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MISS
NOVEMBER

Ashley Graham





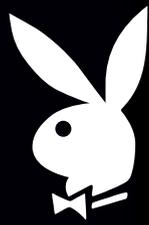


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PLAYBILL

Takashi Murakami

Murakami, known as the Warhol of Japan and father of the Superflat movement, co-curated a pop-up gallery during the Seattle Art Fair in August and handpicked James Jean as an exhibitor. In *Artist in Residence* Murakami explains why Jean, who has similar pop-culture influences, is the kind of creator he both envies and hopes to protect.



Emily Witt

In *Future Sex*, her debut nonfiction book, New York City-based writer Witt explores the sexual subcultures single women often encounter in their search for companionship. For *The Next Sexual Revolution*, PLAYBOY asked Witt to predict how technology and shifting expectations will alter our sex lives, from first dates to saying “I do.”



Keirnan Monaghan and Theo Vamvounakis

Despite the tech-age obsession with everything new, American culture tends to favor legacies. In *Style and Tech*, photographers Monaghan (left) and Vamvounakis capture two staples of those worlds and highlight just how well classic design holds up to innovation.



Kevin Mandel

In this month's fiction, Mandel explores the fears of every man who has ever put down his guitar (or skateboard or paintbrush or hacksaw) to put on a business suit. Anchored by a soul-searching protagonist, *The Filmmaker* wonders whether a person who changes paths can balance redemption with responsibility.



Ethan Brown

Hot on the heels of *Murder in the Bayou*, his true-crime book set in the deep South, journalist Brown flew to Houston to meet Jas Prince, the young music mogul who discovered rap sensation Drake. In *The Crown Prince of Hip-Hop*, Brown charts how Jas, along with his father, James, turned a kid from Canada into a rap kingpin, seemingly overnight.

Zoey Grossman

Grossman describes her photography as “colorful, sexy and playful”—attributes on ample display in her images of Miss November Ashley Smith. They form a Playmate pictorial of pure joy involving a hot rod, a paperback copy of *Jaws* and a revealing dip in a pool. Despite the distractions, Grossman never loses sight of the main attraction.



John Meroney

As PLAYBOY's political correspondent, Meroney has spent much of 2016 searching for meaning in one of the most dizzying election cycles in U.S. history. This month he pulls double duty with the *Playboy Interview*, in which he drills former NSA director Michael Hayden on all matters of national—and personal—security.



Alia Akkam

Most of us can only dream of getting paid to down delicious cocktails at the country's most inventive barrooms, but for veteran food and drink writer Akkam, such hard work is her bread and butter. For our *Best Bars 2016*, she visited dozens of watering holes across America to select the venues that offer the best buzz.

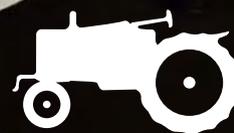


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ON THE COVER (AND OPPOSITE PAGE) Miss November Ashley Smith, photographed by Zoey Grossman.



PLAYBOY

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DEAR PLAYBOY

GREEN AND GOLD

The NFL should reconsider its stance on medical marijuana (*Marijuana Is a Team Sport*, September). Athletes use cannabis for various legitimate reasons. It's one of the most effective and safest drugs known; it's not physically addictive; it's fat free and has zero calories. As Eben Britton writes, our bodies are naturally designed with an endocannabinoid system that helps us rejuvenate and stay healthy longer. Cannabis can be used as a natural painkiller or an anti-inflammatory. It can boost appetite, calm anxiety, improve focus. Some athletes live in a constant state of jet lag—cannabis is a natural aid that can help them sleep, wake up early and be energized and ready to train or compete. And because there's no hangover (unlike with alcohol), cannabis can be used without jeopardizing next-day performance; it neither impairs physical powers nor affects mental judgment—very important if you're on the world stage.

Cannabis is a performance enhancer. The athletes who decide to use it to help their bodies recover instead of doping or taking opioids and other pills should be proud of their choices.

*Ross Rebagliati
Kelowna, British Columbia*

Rebagliati is the first Olympic snowboarding gold-medal winner and CEO of Ross' Gold, a medicinal-cannabis company.

GALE STORM

Kelly Gale is extraordinary (*Playmate*, September), and Chris Heads's photos are instant classics. But the very happy dog perched on Kelly's backside on page 86 is practically as cute as she is. What kind is he?

*Harold Reynolds
San Francisco, California*

The lucky pup is a mixed-breed terrier named Ziggy. He likes camping, eating cheese and taking long walks in the park.

Bravo! The September cover is spectacular and visually stunning with intense colors and the bewitching gaze of Kelly Gale as its centerpiece. It harkens back to the classic PLAYBOY covers of the 1960s and 1970s. Very nicely done indeed.

*Scott O. Sheppard
Orlando, Florida*

FEEL THE LOVE

My husband and I have always enjoyed the magazine, but I'm impressed with the new and improved PLAYBOY. The thicker paper and



A kiss from Miss September Kelly Gale.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS HEADS

new layout have a high-end feel, and I love that I don't have to flip through and search for the remainder of an article.

The photos of the women, though, are what I love most. They're stunningly beautiful and natural, and by not showing everything they let my imagination run a little wild. The photos even make me feel sexy. I look at them and feel a sense of pride in being a woman.

*Kristin Masson
Palm Beach Gardens, Florida*

Six issues in and I love the new direction of the magazine. Bravo to Hef and to PLAYBOY's editorial staff for the bold move. Well played.

*Andrew Bejarano
Las Cruces, New Mexico*

DIRTY WORK

Hef and Mick Jagger at the Playboy Mansion (*Playback*, September)—sounds like a recipe for trouble. Can Hef share any stories?

*Jim Moore
Austin, Texas*

The Rolling Stones' four-day stay in Chicago in 1972 was a bacchanalia for the books; afterward many items needed to be repaired (plumbing),

replaced (bedding, drapes, rugs, a toilet seat) or reupholstered (couch and chair)—Keith Richards had started a fire. That's not surprising, but this may be: Hef says he taught Bill Wyman to play backgammon during the band's visit.

NEW BLUE LAWS

Of all the thought-provoking articles in your Freedom Issue, Norm Stamper's has stuck with me (*Fix the Police*, July/August). Police must be accountable. "It's time America's police officers recognize they belong to the people, not the other way around"—Stamper's exactly right. Cops are supposed to be peace officers, emphasis on *peace*.

*Dan McDonald
Chicago, Illinois*

COVER STORY

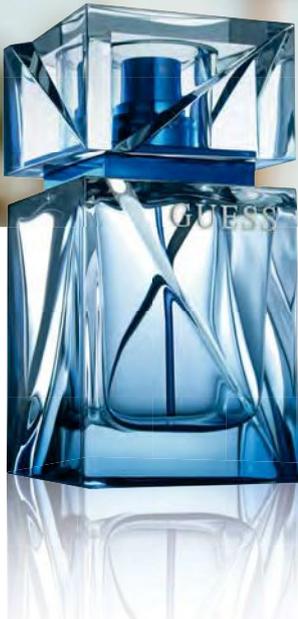
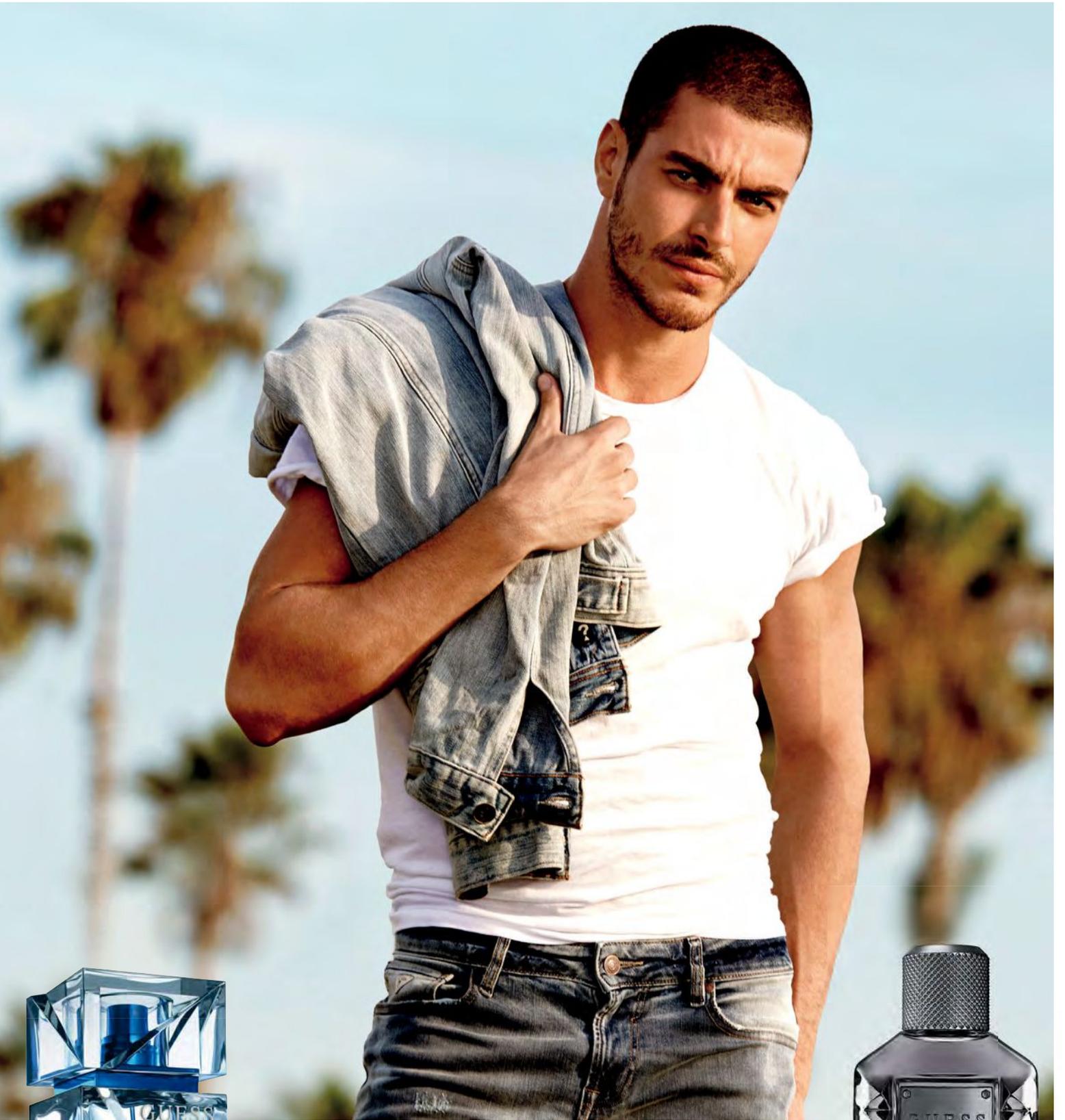
Let us give thanks this month for the alluring Miss November Ashley Smith, at whose knees our Rabbit can be found praying for a little sheet music.



E-mail letters@playboy.com, or write to us at 9346 Civic Center Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90210.

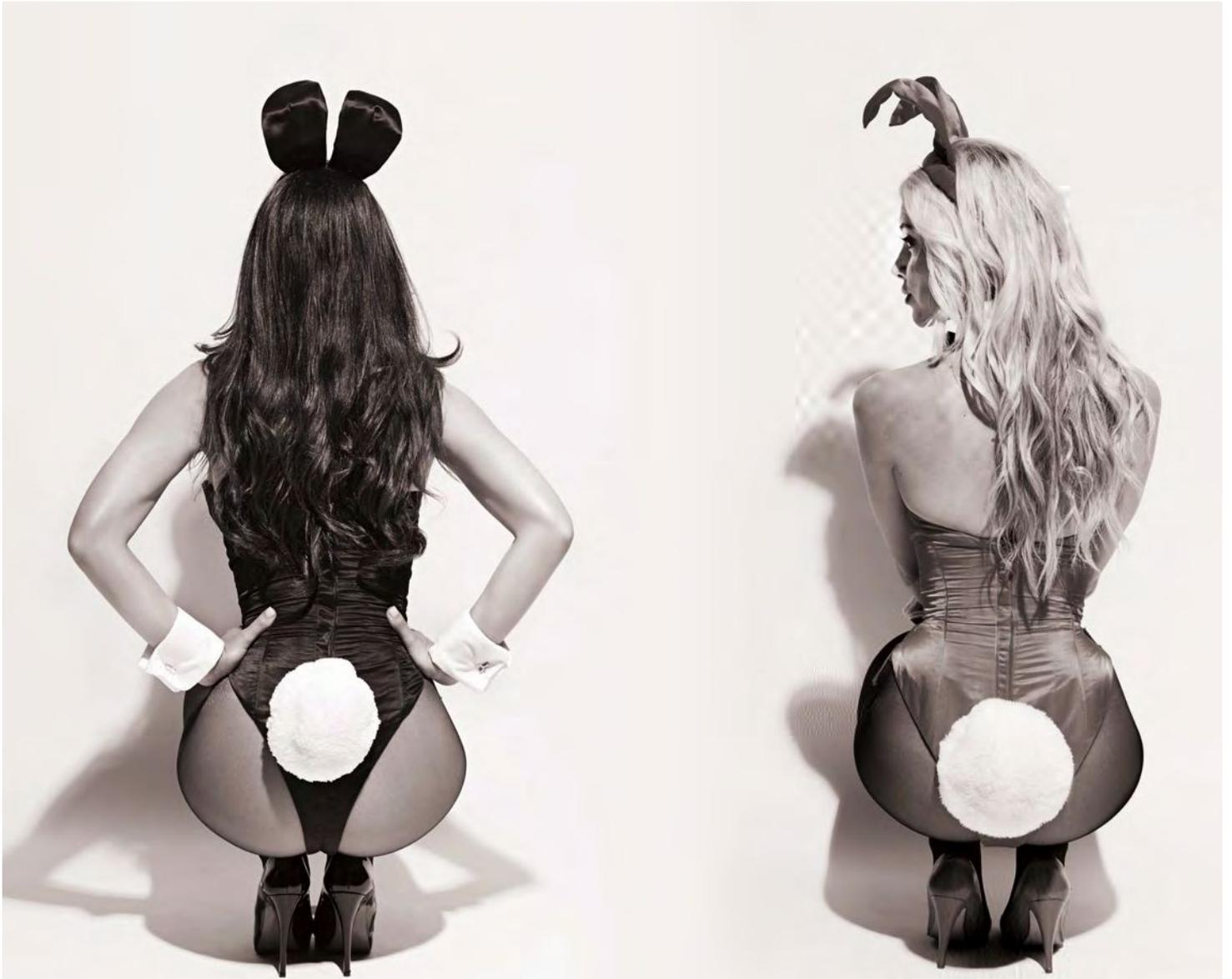
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G U E S S

SOME COOL FRAGRANCES FOR MEN



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0 FILTER

**“When
I say no,
it makes me
feel good
at night.”**

“People often don’t want to get to know the real you; they only want to get to know the person they think you are. For me, that means people are constantly trying to change me, every second of the day, especially on social media. I’m not fed up with social media—I understand it—but people like to comment on how my image is too edgy, that I’m too edgy, and on how they wish I looked. It’s a lot of ‘do this, don’t do that.’ To them I say, fuck off. There’s this effort to try to shame a woman’s sexiness by pulling a cover over it, but I’m a woman who loves skin. I love skin on me, I

love skin on girls, I love skin on guys. If you’re confident enough to show off your body, you should. Be confident. It can be difficult to get yourself to focus on you all the time, especially when you’re trying to transition into who you really are, but I’m not going to change for anybody else. I love staying true to me.”

Bella Thorne stars in Tyler Perry’s *Boo! A Madea Halloween*; *Amityville: The Awakening*; and Xavier Dolan’s upcoming drama *The Death and Life of John F. Donovan*.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHLOE AFTEL



Sriracha Hot Chicken!

*The superspicy Nashville specialty has gone national. And our
Asian-inflected version might be the best*



FOOD

It took only 70 years or so for hot chicken to become an overnight foodie cult hit. Legend has it a jealous girlfriend served an overly spiced dish of fried chicken to a Nashville playboy named Thornton Prince; her attempt at revenge turned into the signature offering of the restaurant Prince's Hot Chicken. In recent years other establishments, including Hattie B's in Nashville and Howlin' Ray's in Los Angeles, have tweaked the formula for the incendiary dish. L.A. chef Kuniko Yagi gives us a brilliant Asian-Southern, soy-and-sriracha-spiked interpretation that ups the umami. Gentlemen, start your fryers.

KUNIKO'S HOT CHICKEN

8 chicken drumsticks
2 qts. rice bran oil

Marinade:

2 tbsp. cayenne pepper
1 tbsp. soy sauce
1 tbsp. sriracha
1 tbsp. mirin
1 tsp. sugar
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. garlic powder
¼ tsp. ground white pepper
¼ tsp. ground black pepper
1 large egg
3 tbsp. cornstarch

Dredging mixture:

½ cup all-purpose flour
½ tbsp. salt
¼ tsp. ground white pepper
¼ tsp. ground black pepper
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper

Pour all marinade ingredients except egg and cornstarch into a large bowl. Stir. Add egg, mix thoroughly, then add cornstarch and mix again. Place chicken legs in marinade mixture and marinate for at least 30 minutes. In another large bowl, combine dredging ingredients. In a four-quart pot, heat rice bran oil to 325 degrees. Dip chicken legs in dredging mixture to coat. Fry in small batches for 10 minutes or until chicken reaches 160 degrees inside.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRANT CORNETT



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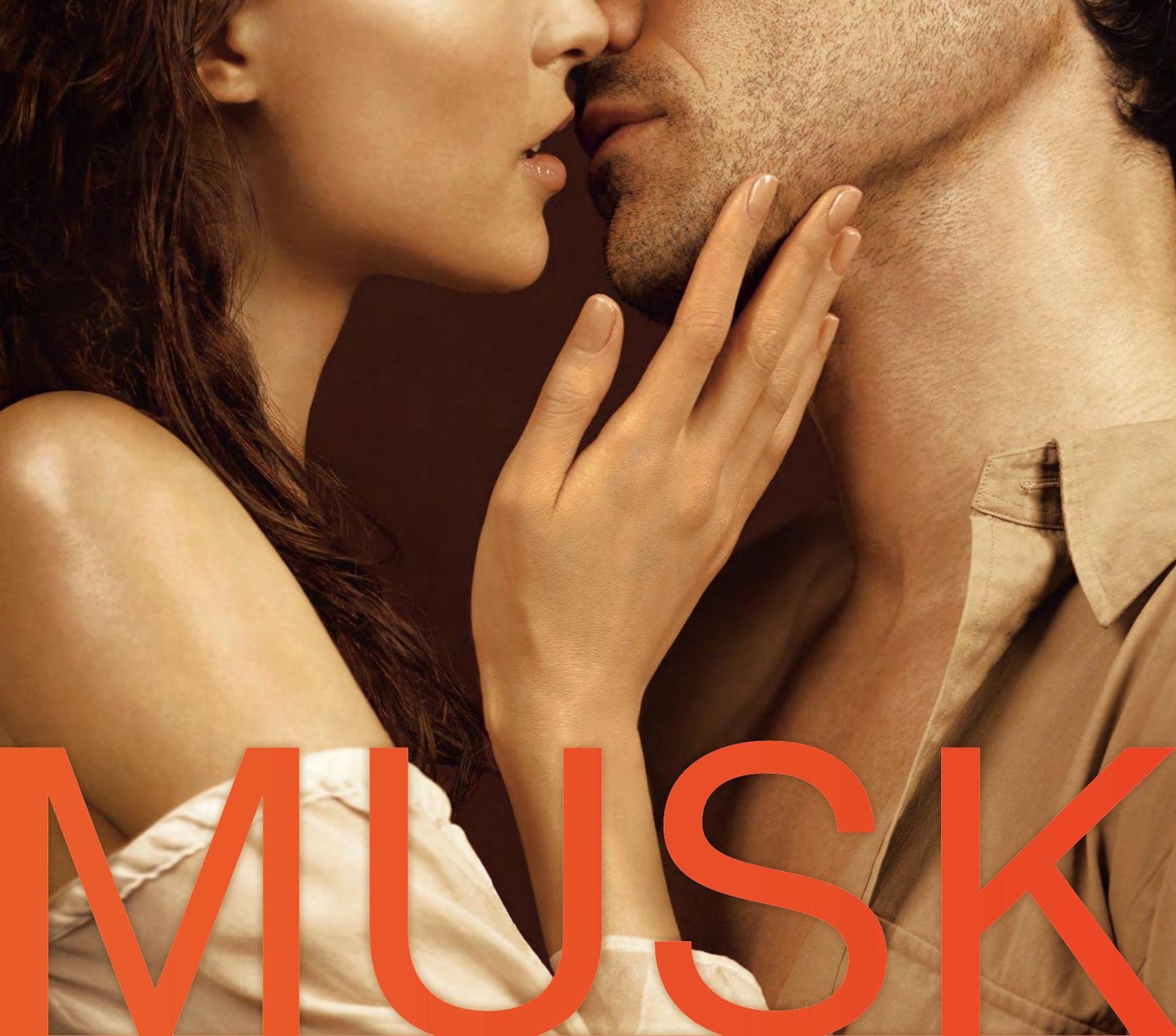
STYLE

MORE MOTO

Cali street cool meets Tokyo urban edge in the ultimate motorcycle jacket

Given its rebel origins, the motorcycle jacket bridges multiple style lanes with subversive but wearable sex appeal. And the Blackmeans rider jacket from California-based streetwear savant John Elliott certainly drives the point home (\$1,900, johnelliott.co). Elliott's laid-back layering clothes have put him at the forefront of the new pack of men's fashion designers. Tokyo's Blackmeans collective grew out of Japanese punk subculture; its leathers are renowned for their attention to detail and hand-crafted technique. The collaboration has produced an exemplar of the motorcycle jacket in supple calfskin with a black satin lining. It's pricey, but it's the last leather jacket you'll need to buy.—*Vincent Boucher*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEIRNAN MONAGHAN
AND THEO VAMVOUNAKIS



JÖVAN

It's what attracts







TECH

THE GREAT KODAK SUPER 8 COMEBACK

Director J.J. Abrams doesn't shoot digital. Neither do Quentin Tarantino and Christopher Nolan, for that matter. Film, they say, feels warmer, its grainy artifacts somehow more artistic. Film is also a major pain in the ass. It's unforgiving and time-consuming. These are loves and lessons many filmmakers learned as pimply-faced teenagers shooting ultra-low-budget backyard versions of *Stand By Me* on their dads' Super 8 video cameras. Now Kodak is souping up its classic lo-fi device with hi-fi smarts. Equal parts legacy and modernity, the new consumer Super 8 (available early next year for \$750 or less) records to a film cartridge that Kodak then develops into a reel-to-reel and a digital file (processing costs are built into the film's \$75 price tag). The camera also has a flip-out viewfinder and controls to adjust film speed and exposure. In an Instagram-obsessed world, the updated Super 8 is a shrewd move for the film giant, one that positions it with a foot on either side of the adoption curve (why choose between being NASA or SpaceX when you can be both?). It also looks just about perfect; the Yves Béhar design is a piece of 1980s retro pop art brought to life. Don't be surprised if it winds up starring in more Vines, viral videos and 30-second spots than it can possibly shoot.—*Corinne Iozzio*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEIRNAN MONAGHAN AND THEO VAMVOUNAKIS



MY WAY

JOHN VARVATOS

*The legendary fashion designer on the power of music, the importance of personal style
and how passion is central to every last thing he does*

AS TOLD TO **VINCENT BOUCHER**

I grew up in a very humble household in Detroit. We were five kids in an 800-square-foot house with one little bathroom. As much as I loved my family, there comes a time when you want to do your own thing. I got sucked into music. I would go to my neighborhood record store, Sam's Jams, and sit on the floor and read through all the music magazines. I'd look at the artists and what they were wearing. I had a paper route and was always thinking what I could spend my \$4 on that week. I would say to Sam, "This Led Zeppelin album, they didn't write all the songs." And he'd go, "You don't know who Willie Dixon is?" and he'd put on blues records for me.

Back then I knew I didn't want to dress like anybody else. When I saw Jimi Hendrix I loved that he didn't look like anybody on the planet. And I liked that Keith Richards didn't look like the rest of the Stones. I thought if they could create their own look, maybe I could too. In junior high I would take whatever little money I had and buy a jacket or a pair of corduroys. And at the age of 14 or 15, you start to be interested in girls and girls start becoming interested in you. They'd say,

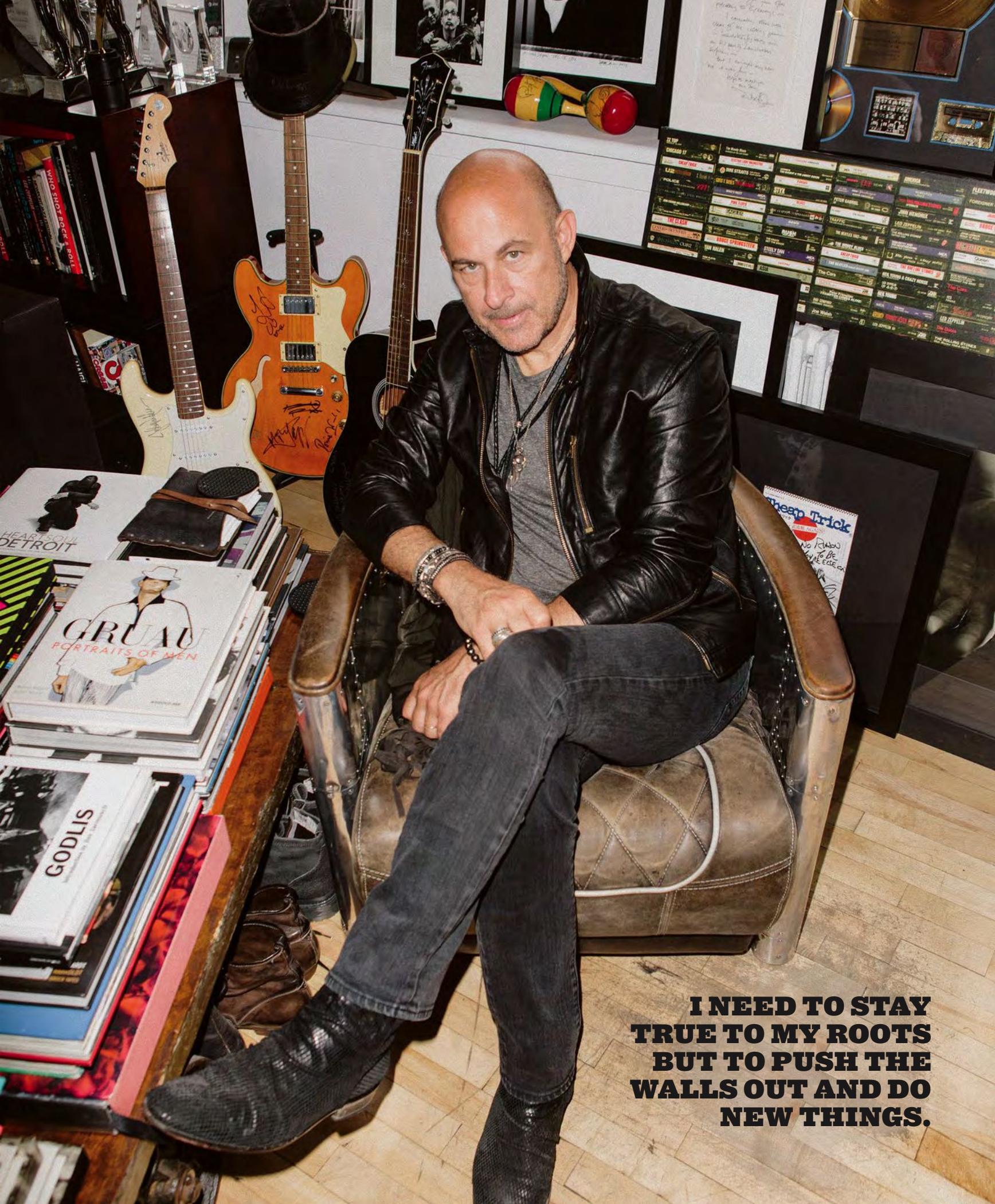
"You look cool. That's a cool jacket." So I got a job at a clothing store after school because I wanted the discount.

I studied science in college and eventually ended up working in sales at Polo Ralph Lauren, where I fell in love with the whole process of designing and creating from inception. A switch flipped in my head that said "This is what you have to do." I was in my late 20s, and I decided to give up an amazing job and change the entire direction of my career. Eventually I went to Calvin Klein to be head of menswear and then back to Ralph Lauren as head of design for men. I was lucky to work with two of the best brands in the world. One day I was walking through Barneys New York; it was a Sunday back in 1999, and I was checking out the fall season. I saw Prada, really successful, and it was all black nylon. I saw Helmut Lang, and it was all this black. Jil Sander. All falling into a modern genre. And I thought to myself, My God, what a time in fashion to do something completely the opposite of classic—to mix a kind of old-world vintage look with a modern sensibility. And that happened to be my personal style.

My creative process is the same every season: I know I have to get from A to Z, with a calendar to get there. And the first thing I need is inspiration. I need to stay true to my roots but to push the walls out and do new things. I might be looking at architecture—say, the amazing Santiago Calatrava winged building in New York—and I'll be thinking it might be interesting for seams on the back of a jacket. Or the way we knit a sweater—nothing ever literal, but always looking for a spark.

I love what I do, and I feel I'm blessed. And I get to combine design with my other real passion in life, music, which has been there all along. Most people have a hard time finding one job they really love, and I have that *and* a record label. I don't have a hundred artists; I have six, and the label is a little more than a year old. It all happened so organically. I never had this grand plan that I was going to start a record label or that I was going to put artists in my ads. It really happened through the one word I use to describe it all: It's *passion* across all those fronts. Because of that, I get respect. And that's the thing I feel most honored about. You can't ask for anything more. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS SHONTING



**I NEED TO STAY
TRUE TO MY ROOTS
BUT TO PUSH THE
WALLS OUT AND DO
NEW THINGS.**



AUTO



THE NEWEST JEEP DOES OLD JUST RIGHT

The last of the great Jeep Wranglers wears its military heritage on its sleeve

There are very few contemporary vehicles to which the term *timelessly cool* can be applied, but the 2016 Jeep Wrangler 75th anniversary edition is one of them. Sure, purists will point out that the civilian Jeep first manufactured in 1945 was the CJ-2A, not the Wrangler, which was launched in 1986. But however you slice it and whatever you call it, the Wrangler, in all its four-wheel-drive, stripped-down simplicity, is a direct descendant of the legendary CJ, and it's still the most bang-for-your-buck badass utilitarian vehicle you can get. Think we're being overdramatic? Name another ride with the same kind of history that you can buy for about \$24,000 (base model) and that holds its own both in rural Texas and on Rodeo Drive.

