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SPECIAL ISSUE

Rolling Stone

DECEMBER 2020 : ISSUE 1346

PLUS

Future & Roddy Ricch

Iggy Pop & Elvis Costello

Summer Walker & Erykah Badu

Lil Baby & Lil Wayne

Brittany Howard & Margo Price

AND MORE

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ISSUE
1346
'ALL THE
NEWS THAT
FITS'

MUSICIANS ON MUSICIANS

Revealing conversations between innovators of all genres and generations

PHOTOGRAPH BY **Mason Poole**

"You were a breath of fresh air from the West Coast," Future (right) tells Roddy Ricch. "New, fresh, fly, melodic."

44

RODDY RICCH: T-SHIRT BY POLO BY RALPH LAUREN. JACKET BY BOTTEGA VENETA. PANTS BY GIVENCHY. FUTURE: COAT AND PANTS BY FENDI. T-SHIRT BY CALVIN KLEIN. SUNGLASSES BY BOTTEGA VENETA.

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On the Cover

Paul McCartney and Taylor Swift, photographed in London on October 6th, 2020, by **Mary McCartney**.

Produced by Grace Guppy. McCartney: Styling by Nancy McCartney. Grooming by Jo Bull. Jacket by Stella McCartney. Sweater by Hermès. Shirt by Prada. Jeans by Acne. Shoes by Stella McCartney. Swift: Top and jacket by Stella McCartney. Pants by Ulla Johnson. Boots by Dolce & Gabbana.

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ROLLING STONE (ISSN 0035-791x) is published 12 times per year, which is subject to change at any time, by Penske Business Media, LLC, 475 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to ROLLING STONE Customer Service, P.O. Box 37505, Boone, IA 50037-0505. Canadian Postmaster: Send address changes and returns to P.O. Box 63, Malton CFC, Mississauga, Ontario L4T3B5. Canada Poste publication agreement #40683192. International Publications Mail Sales Product Agreement No. 450553.

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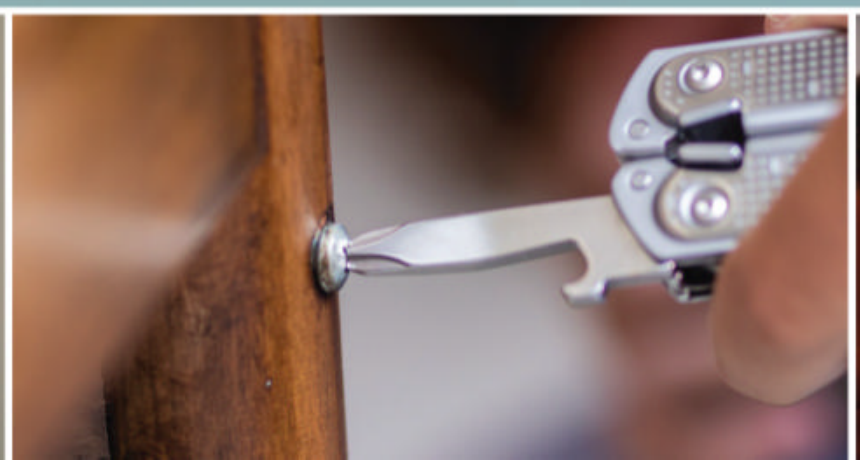


WAIT A SECOND, IS THAT A MULTI-FLAVOR MINI-TOWER OF OAT-GURT CUPS OVER THERE?

Editor's Letter

Musicians on Musicians in Quarantine

WHEN TAYLOR SWIFT walked into Paul McCartney's MPL Studios office in London, in early October, for this issue's cover story, she arrived without assistants or stylists or even a makeup person. (Appropriately, Taylor chose to wear clothes designed by Paul's daughter Stella McCartney for the occasion.) For most of the day it was just Taylor and Paul, along with Paul's daughter Mary McCartney, a photographer, in what turned out to be a revelatory meeting of megastars from across the generations.

Taylor came armed with questions; Paul was loose and relaxed, singing to Motown songs and sharing personal stories, like the time he made veggie burgers for Quincy Jones in his kitchen. They talked about songwriting, how to keep a semblance of normal life as a celebrity, and the risk-taking albums they both made during lockdown. "I was using words I always wanted to use – bigger, flowerier, pretty words," Taylor says in one exchange. "I have favorite words, like 'elegies' and 'epiphany' and 'divorcée' . . . that I think sound beautiful."

"How about 'marzipan'?" Paul asks.

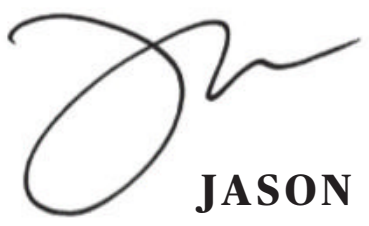
"Love 'marzipan,' " responds Taylor.

This was the reality of Musicians on Musicians 2020, a year that brought live music to a full stop, and forced artists – like all of us – into isolation. "The planning was tricky," says senior music editor Patrick Doyle, who oversaw the package, which features 10 pairings of artists, some meeting in person and others over Zoom. "A lot of musicians didn't want to travel or be in a room with a lot of people. But once the conversations were happening, they really let their guard down, maybe because normal life is out the window."

Mavis Staples speaks to Chris Stapleton about the death of George Floyd and the perils of touring in the Deep South with the Staple Singers when she was young; Summer Walker and Erykah Badu discuss UFOs and living off the grid, and Badu mixes a batch of whiskey-and-tea cocktails to loosen up the photo shoot. Jason Isbell confesses to Barry Gibb that he misses touring so much he's ready to drag a Marshall amp into his front yard and perform for the neighbors.

Iggy Pop and Elvis Costello share a sense of lost time. "I had a tour booked this year," Iggy tells Elvis. "Then, 'Bam!' It's part of the summer gone. 'Bam!' There goes the rest of the summer. And so immediately I have this huge muscle buildup. . . . I would have these nighttime attacks of, 'Who am I now? Who am I going to be?' "

"I know when I do come back onstage," adds Costello, "it's going to feel great. Imagine what kind of party we're going to have."



JASON FINE
EDITOR

"I want to be able to feel safe in my country, I want to be able to feel safe in a kayak in the backwoods. I want to feel safe just as much as a Billy Bob wants to feel safe." –BRITTANY HOWARD

Wolman at Woodstock in 1969

TRIBUTE

Baron Wolman: 1937-2020

Remembering Rolling Stone's first staff photographer, whose historic covers caught the rise of rock & roll

BARON WOLMAN, who captured some of the earliest and most iconic images of classic rockers, died on November 2nd, following a recent diagnosis of ALS. Wolman joined ROLLING STONE at its inception, in 1967, and captured famous shots of Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Smokey Robinson, Frank Zappa, and Jerry Garcia, among other legends. "Everybody was approachable and appreciative in those days," Wolman told ROLLING STONE in 2011. "Baron was perfect," says RS founder Jann Wenner.

"I didn't want a photographer who was just going to go to shows and take photos from their seats. I wanted portraits with elegance and style, and Baron had that. He set the look for ROLLING STONE." On October 4th, Wolman wrote on Facebook, "I'm now in the final sprint to the end. I go forward with a huge amount of gratitude for the many blessings bestowed upon me…with no regrets and appreciation for how my photographs — my life's work — have been received."

GOT A HOT NEWS TIP? We want to hear it. Email us, confidentially, at Tips@RollingStone.com

TRIBUTE

The Joy and Pain of Eddie Van Halen

A special online release tells the story of the man who reinvented electric guitar

TO HIS FANS AND PEERS, Eddie Van Halen — who died of cancer on October 6th — was a larger-than-life guitar superhero who reshaped his instrument forever by the age of 22. But underneath his famous smile, Van Halen was a sometimes-tortured genius who started life in America as an outsider. He and future Van Halen drummer Alex Van Halen emigrated from the Netherlands with their family when Eddie was seven years old, and he barely spoke a word of English when they arrived. In ROLLING STONE's definitive digital cover story, which Eddie's ex-wife, Valerie Bertinelli, called "heartbreaking, truthful, and beautiful," senior writer Brian Hiatt tells the complex full story of Eddie Van Halen, drawing on multiple conversations with the artist. "It's a good life, man," Eddie told us in 2008.

Correspondence

+ LOVE LETTERS & ADVICE

"It is imperative for the democracy of this country to bring people together. Without democracy, things will get worse for us all."

—Cynthia Cortes, via Twitter

The Unguarded Dylan

Even for Bob Dylan fans who think they've read and heard it all, this Douglas Brinkley essay in ROLLING STONE ["Dylan Unguarded," RS 1345] is pure gold.

—Bryan Marquard, via Twitter

"This seems as near as we've got to a *Paris Review* interview with Dylan — so much unguarded, demystified talk about how he writes, or wrote at the time, in his first decade as Dylan in 1961-71; what it takes and what it means or doesn't, and a lot that's funny too.

—Philip Gourevitch, via Twitter

Rebuilding a Divided America

For our November issue, former Vice President Joe Biden appeared on our cover with ROLLING STONE's endorsement ["Joe Biden for President," RS 1345]. As Americans voted early, stood in line at their polling places, and awaited results, our readers also wrote in expressing their hopes and anxieties for the nation. "I so deeply wanted to feel hope around the idea that our country would unite around a sense of justice and morality, but I am sad to see that we remain deeply divided in a way that I should have, but did not, expect," wrote Sarah Anderson. "How did we get here?" Asked Rhea Roggie. "Integrity in leadership matters. As the mother of a disabled young adult, I can't for the life of me understand why Trump's leadership didn't come to a sudden halt when he mocked a disabled person. I'm not sure where we go from here." Despite division, some remain hopeful for restored unity. "The problems we face have been compounded by the pandemic. Now is the time for us to realize that we are all on the same team," wrote Connor Quigg. "I recently became a U.S. citizen, and I'm a first-time voter. It scares me that the country is so evenly divided on two radically different ideals," wrote Isabela Novaes. "I hope we can be more accepting of each other one day."

@AbellSharon: I haven't got a print subscription for any paper or magazine, but I will now subscribe for the first time!

Trump's Damage to Democracy

The Trump presidency ["The Sedition of Donald Trump," RS 1345] is like living in a country run by a Marvel supervillain (right down to the hair and makeup) who cheated his way into the White House and is killing our people, terrorizing our children, and robbing us blind.

—Robyn Neaville, via Facebook

Why do we have a Supreme Court? It isn't to push through party goals. It's supposed to be the fair arbiter of the law for all Americans. This too has become a farce in the hands of Trump and scared Republicans in order to extend their power grab.

—Jenny Kalmer, via Facebook

SPOTLIGHT

How a Country-Music Pioneer's Career Was Cut Short

Linda Martell had three singles on the country charts and performed on the Grand Ole Opry stage as the first black female solo country artist to ever do so ["Country's Lost Pioneer," RS 1345]. What should have blossomed into a lifelong career was cut short by racism. David Browne interviewed Martell, who has been living in anonymity, to tell her full story for the first time. "Information on her is so scarce, and she never does interviews," tweeted Randi Foor Dalton. "This is a big deal." Mark Coleman wrote, "Fascinating and so well told. I knew the soul version of *Color Me Father,* but had no idea about Linda Martell. Hopefully, this will bring her overdue acclaim."

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RHINO

Robin Pecknold's Rebirth

The chaos and loss of 2020 helped him make a creative breakthrough with Fleet Foxes

FLEET FOXES


Pecknold performing in 2019

IN THE SPRING OF 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic tore through New York City at terrifying speed, Robin Pecknold stayed home in his rented one-bedroom apartment in Greenwich Village. "I wasn't being creative at all," says the Fleet Foxes singer-songwriter, 34. "There were some dark weeks where I would end up waking up at 7 or 8 p.m. and stay up until noon. The world just seemed like it was more sane at night."

On top of everything else – "the stress that we've all been going through, just by being alive in 2020," as he puts it – he had an album to worry about. He'd spent the previous fall and winter recording instrumental tracks for a new Fleet Foxes project, but the songs were half-finished at best, with no lyrics or vocals, and no sure ideas for what to do next. "It was this extra albatross," he says. "It was unclear if I would just abandon it, or if it was going to come out in 2022, or what."


With the touring version of Fleet Foxes in 2017

That feeling lasted through March, April, and May. Then, in June, Pecknold had a breakthrough. Heading north for long loops through the Catskills in his Toyota 4Runner, he found himself pulling over to the side of the road to jot down lyrics. "I put 6,000 miles on my car in three weeks," he says.

The songs that came into focus on those drives became *Shore*, the fourth Fleet Foxes album – a gorgeous folk-rock song cycle about life, death, and art, full of mourning and glimmers of relief on the other side. Track for track, it's the most immediately rewarding Fleet Foxes record since their 2008 debut.

Pecknold began writing shortly after the tour for 2017's *Crack-Up*, the album that ended a multiyear hiatus during which he quit music, enrolled in undergraduate classes at Columbia University, and learned to surf. Hoping to avoid another long gap between albums, he got the instrumental tracks down at studios in New York, Paris, and Los Angeles, working with engineer Beatriz Artola and select session collaborators.

The music was sunny and full of light, but finding a strong lyrical perspective to match proved harder. "I resent lyrics sometimes," Pecknold says. "It's very delicate. You can't have a classic song with bad lyrics."

Even before the pandemic, he felt himself hitting a wall of creative exhaustion. "There was just no subject matter," he says. "Living with the gibberish scratch vocals for a year and a half is a bad idea."

As the lockdown period stretched on, he began to see a way out of that dilemma. "The whole experience gave me so much additional perspective on what community means, what death means, what gratitude means, what privilege is," he says. "This is my least personal album. I wanted it to be mostly about how I felt about other people."

There's no better example of this approach than "Sunblind," the litany of thanks for musicians gone before their time that appears near the start of *Shore*. "For Richard Swift," Pecknold sings, invoking the beloved artist and producer who worked with the Black Keys, the Shins, and many others before his death in 2018, and who Pecknold knew from his own time living in the Pacific Northwest. The song keeps going from there, reciting the names of John Prine, Elliott Smith, David Berman, and more, mingling recent tragedies with older ones in a cosmic scroll of appreciation. Then it bursts into a celebratory chorus. "That chorus is saying, 'I'm going to live as best I can, in thanks to these people,' " Pecknold says. "It's zeroing in on this idea of gratitude to be alive."

This summer, as Black Lives Matter protests filled New York's streets, Pecknold joined a march that passed by his block, and also used his car to bring ice and other supplies to occupiers who needed them. He wrote the lyrics to "Jara" – another key song, named for the Chilean protest singer Victor Jara, who was killed in the U.S.-backed coup that brought down socialist president Salvador Allende in 1973 – while thinking about others who took a more active role standing up against racism this year. "The speaker is equating a friend who's a very engaged activist to their own personal Victor Jara," he says.

The recording process for *Shore* was full of new collaborations, with three drummers (Grizzly Bear's Christopher Bear, the Dap-Kings' Homer Steinweiss, and Angel Olsen collaborator Joshua Jaeger) giving Pecknold's songs a new rhythmic edge. Elsewhere on the LP, there's a small sample of Brian Wilson in the studio, taken (with permission) from the *Pet Sounds Sessions* box set that Pecknold discovered as a kid in Seattle. "He's making this crazy egalitarian magic with just his voice," Pecknold says. "Hearing that when I was a teenager – that, more than any other thing, made me want to get into making songs."

The other four members of Fleet Foxes – Skyler Skjelset, Morgan Henderson, Casey Wescott, and Christian Wargo – are notably absent from *Shore*. In fact, though they have contributed in varying degrees to Fleet Foxes' previous albums, Pecknold says his bandmates have always been more like touring members. "The studio albums have always been predominantly my work and my vision," he writes in a press statement. "I've always handled all the songwriting, most of the vocals and harmonies, and most of the recording of the instrumentation."

This balance of roles hasn't always been entirely clear to the public, in part by choice. "On the first Fleet Foxes album, I just didn't list who played what, because I didn't want to have certain songs be all me," he says.

At one point, he expected to be reinterpreting *Shore* with the band on tour this fall. "Part of the idea of this record was songs that would be fun to play live," he says. "It won't happen for a year, and that's weird." But it's also been freeing in a way: "We can't go on tour. The record's just the record. That feels really great."

Recently, Pecknold has begun "bouncing ideas back-and-forth" with his bandmates, co-writing with them for the first time. "They're all great musicians with interesting perspectives," he says. "Maybe we can get those [songs] together for next year."

The process of making *Shore* has left him feeling newly comfortable with his life and career, shrugging off some of the cares that once preoccupied him. "I'm still anxious and worried, but it's not about my own stuff," Pecknold says, sounding happy. "It's about what's going on in the world. This is one weird little moment where there might be some optimism." **SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON**

FAST FACTS

XO, ELLIOTT
As a young musician, Pecknold often looked up guitar tabs on the Elliott Smith fan site sweetadeline.net.

SURF'S UP
Pecknold chose his Toyota SUV "because the back window goes down, so it's easy to put a surfboard in the back."

SEPTEMBER SURPRISE
Shore arrived with virtually no advance promotion at the exact moment of the autumn equinox. "Catching the end of summer, it just felt like the right time," Pecknold says.

FROM TOP: DOUGLAS MASON/WIREIMAGE; SHAWN BRACKBILL

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RS CHARTS
THE BIGGEST ARTISTS, ALBUMS, AND SONGS OF TODAY

2020's Biggest New Stars

THE PAST YEAR has seen many lives stuck on pause, with people around the world staying home to slow the pandemic – but on the charts, new artists still managed to rise from various levels of obscurity to real-world stardom, and thanks to TikTok, many of them pulled it off overnight. Read on for ROLLING STONE's list of the top breakthrough artists of 2020, ranked by their growth in streams from the previous year By EMILY BLAKE


Doja Cat

HIGHLIGHT

DOJA CAT ROARS ON THE CHARTS

WHEN YOUR FIRST HIT is a novelty track and your breakout moment is a meme, it can be hard to make the transition to a serious star. See, for example, the short-lived career of the Royal Teens, the New Jersey rock band behind 1958's "Short Shorts," or Rebecca Black's efforts to follow up the viral success of her 2011 hit "Friday."

But two years after the very funny "Mooo!" — a song she has since called "a joke" — singer and rapper Doja Cat has done the nearly impossible, topping our list of the biggest breakthrough artists of 2020. While her second album, *Hot Pink,* debuted at Number 19 on the RS 200 back in November 2019, it didn't hit its peak until this year. That success is largely thanks to "Say So," the glimmering disco-pop jam released as a single at the top of the year. "Say So" caught the attention of Nicki Minaj, who jumped on a remix and helped take the song to Number Two on the RS 100. *Hot Pink* went on to Number Eight on the albums chart, and Doja Cat reached Number 17 on the Artists 500. In 2020 alone, Doja Cat saw more than 1 billion on-demand audio streams in the U.S., up more than 250 percent from 2019. E.B.

Top Breakthrough Artists of 2020

Who saw the highest streaming gains this year?

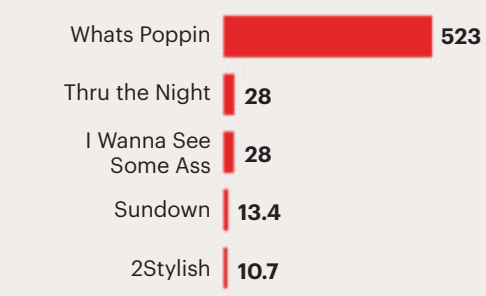
		STREAMS GROWTH
1	Doja Cat	792M
2	Jack Harlow	642M
3	Don Toliver	634M
4	Natanael Cano	462M
5	Surfaces	363M
6	24kGoldn	356M
7	Saint Jhn	347M
8	The Kid Laroi	343M
9	Powfu	340M
10	Eslabon Armado	301M

The Rolling Stone Breakthrough 25 Chart ranks the artists who are seeing the greatest gains in on-demand audio streams in the U.S. This list ranks artists by their total streams from January through October 2020, compared with their total streams in 2019. For more on RS Charts, head to rollingstone.com/charts.

Jack Harlow Pops Off

Kentucky rapper Jack Harlow lands in the top three of our year-end ranking, thanks almost entirely to his piano-trap single "Whats Poppin," which got a boost from a remix with Tory Lanez, DaBaby, and Lil Wayne. From January through October, Harlow saw more than 727 million on-demand audio streams, compared with 85 million in all of 2019.

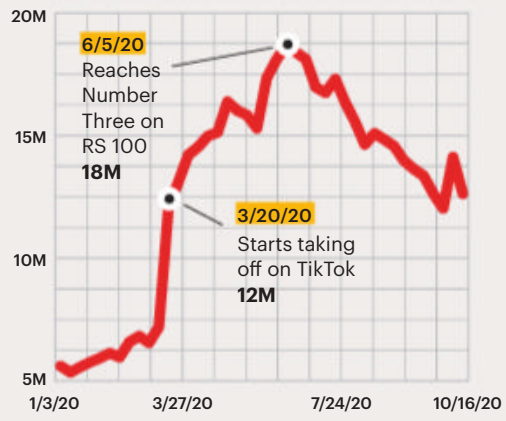
Harlow's Top Songs (Streams in Millions)



Coming Up 'Roses'

Kazakh DJ Imanbek's EDM remix of Saint Jhn's "Roses" stayed high all summer, driving many listeners to explore the rest of Saint Jhn's discography. The rapper received 549 million streams through October, nearly tripling his streams from 2019, and songs like "Trap" racked up streams in the tens of millions.

'Roses' Streams Over Time



Mexican Sound, Global Hits

Eslabon Armado formed in California, but play traditional Mexican *sierreña* music. From January through October, the trio saw more than 300 million on-demand audio streams in the U.S. — a staggering 40,000 percent increase from their 2019 total of under 1 million.

FROM TOP: RCA RECORDS; 2: ATLANTIC RECORDS; KRISTA SCHLUETER; EDUARDO ANTONIO GONZALEZ; NATE GUENTHER; PHIL KNOTT; DONATO SARDELLA/GETTY IMAGES; THOMAS DANG; DANIEL PRAKOPCYK; ESLABON ARMADO

Cano

Natanael Cano Is Just Warming Up

Sonora, Mexico, native makes waves in the U.S. with a modern twist on an old sound

NATANAEL CANO is one of the most exciting acts in a Latin-music movement that took hold in the U.S. in 2020: *corridos tumbados,* which bring what Cano calls a "new style" to the traditional genre of Mexican corridos, telling stories of struggle and triumph with a more modern, hip-hop-leaning edge. The 19-year-old Sonora native has had a big year on streaming services – big enough to take Number Four on our list of the biggest breakthrough artists of 2020.

His streams started to pick up in mid-2019 with the release of his album *Corridos Tumbados*, and by the end of last year, Puerto Rican reggaeton superstar Bad Bunny wanted in on the movement, recording a remix of Cano's fiery "Soy el Diablo." "That's something I never imagined," Cano says, "that an artist from another genre could sing corridos and that there could be this fusion."

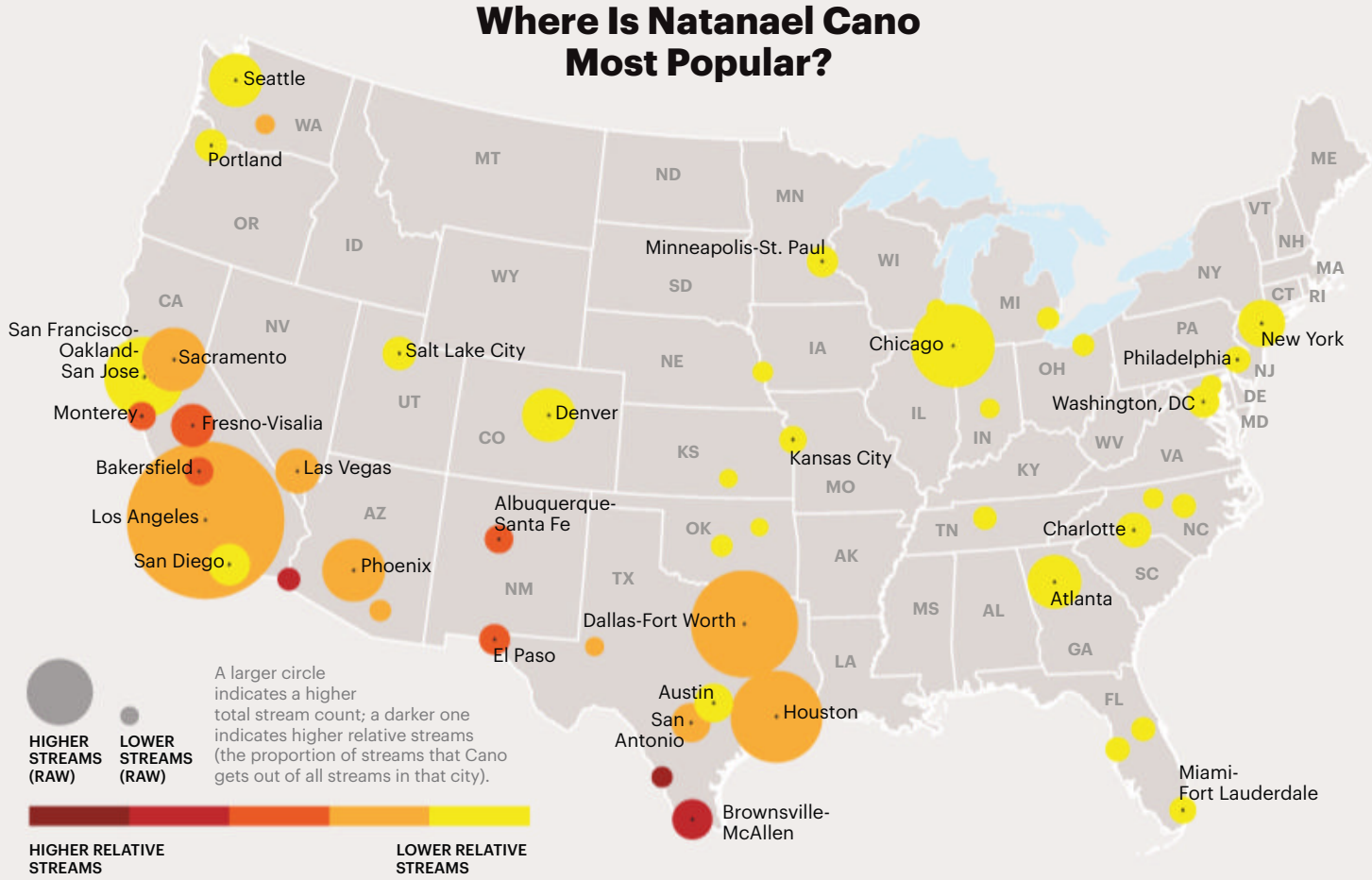
This year, Cano's career caught fire even more. From January through October, he saw more than 600 million on-demand audio streams in the U.S., marking a 322 percent increase compared with 2019. (If you include video streams, Cano's music has surpassed 1 billion.)

"A lot of people connect with our music because they can relate," Cano says. He often sings about his self-made success story: "I started with a guitar. I exchanged my guitar for a PlayStation. Then I sold my PlayStation for a better guitar."

His hustle is another factor. From January through October, Cano released three albums and an EP. "Right now, the people are fired up," he says. "They love our music, and we're going to keep giving them more."

Cano's songs are most streamed in Texas, Arizona, and California, states that border Mexico, but he's made gains in East Coast cities like New York and Raleigh, North Carolina. In October, he became the first regional Mexican artist to perform on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* "I'm very proud to be giving this genre to the world," he says. "We're not going to stop." **LUCAS VILLA**

Where Is Natanael Cano Most Popular?



FROM LEFT: EDUARDO ANTONIO GONZALEZ; RICHARD CREAMER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

DATA VISUALIZATION BY **MSJONESNYC**

TIKTOK

NOW, HERE YOU GO AGAIN...

TIKTOK MAY BE a Gen-Z playground, but every once in a while a classic hit breaks through and proves that it, too, can hang. Harry Belafonte's "Jump in the Line" (1961), Matthew Wilder's "Break My Stride" (1983), and L'Trimm's "Cars That Go Boom" (1988) have all gotten second lives on the platform — but nothing, so far, compares to "Dreams."

Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*-era favorite cruised all the way to Number Three on the RS 200 in October, 43 years after its release. It started when TikTok user Nathan Apodaca posted a video of himself longboarding to it while drinking Ocean Spray Cran-Raspberry juice; in the week following, streams for "Dreams" doubled, and they didn't slow


Fleetwood Mac in 1977

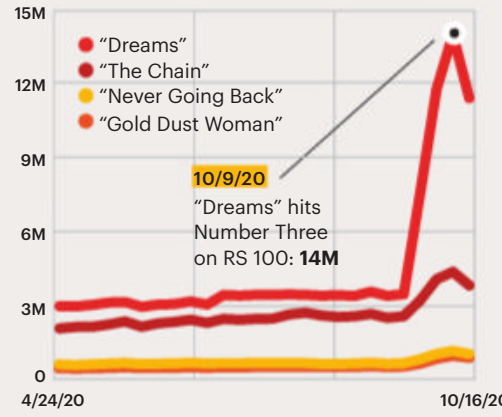
down. Mick Fleetwood and Stevie Nicks eventually got in on the meme, and by mid-October, the track had quadrupled its weekly streams.

The moment also seemed to introduce "Dreams" to a whole new audience: In that first week of TikTok success, Spotify reported that the song saw a 242 percent increase in first-time listeners, while Apple reported a 1,137 percent increase in Shazams. The phenomenon also gave a boost to other *Rumours* tracks like "The Chain," which saw a 50 percent increase in streams and hit Number 82 on the RS 100. The *Rumours* album, meanwhile, reached Number Nine on the RS 200.

