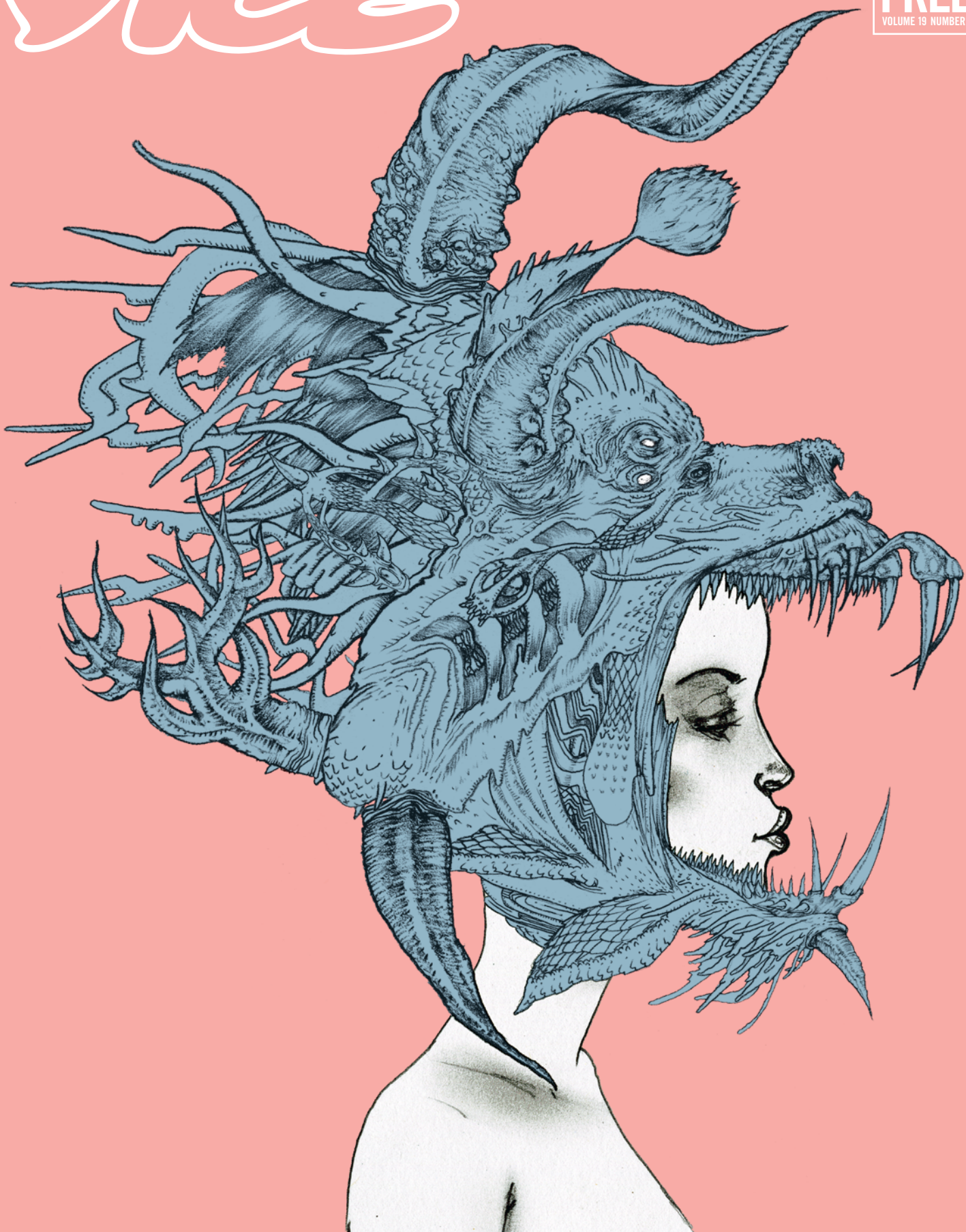


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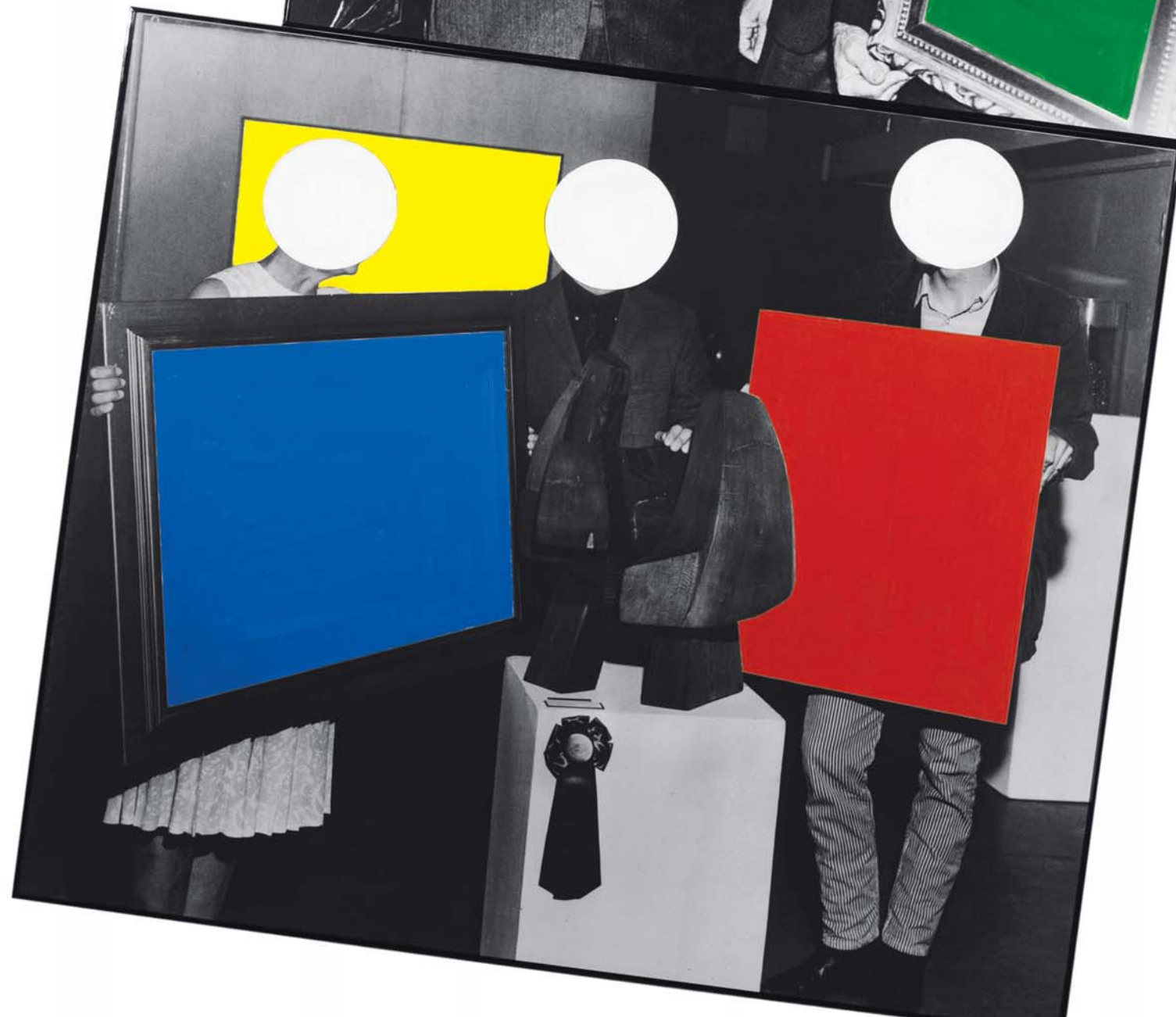
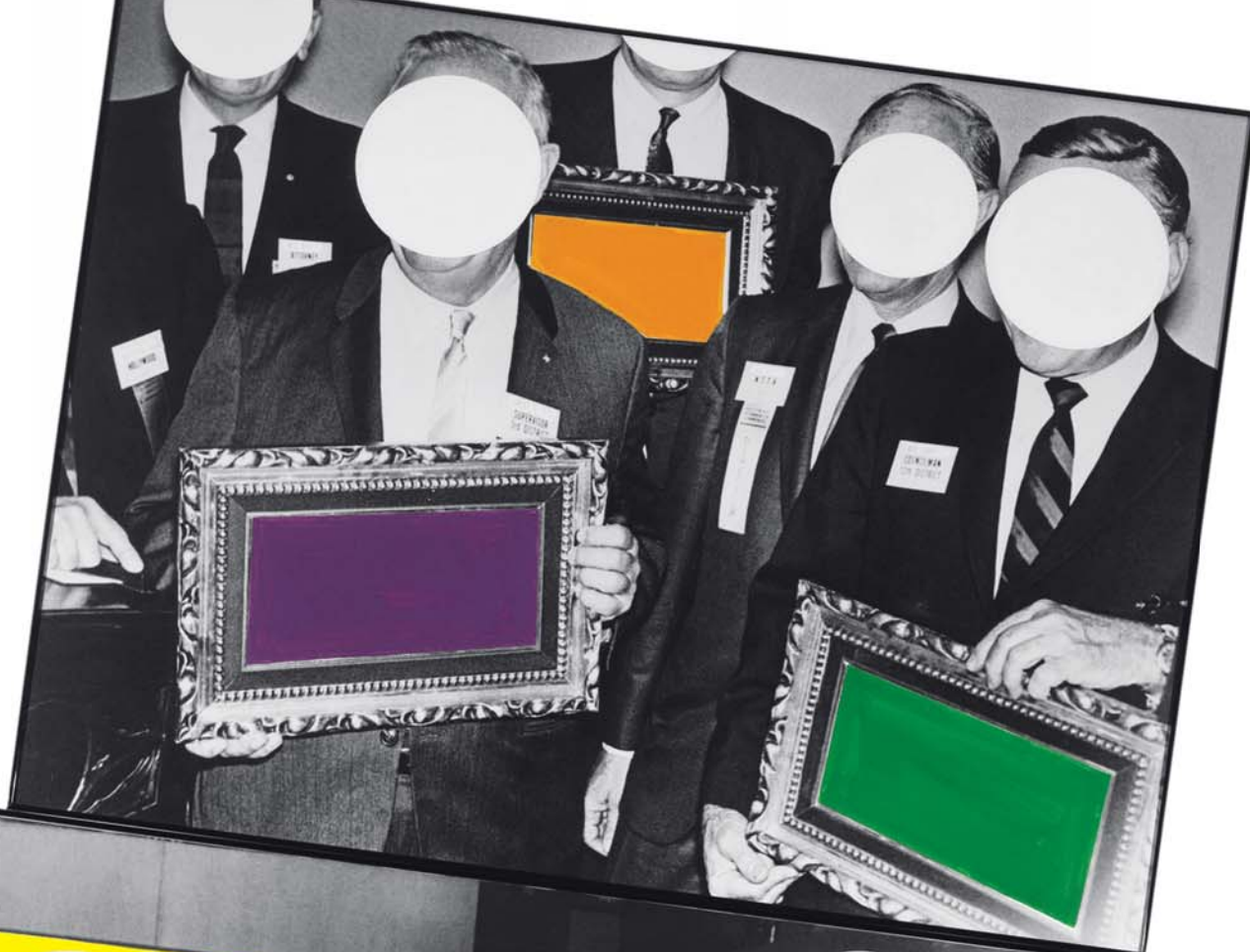
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 Color photographs. 1972-73.



John Baldessari

John Baldessari was born in 1931 in National City, California. He received a BA and MA from San Diego State University and completed post-graduate work at both Otis Art Institute and Chouinard Art Institute. For more than five decades, Baldessari has created thousands of works that demonstrate—and, in many cases, combine—the narrative potential of images and the associative power of language within the boundaries of the work of art. He has continually explored these themes in painting, photography, film, video, site-specific installations, artist's books, sculpture, drawings, prints, and multiples. Since 1957, Baldessari's work has been featured in more than 950 solo and group exhibitions in the United States and Europe. He has been the subject of numerous retrospective exhibitions, including those organized by the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, in 1981; the Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno, Valencia, Spain, in 1989; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in 1990; Cornerhouse, Manchester, UK, in 1995; and the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, and Kunsthau Graz, in 2005. A major retrospective exhibition organized by Tate Modern and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, will open at the Tate in California Institute of the Arts, and from 1996 to 2007 at the University of California, Los Angeles, of artists. He lives and works in Southern California. For an extensive biography of the artist, please visit www.baldessari.org.

Volcom featured artist series presents John Baldessari featured artist tees



www.volcom.com/fa

NICK GAZIN

Based in Greenpoint Brooklyn, Nick's characteristic illustration marry ink and watercolors, strong lines and washy texture. As VICE's comics editor, he's been a major advocate of a new generation of draw-ers and picture-makers from around the world, including his friend Mickey Duzyj.

Check out Nick's work on pages 34 & 35 of this issue.

NICK ON G-SHOCK

"In a time where we expect the things we buy to break for no reason, the idea of a nigh-unbreakable watch borders on noble. Plus, any watch that can survive my habit of falling over and tripping into public fountains is a good thing to have."



GA110HC-1

MICKY DUZYJ

With a fresh visual take on sports & leisure, Mick's drawings remind us that all competitions are weird human theatre, no matter how low the stakes. Featured in magazines, blogs, on apparel, and on skateboards, his brightly colored work is at the forefront of a movement to reclaim sports-graphics from the dusty, sepia-toned graveyards of memorabilia shows.

Look for Mick's illustrated diptych on page 22 & 24.

MICKY ON G-SHOCK

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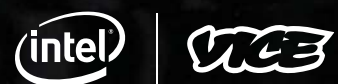
Karen O in Stop the Virgens

In October, The Creators Project and St Ann's Warehouse presented the world premiere of a new psycho-opera from Karen O.

Watch the documentary at thecreatorsproject.com

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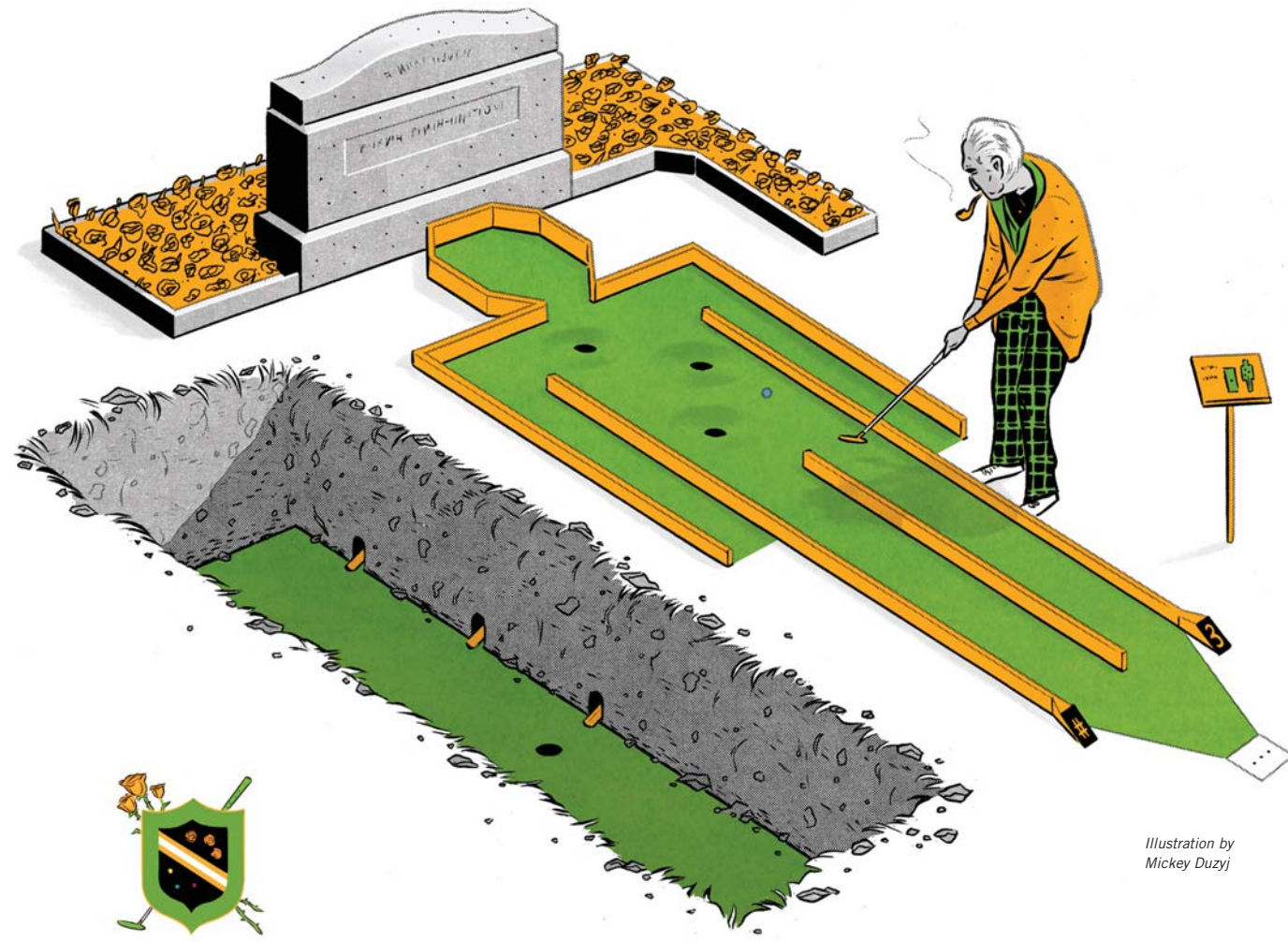
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PAIGE AARHUS

We asked Paige to write us a short bio, and this is what she sent: “My name is Paige Aarhus and I am a freelance writer and photographer in Africa. I enjoy binge drinking and getting extorted by gangsters, and I hate skateboarders, longboarders, hippies, fashion, music, and ‘hipsters,’ purely because it is trendy to do so. I have nearly destroyed myself via moonshine, pirate hunting, exploding volcanoes, and broken-down vans since my relationship with this fine publication began. I was once named employee of the month when I worked at Starbucks. That was the worst job ever. Are we at 150 words yet? Pretty close. *La la la la*, I love American Apparel and Viacom, *la la*. Close enough.”

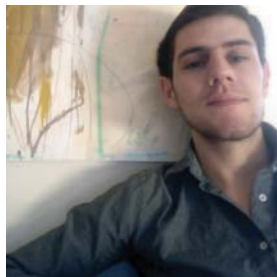
See THE MUNGIKI, THE TALIBAN, AND ME, page 42



PHILIP HARRIS

When Bob Odenkirk told us that for this month’s page he wanted to create an “Occupy”-era update of Currier and Ives’s classic “Central Park, Winter” etchings, our initial reaction was “Shit, Bob, where do you think we’re going to find someone who can do that? All those guys are dead.” After a frantic scramble, we found the perfect guy: Philip Harris, an illustrator from Devon, England, who specializes in ultradetailed drawings inspired by Victorian and Edwardian styles that he creates using old-timey dip ink pens given to him by his grandfather. In a few short days, young Philip was able to bang out an idyllic winter tableau of protest and police brutality that will bring tears to your eyes as surely as if you had been pepper-sprayed.

See BOB ODENKIRK’S PAGE, page 133



AARON LAKE SMITH

Aaron alternates his time between New York and North Carolina, which causes him to rove up and down the I-95 corridor like a ghost. Probably best known for his perambulatory fanzine *Big Hands*, in 2009 he turned his gorgon gaze to journalism, seeking out seams in the contiguous fabric that blankets the world. Since then he’s traveled to a lot of small towns and interviewed a lot of people, including Steve Albini, who, during their interview, took a giant verbal shit on Sonic Youth, as he is wont to do. His last article for VICE, “Vive le Tarnac 9,” was about a group of anarchist saboteurs who live in a village in the French countryside.

See PEELING ONIONTOWN, page 112



MALIN BERGSTRÖM

Swedish illustrator Malin Bergström is from Malmberget, a Lapland hamlet way up north famous for having a humongous crater right in the middle of it that’s slowly but surely devouring the town. When we first got to know her she was flashing her tits and smoking in the bathrooms of Stockholm clubs. Now we couldn’t imagine a party without her. Last year, she adopted a fluffy Pomeranian puppy named Helmut, and before we knew it she had a bun in the oven. Nowadays she spends her time making fudge, changing diapers, and producing illustrations on impossible deadlines. For this issue, Malin illustrated the violent Asian owner of an LA gas station who is the central character in Sam McPheeters’s new novel.

See THE LOOM OF RUIN, page 60



JACOB AUE SOBOL

Danish photographer Jacob Aue Sobol’s work always looks a bit like stills from a film that you would want to watch multiple times, but only when you’re sober or else it might bum you out. His trademark black-and-white contrast-heavy style has won him a Leica European Publishers award, World Press Photo of the Year, and membership in the world-famous photography collective Magnum. We’ll get around to interviewing him properly at some point, but this month he was in Korea and he was too busy taking amazing photos to take our call. PS: For whatever reason, our associate editor Ellis Jones thought Jacob’s name was “Jacon,” which produced lots of inside jokes about “eating Jacon and eggs.”

See A FEW FROM ‘STORIES,’ page 104



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BANS KICK SMOKERS' BUTTS

We live in contentious, troubled times: Millions are out of work, protestors fill the streets of practically every major city, the global financial system is in ruins, and just about everyone feels disenfranchised. It's enough to make you want to smoke three packs a day, but from the looks of things the powers that be are moving toward revoking Americans' inalienable right to give themselves lung cancer.



BY HARRY CHEADLE

December was a tough month for everyone who enjoys the sweet, sweet taste of burning nicotine. First, on November 29, the city council of Boise, Idaho, passed resolutions banning smoking in bars and clubs, near bus stops, on any outdoor patio accessible to children, and basically on any type of public property, including parks. Remember, this is *Boise*, in fucking *Idaho*, a state where there's nothing to do but form militias, be very cold in the winter, and smoke. If people there are adopting the ridiculous "cigarettes are basically as bad as heroin" mentality, the antismoking movement has gained some serious momentum.

As if to prove that point, the very next week, the town of Vancouver, Washington, adopted a similar measure, prohibiting smoking in rec centers and parks. An article in Vancouver newspaper the *Columbian* contained some telling quotes from hardcore antismokers such as "[Smoking] makes me gag just thinking about it. It is just something I can't see us saying it's OK to do" and "I sincerely believe that parks are for healthy living." Statements like these hint at a bizarre, insidious pro-health agenda where any objectionable behavior—drinking soda, cursing, not wiping your ass—is grounds for being kicked out of parks and, if these busybodies had their way, probably thrown in jail until the offending habit is kicked.

The argument for bans like these is that when you light up you aren't just killing yourself, you're killing others via evil secondhand smoke. Some hard-line smokers' rights advocates question that secondhand smoke is bad at all, but let's not get into that, because antismokers hate smoking even when it doesn't hurt anyone else: The city of Boston just banned e-cigarettes in the workplace. Yes, e-cigarettes, the smokeless alternative to cigarettes that *don't hurt anyone but the smoker*. The ban was put into place because someone thought that maybe e-cigarettes *might* be harmful, and probably because they commit the unpardonable crime of looking like cigarettes—which validates the secret belief of some smokers that they want to ban our smokes because we look so damn cool.



Thai Royals Don't "Like" Facebook

BY ELEKTRA KOTSONI
ILLUSTRATION BY SAM TAYLOR

If you happen to find yourself enjoying a Wi-Fi connection on one of Thailand's charming beaches, think twice before "liking" any funny memes about the Thai royal family, unless you want to spend your vacation scrapping for cigarette butts in the Bangkok Remand Prison. Under the long-standing tradition of *lèse-majesté* (a law that makes it illegal to insult the dignity of the monarchy), the Thai government can send you to jail for sharing anything offensive to the royal family.

This law makes no exception for foreigners or even 61-year-olds suffering from mouth cancer like Amphon Tangnoppakul, who was recently sentenced to 20 years in prison for sending an SMS deemed offensive to the monarchy. "Being in an overcrowded jail has worsened his ailment and he always cries when people visit him," says his lawyer, Arnon Nampa, who has worked on many similar cases in the past. "Our legal team is working hard to get him released on bail, but the appeal is likely to take years because the Thai judiciary system has determined his charges to be severe, and we have no witnesses as no one wants to get involved in a *lèse-majesté* case."

Tangnoppakul's trial isn't an isolated incident either—last month an American citizen named Joe Gordon was tossed into a Thai prison for posting links to a bio of King Bhumibol Adulyadej several years ago while Gordon was in Colorado. What's the reason for these numerous *lèse majesté* incidents? Are the royals really that touchy? Nampa blames the tense political situation in the country for the arrests: "Most Thais are loyal to the royal family. However, as we're undergoing a period of political transition, some ultra-royalists use the flaws of our legal system as a political tool against their opposition. What boggles me is that Mr. Tangnoppakul is far from being [antigovernment activist] Surachai Sae Dan; he's an unemployed grandfather of five who can barely spell."

Photo by /Stockphoto/Thornberry



RIOT INTERRUPTED

Last August, a documentary called The Interrupters premiered in London; it follows a trio of workers from an organization called CeaseFire as they go around Chicago's most violent neighborhoods attempting to stop people from beating the shit out of one another. Coincidentally, a week after the premiere, rioting broke out all over the UK. The government's response was more "Throw the bums in jail" than anything like CeaseFire's model.



BY JOSHUA HADDOW

PHOTO COURTESY OF CEASEFIRE



We talked to Dr. Gary Slutkin, the man who invented the practice of violence interruption, which is based on his work with the World Health Organization on epidemic control. Here's what he said about whether "interrupting" could be used to stop the crowd-based violence that continues to erupt across the world.

VICE: How can violence interrupters help control rioting?

Gary Slutkin: In the film you see more interpersonal violence, fighting over money, girls, or gangs, but there have been episodes where we have interrupted what could have been riots. There was an incident on the west side of Chicago about three years ago where the police shot somebody. His friends saw what happened and ran back into their houses to get guns, aiming to start a riot and shoot at officers. The interrupters cooled them down, but it wasn't easy to do; it took hours.

A lot of the rioters in the UK follow the reasoning that their behavior is OK because bankers and politicians are immoral.

The inequity is infuriating. The human mind does assessments of fairness in day-to-day life. The

unequal ways in which the law is being applied are very upsetting to people.

How does this all relate to disease control?

Inequity is like the dirty water in diarrheal disease epidemics. Sometimes you can't clean it up fast enough. If you can't reverse the inequity quickly, then you have to find a strategy to control violence in the meantime.

So interrupters are literally like medicine. It's a real innovation to apply that process to behavior instead of diseases.

Don't forget that decades or centuries ago we were punishing people who had illnesses and diseases. We used to put people with leprosy in dungeons; we misunderstood the problem.

Do you have any suggestions on how police can peacefully curb these types of behaviors?

Police interacting positively with the community has a dampening effect on crime and violence. Highly aggressive policing has been shown to aggravate the situation, and if they're showing aggression the population shows aggression back. I think we've expected too much from law enforcement.

Heaven Is a Waterslide



BY ANNIE CARROLL

PHOTO BY ANNIE M. V. NGUYEN

Suoi Tien, in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, is the first and only Buddhist amusement park in the world. For around \$2.40, you can experience Buddhist philosophy in ride form. Nirvana is represented by giant waterslides emerging from the beards of 12-story-high faces, each plunging into swimming pools decorated with dragons. The deceptively named Unicorn Palace, a cavernous corridor filled with severed heads and high-pitched screams, represents the Buddhist version of hell.

Suoi Tien has recently undergone a multibillion-dollar expansion, lifting the place to surreal, technicolored heights. The park emphasizes nature in its most bizarre form. Want to feed slabs of meat to 1,500 crocodiles? Go right ahead. If



that's not quite savage enough, take a zip-line ride over the crocodile lagoon and into a bat cave. Or perhaps a leisurely jaunt in a swan-shaped boat along the gloriously artificial beach is more your speed. Whatever your fancy, be it daring or not, the Vietnamese seem to have taken the idea of the amusement park and fed it LSD for, like, a gazillion years.



