

SUNDAY NOW

DAILY NEWS APRIL 15, 2007

Behind the
scenes of
'Spider-Man 3'!

PAGE B

A real New York
murder case
hits the screen

PAGE 2

Get the
wedding gifts
you want

PAGE 24

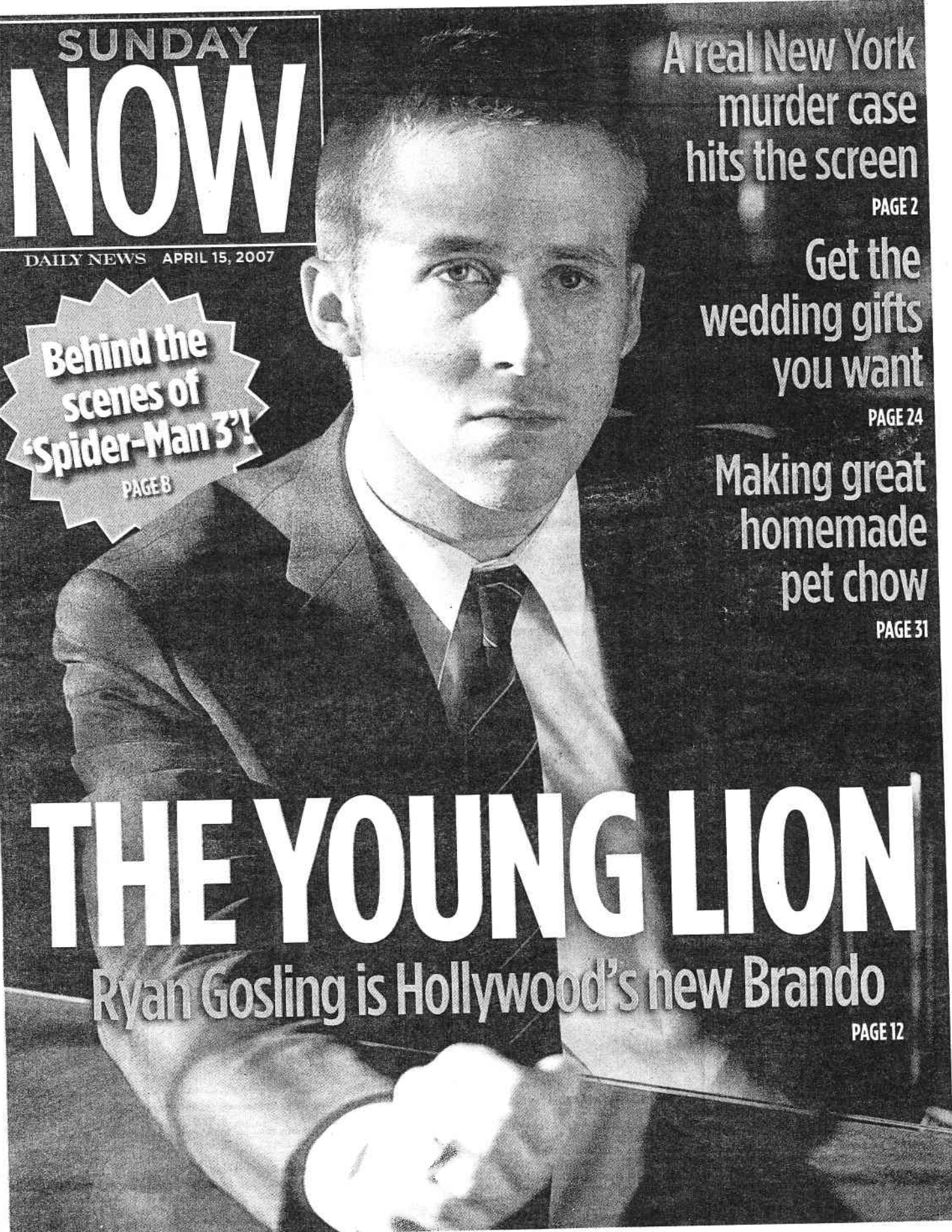
Making great
homemade
pet chow

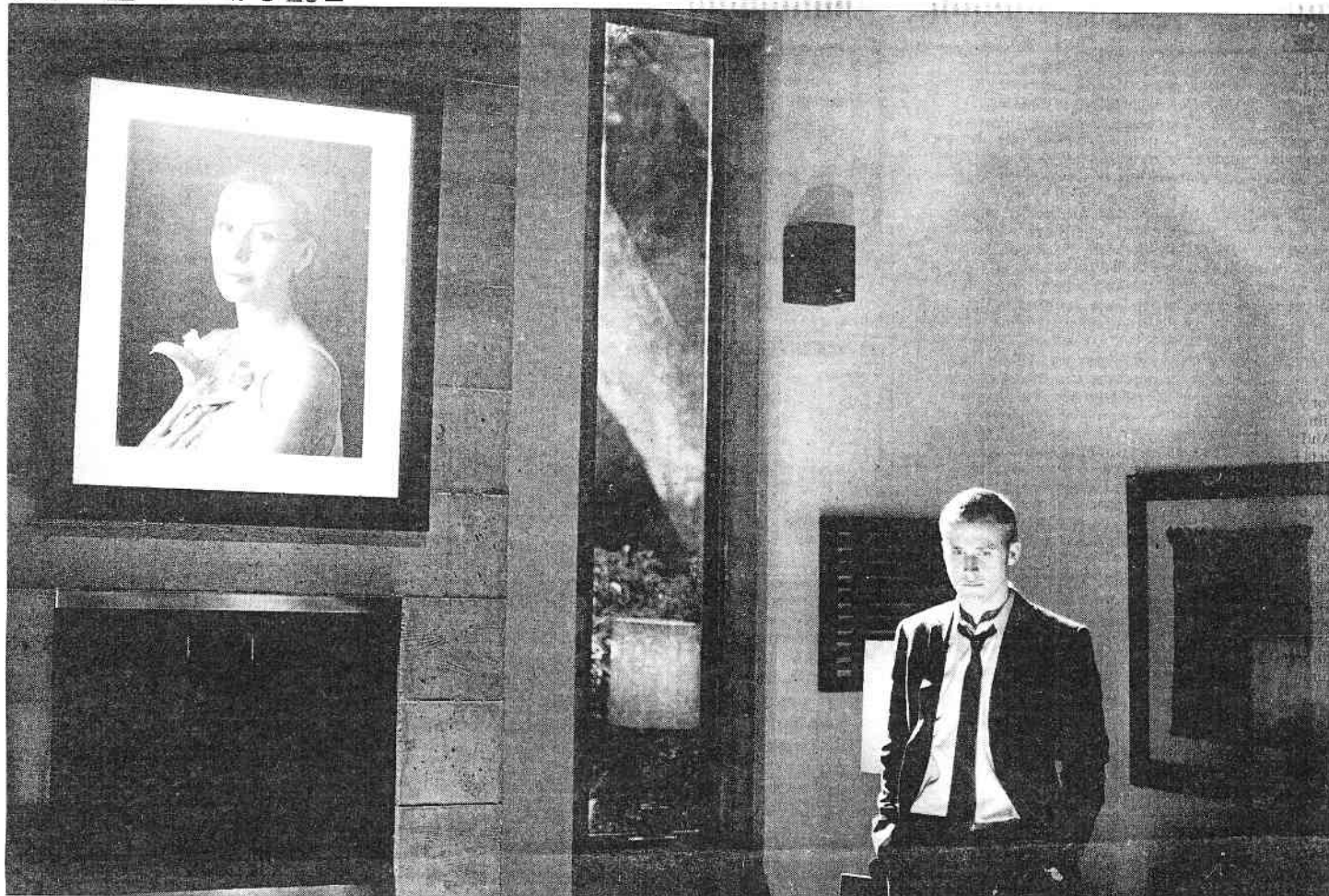
PAGE 31

THE YOUNG LION

Ryan Gosling is Hollywood's new Brando

PAGE 12





PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN Ryan Gosling in "Fracture."

RYAN'S HOPE

With 'Fracture,' Ryan Gosling edges closer to becoming Hollywood's hottest actor

BY MICHAEL GILTZ

It's a problem most actors would kill for: how to deal with critical acclaim so effusive it's almost paralyzing. But Ryan Gosling — nominated this past year for a Best Actor Oscar for "Half Nelson" and frequently referred to as one of the best actors of his generation — has a simple solution.

"Who can say that, anyway? I'll have to tell myself not to listen when that happens," says the 26-year-old star of the new courtroom thriller "Fracture," opening Friday. "And those that say that might be saying I'm the worst pretty soon. ... So at the moment, I have to try to not listen to this stuff, either."

