

## OUTLOOK

### CHAMPION

## Blowing away the competition

**C**hris Ullman loves to put the top down on his red sports car, punch in a tape, and whistle. For most people, this would be a form of relaxation. For Ullman, it's serious work. The 24th International Whistlers Convention takes place in April and Ullman, the reigning champ, is defending his title. He'll face about 30 contestants, screened from a pool of 5,000 whistlers worldwide. No wonder he goes through 15 Chap Sticks per year.

Ullman, 33 and the communications director for a Washington, D.C., lobbying group, perfected his technique as a teenager while delivering newspapers in Massapequa Park, N.Y. The breakthrough came at a college talent show, when his rendition of the *William Tell Overture* drew a standing



Think just anyone can do this?

ovation. Last summer he soloed with the National Symphony Orchestra, performing a chirpy march on the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol.

But it takes more than a perfect pucker to make a champ. The music must be challenging. The best pieces combine speed, octaval range, and rapid changes in tempo. Works like Vince Guaraldi's *Linus and Lucy* are popular showcases. Ullman plans to pair Jules Massenet's romantic adagio "Meditation" from *Thais* with Leroy Anderson's "Fiddle-Faddle." If Ullman wins,

he'd like to retire from competitive whistling to teach. "Contestants don't know how to market themselves to the judges," he says. Marketing, after all, is still Ullman's day job.

—Linda Kulman