

**T**HE CHATEAU MARMONT is a rambling luxury hotel, perched on a hillside above Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles. Behind the hotel, amid the shrubbery, are three secluded bungalows. For five days, between Monday, March 1, and Friday, March 5, 1982, Bungalow Three, rented by John Belushi, was the site of a series of parties. Belushi's frequent companion that week was Cathy Smith, a Canadian living in Los Angeles, who was supplying him with drugs and was more than willing to tolerate the tantrums and listen to the

separating obscurity from notoriety.

Smith had spent twenty years flitting close to the spotlight like a moth around a flame, a child of the 1960s who never stopped believing that sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll led to personal liberation. There were times when she dreamed of stardom for herself; that was part of the fantasy. She sought recognition for her modest songwriting and singing talents, but there was never enough time to perfect those crafts. She was too busy placing herself in the company of entertainers, becoming part of the shiny landscape

from which celebrity grows. It was largely a nocturnal world measured by the vigour of its music, the velocity of its nightlife, and the quality of its drugs. Smith was a good-time girl with a big laugh and a million jokes. She could drive a bus, find a restaurant at 4 a.m., and help treat a drug overdose victim. Cathy Smith was the ultimate groupie, a thirty-four-year-old woman

## FATAL ATTRACTION

*Cathy Smith turned an adolescent obsession with rock music into a career as the ultimate groupie. That career ended abruptly when John Belushi died of a drug overdose and she was charged with murder* **BY DAVID HAYES**

problems of the celebrated comedian.

Shortly after 2 a.m. on March 5, Belushi and Smith returned to the bungalow with a friend. They began taking drugs — allegedly heroin as well as cocaine. That night, comedian Robin Williams and actor Robert De Niro dropped in. (Smith was thrilled to meet Williams and described him as “a sweet, personable man.” Williams later told his wife that Belushi had been with a “tough, scary” lady.) After everyone had left, Smith scrubbed Belushi's back while he showered, then helped him into bed. At about 10 a.m. she left, wearing Belushi's tracksuit and driving his Mercedes-Benz 380 SL. Four hours later, she returned with the car. She had not yet heard that Belushi had been found dead, and that the American media were gearing up for yet another celebrity drug scandal. Reporters and television crews were waiting when police stopped Smith near the bungalow. Minutes later, as she was led away in handcuffs, and the whirring and clicking cameras turned on her, “the mystery woman” — as Cathy Smith had already been dubbed — crossed the invisible line

who had turned an adolescent obsession into a career.

It had been a dizzying climb from a small, rural Ontario community to Hollywood groupie and drug supplier. Smith had learned that talent and a measure of success guaranteed unlimited access to celebrity, but entrance could also be bought with sex and drugs. Smith could catalogue among her acquaintances over the years Bob Dylan, members of The Band and The Rolling Stones, Jack Nicholson, Sylvester Stallone, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Margaret Trudeau, and Prince Charles. She had been involved in a tempestuous relationship with singer Gordon Lightfoot between 1970 and 1974. Once she had experienced life at the top, she decided she liked it there, but she was happiest behind the scenes, her own image burnished by proximity to brighter lights.

“In retrospect, I wish I had not been a drug addict,” explained an intoxicated Smith to Canadian interviewer Jeanne Beker on ABC-TV's “Entertainment Tonight” late last year. “But there was no other way to get there.”

“No other way to get *where*?” asked

**CATHY**

a puzzled Beker.

"Backstage," Smith answered without hesitation. "Is there any other spot?"

CATHERINE EVELYN SMITH was born on April 25, 1947. Both her natural mother, who gave her up for adoption shortly after birth, and her adoptive parents were named Smith. A favourite family story is of her adoptive mother, Evelyn, and her sister, Bonnie, choosing the newest addition to the family. The first baby they were shown was fat and happy. The second, Cathy, was scrawny and screamed horribly. "That one really needs help," observed Bonnie.

on the North American festival circuit that attracted thousands of young people. Folk music – from traditional anthems such as "We Shall Overcome" to Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" – spoke of the social idealism and political activism of the first wave of baby-boom children. Mariposa made a lasting impression on Smith; she remembered it as the place where "people first dared to smoke marijuana in public and flout the law. It wasn't so much who was playing that mattered as it was to be there and be part of the scene." It was a time of cultural upheaval when half of the North American population was under twenty-five.



The Band



Bob Dylan



Gordon Lightfoot

*"They [The Band] always thought I was a one-night stand, the girl from Aldershot they would never see again, but I kept cropping up"*

Smith grew up in Aldershot, a rural community near Hamilton, Ontario, that is now part of Burlington. Aldershot was as spiritually removed from Los Angeles as her childhood was from that of a show-business brat. Her father was a salesman for a cement company and her mother was a housewife who, as a young woman, had worked briefly as a show-girl. Although her parents drank heavily when Cathy was an infant, they curtailed their drinking around the time an unexpected pregnancy presented them with Hugh, their only natural child.

*Chasing The Dragon*, Smith's own account of her life and the Belushi tragedy, suggests that her memories of her father, who died in 1972, and of her mother, who still lives in Burlington, are happy. In some respects, her childhood in the big frame house with its fruit trees and fishpond was nearly idyllic. She had many pets – including a troop of baby ducks – and the family often went on marvellous vacations.

Like many teenagers, Smith became interested in music about the time she entered high school. She was captivated by her older sister's records – the sound of Elvis Presley and The Coasters – and by images of love gleaned from the pages of *True Romance*. In 1963, at sixteen, Smith attended the Mariposa Folk Festival in Orillia, Ontario, a major stop

The Beatles and The Rolling Stones were revolutionizing popular music and Smith idolized both groups.

