



whoopi GOLDBERG

WHOOPI GOLDBERG WHIPPED INTO OUR CONSCIOUSNESS playing a lady-lover in *The Color Purple*. But the shy role she played to perfection in Steven Spielberg's drama is a far cry from the truth-telling, dirt-dishing attitude of Goldberg the woman. How appropriate then that she has now found success on—of all places—her self-produced game show. “Anyone who could make *Hollywood Squares* not square has a will of steel and a lot of chits to call in,” notes Scott Seomin, entertainment media director for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, which bestowed a wildly eloquent Goldberg with the Vanguard Award at the GLAAD Media Awards in April. “She was gay-friendly before it was trendy.” Besides, replacing fey Paul Lynde in the center square adds immeasurably to her cachet among gays.

THINK OF THE ODDS. Oprah Winfrey may be a one-person conglomerate today, but early on she was a down-to-earth black woman trying to make it on the whiter-than-white talk turf. These days while Springer et al. exploit their guests for freak appeal, we trust Winfrey to tell our stories with respect—as she did when she warmly hosted Ellen DeGeneres and Anne Heche on her show soon after they announced their love. Gay men have reason to feel at home with Oprah too. “I’ve never been able to put my finger on why gay men identify so strongly with black women who overcome hardship,” says Rich Tafel, executive director of the gay group Log Cabin Republicans. “But we do. Oprah’s not a victim. She’s taken control of her life. And my sense is that for her, the gay issue is a nonissue. The way she treats her gay guests, she normalizes it—unlike so many of the other talk shows.” Winfrey, who is bringing her brand of enlightenment to the magazine world next year, continues to rewrite the rules.

oprah WINFREY

