



The stylish Art Deco cover of renowned barman Harry Craddock's *The Savoy Cocktail Book*—which Dragon Books prices at \$1,150—is evocative of the Roaring Twenties and Bertie Wooster.



One of famed illustrator Alastair's creations for the 1929 Black Sun Press edition of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* depicts "the wicked Marquise and the touching lover." Alastair, a.k.a. Hans Henning Voight, said he was inspired "by atmosphere and the persons," but didn't adhere strictly to drawing scenes from the book.

Kelsey Grammer is into first editions and can't help pulling them off the shelves to read the poetry of his favorites like W.B. Yeats and W.H. Auden, their words rendering him unable to resist leafing through the original, often fragile pages. For him, it's the ultimate luxury. **Sarah Michelle Gellar** is partial to the work of the venerable Arthur Rackham, who created some of the most rich and strange—and iconic—images of fairyland with his early 1900s illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. **Gwyneth Paltrow**, **Martin Scorsese**, **Jack Nicholson**, **Susan Sarandon**, **James Franco**, and **Michelle Williams**, too, know the romance of rare books, often sumptuously bound and superbly illustrated, that bring back the flavor of times past while revealing fascinating stories of provenance or history. At one point or another they have learned that collecting these books is akin to collecting art. These are a special sort of luxury possessions—they do not scream; they whisper.

The established Mecca for L.A.'s antique book collectors is Heritage Book Shop on Melrose Avenue, across the street from the über-trendy Urth Caffé. Housed in a former mortuary where **Clark Gable** was laid out, this booklover's haven offers anything from a single leaf of the Gutenberg Bible (\$60,000) to a bejeweled *Scarlet Letter* (\$32,500), either of which you can peruse while sitting in a chair from the set of *Gone With the Wind*. "Any celebrity you can think of has probably been here," says Heritage's Rachel Weinstein. "They know what they want, and they can afford it." Furthermore, Weinstein sees



This balcony view of Dragon Books in Bel-Air shows the hand-carved English oak shelves, the fireplace that was rescued from an 18th-century French boys reformatory, and the all-original French club chairs. The layout of the books is modeled after the Long Room library at Dublin's Trinity College.



Gwyneth Paltrow

books as the ideal gift for the star who has everything. Gently arching the pages of one lavish, leather-bound volume, she reveals a painting on the fore-edge: optical illusion and art; one recent customer picked out such a book as the perfect present for **Will Smith**.

Downtown there's Caravan Book Store, whose owner, Leonard Bernstein, has held out for 52 years on a strip of Grand Avenue that used to be known as "booksellers row"—even after his neighbors packed up and their lots became parking garages or restaurants like current posh eatery the Water Grill. But L.A.'s antiquarian bookstore universe, which has been shrinking

BOOK SMART

BY ANNA KAUFMAN

COLLECTING RARE BOOKS MAKES A FIRST-CLASS HOBBY FOR HOLLYWOOD'S SOPHISTICATES.

for some time, received a boost this summer: Dragon Books was opened in Bel-Air—one of Hollywood's luxury enclaves, on Beverly Glen Circle just below Mulholland—by an unlikely owner: young turk Jay Penske, a high-tech entrepreneur and scion of a prominent family—think Penske racing and Penske Corp., whose yellow trucks one can spot across the country.



Martin Scorsese

Penske, a passionate book collector himself, is the chairman and CEO of Velocity Services, Inc., an interactive media and technology company. He is also a man-about-town who has dated **Lara Flynn Boyle** and **Jordana Brewster**. **Kevin Costner** and **Wayne Gretzky** were part of the store's opening-night crowd.

Penske was hooked on books at the tender age of 8; the store is named after John Gardner's *Dragon, Dragon*, "a dark little children's story" which was the first book he remembers reading. Today, two decades later, he has one of the 14 original copies, self-printed and bound by the then-penniless author, which Penske unearthed in New Hampshire. And that's just one of the 15,000 books in Penske's personal library, not to mention the 18,000 in his store, which stocks both low-priced, thumb-worn paperbacks and



Kevin Costner



"If I had a bookstore," Jay Penske remembers thinking when he was 8, "I'd have all the books! I'd never have to wait; I could constantly keep reading."

antiquarian wonders like a first edition of Jane Austen's *Emma* worth \$40,000.

Of the store's 1516 edition of Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, only one other copy was up for sale at an auction in the past 30 years, and only seven copies of earlier editions are known worldwide. Another rarity here: a 20-volume French collection of Balzac owned by Edith Wharton, with markings in her hand. It could make a great gift from somebody close to **Jodie Foster** or **Kate Beckinsale**, since both are fluent in French and well-versed in French literature.

