



Soothsay What? Sure Things for '95



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Some things everyone knows. The Oscars are March 27. "Kiss of the Spider Woman" is May 18. Taste of Chicago starts June 24. And "M.A.N.T.I.S." can't last much longer.

But the obvious isn't good enough for WeekendPlus. It's impossible to keep up on this town's activities and entertainment without doing a little extrapolating. So we've gazed into the future to make some educated guesses about what to expect in the year ahead. And you - lucky you - get to read them:

1. Despite an elaborate nationwide talent hunt in urban playgrounds, producers of the "Hoop Dreams" dramatic remake end up recruiting actors from Hollywood's home turf. Jaleel White will play the mercurial Arthur Agee, with Sean Nelson ("Fresh") as hype victim William Gates. Also cast: Danny Aiello as Coach Gene Pingatore, Tommy Lee Jones as Bobby Knight, Richard Pryor as Arthur's dad, Natalie Cole and Marsha Warfield as the moms, and Gary Coleman as Isaiah Thomas.

2. Oprah Winfrey flies her entire studio audience to Antarctica to originate the first talk show from the South Pole.

3. An unknown actress stars in the unauthorized, made-for-network-TV biopic "Oprah A.M." It traces Winfrey's rise to talk-show fame, and dramatizes backstage conflicts between she and her staff, but angers her in real life by ending before she manages to keep off her weight.

4. Sans hairpieces, Burt Reynolds and William Shatner team up for an "Unplugged" tour.

5. Kathleen Battle gives up the diva business and competes in the Miss America Pageant, where she's voted Miss Congeniality.

6. Billy Corgan, leader of the Smashing Pumpkins, builds a sandbox in his living room and scraps his ambitious double album midway through completion when he comes to believe that his new music is starting fires across Chicago.

7. Louis Gossett Jr., Cuba Gooding Jr., Clarence Williams III and Sally Struthers star in the new TV drama "P.O. Blue." Set in and around Chicago's turbulent Central Post Office, the show attempts to do for mail carriers and office workers what "NYPD Blue" does for cops, but at a much slower pace.

8. In an effort to attract a younger audience, WGN-AM (720) tries to hire Jonathon Brandmeier, Kevin Matthews or Danny Bonaduce from WLUP-FM (97.9). Instead, WGN settles for bringing back Eddie Schwartz.

9. No-Zima Zones.

10. Lili Taylor stars as a hip jazz club operator, Brad Pitt is a yuppie entrepreneur out to get her evicted so he can install a computer emporium, and Ethan Hawke is a community activist planting smoke bombs in "Wicker Park." The romantic comedy-drama boasts shared music tracks by Veruca Salt and Red Red Meat.

11. Chamber orchestras call a one-year moratorium on Vivaldi's "Four Seasons."

12. Boston Chicken starts selling meatloaf and pork dishes, and California Pizza Kitchen adds shrimp and ribs.

13. Planet Mime.

14. With minor-league replacements playing what amounts to virtual baseball in major league stadia, Strat-o-Matic, APBA and other board games become all the rage. ESPN2 even begins covering them live, with guest players including Bill Murray and Ernie Banks. Color commentators focus on such game aspects as dice-rolling technique.

15. CBS buys the rights to "Home Run Derby," the old show pitting slugger against slugger, and promptly loses them to Fox. John Madden hosts.

16. Inspired by RigaTony's, Spagheddie's, Mozzarellas and Aunty Pasto, new casual Italian eateries open with the names LynnGuini's, MaryNara's, Rick Kottas, Teri Misu and CapPellini's.

17. Using a model developed for the new Comiskey Park, the State of Illinois uses tax revenue and bonds to help the Lyric Opera and Chicago Symphony Orchestra pay for their respective \$100 million building renovations.

18. David Caruso's movie career fizzles and he joins the cast of "Full House," where he plays the wacky uncle who's always mooning the neighbors.

