

Is Russia Just a Red Herring? Glenn Greenwald is the left's biggest skeptic.
By Simon van Zuylen-Wood

Plus: **A Strange Death at Sea** / Whitney Cummings on Rebooting 'Roseanne' / Zach Galifianakis, King Clown

January 22–February 4, 2018

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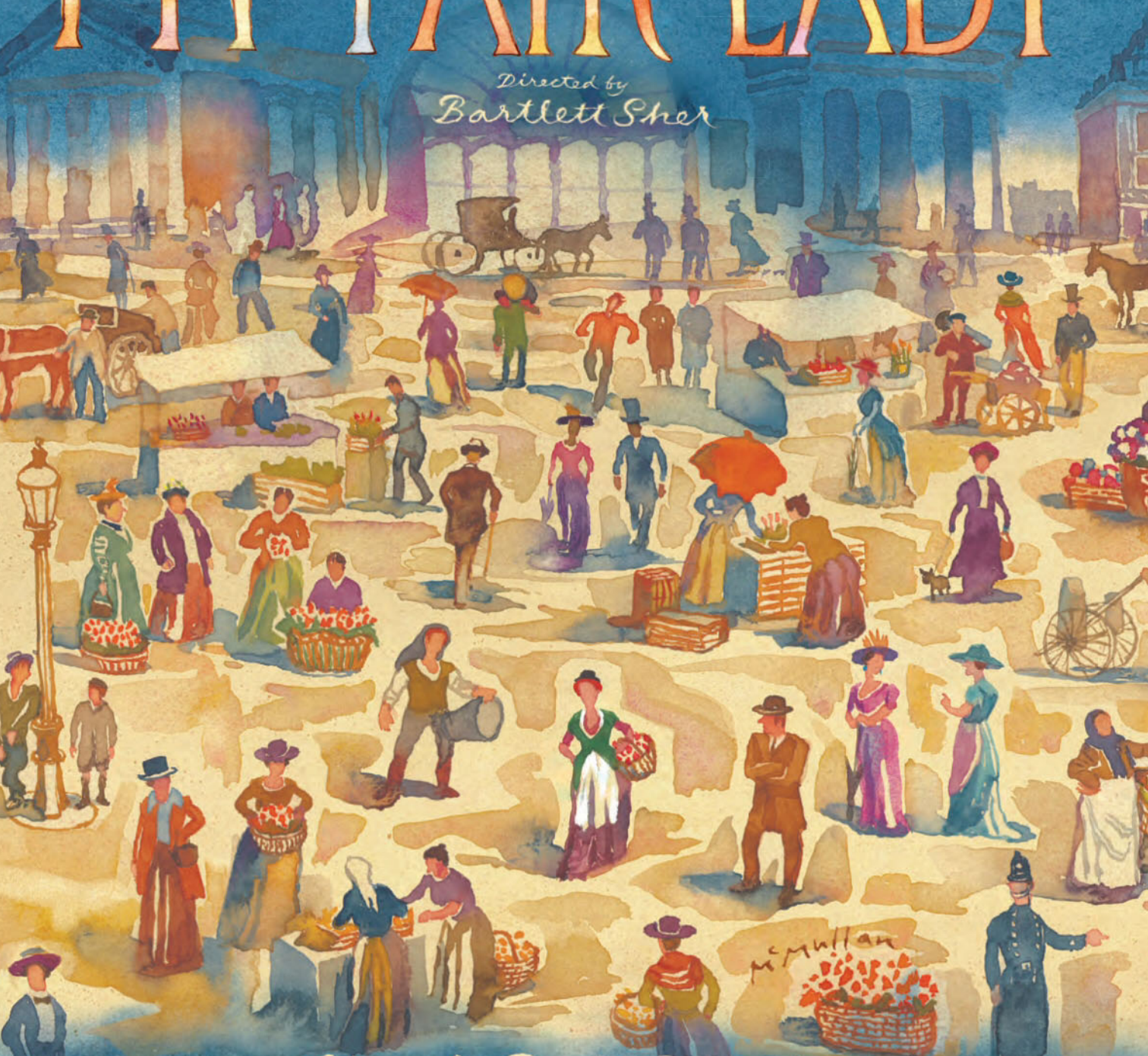
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Comments



1 *New York's* excerpt of Michael Wolff's *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*, on the chaotic first days of the Trump administration ("**Sick of Winning**," **January 8–21**), quickly upended Washington—author Jared Yates Sexton called it "as must-read as must-read gets," and *The Atlantic's* Conor Friedersdorf wrote, "Some of what is described here is the moral equivalent of treason." The revelations also quickly received pushback from the White House: The day it was published, the president released a statement saying, "Steve Bannon has nothing to do with me or my Presidency. When he was fired, he not only lost his job, he lost his mind," and he later tweeted that Wolff is "mentally deranged." Sarah Huckabee Sanders dismissed it as "some trash [peddled by] an author that no one had ever heard of until today." But the story, and the book, had an immediate impact: Bannon apologized for his incendiary comments and was ousted from his perch at Breitbart, while Axios reported that some White House staffers were "contemplating imminent departures." Many of those who watch the West Wing closely vouched for Wolff's work. **Axios's Mike Allen and Jim VandeHei called the book spot-on in its "portrait of Trump as an emotionally erratic president, and the low opinion of him among some of those serving him."** And Maggie Haberman, who covers the administration for the *Times*, weighed in: "Even if some things are inaccurate/flat-out false, there's enough notionally accurate that people have difficulty knocking it down." On the *Today* show, Wolff defended his work, saying, "My credibility is being questioned by a man who has less credibility than perhaps anyone who has ever walked on Earth at this point."

2 Reeves Wiedeman reported on the Rockefeller clan's climate-change campaign against the company their family pioneered ("**The Rockefellers vs. the Company That Made Them Rockefellers**," **January 8–21**). Huffington Post reporter Alexander Kaufman said the story "paints the most nuanced picture I've seen of the hyper-privileged, flawed heirs bequeathed the duty of trying to force reform at a company so powerful its last CEO is the secretary of state." And Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org, responded, "**The timing of your recent piece on the Rockefellers and Exxon could not have been better. Mayor Bill de Blasio's brave decision to divest the city's pension funds from big oil, and to sue the biggest companies, including Exxon, shows how far the movement that the Rockefellers helped spur on has already come.**" Deborah Gordon, director of the energy and climate program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, commented, "When the Rockefellers first made climate allegations against Exxon, I was dubious their strategy would be productive. But as the company begins to recognize climate change in its business plans, verifying the greenhouse gases emitted in company operations, supporting a well-designed carbon tax, and disclosing climate-related financial risks, I'm rethinking my skepticism. While Exxon-Mobil is not the only energy conglomerate that has covered up the facts or downplayed the risks of climate change over the past several decades, it is the world's largest international oil and gas company. It could be a powerful force for reform." David Sassoon, publisher of InsideClimate News, wrote to clarify the origin

of the publication's Exxon investigation, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize: "I'm afraid readers of your piece will come away with the mistaken impression that our journalism is an extension of the Rockefeller family's crusade against the oil giant. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund does indeed support our work, but more than 20 other funders support 90 percent of our budget. None have access to our editorial process. **We set out to investigate what oil companies knew about climate change and when they knew it thanks to an illuminating conversation with Daniel Ellsberg. It was our reporting, not the Rockefellers, that eventually led us to Exxon.**"

3 "A new set of concerns—a self-conscious moral duty in matters of identity, of inclusion and representation—had come to dominate discussions among creators, critics, and consumers alike," Molly Fischer argued in her essay on pop culture in the age of identity politics ("**The Great Awakening**," **January 8–21**). Helen Lewis at the *New Statesman* responded, "Too much criticism online feels like measuring artists and their work against a ticklist, before handing out a sticker that says 'Congratulations on Being Deemed Not Problematic.'" The *Guardian's* Laura Snapes tweeted, "This piece articulates every one of my anxieties/irritations about the current need for all pop culture to be perfectly woke," and Laura Bennett of Slate added, "This is so good. It includes: the unforgettable coinage 'awakening' and also the smartest *Master of None* smackdown I've read."

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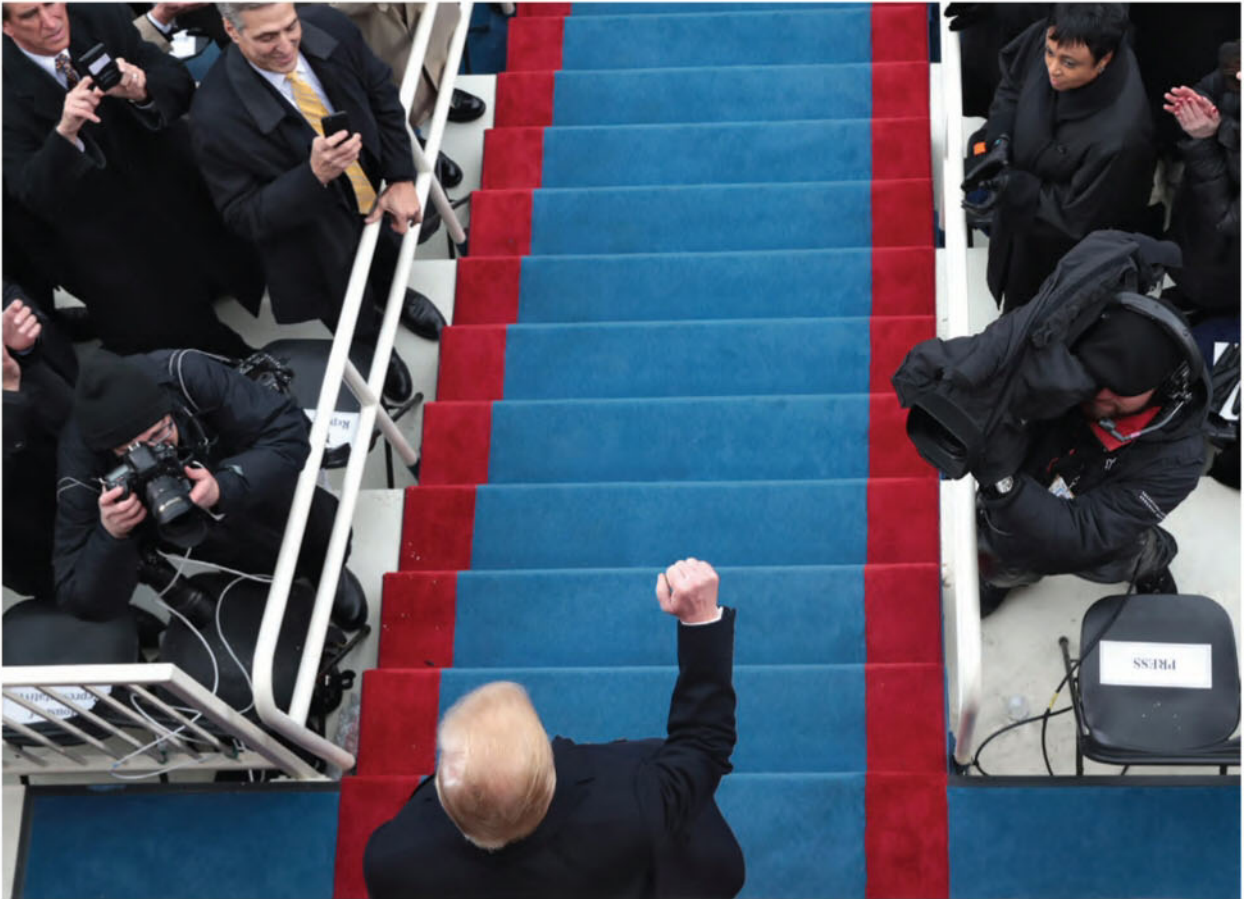
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INSIDE: A poster project by Yoko Ono, Hank Willis Thomas, and Barbara Kruger / Jane Birkin reprises Gainsbourg



The National Interest: Jonathan Chait

The Year in Which Quite a Lot Happened, Except Anything He Promised Rereading Trump's inaugural address.

ON JANUARY 20, 2017, Donald Trump took the oath of office and delivered an inaugural speech that is remembered mostly for being “dark,” as an instant media consensus proclaimed, or “some weird shit,” as George W. Bush remarked. The passage of a year’s time reveals that the speech was something else, too: impossibly grandiose. While those who oppose the president have debated whether he is criminally complicit in a foreign adversary’s election tampering, or whether he is mentally deranged, the country has lost sight of the standard of success Trump set for himself, which rests quite a bit higher than *non-treasonous* and *dementia-free*. Trump presented himself as a populist revolutionary who would reverse decades of decline. His speech reads now as a comic litany of failure.

Trump made a series of promises, some resting on vague or imaginary premises, none coming close to being fulfilled. “America will start winning again, winning like never before,” he declared.

“We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth. And we will bring back our dreams.”

It is true that, since the 1970s, working-class wages have stagnated and manufacturing jobs in particular have disappeared. Trump blamed this development partly on nefarious foreigners. “One by one, the factories shuttered and left our shores, with not even a thought about the millions upon millions of American workers left behind,” he thundered. “The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed across the entire world.” Yet Trump has produced no policy response even remotely proportional to the crisis he promised to solve. There has been no renegotiation of global trade agreements, no strategy to restore American manufacturing to its postwar role. In the meantime, manufacturing employment has continued the slow recovery it has followed since the 2008 crash.

Trump decried “an education system, flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge; and the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential.” He has proposed no significant changes to K-12 education and has none on the horizon—unlike his two immediate predecessors, both of whom enacted sweeping education reforms. Faced with a true drug epidemic—the explosion of opioid abuse—he appointed as opioid czar Kellyanne Conway, a former political strategist and talking head on cable news, who has produced no policy response. His office of National Drug Control Policy was being run in part by a 24-year-old former campaign aide.

The elegant simplicities of campaign rhetoric—or, in Trump’s case, the brutal simplicities—never align with the ugly and complex reality of governing. But Trump’s presidency has presented an especially jarring contrast, since the rhetoric has borne no relation whatsoever to what followed. It’s not that he overpromised but that his promises were fundamentally a con. He and his loyalists possessed not the faintest idea how to address the crises he identified, not even a theory that could lead to a detailed response. Trump’s program has instead defaulted to the preexisting desires of his party’s ideological and funding base, resulting in a regulatory and tax agenda virtually—and in some cases literally—dictated by the business lobby.

For instance: The federal government will no longer withhold subsidies from for-profit colleges that fail to give their students meaningful skills or educations and saddle their graduates with overwhelming debt. Restaurant owners stand to legally take for themselves tips intended for their servers. Financial advisers will be able to knowingly steer their clients toward investments that benefit the adviser’s firm but not the client. Environmental Protection Agency investigators must now obtain permission (from their fanatically anti-regulation administrator’s office) before even asking companies to track the pollutants they emit. Nursing homes and banks will be allowed to force their customers to sign mandatory arbitration clauses that leave them unable to sue if they are abused or cheated. And on and on. The party’s political messaging has increasingly consisted of ignoring the costs of these measures (higher deficits, lax regulation of risky or antisocial business activity) while highlighting whatever fractional benefits trickle down to the non-business-owning public.

Promises Made

“We are transferring power from Washington, D.C., and giving it back to you, the American people ...

“January 20th, 2017, will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again ...

“We will no longer accept politicians who are all talk and no action—constantly complaining but never doing anything about it. The time for empty talk is over.”

Employment has grown no faster under Trump than it did at the end of his predecessor’s term. The economy produced slightly fewer new jobs in Trump’s first year than it did in Barack Obama’s last. The primary evidence of the “success” of Trump’s pro-business policies has been to rebrand the essentially continuous conditions of the recovery he inherited as dazzling prosperity rather than bleak misery.

The most telling passage in Trump’s address came in his populist attacks on the political class. “Washington flourished—but the people did not share in its wealth,” he said. “Politicians prospered—but the jobs left and the factories closed. The Establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country.” This cynical view of the possibilities of government as a tool for self-enrichment is at best a simplistic description of the Obama years. At worst, it is a false one, given the absence of scandal during that administration. More than anything, we all now know, it was a psychological projection of Trump’s own ambitions.

The complete scope of Trump-era corruption is not yet fully known. (In part, this is because House Republicans have quashed votes to compel the release of his tax returns, which would reveal the president’s income sources.) But one year of Trump’s Executive branch has already vastly exceeded the sum total of malfeasance in the previous eight. Trump has used his office to win business and favors for the Trump Organization worldwide. His coterie has followed suit. His former national-security adviser secretly collected payment from Turkey while advising him during the transition. His son-in-law pursued a lucrative deal with a state-linked Chinese firm while simultaneously serving as an influential adviser. His Treasury secretary, Interior secretary, EPA administrator, and Health and Human Services secretary have all helped themselves to lavish private-plane travel at taxpayer expense. His inaugural committee raised twice as much as Obama’s had in 2009 and has refused to disclose what it has done with the lot. Whatever crimes the Russia investigation ultimately exposes, Trump has made perfectly plain his gut-level admiration for Vladimir Putin’s oligarchy as a political and economic model.

Trump’s electoral success depended on decades of built-up dislike for Hillary Clinton, as well as the demagogic possibilities of presenting himself as an outsider possessed of magical deal-making skills. Today, he faces historically low approval ratings and a wave of revulsion that is putting once-safe Republican districts into play. None of this is a surprise: He had no chance to survive the absence of Clinton as a foil, or the necessity of following through with his grand boasts. The con was doomed the day Trump won the election.

In this sense, Trump’s brief political career is a culmination of his business methods. There is an old saying that you can shear a sheep many times, but you can skin it only once. Trump proved that, in fact, you *can* make a livelihood skinning sheep, as long as you keep courting new sheep. He stiffed subcontractors and lenders only to find new ones, ripped off some investors but then successfully courted less-scrupulous ones, and exploited his biggest fans with scams like Trump University and Trump vitamins. But since winning the presidency, he has nowhere left to go. He is doing the same things he did as a tabloid tycoon—spraying wild lies, obsessing about his media coverage, threatening to ruin his enemies—but has run out of sheep. Now what? ■



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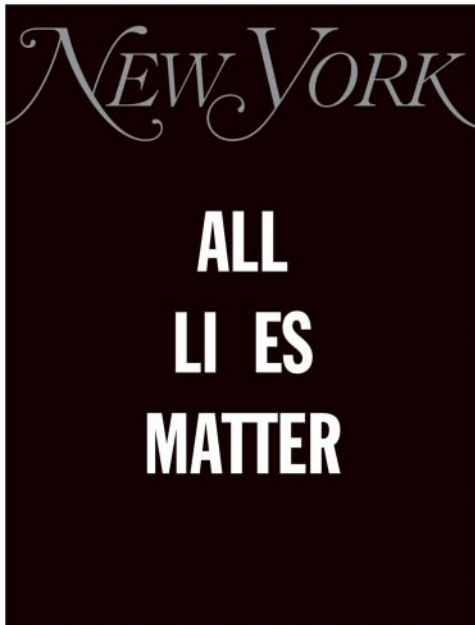
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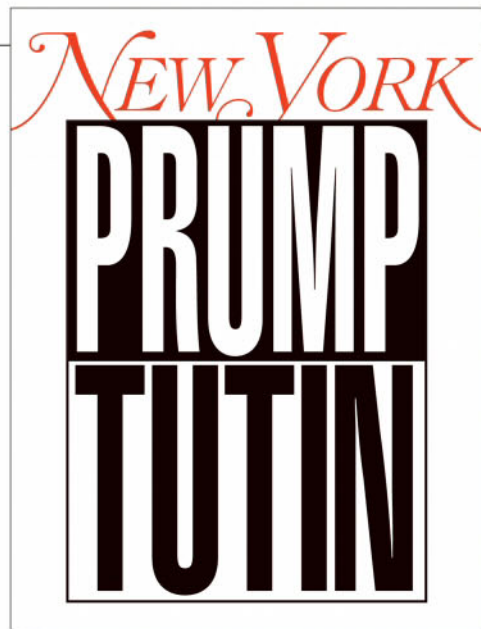
"IT SEEMS SO OBVIOUS," says the artist Hank Willis Thomas, who created the ALL LI_ES MATTER poster shown above, "that many people are lying when they say 'All lives matter.' If you believe all lives matter, then you'd also acknowledge that black lives matter, and those same people would be marching alongside if they believed that." Obvious, perhaps, but cer-

tainly not universally believed, which is why Thomas applied his signature approach (eliminated letters, missing type) to that bland yet brutal slogan.

His is among the visual statements contributed by 50 artists to *New York* as part of a project marking the magazine's 50th-birthday year. The first of them, by the nonagenarian Alex Katz, appeared on our



MARILYN MINTER



BARBARA KRUGER



ROB PRUITT



ALEX KATZ



A giant version (illustrated here) will appear later this year, too.

cover last fall, and is a drawing he did on the subway, an echo of those he made underground in the 1940s. The others also, in their own ways, celebrate the spirit of life in New York City, a place of solidarity—whether on packed trains or in political marches. On January 22, you will begin to see them pasted on walls around town; in the coming weeks, you will encounter

various other parts of this project all over the city, including an installation at Smorgasburg and a show on the High Line. In a few locations that will be announced on Twitter (at @NYMag), we're putting up ten copies stacked like a pad of paper, so (if you're one of the lucky people to get there first) you can tear off a poster and take it home.



69 MINUTES WITH ...

Jane Birkin

The bohemian provocateur on singing Gainsbourg at Carnegie Hall and the “gratuitous nakedness of my good self.”

BY CARL SWANSON

JANE BIRKIN DIDN'T much like the terribly sophisticated Serge Gainsbourg, 18 years older than she and already a famous singer, when she met him after being cast in the French film *Slogan* in 1968—she found him arrogant and snobbish. Or perhaps more to the point, she was convinced that he didn't think much of her, a 21-year-old

English actress who'd blown up after appearing, full frontal, in Antonioni's *Blow-Up*, which was quite scandalous at the time. But she fell for him when they went out dancing, she's always said. He kept stepping on her toes.

“To find out that, in fact, he was extraordinarily timid and, yes, it was all just pretense,” recalls Birkin on a bright winter afternoon in the empty nightclub

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-JESSE GREEN, *The New York Times*

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**"RARELY HAVE I SPENT SO ENTERTAINING
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atop the Standard High Line, opened to us especially for this interview. She sat with her back to the vastness of the view south because the big windows gave her vertigo. She'd never suffered it before, she says, but something about the architecture of the place made her feel exposed, a bit out of control. "When they showed me my bedroom, I screamed," she says.

Gainsbourg and Birkin never married but blithely set off on a photogenic, performative, and occasionally perverse romance. In 1968, she stepped in to replace his previous lover, Brigitte Bardot, on the sure-sounds-like-they're-really-doing-it song "Je T'aime ... Moi Non Plus," which was condemned by the Catholic Church and censored in various places for being too risqué. It became a big hit.

Then there was "Lemon Incest," a duet Gainsbourg wrote and sang with the couple's daughter, Charlotte Gainsbourg, when she was 13. You can Google up the video of a shirtless Serge lolling in bed with Charlotte, who's wearing a shirt and knickers. "Already it was a bit of a scandal, but not much," Birkin says. "I think nowadays it would have been probably impossible to do." The same goes surely for the 1988 film *Le Petit Amour*, in which Birkin plays a middle-aged divorcée who falls for a 14-year-old classmate of her daughter's (the daughter is played, again, by Charlotte). "I think we were quite lucky to have done the things we did when we did them."

All of it was a kind of therapy for her, Birkin suggests. Reading her diary recently, which she plans to publish next fall, she says she found fresh evidence of her insecurity about her body in entries from her boarding-school days. "I think how wonderfully Serge got me over all my hang-ups about looking the way a girl should really," she says. "To have a man who said—after Brigitte Bardot, what's more—I love girls with no bosoms. It's what I drew when I was at art school." And she helped him make the most of what he had as well. "I was the one who thought he looked better with the seven-o'clock shadow, because he used to have a very childish face," she says. "He used to have those terrible inhibitions about it because he had to wait so long before shaving." She preferred him without socks and underwear and bought him women's jewelry "because he didn't look like a hairy man." Rather, he had "a gorgeous girl's arm and not a hair on his chest, so he could have a piece of jewelry round his neck. He looked very refined."

The couple lasted 12 delirious, discomfamous years, before his drinking and OCD housekeeping habits drove her away. "I mean, he could be quite cruel," she says.

"He had a sense of humor, but if you got on the wrong side of it, you have to be careful. What did he write on one of his record covers? And I was with him, I mean, I was still with him. It said: 'Fall for a woman for what she has not, and leave her for what she is.'" She did the leaving, however, moving on to the director Jacques Doillon (with whom she had a daughter, the singer Lou Doillon). But she and Gainsbourg remained friends and provocateur-collaborators until his death, of a heart attack, at 62 in 1991.

Birkin turned 71 on December 14, and while she's pop royalty in France, she might be better known in America these days as the person that Hermès bag was named after (yes, she carries one). The fact that it was designed for her after she spilled the contents of her straw basket-cum-handbag on the lap of the Hermès CEO on a flight encapsulates her dotty glamour. She admits to being a selective klepto—her basket was often full of things like silverware and ashtrays. "It used to make quite a noise," she says. Isn't that a bit eccentric? "Oh, I don't know. English, maybe," she replies. (It also seems to be a trait Charlotte, fond of the robes at the Pierre hotel, inherited.)

Unlike many people who were famous for being young and beautiful, Birkin doesn't look back upon it with nostalgia. "The gratuitous nakedness of my good self in many forms—even I found it sometimes just a bit boring. Of course, who would come in with a breakfast tray? My good self with only a pajama top or only pajama bottom on or something. But that was very much à la mode. Sadly." She pauses. "I say sadly because I was hoping for better things. And then later, at 40, I got them."

"Serge got me over my hang-ups ... To have a man who said, 'I love girls with no bosoms.'"

That was when she had her first hit record and began singing (for real; previously she'd lip-synced to a tape of her studio recording) before audiences. She finally landed more serious, and less naked, acting roles.

In her beaten-up wire-rim glasses, which sit slightly askew on her nose, her sensible cardigan and jeans, her blue canvas tennis sneakers, though not sockless—she's wearing compression stockings for the transatlantic flight—Birkin looks like she's in town to visit her grandchildren, which, in fact, she is. Charlotte Gainsbourg—who eerily resembles a younger version of her mother and is equally unafraid to be naked in her films, though she doesn't dress as oddly as seemed to be required of famous people in the 1970s—moved here with her family in 2014. This was shortly after Birkin's daughter from her first marriage, the photographer and human-rights activist Kate Barry, died after falling—or jumping—off a balcony in Paris.

Barry had suffered from depression and addiction for years and founded a treatment center outside Paris. "You couldn't get anyone who was funnier and more compassionate than Kate. A wonderful mixture of madness and of sympathy," Birkin says. "She existed like some wonderful butterfly. I was already happy that she existed for 46 years. She used to pick up wounded things. She just didn't look after herself."

As it happens, the occasion of our conversation is a project Birkin embarked upon in the wake of Kate's death, when "I didn't know what to do with my time and wasn't doing very well at home on my own." She worked with the Japanese composer Nobuyuki Nakajima to have some of Gainsbourg's songs arranged as an orchestra score and sung by her. The show, *Birkin/Gainsbourg: Le Symphonique*, allowed her to fulfill a fantasy of doing a Broadway musical (*The Phantom of the Opera*, specifically; she'd play the Phantom).

For the past year, Birkin has traveled the world performing with local philharmonics, and she brings the show to Carnegie Hall on February 1. The set list includes "Lost Song," "La Chanson de Prévert," "Baby Alone in Babylone," and the (rather clinical) song Gainsbourg wrote in appreciation of her, "Jane B." But don't expect her to moan out a rendition of "Je T'aime ... Moi Non Plus." That one, along with "Lemon Incest," is taken care of in an instrumental medley.

As we get up to leave, she tells me that she prefers the Bowery Hotel, in part because of the "very nice table napkins." Did she swipe some of them? "Yep, I think I have a few." ■

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of female candidates running for office this



Her March ington

fix a broken system? Take it over, say the record number
year for the first time. **By Rebecca Traister**

THE OPRAH IDEA was, admittedly, imperfect. The antitoxin for one rich celebrity president is not likely to be a *different* rich celebrity president (albeit an infinitely smarter and more humane one). But the alacrity with which America took to the possibility that the former talk-show host and secular deity might be the one to vanquish Donald Trump was not wholly at odds with an actual phenomenon. Over the past terrible, horrible, no-good, very-bad year, an unprecedented number of women have been motivated to dive into politics for the first time, many with the hope of defeating or succeeding men who've held the bulk of America's political power for centuries.

To date, 390 women are planning to run for the House of Representatives, a figure that's higher than at any time in American history. Twenty-two of them are non-incumbent black women—for scale, there are only 18 black women in the House right now. Meanwhile, 49 women are likely to be running for the Senate, which is 68 percent higher than the number who'd announced at the same point in 2014.

To name-check just a fraction of these newly hatched politicians, there's Vietnam-born Mai Khanh Tran, a California pediatrician and two-time cancer survivor vying for a House seat that's been held by Republican Ed Royce for 13 terms. There's military wife Tatiana Matta, who's one of two Democrats trying to oust House Republican Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, and Mikie Sherrill, a former Navy pilot and federal prosecutor, who hopes to show New Jersey representative Rodney Frelinghuysen the door. (Twenty-three-year congressional veteran Frelinghuysen descends from a family once ranked the seventh-most-powerful American political dynasty: His father was a congressman, his great-great-grandfather and great-great-great-uncle were senators; his great-great-great-great-grandfather—also a senator—helped to frame New Jersey's Constitution.)