She was a pretty, spirited teenager who, with a little make-up, could make herself look much older. When she was fifteen, she met her first boyfriend – a twenty-one-year-old Italian boy who wore a black silk jacket, drove a red Corvair, and was a drummer in a local band. He was older, exotic, and glamorous. ("What more could a girl ask, back then?" Smith would later remark.) Smith began frequenting local bars that featured live bands because the smoky, boozy atmosphere provided the edge that was so much a part of, yet so obviously missing from, rock music heard on the radio. In the summer of 1963, a friend took her to meet some musicians playing in a Hamilton bar. The Hawks, led by an American drummer named Levon Helm, were a tough, kick-out-the-stools bar band that also played backup for the Arkansas-born rockabilly singer, Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins, at Le Coq d'Or, his club in Toronto. (Hawkins once told Robbie Robertson, the lead guitarist of The Hawks and later of The Band, "You won't make much money, but you'll get more pussy than Frank Sinatra.") That first night Helm playfully insulted Smith by dedicating "Short Fat Fannie" to her. Soon she was joining

the band after shows, enjoying the late-night parties and romantic camaraderie of a musician's life on the road.

For Smith, sex began as a way of scaling the barrier between audience and performer. One night, Levon Helm wandered into a room where she was sleeping and a relationship of sorts developed between them ("I didn't particularly belong to Levon, although most nights he would make his way to my room"). Smith later described these days with The Hawks as the most exciting thing that had ever happened to her: "To an outsider road life may seem sordid, but what they don't see is the good times, the sense of family you get by hanging out together all the time, and living by different rules. That was when music and good times and love were all tangled together." It was also a turning point in her life, a time when, as she describes in her memoirs, her "fantasies of getting married and having a family began to switch to music and fame."

Smith, at sixteen, was nominally – but not exclusively – Levon Helm's girlfriend. It was not difficult for someone to make the transition from fan to groupie in the 1960s: the strutting guitarist and sweating drummer were seductive figures. Rock music expressed a freer, more experimental attitude toward sex – The Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," released in 1965, was followed by the more explicit "Let's Spend the Night Together" – and many teenagers embraced the new morality. Cathy Smith was no exception. Once, returning from an appearance in the United States, the band was detained at the border when some marijuana was discovered by a customs officer. Smith was persuaded to "buy off" the arresting officer with a night in a motel room. "It wasn't a lark to me," she recalls. "I thought I was in love [with Helm], and when I was approached to do this thing, I thought, yeah, I can help. Later I thought, why on earth did I do that? It took a lot of resolving within myself." A misguided, self-destructive sense of loyalty would characterize many of Smith's decisions over the years.

Against her parents' wishes, Smith dropped out of school in grade eleven. "I was trying to find a way out," she says. "Out of where, I don't know, but I never felt like I belonged anywhere. I don't know what happens when you're adopted, maybe you miss the first six weeks of nurturing or something. I looked at everybody else and said, I don't want to go that route. I'm different." Sometime in 1964, Smith became pregnant. She knew Helm was the father. She hoped

he'd show some feelings of commitment to her, but apparently he didn't. Although Smith was angry and hurt, she did not sever her association with the group; she displayed a masochistic good will toward men, blindly pursuing a rock 'n' roll fantasy as illusory – and as deliberately constructed – as the love stories in *True Romance*.

In the next months, The Hawks moved to New York as Bob Dylan's backup group. Smith, seventeen and mother of an infant daughter, moved to Toronto and took a data-processing job. She started hanging out at The Riverboat coffee house on Yorkville Avenue, which in 1965 featured Canadian performers such as Ian and Sylvia, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, and Murray McLauchlan. Smith began working there in the evenings, and regarded many of the performers as her friends. Around this time, a friend introduced her to an up-and-coming singer named Gordon Lightfoot. After a brief affair with Lightfoot, Smith realized that her life as a teenaged single mother holding down two jobs was becoming too demanding. The girl who had herself been adopted and wondered why her mother had abandoned her made the same decision. When Tracy Lee was six months old, Smith made her a ward of the Children's Aid Society; a few months later the child was put up for adoption. "I was too young to give up my life for someone else," Smith recalls, "when I felt as if mine hadn't even begun yet."

Smith was now free to enjoy to the fullest the "swinging sixties." In 1968, in an extravagantly altruistic gesture – she prided herself on remaining loyal at all costs – she married a young adman with whom she had been living to help him bargain for a reduced sentence on a marijuana charge. Thirteen months later, they separated.

In May, 1970, Smith was working in the data-processing department at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. A chance encounter with Gordon Lightfoot led to a renewed, four-year relationship. Lightfoot had become a major Canadian artist, and an album released that year, *Sit Down Young Stranger*, was an international success, selling more than a million copies in the U.S. under the title *If You Could Read My Mind*. Although his music suggested a cool self-possession, Lightfoot could be verbally abusive. Smith was feisty and restive, and their union thrived on tension. During periods of feuding, Smith had affairs with two of Lightfoot's friends – one of them the actor Jack Nicholson. Once, when Pierre and Margaret Trudeau were hosting a dinner for

