

PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: DONALD TRUMP

A candid conversation with TV's favorite rich guy about money, women, hair, Omarosa, parenthood, Viagra and the value of a little self-promotion

Somehow it's fitting that the Friars Club, the venerable brotherhood of shtick men, has chosen to roast Donald Trump at its centennial celebration this month. Few billionaires have provided as many punch lines as the flamboyant real estate developer with the bombproof comb-over and inexcusable tastes. Even with the gold-plated success of *The Apprentice*, "the hottest reality show in the history of TV," as Trump likes to call it, it's hard not to laugh at the high-camp spectacle that is the Donald's life.

But if the current Trump renaissance has taught us anything, it's that the joke is on the rest of us. Even if you can't stand his pink ties or squinty I'm-so-great delivery, you have to admire Trump for staying on top as long as he has. He nearly went bankrupt during the early-1990s real estate slump, only to fight back with more cash than ever. He sucked it up through tacky marriages and public divorces, only to find romance with Slovenian model Melania Knauss, his fiancée. And in New York City, where Trump bashing had become as common as turbaned cabbies, he now outshits even the Yankees on the hometown popularity scale.

It's hard to say whether *The Apprentice* made him cool again or whether Trump finally brought cool to the hot-tubbing, spit-swapping squalor of "unscripted" television.

More than 20 million people watched the original series each week, with twice that many tuning in for at least part of the finale, when Trump hired cigar salesman Bill Rancic to help construct a 90-story Chicago tower. By the end, *The Apprentice* had become more than just a TV show. It was required viewing at such places as Harvard Business School and the Wharton school of business, and more than a million people applied to take part in round two, which airs this fall.

Not that being a Hollywood titan satisfies Trump, who just keeps moving and building, stamping his name in gold wherever he goes. His latest book, *How to Get Rich*, is his fifth national best-seller, and his latest real estate deals are bringing that special brand of Trump splendor to the Caribbean, Brazil and even Korea.

Born in Queens in 1946, Trump grew up learning to master the universe from his father, Fred, who accumulated millions by selling moderately priced housing to half of Brooklyn and Queens. Not long after Trump the younger crossed the bridge into Manhattan, his behind-the-scenes exploits rivaled the spectacle of his gleaming skyscrapers. His marriages to Ivana and Marla Maples fed a generation of gossip columnists. And even with his current popularity, tabloids love to find chinks in his armor: The casinos

are failing! The stockholders are angry! The billions don't exist!

Trump met with journalist David Hochman over the course of a few days at Trump Tower in Manhattan, midway through the second *Apprentice* shoot. Hochman reports: "Carving big chunks of time out of his busy schedule isn't easy. During one two-hour interview, his executive assistant, Rhona Graff-Riccio, logged more than 50 phone messages. The only call Trump took was from his son Eric, one of his four children. Trump says he always takes his kids' calls. Despite a harried production schedule and a docket full of meetings, public events and charity functions—as well as various interruptions from Trump Organization honchos such as Carolyn Kepcher and other unwitting stars of *The Apprentice*—Trump was focused, enthusiastic, open and direct. He was even gracious enough to leave me with a lapel pin featuring the catchphrase of the year: 'You're fired!'"

PLAYBOY: Let's begin with the most fundamental question of all. What's inside your wallet?

TRUMP: [Reaching into his pocket] Not much money, actually. A Platinum American Express card, some golf club cards, other credit cards, pictures of the family, a newspaper write-up on one of my new



"People like me much better than they did before *The Apprentice*. It's like being a rock star. And if you think about it, all I did was fire people, which shows how bad my reputation must have been before this."



"I virtually never have to pay for things with cash. I've never used an ATM. When I go to restaurants, I always get free meals, even if I'm there with 10 or 15 people. The sad part is, if I needed money I'd have to pay."



"It's possible that winning *The Apprentice* would have been my dream when I was 25, but these kids go through hell, and I don't know if I'd be willing to do the same. I wouldn't have the patience."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID ROSE

projects and, let's see, three \$1 bills. One has a picture of my father on it. The other two are from bets I won.

PLAYBOY: But aren't you supposed to be a billionaire?

TRUMP: I guess \$5 billion or more is the latest figure.

PLAYBOY: And you have only \$3 in your wallet? What's the deal?

