

The New York Magazine



THE YEAR OF
HORROR

DECEMBER 10, 2017
THE GREAT PERFORMERS ISSUE

THE 10 BEST ACTORS OF THE YEAR
CHOSEN BY A.O. SCOTT AND WESLEY MORRIS

IN FRIGHTENING FILMS AND
PHOTOGRAPHS BY FLORIA SIGISMONDI





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The New York Times Magazine

DECEMBER 10, 2017

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THE 10 BEST ACTORS OF THE YEAR

BY A. O. SCOTT AND WESLEY MORRIS

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HORROR SHOW

In a year defined by horror — at the movies and in the world at large — we cast our favorite actors in a series of frightening photographs and films.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FLORIA SIGISMONDI



BEHIND THE COVER

“When Nicole Kidman surprised us with a bloodcurdling scream during our photo shoot, she gave us the chills — and a frighteningly apt cover that evokes classic horror-film posters. Her scream can be seen as a primal response to a very unusual and disturbing year, at the movies and in real life.” Photograph by Floria Sigismondi for The New York Times.

KATHY RYAN, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Andy Serkis as “the demented clown” for the magazine’s annual Great Performers Issue. Photograph by Floria Sigismondi for The New York Times.



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Luke Bryan has been testing the sonic limits of country music for a decade. Just how much novelty can the genre take?

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Photographed by Kathy Ryan in Los Angeles on Nov. 4, 2017, at 2:09 p.m.

Floria Sigismondi *“Horror Show,”*
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Floria Sigismondi directed and wrote the screenplay for “The Runaways,” starring Kristen Stewart and Dakota Fanning. Next year, she will direct “The Turning,” based on the Henry James novella “The Turn of the Screw.” Her television work includes directing episodes of “Daredevil” for Netflix, “American Gods” for Starz and “The Handmaid’s Tale” for Hulu. She is known for the audacious imagery in her music videos, directing for Marilyn Manson, Pink, the White Stripes, Sigur Ros and Rihanna. Her video for Justin Timberlake’s “Mirrors” won the MTV Video Music Award for video of the year, and two of her videos for David Bowie earned a place in the permanent collection of New York’s Museum of Modern Art.

Kathryn Joyce *“The Takedown of Title IX,”*
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Kathryn Joyce is a journalist based in New York whose work has appeared in The New Republic, Pacific Standard, Highline and elsewhere. This is her first article for the magazine.

Wesley Morris *“The 10 Best Actors of the Year,”*
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Wesley Morris is a staff writer for the magazine, a critic at large for The New York Times and co-host of the podcast “Still Processing.” His last feature was about an all-female pop-music canon.

A. O. Scott *“The 10 Best Actors of the Year,”*
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A. O. Scott is a chief film critic at The New York Times and the author of “Better Living Through Criticism.”

Will Stephenson *“No Country for Old Men,”*
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Will Stephenson is a contributor to The Oxford American and The Fader. He last wrote for the magazine about the graphic-design firm Pen & Pixel.

Dear Reader: Is There Life On Other Planets?

Every week the magazine publishes the results of a study conducted online in June by The New York Times’s research-and-analytics department, reflecting the opinions of 2,903 subscribers who chose to participate. This week’s question: *Do you believe aliens exist?*



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Readers respond to the 11.26.2017 issue.

RE: SPIKE LEE

Thomas Chatterton Williams wrote about the filmmaker and his new Netflix series, based on his first feature film.

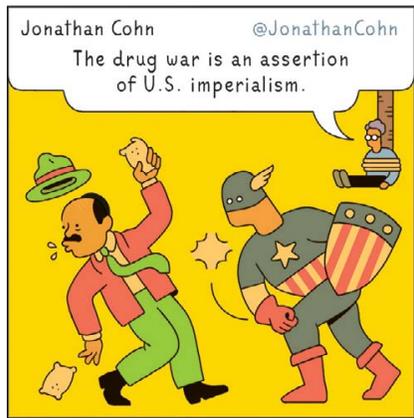
I loved this profile of Spike Lee, who is truly one of the great artists of our time and completely underrated. I hope his point about the importance of Hollywood gatekeepers — and perhaps gatekeepers in all industries that are critical to defining culture — doesn't get lost.

Unfortunately, I feel that the title of this piece is not true: Our culture has not caught up to Spike Lee. The conversations we have about being “woke” are shallow ones; we are as segregated by class and race as a nation as we have ever been. There have been some victories, but as the writer notes, “Do the Right Thing” (like “She’s Gotta Have It”) feels as timely now as it did when it was made. I do think, however, that Spike Lee is a model of the importance of black artists — and artists, period — persevering in a strategic way to protect their vision over time so that it remains theirs and, hopefully, timeless.

To me, the new version of “She’s Gotta Have It” benefits greatly from having a writers’ room full mainly of women. It has some moments that are a bit much — it’s the Brooklyn in him, I think — but the reboot makes it everlasting. Genius never goes out of style.

Joshunda Sanders, Bronx

Though Lee is a Brooklyn icon, and I can think of no other filmmaker who so thoroughly captures the black American experience, he is never given credit for his art that transcends these categories.



One of Lee’s greatest works is “25th Hour”; however, because the film doesn’t neatly fit into the convenient Spike Lee mold (it’s not a film about race), it is often ignored. Give Lee his due, and treat him like the great filmmaker — no additional adjective needed — that he is.

Earl DePass, Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y.

RE: COAST GUARD

Seth Freed Wessler wrote about the United States Coast Guard’s detainment of low-level smugglers.

This story should make every American cringe. These extrajudicial prison boats are slave ships, with inmates shackled to the floor, defecating in buckets and subsisting on rations more suited for animals than humans. It amazes me how cavalierly those who promote this travesty pick and choose legal precepts solely for their benefit, creating an inhumane and comically unjust situation.

While I’m fine with the Coast Guard interdicting drugs (though such efforts do nothing to affect drug availability or use), I have a huge problem with it rounding up the lowest of the low-level traffickers, detaining them inhumanely for months and sentencing them to a decade in United States prisons on the backs of United States taxpayers.

What is this accomplishing? Clearly not deterrence, as evidenced by the article itself. Clearly not reduction in drug availability or use, as evidenced by troves of data. Clearly not remediation of those caught, as they’re more likely to come out of jail as hardened or career criminals than anything else. Clearly not improvements in the Central American countries from which the imprisoned come.



THE STORY, ON TWITTER

The @nytmag Spike Lee cover story is the rare celebrity profile that’s actually insightful, and something you want to talk over with someone at dinner.

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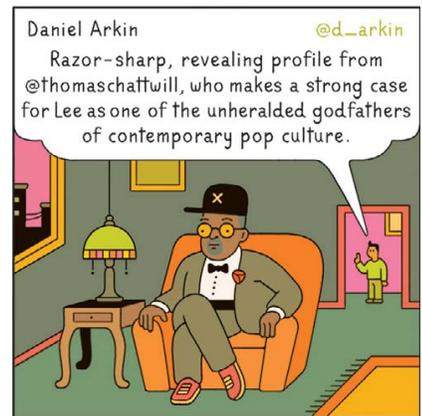
We’re funding drug-interdiction efforts that, beyond capturing drop-in-the-bucket amounts of drugs, primarily cause human rights abuses and add to our ineffective, corrupt prison-industrial complex. How is this even remotely O.K.? *Ryan Hickey, Missoula, Mont.*

Before reading this article, I thought that Donald Trump was the only senior member of the executive branch ignorant of the legal documents that govern our nation. But it is clear that the White House chief of staff, John Kelly, needs to read the Constitution of the United States.

Kelly’s advocacy for and approval of a program interdicting individuals in international waters represents a most interesting concept. How can you go detain somebody if they haven’t violated the law? Prosecuting them without proving the drugs they carried were bound for the United States is in clear violation of Fifth Amendment due-process protections, as found by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

This unlawful and inhumane program — holding detainees up to 90 days in 18th-century-prison-ship conditions — must end. Appeal a conviction from the 11th Circuit up to the Supreme Court as soon as possible. The existing process constitutes a blow to human rights and a stain on our national character.

Peter Myette, New York



‘How can you go detain somebody if they haven’t violated the law?’

CORRECTION

An article on Dec. 3 about the Fox News host Sean Hannity referred incorrectly to the terms of his contract. It is not the case that he can leave the network with no notice.

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From the corridors of power to the vanguard of internet culture, Americans are delighting in being ‘petty.’ By Amanda Hess

Small Talk

This fall, the Trump administration found its new favorite nondenial denial. When a reporter asked the embattled Secretary of State Rex Tillerson about a rumor that he had called the president a “moron” back in July, he replied, “I’m not going to deal with petty stuff like that.” When the White House press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, was asked to comment on political criticism from the Republican senators Bob Corker and Jeff Flake, she dismissed their criticism as “petty comments.” In an Oct. 5 briefing, she brushed off the “moron” story as a “petty, ridiculous accusation” after chastising the media for spending only “5 percent of your time” on “big issues” and filling the rest with “petty palace intrigue.” ¶ Never mind that the Trump administration is normally eager to litigate everything from whether the president owns a bathrobe to the size of his inauguration crowds, or that Sanders herself is the reigning queen of what *The New Yorker’s* Masha Gessen recently called “the petty power struggle” — the art of belittling questions so thoroughly that press briefings come and go with no actual information dispersed. This is the projection presidency, the

“I’m rubber, you’re glue” administration. Its deployment of “petty” as a weapon is particularly canny because it parrots a legitimate strain of press criticism, one that warns reporters against getting sidetracked by meaningless White House spectacles. But at the same time that Sanders is acting appalled by correspondents’ questions, the president’s own petty grievances are working overtime to lure us to national distraction. His recent Twitter rebuke of Time magazine — a “you can’t fire me because I quit” move, in which he claimed to have turned down a potential “Person of the Year” designation — set off an entire trivial news cycle that pushed aside more quotidian political news, like updates on tax-bill negotiations.

It would be easy to assume, surveying the national scene, that pettiness is universally regarded as a bad thing. But in other corners of the culture, it’s experiencing a kind of renaissance. On black Twitter, a certain brand of pettiness — the kind that involves gleefully asserting yourself over the smallest points and meticulously cataloging and avenging the tiniest of slights — is celebrated as a virtue and a skill, the comedic equivalent of possessing strong attention to detail. It’s celebrated in display-name puns — Petty Boop, Petty Labelle, Petty Images — and circulated in animated GIFs cut from reality-TV shows. The black entertainment blog Bossip is hot on the petty beat, publishing lists like “The Pettiest Celebrities in the Game” and curating the highlights of #PettyTwitter. The trend has even been converted into product, with Forever 21 selling a satin baseball cap inscribed with the word PETTY.

Here, the truly petty person becomes a kind of superhero: She’s focused, exacting, unwilling to suffer fools (or literally anything else) gladly. She is an everyday person who treats everything that relates to her as incredibly consequential. If you happen to be the president, of course, the smallest events of your life are already of great consequence — as are your pettiest reactions to them. Trump’s impulse to publicly dunk on Time magazine, when aimed at Kim Jong-un, also has the power to nudge the doomsday clock closer to nuclear holocaust. The context of Tillerson’s insult wasn’t a small thing, either: According to NBC News, it came after a situation-room meeting in which the president was said to be so flippant, about such serious geopolitical issues,



that one anonymous adviser told a reporter, “Maybe we need to slow down a little and explain the whole world” — to the president of the United States. The value of sweating the small stuff, it turns out, depends quite a lot on how much power you have to affect the big stuff.

“Petty” literally means “small.” It evolved from the French *petit* in the late 14th century. A century later, it had curdled into a belittling insult, referring to issues of “small importance” or to “small minded” people. To call other people petty can be to reduce them, and swat them away. It can also be a way to make yourself large, staking your claim to a plane of existence far above such irrelevant nonsense. “Petty” can describe the nonsense, but it can also describe the kind of person who is constantly stooping to engage with it, often transparently in the service of his own ego. “Petty” is both the trifling junk and the person who can’t resist dealing in it.

On black Twitter, a certain kind of pettiness is celebrated as a virtue and a skill.

Ancient Chinese texts drew a class distinction between the *junzi*, the aristocratic gentlemen, and the *xiaoren*, the common men — poor, unskilled and, supposedly, stupid and immoral. Western translators quickly found the perfect Romance-language equivalent: the “petty man.” And 19th-century Marxists made a distinction between the bourgeoisie and the “petite” or “petty bourgeoisie” class beneath it — not just merchants and small-business owners but also all the workers, like foremen and supervisors, who have day-to-day control over means of production they don’t actually own. Kierkegaard extrapolated a spiritual failing from that class position: “Devoid of imagination, as the petty bourgeois always is, he lives within a certain orbit of trivial experience as to how things come about, what is possible, what usually happens, no matter whether he is a tapster or a prime minister.”

These days, pettiness is openly flaunted by the powerful, who are uniquely

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capable of sending their own smallness radiating throughout the culture. It stretches from Washington to America's biggest pop star: On her new album, "Reputation," Taylor Swift re-establishes herself as the perpetual victim in a career-spanning spat with Kanye West. (The first single was titled "Look What You Made Me Do," as if it were blaming *us* for its existence.) Business moguls can act small, too. After workers at the local New York news sites DNAinfo and Gothamist voted to unionize, the billionaire owner Joe Ricketts quickly laid off all of them and, out of what seemed like sheer pique, shuttered the websites, briefly wiping archives of reporters' work from the internet.

Pettiness often manifests itself as an outsize form of revenge — responding to mild slights by putting an absurd amount of energy into plotting meaningless reprisals. (One theory even claims this is how Donald Trump wound up president: His drive to run swelled when Barack Obama made fun of him at a fancy dinner.) There is something unseemly about this habit among the powerful. But when it's practiced by others, there is a delicious sense of possibility in it — a kind of freedom in going to the mat over things you're expected to brush off. Hence black Twitter's embrace of the concept, which sloshes through the digital world in countless jokes and anecdotes and reaction GIFs from black television shows: say, a clip of Traci Braxton, of WE TV's "Braxton Family Values," spelling out "P-E-T-T-Y," or the one from Bravo's "Married to Medicine," in which Quad Webb-Lunceford says, "Honey, you are petty boots!"

Here, "petty" constitutes a reclamation. Just like the insults "geek" and "nerd" have been adopted as proud signifiers of niche interests, identifying as petty signals a willingness to point out slights and center details that are overlooked in the wider culture. But while geeks are imagined as masculine and white, petty is both racialized and a little bit feminized. It's a light cultural rejoinder to the concept of micro-aggressions, those passing instances of everyday racism that add up into a larger, more insidious picture. (See, for instance, Bossip's gleeful dragging of Taylor Swift's "kale-infused" and "tapioca-splattered" performance of

innocence, and the "hilariously petty" reactions it's inspired.)

As with every cultural trend pioneered by black people, white people can't wait to make pettiness their own. BuzzFeed, a master of laundering black internet trends for bigger, whiter audiences, recently added pettiness to its emotional palette, compiling celebratory lists of petty memes and petty texts scraped from social media — often originally posted by black users. The word is emblazoned on sweatshirts, on tote bags, on necklaces. The trouble is that, when you strip pettiness of cultural necessity and make it accessible up the ranks of the privileged, it risks becoming something monstrous. Not everyone in America can be the underdog, leveraging his or her own grievances as refreshing and liberating. At some level, all you have is a

When you strip pettiness of cultural necessity and make it accessible up the ranks of the privileged, it risks becoming something monstrous.

powerful person putting all of his weight behind a pointless, small-minded fight.

Once the powerful have embraced childish sparring and petty egoism, though, how can anyone escape it? Tillerson, who once enjoyed unparalleled status as the chairman and C.E.O. of ExxonMobil, tried to keep himself above the fray of that "moron" story by dismissing the whole thing as irrelevant. Instead, he found himself on the receiving end of a barb from his boss. "I think it's fake news," Trump said, "but if he did that, I guess we'll have to compare I.Q. tests. And I can tell you who is going to win." Even as he's trying to play down the story and suggest it's all nonsense, the president can't resist stooping to claim he's still the smart one. You can seek the high road, but these days, someone will always try to bait you back to the low one. ♦

New Sentences By Sam Anderson



'And you'll roll your eyes while "Born in the U.S.A." plays while fireworks fly screaming into the sky, tucking all its darkness into their pockets.'

I once had an argument with a stand-up comedian about whether it was possible to do a good bit about fireworks.

He said it wasn't. Of course it was, I said.

Our argument went as follows. Comedy, I insisted, raises some deeply familiar subject — childhood, marriage, litter boxes, Hot Pockets — and then moves the listener's mind in unexpected new directions concerning it. The more social gravity a subject has, the more powerful the comic potential. It's like powerlifting: The heavier the thing is, the more impressive it is when you move it.

Fireworks, then, were perfect. They're the most ridiculously familiar thing: a mass spectacle we've all seen so many times it is practically invisible. And yet everyone still goes to see them, as if to a big civic dentist appointment. We lie on blankets and stare up at the dead rhythm of the bangs, and the jellyfish of light spread their tentacles across the sky while spectators make noises of awe so deeply nested in irony that it's impossible to excavate their actual meaning.

But this, the comedian argued, was precisely why fireworks are a terrible subject: Their social gravity is too strong. The human mind simply cannot move in new ways on the subject of fireworks.

Well, poetry is a cousin of comedy, and Abdurraqib's poetic sentence makes me see fireworks in a new way. It ingeniously reverses their motion: Instead of tendrils of light exploding outward, overwriting the darkness, these fireworks gather the darkness into themselves. They are like teenagers stuffing their pockets with candy, ravenous for the night. Violent illuminations arriving, out of nowhere, to hoard the darkness. That would be something worth staring at.

From "They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us" (Two Dollar Radio, 2017, Page 6), a collection of essays by Hanif Abdurraqib.

Illustration by Kyle Hilton

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DAL 1936

Moral panics about technology have returned — only this time, rather than being premature, they might have arrived too late.



The July 3, 1995, cover of Time Magazine featured, below the glowing face of an awe-struck child, a blaring, bold-type neologism that needed no explanation: “Cyberporn.” “A new study shows how pervasive and wild it really is,” read the cover line. “Can we protect our kids — and free speech?” The story cited a new study that made eye-catching claims: that nearly a million pornographic files were available through online bulletin-board services; that 83.5 percent of images stored there — available to anyone, including minors — were pornographic.

The story was a sensation, inspiring a “Nightline” feature and drawing the attention of politicians. The full text of the Time article was entered into the Congressional Record by Senator Chuck Grassley, who urged his colleagues to act “to help parents who are under assault in this day and age.” With strong bipartisan support, Congress soon passed the Communications Decency Act, as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which broadly criminalized the transmission of “indecent” and “obscene” materials to underage internet users. (A Supreme Court ruling in 1997 essentially defanged it.)

Today the article has been disavowed by its writer, the veteran tech journalist Philip Elmer-DeWitt, as the worst of his career “by far.” The undergraduate engineering student who conducted the study, Marty Rimm, changed his name and went into hiding after his work was exposed by critics as profoundly flawed. It was, perhaps, the prototypical mainstream moral panic about the internet.

In the coming years, as most of America got online, some variation on the cyberporn cycle would repeat almost continuously: about chat-room child predators; about online games; about the emergence of social media; about sexting and the apps that seemed designed to make it easier. Anxieties about the internet began to feel more rote and less plausible, in no small part because the internet had disappeared as a distinct place. It wasn’t lurking over there, it was just *everywhere* — as was, for that matter, pornography — and the world turned.

