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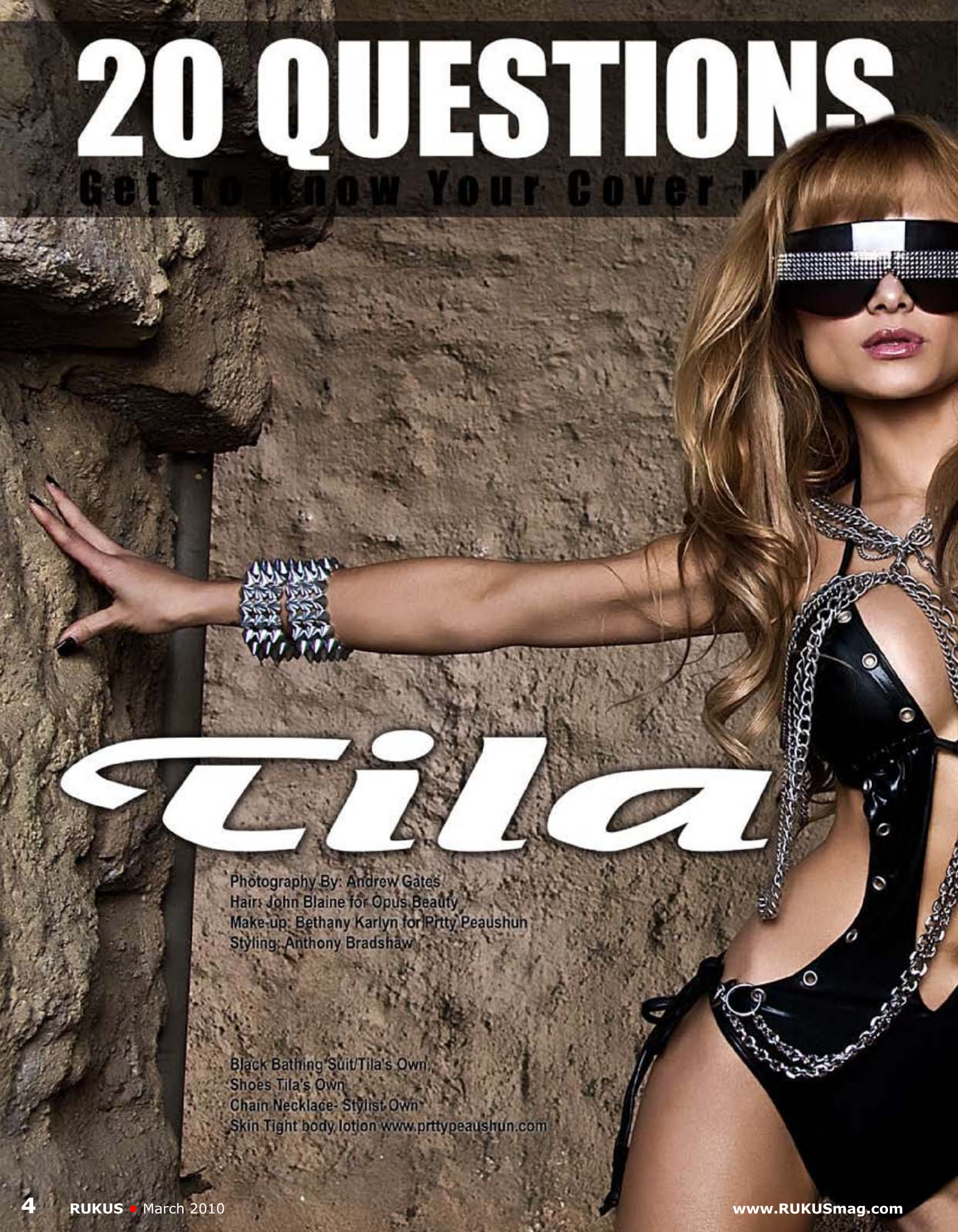
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20 QUESTIONS

Get To Know Your Cover Model



Tila

Photography By: Andrew Gates
Hair: John Blaine for Opus Beauty
Make-up: Bethany Kariyn for Prtty Peaushun
Styling: Anthony Bradshaw

Black Bathing Suit/Tila's Own
Shoes Tila's Own
Chain Necklace: Stylist Own
Skin Tight body lotion www.prttypeaushun.com



Say the name Tila Tequila and you'll get a myriad of reactions: "Queen of the internet", "MTV Reality Star", "Controversial and crazy"...yeah, crazy like a fox!! Tila Nguyen was born in Singapore to Vietnamese parents and a year later emigrated to the United States eventually settling in Houston, TX. Not long after graduating from high school, a Playboy scout discovered Tila in a mall. After that chance meeting, she packed up and moved to West Hollywood, CA and soon there after became Playboy's first Asian to win the Cyber Girl of the Month title. Seeing value in the internet she quickly parlayed her new found cyber status into a record breaking 3.8 million friends on Myspace, earning her the title of "Queen". Knowing a good thing when they see it, MTV came calling and offered her "A SHOT AT LOVE", which gave MTV it's highest rating since the premiere episode of the "Osbournes". Tila has been featured on magazines around the world and is currently working on a TV production deal for 2010. She will also be releasing an EP on May 4, 2010 and plans to do a worldwide tour. She always knew she was something special and when Hollywood came calling she answered and the rest is To Be Continued...



1.What's your Ethnicity?

Mainly Vietnamese. Both my parents are Vietnamese, however I have some French down the line. My grandfather is French. But I mostly consider myself Vietnamese, since I do speak my language very fluently.

2.What's your zodiac sign?

I'm a Scorpio!!!

3.Where are you from originally?

I grew up in the Southside of Houston, Texas.

4.What did you like most about growing up in Houston, TX?

Well it's nothing like Hollywood I must say! It's more like "HOOD" but not Hollywood!