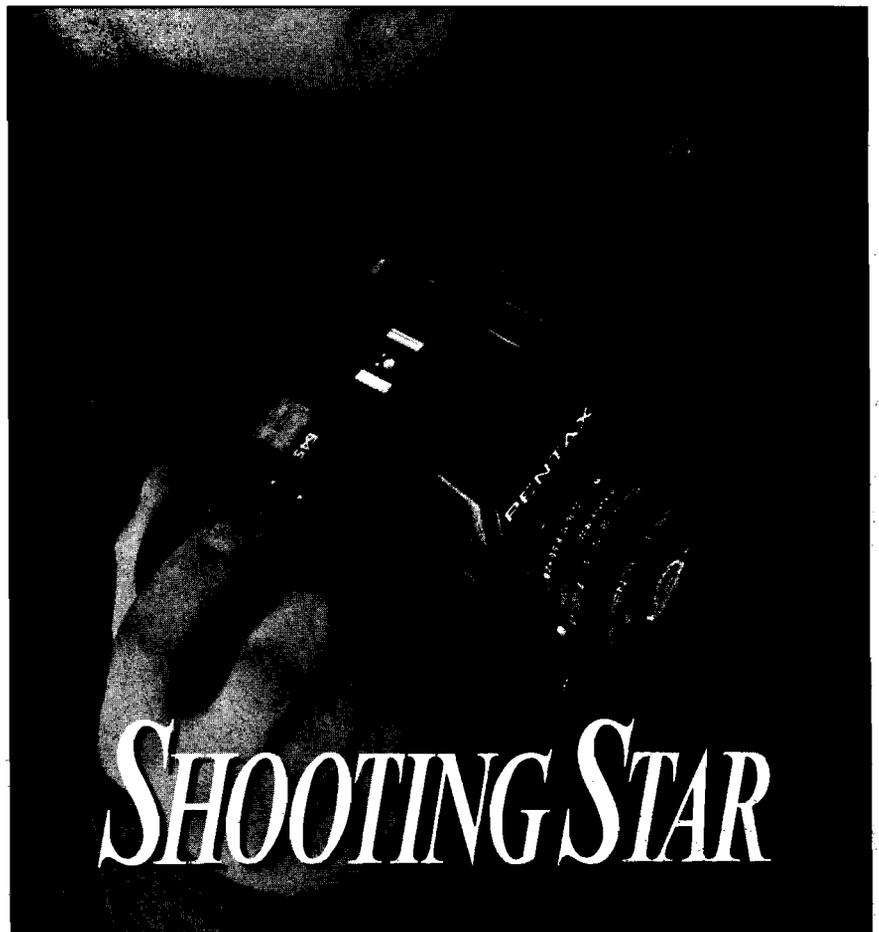
Prince Charles, Lightfoot and Smith were invited. Smith danced with the prince, who, she remembers, stared at her cleavage. She also met Margaret Trudeau, a friend and fan of Lightfoot's. "She inspected me up and down," Smith recalls, "like a piece of meat hanging on a hook."

Smith left her job after moving in with Lightfoot. At first she was satisfied embroidering his jackets and travelling with him around North America, but soon she began to feel ambitious urges of her own. Lightfoot often consulted her as he worked on a new song, and the value he placed on her advice reinforced her belief that she had a musician's instincts. She sang some background vocals for him – and later for Murray McLauchlan and Dan Hill. She also considered setting up her own all-woman limousine service, but Lightfoot bridled at her efforts to launch a career.

After the couple separated in 1974, Smith found it difficult to forget the exciting world of late nights, limousines, and concert tours. "Life with Gordon had made the nine-to-five routine look very undesirable," she says. The next year Hoyt Axton, a country singer and songwriter based in Tahoe City, Nevada, who knew of Smith's vocal efforts

on Lightfoot's album, invited her to audition as background singer in his band. When Axton, whose songs have been recorded by dozens of artists including Three Dog Night ("Joy to the World") and Steppenwolf ("The Pusher"), offered her the job, she gladly accepted her additional role as Axton's "live-in playmate." ("I certainly hadn't been the best singer. I wasn't even sure I was the best looking.") After co-writing with Axton a minor hit song, "Flash of Fire," Smith began to consider herself an aspiring songwriter. Leaving Canada was a turning point in Smith's life; she was stepping out from under the wing of Gordon Lightfoot and the relatively modest Canadian folk music elite and entering the American big time.

She moved rapidly toward its centre. In 1976, she left Axton to accompany her old friends, Levon Helm and The Hawks – by then known as The Band – on their legendary farewell tour. "They always thought I was a one-night stand, the girl from Aldershot they would never see again," she says gleefully, "but I kept cropping up, much to their dismay." She acted as a "nurse" for pianist Richard Manuel – a euphemism for ensuring that his alcohol and drug intake did not incapacitate him. Smith cultivated a reputa-



tion as a responsible companion with a knowledge of drug-related first aid. She met a basic need shared by most celebrities: to be surrounded not only by sycophants but by trustworthy people. On Thanksgiving Day, 1976, The Band invited scores of rock music's most distinguished artists – including Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Muddy Waters, Neil Young, and Joni Mitchell – to participate in their final concert (which was made into *The Last Waltz*, a feature film by Martin Scorsese). Smith had gained entrance to rock music's inner sanctum.

In 1977, she moved to Los Angeles. A friend arranged for her to work for a

began a short-lived romance. Here was the realization of countless fantasies: she was intimately involved with a member of The Rolling Stones. She was the quintessential groupie, adventurous enough to infiltrate a powerful and glamorous mythology and gullible enough to believe in its promises.

The term "groupie" was coined in the mid-1960s. Bianca Rosa Perez Morena de Macias, a Nicaraguan model who was briefly married to Mick Jagger, and Linda Eastman, a celebrity photographer who married Paul McCartney, were the highest order of groupies. The Plaster Casters, a trio of Chicago girls who cast

deliver film scripts with cash inside to her door. But when the heroin was gone, so was her newly acquired prestige – and her free personal supply. If she wasn't a full-fledged alcoholic before she was introduced to heroin, she certainly developed a serious drinking habit trying to quit. Alcohol eased the pain of withdrawal and the numbing aimlessness of her life. Los Angeles, with all its scents of success, could be a wicked city even for people with money and careers. For people without them it could be devastating. Smith blames her miseries on The Rolling Stones – "I felt it was my adventure with The Stones that pushed me over the edge . . . Once more I had taken up with musicians whose fame and fortune insulated them from the consequences of their behaviour" – but she might as well have blamed pop culture itself.

