

# life

## MOVIE BOOM OR BUST?

Only a handful of films are contributing to summer box office success **Story, E-3**



## SUMMER READING

Chill out with a book of short stories about dogs **Books, E-7**



Black bear are common and not skittish, although Alligator Ron warns: "Don't get too close." We paid attention.



Green Glades West and alligators are synonymous. Alligator Ron got his name from "rassling" alligators. Taking on a gator similar to this one almost cost him a hand but made for one heck of a story.



With Alligator Ron in the lead, we toured Green Glades West for two days in ATVs and saw hundreds of deer, with groups of 30 to 40.

## HBO 'About Face' looks at former supermodels

They dish dirt on the business, discuss aging and plastic surgery

By Hank Stuever  
The Washington Post.

Empathy for supermodels isn't easy to muster, especially when their idea of suffering and personal travail seems so exquisite and remote.

Photographer Timothy Greenfield-Sanders' film "About Face: Supermodels Then and Now" (airing Monday night on HBO) attempts to bridge some of the chasm between these famous beauties and the rest of us.

The filmmaker hunts down several of the biggest names in modeling from decades ago to collect their thoughts on the profession and discover how they've dealt with the inevitabilities of age. There are some tender moments and honest reflections.

As with many documentaries about fashion folk ("Unzipped" and "The September Issue" both come to mind), though, a certain antiseptic quality is always present, making it difficult for the narrative to arrive at a solid theme: Is the fashion world a wonderful thing or a cultural travesty? Is this a movie about the rigors of modeling? The emptiness of a life lived in front of the camera? The false promises (and rejuvenating hopes) of plastic surgery?

Or, in the end, do we just want to know what Cheryl Tiegs looks like these days?

The film's subjects — from Carmen Dell'Orefice, who has modeled since 1947; to '70s glam queens such as Jerry Hall and Lisa Taylor; to more recent phenoms such as Christy Turlington — unload everything that's on their minds about the profession, which often makes it seem as though they're not really talking about anything but partaking in a fashion-centric session of free association among friends.

This meandering approach does manage to excavate some fascinating tales and memories.

"It was never really me," says Paulina Porizkova, 47. "Working off your looks makes you pretty much the opposite of self-confident. So maybe I became beautiful when I stopped modeling."

That statement seems ludicrous when set in type, but Greenfield-Sanders clearly has the trust of his subjects. Some of the things they say may seem loopy and even grandiloquent, but their collective wisdom and wit do have something to tell us about the profession — something deeper than we get from those reality TV shows in which today's young women will claw one another's eyes out for the chance at a magazine spread. (It was ever thus; we just didn't watch it

MODELS continues on E-3

### WHEN TO WATCH

"About Face: Supermodels Then and Now" (75 minutes) premieres Monday at 9 p.m. on HBO.

# HE'S A FLORIDA LEGEND ... IT DIDN'T COME EASY

Alligator Ron picked up the nickname 'rassling' gators; he can still tell the tale

By Ron Littlepage  
ron.littlepage@jacksonville.com

When I found out I had the chance to meet a Florida legend, Alligator Ron Bergeron, I did what one does these days: I Googled him.

Age: 68.

Raised as a sixth-generation Gladesman, he left home at 18 with \$235.12 in his pocket.

He borrowed a man's tractor and began mowing that man's field. Others wanted their fields mowed as well. The business with a borrowed tractor grew.

He expanded to heavy equipment, buying a bulldozer and a dump truck. He began building roads.

By the time he was in his mid-20s, he was a multimillionaire, yet he lived in a house trailer until he was 41, taking his earnings and investing them in land and businesses.

Today, Bergeron is a man of immense wealth and influence. He owns more than 30 companies and thousands of acres of land.

His trademarks: cowboy hats, boots and huge belt buckles.

Bergeron serves on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and he has never strayed from the culture of the Glades.

He competes in professional rodeos, thus the big belt buckles, and he has devoted much of his life to the restoration and conservation of what he loves — the Everglades.

As for the name Alligator Ron, more on that later.

So how did I hook up with Bergeron?

Boo Flournoy is a horse trainer who works with my barrel racer wife, Mary.

Boo was celebrating her 50th birthday week (I think she would have preferred a month) and part of that celebration was a visit to Alligator Ron's "camp" in the Everglades.

Through horses, the two have known each other for years and are fast friends.

Knowing my love of the outdoors, Boo insisted that I tag along with Mary on the trip. Boo is a smart woman.

A weekend where the two mainstays of your traveling party are a



Photos by Ron.Littlepage@jacksonville.com

To celebrate Boo Flournoy's 50th birthday, her longtime friend, Alligator Ron Bergeron, invited her and a group of her friends to spend the weekend at his Green Glades West, an 8,000-acre ranch that borders the Big Cypress National Preserve in the Everglades.



A striking feature of Green Glades East is a separate building dubbed Alligator Ron's Saloon. Inside is an enormous collection of animal mounts, pictures, antique guns and belt buckles that reflect Alligator Ron's life as a Gladesman and rodeo man.

