

GEAR & GADGETS

20 ODD QUESTIONS

Alec Baldwin

The veteran actor has been a mobster, a spy, even undead, but keeping his cool as 'car guy' John DeLorean was a new challenge

AS THE SATISFIED OWNER of a Cadillac Escalade, Alec Baldwin drives a huge car, but he's not exactly a huge "car guy." He doesn't have a preternaturally protruding chin. And he's also not known for keeping his cool. But to play the titular auto exec in "Framing John DeLorean" (in select theaters now), a docudrama about the infamous man who created the stainless-steel coupe that "Back to the Future" immortalized, Mr. Baldwin had to devise ways to embody all three qualities.

Becoming a car guy? That's acting. Looking like DeLorean wasn't terribly difficult either. For that, Mr. Baldwin, 61, called in longtime friend and "Saturday Night Live" makeup artist Louie Zakarian to fabricate a version of the 1980s-era chin implant DeLorean reportedly had inserted. But, Mr. Baldwin says, approximating DeLorean's calm was a challenge: How could a man stay so composed while being hunted by federal agents for trafficking cocaine to keep his car business afloat?

"When the water is coming over the deck of the ship and all of them are really screwed because of the scandals and criminal charges, John remains stoic throughout," said Mr. Baldwin. "I watched video of John for hours with the sound turned off. Watched the way he moved. He had a level of self control that I probably have never seen."

We caught up with Mr. Baldwin to talk about mammoth vehicles, killing time in the back seat, managing his stress and what makes it all worth it.

My magic bus is a: 2019 Escalade. We are a big crowd—four kids and a couple of people who work for us—and the next thing up from this was, like, a sprinter van. I had a lot of nightmares about my wife parking a sprinter van, so we all pile in this massive thing that we drive to and from our home in Long Island.

back and win. It's unlikely, but to a degree, sports gave me some idea of "don't quit."

The secret to beating "Saturday Night Live" creator Lorne Michaels in tennis is: to make him run. Just go from corner to corner. Lorne is my neighbor and in the summertime we play some of the most epic trash-tennis games you've ever seen.



My dad drove a: Ford Country Squire. He had six kids and probably needed a sprinter van, too. But this was back before all the vigilance there is now about car seats and belts and all that, so he got all six of us in there.

One of the movies that made me want to be an actor was: "Saturday Night Fever." Everywhere I went, every woman wanted to physically attack John Travolta. They were obsessed with him. I thought: Well wouldn't it be nice to have that kind of a career?

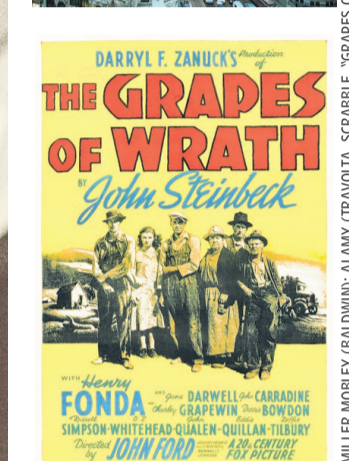
Something I learned from my father was: you only live once, so do what you really feel you want to do. He was very, very encouraging of my decision to study acting and go into that profession. He often said: I wish I had done what I wanted to do.

Movies I'm looking forward to watching with my kids include: "The Grapes of Wrath," any Tom Hanks movie, and old Disney animation, like "Bambi," where I can point to a film and say: "Some guy drew that. A computer didn't make that. A man and a woman made it." I'm waiting for them to reach the age

Something I learned playing sports is: not to quit. Playing tennis, you can be down two sets, five games, 40-love, and theoretically you can come



MAN ABOUT TOWN Alec Baldwin in Manhattan. Clockwise from right: John Travolta in 'Saturday Night Fever'; Scrabble; Madrid, Spain; 'The Grapes of Wrath'; a 1979 Ford Country Squire. Inset: John DeLorean.



MILLER, MOBLEY (BALDWIN); ALAMY (TRAVOLTA, SCRABBLE); GETTY IMAGES (MADRID, DELOREAN)



when they're going to understand that history and line of evolution in filmmaking.

