



**Mister**

From a one-room cottage on Long Island, weightlifter and bar bouncer Chris Langan has constructed a new theory of cosmic creation that replaces the Big Bang. Or so he says. His claim would be easily dismissed if he weren't the smartest man in the world.

● By Jeff O'Connell, Features Editor/Writer

# Universe

*“I’ll be a few minutes,”* says Christopher Michael Langan, a thickly muscled bear of a man with a boulder-sized cranium who has just strode 15 yards or so from his gray-shingle cottage on New York’s eastern Long Island. Expressionless but wearing a Band-Aid across his right cheek, he reaches out to shake hands and clamps down with an iron grip. “My vacuum cleaner just blew up and there’s dust all over the place,” he explains. He turns around and trudges back through crackling leaves to the front door of the cottage.

Not the first utterance you’d expect from someone who has been labeled by experts

in psychometrics — the testing of individuals with extraordinarily high IQs — as the smartest human being in America, possibly in the entire world. Yet you've traveled 3,000 miles to hear, among other things, his explanation of the inner workings of the universe. So you wait.

Actually, it's strangely comforting to realize that the random malfunctioning of a \$76 household appliance can waylay someone whose measurable intelligence places him ahead of the likes of Bill Gates and Stephen Hawking, and in a class with mental giants through history such as Aristotle, Da Vinci, Descartes and Einstein. For comparison, the average person has an IQ of approximately 100, the typical college grad tests out at about a buck-twenty, and 132 earns you admission to Mensa. Langan scores somewhere in the neighborhood of 195, a number that occurs one time in billions.

Surely you'd find a man of such prodigious intellectual talents teaching at a university, consulting for a think tank, or maybe navigating the human genome for a biotech start-up. Instead, he lives in an area so remote that directions to it are themselves a de facto IQ test, and in quarters so cramped and disheveled that the first question you have upon ducking inside goes

unasked: What the hell were you vacuuming, anyway?

Two other places you're likely to find Langan are a gym and a bar, neither an anticipated hangout for the ultra-HiQ set. That paradox sheds some light on what makes him even more extraordinary than his gaudy test scores would suggest: He is as different from most super-geniuses as he is from your average man on the street, although he's equally at home with both.

No coddled Ivory Tower academic, he earns his living by "bouncing" in Long Island clubs. He shares his tiny abode with enough animals, particularly reptiles, to stock a small zoo. He can bench 500 pounds and squat the same amount when his trick knee isn't bothering him, but it almost always does these days. He considered taking up competitive bodybuilding early on; has trained with novelist Tom Wolfe, a fellow genius; and has worked selectively as a personal trainer. His résumé includes stints as a cowboy, construction worker, bartender and a Park Service firefighter. He plays the electric guitar and rides a 1985 Shovelhead Harley-Davidson with a bored-out 1187 cc engine.

Most remarkable of all, perhaps, the 40-something-year-old survives on approximately \$6,000 a year. "I'm like a chipmunk — I save every dime I make,"

