PLAYBOY

Fiction by Stephen King • Guns in Hollywood • The Interview: Billy Bob Thornton • Kim Gordon • 20Q With Anna Kendrick • Reggie Watts • Miss December Eniko Mihalik


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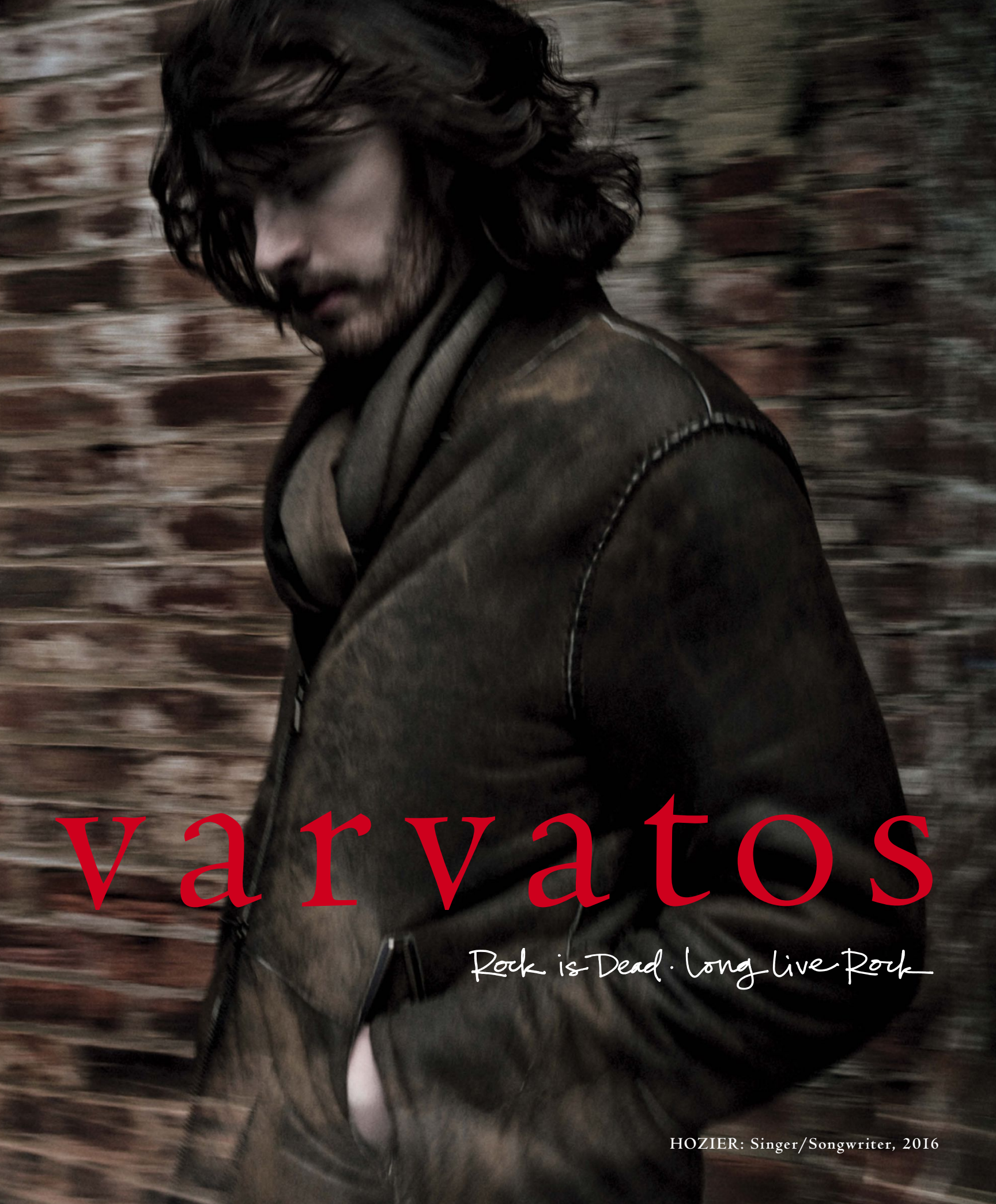

HOZIER: Singer/Songwriter, 2016


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Aaron Feaver

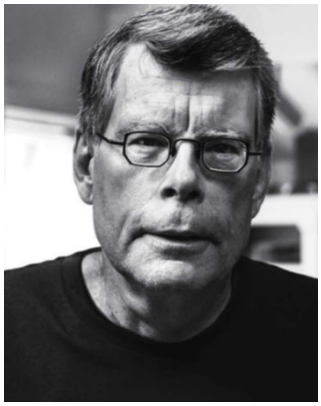
Photographer Feaver spent his early years drifting between the United States, France and Cameroon, ultimately settling in Portland, Oregon. After college he ditched the drizzly land of beer and coffee for the more cheerful sunshine of Los Angeles—the vibrant hues of which now influence his work, as displayed in *All That Glitters.*

Danielle Bacher

A journalist, columnist and pop culture glutton, Bacher has partied with everyone from Ariel Pink to Jena Malone to Smoke DZA for her celebrity profiles. This month she breaks bread with Anna Kendrick for *20Q,* in which the actress discusses her new book of personal essays and details surviving before fame, being broke and battling self-doubt.

Stephen King

It's been 10 years since PLAYBOY featured King's short story *Willa,* about the horrors a group of passengers encounter after their train derails. This month King returns to our pages with another unsettling tale, *The Music Room* (inspired by an Edward Hopper painting), which may leave you suspicious of friendly bar patrons.



Kristin Gallegos

Just two years ago, Gallegos picked up a camera and started shooting as a hobby. Now the California-raised makeup artist and former classical ballet dancer makes her PLAYBOY debut with *Memory Lane,* a seven-page pictorial featuring model-designer Paige Elkington that melds Gallegos's feminine-focused lens with retro flair.

Kim Gordon

For three decades the Sonic Youth cofounder occupied the apex of alternative rock, and she remains a cultural icon today. Gordon manifests her voice across multiple disciplines as half the music duo Body/Head, whose latest record, *No Waves,* is out now, and as a conceptual painter, whose work we celebrate in *Artist in Residence.*

Jessica P. Ogilvie

"Culiacán is incredibly safe because of the cartel," says Ogilvie of the Mexican city that's the backdrop for *The Beauties of Sinaloa,* her article on the women who compete for pageant titles—and the attention of narcotraffickers. Ogilvie spent 10 days in the drug lords' orbit, without incident. "Don't fuck with them and they won't fuck with you."

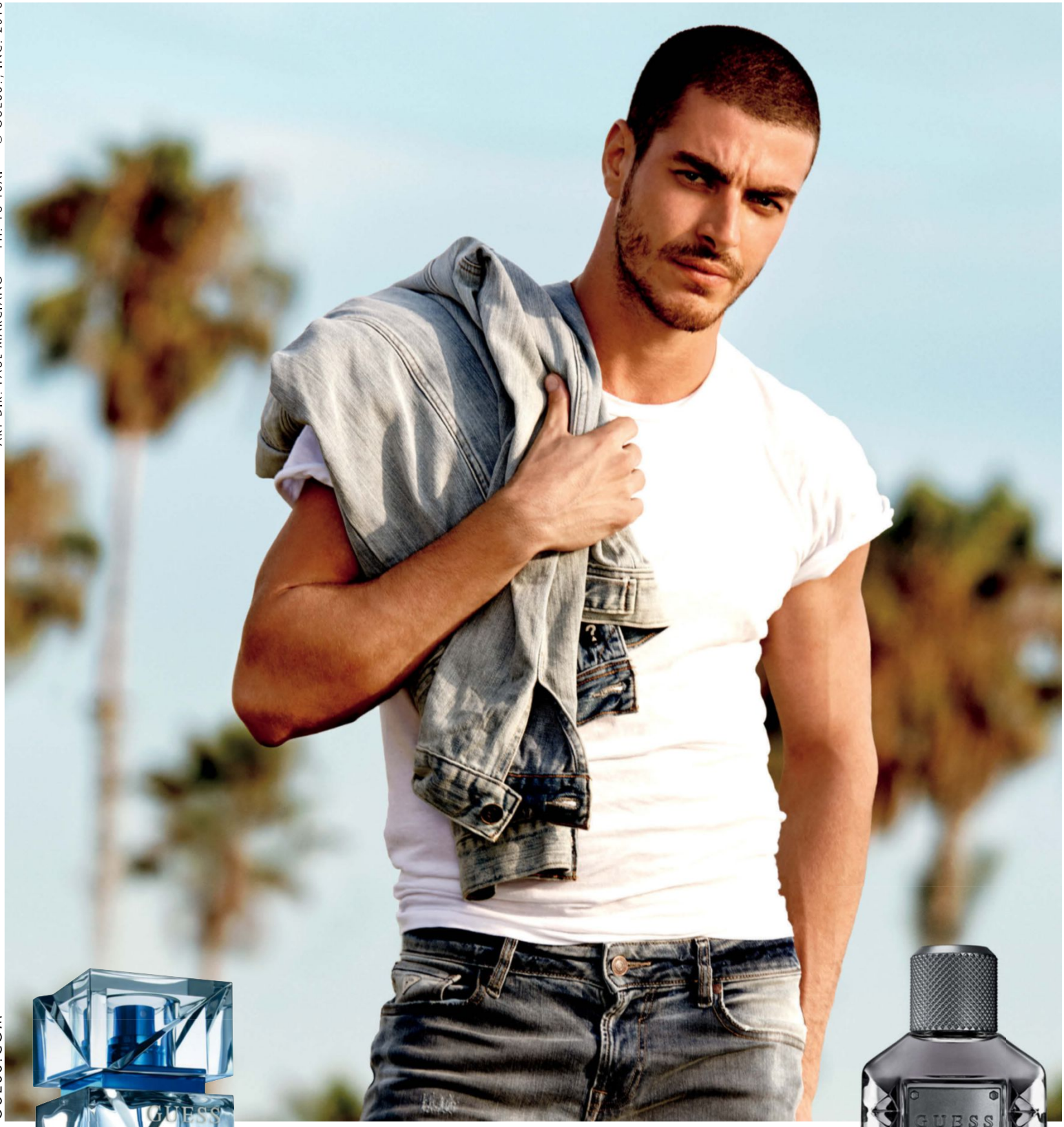
Chloe Aftel

This year Aftel was honored by *LensCulture,* a popular photography site, for her series on gender-queer subjects. In her work, she sees "each person as someone with a story to tell." For *20Q,* Aftel captures Anna Kendrick, herself a storyteller, as she speaks candidly about everything from fake kissing to worrying about going to hell.

Mike Rougeau

Before becoming a PLAYBOY contributor, Rougeau spent years covering America's true favorite pastime—video games—for dozens of outlets. In *The (Insane) Year in Gaming,* Rougeau runs down 2016's biggest successes, surprises and disappointments in the world of virtual gameplay. Yes, *Pokémon GO* made the cut.

CREDITS: Cover and pp. 78–91 model Eniko Mihalik at the Society Management, photography by David Bellemere, styling by Liz McClean for Brydges Mackinney, hair by Cecilia Romero for the Wall Group, makeup by Aidan Keogh, styling assistance by Emily Briggs, panties (cover) by Eres, ring (cover) by Catbird. Photography by: p. 4 courtesy Chloe Aftel, courtesy Danielle Bacher, courtesy Aaron Feaver, courtesy Kristin Gallegos, courtesy Jessica P. Ogilvie, courtesy Mike Rougeau, Shane Leonard, Annabel Mehran; pp. 24–25 courtesy La Valise Hotel, Alessandro Digaetano/LUZ/Redux, Peter Frank Edwards/Redux, Berthold Steinhilber/laif/Redux, Cathrine Stukhard/laif/Redux; p. 38 courtesy Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures; p. 48 Molly Cranna; p. 70 AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo; p. 75 courtesy Brooks England, courtesy Faribault Woolen Mill, courtesy Misc. Goods Co.; p. 76 courtesy Horse Brand, courtesy Leica, courtesy Nintendo; p. 77 courtesy House of Marley, courtesy Orlebar Brown, courtesy Postalco; p. 96 courtesy Activision; p. 99 *Room in New York,* 1932 by Edward Hopper, oil on canvas, Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, photo © Sheldon Museum of Art; p. 110 David Black; p. 114 PLAYBOY archive. Pp. 98–101 Stephen King, *The Music Room,* excerpted from *In Sunlight or in Shadow: Stories Inspired by Edward Hopper,* Lawrence Block, ed. (Pegasus, December 2016). P. 15 styling by Jessy Cain for the Wall Group, hair by Dallin James for the Wall Group, makeup by Amy Chance for TACK Artist Group, styling assistance by Harry Pinkerton; pp. 16–17 prop styling by Janine Iversen; pp. 20–21 prop styling by Janine Iversen; pp. 34–37 styling by Taylor Jacobson for Atelier Management, hair by Craig Gangi for Exclusive Artists Management using Brazilian Blowout, makeup by Vanessa Scali for the Wall Group; pp. 40–41 grooming by Cheri Keating for the Wall Group, jacket by Bindle & Keep; pp. 58–64 model Paige Elkington, styling by Chloe Chippendale, hair by Nikki Providence for Forward Artists; pp. 74–77 prop styling by Robert Doran; p. 79 panties by Eres, bracelet by Catbird; p. 80 jewelry by Catbird; p. 81 dress by Isabel Marant; pp. 82–83 panties by Angela Friedman; p. 84 vintage T-shirt by Stoned Immaculate, panties by Araks; pp. 102–109 model Maya Singer at Vision Los Angeles, styling by Henna Koskinen for Opus Beauty, hair by Tony Vin, makeup by Tami Shirey for the Rex Agency.



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SOME COOL FRAGRANCES FOR MEN

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Surf and salvation with Greg Long.

DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE

I loved your October issue with Sky Ferreira, but I saw a guy at the airport reading a PLAYBOY with a different cover photo. What gives?

James Johnson
Rockford, Illinois

A special issue deserves special treatment, so we created a dual print run of two different covers, both featuring Sky.

CAREFUL WITH KILLER ROBOTS

Matt Jancer's article on the use of robots to kill Dallas mass shooter Micah Xavier Johnson is right to highlight the fact that the situation was unusual—"high, if not the highest, rung on the use-of-force continuum," as one expert he quotes put it (*What Does It Mean When Cops Can Kill a Man With a Robot?,* October). Whether a lethal use of force is constitutional depends on whether an individual poses an imminent threat to others, not on the weapon used. Nobody wants police officers unnecessarily placed in harm's way when dangerous situations arise. That said, some very serious policy issues need to be worked out before law enforcement deploys robots to use force remotely.

The biggest danger of introducing robots into policing is that by allowing force to be applied more safely and easily, it is more likely to be used. Things that are risk-free and easy are inevitably overused, as we have seen with the use of lethal robots overseas—drones—as well as with surveillance technology. The danger is that force-by-robot evolves from something reserved for extraordinary circumstances into something used in more everyday situations. This is especially likely to happen when robots are armed with "less lethal" weapons such as Tasers, tear gas and rubber bullets. (These weapons are not nonlethal; they can and do kill people.) In addition, when officers are operating remotely, their perception of a situation is more likely to be confused, and they're more likely to use force inappropriately or on the wrong targets.

Jay Stanley
Washington, D.C.

Stanley is senior policy analyst for the American Civil Liberties Union's Speech, Privacy and Technology Project and editor of the Free Future blog.

YOU'RE VERY WELCOME

My girlfriend always laughs when I tell her how much I enjoy your articles, but I really do. I would subscribe even if there weren't any pictures of beautiful, scantily clad angels. (But please don't stop publishing them!) Culturally, PLAYBOY remains on the cutting edge. You have the most relevant articles for a wide audience and aren't afraid to take a stance on issues. Thank you for your publication.

Ron Robertson
Indianapolis, Indiana

GLORIOUS GLOBES

Please settle a bet. My brother swears Denise Richards graced a December PLAYBOY wearing enormous, shiny Christmas-ornament earrings. I agree it was a beautiful brunette but am positive it was someone else.

Mark Hanson
New York, New York

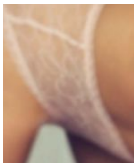
You're both right. Denise is on our December 2004 cover (silver earrings); Brooke Shields in 1986 (red). Other memorable models featured on PLAYBOY *Christmas covers past include Raquel Welch, Naomi Campbell and Kim Kardashian.*

THANKS BE TO GREG

I'm an ironworker, a subscriber and a longtime PLAYBOY fan. In the past three years I've had health issues and personal losses that have prevented me from being able to work and enjoy life the way I desire. I often wonder when my life will return to what it was. Greg Long's story (*My Way,* September) brought tears to my eyes. This awesome surfer's words—comparing our beautiful, mysterious oceans to life—are inspiring. I will continue to live, like Long, through my own "never-ending sequence of radical events." I will also strive to make myself a better person and to seek the grace and love he speaks of, and I will carry this article in my pocket as I search for what brings me happiness. To Greg Long: Thank you, sir.

Tyler Davidson
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

COVER STORY



From his pleasant perch on the best seat in the house, our Rabbit wishes you and Miss December Eniko Mihalik a very happy holiday season.

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"I am a service to people, and hopefully they fuck with me."

When I entered the game, I was around the richest people in the world—who wanted to use my sound to reinvent themselves. In the same breath, I was around the poorest people. I've realized that we're all out there winging it, from the 57-year-old truck driver who's alone in life to the 15-year-old girl who doesn't want to eat her food, and it's fucking fine, because the ideals that have been pushed down our throats are all lies. Nobody comes from glory. Pain is inevitable—whether you just got fired or just got dumped—but we need pain to live. We shouldn't be victims; we should allow pain to push us to change shit and work toward the evolution of humanity. My purpose in music is to inspire people to be who they are, despite race, sexual orientation, gender or where you're from. I want people to free the truth within themselves. My goal is to glorify life.

*Singer-songwriter **Bibi Bourelly** skyrocketed to fame last year after co-writing "Bitch Better Have My Money." Her second EP, Free the Real (Pt. #2), is out this winter; her full-length debut drops early next year.*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY OLIVIA JAFFE

ALL HAIL THE NEO TACO

This supersavory version from chef Ray Garcia redefines the genre

BEET *PIBIL* TACOS

Ray Garcia, mastermind behind L.A.'s B.S. Taqueria and Broken Spanish, makes a vegan taco delicious enough to convert a carnivore.

Serves six
1½ tbsp. annatto seeds
¾ tbsp. dried Mexican oregano
½ tsp. cumin seeds
¼ tsp. allspice
¼ tsp. black peppercorns
1 tbsp. vegetable oil
8 oz. water
4 oz. coconut vinegar
2 oz. distilled white vinegar
2 oz. fresh orange juice
Salt to taste
1 medium white onion, peeled and quartered
1 habanero chili, de-stemmed
12 yellow beets, peeled
Corn tortillas
Garnish: arugula, baby kale, pickled onions, mustard greens, mustard frills

Grind spices in spice mill until smooth. In large pot, heat thin layer of oil over medium heat. Add ground spices and cook two minutes, stirring constantly. Add liquids and salt and bring to simmer. Add onion, habanero and beets, cover tightly with aluminum foil and lid, and cook over medium-low heat until tender, two to three hours. Remove beets from liquid and let cool. In blender, combine remaining liquid, onion, habanero and two beets, and blend until smooth. Pass through fine strainer and set aside. Toss remaining beets in oil, place on sheet pan, season with salt, and roast in 400-degree oven until deeply caramelized. Slice beets, place on tortillas, drizzle with blended sauce, and garnish.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRANT CORNETT

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SHERRY SHAKES IT UP

Top bartenders and restaurateurs are reviving and reinventing the Spanish wine

If you want to know what everyone will be drinking next, ask your favorite bartender what he or she is into right now.

Perhaps because they deal with the standard spirits at work, professional mixers tend to pick less-common libations when they drink for fun. And lately those libations lean toward sherry, a fortified wine from the Jerez region, at the southern tip of Spain.

What makes sherry stand out is an aging process that creates unique flavors. With the *solera* method, the wine ages by passing through a series of barrels that are never completely emptied. Lighter varieties—finos and manzanillas—age under *flor,* a layer of yeast that prevents oxidation and leads to a dry, citrusy and bright flavor, while oloroso sherries, which don't have *flor,* display nutty, cooked-fruit notes thanks to interacting with oxygen. (Amontillado sherry splits the difference, aging for some time with *flor* and some time without.) There's also Pedro Ximénez (usually called PX), a very sweet style named for the grape it's made from.

"The first sip, I fell in love," says Washington, D.C. bar professional Derek Brown of his introduction to sherry in a cocktail a decade ago. "The depth of flavor, the layers—it was unique. It's like getting a song stuck in your head: I wanted to learn everything about it." One of the capital's most famous mixologists, Brown operates four bars, including Mockingbird Hill, which specializes in sherry and opened in 2013 with more than 60 bottles on the menu.

As chief spirits advisor to the National Archives Foundation ("I'm the highest-ranking bartender in the federal government," he jokes), Brown cites sherry's long history in America: The founding fathers and their contemporaries sucked down gallons of sherry, port and madeira back in the 18th century. And a top cocktail of the 19th century was the sherry cobbler, a refreshing mix of sherry, sugar and fruit served over crushed ice that was beloved in part because its low alcohol content allowed imbibers to drink it all day long.

Today, with low-ABV cocktails back in vogue, David Rosoff of Bar Moruno in downtown L.A. recommends a new version of the classic cobbler. His Grand Central Market spot has an extensive list of sherries that go well with the Spanish–North African flavors on the menu. "Sherry is a natural for a low-ABV cocktail, whether you want salinity with a fino or sweetness with a PX," Rosoff says. Also, to put it less technically, less alcohol means you can drink more.—*Jason Horn*

González Byass Alfonso oloroso sherry
Portland bartender and writer Jacob Grier uses this oloroso for a perversely primitive drink known as the bone luge, which involves drinking the sherry through a hollow roasted marrow bone. It offers intense flavors of oak, hazelnut, dried fig—and roasted marrow bone.

PX OLD FASHIONED

by Derek Brown, Mockingbird Hill, Washington, D.C.

Brown uses PX sherry in place of sugar in an otherwise traditional old fashioned to create a more complex and fruity cocktail.

INGREDIENTS
2 oz. bourbon (such as Nelson's Green Brier Belle Meade Sherry Cask Finish)
¼ oz. Pedro Ximénez sherry (such as Williams & Humbert Collection Don Zoilo Pedro Ximénez 12 Years Old)
1 dash aromatic bitters
Glass: old fashioned
Garnish: orange twist

Add bourbon, sherry and bitters to a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir, then strain into an old fashioned glass containing one large ice cube. Garnish with orange twist.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRANT CORNETT

SHERRY COBBLER

by David Rosoff, Los Angeles

Rosoff's twist on the classic sherry cobbler (pictured at right) combines nutty oloroso sherry with rich Irish whiskey, bitter Amaro Montenegro and a bright grapefruit liqueur.

INGREDIENTS
1 strawberry
1 tsp. sugarcane syrup
2½ oz. oloroso sherry
½ oz. Irish whiskey
½ oz. Amaro Montenegro
½ oz. Combier Crème de Pamplemousse Rose liqueur
Glass: wine
Garnish: strawberry, grapefruit wedge and powdered sugar

In wineglass, gently muddle strawberry and sugarcane syrup. Add remaining ingredients, fill glass with crushed ice and stir. Garnish with strawberry, grapefruit wedge and powdered sugar.