I'm very proud of: the fact that my kids demand to be read to at the conclusion of every single day.

If I'm in an Uber with time to kill: I play "Words With Friends" with my father-in-law, who lives in Spain, and who is a super bright guy. Sometimes I hold my own against him, but sometimes he just throttles me.

I used to be addicted to: Scrabble. We had a gang that worked together all through the '90s—my makeup guy, my

hair guy, my wardrobe guy, my stunt double, my stand-in—we would play Scrabble all day. They'd call us onto the set, we'd do the shot, and then we went racing back to the trailer to drink coffee, smoke cigars outside and play obscene amounts of Scrabble—like, 10 games a day. It was insane.

A smartphone game that I miss is: "VS Tennis." It's the stupidest game—the equivalent of twirling a rubber band when I had minutes to spare. But I must say, I miss my ludite "VS Tennis" terribly.

To manage stress I: go out in public as little as possible.

My friends used to call me: the whore of Mayfair, because I could just walk up and down Mount Street in London all day and smoke cigars and shop and go to the Dorchester and the Connaught and have lunch and then go to the theater at night. I did a lot of that back when I was single.

One of my fondest Fourth of July memories as an adult: was when we used to tie boats together in Three Mile Harbor at an old camp called Boys Harbor. Everybody would bring food and booze. We'd get shitfaced and watch fireworks. George Plimpton himself was our master of ceremonies.

My favorite place on earth is: the lobby of the Hotel Ritz in Madrid. When my wife, Hilaria, first took me to Spain, I had a very unusual feeling. The Spanish are very, very decent people. It wasn't like other places I go where you might get a very overt reaction. They might've recognized me, but there was a respect there.

I fell in love with Spain: the same way I fell in love with my wife. It was just instant.

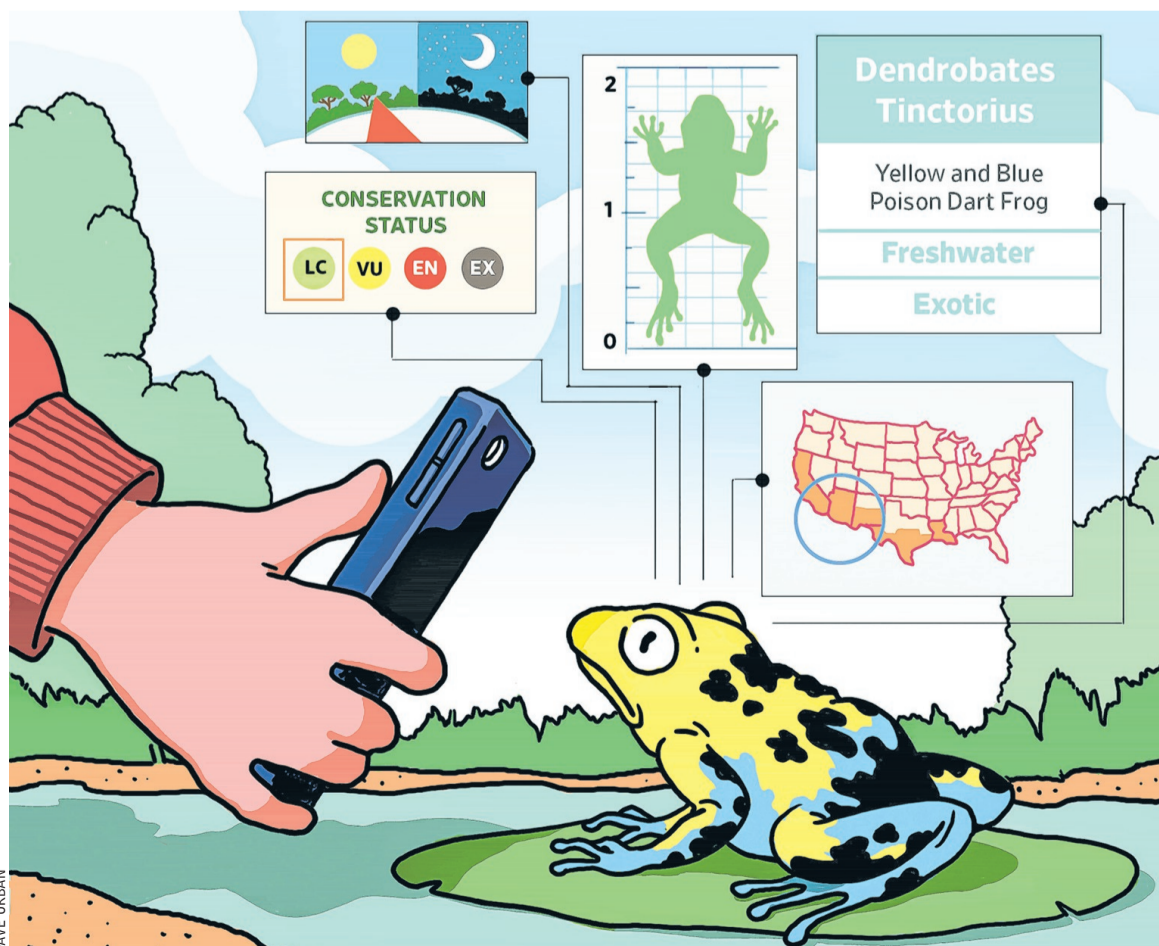
The advantage of having a 1-year-old in my 60s, versus when I was in my 30s is: I'm around more. I host a podcast in New York and I tried to do a talk show for ABC here. I host "Match Game" at 30 Rock. When I film "Mission: Impossible," I'm there for a week, I leave. I go back for a couple weeks, I leave. Because the project is not about me.

