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GENERATION 1.0

Oldest Living Silicon Alley Veterans Tell All

BY VANESSA GRIGORIADIS

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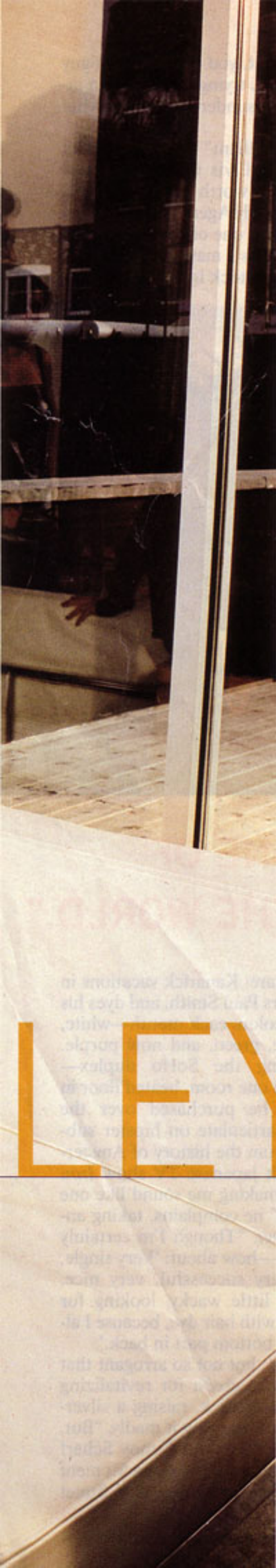


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SILICON

NEW POWER GENERATION
Clockwise from top,
Rufus Griscom, Jaime
Levy, Marisa Bowe,
Steven Johnson, and
Rebecca Odes.



THE INTERNET IS THE MOST DEMOCRATIC OF MEDIA, BUT SILICON ALLEY, LIKE everything else in New York, has its own distinct hierarchy. Throwing a pricey Website launch party at The Four Seasons, with bodysuited models dancing behind a scrim and guests like Stephanie Seymour and Guy Oseary, as style365.com did three Sundays ago, does not make you cool. Hosting club nights with exclusive invitations and French D.J.'s, as Rockstar Games does every few months, does not make you cool. What makes you cool is when you got there. Nineteen ninety-five is cool. Nineteen ninety-six or early 1997 is all right. Anything after that is not. Two thousand makes you a real loser—a suit, a kid just out of college, a fiftyish businessman looking for one last hurrah and another \$100 million. "It means you did not get it," says Jason McCabe Calacanis, editor and CEO of the *Silicon Alley Reporter*. "You did not believe. You did not have religion." • At the pinnacle of Silicon Alley cool is a clique of a dozen or so early adopters Calacanis and some other Alley residents call the "Early True Believers." The closest thing Silicon Alley has to an indigenous population, the Early True Believers aren't exactly businesspeople or programming geeks—they're brainy math-and-music types with impressive liberal-arts educations, mostly upper-crust backgrounds, and birthdays in or around 1966. They're not necessarily richer or more powerful than their colleagues, but they had faith long before this year's "hordes and hordes of carpetbaggers," as Word editor-in-chief Marisa Bowe puts it. And they're not about to let anyone forget it, whether or not they've participated in an IPO. "There's pride in saying you were around back then," says gURL.com's Rebecca Odes, a slim blonde who played bass in an alt-music band before she saw the light. "It was so new, so exciting. It was punk rock." • Back then, the cool kid the other cool kids looked up to was Jaime Levy, now a 33-year-old with dirty-blond hair who chain-smokes Drums and rarely deviates from a uniform of flannel shirts and baggy jeans. "Jaime," says Bowe, "is a rock star." Long before every movie trailer included a Web address, Levy published a floppy-disk 'zine called *Electronic Hollywood* and provided the ETBs with their hangout, an Avenue A loft she lucked into one night after reuniting with a former lover. "I woke up the next morning in his huge-ass two-story loft," she says, "and I was like, 'Wow, you've got a rad place,' and he was like, 'Yeah, but I'm leaving the country—do you want it?'" Every few months, she threw "CyberSlacker" parties,

ALLEY 10003

LONG BEFORE THE SUITS LOGGED ON, A SMALL GROUP OF PREP-SCHOOL SLACKERS HAD FAITH IN THE WEB. NOW THEY'RE THE ALLEY'S ESTABLISHMENT.

