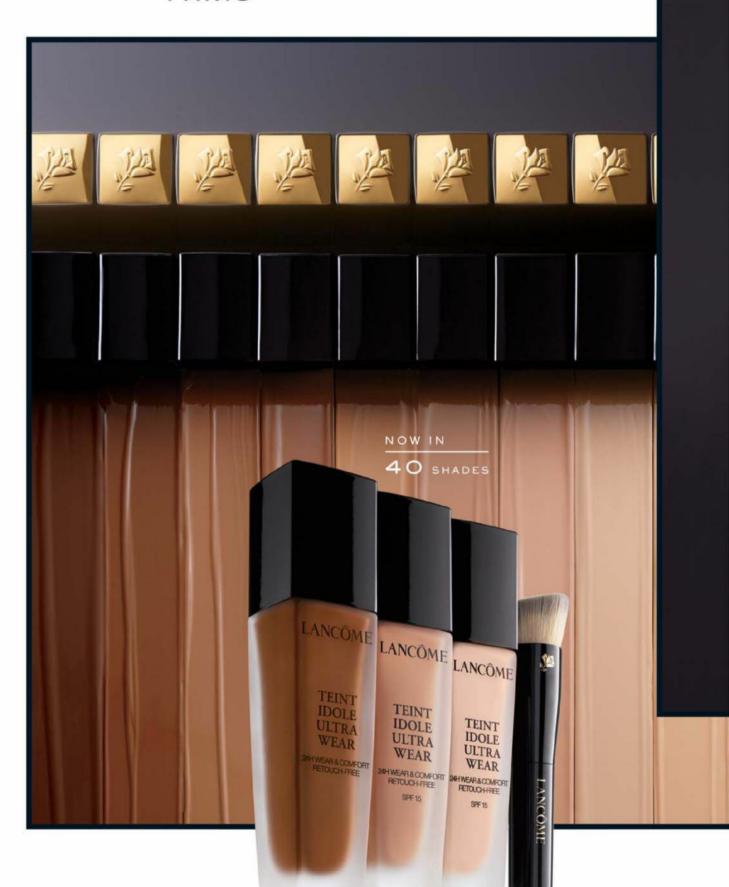




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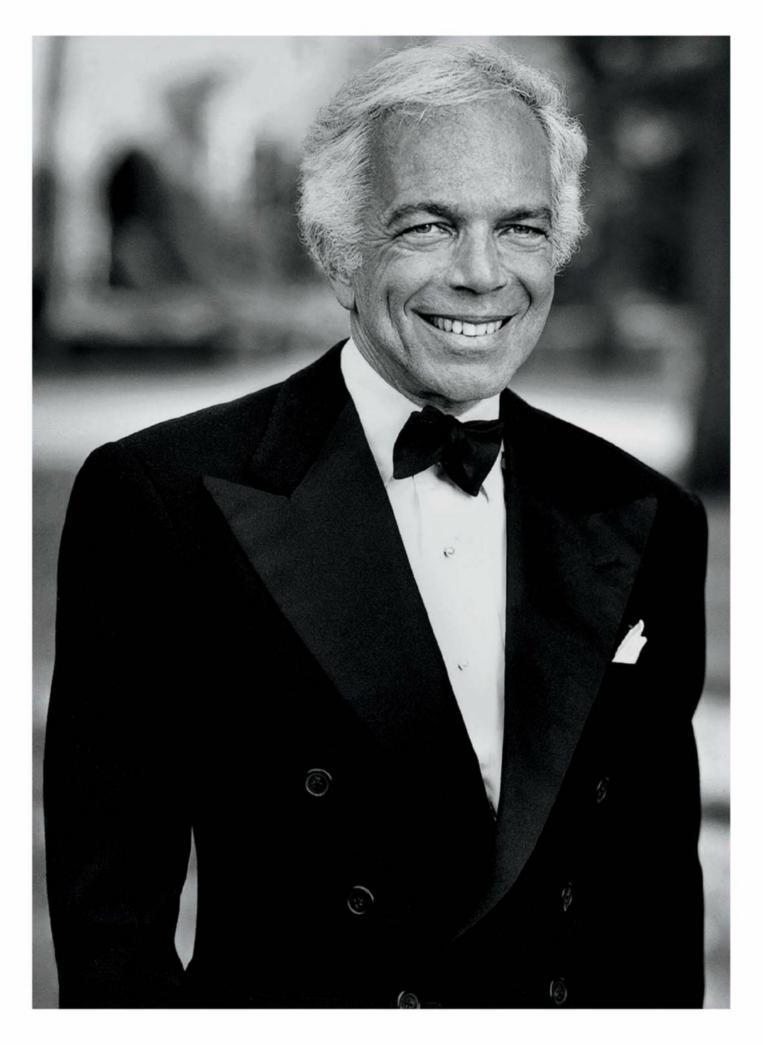
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#### RALPH LAUREN

The TUXEDO, 2016 Photographed by Steven Meisel #RLICONICSTYLE







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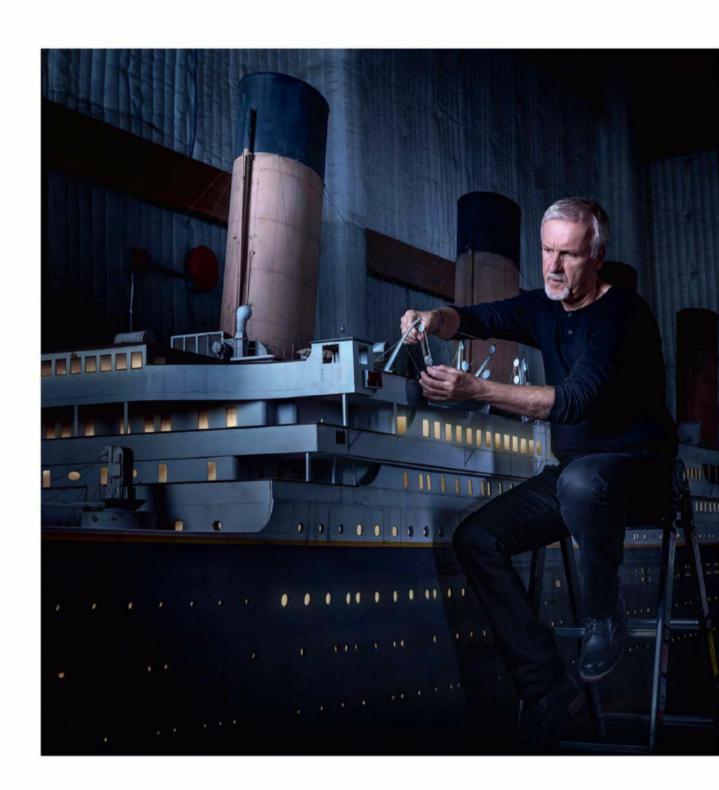
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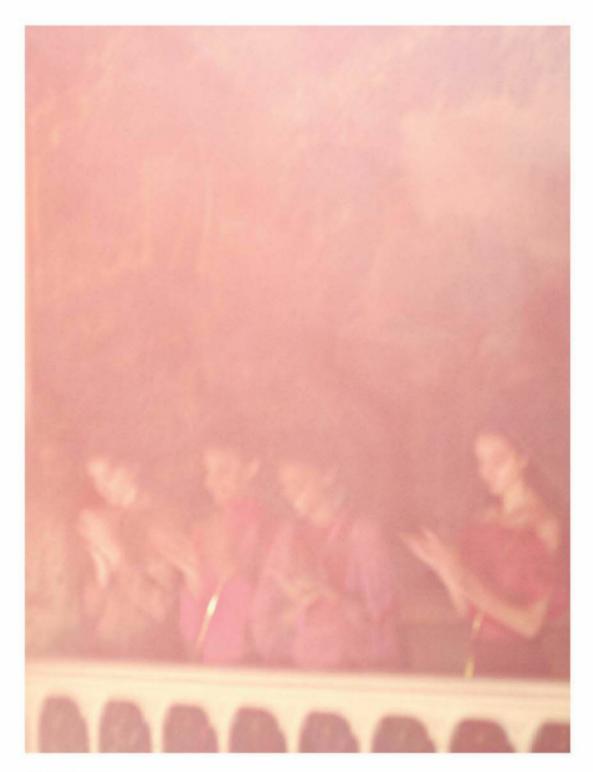
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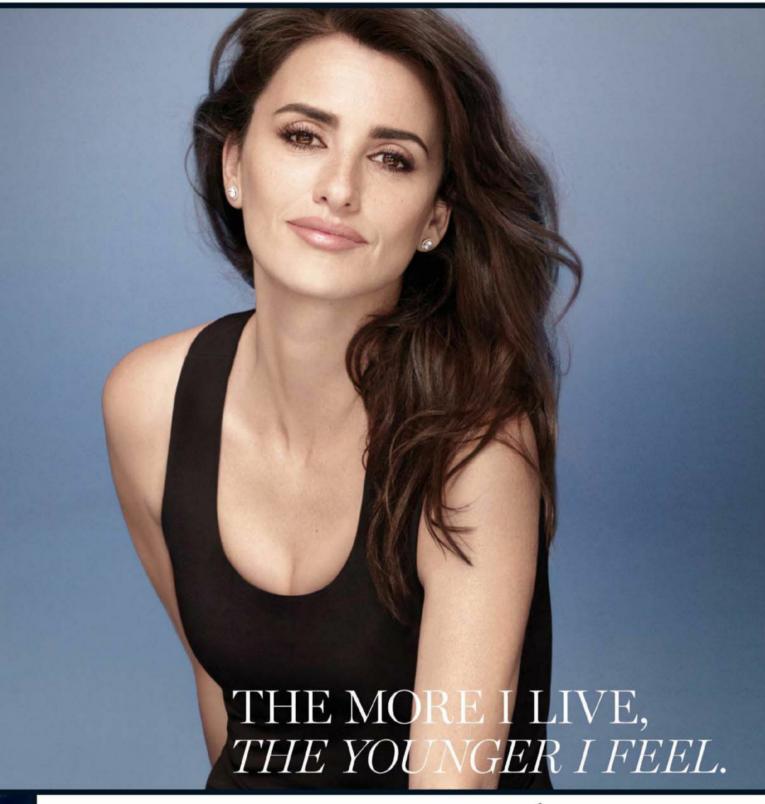






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# **CALVIN KLEIN**



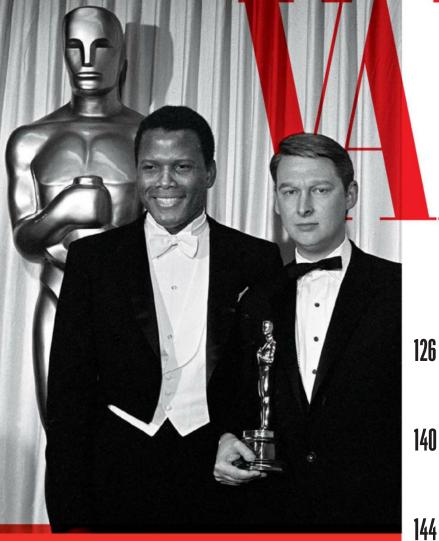


# **CALVIN KLEIN**









Clockwise from above: Sidney Poitier with Mike Nichols at the 40th Academy Awards, 1968 (page 146); Coco Chanel in Hollywood (page 158); Zendaya (page 87).





# **FEATURES**

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WONDER WOMEN: THE HOLLYWOOD PORTFOLIO 2017 By ANNIE LEIBOVITZ A stellar ensemble—featuring Emma Stone, Janelle Monáe, Lupita Nyong'o, Elle Fanning, Amy Adams, and more—captures the extraordinary range of this year's screen heroines. Text by James Wolcott.

# THAT'S ALL FOLKS! By NICK BILTON

With technology allowing viewers to get their entertainment where, when, and how they want, Hollywood is facing the same massive disruption as music, publishing, and other industries. Here's what Silicon Valley has in store for show business.

## V.F. PORTRAIT: JOHN LEGUIZAMO

By LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA As John Leguizamo returns to his Off Broadway roots, a fellow theater phenomenon recalls what Leguizamo's 1992 play, *Spic-o-Rama*, meant to a generation of Latinos. Photograph by Annie Leibovitz.

### PRIDE AND PREJUDICE By LAURA JACOBS

Fifty years ago, while race riots erupted across America, the nation's favorite movie hero was a black man,

Sidney Poitier. He ruled the box office in 1967 with three indelible films—*To Sir, with Love; In the Heat of the Night;* and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*—and his carefully crafted image is still a triumph of humanity.

# MY HOLLYWOOD: SHERRY LANSING

The first female studio chief remembers how her father—and his death—set her on the path.

# "GET ME MARTY SINGER!" By DAVID MARGOLICK

The bane of studio chiefs and tabloid editors, **Hollywood lawyer** Marty Singer is a rabid defender of stars in trouble: John Travolta, Sharon Stone, Charlie Sheen, Scarlett Johansson, and many others. But after years in Bill Cosby's corner, Singer has mysteriously split with his most notorious client. Photograph by Joey L.

# CHANEL'S COSTUME DRAMA

By SAM KASHNER Studio mogul Samuel Goldwyn courted Coco Chanel, hoping to bring his stars a new level of glamour and turn his movies into fashion events. But from the moment Chanel arrived in L.A., in 1931, the clash of Paris couture and Hollywood dazzle was all too obvious.

# MY HOLLYWOOD: LEE DANIELS

The producer and director **learned to dream** from the movies he watched as a kid. Then the struggle began.

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HOLLYWOOD 2017

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HOLLYWOOD 20<mark>17</mark>

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# THE REAL EX-HUSBAND OF BEVERLY HILLS By ERIC KONIGSBERG

**David Foster** stands at the center of two entertainment universes: music and reality television. The composer with 16 Grammys and countless pop hits has also raised some of TV's most famous offspring, viz. the Jenner boys, the Hadid girls, and, of course, the Foster sisters. Photographs by Wayne Maser.

### MY HOLLYWOOD: LISA BIRNBACH

Wide-eyed at the **Beverly Hills Hotel pool**, an industry rookie learned that appearance could be reality.

### THE DEADLIEST KLATCH

Spotlight on the new HBO series **Big Little Lies,** an all-star murder mystery involving a Monterey, California, P.T.A. By Bruce Handy. Photograph by Mark Seliger.

# THE HIT MAN By SAM KASHNER

Writer and director **Michael Crichton**, many of whose best-selling thrillers became box-office hits (*The Andromeda Strain, Jurassic Park*, etc.), died eight years ago. But with HBO's reincarnation of his *Westworld* universe and a posthumous novel headed to television, Crichton remains an entertainment giant.

### **EMMETT, STILL**

Spotlight on **Emmett Till**, whose lynching in 1955, when he was 14, is now the subject of an HBO series and two movies. By Sheila Weller.

# THE CRITIC AND THE STAR By LILI ANOLIK

When **Warren Beatty** persuaded the powerful film critic **Pauline Kael** to leave New York for a Hollywood gig, in 1979, her friends feared she'd be sorry. They were right. Illustration by André Carrilho.

# IT'S A WONKA WORLD

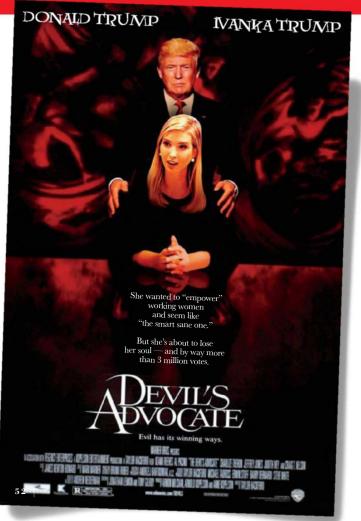
Spotlight on Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman, the songwriting duo behind the new Broadway musical *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.*By David Kamp. Photograph by Gavin Bond.

# **VANITIES**

87 A TO ZENDAYA

Showstopping jewels for the red carpet. My Place: L.A. chefs **Jon Shook** and **Vinny Dotolo.** Haute News. My Desk: **Karl Lagerfeld.** A beauty marathon of Oscar-prep picks.

Top, left and right: Michael Crichton, in 2000: the mind behind Westworld (page 172); bottom, "Trump: The Movie" (page 110).



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HOLLYWOOD 2017





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# AROUND THE WORLD, ONE PARTY AT A TIME

Tech elite honor top science talent at the Breakthrough Prize, at the NASA Ames Research Center, in California. Plus: a celebration for Marty Baron at the Waverly Inn, in New York; Sandro at the Sunset Tower, in Los Angeles; a dinner for La La Land in San Francisco.

# **COLUMNS**

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110 TRUMP: THE MOVIE By JAMES WOLCOTT

Since Trump's triumph was fueled by showbiz, it's only fair to expect a Hollywood epic about his road to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Now, to find the perfect director . . . Photo illustration by Sean McCabe.

JAMES AND THE GIANT BREACH

By WILLIAM D. COHAN James Packer's quest to escape the shadow of his late father, the legendary Australian tycoon, has hit some bumps. Not only did Packer's engagement with Mariah Carey implode, but his casino empire is in jeopardy as well.

DAVID LYNCH'S DARK ART By LILI ANOLIK

Hailed by some as the century's best film, David Lynch's Mulholland Drive began life as a failed TV pilot. Even as Showtime's revival of Lynch's hit series, Twin Peaks, gets the buzz, it's his 2001 movie that blows a viewer's mind.