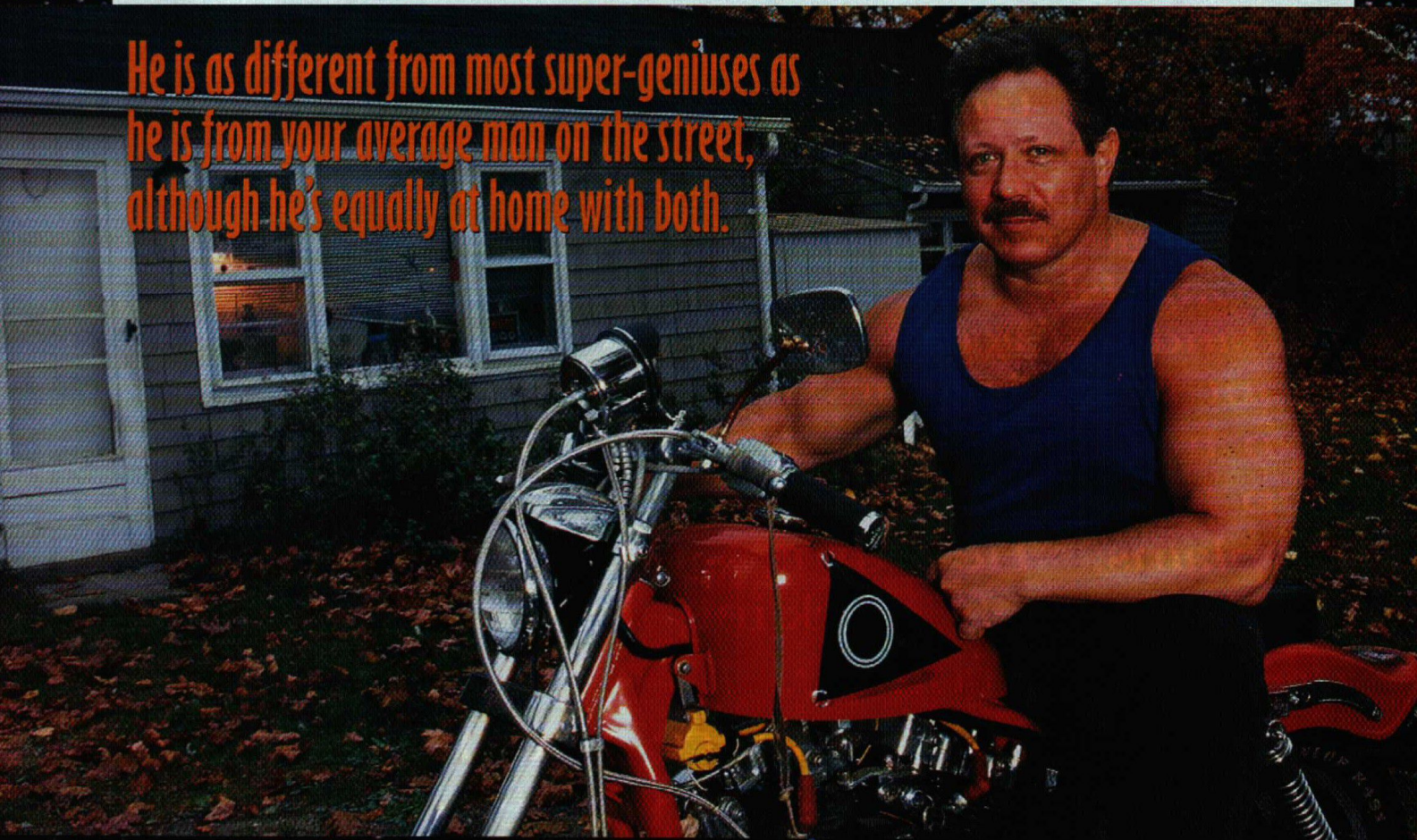
notes Langan, who seems to view money as little more than a bothersome prerequisite for survival. "When you grow up poor like I did, you're not used to having money and you don't spend money. It doesn't take me much more than six grand to live in the style to which I'm accustomed."

Earning additional income would also take him away from his voracious readings in mathematics, physics, artificial intelligence and neuroscience, from which he has borrowed selectively to inform his Cognitive-Theoretic Model of the Universe (CTMU, pronounced *cat-mew*). A decade or so in the making, the theory is laid out in extreme detail in his recently completed opus *Design for a Universe*. He is what's called a cosmologist, an explorer in search of truths about the fundamental nature of the universe. In attempting to go where no man has gone before, Langan (a big sci-fi fan — perhaps the only predictable thing about him) wants to figure out where the universe as we know it came from, which might tell us where it, and we, are ultimately headed.

## Books of Revelations

Inside the cottage, Langan settles into the rickety chair that serves as the bridge of this intellectual *Enterprise*, surrounded by stacks of computer

He is as different from most super-geniuses as he is from your average man on the street, although he's equally at home with both.



