

SMARTCITY
FACIALS FROM A TO Z: THE CITY'S QUIETEST PLACES

Sick children, painful choices. By Susan Brenna

DECEMBER 7, 1998

NEW YORK

Power Girls

A clique of young publicists, only a few years out of college, now control much of Manhattan's trendiest nightlife. No wonder they're laughing.

BY VANESSA GRIGORIADIS

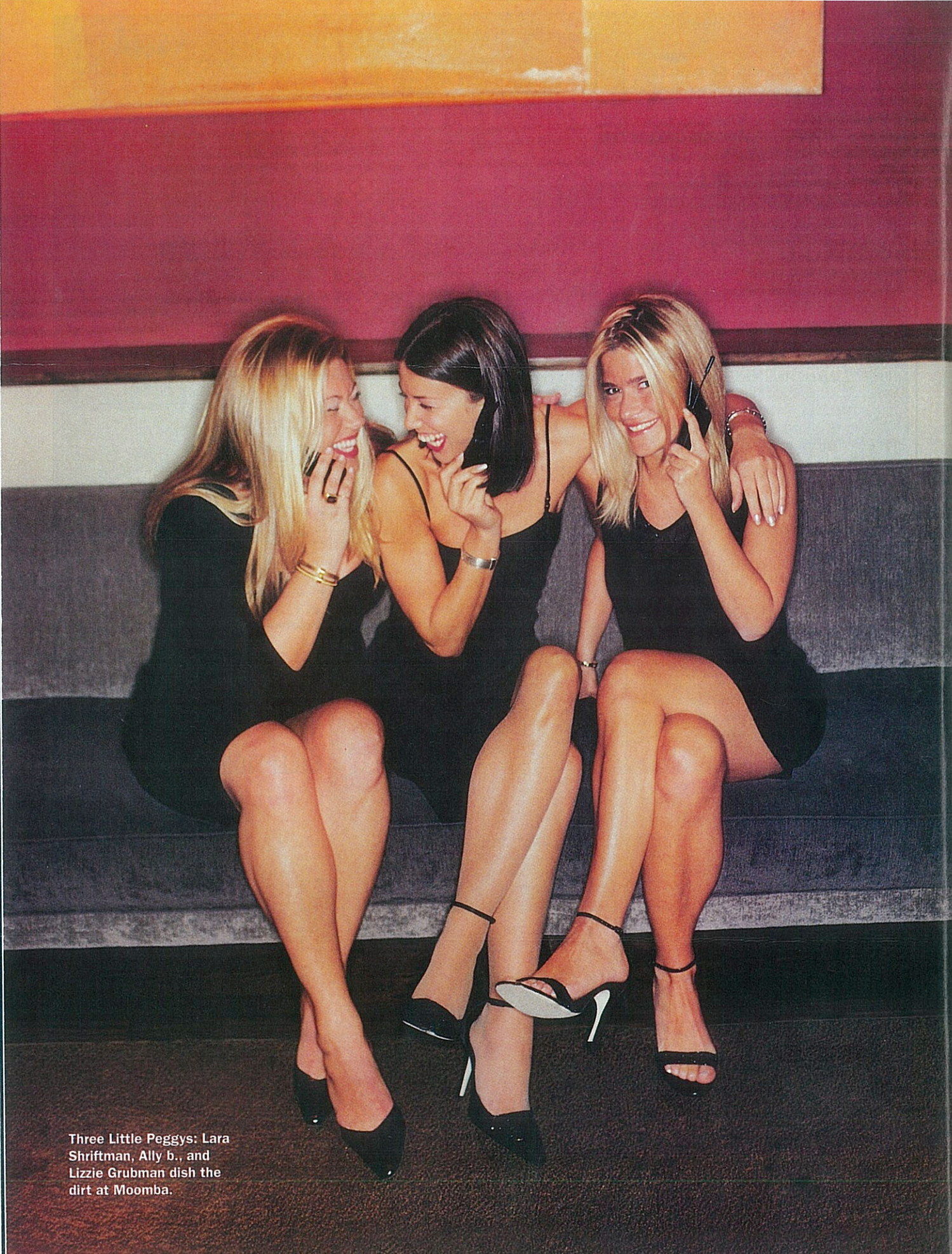


www.newyorkmag.com

\$2.99 (Canada \$3.99)



Lara Shriftman, Ally b., and Lizzie Grubman make the scene at Moomba.



Three Little Peggys: Lara Shriftman, Ally b., and Lizzie Grubman dish the dirt at Moomba.