MITTEN SMITTEN



BY JOSH SCHNEIDER
ILLUSTRATION BY MAIA RUTH LEE

In this fraught political climate even the normally placid Midwest is ready to boil over into conflict. It started when the Wisconsin travel board unveiled their new winter tourism campaign, which featured a Wisconsin-shaped mitten, essentially giving longtime mitten look-alike Michigan the middle finger.

We asked Dave Lorenz at Travel Michigan which state deserved the mitten designation, and he replied, "Michigan. But we understand Wisconsin's mitten envy. They are the Cheese State. Their state looks like a big chunk of cheese. It's no big surprise with all those cheeseheads out there. Obviously they've been wearing those hats way too tight if they think their state looks like a mitten."

In a poll on Travel Michigan's website, nearly 18,000 respondents identified Michigan as the one, true mitten. Continuing the debate on the message boards, commenter Clifford Conor wrote, "Wisconsin is retarded. They don't even look like a mitten unless you have a retarded hand which they probably do being retarded and all." "Dave672" kept it more concise: "Wisconsin will always be the penis." And a guy going by "Moonpoppy" took it to another level: "Michigan is the only place where God touched the earth and his imprint remains." Even Lisa Marshall of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism admitted, "We're not the Mitten State. We want to be known as the Fun State."

Before things got out of hand, the states decided to call a truce, parlaying the press exposure into a clothes drive. "Call it a truce," Dave said, "or as I like to call it—victory."

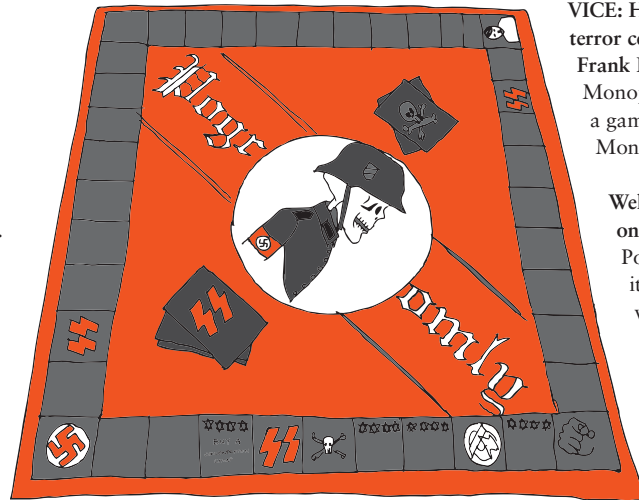
NAZIS SUCK AT MAKING BOARD GAMES

When German neo-Nazis aren't gunning down immigrants, robbing banks, and making pipe bombs, apparently they like to get together for a nice game of Pogromly—a Nazi-themed version of Monopoly where the phrase “Do not pass GO. Do not collect \$200” has more to do with turning people into soap than dropping it. This horrifying abomination was designed and sold for about \$78 by National Socialist Underground members Uwe Böhnhardt, Uwe Mundlos, and their female accomplice Beate Zschäpe to raise funds for their racist terrorist activities. The two guys, a girl, and their blitzkrieg board game are believed to be responsible for the “Kebab Killings,” a series of point-blank executions in Germany between 2000 and 2006 that targeted eight Turks, a Greek, and a policewoman.



BY WILBERT L. COOPER

ILLUSTRATION BY
HANNAH KUNKLE



The two Uwes committed suicide last November, right after robbing their 14th bank in 12 years and only moments before police were about to apprehend them. And Beate turned herself over to police custody after firebombing the house she and the boys lived in, in an unsuccessful attempt to destroy the evidence that ultimately linked the trio to the Kebab Killings—evidence that included the murder weapon and a DVD containing footage of the crew in which they claim responsibility for nine of the murders. In an attempt to understand how such misguided pieces of human garbage come to be (and why they made a board game), we reached out to three American game experts—Frank Lantz, Eric Zimmerman, and Jesse Fuchs—to see whether their analysis of Pogromly could tell us anything about the notorious terror-cell trio.

VICE: Hi, Frank. What can you tell us about the terror cell from looking at Pogromly?

Frank Lantz: They are idiots. Re-skinning Monopoly is the most unimaginative way to make a game. There's *Simpsons* Monopoly and Baseball Monopoly. It's been done a million times.

Well, at least they put their own political spin on it.

Politics in games is nothing new. Monopoly itself is based on a game that was a political work made by a radical leftist to show the injustices of land ownership. However, this game's only value is its interesting, shocking, and perverse cultural kitsch.

Eric, what do you think they were trying to accomplish?

Eric Zimmerman: The fact that they made the game demonstrates their fantasy about having their ideas at play in the culture at large. They hope one might walk into a toy store and see their version of Monopoly on the shelf. It is not necessarily an earnest attempt to make a fun or playable game, or even have some kind of viable economic idea disseminated. Just the act of making the game helps them live out their fantasy.

Do you think it'd be fun to play Pogromly?

Jesse Fuchs: It's almost like the game is for people who find Monopoly too confusing. It's hard to even tell what the utilities are—oh, they seem to be Jews working... The weirdest thing is that Monopoly is a game about bankrupting each other. Was this supposed to represent Nazi infighting? I doubt it was well thought-through. Even if I were a Martian game designer who had no instinctive revulsion to this game, I still doubt I would get anything from it.

Stephen Harper Loves Pussy



BY BEN AMERICO
PHOTO BY COLE WAGNER

Canada's prime minister, Stephen Harper, is a bona fide feline-hoarding kitty lady in disguise, which is why, after the prisons he loves to build, his second-favorite housing facility is “Cat Parliament.” In the mid-80s some volunteers literally constructed a cat-scale parliament behind the real one, fit with heaters, litters, and feeding troughs (supplied by fucking Purina cat chow, by the way). Since the 1960s, hundreds of stray cats gathered around the industrial heaters behind the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa to escape the winter cold. Turns out, the cute little bastards were all the descendants of brave cats employed back in the 19th century by the original parliamentary staff to rid the buildings of rodents. Chemicals replaced them by the 50s, and out of work with no purpose in life, the cats hit the streets. That is, until they were saved, given a home, and rechristened the “Parliamentary Cats” like some shitty Disney movie (but really, the maintenance staff was just sick of pulling cat corpses out of heating shafts). Stephen Harper and his wife, Laureen, have been uncharacteristically empathetic to the plight of the cats,

frequently championing the good work of Cat Parliament volunteers. Meanwhile Ottawa's homeless population, a large chunk of which are Inuit, has the worst crack epidemic in the country and valuable drug-rehabilitation programs are set to be cut by the Conservative government's new tough-on-crime legislation.



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SCHIZOPHRENIA NOT CAUGHT ON TAPE

The Way Hollywood Portrays Mental Illness Is Just Crazy

BY A. WOLFE

ILLUSTRATION BY
NICK GAZIN

Over a century ago, famed Swiss psychiatrist Paul Eugen Bleuler invented the term “schizophrenia” to classify the mental illness whose symptoms included auditory and visual hallucinations, catatonia, paranoia, and disorganized thoughts in hopes that we would stop calling sufferers “bat-shit crazy” and find a way to actually treat them. Since then, science has developed medications to treat the symptoms, but the underlying causes are still unknown, and media depictions of schizophrenics are often dismissive and outrageously negative.

To get a read on how accurate Hollywood’s portrayal of mental illness is, I asked four gentlemen diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar and schizoaffective disorders to watch some films that prominently feature medically “crazy” characters. All four are accomplished members of society: Curtis Plum is a rapper on Strange Famous Records; Erik Leavitt is writing a book about his experience with mental illness; Otis Crook is a prolific musician, writer, and artist; and Matt Bodett is a painter. Here’s what they had to say:

STRANGE VOICES

Strange Voices has been the go-to health-class movie for schizophrenia since its 1987 made-for-TV release. Nancy McKeon (Jo from *The Facts of Life*) portrays Nicole, a young woman whose dreams of being an architect are thwarted when her dad’s computer starts talking to her. She spends the rest of the movie in and out of mental hospitals and on and off medication.

Otis Crook: The thing that got my goat about this film was the lack of serious lockdown security. When you’re in one of these hospitals, it’s much tighter, with no possible escape.

Erik Leavitt: If you suffer from this disease, people look at you, and whatever your dysfunction is, it becomes what motivates all of your actions. I remember being in the county mental hospital and staring at these inkblots, and all I could think was, “Wouldn’t it be funny if I said that all these blots looked like me having sex with my mom”—basically the most Freudian thing I could say—and give that answer for every one of their blots. But I could see how closely they were examining me, how they were weighing my every word for significance, and I understood that all of a sudden I lived in an irony-free zone, and a joke like that would be taken as either confession or psychotic confusion. So in a week I went from being this complex person to a cartoon. Nicole is that same cartoon. She is only the disease personified.

MANIAC!

A buffet of gore featuring scalping and intestinal hemorrhages, *Maniac!* depicts a schizoid serial killer, Frank, out to gut a bunch of sexy ladies. Go figure. (See also: *Black Christmas*, *Bleeding Lady*, *Nightmares in a Damaged Brain*, etc.) People with schizoid personality disorder (schizoids) generally don’t have hallucinations or paranoia (it often resembles autism or Asperger’s syndrome), but Frank has both.

Erik: The monologue in Frank’s head is Frank’s voice. It would usually be someone else’s voice. And Frank is weirdly in agreement with the voice in his head. Someone with schizophrenia or a mental illness with symptoms of auditory hallucinations would usually be a hostile audience to the voices in his head. Calling Frank “schizoid” here is like rich white people who stop calling all Latinos “Mexicans” and opt instead for “Puerto Ricans,” because it sounds fancier and somehow more politically correct.

Otis: I hate when newspapers feel the need to report that so-and-so mass murderer was bipolar. In this case, it says he’s schizoid right on the box, implying that schizoid people are more capable of scalping women to create a fantasy mannequin that looks like their dead-prostitute mothers.

Curtis Plum: In my hospital stays, I’ve had many unmedicated bipolar and schizophrenic roommates. Some were very far out there—and I was too, at times—but I can’t say I ever felt threatened by my fellow patients. There were no physical altercations between patients in any of my stays. And we were in close quarters with good reason to feel aggro because we were locked up. Equating acting “crazy” to danger doesn’t make sense to me.

CAVEMAN’S VALENTINE

Somehow, Focus Features thought it would be a good idea to make a movie in which Samuel L. Jackson plays a schizophrenic man named Romulus who becomes a “Sherlock Homeless” (Erik’s phrase) on a murder-mystery case requiring him to use his classical piano training to solve a crime of homosexual passion. Yeah. Jackson’s performance has mad-genius archetype written all over it, and his hallucinations are depicted by scenes of scores of beautiful, oiled black men in white moth wings dancing. This happens a *lot* in the film.

Matt Bodett: Before I was diagnosed, I went to a psychiatrist and took a test to see whether I could figure out some of what was going on with me. In the end my test was normal except that I scored really high for schizophrenia. The psychiatrist told me that creative people tend to score high anyway. This is what is difficult about the “mad genius” stereotype, like with Romulus: On the one hand it’s true, but on the other it’s another stereotype allowing us to create a character who exists outside social standards. And we can feel OK about it. It seems lazy.

Erik: This goes back to some real old assumptions about insanity—that it somehow allows the maniac to have a pure vision about the world and understand its truths. Rom’s visions never mislead him. They only make his life more difficult through his responsibilities to truth and morality. Rom isn’t delusional; he’s clairvoyant. Is clairvoyance in the DSM [*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*]?

Curtis: Somehow, films make mental illness an asset. That’s a crock. First, it downplays the illness. Second, a lot of mentally ill people aren’t creative types at all. Maybe the “mad genius” is a myth people came up with to explain their lack of creativity—like, “If only I had a magical mental illness.” Dare to dream.

A BEAUTIFUL MIND

The holy grail of all schizophrenia movies; the how-to film for all wannabe screenwriters who want to portray the sensitive side of mental illness. Screenwriting forums all over the internet push *A Beautiful Mind* onto newbies, citing it as the epitome of the schizophrenic experience.

Curtis: When I’ve had hallucinations, I’ve usually been aware on some level that they’re hallucinations. The way John Nash has imaginary friends for a long period without anyone noticing is very unlikely. This doesn’t match up to my personal experience. I don’t doubt that he had hallucinations of people—because I have myself—but his imaginary buddy is giving him all this positive, life-affirming encouragement, which sounds like a definite asset. My delusions were not an asset.

Matt: *A Beautiful Mind* may be an exception because it is a true story. I really like this movie because of how human it makes the illness. The sad part is that the movie could only show very little of what his life was like—it was much worse than portrayed.

Erik: When I was losing my shit, I was still afraid of somebody calling me crazy. I was still aware that “crazy” was a bad thing. A lot of being paranoid was about trying to appear credible. But in these films, nobody’s trying to protect themselves. These people never hide in the bathroom to lose their shit. Instead, they just *immediately* lose their sense of shame.

THE DARK KNIGHT

While the Joker hasn’t been diagnosed with a form of mental illness, some of his henchmen—like the guy who has the phone blow up in his stomach—are clearly schizoid, a fact that went unremarked by the vast majority of reviewers.

Curtis: The film really bothered me because the Joker enlists a bunch of psychotics to carry out one of his attacks. They’re portrayed as these obedient, easily led people so desperate that they’ll do anything, and they’re performing tasks for the Joker that appear to involve tact, composure, being on time, and following instructions. Psychotics are the opposite of that. If I were having a psychotic episode and you told me to turn on the hose in 45 minutes, it wouldn’t get done. It could take me like ten minutes just to get my wallet out, even if it were in plain view. It’s like the film *says* these guys are crazy, but then they just operate like everyday thugs, which basically equates mental illness with being just like everyone else. Except you’re a criminal.

Erik: Delusions, hallucinations, and psychosis made me fearful, not violent. The things I was afraid of were so scary and unmanageable that I couldn’t coordinate a plan to take them on. Leaving the house is hard enough, but taking on Batman seems insurmountable. *VICE*



Don Gabriele Amorth next to a statue of the Virgin Mary, a figure he studied for the first years of his ordained life. Don Amorth was also the editor in chief of *Madre di Dio*, a Virgin Mary-centered monthly magazine.



THE LAST EXORCIST

Satan Is Don Gabriele Amorth's Sniveling Bitch

BY TIM SMALL

PHOTOS BY
GILDA ALOISI

Rome's Garbatella neighborhood can technically be classified as "the projects," but it looks more like an Italian version of a British garden city. King Victor Emmanuel III founded the settlement in 1920, after World War I, to accommodate the immigration of 50,000 agricultural workers into Rome. Like the rest of the city, Garbatella is home to an astonishing number of stray cats. Still, when one dashes in front of my path, just outside the offices of Don Gabriele Amorth, the "honorary president for life" of the International Association of Exorcists, it feels like a sign from above. *Don't relax. The devil is everywhere.*

Tempered and withered by his quarter-century-long fight against Satan himself, 86-year-old Don Amorth is ailing. He was recently hospitalized, and his

hearing and mobility are impaired. Yet he still has the nerve—or misguidedness, depending on your point of view—to appear on the local newscast days before my visit, declaring that good Catholics shouldn't read or watch anything related to Harry Potter (which he says leads to Satanism, of course) and must abstain from yoga, because "you think you're doing it for stretching, but actually it leads to Hinduism." This is a man who, in his book *Memoirs of an Exorcist: My Life at War with Satan*, claimed that "the devil himself, speaking through a possessed woman, threatened to disembowel me in my sleep."

Don Amorth enters the room wearing a black frock. He is carrying a large leather briefcase, which he opens after we exchange pleasantries. Inside are most of his books (he's written ten, which have been translated into more than 40 languages), a copy of *Madre di Dio* (*Mother of God*, a monthly magazine focusing on the Virgin Mary, which he edited for many years), a sampling of his exorcism tools (more on that later), and a bag of nails, bolts, and other metal objects.

"I have two kilos of metal spat out by people possessed by the devil," he says. "Sometimes they come out of the rectum. There were also many pieces of glass. I can assure you that they materialize once they leave the mouth; they're never covered by saliva or blood. If you were to take an X-ray of a possessed soul, you wouldn't find a trace of these in their guts. They appear out of thin air, a few millimeters from their lips, although the person generally confesses to feeling the pain they would cause inside him or her."

Don Amorth claims to have performed tens of thousands of exorcisms in his lifetime—"I stopped counting at 70,000." To clarify, this doesn't mean he has exorcised 70,000 people; it's just that demons are particularly stubborn bastards, and the 2,000 to 4,000 individuals he has rid of evil have often required dozens of sessions.

"In order to liberate a body from its demonic possession, most of the time I have to work for years, and try to practice at least one rite a week," he says. "Lots of repetition. That's the key to success. But the first thing we must do is to realize that the devil exists. If you don't believe in his existence, then you are doing him a favor. That's exactly what he wants you to believe. And in that case, an exorcism is useless. But trust me, he is there."

I nod and begin asking my long list of questions, but he ignores them. I quickly discover that Don Amorth's poor hearing means that he will be doing most of the talking. "The devil deals in two things," he says. "He has an ordinary activity and an extraordinary activity. His ordinary activity is to tempt man toward evil, to lead him to temptation, to sin, to push him to break divine law. His extraordinary activity—and it is very rare—is to give people malign disorders."

According to Don Amorth, Satan can inhabit one's soul in four different ways. The most severe is demonic possession: "Satan, or one of his minions, enters the body of the possessed, who appear to be living with a devil within. He uses their mouths to talk and their energies to move them. He knows all the languages in the world. He knows the future, and he has superhuman strength. Sometimes I need up to five people to help me keep the person still while they thrash about and spit and blaspheme and shout and curse."

The second classification of demonic evil is obsession, or torment. This is when evil forces disturb someone from the outside, rather than directly inhabiting the soul. "Think of [stigmatic saint] Padre Pio. He used to be beaten bloody by

Don Amorth shows us a few of the books he has authored and the bag of nails and bolts spat out by the possessed during exorcisms. I actually held a few of them in my hands, which disgusted the cameraman.



A detail of the small bottle of holy water that Don Amorth uses during his exorcisms, and of his crucifix, a special weapon against the devil, powered up with an embedded medal of St. Benedict.

the devil. He would be thrown off his bed every time he fell asleep, but he wasn't possessed. He was simply tormented. Or think of people who become fixated on an idea or concept that creeps into their very soul and leads them to madness or even suicide. That is a demonic torment."

The third type is a vaguer and less direct method of satanic attack, a curse that can harm one's work, health, and love life. It's easy to mistake for illness, so Don Amorth sometimes collaborates with doctors and psychiatrists when he suspects someone might be suffering from such an affliction. If they're stumped, it may be time for ordained intervention. The fourth type is the traditional kind of haunting (think ghosts), which can infest houses, objects, and even animals.

Just as Don Amorth concludes his lengthy and thoroughly detailed taxonomy of evil, I manage to slip in a question about his ritualistic processes. "When I begin my exorcism," he says, "the person enters a trance and begins to spit and shout and demonstrates an intolerance for holy symbols, sacraments, and holy water. That's when I determine a plan of action and use the tools of my trade. I use my stole [an ecclesiastical vestment resembling a scarf], which is longer

than a traditional stole. I take one rim of it and place it on the shoulder of the person I am exorcising. Then I use a bottle with a few holes in it to spray holy water. I also have a special crucifix, embedded with the medal of St. Benedict, the unofficial patron saint of exorcists. The final tool I use is the holy ointment. I don't need to use the Bible anymore. I know it by heart, after 25 years of doing this. It's important to have learned it by heart: In this way I have two free hands to hold the possessed still."

A man concerned with evil haunting humanity might have an opinion on the recent sociopolitical upheavals in Italy and throughout the world. Could we perhaps be approaching a cataclysmic event?

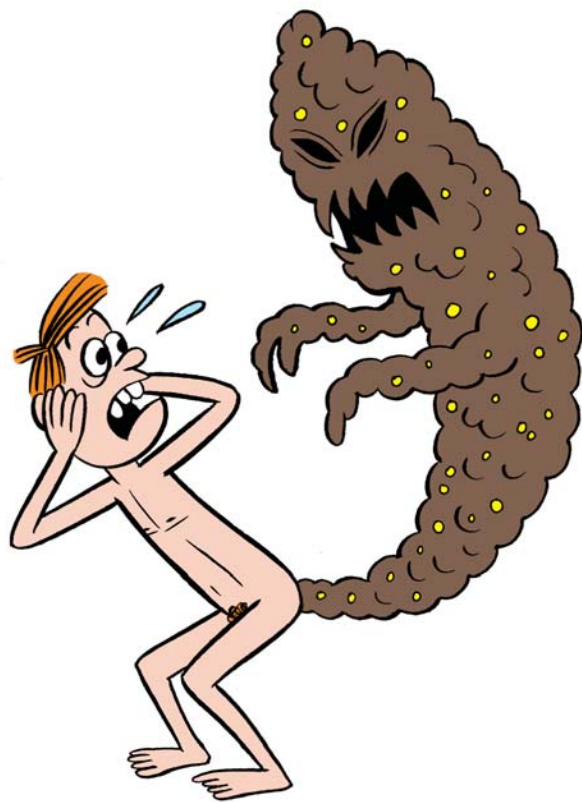
"All I can say now is that the evidence of what's happening is obvious. We are living a disastrous moment. These wars and natural disasters are only the beginning, the antipasti. What's coming is going to be much worse. I am optimistic for the future, but I know that we will be struck and they will be judged—these people who want to build a world without God."

And that's when I got out of there. *VICE*

Keep your eyes peeled for our interview with Don Amorth coming soon on VICE.com.



Desiree in the Karolyn. Mark Welsh portrait. coalheadwear.com **coal**



GOING DOWN WITH THE BROWN

Milk, Milk, Lemonade, Around the Corner Fudge Will Murder You

BY HARRY CHEADLE
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHNNY RYAN

As you read these words, millions of people are purging fecal matter into or onto toilets, holes, ditches, bogs, quicksand, oceans, Honda Civics, sinks, urinals, troughs, wooded areas, grass, dumpsters, trash cans, statues of the Virgin Mary, nostrils, mouths, armpits, feet, vaginas, penises, someone else's buttock, pets, cheese, and whatever else you could think of. Add animal dung into the mix, and it's obvious that we are in the throes of a serious excrement epidemic that you may not be aware of.

So allow me to inform you: One day—and it could very well be someday soon—we will experience a global sewage backup so severe that a turd tsunami will devastate the world over, literally laying waste to every village and metropolis in its path. Rivers of poop will submerge islands and rise up hundreds of feet, eventually cracking the windows of the penthouse apartments of the last survivors until they slowly drown in a foyer full of diarrhea.

Don't believe it? Well, brothers and sisters, have I got news for you. Crap has already declared war, and it's winning. Behold just a few of the innumerable examples of how shit can kill.



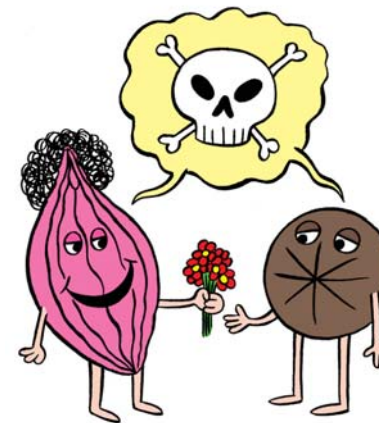
PIGEON POOP PULVERIZER

On December 7, 2007, Craig Taylor of Balgowlah, Australia—like you, someone unafraid and even unaware of fecal death—took shelter from a rainstorm under a store's awning. Unfortunately, pigeons had been nesting there for a long time; in fact, the overhang was so laden with bird droppings that the rain caused it to collapse right on top of poor Craig and crush him. His death, however, was not in vain: Three years later, a coroner's inquest ruled "the issue of awning safety is pressing and requires that immediate notice be given to local councils across the state."



TORRENTS OF HORSESHIT

A horse produces 15 to 35 pounds of road apples a day. Before automobiles, cities like New York had more than 100,000 horses hauling people and cargo from place to place, which equates to at least 750 tons of feces dropped every 24 hours. According to the 1997 book *The Making of Urban America*, "The manure was everywhere, along the roadway, heaped in piles or next to stables, or ground up by the traffic and blown about by the wind." New York dealt with these unseemly piles by licensing "dirt carters" to haul the shit to designated dumps, which would attract flies and odors for months and sometimes years. After it rained, the filth would pool in rivulets and puddles throughout the streets. Even worse, the city had to deal with a surplus of horse corpses in addition to their shit and often dumped the bodies in nearby rivers. What's more, thousands of people died from feces-related diseases every year. So the next time someone bitches about the "evil of oil," remind him or her of yesteryear and that the internal combustion engine was one of humanity's greatest victories in the Great Excreta War.



RECTOVAGINAL FISTULAS

Perhaps the most devastating feces-related ailment, a rectovaginal fistula is what happens when the tissue between a woman's vagina and rectum dies and results in a giant flesh crater that is extremely prone to deadly infection. Thankfully, fistulas are practically unheard of in the West. The condition is far more common in developing countries in Africa and South America where medical care is scant to nonexistent. Fistulas are usually caused by gang rapes or particularly grueling childbirths and can lead to kidney disease, nerve damage to the legs that leaves the victim unable to walk, and, in some cases, death. Women are often too ashamed or ostracized to seek help, and there are reports of females enduring fistulas for 40 years in painful silence.



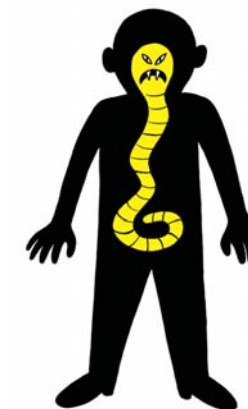
DEATH FROM CONSTIPATION

Everyone knows Elvis died on the crapper, but less publicized is the fact that he suffered from one of the worst recorded cases of chronic constipation in medical history. This was probably due to his twilight-years diet of deep-fried bacon cheeseburgers, cheese grits smothered in gravy, and taffy. By the time of his death, Elvis's colon was so full of hunks of burning love that it was more than twice its normal size. In a book published in 2010, Dr. George Nichopoulos, Elvis's personal caretaker, went so far as to say it was constipation—not barbiturates—that killed the King.



SEPTIC SHOCK

Prison inmates sometimes go a little bit nuts from boredom and isolation and start playing with their own excrement like an infant who finger-paints with his dookie on his parents' solid-oak coffee table. Case in point: In 2009, a prisoner in Arkansas smeared shit all over his body in what we can only imagine was a cry for attention. The guards ignored the shit-smearer for an entire weekend, allowing him to lose consciousness, lapse into a coma, and almost die from septic shock. John Glasscock, the guard blamed for the incident, was also known for getting lap dances while on duty and accepting stolen Hot Pockets as bribes, which just goes to prove the old adage, "People who eat Hot Pockets have no problem leaving others to die in a pile of their own caca."



WORMS FROM RACCOON TURDS

Raccoon poo typically contains millions of roundworm eggs per pellet. If the parasites happen to enter the guts of a human, they will make a beeline to the brain, lay more eggs, and cause nerve damage and death as they squirm through synapses. Raccoons instinctively construct "latrines" where the digger and his or her friends do their business, and these stool depositories tend to be located underneath decks, on roofs, and in garages. These concentrated packages of fecal poison are scattered all over suburban North America, left by furry, ring-tailed terrorists. Those with young children who will stick anything in their mouths should take heed: Be very careful and wear gloves and protective masks when cleaning up raccoon droppings. One small oversight and Junior could end up with a skull full of worms. This is shit's plan to destroy our babies from the inside out. I encourage you to take up arms and wipe away doo-doo wherever it may cross your path. *WCB*



Taliban member Caleb Yare said the Luos were unprepared for armed Mungiki raids in Mathare after the 2007 elections. They fought back with pangas and rocks, sometimes dropping cinder blocks from roofs to thwart assailants.

on a screamingly hot afternoon, with an appointment to meet members of the Mungiki, Kenya's most violent and notorious mafia/cult/political movement, which also might be the largest gang in the world.