# The World's Smartest Man on . . . THE TRUE MEANING OF GENIUS

**M&F:** The term genius is used in a lot of different ways. How do you define it?

**LANGAN:** I would say genius includes a great element of creativity that's not measured by IQ tests. You've had all kinds of great geniuses in history — [Leonardo] Da Vinci, Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein — who had high IQs, but what really set them apart from the crowd was their creativity, the fact that they were original thinkers who could take a direction different from everybody else's. I like to think that I have an element of intellectual creativity that enables me to be a real genius as opposed to somebody who just scores high on an IQ test.

Most people are superficial thinkers. Even ones who are good at inventing complex machinery . . . they're thinking only on one level. Do the parts fit together and how do they work? But in order to get deep inside the structure of reality — the reality that we share and inhabit — that takes an entirely more penetrating kind of mind.



**M&F:** I'm going to throw some names at you of people who at various times, correctly or not, have been deemed geniuses. Give me your assessment, beginning with [English naturalist] Charles Darwin.

**LANGAN:** He deserves to be classified as a genius, but in terms of his actual IQ, he would not have been that impressive. It's actually been estimated at well below 150.

**M&F:** [French philosopher and mathematician] René Descartes.

**LANGAN:** Very intelligent man. However, responsible for many of the problems that we currently have in understanding the nature of reality. He's responsible for Cartesian dualism, the idea that the mind is somehow separate from the body. This is something that should be of concern to all MUSCLE & FITNESS readers.



**M&F:** [Dutch Post-Impressionist painter] Vincent Van Gogh.

**LANGAN:** Yes, but a psychotic genius. We usually associate intelligence with self-control and the ability to normalize your mental processes. This was absent in his psyche. So although he had that creative element that I was talking about before, I'm not entirely sure that he would have tested all that high on IQ tests.

**M&F:** [Greek philosopher and scientist] Aristotle.

**LANGAN:** Absolutely brilliant. When you talk about the fathers of Western thought, you have to come up with Aristotle as one of them. A large part of what we know about logic, including the entire digital age, is ultimately the fruit of Aristotle's work. He was someone I idolized as a kid.



**"[Descartes] is responsible for Cartesian dualism, the idea that the mind is somehow separate from the body. This is something that should be of concern to all MUSCLE & FITNESS readers."**

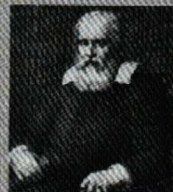


**M&F:** [Jazz saxophonist and composer] John Coltrane.

**LANGAN:** He was a good musician, and that kind of creativity, by the way, is a sign of mental ability. Even though Coltrane might not blow through the roof on an IQ test, nevertheless he was sufficiently creative that I think we can say he's one of the greats in terms of his intellectual capacity.

**M&F:** [Italian astronomer, mathematician and natural philosopher] Galileo.

**LANGAN:** Another truly remarkable person who would have scored through the roof on any IQ test he was given. He had the kind of analytical intelligence that would show up very well on an IQ test.



**M&F:** [U.S. pop musician and composer] Brian Wilson.

**LANGAN:** The Beach Boy? [Laughs] Well, actually, he's kind of an interesting character. I think that Brian Wilson has that element of originality that I've been talking about. He's a guy who I don't know all that much about, but I would not be surprised to engage him in conversation and find out that he is highly intelligent.

**M&F:** [Spanish painter] Pablo Picasso.

**LANGAN:** Picasso is someone who a lot of people resent because he was given credit for being a much greater genius than some people take him for. By all means, he was a very talented artist, and he came up with a lot of trends, but many people consider the trends he came up with to be simple laziness. He didn't want to spend a lot of time on his pictures so he started slapping them together quickly. That's how he developed such a huge oeuvre.



**M&F:** [U.S. statesman, diplomat, printer, publisher, inventor and scientist] Benjamin Franklin.

**LANGAN:** He was another guy who was pretty much a universal genius. He could do virtually anything. Ben Franklin would no doubt score through the roof on any standard IQ test.