Now, if we could just get "Silver Springs" the same treatment. **EMILY BLAKE**

More Than 'Dreams'

"The Chain," "Never Going Back Again," and "Gold Dust Woman" also saw spikes.



MY OBSESSION

A SERIES IN WHICH ARTISTS SHARE THEIR NONMUSICAL PASSIONS

Juvenile, Home-Design Wizard

JUVENILE GRINS WITH PRIDE as he pans the phone around his backyard in a St. Louis suburb. "You *know* I gotta let you see these pieces," he exclaims over Zoom. The chair he just hopped out of was built with his own hands, as were the cabinets, sofa tables, and stools that surround him. Many of them contain hidden electrical outlets or compartments for wine bottles, but it's an assortment of four humanoid light fixtures that hold the most special place in his heart: "It's the Hot Boys," he says, indicating the figures that represent himself, Lil Wayne, B.G., and Turk, the members of the chart-topping rap group he was part of in the late Nineties.

Two decades later, Juvenile is still making music — *Just Another Gangsta,* his 2019 reunion with Cash Money Records co-founder Birdman, was a late-career highlight — but when Covid-19 struck this spring, he found he needed a new hobby. Home-furniture design fit the bill. "My stepfather is a carpenter," says Juvenile, 45. "I've always been around building stuff as a kid. He was teaching me then how to do measurements, different woods, and stuff like that."

Juvenile sources his own materials ("I just bought two pieces of walnut wood from a guy that my sister-in-law got off the internet") and creates his own designs, which he carries out at workspaces in St. Louis and his hometown of New Orleans. "I used to cut hair back in the day. I like to draw," he says. "So I'm pretty good with a straight line and color schemes." He's thinking about setting up a website to sell his creations, but first he wants to make a sofa to go with the rest of that backyard set: "I got to have one of the best upholsterers ever, 'cause the ideas I have are so unique."

Working on furniture brings Juvenile a deep satisfaction. "It's so great to start from nothing and have a tool in your hand," he says. "To make something that's going to be here for years after I'm gone…I can't even explain it. It's no different than making music." **CHARLES HOLMES**

Juvenile with some of his custom light-fixture designs in New Orleans, September 2020 ▶

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CLIMATE

Lorde's Voyage to the End of the World

In February 2019, the pop star traveled to Antarctica to learn about the climate crisis firsthand

PHOTOGRAPHS AND TEXT BY

LORDE

MELTDOWN One scientist told Lorde the wall of ice in the background melts faster each year.

I'VE BEEN OBSESSED with Antarctica since I was a kid. Growing up in New Zealand, the race to the South Pole is mythologized like the U.S.-Soviet race to the moon – two explorers, one British, one Norwegian, locked in a breathless, romantic fight for national honor. I always rooted for Robert Falcon Scott, the British officer, poring over his grim diaries. I inhaled the frostbite, the deaths, and then, upon arrival at the Pole, the discovery of his rival's flag, planted 34 days before. I lived in a warm city, had never seen snow, couldn't even imagine how it felt. And there was another thing, galvanized in my late teens – Antarctica was melting. Our whole world was getting warmer, in fact, the mercury rising by minute amounts, inching us toward the unthinkable. I pictured a giant slush pile, scientists →

FROM TOP: HARRY WERE; LORDE

◀ CRYSTAL CLEAR

"Being from New Zealand, you grow up with a pretty powerful understanding of the importance of protecting the climate," Lorde says. "We spend a lot of time outside."

▶ WHALE WATCH

Lorde took this snapshot of a German whale scientist observing orcas: "It looks dreamy and beautiful, but this was the coldest I got."

▶ ICE PUPS

Dog kennels built by Scott, the late British explorer, whose camp near the Pole has been maintained as it was circa 1912. "There's something so tender about that to me."

▲ ALL THE WAY UP

U.S. Air Force planes carried Lorde on the seven-hour trips from New Zealand to Antarctica and back.

◀ OUT COLD

One of the many Weddell seals found lounging outside the New Zealand base. "I sat inside the base drinking a scotch, looking out at these hundreds of napping seals at 10 at night under the sun. That's the trippiest thing."

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM: LORDE, 3; HARRY WERE

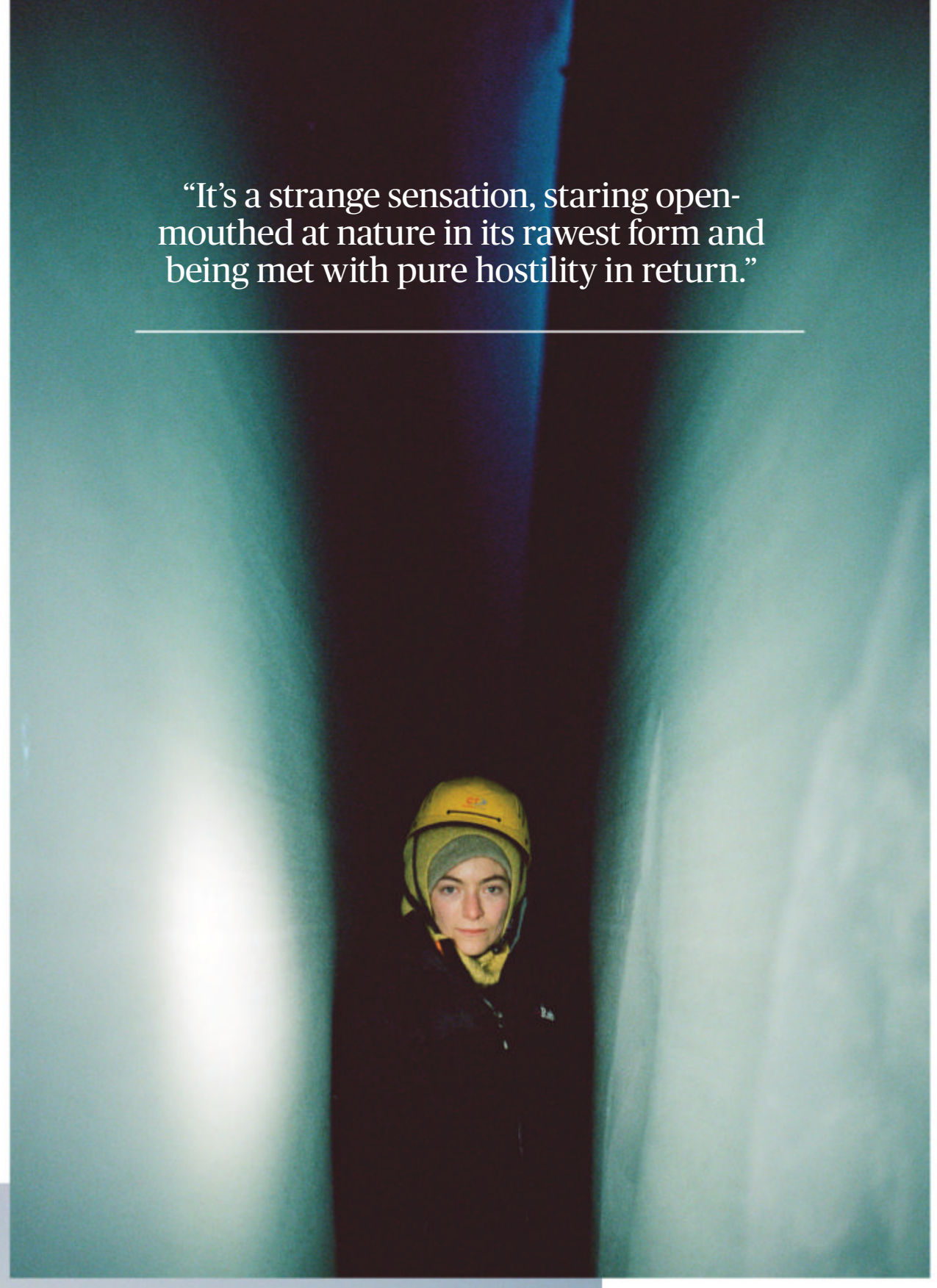
frantically bailing out glaciers with buckets. Antarctica's high drama compelled me. I had to see it before it was too late. And because I'm a pop star, and the world is extremely unfair, I made a few calls, got several dozen booster shots, and I was off in search of the end of the world.

It's very, very white, everywhere you look. There are hundreds of thousands of penguins. But there are also beautiful rocky beaches, which on a sunny day make you feel like you could have a cheeky swim, until you remember the salt water is at a temperature below freezing. You have to wear sunglasses, every single day. My pen froze in my bag. I peed into a bottle in the middle of an ice shelf, fully clothed, using a green plastic instrument called, unspeakably, a Pstyle. I ate so many dense, sweet energy bars I thought my teeth might fall out.

I stayed for five days, pitching a tent and camping outside, belaying on a glacier, cruising in a helicopter looking for whales with a terse German scientist named Regina. I made a handful of calls home on an old landline. It's an incredible place. I used to think the Met Gala was cool, or the VMAs. But there's literally nothing cooler than Antarctica.

It *is* in trouble. Not in the way I'd imagined – while parts of the continent seem OK, largely due to its unique climate systems, some areas, particularly the western Antarctic Peninsula, are warming faster than anywhere on Earth. But to the uninitiated, it's all white, everything frozen, a blinding world I'm permanently changed from getting to experience.

I get it – protecting our most precious natural resources can feel abstract, to say the least. Most of them we've never seen, except in a documentary. We're attempting to pay off our predecessors' environmental debts in the hazy hope that our descendants will thrive. It's a lot to ask of a species hungry for faster and brighter gratification, less and less distance. But I understand it now, and I hope you find ways to as well. Great wonders like this are what's at stake. ®



"It's a strange sensation, staring open-mouthed at nature in its rawest form and being met with pure hostility in return."

▲ IN THE DARK
"It stays in your system, a trip like that," Lorde says. "It feels surreal, but it always did. As soon as it happened, it felt like maybe I just dreamt it."

◀ PLANET PENGUIN
Part of a vast colony of Adélie penguins. "You're just completely outnumbered by these tiny beings," she says, "to the point where you're like, 'They're the dominant species. We are not.'"

FROM TOP: HARRY WERE; LORDE

Q&A

Lenny Kravitz

On his new memoir, making peace with his father, and why he turned down 'Somebody's Watching Me'

By JASON NEWMAN

AS THE PANDEMIC was spreading in early March, Lenny Kravitz left his Paris home and decamped to his retreat on Eleuthera, a small island in the Bahamas. There, he's been living the simple life, growing his own food and using trees as makeshift workout benches. Kravitz has been in a reflective mood, thanks to his new memoir, *Let Love Rule*. It's the first of two volumes, covering his life up to the release of his 1989 debut album. It's a fascinating look at Kravitz's life-long duality: a biracial kid, the son of an NBC News-producer dad (Sy Kravitz) and TV-actress mom (Roxie Roker, of *The Jeffersons*), shuttling between Manhattan and Brooklyn before moving to Los Angeles, where he felt equally at home hanging out in Beverly Hills mansions, skate parks, or goth and New Wave clubs. "I've always said I love the extremes," Kravitz says. "It's in the middle that I don't do very well."

Why write a memoir now, and why break it up into two parts?
Well, I never thought about writing the book [until recently]. I didn't think my life was that interesting. But I'm glad that I did because writing was the best form of therapy I could have ever taken. This was a story about me finding my voice, and I didn't want it to be about stardom or fame. The second book will be a far more difficult book to write. Things got intense, but I think writing it will provide the same level of therapy and a lot will be healed.

I was shocked to read that after you caught your father cheating on your mother, he told you, "You'll do it too," before he was kicked out of the house.
I was about 19. It was a deep statement at a time when I believe my mother wanted him to say something that would have benefited me. And he just went *there*. I didn't realize how deeply that had penetrated my being. But when I look back at it, I can understand now, without judgment, that he was just speaking what he thought was his truth.

How do you think that affected you later in life?
It raised questions about commitment and "Could I do that?" But I spent some years working on getting that out of me. What was beautiful was that instead of seeing my father as my father and what he had done to *me* or to my mother, I got to see him as a man who was just trying to find his way to live through this experience. All of a sudden, all the judgment fell away. I ended up really liking him and understanding him. . . . I love my father, and I loved him more after writing this book. We made peace before he died.

You also write that Kennedy Gordy — Berry's son — offered you a chance to sing "Somebody's Watching Me," which became a huge hit for him in 1984 under the name Rockwell.
He came over to my mom's house with the first Linn-Drum drum machine, which was really big and heavy. "He's like, 'I got this tune for you.' " He sings me the song, and I'm like, "Wow, that's good." But again, as you see in the book, I kept turning things down. I was like, "It's really good, but it's you. You should do this, man." At the time, Kennedy wasn't thinking about himself as being an artist. Maybe he was thinking more about being a producer and a writer. The next thing you know, some months go by and I hear this song on the radio. I was like, "Holy shit."

You also turned down a chance to play Marvin Gaye in a biopic.
I went to the gym where Marvin had trained with the boxing guy. The church where he sang the Lord's Prayer in that beautiful piece of footage. The whole nine. I met the director, Julien Temple, who I really like as a person. But I just didn't feel right about it – I can't really tell you what wasn't right about it. It's a wonderful opportunity, but I'm just trying to do my thing.

You say in the book, "I am deeply two-sided." What do you mean by that?
First of all, I'm born a Gemini – we all know what the classic Gemini thing is. My mother used to ask me, "OK, which one of you am I dealing with today?" I always had that double personality. I have a Christian, Afro Caribbean mother and a Russian Jewish father. I'm Lenny in Manhattan, but I'm Eddie in Brooklyn. I have the Upper East Side and I have Bed-Stuy; I have New York and L.A. You know, here I am at 15, whatever, living in my parents' house. My mother's on the number-one television show. We're living a beautiful life. What do I decide to do? Leave, because my father won't let me go to a concert. And now I'm living in the street. Now I'm living in a car. Now I'm living on people's floors. I put myself in that position. But it works for me somehow. It always has.

In 1995, you told us, "I want to do this till I'm old and little. I'd like to be like John Lee Hooker, all in my little suit with my little gut hanging out, playing music, strumming my guitar." Do you still feel that way?
I don't want the gut, but, yeah, absolutely. Mick Jagger is 70-whatever and can still rock a stadium better than most 20-year-olds. I'm still young, and 20 some-odd years from now, when I get to where Mick is, I'll still be doing it if we have a world where we can do that. I plan on doing this until I can't.

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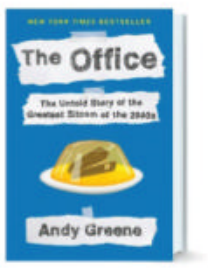
CONTRIBUTORS: TIM CHAN, JON DOLAN, AND BRANDT RANJ

Great New Reads That Rock



The Office: An Oral History

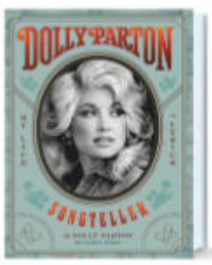
BY ANDY GREENE

ROLLING STONE senior writer Andy Greene's hilarious, revealing oral history of *The Office* is essential reading for fans of the beloved 2000s sitcom.

A Life in Ink

BY RALPH STEADMAN

Steadman's satiric cover illustrations for classic 1970s books by Hunter S. Thompson helped define the look of the counterculture, and this coffee-table anthology is an ideal survey of his career.



Songteller: My Life in Lyrics

BY DOLLY PARTON

The country legend offers a fascinating glimpse behind her creative process, exploring the stories and personal memories that inspired her songs.

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Taylor Swift & Paul McCartney

On songwriting secrets, making albums at home, and what they've learned during the pandemic

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARY MCCARTNEY

TAYLOR SWIFT (*left*)

PAUL MCCARTNEY (*right*)

TAYLOR SWIFT arrived early to Paul McCartney's London office in October, "mask on, brimming with excitement." "I mostly work from home these days," she writes about that day, "and today feels like a rare school field trip that you actually want to go on."

Swift showed up without a team, doing her own hair and makeup. In addition to being two of the most famous pop songwriters in the world, Swift and McCartney have spent the past year on similar journeys. McCartney, isolated at home in the U.K., recorded *McCartney III*. Like his first solo album, in 1970, he played nearly all of the instruments himself, resulting in some of his most wildly ambitious songs in a long time. Swift also took some new chances, writing over email with the National's Aaron Dessner and recording the raw *Folklore*, which abandons arena pop entirely in favor of rich character songs. It's the bestselling album of 2020.

Swift listened to *McCartney III* as she prepared for today's conversation; McCartney delved into *Folkore*. Before the photo shoot, Swift caught up with his daughters Mary (who would be photographing them) and Stella (who designed Swift's clothes; the two are close friends). "I've met Paul a few times, mostly onstage at parties, but we'll get to that later," Swift writes. "Soon he walks in with his wife, Nancy. They're a sunny and playful pair, and I immediately feel like this will be a good day. During the shoot, Paul dances and takes almost none of it too seriously and sings along to Motown songs playing from the speakers. A few times Mary scolds, '*Daaad*, try to stand still!' And it feels like a window into a pretty awesome family dynamic. We walk into his office for a chat, and after I make a nervous request, Paul is kind enough to handwrite my favorite lyric of his and sign it. He makes a joke about me selling it, and I laugh because it's something I know I'll cherish for the rest of my life. That's around the time when we start talking about music."

Conversation edited by PATRICK DOYLE

SWIFT I think it's important to note that if this year had gone the way that we thought it was going to go, you and I would have played Glastonbury this year, and instead, you and I both made albums in isolation.

MCCARTNEY Yeah!

SWIFT And I remember thinking it would have been so much fun because the times that I've run into you, I correlate with being some of the most fun nights of my life. I was at a party with you, when everybody just started playing music. And it was Dave Grohl playing, and you…

MCCARTNEY You were playing one of his songs, weren't you?

SWIFT Yes, I was playing his song called "Best of You," but I was playing it on piano, and he didn't recognize it until about halfway through. I just remember thinking, "Are you the catalyst for the most fun times ever?" Is it your willingness to get up and play music that makes everyone feel like this is a thing that can happen tonight?

MCCARTNEY I mean, I think it's a bit of everything, isn't it? I'll tell you who was very… Reese Witherspoon was like, "Are you going to sing?" I said "Oh, I don't know." She said, "You've got to, yeah!" She's bossing me around. So I said, "Whoa," so it's a bit of that.

SWIFT I love that person, because the party does not turn musical without that person.

MCCARTNEY Yeah, that's true.

SWIFT If nobody says, "Can you guys play music?" we're not going to invite ourselves up onstage at whatever living-room party it is.

MCCARTNEY I seem to remember Woody Harrelson got on the piano, and he starts playing "Let It Be," and I'm thinking, "I can do that better." So I said, "Come on, move over, Woody." So we're both playing it. It was really nice.… I love people like Dan Aykroyd, who's just full of energy and he loves his music so much, but he's not necessarily a musician, but he just wanders around the room, just saying, "You got to get up, got to get up, do some stuff."

SWIFT I listened to your new record. And I loved a lot of things about it, but it really did feel like kind of a flex to write, produce, and play every instrument on every track. To me, that's like flexing a muscle and saying, "I can do all this on my own if I have to."

MCCARTNEY Well, I don't think like that, I must admit. I just picked up some of these instruments over the years. We had a piano at home that my dad played, so I picked around on that. I wrote the melody to "When I'm 64" when I was, you know, a teenager.

SWIFT Wow.

MCCARTNEY When the Beatles went to Hamburg, there were always drum kits knocking around, so when there was a quiet moment, I'd say, "Do you mind if I have a knock around?" So I was able to practice, you know, without practicing. That's why I play right-handed. Guitar was just the first instrument I got. Guitar turned to bass; it also turned into ukulele, mandolin. Suddenly, it's like, "Wow," but it's really only two or three instruments.

SWIFT Well, I think that's downplaying it a little bit. In my mind, it came with a visual of you being in the country, kind of absorbing the sort of do-it-yourself [quality] that has had to come with the quarantine and this pandemic. I found that I've adapted a do-it-yourself mentality to a lot of things in my career that I used to outsource. I'm just wondering what a day of recording in the pandemic looked like for you.

MCCARTNEY Well, I'm very lucky because I have a studio that's, like, 20 minutes away from where I live. We were in lockdown on a farm, a sheep farm with my daughter Mary and her four kids and her husband. So I had four of my grandkids, I had Mary, who's a great cook, so I would just drive myself to the studio. And there were two other guys that could come in and we'd be very careful and distanced and everything: my engineer Steve, and then my equipment guy Keith. So the three of us made the record, and I just started off. I had to do a little bit of film music – I had to do an instrumental for a film thing – so I did that. And I just kept going, and that turned into the opening track on the album. I would just come in, say, "Oh, yeah, what are we gonna do?" [Then] have some sort of idea, and start doing it. Normally, I'd start with the instrument I wrote it on, either piano or guitar, and then probably add some drums and then a bit of bass till it started to sound like a record, and then just gradually layer it all up. It was fun.

SWIFT That's so cool.

MCCARTNEY What about yours? You're playing guitar and piano on yours.

SWIFT Yeah, on some of it, but a lot of it was made with Aaron Dessner, who's in a band called the National that I really love. And I had met him at a concert a year before, and I had a conversation with him, asking him how he writes. It's my favorite thing to ask people who I'm a fan of. And he had an interesting answer. He said, "All the band members live in different parts of the world. So I make tracks. And I send them to our lead singer, Matt, and he writes the top line." I just remember thinking, "That is really efficient." And I kind of stored it in my brain as a future idea for a project. You know, how you have these ideas… "Maybe one day I'll do this." I always had in my head: "Maybe one day I'll work with Aaron Dessner."

So when lockdown happened, I was in L.A., and we kind of got stuck there. It's not a terrible place to be stuck. We were there for four months

"I always thought, 'That'll never track on pop radio,' but when I was making 'Folklore,' I thought, 'Nothing makes sense anymore. If there's chaos everywhere, why not just use the damn word I want to use in the song?'"

—TAYLOR SWIFT

“I often feel like I’m writing to someone who is not doing so well. Not in a crusading way, but I’m trying to write songs that might help. I think that’s the angle I want: that inspirational thing.”

—PAUL MCCARTNEY

maybe, and during that time, I sent an email to Aaron Dessner and I said, “Do you think you would want to work during this time? Because my brain is all scrambled, and I need to make something, even if we’re just kind of making songs that we don’t know what will happen…”

MCCARTNEY Yeah, that was the thing. You could do stuff – you didn’t really worry it was going to turn into anything.

SWIFT Yeah, and it turned out he had been writing instrumental tracks to keep from absolutely going crazy during the pandemic as well, so he sends me this file of probably 30 instrumentals, and the first one I opened ended up being a song called “Cardigan,” and it really happened rapid-fire like that. He’d send me a track; he’d make new tracks, add to the folder; I would write the entire top line for a song, and he wouldn’t know what the song would be about, what it was going to be called, where I was going to put the chorus. I had originally thought, “Maybe I’ll make an album in the next year, and put it out in January or something,” but it ended up being done and we put it out in July. And I just thought there are no rules anymore, because I used to put all these parameters on myself, like, “How will this song sound in a stadium? How will this song sound on radio?” If you take away all the parameters, what do you make? And I guess the answer is *Folklore*.

MCCARTNEY And it’s more music for yourself than music that’s got to go do a job. My thing was similar to that: After having done this little bit of film music, I had a lot of stuff that I had been working on, but I’d said, “I’m just going home now,” and it’d be left half-finished. So I just started saying, “Well, what about that? I never finished that.” So we’d pull it out, and we said, “Oh, well, this could be good.” And because it didn’t have to amount to anything, I would say, “Ah, I really want to do tape loops. I don’t care if they fit on this song, I just want to do some.” So I go and make some tape loops, and put them in the song, just really trying to do stuff that I fancy.

I had no idea it would end up as an album; I may have been a bit less indulgent, but if a track was eight minutes long, to tell you the truth, what I thought was, “I’ll be taking it home tonight, Mary will be cooking, the grandkids will all be there running around, and someone, maybe Simon, Mary’s husband, is going to say, ‘What did you do today?’ And I’m going to go, ‘Oh,’ and then get my phone and play it for them.” So this became the ritual.

SWIFT That’s the coziest I’ve ever heard.

MCCARTNEY Well, it’s like eight minutes long, and I said, “I hate it when I’m playing someone something and it finishes after three minutes.” I kind of like that it just [continues] on.

SWIFT You want to stay in the zone.

MCCARTNEY It just keeps going on. I would just come home, “Well, what did you do today?” “Oh, well, I did this. I’m halfway through this,” or, “We finished this.”

SWIFT I was wondering about the numerology element to *McCartney III*. *McCartney I, II,* and *III* have all come out on years with zeroes.

MCCARTNEY Ends of decades.

SWIFT Was that important?

MCCARTNEY Yeah, well, this was being done in 2020, and I didn’t really think about it. I think everyone expected great things of 2020. “It’s gonna be great! Look at that number! 2020! Auspicious!” Then suddenly Covid hit, and it was like, “That’s gonna be auspicious all right, but maybe for the wrong reasons.” Someone said to me, “Well, you put out *McCartney* right after the Beatles broke up, and that was 1970, and then you did *McCartney II* in 1980.” And I said, “Oh, I’m going to release this in 2020 just for whatever you call it, the numerology….”

SWIFT The numerology, the kind of look, the symbolism. I love numbers. Numbers kind of rule my whole world. The numbers 13…89 is a big one. I have a few others that I find…

MCCARTNEY Thirteen is lucky for some.

SWIFT Yeah, it’s lucky for me. It’s my birthday. It’s all these weird coincidences of good things that have happened. Now, when I see it places, I look at it as a sign that things are going the way they’re supposed to. They may not be good now, they could be painful now, but things are on a track. I don’t know, I love the numerology.

MCCARTNEY It’s spooky, Taylor. It’s very spooky. Now wait a minute: Where’d you get 89?

SWIFT That’s when I was born, in 1989, and so I see it in different places and I just think it’s…

MCCARTNEY No, it’s good. I like that, where certain things you attach yourself to, and you get a good feeling off them. I think that’s great.

SWIFT Yeah, one of my favorite artists, Bon Iver, he has this thing with the number 22. But I was also wondering: You have always kind of seeked out a band or a communal atmosphere with like, you know, the Beatles and Wings, and then *Egypt Station*. I thought it was interesting when I realized you had made a record with no one else. I just wondered, did that feel natural?

MCCARTNEY It’s one of the things I’ve done. Like with *McCartney,* because the Beatles had broken up, there was no alternative but to get a drum kit at home, get a guitar, get an amp, get a bass, and just make something for myself. So on that album, which I didn’t really expect to do very well, I don’t think it did. But people sort of say, “I like that. It was a very casual album.” It didn’t really have to mean anything. So I’ve done that, the play-everything-myself thing. And then I discovered synths and stuff, and sequencers, so I had a few of those at home. I just thought I’m going to play around with this and record it, so that became *McCartney II*. But it’s a thing I do. Certain people can do it. Stevie Wonder can do it. Stevie Winwood, I believe, has done it. So there are certain people quite like that.

When you’re working with someone else, you have to worry about their variances. Whereas your own variance, you kind of know it. It’s just something I’ve grown to like. Once you can do it, it becomes a little bit addictive. I actually made some records under the name the Fireman.

SWIFT Love a pseudonym.

MCCARTNEY Yeah, for the fun! But, you know, let’s face it, you crave fame and attention when you’re young. And I just remembered the other day, I was the guy in the Beatles that would write to journalists and say [*speaks in a formal voice*]: “We are a semiprofessional rock combo, and I’d think you’d like [us]…. We’ve written over 100 songs (which was a lie), my friend John and I. If you mention us in your newspaper…” You know, I was always, like, craving the attention.

SWIFT The hustle! That’s so great, though.

MCCARTNEY Well, yeah, you need that.

SWIFT Yeah, I think, when a pseudonym comes in is when you still have a love for making the work and you don’t want the work to become overshadowed by this thing that’s been built around you, based on what people know about you. And that’s when it’s really fun to create fake names and write under them.

MCCARTNEY Do you ever do that?

SWIFT Oh, yeah.

MCCARTNEY Oh, yeah? Oh, well, we didn’t know that! Is that a widely known fact?

SWIFT I think it is now, but it wasn’t. I wrote under the name Nils Sjöberg because those are two of the most popular names of Swedish males. I wrote this song called “This Is What You Came For” that Rihanna ended up singing. And nobody knew for a while. I remembered always hearing that when Prince wrote “Manic Monday,” they didn’t reveal it for a couple of months.

MCCARTNEY Yeah, it also proves you can do something without the fame tag. I did something

LIGHTING: PEDRO FARIA. DIGITAL TECH: ALEXANDER BRUNACCI. RETOUCHING: THE HAND OF GOD. PREVIOUS SPREAD: SWIFT’S TOP BY REFORMATION. SKIRT BY STELLA MCCARTNEY.

for Peter and Gordon; my girlfriend's brother and his mate were in a band called Peter and Gordon. And I used to write under the name Bernard Webb.

SWIFT [*Laughs.*] That's a good one! I love it.

MCCARTNEY As Americans call it, Ber-*nard* Webb. I did the Fireman thing. I worked with a producer, a guy called Youth, who's this real cool dude. We got along great. He did a mix for me early on, and we got friendly. I would just go into the studio, and he would say, "Hey, what about this groove?" and he'd just made me have a little groove going. He'd say, "You ought to put some bass on it. Put some drums on it." I'd just spend the whole day putting stuff on it. And we'd make these tracks, and nobody knew who Fireman was for a while. We must have sold all of 15 copies.

SWIFT Thrilling, absolutely thrilling.

MCCARTNEY And we didn't mind, you know?