It was atop a stool in a reeking pigsty where I first met Kamande, a shoe shiner by day who moonlights doing all sorts of thuggish business for the Mungiki. He was not shy about the particulars of his second job. "We're just mercenaries," he said when I asked about his assigned duties, which is exactly the kind of half-true answer I expected.

Founded in the 1980s, the Mungiki (which means "multitude" or "masses") began as a rural religious movement within the Kikuyu tribe in Kenya's Rift Valley, with an emphasis on anticolonialism and a return to traditional Kikuyu values. But as it spread to Nairobi, it attracted landless, poverty-stricken young men looking for a little extra cash and respect.

Gangsters in Nairobi generally make their living from exploiting illegal electricity hookups, extorting shop owners and taxi-bus drivers, robbery, and murdering people who cross them. But members of the Mungiki take things to another level. They're shifty, often hypocritical, and occasionally psychotic, even by the standards of their fellow criminals. When there's a riot that needs inciting, voters who require intimidation, or crimes against humanity to commit, they are the go-to guys, backing up their reputation with a track record of government manipulation, drinking blood, and beheading their enemies.

Kamande explained the Mungiki's version of campaigning: For the low cost of 100,000 Kenyan shillings (about \$1,000), officials can hire 30 to 50 men who will pay a visit to a neighborhood to exert a brutal form of political influence.

Leading up to the 2002 elections, Kamande was part of a group paid to attack opponents of Njehu Gatabaki, a former MP, in the Kangema district of Murang'a County. According to him, they invaded the homes of Gatabaki's opponents, armed with clubs and machetes, and collected voter-ID cards.

When I asked whether anyone resisted, Kamande chuckled. "We beat them thoroughly. When you see your friend, your brother, your husband being beaten like a dog, you don't say no."

Gatabaki still lost, but the Mungiki continued to be a major player in Kenyan politics through voter intimidation and retaliatory attacks. Things got especially bad after the last general election in December 2007. Incumbent president Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner in a vote that split largely along ethnic and tribal lines, and he was sworn in during a super-secret nighttime ceremony. Meanwhile, opposition candidate Raila Odinga declared himself the victor, saying that the courts shouldn't decide the election because Kibaki controlled them.

The resulting tension between political parties and tribes quickly boiled over, and soon there were reports of brutal murders and sectarian violence throughout Kenya—usually considered the developed, Westernized hub of East Africa. The Mungiki joined in, of course, and when the dust settled the following February, more than 1,000 people were dead. Four years later, the wounds aren't even close to healing.



In Kasarani's Ngomongo neighborhood there's a bar called the Pentagon Pub that has a portrait of Odinga hanging on the wall. Although Kasarani is a stronghold of the Kikuyu tribe (which counts Kibaki among its ranks), this particular district is dominated by Odinga's Luo tribe, who consider the Mungiki to be immoral savages.

I strolled through the doors behind a group of well-muscled young men. As we entered, everyone inside came to a dead stop, shook the hands of my chaperones, and then bailed immediately. I was hanging with the Ngomongo's Taliban, and they owned this joint.

The Nairobi Taliban may have appropriated their moniker and hardcore ethos from their Afghan namesake, but they're more concerned with local politics than religious doctrine. An offshoot of a defunct group known as the Baghdad Boys, the Taliban are the Luo tribe's answer to the Kikuyu's Mungiki and have been roving the seedier parts of Kenya for close to a decade.

At the moment, the Taliban's moneymaking activities aren't too different from the Mungiki's: extortion, illegally siphoning and selling electricity, and lots of beat-downs. They are also known for their public executions, during which the culprit is stoned until he's unable to walk and then burned alive.

"Everyone here knows the rules. Everyone has seen someone burned, even children. This is how it is," said Joash Oluande, the Taliban's leader.

Oluande, a born-again Christian despite his employment, told me the Taliban are far superior to the Mungiki because Taliban violence is defensive in nature. "Once you become a Mungiki, you would kill even your own mother," he said. "Taliban fight when the fight is there. We only defend. We take taxes, but there is no extortion. We will not force you to pay."

"What happens if a vendor refuses the monthly 200-shilling [about \$2] protection tax?"

Oluande looked at me as if I were a complete idiot. "No one says no, of course."

With the 2012 elections looming, Oluande and the boys expect another round of sectarian violence. They're hoping their man Odinga will win the presidency this time around, a goal they're prepared to accomplish by any means necessary. "The campaign is dangerous, more than the elections, even," Oluande said. "That's when the politicians are paying for work. Many people will leave for the rural areas, but we will stay."

People will flee for the country because staying in Nairobi could result in getting caught in a brutal crossfire between factions. Last time around, the Kibera and Mathare slums (among others) became unofficial war zones.

Kibera, which is dominated by Odinga supporters, saw hundreds of Kikuyus driven from their homes, many of whom became victims of widespread assault and murder. In Kikuyu-populated Mathare, it was the Luos who were displaced and killed.

In Kasarani, many residents claim that local police and the Mungiki joined forces following the elections. According to Taliban member Caleb Yare, the Mungiki donned police uniforms and were armed with army-issued rifles when they stormed into Mathare.

"The only way you could tell police from the Mungiki was that the police don't carry pangas [East Africa's version of a machete]," Yare said. "It was so bad you couldn't leave your house for fear of being hacked." He then demonstrated the Taliban's patented counterattack, which involves smashing attackers with a rock, followed by a swift slash of a panga.

Kenya Police spokesperson Eric Kiraithe assured me that most of what I'd heard from the gangsters was propaganda. "The allegations that the government has used them as mercenaries concern me," he said. "Anyone who was around knows there are many shocking falsities and fabrications. Individual politicians and people in disputes have employed their services. But these guys have never been used to get votes... although, yes, issues of suppression have happened."

LEFT: The Pentagon Pub is a Taliban stronghold in the Ngomongo neighborhood of Kasarani. Note PM Raila Odinga's photo on the wall. Folks here are really not fans of the current president, Mwai Kibaki.

RIGHT: At the end of this road lies the dividing line between Luo/Taliban and Kikuyu/Mungiki territory in Kasarani. This was the site of some of the most brutal postelection violence in the region.

THE MUNGIKI, THE TALIBAN, AND ME

Getting to Know Kenya's Most Dangerous Gangsters

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY PAIGE AARHUS

George Kamande rolled back his sleeves to show the scars. "You take the oath. I cut myself, you cut yourself, we mix it. I suck your blood, you suck my blood, and then we are linked, and you can never surrender," he told me.

In Kenya, this is the ritual gangsters go through before they head out on a mission, and it happens all too frequently among the residents of Nairobi's Mwiki neighborhood in the Kasarani district. It's one of those obscenely poor, sketchy places where people who know better do not wander around solo. I was there recently,



LEFT: Mungiki member John Njoroge shows off his gang's signature weapon—the panga. A massive beheading campaign against matatu (minibus) drivers led the government to unleash death squads against the Mungiki in 2008.

RIGHT: Mungiki member Stephen Irungu got his head smashed in by the Taliban in 2008. His home was burned and his family fled, but he is still a gangster who will not hesitate to extort the shit out of anyone.

Officially, the Mungiki are outlawed—no politician wants to be openly associated with a group of murderous gangsters. Still, it's hard to believe that they've been entirely cut out of the political process, and Kiraithe did not deny allegations of Mungiki members disguising themselves in police uniforms as they terrorized the slums. "There are a lot of unconfirmed reports of things like this. To get a police uniform in Kenya is not very difficult," he said, before suggesting perhaps Kenya's corrupt political system is more to blame than the police.

The International Criminal Court will soon announce whether it will pursue its case against the Ocampo Six, a group of Kenyan politicians thought to have masterminded much of the postelection violence. In confirmation hearings, Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta was repeatedly accused of using the Mungiki to carry out brutal attacks in Nairobi, Naivasha, and Nakuru. ICC prosecutors are struggling to make the connection between organized crime and politicians. Of course, it will be difficult to determine the complete truth, owing to the fact that very few who witness Mungiki violence and are willing to testify often perish before they make it to the stand. The potential ICC showdown is just the latest in a series of efforts by the Kenyan government to finally clamp down on the Mungiki. After the 2007 elections, for instance, Operation Ondoa Kwekwe ("Remove the Weeds") was initiated, but it resembled a war more than a sanctioned police action. A swarm of plainclothes officers infiltrated Mungiki territory, and a string of mass executions followed. A 2009 UN report accused Kwekwe's death squads of killing 8,000 Kikuyu youths during the operation.

Kiraithe was unapologetic: "It's not like you were executing people who were innocent. The Mungiki were committing many murders viciously. You couldn't get a single person to testify. The operation lasted three months, and in my opinion it was highly successful."

Regardless of its tactics, the crackdown certainly forced the Mungiki underground. Where members were once easily identified by their dreadlocks, many have shaved their heads in an attempt at anonymity. Low-level foot soldiers have taken up day jobs, returning to the grinding poverty that led them to join the Mungiki in the first place.

Some gangsters see the politicians' hardline response as a betrayal. James Njuguna, another Mungiki member in Mwiki, told me that officials frequently promised them high-paying government jobs and political power in exchange for their violent persuasion of voters, and then turned on them after the elections. "In 2012 they will need us again," he said. "This is the routine every election and then, afterward, they dump us. We are tired of this routine." Yet they're also wary of speaking out too forcefully. None of the men in Mwiki would let me photograph them without putting on sunglasses and a hat, and they refused to discuss who provided them with police uniforms in 2007.

Stephen Irungu, another Mungiki member, was nearly beaten to death by Taliban members while fighting against them in 2008. Half his forehead was caved in and his legs were completely mangled, and he told me that the 3,000 shillings (about \$30) he was paid by the government did little to cover his medical expenses. He now works with the Taliban to prevent future violence, but he's still Mungiki, still a gangster, and still broke. When I attempted to photograph his arsenal of guns, I was suddenly told I would have to pay an outrageous sum for the shots due to "security concerns." Then a group of much younger, tougher-looking men materialized, demanding money for interviews I didn't want. When I tried to leave, I was told that I would have to pay for that too. Fucking gangsters.

Irungu laid it out for me plain and simple: "We want peace, we want the fighting to stop... but more than that, we want money. This issue is about poverty more than anything else." *WCB*

Photo: Vincent Siquard



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One of the most remarkable shows was for Remy Ho, an expat living in L.A. His family escaped Cambodia during the 70s, when Remy was a baby. During the escape his father packed him into a backpack, but when he crawled under some barbed wire, the bag got caught, scratching Remy's face and leaving a scar.

CAMBODIAN COUTURE

It's Literally to Die For

BY WILLIAM FAIRMAN

PHOTOS BY
WILLIAM FAIRMAN &
RHYS JAMES

Cambodia's recent history has been defined by genocide, war, and corruption. But it wasn't always like that. During the 1960s, Cambodia was a happening place; they loved psych rock, the girls had Mrs. Mia Wallace bobs, and most young people partied accordingly. Then the Vietnam War came along and Cambodians watched Vietnamese and American teenagers mow each other down with machine guns, thinking, "I'm glad that's not us!" (Aside, of course, from the carpet-bombing they endured.)

Shortly after the end of the Vietnam War, when everyone had lost interest in Southeast Asia and gone off the idea of military intervention there, a man using the nom de guerre Pol Pot, the French-educated leader of the communist Khmer Rouge, quietly got on with murdering around 2 million Cambodians in a massive land grab. If you didn't want to give up your farm to the Khmer Rouge, you were summarily executed.

Fast-forward 40 years, and the country known as the Wild West of the East understandably wants to be known for something other than mass murder and landmarks made of human skulls. That is why in November, Cambodia hosted its first-ever fashion week. Obviously, the *Fashion Week Internationale* team had to attend.

Phnom Penh is a strange city, part crumbling French colonial glory, part shantytown, and punctuated with the occasional pristine royal palace or Buddhist temple. By day the city is fairly unremarkable; it's at night that you see its real character.

Walking along the Mekong River promenade gives one a good insight into the local scene: Tweenage boys dressed as girls act out scenes of domestic abuse for local families out on an evening stroll. It's like their version of the juggling clowns in Covent Garden, but more depressing and with far more sexual ambiguity. If you can make it across the road—through the millions of swerving, beeping tuk-tuks and mopeds—you'll find a more sinister part of town, where swarms of middle-aged Western men lurk around clubs with names like *Heart of Darkness*. We went into one for about five seconds, enough time to witness a tourist roughly fingering a sex worker under the watchful eye of her pimp.

An American girl who had been working in Phnom Penh for the past year told me that people come to this city and become "lost souls." And it's easy to see how. Prescription drugs are dirt cheap and freely available from open-front pharmacies, restaurants with names like *Happy Pizza* sell fist-size bags of weed for \$5, and an unlikely community of West Africans runs a lively trade in heroin.

Somewhere in the midst of all this, the garment factories hum with the sound of 400,000 young women making crappy high-street clothes for the likes of you and me. *VICE*

Watch *Fashion Week Internationale: Cambodia* on *VICE.com*. New episodes in *Pakistan* and *Lagos* are coming soon.



The 81-year-old king of Cambodia, Norodom Sihanouk (on the left), is rumored to be gay because he not only supports fashion week, he is a former ballet dancer and a proponent of same-sex marriage. On the other hand, he does have 14 kids.



A member of the "Khmer Riche," as the children of powerful government figures are known. One in particular, *Sohpy Ke*, daughter of the deputy prime minister, is so fond of clothes that she erected a six-story mansion/shop in praise of the god of fashion. The store, named *Sophy & Sina*, has a relaxing shoe garden, wine cellar, and personal tailoring room. They publish *F*, Cambodia's only fashion magazine, which is run by her brother *Sopheha*.



Two weeks before our trip we read in the online edition of the Phnom Penh Post that 300 women had simultaneously fainted in a factory (much like this one) that produces clothes for H&M. The official report said that the fainting was due to "bad spirits" in the factory.



Cambodian Fashion Week does all the things a fashion week should: lights, models, guest list. At one of the shows a guy said, "We all know that Cambodia is a third-world country, but when they organized this fashion week it meant that we're progressing, not only in political or economic situations but in fashion too."

EVERY QUALITY GARMENT HAS A STORY BEHIND IT.

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BIKING BOOTH'S ESCAPE ROUTE

Retracing the Long-Cold Tracks of Lincoln's Assassin

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY VINNIE ROTONDARO

Anyone with a cursory knowledge of American history knows that Abraham Lincoln was brutally assassinated. His untimely death occurred on April 14, 1865, a mere week after the surrender of Robert E. Lee's Confederate States Army at Appomattox. In the midst of celebrating the Union's victory, President Lincoln was enjoying a production of the great farce *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theatre in Washington, DC. Meanwhile, one of the most famous actors of the day, a 26-year-old Union-hating heartthrob named John Wilkes Booth, was fuming over the outcome of the Civil War. Revenge, he decided, would be his.

Just as the biggest punch line of the play was delivered, Booth slunk into the presidential box and fired a single .44-caliber bullet from a Derringer into the back of Lincoln's head. Honest Abe slumped forward while his assassin proceeded to wrestle with Major Henry Rathbone, Lincoln's guest, burying a dagger in his shoulder and seriously wounding him. Booth then leaped down onto the stage, possibly breaking his leg in the process (it has never been determined whether his leg was broken from the jump or during his escape). He shouted, "*Sic semper tyrannis*" ("Thus always to tyrants"), before vanishing into the night.

What's not so well known is that afterward Booth fled into southern Maryland, a hotbed of Confederate sympathy, and spent 12 days on the lam in a strange and tragic odyssey that involved swamps, rivers, dead horses, country doctors, and heavy realizations that the North had won and there was no turning back.

I can be weirdly obsessive when it comes to history, and I've often wondered what Booth's last days were like. Eventually I came to the realization that to truly understand them—to make sense of the changes they wrought on America's soil—I'd have to literally retrace his footsteps. The only catch was that, unlike Booth, I didn't have access to a horse (and even if I did, riding one the entire route would've been impossible). So I took my bike.

Things started off shitty. I awoke the first day—the day I'd designated as the date of Lincoln's assassination—at 8:00 AM. I'd overslept. I was supposed to be at Ford's Theater, halfway across town, at nine for a tour. Flustered and a bit pissed off, I shoved a sleeping bag, some clothes, and a handful of PowerBars into my backpack. Then I hopped on my orange 70s-era iron Nishiki and hightailed it to Chinatown.

A chilling rain fell and the brakes on my bike kept slipping, but I made it to the theater just in time, perhaps feeling a tiny sliver of the stress that Booth had experienced 146 years ago. A gaggle of DC tourists were waiting outside, and I stepped into line behind them.

I overheard some kids talking about a recent Toby Keith concert and an older couple bickering as they deciphered directions to somewhere on a smartphone. We moved inside and descended into the theater's basement, which was literally filled with history. Videos about Lincoln, the Civil War, and the role of slaves flittered across monitors, and exhibits crowded the walls.

"You know why he threw the gun down?" a father rhetorically asked his son as they looked at the single-shot Derringer that Booth used. "Cause he was done. One shot." Perhaps he was impressed by Booth's accomplishment on a purely technical level?

I was particularly bummed when I learned that visitors weren't allowed into the presidential box. I gazed up at it from the seats below until a guide instructed everyone to take a seat as some sort of presentation was about to begin. I was here to relive history, not to have it recounted to me, so I split.

From Ford's Theatre, Booth galloped by horse down F Street, over the Navy Yard Bridge, and into what's now modern-day Anacostia, the poorest and blackest part of Washington. I did the same on my trusty Nishiki steed.

What I saw of Anacostia was fucked, a ghetto nightmare of poverty and neglect. Thugs milled about and made sketchy handoffs. Buildings were boarded up and burned out. I entered the neighborhood at the bottom of a steep hill along the cruelly named Good Hope Road, becoming more and more conscious that I was the only white dude around. Up the street a trio of older gentlemen stood under the doorway of an abandoned building. I got off my bike and walked their way. The first guy looked like a weasel: skinny, scraggly, hunched over, with a lazy eye that was focused on something indeterminable. The guy in the middle had these big, pink-tinted eyes and an aura of worn-out sadness about him. The last one was the largest of the bunch. He wore a badass mustache and a brown Stevie Wonder hat and was munching on a bright green pickle wrapped in a piece of cellophane.

"Excuse me," I said, drawing apprehensive stares. "This is kind of out of left field, but do you guys know anything about John Wilkes Booth?"

They all nodded their heads.

"John Wilkes Booth," the weasely guy said. "Abraham Lincoln."

"Booth crossed the bridge and went right up this road right here. Right up this road and then he took a right on, uh..."

"Wait," I said, "you know the story?"

Sure enough, he did. In fact, all three of them knew all about it. The guy with the big eyes told me that when he was a kid, his mom had a map of Booth's escape route she would show him from time to time. Everybody in the area knew something or other about the escape, he said. It was part and parcel of growing up in Anacostia. I asked Big Eyes his name.

"Love," he said.

"Love? Like L-O-V-E?"

"Yeah, man. Love."

Love gave me his cell number and told me to call him in a few days, that he was going to rummage around for that map. I asked the men whether I could take their pictures, but they said no. So I shook their hands and bade them farewell.

"All right, Vinnie," the pickle eater called out as I biked off into the rain.



A few minutes later I dismounted and pulled out my camera to document the urban decay, but I quickly bailed after a hateful-looking thug hocked a loogie at my feet. My welcome had been worn out.

As I pedaled toward Maryland, I passed by fried chicken and seafood shacks, the environment gradually becoming more suburban, with an emphasis on strip malls. It was still raining.

Booth's original plan was to kidnap Lincoln and exchange him for Confederate prisoners of war. His group of coconspirators included Davey Herold, a pharmacist's assistant and avid hunter. After the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, fell, the plan veered toward a more permanent solution—assassination, a slew of them actually. Booth wanted to kill Vice President Andrew Johnson, Secretary of State William Seward, and Ulysses S. Grant, the Union Army commander, in addition to Lincoln. But in the end only Lincoln got capped, and only Booth and Herold (whom Booth rendezvoused with in Maryland shortly after the assassination) were the targets of the ensuing manhunt.

By 3 PM my jeans were soaked through and I had arrived at the Surratt House in Clinton, Maryland. The red wooden structure was where Booth and Herold made their first stop, picking up some "shooting irons" and a jug of whiskey. Mary Surratt owned the place back then. She also ran a boarding house in DC where Booth and other conspirators hung out. Booth's post-assassination visit to Surratt's country house earned her the honor of being the first woman the US government sentenced to death (she was hanged).

After the tour, I ducked into a liquor store across the street to pick up some whiskey, à la Booth. As I perused the aisles, my backpack and camera dangling about, a security guard approached and asked what I was up to. I told him I was retracing Booth's escape route, and he got majorly stoked. His name was Mr. White, and he claimed he knew a guy named Bobby Valentine who lived in a nearby house that Booth may have stopped at during his getaway.

I was so pumped on the tip that I forgot all about the whiskey and left empty-handed. Thirty minutes later I was knocking on the door to Valentine's vine-covered brick residence. He

OPPOSITE PAGE: A stone marker rests at the spot where Booth died along a wooded median between the north- and southbound lanes of Route 301, in Virginia.

THIS PAGE: The .44-caliber Derringer that Booth used to assassinate Lincoln.





The presidential booth from which Booth jumped after capping the president... and a couple of boring DC tourists.

was a cool old dude, a retired used-car salesman. I asked him whether it was true that Booth had stopped at his house, but he said no, it wasn't. It was almost as if Booth had left false tracks in his wake, calculated diversions to throw off would-be pursuers who would come looking for him even centuries later, guided by folklore.

Riding on, I happened on a more definite trace of his passage: a signpost that read JOHN WILKES BOOTH AND HIS COMPANION DAVID HEROLD ENTERED CHARLES COUNTY HERE. I was on the right track, entering farmland. It was getting dark, so I found a spot off the road in the woods and set up camp, just as Booth might have done. I didn't have a tent, so I wrapped my sleeping bag in trash bags in a bush-league effort to keep dry during the evening downpour.

As the sun set, blessedly the rain stopped. Little brown crickets chirped. Billowing clouds charged through the night sky. Alone and at peace, I popped on a nightlight and began to read.

Around 10 PM I was startled by a sudden beam of light coming from the road, scanning the area around me. I quickly turned off my nightlight and lay still. After a long minute of waiting, I threw up a hand. The beam zeroed in on it.

"Hello?" I called out, blinded. "Are you guys the cops?"

No response.

I tried again. "Police?"

"Yes," came a faint reply. "DON'T MOVE!"

Dancing red and blue lights began to flash. Two officers, a man and a woman, cautiously made their way over to my campsite, their hands hovering over their holsters. "What're you doing?" one of them asked as they shined their flashlights in my face. I was lying on a bed of ripped-up trash bags; I must have looked like a fool. I told them I was following Booth. That broke the ice. Of course, they knew all about the route. Everyone in this fucking town did.

It turned out that they were game wardens who had seen my nightlight from the road. They thought I was doing something called "spotlighting," which is when poachers transfix deer by shining lights in their eyes at night and then blow them away. Then they searched my stuff and informed me that I was on private property, but in the end they let me stay put. "Listen," the man said, "you should know that the rest of these spots you're planning to go to are also on private property."

"How is it that everyone around here knows so much about this particular moment in history?" I asked.

"I'm from southern Maryland," he said. "It's like, whatever." With that, the officers left and, crushingly, it started to rain again.

When I woke up the next morning, the air was frigid and everything was dripping wet. I had managed to stay dry, but the bag holding my shoes got the worst of it. I laced up a sopping pair of New Balances and tried to stay Zen as my feet went numb. Dejectedly, I crawled onto my bike and pedaled five miles back up the road to a Dunkin' Donuts, where I wrapped my fingers around the largest hot coffee they sold and lost myself in the morning news being broadcast on the television hanging from the wall.

After thawing out for an hour or two, I rode to the Mudd House in Waldorf, Maryland. The house's namesake, Samuel Mudd, was a doctor who was an acquaintance of Booth's and, some believe, played a part in the original kidnapping plot before it devolved into murderous desperation. Booth and Herold had visited the good doctor's house after Lincoln got popped, and Mudd set Booth's broken leg. According to my time line, this meant Booth had gotten here much faster than I had—on a busted wing. This trip was turning out to be a lot more depressing than I had planned.

A guide at the Mudd House told me more about Booth's family than I could ever have wanted to know. Apparently Papa Booth was a famous British actor, vegetarian peace nut, and subscriber to an early-1800s version of the free-love movement. After sashaying his penis around town for a while, he found himself inside a particularly fertile lady, ended up having ten kids with her (including Booth), and moved to Maryland so his wife wouldn't find out (she did).

On the front lawn of the Mudd House, a couple of Confederate-soldier reenactors had set up a faux battle camp. They told me they were known as Sons of Confederate Veterans, and they had a lot to say once I approached them. It wasn't a "civil war," they told me, because the South didn't want to overthrow the government, they just wanted to pull away from it; there were blacks who fought for the Confederacy; their uniforms were cooler than the Union's, etc. One of them showed me his Confederate-flag license plates. I figured it was time for me to move on.

Adhering to the theme of the trip, the weather continued to suck—windy, misty, and cold. Originally I had planned to ditch my bike at Zekiah Swamp, where legend has it that Booth and Herold disposed of their horses by wading them into the water and shooting the poor beasts in their heads, just like poor old Lincoln. But considering the forecast, and realizing that it would take forever to walk the rest of this route, I decided to keep my trusty iron steed. Call it a modern convenience.

Fate, however, doesn't fuck around, so of course I got a flat tire as I crossed the swamp and was forced to ditch my bike on the side of the road. Luckily, a short while later a young couple pulled up in their car and swooped me away. Their names were Sean and Kat, and they were traveling with a skinny pit-bullish pup named Remy who wouldn't stop licking me. I told them about my little project, and they kindly agreed to take me to my next destination—a dense overgrowth of trees that is today known as the Pine Thicket, where Booth and Herold laid low from April 16 to 21. It was also where Booth first read newspaper accounts of his act and learned he was no hero. Even the South had condemned him. I can't say I am capable of empathizing with someone who killed one of

this nation's greatest men, but goddamn what a bummer that must have been for him. I think he truly believed at least half the country would back him up.

From Booth's April 21 diary entry:

With every man's hand against me, I am here in despair. And why? For doing what Brutus was honored for. What made Tell a hero? And yet I, for striking down a greater tyrant than they ever knew, am looked upon as a common cutthroat.

After meandering around the Pine Thicket I made my way to Route 301 and rented a room in a cheap off-ramp motel. The next morning I toured the Potomac River with a man named Wilt Corkern, a family friend who used to run a colonial-farm living-history museum in nearby Accokeek where I worked as a farmhand one summer. Together with his wife, Mary Bruce, we made our way to the spot where Booth and Herold had crossed into Virginia, the destination from which the hunted duo thought they would be spirited to safety.

They thought wrong. After crossing into Virginia, Booth and Herold were unceremoniously bounced from shelter to shelter—even more frequently than in Maryland—ultimately ending up at a farmhouse near Port Royal, about 70 miles from Ford's Theatre.

Today the spot rests along a wooded median strip in between the northbound and southbound lanes of Route 301. No trace of the farm remains. Night was approaching on my arrival; the hollowed-out clearing was cocooned by thick vegetation and resonant with the sounds of birds, crickets,

and the occasional whoosh of a passing car. I walked into the clearing. A stone marker lay before me, apparently left by some pro-Confederate group. Pennies littered the ground around it.

It read: LET YOUR PEACE FALL UPON THE SOUL OF JOHN WILKES BOOTH.

I slid off my backpack and took a seat. It was here that the Union cavalry tracked Booth down. Trapped alone in a burning barn after Herold had surrendered, he took a bullet to the neck, which severed his spinal cord. He was carried out of the barn and laid on the porch of the nearby farmhouse. Shortly before expiring, he asked his pursuers to lift his hands before his eyes. "Useless," he said, "useless." And then he was gone.

