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THE GAZETTE
MONTREAL
SATURDAY,
JANUARY 21, 2006
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*"Is there really
that much
baby-sitting money
going around?"*

Late comedian Bill Hicks on
then-popularity of Debbie Gibson

MARK LEPAGE
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

Kids today. When Hilary Duff takes the Bell Centre stage Feb. 1, she will do so at the head of a pack of barely post-teen females whose ubiquitous presence on the charts, mags and EW tabloid shows cannot have gone unnoticed by even the most grizzled '60s vet. The teen star is as old as pop music, but never has there been such a sustained wave of them. Duff, Lindsay Lohan, Ashlee and Jessica Simpson, Michelle Branch, Avril Lavigne – where did they come from? What do they want with our children?

For some history, let's look to professional sports. At some point in the near past, female pop took the example of female tennis and lurched into hormonal high speed. On the grass stages of tennis, in 1979, 16-year-old Tracy Austin forced a new era into being when she defeated the ancient Chris Evert to become the youngest U.S. Open champ. She'd already smoked Evert on clay in Italy.

Austin was the harbinger of the generational fast-forward. Suddenly, old bags of 24 could not compete with the high-schoolers, whose career arc was brutally brief – superstar at 16, washed up at 20, burned out by the next wave of super-toddlers.

Please see POP, Page D3

The drama of the gifted **pop** tart

*Or how Hilary Duff
and the bubblegum brigade
keep a lock on the charts*

DESIGN AND PHOTO ILLUSTRATION **DAVID FITZPATRICK** THE GAZETTE / PHOTO COURTESY OF HOLLYWOOD RECORDS



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