SWIFT I think it's so cool that you do projects that are just for you. Because I went with my family to see you in concert in 2010 or 2011, and the thing I took away from the show most was that it was the most selfless set list I had ever seen. It was completely geared toward what it would thrill us to hear. It had new stuff, but it had every hit we wanted to hear, every song we'd ever cried to, every song people had gotten married to, or been brokenhearted to. And I just remembered thinking, "I've got to remember that," that you do that set list for your fans.

MCCARTNEY You do that, do you?

SWIFT I do now. I think that learning that lesson from you taught me at a really important stage in my career that if people want to hear "Love Story" and "Shake It Off," and I've played them 300 million times, play them the 300-millionth-and-first time. I think there are times to be selfish in your career, and times to be selfless, and sometimes they line up.

MCCARTNEY I always remembered going to concerts as a kid, completely before the Beatles, and I really hoped they would play the ones I loved. And if they didn't, it was kind of disappointing. I had no money, and the family wasn't wealthy. So this would be a big deal for me, to save up for months to afford the concert ticket.

SWIFT Yeah, it feels like a bond. It feels like that person on the stage has given something, and it makes you as a crowd want to give even more back, in terms of applause, in terms of dedication. And I just remembered feeling that bond in the crowd, and thinking, "He's up there playing these Beatles songs, my dad is crying, my mom is trying to figure out how to work her phone because her hands are shaking so much." Because seeing the excitement course through not only me, but my family and the entire crowd in Nashville, it just was really special. I love learning lessons and not having to learn them the hard way. Like learning nice lessons I really value.

MCCARTNEY Well, that's great, and I'm glad that set you on that path. I understand people who don't want to do that, and if you do, they'll say, "Oh, it's a jukebox show." I hear what they're saying. But I think it's a bit of a cheat, because the people who come to our shows have spent a lot of money. We can afford to go to a couple of shows and it doesn't make much difference. But a lot of ordinary working folks . . . it's a big event in their life, and so I try and deliver. I also, like you say, try and put in a few weirdos.

SWIFT That's the best. I want to hear current things, too, to update me on where the artist is. I was wondering about lyrics, and where you were lyrically when you were making this record. Because when I was making *Folklore*, I went lyrically in a total direction of escapism and romanticism. And I wrote songs imagining I was, like, a pioneer woman in a forbidden love affair [*laughs*]. I was completely . . .

MCCARTNEY Was this "I want to give you a child"? Is that one of the lines?

SWIFT Oh, that's a song called "Peace."

MCCARTNEY "Peace," I like that one.

SWIFT "Peace" is actually more rooted in my personal life. I know you have done a really excellent job of this in your personal life: carving out a human life within a public life, and how scary that can be when you do fall in love and you meet someone, especially if you've met someone who has a very grounded, normal way of living. I, oftentimes, in my anxieties, can control how I am as a person and how normal I act and rationalize things, but I cannot control if there are 20 photographers outside in the bushes and what they do and if they follow our car and if they interrupt our lives. I can't control if there's going to be a fake weird headline about us in the news tomorrow.

MCCARTNEY So how does that go? Does your partner sympathize with that and understand?

SWIFT Oh, absolutely.

MCCARTNEY They have to, don't they?

SWIFT But I think that in knowing him and being in the relationship I am in now, I have definitely made decisions that have made my life feel more like a real life and less like just a storyline to be commented on in tabloids. Whether that's deciding where to live, who to hang out with, when to not take a picture – the idea of privacy feels so strange to try to explain, but it's really just trying to find bits of normalcy. That's what that song "Peace" is talking about. Like, would it be enough if I could never fully achieve the normalcy that we both crave? Stella always tells me that she had as normal a childhood as she could ever hope for under the circumstances.

MCCARTNEY Yeah, it was very important to us to try and keep their feet on the ground amongst the craziness.

SWIFT She went to a regular school . . . .

MCCARTNEY Yeah, she did.

SWIFT And you would go trick-or-treating with them, wearing masks.

MCCARTNEY All of them did, yeah. It was important, but it worked pretty well, because when they kind of reached adulthood, they would meet other kids who might have gone to private schools, who were a little less grounded.

And they could be the budding mothers to [kids]. I remember Mary had a friend, Orlando. Not Bloom. She used to really counsel him. And it's 'cause she'd gone through that. Obviously, they got made fun of, my kids. They'd come in the classroom and somebody would sing, "*Na na na na*," you know, one of the songs. And they'd have to handle that. They'd have to front it out.

SWIFT Did that give you a lot of anxiety when you had kids, when you felt like all this pressure that's been put on me is spilling over onto them, that they didn't sign up for it? Was that hard for you?

MCCARTNEY Yeah, a little bit, but it wasn't like it is now. You know, we were just living a kind of semi-hippie life, where we withdrew from a lot of stuff. The kids would be doing all the ordinary things, and their school friends would be coming up to the house and having parties, and it was just great. I remember one lovely evening when it was Stella's birthday, and she brought a bunch of school kids up. And, you know, they'd all ignore me. It happens very quickly. At first they're like, "Oh, yeah, he's like a famous guy," and then it's like [*yawns*]. I like that. I go in the other room and suddenly I hear this music going on. And one of the kids, his name was Luke, and he's doing break dancing.

SWIFT *Ohhh!*

MCCARTNEY He was a really good break dancer, so all the kids are hanging out. That allowed them to be kind of normal with those kids. The other thing is, I don't live fancy. I really don't. Sometimes it's a little bit of an embarrassment, if I've got someone coming to visit me, or who I know. . .

SWIFT Cares about that stuff?

MCCARTNEY Who's got a nice big house, you know. Quincy Jones came to see me and I'm, like, making him a veggie burger or something. I'm doing some cooking. This was after I'd lost Linda, in between there. But the point I'm making is that I'm very consciously thinking, "Oh, God, Quincy's got to be thinking, 'What is this guy on? He hasn't got big things going on. It's not a fancy house at all. And we're eating in the kitchen! He's not even got the dining room going,' " you know?

SWIFT I think that sounds like a perfect day.

MCCARTNEY But that's me. I'm awkward like that. That's my kind of thing. Maybe I should have, like, a big stately home. Maybe I should get a staff. But I think I couldn't do that. I'd be so embarrassed. I'd want to walk around dressed as I want to walk around, or naked, if I wanted to.

SWIFT That can't happen in Downton Abbey.

MCCARTNEY [*Laughs.*] Exactly.

SWIFT I remember what I wanted to know about, which is lyrics. Like, when you're in this kind of strange, unparalleled time, and you're making this record, are lyrics first? Or is it when you get a little melodic idea?

MCCARTNEY It was a bit of both. As it kind of always is with me. There's no fixed way. People used to ask me and John, "Well, who does the words, who does the music?" I used to say, "We both do both." We used to say we don't have a formula, and we don't want one. Because the minute we get a formula, we should rip it up. I will sometimes, as I did with a couple of songs on this album, sit down at the piano and just start noodling around, and I'll get a little idea and start to fill that out. So the lyrics – for me, it's following a trail. I'll start [*sings "Find My Way," a*

song from "McCartney III"]: "I can find my way. I know my left from right, *da da da*." And I'll just sort of fill it in. Like, we *know* this song, and I'm trying to remember the lyrics. Sometimes I'll just be inspired by something. I had a little book which was all about the constellations and the stars and the orbits of Venus and....

SWIFT Oh, I know that song – "The Kiss of Venus"?

MCCARTNEY Yeah, "The Kiss of Venus." And I just thought, "That's a nice phrase." So I was actually just taking phrases out of the book, harmonic sounds. And the book is talking about the maths of the universe, and how when things orbit around each other, and if you trace all the patterns, it becomes like a lotus flower.

SWIFT Wow.

MCCARTNEY It's very magical.

SWIFT That is magical. I definitely relate to needing to find magical things in this very not-magical time, needing to read more books and learn to sew, and watch movies that take place hundreds of years ago. In a time where, if you look at the news, you just want to have a panic attack – I really relate to the idea that you are thinking about stars and constellations.

MCCARTNEY Did you do that on *Folklore*?

SWIFT Yes. I was reading so much more than I ever did, and watching so many more films.

MCCARTNEY What stuff were you reading?

SWIFT I was reading, you know, books like *Rebecca,* by Daphne du Maurier, which I highly recommend, and books that dealt with times past, a world that doesn't exist anymore. I was also using words I always wanted to use – kind of bigger, flowerier, prettier words, like "epiphany," in songs. I always thought, "Well, that'll never track on pop radio," but when I was making this record, I thought, "What tracks? Nothing makes sense anymore. If there's chaos everywhere, why don't I just use the damn word I want to use in the song?"

MCCARTNEY Exactly. So you'd see the word in a book and think, "I love that word"?

SWIFT Yeah, I have favorite words, like "elegies" and "epiphany" and "divorcée," and just words that I think sound beautiful, and I have lists and lists of them.

MCCARTNEY How about "marzipan"?

SWIFT Love "marzipan."

MCCARTNEY The other day, I was remembering when we wrote "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds": "kaleidoscope."

SWIFT "Kaleidoscope" is one of mine! I have a song on *1989*, a song called "Welcome to New York," that I put the word "kaleidoscope" in just because I'm obsessed with the word.

MCCARTNEY I think a love of words is a great thing, particularly if you're going to try to write a lyric, and for me, it's like, "What is this going to say to that person?" I often feel like I'm writing to someone who is not doing so well. So I'm trying to write songs that might help. Not in a goody-goody, crusading kind of way, but just thinking there have been so many times in my life when I've heard a song and felt so much better. I think that's the angle I want, that inspirational thing.

I remember once, a friend of mine from Liverpool, we were teenagers and we were going to a fairground. He was a schoolmate, and we had these jackets that had a little fleck in the material, which was the cool thing at the time.

SWIFT We should have done matching jackets for this photo shoot.

MCCARTNEY Find me a fleck, I'm in. But we went to the fair, and I just remember – this is what happens with songs – there was this girl at the fair. This is just a little Liverpool fair – it was in a place called Sefton Park – and there was this girl, who was so beautiful. She wasn't a star. She was so beautiful. Everyone was following her, and it's like, "Wow." It's like a magical scene, you know? But all this gave me a headache, so I ended up going back to his house – I didn't normally get headaches. And we thought, "What can we do?" So we put on the Elvis song "All Shook Up." By the end of that song, my headache had gone. I thought, you know, "That's powerful."

SWIFT That really is powerful.

MCCARTNEY I love that, when people stop me in the street and say, "Oh, I was going through an illness and I listened to a lot of your stuff, and I'm better now and it got me through," or kids will say, "It got me through exams." You know, they're studying, they're going crazy, but they put your music on. I'm sure it happens with a lot of your fans. It inspires them, you know?

SWIFT Yeah, I definitely think about that as a goal. There's so much stress everywhere you turn that I kind of wanted to make an album that felt sort of like a hug, or like your favorite sweater that makes you feel like you want to put it on.

MCCARTNEY What, a "cardigan"?

SWIFT Like a good cardigan, a good, worn-in cardigan. Or something that makes you reminisce on your childhood. I think sadness can be cozy. It can obviously be traumatic and stressful, too, but I kind of was trying to lean [*Cont. on 74*]

SWIFT'S SWEATER DRESS BY STELLA MCCARTNEY

BRITTANY HOWARD *(left)*

MARGO PRICE *(right)*

Brittany Howard & Margo Price

Two of Nashville's sharpest voices reflect on breaking rules, touring hard, and using music for change

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID McCLISTER

MARGO PRICE once danced on a table at a Nashville greasy spoon, and Brittany Howard has the photos to prove it. "Me and Margo go way back," says Howard, recalling the period when she first came to Nashville, in 2011. Back in those days, Price was the singer in a popular bar band, Buffalo Clover, and Howard was working on the Alabama Shakes' first album, *Boys & Girls*. "We would stay up all night, going to shows, drinking, and talking about our dreams," says Howard.

Boys & Girls would cement Alabama Shakes as one of the decade's most important rock bands. "I saw Brittany blow up," says Price. "One minute she was working at the post office, and then everything took off. She'd be jet-setting with Paul McCartney, and then she'd come back and we'd go to karaoke." Price later broke through with her 2016 renegade-country debut, *Midwest Farmer's Daughter,* and they never lost touch.

They're both still creatively restless. After several experimental side projects, Howard just released her solo debut, *Jaime,* which combines synthed-out psychedelic funk with hip-hop loops and lyrics that grapple with sexuality and family tragedy. Price just released *That's How Rumors Get Started,* which trades fiddles and pedal steel for keyboards by the Heartbreakers' Benmont Tench and heavy guitars. "I see what Margo is doing and I think, 'That's my sister,' " says Howard. "Because she's doing the same thing, going against the grain."

HOWARD The thing I learned from you is perseverance. I've known you through this entire success story, and I remember there were times you weren't so sure it was going to happen, but you never gave up. I'm so proud just knowing your story. You can be gentle and you can be a motherfucker, and I really respect that about you.

PRICE I'm going to cry. . . . I was thinking about the older days, and I wanted to ask you, out of all the bands you've been in – Thunderbitch, Bermuda Triangle, Alabama Shakes – what's your favorite?

HOWARD A lot of it feels very different. But if I had to choose, I might say Thunderbitch is my baby. It just felt like a time when I was becoming really powerful in myself. Being Thunderbitch, I felt like I was 30 feet tall.

PRICE You were larger than life at those shows, like riding a motorcycle [onstage]. You were in the parking lot earlier, you had your face painted, you were making eyes at me, and I didn't even recognize you.

HOWARD It was very Meatloaf.

PRICE Your band that you have now is just so incredible. It sounds so close to the record, the background vocals and everything. And I really think that *Jaime* should have gotten Album of the Year.

HOWARD What's crazy about the Grammys is I think I still could get Album of the Year. Vote for me! Back to your record: If there's one thing that you want people to take away from the stories you tell on the record, what would it be?

PRICE I hope the record can take people's minds off of what's going on in the world for a brief moment, maybe make them think a little bit more deeply about what's going on. You know, nobody has health care, there's no child care. There's . . . a lot of things that we need to fix. But I certainly don't have the answers, and it's certainly not a political record. But, yeah, I hope that people can just learn to be a little more forgiving.

HOWARD Everybody is just, like, a mirror of each other. It's pretty crazy to me how disconnected people can be from "Hey, that could be me, except I have money." It's really odd how people can call themselves certain things: "I'm a Christian, I'm a good man." And then they can look at another human being and not use any of those values. That's pretty wild to me.

PRICE I saw that you marched at the Teens for Equality [a police-brutality protest that drew 20,000 to Nashville]. It's so inspiring that's going on in Nashville. There's a lot that needs to happen right now in this city. And the camaraderie that I saw after the tornado [earlier this year] – I wish people had that right now. And I'm worried about places like 5 Spot, like all the little dives we used to play when we were first getting our start. I don't know how songwriters and musicians are even supposed to break through right now, because people are playing down on Broadway, but you can't play original music down there.

HOWARD The kind of reputation that country music has, especially here in Nashville, it's kind of like the boys' club, and you've got to get in to be successful. Did you witness any of that stuff?

PRICE I never felt like I was part of the country-music establishment. And, you know, the award shows and the festivals – there was a couple things that I was invited to, but then I think there were just certain things that I said that kind of took my name out of the hat.

HOWARD Political things, or comments about the music industry?

PRICE Probably both. Like the gun-control issue: the [Route 91 Harvest festival] shooting that happened in Vegas and the way that that was all handled at the CMAs or whatever, it just all kind of got washed over. Nobody wants to say anything bad about the NRA. And I'm like, 'Fuck them.' I'm not going to play their games. And I don't care about, like, co-writing with any of those people.

HOWARD See, that's the thing about Margo Price: She sticks to her guns. She is who she says she is. What you see is what you get.

Neither of you are afraid to speak about politics or social justice, though.

HOWARD I take it really seriously, just because a lot of what's going on today affects me directly, as a gay woman of color. I want to be able to feel safe in my country, I want to be able to feel safe in a kayak in the backwoods. I want to feel safe just as much as a Billy Bob wants to feel safe. . . . Change is going to happen. Because I know there are more decent people in the world than selfish people.

"One minute Brittany was working at the post office, and then she'd be jet-setting with Paul McCartney."

–MARGO PRICE

PRICE How long did you tour *Jaime*?

HOWARD I didn't quite get to tour it for even a year – basically August to March. I started having a really, really good time again. I've been touring since 2012. I was always gone. With the Shakes, we played so hard, toured so hard. And we played the songs over and over and over. And it was starting to take some joy away from me. So I was kind of apprehensive getting back on the road again. I knew I had a lot of great intention behind it. I just needed to try my hardest and, you know, hold on. Any time I didn't feel strong, I could look around and someone in my band would just give me the tools I needed for that day and show me what I was missing. I can be kind of shy. At the beginning, I wasn't sure if it was going to be good enough. But it was good. It was better than good enough.

PRICE I don't use my falsetto as much as I should, or could. But I love how fluidly you can go from your falsetto.

HOWARD The thing about voices is, like, as long as everyone is doing their own individual voice, you can't lose. There's singers out there like Karen Dalton. Her voice has been *through* it, but I love her because she is just being her authentic self. Those are the people who become iconic. Like David Bowie or Prince. They did their thing the way they wanted to do, even though everyone was like, "That's weird."

PRICE Did you ever take voice lessons?

HOWARD I'm self-taught, just because in the beginning it was just, like, a financial thing. My own curiosity taught me.

PRICE What about the music industry has pissed you off the most?

HOWARD Streaming pisses me the fuck off. The reason I say that is because there's smaller and smaller ways of monetizing our work. We have to leave our families and hit the road and make the kind of money we need to survive. Streaming is cool and convenient, but how do we make it work for musicians? I think there's a better way.

PRICE I'm glad you brought that up. I would say the thing that pisses me off is genres and everybody wanting to stuff you in a genre and that's how you're known forever. How do you describe your sound?

HOWARD Every time I get an Uber and they're like, "What kind of music do you make?" I just say, "My kind of music."

PRICE That was my ambition with this third record, to not have everything drenched in only country instrumentation. I'm sure when you left your band there were probably a lot of people that questioned it.

HOWARD I feel like *I* questioned it a little bit. I felt comforted by having someone to have ideas thrown back and forth with, and I enjoyed being on a team. I was just like, "What if I could have the confidence to do this by myself?" Because that's what it takes.

PRICE I think that when you're out of your comfort zone, that's where really great things happen. MARISSA R. MOSS

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Roddy Ricch & Future

One of 2020's biggest stars talks to a major influence about how to build a career that lasts

GROWING UP IN Compton in the 2010s, Roddy Ricch listened more to the Atlanta rap hymns of Future than to his iconic West Coast forebears. ("I was born in '98," he has said. "What do you expect me to rap like?") He's since become one of the most popular artists in the world with the borderless melodic instincts heard on his unstoppable hit "The Box." So it makes sense that Roddy, 22, would request to speak with Future, 37, who is celebrating nearly a decade as one of rap's most prolific hitmakers, with an influential style that uses alien vocal processing to accentuate deeply human pain. Future has spent most of that time as a critical and listener darling, too, with the possible exception of 2014's *Honest*, which stands as an outlier in his catalog for its warmer, gentler tones. The two artists discussed the keys to a long career, the advantages of home recording, and the importance of staying above the fray.

FUTURE How old were you when you were like, "Now I wanna start doing music?"

RODDY Like 16.

FUTURE What were you listening to?

RODDY You, [Young] Thug, Kendrick [Lamar].

FUTURE Did you go to a real studio, or did you make one in your room?

RODDY In the room. My uncle used to try to rap. I learned how to use Pro Tools watching him. But I didn't really know what was going on until I took it into my own hands. That's why I understand sound – how music is supposed to sit behind vocals – and arranging.

FUTURE I can see that. I'm always like, "Man, I wish I knew how to record myself." I hear it a whole different way than the engineer does, but I can't really tell him in words or show him [what I'm hearing]. I've always gotta settle for 98 percent. There's no one particular way to record: Sometimes you might freestyle, sometimes you might hum a melody, sometimes you might write it down in your notes.

RODDY Yeah, I feel like my shit is different every time. You always want to improve your sound, that's the whole thing. You're always trying to push it further, to change it up.

FUTURE I'm from the hood, so [on my earliest songs] I always was making wordplay out of what they was talking about on the block. It was fresh, because nobody had ever heard that side of my neighborhood, as far as the lingo, like "Fuck up some commas" or "racks." Nobody was talking about racks, but we was talking about racks in the hood: "I'm getting racks." The world wasn't hip to it. They had probably heard of lean, but they weren't hip to us saying "dirty Sprite."

RODDY I make music for niggas that I came up with, so they always felt the music from the very first time I ever said something on a beat. We all came up together. We all we got.

FUTURE You were a breath of fresh air from the West Coast for sure. You could hypnotize [someone] off the rip – it was new, fresh, fly, melodic. That's why you're here right now. You waited for a second, then attacked the lane.

RODDY When everyone else is moving fast, I tend to question that. Why is everything moving so fast? Let me kick back and move a little slower. That's just how I am. I'm more of an observer than a person who moves.

FUTURE Man, if I went back to 22, I would slow down, listen more, observe more, instead of moving so fast. I like the way you're taking your time with everything, critiquing the art. I might have missed something that I could've painted better, [but] I skipped over and went to the next thing . . . dropping three mixtapes in three months. Moving too quick.

RODDY What's the key to your longevity?

FUTURE Staying in the studio and blocking everything out. No matter what's going on in the world, you got here from music. You didn't get here from how you wear your hair, or how you dress, or what hood you're from, or from nobody around you. If you've got the right music, you can get another lawyer. If you've got the right music, you can make more money to buy another house. If you're in the house crying about certain shit that's going on . . . get over it. Go to the studio, make a hit about it.

"You got here from music. If you're in the house crying, get over it. Go to the studio. Make a hit about it."

—FUTURE

RODDY I feel like you should leave everything in the music.

FUTURE But, you know, they'll judge you. You can't say, "I'm fucking two sisters at the same time" now and put it on the internet. The internet is gonna go crazy. But when it came out [in 2015], then it was a cool thing to say. If you say that shit right now, they're gonna explode. You can't say certain things. I see people say certain things in their music and I'm like, "Nigga, I was talking crazier than that at the beginning, [but] you can't say that right now." You can't even write a tweet without apologizing.

RODDY That's why I'd rather not say shit.

FUTURE Within five minutes, here comes the apology. "I'm *sorrrrrry*." [*Laughs*.] You should've never said that! You have to adjust to the times. You've gotta think before you say something. I'm in a space where I just don't care about certain shit. [*Both laugh*.] I built the brand where they're like, "That's Future, don't pay attention to him. He's fucked up anyway." For me, I can get away with shit. You can get rich off of being the villain, because that's what they expect. If I try to be a good guy right now, they won't want that. "Where's the bad Future at?" Then I [become] that, and my concerts sell out. You start talking about [being] in love, and they get mad at me. I be like, "What the fuck, y'all don't want me to be in love? *Ahhh,* man!" Why I gotta be the one who can't do nothing?

RODDY You big Pluto!

FUTURE There's always pressure to say the right shit. Even right now, we don't know if we're saying the right thing, if we're saying the wrong thing. The shit we talk about off camera is not what we'd talk about on camera. This might not be what we say in a [private] conversation. We'd wanna bleep out certain stuff.

Certain stuff might be a viral moment for y'all, and we might not even want that moment. I just want to be a thousand-percent honest, to tell the truth. PAUL THOMPSON

PRODUCER: RACHAEL LIEBERMAN. FASHION DIRECTOR: ALEX BADIA. STYLING BY BOBBY WESLEY. RODDY RICCH: VEST BY MAISON MARGIELA. T-SHIRT BY POLO BY RALPH LAUREN. FUTURE: JACKET BY MARKET STREET BY BOBBY WESLEY. T-SHIRT BY POLO BY RALPH LAUREN. SUNGLASSES BY BOTTEGA VENETA.

RODDY RICCH (*left*)

FUTURE (*right*)

PHOTOGRAPH BY MASON POOLE

Erykah Badu & Summer Walker

Two R&B high priestesses trade wisdom on finding love, embracing their inner boss, and aliens among us

PHOTOGRAPH BY KENNEDI CARTER

ERYKAH BADU and Summer Walker are used to long phone calls. In late October, in lieu of a planned BET Hip-Hop Awards performance, they had a private catch-up that ended up veering far off topic. "We talked about the cypher for five minutes," says Badu, "and we talked about the paranormal for a couple of hours."

Badu and Walker are kindred spirits, both of them ranking among the most innovative auteurs in two generations of left-of-center R&B. Walker, 24, grew up listening to Badu's Nineties neo-soul; Badu, 49, has been a fan of Walker since hearing *Over It,* her 2019 debut. Over the phone from their hometowns of Atlanta and Dallas, they speak to each other with the respect and intimacy of a decades-old friendship, though theirs is very much still blossoming. And when they finally meet in person for this photo shoot at Badu's place, their warm rapport takes over the whole block, from Badu's garden to her friendly neighbors' yards.

BADU So what's going on, Summer? [Are you] supersocial, or are you a hermit like me?

WALKER I'm a super-duper introvert. Not because I want to be – I just don't really understand human interaction. I don't get it. So I just stay in the house.

BADU I used to think I was the odd man out all the time, or the strange person in the group, because I couldn't relate to a lot of the emotions that people had. It's something I had to figure out. Remember when you would have a fire drill or tornado drill at school, and the kids would have to get under the desks? Some kids

ERYKAH BADU (*left*)

SUMMER WALKER (*right*)

would be crying, and I'd be wondering, "What's wrong?" I never did get hyper-emotional about things. It made me feel odd, because it's such a hyper-emotional world. So I created my own space, my own world.

WALKER I saw a long time ago that you have a garden. That's the goal. I could just stay at home and grow all my things.

BADU You want to be off-grid at some point?

WALKER Yes and no. I'm scared, because it gets weird out there. But something like that, yeah. Solar-power everything, and my own plants. I want to make all my own soaps and lotions.

BADU I know that you are very interested in the paranormal. I'm going to ask a super super-personal question. Have you ever seen a UFO?

WALKER No. Thank God. Honestly, I would shit myself. I've seen some things that were unidentified in the sky, but I'm not going to call it anything. I'm going to say no.

BADU Neither have I, and I'm just trying to figure out, "Why am I not good enough to be abducted by or visited by extraterrestrials? What do I have to do?"

WALKER You're like, "I'm doing all the right stuff. I stay out late at night." [*Laughs.*]

BADU I'm making light of it, but it's a traumatic experience for lots of people. I've had a few friends that have had those types of experiences, and I've come to the conclusion that perhaps they have a gift. They have the ability to produce more of the DMT hormone, so they're able to tap into these other realms. Because they all have the same stories, right? All over the world. Do you watch [paranormal movies] a lot?

WALKER I don't like scary stuff. I've watched a couple movies that were supposedly based off real stories. It freaks me out, so I don't really get too deep into it, the abductees.

BADU I'm superinterested in it. Too many people have these same identical stories.

WALKER Supposedly, [aliens are] all around, it's just that they're shape-shifters. So maybe you did see them and have interactions. You just didn't know.

BADU OK, I feel better now. Thank you. Because I was feeling like–

WALKER Like you weren't good enough for them?

BADU Yeah. Like it's racist, I don't know.

WALKER What is that, species-ist? You probably definitely talked to them.

[*Sounds emerge from Badu's phone.*]

BADU I'm sorry. I'm in my car.

WALKER I thought somebody was honking at you. I was like, "You can't drive."

BADU No, I drive very well, my love.

WALKER I don't. I'm terrible. I crashed my last car.

BADU You did? How'd you do that?

WALKER Watching a Drake video. He went to visit this little girl in the hospital and I thought it was so sweet, and then I smacked into a wall.

BADU Tell me about how you became a recording artist. How long have you been singing?

WALKER I was singing since I was very young, but just for fun. I just started taking this seriously. It's been two years.

BADU Do you write your songs?

WALKER Yeah, I write them all. Well, until this last project, [producer London on da Track] got a little more upbeat pop stuff in there. But the heartfelt stuff is me. I'm not even going to ask you if you write your stuff.

BADU I do write it. I like to have a big hand in everything. It sounds like you don't have to do that. There are two kinds of artists, I think. There are artists who care about the process, and then there are artists who care about the end result. Then maybe there's a third that's in-between. You strike me as someone who cares about how [the songs] come out. Are they coming out the way they should?

WALKER Yeah. I don't want to put out something that I don't connect with or [that's] trash.

BADU A lot of the young girls are really, really, really in love with your message and who you are. How does that make you feel – that Summer, the little girl who is an introvert, touched so many people?

WALKER It's weird. But I appreciate it. I know a lot of people [think] that I take it for granted or something, but I do appreciate it. I just don't know how to process it.

BADU That's OK. There are probably a great deal of us who pretend that we are relating to [success]. I like that you're transparent about just about everything. There's no rehearsal. It's just who you are. And that makes you very hard to interview, too! Because you're real, and in this industry, we're so used to having people with rehearsed answers.

I don't know where to go next. Can you please describe for me, in five adjectives, how you've been feeling during Covid?

WALKER Upset, disappointed, anxious, while still productive and grateful.

BADU What are you grateful for?

WALKER I'm grateful that I have the resources to be able to keep up with my immune system, go buy herbs and expensive medicines and vitamins and food. Because unfortunately, that stuff is not cheap. I'm glad I can do that for myself.

BADU That means that you're stable enough to have choices and resources. Do you take care of a lot of people in your family?

WALKER I don't talk to any of my family, really.

BADU I'm the opposite; I have a huge family. I have two grandmothers, 93 years old, and they all have children. One of my grandmas just passed recently, and it was a big deal–

WALKER Oh, I'm sorry.