# **ET CETERA**

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108 IN THE DETAILS ADAM SCOTT

ON THE COVER

PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE RENÉE ZELLWEGER

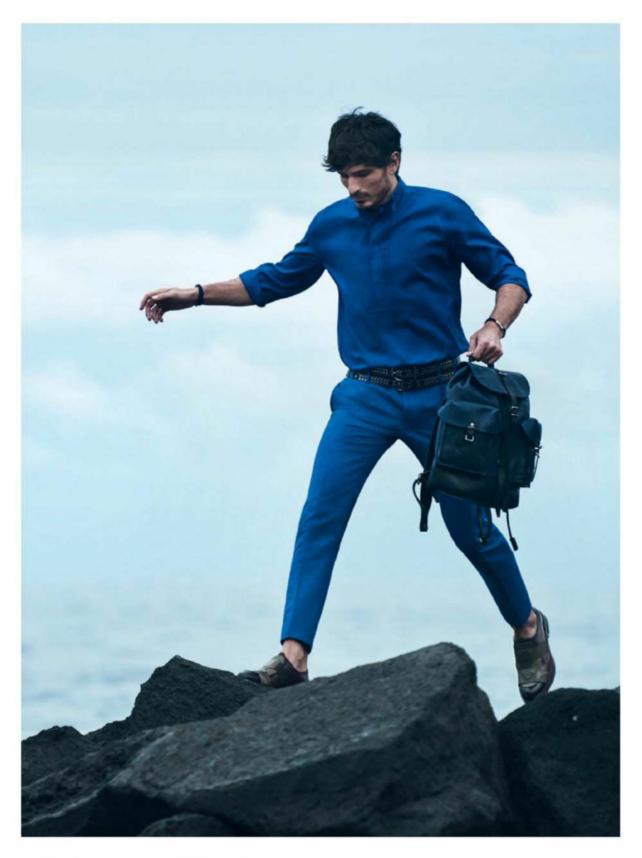


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# SHERRY LANSING ••

As president of 20th Century Fox and later chairman and C.E.O. of Paramount Pictures, Sherry Lansing was the first woman to head a Hollywood studio. In "My Hollywood," on page 153, she describes the ways in which her father nurtured her film fixation. Now Lansing, whose eponymous foundation raises money for cancer research and public education, relishes "just being a fan. But film still moves my emotions, and I actually think it can affect social legislation." Leading Lady, a biography of Lansing, comes out in April.



# SHEILA WELLER ••

Best-selling author Sheila Weller became absorbed by the 1955 lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till after she heard a speech by a cousin of Till's, who was with him just before his murder. Observing his raw emotion, says Weller, "I really did feel like I was watching history." In "Emmett, Still," on page 179, Weller surveys three upcoming films and TV showsinvolving Will Smith, Jay Z, Whoopi Goldberg, John Singleton, and Taraji P. Henson-examining the tragedy and its historic impact on the civil-rights movement.



# ♣ LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA

In the V.F. Portrait on page 144, the Grammy-, Emmy-, Tony-, and Pulitzer Prize-winning creator of Hamilton and In the Heights, Lin-Manuel Miranda, celebrates Colombian-born John Leguizamo and his formative influence on Miranda's artistic imagination and on that of an entire generation of Latino artists. "Witnessing a Latino actor . . . reveling in the specificities of our culture with brilliant, razor-sharp wit and a uniquely hip-hop energy exploded my every notion of what theater could be," writes Miranda, who is currently filming Mary Poppins Returns, out next year.



# LEE DANIELS

Director Lee Daniels (The Butler, Precious) charts his circuitous route to Hollywood-through heavy historical times-in "My Hollywood," on page 163. "Television gets the word into living rooms across the country," says the executive producer of Empire and a trailblazer for African-Americans in entertainment, "but I'm excited about getting back behind the camera as a director: there's definitely a film on the way." Nevertheless, Daniels will soon return as a producer of other projects, including a series starring the stand-up comic Ms. Pat.

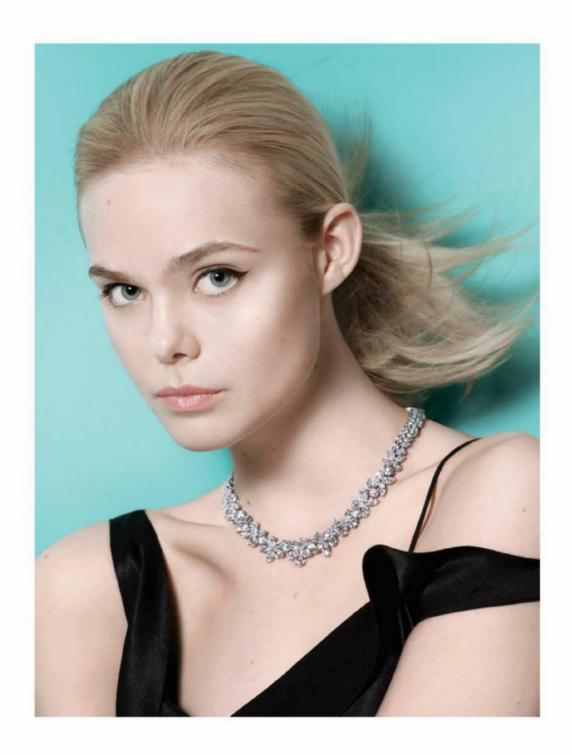


# LAURA JACOBS

In "Pride and Prejudice," on page 146, Contributing Editor Laura Jacobs explores the pioneering work and legacy of Sidney Poitier, Hollywood's first black leading man. "It's true that in terms of race he was usually alone in a movie," Jacobs says, "but as an actor he was set apart as well, because of his concentration and lyricism." Jacobs's new book, How to Look at Ballet, will be published by Basic Books in 2018.

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# TIFFANY VICTORIA®



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# \* KATHRYN MACLEOD, JESSICA DIEHL, JANE SARKIN, AND ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

Since Vanity Fair's inaugural Hollywood Issue, in 1995, each of the 22 foldout covers that featured actresses exclusively has captured the singular élan of the fresh and familiar faces of Hollywood's standout women. Contributing Photographer Annie Leibovitz's cover and "Wonder Women: The Hollywood Portfolio 2017," on page 126, are no exception. In advance of her Women: New Portraits exhibition, at the former Bayview Correctional Facility, in New York City, Leibovitz infused her new V.F. photographs with the theme of sisterhood. The 2017 Hollywood Issue is also a testament to the devotion and talents of an extraordinary behind-the-scenes team of women, who have fine-tuned their methods of casting (Features Editor Jane Sarkin), styling (Creative Director [Fashion and Style] Jessica Diehl), and producing (Senior Photography Producer Kathryn MacLeod) over the years. "This team has been working together for a long time," says Sarkin, "but it's our Hollywood cover that always feels the most special."



# NICK BILTON

With disruption of the film industry—by such streaming services as Netflix, Amazon, and soon even Google and Facebook-in full force, Special Correspondent Nick Bilton probes the biggest hurdles Hollywood faces, in "That's All Folks!" on page 140. "Hollywood executives were eager to tell me that their industry was different and that they had nothing to worry about," says Bilton, who is adapting his book Hatching Twitter with Lionsgate for television. "But I didn't get the impression that most of them actually believed what they were saying.'

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# TIFFANY T COLLECTION



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# "#GiuseppeXJennifer": New, Exclusive Capsule Collection Designed by Giuseppe Zanotti and Jennifer Lopez

When searching for the perfect combination of nonstop musical phenomenon and boundless fashion design, there is no better pairing than Giuseppe Zanotti and Jennifer Lopez. Longtime admirers of each other, the two talents have created the Giuseppe for Jennifer Lopez shoe collection. Cast in a modern color palette of cool grays, warm taupes, navy blue, and pretty pastels and crafted in luxury materials such as suede, satin, printed leather, and all-over crystals, the lineup features six distinct models, from cutout and crystal booties to gladiator wraparound and red-carpet stilettos, flat sandals, and embellished wedge sneakers. True to Jennifer's glamorous style and Giuseppe's shared dedication to music and contemporary femininity, the collection is strong and sophisticated. Launched worldwide in late January 2017, the capsule is available in select Giuseppe Zanotti Design stores, on giuseppezanottidesign.com, and in top department stores.



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### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 64



# WAYNE MASER ••

Prior to photographing musician and record producer David Foster for "The Real Ex-Husband of Beverly Hills," on page 164, Wayne Maser and his wife, Sciascia Gambacciniwho styled the shoot-met Foster in his home, to plan the session. "We knew we were headed for something special when he serenaded us with 'Send in the Clowns,'" says Maser. But Maser still did not expect to be quite so struck by Foster's poise before the camera. "It felt like working with a 90s supermodel."



# JOANNA ROBINSON ••

"I think straight TV recaps are really boring," says Joanna Robinson, whose analyses and predictions about HBO's Westworld and Game of Thrones have spurred extraordinarily broad engagement on VF.com. Watching any given episode about five times, Robinson has covered these shows since their first seasons. "When you get in early," she says, "for better or for worse, people tend to listen to you."

# **\*\*** KRISTA SMITH

Executive West Coast Editor Krista Smith (left, with Amy Adams) has helped orchestrate the casting of every Hollywood cover and portfolio. For this year's issue, Smith offers an insider's glimpse of the shoot in "Behind the Scenes," on page 77. Additionally, on VF.com, she shares a different look at the 11 actresses, in candid interviews and "Secret Talent Theater" videos. "There were so many incredibly diverse roles for women this year," says Smith, who also covers Disney darling Zendaya's future as a Marvel star, on page 87.



# SLOANE CROSLEY

In "Back on Track," on page 97, Contributing Editor Sloane Crosley celebrates the forthcoming sequel to Trainspotting, Danny Boyle's 1996 film set in Edinburgh, starring Ewan McGregor. "I actually lived in Edinburgh right after the movie came out," says Crosley, who also writes V.F.'s Hot Type. "I associate Trainspotting with a slightly hazy part of my mid-youth, and I hope the sequel leans as strongly into its degenerate roots as I have leaned away from mine."



SMITH PHOTOGRAPHED BY KATHRYN MACLEOD. PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVE GIBBONS (ROBINSON), WAYNE MASER (MASER), CAITUN MITCHELL (CROSLEY)



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# A PILLAR of IGNORANCE and CERTITUDE



onald Trump, our 45th president, sold the electorate an America First bill of goods, when what he really had in mind was Me First. "I won," he gloats, "therefore I can do this! I won, therefore I can do that!" In early January, our then president-elect was invited up to the offices of Condé Nast, the parent company of V.F., to meet with the editors of its maga-

zines. The get-together was off the record. (Not my wish. Nor was the meeting itself.) The standard practice is that, in such a context, nothing of what Trump said can be repeated. It doesn't really matter, because I recall nothing being said that he hadn't already said many times before.

Is there any American at this point who hasn't heard Trump talk about pretty much everything? He always speaks lovingly about his favorite subject-himself. He spent an entire campaign talking about the size of his victories, the size of his rallies, the size of his Twitter following, the excellence of his golf game, and the greatness of his company. A more recent theme, as he prepared to shoulder the burdens of office, has been that the man who followed him on his clammy reality-TV show has lower ratings than when he was on it.

Trump's messy birdcage of a mind careers from one random thought to the next. He likes to strut and talk big-league. One of his ongoing observations—in tweets and elsewhere—is that "many people" have been calling him "the Ernest Hemingway of Twitter!" These are presumably people who have never read one of Hemingway's books. In manner and execution, and in his almost touching desire to be liked, Trump comes across not as larger than life but as one of the smaller people on the world stage. He always had a sort of oafish charisma: as we used to say at Spy, a hustler on his best behavior. In small groups, as many can attest, he has mastered the salesman's trick of creating faux sincerity and intimacy when answering a question by including the first name of the person who asked it. But no amount of grifter charm can conceal his alarming disregard for facts and truth. It's this combination of utter ignorance and complete certitude that his detractors find most terrifying. Trump not only doesn't know the unknowns but appears to have no interest in even knowing the knowns. Fact-checkers can't keep up. How often does Obama play golf? Who cares-let's inflate the number by 50 percent. What's the murder rate in a major American city? What the hell-let's multiply it by 10. The writer Michael O'Donoghue used to say that the definition of insanity is the length of time it takes for a lie to be uncovered. The shorter the period, the

crazier you are. By this standard, our president will be setting a new threshold for that definition.

n temperament, we now have an unbridled man-boy in the highest office in the land, one who will lash out at the most reasoned criticism. The brusque childishness of his response to Meryl Streep's measured comments at

the Golden Globes-about Trump's mocking gestures in reference to disabled New York Times reporter Serge Kovaleski-was enough to be worried about. Then he hurled insults at Georgia Congressman John Lewis, a living icon of the civil-rights movement. Really? John Lewis? If he feels that he can so blithely attack two of the most respected people in the country, who is off limits? Trump was always a bad loser. But in the weeks since his disputed victory in the election we've discovered that this preening narcissist is also a very bad winner.

s he drags family members into the administration, a certain amount of sympathy has gone out to Tiffany Trump, the president's daughter with his second wife, Marla Maples. In the end, being the forgotten Trump may turn out to be an asset. Her father's administration is starting off in typical Trump fashion: renovating a house by first hacking away at the foundation. His disparagement of America's intelligence apparatus—what former vice president Joe Biden calls "one of the crown jewels of our national defense"-is a complete mystery, and one that may come back to haunt him. On the health-care front, I confess that I've never fully understood the frantic scramble to shut down Obamacare—the name that opponents of the Affordable Care Act gave to the legislation, and meant as a pejorative. There are actually people out there who say they don't want Obamacare—they prefer the Affordable Care Act. All of which is to say: repealing this landmark piece of legislation will serve only to hurt many of the same people who voted for Trump. Do the hopeful citizens of Florida, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania—the states that swung the election in his favor—really think that this administration's collection of billionaires, former bankers, deregulators, and climate-change deniers are going to be looking out for them rather than for themselves and their cronies? I wouldn't be the first to think that we are wading into a quagmire of exceptions, conflicts of interest, and corruption, both financial and moral, which will then be followed by a long, long road to "Trexit"—our president's extraction from the White House. Populists like Trump sweep into office on lies. They are undone by truths. -GRAYDON CARTER



SERIES 6 PHOTOGRAPHED BY BRUCE WEBER



SERIES 6 PHOTOGRAPHED BY BRUCE WEBER



LOUIS VUITTON



# **BEHIND THE SCENES**



# FANTASY LEAGUE

The mood for Annie Leibovitz's cover shoot was feminine and fantastic, reports KRISTA SMITH, as 11 leading ladies frolicked—Pogo sticks! Golf carts! A visit from Don Johnson!—on the Paramount back lot

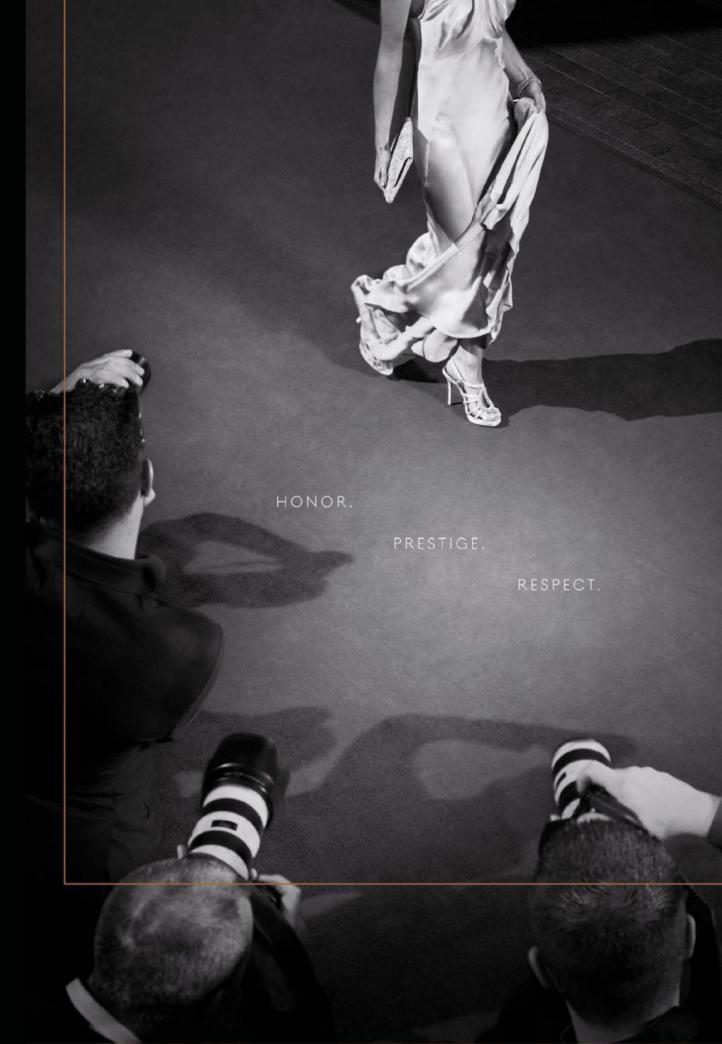
or Vanity Fair's 23rd Hollywood Issue, Annie Leibovitz photographed 11 accomplished actresses, who among them have a total of nine Oscar nominations and two wins, on the back lot at Paramount Studios in a setting inspired by the industry's golden era of cinema. "This year we looked at the young and wildly talented lineup and wanted a bit of femininity—a beautiful, airy palette, almost like a fantasy, to highlight their very distinct individuality," says Jessica Diehl, V.F. creative director, fashion and style. "We were in the mood for beauty, lightness, and romance-the Hollywood we all dream of."