19. The number of Super Crown bookstores reaches 40 in the Chicago area, prompting name changes to Super Stuart Brent's, Super Barbara's, Super Unabridged and Super Powell's. The chain retaliates by launching three Super Duper Crowns. They are the first bookstores to feature bowling and badminton.
20. Starbucks, meanwhile, opens its first Starbooks, a coffee house that sells books on the side.
21. As more frozen crops in Latin America drive up the price of the coffee bean, Starbucks introduces Postum Latte and Postuccino. No one hooked on the cream, chocolate and steam milk drinks notices the difference.
22. After the success of "Cops," "Trauma Center" and "True Stories of the Highway Patrol," Brandon Tartikoff launches his own reality series - "Gums: True Stories of Real Dental Hygienists."
23. The dietary watchdogs who opened fire on Chinese food and popcorn take aim at watermelon, inciting a picnickers revolt. On Memorial Day, millions of watermelon seeds wash up along Lake Michigan, covering the sand.
24. Oscar the Grouch from "Sesame Street" will move to Georgia and begin his campaign to unseat House Speaker Newt Gingrich, the conservative PBS basher.
25. Beavis and Butt-Head start their political careers as aides to Gingrich and Sen. Jesse Helms prior to running for Congress themselves in '96.
26. The Chicago Tribune's new Teen Political Panel interviews Gingrich and pronounces him "swell."
27. Courtney Love and her band Hole record "Still Living Through This (More Songs about Kurt and Loathing)."
28. McDonald's introduces Veggie Whoppers. Survivalists aren't the only ones planning for the end of the world.
29. Beach Boys at Wrigley Field.
30. Rush at Comiskey Park.
31. After Chicago is subjected to an April in the teens, temperature-wise, the first day of spring is officially changed to July 21.
32. Fox's popular children's show changes its name to the "Mighty Snortin' Power Rangers." After each episode, the Power Rangers explain to the kids at home that they are only pretending to use drugs!
33. Heidi Fleiss opens her little black book and ruins dozens of careers. Barney admits he was a client, but says he just wanted someone to scratch his big purple tail.
34. Repairs on the Internet cause serious traffic diversions on the information superhighway, leading unsuspecting signers-on into serious group discussions on AIDS, homelessness, drugs and violence. Surprisingly, many of the computer users stay in the conference rooms, and have their lives changed.
35. Penthouse Online debuts. There is a noticeable increase in female subscribers, and sales of CD-ROM equipment, after it runs secret backstage photographs of Pearl Jam getting undressed.
36. Online dancing.
37. Talk show host Ricki Lake pulls a Cindy Crawford and poses nude in an anti-fur advertisement. Mink sales soar to record levels.
38. Tom Arnold joins the cast of "Grace Under Fire" as Grace's love interest - until she finds him in bed with Nadine and discovers that he's just using her to get a job at the oil refinery.
39. Corporate maneuverings result in the renaming of the United Center to the Sara Lee Center. Food service improves at the stadium, but the Bulls' and Hawks' team morale plummets.
40. Soon-Yi leaves Woody Allen for Sean Ono Lennon.
41. Woody Allen begins dating Mayim Bialik.
42. Mia Farrow becomes an item with Mike Wallace.
43. Yoko Ono marries John Lennon's guitar.
44. Two Chicago newspaper obituary writers get their own radio show, arguing about heaven and hell. It's a hit with the AM band, the FM band and Uncle Jon's Band.
45. Wells Street neighbors Second City and Zanies introduce nude revues. No one notices.
46. Huey Lewis anchors a Gary Lewis tribute album.
47. Complicating her endless struggle with fame, Liz Phair is coerced into signing an endorsement deal with Nike. Her Air Phair line of shoes leaves the toes shockingly exposed.
48. And move over, Liz. Loudmouthed Wesley Willis is the Wicker Park rocker who appears on the cover of Rolling Stone in '95. Instead of a slip, he's wearing his trademark mod overcoat.

