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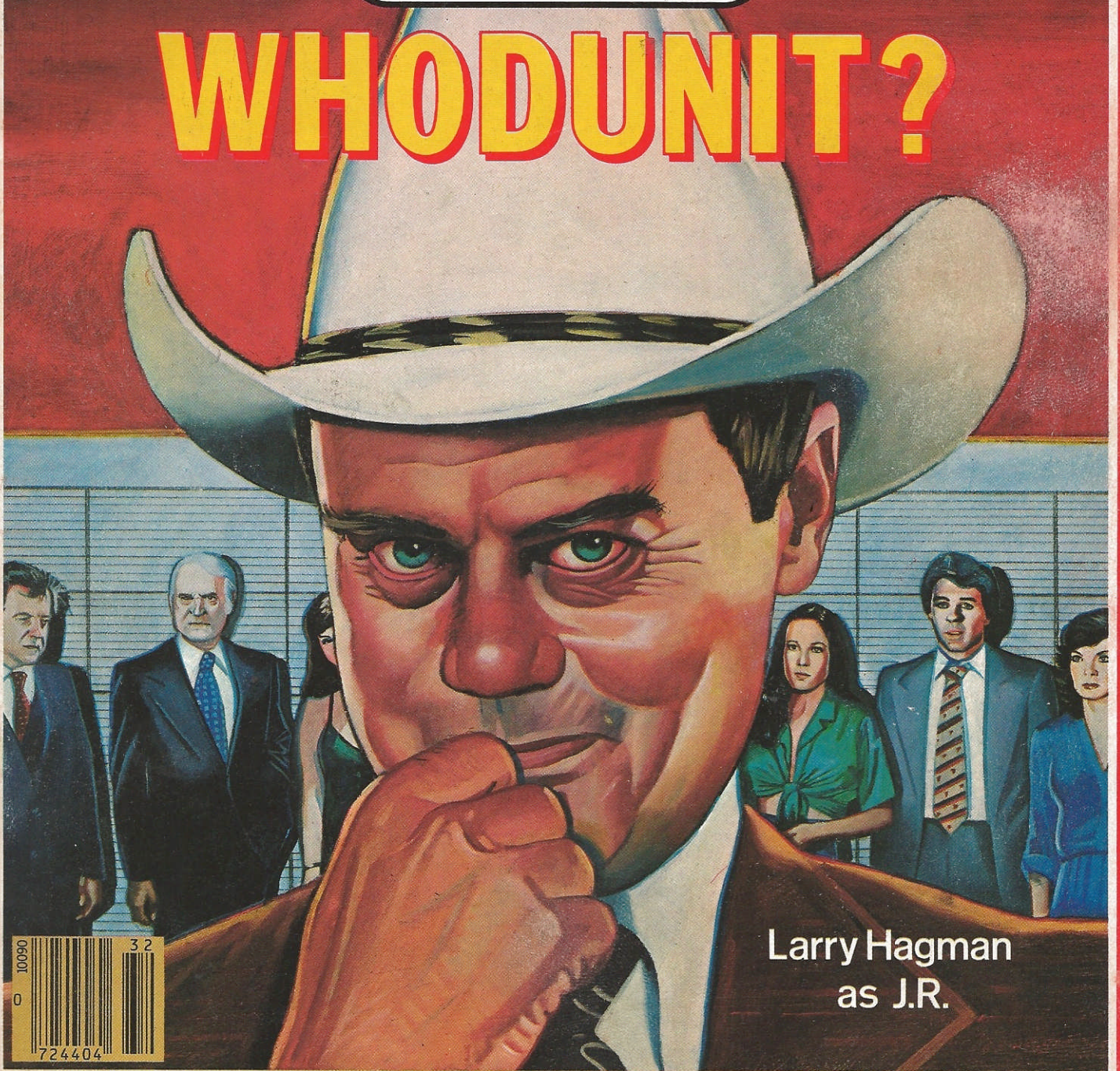
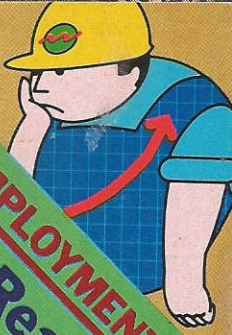
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TIME

TV's Dallas

WHODUNIT?

UNEMPLOYMENT
The Real
Price



Larry Hagman
as J.R.



724404

Television

COVER STORY

TV's *Dallas*: Whodunit?

*Sinning and winning, J.R.'s clan
is now the first family of soap*

As he lay crumpled on the floor of his office, with two bullets in his stomach, his thoughts pinwheeled off into fantasies of his real and idealized past. His first word had been "Mammon." As a child he had torn the wings off flies and sold the insects' bodies to science. In high school he had peddled exam answers to his fellow students, then told his teacher that they were cheating. In college he had impregnated an entire sorority and used the offspring to stock a black-market adoption agency.

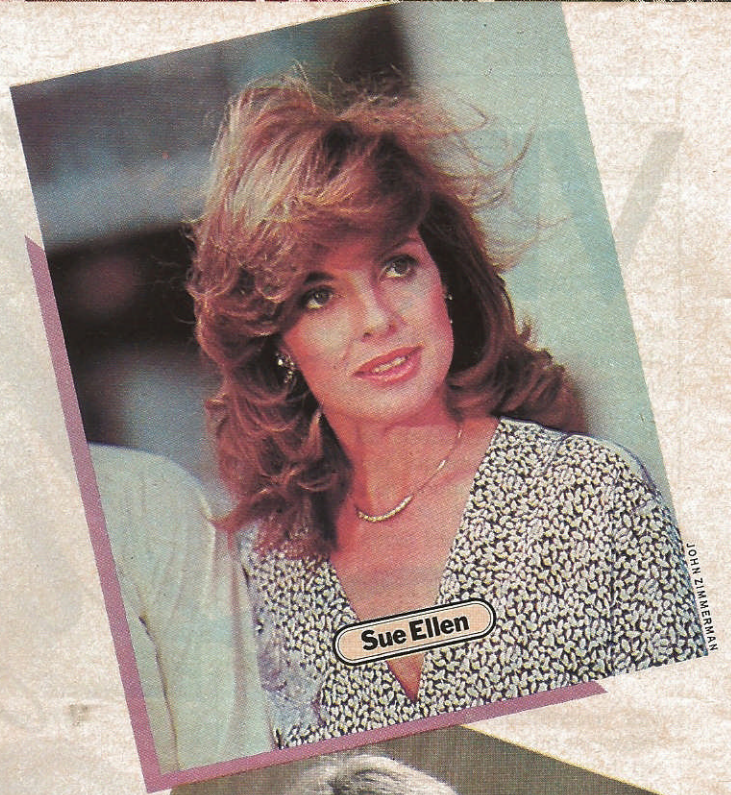
No wonder he proved such a success when his daddy brought him into the family business: skewering the town's most powerful men out of millions while he was seducing their wives. All in all, a cause for celebration. Then why, he wondered as he started to slide from consciousness, was his last image that of his sainted daddy shaking his head in grim disappointment?