THE GLOBAL EXPLORER'S GUIDE FOR 2017

You've visited the world's greatest hits. Here are the newest destinations ready-made for the tastemaking traveler

PORTLAND, MAINE

Portland is the new Portland

Discussions of which up-and-coming American city is the "new Portland" seem, ironically, to ignore the obvious: the original Portland. Friendly, diverse and easily navigable, this New England town is equal parts old-school charm and modern sensibility. In spring and summer, the Portland Sea Dogs play at Hadlock Field, one of the best minor league stadiums in the country, complete with a replica of Fenway's Green Monster. Good spots for steamed clams and lobster rolls naturally abound, but you'd be well advised to stop at the Honey Paw for Asian-inspired comfort food such as Korean fried chicken with corn bread, and tagliatelle with roasted chili ragù. End the night at Vena's Fizz House, a combination mixology shop and cocktail bar where the bow-tied bartenders are happy to create a drink to your specifications. Portland is dead, long live Portland.—*Jeremy Freed*

PARIS

Eat better for less in the City of Light

It's an open secret that the Paris food-and-drink scene had gone stale in recent decades. Now, an embrace of farm-to-table cooking, natural wines and the cocktail revolution have made the city an exciting culinary destination again. The best deal is in Le Marais at the oldest covered market in town, Marché des Enfants Rouges. At Chez Alain Miam Miam (below left) a silver-haired man wearing a WHO THE FUCK IS SHAWN CARTER T-shirt will make you a delicious Comté-and-ham sandwich for just eight euros. For dinner, hit Le Verre Volé, a tiny wine shop–restaurant that serves rustic fare including Normandy beef atop bean salad, and whole shrimp tossed in dill. After dinner, head to Pasdeloup restaurant for a nightcap. Tucked in the back is one of Paris's best cocktail bars, helmed by American expat Amanda Boucher, who mixes stellar drinks both classic and new.—*Jeremy Repanich*

COROMANDEL PENINSULA, NEW ZEALAND

Down under, move over

Surfers (and even suits with a beach-bum mentality) have been following the tide all the way to the Coromandel Peninsula—a sandy hot spot with underground springs at Hot Water Beach, excellent left-hand surf breaks at Whangamata and killer snorkeling in Opito Bay (pictured). The 309 Road gives Route 66 a run for its money with waterfalls, trekking trails, impressive summits and chill local characters. When all that vacationing demands you go in even slower motion, ferry over to nearby Waiheke, a supercool under-the-radar island 30 minutes off the coast of Auckland. It's Kiwi with hints of Hawaii, with chic hotels (the Boatshed, the Oyster Inn), a community art gallery and dozens of wineries (Syrah, cab and merlot feature heavily) to ensure that the air, sun and sand all go to your head.—*Jeralyn Gerba*

LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

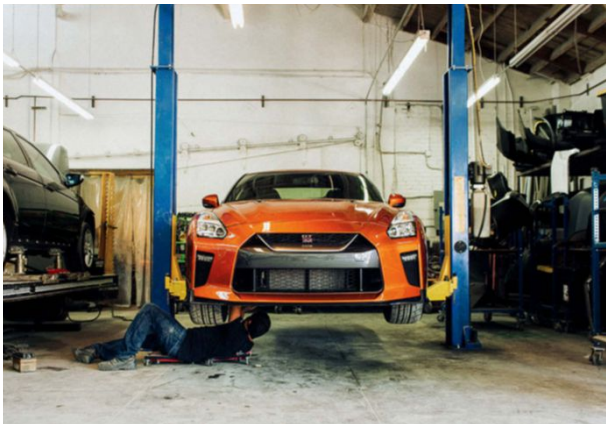
Reuse your imagination

The European Grand Tour is old news. You've outgrown Ibiza; you've done a stint in Berlin. Maybe you're itching to find the cool kids, in which case you should follow the graffiti all the way to Ljubljana. As the city shakes off its Eastern Bloc vibe, the mood is one of radical excitement. The living is good and cheap, the food is wild (deer tartare! bear paw!), and the wine scene is strong—Dvorni Bar is a good place to start your education in the local varieties. Street art of the Banksy kind is public and vibrant. Old buildings have been given new life at venues such as Stara Elektrarna, a former power station that now hosts live shows, and Metelkova (pictured), a barracks turned modern art museum. A stay at Vander Urbani Resort, in the heart of the city, will do you right with its clean, spare, modern rooms, strong coffee and superfast wi-fi—signs that the chic millennial traveler is here to stay.—*Jeralyn Gerba*

MEXICO CITY

America's hippest destination may be south of the border

Decked out with bonsai, raw concrete and immaculate midcentury modern furniture, Xaman Bar could be the hottest new signless spot in New York or Tokyo. The cocktail list, however, is quintessentially Mexico City. Like the drinks, which fuse Mexican botanicals with top-shelf gin and mezcal, this chaotic metropolis excels at combining the traditional with the modern and cosmopolitan. At La Valise, a three-suite designer hotel set amid the coffee bars and streetwear shops of Roma Norte, the rooftop option (pictured) features vintage furniture and a bed on rails that slides out onto a private terrace. A short walk away at Contramar, the raw *hamachi* tostadas with avocado and spicy mayo are a brilliant marriage of Mexican and Japanese. Save room for a late-night *torta,* Mexico City's preeminent street snack.—*Jeremy Freed*



A WORLD-CLASS JAPANESE SUPERCAR BY ANY NAME

You could call it Godzilla or the Skyline, but definitely call the Nissan GT-R amazing

It was around the third or fourth turn, as I cornered the 2017 Nissan GT-R on a tight canyon road high above the cliffs of Malibu, that it hit me: This thing is utterly mind-boggling. Not in the purely figurative sense, but mind-boggling in a literal way that leaves one open to the possibility that, just maybe, there's some mysterious place in the universe where mind can control matter. Such is the power of the latest iteration of the famed Japanese car also known by the nickname Godzilla. Fans of the massively popular and pioneering driving video game *Gran Turismo* may also know earlier models of the GT-R as the Skyline, which partially explains why I caught so many Los Angeles millennials drooling over the car.

This wasn't my first time driving a GT-R. I recall trying to contain my excitement after tackling a few Michigan back roads in the outgoing model some years ago. But the 2017 GT-R is far more exhilarating.

Much of that can be credited to a stiffer frame, which improves the car's handling in situations that call for tricky maneuvering. The GT-R's award-winning twin-turbo 3.8-liter V6 engine has also increased by 20 horsepower, for a total of 565 hp, which allows for quicker acceleration when you hammer down on the gas pedal. All that power is perfectly balanced by one of the most revolutionary all-wheel-drive systems in the game, leading to unparalleled confidence on the road. The GT-R's six-speed dual-clutch transmission has been refined for smoother shifting in normal city driving, but it's clear that the beast, which starts around $110,000, is most comfortable revving at higher speeds.

Cosmetically, the 2017 GT-R has an entirely overhauled face and hood, redesigned to improve the car's overall performance. And the interior has undergone upgraded modifications as well, including a new dashboard and an eight-inch touch screen, creating a more premium luxury feel. Still, it's the intoxicating, thrilling feeling I get when pushing the GT-R through a wicked turn that sells me on the idea that there's so much more to this supercar than its sheer power.—*Marcus Amick*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHANTAL ANDERSON

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What Are the Rules for Hooking Up When You're Home for the Holidays?

Q: *I go back home for the holidays every year and stay with my parents. I'm the only person in my group of high school friends who is single. It all makes me stir-crazy. Going on a date seems like a good excuse to get out of the house, but I don't know where to start. Should I hit up an old flame on Facebook? What if she asks to come back to my place?*

A: Few things put me in the mood quite like cranky shoppers, ugly sweaters and tipsy cousins on political rants. For many singles, being home for the holidays means watching *Elf* on a basic-cable loop and pretending to have answers to such questions as "What are you doing with your life?" When you come out of your turkey-induced coma, you realize the only physical contact you've had of late has been with your uncle's new wife with the new boobs. In the middle of your second *Law & Order* marathon, it hits you: You need to get laid.

BY **BRIDGET PHETASY**

Remember that technology is your friend, whether it's Tinder, Bumble or OkCupid. Just be prepared to swipe through every option in your suburban radius in five minutes. You'll probably see old classmates and think, Tinder over the holidays? That's sad. But know this: They're thinking the same about you. You've already drunkenly cyberstalked your high school girlfriend since breaking up with her years ago, so skip the judgment and just swipe right. Don't underestimate the joys of a mutual pity fuck. Ex sex is often the best sex, because a stranger rarely pleases the way someone who most likely remembers your kinks can. That being said, ex sex can be a terrible idea if you never got closure. It could release residual emotions, making it that much harder to survive the holidays alone. If the relationship is still complicated, swipe left.

Finding privacy can be a bigger issue than finding a match. If your childhood bedroom isn't full of abandoned workout equipment, it's a decent venue, especially since the risk of getting caught heightens pleasure. If your bedroom is now a wrapping room, consider the places I've hooked up in my hometown: Dive-bar bathrooms, movie theaters, garages and basements are all fair game. My go-to is the car, but steer clear of this option if your hookup isn't someone you already know. Car seats don't leave much room for foreplay, and taking a Bumble date to an abandoned parking lot will definitely raise red flags. If you're in your parents' car, clean up the DNA and condom wrappers. Crack the windows during sex and air out the car afterward.

A final note about everyone's favorite seasonal activity: drinking. Booze and being single during the holidays go together like whipped cream and pumpkin pie. Don't get sloppy, but if you do, remember not to bring your date home, where you'll inevitably end up making out on the couch and leaving her there to be discovered by your parents on Christmas morning. Yes, I have been in this situation. I'll never forget groggily waking up with a raging headache to Mr. Johnson saying, "Merry Christmas, Bridget. Would you like some coffee?" Learn from my misfortune and buy your one-night stand the best Christmas gift ever: an Uber ride home.

Questions? E-mail advisor@playboy.com.

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SHAWN STUSSY

The world's most influential street-style genius on growing up with design and returning to his original craft

AS TOLD TO **ETHAN STEWART**

It was always about surfboards. I made my first one at 13. Since then, that's been my job. Way before designing or my clothing line or even thinking about design, it was surfboards.

My parents had a printing shop that we hung around in as kids. They would pick us up from school, and we would go there and hang out until nine or 10 at night. I learned about printing and typesetting and old letterpress, pasting up negatives and chalking out the dust. My whole family was exposed to that at a young age. It was as if my dad had been a tailor or something; it was the family business. Graphic design, at least in terms of manipulating fonts and layouts, was something I grew up with.

Looking back, I still can't separate the two, surfboards and designing. I was always drawing stuff or doing little graphic typesetting things, so even when I was making my first boards I thought, Ooh, where am I going to put my little logo? How am I going to write "Stussy"? I wasn't thinking about these things specifically or individually; it wasn't "design" in that way. They were just happening. I was 13 years old, and it was life.

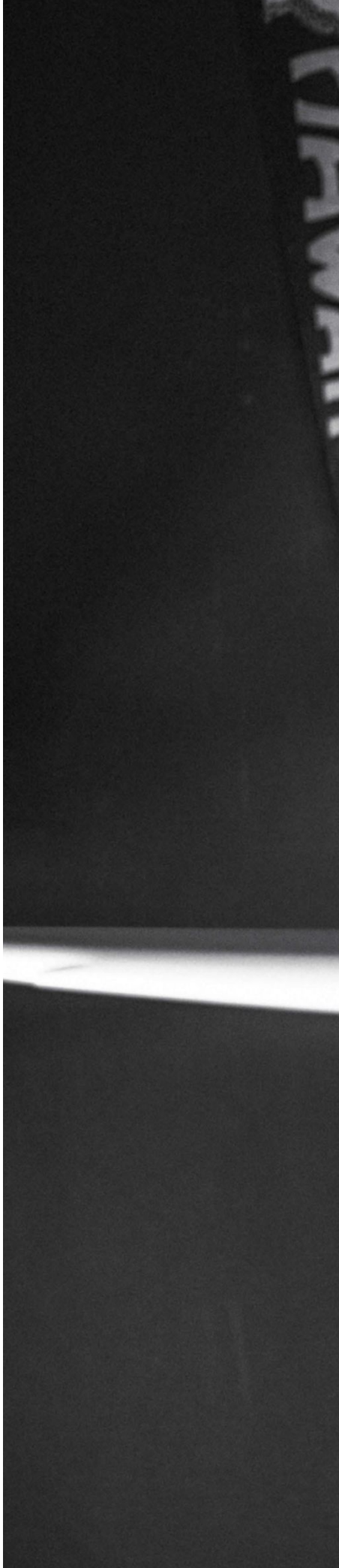
It was never a conscious plan, not in a million years. I was never like, "Hey, I'm going to make surfboards for my job in my adult life and start a clothing company based on the logo I put on those surfboards." I was just doing what I loved, staying interested and seeing where it led me. Luckily, it ended up being sustainable, but you don't know that when you're starting out. Often you still can't see it when you're halfway down the road. At a certain point, I guess you have to trust yourself.

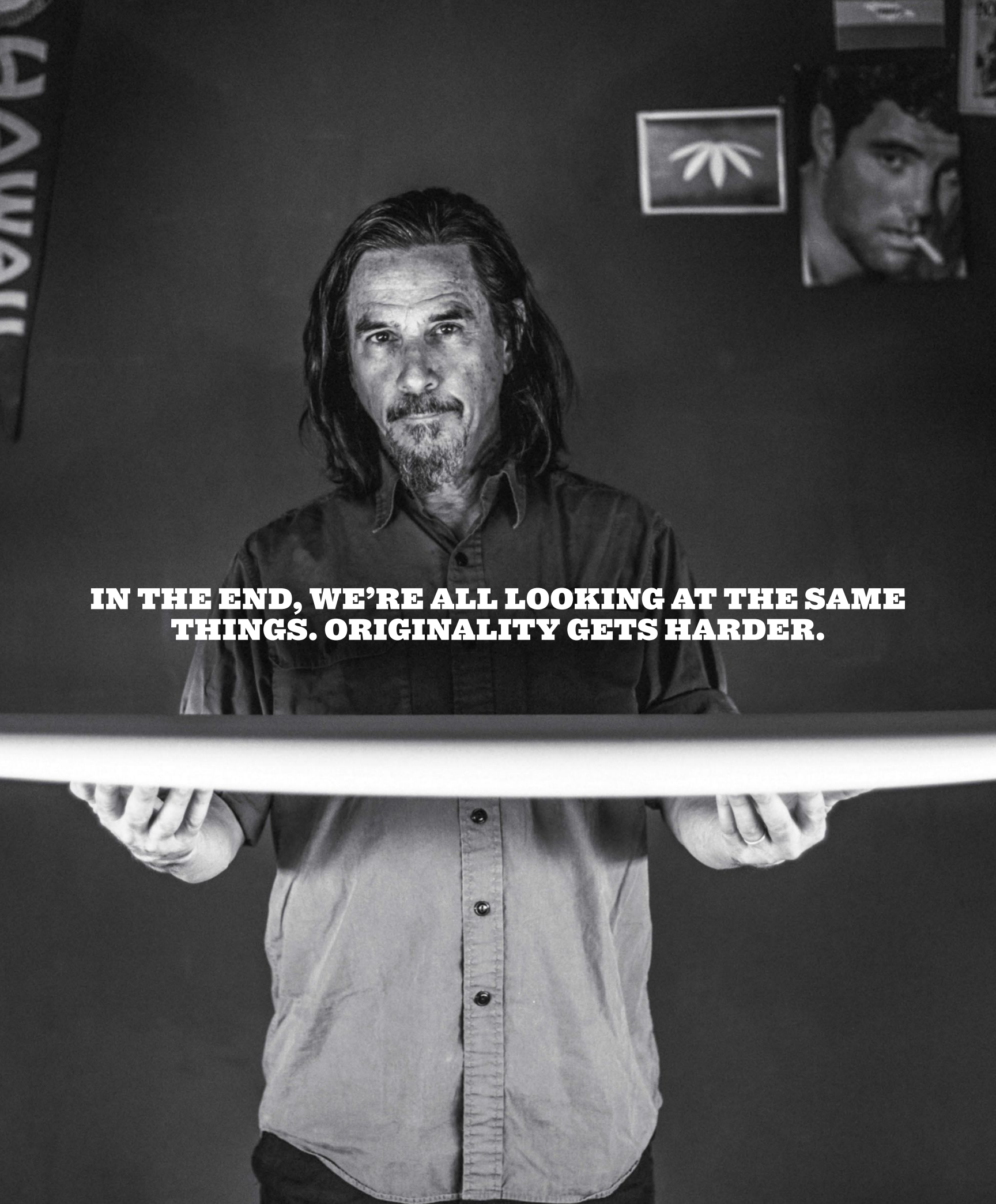
I started so young that by the time I had to make decisions about the worth of my work and my so-called talent, I already had a track record. It wasn't like I was 21 or 22, just out of college, and had to say, "Okay, now what am I going to do?" I never had to face that moment.

Nowadays, we're force-fed visuals. We download so much visual activity in any given day that it has become nearly impossible to find images we're passionate about. You just cruise through all these pictures with one flick of your hand. We all do it. It's a ton of information, but in the end, we're all looking at the same things. Originality gets harder. You can sit in your underpants in Prague and know where the hip Japanese guy was partying the night before. You used to have to go and physically find your influences; you had a real sense of discovery.

When I started doing my thing, there weren't a lot of original ideas either. I was appropriating. I was always getting little glimmers from somewhere else, but maybe those somewheres were more personal to me. I had to choose to seek them out. I had to get on a plane and leave the country, go to a gallery or find a certain magazine store in Tokyo. It wasn't easy, and 10,000 other people weren't looking at the same glimmer at the same time. I was watching my own campfire, just staring into the flames, and the ideas would come from that. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF JOHNSON



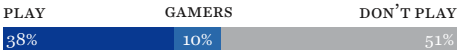

IN THE END, WE’RE ALL LOOKING AT THE SAME THINGS. ORIGINALITY GETS HARDER.

On Video Games

BY **BEN SCHOTT**

STATE OF PLAY

Almost half of American adults play video games, according to a 2015 Pew Research Center poll; only 10% of Americans identify as gamers:



Among men, 15% identify as gamers, compared with 6% of women. ¥ According to the Entertainment Software Association, the best-selling video games of 2015 were:

(1) *CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS III*
(2) *MADDEN NFL 16* • (3) *FALLOUT 4*
(4) *STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT*
(5) *NBA 2K16* • (6) *GRAND THEFT AUTO V*

The video game market is worth $99.6 billion, up 8.5% from last year, according to Newzoo:

Region	*share*	*revenue*	*change*
Asia-Pacific	47%	$46.6b	+10.7%
N. America	25%	$25.4b	+4.1%
EMEA	24%	$23.5b	+7.3%
Latin America	4%	$4.1b	+20.1%

Annual gaming growth is now led by mobile:

Cell phone	+23.7%	PC	+4.2%
Tablet	+15.1%	Web games	−7.5%
TV console	+4.5%	Handheld	−24.1%

READY PLAYER ONE

CONTROL ALT DELETE

¥ Alongside "It's-a-me, Mario!" the most famous video game catchphrase is surely "All your base are belong to us" from the Japanese shoot-'em-up *Zero Wing* (1989). The Japanese-to-English translation is made even more memorable by a grating voice synth. ¥ The titles currently in the World Video Game Hall of Fame are:

DOOM • *GRAND THEFT AUTO III* • *PONG* • *THE LEGEND OF ZELDA* • *THE OREGON TRAIL* • *PAC-MAN* • *THE SIMS* • *SONIC THE HEDGEHOG* • *SPACE INVADERS* • *SUPER MARIO BROS.* • *TETRIS* • *WORLD OF WARCRAFT*

¥ The dullest game is *Desert Bus,* devised by Penn & Teller in 1995 to mock the knee-jerk practice of blaming video games for juvenile delinquency. Players drive a constantly drifting bus in real time from Tucson to Vegas—an eight-hour journey—on a road that's completely straight, requiring ceaseless vigilance in a game that can't be paused. ¥ The Bartle taxonomy classifies gamers as killers, socializers, achievers or explorers, based on how they interact with a game's environment and other characters.

DIRTY SEXY MONEY

Sex has been part of gaming since *Donkey Kong* (1981) saw Mario rescue his girlfriend from a phallically nicknamed gorilla. Today, though many explicit titles are sold, 89% of games rated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board are fit for players under the age of 17:

EVERYONE	37%	TEEN	29%
EVERYONE 10+	23%	MATURE/ADULT	11%

Indeed, a recent analysis of 571 games released between 1983 and 2014 showed a significant decline in the sexualization of female characters over the past eight years.

WAR GAMES

Violence has been part of gaming since *Spacewar!* (1962) enabled MIT students to blow the crap out of enemy spacecraft. Since then, the debate has raged: Do violent games beget violent beings? The answer is...unclear. Granted, some mass murderers have been avid gamers. Anders Breivik, for example, "trained" on *Call of Duty* before he killed 77 people. Yet as video game sales have soared since the late 1990s, the rate of violent crime in America has plummeted.

FALLING DOWN

Tetris (1984) is based on seven four-square Tetrimino blocks:

In classic *Tetris* the shapes appear not randomly but in a roughly even distribution. To test gamers' skill (and sanity), tough *Tetris* clones have been devised, including Sam Hughes's *Hatetris* (2010), which sadistically delivers the statistically least-helpful Tetriminos.

GHOSTBUSTERS

Below are the four ghosts that pursue, and flee, in *Pac-Man* (1980):

	JAPANESE		ENGLISH		
	character	*nickname*	*character*	*nickname*	PERSONALITY TRAITS
	Oikake	Akabei	Shadow	Blinky	*leader of the pack*
	Machibuse	Pinky	Speedy	Pinky	*dogged in pursuit, ambush*
	Kimagure	Aosuke	Bashful	Inky	*shy, unpredictable*
	Otoboke	Guzuta	Pokey	Clyde	*slow and dumb, yet sly*

EVERY POKÉMON IN *POKÉMON GO:* Bulbasaur · Ivysaur · Venusaur · Charmander · Charmeleon · Charizard · Squirtle · Wartortle · Blastoise · Caterpie · Metapod · Butterfree · Weedle · Kakuna · Beedrill · Pidgey · Pidgeotto · Pidgeot · Rattata · Raticate · Spearow · Fearow · Ekans · Arbok · Pikachu · Raichu · Sandshrew · Sandslash · Nidoran · Nidorina · Nidoqueen · Nidoran · Nidorino · Nidoking · Clefairy · Clefable · Vulpix · Ninetails · Jigglypuff · Wigglytuff · Zubat · Golbat · Oddish · Gloom · Vileplume · Paras · Parasect · Venonat · Venomoth · Diglett · Dugtrio · Meowth · Persian · Psyduck · Golduck · Mankey · Primeape · Growlithe · Arcanine · Poliwag · Poliwhirl · Poliwrath · Abra · Kadabra · Alakazam · Machop · Machoke · Machamp · Bellsprout · Weepinbell · Victreebel · Tentacool · Tentacruel · Geodude · Graveler · Golem · Ponyta · Rapidash · Slowpoke · Slowbro · Magnemite · Magneton · Farfetch'd · Doduo · Dodrio · Seel · Dewgong · Grimer · Muk · Shellder · Cloyster · Gastly · Haunter · Gengar · Onix · Drowsee · Hypno · Krabby · Kingler · Voltorb · Electrode · Exeggcute · Exeggutor · Cubone · Marowak · Hitmonlee · Hitmonchan · Lickitung · Koffing · Weezing · Rhyhorn · Rhydon · Chansey · Tangela · Kangaskhan · Horsea · Seadra · Goldeen · Seaking · Staryu · Starmie · Mr. Mime · Scyther · Jynx · Electabuzz · Magmar · Pinsir · Tauros · Magikarp · Gyarados · Lapras · Ditto · Eevee · Vaporeon · Jolteon · Flareon · Porygon · Omanyte · Omastar · Kabuto · Kabutops · Aerodactyl · Snorlax · Articuno · Zapdos · Moltres · Dratini · Dragonair · Dragonite · Mewtwo · Mew · Gotta Catch 'Em All!