49. Inspired by skyrocketing ticket prices charged by the likes of the Eagles and Pink Floyd, concert promoters Jam and Nederlander open up an office at the New World Music Theatre to allow concertgoers to take out a second mortgage and; or purchase tickets.
50. Ticketmaster admits that Pearl Jam was right about its status as a monopoly and promises to refund thousands of dollars in excessive service fees to disgruntled rock fans. Expect an announcement April 1.
51. Urge Overkill features prominently in Quentin Tarantino's new film, "Reservoir II: The Dogs Bite Back."
52. Lisa Marie Presley records a duet with her dad a la Natalie Cole.
53. MTV VJ Kennedy and alternative-rock muscle man Henry Rollins marry.
54. R. Kelly abandons R&B and go country, recording a blockbuster remake of Billy Ray Cyrus' "Achy Breaky Heart."
55. ABC's live telecast of the Academy Awards ceremony runs two hours late because a rambling Tom Hanks accepts his second consecutive best-actor Oscar while speaking in his Forrest Gump drawl. To guarantee a quicker ending in 1996, ABC hires Chevy Chase to host the Oscar show.
56. Speaking of Chase, the ex-talk show host begins a regular gig with the Home Shopping Network. His line of aging preppie clothes is matched by his banter in "Chevy's Wit N' Fit."
57. After Angela Lansbury makes her annual threat to quit "Murder, She Wrote" and retire from television, CBS gives her another big raise, agrees to film her series in Hawaii, and names her queen of the network.
58. Waitress Rikki, the new "Melrose Place" character played by Traci Lords, has an affair with roommate Sydney (Laura Leighton) before taking a vow of chastity.
59. Eighty percent of all made-for-TV movies on cable and the broadcast networks include at least one scene of a nearly nude woman dancing in a strip joint or "gentlemen's club."
60. "Picket Fences" beats "ER," "NYPD Blue," "Law & Order" and "Homicide: Life on the Street" for the best-drama Emmy because members of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences' judging panels don't watch enough TV.
61. MTV eliminates all music videos and devotes 24 hours every day to "The Goods" and other home-shopping programs. The M in the cable channel's name will stand for Mall.
62. To insult David Letterman, Madonna marries Tiny Tim during a live telecast of "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno," airing from a new hotel-casino resort in Havana.
63. Dennis Miller replaces Conan O'Brien as NBC's "Late Night" host, O'Brien replaces Greg Kinnear on "Later," Kinnear joins Ted Turner's World Championship Wrestling as stooge; sidekick to Bobby "The Brain" Heenan, and actor Charles Grodin emerges on cable's CNBC as TV's hottest new talk-show star.
64. CBS begins filming its six-part, 12-hour miniseries: "Scarlett Finds Her Roots in Lonesome Dove."
65. Johnny Morris comes out of retirement and replaces Dave Wannstedt as head coach of the Chicago Bears.
66. The O.J. Simpson murder trial begins June 17, the first anniversary of the Bronco chase. Court TV provides live, gavel-to-gavel coverage on a pay-per-view subscription plan.
67. In a move to spread the wealth, the GOP-controlled state legislature OKs casino gambling for landlocked communities. Several Downstate hamlets install "floating craps" tables in above-ground pools.
68. Cashing in on the scarcity of parking places in several crowded Near North neighborhoods, a renegade group of auto parkers debut Like It Or Hike It, in which, for a fee, they broker you the cheapest valet parking by driving to cut-rate locations.
69. The Terra Museum mounts an exhibition of the early Play Doh school of sculpture. Though well-received, the show ends prematurely when a janitor disposes of the creations in a giant, multi-hued ball.
70. The star attraction in the Museum of Contemporary Art's "Options 95" is a rare, multihued ball acquired from an unknown artist.
71. Cirque du Soliel hires Spiffy the Clown, returning him to the ring nearly a year after he loses his regular gig on "The Bozo Show." He's now billed as "Le Spiffiere."
72. Following the example of rock 'n' roll tribute bands, a young comedian headlines suburban comedy clubs as "Buck Naked: The Jerry Seinfeld Experience."
73. Second City, in a drive to restore its credibility, opens a retrospective of its skits by its predecessor, The Compass. "Compassing Fancies, or This Arrow Points Down," closes after one week, replaced by "Best of the Rest," with Second City actors performing other local troupes' best stuff.
74. In an attempt to catch lightning a second time, the operators of one of the shuttered local stand-up clubs open a tragedy-only venue, "For Cryin' Out Loud." The club MC wears "Hamlet" tights.