Fade to black.



The human oil slick: Larry Hagman as J.R. Ewing

Why do 300 million viewers love to hate this man?



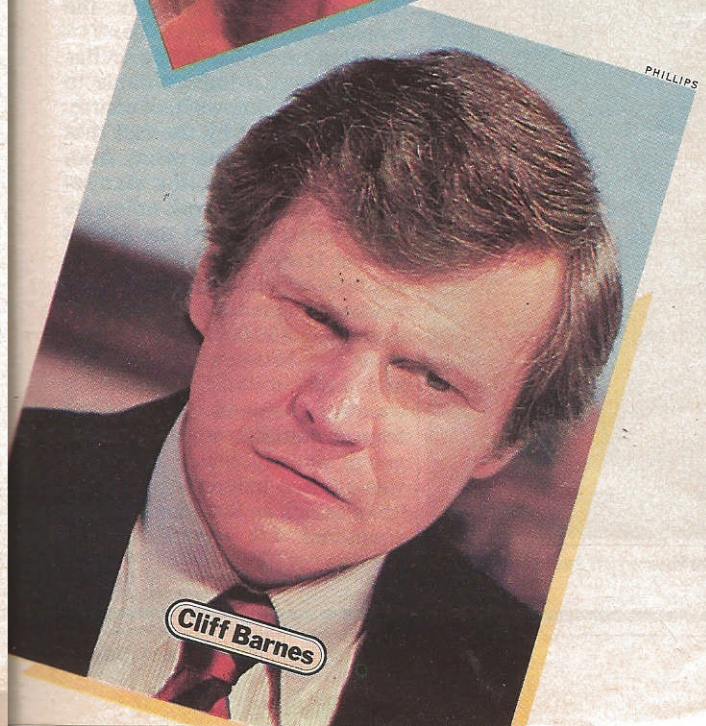
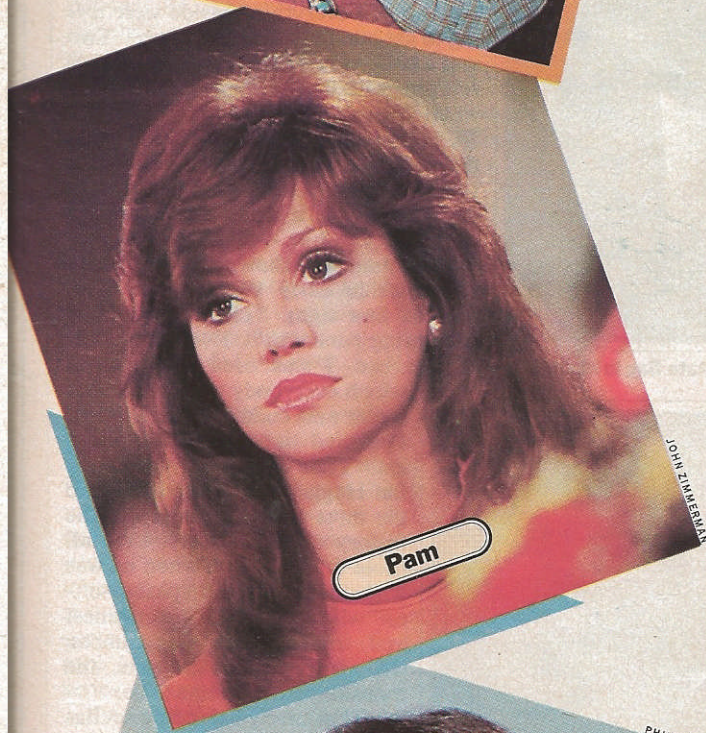
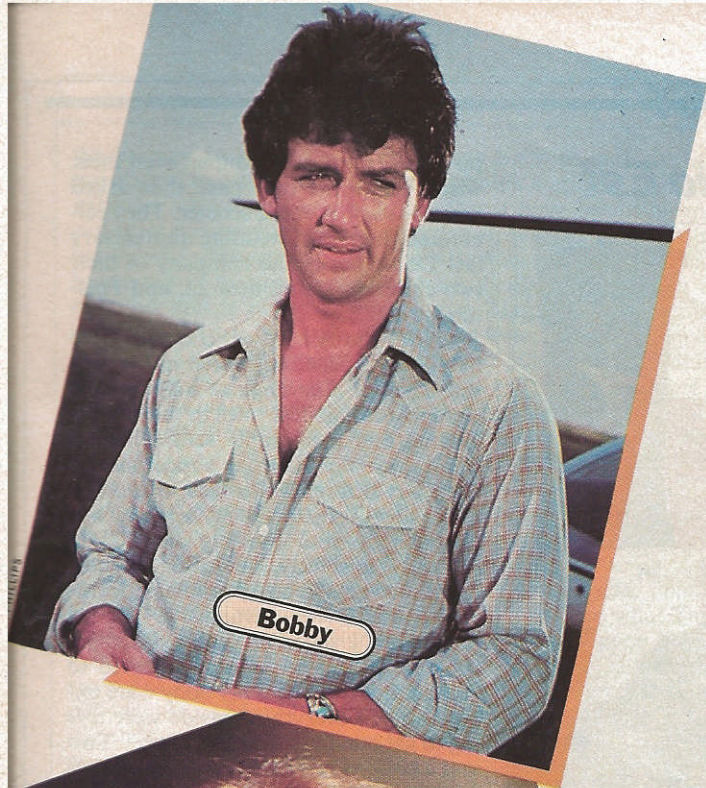
JOHN ZIMMERMAN