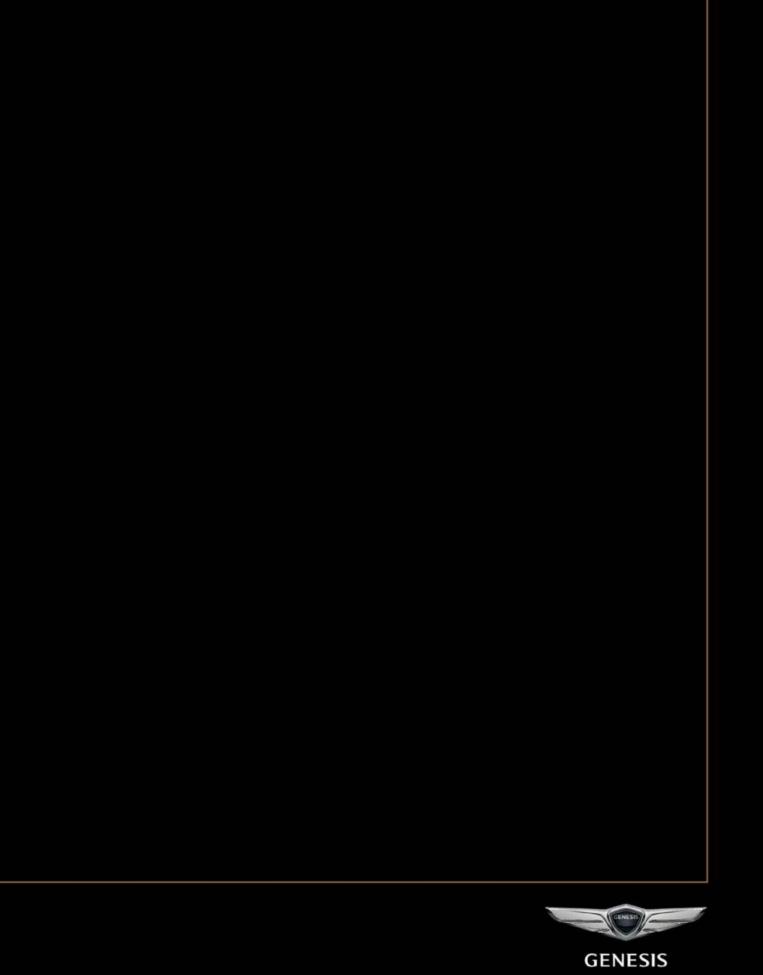
Natalie Portman, who first appeared on the Hollywood cover at age 16, in 1998, was pregnant when she won her



first Oscar, in 2011, for Black Swan. She is again pregnant and the subject of best-actress buzz-this time for playing a bereaved Jackie Kennedy in Pablo Lorraín's unconventional biopic Jackie. (Vanity Fair went to press before the announcement of the 2017 Oscar nominations.) Amy Adams riveted audiences with performances in Arrival, as the linguist Dr. Louise Banks, and in Tom Ford's Nocturnal Animals, as Susan, an art gallerist disillusioned by her life choices. During the photo shoot, Adams and Portman bonded over motherhood (Adams has a six-year-old daughter) and careers.

Lupita Nyong'o continues to establish herself as one of the greats with her performance as the conflicted mother of a young chess phenom in *Queen of Katwe*, based CONTINUED ON PAGE 82







Feeling appreciated shouldn't be reserved for a special occasion, which is why all aspects of our vehi towards the people who drive them. Whether it's Complimentary Service Valet that values our custor safety features standard. At Genesis, it's our mission to deliver an experience that not only surpasses difference in every driver's life. Start your journey with us at Genesis.com.

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cles are created with thoughtfulness ner's time or offering our most advanced expectations, but makes a positive



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 77 on the true story of Ugandan chess champion Phiona Mutesi. She also voiced the character Raksha for Disney's The Jungle Book, and she is joining the Marvel family in the upcoming Black Panther.

Emma Stone sang and danced her way to a Golden Globe best-actress award, bringing her character, Mia, an aspiring artist, to full Technicolor life in Damien Chazelle's La La Land. The film marked her third collaboration with co-star Ryan Gosling, making them a modern Hepburn and Tracy. Be sure to visit VF.com to check out Emma Stone's pogo-stick skills (yes, she jumped around during the photo shoot) as well as the other cover stars' secret talents, ranging from ballet to football.

Fresh off her performance in Ewan Mc-Gregor's adaptation of Philip Roth's Ameri-

can Pastoral, Dakota Fanning poises herself to take on another prized literary work, as star and a producer of The Bell Jar, an adaptation of the Sylvia Plath novel. Younger sister Elle Fanning flew in for the day from the New Orleans set of Sofia Coppola's The Beguiled, a remake of the 1971 Clint Eastwood classic. As Julie, a sexually precocious teenager, in Mike Mills's 20th Century Women and

as Loretta Figgis in Ben Affleck's gangster drama Live by Night, she showed her depth and maturity. Elle and Dakota both required transportation in golf carts to keep their elaborate frocks pristine.

Musician Janelle Monáe transitioned to the screen and dazzled: first in Barry Jenkins's Moonlight as the sympathetic and nurturing girlfriend of a Florida drug dealer, and again in Hidden Figures, a true story about the female African-American mathematicians who were essential to NASA's 1960s space race.

She was joined by two other actresses playing real-life figures: Aja Naomi King, the How to Get Away with Murder actress, delivered a powerhouse performance as Nat Turner's wife, Cherry, in The Birth of a Nation. Ruth Negga, the Irish-Ethiopian actress

from AMC's *Preacher*, is earning rave reviews for her role in Loving. Negga and Joel Edgerton play Mildred and Richard Loving, a Virginia couple who fought for the repeal of laws banning inter-racial marriage.

> ifty Shades of Grey trilogy star Dakota Johnson wins the award for most air miles traveled, arriving on set from Milan. (She was in Italy filming the remake of

Suspiria, which re-unites her with A Bigger Splash director Luca Guadagnino.) Due to her hectic travel schedule, her father, legend Don Johnson, visited our shoot to

@vf.com FOR CANDID MOMENTS FROM our Hollywood cover shoot, visit VF.COM/ HWD2017.

squeeze in time with his busy daughter, to the

delight of all. Actress Greta Gerwig (Jackie and 20th Century Women), fresh from directing a film called Lady Bird, sought to get a different lens on things by shadowing Leibovitz throughout the day.

At times, thanks to the cool music and lively conversation, the shoot ended up feeling a bit like a partyone with a really fun favor: custom Vanity Fair bathrobes. □

# "WE WERE IN THE MOOD FOR THE HOLLYWOOD WE ALL DREAM OF."



# **CLASH OF THE TITANS**

Readers debate pride versus privacy; the sap wars continue; fans find hidden clues in everybody's favorite Christmas movie

t was with great interest that I read David Margolick's "V.C. for Vendetta" [Holiday 2016/2017]. One of my proudest accomplishments has been showing L.G.B.T. youth that one can be "out" and have a happy, successful, and fulfilling life. I might be less sympathetic toward Nick Denton if I had been the subject of any Gawker revelations about my sexuality, but I have no sympathy for Peter Thiel. The "greater philanthropic" things Thiel has done—the "blow for privacy rights" victory claim and being Hogan's sugar daddy-ring hollow.

> WILLIAM T. GULLETTE Escondido, California

argolick describes both Nick Denton and Peter Thiel as "libertarians," yet Denton seems to have engaged in some dangerously un-libertarian thought by exposing Peter Thiel's sexual orientation. Libertarian thought privileges the individual over the collective and attributes to the individual a set of rights-including the right to personal privacy. It seems challenges to freedom can arise just as easily from the private sector as from nation-states.

> F. K. PLOUS Chicago, Illinois

# **SWEET STUFF**

hanks to Rich Cohen for his article "Sticky Business" [Holiday 2016/2017]. His laughter-inducing portrayal of the Canadian cartel was second only to the utter charm conveyed in his description of the chaste Quebec forests.

RACHEL HATCH Normal, Illinois

potless highways where no one tailgates." "Old men in berets eating croissants at McDonald's." I have lived in Quebec for 52 years. Tailgating is effectively the national sport, and I have never encountered anyone wearing a beret and eating a croissant at a McDonald's. But I enjoyed the story!

> HUGH W. NUGENT Ville Lorraine, Quebec

CORRECTION: The portion of the sale price of a barrel of maple syrup kept by the Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers was originally misstated. It is \$54.

# BACK TO BRIDESHEAD

greatly enjoyed Michael Lindsay-Hogg's memoir of our time making Brideshead Revisited ["Brideshead Reunited," December 2016]. Michael Roberts's splendid photo also captures with superb justice the lavishly intimate interior of Castle Howard. Might I point out a very small error. I believe the face contained in the photograph on the far right of the main picture is that of a young John Gielgud rather than a budding Laurence Olivier.

> DEREK GRANGER London, England

# YOU'LL SHOOT YOUR EYE OUT

was fortunate to interview a disgruntled Jean Shepherd around 1990. I asked him about the real meaning of A Christmas Story ["Santa Gets His Claws," by Sam Kashner, Holiday 2016/2017]. He looked at me as though I were daft and stated that it was an anti-war story. He urged me to look closer at the clues: the striped bandits with x's on their eyes, the blimp, the blue ball, and especially the rifle.

> NATALIE HILL Cary, North Carolina

hank you for the story behind A Christmas Story. The anecdote about bully Scut Farkus was enlightening and was made even more effective with the Peter and the Wolf music. "Farkas" in Hungarian means "wolf," and Ralphie was Peter (Billingsley). Did the director do that on purpose? I hope so.

> KAREN COOKSON Sharon Springs, New York

Letters to the editor should be sent electronically with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to letters@vf.com. All requests for back issues should be sent to subscriptions@vf.com All other queries should be sent to vfmail@vf.com. The magazine reserves the right to edit submissions, which may be published or otherwise used in any medium. All submissions become the property of Vanity Fair.

# More from the V.F. MAILBAG



Odds are there are more of you reading this—these letters, this issue, this magazine—than ever before. To which we can only say: Thank you, President-at-Press-Time Trump. Because you may recall there was a little kerfuffle in December in which the then president-elect, possibly reacting to V.F.'s review of the Trump Grill, or possibly by sheer coincidence, tweeted that V.F. had "really poor numbers" and was in "big trouble, dead!" Whereupon V.F. broke Condé Nast's record for most new subscriptions in a single day and, within two weeks, sold a further 75,000 subscriptions. So in a purely circumstantial spirit, we present a selection of mail we received just after the episode, and leave you to draw your own conclusions: "Just expressing my support of your publication in light of Mr. Trump's unseemly screeds directed at you-all. I'm buying multiple copies to distribute to friends" ... "I heard your magazine was experiencing 'really poor numbers,' so I subscribed for two years" ... "If Vanity Fair is the magazine Trump doesn't want me to read, please renew my subscription for the next 30 years!" ... "Thank you for standing up to Trump. I just subscribed and sent gift subscriptions" ... "Never more proud to be a Vanity Fair subscriber!" ... "As long as Mr. Carter, a charter member of Mr. Trump's 'enemies list,' is editor, I will be a very happy subscriber" ... "For the first time since the election, I no longer feel alone."

ILLUSTRATION BY GIACOMO GAMBINERI



New York Miami Las Vegas Beverly Hills South Coast Plaza lanvin.com

# LANVIN

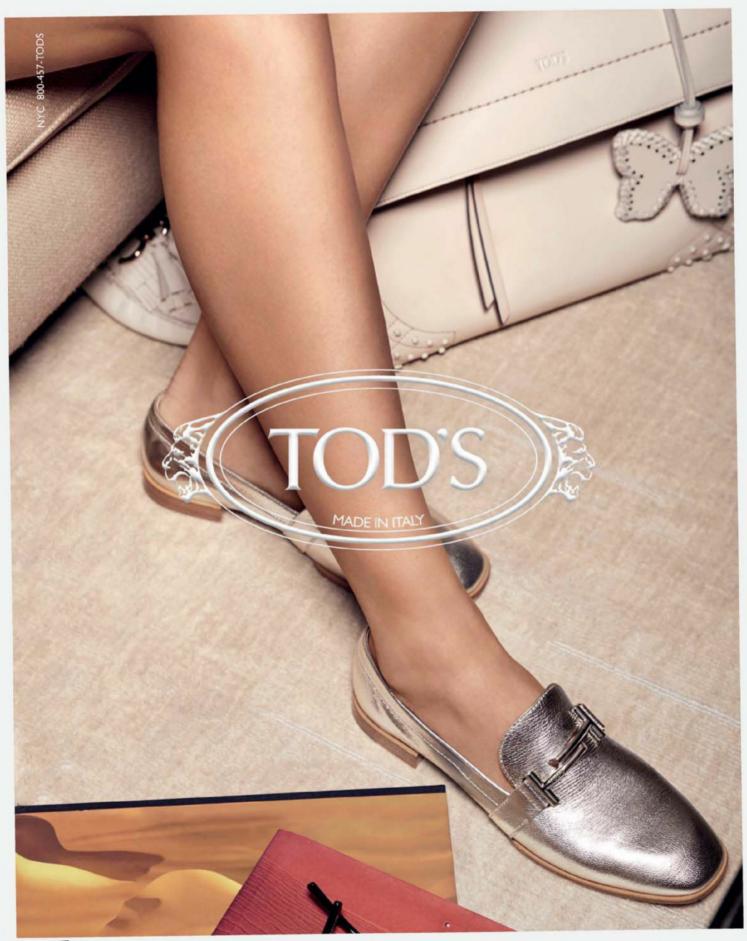


# ATELIER SWAROVSKI LANVIN

ATELIERSWAROVSKI.COM

AGE: 20. PROVENANCE: Oakland, California. THE WORLD'S A STAGE: "I fell in love with theater at a young age. I was that weird eight-year-old who actually appreciated Shakespeare. I loved singing and dancing and putting on performances for my parents," who were both teachers. THE HOUSE THAT MOUSE BUILT: By seventh grade, she had started auditioning in Los Angeles. "I got my first Disney show within six months." After three seasons on the channel's hit show Shake It Up, she went on to star in K.C. Undercover. This talented multi-tasker also serves as one of the show's coproducers. "It's like the best internship you can imagine." MARVEL'S MUSE: Zendaya will be making her big-screen debut as Michelle, Peter Parker's nerdy classmate, in this summer's anticipated reboot Spider-Man: Homecoming. "I auditioned, did my screen test, and waited like everyone else. It was important to me that my first movie be great-I didn't care if I had one line." BREAKING THE MOLD: With her dothing line, record deal, charity work, and upcoming role alongside Hugh Jackman in The Greatest Showman, Zendaya shows no signs of slowing down. More than 55 million social-media followers are watching her every move. "I have a billion dreams, and I want to use my platform to help people. I've been given this power and I have to start conversations that are bigger than myself."

7:00 pm The Show. Beautiful . Who was that model from Rome?



Tods.com







My Place VINNY DOTOLO & JON SHOOK





FAVORITE HOTELS: For us, it's Chateau Marmont and the Beverly Hills Hotel (1). The locations are perfect for giving visitors a little taste of Hollywood living or, if you're local, a great getaway.

FAVORITE RESTAURANT: We love Matsuhisa Beverly Hills (5).

FAVORITE BARS: Tiki-Ti-this is one of the original tiki bars! We also like Musso & Frank Grill, the Roger Room, the Dresden, and the Spare Room.

BEST LOCAL COCKTAILS: A piña colada at the Beverly Hills Hotel pool deck (Jon) and an Aviation at Son of a Gun (Vinny).

THE L.A. LOOK: It's all about casual comfort. A black tee, Joe's Jeans, and James Perse zip-ups (Jon). Limited-edition Nikes or Vans (4) for kicks, hats from Supreme, sweatshirts from Acne Studios (3), and loose-fitting Alexander Wang tees or vintage tees (Vinny).

BEST MUSEUMS: LACMA (2) and the Hammer Museum.

CAN'T BE MISSED: The Hollywood Farmers' Market, an outdoor concert at the Hollywood Bowl or Greek Theatre, driving Mulholland, visiting Venice Beach and Malibu.

HIDDEN GEM: Beverly Hills Juice (6). This tiny shop is the original juice bar in L.A. The Banana Manna Shakes are legendary.

LOCAL FAVORITE: El Chato—amazing taco truck at Olympic and La Brea. You have to try their al pastor tacos.

KEY WORD TO KNOW: "The." E.g., "Take the 110N to the 405N."



McConnell's ice cream-get Peppermint Stick!



HOLLYWOOD 2017



# On the Money

ondon's Midland Bank, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1924, was one of the British Empire's last great architectural statements. Thanks to a partnership between Soho House & Co. and the Sydell Group, the 11-story building has been magnificently reborn as the Ned, a 252-room hotel with nine restaurants as well as a members' club with an array of pools, lounges, and more. The bank's underground vault, with its 3,000 safe-deposit boxes (the inspiration for the interior of Fort Knox in Goldfinger), will be one of London's most riveting bars. -JAMES REGINATO (thened.com)

# Obsessions from Hollywood's A-List Stylists



Micaela Erlanger (Clients: Lupita Nyong'o, Jared Leto)

Dramatic sleeves.