He may have to, since his indie cred and offbeat good looks have placed him square in the sights of stardom. Since Gosling emerged in the early '90s from "The New Mickey Mouse Club" — undeniably one of the most celeb-making shows in television history (around that time, it also featured Justin Timberlake, Keri Russell, Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears) — the Ontario native has earned praise for his work in the independent films "The Believer" (2001), "The Slaughter Rule" (2002), "The United States of Leland" (2003) and last year's gritty "Half Nelson."

His one genuine commercial hit, 2004's "The Notebook," was directed by Nick Cassavetes, whose sincere response to the script — adapted from a novel by Nicholas Sparks — helped Gosling embrace the gushy, heart-on-its-sleeve romance. (The movie co-starred Rachel McAdams, 29, Gosling's current real-life girlfriend and another white-hot talent.)

"I think it takes [guts] to make a love story [as old-fashioned as that], because people are so cynical," Gosling says, recalling how Cassavetes "stood at the edge of his pool and cried. He said he believed

in love and believed the film's kind of love was possible. ... A lot of people read the script and thought it was cheesy and a 'Hollywood' idea of love. I wasn't *not* one of those people sometimes. But after doing the film, so many people have come up to me and said it was their parents' story, or it was *their* story."

Gosling's unconventional approach in even traditional films (his performance as a thrill-seeking high school student helped kink up the 2002 Sandra Bullock thriller "Murder by Numbers") has become part of his image. And, like several other young actors before him — Sean Penn and Daniel Day-Lewis in the '80s, Leonardo Di Caprio and Edward Norton in the '90s — Gosling has garnered tremendous respect after just a handful of roles. As with those actors, his serious persona has helped him even when the films may not exactly be Oscar-worthy.

Now he's seasoning another seemingly conventional movie, "Fracture," with a rumbling undercurrent of moral ambiguity. In director Gregory Hoblit's legal thriller, attorney Willy Beachum (Gosling) is set to jump from the DA's office to the lucrative world of private practice. He only has one more case to get off his desk: an attempted murder crafted by a wealthy, wily engineer (Anthony Hopkins). But as is typical with Gosling, Beachum is hardly a white knight.

"He's the good guy, yet he's not really *that* good," says Gosling about his character, a guy who'd love to simply take

'At the moment, I try not to listen to this stuff.'

CANADA HEAT Gosling and Rachel McAdams

the big-money job but knows the engineer could get away with murder, and doesn't like to be outsmarted or outplayed.

Did Gosling learn anything by watching Hopkins?

"I learned I'll never be as good as Anthony Hopkins, and that was good to know," he says. "He's so good that it's hard to understand. I thought maybe I could take [his process] apart, but I couldn't."

"And I loved watching how he handled his life and work and how he allows his creativity to spill into so many different areas. Not just something he gets paid for. He writes, he directs, he paints, he's a composer. He never stops."

Similarly, Gosling is stretching his talents. He has played guitar in a rock band for years. He hopes to write and direct a film about the child soldiers of Uganda. And he'll continue to tackle offbeat projects like the upcoming "Lars and the Real Girl," a film about a man who falls in love with a life-size doll. ("The situation is funny, but we play it dead serious," he notes.)