BY VANESSA GRIGORIADIS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARK ARBEIT

where would-be new-media impresarios showed off HTML tricks, D.J. Spooky spun records, and skateboarding indoors wasn't a problem. "You know," says Levy proudly, "I had one of the first PPP connections in the East Village."

At the last CyberSlacker party, in November 1996, Levy asked Alley big shots like MTVi President and CEO Nicholas Butterworth and Feed co-founder Stefanie Syman to get on the mike. "The death of the Web as we knew it!" declared Butterworth over jungle music, starting a fifteen-minute rant. "It's over! And wasn't it good while it lasted? Who was there, who was there in 1995? Reaping it in—the money, the fame, the parties, all of it flowing in. They came to you—marketing directors, the executive vice-presidents, the general managers, they came to you and said 'We don't know what the fuck we're doing.'" He let out a soulful wail. "It was beautiful! Everyone here, all my friends, doing creative things with a capital C. . . . It wasn't about a database or a search engine . . . the dream was to be a media assassin, to be a guerrilla—and to be paaaaaid."

He shrieked again.

"Well let me tell you something: Now you have a choice. You can be a guerrilla, or you can get paid. You cannot do both." Throughout, he shouted, "Baby needs new shoes, and I'm a baby!"

jects.com chairman and Rhizome.org executive director Mark Tribe (president of the fine-arts-appreciation society) and Nerve co-founders Rufus Griscom and Genevieve Field (the bookish types who smoke cloves, read Sylvia Plath, and have sex).

There are those in the Alley who are wealthier, like DoubleClick's Kevin Ryan and Kevin O'Connor, and those who are hotter, like Kozmo.com's Joseph Park and StarMedia's Fernando Espuelas. There are even leaders who inspire more devotion: When a deal is made at Jay Chiat's Screaming Media, someone hits a gong and the entire office starts screaming, and last month one of the programmers got a tattoo of the company logo the size of a Lender's bagel on his forearm ("I think the guy who did it messed up," he says, inspecting the tender red circle. "It looks a little infected"). But none of them are as well respected, as widely networked, or as interested in the social ramifications of their revolution as the ETBs. Others may be content to make a few million, but the ETBs want to reboot the world—Butterworth wants to change the music industry, Johnson and Syman want Feed to dethrone *The New Republic*, and Harris says that "Pseudo's competition is CBS." Even Kanarick, whose company designs Websites for firms like Schwab and Bank One, says "We will change the world."

Few of the ETBs have an extraordinary

ored sweater. "But, you know, Jewish guy with a lot of guilt, trying to change an industry, slightly misunderstood, somewhat brilliant . . ."

"Somewhat brilliant" and also sort of handsome in an Elvis Costello kind of way, Kanarick is worth more than \$80 million. Along with Agency.com and Organic, Razorfish is one of the top interactive agencies; it has a market valuation of \$3 billion and its stock is currently cruis-



"IT'S POWERFUL TO FEEL THAT YOU ARE ONE OF SEVENTEEN PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD."

IF MTVI SPINS OFF FROM ITS PARENT COMPANY and goes public in a few weeks as planned, Butterworth will be able to buy those shoes and have them dipped in 24-karat gold. Not every ETB who went to Levy's parties has any gold at all, but because they were there first with the picks and shovels, they've staked a claim as the intellectual and social heart of the nascent Alley Establishment. To the extent that the Internet business is a pyramid scheme, they're sitting at the top. Besides Calacanis (the yearbook editor of Silicon High), Odes (the riot grrrl), Levy (the snowboarder chick), Bowe (the cynical girl who sits in the back of class.), and Butterworth (singer for the school garage band), the crowd includes Razorfish co-founders Craig Kanarick and Jeff Dachis (the popular rich kids), Douglas Rushkoff (the underground newspaper guy), Feed founders Steven Johnson and Stefanie Syman (editors of the literary magazine), Pseudo.com Chairman Josh Harris (director of the drama club), StockOb-