Owls and Other Fantasies: Poems and Essays, by Mary Oliver.

Mules in every form.



Kate Young (Clients: Dakota Johnson, Natalie Portman)

Amaro Montenegro liqueur.

The Carousel of Desire, by Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt.

Le Labo Gaiac 10 fragrance.



Petra Flannery (Clients: Emma Stone, Amy Adams)

Elsa Peretti. In every way.

1960s vintage Venetian Murano glass ashtrays.

The color green.

# Power Play

Master of the universe
Larry Ellison and
famed chef Nobu
Matsuhisa have joined
megawatt forces to
introduce Nobu
Ryokan: an exclusive,
17-suite hotel on
Malibu's "Billionaire's
Beach." Drop the
mic. (noburyokan
malibu.com)

#### EYE ON...

Eveningwear collections to covet:

(1) British women's-wear darling

Giles Deacon finds inspiration in the
celebrated early-20th-century
arts patron Lady Ottoline
Morrell. (giles-deacon.com)

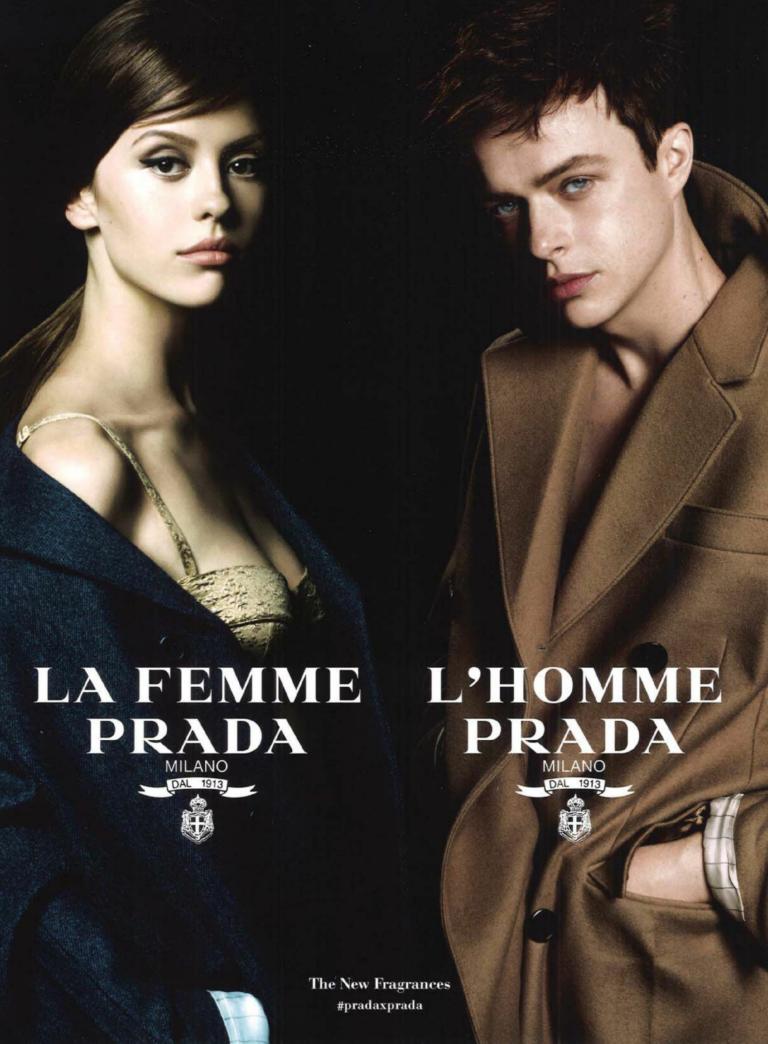
(2) A special Jonathan
Simkhai capsule boasts
meticulously crafted, complex
designs. (jonathansimkhai.com)

(3) Han Chong's flourishing
Self-Portrait label perfectly
blends contemporary
cool with couture flair.
(self-portrait-studio.com)



# HIGH-END HEEL

Italian shoe designer **Gianvito Rossi** has become a red-carpet
and runway favorite for his luxe,
stylish, yet comfortable designs.
And just in time for awards
season, Rossi has introduced
a new color–Praline—to his
massively popular Portofino
sandal. Fashionable,
functional footwear.
(gianvitorossi.com)











Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom and Bloomingdale's

arl Lagerfeld needs no introduction. The designer's trademark personal style is as well known as the designs he produces as creative director of fashion houses Chanel, Fendi, and his own eponymous label. More than six decades

after he began his illustrious fashion career, Lagerfeld is as influential as ever. Herewith, the German-born icon opens the doors to his Paris office, a space he shares with his impeccably chic companion and muse-his cat, Choupette.

# **VANITIES**

My Desk Karl LAGERFELD





PHOTOGRAPH, TOP, BY FABRICE DALL'ANESE/CONTOUR/GETTY IMAGES





he lead-up to Hollywood's biggest event of the year, the Oscars, is a full-blown beauty marathon. To feel your (Academy) award-winning best, here are seven Los Angeles mile markers along the way, which celebrities from Charlize Theron to Taylor Swift are racing to this season. -SUNHEE GRINNELL

# **VANITIES**

Beauty RED-CARPET READY



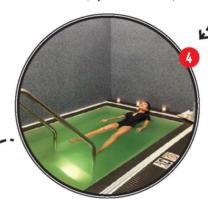
First up, **DMH Aesthetics.** Start with an old celebrity favorite, a B<sub>12</sub> vitamin boost, and then try the cutting-edge LightStim LED light therapy. There are also the massively popular ResurFX Laser treatments and IPL Photofacials. Inner glow takes on a new meaning. (dmhaesthetics.com)

Workout du jour: former ballerina Simone De La Rue, an Australian transplant, blends high-powered dance moves with repetitive strength-training motions at **Body by Simone.** For New Yorkers with a fear of missing out, fret not-she has a studio in Chelsea too. (bodybysimone.com)

Channel your inner Passengers Jennifer Lawrence at Cryohealthcare, where you enter a cryogenic air chamber set between 200 degrees below zero and 256 degrees below zero for three minutes maximum. Cryotherapy, an anti-inflammatory treatment, is the latest West Coast craze to treat muscle pain, reduce cellulite, and more. (cryohealthcare.com)







At Ma Maison de Beauté try the latest collagen-producing treatment for both face and body, aptly called the Venus Legacy. The treatment, quickly becoming a Hollywood obsession, uses 4-D technology to smooth, tighten, and plumpamong other beauty-enhancing verbs. (mamaisonspa.com)

Time for some fitness-friendly math: burn up to 600 calories in 40 minutes while sitting in an infra-red sauna pod (yes, you read that correctly) at SaunaBar. Helps to reduce wrinkles, varicose veins, age spots, and more. (saunabar.com)

Bath time just got real. The Grotto de Sal's Dead Sea pool, complete with 2,000 pounds of salt and 100-degree water-meant to mimic the famed "miracle" water in Jordan's Rift Valley-aids countless ailments from arthritis to psoriasis. (grottodesal.com)





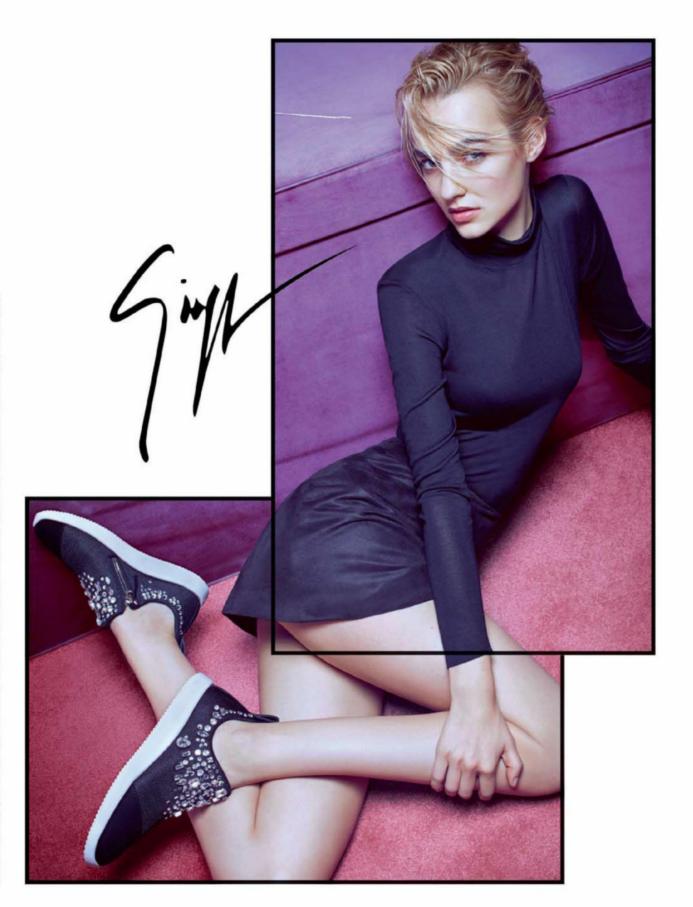
Consult your doctor before undertaking any treatments





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DETAILS, GO TO VF.COM/CREDITS FOR



EVERY BETRAYAL
BEGINS WITH TRUST.

JENNIFER LOPEZ RAY LIOTTA

# SHADES OF BLUE

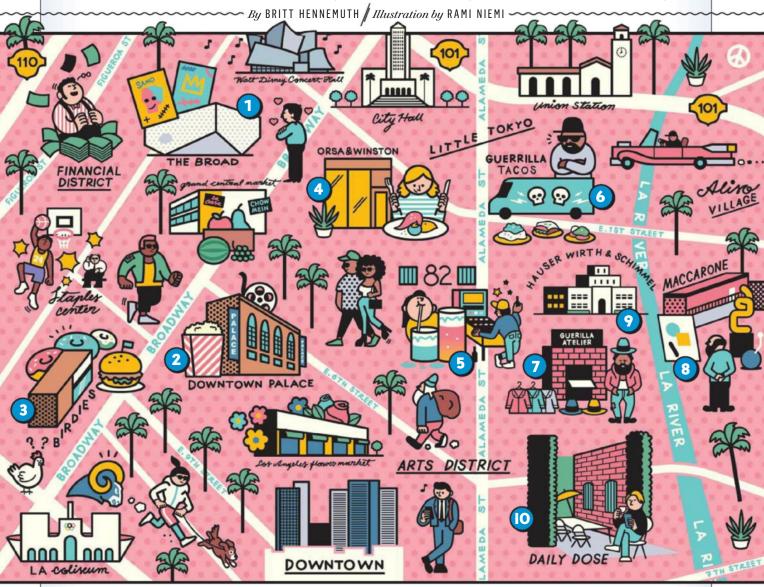
PREMIERE MARCH 5 SUNDAYS 10/9c NBC

AFTER CHICAGO JUSTICE



# Mapping It Out: Downtown L.A.

After years of development, downtown Los Angeles has morphed from an overlooked industrial center into a revitalized culture hub. Thanks to a vibrant art scene and an influx of dining and drinking destinations, the once gritty streets now invite stylish foot traffic in a driver's city



# The Broad

The blue-chip masterpieces of collectors Eli and Edythe Broad are on view for free in downtown's freshest landmark. Next up, the contemporary-art museum will present works by El Anatsui, Julie Mehretu, and others.



Built in 1911 as a vaudeville house, this recently restored movie palace screens classic films and cult favorites.

#### **Birdies**

Sweet meets savory at this hole-in-the-wall serving up two specialties: doughnuts and fried chicken. The shop is open for 24 hours on the weekends, for deep-fried delights around the clock.



#### Orsa & Winston

Here, chef Josef Centeno, who transformed the flavor of downtown with his miniempire of buzzy restaurants, reimagines fine dining with a Japanese-Italian menu.

## **EightyTwo**

Part cocktail bar, part vintage arcade, this Arts District hangout allows anyone with an ID to find the child within.



# Guerrilla Tacos

The food truck known for its inventive tacos-think sea urchin and duck-heart confit-will open a brick-and-mortar location later this year.

# Guerilla Atelier

Shop this sprawling warehouse for an evolving mix of high-end labels and local designers, founded by the unofficial mayor of Rodeo Drive.



#### **Maccarone**

The vast gallery space and sculpture garden provide a spacious setting for works by Carol Bove, Nate Lowman, and others.

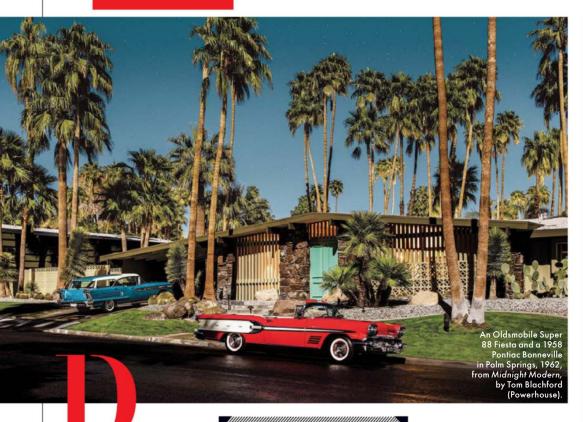


This powerhouse art complex cemented the Arts District's renaissance. Along with the main gallery's exhibitions (through May, L.A. artist Jason Rhoades), there are two bookshops and Manuela, a restaurant with a Texan twang.

# Daily Dose

Tucked down a brick path with ivy-lined walls, this alley café offers a welcome oasis and some of the best sandwiches in town.





Hot Type

ead saints, gnarled roots, abandoned buildings, rusted balconies, single matches, warm skulls. Such images provide the mulch for Mariana Enríquez's slim

but phenomenal Things We Lost in the Fire (Hogarth), wherein a contemporary Argentina grapples with its political future and knotty past. Enriquez tells charmingly-sometimes humorously-macabre tales of children gone missing, teenage girls experimenting with drugs, tragically lost loves, and hotels turned inhospitable. In her hands, the country's inequality, beauty, and corruption tangle together to become a manifestation of our own darkest thoughts and fears. The spookiness of these 12 stories sets into the reader's mind like a jet stone, sparkling through all that darkness.

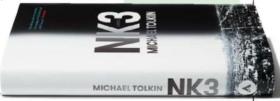
Happy days unclear again: Kay Redfield Jamison delves into the human propensity for melancholy, this time with one human in particular. Robert Lowell, Setting the River on Fire (Knopf) is a study in one genius reaching back in time to unpack the psyche of another. Patricia Bosworth recounts a

glamorously restrictive but never restrictively glamorous 1950s New York in The Men in My Life (Harper). Richard Mason's amateur arborist makes a foray into the forest in Who Killed Piet Barol? (Knopf). Jerome Loving unearths the deep cuts of The Executioner's Song in Jack and Norman (Thomas Dunne). The Nazis move from mugging museums to looting libraries in Anders

Rydell's The Book Thieves (Viking). But Sufi-ce it to say, it's **Brad Gooch** who holds the key to Rumi's Secret (Harper). -SLOANE CROSLEY

# Of Microbes and Men

Michael Tolkin is a soothsayer, an early reader of our psychological topography, and his new book, NK3 (Atlantic Monthly Press), is either the last great Hollywood novel or the first great book of Burning Man. In Tolkin's post-apocalyptic, nanobacterium-plagued near future, the HOLLYWOOD sign presides over a Los Angeles that struggles to carry on in a world where people's memories have been destroyed. Even as a ruin L.A. still has its magic. NK3 is a strangely terrifying if celebratory novel of remnants, fragments, the nag of one's inner voice, and dim reminders of the dissolve that has become America. -A. M. HOMES





#### IN SHORT

Glenn Frankel's High Noon (Bloomsbury) puts Hollywood and Washington on the stand. Iké Udé takes a tour through the radical beauty of Nollywood Portraits (Skira). Not all our children will be raised in Kevin Wilson's Perfect Little World (Ecco). Risible raconteur Jim Shepard imagines The World to Come (Knopf). An immigrant's Civil War years blow through Sebastian Barry's carbine in Days Without End (Viking). Kate Hennessy strings together a rosary of memories for her grandmother Dorothy Day (Scribner). Sabotage and subterfuge collide in Giles Milton's Churchill's Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare (Picador). Bill Hayes is smitten with Oliver Sacks and their Insomniac City (Bloomsbury). Mats Gustafson is the good kind of sketchy for Dior (Rizzoli). Kevin Davis mounts The Brain Defense (Penguin Press). Charles Campisi locks up good cops gone bad in Blue on Blue (Scribner). The Kingdom of Happiness (Touchstone) is upon us in Aimee Groth's Zappos zinger. Ali Smith's first season, Autumn (Pantheon), has arrived, J. M. Coetzee pas de bourrées around The Schooldays of Jesus (Viking). Min Jin Lee's Pachinko (Grand Central) plays with the destiny of one Korean family. Yuval Noah Harari's Homo Deus (Harper) knows what plagues us. The stars align for Lawrence Weschler in Waves Passing in the Night (Bloomsbury). Elan Mastai's natty narrator finds himself in All Our Wrong Todays (Dutton). Viet Thanh Nguyen returns with tales of The Refugees (Grove). Mary Graham makes a power play for The Presidents' Secrets (Yale). Elinor Lipman satirizes suburbia On Turpentine Lane (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). Steven Cohen hedges his bets in **Sheelah Kolhatkar's** Black Edge (Random House). **Joyce Ca** Oates wrote A Book of American Martyrs (Ecco) in the time it took you to read this. - S. C.