ON THE DAY of John Belushi's death the Los Angeles Police Department investigators took Cathy Smith in for questioning. Despite the discovery of a syringe in her purse, she was released several hours later. She could scarcely believe it: a year earlier, she had been charged with possession of heroin and driving while intoxicated. The possession charge was dropped in exchange for a guilty plea to the lesser offence. She was sentenced to a year's probation and required to complete a drug rehabilitation programme. Just two months before Belushi's death, she had been charged with possessing a syringe. She was fined, given another year's probation, and ordered not to "use or possess any dangerous or restricted drugs, narcotics, or narcotics paraphernalia."

Smith's roommate in Los Angeles, a middle-aged waiter named John Ponse, was worried when he heard the news of Belushi's death. Ponse had been providing moral and financial support to Smith (there was apparently no romantic involvement) for the two years she had been sharing his West Hollywood apartment. Smith had reduced her dependency on heroin but Ponse knew that she was still "chipping" – using the drug sporadically. Ponse viewed Smith as a wounded bird exploited by the cruel realities of life in Los Angeles. "She would sacrifice her life to help others in their time of need, and that kind of loyalty and love are rare today," he says. "She had problems that were hard to overcome, and I knew sooner or later the Sword of Damocles was going to fall, but I didn't know it would be in so tragic, dramatic, and absurd a way."

A friend of Belushi's had asked Smith



Pierre Trudeau



Margaret Trudeau



Prince Charles

*At a dinner hosted by Pierre and Margaret Trudeau, Smith danced with Prince Charles who, she remembered, stared at her cleavage*

celebrity lawyer named Ed Masry. She hoped to make the vital contacts a songwriter needs in the music business; she also began using drugs more frequently. Marijuana, prescription pills, cocaine, even heroin were part of social life in the entertainment industry. Drugs provided at least the illusion of increased stamina and confidence, and relief from the anxieties of deadlines, public appearances, and the uncertainties of a show-business career.

In January, 1978, Smith accepted an invitation to join a friend – a fashion model with a wealthy boyfriend – on a trip to France. In Paris she was introduced to her teenage idols, The Rolling Stones, and to heroin. After spending some time with the band while they recorded their album *Some Girls*, she commented: "I was dealing with my own perverse brand of 'success.' With The Stones I was at the top, as far as vicarious living went." When she returned to Los Angeles, guitarist Ron Wood asked her to manage his house while he was on tour, a business arrangement that continued after the tour was over. One night lead guitarist Keith Richards invited Smith to his hotel suite. "He was with two girls," Smith recalls, "both . . . naked except for the pink satin ribbons which wound their hair." That night she and Richards returned to Wood's house and

the erect penises of rock stars in plaster of Paris, were perhaps the most bizarre. Groupies, even those like Smith who also performed legitimate services, were often churlishly treated. Years later, after the Belushi tragedy, Smith would acknowledge with painfully slow hindsight that she had repeatedly been used.

After Smith was unceremoniously sacked following a disagreement with members of The Rolling Stones, she supported herself with odd jobs, sinking deeper into the drug subculture. She was visited occasionally by her closest friend, Marie Anderson, a middle-aged woman from Toronto. Anderson had often lent Smith a place to stay and a sympathetic ear during turbulent periods with Gordon Lightfoot. Now she watched helplessly as Smith spiralled out of control from too many drugs and too few goals. "I think she wanted to hook up with somebody in the music business and live a life like the one she'd shared with Gordon Lightfoot," says Anderson. "She wanted a home and a picket fence, sure, but in Beverly Hills."

Later, Anderson learned that Smith's songwriting aspirations had been sidelined by an opportunity to act as a middleman for a heroin dealer. Suddenly Smith had access to a fine grade of heroin and enjoyed an instant popularity. It was not uncommon for limousine drivers to

to purchase drugs for the comedian. Ponse knew that Smith had little money and was unlikely to refuse an opportunity to take a free ride with a party-loving celebrity such as Belushi. She had been home only once in the past week. After he heard the news about Belushi, Ponse's first call was to Ports, one of the many bars she frequented. "She was crying, very upset," Ponse recalls. "She stayed with me for a few days but reporters were everywhere. The hunters were out for their victim."

The following week Smith contacted a lawyer, Robert Sheahen, who had represented her at a heroin hearing in 1981. Sheahen was a native of Cleveland, Ohio, who had moved to Los Angeles to practise criminal law. He gained some publicity for tackling a number of controversial murder cases, but much of his work centred on drug charges involving various members of the entertainment industry.

The police in Los Angeles had long been criticized for their laxity in matters of celebrity drug use. Now the department was tight-lipped and had silenced coroner-to-the-stars Thomas Noguchi, whose office had conducted the autopsy on Belushi and was usually a plentiful source of information for the media. As a result, the press was starving for details of the Belushi death and the "mystery woman" had become the focus of inordinate attention. It was clear to Sheahen that Smith would be relentlessly pursued unless something was done to diffuse the publicity. *The National Enquirer*, a tabloid noted for its preoccupation with celebrities, had assigned reporters to stake out Ponse's apartment. Sheahen recalls one conversation with an editor at the *Enquirer*. "I said, 'No, we're not gonna give you an interview.' He said, 'Name a price.' I said, 'Okay, \$100,000.' He said, 'That's too high. We're not willing to go to a hundred thousand. But we'll go to twenty thousand.'"