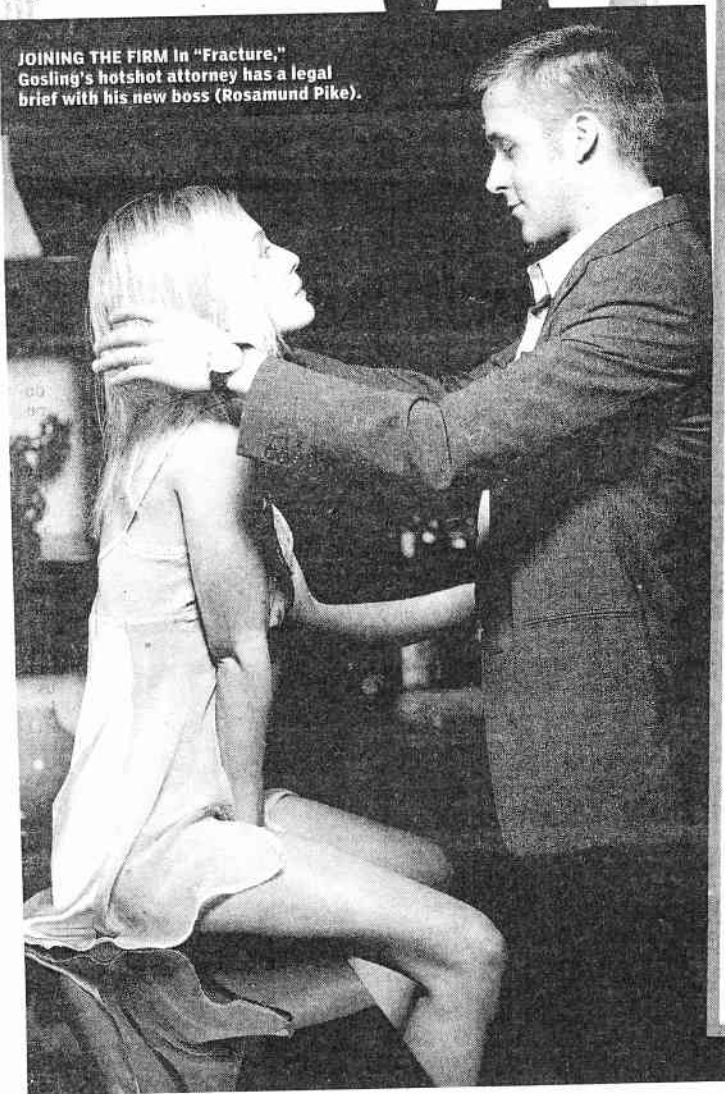
"I've been really lucky," Gosling says of the movies that have built his reputation so high at such a young age. "I know that's not the way it always happens."

"In a way, it's easy for me to say people should do the projects they care about," he says. "But I have been lucky that way — the things that have really given me an opportunity have been those things." ♦



GETTY

JOINING THE FIRM In "Fracture," Gosling's hotshot attorney has a legal brief with his new boss (Rosamund Pike).



THE NOTEBOOK ON RYAN GOSLING

Need a primer on the resume of one of today's best actors? Here's where to start.

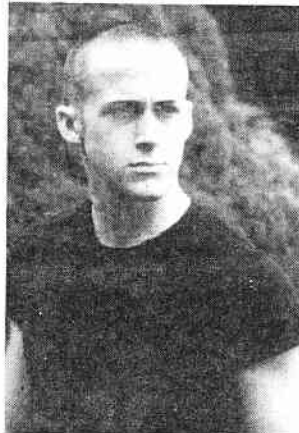


▶ **"MMC"** (1993) The new "Mickey Mouse Club" launched in 1989, but it was in 1993 that the planets aligned to deliver one of the most promising casts of young talent ever assembled. Gosling crossed paths with Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, J.C. Chasez of 'N Sync, Keri Russell and Justin Timberlake.

instinctively licks co-star Sandra Bullock's face. Later, gossip linked Gosling and Bullock as a couple.

▶ **"The Notebook"** (2004) Not since "Dirty Dancing" had a romantic film turned into such a word-of-mouth hit. This drama, based on a novel by Nicholas Sparks (author of "Message in a Bottle"), ran for months and months in theaters, grossed more than \$80 million, introduced Gosling to his girlfriend, Rachel McAdams, and entered pop culture for good when it was immortalized in a "Saturday Night Live" video satire.

▶ **"Half Nelson"** (2006) Gosling followed "The Notebook" with "Stay" and then did this independent film about a high school teacher addicted to crack. Gosling had critics cooing, calling his performance "intelligent" and "commanding." The film nabbed him an Oscar nomination for Best Actor. M.G.



▶ **"The Believer"** (2001) Gosling starred in two failed TV series — "Breaker High" and "Young Hercules" — and even had a tiny part in the hit 2000 Denzel Washington drama "Remember the Titans." But it wasn't until he fought for the role of a conflicted neo-Nazi who turns on his Jewish heritage that Gosling started gaining the attention of critics and audiences.

▶ **"The Slaughter Rule"** (2002) Virtually unseen, this quiet drama about high school football is about as far from "Remember the Titans" as one can get — and Gosling goes toe to toe with David Morse as a lonely coach.

▶ **"Murder by Numbers"** (2002) A modest hit by director Barbet Schroeder, it paired Gosling with Michael Pitt as high school students who commit murder for kicks, à la Leopold and Loeb. Gosling was singled out for one creepy scene in which he