Welcome to the Dollhouse

Perky, pretty, and remarkably plugged-in, a pack of young publicists have become the darlings of New York's demimonde. But be careful—they bite. By Vanessa Grigoriadis

A couple of years ago, **Lara Shriftman**, a 26-year-old publicist, and one of her employees, socialite **Liz Cohen**, 28, had an idea. They decided to transform a Betsey Johnson boutique salesgirl—a 25-year-old transplant from London named **Alice Larkin**—into the season's preeminent it-girl. To this end, the publicists began outfitting the clerk in free designer clothes, putting her up in their summer homes in the Hamptons, and taking her in their limos when making their nightly rounds of movie premieres, dinners for eight, and junior-committee benefits. At each event, they made sure that Larkin was photographed draped around celebrities like **Leo DiCaprio** or **Kate Moss** or **Serena Altschul**; the next day, from their sunny twelfth-floor office in the garment district, they leaked “nice” items about Larkin to the people they call their “favorite friends”—*W*'s **Kevin West**, *Vogue*'s **Alexandra Kotur**, *Quest*'s **Kristina Stewart**, and **Richard Johnson** of “Page Six.”

Photograph by Stephanie Pfriendr

Up until then, Shriftman had focused her considerable energies on promoting mostly inanimate objects like cell phones and \$1,000 pumps. Now she was curious to see whether she could work her magic on an actual person. As it turned out, she could. Within six months, Larkin had become the toast of the town—standing alongside Cohen and **Alexandra Von Furstenberg** as a bridesmaid at heiress **GINNY BOND**'s much-publicized wedding, taking her turn as a *Manhattan File* cover girl, providing pithy quotes for the *Cosmo* story "How I Fell in Love With My Workout." Last month's *Vogue* featured an article on where she gets her highlights done.

Alas for would-be Emma Woodhouses, the similarities to Jane Austen ended there: Larkin soon set the publicists' nifty experiment on its head. On the week-end of Bond's marriage at the Hotel Bel-Air, Larkin began an affair with the husband of one of the inner circle, **Samantha Kluge Cahan**, the 27-year-old daughter of billionaire **John Kluge**. "I'd go to my job, and that filthy illegal British whore would take my husband to a suite in the SoHo Grand," complains Kluge.

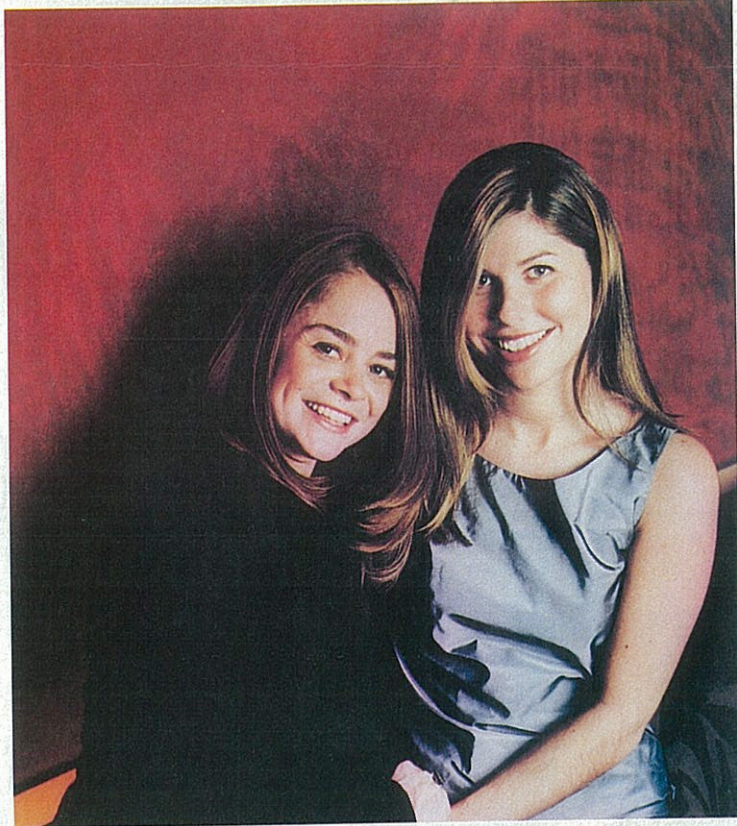
Six months later, this bit of gossip made all the tabloids when Kluge filed for divorce against Cahan. "The day I threw that jerk out, he was crying and protesting and saying things like 'But my heart found a home with you!'" says Kluge, fiddling nervously with the clasp on her Fendi bag. "Well, hon, your dick found a home somewhere else."

The aggrieved heiress was not to be underestimated: Within days, Larkin found herself a virtual leper on the young-socialite scene. When she showed up at Shriftman and Cohen's next party, she was brusquely expelled—"You're so ugly you look like a man," sneered Cohen from the other side of the velvet rope. Larkin ran sobbing out of Life's VIP room. "I loved Liz so much—she was my best friend," she says now. "But I guess they cared about Samantha more than me."

