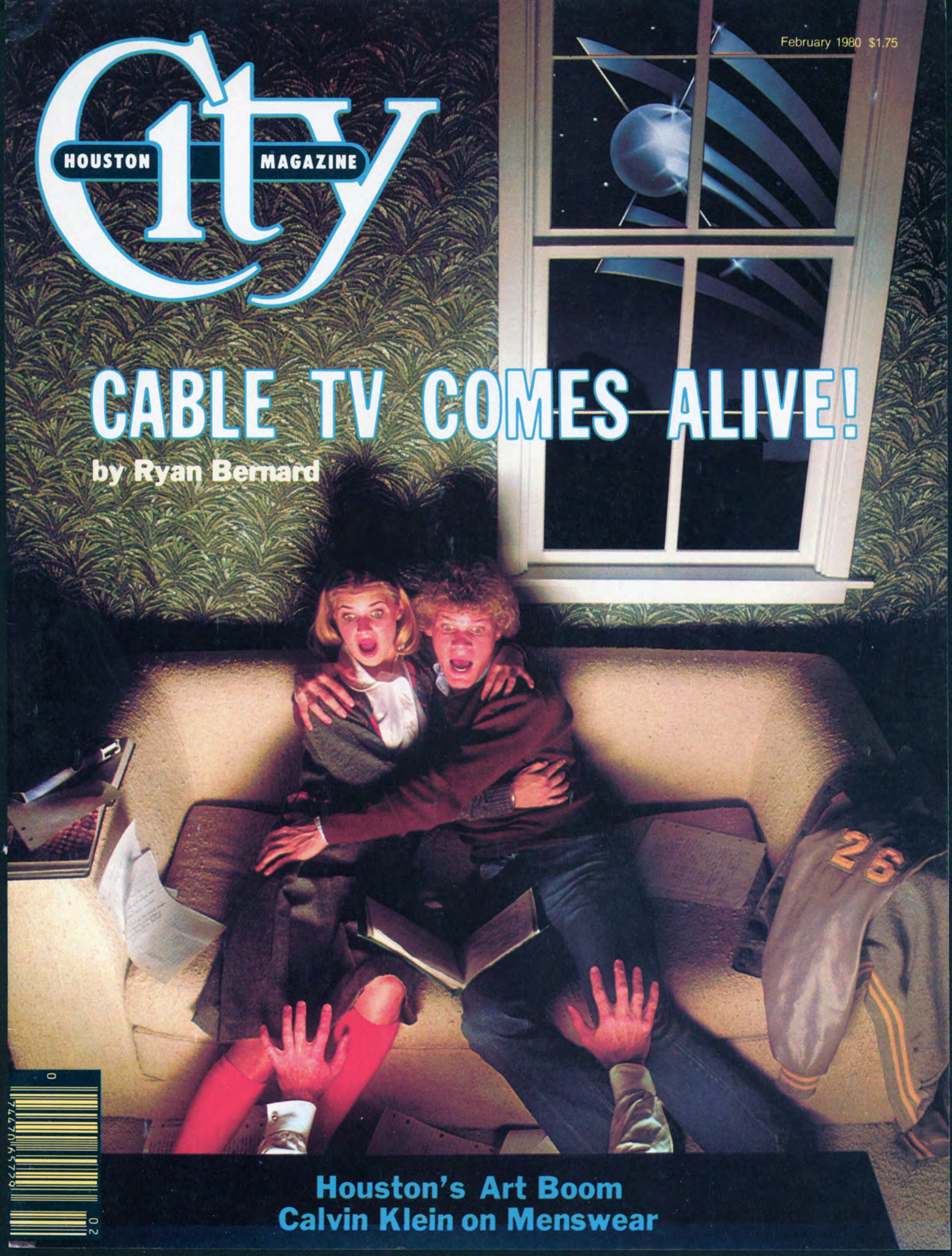


City

HOUSTON MAGAZINE

CABLE TV COMES ALIVE!

by Ryan Bernard



Houston's Art Boom
Calvin Klein on Menswear



CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 1980

VOLUME 4

NUMBER 2



Parking Your Pet

Beverly Sills

Cable Visions

DEPARTMENTS

- 72 • **Sports:** *Purses are bigger in women's tennis, but the game's the same.* By John Wilson
- 76 • **Film:** *With Kramer vs. Kramer, the audience gets the verdict.* By Jerry Oster
- 80 • **Books:** *Lawman Ted Hinton shoots a few holes in the Bonnie and Clyde legend.* By Suzanne O'Malley
- 82 • **Health:** *Race walking bids fair to ease the pains of all that jogging.* By Mary Pat O'Malley
- 87 • **Energy:** *The big guys are squeezing out the little guys, and guess who pays the bill?* By Andrew Sansom
- 89 • **Restaurants:** *At the elegant Che, Amy Ferguson is head of the kitchen.* By Babette Fraser

FEATURES

- 38 • **Cable Visions:** *You know the phone company and the light company. Now meet the cable folks.* By Ryan Bernard
- 46 • **Art and Money in the City of Future-Think:** *A New York critic sizes up the scene.* By Peter Schjeldahl
- 54 • **But on the Other Hand:** *To leaven the weighing, a Houston art critic presents her view.* By Charlotte Moser
- 58 • **Man vs. Computer:** *In a checkmate showdown, we sponsor a match between human and cybernetic brainpower.* By Jerry Lazar
- 62 • **Lived-in Looks:** *Calvin Klein's fashions for men accompany a few remarks from the designer himself.* By Kezia Keeble and Paul Cavaco
- 68 • **Parking Your Pet for a While or Forever:** *What to do with Fido if you really love him.* By Peter Papademetriou, with photographs by Paul Hester

AND MORE . . .