— J.O.

equipment, laundry, file cabinets, reptile-filled aquariums and stacks of books with titles like *Cosmos* and *The 4th Dimension*. The place has become even more cramped by the arrival of his girlfriend, Gina Lynne LoSasso, PhD, a clinical neuropsychologist with close-cropped black hair and luminous brown eyes, and whose own IQ places her among the smartest women in the United States. She believes the two of them should move into a bigger place as soon as possible; he seems undecided.

Asked right off the bat if he agrees with the "smartest-man-alive" moniker often applied to him, Langan answers immediately. "I don't know if I would agree with so grandiose an assessment, but I would agree that I'm smart enough that if anybody claims to be smarter than I am, I can give them a run for their money," he says. "Adult IQ is measured in terms of standard deviations, and you'd only expect to find one in billions with a score above six standard deviations [from the mean; that is, an IQ of 196 or so], and theoretically mine is in that area. But there are statistical anomalies, paradoxes — we know so little about intelligence and IQ testing that it's not really up to me or anyone else to say, 'This particular person is unequivocally smarter than anyone else.' You also have other kinds of intelligence that aren't necessarily measured by an IQ test. There are an awful lot of smart people out there, and I don't underrate a single one of them."

Langan isn't the first super-genius in history to combine great physical power with prodigious mental strength. One of his childhood heroes, Leonardo Da Vinci, was purportedly so strong that he'd tear down the office doors of bureaucrats with whom he became frustrated. Like Langan, however, Da Vinci was the exception that proves the rule. People with aberrantly high IQs tend to be, by their very nature, an iconoclastic, sometimes prickly lot. Inherently different from the rest of the world, many of them choose to withdraw from a society that interprets their intellectual preoccupations as eccentricities. Once isolated, they often communicate primarily via the Internet with kindred intellectual spirits who they'll likely never meet face to face. More often than not, that's fine by them.

Langan and LoSasso have in fact fostered one such HiQ cyber-community by creating and managing an Internet-based forum called the Ultranet. (Interested in joining? You need an IQ of 164 or above to become a full-fledged member.) In contrast to many of his

## The World's Smartest Man on . . . TRAINING SCIENCE & BODYBUILDING



### **Training to failure. (He does.)**

"It goes back to the old idea that if you fail all the fibers, a muscle is going to grow larger faster. [Those sets usually comprise] 8-12 reps, and never fewer than five. I'll start out with a warm-up set, do one intermediate set, and then go to my top poundage and stick with that for my remaining sets [for that particular exercise]."

### **The dangers of anabolic steroids.**

"What you're doing is revving up your internal organs super-high so that you can recuperate in minimal time from any given workout. Well, if you sit in a car, stomp on the gas pedal and never let up, how long is that engine going to last? Not very long."

### **The mind-body connection.**

"I used to actually think about mathematics while I was training, but now I tend to focus just on the weightlifting, knowing that a lot of other thought processes are going on unconsciously. I think this whole mind-body thing — being healthy both mentally and physically at once — holds great potential. There's definitely a synergy there."

