

About Town

RAMBLING REPORTER *By Merle Ginsberg & Gary Baum*



Nathanson (left) and Ratner.

'No Gay Jokes,' Promises Brett Ratner

Just two days after this year's Oscars, **Brett Ratner** publicly referenced getting fired from producing the 2012 telecast at the 34th annual Silver Circle Benefit for the Venice Family Clinic. The producer-director was there to present one of his best friends, *Rush Hour 2* and 3 screenwriter **Jeff Nathanson**, with the group's Humanitarian Award. Acknowledging that many might still consider him a loose-cannon pick to talk before an industry crowd (this one included **Chris Silberman**, **David Shore** and **Barry Meyer**), Ratner said facetiously that Nathanson had sent him an e-mail with strict guidelines on what *not* to say: "No black jokes, no gay jokes, no jokes about **Steven Spielberg**, no jokes about my agents, no jokes about my wife or children, no jokes about Asians or Jews. And whatever you do, do

Got tips? E-mail RAMBLING@THR.COM.

NOT repeat the joke I wrote for you that got you fired from the Oscars. It was totally inappropriate then and it is totally inappropriate now." Not all in the crowd were sure he was joking — Nathanson assuredly did not write the off-the-cuff remark that got Ratner fired — but clearly the director is far enough away from the controversy to have a bit of fun at his own expense.

Charlize Theron, Budding Jeans Queen

Everybody knows how well **Charlize Theron** wears clothes, but



Theron and her own line of jeans: A nice fit?

now the A-list clotheshorse wants to make them too. *THR* has learned that she and stylist **Leslie Fremar** are shopping the idea for a Theron Jeans line with denim brands, which would be sold in mass-market stores. Now, with celebrity stylists making all kinds of clothing deals — **Kate Young** with Target, **Jeanne Yang**'s Holmes & Yang co-designed with **Katie Holmes** — it makes a lot of sense. Theron's rep says she can't confirm the project.



Rao's in NYC.

Rao's Under-the-Radar New L.A. Location

New York City restaurant Rao's — known for its tough reservations and mix of politicians and celebrities like **Woody Allen** and **Martin Scorsese** — famously forces its A-list crowd to schlep uptown to East Harlem for its red-sauce Southern Italian dishes. Now the 117-year-old family-owned business is taking over the former Hollywood Canteen, founded by **Bette Davis** and MCA head **Jules Stein** during World War II in what is now an anonymous

postproduction swath of south Hollywood. "We peeked a bit at Santa Monica, Malibu and Beverly Hills, but this space spoke to us," says co-owner **Frank Pellegrino Jr.** "Sure, it's a bit of a journey, but they'll come. For us, they'll come." The new Rao's is due in late spring.

Academy: Oscar Statuette Reserved for Winners Only

Neuro Drinks — the popular energy drink company started by Malibu socialite/philanthropist **Diana Jenkins** — got a bit too cozy with Oscar's trademarked statuette on Academy Awards night. Neuro, a sponsor of the **Elton John AIDS Foundation** viewing party, placed an ad in the event's program showing a lineup of the gold guys wearing sunglasses with cutesy copy like, "Neuro Trim: Best Editing." Turns out it was an unauthorized use of the Oscar image. The Academy won't comment on whether it's going to pursue action. Reps for Neuro could not be reached for comment. *THR*



Neuro Drinks ran afoul of the Academy.



NATHANSON AND RATNER: JONATHAN LEIBSON/WIREIMAGE.COM; BOULPURT: THERON: FRANK TRAPPER/CORBIS IMAGES; RAO'S: JAMES KENYON/DAILY NEWS/GETTY IMAGES; NEURO DRINKS: RICHARD B. LEVIN/NEWS.COM; OSCAR: GARY P. SHERMAN/PHOTOS.COM; STYLING: DAN STENBERG/PHOTOS.COM; STATUE: ANDREW H. WALKER/GETTY IMAGES; PHOTOS: COURTESY OF C4 GLOBAL; KENNEDY: KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES; ROGERS: EVERETT COLLECTION; ALPERT: PHILIP RITTERMAN/COURTESY OF C4 GLOBAL; CHILDREN: COURTESY OF HARLEM SCHOOL OF THE ARTS.

Power Lunch



Circa 55

A power trio of **Warren Beatty**, **Steve Bing** and **Brian Grazer** met at Madeo. ... Making up a Chateau Marmont foursome were **Kathleen Kennedy**, **Frank Marshall**, **Will Arnett** and **Marg Helgenberger**. ... Warner Bros.' **Sue Kroll** took a lunch meeting at Culina. ... **Ben Silverman**, **Tucker Tooley**, *Homeland* producer **Avi Nir**, **Bryan Lourid** and WME's **Adam Venit** with FX's **John Landgraf** have been in to Mr Chow. ... **Al Pacino** dined poolside at the Beverly Hilton's Circa 55 with **Pat Kingsley**. ... **Annette Bening** enjoyed the Chinese chicken salad at the Backyard at the W in Westwood. ... **Jessica Chastain** and her team, including Mosaic's **Paul Nelson** and BWR's **Nicole Perna**, were spotted at Asia de Cuba.