75. Latecomers to the kids' reality-video market find all logical subjects - zoos, trains, airplanes - taken. Undaunted, they take housebound tykes outdoors with "Amazing Sidewalk Cracks."

76. A local amusement park, hoping to capitalize on sudden antagonism to the Clinton administration and Democrats, installs "Bill's Falls," in which riders are fitted out with silvery hairpieces, strapped to donkey-shaped seats and dropped into a vat of water. White, of course.

77. The Shedd Aquarium, stung by repeated protests over its capture of wild marine animals, presents a filled water chamber with nothing inside. A curt message from the curator proclaims: "Nothing. The Big Zero. Da Nada Fish. Nunca Ray," with a P.S. scrawled beneath: "Are you happy now?"

78. Promoters stage the first donkey-back production of "The Nutcracker."

79. John Callaway leaves WTTW-Channel 11 to become the new general manager of WBEZ-FM (91.5). Marty Robinson takes over "Chicago Tonight."

80. The Lyric Opera's Ardis Krainik and tenor non grata Luciano Pavarotti kiss and make up onstage at Ravinia's gala benefit performance of "Tosca." Unbeknownst to the Primo Tenore, however, she arranges for real bullets to be substituted for blanks during the opera's climatic firing-squad scene.

81. As sequel mania continues in animation, Steven Spielberg announces his film "An American Tail: Fievel Goes Midwest," the story of a young mouse going to a restrictive, cat-friendly college in Evanston.

82. Jenny Jones and Jerry Springer marry and team up to host "Jenny & Jerry."

83. The Museum of Broadcast Communications honors the Empire Carpet Man.

84. Sportcaster-turned-Sun-Times-columnist Tim Weigel makes good on his promise to "punish" WLS-Channel 7 for firing him by sending prank pizza orders to general manager Joe Ahern's home.

85. Ed Vrdolyak quits his WJJD-AM (1160) talk show job and announces his candidacy for Paul Simon's U.S. Senate seat. Simon, in turn, quits the Senate and take over Vrdolyak's radio slot.

86. Channel 7's ratings go through the roof when Janet Davies delivers "Nair Death Experiences," a three-part sweeps report on armpit- and leg-hair-removal horror stories.

87. Steve Dahl and Garry Meier reunite for one night only at a celebrity benefit for Andy the Clown.

88. We won't be ignored, Dan: The femme fatales of "Disclosure," "Basic Instinct" and "Fatal Attraction" - Demi Moore, Sharon Stone and Glenn Close - take on Michael Douglas in a cinema battle to the finish. The money shot will be a scene of Les Femmes descending upon Hollywood's White Male Victim and removing his manhood once and for all.

89. The Lollapalooza '95 lineup - the Black Crowes, Big Audio, Richard Marx, All-4-One and Tesla - goes bust. Upset promoters claim organizer Perry Farrell spent too much time arranging hijinks for his new "Slack Pack" pals Flea, Evan Dando, Gibby Haynes, Beck and Tony Bennett.

90. In a pathetic attempt to rejuvenate his movie career, Macaulay Culkin makes the ultimate surgical sacrifice to preserve his boyish voice and appearance.

91. As the baseball strike drags on, the erstwhile Chicago Cubs get desperate and rent themselves as props for yet another revival of "Bleacher Bums."

92. Country hunk Dwight Yoakam dumps MTV tart Karen "Duff" Duffy when he overhears her publicly ridiculing his musical mentor, the legendary Buck Owens.

93. Avant-garde director Peter Sellars announces that he will stage "Le Jeu des Larmes," an operatic version of "The Crying Game." In lieu of video monitors and cameras, the *Enfant Terrible* will use makeup mirrors and bugle beads as a motif representing the decline of modern society.

94. N.E.A. grants, now under the watchful eyes of Republican-controlled Congress, are cut back for everything except Marlboro billboard painters.

95. Local stage troupes begin to do outreach in local nursing homes, where all the traditional theatergoers have landed. THE WEEKENDPLUS PROPHETS

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