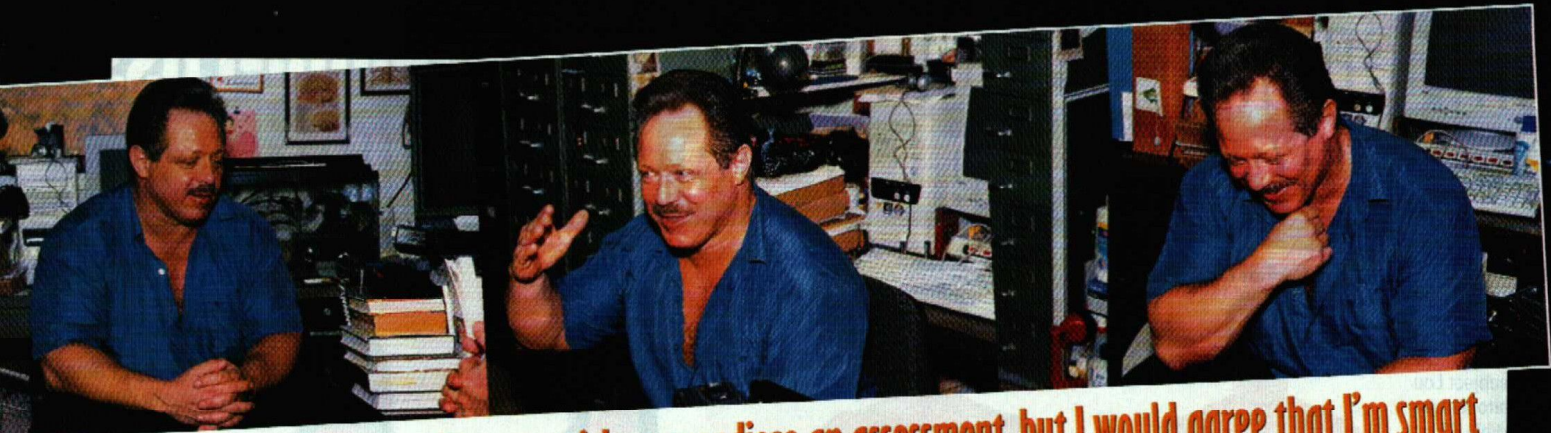
### **His mental approach to working out.**

"I just come to the gym and do it. It's just routine because I've been doing it since my teens. Assuming I can afford a gym membership at that time, I'll be there often. It was always a functional thing for me — I needed body strength to be a bar bouncer — but I also do it simply because I like staying healthy. Once you get to a certain age, you start to experience a permanent loss of muscle mass and bone density, unless you're doing resistance exercise."

### **On the sport of bodybuilding.**

"Unfortunately, I have so much reading to do in other subjects that I can't actively follow the sport of bodybuilding, in terms of who's who and what's what. I know of guys like Dorian Yates, but back in the old days, when Arnold and Franco [Columbu] and Lou Ferrigno were competing, was really the last time I followed competitive bodybuilding closely."

— J.O.



**"I don't know if I would agree with so grandiose an assessment, but I would agree that I'm smart enough that if anybody claims to be smarter than I am, I can give them a run for their money."**

near-peers, however, Langan manages to keep his intellect from becoming a barrier between himself and the rest of the world. "My IQ is not a barrier simply because I've learned how to relate to 'ordinary' people," he states. "Having worked with them for 25 or 30 years in very physical lines of work, I just can't afford to have a supercilious attitude toward others."

It's not an act, either: He's adamant that he learns from average brains every day. "You will find a lot of very respectable intellectual strengths in ordinary people — people who a lot of high-IQ individuals might think of as stupid," he says. "You simply have to open your mind to their particular brand of insight, that's all."

The niggling difficulties of having such a prodigious intellect aren't limited to the challenges of interacting with the surrounding world. Langan gets frustrated sometimes when thoughts and ideas come to him faster than he can possibly record them. Sleep itself offers no asylum from his brain's hyperactivity, as he dreams more or less constantly, often waking up with equations going through his head. His powers of recall are similarly extraordinary. "I can remember being bathed in the sink by my mother when I was under a year old," he recalls. "I can remember her dropping me in the sink, too."

## Blessings & Burdens

Like most attributes received in freakish abundance — beauty, athleticism, creativity — an IQ of 195 can be as much a burden as a blessing. This has held true for Langan since even before he was dropped in the sink that day. He never knew his biological father, who may or may not have died before he was born. His mother was highly intelligent and came from a respectable family, but she was its black

sheep and raised Langan and his three little brothers in abject poverty. (They often had to split one can of tuna between them for a single meal.) Teased for both his abnormal intelligence and for being the poorest of the poor in whatever town the itinerant family happened to be in at that time, Langan learned early on how to defend himself using his fists. He also decided, at age 12, to begin pumping iron.

"As soon as I saw an older kid pick up a set of weights, I knew that was for me," he remembers. "Anytime I'd get ahold of a muscle magazine, I'd pore through it a hundred times because I wanted to have the big biceps and everything like Steve Reeves, Larry Scott, Dave Draper and Arnold. I knew lifting would also enhance my strength — and that that would be a useful thing for me — so I just gravitated toward the weights."