CALL THE ALICE LARKIN EXPERIMENT A lark, a little promo spot for potential clients. But for Shriftman and her coterie of fellow publicists, it was also a raw display of power, proof of their social coming-of-age. And if their tactics seem

more appropriate to high school than to high society, maybe you haven't gotten out much lately.

Now that the city's established society has fled the flashbulbs for the relative privacy of their Mongiardino-designed dining rooms, New York's nocturnal Scene has been colonized by a youthful new breed: a traveling circus of twentysomething socialites, bankers, novelists, models, actors, and starstruck journalists who scribble down their every sneeze. A brand-new group of hostesses has emerged to satisfy he fickle longings of this swell set: seven very young, very ambitious women who are taking their turn as the



The Young and the Breathless: Lauren London and Shari Misher at Lot 61.

latest divas of the demimonde. And as benefits this increasingly commercial age, they're all publicists.

Meet the Seven Sisters: In addition to Shriftman and her partner, **Elizabeth Harrison**, who rep fashion and luxury lifestyle products like Motorola and Gucci, there's **Lizzie Grubman**, the 27-year-old who is the reigning queen of New York nightlife: Her clients include Moomba, Sony Music, and Shine. Then there's 28-year-old **Ally b.** and 24-year-old **Jennifer Posner**, whose company, PB&J, does P.R. for hip-hoppish clients like Loud Records and Tommy Hilfiger Jeans. Rounding out the clique are 27-year-olds **Shari Misher** and **Lauren London**, who rep trendy restaurants like Lot 61 and upscale charity events.

Over the past year, the girls have formed a distinct social unit in the nightlife of the city, traveling in packs from party to party, presiding over tablefuls of celebrities like **Dennis Hopper** and **Minnie Driver**, club-hopping all night with **Puffy** and **Mase**. In New York, scarcely a week goes by without one of them throwing an event. Their carefully groomed guest lists are a supersensitive barometer of the city's junior social hierarchy: who's hot, who's not, who's in and who's out, who's, "like, totally washed up."

"No one our age likes stuffy cocktail parties," says **Dylan Lauren**, the 23-year-old daughter of **Ralph** and a budding event planner herself. "We like to socialize with people our age—most of us have as much power as older guys in suits, and soon enough, we'll have more than them."

This year, sources claim, both Grubman and Harrison & Shriftman billed nearly \$1 million; their MTV-paced flurry of girl-talking, air-kissing, name-dropping, and gift-giving has helped coat a diverse range of products—from Motorola to Method Man, A.O.L. to Nine West—with a dusting of youthful cachet. "These girls live the life," says **Peggy Siegal**, the prickly P.R. powerhouse whom many of the girls cite as a role model. "Personal life, public image—it's all so intertwined that there's hardly a way to tell the difference anymore. But that's how you make the bucks."

"Let's say you're like me," explains Jen Posner on a recent night at Moomba, over an intimate dinner with client **Tommy Hilfiger** and her partner, Al-

ly b. "You're 24, you were brought up in a certain way, you like to be social, you love to talk on the phone, but you don't know what to do with your life." She giggles. "There's really only one thing to be: a publicist."

"My girls are my conduit to the underground," pipes in Hilfiger, putting his arms around the women. "I need to be connected to the right young people, and everybody loves these two." Pecking him on either cheek, the two girls giggle in unison. "We love you so much," trills Ally b., bouncing up and down in her Prada stilettos.

"See, this whole business thing is like a recipe," she continues. "Lara and Elizabeth are the flour; Lizzie's the eggs, Jen and I are the spices, Lauren is the milk, and Shari is

the icing." She claps her well-manicured hands in glee. "And that's the best cake ever!" Move over, Spice Girls.

ONE BALMY EVENING IN LATE SEPTEMBER, a few days after SoHo's newest hot spot, the Mercer Kitchen, opened its doors to the public, Lizzie Grubman threw a party there to launch America Online's new 4.0 software. AOL's **Steve Case** and **Bob Pittman** gave her the names of five guests they wanted to invite; she supplied the other 1,000 from her database of 10,000 VIPs, color-coded under categories like Model, Celebrity, Fashion, Junior, Older Social, Editor-in-Chief, and Clubbers. "Honey, this is a Lizzie party," she said proudly. "This is my crowd."

To the hip-hop beats of celebrity D.J. **Mark Ronson**, guests like **Tony Shafrazi**, **Mark Green**, and **André Balazs** sipped "the AOL drink" (a blue kamikaze) while chatting up **Kylie Bax** and the whole Lauren brood. Models like **Frederique** and **James King** clustered with ultra-buff club impresarios **Mark Baker** and **Jeffrey Jah** in a royal-blue anteroom to chat with well-wishers online;

bit embarrassing to her. When her father sent limos to pick her up from school, she'd insist that they stop a few blocks away. "I never wanted to have more than other kids had," she says. Her own friends include **Ingrid Casares**, **Tommy Mottola**, and model **Jamie Rishar**—of course, they're all also clients.