And Democratic women aren't leaving the men of their own party undisturbed. In Minnesota, former FBI analyst Leah Phifer is challenging incumbent Democratic representative Rick Nolan; Sameena Mustafa, a tenant advocate and founder of the comedy troupe Simmer Brown, is primarying Democrat Mike Quigley in Illinois's Fifth District. And Chelsea Manning, former Army intelligence analyst and whistle-blower, announced recently that she's going after Ben Cardin, the 74-year-old who has held one of Maryland's Senate seats for 11 years and served in the House for 20 years before that.

While the vision of women storming the ramparts of government is radical from one vantage point, from others it's as American as the idea of *representative* democracy laid out by our forefathers (like Great-great-great-great-grandpa Frelinghuysen!). "Representative citizens coming from all parts of the nation, cobblers and farmers—that was what was intended by the founders," says Marie Newman, a former small-business owner and anti-bullying advocate who is challenging Illinois Democrat Dan Lipinski in a primary. "You come to the House for a while and bring your ideas and then you probably go back to your life." Not only has her opponent been in office for 13 years, Newman notes, but his father held the same seat for 20 years before that. "It's a family that has reigned supreme, like a monarchy, for over 30 years," she says.

In the wake of Donald Trump's defeat of Hillary Clinton, Newman and the rest of this girl gang are eyeing the aging cast of men (and a few women) who've hogged the political stage forever, and they're trying to replace them. *Replacement*. It's an alluring concept, striking fear in the hearts of the guys who've been running the place—recall that the white supremacists in Charlottesville this summer chanted "You will not replace us"—and stirring hope

As I sat CRYING
and YELLING at
ELECTION, I REALIZED
THOUGH THAT FELT GOOD
do much to help
that I could be
WE NEED to SEE

Amie Neiling
Running for Indiana State House
of Representatives.

in the rest of us that a redistribution of power might be possible.

That fantasy of restorative justice is particularly resonant amid still-cascading #MeToo revelations of sexual abuses by those who've had too much power, in too many industries, for too long. "Let's make a full-blown trend out of replacing predatory men with women who were long overdue to hold their jobs in the first place," crowed one writer in *Vogue*. "It's really the least the patriarchy can do." Meanwhile, *Marie Claire*—like *Vogue*, not exactly a radical women's collective—ran a giddy list of women who should take over for bad dudes, imaginatively swapping Ava DuVernay for Roy Price at Amazon, Joy Reid for Mark Halperin at MSNBC. Even Conan O'Brien joked on Twitter that he is "ready for the all-female reboot of America."

Of course, in most fields, altering power ratios is neither swift nor easy. Even if men are pushed from their lofty perches, those waiting to take their places, the ones who've accrued seniority, expertise, and connections, are mostly men. Women who've been driven out or self-exiled from their chosen professions often cannot simply reenter them—as partners or managers or even mid-level employees.

This is one of the relative virtues of politics: It can be swiftly responsive to change. You can, in theory, run for local or state or even federal office, even if you've never been as much as a student-council secretary. If you're a preschool teacher or a law professor or a sanitation worker, there will be substantial obstacles, yes—weaker networks, fund-raising disadvantages; party machinery, institutional obstruction, and identity bias to push past. Yes. But you can run. And if you win, whether the office is small or large, you might be able to shake things up. The people who control state and local legislatures often help determine who in their communities gets to vote easily, who has access to health care or to legal sanctuary; local governing bodies around the country have in recent years passed legislation for paid leave and paid sick days and higher minimum wages.

It's certainly true that the policies that are enacted depend on *which* women run and win—the country is full of Sarah Palins,

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October 1991: Barbara Boxer leading congresswomen to the Senate side of the Capitol to seek a delay in the vote on the Clarence Thomas nomination.

not just Elizabeth Warrens. According to the Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), however, so far it's the Warrens who are getting into the game. Of the 49 women currently planning to run for the Senate (including incumbents, challengers, and those running for open spots), 31 are Democrats. Well over half of the 79 women slated to campaign for governor are Dems, as are 80 percent of the women setting their sights on the House.

This past fall's elections—in which Danica Roem, a 33-year-old transgender woman, handily beat an incumbent who'd authored a transphobic bathroom bill and dubbed himself the state's “chief homophobe”; in which Ashley Bennett, a 32-year-old psychiatric-emergency screener from New Jersey, bumped off the Atlantic County freeholder who'd mocked the Women's March by asking whether protesters would be home in time to cook his dinner—showed that improbable wins by improbable candidates are possible, perhaps especially if they can convert anger and frustration at the ways in which they've been discriminated against into electoral fuel.

ILLINOIS DEMOCRAT Marie Newman was a Bernie voter who, after the primary, switched her support to Hillary, whom she calls “likely *the* most qualified person who has ever run in that race.” On the night Clinton lost, “I felt horribly for the nation first,” she says, and “felt horribly for *her* second, because she was ridiculously treated for someone who has given her life to public service.” The next morning, Newman canceled her work meetings and sat home in her pajamas, filling out an application to the Illinois Women's Institute for Leadership. She'd volunteered for campaigns in the past but had never herself been a candidate. By January 1, 2017, she'd shut down her one-woman business, given her clients away, commissioned a data-driven study on her district, and embarked on a listening tour. “I wasn't playing,” she says. She announced her candidacy in April. “I've done 121 meet-and-greets, met with 4,000-plus people,” says Newman, who speaks with a rat-a-tat preparedness that makes Hillary Clinton sound like a slacker.

Newman offers one model of a first-time politician, but only one. In speaking to candidates or potential candidates over the past six months, I've talked to women who expressed ambivalence over throwing their hat in the ring; some who felt uncomfortable fund-raising and others who were shocked by how much they enjoyed asking for money; some who were stressed out by media training and others who took to it like slick seals to water; some who were soft-spoken and shy and others who were angry at Donald Trump,

angry at their own parties, angry at the people who keep telling them to stop talking about how angry they are. The only truly unifying theme has been that they've all felt called, during the crisis of Trump, to do something, *anything*, to fix the mess.

"When something bad happens," says Stephanie Schriock, the president of EMILY's List, the PAC that has supported Democratic pro-choice women since 1985 and has become one of the most powerful institutions in American politics, "women want to take action."

Schriock cited the rise of the tea party as a useful example of how the rage of losing a presidential election—to a candidate you feel doesn't represent you—can move Americans into politics with intensity and velocity. The swift formation of that political faction was driven in many regions by right-wing white women inflamed by Obama's victory. Remember the Mama Grizzlies? And it has reshaped—perhaps entirely remade—the Republican Party.

The other moment that 2018 seems poised to echo is 1992, when, after the shoddy treatment of Anita Hill by an all-male, all-white Senate Judiciary Committee, American women took home a record number of congressional seats. "I see a passion among women who understand that if you sit at home and don't go out and participate, you lose what's important to you," says Patty Murray, one of four women who won a Senate seat in 1992, the so-called Year of the Woman. "That's what motivated women after the Anita Hill hearings. We looked around and said, 'Wait a minute, where's my voice?'" When she decided to run for the Senate, Murray—who famously cast herself as a political neophyte, "just a mom in tennis shoes"—recalls, "I chose to put my name on the ballot if for no other reason than that I had someone to vote for."

The Women's Campaign School at Yale, the place where Senator Kirsten Gillibrand learned how to run, held its first five-day workshop in 1994, in the wake of the Year of the Woman. After 1992, says Patricia Russo, who now runs the school, there was an expectation that female candidates would be everywhere. Instead there was a drop-off, likely because while a high number of open seats and a group of women motivated to fight for them produced record-breaking results in 1992, there was no solid infrastructure in place to continue to draft women into politics or support them once there. This left the pipeline near empty.

"When we started," Russo says, "the median age for women attending our school was mid-40s. Now the median age is around 30." That reflects new attitudes about when women are "allowed" to enter politics. They don't have to wait until their kids are grown anymore, and there's a better chance that they'll

be taken seriously in their 30s or even 20s—being young and single is no longer a deal-killer, nor is being the mother of little children. Also different now, Russo says, is that the majority of those who enroll in the school are women of color.

Other groups have gotten into the candidate-training-and-support business in the past two decades and have registered exponential growth in the past year. For Higher Heights—founded in 2011 to harness the power of black women as voters, organizers, and candidates—a slow rise in engagement in the months after Trump's win became an enormous spike with the fall-2017 elections in Virginia, New Jersey, and Alabama. "Black women were really acknowledged as political drivers of change, as first-time candidates and as the voters who made the difference," says co-founder Kimberly Peeler-Allen.

Erin Vilardi, who runs VoteRunLead, which trains female candidates specifically for local and state-level offices, says that in a typical year, two-thirds of the organization's resources are devoted to persuading women to run, with a goal of tapping 2,000 nationwide. This year, more than 3,200 women contacted the group completely unsolicited. That's meant that VoteRunLead can tailor its recruitment to regions such as "the sleeping giant" of rural America. "There are tons of progressive women in rural communities who don't even need that much encouragement," she says.

"Look at the Alabama vote." She's added digital training to reach wannabe candidates who can't afford to get to cities for seminars and updated the curriculum to help the crowd of women jonesing to run decide which office is right for them. Is it county commissioner, or school-board member, or state representative—and what are the responsibilities in those jobs again?

EMILY's List, meanwhile, nearly tripled the size of its state and local team and doubled the digital staff to handle the 26,000 inquiries they've received about jumping into the electoral fray post-Trump. Run for Something—co-founded in 2017 by a Hillary for America alum to enlist first-time candidates younger than 35—expected around 100 people to sign up the first year; instead, 15,000 did. Sixty percent of them are women, 40 percent non-white, and the group so far boasts a nearly 50 percent success rate after supporting 72 candidates in the fall of 2017—the typical win rate for first-timers is 10 percent, according to co-founder Amanda Litman. Still, she says, resources are stretched thin by high demand: "We need money!"

"I think there's a disgust," Vilardi says, "when women find themselves running against a guy who hasn't changed the photo on his website since the 1990s—these men have been in office for so long." Then there's another kind of disgust, increasingly articulated by at least some of the rookie politicians: "There's disgust very much about the abuse that men in power have systematically been engaging in, unchecked, and disgust with the people who continue to keep those men in power."

And the sense of ill-earned authority and entitlement—in some cases extending to stories of groping (former Democratic senator Al Franken) or asking campaign staffers to be surrogate mothers (former Republican Arizona congressman Trent Franks) or allegedly threatening to distribute a photo of an extramarital paramour nude, bound, and blindfolded if she blabbed about their affair (Republican Missouri governor Eric Greitens)—exists across the ideological spectrum. The upshot is that while the majority of first-time candidates are Democrats

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From left, Oklahoma's Shay White is a state-legislature candidate, and Illinois's Marie Newman and New Mexico's Antoinette Sedillo Lopez seek U.S. House seats.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF THE SUBJECTS

t ONE politician I had seen was
KING about ISSUES that mattered to
such as STUDENT LOAN DEBT.
I didn't wait on someone to MAKE
POLICY CHANGES. I also did not see
ANY WOMEN OF COLOR in state legislature.
I wouldn't accept that EITHER.

Mina Davis
Running for Nebraska
State Legislature.

or progressives, not all of them are brimming with enthusiasm for the party itself, which is surely why so many first-timers are daring to take on primary incumbents. (According to CAWP, 228 Democratic and Republican women are now planning to challenge incumbents in the House; at this point in the 2016 cycle, only 85 were.)

Listen to Newman talk about her opponent, who voted against the Affordable Care Act and last week participated in Illinois's March for Life. "Here's a guy who calls himself a Democrat and is anti-civil rights in every way, anti-women's health care, anti-immigrant. He voted to defund Planned Parenthood and is so anti-woman he doesn't believe in birth control for anyone. The fact that he thinks he can be that controlling is beyond anything I can understand." Responding through a representative, Lipinski says that "Newman is lying about my record," insisting that he has "never taken a vote or made any comment in opposition to birth control," and citing his involvement in, among other things, "finding a solution for the DACA program" as evidence that he's not anti-immigrant.

Particularly noteworthy is Newman's use of the word *controlling*. The pollster Tresa Udem, who tracks American attitudes about gender, politics, and reproductive rights, told me that the word started popping up in focus groups in fall 2016 in the context of voters' views of politicians, who tried to tell women what they could do with their bodies and health care; she'd rarely heard it used that way before. By the end of 2017, the idea of *controlling men* was coming up all the time. "Voters in five out of six recent focus groups on abortion discussed their observation that white men—often also labeled 'old,' 'rich,' or 'privileged'—are making laws that affect women's reproductive care and rights."

Challenging those in control can be complicated. Newman—who's garnered endorsements from Gillibrand, MoveOn, the Human Rights Campaign, Gloria Steinem, NARAL, and Illinois representatives Jan Schakowsky and Luis Gutiérrez, among others—has conspicuously *not* been endorsed by some of the major women's political groups, including EMILY's List and Planned Parenthood's

PAC. Planned Parenthood spokesperson Erica Sackin says that the group hasn't yet endorsed anyone for 2018, but adds, "Representative Dan Lipinski has not been a champion for women or women's rights, and in fact has only a 23 percent voting record rating from the Planned Parenthood Action Fund." As for EMILY's List, the organization declined to comment on Newman, and while it usually refrains from endorsing challengers to Democratic incumbents, its unwillingness in this instance—when Newman is so clearly the better standard-bearer for its priorities—seems out of sync with what could be a transformational chapter in American politics.

"This is a moment to take significant risks, and we're hedging our bets," Vilardi says, in reference not only to EMILY's List's foot-dragging but also to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and state parties, all cogs in a political machine that tends to be hesitant about directing money toward new kinds of candidates in crowded primaries. In response, the DCCC's Meredith Kelly points out that half of the 18 House races that have so far earned the organization's "Red to Blue" designation—a signal to donors to invest—feature women. But that's nine out of the 390 women running for the House; there are still a hell of a lot of highly motivated novices struggling to stay afloat against guys with more cash, experience, and connections. "Not throwing every dollar behind the exciting new women candidates, especially women of color," Vilardi says, "is missing the political moment if I ever did see it."

A THRONG OF DISGUSTED women does not an effective army make—especially when the mechanisms to train and fund them are at capacity, leaving more than a few campaigns erratically funded and sporadically organized. The logistical challenges are huge: How do you move thousands of women smoothly into upcoming races, especially when so many of them are brand-new to politics?

In the months after the election, says Russo, "about a third of women who contacted us, who marched and were mad, were not

My SEVEN-YEAR-old daughter asked if BEING A REPRESENTATIVE was an "ALL-BOY JOB." I knew then I HAD to SHOW her IT WASN'T.

Nicole Clowney
Running for Arkansas State
House of Representatives.

even registered to vote. The second third said, 'Of course I'm registered to vote.' But when I asked where they voted in 2016, they said, 'Oh, I didn't vote. I had some personal challenges,' or, 'The candidates were so similar I just couldn't decide.'"

And so across the nation, on practically every weekend, women who hope to one day lead their communities and perhaps their country are getting crash courses in civic participation. On a Saturday in late October, as EMILY's List's Schriock was addressing potential candidates at the Detroit Women's Conference, the group's executive director, Emily Cain, was doing the same for a hundred women in Manhattan. "If you wake up in the morning caring about something," Cain told the potential future leaders of America crowding a wood-paneled room, notepads out, "you are qualified to run for office." The message echoes one delivered by Higher Heights' Peeler-Allen to the black women she advises, many of whom lack confidence: "Each one of you is beyond prepared to run for public office. You need to channel your inner mediocre white boy and use that to run."

It may seem like a depressingly low bar for entry—although

among the grim gifts of the Trump administration is the recognition of how low the bar is for political plausibility. But another crucial lesson of Trump's unlikely success, points out John Neffinger, a longtime Democratic candidate coach, is about the power of raw self-confidence, which is "very difficult for even super-high-achieving women to own." Unlike their male counterparts, women tend to assume that they don't have the experience or know-how to get into politics. "A lot of people, but especially women, get hung up on this idea that you should know what you're talking about before you open your mouth," Neffinger says.

In a report published in 2013 called "Girls Just Wanna Not Run," political scientists Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox reported that men were almost 60 percent more likely than women to view themselves as "very qualified" to run for office. The duo also surveyed people in professions that feed into politics (such as law) and reported a 16-percentage-point difference between the number of men and women who said they'd ever considered running.

Part of the project these days is reassuring women that they don't need to run like a white man—be he great, mediocre, or ag-

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF THE SUBJECTS



Laura Moser
Running for: **U.S. House**
State: **Texas**

A journalist and founder of the political group Daily Action, Moser became briefly internet-famous as the mother of the toddler who threw a tantrum on the floor of Obama's office. She's gotten loads of national attention for her race to replace nine-term incumbent John Culberson in a district that's been red since the 1960s—but some major groups, like EMILY's List, are backing one of her primary challengers, Houston lawyer **Lizzie Fletcher**.



Stacey Abrams
Running for: **Governor**
State: **Georgia**

A tax lawyer, romance novelist, and former minority leader in the Georgia House of Representatives, Abrams has spent years registering new voters in her state. She's campaigning in 2018 to become the first black female governor in the U.S. but has a formidable primary opponent in fellow state rep **Stacey Evans**. The race has the potential to divide the energized grassroots organizers who coalesced around Jon Ossoff in his close race last summer.



Lindsay Brown
Running for: **U.S. House**
State: **New Jersey**

Calling herself a "qualified millennial woman running a progressive campaign," the 29-year-old is challenging Republican five-term incumbent Leonard Lance in the primary ... from the left. Brown—who is pro-choice, pro single-payer health plan, and anti Trump's tax bill—changed her party affiliation to vote against Trump in the primary and has been open about her strategy of running as a Republican in a gerrymandered red district.



Gina Ortiz Jones
Running for: **U.S. House**
State: **Texas**

The gay Iraq War Air Force veteran is running in a competitive primary to take on Republican incumbent Will Hurd, about whom she recently told *Time* magazine, "I'm sure a lot of people are saying, 'Look, I can do at least as shitty of a job as that guy.'" In a state that many hope is moving closer to blue every day, she's been endorsed by EMILY's List, Wendy Davis, and Khizr Khan.



Fayrouz Saad
Running for: **U.S. House**
State: **Michigan**

The 34-year-old worked at the Department of Homeland Security under Obama, and more recently was the first director of Detroit's Office of Immigrant Affairs; she hopes to fill an open seat that's been occupied by Republican Dave Trott. In the primary, she's facing another Obama-ite, **Haley Stevens**, 34, who served as chief of staff of the task force that oversaw the auto-industry bailout.

gressively incompetent—in order to have a chance. Gone is the kind of advice that Hillary Clinton received from the chief strategist on her first presidential campaign, Mark Penn, who told her that he didn't think Americans were ready for a "First Mama" but that they might entertain the notion of the "First Father being a woman." "Voice modulation is still part of the training," says Russo, referring to the fact that women continue to be counseled to avoid upspeaking, which can undercut their authority. But overall, the emphasis on defeminizing women has waned, she says.

The whole training curriculum of VoteRunLead was overhauled in 2017 and can now be summed up with its call to action: "Run As You Are." Vilardi mentions Eve Hurwitz, a Navy reservist and small-business owner running for state senator in Maryland. She'd long colored her hair a vivid shade of purple, but, says Vilardi, "everybody told her that you can't run with purple hair, so she lost it, but other people said, 'How are you *not* going to run with purple hair? That's who you are!' So she dyed it back."

Similarly, Peeler-Allen recalls reassuring a recent candidate who was fretting about whether she had to code-switch to speak before different audiences. "Be genuine in what you're saying," Peeler-Allen says she advised. "As long as people feel you have their best interests at heart, it won't matter whether you twang or drawl or drop a consonant here or there."

Which is not to say that the political waters will suddenly part, allowing women to walk serenely into office. "You can know you're the best person for the job, and come out of a tearjerker of a training session, having just been inspired by the first Somali refugee to gain elected office," Vilardi says. "But the world is still gonna come at you and tell you that Jim Smith Jr. has been waiting for ten years and is next in line for that seat you want to run for."

Shay White, 26, is a first-generation college graduate, an African-American who grew up poor in southern Louisiana. When she was 12, a contingent from her school was chosen to visit the statehouse; White was not among them. "In that moment of despair," she says, "I decided I will go to the library and learn all

I could, so when my friends get back I won't be left out of the conversation." That turned her on to "a whole world of policy and government and bills," she says, and spurred her to think: "*I should be a U.S. senator!*" She went on to study social work, attending Oral Roberts University in Tulsa while working three jobs and committing herself to progressive policy fixes.

In 2016, she found out that there was a seat opening up in the Oklahoma legislature—the perfect scenario for a first-time female candidate—and decided to go for it. But three months after she entered the contest last April, she learned that she had a primary challenger, a similarly progressive young white man who'd run an earlier, unsuccessful race. He'd amassed more than \$200,000 for his previous campaign and has raised at least \$48,000 so far for this one. By comparison, as of January, White has raised around \$6,000. The incumbent, who reached his term limit, has been photographed with White's opponent over a hashtag reading #passingthetorch.

White calls her rival "a great teacher, a great guy" and says the two are very close on the issues. "I don't want to get in the way of someone's passion," she says. Still, "things have changed dramatically since last November 8, for everyone. Including women. And people of color."

So White's scrambling to secure support. "If I was a young white man," she says, "people would be falling at my feet, talking about how he's got it together. With me, it's just: 'That's really cute.'" But hoping to be the first African-American, and the first woman, to hold her seat is not cute—in some cases, it's downright ugly. White estimates that she's canvassed a thousand homes so far, and "a couple of days ago, a guy slammed the door in my face, and then I went across the street and a woman told me, 'I love Trump.'" Another time, she says, she was working a white, rural part of the district when a man explained that he couldn't shake her hand because of the gun he was holding—he'd brought it to the door, just in case. "After that, I realized that after I knocked or rang the bell, I needed to take five steps back so I wouldn't startle people," White says. As for the guy who greeted her with a weapon, he "ended up saying that he was going to vote for me."

For all the obstacles first-time female (Continued on page 88)



Lauren Underwood
Running for: **U.S. House**
State: **Illinois**

A registered nurse with a preexisting heart condition, Underwood wants to unseat incumbent Republican Randy Hultgren, who voted to repeal Obamacare. Before she can get to Hultgren, she has to get through the Dem primary, in which the 31-year-old African-American squares off against six white dudes.



Mai Khanh Tran
Running for: **U.S. House**
State: **California**

Left at a Saigon orphanage just before the fall of the city in 1975, Tran came to the U.S. at age 9. She and her family became migrant farmworkers before she worked as a janitor to put herself through Harvard. Now a pediatrician running to replace Republican Ed Royce, Tran has drawn national media attention—and support from 314 Action, a PAC dedicated to electing scientists.



Elissa Slotkin
Running for: **U.S. House**
State: **Michigan**

Republican rep Mike Bishop was recently reported to have an unusual sexual-harassment policy at his D.C. office: Any complaint has to be registered within 48 hours. He's being challenged by ex-Pentagon official Slotkin, a former CIA Middle East expert who served three tours in Iraq. She outraised Bishop by nearly \$100,000 this past fall.



Abby Finkenauer
Running for: **U.S. House**
State: **Iowa**

Elected to Iowa's State House of Representatives at 25, the first-generation college grad was raised by union parents; as an adult, she's become an advocate for paid family leave and affordable child care. She's trying to take the seat of two-term incumbent and tea-partier Rod Blum—and is among the 18 candidates who've earned the DCCC's "Red to Blue" designation.



Gretchen Whitmer
Running for: **Governor**
State: **Michigan**

During a 2013 legislative fight over requiring women to purchase separate insurance to cover abortion, the then-state senator gave a speech describing being sexually assaulted 20 years earlier, and argued that the GOP was effectively proposing that women buy "rape insurance." She's hoping to follow in the footsteps of Michigan's Jennifer Granholm—one of only 39 women to serve as governor in the U.S. ever.



Chicken Pox
Plymouth, RI

WHEN RESCUERS
FOUND NATHAN
CARMAN AFTER
SEVEN DAYS AT SEA,
HIS MOTHER
HAD VANISHED
WITHOUT A TRACE.

BUT HIS PAST
WAS ABOUT
TO RESURFACE.

BY JAMES D. WALSH

DEAD
WAKE

Shortly after 11 p.m. on a warm Saturday in September 2016, 22-year-old Nathan Carman and his mother, Linda, untied their boat, the *Chicken Pox*, and set out for a night of fishing.

They motored south through a salt-marsh pond off Narragansett Bay, past clapboard beach houses, lobster shacks, and rust-worn fishing trawlers, all painted by the light of a full moon. When they reached the edge of the inlet, they slipped through a narrow breachway into open water, and the *Chicken Pox*'s 300-horsepower engine roared to life. Minutes later, the candy-colored lights of the Rhode Island shoreline faded behind them.

Before leaving, Linda had texted a family friend that she and Nathan would be back by morning. But when they hadn't returned by Sunday evening, the friend alerted the Coast Guard. Ships, helicopters, and planes immediately began scouring 82,000 square miles of ocean but found no sign of them. Around the docks and on maritime message boards, New England boaters shared theories about what had happened. Had the *Chicken Pox* collided with some unsurveyed shoal? Or suffered a catastrophic hull failure? Or encountered a massive rogue wave? People who had seen the boat before Nathan and Linda left said it was in good shape, and it was equipped with an emergency transmitter that could send a distress signal and location directly to the Coast Guard. How, in the age of GPS, had a vessel like the *Chicken Pox* vanished without a trace?

On Friday, five days after Nathan and Linda went missing, the Coast Guard called off its search. If the *Chicken Pox* had gone down, the window of survivability in the North Atlantic, even in the relatively warm month of September, had all but closed.

Then, on Sunday, a crew member walking along the deck of the *Orient Lucky*, a hulking freighter sailing 115 miles south of Martha's Vineyard, spotted a red raft bobbing in the water off the ship's bow. Standing in the raft, waving his arms to catch the crew's attention, was Nathan.

Once aboard the *Orient Lucky*, Nathan radioed the Coast Guard an account of what had happened. "Mom and I—two people, myself and my mom—were fishing at Block Canyon, and there was a funny noise in the engine compartment," he said in a flat, dispassionate tone. "I looked and saw a lot of water ... I was bringing one of the safety bags forward, the boat just dropped out from under my feet. When I saw the life raft, I did not see my mom. Have you found her?" Later, after a brief rest, Nathan stood on the deck of the freighter, staring out across the ocean for more than two hours. "I got the feeling he was looking for his mother," the captain of the ship told the *Hartford Courant*.

Nathan's rescue, after seven days at sea, defied all odds. But to some, his story didn't add up. Why hadn't he activated his emergency transmitter? Why hadn't the Coast Guard found a single piece of wreckage? Most important: Why hadn't Linda made it to the raft? "This story is starting to smell like week-old mackerel," one fisherman wrote on a message board. Linda's three sisters were among the suspicious. For years, Nathan had displayed troubling, often hostile behavior toward his mother, screaming at her over the slightest

provocation. Plus, there was no overlooking the fact that, with Linda dead, Nathan stood to inherit at least \$7 million of the family's wealth.

A week after Nathan's rescue, law enforcement from five states, along with the Coast Guard and FBI, convened to discuss Linda's disappearance. Nathan, who refused to cooperate with the authorities, proved difficult to investigate. He lived alone in a white Colonial house in southern Vermont, and agents had a hard time finding anyone who had spoken with him for more than a minute or two. Without the *Chicken Pox* or Linda's body,



Two cold cases: Nathan Carman was the last person to see his grandfather John Chakalos (left) and his mother, Linda, before they died.

many believed that the most her sisters could hope for was a charge of reckless endangerment.

Then, in July 2017, with prospects of a criminal prosecution dimming, Linda's sisters filed a "slayer action" against Nathan in civil court, where the burden of proof is lower and circumstantial evidence holds more weight. Slayer actions are intended to uphold a simple principle: Heirs should not benefit from their own wrongdoing. A man who kills his mother, for example, shouldn't be entitled to an inheritance. But while the slayer action the sisters filed against Nathan raised questions about Linda's death, it stopped short of accusing him of murdering his mother. Instead, the sisters accused Nathan of murdering another family member: his grandfather.

TWO DAYS AFTER his rescue, as Nathan landed in Boston Harbor aboard the *Orient Lucky*, the *Hartford Courant* reported that he had been a suspect in the 2013 murder of John Chakalos, an 87-year-old real-estate developer worth an estimated \$44 million. With Chakalos's murder still unsolved, a murder-for-profit narrative emerged: Nathan must have killed his grandfather and mother to fast-track his inheritance. It is the kind of uncomplicated motive that network dramas are built on—but as investigators in both cases have discovered, few questions raised about Nathan yield a simple answer.

Nathan is tall and gaunt. He dresses almost exclusively in outdoor gear—galoshes, hunter-orange vests, khaki shirts—as if always ready for a turkey hunt. A patchy beard, acne scars, and a clumsy haircut obscure an otherwise handsome face. He rarely smiles or laughs, according to people who know him. As a child, Nathan was diagnosed with Asperger's, a high-functioning variation of what is now known more generally as autism spectrum disorder. Like many people with Asperger's, Nathan displayed above-average intelligence, consistently earning high honors in high school. But those who knew him said he had the social aptitude of a child.

