

W

HIGH DRAMA: THE BEST FALL CLOTHES

Gwen Stefani
Gets Set to Rock
The Runway

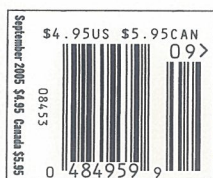
Flat Boots, It Bags, Furs
& Skins: The Season's
Electrifying Accessories

Fashion Outcast:
When Your Style
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Plus: Suzy, Dolce & Gabbana,
Bret Easton Ellis & the
Unsung Valor of Bridesmaids

Kirsten Dunst

The Contagious Charm and Kicked-Back Cool of Hollywood's Golden Girl





Charles Stevenson and Alex Kuczynski at Middle Fork Lodge, on the banks of Idaho's Salmon River

Western Union

New York power couple Alex Kuczynski and Charles Stevenson kick back in their own private Idaho.

Photographs by JENNIFER LIVINGSTON

Orgy! Orgy!" exclaims Alex Kuczynski as she raises her glass of Pinot Noir to the 20 or so guests seated around her rough-hewn, banquet-size dining room table. "Whoops—" she says, laughing. "Wrong weekend!"

It's the final night of a sybaritic long weekend she and her husband, private investor Charles Stevenson, have hosted at their retreat in the mountains of central Idaho, and Kuczynski, a reporter at *The New York Times*, is in an especially jubilant mood. Off duty, the tall blond beauty is known for her occasional cigarillo smoking and often ribald humor, and she's in fine form tonight. Referring to the pair of beautiful female massage therapists she and Stevenson had flown in for the weekend, she quips, "I hope all the men had a happy ending!"

Kuczynski is kidding, but the weekend has truly been an orgiastic feast of sorts. Aside from the masseuses, she and Stevenson flew in a yoga instructor, three chefs and a trove of delicacies for the larder (Alaskan halibut, organic rack of lamb), all for the enjoyment of their guests at Middle Fork Lodge, an 80-acre property on the banks of the Salmon River. Situated amid 2.3 million acres of federally protected wilderness, the lodge is reachable only by small aircraft, horse or raft.

Each summer, Stevenson, 58, and Kuczynski, 37, his wife of three years,

invite a favored set to join them for a few days of hiking, riding, fishing, skeet shooting and soaking in the sulfur hot springs. The couple ferries everyone over from Boise on twin-engine Islander planes and transports the group from the airstrip to the lodge in a horse-drawn surrey. This weekend, the guests include *Allure* editor in chief Linda Wells, her husband, investment banker Charlie Thompson, and their two sons; Ashton and Margot de Peyster of Palm Beach; and art dealer Dennis Ochi and his wife, Roberta, of Sun Valley, Idaho. Everyone stays either in the main lodge with Stevenson and Kuczynski, or in one of the six cozy log cabins on the property, each lovingly restored in recent years by Stevenson with logs helicoptered in from Montana.

Stevenson bought the property seven years ago from cellular mogul John McCaw. (He rents it to fellow outdoor enthusiasts for about \$20,000 a week when he isn't there himself.) "My major concern is that all of this natural beauty remains pristine. The human hive is spreading over the planet—and it is the nature of human beings to destroy things," says Stevenson, adding, "There's something about the wilderness that brings out a woman's feral nature."

Situated amid sagebrush-covered mountains, huge ponderosa pines and creeks ringed by hawthorn trees and cottonwood clovers, with nary a four-star restaurant in the vicinity, Middle Fork Lodge is not your typical million-

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aire's stomping ground, though Stevenson hardly shies from those either. The couple's main residence is at 740 Park Avenue—also home to Spyros Niarchos, David Koch and Stephen Schwarzman—where Stevenson is the board president. (The exclusive co-op is the subject of a forthcoming book by Michael Gross titled *740 Park: The Story of the World's Richest Apartment Building*.) Stevenson and Kuczynski also have places in Sun Valley, where their house is across from Hemingway's former home, and Southampton.