TRUMP: Honestly, I don't spend much during the day. I virtually never have to pay for things with cash. I've never used an ATM. Of course, I always have access to money, and I have hundreds of checking accounts. But I don't handle cash a lot. When I go to restaurants, especially since *The Apprentice*, I always get free meals—"Oh please, Mr. Trump, there's no charge"—even if I'm there with 10 or 15 people. The sad part is, if I were someone who needed money I'd have to pay.

PLAYBOY: You came close to bankruptcy during the real estate slump of the early 1990s, and the New York tabloids mocked you for years. What's it like being king of the hill again?

TRUMP: It's an amazing thing and a great honor. I had a really high profile before and didn't think it could be higher. I was on the cover of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Fortune*. **PLAYBOY:** you name it, long before *The Apprentice*, but there's even more heat this time. Certainly a businessperson on television has never had anything close to this success. It's like being a rock star. Six people do nothing but sort my mail. People come in and want my secretary Robin's autograph. If a limo pulls up in front of Trump Tower, hundreds of people gather around, even if it's not mine. I ask, "Can this be a normal life?" Maybe it's the power that comes from having the hottest show on television, but people like me much better than they did before *The Apprentice*. And if you think about it, all I did on the show was fire people, which proves how bad my reputation must have been before this.

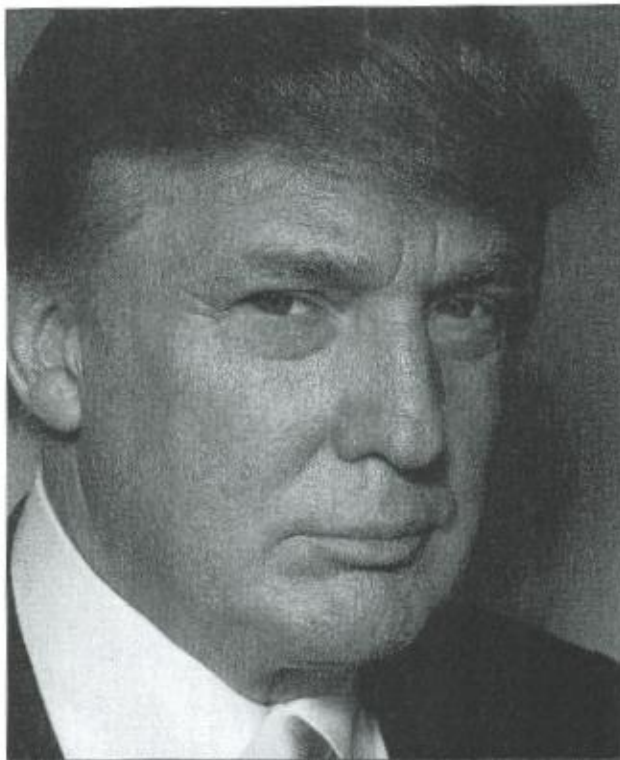
PLAYBOY: You must be so sick of hearing the *F* word.

TRUMP: Nah, it's actually very cool and fun. Every time I walk outside, somebody says it, and the funny thing is, everybody thinks I'm hearing it for the first time. "You're fired!" I get it literally a hundred times a day. Little kids come up to me and say, "Mr. Trump, you're fired" and then run away laughing. It became a mania. YOU'RE FIRED hats and T-shirts sell like hotcakes. It's a beautiful phrase. It's harsh, it's ugly, it's mean, but it's concise and gets the job done fast, which is why I love it.

PLAYBOY: More than 20 million people a

week watched *The Apprentice*, making it NBC's most successful new series in five years. But it also had a certain novelty that made it the watercooler show of the year. How will you up the ante this season?

TRUMP: When you have the greatest show on television, you don't want to make too many changes, but we've done some subtle things and, of course, have a new cast. We have 18 people instead of 16, and there's even more brainpower. We wanted sparks and high IQs, and we got the finest applicants from Harvard, Princeton and Wharton. They're also very attractive. Beyond that we had major corporations begging to be involved. Cunard wanted us to show the *Queen Mary 2* throughout the show. We'll have



I don't use a blow-dryer. I comb it. Once I have it the way I like it, I spray it and it's good for the day.

access to the greatest restaurants, places we could never have gotten before.

PLAYBOY: Would you have a shot at winning *The Apprentice* today if you were 25?