With the help of psychiatrists and occupational therapists, Nathan learned to make his way through the world. Though he wasn't very verbal and his fine motor skills seemed underdeveloped, he liked numbers and planning. He played soccer and basketball, and while he preferred the company of adults to that of kids his own age, his strongest emotional attachments were to animals. As a teenager, Nathan developed a particularly strong bond with a white Irish Sport horse named Cruise that his grandfather bought for him.

Chakalos doted on his grandkids—his motto was "Without family, you've got nothing." Born to Greek immigrants in New Hampshire in 1926, he served as a paratrooper in World War II, earning a reputation as a tough guy who volunteered for the most dangerous missions. People who knew Chakalos described him to me as "ruthless" and "a pain in the ass." After some fits and starts as a young entrepreneur, he built his fortune developing convalescent homes in the 1960s.

Chakalos married his high-school sweetheart, Rita, and settled in Windsor, Connecticut, where they raised four daughters in a modest yellow ranch house on a dead-end street. John, who was proud of his humble roots, preferred to donate his money rather than spoil his children. Though he eventually splurged on a weekend mansion on 82 acres in New Hampshire, he and Rita remained in the split-level home in Windsor for the next 50 years.

Chakalos did provide for his daughters, even into their adulthood. He paid their expenses and gave them annual allowances worth tens of thousands of dollars. But sometimes he used the money as a form of leverage—especially with Linda, the family's rabble-rouser. In the early 1990s, when Linda was living in California, Chakalos offered to buy her and her husband, Clark

Carman, a Dunkin' Donuts franchise if they would move home. After they returned, Chakalos reneged on his offer. But he kept them nearby, installing them in a house he bought for them in Middletown, a leafy college town on the banks of the Connecticut River.

At Middletown High School, faculty and former classmates described Nathan as a loner, a six-foot-three giant running down the hallways from class to class in oversize galoshes. Teased and bullied, he mostly ignored the taunts. But he could also be off-putting. He aggressively challenged teachers and students when-



Nathan Carman shortly after his rescue. "Call me 12 noon if you don't hear from me," his mother texted a friend before she and Nathan set sail.

ever he felt they were wrong. "He was very insistent that he was right, and that was it," one of Nathan's classmates told me. "He would knock stuff over or whatever off the desk. The teacher would try to go out and talk to him, but there was no reasoning with Nathan." In history, his conservative politics came through. "He was very passionate about the Second Amendment," said another classmate. "He believed U.S. citizens should be allowed to buy any form of weapons, including rocket launchers, automatic weapons, grenades."

Nathan grew up mostly with his mother. His parents divorced when he was young, and he and Linda often traveled together—Greece, the Caribbean, an RV trip through Alaska. Once, during a fishing trip in the Canadian wilderness, their canoe flipped over and they were forced to swim to shore. By all accounts, Linda was a giver, volunteering in the community and serving as an aide for other families who had kids with autism. But by the time Nathan got to high school, their relationship had become strained. He was prone to tantrums when things didn't go his way—he once threw a tray of cookies at a wall after Linda burned them. "Soon enough he's going to slit your throat while you're sleeping" her boyfriend at the time warned her. On Halloween in 2009, a parent of a trick-or-treater called the police because Nathan had been handing out "tricks": Ziploc bags filled with fish guts. The following year, when he insisted on moving out of the house, Linda offered a compromise. She allowed him to live in an RV parked in the driveway—far enough to appease Nathan but close enough for her to watch over him.

WHATEVER FRAGILE PEACE Linda was able to maintain with Nathan was shattered a few weeks before Christmas in 2010 when his horse, Cruise, died of colic. The loss of a pet—one of the central pillars of his support structure—was something that Nathan was emotionally ill-equipped to handle. “The only friend he had was his horse,” Clark later recalled. “Things went downhill from that point on.”

After Cruise died, Nathan was despondent. He stopped talking to Linda, communicating with her only through handwritten notes. Plans to scatter Cruise’s ashes had to be put off because Nathan experienced what Linda described on a mental-health message board as a “psychotic episode” at school. Nathan, she wrote, had called the vice-principal “Satan” and his secretary “an agent of the devil”—the sort of behavior, she said, that was “previously reserved for me.” There was something more than autism at work, she feared. Nathan was suddenly having “paranoid delusions” and espousing “religious idiocy.”

Such symptoms are not characteristic of autism. “You don’t expect to see a sudden change in mental status,” said Dr. Jeremy Veenstra-VanderWeele, a specialist in pediatric autism at Columbia University Medical Center. “You don’t expect to see paranoia, you don’t expect to see delusions, hallucination. You don’t expect to see mood disorders, depression. When it happens, it means there’s something else going on.”

Following the incident at school, Nathan was committed to Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Hospital in Hartford. He blamed his mother for his confinement, refusing to see her. But he spent hours visiting with his grandparents John and Rita, who brought him candy, newspapers, and a radio for his room. By that point, John and Linda were locked in a simmering battle for control of Nathan, and Linda grew convinced that her father was using her son’s hospitalization to gain the upper hand. “His grandfather has insisted for 17 years that my son belongs to HIM and all his problems are the result of me, his mother,” Linda wrote on the message board. “This man (his grandfather) is allowed to sit with him in his room, behind closed doors, unmonitored for 5 hours at a time.”

Chakalos had always lavished attention on Nathan, his firstborn grandson. As a teenager, Nathan visited his grandfather at least once a week, and Chakalos brought him on errands, proudly introducing the shy, awkward boy to people around town. Twice, Chakalos donated a new engine to the local fire department, and both gifts included the same demand: that the new truck bear a plaque saying the donation had been made in his grandson’s name. He bought Nathan a pickup truck and gave him access to \$400,000 in a joint bank account. It was as if Chakalos, himself a brusque

day gambling trip. According to someone close to Chakalos, Linda had drained at least one trust fund her father had set up for Nathan. To prevent it from happening again, Chakalos created a new trust fund and put Linda’s youngest sister, Valerie, in charge.

Two days after Linda posted her concerns on the mental-health message board, a family meeting was called in the hospital’s waiting room. “Linda felt her father was butting into what she was trying to do with Nathan,” Clark recalled. “So there was some resentment.” The conversation turned to finances, and Chakalos offered Clark, who was unemployed, a job. When Clark refused, Chakalos threatened to cut off his support for Linda and Nathan. Things quickly turned violent. Linda claimed it started when Chakalos pushed her. Chakalos, in turn, accused Linda of punching, scratching, and kicking him when he tried to leave the room. Two people told me she grabbed her father by the testicles. “My father is worth \$300 million, and I want my share,” Linda told police after the incident. “He is not going to cut me off. I need the money.”

Linda was arrested for assault on an elderly person, but the charges were dropped a few months later at Chakalos’s request. Clark described the incident as perfectly normal for the two. “They seemed to enjoy the animosity,” he said. “Every gathering, Thanksgiving, Greek Easter, there’d always be something like that. Then they’d move on.”



THINGS ONLY GOT WORSE after Nathan was released from the hospital. According to a police report, doctors determined “that he wasn’t psychotic nor schizophrenic.” At first, Nathan hunkered down in his RV. He left every morning at 8 a.m. to visit the library or go fishing, always returning in the early evening. Living conditions in the RV soon became intolerable, and Linda, desperate for help, called a social-services hotline. When a case manager sent police to do a well-being check on Nathan, he was infuriated. Two days later, he got up early and, with a fishing rod poking out of his bag, rode his bicycle to the bus station. When he didn’t return that night, Linda filed a missing-person report. The next day, she received a two-page letter in the mail from Nathan saying he’d run away. He blamed everyone he was closest to except his grandfather.

His parents hired a private investigator, who used dogs to track Nathan’s scent and a helicopter to scan wooded areas. Police checked Nathan’s computer for clues but turned up only searches for motorcycles and pornography. Four days after he went missing, a sheriff’s deputy in Sussex County, Virginia, found Nathan loitering outside a convenience store. He had a moped, \$4,244 in cash, two photos of himself and Cruise, and a plastic bag con-

“MY FATHER IS WORTH \$300 MILLION, AND I WANT MY SHARE,” LINDA TOLD

man short on social grace, understood Nathan’s rigidity better than anyone. “John was very black-and-white,” Clark told me. “Almost like people with Asperger’s.”

Chakalos couldn’t understand why Linda was constantly broke, given the generous support he provided. Her life, by all accounts, was in disarray. She couldn’t hold a steady job, and her house always looked like it had been hit by a tornado. “She had a few problems,” recalled an ex-boyfriend. “She was depressed, and she liked to go to casinos.” Gambling was Linda’s guilty pleasure, a way to anesthetize herself. Sometimes all she needed was a day at nearby Mohegan Sun, but at least once she flew to Mississippi for a ten-

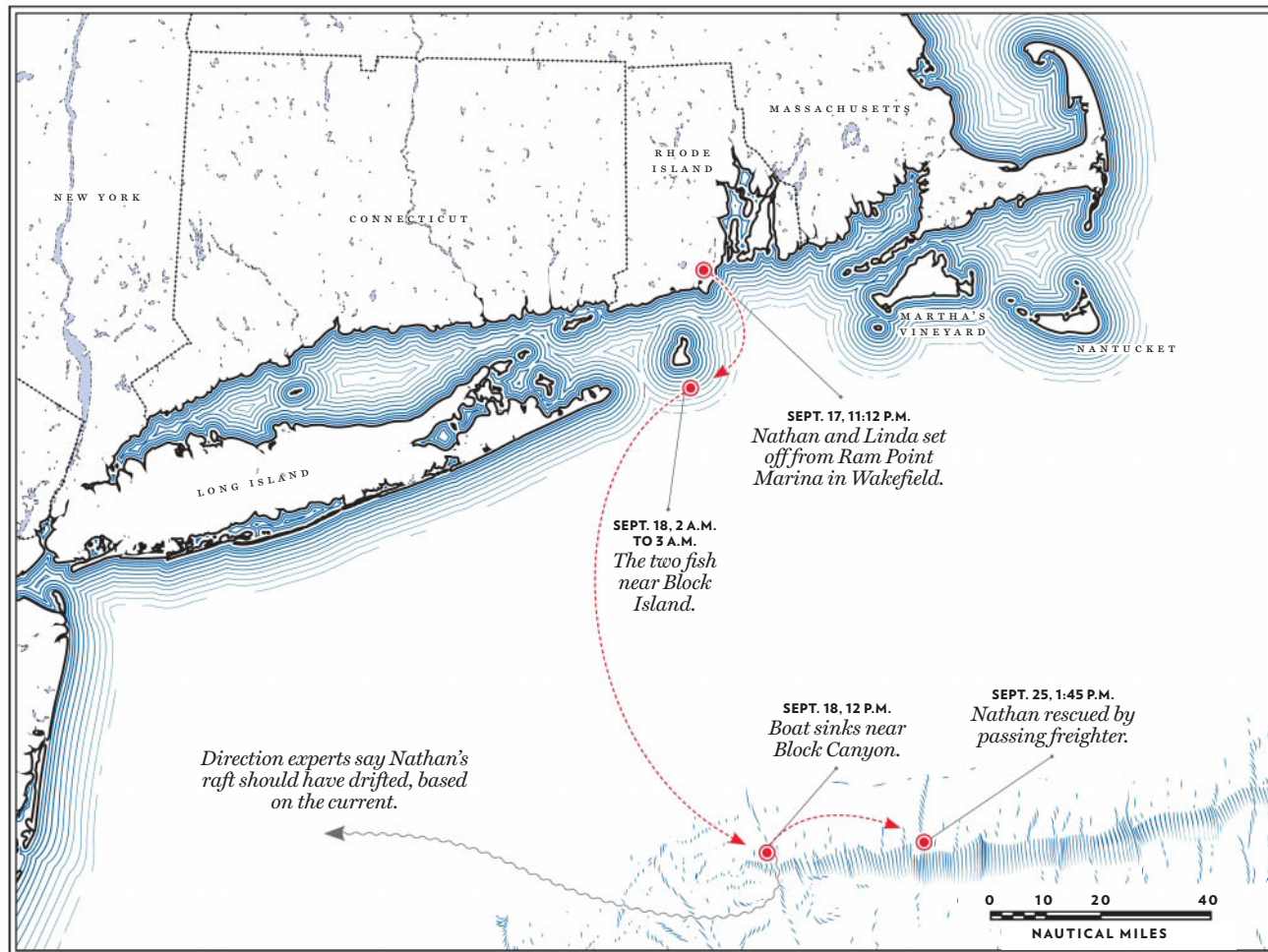
maintaining hair from Cruise’s mane.

Back at home, Nathan grew even more isolated. Feeling unwelcome at his old school, he fulfilled his remaining credits on his own. He rarely left his RV and urinated in water bottles. Every night, wild sounds emanated from the camper. “It sounded like he was taking a baseball bat to the inside of the place, just wrecking it and taking it apart limb from limb,” one neighbor recalled. The outbursts continued for weeks.

In the fall of 2011, terrified of what might happen when their son turned 18 that January, Linda and Clark decided to take drastic action: They signed over guardianship of Nathan to a behav-

A MYSTERY AT SEA

NATHAN CARMAN'S ACCOUNT OF HOW HIS FISHING BOAT SANK, KILLING HIS MOTHER AND SETTING HIM ADrift FOR SEVEN DAYS.



itorial-correction camp. Late one night, men from the camp arrived and took Nathan from the familiar surroundings of his RV to the wilderness of Idaho. Among medical experts, such “boot camps” are widely considered to be harmful to children on the autism spectrum, imposing rigid expectations that a teenager

Then, in the fall of 2013, the relative stability in Nathan’s life came to an abrupt end. That November, his grandmother died of lung cancer at the age of 84, and Chakalos slipped into a deep depression. “He didn’t want to live anymore without Rita,” one of his friends told me.

POLICE. “HE’S NOT GOING TO CUT ME OFF.”

with Asperger’s would find incredibly difficult to meet. But when Nathan returned a few months later, things seemed to improve. Days before his 18th birthday, he started classes at Central Connecticut State University. He moved out of the RV and into a cousin’s house. He began helping his grandfather with his business, and Chakalos paid for Nathan to move into his own apartment. The two discussed plans for Nathan to move to New Hampshire and live full time at his grandfather’s weekend mansion. “His grandfather was proud of him,” someone close to Chakalos told me. “Nathan had already switched his license plate to New Hampshire.”

A little before 8:30 a.m. on Friday, December 20, less than a month after Rita’s death, John’s eldest daughter, Elaine, went to check on her father at his house in Windsor. She found Chakalos dead in his bed, shot three times in the head and back. There was no sign of forced entry. Nothing had been stolen, and the murderer had taken care to pick up the bullet-shell casings before leaving the crime scene.

According to police, Nathan was the last person to see his grandfather alive. They’d had dinner together the night before, but Nathan was unable to account for his whereabouts later that evening. Linda told investigators that she and Nathan had been scheduled to drive to Rhode Island to go fishing around 3 a.m. She had waited in her car for her son in Glastonbury, about halfway between Windsor and Middletown, but he never showed up. Unable to reach him, Linda went home. She didn’t hear from Nathan until 4 a.m., when he called to say he was in Glastonbury waiting for her. They canceled the trip. *(Continued on page 89)*

Does This Man Know More Than Robert Mueller?

BY
Simon van
Zuylen-Wood

Glenn Greenwald's
war on the Russia
investigation.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
Sebastian Palmer



IT'S 10:45 P.M. RIO DE JANEIRO TIME. Glenn Greenwald and I are finishing dinner at a deserted bistro in Ipanema. The restaurant, which serves its sweating beer bottles in metal buckets and goes heavy on the protein, is almost aggressively unremarkable (English menus on the table, a bossa-nova version of "Hey Jude" on the stereo). Greenwald avoids both meat and alcohol but seems to enjoy dining here. "I really believe that if I still lived in New York, the vast majority of my friends would be New York and Washington media people and I would kind of be implicitly co-opted." He eats a panko-cruste shrimp. "It just gives me this huge buffer. You've seen how I live, right? When I leave my computer, that world disappears."

Greenwald, now 50, has seemed to live in his own bubble in Rio for years, since well before he published Edward Snowden's leaks and broke the domestic-spying story in 2013—landing himself a Pulitzer Prize, a book deal, and, in time, the backing of a billionaire (that's Pierre Omidyar) to start a muckraking, shit-stirring media empire (that's First Look Media, home to the Intercept, though its ambitions have been downgraded over time). But he seems even more on his own since the election, just as the agitated left has regained the momentum it lost in the Obama years.

The reason is Russia. For the better part of two years, Greenwald has resisted the nagging bipartisan suspicion that Trump-world is in one way or another compromised by a meddling foreign power. If there's a conspiracy, he suspects, it's one against the president; where others see collusion, he sees "McCarthyism." Greenwald is predisposed to righteous posturing and contrarian eye-poking—and reflexively more skeptical of the U.S. intelligence community than of those it tells us to see as "enemies."

And even if claims about Russian meddling are corroborated by Robert Mueller's investigation, Greenwald's not sure it adds up to much—some hacked emails changing hands, none all that damaging in their content, maybe some malevolent Twitter bots. In his eyes, the Russia-Trump story is a shiny red herring—one that distracts from the failures, corruption, and malice of the very Establishment so invested in promoting it. And when in January, as "Journalism Twitter" was chastising the president for one outrage or another, Congress quietly passed a bipartisan bill to reauthorize sweeping NSA surveillance, you had to admit Greenwald might have been onto something.

"When Trump becomes the starting point and ending point for how we talk about American politics, [we] don't end up talking about the fundamental ways the American political and economic and cultural system are completely fucked for huge numbers of Americans who voted for Trump for that reason," he says. "We don't talk about all the ways the Democratic Party is a complete fucking disaster and a corrupt, sleazy sewer, and not an adequate alternative to this far-right movement that's taking over American politics."

Greenwald's been yelling about this, quite heatedly, since before the election. "In the Democratic Echo Chamber, Inconvenient Truths Are Recast As Putin Plots," reads the headline of an Intercept piece published in October 2016. "The Increasingly Unhinged Russia Rhetoric Comes From a Long-Standing U.S. Playbook," reads another, from February 2017. As Mueller's investigation widened, no fallen domino—not the guilty plea of former Trump national-security adviser Michael Flynn, not the indictment of former campaign chairman Paul Manafort—chastened Greenwald. When it was recently reported that Steve Bannon had lobbed a "treason" charge in the direction of Donald Trump Jr.—precipitating his break with the president—Greenwald rolled his eyes. Bannon's "motives are pure & pristine and he is simply trying to inform the public about the truth," Greenwald tweeted sarcastically.

This is a year in which even the most anti-Establishment liberals have found themselves rooting for Mueller, a Republican who ran George W. Bush's war-on-terror FBI. "It is not an insubstantial portion of Democratic online loyalists who believe that if you deviate from Democratic Party orthodoxy on the Trump-Russia question, you are a paid Kremlin agent," Greenwald says. And many of those who don't believe Greenwald works for Vladimir Putin tend to think he does his bidding for free. "I love him," says former Gawker editor John Cook, who worked with Greenwald at the Intercept. "He's dead, tragically wrong on this."

Thanks to this never-ending hot take, Greenwald has been excommunicated from the liberal salons that celebrated him in the Snowden era; anybody who questions the Russia consensus, he says, "becomes a blasphemer. Becomes a heretic. I think that's what they see me as." Greenwald is no longer invited on MSNBC, and he's portrayed in the Twitter fever swamp as a leading villain of the self-styled Resistance. "I used to be really good friends with Rachel Maddow," he says. "And I've seen her devolution from this really interesting, really smart, independent thinker into this utterly scripted, intellectually dishonest, partisan hack." His view of the liberal online media is equally charitable. "Think about one interesting, creative, like, intellectually novel thing

"Anybody who questions it becomes a blasphemer. Becomes a heretic. I think that's what they see me as."

that [Vox's] Matt Yglesias or Ezra Klein have said in like ten years," he says. "In general, they're just churning out Democratic Party agitprop every single day of the most superficial type." (Reached for comment, none of these people would respond to Greenwald.)

All this has led to one of the less-anticipated developments of the Donald Trump presidency: Glenn Greenwald, Fox News darling. For his sins, Greenwald has been embraced by opportunistic #MAGA partisans seeking to discredit the Trump-Russia story. When alt-right ringleader Mike Cernovich sat for a *60 Minutes* interview last year, he praised only one journalist: Greenwald. "My opinion of Glenn ten or 15 years ago was entirely negative," says Fox News' Tucker Carlson, who now heralds him as one of the "clearest thinkers" in media. (A parallel phenomenon involves the rehabilitation by the Resistance of an armada of neoconservative zombies—David Frum, Max Boot, Robert Kagan, Bill Kristol—and the lionization, at least temporarily, of Trump-skeptical Republican politicians like John McCain, Jeff Flake, and Lindsey Graham.)

This, by the way, is the reason we're eating dinner so late on a Tuesday: Greenwald has to be at a TV studio in a few minutes to be interviewed by Carlson. We leave the restaurant and head across the street to the garage where he parked his Mitsubishi Outlander. Unexpectedly, the gate to the entrance has been shut and the attendant is missing. Mild panic sets in. Greenwald begins rattling the gate. Even if we catch a cab to the studio, his TV clothes are in the car, and he is currently wearing shorts and an old polo shirt. "How," he frets, "can I go on Fox News dressed like this?"

The parking attendant eventually shows up. There is no traffic; we book it to a high-rise studio with postcard views of Sugarloaf Mountain and Christ the Redeemer. Greenwald changes into a shirt and tie but keeps on his shorts and flip-flops. "I've never worn long pants when I'm appearing on TV," he says with a grin. He is miked up and fitted with an earpiece, then forced to wait 20 minutes as his segment keeps getting bumped. The experience of actually listening to Carlson's show seems to get to him.

"He's on a huge anti-gun-control, anti-disarmament rant," Greenwald tells me the first time I ask him what Carlson's talking about. "Bullshit," he says the second time I ask, rolling his eyes. By the time he goes live, it is 11:50 p.m., and Carlson asks just two questions.

"So I only had like three minutes," he says, un-miking himself. "But it's fine. It was worth it. It was cathartic."

GREENWALD'S HOME is located on a dead-end cobblestone street, under a thick canopy of trees, a few miles inland from Ipanema Beach. The grounds are large enough to comfortably accommodate Greenwald; his husband, David Miranda; their two recently adopted children; household staff; 24 formerly stray dogs; and some dog poop, which, when I visit the day before his appearance on *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, I step in.

Greenwald greets me in his cathedral-like living room dressed in his usual shorts and polo. When I joke that he lives in a gated community—a guard in a booth controls access to the street—he seems wounded and explains that he could afford the place only because the recent Brazilian recession had devastated Rio's

housing market. He plays coy when I ask him who owned the house previously. "I think it was some hedge-fund pig," he says.

In person, Greenwald is funny and unguarded, which is the opposite of his online persona. Within minutes of my arrival, he launches into a story about a possible joint op-ed written with Katie Couric, before relaying a conversation he had with Tanehisi Coates about how problematic it is to collaborate with people like Katie Couric. "It sounds like I'm obnoxiously name-dropping, and I'm not!" he says, catching himself. "But it was like, 'How do you maintain your authenticity and the original kind of passion about the world that led you to be someone worth listening to, when now, suddenly, all these doors that had been previously closed are swinging open for you?'"

Greenwald grew up near Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He was closeted in high school and cultivated a rebel iconoclasm to cope. "One of the strategies you can develop is, *I'm never going to be weak*," he says. "*I'm always gonna be smarter and stronger and more aggressive*." Comparing himself to the titular character in



GREENWALD WITH EDWARD SNOWDEN IN THE DOCUMENTARY *CITIZENFOUR* (2014).

the mockumentary *American Vandal*, he says he once prompted a schoolwide investigation by spray-painting the walls with "extremely offensive profanities about individual students and teachers." He was always warring with the administration, warring with teachers," says his friend and former classmate Norman Fleisher. Instead of schoolwork, he devoted himself to the competitive-debate circuit and, in his senior year, to a failed bid for the Lauderdale Lakes City Council. He squeaked into George Washington University, where he majored in philosophy—Nietzsche—and again poured all his energy into debate. After that, law school at NYU, then a job at Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz, the most decorated and macho of the city's white-shoe firms. In 1995, he left Wachtell to start his own litigation practice and carved a niche doing pro bono civil-liberties work, including defending neo-Nazi Matthew Hale.

Greenwald supported the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, but in 2005, when it became clear that the war on terror had produced a massive suspension of civil liberties—warrantless wiretapping, Guantánamo Bay—Greenwald abandoned his law practice and devoted himself to calling out the administration on his website, Unclaimed Territory. That year, he broke up with a longtime boyfriend, a psychotherapist. To unwind, he came to Rio alone, where he met the then-19-year-old Miranda. Their relationship did not, at the time, entitle Miranda to a visa—so Greenwald stayed in Brazil; Miranda is now the first openly gay city councilman in Rio's history.

Early on, the mainstream press was docile in its coverage of the war on terror. Greenwald and his allies in the nascent left-wing blogosphere emerged to push back. “‘Barbarians at the gate’ was kind of the metaphor,” Greenwald says, and his prosecutorial hatchet jobs on the Bush White House became especially popular, despite (or perhaps because of) his exhausting, didactic prose. When he moved his blog to Salon in 2007, says his former colleague Alex Pareene, “editors would joke about the incredibly SEO-unfriendly headlines on his blog posts. Like, 3,000 words with the headline ‘And Another Thought.’” Twitter, when that was invented, proved irresistible to Greenwald. “I would wake up at like nine in the morning and see somebody saying something stupid on Twitter, and then it would be four in the afternoon, and I haven’t gotten out of bed.”

Once Obama was elected, the left blogosphere cleaved. “Some people, they revealed they’re mainstream, democratic liberals and defended a mainstream, democratic liberal administration,” says Pareene. “Others, they stuck to their line of opposition to the use of American power.” Greenwald was clearly in the latter camp, praising Ron Paul’s military isolationism and blasting the various “war criminals” who still ran D.C. Which meant that, by 2013, Greenwald, now writing for the *Guardian*, had spent a decade hurling invective at essentially everyone in Washington. To someone like Edward Snowden, those were unimpeachable bona fides. To others with more sympathy for the American Establishment, coordinating the publication of Snowden’s documents was something else. Greenwald hatred was intense not just in the intelligence community but also among would-be allies of transparency in the press; Andrew Ross Sorkin of the *New York Times* said he’d “almost arrest Glenn Greenwald.” Then—*Meet the Press* moderator David Gregory asked Greenwald if he should be charged for having “aided and abetted” Snowden. Greenwald was not wearing long pants during that interview, either.

Greenwald’s self-conception as an opposition figure, though, was getting more complicated. In 2014, Omidyar, the founder of eBay, poured \$250 million into a news organization called First Look Media and handed Greenwald the keys. One of Greenwald’s collaborators on the Snowden story, the documentarian Laura Poitras, made a movie about the experience, *Citizenfour*, in which Greenwald was something of a second star. In 2015, it won the Oscar for Best Documentary, which Greenwald says he could not enjoy because host Neil Patrick Harris joked that “Snowden couldn’t be here for some treason.” At an after-party that night, a BuzzFeed reporter asked him about it. “I’m like, ‘I’m really trying hard not to say anything about it,’” Greenwald recalls. “And they’re like, ‘No, but you must have an opinion on it,’ and I was like, ‘Neil Patrick Harris is a fucking moron, and that joke was completely idiotic and offensive.’” (For the record, Snowden thought it was funny.)

LAST SEPTEMBER, Greenwald traveled to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to speak at an event held by the Lannan Foundation, an organization that offers prizes and speaking engagements to NPR-friendly types like Roxane Gay and Colson Whitehead. Wearing a light-gray suit and black Hugo Boss boots, Greenwald joked with the crowd for a few minutes before warning them that he wouldn’t be discussing the well-chronicled sins of the Trump administration. “I really don’t think you need me taking up your time talking about that,” he

“In Glenn’s defense, he has never purported to be a patriot.”

said. “And if you do for some reason want that, you can always just go home and turn on MSNBC.” Instead, Greenwald delivered an absorbing reading of the postelection landscape that fell somewhere between a troll job and a comprehensive articulation of his worldview.

The Trump election—because it upended countless political norms, because polls failed to predict it—was a psychologically destabilizing development. “When events happen that are so fucking out of the ordinary, people look for unifying events,” Greenwald tells me. “It becomes like a religion.” But Greenwald didn’t view the election as an aberration that needed to be explained. “Every time Trump says or does something that is xenophobic, or bigoted, or militaristic, or threatening, people always say, ‘This is not what America is about,’” he told the crowd in Santa Fe. “I always react to that by saying, ‘It’s not?’”

Rather than see Trump as a product of a rotten power structure, as Greenwald does, and the 2016 election as a wild reaction against that power structure, as Greenwald also does, it was easier for most American liberals to frame his victory as an accident. And rather than look within to eradicate the conditions that wrought Trump, it was more comforting to pin his rise on an external foe.

The Russian scandal proved ideal. “Across the political aisle, American elites are preoccupied with rejuvenating a Cold War in the name of believing that all of our problems are traceable to the Kremlin,” Greenwald argued. The notion that “Putin is not some fumbling dictator but some kind of an omnipotent mastermind,” he went on, “stems very much from this human desire to believe that when things go wrong, it can’t be our fault.”

Put another way: If you believe the 2016 election was a populist uprising against complacent elites, the Russia preoccupation can seem like an effort to ignore what Trump voters—and Sanders voters—were trying to say. Alternatively, if you believe Trump’s victory was a Russia-perpetrated fraud, normalcy is restored simply by removing him from office. Which, conveniently, is what many hope Mueller’s Russia probe will do.

