

# The Hot Seat

# Dominick Dunne

By MICHAEL GILTZ

**B**EST-SELLING author, film and TV producer and a lacerating chronicler of crimes involving the rich and famous, Dominick Dunne is perfectly suited to his Court TV series "Power, Privilege & Justice." The murder of his daughter (actress Dominique Dunne) in 1982 spurred Dunne onto a crusade to ensure that the people with power and privilege don't always escape justice.

The fourth season of his series — starting Jan. 16 at 10 p.m. — tackles infamous cases like the millionaire real estate developer James Hood, whose wife was mysteriously murdered, and the slaying of Vanessa's acquaintance Gianni Versace.

It's a good start for a new year: The 80-year-old Dunne can begin talking about other people again, rather than making news with family tragedies, lawsuits (the Gary Condit case) and a flare-up at his longtime reporting home of Vanity Fair.

**Q•You were the last person involved in the O.J. trial to get a show and the only one to make a success of it.**

**A•**[Laughs] Oh, do put that in! The truth is, I love doing it, and I love the people at Court TV. They shoot me in my house in Connecticut. It's great. I have a monthly column at Vanity Fair, and I'm writing a novel, and Court TV makes it so great for me.

**Q•Do you ever get more involved in covering the stories?**

**A•**Oh yes. We're doing Gianni Versace, and that's a case I was able to put my two cents in. I had used his killer Andrew Cunanan in a novel. We also report on Claudine Longet [who shot and killed U.S. Olympic skier Spider Sabitch — accidentally, she said]. I knew Claudine; I knew her in Hollywood when she was married to Andy Williams. I often wondered what happened to Claudine. Spider was loved in Aspen. And she killed him. And she got shunned. But you know, she still lives there. And she married her defense attorney. [Laughs] That's a little revelation we make at the end of the episode.

**Q•Some of your shows have resulted in changes in the real world. What's been the most satisfying turn of events?**

**A•**After we ran the show about the guy from Palm Beach, James Sullivan, within a week he was spotted in Thailand by someone who had seen the show. That was a great feeling. His trial begins any moment now.

**Q•The last time we spoke, you were working on your next novel, "A Solo Act."**

**A•**I haven't finished the book. I had this absolutely terrible year in

2005. I had a lawsuit with Gary Condit. I had two melanoma operations.

**Q•And your brother John Gregory Dunne died at the end of 2003.**

**A•**And the death of my niece, and of course my sister-in-law Joan Didion going through all that and then writing this brilliant book that she's written. And then I had... oh...

**Q•A contretemps at Vanity Fair?**

**A•**Yes, and we'll go no further than that. Especially the lawsuit — that dries up your creativity.

**Q•I don't want to be flip about this.**

**Q•But it seems awkward — what does one say to Joan Didion? Congratulations on the book?**

**A•**She got a double whammy. You could lose your mind. I think to record it on a daily basis was brilliant. None of us knew.