As I sat there, I got to thinking about how successful Booth had been, how he had accomplished the most difficult—and in his mind the most crucial—part of his mission, only to have the whole thing backfire in his face. Some people say he was a coward for not enlisting, but I think it took some seriously heavy balls to do what he did, however misguided his actions might have been. In fact, the whole country seemed to have iron balls back then; people didn't hesitate to take action when action was needed. Nowadays that doesn't seem to be the case.

As I thought about this, an odd sort of loneliness fell over me, a very bothersome feeling. I pulled out my phone and gave Love a call to soothe my mind.

"Love," I said. "Did you ever find that map?"

"No, man. I can't find it. I've been looking all over!"

"Well, listen... If you do find it, will you let me know?"

"I surely will," he said. "I surely will." 

A pair of opinionated Sons of Confederate Veterans, who had staged a faux battle camp outside the Mudd House, in Waldorf, Maryland.





THE WONDERFUL ASSHOLE

Gary Indiana Won't Grease It Up for Anyone

BY BENJAMIN SHAPIRO
PORTRAIT BY RICHARD KERN

Archival Photos Courtesy of New York University's Fales Library and Special Collections

I never really thought I'd end up writing anything about Gary Indiana; I just wanted to meet him. Despite a 35-year career writing books that are more corrosive than alien blood, he's been the subject of only a few magazine profiles and no one's written a proper biography of him. Most young, semi-literate people are pretty sure they've heard of him, but it could be that they're just thinking of the city from which Gary appropriated his last name (né Hoisington).

Gary is primarily a novelist, one who falls into the Not Forgotten but Criminally Underappreciated category that seems to plague authors of a certain age. Perhaps this is because the literary sense of today's market has been dulled by what he calls "the procession of no-talent Brooklyn hacks named Jonathan." But his struggle for success has also been hindered by a refusal to think of his life in careerist terms. "I've never had a career!" he once snapped at me. "I've never had a career because I don't eat shit! Those creeps who have careers, they don't even have to eat shit. Their mouths are already fucking toilets." He's been turning out straight-up masterpieces since his first novel, *Horse Crazy* (1989), a minimal, ambient story of gay love and drugs in AIDS-era New York. Close friend William Burroughs championed Gary's early books, calling them "archetypal stories, expertly told. Fascinating to every man, no matter what his sexual tastes—like the characters in *Genet*." If you want to get cover-blurby about it, you could say that Gary is one of the last of a seemingly dying breed of hardcore American intellectuals.

Today, a lot of Gary's stuff is out of print. I can't help but feel that this is partially his doing. "I'm a wonderful asshole but a horrible creep," he said when I delicately asked him whether he had contributed to his own troubles in the marketplace. "Anybody my age with books still in print is just good at networking, greasing every asshole they come across. I can write the novel, and I can sell the novel. I'm just not capable of shoving that novel up anybody's asshole." In a 2002 interview in the *Village Voice* he cautioned against selling out, warning that "people think that you're self-destructive if you're willing to make gestures against power that insure the making of enemies. But if your only concern in life is your success and viability among the people who wield power, then you might as well just start taking a lot of Klonopin every day." A classic communiqué from the solitary world of one who refuses to compromise.

Gary's in his early 60s, although he looks much older, prematurely aged in a way that is somehow fitting to his oeuvre. Over the past 23 years, he's written six crushing novels, mostly about the power relations surrounding sexuality, money, celebrity, and brutality. He's obsessed with the law, the moment where "reality and the law [collide] in a way that exposes the contradictions of the system we live in...

where masses of people are kept in check by fear of the police and the threat of incarceration or execution, rather than by a shared sense of possibility." Much of his source material comes from reality, especially when it comes to crime, and he's extensively covered the trials of Rodney King and Jack Kevorkian and produced studies of Pier Paolo Pasolini and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

He's also an actor. Throughout the 70s he starred in movies made by fringe members of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's circle, the hard-line core of the New German Cinema movement. He's also collaborated with people like Jack Smith, Taylor Mead, Cookie Mueller, Bill Rice, Mike Hodges, and Jim Jarmusch on a variety of projects and mediums. He's also a fire-and-brimstone political essayist, a talented photographer, a subversive playwright, and, perhaps most famously, an art critic.

It is through Gary's eloquent and biting criticism that I first became interested in his work; he's written for *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Film Comment*, and countless other trade journals of the urban 80s left. Many New York artists remember him as the chief art critic at the *Village Voice* through the mid-80s, but he shrugs those years off; according to Gary, his nonfiction is merely public service for a society crippled with moral dyspepsia. That's where his value lies; these books are bitter, nihilistic dispatches from the front lines of the end of the world.

The first time I spoke with Gary was by accident. One morning last October, a coworker tapped me on the shoulder. I had my headphones turned way up and hadn't noticed that my phone was ringing. I picked up to an effeminate voice on the other end, asking for someone named Frank. I knew it was Gary Indiana. I'd been trying to contact him through an old agent who had passed along my number to Gary. Somehow he had mistakenly dialed my number while trying to phone a friend in the hospital who was emerging from surgery for lung cancer. I timidly arranged to meet him two hours later at St. Mark's Books.

When I met him he was nervously thumbing through the philosophy section, about to buy a copy of Guibert of Nogent's *Monodies and on the Relics of Saints*, the memoirs of a 12th-century monk. I'd never heard of it. It is the first of many books, movies, and pieces of art I would jot down over our ensuing conversations; Gary is great for recommendations.¹

¹ He asked me to mention, for those interested, what he considers to be the best book on American life, politics, and economics: The Chapters of Erie, a short account of the 1860s railroad scandal by Henry Adams and Charles Francis Adams Jr., the great-grandsons of John Adams. And the funniest book, he says, is The Economic Consequences of the Peace, John Maynard Keynes's gut-busting romp through the Treaty of Versailles.



LEFT: Gary and some of his friends talking about cocaine and champagne for a 1980s edition of the Soho Weekly News.

RIGHT: Gary at the Chateau Marmont in West Hollywood, where John Belushi overdosed and died. Photo by Ivan Galietti.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Evidence photo of Andrew Cunanan after he blew his brains out on a Miami houseboat.

During our first meeting we mostly talked about movies and television. He's a devoted fan of *Queen for a Day*, a 50s game show that pitted female contestants against each other in a misery competition. They would relate stories of sons mangled with muscular dystrophy or daughters crushed in car wrecks, and the "winner," decided by audience applause, was declared queen, ceremoniously crowned, and showered with washing machines, blenders, and other consumer goods.

I learned that Gary was writing his memoirs, which makes sense because he wouldn't be happy with his life being written about by anyone else with such intimacy and at such length. There's tremendous pressure on him, although, like many of his worries, most of it is self-applied. He was feeling sick and having a difficult time sleeping, speaking of a recent dream in which a giant letter *D* chased him through the streets. He chain-smoked and repeatedly told me that he was looking for work. He told me that he was "an aging, midrange writer" and was considering publishing things under a pseudonym to compete with the younger crop of novelists, usually flashes in the pan who emerge from nowhere and release a middling e-book, only to quickly drift back into obscurity.

The next time we hung out, Gary drank me under the table. At one in the morning on a cool autumn night, we split a bottle of Polish vodka and a pack of Camel Filters at his apartment, a bone-white, three-room railroad in the East Village with a bathroom out in the hall. He's been living there since 1980—books don't fill the apartment, they infest it.

After we got loosened up a bit he told me about his family. His father's side consisted mostly of gentleman farmers from Vermont. "They had a lot of pretensions," he told me. "They didn't think of themselves as middle class." In the 40s, his father won half shares in a lumber enterprise during a poker game, and Gary's family experienced a windfall of sorts. Nothing obscene, but the business helped to keep his family out of financial trouble. His home state, Gary says, didn't offer much. "Southern New Hampshire was like rural Mississippi. Shopworkers, factory workers, people who had never read a book. They weren't stupid; they were poor."

He grew up alienated, and at seven he was severely abused by members of the local community. His mother told him later that the experience changed him significantly. Gary tried to commit suicide at 12 years old, and he told me that he still hasn't moved beyond the experience. Did he get into trouble in high school? He rolled his eyes. "I was troubled. I didn't get *into* trouble."

After an early graduation, Gary ended up at the University of California, Berkeley, sneaking into seminars with the New Left philosopher Herbert Marcuse. He dropped out in the late 60s, thinking that the revolution was just past the horizon, and started working as a paralegal and a gaffer on porn shoots. He drifted between Boston and San Francisco before landing in LA, where he stayed through the 70s, haunting Beaux-Arts apartment complexes filled with "insomniacs and people without driver licenses."

In LA, Gary worked at a movie theater and wrote plays and short stories—until he got into a serious car wreck on



the Hollywood Freeway. "The police said it was an accident that people don't just walk away from... so I walked the fuck away," he chuckled. "The quick story is that I came to New York at the end of 1978. I had \$40 and a TWA getaway card. I started working for a market-research company in the city, finding out what color of packaging people wanted their toothpaste in."

He fell in with Evan and John Lurie's band the Lounge Lizards, started hanging out and performing at the Mudd Club, and opened an underground theater company in Bill Rice's backyard. He picked up writing jobs here and there, traveling back and forth to Europe to act in obscure films like *Dorian Gray im Spiegel der Boulevardpresse* and *Fräulein Berlin*.

During the mid-90s he began writing the series of three books he's best known for—what he calls his "crime trilogy"—two novels (*Resentment* and *Depraved Indifference*) and one nonfiction investigation (*Three-Month Fever*), all commentaries on the rift between sadistic criminality and the spasmodic swarms of media surrounding it. "These books zero in on the major preoccupation of my life," he said. "Why do people commit barbaric acts?" *Resentment* is a fictionalization of the trial of Lyle and Erik Menendez, brothers serving life sentences for murdering their parents with a shotgun in the late 80s. "I had tremendous sympathy for the Menendez brothers," Gary said. "Nobody kills their parents for no reason." A year later came *Three-Month Fever*, following the case of Andrew Cunanan, the man who brutally murdered

"Anybody my age with books still in print is just good at networking, greasing every asshole they come across."

(at least) five people, including fashion designer Giovanni Versace, before offing himself. For research, Gary spent time in every city that Cunanan had lived in. "I felt sympathy for Cunanan. He was the world's most insignificant person killing the world's most important person. But who did he kill before Versace? Why did he kill them? What were they like?" Next came *Depraved Indifference*, based on the mother-and-son murder team of Santee and Kenneth Kimes. "I found them both morally repulsive, but they were able to function with their craziness all over the US and *no one* stopped them. When you look at it, the people who came into contact with them were abysmally stupid, and there's something wrong with a society that allowed them to pass as respectable citizens when they're obviously deeply criminal."

Among Gary's papers housed at New York University's Fales Library is an old photo of the transgressive photographer, filmmaker, artist, and VICE contributor Bruce LaBruce. Gary used to travel up to Toronto to hang out with Bruce's queercore scene in the mid-90s. They were good friends for a little while, until Gary wrote him off following an



Gary with Tina L'Hotsky, a Mudd Club regular and a member of the unnamed theater company Gary founded in the backyard of Bill Rice's Third Street apartment.

invasive prank: Bruce had taken Gary to a party and worn a wire, recording every off-color remark he made, later publishing the transcript in a zine called *Pussy Grazer*.

"To me, he's a Burroughsian figure," Bruce told me. "Really living the life that he writes about. It's not a posture, which you could say about a lot of writers. There's a certain tortured aspect about him that comes through in his choice of subject matter—rent boys, hustlers, mass murderers. He's a part of a bygone era in New York. There's no longer a reference point for what he represents. New York is now a wasteland of consumerism, and Gary is an extinct animal."

When Gary decided to start writing his memoirs, he took a break from a novel in progress called *Diving for Teeth*. Based on Luis Buñuel's 1962 film, *The Exterminating Angel*, the book focuses on bourgeois attendees of a Long Island party. One by one the servants abandon the premises, and the guests find themselves mysteriously unable to leave the living room. Cell-phone batteries are expended, the food supply runs out, and the guests resort to cannibalism. "I may be stealing from Buñuel," he said, "but I'm pushing it further—in his film no one ate each other."

The memoirs begin in 1975, concluding 20 years later, when Gary traveled to India to interview Charles Sobhraj, a serial killer, drug dealer, con artist, and jewel thief who is currently serving a life sentence in Nepal. "I'd been fixated on a certain question that had preoccupied me for many years," Gary said. "Something I couldn't understand. In a way, Sobhraj was the embodiment of pure evil."

Impeded by the Indian authorities, it took months for Gary to set up an interview, but the two finally met. "I asked him bluntly, 'Why did you kill those people?'" Sobhraj gave me a pat answer: He told me he was hired by a Hong Kong triad to eliminate some low-level drug dealers. I knew that wasn't true, and I wasn't interested in how he killed them. I wanted to know what enabled him to do it. We were in an anteroom of the courthouse, and he got up. As he was going to the door he looked at me and said, 'It's a secret.' I knew that he'd never tell me anything more."

Gary plans to close the memoir with this realization—that he'll never answer his question about Sobhraj's real motive, the only true obsession he's ever had. "Certain things preoccupy you for definite reasons," he said. "You have to decide what kind of person you are. Is my life justified? Have I lived in a moral way? When you're gone, you hope that people speak well of you, that you'll have left something of value, and people won't despise you. Then there are other things that are simply questions that as you go through this continuum from life to death, come up—you can't ever really come to terms with them."

He looked up at me with younger eyes. "There's still the question," he said gravely. "Why is the world full of evil? Why do people do such awful things to each other?" It's a different world from the one Gary came up in, but he's not giving up on his original question. He paused dreamily and lit another cigarette, sighing. "Ah, fuck it. Most of life is shit. *That's* why. Why should I be better known? Why should I be anything?" *VICE*

I SAID A FLIP-FLOP,
THE FLIPPY, THE FLOPPY
TO THE FLIP-FLIP-FLOP,
AND YOU DON'T STOP
THE ROCK IT TO THE
BANG-BANG-COMFY
SAY UP-JUMP THE COMFY
TO THE RHYTHM OF THE
COMFY, THE FEET



THEY'RE NOT SHOES
(THEY'RE SANDALS)



THREE CHAPTERS FROM 'THE LOOM OF RUIN'

BY SAM MCPHEETERS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MALIN BERGSTRÖM

Regular readers will know Sam McPheeters as the author of some of VICE's most gratifyingly exhaustive features. Topics have included: the Jerusalem syndrome, Brooks Headley's transformation from ferocious drummer to world-class pastry chef, DIY cryonics, arachnophobia therapy, former Crucifucks singer and self-proclaimed Messiah Doc Dart, Glenn Danzig, and a cornucopia of other subjects. He also guest-edited our 2010 Anti-Music Issue, and earlier this year began writing The Brutality Report, a weekly column for VICE.com. Listeners of quality tunes will also recognize Sam as the singer for Born Against, Men's Recovery Project, and Wrangler Brutes.

In addition to Sam's exemplary nonfiction work, VICE has had the pleasure of publishing a few of his short stories. So last year, when Sam told us that he was in the midst of hammering out his first novel, we became excitedly impatient and demanded to know more. Then, when he told us that the plot concerned "Trang Yang, a gas-station franchise owner with a flair for earnings and a fondness for violence who roams Los Angeles seeking out the corporate spies who beset his stations," we began harassing him on a weekly basis for more details. So it is with great relief and pride that we can now present to you three chapters from The Loom of Ruin, which will be released in paper and e-reader formats on April 1 from Muggler Books (mugglerbooks.com) and is now available for preorder.

1. THE NOSES

Trang was angry. He rested against his white cargo van on the periphery of the Hoover Street Chevrex lot, the outer boundary of his domain, scanning the faces of each incoming customer. It was the first morning of October, bright but not yet sweltering. As he squinted into the distance beyond the lot, an overhead gust rustled the buoyant palms hovering over the office park next door. He tensed his jaw in irritation at the distraction, then sniffed at the breeze to reaffirm a suspicion. Someone was coming, was almost here.

As the owner of nine Chevrex gas stations in Los Angeles, he had plenty to be upset about. Insurers gouged him. Employees disobeyed commands. Customers disrespected his property. People—strangers—dishonored his restrooms. Then there were those who were neither employees nor customers. Vandals. Saboteurs. Hostiles. He saw each of his stations as an isolated outpost in a vast wasteland.

This morning, Trang was angry about the noses. The noses came to his stations to spy. He had caught them before: snoops, agents, secret shoppers trying to administer covert psychological tests. They nosed around his properties like wraiths, interested not in the sundries of his stores or the three grades of gas at his pumps, but in creeping into his head and extracting his secrets. He'd spent the last four hours in motionless vigilance, leaning perfectly straight against the cool metal of the van door, alert in animosity.

His anger had many irritants, but its source was indelible; Trang had felt no emotion but continual rage for the past ten years, ever since the autumn day in 2001 when an off-duty LAPD detective accidentally shot him in the face. The bullet entered Trang's head from a low angle, piercing his cheek and shattering his right second bicuspid at the root before slicing up through

his anterior frontal cortex and exiting just above the hairline, leaving a fontanel the size and shape of a cigar burn. When Trang woke from a three-day coma, he found himself reborn. He saw the world clearly for the first time. The vast clutter of his life had been swept away, and all that remained was hatred.

A stooped figure approached from the Chevrex's Food Mart. It was Rupert Bhatnagar, the morning's sole employee. Rupert had been beaten by the world long before he'd washed up at the Chevrex on West 20th and South Hoover streets. Everything about this man—the terminal slowness, the sloping paunch, the pockmarked, flaccid face—enraged Trang. Rupert worked his multiple shifts at different stations, a Trang-arranged schedule that avoided overtime pay. Sometimes he pulled 16-hour days for a week straight. Large bruises hung beneath both eyes. It was difficult for Trang to resist the urge to thrash him savagely every day.

"Mister Trang," he said without emotion. A breeze ruffled Rupert's oily comb-over. Trang's full focus narrowed to this one pathetic employee.

"Mister Trang. It is ten. It is time for my ten-minute break."

Too angry to speak, Trang merely waved him away. Rupert shambled off with unhurried baby steps.

A Latino man in an oversized sports shirt stepped down from a pickup truck at pump 12. As Trang watched, the man glanced around the lot and then headed toward the now-unmanned Food Mart. The jersey flapped about his torso. Trang speed-walked to the opposite entrance, reaching the building at the same moment as the man. With a spark of anger, he registered that the huge shirt featured the airbrushed face of Kobe Bryant.

"You work here?" the man asked.

To answer, Trang stepped behind the counter, saying nothing.

"Hey, can you tell me how to get to the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles?"

Trang stood motionless, immobilized by fury. The man laughed.

"Fair enough, chief. The last station didn't know where it was either." He retreated a half aisle away to browse, whistling, through the stacks of candy bars. He selected two and placed them on the counter. Trang did not look down but remained perfectly still, glaring into the stranger's face.

"She'll like these. My niece."

Trang said nothing.

"Kids are real troopers," the man continued. "They can deal with all kinds of procedures and needles and what-have-you." He tapped his fingers nervously on the countertop.

"Don't know if you have any kids, but man... I'm glad I don't. I don't know where my brother gets the strength. You know? Thank God they have insurance. Anyway, just the candy."

"You have asshole face on shirt," Trang said.

For the first time, the man made eye contact. "What?"

"You tell them."

"Tell who?"

Trang's English was imperfect. He only spoke long sentences in this boxy, confining tongue when absolutely necessary.

"You tell them. No one take my gas away."

The man blinked helplessly, his mouth an oval of confusion. With one fluid movement, Trang reached below the register and produced the machete that was never more than a few seconds from his side, placing it with a flat clank on the counter, just next to the candy bars, as if tendering a counteroffer.

"You leave," Trang Yang said with unwavering rage.

"I see you again, I cut head off."



3. THE UNTOUCHABLES

"What else? Have we discussed the untouchables?"

In a diner booth eight blocks away, Sergeant Stephen Berquist sat across from Officer Jimmy Rango, whose first week on the LAPD was now observed by an uneaten slice of coconut cream pie on the table between them. Rango looked up and shrugged. Jimmy was Stephen's sister-in-law's brother-in-law, a young guy, not the brightest, but family nonetheless. Stephen had solemnly promised his wife that he'd take the rookie under his wing.

Berquist continued. "'Untouchable' as in 'those-that-cannot-be-arrested'?"

"Celebrities?" Jimmy finally asked.

"Celebrities? Yeah, all celebrities are completely off-limits from prosecution."

Rango continued to stare.

"That was a joke, Jimmy. Seriously, fuck them. Celebrities are a treat to arrest. I'm talking about the people that cannot be arrested under any circumstances."

"Who's that?"

"There's three groups of untouchables. One: diplomatic envoys," he said, counting off with an index finger. "There's a certain kind of card this person carries. It's small and orange. Make sure it's paper and not laminated, and make sure it's embossed. Run your thumb over it," he said, jutting out his own thumb and momentarily pantomiming a gun shape.

"Two: the mayor. That includes his chief of staff, deputy chief of staff, and director of communications. Learn their names. If confronted by any of these guys, you freeze the situation and call dispatch for further instruction."

Jimmy nodded, his lips parted. Stephen realized it wouldn't take much effort to force the younger man's face down into the pie. He could probably tell his wife it'd been a hazing ritual.

"Three: Trang Yang."

"That's that gang, right?"

"A gang? No. Listen, Jimmy. It's one man. Trang Yang. That's his name."

"One man?"

"Trang is a Chinese guy. Comes to America in 2000. First week in town, he's waiting for a bus, accidentally gets caught up in some demonstration for Mexican rights or something. Wrong place, wrong time. Some of our guys mace him and get him in the skull with a riot baton. Sucks to be him. Big class-action settlement. Fast-forward one year. The poor schmuck is out driving around with his wife, and *blam!* He catches a slug in the face. This time it's crossfire from a robbery 200 feet away, but the bullet's one of ours. Cosmic coincidence. The only reason the media didn't turn the whole thing into 9/11 is because it happened at 10:30 at night, and the next morning actually *was* 9/11. But we—the whole department, all of us—dodged a mighty shit storm. If anything ever, ever, ever happens to this guy again, at least by our hand, the whole thing's gonna turn into World War III. Trang got an expedited \$2.1 million, a record settlement. Since then he's off-limits."

For the first time since he'd donned the blue, Jimmy made something close to an expression of thoughtful contemplation.

"This is official policy," Stephen said, "although you'll never see it written down."

6. THE SERVERS

In his youth, Nick Skirmopoulos had been a boxer. He was a top-heavy, broad-shouldered Greek with huge meaty fists that he liked to pound and mash into people's heads. He'd only quit the ring after earning a costly reputation for rupturing the eardrums of his opponents. Nick took a job as a process server because the money was good, the work never dried up, and he got the opportunity to brawl free of legal or financial repercussions. In the counties of LA, Orange, Riverside, and Ventura, he was the man when it came time to serve papers to the ornery and pugnacious.

At high noon on Tuesday, Nick parked his Buick in front of Trang's Vermont Street station and popped the trunk. Most servers of process used props to accomplish

the job. Their cars hid troves of disguises: delivery-service jackets and caps, generic uniforms, wigs, fake beards, sunglasses, and hats. Although Nick proudly saw himself in the grand lineage of process servers before him, subterfuge wasn't his style. His only tools were two stainless-steel saucepans he'd bought at a dollar store three years earlier.

"Where's that motherfucker Trang Yang?" Nick yelled out, banging his saucepans together. He marched into the service station barking at full volume, the legal papers tucked into his belt like a pirate's scabbard.

"Trang Yang is a cheapskate cockadoodle ass-licker motherfuck!" he bellowed. Nick stomped up and down the two aisles of the Food Mart. He crashed his saucepans together with every step.

"Trang!"—*clank, crash*—"Trang!"

From the behind the counter, Rupert, baffled and shell-shocked, said, "Sir?" He had just raced from the Hoover Street station to work another eight-hour shift.

Nick spun on his heels. "You Yang?"

Rupert stared. "Sir?"

Nick dropped his pots on the counter with a clatter and produced the legal papers. He read the plastic RUPERT nametag and grunted.

"I've been to six Chevrex today, pal. I don't have time for your games. Prove you're Rupert."

"Sir?"

"Don't 'sir' me. Wallet. Now."

"Sir?"

"Give it to me!" Nick roared. "That is a direct order!"

The back-office door exploded open, scattering a row of Winston and Salem cigarette packs to the floor.

"Who you," said Trang. Nick found himself facing a thin Asian man. He was nearly a head shorter than Nick and had high, severe cheekbones and a mop of matte black hair flecked with gray. He stood with his hands at

his side, glowering with deep concentration as if he and the process server were ancient enemies.

Amused, Nick said, "Who *you*?"

"Mr. Trang," Rupert whispered, more as a distress signal than an explanation.

"Aha," Nick said. "We..."

Trang stepped forward and snatched the summons papers from Nick's fist. Nick had never had his quarries preemptively grab their own papers.

"Uh. You just got served, homie."

Trang hadn't yet taken his eyes off him. "What this."

"A lawsuit, Jack. Big fat one."

"Who sue."

"*You* sued."

"No one sue me."

"Oh yes. Nadir Imaging Services sue you. Big-time."

"No. They not sue," Trang said, his voice an unnerving staccato of self-assurance.

Nick folded his tree-limb arms and smiled.

"And why don't they sue you, little man?"

"Because you make them. You make them drop lawsuit."

"And why would I do that, little man?"

"Because I make you make them drop lawsuit."

"And how do you plan on doing that?"

"I have you home address."

Nick stared a moment in disbelief.

"No, you don't."

"It on you driver license."

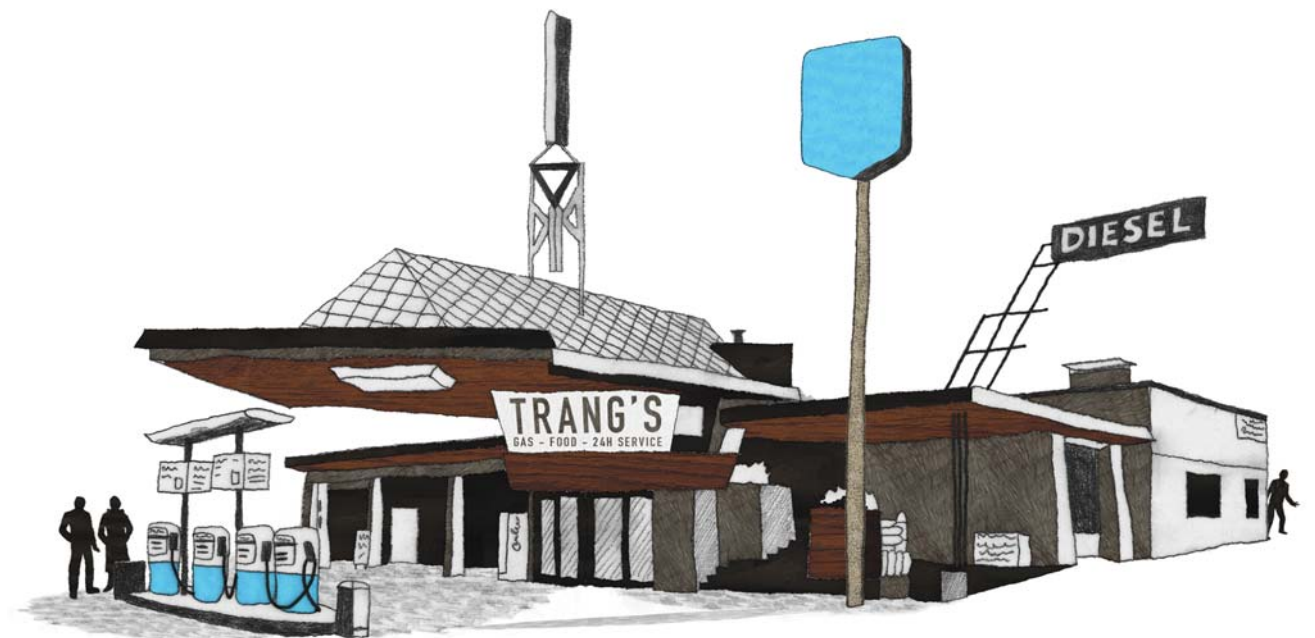
"You don't have my driver's license."