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#### What You Should Know About -

A PANOPLY OF ECCENTRIC BIOGRAPHICAL DATA RE: THE ENSEMBLE-COMEDY STANDOUT

o Groundlings, no Saturday Night Live, no Upright Citizens Brigade-the 43-yearold Adam Scott took an atypical path to comedy stardom. A graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, in Pasadena, California, Scott initially landed moonyjuvenile parts in such TV dramas as Party of Five and Six Feet Under. But successive roles in two Judd Apatowproduced movies, Knocked Up and Step Brothers, endeared Scott to the comedy firmament. Since then, he has held his own as the slow-burn linchpin of the ensemble TV sitcoms Party Down and Parks and Recreation, and, with his wife, Naomi, has produced two offbeat, sui generis comic gems: the swingers-gone-awry indie film The Overnight and the Adult Swim series The Greatest Event in Television History, in which he executed frame-by-frame

re-creations of the credit sequences of such 1980s programs as Bosom Buddies and Hart to Hart. This month, Scott re-asserts himself as a gifted straight actor in the HBO limited series Big Little Lies, in which he portrays a dad enmeshed in the toxic, privileged world of afflu-

ent, competitive yummy mummies (played by, among others, Reese Witherspoon, Nicole Kidman, and Laura Dern) who get into one another's business at their children's school. Herewith, some facts and insights gleaned from a long lunch with the adorable, bristly-haired, Lillian-Hoban-drawing-like actor.

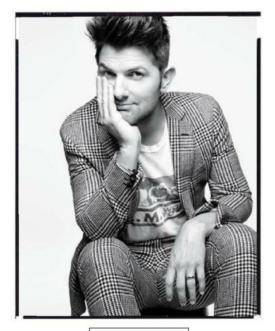
HE COMES by his surname honestly; he is of Scottish heritage on his father's side.

HE IS of Sicilian and Irish heritage on his mother's side. Back when he was at acting school, he considered using his mother's maiden name, Quartararo, as his stage surname, in order to seem more New Yorkauthentic and Method-y. But because "Quartararo" is a mouthful, Scott truncated the name and briefly presented himself as . . . Adam Quardero. HE MADE the mistake of sharing this information with his Party Down castmates, who, whenever Scott had to play a scene even slightly tinctured with seriousness, would declare, "Uh-oh—Quardero is showing up!" HE GREW up in the hippie university town of Santa Cruz, California.

Though his household was not particularly hippie-ish, he was incul-

cated with progressive values when young-"As a seven-year-old, I had definite opinions on Ronald Reagan," he says-and he remembers a "general haze of granola" permeating his childhood.

IN 2014, he filmed a video for Funny or Die in which, playing his schmucky entrepreneur character from Step Brothers, he belittled the



PARTS AND RECREATION Scott, photographed in Culver City.

concept of health insurance while standing in front of an American flag. He had no idea that this bit would prove prescient. HE PERSONALLY pitched the idea for this video to President Barack Obama in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, back when the president was enlisting comic performers to help promote healthcare.gov.

HE HAS girded himself for the Trump administration by setting up monthly payments to the A.C.L.U. and Planned Parenthood.

HIS PARENTS, who divorced when Scott was young, are retired educators. His mother was a special-education teacher at a public school. His father was a biology professor at a junior college.

**HE LIVED** primarily with his mother. He had a tiny black-and-white television in his bedroom, which he semi-surreptitiously kept on deep into the night. It was in this fashion that he discovered David Letter-

man's original Late Night show on NBC.

HE BECAME, in short order, a "Letterman fanatic," watching the program obsessively. In 1987, when he was 14, he was fortunate to travel to New York and take the NBC tour of 30 Rockefeller Plaza.

WHILE IN the building, he spotted Chris Elliott. Beside himself, he chased Elliott down. Elliott was gracious and encouraged Scott to tune in that night, saying, "I'm gonna try something new." Sure enough, in that episode, Elliott unveiled the latest of his many Dada, anti-comedy Late Night characters: his daffy, set-crashing Marlon Brando.

HE IS a die-hard R.E.M. fan who believes that their later albums, recorded after the departure of their drummer, Bill Berry, don't get enough respect. He is especially fond of Up (1998) and Accelerate (2008).

HE WAS unathletic and overweight in his tween years. His peers nicknamed him Spanky, after the portly Our Gang character played by George McFarland.

**HE TRIED** playing Little League baseball but mostly rode the bench. "I sold concessions at my own games," he says, "because I had nothing to do." HE AND his wife are imposing no sports-heroism expectations upon their 10-year-old son, Graham, and their 8-year-old daughter, Frankie. They do, however, hold family karaoke nights. Scott's goto song is "Scenes from an Italian Restaurant."

HE ACTUALLY got to meet and work with Billy Joel while filming the

Greatest Event in Television History episode devoted to Bosom Buddies, whose theme song happens to be Joel's "My Life." After filming wrapped, Joel took Scott and his co-star, Paul Rudd, to a restaurant near Joel's home on Long Island's East End.

HE RECALLS that Joel brought his own clams.

-DAVID KAMP

HE BECAME A "LETTERMAN FANATIC."





THE MOVIE

Since Hollywood helped create Donald Trump, it owes America a cathartic account of his rise. Looking at who might deliver the requisite masterpiece, the author decides on the director for the job (Scorsese? Stone? Sofia Coppola?)

ment business helped inflict Donald Trump on the planet through NBC's The Apprentice and decades of fanning his ego with ostrich plumes, it has a heap of bad Karma to get off its balance sheet. It owes us a major solid, as they say in those "gritty" police dramas. A significant motion picture sometime in the near future (before everything is wiped out) is necessary to help us process our national trauma and try to fathom how a country once inspired by George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Barack Obama woke up from a coma and discovered the Oval Office occupied by an angry mansize Cheez Doodle. To do Trumpzilla justice, the film should be blustery, spectacular, gold-garish, and neopagan, a Circus Maximus Cecil B. DeMille might have whipped up with his riding crop after a fever dream. A tightly reined, atonal trance such as Pablo Larraín's Jackie (compelling as it is) won't do.

ince the entertain-

Trumpzilla has to be more of a horror movie hatched from cur-

rent history. There are classics from the past that give us the Trump phenomenon in embryo, foreshadowings of American authoritarianism with a huckster's grin: A Face in the Crowd, starring Andy Griffith as a

yokel television host who holds the nation captive; The Manchurian Candidate, where the brainwashed soldier of rabid right-wing parents is used as a tool in an assassination plot to install a Communist president; The Devil's Advocate, where a real-estate developer inspired by Trump gets away with murder because he's able to hire the best legal defense, Beelzebub himself. None of these suffices now. In A Face in the

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN McCABE





Crowd. Griffith's "Lonesome" Rhodes loses his hold on the barefoot masses when a live mike broadcasts him referring to his fans as "morons," "guinea pigs," and "miserable slobs." Trump has said he could shoot someone in the middle of Fifth Avenue and still remain popular, so a few overheard epithets wouldn't do him any harm with his rabble fan base. As someone mentioned on Twitter, at least the Manchurian Candidate actually fought in uniform for his country, which is more than Trump ever did. What coder ring and a film-studies degree to figure out what's going on, and why.

Sofia Coppola. A similar caveat might be registered here. A member of a distinguished dynasty of film- and wine-making, Coppola has released the hounds on royal excess (Marie Antoinette) and the pimped-out materialism of the young and jaded (The Bling Ring), which would appear to make her a natural to depict not only big daddy Donald but the entire Addams family (Melania as Morticia). If only Coppola weren't prone to preciosity.

an inside look at the arrest of a French politician and international big cheese, Devereaux (Gérard Depardieu), for the rape of a hotel maid in Manhattan. A fantasia on the Dominique Strauss-Kahn incident of 2011, when the head of the International Monetary Fund was removed from a New York-Paris flight at J.F.K. Airport, arrested, and charged with unlawful imprisonment, a criminal sexual act, and the attempted rape of a maid at the Sofitel hotel in Manhattan (the charges were later dismissed by the judge overseeing the case), Welcome to New York captures the brute force and restless, predatory gluttony of a man unaccustomed to hearing "no" and exercising droit du seigneur at every "grab 'em by the pussy" opportunity. Depardieu, the incredible bulk, dominates every camera shot he's in (especially in silhouette, with his Balzacian head and imposing width), a nocturnal animal growling to be fed. Even in its emasculated, R-rated version, it has an authentic funk and a convincing, intimate feel for life at the top as an interchangeable series of luxury hotel suites and executive offices. Given Ferrara's patchy track record, financial backers may be a bit wary of risking capital on an Abel Ferrara-Donald Trump feature-length fugue

#### TO DO TRUMPZILLA

#### JUSTICE, THE FILM SHOULD BE BLUSTERY, GOLD-GARISH, AND NEO-PAGAN.

The Devil's Advocate tells us about Trump and real-estate moguldom is mostly incidental-it's Al Pacino's vaudeville showmanship at the film's hellfire core.

Those films offered portents. Now that the reckoning has arrived, which director would be dauntless enough for the task? Oliver Stone might seem to be the obvious choice to take on the sperm whale on whom so many fates ride, but a choice that obvious is probably a mistake, a reflex action. The Oliver Stone of 30 years ago, yes; he would have come out with cameras blazing-a high fever of fanatic intensity that is hard to sustain without suffering burnout. The prismatic, time-hopping, obsessive-compulsive attack on history and biography that was so powerfully effective in JFK-a jagged puzzle re-assembling itself with each flashback-has produced diminishing returns in his Nixon, George W. Bush, and Edward Snowden biopics, and the bashing, hedonistic gusto of Any Given Sunday is a distant holler.

aul Thomas Anderson. American movies have many messiahs—one of the benefits of cinephilia as a pagan cultand among them Paul Thomas Anderson has not lost a single golden fleck of godhead status or critical stature, even if things have gotten a little poky at the box office. The director who Hoverboarded through the cocaine-fueled rise and fall of the porn scene in Boogie Nights, unleashed Tom Cruise as a satanic-eyed misogynistic motivational speaker in Magnolia (a vocation Donald Trump might have strapped on in a different life), and endowed Daniel Day-Lewis with mythic grandeur as the oil tycoon in There Will Be Blood could easily mount Donald Trump on his trophy wall. With The Master and Inherent Vice, however, the wizard spells cast by PTA, as the fanboys call him, have turned inscrutable and opaque, darn near Kubrickian, requiring a special de-

Too many of her studies in estrangement (Lost in Translation and Somewhere, especially) are rife with wan wisps of ennui and alienation framed within minimalist compositions that suggest Euro-fancy perfume ads trailing wistfulness in their wake. A Trump movie needs a meatier aroma.

Martin Scorsese. From Mean Streets to Goodfellas to Casino to The Wolf of Wall Street, no chronicler of American thuggery has ever stuffed as much pasta and pastrami into a gallery of psychopaths, or shown so many lids blown off by gunfire, cocaine, paranoia, and howling fits of hysterical laughter, usually provoked by Joe Pesci. If the Rupert Pupkin of Scorsese's The King of Comedy ran for president, we'd be pretty much where we are now, converting the basement into a bomb shelter. But Scorsese works best when he is able to inject his own agitations, animosities, and thorns of Catholic guilt into the sausage casings of his male characters, and I suspect the Trump persona would prove injection-resistant. Based on all outward evidence, his interior life is volcanic rock.

Abel Ferrara. An offbeat choice, but everything about Abel Ferrara is offbeat, improbable, untamable, and legend-obscured. Bronx-born, as religion-soaked as Scorsese, Ferrara started with a double-barreled pulp blast (The Driller Killer and one of the first feminist avenger films, Ms. 45), turned in a pair of testosterone-poisoned psychodramas (Bad Lieutenant and The King of New York), extracted Madonna's best dramatic performance (Dangerous Game), and rolled the dice with a string of films that only a few undead aficionados saw (New Rose Hotel, 'R Xmas, Mary, Go Go Tales, 4:44 Last Day on Earth). With an oeuvre that veers all over the map, what makes me think he might be the one to enter the lion's cage?

Answer: His provocative procedural of bloated privilege, Welcome to New York,

ee Daniels-he could get bankrolled, big-time. It may sound absurd or overly contrarian to propose the director of The Paperboy, Precious, and Lee Daniels' The Butler as the ideal impresario for a Donald Trump monster mash, yet any able-minded viewer watching Daniels's triumphantly over-the-top series Empire on Fox can see the parallels between the sultan kitsch of the Lyon clan and the gilded baroque of Trumpworld, where every room suggests a mouthful of gold fillings. Operating at peak dementia, Empire captures late capitalism in its decadent, melodramatic blow-off phase, just before the temple collapses. The lust;

that exists only in my imagination.

the greed: the unabashed nepotism; the corporate chicanery; the seething vendettas, shifting loyalties, and backstabbings; the obsessive branding

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and shameless product placements-everything about *Empire* could be dipped in white prerogative and converted into Trump Imperiale. Terrence Howard's Lucious Lyon is the closest kin to a hip-hop Trump: ruthless, selfish, reptilian-brained—a slick charmer in seduction mode where Trump projects more of a dry cakeyness. Howard's Lucious isn't a cartoon buffoon-that's what makes him scary, hero-villainous. Whoever does the Trump story will have to inflate him with a grandeur similar to Orson Welles's Charles Foster Kane before pricking a hole in his balloon float. That's where art comes in.  $\Box$ 

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### JAMES AND THE GIANT BREACH

Fighting the shadow of his late father, once Australia's richest man, casino mogul James Packer is facing his third financial crisis. Even more public has been the meltdown of his planned third marriage, to Mariah Carey

By WILLIAM D. COHAN



the biggest fish there by a mile. He's like royalty," says a longtime friend of Australian billionaire James Packer. But when you cut through all the bravado that comes with being the only son of the late Kerry Packer, Australia's largerthan-life media mogul and once the richest man in his country, it's hard not to feel a little bit sorry for James.

Last year turned out to be another very rough time for him. "His selfesteem is the net present value of his assets," another friend once observed.

As 2016 ended, Packer was spending a lot of time holed up at Ellerstina, his spectacular polo ranch outside of Buenos Aires, licking his wounds, far

from the Hollywood limelight he has recently sought so assiduously. (He is one of the three partners, along with director and man-about-town Brett Ratner and Steven Mnuchin-Donald Trump's pick to be the new Treasury secretary-in RatPac-Dune Entertainment, the film-financing entity behind such hits as Mad Max: Fury Road and American Sniper.) As he fights to salvage his reputation and his love life, and tries to weather a bout of intense and unpredictable



risk to his business empire, James has gone silent with the press. In past moments of crisis, according to Packer's longtime friend, he could barely function, ate poorly, put on weight, and sought to sell whatever assets he had in order to stay afloat. "He [became] catatonic," says this friend. "You wouldn't recognize him as a human being."

ronically, last year started out well enough for Packer. In January, after he had been dating the pop singer Mariah Carey for around six months, they announced their engagement. It was a match made in tabloid (if not the real) heaven. "They have a connection that is unparalleled," a source told E! News after the engagement was announced. "It's been a very beautiful experience for them both."

They were photographed together on the red carpet at film premieres, and the paparazzi followed them on Capri, on the streets of Portofino, and coming off his yacht in Mykonos. It was to be the third marriage for both. She is 46 and has five-year-old twins; he is 49 and has three young children.

Ratner introduced them, in Aspen in June 2014, at a premiere of his movie Hercules. "[James] was completely obsessed with her," says a friend who knows Carey well. At the start of 2016, she and her twins moved to Calabasas, California, to be with him in an 18,000-square-foot house they rented for \$250,000 a month. Packer gave her a Van Cleef & Arpels diamond necklace.

In many ways, they were well matched. They both have big egos. They both live peripatetic lifestyles. She travels around the world on concert tours. He shuttles between his yacht and Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, and Israel, where he has invested in tech start-ups and is a personal friend of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's. Packer's fortune, while much diminished, is around \$4.4 billion, according to Forbes. Carey's has been estimated to be more than half a billion.

The couple rang in 2016 together in Melbourne, where Carey performed at one of Packer's casinos. "Spectacular, handsome" was how she described him to the audience, at the start of her show. "I don't even have words for the man who introduced me tonight. We'll just say the amazing Mr. James Packer." She dedicated her performance of the song "Hero" to him. "Mariah showing up was a big deal because he became sort of like the man of the hour," says Carey's friend. One of his ex-wives "was furious because she was throwing this big New Year's party, and she was like, 'Oh my god. I can't believe you're trying to steal my guests."

A few weeks later, at the three-Michelin-star restaurant Eleven Madison Park, in New York. Packer got down on one knee and proposed with a 35-carat emerald-cut diamond ring.

"It was what you call a third act," says Carey's friend. "You know, in your third act you're not necessarily looking for chemistry. You're looking for love and laughter and companionship, someone who is like-minded, who you can spend time with, and you can have conversations and raise your kids together."

The plan was for Packer and Carey to marry on Bora-Bora, on March 1, 2016, since two weeks later Carey was to kick off a 24-city concert tour in Glasgow. Or at least to have a "commitment ceremony," since Carey's divorce papers from television personality Nick Cannon would likely not be finalized in time. that she would get a package of assets worth almost \$1 billion, including \$73 million in shares of his casino company, Crown Resorts, and a substantial amount of cash.