Like many of the other Seven Sisters, Grubman attended exclusive city prep schools—unlike most, she was asked to leave three (Horace Mann, Lenox, and

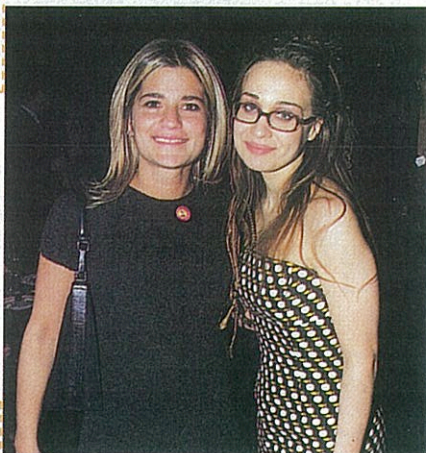


here I am, doing something with my life. A success. His equal."

Watching Grubman expertly push **De Niro** next to **The Artist** for a photo op during Grubman's birthday bash for **Ingrid Casares**, even Madonna is impressed. "I don't know much about Lizzie's biz," she admits, pushing up her cowboy hat. "But she's had balls ever since she was a little kid. And if she's anything like her dad, she's a fucking bulldog."

FOR SHRIFTMAN AND HER ILK, THE WORLD can be divided into three classes: friends, best friends, and sisters. "Friends" are the editors, TV producers, and writers who promote her clients: For them, there are bouquets of tulips and free designer shoes and thank-you notes that she writes in curlicues in thick metallic

Tommy Mottola and Lizzie Grubman on a recent night at Studio 54, left; and Grubman with Fiona Apple at the Grammys.



"Grubman prunes her guest list from a database of 10,000 VIPs—color-coded under categories like Model, Celebrity, Fashion, Editor-in-Chief, Junior Clubbers, and Social."

when it was over, local it-boys **Stephen Dorff**, **Duncan Sheik**, and **Chris Cuomo** went off into the night swinging metallic goodie bags.

A bottle blonde with a tough New York accent that belies her Upper East Side roots, Grubman counts the trendiest of trendy nightspots as clients—Moomba, the Independent, Cafeteria, Shine, the Kit Kat Klub, all the Jet Clubs, and Spy Bar ("Okay, it's in stage two of a nightclub," she admits. "But it still makes buttloads of money"). Earnest and efficient, with the hyper-confident air that comes with growing up rich and well-born in New York, Grubman regularly fields calls from the likes of **Cindy Adams** and **Liz Smith**; the latter recently took her out for margaritas to get the scoop on the "young whippersnappers." "God, that was the biggest compliment of my life," says Grubman, who dreamed of becoming a gossip columnist as a child.

That she grew up bouncing on the knees of people like Tommy Mottola, **John Sykes**, **Kool and the Gang**, and **Madonna**—all friends and clients of her father, the powerful music attorney **Allen Grubman**—didn't hurt business, either, though she says her privileged background has sometimes been a

Dwight) before graduating from the Tutoring School. The most popular girl in a fast crowd, Grubman spent afternoons in the Meadow and nights at Nell's, the Tunnel, or Club U.S.A., stuffing her bed with pillows before sneaking out of her parents' Park Avenue penthouse. Once at Northeastern University, she found herself more interested in promoting clubs than in studying, and dropped out after two years. "I was never a good student," she shrugs, digging into a blini at Cafeteria. "No one thought I'd ever amount to anything."

In 1997, after a brief, ill-fated apprenticeship to the publicist **Nadine Johnson**, Grubman started her agency from her living-room couch. She now employs a staff of fifteen. Last year, she opened an office in Miami, where she reps the Delano and Liquid, and will soon open one in Los Angeles as well.

"It makes me feel really good that I'm working with Bob Pittman," she says. Pittman became close to Allen Grubman in the early eighties, while he was president of MTV. "Now he's all, 'I remember you when you were this big!' And I'm all, 'You used to dunk me in the pool!' And

marker: "Kevin West? I made him," Shriftman has boasted about the "friend" who happens to edit *W*'s influential "Eye" column. ("I didn't know I had made it quite so soon," retorts West.) Friends are invited to come stay at her Southampton beach house—last summer, a bunch of *Harper's Bazaar* editors almost drowned while frolicking with water weights in the pool.

A rung higher are "best friends": celebrities like **Vivica Fox**, for whom she just threw a birthday party in L.A.; **Dennis Rodman**'s brief bride, **Carmen Electra**, who was Shriftman's "date" on Halloween; and **Courtney Love**, whom her partner Harrison "personally persuaded" to wear that white Versace gown at the Oscars. (Stylefile, a company Harrison and Shriftman started with 28-year-old **Greg Link**, acts as a middleman between designers and celebrity mannequins like **Renee Zellweger**.)