Sheahen would risk his own credibility if he struck a deal with the *Enquirer*. Instead, he granted interviews to potentially sympathetic representatives from the electronic and print media - ABC's "20/20," a public affairs programme, and *Rolling Stone* magazine. Sheahen knew his client - an alcoholic undergoing withdrawal from heroin - could be unpredictable and belligerent, her own worst enemy. On March 11, he sent her to St. Louis, a city where she knew no-one, and put her up at a hotel while he made final arrangements for the interviews. A few days later, two reporters discovered her drinking in a hotel

bar; the next morning, Sheahen had Smith flown back to Los Angeles, where a freelance writer named Randall Sullivan was waiting to interview her for *Rolling Stone*. Smith briefly disappeared. Sheahen and Sullivan located her outside a sleazy bar, and the meeting was incorporated into the opening scene of Sullivan's story, "Wrong Time, Wrong Place, Wrong People," in the May 13 issue of *Rolling Stone*: "Sheahen climbed out of the car and got his client into the front seat, where she came to rest with her head against the dashboard. Cathy Smith turned and, peering through a thatch of brittle hair, leered suspiciously.

"Where the fuck am I?" she wanted to know. Her own question struck her as hilarious, and she doubled over with laughter."

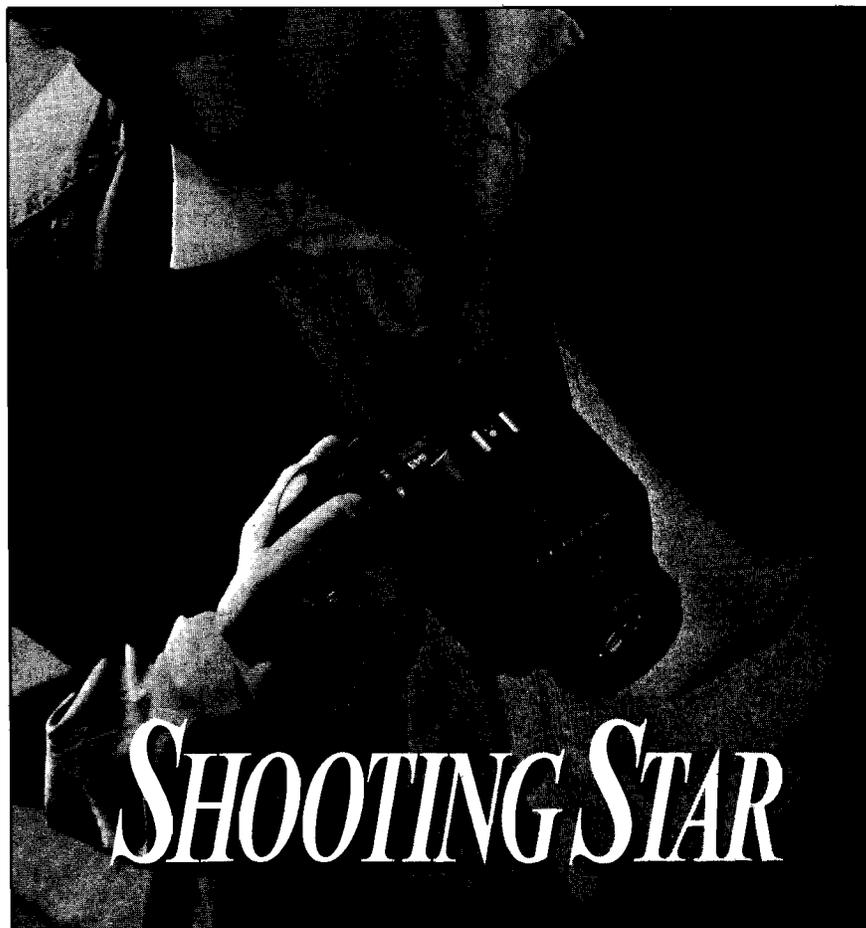
Sullivan conducted his interview in a motel. Smith, her moods swinging between animation and despair, was frequently incoherent. She repeated to Sullivan what she had already told the police: Belushi's final hours were "just the Hollywood scene, really, nothing out of the ordinary." Sullivan felt a peculiar sadness after meeting Smith: "I felt she was a scapegoat. She had no reputation, no-one was going to defend her. Everyone was happy to write her off as scum. She

was no innocent bystander, but there were others involved and they were happy to fade into the background. She is a symbol that forces all of us to question the public image and private lives of stars living near the edge."

That night, Sheahen accompanied Smith to New York: ABC-TV had agreed to put them up for several days in exchange for an interview with Tom Jarriel on "20/20." The next morning Smith disappeared for several hours before the taping. Her performance during the interview was not uplifting.

"She was obviously under the influence of something, although it was not clear what," says Sheahen. "Cathy didn't exactly endear herself to the thousands of John Belushi fans watching. She came across as a thirty-five-year-old groupie who did not appreciate the magnitude of his death. She kept saying how privileged she was to be the last one to see him before he died."

There was no evidence to indicate that Belushi's death was anything but an accidental overdose. The medical examiner's report ruled that he died of "acute toxicity from cocaine and heroin." Traces of both drugs had been found in Belushi's bungalow and on the syringe taken from Smith's purse. Smith could



have been charged for possession of the syringe – narcotics paraphernalia forbidden under the terms of her probation – and there was circumstantial evidence that she might have injected drugs into Belushi, which, under California law, could have made her subject to a murder charge. But drug abuse among celebrities was a way of life in the city of angels; in recent years entertainment figures such as Stacy Keach, Richard Dreyfuss, Richard Pryor, Mackenzie Phillips, Louise Lasser, Linda Blair, and *Cotton Club* producer Robert Evans had all been involved in drug-related charges. At one point, the chief of police referred to Be-

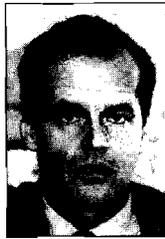
Belushi story, she accepted.

