

early on she knew that she wanted to go beyond the rawness of such films. "Independent filmmakers are much more savvy than they used to be about Hollywood techniques, and have a much firmer grasp of traditional film language—so that they can turn it on its ear," she remarked. The influence goes in the other direction, too. Hollywood, she observed, has always drawn from the edges. Upon being asked if she had any interest in working on a studio movie herself, if only as a lark, she countered that she didn't know how much of a lark it would really be. But then she confessed to feeling, at times, like a victim of her own image. "I saw this thing in *The Hollywood Reporter* a few months ago," she said. "They did an article on New York independent producers, saying that some independent producers, like me, have made the decision not to work with Hollywood. Well, it's not like anyone ever asked. I didn't get the call and say, 'No, are you crazy?'"

SLOUCHING TOWARDS NAZARETH'S



A MAN loves his cigar, and in this, as in so much in life, a man is basically alone. His wife hates his cigar. His friends hate his cigar. People walk on the sidewalk all the way

across the street because they hate his cigar. Sometimes it seems that the only person in the whole world who doesn't hate his cigar is Nazareth Gulu-zian, of Beverly Hills.

"Cigars are the thing of the century now, in the nineties," Nazareth said, when we dropped by Nazareth's Fine Cigars one recent afternoon. Nazareth has black hair, dark eyes, and a black mustache, and he was wearing a gold bracelet and a dark-gray suit. He was born in Beirut in 1953, he told us, and he came to Beverly Hills in 1978, to manage the humidor at the Dunhill cigar store on Rodeo Drive. He started his own place in 1985 on North Canon Drive. Sensing a coming cigar backlash, he made his place not only a cigar store but also a smoking lounge—a refuge where his increasingly put-up-on

customers could smoke. A few years later, he bought a second place, a few paces from the first, and moved his retail business into it. His original store is now a smoking lounge that has leather couches, leather chairs, a maroonish carpet, and an expensive air-treatment system that sucks up smoke. It also has a hundred and fifty cedar lockers, each with a brass nameplate,



in which members store their cigars. Among the members are Sylvester Stallone, Mike Medavoy, Don Johnson, Pierce Brosnan, David Cassidy, Jim Belushi, and a retired guy who used to work for Doris Day. Of these, only the retired guy who used to work for Doris Day was present that recent afternoon. He was smoking a Romeo y Julieta.

The Doris Day guy said, "Do you realize that, with the smoking ban everywhere in the country, Churchill, Patton, and Kennedy would not be allowed into a place? That's the truth."

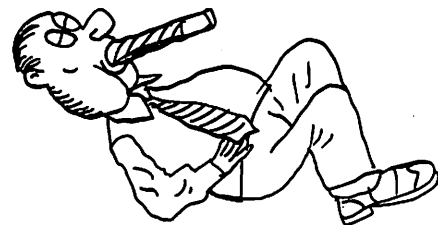
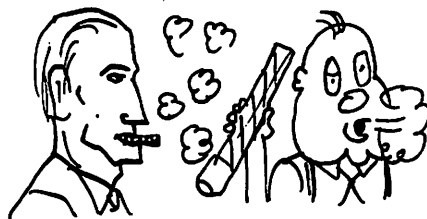
Nazareth said, "Imagine. All these big guys who because they smoke wouldn't be allowed."

The Doris Day guy said, "Ulysses S. Grant. When you really think about it, the movers and shakers were all cigar smokers."

Nazareth said, "That's very much true."

The Doris Day guy said, "All the great generals. And if you didn't have cigars there wouldn't be a great comic left in the world. Berle. Burns. Benny. Allen. Alan King. All cigar smokers. It's like part and parcel of the aura. Letterman. Cosby. Schwarzenegger."

Arnold Schwarzenegger has a locker at Nazareth's. He also owns a restaurant, in Santa Monica, called Schatzi on Main, where once a month he holds a cigar night. A hundred or a hundred



and fifty men and maybe ten women (including, occasionally, Grace Jones) show up to drink fine wine, eat hearty food, and smoke all they want, even while they're eating.

"It's become something of a trend," Nazareth told us.

An enormous personal-injury lawyer came in. He was carrying a little bottle of water to drink while he smoked his cigar. "I usually stop in once a day, at the end of the day, to unwind," he said. "It's the only place I can smoke a cigar. There's a certain camaraderie here that's hard to find elsewhere. Guys don't want to sit around all day in bars and drink. They need a place to go and get away and relax. Bullshit with the guys. I used to smoke in my office, but they've made my building a non-smoking building now. So it doesn't happen anymore."

"Moon River" was playing on the radio. There was a bottle of cognac and a copy of *Playboy* on the coffee table. A Beverly Hills building contractor who was wearing cowboy boots made from the skin of an exotic animal came in. A guy in the food business came in. An English guy who takes photographs of naked women for *Hustler* and *Penthouse* came in.

Nazareth asked him, "Would you say you would rather have a good cigar than good sex?"

The *Hustler* guy said, "I would never say that. I'd rather have a good cigar after sex. During, it's very hard."

Nazareth said, "My wife likes the smell of a good cigar."

The Doris Day guy said, "My wife doesn't mind my smoking cigars. She likes it."

The personal-injury lawyer said, "My wife hates cigars. My kids, too. When I come home tonight, my kids are going to say, 'P.U., Daddy! You've been to Nazareth's!'" ♦