5.What kind of mischief did you get into while growing up?

So many you won't have enough pages in this magazine to cover all the mischief I got into while growing up!

6.What's the craziest thing you've done?

When I was 13 years old, I used to kick it with my sister and all her friends. I thought I was soooo cool since my sister and her friends were all in highschool and I was only in middle school. One day we all skipped school, stole a car, drove it to the beach, had a little beach party, and then we drove the car into the ocean and all hopped out before the car sank into the ocean. It was funny back then, but I look back and feel really bad. I was only 13 years old. I didn't know any better. However if I knew who that person was today, I would totally buy them a new car!

7.What brought you to CA?

I always knew I was going to be something special. I didn't call upon Hollywood, Hollywood called upon me.

8.What's your favorite hobby and why?

I love to sing! A lot of people don't realize that I am actually a really good singer! That's why I have my new EP coming out "Welcome to the Darkside" that showcases more of my vocal abilities. The EP is releasing May 4, 2010 on iTunes. I also love to play the piano. It's really soothing and I



don't think about anything else while I play the piano. It just takes me to a whole other world that I can get away from when I am stressed. I also write songs for other people. I love writing and I am very good at it. That's another thing that a lot of people don't know about me is that I write songs for other people as well. So I guess you can say I'm a pretty talented chick! (laughs)

9.What's your guilty pleasure?

I love to eat junk food right before bedtime! I work on my laptop while I'm in bed, and then gorge down a HUUUUUGE chunk of pizza, cheesburger, etc, you name it, I eat it, right before I go to sleep and my throat doctors get mad at me for doing that because that gives you acid reflux and it messes up your vocal chords for singing! But I guess you gotta make sacrifices and ask yourself what's more important to you, pizza hunger at night before bed, or having a beautiful singing voice for my music career??? Hmmmm...

10.Who do you admire?

I admire the strong, independent people, such as myself. I admire someone who has built their empire from scratch. I admire my great friend and mentor Russell Simmons. He has been there for me through thick and thin and has taught me a lot about becoming a mogul.

11.What's one of your goals?

Honestly, I just want to have my empire (that I have currently built) to blow up so that I can truly be the very first female mogul that is young, sexy, yet can still prove to people that just because you are a young, and sexy female does not mean you are not intelligent! I also would like to adopt at least 3 children in the future and in 3 years I will become

the ambassador for Vietnam. The world will be shocked to see the hard work, and transition that I have made for myself, on my own, once again. I hope to inspire people through my story.

12.What do guys compliment you on the most?

Guys? OMG... Guys are so easy. They just love everything about

(cont'd on page 11)

PIT PASS

Get In The Driver's Seat!

The Docile Beast

By: Nicolas Bates

I know what all of you are saying – “that title is an oxymoron”. No. No it is not. Not with Maserati's 2010 Gran Turismo. Not when Maserati couples their infamous luxury with a motor designed by Ferrari. Do not forget, Maserati's heritage spans just four years short of a century. Not then, dear friends. Not then is it an oxy moron.

Pininfarina, responsible for such iconic designs as the '66 Alfa Romeo Spyder, The Ferrari Enzo and F40, among other classics, designed the Gran Turismo's cutting lines. The car has an extremely sleek and refined look, yet the front end may start to masticate upon your extremities, should you let it. Proudly flaunting its trademark trident, the large, oval grill is reminiscent of that of the 1960 Maserati Tipo 61(Birdcage), made famous for its runs at Le Mans, although immensely smaller than that of that Tipo's. The Gran Turismo's headlights and tail lights make you ponder whether safety was a concern when designing these integral units, or whether designers just wanted the meanest looking head and tail lights on an automobile they could conjure up. The car almost gives off the feeling that the wind itself molded the lines of the body.

Looks are just that: looks. But do not taunt the Gran Turismo. Sure, it is comfortable driving leisurely around town. It is also comfortable at wide-open throttle through the canyons. The Gran Turismo S coupe is outfitted with a 4.7 liter 8 cylinder power plant with 4 valves per cylinder and variable valve timing, which outputs 433hp and 361lb/ft of torque. Fast enough to get you from 0-60 in 4.9 seconds. I do not think such a number can be complained about. Not in a 4,000 lb + vehicle. The base model will yield a respectable 405hp from a 4.2 liter V8. If you need a manual gearbox, however, you are out of luck. The Gran Turismo comes standard with a 6-speed automatic transmission. The good news is you do have options, even though paddles control those options. The Gran Turismo's power is filtered through a ZF automatic.



SPECS

2010 Maserati GT

Price:	\$135,000+
Engine:	4.7 Liter V8
Torque:	361 lb-ft.
Horsepower:	433 hp
0-60 MPH:	4.9 sec. (est.)
Top Speed:	180 mph (US)
EST. MPG:	12 City/19 HWY
Available:	Now



and has four basic modes: Auto, for normal, "around town" driving, Auto Sport, for a little more thrill, Auto ICE, for low grip conditions and Manual mode, where the car will not shift, even at redline, until your little heart desires and you flip that paddle. If you are going to be forced into an automatic, this is the one I would choose.

The Gran Turismo's interior is elegant, intuitive, and not flashy. After all, what is flashy cannot be elegant. The interior comes with your choice of 10 shades of Poltrona Frau leather and 3 wood trim options (no additional cost). Amenities like heated seats, garage door opener, parking distance sensors, auto rear view mirror, front reading lights, and vehicle speed proportional power steering will make you glad you are sitting in the Grand Turismo. While the interior keeps you comfortable and in style, it will also keep you safe with driver and passenger side multi-stage deployment front airbags and front side curtain airbags.

