



LOWDOWN

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WITH HUDSON MORGAN

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Natalie puts a Springer in his step

Does Jerry Springer nurse a forbidden lust for Natalie Portman?

At Wednesday night's party for his new weekday Air America show, "Springer on the Radio," the 61-year-old trash-television host sounded positively gaga over the 23-year-old "Star Wars" starlet.

"Natalie Portman is really bright, and if I was allowed to have one crush, it would be her," Springer told Lowdown.

Portman's PR rep responded: "I am not going anywhere near this whole thing."

Springer added that the actress could be his co-host, despite her apparent lack of talk-radio chops. "You know what? We'd work it out."

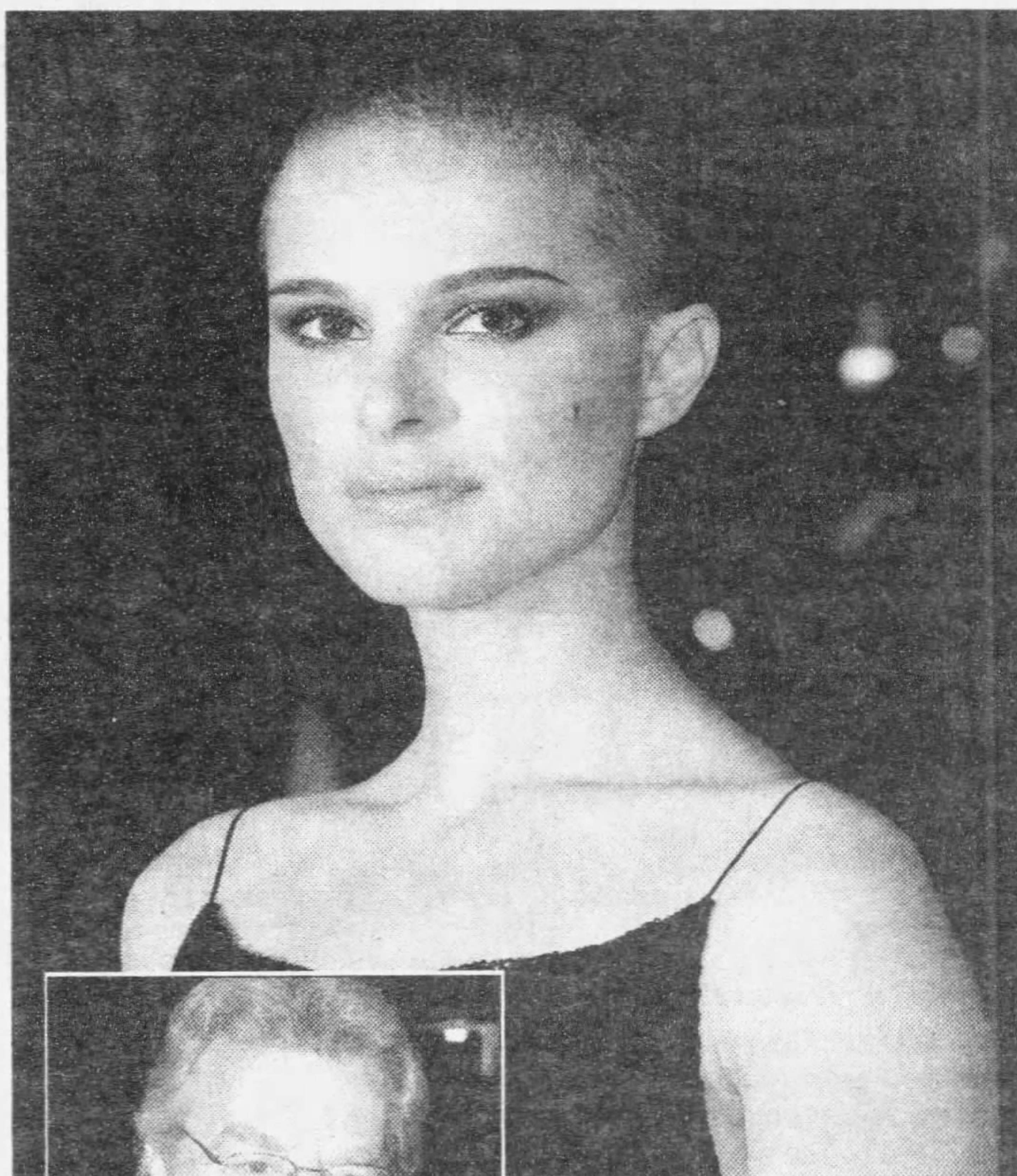
And who could serve as the new host of the "Jerry Springer Show," which is now enjoying its 15th season of Geneva Convention-flouting torture

and humiliation?