"It in you wallet."

"Yeah," Nick said, unconsciously placing a hand on his pocket. "That is where it is."

"And now you give me wallet."

Nick leaned against the counter and smiled nervously. *☺*





DOs

THIS MONTH'S DOs & DON'Ts BY
BRETT GELMAN & JANICZA BRAVO



Who knew somebody could make eating Popeye's pig slop look completely adorable?



This is why everyone should have sex with a black woman once. Even if she lives in the broom closet of a bodega.



These guys are like if Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire were henchmen for the Riddler.



Gucci loafers, lily whites, life at sea. This is what I want to grow up to be. Minus the blue bracelet. It makes people wonder whether or not you just got out of the hospital.



I don't understand why people would want to get rid of pigeons. They don't bother no one.
—Mike Tyson

DRIFTER
★
COMPTON • CALIFORNIA



DON'Ts

THIS MONTH'S DOs & DON'Ts BY
BRETT GELMAN & JANICZA BRAVO



Unless this pig is a member of the GOP, this really bums us out.



This man may have singlehandedly ruined tits.



I got this so that I'll always remember that I'm a human garbage can.



If someone beat off into a Bible and put it on the bookshelf for six months and then opened it back up, that smell would look like this guy.



Nothing gets the party bumpin' more than a double overdose.



Turntable Lab

Dijital Fix

AC Gears

W Hotels

Apple

ShopHex.com



DOs

THIS MONTH'S DOs & DON'Ts BY
BRETT GELMAN & JANICZA BRAVO



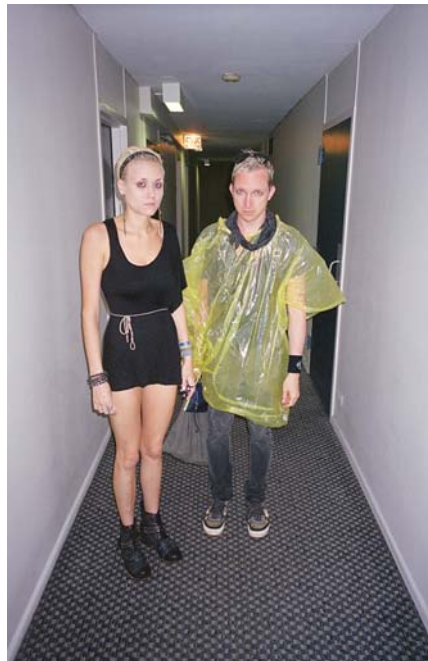
This is my aunt Fu. "Fu" means fortune and wealth. She sells knives on the street near a bus stop. She used to sell fried dog near the airport.



This might sound strange, but after I take this picture of you and you take that picture of me can you come over here and roller-skate over my balls?



This is the girl I want to re-lose my virginity to. I bet her cigarette breath smells like puppies.



Just because you and your brother were sold into slavery before the fall of the Berlin Wall doesn't mean you can't still have a good time at the office party.



Whether she was just kicked out of her parents' house for trying to pawn her great-grandma's Holocaust survivor bracelet or is on her way to a very well-prepared weeklong Oxycontin binge, she is doing it with aplomb.



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DON'Ts

THIS MONTH'S DOs & DON'Ts BY
BRETT GELMAN & JANICZA BRAVO



Nothing like a good garden piss to really drive home the fact that you're going to die alone.



I finally found a stoop that goes perfectly with my whore shoes, sluttos, and dump-truck smell.



I would have only one wish for this genie: "Please get your hard-on off my thigh."



I am here to teach the children of the world how to forgive. As in forgive me. As in forgive me for trying to fuck them.



Everything about my week in Thailand was great: green discharge from my penis, burning sensation when urinating, cupcakes, rashes, lumps, blisters, and sores on my dick area.

*English Laundry*TM
BY CHRISTOPHER WICKS

chair courtesy of SULTANChic

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 AND BETTER SPECIALTY STORES.

IT'S MY PARTY AND I'LL CRY IF I WANT TO

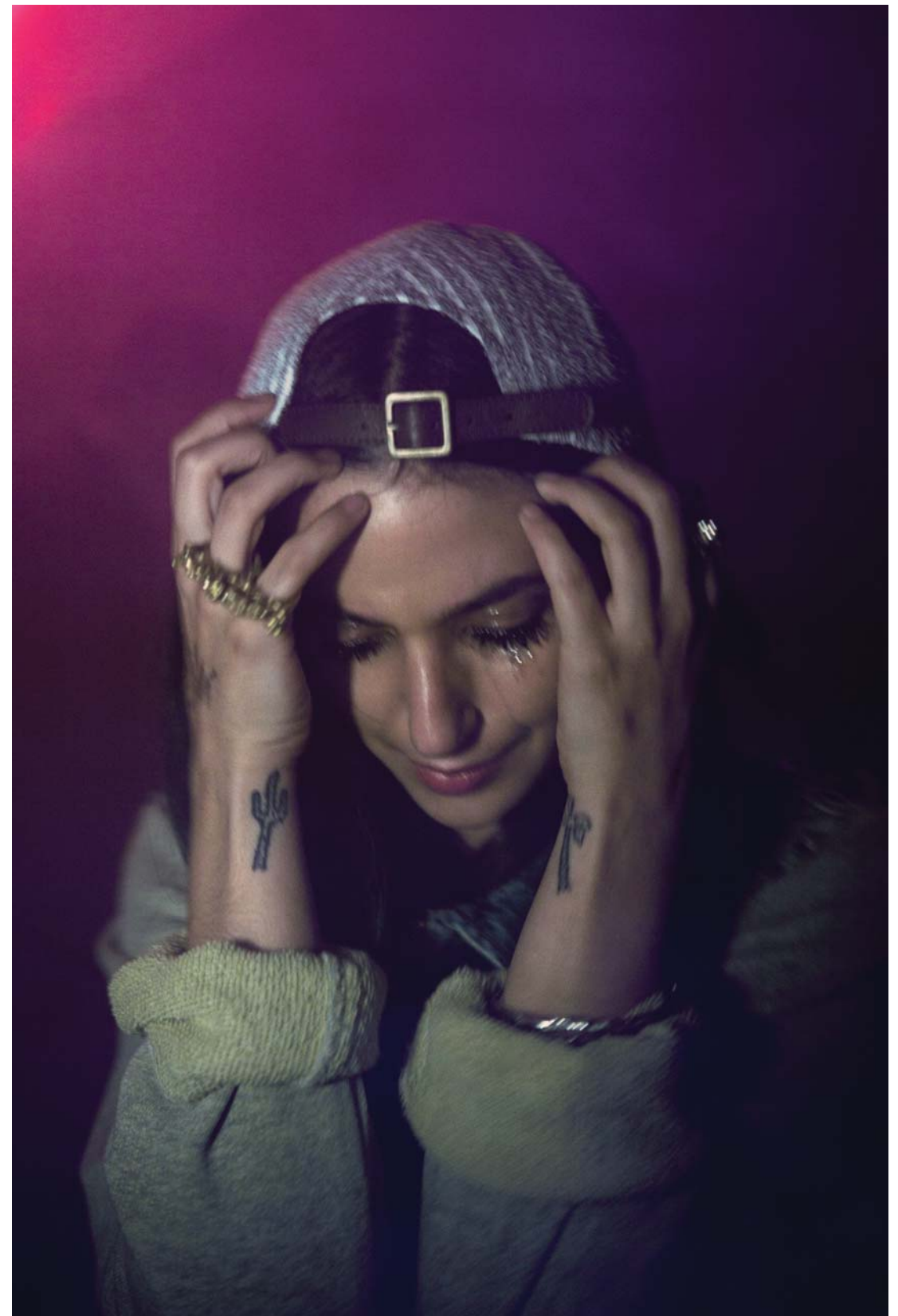
PHOTOS BY FRANCESCO NAZARDO
STYLIST: IAN BRADLEY

*Photographer's assistant: Nicolo Bagnati
Hair: Darine Sengseevong
Makeup: Jenny Kanavaros
Models: Amanny, Amanda, Fania, Isabelle, and Laura
Special thanks to Home Sweet Home, The Jane Hotel,
Westway, and The Standard Hotel*



Won Hundred jacket, Gerlan Jeans dress, Rankin for Swatch watch

Joyrich jacket, Nettle Kent bracelet and ring, Eugenia Kim for Timo Weiland hat





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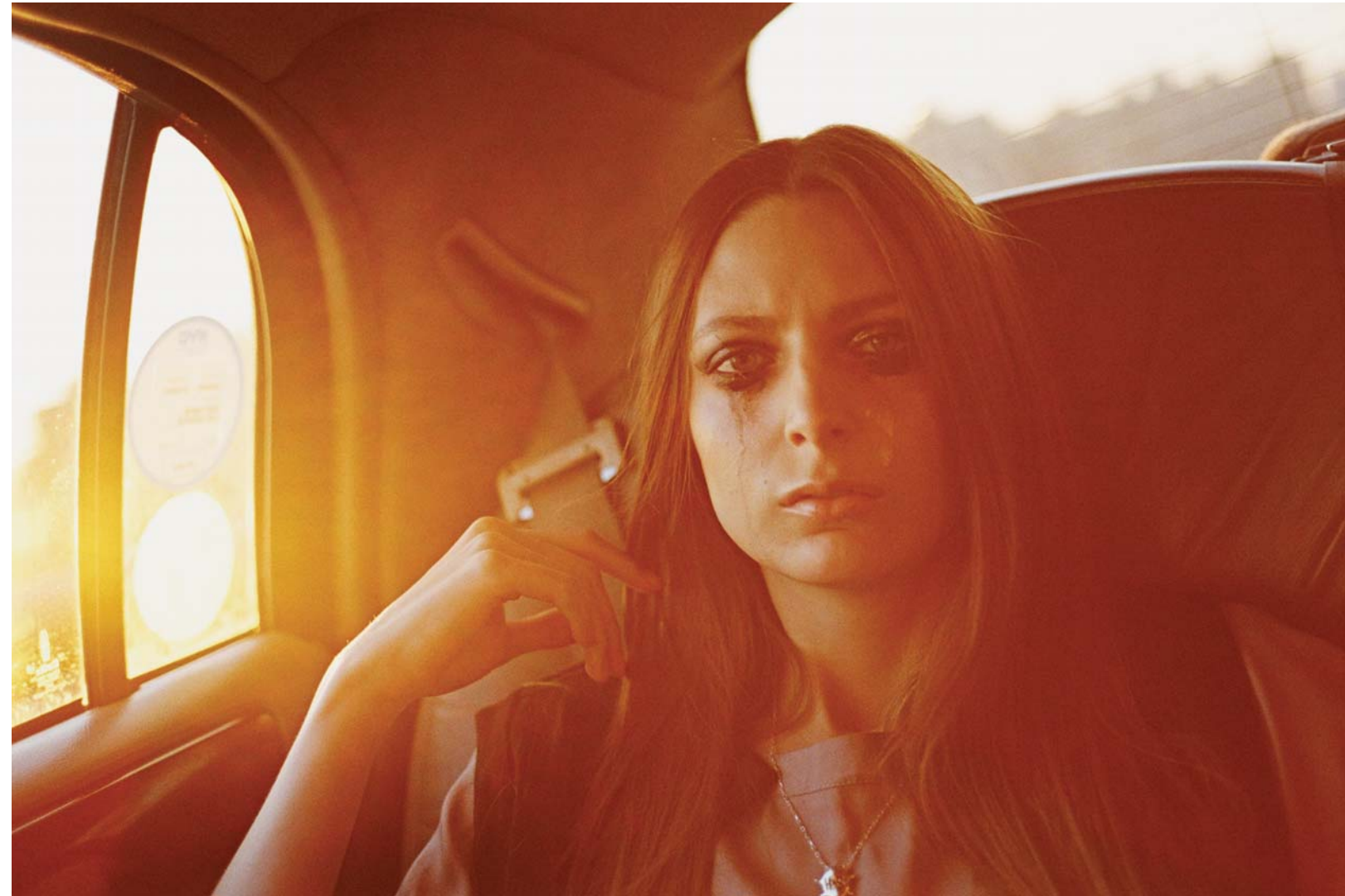
Holy Tee shirt, Richard Chai LOVE dress, Jeremy Scott for Swatch watch, Nettie Kent ring



Nomia shirt, Jeremy Scott for Swatch watch, Spragwerks ring, Bevel necklace



THIS PAGE: Amy Winehouse for Fred Perry shirt, Mary Meyer dress
OPPOSITE PAGE: Won Hundred dress, RAD by Rad Hourani tunic, Bevel necklace



IL-SUNG SONGS

PHOTOS BY BEN RITTER

STYLIST: ANNETTE
LAMOTHE-RAMOS

*Stylist's assistant: Miyako Bellizzi
Hair: Darine Sengseevong
Makeup: Ruico Oshika
Models: Alyssa, Andrew, Angela,
Annie, Beryl, Ethan, Jason, and Maia
Special thanks to U2 Karaoke and
Planet Rose*

*Surface to Air cardigan, Rogan dress, Malaya necklace
H&M ring, Diesel jeans, Converse sneakers*



Coogi sweater, Mavi jeans



Reyn Spooner shirt, 55DSL jeans, Ray Ban glasses, Casio G-Shock watch



Wildfox dress, The Sock Man tights, Jeffrey Campbell shoes, Forever 21 bracelets



Rogan dress, American Apparel socks, Jeffrey Campbell shoes, vintage rings

WE GOT THE POWER
GOT THE GLORY
JUST SAY YOU NEED IT
AND IF YOU NEED IT



Made Me Mark McNairy jacket, Ben Sherman shirt



Holy Tee shirt, Stussy leggings H&M bracelets, Human Potential pants, Alalaya necklace, H&M bracelet and rings



Diesel jacket and shirt



Beta Unit jacket, Wildfox sweater, Agent Provocateur pants, Forever 21 bracelets

UNVEILED

Inside the Homes and Lives of Saudi Women

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY ZIYAH GAFIC

Forty-five percent of Saudi Arabia's population is female. Ironically, these ladies control an estimated \$11.9 billion of the nation's wealth but are denied rights that most women take for granted: They are forbidden from voting (until 2015), can't drive, and require written permission from their male "guardians" (usually a father or husband) if they wish to travel abroad or open a business. It's no wonder they are often stereotyped as faceless, voiceless shadows without control over their own destinies.

Offered a unique opportunity, I was invited into a world rarely visited by outsiders—one that is usually considered off-limits and impenetrable—to lift the *abaya* and *niqab* and meet the women underneath.

Watch Ziyah meet these Saudi women in a new episode of Picture Perfect, coming soon to VICE.com.



Dr. Fawzia Akhdar, retired member of the ministry of education: "The Saudi woman is a chancellor, judge, leader, and mother. She can shake the world with her left hand and rock her child with her right, as Napoleon said. The rest of the world views the Saudi woman differently because she is covered and wearing a hijab, so she must be oppressed. But the opposite is true. The Saudi woman is like the rest of the women of the world, or even stronger because she has had to fight to reach where she is."



Najat Bager, former school principal who now writes for various newspapers and internet publications: "Westerners must change the way they relate to us in the media. They must write the truth about Saudi women—and not just the bad women. We have women who are working as directors in television and editors at newspapers. It's not like before."



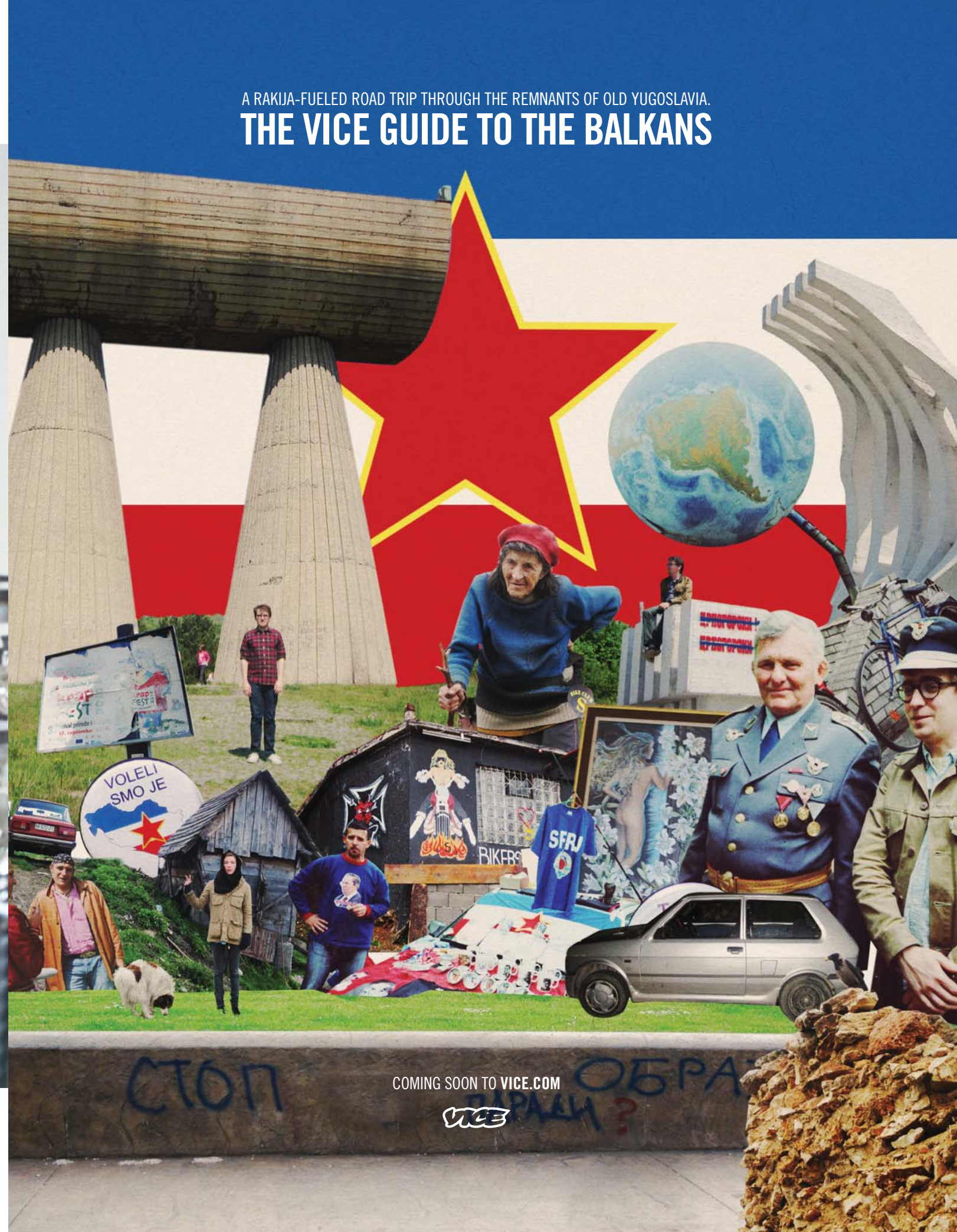
Salwa Shaker, broadcaster: "When I started working as a broadcaster you could count us on one hand—perhaps three or four—but now we have more than 20 or 25 female broadcasters. What's important is that the kingdom and the government gave priority to the development of human abilities, whether of a man or of a woman."



Faima Almotawa, dentistry student in her internship year: "The world should know that we don't live in a desert and that we don't ride camels. Our women are not slaves at home. We go to work, study, and decide our own pathway. Our challenges have never been about the Saudi government—it's the culture. People can't accept that women can be in line with men. Or at least they couldn't accept it, until now."



Deema Barghouthi, child-speech pathologist: "Saudi women are just like any other women in the world. They are nice wives, they are kind to their kids, and they are ambitious. We want to learn and get higher education to serve our country."



A RAKIJA-FUELED ROAD TRIP THROUGH THE REMNANTS OF OLD YUGOSLAVIA.
THE VICE GUIDE TO THE BALKANS

COMING SOON TO VICE.COM



ОБРАТ
ВАРАЦИ?

CARBON COPIES

Monette and Mady Are the Swingingest Twins in Paris

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY MAJA DANIELS





The first time I saw Monette and Mady they were nonchalantly strolling around Paris's 11th arrondissement, where I used to live. Identical twins always attract a peculiar type of attention, but these gals were walking mirrors. Their uniformity was uncanny.

Over the following months, then years, I kept seeing them around. They were always dressed exactly alike in just-off-the-rack outfits that were expensive, tasteful, and never the same. Every time I spotted them they appeared to be running late for some important function or meeting, their hurried gestures and body language perfectly synchronous.

I'd always wanted to talk to the twins, to find out what their deal was, but a good opportunity never presented itself. Then, on a random Sunday morning years after my first encounter, I ran into them at my local produce market and asked if I could take their portraits. They agreed almost immediately.

I soon learned that Monette and Mady were very familiar with modeling and acting. They've appeared in French films such as *Amélie* and *Paris Je T'Aime*, starred as dancers in a

George Michael video, and posed for numerous advertisements and art projects.

The more I spoke with the twins, the more I wanted to know about their symbiotic existence. I discovered that they've lived together their whole lives, never married or had kids, collectively refer to themselves as "I" instead of "we," finish each other's sentences so quickly that it often sounds like only one person is speaking, and follow the same daily routines, including eating duplicate meals in identical portions. After we became better acquainted, I asked if could document their daily lives indefinitely. At first, they couldn't fathom why someone would want to do such a thing, but eventually they came around.

VICE: Have you always dressed identically?

Monette: When we were very young, our mother would dress us in different outfits to make it easier to tell us apart. Later, when we started dressing alike, she didn't like it.

Mady: She always made a point of giving us different gifts and treating us as separate individuals.

Monette: But it's fun to wear identical clothes! It amuses us to see people's reactions on the street, they turn around and give us strange looks—

Mady: —because we still dress alike at our age. Uniqueness might be important to singular people, but it's not to us.

What do you mean by "singular people"?

Mady: Singular people are those who are not twins. What I mean is, for example, if a singular person sees two people dressed the same, it's a shock to them.

Monette: We're not singular people, to us being and dressing alike is part of our personality. It would create an imbalance if one of us would be dressed casually while the other would be dressed up and wearing high heels.

Mady: It would feel like wearing both outfits at the same time. We are very balanced so we can't have that!

Does it annoy you when people stare?

Mady: We make fun of them too!

"Uniqueness might be important to singular people, but it's not to us."

Monette: Once, three boys in their 20s passed us on the street, all dressed the same in jeans and similar jackets. They made some ridiculous comment about us dressing alike.

Mady: We caught up with them and said, "At least we are aware of it."

Monette: Most people don't realize it but everyone looks more or less the same these days.

Have either of you ever had boyfriends?

Mady: It's quite difficult to explain all this; a twin will always be a twin even if she gets married. She will always be attached to her other half. You carry your twin with you all the time.

Monette: We knew—I say this with modesty—everything about being in a couple long before singular people our age



did. To find a soul mate is extremely difficult for a singular person, it might happen just once in a lifetime.

Are you implying that the two of you share romantic relationships?

Monette: What do you mean?

Let me reformulate that question: Has someone ever fallen in love with both of you?

Mady: [giggles] You will have to ask them that!

Have you ever fallen in love with the same person?

Monette: Oh, now you are asking questions we won't answer!

You once told me that some people are superstitious around you, that they give you offerings.

Mady: Yes! To a certain African community, twins are a disturbing element so they protect themselves by giving us a coin. They also make a wish so it's a votive offering.

Monette: They are obliged to do so. If we refuse they'll say, "No, no, I *must* give you a piece!"

Mady: About a year ago, when we were waiting for the bus, a young African woman passed us. She smiled and said hello, then retraced her steps and said, "Is it OK if I give you a coin?" We asked her why and finally found out.

Monette: So now we accept their offerings because we don't want to disrespect their culture.

Do you ever spend time apart?

Monette: We do most things together, but it happens. For example, one might go to the shop while the other takes care of the laundry.

Mady: We don't really have a need to be apart, which singular people have a hard time understanding. Whenever we're out on different missions we keep in touch over the phone.

Monette: People tell us we're lucky because we can be more efficient; you could argue that we can be in two places at the same time. *WCB*



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A FEW FROM 'STORIES'

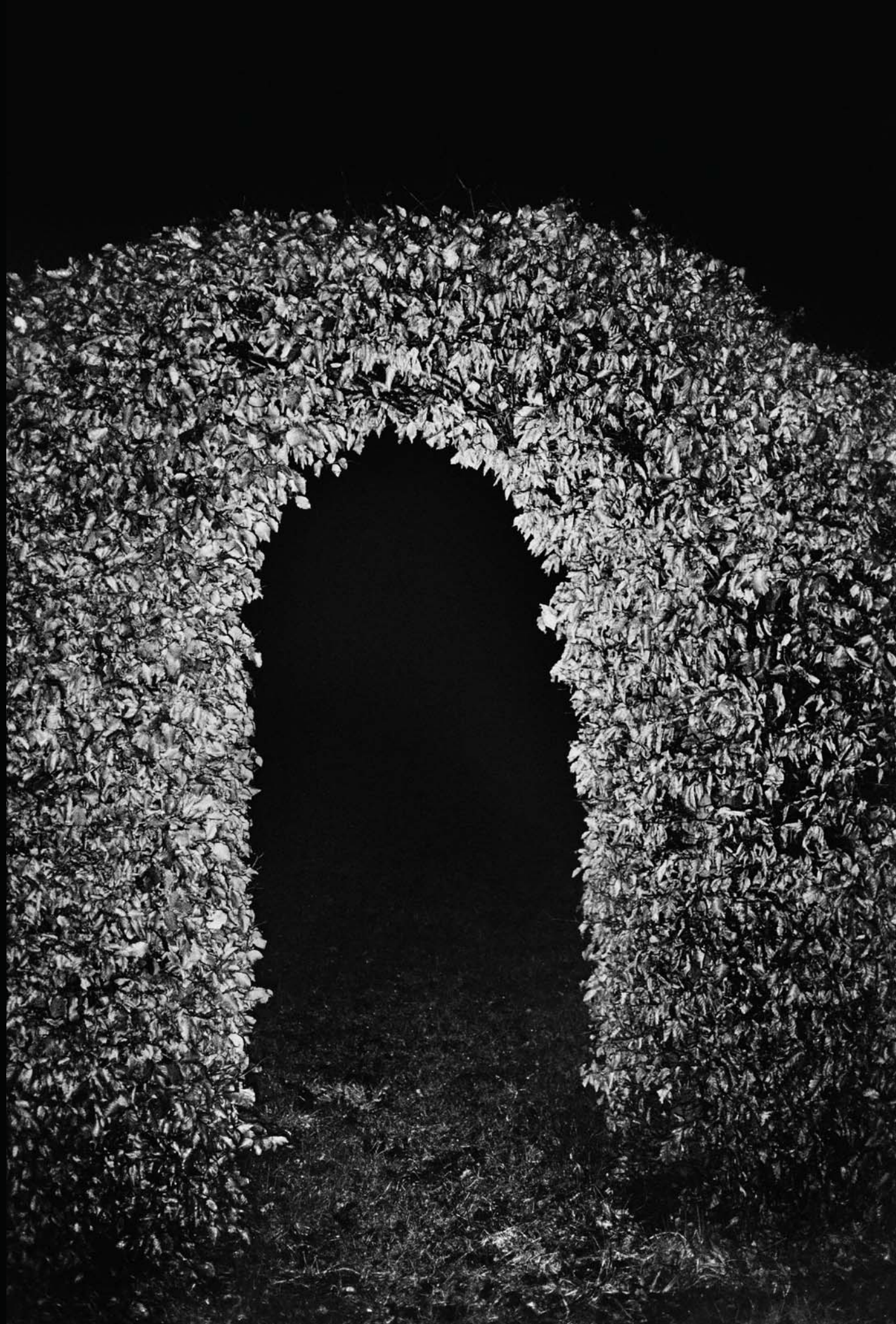
PHOTOS BY JACOB AUE SOBOL

From 2008 to 2011, award-winning Magnum photographer Jacob Aue Sobol wandered around Tokyo, Bangkok, and his native Copenhagen, taking photographs for his first collection, Stories. Aptly named, the images contained within transform everyday interactions with humans, objects, and at least one scruffy kitty into intense, moody compositions that make everything he shoots look like a snapshot from some harrowing—or uplifting—WWII tale (we mean this in the best of ways). Or, in Jacob's words: "In my constant search for closeness and intimacy, I photograph humans fixed in their play, passion, despair, and exhaustion. And in between, the landscapes, shapes, and textures that surround us. In Stories I invite us to rise above our day-to-day security and to relate to our own body and existence."

