

# SUMMER MOVIE PREVIEW

# Entertainment Weekly

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ISSUE

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# The Humanity Project

Jean Thompson

NOVEL

By Leah Greenblatt

The many protagonists in Jean Thompson's *The Humanity Project* are, for the most part, complete messes: They're broke, lonely, adrift, and traumatized; they've seen their dreams sour and their luck dissipate. A few don't even make it past the first 50 pages alive.

But "humanity" isn't just a vague focus of the charitable foundation begun by one of the novel's few financially solvent characters, a slightly batty Bay Area widow named Mrs. Foster. It's something that Thompson infuses into every sentence, striking true, clear notes whether she's writing about the hissing colony of feral cats trapped inside Mrs. Foster's palatial house or the inner life of Linnea, a sullen Ohio teenager sent to live with her long-absent father in Marin

County after she survives a brutal school shooting. The people Linnea meets there—including Conner, a handsome, taciturn boy whose relationship with his invalid father drives every choice he makes, and her downstairs neighbor Christie, a thirty-something nurse struggling to feel connected to anything—aren't in much better shape than she is, even though they wake up every day in a place famous for its embarrassment of natural riches and New Age enlightenment. Though the

project of the title draws all of them toward one another, it's not really the point of the novel, or at least not one that Thompson fully follows through on. She's too interested in threading through these patchwork lives, and telling their stories in a way that doesn't offer resolutions so much as a messy, imperfect kind of grace. And what's more human than that? **A-**



Jean Thompson



MEMORABLE LINES

"We were losing the future that had been promised to us... But we could reinvent ourselves brand-new. New! We had always liked new things."

HIGHLIGHTS FROM CELEB MEMOIRS

## We Read Them So You Don't Have To



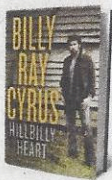
**BILLY RAY CYRUS**  
*Hillbilly Heart*

**1** Cyrus married his first wife, Cindy, three months after they met—without knowing her last name.

**2** He persuaded Mercury execs to change the title of his biggest hit from "Don't Tell My Heart" to "Achy Breaky Heart."

**3** When Liam Hemsworth asked Cyrus for his daughter Miley's hand in marriage, he responded, "Can you get me in one of your brother's movies?"

→ *Cyrus at the height of his fame in 1993*



**SALLY KELLERMAN**  
*Read My Lips*

**1** While working as a waitress, Kellerman fought off advances from Marlon Brando and Warren Beatty.

**2** Filming the movie *M\*A\*S\*H*, she clashed with Donald Sutherland and Elliott Gould, who both wanted director Robert Altman fired.

**3** She dated Henry Kissinger even as she was volunteering for 1972 Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern.

→ *Kellerman as Hot Lips in 1970's M\*A\*S\*H*



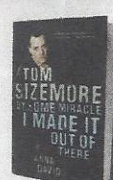
**TOM SIZEMORE**  
*By Some Miracle I Made It Out of There*

**1** Sizemore claims he first used cocaine with Robert Downey Jr., setting off a long battle with addiction.

**2** He fell in love with *Austin Powers* actress Elizabeth Hurley before learning she already had a boyfriend, Hugh Grant.

**3** When *The Sopranos* was in development, he met with creator David Chase, but thought TV was "beneath him" at the time. —Stephan Lee

→ *Sizemore in 1998's Saving Private Ryan*



THOMPSON: MARION ETLINGER; CYRUS: JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC.COM; KELLERMAN: 20TH CENTURY FOX/PHOTOFEST; SIZEMORE: DAVID JAMES