

# high life

JANUARY 2002

**WHOA, MAMA**  
MEXICO'S TRANVESTITE TOWN

**RIDING THE SKELETON**  
TEN WINTER SPORTS THAT BEAT SKIING

**THE LAST HURRAH?**  
THE BRITISH TAKE ANGUILLA - AGAIN

## LENNY KRAVITZ

"I'm not one of those regular dads" **INTERVIEW**



HOT: JAPANESE SPRINGS | WARM: THAI HOSPITALITY | COOL: IGLOO CAMPS



LENNY KRAVITZ

# the family maaaaan

With his well-preened Afro, an utterly impractical wardrobe and a space-pod mansion, Lenny Kravitz is the last of the old-fashioned rock superstars. But his days of living in a Miami bachelor pad with his 12-year-old daughter are over. "Time to move to a more family house," he tells **Siobhan Grogan**



INTERIOR PHOTOGRAPH BY GREG DELVES

IT LOOKS LIKE a suburban street anywhere in the world. Only the solid stainless steel gate blocking one home from view gives any clue that a multi-million-selling rock star lives among these unremarkable white houses, family cars and tidy gardens in Florida's Miami Beach. Silently, the gate swings open. Four motorbikes and two four-wheel drive cars stand before the house, a curved concrete bunker with a front wall made of glass and silver bubble mirrors. Their endless reflections distort all sense of reality and dimension. Clearly, this is the place where the real world stops, takes off its shoes (the only house rule) and enters the colourful, and vaguely surreal, world of Lenny Kravitz.

Twelve years, six studio albums and one greatest hits collection into his career, Kravitz is one of the last old-fashioned rock stars. Comparisons to Hendrix, Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page and even Lennon have plagued his career, but in many ways they are spot on. Like them, Kravitz lives his life in glorious technicolour, the way we all like to imagine true celebrities do

but few actually pull off, with impractical clothes (floor-length faux-fur and Versace snakeskin), several extravagant homes (one here in Miami, New York, New Orleans and the Bahamas) and glamorous women (Madonna, Vanessa Paradis and Kylie Minogue are all rumoured to have fallen for his charms).

In fact, entering his Miami haven – called Roxie Studios, where he also records his albums – is like walking into the space-age version of Austin Powers. It's designed the way people of the 70s imagined the 21st century would look.

His entrance hall is a dimly lit, fur-lined tunnel (really...) leading to sheer, red doors that slide open on approach and close swiftly behind you. Then you're in the nerve centre, the large, vivid red and orange living room that takes up half the area of the house. A curved 40ft sofa snakes down the middle between a red piano, Kiss and Elton John pinball machines, a pool table, a huge TV and a fully-stocked bar in the corner. Between the vodka bottles stand the singer's three Grammy Awards, while the glass wall

To have a gay son is infinitely preferable. There's no stigma attached to homosexuality here. As our friend and openly gay friend, Robert Marder explained it to me: "God puts me here in different bodies that's all."



down the far side of the room overlooks the pool, jacuzzi and a concrete barbecue area that drops directly into the glistening water of Miami's Biscayne Bay. It's a lavish assault on the senses that few could get away with.

"I wanted it to be funky and different and a place that is aesthetically pleasing to me for working. So about three years ago, I built this place with an architect friend of mine named Michael Czysto who I grew up with," Kravitz says softly, when he finally appears from another imperceptible sliding door in the living room wall. In the flesh, he's a larger-than-life version of the man in his music videos, all chiselled features, huge Afro and perfect white teeth.

Tattoos peek from his T-shirt sleeves and he wears an enormous diamond stud in his ear. Yet he's softer and less aggressive than his on-stage persona, curling up barefoot on the sofa with another dazzling smile. But how can someone so apparently harmless come to live in a house designed for debauched rock star behaviour?

"Aaah! Well I don't do much of that here. My daughter [12-year-old Zoe, by Kravitz's ex-wife, actress Lisa Bonet] lives here with me, so I give the appearance of the whole bachelor rock 'n' roll pad, but actually this is as far as I get to go with it. I love living with her. It keeps me grounded. She goes to school and I can just go in the room back there and work, and when she comes home, I'm here. This was actually only really meant to be a studio before I got my

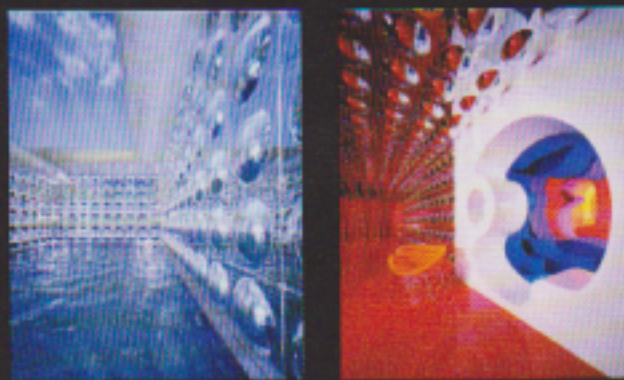
the family moved to Los Angeles where stars like Woody Allen used to pop round for dinner. The young Lenny then attended the famous Beverly Hills High, alongside fellow pupils Nicolas Cage and Saul Hudson, later to become guitarist Slash in Guns 'n' Roses.

"I wasn't one of the extremely popular kids, but people knew me and I was friendly," Kravitz reflects. "There was all these groups and I pretty much hung out with them all. The black kids would hang in one place and listen to funk and R&B, and then the white rocker kids would hang out at this table and listen to Zeppelin and Hendrix. And then you've got the Mexican kids who would hang over here, and the geeky, smart kids over there. I was one of those kids who was just cool with everyone."