As moral panics about danger and depravity lost traction, popular tech criticism became nebulous and fretful, concerned with vague themes and forecasts. (“Is Google Making Us Stupid?” “Tinder and the Dawn of the ‘Dating



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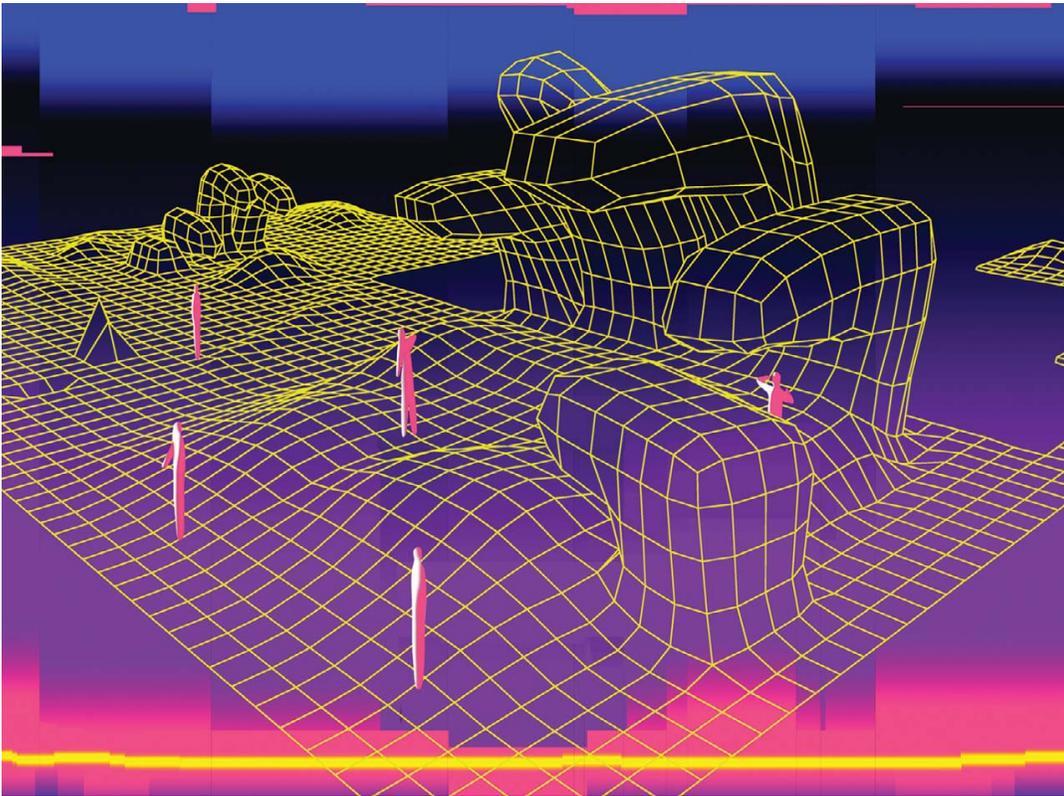
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Apocalypse.’”) In the absence of coherent critiques, and in the context of a stunningly rapid adoption of smartphones, a righteously defensive posturing about the social consequences of tech went mainstream. Critics were easily dismissed as Luddites, unable to see the future through a misplaced nostalgia for the past. This assumption was frequently vindicated and started to feel a lot like wisdom. As the world truly moved online, abstract fears were repeatedly met with, and answered by, specific, irresistible and unthreatening products and experiences. We had learned our lesson.

Which makes 2017’s sudden fits of tech anxiety all the more notable. On YouTube, for example, parents are hearing of vulgar and violent content apparently aimed at — and sometimes featuring — children, in a story that has, at least superficially, the

contours of a moral panic: user reports of disturbing or abusive content and failures to keep it from reaching kids; widespread appeals for action; snowballing attention suggesting a crisis, resulting in headlines like “YouTube Is Addressing Its Massive Child Exploitation Problem.”

And then there’s the matter of “fake news” on Facebook, which predates the 2016 election but which took on panicky dimensions in the months after, as the scope of organic misinformation and foreign-sponsored disinformation was gradually revealed, summoning grave questions about the “post-truth” era and social media’s compatibility with democracy. The trajectory of these stories was familiar and so were the responses: from YouTube saying publicly that it was fixing the problem while also claiming the offensive videos were “the extreme needle in

the haystack”; or from Facebook, which claimed that, at most, news and politics were small detours in the service’s destiny to connect the world. Mark Zuckerberg, the most successful child of the besieged and defensive ’90s internet, has responded to criticism in a manner characteristic of his former peers and idols. His defense of the open network, deployed in the service of his company, rang hollow. It may appear that moral panics are back, but something has changed.

The internet of the 1990s was a perfect canvas for alarmism: hard to define, easy to misunderstand, growing rapidly but not yet vital or even familiar to those most inclined to worry about it. But the internet of 2017 is fundamentally different: both a dominant medium and a medium dominated by a few companies. Earlier worries about the reliability of information online — anyone can publish anything! — addressed the emergence of an entire new category of networked communication, evoking anti-populist fears about the spread of television, radio and the printed word; today’s concerns about, for example, state-sponsored disinformation double as criticism of the companies that have annexed our networks: primarily Facebook, Google and Twitter.

The flip side of these companies’ new dominance is that, not unlike the first industrialists, they turn progress from something that manifests inevitably with the passage of time into something that is being done *to* us, for reasons that are out of our control but seem unnervingly and suddenly within someone else’s. This is a profound reorientation, which might explain why current anxieties about the internet make for such unlikely bedfellows. Conservative parents with moral complaints about inappropriate videos surfacing in YouTube kids’ channels find themselves inadvertently agreeing with leftist critiques of corporate power. Facebook’s inability to deal in any meaningful way with misinformation on the platform has loosely aligned an elitist critique of democratized news with populist anger at a company led by Silicon Valley elites. There are right-wing anti-monopolists and left-wing anti-monopolists setting their sights on Google and Facebook, claiming dangerous censorship or lack of responsible moderation or, sometimes, both at once — people who want different

Moral panics are back, but something has changed.

John Herrman
is a David Carr fellow
at the magazine.

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things, and who have incompatible goals, but who have intuited the same core premise. In these instances, the only people left telling us not to worry — rhyming their responses with the vindicated defenders of the nascent internet — have suspiciously much to lose.

Our present panics tend to arrive just as new parts of our economy, culture and politics are reconstituted within platform marketplaces — shifts that have turned out to be bigger than anyone anticipated. Aggravation about “fake news” followed the realization that the business and consumption of online news had been substantially captured by Facebook, which had strenuously resisted categorization as a media company. Children’s entertainment has migrated to new and unexpected venues faster and more completely than either parents or YouTube expected or accounted for. Twitter is now the most effective way to keep up with breaking news, a singular direct line to the president, and a conspicuously mismanaged experiment in centralized public discourse.

In this way, these new moral panics do have something in common with Luddism, though not as it is now popularly and mistakenly understood. The original Luddites’ complaint was with the way industrialists were using new textile manufacturing technologies to circumvent labor conventions and to thin their ranks as quickly as possible, not with the technologies themselves. They didn’t so much propose solutions as much as they registered a loud and visceral complaint, smashing machines until they were put down by gunfire. Luddites have been reduced in the popular imagination to misguided fools obstructing the arrival of technologies that we now understand as both primitive and vital to the advance of civilization. Their message was inchoate but fueled by firsthand experience of material change rather than speculative, moralistic doomsaying or elite hand-wringing about what we might have lost.

As the internet of 2017 has changed, so has the internet user. We are now in the majority, and our experience is defined by plenitude and freedom, still, but also by a growing sense of exploitation. We find ourselves aware of the power and unaccountability of the new marketplaces in which we socialize, communicate

The people telling us not to worry have suspiciously much to lose.

and do business. To cast our recurring panics as technophobic reruns is to misidentify what animates them most: Not fear, but helplessness.

It would be a mistake to give credence to every noisy critique of a platform, and some of the inevitable panics about Facebook, Google and Twitter — not to

mention Amazon — will be bolstered by sheer reactionary traditionalism. But in more cases, these panics will reveal themselves as concrete complaints, addressed to people and companies whose responsibility for the networks that connect us — for better and for worse — will finally start to catch up with their power. ♦

Poem Selected by Terrance Hayes

This poem displays the poetics between Babel and Babylon, a style compressed and personal enough to conjure Amari Baraka, Baudelaire and Bob Kaufman. It makes reading a kind of revision, a reviewing, a reseeing. We overhear sketches of consciousness. An ominous mood carries through words like “killed,” “poor,” “eulogy,” “jail” and “pain.” The poem resists subject, but sometimes subject is the least engaging part.



The Confidence Scheme

By Tongo Eisen-Martin

The neighborhood looks like someone put their kitchen outside/
Like our children love Detroit/And therefore it is better to cry
than cry through your hands

(I’ve been rehearsing my speeches all summer/tracing car keys on
paper and calling it poetry)

I’m reaching
through the chair
Into the back of a rib cage (the metaphor is the chair)

I am a spirit who sketches
And thinks too much for a man killed by a herd

A poor man’s coat becomes my leader
But will soon need a decent eulogy

Waiting for a bus station to become
more like a birthday eve than juvenile jail sentence
is a matter of contraband.

“I will buy you a drink tomorrow,”
the pain here told the pain there

Terrance Hayes is the author of five collections of poetry, most recently “How to Be Drawn,” which was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2015. His fourth collection, “Lighthouse,” won a 2010 National Book Award. **Tongo Eisen-Martin** is a poet whose second collection, “Heaven Is All Goodbyes,” was published in September by City Lights.



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Grinner's Circle

Can smiling while exercising improve performance?

Many athletes have been told that smiling while sweating will make our efforts feel easier. In May, Eliud Kipchoge, the Kenyan marathon runner, periodically grinned through the final miles of his fastest-ever marathon, which he completed in 2 hours 25 seconds; afterward, he said that he had hoped that the smiling would ease him to the finish line. But there has been little solid scientific evidence to support this idea. Several past studies have examined whether deliberately smiling can alter how people feel psychologically during races, but few have looked at the physiological impact on sports performance.

For a new study published in September in *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, researchers from Ulster University in Northern Ireland and Swansea University in Wales decided to gather a group of experienced recreational runners and have them alternately grin and grimace as they ran. The 24 volunteers, men and women, were not aware of the study's purpose: They were told that the experiment would look at a variety of factors related to "running economy," a measure of how much oxygen you use to stride at a given speed.

First, the researchers tested the volunteers' usual running economy by having them don a facial mask to measure their respiration and then run on a treadmill until they were exhausted. As they ran, the scientists asked them to rate how they felt and describe what strategies they were using to keep going, such as ignoring their bodies' discomfort or tuning in to it.

Then, on a separate lab visit, each volunteer completed a series of four six-minute runs, during which they were assigned four approaches: to smile continuously but sincerely, to frown, to relax their upper body by imagining they gently held a potato chip between loose fingers or, as a control, to use their normal get-me-through-this-run mental techniques.



There were variations in the results. A few runners were most economical when they frowned; the researchers speculate that their grimaces, like ferocious "game faces," increased their determination to outdo their normal performance. But the runners turned out to be most economical when they smiled. As a group, their economy then was as much as 2.78 percent more efficient than during the other runs, a meaningful difference in competitions. Smiling probably aided economy by prompting a "reduction in muscular tension," says Noel Brick, a lecturer in

The key may be to grin sincerely near a race's end, but in 30-second bursts, rather than continuously.

sport and exercise psychology at Ulster University, who led the study.

Many of the runners found it difficult to smile throughout the six-minute session, though: Their grins became increasingly fixed and unnatural. Such false smiles activate fewer facial muscles than the sincere version, Brick said, and most likely result in less relaxation and performance enhancements. So the key to using a happy smile to make you a better runner, he says, may be to grin sincerely and often near a race's end, but in 30-second bursts, rather than continuously. "This is what Eliud Kipchoge seems to do," Brick said. ♦



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Should Buyers Be Told About The Killer Next Door?

I live in a one-family house adjacent to the house of a family whose son was a serial killer 25 years ago. He was 20 at the time and killed two people. He was recently released and now lives there. My son will inherit our house after us and plans to live elsewhere closer to work.

He wonders if he is morally obliged to inform prospective buyers about the neighbor's history.

Name Withheld

Legal requirements vary from place to place, but morally speaking, sellers should either disclose adverse information about the physical condition of what they're selling or issue a disclaimer that they're selling the property "as is." The general principle of caveat emptor — let the buyer beware — can make sense for the sorts of facts that responsible buyers would find out for themselves. By the same token, sellers ought to report problems that an inspection isn't likely to turn up. In those cases (involving so-called latent defects), a disclaimer doesn't suffice. There may be no physical evidence that your house has a tendency to flood, owing to your assiduous rehab work. But you'd better come clean about it. And the same goes for off-site conditions: You should tell prospective buyers if your municipal sewer system is prone to backing up. You should tell them if your neighbors keep 10 pet coyotes and blast death metal all night long. (Remember, I'm talking morality here, not law.)

A house is for living in, and you might conclude that things that don't affect

its use for that purpose are up to you to divulge or not. Yet a house is also an investment, and buyers reasonably want to know about circumstances that could affect its resale value. The simple fact that a buyer would want to know something, though, doesn't require you to tell them.

Some buyers might be deterred by the fact that a previous occupant had AIDS, that the house is believed to be haunted, that there's a senior-living facility in the neighborhood, that there's a mosque at the corner or that a mentally disabled person lives across the street. Depending on your pool of prospective buyers, these things could affect the home's resale value. So you might think that these facts should be disclosed as latent defects, akin to poorly insulated pipes that freeze in the winter. Yet by doing so, you'd be acquiescing to prejudice and superstition.

I'm not talking about the law here, but it's notable that a number of states don't require you to disclose the presence of sex offenders in your neighborhood or the fact that your home was once a murder site. Owing to fair-housing laws, there's a general prohibition on discussing the ethnic or religious composition of a neighborhood. (The disclosure of some of the other circumstances I listed earlier could be prohibited, too.) Legislators, guided by moral concerns, have decided that transparency isn't the only value to be considered.

In this welter of things that you must disclose, may disclose and must not disclose, where should we situate your

neighbor's troubled past? Obviously, most buyers would want to know about it. But there are reasons for doubting that they have a right to be told. One is that the legal system has judged the murderer next door to have paid his debt. We need to rehabilitate offenders, even murderers. That is one aim of a decent system of criminal justice.

Calling him a serial killer suggests that you think he's mentally ill in a way that poses a continuing threat to others. But if that were so, the courts should have committed him until psychiatrists were convinced he posed no danger. Putting aside the movie stereotype of the serial killer, what you really know is that this is someone who killed two people. A sane person who has just spent a quarter of a century in a prison cell for murder would know that he'd be the first suspect if anything happened near his home. Reoffense rates for people like your neighbor are hard to come by, but in her 2012 book "Life After Murder," the journalist Nancy Mullane identified a thousand convicted murderers who were paroled in California over the previous two decades; not one was rearrested for murder.

The likelihood is that buyers would react irrationally to the information about your neighbor. That is emphatically true if you were to call him a serial killer, which evokes an image of someone meticulously planning the murders of innocent strangers. If a buyer asks a question, you ought not to lie. But you can certainly say, for example, that you don't want to spread gossip about the neighbors. Only if you have reason to think that the fellow next

Bonus Advice From Judge John Hodgman



Dianna writes: My partner, Nick, eats leftovers straight from the fridge (pizza, Chinese food, sometimes a thing he calls a "cold cheese roll up"). I'm sensitive to the smell of cold foods. I can be sitting in a different room when he opens the fridge, and it still turns my stomach. Please tell him to stop.

This court has a precedent of siding with unusual senses of smell (see my Nov. 19 ruling in defense of an anosmic wife). I cannot rule in your favor, however. First, if your supersmelling is as keen as you describe, I'd have to order Nick to *never* open the refrigerator at all, even if he planned to heat up his food. Second, cold pizza is delicious. It is arguably the whole point of pizza. I will enter into the record that "cold cheese roll up" is gross. But alas, occasional nausea is the inevitable price of any cohabitation.

To submit a query: Send an email to ethicist@nytimes.com; or send mail to The Ethicist, The New York Times Magazine, 620 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10018. (Include a daytime phone number.)



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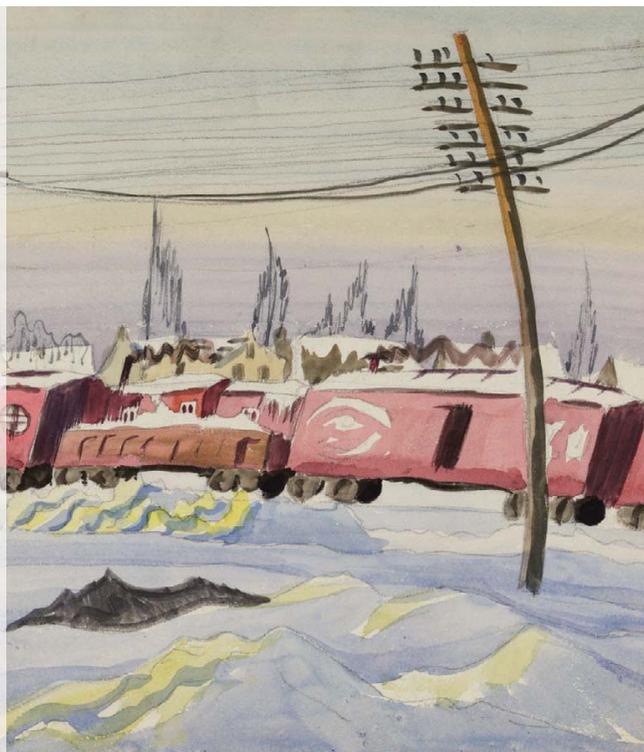
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The Ethicist

door poses a significant threat do you need to talk about his history.

I am Facebook friends with a well-known practitioner in my field. I've never met him, but he posts interesting things and blogs about various developments in our field. I sometimes comment on his blog.

One morning I saw a bunch of posts in my Facebook feed featuring pictures and such from a somewhat flamboyant blond woman with the same last name as this fellow. Having never seen her before, I assumed she was his spouse, and I'd somehow accepted her friend request. There were a lot of posts that I was not interested in (fashion, glamour), so I quickly unfriended her.

I continued to scroll down and saw her first post — she had just come out as trans. She was formerly he, the practitioner I knew and followed.

I feel terrible. I would never unfriend someone for coming out as transgender. How should I handle it? Just refriend? Ignore it? Please advise; this must be a new phenomenon.

Name Withheld

There's an excellent chance that what you did wasn't noticed; with Facebook unfriending, you have to look in order to learn. Still, it's possible that someone who is just coming out as transgender might assign malign significance to unfriendings that occur around the moment it happens. So you could just refriend. But you could also send a private message to her that says something like: "I accidentally unfriended you the other day because I didn't recognize the new you! Congratulations!"

My husband and I have our medical insurance through a Medicare Advantage insurance plan. In addition to paying monthly premiums and having Medicare payments deducted from our monthly Social Security benefits, we paid, in 2016, more than \$6,000 for prescriptions, doctors' visits and other medical expenses that were not covered by our insurance.

As a perk, our plan offers gift cards when a member participates in certain "best practices" such as having an annual flu shot, an annual physical or a mammogram. When I recently called to request a \$50 gift card (you can select gift cards to several

restaurants or shopping sites such as Amazon or Target) after having my annual physical, my husband became extremely angry and told me to cancel my request. He insisted that by requesting these gift cards I was participating in the high cost of medical insurance. I told him he was being ridiculous and refused to do so. (The gift card for a flu shot is \$10.)

What is your opinion? The insurance company has sent us several mailers promoting this program, and I see nothing wrong in requesting these cards.

Name Withheld

Insurance companies, believe it or not, are businesses, and they have their reasons for doing what they do. They have an interest, for example, in getting people to take measures that will reduce their medical costs by increasing preventive care. That's good for the patient and good for the company and good for the world. But your husband has it backward: The gift-card program, if it works, will lower

health care costs (and in theory, could minimize premium increases). These aims won't be affected by whether you take the card; the amounts in question are well within the rounding error of their budgets. But to accept it would be to participate in a scheme your husband actually has every reason to favor.

I am a physician practicing in a state where marijuana is legal, both medicinally and recreationally. I will occasionally receive a bottle of wine from a patient as a token of gratitude. Recently, I was offered some marijuana by a patient for this reason. I did not accept, but would it have been wrong if I had?

