

# Odd couple

## Newt Gingrich, Oliver Stone on common ground

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**O**liver Stone and Newt Gingrich apparently agree on something: David Letterman may be dangerous to our psychic health.

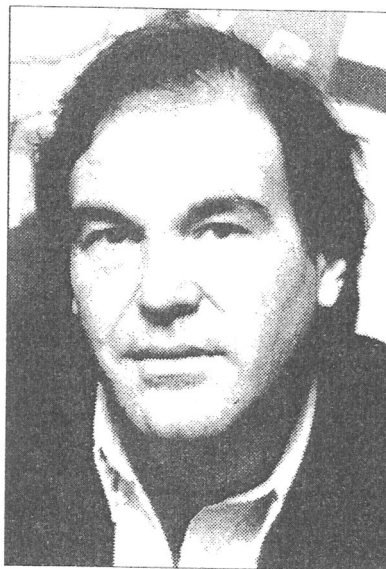
It would seem a stretch to believe that the movie director of instinctively liberal politics ("JFK," "Platoon" and "Natural Born Killers") and the speaker of the U.S. House could find a common bond, but they do in the spring issue of **New Perspectives Quarterly**.

A publication of the left-leaning Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, whose prime backers include Chicago commodities whiz Richard Dennis, this issue is devoted to the "Revolt Against the Media Class" and raises questions about the role of community amid changes in mass media and the advent of the information superhighway.

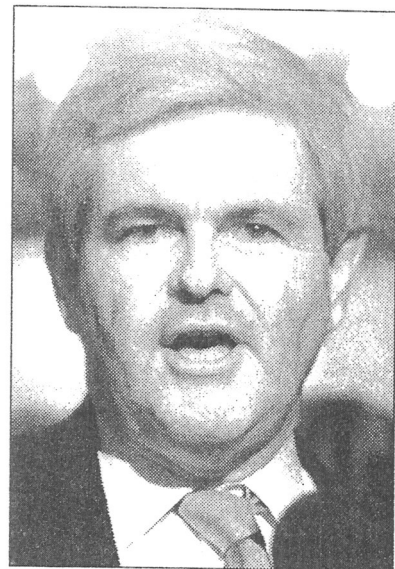
It includes separate interviews with an eclectic crew, including Stone, Gingrich, White House honcho George Stephanopoulos, Microsoft boss Bill Gates, Apple Computer chief executive Michael Spindler, Los Angeles Roman Catholic Archbishop Roger Mahoney and renowned sociologist Daniel Bell. Stone offers some surprises.

Somewhat defensive, he opens by arguing that his films are nowhere near as subversive as, say, TV shows of the 1950s such as "Leave It to Beaver." Those, he argues, presented an unfounded image of American conformity.

"Even in the days of 'Donna Reed' there was a lot of suicide, anguish and divorce in America; many families were silently—that is, not on the screen—torn apart over issues of homosexuality and race," he says. Stone contends that some people cracked because they couldn't live up to the TV images of family life.



Oliver Stone says '50s television shows were more dangerous than his films.



Speaker Newt Gingrich's criticism is getting some unexpected support.

### Magazines

He gets to Letterman by way of agreeing with the thesis, pro-pounded these days by a broad range of folks from Gingrich to Muslim clerics, that the increasing ideology of Western mass media is both anti-authoritarian and cynical. Virtually nothing is to be trusted.

"In this sense," says Stone, "David Letterman is far more dangerous to values than I am. He doesn't have values; he makes fun of values. For Letterman, everything is an object of ridicule—it almost doesn't matter who is on his show.

"There is no discussion of issues or values, just constant, remorseless ridicule of everything and anything. To the extent that kind of show sets the tenor of discourse I think we have a real problem."

That sensibility is everywhere, he says. Take the advertising for grunge clothing: "The kids are rebellious, snotty, sticking their butts in the air. . . . That is very deeply anti-social." (\$12.50 for the issue via 10951 W. Pico Blvd., 3rd Floor, Los Angeles, Calif. 90064).

**Quickly: Cross Currents**, another small quarterly, from the Association for Religion and Intellectual Life, includes Rev. Andrew Greeley's criticism of the depth of research used by many in his academic field, sociology, to both claim a decline in formal religion and unceasing growth in the secularization of modern society (\$6 via the College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, N.Y. 10805-2308). . . .

Why is one not surprised to read in the May **New Choices for Retirement Living**, via Reader's Digest, that a study by a Pittsburgh psychiatrist concludes that more older wives than husbands feel trapped in marriages, as a result of the guys' being immersed in their jobs while the gals agonize over opportunities lost? Meanwhile, a May 22 **Newsweek** piece, expanding on a new study reporting that women earn more than men in 45 percent of dual-earner households, notes the marital strains at times caused by the new order among a somewhat younger generation. . . . Financial magazines love topping one another when it comes to allegedly hot new funds to invest in, and, thus, it's no surprise to find **Money** magazine's summer **Money Guide** (\$3.95) heralding five purportedly underpriced stock mutual funds "ripe for a comeback." . . . June **Good Housekeeping** details the arduous adoption tale of Keith Lussier of Buffalo, who was in the early stages of adopting a Korean child when his wife died of a malignant tumor in her uterus. The private agency, whose rules bar single-parent adoptions, yanked back the kid and soon found itself in court, and a loser as Lussier persevered in finalizing the adoption. . . . In May 29 **National Review**, sourpuss critic John Simon reviews "The Underneath" and declares that in switching from writing to directing, Steven ("sex, lies, and videotape") Soderbergh "flunks the test with flying colors."