The Maserati Gran Turismo comes from a long line of race and luxury inspired vehicles. This heritage shines through as we see both comfort and sheer brawn come through to make one desirable automobile. And if you are looking for more power, more exclusivity, then be on the look out for The Gran Turismo MC Trofeo, a real race spec version of the docile beast to be sold directly from Maserati Corse (MC) in Italy.





White Body Suit by Smooch
Wood necklace courtesy of Em & Co. Boutique
Shoes by Report Signature
Earrings by Carmela

(cont'd from page 7)

me. They don't even have to get to know me first and they are always trying to holla at me, but the dangerous thing is that once I do let a guy into my world, even just a friend, once they actually do get to know me, they always end up falling in love because I am truly wifey material. I am pretty much every guys and girls dreamgirl. I run my own empire, I'm young, I'm independent, and when you're this busy people tend to get drawn to you because they want to spend more time with you, but they know that they are not my #1 priority, my work is.

13.What's your favorite body part on yourself?

Hmm... I would have to say my button nose and my lips. With just one kiss from my lips, I will have you fall in love with me. (laughs)

14.What's your least favorite body part on yourself?

I hate my feet! Although they are small and cute (I wear a size 5 ½) I just have this weird thing about my feet! I don't know why but I just hate my feet. I'm always making sure my toes don't go over my shoes and clench onto them like I have seen other girls when they wear those stripper shoes! (laughs)

15.What do you look for in a guy?

Due to the fact that in my real life, I am such a Boss Biatch, a mogul, the president of many corporations, I would like a man who can make me feel like a woman. I need that balance. At work, it's like I am doing a man's job. So when I come home to a man, I would like him to be man enough to make me feel like a special little princess that I am. I don't like to take my work home with me. So yes, a man who makes me feel like a woman, who is also romantic, and not afraid to tell me he loves me or misses me. I love that!

16.What's the first thing you notice about a guy?

I always notice the hot guy that is sitting alone by himself at the back of the bar. I love mysterious men. I am very drawn to them.

17.What turns you on?

I love music! Everything I do, music is involved! Such as when I am making love, I always have a play list on of my favorite songs. I have this song called "Mary Jane" that I wrote for love making. It's very sexy! As a matter of fact I have a huge catalog of Tila Tequila music of about 200 songs or more that nobody has ever heard yet, but now that I have my own record label "Tila Tequila Records" I just might go ahead and release all of these songs for my fans. They have been waiting for new Tila music for over 3 years now!!! But wait no longer because starting this spring, you will see more of me everywhere so get ready!!!

18.What turns you off?

I hate guys who have ugly shoes! A guy can be totally hot, and have the perfect personality, but when I look down at his shoes and he has some old, brown, stupid looking shoes, OMG, it's a wrap! It's Over! Get out of my house! I get so turned off by a guy who has ugly shoes! I don't know why! (laughs)

19.What's your biggest pet peeve?

My biggest pet peeve is when people talk over me while I am talking. I give everyone enough respect to let them speak first and when they are finished, then I speak. However I find it rude when people keep speaking over you or interrupt you in the middle of your sentences! Oh and also Shitty Drivers! Get off the damn road if you can't drive!

20.Who's your celebrity pass?

Edward Norton.

RM

WORK IT OUT

Your Guide To Personal Fitness

Celebrity Trainer **Troy Lindner**

gives you guidance on health, fitness and nutrition
www.RockstarAthlete.com



Nutritional Nugget

Easy Baked Salmon

Ingredients:

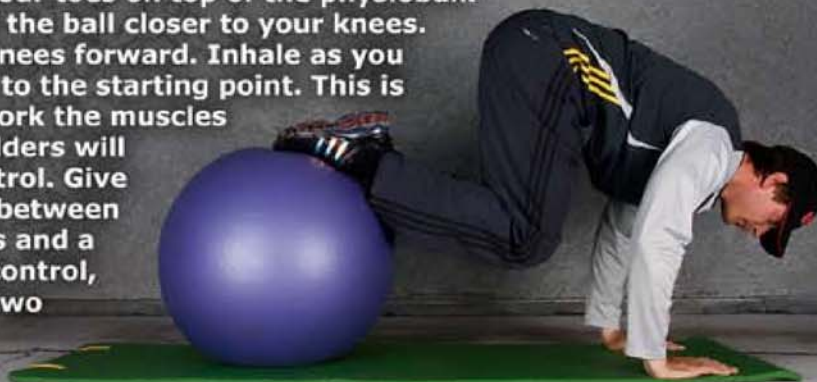
- about a pound of fresh salmon
- 1 lemon
- 1/4 teaspoon of sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cracked pepper
- 1 tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil
- some parchment paper

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. You'll need an oven safe glass dish big enough to hold the filet lying flat. Pyrex are great. Cut the parchment paper to fit inside the dish. Then coat the parchment paper with the olive oil and place the salmon filet inside the dish. Brush and cover the salmon with some olive oil too. Then sprinkle the sea salt and pepper over it. Lastly, cut the lemon into four pieces. Squeeze some lemon on top of the salmon. Cover the dish and place inside the oven. Cook for 22 minutes. After that time, take it out and check to make sure it is cooked through. When it's fully cooked, you can use the extra lemon wedges for sauce. You can also flip the salmon over, very carefully, and scrape off the dark colored meat. That where fish hold onto a lot of the pollutants and stuff you don't want in your body. Throw in some steamed carrots and broccoli on the side and you got an awesome healthy meal.



Jack Knife

You can start by getting into a push-up position with your shins on top of the physioball. Keep your neck, back, and hips straight. In very controlled manner, bring your knees forward to your chest. Hold for a second. Then return to the starting position. Try to keep your hips from rising up, only lift them high enough to bring your knees forward and under you. For more of a challenge, go up onto your toes on top of the physioball. To make it a little easier, position the ball closer to your knees. Exhale as you are bringing your knees forward. Inhale as you are straightening your body back to the starting point. This is a great exercise that will really work the muscles in your core. Your arms and shoulders will get a workout too. The key is control. Give yourself 30 to 60 seconds rest in between sets. You can start out with 2 sets and a minute rest. As you feel more in control, shorten the rest and add a set or two over time.