GLADES continues on E-2

### MORE ONLINE

See two videos and a photo gallery from Ron Littlepage's tour of an 8,000-acre Everglades ranch. [jacksonville.com](http://jacksonville.com).



# GLADES

Continued from E-1

a lady named Boo and a gentleman who goes by Alligator Ron had to be interesting.

We were to meet at one of Bergeron's ranches — Green Glades East, located west of Davie on Alligator Alley.

Let's just say the spread is well appointed. Statues — a rearing horse, deer, alligators, bear, all strategically placed around meticulously kept landscaping — attest to that.

There's the lake, the barn, the massive covered arena, but what really got my attention was Alligator Ron's Saloon.

I've seen some party rooms in my life, but never a large separate saloon filled with deer, alligator, cougar, bobcat and turkey mounts, vintage rifles and pistols, a life-size re-creation of Chief Osceola, and a long, well-stocked bar that has fringed saddles serving as bar stools.

Bergeron arrived in an equally well-appointed black Hummer, stuck out his hand and said, "I'm Alligator Ron."

He then introduced himself to another in our party, a young man with a shaved head, and ordered, "Comb your hair, son."

I knew I was going to like this guy.

Our caravan left Green Glades East and headed west on Alligator Alley until we exited and drove through the Seminole Indian reservation and on deep into the woods.

When we arrived at Green Glades West, the "camp" turned out to be 8,000 acres adjacent to Big Cypress Preserve and, as Bergeron pointed out, 4.2 million acres of preservation land that runs all the way to Florida Bay.

And you're not exactly roughing it there with nice cabins and a cookhouse that comes with a cook, Norma, a Cuban-American who knows a thing or two about preparing food.

We spent Friday afternoon and Saturday touring this magnificent part of Florida that is one of the natural wonders of the world and that Bergeron is determined to conserve.

"Pristine" is a word Bergeron uses a lot, and it's not an exaggeration when you're standing in a cypress swamp next to a 500-year-old cypress tree that took



root when the Spanish explored Florida.

Another is "peaceful," which accurately captures the feeling of watching the deer, bear and turkey that roam Green Glades West.

"Mischievous" is one of the words I would use to describe Alligator Ron.

One of his bulls bellowed from behind a thicket, a startling sound that widened the eyes of one of our party, a young lady who recently graduated from college and decided on this trip that she was more of a city girl than a country girl even though she hails from a tiny town in North Carolina.

"Skunk ape," Bergeron said of the sound with a straight face. "There's lots of them here."

Perhaps that's what cemented her city girl revelation, or it could have been when Bergeron shouted "Snake!" as we tromped through a swamp. There, of course, was no snake.

As for the name Alligator Ron, it comes from rassling alligators, a part of the Glades culture that Bergeron grew up with and wants to preserve.

It's an avocation that almost did him in in 2006.

As he tells the story, wealthy guests who had contributed \$25,000 to a charity to spend a weekend at Green Glades West didn't think they would get their money's worth until they saw him rassle a gator.

Bergeron obliged, and as he told the story sitting in an ATV by the pond where

the drama unfolded, things went wrong, from "serious to very serious" in a hurry.

Bergeron was locked in a struggle to survive as the gator had him by the hand and in a death roll. The audience thought it was part of the show and applauded until they noticed the finger dangling by a tendon and the wounds that required more than 100 stitches.

Alligator Ron won the battle and, not long after, his hand still bandaged, he was at the White House standing in a line to meet President George W. Bush.

The president: What happened to your hand?

Bergeron: I was rassling an alligator.

The president, leaning close to Bergeron: You're kidding, right?

Bergeron: No.

A couple of years later, he was again in a line to shake hands with Bush.

The president: You're that guy that rassles alligators.

Bergeron: Yes, sir.

The president, again leaning close to Bergeron: You were kidding me, right?

Of course, the alligator incident made the news, and the animal defenders wanted the state to prosecute him for "molesting an alligator."

Bergeron's response: "I wasn't rassling a squirrel. I was rassling the top of the

food chain."

After an evening meal, Bergeron offered career advice to a young man in our group: Be humble. Be honest. Be ethical. Work hard.

Later, he and I talked politics. He's big in Republican circles. Me, not so much.

But what I find to be a

rarity these days in political discussions, he didn't consider me evil nor I him.

By the end of the evening, we decided what the presidency needed was a "Ron and Ron" ticket.

As we said our farewells the next morning, I reminded him about our presiden-



The Eastern lubber grasshopper is flightless, and one of its defensive mechanisms is to make a loud hissing noise.

Green Glades East, another of Alligator Ron's ranches, is just west of Davie on Alligator Alley. It is dotted with statues of horses, deer, gators and bears.

Photos by Ron.Littlepage@jacksonville.com

tial ticket.

My wife asked if we were planning for 2016.

Alligator Ron looked at me, and we agreed that for the good of our country, "Ron and Ron" was needed in 2012.

Ron Littlepage: (904) 359-4284