

## ON THE LIGHT SIDE

## Mature guy has much to offer – unmatched shoes and all

BY CHRIS ERSKINE

Clothes make the man. I confirmed this a few weeks back when I wore two different shoes to work — one brown, the other, browner.

Thankfully, men's shoes are amazingly unimaginative, which makes them virtually interchangeable. So one dark winter morning, I slipped on a right loafer from one pair and a left from another. It wasn't until I was walking out of the parking garage and to my desk that I discovered the loafers didn't match.

Later, about 4 p.m., I stood up at my desk and asked, "Notice anything odd about me today?"

There was a long pause.

"Where do you want us to start?" someone grumbled.

I learn now that unmatched shoes are very in. The Financial Times just reported that wearing mismatched shoes is entering the fashion mainstream.

In fact, my buddy Rich came to work last week with one loafer and one tied shoe, which is a real feat, no pun intended.

Because, to me, it's one thing to accidentally slip on two mismatched loafers. It's quite another to accidentally wear one laced shoe and one slip-on, as Rich did.

Think about it: Rich, a vibrant man somewhere between the ages of 45 and 90, leans down to tie one shoe and it never occurs to him that he is tying only one shoe, not the other. With Rich, I think we should all just be grateful when he remembers his pants.

By gawd, it'll be interesting watching baby boomers grow older. First, we have all the usual traits of the gracefully aging male — forgetfulness, lust, anger, lust, mid-life crises and a certain I'm-afraid-of-nothing sensibility that makes a man highly attractive to every mem-

ber of the opposite sex, except perhaps his own wife.

After 25 years, his wife knows too much. She hears him in the morning pulling up his socks, grunting a little as he bends, or the way his sinuses whistle when he reads the paper over coffee.

She sees him rub his aching back after a short car trip to the post office and thinks, "Wow, my dear dinosaur looks a little stiff today. I wonder if he'll make it to lunch?"

In that same vein, the other day my wife asked, "What'd you do to your neck?" after I'd turned to her creakily, like Frankenstein.

"What neck?" I answered.

I pride myself on my lack of neck. In fact, I pride myself on my overall body type: no neck, stubby legs, a physique perfectly suited for tunnelling under culverts or retrieving curious children out of wishing wells. Too bad, really, that

I missed the Second World War, for I would have been a terror to the Germans under small Bavarian bridges.

But I digress. The point is that a mature man still offers a woman many things — perspective, humour. . . . Retiree medical? You bet your bunions.

Think about it for a moment. By the time boomers hit 80, we will have sucked up all the world's health care — the gauze, the syringes, the artificial hips — leaving none for succeeding generations, probably not even a Q-Tip or a lousy throat lozenge. The time to prepare for that is now.

But I digress. Again. The point is that a mature man offers more than just a certain physical grace and cutting-edge fashion sense. The mature man can talk at length about Lamborghinis or the modern global economy. Or describe — heck, he'll even demonstrate — how Baltimore's Johnny Unitas used to drop

back in the pocket, dance left, look right and zing the ball over the middle to his favourite target, Raymond Berry. Grace under pressure, that's a mature man's métier.

By the way, did you happen to hear about the Boise State player who flicked the ball to his teammate on that perfectly executed fourth and forever? Sports Illustrated asked him recently how he kept his cool, and the kid said, "To be honest, I didn't realize it was fourth down."

See, that's what you get with a younger man. The mature man always knows what down it is, always has a plan. He can't execute the plan, but he knows that something must be done.

And if you don't find that a little sexy . . . hey, check out these shoes.

• *Chris Erskine writes for the Los Angeles Times.*

## RESEARCH FILE

## World Wide Web is also math puzzle

■ **Study conclusion:** The World Wide Web network can be modelled using mathematics. Such modelling leads to improvements in search-engine rankings and to a better understanding of the underlying principles governing the evolution of the web.