Name Withheld

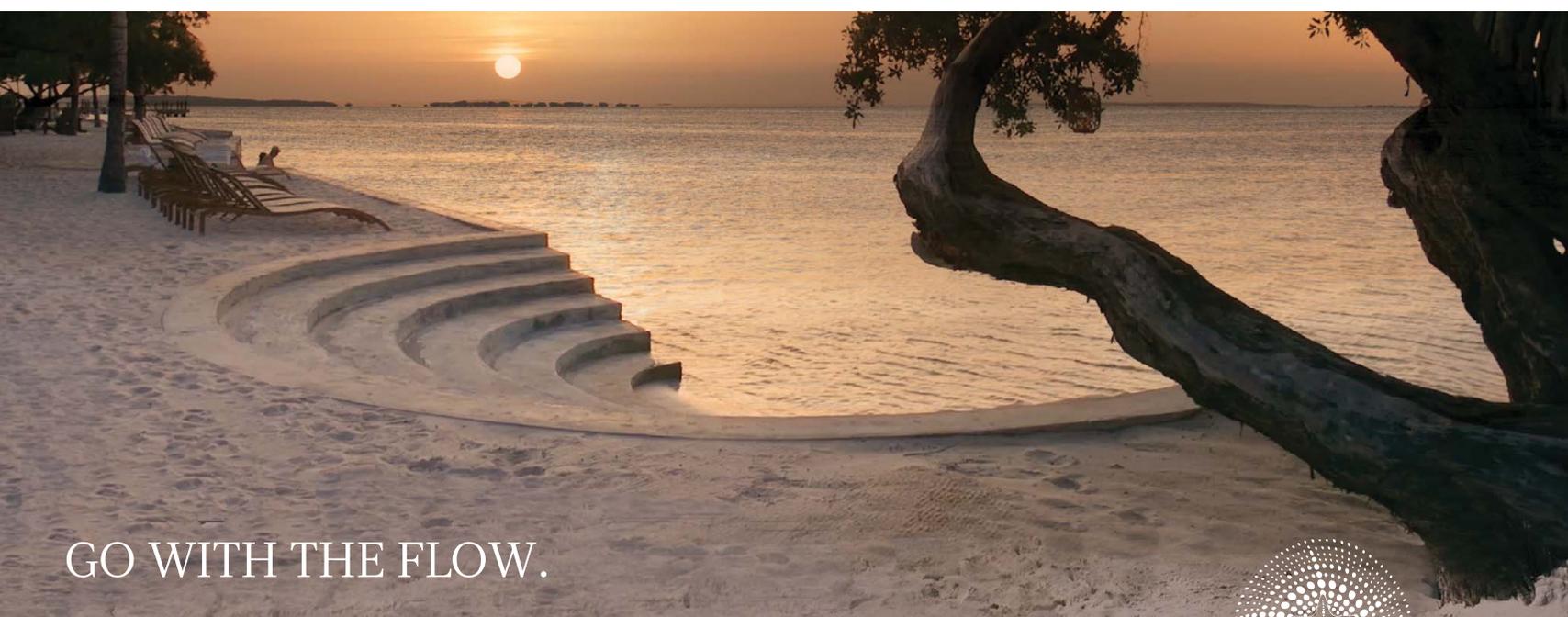
It isn't unusual for grateful patients to give small gifts to their doctors. Large gifts can create problems in professional relationships; small ones really don't. Indeed, refusing them can seem disrespectful, as if you thought the patient

Large gifts can create problems in professional relationships; small ones really don't.

was inappropriately seeking future favors. But in a society like ours, where so many different cultural traditions live side by side, it can sometimes be hard to figure out a gift giver's motives or expectations. All this means that the context and meaning of a gift are going to matter. So my answer to the question whether you should have accepted the pot is: only in circumstances in which it would have been fine to take the wine.

Of course, if you wanted to avoid the complexities, you could adopt a policy of not accepting any gifts at all. That way you could truthfully say, "That's very kind of you, but I have a policy of not accepting gifts from patients." A response like that might still be regarded as disrespectful by people in some communities, with contrary customs, but that's much less likely if you report your refusal as one of your own customs. ♦

Kwame Anthony Appiah teaches philosophy at N.Y.U. He is the author of "Cosmopolitanism" and "The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen."

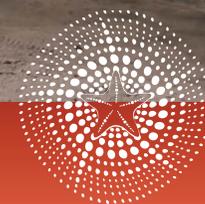


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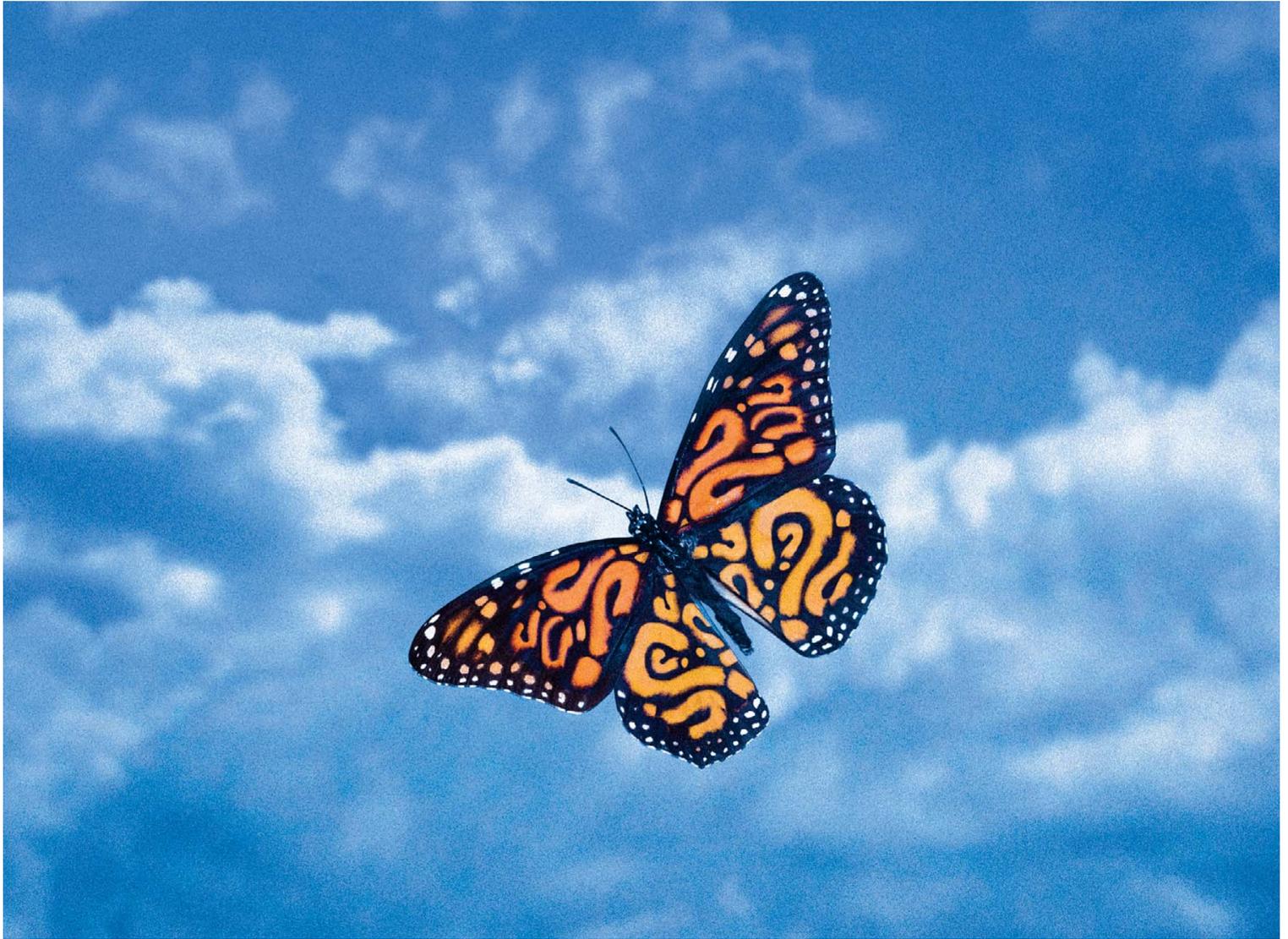
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iNaturalist

By Ferris Jabr



One Christmas, when I was about 8, I received a modern bestiary, a large photo-dense encyclopedia of animals. I had loved animals from toddlerhood — and had begun assembling a small menagerie that would eventually include fish, a rabbit and a fire-bellied toad — but I was not yet acquainted with the staggering diversity of wildlife around the world. I would cradle that book on my lap for hours at a time, memorizing facts about the planet’s creatures, silently reciting their common and scientific names. Ever since, I have made

it a point to learn the names of wildlife I encounter, seeking whatever tools might help me: hefty field guides to mushrooms, pocket-size pamphlets of backyard birds, archives of wildflower photos that let you search by petal color and bloom time.

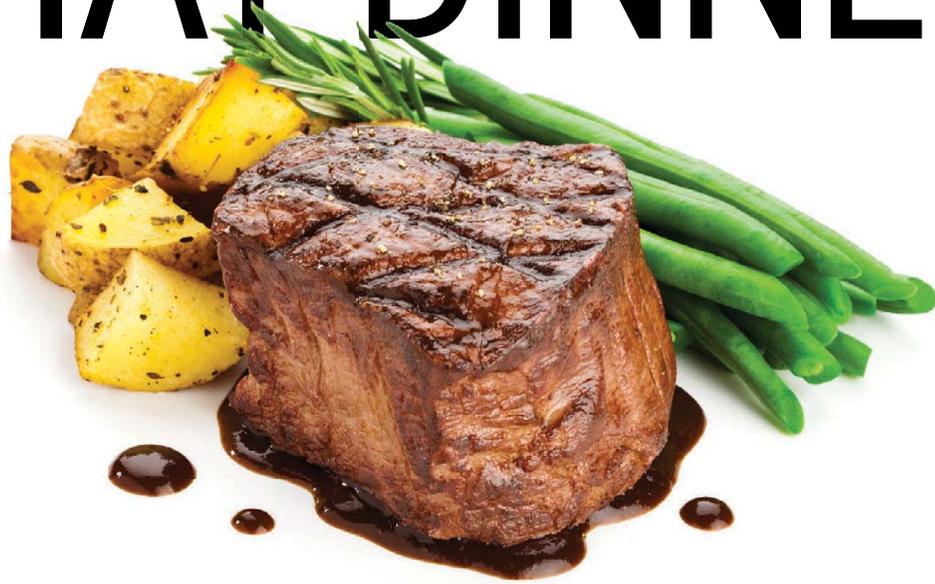
So when I heard reports that a free app called iNaturalist could identify just about any wild animal, plant or mushroom on sight, I immediately downloaded it. iNaturalist is straightforward to use: Take a picture with your smartphone and click “What did you see?” A few seconds later,

An app that changes how we look at nature.

iNaturalist gives you a list of likely species, along with photos and short descriptions. I have tried the app on more than 140 wildflowers, birds, insects and amphibians in Oregon, Washington and California; it correctly identified nearly all of them. (It sometimes has trouble with really large organisms that are difficult to capture in one shot, like trees.)

iNaturalist is a novel hybrid of artificial intelligence and ceaseless human curiosity. In 2008, Ken-ichi Ueda and several other students at the University of

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California, Berkeley, founded iNaturalist as an online community for biologists, citizen scientists and people who simply enjoyed observing wildlife. Members helped one another identify species, eventually amassing a database of more than six million labeled photos. When the iNaturalist app was introduced, it was essentially a mobile version of the website. But it has been updated several times, and the current version employs a neural network trained to recognize species using images from the rich library compiled by human users.

This past May, a couple of months before I discovered iNaturalist, my partner, Ryan, and I went hiking with my family in the hills west of San Jose, where clumps of trees and chaparral mottle pillows of golden grass. As we walked, Ryan and I tried to identify what we saw: over there, a cabbage white butterfly; this was definitely some kind of oak; a Western scrub jay — or was that a Steller’s? Bemused, perhaps slightly annoyed, my father interjected: “Why is it so important to know the names?”

I’ve been mulling over his question. Learning the names of wild things changes the way we look at nature and the way we think about it. Consider bees. Most people know two types: honeybees (the genus *Apis*) and bumblebees (the genus *Bombus*). There are in fact thousands of distinct bee species flying around us all the time — small as gnats or larger than horseflies, fuzzed in hair as orange as Cheddar or armored in metallic green. Some, like the familiar honeybee, are highly social. Many others are solitary. Some construct elaborate hives, while others nest in dry grass, wood or dirt. Most of us are oblivious to this winged panoply, even in our own backyards, because our perception is circumscribed by our ecological illiteracy. Learning the names of our many wild neighbors is an exercise in perspective and empathy, transforming the outdoors from a pastoral backdrop into a world of parallel societies inhabited by diverse creatures, each with its own character and career.

More than an identity, a creature’s name is also a password. It gives you access to entire realms of knowledge about the natural world that would otherwise be inaccessible, because you did not know the right phrase when you went knocking. “Small brown bird” does not have much purchase on Google or in

Learning the names of our many wild neighbors is an exercise in perspective and empathy.

a library, but “house sparrow” (*Passer domesticus*) will open every relevant portal. The name of the rose is the key to its whole story, to its evolutionary arc and cultural entanglements, to the names and narratives of its many cousins. One discovery inevitably leads to another.

While walking my dog one day, I encountered a field of weeds with flowers like tiny indigo windmills. I had no idea what they were. iNaturalist identified them as common chicory (*Chicorium intybus*), which I then learned is the wild ancestor of endive and radicchio. Another day, while gardening, I noticed a particularly furry bee. iNaturalist informed me that it was in fact a fly that evolved to mimic bees, part of a much larger family of flies (*Bombyliidae*) costumed as bees for defense against predators.

The bee impostor had been resting on a flower that is abundant in my neighborhood, a lacy white parasol that browns and curls as it ages, forming a woolly bowl resembling a hummingbird’s nest. Before downloading iNaturalist, Google helped me narrow down the flower’s identity: wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) or poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). The two are often confused. Based on further research, I was pretty sure it was the former; wild carrot has a more compact flower and a fuzzier stem. When iNaturalist concurred, it felt like a nod from an expert. On one walk, Ryan dug a specimen from the ground. We inhaled its noticeable aroma, earthy and mildly sweet. Convinced, Ryan even took a tiny bite of its pale root. “Not bad,” he said. “Definitely tastes like carrot.” ♦

Tip By Malia Wollan

How to Have Fewer Regrets



Improve the way you make decisions to prevent future regrets. “We don’t always have control over outcomes, but we do have control over our process,” says Amy Summerville, a psychology professor at Miami University. Research your options — but avoid “maximizing,” or exhaustively considering every possibility in search of the perfect. “Focus on what’s good enough for you,” Summerville says.

Research suggests that around age 7, humans develop an ability for what’s called counterfactual thinking, the capacity to imagine what might have been. In one study, Americans list romance as a top source of regret, followed by family, education, career and finance. Social regrets — wishing you’d married

someone else, for instance — tend to be more intense than nonsocial ones. People identify regret as the second most common emotional state, after love. Don’t worry too much about missteps: Regrets of action (quitting a job, say) are generally stronger at first but fade more quickly than regrets of inaction (staying in a career you dislike), which persist and can become a sort of passive wistfulness.

Imagine regret as the psychological version of physical pain, drawing attention to something inside that’s off or in need of healing. “Regret is a signal that you’re learning from your mistakes,” Summerville says. If you wish you were more communicative about your emotions with an ex-lover, for example, let that feeling steer you to more openness in future relationships. Consider seeking help from a therapist if you experience what Summerville calls “ruminative regret,” the negative thoughts that arise repeatedly, unbidden, alongside anxiety and depression. “Poking at a wound in that way is not going to make it better,” she says.

Give voice to regret. Studies indicate that the effort to communicate the emotion is driven by a desire for closeness with others. Preliminary data from what Summerville calls her Regret Lab suggests that people hearing about regret do feel closer to those divulging it. “If you have regrets about the things you haven’t done well in your relationships,” she says, “this may be a good time to tell people that.” ♦

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The Magic of Three

Coconut, chiles and garlic brighten any vegetable.



My father got his first tattoo at 63. The number three, in black ink, on the palest part of his arm. “A three?” I asked him, as he rolled down his sleeve. “Why a three?” Because he was the youngest of three siblings, born on the third day of the month, and three had always been his favorite number, he told me. And because three was all-around lucky and mystical, charged full of power — the number of incarnations of the divine, of witches in “Macbeth,” of riddles for a hero to answer.

You can find any number, any number of times, when you’re looking for it. But it’s true that some things are perfect in a set of three, if not exactly harmonizing

then crackling together with a kind of magic. My father taught me a few of these sets, at their most elementary, like crepe batter (flour, eggs, whole milk), which he whisked together every Saturday morning, after he took the dog for a walk, so I could have the thin pancakes rolled up with lemon juice and sugar. But the most compelling kitchen trio I know, the one I turn to most often, is an all-purpose blend of coconut, dried red chiles and garlic.

It’s what I put together to be practical and finish odds and ends of vegetables in the fridge, but also to embellish any exciting, single-subject haul from the farmers’ market. It’s what I make when

Everything the coconut mix touched became a more vivid, lavish version of itself, tingling with heat and sweetness.

no one is around and I’m eating a quick dinner alone, cross-legged on the floor, in front of my laptop. But also when friends are coming over for a weeknight dinner and I want to put something extra on the table with a pot of dal and rice. When my friend Khushbu asked me for the recipe about a month ago, I realized that although I made it constantly, I’d never once measured its parts or written it down. I didn’t even know its name.

The three key ingredients were always on hand, and I took them for granted. Coconut, bought shredded into tiny pieces, dehydrated and unsweetened. Red chiles, only slightly hot, which I

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softened in boiling water. And raw garlic, scant in proportion to everything else, but just as necessary. When I bashed the three together in the small stone mortar that lives on my countertop, the garlic got completely obliterated so that no big pieces were left floating around and the chiles broke down into confettilike bits. I usually sautéed the rough, crumbly paste in a hot pan, just long enough to take the edge off the garlic, then added in a cooked vegetable.

It almost didn't matter which one. Everything the coconut mix touched became a more vivid, lavish version of itself, tingling with heat and sweetness. My family from southwestern India used it to season green beans, trimmed and cut into tiny, delicate pieces, finished with a squeeze of lemon juice. In the winter, I tossed it with rings of unpeeled delicata and butternut squash, roasted in the oven, or tiny florets of roasted cauliflower. I added it to a pan of shredded,

stir-fried cabbages, and to thinly cut brussels sprouts and to beets. It was the best way I knew to use up dull, fading carrots (coarsely grated into a pan with shallots). It was delicious with fried eggs, and with tender, shredded, wilted kale, and fresh fava beans that had been blanched in salted water, and summer corn, shaved off the cob and sautéed with some coconut oil, and even with roasted okra. After sprouting an excessive amount of mung beans on the radiator, I realized it was an excellent way to season those too. Three ingredients with endless variations.

In a quick stir-fry I observed my aunt make with the mixture — using fresh coconut — there was also a sprig of fresh curry leaves and some mustard seeds. The leaves spat when they hit the pan, letting out a soft, almost eucalyptus-like bass note into the hot oil, and the mustard seeds fizzled and popped. You can do this, or not, but when the coconut mix infuses into the

It is delicious with fried eggs, wilted kale or fresh fava beans.

lightly seasoned oil, you get something fuller, and rounder, and more complex.

“We just call it *massolu*,” my father told me, when I complained about not having a word for this garlicky coconut mash I loved so much. And a coconut-based *massolu* could be prepared without garlic, or with tamarind pulp and coriander seeds, or with the addition of toasted dals and cumin. It could be composed of many ingredients and adjusted according to the dish, or it could be, like the one I repeated from my father's side of the family, fixed and flawless with precisely three.

Roasted Squash With Coconut, Chile and Garlic

Time: 40 minutes

- 1½-2 pounds mixed winter squash (such as delicata, acorn and butternut)
- 2 tablespoons grapeseed oil
- 1 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste
- 2-3 dried chiles de árbol
- ⅓ cup unsweetened dried, shredded coconut
- 1 small garlic clove, peeled
- 1 teaspoon coconut oil
- ¼ teaspoon black mustard seeds (optional)
- 1 sprig fresh curry leaves (optional)
- Half a lemon

1. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper, and preheat the oven to 400. Wash, slice and seed the squash, cutting it into approximately ½-inch-thick rings and wedges. Arrange on a sheet pan, drizzle with oil and season with salt. Roast for 30-45 minutes, turning the pieces about halfway through, until the squash is tender and slightly browned in places.

2. In the meantime, put the chiles in a bowl, and cover with very hot water so they soften for about 2 minutes, or longer. In a mortar and pestle or a small food processor, add the coconut and garlic. Grind until the garlic is completely broken down, then fish the chiles out of the water, and add them. Grind, until the chiles are in small but still-visible red pieces.

3. In a sauté pan, heat coconut oil over medium heat. When it is hot, add mustard seeds and curry leaves, if using. When seeds start to pop, add coconut-chile-garlic mixture, and stir well. Cook for about 1 minute, or less if the paste is very dry and starts to brown quickly, then remove from heat. Toss the warm roasted squash into the coconut mixture, along with a generous squeeze of lemon. Taste a piece for salt and lemon, adjust as needed and serve.