The week I visit Greenwald in Rio, the news out of the D.C.-Moscow gyre is the indictment of three Trump-campaign aides: Rick Gates, George Papadopoulos, and Manafort. Sitting at Greenwald’s dining-room table, as a little dog named Kane molests a bigger dog named Enzo, I make the mistake of suggesting this is a “huge” development. Greenwald is ready for me before I finish my sentence.

“Have they been huge?” he pounces, answering his own question. “I mean, I guess they’ve been huge in the sense that Donald Trump’s former campaign manager was indicted on multiple felony charges, right? That’s inherently huge, but it’s



ACCEPTING THE 2014 GEORGE POLK AWARD.

PHOTOGRAPHS: STAN HONDA/GETTY IMAGES (POLK); KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES (ACADEMY)

not particularly huge for the Russia story, because all the charges leveled against Manafort were unrelated to questions of collusion with the Russians.” Fair enough, but Papadopoulos’s arrest was in fact related to the question of collusion. Greenwald waves this away. “They had all these kind of losers who weren’t even in the Trump campaign,” he says. “You know, these charlatans who were constantly puffing up their résumés, who come from the shittiest schools and have no significant experience.” He continues: “What happened this week, for me, is exactly what I’ve been expecting all along.”

True. Last March, Greenwald wrote an Intercept piece that forecast the “indictment of a low-level operative like Carter Page, or the prosecution of someone like Paul Manafort on matters unrelated to hacking.” His point then, as now, is that such developments are far removed from the original impetus of the investigation: whether Trump and Russia worked together to throw the election. “If you go back to what the Democrats were saying in 2016 and then into 2017, it wasn’t ‘Paul Manafort is laundering money and hiding taxes and failing to register forms about how he’s a foreign agent,’” Greenwald says. “Because that’s true of that entire scumbag lobbyist class in D.C.”

When it comes to what the investigation was designed to focus on, Greenwald says he’s still waiting for hard evidence that the Trump campaign aided Russian operatives in hacking the Clinton-campaign emails—or struck some other corrupt bargain. Absent that, he’s not impressed. “Some Russians wanted to help Trump win the election, and certain people connected to the Trump campaign were receptive to receiving that help. Who the fuck cares about that?”

and global capitalism were better than what the other team was offering. Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush, the presumptive 2016 favorites, reflected this consensus. Their dismal showings suggested the consensus had been busted, and among the signs that the political spectrum had broadened was the appearance of a new-seeming category of Russia-skeptic firebrands sometimes called the alt-left. Greenwald was one of the loudest voices, but there were others, many so divergent in their views of everything but Russia that it hardly made sense to group them together: the Trump-curious burn-it-all-down types; the “dirtbag left,” led by the irreverent politics podcast *Chapo Trap House*; anti-Zionist-anti-imperialists like Max Blumenthal; basically all of Russian television network RT’s on-air talent; retired NYU scholar and *Nation* eminence Stephen F. Cohen.

These critics note the irony that many who were critical of national-security abuses during the Bush and Obama years have now, in the name of defending the republic, put their faith in opaque intelligence agencies and retired generals. That uncomfortable alliance between liberals and the “deep state” is the Greenwald-Trumpworld relationship inverted; on Russia, the America Firsters in the White House share more with dovish lefties than with Washington’s centrist power elite. To borrow from the language of Brexit, the ideological split on the Russia question may be more “Leave” versus “Remain” than Republican versus Democrat. In other words, Establishment insiders versus skeptical outsiders.

“For me, the fundamental question is: How satisfied are you with the prevailing order, with the status quo?” By this, Greenwald does not mean life in the Trump era but the behavior of American elites



WITH LAURA POITRAS AT THE 2015 OSCARS.



WITH TUCKER CARLSON ON FOX NEWS IN OCTOBER 2017.

Greenwald’s not wrong to criticize the zealotry of the Russia pile-on. The investigation’s boosters not only seem to ignore America’s own long history of election meddling (“Yanks to the Rescue: The Secret Story of How American Advisers Helped Yeltsin Win,” crowed a 1996 *Time* cover story) but have also elevated a bipartisan class of Russia conspiracists like Louise Mensch and Eric Garland to unfortunate prominence. Which is how, for instance, a deranged 127-tweet rant about “game theory” became cherished by liberals as a Russiagate decoder ring.

How did all this happen? In a recent issue of *n+1*, Cornell Law School professor Aziz Rana called 2016 the “last election of the Cold War.” What he meant was that for half a century, an unassailable Western consensus had prevailed that democracy

over the past several generations. “How benevolent do you regard American power and American institutions?” The answer to that question says a lot about how you rate the Trump threat.

ONE AFTERNOON, Greenwald and I drive to a sports club affiliated with Rio’s most popular soccer team, Flamengo. His mischievous and adorable children, Jonathas, 8, and João Vitor, 10, are scheduled for a tennis lesson at the club’s clay courts. It occurs to me that a tennis match with Greenwald would make an entertaining narrative stunt. Greenwald declines, telling me that he’s too good. “You’re going to feel bad because I’m going to destroy you, and you’re going to try and get vengeance on me through the profile.” That I’m cooking (Continued on page 91)

THE CUT

NAN ZHANG

AGE: 21

FROM: China

WEARING: Apple
AirPods,

Bape jacket, Nike Air
Vapormax x Comme
des Garçons sneakers
(not shown).

Meet You on the Corner of Hype and Mercer

Two blocks in Soho have become a fashion destination
for streetwear-obsessed boys. *By Emilia Petrarca*

Photographs by Ryan Pfluger



GRANT HALPERN

AGE: 13

FROM: Westchester

WEARING: Bape hoodie, Supreme backpack.

What stops have you made today? We went to the Off-White Em Pty Gallery on Mercer, then we went to Palace, and then we came to Stadium Goods.

What did you buy?

I bought a hoodie from the new Off-White collection. It was the cheaper collection, so it was \$170 instead of, like, \$600.

And I got the Pot Palace T-shirt.

What do you think about that, Mom?

JOAN HALPERN: Is that really what it is?

GRANT: It's not weed, it's just the plant design.

JOAN: There was one with a naked woman on it, and I was like, "No! Stay away from that one."

I

IF I WERE THE MOTHER of a teenage boy who owned more than three pairs of sneakers and spent longer than 60 seconds looking at himself in the mirror each morning, the intersection of Mercer and Howard Streets in Soho is where I would go looking for him if he ever went missing.

In the past few years, these off-Broadway streets have become a destination for fashion-curious men (and some women) who want to buy into streetwear culture and its many forms, from graphic skate tees to Adidas sneakers designed by Kanye West. Stores including VFiles, Stadium Goods, Billionaire Boys Club, Palace Skateboards, NikeLab 21M, and Off-White create an outdoor mall for items such as these, which are particularly hyped among young people

for their relative affordability and constant supply. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the French designer Agnès B., whose humble storefront sits smack in the middle of all this.

Long lines for “drops,” or timed releases of limited-edition items, plus in-store events hosting celebrities like Justin Bieber, flood the area with stylish locals, tourists, and the occasional parental chaperone. At least one amateur photo shoot is happening at all times, and at around 5 p.m., multiple store employees report, the distinct smell of marijuana tends to waft throughout the area.

Artist Barbara Kruger hosted her most recent show, *Untitled (The Drop)*, in the form of a pop-up at the corner of Howard and Broadway this past November, as a parody of Soho’s long lines for drops—particularly those at Supreme, whose boxy logo bears an uncanny resemblance to Kruger’s own work. Sure enough, Pavlovian hypebeasts joined the back of her long line, just to see what the fuss was all about.

“In my mind, for this culture, this is the New York shopping destination,” declares John McPheters, the CEO and co-founder of Stadium Goods, which opened at 47 Howard in 2015. “For a long time, I think people looked more toward Lafayette, where Supreme was, and that’s a great area to shop,” McPheters says, referencing the original streetwear mecca, which first opened in 1994. “But I think we have something that’s decidedly a little newer; there’s a different type of energy happening here.”

“Mercer is youthful and fashion-forward,” says VFiles founder Julie Anne Quay, who’s worked near this Soho intersection since the ’90s—she was the executive editor at *V* magazine, which makes its home at 11 Mercer. She opened VFiles in 2012, when the only other “downtown cool” stores in the area were Opening Ceremony and Alexander Wang. “These kids know everything about sneakers, who’s wearing what, and what’s dropping,” she adds.

In addition to being an emerging menswear hub, the corner of Mercer and Howard is a place to see and be seen—or cultivate “clout,” a word that’s been reinserted into the popular lexicon as a replacement for “influence” both IRL and online. Certain sneakers, for example, depending on how hard they are to acquire and which celebrities they’re associated with, can gain you clout. Meanwhile, a pair of white, Kurt Cobain-esque sunglasses have been deemed “clout goggles.” In 2018, clout is inextricable from style, which is why we’re calling this particular Soho area the Clout Corridor. It’s here that young people are linking, building, and, most important, buying.



1 Stadium Goods
47 Howard St.

2 Palace
49 Howard St.

3 Billionaire Boys Club
7 Mercer St.

4 NikeLab 21M
21 Mercer St.

5 Off-White
53 Mercer St.

OTHER STOPS ALONG THE WAY:

Supreme
274 Lafayette St.

Bape Store
91 Greene St.

Kith
337 Lafayette St.

Nike
529 Broadway

Adidas
115 Spring St.

Concepts NYC
225 Hudson St.

Extra Butter
125 Orchard St.

Round Two
113 Stanton St.

FOR THE GROWN-UPS:

Noah
195 Mulberry St.
*Founded by Supreme alum
Brendon Babenzien.*



The Wagners, who are from Baltimore, pulled up to the corner in a white limousine wearing Supreme beanies.



AUSTIN BUTTS

a.k.a. Asspizza, 19

FROM: Queens

WEARING: North Face parka, customized Carhartt beanie, cargo pants from a friend, Nikes from eBay.

"I used to hang out in Soho in 2014 and 2015, but now I'm not really around here a lot. I come back like twice a month or something. Back then, it was just a place where all the kids would go. We really wouldn't buy anything, because we didn't

have money. We were just fucking around, basically. We'd meet at Prince and Mercer. You could sit outside the Mercer Hotel and get free Wi-Fi and people think you're important because you're sitting outside the Mercer Hotel."

ELLISON BAUS

AGE: 15

FROM: New York

How often do you come to this area?

I'm here at least three or four times a week. It's where I feel like I can be myself and walk around in a wild outfit and not have to feel like, *Oh my God, how am I going to sit like this in class?* I can be me here.

Where did you get those glasses?

I got them last Tuesday at Opening Ceremony, and they're George Keburia. I've been wanting them for a while, and then Solange wore them on the cover of *Surface* magazine and I was like, *I need them!*

What about the rest of your outfit?

My bag is vintage Dior, and I got it from American Two Shot.

I didn't like the strap it was very 2000s so I put on a strap from another bag. My sweatshirt is BlackEyePatch. It's this really cool underground brand from Asia. This lock is vintage Louis

Vuitton. I got it off eBay for Christmas. I might give the key to a boyfriend someday or one of my best friends.



CAIDEN TING, 6
FROM: New York

“My sweatshirt is from Kith, isn't it cool? *Sesame Street* is on it. My teacher always tells me she loves my clothes and sneakers. That makes me happy.”



FELIX VAN BUREN, 22
FROM: Boston

“My whole image as a musician is having no image. I don't reveal my face when I perform or when I'm out and about.”



DEON HINTON, 19
FROM: Fayetteville, Arkansas

“I'm with my friends from China. They really like shopping, I just wanted to bring them around and show them New York's culture.”



MATTHEW TING, 40 (*Caiden's father*)
FROM: New York

“When I was younger, I would shop at Canal Jeans and Renaissance, where I used to buy my Girbaud jeans.”

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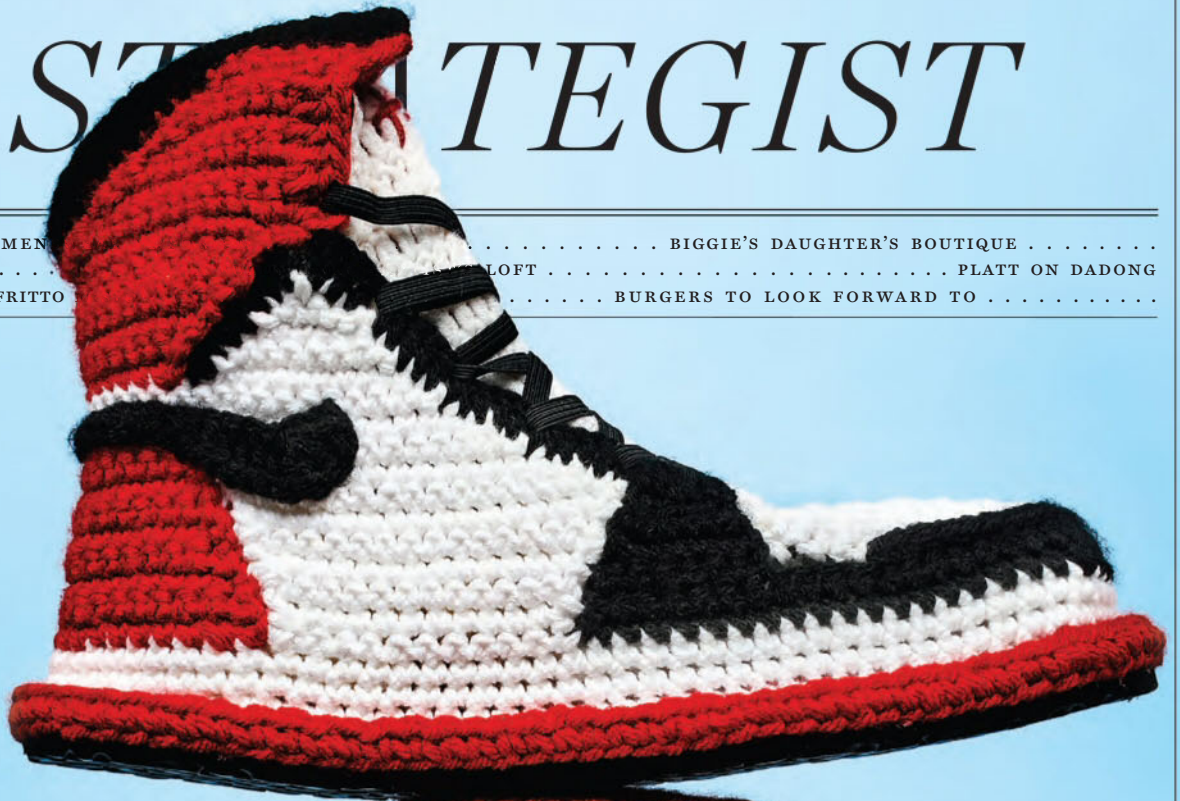
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LOFT PLATT ON DADONG
A FINE FRITTO BURGERS TO LOOK FORWARD TO



**THE
BEST
BET**

THE GOAL: Find the best slippers that look like sneakers. After all, between Balenciaga's sock sneakers, Allbirds's wool slip-ons, and Adidas's Primeknit racers, plenty of outdoor shoes feel like bedroom slippers. Surely the reverse must be true too.

THE VERDICT: The **One Love Socks** by Fuggit (\$60 at fuggitbrand.com) take aesthetic inspiration from the rarest, most coveted kicks on the market—in this case, Retro Air Jordan 1s—but are hand-crocheted by a team of female artisans in Turkey. Unlike most of the puffy slipper-sneakers available, Fuggits have a tapered, high-top silhouette and fake laces. And recently the brand's founder, Richard Riley, started adding rubber soles—meaning you can even wear them downstairs to the deli.



BEST BETS

FIRST LOOK

In April, **Nordstrom** will open its first New York City store with three floors of men's apparel and products (235 W. 57th St.).

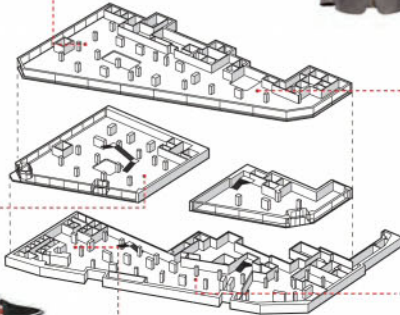
Dresswear: Suits from luxury menswear lines like Armani, Tiger of Sweden, Italian brand Eleventy, and Japan-based Ring Jacket; tailors on site for on-the-spot alterations.



Givenchy area: A shirt printed with gold lips (\$2,995); Western evening jackets (\$3,760).



Sunglasses: A shop-in-a-shop devoted to shades, like the Luigi frames from German eyewear brand Mykita (\$519).



Shoe department: Gucci wing-tip boots (\$1,550) next to classic slip-on Vans (\$50); shoeshine station offering buffing and polishing (\$3).



Grooming: Le Labo beard oil (\$60) and after-shave balm (\$35); clay hair pomade (\$24) from Saturdays NYC; events with visiting barbers.

2x2

Geometric Wooden Lamps

For polygonal beams of light.

TABLE

PENDANT

PAINTED



Seletti Woodspot Pink by Alessandro Zambelli, \$190 at allmodern.com.



Specimen Cement wood lamp by Thinkk Studio, \$206 at specimen-editions.fr.

NATURAL



Capucha Origami wood-and-paper table lamp, \$218 at oitenta.com.



Hemlock Diamond pendant lamp, \$120 at lafabriquedeco.com.

THREE IN ONE

In February, Brooklyn boutique owner **Jill Lindsey** will expand to Tribeca with an eponymous emporium touting finance workshops, nut-milk cappuccinos, and smokable herbs (104 Reade St.).



SHOP
Smoking herbs for lung congestion (\$13); spicy coconut-oil mouthwash (\$26); Marvis toothpaste in licorice, jasmine, and cinnamon (\$8).



LEARN
Finance workshops with wealth adviser Bob Fuest (from \$95); tarot readings (from \$25); acroyoga classes with instructor Jonathan Ziff Sint (\$20).



DRINK
Irving Farm Coffee served with handmade nut milk (from \$2.75); biodynamic wines and Champagne (from \$12); healing tinctures (from \$4.50).

HE SAID, HE SAID

David Sobie and Mark Geller opened **Happy Returns**, a booth for unwanted goods from online stores (30 Rockefeller Plz.).



DAVID: "Here's the pitch: We create an in-store return experience for 13 shops such as Eloquii and Chubbies." **MARK:** "We're in a former ticketing booth for Radio City Music Hall. The 'returnistas' do all the return work for you." **DAVID:** "Our staff role-play people bringing damaged items in, just in case someone tries."

HOW TO

Stefan Matte, from one-on-one stretching studio **Lymbr**, on the proper way to train the oft-overlooked pinkie toe (11 Jay St.).



1 "The little toe is important for balance. To stretch your left one—and release tension—sit on the floor, right knee bent. **Cross your left foot over your right knee.**"

1

2 "Grasp the left little toe with your left hand to pull it up toward your left knee. Use the right hand to separate the other toes. **Pull and release the toe five times.**"



3 "Don't hold the stretch in place—this will slow the nervous system and in turn condition your muscles to respond slowly when you're, say, slipping on ice."

3



TOP FIVE

Biggie Smalls's daughter, T'yanne Wallace, recently opened **Notorious**, a Boerum Hill shop for her hip-hop-inspired clothing line (514 Atlantic Ave.).



"This **hoodie** (\$35) has our logo on it. I added the extra S to remind people that this isn't a Biggie merch line—it's 100 percent by me."



"I designed this **smoking kit** (\$20) for 4/20 last year—it comes with one grinder, two Notorious-branded lighters, and three packs of rolling papers."



"**Pins** are the new thing right now—this one has my dad with a crown on it (\$10). People seem to like to put it on their hat, jacket, backpack, shirt."



"For our 'Fuck Bitches, Get Money' **hat** (\$30), the phrase is spelled out in emoji. Some women said they want one that says 'Fuck Guys, Get Money.'"



"A clothing line called Retro helped with this **tee** (\$30), with a picture of my dad dressed how he would be if he were alive now: Yeezys, a Bathing Ape hoodie."

TADREE COPPEDGE

Real-Estate Agent

Are there any deals out there to be had?

That whole Sutton Place area has some really interesting deals, believe it or not. Two-bedrooms over there are going for \$2 million; the same apartment on 12th between Fifth and Sixth would be \$3 million or even \$3.5 million.

What about anything ... cheaper? Say, a two-bedroom under a million?

Well, I only know Manhattan, and no, I really don't see that kind of deal available. What one would have to do is find a small one-bedroom in a walk-up building with a studio adjacent, buy both, and then combine.

Where do you live?

I rent an apartment in the East Village.

Do you live alone or do you have a partner?

I don't date anymore. I've lost trust in men. All of my girlfriends that are married—had they known what their husbands would have been like, they wouldn't have married them. All of them. I have a saying when it comes to men: I can't screw you and change your diapers, too, because I'm not a pedophile.

INTERVIEW BY
ALEXIS SWERDLOFF



LIGHTNING ROUND

Born in: *White Plains.*

Before real estate:

"I was a model for ten years and was photographed with Givenchy for WWD."

Sweater: *"I bought it after 9/11 from a South American woman selling sweaters outside the Astor Place station."*

Dream address: *"Either the penthouse of the Pierre, the penthouse of the Woolworth Building, 157 West 57th, or 220 Central Park South."*



DaDong

Lame Duck

At midtown's glitzy new DaDong, the signature dish is overshadowed by the spectacle.

BY ADAM PLATT

IT'S SAFE TO say that grizzled New Yorkers who've subsisted over the decades on a steady diet of soup dumpings and warmed-over containers of carryout crispy orange beef have never seen anything quite like the eagerly awaited, elaborately hyped midtown Peking-duck palace DaDong. Instead of the usual cramped quarters out in Flushing or down on Mott Street, the glittering outpost of this popular Chinese dining empire occupies two glass-enclosed floors off a pedestrian plaza near Bryant Park. There's a terrace for outdoor dining and a wraparound bar that serves cocktails tinged with ingredients like black-lava salt ("Fire Rooster") and coconut water ("Tiger Style"). The house fried rice is tossed with Wagyu beef instead of shreds of recently unfrozen shrimp; the chef's signature roast duck comes with a supplement of caviar, if you wish; and, in deference to local tastes, the cold noodles are flavored, radically, with avocado.

"This feels like the Disneyland of duck restaurants," one of my daughters declared as we inspected our long, tapering chopsticks, each pair bound with identical little

tassels of red silk, and peered out from our window table at the hordes of frozen tourists shuffling up and down 42nd Street. There were plenty of other tourists sitting around us, though like Americans huddled together at a distant Disneyland on the outskirts of, say, Shanghai, many seemed to be DaDong groupies, chatting together in Mandarin. Like us, they were probably familiar with the legend of Dong Zhenxiang, the eponymous chef-owner, who began roasting ducks in Beijing back in 1985. As tastes in the booming country evolved, he evolved, too, inventing a proprietary method for preparing the duck; launching ever more DaDong outlets, with all sorts of gourmet flourishes on the menu; and eventually winning coveted Michelin stars for two of his restaurants in Shanghai.

There are now four DaDongs in Shanghai, for the record, along with numerous others in high-profile, food-mad cities like Beijing and Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province. There's also a burgeoning new line of fast-casual "duck burger" establishments in the company portfolio, and if you feel so inclined, you can sample Dong's

flowery, fusion-y brand of Chinese cooking onboard a Royal Caribbean cruise ship. But DaDong New York is the first venture outside China for the towering chef (*da* means "big" in Mandarin); according to the company's voluminous press materials, several of his specially designed, round, wood-burning ovens have been shipped over for the occasion, and his group of duck experts has spent two years developing the perfect Peking-style roasting bird in tandem with a farm in Indiana.

Before we tasted Chef Dong's vaunted duck, however, our little team of eaters had to chew through a series of elaborate dishes, many of which combined the overwrought elements of Michelin-fueled ambition and style with the clunky, Disneyfied overtones of a random corporate restaurant chain. No one complained too much about their dumplings (order the crystal vegetable buns), but my Chiclet-size bits of sweet-and-sour pork rib were obscured in a darkly viscous, oversweet sauce and then finished tableside, for good measure, with a dusting of powdered sugar. Other dishes were sweetened in a similarly heavy-handed, Willy Wonka way—the cold, grimly goopy lotus root with glutinous rice; the \$62 song shu crispy whole fish, dressed with tiny melon balls—and those that weren't (the aforementioned avocado noodles, my sticky little wheel of uni rice) had the slightly clammy, premade taste of food that's been sitting in the refrigerator too long.

My daughters are on record as preferring even a second-rate example of Peking duck to almost any dish on earth, and when the main course finally arrived at

NO STARS
DaDong
3 Bryant Park (enter
at plaza nr. Sixth Ave.
bet. 41st and 42nd
Sts.); 212-355-9600;
dadongny.com

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★★★★ EXCEPTIONAL

★★★ EXCELLENT

★★ VERY GOOD

★ GOOD

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NEW YORK

our table, they did their best to cheer up their increasingly grumpy father. “Five stars for these pancakes, Dad!” one of them said hopefully, which was arguably true, although the brittle sesame buns, which are presented as an alternative to the steamy pancakes, turned to dust when I tried to load them with bits of duck. Five stars for the expertly carved duck skin, too, although I had to point out that the meat had a chalky, strangely listless texture (“Turkey tastes better,” sniffed one of my duck-snob friends). The traditional condiments mask these deficiencies well enough, but the chef’s newfangled innovations—an aioli-like garlic paste, julienned melon, and, yes, more sugar—have the odd effect of turning this regal, time-tested delicacy into something less than Peking duck.

New York is awash in decent Peking-duck facsimiles these days, but at \$98, not including the caviar supplement (or the carcass, which is whisked away), Dong’s version is officially among the most expensive in town. On the evenings I visited, this price included an overloud soundtrack loop thrumming relentlessly above the crowded tables and service closer to what you’d find on a shakedown cruise aboard a Caribbean liner. Dishes appeared in a confused flurry, or not at all, and when we asked for a bottle of Riesling to go with our duck, we were reflexively directed to the most expensive magnum on the list. Dessert, when it mercifully arrives, is a mostly mixed bag of clichéd traditional Chinese (bean cakes) and clichéd Western “gourmet” (the “multi-flavored white chocolate shells”), but if you want an ingenious combination of both, call for the ice cream, which is folded with tart slivers of dried tangerine peel.

SCRATCHPAD

One hesitant star for the duck (although there are better examples, even in midtown). Minus a star for the prices, the sugary non-duck dishes, and the service.

BITES

IDEAL MEAL: Crystal vegetable buns, DaDong roast duck, dried-tangerine-peel ice cream. **NOTE:** According to press reports, the restaurant’s online reservation system was flooded with more than 2,500 requests when it went up, but there seemed to be plenty of available tables on my last visit. **OPEN:** Lunch and dinner daily. **PRICES:** Appetizers, \$6 to \$21; entrées, \$12 to \$195.

THE DISH

Fritto Misto

There are few dishes in the Italian culinary playbook as irresistible as fritto misto—that hodgepodge of delicately fried morsels, traditionally a mix of offal or seafood plus assorted vegetables. When perfectly fresh and skillfully fried, these tidbits arrive golden and crunchy, mysteriously ungreasy, and dangerously addictive. Cheetos and Doritos have nothing on fritto misto. At Joe Carroll’s new Casino Clam Bar, chef Jeremiah Del Sol’s terrific version includes squid, shrimp, Spanish anchovies, Italian capers, Kalamata olives, sliced lemon, and, as you might expect given the name of the place, clam bellies. This being Williamsburg, Del Sol throws out a few well-placed curveballs, including house-pickled cucumbers, bell peppers, and Cubanelles.

R.R. & R.P.

On the menu at **Casino Clam Bar**; \$15; 160 Havemeyer St., nr. S. 2nd St., Williamsburg; 718-782-3474.



The only fritto misto we've had with house-fermented pickles.

Housemade hot sauce and tartar sauce for dipping.

Clam bellies are fried separately and last to avoid the bane of fritto mistos, not to mention clam bellies: rubberiness.

No batter: A simple toss in rice flour yields a thin, ethereal, almost translucent shell for the fried seafood.