aptitude for programming, fewer still have Jeff Bezos's genius for envisioning a new kind of business. What they do have is ambition, ideas, and—perhaps most important—the kind of finely tuned pop culture antennae that unerringly lead one to the most exciting place at the most eventful moment. "We had amazing cultural timing," shrugs Griscom. "It's incredibly powerful to feel that you are one of seventeen people who really understand the world." Especially when the world is lining up to pay you top dollar to explain it back to them.

If there's hubris here, it comes from the fact that Griscom and his friends have been surfing the crest of the Zeitgeist for so long they've forgotten what it feels like to walk on land. "I'm arrogant, but I'm not arrogant enough to draw a parallel between what Einstein did and what I'm doing," says Kanarick, sipping a tall amber beer at the Soho Grand, the black cord of the earpiece for his cell phone clipped neatly at the collar of his rust-col-

ing at \$36 a share. Kanarick vacations in Mustique, wears Paul Smith, and dyes his hair different colors each month—white, red, pink, blue, green, and now purple. He's renovating the SoHo duplex—padded floor in one room, heated floor in another—that he purchased over the summer. He's articulate on hipster subjects ranging from the history of Amsterdam to the cult Japanese TV show *Iron Chef*. "You're making me sound like one big singles ad!" he complains, taking another sip of beer. "Though I'm certainly not getting any—how about: 'Very single, very smart, very successful, very nice, very stable, a little wacky, looking for someone good with hair dye, because I always miss that bottom part in back.'"

"I'm arrogant, but not so arrogant that I'm going to take credit for revitalizing the city," says Kanarick, raising a silver-ringed finger and wagging it madly. "But, you know, first there was Kenny Scharf and Keith Haring, and that was a Moment in Time, and then there was Wall Street

and Bret Easton Ellis, and that was a Moment in Time, and then for a while there was nothing—not because of David Dinkins but because of the economy. Now there's the Internet—me, us, this—and it is a Moment in Time.”

Kanarick means to enjoy his Moment to the fullest. He gets around New York on Rollerblades, a battery-operated Zappi scooter, or in his new car, a sky-blue '65 Corvette Stingray. Silicon Valley has its teak mountain bikes and 200-foot yachts, but in the Alley, where flashy

Griscom, Johnson's childhood pal from D.C. prep school St. Albans; Tribe, son of Harvard Law School professor Laurence Tribe; Funny Garbage co-owner J. J. Gifford; Feed contributor and novelist Sam Lipsyte; and gURL.com co-founder Esther Drill. “Continental philosophy, semiotics, whatever you want to call it, prepared us well for the digital economy,” says Griscom. “We were comfortable with new lexicons—used both to intimidate and explain—and we were naturally suspicious of systems of power common-

The New Republic. “They had philosophical quotes, like Cicero's ‘He does not seem to me to be a free man who does not sometimes do nothing.’” Tall and convivial, Griscom snorts at his folly. “I mean, who's going to buy that shirt? That's a triple negative.” He was even featured in a local paper's Gen-X story: “I rattled off my little slacker screed,” he says, shaking his head. “I believe one of my quotes found its way into the lead—‘Ambition is a form of vanity.’”

After a respectable period of early-twenties indirection, the Brown clan all found their way to New York, where they began to mix with the pierced programmers and HTML installation artists starting to set up shop around Broadway in Greenwich Village and the Flatiron district. Butterworth met Odes through his girlfriend, who studied with her at the Art Institute of Chicago. Odes met Kanarick when she took a course he taught at NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program. Kanarick met Levy at an event Echo founder Stacy Horn threw at P.S. 122. Levy met Bowe on Echo, Horn's influential electronic bulletin board, before they even saw each other in person. “We bonded over being punk-rock techie girls,” says Bowe, “the only girls out there who loved nothing more than to be alone and online all night—especially when drunk.”