If we're lucky, Stories (and a second book from Jacob entitled Home) will be available soon. A release date has not been set for either.









PEELING ONIONTOWN

Unraveling the Many Layers of New York's Most Reclusive—and Feared—Community

BY AARON LAKE SMITH
PHOTOS BY NADIA SHIRA COHEN

A young man angrily kicks one of the many piles of trash that are strewn about Ontiontown.

There are certain places that, by their very nature, seem forsaken. Afghanistan is one. Another lies an hour and a half north of New York City outside the bucolic little Hudson Valley hamlet of Dover Plains. It's a place called Oniontown. Despite its name, Oniontown isn't an actual town—it's more of a mountainside enclave filled with a haphazard collection of run-down trailers on a dead-end dirt road. The settlement has a notorious reputation that conjures up words like *hill-billy*, *inbred*, and *drugs*. Residents have a hard time finding jobs in town because of their addresses. There are stories about people throwing onions onto the court when the local high school basketball team plays away games. While in the past 100 years women attained suffrage, segregation was ended, and civil rights were established that protected minorities, the century-old stigma toward Oniontown has remained remarkably intact.

In Dover Plains, the very word *Oniontown* causes people to frown, as if confronted with a foul smell or some unpleasant, long-repressed memory. Historically, Oniontowners seem to have always been thought of as somehow “less than” people in Dover—gap-toothed hillbillies who dwell in a kind of medieval mountain darkness. “Subhuman,” as a few locals put it. Even Dover's post office, less than a mile away, doesn't consider Oniontown to be worthy of receiving mail.

No one, not even the residents of the settlement, can definitively say where Oniontown's peculiar name originated. Some believe it's a derivation of *Youngintown*, on account of people in the settlement having so many children. Others say it's because people there smelled like onions. A third faction suggests that *onion* was once slang for “uneducated.”

In the 1800s, poor white tenant farmers settled in the area. The earliest mention I could find of Oniontown appeared in the 1908 book *Historic Dover*: “One mile south of Dover Plains is a little settlement, composed of two classes—males that don't do anything and females that bring up the children and take the business off the old man's hands.” The little smattering of trailers and homesteads seems to have always held an inexplicable draw for outsiders. In 1947, International News Service reporter James L. Kilgallen ventured up to Oniontown and penned a trio of articles about the outpost with headlines like “Escape from Atomic Age: Real Life Tobacco Road 100 Miles from Broadway,” “No Radio or Auto Disturbs Hillbillies of Colony, a Century Behind Times,” and “Woman of 39 has 13 Children.” In his articles, Kilgallen made fun of Oniontowners for being scared of cameras and not being well-versed in Shakespeare, while simultaneously praising their simple, pastoral way of life: “Picture a community without an electric light, without a radio, without a movie house, without a bathtub, where the kiddies rarely get to eighth grade in school, where illiteracy abounds... rough hard-bitten Oniontown is primitive.”

In the final piece of his series, Kilgallen and his photographer drive away from Oniontown, past lavish country estates, and the photographer invokes the noble savage, saying, “I doubt if a lot of rich people who live in those estates are happier than the people we saw in Oniontown. You don't find Oniontown worrying about income taxes or the atomic



Ethel Smith
with her great-
grandson.

bomb.” Twelve years later Kilgallen returned to the settlement for a follow-up piece, brilliantly titled, “Quaint Ontiontown Still Hides Behind Its Patched Rag Curtain.” The community still didn’t have electricity.

What was the root of this fascination and fear of rural poverty? Where does a bad reputation come from?

For most of its history, the residents of surrounding areas quietly judged the Ontiontowners but left them alone up on the mountain. “Most locals know there’s no point in going up there,” a state police investigator told me. But recently, the demographics of the region have been changing. New York City homebuyers have plowed through Westchester and Putnam into traditionally working-class Dutchess County, ever in pursuit of cheaper, more bucolic upstate idylls. And in the past few years, suburban youth have taken to venturing up to gawk at the supposedly inbred hillbillies who’ve been popularized by urban myth. In early 2008, a shaky video called “Ontiontown Adventures” appeared on YouTube. In it, three young jokers drive up a dirt road in an SUV at dusk, pretending like they’re reenacting a scene from *Deliverance* while commenting on the “little inbred hick village.” A guy in the backseat sarcastically says, “We’re gonna die.” The one in the passenger seat raises a pickaxe and says, “I’m gonna take one of those fuckers with me” as they blast twangy country music to pump themselves up. Once they cross the invisible border into Ontiontown, everything seems to take on a preternatural significance. They roll down the windows and snap camera-phone photos of the trailers and trash. One guy spots a chicken on the dirt road and shouts, “Oh my God, look—a fucking chicken!” Then the video begins to slow down as the camera zooms in on a shadowy figure standing out in the woods. “That’s the sketchiest person I’ve ever seen in my life,” one of the boys says. Another shouts, “Look, I think there’s someone in the window!” This is followed by a couple *Blair Witch* slow-motion shots of other people standing in the woods. In the end, nothing really happens except a few terrible jokes and even worse laughter, concluding with one of the kids saying, “Didn’t they all look dazed? It’s like they are oblivious to the rest of the world.”

Later that summer, perhaps inspired by the bro-trio’s now-popular YouTube video, two teenagers from the wealthy town of Mahopac ventured into Ontiontown with a camcorder to poke fun at its residents. They weren’t so lucky. Ontiontowners wielding bricks and rocks attacked their car, and both of them ended up in the hospital. The incident made national news, adding to the place’s infamy. The situation was exacerbated by state police investigator Eric Schaeffer’s ominous warning to the press: “Anybody that doesn’t belong there, anybody that’s not a resident, just stay out of Ontiontown.”

All of the commotion only served to make people more interested. Adventure-seeking teenagers, inspired by videos with titles like “A Day in an Inbred Village” and “Return to Fishkill,” arrived in droves, undeterred by the fact that their excursions had a good chance of being followed by a trip to the ER. In one clip, a teenage interloper’s camcorder points at the car’s floorboard, and all you can hear is girls screaming at the top of their lungs: “Oh my God! Fuck off!

Leave us alone!” Below the clip, the video poster explained, “Some guy started chasing us down the road in his car and they blocked me and threw a rock at my windshield... these people are physco [sic].”

Ontiontown became a kind of real-life haunted house for bored suburban teens, albeit one with serious consequences. One girl got a brick to the side of her head. Car windows of Ontiontown’s unwanted “fans” were routinely smashed, their passengers dragged out and beaten. Others have been chased around by cars full of Ontiontowners, careening their vehicles into trees or escarpments of rock while trying to escape. Eventually, the local police contacted Google and had many of the videos pulled off YouTube, but the damage had already been done. Ontiontown had gone viral. One police investigator told me, “Kids were coming from all over—Westchester, Fishkill, Cortlandt Manor. When we would pull them over they’d say they were lost, but they’d have Google Maps directions to Ontiontown in the backseat.”

Another investigator asked me, “What would you do if someone came into your neighborhood and started doing donuts and making fun of where you live and calling you names? People came in and messed with them, and so they reacted and then other people reacted back and it just snowballed from there. It wasn’t local kids. YouTube perpetuated it.”

What lies at the heart of this dark star? What was the root of this fascination and fear of rural poverty? Where does a bad reputation come from? I set out to get some answers.

I started my journey in Poughkeepsie, a glum city in that upstate Rust Belt sort of way. I met Betsy Kopstein Stuts, executive director of the Dutchess County Historical Society, in a centuries-old house near the center of the decayed and boarded-up downtown. Unpaid volunteers—elderly gentlemen and college girls—circulated in and out of her dusty office, looking like movie extras as they carefully catalogued centuries of Poughkeepsie artifacts. Betsy sat on the other side of a massive desk cluttered with papers, seeming bemused by my interest in so marginal a place as Ontiontown.

“We just don’t have a lot of facts. There are stories,” she said. What kind of stories? “That they’re inbred. That they built a Planned Parenthood nearby there in Dover because the girls out there were getting pregnant at 12 and 13. That Ontiontowners are ten to a house and the police won’t go there. If you try to go out and talk to them, they’ll slip out the back and scatter into the woods. You can rarely do any interviewing with them or get any kind of story. That’s why there’s so little known about them—they don’t let anyone in.”

I asked Betsy, a native of Poughkeepsie, what she had heard growing up. “It was the kind of place you didn’t want to go at night,” she said. “You went with a group, never alone. And you definitely didn’t go in there unprotected.” Betsy explained that she believed the community had chosen their own isolation—that they had shut themselves off to the world and paid the price of stigmatization. “The relationship between Dover and Ontiontown is terrible to this day,” she continued, “If you move into a neighborhood and there’s one person there who doesn’t mow their lawn and doesn’t paint their house and leaves trash outside, how do you feel about that person? You reflect and say, I wish that person weren’t here.” But is it fair the way people talk about Ontiontown? “No, it’s definitely not fair. But can you stop people from talking? Can you stop rumors? You just can’t.”

My “access” to Ontiontown originated with a common form of journalistic chicanery—the friend of a friend. To be honest, I had some pretty serious reservations about asking a group of people who had basically fought a guerrilla war for their privacy if I could come up into their homes to poke my nose around and ask them scrutinizing questions. But somehow, as the journalist always does when thinking of the paycheck at the end of the rainbow, I managed to suppress my misgivings and watched my fingers dial the telephone number. To my surprise, Patty Smith and her mother-in-law, Ethel, the oldest living resident and “Queen Bee” of Ontiontown, told me to come on up. By 11 AM, I was going up the infamous dirt road to the settlement.

Just through the cattle gate, past a flurry of NO TRESPASSING signs, stood a burned-out house, like a warning: Beware all ye who enter. The gnarled, charred husk of a structure had twisted into itself like something from an Edvard Munch painting. Ontiontown proper was just a few steps ahead. It was as bleakly unimpressive as I had expected: just a steep little dirt road pocked with a couple of trailers that overlooked the entire valley—the Metro North train tracks, highway, and cliffs beyond. A couple of little kids played in the junk-strewn dirt yards. I told one of the little girls that I was looking for Ethel, and she ran inside a trailer. A pit bull eyed me suspiciously from across the road as I waited under the eaves. After a while, the door creaked open to reveal a tough-looking kid, with a flat-brimmed hat and a big belt buckle adorned with a marijuana leaf. “Ethel doesn’t want to talk right now,” he said. “She’s not feeling good.” He glowered in my direction.

I asked when I should return, and he shrugged and muttered something about staying away from Ontiontown, shutting the door in my face. I walked up the stark little hill to Patty’s trailer, but no one was home. After standing around on the dirt steppe for a bit, surveying the nearby pit-bull kennels and skeletal mountain tree line, I headed back to Dover to meet Renny Abrams, the town judge, at his bustling country store and gas station. Abrams, kindly and white-haired, bore an uncanny resemblance to an elderly Johnny Cash. He also had Cash’s nebulous politics—after an hour of talking to him I couldn’t tell whether he was right- or left-leaning. As a town judge and a business owner, he had a lot of experience dealing with the Ontiontowners.

“When I was a teenager they were always bullied,” he said. “I remember experiencing some situations where a certain girl would be deemed ‘less than accepted’ because of her Ontiontown status. But they, more than anybody, supported me when I started this store. They shopped here, they were our friends—to this day I am indebted to them. They’re not looking for something to set them higher in some social arena. They’re genuine. They’re real.”

In small towns and insular communities, news spreads quietly and rumors proliferate amid the shadows. Abrams described how isolated events that were somehow related to Ontiontown had stacked atop one another, reinforcing people’s prejudices. “Someone gets arrested for drugs—‘Ontiontown is a drug den.’ Someone’s arrested for killing a deer out of season—‘Oh, they’re lawless up there.’” In the end, he concluded, it was unlikely that Ontiontown could ever rectify its horrible reputation. “How do you get it all back? How do you get out from under it? How do you heal Ontiontown?” He sighed. “I don’t think you can. It’s going to be that way forever. After all the people are dead and they bulldoze the place, the whole mystery will still be there.”



OPPOSITE PAGE: A young boy practices shooting his pellet gun, perhaps to ensure that he’ll be ready if YouTubers invade his land.

One of the many signs warning strangers to keep out of Ontiontown.

Dick Smith’s pigs chowing down on some donuts.



THIS PAGE:
Desaray
Duncan in
her bedroom.

**OPPOSITE
PAGE:** Dick
Smith plays
with his
granddaughter
Hannah.



Later that afternoon, I ventured back up to Ontiontown and, as I approached, saw smoke coming from the stovepipe of Patty and Dick’s trailer. I knocked and was greeted by a hard-looking middle-aged woman wearing a flannel shirt and big spectacles. Patty welcomed me inside. A little Christmas tree was set up in the corner, and a massive woodstove kept the place tropically warm. A TV in the living room played *Big Daddy* via satellite. It was utterly normal. She introduced me to Desaray, her 19-year-old granddaughter, who had dropped out of school and was crashing with them for the time being. We sat on the couch, and Patty shared photos of her extended family—a lot of her relatives were in jail or had passed away. There were pictures of Desaray’s mother, Bambi, who was serving time for burglary. “We’re hoping she’ll get out before the New Year,” she said. Desaray’s 17-year-old brother, Joey, was also behind bars for an unrelated burglary. After perusing her photos, Patty brought over the stack of the day’s mail and retrieved a thick envelope, a prison letter from Joey. Inside were two long, handwritten missives, and the granddaughter and grandmother sat down to read them.

“Awww. That little shit. It seems like he’s doing good. Listen to this,” Desaray said.

How is OT? Any drama? It’s OT! Of course there’s drama! Laugh out loud. Patty continued reading her own letter, looking morose. “He wants to know what we had for Thanksgiving dinner.”

At dusk, a truck pulled up in the dirt outside. It was Dick Smith, Patty’s husband, fresh off his 12-hour shift spreading manure. In his late 50s, Dick was a proud, tough man, born and raised in Ontiontown. I found him outside by a container unit, talking to a guy named Kenny, who

was innocuously holding two vacuum-sealed bags of weed. Kenny chatted about a drug raid that had gone down in town the night before.

“They had dope, crack, meth, everything,” Kenny said. “I kept telling them, when the cops are driving back and forth in front of your house every day, it’s going to go down soon. A lot of bad shit—they’re going away for a long time.”

“Look at you, man.” Dick pointed to the bags. “Oh, it’s just weed. It’s nothing serious.”

With that, Dick retired to the trailer to shave and get cleaned up. Once he was relaxed in his favorite armchair, we spoke about his hometown: “Everyone thinks you’re lower class, no good, second-rate. You get picked on and beat up. They say you’re inbred, and next thing you know you’re fighting with three or four guys. You learn to fight and take care of yourself. I’ve been fighting all my life. My hands and knuckles is scarred and broke from fighting.” I asked him how it had been when he was in school. “The kids pick on you. You grow up watching your back. They come up behind you and punch you in the head. A lot of people hide the fact that they’re from here. The stigma has always been there. My dad remembered it. My grandkids deal with it.”

I felt comfortable enough to bring up the YouTube videos, and Dick was unrepentant about the way these unwelcome visitors had been driven out: “Older people used to run you out with a shotgun here if you weren’t invited. Now if you come in and act right, you’re all right. But if you come here looking for trouble, you’ll get trouble.”

We stopped talking. Dick’s attention diverted to the reality show *Storage Wars* while Patty and Desaray made venison gravy in the kitchen. After the show concluded, Dick changed the channel, stopping on the climax of *Total Recall*—the scene

where Quaid blows up the control room and everyone’s eyes are bugging out of their sockets from decompression and exposure to the Martian atmosphere.

“What’s this?” Patty asked. “*Total Recall*,” Dick said, looking entranced. “They make him believe that the outside world would kill him.”

After everything crumbles, Schwarzenegger and the female lead step out into the sunlight. As the triumphant music is cued, they move together for the final passionate kiss. Dick abruptly changed the channel.

“It’s only on TV,” he scoffed. “What is?” Patty asked. “The happy ending.”

Later that night, Patty gave me a ride in her Jeep back to my motel. Zooming down the dark mountain road with the car heater blasting, she told me that her father hadn’t wanted her to marry Dick because he was from Ontiontown. “A lot of people are prejudiced, and I just don’t understand how they can be,” she said. “You have to get to know the person. You can’t judge them based on where they’re from. It’s gotten worse in the last couple of years.”

When we reached the motel, she wished me goodnight and I got out. Famished, I walked down the main road until I found a place called Four Brothers Pizza Restaurant, apparently the only place in town that was still open. Inside, the restaurant was completely empty. Teenage waitresses paced behind the counter, spraying Windex on countertops and organizing stacks of napkins, trying to look busy for their manager. I sat down at the counter and ordered a beer. I asked two waitresses what they knew about Ontiontown.

“I heard it’s really dangerous,” one said.

“The incest wasn’t at that initial stage,” he explained. “It happened later on down the line, with the first cousins.”

“Two kids from my school are from there—both of them got expelled,” said the other.

“My boyfriend’s friends went up there and people shot at them.”

“It’s a meth area. A whole lot of meth.” The bearded manager overheard the conversation and shuffled over to put in his two cents.

“I know why it’s called Ontiontown. It’s because that field on the other side of the tracks used to be filled with wild onions. Then there’s the whole incest thing. You see red-headed mulattos walking around in the little towns around here, and you know where they came from.”

“But how can it be incest if the people are mixed race?” I asked.

“The incest wasn’t at that initial stage,” he explained authoritatively. “It happened later on down the line, with the first cousins.”

The next morning I walked across Dover Plains past the wooden churches and Dunkin’ Donuts to a place called Murphy’s Auto Parts, where Ontiontown Road begins its ascent. Dick had told me to speak with Warren Wilcox and Fred Murphy, the last surviving descendants of the original Ontiontown families. I found them in the dusty office at the back of the auto-parts store. Warren was reluctant to talk.



THIS PAGE: Patty prepares Easter baskets.
OPPOSITE PAGE: A basket of plastic flowers and an American flag hang over Ethel Smith's window.



“Oniontown is dead,” he said. “All of the original people died off. We keep to ourselves and don’t want to be bothered.”

While some people mentioned that inbreeding was the problem with Oniontown, others nervously discussed the residents’ supposed “intermingling,” or race mixing. Oniontown was all white until the late 60s and 70s, when several of Ethel Smith’s young daughters married black men and brought them back up to the mountain. “It’s those niggers up there that are causing the problems,” Warren said. “No one used to come in and bother us.”

The YouTube incidents inevitably came up. Fred sat, folding his arms as he said, “If people came up into your yard and did donuts and called you a fucking nigger and a half-breed, what would you do?”

After I left the auto parts store, I walked up the road to Oniontown, stopping periodically to pick up some rocks, in case I encountered pit bulls. The paved road dead-ended, and I spotted Desaray and her friends out in the middle of a big empty field. Desaray said she had gotten locked out of Patty and Dick’s trailer the night before. Rap-rock blared out of her young, pregnant friend’s SUV and the group stood around outside the car smoking, comparing tongue rings, and calling one another gay, passing time in the way that only young people can. They listened to Lil’ Wayne and booty-danced to a song that sounded like some kind of warped remix of “Cotton Eye Joe,” which I would soon learn was about titty-fucking. Then that popular Kid Cudi song came on and they sang along:

Tell me what you know about dreams, dreams/ Tell me what you know about night terrors, nothing.

I caught a ride with Desaray and her friends back up to Patty’s trailer. Desaray took me to her room and showed me

her Joose and Four Loko collection. Like her grandpa, she said she had fought her way through school. “Kids would just sit there and push you and sometimes just punch you in the back of the head. I got jumped in eighth grade because I’m from here—a couple of girls came up and said my whole family was nothing but a bunch of inbred niggers and I just lost it.”

I asked Desaray how people found out where they were from. “We normally keep it to ourselves that we’re from here. But it somehow came out in school that I was from Oniontown. After that certain people didn’t talk to me.”

Desaray told me she was having a difficult time finding a job. Having an Oniontown address didn’t make it any easier. “The post office doesn’t deliver, so we all have PO boxes in town. But a lot of places around here want your mailing address and your home address. If they want both, it sucks. Because of our reputation we have to suffer everyone else’s stupidity.”

In 2008, Desaray moved upstate for a while with her dad. The Dover school system had always put her in remedial classes and held her back. But at the school upstate she said she had absolutely no problems. When she returned to Oniontown, it was in the midst of the influx of YouTubers. “I wasn’t back for five minutes when one of them pulled up. We would just be trying to do our own thing, and you’d hear someone shout ‘YouTuuuube.’ You’d hear it and you wouldn’t want to hear it. We would get three cars in here a weekend, like we were some kind of freak show.” She explained how they would defend against the scourge. “We would lock the cattle gate and shut them in here. They would of course roll up their windows and lock the doors, but as soon as they came in here the windows were gone anyway. My cousins would ask them, ‘What are you here for? You want to film us?’ And some would say, ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry,

I’m sorry.’ And others were like, ‘No, no, no... wrong turn.’ Then my cousins would decide if they were lying or not. It’s been a lot better lately.”

The countermeasures worked—Oniontown’s reputation is now more intimidating than ever before, and people once again fear for their lives to go there. Desaray’s cousin Jamal was a driving force in pushing out the gawkers. During my visit to Oniontown, Jamal had radiated nothing but ire and disdain toward me, perhaps with good reason, seeing as how I was camped outside his house like a paparazzo trying to get an interview with his grandmother Ethel. Desaray had a talk with Jamal and told him I was “cool,” and soon enough I was hanging out with the skinny 19-year-old kid in a flannel shirt and a fur winter hat. Jamal had grown up in Brooklyn, in the Cypress Hills Houses. His mother was from Oniontown, and they had left the city to be closer to family after his father left them. He knew what people said about Oniontown, but he didn’t think much of it. “These white boys up here call you inbred, call you niggers up here and shit. Makes you want to go to jail.”

When Jamal was 13, he crushed a Dover kid’s skull during a fight and went to jail for 18 months. He said that he felt like the legend of his brutality might have played a part in attracting people coming up to the settlement. When he returned home from jail, the YouTube phenomenon was in full swing. “Every single day they were coming up here. We had to shut them down. I don’t want to be video-camera’ed like some kind of fucking animal.”

Jamal said he planned to stay in Oniontown as long as Ethel was still breathing. “She’s our heart up here. She keeps us stable. Alive in a way, I guess you could say. We call her the Warden.” As Jamal and I smoked cigarettes, we looked out at

“These white boys up here call you inbred, call you niggers up here and shit. Makes you want to go to jail.”

the bleak vista—gray skies, a burned-down house, trailers. He sighed, “There aren’t any fucking monsters up here. Normal people, normal lives.”

By 5 PM it was dark outside. I made one last abortive attempt to interview Ethel, waiting in the now-familiar eaves as voices murmured on the other side of the door, discussing. “She doesn’t want to talk,” reported a droopy-faced woman. Having been thrice denied by the Warden, I took my cue to leave. Dick and Patty were off at court—apparently some manure had fallen out of the back of Dick’s truck and hit a cop car, which resulted in charges of driving with an unsecured load. Without a ride down the mountain, I said goodbye to Desaray and began the long, dark walk down the empty road, beneath the black silhouettes of mountains and clouds backlit by the moon.

As I walked I thought about how if you’re not part of their world, playing society’s games and making up stories to tell about yourself, those stories will eventually be made up for you by others. And I thought about how there may be places set back from the world, away from glowing floodlights and prying eyes staring out of car windows, but there is nowhere to go to escape the murmur of their endless talk. And I thought about how the world is a spinning top, plowing forward through the chaos of time, all of its weight precariously balanced on a single, ever-spinning tip called reputation. *CE*



IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL CUM

*Sexual Healing and Kinky Community
Outreach with the Impropriety Society*

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY JOHN MICHAELS

In the spring of 2010, the recession, marching across the land like a zombie army, flushed me from the tenuous life I had cobbled together in LA. Suddenly jobless, and approaching homeless, I fled to an organic vegetable farm owned and operated by an old friend in Humboldt County, California, and became a farmhand. My colleagues included a group of 20-somethings known as “the Kids.” They were a horny bunch, pansexual and polyamorous, and after a few weeks of sexy, confessional one-upmanship and twerking to sissy bounce, they were coupling and tripling feverishly.

I kept above the sticky fray, but before decades of bad behavior, self sabotage, and poor relationship choices left me a monkish neurotic, I’d had my share. I came of age in the sex-positive 90s, right in the thick of it. I pushed a cum-mop at the famous Lusty Lady Theater in San Francisco while still in my teens. I shot B-roll on some greasy little pornos, dated strippers, tried my hands as an erotic masseur, checked out a swinger hotel with my girlfriend. As a cab driver in my mid-20s, I’d drive loops around the Tenderloin while tranny hookers sucked off their clients in the backseat. With a confident swagger, I entered the confessions game, but one of the Kids—skinny, Jewfro’d, with a thin mustache and bushy beard—had me beat. He told us how, onstage in front of a few hundred people, he’d fisted a woman while humming a tune and thumping a beat on a drum set consisting of her ass and the contact-mic’d bathtub they were sitting in. This was my introduction to the Impropriety Society, a group of local kinksters who throw elaborate and well-attended sex parties in Humboldt.

The Impropriety Society, Imps for short, rose from the ashes of an earlier group of sex partiers known as Club Risqué. The parties started as fund-raising events for a pirate radio station put on by a bunch of theater and circus geeks and were more like sexy parties featuring racy performances than actual sex parties. But as they evolved, actual fucking quickly came to the fore, and, being so far away from any urban center, they became a place for otherwise-underserved members of a variety of kinky persuasions to express themselves, replete with a separate dungeon area for the local BDSM community. From the start, an energetic, polyamorous couple was at the core of Club Risqué, and when their relationship ended a few years ago, so did the parties. A core group of Club Risqué veterans took it upon themselves to continue the scene, and they founded the Impropriety Society, drafting a mission statement and formulating a sex-positive ethos that stressed consent, self-awareness, responsibility, and inclusivity for all sexual orientations, gender identities, and all forms of personal expression.

Their first party was in May 2008. Every month or two since, they’ve put on small, low-key events that

they call “socials,” for which they sell about 75 tickets. Taking place in one large room with only a few pieces of BDSM and dungeon gear, the emphasis is more on socializing, dancing, and, with the walls lined with mattresses, fucking. Twice a year, in spring and fall, they hold much larger events complete with a fully equipped dungeon and viewing gallery, several themed play spaces, a black-lit area full of mattresses called the cuddle room, a larger dance floor, finger food that strives toward gourmet, and a stage show. Selling up to 250 tickets, and with as many as 80 volunteers, they can be pretty big affairs, especially when you consider the ratio of trees to people in Humboldt.

I went to my first party, last year’s Halloween extravaganza, with Jewfro and two of the girls from the farm. It was held in the clubhouse of some obscure fraternal order on a desolate street in Eureka. I didn’t know much about the area at the time. The few months I’d been in Humboldt had been spent on a few acres nestled in a forest on the flood plain of the Eel River, though I would come in to sit at a café in the Old Town section of Eureka every week to do my internetting. The streets always felt haunted, empty but for a few tweakers huddling in the alleyways of the cheerless district, the old Victorians and brick facades echoey, like an abandoned set on a studio back lot.