■ **Researcher:** Anthony Bonato is an associate professor and graduate coordinator in Wilfrid Laurier University's department of mathematics.

■ **Study focus:** "The development of the Internet and the World Wide Web has changed our outlook on the world," Bonato said.

"No longer is information given in a book form and catalogued in an orderly manner. It is presented in a web-like form as a mass of items with interconnecting links."

The network of web pages connected by hyperlinks is called the "web graph," and it's now an object of intense research scrutiny by mathematicians, computer scientists and physicists.

"The web graph is a massive graph, with many billions of pages and links. It is constantly changing, with pages and links constantly being added, updated or deleted," Bonato said.

Bonato's research goal is to find good mathematical models to represent the web graph accurately.

He uses wide-ranging techniques, making use of tools from graph theory, probability theory and geometry.

Applications of modelling the web range from simulating the spread of computer viruses and discovering the communities of web pages on interrelated topics, to improving web search algorithms.

Google, the dominant search engine, already exploits the network structure of the web in its rankings.

■ **Published:** Bonato's research, along with a detailed survey of existing research on the web graph, will be summarized in his upcoming book on the mathematics of the Internet, called *A Course on the Web Graph*.

Bonato's research has been published in more than 30 papers in peer-reviewed international journals.

**Source:** *Wilfrid Laurier University public affairs.*

PEOPLE: Jeffrey Kuhn

## St. Clements Scarecrow now on Broadway

'I can't imagine my life without theatre'

BY COLIN HUNTER  
RECORD STAFF

He is a knight who does not say "Ni!" He is, rather, Sir Bedevere The Strangely Flatulent — a wise but smelly knight.

In reality, he is Jeffrey Kuhn, a stage actor originally from St. Clements who has recently joined the Broadway cast of Monty Python's *Spamalot*.

The musical is based on — or "lovingly ripped off from," as the playbill states — the iconic comedy troupe's film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

Since *Spamalot* opened in 2005, the consistently sold-out Broadway production has won three Tony awards and a Grammy.

Despite the big hype and high expectations, 37-year-old Kuhn says stepping into the part of Sir Bedevere has been a blast.

"It's so nice to just be silly," he says of the role on the phone from his Manhattan apartment.

"It's refreshing to do something whose sole goal is to amuse."

**The Life of Jeffrey:** *Spamalot* is Kuhn's fourth Broadway production in the past decade — an impressive run he only dreamed of as an aspiring actor in St. Clements.

But as early as Grade 6, when he portrayed the Scarecrow in a school production of *The Wizard of Oz*, he knew he was destined for the stage.

"I remember very vividly during that show saying to myself, 'If I can

go through life doing this, I'll be happy,'" Kuhn says.

As a teenager, he joined Kitchener-Waterloo Musical Productions, where he gained valuable experience and made strong connections in Canadian showbiz.

He studied drama at Ryerson University in Toronto, and shortly after graduation landed a spot with the Stratford Festival Theatre company, where he performed for three seasons in shows such as *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

**His Holy Grail:** Though performing in Stratford was an invaluable experience, there was one problem: Stratford was practically his own backyard. His childhood dream was to perform in New York, and as luck would have it, New York soon needed him.

He was in the Toronto cast of *Ragtime* in the mid-1990s, and was recruited to be part of the Broadway cast of the show.

That experience eventually helped him land parts in Broadway productions of *Wicked*, and Stephen Sondheim's *Assassins*.

When a casting agent called about the role in *Spamalot*, he was confident and ready.

**Always look on the bright side of life:** Finding work as an actor in the Big Apple can be a tough slog and was particularly tricky right after Kuhn permanently moved there in the late summer of 2001.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jeffrey Kuhn, originally from St. Clements, now lives in New York and is playing a knight in the Broadway production of Monty Python's *Spamalot*.

Broadway receipts took a major hit as tourism to the city plummeted after the 9/11 attacks, leaving slim pickings for the city's actors.

