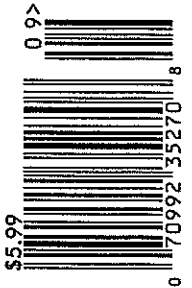


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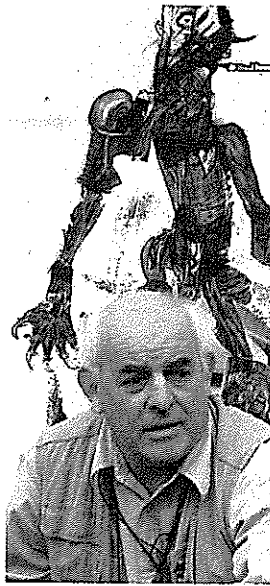
EXPLOSIVE INTERVIEW: EX-FEMA BOSS MICHAEL BROWN •
EVA LONGORIA SEXES UP 20Q • JOURNEY TO THE CENTER
OF A COAL MINE • PARIS HILTON'S LOOK-ALIKE NUDE •
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Though set up to be the fall guy for the government's bungle of Hurricane Katrina, Michael Brown refused to play the president's patsy. Having weathered the storm, Brownie spoke about his experience to David Sheff in the *Playboy Interview*. "Normally people in government are very tight-lipped, so it was remarkable talking to Brown, who spoke freely," Sheff says. "One reason for his openness is that he wants to clear his name. I also think he did the interview because he still feels a moral obligation to protect the people of this country by informing them that the government is not capable of handling the next major disaster. On both levels he is the equivalent of a soldier who seriously questions his commander, only in this case it takes balls because it's the commander in chief."



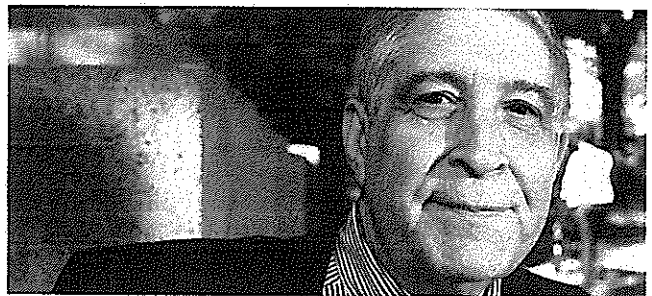
Stephen Rebello had the pleasure of playing 20Q with Eva Longoria. "In person she is much more than just drop-dead gorgeous," Rebello reports. "It's as though an exclamation point is hovering over her head. Like many gorgeous actresses I have interviewed, she swore she bloomed late and wasn't so hot in high school. This pattern has led me to advise every young man I know to be careful of turning down less desirable dates—they all seem to grow up to be sexy starlets."



"Hunter S. Thompson infected me with an aggressive edge—or at least sharpened the one I already had," says artist Ralph Steadman. A little more than a year after HST's death, we publish *Smashing Windows* from Steadman's memoir, *The Joke's Over*. The piece is an exchange between the longtime collaborators, two fathers concerned about the pressure of cultural conformity on their sons. "Hunter did not play father in the conventional way. But for all his mindless self-indulgence, which is legendary and crude, he always impressed me with his blind, selfless urge to cut out the crony bestiality of modern society. I believed in him and was inspired by him."



Prestigious fashion photographer Fabrizio Ferri debuts in our pages this month with *Dress Smart*. "It is extremely rare that I work with people who are as passionate about their trade as Joseph De Acetis and the *PLAYBOY* fashion staff," Ferri says. "The creativity, time and effort we put into the shoot was astounding. Because we are all perfectionists it took well over four hours just to set up the first shot. The time, as always, was well worth it. We emerged with beautiful pictures that emphasize the clothes and also send an intelligent message. I think we made quite the bold fashion statement."



Mickey Edwards, formerly a Republican congressman from Oklahoma, wrote "Power Play" for the *Forum*, in which he expresses his disgust at the partisanship rampant in the legislative branch. "It is unconstitutional that members of Congress are putting their party's beliefs before our institution of checks and balances," Edwards says. "The American people must confront their local representatives and demand that they uphold the foundation of our system of government, or else we will cease to live in a democracy."

PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BROWN

A heckuva conversation with the maligned ex-FEMA chief about Katrina's fury, why we're still not safe and which congressman can, as he says, "bite me"

Over the course of several horrific days a year ago, Michael Brown, head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, went from relative obscurity to fame and then, just as quickly, from fame to infamy. On August 29 Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf coast and devastated more than 90,000 square miles. New Orleans was flooded, and more than 1,800 people died. In addition to causing death, injury and displacement, the storm caused approximately \$75 billion in damage. At first President George W. Bush famously lauded Brown, saying, "Brownie, you're doing a heckuva job." Within days, however, Brown was forced to resign after what was generally viewed as his, and the government's, incompetence.

Brown was vilified. Editorial writers, politicians and citizens called him everything from "an embarrassment and a menace" to "an unqualified political appointee" who was "utterly overwhelmed by the magnitude of the disaster." "The more one learns about him, one is surprised he is in that job in the first place," said conservative commentator William Kristol on Fox News after Time magazine accused Brown of falsifying his résumé. Aaron Broussard, president of Louisiana's Jefferson Parish, told CBS's 48 Hours that FEMA under Brown "has committed murder here in New Orleans." The late-night comedians had a field day at Brown's expense. Jon Stewart said Brown's performance had been downgraded from "heckuva" to "Faulknerian idiot man-child."

The barrage didn't end when Brown stepped aside. A House committee investigating the response to Katrina released more than 1,000 damning e-mail messages sent between Brown and his staff. In one Brown is preoccupied with finding a sitter for his two dogs. In another, one of his assistants advises him to modify his appearance before talking to the press. "Even the president rolled his sleeves to just below the elbow," she wrote. "Roll up the sleeves." During the worst of the hurricane Brown wrote to a co-worker, "I am a fashion god. Are you proud of me?"

The Bush administration might have wished Brown would quietly go away, but he has not. Instead, after a series of congressional hearings and the release of videotapes showing him briefing the president during Katrina, he has been partially vindicated. Contradicting the view of Brown as inept, uninvolved, egotistical and unqualified, the videotapes show he was informed and engaged, though frustrated in his attempt to get the administration's attention and support. Brown has refused to be the administration's fall guy. Instead he has fought back, charging that the government's preoccupation with the war on terror distracted the nation and drained resources from FEMA, that his boss at the Department of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, restricted his ability to manage the disaster and that the New Orleans and Mississippi governments were dysfunctional.

Brown, 51, was born in Guymon, Okla-

homa, where his father worked as a printer. He attended Central State University and received a law degree from Oklahoma City University in 1981. After graduating he worked as an assistant to the city manager of Edmond, Oklahoma. His résumé stated he had emergency-services oversight in that position, but Time reported that the head of public relations for the city denied Brown had oversight over anybody, noting, "The assistant is more like an intern." (The spokesperson later claimed that comment was taken out of context.)

Brown also served as staff director of the Senate Finance Committee of the Oklahoma legislature, and he was elected to the Edmond City Council but resigned to practice law. He ran for Congress in 1988 and lost. Brown next became the judges and stewards commissioner for the International Arabian Horse Association. After Bush took office, in January 2001, Brown joined FEMA as general counsel, hired by his longtime friend Joe Allbaugh, then FEMA director, who had run Bush's 2000 election campaign. Allbaugh later named Brown to the post of FEMA deputy director; when Allbaugh resigned, Bush appointed Brown as director, in January 2003.

Brown is married and has two children, and he divides his time between an apartment in Washington, D.C. and homes in Taos, New Mexico and Boulder, Colorado. He has started a new business, a consulting firm for disaster



"Terrorism has to get the resources it needs but not at the expense of natural disasters, which we know are coming—earthquakes, hurricanes. Chertoff keeps trying to shift the blame back to me, which solves nothing."



"We are less prepared now than before Katrina. It's more of a mess than ever. People should be scared, and they should demand more of the government than this kind of half-assed way of doing things."



PHOTOGRAPHY © SAM KITTNER

"In the middle of the disaster I thought about quitting—after the first few days. But then I thought, People are dying, people are suffering; I can't leave. It was a no-win situation. So I truly had to be the scapegoat."