Serves 4 as a side. ♦



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THE

BEST
ACTORS
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LET'S SAY THAT THIS YEAR THINGS WERE NORMAL, THAT WE MISSED THE NEWS ABOUT HURRICANES AND EARTHQUAKES AND WILDFIRES, KNEW NOTHING ABOUT MEN SEXUALLY HARASSING ACTRESSES, CAPITOL HILL STAFFERS, JOURNALISTS AND TEENAGE ALABAMA GIRLS, NOTHING ABOUT BOMBINGS AND MASSACRES AND NEVER-ENDING REFUGEE CRISES, NOTHING ABOUT THE CREEP TOWARD NUCLEAR WAR AND THE DANGERS OF A WARMING

planet, nothing of the lava flowing from our president's Twitter account. What story would we come up with to explain why horror films grossed more than a billion dollars in 2017? Horror movies probably don't need the world to be horrifying to be good. But when things are bad, the genre has a way of telling you they could be worse.

There's a difference, of course, between being scared for fun and actually fearing for your life, your country, the future of humanity. But the thrill of horror movies has always been their grasp on collective nightmares. Horror is effective partly because it's never new. We've always seen boogeymen in the movies. Now we're seeing boogeymen at the office, in the government, at the comedy club, *doing the news*. Some of what drew us to the genre this year might have been the urge to have our worst fears realized and to see whether the movies could upstage reality by reflecting it. Their darkness was a respite from our own.

Led by the surprise blockbuster "Get Out," the horror movies of 2017 offer up reliable pleasures — jump scares, creaky

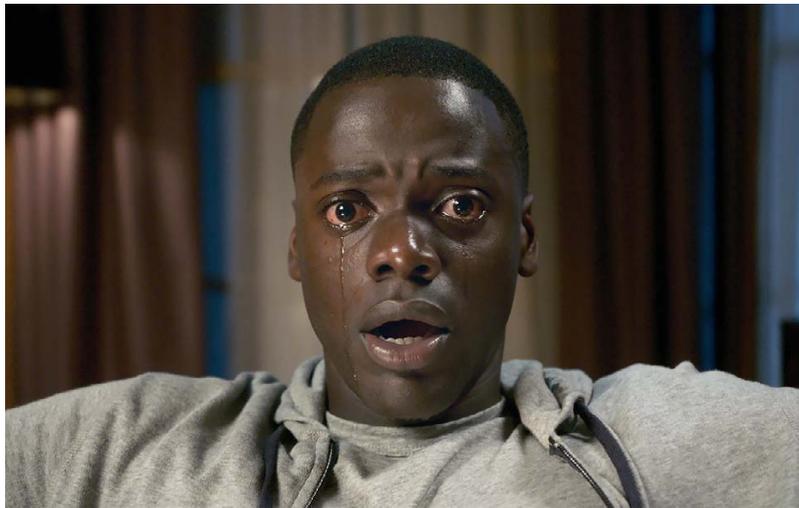
door hinges, lonely houses late at night — while playing with our expectations. "Get Out" invented mind-blowing metaphors for racism. "It" refashioned a shopworn fear of clowns so that their viciousness felt like news. In "Split," a trio of young women trapped in a basement work together to get free of the basket case imprisoning them. A metaphor, perhaps? Even "Happy Death Day," with its heroine who keeps dying until she figures out who's killing her, seems right on time: Her horror movie might never end. And as bad as "Friend Request" is (very, very), it arrived with the tag line of the year: "Evil is trending." Because, well, it is.

Like the superhero genre, horror is somewhat allegorical, a way of giving shape to abstractions. Monsters, demons, ghosts, psycho killers, that homicidal clown all pop out of the Pandora's box of the collective unconscious, as our tormentors and our proxies. For all the supernaturalism attached to horror, the real source of the terror is usually us — or folks more or less like us. Ghosts and zombies are nothing more than former people (a point made with metaphysical

wit in David Lowery's mopey art house film "A Ghost Story"). Regular living humans turn out to be capable of diabolical cruelty (the point of "Get Out") and coldblooded self-preservation (the revelation of "It Comes at Night").

If horror movies were some of the year's most illuminating, they were also some of the year's cleverest and most fun. So we asked the actors who gave this year's greatest performances — including Daniel Kaluuya, Nicole Kidman, Cynthia Nixon, Andy Serkis, Jake Gyllenhaal and Tiffany Haddish — to interpret the genre's archetypes. Duck under a bedsheet, slip in a set of fangs, smear on some makeup, lose your mind and "Boo!": You've captured 2017. But, of course, these performers had already done that, in movies that offered relief and enlightenment as well as terror. They played sensitive primates and brilliant poets, ordinary heroes and exceptional children, best friends and beguilers in movies that were funny, sad, sweet and revelatory. What's truly scary about them is their talent, commitment and craft. *Wesley Morris and A.O. Scott*

The shot from Jordan Peele’s “Get Out” that probably pops into your head first — it was in the trailers and will no doubt feature in the Oscar reel — is of Daniel Kaluuya in close-up, his eyes open wide and overflowing with tears. It’s a pivotal moment, for sure, both in the plot and in Kaluuya’s performance: the big reveal and the first big emotional payoff. But it’s also a confirmation of the importance of those eyes to the structure and meaning of the film. They are perhaps its only reliable barometers of emotion, instruments of empathy and windows on the truth.



Chris Washington, Kaluuya’s character, is a photographer. According to a movie convention going back at least to “Rear Window,” this makes him a bit of a voyeur and also suggests a certain detachment from experience. He’s a watcher more than a doer, at risk of seeing too much. And “Get Out,” in every way, is about seeing and being seen, about Chris’s dual status as an observer of the ways of white people and an object of their increasingly sinister gazes.

◆
DANIEL KALUUYA
 FILM:
Get Out
 ◆

Visibility and invisibility are central to the psychic history of American racism. Black men like Chris can be destroyed if they are seen in the wrong place (or if they look at the wrong person in the wrong way). They are also in constant danger of disappearing, of being erased, stolen, whited out. Chris knows all of this, but he would like to believe that he can wear this history, as it were, lightly. In the early scenes it seems as if he and his girlfriend, Rose (Allison Williams) haven’t so much “transcended” or “seen beyond” race as figured out a way to be

different without being each other’s Others.

Chris’s rude awakening from this pleasant, lethal fantasy is the entire plot of “Get Out,” and Kaluuya’s quiet, reactive, cat-footed performance is the key to it. He is victim and avenger, a surrogate for the filmmaker and the audience, as passive and helpless as Mia Farrow in “Rosemary’s Baby” and then, when it counts, as charismatic and decisive. He can’t believe his eyes, and you can’t take yours off him. *A.O. Scott*

The truth of the matter is that Nicole Kidman could make the list of great performers in just about any year, for just about any role. She is always interesting, never not surprising and consistently unnerving, even when the movies fall short. In 2017 her most-heralded work was on television, in the Northern California HBO potboiler “Big Little Lies,” where she played a supercapable professional turned stay-at-home mom and steadfast friend who was also the victim of violent domestic abuse. The zone where normalcy collides with extremity — where high comedy and psychological terror keep company — is her sweet spot.



What makes her big-screen work this year — in “The Beguiled” and “The Killing of a Sacred Deer” — even more astonishing is that she brought that sweet spot with her, infusing those movies with an element of vitality they would otherwise have lacked. Both of them are hothouse blossoms, exercises in sensibility for directors (Sofia Coppola and Yorgos Lanthimos, respectively) with very particular

◆
NICOLE KIDMAN
 FILMS:
The Beguiled,
The Killing of a
Sacred Deer
 ◆

agendas. “The Beguiled” remakes a pulpy early-’70s study in sexual hysteria into an arch melodrama of beleaguered femininity. As the headmistress of a school full of Southern belles who welcome a wounded Yankee into their midst, Kidman is an avatar of Victorian womanhood. Her character is also the only one to understand how absurd the situation is and to grasp the raw currents of power and lust that surge under the decorous surface.

Kidman herself disrupts the film’s decorum, much as she complicates the mechanical allegory of Lanthimos’s film. Everyone else in “Sacred Deer” is slotted into a carefully measured box, working in the service of what is essentially a literary conceit. A young man places a curse on a modern, upper-middle-class family, who must contemplate a horrible crime if they wish to break it. While the other actors obey the director’s fairy-tale strictures, Kidman behaves like a real person. All of the film’s moments of genuine emotion, which means real humor as well as authentic terror, belong to her. *A.O.S.*

Please bear with me. I'm about to use too many italics. But that's because Tiffany Haddish is an italics type of actor. She bends every word she speaks toward her. They're not leaning, though. They're bowing down. Haddish is that charismatic, that *alive*. Dina, the party monster she's playing in "Girls Trip," wields that charisma to demand that you be alive, too. In the movie's most notorious scene, she makes a case for the erotics of grapefruit that should have sent citrus stock through the roof. In New Orleans's French Quarter, Haddish air-humps one of those live tourist-trap statues, and the statue breaks character and chases after her. He can't help himself. Nobody can.

This is an ensemble movie with a very good ensemble, so it feels rude to single out Haddish. But she makes the singling out inarguable. As Michael Jackson once asked, "Where did you *come* from, lady?" Before "Girls Trip," I'd only seen Haddish in "Keanu," as a gun-toting drug-world thug who is mildly into Jordan Peele. We now know what false advertising this was.



◆
TIFFANY HADDISH
 FILM:
Girls Trip
 ◆

There's nothing mild about her. Some of Dina's choice lines: "It's chlamydia, y'all! That [expletive] can be cured!" "I got drugs. In my booty." "Who is this ratchet-ass bitch?" Black women have done top-volume vulgarity in the movies before. What we've never seen is vulgarity delivered with this much kaleidoscopic effervescence.

In a sequence set on an airplane, Dina takes a serving tray from the flight attendant and starts handing out cups to her fellow first-class passengers as Chaka Khan's "I'm Every Woman" starts playing. Even

though Haddish is singing along, it still seems like another soundtrack jam. But then everybody else in the cabin sings, too. Who put this song on? We don't hear anybody request it, and no airplane speakers sound *this* good. As Haddish marches and shakes her way down the aisle, it's pretty clear what happened. She willed this. To paraphrase Chaka, it really is all in her. And by the time this movie is over, whatever "it" is, Haddish has poured all over us. *Wesley Morris*

What to do with an actor in a type of role you dislike that's the centerpiece of a movie you don't care for, in part because it's set somewhere you wish the movies would, pretty please, stop fetishizing? Well, if the acting works, you just ignore everything else. And Jake Gyllenhaal's acting here really works. He plays Jeff Bauman, a real-life Costco employee who lost his legs in the Boston Marathon bombing. Bauman is desperate to go back to being a knucklehead with his buddies. But he has to struggle with his family's brew of emotions, his girlfriend's guilty feelings and rehab. It's the sort of bound-for-tragedy part that barely needs an actor. It practically performs itself. And yet, many actors have given it and had many a statuette thrown at them for doing so. But as the story becomes about the city's need to worship at Bauman's wheelchair, Gyllenhaal's sidesteps dignity and saintliness and inhabits the horror of unsought heroism. He makes the physical challenges secondary to the psychological ones.

Gyllenhaal has found a way to play a part that can only be described as charismatically



◆
JAKE GYLLENHAAL
 FILM:
Stronger
 ◆

unremarkable; except he doesn't just play it, he disappears within it. The bombing in the film happens sooner than you want it to. The minute you hear the first boom, you start wondering about what's going to happen to Bauman, obviously. I worried about what would happen to Gyllenhaal's acting. He works here with remarkable restraint. The character struggles with leglessness and unceasing adoration. The actor doesn't appear to struggle with anything. He's playing the shock of attention, the suffocating embarrassment of pity, and rage at how the bombing forces Bauman to take greater responsibility for his choices.

This fictional Bauman seems fine with the wheelchair. It's adulthood and celebrity that leave him feeling confined. There's a scene in which the character is wheeled onto the ice before a Bruins game, where the crowd smothers him with hero worship. Rather than exude gratitude, Gyllenhaal goes for something far more original and distressing in its direness: claustrophobia. *W.M.*



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LET THE SHOW BEGIN

“A Fantastic Woman” is set in Chile, but its star, Daniela Vega, practices a kind of naturalistic, European mode of performance. It’s acting that’s more like being: She makes her way through the film as she might go about her actual day. If you’re a transgender woman, as Vega is, the day might entail enduring the hateful harassment of your dead boyfriend’s ex-wife, his son and his son’s friends. It might include a medical examiner’s gratuitous request that you disrobe, not only because you’re the suspected cause of the boyfriend’s death but, you know, just *because*.

Vega plays Marina, a waitress and a nightclub singer, for whom a version of widowhood immediately sinks in, meaning she spends most of Sebastián Lelio’s film in a state of shock. Everyone who comes into contact with her insinuates something. How did Orlando *really* die? And where are you taking those suitcases? With each new confrontation, Marina has to reexplain herself and therefore relive the trauma of her man’s death. She’s insulted, nagged, disbelieved, denied, wrapped in packing



◆
DANIELA VEGA
 FILM:
A Fantastic Woman
 ◆

tape, at some point, and dumped out of a truck. The tension here is between the necessary wariness of Vega’s acting and Marina’s being so hideously acted upon. Dignity is overrated as a performance strategy. Usually, it works against an actor because it bumps her up to saint before she’s finished being human. But the longer this movie goes on, the clearer it becomes that Marina is all dignity. Under the circumstances, it’s all she has.

The “fantastic” of the title might be a kind of built-in accolade for its star. But it also implies the state of the character’s imagination. Anytime we’re allowed

into Marina’s head, it’s for something like a nightclub dance sequence in which she becomes a human pompom. Vega has Marion Cotillard’s enormous eyes, some of her sense of sadness and a whiff of her glamour. She’s Cotillard before putting on layers of emotional makeup. Her work here builds slowly. But it builds up high. Vega’s triumph is moving for its absorptive anti-drama. Her body tells you where she stands. But that face tells you what she has withstood. *W.M.*

Has any movie actor conjured as much surprise as this little girl? Maybe “Annie Hall”-era Diane Keaton or 1980s Goldie Hawn. But Brooklynn Prince is playing a 6-year-old impoverished urchin named Moonee, not a bourgeois, hopeless romantic. Moonee zooms around a shabby motel near Disney World, looking for excitement that most adults would classify as trouble.

There’s a scene in which she tries banging the back of her head against a concrete mural and registers real alarm at how it kind of hurts. It’s cute yet sums up her acting challenge here: Where does cute go after it hits a wall? Typically, the answer would be “on your last nerve.” But Moonee’s misbehavior abuts tragedy. Even though she’s a child who instigates arson and licks ice cream as a comic means of torture, Sean Baker’s movie has pulled back far enough for her mischief to make psychological sense. Her young mother is messy and wild — and, emotionally, also 6. Moonee learned brattiness and cluelessness at home.



◆
BROOKLYNN PRINCE
 FILM:
The Florida Project
 ◆

Baker carefully turns this kid’s depressive, uncouth world into a wonderland. Her tasks might seem like nothing special (she does lots of yelling and galloping around). But that’s an actor’s job — to turn nothing special into something. For one thing, she has a firm grasp of sarcasm. (“Yeah, Mom, you’re a disgrace,” she says when someone chastises her mother about Moonee’s latest misadventure.) For another, she holds her own with Willem Dafoe, who plays the motel’s manager and is the only veteran actor in the movie for miles. She doesn’t seem to know or care that she’s acting with Dafoe. He becomes another game to play, his patience another button to push.

Prince is at her comical best when the movie needs her face to do what a screenplay can’t. That fire Moonee helps start lures eager spectators, including her mother, who proceeds to take her daughter’s picture in front of the burning building. Prince’s expression — a rictus of embarrassment, confusion and guilt — belongs in a gallery. It’s a masterpiece of remorse. *W.M.*

Elio, the teenage protagonist of “Call Me by Your Name,” may not be a prodigy, but he’s a serious musician, spending part of each summer day in intense concentration as he transcribes what he hears on his Walkman onto staff paper. It’s 1983, a blissfully analog time to be 17. Sometimes Elio’s parents persuade him to perform for guests at the rambling villa in Northern Italy where they live during school vacations. One guest in particular — an American graduate student named Oliver, who is with them for six weeks — sparks Elio’s interest. As their initially tentative friendship evolves into something more intense, Elio engages in some musical showboating for Oliver’s benefit. He plays a bit of Bach on the guitar and then moves to the piano, banging out the same passage in the style of Liszt and then in the manner of “Busoni playing the way Liszt would have done it.”

Timothée Chalamet, the 21-year-old actor who plays Elio, demonstrates similar virtuosity, but with nothing like Elio’s level of needy display.



◆
TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET
 FILM:
**Call Me by
 Your Name**
 ◆

Luca Guadagnino’s film, one of three movies in which Chalamet appeared this year (the others are “Hostiles” and “Lady Bird”), is lush, sensual and elusive, driven less by plot than by mood. The moods that keep it in motion — languorous, horny, impatient, ecstatic — belong principally to Elio. Or, rather, he belongs to them.

The conventional way to deal with a young man’s first sexual experience involving another man is as a coming-out story in which an unacknowledged but pre-existing identity is brought to the surface of consciousness and experience. What happens

to Elio is a more ambiguous and open-ended process of self-invention. Every aspect of his life — erotic, domestic, intellectual, social — is like that Bach medley. He tries out various styles with flair, irony and a kind of amazed delight in himself and his awakening appetites. Chalamet seems to match Elio’s exuberance, to share his devotion to experimentation and limit-pushing and, before our eyes, to evolve from precociousness to mastery. *A.O.S.*

Here’s the short, incomplete explanation of how performance-capture works: An actor puts on a contraption that helps record the contortions of his face and body. That recording is then used to animate a creature whose movements have a peculiar lifelikeness. To play Caesar, the president of the apes in “War for the Planet of the Apes,” Andy Serkis had to wear such a get-up. He’ll never be sufficiently lauded for the grace and solemnity of his performance as Caesar. His mastery of this wing of acting might always be perplexing. How do you know what we’re seeing? But if Caesar moves you, the experience beats seeing Serkis. You’re *feeling* him. He so harmonizes with the technology that he manages to transcend it. It’s tempting to say he is the Daniel Day-Lewis of performance-capture acting. But what if Daniel Day-Lewis is really the Andy Serkis of regular acting?

By this third installment of the latest “Apes” series, Caesar is a being of fury, grief and purpose. He speaks in low, oddly elegant grunts. For stretches, he does a lot of crouching, standing and



◆
ANDY SERKIS
 FILM:
**War for the
 Planet of the Apes**
 ◆

watching. There’s barely any of his motion to capture. And yet he remains the movie’s emotional center of gravity. This beast couldn’t be more dissimilar from Serkis’s Gollum, from the “The Lord of the Rings” movies — a tinier, hairless, lizardly villain. His hissed speech was a kind of demonic possession. The inner conflict Serkis evoked as Gollum becomes grand yet wary rectitude with Caesar.

As with Gollum, one key to the “Apes” performance is in the eyes. They’re not roiled here. They’re pebbles. You’d never think anything so tiny could be so mesmerizing, but they’re essential to the moral seduction of these new “Apes” movies and maybe even to the performance-capture enterprise as practiced by Serkis: They make man root against mankind. The perverse empathy we feel for the apes comes from how thoroughly awful humans are made to seem. The rest comes from what a convincing leader Serkis makes Caesar. You really would follow him to paradise, to war and even to your death. *W.M.*

I'll confess that I am biased both for and against literary biopics. For, because I worship writers; against, because I hold to the unfashionable belief that all we need to know about them can be found in their work. What was Emily Dickinson like? The jagged lines, slanting rhymes and metaphysical drama of her poems should be sufficient to bring you into her mind and world.

But it's also true that the meeting of that mind and that world — a mind that seems as bracingly modern as its environment seems quaintly antique — is an endlessly fascinating subject. “A

Quiet Passion,” Terence Davies’s restless and lyrical chronicle of Dickinson’s life, poses apparently guileless questions: Where did this poet come from? Who was she when she was at home?

The answer is supplied by Cynthia Nixon, who faces the challenge of filtering Dickinson’s obscurity through the inevitable lens of her own celebrity. If anything is the opposite of “Sex and the City,” it is surely the life of Amherst’s most famous recluse. She’s all about chastity and the countryside. While



◆
CYNTHIA NIXON
◆
FILM:
A Quiet
Passion
◆

Nixon’s Emily is no Miranda, she is smart, silly, sociable, principled and above all engaged with everything and everyone. She gossips and giggles with her beloved sister, defers to her fearsome father and rolls her eyes at dull visitors. When she learns that her brother has been unfaithful to his wife, she reacts with the fury of a woman betrayed. The solitude of her poetic labor is balanced and fed by the richness of her domestic surroundings. At home and on the page, she is the same person: quizzical, mercurial, terrifyingly perceptive.