TRUMP: I don't think so. I wouldn't have had the patience these contestants have had. I also don't know that I'd make the tremendous commitment necessary to make it work. I mean, it's possible that winning *The Apprentice* would have been my dream when I was 25, but these kids go through hell, and I don't know if I'd be willing to do the same.

PLAYBOY: Why were the most successful people from the first season—well, at least Bill and Kwame, the two finalists—so un-Trump-like, so bland?

TRUMP: They were all great, smart, attrac-

tive people, but not one of them is me. That said, all the apprentices will do well. Bill will make a lot of money over his lifetime, and he's going to learn a lot. Kwame has a Harvard MBA and an incredible career ahead of him. They're all articulate and engaging, and you can't beat the kind of publicity they got. Even Omarosa is doing well, if you believe her.

PLAYBOY: Omarosa became one of the great villains in the history of reality TV. She lied, she backstabbed, she even "misplaced" Jessica Simpson. How much of that was scripted?

TRUMP: Honestly, none of it. We chose her over 215,000 applicants, but I didn't know until midway through the show that she would be such a villain. I got along with her very well, but she was difficult for people to handle. I realized we had something when people like my dear friend Regis Philbin started asking me if she was too good to be true, if we'd concocted her in some way. It was all 100 percent Omarosa. I couldn't believe she was lying on camera like she was. She's got a problem or something.

PLAYBOY: Would you serve as a job reference if she asked?

TRUMP: It would depend on what kind of job it is.

PLAYBOY: The chief executive of a small company?

TRUMP: No, I really don't think so. But I might serve as a reference for her to be on a soap opera, because I think she'd be terrific at it. She's wonderful on TV, and she gets ratings. I just wouldn't necessarily want her running my church.

PLAYBOY: The winner, Bill Rancic, was an online cigar salesman from a lesser-known college who tended to micromanage on *The Apprentice*. Now you're having him oversee a complicated 90-story building project in Chicago. What if he screws up?

TRUMP: He's working with a tremendously talented group of people who do nothing but put up towers for me. So in all honesty, I don't think there's much room for screwups.

PLAYBOY: Is that code for "Bill won't be making any decisions"?

TRUMP: Bill will make decisions, and they'll be important ones, but they will always be checked by me and others who've done a lot of this before.

PLAYBOY: In real life things haven't been so rosy lately. Trump Hotels and Casino Resorts, your one publicly traded enterprise, is drowning in billions of dollars of debt, and the stock price has fallen. According to *The New York Times*, it's because you either neglected the company or don't have the vision or ability to oversee an entertainment conglomerate.

TRUMP: The casinos have done very well

from a business standpoint. People agree that they're well run, they look good and customers love them. The only problem is that over the years I've placed a lot of debt on them. Before I took them public I placed debt on the casinos and also took money out. It's like when you put a mortgage on your house and take money out. It's no different, just larger. I took out money and bought a lot of real estate in New York—a smart decision considering what's happened with real estate. But that left the casinos with a lot of debt, which I'm trying to alleviate.

PLAYBOY: Are you optimistic about the casinos' future?

TRUMP: I think and hope the casino company will be good in the years to come. The Taj Mahal has been the number one casino in Atlantic City history. And truthfully, it's a small portion of my net worth—two percent or less. But because the casinos are heavily leveraged, people go after them, especially *The New York Times*. Or else people criticize the hair.

PLAYBOY: Ah, the hair. Can you walk us through your daily routine?

TRUMP: I get up, take a shower and wash my hair. Then I read the newspapers and watch the news on television, and slowly the hair dries. It takes about an hour. I don't use a blow-dryer. Once it's dry I comb it. Once I have it the way I like it—even though nobody else likes it—I spray it and it's good for the day.

PLAYBOY: Who cuts it?

TRUMP: My girlfriend, Melania.

PLAYBOY: You must really trust her.

TRUMP: I do. And by the way, she's much more artistic than my hair would indicate. But she believes that if you like something the way it is, you should leave it. She doesn't fool with the hair. She's not trying to reinvent the wheel.

PLAYBOY: Can you explain why you're getting married again? You haven't been the poster boy for matrimonial bliss.