ZIMMERMAN

ZIMMERMAN



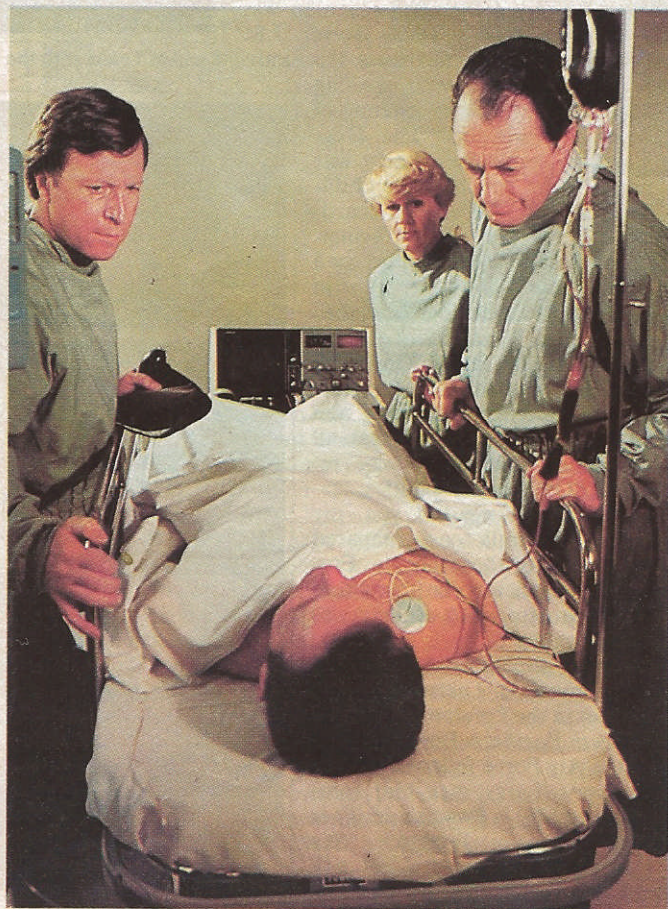


... Until Friday, Sept. 19, that is. On that night—God and the striking Screen Actors Guild willing—the critically wounded body of John Ross Ewing Jr. will be sped to Dallas Memorial Hospital, and viewers will be given their first clues to a solution of the mystery: Who shot J.R.? Never in the history of cliffhanging narrative have so many people waited and speculated on the resolution of a plot twist. At last count, 300 million souls in 57 countries shared this benign obsession. When the Ewing family saga begins its new season, the number is sure to be swollen by millions more who will have succumbed to the summerlong blitz of news features, promotions and gossip. Competing networks are advised to broadcast test patterns.

Since its debut in April 1978, *Dallas*' Nielsen rating has almost doubled, until it is now the top-rated dramatic show on U.S. television. The March 21 *Dallas*, which ended with the shooting of J.R., was the year's most watched series episode. The show's huge, steady audience (40 million a week in the U.S.) helped CBS vault back into its familiar position as the top prime-time network after ABC's three-year interregnum.

Most hit shows live off habit; *Dallas* arouses demonstrative loyalty. Millions of *Dallas* T shirts, bumper stickers and buttons are festooning torsos, fenders and lapels. Half a dozen "J.R." novelty records are heading for the charts. Society matrons are planning *Dallas* costume parties for the night the program returns. Politicians have climbed on the bandwagon too. Jimmy Carter, at a Dallas fund raiser, confessed with a grin: "I came to Dallas to find out confidentially who shot J.R. If any of you could let me know that, I could finance the whole campaign this fall." Perhaps not: at the Republican Convention, Reaganites distributed buttons that read A DEMOCRAT SHOT J.R.

Gradually and purposefully, like J.R. slithering toward a voluptuous Texas belle, *Dallas* has ascended the international ratings until it rivals *The Muppet Show* as the world's most popular TV series. In Johannesburg, where *Dallas* is No. 1 in the ratings, Cabinet ministers refuse speaking engagements on Tuesday nights, knowing their constituency will be at home with



Intensive care in the Dallas Memorial emergency ward

Who pulled the trigger? How will J.R. take his revenge?

Larry Hagman: *Vita Celebratio Est*

In his acting debut, Larry Hagman had only one line. It never got out. Instead, the actor stared dumbly at the audience. If he has been tongue-tied in the 40 years since that grade-school pageant, the occasion has gone unrecorded. Today Hagman likes to talk the way Texans like to spend. Except on Sundays, when there is a rule of silence at his Malibu spread. "You've got to have a day of rest somewhere along the line," he explains. "Every major religion has one."

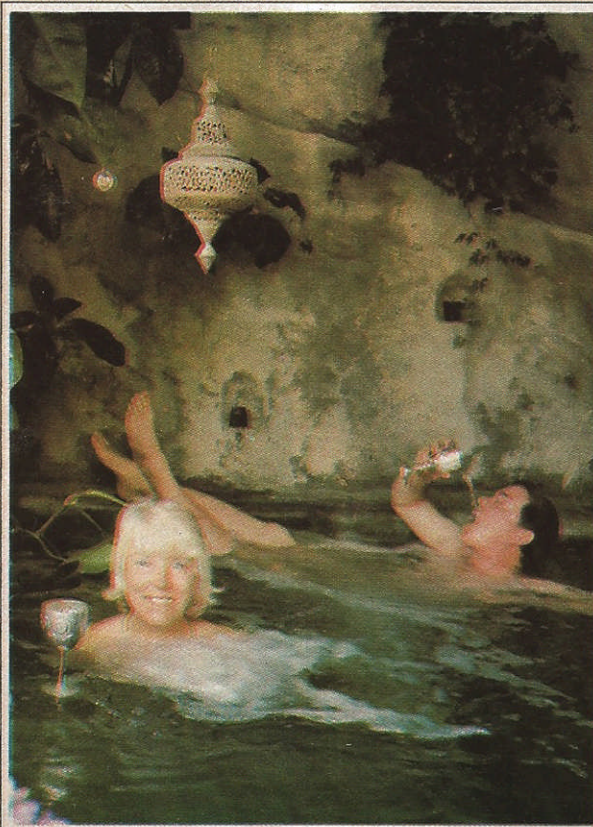
But then Hagman crowds at least a week into the other six days. He is famous for leading full-dress parades down the beach, with as many as 400 people in tow, and he may decide—today, tomorrow or perhaps ten minutes from now—that it is time to put on his Indian headdress and call the rest of the Malibu tribe to a war dance. He has been known to show up at the supermarket in a gorilla suit. Why? Why not? "I guess I'm a ham," he says. However he costumes himself, he knows that he can always cool off by jumping into the lavish Jacuzzi bath and forget everything but his motto, floating on a banner overhead: *Vita Celebratio Est* (Life Is a Celebration).