By that time, Butterworth was executive director of Rock the Vote, and when he joined up with his buddy Tim Nye to build an early version of SonicNet, and Johnson grabbed the media's attention with Feed, Griscom realized his Brown buddies were on to something. They all knew there was money to be made on this digital frontier, but part of the ETB myth is that starting a business is as natural and casual—and hence as appealing—as taking up with a punk band. “We developed the idea for [the literary erotica site] Nerve in a few months and then talked about it in the presence of rich people,” shrugs Griscom. “It worked, but not without their lawyers' beating the shit out of us.” After all, ambition is a form of vanity.

THE ETBS MAKE IT LOOK EASY, BUT they went to great lengths to engineer the kind of companies smart, creative types like them would want to work for. Razorfish bought Aeron chairs for all of its employees, and SonicNet cleared space in its Broadway loft for a basketball net. “We worked on a principle that was more Apple than Microsoft,” says Tribe as he gets jostled by the crowd at a recent net.art opening in a Williamsburg loft. “Web jobs are not like corporate jobs twenty years ago—they're not conformist or culturally or socially conserva-

wealth just isn't cool, Craig's car is the most visible totem of success. “I bought the car because I thought it was beautiful, and I love beautiful things,” he says. “The world is a beautiful place.”

WELL BEFORE THE ETBS HAD THE epiphany that they were living in a Moment in Time, several of the core members spent the late eighties studying at Brown's ‘Modern Culture and Media’ department. On cold nights when he didn't want to make the trek back to his off-campus house, Butterworth would crash on the couch of Johnson, who played with him in a band called the Lenny Kravitz (“Someone came up to us after one show and said, ‘Dude! You know, there's a singer named Lenny Kravitz, too!’” laughs Johnson). Some of their other college pals included

ly assumed to be irreplaceable.”

After diving into cultural studies when everyone else was pre-law, they became slackers—not in a lazy way but in a do-it-yourself kind of way—back when ambition was still the way of the world. “Anyone with half a brain who graduated when we did wouldn't have wanted to be part of that *Bright Lights, Big City* asshole-bankers-in-power-ties scene,” says Tribe. “And when we graduated, it was that or nothing.” So they chose nothing: Butterworth stayed in Providence to play bass for an arty punk band fronted by Lipsyte, Tribe tried art school in San Diego, and Johnson enrolled and then dropped out of Columbia's English literature Ph.D. program. Griscom followed a girlfriend down to Little Rock, Arkansas, where he worked in data entry and designed T-shirts he sold through an ad in



CRUISE CONTROL Above, Craig Kanarick and his '65 Corvette Stingray; opposite, Jason McCabe Calacanis at an internet convention.

tive. Look around," he exhorts, gesturing to the twentysomethings ogling a computer logged onto Yahoo! that's meant to be an artifact of the commonplace akin to Warhol's Brillo box. "These kids don't care about their 401(k). They want Special K."

They also created companies that reflected their take on the world. "We wanted to say, 'There are a lot of different ways to be cool and pretty and have a good life,'" says gURL.com co-founder Heather McDonald, ensconced in a narrow red banquette at the Astor Lounge. "And it does not relate to how you match your clothes together or what products you buy." Thanks to ironic animated games like Hairy gURL, which lets users draw body hair on a female image, gURL.com became one of the leading teen sites on the Web, snapped up by dELiA*s (which later made it part of the e-commerce site iTurf). gURL.com was there first, but Drill attributes their success to their *Weltanschauung*—"what you present on your site is a reflection of your culture and environment." Like

still the East Village chick, and Rebecca's still the gURL Girl and Marisa is still Miss Williamsburg. Things haven't changed that much, considering."