TRUMP: That's an interesting question coming from *PLAYBOY*. Melania is a very special woman, a good woman. She's been loyal to me, and I'm a big believer in the great woman behind the man. I see it with Bob Wright, the chairman of NBC. His wife, Suzanne, is a great positive force, and Bob is an amazingly successful man. I've seen it the other way, too. When Andre Agassi was married to Brooke Shields, he couldn't play tennis. His ranking fell to 200, and he'd get blown off the court. I think Brooke Shields is a wonderful girl; I know her. But then he married Steffi Graf and all of a sudden he was at number one again.

PLAYBOY: What has Melania added to your life?

TRUMP: I've had a successful career with Melania in it. The last five years have been my most successful. So maybe it's the woman behind the man or the luck of the woman behind the man, but we've had a good run, and she's great.

PLAYBOY: She's a model. You're a billion-



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aire. But do you ever just sit around in your ratty underwear watching *Eliminate* together?

TRUMP: We love to watch television together, but we don't get to hang out as much as I'd like. She does cook dinner for me every night, even if we're going out. In fact, her biggest problem is that she's too good of a cook—it's hard not to gain weight when you're with her.

PLAYBOY: What's your relationship with Ivana like these days?

TRUMP: I would say it's okay. I wouldn't say outstanding, but it's okay.

PLAYBOY: Do you talk to her?

TRUMP: When necessary. I don't think she's ever properly appreciated what I've done for her, and I've done a lot, much more than she has been willing to admit.

PLAYBOY: How about Marla?

TRUMP: We have a nice relationship. Marla is a kind woman, but in all fairness she wasn't for me. She's a very spiritual person, perhaps too spiritual for me, and

she's given me a great daughter in Tiffany. Marla and I should have been friends, not necessarily married.

PLAYBOY: You wrote in *The Art of the Comeback* that women are gold diggers. Do you still believe that?

TRUMP: I think it's hard for women who go out with very wealthy guys not to get seduced by that lifestyle—the apartments at the top of Trump Tower, the helicopters and airplanes. But I don't think all women are gold diggers. There's nothing more beautiful to me than a woman. I love and respect them. I've known a lot of really good women and have had amazing relationships over the years. But as with men, there are good ones and bad ones.

PLAYBOY: How often are you alone?

TRUMP: Lately not so much, because I live with Melania and we have a nice life together.

PLAYBOY: Do you miss the alone time? Don't you crave it occasionally?

TRUMP: Listen, Melania really understands me. She gives me tremendous space. She can read me better than anybody I've ever known. She understands when I want to be alone, and she'll just leave me. I've been with other people who would say, "Oh, you're not talking to me. Something's wrong. Why aren't we walking down the street together? Why aren't we doing this together?" But Melania can tell when I'm in the right mood. It makes life a lot easier.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of being in the mood, are you a fan of Viagra?

TRUMP: No, I'm not. I think Viagra is wonderful if you need it, if you have medical issues, if you've had surgery. I've just never needed it. Frankly, I wouldn't mind if there were an anti-Viagra, something with the opposite effect. I'm not bragging. I'm just lucky. I don't need it. I've always said, "If you need Viagra, you're probably with the wrong girl."

PLAYBOY: How appropriate is the use of

sexuality in today's business world? One of the big criticisms of *The Apprentice* was that the women on the show shamelessly used their sex appeal to manipulate men and get what they wanted.

TRUMP: The women on the show were beautiful and very sexual, to the point where I actually took them to task for it. They were really out there for a while. But they weren't doing anything that doesn't exist in the business world. One egghead professor criticized us, saying that sort of thing doesn't take place in business. But come on, sexuality has been important since the beginning of time. If people think sex appeal doesn't exist in the boardroom, they're wrong.

PLAYBOY: The women on the show certainly seemed to be flirting with you. Did you realize that?

TRUMP: I never saw them flirt. Perhaps they were flirting with me in a business sense, but there's nothing wrong with being attractive, young and confident with the opposite sex.

PLAYBOY: What advice do you give your daughter Ivanka about men?

TRUMP: I just tell her to be careful. She's smart and beautiful, and hopefully she'll learn. But you can tell children only so much. They either get it right or they don't, and often they don't get it right.

PLAYBOY: How did she feel about your remarks on Howard Stern's radio show that New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady is the only man good enough for her?

TRUMP: I kid Tom, but he's a friend of mine. I think he's a great character. I got to know him when he was a judge at a jitterbug contest I entered after the Patriots won the Super Bowl. He's a winner, and by that I mean every time he needs to make the pass he makes it. You have other guys in the NFL and in life who have all the equipment but don't make the pass. I think Tom's a great guy,

and I think he and Ivanka would make a great combination.