The fact that the Jeep (originally called the Willys MB) began as a basic mode of transportation for U.S. troops in World War II is the foundation of its decades-long cred. The association isn't just historical: In 2006, Wrangler production moved to the same Toledo, Ohio plant that assembled the military Jeeps.

Under the hood, the specialty Jeep is equipped with the same 3.6-liter V6 engine found in other Wranglers, and it puts out a hearty 285 horsepower and 260 pound-feet of torque. For the most part, its performance features are the same as on standard models, aside from some extra off-road equipment.

But most people aren't going to challenge the beefy four-by-four's capabilities. It's on the

aesthetic front that this special edition shines: The most arresting elements can be found in such details as the low-gloss bronze accents and commemorative badging, especially when paired on a "sarge" green model—just one of six color options for the limited-edition Wrangler. These customizations push the starting price well past the entry level, to \$34,675 (as listed for the two-door model). But considering the 2016 Wrangler is one of the last models to be built on Jeep's popular JK platform, which will end its decade-long run in 2017, you can justify the expenditure as an investment in a collectible. And with Jeep's rich backstory and outstanding performance, no one will challenge your thinking.—*Marcus Amick*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHANTAL ANDERSON



 **PLAYBOY**SHOP.com



ADVISOR

How Do I Friend-Zone Her Without Being a Dick?

Q: *I met a woman on OkCupid; we've gone on five dates and slept together once. Although I find her attractive, a spark is missing. I like hanging out with her, but I definitely don't want us to keep dating. I've been texting her less often and mentioning other women, but she still asks me out. How do I put her in the friend zone?*

A: You're just not into her. It happens. You cannot feign chemistry—and don't try, because pheromones will win every time. It's important for you to realize that no matter how you present it, the term *friend zone* implies rejection, and not many people take kindly to being rejected. Unless the two of you are as serene as high priestess Gwyneth Paltrow and puppy dog Chris Martin, a "conscious uncoupling" is tricky to navigate, particularly if you don't have much history together. That said, it's not impossible, as long as you avoid the mistakes most men make when trying to bail on an intimate relationship.

First off, don't suddenly start acting squirrely, being less responsive or flaking on plans. Instead of ripping off the Band-Aid, you'll only be tugging on it hair by painful hair. In this attempt to avoid confrontation, you'll end up hurting her more.

You should also not bench her. That's when a man knows he can't give a woman the commitment she desires but keeps her in his orbit for occasional sex or companionship. A common example of this is asking her to "Netflix and



chill" every time you sense she's pulling away. When you know she has feelings for you but have no intention of taking it to the next level, this is an egregiously selfish move.

Whatever you do, don't pull the most common of break-up tactics and ghost her. Many argue that in today's age of low-stakes dating, disappearing without any explanation is acceptable behavior. I disagree. It's the most cowardly way to disengage. Ghosting leaves the other person in a purgatory where he or she will never stop wondering, Was it something I said? To ghost someone shows zero respect for their feelings and betrays a complete lack of integrity. No one wins.

Lastly, if you want to stay friends, there's only one way to go about it, and it's the scariest: Tell her the truth. Recently I went on a few

dates with a man I liked. He knew I was looking for something serious because I was up-front with him from the get-go. Four dates in, he told me his feelings didn't match the intensity of mine. Yes, I was disappointed, but I appreciated his candor. Because of that, he and I are now friends—after enough time had passed to allow my bruised ego to heal. Which brings me to the most important thing to remember when friend-zoning someone: Even if you're honest about what you want, you can't control the outcome. In the end, whether she wants to stay friends with you is her decision. Do your best to express your feelings honestly—something many men find difficult but that returns dividends. Your willingness to be forthright will reveal just how much you respect her, and that's a step in the right direction.

Questions? E-mail advisor@playboy.com.



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BURTON

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 **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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ON BEER

BY **BEN SCHOTT**

GLOBAL BEERS



One in 20 beers sold is a Snow, the pale, watery lager from China that retails there for only \$1 a liter. The top 10 beers worldwide are:

Global market share			
Snow	5.4%	Yanjing	1.9%
Tsingtao	2.8%	Heineken	1.5%
Bud Light	2.5%	Harbin	1.5%
Budweiser	2.3%	Brahma	1.5%
Skol	2.1%	Coors Light	1.3%

Source: Euromonitor, 2016

BIZARRE BEER MIXES

- Snakebite* beer + cider
- Black velvet* Guinness + champagne
- Blackstrap* rum + molasses + beer
- Calibogus* rum + molasses + spruce beer
- Dog's nose* beer + gin
- Michelada* beer + lime juice + spices
- Red eye* beer + tomato juice
- Rumfustian* beer + white wine + gin + egg yolks + lemon juice + sugar
- Black and tan* pale ale + stout/porter
- Purl* beer + wormwood
- Humpty-dumpty* ale boiled with brandy

BANG FOR YOUR BELLY

EfficientDrinker.com evaluates beers by calculating the percentage of calories in each that are derived from alcohol. In other words: what to drink to achieve maximum insobriety with minimum beer belly. The site's most efficient beers are currently:

ABV	Cal.	Beer	EFFICIENCY
2.5%	55	Budweiser Select	55 88.2%
5.5%	123	Bud Ice	86.8%
4.2%	95	Natural Light	85.8%
4.2%	95	Michelob Ultra	85.8%
5.0%	114	Michelob Ultra Amber	85.1%

UNUSUAL BEER SLANG OF NOTE: *shant of gatter* = pot of beer · *malt-worm/lushington/belcher* = beer-hound · *legs-and-arms* = beer with no body · *Molson muscle* = beer belly · *potomania* = drinking beer to excess · *tegestology* = collecting (pilfering) beer mats · *merry-go-down* = strong beer · *bumclink/clink* = inferior beer · *Beer Street* = the throat · *rush the growler* = fetch some beer

"For a quart of ale is a dish for a king."

—FROM *THE WINTER'S TALE* BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

SUDSCELLANY



The U.S. Department of the Treasury defines beer as "fermented beverages of any name or description containing one half of one percent or more of alcohol by volume, brewed or produced from malt, wholly or in part, or from any substitute for malt." This, frankly, takes all the joy out of an ice-cold, brown-bagged, cheeky "road soda." ¶ Below are the countries that drink the most beer:

Annual liters/person			
Czech Republic	143	Ireland	93
Germany	110	Romania	90
Austria	108	Lithuania	89
Estonia	104	Croatia	82
Poland	100	Belgium	81

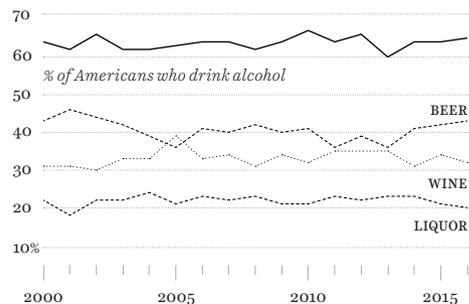
Source: Euromonitor, 2014

Beer's astringency is measured in *international bitterness units*, a 0–100 scale on which **LIGHT LAGER** scores 5–15; **IPA**, 60–80; **DOUBLE IPA**, 70–90; and **BARLEYWINE**, 100. ¶ The old English drinking ditty "The Barley Mow Song" consists of a series of repeating verses in which the barley harvest is welcomed in ever-increasing quantities of beer:

- NIPPERKIN → QUARTER PINT → HALF PINT → PINT → QUART → POTTLE (half gallon) → GALLON → HALF ANKER → ANKER (9 gallons) → HALF HOGSHEAD → HOGSHEAD (64 gallons) → PIPE (108 gallons) → WELL → RIVER → OCEAN

AMERICAN ON TAP

According to Gallup, 65 percent of Americans report drinking alcohol on occasion—a figure that's been relatively stable for the past 70 years. Among those who booze, beer remains the most popular tippie, notwithstanding occasional flirtations with wine.



Below are the 5 best-selling domestic beer brands in the United States:

ABV	Beer	2015 sales (millions)
4.2%	Bud Light	\$2,022
4.2%	Coors Light	\$1,044
4.2%	Miller Lite	\$885
5.0%	Budweiser	\$719
4.2%	Michelob Ultra	\$508

Source: Statista

CRAFTY

Craft beer accounts for 21 percent of all beer sold in the U.S., according to the Brewers Association. In 2015 craft brewers blended 24.5 million barrels (up 13 percent from 2014), worth some \$22.3 billion. IBISWorld breaks down the types of craft beer made:

IPA	25.2%	Lager	8.6%
Seasonal	23.7%	Wheat	6.9%
Pale ale	17.3%	Bock	3.9%
Amber ale	10.9%	Fruit beer	3.5%





JEFFREY DEAN MORGAN

As Negan, he strode into TV history with *The Walking Dead's* fanatically debated season-six finale. Meet the man behind the bat

BY **SCOTT PORCH** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **RYAN LOWRY**

Q1: Last season, *The Walking Dead's* concluding episode saw the introduction of your character, Negan, and a major cliff-hanger: Negan presumably killing one of the main characters with a baseball bat wrapped in barbed wire. How much did you know at the end of the season?

MORGAN: We ended on that bat coming down. I didn't know who the victim was at that time. I don't think anybody in the cast did. Maybe somebody knew, but everyone on the show swears they didn't. When we came back this year, we picked up directly from there.

Q2: How does a show this big keep a major secret like that?

MORGAN: We've had to take so many security measures. People will hang out where we shoot and try to fly drones over the sets. It's a level of crazy I've never experienced. We hide people in vans to get to the sets so you don't know who's coming and who isn't. We shoot Alexandria—the place where a lot of the show is set—in a town called Senoia, Georgia. The town has become this big tourist attraction. It has a *Walking Dead* coffee shop. Peo-

ple come from all over the world to this 15-foot wall and try to get a glimpse of us shooting.

Q3: Have you watched the show from the beginning?

MORGAN: I was a fan of the show from when Frank Darabont started it. I was like, Really? A zombie show? How will that fly? And it's not a zombie show. You get into what the characters are going through and how they interact with each other. The zombies are kind of an added bonus. I've been in the comic-book world for a while, from being on *Supernatural* and in *Watchmen*. I've been going to Comic-Con for one show or another for the past 10 years, and I went this year for *The Walking Dead*. It was insanity. Hall H holds almost 7,000 people, and it was standing room only. We brought everyone who was in the lineup with Negan at the end of last season.

Q4: Has your appearance in that one *Walking Dead* episode made a difference in your ability to go to Starbucks?

MORGAN: Not yet, but I live in the middle of nowhere here in Atlanta and on

a farm in upstate New York. Everyone on the show has said it's a life-changing experience. I hang out with Norman Reedus, who's the brother I never had. We go on motorcycle rides in the middle of Alabama or wherever, and we can stop for five minutes and people will converge on him. He can't go anywhere, and it's like that for most of the cast.

Q5: You've seen it up close, and you're okay with it?

MORGAN: It's more than I want to deal with. *Star* magazine has never given a shit about me, and TMZ doesn't know who I am. The show is going to change all of that, and I don't know how I feel about it. It hasn't really hit me yet. I'm already in the process of putting in a ton of security on the farm. After that episode aired, I started seeing weird things in my mailbox and people coming up my driveway to take pictures. The cast members don't go to the grocery store. They don't go out to eat. AMC has told them in no uncertain terms that they have to lie low until the premiere. We've been given very strict





directions on what we can and can't say between now and then.

Q6: *You've been at this for a long time. When did you start acting?*

MORGAN: I was 22 and I'm 50 now, so I've been acting for almost 30 years. I wanted to be a graphic artist. I grew up in Seattle. I had been selling paintings in bars to pay my rent. All my friends were musicians in Seattle when grunge was blowing up. I had an actor friend who was moving to L.A., and I went with him. I went to a few auditions and got a part playing a pimp in a Roger Corman movie called *Uncaged*. I remember driving down Hollywood Boulevard in a Cadillac convertible with a camera mounted to it and thinking, I've got this wired, man. I had been there only a month, and I was already the lead in a movie. And then I struggled forever. I didn't break out until *Grey's Anatomy* and *Supernatural* hit, when I was 39 years old.

Q7: *That must have been a hectic year. What do you remember?*

MORGAN: I was doing *Grey's Anatomy* and *Supernatural* at the same time, and then they aired at the same time. Zack Snyder was a fan of *Grey's Anatomy* and cast me as the Comedian in *Watchmen*, which was the exact opposite of Denny Duquette. For a while, I would get tackled by women at the grocery store. I was at the Harley dealership yesterday, and a lady knew I was an actor and couldn't figure out who I was. And all of a sudden, I saw the lightbulb go off: *It's Denny*.

Q8: *Speaking of Harleys, didn't you and Norman bike up north recently?*

MORGAN: We went to Nashville from Atlanta. It's like four and a half hours if you take the freeways, but we took back roads through the mountains. I have a new bike that has GPS and we just put in "no freeways." We didn't care how long it took us, and it was about nine and a half hours each way. Just the two of us. It was great.

Q9: *I hear you have pet alpacas on your farm. What is an alpaca?*

MORGAN: An alpaca is a camelid. They spit at you. They honk at you a little bit. We don't have enough for a serious wool operation, but we get enough to process it and give to some of our friends. We have Highland cattle that look like woolly mammoths—they're as big as a Volkswagen—and a calf named Hamilton. We saved two baby ducks that think they're dogs. And we have chickens. I'm usually outside working on something. We built a workshop and a barn last winter, and we're doing an addition now. There's a lot of grass to mow, a lot of snow to plow.

Q10: *You joined Twitter in August with the handle @JDMorgan, but you haven't been very active. Do you have an incognito account, or are you just not into social media?*

MORGAN: I've never had a stealth account, or any account. When we were at Comic-Con this summer, our showrunner, Scott Gimple, said I should get an account so other people wouldn't pretend to be me on Twitter. I have never really understood social media. I don't understand how actors complain about privacy and then tweet what they're having for dinner.

Q11: *Back to Negan. He says a lot of funny things, like "Pissin' our pants yet?" Is that all in the script?*

MORGAN: This may evolve as we go, but all of my dialogue so far has come almost straight from the comic—way more so than any other character. I want to be careful not to make Negan too cartoony. The world of *The Walking Dead* is so gritty and dark that I wondered if playing him bigger than life would fit. The dialogue lends itself to going super big, so I've had to fit that a lot. Every director who comes in wants to have his Negan moment, and I want to reel it in.

We do the F-bomb take, where every other word is *fuck* or *fucking*. It's so much. I swear like a fucking sailor in

real life, and it's a lot for me. I've been trying to make him as realistic as possible in this *Walking Dead* world and yet keep the larger-than-life comic-book character alive.

Q12: *TV has a recent history of celebrating anti-heroes and other morally ambiguous characters, from Tony Soprano to Wilson Fisk in Daredevil. Do you see Negan as a pure villain?*

MORGAN: The introduction of Negan is probably even more straight-up evil, but it's complicated. Rick Grimes, Andrew Lincoln's character, has done some horrible things in the past seven years. Negan does horrendous things, but there's a certain charisma and sense of humor that the audience would feel if they had been following him for the past seven years instead of Grimes. Negan is coming in and blowing apart the show, and he's a guy people are going to hate.

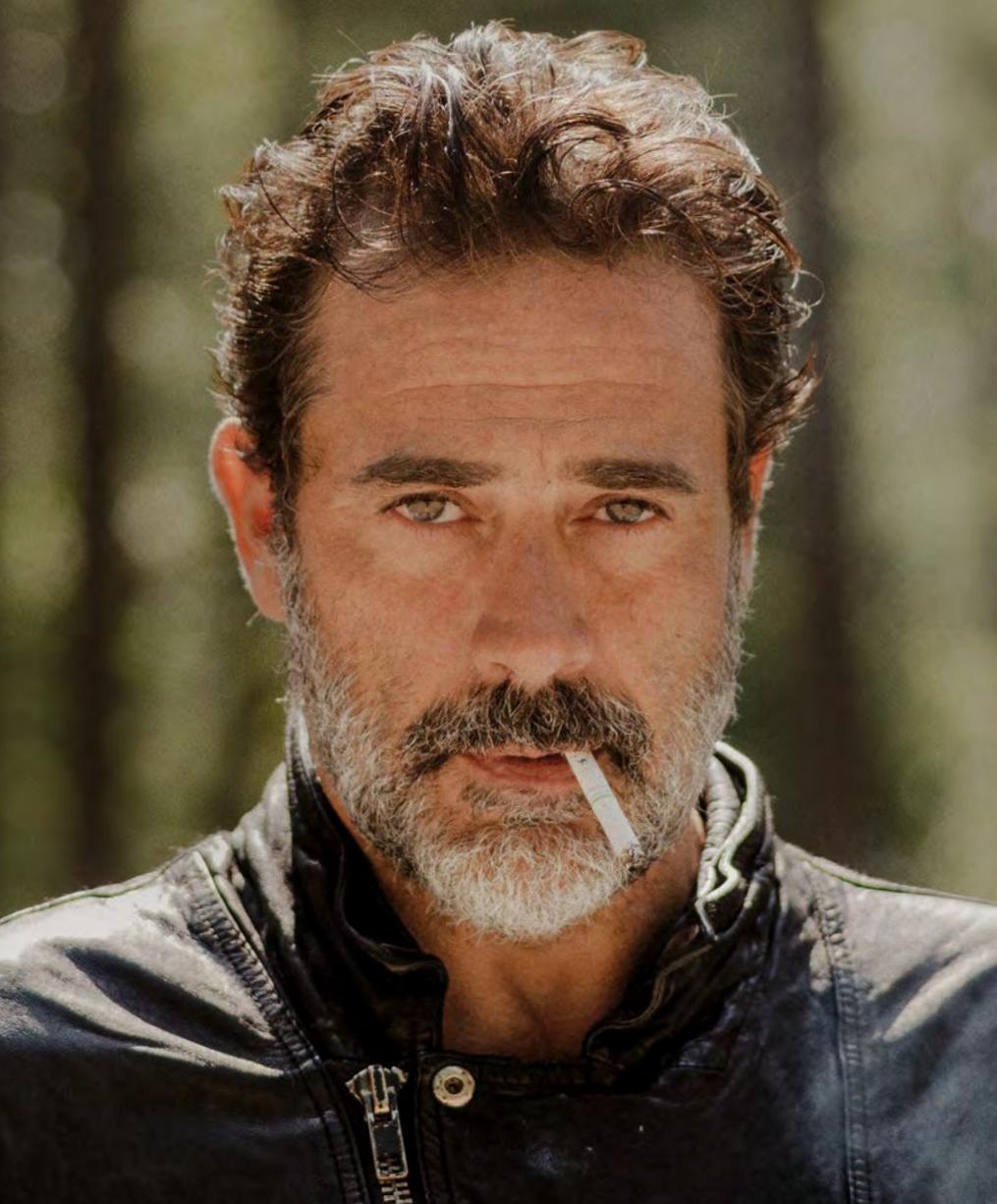
Q13: *Was he ever motivated by making the world a better place?*

MORGAN: Robert Kirkman, who's a producer and writes the comic series, sent me the first 48 pages of Negan's backstory from the comics. I don't know if it will ever end up in the show, but it's interesting to see that Negan was a husband and a coach before the apocalypse. He was a physical education teacher. He coached Ping-Pong. [laughs] He ended an affair when his wife, Lucille, got cancer, and he was in the hospital with her when the apocalypse hit. He takes people in and tries to protect them from these zombies. No one listens to him, and they continually die. He becomes this abrasive asshole, this dictator who leads by the threat of violence.

Q14: *He named the bat he uses to kill people after his wife?*

MORGAN: Yeah, Lucille was his wife's name. There's a human in there somewhere. That's the only way I can play a guy like that. I have to approach every scene with him like there's the possibility of a person in there—the sense

**I JUST HOPE I'LL BE ABLE TO WALK
DOWN THE STREET WITHOUT PEOPLE
HURLING SHIT AT MY HEAD.**



of humor, the charisma that shows a sense of who he was.

Q15: *Who's your Mount Rushmore of TV villains?*

MORGAN: I love, love, loved Ian McShane on *Deadwood*. David Milch would write these five-page monologues, and McShane had this dark, poetic delivery. Walton Goggins from *Justified*—so sleazy with that snake-charmer charisma. John Lithgow for *Dexter*, which was an extraordinary season. And Mads Mikkelsen for *Hannibal*.

Q16: *What makes a villain tick?*

MORGAN: To be a good villain, there has to be some unpredictability. With Negan, it's the unpredictability that you'll survive the conversation. He can be having a normal conversation with

you, and all of a sudden you're dead. McShane was the same—he could smile and put a bullet in your head. A good villain has to be smart, and Negan is always a move or two ahead of everyone else.

Q17: *The Walking Dead and Game of Thrones have a lot in common: big scale, big stakes, a lot of character work, bravura violent scenes. How do you explain their insane popularity?*

MORGAN: It's such a crapshoot what people will embrace. I love *Game of Thrones*, and I can't explain why I love it so much. I got hooked watching Peter Dinklage, who is so, so good. I think they're character-driven shows. It's not the zombies and the dragons; people are relating to these characters and how they struggle. A lot of people

embrace the violence, but I meet a lot of people who say they don't watch *The Walking Dead* because it's too violent. With our show, and I think with *Game of Thrones* too, people like the characters and they want to see what happens with them. They're flipping out now because they have so much time invested in these characters who are part of their lives, and they're going to lose one of them. I just hope I'll be able to walk down the street without people hurling shit at my head.

Q18: *Is The Walking Dead all you have time for, or are you talking about joining any of the major film franchises?*

MORGAN: I'm not, but that's obviously the wave of the future. I'm purely locked into *The Walking Dead* at this point. I played Thomas Wayne, a small bit, in *Batman v Superman*, and Zack Snyder and I talked a little about the *Flashpoint* comic where Thomas Wayne is Batman and is a really dark dude. DC has a lot on its plate right now with all the spin-offs, but that's a character I would relish playing.

Q19: *Are you signed to play Negan beyond this season?*

MORGAN: Yeah, I'll be around for a little while. Negan is introduced in issue 100 in the comics, and he's still in it some 50 issues later. If we keep going at this rate, and if they follow the comic book, that could be three or four seasons. We haven't had a lot of conversations about what's ahead, but the show is in a rare position. Unless the audience just totally says "Fuck off," I think we'll be around for a while longer. I can honestly tell you—this is no bullshit at all—it's the most fun I've ever had. It's also the biggest challenge I've ever had. There's no sleepwalking through this character.

Q20: *Do you want to be 70 years old and still going to Comic-Con for The Walking Dead?*

MORGAN: Oh hell yes. What I do for a living is to put myself out there and hope people enjoy my work. The ones who enjoy the work are the ones who go to the conventions, and it's important to interact with fans. I've heard so many stories of people being sick and binge-watching a show or relating to a character, and you meet people and realize it can be a life-changing moment to meet you. It's a profound thing. It can be very emotional. ■



BOOKS

The Next Sexual Revolution

*Orgasmic meditation. Webcams. Nonmonogamy. Emily Witt explores these worlds and more in her book *Future Sex*, an eye-opening survey of the ways we come together and get off in the 21st century. The Brooklyn-based author spoke with us about the big questions we'll be asking ourselves as we enter the post-Tinder phase of the sexual revolution and made a few guesses as to the pleasures and trials we'll encounter. All of us—especially straight men—should take heed.*

IDENTITY

"We have this idea of coming out for gay people or queer people, and straight people tend to think they don't have to go through that process of inquiry because society offers so much consensus about who they are and what their relationships will look like. But it's beneficial to everybody to examine your fantasies—where they came from, what informed them and whether they're really rooted in your physical feelings."

COURTSHIP

"People will always want romance. We can't all be like, 'Let's meet at a bar and then go home together.' That's fine, but I think there will still be a place where charm matters. That's what *PLAYBOY* will be showing people how to do—the futuristic equivalent of how to make a good martini. Everybody still values manners, humor, creativity and all the gestures that make an encounter with a new person fun and extraordinary."

SEX

"With straight men, there can be a video-game-like rubric of sexual achievement: 'I need to press this button and reach this level and then I've won the game.' If you're on the other side of that, it may not be the maximum version of your pleasure. You feel the person is not actually paying attention to your responses. Everybody, male and female, has to go through a process of finding an authentic sexual self outside of porn."

RELATIONSHIPS

"There's a machine bias in futurism: People tend to think of the future of sexuality as virtual-reality porn and teledildonics, but actually it's much less glossy and robotic. It's much more about how you define a family if you never get married or have kids. How do you take care of elderly people? When you change the way you organize your sexual relationships in a society, the whole structure of that society changes."

COMMITMENT

"I'm searching for some kind of commitment that incorporates the new technology we have and the openness of our social mores but allows us to build sustainable relationships and keep one another safe and happy. For some people, the answer will still be marriage. Thousands of years of history have perfected this structure, and maybe it's still the best one, but I think there's something better out there."



MUSIC

Noises From the Underground

Five indie bands fearlessly tackle personal travails and divergent styles, offering fall albums that aim for both the heart and the gut



CYMBALS EAT GUITARS

Pretty Years
Sinderlyn

If you want a crash course in the fractured genius of Cymbals Eat Guitars (pictured), check out “4th of July, Philadelphia (SANDY),” the lead single from their fourth album, *Pretty Years*. Frontman Joseph D’Agostino sings about a holiday party that gets out of hand before it even starts; three and a half minutes later, a guy takes a bat to the head. D’Agostino walks away unscathed, feeling better for the first time in months—at least for a little while (“Swore I’d be present and grateful for every second/Later the feeling faded/I couldn’t help it”).

Then there’s the song’s title, which references both Bruce Springsteen’s “4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)” and bedroom strummer Alex G, a Philly native who’s name-checked in the lyrics and often goes by SANDY. Like Japandroids and Titus Andronicus, Cymbals Eat Guitars have one foot in internet-bred indie rock and the other in plain old *rawk* rock, combining the swagger of the second with the dark introspection of the first. And though their lyrics present a world full of disappointment, pain and anger, the songs glow with the underlying hope that you can always pull yourself out of the muck and reconnect.

The New Jersey group had a creative breakthrough with 2014’s *LOSE*, which saw D’Agostino come to terms with the death of his best friend atop mountain-size guitar outbursts, and they continue to ride that high on *Pretty Years*. Amid the feedback bombs, they also made room for “Have a Heart,” a jubilant New Wave love song that should be soundtrack-ing bat-free parties for years to come.



BEACH SLANG

A Loud Bash of Teenage Feelings
Polyvinyl

Following the release last fall of Beach Slang’s clamorous debut album, *The Things We Do to Find People Who Feel Like Us*, singer James Alex had so many feelings inside that the Philly-based outfit had to issue a follow-up right away. Inspired by conversations between Alex and fans young and old, *A Loud Bash of Teenage Feelings* takes the “like the first album but more so” approach, piling on power chords, nicotine-scorched vocals and a gift for evoking timeless teen angst.



JOYCE MANOR

Cody
Epitaph

Known for making albums shorter than a sitcom episode, California punks Joyce Manor worked on this one with Beck producer Rob Schnapf for a full two months. Lest anyone worry that these eternal little brothers are getting too mature, “Stairs” finds singer Barry Johnson admitting he still lives with his parents and is incapable of doing the dishes or laundry. So not the best housemates, but Joyce Manor can still shove a summer’s worth of hooks and pathos into a two-minute pop gem.



TOUCHÉ AMORÉ

Stage Four
Epitaph

Touché Amoré has shown serious ambition since forming nearly a decade ago, but on its fourth album, the California hardcore outfit tackles the small matter of life and death itself. *Stage Four* is a song cycle about frontman Jeremy Bolm losing his mother to a drawn-out battle with cancer and his struggle to find the good in the world (“I asked your God how could you? / But never got an answer”). The intricate songwriting and white-knuckle tempos make for a life-affirming listen.



WARPAINT

Heads Up
Rough Trade/Remote Control

The nice thing about goth is that it’s timeless. But that doesn’t mean it can’t use an upgrade every so often, and on its third album, L.A. quartet Warpaint mashes up New Order-style bass figures and synth lines with tricky drumbeats inspired by West Coast hip-hop (there’s even a song named “Dre”) and wozy R&B production. Through it all, Warpaint never strays from its most powerful element: the exquisitely unimpressed harmonies of its three vocalists.—*Michael Tedder*



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GAMES

From the Trenches to the Stars

Two blockbuster games, one set in the future and one in the past, offer a singular vision of modern warfare

You dock on an asteroid orbiting dangerously close to the sun. You're here to investigate an outpost on the rock, one of the micro-settlements set up to extract the resources humans have long since plundered to extinction on Earth. The residents of the outpost are not at all happy about your presence; they've already declared their desire for independence from their former home, with its insatiable demand for ore and minerals. Resources are limited here, as they were on Earth, and owning them is more important than human alliances.

While *Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare*, published this month by Activision, is set far in the future, the year's other major first-person shooter, Electronic Arts' *Battlefield 1*, takes place on the front lines of the Great War. Both titles expose the roots of some of the direst geopolitical problems of the present. ISIS may keep ideology in the headlines, but from the Syrian conflict to the Mexican drug wars to the South China Sea dispute, resource control is always there, lurking behind the rhetoric and cranking up the war machine. The battlefield and the technology may change, but the human motivation for war rarely does.

"Fighter-jet pilots will talk to us, and they'll point up," says *Infinite Warfare* narrative director Taylor Kurosaki, describing



Top: *Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare*. Bottom: *Battlefield 1*.

the research process. "They're not pointing to the sky; they're pointing beyond the reaches of the atmosphere and telling us that the next theater of war is beyond Earth. I could absolutely see *Infinite Warfare*'s future as a plausible one."

Down here, oil is a central concern of *Battlefield 1*, with a particular focus on the national borders that make the resource abundant for some and virtually nonexistent for others.

"World War I wasn't just fought in trenches," says Lars Gustavsson, the game's design director. "We tried to portray different locations—the expected ones along the Western Front, where there was a lot of trench warfare, as well as the Italian Alps and the battle for oil in the Middle East. The British Empire building dreadnoughts meant there was suddenly a need for oil to feed war machines. As such, the Brits and the Ottoman Empire clashed."