There was more than mere friendship at stake: Many of the ETBs invested in each other's businesses, and Johnson, Tribe, and Kanarick put money into Nerve early on. Calacanis helped by lionizing the group in his magazine: *The Reporter's* monthly page of party photos once ran under the headline DIGITAL DIM SUM: THEY LEAD THE CHARMED LIFE SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO. A towheaded Brooklynite who has a black belt in tae kwon do and loves the Knicks, Calacanis has been accused of using the *Reporter* to shill for friends and advertisers, but his belief remains pure. "The metaphor for Silicon Alley is the people who reinvented film in the late sixties," he says. "It's the Dennis Hoppers and Scorseses and Coppolas—the people who didn't care about Hollywood and wanted to build something new."

Like Hollywood's players, some of the ETBs have a tendency to circle the wagons

recently, "Calacanis shellacked me on that last Silicon Alley 100 in the *Reporter*," Harris complains. "Running a picture of my ex-CEO and my name underneath his! No way is he getting near my court seats for the Knicks this season—certainly not for the playoffs. He can sit in his crap seats in the rafters."

Business intruded in other ways as well. Content was no longer king, and the smart money moved on to search engines, online communities, e-commerce, B2B companies. "You could hear the hoofbeats of the investors galloping from one to another, every six months," says Griscom. In late-'97 and early '98, gURL.com was bought by dELiA*s, Word by Zapata, and SonicNet by TCI—which even tried to drug-test the employees. In May of 1999, SonicNet became MTVi when it was bought by Viacom. Suddenly, the ETBs weren't trying to seize the means of media production from the folks who eat at Nobu—they were taking lunch with them.

But the divide between the ETB haves and the ETB have-nots—or more accu-

"THESE KIDS DON'T CARE ABOUT THEIR 401(K). THEY WANT SPECIAL K."

many of the other ETBs, they established relationships with their first users, and they still talk about Moonstream and Krestar79 with reverence. "One girl was in a wheelchair, and at the time I'd had an accident so I was too, and I wanted to say something—but what do I know about being a teenager in a wheelchair?" says McDonald. "That girl still logs on sometimes, and my heart starts racing because I love her."

When the ETBs weren't online or meeting with venture capitalists, there were parties at the Razorfish and Pseudo offices and monthly World Wide Web Artists Consortium meetings at the Sony building, where they would dabble in C++ or talk about race on the Internet. Social life was Bud-and-whiskey-only dinners at the Mulberry Street dive Mare Chiaro, Thai food over discussions about Foucault at their monthly book club, and shared houses in the Hamptons. Some of them paired off—Griscom and Field most famously, Kanarick and Odes most dramatically. "We were all treated to the Craig-and-Rebecca Show for a year or so," says Bowe. "They were the prom king and queen of the Internet." Odes is considered responsible for the restyling of Kanarick, whose original sartorial affect has been described as longhaired Ivy Leaguer. "But even then, he was Joe SoHo, and he still is," says Levy. "And I'm

when it comes to the media. "Journalists are leeches," Dachis reportedly has said, "and I don't have time for remoras." Calacanis, especially, protects his friends. "Look, at *New York Magazine*, you're writing for a group of people who didn't get it early on," he said this month at his Union Square office. "These people don't understand how we're making all this money, and they're pissed. So now they've come up with SomeDumbIdea.com, and they're expecting to IPO with SomeDumbIdea.com. They're Johnny-come-latelys, they're posers, and they're resented." He pauses. "And you're here to write a story that makes the Early True Believers look like assholes so that your readers will feel better about the fact that we have more money than them."

IT COULDN'T LAST. HARRIS WAS THE FIRST TO exchange some of his dreams and options for cold, hard cash, in 1997, when the Gartner Group put \$8 million into Jupiter Communications, the Internet research firm he founded. After that, what one ETB calls his "mind-blowingly offensive personality" became harder to swallow. He began a half-serious feud with Calacanis, who reported in his *Paper* magazine column that Harris's girlfriend was having a lesbian love affair he'd discovered when he developed a roll of film with incriminating photos. More

rately, the don't-have-yets—became most obvious in the spring of 1998, when hundreds of Netheads crammed into Webster Hall for the first Silicon Alley Talent Show, a \$30-per-head benefit to fund independent Web projects. Many of the ETBs performed in the spirit of supporting their less established colleagues, but some of the corporate high rollers—Kanarick, Harris, Butterworth—were noticeably absent from the roster. With Bowe, ITP chair Red Burns, and MIT guru Nicholas Negroponte officiating, Calacanis practiced tae kwon do, Odes and the gURL band sang a hard-rocking ditty called "The Technology Song," and Johnson and some Feed employees played a country tune about "building the brand, so high / Gonna rise like Chan Suh." But the real laughs came when Levy stepped on stage to rap:

Back in the day when new media was new

I could bullshit my employer 'cuz no one had a clue

*I was making e-zines on my Mac II
I was totally wired not like the rest of you . . .*

*I'm the biggest bitch in Silicon Alley
I'm better than those nerds in Silicon Valley*

Bill Gates calls me up when he needs advice

'Cuz I'm Jaime Levy and I'm as cold as ice . . .

Now I'm a CEO running the show

I said: Now I'm a super HO running the show

Now I'm just waiting for that big IPO

THE IRONY OF LEVY'S SONG WASN'T lost on the crowd: When Kanarick offered her a third of the Razorfish partnership in 1995, Levy turned him down. "I just thought Jeff was an idiot," she says, dexterously rolling a Drum cigarette in her high-ceilinged Flatiron office. "I was like, 'What do we need this business dude for?' Was I ever wrong." Kanarick all but disappeared for two years to work day and night on Razorfish, but one night in late '97, she met up with him for dinner; afterward, Jeff showed her how to write a proposal to design a corporate Website. "It was depressing," says Levy. "Here I was, an early pioneer, and I didn't do the Razorfish thing, and I didn't do the Web TV thing—and I thought, *Jeez, what have I been doing?* It felt like shit. It took a year of therapy and someone to give me half a million dollars for my new company to recover."

She sighs, stamping out her cigarette in a pewter ashtray. "I still live with two roommates in the East Village, and Craig is a billionaire who's building a penthouse in SoHo, and it's like, 'Fuck Craig!'" she says. "But . . . aaaaaaaah! What am I going to do? What am I going to do? I didn't want to do the boring shit Craig had to do, like bank Websites. And I will make it. I get it. It's not like I'm some loser from Buttercrack, Ohio, who just showed up."

WHEN LOSERS FROM BUTTACK, Ohio, do show up, their first stop is one of the monthly new-media mixers—CyberSuds or Cocktails With Courtney. With cash bars, epic business-card swapping, and sometimes raffles for an MP3 player from the party's sponsor, these networking events at lounges like Spy Bar and Veruka are as far from Levy's loft parties as Bleecker is from Ludlow. "These Cocktails With Courtney parties are like cocaine that's been cut so many times it's crap," says a dot-com CEO, gazing hungrily at the kitchen door for more of the promised pizza squares. "Still, the real players do still show up in the most random places."

The Courtney who hosts the Cocktails is 30-year-old Courtney Pulitzer, a distant relative to the fortune who has written a weekly online Alley society column since 1997. ("She's a Froot Loop, but you gotta love her," says one ETB.) "Although the Internet world is all about casualness,

my parties represent a time when things were a little more dressy," says Pulitzer, who has the misty look of a thirties movie star and outfits herself like one as well. "A time when the butler took your coat at the door and offered you a martini."

This winter, Pulitzer organized Silicon Alley's first-ever black-tie party, a benefit for the Fresh Air Fund at the Metropolitan Club. She had a sweeping gown designed by her Russian seamstress just for the occasion and swept her hair up with

CLEANING UP NICE Internet social columnist Courtney Pulitzer and boyfriend at the Metropolitan Club for a black-tie party to benefit the Fresh Air Fund.



pearl barrettes. "Unfortunately, it's not a dress you can eat in," she admits. To her glee, big-time moguls like Candice Carpenter of iVillage showed, and Bert Ellis of iXL even gave a toast: "All of us in this room have been in a moment in time that no one could've predicted," he declared. One of Rudy Giuliani's deputies read a note from the mayor: "I'd like to thank Manhattan's own breath of Fresh Air, Courtney Pulitzer!"