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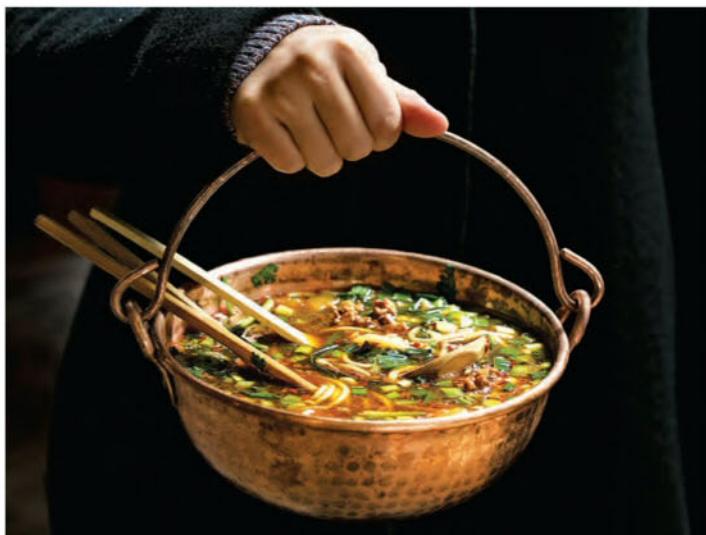
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WHEN SIDE GENG opened Yun Nan Flavour Snack in Sunset Park in 2006 (he has since expanded to the larger Yun Nan Flavour Garden), the cooking of China's southwesternmost province was a bit of a novelty. But with the advent of places like Little Tong and (the late) Yunnan Kitchen, New York has grown increasingly familiar with the region's sour and spicy flavors, prodigious use of edible flowers and wild mushrooms, and especially its rice-noodle dishes, or mixian, of which the most famous example is the elaborate tableside assembly of broth, meats, vegetables, and seasonings called crossing-the-bridge noodles. This dish is a featured attraction at the new South of the Clouds, a 45-seat Greenwich Village restaurant named for the mountainous province's literal translation. It's the first independent venture from Geng's son, Liheng Geng, who has made a point of sourcing cuisine-defining ingredients like Zhaotong sauce for the tofu-pudding rice noodle, and the mozzarella-like rushan cheese that adds texture to a rice-ball-and-rice-wine dessert. His short menu focuses on rice noodles (both dry and in soup, pictured), small plates like "pigs on a stick" and smashed-cucumber salad, and sweets, many incorporating roses in jam or petal form.

R.R. & R.P.

THE UNDERGROUND GOURMET DIGEST

Burgers for Backsliders



YES, WE KNOW it's January and your fat-trimming resolutions have yet to melt away with the first snowfall. But there will come a time when you crave a burger. Here, three of the best new arrivals, distinguished either by compelling origin story or unique cooking method, and found where you might least expect them.

①

Mu Ramen's the Harlan

This ramen(-shop) burger isn't sandwiched between two piles of fried noodles but rather served on a housemade Asian-style potato bun. Into that fluffy cradle goes eight ounces of short-rib meat larded with **dry-aged beef fat**. Mu's Joshua Smookler cooks the patties over hardwood charcoal in an oddball oven imported from Croatia expressly for this purpose; tops them with Taleggio, potato sticks, and—like at one of its inspirations, Minetta Tavern—deeply caramelized onions; and won't serve them one degree past medium rare (*\$19 including fries; 12-09 Jackson Ave., Long Island City*).

②

Buvette's Petit Burger

It began, like brunch's famous waffle-BEC sandwich, as a staff meal, then became a verbal special as Franco-American as its gastrothèque setting. **Inspired by the Spotted Pig's Roquefort behemoth** but about a third the size, this superb little flavor bomb is formed from top-round remnants of

steak-tartare prep, expertly griddled, crowned with blue cheese, and served on a perfectly pliant square of focaccia with a mountain of matchstick fries (*\$17; 42 Grove St.*).

③

Tetsu's Beef Burger

When superstar chefs cave under pressure and finally give their public what it wants (burgers), they tend to overdo it with loony-bin toppings and fancy fromage. Not so Masa Takayama, whose first foray into the world of Wimpie has brought us two takes (one lamb, one beef) that are surprisingly stripped down. The beef burger in particular, with its seal of melted Cheddar and uncharacteristically cohesive pretzel bun, is a minimalist marvel. Notable technique, too: **It's cooked in a medieval-looking contraption the chef designed**, with internal spikes that pierce the meat but preserve the juices, that has got to be the greatest innovation in burger cookery since Louis' Lunch's vertical cast-iron patty broiler (*\$23 including fries; 78 Leonard St.*).

R.R. & R.P.

1



2



3






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A
(Mostly)
Untouched
Artist's
Loft

*Which is actually
rarer in New York than
one might think.*

BY ERIC BOMAN

Staircase

The bronze sculpture on the second stair on the second stair is by Cathe Wallendahl, Cheryl Mowinckel's husband's grandmother. The picture to the right of the column is by André Masson.

**The Living Area**

"Most of the artwork is from modern British artists that I collected while living in London," Cheryl Mowinckel says.



FIRST MET DECORATOR Cheryl Mowinckel when she and her husband, John, moved into my building in the Flatiron District. Their floor had originally been a small printing plant, after which it was the live-in studio of Lenore Tawney, a fiber artist and a member of the Coenties Slip artists' group that at various times included Robert Indiana, Ellsworth Kelly, Jasper Johns, Agnes Martin, and James Rosenquist. Clouds of threads hung down from Tawney's ceiling, and clouds of incense wafted into the elevator when it stopped on her floor. By the time the Mowinckels came, Tawney was long gone—and so were her collections of bird skeletons, eggshells, and rocks displayed along the seams in the floorboards, in descending order of size



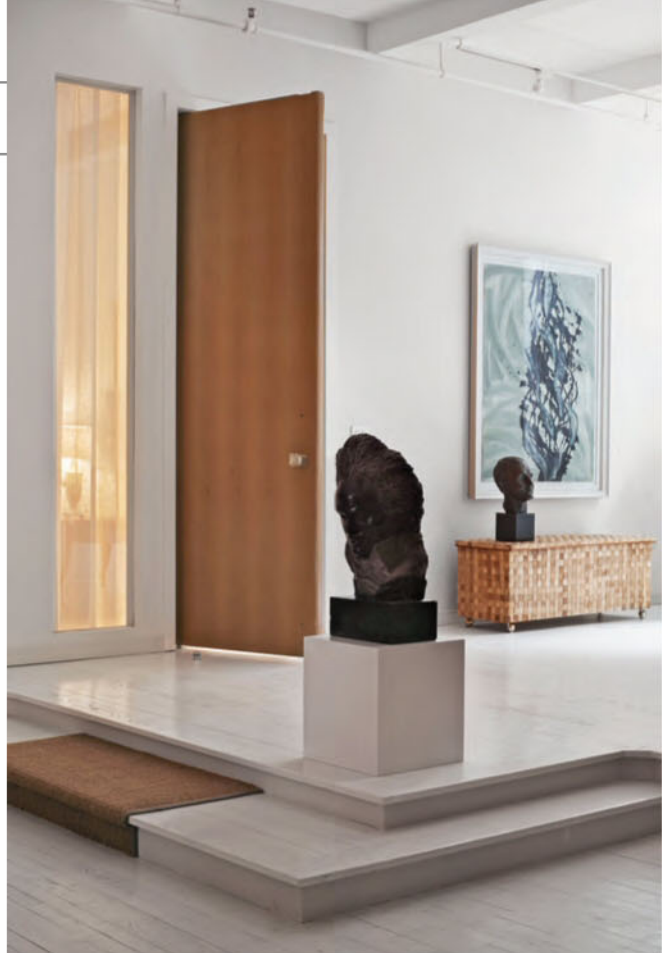
DESIGN HUNTING



Seating Area

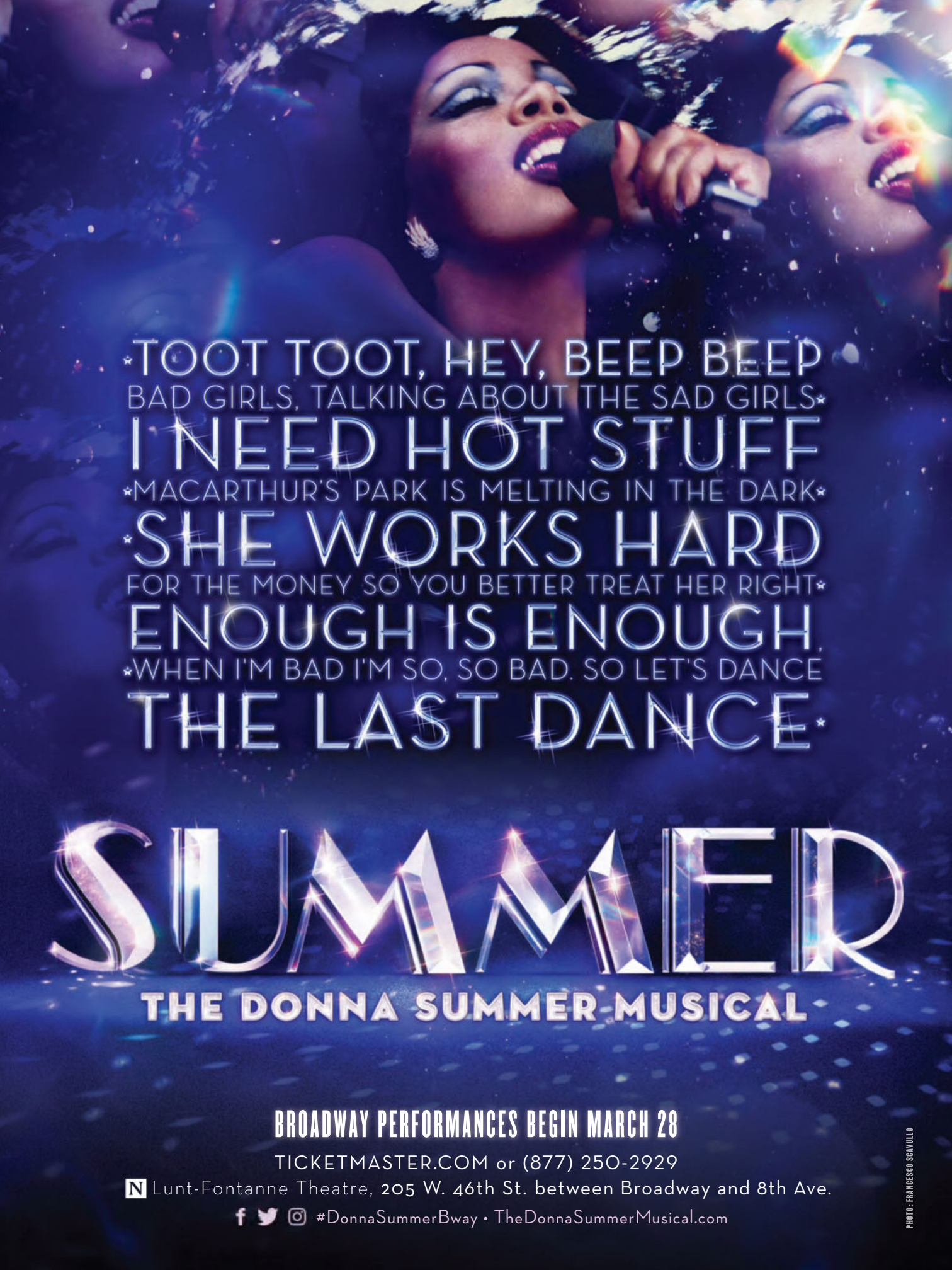
"The metal coffee table was made by my Roman artist friend Coralla Maiuri," Mowinckel says. "It is two pieces on wheels and can double as seating."





Door to Bedroom
The granite bust of Beethoven is by Honoré Sausse, and the bronze bust on the chest is by Cathe Wallendahl.

from the wall. Taken with the endless possibilities of a near-raw 4,000-square-foot loft, Mowinckel did what most people can't: She left it (almost) alone. Mowinckel's first priority was to luxuriate in the open expanse, and with her children grown, she could. She used screens and furniture groupings in such a way that you understand what the space is visually (living room, dining room, kitchen) without lots of walls and doors. "You can enter a bedroom," Mowinckel says, "pass through a bathroom, study, and dressing area, and reappear through the library!"



*TOOT TOOT, HEY, BEEP BEEP
BAD GIRLS, TALKING ABOUT THE SAD GIRLS*
I NEED HOT STUFF
MACARTHUR'S PARK IS MELTING IN THE DARK
*SHE WORKS HARD
FOR THE MONEY SO YOU BETTER TREAT HER RIGHT*
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH
*WHEN I'M BAD I'M SO, SO BAD. SO LET'S DANCE
THE LAST DANCE*

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The CULTURE PAGES



The Hangover Cure

After a sudden, unexpected, and not entirely welcome rise to fame, Zach Galifianakis is happy to play the sad clown—or, really, just go canoeing. *By David Marchese*

ZACH GALIFIANAKIS'S HOME in Venice is only about 15 miles from Hollywood, but step inside the house of the inarguably successful and uncomfortably famous (at least for him) comedian, and it's as if the town where he's made a career doesn't exist at all. There are no pictures of him and his old *Hangover* co-stars on the wall; no reproductions of his magazine covers; no photos from the opus of celebrity awkwardness that is his oft-viral online interview series *Between Two Ferns With Zach Galifianakis*, which has featured Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, among many notable guests. There's not even visible evidence of his current show, the deliciously absurd, frequently heart-breaking quasi-sitcom *Baskets*. In fact, there's little indication that the guy who owns this place has done especially well in any line of work.

The drafty bungalow is spartanly outfitted with a wood-burning stove, an unplugged TV, a few well-worn armchairs, some years-old magazines, and, on this January morning, a plate of muffins and a steaming carafe of coffee that Galifianakis, dressed in a rumpled pink T-shirt and cargo pants, has politely set out. "A mug," he says, snapping his fingers. "You need a mug." He frowns. "Or maybe they drink it straight from the pitcher in New York, which would be weird, but I don't want to impose."

By design, things have gone back to something like normal for Galifianakis since his moment as mainstream comedy's pudgy imp-of-choice, following the unexpected box-office success of 2009's *The Hangover*. "I don't want to seem ungrateful," says the 48-year-old, whose voice retains some of his native North Carolina drawl, "because this business is amazingly open to letting dummies like me make something of themselves, but what it values makes me uncomfortable. The *Hangover* stuff"—by which he means fame—"was a struggle." A self-effacing presence, Galifianakis, who'd previously ridden the alt-comedy boom to a stable-ish stand-up career in the early aughts, was very flustered, very quickly, by his movie-world prosperity. "People expect you to be the crazy guy from *The Hangover*. I'd go out for dinner and there'd be four free drinks sent to my table," he says. *The Hangover* director Todd Phillips, who'd long been a fan, tapped him for the film, but, Galifianakis explains, "not long before that, I was trying out to play Bellhop No. 4, and producers would say, 'Can you come back in to read for Bellhop

No. 6?'" Then suddenly I was getting asked to be in big movies. It messes with your mind, because I knew that I hadn't gotten any more talented or deserving."

Galifianakis gets up from his chair to check on the wood-burning stove. "But I decided," he says, "that I was more comfortable doing small things that I had some control over than I was doing bigger, noisier things." He sits back down. "I feel funny talking your ear off about myself." (When

“Obviously, I’d like it if more people knew about ‘Buckets.’ That’s what my parents think it’s called.”

he's able to shift the conversation topic over to me, his bushy eyebrows move from furrowed to raised, as if set free.)

There is, of course, an ex post facto element to his retelling of his move from the margins to the mainstream to somewhere more cozily in between. None of the film comedies, such as *Dinner for Schmucks* or *Due Date*, that he tried after *The Hangover*—and he did three *Hangover* films in total, the last in 2013—landed with audiences. Which is to say that his backing away from the business might've been at least partly mutual—though he disagrees. "If those movies had been hits, it probably would've driven me away *more* quickly." He self-mockingly rolls his eyes. "I know

this all sounds whiny."

In any case, Galifianakis has plenty other things he'd rather talk about. There's the book he's reading (David Grann's account of skulduggery on an Osage Nation reservation, *Killers of the Flower Moon*), the comedians he's loving (the Australian duo of Kate McLennan and Kate McCartney), and the documentaries he's into (Errol Morris's investigation of government mind-control experiments, *Wormwood*, and *Icarus*, about Russia's Olympic doping schemes). He'll talk eagerly about the property he and his wife, Quinn Lundberg, and their two kids visit in British Columbia ("My ideal day is canoeing on a lake") and slightly less eagerly about smoking pot. "It bugs me that people think I'm a stoner," he says. "I do not believe in pot for people in their 20s. It affects their get-up-and-go-ness. I'm not even comfortable passing a joint to someone younger than me." And then there's politics: "I was at a café in downtown L.A., and across the way I saw this deranged human being in a T-shirt and a jockstrap, and he was defecating into a tube sock. And my first thought was *God, I wish he was president.*" He looks away to an imaginary camera. "We'll be right back with more from the world's worst public-affairs show!"

It's disorienting—though not unpleasantly so—to spend time with a comedian who so perfectly wed Andy Kaufman's surrealism to John Belushi's hair-trigger intensity, only to learn that what he really wants to do is express himself earnestly—in his life and, increasingly, his work. "Maybe I've just matured," he says. "If you always want to be the fat guy who says things that don't make sense, that's great. But at this point in my life I want to try different storytelling." Hence, *Baskets*, which is the best and certainly most affecting thing he's done, though far from the most popular. "The viewership's up to 700 people now," he says proudly. "The goal is to get up to 950 and see if we can crack those advertisers." (For the record, across all platforms, last season the show averaged 2.1 million viewers per episode.)

On the FX show, which has its season-three premiere on January 23, Galifianakis plays rival twin brothers Chip and Dale Baskets, whose mother, Christine, is played by comedian Louie Anderson, who won a 2016 Emmy for his performance. The Basketses, under a purposefully hazy cloud of family tragedy, nobly try and typically fail in their attempts to gain some small measure of happiness. (Chip wants to be a professional clown—but only an artful one.) It's a show whose governing device is to have its characters do the abnormal thing of aggressively

baring their souls amid mundane American settings: performing mournful mime at a Bakersfield rodeo, snapping over dessert at Applebee's, being a Juggalo just about anywhere. *Baskets* is tonally and comedically singular, but Galifianakis says that despite its oddness, the show trades in traditional sitcom matter. "A family is the perfect vehicle for getting laughs and creating emotional investment, because it's made up of forced relationships, which make for funny situations," he says about the show, which he co-created with Jonathan Krisel and Louis C.K. "Obviously," he adds, "I'd like it if more people knew about *Buckets*." Did I hear him wrong? Nope. "That's what my parents think it's called."

Until this season, C.K., who'd helped bring the series to FX, was one of *Baskets*' executive producers. That relationship has since been severed. "It was so disruptive in a harmful way to so many people," says Galifianakis when I ask him about the aftereffects of the comedy star's sexual misconduct. "We just kind of put our heads down and worked on the new season." Then he slumps forward in his chair, his head hanging. He's closing his eyes tightly, as if to hold back tears. It's the kind of gesture Galifianakis has so perfected as a part of his comedy that to see him doing it sincerely is disarming. After a long, tense pause, he says, in a shaky voice, "This is the poison of celebrity culture: The fact that someone can think that just because they're loved, they can do what they want. It grosses me out." He exhales. "That's all I want to say."

There are days, and they're not infrequent, when Galifianakis imagines walking away entirely. "I think about it all the time. My life is more important than my work. The stand-up would be hard to not do, but my interests are more home-steadier interests." (For example: He loves his tractor.) Still, for the short term, he's got *Baskets*, which he thinks will have a fourth season, and in March, he'll co-star in director Ava DuVernay's adaptation of the classic children's sci-fi novel *A Wrinkle in Time*. "I know, I know," he says bashfully, "it's a big Disney movie." But he'd seen DuVernay's documentary about incarceration and racial injustice, *13th*, "and I mostly wanted to meet her and ask questions about that. I didn't think she'd hire me—because I'm dead inside—but the next thing you know, you're in a movie with Oprah Winfrey and she's asking if you'd consider being her running mate." He waves his hand dismissively. "I had to tell her that secretary of Agriculture is what I'm more comfortable with." ■

CHEAT CODE

A Good Year for Bad Clowns

SAD, MISUNDERSTOOD, and otherwise aberrantly unfunny clowns have been around since at least Pagliacci, but the past year has seen a kind of bad-clownaissance. From sewer-dwelling psychos to Boston city-council candidates, here are some recent standouts—and a look at how Chip Baskets, the clown Zach Galifianakis plays on *Baskets*, compares.



Chip Baskets

THE CHARACTER: Chip is the title figure on the FX series *Baskets*, which stars Zach Galifianakis as a faltering professional clown. **CLOWN CRIME:** Failure—having trained at a prestigious Parisian school, Chip now makes his way as a rodeo clown while at times sharing quarters with his twin, Dale. **BAD-CLOWN SCORE (OUT OF FIVE):** 😊😊😊😊😊



Pennywise

THE CHARACTER: Pennywise—full name Pennywise the Dancing Clown—is the most common manifestation of a shape-shifting, sewer-dwelling creature that kills children in Stephen King's 1986 novel *It*—made into a box-office-topping horror film in 2017. **CLOWN CRIME:** Kills children. **BAD-CLOWN SCORE:** 😈😈😈😈😈



The Clown

THE CHARACTER: The unimaginatively named The Clown is one of several menaces on hand in *Circus Kane*, a 2017 straight-to-VOD horror film starring Jonathan Lipnicki of *Jerry Maguire*. In a canny bit of marketing, the film was released on the same day as *It*. **CLOWN CRIME:** Engendering bad-clown brand confusion. **BAD-CLOWN SCORE:** 😈😈😈😈😈



"Sad Clowns"

THE CHARACTER(S): Sad clowns everywhere were paid homage to in this first-person country song by John Mellencamp, released as part of his 2017 album *Sad Clowns & Hillbillies*. **CLOWN CRIME:** Per the song's lyrics: "I don't wait on women / I don't open doors ... / I'm about as dependable / As a drunkard who needs a drink." **BAD-CLOWN SCORE:** 😞😞



Pat Payaso

THE CHARACTER: In 2017, Pat Payaso campaigned for a seat on Boston's city council while dressed as a clown. He had a rationale (of sorts): Payaso's surname is Spanish for "clown." **CLOWN CRIME:** Losing—Payaso came in last, earning 6,124 votes, or 2.3 percent of the vote. **BAD-CLOWN SCORE:** 😞

Why Resurrect *Roseanne*?

The showrunner for the sitcom's return explains how Twitter and Trump spurred her to revisit the *Conners*—and why you should, too.

By Whitney Cummings

ROSEANNE premieres on March 27 on ABC.

WHEN I GOT A CALL about working on the revival of *Roseanne* with the original cast, it was tempting on a number of levels. For one, it was honestly my favorite show growing up. Shows like *Beverly Hills, 90210* made me feel poor, ugly, and boring, but *Roseanne* was like oxygen for me. It made me grateful for what I had, instead of obsessing over all the things I wanted but couldn't afford. It was about a family who used humor to survive the smash-'n'-grab we call life, and it inspired me to use levity as my own anesthesia.

I also thought about the current TV landscape. I realized that it overwhelmingly depicts the “problems” of privileged, financially solvent people. We call shows about the Kardashians, rich housewives, and million-dollar listings “reality,” when so few of the people on them seem to have ever had to face reality—certainly not a financial one. It made me wonder where working-class people were getting their oxygen and who was seeing, understanding, and reflecting back their reality to them.

And I thought about Twitter. I'm not great at tweeting about politics because it takes me too long to emotionally process news before I can come up with a witty, quippy, retweetable tweet. But whenever I did tweet about politics, I got unanimously positive feedback, which led to a chilling realization: I was essentially in an echo chamber, patting myself on the back every time someone who agreed with me, well, agreed with me again. Our country has

become so bifurcated, we're not even exposed to the lives of “the other side” anymore. Like people who exclusively consume Fox News, some of us don't even know what we don't know.

When weighing my decision, I remembered a call Michelle Obama had initiated with TV showrunners. I have no idea who was on this call, and I don't even think I qualified as a showrunner, but she filled us in on some metrics indicating that iconic gay characters on TV shows had a big impact on how people across the country

Maybe what's on TV in the next year could influence how this national healing process goes.

thought about gay marriage. Turns out, many Americans never get to know or even meet people who aren't like them, so putting them on a flickering box in their living room—full of vulnerabilities, problems, jokes, and dreams—is a great way to develop empathy toward a type of person they may normally not cross paths with. There are times in comedy when I feel like a self-indulgent child avoiding the real world, but hearing that information made me think that maybe what's on TV

in the next year could influence how this national healing process goes. Working on *Roseanne* meant I could write for characters who had different beliefs and experiences than me and who may even have voted differently than me. And I got my wish, that's for sure.

In the writers room, we dug into all the uncomfortable territory you avoid talking about with your relatives, navigating our fair share of “micro-aggressions” and “trigger words” and downright FCC violations. We spent a lot of time in the room asking, “Can we say that? Can we get into that?” The answer was usually no, but we usually figured out a way to say it anyway. We even got the help of special-interest groups and focus groups to make sure we were telling truthful stories that reflect the reality of the working class and our current ideology war. If I reveal what the *Roseanne* stories are, I think I will actually get arrested, but let me just put it this way: I don't even know you, but I promise you're going to be nettled by something on the show. And I think that's good. If we aren't disagreeing with someone, that probably means we've surrounded ourselves with only people we agree with. I'm the first to admit that's a comfortable place to be, but from what I understand about how societies work, it's also a very dangerous place to be.

It's not that our goal is specifically to piss anyone off, but the *Roseanne* writers have a commitment to the truth that I have not seen on other network shows. There's no agenda, no judgment of the characters, just a deep devotion to the *Conners'* fiscal and emotional reality. That, and a bravery around incendiary, progressive-themed stories. Now that I know how making TV works, I'm in such awe of what *Roseanne* did 20 years ago: having a plotline about D.J. wanting to skip the school play because he's afraid to kiss a black girl, for example. *Roseanne* was a show where a writer had the courage to pitch that Jackie's boyfriend physically abused her. On a comedy. I now know how big a deal it was to even get those stories on the air, much less execute them so gracefully and memorably. We approached the show with the same intent: to make us laugh about subjects that usually make us cry.

In network television, there's a lot of conversation about making characters “likable,” but often it's at the expense of making them complicated and truthful. After working with some of the show's original writers, I've concluded that their quest to honor reality and avoid worrying about if you “like” the characters is actually what ended up making you love the characters. For a sitcom to make you care that much



Above, *Roseanne*,
1989. Below,
Roseanne, 2018.

requires that the writers and actors have a perfect balance of courage and restraint. Whereas on most sitcoms you're trying to make everything funny, in the *Roseanne* writers room, you'd often hear "Do we even need a joke here?," which allows for the story to unfold the way life actually would.

And then there is Roseanne herself, never shy to speak her mind and share her beliefs. I've been asked, "How can you work with her? She voted for *him*." Although we don't agree on everything, Roseanne has always been a comedy hero of mine. She broke ground for comics to do and say the things we do and say. We are in the middle of an incredible resurgence of the women's movement and encouraging strong female voices to speak out. In the late '80s, Roseanne was on the front lines of pro-choice and pro-equality, way before it was in the Zeitgeist. Do I co-sign on everything that comes out of her mouth or that she retweets? Of course not. But this clash of ideas and personalities makes for a deeper show. This version of *Roseanne* is not about Trump—it's about the circumstances that made people think Trump was a good idea.

Everyone asks me what production was like, and the only way I know how to respond is "surreal." Everyone on the crew worked tirelessly to make sure the show was as authentic as possible. We labored over what everything should feel like 20 years later: what coffee maker they'd have, whether they'd have new wallpaper or if they'd reupholstered that iconic couch. The writers worked through the smallest details to make sure the show felt authentic and delivered the same belly laughs; the actors revisited characters they haven't inhabited for 20 years; the costumer found the perfect plaid shirts; and the set designers spent days painting the set to make sure the living-room wall was the perfect shade of celadon.

My gut tells me the show will make you feel like you're going home to visit relatives whom you may not always align with politically or philosophically, that you may have anger toward, but that you still respect and love because they're smart, self-aware, and always make you laugh. If nothing else, you'll get to hear that iconic laugh again, which can take you back to 20 years ago, when it was a simpler time, back when we believed our news, when we all had no choice but to talk to one another in person, when we didn't follow our heroes on Twitter, and when you had no idea what celadon was. Maybe you still don't. It's a very weird, limey-yellowish-mint-green that I don't want to see anywhere except in the show *Roseanne*. ■



QUIZ

Everything You Think You Know About Terry Gross Is Wrong

AS THE DISTINCTIVELY voiced and expertly inquisitive host of the NPR interview show "Fresh Air," Terry Gross is well known to her legions of listeners. Or so they think! Gross, it turns out, is full of surprises—especially when she is on the receiving end of the probing questions. So who interviews the interviewer? Well, we did, and here is a quiz about the most surprising things we learned. DAVID MARCHESE

TRUE OR FALSE?

Terry Gross is friends with her guests.

FALSE: "I figured out pretty early on that I'm not the kind of person who's doing interviews to be friends with the guests. I'm not trying to prove that I'm smart or funny. I just want the guests to say things of value. I want them to be interesting, and I want them to say things that our listeners will want to hear."

TRUE OR FALSE?

Listening as a profession is easy.

FALSE: "People think when you interview that you talk a lot. Actually, I listen a lot. I talk very little. Listening sounds like it should be easy, but it's not, because while I'm listening, I'm also thinking ahead. I'm thinking, *Is this an interesting answer?* I'm also thinking, *What's that word on the tip of my tongue?* And then I'm thinking, *Oh, my producer laughed. That's good. Or, My producer looks bored, that's not good.*"

TRUE OR FALSE?

Terry Gross doesn't care what you think of her show just as long as you give her a good deal on a car.

TRUE: "A long time ago, I was buying a car—this was the '70s or maybe the early '80s—and I wanted to hear the car's radio and make sure the speakers were good. So I tuned into WHYY, where 'Fresh Air' was then a local show, and the guy who's selling me the car says, 'Oh, I know that station. You know that lady in the afternoon? That really annoying lady?' And I said, 'Oh, uh, that's me.' And he smacked his head and went, 'I'm never gonna be able to sell you the car now.' But I did end up buying the car from him. I didn't care about his taste in radio. I just wanted a good deal."

TRUE OR FALSE?

Terry Gross is afraid of death.

