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## **Nuked!**

The love story that is rocking daytime television

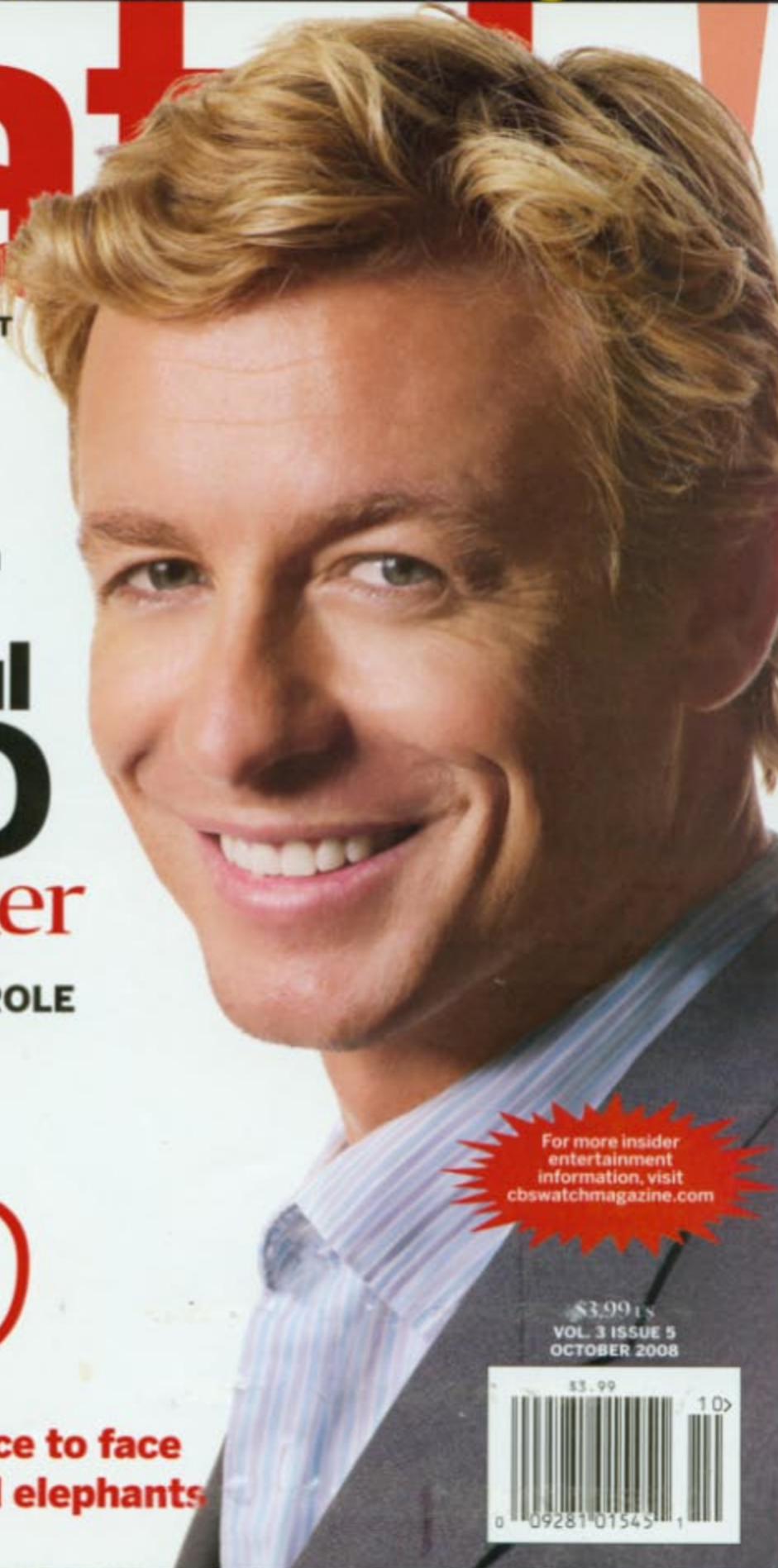
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TELEVISION'S  
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NOTEBOOK

# QUICK

TAKES



## Atomic Love

By Jim Colucci

As the World Turns' "Nuke":  
A love story for the 21st century

A generation ago, a hunk named Luke and his bride, Laura, were the hottest couple on daytime TV. In 2007, *As The World Turns* introduced a Luke for the new millennium. But this time, his other half would be a man named Noah.

Luke Snyder, the scion of one of Oakdale's typically troubled families, was born on *ATWT* in 1995 but, a tragic victim of Soap Opera Rapid Aging Syndrome, jumped to age 20 a mere 10 years later at the behest of the show's writers. A newly recast Luke would announce his homosexuality, sparking a new Snyder story line, which, executive producer Chris Goutman explains, "has been successful simply because it's a story about how a family gets stronger by accepting its differences."