ANNA KENDRICK

The actress and singer discusses her revealing new book, her star turn in Up in the Air and the quirks that fuel the work. Also, dick pics

BY **DANIELLE BACHER** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHLOE AFTEL**

Q1: *When did it hit you that you were no longer a struggling young woman living in a shit hole in Los Angeles?*

KENDRICK: Weird things will trigger that sensation of "Holy crap! How did I get here?" It will be like when I'm checking out at the doctor's office. I vividly remember being 19 years old, not having health insurance and moving to Los Angeles. I needed to go to the doctor, and it was 30 times more expensive than I was expecting it to be. Now when I'm checking out and there's a balance of $70, I'm like, "Yeah, I'm making it rain up in this doctor's office!" I very distinctly remember not having $70.

Q2: *In your new book, Scrappy Little Nobody, you say you knew you were crazy at a young age. Why haven't you ever seen a therapist?*

KENDRICK: I never felt normal, but I actually think that's a way more common feeling than I realized. Honestly, I haven't been to a therapist because it was one of the many things I thought I would magically know how to do as an adult, but I don't. I thought someone was going to tell me so many things. Like when I was 25, I wanted to buy a rug. Why didn't anyone tell me that rugs are like the most expensive thing in the world? People are selling rugs for $10,000 as if that weren't absolute insanity. Why isn't that mentioned at some point in your life? "Oh, by the way, people are going to try to sell you rugs that cost so much money that you're going to want to smash a window."

Q3: *You're now 31. Do you feel younger than you actually are?*

KENDRICK: I definitely feel like a little old lady at heart. I'm very grumpy and grizzled but simultaneously really immature. So I'm the worst of a child and the worst of an old lady. I'm a treat, basically.

Q4: *You also say that you're a "loud, hyperactive loser." Was it difficult to publish such sharp words about yourself?*

KENDRICK: I guess the best I can hope for is that people relate to that feeling. If you can't get on board with overthinking, I don't know how much we can connect. I'm an overtalker. When I'm trying to figure out what to do about something, I'll bend someone's ear. I understand if they just want to duct-tape my face shut.

Q5: *Your parents divorced when you were 15. Why did you leave that out of the book?*

KENDRICK: Honestly, it was one of many things I wanted to write about, but it just didn't end up jelling. It felt more like a police report than a chapter. The miraculous thing about that situation was that my parents were so civil and respectful throughout the process. It made me a poster child for divorce. If they'd stayed together and been unhappy, it would have messed up my understanding of what marriage should look like. I'm very pro-divorce. I know that sounds crazy, but Louis C.K. did this great bit about how divorce should never be sad. There are never two people madly in love and perfect for each other who get divorced.

Q6: *You've said that you feel unworthy of success. Why?*

KENDRICK: It's not that I feel unworthy; it's just that I used to buy into the idea that some people are better. I'm learning every day, over and over, that we're all the same. Really, it was more that I just wanted to pay the bills doing what I love and, ideally, not have a second job.

It was the biggest dream I allowed myself to have.

Q7: *You've sung and acted on Broadway and in movies including the Pitch Perfect franchise and Into the Woods. Which is weirder, watching yourself sing or watching yourself act?*

KENDRICK: Growing up, people told me I should sing in a recital or something, but it was mostly a way to combat the fact that I wouldn't fucking stop singing. I really liked to scream-sing. If I'd kept on singing like that, I would have lost my voice before I hit the age of seven. I think it's less weird to watch myself sing than watch myself act. When I watch myself sing, I can appreciate the music because I didn't write it. I've never written a script either, but there's something a little rawer with acting. I tried to watch one of my movies alone in a screening room, and the entire time I was thinking, You are a monster. You are terrible!

Q8: *It seems every time you smoke weed, you get really paranoid. Why the hell do you do it?*

KENDRICK: [*Laughs*] About two years ago I had one of those game-changing paranoid experiences, and I haven't smoked weed since. I was probably remembering all the bad trips. It was a big pastime. For whatever reason, I had more bad experiences than good experiences, so I thought I shouldn't do it anymore. I've never been addicted to anything. I would be a much more interesting person if I were addicted to OxyContin.

Q9: *You mention in your book that you kept a journal. What did you write about losing your virginity?*

KENDRICK: I just wrote, "When am I going to lose my virginity? Like, really, when is it going to happen? What is it going to be like? How long, and at what point will it be too late and I'll have to be a virgin forever because you can't lose your virginity past a certain age?" I remember literally writing, "It's going to happen at some point and someone is going to be on top of me, and we'll be having sex and I'll probably think of this diary entry." It's a pretty meta diary.

Q10: *We've heard that you have a lot of sex dreams. What's the craziest one?*

KENDRICK: Oh my God, do I? I don't want to name the actor, but I dream about someone I find really creepy but other people might find totally attractive. I've had two sex dreams about him, which is really awkward. I woke up like, What the hell was that about? I can have a sex dream about anyone in the world and it was *that* guy? Thanks a lot, dream brain!

Q11: *Are you pro– or anti–dick pic?*

KENDRICK: Now, this is a lose-lose question for me. I can't be pro, because then I'll get a bunch of dick pics. And I can't be anti, because I'll also get a bunch of dick pics. It's just setting me up for failure. A friend of mine once said she had been to a comedy show, and it changed her perspective on it. This guy said, "If you think you're hot shit but don't have a dick in your phone, you need to reconsider it." I guess that is a way to recontextualize.

Q12: *What's the most awkward song you've had sex to?*

KENDRICK: "Lapdance" by N.E.R.D. It was just too on the nose, and we ended up laughing. It's a really sexy song, but then it was just kind of like...eh. It came on shuffle, and we were both trying to stay in the moment. We were like, "Are we in a music video? What is going on?"

Q13: *Why are you so uncomfortable doing nude and kissing scenes?*

KENDRICK: It's so mechanical; it wasn't the actor's idea to kiss me. We just have to look at each other and say, "Okay, I guess we are doing this now." For women, the fact that someone wants to kiss you is the exciting part. If someone's kissing you when they don't particularly want to be, it takes the fun out of it. Also, it's the makeup department's job to have mints, which is random. Why the makeup department?

Q14: *How much did you relate to your extremely type-A character in Up in the Air?*

KENDRICK: I related to my character a lot, but I think that's because she's probably one of the only people on the planet who's more uptight than I am.

Q15: *What about acting with George Clooney?*

KENDRICK: Everything you want George Clooney to be, he is that. I was nervous to act with him, but he was really warm and accommodating. He's probably used to people being nervous around him at this point.

Q16: *Your new movie The Accountant came out this October. Ben Affleck's character is an autistic savant with obsessive-compulsive disorder. How did his condition affect your portrayal of your character?*

KENDRICK: Ben and Gavin O'Connor, the director, did a lot of research for this film. They really understood the responsibility they had to portray someone who's on the spectrum. I did my research through reading, and I prepared myself to interact with Ben however he decided to play that character. What was nice for me was playing someone who's probably the only person in that character's life who's in awe of him. She's not freaked out; she thinks he's amazing. Since Ben's character is more closed off, it forced me to listen a lot, which is the best thing you can do as an actor anyway.

Q17: *You've said that singing at the Oscars last year is one of your top three scariest experiences. What was another?*

KENDRICK: One was when I did *Letterman,* because I had never done a talk show before. What if I sit down and start screaming? What if the universe swallows me up? He's terrifying. He wanted me to do "Cups" from *Pitch Perfect,* and I was like, "Well, yeah, whatever he wants, because he is so biting and his wit is so icy and if you get on his bad side...." Afterward, I just got the hell out of there, ran to my hotel room and waited for it to come on. I was also on Twitter while watching it,

IF YOU CAN'T GET ON BOARD WITH OVERTHINKING, I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH WE CAN CONNECT.

which I would never do now. That's just setting yourself up for disaster.

Q18: *Let's take it a few steps further: Why do you fear death so much?*

KENDRICK: It's like from that song: "I swear there ain't no heaven, but I pray there ain't no hell." I was raised going to church, and I had horrible anxiety about going to hell. My parents were like, "Of course you are not going to hell. You are a little girl. What are you thinking?" Were they not paying attention in church when they said that basically anyone who ever does anything bad is going to burn in a fire forever? I wasn't even Catholic; I was raised Protestant. I think the previous generation got so messed up by Catholic guilt that they went Episcopalian. They thought, Oh, my kids are going to love church. But they're still reading from the Old Testament. So yeah, I think I'm afraid of being tortured forever. What if hell is real? I'm going to do some good deeds just in case.

Q19: *How close is the real Anna to the one we see in the media?*

KENDRICK: [*Laughs*] I don't know. Oh my God, I'm going to pee so much after this interview. I was just thinking that if I died and somebody talked to every single friend and acquaintance of mine, and read every journal and diary entry I'd ever written, I don't think they would know anything about me. I mean, it's not like my goal is for everyone in the world to know completely who I am.

Q20: *What was it like having cake smeared all over your face in the upcoming Table 19? Would you ever bring a cake fight into the bedroom?*

KENDRICK: I loved the cake all over my face. I tweeted at the time that I was covered in frosting and Lisa Kudrow had to brush my frosted hair away from my face. I was living some weird 1990s fantasy. But yeah, I think food in the bedroom could totally go hand in hand, specifically with vanilla frosting. Chocolate I don't understand. It's too scatological; it looks like poop. But vanilla frosting I can get on board with. I was trying to be a lady in talking about poop, but I'm not a lady. ■

Sci-Fi's Secret Weapon

Alan Tudyk *was uniquely qualified to play K-2SO, the towering droid of Rogue One: A Star Wars Story. Having starred in the 2004 film I, Robot, he already knew his way around a motion-capture suit. As for the stilts that lend K-2 its height, he was experienced there too—thanks to an East Village clown show. Maybe Tudyk has more in common with K-2 than he does with Wray Nerely, his hapless alter ego on the comedy series Con Man. Both men are science-fiction veterans, but unlike Tudyk, Nerely hates the convention circuit. Here's Tudyk on his absurd, happy life in sci-fi.*

Alan Tudyk

ON BECOMING K-2SO

"The stilts were pretty easy to learn on: I had done some stilt work in a clown show off-off-off-off-Broadway a few years ago. I had to do this salsa dance in stilts. They were definitely not engineered by ILM, and they were a lot higher than the ones I learned to run around in for *Rogue.* K-2's really cool to have in a room—even if I'm just standing in a scene wearing my stilts and what look like pajamas."

ON DROID MAGNETISM

"I'm blown away by how well-rounded C-3PO is. His face doesn't move at all; it's his voice. R2-D2 and BB-8 don't even speak a language you can understand, but in this world it's how people react to them. I feel like I originally saw BB-8 in *Cast Away,* playing Wilson. I don't know if it was a substance-abuse thing, because he really dropped off, but then he came back and it was like, 'Whoa, way to go!'"

ON FAN LOVE

"The main difference between me and Wray, and the whole point of *Con Man,* is that he's missing how great his life is. It's hard to miss it when you're surrounded by people who appreciate the work you've done—things you've put time and work into that other people haven't seen. But when somebody comes up to Wray and says, 'I love that you did that,' he takes it as an insult."

ON DRAWING FROM LIFE

"Nathan Fillion and I did *Halo 3.* I asked him, 'So what was it like, dude?' And he was like, 'It was great. I did all the, you know, [*in gruff voice*] "Follow me, this way! We've got them on the run!"' And all of mine were, '*Owww,* that hurt! They're usin' real bullets! I got a new plan: Let's hide!' So I'm that guy—all the chickenshit soldiers in *Halo 3.* But then I got to make fun of that on *Con Man.*"

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ONE SMALL STEP FOR STAND-UP

Reggie Watts and the diverse, digital and beautifully weird new age of comedy

BY **BRIAN HEATER**

"We here at Netflix believe: *Fuck TV,*" Reggie Watts tells the crowd with a smile. "We're moving into the future. This is an experimental show. You might not even see this on Netflix. This is an incubator R&D program designed to test the limits of what a viewer can stand."

Those who know the comedian from his stream-of-consciousness stand-up, his meta-hysterical TED Talk or his bandleader gig on *The Late Late Show* will tell you that this moment, from his new special, is just Reggie being Reggie. But no matter how far out there he gets, Watts always has a point, and that Netflix line is no exception. The past few years have found the streaming service drastically increasing its output of original stand-up specials—testing the limits of how much stand-up a viewer can stand. Clearly we haven't hit one yet.

Watts's special, *Spatial,* is his latest entry in what *The Wall Street Journal* has called "the new comedy economy," a recent surge in the form's evolution led by a handful of streaming services. In August, Netflix announced Watts's special along with seven others, from bigwigs including Dana Carvey and Cedric the Entertainer to fresh faces like Michael Che.

To date, Netflix has produced 43 of its own comedy specials—19 this year alone. Nearly triple that number of non-Netflix-produced specials are currently available for streaming through the U.S. version of the service. Meanwhile, Comedy Dynamics, the country's largest independent stand-up comedy producer, has seen its own number jump several times in the past few years, from seven specials in 2006 to 51 in 2016.

"There's a story I like to tell," says Comedy Dynamics president and founder Brian Volk-Weiss. "At the end of 2015, we had a company-wide meeting. I told the company that the year was an anomaly and we would never make that many specials again. Sure enough, I looked

like an idiot, because this year we produced about 35 percent more."

You could call it a second golden age for recorded stand-up, a return of sorts to the glory days of the 1980s, when Robin Williams, Eddie Murphy and *Comic Relief* specials populated screens both big and small. But back then there was no YouTube.

That medium, so widely bemoaned by comedians as a joke burner, has actually reignited interest in the genre. When comedy is served up in free, joke-length portions, it's much easier to discover new voices without having to pay for cable or wade through hour-long specials. And more content means more power to underrepresented artists and communities.

"As long as it means more access to more unique voices that are talking about their experience in comedy, I say the more the better," says comedian Patton Oswalt, whose first Netflix special, *Talking for Clapping,* arrived in April. "It makes the world feel more connected and way less scary and lonely if there are more people talking about different experiences and making them something everyone can relate to."

No one embodies this breaking of barriers like Watts, one of the most idiosyncratic and innovative comic performers working today. "I think he's brilliant," Oswalt says. "He's a unique voice. He takes what has become common grammar and really tweaks it to his own sensibility. That's the sign of a great comedian."

For its part, Netflix seems to have taken a page out of HBO's stand-up playbook by giving performers a platform to be themselves. And without the bureaucratic baggage of traditional networks, Netflix is better equipped to take on a project as flat-out weird as *Spatial.* The show opens with the words "Somewhere in the Vega star system" and unfolds into a mélange of free-form improvised musical comedy, absurdist sitcom sketches, colorful costume changes and a shadowy striptease. Watts presides over much of the entropic proceedings in a T-shirt bearing the words CHAOTIC GOOD in big block letters—the perfect two-word distillation of Watts's genius.

"In a way, Netflix is thinking like an artist," Watts says, referring to its rapid development pace. "They're able to keep their minds in a more creative space and kind of go for it, and they're being rewarded for that."

It might just be the ideal platform for the comedian, whose work is typically a combination of telepathic wordplay and complex comedic musical improvisations created live on stage with a sampler. "Pretty much the whole special is improvised," Watts says. "They were able to make that happen. And I think in that format, given the constraints we had, we were able to achieve quite a bit of what I wanted to have happen and also some really nice surprises."

But just as all the chaotic good of *Spatial* boils down to Watts's extraordinary voice, body and brain, stand-up has remained remarkably consistent even as distribution methods and attention spans have shifted. Sketches, costumes and interpretive dancing aside, Watts is just a person speaking to an audience.

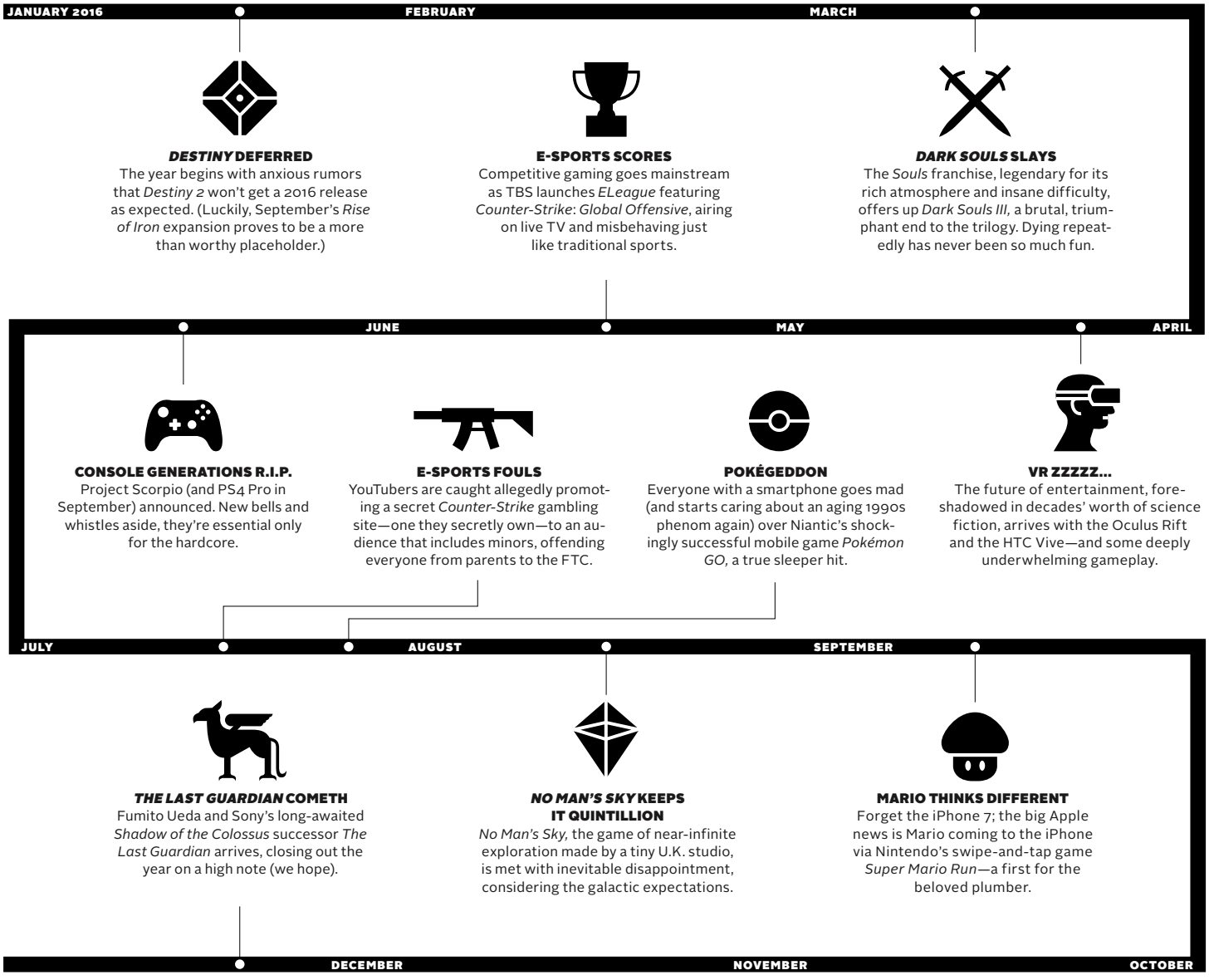
"Stand-up is about the material and the delivery," says Volk-Weiss. "What worked in 1950 you can't really improve too much in 2016. Comedy is a lot more diverse than it was, which is a great thing, but you can't really beat a man or a woman delivering jokes with a microphone." ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUTUMN DE WILDE

THE (INSANE) YEAR IN GAMING

With its expectations, insurgents and scandals, 2016 was gaming's Yeezy year

Whether you're a casual button-masher or an e-sports fanatic, a VR believer or a Bulbasaur hunter, you undoubtedly felt the gaming world's vertiginous highs and lows throughout 2016. Hotly anticipated games and technologies landed with a thud, while unheralded titles became cultural touchstones—to say nothing of underground-gambling or online-harassment scandals. Clearly the gaming world, like the world at large, is in a molten state. Join us as we revisit 10 of the year's key moments.—*Mike Rougeau*



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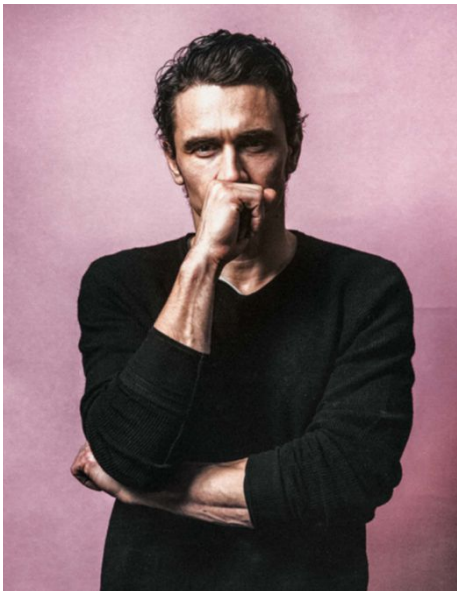
COLUMN

FRANCOFILE

*Writer **George Pelecanos** on the joy of the 1970s, what makes a good crime writer, working on The Wire and why he isn't afraid to make you uncomfortable*



BY
JAMES FRANCO

JAMES FRANCO: A lot of your books are set in Washington, D.C. in the 1970s, when you were a teenager. How did that city become such a big part of your writing?

GEORGE PELECANOS: My dad had a diner in Washington, and I worked for him from a very early age. When I was 11, I was out there delivering food on foot. I fell in love with the city, and I'm talking about everything—the people, the music, the culture and what was going on at the time. This was right in the wake of the riots, and D.C. was a black city. When I was a kid, D.C. was, like, 80 percent black. For a young guy, it doesn't matter what color you are. That's very exciting, you know? Couple that with the music, with the funk and soul movement of the 1970s and everything, and I just loved it. At the same time, I noticed that nobody was really writing fiction about the city. All the books and movies about Washington are always about the government and never about the people who actually live there.

FRANCO: You published your debut novel, *A Firing Offense,* when you were 35. You've written a total of 19 crime novels. How did you develop the inside knowledge to write about police officers?

PELECANOS: I feel these kinds of books should take readers where they're either unwilling or unable to go. To do that, you have to go there yourself and experience a lot of shit. So in the beginning, I used to do what any citizen can do: I'd walk into a police station and say, "I want to ride with a police officer tonight." Then you just sign a form that's like an insurance waiver, and you get in the car and ride with these guys at night. I saw a lot of cool stuff, and I would go to trials too, which is also a citizen's right. I would walk into a murder trial and sit there for a week and listen to the language. I didn't care about the procedural stuff. I wanted to hear the people up on the stand. I wanted to hear the language, because there's poetry in that. When I got involved with *The Wire,* it opened a lot of doors for me. Before I wrote *The Night Gardener,* I wanted to write a big novel about homicide police in D.C., but homicide is traditionally a very closed family.

FRANCO: Why is that?

PELECANOS: They don't trust writers for the simple reason that journalists often write things about them that aren't accurate or true, and that extends to novelists. They don't give a shit. They're not impressed. If you're Michael Connelly, you've got complete access to the LAPD. I was just a guy writing these little books in D.C. But when *The Wire* came out, they opened their arms to me. The police like *The Wire* because we always shit on the brass.

FRANCO: Your books often deal with race relations. Is that hard to navigate as a white writer?

PELECANOS: It is endlessly fascinating to me having grown up the way I did and in that era. I also have two black sons. I've watched them grow up in the world and seen them shaken down many, many times because of the color of their skin. So I've sort of experienced that side of it too as a white guy, which is an odd thing. Fifteen years ago I wrote a book called *Right As Rain,* which is about the police shooting a guy because he's black. The victim is a black police officer who isn't in uniform and wanders onto a crime scene, and he's shot by a white police officer. I had walkouts when I was on that book tour. I had people walking out when I started talking about this stuff, as if it wasn't true. And look where we are today. It took a black president to show people how much racism there is still in this country. That was supposed to be solved, right? Everybody thought that was over until we had a black president. So I think it's still worth talking about.