BADU It's OK, because my mom had a mom for 70 years, and that's a long time to have a mother. I love my family a lot. They really molded my thinking. Tell me more about how you started singing. Has it been forever?

WALKER Forever. Well, to myself.

BADU You only sung to yourself?

WALKER Yeah, for the most part. But a little bit more [publicly] when YouTube came about. I used to put my videos up when I was 15.

"It's difficult to be a woman and a black girl who's a boss, who's trying to be the controller of her world."

–ERYKAH BADU

BADU Is that around the age when you learned to play the guitar?

WALKER Yeah, the guitar is so awesome.

BADU I taught myself how to play before college. But I was playing it wrong. I just laid it on my lap like a harpsichord. My hands were so little that I couldn't really get around – those hands got to be able to stretch on that neck, and I didn't have fingers for that, so I had to lay it on my lap and play it. I ended up playing both a guitar and a drum at the same time. I only knew about three chords, and I wrote about 12 songs.

WALKER Well, that's me. I only know four chords and I don't know anything else, and there goes a bunch of songs off of that. It's funny.

BADU It's like your language. I learned how to sing and play on an upright piano that was very out of tune at my grandma's house. When I sing, it's a little sharp, because the piano was tuned very sharp, and I played on that piano so many years to myself. When I'd go out and sing, I'd think people were flat. But actually they would be singing the right notes. I still have it. I write a lot of songs on that piano.

WALKER I don't know you or André [3000] personally, but y'all just seem like really amazing people. How is y'all friendship?

BADU He just left Dallas, actually. He came down for my grandma's memorial. He's one of my best friends on the planet. When we became boyfriend and girlfriend in the Nineties, we didn't become friends first. We were attracted to each other first. We had stuff in common, but we didn't learn all of that until over the years. We have a 23-year-old son. Over these years, we've just become closer and closer as friends, as humans, as man, as woman. I care for him so very much, about his livelihood, his art, his feelings. And I'm a superbig fan of him. I'm assuming he's also a fan of my music. We're really close. We laugh all the time, talk about things. It's brother and sister, it's grandmother and grandson, it's father and daughter. It's so many different things depending on what the situation calls for.

He's one of the most caring people that I know. [Our son] Seven adopted this same energy from him. They both have this look on their face as if they're saying, "I hope it works for you." No matter what it is. They're nonjudgmental people.

We respect each other's art. We're snobs when it comes to art and literature, but I never hear him putting people down at all. He gives everything the benefit of the doubt and consideration. He wants it to work out for people.

WALKER Well, that's beautiful.

BADU Yeah, that's my homie. . . .

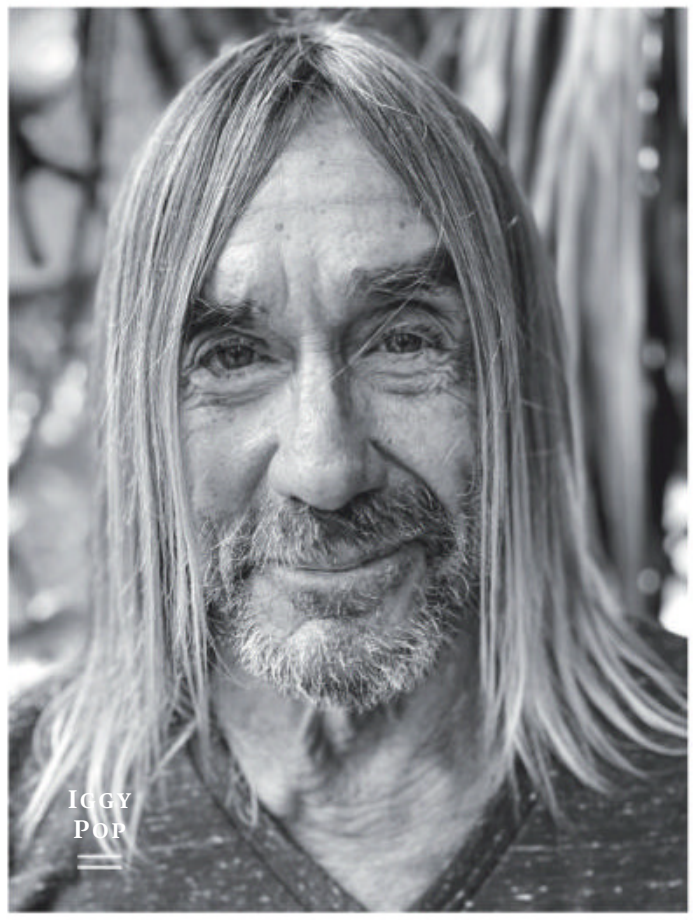
You are now an employer. You are now the boss. You are the shot caller. How do you manage that? Who tells you what to do? Who keeps you on course?

WALKER Well, no one now, which is great. The only thing is, I sound very nice when I speak and I'm very soft-spoken. So people [*Cont. on 81*]

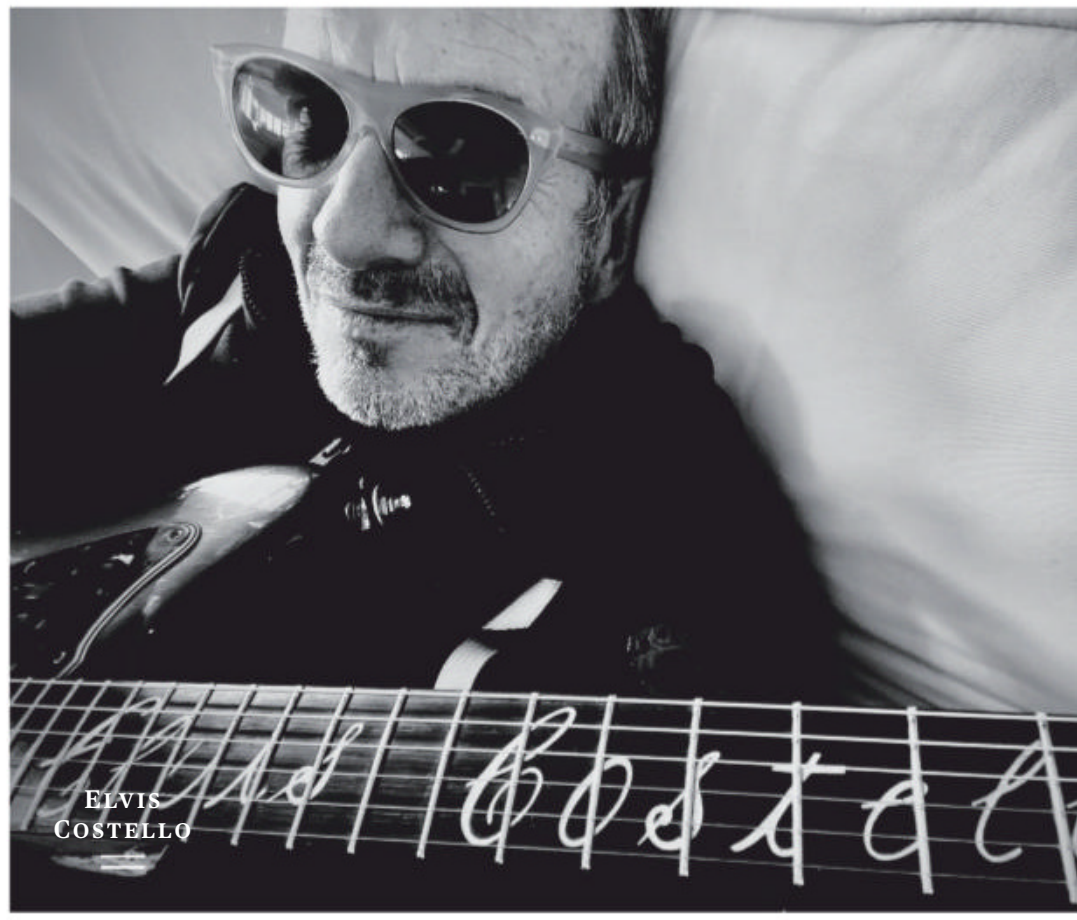
STYLING BY ERYKAH BADU. BADU: PONCHO BY ANGEL CHEN; BOOTS AND ACCESSORIES FROM HER PERSONAL COLLECTION. SUMMER WALKER: BODYSUIT BY XULY.BET; NECKLACES, BRACELETS, RINGS, EARRINGS BY BURBERRY; BOOTS FROM BADU'S PERSONAL COLLECTION.

Iggy Pop & Elvis Costello

The old friends on surviving the Seventies, why most hard rock is overrated, and staying in touch with their iconoclastic inspiration



IGGY POP



ELVIS COSTELLO

ELVIS COSTELLO was less than 24 hours into his first American tour when he met Iggy Pop. It was November 1977, and the former Stooges frontman was playing at the Old Waldorf in San Francisco when a bleary-eyed Costello, fresh off a flight from London, wandered into the venue just in time to see Iggy sing "The Passenger."

"My memory of it was I was slightly scared," Costello tells Iggy. "At one point, you got this tiny chair and inserted yourself into it. It was kind of like if you took Marlene Dietrich and put her in a rock & roll band."

When the show was done, Costello was ushered backstage for a quick chat. "You put your arm around me and said, 'Just take care,' " Costello continues. "You were very kind, and I've never, ever forgotten it."

It was the start of a long-distance friendship that culminated last year, when Iggy recorded a French-language cover of "No Flag," from Costello's new LP, *Hey Clockface*. Right now, Iggy is at his home in Miami and Costello is in Vancouver. They greet each other warmly once the Zoom begins (Elvis calls Iggy "Jim") and spend the next 90 minutes talking about each other's greatest music, high and low times in the Seventies, and their lives during Covid-19.

COSTELLO I read about the Stooges in the paper, but the real starting point for me came when there were a lot of bands trying to sound like you when I started making music in 1976 and 1977. Some of them were actually playing Stooges songs. You had two records that caught people's imagination [1977's *The Idiot* and *Lust for Life*]. Everybody was talking about all of it.

POP [You] had something out in the late Seventies in England. It had two things that struck me. One was a whole lot of facility with the melody. I was like, "Jesus, this geezer can lift a hook." The other thing was the use of the keyboard and the organ by [the Attractions'] Steve Nieve. That really struck me. Wait, didn't we have dinner at a curry joint once in London?

COSTELLO That was later. Good memory.

POP We had dinner and talked about music. You had the curry and a big lager.

COSTELLO When we were teenagers, my friends and I would go to a pub where they played music, and then we'd order the hottest curry we could eat. It was a badge of honor. The first time I suggested that to an American, they looked at me like, "Are you crazy?" I guess you'd spent some time in England and maybe in the company of English people that have done that.

POP I used to love the newsstands in England. I'd get very excited on Wednesday morning, when you'd get up and they had the music papers. *Sounds*, *New Musical Express*, *Melody Maker*. Each one would have their own slant. *Sounds* was the cheap one, and it was pretty easy to get in there.

COSTELLO That is definitely right. I think I got my first mention ever there. That happened once they put these glasses on me and changed my name. It was a little like Clark Kent in reverse. I appeared in *Sounds,* and I couldn't believe it. In one minute, I was working in an office. In the next minute, I was on the cover of *Melody Maker* for being arrested.

POP The busking!

COSTELLO We did a publicity stunt to try and get arrested. The policeman came along like, "You have to move along, sonny." He picked the wrong guy. There was no way I was walking away. I think we might be slightly wired that way. If you say, "Do that," I'll do this. They hauled me off.

POP When I heard your music, I felt like you were the only thing coming out of the U.K. that wasn't going along with the I'm-a-monster-with a-guitar-riff thing. The whole guitar riffage was going up and up and up. You were either that or, no offense to her, you were Lulu.

COSTELLO I actually like Lulu better!

POP I love Lulu. But you were either doing schlock or you were doing this thing that every six months was getting more stupid and dull. Being English, you know about this – when you don't have much money, you save the tea bag for a second squeeze. That's how rock was getting at that time. You came up with something different.

COSTELLO Even after all these years, people say to me, "You came out of the punk time."

POP But it wasn't punk. It was just that time.

COSTELLO The Pistols called themselves the Pistols because that was a great name. It was probably a better name than it was a group. The Clash were the Clash. I had the blessing or the burden of this crazy stage name. But there's a person behind that name, and you just try to keep that person from getting too injured by the process.

The squeezed-tea-bag thing about rock & roll is so true. Elvis' first record doesn't have drums on it. Jerry Lee Lewis doesn't have bass, because that's all they had, all they could afford. Johnny Cash's first record didn't have drums. The rhythm was coming from guitar. Did you need it? No. Does anyone think it doesn't rock? No.

[*Cont. on 75*]

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF IGGY POP; LENS O'TOOLE

MAVIS STAPLES

Mavis Staples & Chris Stapleton

The soul legend and the country star have formed a deep bond. 'We gotta be related,' she says

"HOW YOU BEEN, MAVIS?" Chris Stapleton asks from Tennessee, where he lives. "I've been OK," says Mavis Staples, who's in Chicago. "My bass player sent me a puzzle of the whole band onstage. 500 pieces!" Staples, 81, is contending with her longest break since she started singing with the Staple Singers – her father, Pops, her sisters Cleotha and Yvonne, and brother Pervis – in the 1950s. "I like being in the house, but not this long." It's not unusual for Stapleton to call her up; they met after he recorded her late father's ballad "Friendship" for his 2017 platinum-selling album, *From A Room: Volume Two*. "It blew my mind," says Staples of the recording. "I had been keeping up with Chris, because of his name. I said, 'Stapleton, Stapleton.' I told him, 'We gotta be related.'"

Stapleton's producer, Dave Cobb, played him "Friendship," which Pops recorded in 1999, a year before his death. It led Stapleton to the Staple Singers' early-Seventies Stax era, when the family released empowering gospel-soul classics like "Respect Yourself" and "I'll Take You There." "There's a realness when they sing that's not something you can practice," he says. "It comes from somewhere else."

"If I got sick, Chris would come and help me out," says Staples, who released her latest album, *We Get By*, last year. (Stapleton also just released an LP, *Starting Over*.) Describing their relationship, she starts singing "Friendship": "We got friendship, the kind that lasts a lifetime." Says Stapleton, "You're making me tear up right now."

STAPLETON What's your earliest memory of singing in public?

STAPLES We were at my Aunt Katie's church. We sang the first song Pops taught us, "Will the Circle Be Unbroken." The people kept clapping us back, but we didn't know what an encore meant, so we went to sit down. Someone

PHOTOGRAPH BY NOLIS ANDERSON

18+

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"We tried to figure out what tremolo pedal your dad used. We found a couple and spent way too much money repairing them. We plugged them in and realized no matter what pedal we had, we weren't Pops Staples."

—CHRIS STAPLETON

came over and told us, "They want to hear you again. You've got to sing another song." Well, we ended up singing "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" three times, because it was the only song Pops had taught us all the way through. After that, Pops said, "Shucks, these people like us. We're going home and we're going to make some more songs." That's how it started.

STAPLETON When me and Dave Cobb decided to play "Friendship," the song you and Pops had recorded, we got off on a guitar-nerd session. We tried to figure out what tremolo pedal your dad used. We landed on a mechanical tremolo, one of the first pedals ever made. We found a couple that were not working and we spent way too much money trying to have them repaired. And then we plugged them in and we immediately realized that we weren't Pops Staples, because no matter what pedal we had, or what amp we had, or what guitar, we still didn't sound like your dad.

STAPLES Elvis Presley told me one time – him and his boys were watching one of our shows in Memphis – "I like the way your father played that guitar. He plays a nervous guitar."

STAPLETON I didn't realize that you did a bunch of things with [guitarist-producer] Steve Cropper, and I didn't draw this parallel until I was reading about it. I hear a lot of your daddy's influence on Cropper's guitar playing. What are some of your memories of working in that era – the Stax era?

STAPLES Steve produced our very first record on Stax. Steve and Pops, they'd be in the studio playing their guitars with Booker T. and Donald Dunn. That shocked us, to get to Stax and to see two white boys and two black boys playing together. You weren't supposed to [see that].

I don't know if Pops even knew that he influenced a lot of guitar players. Pops learned how to play guitar at Dockery Farms [in Dockery, Mississippi] from Charlie Patton. We didn't know that for years we were singing gospel but Pops was playing blues on his guitar. We always thought the blues was something we shouldn't listen to. Muddy Waters and B.B. King, all them, were friends with him. [But] he'd say, "No, the blues and the gospel, they first cousins, Mavis. You got to get your history together." I didn't know blues and gospel were first cousins. And country is, too.

CHRIS STAPLETON

BECKY FLUKE

STAPLETON Did you ever work with B.B. King, Muddy Waters, or some of those guys you mentioned?

STAPLES Howlin' Wolf lived not just a few doors down the street from us [in Chicago]. He was so tall, Pops' forehead would be at Howlin' Wolf's belt. You're making me remember a lot of stuff. Pops sang at Muddy Waters' funeral. And B.B. King, he'd say to Pops, "You can sing and play at the same time. I can't do that." B.B. King would go to Japan and would send Pops souvenirs – cameras and stuff. I said, "He really likes you!"

STAPLETON What was it like touring back in the day? You hear the bluegrass guys talk about strapping a bass on top of their station wagon, things like that. How did you travel?

STAPLES When we first started traveling, Pops had a turquoise Bel Air. That was in the Fifties. Then, when we started making some money, we would travel in this Cadillac. I was the night driver. One time I pulled into the service station, Chris. OK, this is a long story I'm not going to tell, but we went to jail that night.

STAPLETON You can't tell us that you went to jail and not tell the whole story.

STAPLES: What happened was, I had driven from Jackson [Mississippi] to Memphis, and I pulled into a service station at Third and Union. This long, tall white guy came out, and he filled up the car, and then he wanted his money. There were a lot of bugs on the windshield, so I said, "Will you clean the windshield?" He looked at me a long time, and I could tell he was mad. I asked him for a receipt. He looked at me and said, "If you want a receipt, n-word, you can come over to the office." Pops went into the office, and [the man] shook his finger in Daddy's face. When he did that, Pops clocked him, and they fought. Pervis got out of that car like Superman and came down on this guy. The guy started running away. Then Pops said, "Mavis, drive." So I started driving.

I got across the bridge. Three police cars – they had shotguns on us, they had the dogs barking. I've never been so scared in my life. They started searching our car. When they went in the trunk, our money from the gig was in a cigar box. The officer said, "Where'd you get this kind of money, boy?" Pops said, "We sang for that money tonight." After a while, they put us in handcuffs. I thought they were taking us to the woods to lynch us. I had never been so glad to see a police station in my life. When Daddy walked in, there was a black man mopping the floor. He looked up and said, "Poppa Staples, what you doing here?" Pops kept walking. We laughed about that way later.

STAPLETON It wasn't funny at the time, I would imagine.

STAPLES It wasn't. The receipt is what saved us. The man had told the police we robbed them and beat him up and we didn't pay for our gas. When the chief saw the receipt, he said, "Get those handcuffs off those people. Let them go home." We had some times in the South, Chris.

STAPLETON It's important for me to hear stories like these just so I know what's up. My experiences are vastly different. I don't have any concept, really, of that. I want to hear those stories. I want to know what had to take place. That's wild to me, to hear that. And unthinkable to live.

STAPLES I need to say this. When [George] Floyd was under that man's knee, [you] called me and said, "Mavis, I just want to know how you're doing." And [you] said something to me that really got me, [you] said, "Mavis, I just didn't know. I must have had blinders on." I said, "Chris, you didn't have no blinders on, there was no way for you to know what black people have been going through." But that made me feel so good, that [you] were thinking about me. That's a true friend. I got off that phone and tears just wouldn't stop flowing. I was just so grateful for that.

STAPLETON How did your dad's last record [2015's posthumous *Don't Lose This,* produced by Staples and Jeff Tweedy] come about?

STAPLES Pops was sick, and he called me and said, "Mavis, bring me the music to my room, I wanna hear it." After he heard it, he said, "Mavis, don't lose this." And that was why I named the LP *Don't Lose This.*

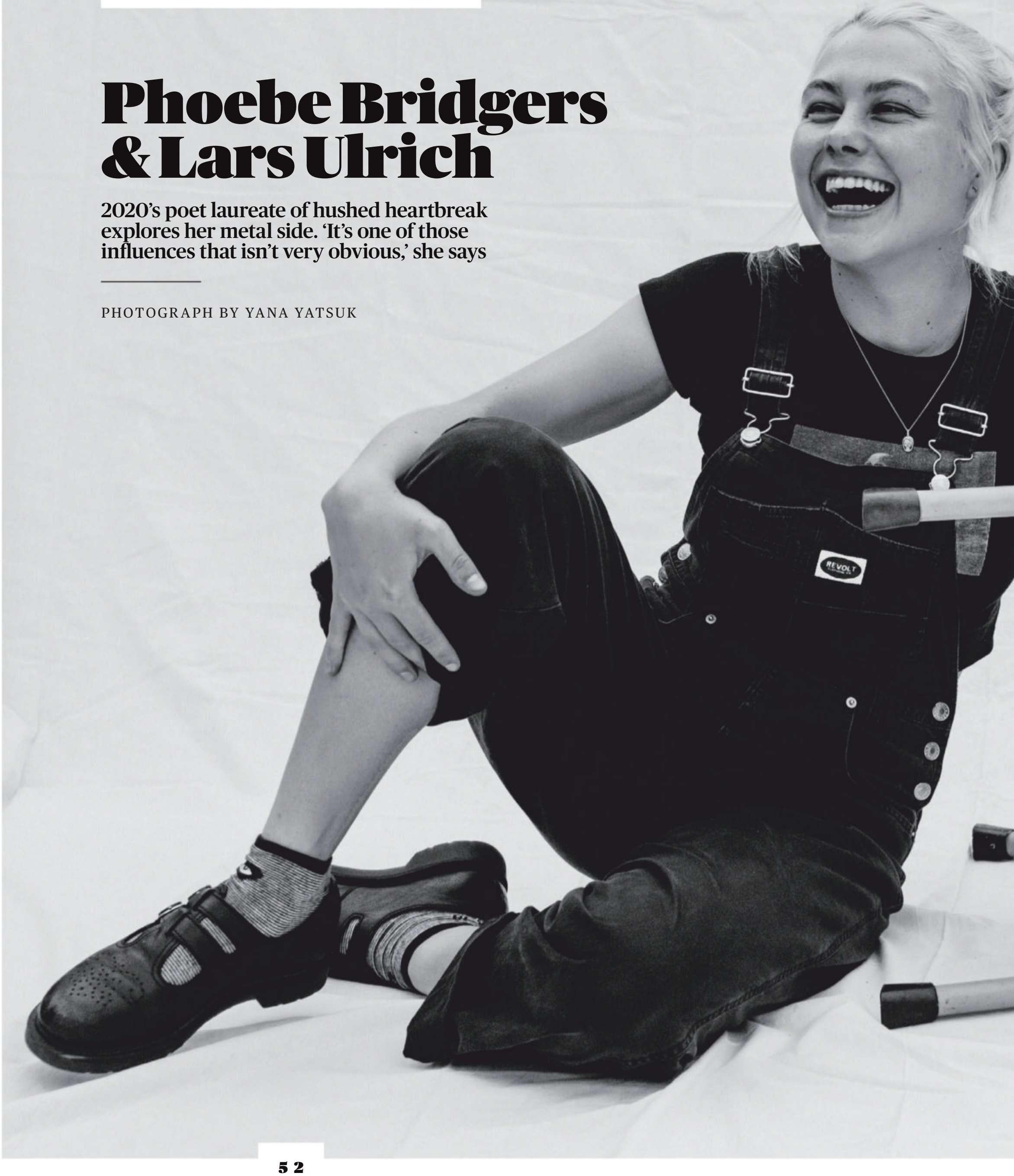
STAPLETON I love hearing these things, all these stories.

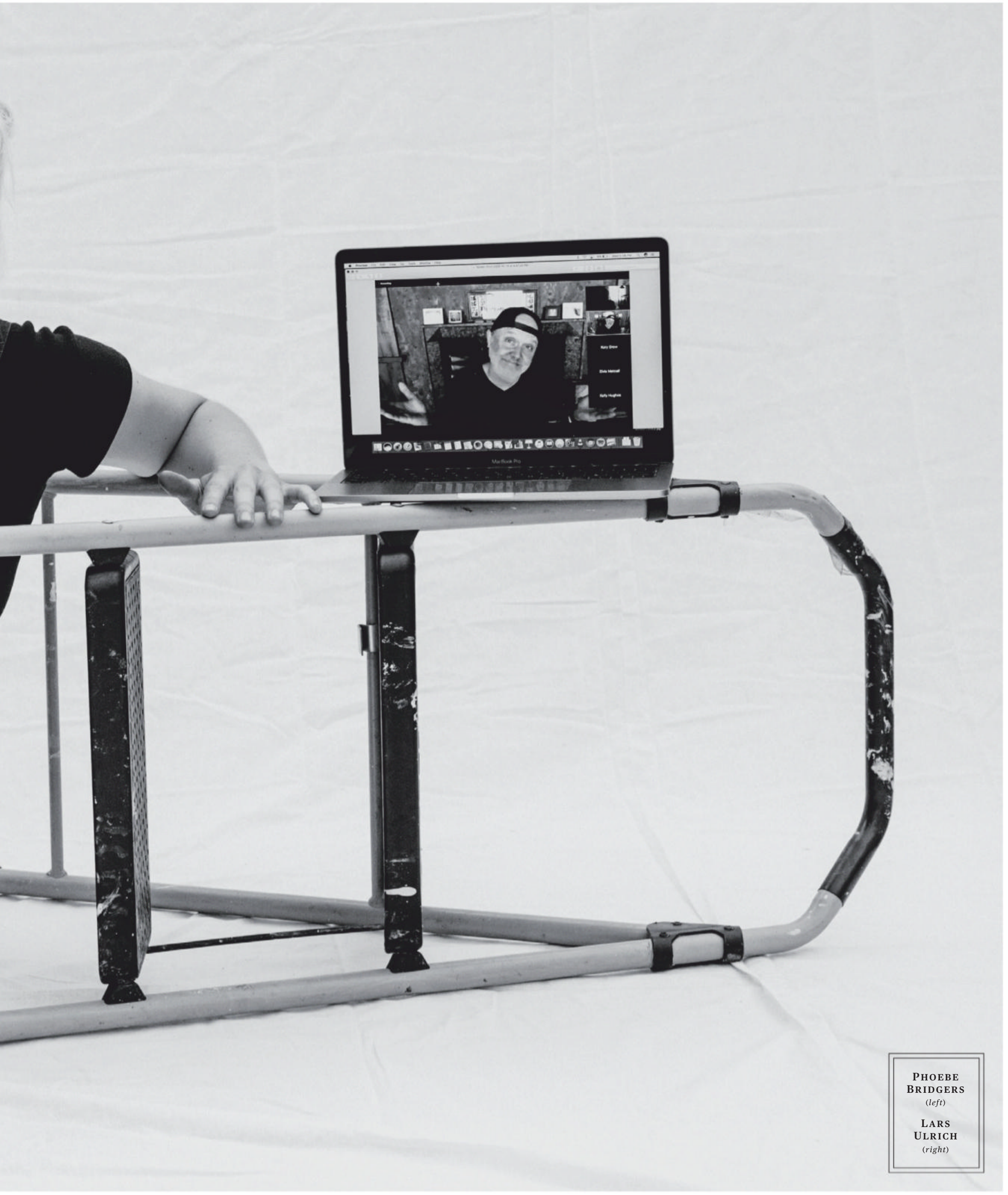
STAPLES That's all I got, is a bunch of stories now, Chris. JONATHAN BERNSTEIN

Phoebe Bridgers & Lars Ulrich

2020's poet laureate of hushed heartbreak explores her metal side. 'It's one of those influences that isn't very obvious,' she says

PHOTOGRAPH BY YANA YATSUK





Phoebe Bridgers
(*left*)

Lars Ulrich
(*right*)

PHOEBE BRIDGERS was in grade school in Pasadena, California, when she heard Metallica's music in the PlayStation 2 game *Test Drive: Off-Road Wide Open*. "I was a kid in the early 2000s, so it was kind of a gift when a band that you just got into has an entire catalog already," says Bridgers, 26. "You get to go back and listen to everything."

Though Bridgers has credited artists like Elliott Smith and Tom Waits as influencing her witty, deeply emotional folk-rock sound, she's been less vocal about her fandom for Metallica; she's the kind of fan who can make an impassioned case for 2003's *St. Anger*. "I think of Metallica as being a pop band," she says. "A lot of metal is just metal to be metal – but Metallica write real songs." Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich, 56, was excited when Bridgers reached out for a conversation, delving into her catalog, even her previous bands Einstein's Dirty Secret and Sloppy Jane. The talk flows so easily, in fact, that nearly two hours had passed when Ulrich finally looks at the clock. "I could sit here and talk all day," he says. "This is supercomfortable."

BRIDGERS You have great fans, but you also have fans that are pretty entitled and have ownership over you and are like, "These are the *real* Metallica records." What do you make of that?

ULRICH The difference now, compared to back in the day, is that everybody's got an opinion. In the mid-to-late Nineties, it was like, "We played a show four days ago in Bumfuck, Somewhere, and the set list is posted online. The whole Napster thing 20 years ago, when we woke up in the middle of that shitstorm, was the first time where we were not universally the good guy. That's when I conditioned myself to stop paying attention [to online commentary].

BRIDGERS The Napster thing is so interesting to me because we're sitting in 2020 and somebody who doesn't play music at all is making all the money on streaming. Now it's legal to steal records.