The stage-show portion of the party was wrapping up when we arrived: a *Star Wars* spoof that ended with Princess Leia being eaten out by Luke Skywalker, who was in turn being pegged by a strap-on-equipped, female Darth Vader. Then the performers from the earlier skits joined the stage for a curtain call, and the audience (about 200 or so costumed people seated on the floor, or lounging on the mattresses and one another) went wild. The applause faded, the DJ started spinning, and ten minutes later, people were fucking on the mattresses along the perimeter of the main room. Not long after that, the thwacks of whips and paddles could be heard coming from the curtained-off dungeon. The Kids had a great time. They too had put on risqué costumes and eagerly and effortlessly eased into the sweaty mix.

Something that sets the Impropriety Society’s activities apart from most swinger-type parties is that they not only allow but encourage single men to attend. They



even hold PG-13 events at local bars to reach out to the larger community. I was one such single dude, one of a handful of lurkers in street clothes sketching around the party. I'd check out the action on the mattresses for a bit, take in the view in the cuddle room, have a sit in the dungeon gallery, and then loiter pointlessly in the smoking section. And then I'd do it all again, for about seven hours total, watching my friends and strangers as they merrily sucked and fucked their way around the same circuit. I tried talking to one person one time, something about how nice her ass was, but when our eyes met, I withered and slunk away. As night turned into day, I was exhausted. I found one of the girls I had arrived with passing out in one of several kiddie pools in the cuddle room, and I crawled in next to her. She was Jewfro's girl, but they had an open-ish relationship and we were flirty friends. She had a great butt that was the talk of the farm, and in that brief moment of reckless bravery that comes just before sleep, as Jewfro and our other friend gleefully watched, I pulled her close, we nuzzled, and I grabbed a grateful hold of one sweet cheek. That would be the culmination of my night of titillation and frustrating meekness: a passing heat across a sweaty palm. A half hour later, we were driving home in an unheated car through freezing rain.

I spent the winter back East, snowed in and lonely, getting fat on TV. As I wallowed with a bout of seasonal affective disorder, my mind conjured Humboldt; its dark chocolate soil and unique culture. I was comforted by the knowledge that I'd be returning in the spring, and as I lay on the lonely island that is my sister's couch, I thought about the Imps.

About a month before the next Impropryety Society party I attended, a late-summer social, one of my closest friends suddenly died. A couple years my senior, he came out to me when I was 14. It was a radical world-view shift for a straight teen in rural New Jersey in the early 80s; he opened my eyes to the clandestine world of down-low jocks and predatory teachers. A poet and musician, he was a tough-minded and deeply perceptive social critic. He had a frank and healthy appreciation of sex, and although he identified as gay, he'd slept with more women than most straight men. He had always given me shit about my hang-ups and peculiar trips, sometimes gently teasing, other times throwing his hands up in frustration. I loved him dearly, and losing him almost overwhelmed me. To see his body lying there, sewn and propped into unlikely repose, was chilling and bluntly real. I wept with all of his other friends, and I moved through the grief. I realized a few things then: The loss and pain I'd been fearing my whole life, which caused me to hold at bay any hope of love or real intimacy, had just happened, and I was going to survive it. Maybe I could stop being afraid.

This is where my head was at as I drove to the party; down the jarring river road, across the Eel, and then onto the Avenue of the Giants, with its looming, enormous redwoods vaulting toward the sky. I drove past towns whose names were synonymous with the food I ate: Shively corn and tomatoes, Ferndale grass-fed beef, Loleta cheese. The headlights cut through fingers of fog, past grazing cows, hitchhiking crusties, and tiny, eclectic communities that suddenly felt alive to me.

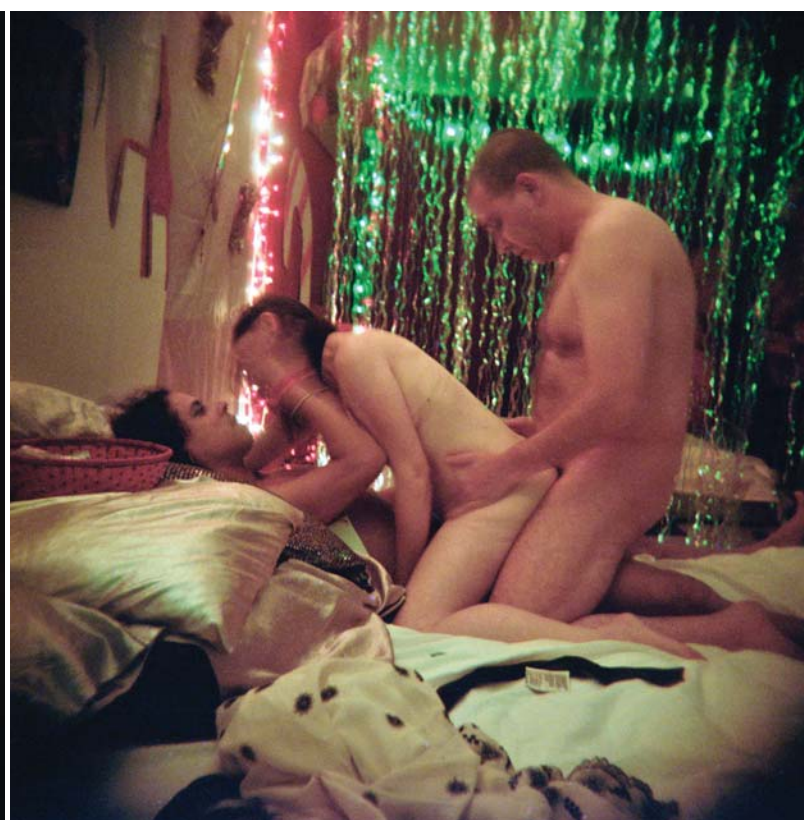
A woman was wrapped tight in plastic wrap and then duct-taped, head to toe, like a mummy. A man was ass-fucked with a dildo, then cleaned and diapered. I saw a face furiously fucked, her head held like a watermelon.

That night, when I walked into the dance studio where the Imps were holding their summer event, the first thing that seized my attention wasn't the two nude, middle-aged women awaiting their beatings on a St. Andrew's Cross, or the pair of fatherly, silver-haired gentlemen with smeared eyeliner in drag, or the ass-up bottoms astride the "spanking benches." What caught my eye, a few feet in front of the DJ table, standing motionless amid the small throng of revelers, was a blind man clutching his collapsible white cane, his head slightly cocked the way blind people do. He was balding, with short, brown hair and a thin mustache, and his lazily wandering eyes were slightly sunken. Among this randy and perverted group, he was the Unicorn. Despite their diversity in age, race, orientation, and kink, the rest of the partygoers could be lumped into a single, monolithic category when compared with him. I pulled my eyes from him finally, swept the room with a timorous gaze, and waded into the mix.

It was a memorable night. Early on, all the hottest 20-somethings coalesced like bubbles into a big, sticky, heteroflexible fuck pile in one corner, squirming and

writhing for a couple hours. A woman was wrapped tight in plastic wrap and then duct-taped, head to toe, like a mummy. A man was ass-fucked with a dildo, then cleaned and diapered. I saw a face furiously fucked, her head held like a watermelon. Thighs were slapped and asses whipped while nipples were clamped with clothespins. At the foot of one bed was a fuck machine. It was your basic model—a dildo stuck to the end of a metal rod, jointed to a second rod that was attached to a revolving metal plate powered by a small electric motor. The machine sat alone, set to a slow, sexy rhythm, and all night long it made sweet, tender love to the nothingness a foot above an empty twin-size mattress.

As the evening wore on, a woman caught my attention. She appeared to be in her 30s, petite with a Dark Lolita look. She was dancing with a guy in a Hawaiian shirt and captain's hat who was a bit older than her. They soon headed for a bed, and I followed. At the foot of every mattress were two laundry baskets marked with signs—DIRTY and CLEAN. As Dark Lolita changed the sheets, her man, let's call him Yacht Rock, walked away to hit the restroom or whatever. I sidled over to





The couple were newbies, fresh off their first public sex act: His dick poking through his boxers, he had hunched over her prostrate body and thumbed her clit while penetrating her with glacial slowness.

her furtively, and she immediately gave me a look that said, “What the fuck do you want?” I got flustered, told her to never mind, and turned to retreat. Realizing that my actions might be playing especially creepy, I turned back and, to save face, I came up with the brilliant, and not at all icky, “Uhh... if you guys are going to play, do you mind if I watch?” She said sure, as long as I kept a respectful distance, but it was plain she wasn’t psyched about it. I slouched away, red-faced.

A little later, Dark Lolita was astride Yacht Rock and, still clothed, they were grinding their crotches together. They happened to be using a bed adjacent to one occupied by a couple I’d interviewed earlier. The couple were newbies, fresh off their first public sex act: His dick poking through his boxers, he had hunched over her prostrate body and thumbed her clit while penetrating her with glacial slowness. When she finally came, it was the most purely experienced pleasure I had witnessed all night. They had cuddled for a while after that in a post-orgasm haze, but now they were half-sitting up, looking sort of stunned as they took in the room. I asked whether I could sit with them to talk some more. The debriefing quickly turned casual, and we were discussing the newbie woman’s PhD thesis when Yacht Rock suddenly turned to me and declared, “That’s enough!” I was stunned silent. He continued, “This is the second scene you’re interrupting. This is a scene space, not a social space. The social space is over there.” He pointed to the other side of the room. “I’m just trying to get there,” Dark Lolita added, “and I can’t get there with you talking.” I was mortified. I mumbled apologies, nodded to the newbies, and split.

I found Jewfro, whom I’d gotten to come with me, and told him what had happened. He just laughed. Then Yacht Rock appeared in front of us, still clearly upset. He informed me that he was, in fact, the Impropriety Society’s head of security and listed the various rules I’d broken as he detailed my insensitivities. I apologized profusely and pleaded ignorance. He half-relented, apologized for losing his temper, and then we shook hands and he walked off. Soon after, I was approached by a smiling bleached-blond woman in her early 30s wearing a grass skirt and coconut bra. She said she was the Vibes Master.

There was a spiritual element within the Club Risqué community that created the Vibes Crew, a group within the larger group that charged themselves with elevating the mood of the party by projecting goodness to

everyone they encountered. The Vibes training involved developing intuition, learning to read people’s energy, and throwing “energy balls.” A somewhat secularized version of the Vibes Crew carried over to the Imps. They have foregone the throwing of energy balls, but their agenda remains pretty much the same: to lead with their vulnerability, visualize positivity, and reach out to those who may be overwhelmed or nervous.

The Vibes Crew headmistress hadn’t actually witnessed my exchange with Yacht Rock; she was just introducing herself and checking to see whether I was enjoying myself. Still, I told her what had happened with him and Dark Lolita, that I had interrupted their scene. She asked me whether I’d read the waiver. The waiver is posted on their website and a copy of it needs to be signed by every attendee upon entry, whether they’re a volunteer, the head of security, or just a guy off the street. It covers the basic dos and don’ts and releases the Imps from liability. I’d signed it, of course, but I had treated it more like a TOS agreement for a software update. (It seems important to point out that it also contains the following clause in bold capital letters: **I UNDERSTAND THAT MY ATTENDANCE OF THIS EVENT DOES NOT MEAN THAT I WILL GET LAID.**) Apparently I’d broken protocol on several points. Taking me under her wing, she explained the formal nature of interaction at the parties. No one touches anyone, no matter how casually or innocently, without asking permission. That is the first stage of an important concept she introduced me to that one must grasp to fully enjoy a sex party: the negotiation of a scene. A scene that may involve being tied up and hung from a rafter, having hot wax poured on your genitals, being paddled until your ass and thighs are a mess of hard, purple contusions, or just straight fucking will often start with a simple “May I shake your hand?”

Some while later, I spotted Dark Lolita. I was certain she hated me. From a wary distance I watched her circle the room as I tried to appear disinterested and unphased, staring blankly at the various scenes unfolding around me. Her circuit soon brought her into my orbit. Our eyes met, and a warm smile spread across her face. She offered her hand to me and asked, “Can we start over?” We did, and it completely reset my vibe.

Near the end of the night I watched two cute hippie couples twist around each other like licorice. The Unicorn approached and, tapping the edge of their mattress with his cane, tried to sit, plopping his butt onto

their legs. He shot back up and attempted to move to another mattress, repeatedly bumping into the laundry bin below. Someone moved it for him and guided him to an adjacent mattress, where he finally took a seat. He sat there for a while, quiet as he methodically squeezed his hands around his cane. Then, unprompted and with sudden movement, he reclined, unzipped his pants, and began to furiously masturbate with the fingertips of both hands until he had an angry little purple boner. A few people gathered, watching, but not close enough to communicate their presence or to lend a hand. He lay there jerking off for some ten minutes when, just as suddenly as he'd started, he fumbled his dick back into his pants and zipped up. But apparently he wasn't finished, because he then stuffed his hand down his fastened pants, his arm pulsating in spastic, arrhythmic motions as his lips pulled taut against his teeth. He was engaged in an epic struggle, but I didn't stick around to find out who won. Sensing the night was almost over, I made a quick circuit of the room, trying to take in everything that remained of the night at once in a confusing crescendo. Then the lights came on, signaling the end of the party, and, squinting, everyone hunted down their clothes.


The next party I attended was this year's Halloween party, and the Imps and I had been in complicated negotiations for months so I could take photos at the party. I arrived early, and as I watched the manic bustle of the volunteers setting up the Enchanted Kinkdom—putting up the well-glittered decorations, running through light cues for the stage show, setting up the dungeon and the cuddle spaces, preparing the food—I was suddenly struck by the fact that this is entirely self-motivated. There are no corporations sponsoring this event. Nobody is getting paid to be here; not the founders, the performers, the DJs, or the department heads. In the parlance of the group, they are holding space for one another. And then the guests will arrive, and they will hold space for them, too. Some of them will play rough in the dungeon, some will fuck, and most of them will dance and watch and flirt. Some will feel like they've finally come home; others will be nervous as hell.

It was a big deal in the community that they were letting me take pictures. No one had ever been allowed such access before, and it was ruffling feathers. There was a thread discussing me and my intentions in the

Then, unprompted and with sudden movement, he reclined, unzipped his pants, and began to furiously masturbate with the fingertips of both hands until he had an angry little purple boner.

Humboldt forums section of Fetlife, an alternative-lifestyle social-networking site. They referred to me as “the Journalist.” The local weekly had done an undercover exposé of a party a few years earlier that some members of the community had taken offense to. Some felt the descriptions of participants were too revealing. Others didn't appreciate the secretive way in which the story was reported. So I created a profile on Fetlife and started a thread wherein I spelled out who I was and what my intentions were. I told them about my hang-ups and my dead friend. I also started the same thread at the Imps' Yahoo! Group. And then, just to show that I, too, was willing to have some skin in the game, I posted an arty yet explicit nude self-portrait, which, as a ginger, gives new meaning to the term “redwood curtain.”

This party was different from the last one. In the intervening couple months, I had been interviewing various members of the community over burgers or coffee, at farmers' markets, and in their homes. Many of them became my friends. The actual sexual aspects of the parties, I have to admit, don't really do it for me. But I witnessed firsthand the transformative power that the community can have, when someone spends their entire lives in deep shame because of their predilections, and then suddenly they find a whole group of people who will love them for it.

Dark Lolita and I developed a particularly sweet bond, casual but tender, and I surprised myself with my openness to it. Is this an end to all my hang-ups? Not likely. I've already left for the winter; I'm always leaving. But it was a good start. 



TOUPEE: HELLO AGAIN, ASSHOLE

BY BRETT GELMAN, PHOTOS BY JANICZA BRAVO
Featuring Alessandro Minoli and Janet

Fucking Medicine Man. Fucking dumb old hippie buzzard! Telling me shit I could have told myself 100 times. I'm not a fan of voices or vocal qualities, so I hate when I have to listen to shit that I don't need reverberating inside my head. Hear someone talk for too long and it just makes you want to hang yourself from a fucking lamppost.

Words might as well smell like farts, because to me they sound like them. We might as well shit out our mouths. And that's double true for Medicine Man. His mouth smells like hot-baked mustard skin. Not even Janet can take the smell, and dogs love a good garbage hole. And here he is, this fucking smelly piece of shit, about to win the most useless information award.

"It was Shit Bird."

OF COURSE IT WAS SHIT BIRD!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
But Shit Bird wasn't behind it. Shit Bird couldn't plan out putting his fucking shoes on. He definitely knows how to squeal, though. He's the best at it. Medicine Man gave me a piece, and I'm gonna shove it up Shit Bird's ass until his breath smells like gunpowder and he squawks on whoever put him up to it.

Here we are at the dump hut, the worst house I've ever seen. It's got Shit Bird's shitty touch all over it. He always leaves the door open, so we walk in. That's the thing about people. They're one thing, and then they're the opposite. Here we got a guy who has the biggest yellow streak there is. He'd skip town if you just pointed at him the wrong way. Yet he always leaves the door open. A part of him must want to die! It wants the fear to end! I don't mind making that happen. I don't mind taking it all the fuck away.

Inside, there's nothing anywhere. A real emptiness. No character at all. A house for a true coward who's just waiting to run again. Don't want to leave anything behind, so the perfect answer is to not have anything.

Janet and I walk down the hall. I can hear the worm snoring. It's a weak snore. The fuck can't even sleep with backbone. We enter the bedroom. Smells like cum and farts.

His face is so peaceful. Makes me want to vomit. This prick gets peace? He tries to ruin my life, and then celebrates with comfy dreams.

I raise my gun. Should I just kill him right now? Shit, I bet that would feel great. Watch that peace end and send him hurtling into oblivion—screaming in terror, straight to fucking hell.

I cock back the hammer. You would have thought I shot the gun right next to his ear, 'cause the toad jumps, pulls his gun, and grabs my fucking beard (which sucks, but at least it's not my toupee). Shit Bird's not as weak as he looks. But I've got my little ace!

"TEAR HIM APART, JANET!"

Janet sinks her teeth into his arm. He drops the gun. Then comes the face. She tears it up like an unpaid bill. He's screaming. I'm loving it. So relieved that I get to hear screams instead of bullshit words, and he's such a great screamer. It's like he went to school for it. He should scream more. People would like him better. Janet holds on to his cheek. My girl always knows what to do.

"My face! My fucking beautiful face!"

"Trust me, Shit Bird, you look better!"

"Get this fucking bitch's teeth out of my cheek!"

"She will. Whether she takes your cheek with her is up to you."

"Why are you doing this?!"

"I'm trying to teach the dog reconstructive surgery. Why do you think, Shit Bird?"

"You think I set you up?"

"Good guess."

"It wasn't me. I mean, I did it but I didn't know. I mean, I knew but I didn't want to. I was forced! He forced me!"

"Who forced you, Shit Bird?"

"He did!"

"Who's he?"

"Don't make me!"

"Oh, I won't make you. But Janet will!"

I don't even need to command her. Janet knows. She rips his stupid cheek off like he's a Mr. Potato Head.

"Now tell me who did it before Janet makes you look like a fucking chimp victim!"

"I'm deformed!"

"You were already deformed! Now you just look more the part. Who the fuck did it?!"

"I can't tell you. HE'LL GET REALLY MAD AT ME!"

"I'M REALLY MAD AT YOU! AND SO IS JANET! WHO WAS IT?!"

"DEAD DICK!"

"Dead Dick?"

"DEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAAD DIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIICK!"

Dead Dick? Dead Dick's... dead.

Check VICE.com for previous installments of Toupee, Brett Gelman's novel about baldness, disgusting depravity, and being on the lam.

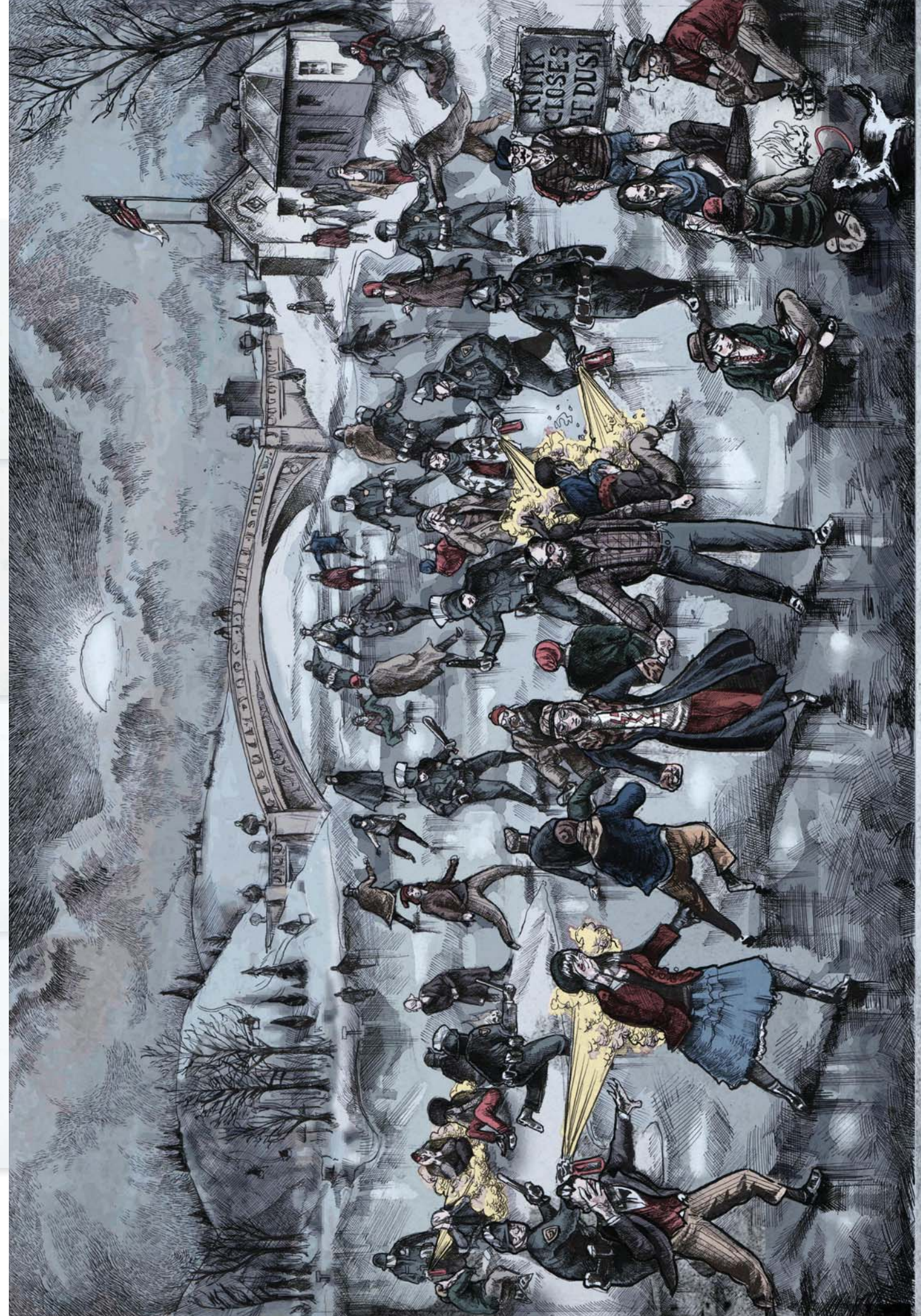


Illustration by Philip Harris
Concept by Bob Odenkirk

CLEARING THE PARK.

THE CUTE SHOW PAGE!

BY ELLIS JONES, PHOTO BY HEATHER LIGHTON

Baby Wombat Orphans

We asked our associate editor Harry what he thought about wombats, and he said, “An ugly animal—like a bat but dumber.” Then we whipped out this photo and he was paralyzed in an alternating laugh/awwww/laugh/awwww stupor for three whole minutes. Then we really fucked with his emotional bearings by telling him that this little munchkin, named Belle, is an orphan. Sadly, her mother was run over by a car, but when animal control arrived they checked her pouch and found Belle alive and well inside. (Unlike most marsupials, wombat pouches open from the bottom, near their rumps, so that when they dig they don’t sprinkle dirt all over their babies. Clever, eh?) After being rescued, Belle was taken to Healesville Sanctuary in Australia and currently lives there with her best mate, Phoenix, another orphaned wombat. When we visited, they simultaneously dove into a tunnel that was too small to fit both of them, so their little butts were wiggling around in our faces as they tried to push their way inside. It was hilarious!

Watch a brand-new episode of The Cute Show! to see Belle and Phoenix get into all kinds of mischief later this month on VICE.com.



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THE LEARNIN' CORNER: TOPOLOGICAL MATTER IN OPTICAL LATTICES

BY W. VINCENT LIU AS TOLD TO HARRY CHEADLE, ILLUSTRATION BY KAMRAN SAMIMI

This month's Learnin' Corner is an explanation of topological matter in optical lattices by University of Pittsburgh associate professor of physics W. Vincent Liu, whose paper "Topological Matter in Optical Lattices" first interested us in the subject of topological matter in optical lattices.

Cold atomic gases are a new form of quantum matter, which is currently at the forefront of many-body physics research. The main step in creating this form is laser cooling. Think about the laser as a bunch of photons—the photons are tiny particles, and the atom is a giant particle. It's like there's a big ship in the sea, and in the beginning the ship is moving fast, but if it's surrounded by millions of particles, which are like fish, those fish will take away the kinetic energy and slow down the motion of this big ship.

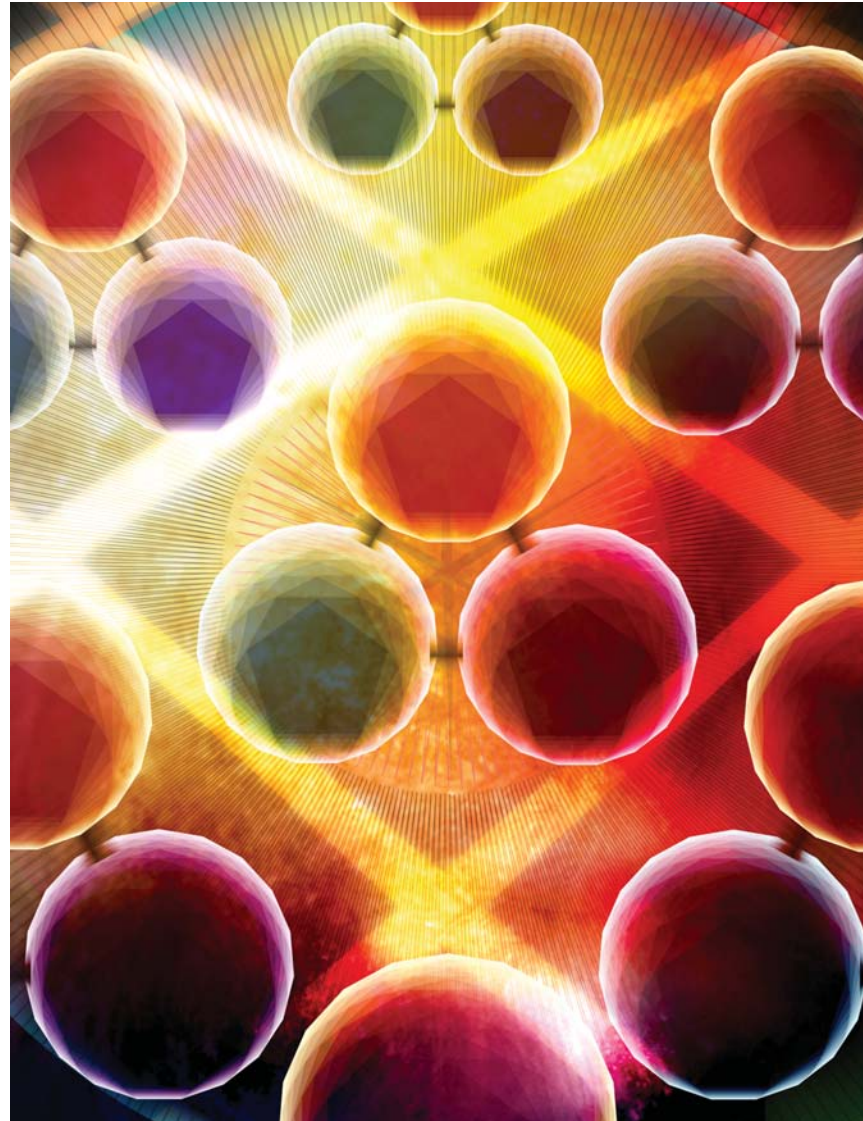
The second step in this process is cooling by evaporation. What you do is you have a kind of cup that can hold the atoms inside so the colder atoms cannot fly away, and the hotter particles will escape from the cup, and eventually the system will cool down. And this evaporation will further cool down the particles to the nano-Kelvin scale, which is the lowest temperature human beings have achieved so far.