Battlefield 1 shows how the creation of oil-dependent vehicles and weapons signaled the end of horseback cavalry and man-pulled artillery. When you're riding a horse that's toppled by a tank or staring down the approach of a well-thrown grenade, you sense the futility experienced by armies relying on old-world approaches—and the narcotic high that comes with advanced weaponry. Then, as now, those in control of the resources vital for the latest technologies would

come to rule the battlefield, and the world.

Politics aside, both games deliver the goods—*Infinite Warfare* with its stunning set pieces and zero-gravity gunplay, *Battlefield 1* with its massive array of combat options. Gamers will argue over which is king of the genre, but they're best consumed together. If you want a vivid picture of today's world, how we've arrived here and where we might be going, this is a good place to start.—*John Robertson*



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COLUMN

FRANCOFILE

Talking acid, acting and the future of the Wu-Tang Clan with hip-hop legend **Method Man**

FRANCO: What got you into hip-hop?

METHOD MAN: I've always been into hip-hop but not particularly writing and rhyming. It was the dudes I hung around. That's why I always say it's important to know who your kids are hanging around, because that's going to be a greater influence than anything else. I could have hung out with dudes that was crackheads, and I could have been a crackhead. But I hung out with dudes that liked to rhyme.

FRANCO: One of those dudes was RZA. How did you meet?

METHOD MAN: I met RZA between the eighth and ninth grades. He was already a bit of a celebrity. They had tapes that would circulate through the hoods. This is when Slick Rick was big with these story rhymes, and RZA had a gang of story rhymes. I wanted to meet the dude, and a friend of mine brought me to RZA's house one day. It was just a friendship from there on.

FRANCO: You're in ninth grade and rhyming with friends. What does that look like?

METHOD MAN: Let's put it this way: There was a lot of truancy going on, you know what I'm saying? We would meet up at the bus stop on our way to school, and dudes got money in their pockets. It was \$5 for a ravioli bag. That's slang for a \$5 sack of weed that came in a big yellow envelope. We would all put our money together, then we'd go up in the staircase and just be rhyming all day off that one bag of weed. Our building only went up to the sixth floor and then you had the roof, so we would rhyme in between the sixth floor and the roof because it had a lot of bass in there.

FRANCO: If that's where you were putting all your energy, what was high school like for you?

METHOD MAN: Well, as I told you, there was a lot of truancy going on. I'm a smart guy. I've always been a great student, but I wasn't interested in school anymore. I would just leave. Plus, I was smoking mad marijuana, and then we discovered acid. Oh boy.



BY
JAMES FRANCO

FRANCO: When did Wu-Tang start?

METHOD MAN: Wu-Tang was supposed to be RZA, GZA and Ol' Dirty Bastard, just those three. We all did a song together that was supposed to be a posse cut—you know, one of those songs where you put all your friends on it. But when we recorded it, RZA thought, Damn, I got a lot of dope niggas in my home right now. He had an epiphany: I might as well come in as a group with all these dudes. I don't know how GZA and Dirty felt about it, but that's a little Wu-Tang trivia. But we all had to pay to get on that song. Studio time was expensive and none of us had money, but it was \$100 a head to get into the studio and get on that record. Afterward, I remember RZA coming to talk to me about the whole Wu-Tang thing and what he had planned.

FRANCO: How do you decide who gets a verse on a Wu-Tang track?

METHOD MAN: Everybody gets a shot at the track. If you show, you go. If the verses are not

up to par, when you hear the album, your verse ain't on there. I never had that problem, though. I always made sure I went in. And certain songs just sounded good the way they were, like "C.R.E.A.M." with Inspectah Deck and Raekwon. You didn't want to touch them because they felt genuine the way they were.

FRANCO: How did you make the move into acting?

METHOD MAN: They wanted me to perform one of my songs in a movie called *The Great White Hype*. Sam Jackson was there, and Damon Wayans too. Sam was doing a movie called *One Eight Seven*, and they called me in to do a little part. Once I did that, I was hooked. The first audition I went on was for a movie called *Cop Land*, and I went in and it was horrible. My manager told me to go back in with the whole "Bring the Pain" look—the eyeball missing, the whole thing. So I went back in with my getup on, and I got the part. From there, it was on, but

there weren't a lot of roles for rappers—unless you were like freaking Will Smith. Redman and I decided the only way we were going to get into the game was if we made our own movie. That's when I met my manager, and she gave us the opportunity to make *How High*. We were so green. Watch *How High* now; you can see every time we walk into a room, we're looking down because we were looking for our marks.

FRANCO: Is Wu-Tang still recording?

METHOD MAN: Not right now. I'm doing my thing with acting. RZA's directing. We gave it one last shot on this latest LP, but you know, it wasn't received well by the fans. And some of the Clan members didn't like it either—the way it was done, the process and all that. For me, if you don't love what you're doing anymore, it's time to leave that shit the fuck alone. But you know, dudes in the Clan still have that itch, and I'm a team player, so if they want to go back and make another album, as many albums as they want to make, I'm here for it. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE MA

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HUMOR

IN THE CARDS

Join us as we peer into the future and discover how American life will change under President Clinton or General Trump

BY **MATT SHIRLEY**

	CLINTON WINS	TRUMP WINS
OBAMACARE	Expanded! All newborns are now required to buy insurance through the governmental exchange.	Repealed! Consider pulling yourself up by your bootstraps to cure that cancer.
GUN CONTROL	Are you a responsible gun owner? Fuck you.	Maybe there's something the Second Amendment people can do about you gun-control freaks....
IMMIGRATION	If you touch American soil with your tongue, congratulations, you're a citizen.	At least there are plenty of jobs building that wall Mexico refuses to pay for.
TWITTER	She's the first president to enact laws based on how many retweets they get.	He's the first president to use a Twitter poll to determine which type of torture a prisoner gets.
ENVIRONMENT	Recycle, recycle, recycle! Just like she did with all of Bernie's ideas.	The EPA is now the EPPA (Environmental Profit Protection Agency).
HOMELAND SECURITY	Literally no changes.	If your name sounds Muslim-y, it might be time to head to Canada.
MARIJUANA	420 blaze swag yolo, my fellow teens!	Only losers smoke pot. Winners take the edge off with "success distilled" Trump Vodka.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY PLAYBOY. IMAGES: DORLING KINDERSLEY; MAURIZIO BACCARINI/GETTY IMAGES



CLINTON WINS

TRUMP WINS

TECHNOLOGY	Investigations into private e-mail servers are now illegal.	<i>Silicon Valley</i> (TV show) is canceled, and Silicon Valley (valley) is now a golf resort.
TAXES	Fifty percent of your paycheck will go toward personal panda bears for the Cabinet.	Roads and firemen? Who needs 'em!
JOBS	Your job is now in Pakistan. Flight leaves at seven.	You can have a job at one of Trump's new hotels... wait, no, it's bankrupt already.
ENERGY	Corporations must be powered by garbage, like the DeLorean at the end of <i>Back to the Future</i> .	Introducing Trump Oil: I drink your milkshake! I DRINK IT UP! LOSER!!!
IRAN	Trade sanctions should totally solve this whole problem.	We are now in a war with Iran.
NORTH KOREA	Guys, if we just talk to them, they'll cooperate.	We are now in a war with North Korea.
WELFARE AND POVERTY	The minimum wage is now \$80 per minute.	Two words: Boot. Straps.
FREE TRADE	Free trade is great! Did we mention your job is in Pakistan? No more free trade.	Your next iPhone will cost \$50,000. #MAGA
THE ECONOMY	Let's not lie to ourselves: The president has basically no effect on the economy.	Let's not lie to ourselves: The president has basically no effect on the economy.
EDUCATION	Socialized education. Just look at how well it's been doing!	Privatized education. It's been working so well with health care!
WALL STREET	Well, they paid for her election, so....	Well, they paid for his election, so....



NO HOME FOR WAR HAWKS

How Trump silenced the Republican call for war

Even if Donald Trump loses this month, his insurgent campaign for the White House will have accomplished something remarkable: running the hawks out of the Republican Party. Until Trump came along, this small but potent band of scholars, commentators and ex-government officials controlled GOP foreign policy for more than two decades, steering the U.S. into a disastrous invasion of Iraq.

The group formed after voters swept Bill Clinton into the presidency in 1992. William Kristol, who had served as Vice President Dan Quayle's chief of staff under George H.W. Bush, was suddenly out of a job. Around Washington, Kristol was known as "Dan Quayle's brain," which no doubt limited his prospects. So he teamed with former Department of State speech writer Robert Kagan, and together they dreamed up an audacious stunt: Urge Clinton to go to war against Iraq.

Calling themselves the Project for the New American Century, Kristol and Kagan convinced 23 former government officials, including three ex-Cabinet members—former secretary of education William Bennett and former secretaries of defense Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld—to sign PNAC's statement of principles to "challenge regimes hostile to our interests and values." Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein topped their list.

President Clinton ignored them, and they were left waiting for a president to influence. By 2000, the hawks saw Governor George W. Bush of Texas as their mark. But there was a problem: Bush campaigned by arguing for a "humble" U.S. foreign policy. "I'm not so sure the role of the United States is to go around the world and say, 'This is the way it's got to be,'" Bush argued. This position flew in the face of the hawks' interventionist agenda.

Then Bush put Cheney in charge of selecting his vice president, and Cheney selected himself. After they won, the Bush-Cheney team re-



BY **JOHN MERONEY**

instated Rumsfeld as secretary of defense (the position he'd held during Gerald R. Ford's presidency) and let about a dozen other hawks into the White House. After 9/11, the hawks finally had the momentum they needed for a Middle East invasion. Bush's then secretary of state, Colin Powell, warned against an invasion, not only because Iraq had never attacked the United States but also because Powell feared what he called his Pottery Barn rule: You break it, you own it.

"You are going to be the proud owner of 25 million people. You will own all their hopes, aspirations and problems. You'll own it all," Powell told Bush.

It's been almost 14 years since the hawks got their war, and Powell's warning still rings true. That hasn't stopped the hawks from holding sway in GOP circles. A year ago they had Jeb Bush and Marco Rubio advocating for more overseas adventures. All that ended with Trump.

"Obviously, the war in Iraq was a big fat mistake," Trump said in one of the GOP debates. "Bush made a mistake. We can make mistakes,

but that one was a beauty. We have destabilized the Middle East." Later, in an interview with *The New York Times*, he added, "If our presidents would have just gone to the beach and enjoyed the ocean and the sun, we would've been much better off in the Middle East."

For the neoconservatives, this was heresy. That the message got traction with voters made them apoplectic. Leading neocon Peter Wehner charged in *The New York Times* that Trump is "erratic" and "unprincipled" and "possesses a streak of crudity and cruelty."

"Those objections are just a camouflage for deep policy differences," says Faith Whittlesey, a senior advisor and U.S. ambassador in Ronald Reagan's White House, and a Trump supporter. "The [hawks] are Brahmins in the imperial city of D.C., and their policies reigned supreme. Trump comes along

and challenges their basic assumptions, and they don't want that."

They also realize voters have no taste for new wars. "The old idea of going in and turning Iraq or Afghanistan into some version of Iowa—the American people won't go for it anymore," says conservative commentator Patrick Buchanan. "They're going to have a hellish time making their case for future interventions."

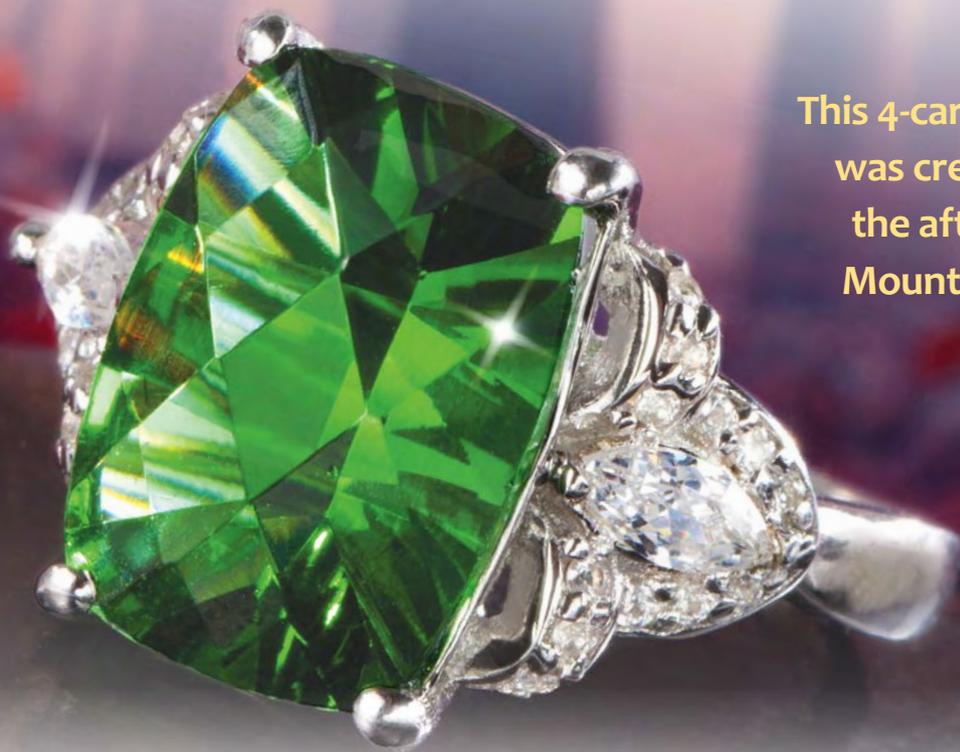
If Trump wins, the hawks face a total shut-out. "They're going to have zero influence in the Trump administration—zero," is how one of his advisors puts it. "The neocons are going to be persona non grata."

In early September there was talk of a potential resurgence should the presidency go to Hillary Clinton, who voted for the Iraq war. But when Clinton declared on NBC's *Commander-in-Chief Forum*, "We are not putting ground troops into Iraq ever again, and we're not putting ground troops into Syria. We're going to defeat ISIS without committing American ground troops," the lights dimmed at neocon central. ■

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INTERVIEW

MICHAEL HAYDEN

In the days after Al Qaeda terrorists hijacked and crashed four commercial jetliners on September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush ordered the National Security Agency to eavesdrop, without warrants, on American citizens and foreign nationals within the United States. His action represented the biggest shift in U.S. intelligence gathering in American history. But the true architect of that secret program, code-named Stellarwind, was a former Air Force intelligence officer who'd been picked to run the NSA two years earlier: General Michael Vincent Hayden. ¶ What a long way from Pittsburgh, where Hayden was born in 1945. His youth was western Pennsylvania through and through: Dad was a welder, and the family lived for Sundays, when they would attend mass and Steelers games.

In college at Duquesne University, Hayden even worked at the Steelers' summer training camp to help pay his tuition. He studied history, joined ROTC and started active duty in the Air Force in 1969.

A registered Independent with no political background, Hayden came up through the ranks of Air Force intelligence, and in 1999 President Bill Clinton selected him to run that secretive organization nicknamed No Such Agency. When Hayden arrived, he found the NSA struggling to keep up with the technological tide. Two years later, 9/11 jolted him into unprecedented action, and he implemented rapid, transformational measures. Hayden's Stellarwind program circumvented the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court and even went beyond the authority of the Patriot Act passed by Congress.

After *The New York Times* exposed the operation in 2005, Hayden still moved forward—but another, more damaging exposure lay ahead. Bush made him principal deputy director of

National Intelligence and then promoted him to director of the Central Intelligence Agency in 2006. Hayden's new position as top spy coincided with another CIA hire: Edward Snowden. The then 23-year-old computer tech later went to work for two NSA contractors, and in 2013 Snowden released confidential information on the spy program established by Hayden. The resulting firestorm implicated both the Bush and Obama administrations.

Today, Hayden is a principal at a security-consulting firm in Washington, D.C. run by former secretary of homeland security Michael Chertoff. Hayden's book *Playing to the Edge: American Intelligence in the Age of Terror* was published this February. At 71, he remains an influential figure in the nation's capital. But outside D.C., to many he personifies a government that violates individual liberties.

To interview Hayden, PLAYBOY sent political columnist John Meroney. "Hayden is remarkable in his willingness to answer questions about being a spy," Meroney says. "It's striking

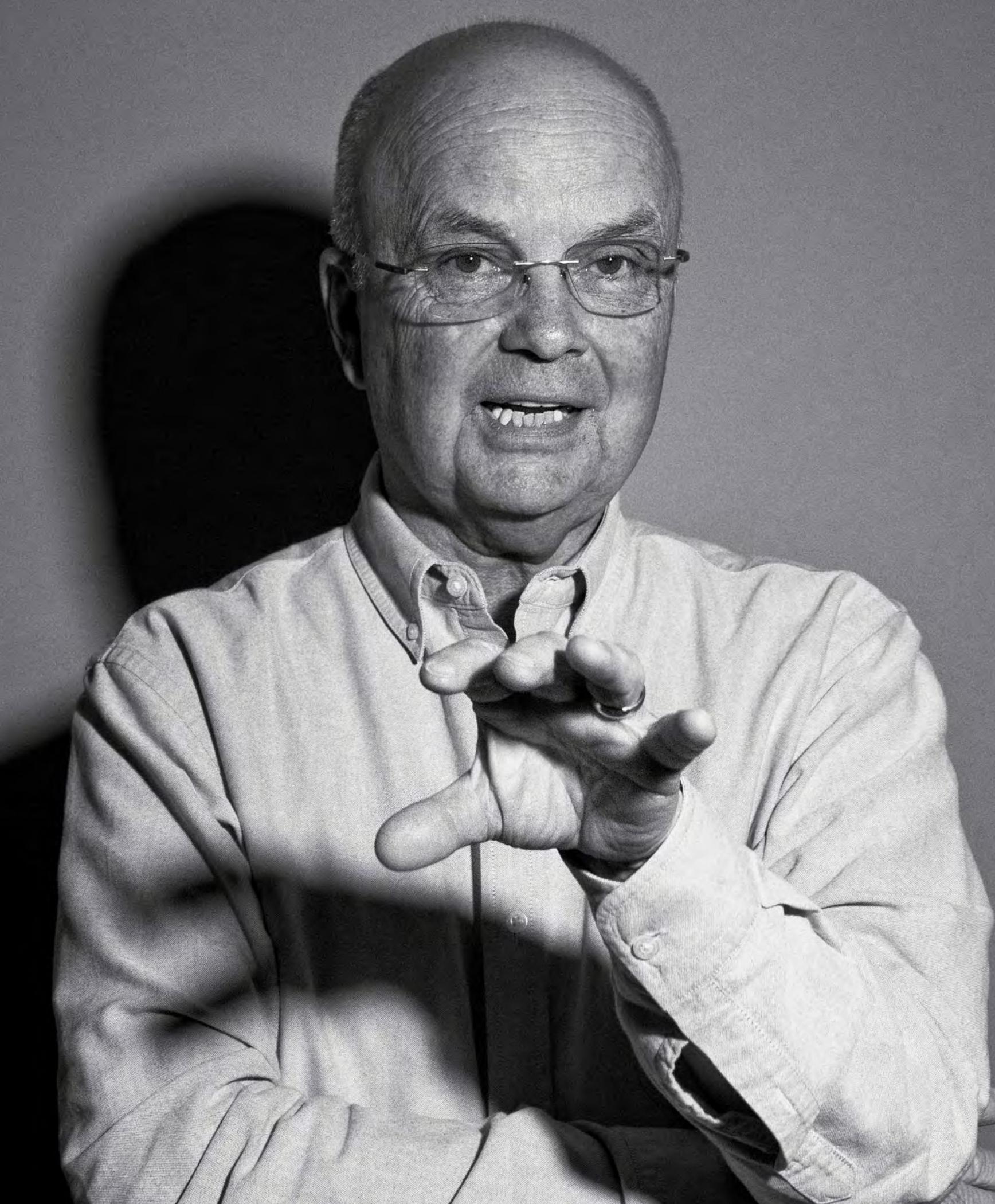
for someone whose life has been so animated by secrets. We would meet at his office near the White House, with a stunning view of the capital city. He always seems to be on the go, drinking his Diet Coke and running to catch a plane or teach a class at George Mason University. Still, he remains affable and not at all like most top Washingtonians, whose every word seems calibrated for maximum public appeal.

"In August, Hayden announced to great media fanfare that he refused to support the candidacy of GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump, arguing that Trump would 'risk our country's national security and well-being.' I wanted to understand what was behind Hayden's stance, so we started our discussion there."

PLAYBOY: Your position is that Trump's statements on the campaign trail disqualify him from being president. Why doesn't Hillary Clinton's handling of classified information disqualify her?

HAYDEN: Because many of the things Trump

INTERVIEW BY **JOHN MERONEY** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ALDO ROSSI**





INTERVIEW

says appear to be intentional and directed. What Clinton did may reflect incompetence and carelessness, but she's not Edward Snowden.

PLAYBOY: In your letter against Trump, you state that he's ignorant on foreign policy. But many presidents came into office ignorant of foreign affairs, including George W. Bush, under whom you served the longest. Isn't there a learning process they all have to go through?

HAYDEN: Yes, and that applies to the current president as well. But Barack Obama and George W. Bush had the good sense not to shoot off their mouths with half-assed, uninformed remarks that defy law, logic and reality. Earlier this year I went on *Real Time With Bill Maher*, and he asked me about Trump's statement that the U.S. should kill terrorists' families. I said, "That's just not going to happen. The armed forces of the United States will not carry out such an order." Well, the next week there was a Republican presidential debate, and Bret Baier of Fox News said, "Michael Hayden said armed forces aren't going to kill women and children for you." Trump responded, "Yes they will, because I'm a leader, a great leader." And then he added, "On 9/11, the terrorists' families knew about the attacks. They left the country before the attacks. They flew out of here, and they watched the planes fly into those buildings on television." That's absolute and total bullshit. Most of those attackers weren't married, none of their families were in the United States, and we have

no evidence that any relatives were watching the attacks on TV. Trump just made that up, which is a little different from George W. Bush not knowing the name of the president of Nigeria.

PLAYBOY: Are you opposed to Trump because he repudiates Bush's foreign policy in the Middle East every chance he gets?

HAYDEN: The day after I said I wouldn't support Trump, he said that the people who signed the letter were the same people who brought us the war in Iraq and the rise of ISIS and allowed Americans to die in Benghazi. Trump's answer underscores why we wrote the letter. Yeah, we were all there for Iraq, and we'll take our lumps. History will judge. But none of us was in office for the rise of ISIS, as he claimed. Most of us have been out of government for eight years, so we had

nothing to do with Benghazi. What we got from Donald Trump was a non-fact-based, emotional response condemning the character of the people who wrote the letter. That's classic Trump.

With Trump, you get free association. I don't see coherence, and that's scary. Regarding ISIS, he says, "We're going to finish them hard, we're going to finish them fast, and then we're coming home. We're not going to do any of that nation-building shit." Well, if we could kill our way out of this, we'd have been done 15 years ago. The only way out of it is to change the facts on the ground. A high peak of violence followed by disengagement, as he advocates, simply means you get to do it again.

Any security service worth its salt would've discovered where Secretary Clinton's server was.

PLAYBOY: Trump says he favors waterboarding as a technique to fight terrorism, and you've stated that waterboarding led to valuable intelligence. How are your views different?

HAYDEN: Well, Trump says he's for waterboarding and "a lot more." When I was in office, we never talked about "a lot more." He also says, "We're going to waterboard because they deserve it." We never did it because terrorists deserved it. He's advocating waterboarding as punishment for past sins. He's doing it with enthusiasm. He seems to want to do it, a lot. We did it because we thought people were withholding lifesaving information. We did it with regret, and rarely. To me, those are big differences. Beyond that, we did it when the Department of Justice said it was lawful. Congress has

spoken, American law has changed, and we've taken waterboarding off the table. If a future president wants to do it, he'd better bring his own bucket.

PLAYBOY: During the Cold War, the left wing seldom criticized the then Soviet Union even though it was bent on world domination. Now, with the collapse of Soviet communism and Vladimir Putin's rise to power, Hillary Clinton and the Democrats are forceful in denouncing Russia and Putin. How do you explain the switch?

HAYDEN: Secretary Clinton was for Russia before she was against it.

PLAYBOY: What's wrong with enlisting Russia in the fight against ISIS, as Trump advocates?

HAYDEN: He says, "If you're willing to fight radical Islam with us, you're our friend." He's made fighting ISIS the core around which all other aspects of American diplomacy will form. That position says Russia's my friend because it's willing to kill ISIS too. Well, as long as the Alawites rule in Syria, there will be a Sunni rebellion. And as long as there's a Sunni rebellion, that rebellion and the civil war will feed fundamentalist Islam. But a core tenet of Russia's participation in the war is the preservation of, if not Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, then the preservation of Assadism, or Alawite rule. Because Trump oversimplifies, we're in league with a country whose policy guarantees ISIS will never go away.

PLAYBOY: Don't you think Russia is a natural ally of the U.S.?

HAYDEN: No. Russia is using its military power to sustain the Assad regime and not fight ISIS. The Russian air strikes against ISIS have been few and far between. While Russia has gone against the opposition, which includes al-Nusra, the former Al Qaeda group, that's all about expanding government control, not taking on the global terrorist unit there. So I don't see a convergence of views between the U.S. and Russia, except in a modest tactical sense.

PLAYBOY: All signs indicate that the Russians hacked the Democratic National Committee this summer and subsequently released the documents on WikiLeaks. Why hasn't the U.S. government confirmed it?



INTERVIEW

HAYDEN: I have no reason to doubt the general consensus that the hack was done on behalf of the Russian Federation, though it was probably done by a Russian criminal gang on behalf of the government. That's a pattern we've seen in Estonia, Georgia and Ukraine.

PLAYBOY: With that kind of certainty, why hasn't President Obama rebuked the Russians for the hack?

HAYDEN: Because the next logical question would be "What are you going to do about it?" Lacking that answer, we choose silence.

PLAYBOY: Which should be more of a concern: Russians hacking the U.S. election results or Russians mounting a covert influence campaign to coincide with the election?

HAYDEN: Hacking an American political party is a legitimate act of foreign intelligence gathering by the Russians. We would have done the same against a comparable target. But the Russians did more: They weaponized the information. They used the information to meddle in or at least cause us to lose confidence in the American political process. That's called covert influence in the business, and it is quite different from routine espionage.

PLAYBOY: That sounds like Cold War stuff.

HAYDEN: Yeah, and this is not the former director of the CIA claiming that my agency never in history tried to influence a foreign election. But it's very dangerous.

PLAYBOY: You've been in the top echelon of Washington for decades. From that vantage point, how have the Clintons been able to survive one scandal after another?

HAYDEN: They've shown real talent. They're a very able couple in politics and policy. As senator, Hillary Clinton got good marks from both sides of the aisle for being hardworking and knowledgeable. In the transition from Bush to Obama, I briefed Obama and his top people on ongoing covert actions, and it was clear to me Secretary Clinton was the smartest and most well-informed of the bunch.

PLAYBOY: Given that, and your objections to Trump, why do you refuse to vote for her?

HAYDEN: I wonder what she was thinking when she set up her e-mail system. For someone with my background, what she did is inconceivable. Anybody who has experience at this

level of government knows that once you've set it up as she did, it's all bad. It's bad on the preservation of federal records, bad on mingling things you want to keep private as opposed to the secret stuff, and bad with things that shouldn't be in there bleeding into an unclassified e-mail account. When she used her own e-mail and server, she became responsible for the protection of the data. So there's a big question of her competence. She knew she was going to run for president, so who would even get close to the kinds of arrangements she had,



even if they technically stayed on the right side of the law? And I will tell you, every subsequent explanation she gave was incoherent.

PLAYBOY: Do you think other governments were reading her e-mails when she was secretary of state?

HAYDEN: I do not know that. But any security service worth its salt would've discovered where Secretary Clinton's server was, and any security service that could have, would have broken in. Let me turn this on its head: If a foreign minister in a country important to the United States, particularly one perhaps not friendly to the United States, had done what

she did, I would've been all over them as director of the NSA.

PLAYBOY: One more Russia question: You were born in 1945, so you must remember the "duck and cover" instructional films of the 1950s. They taught American schoolchildren how to "protect" themselves in the event of a nuclear attack. How did the threat posed by the Soviets affect you?

HAYDEN: It was damn dark. One of my strongest memories was when I was a junior in high school in October 1962 and all of us lined up for confession during the Cuban Missile Crisis. I grew up Catholic and I accepted the Manichaean view of the world. The church was in strong opposition to communism because the Soviets were against freedom of religion. Practically every aspect of my life was "Communism is bad, communism is a danger, communism is a threat." Later, when I was on active duty in 1973, the U.S. went to DEFCON 3 because we weren't sure what kind of weapons the Soviets were shipping to the Egyptians as the Israeli army was crossing the Suez Canal. So I've seen the world more dangerous than it is now.

PLAYBOY: When you were growing up, did you ever fantasize about running the CIA?

HAYDEN: Oh God no. Hell, I was 18 before I got on an airplane. I lived in Pittsburgh—you know where Pittsburgh is, right? It's tucked in the southwest corner of Pennsylvania. I joined the ROTC because there was a big war on and we had universal military service. And I was in a neighborhood where everybody joined.

PLAYBOY: For many, the CIA means Jason Bourne, Jack Bauer, Jack Ryan and *Homeland*. Do these Hollywood depictions ring true?

HAYDEN: When you go into the headquarters, you walk over the iconic shield, and that image is featured in the movies and on TV. *Homeland* gets all the foreground wrong, though. My wife and I were watching it the other day and she almost guffawed when the Saul Berenson character, played by Mandy Patinkin, pulls out a cell phone in the agency headquarters. Oh yeah, that's going to happen. But what *Homeland* does get right is all the stuff in the background. The inward turning, the sisterhood/brotherhood, the focus bordering on obsession.



INTERVIEW

PLAYBOY: On *Homeland*, CIA officer Carrie Mathison, played by Claire Danes, sometimes uses sex to recruit a source or an agent.

HAYDEN: That would not be acceptable.

PLAYBOY: Would a CIA officer be terminated for using sex?

HAYDEN: Yeah. We have an acronym, MICE, which stands for the tools we can use: money, ideology, coercion or compromise and ego or excitement.

PLAYBOY: You said you had a Manichaeian, black-and-white view when you were young. Is it fair to say that being a spy changed you?

HAYDEN: No one can be a good intelligence officer and have that black-and-white view of the universe. You begin to see humanity in every aspect of life. I've sat across the table from [Bosnian Serb general] Ratko Mladić. He was an absolute war criminal, but I could still see he was a human being. When I briefed President George W. Bush on Al Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, I made him human. I didn't quench our desire to kill the son of a bitch, which we did, but I did make him more human.