FRANCO: You and I deal with that on the show we're shooting, *The Deuce,* which is also set in the 1970s. How do you depict both the period and the behavior of people accurately but not come across as though you support the prejudice of the characters?

PELECANOS: I feel strongly that you have to let the characters speak as they would speak in their time and trust the viewer or the reader to know that you're writing honestly. When your character, Vincent, talks about the character Paul, he talks about "fag bars" and "fairies," but he's not a bad guy. He's a guy of his time who means no malice, but he was brought up a certain way in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. That's what he would say. I can't worry if a viewer sees that and is offended or thinks that Vincent is homophobic, because I know those are the words Vincent would use in 1971. And the same thing goes with dropping the *N* word. If somebody's going to do it, if a character would do it, I have no problem with writing it, because it's honest. Doing the opposite is the death of art, man. That's what tarnishes your work, giving up the honesty. To placate people or make them less uncomfortable is always the wrong thing to do. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE MA

BURTON × PLAYBOY

With all due respect, we're back at it again, with a collection of Playboy inspired Winter Necessities. Here we have Mikkel Bang finding wild with Playmate Gia Marie

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He Wants to Watch

Some men are asking their wives to have sex with other men while they watch. And some women are saying yes

Janine had always lived a relatively monogamous life—that is, until her husband of less than a year revealed he wanted to watch her have sex with another man. "I tried it out of fear of disappointing him," she says. The 31-year-old advertising manager says she was initially buoyed by the act because of her ability to please her husband. "I've never been so sexual or confident," she says. One night, as her husband was ostensibly savoring the sight of Janine having sex with another man, he interrupted them. "Keep going. I'll be right back," her husband said, leaving the room. Twenty minutes later, Janine found him watching TV in the living room. "I was doing this for him, and he wasn't even actively participating," she says. That night Janine felt used by her husband. This scenario reflects the complicated psychology behind the sexual fetish of cuckolding.

The traditional definition of a cuckold is a man who is made a fool by his obliviousness to his wife's infidelity. Most men are unlikely to belittle their own manhood or tolerate seeing the woman they love sleeping with someone else. Except that some men want just that.

As a sexual fetish—and it is a notable fetish, the subject of hundreds of porn scenes—cuckolding is when a man watches his wife having sex with another man, called a bull, and gets off on the psychological tension the situation creates. "Being a cuckold is to experience a form of masochism in which emotions are the sources of pleasure," explains Ricardo Rieppi, a psychologist in New York City. "Cuckolds need to experience these feelings in order to experience a high."

Unlike the more common "hot wife" fantasy, which focuses on wives having sex with other men to enhance their own pleasure, cuckolding centers on men achieving pleasure through their own humiliation. "Many modern couples interested in new paths to pleasure and fun use 'hot wife' and 'cuckold' interchangeably," says Heather McPherson, a sex therapist in Austin, Texas and CEO and founder of the Southwest Sexual Health Alliance. "But the hot-wife lifestyle is about fulfilling the fantasies for one or both partners, as well as the wife's personal growth, sexual exploration and freedom."

Cuckolding, on the other hand, is all about the man's desire, and it's not just about the pleasure of submission or humiliation; if that were the case, one would imagine that leather whips, furry handcuffs or bondage ropes could achieve the same result. For cuckolds, it's also about control. "The male partner may be submissive, but he also holds all the power," McPherson explains. That's because while his wife is having sex with another man, a cuckold can look or walk away at any time—which is exactly what happened to Janine. In cuckolding, the man is always in command, even if he bows out in the middle of an intimate encounter.

Having multiple sexual partners is more acceptable in today's society than in past eras, but that doesn't mean people are more open-minded about extramarital sex. In fact, a 2015 study of America's shifting attitudes toward sex, published in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior,* found that extramarital sex remains taboo, even as people have become more tolerant of adolescent sex, premarital sex and same-sex sexual activities over the past four decades. In 1973, four percent of respondents said cheating was tolerable; in 2012, only one percent did.

While changing attitudes have allowed prime-time TV to air heterosexual representations of once-deviant sex acts such as pegging (*Broad City*), rimming (*Girls*) and anal sex (*The Mindy Project*), cuckolding has yet to break into mainstream pop culture. It isn't expected to anytime soon, nor is participating in it likely to be a goal in most relationships. Just consider how icky most of us feel watching fictional TV characters jump from one person's bed to another's (*Friends*) or cheat on their partners (*The Walking Dead*). That material is tame compared with the tricky nature of accurately portraying—and thus normalizing—infidelity as a sexual turn-on. Admitting to an interest in cuckolding can be intimidating, but understanding the science behind such urges may help a man explain his curiosity to his partner.

BY **ELIZABETH WEISS**

According to David J. Ley, author of *Insatiable Wives: Women Who Stray and the Men Who Love Them,* a man's desire to be cuckolded is almost universally based on a male fantasy. Ley identifies such motivations as vicarious bisexuality or the excitement a man feels watching a woman be fulfilled in ways he can't offer. The desire to be cuckolded may also be hardwired in the brain. "Our evolutionary history of sexual competition has affected how men respond to the idea that their female mate may have been unfaithful," says Ley. "Men have more vigorous sex, they get erect again sooner and their orgasms are more powerful, delivering greater quantities of sperm. All of this is designed to psychologically and biologically compete with the sperm of another man."

While cuckolding is primarily focused on male pleasure, it can have sexual benefits for women too. Instead of feeling unhappy about her husband's desire to be cuckolded, Karen, a stay-at-home mom in her 30s, was titillated. Their cuckolding stayed private initially, with Karen arousing her husband by telling him about a well-endowed former boyfriend. "I realized the more jealous and humiliated my husband was, the more turned-on he got," she says. In turn, his lust stimulated her.

McPherson tells the tale of another woman who had slept only with her husband, leading to long-suppressed sexual cravings. "She suggested the cuckold lifestyle as a way for her to experience having sex with another man," McPherson says, "and the fantasy happened to turn on her husband. They started exploring the lifestyle, and she became more confident and assertive. Cuckolding freed them both and encouraged them to pursue their desires." In fact, while some couples experiment with cuckolding because the husband can't satisfy his wife's sexual appetite, others simply try it to spice up their sex lives.

There is a consensus among mental health experts that this lifestyle—indeed, any nontraditional sexual lifestyle—must be highly individualized and mutually pursued in order to function. "Both partners have to want it. If it is just the husband's fantasy, it won't work," says Karen. Communication is of the utmost importance, in and out of the bedroom. "A wife needs to be verbally open with her husband and ensure that his sexual desires are being met," she says. "Any jealousy needs to be communicated often and openly between spouses."

So how does a man find a bull and invite him to have sex with his wife? Both partners often have a say in who will join them, though every couple develops their own set of fetish rules. "Although the fantasy is that men will be lining up to screw your wife, lots of couples report that those are not the kind of men they want to trust with their secret, let alone their sex lives and the wife's body," Ley says.

Unlike Janine's now ex-husband, who found their bulls anonymously online, Karen proposed that she and her husband invite his best friend to be their first, after the friend had privately made a pass at her. "I don't have sex with just anyone. There has to be some emotional connection," says Karen. "The main rule, though, is that there's no cheating. I can't go to bed with another man without my husband's knowledge. He wants to be there to watch." ■

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY KALEN HOLLOMON

HOW TO BUILD A BETTER WHITE HOUSE

The following months will determine whether the president-elect will succeed or fail before even setting foot in the Oval Office

BY **JOHN MERONEY**

For a new president, no time is more fraught with peril than the period between Election Day and the swearing-in ceremony on January 20. This so-called transition period costs about $40 million and amounts to the biggest power grab in the world. More important, how the president-elect plays this interval will determine whether the next four years are a triumph or a disaster.

"Presidential campaigns are like an MRI for the soul—whoever you are, eventually people will find out." That's the famous line Barack Obama's chief strategist, David Axelrod, uses to describe the long national nightmare we've just endured. But the first few days post-election and how our new president spends them are just as revealing.

The groundwork began in earnest this summer when Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump established their transition offices in Washington, D.C. The incoming president must fill about 8,000 jobs and so must be ready to put operations into overdrive the morning after Election Day. It's a painstaking process: The FBI performs background checks on all new employees, and 800 of them will have to undergo U.S. Senate approval. "The FBI checks are quick if you have no financial holdings, you have never traveled and you have lived in the same place for 30 years," said an aide who worked for President George W. Bush in a *New York Times* interview. No wonder many presidential appointees will still be running the gauntlet in August.

"Bill Clinton would ask for more names, saying the lists didn't have enough people of stature or anyone who'd helped get him elected," says political journalist and author Elizabeth Drew, who covered the first few years of his presidency.

When Clinton tried to fast-track the nomination of Zoë Baird for attorney general, his team didn't perform enough due diligence and was embarrassed when it was revealed that Baird had employed an illegal immigrant as a nanny. This erupted into one of those minor Washington scandals that won't go away. Clinton was forced to rescind Baird's nomination and start over, costing his presidency valuable time.

The other risk for the president-elect is disloyal new employees. Jimmy Carter won the White House as an outsider campaigning against the establishment, including members of his own Democratic Party. But there weren't enough qualified outsiders to join him in office, so he hired party hacks—many of whom hated him. In three years, they turned on an embattled Carter and massed around Senator Ted Kennedy, who challenged him for renomination. "If Kennedy runs, I'll whip his ass," Carter said, and though he did just that, the internal party opposition wounded Carter and contributed to his failure to win reelection.

The most successful presidents come into office with a clear legislative agenda. Ronald Reagan focused on turning around an economy that was in recession, even pushing his budget and tax policies through Congress while recovering from an assassination attempt. Before summer ended, he'd made a deal with Congress that he signed into law. When Reagan was reelected in 1984, he won in a landslide of 525 electoral votes.

Advisors to Bill Clinton still comment on how he just couldn't stop campaigning after his first election—from talking to volleyball players in Santa Barbara to greeting 30,000 shoppers at a Los Angeles–area mall. By the time he took office, he was overwhelmed. "It was totally chaotic," says one of his transition staffers. It didn't help that Clinton's agenda was a hodgepodge—gays in the military, health care overhaul, economic policies. The Republicans exploited his lack of focus and in two years won back control of Congress, creating a GOP opposition that spiraled for the rest of Clinton's presidency and continues today.

Perhaps most important is knowing how to "work the levers of power in Washington," says commentator Chris Matthews. He was a speechwriter for Carter and then worked for Democratic House Speaker Tip O'Neill during the Reagan presidency. Reagan was a master at getting cozy with Congress in his first term, something Obama ignored. "Reagan was fond of O'Neill's motto that political battles ended at six o'clock," Matthews says. "When he would call O'Neill, Reagan would say, 'Hello, Tip, is it after six?' "

President John F. Kennedy's speechwriter Ted Sorensen once said that in those early days of a new administration, failure is unthinkable. "In the heady atmosphere of infallibility that follows successful campaigns, it is hard not to be impressed by the secret maps, arcane terminology, gold braids and experts' crisp, confident manner," he wrote. "Success is in the air"—and after surviving the arduous adventure of getting elected, that's exactly when some of the greatest presidential campaigners have faltered as presidents. ■

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BILLY BOB THORNTON

The tattoos alone tell a wild story. All those cherubs and arrowed hearts adorning Billy Bob Thornton's razor-sharp frame are like an illuminated manuscript on love, loss and squirrelly good times. NOTHIN' DOIN', *scripted on his left biceps, is the name of a party band he played with in the 1970s. The magic mushroom on his right calf celebrates his beloved Allman Brothers and Lord knows what else. Thornton's kids (he has four by three women) leave their marks too, as does Connie Angland, his current wife—Mrs. Billy Bob number six. The most striking is a vibrant angel in the crook of his left arm, shedding bloodred leaves. It now reads* PEACE, *though it once spelled* ANGELINA. *"That was probably the most painful one to ink," Thornton says.*

Here's a little show-business secret: Some of our finest character actors are absolute bores off-screen. We're talking celebrated Oscar winners you wouldn't want to share a cab with. There's no such disappointment with Thornton. He's tackled wide-ranging roles in movies such as *Sling Blade, Friday Night Lights, A Simple Plan* and *Armageddon,* and he's every bit as riveting when he's sitting straight across from you. The intensity, the oddness, the feeling that he'll forever be an outsider—it's downright mesmerizing. And contagious: You feel his influence in the brooding backwoods banter of Matthew McConaughey's Rustin Cohle character from the first season of *True Detective* and in Bradley Cooper's emotional transparency in *American Sniper.* Existentialist torment with a country twang—that's Thornton.

In the past two years alone, Thornton has worked on more than a dozen films and television shows, including *Our Brand Is Crisis, Bad Santa 2* (out this holiday season), FX's *Fargo* and David E. Kelley's new legal drama, *Goliath,* on Amazon. His return to the ever-shifting ground of TV (one of his earliest roles was a bit part on *Matlock*) is resulting in some of his best work yet.

Billy Bob Thornton is his real name, bestowed on him August 4, 1955. His father, Billy Ray, was a high school history teacher and basketball coach, and his mother, Virginia—who is Native American, English and Spanish—worked at the telephone company and as a psychic. Thornton spent much of his childhood at the backwoods house his maternal grandparents owned in rural Alpine, Arkansas. They ate whatever his grandfather caught, which meant squirrel and possum on good nights. The family later moved to Malvern, where Thornton got into theater, rock and roll, baseball, drugs and girls. Adversity was never far: His father beat him, and a younger brother died of heart failure at the age of 30.

The gauzy cinematic breakthrough scene happened after Thornton kicked his worst habits and moved to Los Angeles. He was working as a waiter at a show-business party when he encountered *Some Like It Hot* director Billy Wilder, who encouraged him to write screenplays. "He told me, 'Everybody's an actor,' " Thornton recalls. " 'What we need are better stories.' " Wilder's words pushed Thornton to focus on the scripts he'd been toying with. A short film he wrote about a mentally disabled Arkansas man who murders his mother and her lover led the way to *Sling Blade.* The 1996 film earned Thornton, who also stars in it, an Academy Award nomination for best actor and the Oscar for best adapted screenplay. He has been a household name ever since.

Contributing Editor **David Hochman,** who interviewed Kevin Hart for the October *Playboy Interview,* has known Thornton for more than 20 years. "I saw a very early screening of *Sling Blade* and said, 'I need to know more about this guy,' " Hochman says. "We've sat down for some very deep and wonderful conversations over the years. This

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DAN MONICK**

time, we met at the Sunset Marquis, where Thornton lived on and off for six years from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. 'Dwight Yoakam's joke was that every time I got a divorce, I lived here,' he told me, 'which was pretty often.' After all this time, and whether he's talking women, booze, political correctness or his famous OCD, he's still got that twinkle in the eye and a radical way of sharing that makes you go, 'Billy, you did *not* just say those words.' "

PLAYBOY: It's been more than a decade since you helped set the Hollywood *F*-word record for a Christmas film with the original *Bad Santa*. Are you still saying "Fuck the fuck off" in front of the children?

THORNTON: Yeah. This one may better that record depending on how they edit the thing. I would say this movie is more emotional and has more of a human story than the original. My character, Willie, was just an abused kid who grew up bitter and sour because of it. Despite his salty tongue, he has a heart. He's a hero to a lot of people, talking about the commercialism of the holiday and all that. But yeah, the material is still very funny and definitely fucking filthy.

PLAYBOY: How's the man under the dirty beard holding up?

THORNTON: That's a bigger question. I guess I feel older in the sense that the character would feel older. My youth is behind me. I'm a veteran now. In the old days, if the character saw a pretty girl on the street, he would be more likely to go up to her than he would be now. Now he's a little more tired and a bit more mature. I can relate to that. I think I'm over the stupid shit people do and say to you. Now it's like, "Just get out of my face." I've been in this business for around 30 years at this point. I've done pretty much everything you can do. I've been at every level of success and failure and disappointment and joy and humiliation and heartbreak. It's not like I'm going to do something that will thrill me other than doing some good work as an artist and being with my kids. Those are the two things. I think I'm more stable, more focused, more comfortable with myself. It's kind of like I was on a train for years and I just got off at a stop I liked. So now it's just, Okay, I'm going to settle down here.

PLAYBOY: That sounds downright sane for a guy who has always talked about being a weirdo.

THORNTON: I don't know if it's that I'm sane or just older and wiser. You get to a point where you don't want to put up with any more shit. I've always been really co-dependent. I still am to a large degree, but now I don't mind telling people I'm not going to do this or that. There were times when that wasn't the case. Say a director wanted me to do something that was against my instincts. I used to do it anyway. These days I'll just say, "I think this dialogue is bad. Why is this scene so shitty? This doesn't make sense in the story." It's the same with people. I'll say, "Tell that asshole over there he's not going to manipulate everybody." If somebody knows more than I do, I'm delighted. I don't want to be the smartest guy in the room. But if I get the feeling you don't know where to put the camera, I'm sure as hell going to say something.

I'm still, at 61, exactly like I was in high school. The popular kids don't equate with me.

PLAYBOY: You've admitted you were drinking during the shooting of the original *Bad Santa*. Did you apply the Method acting technique to this one too?

THORNTON: Not in the same way. On the first *Bad Santa,* I was kind of living the life of that guy. I was having way too much fun. I'm a million times tamer now. I'll have a light beer or two every few weeks, and the next morning it will feel like I have a sinus headache. When I was doing the original film, that was one of the only carefree times in my life. I mean, I've never allowed myself to be truly happy since my brother died in 1988, but that period in the early 2000s was pretty fucking great. I was doing great movies with anybody I wanted—*The Man Who Wasn't There, Monster's Ball, Bad Santa*. There were a lot of great people around. It was movie-star time.

PLAYBOY: Those were the Angelina Jolie years. Looking back, could you have made that relationship work?

THORNTON: Ultimately, no. I think we could have lasted a couple more years, maybe five more, but I kind of blew it with her.

PLAYBOY: How did you blow it?

THORNTON: I don't know. I always felt beneath her, and if you're living a life with someone you feel you're beneath, that's not good for either of you. Angie and I are still friends. That won't ever go away. We don't talk on a regular basis; sometimes I won't see her for five years. But I offer. I know she's been through a lot. "If you ever need to talk, if you ever need anything...." She knows that. She's a great person. And she's one of the people who didn't abandon me. She never has.

PLAYBOY: What do you mean by "abandon" you?

THORNTON: Well, my relationship with the show-business world is that generally I feel apart from it. I mean, I was accidentally or just a situational victim of it a couple of times, but I've never been much a part of Hollywood. I don't have any friends in Hollywood. I have friends in Los Angeles, though. One guy is a carpenter who still goes to theater groups and is working on short films and stuff. I have one friend who lives in Oregon in a hut. The guys in my band are my friends. Dwight Yoakam has been my best friend for years and years and is still just that. We're all busy, though. He and I won't see each other for six months. It's always been the same. Outside of that, I'm not part of that whole rat pack. I was a guy people used to look up to, but they sort of dropped me like a hot rock.

PLAYBOY: Who are you thinking about?

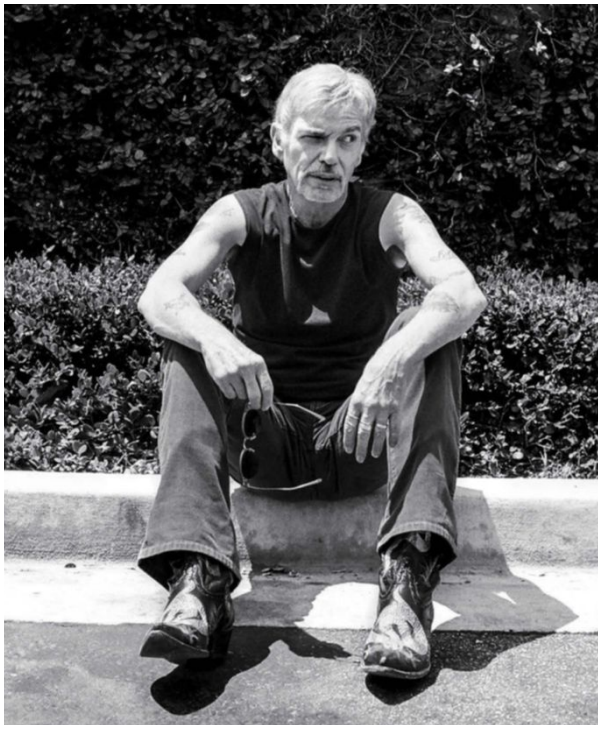
THORNTON: Well, I can't say, because I don't talk about my enemies. I can't do it. I'm talking about various actors, mostly. Most of them were either slightly younger or a decade younger than me. For a while I was the senior member of a group of them, and I was the guy they always wanted to be around. They would ask me to write them a script, or they wanted to be in something I was directing, or they wanted to be in a movie with me. We all hung out here at the Sunset Marquis or the Whiskey Bar. I've reached out to them, and it's like, "Hey, man, so good to hear from you." But then I don't hear from them anymore. I mean, it puzzles me. I assume part of it is my doing. I have things like obsessive-compulsive disorder and dyslexia that cause certain behavior that can come across a little like Asperger's. But still, I've felt hurt a few times, because I came up with those guys. There are a handful I still hear from who I really appreciate. Bill Paxton checks in. I love him, always will. Bruce Willis checks in, and Dennis Quaid. We're good friends. Kevin Costner and Dwight, of course. John Cusack keeps up with me. Other than that, I'm not close with anybody in the movie business. I'm not part of a clique. I'm just like I was in school. I was an outcast in school. I hung out with a bunch of nerdy kids and bad guys. I was with the music geeks and the guys who smoked by the incinerator. I didn't belong in either of those worlds completely, but I sure didn't belong in the popular-kid world. I'm still, at 61 years old, exactly like I was in high school. The popular kids still don't equate with me. But I guess one thing that has really changed is I'm no longer envious.

PLAYBOY: You've made tons of good movies. You have an Oscar. What were you envious of?

THORNTON: Maybe that the handsome star guys got the big parts based on their popularity and looks. I've always known who I am as an actor. I think probably one of the most important things you can have as an actor is knowing who you are. I have friends who don't work like they ought to because they insist they're Clark Gable, and they're not. I always knew I wasn't Clark Gable, but I still had feelings inside that would create some jealousy or envy or whatever. Not that I ever expressed those feelings, really. I always appreciated other actors, and I loved my friends. Fortunately, these days it never crosses my mind what else is going on out there. I don't care who's starring in what. I really don't. I focus on whatever it is that I'm doing right now.

PLAYBOY: That sounds like a personal breakthrough.

THORNTON: My daughter Bella had a lot to do with it. She's 12, and she's a kid who desperately needs her father as a friend, not just as a father. She and I have so many things in common. We connect on some kind of magical level. I'm there for her, and she knows that. In a larger sense, I'm okay with the overall direction of my life. I have faith that things are going to pan out okay. That's not to say you don't get thrown for left turns. My life in particular has had a lot of those. Some of the people I know, their lives are pretty much the same as they were 20 years ago. But mine has had high notes, low notes and everything in between. I'm just drawn to a certain type of intensity, I guess. I think it's an uncontrollable appetite for life. I can't get rid of that passion, just like I can't get rid of certain neuroses. You just have to make peace with them.



PLAYBOY: Your phobias are more famous than some of your ex-wives. Are you still apprehensive about antique furniture and Komodo dragons?

THORNTON: Put it this way: I still have a lot of eccentricities, and I embrace them all. I figure if you've got them, just live with them. As long as it doesn't hurt people, you're okay. For instance, I'm often late for things because I've had to drive around the block more times than I should have. I have to do it like three times or the world's going to fall apart. It's part of that lifetime struggle of having OCD. I used to watch the clock to see when my dad was going to come home. When I was younger than my daughter is now, probably when I was 10 or so, I would start looking at the clock. If my dad was supposed to be home at 3:30, at 3:25 I would say, "If I can count to 100 20 times before I hear the car pull in the driveway, everything will be okay." They say that for a lot of people who have OCD, that's part of it. It's a way to control your environment, whether it's imaginary or not.