"Natalie Portman!" Springer answered — not that he has any intention of giving up the gig that has made him a millionaire many times over.

"Or Woody Allen," Springer added. "Anyone could do it. Anyone. All I do is, I go, 'You did WHAT?' 'Come on out!' 'We'll be right back.' A dolt could do what I do."

Meanwhile, Springer — a die-hard Democrat, an oft-mentioned Senate prospect in Ohio



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SPRINGER-AUTUMN CRUSH: Natalie Portman has a big fan in Jerry Springer.

and the former mayor of Cincinnati — likes **Hillary Clinton** for President in 2008.

"For right now, yeah," he said. "I think she can have a conversation with anybody and wouldn't feel like she's got to prove herself, wouldn't feel

threatened. I really think she's got a phenomenal sense of self. And our best Presidents, at least in my lifetime, have been those who are most comfortable with themselves."

And remembered to take care of themselves, and each other.

BRIEFING

DEEP SCOOP: With all the hoopla surrounding retired FBI official **W. Mark Felt's** Deep Throat coming-out party this week, it's easy to overlook that Johns Hopkins University scholar **James Mann** almost definitively solved the mystery in *The Atlantic Monthly* 13 years ago. "The FBI took charge of the federal investigation [of Watergate] at the same time that the Administration was trying to limit its scope," Mann wrote in his "institutional

analysis" of the leaker's identity in May 1992. "Therein lies the origin of Deep Throat." Mann named Felt as a leading candidate for the honorific, for reasons that **Bob Woodward** confirmed in detail yesterday in his Washington Post story chronicling their contacts and Felt's motives for dropping the dime on Richard Nixon's White House. "Today, when I picked up Woodward's very detailed account of his relationship with Mark Felt, I was really amazed that I had really filled in the blanks, and at just how accurate I had been," Mann told me yesterday. "When

my piece came out, Bob called me and we talked, quickly. He wasn't happy," Mann added, noting that he and Woodward have been friendly since their days as fellow reporters on The Washington Post's metro section.

BORN YESTERDAY: At 6 pounds, 9 ounces, Washington native **Harper Andrea Stephanopoulos** is a healthy Daughter No. 2 for comedian-actress **Alexandra Wentworth** and ABC News' "This Week" anchor **George Stephanopoulos**. That makes 2½-year-old **Elliott Anastasia** the big sister. Congrats to all.

Big-time players, but few seats, for this matinee

What was all that commotion at the American Airlines Theater on W. 42nd St. yesterday afternoon?

Those black SUVs disgorging important-looking passengers. The machine-gun-toting SWAT team standing guard across the street. And even recognizable celebrities — notably **Naomi Judd**, **Sally Field** and **Denzel Washington** — braving the crush of tourists on the sidewalk to pass through heavy security and scamper into the theater.

Well, I can reveal that the publicity-shy Academy of Achievement — the project of world-class Washington philanthropists and celebrity-wrangers **Wayne** and **Catherine Reynolds** — is in town through tomorrow.

Among the worthies who have actually shown up to receive their awards are Her Majesty Queen **Rania Al-Abdullah** of Jordan, President **Abdoulaye Wade** of Senegal, playwright **Edward Albee**, NBC's **Katie Couric** and **Tim Russert**, actors **Field**, **Washington** and **Michael J. Fox**, fashionista **Carolina Herrera**, Harvard President **Larry Summers**, Supreme Court Justice **Anthony Kennedy** and U.S. Attorney General **Alberto R. Gonzales**, novelists **John Irving** and **Tom Wolfe**, violinist **Itzhak Perlman**, composer **Stephen Sondheim** and an amazing assortment of Nobel laureates, including **Toni Morrison**.

They — along with a few hundred invited students and a diverse array of past honorees including **Bill and Hillary Clinton**, **Mayor Bloomberg**, **Dominick Dunne** and **Sam Donaldson** — were dipping in and out of heady policy breakfasts, power lunches and black-tie dinners.

Yesterday's event at the theater was a sensitive symposium on "Passion, Creativity and the Arts."

No wonder Lowdown was stopped at the door.

THERE IS STILL TIME TO WIN 100G LIKE CAROLE BUTLER TWO WEEKS TO PLAY!

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DAILY NEWS

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