So why do the atoms remain as a vapor or a gas instead of a solid? The atoms remain a gas because the density is so low. The density actually is lower than the density of the air that is surrounding us.

Now, the term "semi-metal" has been used to refer to several different things. We used the term "topological semi-metal" to refer to a novel state, which is neither a metal nor an insulator, and this state is topologically protected.

A topological insulator has to have something that sets its atoms rotating in a single direction. Normally in a quantum Hall state of electrons, you use a magnetic field to create this effect, but here we put particles into a double-well super-lattice and the interaction between them forces them to line up, in a sense, the whole system develops a spontaneous rotation. All the particles are rotating, and this orientation lowers the total energy. This is known in physics as spontaneous symmetry breaking. It plays the role of a magnetic field. It's remarkable to see.

This is a very special material whose bulk is an insulator (no currents can flow inside the system—for electron systems, it is electric current), but at the same time, its edge is metallic, along which currents can flow. For example, if we consider a two-dimensional electron-based topological insulator (which is a thin sheet), electronic currents cannot flow anywhere inside this sheet. Nevertheless, the edge of this sheet is like a wire, and currents can flow along the edge. In many cases, the



edge current can only flow in one direction, known as chiral current, much like cars flowing on a one-way road or on one lane of the interstate highway.

Another interesting, and quite unexpected, property of topological insulators lies in the fact that the conductivity of the whole system is very sensitive to the shape (topology). For an ordinary insulator/metal, it is always an insulator/metal no matter what shape we made it into. However, for a topological insulator, if we make the sheet into a sphere, because the sphere has no edges, the system will turn into a true insulator, where currents cannot flow

anywhere. But if we make the sheet into a disk, which has an edge, the system can conduct electronic currents due to the metallic edge.

The particle flow in one direction is a really remarkable phenomenon. Usually, you have particles in a system that move randomly in both directions—think about a one-dimensional wire—but on the edge of our material, everything moves in the same direction and there are no collisions between particles or random jiggling around back and forth. So this kind of system has very different properties from ordinary wires. It could have huge implications, this phenomenon.

GUCCI MANE
& W-Nasty
BAYTL

Featuring
“LOADED”, “LET’S GET FADED”
and **“WHIP APPEAL”**
PRODUCTION BY ZAYTOVEN

IN STORES DECEMBER 13TH

WB RECORDS BRICKS & MORTAR GUCCIMANEONLINE.COM | TWITTER.COM/GUCCI1017 | FACEBOOK.COM/GUCCIMANE | YOUTUBE.COM/OFFICIALGUCCIMANE VICE MUSIC



**NO WARNING 6:
THE UNFAIR
ADVANTAGE**

Dir: Belladonna
Rating: 9

Enterbelladonna.com/
Evilangel.com

If you thought *No Warning 1* through *5* were good, then I can't help but believe that you're going to love *No Warning 6*! And if you've never seen a Belladonna *No Warning* video then I implore you, if you're going to watch only one hardcore, anal-raping, lesbian-wrestling porno this year, make it *No Warning 6*. The hardcore is harder! The anal is more anally! And the lesbians are all—let's be honest, I'm not going to review this video. Reviews are boring. You don't care what my opinion is, nor should you. If we have the same interests in sex the world is more fucked than we already suspected. Because I don't think there's enough piss to drink for the both of us!

What's more important than Belladonna's Wrestling Federation, as seen in this video (which is awesome and hilarious. SPOILER: Girls wrestle each other naked and then make their digits disappear into one another's assholes), is that Belladonna and her husband, Aiden, who she makes all of her naughty films with, are the subjects (after Kimberly Kane and Joanna Angel) of my nonexistent, pretend VICE TV show, *Skinema*, which VICE refuses to ever air. I first got interested in Belladonna (not her birth name) a few years ago at a porn dinner when she and I were discussing parenting. This mild-mannered, double-anal-loving sex kitten with a penchant for chocolate has a dark and seedy alter ego: She's a PTA mom at her daughter's school. THE HORROR!

That secret life of trying to live among the nut jobs is what intrigued me most about her. Here we have an attractive young lady with an occupation in race

relations and a master's degree in interracial studies, who is so dedicated to the cause that for years she has offered up not just a helping hand but a helping mouth, vagina, and asshole as reparations for the slavery and inequality done upon African Americans in this country for centuries, and who doubles as... dare I say it? A mom who makes cupcakes and goes on class trips?? I find that really bizarre for a number of reasons. For starters, class moms are usually not hot. The MILFs tend to stay home by the pool. All the class moms I remember were heifers who would try to steal my cookies. "You going to eat that, Christopher?" Also, if you have the time to be a class mom, that means you're probably a stay-at-home mom: the craziest of all moms! Their only human interaction is with children, rendering them nearly inept in the conversational department. It also makes them bored and lonely, and once those two feelings spread they manifest into NOSY.

I remember the stay-at-home mom who lived next to me always ratting me out to my mom for sneaking out at night and coming home at two in the morning (I put a brick through her garage window, told her to mind her fucking business). So if and when VICE ever gets its hip little head out of its wannabe political ass and starts airing what people really want to see in times of economic downturn (tits and ass) then we can all hold hands with Belladonna as we investigate the ugly and twisted world of class moms. Just the words send chills up my spine...

More stupid can be found at Chrisnieratko.com and twitter.com/Nieratko.



**ASSASSIN'S CREED:
REVELATIONS**

Platform: Xbox 360,
PlayStation 3, PC

Publisher: Ubisoft

Assassin's Creed: Revelations is an aging, decrepit continuation of a once-captivating franchise, which is sort of appropriate given that it's *about* the aging of its two historical protagonists, Ezio Auditore da Firenze and Altaïr ibn-La'Ahad. But the obvious joke is facile here, because I'd love to see a well-done game about old age and legacies—that this is old, tired gameplay about old, tired men is just an unfortunate coincidence.

The first *Assassin's Creed* was, I will contend forever, a brilliant construction, albeit flawed in a lot of ways—repetitive and too free with unskippable cut scenes of two guys talking at a desk. *Assassin's Creed II* was far less narratively ambitious—rather than cultic indoctrination and philosophy, a plot seldom seen in this medium, it was about an angry young man's quest for revenge, a plot seen all the time—but far more successful as a compelling video game. *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* was just *Assassin's Creed II* all over again, but more polished and featuring Rome, and that was *fine* because calling down remote assassin strikes on dudes is great, and Ubisoft succeeded in making Rome a vital setting and a character all its own.

And now we have *Revelations*, and it's like *Brotherhood* all over again except it doesn't work. Its setting, Constantinople, has none of the character that made Renaissance Florence, Venice, and Rome from *ACII* and *Brotherhood* compelling—here we have Roma dancers filling the role of courtesans, and everyone and everything is dressed in brighter and more vivid colors than the previous games, but there's no sense of Constantinople's historical weight. There are three major mechanical additions to *Revelations*: 1) a tower-defense game for defending your territory against Templar conquerors, 2) the hookblade, which lets you

jump slightly further and use zip lines, and 3) bombs. The tower-defense game, first of all, I did not find terribly entertaining, and while *ACII* and *Brotherhood* justified Ezio's new gadgets via Leonardo da Vinci, feeding into the whole Renaissance vibe, the hookblade is just a random game power-up. Bombs *sort of* work, in that they provide an excuse for having an inventory—you get slots for lethal, tactical, and distraction bombs and can build different types of each out of components you buy or find in chests or on dead guys—but I never found them integrating naturally into my play style.

Finally, the game lets Ezio go back and experience Altaïr's memories during a few specific sequences. These aren't bad, but they're not enough to make the rest of the game interesting, and I personally found them difficult to engage with because I am a huge fan of the first *Assassin's Creed* and they changed Altaïr's voice actor. It's true that Philip Shahbaz, Altaïr's original performer, sounded American, while Cas Anvar has a Middle Eastern accent, which many fans clamored for. But Shahbaz conveyed a frightening intensity—Altaïr came across as a man coldly determined to succeed at everything that interested him, including the logical and philosophical problems his mentor posed to him as distractions. Anvar's performance doesn't convey that. Any points the game wins with me by including Altaïr again, it immediately loses because its version of Altaïr doesn't possess any of the qualities that made the character interesting.

Is it worth playing? Probably, yeah. The parkour is still great. Is it satisfying? Given the choice between playing this and going back to play *Brotherhood* for a third time, I'd go with *Brotherhood*.

This review is based on a retail copy of the Xbox 360 version of *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*, provided by Ubisoft for promotional purposes.



**BEST ALBUM OF THE MONTH:
BLACK BANANAS**



GANGRENE
Vodka & Ayahuasca
Decon

☺ Rap is a good genre because it re-ups concepts that are boring in fresh and interesting ways. Maybe you thought poverty in cities was tired? And then you were like, "I am terrified of NWA!" Maybe you thought badly behaved teen-punk nihilism/freedom peaked with *Suburbia*, and then you were like, "Can someone explain Odd Future to me?" Maybe even now you're in your leather chair at your oak desk saying, "Surely an American talking to me about adventures on obscure psychedelics definitely ends with Carlos Castaneda," and I'm blowing this joint in your face.

CX ZOLA

KID SISTER
Kiss & Tell
Fool's Gold

☺ In the ten minutes and 56 seconds it took to listen to this EP I went from being tied up by a Suicide Girl to sipping prosecco at the Boom Boom Room with some betches.

MATILDA

THE INTERNET
Purple Naked Ladies
Odd Future

☺ This record is mostly some spacey sounding R&B made by Syd the Kid, the gay lady DJ/audio engineer of Odd Future, and Matt Martian from Jet Age of

Tomorrow. Are people on the internet still wringing their hands about Odd Future and whether or not it's OK to like them? What the fuck is up with that? How did a bunch of gay bloggers and 12th-wave feminists turn everyone into neo-Puritans?

NICK GAZIN

MC PROTOTYPE
Chasing Dreams
C&M Promotions

☹ America probably needs more rappers who spit about scallywags, skateboarding, and being a nerd, but as catchy as this shit is, it doesn't make me want to put my penis into anything. No one wants to hump to a song about Bernie Mac.

JONATHAN YOST



PHENOMENAL HANDCLAP BAND
Form & Control
Tummy Touch

☹ You know that jizzy smell that's ubiquitous to gay dance clubs and porn shops? I swear my speakers blasted that out like a fog machine the whole time I had this on, which was roughly 35 seconds.

HOT GYNO

WARNING LIGHT
Wild Silver
Stick Figure

☺ I usually spend my hangovers listening to the Pogues' version of "And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda" on repeat until all the bad decisions

come up in one sobbing flume of whys and "They were just boys!" (Try it at work sometime, most Townes Van Zandt works too.) This is some pretty good instrumental morning-after music, but way less of the river-of-screaming-tears variety than the cruising-the-museum-or-something-on-a-little-bit-of-Valium type, which is good, because I've been getting some pretty ugly looks from the receptionist lately.

CAPPO DELMONICA

PRETTY GOOD DANCE MOVES
Limo
MAD Dragon/Township

☹ If there were a *Beverly Hills Cop* video game, and it had a soundtrack, this would basically be it. Do you ever honestly not know if you like something or not? I was gonna turn this off after two seconds of playing it, but then some cool noises started happening and I let it ride. Then after a while it all got so bad that I turned it up SUPER loud because I thought it was hilarious. By the time the saxophones showed up at the party I was like, "Hey guys, glad you could make it. Beer's in the fridge, Andy's got the vape going in the garage."

JIMMY JAMES DEUX

FLOSSTRADAMUS
Jubilation
Fool's Gold

☺ Flosstradamus and Kid Sister both released EPs at the same time, and the Kid Sister track on this Flosstradamus EP is better than any of the songs on her own EP, and also the best song on THIS EP. So if A + E + X = 4, that means that Flosstradamus and Kid Sister are Go-Bots? Wait, that's not right. The correct answer = Although this EP is nothing special, I still played it loud enough to make my throat hurt the next day.

LOLA GYNO

PORCELAIN RAFT
Strange Weekend
Secretly Canadian

☹ OK, I'm sick of this. You can't just listen to a Slowdive album, think, "Hey, I can do that!" and then record yourself moaning into the corner of the shower while your girlfriend plays tambourine out in the kitchen. You can't do any of these things anymore! Stop trying to be in bands! Go soak your crystals in a clean bowl of tap water, and plan B will appear to you in a dream.

HEY SALLY

CHAIRLIFT
Something
Columbia

☺ Sometimes I'll see Chairlift's front woman, Caroline Polachek, out at my weekly goth nights, and I'll be like, "OH SHIT, BITCH IS DARK." So now when I listen to this new album, which is super lively and colorful, I can't help but think it's riddled with hexes and maybe those backward subliminal messages. If they have an undecipherable, satanic voice in this thing telling me to obsess over it, it's working.

KRISTEN K.



POP 1280
The Horror
Sacred Bones

☺ If these doofs wanted a good review for this bullshit album they shouldn't have kicked me out of the band when I started working for VICE. This music is

**WORST ALBUM OF THE MONTH:
PRETTY GOOD DANCE MOVES**



great for those weepy moments when you realize that you've outsourced your talent to a multinational youth-media conglomerate. After all, you could've been pounding out brain-melting tech-sludge in the back rooms of roach-infested flophouses. Instead you're sitting at a desk writing a bad review of a good record out of spite. Actually, fuck it. I'm giving myself the barf-face on this one.

BEN SHAPIRO



THE SCREAMING TRIBESMAN
Bones + Flowers/Date with a Vampire/Top of the Town
Grown Up Wrong!

☺ The Screaming Tribesman are adrift in a speed-boat off Sydney Harbor Bay. While rummaging through the boat's provisions the drummer finds an old lamp. He rubs the lamp and a genie appears. This genie tells them that he only grants one wish. Without giving much thought to the matter, the drummer blurts out, "Turn the entire ocean into Foster's!" The genie claps his hands with a deafening crash, and immediately the entire sea turns into beer. The genie disappears, and only the gentle lapping of beer on the hull breaks the stillness as the band considers their circumstances. The lead singer turns to the hapless drummer and says, "Nice going, mate! Now we're all going to have to piss in the boat."

JORDAN RAEDELLI

YOUNG MODERN
Live at the Grace Emily
Grown Up Wrong!

☹ Why wasn't Jesus born in Adelaide? They couldn't find three wise men and a virgin. What's an Australian's idea of foreplay? You awake? What's a Tasmanian's idea of foreplay? You awake, Mum? Why do

so many Australian men suffer premature ejaculation? Because they have to rush back to the pub to tell their mates what happened! What's the difference between a G-spot and a golf ball? An Australian man will actually search for a golf ball.

JORDAN RAEDELLI

BLACK BANANAS
Rad Times Xpress IV
Drag City

☺ And this is the way music should sound. Like the hottest, toughest girl drove you somewhere on her three-wheeler, laid her jean jacket on the ground, and now you're getting slow-fucked by a nitrous-filled dildo in some awesome forest full of pointy guitars that grow pinecone-size joints. Btw, if you haven't picked up on the fact that this is Jennifer Herrema's new band there may not be hope for you yet.

BLONDE CAMERO

VOIVOD
To the Death 84
Alternative Tentacles

☹ How killed do you think I would get if I walked around Montreal with a sandwich board that said "Early Voivod just sounds like shitty Venom"? There'd be more LARPing swords sticking out of me by day's end than virgins at Les Tams-tams.

TRAILER TRASH TRACYS
Ester
Domino

☺ TTT are rightful heirs to the Cocteau Twins' throne, but they make sure to scrape over a few chairs from Yazoo's and Stereolab's royal courts so



**BEST COVER OF THE MONTH:
WARNING LIGHT**

everyone can sit comfortably and create atmospheric songs perfect for make-out scenes in your personal fantasy version of *My So-Called Life*.
BLONDE CAMERO



SUNN O)))
Void
Southern Lord

My 13-year-old bowels weren't strong enough for this when it first came out. The laborious low-end drone probably would have pummeled my innards to the point of defecation for sure. So I am thankful this was rereleased when I am more physically equipped to sit through almost a full hour of metal-influenced amp worship without a diaper.
WILBERT L. COOPER



CRYSTAL STILTS
Radiant Door
Sacred Bones

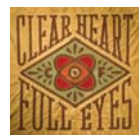
The candy-colored packaging acts as a diversion from the fact you're carrying around a doggie bag of festering leftovers that only drunken desperation could compel you to eat. As you choke back your nausea for another bite, you wonder what the hell is up with your friend who is way too fucking positive for the 8 AM leg of this bender. Does he have a bag he hasn't told you about? And can someone close the curtains again and tell these people that friends don't let friends handclap?
CLEOPATRA RECORDS SAMPLER



FIELD MUSIC
Plumb
Memphis Industries

What's that fairy tale about the devil where people keep meeting him, but no one can remember his name? That's a thing right? Or did

I just make that up? Either way, I just played this all the way through twice while drinking beers in my room and the first time it came to an end I was like, "Goddamn, I played that whole thing and my brain and ears didn't take one second of it in." At the end of the second rotation I couldn't even remember the name of the band. I think it made me unable to conceive as well.
DAVID FLINCH



CRAIG FINN
Clear Heart Full Eyes
Vagrant

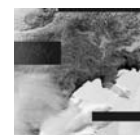
If your favorite parts of Finn's band the Hold Steady included pseudowitticism, heavy religious undertones, and a lot of syllables squeezed into too little musical breathing room, then celebrate, for the savior hath come! This feels hastily made, (impossibly) even more talky/narrative than his past work, and I was hard-pressed to find one track that didn't feature a shout-out to the big man upstairs. What happened to that awesome accordionist?
ALEX HOLMES



DARE DUKES
Thugs and China Dolls
Self-released

Once as we were walking past this café where an amplified acoustic guy was playing behind the window with the tiny audience facing the street, my brother made the jerking-off motion to the audience, who laughed, and the guy stopped his set and turned around to see. Maybe it was Dare Dukes? Who knows, it's impossible to distinguish between café pussies. Also, this record was brought to you by a Kickstarter campaign. Please leave the boring café

before you guys waste six grand on anything else; the jerking-off motion is being made at you too.
LITTLE LOCKY



RHYTON
S/T
Thrill Jockey

Does anyone ever leave a psych-rock show thinking, "God, I wish all the band members could have been playing elaborate solos at the same time"? No. They don't. My fantasy is that solos longer than 20 seconds would trigger a *You Can't Do That on Television*-esque slime bucket installed in the rafters of major venues. That probably won't happen anytime soon, so I've just started bringing a plastic spray bottle with me to shows.
A. WOLFE



BHI BHIMAN
Bhiman
Boocoo Music

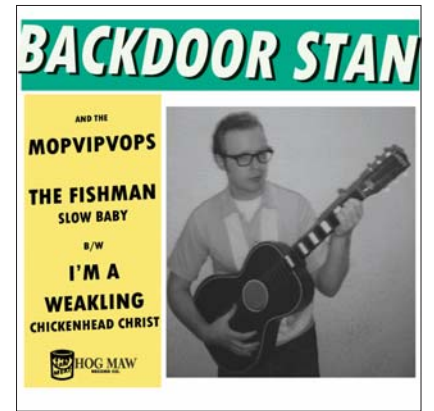
This new record by a singing guitar guy includes new familiar versions of the organ one, the handclap one, the shorter lo-fi one, the rocker, and the sad one, plus it's filled out with what they used to call "album tracks." Available when he's next opening for a band with a pretty good drummer, a singing keyboard guy, and a guitar player with a pedal board.
ANTONIO SALIERI



ANI DIFRANCO
Which Side Are You On?
Righteous Babe

Receiving this promo in the mail filled me with the same feeling as ripping open an envelope containing STD test results. But you know, it's nice that someone out there is still concerned with what

**WORST COVER OF THE MONTH:
BACKDOOR STAN**

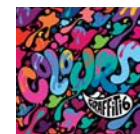


salt-and-pepper lesbians are gonna play at their next vegan potluck. Here it is.
WIND DANCER



BACKDOOR STAN AND THE MOPVIPVOPS
The Fishman
Hog Maw

Backdoor Stan is this Russian guy I see around town playing the harmonica. He's basically the king of the assmen and a lot of his songs are raging butt anthems full of angry love, usually equating people with animals like Fishmen and Chicken Heads. Love is animalistic, so it makes sense. You're either a hen pecking at seed or a fish flopping on the docks.
SHTAYAN



GRAFFITI 6
Colours
Capitol

Like, no joke. Someone—sorry, *someones* were really into Maroon 5 and started their own phenomenally embarrassing band called Graffiti 6. This is completely for fucking real. This world, right?
JOHN PAXSON



VARIOUS ARTISTS
East of Underground: Hell Below
Now-Again

Oh, no big deal, just a recording of a little battle-of-the-bands competition from 1971. IN THE MIDDLE OF VIET-FUCKING-NAM! Each of these four bands was made up of US soldiers on their way to, in the middle of, coming back from, or avoiding "The Shit" (or,

as my uncle likes to call it, "Let's talk about something else"). While that might not make East of Underground's cover of "California Dreaming" any more in key, there's something that's gotta be said for lighting up a joint and listening to agitated semi-amateur funk from guys who may or may not have reached over and put their hand in a pile of goo that a moment before was their best friend's face. Liner notes by Sam Lipsyte too!
FEELIN HUSKY



DWARR
Starting Over
Drag City/Yoga

Ah, mid-80s South Carolina. A place where a bullnecked factory worker sporting Klaus Kinski hair and a bootleg Eddie Van Halen Frankenstein could record moody, nuclear-war sex jams with a drum machine, electric piano, and the noodliest guitar lines this side of Yes and still end up with cover art that looks like a gig poster for my redneck cousin's Cryptic Slaughter cover band. This barely released 1984 opus and Dwarr's follow-up, *Animals*, seriously don't sound like any other music I think has ever existed. It's like the RC Cola of weirdo semi-outsider metal.
LEROY GUMPTION



VARIOUS ARTISTS (I THINK?)
Minimal Teef
???

This CD-R mixtape showed up in an envelope with no return address or postmark over the stamps, which seems vaguely not legal. I have no clue where it came from, there's no label on it or contact info of any kind, and each of the supposed bands is completely immune to googling. All of which would be A-OK if it were a bunch of shitty noise acts from Bushwick and not impeccable Euro-style synth-wave stuff that sounds like outtakes from the French *Bipp* compilation. Quit fucking around with my heart,

Minimal Teef guy. This isn't tenth grade, and I'm not giving you a blowjob to find out what the deal with these songs is (probably).
DEBRA ALLEN



THE ASTEROIDS GALAXY TOUR
Out of Frequency
BMG

Listening to this album without being able to eyeball that sexy bitch Mette Lindberg is as pointless as watching Dylan play at the Gaslight while wearing earplugs or fucking the couch with a condom on. MAMA CAT PANTS



PETE SHELLEY
Sky Yen
Drag City

I'm going to level with you. If this wasn't the guy from Buzzcocks this review probably would have read, "What's with the bee parade, bozo? Forty minutes of this buzzing beeshit? Get outta here." As it is, though, I'm like, "Bee me on, bee man." Unfair? So's life, phlegm-wad.
BUZZ McCALLISTER



STRANGE MEN IN SHEDS WITH SPANNERS
S/T
Drag City/Groovy

This is basically the sound of bored, broke British dudes who spent all of their dole checks on little electronic boxes instead of real instruments. Some of the most collectively gnarly, damaged, solitary, burned-out robo-clang that you're likely to find. Also who doesn't love a band with a good old-fashioned absurd, convoluted name? These guys have the third best, right after Too Fat to Fit Through the Door and People with Chairs up Their Noses.
SKIP COCHRAN

VICE FASHION STOCKISTS

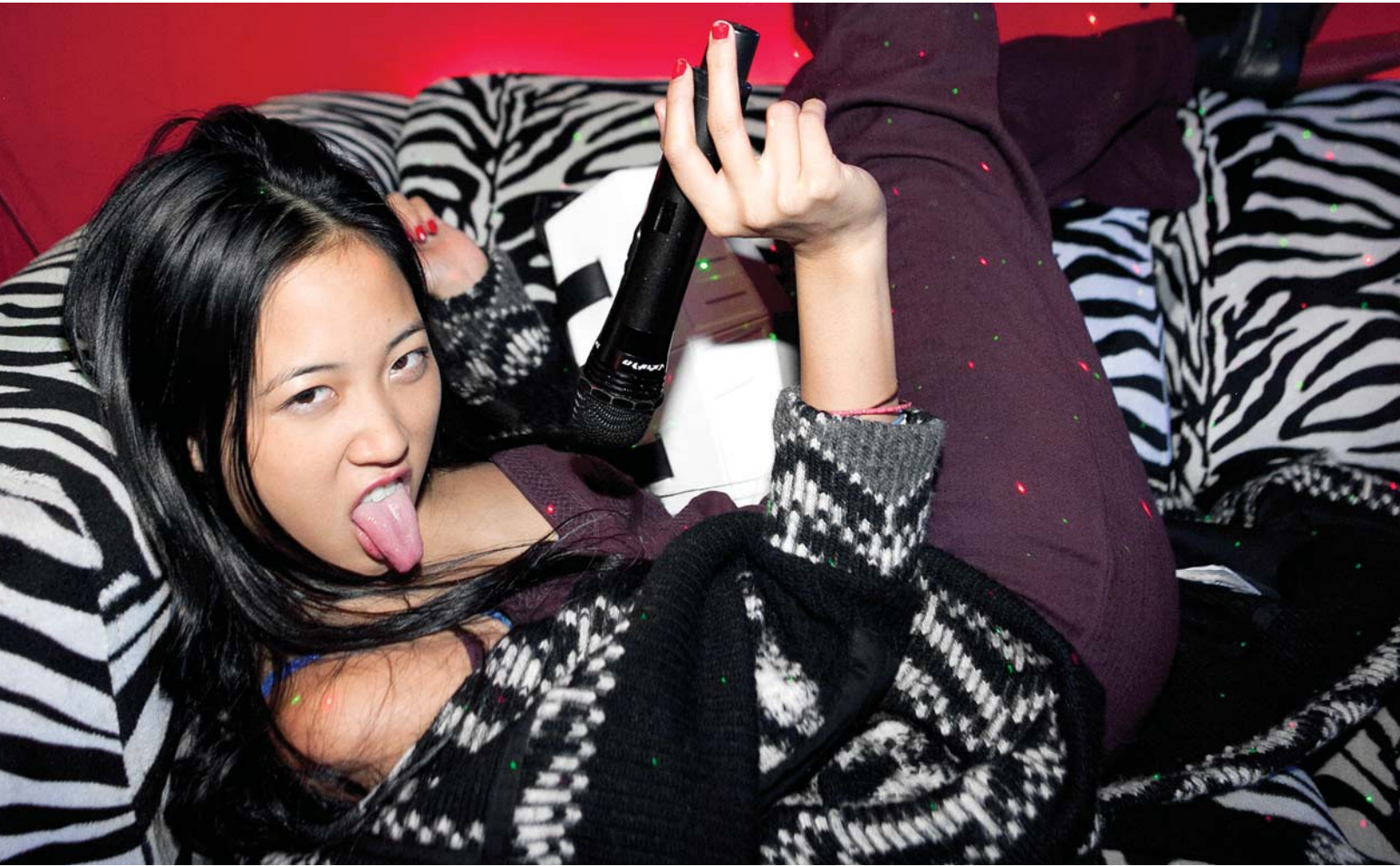


Photo by Ben Ritter, see page 82.

Stussy jumpsuit, Agent Provocateur bra, Diesel sweater, Jeffrey Campbell shoes, United Nude bag, Forever 21 bracelets

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