

Signals in the Static: **Cybil Shepard** will play the role of **Martha Stewart** for the second time in a TV movie for CBS. This August, **Hunter S. Thompson's** ashes will be blasted from a cannon mounted inside a 53-foot-high sculpture of the journalist's "gonzo fist" emblem at his Aspen-area home. **Stephen Sondheim** turns 75. Died: Chicken merchant **Frank Perdue**, 84, one of the first CEOs to star in his own commercials; Cartoonist **Dale Messick**, 98, creator of "Brenda Starr"; Maverick automobile industrialist **John Z. DeLorean**, 80.

**Sean "P. Diddy" Combs** will design custom, precision-forged aluminum rims for high-end vehicles (\$700-\$3,000 each). **L'Oreal** introduces "Men's Expert," the first mass-market anti-aging skincare line for men. **Nintendo** will open its first Nintendo World store in NYC's Rockefeller Center. **Nike** cuts an exclusive distribution deal with discount retailer **Wal-Mart** for its non-swoosh "Starter" brand. Troubled automaker **Mitsubishi** changes ad agencies (to BBDO/NY), and will launch a Japan-themed ad campaign. Cable's **SpikeTV** is planning a reality show called "Invasion Iowa," in which an annoying guy wanders around an Iowa town trying to get people interested in products whose corporate owners have paid to be included. **Brandport.com** is a new online advertising vehicle that pays 18-24-year-olds for watching commercials and correctly answering brand-related questions.

Open Source Advertising: Next month, OpenAd.net will offer a gallery of product-specific ad campaigns and ideas for license from its authors. Advertisers can also hold an online "pitch" to solicit ideas from ad creatives around the world. **Converse** has a Web site that lets customers upload a :25 video, and pays \$10,000 if it is aired on television.

TV Gets Religion: In development for fall, "The Book of Daniel" (NBC), about a drug-addicted Episcopal priest; "Briar + Graves" (Fox), about a gun-toting excommunicated priest who battles evil, described as "'The X-Files' goes to church." The first episode of NBC's "Revelations" apocalyptic miniseries delivered 15.3 million viewers.

The Price of Gas: The average US price for a gallon of unleaded has reached a 20-year high, averaging \$2.50+ in California. However, when adjusted for inflation, it is still less than its peak of \$3.07 in 1981. For comparison, **Evian** water currently costs \$21.19 per gallon.

What Americans Worry About: 30% of adults worry frequently and 21% occasionally about being able to pay their bills. 12% worry frequently and 28% occasionally about being a victim of terrorism. 20% worry frequently and 34% worry occasionally about being hurt in an accident. While 15% think it is "very likely" that there will be a terrorist attack involving nuclear weapons, only 13% frequently worry about it. *Ipsos-Public Affairs Survey.*

Viewpoint—The Real Costs of Living: "The families in the worst financial trouble are not the usual suspects. They are not the very young, tempted by the freedom of their first credit cards. They are not the elderly, trapped by failing bodies and declining savings accounts. And they are not a random assortment of Americans who lack the self-control to keep their spending in check. Rather, the people who consistently rank in the worst financial trouble are united by one surprising characteristic. They are parents with children at home. Having a child is now the single best predictor that a woman will end up in financial collapse." —*The Two Income Trap: Why Middle Class Mothers and Fathers are Going Broke, Basic Books, 2003*