FALSE: "I'm not afraid of it. What I'm afraid of is pain. I'm really afraid of suffering. I'm afraid of being trapped in a hospital, incapacitated."

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The Man Who Made the Black Panther Cool

Christopher Priest broke the color line at Marvel and reinvented a classic character. Why was he nearly written out of comics history?

By Abraham Riesman

BLACK PANTHER opens on February 16.

“I’M AN ASSHOLE. I’m abrasive. I am so sure that I’m right about virtually everything. I can sing you an aria of reasons to not like me,” says comics writer Christopher Priest, his bass voice rising to the brink of anger but never quite tipping over. “Not liking me because I’m black is so juvenile and immature, because there’s many reasons to not like me.” He’s speaking, as he often does, about the racism—both overt and structural—that he’s faced over his 40-year career. But his collection of attributes could double as a list of reasons to like him, or at least admire him—he’s unwaveringly outspoken, endearingly opinionated, as well as a pioneer in the comics industry. He’s also likely the only comics writer to have taken breaks from his career at various times to toil as a musician, pastor, and bus driver.

Priest, who’s 56, is about to see some of his most influential work go wide in a major way. His turn-of-the-millennium run at Marvel Comics, when he was writing the character Black Panther, has served as an inspiration for this year’s feverishly anticipated Marvel Studios film *Black Panther*. Given the comics world’s self-image of liberal inclusivity, and the fact that Priest is the first black writer to work full time at either Marvel or DC, starting with his first regular writing gig back in 1983, you might think he is long established as an elder statesman of the industry. But until recently, Priest had bounced from job to job (including the aforementioned bus driving) and was largely denied the recognition he deserves. Indeed, talk to comics historians and they’ll have to pause for a minute and think before they conclude that, yes, he probably was the first African-American writer to truly break that barrier in superhero comics. Even among fervent fans, his milestones are far from common knowledge. He’d worked in quasi-obscurity for three decades before angrily retiring in 2005, opting to pursue work as a man of God in Colorado.

During that period of self-imposed exile, though, something happened, something Priest himself finds curious: He not only became recognized; he became a kind of icon. His run on *Black Panther* now merits its own multivolume reprint, *Black Panther by Christopher Priest: The Complete Collection*. He has reentered the spotlight, returning to Marvel—a place with which he has had a contentious relationship, to say the least—to write a new title, and he’s taking on DC’s flagship team-up series, *Justice League*. To his surprise, he finds that crowds now pack convention halls to see him speak.

At a moment when Marvel Studios is making a self-consciously bold statement on inclusivity with its film version of *Black Panther*, Priest’s breaking of a color line deserves to be acknowledged. While Priest did not invent *Black Panther*, about a superhero and king of a fictional African nation, which had been kicking around Marvel for decades, in many ways he revolutionized the title character. “He had the classic run on *Black Panther*, period,” says Ta-Nehisi Coates, who currently writes *Black Panther* for Marvel. “People had not put as much thought into who and what Black Panther was before Christopher started writing the book.” While previously the Panther had been written as a superhero, Coates notes, “[Priest.] thought that Black Panther was a *king*.” It seems doubtful there’d even be a movie about him today if not for Priest’s refurbishing. Yet Priest himself has been chronically underappreciated.

Priest is nothing if not candid about his own career and the industry as a whole. In interviews and copious self-published essays, he speaks fiercely about injustices in comics, naming names and pointing fingers at people responsible for failures he thinks have been undeservedly ascribed to him. You might say that’s just a case of his being, to use his words, an asshole, but he’s equally frank about his own shortcomings and poor decisions. Still, he sees his predicament as part of a larger pattern. “When I read these self-congratulatory histories of Marvel and DC, they completely omit not just me but other persons of color or firsts,” he tells me. “Who was the first woman editor? Who was the first woman penciler? And I think part of it is that the people who were assembling these histories of it just didn’t think it was important. But these things do count, and they really do matter.”





*Priest, when he
was a Marvel
staffer, circa 1980.*

PRIEST HAS NOT always been Christopher Priest—he grew up poor in the Hollis neighborhood of Queens and, back then, his name was James Christopher Owsley. Young James was, to put it indelicately, a dweeb. And the kids in his neighborhood weren't very fond of dweebs. "It was a fairly hostile environment," Priest recalls. "I got beat up a lot in that environment. I was mugged in that environment. I had guns pointed at me in anger in that environment." Later in life, he'd write about lower-class black urban life—which he remembers unromantically. "I'd climb into the closet and just close the door and cup my hands over my ears and try to scream out this noise and just cry and go, 'I hate being poor. I can't stand being poor.'"

But the closet also brought a kind of aesthetic solace for young James. "I'd go in there and I'd read comics," he says. "It was a big storage area, and I would climb in there, and I would put on a little lamp, and that was the only place I could get away from the maniacs." He started out perusing DC, then moved on to Marvel, and he became an obsessive reader and collector. He dreamed of working at the latter of those two publishing giants, and during high school he began an internship there in 1978—something no black person had ever done.

Priest was not the first black person to work in comics as a whole. Though their opportunities were limited, African-American and mixed-race people had had gigs in the industry, from "Krazy Kat" cartoonist George Herriman in the early part of the 20th century to Marvel artist Billy Graham, who helped shape the character Luke Cage in the early '70s and occasionally assisted with some writing duties. However, no black person had been a full-time comics writer or editor at the so-called Big Two, Marvel and DC, until Priest entered the scene.

The editor-in-chief of Marvel at the time, a stubborn and revolutionary leader named Jim Shooter, tells me he didn't even notice that the office had been lily-white prior to Priest's arrival. As for Priest, Shooter has nothing but praise. "He was crazy, high energy, and did everything you could ever ask of him," Shooter says. "He started to wear roller skates so he could go back and forth on the floor. He was a really great kid and loved being there with all these creative people."

Priest soon secured a gig as an assistant editor and became a full editor in 1984 at the tender age of 22. He also dipped his toe into writing: He penned a goofy one-off parody title called *The Official Marvel*

No-Prize Book, then got a four-issue miniseries about longtime Captain America pal the Falcon, a black character. Then he was put on the long-running series *Power Man and Iron Fist*. He could do action with the best of them, but he was better at mixing humor and social commentary than anyone in the business at the time.

Unfortunately, Priest wasn't as successful when he wasn't holding the writer's pen. His tenure as an editor was a disaster. "He wasn't good at that," Shooter recalls with a laugh. "He's obviously a smart guy, but just had no interest in bureaucracy and wasn't dealing real well with getting people to work on time and keeping a schedule and all that stuff." His status as the only black editor made him a figure of inspiration and kinship for black freelance creators, which spurred some of his white co-workers to charge that he was coordinating some kind of African-American conspiracy. Priest responded by writing an open memo headlined "MARVEL WHITE

**"I'd go in
[the closet] and
read comics. That
was the only
place I could get
away from the
maniacs."**

SUPREMACY MEMO," identifying all the black creators he worked with and exactly why each one was present in the office.

"It was a terribly unhappy time of my life, both personally and professionally," Priest later wrote of those years. He was put in charge of the Spider-Man titles, which he says was "an incredibly bad call. Saddling me with several beloved staffers as creative talent on books that constituted over \$2 million of Marvel's bottom line was a very bad idea." Eventually, recalls Shooter, "I called him into my office and said, 'I have to fire you,' and he said, 'Thank you.'" Priest continued writing, even as Shooter was ousted from the company, removing his final quasi-friend. But after writing a hit comic title, *Spider-Man vs. Wolverine*, he wasn't asked to do a sequel—something Priest suspects had to do with racism. He published his final Marvel script and moved over to DC Comics to work on a few titles, but grew frustrated when he was put through what he saw as too many rewrites of the first issue

of a series called *Emerald Dawn*. Pissed off yet again, Priest chose to go into exile and, as he recalls, "settled into a quiet life far, far away, driving big Greyhound-style buses for Suburban Transit in North Brunswick, New Jersey."

DURING THIS PERIOD, Priest entered the sights of DC editor Mike Gold. A political radical who had once worked on the defense of the Chicago Seven as a media coordinator and had done extensive work with low-income residents of that city's Cabrini-Green housing projects, Gold cared deeply about the lack of black representation in the comics industry. "It was difficult to hire any black person back then, because it was an old white-boys' club. You'd get a lot of questions like 'Why do you want him? Boy, I hear he's not reliable,'" Gold recalls. Gold admired Priest's work at Marvel for its cleverness and edge, so he reached out in an effort to bring Priest in from the cold and make him an editor. Priest initially declined, but Gold was persistent.

Priest eventually took the gig in 1990 but kept his bus driver's job as a backup. He raised eyebrows for putting up a poster of a gun-toting Malcolm X over his desk. It was during this period that he started going by Christopher Priest, to the confusion of his co-workers. Priest would later write, in an odd, third-person bio on his website, "He never discusses the true reasons behind his name change but insists every story you may have heard about it is absolutely true." (Asked about it now, he says the name change, which came after his divorce, was because he wanted a more distinctive moniker.)

At DC, he was a little older and significantly wiser than he had been during his Marvel gig. But the wheels came off when he became infuriated during various editorial disputes. He left DC—a split that led to his prodigal return to an old disaster site: Marvel Comics.

By 1998, Marvel was in a financial tailspin and furiously tossing out new ideas. One such project was the Marvel Knights imprint, a stab at telling edgier stories about classic characters. Among them was Black Panther—a character that Knights editors Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti thought had potential. When they approached Priest about writing it, he was less than enthused. "I was a little horrified when the words 'Black' and 'Panther' came out of Joe's mouth," he would later write. "I mean, *Black Panther*? Who reads *Black Panther*? *Black Panther*!?" But they were adamant, and Priest acquiesced—with "one basic stipulation: *Black Panther*

could not be ‘a black book.’” Even though he had become the best interpreter of race in the game, Priest saw something troubling happening to his career. “I stopped being a writer, or being thought of as a writer,” he tells me, “and started being thought of as a black writer.”

So, in order to make this new endeavor interesting for himself, he managed to persuade Quesada and Palmiotti to let him give a book called *Black Panther* a white protagonist. While watching the *Friends* episode “The One With the Blackout,” Priest was taken by a scene in which Matthew Perry’s Chandler Bing finds himself trapped in an ATM vestibule with a supermodel. “Respected and successful, Bing nevertheless was the horrified fish out of water,” Priest later wrote. He felt he needed a Chandler, so he created Everett K. Ross, a hopelessly overwhelmed white man who works for the U.S. government and serves as a diplomatic escort for the Panther when the monarch embarks on a trip to Brooklyn. It was a genius move that allowed a book about a stoic superhero to be hilarious.

One of the great comic-book writing stretches had begun. The run lasted for 62 issues and is still the definitive take on the character. Nevertheless, Priest was once again dissatisfied with his treatment at Marvel. *Black Panther* ended, and his series called *The Crew* was canceled after just seven issues in 2004. What’s more, Priest was exhausted after decades spent on the B- and C-lists, never writing a *Superman* or an *Iron Man*. “It felt like I just was wasting my time,” he tells me. “What’s the point? Everything I do gets canceled, and I’m never gonna be put on a top-tier book.” In 2005, he walked away from comics again—this time, it seemed, for good. Long a religious man, Priest, somewhat appropriately given his name, became a pastor and started a website about religion called praisenet.org. He did web-design work for various churches in Colorado, where he now lives. A talented musician, he played at worship services. “To be perfectly blunt, I think I was probably happier doing that than writing comics,” he says.

But he wants to be clear on something: Even though he stopped pitching comics, he was still open to writing them. He was just peeved at what he would periodically be asked to write. “Every 18 months, I’d get a call from Marvel or DC and they’d say, ‘Hey. We’re bringing back *All-Negro Comics* and we want you to write it: ‘We want you to do *Black Goliath*.’ ‘We want you to do *Black Lightning*,’” he says.

Then, something remarkable happened: Priest was offered *Deathstroke* the



Black Panther, 1998.

Terminator, a minor DC character. “My first question was ‘Is he black these days?’ They said, ‘No, he’s still a white guy.’ And I went, ‘Okay, I’m listening.’”

Priest agreed to write a new series, *Deathstroke*, as part of a DC initiative called Rebirth. It’s consistently been one of the company’s best series, filled with popping action and—yes—really good commentary on race. Priest’s career has been on an upswing ever since. Aside from the attention to his work on *Black Panther*, he’s in the middle of a *Justice League* run that finally allows him to do what he always wanted: To play with Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and more of DC’s most valuable toys.

Priest returned to working with Marvel with a just-concluded series about the long-running characters the Inhumans. As he put it in an interview about that last project: “I was a little shell-shocked at how easy the handshake was.”

It appears comics needs Priest more than Priest needs comics, and his absence would be a shame, if for no other reason than the fact that he’s already been so absent—not just as a writer but as a historical figure worth recognizing and reckoning with. “I’m a little insane, and I’m going to be a little different,” he says. “But hopefully, somewhere in there, in that creative arena, something will emerge that is new, and different, and unique.” ■

The CULTURE PAGES

CRITICS

Matt Zoller Seitz on *The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story* ... David Edelstein on *The Final Year* ...
Jerry Saltz on *Trump's border wall*—as public art.

Penélope Cruz



TV / MATT ZOLLER SEITZ

A Phantom's Threads

The Assassination of Gianni Versace
unravels a serial killer's backstory.

YOU'VE GOT TO HAND IT to Ryan Murphy: Love him or hate him, he never gives you quite what you expect. The first season of his FX anthology series *American Crime Story* (not to be confused with Murphy's other anthology, *American Horror Story*) was an acclaimed ten-part look at the O.J. Simpson murder trial that examined the subject matter from multiple perspectives, including those of the defense, the prosecution, and the jury, and illuminated the case's wider context while allowing its central character, Simpson, to remain an enigma to the end. Season two, *The Assassination of Gianni Versace*, about the titular fashion designer's murder by a serial killer, does all of those things (including the enigma part), while swapping in homophobia, AIDS, and gay rights for the first season's focus on racism, sexism, and police misconduct.

But the tone, the pace, the feel of the season are all quite different. Adapted by novelist and *London Spy* creator Tom Rob Smith from a 1999 nonfiction book by Maureen Orth titled *Vulgar Favors: Andrew Cunanan, Gianni Versace, and the Largest Failed Manhunt in U.S. History*, it prizes atmosphere, characterization, architecture, and, yes, fashion over traditional storytelling virtues. It doesn't attempt anything like the intricate structure of the O.J. season, which was as me-

ticulously organized as a good lawyer's evidence files, but it's not disorganized, either. If anything, the structure of this one is much simpler, built around a conceit that has a certain poetry: We begin with the murder and work our way backward chronologically, à la *Memento* or *Irreversible*.

The first episode, directed by Murphy in a series of gliding, faintly sinister long takes, starts in Miami, in 1997, by introducing Versace (Edgar Ramírez); his longtime partner, Antonio D'Amico (Ricky Martin); and his soon-to-be-killer, Andrew Cunanan (Darren Criss), and builds inexorably to Cunanan shooting Versace to death outside the gates of his mansion. (The cinematography, by Murphy's regular director of photography, Nelson Cragg, is exceptional, using very-wide-angle lenses to abstract the lines, colors, and shapes of rooms, hallways, building exteriors, and landscapes, so that you appreciate them as you might a suit or dress.) From that point on, the story moves according to its own slowed-down rhythms, focusing its attention on people and events that might seem

THE ASSASSINATION
OF GIANNI
VERSACE: AMERICAN
CRIME STORY.
FX. WEDNESDAYS.
10 P.M.

unconnected to the Versace murder until it dawns on you that you aren't watching a procedural, or even what certain news outlets call an "explainer," but something more like a psychologically oriented nonfiction novel—one that uses a combination of careful research and blatant dramatic license to speculate on why real people did the things they did and how some of them ended up crossing paths in the first place.

Fans of the *O.J.* season might get whiplash from this one. Murphy's direction sets a fresh template in the pilot—elegant and decadent, anxious and solemn, steeped in unglamorous, workaday details and historical milestones. These last include the U.S. military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which kept many qualified gays and lesbians in the closet or drove them into civilian life; the AIDS epidemic, which was also explored in Murphy's divisive but vigorous HBO adaptation of *The Normal Heart*; and key events in the life of the Versace family, including Gianni's decision to come out, his murder by Cunanan, and his sister Donatella's (Penélope Cruz) attempt to carve out her own identity in the family business. Throughout, however, more time is devoted to Cunanan than the Versaces, and despite Criss's memorably creepy-enthusiastic performance, the killer never seems like more than an unnerving bundle of insecurity, grandiosity, deceptiveness, and petulance, with a touch of Norman Bates's bird-like insistence and Patrick Bateman's obsession with brands. He's a character who's tailor-made for viewer projection but who never registers as a human being as powerfully as the major supporting characters, the Versaces in particular. (The dialogue doesn't always do him or anyone else favors. Not even a performer as skilled and charismatic as Cruz can put across a sentiment like "You live in isolation, surrounded by beauty and kindness. You have forgotten how ugly the world can be.")

And yet—odd as this might sound—Cunanan ultimately is used rather well as a kind of storytelling device, moving the tale backward through time and all over the continental U.S. This strategy won't be everyone's liking, and I won't pretend that it works like gangbusters all the time. But it's a valid approach and it gives Murphy & Co. a pretext to spend quality time with other Cunanan victims who weren't particularly famous, which is the opposite of what productions like this usually do.

The cast of characters who are each granted the equivalent of their own short film includes closeted real-estate developer Lee Miglin, touchingly portrayed by one-time *M*A*S*H* star Mike Farrell, and Jeff Trail (Finn Wittrock), a former Navy lieutenant driven out of the service by institu-

tional as well as personal bigotry. Although it's regrettable in some ways that it took the story of a gay serial killer to create the framework for a series of sketches about gay men of different ages and social classes (all white except Cunanan, who was half-Filipino), it's also remarkable to see a major cable drama devote one and a half episodes to somebody like Trail, an intriguingly complex noncelebrity who defends a fellow gay sailor from two homophobic attacks, attempts to cut a tattoo off his own leg to prevent investigators from using it to identify him in one of their witch hunts, and ultimately resolves to move away from San Diego because the sight of Navy ships in the harbor was breaking his heart.

The variety of locales is more wide-ranging than could've been anticipated: Besides '90s-era Miami, we briefly visit San Francisco, San Diego, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Chicago, New York City, and Pennsville, New Jersey, and the fetishistic production design and costuming consistently nail the little details that help sell a moment,

from the high-waisted, stonewashed jeans Cunanan sometimes wears to the blocky TVs and computers in every home, apartment, and office. And even when the story spends more time marinating in a subplot or scene than its dramatic content might justify, you can be confident that if you just stick with it for another five or ten minutes, there'll be a moment unlike any you've ever encountered, like the flashback to a victim's childhood that shows him going on a hunting trip with his father, running away in horror after the old man shoots a duck, then being consoled rather than chastised afterward, and sincerely assured that hunting "isn't for everyone." *The Assassination of Gianni Versace* isn't for everyone, either, but it's sincere and committed as it follows its own path. When you get to the end, the reversed storytelling could seem sad, because you're thinking about the inevitable tragedies to come, or restorative, because the dead have been systematically resurrected and have at least a bit more living to do. ■

MOVIES / DAVID EDELSTEIN

A Return to Diplomacy

A doc follows Obama's foreign-policy team in 2016.



THERE IS A PERSISTENT charge that the quietly devastating, on-the-fly documentary *The Final Year*, covering January 2016 to January 2017 in the administration of Barack Obama, is a piece of propaganda—which is valid only if you believe that portraying U.N. Ambassador Samantha Power, Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes, Secretary of State John Kerry, and the president himself as idealists determined to carry the ball forward on climate change, human rights, and arms reduction is fundamentally misleading. If so—if you think that they're saboteurs pursuing a hidden agenda (say, strengthening Sharia, weakening the U.S. in the Middle East, and furthering the climate-change hoax)—then nothing in Greg

THE FINAL YEAR
DIRECTED BY
GREG BARKER.
MAGNOLIA
PICTURES. NR.



Rhodes, Power, Kerry, and Obama.

Barker's film will satisfy you (and there is no help for you, in any case). The rest of us will appreciate this swift, insiderish view of the achievements, mistakes, and compromises that make the Obama legacy alternately exhilarating and depressing. Hovering over all is an invisible anvil: the coming election of a president bent on undoing every last element of what the people onscreen are busy accomplishing.

The movie is barely an hour and a half but feels dense, and exhausting, as Barker skips among three protagonists who are up against a ticking clock: the tense, reactive Power, who bounces among her family's apartment, the U.N., and various refugee camps; the tireless, 72-year-old Kerry, who at one point travels by boat amid spectacular—and melting—Greenland icebergs; and the hyperfocused Rhodes, whose chief focus is the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran that prompts the ire of hawks.

But Barker seems principally drawn to Power, an immigrant herself (she came to the U.S. at age 9 from Ireland), who reduces an audience of new citizens (and herself) to tears in a speech of welcome that now seems sadly quaint. This is another reason that *The Final Year* doesn't play like Obama propaganda. In later scenes, Power is crushed by her inability to prevail on the president to intervene forcefully in the humanitarian crisis in Aleppo and other parts of Syria. Anyone who has read Power's exhaustive *"A Problem From Hell": America and the Age of Genocide* can understand why she came into the administration (from academia) determined that nothing like Bosnia or Darfur would happen on Obama's watch. She speaks of the president's being haunted by the deaths of U.S. soldiers and the grief of their families; and so, for all her sophistication, she's unprepared for his political calculations and their attendant (regretful but forceful) demurrals.

The Obama whom Barker shows us is a gifted and uplifting symbolist who tells a group of young people in Vietnam, "Sometimes we think people are only motivated by money ... by power ... But people are also motivated by stories." His example? The U.S. Declaration of Independence. The students are visibly transported. He travels to Hiroshima and says, in essence, never again. In Laos, he laments the secret Nixon-Kissinger bombing and expresses horror at the number of civilians still killed and maimed by hitherto-dormant 50-year-old bombs. His thoughtful demeanor continues to inspire, but in the context of the film he seems abstracted, cut off. He tells Barker and others that deaths from war are way down compared to the last century and that all trends in democracy are going in the right direction. And he wants to believe that—and to

be the U.S. president who ushers the world into an era of unprecedented diplomacy. Although he variously presided over two wars (and pursued a flawed military strategy in Libya), the Obama we meet in *The Final Year* plainly wants to earn the Nobel Peace Prize he was awarded in his first year in office for no reason other than that he wasn't George W. Bush. But in Power's view, he misses the trees for the forest.

The tallest of those trees—taller than Donald Trump, who's seen only briefly and, until the end, on television screens—is Vladimir Putin. It's Rhodes who muses for Barker on Putin's agenda, which has less, he says, to do with Russia's interests than with Putin's more wayward ones—and the fact that Putin is behind the effort to undo the work of Rhodes and his colleagues. Power, meanwhile, is repulsed by an attack on a humanitarian convoy in Syria that was all but certainly orchestrated by Putin and Bashar al-Assad. She cries out from her U.N. perch to the implacable Russian ambassador, "Is there literally nothing that can shame you?"

There is nothing in *The Final Year* about outright Trump-Russian collusion. This is an "experiential" documentary, meaning Barker chiefly sticks to the present tense. It's disappointing, nonetheless, that he doesn't address Obama's refusal to make public what was known about Russian in-

terference for fear of putting a finger on the presidential-election scale. He avoids any overt references to Hillary Clinton, apart from Power's Election Night reception for women game-changers, among them former secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Power is confident that the evening will end with a female president, and her face goes increasingly slack as she realizes how much of the past eight years' work is about to be dismantled. Rhodes sits alone on a bench and attempts to formulate a response to the election while Barker's camera waits ... and waits. (The words never come.) Later, he alludes to the surprisingly small White House West Wing and how few people there will be between the new POTUS and ... something very bad.

It's hard to know how to read Barker's last scenes, which feature footage of Obama at the Parthenon along with an up-close interview with the president backstage after an event. Obama wants to allay fears and take the long view: This election is a mere blip in the positive arc of humankind, he says. At the White House, Power packs up her files, insisting, like her boss, that "we're in this for the long haul." A surprisingly melancholy gospel cover of "The Times They Are A-Changin'" plays her out. And at least one viewer wept all the way through the credits. ■

ART / JERRY SALTZ

Could the Border Wall Be Art? Eight monuments to nativism.



ARTIST CHRISTOPH BÜCHEL has created an online petition to declare Donald Trump's eight border-wall prototypes—now standing in California, just over the border from Tijuana—a permanent national monument. This is brilliant. When I read the proposal, I was struck with the thunder of what Emerson called "alienated majesty"—that feeling of seeing one's own rejected thoughts in another person's idea. These beige, pale, terra-cotta, and desert-colored slabs have a very specific presence; they exist as nullities that nevertheless designate, enforce, and arc out at all of us.

The pictures of the prototypes have been widespread and the subject of numerous articles. Each prototype is monolithic, corporate, severe. Made of combinations of reinforced steel, concrete, metal bars and rods, and/or barbed wire, all look to be a couple of feet thick and are around 30 feet high and 30 feet wide. They are arranged in a row on a barren patch of borderland only feet from Mexico and the already-existing border fence. The structures were built by six different companies; one is affiliated with an Israeli defense contractor. The Department of Homeland Security has allocated around \$20 million to build and study them.

The guidelines for the prototypes are telling. All exposed hardware must be on the American side of the wall to protect against Mexican tampering; the wall must extend at least six feet into the ground to discourage tunneling; the wall shall be unscalable even with climbing aids and must be able to withstand a half-hour of attack by "sledgehammer, car jack, pick ax, chisel, battery operated impact tools,



Border-wall prototypes.

battery operated cutting tools, Oxy/acetylene torch or other similar hand-held tools.” It is stated that the U.S. side should be “aesthetically pleasing in color ... to be consistent with the general surrounding environment.” The walls look like generic prison, industrial, and institutional architecture. Los Angeles *Times* architecture critic Christopher Hawthorne aptly described them as reflecting “medieval construction, marketing and promotion ... and the new nativism rolled uncomfortably if somehow inevitably into one.”

Büchel’s petition is straightforward. It begins, “President Trump proposed the continuous border wall between Mexico and the United States as a centerpiece of his 2016 election campaign.” Büchel claims that, as they now exist in this place, in this configuration, the prototypes “have significant cultural value” and are thus worthy of being designated a monument. This act of redefinition echoes the aesthetic-conceptual strategies employed by Marcel Duchamp, who in the early-20th century designated already-existing objects as art (urinal, bicycle wheel, snow shovel, etc.). Büchel’s petition does something similar. He pulls back the curtains on several pressing ideas at once—ideas that deserve to be taken seriously, not dismissed as a gimmick or simple provocation. On the contrary: Büchel’s proposal allows us to see through layers of flimflam, illusion, posturing, and political theater, while also revealing a dark side of one of the most respected recent art movements.

Even before reading Büchel’s proposal, I could see that these eight looming prototypes look a lot like minimalist works of sculpture and environmental interventions made by artists like Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Robert Morris, Maya Lin, Walter de Maria, Nancy Holt, Donald Judd, James Turrell, Michael Heizer, Tony Smith, and many others. These artists’ works, as with these prototypes, were often site-specific and had everything to do with exactly where they were placed and exactly what materials were employed: industrial, utilitarian, and corporate ones (namely, steel, concrete, mesh, and

barbed wire), arranged in repeating patterns and laid out in ordered, geometric, logical configurations. The art demarcated territory, claimed space (often on federal or state land), and could involve vast bureaucracies of execution, including government officials, land permits, bankers, ranchers, technicians. These earthworks, like these prototypes, were done on a massive scale in panoramic landscapes, typically the deserts of the West.

Trump’s eight prototypes fit the visual trope to a haunting T and reminds us that under Mussolini and Hitler, Fascist architects appropriated the look, materials, and visual language of classical architecture in order to create gigantic, intimidating structures, stadiums, government buildings, monuments, and marching grounds. These eight prototypes show the American right wing colonizing what were once radical left-wing and avant-garde ideas in order to re-radicalize them—while the left has been tasked with trying to maintain order and enforce existing rules.

On top of all that, Trump’s prototypes—especially when viewed in light of Büchel’s proposal—make you see something that’s always been there in minimalism but that we’ve always turned away from, flinched at, denied or still deny. Minimalism remains one of the most revered isms in institutions, galleries, academia, and the market. I love it a lot, too; it changed my life. But while none of the artists making this work may have meant it, there’s still no way not to see much of their aesthetic tenets and foundational ideas as verging on the absolute, macho, authoritarian, faceless, banal, isolated or aloof, technological, totalizing, theatrical, and colonizing—in works that involved forceful, industrial rearrangement of the landscape via grandiosity and hubris. The even darker Freudian sides of control, emasculation, the fetishizing of phallic power, and the proximity to something almost fascistic are here as well. Indeed, de Maria made a swastika out of shiny metal troughs; Frank Stella named a work *Arbeit Macht Frei* (“Work Makes You Free,” the slogan

over the gates of Auschwitz); Morris created cages and famously posed shirtless wearing a Nazi helmet; Judd said he was interested in “plain power”; Dan Flavin even referred to an erection when using the phrase “diagonal of personal ecstasy” to describe one of his fluorescent-light sculptures.

Apologists often claimed these works were aesthetically charged and radical but nevertheless still “neutral.” But in her incredibly prescient 1990 essay “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” critic Anna Chave took issue with these tendencies as “domineering, sometimes brutal ... display[s] of power.” In these assertively blank works, she saw “talisman[s] against castration and impotence, a symbolic surrogate for the female body’s absent penis.”