PLAYBOY: Have you ever killed anyone?

HAYDEN: No, not personally.

PLAYBOY: What was the heaviest burden of being director of the CIA?

HAYDEN: It's an institution that relies on secrecy for its very success inside a political culture that's distrustful of secrecy. It's a challenge to be successful in espionage and also be true to America's values.

PLAYBOY: That's theoretical. What about the personal burden?

HAYDEN: Well, the phone would ring in the middle of the night, and I generally knew what it was about. I'm not going to describe it any further.

PLAYBOY: Can you tell us how often it rang?

HAYDEN: It was fairly routine. As I reached to grab the phone, I would remind myself: Think this through; you're going to live with this decision for the rest of your life. That's not an invitation to go soft, because if you do and something goes bad, you're going to live with that too.

PLAYBOY: If the CIA is as good as you say it is, why couldn't we stop the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?

HAYDEN: George Tenet, who was director of the CIA before I got there, was excited about Al Qaeda and tried to alert the nation, but it was hard to get that kind of message across. "I know this has never happened before, but I got a bunch of guys in the Hindu Kush who I think might be an existential threat to our well-being as a republic"—that was pretty tough to argue. George also had to cover the waterfront. I mean, the CIA is the nation's *global* espionage service.

PLAYBOY: You'd been director of the NSA for a little more than two years at that point. Was Osama bin Laden on your radar?

HAYDEN: I was trying to modernize the place to keep track of signals. I wanted to take money

for the next 24 hours has driven most of our analytical energy into so-called targeting. It's all about the disambiguation of data, getting down to the very specific. And that has almost certainly been at the expense of what's going on.

PLAYBOY: What's the future of Iraq?

HAYDEN: Iraq doesn't exist. It's gone, and it's not coming back. Syria doesn't exist either.

PLAYBOY: We can't fix them?

HAYDEN: That's correct. We will never have a unitary political entity called Iraq again, nor will we have one called Syria. Even if we could replace Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Bashar al-Assad with St. Francis of Assisi, those places would still be shitty. And they're going to be

shitty for a generation or two because Islam is now going through what Christendom went through in the middle of the 17th century with the Thirty Years' War. At the end of that, our monotheism decided, "You know, we've got lots of reasons to kill one another, but let's take religion off the list." We severed state power from theological disputes. It remains to be seen what this great monotheism will do with that question.

PLAYBOY: Even though Iraq and Syria have gone to hell, what's your assessment of whether the CIA and NSA are winning or losing?

HAYDEN: In the war on terror, we were safer four years ago than we are now. ISIS is a bottom-up organization, whereas Al Qaeda was authoritarian and top-down. So now we're adjusting

how to deal with threats coming from ISIS.

PLAYBOY: You use the formulation "war on terror," which George W. Bush started. Why won't you just say that the U.S. is in a war against radical Islam, as Trump and others argue?

HAYDEN: Because that's a bridge too far. This is indeed about Islam—but it's not about *all* of Islam, and it's certainly not about all Muslims. There are multiple civil wars in Islam—a Sunni-Sunni war between the monarchies and ISIS and Al Qaeda; a Sunni-Shia war led by Saudi Arabia and Iran; and then Islam, as one of the world's great monotheisms, trying to make its peace with what you and I call modernity.

PLAYBOY: Let's go back to when you were appointed director of the NSA in 1999. Did that surprise you?

I was accused of either being incompetent and going deaf or being omniscient and reading everyone's e-mail.

off peripheral missions in order to invest in new technology that would intercept modern signals that were changing. God, you would've thought I was telling everybody to make Sophie's choice. Nobody wanted to give up anything. I had to go to the mat to try to reduce NSA's coverage on Nigerian organized crime. This sounds like dodging your question, but there was a collective inability to visualize a new kind of threat.

PLAYBOY: But the rise of ISIS, which seems to be a far greater threat than Al Qaeda, has also taken us by surprise in the past couple of years. How did it happen?

HAYDEN: They may have been so busy cutting down trees over here, they just didn't notice the second-growth forest popping up over there. Look, the drumbeat of keeping the nation safe



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HAYDEN: Oh yeah. It was just out of the blue, and I'm not a technical guy. George Tenet interviewed me for about an hour, and about four weeks later I was told that the administration was going to send me to Congress for confirmation. I never spoke to the president or the vice president. In fact, as NSA director my visibility to any president happened only after 9/11.

PLAYBOY: You've said that before the attacks, the systems at the NSA were so antiquated it was difficult to even send e-mail. Today there's a perception that the NSA is reading every e-mail Americans send. How did we make such a gigantic leap?

HAYDEN: Let's play it back to pre-9/11. I was accused of either being incompetent and going deaf or being omniscient and reading everyone's e-mail. The NSA was having the devil's own time in keeping up with the revolution in modern telecommunications, and I freely admit we were well behind. So that put the lie to this idea that we were reading everybody's correspondence.

PLAYBOY: And 9/11 changed all that?

HAYDEN: Because of the attacks, the NSA got more money and focus and began an aggressive pursuit to be able to read *any* communication—not all, but any. The goal was that no part of the modern global telecommunication structure would offer a safe haven to an enemy of the United States.

PLAYBOY: But didn't that direction lead to us to monitor German chancellor Angela Merkel's cell phone?

HAYDEN: I can't confirm or deny that we were doing that. But I can tell you that leadership intentions are important. My job was to intercept communications whose acquisition would provide information that made America more free or more safe. This is not about intercepting the communications of just bad people. If you've got a travel agent in Pakistan talking to a travel agent in Kuwait, neither of whom is involved in anything nefarious other than trying to make a buck being a travel agent, but they're talking about the travel of someone we're really interested in, guess what—I'm going to intercept their communications.

PLAYBOY: But Merkel is an ally.

HAYDEN: Yeah, so it's not about the innocent or the not innocent, the guilty or the not guilty.

PLAYBOY: The U.S. just wants to know what these leaders intend to do?

HAYDEN: Leadership intentions are high-priority intelligence targets. Would we collect on all foreign leaders? No. But look, the American culture isn't this kind of fuzzy, amorphous human right to privacy. America is very binary: Are you or are you not protected by the Fourth Amendment? If you are not and your communications contain things that keep America more safe and free and I haven't received political guidance to stand down, game on.



PLAYBOY: But again, Chancellor Merkel is an ally. Can't you see the reason some might be troubled by our listening in on her cell calls?

HAYDEN: Well, if you're offended by it, how about listening in on her predecessor, Gerhard Schröder, who opposed U.S. policy in Iraq? He secured a 1 billion euro loan for the Russian gas pipeline Nord Stream right before he left the chancellorship and then was granted a lucrative board position with Nord Stream. You think we ought to be interested in that?

PLAYBOY: So even though you won't confirm that we were listening to Merkel's phone, all governments try to listen to one another. Did

you use a mobile device when you were director of the NSA or the CIA?

HAYDEN: No. I never had a mobile device until I left government. Period.

PLAYBOY: Why not?

HAYDEN: Because of that very reason. You can't make it work.

PLAYBOY: We can't make a mobile device that's impenetrable?

HAYDEN: You can't make it secure enough. But look around Washington: They're using iPhones and BlackBerries and they're saying, "I won't use it for any classified work." My message is that the CIA director's note to his family is of importance to a foreign intelligence service. Did I have my own e-mail? Sure. It was AOL, and it was on my own computer.

PLAYBOY: What would you use it for?

HAYDEN: Notes to the kids, complaining about the Steelers' offensive line.

PLAYBOY: Did you think foreign governments were reading your e-mail?

HAYDEN: I assumed they were. Let me rephrase that: I had to act as if they were. To do otherwise would've been irresponsible.

PLAYBOY: So we have to accept that everyone is spying on everyone?

HAYDEN: I would lose all respect for a country that didn't take its responsibilities to its citizens seriously enough that it *wouldn't* spy. You may recall that when President Obama was campaigning in 2008, he ran things on his BlackBerry. After he was elected, we told him, "You can't do the BlackBerry here, Mr. President-elect." He gave an interview to CNBC where he said something that sounded like a Second Amendment bumper sticker: "They're going to have to pry it from my fingers." So we said, "All right, can we borrow it for a day?" And then we kind of tightened it up. I'm telling you this because we were telling the soon-to-be most powerful man in the most powerful nation on Earth that if he used his personal communications device in his own national capital, his e-mails and texts were going to be read by scores of foreign intelligence services. That's just the way things are. Steal my secrets, shame on me. I'll give you one more punch line on Merkel. *If* the Americans were intercepting her cell phone in Berlin, we were the least of her problems.



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PLAYBOY: So where do you see our drive for security going?

HAYDEN: I'm not just a technician. I get it; I vote too. But we carry out the will of the nation, and the nation needs to decide through its political processes how it wants to deal with a new flavor of threat—substate actors, groups and individuals that have the capacity we used to associate only with nation-states. How does the country want to deal with those threats?

PLAYBOY: Two or three weeks after 9/11, as NSA director you reportedly met with Tenet, and he asked, "Is there anything more you can do?"

HAYDEN: Yes, and I replied, "Not within my authority." He said, "That's not quite what I asked you." I said, "I'll get back to you." So I sat down with my NSA guys and said, "If we had the authority, what are the additional things we could do to make America more safe in these unique circumstances we now find ourselves in?" They came up with two or three things, and I went down and briefed President Bush. He and Attorney General John Ashcroft judged that the president had the authority to authorize them based on his commander-in-chief authorities, and the president acted. The president was willing to authorize things we said no to.

PLAYBOY: Such as?

HAYDEN: We didn't do domestic-to-domestic calls. Actually, I think the president of the United States has the legal authority to do that, but I said to David Addington, the legal counsel to Vice President Dick Cheney, "We don't have the right plumbing for that. And frankly, if we're going to listen in on domestic-to-domestic calls, I'll go to a judge."

PLAYBOY: When Bush gave the green light to the now infamous domestic eavesdropping program, did you think it was legal?

HAYDEN: Yeah. Did I think this would be controversial? God, yeah. Did I recognize there would be a reckoning—if not a legal reckoning, at least a political reckoning? Absolutely. It's a continuous debate that goes back to Lexington and Concord. The NSA thought it was doing precisely what the American people said they wanted it to do. The so-called 215 program—the metadata program—was directed by two presidents of two different political parties. It was authorized and reauthorized by Congress and overseen by the federal court system.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of 215, also known as the "sensitive collection program," what's your view of Edward Snowden?

HAYDEN: Not very positive.

PLAYBOY: We figured that. The CIA hired him in 2006, around the same time you became director. He was a high-school dropout. Why would the agency hire someone like him?

HAYDEN: Because we needed computer expertise and had been told not to look to traditional molds for people. If we'd rejected people like Snowden out of hand, we'd be open to even more legitimate criticism. So we brought them all in. He wasn't a star performer when he worked for the agency. Before that, he took some job as a

their heads—said, "That no longer constitutes consent of the governed. That may be consent of the governors. You may have told them, but you didn't tell us." That's what this is about.

PLAYBOY: Did Snowden disrupt any NSA operations?

HAYDEN: Absolutely.

PLAYBOY: Do you put Snowden in the same category as other Americans convicted of espionage against the U.S., such as Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were stealing nuclear secrets so the Soviets could build a bomb?

HAYDEN: Snowden didn't do it for money, so that separates him from a whole bunch of folks. He didn't do it for the cause of a foreign state, which separates him from the Rosenbergs. He did it for ideology. It was kind of his own—not a competing global ideology in some sense of a cold war. All that said, what he did was the single greatest hemorrhaging of legitimate American secrets in the history of the country.

PLAYBOY: One of the key questions raised by Snowden's revelations seems to be whether our government needs formal power to spy within our country. We didn't really have that before 9/11.

HAYDEN: This is not about the ability to spy on Americans; it's about the erosion of the old distinction between foreign intelligence collection and domestic law enforcement. Things aren't as crisp and clear as they were 50 years ago. If there's an e-mail between Waziristan and Yemen, the odds are pretty good that it's sitting on a server in the United States. Is that American? For some

it is. And that used to not be a problem. That correspondence never sat in the United States, and therefore there was never a claim to privacy protection. So what you're seeing is not a desire to spy on Americans. What you're seeing is: How do we continue to do that which we've done in the past in a world in which the distinction between foreign and domestic, law enforcement and intelligence, is not nearly as bright?

PLAYBOY: The stories of Snowden's leaks by Glenn Greenwald in *The Guardian* and the documentary *Citizenfour* by Laura Poitras have been called the greatest journalistic coups since the publication of the Pentagon Papers during Vietnam. How do you view Greenwald and Poitras?

HAYDEN: They describe themselves as advocacy journalists, which is different from being

Snowden had other tools available than mass theft and seeking refuge in a totalitarian state.

security guard at an NSA facility, then got on with a contractor at Dell and then at Booz Allen Hamilton. But it was just his computer knowledge, which we're all in great need of, that got him on at the CIA.

PLAYBOY: How did the NSA react to news of Snowden's disclosures?

HAYDEN: The general outcry took the NSA off-balance. The NSA was like, "What? Wait a minute. Congress knows. The president authorized it. The court's overseeing it. That's exactly the way you said we should get permission to do this stuff." The NSA got permission for Section 215 of the Patriot Act, and its strongest defenders were the two intelligence committees in Congress. What was new is that a lot of Americans—and they didn't have tinfoil on



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a journalist. When they got access to these things, they rolled them out in the darkest way possible in terms of what it was they thought they were describing, and very often they got it wrong. Saying the NSA had free range of the domestic internet service providers' servers—that's simply not true, and a lot of the things that have come out have nothing to do with your privacy or mine. I would call it espionage porn. It's certainly destructive of the capabilities of a free people to collect intelligence and defend itself.

PLAYBOY: But can you understand why Daniel Ellsberg and others see Snowden as a hero?

HAYDEN: They've accepted the premise that what we have here is an all-knowing, all-surveilling surveillance state. This fits into the pre-conceived narrative. The "evidence" Snowden was pushing was reasoned, somewhat measured responses to the world in which we find ourselves. I can't find a civil libertarian who gave a damn when we were trying to cover the Soviet Union's Strategic Rocket Forces.

PLAYBOY: You're going back to the Cold War?

HAYDEN: Yes. There were Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces communications coming out of Moscow and going to the intercontinental-ballistic-missile fields in the Far East. The U.S. was all over that communication channel, trying to pick up words of interest like *launch*. Today's equivalents are terrorist and proliferator and trafficker communications co-existing with your Gmails. So if you want the NSA to do for you in the 21st century what it did for you in the last half of the 20th, it has to be in those communications paths—even though your communications are skidding by there too.

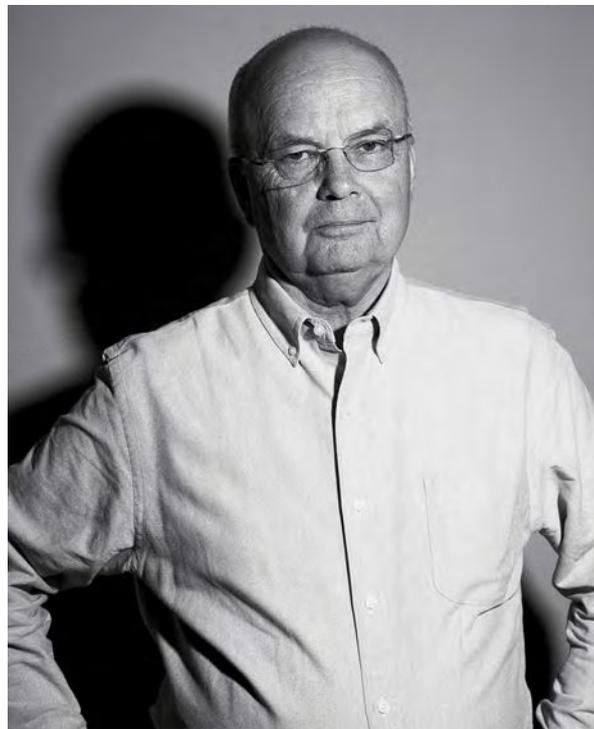
PLAYBOY: What do you see as Snowden's long-term fate?

HAYDEN: He stays in Moscow. I cannot conceive of a plea deal that would satisfy him and not alienate the 100,000 Americans who go to work every day and keep secrets.

PLAYBOY: What do you make of former attorney general Eric Holder going from criticizing Snowden to now saying he performed a "public service"?

HAYDEN: I was heartened that the Obama

administration backed away from Holder's latest statement almost immediately. Snowden engineered the greatest leak of legitimate American secrets in the history of the republic. Whatever debate he may have generated about American metadata, the other 98 percent of what he stole had nothing to do with American privacy. It had everything to do with how America conducts legitimate foreign intelligence. If he ever returns home, the first sound he hears should be "You have the right to remain silent." I don't mean to be an ass about



this, but the damage he did will last for a very long time. He had other tools available to him than mass, near indiscriminate theft and then seeking refuge in a totalitarian state.

PLAYBOY: What's your view of Chelsea Manning, the transgender Army soldier who as Bradley Manning gave documents and other material to WikiLeaks in 2010?

HAYDEN: Manning is different from Snowden because she didn't even know what she was downloading; it was just a data dump. What higher principle was Manning embracing? Seriously. The only crime she claimed to uncover was the video of our Apache helicopter killing two

journalists in Iraq. But that had already been investigated. Manning was an unhappy, frustrated young soldier who appears to have been bullied by her squad and platoon mates. At her trial, she said that what she did was irresponsible.

PLAYBOY: President Obama's term is almost finished. What's your assessment of him?

HAYDEN: He wanted to expend most of his energies in making America better and viewed much of what the external world was imposing on him as a distraction from that primary task. Unfortunately, the world didn't cooperate and imposed itself on him. And to be honest, it has imposed itself on him in a very punishing way.

PLAYBOY: Why do you think Obama continued some of Bush 43's tactics, such as the section of the Patriot Act that permits the government to search a citizen's records without the citizen's consent?

HAYDEN: Obama ran on an "I'm not George Bush" approach. And what did he do? He kept the part of the Patriot Act you're talking about, which is a pretty good argument that it was probably a pretty useful program. But it's also an argument that national security looks different from the Oval Office than it does from a hotel room in Iowa.

PLAYBOY: Oliver Stone's new movie *Snowden* has an NSA head, possibly a Hayden stand-in, who says, "Most Americans don't want freedom. They want security." How does that characterization square with you?

HAYDEN: Why do the purveyors of this conspiratorial bullshit think they have a right to condemn those who work to keep them safe? Two days after 9/11, I addressed the NSA. I said, "It's not just our safety but our

character as a free people that is at stake here. Every nation is required to balance the needs of security with the needs of liberty. Thanks to James Madison and a bunch of his friends, we have planted our flag well on the side of liberty in that difficult question. But if a nation feels itself threatened, feels its children are at risk, it tends to move its banner closer to the requirements of security than those of liberty. You and I have a role here. You and I can and will preserve American liberty and we will do it by making America feel safe again." I often think of that speech when I hear criticism like that. It doesn't square with the world I lived in. ■



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A NIGHT WITH THE BLACKHEARTS

This year, four irresistible Playmates who embody the spirit of Blackheart Premium Spiced Rum stole the spotlight at Playboy's annual Midsummer Night's Dream Party. Held at the Playboy Mansion, the world-famous event provided the perfect environment for their personalities to shine. Blackheart Rum and Playboy were behind the scenes to get in on all the action. For more photos from the event, visit www.playboy.com/theblackheartmsnd16

PLAYMATE FOREVER. DJ FOR A NIGHT.

Miss Bold, Tiffany Toth, never missed a beat or a chance to take the party to the next level. Surprised to find her spinning and mixing behind the DJ booth, we asked how she was able to make it past security. She paused for a second, making us wait while she put the finishing touches on her playlist:

“
I never ask for permission. I just move like I'm in control.
”



STEALING ATTENTION. BREAKING HEARTS.

Miss Cunning, Kimberly Phillips, turned heads everywhere she went. We found her chatting with one of the many guys to buy her a drink that night. Biting a cherry off its stem, she flashed an enticing smile at her suitor, then turned around and whispered in our ear:

“
Have you met my latest admirer?
”



WHEREVER SHE GOES THE PARTY FOLLOWS.

Making our way through the party, we encountered Miss Bawdy, Shelby Chesnes, letting loose on the dance floor, on a couch and high above the crowd—on top of the bar, actually. Although obviously she was the life of the party, we asked about her favorite moment of the night:

“
I loved dancing everywhere and anywhere all night!
”

THE GROTTO JUST GOT HOTTER.

Miss Seductive, Raquel Gibson, could be found only at the Grotto that night. It wasn't a mirage as she beckoned one lucky gent to follow her in. And who could say no to one of the most tempting women on the planet? Her smoldering stare captivated every man who crossed her path. Sitting across the Grotto, she looked directly at us before disappearing into the water, saying:

“
Don't you want to get in?
”



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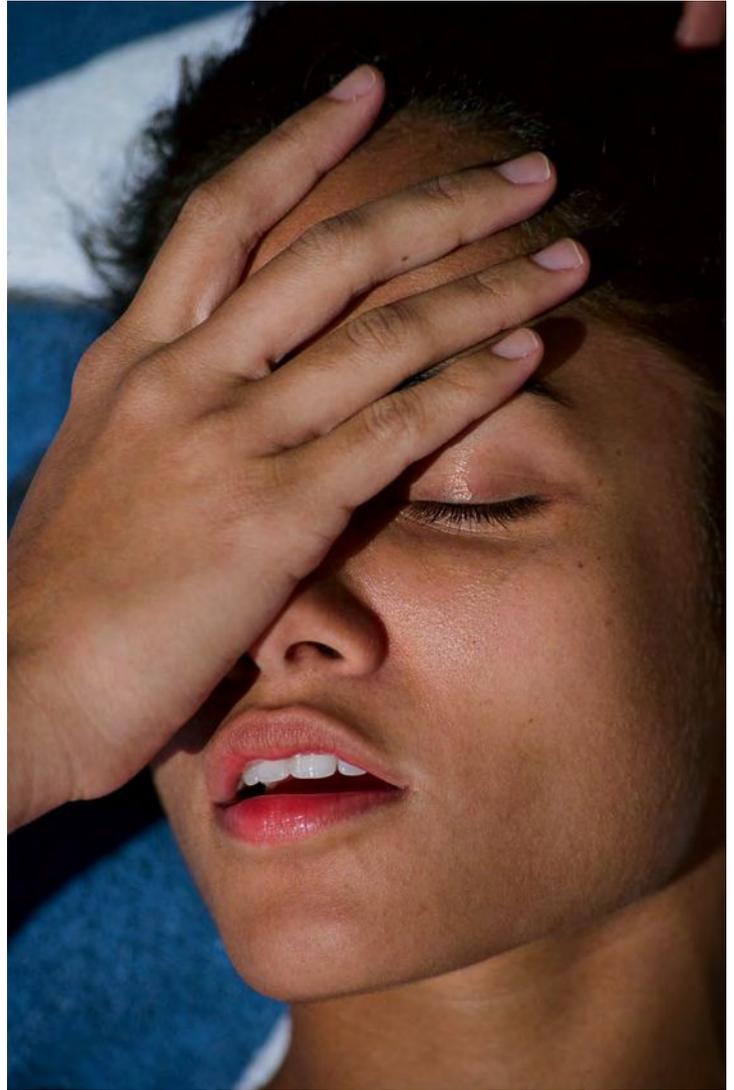


IN A PAST LIFE

*Model **Cenit Nadir** posing in a midcentury architectural masterpiece is all the proof you need that true beauty transcends time*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JEAN PIERROT**

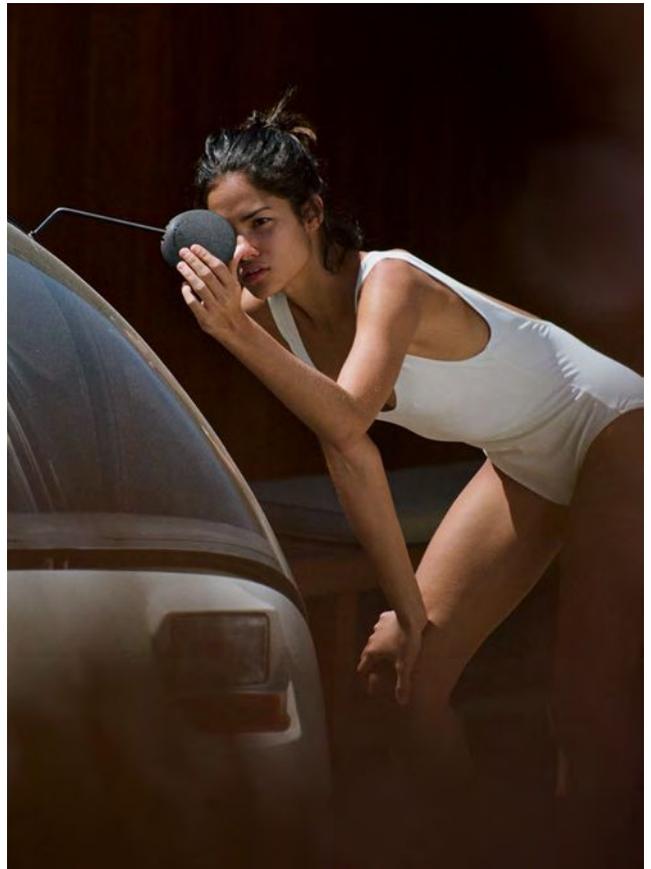
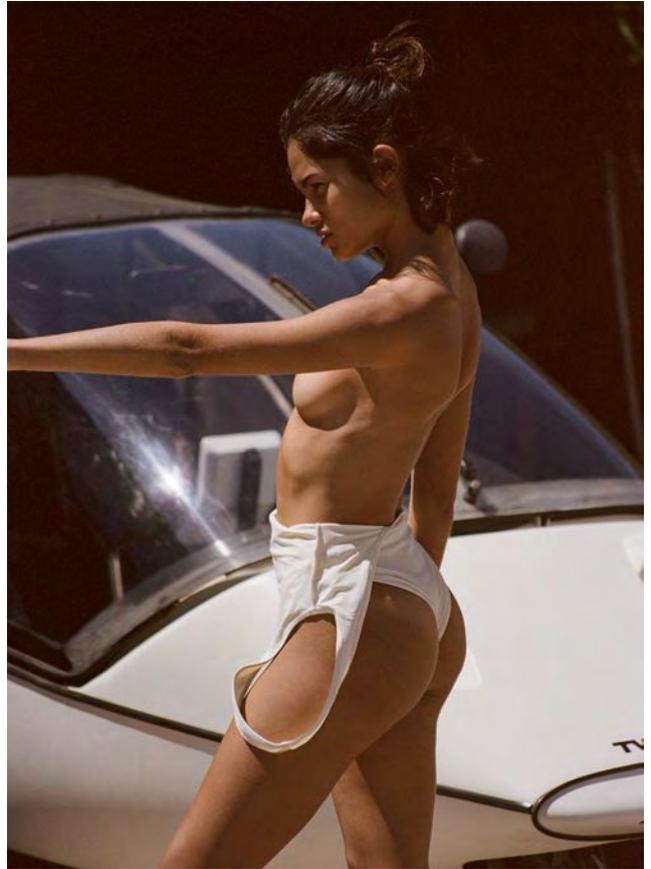




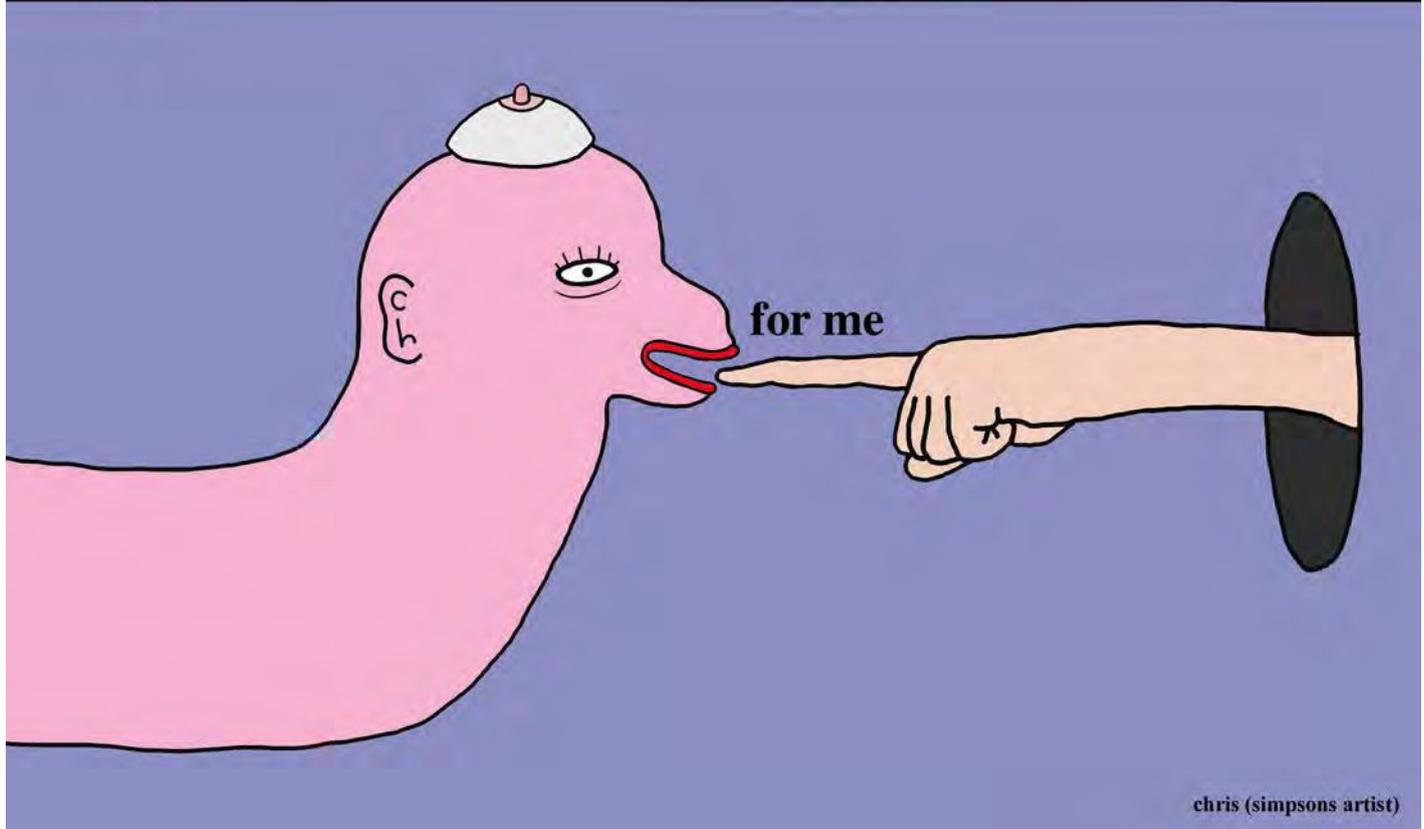
Tucked away in the California canyons, high above L.A.'s hustle and bustle, Crestwood Hills is a secluded pocket of midcentury residences developed after World War II. It was here in 1948 that architect A. Quincy Jones, famous for his modernist designs, built the Schneidman House. A glass-cased masterpiece of minimalism, it provided the perfect backdrop for photographer Jean Pierrot, who wanted to capture model Cenit Nadir in a tranquil setting. "It was already a hot and lazy day in L.A., but here you can sense nonchalance on an even higher level," he says. "This is an escape from the city's overwhelming reality. It is the ultimate relaxation."