"It's a heady, heady drug, the spotlight," Marie Anderson later remarked. "They told her how misunderstood she was. They were big spenders. They took her out to good restaurants. Cathy did exactly the same thing she always did. She said, 'Marie, they're the nicest guys you'll ever want to meet.'"

A photograph of John Belushi ran on the front page of the June 29 edition of the *Enquirer*. Inside, under a headline that read "Hollywood Drug Queen Confesses," Smith was quoted as saying: "I killed John Belushi. I didn't mean to but I was responsible for his death." Accord-



The Rolling Stones



Jack Nicholson

*With The Rolling Stones, Smith again had taken up with musicians whose fame insulated them from the consequences of their behaviour*

lushi as "an addict, a horrible person" – and police officials evidently sensed there was little to be gained investigating the consequences of the comedian's appetite for fast living.

No warrant for Smith's arrest had been issued as of Thursday, March 25, six days after the "20/20" interview appeared, and the day Smith heeded her lawyer's advice and boarded a plane for Toronto. She had visited Toronto over the past few years, but this time there was a sense of finality to the trip, as though her odyssey were coming to an end. "What are they saying about me in the papers?" she wailed, as she burst into Marie Anderson's home. "What kind of mess am I in?" Anderson could see Smith's exhaustion, confusion, and panic. Anderson had seen her brash, vivacious friend turn into a hardened hustler, but she was not prepared for the chunky, sunken-eyed refugee who came through her door.

**I**N JUNE, 1982, Cathy Smith had been living with Marie Anderson for two months. Her only regular income was royalty cheques from "Flash of Fire"; otherwise she relied on friends. The most generous was Gordon Lightfoot, but Smith hated asking him for money so, when two *National Enquirer* reporters offered her \$15,000 to tell her side of the

ing to the *Enquirer* story, "Belushi was injected with drugs at least 24 times in his last 30 hours – and she did some of these injections for him; Cathy personally supplied the heroin used in the deadly heroin-cocaine 'speedball' that finished him off; she gave Belushi his last injection – a powerful shot of killer drugs that she herself termed the 'coup de grâce' (death blow)." At the same time, the Los Angeles *Herald Examiner* ran a six-part series in which reporters questioned "the lingering mystery behind Belushi's death." As a result of the renewed publicity, the police investigation was reopened.

When Smith saw the *National Enquirer*, she contacted Milton Davis, a Toronto civil lawyer recommended by a friend. Davis contacted criminal lawyer Brian Greenspan. During the first weekend of July, Smith and her lawyers met with two Los Angeles detectives in Toronto. The detectives were told she had been given alcohol and drugs by the *Enquirer* reporters and was impaired during the interviews. Greenspan and Davis, who had obtained tape recordings made by a friend of Smith's who attended the interview sessions, said the article "was not, in its form or content, the original story she gave to the *National Enquirer*."

"They asked leading questions," Davis explains. "On the part of the tape

where she is supposed to have said she gave Belushi the *coup de grâce*, it's the *National Enquirer* guy who uses that phrase. Cathy asks him, 'What's that mean?' They put words into her mouth."

In September, the Los Angeles County grand jury began a formal investigation into Belushi's death. The witnesses included one of the *Enquirer* reporters. Subpoenas were also issued for Nelson Lyon, a screenwriter, and Leslie Marks, a woman Belushi dated in Los Angeles. Lyon and Marks were with Belushi and Smith the morning Belushi died; both agreed there had been extensive use of what they believed were cocaine and heroin. Lyon said that when he left at about 3:30 in the morning, Belushi was alone with Smith.

Smith's life in Toronto was plagued by her recent past. She was still using drugs – although probably not heroin, – and drinking heavily. After a temporary falling out with Marie Anderson, Smith shared an apartment with a young student she had met in a restaurant. The relationship was platonic, and Smith slipped into a domestic routine that included grocery shopping and preparing her mother's roast beef and Yorkshire pudding for Sunday dinners. The young man and two other friends formed a safety net over which Smith spent nearly half a year, despite periodic forays back to her downtown haunts. "I think she was really trying," the young man insists, "genuinely, with all her heart, to forget about California and get her life together. She may not have had the strength."

Many friends, especially those in the music industry with careers to protect, refused requests to discuss Smith. One friend agreed to an interview only after considerable urging and a guarantee of anonymity. "Her problem was that she never channelled her abilities," he said. "It was too easy just hanging out with the entertainers . . . She was part of the scene and never had to think of herself as a groupie because she was always running a household or had some kind of job." He paused, then added: "It's funny. I like her and I want to help her, but I also want nothing to do with her. No-one wants the headache. Everybody loved being with her before the Belushi thing, but now the association is not good."

**O**N MARCH 15, 1983, the Los Angeles grand jury issued a warrant charging Smith with second-degree murder, and with thirteen counts of furnishing and administering heroin and cocaine. An application was filed requesting her extradition to the U.S. Smith was released on \$75,000 bail after Marie Anderson

posted the mortgage on her house. Brian Greenspan began preparing his defence, financed in part by Gordon Lightfoot, who had been quoted in *Rolling Stone* as saying: "I've done some pretty heavy partying with her myself. I don't believe that she did anything wrong at all."

Smith, encouraged by Lightfoot and others who felt everyone but she herself was benefiting from her infamy, began to consider writing her own story to help pay her legal costs. In June, Steve Levitan, a young media lawyer with Goodman and Goodman in Toronto, met his friend Milton Davis at Hy's restaurant on Yorkville Avenue across the street from where The Riverboat coffee house had been. When Davis mentioned that his client was considering a book, Levitan was intrigued. He was familiar with the success of Margaret Trudeau's frothy reminiscences, a deal engineered by Michael Levine, senior media partner at Goodman and Goodman and Levitan's mentor. Smith, like Trudeau, was a controversial figure who attracted the media attention needed to sell books. Although neither woman could boast of a single heroic achievement, they were, to borrow American social historian Daniel Boorstin's phrase, "famous for being well-known."

