

watch!

Citizen CRAIG

What the newly minted American said to the President

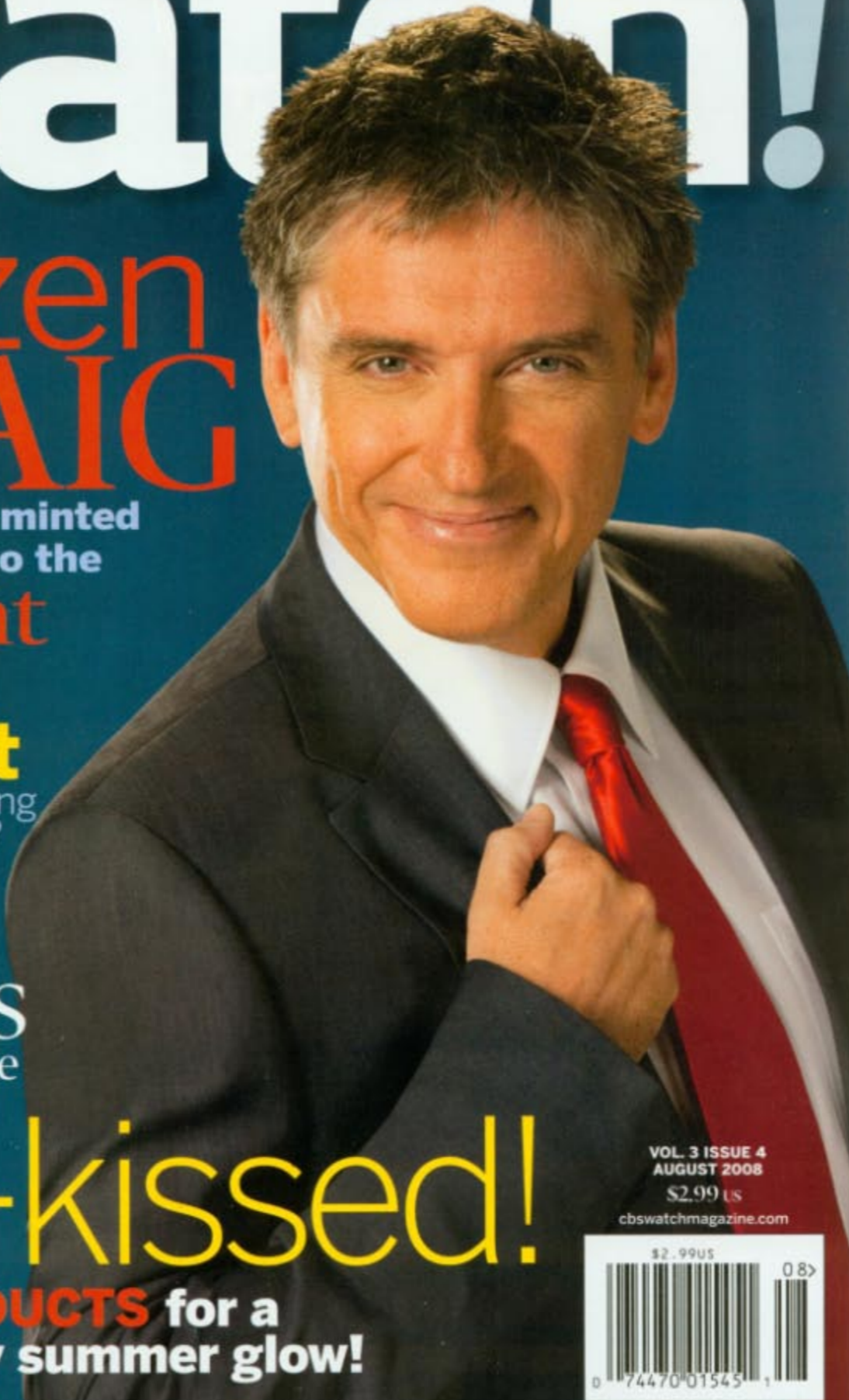
I.D. Theft

Who's impersonating your favorite stars?

BRIDAL FASHIONS that take the cake

sun-kissed!

9 HOT PRODUCTS for a celeb-worthy summer glow!



VOL. 3 ISSUE 4
AUGUST 2008

\$2.99 us

cbswatchmagazine.com

\$2.99US

08>



Breaking All the Rules

When it came to characters and locale, *Frank's Place* broke the mold.

Today, it's a standards setter for New Orleans-based series

It had been nearly five years since the end of their successful sitcom, *WKRP in Cincinnati*, when actor Tim Reid and writer Hugh Wilson decided they'd like to work together again. And so, both Southern-bred, they started their new collaboration by searching for a city in Dixie to replace their famous former setting in Ohio.

Mining the Big Easy

"That's when I jumped up and said, 'New Orleans!'" remembers Reid, who recalls that, having traveled through the Big Easy in 1971 with then-comedy partner Tom Dreesen, he "had spent two of the most incredible weeks of my life. The city has got to be in the top 12 or so most culturally unique in the world. And it had been etched in my heart from that point on."

On a research trip to the city, Reid and Wilson discovered a tiny locals' hang-out called Chez Helene's, which had all the communal characteristics Reid was searching for as the type of enterprise his new character, Bostonian Frank Parish, would inherit from his father in the pilot of the 1987 to 1988 CBS series *Frank's Place*. "We knew the show had to be set

in a restaurant," the actor/producer says, "because you can't do a show about New Orleans and not deal with food—otherwise it might as well be Milwaukee."

Indeed, throughout the show's run, the *Frank's Place* writing team would continue to mine the city for what the creators had identified as four of its defining themes: food, history, music and death.

Ignoring the Status Quo

Initially given "carte blanche" by CBS, Reid says, he and Wilson ended up creating a series so daring for its time—for one thing, it was produced without a laugh track—that it ultimately scared the network.

"*Frank's Place* broke all the rules," Reid explains. "Imagine today a sitcom with two characters over 70." And while Reid had hoped to tap into a rich, black cultural heritage he recognized in the South, "In our zeal to be different and true to the culture, we probably went too far, and created friction with the sitcom status quo," he says. "But we were bullheaded enough that we figured that we'd put everything we could into the show, and when it was over, it was over."



Frank's Place, starring Tim Reid, featured story lines focused on food, history, music and death.

The 'Best Ever'

Then, after only 22 episodes and many hard-to-find time slots, it was over. But despite lagging ratings, Frank and his friends had been far from unappreciated; the show earned three Emmys in 1988, six additional nominations, and critical raves that continue to this day.

In a September 2007 online posting about Fox's now-canceled post-Katrina cop drama *K-Ville*, New Orleans *Times-Picayune* TV critic Dave Walker refers to *Frank's Place* as "the best-ever New Orleans-set TV series." Reid and Mayor Ray Nagin have even tossed around the idea of a *Frank's Place*-themed weekend to boost NOLA tourism. "I realize I have this New Orleans of old in my heart and mind, and I know it's no longer there," the actor, now 63 and running a production company in Petersburg, Va., with wife Daphne Maxwell-Reid, says of his '70s days. "So I've been putting off calling the mayor again. But now, maybe it's time." 