"But I didn't have any second thoughts about being in New York," Kuhn says. "It felt like home."

**The Meaning of Life:** "I can't imagine my life without theatre," says Kuhn, who lives just a short walk away from Times Square with his partner, Richard, and their two big dogs.

The more time he spends onstage, he says, the happier he is.

"When I walk into a dark auditori-

um and see the stage, it feels like the most comfortable place on the planet to me," he says. "It just feels perfectly calm and centred and right."

**And now for something completely different?** Kuhn is scheduled to play Sir Bedevere in *Spamalot* until June.

And after that? "Who knows?" he says.

"All the most interesting things that have happened to me weren't on the radar. The best experiences I've had have just bubbled out of the blue."

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## NEW TECHNOLOGY

## Environmentally friendly cabin catches public fancy

BY ERIC SHACKLETON

An environmentally friendly, made-in-Canada, high-tech cabin has captured the imagination of visitors at home shows across the country.

"Smart," "tough," and "cool" are just a few of the comments from people who have seen the all-terrain structure that emerges from a shipping container.

The small abode is fully equipped for living and was constructed by a Vancouver-based design group to promote Canadian design and ingenuity. It's not for sale, but almost everyone, it seems, wants to own it.

"It's amazing how in 480 square feet, you can actually live in something that's self-contained and filled with smart stuff," says Lisa Snider, who visited the cabin at the Metro Home Show in Toronto in January.

"It's sustainable . . . compact . . . real-

ly cool," said Snider, a sales representative for DMG World Media, which organized the home show.

The cabin has a composting toilet, said Robert Studer, who helped design the dwelling.

There are two large holding tanks for water. The filtration system consists of UV light to kill bacteria and micro filters to pull out sediment.

As of now, the tanks are filled upon deployment of the exhibit, but plans are to add an awning to catch rainwater for the tanks, said Studer.

Energy and heat for the exhibit are provided by a biodiesel generator and by large photovoltaic panels, which are also used to recharge batteries.

Studer said it takes a team of four about a day to set up the exhibit.

The Bark Design Collective, which comprises several design firms, was formed in 2002 with a mandate to uplift

the profile of ingenuity and design in Canada.

It embarked on the cabin project two years ago, said Studer, who has his own design firm This Is It Design Inc., and is also marketing director for the collective.

The cabin is now on a four-year journey around the world. Its first stop was in Calgary in March 2006. The next stop is the Ottawa home show March 22 to 25.

Besides Canada, the exhibit will also tour the United States, Europe and Asia.

The cabin comes folded up in a box — a six-metre container — called a MECC, designed by Weatherhaven and used worldwide for military and disaster relief operations.

The MECC's walls fold down to become the floors. Everything that comprises the exhibition is strapped down

in the centre of the container.

"It can actually support a family of four, even a pet," said Snider. "That's really amazing. People were really excited and impressed."

When the MECC is deployed, it triples in size.

Bark wants the All Terrain Cabin to be the cabin of the 21st century, said Studer, who refused to give its cost, fearing it would give it too much of a retail image.

Part of the money for the project came from the federal government's Western Economic Diversification Fund, he said. The rest came from the design firms and the more than 50 companies that contributed products.

Countries like Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, Germany, Italy "all have very good brand images that involve design as a key component."

But "no matter how much we say

this is an exhibition of Canadian design and ingenuity, somehow this all-terrain cabin is addressing a deep-seated need for people to want to live in the woods off the grid," said Studer.

"We're constantly being inundated with 'How much?' and 'Where can I get one?'"

The cabin's photovoltaic panels were made by Day4Energy, Audio Products International produced its sound system, and the composting toilet came from Sun Mar Corp. It also uses long-lasting LED lighting.

"It showcases everything from publicly traded companies like Research In Motion right down to some of the finest graduates that are coming out of our design institutes," said Studer.

There are no plans yet to mass produce it for consumers.

• *Canadian Press*