The White-Collar Future of Weed

Forsaking stoner culture, a new generation of entrepreneurs is using venture capital, scientific research and new products to revolutionize America's cannabis industry

His day started early in a meeting with San Francisco investment bankers. Now Mark Hadfield, a 44-year-old serial entrepreneur, is guiding his Mercedes SLK 350 Roadster over the Bay Bridge to meet a potential business partner. His mission: to spread the gospel of HelloMD, an online platform that allows doctors, patients and retailers to exchange information about medical marijuana.

“People come to the industry who maybe smoked a joint in college but don’t know what’s available today,” Hadfield explains. To those novices, HelloMD offers video consultations, doctors’ recommendations and access to a community of medical professionals, vendors and more-experienced users.

Although medical research has been stymied by Washington, D.C.’s lingering *Reefer Madness* mentality, it’s increasingly evident that cannabinoid extracts can improve the lives of millions of Americans. “At one end of the spectrum are young men in their 20s who just want to get high, and at the other are people who have cancer, epilepsy and terminal illnesses,” says Hadfield. “We’re focused on the health-and-wellness consumers in the middle who want relief from chronic pain, arthritis, insomnia and migraines.”

Hadfield’s destination is a 13,000-square-foot factory building on the far side of Oakland. The factory houses Kiva Confections, a cannabis-candy company headed by a 30-year-old former wedding photographer named Kristi Knoblich, who started the not-for-profit collective in her kitchen in 2010 with a \$36,000 loan from her father-in-law. Hadfield wants Kiva to join his online community and, as an inducement, has posted a video about Knoblich and her company on the HelloMD website.

“We already have 75,000 members in the community, and that number will double over

the next 12 months,” he says. (At press time, HelloMD membership had reached 100,000.) “We want entrepreneurs, bud tenders and customers exchanging experiences for free on an open platform that’s searchable.”

“That’s so cool,” Knoblich says, smiling. “You should have prizes for the best contributors!”

Kiva Confections makes some of California’s most popular edibles. Its chocolate bars, some of which contain 180 milligrams of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) extracted from indica and sativa strains of northern California plants, are hot sellers in medical-marijuana pharmacies throughout the state.

On the factory floor, the heavy tang of cannabis is masked by the sweet smells of mint, Irish cream, tangerine, espresso and ginger—flavors that distinguish a variety of chocolate bars, each of which is tested for purity before being sealed in a childproof package.

Chocolate bars are Kiva’s top sellers, but Knoblich believes smaller doses will become more popular if California legalizes marijuana for recreational use—that is, if Proposition 64, also known as the Adult Use of Marijuana Act, passes on Election Day. The company also produces chocolate-covered blueberries and espresso beans that contain only five milligrams of THC apiece. “My concern now is not going to jail,” Knoblich says, “but scaling up to meet statewide demand when prohibition finally ends.”

• • •

This is the state of weed in 2016. Despite a layered and contradictory matrix of laws, the industry continues to evolve and proliferate, encompassing big business, technology and mental and physical health—as well as good old-fashioned hedonism. And a new generation of nimble entrepreneurs like Hadfield and Knoblich is carrying the baton.

The rate of change is clear to anybody who steps inside a medical-marijuana pharmacy or recreational-cannabis dispensary. Gone is the head shop staffed by a glassy-eyed stoner. Candy jars filled with marijuana buds may cover one wall, but they are far outnumbered by edibles, drinkables, tincture sprays and topical creams. There’s even a market for pets: Therabis makes a line of sachets that, when sprinkled into kibble, can soothe a dog’s itching or calm its anxiety. “When they feel better, you do too,” claims its marketing.

In 1937, the Marihuana Tax Act effectively outlawed the use and sale of marijuana on a federal level. The prohibition began to erode in the 1990s, when HIV and AIDS sufferers realized cannabis reduced their nausea and pain. In 1996, California became the first state to legalize medical marijuana, but cannabis is still banned under federal law, which insists it is just as dangerous as LSD, heroin and ecstasy. Indeed, the federal government considers marijuana more dangerous than cocaine and crystal meth, but it allows states that have regulations in place to determine the nature and scope of intrastate use.

Today, 25 states plus the District of Columbia have legalized cannabis in some form. In Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Colorado and D.C., recreational marijuana is legal as long as specific requirements are met, such as keeping it away from children and strictly monitoring inventories. On November 8, five additional states—Arizona, California, Maine, Massachusetts and Nevada—will allow voters to decide if cannabis should be made fully legal and taxed like alcohol. Four other states will vote on whether to legalize medical marijuana.

Entrepreneurs and politicians alike are fixated on California, which has the world’s sixth-largest economy and accounts for nearly half of America’s legal cannabis sales. Says Allen

ILLUSTRATION BY **EDEL RODRIGUEZ** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JOSHUA ELAN**





Left: Inventory at High Level Health's facilities in Denver. **Right:** Jane West, the "Martha Stewart of pot," and a few of her wares.

St. Pierre, former executive director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, "California really is the linchpin for hemispherical legalization."

Back in 2010, Californians rejected a similar referendum to legalize recreational marijuana by a 54 to 46 percent vote. But this time advocates for legalized pot have the support of the state's lieutenant governor, Gavin Newsom. The "Yes on 64" campaign has more than \$6.6 million to spend on political messaging, thanks to direct or indirect contributions from philanthropist George Soros, Napster co-founder and former Facebook president Sean Parker and Hyatt Hotels heir Nicholas Pritzker (who is also an investor in Tesla, SpaceX and Uber).

"Marijuana reform is a generational issue, like health care reform and marriage equality," says Jason Kinney, a Sacramento political operative who heads the Yes on 64 effort. He adds that more than a dozen recent polls have shown at least 60 percent of California voters support the legalization of recreational marijuana. It's also receiving strong support in minority communities disproportionately affected by the war on drugs. Over the past decade, nearly half a million people in California have been arrested on pot charges.

Efforts to legalize marijuana have typically been opposed by police chiefs, county sheriffs,

district attorneys and politicians at all levels of state and local government. But not this year. Opposition at the city and county level has been muted by the prospect of a tax windfall from a \$9.25-per-ounce cultivation tax and an existing special 15 percent tax on the retail value of all marijuana sold—in addition to the usual state and local sales taxes.

California voters could narrowly defeat Proposition 64, but West Coast investment bankers doubt a "no" vote would diminish a nationwide consumer market for legal and illegal marijuana already valued in excess of \$40 billion, according to some estimates. One recent investment report by San Francisco's Ackrell Capital titled "The Green Gold Rush" estimates that the U.S. consumer market for recreational and medicinal cannabis will expand from \$4.4 billion in 2015 to \$9.5 billion in 2019. If legalized federally, Ackrell predicts, the market will grow to \$37 billion within five years and \$50 billion within 10 years.

Shannon Soqui, Ackrell's head of cannabis investment banking, says, "A broad range of investment opportunities exists for sophisticated investors who are willing to take significant risk."

One measure of pot's acceptance is the number of strategic relationships extending to major corporations. Microsoft recently partnered with

a cannabis-industry software company called Kind Financial to launch a computer system that tracks the cultivation, harvesting and eventual vending of marijuana. The "seed to sale" software helps government regulators ensure that no product is diverted for illegal purposes.

The Microsoft venture coincides with a \$400 million investment by Jim Hagedorn, CEO of Scotts Miracle-Gro. According to a recent article in *Forbes* magazine, Hagedorn's epiphany came on a trip to Yakima, Washington, where he noticed that the hydroponics tanks, lights and liquid nutrients used for the indoor cultivation of marijuana were consistently outselling dirt, grass seed and other Scotts products. So last year he paid \$135 million for two California companies that market soil, fertilizer and accessories to pot growers. He then spent another \$120 million on a Dutch hydroponics-equipment company and vows to invest an additional \$150 million before the end of the year. By September, Scotts Miracle-Gro stock had jumped 17 percent.

An Israeli company called Leaf recently raised \$2 million to develop an automated grow system the size of a mini refrigerator that uses a smartphone app to help growers monitor the temperature, humidity and feeding of marijuana plants. And in Los Angeles, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center reportedly began referring



cancer patients directly to a West Hollywood medical-marijuana dispensary.

The flirtation between big business and recreational cannabis stems from the profit potential, but it also results from the fact that cannabis executives are just like other executives. When cannabis companies decided this summer to hold a fund-raiser for the Denver Colorado AIDS Project, they opted for a charity golf tournament instead of a Phish concert.

...

Because it took root in the legal shadows, the cannabis industry now evolving west of the Mississippi isn't controlled by old money or the male-dominated corporate hierarchy of the last century. Its leading entrepreneurs are as diverse as the communities in which they work. Take Jane West, who spent 20 years as an event planner in New York and Houston before moving to Denver and starting a company called Edible Events Co. She is often referred to as the "Martha Stewart of pot."

Staged once a month at high-end art galleries, West's themed soirees attracted local business leaders, who enjoyed gourmet munchies served in an atmosphere tolerant of recreational cannabis. "My first event, called End of Prohibition, was in January 2014 to coincide with Colorado's legalization of pot," West says. "The party, which cost \$125 a person and was limited to 100 people, was covered by CNBC and got me fired from my job." Undeterred, she immediately began to plan a Valentine's Day party called A Threesome With Mary Jane, which featured live body-painting. The next month she hosted Miso Hungry, which offered Asian cuisine and an origami station "because people who are stoned love to work with their hands."

Despite a visit from a SWAT team in April 2014, by midsummer, organizations were coming to West. By the end of that year, she had established a professional network and was ready to start Women Grow, an organization that helps women enter the cannabis industry.

With chapters in 44 cities and locations as far-flung as Alaska, Guam and Canada, West says Women Grow now has more than 50,000 members who promote marijuana as a healthier alternative to alcohol and create products designed by and for women. West has her own YouTube channel and sells cannabis-related products on her website. She believes America may finally be on the verge of accepting cannabis culture, and she wants to make sure women play prominent roles in the industry.

"Sixteen men created the modern alcohol industry over the course of 150 years, and their names live on today," she says, rattling off John Jameson, Jack Daniel, Joseph Seagram and several others. "Women have the same opportunity to make their indelible mark in the cannabis industry. Thanks to the federal government, cannabis companies have to start small and stay local. Why can't women create 16 bud brands before the large corporations come in and take over?"

Toward this goal, West is creating a lifestyle company featuring glass products she'll sell online beginning this month. She calls her elegant bong, pipes and beakers "home goods" instead of "paraphernalia" and hopes that one day her designs will be for sale at Crate & Barrel.

"Women make excellent entrepreneurs because they can multitask," West says. "They also drink more alcohol than men and buy 80 percent of the products brought into the home.

“MARIJUANA REFORM IS A GENERATIONAL ISSUE, LIKE HEALTH CARE REFORM AND MARIAGE EQUALITY.”

We should take over the cannabis industry now before it has time to develop a male hierarchy like other mature industries."

...

In the past, marijuana had one application: getting you high. But decades of genetic experimentation and horticultural innovation have opened a wide range of benefits that have nothing to do with creating a buzz. Colorado-based Ebbu is among the companies using science-based purification processes to isolate marijuana's various psychotropic properties—and eliminate the unpredictability that users face every time they light up.

In Evergreen, Colorado, in a building that resembles a ski chalet, Ebbu's research team of three Ph.D.s is developing an ethanol-based technique that extracts cannabinoid compounds and terpenes from marijuana strains so they can be recombined to create products

associated with one of five desired feelings: chill, bliss, create, giggle and energy. "We want the consumer to be able to select an exact experience that is precise and predictable," explains Ebbu CEO Jon Cooper.

A succession of locked doors lead down to Ebbu's basement laboratory, which is entered through a clean room containing lab coats and hair nets. There, Cooper's research team has been able to extract dozens of compounds that react with the human body's endocannabinoid receptors. Some cannabinoids, such as THC, produce the buzz familiar to college students. Other cannabinoids, such as cannabidiol, or CBD, reduce pain and inflammation and alleviate anxiety instead of creating a high. Transcending that state and its attendant clichés is Ebbu's stated mission. "Our goal is to create a mainstream product that will have a positive impact on society," Cooper says.

Privately funded research shows that therapeutic compounds extracted from cannabis appear to influence every aspect of the human body when applied, ingested or inhaled. Endocannabinoids and their receptors are found in organs, the brain, connective tissues, glands and immune cells. In each tissue the cannabinoid system performs different functions, but its prime goal, surprisingly enough, is to maintain a stable internal environment for the body.

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Marijuana's medicinal properties attract many executives to the industry, but Hugh Hempel embraced cannabis for a more personal reason. In 2007, his twin daughters, Addison and Cassidy, developed a rare and fatal disease called Niemann-Pick type C. Sometimes referred to as "childhood Alzheimer's," the condition is caused by harmful amounts of cholesterol that adversely affect the brain, spleen and liver. Severe seizures are a by-product of the disease. Many of the pharmaceutical drugs available turned the twins into "little zombies," Hempel says, so he turned to cannabis, which provided the girls relief without the side effects.

A veteran of the tech industry, Hempel sold IBM mainframes in New York before taking a marketing position with Apple. Later, he acquired a large sum of money from a Netscape IPO. He invested his time and some of his fortune to find a medicine that would prolong the lives of his daughters. "When my daughters got sick, I was forced to learn how to make medicine," he says.



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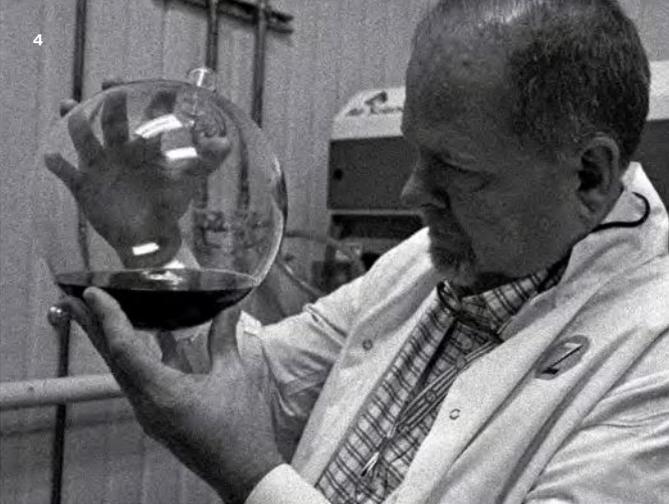


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3

1 and 2. More of High Level Health's product. 3. A customer at the High Level Health dispensary. 4. Strainz CEO Hugh Hempel inspects a sample of cannabis oil. 5. At the Kiva Confections factory in Oakland, California. 6. A High Level Health staffer conducts some quality control of his own. 7. At Ebbu headquarters in Evergreen, Colorado.



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Hempel, 58, is now the CEO of Strainz, a Las Vegas-based developer of medical-marijuana products he co-founded with his wife. Strainz products are sold in Washington, Colorado, and soon Nevada through licensed partnerships with local manufacturers. He buys locally grown strains of marijuana in each state and extracts oil in a process using carbon dioxide or ethanol. After being refined, the oil from several strains is blended and placed in cartridges that can be inserted into a discreetly sized vape pen. Oil also comes in a tincture that can be taken orally. “Today cannabis is my passion, and I couldn’t be happier. I can do well by my family by doing good for society,” says Hempel.

In Colorado, a manufacturer produces Hempel’s cannabis oils in a 25,000-square-foot factory a few blocks north of the I-70 freeway running through Denver. Surrounded by a locked wrought-iron fence, the unmarked building is compartmentalized by doors that can be opened only with a key card. Why all the secrecy and security? “Because it’s legally mandated and because at any time we have hundreds of thousands of dollars’ worth of products in production here,” Hempel explains.

Research by Strainz and similar companies shows that CBD has analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties and can achieve measurable success in the treatment of Crohn’s disease, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and post-traumatic stress disorder. Cartridges inserted into Strainz vape pens are marketed with THC and CBD in different proportions, so customers can enjoy the medical benefits of CBD without experiencing the high associated with THC. Seven years after their diagnosis, Hempel’s daughters experience less frequent and less intense seizures thanks to orally administered CBD tinctures. It’s a sign of how far the culture has shifted that neither of these users nor their “dealer” is anomalous.

...

Even in states where cannabis is legal, companies handling marijuana and its derivatives face a variety of challenges that keep their executives wandering in a regulatory fog. Pharmaceutical multinationals have to deal only with the Food and Drug Administration, but companies that produce or sell cannabis must answer to state, county and city administrators who can change the rules at any time and often do. Regulatory compliance in Colorado is monitored by the Marijuana Enforcement Division of the Department of Revenue; Washing-

ton’s oversight is handled by the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board. Some states allow advertising and the distribution of free samples; others do not. Washington restricts ownership of companies to residents; Nevada welcomes investment from outside the state.

Cannabis companies are perhaps the only businesses in America that don’t complain about local taxes—despite the fact that the money they pay goes far beyond the sin taxes placed on tobacco and alcohol. Jim Rice, founder and CEO of High Level Health in Denver, has two indoor grow houses that supply marijuana strains to retail dispensaries he owns. He pays the 15 percent excise tax on the value of every pound of recreational marijuana he produces, but he questions why every single location where he operates requires a separate business license. Instead of having one license for agricultural cultivation and a second for

ULTIMATELY, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN DO LITTLE TO STOP THE STEADY MARCH TOWARD LEGALIZATION.

retail sales, the 40-year-old businessman is forced to purchase 16 different licenses that range from \$3,000 to \$9,000 each.

The greatest impediments to the cannabis industry, however, come not from the states but from the federal government, which continues to insist the product is illegal, despite dozens of state laws to the contrary. No financial institution larger than a credit union will open an account or accept deposits from an individual or company involved in the cannabis business. Neither will federal law permit a cannabis dealer to use or accept payment on a credit card. Freight and delivery companies including FedEx and UPS that are involved in interstate commerce will not deliver a product containing marijuana—even if the shipment is within one state. Federal prohibitions preventing cannabis companies from using the mail and other forms of interstate commerce make it impossible for a company to expand legally

beyond an individual state’s borders unless it builds a duplicate factory producing the same product in the second state.

The federal agency inflicting the most pain is the Internal Revenue Service. “I used to own a wine and liquor store and could deduct utility costs, employee salaries, office supplies, business entertainment, advertising, travel tickets and conference fees as costs of doing business,” says Rice. “My dispensaries incur some of these expenses, but I can’t deduct any of them, because they’re associated with a product the IRS deems illegal.”

A little over one block south of Colorado’s elegant capitol building is the law office of Christian Sederberg. More than 95 percent of the 38-year-old attorney’s clients are companies involved in the state’s four-year-old marijuana business. How has legal cannabis affected Colorado? Have laws and levies stunted its growth?

“Back in 2012, when we voted to make cannabis legal, Colorado instantly became a late-night-talk-show joke,” Sederberg says. “Since then the state has had three straight years of record tourism and economic expansion. New people are moving in. Foreign diplomats come to study our tax-and-regulate approach. There are no stoners sprawled on a couch here.”

...

National pot policy won’t change anytime soon. Federal courts are unlikely to get involved, because access to marijuana is not a civil rights imperative. The industry lacks the army of lobbyists necessary to pro-

mote congressional legislation. And after years of contentious debate over abortion, illegal immigration, gay marriage and access to public toilets, neither political party wants to embrace another divisive issue on a national level.

But ultimately the federal government, having invited the states to establish their own marijuana policies, can do little to stop the steady march toward legalization. California’s acceptance of recreational marijuana will provide political momentum, if only because cannabis will immediately become one of the state’s leading cash crops. But a defeat of Proposition 64 would not mean all is lost. Thousands of young, well-educated entrepreneurs have seen the demand for medical marijuana grow in states throughout the country, and they’re determined to build a legal and regulated industry whose products can make life healthier and more enjoyable for all Americans. And their dogs. ■



This is the new golden age of the cocktail, and drinking establishments are better than ever. From a day drinker's dream to an actual gin palace, here are the top new bars in America

BY **ALIA AKKAM, JEREMY REPANICH AND ALYSON SHEPPARD**



1 COLUMBIA ROOM Washington, D.C.

When Derek Brown first opened Columbia Room, it was in the back of neighborhood hangout the Passenger. Patrons were sad when the secretive oasis shuttered, even though they had Brown's other watering holes (Eat the Rich, Southern Efficiency, Mockingbird Hill) to ease the pain. But Columbia Room's second incarnation in Blagden Alley is worth the wait: It's more commodious and far grander, with a striking Italian mosaic mural behind the curved burl-wood bar in the Tasting Room. Here, guests can splurge on three- or five-course menus that might culminate in a Banana Republican (Singani, Guyanese rum, Cocchi Torino, Banane du Brésil, Xocolatl mole bitters) paired with guava three ways. The bar's Spirits Library, adorned with stately cabinets and leather, is a less formal area. Sit back and enjoy a We Came for the Gold or a Not Far From the Tree (Calvados, *sirop de gomme*, whiskey-barrel bitters, orange and lemon peels) and an order of Thai chili-spiced edamame hummus. All manner of punches—including the Manhattan Project #2 (rye, Dubonnet rouge, cherry bounce, Sfumato Rabarbaro amaro, berry vinegar)—are naturally the draw of the rooftop Punch Garden.



The bartenders at work at Columbia Room.



Day drinking is perfected at Dante in New York City.

2 DANTE New York City

In Europe, day drinking—not getting drunk but patiently sipping glass after glass of low-alcohol beverages such as Campari or Aperol in a ritualistic fashion—is just part of the lifestyle. Dante, an Italian cocktail bar in Greenwich Village, is one of the first to champion this custom in America. “This kind of drinking makes you feel great,” co-owner Naren Young says. “You feel refreshed. You feel invigorated. And you can sit around and have more drinks, hang out longer.”

Situated in a spruced-up New York City landmark building, Dante is a place where you'd actually want to hang out longer. (The bar is open from 8:30 A.M. to two A.M. most days.) The drinks menu focuses on refreshing, low-ABV ingredients such as vermouth and sherry, as well as the negroni—the king of aperitifs. Dante even has its own negroni happy hour (four to seven P.M. daily), when you can get any of 12 versions of the drink, including one on tap, for \$9 each.

Young wants to own certain drinks, to serve the world's best interpretation of them. To accomplish this, he elevates cocktails with nontraditional garnishes and glassware, or he

tweaks a certain ingredient. His gin and tonic, for example, includes a tonic cordial and a mist of jasmine. But the real point is to be a beacon for the community, as the spot has been since the early 1900s. “We didn't—we don't—want it to be a hip place,” Young says. “I know we make great drinks, and that's fine, but we're really aiming for people to be able to come in here and feel like it's a home away from home.”

3 SUFFOLK ARMS New York City

Suffolk Arms defies expectations. You expect a bar that looks like an English pub to serve pints, not great

mixed drinks. You expect a craft-cocktail bar to pay homage to pre-Prohibition America, not Ed Koch and Sonia Sotomayor. And you expect a place owned by an experienced and respected bartender not to devote a whole menu page to vodka cocktails with names like the Porn-Star martini, Twinkle and Grapefruit Cooler. But they're there in all their glory, under the heading INTRACTABLE & UNAPOLOGETIC.

It may not hit you when you first walk into Suffolk Arms, but once you take in the sketches of iconic New Yorkers on the walls, crack the menu to see an ambitious list of 40 cocktails, relax under the care of the friendly staff and sip your first drink, you will realize that owner and bartender Giuseppe González has expertly combined the comfort of the pub with the craft of the modern cocktail bar.

Order from a list of classic drinks (mai tai, Tommy's margarita), new classics created by notable bartenders in the past decade or so (Jagerita, Ready Fire Aim!), originals (Horseapple, which is a juiced Granny Smith, horseradish and your choice of spirit) and of course those aforementioned vodka drinks, sans judgment. You're getting quality without the hipster attitude.

Columbia Room's Decaf Cowboy: Combine 1 oz. Avuá Amburana cachaça, ½ oz. Barbadillo amontillado, ¾ oz. fresh lime juice, ¾ oz. café de palo syrup, the white of 1 large egg and 3 drops espresso in a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Shake vigorously. Strain into an empty shaker, shake again and pour into a chilled coupe.



4 WHITECHAPEL San Francisco

Yes, one could sip scotch at Whitechapel, but the *raison d'être* of this Tenderloin spot—from bartender Alex Smith and Martin Cate of Smugler's Cove glory—is gin. It takes a lot for a joint to stand out in drink-happy San Francisco, and Whitechapel has amassed well-deserved kudos. A true shrine to the spirit, this fantastical Victorian-inspired wonderland with a barrel-vaulted ceiling boasts the largest collection of gin—500 varieties—on the continent. The cocktail menu is just as comprehensive, taking guests on a journey from goes-down-easy highballs with seltzer, lemon-celery bitters and orange oil to myriad martini and gin-and-tonic interpretations. Classics like the labor-intensive Ramos gin fizz get a prominent shout-out, as do such “lost and forgotten” tipples as the Chapelle, with Italian vermouth, pineapple and lime. Many are

Sweet Liberty's Mezcalero: Pour 1 oz. Del Maguey Vida mezcal, 1 oz. blanc vermouth, 1 oz. Aperol and 2 dashes grapefruit bitters into a rocks glass over ice. Stir and garnish with grapefruit peel.

ing, though more casual and grungier than the subdued, hidden-behind-a-bookcase original. Occidental's centerpiece is a collage of about 1,000 cassette tapes spray-painted silver; the wallpaper incorporates images from old *Adbusters* magazines, and the bathroom doors pay tribute to Iggy Pop and Debbie Harry, reinforcing the unapologetic countercultural theme. Head to the pinball machine with a Moscow mule, or for something more ambitious, try one of the libations named after 1980s music. The TV Party is a nod to Black Flag's 1982 EP,

New York sours and *matcha* old fashioned, is far swankier than the building facade suggests. Secure a reservation at the coveted six-seat bar for the best experience: Visually stunning drinks such as the Tavern Keeps Treasure—served under a glass bell swirling with the smoke of charred American oak barrel chips—are offered only here. Brown spirits are especially prized; the selections include A.H. Hirsch Reserve 16-year-old bourbon and Yamazaki 25-year-old Japanese whiskey. One of the bar staff, wearing a namesake leather apron personally designed by

Park, will guide you through the range.

7 SWEET LIBERTY Miami

Miami locals will surely recognize John Lermayer from his longtime stints at the buzzy Shore Club, Delano and Regent Cocktail Club, where his drink-making prowess and hospitable nature were on full display. He now brings those traits to the emerging Collins Park neighborhood, where he and partners David



San Francisco's Whitechapel is a true temple to gin.



Yes, the staff wears leather aprons at Bar Leather Apron.

made with the bar's own London dry gin recipe, courtesy of local Distillery No. 209. Among the original creations are the autumnal Flemish Purl and the effervescent Hippy Wallbanger (Leopold's gin, Galliano, orange juice, club soda, lime juice), which is laced with a patchouli tincture. It's a good way to ease into the hot-curry-laden mussels vindaloo.

5 OCCIDENTAL Denver

Bar aficionados know that the LoHi speak-easy Williams & Graham, helmed by Sean Kenyon, is an obligatory stop in Denver. They're also quickly learning that Occidental—Kenyon's second bar, just next door and opened with partner Todd Colehour—is equally captivat-

while the Paul Collins (gin, peach liqueur, lemon, ginger, soda) honors the frontman of power-pop band the Beat.

6 BAR LEATHER APRON Honolulu

Passionate Honolulu bartenders are fast replacing the saccharine mai tais that pervade Waikiki resort menus with thoughtful, inspired creations. One such mixologist is Justin Park, who, after making his mark at the bar Manifest, teamed with Tom Park of shoe retailer Leather Soul to create Bar Leather Apron. The mezzanine location inside downtown Honolulu's Topa Financial Center is decidedly unglamorous, but the lounge, where you can relax while sipping

Martinez and Dan Binkiewicz have opened Sweet Liberty, which was crowned this year's best new American cocktail bar at the consumer-industry confab Tales of the Cocktail Spirited Awards. Devoid of nearby South Beach nightclub pretense, it's a relaxed space with whimsical wallpaper and 75-cent oyster specials. Gorge on brisket sandwiches and cauliflower nachos during Motown on Mondays, and while the remixes spin, sample drinks such as the floral Collins Park sour or the fragrant Baby Bison (Zubrówka Bison Grass vodka, apple juice, Aperol, citrus, cinnamon). Insiders wisely book the bartender's table, an intimate nook where you can savor a slate of snacks and wash them down with the barkeep's choice of concoctions.

8 COMPÈRE LAPIN New Orleans

The French Quarter may teem with tourist-perfect charm, but New Orleanians know the Central Business District is a must for discerning diners and drinkers. It is here where one may discover the Old No. 77 Hotel & Chandlery, and within its trifecta of revamped warehouses is Compère Lapin, a restaurant with classy brass accents and brick walls. St. Lucia native Nina Compton presides over the kitchen, and her Caribbean- and Creole-inflected cooking is complemented by bright, refreshing cocktails including the Andromeda and the frozen Misty Slipper sangria (rum, rosé, brandy, melon, Amaro Montenegro, lychee) served at a blue-tiled bar that pops against a mosaic floor. Resist a night of Bourbon Street revelry and instead find salvation with a moody Harvey Jones (coffee, Galliano, *genever*) made by beloved head bartender Abigail Gullo—she garnered myriad fans behind the bar at SoBou—while peering into the hypnotic window overlook-



ing the kitchen. That will inevitably lead to an order of conch croquettes paired with pickled pineapple tartar sauce.