By this time, Kravitz was already learning to love the instrument that would make him famous. "My dad had a guitar in the house when I was a kid," he smiles. "I was about 8 or 9 years old when I picked it up, after hearing the Jackson Five and Motown stuff. We had a piano in the house as well. Then they bought me my first guitar when I was 10, but I was still the kid who stayed in the bedroom and kept the door closed and didn't let anyone else hear. Really, my mom didn't know I could play until she heard my first record and then she said 'That's what you've been doing in there?'"

After three years of rejection from record companies, Kravitz finally signed to Virgin after

"I gave my house the appearance of a bachelor rock 'n' roll pad, but Zoe lives here"



Raunch pad: Lenny's space-age home and recording studio in Miami. Clockwise from top: the dressing room, the Verner Panton-designed playroom, and the walled swimming pool. Previous page inset: the master's rock bedroom

daughter, so now I have my kid I want to get more of a family house. We're moving in a few weeks but she doesn't want to leave here. She says it's like living in a club."

Her friends must love it. "They like to come over, yeah. She always says she's glad I'm not one of those regular dads, too, so I suppose I get some points. Until I make her clean her room or something."

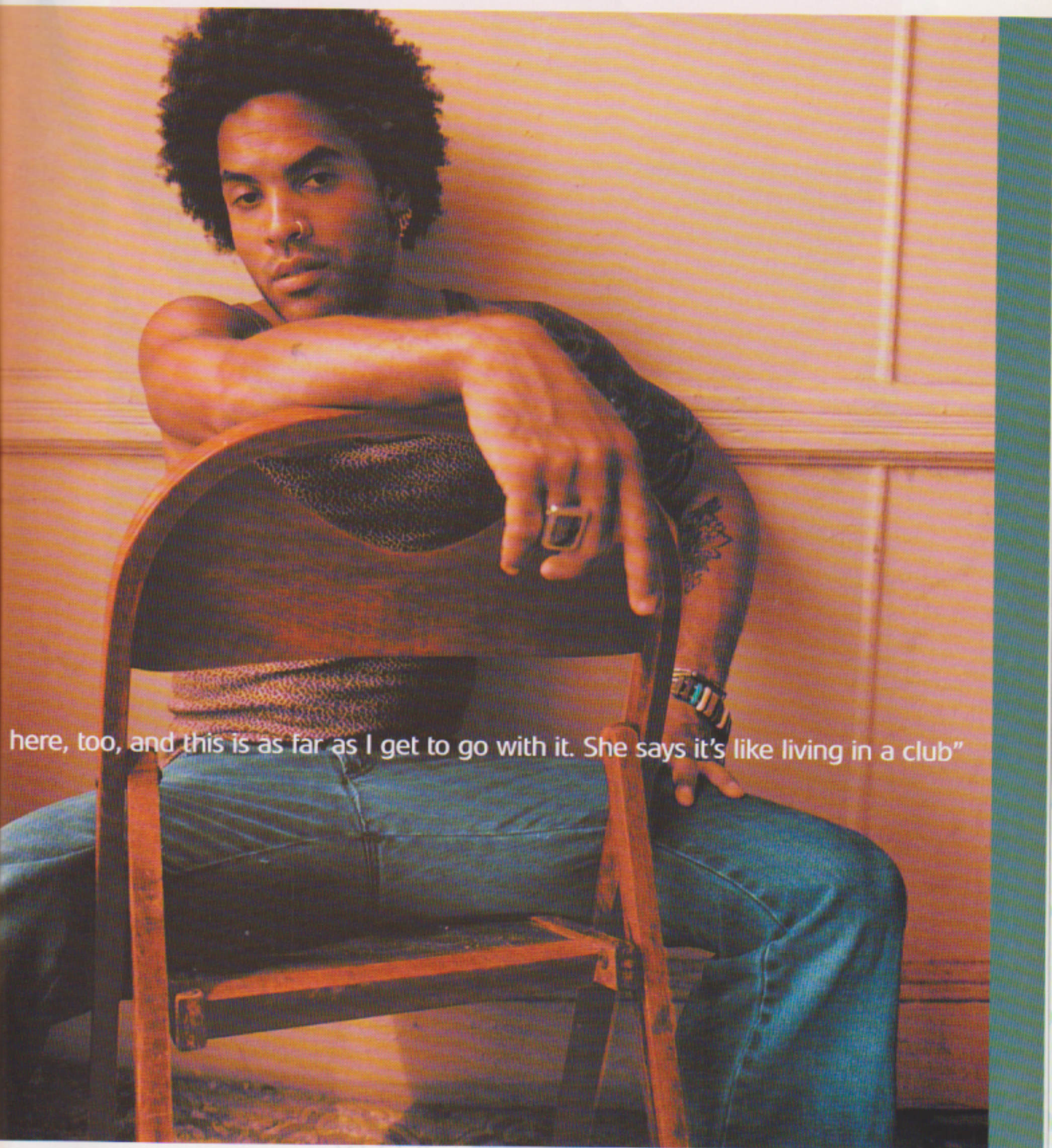
Leonard Albert Kravitz was born in Brooklyn, New York in May 1964, to parents already well used to the world of showbiz. His father, Sy, was a news producer for NBC TV while his mother, Roxie Roker, was a successful actress on the hit TV comedy series *The Jeffersons*. At 10,

being granted only a five minute meeting. "One of the guys there, who was the president of the label, just said would you like a record deal? And that was it. After years and years it just happened in 20 minutes. It was shocking. I couldn't believe it. I went home and we popped champagne but I didn't think I'd made it. I just thought, 'Wow, I got a record deal!' There was never any thought about what would happen after."

No one could have predicted the success that would follow. First, he met Bonet, star of *The Cosby Show*, at a New Edition concert. The pair, though initially both in other relationships, eventually married in Las Vegas in 1987 and had their daughter soon after. A year later, Kravitz



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