Prone Bridge

1. Neck straight with your eyes looking down.
 2. Keep your hips level, making sure they don't raise up or down as your back gets tired. Breathe in and out at an even pace. Don't hold your breath.
 3. Lock your knees, trying to keep your legs as straight as possible. Position your feet shoulder width apart.
 4. Hands separated.
 5. Upper arm perpendicular to the floor.
 6. Pull your stomach up and in. This will help support your lower back and strengthen your abs.
- Elbows and feet should be shoulder width apart
 - Keep your forearms and legs parallel
 - Hold this position for 10 to 30 seconds at a time, slowly building up to a minute
 - Repeat for 2 to 4 sets
 - Rest for 30 to 60 seconds in between sets
 - You should feel this in your stomach and low back muscles
 - Don't hold your breath; it's very easy to forget to breathe during this exercise



A full-page photograph of Tila Tequila lying on a rough, textured ground. She is wearing a white, asymmetrical, one-shoulder crop top and white shorts. She is adorned with large, chunky wooden and metal accessories: a wide wooden cuff with metal plates on her right wrist, a matching necklace, and a large metal clasp on her left wrist. She has blonde hair with bangs, heavy eye makeup, and large gold earrings. A tattoo is visible on her left upper arm. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

**"...I am
such a
Boss
Bitch..."**

See more of Tila at
WWW.TILATEQUILAOMG.COM



STATS:

Birthday: *October 21, 1981*

Height: *4'11"*

Weight: *95*

Measurements: *34D/24/34*

ALL ACCESS

The Latest Albums Reviewed!



SLAYER

Metalheads Rejoice - Slayer is Back!

Photo by: Mark Seliger
Written by: Daniel Richter

When I first turned this album on I immediately started a circle-pit in my apartment. Now my roommate has a black eye and I have a ringing in my ears. Slayer's 10th full length album, *World Painted Blood*, was released on November 3rd, 2009. It started its first week at the #12 spot on the Billboard 200, and earned a Grammy nomination of best metal performance for the single "Hate Worldwide".

To be honest, I had never heard a Slayer song before I got *World Painted Blood*. Of course I had heard of them; but I never really listened to them. I was pleasantly surprised by what came charging out of my speakers. The first thing that caught my attention was the speed metal guitar with seemingly impossible solos. This album was right away heavier than anything else in my music collection. The double bass pulsating out of Dave Lombardo's drum kit sets the tempo and energy level for this album on overdrive. Lombardo keeps everything running smoothly, without ever over playing, or slowing down. Once I wiped away the blood from my ears, I played the album a second time; and this time I was blown away by what Tom Araya had to say.



World Painted Blood is the first Slayer album where all the lyrics were written in the studio. It is easy to tell that these lyrics were thought out. Slayer's anger and spite have direction and get the point across brilliantly. World Painted Blood is aggressive, hateful, and all together pissed off. With that said, Slayer isn't mad just to sell records, they are furious at brutal injustices, religious fanatics, crooked politics, and brainless people. The lyrics are shouted with a certain swagger that fits the album's overall groove.

With World Painted Blood, Slayer proves yet again that they are not thrash metal pioneers, they are thrash metal. This album smashes the gas pedal to the floor, and doesn't let up for nearly forty minutes. Slayer has created a brutal sound that has a beautiful melody. This album has become a collection of all things Slayer so far. Araya spews forth angst and violence with intelligence and poise. Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King, along with Araya, all collaborate to write the lyrics. Hanneman and King are both responsible for the wildly chaotic guitars. Both Hanneman and King were ranked #10 on Guitar World's "100 Greatest Heavy Metal Guitarists of All Time".

There have been talks about Slayer splitting up after this album, because it is the last recording in their contract. Araya proposed that he could not see his musical career carrying on as he got older. King, however, is optimistic that the band will stay together for at least one more Slayer album.

After getting my first taste of Slayer with World Painted Blood, I will be scouring record stores for more Slayer releases. World Painted Blood is an excellent album that combines death, hate, and gore, with wailing solos, heavy riffs, and pounding drums.