Levitan's one serious misgiving concerned the imminent release of *Wired*, a book about John Belushi by Bob Woodward, one of the two reporters responsible for exposing the Watergate scandal. He worried about how the book would depict Smith and in turn how that would affect the trial. Woodward had approached Smith and her lawyers and been given permission to interview her at length, presumably on the strength of his reputation. According to one friend Smith developed "kind of a crush on Woodward . . . She thought he was sympathetic, just great." The final section of the book described in vivid detail the last week of Belushi's life, an orgy of drug use in which Smith participated. During the extradition hearings, Greenspan would argue that *Wired* was presented as nonfiction, and "authoritatively states that this is what happened, that Bob Woodward was able, in his usual way, to get the facts right." Greenspan maintained that the publicity surrounding *Wired* prejudiced Smith's right to a fair trial in California.

Levitan and Michael Levine were retained by Davis in September. They decided to seek a Canadian publisher, and a meeting was arranged between Smith and Anna Porter, the president of Key Porter Books. "She talked about being adopted and being an insecure child,"

Porter recalls. "She told me about walking into a closet with a bare light bulb where her dolls were kept in shoe boxes. She believed that adopted children came from somewhere like that and she could be sent back at any time. That image stayed with me."

Porter knew Smith would need a ghostwriter. She ended up using two at different stages of the book - one of them was described as "a prominent novelist who did it for the money"; they worked from Smith's tape-recorded notes and conducted interviews with her. The writing and editing continued into the summer of 1984. In July, Key Porter's fall-winter catalogue announced the imminent publication of *Chasing the Dragon*. A summary read in part: "Here is the story of the ultimate fan who aspired to become one with the objects of her adulation, and succeeded. A story of glamour and self-delusion, of second hand glory too easily withdrawn. It comes from the heart of the fan generation . . ."

A journalist, sitting across from Porter in her cluttered office, asked whether Smith hasn't been consistently exploited - by lawyers, publishers, the media - ever since Belushi's death?

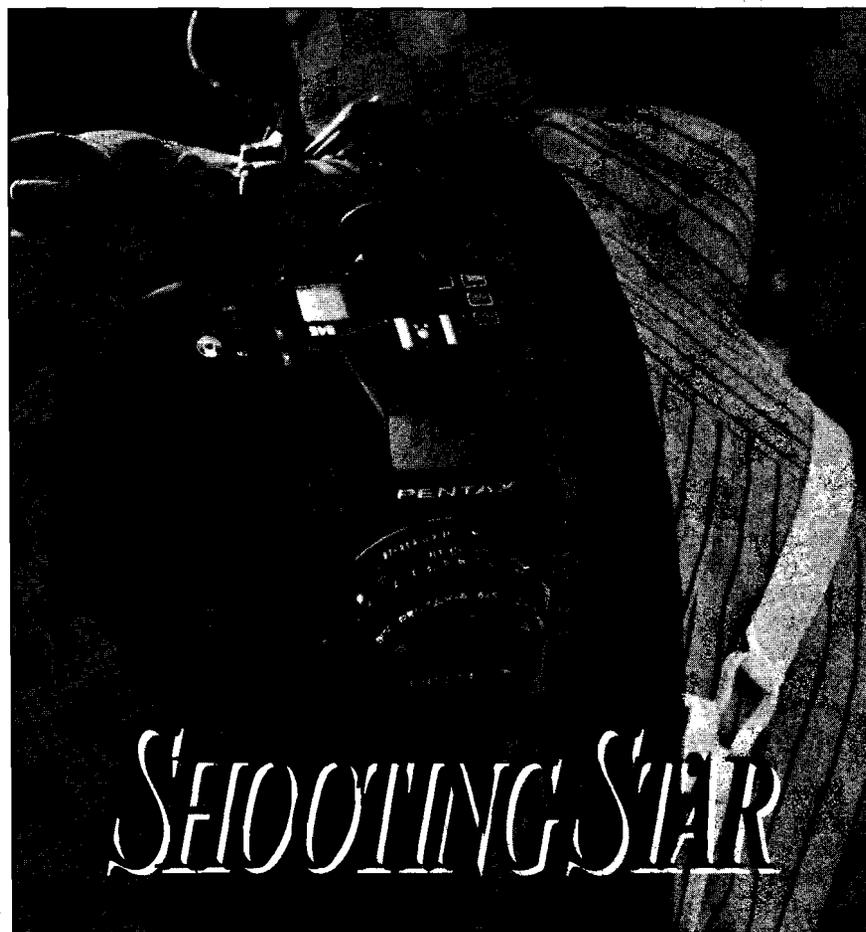
"It's not a celebrity rip-off," Porter re-

plied. "I felt it was a really good personal story about someone who led an interesting, devastating life, ended up in tragedy, and is now looking for a base for survival. It puts her into a context: here is a real person with a childhood. It lends her soul. The book is a significant statement about young people who get caught up trying to be somebody. And yes, I justified it to myself in part because she was so desperate for cash."

"But I could turn the question around. Aren't you ripping off the poor lady by writing this article? And what about all the people who enthusiastically read it?"

*Chasing the Dragon* was in the stores by October. Although genuine insights were few, the book provided a window on the ragged fringes of the entertainment industry. In what amounts to a parody of traditional female stereotypes, Smith viewed herself as a "homemaker" who, even as a heroin addict, prided herself on tidy surroundings. When she wasn't acting as a gofer, she was playing nurse, displaying her knowledge of overdose emergency procedures.