The people Shriftman calls B.F.F.'s—best friends forever—are daughters of the superrich: **Serena Boardman**, **Lulu de Kwiatkowski**, **Patricia Herrera**, **Rachel Peters**, **Tiffany Dubin**, **Aerin Lauder**. "Sisters," however, are a bit

harder to define. There are some celebs in this category too, like **Bijou Phillips** ("my little sister"), for whom Shriftman bought a little white poodle, and author **Candace "Candy" Bushnell** ("my big sister"), who says that she used a composite of the girls as an aching-to-make-it character in *Sex and the City*. But mostly, sisters are publicists just like her. After all, it wasn't so long ago that these women were members of real sisterhoods—nearly all held leadership positions in their college sororities.

But, like all sisters, they suffer from occasional bouts of sibling rivalry. When a crush of Shriftman's, **Scott Lerner**, brought "sister" Lauren London to a wintertime gala for Estée Lauder, Shriftman was livid. "You can't bring her as your plus-one!" she squealed, banishing her competitor. "Nasty pig!" hissed London behind her back. Grubman and Shriftman have also locked horns, in this case over a profes-



Left, Tommy Hilfiger, Ally b. and Jennifer Posner of PB&J, with China Chow at Lot 61. Below, Ally b., Sean "Puffy" Combs, and Lara Shriftman at Bridgehampton Polo.

"I worship Audrey Hepburn," says Ally. "And now I have the fur-lined coats and big glasses and glamorous life."

sional matter: Months after Grubman started dating **Andrew Sasson**, the owner of the Jet Clubs, Shriftman lost the account to Grubman. The two didn't speak for a year. "I don't care if they call me a bitch for freezing her out," Shriftman complained at the time. "You don't just take someone else's account. That's, like, a total rule." Grubman insisted that everything was misunderstood. "*Whatever*," said Shriftman. "I have better accounts than Guido East."

In any case, the two made up quickly when they found out that this article was in the works. To demonstrate their newfound fellowship, they co-hosted a party at the Independent in honor of *Vanity Fair's* **George Wayne**. "Lara is just a terrific girl," said Lizzie, giving her a hug. "I love Lizzie," beamed Lara. "She's a sister to me."

IT'S A HUMID LATE-AUGUST DAY AT BRIDGEHAMPTON Polo, and thin-waisted women in big straw hats are huddled under a white tent hiding from the sun. "Honey, isn't this party the greatest?" trills Shriftman, floating by arm-in-arm with Ally b., who stops to administer quick hugs to the event's organizers, Lauren London and Shari Misher.

A graduate of Dalton and the Universi-

ty of Pennsylvania, London, along with Misher—a smiley Syracuse grad from Woodmere who grew up in a kosher home—have amassed a roster of clients that includes Caroline's Comedy Club, tony charity events, and the superhot Lot 61. "These chicks are part of this unbelievable female mafia," marvels **Amy Sacco**, the 30-year-old former Jean Georges manager who owns the cavernous restaurant. "On my opening day, there were 600 of

the most beautiful, chic, cool, powerful people in New York in my restaurant," says Sacco. "I knew not one of them; they were all Lauren and Shari's friends."

Today, London holds court in a group of young women and her dad, financier and club owner Stanley London. Standing perfectly straight in a lilac Prada dress-and-sweater set that complements her strawberry-blonde locks, London starts kvetching. "You have no idea about the number of crashers here today," she complains in a hoarse monotone, fanning herself with a program listing the jockeys' names. "I'm gonna catch myself a crasher." "This is her favorite part of the day," giggles Misher. London turns to me expectantly: "Wanna have some fun?"

We weave through the sweaty crowd, stopping here and there to air-kiss the sons and daughters of the rich: **Rob Speyer**, **Jamie Patricof**, **David Lauren**, **Patricia Herrera**—all the faces that grin up from party pages and fashion spreads in magazines. Finally, we find what she's been looking for: a 65-year-old woman with wiry gray hair poking out of her upside-down-pineapple hat, an ill-fitting purple leather coat draped over her polka-dotted blouse. Noticing London, she jumps to her feet with enough time to escape—but

stops to look back longingly at the meal of seared tuna left on her plastic plate.

"What are you doing here?" demands London, color spreading from her throat to her cheekbones. She grabs her prey by the elbow and we begin a long trek to the door, with the woman protesting every step of the way that she's a TV reporter. "Now, don't let me ever, ever, ever lay eyes on you again!" London sputters as we near the edge of the tent. "Fine," says the woman, her eyes filling with tears. "You won't see me anymore because I don't have much longer to live! I have cancer!" She puffs up her chest and takes off through the lush green field.