So it has been for most of his 48 years. Larry's father Ben Hagman was a wheeling-dealing Texas lawyer, J.R. Ewing without the meanness. His mother is Mary Martin, who is, along with Ethel Merman, doyenne of Broadway musicals. The Hagmans divorced when Larry was five, and for much of his childhood he shuttled between boarding schools and theater wings. When Martin went on the road with *Annie Get Your Gun* in 1947, Larry, then 15, decided to go home to Weatherford, Texas, to live with his father. One summer Ben was running for state senator, and his son drove him all over his district. "I met all the dudes down there," he recalls. "Oil, cattle, politics, everything. Let me tell you, my character is milk toast compared with some of those people. Fratricide, patricide, brothers and sisters shooting each other; it was unbelievable!"

After appearing in some tent-show musicals, Larry joined his mother in the London production of *South Pacific*. A European tour in the Air Force followed. Along the way, Larry met Maj (pronounced My), a Swedish designer then living in England. "She thought I was the crassest jerk she had ever met in her life," he says. But Hagman, who had a lit-



A son of Texas with the state flag in Malibu



The star and wife Maj cavorting in their giant Jacuzzi bath

tle of J.R.'s way with women even then, wisely let a little time pass, then asked her out—on his Vespa scooter. They celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary last December in the company of their two children, Heidi, now 22, and Preston, now 18.

After the Air Force, Hagman tried his luck off-Broadway, then did a two-year stint on *The Edge of Night*. There were several modest roles in movies, including one memorable semivillain in *The Group*. But Hagman's most important part before *Dallas* was in the air-head sitcom *I Dream of Jeannie*. For Hagman it was the big break. He worked constantly, rewriting scripts, fighting to get the best possible performers. "I was driven, compulsive," he remembers. "I yelled at people. Finally I couldn't take it any more. I started to vomit, and it was as if my body were exploding and everything inside were trying to get out, including my brain." Two and a half years with a shrink put his cerebrum where it belonged, and even when *Jeannie* folded, he kept busy with TV pilots and movies. In the lean years that followed he still earned more than \$150,000, enough, as his mother says, to allow him to be "a grand pasha" around the house.

Hagman was shown the first script of *Dallas* in early 1978: it was love-hate at first sight. "There wasn't one redeeming person in it. Even the mother was bad. I was tired of shows in which everybody was so nice and warm and cuddly to each other. I wanted to see some ass kickers." That was incentive enough for Hagman to make J.R. into the most unusual bad guy in the history of TV villainy. Like all those dudes he met when he was with his daddy, he speaks softest when he is at his meanest and smiles before he pounces; the more devious he gets, the more sincere he seems to be.

That canny balancing act has made Hagman indispensable to the show. He knows it, of course, and, embittered by the fact that he does not get one penny from the *Jeannie* reruns, the star refused to return to work unless he got a larger share of the *Dallas* gusher. It was a tactic J.R. would appreciate, and, naturally, it worked: Hagman now makes an estimated \$50,000 to \$75,000 a show, or between \$1.1 million and \$1.65 million a year—not counting residuals yet to come from eventual syndication. "But you're already a rich man," he was advised before negotiations. "Not as rich as I'm gonna be," he countered. J.R. would like that too.

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the Ewings. In Hong Kong, *Dallas* is a hit with both the local population and the American businessmen stationed there; expatriates who return briefly to the States have been known to call their wives with news of episodes aired in the U.S. but not yet shown in the crown colony. In Australia, Network 10 quickly ran out of its supply of I HATE J.R. badges and when it announced that it hoped to bring Larry Hagman—J.R. himself—to the country, the switchboard was swamped with requests for his private phone number. Citizens of such troubled Middle East nations as Lebanon and Jordan find the show a welcome diversion, a fantasy land where oil-rich Americans have fun making themselves miserable. And in Turkey, the head of the Muslim fundamentalist National Salvation Party presented a 16-page ultimatum that included “the elimination of *Dallas* from television programs” because it is “degrading and aims at destroying Turkish family life.”

The British are supposed to be above such nonsense. After all, their prime-time soaps (such as *The Forsyte Saga*, *Poldark* and *Upstairs, Downstairs*) are to the American brand what Yardley is to Lifebuoy. But after a slow start, *Dallas* grew from a guilty secret to a national craze. When the BBC broadcast last season's final episode, normally congested roads were clear and pubs empty as 30 million Britons (more than half of the U.K.'s population) stayed home to watch J.R. get his. On the news program that night, the BBC replayed the shooting as a news event, and a few days later offered a weekend for two in Dallas to the person who supplied the wittiest explanation for the crime.* (This summer the network is also providing a crash course in Ewingology: a rerun of all 54 shows, one a night.) British bookmakers seized on the golden opportunity. William Hill's set odds on the assailant's identity. (The favorite, at 6-4: Dusty Farlow, the “deceased” lover of J.R.'s wife. Others: J.R.'s mistress, 4-1; his banker, 4-1; his mother, 8-1.) Hagman, vacationing in England, was offered what looked like a sure thing: £100,000 if, as he stepped on the plane taking him home, he would reveal the culprit. Hagman blurted out the truth: he did not know who shot J.R., nor did any member of the cast.

It hardly matters. The *Dallas* phenomenon stems from something more complex than an interest in whodunit. If J.R. Ewing had not committed himself to a life of stylish wickedness—and if the part did not fit Hagman like an iron whip in a velvet glove—few viewers would care that he was near death or trouble themselves to ponder the assailant's identity. If the scheming scion of Ewing Oil were not surrounded by a nest of relatives, all pursuing their venal and venereal desires through a plot delirious in its complexity, he would be perceived as a cartoon villain among prime time's standard retinue of sanctified simps. If *Dallas* did not offer the rarest of series commodities—narrative surprise and character change—the attempt on J.R.'s life would be no more than a gimmick, instead of the logical climax to a season of devilish intrigue.