9 GREENRIVER Chicago

The 18th floor of a Northwestern Medicine building is the unlikely location of this

rum, Noilly Prat Ambré vermouth, Amaro Nonino, banana, Crème de Noyaux, absinthe, Decanter bitters) pays homage to the tireless labor organizer and *Mother Jones* namesake, just as the Mr. Dooley references a series of *Chicago Post* articles by Finley Peter Dunne. Perch at the wood-topped bar across from the open kitchen or on the wrap-around terrace overlooking Lake Michigan with a *yuzu* gin and tonic in hand. At the adjacent Annex, a dark, intimate hideaway, GreenRiver's head bartender, Julia Momose, constructs thematic cocktails that amplify the spices and florals.

10 OLD GLORY Nashville

Scores of L.A. and New York transplants are finding serenity in Nashville.

In recent years this creative Southern metropolis has established ample culinary cred thanks to such lauded restaurants as City House and the Catbird Seat. Music City's bar game is just as strong, as evidenced by the adventurous Old Glory. A clandestine alleyway leads to this industrial playground in the mixed-use devel-

Whitechapel's Coco con Ginebra: Combine 2 oz. No. 209 gin, 4 oz. coconut water, 1/4 oz. simple syrup and 1/4 oz. lemon juice in a shaker filled with ice. Shake, strain and pour over ice in a rocks glass or a coconut cup. Garnish with lemon wheel and cherry.



Streeterville restaurant and bar from Sean Muldoon and Jack McGarry (both of New York's the Dead Rabbit and Blacktail fame) and Danny Meyer (Union Square Events). Such a powerful collaboration yields more than mere hype. A tribute to Chicago's robust Irish heritage, the thoughtfully elaborate cocktail menu celebrates notable Irish Americans such as Mary Harris Jones. The Coal Miner's Daughter (Plantation Barbados five-year-old Grande Reserve

opment of Edgehill Village. Decked out with a smokestack, original tiles featuring the OG logo and plenty of cement and exposed brick, this onetime boiler room for a 1930s laundry facility is punctuated by a grand, modern staircase. Dreamed up by Miami-reared siblings Alexis and Britt Soler—Britt got her start slinging drinks at Alexis's first Nashville bar, No. 308—the menu highlights playfully named cocktails that incorporate straight-from-the-kitchen-pantry ingredients. Sip on the Beet Happening or the Garden Hoe (Fords gin, arugula, pineapple, yellow Chartreuse, falernum) while finding fortification in smoked baby potatoes cloaked in paprika butter. ■



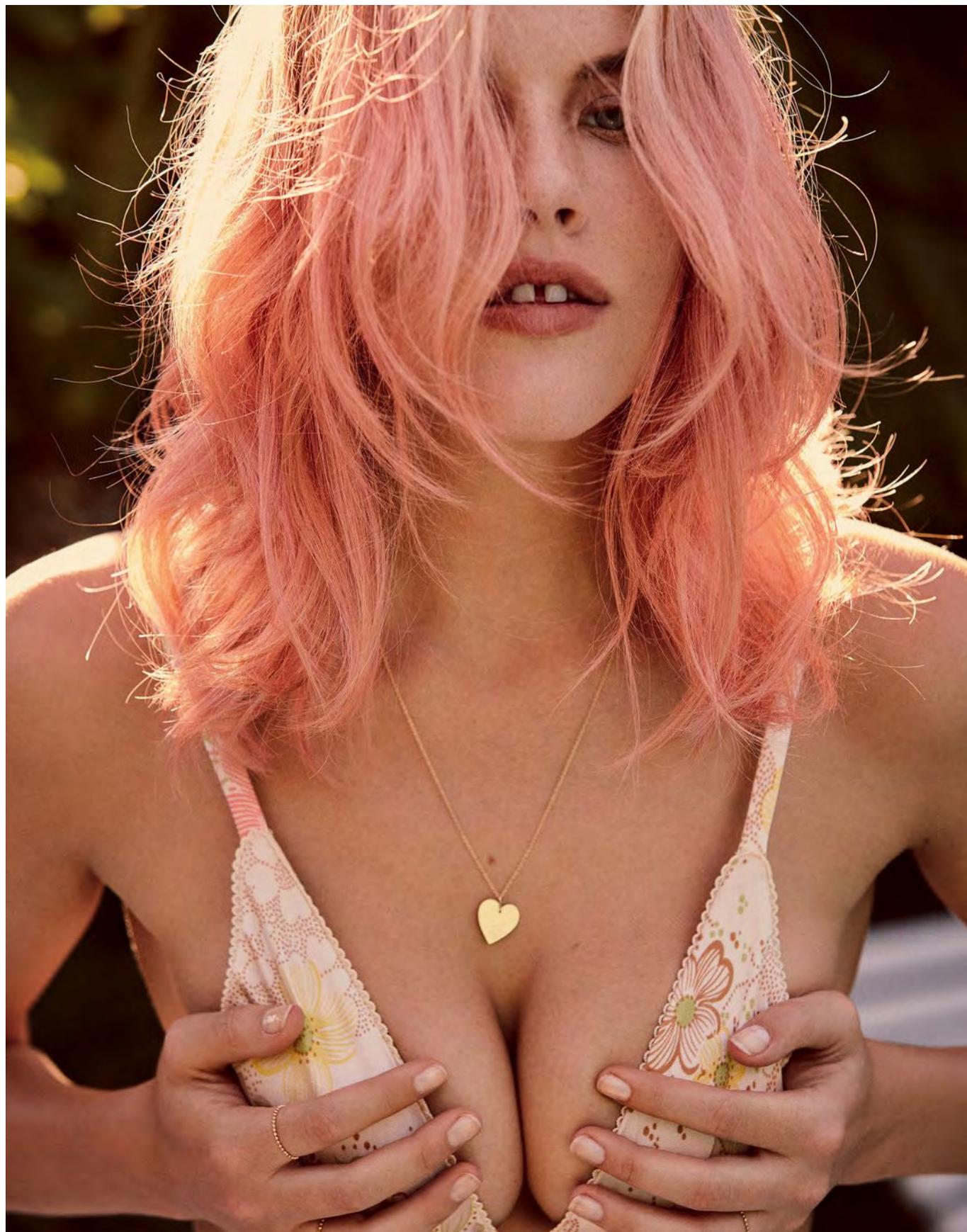
PLAYMATE

A large, elegant, handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ashley Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZOEY GROSSMAN

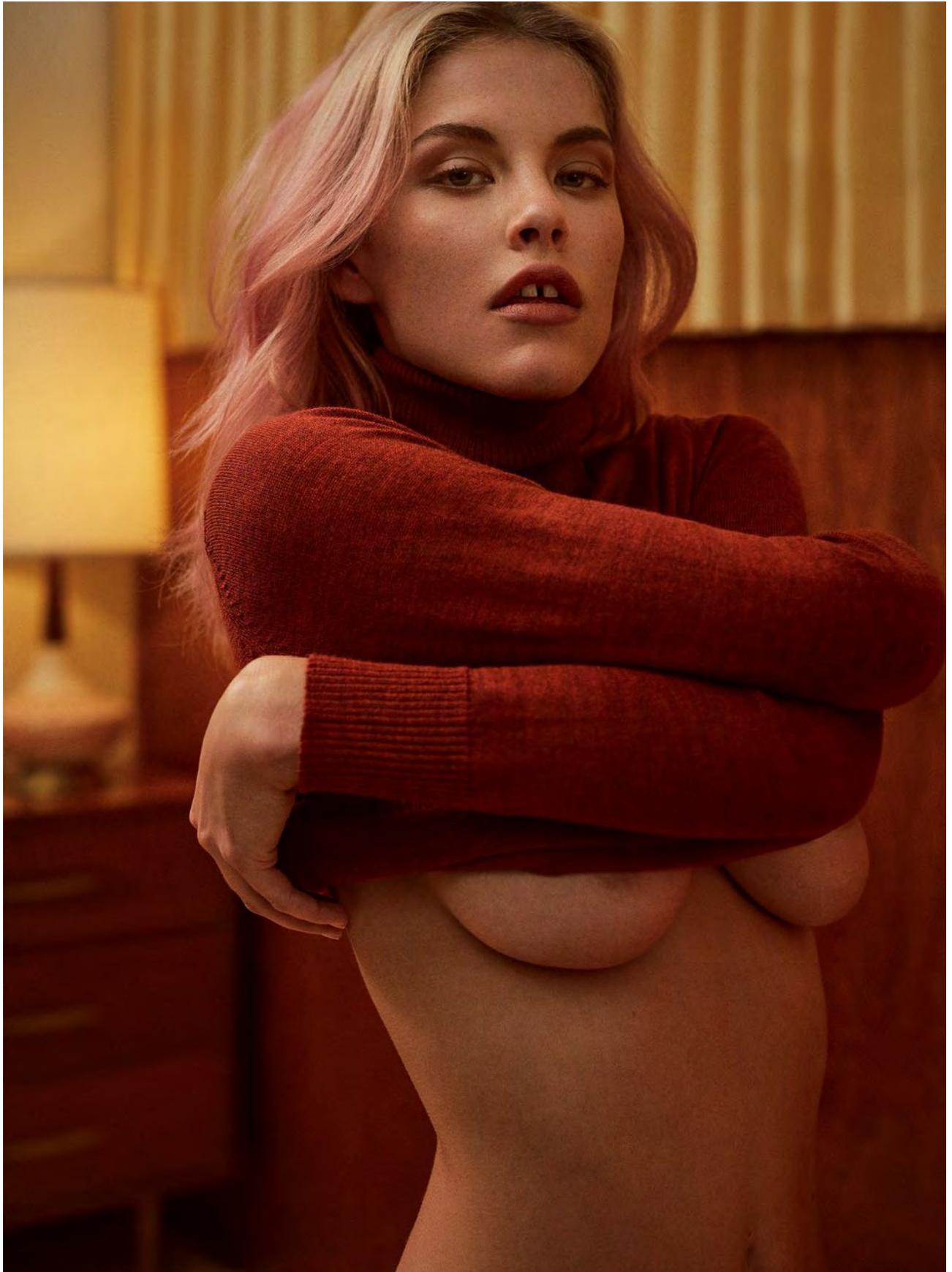
“I’ve started deejaying in some clubs in New York,” Miss November **Ashley Smith** says to a reporter as she wraps up an interview. “Can you include that?” When talking to Ashley, who was raised in Austin, Texas but moved to the Big Apple to pursue bigger dreams, you’ll learn that she’s not an easy read—and that’s a beautiful thing. She’s made a name for herself as a magazine cover girl (including this very issue) but also wants to study marine biology. She can speak a bit of French but enjoys mindless TV like *Adventure Time*. She can turn heads in a bar as the girl dancing like nobody’s watching, but she hates to stand in line, so you won’t see her out on weekends. Altogether, Ashley takes pride in being a woman who opens herself up to the world around her. “We have only one life, and I would rather live adventurously and test my boundaries than be shy. That’s boring. I want to meet new people, do new things and live a full life. Being afraid is not going to get me that,” she says. “You have to show the world why you’re special.”





















ASHLEY SMITH



AGE: 25 **BIRTHPLACE:** Longview, Texas **CURRENT CITY:** New York

TEXAS GIRL

I'm from the middle of nowhere in east Texas, and I moved to Austin when I was a teenager. My most Texas trait would probably be that I like to get buck wild sometimes. I like going to places where I can spread my wings and not worry about how I'm being perceived. I'm definitely more of a dive-bar girl, and I don't even go out on Friday or Saturday nights because I need space to dance. Another Texas trait of mine is my drink of choice: whiskey on the rocks.

TIME FOR A STUDY BREAK

Three days after graduating from high school I was on a plane to New York City to begin working. I never went to college, and that's

a bummer because I liked being in school and learning in a classroom. Everyone wants to feel that what they do makes the world a better place. Part of me wants to be an astronaut; other parts want to study marine biology or nutrition. I don't know where I want to take my world, but I definitely want to explore other interests.

GEEK ALERT

I'm a dork. I dabble in comic books, and cartoons are my guilty pleasure. I'm obsessed with *Adventure Time*, *Rick and Morty* and *Archer*. If I were ever to act in a movie, I would want to play a badass bitch like a Power Ranger, Catwoman or Supergirl.

MY CELEBRITY CRUSH

I like Joseph Gordon-Levitt's smile, partly because we have the same one. When we smile, our eyes get small. He also created hitRECORD and seems like he has his hands in a lot of different projects. Ingenuity is attractive.

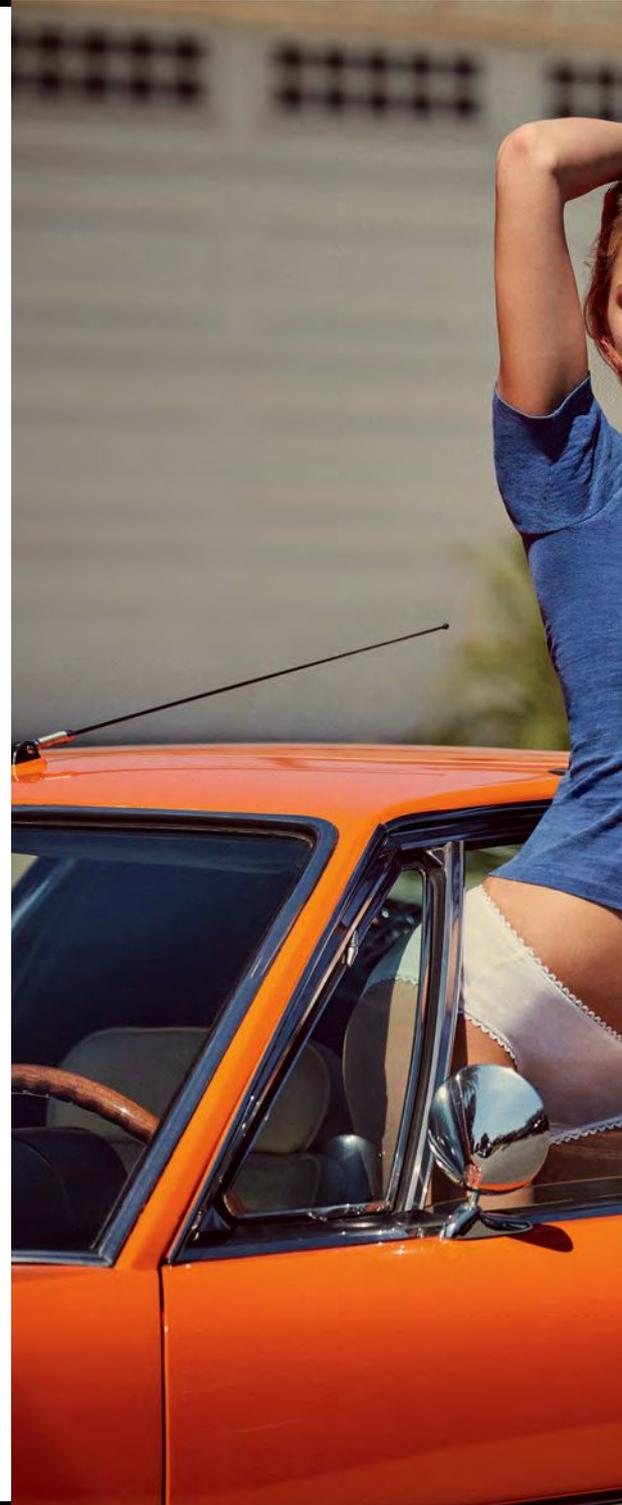
WHAT I'M LISTENING TO

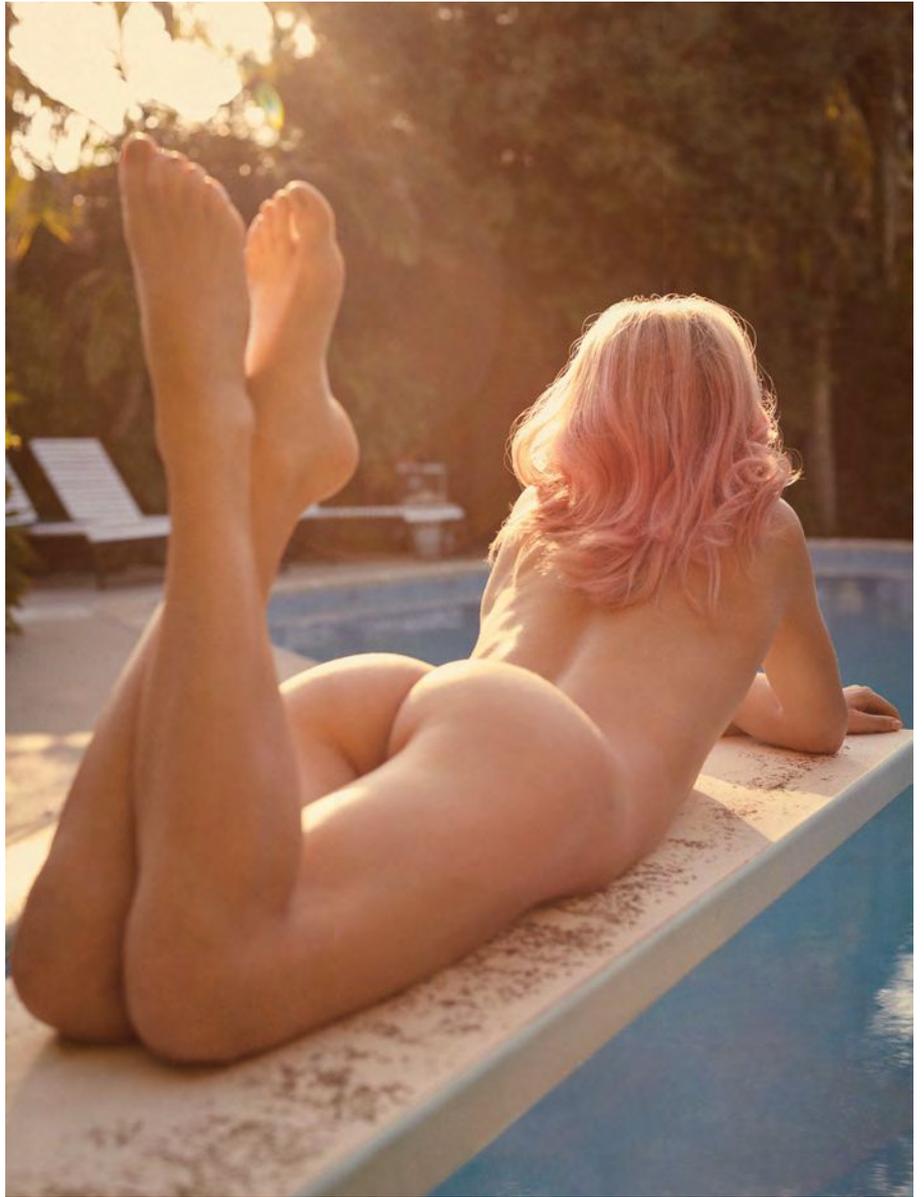
I listen to a lot of indie music. Three songs I like right now are "This Is the Day" by The The, "Keep Pushing On" by John Maus and "Gallop" by Jeremy Jay.

MY FEEL-GOOD MEAL

I love a foot-long tuna fish sandwich from Subway and a 3 Musketeers bar when I'm having a bad day.

@TheRealAshSmith @TheRealAshSmith





A close-up, low-angle portrait of a man with a dark beard and mustache. He is wearing large, silver-rimmed sunglasses with reddish-brown lenses. His mouth is slightly open, revealing a gold grill with a dense pattern of diamonds. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

THE CROWN PRINCE OF HIP-HOP

Jas Prince is rap royalty, the mastermind behind the rise of Drake and—for now—the best-kept secret in hip-hop

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
**ANDREAS
LASZLO
KONRATH**



At the corner of Liberty Road and Staples Street, deep in Houston's Fifth Ward, Drake is not in the building but *on* it. It's an unusually cool late afternoon in spring—the temperature hasn't risen above the low 60s all day—and the artist, dressed in white sweats and a thick white hoodie from his OVO clothing line that's emblazoned with the word OCTOBER, is toting a tall white cup with unknown contents. He has just ascended onto the roof of Mo Mo's Chicken and Waffle, a tan-painted soul-food joint that has a garish purple sign out front bearing its name and all the charm of a suburban strip mall.

The Canadian actor, two-time *Saturday Night Live* host and multiplatinum-selling rapper, whose 2016 album *Views* has been streamed more than 1 billion times on Spotify, Apple Music and other services, is surrounded by an imposingly large crew that includes longtime friend and associate James "Jas" Prince and his father, James Prince—Fifth Ward native, owner of Mo Mo's and, more significantly, godfather of Southern hip-hop.

Paterfamilias James—known to most by his one-letter nickname, J.—and Jas are a foundational family in hip-hop. In the mid-1980s the elder Prince founded the influential Houston record label Rap-A-Lot, through which he released some of the darkest and most uncompromising hip-hop in the music's history, including the Geto Boys' "Mind Playing Tricks on Me," ranked by *Rolling Stone* as the fifth-greatest hip-hop song of all time. Twenty-plus years later, son Jas drove the trajectory of Drake's career from aspiring Canadian rapper struggling to be heard on social media to one of the most dominant artists of the streaming era.

"Houston is a very special place," Drake explains over text message. "You can find inspiration in a two- or three-day trip there. It became a big part of my life because it was essentially where I got signed. The Prince family are a staple in this city. I witnessed that and immediately wanted to have that same respect in Toronto that J. Prince has in his city, making positive changes and giving people music and moments that will last forever."

For a while, Drake—in town to celebrate Jas's upcoming 29th birthday—and the Prince clan seem content greeting and taking selfies with the approximately 5,000 fans who have shut down Liberty Road, amid the incessant shout-outs from the DJ ("Drake is in the building!").

But hours later, just as the sun begins to set, Drake picks up a microphone, strides somewhat perilously toward the edge of the roof and launches into a distinctly Houstonian spin on his "Hotline Bling." "Ever since you left the

Fifth Ward....," he croons, leaving the line dangling in the air. The revelers roar with delight; he's just replaced a portion of the lyric "Ever since I left the city/You got a reputation for yourself now" with a nod to their neighborhood. The shoulder-to-shoulder crowd lining Liberty Road chants along to this new, Texas version of the song. Later, the raucous birthday party will be covered by media ranging from the *Houston Chronicle* to TMZ (DRAKE SHUTS DOWN HOUSTON STREET; WE GOTTA PARTY!!!).

Just one day earlier, Drake played a party during the annual film, interactive media and music conference South by Southwest, but it's this Houston show at Mo Mo's that truly thrills. It's so far removed from the machinations of the music industry and so close to the heart of one of the most vital cities in hip-hop and R&B history, the breeding ground for everyone from Beyoncé to the late, iconic street rapper Pimp C, whom Drake samples on *Views*. And it's a moment—atop a chicken and waffle shop in a low-income, majority African American neighborhood in the South, with an artist who is not just the biggest star in hip-hop but one of only two men (Michael Jackson being the other) to concurrently hold the *Billboard* top spot for song and album for seven straight weeks—that demonstrates the extraordinary and enduring power of the Prince family brand.

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The story of the Prince empire's acquisition of Aubrey "Drake" Graham begins in 2007 in a place as unlikely as Mo Mo's: Myspace. It was on the social media network, on a visually cluttered and sophomoric page—myspace.com/thisdrake—that the former *Degrassi: The Next Generation* child star and aspiring Toronto rapper posted several songs, including the light, finger-snap-driven rhythmic hip-hop of "Replacement Girl," along with an extremely clunky bio proclaiming "collective attendance of over 20,000 fans for mall tours."

Fortunately for Drake, more than 1,000 miles south in Houston, Jas Prince was in a similarly amateurish place. He'd graduated from Houston's private Alexander-Smith Academy, where he'd excelled at soccer, track, football and baseball, and had spent his summers working a series of jobs at Rap-A-Lot that included sweeping floors, sorting mail and handing out flyers for the label's street team. But he earned the disapproval of his extremely entrepreneurial father by spending his post-high-school years merely hanging out—and not forging business deals—with longtime family friends from Cash Money Records, including Lil Wayne. "Don't just be kicking around Wayne and not getting any

business done," James scolded Jas back then. "Go to him. Let him know you have \$1 million of your own money to start a label."

The offer of a seven-figure investment was a moment of profound good fortune that typically shines only on children of the one percent like Jas. But he wasn't interested in his father's deal. Instead, he sought to convince Wayne that the pair should manage this artist Jas had heard on Myspace. However, after hearing Drake, the rapper's response was bluntly dismissive: "It sucks," Jas remembers Wayne saying. "Don't ever play this shit for me again." James Prince had a similar reaction. "He played Drake for me," James recalls, "and I was like, 'Jas, you like *this*?' I wasn't feeling it. But Jas said, 'Dad, this is the new sound. Trust me on this.'" James pressed his son, querying him about the new sound's hometown. "Toronto," Jas replied. James was stunned; it was as if Jas wanted to sign a rapper from another—and very much whiter—planet. "Canada?" James asked skeptically. "But then he said a key word to me," James continues. "He's *buzzing* in Canada.' My ears stuck up like a German shepherd's."

Encouraged by his father's interest—however slight—Jas concocted a plan to win Wayne over. "I sent Drake tracks he wasn't supposed to have," he says, "like hot Wayne songs. And I was like, 'Rap over them.'" Drake acquiesced and quickly sent the finished product back to Jas. Armed with a demo that included Drake rhyming over much more potent tracks than his mostly weightless work on Myspace, Jas slid the CD into the car stereo as he and Wayne drove to their favorite jeweler, Exotic Diamonds, on Westheimer Road in the ritzy Galleria area. "I'm looking at him and I see him bobbing his head," Jas says. "I'm like, Okay, cool. I turn it up. We're jamming. I play the next song. He turns it down. 'Who is this?' 'That's the nigga Drake you told me sucked.' I play the next song, 'Brand New,' one that Drake is singing on. And Wayne's like, 'Who's this?'"

"Oh, that's Drake. He sings and he acts."

"Where is Drake?"

"In Toronto."

"Can we get him here?"

"Let me call him."

Jas dialed Drake, who was sitting in a barber's chair in Toronto, unaware that Jas was sitting with one of the greatest rappers in the history of hip-hop. "Let me call you back," Drake said dismissively. "Hold up one second," Jas interrupted, handing the phone to Wayne.

"Wayne got on the phone like, 'What's up?'" Jas recalls. "Drake's like, 'Who's this?' 'It's Weezy.'" There was stunned silence on the other end of the line as Wayne handed the phone back to Jas. With Lil Wayne finally



feeling Drake, Jas urged the artist to take the earliest flight out of Toronto to Houston.

The next day was Wayne and Jas's first face-to-face meeting with Drake. Up until that point he and Jas had been communicating only via technology. "I brought him on the bus to meet Wayne, and it was awkward," Jas says. "Wayne wasn't saying nothing to him." Wayne suggested they all ride in his tour bus from Houston to Atlanta, but even the nearly 800-mile road trip didn't bring Wayne and Drake any closer together. Back then, Wayne kept stacks of clothing in the bunks that were meant for sleeping, forcing all onboard to squeeze uncomfortably into the seats up front. And those seats were populated by emerging artists from Wayne's Young Money Entertainment—which would later sign and then break Nicki Minaj—who viewed the newbie Drake with deep suspicion.

But then Wayne, Drake and Jas hit the recording studio in Atlanta, and the awkwardness of the bus ride gave way to profound chemistry. There, Wayne and Drake recorded "Stunt Hard" and, most magnificently, "Forever," which in 2008 would be transformed into a stellar posse cut featuring Wayne and hip-hop heavyweights Eminem and Kanye West. "Forever" employs a reliable template: flipping stellar beats made for others into a brand-new context. (The song's beat had been used by Canadian rapper Kardinal Offishall as well as by Drake's camp.) "Three weeks after that, the songs leaked," Jas says. "It was like, 'Who is this kid rapping with Wayne, basically killing it?'"

In the space of months, Drake went from Myspace obscurity to the most buzzed-about rapper in hip-hop, one who could hold his own on a posse track with Kanye and Eminem. That his streak of success continues nearly one decade later—in June, *Views* held the number one spot on the *Billboard* album chart for five weeks straight, the longest run since Adele's *25* in 2015—makes his origin story all the more remarkable.

Drake's post-Atlanta sessions were cemented by a series of lucrative deals that Jas and the Cash Money crew struck for him. In December 2008, Drake signed an exclusive recording-artist agreement with Aspire Music Group, which was run by Lil Wayne's longtime manager, Cortez Bryant. In June 2009, Aspire entered into a deal to furnish "the exclusive recording services of Drake" to Wayne's Young

Money Entertainment/Cash Money Records. The following month, an arrangement was drawn up whereby Jas and a company he'd created just to manage Drake, Young Empire Music Group, would receive 22 percent of Aspire's one-third share of profit advances, net profits and other advances from Drake's Young Money/Cash Money deal. The same month,

AFTER HEARING DRAKE, LIL WAYNE SAID, "DON'T EVER PLAY THIS SHIT FOR ME AGAIN."

Drake received a \$2 million advance from Young Money, Cash Money and Aspire.

More than seven years later, however, the fruits of that flurry of deal-making are very much in dispute. Jas claims that Cash Money has not paid out more than \$5 million in Drake profits, a claim Cash Money vigorously denies, according to court documents. After a series of angry exchanges between the Prince and Cash Money camps—including an April 22, 2014 e-mail from James obtained by *PLAYBOY* that reads, "I was born at night but not last night what's up with the money homie"—Jas and Young Empire sued Cash Money in federal court in Florida. Attorneys for Cash Money later filed a motion to dismiss the August 2014 lawsuit; the motion was granted by a federal judge in May 2015. (Jas says he refiled the lawsuit in a different venue, in New York, in late 2015 and that the case is still pending.)

The behind-the-scenes legal wrangling between Jas and Cash Money cannot tarnish Drake's triumph, nor can it break the bonds among Jas, Drake and the city that gave us the Prince hip-hop dynasty. Drake now stages an annual Houston Appreciation Weekend every Memorial Day, and in May, he skipped the *Billboard* Music Awards to play golf with Jas in Las Vegas. And Drake's nearly unprecedented success is just the latest chapter in the decades-long Prince family history.