PLAYBOY: Anxiety is a big issue for you.

THORNTON: I have terrible anxiety issues. Mine are all up here swimming around all the time. I have anxiety over specific things sometimes, but usually I'll get these attacks of anxiety that come out of nowhere. I'll get a really rapid heartbeat, numbness in some part of the body, a feeling of disconnection, everything looking like it has a white film over it. And trouble breathing, your diaphragm getting right up under your rib cage. You can breathe in your lungs, but you can't get a full breath. It can happen in a social situation when somebody comes up to me and I don't know what to say.

But what's ironic is, I'm great in an actual emergency situation. I'm not afraid of anything then. I'm usually the one in charge if somebody, let's say, at work runs into the wall in a harness and gets injured. I'm usually the one that's like, "Shut the fuck up. You get over

there. Let me do this. Unhook him." I'm good in those situations. I can come to the rescue both emotionally and physically for people. Whatever I went through growing up, it helped me with certain crisis situations. I may weigh 137 pounds, but I still have the hillbilly in me, anxieties and all.

PLAYBOY: There are therapies and medications that can help ease these burdens. Have you tried any of them?

THORNTON: I've never taken anything for it. I think it's part of what makes you what you are as an artist. I don't know. I don't personally go for therapy, because it's kind of like people in Alcoholics Anonymous sometimes. I think AA is a great thing to get people sober, but then the behavior afterward sometimes doesn't change. In addition to that behavior, you now have this anger and nervousness that was held down by the drug or the alcohol, and then there becomes this very judgmental part of them. I think sometimes people in therapy.... Look, I don't want to get into that hornet's nest. I think therapy is good for people it works for, and I think AA is good for people it works for. I'm saying don't use it against everybody else in your life. Sometimes when people are in these therapy or group situations, they come out as a little higher and mightier than everybody else. You develop this personality where you're willing to change everybody else's world just so yours works.

PLAYBOY: You don't like people telling you what to do.

THORNTON: Exactly right. If you've made a change for yourself, that's fine, but then don't tell me I need to quit smoking. There was a guy I worked with not too long ago who, every day when I was hanging out in the naughty corner—me and a couple of the other bad kids—he would come by and go, "If you ever want to stop that stuff, I know a guy. I have a person." It's like, I really don't give a shit. I don't care how many guys you've got. I know you quit this and that and the other. That's fine. But don't go around promoting it. I'm not bothering you with my shit. That's why I go in the corner. So just leave me in my corner.

We live in a society that's increasingly mean-spirited and judgmental. I'm probably more open-minded than I've ever been even though I grew up as a hippie and a real liberal guy. Still, I find myself moving a little closer to the center over certain things. Like I'm not a fan of political correctness.

PLAYBOY: You're not alone in that. But isn't political correctness intended to offer protection to the marginalized and the oppressed?

THORNTON: I was thinking about this the other day. I grew up in the South during segregation. I experienced separate drinking fountains as a little kid. When the Civil Rights Act was passed, I was old enough to know what was going on. We've sure made leaps and bounds as a country, but on another level, the divide is greater than it was then. We're more separate than we've ever been, and there are problems we've never gotten over. Is political correctness helping? In some ways, no. Artistically, I think things are worse. In this age of technology we've come a long way, but in a lot of ways we've gone really backward. I know this is going to make me sound like a dinosaur, but in my generation, the watermark was higher for our culture. I grew up in an age when the musical bar was set by the Beatles. As actors, we all wanted to be Spencer Tracy or Marlon Brando or James Dean. That was the benchmark.

I have a lot of eccentricities, and I embrace them all. I figure if you've got them, just live with them.

Now we live in a time when you can't say anything or do anything out of fear that you're going to offend someone. You can't take creative risks. I'm not saying everybody has to walk into a Robert Mapplethorpe exhibit and say, "Oh, this is lovely." But now, when you go to the movies, it's like anybody who does anything politically incorrect ends up being the bad guy who gets killed.

I want to be able to tell a joke. I want to be able to kid with my friends without somebody outside our group pointing their finger or wearing Earth Shoes and having a rally about it. That's the weird thing about some liberals, and I'm one of them, trust me. They'll go telling some other religion or lifestyle or whatever, "We're standing up for you." But that's not really their job. In other words, if I have a gay friend who doesn't mind a joke, I want to be able to tell that joke. Don't you, a straight guy, come out of nowhere and interrupt me and my buddy and say, "That's not right."

PLAYBOY: So do you know any good jokes?

THORNTON: [*Laughs*] I can never remember any jokes, which is probably a good thing in this case.

PLAYBOY: Next question then. What was your toughest movie to make?

THORNTON: *A Simple Plan,* just because of the conditions. It was cold. Intense. That was real hard, and I loved every minute of it. But this movie I shot recently, *London Fields,* was extremely hard to make, and I'm not sure anybody will ever see it. It's based on the Martin Amis book. There was a fight between the producers and the creative people about the cut. The two approaches were very different. I saw the director's cut, which I thought was a masterpiece, but it is probably going to be tied up for years and won't come out.

PLAYBOY: One thing already came out from that movie, which was the rumor this summer that you were sleeping with your *London Fields* co-star Amber Heard, something that allegedly sent her then husband, Johnny Depp, into a jealous rage.

THORNTON: Here's what's ridiculous about that: It was not based in reality whatsoever. I was on tour with my band, just sitting in my

chair, and had nothing to do with any part of that rumor. The whole thing not only was not true, but none of it even came close to happening. And yet there it was on the internet. A friend of mine calls me and goes, "Hey, did you see the news? They're claiming you're from Mars." Then it all begins. The press is calling your publicist, asking if you want to make a statement. No, I don't want to make a statement. This was a stupid made-up story. The problem is, these days all you have to do is say something, and it's true. Somebody makes an accusation—any accusation—and it sticks with you a little. Especially if it has anything to do with sex or something like that.

PLAYBOY: What should men know about women?

THORNTON: First of all, when you look at a guy who has been married as many times as I have, I'm probably not the best expert. But then again, maybe I am. Either way, this is one thing I've learned: If you're with a woman and you're unfaithful to her one night at a restaurant on the bathroom sink, she'll usually get past that. Because you didn't have feelings. It was just some stupid thing you did. However, if you have feelings for a woman, even if you don't have a sexual relationship but you have love or romance, well, that means way more than fucking on the bathroom sink. With men, meanwhile, if your wife or girlfriend falls in love with another guy, men will somehow get past that. Guys will be okay. But I'm telling you, if she confesses to one time on the bathroom sink, shit! You are out the door! Guys are brought up almost as though sex is an athletic event. We weren't taught the romance. We were told you've got to be the best and the biggest and the strongest and the fastest, especially a guy like me, whose dad was a coach. Fortunately, I'm also a hopeless romantic. If my wife fell in love with someone, it would absolutely kill me, but I would understand her for it. The bathroom sink I wouldn't understand. I couldn't see her in the same way again.

PLAYBOY: You and Connie Angland, your daughter Bella's mother, have been together for more than a decade and have been married since 2014. Is she finally the one?

THORNTON: Yeah, I'm done. We're real. She's shown me how to enjoy stability and all that. She's truly got my best interests at heart. She doesn't need anything outside this life that we've built. Mostly, she knows who I am. She knows I'm not ever going to be the guy who's running around the world to exotic places. She loves to travel, but she knows I'm never going to be that guy. Angie knew that about me too. She knew I was never going to go live in Vietnam or China or whatever and travel all over the world and fly to this country and that country. She knew I would never be that guy. She also knew that I wasn't going to be that involved in society.

I'm a bit of a hermit. I still like to stay up at night and sleep during the day. I'm not somebody who goes out to things. I'm a guy who's pretty content just staying home, watching the news or whatever.

PLAYBOY: You've been doing more television in recent years. *Fargo* is a big cult hit, and now you have a new Amazon series, *Goliath*. Are you a binge watcher?

THORNTON: Not at all. If anything, I'll watch *Andy Griffith* and *Gomer Pyle* and *Hogan's Heroes* and all that. Or sports. I'm a baseball freak, and I love football too. So I watch sports and I watch the Smithsonian Channel because every now and then it will have something weird on. I'm terrified of flying, so I watch that show *Air Disasters*. Sometimes when you're afraid of something you can't help but get into it. I do a little of that. But no, I don't watch the current TV shows.

I do understand that TV is the place to be right now. It was certainly enjoyable working on the recent projects I've done. I love the character I play on *Goliath*. I think we hit our stride about halfway through and realized what it was. The last three or four episodes are pretty amazing and intense.

PLAYBOY: Let's take a step back. What's your earliest memory?

THORNTON: My grandmother's front yard. It's where I spent my growing-up years, in a community called Alpine, Arkansas. The population was around 100. The place was magical. It's where I started discovering the wonders of life. My grandmother Maude Faulkner was the matriarch. Everybody came to her little cabin for reunions and whatnot. And not only from my family; she was a figure for the whole community. Alpine was in a very backwoods place; the cabin didn't have electricity. But my grandmother was very intelligent. She was one of the few literate people around there. She used to write for magazines. She did income taxes because other people couldn't read or write. These were logging woodspeople. They wouldn't pay her in money. They would give her a bushel of peaches or make her a quilt. I really admired how much she helped other people.

I fantasize all the time about going back to the beginning and starting all over again. That's what heaven is to me. You're born into the same family; you're exactly who you are this time—you don't become a beetle or whatever. You get to live the same life again but with the knowledge of what you did the last time, and you're in total control of everything.

PLAYBOY: What would you change?

THORNTON: I would still be relatively poor. I would become famous in music before movies in my early 20s. I wouldn't have to be the Beatles, just respected, and people would know I was honest. I think there are three or

four events I wouldn't go through again, like a couple of health events and a couple of marriages. Obviously I would have my father live longer. He died when I'd just graduated from high school. I would love to go back and be able to talk to him again. What I would talk to him about would completely change what he thought of himself. He knew he was never going to rise above who he was, but he had more capacity in there. He just didn't know how to mine it. I think he was a frustrated guy who longed to live a fuller life and wanted to have more.

PLAYBOY: In the autobiography you wrote with Kinky Friedman a few years ago, you forgive your father for being physically abusive to you.

THORNTON: Absolutely. I think everything is forgivable except murder. I understand why my dad was the way he was. I think he felt a lot of guilt that he couldn't provide more for his family, and that probably triggered a lot of envy and jealousy and anger. He took it out on the very people he wished he was better for.

PLAYBOY: How old was he when he died?

THORNTON: He was about 44 or 45. He was a fireman in the Navy, on a destroyer. Have you ever seen these mesothelioma commercials? "Were you in the Navy? Did you work in the shipyards? Were you a fireman?" He was all of them. That's what killed him. The same thing killed my friend Warren Zevon. It's one of those bad diseases. My dad smoked, and you can imagine what his diet was like back in the South in the 1960s and 1970s. But he probably would have lived to the age of 75 if he hadn't gotten mesothelioma. My mom's still around. She's 83 and living in northern California with my brother and his wife and two of her grandkids.

PLAYBOY: How are you like your mother?

THORNTON: In almost every way. My daughter calls me Marlin. He's the father fish in *Finding Nemo* who's terrified for his son and won't let him go out and swim. My mom and I, we're both worriers like that. It's interesting, because when I'm performing, it's the one place where I'm not anxious.

PLAYBOY: So you always knew you would be an actor?

THORNTON: No. I was absolutely going to pitch for the St. Louis Cardinals. Baseball was everything to me, but I had an injury and that sent me in another direction. In high school, there were always girls in drama class, which interested me, but I didn't think much about being an actor, frankly. I was good at girls but not very good at school. I had dyslexia on top of everything else. Then one of my teachers in Malvern, Arkansas recognized something in me. She said, "Hey, most people are in this class to goof off and so they won't have to do math, but I think you've got something and should do this." That was really meaningful to me. I never forgot that. I became an actor, star of the senior play and all that.

This might surprise people, but I'd love to do a movie with Brad Pitt. I think we'd be great together.

PLAYBOY: Were you a partier in school?

THORNTON: We all did stuff then. That's just what you did. Drugs, drinking, sex. We didn't have AIDS, so nobody was worried. Sex was like, whatever you want to do, go for it. You might get the clap, but you'd go to the doctor and get some ampicillin or whatever. We were living.

PLAYBOY: How long did that lifestyle last?

THORNTON: Well, it gets old pretty fast, or at least it did for me. I did all kinds of hard stuff when I was in my late teens and early 20s, and I was fine. We tried everything. I was mostly a downers guy. It's different now for kids. I made a joke on a set the other day about taking reds. They were like, "Reds? What's that?" It turns out they don't even make that shit anymore. Drugs never really interested me after that early experimentation. Even pot. I think I'm allergic to it. If I smoke a joint I start thinking the FBI is after me. My heart beats real fast, and I'm paranoid. I'm one of those guys who starts driving 20 miles an hour. But it was fun when it was fun.

PLAYBOY: How did you get to L.A.?

THORNTON: I had a friend, Tom Epperson, who was moving to California to become a screenwriter. He said to me, "Look, you were in drama. Why don't you try to be an actor?" So I came out here in the early 1980s. I joined a theater group. I took telemarketing jobs and all kinds of shit to get by. I never expected money from acting. I certainly didn't expect stardom. But I caught the acting bug. I wanted to work as an actor. I got a role on *Matlock* and other minor parts. This was thrilling for me. Then Tom and I wrote *One False Move,* which got a lot of attention. Critics really liked it, and audiences did too. It was a great time. We were inventing things to do for ourselves. That's exactly what happened with *Sling Blade.*

PLAYBOY: How does *Sling Blade* look to you when you watch it now?

THORNTON: The same as it did the first time I ever saw it. That movie is exactly what I wanted it to be. Here's the thing: I've only directed in self-defense, to protect the thing I'd written. That's what it was with *Sling Blade*. I never wanted to be a director. I just wanted to make sure the movie hit all the notes I saw in my head. That whole experience still blows my mind. The fact that people to this day come up to me saying "*Mmm-hmm*" in that character's voice and say things about a movie I did more than 20 years ago, I consider that an absolute honor.

PLAYBOY: You've said that after he saw an early cut of that movie, Martin Scorsese predicted correctly that you would win an Oscar for it. He also predicted that you would never again

have the freedom to make a movie exactly the way you wanted. Was he right about that too?

THORNTON: Oh, he was definitely right. That's how it works in Hollywood. When you're this hot discovery, people treat you one way, but once they've got you, it's pretty much all over. Look at *Sling Blade*. John Ritter was the most famous person in that movie. I wasn't any more well-known than the kid in it. You can never make a movie like that twice. It's like, let's say, a man meets a girl who's a rock star. She's got tattoos and piercings, and the guys are falling all over themselves, and maybe a couple of women are too. She plays her guitar like Jimmy Page in concert, and you're like, "Wow, this chick knocks me out." You start going out with her. Then you go to a concert and see her up there in her underwear, and all the guys, and maybe some of the women, are still falling all over themselves for her. But the next day, you're saying, "Listen, I want you to get those tattoos covered up." Sometimes when the suits get involved, it's like that. They love how original you are. They love that you did it your way. You're gonna be fucking huge. But once you sign up with them, you're gonna do it a whole different way.

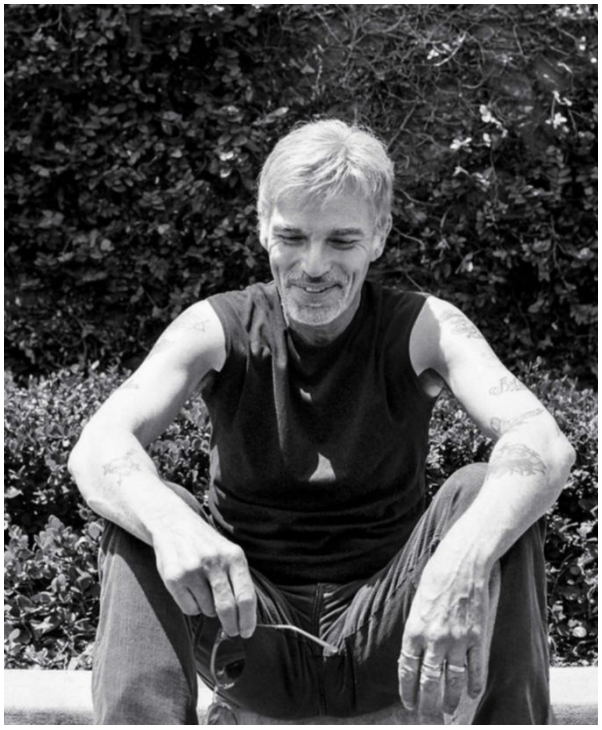
PLAYBOY: How is it that you've spent your whole career bouncing from indie projects to blockbusters?

THORNTON: You know what it is? It's that I made my way in independent film. I was a guy who could play a leading man or a character because I started out playing character parts, so the audience lets me do it. Whereas for guys who made it as matinee idols, like Tom Cruise or whoever, the audience sometimes doesn't allow them to play an extreme character. I feel bad for them, because I'm sure they want to. I thought Tom was great in *Rain Man* with Dustin Hoffman.

These days, if you do an independent film, it gets a little distributor, they give you no money to make it and they want seven movie stars in it. So you end up casting people who aren't really right for the parts, and the whole point of independent film is that it feels real. If you've got seven top movie stars in a $3 million movie about a guy who lives in a closet or something, all of a sudden you're taking out a movie. When independent film went that way, it kind of was lost. Now it's premium cable, which is a great format for independent film because you can make an eight- or 10-hour movie. That's what *Fargo* is.

PLAYBOY: Are you happy with the career you've had?

THORNTON: I didn't think I'd ever be in a movie, let alone be part of some of the most fantastic movies of the past few decades. It's a miracle to me. *Monster's Ball, The Alamo, Friday Night Lights,* all those movies. There are also things I wish I had gotten to do. I was set to star in Robert Altman's last movie before he died. That's a regret. I would love to make a movie with Martin Scorsese. I've always wanted to work with Woody Allen, Jack Nicholson, Gene Hackman. I want to play a college professor in a movie. I always have. I always wanted to do a World War II movie. I've played a soldier, but I can be a general now. I can play Eisenhower or somebody. Oh, and this might surprise people, but I'd love to do a movie with Brad Pitt.



PLAYBOY: That would certainly be interesting to watch.

THORNTON: Yeah, I think we'd be great together. We'd play a good couple of Southern guys. We grew up not far from each other, me in Arkansas, him in Missouri. We come from the same thing. Brad does a very good Southern character. There was a little movie this year called *Hell or High Water,* about two brothers who are bank robbers in Texas. They have to get money to save their family's farm. Now, the guys who starred in it were around 35, which is natural. But Brad and I could do our own version of a Southern heist thriller.

PLAYBOY: You've been touring again with your band, the Boxmasters. Do you ever want to be a full-time rock star?

THORNTON: Not really. I love balancing music with acting. We make good records. Nobody will ever give us a chance probably, but we do. I have two concept records that one of my bandmates and I wrote that are as good as any concept record I've ever heard. But (a), where are you going to sell a concept record? And (b), who cares about us? The music business is not a place where you make a living anymore, unless you're one of the top pop or hip-hop or Nashville country stars. We've had some good reviews and great tours, but I hope it doesn't end there. I'd say that if we don't have an album that's recognized on a high level at some point, I'll be disappointed.

PLAYBOY: Goals.

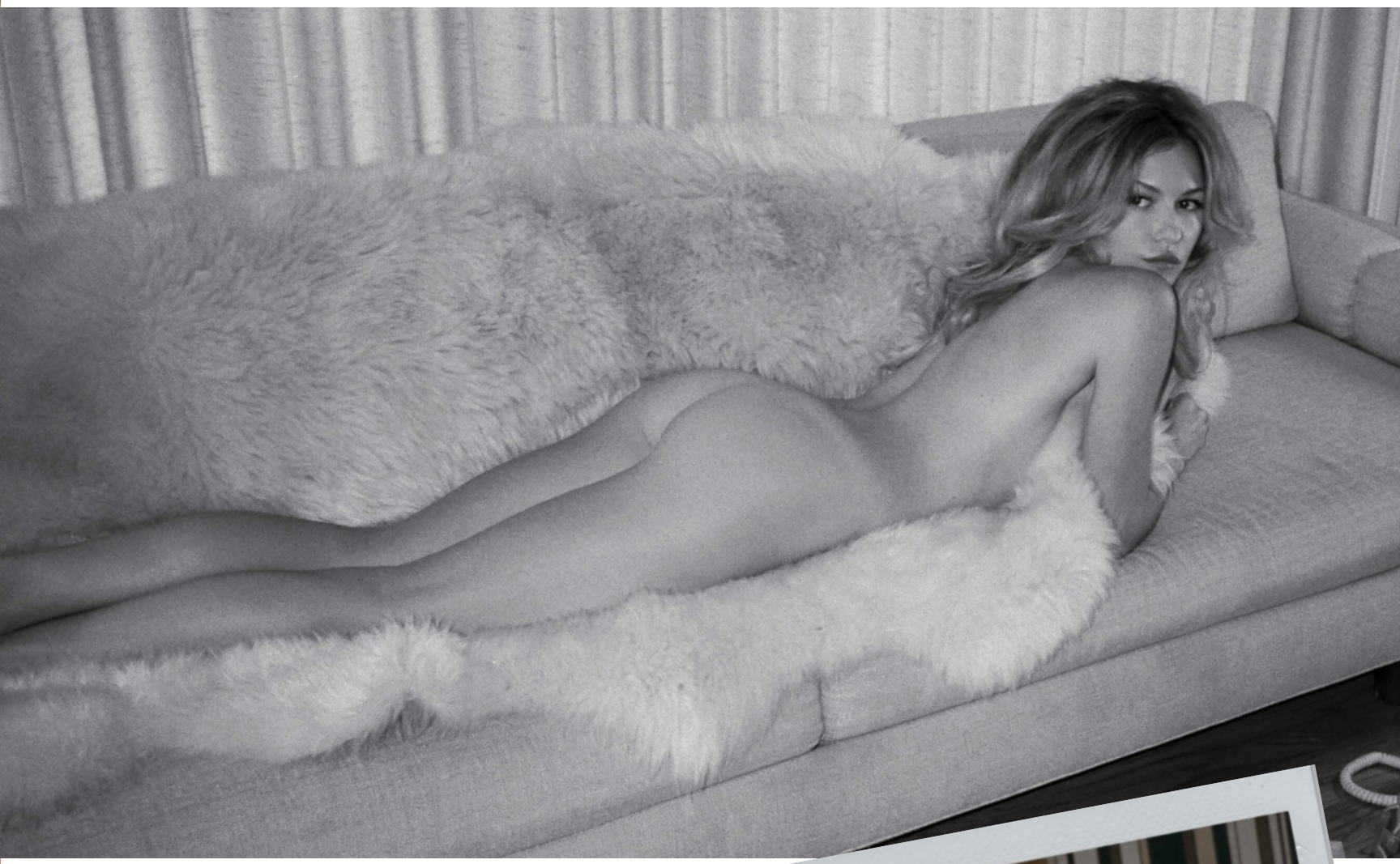
THORNTON: That's right. You never stop sculpting your life. You never stop thinking about things you can do to stretch yourself here and there. It's not always neat and clean as you go along. There are a bunch of things I might like to try over again, and some people over the years who maybe I've wronged. I hope I can get around to apologizing for those things. But I'll tell you something: Right now, things are pretty good. I'm happy with my family, happy with my work. I'm still passionate about everything. I just don't care about the party anymore. By "the party" I mean it in every sense of the word, not just partying. I don't need to be part of the machine. I've got my life, and my life is enough for me. As long as I get to keep doing things that feel good and making things people enjoy, that's all I care about. ■

Memory Lane

*Model-designer **Paige Elkington** stars in a nostalgic ode to the girl next door—that still-romantic, archetypal woman who never stops beguiling and makes us dream eternally*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KRISTIN GALLEGOS


THE NATIONAL BESTSELLER AT YOUR BOOKSTORE
The Joy of Sex




BIRDS?
BREASTS...!!
BUMS..!

