

WATERS, from page 1

them. I go — like people go to look at haunted houses. But I'm always so embarrassed because I'm afraid someone will recognize me and then I'm the worst pervert for watching them. I pull up and just crunch down in the car and look and it makes me crazy. I want to take pictures and stuff. But I can't because I feel bad — some of them are near my mother's house and I don't want to cause trouble in her community.

S.Z.: *Let's talk about perversion: There seems to be a thin line for you between morality and perversion.*

J.W.: Well, I'm perverted. And I think I am moral. I think my films are politically correct. I don't think they are mean spirited. I don't think they judge people. If my movies have any politics, they all have the same, from "Pink Flamingos" to "Hairspray" — which is, "Don't judge other people. Exaggerate what you have and even if other people think it's negative turn it into a style and you will always win."

Morally, I believe in the basic goodness of people. I do. I don't believe in any religions I've heard of, but I hope one day that we find a planet and it's got a whole new explanation for everything.

I believe in science.

My mother is religious. It brings her comfort and happiness and she doesn't force it on anyone else. I'm for that.

S.Z.: *What is your favorite Christmas, or holiday, memory?*

J.W.: That would have to be when the Christmas tree fell on grandma. Well, it didn't really fall — well it fell *onto* her. But I exaggerated it, certainly, in "Female Trouble" where Divine knocks the tree over. It didn't happen that way. In doing these Christmas shows, many people have shared with me stories of the Christmas tree falling over in their house. It happens all the time. It's usually the pets that do it. I've always said rig it! So at the height of the festivities, pull the wire and have the tree fall over. Have everybody be in on it. Everybody scream, take pictures. Plan disaster so that it doesn't take you by surprise!

S.Z.: *You're a bibliophile. You even make the love of books sound naughty. What is a favorite book right now?*

J.W.: The last really great book I read was "The Skies Belong to Us" by Brendan I. Koerner. It's a great true crime book about all the skyjackers in the '70s. It's really good. You forget all of that. It's a really great reminder of the trendiness of skyjacking.

S.Z.: *My friend, and Street Roots volunteer, Mary Pacios, edited a book by the Kuchar brothers (George and Mike): "Reflections from a Cinematic Cesspool" ...*

J.W.: I wrote the introduction for that book.

S.Z.: *How have the Kuchar brothers influenced you?*

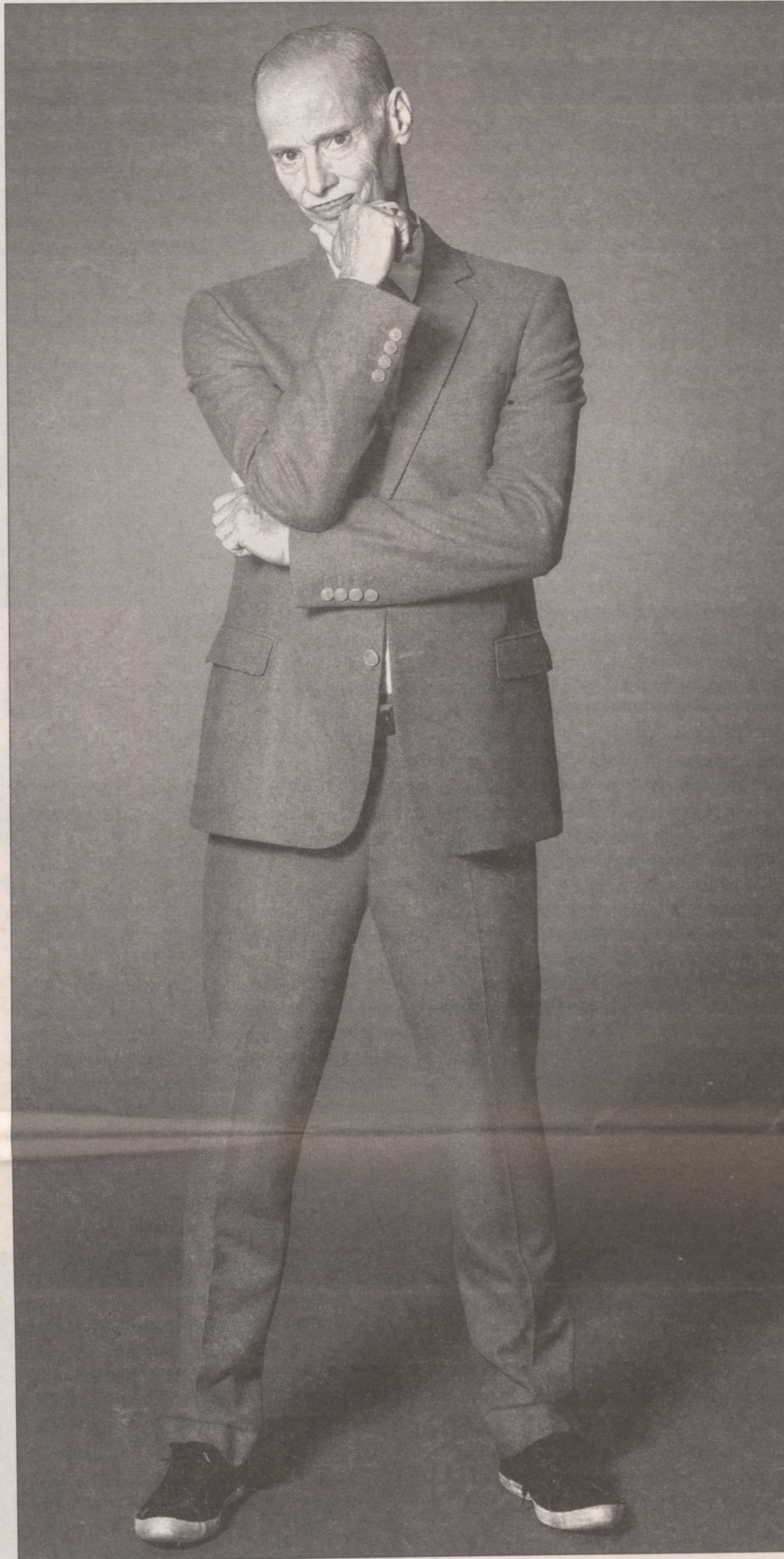
J.W.: Oh my god. That lurid color, the turd in the toilet in "Sins of the Fleshapoids"? I mean, are you kidding? They did turds first.

