feet wet. He writes this paper and it takes on a life of its own. That, I could identify with, because that's how it was for me with *Good Will Hunting*. You write something, it takes off, and you're sort of whisked along with it. Ryan's not sure where he'll wind up, where this will



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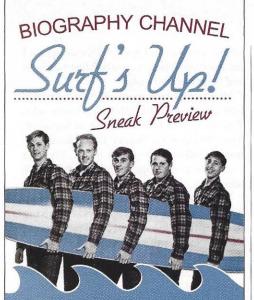
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Answers to puzzle from page 94

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