The emotional fragility of most super-geniuses wouldn't have allowed them to survive the sorts of hardships and ignorance endured by Langan, whose formal academic career ended after brief, ill-fated stints at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, and Montana State University in Bozeman. To help other gifted children avoid having to fight those battles against ignorance and miseducation, he created the Mega Foundation along with LoSasso, who now spends part of her day running it from the cottage.

"Not all gifted children get the kind of encouragement and have access to the kinds of resources they need to fulfill their potential," says Langan, who seems genuinely compelled to improve the human condition — despite, or perhaps because of, his own nightmarish child-

hood. "At the same time, people don't seem to care as much these days about gifted kids as they do about disabled kids. There's something very noble about caring for disabled kids, but we shouldn't allow gifted kids to get swept under the rug, either, because they represent a great resource for humanity."

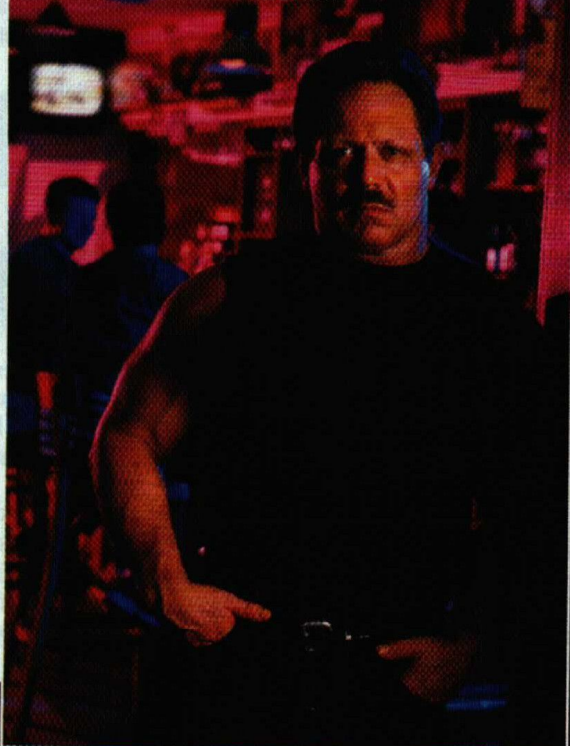
"It's a question of maximization of resources. You can take an average kid and throw all these advantages at him, but he's never going to be much more than average. On the other hand, if you do this with a gifted child, you may get an Isaac Newton or an Albert Einstein."

## Weighty Matters

At the moment, however, this modern-day Isaac Newton has a more vexing problem at hand as he dresses for his impending workout.

"Where's my jock?" he asks, exasperated, looking under a pile of  
*(Continued on page 268)*

**A bar bouncer, Langan was once shot at three times in one month.**



## Mister Universe

(Continued from page 120)

clothes. For that matter, where are his keys, whose absence elicits another helter-skelter search. Finally, after much further ado, he and LoSasso exit their cottage and head to her car for the drive to the gym.

Inside Peconic Health & Racquet in nearby Riverhead, New York, steel beams traverse a high industrial ceiling; a small picture of a black cat is stenciled on the wall. Notwithstanding the name, it's a no-frills, hardcore iron dungeon with its share of roughnecks as clients. Langan exits the locker room wearing white shoes, white socks, olive-drab shorts and a blue tank top. After going through a series of light warm-ups, he throws three 45s onto either side of a Smith machine and begins hammering out reps of incline bench presses.

Langan has pumped iron for most of his life; in fact, he says he would've considered doing natural bodybuilding contests if they had existed when he was in his 20s. He's the first to admit, however, that in recent years, the gaps in his training have become more frequent, whether because of finances — sometimes he can't afford a gym membership — his troublesome knee and

shoulder, or the time it has taken him to complete his book. In fact, when first approached about doing this article, he requested several weeks to get back into suitable shape. ("Like everyone else who frequents the weight room, I'm familiar not only with M&F's informative articles but also with the photogenicity and peak fitness of its models," he wrote in an initial e-mail.) By training four days on, one day off — hitting his upper and lower body in separate sessions — and doing regular cardio, he shed 20 pounds in 3½ months for this shoot, to arrive at his current weight of 248 pounds.