Which, fittingly, brings us back to Trump. As with much minimalism, these prototypes are hard-edged geometry and impervious materials brought into the landscape of the American West, arranged to impose order, inspire awe, and align mystic political forces—and to make something that, while instantly obsolete, like some useless Stalinist gulag project, is meant to last forever. Trump has made something that evokes a real monument, one that may be said to stand for everything he believes in. That mustn’t be forgotten. The structures represent a menacing presence that imparts brutal cruelty, fear, contempt, cold-hearted malice—something nihilistic and destructive that reflect not the substance of the American creed but only the appearance of being cocksure, in theatricality and manipulative statecraft.

Büchel’s proposal made me see glimmers of hope in the hopelessness. In imagining these prototypes as a true monument—one that would endure for generations, and one that looked, in the desert, almost like it already had—I glimpsed a time-after-Trump, a time when his nativist policies have been overturned, roundups of family members for deportation have ceased, and all other signs of his visitation on America have been removed. I saw a day when this administration is gone and America is recovering, having not broken into several countries—a time when these eight walls will be the only thing left of his memory. From that vantage, these prototypes will be a perfect memorial to how close the U.S. came to giving in to the ghosts of racism, xenophobia, nativism, white nationalism, mediocrity, and a cosmic fear of the other. And the Trumpian monument will stand for this last gasp of the mythical infatuation with race. The prototypes will stand as a reminder of how D.H. Lawrence saw America reflected in *Moby-Dick*: “A mad ship, under a mad captain, in a mad, fanatic’s hunt,” afraid of its “white, abstract end.” ■

PARTY LINES

Edited by Stacey Wilson Hunt
Reporting by Antonia Blyth, Diane Gordon,
and Scott Huver

THE 75TH GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS THE BEVERLY HILTON, BEVERLY HILLS. JANUARY 7.



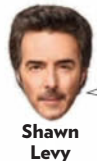
What is the most embarrassing thing currently on your DVR?

"Oh God, probably The Bachelor. It's so embarrassing."



"Hallmark Channel rom-coms. If you see one pillow on the couch, that's for me to hold while watching and hugging myself."

"My 600 Pound Life. They show the bariatric surgery and everything. It's nasty and awesome."



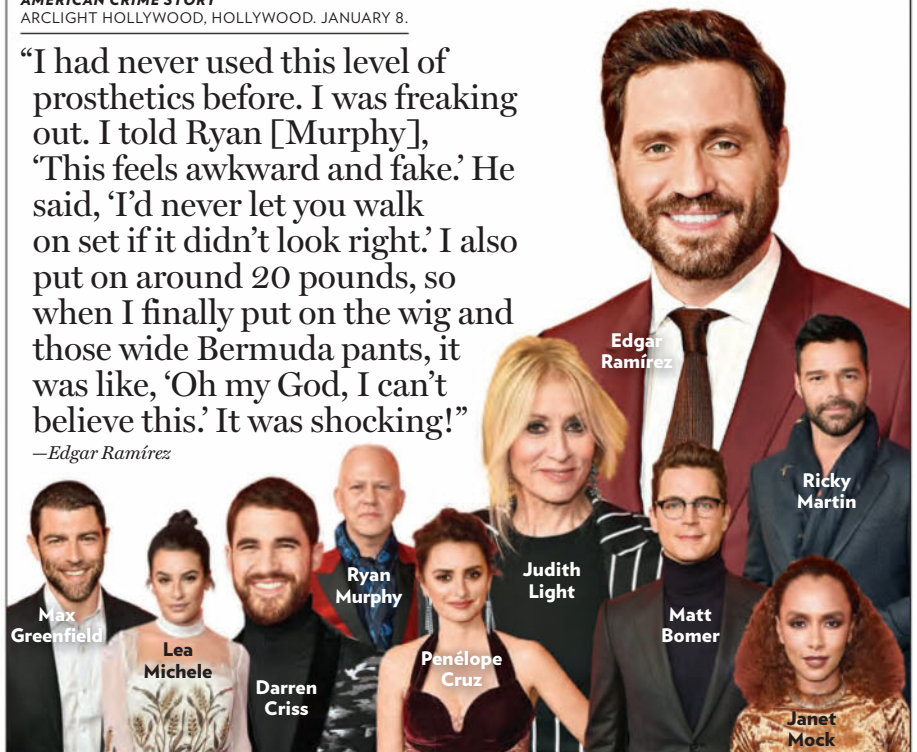
"When my wife is brushing her teeth to her DVR'd episode of Access Hollywood, I'll sneak a peek over her shoulder."

23RD ANNUAL CRITICS' CHOICE AWARDS BARKER HANGAR, SANTA MONICA. JANUARY 11.

PREMIERE OF FX'S THE ASSASSINATION OF GIANNI VERSACE: AMERICAN CRIME STORY ARCLIGHT HOLLYWOOD, HOLLYWOOD. JANUARY 8.

"I had never used this level of prosthetics before. I was freaking out. I told Ryan [Murphy], 'This feels awkward and fake.' He said, 'I'd never let you walk on set if it didn't look right.' I also put on around 20 pounds, so when I finally put on the wig and those wide Bermuda pants, it was like, 'Oh my God, I can't believe this.' It was shocking!"

—Edgar Ramírez



For full listings of movies, theater, music, restaurants, and much more, see nymag.com/agenda.



The CULTURE PAGES

To

DO



Twenty-five things to see, hear, watch, and read.

JANUARY 24–FEBRUARY 7

TV

1. Watch One Day at a Time

Up on your feet.

Netflix, January 26.

The heartfelt and imaginative reboot of Norman Lear's 1970s single-mom sitcom is back for a second season, with its core cast, including 80-something scene stealer Rita Moreno, returning from last year. **MATT ZOLLER SEITZ**

POP

2. Listen to Man of the Woods

Is it R&B? Is it country?

RCA, February 2.

No one knows what Justin Timberlake is planning to unleash on the world with his forthcoming outdoor-themed album. But with a list of collaborators that includes producers Pharrell and Timbaland and the singers Chris Stapleton and Alicia Keys, it's bound to be worth a try. **CRAIG JENKINS**

ART

3. See Survival Research Laboratories

Noise, confusion, chaos.

Marlborough Contemporary, 545 West 25th Street, through February 10.

Wayward, jerry-built machines belching fumes, moving like reptiles, and running amok are the stuff of the famous collective Survival Research Laboratories. All of these miraculous, mad sculptures have been brought back to life, made from discarded, obsolete, or otherwise purloined materials. Witness awe-inspiring forces falling apart. **JERRY SALTZ**

BOOKS

4. Read A State of Freedom

Hope wrestles with despair.

W.W. Norton.

Neel Mukherjee's new novel is episodic and ambitious: five linked novellas branching out from a devastating opening vignette—about an Anglo-Indian touring Agra with his 6-year-old son—into lives determined and divided by castes, communities, and generations. **BORIS KACHKA**

THEATER

5. See Miles for Mary

Stars of track and field.

Playwrights Horizons, through February 4.

Lila Neugebauer directs this play by the Mad Ones set in 1988 in a high-school phys-ed-teachers lounge during the annual Miles for Mary Telethon. A hit at the Bushwick Starr in 2016, it's now reaching a wider audience through Playwrights Horizons' Redux series. **SARA HOLDREN**

CLASSICAL

6. Hear Haydn: The Seasons

Turn, turn, turn.

Carnegie Hall, January 24.

Nature's cycles of violence, serenity, and change have seduced many composers—think of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony—but few have turned a year of weather into a human drama as sweepingly or incisively as Haydn. One of the world's great ensembles, the Cleveland Orchestra, does its miraculous best to emulate the great outdoors. **JUSTIN DAVIDSON**

MOVIES

7. See Have a Nice Day

One crazy night.

In theaters January 26.

Want to have a blast watching a cartoon for grown-ups? Check out Liu Jian's rollicking (and blessedly short) Chinese gangster thriller, which recalls both the Tarantino-scripted *True Romance* and the film *A Hard Day*—i.e., farce and carnage in equal measure, plus some breaks for Eastern contemplation. **DAVID EDELSTEIN**

POP

8. Listen to Digital Rain

Ambient.

Italians Do It Better, January 26.

The enigmatic Johnny Jewel, leader of synth-pop act Chromatics, returns with this instrumental solo album. Expect another serving of the hazy, shoegaze-y sounds Jewel brought to the soundtracks to films like Ryan Gosling's *Lost River*. **C.J.**

OPERA

9. See Cruzar la Cara de la Luna

Across the divide.

Rose Hall, January 25 through 28.

You might think that mariachi and opera go together about as well as goulash and ice cream, but both are flexible enough genres to find some overlap. This music drama about a family riven by the U.S.-Mexico border had its premiere in Houston in 2010 and now gets a four-performance run at New York City Opera. **J.D.**

BOOKS

10. Read Grist Mill Road

Cruel intentions.

Picador.

In his new novel, Christopher J. Yates tracks the consequences of youthful sins with a long lens. Patrick and Hannah have a seemingly solid marriage paving over a secret: Unseen, he witnessed a savage, near-fatal attack on the young teen Hannah by his friend Matthew. (Never has so much pain and suspense sprung from a BB-gun attack.) **B.K.**

POP

11. Listen to Amen

Sounds of transition.

88records, February 2.

Rich Brian (formerly Rich Chigga), the teen from Jakarta, is graduating into a more reflective vibe on his debut album. Self-oriented and likely self-produced, *Amen* will show whether the internet phenomenon has what it takes to build a more substantial career.

THEATER

12. See [PORTO]

Stepping out.

WP Theater, 2162 Broadway, January 28 through February 25.

Under the direction of Lee Sunday Evans, Kate Benson's smart, soulful play about food, sex, gen-

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trification, and an unexpected encounter between a regular and a stranger at a bar in an all-too-recognizable Brooklyn neighborhood makes its much-anticipated Off Broadway premiere. S.H.

MOVIES

13. **Go to Fight the Power: Black Superheroes on Film**

Can you dig it?

BAM, February 2 through 18.

As the world gets ready for Marvel's *Black Panther*, the biggest black-superhero film of all time, BAMcinématek reminds you of the movie's ancestors in this series that highlights blaxploitation classics like *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* and *Shaft* along with odd but inspired choices like *The Brother From Another Planet*. D.E.

CLASSICAL

14. **Hear Here Be Sirens**

Call of the wild.

National Sawdust, January 28.

Composer Kate Soper has embedded these mythical lethal creatures in an all-soprano opera rich in irony and literary luggage. Here, she presents a new performance of her entertaining and extreme music drama. J.D.

BOOKS

15. **Read The Line Becomes a River**

Faces behind the wall.

Riverhead, February 6.

This immigration story from Francisco Cantú stands out for its dramatic emotional arc and its many perspectives. It's a sharply political and deeply personal narrative about the author's time working with the Border Patrol. B.K.

THEATER

16. **See A Chronicle of the Madness of Small Worlds**

The search for signs of intelligent life.

New York Theatre Workshop, through February 5.

Director Elena Araoz adapts two short stories by Mac Wellman into a pair of fantastical monologues about the lives of the imagined inhabitants of an asteroid belt. Aliens, amnesia, love, loss, and interstellar anxiety meet live music and design by Justin Townsend. S.H.

ART

17. **See Byron Kim: Sunday Paintings, 1/7/01 to 2/11/18**

Mark your calendar.

James Cohan, 533 West 26th Street, through February 17.

Byron Kim unchains his heart in a series of small paintings of the sky, each painted on a Sunday and each incorporating his diary entry for that day. Where usually Kim's paintings drill into theoretical-conceptual corners, these works impart a far more personal, accessible, open vulnerability, recording family traumas, dinner plans, and other days in the life of an artist. J.S.



NEW YEAR, NEW COMEDY

Shake off the winter doldrums.

The 'Sup Show

Caveat,
January 25

Come for a look at this inventive new Lower East Side venue with variety shows on everything from science to cults; stay for this showcase highlighting queer, female, and gender nonconforming performers.

Butterboy

Littlefield,
January 29

Names to know, like Hari Kondabolu, come through this weekly comedy show with a triple threat of hosts in Jo Firestone, Aparna Nancharla, and Maeve Higgins.

W. Kamau Bell

Capitale,
February 1

Expect topical humor galore from the CNN host and self-proclaimed "semi prominent Negro" (above) as he takes the stage for two shows that will be filmed for a television special.

Beautiful/ Anonymous Podcast With Chris Gethard

The Bell House,
February 7

Hard to predict what the mood will be at this live taping of the podcast where television host and comedian Gethard tweets out a phone number and takes the first call that comes in, but it's a sure thing you'll be entertained.

STORYTELLING

18. Go to This Alien Nation

Voices from all around.

Joe's Pub, February 7.

Serbian-Australian writer Sofija Stefanovic hosts this comedic storytelling show on the topical subject of immigration. Hear fish-out-of-water stories from comedian Aparna Nancharla, writer and activist Nancy Mercado, actress Emma Ramos, and tech expert Anil Dash.

TV

19. Watch Waco

We're not in Dillon anymore.

Paramount Network, January 24.

Taylor Kitsch stars as cult leader David Koresh in this intense, psychologically oriented look at the siege of Waco, which ended in a fiery, fatal assault by FBI agents in 1993. Michael Shannon balances him out as the lead FBI negotiator on the case, and Melissa Benoist and John Leguizamo shine in supporting roles. M.Z.S.S.

THEATER

20. See Fire and Air

Pas de deux.

Classic Stage Company, through February 25.

CSC artistic director John Doyle directs the world premiere of Tony-winning playwright Terrence McNally's new play about the great Ballets Russes, the Russian ballet company led by Sergei

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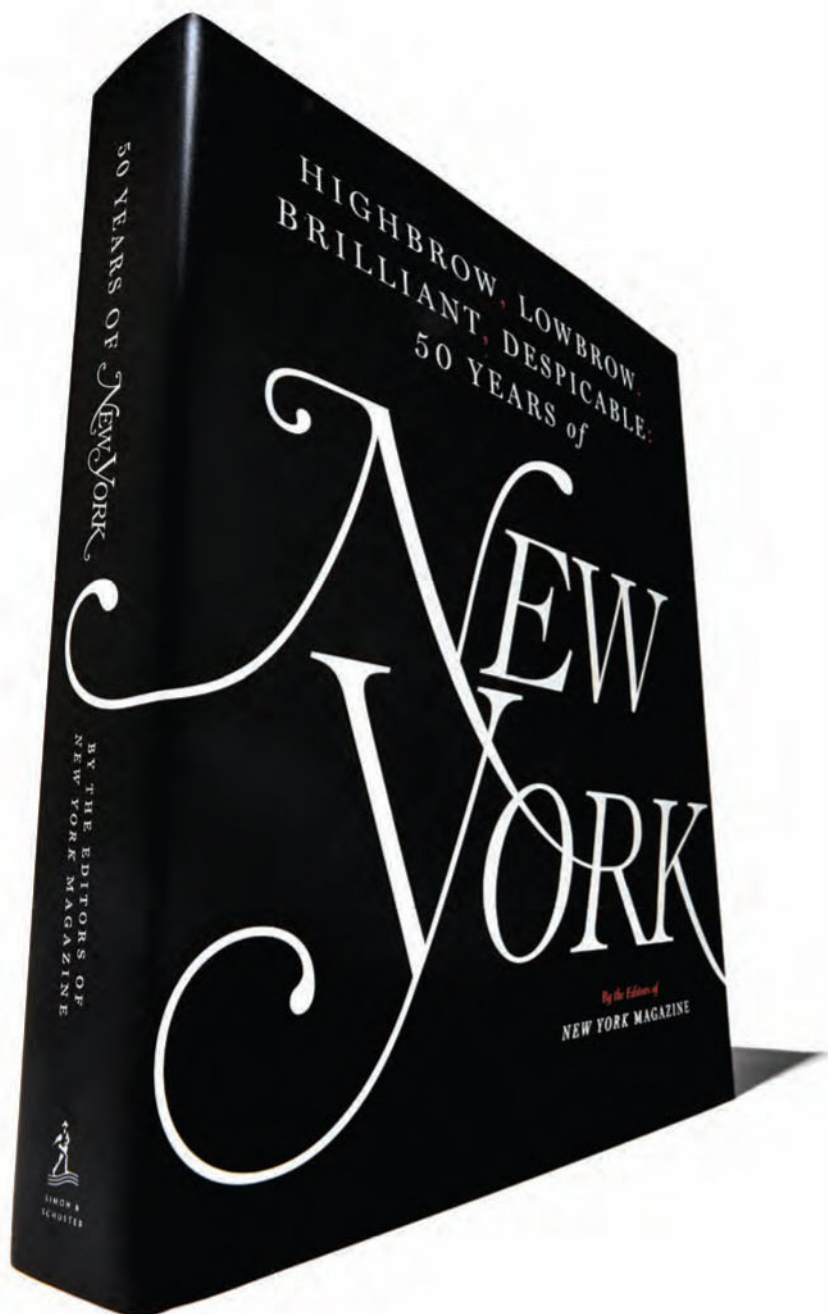
SOLUTION TO LAST ISSUE'S PUZZLE

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Diaghilev, whose storied and stormy relationship with the dancer Vaslav Nijinsky changed the world of dance forever. S.H.

CLASSICAL

21. See Julius Eastman: That Which Is Fundamental

Paying respects.

The Kitchen, through February 10.

The life of the minimalist composer Julius Eastman is among the sadder stories of modern American music. A gay black militant during the Reagan years, he died at 49 in 1990, largely ignored in the movement's chronicles. Now the posthumous rediscovery rolls on with an exhibition and six concerts, including a performance of Eastman's simultaneously monumental and jaunty hourlong *Feminine*. J.D.

MOVIES

22. Go to Ingmar Bergman

The most thrilling retrospective of the year.

Film Forum, February 7 through March 15.

It's the global centennial celebration of the films of Ingmar Bergman: 47 movies the tortured, guilt-ridden, but ever-randy master directed or wrote or both, 40 newly restored. See the obvious masterpieces (*The Seventh Seal*, *Persona*) but don't miss the less-obvious ones, among them the ne plus ultra of bleak religious torment, *Winter Light*. D.E.

POP

23. See Yung Lean & Sad Boys

Trap jams you can dance to.

Irving Plaza, February 7.

Scandinavian rapper Yung Lean makes music that's perfect for winter: The towering, synth-laced productions underfoot evoke vast expanses of ice, while Lean and rap partners like Bladee ponder life's ups and downs in an Auto-Tuned sigh. C.J.

TV

24. Watch Queer Eye for the Straight Guy

No, you're crying watching a makeover show.

Netflix, February 7.

Queer Eye is a show that belongs to a very specific early-aughts moment, when gay culture was just edging into the mainstream in a big way. That the Netflix reboot of the series actually works in 2018 is perhaps the biggest surprise of the year. Politics is touched on—including an episode where they make over a Trump supporter—but what's most effective are the moments of genuine human connection.

THEATER

25. See Hangmen

Left in the lurch.

Atlantic Theater Company, through March 4.

Olivier- and Oscar-winning playwright Martin McDonagh's newest play, about the fate of a hangman when England abolishes hanging in 1965, makes its U.S. premiere in a transfer from the Royal Court in London. S.H.

Sunshine State of Mind

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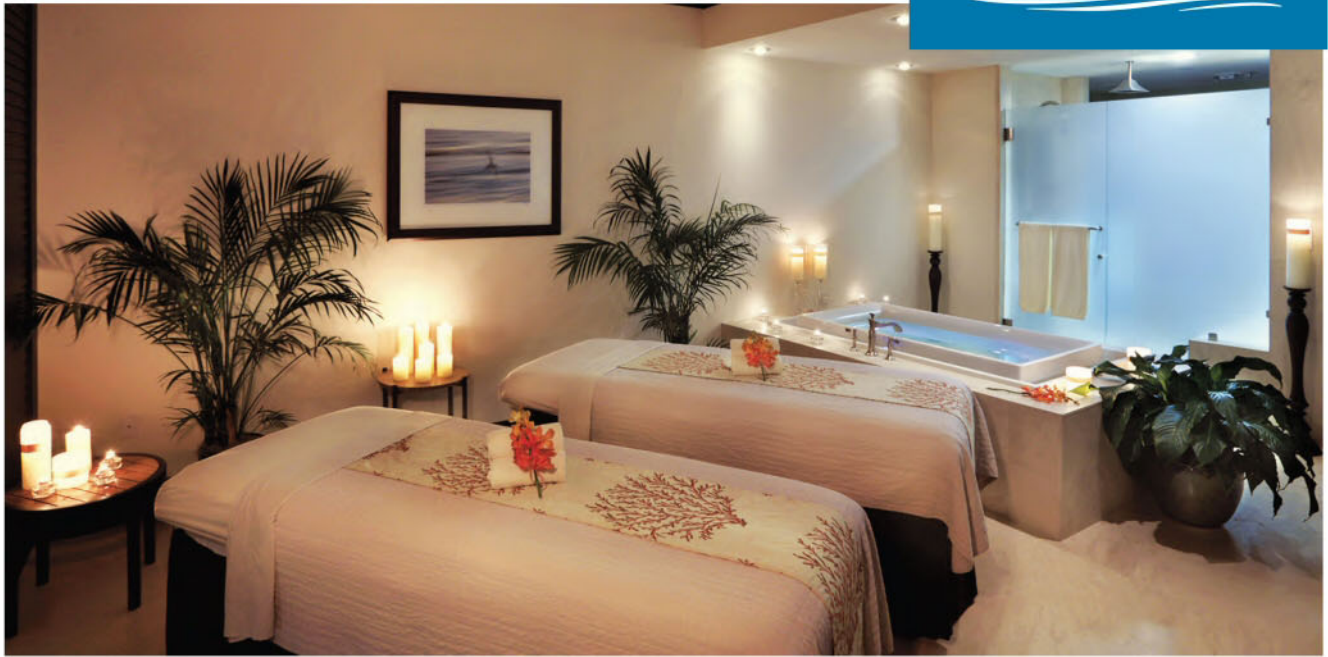
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

candidates face, Vilardi notices a refreshingly new mind-set this year. “The ‘Am I qualified?’ stuff we used to hear, when women would talk themselves out of running for office—what is the time management going to be, wondering how they’ll talk to their husband or partner or boss about this, worrying that they can’t make this work with their job, or that legislatures pay crap—now all of that is being negotiated in a positive way.” Instead of talking themselves out of it, they’re talking themselves *into* it. “It’s like lightbulbs are going off everywhere,” says Vilardi. “Prior to the 2016 election, two-thirds of VoteRunLead women would tell us they wanted a five-year plan. Now 60 percent want to run by 2020.”

ANTOINETTE SEDILLO LOPEZ, a former law professor working at a nonprofit assisting victims of domestic violence, had been urged many times in the past to run for office. But she was happy with her work. Enter Trump. The week after he was inaugurated, Sedillo Lopez, many of whose clients are Latina immigrants, noticed that only three of the ten people on her schedule showed up. “We called them and found out that they were afraid to go to the courthouse to get restraining orders, afraid to testify against their abusers in criminal trials. That was the first time I’d seen that.” She immediately launched a campaign asking that Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents be removed from courtrooms, arguing that the dynamics were creating “a class of people who could not obtain justice because of fear” of deportation. “We’ve elected someone who doesn’t care about the rule of law and is an abuser,” she says. “It’s an outrage.” Now Sedillo Lopez is running for Congress in New Mexico’s first district.

That outrage can be an extremely useful catalyst, says Patty Murray, especially when you face the kinds of fund-raising and structural barriers that many women do. “You have to feel you can get past all that,” she says. “When we have that passion or anger, we work so hard.”

But some of those seeking to organize women electorally are nervous about too much fury, fury that in women is still more

likely to be read as irrational, hysterical, unappealing. “Anger can be a springboard,” says Patricia Russo, but it has to be followed by hope and a plan. “It can’t just be ‘I marched and I’m mad.’” For black women, who’ve long been undermined by caricatures of anger, it can be an even bigger risk. “There is little tolerance for black women to be angry,” says Peeler-Allen. “Which is hard when we have so much to be angry about.”

Then again, the world does seem to be changing. When Tresa Undem conducted a poll in December 2016 asking if the Trump campaign and election had made voters think more about “sexism in our society,” 40 percent of respondents said yes. In November 2017, when she asked whether the news about sexual harassment and assault made people think more about societal sexism, 73 percent concurred. In December 2016, 52 percent of those surveyed by Undem said that the country would be better off with more women in office; in November 2017, 69 percent gave that answer.

Undem isn’t alone in detecting seismic shifts in attitudes about gender and politics. Recent MTV-PRRI polling of millennials found that young women were far more likely than young men to have participated in political activity over the past year, leaving one writer at Brookings musing that this could be “the first time in American history that an entire cohort of young women reports greater political engagement than their male peers.”

It looks the same to Murray on the ground. “We have a huge number of women who could be elected mayors in major cities. We’ve never seen that before,” she says. In other words, the pipeline could really start to fill, with female mayors and city-council members and school-board officials, who become tomorrow’s state reps, who become 2030’s senators and governors.

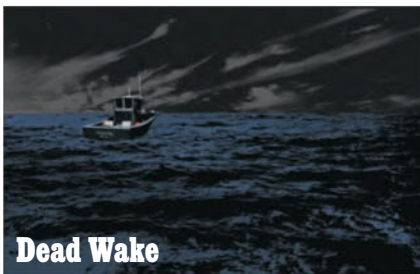
The sight of so many women rushing to occupy elected office is almost sure to draw out antagonists. This is a zero-sum game: If women win political power, white men lose it. Recall that the wave of women who hit Washington in 1992 didn’t lead to a flood but a trickle of female candidates in the election cycles immediately following, that the backlash to the election of Barack Obama and the symbolic threat of Hillary Clinton gave us the tea party and eventually the Trump presidency. What if the backlash—to #MeToo, to the sheer number of women taking to the campaign trail—reduces the enthusiasm for women down the road, as we move out of 2018 and toward 2020?

Andrea Steele of Emerge America, which trains Democratic women candidates in 24 states, worked on Carol Moseley Braun’s campaign in 1992 and remembers the drop-

off. “We thought everything was going to change,” she says, recalling the deep disappointment when it didn’t. “The difference between then and now is we have infrastructure. EMILY’s List is stronger, Emerge is growing its support structure, there are state organizations helping to fund candidates. And a big part of what we’ve seen over the years is that when women get into politics, they start bringing other women in.”

That, of course, reflects another sign of hope: That even if this is a bump, an aberration, it is likely to reverberate far into the future. In that Year of the Woman that is now two and a half decades old, four women (just four!) were elected to the Senate; today, there are five and a half times that number. The seat won by Moseley Braun, the first black woman ever elected to the Senate, would go on to be filled by the next African-American to win, Barack Obama, who would go on to become our first black president. Two of the original four women, Murray and Dianne Feinstein, are still in the Senate; Murray has been the highest-ranking woman in the body. Both participated in the controversial but strategically smart, and wholly unprecedented, show of female force that pushed Franken to step down in the wake of groping allegations. Kamala Harris, only the second black woman to be elected to the Senate after Moseley Braun, was part of that clean-your-own-house-first effort. And the senator who kicked off the move against Franken—one that may have contributed to the defeat of Roy Moore, the retirement of Franks and Farenthold, and the public reexamination of assault allegations against President Trump—was Kirsten Gillibrand, who occupies the former seat of the first woman ever elected senator from New York, a politician who also came to Washington, in 1992, as a wife. *That* woman would go on to run two historic and competitive presidential campaigns, one of which earned her 3 million more votes than our incumbent president; it is, of course, her electoral defeat that helped land us here.

Win or lose, for many of the women running in 2018, the unexpected electoral engagement has become a calling. They’ve gotten a taste of what running things might feel like, in a good way: Sedillo Lopez says that there has been something “very empowering” about leaving the domestic-violence agency, where she felt so regularly yanked around by the Trump administration, and embarking instead on a mission to challenge that administration. Asked if she’s enjoyed becoming a candidate, Sedillo Lopez says, “Oh, I just love it, and I had no idea I would love it as much as I do. I might have done this earlier in my life if I’d realized how fun it is.” ■



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33

The investigation surfaced a complex web of family secrets. Police sought to obtain the phone records of at least 11 persons of interest. Linda was considered a suspect, which wasn't a surprise given her assault charge against Chakalos, her gambling habit, and the fact that, like her three sisters, she stood to inherit millions. Police also learned that Chakalos's longtime bookkeeper had skimmed more than \$400,000 from his boss, a crime for which he was sentenced to three and a half years in prison.

Linda and her sisters all passed a polygraph test, but Nathan refused to cooperate with investigators. When police searched his apartment seven months after his grandfather's murder, they found a gun locker in his bedroom closet with a Remington shotgun and a pellet gun, neither of which was linked to the murder. But the next day, they got their biggest break in the case: Before his grandfather was killed, they discovered, Nathan had purchased a Sig Sauer Patrol 716 assault rifle, which was the same caliber as the gun used to kill Chakalos. When police asked Nathan why he hadn't told them about the assault rifle, he said he'd forgotten about it. When they asked him where it was, he said he'd lost it.

"That gun is a high-end, \$3,000, semi-automatic assault weapon," said Dan Small, an attorney for Nathan's aunts. "How do you forget about a weapon like that when the police are asking you about guns? More importantly, how do you lose it? Did you leave it at the Dunkin' Donuts?"