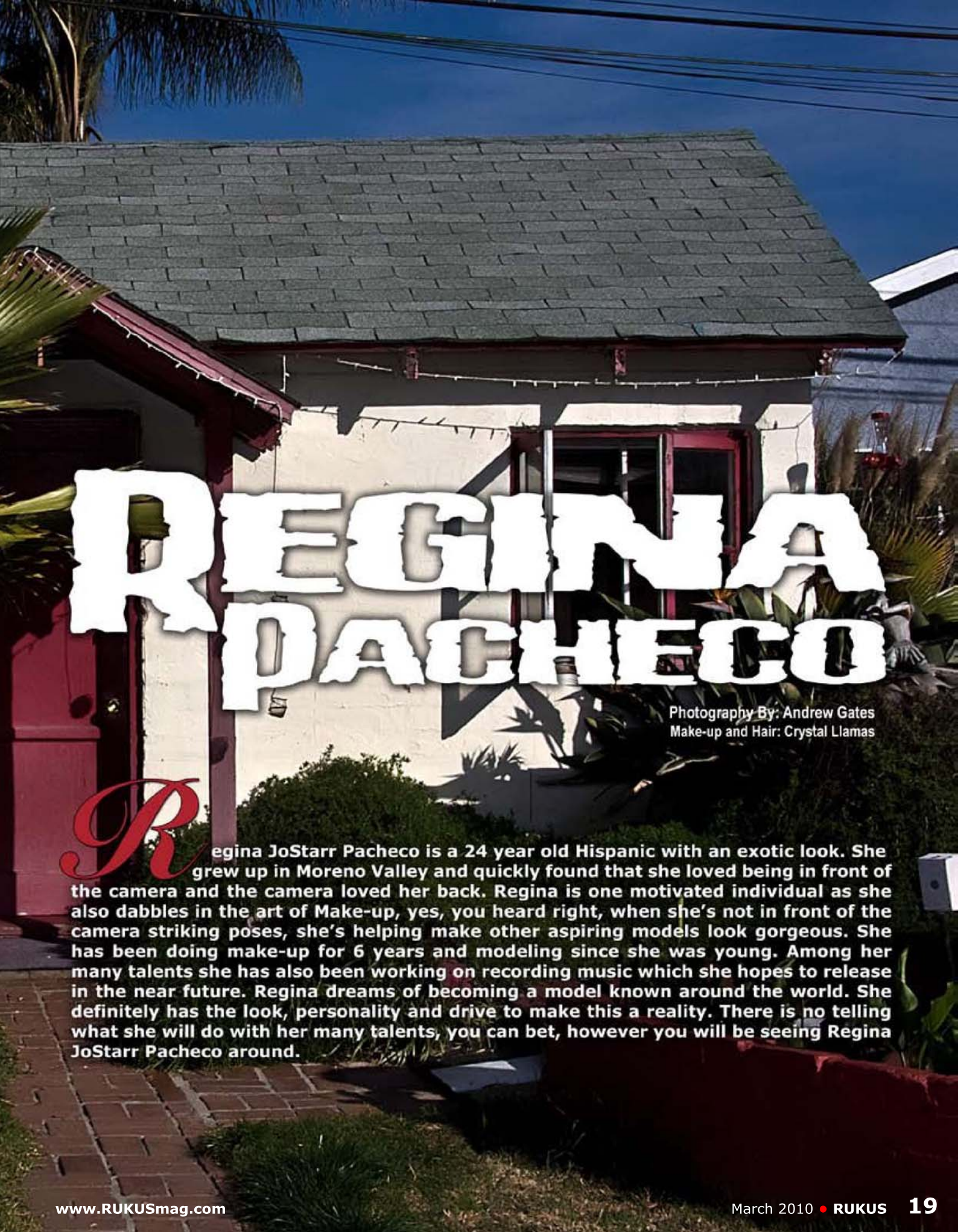
Slayer: World Painted Blood
Label: American Recordings/Sony Music

★★★★★
RELEASE DATE: November 3, 2009

COMING UP...

Models n Eye On





REGINA PACHECO

Photography By: Andrew Gates
Make-up and Hair: Crystal Llamas

*R*egina JoStarr Pacheco is a 24 year old Hispanic with an exotic look. She grew up in Moreno Valley and quickly found that she loved being in front of the camera and the camera loved her back. Regina is one motivated individual as she also dabbles in the art of Make-up, yes, you heard right, when she's not in front of the camera striking poses, she's helping make other aspiring models look gorgeous. She has been doing make-up for 6 years and modeling since she was young. Among her many talents she has also been working on recording music which she hopes to release in the near future. Regina dreams of becoming a model known around the world. She definitely has the look, personality and drive to make this a reality. There is no telling what she will do with her many talents, you can bet, however you will be seeing Regina JoStarr Pacheco around.





THE STATS

Birthday:
October 17, 1985.

Zodiac Sign:
Libra.

Measurements:
34D-25-36

Height:
5'5"

Weight:
115

Ethnicity:
Hispanic.

Hometown:
Riverside, CA.

Turn Ons:
A romantic guy.

Turn Offs:
Cockiness in a guy.

Pet Peeves:
Rude people.

Celebrity Pass:
Paul Walker

See more of Regina at
Twitter.com/
reginapacheco1 or
Myspace.com/
reginajostarrpacheco



"Hello, I'm Johnny Cash....."

Photo by: Martyn Atkins

Written by: Jenny Frank

At first I was ecstatic about writing this review for American VI: Ain't No Grave, Johnny Cash's final (and 2nd post humous release thanks to the efforts of friend/Producer extraordinaire, Rick Rubin.) Ecstatic because before I could say, "Bobby McGee" my Mom had already exposed me to countless hours of music from the likes of Johnny Cash and his fellow Highwayman Kris Kristofferson. So I thought this review could be finished in a couple hours based on my familiarity with Johnny Cash's music. After all what more can be said about a man who has spent his life defining so much of what American Music is? I revisited Johnny Cash's original songs, moving on into the period marked with his 1994 signing with American Records and the songs both Johnny Cash chose or those Rick Rubin suggested as cover songs for that 6 albums that fall under American Recordings I-VI. Why had these specific songs/musicians/songwriters/poets/storytellers been decided on? What was so incredibly important in these songs that Johnny Cash continued to work even after the sudden death of his wife/best friend/soulmate June Carter Cash in 2003? What had these songs inspired in him that allowed him to continue to record even with the debilitating pain he was plagued with due to his battled with MSA, a disease which ravaged his body with Parkinson-like symptoms?

American VI begins with low undeterminable noise behind an acoustic guitar. Impossible to tell for sure if it is wind, Death's chains or a shallow, gasping breath whatever it is, it is gone as quickly: "There ain't no grave that can hold my body down/THERE AIN'T NO GRAVE THAT CAN HOLD MY BODY DOWN/When I hear that trumpet sound I'm gonna rise right out of the ground/There ain't no grave that can hold my body down." Unmistakably Johnny Cash, his now ghostly voice makes even smallest hairs stand on end. Almost undetectable at first there is a slight difference in his voice--something quieter, layered deep underneath his trademark baritone that now also bears a certain fragility absent from his earlier songs. It is most noticeable on "I Corinthians 15:55," which is the only original Johnny Cash song included on American VI. "Oh life you are a shining path/And hope springs eternal/Just over the rise/When I see My Redeemer beckoning me" the lines echo with a quivering reverberation trailing off into....