**Q•It's probably what kept her sane.**

**A•**Exactly. I'm so proud of her. She's the most fragile little thing you ever saw. But boy, is she a strong woman.

**Q•Were you happy with the settlement of the Condit lawsuit?**

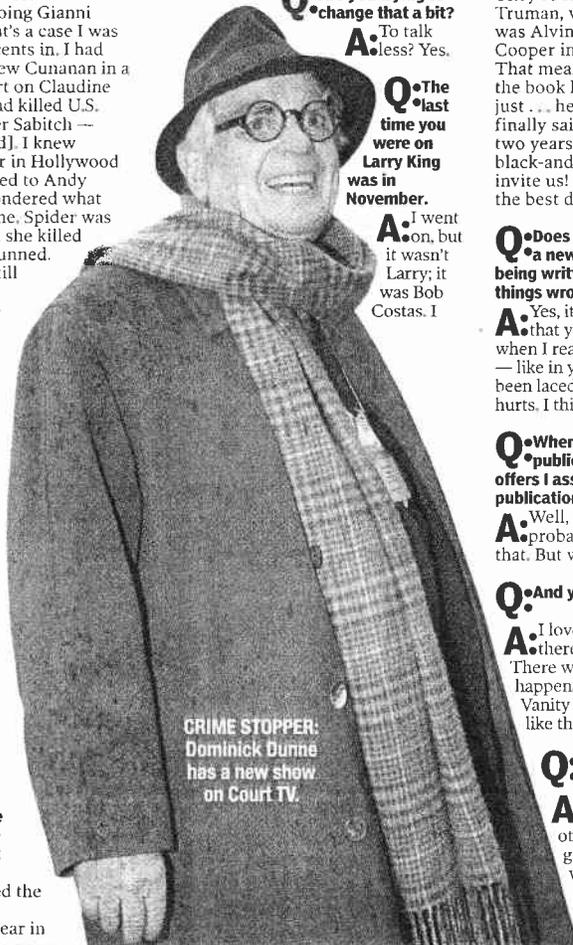
**A•**[Pause] I am happy that it's over. You know, I can't talk about it. It's a legal thing. It's better just to stay away from it. I always talk too much about everything.

**Q•Are you trying to change that a bit?**

**A•**To talk less? Yes.

**Q•The last time you were on Larry King was in November.**

**A•**I went on, but it wasn't Larry; it was Bob Costas. I



**CRIME STOPPER:** Dominick Dunne has a new show on Court TV.

## The score

**Name:** Dominick Dunne  
**Age:** 80  
**Born:** Hartford, Conn.  
**Children:** the actors Griffin and Dominique Dunne  
**Can he fight?** Earned a Bronze Star in the Battle of the Bulge during World War II  
**First big job:** movie producer, including the groundbreaking 1970 gay drama "The Boys in the Band" and "Panic in Needle Park" with Al Pacino  
**Better known for:** writing a dozen books, including a memoir of his Hollywood years that accurately describes himself as "a well-known name-dropper"  
**Next book:** "A Solo Act" — revives his alter ego, Gus Bailey

couldn't stand him. I absolutely couldn't stand him. He was a little p---k. He kept on trying to get me to talk about the Condit case, and that wasn't what I went on for.

**Q•You were friends with Truman Capote. Have you seen the new film?**

**A•**I sure have. I think it's just brilliant. And I knew Truman quite well. We were interested in the same things, Truman and me. We were interested in writing about society and wealth. And we were interested in crime. He was more talented than me.

**Q•What was he like?**

**A•**My wife and I gave a ball — a black-and-white ball. It was the talk of the town. We had to limit it to 275 people or something like that. We had to say, "No houseguests." Truman called and said, "Well, I have these people I just have to bring. They're from Kansas." I said, "Oh Truman, we can't do it." Who it was was Alvin Dewey — played by Chris Cooper in the movie — and his wife. That meant nothing then because the book hadn't been published. He just... he would not let up. And I finally said OK, bring them. Then two years later, he gave his famous black-and-white ball. And he didn't invite us! [Laughs] That's perfect. It's the best description of him.

**Q•Does it make you see the media in a new way, knowing when you're being written about that they can get things wrong?**

**A•**Yes, it does. It's very interesting that you asked that. I realized when I read a few things about myself — like in your paper. [Laughs] I have been laced a few times. You know, it hurts. I think it's made me kinder.

**Q•When the Vanity Fair issue became public, were you pleased by the offers I assume came to you from other publications?**

**A•**Well, such was the case. I really probably shouldn't talk about that. But we're together again.

**Q•And you feel good about it?**

**A•**I love that magazine. I've been there for something like 24 years. There was an issue and things happen. But we were adult... I need Vanity Fair. I did get big offers. But I like the perks.

**Q•It suits?**

**A•**It suits. But I was very grateful to hear from those other people. It made me feel great. The important thing is we got over it. And that shows. If you can't be adult — I mean, I hope I'm adult by 80. [laughs] I hope.