Dallas does well what American commercial television does best: present the viewer with a family of characters so appealing in their hopes, their failings, their resilience that they will be invited back into the living room week after week. The Ewings may be scoundrels and wastrels, but they are good company. Socially they carry themselves with the ease of Middle American nobility. Only at the end of each visit, with kisses and thank-yous all around, do you notice that they have made off with the silverware and your teen-age daughter.

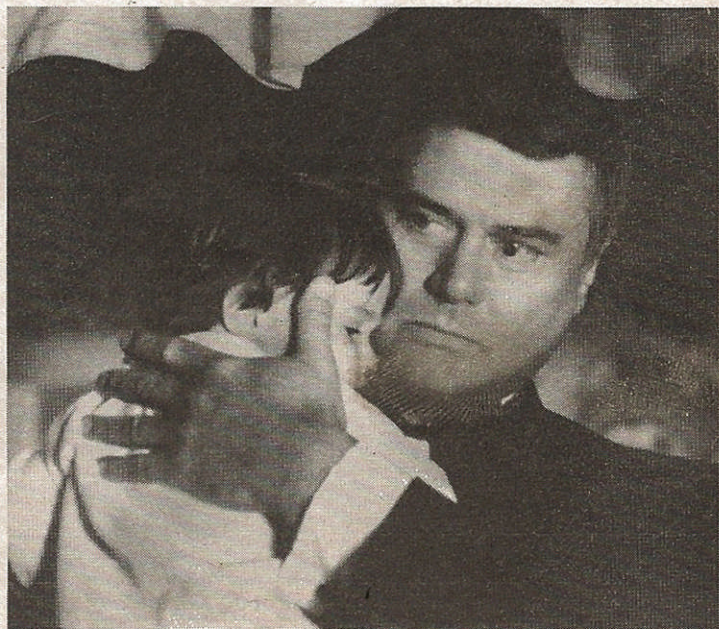
In many TV series, characters behave the same way from first episode to last; that is their appeal. *Dallas* is different. It makes a pact with the viewer: tune in every week and get a jolt. *Dallas* offers adventure. In most series, characters refine themselves ever so slightly as time goes by, like an outdoor sculpture retouched by nature; the Ewings redefine themselves almost every week. Missing one episode means not only losing track of the plot, but finding that someone has acquired new alliances

*The winner, from 10,000 entrants: Leonora Gallantry, a widow from Crew, Cheshire. In her scenario, J.R. planned the whole thing to escape his personal and financial problems. On his “deathbed” he signed a paper committing his wife to a sanitarium.

and enemies. It's flourish or perish with each week's trauma.

In short, punchy scenes, *Dallas* tells viewers that the rich really are different: they sin more spectacularly and suffer in style. The program's high-gloss handsomeness brings a touch of class to the ruck of commercial series TV. The Ewing home at Southfork Ranch, where eight members of one of Texas' wealthiest families contrive to live under one roof, resembles a fornicary of Neiman-Marcus showrooms. Every taste and no taste is represented here: satin pillowcases, china dogs, replicas of Steuben vases, gilt-framed imitations of Frederic Remington, bedroom closets that look like mink cemeteries. The budget for a typical *Dallas* episode approaches \$700,000, one of the highest in TV, but all the money is on the screen.

Beneath the glamorous settings and soap-opera situations—and inextricable from them—is a solid, suggestive foundation of conflicting themes and characters. David Jacobs, 40, who created the show and wrote many of its early episodes, struck a rich vein of dramatic possibilities with one basic opposition: the Old West vs. the New West. *Dallas* expresses this opposition in countless configurations: cattle and oil, country and city, the land and the machine, tradition and innovation, family and business, the Ewing ranch in rural Brad-



One brief shining moment: J.R. finally embraces his son

Why did this scene bring 10,000 letters to the Dallas office?

dock and the Ewing Oil office building in downtown Dallas.

The opposition is not a simple matter of Good (noble conservatism) vs. Evil (predatory pragmatism) because one factor is dependent on the other. The Ewing Oil empire supports the ranch home; the business keeps the family together. J.R. may behave like a raffish amalgam of Machiavelli and the Marquis de Sade, but if he is evil, he is a strong, necessary evil for the weaker family members. His ruthless devotion to expanding the Ewing empire almost justifies his weakness for the three Bs: booze, bribes and broads. Oil work and no play would make J.R. a dull boy—and would have scuttled *Dallas* long ago.

If this makes the program sound like the subject for a doctorate in contemporary mythology, so be it. But Jacobs refuses to fish for a subtext. “*Dallas* makes no demands on the system,” he says. “It is not about capitalism, Big Oil, the rich and the poor, abuse of power or any other social issues. The people are driven by very big emotions, and they're miserable.”

True. No *Dallas* watcher is likely to make the connection between a Ewing Oil business meeting and the current price of a gallon of gas. Southfork is a ranch out of time, and the Ewing Oil headquarters is a castle in the air—almost literally. The stock shot of the office tower shows a fleecy cloud reflected on the building's façade with the surreal clarity of a painting by Ma-

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gritte. Dallas realty; *Dallas* fantasy. The plot is a Rube Goldberg machine of the seven deadly sins, but performed and acted absolutely straight. This gives the viewer options. He can live and die with the Ewings; he can see the show as a satire of Neanderthal capitalism; or he can appreciate *Dallas* as the most adroitly plotted multigenerational saga since the Corleones moved into the olive oil business.

In 1977 *Dallas* was only a wicked gleam in David Jacobs' eye. Jacobs, a balding, cherubic man who was then story editor of ABC's *Family*, had the idea for an hourlong series, "a sort of American *Scenes from a Marriage*." Richard Burger, then head of dramatic development at CBS, suggested that Jacobs "try something rich and Southwestern instead of middle-class and Californian." Recalls Jacobs: "I went home and wrote a letter to myself about this terribly good-looking, semitrashy lady who marries into a rich Texas family." Jacobs envisioned this character, Pamela Barnes Ewing, taking on heroic proportions, shaking off her shady past and winning the respect of the family.