PLAYBOY: What does Ivanka think?

TRUMP: My daughter has a boyfriend and she's happy with him, but Tom Brady would make any father-in-law proud.

PLAYBOY: It must be difficult being Donald Trump's child. Your four children have security and undoubtedly all the material possessions they could ask for, but now some of them, such as Donald Jr., a Wharton graduate, are going into the family business. What's your sense of the pressure that's on them to out-Trump you?

TRUMP: I think there's pressure on them but not too much, I hope. It's not easy for them. When their father does a television show and it becomes the number one program, when their father is by far the biggest developer in New York, it's tough to beat. It's also tough to have children grow up in this crazy limelight. They've adjusted well—they're smart, they've been good students, they went to good schools—but maybe the toughest thing is to find private time with my children. Even when I take them out to a restaurant, people come up and go crazy. I've never been the kind of guy who takes his son out to Central Park to play catch, but I think I'm a good father.

PLAYBOY: What kind of son were you? Were you rebellious?

TRUMP: I was very bad. That's why my parents sent me to a military academy. I was rebellious. Not violent or anything, but I wasn't exactly well behaved. I once gave one of my teachers a black eye. I talked back to my parents and to people in general. Perhaps it was more like bratty behavior, but I certainly wasn't the perfect child.

PLAYBOY: Yet you went into the family business the minute you graduated from Wharton. And that was in 1968, when other people your age were heading to either Haight-Ashbury or

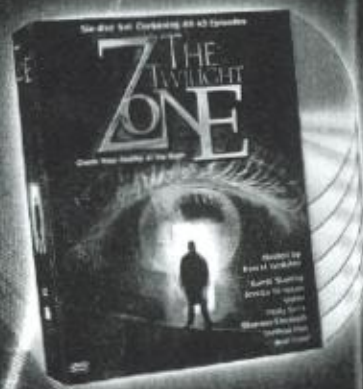
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Vietnam. Did you for a moment consider packing up a Volkswagen van and cruising to Woodstock?

TRUMP: No. When I graduated, it was all about work. I loved working as much as my father did, right from the start.

PLAYBOY: A psychiatrist once commented that you have an "overmastering need to escape the shadow of your father."

TRUMP: I wouldn't dispute that. I'm a competitive person. It's not an overly complex theory; I've heard it with respect to many successful sons. I totally loved my father, but I would say that in the beginning especially I was competitive with my father, yes.

PLAYBOY: How were you two different?

TRUMP: That's a tough question to answer. We had a lot of the same qualities in terms of negotiation, in terms of certain aspects of running a business. My father understood how to build, and I learned a lot from him. I learned about construction, about building. But if I had an edge over my father, it might have been in concepts—the concept of a building. It also might have been in scope. I would rather sell apartments to billionaires who want to live on Fifth Avenue and 57th Street than sell apartments to people in Brooklyn who are wonderful people but are going to chisel me down because every penny is important. My father never really got away from Brooklyn and Queens. He was very successful there, but he was more comfortable selling a piece of land in Brooklyn for \$1 a foot than in Manhattan for \$1,000 a foot. You have to be comfortable with what you're doing or you won't be successful. I used to stand on the other side of the East River and look at Manhattan. I'd always admired the great buildings, and now I own many of them. I own the land under the Empire State Building. I own 40 Wall Street, which for a time was the tallest building in the world and now, sadly, is the tallest building in downtown Manhattan.

PLAYBOY: What gave you the idea that you could do more?

TRUMP: A combination of my mother and my father, I think. My mother was a great homemaker. She also had good promotional skills and was a great storyteller. She came from Scotland, and she would sit and read about the English royal family any chance she could. If there was a royal wedding on TV, she could watch it for 24 straight hours. She loved pomp and pageantry. My father wasn't into pomp and pageantry. That's why he loved Brooklyn and Queens and why he was so good at what he did there. Pomp and pageantry and a love of business—if you put the two of them together, perhaps you have Donald Trump.

PLAYBOY: Are you someone who talks out your parent issues with a psychiatrist?

TRUMP: No.

PLAYBOY: Why?