After a banquet dinner with flank steak and sushi, a slim blonde in pashmina chatted on a Nokia about how "TV advertising is so twentieth-century"; the gangly CEO of Corporategear.com was

pitching himself as a "Bruce Lee kind of street fighter"; and when a red-faced, cigar-chomping interactive-services guy grabbed a passing woman and kissed her on her neck, she protested, "Whoa! Let's take that off-line!" At midnight, there was a spontaneous outbreak of swing dancing.

A middle-aged woman with spiky brown hair and a magenta faux-fur coat worked the room with the ferocity of a paparazzo, forcing her black-and-red card into every available palm. "I'm the central intelligence officer at Mayday Interactive," she said, about to introduce her client EVEO.com. "Here's your beta, babe: We're user-generated streaming video—brand-new, totally hot—with a former exec VP from ABC as our chief of

content and one of the *Blair Witch* guys on our board. Think cross between Geocities and *America's Funniest Home Videos*."

She downed her drink.

"So here's my deal," she drawled. "I was big in Hollywood in the eighties, did the CD-ROM thing in '90, and then in '92, someone asked, 'What do you think is going to be hot next?' And I was like, 'Bingo—it's the Internet!'" She grabbed another glass from a passing waiter. "So I get into the Internet business, and it's like I'm about to lose my house because I have this passion, and everyone including my mother thinks I'm crazy. And I'm bor-

rowing money from her because I had the jones for the Internet, and really I was this close to losing my house—like three payments behind—and I was like, ‘Yo, I don’t want to get rid of my Mustang, you know?’” She smiled. “But I gotta say, fuck me with a chain saw, huh?”

THE ETBS CAN STILL LOOK DOWN ON those late to the gold rush, but now, more than ever, the ones who haven’t scored yet want to get *paaaaaid*. “As idealistic as myself or Rufus or Steven are, we still spend most of our days talking to investment bankers or VCs,” says Tribe. “We really believe we’re making the world a more interesting place, but nevertheless we’ve gotten the equivalent of our M.B.A.’s along the way.”

This past July 4 weekend, when the ETBs who had already struck it rich were away at the beach, Calacanis organized a sushi dinner at Bond Street for the rest of the old posse—including Bowe, Levy, Johnson. “It was sweet, and I know Jason was trying to create a sense of camaraderie, but we were suspicious,” says Rushkoff. “We felt there must have been something that he was trying to do for himself. Because everyone in this industry is so suspicious now.”

“Look, we hang, but there was always an underlying competitiveness,” says Harris, in a quiet yet gruff voice. “They’re rallying you to beat them, and you’re rallying them to beat you. Like with Butterworth’s MTVi thing—you kind of root for him, but you kind of hope he doesn’t do better than you. But let’s face it: I’m at the top of the pecking order.” He may be lonely up there: Not one of the others made it to Harris’s two-week million-dollar millennial banquet—an 80-person sleepover with a fir-

son—I play a peg-legged pirate with an eye patch and I go *arrrrrrrrrrh* a lot. He runs a hand over his purple-for-January hair. “Oh, the whole place is tacky, but it’s gorgeous, like Ivana’s house meets Bugsy Siegel circa 1929.”

“I’m certainly competitive in a social way with Craig, and it pisses me off when he’s on ‘Page Six,’” admits Harris. “But in Craig’s heart of hearts, he wants to be in the New York social scene. I make scenes; he participates in them. But hey, he doesn’t have time—he works for a living.” He laughs manically. “Hey, Craig’s a stud. He had a makeout session with my girlfriend once—she’s been down the Alley. I can take it.”

They’ve all come a long way. “I didn’t grow up overly social in high school—I wasn’t popular or anything of that nature,” says Kanarick. “I wasn’t a loser, but, you know, I was a freak! A nerdy little technology guy who also had this weird art thing going on. I was a freak, but I knew about this secret little world. I had e-mail in 1985, okay? Now, for me to walk down the street and hear dot-com this, app that, e-mail me this, there’s a loss of innocence and a sadness. It’s no longer the indie scene. It’s the music industry.”