“If your nerve deny you,” Dickinson wrote, “go above your nerve.” At times in “A Quiet Passion,” Nixon is nothing but nerve, abuzz with thoughts and sensation that can hardly be contained by the sober, Christian, patriarchal society she lives in. But as Emily accepts those constraints, enclosing herself within an ever-narrowing circle of activity and acquaintance, Nixon’s voice and body vibrate at a higher frequency, and we find ourselves beholding one of the most plausible and powerful depictions of genius ever committed to film. *A.O.S.*

It has been apparent for at least a decade — let’s say since “Atonement,” which you may have forgotten had anyone else in it — that Saoirse Ronan can do anything. Even as a young teenager, she clearly possessed Streep-level discipline and versatility and also the kind of relentless, fearless, unshowy honesty most often associated with great French actresses like Juliette Binoche and Isabelle Huppert.

In “Lady Bird,” Greta Gerwig’s semi-autobiographical coming-of-age story, Ronan proves she can do anything by doing something that may sound easy: playing an ordinary American high-school student. “Ordinary” is hardly fair, though. Lady Bird McPherson (also known, to her great annoyance, as Christine) is typical only by virtue of the circumstances over which she has no control. She has parents who love her and drive her crazy, a school that is neither paradise nor prison, a loyal best friend and various other romantic and social temptations. She is in no way exceptional and in every



◆
SAOIRSE RONAN
◆
FILM:
Lady Bird
◆

way unique — a marvelous paradox that has rarely been captured with such wit.

In the course of a little more than 90 minutes of screen time, *Lady Bird* fights with her mom (the astonishing Laurie Metcalf), loses her virginity and applies to college. She auditions for the school musical, goes to prom, dabbles in pretentiousness and stands by her dubious musical taste. She is intelligent and thoughtless, timid and defiant, generous and mean. She grows like an artichoke thistle: spiky and layered and aware, even if no one else is, of her inner radiance.

Ronan navigates each swerve in *Lady Bird*’s story with an uncanny combination of self-confidence and discovery. She is as spontaneous and unpredictable as an actual 17-year-old — someone you know, someone you were — which suggests an altogether stupefying level of craft. You could say she makes it look easy but being young is never easy. Better to say that Ronan makes being *Lady Bird* look exactly as hard as it is. *A.O.S.*



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THE MOVIES
AND IN
THE WORLD
AT LARGE —
WE CAST OUR
FAVORITE
ACTORS IN A
SERIES OF
FRIGHTENING
PHOTOGRAPHS
AND FILMS.*

◆
PHOTOGRAPHS
BY
◆
FLORIA SIGISMONDI

FEATURING:

DANIELA
VEGA



TIMOTHÉE
CHALAMET



SAOIRSE
RONAN



BROOKLYNN
PRINCE



ANDY
SERKIS



CYNTHIA
NIXON



DANIEL
KALUUYA



TIFFANY
HADDISH



JAKE
GYLLENHAAL



NICOLE
KIDMAN

DANIÉLA VEGA
FILM:
A Fantastic
Woman

◆ THE VAMPIRE ◆

**No pleasure can
match a
midnight feeding.**

*“You’re looking at the
beauty first, and then you
realize that there’s something
different about the image –
that trickle of blood is what
gets the imagination going.”*
Floria Sigismondi



TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET
FILM:
Call Me by
Your Name

◆ THE CANNIBAL ◆

**As genteel as he
is evil, he lives only
to serve man.**

*“There’s an air of Dorian
Gray to him. He’s polishing
the silverware and
catching his reflection in
the knife, he’s fixing
his hair. He’s been haunting
the house forever,
but there’s a charm and a
sweetness, as if he
would give you his heart.” F.S.*





SAOIRSE RONAN
FILM:
Lady Bird

◆ THE MANNEQUIN ◆

After years
in the attic, she
is awakened.

“This image reflects an idea I’d always had but had never realized – to play with wrist movements and eyes opening, and being trapped in a version of yourself, trapped in a hard shell.” F.S.







BROOKLYNN PRINCE
FILM:
The Florida
Project

◆ THE DEMON CHILD ◆

**Will she heed her
mother's call?**

“Deviant little children come up in horror movies a lot, because they’re so scary. And I think it’s because children are so honest. You can go anywhere with that idea. Brooklynn was amazing. I was telling her to play with the shower curtain and do these hand movements, and it was so lyrical and scary at the same time.” F.S.

ANDY SERKIS

FILM:
War for the
Planet of the Apes

◆ THE DEMENTED CLOWN ◆

**He paints his
face for a night
of terror.**

*“Clowns are scary,
because they’re supposed
to make you laugh,
but they’re also hiding
something.” F.S.*

CYNTHIA NIXON

FILM:
A Quiet Passion

◆ THE GHOST BRIDE ◆

**Jilted in life,
she haunts the altar
in death.**

*“We don’t have her eyes
to use as an instrument of
emotion, but she says
so much with her face and her
hands and her lips.” F.S.*





DANIEL KALUUYA
FILM:
Get Out

◆ THE PSYCHO KILLER ◆

His victim
isn't as dead as
he thinks.

"He knows what he's done, and he's watching television. The bloody hand is a great revenge twist. The scene ends with a question mark." F.S.





TIFFANY HADDISH
FILM:
Girls Trip

◆ THE MACABRE
DANCER ◆

**Even death
cannot diminish his
hold on her.**

*“It’s the idea of a dance
with mortality and flirting with
that relationship and
turning it into something where
you’ve got the upper hand.
There’s a power play with death
turned into art.” F.S.*

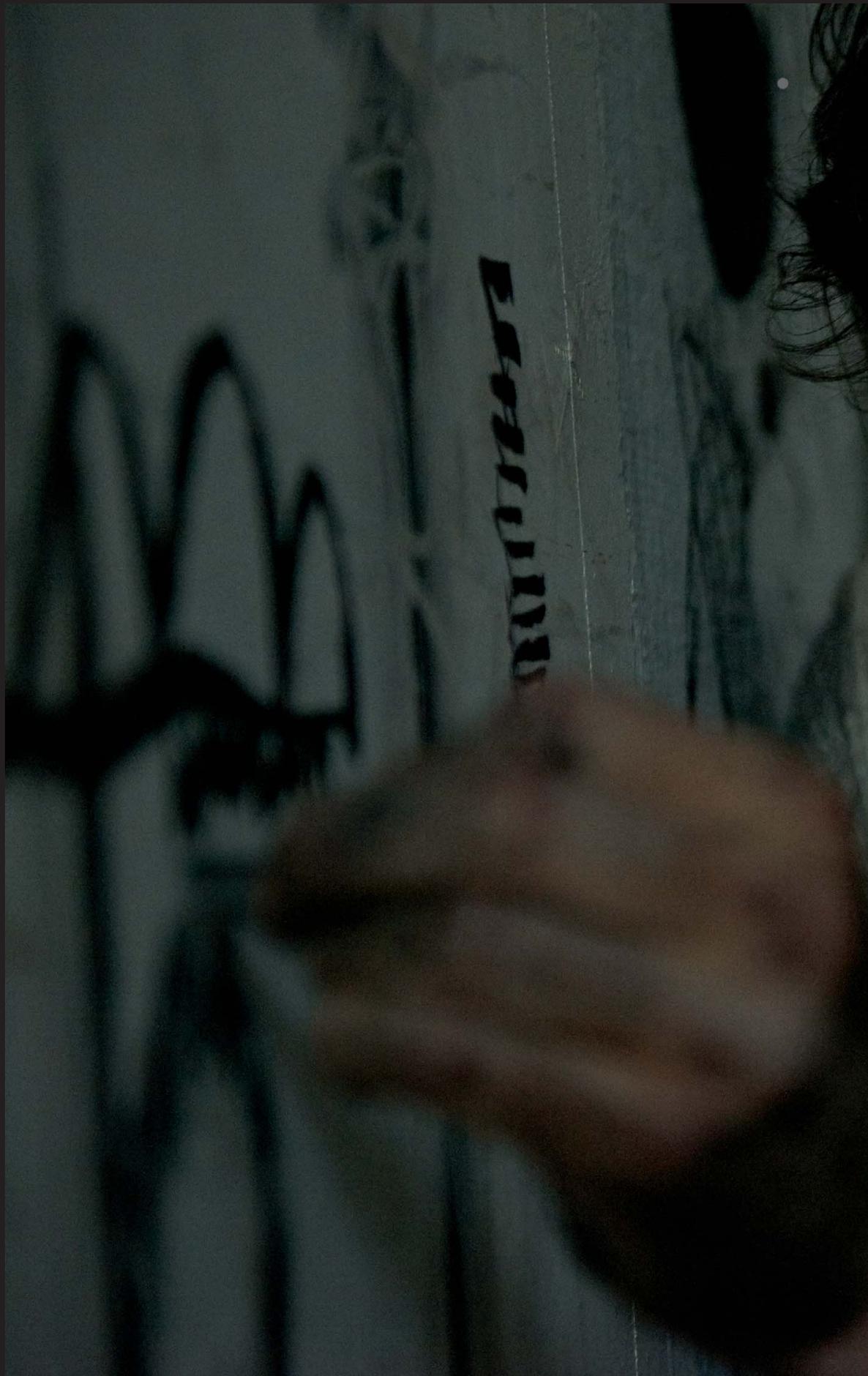


JAKE GYLLENHAAL
FILM:
Stronger

◆ THE DAMNED ◆

**Voices in the
walls condemn him
to misery.**

*"I thought of Tom Waits
as Renfield in Francis
Ford Coppola's 'Dracula.' He's
in a padded cell, and
he feels Dracula talking to
him — he knows the
master is coming." F.S.*





NICOLE KIDMAN
FILMS:
The Beguiled,
The Killing
of a Sacred Deer

◆ THE POSSESSED ◆

**She is overtaken by
a beast within.**

"We had one take, because once the eggs and the flour and the milk were used, it was going to go all over her and all over her hair, and so she played this for three minutes straight. In those three minutes, you could see all the changes — from frustration to possession to orgasmic experience." F.S.





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e from discrimination is extremely important.
sexual violence, interferes with students' right
on and, in the case of sexual violence, is a

The Takedown of Title IX / By Kathryn Joyce
Inside the fight over federal rules on campus sexual assault.

L

ast year, the phone rang in the office of the New York attorney Andrew T. Miltenberg. On the line was Tom Rossley, a trustee for 23 years at Drake University in Iowa. His son, Thomas, had just been expelled after a woman accused him of rape, and Rossley, such a longtime booster that he was sometimes called Mr. Drake, was on the verge of being kicked off the board for protesting the verdict, he believed.

While a trustee's son might be expected to receive favorable treatment, Rossley thought that possibility had been eclipsed by the school's greater urgency to demonstrate how seriously it took sexual assault, because it was under federal investigation at the time for supposedly mishandling a victim's complaint two years earlier. "I'm not definitively saying it didn't happen," he told Miltenberg. "I'm not saying it did happen. What I'm saying is we don't know, and they didn't really want to find out."

As Rossley would explain to Miltenberg, on the night in question, Thomas, then 21, met up with a woman in his circle of friends. Each had drunk heavily. According to the school investigator's report, the woman remembered Thomas having sex with her in his dorm room, her telling him to stop and him stopping. But Thomas, who said he'd had the equivalent of 15 drinks, didn't recall having intercourse and woke up fully clothed. Rossley noted what he believed to be many flaws in the process of his son's case, including the school investigator's not accepting key witnesses — among them Thomas's roommate, who claimed he was present in the room the entire night. Although in the classroom Drake accommodated Thomas's lifelong language-based learning disability, which made communication difficult, he was left to defend himself in a nine-hour hearing, in which he frequently stumbled and was asked to speak up. (Drake declined to comment on the details of the case but broadly disputes the Rossleys' characterization. In court filings, the school said Thomas could have introduced additional witnesses at the hearing and did not request disability accommodations.)

Rossley had contacted Miltenberg to ask him to handle their suits — Thomas's claiming gender discrimination and due-process violations, and Rossley's for retaliation after the board removed him. Miltenberg's name was easy to find because by then he had established a reputation as "the rape-guy lawyer," as a colleague describes him, or "the due-process guy," as he sometimes calls himself. To Miltenberg, the Rossleys' experience showcased "the disparity between how men and women are being treated" under Title IX — the federal law that prohibits gender discrimination in schools that receive public funds — and demonstrated how campus responses to sexual assault have become driven by internal politics and institutional fears.

A 52-year-old New York City native, Miltenberg spent most of his career on business litigation, often involving defamation. That work brought him his first college case in 2013, when an international student called to say he had been falsely accused of rape. It wasn't defamation — the school found him responsible for nonconsensual sex — but Miltenberg thought it could be something else — a violation of due process. To him, the handling of the case seemed unfair: The student, whose English was weak, told him that he wasn't told about resources available to him. The

father of the accuser was on the faculty, and his colleagues judged the case. "There's an old saying among lawyers: Justice is not the result, it's the process," Miltenberg says. "We give ourselves over to a system. We lose, we win. We hate losing, but you are able to at least say: 'I couldn't have asked the judge to do more than he did. He listened, he thought, he read.' Here you are not having that experience."

Miltenberg lost the case but found a calling: addressing what he saw as a crisis in campus Title IX processes, as universities around the country, he felt, overcorrected after decades of failing to take student sexual violence seriously enough. In the years since, Miltenberg estimates, he has represented some 150 students — almost exclusively men — in campus Title IX proceedings and around four dozen lawsuits against schools. His cases include the accused man in Columbia's "mattress girl" scandal and the Colorado State University-Pueblo football player who was suspended despite the supposed victim's denying she was raped. Miltenberg's two oldest children, who are twin brother and sister, just began their sophomore year of college, and if either were involved in a sexual-assault case, he says he would worry more about his son's treatment than his daughter's. He has developed a fearsome reputation among college administrators and the adulation of men's rights activists, who believe feminism and politically correct campus culture prop up accusations from women who regret consensual sex. But he is also the focus of enmity from victims' advocates, who see his efforts as feeding a backlash. He has suggested that if a campus assault isn't "bad enough to report to the police, then maybe it shouldn't be reported." By his own admission, he has badgered Title IX officers to disclose whether they themselves were rape victims — an experience he believes fosters in them a "religious" conviction that "only a crazy woman would fabricate a report."

In the past year, Miltenberg's cause has widened into a public debate about whether the effort to ensure women's safety has come at the expense of men's due-process rights. An already polemical fight sharpened when President Trump's administration came into power and began to methodically dismantle Obama-era policies. Miltenberg has said that Trump's election, despite sexual-assault allegations, demonstrated that university practices are out of step with public opinion. Many of Trump's advisers signaled support for accused men, as did the 2016 Republican platform. His secretary of education, Betsy DeVos, has donated to a group that supports accused students' rights, and to temporarily lead the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, which enforces Title IX compliance, she picked Candice Jackson, a conservative activist who told *The New York Times* in July that 90 percent of campus-rape allegations are dubious — mired in alcohol and relationship drama. (Jackson later apologized.) In September, DeVos declared current policies a "failed system" of "kangaroo courts" and "weaponized" civil rights, vowing that "the era of rule by letter is over."

A decade ago, Title IX was better known as the law that forbade schools to banish women's sports teams to the parking lot while men got the fields. Schools were required to address campus sexual assault under both Title IX and the 1990 Clery Act — a federal law, named for a Lehigh University freshman raped and killed in her dorm room, that requires colleges to report all campus crimes — but schools were only rarely sanctioned under the act, and few students knew how to lodge Title IX complaints. Reporting to law enforcement offered little help: Federal statistics compiled by the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network show that only 310 out of 1,000 rapes are reported to the police. Just 11 of those are referred for prosecution, and just seven lead to felony convictions. Even if the criminal-justice system pursued sexual-assault allegations more aggressively, college victims would still have to face the accused on campus as investigations and prosecutions drag on for months, or even years.

In 2011, following an investigation by NPR and the Center for Public Integrity on campus assault, the Obama administration decided to act. The Office for Civil Rights sent a "dear colleague letter" reminding colleges that



sexual harassment and assault create an environment so hostile that women's access to education is jeopardized, violating their civil rights. The letter noted a commonly cited (though commonly challenged) statistic from the National Institute of Justice that one in five women are victims of attempted or actual sexual assault during college. A subsequent clarification of the letter created no uniform policy for how schools should adjudicate cases, but it offered recommendations like having schools inform students that drinking "never makes the survivor at fault for sexual violence" and discouraging colleges from allowing either party to directly cross-examine the other in investigations. Schools that failed to uphold standards risked losing federal funds.

Colleges responded by creating new Title IX offices and drafting individual policies that varied from school to school. Some universities use hearings; others employ a "single investigator" model, in which a school designee is responsible for both investigating and making a determination. More typical is something like this: After students disclose an assault to a "responsible employee," that staff member must relay it to the Title IX officer, who determines whether a full investigation is warranted. If it is, the officer taps a staff member or external investigator who has been trained in Title IX procedures to contact the parties, interview witnesses and gather evidence. Complainants are asked to participate, but schools can proceed without them if they decide the claim poses a larger threat on campus. A report is produced that each party can comment on, and panel hearings are held. Until this September, Office for Civil Rights rules stipulated that all of this needed to happen within 60 days, and afterward, the parties could appeal.

Campus reporting of sexual misconduct spiked significantly, and that increase led to an outcry from

conservative media, including writers for *National Review* and *Town Hall*, which argued that the guidance letter made accusations as good as a verdict. The day the Office for Civil Rights sent its letter, the federal government made "all sex unsafe on campus," the libertarian magazine *Reason* said.

The most widespread criticism was that the letter forced schools to lower their standard of proof when assessing claims, to the "preponderance of evidence" standard commonly used in civil lawsuits. Unlike the higher standard used in some civil trials, which require "clear and convincing evidence," or the highest standard used in criminal trials, which require certainty "beyond reasonable doubt," preponderance is often described as 50.01 percent certainty of guilt. If an accused student is found more likely than not to have committed the offense, he or she is "responsible," in the parlance of campus hearings. While there were exceptions before 2011 — schools that used "clear and convincing" or, in a few instances, "beyond reasonable doubt" — preponderance was used in about 80 percent of colleges that had any fixed standard.

Victims' advocates argued that it followed an established legal principle: In civil cases, where criminal penalties aren't on the line, the burden of proof is lower. But critics viewed the mandate to use preponderance as a means to finding more accused students responsible, and the standard became a sort of shorthand — that college men were no longer presumed innocent and were being expelled en masse over "regret sex."

It was an oversimplification, but also one that reflected real problems in the process. To Joe Cohn, the legislative and policy director of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), a nonpartisan nonprofit that works on free speech, religious liberty and due process in higher

Andrew Miltenberg at Columbia University in October.

education, the larger issue is that the lower standard exists within a “parallel judicial system” that lacks other due-process protections — like the consistent right for attorneys to meaningfully participate in hearings and access to the legal procedures to investigate complex cases. Schools can’t subpoena witnesses to compel relevant testimony or put people under oath; they rarely have access to forensic evidence or processes for discovery.

“O.C.R.’s rationale” was that preponderance of evidence “was the standard for suits alleging civil rights violations like sexual harassment,” wrote Nancy Gertner, a retired federal judge and current Harvard law professor, in *The American Prospect* in 2015. “True enough, except for the fact that civil trials at which this standard is implemented follow months if not years of discovery.” She continued: “It is the worst of both worlds, the lowest standard of proof coupled with the least protective procedures.”

In 2016, FIRE, which had been connecting accused students with lawyers and offering a class to attorneys on handling complaints, put out a recruitment call for plaintiffs to sue the Department of Education over the guidance letter. There was already an abundance of lawsuits against schools — at least 190, according to the men’s advocacy group Title IX for All. Typically, victims’ complaints about mishandled Title IX cases have gone to the Office for Civil Rights, while complaints from accused men land in civil court. In a ruling involving Brown University last year, a Rhode Island judge noted: “A student is not entitled to a perfect disciplinary process, and it is not the court’s role to be an appeals court for Brown’s disciplinary decisions.” At the time, no circuit courts had weighed in, but there were so many cases it seemed one would have to. This September, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals did so, finding that the University of Cincinnati violated an accused student’s due-process rights by failing to let him cross-examine his accuser.