But the Ewings, even in embryo, had already begun to dom-

of profits from their wells and wooed away Digger's true love, Ellie Southworth (Barbara Bel Geddes). Forty years later Ewing Oil had grown into an empire, and Jock and Ellie had produced three sons: J.R., who took his father's place as company president and married a former Miss Texas, Sue Ellen Shepard (Linda Gray); Gary (David Ackroyd), who bolted the Ewing spread, leaving behind his horny teen-age daughter Lucy (Charlene Tilton); and Bobby (Patrick Duffy), who has wed Barnes' daughter Pamela (Victoria Principal). Pamela's loyalties are tested by the continuing family feud, carried on now by J.R. and Pamela's half-brother Cliff (Ken Kercheval), who has vowed to dispatch the Ewing empire with extreme prejudice.

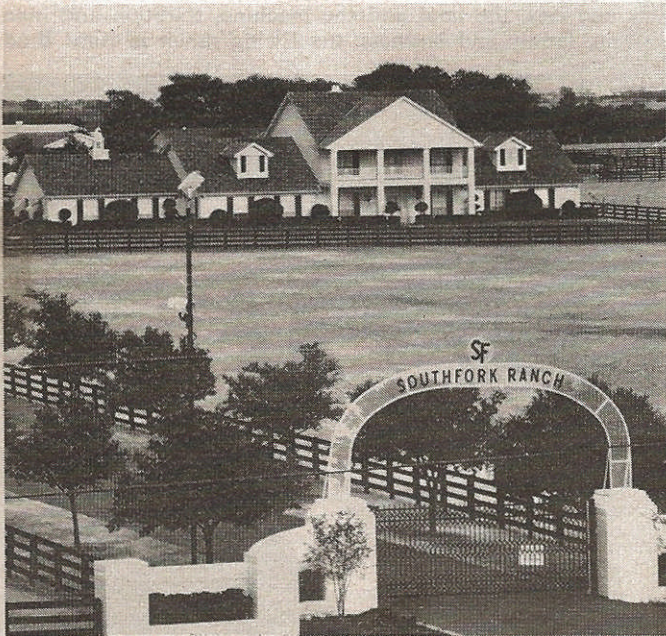
These plot permutations have a biblical resonance: Cain and Abel, Abraham and Isaac, Noah and his sons, Sodom and Gomorrah. No wonder then that *Dallas*, like most soap operas, has a "bible," a synopsis of each character and his or her development through a year's worth of episodes. The *Dallas* bible is assembled each spring by Executive Producer Philip Capice, Producer Leonard Katzman, Executive Story Editor Arthur Bernard Lewis and Story Editors Camille Marchetta and Rena Down. (After the first five shows, Jacobs left and now supervises the *Dallas* spin-off, *Knots Landing*.) "We spend six weeks or so doing a long-range seasonal bible," Capice explains. "Then we break that down episode by episode. We spend hours going over each script in all its variations. You must develop a story line so that when the main story peaks, another variation takes over. And there is usually an interrelationship between the main story and the variations."

Holding the power of life or death, love and guilt over three dozen characters has its pleasure; it is also a grind. Says Katzman: "We have this wonderful group of people whose lives can go anywhere. But when you have all the story lines to plot out, it is very depressing. You may plot the season and then look at a character and say, 'Wait, he has nothing to do in Episode 10.' And at some point all the story lines have to come together."

Often enough, the story lines come together in an apt, compact resolution to a wondrously complex plot. Toward the end of the past season, for example, the twine of stories looked hopelessly snarled. Cliff Barnes, now taking his revenge as an assistant district attorney, had Jock indicted for the murder, 28 years earlier, of Southfork Ranch Hand Hutch McKinney. But *voilà!* Digger Barnes, on his deathbed, confessed to Miss Ellie that *he* had shot Hutch for planning to run off with Digger's wife Rebecca, who was carrying Hutch's child—Pamela!

A series like *Dallas* demands a certain kind of actor. It needs an ensemble of performers; the story is the star. Only team players need apply. Luckily, the actors wear their roles like alter egos. Jim Davis, 63, a veteran of hundreds of westerns, drawls modestly, "I'm Jock Ewing without the money." (He may be a bit too modest: each principal actor reportedly earns more than \$250,000 a year from the show.) Ken Kercheval, 45, whose Cliff Barnes is obsessed with ruining J.R., says of the murder attempt, "Actually, I hope it is me. I'd be an instant hero around the country." Victoria Principal, 30, had to adapt to the shifting of focus from Pamela to J.R., and she seems well adjusted. She calls Pamela "a little Statue of Liberty. When you have utter evil on one side, you can't have mediocre good on the other." Principal, who is herself statuesque enough to have posed for a rearmend *Venus de Milo*, has been criticized by discriminating voyeurs for changing Pamela from a sexpot to a Gucci Two-Shoes; she replies, "I didn't want to upstage my own performance." Charlene Tilton, 20, plays Lucy, the Ewing niece, as if she were really the love child of Mae West. The British press has a nickname for this tiny terror of Southfork: "the Poison Dwarf." When asked her response to those who call *Dallas* classy trash, she laughs with wide, wicked eyes: "Honey, they can call it whatever they want! We're No. 1!"

The *Dallas* cast works well together: everyone knows his lines, enjoys his work, respects his fellow actors. Irving J. Moore, who has directed 17 episodes of *Dallas*, says, "You can get a lot