In the meantime, Packer was pushing his executives to re-structure Crown—which owns such properties as the Crown Melbourne casino and hotel, and Crown Perth-in an effort to boost its languishing stock price. He wanted to sell a 49 percent stake in some of Crown's Australian hotels, through an I.P.O., and to split the domestic Australian casino assets

#### "IT WAS WHAT YOU CALL A THIRD ACT. YOU'RE NOT NECESSARILY LOOKING FOR CHEMISTRY."

But a bigger obstacle to their wedding was Packer's decidedly unromantic, 37-page prenuptial agreement. As reported on the Web site TMZ, it stipulated that Carey would have to get by on \$115,385 per week in the event of a divorce: "James will pay Mariah, and Mariah shall accept, \$6 million per year for each full year of marriage, up to a maximum of \$30 million . . . adjusted pro-rata on a weekly basis." Packer also agreed to provide Carey with a credit card "for use by Mariah and staff," with a still-to-be-negotiated monthly limit, and also "use of one private aircraft, of his selection," for Carey's "personal use, or that of her children and nannies," but only when Packer, "in his sole discretion, determines it is appropriate." He agreed as well to buy her clothes, excluding those used for her musical performances.

The pre-nup did not go down well with Carey. "When you give a woman a 37-page pre-nup that reads as a business agreement with a five-year term, that means that you have a five-year plan and you're using Mariah for your five-year plan," says Carey's friend. "It was a business arrangement rather than love. [But] I think Mariah ... was hoping. She understood the business piece of it. She's a sharp cookie, but she wanted it to be love. That's why she uprooted her life, to go to California so he could be closer to his ex-wife and kids," who live in a \$13 million home in Bel Air. (Neither Packer nor Carey agreed to be interviewed for this article.)

At the same time Packer was offending Carey with the pre-nup, he was negotiating two other big deals. By February he had tied up some lingering financial loose ends with his sister, Gretel, regarding their inheritance from their father. Some 10 years after Kerry Packer's death from kidney failure (he had survived his last five years with a kidney donated by his helicopter pilot) and after difficult negotiations, James and Gretel agreed from the international ones. He was hoping investors would appreciate that he was trying to put some distance between Crown and its equity stake in struggling casinos in Macao, including Studio City, a \$3.2 billion Hollywood-themed casino that opened in October 2015. (Packer's hopes for it had once been so high that for the opening he commissioned a \$70 million, 15-minute promotional film, The Audition, directed by Martin Scorsese and starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro, and Brad Pitt, each of whom was reportedly paid \$13 million.)

In August, Packer's holding company sold 35 million shares of Crown into the market, for \$338 million, reducing his stake in Crown to 48.2 percent but still keeping him the company's largest shareholder. It was speculated that the stock sale was part of how he funded the settlement with his sister.

#### **Down Under and Out**

acker has faced existential business crises twice before. The first came at the turn of the millennium, when he was trying to escape his father's long shadow. Kerry Packer had been Australia's most famous businessman-at his zenith more famous than even News Corp.'s Rupert Murdoch, his principal rival. He turned an inherited \$100 million fortune into one worth billions through savvy investments in television, magazines, and casinos. Six feet two, with a girth to match, he was a bull of a man, defiant, even with his doctors, who pleaded with him to lose weight and quit smoking. His passions were polo-he created and nurtured both Ellerstina and Ellerston Polo Club, on the family's 70,000-acre ranch 200 miles north of Sydney, which now rank among the world's most important polo organizations-and gambling. He was reputed to have been the biggest gambler of his day.

With steely nerves and uncanny intuition, he thought nothing of betting \$400,000 on a single hand of blackjack, and there are stories of his losing \$20 million in one night at the Bellagio, in Las Vegas, and \$12.6 million at the Ritz Club, in London. He sometimes won big as well—as much as \$25 million at blackjack and baccarat one night at the MGM Grand.

Packer considered James, his only son, a "mummy's boy," according to James's biographer, Paul Barry. Kerry made him skip college and enter the family business, after a year spent getting toughened up as a "jackeroo" in the outback. "Kerry led James by the nose from a very early age," a family friend told Barry. "[James's] whole life has been about business and materialism. All he cares about is creating wealth and making money because that's all Kerry ever taught him."

Kerry was often dismissive of his son, criticizing him mercilessly, Barry relates. Consequently James was always looking for ways to impress his father with his business acumen. In the 1990s, he championed the Packers' move into casinos at nearly the perfect time, but Kerry gave his son little credit for the idea, and James longed for a way to break out on his own. Against his father's wishes and better judgment, James caught the Internet bug in the late 1990s and invested hundreds of millions of dollars in risky ventures, such as ecorp, an Internet start-up. In June 1999, ecorp went public, with a market capitalization of around \$525 million. It was briefly valued at more than \$3 billion.

Kerry remained skeptical of his son, even though James struck it rich, for a time, with an investment of about \$190,000 in One.Tel, an emerging telecom company. In short order, after One.Tel went public, James's investment was worth \$12 million. At its November 1999 peak, his stake was worth \$160 million. According to Barry, James crowed that these two investments made him rich in his own right. One .Tel's founder, Jodee Rich, later recalled James telling him, "Jodee, I love you. You have bought told a roomful of financial analysts, when James withdrew from the family business.

round this time, James reportedly became involved with Scientology. He was befriended by Tom Cruise, the organization's most famous member. He felt that Cruise was one of the few people who still believed in him. "I think I became depressed and emotionally exhausted, and my [first] marriage [to model Jodhi Meares] had broken up," Packer said in a teary 2013 television interview. "I felt isolated, I felt like a failure, you know. It was not a great time in my life."

After his father died, in December 2005, James took full control of the Packer empire. Less than a year later, he hit the jackpot. In October 2006, he arranged to off-load most of the Packers' remaining media businessesincluding its national television station and scores of magazines, a diverse group that included Woman's Day and Motorcycle Newsinto a joint venture with CVC, a big buyout firm. The deal valued the media assets at \$4.2 billion and allowed Packer to pocket \$2 billion plus another \$1.4 billion after the new company was loaded up with debt and paid him a dividend. It was a stroke of genius. "I've worked with some of the wealthiest people in Australia, and he's one of the most impressive," says his longtime friend. "He's so clinical and dispassionate. He's very strategic."

With the profits he bought a \$38 million mansion in London's Mayfair neighborhood and burnished his reputation as a playboy. He dated a string of models, including Kate Fischer. In June 2007 he married model and sometime singer Erica Baxter, his first wife's best friend, in the South of France. They attended Scientology meetings together, and their wedding was a four-day party, which Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes attended.

The marriage lasted only six years. Afterward, James was reported to have dated Miflashy north end of the Strip. Two months later, he spent \$36 million for a 38 percent stake in a \$5.5 billion plan to build a huge tower and casino next door. He then spent \$242 million for a 5 percent stake in Station Casinos, and he bought a 2.5 percent stake, for \$172 million, in the highly leveraged buyout of Harrah's. He teamed up with Australia's Macquarie Bank to pay \$1.2 billion for one of the biggest casino companies in Canada. For another \$320 million, he bought a 24.5 percent stake in Cannery Casino Resorts, which owned casinos in suburban Las Vegas and a racetrack in Pennsylvania.

His timing couldn't have been worse. By August 2009, a year after the onset of the worst financial crisis in generations, Packer lost everything he had invested in the North American casino businesses, and he took a \$1 billion write-off.

espite the delay in getting the prenuptial agreement negotiated, Packer and Carey continued to make wedding plans. She reportedly consulted four designers on her wedding dress. Plane tickets and hotel reservations were arranged for the guests. Packer sent Carey mash e-mails, according to TMZ. In them, he referred to her as "MCP," Mariah Carey Packer. Under the subject line "Will U marry me soon MCP pls -:))))," he wrote her last August, "I'm in love with you and can't wait to get married and be together forever."

The tabloids followed their romance avidly. On September 8, his birthday, Carey gave him a gold Cartier wedding band. That same month, after she announced she would close her Las Vegas show in May, the couple met up in Greece to discuss their wedding. Packer sailed over from St. Tropez on his Arctic P, a 287-foot icebreaker that his father converted into a yacht. She chartered a 192-foot yacht with a crew of 16, including a chef. At first, things went well enough, if the images of them canoodling are to be believed. She herself posted pictures to her Instagram account of them together, appearing happy.

But then all hell broke loose. Carey was blindsided by an October 27 article on the Web site of Woman's Day, Australia's top weekly magazine, with the headline IT'S OVER: JAMES PACKER DUMPS MARIAH CAREY.

Citing unnamed Packer friends, the article blamed the couple's troubles on everything from Carey's refusal to attend Gretel's 50thbirthday party in Sydney, in August (James did not attend, either), to Carey's "lavish lifestyle" and "over the top spending sprees," to the upcoming Mariah's World, Carey's reality-TV show, on the E! network.

The next day, Carey's P.R. team issued a statement denying that "excessive spending" had caused the breakup. The statement said Carey and Packer were "trying to work it out" but "right now they're not sure if they will stay together." But Packer's people dismissed Carey's version

#### "IT WAS FOR HIM A PUBLICITY STUNT.... IT MADE HIM A HOUSEHOLD NAME.'

me my independence. I am practically a billionaire now without any of my father's money."

Alas, it was not to be. James's Internet gambit imploded after the market crashed in March 2000. Ecorp collapsed, washing away James's gains plus his investment. In May 2001, One.Tel dissolved, costing the Packers around \$220 million. Also, at James's urging, the Packers had invested in another telecom company, in India, which ended up losing them about \$240 million. There will be no more "fuckups," Kerry Packer

randa Kerr, a former Victoria's Secret Angel and Orlando Bloom's ex-wife, who is now engaged to Evan Spiegel, the billionaire cofounder of Snapchat.

Unfortunately, Packer took the winnings from the sale of the family's media businesses and plowed them into more casino assets, investing in Las Vegas, just as the North American gambling market was hitting its all-time peak. In April, he spent \$275 million for a 19.6 percent stake in Fontainebleau Resorts, which was building a \$2.8 billion casino at the less



of events and said the relationship was over. TMZ reported that Carey's people claimed Packer did "something really bad" involving an unnamed assistant to Carey. ("Simply untrue," a Packer spokesman told the New York Post.) Another TMZ report suggested that Packer had grown "jealous of her relationship" with one of her backup dancers, 33-year-old Bryan Tanaka. A source from Carey's camp confirmed that she and Packer had had "a fight" in Greece and had not seen each other since; a Carey "insider" told E! News that "Mariah was in essence an abandoned woman" and had "developed a close relationship" with Tanaka.

Some of this personal drama would subsequently play out on Mariah's World, the first episode of which aired in December. Later episodes would show that Carey had, in fact, been cavorting with Tanaka while she was still engaged to Packer.

The longtime friend of Packer's noted that the billionaire's engagement to Carey was a boon to him. "James got the better of that," he said. "It was for him a publicity stunt.... It's made him a household name." Carey's friend agreed with this assessment: "Why does anyone in Hollywood care about James, other than the fact that he was engaged to Mariah and he's a partner in RatPac? Nobody knew who he was until Mariah."

#### Divorce, Australian-Style

arey's friend thinks the singer was too trusting of Packer's motives, that she honestly believed he loved her. "Mariah really added class to the equation," this person says. "No matter what you say, Mariah is still the highest-selling female artist of all time. Her range goes from Jay Z to Pavarotti.... [James] gets to stand next to her on the red carpet at the GLAAD awards, alongside other high-profile celebrities. Or she's singing for UNICEF, and he's there on the red carpet. It's a big deal. And all of the events that he had her accompany him to-political events, whether it was in Israel or Australia or China or London-and dragging her around . . . really did help elevate his business status. And I was saying to her, 'What are you doing all this shit for? You're not even married. Wait till you're married. You're helping the guy make money. What do you get out of it?"" Privately, her friend says, Carey was angered and hurt by Packer's decision to break up and the way he conveyed it. "The problem is they launched the first missile when they put 'Dumped Mariah Carey' in Woman's Day Australia, thinking they're going to be cocky and call her a gold digger, an opportunist, or an excessive spender."

By then, Packer had bigger concerns than his deteriorating love life. In mid-October, 18 Crown employees-three Australians, one Malaysian, and 14 Chinese nationals-were

"detained" in China, apparently as part of coordinated police raids to crack down on the international soliciting of high-rolling Chinese gamblers to visit foreign casinos. Usually, in China, so-called junket operators arrange trips for Chinese who want to gamble overseas, but Crown was allegedly dispensing with this loophole and soliciting high rollers directly, which is illegal in China. A month later, the three Australians were formally arrested and charged with "gambling crimes." A trial is reportedly pending.

debacle in Times Square. In front of a live audience of about 2 million people, plus more than 20 million or so watching on television, Carey botched two of her biggest hits. It turned out she wasn't really singing them, just lip-synching. When there was a technical problem and she couldn't hear the tracks, she merely held out the microphone, saying, "I'm going to let the audience sing." While the second song played, she managed a few lyrics, and then waited for the music to end. "It just don't get any better," she told the audience.

#### IN PAST MOMENTS OF CRISIS, "YOU WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE HIM AS A HUMAN BEING."

In December, Crown said it was terminating most of the June re-structuring proposal. It also abandoned its latest plan to return to the Las Vegas casino market and announced that it was pulling back from Macao, where Packer had once staked the company's future. Crown agreed to sell, for \$1.2 billion, half of its 27 percent stake in its Macao casino holdings to its longtime local partners, the wealthy Ho family, and immediately followed by selling off another \$218 million of its stake on the public market. Crown further announced that it would refocus on its casinos in Melbourne and Perth-which had suffered a 45 percent drop in high-roller revenues in the previous 23 weeks-and on building a \$1.5 billion casino and hotel in Sydney's new harborfront development, Barangaroo. Just under half the proceeds from the sale of the Macao stock would be used to pay down some of Crown's outstanding debt. Another \$440 million of the proceeds would be paid out in a special dividend to Crown's shareholders, with Packer getting about half the money. "This is a good move, because he is in a pond and he doesn't know how deep it is, and he is swimming for shore," a source told Damon Kitney, at The Australian. "And this gets him to the shoreline."

Carey, meanwhile, wasted no time putting the pieces of her life back together. She still wears the \$10 million engagement ring Packer gave her. (He hasn't asked for it back.) She has pointedly made public appearances in Los Angeles, alongside Nick Cannon and their twins, as well as with Tanaka. Big chunks of Mariah's World were edited to remove scenes with Packer and replace them with those featuring the chiseled Tanaka. "We have no shortage of stories to follow," says Carey's friend. "We have 800 hours of footage and only 8 hours of the special."

But then came Carey's New Year's Eve

Twitter quickly called it "#mariahmeltdown." She tweeted, "Shit happens," and her manager blamed the show's producer.

or his part, Packer has returned to the board of Crown Resorts, a year after stepping aside, and has surrounded himself with his most trusted friends and advisers. A former business associate says that, all things considered, the year could have been a lot worse for Packer: he's likely glad to be rid of Carey, and he's smart to have shed his Las Vegas and Macao holdings in favor of focusing on his casino business in the Australian market, which he knows well. "He's figuring, 'I probably have a little less money than I would've guessed a year and a half ago . . . but my business empire is safe and stable.""

Packer's biggest concern now, his friend says, is what to do about the Barangaroo casino project, which would feature a nearly 900-foot skyscraper and be a striking architectural addition to Sydney Harbor. But if Crown's high-roller numbers continue to fall in the wake of the China crackdown, he'll be faced with the grim prospect of walking away from the project, even though Crown could likely get the financing it needs to complete it.

If he walks away from Barangaroo, his friend says, "it will be a gigantic loss of face for him," because Sydney is "his home and he was building this Taj Mahal." This person pauses and seems genuinely concerned about the forlorn billionaire. Packer is sort of damned if he does, damned if he doesn't. If he walks away, he's a laughingstock, his friend concedes. But to complete the project, Packer will have to load up his company with debt again, likely pushing down Crown's stock price from its already depressed levels. In the past, the friend says, "there's always been another piece of family silver to sell." But not this time. "There's nothing left," he concludes. "It's all on black." □



## DAVID LYNCH'S **DARK ART**

As David Lynch's cult series, Twin Peaks, returns to television after more than 25 years, the author takes a trip down a Lynchian rabbit hole: the Twin Peaks spin-off that never was, the 2001 film Mulholland Drive

By LILI ANOLIK

#### want to talk about any of these things, don't want to talk about Twin Peaks at all, in fact. I want

Peaks this, Twin Peaks that. A new season is coming, courtesy of Showtime, after the last ended 26 years ago, and everybody is once again talking about rooms that are red and lodges that are black, ladies who log and dwarfs who dance. Well, I don't

> to talk about David Lynch's other TV show, his 2001 movie, Mulholland Drive. Only Mulholland Drive is Twin Peaks, or started out that way.

hese days it's Twin

#### The Backstory (or You Want to Know, Don't You?)

t was supposed to be a spin-off. The basic idea was this: Audrey Horne (Sherilyn Fenn), God's gift to saddle shoes and tight sweaters, the sweetest piece of cherry pie in the Pacific Northwest, especially after the death of her classmate and the homecoming queen, Laura Palmer, goes to Hollywood to seek fortune and, of course, fame. Mulholland would premiere at the same time Twin Peaks' third season premiered. There was no Twin Peaks third season, so there was no Mulholland. It hadn't even been born yet and Mulholland Drive was already dead.