With funding from right-wing donors like the Charles Koch Institute, FIRE has often aligned with conservative sensibilities. But a number of academics and lawyers, among them a group of feminist Harvard law professors (including Gertner) who released a public letter in August calling for reform, have cited reasons Title IX policies should concern progressives, too: that overly broad definitions of misconduct, encompassing most drunken encounters, threaten to erode distinctions between consensual and nonconsensual sex; that anecdotal evidence (there’s little hard data available) suggests men of color are disproportionately punished; that a conservative administration could co-opt the campus-rape debate to further its own aims; or that perceptions of bias could trigger a backlash casting women as liars.

“I concede I’ve seen cases where it seems schools were taking shortcuts to justice,” says S. Daniel Carter, a longtime campus-safety expert who consults with colleges and universities about sexual misconduct. But schools that did so, he emphasizes, were violating policy or breaking the law. He points to a September 2017 study released by FIRE that found that most top schools fail to consistently ensure 10 safeguards it considers “fundamental elements of due process” — like providing adequate written notice of allegations and the need for impartial fact-finders. With the exception of two items on FIRE’s list — one calling for a presumption of innocence, which Carter believes violates Title IX’s requirement that adjudicators make no presumptions whatsoever — Carter says not only that he agrees with every principle but also that each is already required by Title IX, the Clery Act or the guidance letter.

In the case of Thomas Rossley, which Andrew Miltenberg joined when father and son decided to sue, the Rossleys contend that Drake violated some of these policies. The school’s acting dean was afforded equivalent speaking time as Thomas and his accuser — effectively doubling the amount of time allowed to make the case against Thomas, which the Rossleys argue is a violation of Office for Civil Rights guidelines. Although Drake’s Title IX coordinator noted in an affidavit that the only way the school could comply with Title IX was to waive the school’s requested time, the dean still spoke. “They basically put in writing: ‘We’re not going to comply with Title IX in this prosecution,’” Rossley says. (In a court filing, Drake denies violating any rules or procedures.)

Victims’ advocates say that cases like this illustrate that the problem isn’t the policy but rather schools’ failing to follow it. A situation where a school gave more time to one party than the other, says Alexandra Brodsky, a fellow at the National Women’s Law Center, would be “both a clear error by the school and points to a need for a more nuanced conversation about Title IX enforcement than ‘Is Title IX good or bad?’”

“For my entire career, I’ve seen the pendulum swing,” Carter says. For decades, schools followed “the path of least resistance,” he says, to the detriment of victims. More recently, some followed the same path to the disadvantage of the accused. Now that pattern of reaction and counterreaction is happening at the national level. “It’s not back and forth so much as it’s the same old failed system,” Carter says. “Who is it failing the most today?”

“It’s becoming, I don’t know if ‘circus’ is the right word,” says Laura L. Dunn, the executive director of the national victims’ rights group Surv-Justice, but “it’s so legally complex that it’s not an easy thing to step into.” School officials are being named in individual lawsuits, so fewer agree to serve on Title IX panels; self-identified victims increasingly need lawyers of their own, because they risk being sued. Advocates on both sides suspect that schools are hedging their bets as they adjudicate, fearing both lawsuits and Office for Civil Rights sanctions.

In the past six months, two different professional attorneys’ associations have reviewed campus sexual-misconduct policy, and a third’s assessment is underway. They’ve come to different conclusions — one proposing higher standards of proof, another access to all evidence for accused students. The American Bar Association task force’s recommendations led to disputes even within the A.B.A. “I don’t think either side of this issue has advocates that are completely imagining problems,” says Cohn, who admits that no proposed solutions — including FIRE’s — come without costs to either side. “There isn’t a perfect, utopian answer to the problem.”

But under the Trump administration, these complexities are being cast largely as a matter of overregulation. Secretary DeVos, who has argued that local authorities and parents should have greater control over education than the federal government, seems to have taken a similar approach with Title IX. When she had one of her first official conversations about Title IX last April, it wasn’t with national experts on either side, but rather with a combative Republican state representative, Earl Ehrhart of Georgia, who has argued that Title IX enables rampant false allegations and that schools have no business investigating sexual assault. Ehrhart came away from his meeting gratified that DeVos seemed to agree with him on the limited role federal authorities should play. “She’s placing this back where it belongs,” he told me, “in the purview of the states.”

‘I concede I’ve seen cases where it seems schools were taking shortcuts to justice,’

In January 2016, Representative Ehrhart, a former chairman of the American Legislative Exchange Council, which drafts model bills for conservative state legislators, decided, after hearing from the distraught mother of an accused student, to make Georgia the testing ground for challenging the “dear colleague letter.” A conservative with a penchant for bomb-throwing who has been lampooned by a Georgia reporter for delivering “Wagnerian” pronouncements, he began with what he called his “Georgia Tech hearing.” At the time, Georgia Tech had a mandatory-expulsion policy for students found responsible for rape, and The Atlanta Journal-Constitution found that it had expelled or suspended more students for sexual misconduct than any other Georgia state school. It also then used the controversial single-investigator model. Ehrhart, as chairman of Georgia’s House Subcommittee on Appropriations for Higher Education, wielded his financial authority like a weapon, effectively denying Georgia Tech funds to expand its libraries and warning other colleges to be more concerned about losing his support than that of the Office for Civil Rights. “If you don’t protect the students of this state with due process,” he said, “don’t come looking for money — period.” Some victims’ advocates believe he leveraged his role again in pushing the state’s Board of Regents to overhaul its sexual-misconduct procedures. The board announced new rules, including banning the single-investigator model, which went into effect in mid-2016.

That April, Ehrhart and his wife, represented by Miltenberg, sued the Department of Education, challenging the dear colleague letter on the claim that Ehrhart’s stepson, a Georgia Tech student, could “be wrongly accused and found responsible.” Then, early this year, Ehrhart proposed a bill, H.B. 51, which initially mandated that any campus sexual-assault report be forwarded to the police, with or without the complainant’s consent, and forbade schools to take final disciplinary action for any possible felony until there was a conviction or a no-contest plea.

The complexity around campus sexual misconduct has led observers from diverse political backgrounds to call for turning the whole matter over to the police. In a forthcoming law-review article, Brodsky notes that since 2013, at least six states and Congress have considered bills that included some form of law-enforcement reporting. Some mandated that schools refer complaints regardless of victims’ wishes; Congress considered a bill that prevented colleges from proceeding with Title IX processes until the police were at least notified, or in some cases, until a conviction was obtained. But no state bill before H.B. 51 took such an extreme approach — or so flagrantly contradicted federal law. And because state bills cannot override federal law, H.B. 51 seemed intended to force a court challenge to the dear colleague letter.

That, Ehrhart acknowledged, was the point. When we met in Atlanta in March, over Chick-fil-A sandwiches, he said he hoped “Georgia will hang a light on the problem such that the O.C.R., the D.O.E., will be put in a position: ‘Here’s a state statutory enactment that’s 180 degrees different from the old guidance letters. What are we going to do?’” Given the Trump administration’s signaling its distance from the dear colleague letter, he wagered that if H.B. 51 passed, the new Office for Civil Rights wouldn’t withdraw federal funds. Then other states would see that they could challenge the letter without repercussion and would follow suit.

The H.B. 51 fight was ugly. Hundreds of student protesters went to the state’s Capitol, where legislators challenged women seeking to testify about their assaults during a preliminary hearing. Ehrhart reprimanded one group of victims, saying: “If you feel triggered, trigger somewhere else.” Men’s rights activists showed up to lobby, at times targeting individual activists. They speculated on social media that one student organizer was a “pretty little liar” and brought to the Capitol a man suspended for having assaulted another.

The backlash Ehrhart mobilized created collateral casualties of its own. In his Georgia Tech hearing, Ehrhart read aloud a letter from the mother of a man expelled after being found responsible for rape. The expelled man had sued, and while his accuser wasn’t a defendant, her name and identifying details were in court documents then available to the public.

It was a threat that her attorney, Lisa Anderson, who represents victims pro bono as executive director of Atlanta Women for Equality, feared was a new tactic: essentially outing women who lodged Title IX complaints.

There were threads about her case on the school’s Reddit page; riding a bus across campus, she sat in stricken silence as two students discussed it and decided she had probably made it up. Sidelined by panic attacks, she withdrew from most classes by the end of the semester, and though she tried to return last fall, she ended up leaving again and was hospitalized for a week after becoming suicidal. Her G.P.A. slipped so low that she told me she fears that she can’t transfer elsewhere, and that her only chance to graduate is to wait for the current crop of Georgia Tech students to cycle out.

At Kennesaw State University, one woman found that as the Georgia debate around Title IX grew, her case was caught up in the furor. According to her complaint, early one morning in February 2016, she was raped by a male friend, when consensual fooling around ended in nonconsensual intercourse that she explicitly refused. At first, she told me, she thought her friend had merely “disrespected” her clear line. She let him spend the night, and in the morning they ate breakfast, making plans to meet later. The man didn’t call, and the woman, troubled, talked to friends, who told her she was describing rape. Her mother took her to the hospital and the police, and school officials were informed. K.S.U. started an investigation. (The man denied that they had intercourse.)

But over the summer, as the new Board of Regents policy went into effect, the woman claimed the tone shifted. In her last interview, she says, investigators asked whether she was calling the situation rape because the man hadn’t called. Nonetheless, they found him responsible and recommended a two-semester suspension. (The man’s attorney, Lisa Wells, said the K.S.U. office fell out of touch for nearly five months, leading her client to believe the matter had been dropped.)

In the lead-up to a planned hearing in October 2016, the man argued that the investigation had been biased and hadn’t adequately considered his evidence. He asked that his case be reheard under the new regents’ policy and requested a stay of his decision “until the enforceability of the 2011 dear colleague letter has been adjudicated” — suggesting that Ehrhart’s lawsuit might settle the point. The request for a stay was denied, but the school agreed to have an external reviewer assess the case. When they informed the woman, she received a list of new witnesses for the man’s defense; among them was Ehrhart.

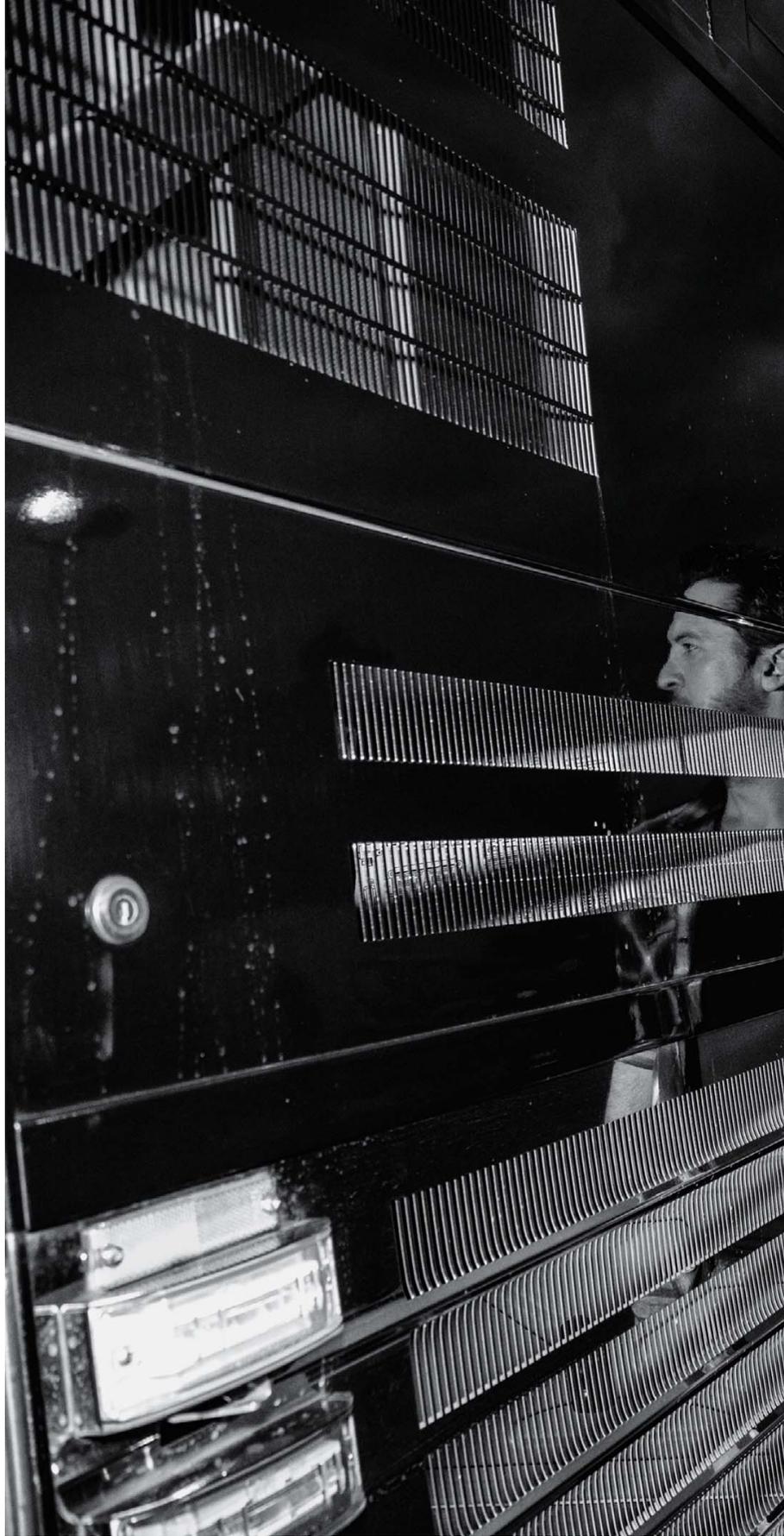
“I had no clue who he was or what he could possibly know about somebody raping me,” she said. “As soon as Ehrhart’s name came up, everything went crazy, and they dropped any care they had for me.” As a representative of K.S.U.’s district, Ehrhart had substantial ties to the school. He co-owned a sprawling sports complex that partnered with the university, and when K.S.U. needed a new president in 2016, Ehrhart championed the appointment of the state’s conservative attorney general, Sam Olens, who served with Ehrhart on the board of a K.S.U. business accelerator.

In the fall of 2016, Lisa Anderson, who represents the woman in the K.S.U. case as well, began to notice that email records K.S.U. sent had redactions in the “cc” line — a third party being kept abreast of the case. After filing multiple records requests, Anderson found emails involving Ehrhart, Lisa Wells and Olens. In one, Ehrhart wrote to Olens: “This is the second of the absolutely ridiculous cases I was concerned about. I label this one ‘breakfast with a rapist’ made for TV absurdity.” He noted he was drafting new legislation to remove such “nonsense” cases from university jurisdiction and his belief that “with a new administration in D.C., the guidance letters are now garbage, and the threat of federal funding is off the table.” In closing, he appeared to request a specific outcome: “I also hope this case can be dealt with in an expeditious manner benefiting its absurdity.”

Olens forwarded the email to the K.S.U. Title IX coordinator. When an external reviewer’s report came back in early 2017 — around the same time Ehrhart introduced H.B. 51 — it reversed the initial decision. (Wells says Ehrhart’s emails could not have influenced the

(Continued on Page 79)

NO COUNTRY FOR



Luke Bryan has been testing the sonic limits of country music for a decade. Just how much novelty can the genre take?

By Will Stephenson
Photographs by Devin Yalkin



OLD FASHION

MITCHELL WILLOUGHBY SWALLOWED

25 live crickets to win his backstage passes to the Luke Bryan concert in Fort Wayne, Ind. He bragged about the feat — a challenge from a local radio station — to Bryan’s face while the country star was making the rounds at his standard meet-and-greet before the show. Bryan looked taken aback. “You just, like, swallowed ‘em whole?” he asked, visibly disgusted. “Alive?” Mitchell nodded proudly. Bryan shook his head and moved on to the next fan, a preteen girl who was already shivering and in tears.

It was a Thursday night in October, and Bryan was midway through his ninth annual Farm Tour. More than 10,000 people had trekked from all over Indiana and the rest of the Midwest to see him perform on this geographically remote patch of earth. The tour, Bryan’s lead guitarist and longtime friend, Michael Carter, told

me, was an attempt to recreate the shows they played while in community college in southern Georgia, when they would enlist a friend with some land and “set up on a flatbed trailer or on a porch or in a barn.”

The scale of the operation has changed drastically in the intervening years. Bryan has been in the spotlight for a decade — a career that has included having three albums top the Billboard 200, singing the national anthem at this year’s Super Bowl and co-starring in ABC’s coming reboot of “American Idol.” The Farm Tour now employs well over a hundred crew members (including cooks and a full-time massage therapist), who construct a high-capacity concert arena from scratch every morning and then break it down each night after Bryan’s encore with a kind of supernatural efficiency, leaving the fields empty and clear as the circuslike convoy of more than 60 buses and tractor-trailers heads on to the next farming community. They go to sleep on their respective buses and wake up in a new town they’ve often never heard of. “I don’t even know where I am right now,” one roadie told me that day in Fort Wayne. “What state or nothing. It’s a blur.”

The farms change, but Bryan’s preshow ritual does not vary. Before taking the stage each night, he spends an hour riding a propped-up bicycle. Then he mixes himself a salty dog — grapefruit juice and vodka, with a generous pinch of salt. His stylist, Cheryl, presents him with the evening’s outfit, almost always some variation on a solid-color V-neck, baseball cap and jeans. She rubs his arms with moisturizer until they glisten. Finally, he throws on his cowboy boots, which he secures tightly to his ankles with tape. He needs the extra protection when, in his words, he’s “in the heat of the battle up there.”

If you haven’t seen a mainstream country concert in recent years, you might not know what he means by this, but a Luke Bryan show is a deeply athletic affair. As his band begins its opening licks, he emerges from the darkness to raucous screams from the crowd. He jogs down the catwalk, grabbing hands and beaming. Onstage, he is more Freddie Mercury than George Strait — he leaps into the air and growls sensually and is known for his unique brand of hip-shaking, which seems both earnest and self-effacingly ridiculous. He lines up tequila shots on the lid of a piano and lobs cans of Miller Lite (a sponsor) out to the audience from a cooler wheeled out for this express purpose.

Bryan’s 2015 album, “Kill the Lights,” was the first in history to have six singles reach No. 1 on the Billboard Country Airplay charts, and his crowds know every word to all of them. He also makes a point to mine his earlier records for fan favorites like “Country Man” (“I can grow my own groceries and salt-cure a ham/Hey, baby, I’m a country man”) and the self-explanatory “Rain Is a Good Thing,” both of which resonate powerfully with the farm-town audiences. Generally unburdened by a guitar, Bryan caps off every song he performs in a kind of triumphant superhero pose, pumping his fists or pointing up at the sky.

For years now, Bryan and his generation of pop-country artists have been testing the sonic integrity of country music — a genre with a reputation for

being highly inelastic — bending it to the larger demands of the marketplace by incorporating influences from the worlds of rap, R&B, EDM and arena rock. Bryan grew up listening to 2 Live Crew and Eazy-E alongside Ronnie Milsap and Reba McEntire, and his catalog bears their imprint. His new album, “What Makes You Country,” released last week, acts as a statement of purpose from its opening track: “You do your kind of country,” he sings. “They doing their kind of country/I do my kind of country.”

The term most often used for the music made by artists like Bryan is “bro-country,” coined by the critic Jody Rosen in 2013. “Music by and of the tatted, gym-toned, party-hearty young American white dude,” Rosen wrote, calling Bryan the “king of the genre.” Bryan has indeed made it clear that he’s not interested in baring his soul, or in emulating earlier country aesthetics. His guiding principle is that his music should please as many people as possible — ideally stadiums full of them — and to that end, he’s willing to use whatever tools (from whatever genres) he deems

helpful. If that means making what is essentially a rap song about clubbing in a cornfield (“Kick the Dust Up”) or an R&B sex jam with lyrics like “Feel my belt turn loose from these old bluejeans” (“Strip It Down”), then so be it.

But like all great country catalogs, Bryan’s music at its core evinces a careful balance of the hedonistic and the reverent — at ease in the space between the dive bar and the church, between spring break and the farm. It still came as a surprise, though, in Fort Wayne when he was able to bring the wild proceedings to a sudden halt to address the mass shooting in Las Vegas, which had occurred over the weekend. “It’s been a rough week for me personally,” he said to the crowd, wiping the sweat from his brow, “and probably the worst week in the history of country music.” The audience knew exactly what he meant, and the volume fell to a hush. Like a preacher at a tent revival, he asked us to put our arms around one another and bow our heads, to keep praying about the problems our country faced. “Let’s get to working on this, y’all,” he said. “Let’s try to learn from it and make a change.”