KATZ—BUCK STAR

Home sweet home: Southfork Ranch, base of the Ewing clan

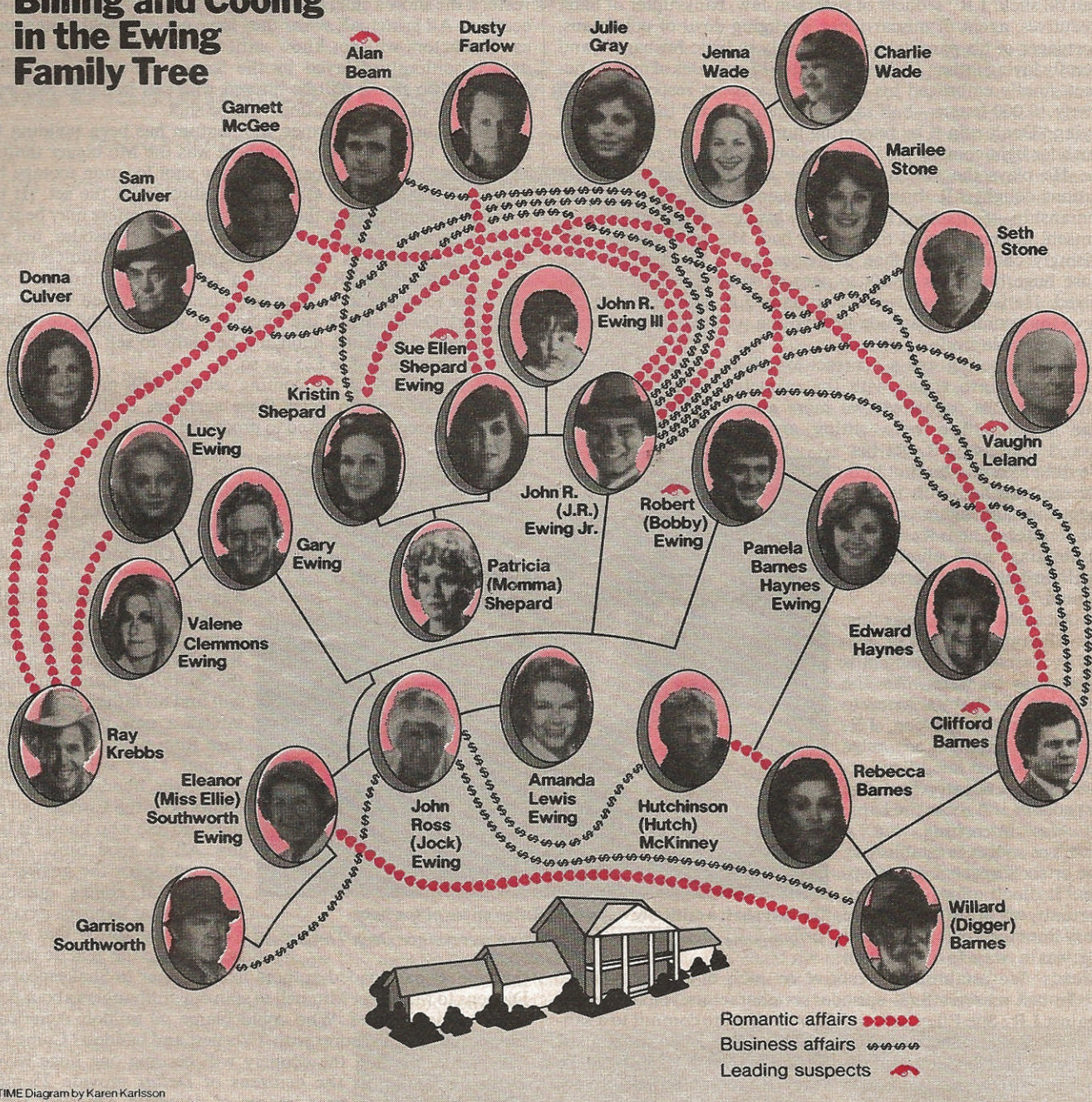
Why do eight members of a wealthy family live under one roof?

inate the lives of those around them. Says Jacobs: "Then I had to write a family. Before I had even got to the script, we had complicated things too much. We had created a ranch hand who had brought her out to the barbecue where she met Bobby [her future husband]. We had decided that the family's father was once partner with her father. And so on. There were just too many people in it to concentrate solely on her."

Dallas was not conceived as a serial, for reasons that are largely economic. TV production companies make little or no money from the network run of their programs; the profits come later, when the shows are syndicated to local stations. (Last year one New York station paid an estimated \$56,000 for each episode of *Three's Company*.) In the off-prime-time hours when syndicated shows are aired, the viewing patterns are too random for commitment to a daily dose of fast-paced story. The failure in syndication of *Peyton Place* underlined the difficulties in making money from prime-time serials. So Lee Rich, president of Lorimar Productions, the company that produces *Dallas*, is careful to call the show a "semiserial" and to ensure that each episode features one self-contained story.

Even at the beginning, however, Jacobs' family plot was too intricate to be compressed into detachable episodes. The partnership between two wildcatting oilmen—Jock Ewing (Jim Davis) and Digger Barnes (David Wayne, and later Keenan Wynn)—had dissolved when Jock ended up with the lion's share

Billing and Cooging in the Ewing Family Tree



TIME Diagram by Karen Karlsson

more done on a loose set than you can on a tight one," and the *Dallas* set is as loose as J.R.'s moral code. Hagman and Patrick Duffy serve as chief pranksters. Hagman will often go cross-eyed in closeups, and has been known to come to work wearing a fire hat with a revolving red light. Duffy's character, Bobby Ewing, functions primarily as a Boy Scout manual with muscles, picking up after everyone else's mess. One day, the script called for him to discover the pregnant, drunken Sue Ellen passed out in her station wagon on the side of a road. He was to pick her up and carry her to his car. But on the set, Duffy stood over Linda Gray and shouted, "This is a job for Superman!" He ripped off his clothes to reveal a full Superman costume. He lifted Gray and raised one arm to the sky as if to fly. Three times he tried to get off the ground, then shrugged and said quietly, "Aw hell, we'll walk."

In the beginning, Sue Ellen was a non-character. As Gray, 36, tells it, "I was lovingly referred to by Lenny Katzman as 'the brunet on the couch.' I could have been J.R.'s masseuse. I decided that any woman stupid enough to marry J.R. had to have

a lot of things wrong with her. I have always acted with my eyes, so when it came time for closeups of each family member, I thought, 'I'm going to give them a look to kill.' Venom came out. When they saw the closeups, a phone call came, saying, 'Do something with that part.'"

Sue Ellen festered into a major *femme maudite*, an alcoholic adulteress who both loves and hates her baby. Gray blossomed in the role, bringing it passion, grandeur and a touch of raunch. Through her soft, melodious voice, her carriage and her steely blue eyes, she suggested Sue Ellen's lifetime of good breeding and rude awakening, the lady whom J.R. forced to become a tramp. Says Gray: "I love the great broads of the world. I love Bette Davis and Katharine Hepburn. I love crying and letting the mascara run. I keep saying to the scriptwriters, 'Whatever you do, don't make her nice!' I've read the first four scripts of the next season, and I'm thrilled. The conflict continues."

