

## News + Notes

### 12 Come All Ye Faithful

Mel Gibson has a religious epiphany, and studios are feeling his *Passion*... The reality of *Big Brother*: It's a hit!... A notoriously good Crib Sheet on Duran Duran...Our *Project Greenlight* prescription, plus what we found on the cutting-room floor...The 5-Year Plan: *Thirteen*'s Nikki Reed...Hot Sheet...The Shaw Report...Monitor.

## Features

### 28 And the Geek Shall Inherit the Earth

Part Howdy Doody, part Davy Jones, 100% stud, America's favorite redhead (sorry, Lucy!) dishes on Ruben, stardom, and that hair. Our heart's Aiken for Clay.  
BY DAVE KARGER

### 33 Guilty Pleasures

Okay, we admit it. Kurt Russell makes us giddy, and we're a little too thrilled by *Sabrina*, *the Teenage Witch*. From Babe to Britney, stars' and staffers' true confessions.

### 43 Orange Alert

With *The O.C.*, Fox returns to what it does best—sexy teens in SoCal's hottest zip. Just don't call this hit 92660.  
BY JENNIFER ARMSTRONG

### 46 Merry J. Blige?

After years of teary confessionals, the onetime Queen of Pain is confronting a new obstacle: Happiness.  
BY ROB BRUNNER

Right: The O.C.'s Benjamin McKenzie, Adam Brody, and Mischa Barton are California dreamy (page 43)



**ON THE COVER** Clay Aiken photographed for EW by Matthias Clamer in New York City on Thursday, July 17, 2003



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Looking—Turn to Page 28!)  
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