In the moment of silence that followed — 15 seconds that seemed much longer — it became suddenly apparent again that we were in the middle of the Indiana woods. Then the moment passed, and the crowd was chanting: “U.S.A.! U.S.A.!” Bryan gave a shout-out to police officers and firefighters, soldiers and schoolteachers. And just like that, his swagger was restored. “Let’s do some party crashing on a Thursday night,” he shouted. The crowd roared its approval, and the band came back to life.

One afternoon several years ago, my uncle and his family took their new boat out for a test run off their dock on the Flint River in southwestern Georgia. Around the point where the Muckalee and Kinchafoonee Creeks flow into the river proper, the boat’s engine sputtered and died, and they found themselves stranded. Before long, however, an older, well-tanned woman in a bass boat called out to them and volunteered to help. My cousin insisted they were fine. “I wouldn’t be turning down help,” she replied, before pulling up alongside and asking if they’d like a beer. “I’m Luke Bryan’s mom,” she said, as if by way of explanation, before offering to tow them home.

I heard stories like this for years, as Bryan evolved from a local phenomenon — he grew up in Leesburg, just upriver from my hometown, Albany — to arguably the biggest star in Nashville. His songs are largely about trying to carve out a good time in dull, desolate places; the images you get from his lyrics are of vast, rural stretches of eerie nothingness. It’s





Luke Bryan with a fan.

a landscape I recognize from our corner of Georgia — the pecan trees and cotton fields punctuated by boiled-peanut stands, the occasional collection of cows and every conceivable variety of grain elevator.

Bryan is an enthusiastic ambassador for the area, and in his capricious approach to country, he is channeling the diverse mix of sounds that kids in his town, and others like it, were listening to. In many respects, country and hip-hop are sister genres, the pop styles that most reliably make room for God and work, black-market economies and regional pride. In the media, and particularly in the South, they have often found themselves pitted against each other, an opposition born of the culture wars and of the region's catastrophic racial history. But my own experience was that most teenagers who listened to country (or jam bands or nu-metal) were just as likely to be familiar with the songs in regular rotation on rap radio. Rap was ubiquitous — it was the soundtrack at football pep rallies and, as Bryan has pointed out, at the same dive bars that hosted artists like him. He has a visceral understanding of places like this, whether Leesburg, Ga., or Fort Wayne, Ind.

So why, I asked Bryan the next afternoon aboard his tour bus, did he leave southern Georgia for the big city? I know why I left, I said — I never especially liked it there to begin with. What was his excuse?

He hesitated. We were now in Springfield, Ill., and the ground outside was unmanageably muddy. Taking pity on my tennis shoes, he had lent me a pair of his boots. He seemed oblivious to the mud himself, stretching out his own grimy pair on the black leather couch lining the wood-paneled interior of the bus. He kept running a hand through his disheveled hair, where a backward ball cap should have been, as if he were feeling for a phantom limb. "I'm interesting in that, at any point, I could have taken the slightest deviation and never moved to Nashville," he said. "And I think I would have still been smiling through every day. I would have been fine working at my dad's peanut mill."

His father ran not only a peanut mill but also a fertilizer-chemical company and, along with a partner, was responsible for 3,000 acres of farmland. His mother — who had joined him for the tour, posting up in a lawn chair outside his bus and chain-smoking Salems — worked for the county utilities department. The youngest of three siblings, Bryan sang in his church choir as a teenager and led a praise band on Wednesday nights. On Fridays, he would be down the street playing at bars, often to the same crowd. "I would play a David Allen Coe song, and then I'd do a gospel medley of 'I

Saw the Light' and 'Amazing Grace,'" he said. "And people would be like, 'Don't you feel weird playing those songs in a honky-tonk?' And I'd say: 'Well, I don't know. Would Jesus feel weird walking into a honky-tonk?'"

Bryan had long planned on moving to Nashville, but a year after graduating from Georgia Southern University with a business degree, he was still in his hometown, pulling peanut wagons for a living. "My dad felt like he needed to nudge me a little out of the nest," he said, and so the elder Bryan threatened to fire his son, who finally moved to Nashville in late 2001. After a few months of waiting on tables, he was put on contract by a publishing company to write tracks for other artists.

In 2005, he met the songwriter Jeff Stevens, who had written hits for George Strait and Tim McGraw and immediately recognized Bryan's potential as a performer. He produced Bryan's 2007 debut, "I'll Stay Me," which reached No. 2 on the Billboard Top Country Albums chart, and scored a modest hit with "All My Friends Say," sung from the perspective of a man piecing together a drunken blackout — presaging the college-bro image that would come to define his sound. But otherwise, his first release was relatively traditional, with lots of fiddle and mandolin; Bryan now calls it "country as cornbread" and says it's slightly embarrassing for him to listen to.

What you might not guess from his music is that Bryan's life has been marked by tragedy. His older brother, Chris, was killed in a car accident in 1996, and his older sister, Kelly, died of uncertain causes in 2007 while doing the laundry. (Her husband, Ben Lee Cheshire, died in 2014; Bryan and his wife, Caroline, took in their three children.) It occurred to me to wonder, given the contours of his life, why Bryan's music wasn't sadder, and so I asked him. "I've written some sad songs," he said. "There are 10 or 15 songs I've got that will break you down, like gut-punch you." But these more personal songs, he said, have never felt right for his albums. "I don't know if they — if they ever show up, they show up," he said. He has claimed that his 2013 hit "Drink a Beer" is a sort of tribute to his siblings. But Bryan didn't write the song himself, and there's something vaguely disheartening about his linking these very real calamities of life to such a trite premise: Faced with the loss of a loved one, a man shrugs it off and cracks open a cold one.

Sitting in the front seat of Jeff Stevens's pickup truck one evening on the tour, I asked him what he thought of the criticism Bryan has taken over the course of his career: that he mostly sings about his truck and bluejeans and boots, that he's shallow or opportunistic. Stevens, who has worked with Bryan on all his albums, sat back and laughed. "I love it," he said. Whenever he sees Bryan perform, he went on, "I look over a sea of people who are forgetting everything. And that is the biggest gift that we can give to somebody — an hour and a half where they haven't thought about their job, they haven't thought about their troubles. They're just here for pure fun. I personally feel that purely fun music is cathartic. It's like being a goddamn doctor. And it's important. I'm not saying that it's not important to have a message — a message is great. But people love to not think in today's world. They got enough to think about. When they go back to their cars, they'll start thinking again."

One afternoon, angling his head out of his tour-bus bathroom while urinating, Bryan asked me about my political beliefs. I admitted that they were somewhat to the left of his own, and had been even back in Albany. He expressed surprise but said: "That's the beauty of getting out of where we're from. I lean conservative, but when you truly see the world and the country in its entirety, I think if you stay so conservative, it's almost a little ignorant." His musical trajectory is closely tied to his personal one. "When I was a 12-year-old kid," he said, "I was so country, I would've probably had to have an interpreter for this interview." But seeing the world had changed his perspective on things. He had evolved as a person, and his views — both artistic and political — had developed accordingly.

Country singers aren't often thought of as having the ability to change. They're supposed to be reactionary and creatively static, to play the

Title IX

(Continued from Page 73)

external reviewer's findings because they weren't forwarded to her. K.S.U. officials said they were unable to comment on a continuing matter.) When Anderson and the woman appealed in the spring and summer, a process that finally culminated in a hearing this October, the panel declared that both parties were equally credible, so it couldn't find the man responsible. Even before the verdict, the woman had become so despondent that she decided to withdraw. Wells says her own client is suicidal.

Ehrhart's bill ultimately failed to pass before the legislative session closed in March, staved off largely by the mobilization of student activists. But if he lost the battle, it would come to seem he had won the war. After DeVos rescinded the guidance letter, he was elated. "We're back to pre-2011," he told me. "In many ways, we've succeeded."

"We in the advocacy community, who have been involved with Title IX for decades, understand this is nothing short of a catastrophe," says Noreen Farrell, executive director of Equal Rights Advocates, which in 1977 was one of the first organizations to argue in court that sexual harassment violates Title IX. But the exact nature of that catastrophe is not yet clear. The language in the Office for Civil Rights's rescission letter and interim guidance is vague enough to allow for different interpretations. It might forbid accusers to appeal. Ehrhart hopes for this but acknowledges that "they didn't make it crystal clear." A line criticizing the Obama administration's failure to let schools rely on law enforcement might allow — or push — schools to relegate complaints to the police. The new Office for Civil Rights interim guidance allows schools to choose between the "preponderance" standard or the higher "clear and convincing," which could open the floodgates to hundreds of students' demanding their cases be reheard or bringing new lawsuits. DeVos's comments have already been cited by a man suing the University of Vermont over his suspension for sexual harassment, noting in his lawsuit: "UVM's procedures for adjudicating sexual-misconduct complaints is precisely the type of system referenced in DeVos' statement." (The university says it is "confident it has acted legally and appropriately.")

Title IX practices may also start to diverge state to state. While advocates may refute Ehrhart's suggestion that Title IX is now a state issue — unless Title IX and the Clery Act are overturned, state laws conflicting with them will be challenged in court — they concede that they can't stop emboldened conservative legislatures from trying.

In the week after DeVos's speech, a bill sped through California's Legislature, codifying many of the procedural aspects of the 2011 guidance. Although Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed the bill, citing concerns about due process,

Farrell predicted it would be just one among numerous state initiatives. At an October meeting of the State Innovation Exchange, a progressive legislative advisory group, there was discussion of potential Title IX legislation in Colorado, Maryland and Massachusetts; in November, a Massachusetts bill mandating better sexual-assault training for campus staff unanimously passed the State Senate.

Attorneys general will also take on a more active role, says Lizzie Ulmer, a member of the Democratic Attorneys General Association, which sent DeVos an open letter in July urging her not to rescind the guidance and has since held meetings to discuss how states can serve as a stopgap against federal changes. Already, Attorney General Andy Beshear of Kentucky has used his office to sue three state universities for concealing records related to sexual harassment or abuse allegations. "The lawsuits that we're filing are now more critical than ever," Beshear says. "If the Education Department is not going to be actively monitoring these investigations by our universities under Title IX, it's going to take other leaders on the state level." This could create a situation in which protections for students, on either side of an accusation, vary enormously depending where they live. "One thing we have to think about is it really does become a state jigsaw," Dunn says. "We have a very polarized

political debate, and I think states will come out all over the map."

Calling campus sexual misconduct a state issue is a short step from calling it an issue of states' rights. And that's no accident, say advocates, many of whom have long warned that an attack on Title IX could enable similar attacks on Title VI, the 1964 Civil Rights Act clause that forbids racial discrimination in schools, on which Title IX was modeled. The case law around both is intertwined, Dunn says, and their fates are, too: "If you're rolling back Title IX, the next thing you roll back is Title VI."

It's an argument that some conservatives are already making. Days after DeVos withdrew the guidance, The Wall Street Journal published an op-ed suggesting that she shouldn't stop there but should also withdraw a 2014 guidance concerning the disproportionate suspension and expulsion of black and Hispanic students. The same week, the Federalist Society released a report, written in part by individuals who had been active in criticizing Title IX practices, charging that the Obama Department of Education had overreached on three grounds: the guidance on campus sexual misconduct; a 2016 letter, also under Title IX, mandating transgender students' access to facilities that correspond with their identity; and the 2014 guidance over disparate suspensions of black and Hispanic students. Given that the first two guidance letters were withdrawn by the time the report



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was published, the next target seemed clear. The conservative think tank Center for Equal Opportunity, two of whose staff members helped write the report, published a blog post with the headline “Two Down, One to Go.”

One advocate, who asked to remain anonymous to describe a closed-door meeting with the Office for Civil Rights, said that Title VI had come up in conversation with Candice Jackson. “We’ve tried to approach them in good faith,” the advocate said, “and I think they’ve used it to unfortunately learn more of what they could undo.” In October, DeVos rescinded 72 additional Department of Education policies related to the civil rights of students with disabilities, an effort, the department said, to eliminate outdated guidance. A few weeks later, department officials met with a group of educators and advocates calling for the rescission of the third Department of Education guidance letter, on disproportionate discipline of students of color. Among them was the lead author of the section of the Federalist Society report calling for the letter’s rescission. And just before Thanksgiving, the department proposed revising its procedures for investigating school civil rights violations to no longer assess whether an individual reported incident could reveal more systemic discrimination, according to a draft document obtained by The Associated Press.

“This is about ending civil rights protections,” Dunn told me. “This is removing what we had a Civil War over, which really was limiting the states in their ability to violate the rights of individuals. The federal government is meant to be a civil rights check, and states have always retained tons of power to fight that check, but they’re trying to erode even that.”

This November, Equal Rights Advocates held the first leadership meeting of the Initiative to End Sexual Violence in Education, a new national network of attorneys and activists to defend Title IX that will train hundreds of new lawyers, establish a hotline to gather complaints and file suit either against schools failing to uphold Title IX rights or on behalf of those who might come under attack from the new Office for Civil Rights. “If the O.C.R. won’t defend Title IX,” Farrell says, “we will.”

This spring, Miltenberg’s phone rang again. On the line was another mother. “You’re not going to take our case,” she said. “You’re for the other side.”

Her daughter, a freshman at a college in upstate New York, said she had been raped during her first semester, after she was separated from friends at a Halloween party and a man she’d never met grabbed and forcibly kissed her. She said he repeatedly asked her to go to his room, and she repeatedly refused. Later, when she was drunk, he offered to help her find her friends, but he said he needed to stop by his dorm first. Once in his room, she said, he immediately undressed. The woman doesn’t remember exactly what happened next, but she found herself naked on his

bed. Then he raped her. When she got up to leave, she said, he told her, “Now go back to your room and don’t hook up with anyone else tonight.”

Weeks later, when the woman was out at a local bar, she felt someone staring at her and saw the man again, standing alone and watching her. Over the course of the night, as she moved from room to room to evade him, he followed, ultimately accosting her on the dance floor. (The accused man denies this account and maintains that the sex was consensual.)

By most campus standards, it seemed like a strong case. The woman had text messages she sent friends the night of the rape, saying she needed help; a female friend of the accused man would testify that she stopped by his room and saw the woman there, looking terrified. The same friend said the man asked her to tell campus authorities that everything looked fine. And the woman went to law enforcement.

After she filed a Title IX complaint last December, the woman and her family moved quickly to comply with the office’s requests, pulling together documentation in the weeks before Christmas and participating in a Skype interview on Dec. 18. But after the woman took a medical leave of absence — she struggled after the assault and was beginning therapy — the school’s commitment seemed to flag. By late January, the woman and her family say, officials hadn’t contacted any of the witnesses she suggested, and the accused student wasn’t interviewed until mid-February. The family decided they needed an attorney of their own. But they found lawyer after lawyer who represented only the accused; no one would take their case.

Miltenberg’s partner warned him that taking the case would be career suicide. But over the previous few months, he had started telling fellow Title IX critics that he didn’t think the dear colleague letter should be summarily withdrawn; perhaps it merely needed to be amended. Far from his earlier suggestion that women who don’t want to involve the police shouldn’t report to schools, he began to believe there was no easy way out of requiring colleges to take action. The police are too overburdened, he said, and some cops too “hard-boiled,” to respond to campus sexual assault well. Miltenberg’s new opinions made him unpopular. “I’m left out of a lot of email chains and phone calls now, and I used to be the lead guy,” he says.

He instructed the family to copy him on their communications with the school. The college’s own investigator was a woman Miltenberg says he contended with in the past, when she aggressively defended schools from lawsuits brought by men. The school allowed the male student to withdraw voluntarily on the eve of his hearing — informing the woman that meant the case was closed. “In any case I’ve ever done, the first thing parents ask is: ‘Can we just pull him out?’” Miltenberg says. Uniformly, in his experience, schools said no: The process would proceed, with or without the accused, and with findings of responsibility

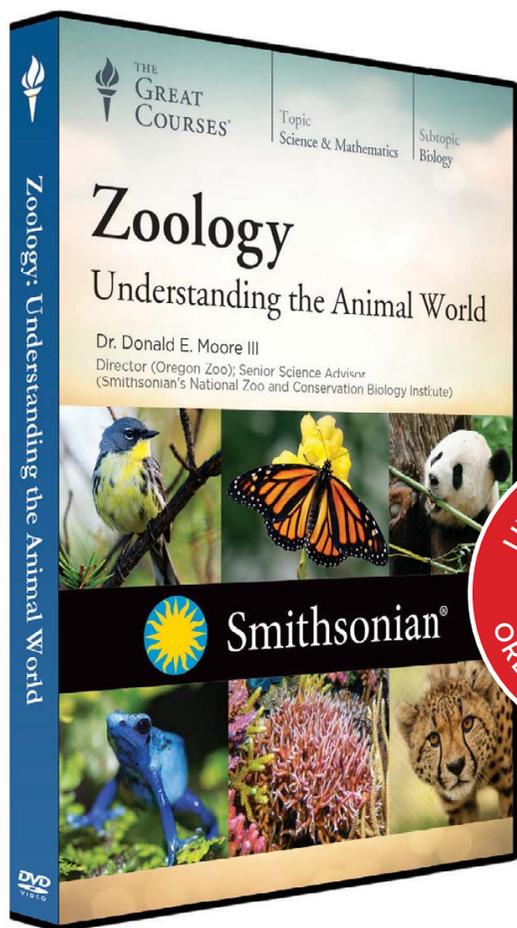
put on his permanent record. (The school says cases like this would result in a notation on the student’s transcript.) Miltenberg took the case.

When he met with the woman and her family in early June, he was shaken. “It was the first time I’ve ever sat with someone who’s a victim, at least in this type of setting,” he says. “I’m used to hearing the other side in detail and trying to come up with the parts that don’t add up, or where the story doesn’t make sense.” When the woman sent him a diary she kept in the months after the rape — a stream-of-consciousness account of the aftermath of losing control of her body — Miltenberg was aghast. As he read the diary, he imagined the voice of his eldest daughter, the same age as his client, and felt like throwing up. “I read this and think, My God, what if this is what every woman who feels they’ve been sexually assaulted feels like?”

As the woman’s lawsuits begin, she is starting her sophomore year at another university far from her first school. When she notified the New York college, she says, officials seemed almost overjoyed to approve her transfer.

When DeVos rescinded the letter in September, Miltenberg released a statement that did not betray any doubts but instead stated that he was “encouraged” by the action. But when he elaborated to me, he sounded more conflicted. Although he was glad more people were talking about the issue, he said he was “having a bit of a crisis of conscience.” Over the months he had worked on the woman’s case, the conventional wisdom about campus sexual assault had changed, with greater public focus on concerns about due process. “And insanely, I’m one of the people, for better or worse, who had some impact on shifting the narrative.” At the same time, he worried that the rescission could lead to a reaction of its own. He had received nearly a dozen new cases — all decided in the weeks immediately surrounding DeVos’s speech — in which he believed the schools had meted out unduly harsh penalties to make “a political counterstatement.” That prospect was as concerning to him as the school’s inaction on his female client’s case.

“There are real topics in this world that are zero-sum games,” he said; finding a balance between addressing sexual assault and ensuring due process didn’t need to be one. He found himself thinking that advocates on either side of the debate shared a sense of battlefield camaraderie, because only they saw what was really going on. “Sometimes you sit in this hearing and your heart breaks for both people,” he said. “Sometimes I walk out and think the whole thing is a [expletive]: terrible for him, terrible for her, terrible for the parents.” It would be disingenuous, he said, not to acknowledge the concerns of the other side: That if the process is broken, it’s broken at least as much for victims as the accused. That correction can become over-correction in either direction. The pendulum swings both ways. It shouldn’t, he said, “but I don’t know how to stop it.” ♦



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16. Carnivore Mammals: Feline, Canine, and Ursine
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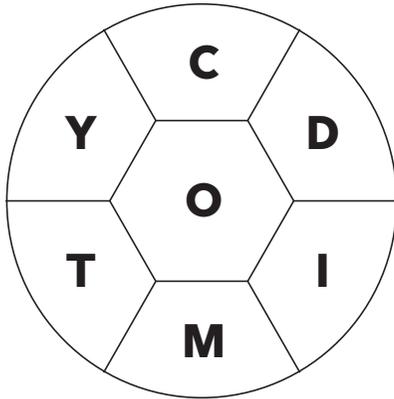
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SPELLING BEE

By Frank Longo

How many common words of 5 or more letters can you spell using the letters in the hive? Every answer must use the center letter at least once. Letters may be reused in a word. At least one word will use all 7 letters. Proper names and hyphenated words are not allowed. Score 1 point for each answer, and 3 points for a word that uses all 7 letters.