Although many people believe Stevenson inherited his great wealth, he says that is a misconception. His father, Charles Sr., owned a successful company in Buffalo, New York, that manufactured fabric-cutting machinery, and his late mother, Mary Louise Lord, was a New York society "princess," as he calls her. But when Stevenson graduated from Yale in 1969 (George W. Bush was a classmate), he parlayed \$18,000 into a multimillion-dollar fortune through his own investment savvy.

He is both a classic master of the universe and an unabashed spiritualist. Stevenson, who has three previous marriages (all ending in divorce) and six children, reportedly wanted to give Kuczynski a nine-carat engagement ring, which she rejected in favor of her current six-carat one. At the same time, he speaks of his ambivalence toward wealth ("People who hold large amounts of money ultimately have corroded souls") and his admiration for Buddhist ideals. He even once played host to a group of robe-swathed Tibetan monks at 740 Park. Says Stevenson: "I think most people are simply bouncing around responding. I like to be aware of the choices that I have. I don't want to live accidentally."

Most days he rises early to check on the Asian and European markets, but by midday he is engaged in some sort of physical activity, whether it be skiing, swimming, playing squash or practicing yoga. At Middle Fork this weekend he led the group on a two-hour-long morning hike and played both a competitive tennis match and a cutthroat round of horseshoes with his old friend Ashton de Peyster. "We are all animals," says Stevenson, who is as fit as a boxer. "And the worst thing for an animal would be to keep it sitting in a desk chair. If I became a slob physically, I would feel like I was living in a dirty house or hadn't brushed my teeth. I need to be fit and trim."

"God, is he ripped," said Kuczynski earlier that weekend, admiring her husband's physique as he emerged naked from the outdoor hot tub. "I can't believe what great shape he's in."

The *Times* reporter met Stevenson five years ago on a blind date. By the end of the evening, says Kuczynski, he knelt down and teasingly proposed. "Not so fast!" she says she responded. "Now I know why you've been married so many times." They dated for two years and were married by former New York City mayor David Dinkins in Stevenson's apartment.

"Alex is one of the few people who can keep up with Charles," observes Margot de Peyster. "I think Charles would be bored with just a physical relationship—though they're probably at it night and day, that's my guess."

"They're so complementary," says Linda Wells. "Charles is quietly intellectual while Alex is so extroverted—she'll sing impromptu in front of a dinner party. And there's just this kind of sexiness to them. There's a sexual attraction that you can see that is very compelling."

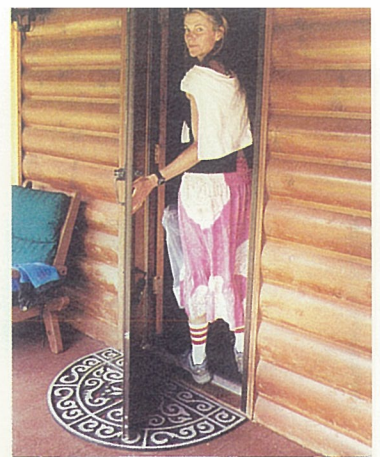
The daughter of Pedro-Pablo Kuczynski, the current finance minister of Peru (and reportedly a contender for the 2006 presidential election), and Jane Casey Hughes, a former reporter for the *Voice of America*, Kuczynski attended the Madeira School in Virginia and Barnard College. She is a backgammon enthusiast—she has been invited to play in the world backgammon championships—and an avid pianist. (The Steinway grand in their Manhattan living room was a gift from Stevenson for her most recent birthday.)

"I think we were both hot catches, y'know?" says Kuczynski, who recently took time off from the newspaper to write her first book, *Beauty Junkies: Inside Our \$15 Billion Obsession With Cosmetic Surgery*, out from Doubleday later this year. By the time Stevenson had fallen for her, she says, he'd had time "to get his ya-yas out of his system and throw away his black book."

In New York the couple keep a relatively low profile, particularly where the society circuit is concerned. "I find that the whole benefit scene is just a reason to party," says Kuczynski. "Isn't it demented? People getting dressed up for this merry-go-round of benefits who've forgotten what they're supposed to be raising money for."

"Middle Fork is more our kind of place," she adds. "A spiritual sanctuary."

—JEFFREY PODOLSKY



Left: Aerial view of the estate. From top: Kuczynski at the lodge; Stevenson at the creek; guest Katy Lobel and Kuczynski at the springs; a lamb dinner; guests shooting clay pigeons; the happy couple.