Kennedy

HITCHED, HATCHED, HIRED

Inside the industry's celebrations and news

CONGRATS

AOL hired **Susan Lyne** as CEO of its content brands (minus the Huffington Post group) on Feb. 28.

AMC Networks on Feb. 28 promoted

Sarah Barnett

to Sundance Channel president and GM.

Dirk Hoogstra was promoted to History development and



Barnett

programming executive vp Feb. 28.

Rosalind Norwicki was tapped as executive vp global sales and retail for 20th Century Fox Consumer Products on Feb. 27.

Univision Communications named **Mehul Nagrani** senior vp digital operations Feb. 26.

Hilary Smith was appointed senior vp communications at USA Network on Feb. 27.

FilmDistrict promoted **Beth Lemberger** to executive vp business affairs and general counsel and **Brad Goldberg** to executive vp media and digital and tapped **Anjay Nagpal** as senior vp finance and business development March 4.

Scot Finck was upped to senior vp promotion at the Disney Music Group on Feb. 28.

Film Society of Lincoln Center on March 4 named film critic and programmer **Dennis Lim** director of Cinematheque programming. He succeeds Robert Koehler, who, citing family health issues, resigned

as director of year-round programming.

Producer **Frank Marshall** was named co-chair of the board of directors for the nonprofit L.A.'s Promise on Feb. 26.

Starz elevated **Theano Apostolou** to executive vp communications on March 4.



Apostolou

DEATHS

Pianist **Van Cliburn**, who became an American hero for his sensational triumph at the 1958 Tchaikovsky competition

in Moscow at the height of the Cold War, died Feb. 27 at his home in Fort Worth, Texas, from bone cancer. He was 78.

Stanley Snadowsky, a co-founder and the co-operator of The Bottom Line nightclub in New York's Greenwich Village during its eclectic three-decade run, died Feb. 25 of diabetic complications in Las Vegas. He was 70.

Dale Robertson, a veteran of movies and TV Westerns of the 1950s and '60s like NBC's *Tales of Wells Fargo*, died Feb. 27 of lung cancer and pneumonia in a San Diego hospital. He was 89.

Bobby Rogers, who co-founded The Miracles with Smokey Robinson, died March 3 at his home in Southfield, Mich., after a long illness. He was 73.



Rogers (left) with The Temptations circa 1962.



SOCIAL ACTION HERB ALPERT SAVES A SCHOOL

Thanks to the music legend's \$5.5 million rescue of the storied Harlem School of the Arts, the institution no longer has to worry about 'how to keep the lights on'

By Tina Daunt

TWO YEARS AGO, THE HARLEM SCHOOL of the Arts was forced to close its doors for a month because of a budget crisis. Now, thanks to musician-turned-philanthropist **Herb Alpert**, its financial house is in order and its corridors are alive with the sound of dancers' swift feet and the echoing lines of great playwrights.

In appreciation, on March 11 it will rename itself The Harlem School of the Arts — The Herb Alpert Center. The rebranding comes after Alpert helped rescue it with a lion's share of grants totaling \$5.5 million from his foundation, established in 1988 with his wife, singer **Lani Hall**.

For nearly a half-century, the private school — founded by concert soprano **Dorothy Maynor** — has provided free or low-cost visual and performing arts classes to 3,000 mainly African-American and Latino neighborhood children. Its graduates have gone on to schools like Juilliard and professional careers, among them Tony-winning actress **Condola Rashad** and *Breaking Bad*'s **Giancarlo Esposito**.

Alpert read about the situation in *The New York Times* in 2010 and stepped in with half of the \$1 million needed to resume classes and later with more than \$5 million to replenish the endowment, pay off the school's mortgage and fund scholarships.

"I couldn't imagine that an artistic community like Harlem could lose an art center. The arts open up a child's imagination," says Alpert, who grew up in L.A.'s Fairfax district and remembers when his grammar school invited students to select an instrument from a table. "I picked up a trumpet and got interested in playing. Kids for the most part are not having that opportunity anymore."

School president **Yvette Campbell** says that because of Alpert, school officials no longer are worrying about "how we're going to keep the lights on."

Harlem is only the most recent beneficiary of Alpert's philanthropy. Since 1990, the A&M Records co-founder has given \$120 million to arts education, including a \$30 million grant to UCLA to establish the Herb Alpert School of Music — a generous gesture from a guy who once played in USC's marching band. *THR*

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Harlem School of the Arts will rename itself March 11.

"I believe I have been blessed beyond my dreams. I feel this is the best way I can say thank you," says Alpert, photographed in January at his Malibu studio.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY Philip Ritterman

www.thr.com | THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER | 21