Within moments, London has anecdotalized the moment, recounting the incident to a ring of socialites in bright bonnets and their Polo-shirted dates: "And then listen to what she said . . ."



LIKE MOST OF THEIR COUNTERPARTS, LONDON and Misher got their start working with already established publicists, in their case **Bobby Zarem**, to whom they still express loyalty and respect. He doesn't return the favor—"All these kids know how to do is make dinner reservations and shop at Prada," he sneers. "They're just in it to get laid."

Other publicists are more diplomatic. "Most of these girls are terrific, but I would be very careful who you put in this story," Siegal warned me. "Any 23-year-old can hook up a phone and buy a laptop and call themselves a publicist." "There's life after 'Page Six,'" adds the formidable Nadine Johnson, who should know: "A good publicist has to create real value for their clients, think about long-term strategy. It's more than throwing a party or placing an item." "Not everyone starts out with a trust fund," says **Norah Lawlor**. "I've had to work hard to build my business."

"These girls are kicking ass," says **Jason Weinberg**, the early-nineties P.R. wun-

derkind who has since moved on to managing artists, "because they know something the fogies don't—you have to be nice to everyone. Today's assistant is tomorrow's editor." Shriftman has taken the advice to heart. She reportedly chants, "I will not be Peggy Siegal, I will not be Peggy Siegal," whenever she feels herself "getting the meanies."

After all, being nice to editors and journalists is the easiest path to coverage, as all the girls have learned. "The press are our buddies," says Misher. "We take care of them." Lifestyle writers and editors routinely receive steep discounts on clothes and accessories—everything from Gucci watches to Hilfiger clothes.

When Motorola hired Harrison & Shriftman in September, it gave the firm strict directives: "I told the girls, 'I want to read about my phone in the fashion section of *Vogue*,'" says Motorola P.R. director **David Pinsky**. "I want a beauty story in *Harper's Bazaar* and a 'Styles' story in the *New York Times*.'" To this end, they dutifully dispensed free phones to dozens of journalists across the city and invited them

time sun, Shriftman sets the cruise control to 90 mph in hopes of catching up with the 30 identical Mercedeses that are a half-hour ahead on the highway, racing to a holistic spa on the Hudson. The convoy is part of a promotional event to introduce the "fashion and lifestyle" press to the new Mercedes CLK Cabriolet, and she of all people can't be late.

Speeding into a sandy parking lot filled with new cars, the convertible jerks to the curb and Shriftman leaps out in a plume of dust. "Sammy Sam Sam is our No. 1 favorite best VIP today," she announces to the gathered crowd, leaning her head on Kluge's Ralph Lauren-clad shoulder.

A buxom debutante with thick blonde hair that she has straightened three times a week, Shriftman grew up "just, like, totally normal" in Jacksonville, Florida, the daughter of a natural-food-company CEO; she kept a horse at the country club, served as secretary of her pre-debutante society, and usually ended up the designated driver in her Mercedes 190E. As an NYU sophomore, she made a name for herself throwing parties for young so-

the balance to Shriftman's bouncy id. She prefers it that way. "I'm getting too old for all the parties," she says with a smile. "I let Lara do that."

After lunch, the invited guests take meditation classes, are Thai- and Swedish- and deep-lymphatically massaged, get rowed around in gondolas by men with beards, and paint watercolors under a pretty maplewood gazebo. Everything is taken care of—ten golf carts even whisk attendees around to their various activities, since organizers knew that most of the girls would be wearing fall's "in" stiletto heels.

Lounging on Mercedes-Benz towels under a cloudless sky, some editors nibble blackberries with one hand. Others call the office on their tiny StarTacs, thoughtfully supplied by Shriftman at the Motorola luncheon a week earlier.

"God, this is just so fun," sighs Shriftman, setting her Gucci sunglasses on top of her head. She looks out at the still lake. "I'm with all my best friends in the world."

"Any 23-year-old can hook up a phone, plug in a laptop, and call herself a publicist," growls the fearsome Peggy Siegal.

to a luxe lunch at the Mercer Kitchen, where journalists slurped tomato bisque and chatted with the likes of **Liv Tyler** while listening to Motorola's sales pitch.

"It was like magic!" says Pinsky.

"They seduce you," sighs one magazine editor who is frequently on the receiving end of the publicists' largesse. "Every day, they send you this endless stream of free stuff, cell phones and facials and a month with a Mercedes, and all they want back is a tiny little item. Eventually, your whole social life starts to revolve around them. Let's face it: Most journalists are neither rich nor cool, and to sit at a table with an heiress on one side and a movie star on another—it's hard not to fall for that."

Even Harrison admits that the line between press and publicists has become a bit blurry. "Journalists are no longer covering the scene—they're part of the scene," she says. "But it's not our responsibility to maintain their integrity. It's theirs. We don't force anyone to accept a free phone."