Customers often bring the treasured tomes they've acquired for a consultation from Penske, like a recent booklover who brought in a 1929 edition of *Les Liaisons*



This copy of *The Poems of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, Poet Laureate was printed in London in 1900 and bound with transparent vellum over pale green paper. The cover image, depicting King Arthur and Excalibur, was drawn in pen-and-ink and watercolor. A star who knows what she wants could pluck this off Heritage's shelves for \$6,500.

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BOOK SMART

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Dangerous in two volumes, published by Black Sun Press with illustrations by the famed Alastair. "These books are a work of art," Penske marvels. Printed on creamy Moirans paper in an exquisite coral-red and black type and featuring sublime two-color, bound-in illustrations that feel like original woodcuts, it is one of a limited edition of 1,020 copies printed.

"This is what the Black Sun Press did," Penske explains. "It was a mystical outfit founded in '20s Paris, the home away from home for the Lost Generation, by the wealthy American expatriates Harry and Caresse Crosby. They published small, artistically perfect runs of the works they themselves were interested in, often authored by their friends—D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Hemingway, Eugene Jolas, Oscar Wilde, Harry Crosby, who miraculously survived the battlefields of World War I, became a mystic, compulsive about darkness and death—that's why it's the *Black Sun Press*. He eventually committed suicide. There is a book about them, now out of print, *Les Amants du Soleil Noir*, and another one about Alastair, the illustrator."

"Oh, I want both!" exclaims the *Liaisons'* owner.

"This is how people get hooked," says Penske, knowingly. "I understand it only too well."

Indeed, Penske's life these days presents a unique dichotomy, a very literary saga of a man caught between two worlds. "It's kind of crazy," he admits. "I mean, I'm still running a technology company, but on weekends or evenings I'm here behind the cash register or working with customers and clients, selling books."

Penske pulls a volume from the store's shelves to further illustrate how one can *feel* history through a vintage book, this time on a more lighthearted note. Published in flapper-era London, *The Savoy Cocktail Book* is pure Art Deco in style and contains "a complete compendium of the Cocktails, Rickeys, Daisies, Slings, Shrubs, Smashes, Fizzes, Juleps, Cobblers, Fixes and other Drinks, known and vastly appreciated in this year of grace 1930, with sundry notes of amusement and interest concerning them, together with subtle Observations upon Wines and their special occasions. Being in particular an elucidation of the manners and customs of people of quality in a period of some equality." "The recipes are compiled by the renowned barman at the London Savoy Hotel," explains Penske, "who wisely abandoned the States during Prohibition to ply his trade on a more indulgent shore." As rare book enthusiasts know all too well, there's a kind of time travel that occurs when holding such a piece of history in one's hand. It's a pastime that may not be inexpensive—Penske prices *The Savoy Cocktail Book* at \$1,150—but for the truly cultured, the pleasure that comes from it is invaluable. ■

movieline DVD

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its British forerunner and into its own wonderfully wince-worthy world. Steve Carell deserves his Golden Globe for making you care about bumbling boss Michael Scott—even as you want to strangle him—and this collection promises gems, like cast members' fake PSAs, that are even more likely to make you want to power up the DVD player, curl up on the couch and call in sick for work.

SLINGS & ARROWS: SEASONS ONE AND TWO

It's the best thing to come out of Canada since basketball, the telephone or the zipper (all gifts from due north, doncha know). Though it only aired on the Sundance Channel in the U.S., this series about the eccentric denizens of the New Burbage Theatre Festival received rave reviews, and for good reason: It's one of the most smartly written and acted dramedies to ever hit the stage—or, screen. Paul Gross stars as Geoffrey Tennant, the festival's reluctant new artistic director who, in true Danish prince fashion, is being haunted by the ghost of his former mentor. Season one also features Rachel McAdams playing, appropriately, an actress on the verge of her big break; season two takes on cursed play *Macbeth*.

VERONICA MARS: SEASON TWO

If you judge a show by its fans, then few programs have as impressive bragging rights as *Veronica Mars*, which in its second season received so much love from the likes of Joss Whedon and Kevin Smith that both agreed (or, rather, were *thrilled*) to guest star. Though not as tight as the show's first season, its sophomore effort still packs a punch...and a bus crash...and a terrifying explosion. Definitely due more attention on its new home, The CW, *Veronica Mars* is always worthy of further investigation.

THE WIRE: SEASON THREE

Each season of *The Wire* is greeted with an avalanche of effusive praise, and rightfully so. This bold crime drama examines the contemporary American condition through a mosaic of morally conflicted characters in the troubled city of Baltimore: the cops whose investigative prowess can put them at odds with the venal bureaucracy in control of their career advancement; the ambitious politician who has to get dirty if he wants to effect any social change; the gangster best friends whose clashing mentalities (one is business-minded, the other powered by pride) set up season three's most startling showdown. Yes, the series is (as reputed) dense and complex, but, it must be emphasized, in a thrilling, pulsating way. *The Wire* is so magnificently executed, so fascinating in its evolution, so frequently bracingly profound that it does no less than elevate the medium of television itself. ■

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