

DIVERSIONS

Sex and The Stars

Read all about it: Does the zodiac cast a spell over your erotic life?



THE STARS MUST have been in alignment that day. A minor blogging frenzy was kicked off in June when Bill

Clinton, while being interviewed about his new book on CNN, happened to be seated in front of a shelved copy of *Sextrology*—a sizzling zodiac guide by Stella Starsky and Quinn Cox, the pen names of an astrologer couple from New York City's West Village. (One blogger joked that the interview must have been held in Clinton's office.) It was a key moment in the charmed life of this amusing study of the sexual character of zodiac signs.

Sextrology began with a modest printing of 10,000



STARGAZERS: Co-authors Starsky, seated, and Cox

copies in the U.S. in January, and has since grown into a word-of-mouth phenomenon, with six printings and total sales of almost 50,000 copies. Since the book's European launch during the summer, international sales have reached some 10,000 copies, mostly in Britain; and Starsky and Cox are in discussion with the BBC about developing a companion TV series. "*Sextrology* tells you

everything you ever needed to know about your other half—but were afraid to ask," says BBC producer Sally Lisk-Lewis. The authors have also sold Russian, German and Spanish rights to the book. In France, even without a French translation, the Parisian style and design boutique Colette sells about 300 copies a month. "The laughter, the pleasure of discovering what people read is very visible

and very immediate," says Colette spokesman Guillaume Salmon.

The book's success lies in its deft melding of high-mindedness and raunch—nothing like knowing that your penchant for outdoor sex is due to your binding zodiacal link to Dionysus, the orgiastic Greek god of wine. As Cox says, "What [readers] didn't expect were the smarty bits; they just expected the unzipped stuff, not the smarty pants themselves. Pop, but also classic, high and low."

To achieve this, the book's first two sections examine questions of body, soul and mind, drawing from an array of Greek mythology, psychology and astrology before arriving at the juicy bits. So the reader gains a robust sense of a particular sign and its motivations before learning, for example, that he was "built to deliver that much more bang for the buck." Though it might make some readers blush, *Sextrology*, packaged with humor and intelligence, is a rare find: a genuinely new take on the planet's oldest pastime. Thank your lucky stars. —By Aatish Taseer

TECH WATCH

LOOK MA, NO HANDS

How do you steer this thing?" passengers might wonder as they step into this cartoon-like vehicle—a golf cart-sized car that accelerates, turns and stops but has no steering wheel and no driver. The CyberCar uses the latest in computer technology to dispense with human navigation.

Unlike the automated cars currently ferrying passengers through airports and industrial areas in Amsterdam and Hamburg, the CyberCar can function without following embedded road tracers. The vehicle traces a preprogrammed route while a laser sweep pegged to its front end allows it to avoid or stop in front of obstacles. The town of Antibes on the French Riviera and the nearby principality of Monaco are considering buying their own fleets to taxi visitors around their cramped streets.

The CyberCar was developed by a consortium of 15 European research centers and spearheaded by Michel Parent, program director



for research and development at France's INRIA, an automation and robotic research center. As you might imagine, Parent is a car buff who enjoys renovating vintage automobiles, such as the 1955 MG TF 1500 he refurbished while on a two-year assignment at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "We are not looking to eliminate cars, just reinvent them," Parent declares.

He says the latest electricity-powered model "is just a beginning." In the next three decades, he envisions roads populated by curvy, futuristic-looking CyberCars. "Soon you'll be able to order a [CyberCar] on your cell phone," claims

Parent. The traveling public seems to be warming up to a driverless future. At a recent two-week-long test drive in Antibes, more than 3,000 people were able to take free rides in a CyberCar. Although some passengers might at first be nervous about cruising around town in a machine with no living navigator, Parent says, "In the end, they will trust our technology." This gives new meaning to the term designated driver. —By Terrence Murray