ULRICH It was the strangest fucking summer. Because I was most on the front lines, it left me kind of shell-shocked. It really started more as a street fight. It was like, "Wait a minute, one of our songs is playing on a bunch of radio stations in the Midwest?" It was a song we hadn't released yet. So we started tracing it back, and it was like, "Napster, what the fuck?" The environment we were brought up in was if somebody fucked with you, we'd just go after them. And then all of a sudden the lights came on, the whole world was watching.

It left certainly a pretty crazy taste in my mouth, especially because everybody was my friend: "You're doing such a great job. We support you. What can I do to help you? Call me." And then, as soon as I was out there and I looked behind, there was not a single person behind me. Obviously, I had the support of the band, but it was really weird. How do you view social media and how do you use it to get your shit out there and to communicate with your fans?

BRIDGERS I always end up on the devil's-advocate side of social media. Maybe it's just that I have a lot of older friends who think it's stupid, and I feel like I end up just being like, "But look, this kid made up a dance to one of my songs." Does Metallica have TikTok dances?

ULRICH There's definitely some out there.

BRIDGERS I think that's great. . . . Do you have superfans who've come to so many shows that you know them on a first-name basis now?

ULRICH Oh, yes. We actually came up with this idea called the "Black Ticket": You buy a ticket for the whole tour and that will get you into every show.

BRIDGERS That's epic.

ULRICH And I can relate to that because back in the day, when I moved to California, I used to literally follow Motörhead around; I saw 68 Motörhead shows. You've obviously referenced Lemmy in one of your songs ["Smoke Signals"]. Did I hear that right?: "Singing 'Ace of Spades' when Lemmy died."

BRIDGERS It's a true story. I was on a road trip with my drummer, and we were listening to the radio. They were talking about how Lemmy passed away. We spent the whole road trip screaming along and making playlists. I listen to a lot of Motörhead, a lot of Metallica. I have dabbled in the Slayer world. And then, weirdly late for me, I got super into Nine Inch Nails.

ULRICH You can't deny Trent and his talent. It's insane.

BRIDGERS It's one of those musical influences that I feel like isn't very obvious in my music, but hopefully with this next record, it will be. I also have an apathetic voice, and I feel self-conscious that when I scream I sound like musical theater.

ULRICH Let that be a good thing. Let's talk about writing. Obviously, there are three different elements to my ear: lyric, melody, and the musical accompaniment. What usually comes first for you?

BRIDGERS I sit down with a guitar, and then I'll float around and try to find a melody; it comes weirdly at the same time. I feel like I write very carefully. There's nothing that I hate more than looking back two days later and being like, "That's dog shit." So I try to save myself from that by being deliberate, and I almost write in order.

One of the craziest things I've ever seen is in the Metallica documentary [*Some Kind of Monster*], when your therapist [Phil Towle] slides over [and suggests] lyrics. I was like, "Oh, my God." I did listen to mixes with a therapist once, because she was like, "You've got to show me what the fuck you're so anxious about."

ULRICH It was a very transitional, experimental time. We'd been a band for 20 years, and we realized we never had a fucking conversation about how we're feeling, what being in Metallica is doing to everybody. It was just this fucking machine. And then [James] Hetfield had to go away and deal with some of his [substance abuse] issues, and then that opened up this whole thing.

It was a difficult time with Phil. And as easy as a target as he is to make fun of, whenever I get asked about it now, I find myself defending him. He did save the fucking band.

BRIDGERS Also, *St. Anger* is a great record. It might have been the first Metallica album I heard.

ULRICH That record had a very, very different makeup. For those couple years, everything was about being open with each other, about the spirit of no rules. I'm happy we did it. . . .

We're three, four weeks into some pretty serious writing. And of all the shit – pandemics, fires, politics, race problems, and just fucking looking at the state of the world – it's so easy just to so fall into a depressive state. But writing always makes me feel enthusiastic about what's next. It's like, "Fuck, there's an opportunity here to still make the best record, to still make a difference. To still do something that not even turns other people on, but turns me on." Did I read the other day that you're starting a label, Saddest Factory [an imprint owned by Secretly Group, home to Secretly Canadian]?

BRIDGERS Yeah.

ULRICH I'm psyched that you're doing it. I hope it goes better than what I did. Back in the late Nineties, early 2000s, I had an imprint through Elektra Records. One of the ones I put out was the least-selling record.

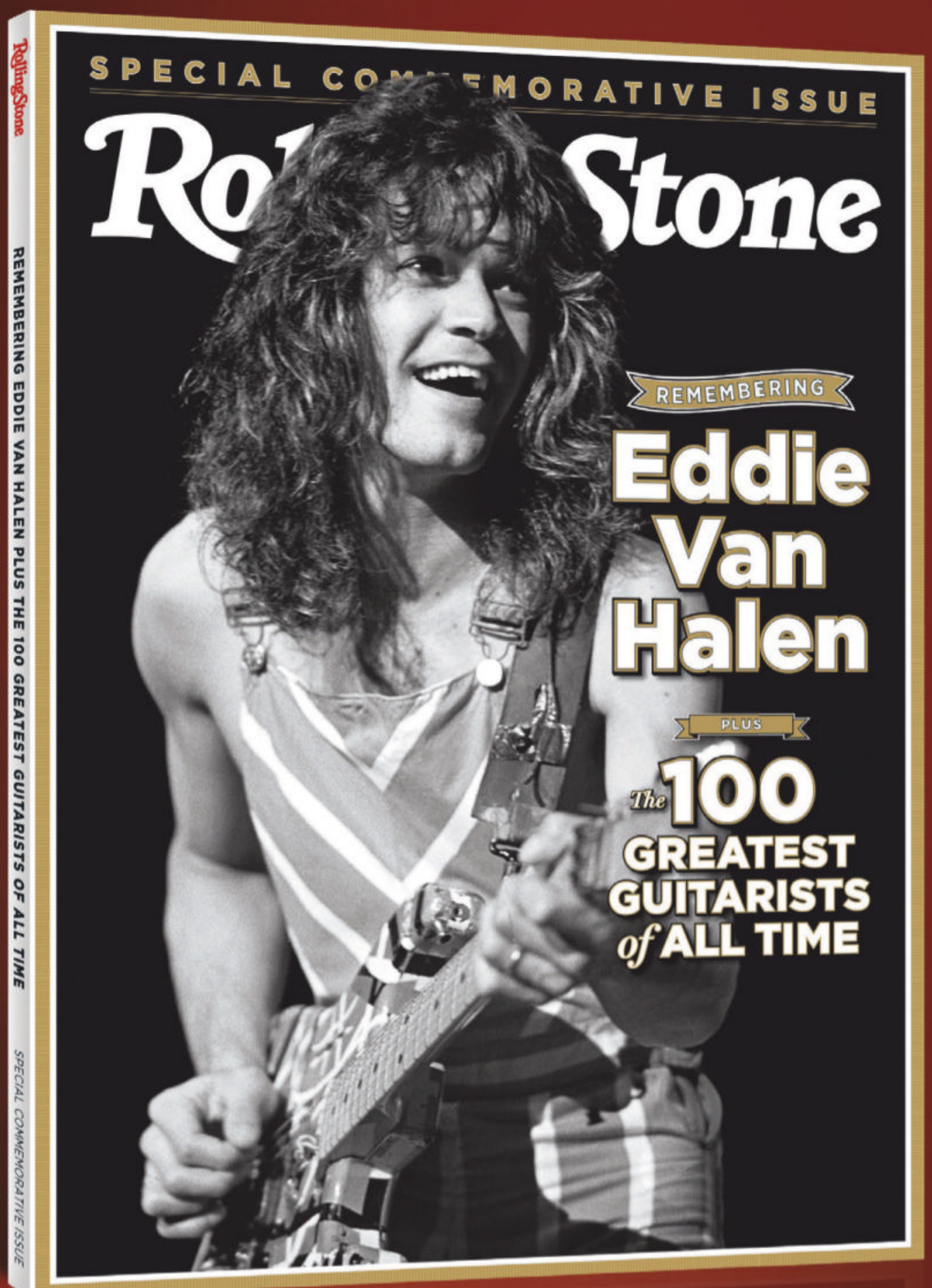
BRIDGERS Yeah, I definitely have nightly panic attacks that it's too much to take on. But it's going to be fun.

ULRICH If I hear anything, I'll send it your way.

BRIDGERS Yeah, send shit my way! I'm going to try to beat your record of least-sold Secretly Canadian albums. KORY GROW

"One of the craziest things I've ever seen is in the Metallica documentary, when your therapist suggests lyrics. I listened to mixes with a therapist once because she was like, 'Show me what you're so anxious about.'"

–PHOEBE BRIDGERS



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Kevin Parker & Billy Corgan

Two uncompromising studio visionaries on band politics, what the Nineties were really like, and how to keep rock exciting

KEVIN PARKER REMEMBERS hearing his older brother play Smashing Pumpkins' *Siamese Dream* when they were growing up in Perth, Australia. "It was like an indescribable cross between optimistic and sad music," says Parker. "All my friends were into Rage Against the Machine. *Siamese Dream* was my internal headspace album, I guess."

That 1993 album helped inspire Parker to start making songs as Tame Impala, a solo project that has since grown into one of the biggest rock acts in the world, blending hazy guitars, disco beats, and huge pop melodies. That success has helped Parker, 34, become an in-demand collaborator for everyone from Rihanna to Kendrick Lamar, but he's never met Corgan – who, it turns out, is a fan of his as well. "There's a beautiful tastefulness in the tones that you choose, the way you move melody around in a nonlinear way," Corgan tells Parker. "That's all discernment. That's the sign of a good musician."

Corgan says he has an idea why *Siamese Dream* – Smashing Pumpkins' career-making second LP, with Nineties alt-rock anthems like "Today" and "Cherub Rock" – was the one that resonated with Parker. "Every generation has their own gateway album," he says. "For Gerard and Mikey Way, their [favorite Pumpkins] album was *Machina,* because it was very distressed and of that time, the dawn of the internet age. I see *Siamese Dream* as kind of an idealized statement. After that, we explored every variation: brute-force reality, true darkness. But people are really attracted to idealism. What's weird is we almost killed ourselves to do it."

KEVIN PARKER

Today, Corgan, 53, is on a new path of his own, having just finished *Cyr,* a double album featuring founding Pumpkins James Iha and Jimmy Chamberlin; it's also tied in with a five-part animated series. Says Corgan, "You have to just keep moving forward."

PARKER I see the [mid-Nineties] as the golden era of rock & roll: When I started making music, all I wanted to do was be in that kind of romantic, grungy scene. It's this fantasy that I hold in my mind now.

CORGAN I don't think we realized what a great time it was: the breakthrough of alternative music. The Cure, Depeche Mode, U2 – there had been so many great bands [before]. But once *Nevermind* cracked everything open, suddenly the world was open to weird bands. We had our sanity, we hadn't done too many drugs yet. The golden era, to use your words, was '91 to about '96. Then it was over.

PARKER Sometimes fans will say, "Oh, man, I wish you had that sound again." I feel they're more in love with the time when they fell in love with that album.

CORGAN I'm at this midpoint where it's time to look through the scrapbook, but also look for-

PHOTOGRAPH BY
LAWRENCE AGYEI

ward. You have to take stock of where you've been. It sounds a bit boorish, but when you've experienced fame at an international level, it's a dopamine rush that's reserved for very few people on this planet. People talk to me about certain years of my life, and it literally is a blur because in that one year we played 200 shows. At some point you have to step back and say, "OK, what did this do to me?"

PARKER Isn't it funny how it's difficult to appreciate things that we look back so fondly on?

CORGAN That's what I love about your music. It really celebrates the moment. I was raised, like many people, on the Beatles and Led Zeppelin. Our way of rebelling against that was to play it louder, faster, with weirder lyrics. So as the world has sped up, as communication became global, I started hearing a lot of music that I didn't understand. In essence, it's not based in the same rules that I would liken to classic songwriting. It's taken me a while to understand that to make music of today, you have to be sort of unattached and more free than we were. Your music bridges the gap. I hear hooks that remind me of the Bee Gees.

PARKER Absolutely!

CORGAN We grew up in a world where you were given a lane and you were expected to stay in that lane. If you veered from that lane, you would get a bunch of weird shit about it. We were like, "Well, the Beatles did 'Revolution' and 'Strawberry Fields' and 'She Loves You.' " People would go out of their way to enforce the rules. Whatever that was is over.

PARKER When we got a record deal, the music that we got signed with was all my home recordings. Then, all the albums from there were all me. But it was this awkward power struggle, because I didn't want to be the boss [in my band], but I wanted it to sound like I wanted it to sound. How did you navigate that role?

CORGAN Like a young lover, I had a romantic idea of what a band was. My father had been in a band. I always heard him complaining about the other musicians. I didn't want to be that type of band. I wanted to be in the Beatles. Socially, we were like a gang. We moved in one direction. Of course, there were early indications that it was my thing, as far as the songs, but it didn't really come to a head until we first started recording, and then producers like Butch Vig would say, "It needs to be up to this standard." Suddenly, I was kind of put on the spot, because I'd made the majority of the demos, like you. People would go, "I want the thing I heard on the demo." I'd go, "Well, that's me." "Why can't you do it?" "Band politics. I don't want to hurt somebody's feelings."

Not too ironically, we were doing an interview for ROLLING STONE around 1993. We were sitting in a cafe, and the guy interviewed me first and then James [Iha] and D'arcy [Wretzky], who were an on-again, off-again couple. I ate my soup, but I could hear what they were saying. One of the band members said, "Oh, he does everything." It was weird – like, "OK, I thought we had an agreement to keep that to ourselves." [People] would use words like "tyrant" and "Svengali."

Look, I grew up poor-ish. I watched my father struggle and play five sets a night and complain and get lost in drugs. I was like, "That's not going to be me." So I had this ambition to get not only out of my social situation, I had this ambition to live my dream. And it was working. We had hits and massive sales and were playing festivals, but behind the scenes everybody is complaining all the time.

PARKER Totally.

CORGAN I think eventually we found this kind of peace with one another, where on one level I figured out what I was good at and I stopped apologizing for it.

PARKER Isn't it funny that it takes that equilibrium to be reached for there to be harmony? We had the same kind of thing, where it was between the three of us, but we all knew it was me making the music. But they also had to do interviews. The interviewers would ask the guys what the influences were. Sometimes they'd sort of bullshit and string the conversation along, and sometimes they'd go, "We don't fucking know, it's just Kevin." That confusion came to a head, and then it all blew open. It was like, "OK, something is wrong here. So we're just going to call it what it is, which is basically a solo project." It took a lot of growing up and maturing. It works so much better now.

You said *Siamese Dream* almost killed you. I'm intrigued how it almost killed you.

CORGAN We were under tremendous pressure to succeed. It was well-known that if you didn't produce a bunch of big radio songs or MTV songs, you were dead, and they would just drop you. Our producer was coming off *Nevermind,* so he was under pressure to prove he wasn't a one-hit wonder. Then I think the inner politics: All three members reacted negatively to what they were being asked to do, because we had to make this once-in-a-lifetime album. We were working 12 to 13 hours a day; the long hours, the isolation.

I think it exposed what was fragile in our relationships. It built up to people quitting, people going on drug binges. It was everything under the sun. Then people would walk through the door and we'd play them the basic tracks and their jaws would just be on the floor, like, "What the fuck?" So we knew we were doing something right. Then you'd close the door and go back to "I hate you."

PARKER I want to ask how you feel about the current state of rock & roll. Sometimes I wonder, has the driving force of rock & roll been replaced by other types of music?

CORGAN In terms of approach and style, I think that the closest thing to rock & roll is hip-hop. There unfortunately hasn't been the evolution there in terms of how to play, to make the guitar as valuable as a synthesizer or something. If you're a guitar player and you have a vision like I did or you do, then you'll figure it out, even if it means turning your guitar upside down and running it through a blender.

Rock & roll has to be willing and able to be dangerous. When I hear great artists like yourself or Grimes, you guys are figuring out a way to bring what I would call the violence and the beautiful sort of fuzz into the current state. The moment rock gives up the mantle of being willing to step over a particular line, it's dead. Everybody thinks they know how to put on a guitar, stand up, and say something that 10,000 people aren't going to like. Try it sometime. Until you've had people throwing whiskey bottles and keys and jars of piss at your head because they don't like what you're saying, you're not on the edge of anything.

PARKER Has that happened to you?

CORGAN Oh, yeah. We're talking near-riots, man.

PARKER Are you nostalgic for those moments?

CORGAN Not at all. I'm telling you, there's never a more beautiful moment than being in this moment, with [my] children, happy. I can call up my band members on the phone and everybody gets along. That's just as beautiful, if not more beautiful, in my mind.

PARKER Tell me this: Did you guys have plans to come to Australia before this whole coronavirus shutdown?

CORGAN You know, it's a sad thing. No promoter will bring us over.

PARKER What are you talking about? I'll have a chat with my people.

CORGAN We'll get you up for a *Siamese Dream* song.

PARKER Oh, my God, that would be amazing. That would be a dream. **PATRICK DOYLE**

"Everybody thinks they know how to put on a guitar and say something that 10,000 people aren't going to like. Try it. Until you've had people throwing jars of piss at your head, you're not on the edge of anything."

–BILLY CORGAN

PREVIOUS SPREAD: MATSU (KEVIN PARKER); CORGAN GROOMED BY ASHLEIGH COARTNEY

Jason Isbell & Barry Gibb

One of today's most gifted songwriters talks to the Bee Gees legend about lyrics and the joy of making music with family: 'I've known your songs my whole life'

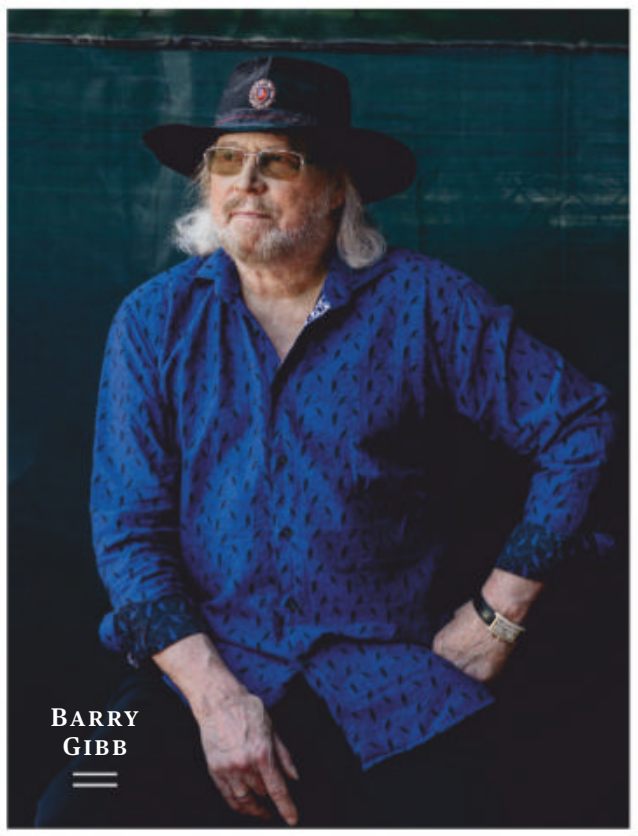
LAST YEAR, Jason Isbell came home to his wife and bandmate, Amanda Shires, and played her a duet he'd just recorded with Barry Gibb. "She said, 'That's the best I've heard you sing,' " Isbell says. "I said, 'Well, I was singing with Barry Gibb. I had to do my absolute best.' "

Isbell may be a rootsy songwriter from Alabama, but he's been a Bee Gees fan his entire life. The song he and Gibb recorded, "Words of a Fool," appears on Gibb's upcoming album, *Greenfields,* which features rerecordings of his catalog with artists including Brandi Carlile, Dolly Parton, and Alison Krauss. "I've always been a real freak on old country music," Gibb says. "After the Bee Gees no longer existed, I drifted into my own bliss, which is this kind of music."

"I was nervous, Barry," Isbell says of their duet.

"My jaw was on the floor," Gibb tells him. "You guys didn't need to do this. The fact that you cared about those songs means everything to me."

JASON ISBELL



BARRY GIBB

ISBELL I think you got your star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame a couple months after I was born, so I've known your music my whole life.

GIBB Wow. I need to give you a little bit of input about our roots. We were an immigrant family who moved to Australia in 1958, and from then onwards, we heard so many records from America. Roy Orbison and Elvis . . . these were country stars, but they were also rock stars. . . . George Jones, Dolly . . . these people had a radical influence on us.

ISBELL The fact that you guys didn't spend your formative years in England, do you think that made for a different mix? I don't hear as much skiffle in what you were doing. It sounds like country music.

GIBB We were inundated with American country music, and don't forget: We went through that whole folk era.

ISBELL Totally. Songs like "Massachusetts" could be a country song. Also, things like loops and samples, I don't think people realize how big the Bee Gees were for the way a lot of popular production happens now. The *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack had the first loop I know of.

GIBB "More Than a Woman" is the same drum loop as "Stayin' Alive." "Woman in Love," same drum loop. We used it on different records, but I think there was some kind of obsession with accuracy. The groove had to be dead-on.

ISBELL What have you been doing since the pandemic hit?

GIBB Watching Netflix. Always watching *Down From the Mountain*. I watch it over and over again.

ISBELL I do a lot of that, too. I sit and play the guitar all day. If I have to, I'll drag a Marshall [amp] to the front yard and play for the neighborhood. I'm close to that point now.

GIBB If I play, I'm playing for myself. If I like the song, I'll applaud.

ISBELL It's been reminding me more of the reason I started making music in the first place.

GIBB Do you know the first gig we ever played was a speedway? We talked the people there into letting us sing in the middle of the oval, between the races. We were on the back of a lorry with a microphone. The people threw coins onto the track.

ISBELL That sounds like something that very easily could have happened in Alabama, where I grew up.

GIBB Once you have any success, it becomes a competition. I think it's hard for groups. If you're a family, you can make it last. If you're not a family, things can fragment pretty quickly.

ISBELL I've seen that. I was in a band for a long time where we had three songwriters and three singers, and it was tough. Ever since then, I feel like I do my best when I'm either being told what to do or if I'm making the decisions. But anything in between, I haven't been all that good at.

"Once you have success, it becomes competition. If you're not family, things can fragment quickly."

—BARRY GIBB

GIBB I've always written songs or recorded songs to please somebody, and I don't know if that's the same thing for you. I very rarely would write a song just to please myself.

ISBELL I think we all have that. Even if it's some sort of amalgamation of different people in your life. My wife is the first person to see my songs. She's got a master's in poetry; she's a great songwriter herself. So it's a little scary. She'll say, "This is a cliché. That doesn't rhyme exactly." It's hard. I will fight back. I'll defend to the death some of my stupid lines, but it helps.

GIBB Happens to me. If I'm sitting alone in a room and Linda walks through, she might make some offhanded comment like, "I think you can do better than that."

ISBELL I think that's the thing that impresses me about you the most: the fact that you are so committed to being a good human being. You have a family you're close to, and you've not allowed your abilities to give you an excuse to act like a bad person.

GIBB Once you've had a couple of failures, you realize failure is always just around the corner. Success is a bit like walking on a sponge. You start to sink. Nothing lasts, no matter what you do. So you prepare yourself for the time when it's fine to just watch TV or read. But I'm at that point where I'd love to be able to walk on another stage.

ISBELL Hopefully, one of these days we can go out and do that song together live.

GIBB I'd love that, man. ANGIE MARTOCCIO

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALYSSE GAFKJEN (LEFT) & ROSE MARIE CROMWELL

LIL WAYNE

Lil Wayne & Lil Baby

Rap's most urgent voice talks to his hero about taking risks and why the South rules hip-hop

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICKY WILLIS

LATE ON A Friday night, Lil Wayne fires up a joint at his Miami studio and logs into Zoom as "Mr. Carter." "What up, Baby?" he says. "How's the fam?" "Good, man," says Lil Baby, grinning from L.A. "That's what's up," says Wayne.

Wayne doesn't listen to a lot of new music – "I listen to myself," he's said – but he loves Lil Baby, the 25-year-old Atlanta rapper who, in just a few years, has gone from serving time to becoming one of rap's most urgent voices. Wayne points to Baby's lyrics, which combine politically conscious statements with playful wordplay ("I done made a quarter this week in huaraches/ Top model with me, trying to feed me hibachi"), delivered in some of rap's smoothest cadences. "I got the utmost respect for his shit," says Wayne, alluding to Baby's protest anthem "The Bigger Picture." (This interview took place before Wayne's controversial choice to pose for a photograph with President Trump just days before the election.)

Baby was in his early teens when Wayne reshaped rap with his mixtape series *No Ceilings* and the multiplatinum *Tha Carter III*. Baby likes how Wayne was able to balance huge radio hits with wild creative choices (including his 2010 rock album, *The Rebirth*.) "I always felt like Wayne did what he wanted to do," says Baby. "The reason was because he put the numbers up behind it. So that's how I am rocking out: doing whatever I want, as long as I put them numbers up."

BABY I heard you real young. I can't even remember, maybe elementary or middle school. I can't even remember, like, the first time I heard a Lil Wayne song, but I knew them fucking word for word back then.

WAYNE I appreciate that. I remember I saw the video "Drip Too Hard." Of course, that was riding a wave where a lot of music was sounding the same. I'm like, "Who this?" Reginae [Wayne's daughter] was like, "That's what I'm talking about." So once it got solidified, I was a fan forever.

Wayne, you're from New Orleans, Baby's from Atlanta. How did those cities shape you?

BABY It shaped me a whole lot, 'cause that's my swag, my flavor, my flow. That's my talk, my walk, right there. I feel like where you come from is 90 percent you.

WAYNE New Orleans is the reason why I am a rapper, bro, plain and simple. My oldest son, he's doing an assignment for school right now, and he asked me this week: "Dad, I have to do an assignment on you. Can I ask you a few questions? What rappers influenced you?" My answer was: "I'm sorry. I can't. Your teachers, your friends, they're not gonna know who they are."

Growing up, we had block parties very frequently. And they were almost like a concert, but the mic was always open. So those regular guys who rocked every block party, they were superstars. I mean, [they had] no cars or jewelry, no nothing. But [they] will be on it and rocked the DJ. So I saw that. I saw him poppin', I wanted

"Staying focused is my biggest challenge now that I got a lot to lose. Nowadays a lot of people depend on me. It's hard with all the distractions and shit. That's the main thing — and managing my money the right way."

—LIL BABY

all that. So one day, I got hyped up off of some Mountain Dew; I was just 11 years old. I walked up to the DJ, and that's it: "Let me see the mic."

When I jumped in the game, [the South] was frowned upon, you know: "There go them boys with their shake-that-ass music." Nah, man, we talking about something! I heard something come on the radio, and I got to ask Mack [Maine], "Who that is?" And when he tell me where they from, I'm like, "Nah, they can't be from New York." But you know, it's flattery.

What was one of the first albums that impacted you?

WAYNE Jay-Z, *Life and Times of Shawn Carter,* plain and simple. It was the first album where I actually [got] the car that the rapper was talking about. That was my album. Also, Jay talked so crazy. He went bananas on that album. I got lyrics from the album tattooed on me and shit. I have songs that are remakes of spinoffs of songs from that album, you know?

BABY I can't remember. I was always rapping, remixing peoples songs, switching the words up. My whole process when I walk in the booth is go hard. I'm not even thinking. I'm just thinking, like, "Go hard as I can go on this beat."

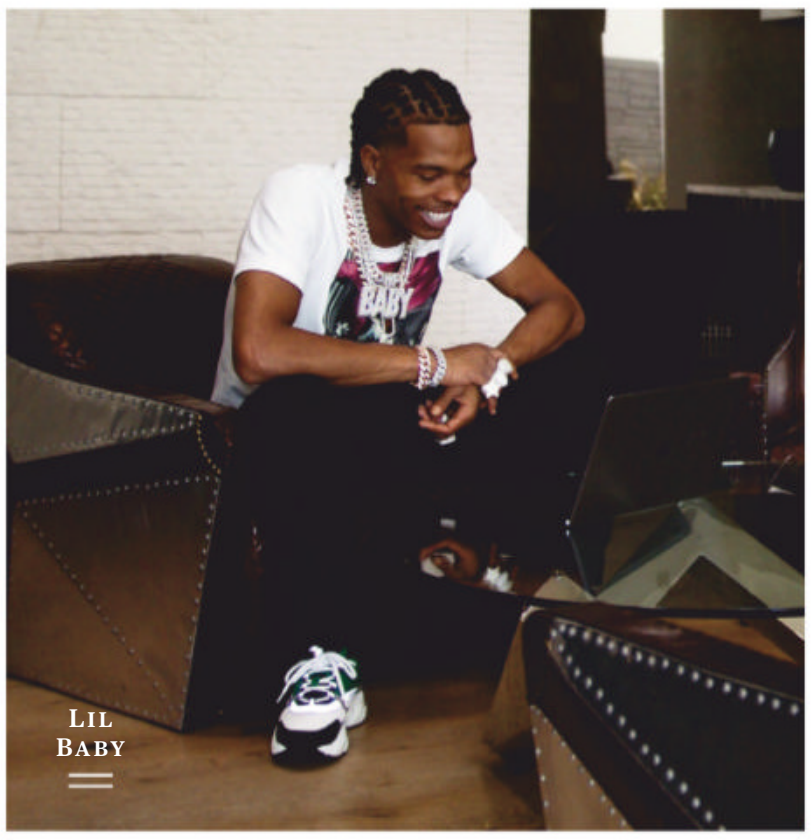
WAYNE I approach it a bit different. I want to know who the song is for and what's the song about, and after that, I go back into Lil Baby mode: I just go in there and kill it. The trait that's gotten me to where I'm at right now is that I've always tried to impress. So whoever gives me a song, that's my main thing. When I send it back, I want that person to be impressed, and be more than satisfied with what they just got back. I just be aiming to please, man.

