

Signals in the Static: **Muhammad Ali** simultaneously appears in US television commercials for Gillette, IBM, and Adidas. **Robert Redford** becomes the new voiceover for United Airlines, his first ad campaign. **James Minder**, Chairman of arms maker Smith & Wesson, resigns after it was disclosed he had spent time in prison for armed robbery in the 1950s and '60s. **Al Gore** turns 56. **Cyndi Lauper** turns 50. **Viagra** turns 6. **This is Spinal Tap** turns 20. Died: Clam digger **Thomas Soffron**, 86, who brought fried "clam strips" to restaurants nationwide; actress **Jan Miner**, 86, who made "Madge the Manicurist" a household name for **Palmolive** dishwashing soap.

B&W Tobacco's **Kool** introduces sweet-flavored cigarettes, including "Caribbean Chill," "Midnight Berry," and "Mocha Taboo." **The Roxbury Spa** in Beverly Hills offers a **Butt Facial**, including a scrub, cellulite treatment, and an exfoliating mask. **Scores** will open a \$10 million, 10,000 sq. foot topless club in NYC. **Yahoo TV** will partner with **Television Without Pity**, a TV gossip site that features real-time chats about shows as they air. Rapper **Chuck D** is a sponsor of the **Real Hip-Hop Network** cable channel. **Showtime** orders a pilot for **Make Me Cool**, a primetime reality series in which a squad of hip African-Americans helps terminally uncool individuals (not just Caucasians) overcome their obstacles. **Food Network's** cult hit **Iron Chef** will debut in America on April 23rd, featuring famous US chefs such as **Bobby Flay** and **Wolfgang Puck**. The 36-seat **Masa** sushi bar in NYC's new Time Warner Center charges \$300/person (plus sake and tip) for 12 courses of whatever chef **Masa Takayama** serves. Diners must pay \$100 if they cancel their reservation without giving 48 hours notice.

New Toys: **Tamagotchi**, the electronic pocket "pet" that first launched in 1996, is being reintroduced with the ability to "chat" with and "date" other Tamagotchis using infrared portals. Mattel's **HotWheels** introduces **Blings** cars, with oversized wheels and colors like "Hummer Yellow" and "Pimpin' Purple." Based on the character from the WB's *Mucha Lucha!* cartoon series, the **Gut Busting Flea doll** passes gas when his stomach is squeezed.

New Weapon: TASER International launches a civilian version of its energy weapon in July (\$999). While the standard law enforcement model discharges 19 shaped pulse discharges per second, for a period of 5 seconds at a time, the civilian model will deliver 15 pulses per second, but for an extended period of up to 60 seconds, to maximize incapacitation. The weapon can be carried without a permit in 46 states. *Military and Aerospace Electronics.*

Demure Fashion: Fall 2004 fashion trends for women include finely tailored 3/4 length suits and coats, shirtwaist dresses, knit twin sets, and full skirts. Tweed will be the most popular fabric, along with buttery satin, rich velvet and light chiffon in dusty pastels and rich fall tones such as plum, rust and forest green. Warm, yellow gold replaces the cool silver jewelry of previous seasons. *Cassandra Report.*

Comedy News' Influence Grows: 21% of Americans 18-29 years old say they regularly get election campaign news from comedy shows such as *Saturday Night Live* and *The Daily Show*. They mention these comedy shows as regular sources of election news almost as frequently as they do newspapers and evening network news programs. *Pew Internet & American Life Project.*