At the hub of virtually every conflict in *Dallas* is that hu-

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man oil slick, J.R.: seducer of sisters-in-law, bankrupter of bank executives, agent of miscarriages, avenging devil of politicians, mortgager of his parents' home, suavely sadistic husband—and secretly loving father. (When J.R., after 17 episodes of malign neglect, finally embraced his infant son, viewers responded with nearly 10,000 letters—half saying "Thank God!," the other half saying "Don't ruin it by reforming him.") Hagman developed a touch for light comedy on TV in the '60s sitcom *I Dream of Jeanie*. He plays the villainy *sotto voce* and the humor—the infectious delight J.R. brings to the business of malevolent on-upmanship—*fortissimo*. He struts, whinnies, talks out loud to himself; he has a grand time being bad. His soft, smooth, surprisingly characterless face expresses J.R.'s childishness; but those huge blue eyes testify to ages of suffering given and received. He is the man we love to hate. J.R. and Hagman deserve the country's gratitude for lighting up Friday nights with that barracuda smile.

J.R.'s shooting was a contract job. *Dallas*' second full season was to have ended with the revelation of Pamela's true father, but CBS requested two more episodes. Leonard Katzman recalls: "We were sitting around, and Phil Capice says, 'Let's have J.R. get his.' We didn't know who shot him. We said the hell with it, let's shoot him and figure out who did it later. Then we started eliminating and eliminating until we found the person we wanted."

An early scenario was this: Sue Ellen decides to kill herself by dissolving sleeping pills in a glass of water. As she heads to the baby's room to say goodbye to her son, J.R. comes in drunk and gulps down the water. Sue Ellen sees this but does not stop him. She just goes in and rocks the baby. "It was interesting, but it wasn't as stylish as establishing five or six suspects," says Capice. "It didn't afford us an opportunity to bring four or five story lines together. The shooting was a way to tie up plot threads. We established a motive in each of the plot lines."

In last season's final episode, six characters voiced threats against J.R.: Sue Ellen, whom J.R. was about to commit to a sanitarium; Kristin Shepard (Mary Crosby), Sue Ellen's vixen sister, who had bedded and then blackmailed J.R. only to be charged with prostitution; Alan Beam (Randolph Powell), an unscrupulous lawyer whom J.R. used and then threatened with a bogus rape indictment; Vaughn Leland (Dennis Patrick), J.R.'s banker, who was ruined when he bought into a Ewing double-deal; Bobby Ewing, whom J.R.'s dastardly business ethics finally drove from Southfork; and Cliff Barnes, who swore on his daddy's grave that he would avenge the family honor and "stop J.R. for good."

The plotting here is elegant. The motives all touch on *Dallas*' pervasive themes: sex (Sue Ellen and Kristin), money (Alan Beam and Vaughn Leland) and family (Bobby and Cliff). For the mystery's solution to be equally impeccable, the culprit must come from inside the family. This would permit many of the new episodes to revolve around the altered relationships of the assailant and the other Ewings, especially J.R., who could be expected to devise an ingenious form of revenge. But Capice suggests otherwise: "The ripple effect from the revelation will be minimal. We'll move on to other things quite quickly."

Even this could be one more false trail. Capice is not likely to reveal the most tantalizing secret since the identity of Deep Throat. Neither are the approximately 15 others in the know: *Dallas*' producers and story editors, the major writers and di-

rectors, the show's chief publicists and a few Lorimar and CBS executives. All principals swear they have not even told their spouses. The actors will not know until the crucial scene is shot—a date propitiously delayed by the Screen Actors Guild strike. The first two shows will be littered with red herrings, but only one version of the "revelation" will be shot.

Throughout the summer, momentum has been building for an answer to the mystery. Nowhere was the Mo bigger than in Dallas itself, where the cast and crew shot location footage before the Screen Actors Guild strike shut down the set. (If the strike lasts much longer, the *Dallas* season premiere may be postponed; Lorimar has filmed pieces of a dozen episodes, but not all of any one.) For six weeks, thousands of *Dallas* addicts turned the actual Southfork Ranch into a Texas tourist attraction second only to the Alamo. The neighbors threatened to sue, but Southfork Owner Joe Rand Duncan, a wealthy land developer, was delighted with the publicity: he plans to sell clumps of the hallowed turf for \$15 to \$25 per sq. ft.

Of the events of the coming season, this much is known (readers who wish to defer these surprises until they are revealed on-screen are advised to proceed directly to the next paragraph): the Ewing family is intact. Both Sue Ellen and Cliff will be arrested and released. While J.R. recuperates, Bobby will assume the presidency of Ewing Oil and become obsessed with power, thus putting a severe strain on his marriage. Pamela will find her mother, a mysterious rich lady, and Ray Krebbs (Steve Kanaly), the Southfork Ranch foreman, will find his father. Cliff will establish a new political power base from which to harass the Ewings. Lucy will get married. As for the hundred other plot contortions the Ewings will endure, no one who knows is telling. All in good time, *Dallas* fans will learn the answers to the eternal child's question: Daddy, what happens next?

It is a question that seems burned into the genetic code of

the race. It has goaded authors from Homer to Shakespeare to Dickens to Margaret Mitchell to spin out cliffhangers about powerful, tragic families. Who could blame 40 million Americans for taking their pleasures with TV's best and baddest? Come Friday nights this fall, the country will become one huge eavesdropping family, as the denizens of *Dallas* provide 25 more gilded, high-gloss mirror images of domestic America. For if the show's spectacular success proves anything, it is that when the chemistry is right, oil and soap do mix.

He lay on a stretcher in the ambulance heading toward Dallas Memorial, his mind struggling back to consciousness. They could shoot down ole J.R., but they couldn't keep him down. Already his ambition leaped to newer, more dizzying heights. The country needed a strong leader—why not a nearly martyred oil tycoon? As President, he'd send Bobby to beat some sense into that Ayatullah fella. Spread some Bs around the Kremlin; no way those old Russkies could resist the sight of Pam in a bathing suit. Inflation, recession, civil unrest? No problem at all in a Ewing dictatorship—at least not for Miss Ellie's oldest boy.

As he slid again toward oblivion, a flash of pain jolted his memory back to the Ewing office and eerily illuminated that figure moving toward him in the darkness, eyes and gun blazing bright with vengeance. Of course! It was so obvious. Who else could it have been but . . .

Fade to black.

—By Richard Corliss.

Reported by James Willwerth/Los Angeles



The last shot: a critically wounded J.R. lies on his office floor

Will anyone reveal the most tantalizing secret since Deep Throat?