You both have very melodic styles. What are your influences outside of rap music?

WAYNE The first is gonna be Miss Anita Baker, then Missy Elliott. Miss Erykah Badu. Then I might flip it around: Smashing Pumpkins, Nirvana. Nine Inch Nails. 311. Stuff like that. I make sure I hear what everybody makes, just to make sure that we all still going through the same battles. I listen to everybody.

BABY I like anything that got a vibe. It's gotta be R&B, soul music, shit you feel.

WAYNE I'm gonna shoot you some joints, let you listen to them.



LIL BABY

JOSH CHAROW

BABY Staying focused [is a big challenge]. Staying focused now that I got a lot to lose. Nowadays a lot of people depend on me. It's a hard challenge for me, with all the distractions and shit. So that's like the main thing to me, managing my money the right way.

WAYNE The most challenging challenge for me would be trying to be the most perfect – if there is a such thing – father there is to my three boys and my beautiful daughter. I love a challenge.

Everybody has stories about you, Wayne, how you're in the studio forever and work like crazy.

WAYNE I got it straight from [Cash Money founders] Birdman and Ronald "Slim" Williams. And Mannie Fresh. That's what they embedded in us. They went to the studio Monday through Sunday. They put in my head that you must work, no matter what. I was still in school. I was 13, 14, and they had no problem with knowing that I had exams or whatever: "You need to be in the studio. We need that verse." So it was embedded.

BABY On my end, I think it comes from just hustle and the grind, period. Whole thing is like, if you're hustling, we go hard. In the studio, it's the same thing. For me it's the outcome: We do this shit right, we can go on the road and get all this money; we can buy something.

Rappers don't get recognized for being style icons and shaping the culture that way. How did you put together your looks?

WAYNE: It was always just wanting to be different. I started in the group the Hot Boys. Baby started throwing on these throwback jerseys. That's what opened up the door for me to give a little bit more personality. We had a uniform at Cash Money. I always want to just go left and make myself stand out.

My mom was a single parent. She would break my fucking back just to make sure I'm fly, just to make sure I'm funky, so that's where I get that from. Even when she was asking me to walk to the corner store to get a Coke and some chips – you better not go to that store in the shit you slept in. I'm that way with my sons.

BABY I already knew what I wanted, but didn't always have a bankroll to do it. I started getting the money, and that's all I need.

WAYNE That's what it is, right there.

Your productions are on another level. Tell me about the process of beat selection.

BABY I want to take them from producers, the beat that we going crazy on.

WAYNE Like he said, all credit due to the producers, plain and simple. If you love that music, then that's all them. I don't have no part in the music.

How do you select tracks when putting together an album? Is it a collective process?

WAYNE Mack, plain and simple. I just throw them all out down on the table and let him pull his hair out, even though he's got no hair. I just gave him, like, 90 songs when all he actually needed was two. [*Laughs.*] He just lets me know what he picked. I mean, that right there comes from just having confidence in every single thing I do. And thinking every single song I do is worthy of being the Number One song in the damn country, so therefore I never get pissed about none of the songs he didn't pick. The ones he didn't pick, those are the best ones, too. [I] put them on mixtapes.

BABY Once I play music for the bros, they'll tell me to "play that one back" or "I want to hear that one." I kind of already can feel it. My people around me, they can let me know: "Put a little snippet on Instagram" or something I kind of work off of trying to go off everybody else.

WAYNE I remember those days. Now I go into the studio by myself. I don't like niggas to be around my shit. I don't got nobody to pop their head, tell me it's fire or something. I just go off. Other than that is just feeling, man. I start making some shit up in my head. I can give y'all an exclusive that me and Baby got one together on *No Ceilings 3.*

Do you think Wayne gets enough credit?

BABY What I'm learning about the rap game is you ain't never going to get enough credit. Might get it from some people, but for the most part, you'll never get no credit.

WAYNE I can't do nothing but say amen to that. I can't do nothing but say amen. **DEWAYNE GAGE**

THE UNTOUCHABLES

The Chicago Police Department has a history of violence and racial bias. Why does it protect its most dangerous cops while retaliating against officers who tell the truth?

BY PAUL SOLOTAROFF

ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE MCQUADE

USUALLY, THAT KID CLOMPING DOWN his mother's porch is a tractor beam of charm. On the South Side of Chicago, where Gangster Disciples shoot the Black Disciples over slights and side-eyed infractions, nobody seems to hassle Calvin Cross – he's too much fun to be around. He does a thousand voices, and all of them are funny, from 50 Cent impressions to Dave Chappelle to the cast of *Diff'rent Strokes*. Every night, he calls his girlfriend, Tunoka Jett, to tell her he loves and misses her – and to sometimes sing to her that dopey song from *Dirty Dancing*. "You can't never be down when you're around him," Tunoka says. "He'll just keep at you and at you till you laugh." ¶ Tonight, though, Calvin's high beams are dimmed a bit: It's the day after Memorial Day, and he's stuffed on BBQ. He's on the couch drowsing through a Mavs-Heat game when his homie wakes him up to go hang out. Calvin doesn't have friends so much as eager wingmen. "My craziest times with females happened offa him," says Myles Gardner, his day-one bestie at Harlan High School. "Once he showed that smile

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to a girl, it's a wrap – then I'd swoop in on her homegirl." Calvin's got a baby boy due in the next five weeks, and all he talks about is how he's going to spoil him. But Tunoka is a dean's-list student headed for college, and Calvin's 19 and, frankly, feeling himself. He's got too much game to settle down.

And so now he's off to kick it with his pal Ryan, a guy he befriended at Job Corps. The two teens walk up to 124th Street, headed around the corner to meet some girls. But about halfway between Parnell and Wallace streets, a police car suddenly screams to a halt beside them. Three cops pour out of it, dressed head to toe in black and pointing semi-automatics at them. *Put your hands up,* they scream; it's dark; there's a streetlight on the corner, but it's broken. Ryan stops ands raises his hands. Calvin takes off running. No one knows why he does this, though it's easy enough to guess: He thinks he's about to be killed.

The first shot, from a cop named Matilde Ocampo, rings out close but doesn't hit him. (Ocampo and the other cops would later claim that the teen had a gun.) Calvin is fast and built low to the ground, a tank of a former tailback at Harlan High. He hits the corner hard and turns it at a gallop, crossing westbound on Wallace toward a church. The cops reach the corner and unleash a barrage of bullets, peppering the ground with casings, at their fleeing target. There are people out and about still, after half-past 10:00. But these cops just keep blasting down the block. (One, a patrolman named Macario Chavez, is firing an *assault rifle* and emptying his clip, which holds 28 steel-piercing rounds.) In total, they'll put down 45 shells, endangering anyone walking within a half-mile range of their shooting stances.

It's not clear when Calvin Cross was struck the first time. He'd reached the cyclone fence in a lot behind the church and was presumably about to jump it when he fell. As patrolmen Chavez and Mohammed Ali enter the weed-gone lot, Calvin is on the ground. There is blood pooled at the bottom of the fence; Calvin is badly wounded but alive. Though he represents no threat to them, the cops open fire again. From a distance of 15 feet, they empty their clips, then reload and fire some more. One of those bullets hits Calvin between the eyes. It makes a tiny incision just below his right eyebrow, carves a huge lane through the center of his brain, then shatters into tiny shards throughout his skull. A postmortem performed the following day will find mass "destruction of brain tissue" around the bullet path and "extensive fracturing of the [frontal] skull." For all of that, it's likely Calvin was still breathing as the two cops handcuffed the dying teen.

But the slaughter of Calvin Cross is not the end of this horror; rather, it is just the beginning. Because suddenly the block is aswarm with cops: 70-something policemen, by neighbor's counts. According to veteran cops who spoke to ROLLING STONE on the record, their job was to do what is all too often done in the wake of wrongful shootings by their colleagues: "Make it right for the copper," says Sgt. Isaac Lambert, a whistleblower who once earned the highest award for valor that the Chicago Police Department hands out. "Gotta protect our officers," says ex-commander Lorenzo Davis, who ran his own district before joining the review board that investigates wrongful shootings. In all, four former and current officers came forward – each of them black – to tell me how cops in Chicago "fix" the shootings of unarmed black and brown citizens.

As residents peek out windows, cops search under cars: Everyone is looking for a gun. Sure enough, a patrolman retrieves one on the sidewalk and calls it in to the dispatcher. The cop tells the two witnesses standing closest to him, "You saw this was lying here, right? You saw me find it here, right?"

The next day, a statement is taken from the three cops involved in the deadly shooting of Cross. Two, Ali and Chavez, tell investigators from IPRA – the so-called Independent Police Review Authority, now defunct – that Cross produced a pistol and fired at them. "Bang, bang, bang," says Ali three years later, when he's deposed by Torreya Hamilton, one of the lawyers for Cross' family who filed a wrongful-death suit on their behalf. "Cross fired his weapon in our direction," says Chavez to Hamilton's partner, Tony Thedford, and was "still shooting" as he fled down Wallace Street.

Their testimony to IPRA and, later, to Hamilton and IPRA's successor, is a masterpiece of fantasy and obfuscation. Ali disputes himself so often that his lawyer calls three timeouts in 40 minutes. Chavez's answer to more than 100 questions is "I don't recall," which, at least when it comes to keeping his story straight, has the ring of truth. He tells IPRA that Cross was moving when he shot him the final time, only to admit later in a deposition that he wasn't moving.

In the end, their self-entrapment is beside the point. Ballistics tests performed shortly after the shooting revealed that the gun Cross purportedly fired was a relic that proved inoperable. More damning still were the tests of Cross' remains: no gunshot residue anywhere on his person. These facts so repudiated the cops' stories that the city rushed to settle the civil suit. It quietly cut a check for $2 million to a trust for Calvin Cross Jr., the baby born almost exactly a month after his father died. Calvin Sr.'s mother and three siblings received nothing, however. Worse, they were never notified of his death by the Chicago Police Department. Had it not been for an honest cop who tipped them that the shoot was bad, Dana says, they might never have hired Hamilton and fought for three years to learn the truth about his killing. "The night they shot Calvin, the officer came in my house broke up pretty bad" by what he'd seen, says Calvin's mother, Dana, nine years later. That cop, who's still on active duty and whose name can't be revealed, declined to say that her son was dead: "He just told me straight up, 'Get a lawyer.' " This was in 2011, before everyone had smartphones and the ability to film misconduct as it happens. Almost a decade later, though, the dismal fact persists: We almost never learn the full truth about a cop-shooting unless a righteous cop breaks the silence.

The next morning, the Cross family went down to the morgue to identify Calvin's body. There, they were accosted by two detectives, asking about Calvin's ink. "He had a tattoo of praying hands wrapped around a rosary, and you ask me if that's a gang sign?" says Dana. "To see him on that table – they shot my baby in the face! – that'll never leave me," she says, sobbing. "When they killed George Floyd and he cried out for his mama? . . . It's like Calvin was crying out for me from heaven."

As for the cops who took his life and tried to brazenly justify it? Chicago saw fit neither to fire nor suspend them, let alone charge them with murder. Instead, its police department issued commendation awards to those officers a year and a half later, citing them for bravery "above and beyond [their] obligation to duty."

FOUR COPS CAME FORWARD TO TELL *ROLLING STONE* HOW OFFICERS IN CHICAGO "FIX" THE SHOOTINGS OF UNARMED BLACK AND BROWN CITIZENS.

IN A 2020 AUDIT of American cities, the municipal monitor Truth in Accounting gave Chicago an F for fiscal health. It called the town a "sinkhole" that's $36 billion in the red and owes more per citizen – roughly $40,000 apiece – than any metropolis save New York. It borrows huge sums to meet its obligations, routinely raises taxes on property owners, and claws back millions from teachers' pensions to float its annual budget. What it doesn't do is face down the ruinous costs of police misconduct against its people. Chicagoans pay more to the victims of cop violence than the residents of any U.S. city per capita. In 2018, the last year for which there are records, the city spent about $100 million on claims, and tens of millions more in legal fees to the lawyers who brought the cases.

Those numbers track squarely with previous years. Between 2010 and 2017, the city issued more than $700 million in "police brutality bonds," as civic watchdogs call them. Per a 2018 study by the Action Center on Race and the Economy (ACRE), Chicago leaned on entities like Goldman Sachs to raise the $700 million it needed. But because the city's credit rating is junk-adjacent, it had to agree to loan-shark terms with its corporate lenders. Accordingly, the city will shell out $800 million simply to service the debt on that loan. And who gets the tab for the $1.5 billion? The taxpayers – specifically, the poor ones.

In 2012, after the city went to Wall Street for those bonds, it closed dozens of schools in low-income

Contributing editor PAUL SOLOTAROFF *interviewed the rapper Meek Mill in prison in 2018.*

KILLED ON THE STREETS

Calvin Cross [**LEFT**] was gunned down fleeing the police, who claimed he shot at them. But the gun at the scene was inoperable and tests proved Cross had not fired a shot. The officers remain on the force. [**BELOW**] Dana Cross, Calvin's mom, says, "When they killed George Floyd and he cried out for his mama?… It's like Calvin was crying out for me from heaven."

WALKING WHILE BLACK

Ricky Hayes [**BELOW**], an unarmed autistic teen, was shot during a late-night walk, and the cop remains on the force. [**BELOW RIGHT**] Shirley Johnson, with her foster son Ricky, says, "It gives me chills to think of that man still out there, maybe looking for the next kid to shoot."

PREVIOUS SPREAD: IMAGES IN ILLUSTRATION BY TEMPURA/GETTY IMAGES; JUPITERIMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; SEAN MURPHY/GETTY IMAGES; MINT IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; ROMAN SAMBORSKYI/ALAMY; CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM/GETTY IMAGES. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF THE CROSS FAMILY; ANDREW NELLES/"THE NEW YORK TIMES"/REDUX; COURTESY OF SHIRLEY JOHNSON; PATRICIA EVANS

neighborhoods; shut half of the mental health clinics in those sections; and gutted its lead-paint-removal program, leaving children untested and untreated. The ACRE study quotes an unnamed attorney on the city's payroll: "When you had to budget more for [police] tort liability, you had less to do lead-poisoning screening for the children of Chicago. We had a terrible lead-poisoning problem [in the city], and there was a direct relationship between the two. Those kids [are] paying those judgments, not the police officers."

But the deep story here is not fiscal injustice and a city's refusal to face it. Instead, it is the state of policing in America, embodied by the town that gave its cops a charter to put their knees on the necks of black citizens. It began with the first wave of the Great Migration, that African American exodus from the Jim Crow South to the industrial cities of the North. In 1916, sharecroppers by the thousands boarded trains in Mississippi for Union Station in Chicago, drawn by the promise of ready jobs in the stockyards and steel mills. The barons of those outfits were not ardent lefties integrating the workforce; they were ruthless misers out to undercut wages and break the backs of white unions. And so they sent recruiters, called labor agents, to lure unskilled blacks off of the farms. At the time, people of color constituted two percent of the census in Chicago. By 1970, they were a third of the population of the then-second-largest metropolis in America.

The arrival of this vast new cohort of families wasn't met with balloons and cake. Black residents were forced into the South Side's slums and beaten by mobs when they tried to test the boundaries of what quickly became known as the Black Belt. During the *annus horribilus* of 1919 – the Red Summer of race riots in America's cities – huge mobs of whites tore though the South Side, burning down homes and pulling black people out of streetcars and stoning them to death. Three-quarters of Chicago's police force was sent to the scene to establish a hard perimeter. Instead, they stood and watched or escorted gangs of white goons into and out of harm's way. One member of those gangs: a teenage Richard Daley, who would rise to become the mayor of Chicago and rule it like a crime boss until his death.

"This was domestic terrorism, plain and simple – aided and abetted by the CPD," says Simon Balto, an assistant professor of history at the University of Iowa, whose *Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago From Red Summer to Black Power* is the essential text on the subject. "Two-times-more blacks died by violence than whites – [and] two-times-more blacks were arrested."

Despite their baptism of blood in Chicago, families of color continued pouring north, growing a culture and an economy in apartheid. Churches and blues clubs and restaurants sprang up, seeding the "Chicago Renaissance" of the 1930s. That first generation birthed a black middle class of doctors, managers, and union stewards, and served as a beacon for hesitant blacks still trying to eke by in the South. But the second great wave, of the Forties and Fifties, sparked new rounds of racist reprisal. Pushed to their breaking point, black communities rose up, staging marches on City Hall. Daley, the former-rioter-turned-dynast-czar of the Democratic machine in Chicago, responded by hiring Orlando Wilson to run the CPD. It was Wilson who turned the city's police force into a numbers-driven dreadnought of racial suppression.

Instead of standing sentry at the South Side's borders, his cops surged in by the thousands each day to harass and bust at will: stop-and-frisk mandates; summonses for small infractions; arrests and ticket quotas for patrolmen. Their job was to take back territory, says Balto, under the banner of law and order. It bears noting that violence soared under Wilson. Murders rose by a third during his watch.

Though Wilson retired in 1967, the fruit of his labor was on view the following year, when the city went up in smoke not once but twice. If you Google "Chicago riots" and "1968," the top results link you to the Democratic Convention, when Daley's cops beat and arrested hippies for peacefully picketing outside. But four months earlier, when Martin Luther King Jr. was killed and black kids took to the

streets, the police swarmed in and shot down dozens of them, 11 fatally. That wasn't enough blood to suit Daley, however. "Shoot to kill arsonists!" he ordered his cops, and, "Shoot to maim the looters!"

In December of the following year, 14 heavily armed cops stormed the apartment of Fred Hampton, the chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panthers. Hampton was sound asleep beside his nine-months-pregnant wife when the CPD burst in blazing. They killed his bodyguard, Mark Clark, shot several of Hampton's friends, then made their way to the bedroom. Hampton, who'd been drugged by an FBI mole, may or may not have roused before cops killed him. He'd been gravely wounded in the initial barrage; then one of the cops coolly finished him off, shooting him twice in the head.

We know these facts because a neophyte lawyer fought to make them known. G. Flint Taylor, the twentysomething founder of the People's Law Office in Chicago, sued for 13 years on behalf of Clark and Hampton before settling in 1983 for $1.85 million, then a record sum for a civil rights case. Taylor, still practicing law at 74, is a walking passcode to CPD misconduct. It was Taylor and his colleagues who unearthed the crimes committed by the "Midnight Crew," a squad of racist cops who tortured blacks to extract their false confessions. Once again, a tip from an anonymous cop – Taylor calls him "Deep Badge" in his memoir, *The Torture Machine* – launched a probe into the CPD's worst actors. Headed by Jon Burge, who climbed from beat cop to commander faster than anyone in department history, the Midnight Crew deployed a device with clamps and electrodes to wring information from detainees. "He rigged a generator up and attached clips to people's genitals, then shocked and burned and beat and choked them till they told him what he wanted," says Taylor.

Burge's cops produced a hundred wrongfully obtained convictions and sent a dozen men to death row. Then, Taylor and his colleagues stepped in. Beginning in 1987, when they repped a cop-killer named Andrew Wilson, Taylor et al. worked continuously for more than two decades to dredge up the truth about Burge. Here is Taylor's recap of the crimes done to Wilson, a cognitively-disabled man with seizure disorders, in a law-review piece from 2012:

> *Burge and his longtime associate, John Yucaitis, subjected Andrew to a [15-hour] regimen that included bagging him, beating him, and burning him.... They handcuffed him across a ribbed steam radiator and shocked him on the nose, ears, lips, and genitals with Burge's shock-box, jolting him against the radiator and leaving serious burns on his face, chest, and leg...*

Though he never won Wilson's release from prison, Taylor sued the city for Wilson's pain and suffering and got a judgment of $1.1 million. The truths adduced in court led to Burge's firing in 1993 – and eventually, to his imprisonment in 2010. But still the city had Burge's back, paying him a pension and defending his convictions. So Taylor continued to sue repeatedly for the freedom of Burge's victims, then made the city pay for their years in prison. To date, Chicago has written $90 million in checks to the victims of the Midnight Crew, and at least one-third of that in lawyers' fees. Included in that sum is a reparations award for the victims who weren't exonerated. In 2015, then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel grudgingly agreed to compensate Burge survivors with credible claims of abuse. With that $5.5 million ordinance, Chicago became the only city in the world to make public reparations for police torture.

Now, surely, a town that comes to terms with its epic cruelty will take some instruction from the past. But this is Chicago, the city that never learns, no matter how sharp the lash. Because hard on Burge's heels came Detective Reynaldo Guevara, who allegedly beat and framed dozens of men for murders they didn't commit. From the late 1980s to the early aughts, Guevara and his crew allegedly pinned body after body on people of color on the West Side. Even when those crimes came to light in 2006, the city went on shielding Guevara and the others and pushed back on all attempts to free their victims.

"Twenty verdicts reversed and more to come, but we've had to win each one by one," says Josh Tepfer, a partner at Loevy and Loevy, one of the largest civil rights firms in the country. Says its founder, Jon Loevy, the king of bad-cop torts – he's personally thrashed Chicago for $250 million in verdicts and settlements on behalf of his clients of color – "This town hires expensive law firms to drag out every motion and deposition. Their thinking seems to be, 'If we just stall, maybe they'll drop the case and go away.' " Loevy doesn't go away: He beats the city's brains in. He's won 12 jury verdicts of at least $5 million (five of which exceeded $20 million), and is among the state's leaders for most judgments of $5 million-plus.

Guevara retired in 2005, and Ronald Watts picked up the bad-cop baton. Sgt. Watts' crew spat on Guevara's numbers. They allegedly beat, framed, and robbed untold numbers of people in the Ida B. Wells projects for a decade. Operating in plain sight of Internal Affairs, they treated each day like *Training Day,* running their own gang in the hood. Watts was so brazen he actually got caught, but left behind hundreds of broken families. Tepfer, who won a mass exoneration for Watts defendants, says, "By the time the city's done paying Watts' victims, the amount could be astronomical." Indeed, the sum may end up dwarfing what Chicago paid on Burge.

"THE BOSSES DON'T GIVE BAD SHOOTS TO GOOD COPS," SAYS A FORMER SERGEANT. "THEY GIVE 'EM TO THE SAME CREWS OVER AND OVER TO CLEAN UP THE MESS."

RICKY HAYES LUCKED OUT the day life brought him to Shirley Johnson: She's the foster mom you'd want if fate took you from your mother and placed you, at the age of seven, in a stranger's home. Shirley's a tough cookie who's both sweet and salty, the optimal disposition for special kids. A former hairdresser, she's been doing this work for 14 years, and at 54, has seen it all from the young men who shared her house. (She currently has two youths, both autistic.) Ricky was a handful when he started with her, a child on the spectrum who was minimally verbal and maximally prone to meltdowns. "He'd rev his little toy car back and forth, then bawl because his arm started to hurt," she says. "Then he'd jump up and throw the car at me, and start crying and laughing and carrying on."

But Shirley had the skill set to decipher behaviors and to teach him how to manage his moods. By 10, Shirley says, he was chipping in around the house, helping her sweep floors and wash windows. He learned to write his name and ask for his obsessions: a cellphone to listen to Drake and Kanye West; the peanut-butter cookies that his grandma bought him; and his favorite show, *My Babysitter's a Vampire*. By his mid-teens, Ricky was a joy to have around, the closest thing to a child she'd birthed herself. "He was always smiling and being his sweet self, except when I asked him to make his bed," Shirley says. "He loved going to block parties and talking to girls. He always had a crush on one or the other, and liked sneaking out to try and see them."

That was Ricky's superpower: defeating her front-door locks. Late one night in August 2017, he stole out of the house in search of a girl on the block. He had just turned 18 but looked six years younger: a short, slight kid with an oversize head and a big, inquisitive grin. Off he went, skipping down the street and whistling to himself around 1:30 a.m. Porch cams tracked him for a couple of hours, loping and stopping and peering like a deer into the cars and windows of houses. Then, at 3:46, a Chevy Tahoe rolled up. At the wheel was an off-duty cop named Khalil Muhammad; Ricky took off running down the block. Muhammad pursued him for more than an hour, driving his SUV down alleys and streets. Finally, a few minutes before 5 a.m., Ricky stopped in front of a house on Hermosa Avenue. The cop lowered his window, barked something at Ricky – then pulled his Glock 19 and shot him twice.

The first round tore a chunk from Ricky's flank, but mercifully missed his heart. The second shot shanked his left arm. Ricky fled a short ways before Muhammad caught him. Between sobs and wails, he moaned something about his cellphone, which went missing while he ran in terror. Muhammad, dressed in street clothes, had no handcuffs, so he held Ricky down while dialing 911. When a dispatcher came on, Muhammad told his first lie: "The guy pulled, like he was going to pull a gun on me," he babbled. "He walked up to the car, and I had to shoot."

WATCHING THE DETECTIVES

[**ABOVE**] Sgt. Isaac Lambert (left) rang the alarm that the Hayes shooting was being covered up; lawyer Torreya Hamilton won millions for the Cross family from the city; former CPD commander Lorenzo Davis was fired after refusing to "fix" shootings. [**BELOW**] After years of investigating the CPD and breaking major stories, reporter Jamie Kalven built the Citizens Police Data Project database so the public could access disciplinary records of every cop in the city.

Sgt. Isaac Lambert was at his desk that night, when a call came in about a cop-shoot. He sent two detectives to take a statement and went to the scene himself a short time later. A commander, a captain, and several sergeants surrounded Muhammad, ringed by five or six beat cops. Lambert, who had two decades-plus on the job, says he immediately sensed something was off. "I talked to my lead detective, who had problems with Muhammad's story," Lambert says. Key details kept changing, and he gave no cause for shooting Ricky. Then, according to Lambert, Muhammad stopped speaking altogether, waiting on his union rep. (The CPD did not make Muhammad or any other current officers named in this story available for comment.)

Back at the station, the pieces clicked together. Lambert saw a missing-persons report on Ricky and connected it to the teen Muhammad shot. Lambert told his detectives, who'd joined Ricky at the hospital, to bring him into the station uncuffed. He fed Ricky a snack and says he was about to release him, when the sergeant on the next shift intervened. "He wanted his detectives to interview Ricky, which I thought was ridiculous and said so. How're you going to sweat this kid when he can't even answer your questions?"

But the other sergeant pressed the issue, siding with Muhammad, the shooter-cop. He ordered his men to take a statement from Ricky, which is when Lambert walked away. "I wasn't getting caught up in their bullshit, on the heels of the [Jason] Van Dyke thing." (Van Dyke was the cop who shot teenager Laquan McDonald and was about to stand trial for his murder. For more on that killing, see below.)

Now, Lambert loved being a cop; he treated the job as a calling, "bringing resolution to cases in my community that don't get closure from this department," he says. "Just look up the statistics of whose cases get closed: It ain't people on the South Side, I'll tell you that." Indeed not. Per a 2019 report, the solve rate for white victims of homicide in Chicago is 47 percent; for blacks, it's 22 percent. Lambert's rate pushed 70 percent because he was a different kind of cop, the sort who makes connections on the street. As a young patrolman, he went out of his way to cultivate the corner boys. When he caught them slinging weed or lighting a stem, he gave them a warning to move along. "My thing was always, clip the dealer, not the user. The user will do you solids for years to come."

While a patrolman, Lambert won an exalted honor from the city (the Carter H. Harrison Award), when he chased down and caught a carjacker who'd snatched a hostage. Years later, as a detective, he earned a Distinguished Service Award for taking down a leader of a biker gang. His most durable triumph, however, happened off the job. In 2003, he founded a youth football program in a South Side section with no team sports. In months, his Hayes Park Blitz fielded squads in three age groups and traveled to tournaments citywide. Over the years, Lambert's mentored dozens of kids, and sent one of them, Kenny Golladay, to the NFL, where he's a Pro Bowl receiver for the Detroit Lions. "I'd pack as many Pee Wees as would fit in my Yukon and take 'em to watch high school games. My thing is, 'You gotta see it to be it,' and I needed 'em to know that they could do this." A number of those kids played varsity in high school and got scholarships to D-1 schools. They're now teachers and tradesmen and master electricians; a few of them even joined the Chicago Police Department.

Like all the black cops featured in this piece, Lambert's big on schooling. He carved out time to earn a master's in public administration while working crazy hours as a detective. "That's how we gotta do," says his friend Joe Moseley, a sergeant detective for more than 30 years, who retired and became an adjunct professor. "If you're black and you're honest, you gotta go that extra mile to make your rank in this town." Says Sgt. Don Hoard, another friend of Lambert's who earned a master's degree, "What this department lacks is leaders like Ike, dudes that don't play that hoop-dee-do. If a cop comes up wrong, Ike's gonna call it like he sees it, not cover for these simple motherfuckers."

Like Lambert and Hoard, Moseley's been to many cop-shoots, though rarely as a member of hand-picked "shoot teams." "That's pretty much all they do – [white] detectives that 'work' a scene and make it come out right." Moseley lists the tricks those shoot teams deploy while assembling reports for the brass: "coaching up" the shooter before he makes his formal statement; massaging key details to give him cover in their write-up – the cellphone or belt buckle that "looked like a gun"; and "burying" witness statements and video footage. "The bosses don't give bad shoots to good cops," says Moseley. "They give 'em to the same crews over and over to clean up the mess that bad cops make."

