

ARENA

Style for men

August 2003 £3.20



Exteriors special

Playground of the gods

Arena designs the ultimate
backyard Babylons

Eric Bana is

The Hulk



Indestructible!

How Marvel became the
media success story of 2003



Why I love men in tights

by Kevin Smith

Photographed exclusively for
ARENA by Sean Ellis
Black shirt, trousers and belt, all by Prose

Plus

Mia Tyler

Art vs Bruce Lee

Revenge of the pub

Haute couture lingerie

The best jeans

in the world

Accelerated culture
The world's most
aggressive superbikes

+

Valentino Rossi

MotoGP's

200mph speed king

+ Dior Homme Viktor & Rolf Etro Jil Sander Dolce & Gabbana Kim Jones

The case for: converting to Islam

More scholarly stones to sling for the obnoxious and intentionally bloody minded

As blinding, weapons-grade hypocrisies go, expressions of "deep respect" for the Muslim faith from Western politicians – both the devout Christian leaders of the Free World and those smug, liberal platitude-spouting "leaders of their own breakfast bar" this page exists to rile – are tough to beat. Fundamentalist terrorists aside, Islam's a lovely religion, they declare. We're not engaged in an epic, toe-to-toe clash between two world faiths that might last for centuries, just a short "little" battle to save "true" Islam from a few one-eyed, bearded, test-tube wielding nutters.

Tripe. This is a gripe between Gods, and it's old and personal. And, no doubt, there will be only one winner – the other guy. Islam is the better, stronger, more vital religion and we'd all be better off if we converted. Try saying that at the breakfast bar and see how long the liberal tolerance holds out.

Allah would have God in a fight

The only truly monotheistic religion, Islam's version of the deity isn't confused or diluted by holy trinities or offspring, but is the one unique force in the universe. His clear out-punching of God is evident in his relationship with Iblis, the Muslim equivalent of the Devil. While Satan is a force to be reckoned with in the Bible, capable of tempting Jesus and causing a dreadful mess in the *Book Of Revelations*, in the Koran the devil is nothing more than an irritant to an all-powerful force – the Keegan to Allah's Ferguson. God wouldn't make the fifth round.

Islam just makes more sense

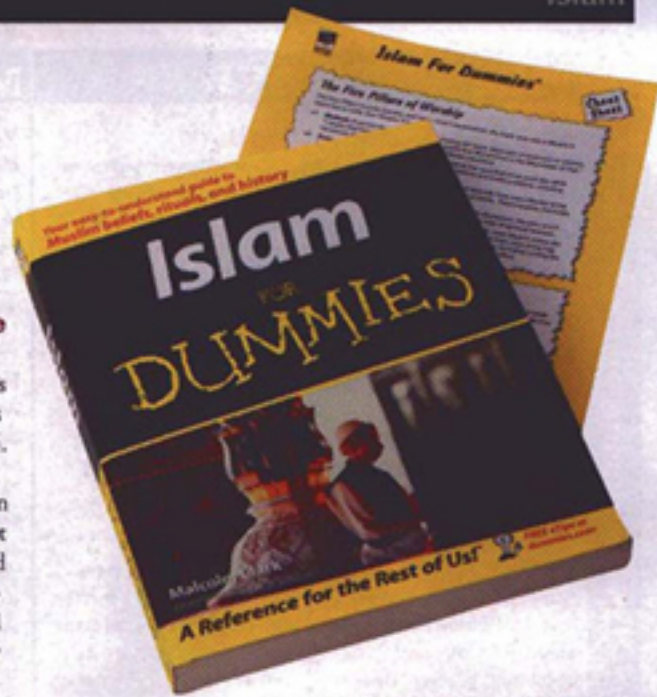
Perhaps the simplest explanation for Islam's success, compared to Christianity's glacial slide out of favour in the West, is that you can explain it on one side of A4. Allah made the universe. Muhammad was just a man, not Jesus' earthly version of divinity which theologians have spent two millennia bickering over. Allah told him the rules by which we should live – the Koran. Follow those rules and you'll go to heaven. This rock-solid simplicity also explains why Muslim nations have never been to war with one-another over disputed interpretations of the same faith – something Christians have been highly skilled at for 500 years.

Muslims are more Christian than Christians

What percentage of your annual income do you give to the poor (and income tax doesn't count)? Muslims start by paying a *zakat*, or fixed donation, to the needy of around 2.5 per cent of their yearly income, then most give a bit more. Shi'ite muslims pay a whopping 20 per cent annual religious tithe, most of which goes on philanthropy. In the US, the country with the highest Christian church attendance and the highest levels of financial philanthropy in the West, charitable donations by individuals run at just 1.6 per cent of national income – a figure which has dropped 30 per cent in the last 40 years. Merry Christmas.

You're on the growing team

If Allah stuffing God doesn't decide the matter, a mass brawl will. On paper,



True faith

Prayer mat, alarm clock, compass, belief there is only one God, Allah, who created the entire universe, and that Muhammad is his final messenger on Earth.

with 1.9 billion adherents, Christianity is the world's largest religion, but Islam's 1.2 billion represents a 70 per cent growth in size, relative to the world population, in just 100 years – and that's not counting a significant growth in China, which Beijing nervously denies. And when you consider the falling rates of participation in Christian countries – even the US has mislaid 10 per cent of its churchgoers in 30 years – it's quite possible there are already more active Muslims in the world than Christians.

Islam is the more progressive and tolerant religion

Muslim religious leaders, rather than governments, have a strong cultural track record, permitting the developments of pathology, pharmacology, surgery and astrology while our priests were keeping the intellectual lights dim in the Dark Ages. As for the "equality of the sexes" argument – what do Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Turkey have in common that the US, France and Germany don't? They've had a female head of state.

Islam is so 2003

Demanding ethical investment in businesses, outlawing cruelty to animals for sport or target practice, forbidding the unnecessary destruction of forests, voicing disapproval of ostentatious consumption and dishonesty in commercial dealings and uttering fearful warnings against the excesses of greed in a materialistic culture. Naomi Klein? Michael Moore? The Dalai Lama? The Prophet Muhammad.

Hillary Clinton Is it just us?

The column whose wife just doesn't understand it

Arena man is always impressed by a woman of fearsome intellect and ruthless ambition. And even more impressed by a woman willing to turn a blind eye to her husband getting a bit of play on the side. Apart from the chance to knock boots with the future Democrat presidential candidate, there's always the possibility you could

set things up with old Bill first. Imagine, the two of you grinding away, suddenly – there's a noise from inside the wardrobe. Hillary stops in horror as Bill emerges, naked from the waist down playing "Baker Street" on his saxophone. "Don't mind me," he says with a sly wink. "I'll just wait my turn..." Ba-ba-ba-bada-bada-baaaa...