If she had no idea how she had reached such a low point, at least Smith recognized the geography. "I was living through other people's lives, and when they rejected me I felt extinguished," she



wrote. "I had no sense of my own identity, and what was left of me hurt so bad I tried to bury my emotions under heroin."

The reviews of *Chasing the Dragon* were generally unfavourable. *Maclean's* called it a "seamy chronicle in which Smith never attempts to analyse anything." *Chatelaine* reported that "the content runs the gamut from the merely gothic to the simply sordid." One of the few writers to defend Smith was Carole Corbeil, a *Globe and Mail* columnist who attacked the review that appeared in the *Globe's* pages. "It's okay... for the 'talented' to live self-destructively because

to that bed I had as a child... You can't ever go back, I guess." The next day Smith sent Beker a plant with a card that read: "Jeanne. Please accept my humblest apologies. Sincerely, Cathy Smith."

By February, the hardcover sales of *Chasing the Dragon* were proceeding modestly, and *The New York Times* syndicate had bought the rights to publish excerpts for about \$30,000 (U.S.). The Canadian paperback rights had been sold to McClelland & Stewart-Bantam Ltd. for a rumoured \$30,000. Publishers in France, Holland, and Japan held options, and Robert MacLean's Northwood Communications Inc., a Canadian

September 12, Judge Borins handed down his decision. Although he noted that Greenspan's case was presented with "customary erudition," he was not persuaded. He held that the evidence supplied by Los Angeles investigators – including the traces of heroin and cocaine found on the syringe taken from Smith's purse and her admissions to the *National Enquirer* – were sufficient to support a charge of trafficking in a narcotic. While the evidence would not support a second-degree murder charge in Canada – it did not demonstrate that Cathy Smith *intended* to kill John Belushi – Borins felt it would support a manslaughter charge under Canadian law. Borins upheld the extradition application and ordered Smith to return and stand trial in Los Angeles.

On January 21, 1985, two days before a final appeal was scheduled, a deal was apparently struck between Brian Greenspan and the Los Angeles district attorney's office: Smith would return to Los Angeles to plead guilty to the lesser offence of involuntary manslaughter and only three of the thirteen drug charges. Her defence lawyer would be Howard Weitzman, a celebrity himself following his successful defence of John DeLorean on cocaine-related charges last year. On February 11, however, Weitzman announced his intention to defend her on the original charges, telling the press that Smith "was just... one of the people around Mr. Belushi who basically did what he asked her to do."

**CATHY SMITH** rode her infatuation with the bright lights and trappings of the entertainment industry to Hollywood, but for the past three years her own life has been revealed to a curious public through television reports, radio interviews, newspaper and magazine articles, and a celebrity journalist's best-selling book. She added her own published confessional in order to help pay her mounting legal costs. Her identity, as usual, was the sum of many greater forces around her.

"You know, I'm not supposed to get tired of these things," Smith sighed wearily at the end of an interview, "but I'm really tired and the beat goes on and I can't afford to be tired now and that makes me even more tired."

Sitting in a lawyer's office less than two months before her extradition to face a murder charge, Smith was relaxed and in good humour. She appeared clear-eyed for the first time, closer to the likable woman described by her friends. "I've tried to help you," she said. "Sure, go ahead, look at the facts. Maybe you can shed a little light on it for me too."



Robert De Niro



Robin Williams



John Belushi

*Smith was supplying John Belushi with drugs, and was more than willing to listen to the many problems of the celebrated comedian*

'they have their work to give them structure.' Oh yes, *the work*. The work of mass entertainment – which just happens to be feeding the (lucrative) fantasies of all the budding Cathy Smiths – obviously has to be sanctified. Otherwise we might have to face up to the mass hypocrisies which keep much of the mass entertainment business going."

Smith's contract with Key Porter required her to take part in book promotion. Many of Smith's appearances on local radio and television programmes were uneventful, but one day she arrived at Milton Davis's office for a taped interview for ABC's "Entertainment Tonight" – viewed by 20-million Americans – after having apparently spent the afternoon in a bar. It was a critical taping and Smith was at her worst. When Jeanne Beker, the interviewer, said she'd understood Smith could not talk about Belushi, Smith snapped: "If you want to know what he was like, nice guy. Wish he was here now. I'd punch him right in the nose." She laughed hoarsely and very nearly slid out of her chair. "Stupid motherfucker!" Laughing again, she glanced at Davis like an errant child. At one point, Smith flung a copy of her book toward the camera. An uncomfortable Beker finally asked about her fondest memory. "My bed. My bed," Smith replied disconsolately. "If I could go back

production company, had acquired the film rights and was negotiating with several American networks and pay-TV organizations.

When asked how she felt about the book, Smith showed the strain of the last several months. "I never really wanted to do this," she said, "but now that it's out there, *buy it you motherfuckers!* I'm coming out with a necktie next. Buy it. Soon there'll be bumper stickers too."

**THE EXTRADITION** hearing began on August 20, 1984, before County Court Judge Stephen Borins. Outside the courtroom there were no curious gawkers or heavy-handed security measures. A handful of journalists stood politely to one side. At one point, a nervous Smith danced a slithery jive step while snapping her fingers. "I can't believe this," snorted a stocky *National Enquirer* reporter. "If this was L.A., you couldn't get near her for the cops. Here she is walking around all by herself singing 'Be-Bop-A-Lula.'"

At the extradition hearing of a Canadian citizen, the Crown must demonstrate that the crimes with which a fugitive has been charged are considered crimes in Canada, and that the evidence is sufficient to support the same charges under Canadian law. The hearing lasted three days, and three weeks later, on