

# People®

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# insider

by Tom Cunneff

## As *The Sopranos'*

philandering Mob boss, **James Gandolfini** has dallied with a Mercedes saleswoman (**Annabella Sciorra**) and a clingy Russian immigrant (**Oksana Lada**). On the Nov. 3 episode, Tony Soprano meets a party girl who may look familiar. She is **Leslie Bega**, best known as Maria Borges on ABC's popular 1986-'91 TV series *Head of the Class*. To break the ice before their first love scene, I'm told, Gandolfini sent Bega two dozen roses.

## Freddie Prinze Jr. turns

up on the Nov. 7 episode of *Friends* as the nanny for **Jennifer Aniston** and **David Schwimmer's** baby Emma. Not that the actor, who married **Sarah Michelle Gellar** on Sept. 1, is ready for parenthood anytime soon. While holding one of the twin girls who portray Emma, Prinze shouted for a baby nurse the second a diaper change seemed to be in order. "We just had a little explosion downstairs," he said, holding the tot at arm's length.

**When are two weddings not enough?** When you're **Gwen Stefani** and **Gavin Rossdale**, who exchanged vows three times because two of the ceremonies weren't held inside a Catholic

church. First the rockers wed in an Anglican church in London on Sept. 14, then outdoors at music mogul Jimmy Iovine's L.A. mansion on Sept. 28. But to satisfy Stefani's Roman Catholic parents—and the Vatican, which only recognizes marriages that take place within the walls of a Catholic church—in between, they held an intimate ceremony for her immediate family at an L.A. cathedral on Sept. 26.

## Katie Holmes not only

stars in *Abandon*, the new psychological thriller, she sings the movie's theme song as well. While filming a choir scene, writer-

director **Stephen Gaghan** became so taken with Holmes's voice he had her record the opening soundtrack—just as **Mia Farrow** did for *Rosemary's Baby*.

## HBO's hit series

*Six Feet Under* just started production in L.A. after a five-month hiatus, which star **Peter Krause** spent in an adventurous way. He went surfing in L.A., bass fishing with his brother Michael in Minnesota and glacier-climbing in Yosemite National Park, where he encountered a black bear. But when a quick-thinking Krause shouted, "Hey!" the bear ran away.

## On the heels of

*American Idol* comes *American Bridal*. Talk show host **Caroline Rhea**, who is getting married in December to nonprofit executive Bob Keltz, will introduce a segment on her show where bridesmaids, wedding planners and dress designers compete to be part of her wedding. It should make for good television, but more importantly, Rhea has been so busy she doesn't have time to plan her own wedding. Says Rhea: "Now I know why **David Letterman** and **Oprah** are still single."

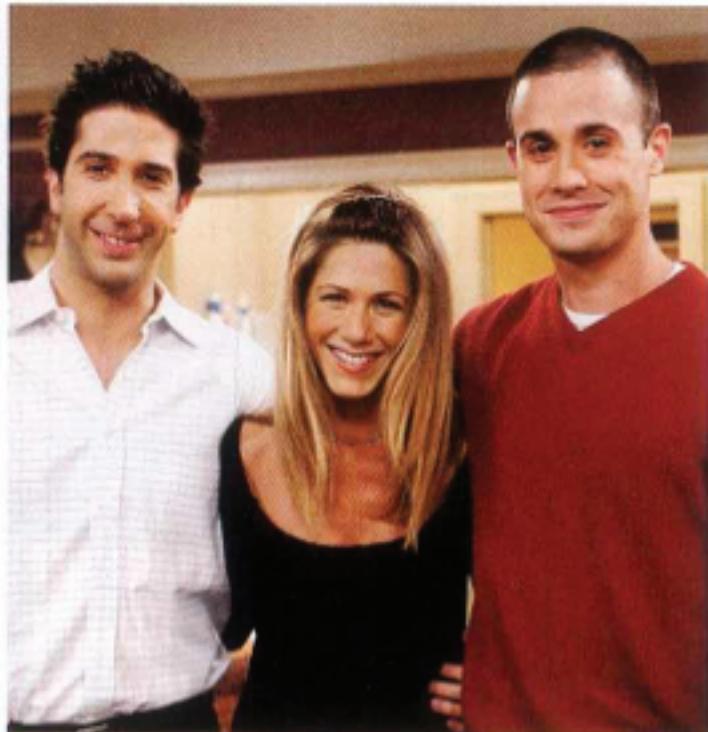
Additional reporting by  
Mary Shaughnessy



*The Sopranos'* Leslie Bega catches Tony's eye.