His life is filled with accomplishments, contradictions and controversy including the 1968 Live from Folsom Prison and 1969 Live from San Quentin Prison recordings and although he never called a prison cell "home" (he was arrested several times). He was married and found true love (but not from the same woman). He drank heavily, and battled both alcohol and drug addiction. He knew God intimately and was a Biblical Scholar. He started (actually his truck) started a forest fire that burned 508 acres in California. He was arrested in Starkville, Mississippi for picking flowers, and now the occasion is marked by an annual flower-picking festival in his honor. His voice was used as a character in an episode of the The Simpson's cartoon. He recorded many things including a spoken word of the King James's New Testament Bible. Mostly though, Johnny Cash sang and played guitar like very few before or ever will again.

The most striking song on American VI is the cover of Hank Snow's 1954 "I Don't Hurt Anymore." (Side-note: Hank Snow is credited as the first person to bring Elvis on stage at the Grand Ole Opry in 1954. He, along with Colonel Tom Parker became Elvis' first Managers.)

While many critics and fans see Johnny Cash's 2002 cover of the Nine Inch Nails song "Hurt" as a kind of epitaph: It is not until we hear "I Don't Hurt Anymore" that we fully understand that "Hurt" was not his probable chosen epitaph. Instead "Hurt" probably seems to more accurately represent his frustration towards illness, old age and Death. The new epitaph finds a triumphant Johnny Cash singing "It don't hurt anymore/All my teardrops have dried/...../Just to think it could be/Time has opened the door/At last I am free/I don't hurt anymore..../It is wonderful/I don't hurt anymore." The final line grabs me in a way unlike any other Johnny Cash song has before. Maybe because it lacks the degree of conviction and sincerity present in all his other songs? No matter, it is a rare Johnny Cash moment where he shows a true fear towards Death and the unknown future ahead.

American VI: Ain't No Grave is not an album I can review for you. I cannot advise you if it is good or bad. If you should run out to buy it. I cannot tell you if it deserves 1,2,3,4 or 5 stars. (Truthfully there are not enough stars in the sky.)

American VI: Ain't No Grave IS Johnny Cash.

It is the voice of a man who understands how precious life is. It is the same voice who also accepts life's inevitable end. He reminds us with these 10 songs that life is not defined by breaths but how people remember you and how you remember others. He gives us assurance that even in death we remain and that we have a voice that can never die for those who remember and love.

Johnny Cash knew what he wanted to record as the final song on his last album. Rick Rubin honored his wish with Track 10, "Aloha Oe." A traditional Hawaiian folk song written by the Queen Lili'uokalani, Queen of Hawaii before it was annexed by the United States on July 4th, 1894. Queen Lili'uokalani was a woman who fought hard against this annexation and was even imprisoned for her deviance. In the same way the album starts with the ghostly entrance of "Ain't No Grave" Johnny Cash now leaves with an eerie silence....

"Aloha Oe" Johnny Cash, "until we meet again....."

Johnny Cash: American VI
Label: American Recordings/Lost Highway

★★★★★
RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 23, 2010

COMING UP...
Models To Keep An Eye On 2010



Jessica DeBonville

Photography By: Andrew Gates
Make-up and Hair: Crystal Llamas

*J*essica DeBonville began modeling when she was 17, living in Massachusetts. She had been involved in jazz dancing at a young age and Varsity Cheerleading in high school, but knew there had to be more opportunities out there. Even though Jessica grew up in a very small town she knew she wanted to move to a place that could make her dream of acting a reality. When Jessica turned 22 she made the leap of faith, packed her belongings and ventured out west to the City of Angeles, Los Angeles, CA. While she is pursuing her acting career Jessica bartends full-time and also works for an energy drink company called Mana Potions. She is definitely no stranger to the camera as she has been featured in a Comcast commercial, posed for a variety of calendars and competed as a Hawaiian Tropics model. She has done some music video work with the likes of Lil Wayne, Pussycat Dolls, and Kanye West. Jessica's also been featured on some of TV's hottest shows; Heroes, Greek, Melrose Place, Entourage, Desperate Housewives and many more. Watch for this Exotic Beauty, she could be the next Big Thing!



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a red and black lace bikini top and matching bottoms, is posing against a wooden fence. She is wearing black high-heeled sandals. The background shows a utility pole and some trees under a clear sky.

THE STATS

Birthday:
February 15, 1986.

Zodiac Sign:
Aquarius.

Measurements:
34C-25-34

Height:
5'2"

Weight:
105 lbs.

Ethnicity:
I am Korean.

Hometown:
Los Angeles, CA.

Turn Ons:
**Confidence and
Charm.**

Turn Offs:
**Someone who is too
cocky and rude.**

Pet Peeves:
**When people have no
common sense.**

Celebrity Pass:
Justin Bartha.

See more of Jessica at
[modelmayhem.](http://modelmayhem.com/1556188)
[com/1556188](http://modelmayhem.com/1556188)

GAME ON

test Games R



MASS
EFFECT

Consider Me Massively Effected

By: William Nadel

Mass Effect is a beastly franchise. It takes cajones to tell the world that your game will be part of a trilogy before the first game hits the shelves. That's exactly the confidence that has helped shape this series into what it is: A master class of storytelling, game design, and sci-fi adventure goodness.

The Mass Effect Trilogy will be inseparable when all is finished because Bioware plans on ingeniously interweaving save game data from all three games to fully flesh out the believability and persistence of the game universe. Many choices from the previous games will have a direct impact on your experience in the subsequent games. Mass Effect 2 starts off with a serious bang that really gets you hooked into the story and raises your adrenalin levels to white knuckle status. Even the first scene can play out differently if certain paths were taken in Mass Effect.

