

Billy Bob Thornton

On his cure for heartbreak, his philosophy about tattoos, and his fear of organ meat

What adventure most changed your life?

I've never been into, like, kayaking, so I'd say moving to California in 1981 and taking a chance to be in the entertainment business. I drove west with my neighbor Tom Epperson, who became my writing partner, in his Mustang, which isn't nearly as romantic as it sounds. It was, like, a '79 Mustang, which might as well have been a Ford Fiesta. We lived in a converted motel room that cost \$90 a week. I cleared \$96 a week working at a Shakey's pizza parlor, so we had \$6 left over for generic rum and donuts.

What's the best piece of advice you ever received?

Do it your way. Otherwise let somebody else do it. Johnny Cash told me that when I was having trouble with some suits.

What's your greatest fear?

Religious fanatics and organ meat.

Best cure for a hangover?

A big plate of fresh pineapple really helps. It kind of washes you out. Cayenne pepper is also really good. I've never tried them together.

Best cure for a heartbreak?

Another heartbreak. Just go right back out there and get into something you know is going to be the next one.

What one skill should every man have?

Driving. It's okay for a girl to freak out if she can't find a place, but if you're a guy and can't handle yourself behind the wheel, you open yourself up to a lot of ridicule. You don't want to be 35 and drive like some old lady.

Worst physical pain you've ever experienced?

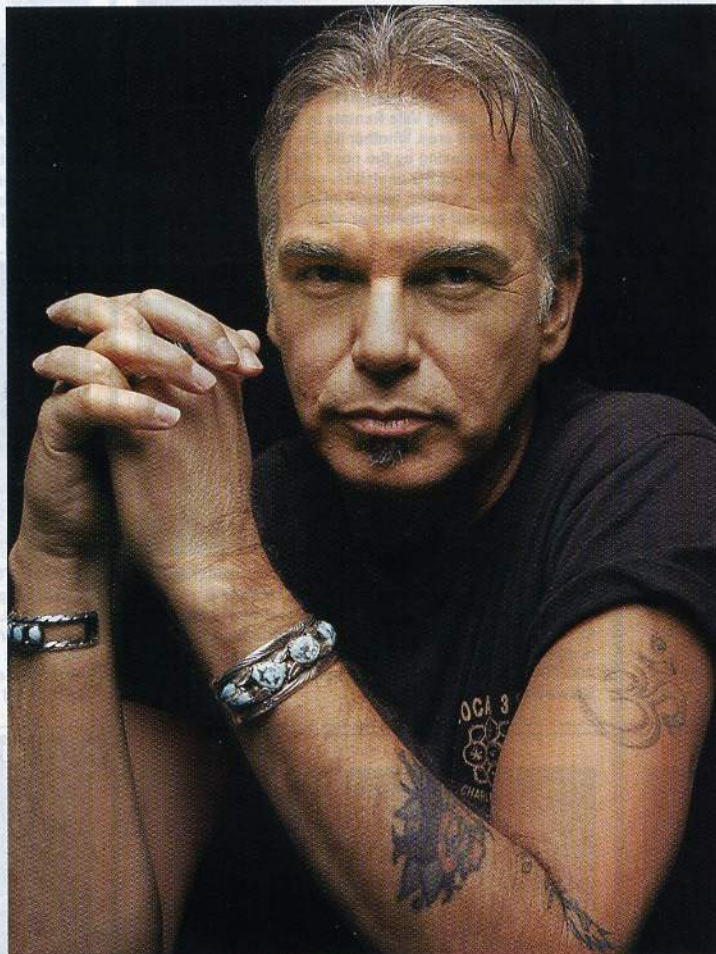
Kidney stone. There are others, but that really sucked. It's like getting hit in the kidney with a sledgehammer.

What one thing should every man know about women?

They all have a little triangle at the base of the neck. You have to look close, but it's there. The color depends on the planet.

Do you have any recurring dreams?

I walk into a huge factory. There's a ladder that goes way up to a metal catwalk.



"Sunday Morning Coming Down." That's one of the best-written songs ever. It takes you right there. I dread Sundays.

I know I have to climb the ladder, walk to the middle of the catwalk, and jump off. I'm compelled. My legs don't break, but the pain is excruciating. Then I realize I have to climb the ladder and jump again. I've had that one since I was a kid.

Best meal you ever had?

At the Perini Ranch Steakhouse outside Abilene, Texas. Barbecue brisket and hominy, with cheese and bacon.

Any tattoos you regret?

Actually, no. They're part of the road map of my life.

What's the most cherished thing you ever lost?

My brother died in 1988. He was a songwriter, and I had most of his handwritten lyrics in a notebook. My house burned in the Malibu fires in 1993. I lost everything, but the notebook was the thing that really broke my heart.

What song do you have to hear once a week?

"Sunday Morning Coming Down." That's one of the best-written songs ever. It takes you right there. I dread Sundays.

What was your first car?

The first car I actually owned was a '67 Buick Wildcat. White with black vinyl top, bucket seats, and a factory eight-track player. It was a dandy.

Your favorite place on earth?

Austin. Growing up, I was a combination of an athletic southern guy and an artist, and those things don't generally mix. In Austin they're all mixed up. You'll see a guy in a cowboy hat, pulling a trailer behind his truck, drive by a girl dressed like Stevie Nicks playing flute on the sidewalk.

How do you make your favorite drink?

With Silk soy creamer and dark roast coffee.

What one experience do you want to have before you die?

An entire year with absolutely no worries. No major ones. Actually, a week would do.

—INTERVIEWED BY STEVEN RUSSELL

Thornton is currently starring in the film *The Astronaut Farmer*.

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