The Beauties of Sinaloa

Mexico's beauty-pageant circuit is a place for women to be discovered by talent scouts—and drug cartels. PLAYBOY *travels to the land of El Chapo to witness the hope and the danger*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
OLIVIA JAFFE

"¡Silencio, por favor!"

The chattering audience in the bleachers at Televisoras Grupo Pacífico's Culiacán soundstage is causing programming director Francisco Arce Camarena a great deal of stress. It's 9:30 A.M. on a Tuesday in late May, and filming of a casting for the northwestern Mexican state of Sinaloa's most prominent annual beauty pageant needs to get under way. Behind Arce Camarena, 16 young women pose in an arc, delicately positioned on an ivory set with the letters *NB,* for *Nuestra Belleza* ("Our Beauty"), written in pink cursive. So stunning that they look like onyx-haired Barbies come to life, the women have their hands on their outer hips, their front-facing knees gently bent and smiles twitching on their angel-like faces. In accordance with pageant requirements, they're all between 18 and 24, five-foot-five or taller and at least conversant in English. They've arrived from all across the state. Those who make the cut today will go on to compete in Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa, whose winner will be in the running for Nuestra Belleza Mexico, which funnels its titleholder to Miss Universe—one of the largest beauty pageants in the world. This morning, the women stand beneath glaring television lights, in front of a now-silent audience full of their hopeful families and friends, waiting to be evaluated. But once today's casting airs, the judges won't be the only ones watching. The women will be seen by all of Mexico, including the region's richest and most dangerous men—members of the Sinaloa cartel. Widely believed to be one of the most powerful drug-trafficking organizations in the Western hemisphere, the cartel is among the largest suppliers of heroin, meth, marijuana and cocaine to the U.S. Its leader, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán Loera, is reportedly worth $1 billion. He made international headlines the past few years for being captured, escaping from prison through a tunnel, scurrying off on a motorcycle, giving an interview to Sean Penn and then being captured again just a few months later.

BY **JESSICA P. OGILVIE**

For decades, men like El Chapo have courted pageant queens with money and gifts, pursuing them as aggressively as real estate moguls chasing a hot piece of property in L.A. or New York. Some women fend them off, wary of the violence of narco life. Others compete in pageants with the explicit goal of meeting rich but potentially dangerous men, weighing the risk against the chance to lift themselves and their families out of the poverty from which many of them come.

"Most of the girls know this guy might kill them any minute, anytime, anywhere," says Javier Valdez Cárdenas, a Culiacán-based

reporter and author of the 2010 book *Miss Narco*. "But that's the only way to mobilize in this society. There's no employment here. That's the only option they see."

It's impossible to say how cognizant pageant contestants are of narcos' covetous eyes when they sign up. While Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa can be a legitimate career step, it's also a guaranteed way to draw attention—wanted or not—from the cartel's most powerful operatives.

The pageant's reputation as an avenue for drug lords to discover new women isn't a secret, says Valdez Cárdenas. And when it comes to the money and power they hope will serve as bait, "nothing can compete against narcotraffickers," he says. "There's no religion, no political body, no government that can compete—they have more money and power than anyone."

• • •

Culiacán is Sinaloa's capital and largest city. Much of the rest of the state is rural; most inhabitants are farmers who produce tomatoes, wheat and sugarcane, among other things. The fertile soil is what has made the cartel's marijuana- and opium-growing operations so successful.

It sees fewer tourists than other Sinaloan cities, including the beachside destination of Mazatlán. A known hub of cartel activity, Culiacán has been painted by international newspapers as the type of place where foreigners may be shot or kidnapped as soon as they step off a plane. In reality, parts of the city look more like a quaint European village, a colorful medley of one-story buildings, street murals and outdoor cafés, with sidewalk stands selling *horchata* and other *aguas frescas*.

SINALOA HAS A REPUTATION FOR PRODUCING SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN. TO NARCOS, THESE WOMEN ARE PRIZES.

A local museum exhibits works of Sinaloa's most influential artists.

When I arrive the week before the casting, the temperature in Culiacán is approaching 100 degrees. The air is tawny brown, and refracted light bounces off the asphalt. I'm here, admittedly, without much of a plan; my months-long attempts to reach pageant organizers have gone exactly nowhere. But there is some promise: My fixer, Miguel Ángel Vega—who also works as a reporter for *Ríodoce,* a Culiacán weekly paper—made contact this week with a representative who assured him we would be granted access to Tuesday's event.

In Mexico, pageants factor far more prominently in the public consciousness than they do in the U.S. Titleholders become national celebrities; little girls look up to them, wanting to do what they do.

And part of what they do, it seems, is get mixed up with drug lords. One of the first known 20th century weddings of a narcotrafficker and a Mexican beauty queen was between the nephew of Chicago mob boss Sam Giancana and Miss Sinaloa 1958 Kenya Kemermand Bastidas. The following decade, Ana Victoria Santanares—Miss Sinaloa 1967—wed Ernesto Fonseca Carrillo, a reputed founder of Mexico's Guadalajara cartel.

The tradition was updated in 2007 when El Chapo himself descended on the small town of Canelas, Durango in a legendary display of courtship. According to news reports, Guzmán Loera arrived by plane during a local celebration, flanked by hundreds of armed men, to woo 17-year-old Miss Coffee and Guava contestant Emma Coronel Aispuro. The two were soon married, and Coronel Aispuro bore Guzmán Loera two daughters. She was by his side when he was arrested in a Mazatlán condo in 2014.

Coronel Aispuro has remained untouched, but the same can't be said for other women associated with the cartel. In 2008, El Chapo's mistress Zulema Hernández was killed, some suspect by members of rival cartel Los Zetas. Her body, with the letter *Z* reportedly carved into it, was left in a car trunk. In 2012, beauty queen María Susana Flores Gámez was caught in a shoot-out between Mexican soldiers and high-ranking Sinaloa cartel member Orso Iván Gastélum Cruz, whom she was dating. Gastélum Cruz escaped. Flores Gámez was killed.

The violence hasn't hampered the relationship between narcos and pageant queens, particularly in Sinaloa. The state has a nationwide reputation for producing some of the country's most beautiful women. To narcos, these women are prizes.

Manuel (not his real name) is a mid-level trafficker who claims to work for the cartel. At a ranch in Pericos, a town 30 miles north of Culiacán, Manuel—who has a wife and two girlfriends—explains the connection between cartel members and beauty queens. "Women and power, they are the same," he says. "If you have power, you can have women. It's a luxury. Women love power. That's why we have so many women—because we can afford them."

• • •

Nelly Peña, 23, steps out of her boyfriend's beat-up white sedan into the blazing Culiacán sun. She's wearing John Lennon sunglasses, high-waisted jeans and a white crop top. Her thick curly hair is piled on top of her head. She seems a bit short for a beauty queen, but her looks allowed her to work as a model when she was younger. She says her agency encouraged her to raise her profile by competing in pageants.

Resting against the car and occasionally reprimanding her Labrador, Simba, that's running free in the streets—*"¡Simba, fuera! ¡Rápido!"*—Peña explains she took up her agents' suggestion as a way to advance her career.

"I want to be a TV host, and I want to be good," she says. "But my dream is to become an actress. That's what really triggers me."

In that sense, many women audition for Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa for the same reasons they might vie for the title of, say, Miss America or America's Next Top Model. They want to be actresses or models, TV hosts or spokespeople. The pageant can serve as a launching pad.

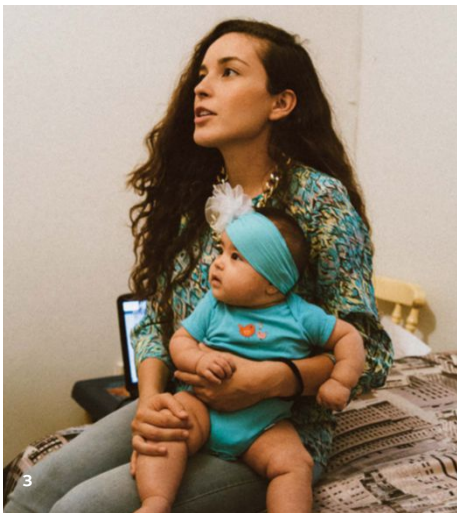
But Peña was immediately instructed in the not-so-secret underpinnings of the beauty world. *"Culiacán es muy pequeña,"* she says. Culiacán is very small. "The narcotraffickers know the heads of modeling agencies, so they know who is competing."

According to Peña, those agency heads will sometimes set up a date between a narcotrafficker and a woman at the narco's request.

"They say, 'There is this person who wants to meet you. He can support you in many ways. He can open doors for you,' " says Peña. Sometimes they're more blunt: *" '¿Quieres más dinero?' "* she says. Do you want to make more money?

The women are indirectly encouraged to be nice to the men, to flirt, and soon may find themselves on the receiving end of expensive gifts—cars, phones, trips around the world.

"Que sí"—if you say yes to them—"you have a car outside your house the next day," says Peña. Seeing the surprise on my face, she says, "If you're



1. A Sinaloa street. **2.** Model and aspiring actress Nelly Peña has entered pageants hoping to elevate her career. **3.** Peña at home in Mexico.

impressed, imagine how they feel when they have nothing and all of a sudden they have a car."

With their activities largely unchecked by cops—many of whom are threatened or paid off—narcos are often free to do whatever they want, to whomever they want. When it comes to courting the state's *bellezas,* their pickup techniques have all the subtlety of clubbing a woman over the head and dragging her back to a cave. "When a narco sees a girl he likes, he sends a worker to follow her," says Josue (not his real name), who once ran cash for the cartel. The worker gets the woman's address, then the narco starts sending presents.

Manuel confirms this. "If they're hot, I will select them," he says. "You ask for their phone number, and you send them gifts—expensive ones, like diamond rings or gold necklaces. Then you just take them to bed.

"I told you," he adds, "women love power. And they know who holds the power."

• • •

"We're in El Chapo's territory now," Ángel Vega says on the Friday morning before the casting. We're driving south toward Televisoras Grupo Pacífico's Mazatlán office. We haven't heard back from pageant reps after leaving several messages, and Arce Camarena, our primary contact, has been slippery. After promising us VIP access to the casting earlier in the week, he has since avoided our calls. Ángel Vega suggests we make the more than two-hour trip to drop in and say hi.

Outside the borders of Culiacán, the landscape becomes immediately and jarringly rural. Unlike the piled-up buildings of the city, homes in the countryside are scattered amid browned fields. The roadside trails off into dirt with almost no separation from the asphalt.

Thirty minutes into our drive, I explain my original plan for reporting this story: to fly in and out of Culiacán without the cartel knowing I was here. Ángel Vega—who has been reporting on the Sinaloa cartel for almost a decade—turns to me from the driver's seat.

"Without the cartel knowing?" he says, then throws his head back and laughs. "They already know you're here."

The cartel has fly lists, he explains. Upon recognizing the name of an American journalist, operatives would have looked into me, possibly even found out what story I was trying to do, then decided whether I would have access or not.

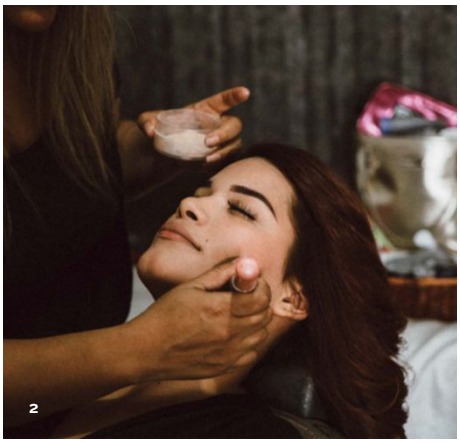
"If they didn't want you to tell this story, no one would talk to you," he says. "You would get no interviews. You pose no danger to them, so you're okay."

This is a blow to my ego—as a journalist, my job is to pose a danger to certain people. But it also makes me realize how much I've bought into the myth of the cartel as an underground operation—and of myself as a sort of secret infiltrator.

Valdez Cárdenas explains later that, to Sinaloans, such an assumption is almost laughable. "You have to understand," he says, "narcotrafficking is a way of life in this society. Every single road connects to the narco world. That's our reality."

• • •

When we finally arrive in Mazatlán, Ángel Vega finagles our way into the station by saying we have a meeting with Arce Camarena. We're shown through a series of corridors, then



1. Two Sinaloan beauties wait to learn the winner of a local pageant in 2013. **2.** Pérez López having makeup applied at Conchita Torres's beauty salon. **3.** An award at a custom-gown studio in Culiacán.

deposited on a couch outside a production office. Minutes later, a young dude dressed in what is apparently the international uniform for TV bros—distressed jeans, a hoodie over a T-shirt, Warby Parker–like glasses—comes out. He speaks to Ángel Vega for a minute in Spanish, then Ángel Vega translates. Arce Camarena isn't here, he says. He's out in the field. But he's so sorry he missed us, and we're all set with VIP press access to next week's casting.

We are both skeptical.

• • •

In the Las Quintas area of Culiacán, Conchita Torres's eponymous beauty salon is on the second floor of a white and beige stucco building. One of the most renowned hair and makeup stylists in the city, Torres says she has been working with Televisoras Grupo Pacífico for nine years.

With iridescent brown eyes and a shy smile she can't help flashing every time something amuses her, which is often, Torres talks about the contestants as gently as if they were her own children. It's now Monday night, and her job at tomorrow's casting is to tweak whatever looks the women show up with, making them both pageant- and camera-ready. "I tell them, 'This is too much' or 'This is not enough,' " she says. " 'So let's just balance what you did.' "

Their hair will be styled in soft waves. Their skin should be even—"not very dark on the arms and light on the shoulders, or vice versa," says Torres—and their makeup will be natural. (Natural for pageants and television is, of course, a bit different from natural for every day.)

As it happens, when we arrive, Torres is also being visited by Alejandra Rubi Pérez López, 2015's Miss Teenager Mexico and Miss Teenager Earth. Quietly thumbing through magazines in a salon chair, Pérez López is so pretty it's hard not to stare. She's tall and slim with delicate features, and her thick, espresso brown hair pours perfectly over her shoulders. As of today, Pérez López says, she's been competing in pageants for two years. She started as a way to help her family, but she has determined that the experience also helps her professional polish; she wants to work in marketing one day.

"You see a lot of people from different places, and you learn a lot about different countries," she says, never dropping her Vaseline smile. "It's great for my career."

Pérez López doesn't have a boyfriend—she says her manager has advised her to stay single until she's 25. "I have to devote my focus to my career," she says. "I'm only 18."

But should she catch the eye of the wrong man—even if she turns him down—she may find someone coming after her.

Raquel Vega works at a different beauty salon, one that's popular with narco women. For narcos' mistresses, she says, the biggest risk isn't the narco himself—it's his wife.

"The wives send hit men to kill the girlfriends," she says. "The wife is the worst enemy they have."

Her clients often spend entire days at the salon—"manicures, pedicures, hair extensions, facial treatments," Vega says—which can cost up to $600. Many go further, getting breast and butt implants until they begin to look like caricatures. "They don't care about being educated, funny, smart—it's only how they look on the outside," she says.

But accepting money from a drug lord comes at a price, and Manuel isn't shy about the fact that he expects sex on demand. "Fuck yes," he says. "That's why you pay for their shit. I can go to any of my mistresses, and they better put out."

In fact, he takes it one step further. "I own them," he says. "If you have a pet, whose is that pet? It's yours! Your brother, your cousin, your neighbor—they're not paying for your women; you are. So you own them."

Still, the allure of narcotraffickers is well

understood. A young woman I'll call Guadalupe (she won't tell me her real name) says she competed in Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa several years ago. She works as a model now, but some of her friends wound up with narcos. She doesn't begrudge them their choices.

"If, in their hearts, they believe their decisions are the best, I wish them well," she says.

It's too soon to say whether Pérez López will be able to fend off suitors. In the meantime, she focuses on her pageant talent. Leaning forward in the salon chair, she pulls out her phone to show us a sample. It's a traditional Sinaloan deer dance, in which Pérez López plays the part of the deer.

"Supposedly you are being hunted. You are hiding from the hunter because you know he is after you, so you are trying to hide away every time," she says. "You are prey."

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At 8:30 the next morning, the hallway at Televisoras Grupo Pacífico's Culiacán soundstage is full of women. They are otherworldly, tight dresses hugging their curves, their hair magnificently cresting down their backs.

We quickly find Arce Camarena, or rather he finds us. It's then, as we're about to clinch the story we're actually here to report, that we find out what has been going on all these months.

First Arce Camarena apologizes—he can't let us in. The network told him we're with PLAYBOY, and they don't want to be associated with the magazine. Then, as we press him, he says he can't let us in because we lied about not contacting the network. (No such lie was told.)

Finally, five minutes before the cameras flick on, Arce Camarena begins a rapid-fire conversation with Ángel Vega in Spanish. I don't catch all of it, but I do make out "*narcotráfico.*" The real reason they don't want us here, it turns out, is because they believe we have nefarious intentions when it comes to the angle of the story.

"NARCOTRAFFICKING IS A WAY OF LIFE IN THIS SOCIETY. EVERY SINGLE ROAD CONNECTS TO THE NARCO WORLD. THAT'S OUR REALITY."

It's a point I can't argue with. Journalists come to Sinaloa from all over the world to taste the danger associated with the cartel. Many have more straightforward assignments than I do—they want to go to opium fields or interview hit men. But we're all after the same thing: exposing cartel culture.

Which is why I do not give full disclosure; I do not tell the truth when Arce Camarena finishes his conversation with Ángel Vega and approaches me.

"What is your angle?" he asks.

"I want to write about how different beauty pageants are in Mexico than they are in the U.S."

"What is your angle?" he repeats.

"Well, I also want to talk about how Sinaloa has the most beautiful girls in the country."

He sighs. *"Amiga,"* he says. "I know you are going to do whatever you're going to do with your notes and interviews. But I just ask that you not take a negative angle."

I am embarrassed, I am humbled, and I briefly debate calling the story off. After all, I believe Nelly, and I believe Alejandra, and I believe Guadalupe when they say they entered pageants to advance their careers. What woman can be faulted for using a God-given advantage to secure her future? If that advantage happens to be beauty, so be it. Why should I tarnish the image of an organization that offers them that opportunity?

Arce Camarena decides to let us stay, but we have to wait outside. He then disappears behind the two doors separating us from the soundstage.

It's now one minute to showtime. I stand in the hallway with Ángel Vega and our photographer, all of us unsure if we should leave. Right then, a blonde woman dressed like a CEO pushes open the doors and heads inside. Ángel Vega, looking straight ahead, says, "You might make it in."

I have seconds to make the call. I jump up and follow her into the room.

• • •

Arce Camarena is pacing in front of the bleachers, yelling commands to a crew of at least a dozen. The 16 contestants are now onstage, so brightly lit that their primary-color dresses make them look like a box of beautiful crayons: bright yellow, deep blue, siren red.

Perla Beltrán Acosta, Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa 2008, who now serves as the pageant's coordinator, is demonstrating the proper way to walk. She glides across the stage, turns down the runway, stops at the microphone, turns again and glides back. The women laugh at how easy she makes it look. When she steps away for an on-camera interview, the competitors are briefly released to change clothes before filming officially begins. They scatter to find their parents and friends. One yells up to the bleachers: *"¡Mama!"* Her mother tosses down a multicolored bikini top. *"¡Y los otros!"* Down come the matching bottoms.

Suddenly I feel two large hands on my shoulders. Arce Camarena, somehow, has materialized behind me. *"Amiga,"* he says again, "you know you're not supposed to be in here."

I fumble through a shoddy explanation: I thought only my *photographer* couldn't come in. Couldn't I just stand back here and watch? I don't even have my notebook with me, see? He looks at me as if he pities my dilemma and my general state of existence.

"Fine," he says, turning to walk away. "But if I see you recording, I'm kicking you out."

Ten minutes later, the contestants reappear wearing only bathing suits and high heels. The cameras roll, and the contest begins.

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In online photos, the women in Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa's annual lineup look like lean, classy Kardashians, all cartoon curves, implausibly big eyes and hair that seems like it should smell perpetually of strawberries. In person, they're even more unreal. Gathering at the stage's edge in groups of three, they step up one by one, cross to the middle, bear left down the runway and approach the microphone to answer questions from the four judges.

The first contestant seems nervous but not inexperienced. At the end of the runway, she places her hand expertly on her hip. The questions take about three minutes, and she is then escorted into a room behind the bleachers.

The second has a bit more spunk. She stops to pose at the microphone, shaking her extravagant hair out behind her.

Contestant number three speaks in a mature, soothing alto. Placing her fingertips delicately on the microphone, she addresses the judges. *"Buenos días,"* she says. Why do you think you should be Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa? *"Por mi carisma."*

1. A mausoleum for an alleged narco girlfriend at Jardines del Humaya, an infamous trafficker cemetery in Culiacán. **2.** A custom-made pageant gown. **3.** A girl walks past street art in Sinaloa.

1

2

3

The women continue their parade for more than an hour. Each presents a slight variation on the aesthetic theme: One has a waist so small her hands touch when she places them on her hips. Another looks so young and wobbly her presence here is almost uncomfortable. One of the last to take the stage is jaw-dropping: Wearing a purple keyhole bikini top and matching bottom, she is all soft skin and taut muscle. A male judge on the panel unabashedly asks her to turn and walk toward the back of the stage—twice.

"Why do you want to be Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa?" he asks her.

"Porque soy hermosa." Because I'm beautiful.

It's 11:41 A.M. when the last contestant takes her turn. The finale is bumpy; she makes it about halfway down the runway before the worst befalls her—she *trips,* landing on her knees with a thud. A gasp rises from the crowd. The woman in front of me covers her mouth with both hands. But our hero recovers; she stands back up, takes a deep breath, gestures dramatically to the floor, suggesting to the room that she fell because of a wet spot, and returns to the back of the stage, allowing a frantic stagehand to furiously mop the area in question. She then starts her walk over again, steps up to the microphone and giggles. All is forgotten.

With the contest complete, the elimination will take place on the spot. We are barred explicitly from this portion of the event, so we wait in the hallway as the contestants learn their fates. When they emerge, most breeze right past us. Their faces reveal nothing, in true beauty queen form.

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Ángel Vega and I are driving aimlessly around the city. It's the day after the casting, and no one will speak to me. Calls to Arce Camarena go straight to voice mail. Ross Beltrán, a pageant trainer, offered yesterday to introduce us to the current Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa. Now he won't answer his phone. Even the contestants, the women whose stories I'm looking for, won't take my calls or reply to texts. (Arce Camarena, when asked later, will deny having anything to do with this.)

The previous day's finalists spend the coming weeks training in public speaking, runway walking and talent, and on July 2, Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa 2016 is crowned: Denisse Iridiane Franco Piña, the same contestant who called out to her mother to toss down her bikini. She is notably exquisite, even, I dare say, more so than her competitors.

Nothing indicates that this pageant was fixed, though most *culichis* say it's common knowledge that narcotraffickers buy victories for their favorite women. Then again, it's hard to know what's real in Sinaloa's pageant world. When María Susana Flores Gámez was killed in 2012, the story was reported around the world: "A 20-year-old state beauty queen died in a gun battle between soldiers and what appeared to be a gang of drug traffickers," wrote the Associated Press. "A Mexican beauty queen was killed during a weekend shoot-out in Sinaloa," said CNN.

The story told by most *culichis,* though, is quite different.

The man with Flores Gámez on the night she died, Orso Iván Gastélum Cruz, is known colloquially as El Cholo Iván. He's a mean-looking motherfucker; U.S. authorities have called him one of the most violent men in the Sinaloa cartel. While accounts of their courtship vary, according to multiple sources, El Cholo started to pursue Flores Gámez when she was just 15 or 16 years old and he was about 25. When she supposedly turned him down, he decided to force the issue.