In Nathan's apartment, investigators found handwritten notes with details about "self-propelled Improvised Explosive Devices" and "sniper rifles on an aerial video stabilizing platform." Neighbors told police Nathan was "a time bomb waiting to go off," referring to him as "murder boy." There is no evidence linking Asperger's with violence. Some researchers, however, believe that autistic traits, in conjunction with psychotic symptoms, can contribute to the disinhibition that precipitates predatory aggression. To avoid misinterpreting Nathan's autism as evidence of "deceit or avoidance," police consulted S. David Bernstein, a fo-

rensic psychologist. If Nathan had committed the crime, Bernstein said, he would have researched it on his computer, likely returning to the same websites over and over to check his work. But any hopes of catching Nathan planning the crime were dashed when investigators discovered that he had discarded his computer's hard drive.

Local police had little experience handling murder cases, and one detective was later demoted for mishandling critical evidence. But the biggest obstacle was something simpler: A prosecutor can't build a case around a missing hard drive or a gun that disappeared. Despite the hole in his alibi on the night of the murder, there simply wasn't enough evidence to arrest Nathan, much less convict him beyond a reasonable doubt.

The motive was as elusive as the evidence. Why would Nathan kill the person in his life who seemed to understand him best and who supported him in his quest for independence? "John was the most important thing to Nathan," said Clark. "At times I think he felt he was his father more than me." Nathan's parents weren't the only ones who believed in his innocence. "Unlike his mother, I never saw Nathan arguing with John," a source close to Chakalos told me. "There were periods of time back when he was younger that Nathan didn't even want to talk to his grandfather. But once he turned about 14 or so, I don't recall any time they'd argue about anything."

It is unclear when Nathan's aunts began to suspect him of the murder. Though they fought from time to time, Linda was close to her sisters. Valerie, as the trustee of Nathan's trust fund, approved a check for nearly \$200,000 to pay a top criminal-defense attorney to represent him. Long after their father's murder had been relegated to the state attorney's cold-case squad, the sisters continued to pay for billboards around Hartford advertising a \$250,000 reward for information leading to an arrest in the case. If the Chakalos sisters did suspect Nathan of killing their father, they didn't discuss it outside the family. They rarely speak to the media and declined multiple interview requests for this story. But on the anniversary of their father's murder, while Linda was still alive, Valerie made a vague and chilling public statement. "This person has gotten away with murder," she warned, "and chances are it will happen again."

LIKE THE FIRST STEP into a massive saltwater swimming pool, the continental shelf off the Atlantic coast extends some 100 miles out to sea, where, along a ridge line, the ocean floor plunges from a

few hundred feet to more than a mile deep. Submarine canyons striate that ridge line, forming perfect habitats for game fish like bigeye tuna and marlin. Accordingly, the canyons are the preferred hunting grounds for adventurous, well-heeled sport fishers. Nathan longed to fish the canyons, but Linda, his only fishing partner, reportedly refused to join him. No one goes that far out without an experienced captain and a capable boat.

In December 2015, Nathan purchased the *Chicken Pox*, a sturdy 31-foot Downeaster, from a metalworker in Massachusetts who had retrofitted the vessel's topside with a stainless-steel deck and pilothouse. Six months later, he bought tuna-fishing gear from a fisherman named Shawn Sakaske. After talking to Nathan for an hour about fishing, Sakaske worried that the 22-year-old wasn't experienced enough to venture that far from shore. "He just wasn't ready for the canyons," Sakaske recalled. "He had no one to teach him."

Sakaske wasn't the only one who felt that Nathan was too inexperienced. An employee at Ram Point Marina told me that he once spent an hour helping Nathan back the *Chicken Pox* into its slip and, on multiple occasions, had to explain basic concepts of boat maintenance. But Nathan liked to tinker with the boat as if he were a seasoned pro. The day he and Linda set out on their fateful trip, Nathan removed the *Chicken Pox*'s "trim tabs," two foot-long paddles mounted on the back of the hull. There was no reason to remove the paddles, which act like rudders to regulate a boat's pitch and tilt as it cuts through water at high speeds, but Nathan felt they "were serving no purpose." Removing the trim tabs left half-dollar-size holes in the boat's hull near the waterline, so Nathan filled them with marine putty. As an employee at West Marine, the boating franchise where Nathan bought the putty, said to me, "You wouldn't believe the dumb shit people do to their boats."

Linda, who had turned 54 earlier that week, looked forward to her fishing trips with Nathan. Boats had long served as floating DMZs in their embattled relationship. That night, before shoving off, she texted a "float plan" to a friend, a standard precaution she took whenever going out on a boat. She and Nathan, she told her friend, would be fishing near Block Island—nowhere near the canyons—and would be back Sunday morning. "Call me 12 noon if you don't hear from me," she wrote.

Soon after Linda sent her float plan, she and Nathan were under way, heading through the salt-marsh pond and past the breachway into open water. In a legal dispute with his boat-insurance company,

Nathan claimed that he and his mother fished near Block Island for an hour or so. Then, around 3 a.m., they headed to Block Canyon, arriving shortly after dawn on Sunday. Weather conditions were good and the sea was calm. They dropped their fishing lines and spent the next five hours trolling for tuna before things went terribly wrong.

Nathan heard a sound coming from under the deck. When he opened a hatch to check it out, he found the compartment filling with water. According to tests done by the insurance company, it's likely that the marine putty Nathan used to fill the holes in the hull had failed and that the boat had been slowly taking on water for hours. Nathan said he told Linda to bring in the fishing lines and started making preparations to jump ship. He went into the boat's pilothouse a number of times but never sent a distress signal. Then, as he told the Coast Guard, "the boat just dropped out from under my feet." Nathan's \$4,000 life raft—mounted on top of the pilothouse and fully stocked with packets of water, crackers, and survival gear—would have self-inflated the second it hit water. At some point, Nathan said, he managed to transfer additional survival supplies from the *Chicken Pox* to the life raft and clamber into it. He began blowing a safety whistle and calling out to his mother, but she was nowhere to be seen.

Crimes at sea are notoriously impenetrable. Evidence is usually limited to the weather, the tides, and any cell-phone or GPS data that has been relayed to shore. What's left resembles the narrative that Nathan provided in the murder of his grandfather: a gap-toothed story that raises more questions than it answers. One charter-boat captain doubted that Linda would have agreed to a long trip to the canyons aboard a boat that didn't have a toilet. Her ex-boyfriend asked how Nathan could have swum to his life raft while wearing his signature galoshes. Some keen observers wondered why Nathan instructed his mother to reel in the tuna lines if he planned to abandon ship.

As mysterious as the *Chicken Pox's* sinking was, investigators were equally perplexed by what happened after the boat went down. The Coast Guard launched a massive search-and-rescue mission but saw no sign of Nathan. "He was found in the search area," a spokesperson said after his rescue. "Why didn't he see us? Why didn't we see him?"

According to Nathan's timeline, he spent a full seven days at sea on his life raft. Yet the captain of the *Orient Lucky* said Nathan was neither dehydrated nor hypothermic when he was found. Skeptics who watched video footage of Nathan's

rescue wondered why he looked relatively healthy after spending a week on a raft little bigger than a doghouse. Survival experts—including one I spoke with who spent 76 days aboard a life raft after his boat sank—say surviving such a mishap at sea isn't impossible, but they would have expected Nathan to look much worse after his ordeal.

The issue of where Nathan was found only deepens the mystery. The *Orient Lucky* pulled him out of the water in the vicinity of Alvin Canyon, some 35 miles east of where the *Chicken Pox* supposedly went down in Block Canyon. According to Glen Gawarkiewicz, a research scientist who studies the continental shelf for the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, currents over the shelf flow east to west—which means Nathan should have drifted in the opposite direction. With no way to locate the *Chicken Pox*, investigators had very little to go on. Once again, as in the case of his grandfather's murder, Nathan had lost the one piece of evidence that could have helped determine his innocence—or guilt.

SINCE HIS MOTHER'S disappearance, Nathan has become something of a celebrity in gothic New England, and everyone seems to have a theory of the case. Some are plausible (Nathan didn't know what he was doing or where he was when the boat went down). Others are creative (Nathan killed his mother, sank the *Chicken Pox*, and then hid on another boat until shortly before his "rescue"). Still others are far-fetched (Nathan and Linda planned the whole thing, and she is now living on the lam in the Caribbean). Sakaske, who sold Nathan the tuna gear, thinks Linda was ensnared in the fishing lines. "When the boat sinks from under her and goes straight down, everything in her feet is now tangled and all that stuff is hooked to the boat and she didn't have a knife on her," he said. "She panics and tries to take a breath and sucks in saltwater and drowns." Clark shared a similar theory with me. "There's not a bone in me that thinks Nathan could have killed his mother," he said. "Maybe he did something to the boat, but that's a mistake."

Implicit in many of the theories is the assumption that Nathan meticulously planned to execute his mother. Absent from those theories, however, is a reason why Nathan would choose a plan that involved putting himself at such risk. Sinking a boat 100 miles offshore and expecting somebody to happen upon you defies logic. The only way Nathan could have reduced that risk, while avoiding detec-

tion by the Coast Guard, would have been to dump his mother's body and hide out for seven days. There are no islands that far out to sea, but it's conceivable he could have hidden somewhere along the coast, 100 miles away from the canyons, and then returned to sink his boat once a freight ship was nearby. If Nathan did kill his mother, it seems more likely that he did so in a fit of anger. Maybe Linda had refused to go to the canyons. Maybe she brought up her father's murder. Or maybe Nathan blamed his mother for his grandfather's death.

Six weeks after his rescue, Nathan held a memorial service for Linda at a church in Hartford. He brought a bouquet of pink lilies and, afterward, he sheepishly pushed his way through a scrum of reporters with his head down. "The whole family was invited," he said, getting into his pickup truck. Conspicuously absent from the service were Linda's sisters. Still, according to someone close to the family, they continued talking to Nathan. On the phone, he seemed not to hear the anger and fear in their voices. It must have come as a shock to him last summer when he learned that his aunts had filed the slayer action against him in court. "It's clear that there are holes not just in Nathan's boat, but in Nathan's story," said an attorney for the sisters.

Since his rescue, Nathan has given very few interviews, and he declined to speak to me. Last year, during a rare television appearance, he accused investigators of targeting him because of his disorder—Asperger's, he said, made him "the lowest hanging fruit." He categorically denies any involvement in the deaths of his grandfather and mother. Today, nearly a year and a half after Nathan was rescued, investigators seem no closer to solving the mystery. Nathan lives by himself in a house in Vernon, Vermont, that he bought with money his grandfather gave him. Everyone in town knows of the quiet recluse. He spent months renovating his home, adding two more stories and transforming it into a bizarre four-story eyesore. Building materials are strewn around his yard, and a handwritten sign staked at the end of the driveway politely wards off reporters.

The slayer case has only just begun in probate court, and Linda's sisters have said that if they win, they will donate Nathan's inheritance to charity. Above all, the lawsuit seems to be a last-ditch effort to surface the whole truth about what happened to their sister and father. For now, they are left with Nathan's version of Linda's final moments: going down with the *Chicken Pox*, her son on a life raft only a few feet away, yet impossible to reach. ■

Does This Man Know More Than Robert Mueller?



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

up a savage hit piece becomes a running joke throughout my visit—as does Greenwald’s inevitable reaction to my hit piece. “Unfortunately,” he imagines tweeting, “*New York* apparently has eliminated its entire editorial and fact-checking team as evidenced by this wretched article filled with lies. 1/29.”

In truth, a hatchet job probably wouldn’t bother Greenwald. He’s long positioned himself as a radical adversary of the courtier press corps; a hostile story would confirm his view. Indeed, the formidable team of investigative journalists that surrounds Greenwald at the Intercept reflects this bent. But the ambitions of the First Look Media empire have also been hobbled by Greenwald’s team-last iconoclasm. In 2014, Greenwald co-wrote a lengthy piece documenting—and further contributing to—the company’s managerial dysfunction.

Greenwald’s half-a-million-dollar Intercept salary reflects his role as the founder and figurehead of the organization. But since the Snowden revelations, Greenwald hasn’t done much original reporting, and he has lately repositioned himself as a bomb-throwing media critic. This is in some ways a natural role for him, one that harks back to his early blogging days. “His general default position is that we shouldn’t believe anything the elite Establishment politicians are saying without fact-checking them,” says Jeremy Scahill, his Intercept co-founder. “We certainly shouldn’t believe the anonymous proclamations of CIA, NSA, FBI officials.”

Greenwald’s bunker mentality makes his Russia skepticism especially intuitive. “Every groove in his brain,” one Greenwald critic told me, burnishes his suspicion that the political and media Establishment has a vested interest in promoting the story. His Bush-era awakening created a built-in distrust of national-security apparatuses; his focus on U.S. power abuses tends to outweigh concerns about threats to the homeland; his isolationism makes him wary of belligerent rhetoric; his civil libertarianism demands that unpopular views not be censored.

In 2012, many liberals who now consider Kremlin-linked Facebook memes an act of war mocked Mitt Romney for calling Russia our “No. 1 geopolitical foe.” Greenwald, meanwhile, has been more consistent. “He’s always minimized whatever the threat vector that people like me were concerned about,” says Lawfare editor Ben Wittes, a longtime Greenwald opponent and unlikely celebrity of the Russiagate media sphere. “He’s doing the exact same thing now. Just that the threat vector we’re concerned about is the Russian state versus our leadership.” Wittes adds, tongue in cheek: “In Glenn’s defense, he has never purported to be a patriot.”

To listen to intelligence veterans, there is also a defensive aspect to Greenwald’s collusion skepticism. “You really cannot dismiss as part of his motivation the way in which this new story is undermining the very things that he made his reputation on,” says cybersecurity expert Stewart Baker, a former NSA general counsel. “Which is: embracing WikiLeaks and Snowden and a hostility to the idea that there are national-security threats the U.S. has to respond to.”

Journalistically, the problem with this dynamic is there’s virtually no revelation in the Russia story that could get Greenwald to change his mind. Which means that while Scahill and other Intercept colleagues tend to evaluate each new revelation at face value, Greenwald focuses disproportionately on debunked or overblown Russia stories. Ever the lawyer, he curates evidence that suits his argument. More than a year ago, the *Washington Post* published an erroneous story alleging that Russia had hacked into a U.S. electrical grid in Vermont. Greenwald continues to bring this up. To him, it’s not just a random piece of bad reporting but a crucial exhibit in a case he’s building.

Which makes his lack of interest in a report the Intercept itself produced all the more curious. In June, it published an explosive story that Russia had attempted to infiltrate voter-registration systems days before the election by sending phishing emails to more than 100 local election officials. The information came from a leaked NSA report; shortly before the Intercept published its story, a Georgia NSA employee named Reality Winner was arrested on espionage charges. Almost immediately, the Intercept was accused of exposing Winner with its own sloppy methods. But the scoop itself represented one of the first credible claims that, more than trying to influence American voters, Russia may have been directly targeting

election technology. Greenwald distanced himself from the bungled leak at the time and now says he doesn’t buy the story outright. “I never liked the story. I thought it was bullshit and knew it was going to be huge in a way that was totally unjustified in what it actually revealed,” he says. “I think it tried to overstate the importance of what that document was.”

Greenwald’s selective outrage has become habitual. In November, *The Atlantic* published Twitter correspondence from 2016 in which a WikiLeaks representative gave Donald Trump Jr. campaign advice. Greenwald pooh-poohed the coordination, implying that Julian Assange was just playing his usual 4-D chess. Barrett Brown—a pro-transparency autodidact who served more than four years in federal prison for spreading hacked data and won a National Magazine Award for Intercept essays he wrote while incarcerated—was livid. “He doesn’t seem to be engaging on the actual revelations that keep coming out on Russia and Trump’s people,” Brown says. “My best guess is he’s just ignoring these things in favor of the less difficult argument that some people who are backing the Trump-Russia narrative are full of shit.”

It probably doesn’t matter to Greenwald in the end how many new details emerge about Russia. The big truth—that American society is in dire need of reform and Russia is not to blame for that—can never be dislodged by the little truths. Still, in the weeks following my visit to Rio, Greenwald seemed to grow self-conscious of his alienated stance. On December 8, he emailed me that he’d been asked to appear on the *Sean Hannity Show* to talk about his criticism of a CNN story about emails between Trump’s team and WikiLeaks that he considered “the biggest fuck-up yet in the Trump/Russia story—totally humiliating.” A few hours later, he reconsidered. “Actually I’ve decided to take the opportunity to go on and just spend the whole time bashing the shit out of Fox and Hannity rather than doing what they want me to do: attacking CNN.” Later, he sent this: “Reading up now on all the Fox Fake News scandals of the year—what a fucking list.”


Ultimately, after being asked to appear on all three of Fox News’ prime-time programs, he went on Laura Ingraham’s show, where he fulfilled his promise to bash Fox News. The next morning, Greenwald tweeted a clip of the confrontation to his 940,000 followers, then immediately got into an argument with somebody called @hoboken1111. ■


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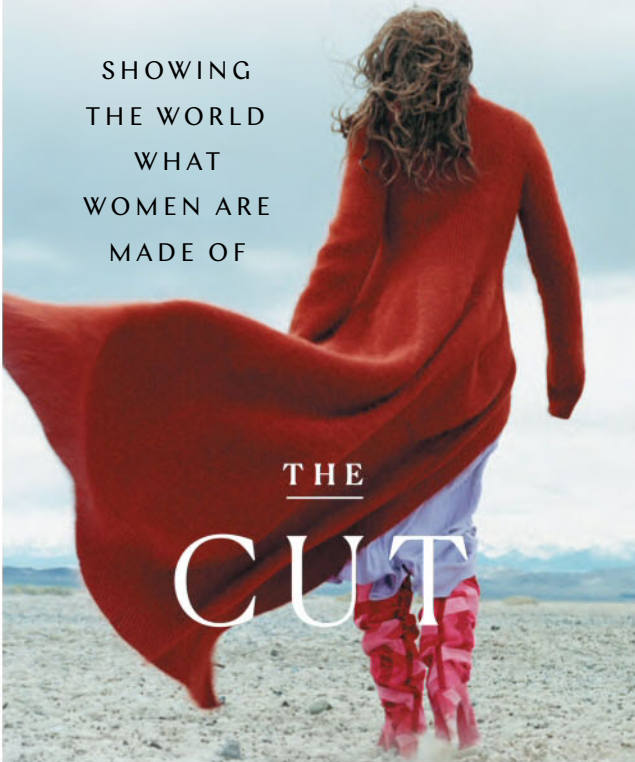
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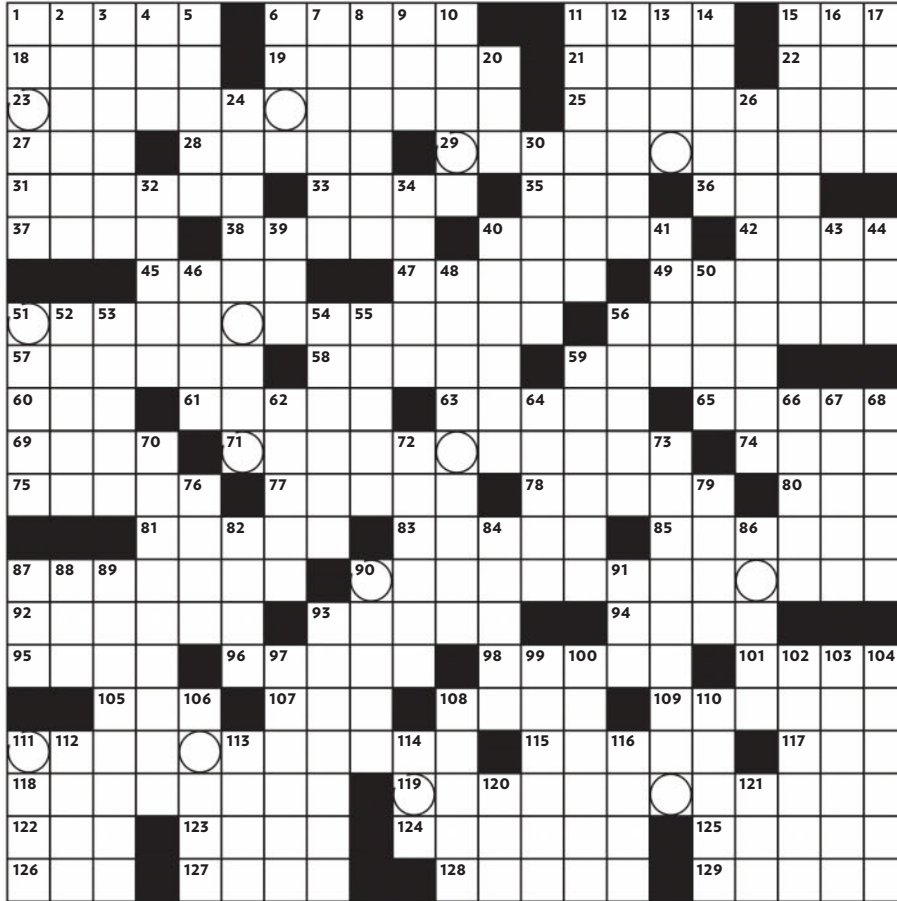
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A Fresh Start

New York Crossword by Matt Gaffney



Across

- 1 Judges hear them
- 6 Pastrami Queen and the like
- 11 Phone fun
- 15 Animal for whom an NFL team is named
- 18 Our home
- 19 Hercule is her creation
- 21 Cheese in a salad
- 22 Kitchenware brand
- 23 Paul Theroux, e.g.
- 25 Largest city in South America
- 27 "___ true!"
- 28 Napkin material
- 29 One with kids in college, often
- 31 Drive on a course
- 33 River issue
- 35 Caesar's "sum," to us
- 36 Sault ___ Marie, Mich.
- 37 Goes astray
- 38 Ford of '58
- 40 "But you told me ..." retort
- 42 Casual greeting
- 45 With 59-Down, No. 5 creator
- 47 Colon, e.g.
- 49 First game in a series
- 51 Indulge
- 56 Rumored Himalayan

- 57 Document heading
- 58 "Gosh, that's cool!"
- 59 Unsophisticated
- 60 One for Sophia Loren
- 61 Strikes, as one might a cad
- 63 Swiss pharmaceutical giant
- 65 They go under tents
- 69 "Song ___ Blue"
- 71 Location in the climactic scene of "X-Men"
- 74 Pete of "Musicforthemorningafter"
- 75 Watch secretly
- 77 Prevention amount
- 78 Steffi's husband
- 80 "It's Always Sunny" role
- 81 Correct, as code
- 83 "Three Sunflowers in ___" (Van Gogh painting)
- 85 Mexican food brand
- 87 Newspaper format
- 90 Mountain climber's tool
- 92 Name
- 93 Honor-driven event
- 94 Fashion-house founder of 1946
- 95 Historian Howard
- 96 Tales with many turns
- 98 ___ Hemings (slave and

- probable son of Thomas Jefferson)
- 101 Leon who wrote "Mila 18"
- 105 Hat named for an African city
- 107 Business end?
- 108 City of 1993 peace talks
- 109 Star-studded pair
- 111 Tonight
- 115 Belted hunter
- 117 Had
- 118 Overhead zone
- 119 "Moonrise Kingdom" actor, 2012
- 122 Jack moved into his house
- 123 San Francisco feature
- 124 Hot dog, in kid-speak
- 125 Panera, e.g.
- 126 Thierry's the
- 127 Ransom of cars
- 128 Can't do without
- 129 Plant with broad leaves

Down

- 1 Small
- 2 Ali of "Legally Blonde"
- 3 Chalkboard clearer
- 4 Off-roader
- 5 Book's nook

- 6 Sunup
- 7 Way out
- 8 Kazan of "My Big Fat Greek Wedding"
- 9 Creepy TV cousin
- 10 One of 500 in a ream
- 11 Decline to vote
- 12 Request from a kid carrying a board game
- 13 Peasant
- 14 Building overseers, casually
- 15 It runs from Maine to Key West
- 16 Car bar
- 17 Drop anchor
- 20 Branch
- 24 Product's path
- 26 Words before reciting an adage
- 30 Rice dish
- 32 Green grouch
- 34 Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas ___
- 39 Scrapy-___ (cartoon dog)
- 40 Ice houses
- 41 Qatar's capital
- 43 Tennis redo
- 44 "Entourage" role
- 46 Elevator pioneer
- 48 Fetching dog's task
- 50 Annoyance
- 51 Bridge support
- 52 Amass
- 53 Magazine since 1945
- 54 Detach from the wall
- 55 Tree secretion
- 56 The way things are going
- 59 See 45-Across
- 62 One way to read
- 64 Manila-envelope feature
- 66 Riding event
- 67 Alternative to Newman's Own
- 68 Go on tiptoe
- 70 Piety
- 72 Close calls
- 73 Babbling endlessly
- 76 Element around Las Vegas
- 79 Hence
- 82 Taste
- 84 Church areas
- 86 Monotonous sound
- 87 Spinning cartoon devil
- 88 Alex and ___ (jewelry brand)
- 89 Parts of some pagan rituals
- 90 Pricey purse
- 91 Nuptial agreement
- 93 Evening eating
- 97 Put (together)
- 99 Stephens who won the U.S. Open last year
- 100 Like good romance novels
- 102 Rustlers' ropes
- 103 Liking what's going on
- 104 Miller of "American Sniper"
- 106 Youngest of the Marx Brothers
- 108 Wry Nash
- 110 Steve's role on "Boardwalk Empire"
- 111 Weimaraner wagger
- 112 Walk in the woods
- 113 Alternative to Aspen
- 114 Novel
- 116 Monthly day
- 120 Very young
- 121 Piraeus P

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THE APPROVAL MATRIX

Our deliberately oversimplified guide to who falls where on our taste hierarchies.

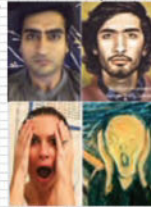
HIGHBROW

The AT&T Building's lobby is being **demolished**.



Possibly related: The **American Institute of Architects** decides that there isn't a single '80s or '90s building worthy of its Twenty-five Year Award.

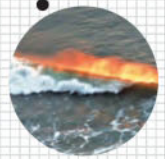
You'd think we'd know better by now, but we all got conned into feeding the **facial-recognition engine**—for free!—again.



Stock picker Bill Miller donated **\$75 million** to the Johns Hopkins philosophy department.



Susanna Mälkki lit **La Mer** on fire with the Philharmonic, and not in an oil-spill kind of way.



The **ginger-haired heroine** of Studio Ponoc's animated, Ghibli-ish *Mary and the Witch's Flower*.



Dolores O'Riordan.



The **Met's** nonnegotiable-for-out-of-towners \$25 admission fee.

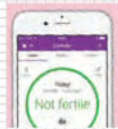


Conductor Charles Dutoit, accused of sexual assault, is **fired** by the Royal Philharmonic.



A Goldman Sachs exec's personal assistant allegedly **stole** \$1.2 million worth of wine from his boss and sold it.

Wendi Deng ... spy?!



The Swedish contraceptive app Natural Cycles is apparently responsible for a whole bunch of little **Svens and Ingas**.

Governor Cuomo finally throws his weight behind **congestion pricing**.



Enda Walsh's *Ballyturk*, a small-town Irish play that goes Beckett **one turn darker**.



The alleged **Stormy Daniels-Donald Trump** coupling, in all its profoundly unsexy detail.

Homeland Security secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, whose name is not at all Nordic, claimed not to know that most **Norwegians are white people**.



The **Awl and the Hairpin, R.I.P.**



The **Times-iest Times headline** in all the *Times*: "Kazakhstan Cheers New Alphabet, Except for All Those Apostrophes."



This truly incredible **car-crash** photo. (Also incredible: Driver and passenger were barely hurt.)

Fred Bass, the late owner of the Strand Book Store, was buried at sea in a **Strand sweatshirt**.



DESPICABLE

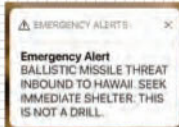
It's sundown for the **Landmark Sunshine Cinema**.



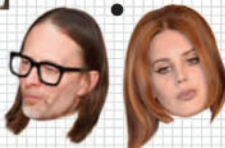
The Ataris' ex-bassist allegedly masterminded a \$27 million real-estate scam. Will he **Breakout** of jail?



Missile alerts. Because we're not all jumpy enough.



Radiohead v. Lana Del Rey.



"**Chicken-nugget connoisseur**" is now a job.

And speaking of nursery-school food: Why buy a \$10 million condo when you can bribe Trump with a jar of cherry **Starbursts**?



Dressing for weather that swings **from 58 degrees to 15 degrees** over the course of a day.



"**Shithole.**"



"**Shithouse.**"

Thinx founder Miki Agrawal, who left her last company after complaints about her lack of boundaries, promoted her new start-up by handing out string-your-own-**anal-beads** kits.

BRILLIANT

David Byrne led a gorgeous sing-along of David Bowie's "Heroes" at Joe's Pub.



The swagger of **Black Lightning**, the perfect black-superhero show for this moment.

The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story.



Downtown Boys' "**A Wall**," maybe the first great Trump-era protest song.



The Good Place's Jameela Jamil was on **The Great British Bake Off** and produced a dessert declared "unsafe to eat."



Hugh Grant as nun.

And, more prosaically, **Fred Armisen** as Michael Wolff.

The **Starbucks Blonde Espresso** is ... fine? We guess? Better than the other one. A little.



Edible *faux* Tide Pods.



LOWBROW

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