He prefers free weights to machines and he likes lifting heavy, even though he doesn't rest much between sets. He loves squats, incline bench presses, bent-over barbell rows and deadlifts. For cardio, he opts for the NordicTrack cross-country ski machine, when he has access to one. As for his diet, Langan is the first to admit that it takes a back seat to his more ethereal interests. "I don't have a lot of time to eat, so I eat twice a day," he admits. "I wake up, eat a can of tuna fish and water, and then I eat dinner, usually gorging myself like some kind of carnivore. I try to make sure that I get at least 100-150 grams of protein each day, but

I eat it in great big chunks. That's exactly the wrong thing to do, but it's been working for me for years. I'm stronger than anybody in this gym." His budget seldom allows him to indulge in supplements, although he seems receptive to their efficacy.

## Cutting to the Chase

After training, Langan and LoSasso head to Cliff's Elbow Room in Jamesport, New York, to refuel. He orders a porterhouse prepared "black and blue," with french fries and, as the meal unfolds, wields his steak knife with the vigor and dexterity of a modern-day Daniel Boone. ("I would have become a vegetarian a long time ago because I'm an animal lover, but the human digestive system is not meant to work that way," he says with a shrug.) Along with his backwoods know-how, Langan also displays an unexpected knowledge of pop culture. He has seen nearly every movie that comes up in conversation, including most of Arnold Schwarzenegger's. "Predator" and "Pumping Iron" are his favorites.

Not surprisingly, given their prodigious intellects, the couple has an intense interest in the workings of the human brain, the next subject on tap. LoSasso, an adjunct psychology profes-

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sor at Southampton College, has extensive experience working with brain-damaged patients. Langan lists neuroscience, along with artificial intelligence, as being an interest for him on a par with math, logic and physics. One of the fundamental flaws of modern science, he believes, is the attempt, rooted in Cartesian dualism, to treat the mind as something apart from the body.

"If you're really interested in this, you need to know about the CTMU," explains Langan. "Is there some kind of separation between mind and matter, or is the universe nothing but matter? The fact is, no, because you can't make a universe out of matter alone. How do you build empty space out of matter? Ever since [Einstein discovered the Theory of] Relativity, we've known that [space] is an abstract quantity called the tensor field that simply confers certain properties on matter: location, orientation, angular velocity, linear velocity, geometry, space-time curvature.

"They used to think that space was filled with a substance called ether, but once they did away with ether, they did away with any pretense that space is a material property. Space is not material; it's abstract, it's mathematical. And that means, of course, that it is mental. So you cannot describe the universe completely with any accuracy unless you're willing to admit that it's both physical and mental in nature. And once you admit that, you admit that there's a side of reality that's not materially manifested, which of course opens up a whole realm of possibilities." It is a world view, he notes, that can accommodate both science and religion.

He continues: "If we go back through time, we eventually come to a cosmic singularity that supposedly blew up in a 'big bang,' causing the universe to occur. But there are certain problems with that. The idea that you have a singularity that explodes and expands . . . what does it expand into? Think about that for a minute. If there was something there for that universe to expand into, now you're obligated to explain what that something is. And if you keep going back and back to a more primitive explanation, ultimately you come to the necessity for a 'conspansive' model that is completely self-referential and self-contained. The easiest way to explain it is that the universe is not expanding so much as we are shrinking relative to its invariant size."

"It's like it's expanding inward, into subsequent inward layers," adds LoSasso, by way of, uh, clarification. "It has a feeling of accelerating and expanding, but it's actually conspaning."