Recently, Mike gave me a beautiful caricature that George drew of me that I love that is hanging in my San Francisco apartment.

To me they were true underground filmmakers that continued — they never, ever sold out and they influenced everybody.

They were funny, original and really politically correct. Once I said to George, "How come you don't have all of your movies out on DVD?" And he said, "Well, I wouldn't want to make money on some of (the films) when the actors weren't paid." Oh my god! That is so refreshing to hear that.

S.Z.: *"Carsick" — the book you wrote about hitchhiking from Baltimore to San Francisco*



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last year — is coming out in June 2014.

J.W.: Yes! I saw the cover this week and I've seen the title page and it's been edited, the lawyers have gone through it. It's ready to go. The galley is coming soon, so I'm really excited.

S.Z.: *What was the hitchhiking experience like?*

J.W.: Well, I had a lot of fictional parts because I imagined the worst 15 rides and the 15 best rides, which are 30 chapters even before I get to the 21 chapters that are the real ride — so it's many short stories.

Let's just say one involves eroticism in a demolition derby. The worst? Let's just say there is a diarrhea issue. And in the best there is a great young Republican in a Corvette that picks me up once and drives me really far and then drives 2,000 miles back to give me another ride while his parents are freaking out.

S.Z.: *Tell me about your attraction to Baltimore.*

J.W.: Well, it has the cutest boys and it has a good sense of humor. It's still cheap and we have a great music scene.

S.Z.: *Talk about being a gay man and how*

J.W.: Gay is not enough. It's a start. I

"Gay is not enough. It's a start. I don't fit in the total gay world either. I'm against separatism, so I don't go to gay bars, I go to hip bars where gay people go and straight people and everybody mixes together. I want to hear everybody's worst night — not just gay people."

cell phone. That kid in the same way could sell his or her movie to them as a found footage movie, they'll give the kid \$200,000 when it cost \$10 to make it, \$200,000 worth of bad new music, spend another \$300,000 to make it look like it cost \$5,000 instead of \$10 and then, they'll have a hit and everybody will be happy.

S.Z.: *I've heard you express some regret: You used to attend trials, one of the first being the Charles Manson trials, and you've had a friendship with (Manson Family member) Leslie Van Houten for decades. I'm curious about your connections to prisons, criminals and fringe dwellers.*

J.W.: I don't go to trials anymore. I think I'm more serious about it. I taught in prison, so I believe in rehabilitation. At the same time, I believe that victims go through real hell, so I see all sides of it. If I wasn't a filmmaker, I'd be a defense lawyer ... and I'd be a pretty good one, I think.

I believe I'm interested because, whenever you do something so terrible, how can you survive it? How do you deal with it? And can you ever make up for doing something so terrible when you were young and crazy. Certainly, meeting Charles Manson in 1969 is not a normal thing. Be glad that your kids never met him.

At the same time, I understand the [Manson] victims' rage that they have to come back there every time for the hearings and everything. So, there is no real fair answer. I am arguing it completely from society's viewpoint. She (Van Houten) got a life sentence, with parole. And she has done things really well. No one thinks she is a danger. No one thinks that she would ever listen to somebody else's (directives). She is probably the last person who would ever be brainwashed by anybody considering what she has learned and what she's gone through.

But at the same time, how do you make up for it? I don't know the answer. I hope that everybody gets another chance. At the same time, she didn't kill my mother, so I can't — it's a question that morally I don't have the right answer to, but I understand other people's moral answer that might not agree with me.

S.Z.: *Are you an anarchist?*

J.W.: No! I'm too old to be an anarchist. How embarrassing to be a 67-year-old anarchist that owns three homes and a summer rental.

But I love anarchists! I think they are cute and I like them and they are doing the same things I was doing in anti-Vietnam marches — having fun politically and getting high and getting laid and having a good time. I love the anarchist look. I love nothing more than that "I-just-kidnapped-Elizabeth-Smart" beard look — that all cute boys have in Brooklyn. And probably in Portland ... I'll bet it's *big* in Portland, that look.

S.Z.: *Divine's birthday would have been last month. Can you share something about him?*

J.W.: One thing about Divine? I miss him. Especially at Christmas because he was a huge Christmas fanatic. He almost went to prison every year for charging too many Christmas decorations. He was obsessed.