"Charles would be bored," a friend says, "with just a physical relationship—though they're probably at it night and day, that's my guess."



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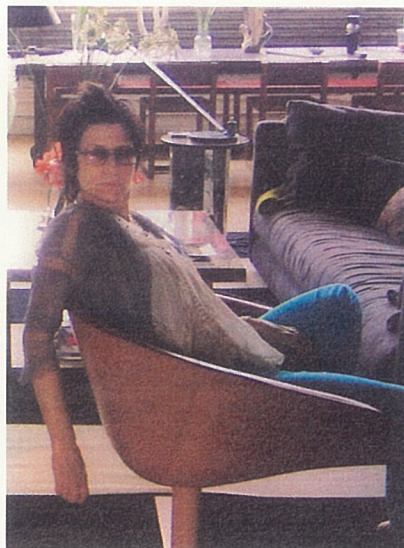
Lori Goldstein

For September, Goldstein, a Manhattan-based stylist, collaborated with photographers Bruce Weber and Michael Thompson on their very different fashion stories. "Bruce's was vibrant and streety, while Michael's was more about couture," she says. "But both those things are what's happening in fashion right now."

Weber's shoot indulged in a playful, anything-goes sensibility. "There wasn't any hard-fixed concept. Everybody was just having fun and doing what they love to do."

In contrast, Thompson created a loose plotline about a wealthy 19th-century Italian industrialist and his two beautiful daughters. "It was much more serious in its mood, tone and history," notes Goldstein, who traveled to Pisa, Italy, for the shoot.

The stylist hiked up the luxe factor and dressed the models in sumptuous velvets, resplendent colors and layers of Rochas dresses to play to the aristocratic premise.



Taylor Tomasi

After a brief stint studying clothing design at the Pratt Institute, Tomasi realized the vocation wasn't for her. "I just didn't have the patience for sewing," she admits. Not willing to give up on the clothing business entirely, she took an internship in *W*'s accessories department in 2003 and quickly discovered that she enjoyed fashion much more when it didn't involve working with a needle and thread.

Now Tomasi is *W*'s Market Editor, a position that requires her to scour everything from Parisian couture houses to the vintage bins on Manhattan's Lower East Side for the looks that appear in the magazine's pages. "My favorite part of my job is when I have to find something that's off the beaten path," she says, "or when a piece has to be made to complement a specific theme." For September, Tomasi collaborated with *W* Fashion Director Alex White and stylist Lori Goldstein on their respective stories.

Jeffrey Podolsky

Podolsky considers himself a true New Yorker, so it's no surprise that he has a few hang-ups when it comes to the great outdoors. "To me, a hike is walking across Central Park, and fishing is ordering sea bass at my favorite restaurant," he quips. But the seasoned journalist, who is also the New York editor of *Tatler*, managed to keep his neuroses (and allergies) in check for his story this month on Middle Fork Lodge, an 80-acre tract of pristine Idaho wilderness. The experience provided a lot of firsts for the writer: "horseback riding, fishing, hiking—three things I've never done before."

The ranch, owned by Manhattan investor Charles Stevenson and his wife, reporter Alex Kuczynski, wasn't bereft of creature comforts. A yoga instructor and several masseuses were on call to attend to any aches and pains guests might have acquired during their outdoor pursuits. Podolsky took advantage of both.



Guido Palau

Though he is a 20-year veteran of the business, hairstylist Palau still brims with the enthusiasm of a novice. "I love the whole process of working with great people who have a vision," he says. "Every job is an exciting new challenge."

This month he teamed up with photographers Mert Alas and Marcus Piggott for their fashion story, which evokes the dark moodiness and noir sensibility prevalent on this season's runways. Palau created sleek bobs and tousled manes that underscore the architectural feel of the shoot's distinctive silhouettes. "I looked at the shape and movement of the clothes and tried to reflect that in the hair," he explains.

Although Palau cites an Eastern European influence in his work on the story, he generally eschews obvious references or styles. "I don't like it to read too literally or predictably," he says. "It should be up to the readers to take what they want from an image."