And no one wants to get stuck at CBGB. “We’re all tired of going to launch parties and getting oversize T-shirts,” Levy says. “That being said, I hope that the party for my new CyberSlacker series will be a hit.” Her animated cartoon about an East Village slacker who wears T-shirts with catchy phrases like GEN Y WILL DIE will be released on Centerseat.com next week. “We’re having D.J. Spooky at the Angel Orensanz Center, which is on the Lower East Side, so it’s cool, and there’ll be free booze. Now, to have people look at your work, I

local kosher winery serve as banquettes in the chic new space, with room in them for half a dozen people each—just the perfect size for a small group of friends, most of whom are 23. “We’re the Internet Brat Pack,” announces Jess Zaino, host of an *Entertainment Tonight*-type show on Pseudo.com called *StarFreaky*. “It’s kind of our . . . Moment in Time.” ETBs—the next generation?

The dashing group includes Kozmo.com promotion manager Matt Heindl; Zaino’s producer from Pseudo, Nicole Abramovici; and RedFilter’s Steve Weiss and CEO William O’Shea, who was recently on the cover of the *Voice*. “Will is a star,” shouts Zaino, who is working a Betty Boop kind of look, handing a bunch of drink tickets to a less Brat Packy friend. “Everywhere we go, everyone’s like, ‘Will! You rock!’” She reaches over to pinch his cheek. “Cutie!”

She squats down next to me and pulls up her sleeve to show me her tattoo. “This is a star, and it has a little j in the middle,” she says. “Just to remind me that I *also* need to be a little superstar.”

“Tattoos are everywhere,” offers Abramovici, who is working a Daria kind of look. “There was this one guy who got into the VIP room at the last Pseudo party just because he had a henna tattoo of PSEUDO.”

“That’s nothing,” says Syl Tang, a recent Cornell grad who is working a Daria’s-friend-Jane kind of look. “I have a friend who has the name of every Internet company he’s worked at and INTEL carved in his arm.”

“You got to represent!” says a guy with spiky hair and angular glasses, working a Craig Kanarick kind of look. “This whole Internet thing is about faith!”

“It’s about social Darwinism!” yells

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ing range, Quake tournaments, and a live sex show. Kanarick: “Not interested.” Levy: “Josh totally ripped off the idea of my CyberSlacker parties.” Harris: “She’s totally deluded. This is what I was put on earth to do.”

He’s not the only one with Warholian dreams: Kanarick, as you may have read on “Page Six,” will soon open an Orchard Street burlesque club and restaurant called the Slipper Room. “Titties with tassels! Gotta have pasties!” he says. “We have a girl who does a feather fan dance, and a lot of former strippers doing silly things in fur bikinis. And we’re doing a musical based on *Swiss Family Robin-*

guess you’ve got to talk the big talk and have suits and things.” She sighs. “Even if my company did tank, I’d get a six-figure job at some entertainment network, because now I have high-level managerial experience. It’s not all for naught.”

ANOTHER WINTER NIGHT, ANOTHER Internet party—this time at the grotto at Tonic for MP3Lit.com, Insound, and RedFilter, the last of which hasn’t yet launched. “It’s bizarre going to parties and feeling like an elder statesman,” admits Griscom, a head taller and nearly ten years older than anyone else in the room. Giant wine casks from a

Betty Boop, puckering her full red lips. “It’s Calvinism! I get paid shit right now, and it’s not even an issue for me!”

“It’s about opportunity over reward!” agrees Daria.

“Yes! Opportunity over reward!” exclaims the guy who looks like Kanarick.

“Look, I didn’t graduate from college,” says Betty Boop. “I could be on the streets of San Francisco right now, because I’m a free spirit.” She pulls a cigarette out of a silver case. “And on a more shallow level, I just want to be a little superstar, hence my tattoo. Excuse me for cursing, but I will fucking kill you to get what I want. I will get what I fucking want.”