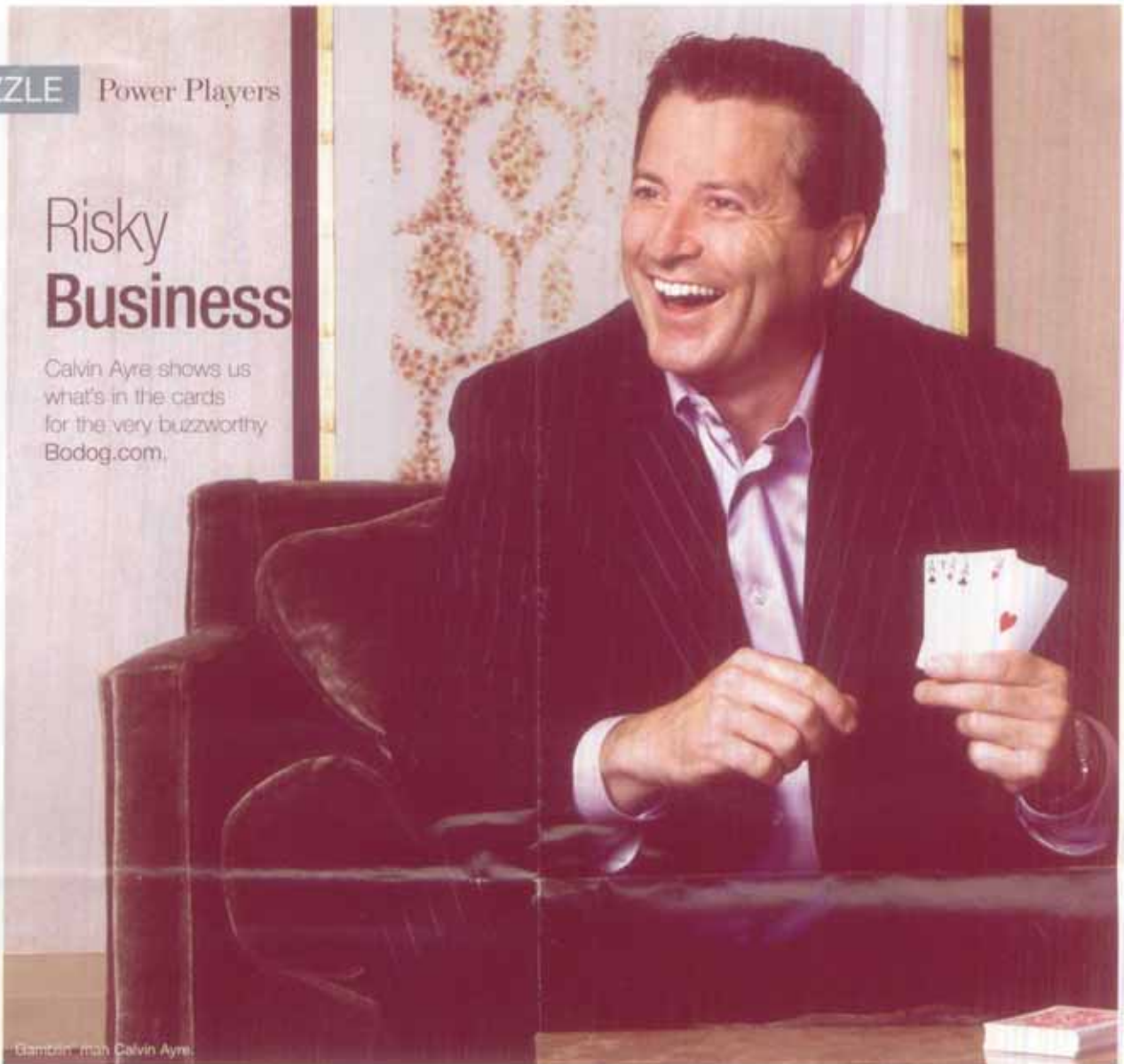


SIZZLE Power Players

Risky Business

Calvin Ayre shows us what's in the cards for the very buzzworthy Bodog.com.



Gambler man Calvin Ayre

LIFE IS LIKE A POKER GAME FOR CALVIN AYRE, and right now, he's got a pretty good hand. As the founder and CEO of Bodog Entertainment Group, Ayre is sitting on a Royal Flush: Currently valued at more than \$1 billion, his website, Bodog.com, hosts a digital entertainment empire.

What started as an online sports-betting site in 2000 has now branched into an online casino, with poker, novelty proposition bets, television, and music, too. Ayre also has a book and two feature films are on the horizon. "I see all things we do as positively supporting [each other]," Ayre says.

The ace in Ayre's hand has been his success in forming his company's image around himself. "Having the ability and confidence to actually step forward and embody the whole brand with my own image and personality is a huge differentiator between me and anybody else in this industry," he insists.

For Ayre, this has meant living a fast-paced, no-holds-barred life in the public eye—and the stakes have certainly paid off. In 2006 alone, the Canadian mogul graced the cover of *Forbes* magazine's Billionaires issue, and his good looks didn't hurt when he was named to *People's* Hottest Bachelors list.

Beyond his pioneering role in the digital-entertainment business, Ayre has also put Bodog.com on the map with celebrity-driven poker. Last year's Bodog-sponsored team at the World Series of Poker included Oliver Hudson, DJ AM, and poker pro Josh Arieh. After leaving the table, celebs are often found at a raging Bodog party. This year's annual Vegas bash drew the likes of Danny Masterson, Vince Neil, and Kelly Hu.

Much like the site's gaming fans, Ayre has found it necessary to take strategic risks, given the nature of the industry. In July, a bill was passed in the House of Representatives forbidding the use of US credit cards to pay most online bets—potentially rendering much of the online gambling industry impotent. It is uncertain whether this bill will be passed by the Senate. Although Bodog.com is currently registered in Costa Rica and Canada, this would adversely affect its customer base.

"I think you can't stop online gaming from having an impact inside the United States," says Ayre, who is convinced that the US will eventually regulate the industry.

As Bodog.com continues to enjoy its piece of the gambling pie, as well as the multiple successes of its other ventures, it's clear that Ayre is here to stay. Either that, or he has a damn good poker face. —LESLEY BRYCE