Once written, the "official story" is hard to change; it becomes the master narrative of the case. But every now and then, the story falls apart – and when it does, the dark machinery is exposed. The most famous example is the Laquan McDonald slaying in the fall of 2014. Every trick in the bad-cop playbook was deployed for Jason Van Dyke, the officer who shot McDonald in cold blood. The full truth only surfaced after a year of devoted digging by several public servants in Chicago. One is Jamie Kalven, an independent reporter in the tradition of Mike Royko and H.L. Mencken. In the 1990s, Kalven embedded with the poor and got stories that the dailies wouldn't touch. Building a tranche of contacts in the streets and housing projects, he's broken huge scandals about bad cops, successfully sued the department for evidence it concealed, and built the first database of disciplinary records for every sworn policeman in his city. That database – the Citizens Police Data Project – is remarkable for its ease of use. During the George Floyd protests, marchers filmed violent cops, then posted their names and priors on Twitter, using CPDP's info.

It was Kalven who got a tip from an anonymous source who'd seen the dash-cam footage of McDonald's murder, and who knew of a witness who might talk. Kalven produced that witness [*Cont. on 76*]

FROM TOP: CARLOS ORTIZ; ALYSSA SCHUKAR/"THE NEW YORK TIMES"/REDUX

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Reviews

Music

SHAWN MENDES GETS LOST IN LOVE

The sensitive pop heartthrob makes romance sound sweet and scary on his fourth album

By JON DOLAN

Shawn Mendes
Wonder
ISLAND
★★★½☆

CANADIAN HEARTthrob Shawn Mendes made his bones playing a version of boy pop that was more James Taylor than Justin Bieber – strumming his acoustic guitar and singing earnestly about the battle scars of romance. He was a dress-shirt-and-sport-coat guy in a sleeve-tat world, and on his self-titled third LP, from 2018, he continued to grow, carefully making the transition to adult themes as he mixed rock moves, Princely vocals, and lyrics about hookups that he hoped might become something bigger.

The deluxe edition of *Shawn Mendes* tacked on "Señorita," his steamy hit with girlfriend Camila Cabello. She doesn't appear here, at least not in corporeal ➔

ILLUSTRATION BY
Nigel Buchanan

SHAWN MENDES

form, but her image looms large. *Wonder* is essentially a concept album, the concept being *Camila Cabello, like, whoa*. "Just isn't fair what you put in the air/I don't wanna share," Mendes notes. The whirring synths layered over album opener "Intro" even recall the android hum of Cabello's signature classic "Never Be the Same." Mendes goes from the date-night elation of "Higher" to "24 Hours," a prayerful ode to putting down roots ("Sign the check, and the place is ours/It's a little soon, but I wanna come home to you"), to the string-bathed R&B sexcapade "Teach Me How to Love."

The musical settings can be as grand as his romantic ambitions. On previous albums, Mendes' strongest weapon was his light touch, the way songs like "Nervous" and "There's Nothing Holdin' Me Back" worked nimble guitar lines and taut rhythms into big payoffs. *Wonder* is sometimes too grandiose; with its chorale backing vocals, cannon drums, and lyrics about a reality beyond black and white, the gaping title track feels like overreaching, while "Monster," which features a bad-boy apologia from Bieber, is wan celebrity navel-gazing.

Mendes, who wrote or cowrote every song on the record, is better when exploring his own real feelings of hope and heartbreak. There's genuine ache in the feverish "Dreams," in which he sings about rushing home so he can get his head on his pillow and connect on the astral plane: "You're asleep in London.... Count back from one hundred." On "Call My Friends," she's back home, and he's on the road, wandering through fame like a zombie looking for people to get high with: "I need a vacation from my mind," he sings.

What emerges is a compelling mix of youthful passion and coming-of-age agony. Mendes closes with "Can't Imagine," a solo acoustic song where he makes life without his queen sound like a scorched-earth hellscape. *Wonder* makes you hope he never has to live it. Ⓡ

Quick Hits

Ten new albums you need to know about now

Jeff Tweedy
Love Is the King
dBpm

REAL LOVE The Wilco frontman's latest solo effort is full of delicate folk mopers, lighthearted country romps, and genuinely sweet love songs, as well as his best guitar playing in years.

★★★★☆

The Avalanches
We Will Always Love You
Astralwerks

DEEP GROOVES The Aussie sample-pop duo bring on Rivers Cuomo, Karen O, Blood Orange, Leon Bridges, and many others for a rich LP of poignant, chill-out soul that flows by like a seamless mixtape.

★★★★☆

Elton John
Elton: Jewel Box
Universal

EXTRA ELTON Sir Reg rescues his favorite deep cuts and B sides, but the heart of this overstuffed box set is three discs of prefame rarities, including his lost 1968 Beatlesque song "Regimental Sgt. Zippo."

★★★½☆

Sleaford Mods
Spare Ribs
Rough Trade

PANDEMIC PUNK Nottingham, England's Sleaford Mods make acerbic post-punk in the style of the Fall, and here they respond to life during Covid-19 with honest sorrow, realist confusion, and plenty of rage.

★★★½☆

Guided by Voices
Styles We Paid For
Guided by Voices Inc.

VOICES CARRY "Roll with the punches and remain a child," Robert Pollard sings on the third GBV record of 2020. It's piled high with the indie-rock anthems of a guy who never runs out of garage-rock kicks.

★★★½☆

Dirty Projectors
5EPs
Domino

ART-POP FUN Compiling five EPs, each helmed by a different member, this eclectic band's latest has everything from alt-rock to futurist pop and João Gilberto homages — all cleverly retouched.

★★★½☆

Billie Joe Armstrong
No Fun Mondays
Reprise

MONDAY'S BEST Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong does a batch of fun covers like Tommy James' "I Think We're Alone Now" and the Equals-via-the-Clash's "Police on My Back," with loose, Replacements-y zeal.

★★★½☆

M. Ward
Think of Spring
Anti-

FOLKIE IN SATIN A charming concept from guitar noodler M. Ward: covers of Billie Holiday, mostly from 1958's *Lady in Satin*, the last album she released in her lifetime, done with low-key autumnal prettiness.

★★★☆☆

Drive-By Truckers
The New OK
ATO

ROUGH ROOTS Americana's heartiest realists deliver typically gray tales of Trump-era American demise, plus a rowdy Ramones cover and a soul ballad about stubbornness.

★★★☆☆

Smashing Pumpkins
Cyr
Sumerian

BILLY'S BUMMER Billy Corgan indulges his fetish for 10-cent words and keyboards over guitars, paying a debt to the dark Eighties New Wave band Talk Talk but leaving out a lot: like melodies and choruses.

★★☆☆☆

CONTRIBUTORS: JONATHAN BERNSTEIN, JON BLISTEIN, DAVID BROWNE, JON DOLAN, BRENNA EHRLICH, KORY GROW, SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON

TOP, FROM LEFT: ANDREW BENGE/WIREIMAGE; MATT COWAN/GETTY IMAGES; DAVE SIMPSON/WIREIMAGE; PEDRO GOMES/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES; KEITH GRINER/GETTY IMAGES

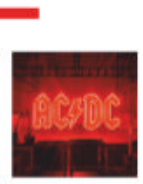
★★★★★ Classic | ★★★★ Excellent | ★★★ Good | ★★ Fair | ★ Poor RATINGS ARE SUPERVISED BY THE EDITORS OF ROLLING STONE.

REVIEW

AC/DC'S ENDLESS HIGHWAY TO HELL

The hard-rock heroes haven't lost a step on their best album in 20 years

FOR DECADES, AC/DC have defended their devil-horned crown as rock's most stubborn band. They've survived deaths (singer Bon Scott in 1980, guitarist Malcolm Young in 2017) and dirty deeds (drummer Phil Rudd was placed on house arrest after threatening to kill a man). Yet, they remain eternally committed to their core values: rocking out, hailing Satan, and never going within an outback mile of a ballad. *Power Up* is their first LP since 2014, and their best since 1990's *The Razors Edge*. Many of the riffs, which came from lead guitarist Angus Young and his late brother's archive, recall their greatest hits – the sidewinding blooze of "Demon Fire" is a distant relative of "Whole Lotta Rosie"; the throbbing intro to "Witch's Spell" harks back to "Who Made Who" – and singer Brian Johnson's voice still sounds like angry truck exhaust, whether he's huffing about tearin' up the highway on "Code Red," or prescribing sex three times a day as a depression cure on "Money Shot."



AC/DC
Power Up
★★★½☆

There is a small bit of introspect on the gentle (by AC/DC standards) rocker "Through the Mists of Time," on which Johnson sings about "dark shadows on the walls." But soon enough, he's back yowling about "painted ladies," and Young is whipping out another high-voltage blues solo. That's what makes AC/DC great: No matter what they've gone through, they can only be themselves. **KORY GROW**

AC/DC
power up.

JOSH CHEUSE

T.V.

ESSAY

So Long, Peak TV, We Hardly Knew Ye

How streaming services are becoming just like the old networks – and bringing an era of wild creativity to an end. By ALAN SEPINWALL

STREAMING TELEVISION has been one of the few constants of our strange and scary pandemic lives – except in all the ways it hasn't been.

Yes, it's been reassuring to binge *Schitt's Creek* or *The Sopranos* when we can't go out to see movies, or friends, or families, or . . . anyone. But the streaming world has gone through a huge amount of tumult since March. Those changes may not be fully felt for a while, but they'll still significantly transform how and what we stream.

The past nine months have seen the launch of three high-profile streaming services: the confusingly titled HBO Max, an amalgam of HBO programming and other WarnerMedia properties; NBC's ad-supported Peacock; and the already-defunct Quibi, which sold itself as your premiere destination for short-form video content to watch on the go, only to debut in a world when no one was going anywhere. Quibi's short and unintentionally amusing lifespan has rendered it the New Coke of the millennial generation, but its inevitable implosion happened in a remote corner of the overall streaming picture. HBO Max and Peacock both arrived to relative indifference, learning the hard way that if your app isn't available on every platform (in this case, neither was on Roku or Amazon Fire at launch time), you will not matter.

There have been big executive shuffles at stalwart outlets like Netflix and newbies like HBO Max. Established streamers have been through rebrandings both minor (Hulu is framed as the adult alternative to corporate sibling Disney+) and major (get ready for CBS All Access to expand into Paramount Plus). And as high-profile films like *Hamilton* and the *Borat* sequel bypassed struggling movie theaters to premiere directly onto streamers, the chairman of no less than the Walt Disney Corporation announced that streaming would now be the company's primary focus.

This is a bold statement, given that most of the current appeal of Disney+ is its awesome library of pre-existing titles, while only one project made for the service, *The Mandalorian*, has broken through in any palpable way. But it's also a necessary one, because streaming is increasingly becoming all that matters. FX has long been one of the most exciting and reliable channels in all of cable; now, many of its shows premiere directly on corporate sibling Hulu. Nobody knew the cyber-stalker drama *You* existed when it aired on Lifetime; on Netflix, it was a word-of-mouth sensation. When you wonder why various decisions are being made in television, from shifts in overall programming strategy (basic cable channels are sprinting out of the scripted-TV business) to how shows are structured, the answer is inevitably tied to streaming. As Baby Yoda's gruff guardian would tell you, this is the way.

But perhaps the biggest sign of a fundamental shift in the streaming-verse was when Netflix discovered a newfound love for canceling shows – in some cases, pulling the plug after new seasons had already been ordered.

In abruptly ending series like *GLOW* and *I Am Not Okay With This* a few months ago, Netflix certainly isn't alone. Cancellations and "unrenewals" have been rampant throughout the pandemic, thanks to untenable costs for PPE (some producers have estimated that Covid-proofing adds more than $500,000 per episode) and other logistical difficulties. But there's something about Netflix – long the biggest, baddest, most influential streamer of them all – doing it so cavalierly that felt like a

ILLUSTRATION BY **Andrea Ucini**

seismic shift, and perhaps an end to the era of programming excess known as Peak TV.

In the early days of the streaming revolution, Netflix created an unwritten contract with subscribers: Cut the cable cord and you'll be able to find every show you want in one place, for one low, low price. We'll let our creators tell the kinds of unique stories they want, without interference, until the tales reach a proper ending.

One by one, those implicit promises have been undone. The days when Netflix's library contained virtually every non-HBO show of note are long gone, as other conglomerates have taken back the likes of *Friends* and *Parks and Recreation* to build up their own services. Netflix's own subscription price keeps rising at the same time that all these competitors have popped up to demand even more of your money if you want to have access to all of the content on your list. Meet the new cable bundle, same as the old cable bundle.

Those promises of creative freedom have proved more complicated than they first seemed. Many writers of streaming shows say they're told to write to the "10-hour movie" model, where one hour simply bleeds into the next. Most of the streamers don't have advertisers to appease, but they do have global reach, and thus other concerns about content, like the time Netflix pulled an episode of *Patriot Act With Hasan Minhaj* in Saudi Arabia at the request of that country's government.

Where Netflix and its ilk once acted like boutiques, now they are big-box stores, with the only thematic programming link being, "Here's a bunch of stuff we own the rights to." In particular, this newfound lust for cancellation is very much business as it's always been. Barely any Netflix shows make it past three seasons – a junction when cast and crew contracts can get substantially more expensive – and only some of those short-timers have gotten adequate warning to wrap things up. The confidence that you could sample any show on Netflix, Hulu, Prime, etc., and have a complete narrative experience is gone. Quirky, original series once did well on the streamers because audiences felt secure about checking them out; now, fear they'll end prematurely could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, leading to a more homogenized creative landscape.

Audiences used to complain similarly to CBS, Fox, NBC, and the rest; no one expected any better from the old broadcasters. But with the streamers, we thought, it wasn't supposed to be this way. Unfortunately, that's how it goes with new discoveries. First, there's the Wild West period, when anything seems possible and familiar laws do not apply. Eventually, though, territories are settled, and an era of seemingly limitless possibility gets codified in the name of civilization and profits.

The streamers aren't going to run out of content to provide distraction from the state of the world. But that content is going to feel more familiar, harder to find, and less stable. Streaming is where all the money's going – yours most of all – but you may be getting much less than you once paid for. ®

MUST-SEE STREAMING TV

The digital newcomers have given us hundreds of brand-new series. These are the best:

BOJACK HORSEMAN (Netflix)
The hilariously tragic cartoon is the best show made for any streamer. Period.

FLEABAG (Amazon)
Phoebe Waller-Bridge's intimate, explosively funny anti-heroine tour de force.

RAMY (Hulu)
Smart, beautiful dramedy about a young man trying to be a better Muslim.

RATING THE TOP STREAMERS

There are tons of services out there, but are they worth your time and money? We compare seven of the biggest on catalogs and usability

Netflix

Library: A shell of its former self, though a few classic series like *Breaking Bad* remain. Don't bother looking for older movies.
Originals: By far the most of any streamer. Most seem content to top out at B or B+, but a handful (*Russian Doll, Master of None*) are genuinely great.
Interface: Browsing's awful, but the user experience is excellent once you've started watching.
★★★★☆


Natasha Lyonne bugs out in *Russian Doll*.

Hulu

Library: A huge selection of classic shows spanning genres and eras, plus next-day streaming of many current broadcast and cable series, makes Hulu a TV-lover's paradise.
Originals: A smaller but eclectic, exciting group, especially thanks to FX-produced shows like *Devs* and *Mrs. America*.
Interface: All that abundance results in a baffling layout.
★★★★½

Amazon Prime Video

Library: Not as robust as it was before HBO reclaimed its catalog, but solid offerings in both television and film.
Originals: A respectably big collection of series, including award winners (*The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, Transparent*) and book adaptations (*Bosch, Man in the High Castle*).
Interface: Hard to tell what's included with Prime and what you have to rent, but the X-Ray bonus feature will spare you a lot of frustrating "Who is that actor?" Googling.
★★★½☆

Disney+

Library: A must-have for anyone with kids. Disney! Pixar! Marvel! LucasFilm! NatGeo! *The Simpsons*!
Originals: The pandemic has slowed plans for lots of Marvel and other branded shows, but it has also forced several Disney feature films to debut here. Plus: *Star Wars* spinoff *The Mandalorian*!
Interface: Organized by brand into clear, easy-to-navigate categories.
★★★½☆

HBO Max

Library: A treasure trove. Nearly every HBO series ever made, plus *Friends, Big Bang Theory,* and a lot of great British shows, plus a huge movie collection that should embarrass the other big streamers.
Originals: Barely anything of note has been made directly for HBO Max to date, though you get HBO episodes right when they premiere on cable.
Interface: So far, still unavailable on Roku and Amazon Fire.
★★★★☆

Peacock

Library: Plenty of NBC-Universal-owned shows (every *SNL* season) and movies (*Jaws*), though for the moment, much of it is duplicated by other services. Also non-corporate odds and ends like *Everybody Loves Raymond* and the *Harry Potter* films.
Originals: Mostly mediocre British imports so far, plus a few promising talk shows — including sharp *Late Night With Seth Meyers* spinoff *The Amber Ruffin Show*.
Interface: Still not on Fire, and subscription tiers (free with ads, premium with ads, premium with no ads) can be confusing.
★★★☆☆

Apple TV+

Library: None.
Originals: Lots of high-profile talent (particularly Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon, and Steve Carell in the soapy drama *The Morning Show*) with largely uneven results.
Interface: Like Prime, not intuitive as to what comes with your subscription and what's extra.
★★½☆☆ **A.S.**

FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: NETFLIX; MIYA MIZUNO/FX; DISNEY+/LUSCASFILM LTD.; JACQUES M. CHENET/CORBIS/NBCU PHOTOBANK/GETTY IMAGES; NICOLE RIVELLI/AMAZON STUDIOS; ALICE S. HALL/NBCU PHOTO BANK/GETTY IMAGES; APPLE+

★★★★★ Excellent | ★★★★ Great | ★★★ Good | ★★ Fair | ★ Poor

[*Cont. from 39*] into sadness that feels like somehow enveloping in not such a scary way – like nostalgia and whimsy incorporated into a feeling like you're not all right. Because I don't think anybody was really feeling like they were in their prime this year. Isolation can mean escaping into your imagination in a way that's kind of nice.

MCCARTNEY I think a lot of people have found that. I would say to people, "I feel a bit guilty about saying I'm actually enjoying this quarantine thing," and people go, "Yeah, I know, don't say it to anyone." A lot of people are really suffering.

SWIFT Because there's a lot in life that's arbitrary. Completely and totally arbitrary. And [the quarantine] is really shining a light on that, and also a lot of things we have that we outsource that you can actually do yourself.

MCCARTNEY The period after the Beatles, we went to live in Scotland on a – talk about dumpy – little farm. I see pictures of it now, and I'm almost ashamed. I needed a kitchen table, and I was looking through a catalog and I thought, "I could make one. I did woodwork in school, so I know what a dovetail joint is." So I just figured it out. I'm just sitting in the kitchen, and I'm whittling away at this wood and I made this little joint. There was no nail technology – it was glue. And I was scared to put it together. I said, "It's not going to fit," but one day, I got my woodwork glue and thought, "There's no going back." But it turned out to be a real nice little table I was very proud of. It was that sense of achievement.

The weird thing was, Stella went up to Scotland recently and I said, "Isn't it there?" and she said, "No." Anyway, I searched for it. Nobody remembered it. Somebody said, "Well, there's a pile of wood in the corner of one of the barns, maybe that's it. Maybe they used it for firewood." I said, "No, it's not firewood." Anyway, we found it, and do you know how joyous that was for me? I was like, "You found my table?!" Somebody might say that's a bit boring.

SWIFT No, it's cool!

MCCARTNEY But it was a real sort of great thing for me to be able to do stuff for yourself. You were talking about sewing. I mean normally, in your position, you've got any amount of tailors.

SWIFT Well, there's been a bit of a baby boom recently; several of my friends have gotten pregnant.

MCCARTNEY Oh, yeah, you're at the age.

SWIFT And I was just thinking, "I really want to spend time with my hands, making something for their children." So I made this really cool flying-squirrel stuffed animal that I sent to one of my friends. I sent a teddy bear to another one, and I started making these little silk baby blankets with embroidery. It's gotten pretty fancy. And I've been painting a lot.

MCCARTNEY What do you paint? Watercolors?

SWIFT Acrylic or oil. Whenever I do watercolor, all I paint is flowers. When I have oil, I really like to do landscapes. I always kind of return to painting a lonely little cottage on a hill.

MCCARTNEY It's a bit of a romantic dream. I agree with you, though, I think you've got to have dreams, particularly this year. You've got to have something to escape to. When you say "escapism," it sounds like a dirty word, but this year, it definitely wasn't. And in the books you're reading, you've gone into that world. That's, I think, a great thing. Then you come back out. I normally will read a lot before I go to bed. So I'll come back out, then I'll go to sleep, so I think it really is nice to have those dreams that can be fantasies or stuff you want to achieve.

SWIFT You're creating characters. This was the first album where I ever created characters, or wrote about the life of a real-life person. There's a song called "The Last Great American Dynasty" that's about this real-life heiress who lived just an absolutely chaotic, hectic…

MCCARTNEY She's a fantasy character?

SWIFT She's a real person. Who lived in the house that I live in.

MCCARTNEY She's a real person? I listened to that and I thought, "*Who is this?*"

SWIFT Her name was Rebekah Harkness. And she lived in the house that I ended up buying in Rhode Island. That's how I learned about her. But she was a woman who was very, very talked about, and everything she did was scandalous. I found a connection in that. But I also was thinking about how you write "Eleanor Rigby" and go into that whole story about what all these people in this town are doing and how their lives intersect, and I hadn't really done that in a very long time with my music. It had always been so microscope personal.

MCCARTNEY Yeah, 'cause you were writing breakup songs like they were going out of style.

SWIFT I was, before my luck changed. I still love a good breakup song. Somewhere in the world, I always have a friend going through a breakup, and that will make me write one.

MCCARTNEY Yeah, this goes back to this thing of me and John: When you've got a formula, break it. I don't have a formula. It's the mood I'm in. So I love the idea of writing a character. And, you know, trying to think, "What am I basing this on?" So "Eleanor Rigby" was based on old ladies I knew as a kid. For some reason or other, I got great relationships with a couple of local old ladies. I was thinking the other day, I don't know how I met them, it wasn't like they were family. I'd just run into them, and I'd do their shopping for them.

SWIFT That's amazing.

MCCARTNEY It just felt good to me. I would sit and talk, and they'd have amazing stories. That's what I liked. They would have stories from the wartime – because I was born actually in the war – and so these old ladies, they were participating in the war. This one lady I used to sort of just hang out with, she had a crystal radio that I found very magical. In the war, a lot of people made their own radios – you'd make them out of crystals [*sings "The Twilight Zone" theme*].

SWIFT How did I not know this? That sounds like something I would have tried to learn about.

MCCARTNEY It's interesting, because there is a lot of parallels with the virus and lockdowns and wartime. It happened to everyone. Like, this isn't HIV, or SARS, or Avian flu, which happened to others, generally. This has happened to everyone, all around the world. That's the defining thing about this particular virus. And, you know, my parents…it happened to everyone in Britain, including the queen and Churchill. War happened. So they were all part of this thing, and they all had to figure out a way through it. So you figured out *Folklore*. I figured out *McCartney III*.

SWIFT And a lot of people have been baking sourdough bread. Whatever gets you through!

MCCARTNEY Some people used to make radios. And they'd take a crystal – we should look it up, but it actually is a crystal. I thought, "Oh, no, they just called it a crystal radio," but it's actually crystals like we know and love.

SWIFT Wow.

MCCARTNEY And somehow they get the radio waves – this crystal attracts them – they tune it in, and that's how they used to get their news. Back to "Eleanor Rigby," so I would think of her and think of what she's doing and then just try to get lyrical, just try to bring poetry into it, words you love, just try to get images like "picks up the rice in the church where a wedding has been," and Father McKenzie "is darning his socks in the night." You know, he's a religious man, so I could've said, you know, "preparing his Bible," which would have been more obvious. But "darning his socks" kind of says more about him. So you get into this lovely fantasy. And that's the magic of songs, you know. It's a black hole, and then you start doing this process, and then there's this beautiful little flower that you've just made. So it is very like embroidery, making something.

SWIFT Making a table.

MCCARTNEY Making a table.

SWIFT Wow, it would've been so fun to play Glastonbury for the 50th anniversary together.

MCCARTNEY It would've been great, wouldn't it? And I was going to be asking you to play with me.

SWIFT Were you going to invite me? I was hoping that you would. I was going to ask you.

MCCARTNEY I would've done "Shake It Off."

SWIFT Oh, my God, that would have been amazing.

MCCARTNEY I know it, it's in C!

SWIFT One thing I just find so cool about you is that you really do seem to have the joy of it, still, just no matter what. You seem to have the purest sense of joy of playing an instrument and making music, and that's just the best, I think.

MCCARTNEY Well, we're just so lucky, aren't we?

SWIFT We're really lucky.

MCCARTNEY I don't know if it ever happens to you, but with me, it's like, "Oh, my god, I've ended up as a musician."

SWIFT Yeah, I can't believe it's my job.

MCCARTNEY I must tell you a story I told Mary the other day, which is just one of my favorite little sort of Beatles stories. We were in a terrible, big blizzard, going from London to Liverpool, which we always did. We'd be working in London and then drive back in the van, just the four of us with our roadie, who would be driving. And this was a blizzard. You couldn't see the road. At one point, it slid off and it went down an embankment. So it was "*Ahhh,*" a bunch of yelling. We ended up at the bottom. It didn't flip, luckily, but so there we are, and then it's like, "Oh, how are we going to get back up? We're in a van. It's snowing, and there's no way." We're all standing around in a little circle, and thinking, "What are we going to do?" And one of us said, "Well, something will happen." And I thought that was just the greatest. I love that, that's a philosophy.

SWIFT "Something will happen."

MCCARTNEY And it did. We sort of went up the bank, we thumbed a lift, we got the lorry driver to take us, and Mal, our roadie, sorted the van and everything. So that was kind of our career. And I suppose that's like how I ended up being a musician and a songwriter: "Something will happen."

SWIFT That's the best.

MCCARTNEY It's so stupid it's brilliant. It's great if you're ever in that sort of panic attack: "Oh, my God," or, "*Ahhh,* what am I going to do?"

SWIFT "Something will happen."

MCCARTNEY All right then, thanks for doing this, and this was, you know, a lot of fun.

SWIFT You're the best. This was so awesome. Those were some quality stories!

POP & COSTELLO

[*Cont. from 49*] **POP** Little by little, you needed more. You needed a bigger drum set. You needed someone that could wail [*screeching banshee voice*], "Whoaaaaa, baby!" And all that.

COSTELLO [*Sarcastically*] I can't think who you are speaking of! Who are you referring to?

POP That one group led to groups in the States like Cinderella.

COSTELLO It's so horrendous. The first time I ever met Robert Plant was at a benefit show in 1980. I went right up to him. I was full of drink and drugs, and I got right in his face, and he thought I was going to say hello. I just said, "Stairway to Heaven," in my most sneering voice. Back then, there was all this ridiculous rivalry between the generations, when we were only actually four or five years apart. We saw it as the old folks' music.

POP In rock & roll, five years is a generation. For me, [starting a solo career] was somewhere below hopeless. You knew you were not going to get on the radio, and in America, the business was starting to get taken over by the overweight muscly guys with the baseball caps who later took over the whole biz. It was either them or you had the "Rock Goes to College" magazines. It wasn't going to happen for me.

COSTELLO I read about all these rock clubs in those magazines. Suddenly I'm in the Whiskey a Go Go, and it really didn't look that splendid.

POP You were a little late for that. You caught the tail end. We recorded *Fun House* in 1970 in L.A., and we went to play the Whiskey. We were staying in the same hotel as Andy Warhol and his entourage. They all came to the gig and sat in the booths in the back. You had the Stooges onstage, and there's that dance floor. We had three little surfer babes with the hip-hugging miniskirts and the bell-bottom pants doing the surf dance. That was pretty special, because it didn't really go with us or our music.

COSTELLO It's so great they still did that dance regardless. We had a bunch of sneering people looking at us. We stayed at the Tropicana, too. That was still in operation.

POP That was the place.

COSTELLO I knew that strip pretty well. In one direction there was a car wash, and in another direction there was an IHOP. I didn't drive, so I was really at a loss in Los Angeles. No buses, no subways. "Oh, that place you want to walk? That's four miles away." It was so mystifying to me.

POP I never really learned [how to navigate the music industry]. The Stooges started on Elektra. Jac Holzman was a record-store owner, that's all he was, but he had good taste and a good education. Elektra got sick of us, and we moved to CBS [for 1973's *Raw Power*]. Clive Davis was there. He wished he'd never signed us. And then RCA signed me [for a solo deal], because any project that David Bowie was doing, they wanted to be the ones doing it so he wouldn't talk to other executives. By the time I got on Arista, it was a wonderful guy from England named Charles Levison. Then Clive Davis took control of the company, and the first thing he said was, "You did what?! You signed Iggy Pop! Oh no!"

COSTELLO There were all these horrible machinations around *Raw Power*.

POP Really bad.

COSTELLO The first edition of that album sounded like a copy of a cassette, with no bass, and that weird compression. The energy you can't extinguish. It's coming at you. But it must have been weird that a lot of people in England cited that record. Was it hard for you?

POP The good thing was there we were, taken out of Detroit, completely away from all our bad distractions. We had a place to rehearse, a place to write, and finally we had a good studio. We were able to make a really great record, but things started falling apart when it came to, "Are we going to be able to do a gig?"

Later, I became sort of like Colonel Kurtz. I tried to mix it the way I imagined it could sound. Finally, gently, it had to be taken away from me. James Williamson and I went in for two days with David Bowie in L.A., and we did a mix together. At that time, none of us knew anything about what mastering was. As soon as the needle went anywhere near the red, it was like, "Wow, turn it down!" We were the red.

COSTELLO Were you ever on any really eccentric bills early on – those crazy juxtapositions where you got Quicksilver Messenger Service, Freddie King, and Miles Davis at the Fillmore?

