

FROM TRIPPY TECHNO TIPS TO HIPPIY HYDRO HITS



SKUNK

stinkin' it to the man

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 4

Her Royal Highness:

HIGH TECH

and

HIGH 'DRO

The Strain Report:

ORANGE VELVET

AERO-CLONING

DEMISTIFIED

THE CUBECAP EVOLVED:

DRIPCAPS

LO-TECH, HIGH-GRADE

SPONGE GROW

FRESH OFF THE BUD

HASH INSANITY



www.skunkmagazine.com

The Breeder Diaries

REEFERMAN

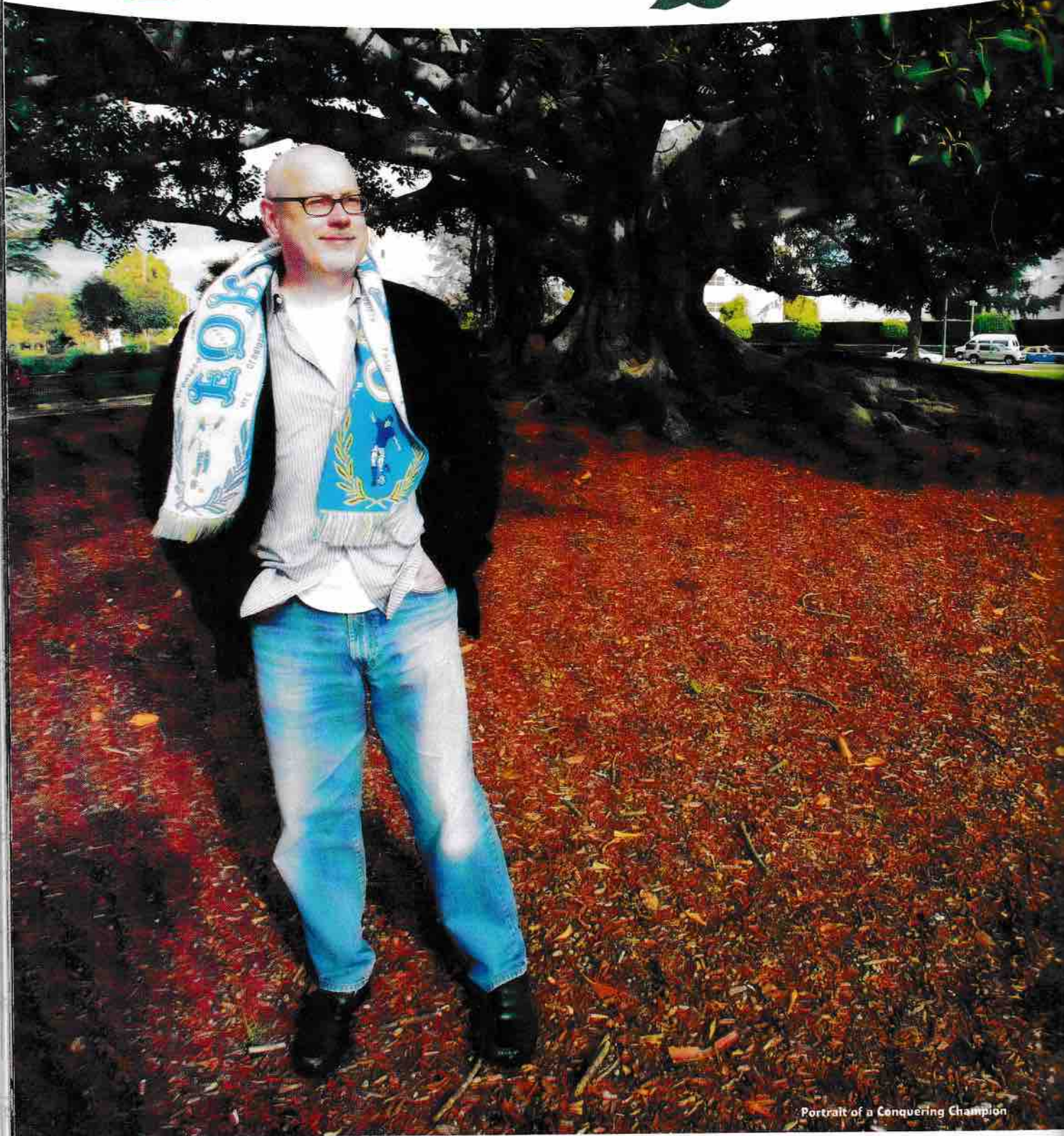
JESSIKA VIOLET IS

SSSSMOKIN'!

• MARK HASKELL SMITH • SENSIGARS • BARRY COOPER • HEMPTRESS DECEMBER • RPM •

LA crime novelist Mark Haskell Smith explores the roots of West Coast stoner society in fact and fiction.