TRUMP: Because I'm too busy and because I enjoy my life. A lot of people see psychi-

atrists because they don't have enough on their mind. I spend so much time thinking about buildings and deals and clubs and doing what I do that I don't have time to get into trouble mentally. I don't knock psychiatry. I have friends who can't live without it. They look forward to it and go five, six, seven times a week. But I don't like that. It's a crutch.

PLAYBOY: We always read about your famous fear of germs. A psychiatrist would have a field day with that one. Is it still an issue?

TRUMP: The concept of shaking hands is absolutely terrible, and statistically I've been proven right. Many studies have found that you catch colds and who knows what else from shaking hands. A guy walked into my office two weeks ago. He shook my hand, hugged me, sat down and said, "I have the worst flu I've ever had." The guy looked like he was dying, and he'd just shaken my hand. I said, "Why did you shake my hand?" People don't have a clue. It's disgusting. Then he wanted to shake my hand when I left. I said, "Look, you just told me you're dying of the flu and I'm supposed to shake your hand?" But honestly, I don't feel crippled by it. I just wash my hands.

PLAYBOY: What about your temper? In the book *Trumped!*, an unauthorized biography, your former employee John O'Donnell describes your ripping upholstery out of a limo, ramming your fist through tile in a casino, yelling at pilots for rough landings. How's that Donald doing these days, and why didn't we see him on *The Apprentice*?

TRUMP: O'Donnell is a loser. He totally made that up. I hardly even knew this guy. He wasn't very good at what he did. I've had many books written about me, and in almost all instances they just make things up and say whatever they want, even if it's total nonsense. I ripped the interior out of limousines? Give me a break.

PLAYBOY: When was the last time you screamed at an employee?

TRUMP: It might have been two days ago, but it wasn't out of anger; it was a method of getting them to do a better job. Sometimes that works better than honey. I don't actually have a bad temper. I call it controlled violence. I get angry at people for incompetence. I get angry at people who are getting paid a lot of money and don't look sharp when they work for me. That's one reason I do better than everybody else. That's one reason I get more per square foot than other real estate people. That's part of why I'm so successful.

PLAYBOY: Does one project stand out?

TRUMP: I've always loved Trump Tower. It's not my most successful building because of the size. It's a big building, 68 stories. Many of my jobs are more financially successful. A perfect example is Manhattan's west side rail yards, where I built Trump Place, which has almost 6,000 units and 10 million square feet. It's actually the most successful job




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in New York, but nobody knows about it because it's along the Hudson River. By comparison, the new Time-Warner Center in Columbus Circle is only 2 million square feet. Trump Place is at a location where it's not so evident, yet it's five times the size of Time-Warner.

PLAYBOY: And the road to building it was a long one. It took you 10 years to get that job done. Practically everybody on Manhattan's Upper West Side hated you because they thought it would cast shadows and change the culture of a beloved neighborhood.

TRUMP: They hated me. There were riots on the west side when I was building it. To be honest, the near collapse of New York during the 1990s is what got it done. If New York had been doing well, we would never have gotten the zoning for that job. It's always good to get zoning in bad times and build in good times. It took 10 years, and now it's paying off, which says everything about sticking to it. Never give up. It was a tough job, but it was an amazing experience. I think I'm somebody with a great imagination who understands people and understands quality, and when I put it all together I do some interesting things.

PLAYBOY: It would have been great to hear your ideas for some of the team projects on *The Apprentice*. For instance, how would you have sold lemonade on the streets of New York?

TRUMP: The women did an amazing job. They were dressed beautifully, and a lot of guys wanted to buy lemonade from them. So naturally, the women blew the men out of the water. As for the men, I certainly wouldn't have been at the Fulton Fish Market—that was a terrible idea. And I wouldn't have dressed in a suit and tie, because who buys lemonade from a man in a suit and tie? No way. I would have gone immediately to a gay section of Manhattan.

PLAYBOY: Because?

TRUMP: Because I think a gay man would feel really comfortable buying lemonade from another man. Or else I would have hired beautiful women to sell the lemonade. The men picked the worst location. Kwame picked the Fulton Fish Market, and it was a disappointing choice. He was lucky to have survived that one.

PLAYBOY: Do you ever worry about losing it all?