POP One of the worst bills I was ever on was the J. Geils Band, Slade, and Iggy and the Stooges.

COSTELLO Wow!

POP The last thing I remember is popping 'ludes in Peter Wolf's hotel room after the gig. And then [Stooges guitarist] Ron Asheton always claimed that I was chased around the hallways by Slade's tour manager with an ax. "I'm going to kill him!"

COSTELLO Sounds like a regular night around that time, really.

POP We were the band that a lot of rock acts wanted to avoid. People did not want to follow us. In 1970, right after *Fun House,* the Stooges played the Fillmore with Alice Cooper. That was when it was the old homemade Alice Cooper Band. They were singing about spiders, and they all had the matching spandex outfits, and they'd shake their hips like ladies. Alice had a little light show that he'd control with a foot switch. They were cool. At that show, the front row was occupied by these people called the Cockettes, who were early drag performers. They had Carmen Miranda banana hairdos and everything. They became part of the show.

I did one show later on at one of my lower periods at a place called Bimbos in San Francisco.

COSTELLO I know Bimbos.

POP Oh wait, the best one! This kills them all. One time, Iggy and the Stooges played a small place in Nashville called Mothers. This was when Nashville truly was Nashville. The other band was the Allman Brother roadies. They took one look at us during the soundcheck and started making loud comments like "Do you think they have pussies under those jeans? Let's go to the bathroom and find out." We thought they were going to beat us up. Then they stayed for our set, and they all came and apologized: "We didn't know. You rock good!"

COSTELLO When we'd go into a town like that, we'd seek out the record shop and go, "Where are the records by groups from here?" I'd be in Akron and I'd get the Pere Ubu singles that I couldn't get in London. You'd be in Boston and you'd get a record that was just in Boston. They'd be on their local label, just like we were. Texas was a little bit different. We'd play the Armadillo in Austin. The poster would have Mose Allison and the Flying Burrito Brothers on it. I didn't know what decade I was in.

POP We did a lot of good bills in the early Seventies in Detroit. The Stooges got to open for the Who, Cream, Zeppelin. We saw Jimi Hendrix play to a converted bowling alley in Ann Arbor. I was six feet from him. The stage was eight inches high. Things were more easily accessible. There was usually some sort of egomaniacal nutter in each town that had some business sense, but also just wanted to do something cool. Music was a way in for some people.

COSTELLO I think something we learned from each other is fearlessness, particularly in recent times. You can make records in France, where you're singing in French, or the record you made with Josh Homme [2016's *Post Pop Depression*]. I saw you one night on the BBC when you were playing with those guys, and you closed the show with "Lust for Life." You ran past the cameras and into the audience. I was like, "This is so full of joy, and it's also the kind of music that the authorities usually say, 'Let's ban this immediately, because it's going to cause some trouble.'" It's still right there if you want it. I think that's rock & roll. What we've been talking about is the danger of sticking to that first plan and not having another idea. It becomes harder and harder to have the surprise you felt when you made those great records at the beginning.

I went all the way to Helsinki to record these three songs that I began [*Hey Clockface*] with. The first is called "No Flag." That should have been a clue right away. It shared one word and one letter with a famous song of yours ["No Fun"], but nobody spotted where it was drawing from, because nobody expects me to take a cue from you. I thought, "What don't I need?" I have a bass player in my band, but I didn't take him with me. Unlike you, I can't play the drums, so I'm going to sing the drums. Even if it's just three chords, you have to find a way to make that fresh.

There was a "toes right to the ledge" philosophical idea in that song, which I hear on a lot of your songs. I think of "Some Weird Sin."

POP I thought of that song too when I heard it.

COSTELLO The line in that song "stuck on a pin" came to my mind. You reach that point in your career where there's a version of you that is like a butterfly in a collection. You have to get off that pin. I love that song so much.

[Since the pandemic began] it's difficult not to be able to visit my mother in England, who is 93 and not in great health. You worry. I have a son who is in London. I worry and want him to be safe. Things are a little bit more tense there. But for myself, I can only be grateful for the time and relative calm we've had.

I've had time with Diana [Krall]. Normally, one of us would be on the bus to a place like Wichita at this moment, and our boys wouldn't be with us. That's our life. I've watched her put a record together, which I never have a chance to do. She usually makes her mixes in the music room upstairs, and I'm working on things even newer than *Hey Clockface*.

POP I had a tour booked this year. And then "Bam!" It's part of the summer gone. "Bam!" There goes the rest of the summer. And so immediately I have this huge muscle buildup. "This is what I do! Nothing stops me!" And then I developed a healthy fear of the virus for an old boy with a history of asthma and bronchitis.

I said, "All right! We're going to reschedule!" I rescheduled the whole thing for 2021. And then one by one, as the months went on, this thing is not going to be predictable or doable in 2021 either. At that point, I made the decision to back out. But I would have these nighttime attacks of, "Who am I now? Who am I going to be?"

COSTELLO I know when I do come back onstage, it's going to feel great. Imagine what kind of party we're going to have! **ANDY GREENE**

[*Cont. from 67*] and got hold of the autopsy report: 16 shots, front and back. His shoe-leather reporting triggered an avalanche: months of angry marches; Freedom of Information Act filings to release the tape; and a yearlong suit brought by two of Kalven's colleagues, civil rights lawyers Matt Topic and Craig Futterman. Topic and Futterman fought the city's lawyers, who kept spouting the standard trope – "ongoing investigation" – to keep the video hidden. The court saw through their ruse and ruled the tape in the public interest. It ran on nightly newscasts across America.

Everything changed in Chicago when it aired – everything but the way cops do their business. Van Dyke was arraigned for killing McDonald. He'd be convicted of 17 crimes but punished for only one, and slink away with a sentence of six years. Emanuel, whose administration had suppressed the tape, was a dead man walking in public service. He fired his police chief, served out his term, then stepped aside before voters could roundly thrash him. Anita Alvarez, the state's attorney for Cook County, was avidly booted out in the next primary. And in 2015, the U.S. Department of Justice launched a probe of the CPD. For 13 months it put the department under a scope, interrogating cops, combing their use-of-force reports, and auditing civilian complaints. What it found was a police force poisoned to its core: racist and predatory and brazenly lawless, a corps accountable only to itself. Chicago spends 40 percent of its annual budget to fund the CPD. Here is what the city gets for its money, per the Justice Department's final report:

- *Officers engage in a pattern or practice of . . . deadly force that is unreasonable. [They] engage in . . . pursuits that too often end in officers . . . shooting someone, including unarmed individuals.*
- *We found many . . . circumstances in which officers' accounts of force incidents were later discredited . . . by video evidence. Given the numerous use-of-force incidents without video evidence . . . the pattern of unreasonable force is likely even more widespread then we were able to discern.*
- *CPD uses force almost 10 times more often against blacks than whites, [and] has tolerated racially discriminatory conduct. Black youth told us that they are routinely called "nigger," "animal," or "pieces of shit" by CPD.*

The report concluded that the department was so broken that it couldn't be fixed by the city. It pressed upon the mayor a consent decree, essentially a federal takeover of the CPD. Under President Obama, 14 cities agreed to such terms, giving a judge and a panel of experts the power to remake departments. These third-party rebuilds have been a boon for cities like Pittsburgh, New Orleans, and Cleveland. They saw significant drops in police-related shootings and civil rights suits against their departments. Alas, the DOJ filed its Chicago report on January 13th, 2017. Seven days later, Donald Trump took office and named Jeff Sessions attorney general. And there, in the blink of an election, went Chicago's best chance to fix its police force. The city's voters persisted, putting a pair of progressives in charge: State's Attorney Kim Foxx and Mayor Lori Lightfoot. Among her first acts, Lightfoot hired a reformer, David Brown, to be her new police chief. But under his direction, very little has changed. Brutal cops have kept their jobs and the dark machine keeps churning lies. For proof, look no further than Ricky Hayes.

Ike Lambert was overruled by the other sergeant: Ricky did give a statement to detectives. But whatever they hoped to squeeze from a kid who barely spoke was beyond his power to grant, and so the only version on the official record was Sgt. Khalil Muhammad's. After huddling with the brass and his union lawyer, Muhammad gave a statement with some striking emendations. Suddenly, he remembered fearing for his life because Ricky groped behind him for . . . well, something. "As he's turning toward me, he reaches back with his right hand," said Muhammad, "and he starts to pull a dark object out of his waistband, which to me, was consistent with someone pulling a weapon." Muhammad further recalled now that an officer in the area had her gun and wallet stolen from her vehicle, and that a black male in his early twenties might have had something to do with that. Given those "facts," he believed Ricky was going to kill him, and was justified in shooting him first.

In Chicago, police shootings are subject to two probes: an internal investigation by senior detectives, and an out-of-house review by a civilian board. That board's had several names and a fraught reputation as a law-enforcement monitor with no power. In the five-year span preceeding the DOJ investigation, there were 409 police-involved shootings of civilians; exactly two were deemed unjustified by the board. Once called the Office of Professional Standards, then the Independent Police Review Authority, it is now known, after the Laquan McDonald debacle, as the Civilian Office of Police Accountability, or COPA. The latest iteration began in the fall of 2017, with a new boss and bold intentions. "I hired strong people to do the investigations, including defense lawyers who've dealt with policemen," says Sharon Fairley, an ex-deputy inspector general who aimed to build the review board into a watchdog with real teeth. Its job is immensely difficult to do: oversee a department – and its patrolman's union – that fights to the death for the worst offenders.

It is nearly impossible to fire a cop in Chicago for excessive use of force. The city has bargained away most of its rights in contract after contract with the Fraternal Order of Police, making huge concessions to the union. By rule, COPA can't require a statement from a cop who's shot a kid until 48 hours have passed. And COPA can't keep that cop from speaking to other cops and potentially syncing up his story with theirs. By rule, the department can't discipline a cop who's shot a kid until an arbitrator says it can; can't carry out that discipline while the cop makes his appeals; and can't stop paying the cop's salary until he's exhausted those appeals. The result: Only two cops have lost their jobs in the past decade over wrongful shoots. Meanwhile, cops involved in multiple shootings remain on the force in good standing.

Fairley spent only two years at the board – "It felt like six," she says – but enacted changes before she left. She created a six-week training program for all its new employees; produced a manual of guidelines and values; and implemented rules to broadcast tapes of police misconduct in the first 60 days of a probe. Her insistence on transparency has been a promise kept. In the past three years, COPA has posted video of 300 incidents of excessive force by cops. Before Fairley, that number was zero.

But for all its zeal, COPA's handling of the Hayes shoot failed everyone involved except the cop. First, it didn't interview Sgt. Muhammad until more than a month went by. "We typically take a statement within seven days, but in this case it took five weeks," says COPA's chief investigator, Andrea Kersten. Her team had to wait out a decision by the state's attorney about whether she'd seek charges against the sergeant; that delay would have been more than enough time for Muhammad to concoct and rehearse his story. Then COPA was blocked from airing the video by the mayor's legal department. It suppressed the tape for 14 months, citing Hayes' right to "privacy" as a ward of the court. "We didn't stand in the way of the public seeing it, but the city's lawyers inform our actions," says Kersten.

Nonsense: "They could've aired the tape without naming Ricky," says Gabe Hardy, the lawyer who repped the teen. "But this was right in the middle of the Laquan McDonald mess, and they didn't want the heat of a second scandal." Hardy, who saw the tape, begged the city to charge Muhammad; he asked COPA and Foxx's people to come meet Ricky. "They sent investigators to sit with us, but then never called back. Before I knew it, a year went by." Meanwhile, he negotiated with the city, talking settlement figures with the same legal department that stopped COPA from airing the tape. Asked if that was ethical lawyering by the city, Hardy laughs out loud: "All I'll tell you is they didn't release the tape until they got pressure from outside."

That pressure was brought – again – by Jamie Kalven, the street reporter of bad-cop nightmares. Kalven's source at COPA told him about the tape and about the city's legal ploy to quash it. That source, unnamed in the story Kalven filed, has decided to come forward now. "I knew about the tape because I found it," says Regina Holloway, a public-sector lawyer and ex-supervisor at COPA who went door-to-door days after the shooting. She charmed and cajoled residents until one of them confided that a person down the block had porch-cam footage. Holloway used all of her rhetorical skills to persuade that person to send her the tape. It arrived before dawn as a text link on her phone. She watched it over and over in mounting rage. "This cop shoots a kid who's smaller than my 12-year-old, then claims it's self-defense?" she fumes.

Holloway went to work and showed the footage to Fairley. Appalled, says Fairley, "I called the state's attorney's office," hoping for an aggressive investigation. Instead, Foxx's office dithered for weeks, then declined to file charges against Muhammad. Fairley resigned a few weeks later to run for attorney general of Illinois. She was replaced by Sydney Roberts, a law-enforcement lifer who balked at pushing for Muhammad's firing. Holloway quit COPA a short time after Fairley left, gutted by her departure. She's now vice president of community impact at a security firm. "I took the [COPA] job because I believed in the mission, and because I was tired of seeing dead black kids," she says. Once Fairley left, "I could see where this was going." COPA was going to "give that cop a pass."

Indeed, Roberts recommended that Muhammad be suspended for shooting a disabled child. There, the matter would have sunk from sight, another kid's suffering gone unheeded. But Holloway's indignation brought her to Kalven, and Kalven pressured COPA to see the tape. The video, aired days after the Laquan McDonald verdict, sparked another hellscape for the department. Ricky appears in [*Cont. on 80*]

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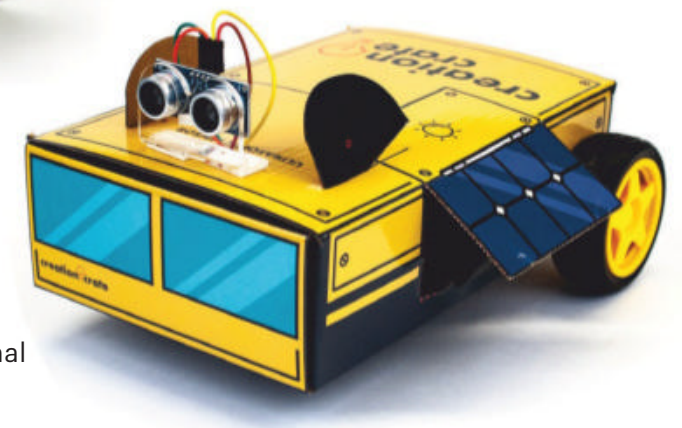

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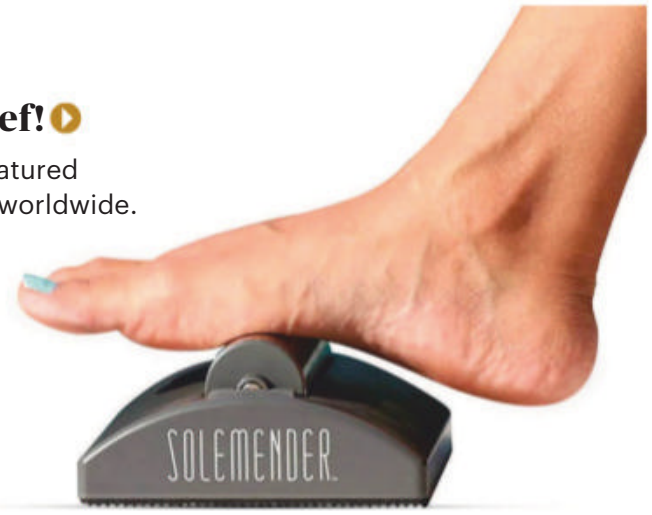

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THE UNTOUCHABLES

[*Cont. from 76*] the frame at about the one-minute mark, when he stops in front of the house on Hermosa Avenue. Muhammad pulls up, grunts something at him, then pumps two slugs into Ricky. Hayes, an unarmed teenager, is not doing anything remotely threatening when he's shot.

Instantly, the statement by Muhammad collapsed – although at that point, no one had heard it. For 14 months, both COPA and the CPD had been silent about the shooting. Now, under fire to tell the public something, each outfit lumbered into gear. COPA sent its findings to the CPD, where the outgoing superintendent did something rare: He doubled the length of Muhammad's suspension from 90 to 180 days. Meanwhile, Sgt. Lambert, he says, was suddenly on the spot, ordered to review his detective's report. "I'm like, 'What report?' I had nothing to do with that case since the day it happened," he says.

Nonetheless, Lambert and one of his detectives turned in a draft to their lieutenant. The lieutenant kicked it back to them with a suggestion: "Couldn't this be an aggravated assault [by Ricky Hayes]?" wrote the lieutenant in the margin. Repulsed, Lambert says, he signed the report as written and passed it up the line. Five days later, he was dumped from sergeant to the patrol division, riding in a squad car like a rookie. When his commander, Rodney Blisset, gave him the news, Lambert stood there speechless, disbelieving.

"Twenty-six years I do my job with honor, and y'all turn around and treat me like trash?" says Lambert. He's sitting in the office of Torreya Hamilton, the lawyer who won millions in the Calvin Cross case. Hamilton is suddenly in steep demand, the first call for whistle-blowing cops. The blond daughter of a police-officer mother, she's counterintuitive casting for the role. But she won a huge sum on behalf of Lorenzo Davis, a black CPD commander who became an investigator for IPRA (COPA's forerunner) and was fired for uncovering excessive violence by bad cops. Since that verdict in 2018, she's been fielding requests from practically every officer who's been punished by Chicago for stepping forward and telling the truth. "I started out working for the other team: I was a prosecutor, then a lawyer for the city," Hamilton says. "But the city wasn't interested in finding the truth. It only cared about protecting its police officers."

Davis, a commander who became an attorney while climbing the ranks, was that rare commodity in his eight years at IPRA: a consummately thorough detective. He investigated cop shoots that violated procedure and turned in reports so buttressed by the facts that any honest force would have fired the shooters. Instead, says Davis, his boss at IPRA, Scott Ando, "ordered me to change my findings, make them come out right" for the cops. When Davis refused, he was fired by Ando and escorted off the premises. He hired Hamilton in 2015 and sued the city. The city, per usual, fought the lawsuit for years before deciding to go to trial. The jury came back – in under an hour – with a whopping verdict for Davis: almost $3 million in damages. Alas, he hasn't seen a cent in the two years since he won. The city appealed and has him penned in court, perhaps hoping that Davis, a man of 71, will die before the process plays out. If so, he isn't prepared to oblige. "I was in a shootout where my partner was killed and the bullets went right past my ear," he says. "It's gonna take more than waiting to finish me off."

SGT. LAMBERT HIRED Hamilton after his shock wore off: They held a press conference in her office to announce their suit. It is a very rare thing when a cop in Chicago refuses to bend the rules for a colleague. It is another order of rarity – call it martyrdom – for a cop to blow the whistle in public. But Lambert was past caring about his career: Someone had to speak up for the truth. "I wanted every cop to know that you have to stand for something. That poor kid didn't deserve being shot for some bullshit, and the cop that did it doesn't deserve to be a cop."

Muhammad, who shot an autistic child and spun a story to save his hide, served out his suspension, then returned to duty – at full rank and pay as a sergeant.

Hamilton filed Lambert's suit in March 2019. As she expected, the city's lawyers have stalled and stiffed her, "fighting over every scrap of paper." What she didn't expect was a second cop to sue in connection with her case. Roughly a year after Lambert was dumped back to patrol, his commander, Rodney Blisset, was demoted to captain, he alleges, after refusing to lie for the department. Blisset, an officer with a sterling reputation, says he had been ordered by his bosses to transfer Lambert. "I couldn't fathom why they'd dumped him, and when I asked about it, [they] wouldn't give a reason," says Blisset. Seven months later, the city's lawyers sat him down to prep for Lambert's lawsuit. "They told me, 'We heard that Ike Lambert was a poor employee.'" Blisset says he asked them where they got that. "They said, 'From you. That's what the chief of detectives said you told her.'" Blisset was incensed: "I told them, 'The chief is a damn liar. We never had a conversation about Lambert.'" The lawyers seemed stunned; here was another cop who wouldn't fall in line with the official story. "I told them, 'I'm not lying for anyone, so get your shit straight before you go into court.'"

In January this year, Blisset was booted from his post. No explanation, he says, no announcement, just stony silence from the department he'd served for decades. Like Lambert, Blisset's career is irreparably harmed. As commander of a South Side district in Chicago, he'd expected to become the chief of a smaller city when he retired at 60. Instead, he suddenly finds himself unemployable after resigning from the force. "This will follow me for years," he says. "I might never get a job in law enforcement." So he, too, waits for his day in court, seeking consolation from a jury. "My whole life, I've gone by my father's words: 'Tell the truth and deal with the consequences, or lie and live with the consequences,'" Blisset says, sighing. "I can live with what I did. Can they?"

Lambert says he wanted to work until he got his 30 years in, but it literally makes him sick to show up now. "I have a chronic condition that's been aggravated by this stress," he says. "It might force me to retire prematurely." As for Ricky, the city settled with his lawyer Hardy after the videotape aired. "They cut him a check for $2.25 million, which went straight to a special-needs trust," says Hardy. "He'll have money for any treatments he needs to get past this, though frankly, that could be a long while."

In the three years since the shooting, Ricky's been a different kid, tortured by rages and terrors. He cries uncontrollably, puts his fist through things, and pines out loud to be dead. "I wish they'd just killed me," he says over and over while Shirley tries to console him. After the check from the city clears, Shirley plans to find a house for them in the suburbs, where Ricky can play outdoors and see his cous- [*Cont. on 81*]

BADU & WALKER

[*Cont. from 48*] will not take me seriously when I tell them what we're going to do or what we're not going to do. I often have to enforce things, and I don't want to be mean.

BADU I like it. You keep going, you'll become the bitch that you need to be. You just keep going. It's difficult to be a woman and a black girl who's a boss, who's trying to be the controller of her world. And, trust me, there's nothing freaky about it. If I have to give you any kind of advice: Don't take your foot off they neck. If you feel it and you're intuitive about it, go forward with it. You can always correct it later, because smart girls ask for help, too.

WALKER When I used to watch you perform a lot, I just would always say, "Oh, my God, look at this confidence." The way that you would command a room, command either your band or your space. Woman to woman, I want to be like that, to have that type of confidence. I be walking into the room real small and then trying to still be the boss that I have to be. And it don't work. I can't wait to get to that point.

BADU Oh, you will, girl. I ain't worried about it at all. It will happen. It just happens naturally. You just get tired enough. You learn personalities, and, trust me, we're not trying to win an award for being the nicest and kindest person. Because that's not some necessary thing to be all the time. You're trying to get your vision fulfilled, and we do it as much as we can without being an asshole.

One really important thing I wanted to tell you is I'm afraid of a lot of different things. Of moving forward, or sometimes walking onstage in a different place. Mostly when there are people that I know in the audience. I'm afraid a little bit, and it starts out that way, but I have confidence – because guess what, Summer? It always, always, always works out. And if I fast-forward my thinking to "It always works out," then I quickly lose that fear…

WALKER The self-sabotage.

BADU Summer, do you still have any dreams you'd like to share? I know that one of your greatest dreams has been fulfilled, becoming a recording artist and being self-sufficient.

WALKER I only had two dreams. I just wanted to be self-sufficient, like you said, and I just want a little tiny house with a big backyard, my garden. I want a pig. I want to make all my stuff that I use in the house from scratch – my lotions and soaps and all that stuff. And I just want to live humbly and happily and then continue to evolve mentally and spiritually and become smart as fuck. I want to get old and just have this big library and be hella smart. That's what I'm working on now.

BADU And you shall have it.

WALKER I hope so.

BADU Did I tell you that I'm also a fairy godmother?

WALKER Are you? I'm not surprised.

BADU I am, and you shall have everything that is for you. Every single thing you just named, you shall have it all. It's going to be written down. The universe will conspire with the wombniverse to make these things happen for you, because you deserve them and you shall have them. All of them.

WALKER Thank you, fairy godmother.

BRITTANY SPANOS

THE UNTOUCHABLES

[*Cont. from 80*] ins. "I just want him out of this city," she says. "It gives me chills to think of that man still out there, maybe looking for the next kid to shoot."

SIX MONTHS AFTER the George Floyd slaying – six months of blood and heartbreak in the street; of legislative busywork around reform; of jackbooted pushback from the cops – is it fair to wonder whether all of that ferment was so much tilting at windmills? No city has defunded its police department or opted out of its contract with the union. No mayor has stepped forward to fire officers with dozens of allegations lodged against them. No police chief has broken with the rank-and-file to denounce excessive force or no-knock warrants. The killings continue, the days of rage follow, and the curtain drops on another week of theater.

But the kids in Chicago could have told you that. They've been marching for six years against the CPD, and here's what they have to show: mothers of dead teens silenced by a check, grieving the unsolved shootings of their sons; jerry-rigged probes that grind their gears while brutal cops rule the streets; honest cops banished for telling the truth, suddenly obsoleted in their fifties. It's worse than that, actually: We'd know nothing of Cross and Hayes if not for whistleblowers. Any system hinging on the valor of the few is a system built to fail – and the city knows it. It grovels before the cops and their labor union, and brazenly breaks faith with black communities. It elects state's attorneys who refuse to try cops even when given gifts of video evidence. It squabbles with itself while shootings spike and no one trusts the police enough to call them. Until its leaders finally say "enough," Chicago will shed citizens by the thousands each month. (Its population shrank each of the past five years.)

For Dana Cross, the mother of Calvin, a murdered church kid, Chicago died the day it cleared his killers. She moved her family south to a collar-county suburb of Chicago, and still aches when she thinks of her lost son. "I see moms [in other cities] get justice for their kids, but where'm I supposed to get mine?" she says. Several years ago, her daughter Senetra confronted Kim Foxx at a luncheon. Senetra says Foxx promised her that she would take a fresh look at the case – then never followed through with the Crosses. (Foxx did not respond to requests for comment.)

Years later, when the feds launched their probe of the department, Hamilton urged their agents to investigate Calvin's killing. What they learned so chagrined them that they featured his case in their findings on wrongful shootings by the CPD. Meanwhile, something very unusual happened: COPA did a review of the Cross case. It sat down two of the three cops and challenged their statements, going over them blow by blow. (The third cop, Mohammed Ali, "suddenly decided he had PTSD and sued to block COPA from bringing him in," says Hamilton.) After a year of weighing the facts, COPA ruled against Officer Chavez, citing his "reckless disregard for human life." The punishment it prescribed for the slaughter of an unarmed teen? Thirty days' suspension, without pay. Chavez appealed; he hasn't served a second.

Matthew McConaughey

The actor on the 'McConaissance' and the joys of nude drumming

What are the best and worst parts of success?
The upsides are access, options, creative expression, being able to communicate. The worst part about success and fame is not meeting strangers anymore. The world is already coming in with an idea of me. It's why I went away to Peru or Mali. I want to go someplace where, when I leave, the hugs goodbye are all based on the man they met when I showed up.

McConaughey's book, 'Greenlights,' drawn from his diaries, is out now.

You confirm in your book that the story of being arrested for playing bongos nude in your living room is precisely what people thought. But what does the nudity add?
Just freedom! I had played bongos late at night buck naked many times before, and have many times since. *Bang, bang, bang,* until you break a sweat. Have you ever tried it? It's a great feeling. It's legal, and it's a great workout.

After all the good luck you've had, do you ever fear the other shoe dropping?
Any time I start feeling like, "Oh, my gosh, this is all going too good," I remind myself, "That is extremely arrogant thinking, Matthew, to think this is a ceiling." Usually when I think the heat is hot enough to melt my wings, it's not even 80 degrees.

What did it feel like to turn down a $14.5 million offer circa 2010, when you were determined to move away from romantic comedies?
At the time I was stuck between "You dumbass" and "Wow, how awesome!" [*Laughs.*] My brothers and my mother were definitely on the "You dumbass" train. I didn't get work for 20 months. But once I turned down that offer, it sent a signal to Hollywood. Whoever thought I might have been bluffing now knew I wasn't.

You could have done the "One for me, one for them" thing that a lot of actors do, alternating between indie and commercial films. Why such a strict line?
I wasn't being offered the "One for me's"! It was all romantic comedies or action-adventures, which I enjoyed doing. At the same time, after four or so rom-coms, you could send me a rom-com tonight and I could do it tomorrow morning. I wanted to find some work that made me sweat in my boots.

And after your turnaround, you started the term "McConaissance" yourself, by fibbing to an interviewer that you had heard it from another reporter. How did that happen?
I unbranded. I didn't rebrand. I basically was gone. And so it was like, "Where'd McConaughey go?" Then all of a sudden, I become a new, bright idea. "Hey, you know who'd be interesting casting?" And I was like, "If I'm putting together a great album of work right now, maybe it needs a title."

One of your key roles at that time was in *Dallas Buyers Club*. What did you learn from losing all that weight to play someone battling AIDS?
The body is more resilient than we give it credit for. I sometimes miss that feeling, because all of the power I lost from the neck down sublimated to absolute mental acuity. I woke up every morning at 4:30 without an alarm. I became militant about [the diet]. Egg whites in the morning. For lunch and dinner, five ounces of fish and a cup of vegetables. As much wine as I wanted at night. I lost two and a half pounds a week, like clockwork. And I got a little bitty spoon, and that was my utensil. It made my meals last longer.

You were five days into filming your first movie, *Dazed and Confused,* when your father died. You said that helped you learn to be "less impressed and more involved." What does that mean?
I was starting a weekend hobby in the summer of '92 that turned out to be a 28-year career. So, just when I was like, "Wow, I can't believe I'm getting to do this," Dad dies. You want to get grounded? Let your dad die on you. When my father died, that automatically became the most important happening in my life. Acting became number two, and I was able to be more involved in the process, because I was less impressed with the process. If acting was the number-one thing, I wouldn't be as good at it. BRIAN HIATT

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