- 6 • **Inside:** *Meeting Peter Schjeldahl*
- 8 • **Letters:** *A gratuitous insult*
- 10 • **Finds:** *Neat stuff.* By Alison Cook
- 12 • **Cityscope:** *Music, Dance, and Film, 12; Theater, 15; Nightlife, 16; Art, 20; Sports, 24; Events for Kids, 25; Diversions, 26; Restaurants, 90*
- 31 • **Spectator:** *KULF goes big time; hard news for hard hats; positive thinking revivals; and more.*
- 37 • **The Page:** *By our leading bean-spiller, Alison Cook*
- 102 • **Sales and Bargains:** *More for less.* By Sue Goldstein
- 104 • **Pun City**

HOUSTON CITY MAGAZINE (UPSP 415-610) is published monthly by de Menil Publications, Inc., 315 W. Alabama, Houston, Texas 77006, (713) 526-3399. Copyright © 1980 by de Menil Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly forbidden. HOUSTON CITY MAGAZINE, Spectator, and Cityscope are trademarks of the publisher. Publisher assumes no responsibility for care and return of unsolicited manuscripts. All letters sent to HOUSTON CITY MAGAZINE will be treated as intended for publication and are subject to HOUSTON CITY MAGAZINE's unrestricted right to edit and to comment editorially. Subscription prices: Texas residents, one year \$16.00; two years \$27.00; residents of other U.S. states and possessions, one year \$18.00. Foreign subscriptions only acceptable if paid in U.S. currency. Single copy price \$1.75. Back issues \$2.25. Payment must accompany all single copy orders. For subscription and single copy orders, address changes, renewals, and adjustments, write to HOUSTON CITY MAGAZINE, Circulation Department, 315 W. Alabama, Houston, Texas 77006. Allow four to six weeks for change of address or for entry of new subscription. POSTMASTER: send form 3579 to HOUSTON CITY MAGAZINE, P.O. Box 982, Farmingdale, New York 11737. Printed in the U.S.A. Second Class Postage paid at Houston, Texas. Audit Bureau of Circulation's membership applied for.

COVER CREDITS: PHOTOGRAPH BY JOE BARABAN. FURNISHINGS COURTESY OF EVANS-MONICAL. PHOTO STYLIST: CINDY BISHOP. SATELLITE PAINTING BY JOHN PAVLICEK.

Parking Your Pet for a While or Forever

Whether groomed or entombed, Fido never had it so good as he gets at these ultimate two animal-care outfits, where the accent is on special touches.

Photographs by PAUL HESTER

By PETER PAPADEMETRIOU

THERE IS THE old saw about people and their pets that you can see the owner in the animal of his choice. To this I would add the idea that as institutions mirror society, in them lies the truest reflection of values. Combine the two in pet care concerns, and you reach a focus of exaggerated perspective on ourselves. Houston is so new that few institutions exist to set the rules for others to follow, and often bizarre concepts arise as the newest way to solve old problems—what to do with your pet when you leave or it dies? In a city where roughly one person in three has arrived since 1970, we are ripe for “instant institutions.”

Pet Hotel at 5602 Royalton is one of a kind. Its president, Irv Harrison, developed his concept after traveling a great deal and concluding that the traditional “mom and pop” kennel was behind the pace of Houston’s newly arrived residents. A particular breed, pet owners here seemed ready for something with a higher tone. And after several years working for the Marriott chain of motels, Harrison was ready to hand it to them. A brochure for Pet Hotel describes its “philosophy of quality pet care”: one “designed to satisfy the ever-increasing needs and preferences of pet owners.”

Now in its sixth year, Pet Hotel cost half a million dollars to build and is organized to maintain pets “in the cleanest possible environment.” It also claims to be the largest kennel in the nation and boards up to 500 animals with basic rates comparable to other kennels (about \$4.50 to \$7 a day). What sets Pet Hotel apart is how it fulfills an owner’s expectations that a canine or feline guest will be housed in a setting subtly similar to his

Peter Papademetriou is an architect and an associate professor at Rice University. He writes for *Progressive Architecture* and *Texas Architect*.



Duree Saltee keeps a doleful spaniel under wraps at the elegant Pet Hotel.



The luxury 'Poochie Penthouse' provides your canine friend with separate 'living' and 'sleeping' accommodations.



Billed as the largest kennel in the nation, Pet Hotel presents a simulacrum of hostelrys the master might occupy.

own, that is, the garden apartment.