THE WOMEN LOOK LIKE LEAN, CLASSY KARDASHIANS, ALL CARTOON CURVES, BIG EYES AND HAIR THAT SHOULD SMELL OF STRAWBERRIES.

"He kidnapped her family," says one source. *"Su madre y su hermano."* Her mother and her brother.

Maybe Flores Gámez grew to love the man some say pushed himself into her life. Or maybe she was so terrified she didn't dare leave. But what's clear is this: On the day of her death, she was with El Cholo. When their entourage was overtaken by the Mexican army in a small Sinaloan village, El Cholo reportedly told Flores Gámez to stay in the truck, saying she wouldn't be shot because she was a woman. He and some of his entourage then escaped.

Newspapers would report that Flores Gámez was holding a gun when she stepped from the truck. Officials did not confirm whether she fired. Either way, when she emerged, María Susana Flores Gámez was shot dead.

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Not all women who date narcotraffickers have their lives end in tragedy. Nor do all men who work for the cartel: After running cash for the cartel for just one year, Josue was captured by a rival cartel in Tijuana. He was held for 72 hours and tortured—his hand still bears the scars. But he feels lucky to have escaped with his life.

"After I got caught and tortured," he says, "I thought, I don't want to die."

Still, narcos are seemingly in the mind-set of violence more often than not. Manuel claims he has never hit a woman, but he has come close. "Once I was drunk, and I crashed one of their doors," he says. "I didn't hit her, but I destroyed her fucking room. Then I had to pay for repairs. It is a damn circle: fight, reconciliation, make up. It is like a fucking war."

But is it really so different, powerful men hunting beautiful women, from what happens anywhere else in the world? From Los Angeles to New York, underage girls are routinely seduced by middle-aged executives. The violence is certainly less flagrant, but accusations of statutory rape make headlines—and the alleged perpetrators rarely face consequences.

Beautiful women have one thing powerful men can't get via their usual means, whatever those means may be. The acquisition of that beauty by force, then, seems to be met with a blind eye—no matter what country you call home.

• • •

The night before I leave Culiacán, I visit Peña again to say good-bye. She lives in a one-bedroom house with her mother, her boyfriend, her four-month-old daughter and Simba. Their toilet is broken, and discarded objects are pushed into corners throughout the house.

Peña is about to start a job at a television station that she hopes will support her family. She still dreams of acting—she loves Tarantino movies, including *The Hateful Eight.* Angelina Jolie and Dakota Fanning are her favorite actresses.

Before I leave, Peña's mother acknowledges that the family doesn't have much. "But," she says, "we are happy."

When it comes to her own daughter, Peña hopes to raise her the same way she was raised: self-sufficient, confident and with bulletproof values.

"I want to raise her to be the best she can possibly be and support her in anything she wants to do," she says. "Whatever she decides." ■

HOLIDAY Gift GUIDE

Whether you're a techno-fetishist, an audiophile or simply a fan of throwback style, we've got you covered with this year's compendium of covetable gear. Gentlemen, start your wish lists

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHANTAL ANDERSON**

Originally designed to fit under pilots' goggles, aviators are distinctive and forever cool. Saint Laurent's mirrored version has navy enamel frames popped with yellow and reflective blue lenses that boost the style factor and cut UV glare. *Saint Laurent aviators, $375, mrporter.com*

Don't let the fact that the FAA has registered half a million drones fool you. Most aren't built for the mainstream—they're tricky to fly, clunky to carry and produce pretty choppy footage. That's where the GoPro Karma comes in. The drone features an onboard stabilizing gimbal, a touchscreen controller free of aviation jargon (pitch? yaw? what?) and collapsible arms that allow it to tuck neatly into a backpack. Bonus: The stabilizer is removable, so your handheld video can get a Steadicam upgrade too. *Karma drone, from $1,000 with camera, gopro.com*

Faribault Woolen Mill has been weaving for the U.S. military since the 1890s. Its wool blanket is ready to be deployed for Netflix duty. *Navy blanket, $200, faribaultmill.com*

Unlike some flasks, Misc. Goods Co.'s handsome ceramic model imparts no metallic tang to your liquor. *Ceramic flask, $92, misc-goods-co.myshopify.com*

Bike-seat brand Brooks England offers a stylish carryall made of treated organic cotton with vulcanized rubber straps. *Mott Weekender bag, $385, brooksengland.com*

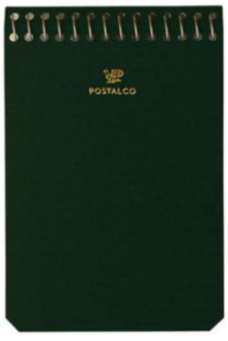
True fact: People used to play songs out of giant teakwood cabinets with built-in shelves, glowing lights and places to store booze. Having access to every song ever recorded in a device smaller than the palm of your hand is great, but there's something to be said for the sophistication of the olden days. Princeton Audio makes exquisite speakers out of black walnut, cherry and other instrument-quality woods that recall the finest audio gear of your grandparents' era. *Site:1 Bluetooth speaker, $350, princeton-audio.com*

This analog-digital camera prints out your party pics in all their grainy, sepia-toned glory, plus allows you to post them online. *Sofort instant camera, $300, us.leica-camera.com*

Brooklyn-based Horse's handmade bike conveys you and up to four surfboards to the shore via the bike lane, not the freeway. *Sidecar bicycle, $4,500, horsebrand.co*

This super-affordable eight-bit dream comes loaded with 30 classics—think *Donkey Kong, Pac-Man* and *Super Mario Bros. NES Classic Edition, $60, nintendo.com*

Boldly go your own way with Braun's BN0106 digital watch, which features a frameless face, antiscratch glass seamlessly fused to the stainless steel case and an LED-backlit display. German-made and state-of-the-art, the sleek timepiece has a patented scrollable operating system and an energy-saving motion detector, plus it's water-resistant to 30 meters. It hews to the Braun tradition of aesthetically pleasing, innovative design that's honest and unobtrusively useful, first articulated by the company's legendary midcentury leader, Dieter Rams. *Braun digital watch, $725, mrporter.com*



The Platonic ideal of a notebook: cotton cover, one-millimeter grid lines and steel spiral binding. *No.20124 A6 bank-green notebook, $17, postalco.net*

Made of hemp, bamboo and recycled scrap, this eco-friendly House of Marley turntable does good and sounds good. *Stir It Up turntable, $230, thehouseofmarley.com*

Alpine skiers on swim trunks express the wintertime tropical-getaway vibe just right. *Bulldog Sun Swissed swim shorts, $345, orlebarbrown.com*

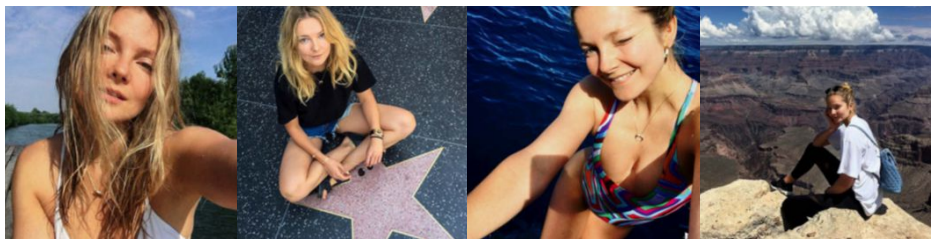
Eniko"

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID BELLEMERE

"There are so many moments in my life when I have to pinch myself to check if this is reality," says Miss December **Eniko Mihalik.** The daughter of a cop, Eniko was the first in her family to leave her home country of Hungary, ultimately settling in New York City. There, her ambition landed her in the famous Victoria's Secret Fashion Show and on magazine covers with Naomi Campbell and, this month, our Rabbit. That's just part of what makes this self-made woman the perfect Playmate to cap off a historic year that saw another self-made woman take a hammer to the glass ceiling. Eniko works hard, stays modest and takes nothing for granted. "Every woman is criticized and torn down," she says. "I've wanted to quit at times, but I sucked it up and persevered. Considering where I come from, I will always be fortunate. You can't please everyone, but you can walk away, close your ears and keep going."

MISS DECEMBER 2016

ENIKO MIHALIK



AGE: 29 **BIRTHPLACE:** Békéscsaba, Hungary **CURRENT CITY:** New York

I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

I go back to Hungary for Christmas every year. I love everything about home because I know it like the back of my hand. I know the attitude of the people and I see the same faces—even the cashier in the supermarket. Every building and street brings back a certain memory. I'm constantly happy when I'm home, even if I'm bored out of my mind.

THE BEST ADVICE I'VE GOTTEN

My grandmother once told me, "Never chase after boys," which I didn't understand as a teenager. What's wrong with chasing somebody you want? It took a while for me to understand the real meaning, which is to respect and value yourself. If someone doesn't do the same, you shouldn't have to lower your expectations.

STAR WARS FAN, SHE IS

My dad and I have a brother-sister relationship because I was born when he was in his early 20s. He made me watch the *Star Wars* movies when I was five years old, and I remember them being boring. But last year, my friend took me to see *The Force Awakens,* and I laughed my ass off. That movie is really cute and fast-paced. I enjoyed it so much I want to go back and rewatch the old ones now.

SHUT UP AND DANCE WITH ME

My friends and I like to declare certain nights as "dance night" once in a while. On those nights, I'll usually go to a club that plays old-school hip-hop. I stay sober, wear flats, a T-shirt and shorts and spend the entire evening just dancing and sweating nonstop.

CALL ME A GLOBAL CITIZEN

I've thought about applying for U.S. citizenship, but I feel I'm too free-spirited to make that kind of decision and settle down at such a young age. I have lots of friends who've started the process, and I admire them for being so sure of what they want to do. I, however, still want to travel so much. I may actually pack my bags one day, rent out my apartment and not come back for two years. I don't see the point in settling down yet.

@mreniko @enikoeva

WHO PUTS GUNS IN THE MOVIES?

As the gun debate divides America, we're unified in our love for movie heroes who pack heat. We look at how firearms end up on-screen and find out whose finger is on the trigger

BY **ADAM SKOLNICK**

"So, are you ready to fire a machine gun?"

In reply, I smile.

My anticipation has been building for more than an hour—ever since the tour began in the revolver room, a place that would feel familiar to any policeman from the 1970s (like, say, Dirty Harry Callahan). Larry Zanoff, a former soldier in the Israeli military and one of Hollywood's most sought-after armorers, guides me from the revolver room to the Western room, where I gawk at Gatling guns, lever-action rifles and double-barreled shotguns, brand-new and gleaming, racked floor to ceiling in perfect order by year and manufacturer.

"There's a misconception that the guns people see in movies are fake," Zanoff says. "Most of these are reproductions, but they're real."

Soon I'm fingering a German Luger from World War I, cradling a Japanese matchlock rifle from the 1500s and, later, shamelessly posing with a vintage 18th century dueling pistol. But the highlight of my tour through Hollywood's biggest armory, where some 16,000 weapons are stored in six rooms, is the NFA room—named for the 1934 National Firearms Act, which placed strict regulations on machine guns in the Al Capone heyday of bootleggers, bank robbers and public gangland hits. On display here are grenade launchers, mortar tubes, .50-caliber machine guns, sniper rifles and racks of assault weapons, including—ironically—dozens of semiautomatic AR-15s.

Although the commercial sale of automatic weapons remains prohibited in the United States, the semiauto market is booming and legal, and its biggest star, thanks to its versatility and reliability, is the AR-15. You've heard of it. It's often stockpiled by those preparing for the apocalypse and publicly flaunted by open-carry zealots. It has had a leading role in more than one of our country's mass shootings, and judging by recent history, it's likely to play a vital part in the next big production starring a psychopath near you.

As I drove that morning through picturesque suburban horse country to the converted government compound northwest of downtown Los Angeles that houses Independent Studio Services—Hollywood's preeminent prop house—I kept thinking of the AR-15 and wondering if there's a credible link between Hollywood and gun violence in America. And I hated myself for it. I grew up in the 1980s, when those Tipper Gore–inspired Parental Advisory labels on CDs smacked as much of Bible-thumping censorship as they did of concern for kids. This is why I typically don't blame creatives for what ails us as a culture, but then June and July happened.

It began with the Pulse nightclub massacre in Orlando on June 12. Next came Alton Sterling (July 5), Philando Castile (July 6), Dallas (July 7) and Baton Rouge (July 17). Innocent civilians and innocent cops, all killed for no good reason within days of one another. It was tragic and horrifying, and the resulting anger, grief, conflict and political opportunism saturated America. Then in the midst of it came the marketing rollout for *Jason Bourne.* The poster was stylish, minimalist, with a background as black as a midnight shadow, showing only a sliver of Matt Damon stepping into the light to aim his Sig Sauer P229R pistol.

Given the timing, it wasn't a good look. Tami Sagher, co-executive producer of *Girls,* posted on her Instagram and Twitter feeds an image of the ad, taken at a subway stop, with the gun torn off. She suggested New Yorkers start tearing the Sig off all the *Bourne* posters. "So tired of guns," she wrote. Lena Dunham shared the post, and suddenly a backlash was brewing so loudly that Damon addressed it and Universal switched to a poster featuring the actor sans weapon.

Granted, politics pairs with Hollywood only slightly better than it does with Facebook and Twitter, but Sagher and Dunham were hinting at important, systemic questions we should all

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE MA

consider. Does Hollywood embolden a Chicago drive-by shooting or an ambush of officers on the job? Does it inspire the itchy trigger finger of jumpy cops on patrol or the work of spun-out mass shooters who choose to salve their pain with innocent blood? Does it condition us to gawk, grieve, then shrug our collective shoulders and move on until the next episode? In other words, does Hollywood have a gun problem?

If film sets are dictatorships, then directors are emperors, which means making the final call on which guns their characters use. It's up to armorers like Zanoff to break down a script and narrow the director's choices. If the script specifies a particular gun, Zanoff will oblige, but more often he factors in the script's historical time period and the character's background and skill to determine which guns to bring to the director for a "show-and-tell." There's a reason Hollywood productions rely on folks like Zanoff and ISS to stockpile and handle weapons for them: government regulations.

"We provide a legality," Zanoff says. "Again, these are all real guns; we can't just give them to people. So we're responsible for safety, and we often do actor training and gunfight choreography too." ISS has eight armorers on staff, including three gunsmiths who modify weapons—say, for wars waged in some future or fantasy world—and, more important, convert them to shoot only blanks. Live ammo is never fired on set.

ISS and other armories have to be prepared for such a wide range of stories that they usually source their stock well in advance. And though guns were flashed on-screen before "talkies" became a thing, it wasn't until 1971 that gun manufacturers recognized the value of having their weapons featured in a hit movie.

"It started with *Dirty Harry,*" says David Fencl, another A-list armorer, with films such as *Zero Dark Thirty, 13 Hours* and the *Transformers* franchise to his credit. Sales of the titular character's weapon of choice, the Smith & Wesson Model 29, "skyrocketed after that movie," says Fencl, founder of the Nevada-based shop Point Blank Props.

"Nobody knew when they put that revolver in Clint's hand that it would boost sales, because no law enforcement officer ever carried that gun," Zanoff adds. "It was an oddball thing."

"It was designed for fishermen in Alaska to protect themselves against bears," Fencl says. But that didn't stop fans of the movie—and fans of guns—from buying the model, and it wasn't the last time gun guys bought weapons or ammo ill-suited for their needs.

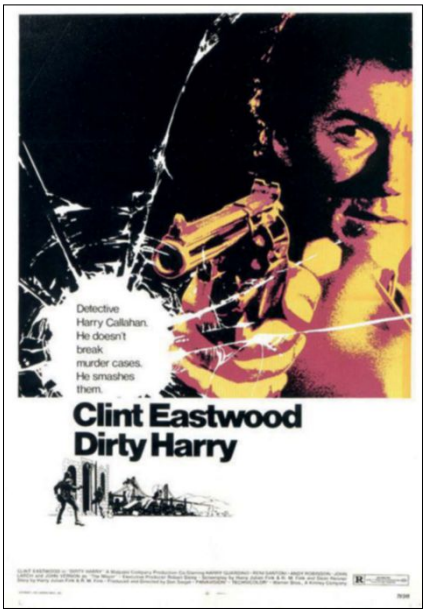
Zanoff experienced the power of motion pictures before he was in show business. In the mid-1980s he worked at a small manufacturer called Calico Light Weapon Systems. Its signature gun, the Calico, was featured in *Total Recall,* the classic Arnold Schwarzenegger film. When Zanoff went to work on the Monday after the movie opened, the company's voice mail was filled with messages from people who wanted those exploding rounds they'd just seen in the movie. "And we were like, 'It was a movie. There are no exploding rounds in nine millimeter for this gun,' " he says. But munitions manufacturers soon caught wind of the demand and built an exploding round for the Calico.

Zanoff calls it "life imitating art," and weapons companies noticed. "After *Dirty Harry,* manufacturers realized that getting their product into a film is worth millions in advertising," he says. Today many weapons companies regularly ship their best goods to film armorers, hoping to make the cut.

"We do see value in being placed in a movie, and on TV shows too," says Kevin Wilkerson, marketing manager for Arkansas-based Walther Arms, maker of the sleek and stylish PPK handgun preferred by James Bond. "Armorers contact me sometimes, and we'll donate product, but I haven't dealt with any who pay for it."

Sometimes preferential treatment extends beyond the usual swag weaponry. In 2012, Fencl was in Amman, Jordan working on *Zero Dark Thirty.* According to Fencl, in the raid

Larry Zanoff of Independent Studio Services supplies the fake ammunition and guns, both realistic and fantastic, for many Hollywood movies.



that killed Osama bin Laden, two SEAL Team Six members carried HK417 fully automatic rifles, but at the time the cameras were rolling, that model was available only to armed forces. Then, just as director Kathryn Bigelow was preparing to shoot the raid scene, news broke that a civilian version of the weapon, the MR308, was about to come out. Fencl placed a call to the manufacturer, Heckler & Koch.

"Everyone wanted them," he says, "but I told them about the movie, and they sent me the first two ever made."

Sometimes weapons manufacturers place stipulations on the use of their products. When Fencl was hired last year to work on *Patriots Day,* the Peter Berg film about the Boston Marathon bombing due out this winter, he discovered that the Boston cops on the subsequent manhunt had been carrying Glocks. "Glock typically wants you to sign something saying it won't be given to a bad guy," Fencl says. "Luckily the Tsarnaev brothers didn't use a Glock, so I signed."

Zanoff and ISS refuse to make such guarantees. "We don't promise anything as far as who will hold it or how," Zanoff says. "Too many decisions get made on the fly."

Some companies are willing to buy assurances. Another Peter Berg film, *Lone Survivor,* a surprise hit starring Mark Wahlberg, became a poster child for firearms product integration after its 2013 release. The film tells the tale of a Navy SEAL team that was overrun in the mountains of Afghanistan in 2005. Although the real-life SEALs carried Sigs that day, firearms manufacturer Beretta reportedly paid $250,000 to ensure that when Matthew "Axe" Axelson (played by Ben Foster) runs out of ammo for his rifle, he fires his Beretta M9 pistol instead.

Rolfe Auerbach, CEO of Brand In Entertainment, brokered that deal. Auerbach has been in product integration since 1996, and he insists *Lone Survivor* isn't an anomaly. "We've worked with a number of gun companies," he says. He scoffs at the reported amount Beretta paid to place its product in the movie and suggests it was higher, though he won't say for sure. He claims Beretta got its money's worth. "They did very well, and that's all I will tell you," he says.

ISS has also inked product-integration deals for firearms, though Zanoff insists it's rare. More often, he encounters directors who demand bigger, better and newer. "Every movie that comes out, especially nowadays, has to top the last one," he says.

SALES OF DIRTY HARRY'S WEAPON OF CHOICE, THE SMITH & WESSON MODEL 29, SKYROCKETED AFTER THE MOVIE CAME OUT.

Is that because we've seen too much? Have we, the audience, become addicts who need a more potent fix to feel something? If so, there is a cure. No matter how thrilling the action in a movie, it can't compete with the real thing.

After the tour of ISS, Zanoff escorts me to the house gun range and hands me a Heckler & Koch MP5A2 submachine gun. It feels light when I lift it to shoulder level, squint through the sight and point it at a metallic wall. There's no target because we're shooting blanks, which means no kickback either. But when I squeeze the trigger, the barrel flames and spent shells spout from the chamber, clattering at my feet—just like in the movies. "Can I do it again?" I ask. This time Zanoff cracks a smile.

• • •

So yeah, I liked it, but I couldn't determine if that was because of the experience itself or because I associate guns with the heroes and stories I love. In other words, was my thrill theoretical or physical?

Perhaps it was both.

The next time I fire a weapon is only a few weeks later. My gun of choice: a Heckler & Koch G36. This time, instead of standing I'm sitting in a tent set up in the parking lot of the Forum in Inglewood, California, and the trigger I'm tickling is that of a game console. In a few seconds a row of unshaven millennial men and I—plus a woman or two—will drop into a game of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare Remastered.*

First-person shooters such as *Call of Duty* dominate the video game market because they combine the experience of being a hero on the battlefield with the fantasy that only a good story can provide. The sounds, graphics and characters pull you in, and the thrill of scoring a direct hit and beating your friends heightens the rush.

While I sit in a tent with the regular folk, Michael Phelps, Derrick Rose and Karl-Anthony Towns are in a VIP room somewhere, doing battle. The carnival-like event, Call of Duty XP, is a fan celebration—Activision's first in five years—and people have flown in from all over the world to attend. It's also a buzz builder for the release of *Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare.* The event features three tents for playing the game, a paintball battlefield, a virtual-reality space made from converted storage containers, a championship e-sports tournament in the Forum itself, military vehicles on display and a zip line.

Call of Duty is a gaming Goliath. Each new release is the biggest entertainment launch of the year. Last year's *Call of Duty: Black Ops III* earned Activision $550 million in just three days, and the video game business as a whole dwarfs Hollywood, making it an easy target following a mass shooting.

After the Sandy Hook massacre in 2012, National Rifle Association executive vice president and CEO Wayne LaPierre took a shot at the industry. "There exists in this country...a callous, corrupt and corrupting shadow industry that sells and sows violence against its own people," he said. "Vicious, violent video games."

Games like *Call of Duty: Black Ops II* allow us to play both hero and shooter.

Don't blame the guns, LaPierre argued; blame video games. That's a leap, but if millions of kids spend endless hours playing first-person shooter games, it does seem fair to wonder if they may become desensitized or even conditioned to violence. Of course, LaPierre, reductionist that he is, left a few things out. Like the fact that weapons companies collaborate with video game developers and designers to make the games look, sound and feel like the real thing.

No video game company contacted for this story agreed to go on the record about its relationship with gun companies, but Mark DeLoura, former senior advisor for digital media in the White House and a 20-year veteran of the gaming industry, has personally witnessed game designers firing weapons at a shooting range and recording the various sounds for their games. "Realism has become so important," he says. "Anything game designers can do to make it more realistic, they'll do, because they want realism, and their players want realism."

"Weapons manufacturers have CAD diagrams, the original 3-D models," says Simon Parkin, author of *Death by Video Game,* "so they can just send all that information to the video game developer. Because they're also working within 3-D software engines, they're able to exactly replicate the weapon. I know that happens in the *Call of Duty* franchise."

An anonymous source at Activision says that the company licenses the weapons featured in *Call of Duty.* Translation: Activision pays the manufacturers of the weapons featured in its video games. The scope of each licensing agreement is unknown. It could be a one-time payment or a small percentage of each game sold. Either way, it sure looks as though gun companies—and therefore the NRA—are partially funded by your *Call of Duty* dollar.

The larger impact of weaponized media is less clear. "It's marketing," DeLoura says. "People see a weapon in a game and maybe they want that gun because it's cool."