A MONTH AFTER THE KLUGE-CAHAN divorce, Shriftman and Kluge are buzzing up the West Side Highway in a 1999 red Mercedes convertible, drinking copious amounts of Evian and singing along to Sade. Squinting in bright noon-

cialites at the Merc Bar, Park Avalon, and Tatou with her well-connected friend Liz Cohen. The **Miller** sisters, **Tracee Ross**, the **de Kwiatkowskis** would mix it up with **Bruce Willis** and **Kate Moss**, and *W* would cover.

Grabbing a Dooney & Burke satchel out of the backseat, her eyes perpetually flicking to her Gucci watch, Shriftman takes quick, short steps in her Sergio Rossi pumps—a walking billboard for her clients. "These are my favey-fave designers!" she shrugs. "So what if I represent all of them?"

Joining the magazine editors and other "important friends" for a lunch of lobster and champagne under a big white tent, Shriftman coos over the six-months-pregnant belly bulging out of the tight black halter top worn by her petite, raven-haired partner. Harrison, a lifetime Upper West Sider whose grandfather founded Anne Klein, has already been at the spa for three hours, meticulously setting up the event. "My baby only drinks champagne," she jokes. "She's going to be a party girl." At 52, Harrison is the oldest of the clique, a savvy, slightly stiff businesswoman who fled to flackdom after a stint at *Elle*. While Shriftman is the public face of the company, Harrison is the behind-the-scenes coordinator, the deal-maker,



Girls' night out: Twenty-seven-year-old publicists **Shari Misher** and **Lauren London** with **Donald Trump** and a friend, celebrating the publication of writer **Coerte Felske's** new book at **Joe's Pub**.

I AM SO GIFTED BY EVERYONE IN THIS room," says Ally b., clinking champagne glasses with **Tommy Hilfiger**, **Mark Eisen**, **Carmen D'Alessio**, and **Joan Osborne**. "God, the energy is unbelievable tonight! It's like we're all part of a river, flowing the same way." Ally and her partner, **Jennifer Posner**, have just arrived at the Central Park Boathouse for a disco-dance party to benefit AMFAR; earlier in the evening, they had a "killer brainstorming session" at Asia de Cuba with their client Hilfiger and his brother **Andy**, then the whole group grabbed a limo over to the West Side's Hit Factory to check out the new track from **Wyclef Jean**, which features Osborne on vocals. "Everyone's just been giving out such an intense amount of love tonight," Ally declares. She hugs an uncharacteristically chipper Os-

borne, who plants a smacker on her cheek. Suddenly, Shriftman appears. "Joan, have you met my little sister?" she says, pushing Dylan Lauren toward Osborne.

Life in the big city is still thrilling to Ally b., a perpetually tanned Floridian and University of Arizona graduate who says she always felt a connection with Manhattan. Her real last name is Bernstein, but after moving to the city three years ago she shortened it and lowercased the *B*, k. d. lang-style. "As a teenager, I'd watch *Breakfast at Tiffany's* over and over and I knew, *totally knew*, that I would get there someday," she declares, sitting down at a picnic table next to Cynthia Rowley. "I worshiped Audrey Hepburn. And now I'm just like her—I have the fur-lined coats and the big glasses and the glamorous life."

After short stints in fashion P.R. at Jill Stuart and Showroom Seven, Ally met Loud music mogul **Steve Rifkind** over dinner with friends. He signed PB&J even though they had no experience with musicians; a month later, the pair were waterskiing with the **Wu-Tang Clan** in Hawaii. Sweet-natured and excitable, Ally is considered the "party girl" of the clique, the one who goes out dancing all night with rap stars and D.J.'s and ends up cuddling with rappers like Method Man and **RZA**. "She's totally down with her clients like **Funkmaster Flex**," says Cohen, impressed. "Whereas I'm like, 'Yo, Soundmaster Flex, whassup!'"

"All my dreams have come true," says Ally, peering over a half-full Cosmopolitan. "I feel like a real princess. Now I just need to find my prince, 'cause I've sure kissed a lot of frogs. I can definitely see myself as part of a media power couple." She smiles toothily at this, then claps her hand over her mouth. "People say I smile too much," she whispers. "Do I smile too much?"

Her partner, Posner, runs by in hot pursuit of a pouting Wyclef Jean, who wants to go home, pulling on his arm with one hand and gabbing intently on her butterfly-decorated StarTac with the other. Finally, he gives her a peace sign, says "Stay sexy, baby," and is out the door. She flips up the phone and takes my hand. "It's so hard to control these artists," she says mournfully, making her blue eyes even bigger than usual. "They used to have a black publicist doing this," she jokes. "But they needed two bigmouthed Jewish girls to tell it to these guys straight—'Shut up, sit down, and do what I say!'"