TRUMP: I try not to. In the early 1990s I was highly leveraged when the real estate market collapsed. I'd borrowed a lot and had lots of debt. Many of my friends and enemies in the real estate business filed for bankruptcy, but I never had to. I got it all back. Actually, the *Guinness Book of World Records* lists me as having made the greatest personal financial comeback in history. Through it all, I had great relationships with banks. The ones I used then I still use today. The hardest I've ever worked in my life was the period from 1990 to

1994, but my business is now bigger and stronger than ever before. I wouldn't want to do it again, but I learned that the world can change on the head of a dime, and that keeps things in perspective.

PLAYBOY: Now that you've achieved so much, why not give it all away, as Bill Gates and David Geffen have done?

TRUMP: I do give millions of dollars a year, but I do it personally. I just write checks and give it away.

PLAYBOY: But the Donald J. Trump Foundation contributed only \$287,000, according to its most recent report.

TRUMP: I'm surprised it's even that high, because it's not what you'd call a living foundation. It's set up for after I...when it's no longer my time. The foundation will become very active at that point. But my business is a little different from Bill Gates's business. Bricks and mortar—buildings—don't necessarily divide as easily as stock in a public company. I also have my son in the business. My daughter will be coming in, and I have another son coming up. They all like the real estate business, and as long as that's the situation, I'd be more inclined to leave it to the children than give it all to charity.

PLAYBOY: Is it true that you've never had a glass of alcohol?

TRUMP: I've never had drugs and never had alcohol and never had a cup of coffee. I have had other things that perhaps people wouldn't like. I certainly love women in abundance. And I enjoy my work to the point that I don't even consider it work.

PLAYBOY: Yet you were always showing up at places where drugs were being used. You must have been the only multimillionaire during the heyday of Studio 54 who wasn't snorting cocaine in the bathroom.

TRUMP: Yeah, I guess I probably was one of the few people there not doing drugs.

PLAYBOY: What was your wildest memory from those days?

TRUMP: You saw things at Studio 54 that you had never seen before. You would see not one superstar but 30 of them, and you'd suddenly realize how many so-called superstars there are. Or you'd see the top models in the world getting screwed on tables in the middle of the dance floor. You would see things you just don't see today primarily because of AIDS and other diseases. But it was incredible. You'd see the most beautiful women in the world, the most beautiful people in the world. Then, an hour later, you'd see them making love right in front of you. And I'm there saying, "Excuse me?"

PLAYBOY: And what were you up to?

TRUMP: I was there having a good time. You don't need drugs and alcohol to have a good time. You can get high on life. That's what I do.

PLAYBOY: Were you dating a million models at the time?

TRUMP: A million. I was dating lots and lots of women. I just had a great time.

They were great years, but that was pre-AIDS, and you could do things in those days that today you're at risk doing. AIDS has changed a lot.

PLAYBOY: Was there a time when you worried about AIDS because of all you'd done?

TRUMP: There was, but I got tested. I think it's hard for young kids today. It's a whole different thing. I tell my sons just to get a nice girlfriend and be happy, because it's dangerous out there. It's Vietnam. I guess now we can say it's Iraq—same deal, right?

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about that. You were considering a run for the presidency in 2000. How would a Trump candidacy have been different in 2004?

TRUMP: First let me say that although I got ridiculously high poll numbers, ultimately I decided I didn't want to run primarily because I would have had to do it on the Reform Party ticket, and I thought the Reform Party was a total disaster. You would go to a meeting, there would be fistfights, and it was ridiculous. So that wasn't for me. But things would be a lot different today, from what I've been witnessing. If I were president, I would call Saudi Arabia in right now and say, "You get those fuel prices down or you're going to pay a heavy price," because they're ripping us off left and right. Fuel is at an all-time high. I would get Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in line. We saved Kuwait. These guys were sitting in London in the most beautiful hotels when Saddam Hussein took their country away from them. We put them back into power and now they're ripping us off for oil. I'll tell you one thing: If I were president, a whole different negotiation would be going on right now.

PLAYBOY: You've said the first Gulf war contributed to your financial problems in the 1990s. What will this war do?

TRUMP: The Persian Gulf war was a different thing. You couldn't get gasoline—that was a big difference—and interest rates got up to 21, 22 percent. But this war is a total catastrophe. We never should have gone there. You could have done spot hits instead of sending in the troops. In all fairness, it's horrible on both sides. I see beautiful Iraqi children being killed and maimed, walking around with no legs and no arms. Then I see soldiers coming home with one arm and one leg, and they're going to have to live that way—and for what? Say anything you want, but Iraq wasn't heavily into terrorism. Saddam didn't allow terrorists, because he didn't want people blowing the hell out of his country. And of course, it turns out there were no weapons of mass destruction.