For those who have yet to play the original Mass Effect, for shame! Go out immediately and buy it. Play it twice and call me in a couple weeks. Mass Effect 2 will be fun if you haven't played the first, but you will not get the benefit of seeing your old decisions come back to haunt you. The main story follows Commander Shepherd. Shepherd had become the universe's savior after thwarting the efforts of a creature called a Reaper, who is a destroyer of worlds.

Since Mass Effect 2 allows you to upload your character from the first game, there's a real sense of nostalgia when you see your character again. All the familiar scars are there, now with a much higher graphic fidelity. Bioware has completely fixed any of the gripes I had with the look, presentation, and feel of the original game. Mass Effect had some graphical and frame rate hiccups, a complex skill tree, a complicated armor and weapon system and plenty of physics bugs. All major concerns from Mass Effect have been blown out the air lock in Mass Effect 2. The graphics are amazing, the shooting mechanics are solidly improved, and they simplified the skill tree to make it more intuitive when leveling up without sacrificing depth.

A large part of Mass Effect 2 is exploring the universe and recruiting teammates to help you on your quests. There is a universal map with many star systems and planets to explore. Many of these planets cannot be visited. They can only be surveyed for their terrestrial spoils, such as the versatile element zero. I would have loved exploring all of these strange planets... Mass Effect 3 if you please? In Mass Effect, planets were surveyed for materials with a button press. That was boring and non-engaging. They corrected this with a cool minigame of sorts that allows you to rotate the planet and scan it with a quasi equalizer graph. As the scanner crosses valuable materials on the planet's surface, the EQ graph will create peaks to show which particular element you've discovered. These materials are used to craft armor and weapons back at your ship. I'll admit that I've spent far too much time mining for resources. This was by choice because the allure of digging for valuables cannot be denied.

Some characters you recruit will be familiar to those who played the original and some are new. All of these teammates are quite dynamic. They have their ups and their downs, but all of it is bloody interesting. The voice acting is impeccable, starring the talented Martin Sheen. Martin Sheen could turn a Simpson's cameo into an Emmy winning performance, so it should be no surprise that he steals the show. Sheen plays the Illusive Man, a more than subtle character nod to the X-Files' Smoking Man. The dialog system from the first game has made a slick comeback. When engaged in conversations, you must choose your responses. Be a Paragon, a Renegade, or choose a moderate path. This plays like the classic Choose Your Own Adventure books from childhood, but with immersive facial and emotional feedback from the characters. The writing and comedic timing had me laughing out loud multiple times during my playthroughs. They did a remarkable job of causing me to feel like every bit of conversational choice I made would have future importance in this or future games. Bioware is notorious for giving you only one shot to do something, be it hacking a terminal or choosing the right answer. I like this because if the "wrong" dialog is selected and you piss a character off, you might not ever get the benefit they were providing. Your consequence might be a fight to the death incited by your lack of social graces. So all of you with no tact might consider the path of the intimidator if you want conversational success.

There's no multiplayer, but it's deep enough to hold my attention for multiple playthroughs. There could always be more powers, weapons and planets to explore. The conversation system is awesome, but I would greedily like to be able to talk to all non-player characters in the game. I also had a slight issue with some social parallels in the game. There is a point where Shepherd returns to the central hub for intergalactic civilizations, The Citadel. When Shepherd gets to the security checkpoint, there were some amusing but borderline inappropriate parallels between the Turian race and Islamic extremists. I don't remember the verbatim line of dialog, but they overtly portrayed the headscarf wearing Turians as something akin to our perception of a terrorist. My other gripe with the game is that it comes on two DVDs. I'm all for having plenty of content, but I absolutely don't want to be required to unexpectedly change disc at 3:27 in the morning when I'm playing all comfy from my bed. I was simply exploring an uncharted planet when I had to go change the disc. This immediately brought me back, like a time machine, to 1995. Suddenly I was back on my PC playing Phantasmagoria, looking at the "Load CD 7 message". This was the first time I felt like Microsoft screwed us by opting out of Blue Ray technology. It's a minor gripe and just shows how lazy I am, but I'm not the only lazy man playing this game. We're in America, after all. That said, I commend them on all the bitchin' content they packed into these two discs of joy.

If you remember the buzz on your skin as you watched Empire Strikes Back, buy this game. If you enjoy the prospect of saving the universe with weapons and magic, buy this game. If you read Choose Your Own Adventure books into the wee hours of the morning, buy this game. If you truly respect yourself as a sci-fi or RPG fan, just buy the game. I cannot wait to see what effects my choices from the past two games have on how the third installment pans out. Prepare yourself for the journey of a lifetime and a gaming experience you will likely never forget.

Mass Effect 2

PRODUCER: Bioware/EA

PLATFORM: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE: January 26, 2010

★★★★★

RATINGS: Mature

GENRE: Action RPG



DANTE'S INFERNO

"Go to Hell... Literally"

By: Andres Caicedo

Dante's Inferno is nothing short of what it really is, a God of War Clone. It's very interesting to see how much marketing and money Electronic Arts pumped out for this game, yet didn't fully deliver in the final process. While I wasn't preparing myself for this game to be a record breaker, I thought it would at least take me for an enjoyable ride into the bowels of hell, and it did, if not for a while, but soon fizzled out at the mid/latter part of the game.

Storywise, it is based off the Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri, though very loosely based, as only some of the elements were borrowed from the book. You are Dante, a sworn crusader ready to fight in Holy Crusade's to anyone that defied your religion (I'm presuming Catholic), while your wife Beatrice is worried deeply for your life in the battlefields. While the story isn't anything really worth mentioning, it starts out strong yet fizzles out with crappy gameplay mechanics.