## Dueling Geniuses

An hour later, Langan walks from a raging storm through the front doorway of the Westhampton Grill, one of the clubs in which he bounces. Late, off-season, on a weeknight, the place is deserted except for the help. "Hey, Chris," yells a heavysset bartender, who earlier that month had made a small killing on the sports-trivia show "Sports Geniuses." "A guy in a trailer park in the middle of Florida with a 14 IQ, he should get, like, one-seventh of a vote, and you should get like 40."

Langan glances up at a TV announcing the presidential election results coming in that day and laughs. "You know something? You gotta point there. The Florida guy cancels out my vote completely."

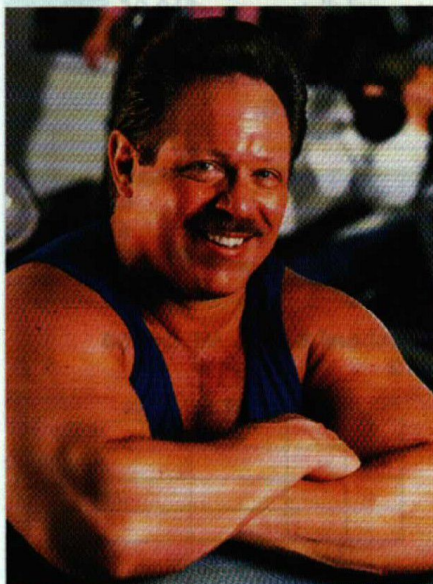
"You get one vote, and Jethro with one tooth who lives in a tire in Dade County gets the same one vote," says the bartender.

"You're 100% right," says Langan, laughing harder.

Bartender: "God bless America."

Langan reckons he has bounced in some 40 nightclubs since the early 1980s. Normally, the job is 99% diplomacy, he states, but in "hot" clubs, skirmishes can occur nightly, sometimes requiring a good old-fashioned ass

**Regardless of the impetus, increasingly Langan seems not only intent on discovering how the universe works but willing to explore where he himself truly belongs inside it.**



kicking or two. What's more, New York clubs are often havens for organized crime — mobsters love cash-money businesses — and Langan has had a contract or two issued on his life. He wears a bulletproof vest to some gigs, and was once shot at three times in one month at a club in Southampton.

You wonder how much longer he'll risk this dangerous occupation. From the outside, his life appears to be undergoing a subtle transition of sorts. He's shopping *Design for a Universe* to publishers, although he says he'll self-publish through the Mega Foundation if necessary. He has been profiled in publications ranging from *Esquire* to the *London Times*; been featured on a half-dozen or so national TV shows, including "20/20"; and done segments for WABC in New York. He's using his self-taught knowledge of AI to help two software entrepreneurs develop a radically new type of Internet search engine. He has also made several visits to a Disney-affiliated R&D think tank in California, where he rubs elbows with other geniuses in industry and entertainment.

Maybe it's the realization that no matter how incredibly brilliant he is, history will remember Langan only if he leaves behind something worthy of his genius, and ignore him if his legacy is merely three freaky numbers on a forgotten sheet of paper. Maybe it's having LoSasso in his life. Regardless of the impetus, increasingly he seems not only intent on discovering how the universe works but willing to explore where he himself truly belongs inside it.

"Hey, did you ever get your 38,000 bucks from the show?" Langan asks the bartender after a swig of his Bass.

"Thirty-five, and no."

"So when you get your 35 grand, you're gonna be taking us all out to dinner, right?"

"Dinner?"

"Hey, I've been letting you bask in my illustrious presence for how long?" asks Langan, laughing.

"Illustrious presence? Listen, you meathead, if I had a 195 IQ, I wouldn't be sitting here in this bar."

The real genius sets his glass down and smiles as his friend walks away. "I've been nationally famous for a year and haven't made one thin dime [off it], and he's on a sports-trivia show and makes \$35,000," says Langan, grinning as he shakes his enormous head and picks up his beer. "Unbelievable." **M&F**

To learn more about Christopher Langan, the Mega Foundation and the ultra-HiQ community, visit [megafoundation.org](http://megafoundation.org), [megasociety.com](http://megasociety.com) or [ultrabiq.net](http://ultrabiq.net).