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Hip-hop has long been known as much for its impresarios as for its rappers—Sean "Puffy" Combs and Bad Boy, Bryan "Birdman" Williams and Cash Money, Dr. Dre and his Beats



empire—and the Princes are firmly in this tradition of self-made men. But James and Jas are at once far less known than hip-hop's entrepreneurial icons and more quietly influential.

James founded Rap-A-Lot in the Fifth Ward in 1986, primarily as a means to get his brother Thelton Polk, who rhymed under the name Sir Rap-A-Lot, off the streets. "You rap," James remembers telling his brother, "I'm gonna support you."

Back then, hip-hop was confined to the coasts. "James Prince was one of the first empire builders in an area not called Los Angeles or New York City," says Jeff Chang, author of *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*. Even in major cities and among its biggest stars, hip-hop was just barely becoming a commercial enterprise. In 1986, Run-DMC released its third album, *Raising Hell*, which crashed the top 10 on *Billboard's* albums chart primarily because of its Aerosmith collaboration, "Walk This Way." An independent rapper like Sir Rap-A-Lot, in a city with no hip-hop history to speak of, couldn't survive without the financial backing of his brother James, who ran a bevy of small businesses in Houston, including a used-car lot in the northwest part of the city.

The establishment of Rap-A-Lot was a hip-hop business proposition decades ahead of its time. Its founding came long before the Atlanta-driven Dirty South movement took off and nearly a decade before one of that region's early pivotal moments: Outkast being named best new rap group at the Source Hip-Hop Music Awards in 1995. "The South got something to say!" proclaimed the group's André 3000 prophetically as he was nearly drowned out by jeers from the crowd at Madison Square Garden's Paramount Theater. More than 20 years later, the South, particularly Atlanta, isn't just a dominant force in hip-hop; it is the music's center. Now, nearly every rapper of any import—Young Thug, Migos, Future—has deeply planted Southern roots.

The rise of Rap-A-Lot in the mid- to late 1980s and into the early 1990s proved that the South did indeed have something to say from the music's inception, despite bias from the coastal elites. "They felt like we was country," James says. "They made fun of our accents, but we spoke the language of the ghetto."

James doesn't mean "ghetto" in the narrow neighborhood sense but as a signifier for poor, struggling people everywhere. And Rap-A-Lot act the Geto Boys—which at first featured James's brother Sir Rap-A-Lot, who later left the group—reflected that wide-ranging sensibility, rejecting the well-trodden world of gangster rap.

The Geto Boys released protest songs (1991's

"Fuck a War" is an anthem against the first Iraq war in which the group proclaims, "I ain't goin' to war for a shit talkin' president"), songs about duplicitous street guys (1988's "Snitches" foreshadows hip-hop's embrace of "Stop Snitching" in the mid-2000s) and songs about suicide, depression, loneliness and paranoia, such as 1991's "Mind Playing Tricks on Me," which is not only one of hip-hop's darkest and most introspective songs but also one of its best. "James Prince was bold," says *Can't Stop* author Chang. "He went against all the norms. Because you know that sex sells, but does horror sell? Does mental illness sell?"

Indeed, Rap-A-Lot pushed hip-hop's sonic and lyrical possibilities at a time when the music was truly antiestablishment. In 1989 the FBI sent an angry letter to N.W.A's distributor, Priority Records, about the group's anthem "Fuck Tha Police" that scolded them for "advocating violence and assault" against law enforcement.

By the early 1990s the environment was so challenging for acts like N.W.A and the Geto Boys that when hip-hop maestro Rick Rubin released remixed and repackaged Geto Boys material on his Def American label in 1990, it came with a warning sticker affixed to the CD: "Def American Recordings is opposed to censorship. Our manufacturer and distributor, however, do not condone or endorse the content of this recording, which they find violent, sexist, racist and indecent."

Having its artists saddled with "explicit lyrics" stickers in the early 1990s would seem like a frictionless run-in with power compared with Rap-A-Lot's turbulent end of the decade. In the late 1990s the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Houston Police Department targeted James and Rap-A-Lot in a wide-ranging drug-trafficking investigation. "He [Prince] and his associates were believed to be large-scale drug dealers," then Indiana representative Dan Burton later said in a congressional hearing. Years earlier, a car with dealer license plates allegedly from a Houston used-car lot owned by James had been stopped near El Paso with 76 kilos of cocaine stuffed in a hidden compartment. The investigation netted more than 20 convictions, yet James was never arrested, charged or indicted. He claimed the case was nothing more than part of a pattern of years-long harassment by law enforcement.

Long-serving African American congresswoman Maxine Waters wrote the Department of Justice about the investigation: "Simply put, Mr. Prince believes strongly that the Department of Justice must intercede into the questionable practices of the DEA and provide him with the necessary protection to ensure that





his life and livelihood are not subject to ongoing harassment and intimidation.”

Waters’s support of James stoked a wave of resentment within the DEA ranks. In the early 2000s, a DEA agent on the Rap-A-Lot case claimed the probe had been shut down and he was demoted after James allegedly donated \$200,000 to then vice president Al Gore’s presidential campaign. James’s camp called the allegation “absurd,” and despite congressional hearings on the thwarted investigation, no records ever emerged of contributions from James or Rap-A-Lot to the Gore campaign or the Democratic National Committee.

“Can’t be stopped, not even by a badge,” Geto Boys’ Scarface boasted in a song after the investigation had been quashed, infuriating the feds and engendering headlines such as RAP ARTIST TAUNTS DEA AND TWO AGENTS BY NAME. “Ain’t enough bullshit in the United States to come stop this Rap-A-Lot Mafia shit.”

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It’s a late morning in mid-March 2016, more than 15 years after the death of the Rap-A-Lot DEA investigation, and James is eased back comfortably in a leather chair on the stage in a fourth-floor ballroom inside the Austin Convention Center. He is about to deliver a keynote address at South by Southwest, a highly prestigious festival slot that this year was also occupied by Tony Visconti, longtime producer for David Bowie and, incredibly, FLOTUS herself, Michelle Obama.

“Rap-A-Lot Records and South by Southwest are both celebrating their 30th year,” Melissa O’Brien, the festival’s music conference panels chief tells me. “We chose James as one of our keynotes because of his longevity in the music business and his stature as the godfather of Southern hip-hop.”

Though small in stature—just over five-foot-six—with his wide build, ruddy cheeks and beard, James has the look of a bear you’d never want to encounter in the woods. But there’s also something relaxed and retiree-like about this hip-hop elder statesman: Today he sports a white dress shirt with blue paisley designs on its bulky cuffs, loose-fitting jeans and plain white tennis shoes.

In a slow, laconic Southern drawl that nonetheless carries with it the authority of a true boss, James addresses the packed ballroom of lanyard-sporting hip-hop heads, an ethnically and geographically diverse group that includes everyone from Houston rappers to Japanese

hip-hop obsessives. He recounts the days when the full weight of the DEA was bearing down on him. “I was under attack by the feds,” he says. “These guys put a full-blown attack on our hip-hop movement because we were making so much money. They felt something was crooked about our money.” He cocks an eyebrow knowingly. “They thought I was one-dimensional, so I diversified my portfolio.” The federal scrutiny, he says, simply served as inspiration for his next move: as manager of boxing greats including Andre Ward and Floyd Mayweather Jr. “My first love was boxing,” James says. “Music turned out to be a good distraction.”

Later that afternoon, James and I meet in the lobby of his hotel in downtown Austin. After briefly introducing me to Jas, who hovers nearby, James explains that he’s worried about cooperating with me on this story. “I hear you’re

“THESE N**S AWAKENED A SLEEPING GIANT,” JAMES PRINCE WARNED. “DO RIGHT BY ME AND PAY EVERY PENNY DUE.”**

the man with the stories,” he says. I thank him for what sounds like a compliment, but then he suddenly leans toward me, turning unexpectedly serious. “That you like to *dig*.” Before I can reply, he apologizes and says he has to catch a private jet to California—one of his boxers, Ward, has a fight next weekend in Oakland. “We’ll talk,” James says, walking out through the hotel’s revolving door and disappearing into a black car. A few hours later a photo appears on Jas’s Instagram account of him and his dad with a couple of friends posing in front of a private jet, bearing the caption “Family!” It’s an appropriate message; I soon realize the moment is less about James shirking an interview than it is about him passing his hip-hop mantle to his son.

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A month later I’m back in Houston, this time to meet with Jas, not James, at the Rap-A-Lot

offices in the northwest section of the city, in a midcentury concrete structure with a pane of one-way glass that stretches its entire length—a near-perfect representation of the secretive, unflashy nature of the Prince family business.

As I pull up the driveway to the garage, a steel gate slowly slides open to reveal Jas, in tan Yeezys, skinny black jeans and a green T-shirt, and the Prince family’s representative, Vivian Gomez. Like his father, Jas is small and sports a close beard, but he has softer features and Drake’s fashion-conscious style, and he offers a gentle, compassionate handshake. Before we head upstairs he shows off his father’s car collection, which includes a Bentley Azure, a silver Lamborghini Diablo and a 1938 Packard. It’s a sprawling set of prized autos that, like the Prince family itself, encompasses decades of history.

Upstairs, the hallways of Rap-A-Lot offer a crash course in the rise of Houston hip-hop: Gold and platinum albums from label stars including the Geto Boys and Scarface hang on the walls. The Geto Boys’ 1991 platinum album, *We Can’t Be Stopped*, features a photo of member Bushwick Bill strapped to a hospital gurney after supposedly being shot by his girlfriend during an Everclear-soaked domestic-violence incident. In comparison, James Prince’s always-on-the-edge empire couldn’t be further from the sensitive pop leanings of Drake.

A framed 2006 *Source* magazine cover featuring James, Bun B and other Houston greats proclaims, DON’T MESS WITH TEXAS: WHY HOUSTON’S REIGN WON’T STOP. The image captures a mid-2000s moment, when the city ruled supreme in the hip-hop world thanks to such hits as Houston-based Mike Jones’s “Still Tippin’.” A distribution deal with Warner Bros. brought Houston hip-hop to the mainstream, a pact that James Prince forged. “My dad did the deal with Warner Bros.,” Jas says. “That was his deal. Nobody really knows that. It was his movement. He put it together.” On James’s desk sits a wood-carved nameplate given to him by an imprisoned fan. Indeed, James’s name rings so strongly in the federal and state prison system that he regularly receives “hobbycraft”—homemade gifts—from inmates around the country.

In a business known for rough players like Suge Knight, it is a reputation that is singularly intimidating. For years James has been linked to Larry Hoover, alleged leader of the sprawling Chicago-born street gang the Gangster Disciples,



Left: Drake, James Prince and Jas Prince in Washington, D.C. **Right:** Jas, an expert equestrian, rides his horse at the Prince family ranch in Waller County, Texas.

which according to the Department of Justice is currently active in some 24 states. James has denied all accusations of criminality and has often taken to court anyone who has linked him to Hoover. In 2007, according to court documents, he sued BET, Apple and Viacom for defamation over the network's *American Gangster* documentary series, an episode of which pictured him and Hoover together.

But the specter of the Gangster Disciples looms large—in both the streets and in the hip-hop community—over anyone who might cross James. When federal prosecutors in Georgia indicted dozens of Gangster Disciples on charges ranging from drug trafficking to murder earlier this year, they alleged that the gang had threatened a rapper they would identify only as R.R. “with physical harm unless rapper R.R. paid the Gangster Disciples for the use of the gang’s name and symbols.” R.R. is widely believed to be multiplatinum rapper Rick Ross; in 2012 members of the gang threatened him in a video posted online—and later picked up by TMZ—for using its name and appropriating its imagery.

Such suspected gang ties are all the more frightening because of the very real acts of violence that have reportedly been linked to James, including a 2003 incident in which he was accused of sending associates to the Top Rank Gym in Las Vegas to beat associates of former client Floyd Mayweather Jr. with baseball bats. The James-Mayweather beef was allegedly over an unpaid debt, and in 2015 a similar skirmish broke out between James and Cash Money. In

the midst of son Jas’s battle with Cash Money over Drake profits, James released a “courtesy call,” posted on TMZ, warning, “These niggas awakened a sleeping giant.... I will not allow it to stay on my track record that Cash Money took anything from me and my son. Do right by me and pay every penny due.”

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With the Rap-A-Lot office tour concluded, Jas and I head to the heart of the Fifth Ward, his ancestral home and the site of Drake’s recent rooftop show. Here I see the flip side of the gangster mythology: the love of home and the bonds between family, both blood and neighbor, and the importance of home turf. “I love Houston,” Jas says as he navigates the traffic on I-610 in his Mercedes G-Class SUV. “I did a lot of fishing, riding horses growing up. This is Texas; there’s horses everywhere.” He points to smaller side roads beside 610. “Ride horses all through here,” he says.

After switching to I-69, we exit the freeway and, just a few feet from the off-ramp in the Fifth Ward, stop at the corner of Lyons Avenue and Schwartz Street. There’s a tiled mural, the first panel of which reads WELCOME TO FIFTH WARD, EST. 1865. Below this welcome is the inscription, from Matthew 7:16, “By their fruit you will recognize them.”

Created in 2006, the mural—*Fruits of the Fifth Ward*—recognizes the many greats produced by the neighborhood, including bluesman Lightnin’ Hopkins; boxing titan George Foreman; congresswoman Barbara Jordan, the

first African American woman to deliver a keynote at the Democratic National Convention; and on the fourth and last panel, James Prince. Directly beneath James, rendered by the artist with a knowing smile, is another verse from the Gospel of Matthew, this time 7:18: “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.”

When we drive to the heart of the Fifth Ward—which is dominated by blocks of dilapidated 1970s-style ranch residences and 1930s shotgun homes—it’s clear that James has taken such biblical guidance to heart. In the 3000 block of Jensen Drive he opened a sprawling community center that’s available to neighborhoods kids at no cost, every day, from eight a.m. to nine p.m., featuring a basketball court, a study room and several band rooms replete with brass instruments.

Inside one of the band rooms, Jas picks up a pair of drumsticks and taps distractedly on a long row of snares as he dials up one of his new artists, Tone Stith, whom Jas describes as “equal parts Prince, Michael Jackson and Quincy Jones.” Jas was introduced to the 21-year-old artist thanks to longtime friend Justin Bieber, who was so impressed with Stith’s covers of his work that he implored Jas to listen to them. Since connecting with Jas in 2013, Stith has written and produced two songs, “Liquor” and “Make Love,” for Chris Brown’s 2015 album, *Royalty*. When Stith picks up the call, I can hear him shouting with glee at the FaceTime guided tour of the band room—Jas later tells me Stith’s a huge band head—shouting, “*Drumline*



Jas Prince in front of a wall of gold and platinum records amassed by Drake, Jas's greatest discovery yet.

is coming!” We head to the corner of Liberty and Staples, where Drake has just held court, and Jas points out a building where, he says, his father has built a “ghetto Fifth Ward penthouse with two condos.” James is attached to this Fifth Ward intersection because he was raised right around the corner, on nearby Ranch Street. Jas’s grandmother also grew up on Ranch.

As we drive back toward Interstate 610, I ask Jas if the Fifth Ward has ever undergone the sort of transformation seen in majority-black neighborhoods in Chicago and New Orleans, where city government demolished the projects and replaced them with mixed-income housing, changing the face of these areas forever. “Nah, we still have our projects,” Jas says with a laugh. “One thing about Fifth Ward, they ain’t came and touch anything.” He pauses and smiles. “Before they touch it,” he says, “my dad will buy it.”

• • •

James Prince owns Fifth Ward real estate, washaterias, a waffle house, a condom company, a record label and a boxing-management company. But the jewel of the Prince empire is Prince Estates, a sprawling ranch in rural East Texas about a one-hour drive from Mo Mo’s. It’s a rolling pastoral property comprising lakes,

horse stables and horse trails, along with 120 Black Angus cows that mill about the property, all managed by an affable rancher in the Prince family’s employ named Ben Dyer.

When I meet Jas on the ranch on a blazingly hot Sunday afternoon, he is already astride

“THEY AIN’T CAME AND TOUCH ANYTHING,” SAYS JAS OF THE FIFTH WARD. “BEFORE THEY TOUCH IT MY DAD WILL BUY IT.”

a sleek, beautiful brown horse with a blonde mane and is dressed in a blue T-shirt and faded jeans that are tucked into his cowboy boots. He gallops around the ranch with the authority and ease of a true equestrian, swatting the horse with a switch in his left hand on the few occasions it disobeys his orders.

Returning to the stable where I’m waiting, Jas urges me to mount up as well. We ride several miles deep into the property, to a wooden cabin that was once owned by country music star Clint Black. Inside, we take refuge in the air-conditioning as Dyer and the ranch hands

tend to the horses’ needs. Jas tells me Prince Estates is such a profound refuge for him that he’ll often come out here, ride one of his horses into the farthest reaches and take a nap under one of the many live oaks.

It’s here that Jas reflects on the father-son empire. Sometimes, he confesses, he’ll wonder of his dad, What did he do back in the day to gain the respect he has? Jas wanders over to an antique phonograph in the living room and drops the needle. As 19th century waltz music plays, the crackle and pop of old vinyl augmenting the eeriness, he reflects on the Prince family empire and, as Houstonian Beyoncé recently put it, “Daddy Lessons.” “Drake at over 1 billion for just *Views*,” Jas says, beaming. “Even Drake is surprised. My dad, this is what he taught me.” He surveys Prince Estates, and his pride in the ranch visibly swells.

It’s hard not to be swept up in the moment. The 1,000-plus acres owned by the Princes sits in Hempstead, a small city in Waller County, Texas. This is the site of one of the most painful and poignant moments in the Black Lives Matter era, the July 2015 arrest during a violent traffic stop of motorist Sandra Bland, who then—allegedly—hanged herself in the county lockup. Waller County’s white supremacist history stretches centuries before Bland’s death: At least five lynchings occurred there between 1877 and 1950, and in 2008 the Department of Justice filed a complaint against the county over its voter registration practices that allegedly violated both the Voting Rights Act and the Civil

Rights Act of 1964. So the ownership of land in the deepest South by two black Princes, James and Jas, is a revolutionary act that harkens back to General Sherman’s Civil War order to redistribute land to black families (best known as “40 acres and a mule”), which was later overturned by President Andrew Johnson. But here is a spread the Prince family took, step by step, hustle by hustle, track by track, download by download. “Own it,” Jas says, stretching out on a couch in the cabin. “That’s what I learned from my dad. He’s big on owning. Not renting or leasing. No, own it.” ■



KASHA



Day Glow

*The ocher hues of a picturesque West Coast afternoon are a perfect complement to model **Jasmine Villanueva**'s natural radiance*

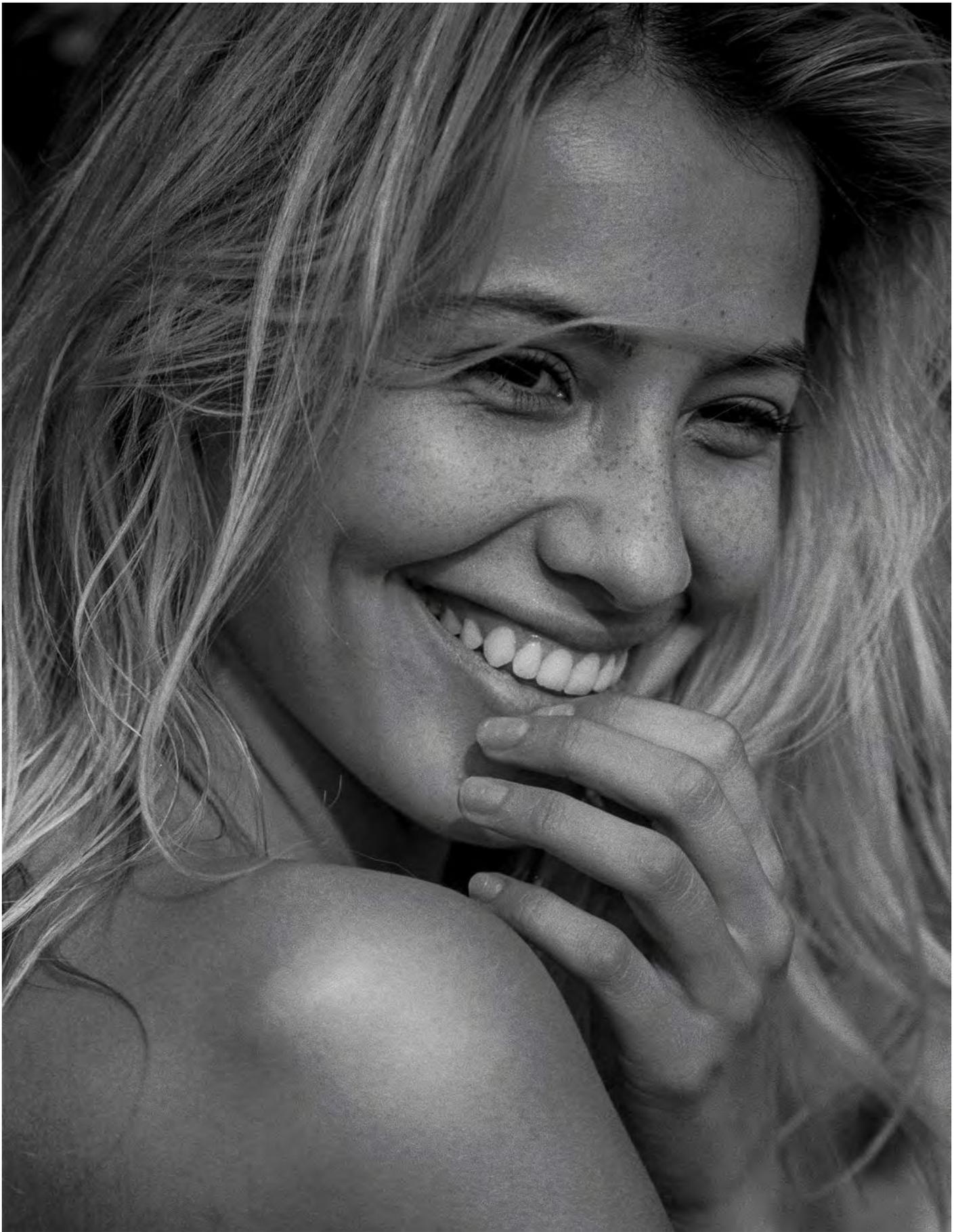
PHOTOGRAPHY BY

HENRIK PURIENNE











The Filmmaker

DECIDING TO FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS TAKES COURAGE;
FOLLOWING THROUGH TAKES MUCH MORE

TYPOGRAPHY BY BEATO



Funny thing, Kozak almost said no. A tribute band? Playing music from the Paleozoic—*his* Paleozoic? Run, said a voice, and no doubt had the invitation come from anyone but a client he would have refused. In the theater, however, standing in the lobby, Kozak realized he'd gotten something wrong. How else to explain his unsteady legs? Surging heartbeat? The fact that he was scared?

He remembered then younger days, when a rock concert was a kind of peak. Had about it an air of possibility, hazard, voluptuousness, more. Indeed, had oft catapulted Kozak into semi-mystic states, extended interludes wherein the presence of his fate—and Kozak's inborn prayer that it be special—was made to feel more vivid, near. Kozak, now sipping a beer, let himself recall: Dylan at Red Rocks, under a crescent moon. Springsteen, back in college, the night it snowed. That mad and magical Built to Spill show in 1994.

Then, just a short while later, not long after the house lights went dark, Kozak found himself experiencing something of the same.

First noted was a sudden distance, warm and guiltless, between himself and his usual concerns—money and work, wife and infant daughter, a chronic beating pressure at the crook of his jaw. Then an odd feeling of his body limbering and lightening, followed by a sensation of lifting up into the air, and a suprasensory ability to see. Suddenly Kozak could see—this audience around him: slow and doughy and overfed...just like him! And yet still so hungry. Yes? Wasn't that also somehow true? Kozak was certain, could see the crowd's collective appetite rising up like so much steam.

Peering sideways then, Kozak saw the larger world outside, saw it stretching east and west: the parking lot, Taco Heaven, houses, highway and also the people there dwelling: jackasses and geniuses, saints, psychos, mediocrities, and also all that passed between: the evil, goodness, idiocy, love... And Kozak thought, This world, what a thing of wonder, what a marvelous, beautiful, even divine thing, as long as one accepts a single

simple truth: It, *this*, our world, gives not the truest shit about people. No one. No one.

Then, pulling up higher and peering down, Kozak saw himself. Ahoy matey! There he was: a guy he himself might not even notice. When, he wondered, when exactly, had he gotten so small?

But wait—could it be he was not alone?

Yes, crowding about were Kozaks of days gone by. A veritable convention, down by his seat. Makes and models dating back to his 20s, though most pressed up to his current age—a gray hair under 43.

And all hunched over, murmuring, staring this way and that, each Kozak surprisingly distinct and unique. Yet in one way, he suspected, largely the same: that somewhere in their Kozakian hearts they felt unrequited. Unrequited *still*. Though for what—what feeling, sensation, experience—none would be able to quite say.

The concert went on, a soundtrack to Kozak's reckoning. And though at first he did a good job pretending to be one of the crowd—mouthing choruses, fist-bumping his client on cue—there came an instant when he knew he must stand apart. And so he bolted to the men's room, a locked stall, where he stood perfectly still, feeling surely any second he must cry. That he did not, could not, had seemingly lost the ability, did in no way, however, detract from the gravity of the moment. For it struck him just then that he must change.

How? Kozak discovered he already knew. First, he must stop pretending to be what he wasn't: a businessman. And then he must simply be: that which he first declared his ambition at the age of 13, studied at NYU, worked at for 15 years, before he blundered,

blew off course, ended up here. But not blundered! Because now he saw, saw at last with perfect clarity who and what he was, and now and forever what it is he must do.

By God, Kozak thought, a filmmaker—that's me.

•••

Changing your life, really doing it, is a bitch. And most who try fail.

Kozak, who'd long held this to be so, found himself rather rapidly considering why he himself, in this instance, would be no exception. That is, all the ways his own situation was, well, *tricky*. So swiftly in fact was this analysis

undertaken that even as Kozak unlocked the bathroom stall, found and thanked his client, made his way to his car—the basic outline for a case against trying was all but complete.

Starting with: Changing his life might be a really bad idea.

Kozak grasped this straightaway. That yes, sure, he'd come to the notion honestly, at the zenith of a profound and dramatic inner experience. But then, in response, mightn't he say, "So what?" That there comes a time in a person's life when profound and dramatic inner experiences kind of lose their cachet?

After all, this life he was suddenly so keen to recycle, wasn't it pretty much okay? And, more importantly, lest he lose sight, wasn't it—this life—that which he'd actively pursued? His point of departure being the very existence he was now, suddenly, determined to resume?

"More life" was how he'd phrased it back then—"More life actually *lived*." This a goal Kozak had come to over the course of several years. Informed on one hand by what felt like a wholly organic, gradual shift in his



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attitude and values, and on the other hand, a massive conspicuous fact. Namely, that his time in the independent film scene, 15 years of writing scripts and making low- or no-budget films while eking out a living with any industry-related freelance gig he could grab, had naturally run its course. That, odd victory notwithstanding—an early short that rode the festival circuit, a run of reality-show assistant director jobs—Kozak had failed in what he'd set out to do. Set out to *be*.

Also though, something else. A suspicion Kozak harbored at his very core: that perhaps his pursuit of filmmaking had been a mistake all along. That actually, in his heart of hearts, his true desire had never been to capture, critique or frame life on a screen, but instead simply, merely, *to play a part*. Family, community, steady work for steady pay—Kozak came to consider these anew. Concluding that their millennia-spanning prestige must undoubtedly be based in reason. And that the good life—if it was something he truly wanted—in this direction he must go.

And by and large Kozak had succeeded.

He had joined an online dating site and within six weeks met a woman he liked, respected and enjoyed going to bed with; and to his everlasting amazement felt the same about him. Penelope was her name, and she admired in particular how utterly precise Kozak was on the topic of his future. Which goes a long way to explain how after stiff initial resistance Kozak had been able to prevail upon her to uproot and move with him to the outer reaches of Dutchess County, thus enabling Kozak to capitalize on the best of the career opportunities he could drum up—a sales position with one of the country's most formidable wholesale gravel distribution firms.

They went all-in: rented an apartment, joined a food co-op, bought a house, befriended neighbors, sponsored a book group, planted a garden, had a child. While at the same time launching a conversation, which over the years had countless iterations yet whose essence remained the same: Regrets for city lives once led? Or past city selves, with all their concomitant highs and lows? Uh-uh—no regrets at all. Yet, however, make no mistake—what they had *now*, what they were presently building, was without doubt infinitely better. That is infinitely more satisfying and grown-up. Infinitely more *real*.

• • •

So then, perhaps unsurprisingly, following his epiphany at the tribute-band concert,

Kozak exercised caution. Willed himself in every waking hour to think through the pros and cons of blowing up the life at hand. To weigh the implications—ethical, practical, financial—from the perspective of all who would be impacted.

And actually, it felt to Kozak that this analysis went exceptionally well. With the effort alone lending a sense that he was near or at the top of the Ferris wheel he often considered his person to be. Instilling in Kozak a sense that whatever faculty he possessed for relating to another human being, to do so honestly and in good faith, at present that faculty was particularly adroit, particularly awake.

And really, it was from this place, on a Sunday night, in their yard, after Melody had finally fallen asleep, that Kozak shared with Penelope what by this time had occurred six days prior. "*Something else*," he explained, that happened at his recent client outing, "this kind of quasi-out-of-body, semi-magical thing, no, not thing, experience," and, as a consequence, what it is he now must do.

Penelope listened calmly, carefully, without revealing even a hint as to how she felt. After, though, she raised a cheek and looked up to the sky, as if something had dropped out of it and landed in her eye.

Then she stepped away, and walked a perfect circle along the perimeter of their small plot, pausing to stare into various plant beds. Kozak taking mental notes—the fitfulness to her movement, and also the way her shoulders lifted higher and higher with each inhalation, yet never seemed to settle down. Then, finally, how Penelope slowly ambled back, stared up into his eyes and whispered, "Out of the blue?"

Kozak winced.

"And the money," Penelope said, while jabbing her chin in the direction of a newly dangling rain gutter.

"Yes, I know," Kozak said. "Of course. Things could get...hard."

"Hard?" Penelope mouthed the word, then said she hoped he had something better than this to say.

Kozak thought he did. But, before getting to it, he ineptly swallowed his own saliva, causing him to cough then croak his words out in guttural jabs. "Hey, Pen, I know, I do, really—"

Kozak halted, closed his mouth, but not his effort to communicate. Indeed, tried even harder now—first with flailing arms and hands and pleading eyes, then bits of sentences too, about the deep, essential, *in-*

effable needs within himself he was trying to satisfy, and how he hoped, hoped against hope she could see things as he did, and please be onboard.

