

Signals in the Static: Comic **Chris Rock** will host the 2005 Academy Awards to be broadcast on February 27. Former *Baywatch* star **Carmen Electra** is currently featured in three different TV ad campaigns—DirecTV, *USA Today*, and Blockbuster. Supermodel **Tyra Banks** will host a TV talk show in 2005. Died: **Lewis Urry**, 77, inventor of the alkaline battery.

**The U.S. Navy** changes its dress code, making skirts optional for its 54,000 women sailors. In addition, all sailors are now permitted to carry cell phones and carry gym bags and backpacks over their shoulders. **Disneyland's Jungle Cruise skippers** have been given back their fake guns to "shoot" the "hippos" lunging from the water during the ride. Political correctness disarmed the skippers in 2001.

**Hershey** will launch cookie versions of its **Reese's**, **Hershey's**, **Almond Joy**, and **York Peppermint Patty** candies. **General Mills** introduces whole grain versions of **Cinnamon Toast Crunch**, **Lucky Charms**, and **Trix** cereals. **Toyota** and an aftermarket manufacturer are building 20 **Scion xB xRamp** vehicles per month, enabling injured athletes and wounded soldiers returning from Iraq to drive a "high image" vehicle. **Honda** unveils its first pickup truck, the 2006 Ridgeline. **Plenty** magazine debuts this month, described as "*Wired* for the green set." This January, Boston University students will launch **Boink**, a magazine featuring sex columns, sex toy reviews and polls, and nude photo spreads of students.

**Texas Instruments** has developed an advanced chip that will allow digital TV broadcasts to reach mobile phones and handheld PCs at a rate twice as fast as current high-end video phones. **Twentieth Century Fox** will create a series of one-minute dramas based on its

hit TV show *24*, to be shown exclusively on cell phones. **Billboard** will start carrying a Top 20 chart for cell phone ringtones. The **RIAA** issues its first gold, platinum and multi-platinum certifications for digital music downloads, including iTunes sales.

Prison Inmates Increase, Crime Drops: At the end of 2003, there were 2,212,475 men and women in state and U.S. prisons, county and city jails, and juvenile facilities, a rise of 3.6% during that year. From 1994 to 2003 there was a 16% drop in arrests for violent crime, while the average time served by prison inmates rose from 23 months in 1995 to 30 months in 2001. Notably, almost 10% of all American black men, ages 25-29, were incarcerated. *NY Times*.

Super-Premium Liquor: Ultra-luxury is ultra-hot: New **Stoli elit** vodka (\$60); **Johnnie Walker Blue Label** scotch (\$185), and **Green Label** (\$54); **Patron** tequila (\$28). *Ad Age*.

Are We Really A Mobile Society? A majority of U.S. adults still live within 50 miles of where they mainly grew up. In fact, 26% of adults live within 10 miles. To compare, only 21% of adults now live further than 500 miles away from their original home. —*Opinion Research Group*.

Viewpoint—The Challenge of Choice: "In a few hundred years, when the history of our time will be written from a long-term perspective, it is likely that the most important event historians will see is not technology, not the Internet, not e-commerce. It is an unprecedented change in the human condition. For the first time—literally—substantial and rapidly growing numbers of people have choices. For the first time, they will have to manage themselves. And society is totally unprepared for it." —*Peter F. Drucker, 1999*.