In 1998, Tony Krantz, Lynch's television agent turned production partner, persuaded Lynch to bring it back to life. Lynch kept the title but junked the rest, cooking up a new batch of characters and situations. He and Krantz drove to ABC, where Twin Peaks had aired its original 30 episodes, in 1990 and 1991, and delivered a pitch. It sold on the spot. Krantz: "David had them at hello because they wanted to do anything he wanted to do." And then he did it and they discovered that it was the last thing they wanted. Their problem with Lynch's pilot was that it was, well, Lynchian: weird, creepy, slooow. ABC passed. The Thursday nine P.M. slot Lynch had hoped his show and its three unknown leads, Naomi Watts, Laura Elena

Harring, and Justin Theroux, would fill was taken by Wasteland, Kevin Williamson's follow-up to Dawson's Creek. Mulholland *Drive* was even deader than before.

Another resurrection, however, was coming. In the summer of '99, StudioCanal's Pierre Edelman offered to buy the rights to Mulholland from ABC, plus raise an additional \$7 million to turn the pilot into a feature. Lynch accepted. He reconceived the footage he'd already shot, then wrote and filmed 18 new pages of script. Mulholland premiered at Cannes in 2001. While hugely lauded at the time, its reputation has only grown. In fact, according to a number of recent polls, including the prestigious BBC Culture, this two-time loser is the best movie of the 21st century.

Wasteland was canceled after three episodes.

#### The Director (or a Head Above the Rest)

wo things you need to know about David Lynch: he's an Eagle Scout, and he trained as an Abstract Expressionist.

#### The Plot (or I Don't Know Who I Am)

o know what's going on in Mulholland Drive is to ask, What's going on in Mulholland Drive? This isn't a typical movie in which images and narrative support a story that's being told. But one is. The tricky bit is describing it. The feeling is that to do so is to submit to a kind of cinematic Rorschach test, your perception of the inkblot/plot more revealing of you than the inkblot/plot. In other words, it's a sucker's game. And the temptation is to play it safe, tend to the gnomic. To say, for example, that Mulholland is a riddle that cannot be solved. Or a Grimm's fairy tale set in the fantasy capital of the world, a neighborhood that is also a state of mind: Hollywood, California. Or, and now I'm quoting Lynch, "Part One: she found herself inside the perfect mystery. Part Two: a sad illusion. Part Three: love." (Tough to beat Lynch for gnomic.) All of these characterizations are accurate, as far as they go. Which isn't very.

So I'll go farther. Mulholland Drive is a movie in two halves of unequal length. The first two hours-the pilot, roughly-is about a bright-eyed blonde, Betty Elms (Watts), an aspiring actress who moves to Hollywood in the hopes of getting discovered, and encounters a beautiful dark-haired woman (Harring), who calls herself Rita but only because she has to call herself something. Rita, you see, was in a car accident from which she escaped with her life though not her memory. Betty and Rita team up and, like a couple of girl detectives, attempt to answer the question of Rita's identity. The final 30 minutes—the additional footage—is about a down-and-out never-was, Diane Selwyn (Watts), who hires a hit man to kill her treacherous movie-star lover, Camilla Rhodes (Harring). The film's first half is the fantasy of a racked Diane, reimagining her relationship with the now dead Camilla before firing a bullet into her own brain. So far, so comprehensible, right? Wrong. Because the story line I'm explaining I'm really imposing. The scenes and characters could be interpreted, reasonably, persuasively, in any number of ways. or would be if Betty weren't so hopelessly clean-minded.

So Mulholland has more narrative than you can shake a stick at, except actually what it has is the illusion of narrative. And that's how Lynch gets you. You think you know what you're seeing-a film noir, say-only to realize you don't. You think again you know what you're seeing-a Doris Day comedy, say-only to again realize you don't. Add to this Lynch's dialogue, deliberately artificialsounding; his pacing, somnambulant; his

#### ABC'S PROBLEM WITH LYNCH'S PILOT WAS THAT IT WAS, WELL, LYNCHIAN: WEIRD, CREEPY, SLOOOW.

Now I'll go even farther. In fact, I'll go all the way, which is full circle, back to gnomic. The truest description of Mulholland Drive is this: a dream turns into a wet dream turns into a nightmare.

#### The Dream (or Have You Ever Done This Before?)

want to clarify. When I say Mulholland Drive is a dream, I don't mean a dream in that hokey, hack-y it's-alljust-a-dream sense, where the exhilarating or alarming thing that happened actually didn't. I mean a dream in the Freudian roval-road-to-the-unconscious sense, as if Lynch had removed the images projected on the backs of his eyelids and put them up on the screen. And it's why the plot holeswhat's inside that blue box?--and disconnected or semi-connected scenario strandsthe one involving Adam Kesher (Theroux), for instance, the director who's lost control of his film-make not the slightest bit of difference. And it's why Mulholland Drive, so incoherent, coheres perfectly. Dream logic, not narrative logic, is what it follows, and its dream logic is tight, sustained, flawless.

Yet, Mulholland Drive looks like a movie, meaning it looks like a genre movie. Or rather a genres movie. Five of them, by my count, in the first 30 minutes. Rita, a gorgeous amnesiac and shady lady of the night, is right out of a film noir; indeed she takes her name off a poster of Gilda, the 1946 Rita Hayworth vehicle. Betty is a Doris Day role, a Little Miss Sunshine virgin too cheerful and dumb to tweak to the fact that Rock Hudson's gay. Behind a diner, a man is confronted by a monster, dies of fright, in what could be an outtake from a horror picture. The scenes with Adam and the studio flunkies are Hollywood satire. And the way that Betty and Rita meet, Betty walking in on Rita in the shower, is pure dirty-moviemanner of staging and lighting real-world locations so that they appear unreal, beautiful and dire, painterly; and before you know it, you're lulled, hypnotized, slipping into a trance, a dream state. Which is right where he wants you, at his mercy, because at no time are we so vulnerable as in our dreams, our subliminal armor off, in an untidy heap at the foot of the bed, our hearts beating wetly, nakedly in our chests. And that's when the man who once confessed his "fantasy of sneaking into a girl's room, hiding, and observing her through the night" makes his move.

#### The Audition (or the Wet-Dream Part)

he movie's most famous scene comes at the midpoint, when Betty heads to a studio lot to read for a producer. Mulholland's attitude toward show business, ironic, mocking, appalled, has already been established. And the setup here seems to indicate we're in for more of the same. The leading man, Woody Katz, is 20 vears past his prime. The director speaks in pseudo-profundities. And since we heard Betty run the lines earlier with Rita, we know what drivel they are, purest corn melodrama. Woody, clearly using the audition as a chance to grope young female flesh, immediately gets Betty in a clinch. She seems distressed and distressingly polite. And then, all at once, she doesn't seem either. She flips the casting couch around, turning Woody into her prey, and the flat, tired material-a lover's quarrel-into something very exciting, very dangerous-a lover's quarrel that could end in orgasm or murder or both. It's the most effective demonstration imaginable of the power of performance and of make-believe and of the movies. And the room, full of jaded industry folk, is rapt, riveted, turned on.

Betty, too, is turned on. And, afterward, she can't turn off. Sleeping Beauty has had

her sexual awakening, and her carnality is suddenly burning, out of control. I called Betty dumb a few paragraphs ago. In fact, she's smart, though she's smart in the way a child's smart-precocious. Yet in an instant, the moment she takes Woody's hovering hand and presses it into the swell of her hip, she is grown up, is simultaneously participant in and perpetrator of corrupt adult sexuality. At the scene's close, she's shaken, visibly unnerved. Not because she's lost her innocence but because, as she now understands, she never had it in the first place, the dark knowledge in her the whole time. And isn't that exactly what coming-of-age feels like? Soon Betty will be exchanging looks with Adam, and considerably more than that with Rita.

Which brings us to the movie's secondmost-famous scene, Betty and Rita's sex scene, sexy even for a sex scene, the sexiest. The heat generated in the movie so far has been boy-girl. And yet, there have been signs, subtle but definite, that something girlgirl is happening as well-Betty and Rita do touch an awful lot, stand awfully close-and we've picked up on these signs without quite

knowing it. (Lynch, though, of course, did. There was no Betty-Rita romance in the pilot. Harring: "Naomi and I got along very, very well, and we had good chemistry. And there was one time where I sort of spanked her. It was innocent-like with my sisters. But David saw, and I think it sparked the creative process.") So it seems at once out of nowhere and perfectly right when Betty tells Rita, between rapt kisses, "I'm in love with you." This too: Lynch is the best pornographic director America's ever produced, along with the best art-house. How he sees is erotic. His rhythm, slow and sensuous, is erotic. What he does to time, the way he contorts it, makes it seethe, throb, pulsate, so that every beat of it feels charged with fear and desire, is erotic. Mulholland Drive the

road traces its sinuous path through the Santa Monica Mountains, affording spectacular views of Hollywood, home of the movie industry, but also of the San Fernando Valley, home of the porn. And if the geographical separation between the two industries is narrow, the psychological isn't even that, the porn industry overtly about what the movie industry is covertly: sex and fantasy, objectification and exploitation. It's the movie industry without the pretense. Or the hypocrisy.

What the audition scene does too is make us consciously aware of Naomi Watts, like Betty an actress and, like Betty, a new face. We realize that if Betty is this good

Watts must be even better. And the sympathy we felt for Betty-having to walk into that room and, on the spot, mesmerize, bring cold words on a page to dramatic life, and for a group of people whose surface niceness does little to disguise their essential boredom and impatience—we transfer to Watts. Moreover, we intuit that the reason Betty is such a knockout is because of how willing she is to expose herself: simulate first arousal and then shame and self-disgust so convincingly she appears to actually experience arousal, shame, and self-disgust. The psychic toll it takes on her to do what she does feels real, and we know it must be taking the same toll on Watts, who in the role of Betty will be asked to do far more. There's the sex scene, obviously. And, in the movie's second half, as Diane, she must look unloved, unwanted, and so spiritually sick as to seem contagious, not to mention masturbate while weeping, the camera's unblinking eye tight on her anguished face. (So vast is the difference between Watts hopeful and Watts hopeless that I was unsure, the first time I saw the movie, if Betty and Diane were played by

the same actress.) We are voyeurs, so we watch. Of course we watch. But we've been made to understand that by watching we're not just implicated in Betty's/Diane's/ Watts's violation, we're complicit in it. Watching thus becomes a fraught activity, and almost unbearably visceral.

#### Casting (or David Lynch Is BOB)

OB is the demonic entity in Twin Peaks who inhabits souls, including Leland Palmer's, causing Leland to rape and murder his own daughter. The statement in the header is an outrageous one, obviously, and I wasn't entirely serious when I made it. Just half. I don't believe Lynch is demonic, but I do believe he inhabits souls. How else to explain the performances he gets?

Mulholland most importantly, but Lost Highway, Lynch's 1997 L.A.-set neo-noir, first. Lynch has spoken of being under the influence of the O. J. Simpson case when he conceived it. In the role of the Mystery Man, the id of the protagonist, a musician who stabs his wife in a fit of jealous rage, Lynch cast Robert Blake. Blake would give the performance of his career. And four years later he became the

> star in a real-life L.A.-set neo-noir, the biggest since the Simpson case, when his wife, also romantically involved with Marlon Brando's son Christian, was shot outside a restaurant in Studio City. Blake was brought to trial for murder and, though acquitted, was, like Simpson, subsequently found guilty in a civil suit. Lynch's



CHARACTER STUDIES

Above, Lynch on set with Laura Elena Harring and Justin Theroux, 2000. Right, Naomi Watts and Harring.



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casting therefore isn't merely good, it's uncanny, even clairvoyant. Now, I wouldn't go so far as to suggest he be charged as Blake's accomplice. I would suggest, however, that he senses a reality in a person before it happens, one he can animate, activate, inspire.

Wrap your mind around this: Lynch cast Harring and Watts solely on the basis of their head shots and informal interviews. No auditions. There never are with him. Says Mary Sweeney, Lynch's editor, producer, and ex-wife, "David doesn't think about actors think about that "somehow." That "somehow" is key, monumental even. Because how, how, without any actual evidence, could he know? Is it because he understood, in his hyper-intuitive, shaman-esque way, that she was already living it? Watts, then 30, had been a professional actress for 13 years. But unlike her best friend, Nicole Kidman, she had yet to click. Ray: "I was shocked when people asked me afterward, 'How did you find Naomi?' I'd known how brilliant Naomi was for years. I brought her in for everything.

were legendary, phoned Lynch before he was cast insisting, "I am Frank." And he was. As the Oedipally fixated, amyl-nitrite-huffing gangster tormenting Isabella Rossellini, he's more than convincing, he's electric. Watching the movie, you sense that at any moment he might leap from the screen, punch your lights out. With Hopper, as with Watts, there's something authentically primal, authentically primitive going on, which is why it's impossible to take your eyes off them. Or shake them. Frank Booth and Betty/Diane follow you out of the theater.

#### I DON'T BELIEVE LYNCH IS DEMONIC, BUT I DO BELIEVE HE INHABITS SOULS.

while he's writing his characters. When he looks at an actor's picture, he gets a feeling, and it needs to match his feeling about the character." Which it did with Harring, perfectly, three cherries in a row. Johanna Ray, Lynch's longtime casting director: "Oh, David went crazy for Laura's photo. He didn't want to see anyone else's." It's not hard to fathom why. Harring embodies a kind of pure sexual glamour that's rare these days. She's the second coming of Rita Hayworth, basically. Not just in looks-smoky yet vivid, ambiguous-but background as well. Actually, the background is more Gilda than Havworth: moved from Mexico to the U.S. at 11. hit by a stray bullet from a drive-by shooting at 12, Miss El Paso, then Miss Texas, then Miss America, marries the great-greatgrandson of Otto von Bismarck, a count, divorces him a few years later, though retains the title, and on to Hollywood. Very mysterious. Very noir. Something about Lynch I've left unstated but will now state: he has an aeolian-lyre quality. Meaning he's highly receptive to vibrations, viz., the spanking. And he requires an actor who can also catch a mood quickly. His direction to Harring was indirect, evocative: "David speaks in metaphors. When I was Rita, wounded and tormented, he said, 'Walk like a broken doll.' And then, when I was Camilla, the powerful one, he said, 'Walk like a kitty cat,' and that's all he said. I knew exactly what he meant, though-slow-moving, feminine, drive men crazy."

As Rita/Camilla, Harring is iconographic. She's a femme fatale, doubly so-first a femme who seems fated to die, then a femme who seems fated to cause others to die. As the one in the femme fatale's thrall. Watts has the more difficult task. Betty/Diane is a wildly, fantastically demanding role. Yet somehow Lynch knew she could handle it. Now, I'd like you to take a second and I didn't realize the extent until I looked back at photos of my old auditions. She's in nearly every one. Only she wasn't getting the parts she deserved. And she was feeling so hopeless about her career she'd made the decision to give up acting when she got the call on Mulholland." Watts confirms: "It was bleak. I kept getting rejected. The feedback was that I was too intense. I was in New York with my family when I heard that David wanted to meet, and it was like, My God, the last time I changed my plans to go to an audition, I looked up and saw that the director actually had his eyes closed, was having a nap. I got a cheap ticket, went straight from the airport to Johanna's office. I noticed that David was asking me questions, looking me in the eye. I felt like I was talking to a person, not somebody I had to fight to convince that I was right for the part. He was able to see beyond that mood I'd been bringing into the room and freaking people out with. He just opened me up."

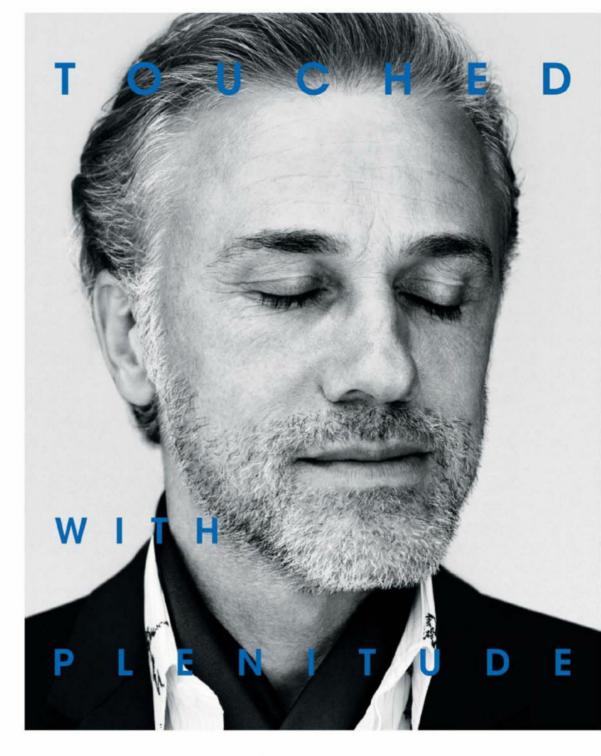
So, an actress who feels she's failed as an actress plays a failed actress and is so extraordinary in the role she becomes a star. You could call that irony or you could call it something else. You could perhaps call it David Lynch, because the director seems to have an instinctive grasp, unparalleled, of how to fuse actor and role. I'm not so naïve or demented as to imagine Watts was simply playing herself in Mulholland. Actors who haven't made it account for half the population in L.A. Very few could do what Watts did. Moreover, in the years since, Watts has given a number of fine performances in other films. Her performance as Betty/Diane, however, is, I would argue, qualitatively different. It doesn't feel like a performance. It feels rawer, realer, beyond skill or artistry. The same is true of Dennis Hopper's performance as Frank Booth in Blue Velvet. Hopper, whose problems with drugs and women

#### The Back of the Backstory (or Hey, Pretty Girl, Time to Wake Up)

said that Mulholland Drive began with Twin Peaks, but I didn't say what Twin Peaks began with. David Lynch and Twin Peaks' co-creator Mark Frost first collaborated on Goddess, an adaptation of a Marilyn Monroe biography that focused on Monroe's final troubled days. Goddess was eventually put into turnaround, and Lynch and Frost moved on. Maybe, though, Lynch didn't. Monroe, after all, is the ultimate blonde in peril in Hollywood. She was a film actress who was also a capital-A Adult actress. (Don't forget, she started in nude pictures, and the source of her appeal was always pornographic-those twin peaks of hers that an entire generation of men aspired to climb-an idea she kidded, the real source of her appeal.) She's the foster child who had nothing, got everything, and yet ended up with nothing. She's the teen bride of a sheet-metal worker who went on to marry a sports hero, a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, to seduce the president of the United States, and who killed herself in an empty bed, same as Diane. She's what every Betty hopes and fears to be: a movie star who becomes immortal, but only by dying while she's still young and beautiful, before her promise is broken or our feelings about her can be resolved, leaving us wanting more, more, more. She's Los Angeles's angel, the Angel of Death, and she'll haunt us forever.