PLAYBOY: What do you think should be done now?

TRUMP: It's a catastrophic situation because there's no way to get out without losing face. As soon as we leave, the country will be taken over by the next dictator

and then the next one. If we leave Iraq with a wonderful new government in place, it will be overthrown in about 15 seconds, just as the Saudi government would be overthrown in about 15 seconds if we weren't protecting Saudi Arabia.

PLAYBOY: How do you think all this will affect the presidential election?

TRUMP: I think it's going to be hard for Bush to be reelected because of the war. The first Bush lost because of Iraq, and the second Bush has a big chance of losing because of Iraq too. No way will there be a normal democratic government in that country, in my opinion. The same with Afghanistan. If anybody thinks Afghanistan will become a normal, wonderful democratic country where everybody walks in on a Tuesday and votes, it's not going to happen.

PLAYBOY: Do you think John Kerry is the man for the job?

TRUMP: Well, I know him. He's a great guy. He's a very smart guy. I think he's highly underestimated, and I think he's going to run an amazingly successful campaign. Look at what he did in the primaries. It appeared as if he was off the radar, and all

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of a sudden he made this great comeback. I have a feeling he's going to do very well.

PLAYBOY: Let's shift gears for a moment. It was surprising to read in *How to Get Rich* that you and Mark Burnett, the executive producer of *The Apprentice*, share a passion for Neil Young's music. Any other musical skeletons in your closet?

TRUMP: I think Neil Young is a great storyteller, and certainly Mark Burnett is a great storyteller. I took him down to the Taj Mahal to see Neil Young perform, and Mark fell in love with him as an entertainer. I've always been a fan. I like others, too. I think Eminem is fantastic, and most people think I wouldn't like Eminem. And did you know my name is in more black songs than any other name in hip-hop? Black entertainers love Donald Trump. Russell Simmons told me that. Russell said, "You're in more hip-hop songs than any other person," like five of them lately. That's a great honor for me.

PLAYBOY: Why does everything come back to self-promotion for you? What's the value in constantly telling people how great you are?

TRUMP: Because if you don't, probably

nobody else will. Whether I'm building the best buildings in Chicago, New York, California or wherever I happen to be building, I think I get credit for being a great promoter. Actually, what I am is a great builder. I build great things and become successful, and everybody talks about them. I'd like to be remembered as somebody with a high standard of taste who got the job done and also put lots of people to work, made lots of money for the poor and fed a lot of families.

PLAYBOY: Do you think Trump Tower and your other buildings will bear your name a hundred years from now?

TRUMP: No, I don't think so.

PLAYBOY: Why?

TRUMP: I don't think any building will be here—and unless we have some very smart people ruling it, the world will not be the same place in a hundred years. The weapons are too powerful, too strong. Access to the weapons is getting too easy, so I think the landscape we're looking at will not be the same unless we get smart people in office quickly.

PLAYBOY: That's frightening.

TRUMP: You don't agree?

PLAYBOY: It's just surprising coming from you. Your whole world is bricks and mortar.

TRUMP: I had an uncle who was a great professor and a brilliant man—Dr. John Trump, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His whole life was devoted to the study and eradication of cancer, and sadly, he died of cancer. But he was a brilliant scientist, and he would tell me weapons are getting so powerful today that humanity is in tremendous trouble. This was 25 years ago, but he was right. The world is rocky, and some terrible things are going to happen. That's why I lead the life I do. I enjoy it. I know life is fragile, and if the world looks like this a hundred years from now, we'll either be very lucky or have found unbelievably good leaders somewhere down the line.

PLAYBOY: One last question. You make acquiring wealth look so easy. Why isn't everyone rich?

TRUMP: Some people aren't meant to be rich. It's like when Babe Ruth was the greatest home run hitter. There had never been anybody like him, and his teammates would ask, "Babe, Babe, how do you hit the long ball?" And he'd say, "I don't know, man. I just swing at it." I see it like that. It's just something you have, something you're born with. Many people don't have the ability to be rich, because they're too lazy or they don't have the desire or the stick-to-itiveness. It's a talent. Some people have a talent for piano. Some people have a talent for raising a family. Some people have a talent for golf. I just happen to have a talent for making money.