Peter Krause avoids a bear hug in Yosemite.



Prinze Jr. (right) does diaper duty with Schwimmer and Aniston.

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# People®

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# school ties

It's *A Different World*—if not zip code—for 90210ers and other grads of TV's classrooms. The second of a two-part series

## HEAD OF THE CLASS

1986-1991

An unlikely hit, this sitcom about a motley crew of precocious honors students and their prickly teacher made being smart cool. When the cast went on *Oprah*, recalls Dan Frischman, who played *Class* nerd Arvid Engen, "they screamed like we were the Beatles."



The *Brainy Bunch*: (top row) Jeannetta Arnette, Jory Husein, Dan Schneider, Dan Frischman (middle) William G. Schilling, Leslie Bega, Kimberly Russell, Brian Robbins, Howard Hesseman (front) Khristyne Haje, Tony O'Dell, Robin Givens and (bottom) Tannis Vallety.

If an ex-*Classmate* "is going to be on TV, we'll gather and watch," says Russell (second from left, with Frischman, O'Dell, Bega and Vallety in Los Angeles).



where are they now? •





## HEAD OF THE CLASS

### Dan Frischman

After cementing gawky Arvid Engen in the canon of lovable TV geeks, Frischman, 42, struggled hard to shed his pocket protector. Following a run on the stand-up comedy circuit, he spent four years on Nickelodeon's *Kenan & Kel*. These days, the single Frischman, who continues to act in Los Angeles, increasingly enjoys being recognized. "Now they say, 'You're an actor,'" he says, "which I much prefer to 'Hey, you're that nerd!'"

### Leslie Bega

For Bega, 31, who played Maria Borges, life after the show was tumultuous. Shortly after marrying INXS drummer Jon Farriss in 1992, she put her acting career on hold. Their divorce in 1998, coupled with the suicide of Bega's close friend and INXS lead singer Michael Hutchence the previous year, plunged her into depression. Counseling and yoga helped pull her out. Now an aspiring singer who runs her own production company,



### Robin Givens

Fueled by her vitriolic split from Mike Tyson during the show's run, Givens, 36, who played haughty Darlene Merriman, "was called America's most hated woman by the media," says *Class* co-creator Michael Elias. Recently, however, the twice-divorced Givens, who lives in L.A. with her sons Michael, 9, and William, 2, has won praise for her work in *The Vagina Monologues*. Says Elias: "She has created a life for herself."

"I absolutely don't regret a thing," she says. "I'm much stronger, much more open."

### Tannis Valley

She was just 13 when she left *Class* in 1989, but Valley was ready to grow up. "I didn't want to be the baby anymore," says Valley, 25, who played child savant Janice Lazarotto. "I wanted to be cool." After earning her degree in psychology from Stanford in

1997, Valley found her niche working as a casting director in L.A., where she regularly encounters searching stares. "People will look at me," she says, "and be like, 'Did we go to camp together?'"

### Tony O'Dell

As a voice-over actor on the WB sitcom *For Your Love*, O'Dell is showing much more range than he ever did as cardboard-cutout Reaganite Alan Pinkard. The never-married O'Dell, 41, who lives in Burbank, provides a variety of offscreen voices—from airline pilots to wailing babies—and claims he doesn't miss his old gig a bit. "I just look back on that and say, 'That is so not me.'"

### Kimberly Russell

Since playing spunky Sarah Nevins on *Class*, Russell, 30, has guest-starred on shows such as *ER* and *Ellen*. Now she and cinematographer Michael Bonewitz, 35, whom she wed last year, are expecting their first child in December. Although she has fond memories of her old show, Russell is less misty about her late-'80s fashion sense.

### Brian Robbins

As rebel Eric Mardian, Robbins, 37, injected *Class* with a dose of leather-jacketed sex appeal. But teen-idol status never clouded his real ambition: to work behind the camera. Married, with two sons, to Los Angeles publicist Laura Cathcart, 37, Robbins has directed teen flicks (*Varsity Blues*), produced the new television series *Smallville* and, with *Class* alum Dan Schneider, a string of such hit Nickelodeon shows as *Kenan & Kel*. "Brian gets what is funny to kids," says Nickelodeon exec Kevin Kay. "He's never lost that vision."

