

# Such a scandal; high Wattage

By Seth Rogovoy

GREAT BARRINGTON

THERE IS no question that the Bush administration has some explaining to do about the run-up to war in Iraq. Clearly truths were stretched and reports were used very selectively in presenting the case for invasion.

## Mother Jones

But the cover story in the January/February issue of Mother Jones, a "special report" titled "The Lie Factory" promising "for the first time, a detailed investigation" on the "disinformation and bogus intelligence" that "led the nation to war" resembles nothing more than what it sets out to reveal.

Rather than being an exposé of "the workings of a secret Pentagon intelligence unit and of the Defense Department's war-planning task force," the article, by Robert Dreyfuss and Jason Vest, is merely a rehash of the same tired "evidence" that the Bush administration's war policy was guided and manipulated by a cabal of neo-conservative war hawks.

Dreyfuss and Vest present as news the fact that people like deputy secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and undersecretary of Defense Douglas J. Feith were on speaking terms with the likes of Richard Perle, Harold Rhode and Ahmad Chalabi, and somehow this is supposed to prove a conspiracy that led to war. They even provide a full-page flow chart of the members of the "secret intelligence unit, many of whom were recruited from neoconservative think tanks."

Goodness gracious, there are conservatives in the Pentagon of a right-wing Republican administration, and they had jobs involving policy analysis before they entered the government's ranks! What a conspiracy; what a scandal. Alert the media.

## Hollywood Life

For some serious journalism, I turned to Movieline's Hollywood Life and its cover story on actress Naomi Watts. Watts was a nobody until filmmaker David Lynch cast her in "Mulholland Drive," introducing her to serious film fans for the first time. She then made the leap to Hollywood fare like "The Ring" and "21 Grams."

In "High Wattage," interviewer Martha Frankel reveals that Watt's

father was a roadie for psychedelic rock band Pink Floyd and her mother stayed home and baked bread and made the family's clothes. So now we have a whole generation of cultural figures who are the children of hippies. The chickens will come home to roost.

We also learn that Watt has roles in upcoming movies including a Sean Penn vehicle called "The Assassination of Richard Nixon" and a remake of "King Kong" by "Lord of the Rings" director Peter Jackson.

## Esopus

With its first issue, the new arts magazine Esopus has made an auspicious debut. Planned as a twice-yearly journal featuring works by writers, visual artists, filmmakers and musicians, the magazine offers a fresh approach to contemporary culture divorced from the hype of the marketplace and the editorial compromises that dictate so much of the commercial coverage of media and the arts.

The large-size magazine is stylishly designed and printed on thick cardboard stock in a format that changes to fit the needs of the work— if pages need to fold out, they do, and if music needs to be heard, then a CD is packaged in a flap, as in this issue's "Public Domain," featuring 12 commissioned pieces by musicians including Luna's Dean Wareham and American Music Club's Mark Eitzel reflecting on what "public domain" means to them.

In "Music at 6: Scoring the New, Then and Now," film composer Carter Burwell deconstructs the music that accompanies TV news. This subliminal genre of music must have a regular listenership that vies with the songs at the top of Billboard's pop charts, but it is given almost no attention as an art form. And according to Burwell, that might be for good rea-

son.

"The Art of Husbandry" is a portfolio of drawings by Don Bachardy of actresses who starred in the 1974 film, "The Stepford Wives." Some of Bachardy's drawings were used in the film about a suburban dystopia as a plot device — a character in the film is an artist whose drawings are used as the basis for creating the robot replacements for the town's wives.

Among the actresses Bachardy drew were Katharine Ross, Paula Prentiss and Tuesday Weld, the original female lead who was replaced by Ross. The drawings are astonishing for the manner in which they simultaneously capture the uniqueness of each actress while also portraying the generic quality of the male gaze that would turn them all into servile machines.

Other highlights are Alex Shear's fold-out display of vintage soda pop bottles, "Victor and Judy," a photo essay by Eva Vives profiling the real-life characters who inspired her film, "Raising Victor Vargas," and "Hollywood Minute," the script of a short, satirical play by Christopher Durang sending up TV entertainment reporters that had me laughing so hard that my family members came running over to me to see if I was OK.

Esopus is that rare arts magazine that itself becomes a work of art.

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