

ary home of Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, and by since selling it to Pia Zadora and Meshulam Riklis. He cast his team with potential superstars. Kirk Douglas says, "It's a weekly series where each character has a terrific personality and you can't wait to get back." From the venerable captain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, the N.B.A.'s all-time leading scorer, to the mesmerizing Magic Johnson, the N.B.A.'s highest-paid player, they're a studio chief's dream of a team: a seven-foot posse of good guys with a marked flair for the dramatic. They're a box-office smash every time they play. They even have a glamour-boy coach in picture-perfect Pat Riley, a Screen Actors Guild member whom Teri Garr elected to be our next pinup president on *David Letterman*.

The crossover dreams work both ways. Magic's agent, Lon Rosen, says, "All the actors want to be athletes and all the athletes want to be actors." Jack Nicholson, who invites the team to screenings and wore black when Norm Nixon was traded, bought the Forum a VCR and tapes so that if he had to miss a game it could be Federal Expressed to him to watch "live" the next day. Rob Lowe snuck off the Hamptons set of *Masquerade* last year and seaplaned to Boston for the finals (where he shot hoops with Michael J. Fox). Baryshnikov was wowed when he went to a game—"They think we jump, now *that's* jumping." Record producer Richard Perry says that "when the team goes dancing at On the Rox [Lou Adler's private club at the Roxy], Michael Cooper brings his own non-stop slammin' cassette and Magic calls out signals, cuing the guys in to a new step."

There's a slew of show-biz spin-offs, including a *Lakers Are Cookin'* cookbook (Gilda Radner and Gene Wilder's fish marinade, Walter Matthau's kasha goulash, Henry "The Fonz" Winkler's baked beans). Then there's the Laker Girls. The cheerleaders seem to cast a spell over Jack Nicholson. Charlie Sheen sent fifty white roses with one red rose in the center to one Laker Girl. Another married teen idol Rex Smith. And Laker Girl alum Paula Abdul became Janet Jackson's choreographer.

But Magic is probably the biggest star in town. He even has his own billboard on Sunset Boulevard. When Magic walks into a restaurant, the room stops and there's just deafening applause. "I'm in awe when that happens," he says. Magic was slated to be in Eddie Murphy's new movie, but ran into wardrobe problems. Bruce Willis was thrilled to meet Magic, and all Magic wanted to talk about was *Moonlighting*. Kareem may have scouted jazz bands for MCA, but Magic has prompted an unprecedented move at CAA: Michael Ovitz signed him in March as its first athlete client. The *L.A. Times* quoted Irving Azoff as saying, "It's a great marriage. . . . [Magic's] an untapped wealth."

The L.A. Lakers are the town's star attraction, and the attraction of the stars in a town where celebrity scores high. "If you want to see them shine," says Dr. Buss proudly, "there's just one place to look." □

SPOTLIGHT

Misha Makes a Mark

Superstar Mikhail Baryshnikov and superflamboyant, precocious Mark Morris met, briefly and privately, for the first time just a year ago at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. This month they're back at the Met again, for American Ballet Theatre's spring season, and Baryshnikov is performing in Morris's latest creation—a ballet set to some piano études by Virgil Thomson.

When Baryshnikov, A.B.T.'s artistic director, decided to commission something from Morris, America's most prolific young choreographer, scheduling was a problem. The company's rehearsal period and Morris's gigs were at odds. But then, in his role as a dancer still hungry for interesting work, Baryshnikov had a suggestion: "The company's not available, but I am." Other A.B.T. dancers found time to participate, and a preview portion of their new ballet, *Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes*, became part of the "Dancing for Life" AIDS fundraiser in October.

An improvised and innocent enough beginning for a new work. Or was it? Next door to the Met at Lincoln Center, the much-trumpeted American Music Festival programs are dominating the season at New York City Ballet, A.B.T.'s competition. Mark Morris is conspicuous by his absence from the group of modern-dance choreographers chosen for that event, while all-American composer Virgil Thomson is barely represented. So it just may be that Baryshnikov's savvy commission is meant to redress an oversight. When Misha and Mark do their own bit for the Stars and Stripes, it could steal a whole lot of thunder from across the plaza.—ROBERT GRESKOVIC

Photograph by ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV MARK MORRIS

*They're doing
their bit for the Stars
and Stripes.*