A pretty blonde who dreamed of movie stardom but got no further than an extra's role on *Central Park West*, Posner grew up in the Upper East Side universe of kids of the rich and famous. One night at Moomba, ex-Seinfeld squeeze **Shoshanna Lonstein, Quincy Jones's** daughter **Kidada Jones**, and **China Chow**—the latter two are PB&J clients—sat down with me in a secluded banquet to explain how much they care about her.

"If I have a best friend in the world, I would consider it to be Jen," said Chow in a soft, sweet voice. "But we're more like sisters than anything else." The three became animated as they described Posner's 10th birthday, where they videotaped themselves moonwalking to Michael Jackson's "Beat It" in rhinestone sweatshirts and wigs supplied by another childhood pal, **Lulu Johnson**.

"I don't want to sound intellectual, like Jen and I talk about all these deep things," said Chow evenly. "But we talk about very real feelings, and where we are in our lives." She cocks her head. "Like, it was



Lara Shriftman nuzzles up to Andrew Lauren; former **Tocca** fashion director **Marie-Anne Oudejans**, **Lulu de Kwiatkowski**, and **Elizabeth Harrison** at their junior-committee party for the American Ballet Theater held at **Louis Vuitton's SoHo** store.

funny—tonight we were in a taxi, and I said, 'Jen, we're young ladies now. I feel like somehow we're little kids playing dress-up in fancy clothes, but we're not. We're at that age where we're real people.' And she said, 'I know! I know! How did that happen?'"

"This thing with Ally and Jen is not a bogus P.R. situation," says Jones solemnly. "This is a family situation. When I see my girls, I feel instant love."

IT'S 10:30 IN THE MORNING AT LIZZIE Grubman's seventh-floor office on Spring Street. Standing behind a massive maple desk, Grubman snaps her fingers loudly to speed up her dozen employees, who chatter and compliment one another's outfits as they slowly drag black fold-out chairs into a messy semi-circle around her desk. In an effort to ward off the sunlight streaming into the room, they have left their sunglasses on; what with the shades, Vamp lipstick, kitten-heeled Manolos, and black CB&G cocktail dresses, they look like L.A. club-hoppers on their way to the Viper Room.

"C'mon, people, let's do this," says Grubman, snapping her fingers again. Wincing collectively, the group quiets

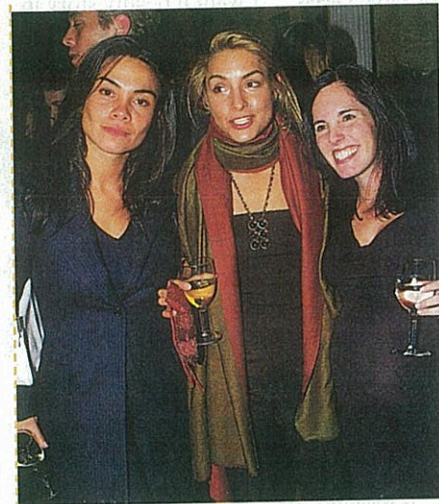
down, noisily slurping on iced coffees from Starbucks.

"Jesus, I'm hung—um, tired," says Grubman, shooting a glance my way. "So, who went out last night?" A few hands go up. "I can tell Brenda went out, 'cause I can see it in her eyes." Brenda rolls them.

"I hooked up with T.M. [Tommy Motto-la] at Veruka," reports an assistant with close-cropped hair, crossing long legs. "Just checked out what was up. He seemed psyched. It was a cool vibe, everyone was hanging out, it was totally legit. No one bothered him."

"Good!" says Grubman.

The door opens, and sandy-haired **Bad Boy** vice-president **Josh Taekman** comes in. He's here for a meeting about an event for Puffy's charity, Daddy's House. Grubman takes a gulp of coffee. "Listen, honey, there's a lot of work here. Is Puffy psyched about this?" she asks.



"He's extremely stoked," says Taekman. "Good," says Grubman energetically. "Sky will sponsor it. **Will [Smith]** and **Jada [Pinkett]** are down. I'm gonna get AOL involved, I'll get **Mark Ronson** to D.J., and I told **David Blaine** last night that I want him to do a magic show. Also, my client **JFax** will get involved."

"J who?" asks Taekman.

"He's this rich German guy who's like 24," declares Grubman.

"Twenty-seven," corrects an assistant.

"Who knows how old he is—whatever age he picks for the day," says Grubman.

"Anyway, JFax just moved to the city, and his deal is that he wants to go out. He'll get involved financially, but he wants to hang with Puffy. And if Puffy charms him to death," she says, snapping again, "he might underwrite the whole thing."

"Right on, dude," says Taekman, chewing on the end of his pencil.

"What about Trump?" Taekman asks.

"Nah, he's wack, forget about him, we don't need him," growls Grubman. "He'll hog all the press."