But there had never been a "master plan" for young Luke to then find a soul mate, explains CBS Daytime senior vice president Barbara Bloom; after all, a soap opera is written as a chapter-by-chapter story, continually evolving. But in actor Van Hansis' portrayal, Bloom remembers, "we realized this was the boy who had captured our hearts." And so, in 2006, Luke's life expanded beyond the scope of parents Holden and Lily, as he fell in love with Kevin, a guy who, heartbreakingly, turned out to be straight. Later, when best gal pal Maddie brought home her new boyfriend Noah, awkward sparks flew.

### The Kiss Seen Around the Web

According to Daniel R. Coleridge, author of *The Q Guide to Soap Operas*, some soaps had featured gay characters in the past, and had even depicted a bit of courtship between two men. But on Aug. 17, 2007, Luke and Noah shared a historic kiss. And their resulting relationship, Coleridge says, "is the most fully fleshed-out that daytime TV has ever seen. It's 2008, and now we're finally seeing two young gay men have a romance like we've seen straight couples have for nearly 70 years of soap opera."

The "Nuke" kiss—you know a soap couple has arrived, Coleridge explains, when fans bestow the pair with a Brangelina-esque name amalgam—electrified the fan community and even lured otherwise nonsoap viewers to their sets, their DVRs and YouTube to catch up on buzzed-about clips. "That is the way soap



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operas are going to stay modern," Coleridge says, "by continuing to reflect issues we can relate to from real life, instead of showing some fantasy world where people have amnesia or come back from the dead."

Not coincidentally, between June 2007, when the Luke-and-Noah story line began, and March 2008, *ATWT* increased its viewer base by 13 percent. This year, the gay rights organization GLAAD presented the show with its annual media award. And the story line's most important measure of success—fan response—has been overwhelmingly positive.

**Nuke-lear Families**

By mid-2008, Luke and Noah shared a total of three kisses, all eagerly awaited by fans who actually counted the days in between. Jake Silbermann, who plays Noah, sees that audience interest not just as vicarious lust but as a reaction to the obvious affection Luke and Noah share. "From the beginning, we've seen these characters fall in love," Silbermann says. "They're very real with each other and very sweet, and I think that's really what people want to see."



As *The World Turns*' Noah and Luke

Hansis agrees, noting that he continues to receive fan mail from viewers across the demographic spectrum. "I think it's really a testament that this story line hasn't been marginalized into one group of fans," the actor says. That, Bloom theorizes, is because Luke and Noah's gay love story turns out to have an unexpectedly widespread appeal. "We have viewers who write in and say, 'I felt the same way about a boy I wasn't allowed

to marry because he was a different color.' There's a universal sense of connection to this story, where people are being told that their love isn't allowed."

Despite Luke and Noah's apparent breakup this summer, *ATWT*'s writers are ready to forge ahead. The Nuke story line is just a reminder that "because we're in their homes on a daily basis, soap operas have an enormous power to change and add meaning to people's lives," Goutman says.

In 2007, for example, Hansis received a letter from an older woman who had initially complained to CBS about the gay subject matter. "Then, a few months later, her son came out, forcing her to reconsider her views," the actor says. The viewer told Hansis that she had begun looking to Luke for a clue toward understanding and accepting the members of her own family. "That feels good," he says. "Because a lot of times as an actor, you end up in a commercial, selling cereal or bathroom tissue. So to get a job that has some kind of social impact is really rewarding." **U**



Here's what has satirist Kim Forrest shaking her head this issue

**[smh]**

**1 Bloggers urge Kate Hudson to finally cut her son's hair.** Kate Hudson responds, "Wait ... he is a boy? Good to know."

**7 Maggie Gyllenhaal says, "Being around water makes you feel so good."** Some people refer to this as "hydration."

**2 Tré Cool of the band Green Day says, "I never completed high school, and I am very rich and successful."** He adds, "Reading and writing will never get you anywhere anyway. Now pass me that picture book."

**8 Fashion stylists predict wide-legged jeans will have a successful run this fall.** I predict a successful run of a new material called "cotton."



**3 Janet Jackson credits her better body to staying away from one thing: pancakes.** She credits years of therapy to staying away from one thing, as well: Michael.

**4 Angelina Jolie remarks she has enough children now to form the Brady Bunch.** She also claims she has enough housekeepers to kick Alice's ass.

**9 The new fall lineup hopes to jump-start viewers after the writers strike fallout.** New shows include, *How I Met Your Stepfather* and *Two and a Half More Dollars at the Pump*.

**5 A partying Vince Young admits he is concerned with being a "role model."** He also notes, "Kids need to learn how to drink sometime."

**10 Jessica Simpson is set to release a new country album.**

**6 Steve Carell tells an interviewer he used to be a mailman in Massachusetts.** Now I can finally tell Aunt Sally where all her birthday cards went.

When asked about the album's genre, she says, "Country? Well, I don't know what country it is from per se. You never can tell where those CDs are made."