Afterward both stood stiff-necked and still. And around them all seemed quiet, despite the constant thrum of their subdivision, and also a faint staccato saw coming from a plastic monitor, made of airwave static and their baby daughter, snoring. Until Kozak said, "So...."

"So?"

"Maybe say something."

"Okay," Penelope replied, "give me a moment. And in the meantime—"

"Yes—"

"If you would—"

"Anything."

"Go and get me some cherries."

Kozak went, as such a request was not that unusual, was really no more than a vestige of Penelope's pregnancy, when he was perpetually on call. Still, though, Kozak did not like his wife's tone. Heard in it gathering will and justification. And while in the kitchen fulfilling the order—washing each cherry with soap and water and paper towel—

Kozak careened between steeling himself for going it alone, divorce if necessary, and unconditional capitulation.

Yet when he returned Penelope was altogether different. Was sitting on the grass, legs reaching and toes pointing, looking up at him with a grin.

"What gives?" said Kozak.

"I was just thinking to myself," said Penelope, "you and me, since we met—never a dull moment."

Kozak requested clarification.

"It's fine what you want to do," she said. "No, wait, I take that back. It is, I'm sure, the right thing."

Penelope then rushed on. Explaining that it was all about honesty. To wit, how could she try to stop her husband from doing something he had to do? Because honestly, how sad, especially for Melody, the day she discovered her father failed to follow his heart, and honestly, wasn't there something here for her too? Didn't it, if nothing else, put her in mind with her favorite thinker, the late Joseph Campbell, and his wonderful decree—that the best a person might do in this life was to really and truly know themselves and then venture forth into the world to follow their bliss?

Kozak took this in, astonished, dumb, terrified, but also feeling like a jerk for forgetting



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that Penelope contained such ideas—or never knowing, or perhaps some combination.

Tendering an open hand, Kozak helped Penelope back on her feet. The two of them now loose-limbed, tentative, pinching their lips, then slowly, playfully circling to the right. This until at almost the exact instant both shrugged and said, “Uh, now what?”

Kiss was the answer, eat more cherries, then grab a carton of white wine and come back outside. Each now causing the other delight, and also floating silent queries as to how much further they might like to take this evening, how much further they could. And each sending back the same response: without limit. And this really because each had now arrived at the same need: to test their togetherness. Push out against its most basic, most mysterious seams. Then, if it still held, try something more. That is, with equal parts love and rage and imagination, turn it into pleasure, and release.

...

The next day Kozak woke at dawn, ran two miles, then got to the office early to wait for Bob.

Bob, Bob, Bob—Kozak liked to say the name and liked the man himself. Held Bob to be no small part of his good luck these past years, insofar as Bob was not only a top-notch mentor—deftly guiding Kozak through the ins and outs of the international markets for sand- and stone-related products—but also something of a walking refutation to stereotypes to which Kozak himself had once subscribed. Bob, it turned out, knew film. Really knew it, as much as anyone Kozak had ever met, especially European film, in particular the French New Wave, Italian neorealism, the Berlin School.

This morning Kozak intercepted him by his office door, then, after sharing his news, complied with Bob’s request to step inside.

“Back to it?” Bob confirmed.

“Yes.”

“Hmph—I’m surprised.”

“I know,” said Kozak, “it’s...surprising.”

“Didn’t see it coming.”

“Neither did I.”

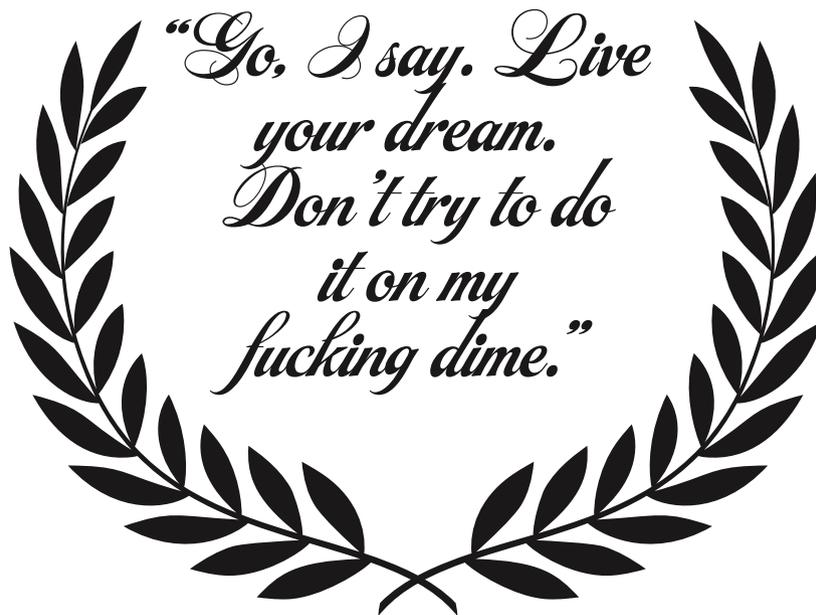
“The fire still burns then?” Bob challenged.

“Yes, absolutely,” Kozak assured.

“Well, guess that’s that.”

“Guess so.”

And really, mostly, that was it. Kozak out the door by noon, strolling the company parking lot, shot through with a euphoria that seemed somehow to have its own center of gravity, and will. Felt capable, too, of doing something crazy—like launching Kozak high up off the blacktop or causing him to speak in tongues. And as it were, Kozak let it ride. Stoked it even, reminiscent of how he might



have back in the days he was still regularly getting high.

Only today, now, the result in Kozak’s head a bouillabaisse of self-confidence, self-congratulation, goodwill toward everything, and also fantasies, including one he can’t help but let freely unspool: a rapt audience, Kozak at a lectern, a shiny object, and also a few things.... *If you’ll indulge me.... I’d really like to say.... First, people, it’s possible to be alive, fully alive! Truly, alive. And I recommend it. Because Beauty is real.... And Beauty can be ours.... But only if we fight.... Fight, fight, fight.... Especially as we get older.... People, I love you.... Love, love, love—*

With Kozak then slamming on the brakes,

halting not only this fantasy in progress but also declaring an indefinite moratorium on fantasies writ large. And, further, gripped suddenly by a web of related notions he’d long held about fantasy—in a nutshell, that the universe looks afoul at the activity, punishes those who overindulge—Kozak resolved on the spot that a kind of penance must be made. Something bold and specific, that at least in some way furthered the cause of his reborn career.

Hence Kozak’s next decision: to drive to the nearest Metro-North station, board the next city-bound train, then walk downtown for an impromptu meeting with his friend and ex-collaborator, Ivan.

Ivan glad he did, Kozak sure from the hint of a grin and also enthusiasm of Ivan’s “Hey” as his apartment door slowly came open. Still, though, after their greeting, Ivan did not budge from the vestibule.

“Busy?” said Kozak.

“Guess so.”

“Nice to hear,” said Kozak, scanning over Ivan’s shoulder, at his various workstations, including a tottering futon, upon which was a stack of postcards and posters. Materials, Kozak guessed, related to Ivan’s occasional occupation as a freelance publicist.

“So what’s good,” Kozak asked, “in this year’s Kazakhstan Film Festival?”

“I don’t know,” Ivan replied. “I lost that account.”

Kozak pointed to the futon.

“That’s for Turkmenistan.”

“Oh, so what’s good there?”

Ivan took several moments to ponder, then answered impassively. “Nothing. It’s all total shit.”

Kozak bobbed sympathetically, then got to the point: how, for the purpose of informing that he, Kozak, was really back and should from now on be officially considered an able and super-hungry member of Ivan’s professional network, only showing up in person would do. As after all, rigorous personal rapport—back in the day, wasn’t that what all their best creative experiences had at their core?

“Absolutely,” said Ivan.



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"Great, thank you," said Kozak, before conveying something else, the other reason he'd come all this way: footage from their last project, an uncompleted documentary. Did Ivan happen to have a copy on disc, that Kozak could take back with him upstate?

"No need," said Ivan, explaining that it was uploaded online, and that he'd e-mail Kozak the account information.

"Ah, of course, thank you," said Kozak, at the same time twisting toward the door. But Ivan bade him to wait, adding, "If you have a second I'll show you what I'm working on."

He then ushered Kozak in, all the way, to sit with him in front of a cul-de-sac of desk-top monitors and view sections of an industrial film he'd been hired to edit, and also a short experimental art film he was making by himself, on spec, "something, perhaps, for the art gallery scene."

And Kozak, for his part, jumped right in. Played the role he knew expected: that of colleague, offering fresh perspective and constructive criticism. Indeed, did so with relish, as this was a part of film-making Kozak had always enjoyed. Yet now it was a struggle. The effort coinciding with the oddest sensation in Kozak's torso—a kind of slow and achy petrification, as if his veins, even chest, were somehow filling up with bits of twigs and maple syrup.

Afterward, on the sidewalk, in a soft summer rain, Kozak took a few minutes to attend these ill feelings. Hunted down some antacid, did a few basic stretching exercises, with this regime quickly garnering results. Indeed, combined with the city itself, and the soft thrill he derived by merely again moving through it, Kozak felt his spirit stirring, stirring then rising gradually higher, as if in concert with the increasing numbered streets on his route to Grand Central. This right up to the very instant Kozak's phone lit up and rang out the theme song to *Mission: Impossible*, a ring tone he'd been meaning to change for close to three years.

It was Bob, and though at first their spotty

connection prevented Kozak from getting more than every third syllable, he quickly adduced what the call was about: money, in the form of sales commission, \$8,750 worth, owed to Kozak, which as a matter of standard company policy Kozak fully expected to collect.

Yet now Bob seemed to be informing otherwise. To be claiming the owner of the company was not inclined to pay.

"But it's a policy," said Kozak.

"Discretionary," Bob quipped. "A discretionary policy."

Kozak was now pressed up against a Starbucks window, straining for calm and trying to conjure, conjure with all his might, a

the call, but Bob didn't, instead said, "Hey, sorry about this...."

Kozak silent.

"And believe it or not, I'm still wishing you lots of luck...."

Kozak silent still.

"And something else too—updates. Keep 'em coming. About the film stuff."

"Uh...Bob," said Kozak. "*Really?*"

"Yes! Of course," said Bob, cheerily, then adding, "hey, don't misunderstand me! This call is not meant to punish. Go, I say. Live your dream. Please, I'm begging, try to make the next *Jules and Jim* or *Les Quatre Cents Coups* or *Ladri di Bicicletta*. All, really, this call means, is don't try to do it on my fucking dime."

It took upward of five minutes but Kozak laughed at this last remark. Then laughed at the entire call. Loudly. Even as the sharp points of what was said sank in.

And nor was laughter it seemed the only positive reverberation. Resuming his walk Kozak noted how this episode with Bob had somehow, improbably, leapfrogged him over what he sensed was an otherwise impending interlude of introspection, even self-doubt. Leaving him instead feeling oddly energized and, psychically speaking, crisp, nimble, poised, wholly at ease in the unfolding present.

This served well when Kozak got home, as

Penelope was clearly not having a great day. Had certain needs that required urgent attending. For example, reassurance that despite the perfection of the night prior they were doing the right thing. But not only. Also help getting Melody to sleep, preparing dinner, restoring the internet signal, weeding and watering the garden, washing diapers, taking out the recyclables.

Services all that Kozak swiftly and deftly rendered, and in the rendering found himself becoming steadier still. Steadier and serene and a true believer in the words he'd spoken to Penelope earlier, soon after he'd walked through the door: "Hey, sweetheart, look at me—decisions are what suck. But the decision here is over. Now it's just life. Just boring old life."



reply that Bob himself might make.

"So, uh, Bob, can we talk off the record for a second—just you and me?"

"Of course."

"Awesome, because I'm wondering: Considering the great feeling we've built up these past years, what's the very most you think the company would be willing to pay me?"

"Nothing," said Bob.

"Like nothing-*nothing*, Bob? Or nothing-maybe-something?"

"The former."

"Okay, then you mean nothing-*nothing-really-nothing*."

"Correct."

Kozak was stumped; waited for Bob to end



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Later, after Penelope went to bed, Kozak went down to the basement and located a pyramid of cardboard boxes. He brushed off some soot, slit their seals, reached inside, and out came an entire life: screenplays, treatments, notebooks, textbooks, treatises, a frayed and fading photo of a young Orson Welles. Then much more: hundreds of VHS tapes and DVDs; a dozen keepsake eight-millimeter film canisters; computer monitors, hard drives, software discs, tripods, shoulder straps, battery packs, camera bags, a half dozen actual cameras, including Kozak's last, which he dusted and buffed before plugging into a recharger.

Kozak then got onto the website to which Ivan had referred, and screened their old footage. There was much, and though he at first watched gladly—convinced the project still had unrealized potential, merited their going back—this conviction gradually dissolved, to where he could see only flaws: poor camera and sound work, inane subject matter, unoriginality. And that actually, he and Ivan had shown sound judgment in shelving the endeavor and moving on.

So Kozak logged off and began to organize his desk area, and also compile multiple to-do lists headed respectively "Creative," "Making a Living," "Home Improvements." All this he did concurrently for upward of 40 minutes, until, for what felt like no reason at all, he paused, put his pen down, stared out aimlessly toward a gray rusted water meter. Kozak then staring more and more deeply, with greater and greater fixity, until, though looking straight at it, what he saw was not a water meter at all.

• • •

It was raining when Kozak left the house, raining with ferocity, with drops cratering the grass and bouncing off parked cars. Yet Kozak upon contact barely went tight. Instead he just kept going, initially at a near sprint, through his subdivision, along new and gently curving streets with names that he'd only ever disdained (Happy Trail, Candy Place, Celebrity Road), until he reached the area's main drag, a four-, sometimes six-, sometimes eight-lane commercial thoroughfare that Kozak read or maybe dreamed followed pretty much bend for bend a 500-year-old Indian trail.

Kozak walked alongside. He moved over patchy grass and parking lots, past the public and Catholic high schools, driving range, outlet stores, car wash, dialysis center, four-story

office buildings, right into the next town over, which differed from his only in name.

And mostly Kozak didn't slow down, only at intersections, to avoid the occasional car or truck, or to raise his camera up to eye level, so as to see his surroundings through the finder and judge if any of it were worthwhile for him to shoot.

The answer was never yes, and Kozak trudged on, step after step, hour after hour, hardly noticing as the night sky brightened, rain tapered, or even that at some point he changed course, aimed himself by increments back toward his town, subdivision, street, house. Stopping at this last, looking up at the facade, regarding it with detachment, seeing it very clearly. Then lowering down, so as to seat himself on the curb.

Sometime later there was movement. At the end of his street. A man with a shopping cart, distributing something to all the houses, inserting things, no, circulars, into mailboxes, or leaving them at the door.

For an instant, Kozak froze.

What he saw: morning half-light, lustrous and broken-beamed. A desolate street, puddle-checked, beneath a thin ribbon of fog. And a man, moving about, moving easily, engaged in a simple task. It was, in short, a wondrous tableau. The kind that all his life had made Kozak feel special. And even, somehow, sometimes, more than special. Somehow, sometimes, more.

And sitting there Kozak thought, What's important is not to read too much into it, this tableau. To not see answers. To remember that nothing about what my life should be, or what I should do, or whether or not I've perhaps recently steered my life off a cliff is therein contained.

Still, Kozak stole glances. This until the man got near enough that their eyes might meet, at which point Kozak looked away, before placing his head into his hands.

Then, soon, Kozak heard the shopping cart, its piercing rattle, getting nearer. Followed by squeaking sneakers, denim rubbing, but more, breath, labored and from the mouth.

"Hey, mister, you okay?"

"Uh-huh."

"Hey, mister...."

"Yes?"

"Your clothes are wet."

Kozak looked up and saw then he'd been mistaken. It was not a man but a teenager. A teenager with maybe the homeliest face he'd ever seen. Large and round with pale skin, nearly

translucent. Did he have some kind of thing, Kozak wondered, a condition or whatnot? Kozak could not discern, knew only that this other human being was presently smiling at him through tiny and gap-riddled teeth, doing so in a way really that was utterly ingenuous, even sweet. "Yes, I know," said Kozak. "Thank you very much."

"What's that?" the teenager said, pointing at Kozak's lap.

"A camera."

"A movie camera?"

Kozak considered. "Well, no, not necessarily."

"Not necessarily a movie camera?"

"That's right."

"But maybe one."

"Yes," Kozak granted, "maybe one."

The teenager took a step forward, to within arm's reach, then craned down and began to examine Kozak, examine Kozak as if Kozak were something very strange and rare.

"Can I help you with something?" said Kozak.

The teenager shrugged.

"Do you want to give me that?"

"Yes," said the teenager.

Kozak took the circular while holding the teenager's gaze, this to see if there was anything more for either of them to convey. Then, seeing there was not, Kozak thanked him and again put his head down into his hands.

The teenager, however, did not budge. Kozak aware not only of his physical bulk but very soon too the sound of his breathing, as it gathered in volume, rhythm, the odd staccato accent of whistling phlegm.

"Something else?" said Kozak.

The teenager gave no reply.

"What can I do for you?"

"Who, me?" said the teenager.

"Yes, you," said Kozak, gently. "Why have you stopped here?"

"Oh, because...."

Kozak looked up.

"I think...."

"Yes?" said Kozak. "Please, you can say anything to me."

"It's just your camera, mister," he said. "You left it on."

Kozak looked down. Saw it was so.

"You made a mistake, right?" said the teenager.

"Well, it's possible," said Kozak, nodding his head, then slowly getting to his feet. "But maybe, perhaps, I could ask *you* something. I mean, what I'm wondering myself, is there a way for a person to ever really know?" ■



ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

JAMES JEAN

When I began my career, I was struck by the lack of support I received from galleries and museums in Japan. I quickly learned that I needed to take the initiative to establish a place for myself in the art world. When I see an artist like James Jean, who at the age of 37 has achieved both independence and widespread recognition, I am both envious and filled with a desire to protect him from the forces that might assault that independence. Though he is perhaps best known for the dreamy, intricate illustrations that have graced the pages of Rolling Stone and The New York Times and the covers of DC comics and novels, Jean's recent work as a painter has seen him create images densely layered with societal references and semiology. They draw freely from pop culture, myth, the internet and the margins of history, reflecting the chaotic mental state of living in an increasingly interconnected world. The contemporary art community has only begun to recognize

the breadth of his work. It will take a brave and curious curator, one who can look beyond his technical virtuosity and ubiquitous internet presence, to unwind the many threads of meaning Jean now entwines. He deserves nothing less.—Takashi Murakami



Above: Portrait of the artist by Brandon Shigeta.
Right: *Aides Lapin*. Digital, 6,000 x 9,539 pixels, 2016.







Top left: *Kali*. Mixed media on paper, 41 x 30 inches, 2015. **Top right:** *Ottoman*. Ink on paper, 8 x 5 inches, 2011.

Bottom: *Adrift II*. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 inches, 2016.

Opposite page: *Bassoon*. Mixed media on paper, 41 x 30 inches, 2015.





WORLD OF PLAYBOY



Playboy doubled the pleasure this summer, hosting our famous late-night lingerie party in two cities for the first time. In addition to turning the Playboy Mansion—the traditional venue for the annual Midsummer Night's Dream Party—into a fantastical land overrun by mermaids, fairies and satyrs, MSND 2016 concurrently premiered at the Marquee Nightclub in the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, offering PLAYBOY fans and readers the chance to experience one of the year's hottest parties in person. In addition to dancing alongside dozens of Playmates to beats spun by DJ Carnage, attendees at the Sin City bash took in the sights of swinging aerialists and other costumed performers. Back in Los Angeles, VIP guests including D'Angelo Russell (point guard for the Lakers), Stephen Merchant (*The Office*), Craig Robinson (*Mr. Robot*), Tyler Posey (*Teen Wolf*) and Gregg Sulkin (*Faking It*) enjoyed the company of Playmates and private tours of the Mansion grounds, including the Zoo, the Game Room and, of course, the Grotto.





Playboys & Girls

Slow Culture Los Angeles

Fans lined up around the block to get into L.A. gallery Slow Culture's Chinatown space for the September opening of the Playboys & Girls exhibition. The three-week show featured works from 22 artists including frequent PLAYBOY contributor and *Bob's Burgers* artist Jay Howell, recent Artists in Residence Chloé Kovska and Ben Venom, photographers Nate Walton and Molly Steele, and Playmates Rachel Harris and Brook Power.



Let Us Buy You a Drink

To celebrate this year's annual ranking of the best bars in America, we've teamed up with the Hooch app to make sure you hit all the right spots on your nights out. Hooch is a private cocktail society that gives members one free drink a day—every day—at hundreds of participating locations, for \$9.99 a month. But PLAYBOY readers get their first month for just \$1: Download the Hooch app, register with your name and payment information and enter the promo code "bestbars" to unlock the list of participating bars in your area. Then enjoy a month of cocktails for \$1.





PLAYBACK



WISCONSIN, 1981

A Bunny takes a ride in a hot air balloon above the Playboy Club in Lake Geneva.



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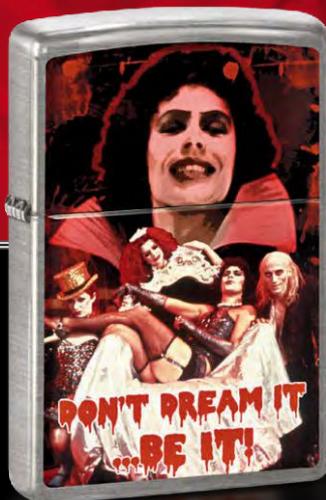
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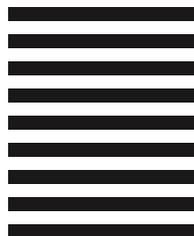
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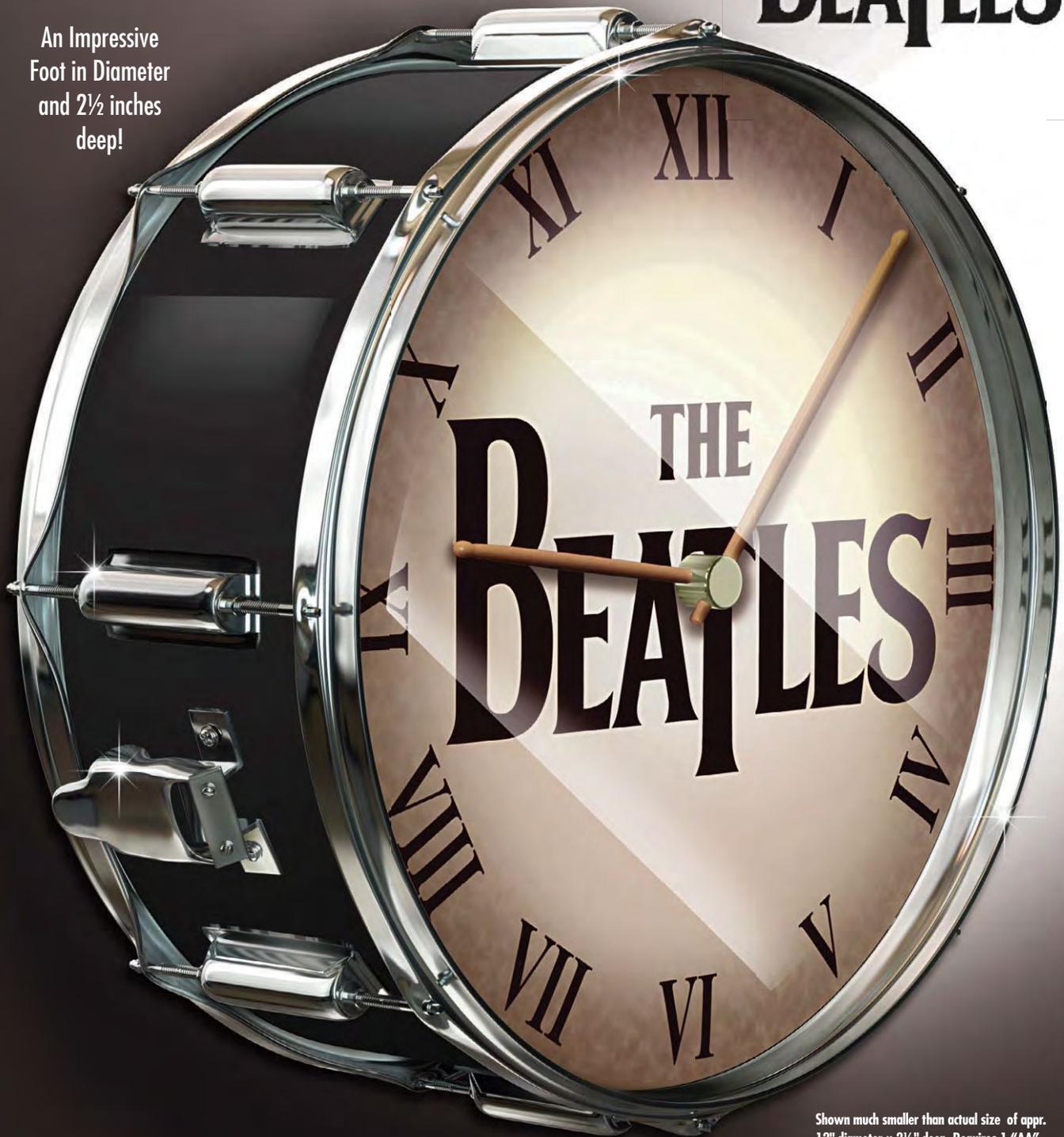
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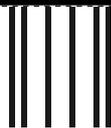
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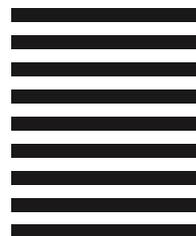


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Gleaming finish and electroplated detailing recreates the look of Ringo's classic black pearl drum kit from the 1960s!

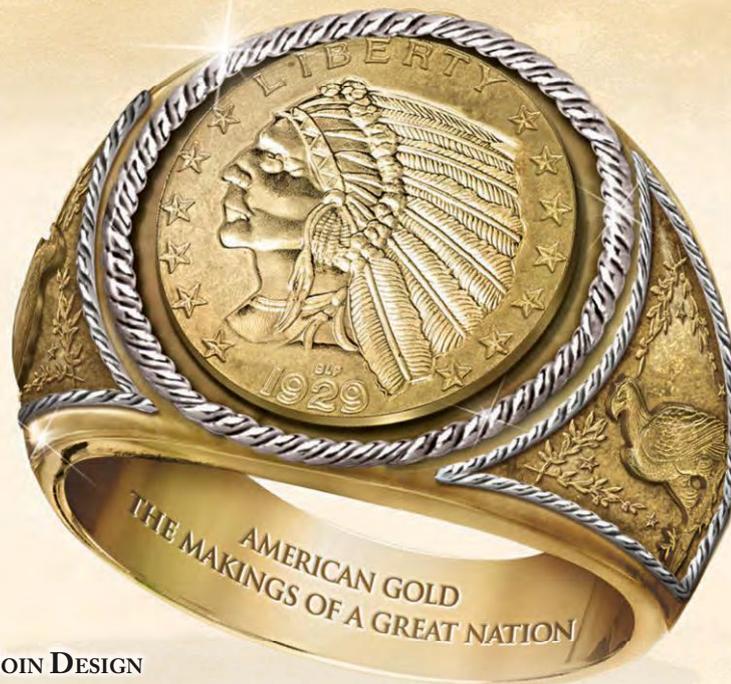
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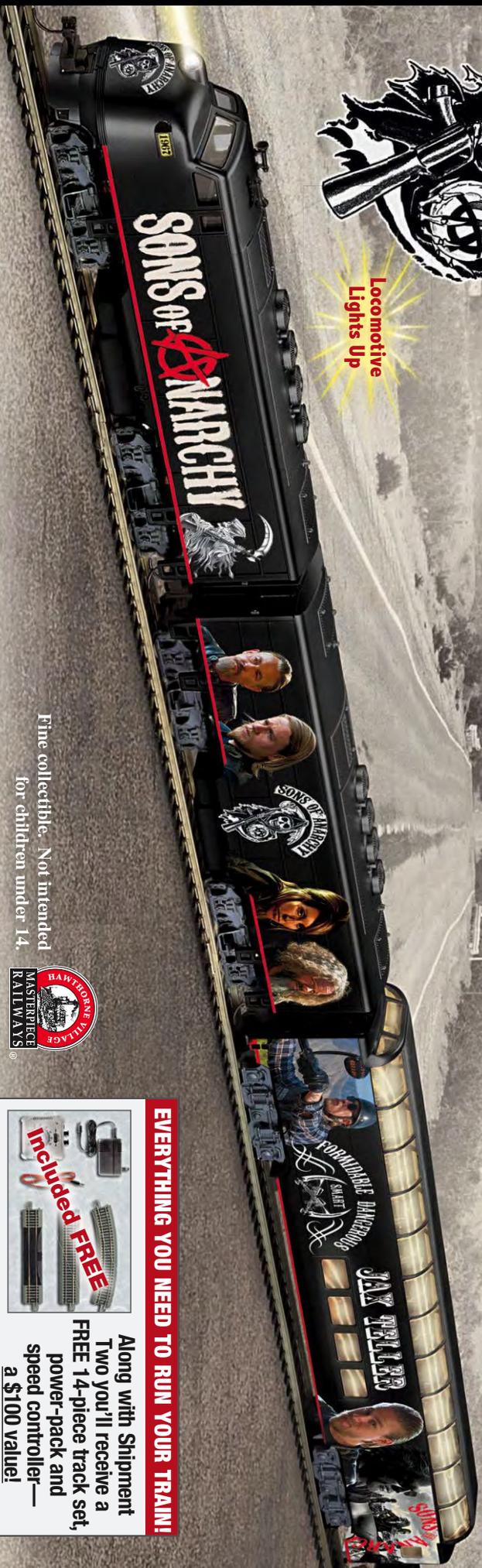




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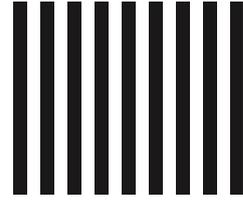
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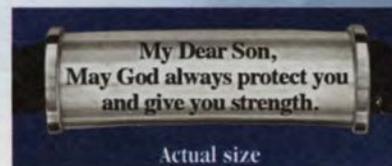
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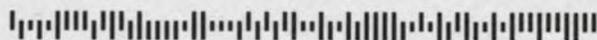
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