Now the gameplay is what makes this game average at best, it plays as a watered down God of War, and you definitely get the feeling that you played this game before. If you have played God of War, Onimusha, or Devil May Cry, you definitely know the type of gameplay this title is capable of delivering, and it's a love/hate for some. You have a strong attack, and a weak attack which are your primary ways of attacking people. You can harvest the souls of monsters you encounter for points, as you have an "evil" and "good" bar you can level up. Every time you grab a monster, you have the option of punishing them, giving you evil points, or blessing them, giving good points, which add slight diversity to the types of attacks you want to do. Overall I found the use of evil more effective, as you are mainly using your scythe more than the cross power you begin with. The gameplay starts out strong and fresh, but after playing a good 3 hours, you really start to realize that it is a very repetitive process, as it can get really monotonous as well. Overall this was the weakest part of Dante's Inferno.

While in Hell, you go through the seven deadly sins, and each one acts like a level. I loved seeing lust with all the prostitutes attacking you, as well as in Sloth where everyone was super fat and deadly, but once again it just got redundant and repetitive. The Level design starts out amazing at first, especially when Dante is just entering Hell for the first time, but starts to sputter out into a "kill monsters in room A, to advance to Room B; rinse and repeat." While I admit that this was working alright in the beginning of the game, I started realizing that this was pretty much how the rest of the game was going to unfold. Really sad.

Overall, Dante's Inferno had promises of being a good game, but didn't deliver. What starts out as an interesting story and gameplay soon turns out to be repetitive and boring. I wouldn't recommend this game to anyone unless it came from the bargain bin. Beware; if you play this game, you will be bored as hell.

Dante's Inferno

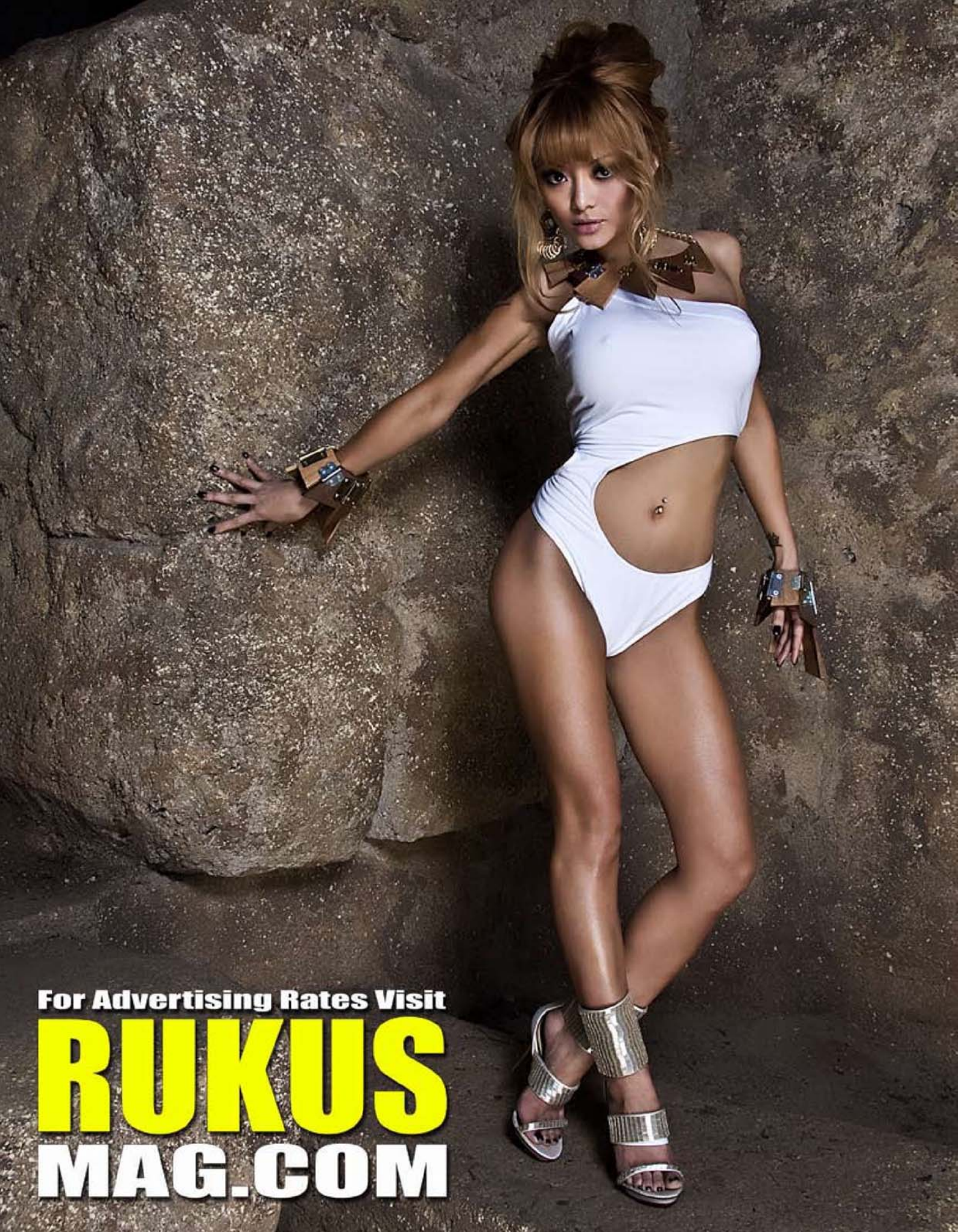
PRODUCER: Electronic Arts

PLATFORM: Xbox 360, Playstation 3

RELEASE DATE: February 9, 2010

★★★★★

RATINGS: Mature
GENRE: Action, Horror



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