Still, no hard statistics can prove a link between gun purchases and video games, and the overwhelming majority of academics agree there's no credible cause-and-effect relationship between the consumption of violent media—games, films or TV—and an increase in gun violence.

"If it's a factor, it's 25th out of 25 factors on a list," says University of Wisconsin associate professor Constance Steinkuehler, who studies video games, education and game-based learning. "Poverty, mental health issues and gun control are all much more significant."

"I haven't found much evidence that watching violent movies or playing violent video games makes people angry, more aggressive or is even correlated to violent crime," says Stetson University psychology professor Christopher Ferguson, who has published widely on the subject. In fact, the opposite may be true.

A 2014 study out of Villanova University entitled "Violent Video Games and Real-World Violence: Rhetoric Versus Data" notes that when new versions of popular video games are released—including especially violent ones such as *Call of Duty*—violent crime among young people drops considerably because so many kids are attached to their game consoles, at least for a while.

Still, I can't shake the thought that the media help boost familiarity with weapons, which breeds increased popularity. And it isn't the fault of Hollywood and the video game industry alone; toss the news and social media into the mix as well. Consider that in the days after the Orlando massacre, when it was erroneously reported that the shooter, Omar Mateen, had used an AR-15, Google searches for that weapon spiked. When it became clear he had used a Sig Sauer MCX, searches for that weapon spiked. People wanted to see the gun he'd used, and some almost certainly bought one for themselves, which brings us back to the gun-loving liberals of Hollywood and their most powerful weapon of all: stories.

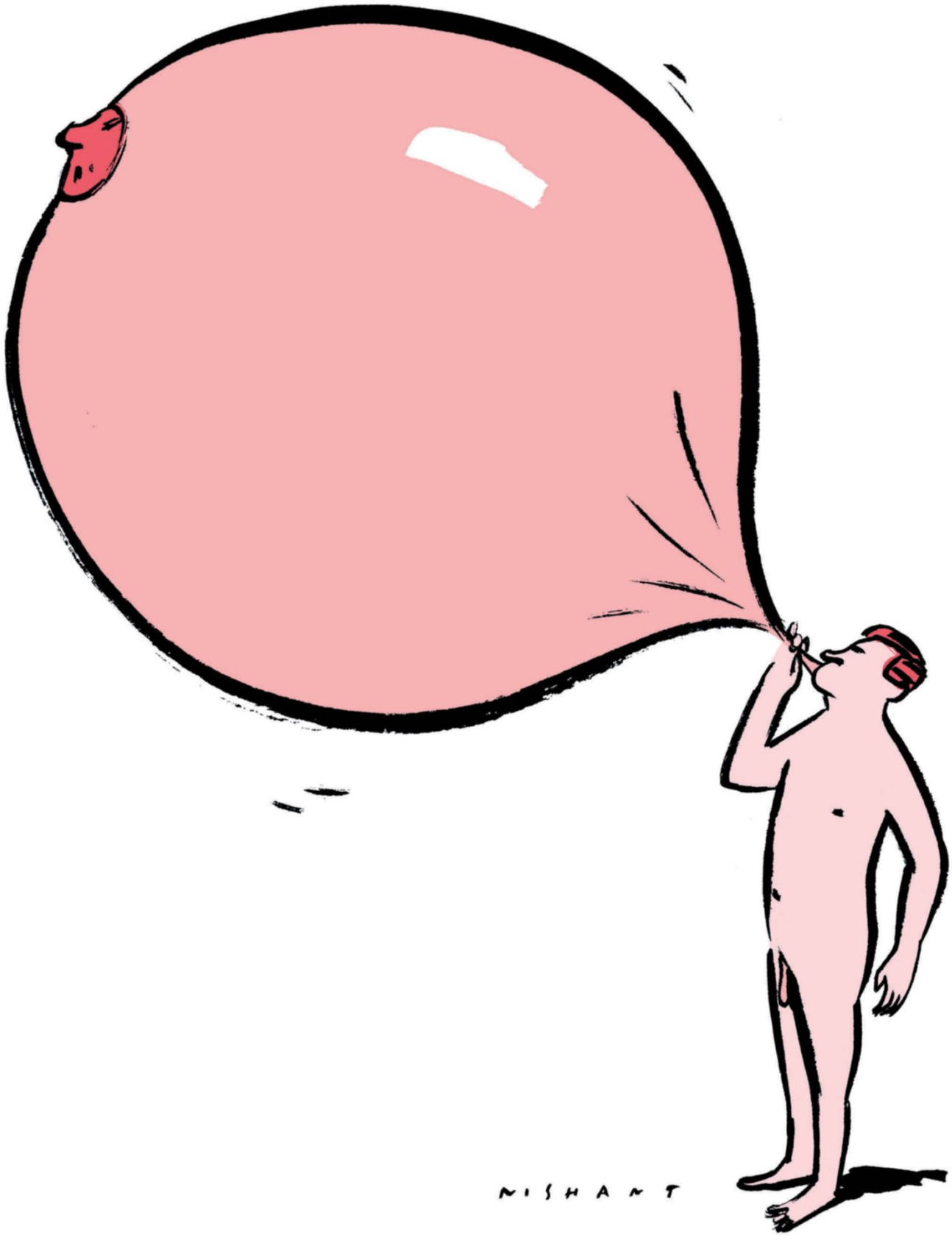
For millennia, stories—especially hero tales—have been used to influence and reflect human life. Joseph Campbell, anthropologist and author of the seminal *Hero With a Thousand Faces,* became famous for documenting the hero's journey in myths and legends from cultures around the world. George Lucas consciously integrated Campbell's work into *Star Wars.* Legions of filmmakers followed suit, and today's heroes are almost always armed for their journey with a gun.

"I think *Call of Duty* enables gamers to act out fantasies of empowerment—to be a hero and live an epic life—in a fictionalized world," Steinkuehler says, "and to be honest, that doesn't frighten me."

But what if the unhinged among us are telling themselves their own hero story? Didn't a crazed Gavin Long—who, don't forget, was a marine—see himself as a hero on the day he killed three cops in Baton Rouge? What about Mateen in Orlando or Micah Johnson, another veteran, in Dallas? They all fantasized and plotted, but most important, they all had access to assault weapons despite their mental health issues. We as voters, and the politicians who claim to serve us, can't seem to overcome the NRA's congressional choke hold, even though nine out of 10 Americans—gun lovers and haters alike—support universal background checks.

The whole world watches Hollywood movies and plays the same violent video games, yet firearms-related murders are 25 times higher in the United States than in other developed nations—because we have more guns on the street.

Maybe the real problem isn't Hollywood the influencer but Hollywood the reflection. We're all so comfortable watching the same damn movies, playing the same games and feigning the same outrage and heartache, we've become too blind to see the laser sight settling right between our eyes. ■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THE MUSIC ROOM BY STEPHEN KING

Guests of the Enderbys receive a special kind of hospitality in this short story inspired by the Edward Hopper painting Room in New York

Room in New York, 1932.

The Enderbys were in their music room—so they called it, although it was really just the spare bedroom. Once they had thought it would be little James or Jill Enderby's nursery, but after 10 years of trying, it seemed increasingly unlikely that a Baby Dear would arrive out of the Nowhere and into the Here. They had made their peace with childlessness. At least they had work, which was a blessing in a year when men were still standing in breadlines. There were fallow periods, it was true, but when the job was on, they could afford to think of nothing else, and they both liked it that way.

Mr. Enderby was reading the *New York Journal-American,* a new daily not even halfway through its first year of publication. It was sort of a tabloid and sort of not. He usually began with the comics, but when they were on the job he turned to the city news first, scanning through the stories quickly, especially the police blotter.

Mrs. Enderby sat at the piano, which had been a wedding gift from her parents. Occasionally she stroked a key, but did not press any. Tonight the only music in the music room was the symphony of nighttime traffic on Third Avenue, which came in through the open window. Third Avenue, third floor. A good apartment in a sturdy brownstone. They rarely heard their neighbors above and below, and their neighbors rarely heard them. Which was all to the good.

From the closet behind them came a single thump. Then another. Mrs. Enderby spread her hands as if to play, but when the thumps ceased, she put her hands in her lap.

"Still not a peep about our pal George Timmons," Mr. Enderby said, rattling the paper.

"Perhaps you should check the Albany *Herald,*" she said. "I believe the newsstand on Lexington and 60th carries it."

"No need," he said, turning to the funnies at last. "The *Journal-American* is good enough for me. If Mr. Timmons has been reported missing in Albany, let those interested search for him there."

"That's fine, dear," said Mrs. Enderby. "I trust you." There was really no reason not to; to date, the work had gone swimmingly. Mr. Timmons was their sixth guest in the specially reinforced closet.

Mr. Enderby chuckled. "The Katzenjammer Kids are at it again. This time they've caught Der Captain fishing illegally—shooting a net from a cannon, in fact. It's quite amusing. Shall I read it to you?"

Before Mrs. Enderby could answer, another thump came from the closet, and faint sounds that might have been shouts. It was difficult to tell, unless one put one's ear right up against the wood, and she had no intention of doing that. The piano bench was as close to Mr. Timmons as she intended to get, until it was time to dispose of him. "I wish he'd stop."

"He will, dear. Soon enough."

Another thump, as if to refute this.

"That's what you said yesterday."

"It seems I was premature," said Mr. Enderby, and then, "Oh, gosh—Dick Tracy is once more on the hunt for Pruneface."

"Pruneface gives me the willies," she said, without turning. "I wish Detective Tracy would put him away for good."

"That will never happen, dear. People *claim* to root for the hero, but it's the villains they remember."

Mrs. Enderby made no reply. She was waiting for the next thump. When it came—*if* it came—she would wait for the one after that. The waiting was the worst part. The poor man was hungry and thirsty, of course; they had ceased feeding and watering him three days ago, after he had signed the last check, the one that emptied his account. They had emptied his wallet at once, of almost $200. In a depression as deep as this one, $200 was a jackpot, and his watch might add as much as $20 more to their earnings (although, she admitted to herself, that might be a trifle optimistic).

Mr. Timmons's checking account at Albany National had been the real mother lode: $800. Once he was hungry enough, he had been happy to sign several checks made out to cash and with the notation "Business Expenses" written in the proper spot on each one. Somewhere a wife and kiddies might be depending on that money when Father didn't come home from his trip to New York, but Mrs. Enderby did not allow herself to dwell on that. She preferred to imagine Mrs. Timmons having a rich mama and papa in Albany's Mansion District, a generous couple right out of a Dickens novel. They would take her in and care for her and her children, little boys who might be endearing scamps like Hans and Fritz, the Katzenjammer Kids.

"Sluggo broke a neighbor's window and is blaming it on Nancy," Mr. Enderby said with a chuckle. "I swear he makes the Katzenjammers look like angels!"

"That awful hat he wears!" Mrs. Enderby said.

Another thump from the closet, and a very hard one from a man who had to be on the verge of starvation. But Mr. Timmons had been a big one. Even after a generous dose of chloral hydrate in his glass of dinner wine, he had nearly overpowered Mr. Enderby. Mrs. Enderby had had to help. She sat on Mr. Timmons's chest until he quieted. Unladylike, but necessary. That night, the window on Third Avenue had been shut, as it always was when Mr. Enderby brought home a guest for dinner. He met them in bars. Very gregarious, was Mr. Enderby, and very good at singling out businessmen who were alone in the city—fellows who were also gregarious and enjoyed making new friends. Especially new friends who might become new clients of one business or another. Mr. Enderby judged them by their suits, and he always had an eye for a gold watch chain.

"Bad news," Mr. Enderby said, a frown creasing his brow.

She stiffened on the piano bench and turned to face him. "What is it?"

"Ming the Merciless has imprisoned Flash Gordon and Dale Arden in the radium mines of Mongo. There are these creatures that look sort of like alligators——"

Now from the closet came a faint, wailing cry. Within its soundproofed confines, it must have been a shriek almost loud enough to rupture the poor man's vocal cords. How could Mr. Timmons still be strong enough to voice such a howl? He had already lasted a day longer than any of the previous five, and his somehow gruesome vitality had begun to prey on her nerves. She had been hoping that tonight would see the end of him.

The rug in which he was to be wrapped was waiting in their bedroom, and the panel truck with ENDERBY ENTERPRISES painted on the side was parked just around the corner, fully gassed and ready for another trip to the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. When they were first married, there had actually been an Enderby Enterprises. The depression—what the *Journal-American* had taken to calling the *Great* Depression—had put an end to that two years ago. Now they had this new work.

"Dale is afraid," continued Mr. Enderby, "and Flash is trying to buck her up. He says Dr. Zarkov will——"

Now came a fusillade of thumps: 10, maybe a dozen, and accompanied by more of those shrieks, muffled but still rather chilling. She could imagine blood beading Mr. Timmons's lips and dripping from his split knuckles. She could imagine how his neck would have grown scrawny, and how his formerly plump face would

"I CAN PUT A STOP TO IT, IF YOU LIKE. OF COURSE, IF *I* DO THE DEED, *YOU* WILL HAVE TO DO THE CLEANUP. IT'S ONLY FAIR."

have stretched long as his body gobbled the fat and musculature there in order to stay alive.

But no. A body couldn't cannibalize itself to stay alive, could it? The idea was as unscientific as phrenology. And how thirsty he must be by now!

"It's so annoying!" she burst out. "I hate it that he just goes *on* and *on* and *on!* Why did you have to bring home such a strong man, dear?"

"Because he was also a well-to-do man," Mr. Enderby said mildly. "I could see that when he opened his wallet to pay for our second round of drinks. What he's contributed will keep us for three months. Five, if we stretch it."

Thump, and thump, and thump. Mrs. Enderby put her fingers to the delicate hollows of her temples and began to rub.

Mr. Enderby looked at her sympathetically. "I can put a stop to it, if you like. He won't be able to struggle much in his current state; certainly not after having expended so much energy. A quick slash with your sharpest butcher knife. Of course, if *I* do the deed, *you* will have to do the cleanup. It's only fair."

Mrs. Enderby looked at him, shocked. "We may be thieves, but we are not murderers."

"That is not what people would say, if we were caught." He spoke apologetically but firmly enough, just the same.

She clasped her hands in the lap of her red dress tightly enough to whiten the knuckles, and looked straight into his eyes. "If we were called into the dock, I would hold my head up and tell the judge and the jury that we were victims of circumstance."

"And I'm sure you would be very convincing, dear."

Another thump from behind the closet door, and another cry. Gruesome. That was the word for his vitality, the exact one. *Gruesome.*

"But we are *not* murderers. Our guests simply lack sustenance, as do so many in these terrible times. We don't kill them; they simply fade away."

Another shriek came from the man Mr. Enderby had brought home from McSorley's over a week ago. It might have been words. It might have been *for the love of God.*

"It won't be long now," Mr. Enderby said. "If not tonight, then tomorrow. And we won't have to go back to work for quite a while. And yet...."

She looked at him in that same steady way, hands clasped. "And yet?"

"Part of you enjoys it, I think. Not this part, but the actual moment when we take them, as a hunter takes an animal in the woods."

She considered this. "Perhaps I do. And I *certainly* enjoy seeing what they have in their wallets. It reminds me of the treasure hunts Papa used to put on for me and my brother when we were children. But afterward...." She sighed. "I was never good at waiting."

More thumps. Mr. Enderby turned to the business section. "He came from Albany, and people who come from there get what they deserve. Play something, dear. That will cheer you up."

So she got her sheet music out of the piano bench and played "I'll Never Be the Same." Then she played "I'm in a Dancing Mood" and "The Way You Look Tonight." Mr. Enderby applauded and called for an encore on that one, and when the last notes died away, the thumps and cries from the soundproofed and specially reinforced closet had ceased.

"Music!" Mr. Enderby proclaimed. "It hath powers to soothe the savage beast!"

That made them laugh together, comfortably, the way people do when they have been married for many years and have come to know each other's minds. ■

ALL THAT

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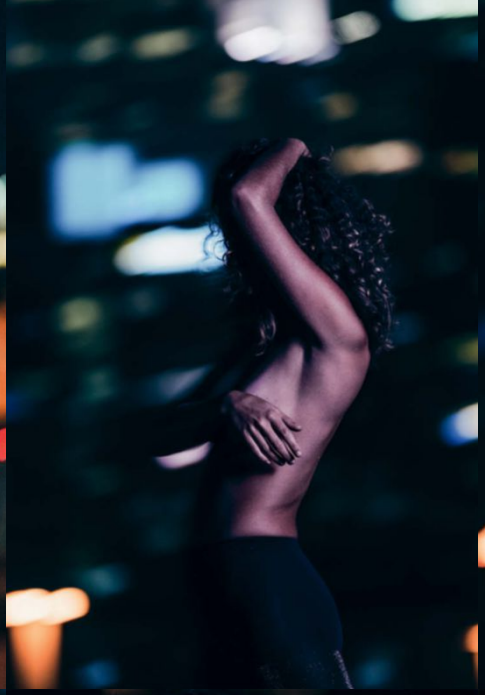
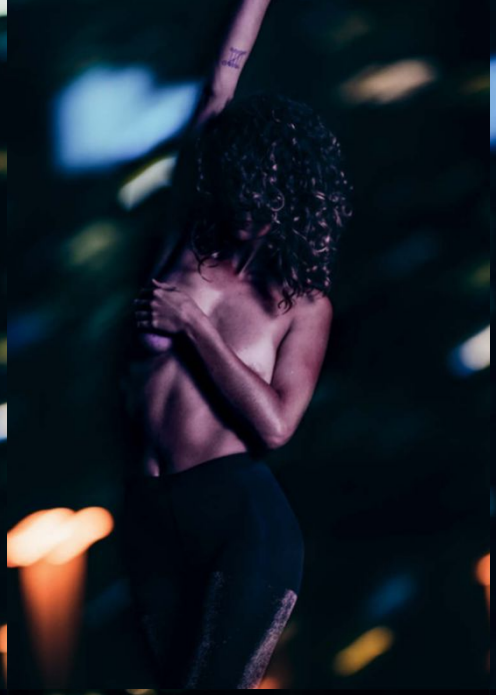







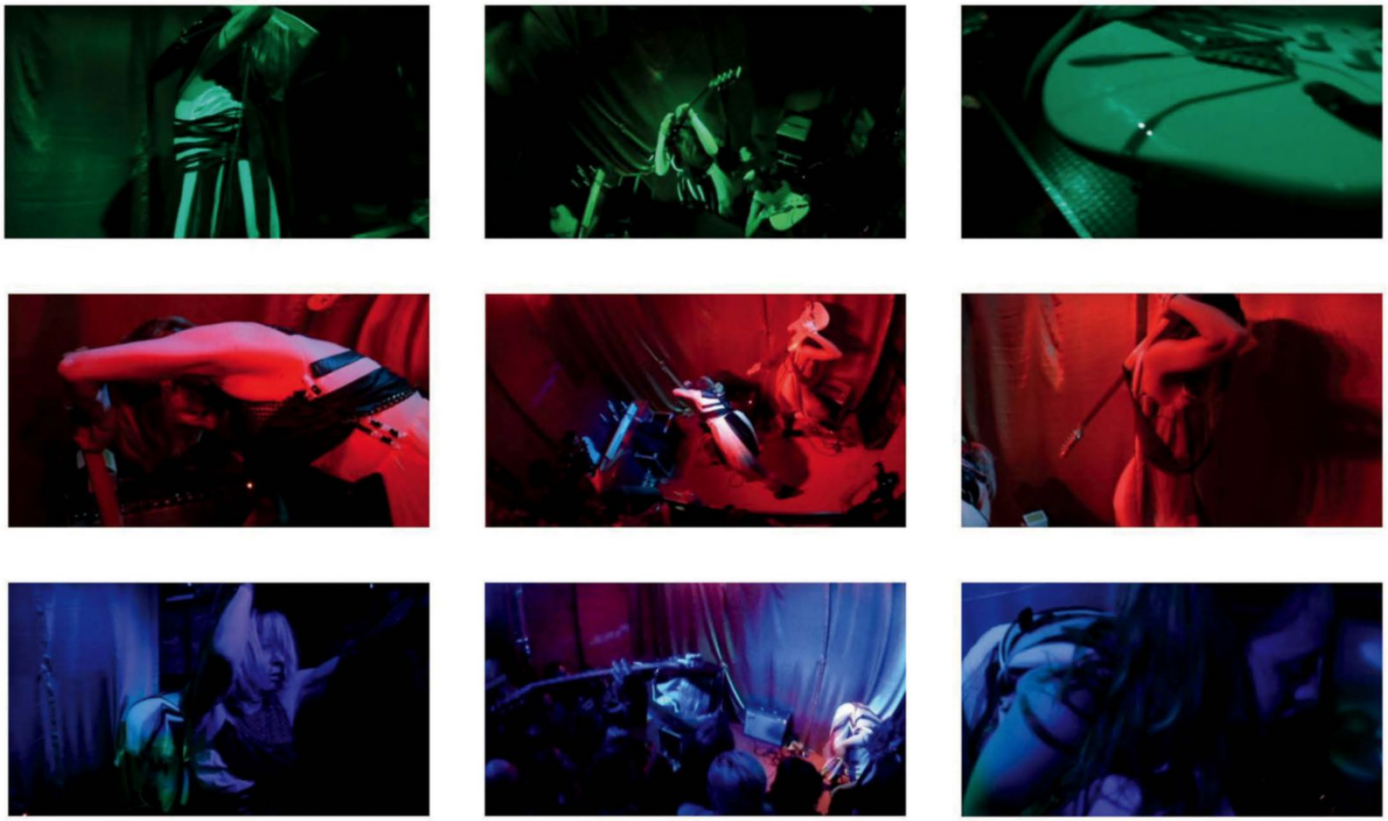



KIM GORDON

You could not have crashed your way through the 1980s and 1990s indie-rock world without encountering Kim Gordon, then best-known as the bassist and vocalist of the seminal noise-pop band Sonic Youth. With long blonde hair cascading over her eyes, a low-slung bass around her neck and an EAT ME *shirt on her lanky frame, Gordon was—and is—a ferocious musician who became an alt-rock style icon, a high-profile feminist and a muse to everyone from Kurt Cobain to Tavi Gevinson. ¶ But before she began pursuing music in earnest, Gordon was an art student with a collaborative streak. In addition to exhibiting her mixed-media work everywhere from Tokyo to London, she has co-founded a clothing company (X-Girl), curated countless art shows and created work with Yoko Ono, among many others. These days, Gordon's output is more varied than ever: A few years ago she launched the cathartic guitar duo Body/Head; in 2015 she published her unflinching memoir, Girl in a Band; and just this September she released "Murdered Out," her first single under her own name. Visitors to this year's Art Basel Miami Beach can experience her take on music, fashion and art all at once in Proposal for Dance, a video performance piece in which Gordon and another artist, clad in Rodarte dresses, mercilessly manipulate electric guitars in front of (and at times in the middle of) a live audience. ¶ Her recent paintings and sculptural works are rooted in her downtown No Wave beginnings, visually name-checking bands like Pussy Galore, using spray paint and trashed canvas and somehow achieving, through the wreckage and noise, a sublime abstraction. Almost 40 years in, Gordon continues to provide a reverberating commentary on the high and the low—and a point-blank look at what she recently called "culture collapsing in on itself."—Eric Steinman*

Above: Portrait of the artist by David Black. **Opposite:** *mirror wreath #2.* Spray paint on mirror, 24 x 18 inches, 2016.


Pussy
Galore



Opposite page: *Pussy Galore.* Acrylic on canvas, 55¼ x 39½ inches, 2015.
Above: Stills from *Proposal for Dance.* DVD, dir. Philipp Virus, 2012.
Below: *Fortress of Glassitude.* Acrylic on gessoed canvas with Aqua-Resin and fiberglass, 20 x 30 x 43½ inches, 2015.

WISCONSIN, 1968

Snow Bunnies take a ride through the Lake Geneva woods.

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