Rating: 5 = good; 10 = excellent; 15 = genius



Our list of words, worth 16 points, appears with last week's answers.

FREEWHEELING

By Patrick Berry

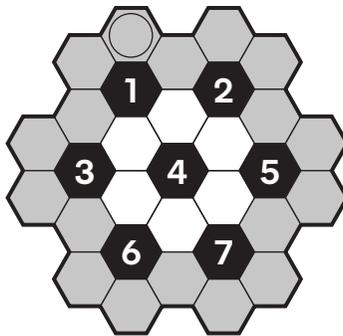
Wheel answers are six letters long and circle their correspondingly numbered hexagons, starting in one of the six adjoining spaces and reading clockwise or counterclockwise. Rim answers read clockwise around the grid's shaded perimeter, one after the other, starting in the circled space.

WHEELS

- Made up for misdeeds
- Loves to pieces
- Hollywood industry
- Some devices connected to routers
- Uproar
- Liquid part of blood
- To whom the narrator of "Green Eggs and Ham" is speaking (hyph.)

RIM

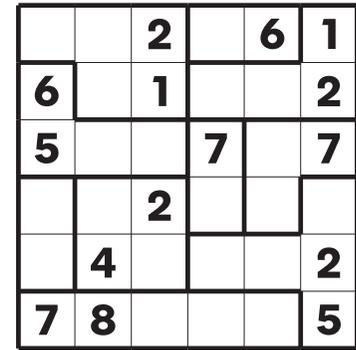
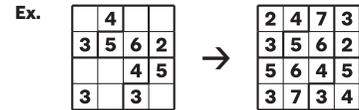
Police weapon that shocks • Allege • Star of "Serpico" and "Dog Day Afternoon" (2 wds.)



BOXING MATCH

By Tinh Van Duc Lai

Place numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid so that each outlined region contains consecutive numbers, and so that the sum of numbers in every 3x3 area is the same. The grid has 16 overlapping 3x3 areas. Solving hint: When 3x3 areas overlap, the sum of the numbers in their unshared squares must be equal. In the example, the total of each 3x3 area is 42.

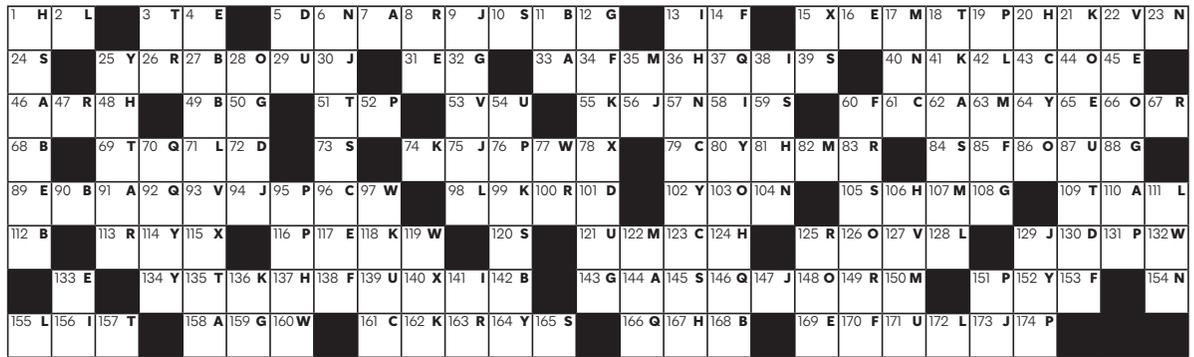


Next week: Introducing Elbow Room

ACROSTIC

By Emily Cox & Henry Rathvon

Guess the words defined below and write them over their numbered dashes. Then transfer each letter to the correspondingly numbered square in the pattern. Black squares indicate word endings. The filled pattern will contain a quotation reading from left to right. The first letters of the guessed words will form an acrostic giving the author's name and the title of the work.



A. Unesco and others

46 33 144 110 62 158 91 7

B. Winner of a prestigious prize

68 90 142 168 11 27 112 49

C. Formulator of F = ma

43 96 79 161 61 123

D. The Panthers of the N.C.A.A.

5 130 101 72

E. Stephen Sondheim musical including "Gun Song"

31 89 45 133 4 65 117 16 169

F. Batman adversary born Harvey Dent (hyph.)

138 170 14 153 85 60 34

G. Penned together (hyph.)

143 50 108 88 159 32 12

H. Vantage point that may provide clarity?

137 1 106 48 20 81 124 167 36

I. Select few

156 141 38 13 58

J. Delicate, as a situation

56 9 173 147 129 94 30 75

K. Transmissions of a telepath

21 162 41 55 136 99 118 74

L. Song tied to a 1960s dance craze (2 wds.)

2 155 111 128 98 42 71 172

M. Danger sign (2 wds.)

35 107 17 63 82 122 150

N. Associated with high-toned areas

104 40 57 6 154 23

O. Cost concern for many parents

44 126 66 86 148 103 28

P. Dog's snack, per a classic alibi

174 151 95 52 116 76 19 131

Q. Less than right?

37 146 70 166 92

R. Singer of the 2002 hit "Don't Know Why" (2 wds.)

47 67 163 100 26 125 113 149 83 8

S. Fail to remember (3 wds.)

24 59 145 165 73 10 84 120 39 105

T. Host city of the 2008 Olympics

51 18 3 69 135 157 109

U. On the way out

87 139 121 171 54 29

V. Spot of wine?

22 127 93 53

W. Roderick and Madeline's house, in an 1839 tale

160 97 119 132 77

X. Attire for a hippo in "Fantasia"

78 15 115 140

Y. Fresh; green or not yet mature

102 164 64 25 80 152 114 134

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FULL-BODY CAST

By Erik Agard and Laura Braunstein

ACROSS

- 1 Take ___ on the wild side
- 6 Cartoonist Silverstein
- 10 Before you can say Jack Robinson
- 18 Academy Award-winning Marisa
- 19 Hip-hop's ___ Kweli
- 21 Crisis connections
- 22 Boo-boos
- 23 Brings up
- 25 "Batman" actress, 1967-68
- 26 A-list topper
- 28 Nine-time Pro Bowler John
- 30 Curriculum ___
- 31 "Traffic" actor, 2000
- 32 Winter Olympics event
- 34 ___-de-France
- 35 Sat ___ (GPS, to a Brit)
- 36 "Super Mario Bros." actor, 1993
- 40 Comic-book onomatopoeia
- 43 Irish form of Mary
- 46 Figure on a foam finger
- 47 ___ contendere
- 48 School that lent its name to a collar
- 50 Like many laundromats

- 52 Seat of Penobscot County
- 54 "Bride of Frankenstein" actress, 1935
- 56 Traditional Filipino dish marinated in vinegar and soy sauce
- 59 Turn up
- 60 Bring into harmony
- 63 Yves's evening
- 64 Like many write-in candidates: Abbr.
- 65 "Training Day" actor, 2001
- 71 Old C.I.A. foe
- 72 Where people get off
- 74 Growing art form?
- 75 "A ___ From St. Nicholas"
- 77 Roadside establishment much seen in the Southwest
- 80 "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" actress, 2000
- 85 Connive
- 86 Shaman, e.g.
- 87 When tripled, a "Seinfeld" catchphrase
- 88 Eastern European capital
- 89 Simple top

- 91 Cell exchanges
- 93 Deteriorate
- 94 "Crash" actor, 2004
- 97 Scottish form of John
- 99 Operate
- 101 Deliverance person
- 102 "Frost/Nixon" actor, 2008
- 106 Kidney-related
- 109 Dame modifier
- 110 Bear claws and such
- 112 What eight actors took on for this puzzle?
- 115 Written deeply
- 117 "Mea ___"
- 118 Daughter of Oedipus
- 119 Kama ___
- 120 Hermione's Patronus, in the Harry Potter books
- 121 Lure in Vegas
- 122 Leader wearing the Great Imperial Crown
- 123 10 cc's and others

DOWN

- 1 Thing whose size is measured in picometers
- 2 Floored
- 3 Pal
- 4 Country singer Womack
- 5 What might show participants going neck and neck?
- 6 Cop
- 7 Le ___ (French port)

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18						19			20		21							
22						23			24		25							
26						27			28		29			30				
	31								32				33				34	
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54					55						56						57	58
	59								60	61	62					63		
64				65		66	67	68					69	70		71		
72			73			74							75		76			
77					78	79					80	81	82	83				84
					85						86						87	
						88			89	90			91			92		93
					94				95			96			97	98		
99	100							101				102	103				104	105
106				107	108			109				110						111
112						113	114			115			116			117		
118											119					120		
121																123		

12/10/17

- 8 "Mr. Blue Sky" band, for short
- 9 This way
- 10 "Gotcha"
- 11 Word implied on Opposite Day
- 12 Ultimate degree
- 13 Name of five Norwegian kings

- 14 Word with torch or bar
- 15 Ab ___ (from the beginning)
- 16 Genre for Black Sabbath
- 17 Lauder of cosmetics
- 20 Hotel attendant
- 24 Proust protagonist
- 27 L.G.B.T. magazine since 1967
- 29 State as fact
- 33 Mosque tower
- 36 Primatologist Goodall
- 37 Crash, with "out"
- 38 Pond growth
- 39 Emotional states
- 40 N, seen from the side
- 41 Where I-20, I-65 and I-85 all meet
- 42 Some advanced researchers, for short
- 44 Particle named by Faraday
- 45 Most caloric
- 49 Catch
- 51 Face-to-face challenges
- 52 Pot holder
- 53 1947, for Jackie Robinson

- 55 Stripling
- 56 Depress
- 57 Ruckus
- 58 Sphere
- 61 J.F.K.'s former ___ Terminal
- 62 "Je ___" (French words of affection)
- 64 Suffix with novel or Nobel
- 66 Standout hoopsters
- 67 City planners' designation
- 68 Undoing
- 69 Leaves a lot on the table?
- 70 Nothing
- 73 Chocolate-coated snack stick
- 76 Like some winks
- 78 Branch of Islam
- 79 Any of the Ninja Turtles
- 81 "Must've been something ___"
- 82 The Browns, on a scoreboard
- 83 Bad spell
- 84 See 102-Down
- 86 Vertical landing spots
- 89 Program saver
- 90 Like SEALs

- 92 Cured and dried fish
- 94 Have as a tenant
- 95 "Dear Evan ___," Best Musical of 2017
- 96 Like florists' flowers that are already in vases
- 98 Best-selling Japanese manga series
- 99 ___ Outfitters (retailer)
- 100 Where Javert drowned in "Les Misérables"
- 102 With 84-Down, bit of black attire
- 103 Real-time tool for meteorologists
- 104 Isn't level
- 105 Where one might raise a flap about a reservation?
- 107 So quiet you can hear ___ drop
- 108 Isn't up to date
- 111 Early 2000s outbreak, for short
- 113 Old resident at Versailles
- 114 "Star Trek" spinoff, to fans
- 116 Elevs.

Puzzles Online: Today's puzzle and more than 9,000 past puzzles, nytimes.com/crosswords (\$39.95 a year). For the daily puzzle commentary: nytimes.com/wordplay.

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5	2÷		20×	2-
2-	1-			
	9+	2-		4
2-		2-		10×
	5+		2	

8+	3-		12×	12+		1-
	4-				1	
4-		4		1-		1-
28×		2÷	18+	2-	2÷	
	24×					6+
4-		1-		4-		
	3		40×			

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Credits: "Horror Show," Pages 48-67

Directed and photographed by **FLORIA SIGISMONDI**

Produced by **THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE** and **MAAVVEN**. Producers: **AMY KELLNER, KATHY RYAN, COLEEN HAYNES**. Executive producer: **JAKE SILVERSTEIN**. Associate producer: **OUALID MOUANESS**.

Cinematographer: **EIGIL BRYLD**. Editor: **CLARK EDDY**. Original music composed and performed by **LAWRENCE ROTHMAN**. Recorded at **HOUSE OF LUX**.

Production supervisor: **DESIREE LAURO**. Assistant production supervisor: **GORDON GEE**. 2nd assistant production supervisor: **HENRY SANTA MARIA**. 1st assistant directors: **RICHARD HAWTIN, MAX NORMAND**. 1st assistant camera: **IAN CLAMPETT, LORENZO PORRAS**. 2nd assistant camera: **LISA EIDENHAMMER**. Digital technicians (video): **NATE KALUSHNER, SHAWN AGUILAR**. Behind-the-scenes photo and video: **MICHAEL DELLA POLLA**.

Gaffers: **SIMON CHO, TYLER ROUSSEAU**. Best boy electric: **JESSE WINE, BRYCE LANSING**. 3rd electric: **JOSE GARCIA, LUIS MANZO JR.** Key grip: **BRIAN BEVERLY, NICK LUNDSTROM**. Best boy grip: **PAUL SALMI, JD HOWELL, JACK BEVERLY**. Additional grip: **SAM CAMM, DEVON USHER**.

Digital technician (photo): **CAMERON GARDNER**. Camera assistant (photo): **JOSEPH BOURDONY**. Photo postproduction: **PICTUREHOUSE & THESMALLDARKROOM**. Telecine: **FRAMESTORE**. Video colorist: **BEAU LEON**. VFX artist: **SARAH MARIKAR**. Senior color producer: **ANDREW MCLINTOCK**. Color assistant: **JONAH BRAUN**. Data color support: **EVAN REINHARD**.

Production assistants: **DAVID HEWES, KATELYN PIPPY, BEN TAYLOR, RAMOND ROBINSON**. Director's assistant: **CAITLIN WESTERMAN**.

Talent coordinator: **MISTY FAIRBANKS**. Camera equipment: **KESLOW CAMERA**. Craft services: **ZSAJSHA JAYE**. Catering: **FOOD FETISH**. Location scout: **STACI LYNN BUCKLEY**. Location: **2215 S. HARVARD BLVD. LOS ANGELES**. Base camp parking: **IGLESIAS EVANGELICA LATINA TEMPLO BETHEL**. FilmL.A. representatives: **ERICA WADE, DEREK STORM, ROD EMELE, DARYL MIDDLEBROOK**. Trailer: **STAR WAGGONS**.

Special thanks: **MICHAEL ELLISON-LEWIS** and **FIRST A.M.E. CHURCH OF LOS ANGELES**, **OFFICER GABRIEL MARTINEZ** and **OFFICER RICH PRIEST** from **THE LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT FILM DIVISION**, **FATIMA ROBINSON**, **CONCEPCION BARBAYNES**, **JOE ANDRADE III**, **BRITTANY KAHN, KELLY BAKER, BEN KAUFMAN, TOSCA VERA SIGISMONDI**.

Art Department

Production designer: **KRISTEN VALLOW**. Set art director: **SARAH COUPLAND**. Set decorator: **ELIZABETH MOORE**. Lead set dresser: **ZENO BEN-AMOTZ**. Set dressers: **MICHAEL FLORIAN, SETH MURRAY, TAYLOR WILLIAMS**.

Styling

Costume designer: **DOUGLAS VANLANINGHAM**. Assistant stylists: **JEREMY FRIEND, STEPHANIE HARRISON, DIANA ARANGO**.

Special makeup effects: **ALLY MCGILLICUDDY, SHEILA MIA SEIFI**. Clown makeup for Andy Serkis: **WEN ZHENG**. Bloody-hand model: **MISTY FAIRBANKS**.

Hair

Haddish: **PRECIOUS JACKSON**. Kaluuya: **CHRISTOPHER LENELO**. Kidman: **LONA VIGI**.

Nixon: **CREIGHTON BOWMAN**.

Prince: **PRESTON WADA**. Ronan: **MARCUS FRANCIS**. Vega: **NATHANIEL DEZAN**.

Makeup

Haddish: **DIONNE WYNN**. Kidman: **ANGELA LEVIN**. Nixon: **STEPHEN SOLLITTO**. Prince, Vega: **MYNXII WHITE**. Ronan: **MAI QUYNH**.

Manicure

Haddish, Kidman, Ronan, Vega: **EMI KUDO**. Nixon: **LISA PEÑA-WONG**.

Grooming

Chalamet: **KUMI CRAIG**. Gyllenhaal: **KERRIE URBAN**. Kaluuya, Serkis: **ANNA BERNABE**.

Clothing

Chalamet: Jacket and pin by **DIOR HOMME**; waistcoat by **ANN DEMEULEMEESTER**; shirt and shoes by **GUCCI**; watch by **HERMÈS**. Gyllenhaal: Knit by **JOHN GALLIANO**; pajama pant by **SHAUN SAMSON**; slippers by **GUCCI**. Haddish: Gown by **FAITH CONNEXION**; shoes by **PIERRE HARDY**; earrings by **DIABOLI KILL**. Kaluuya: Topcoat, suit, shirt and tie by **ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA COUTURE**. Shoes by **TOM FORD**; ring by **DIABOLI KILL**. Kidman: Dress by **BOTTEGA VENETA**; necklace, ring and earrings by **TIFFANY & CO**. Nixon: Gown by **ELIE SAAB COUTURE**; earrings and ring by **TIFFANY & CO**. Ronan: Dress by **GUCCI**; earrings by **LA TACHE BOBO**. Serkis: Jacket by **3.1 PHILLIP LIM**; trousers by **Y/PROJECT**; shoes by **COMME DES GARÇONS**. Vega: Dress, bodysuit, shoes, necklace, ring and bracelets by **JEAN PAUL GAULTIER COUTURE**; horn ring by **DIABOLI KILL**. ♦

become more
star struck

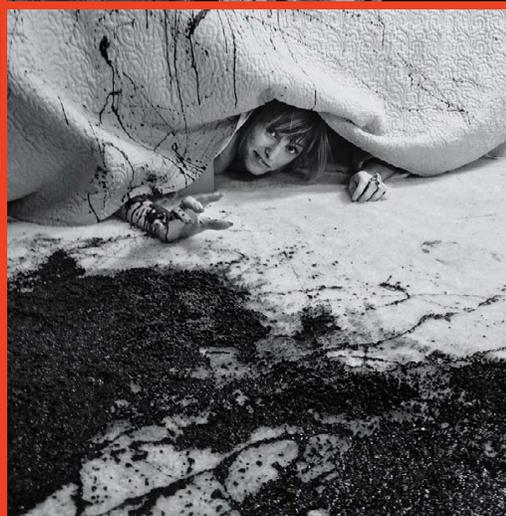
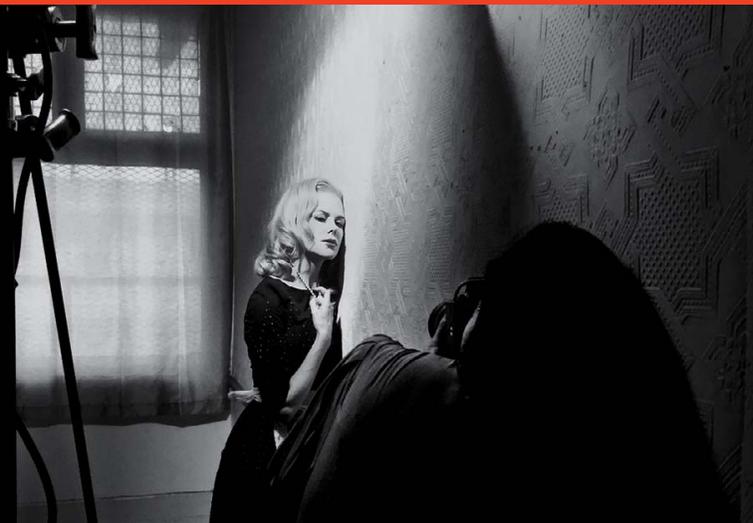
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BEHIND THE SCREAMS

Every year for the “Great Performers” issue we choose a theme for our photos and videos. This year we took on a particularly challenging genre: horror. The actors threw themselves into it, enduring grotesque makeup and splatters of gore. Nicole Kidman told the team to cover their ears before she let out a bloodcurdling shriek, in an image that became our cover. Jake Gyllenhaal embodied his role so intensely he didn’t need much makeup at all; the sweat and grime were his own. For Daniel Kaluuya’s psycho-killer scene, a crew member, Misty Fairbanks, agreed to cram herself under a musty mattress, reaching out again and again with a vengeful hand. **AMY KELLNER**

◆
 Clockwise from top left: Nicole Kidman being photographed by Floria Sigismondi; Tiffany Haddish with the cinematographer Eigil Bryld; Jake Gyllenhaal with Sigismondi after their shoot; Misty Fairbanks, the hand model; Saoirse Ronan with Sigismondi.

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