Everything I do now is about: staying home with my kids. I've had a lot of opportunities to make films again, but they want me to go to Barcelona or Prague or Rome. But if it's an extended trip and a lead role in a film, the answer is no.

—Edited from an interview by Chris Kornelis

Name That Croak!

These free apps help you instantly identify plants and animals in the wild



A SHOT IN THE DARK Not sure if it's a frog or toad? Seek helps you classify an animal down to its species.

IF YOU'VE EVER hiked through the woods with one of those savants who can identify every plant, every tree, every berry, bug and birdsong, you know it can be a revelation. When we're alone in the trees with our ignorance, however, nature remains an inscrutable beauty.

It needn't be. On recent walks through Alabama forests and Brooklyn cemeteries, I experimented with apps that use my smartphone's camera and microphone—plus cloud-based machine learning technology—to identify plants and animals around me as quickly as Shazam can recognize a deservedly obscure Adam Ant song.

I now know a nightmarish-looking red mushroom I saw pushing its way through the grass was an "Elegant Stinkhorn." And that the avian chorus crooning at my window each morning and interrupting my sleep isn't just a bunch of stupid birds; it's a bunch of stupid "house sparrows." Here, three free apps to demystify flora, fauna, and fine feathered frenemies.

BirdNET It's often easier to hear a bird than see it, particularly when the tree canopy is dense with leaves. But if you're curious about what's accompanying your barbecue so melodically, BirdNET lets you record snippets of song and upload them for instant analysis. It can match your recordings with those of the birds in its database—soon to

top 1,000 species. The app displays its findings, its level of certainty and a link to the creature's Wikipedia page. Available for Android

Seek Able to identify anything from a porcupine to a porcini, Seek analyzes whatever you point your phone's camera at, working its way up the tree of life in real time—revealing the kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus and finally species. While Seek does its work quickly and with impressive accuracy, always consult a trusted expert before eating anything. You shouldn't bet your life on an app's attempts to discern the difference between a delicious honey mushroom and a deadly galerina. Available for iOS and Android

Merlin This app offers two avenues for ornithological identification; either snap a photo and submit it, or just answer a few basic questions about the bird in question. What is its coloring? Is it bigger than a raven? Smaller than a goose? The app uses uploaded info along with your location and observations from the eBird community to suggest likely candidates, delivering images of the bird in question, plus relevant info and audio clips of its songs and calls. If your signal is wimpy in the wild, geographic packs covering more than 60 countries and 3,500 species can be easily downloaded. Available for iOS and Android

—Matthew Kronsberg