It is the front image that lingers on. Pet Hotel looks much like so many projects where single units are comfortably overshadowed by the hot imagery of a collective identity. In contrast to its elaborate up-front facade are the plainer and functional kennels to the rear, much like garden apartment units.

"The look of the place is for people," Harrison says. "It puts them at ease." An overscaled porte cochere with large carved double doors marks the main lobby, from which radiate facilities for travel, boarding, and grooming. These elements are like those of any pet shop, but they are arranged architecturally to suggest this is indeed a resort on a par with what the owner will shortly check into as well, thus escaping a twinge of guilt for having left the pet behind.

After walking through the double door, a client descends a twin staircase leading to a sunken entry court. Under a dominating chandelier, the owner may glimpse related facilities while he faces a registration desk. The lobby is dotted with arrangements of traveling gear, all in an atmosphere of piped-in music (disco seems popular).

The place offers a number of services: Valet Pickup and Delivery, Airport Shipping and Receiving, Obedience Training, Special Diets, and Cookie Time at 11 A.M. Pampered Pet Suites are the most original option, and the luxury Poochie Penthouse—totally air-conditioned and available for \$20 a day—offers separate "living" and "sleeping" rooms. Three black cats occupied it on our last visit and were undoubtedly the envy of occupants in the just-a-bit-less-luxurious Cat-o-rama, a quad-plex offering a "mod" environment of interlocked, carpeted cat trees.

Where the action really jumps at Pet Hotel is the Grooming Salon, where Gloria Franklin oversees matters with Duree Saltee and her daughter, Robin Barbee. There are seven tables and no waiting, with production up to, sometimes, 35 dogs a day, each requiring an hour of work. This is not to mention special requests, such as the Pomeranian that got alternating pink and white nail polish and a pink bow when grooming was done. A bathing room with two tubs gets Baby ready for the salon, and special blow-driers assure the beast's comfort. A Grooming Card asks the attendant, "If this was your dog, would you be happy with it?"

Regular customers keep up the trade, some coming every two weeks. A special reminder is sent out, addressed to the pet itself. Pet Hotel has a lot of paperwork, from the invoice organized identically to those from "real" hotels to brochures, postcards, report cards to the owner, special instruction sheets for grooming and diet ("My pet would like the following attention. Example: She likes to be scratched on the tummy."), and reservation confirmation—again addressed to the pet and signed with a paw print.

Being treated like a dog at Pet Hotel isn't bad at all in "individual suites with air conditioning, . . . a patio or run outside in the fresh air." One hound spent most of its time there, checking out only on weekends.

A special reminder is sent



Corine Price and her muzzled client thrash it out on the grooming table.

Special blow-driers after shampoo assure the comfort of visiting beasts.



AT THE OTHER end of the pet care problem is the Houston Pet Cemetery, one of the oldest of its type in the country. It was established in 1938 in Alief by William Landfield and for the last 13 years has been owned by H. A. Birkelbach. "The South's Finest Burial Park for Discriminating Pet Owners" was once a country cemetery, but now the nearly seven acres on Cook Road are surrounded by new suburban housing tracts. Only one and a half

acres have been developed, probably a function of the small plots, averaging three by four feet. The markers are dominated by cats and dogs, but there are a few for parakeets as well as sites for turtles, rabbits, monkeys, an alligator, and a ferret. The largest sites are for three horses (though large animals are no longer accepted). The Pet Cemetery was created, according to a booklet there, because a "need exists for any number of personal reasons, and for some plainly practical ones." The specifics of this "need" are never

out, addressed to the pet itself . . .



Last respects are paid at Pet Cemetery's funeral parlor. The client pays 'cash at time of burial.'

A catalog provides suggestions for epitaphs and likenesses of 65 different pets to admire, most of them cats and dogs.



closely revealed but are obviously understood by pet owners. Even so, the cemetery "provides you the assurance that this special friend who brightened your world can leave that world in a decent and dignified manner."

The pet's world was created, of course, in our own image, and it is in the funerary paraphernalia that this transferral is complete. Browsing through a catalog provided by the Pet Memorial Art Granite Stone Company, one is struck by how convenient things are made with suggestions for epitaphs and

likenesses of 65 different pets to admire. Things come down to earth somewhat as the firm's rules and regulations remind the owner: "Our terms are cash at time of burial." (Prices may vary widely, but the average cost of a grave site, opening and closing a grave, and a small casket is about \$250.)

Houston's changing demography hasn't noticeably affected the sort of owners who seek out the cemetery, says Joyce Serant, who administers it. Most referrals come from veterinarians and past customers.

People are emotional about their pets, and Pet Hotel and Pet Cemetery are simply responses to the uncertainty of accelerating urbanity. Life grows more complex. Easy assurances are best wrought by an exaggeration of an image, often resulting in an outrageous intensifying of those images. Guilt may be the pet owner's strongest motivation, and by satisfying emotional needs of assurance, these facilities give us an inflated caricature of our most cherished and familiar institutions. ■