GROUNDNDED



Portrait of a Conquering Champion

Baked: The current cover. ▶

Somewhere underneath the concrete and tar of Eagle Rock, a garden once grew. Apricots, pears, peaches, strawberries... you name it, it once grew here. Almost a century ago, however, the region began suffering severe growing pains. Streets and neighborhoods began popping up on chunks of land once used for grazing and letters to the editor in the local newspaper, *Eagle Rock Sentinel*, complained of livestock running free on private property and weird, insect-producing piles of stuff behind the neighborhood apothecary.

Anticipating the future, one resident, an enterprising newspaper proofreader named Cromwell Galpin, took the initiative to subdivide and develop some of his property into a tract called "Shallot Terrace." Interestingly enough, on the day the newly incorporated city board approved of it in 1911, they also considered a piece of legislation entitled *Ordinance 21*. This innocuous-sounding bill, which passed weeks later, effectively banned the sale and consumption of alcohol within city limits. "Now is a good time for everyone to take an inventory of our legal and moral duties and act accordingly," declared an op-ed piece entitled "Let Us Start Right," in the *Sentinel*.

And so it was.

Nowadays, most residents live, work and die on this tract without even knowing this district's name, much less what it was once used for. But they sense it. They must in some way, for ever since *Prop 215*, over twenty weed dispensaries have sprouted up from Eagle Rock's fallow ground, infiltrating empty retail space and unnerving community groups. Some of the most strident voices within the state's current debate on medical marijuana come from this section of the city. Crime fiction novelist Mark Haskell Smith can see it all from the balcony of his pea-green nook, which sits on an ivy-covered knoll within Shallot Terrace's borders. Perhaps he's in a better position than most to understand that what makes this region most interesting is definitely homegrown.

"I had read about the [*High Times*] Cannabis Cup ten years ago and I just thought it was such an interesting thing. Here's a celebration contest for something that's illegal," says Smith of his original interest in marijuana gardening. "So I just started researching it as I was writing other books. And it took me a while to get to it, but for me, hedonism and criminality intersecting [is] really fun. Reading should be fun and no one had really ever explored this. And it's such an interesting world; it's not like people in a motel in the desert whipping up some meth. The botany involved is kind of serious. There are serious scientists looking at genetics here."

Little by little, this interest blossomed into *Baked*, Mark Haskell Smith's hipster odyssey into Los Angeles's medical marijuana industry. Following in the footsteps of *The Big Lebowski* and *Inherent Vice*, *Baked* expands the burgeoning field of LA Stoner Noir by examining the politics behind the region's dispensary system.

Our host and hero is a UC-Davis-educated botanist named Miro Basinas, whose skill and vision in growing marijuana is counterbalanced by his inability to function amongst non-plant

species, like humans. Driven by a compulsion to create marijuana's version of the "pluot," Basinas develops a mango-scented hybrid strain named Elephant Crush. After staging an upset victory at the Cannabis Cup, he's shot upon returning to L.A. by an Irish-Salvadorian gangster thug with the outrageous name of Shamus Noriega. Miro survives, but Noriega steals his prize crop for the book's primary villain, Vincent, a ruthless dispensary chain store owner. With the help of his Dutch coffeeshop sponsor, Guus, and love interest, Marianna, Miro sets out to find his plants. Smith's light, sardonic style and occasionally kinky plot twists (a memorable one including a strap-on wearing EMT tech who gives one of Shamus's henchmen a taste and no medicine) keeps the action taut until the climatic Mexican standoff between good and evil at an upscale Westside dispensary opening.

Haskell reclines against one of his couches, a massive bookshelf framing him as he settles down to observe me, as I observe him. From time to time, he'll engage me in conversation and I end up sharing as much of myself with him as he does of himself. He apparently enjoys the human comedy whenever it waltzes past him in all of its variety—after all, it's possible he might find grist for yet another novel in front of him. Propped next to him on a coffee table is a laptop, its screen displaying a website announcing the capture of Timothy Joseph McGhee. A hardened gang leader for the Northeastern LA-based Toonerville Rifas, McGhee terrorized the Atwater Village neighborhood where Smith lived at the time with a random killing spree he charmingly referred to as a "hunting party." McGhee would later become the model for the sociopathic Noriega, while Miro's sidekick Daniel, a Mormon missionary who gradually develops a taste for bondage, initially walked into Smith's life as two formally dressed, heat-prostrated Utah teens at his doorstep. "I took them in and then gave them water. They were so happy to have someone to talk to, that they just told me their life stories and I thought, oh, this is such an interesting character."

Smith's personal road to perdition started in theater. Inspired by Joe Orton, Smith initially started writing plays before arriving in Los Angeles in the '90s. His biggest break so far in Hollywood came in the form of 1997's *Playing God*, starring David Duchovny in his first role outside of *The X-Files*, playing a disgraced surgeon who treats mobsters who can't seek legal treatment. This led to work for TV and while it led to his current profession as an author, Smith would rather you forget what you've seen and concentrate on what he's written. "Sometimes, people [in film] just think the