#### No, No, David Lynch Is Actually Rita

lease note: I'm not saying Lynch is Harring's second incarnation, Camilla, Woman the Destroyer, and unequivocally bad news. I'm saying he's Harring's first, Rita, neither good nor the opposite, in trouble though maybe trouble too, someone whose real self is unknown to us. And we're Betty, so far gone on his beauty and his mystery and his dark, sultry glamour we surrender to him totally, invite him into our aunt's apartment, run afoul of underworld figures, skip out on the director who could make us a star. We tell him we're in love with him, and he doesn't say the words back. But he doesn't stop kissing us either. □





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#### **VANITY FAIR**



#### Emma STONE

24 films, including *La La Land* (2016) and *Battle of the Sexes* (2017).

Acting chops matter most, but adorability never hurts, and this Emma Stone has in tidy supply. A natural blonde, Stone has registered her greatest impact on-screen as a scorchy redhead, first in Superbad, later setting the high-school halls abuzz in Easy A, finding romance in the inexplicably titled Crazy, Stupid, Love, and co-starring in a pair of Woodys (charming Colin Firth in Magic in the Moonlight and jostling Joaquin Phoenix's moody moods in Irrational Man). Restored to blondeness, Stone played the uncharacteristically abrasive part of the wounded, resentful daughter in Birdman, a small volcanic eruption that earned her an Academy Award nomination for best supporting actress. Stone finds herself in the Oscar steeplechase again this year after winning the Golden Globe for best actress in a musical for her swirly, ardent luminance in La La Land, a valentine to Hollywood musicals and the Los Angeles dusk directed by Damien Chazelle (Whiplash), which re-teams her with Crazy, Stupid, Love manwich Ryan Gosling. A sensation at the Venice Film Festival, La La Land was named best picture by the New York Film Critics Circle, that finicky tribe of cannibals.

STONE WEARS CLOTHING BY MAX MARA; HAT BY HAT ATTACK; HAIR PRODUCTS BY L'ORÉAL PARIS; MAKEUP BY CHANEL; NAIL ENAMEL BY DEBORAH LIPPMANN.

The 11 actresses posing for ANNIE LEIBOVITZ have riveted moviegoers this year, in a



# Natalie

37 films, including Jackie (2016); one Academy Award.

A super-concentrated packet whose features have the precision of an X-Acto knife, Natalie Portman literally and figuratively blasted out of the box as a pubescent punkette assassin in The Professional (1994) and hasn't taken a breather since, working with the top stratum of directors in a carousel of genres ranging from costume drama (The Other Boleyn Girl) to space opera (the Star Wars prequel trilogy), to mirror-splintering psychodrama (Black Swan, for which she won the Academy Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role). And now, dominating the camera frame while scarcely moving a facial muscle (Garbo-esque close-ups galore), is her command performance as Jackie Kennedy in Pablo Larraín's Jackie, a master class in how to use deportment, etiquette, feathery enunciation, and impeccable fashion taste to ward off chaos and the howling wolves of grief. From Jackie's blood-spattered pink Chanel-styled suit to her widow's black veil and mourning dress as she staggers through the milky-white mist of Arlington National Cemetery, the film is iconography in sleepwalk motion, history as a trance state.

> PORTMAN'S HAIR PRODUCTS BY KÉRASTASE PARIS; MAKEUP BY DIOR.

elp us, Obi-Wan Kenobi—you're our only hope," went the distress call beamed from Earth into the distant heavens after the election of Donald Trump, but no answer or hope has been forthcoming. Carrie Fisher, whose Princess Leia summoned Obi-Wan at the beginning of Star Wars, died in late December; the next day her mother, Debbie Reynolds, one of the last vibrant links to the classic MGM of commissaries and contract players, died, possibly from a stroke—two generations of stardom, two Hollywood eras, laid to rest in 2016's final coup de grâce. Witty to the end (and beyond), Fisher exited this world with her cremation ashes preserved in a giant Prozac pill. The perfect symbol: a giant Prozac is what we'd all like to pop right about now.

Movies, with their cultural ESP, sensed the disturbance in the Force in 2016. The films represented by the superlative actresses in this year's Hollywood Portfolio offer intimate studies of resilience, pluck, faded glory, and the everyday heroics of forging ahead against backward pressure. Even the seemingly happy-go-lucky dancing-romancing La La Land, which tucked away seven Golden Globes, has melancholy weighing in the background. Movies have always thrived on adversity (the Depression, Vietnam, Watergate), and there'll be no shortage of that on tap in the fight ahead. So: Heroines, assemble!





3 films, including *Moonlight* and *Hidden Figures* (2016).

The Afro-futurist musical artist Janelle Monáe, whose 2010 album, The ArchAndroid, established her pro-android aesthetic and politique ("The 'android' represents the new 'other,'" she explained), enjoyed a rookie year as an actress in 2016 that would be the envy of any humanbot. In the haunting triptych of fragility and identity Moonlight, she is Teresa, the drug dealer's girlfriend with a consoling heart and keen emotional radar; in Hidden Figures, she's Mary, the youngest member of a trio of unsung female African-American mathematicians working behind the scenes at NASA to keep John Glenn's Mercury capsule from collapsing like a soda can on launch and re-entry. Equally at ease with Moonlight's elliptical pauses and Hidden Figures' expository prose, Monáe showed she could handle anything thrown at her

> MONÁE WEARS A SUIT BY ALTUZARRA; SHOES BY CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN; EARRINGS BY TIFFANY & CO.; MAKEUP AND NAIL ENAMEL BY COVERGIRL.

and bat it over the wall.

HOLLYWOOD 2017













# Greta GERWG 14 films, including Jackie and 20th Century Women (2016). A screwball heroine with

a lot of topspin, Greta Gerwig is at her best playing agitators and instigators—taking Lola Kirke under her erratic wing in Mistress America, creating a junior-miss version of Miss Jean Brodie in Whit Stillman's Damsels in Distress, hatching a scheme to unload her pretentious married boyfriend back onto his wife in Rebecca Miller's Maggie's Plan, and driving Al Pacino out of what's left of his woolly mind in The Humbling. Her gyrating and instigating are beautifully fused in Mike Mills's 20th Century Women, in which she plays Abbie, a soul-hungry Woody Woodpecker punkhead in a Lou Reed T-shirt who spazzes out to Talking Heads and the Clash, takes her teenage roomie to the nearest mosh pit, and conducts a blunt tutorial on menstruation at a dinner party presided over by a squinty and supremely unamused Annette Bening (never greater). Gerwig can also be seen in the recently released Jackie, consoling and advising the grief-stricken First Lady, a guardian angel in a brunette bouffant.

GERWIG WEARS A COAT BY THE ROW; DRESS BY RAG & BONE; SHOES BY STUART WEITZMAN; HAIR PRODUCTS BY ORIBE; MAKEUP BY TOM FORD BEAUTY; NAIL ENAMEL BY DEBORAH LIPPMANN.





Plmy ADAMS

36 films, including Nocturnal Animals and Arrival (2016).

An air of expectancy is what Amy Adams has brought to the movies ever since her breakthrough, in Junebug (2005), an avid acceptance of come-what-may that made her exiled princess in Enchanted such a piquant charmer. The most un-showy of actresses, a smooth canvas each time out, Adams buoys nearly every movie she's in, her ready calm establishing an oasis amid the testosterone sweatbox of The Fighter and the hurly-burly of American Hustle (both directed by David O. Russell), keeping the multi-narrative crisscrosses of Tom Ford's Nocturnal Animals on track, and elevating her performance in the critical and box-office hit Arrival-Denis Villeneuve's Jungian science-fiction meditation, in which the aliens communicate through enso ink circles, as if blowing Zen smoke rings-to a state of grace. She's been nominated five times for an Oscar: perhaps this will be the year-finally!-that she gets to lug one home.

ADAMS WEARS A DRESS BY PRADA; HAIR PRODUCTS BY ORIBE; MAKEUP BY TOM FORD BEAUTY.



Hollywood thinks it is threatened by technology. In fact, the battle is two-decade low and profits dwindling, the kind of disruption that hit music, business. From A.I. Aaron Sorkin to C.G.I. actors to

# ROUKS. END over—and Silicon Valley has won. With theater attendance at a publishing, and other industries is already reshaping the entertainment algorithmic editing, NICK BILTON explores what lies ahead

# I. The Raindrop Moment



months ago, the vision of Hollywood's economic future came into terrifyingly full and rare clarity. I was standing on the set of a relatively small production, in Burbank, just north of Los Angeles, talking to a screenwriter about how inefficient the film-and-TV business appeared to have become. Before us, after all, stood some 200 members of the crew, who were milling about in various capacities, checking on lighting or setting up tents, but mainly futzing with their smartphones, passing time, or nibbling on snacks from the craft-service tents. When I commented to the screenwriter that such a scene might give a Silicon Valley venture capitalist a stroke on account of the apparent unused labor and excessive cost involved in staging such a production—which itself was statistically uncertain of success—he merely laughed and rolled his eyes. "You have no idea," he told me.

After a brief pause, he relayed a recent anecdote, from the set of a network show, that was even more terrifying: The production was shooting a scene in the fover of a law firm, which the lead rushed into from the rain to utter some line that this screenwriter had composed. After an early take, the director yelled "Cut," and this screenwriter, as is customary, ambled off to the side with the actor to offer a comment on his delivery. As they stood there chatting, the screenwriter noticed that a tiny droplet of rain remained on the actor's shoulder. Politely, as they spoke, he brushed it off. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, an employee from the production's wardrobe department rushed over to berate him. "That is not your job," she scolded. "That is my job."

The screenwriter was stunned. But he had also worked in Hollywood long enough to understand what she was really saying: quite literally, wiping rain off an actor's wardrobe was her job-a job that was well paid and protected by a union. And as with the other couple of hundred people on set, only she could perform it.

This raindrop moment, and the countless similar incidents that I've observed on sets or heard about from people I've met in the industry, may seem harmless and ridiculous enough on its face. But it reinforces an eventuality that seems both increasingly obvious and uncomfortable—one that might occur to you every time you stream Fringe or watch a former ingénue try to re-invent herself as a social-media icon or athleisure-wear founder: Hollywood, as we once knew it, is over.

n the mid-90s, the first time I downloaded an MP3. I realized that the music industry was in grave trouble. People who were my age (I wasn't old enough to legally drink yet) didn't want to spend \$20 on a whole compact disc when all we coveted was a single song on the album. Moreover, we wanted our music immediately: we preferred to download it (illegally) from Napster or eventually (legally) from iTunes without the hassle of finding the nearest Sam Goody. It turned out that this proclivity for efficiency customizing your music and facilitating the point of sale—was far from a generational instinct. It explains why the music industry is roughly half the size it was one decade ago.

These preferences weren't confined to music, either. I also felt the raindrop moment firsthand when I began working at The New York Times, in the early 2000s. Back then, the newspaper's Web site was treated like a vagrant, banished to a separate building blocks away from the paper's newsroom on West 43rd Street. Up-andcoming blogs-Gizmodo, Instapundit, and Daily Kos, which were setting the stage for bigger and more advanced entities, such as Business Insider and BuzzFeed-were simultaneously springing up across the country. Yet they were largely ignored by the Times as well as by editors and publishers at other news outlets. More often than not, tech-related advances-including e-readers and free online blogging platforms, such as WordPress and Tumblr-were laughed at as drivel by the entire industry, just as Napster had been years earlier.

Of course, the same logic that had decimated music would undermine print publishing: readers didn't want to travel to a newsstand to buy a whole newspaper when they were interested only in one story or two. And, in so many cases, they really didn't care

all that much whose byline was at the top of the piece. Subsequently, newspaper advertising revenues fell from \$67 billion in 2000 to \$19.9 billion in 2014. Meanwhile, the same pummeling occurred in the book-publishing world. Many consumers didn't want hardcover books for \$25 when digital versions were available for \$9.99. An algorithm generally provided better suggestions than an actual in-store clerk. And consumers never had to leave home to get the book they wanted. Amazon, knowing this, eviscerated the business. While print sales have finally leveled out (largely through a reliance on science fiction and fantasy), the industry has seen sales fall precipitously over the past decade.

Hollywood, these days, seems remarkably poised for a similar disruption. Its audiences increasingly prefer on-demand content, its labor is costly, and margins are shrinking. Yet when I ask people in Hollywood if they fear such a fate, their response is generally one of defiance. Film executives are smart and nimble, but many also assert that what they do is so specialized that it can't be compared to the sea changes in other disrupted media. "We're different," one producer recently told me. "No one can do what we do."

That response, it's worth recalling, is what many editors and record producers once said. And the numbers reinforce the logic. Movie-theater attendance is down to a 19-year low, with revenues hovering slightly above \$10 billion-or about what Amazon's, Facebook's, or Apple's stock might move in a single day. DreamWorks Animation was sold to Comcast for a relatively meager \$3.8 billion. Paramount was recently valued at about \$10 billion, approximately the same price as when Sumner Redstone acquired it, more than 20 years ago, in a bidding war against Barry Diller. Between 2007 and 2011, overall profits for the big-five movie studios-Twentieth Century Fox, Warner Bros., Paramount Pictures, Universal Pictures, and Disney-fell by 40 percent. Studios now account for less than 10 percent of their parent companies' profits. By 2020, according to some forecasts, that share will fall to around 5 percent. (Disney, partly owing to Star Wars and its other successful franchises, is likely to be a notable outlier.)

Show business, in many ways, has entered a vicious cycle set off by larger economic forces. Some 70 percent of box office comes from abroad, which means that studios must traffic in the sort of blow-'em-up action films and comic-book thrillers that translate easily enough to Mandarin. Or in reboots and sequels that rely on existing intellectual property. But even that formula has dried up. Chinese firms, including Dalian Wanda, are rabidly acquiring companies such as Legendary Entertainment,

AMC, and Carmike Cinemas, a smaller theater chain, with an apparent goal of learning how Hollywood does what it does so China can do it better. As *The Wall Street Journal* reported last summer, more sequels bombed than did not. *Fortune* called it "a summer of big flops." MGM's *Ben-Hur*, which was produced by Mark Burnett, cost \$100 million and yet grossed only \$11 million in its opening weekend.

But the real threat isn't China. It's Silicon Valley. Hollywood, in its over-reliance on franchises, has ceded the vast majority of the more stimulating content to premium networks and over-the-top services such as HBO and Showtime, and, increasingly, digital-native platforms such as Netflix and Amazon. These companies also have access to analytics tools that Hollywood could never fathom, and an allergy to its inefficiency. Few have seen the change as closely as Diller himself, who went from running Paramount and Fox to building his own tech empire, IAC. "I don't know why anyone would want a movie company today," Diller said at Vanity Fair's New Establishment Summit in October. "They don't make movies; they make hats and whistles." (Half of the people in the audience, likely representing the tech industry, laughed at this quip; the other half, from Hollywood, cringed.) When I spoke to Mike Moritz, the iconic venture capitalist, backstage at the event, he noted that a nominal investment in a somewhat successful tech company could generate more money than Hollywood's top-grossing movies. "In my mind," he said, "Hollywood is dying."

# II. Here Comes Facebook

art of the problem, it seems, is that Hollywood still views its interlopers from the north as rivals. In reality, though, Silicon Valley has already won. It's just that Hollywood hasn't quite figured it out yet.

When Netflix started creating its own content, in 2013, it shook the industry. The scariest part for entertainment executives wasn't simply that Netflix was shooting and

bankrolling TV and film projects, essentially rendering irrelevant the line between the two. (Indeed, what's a movie without a theater? Or a show that comes available in a set of a dozen episodes?) The real threat was that Netflix was doing it all with the power of computing. Soon after *House of Cards'* remarkable debut, the late David Carr presciently noted in the *Times*, "The spooky part ...? Executives at the company knew it would be a hit before anyone shouted 'action.' Big bets are now being informed by Big Data."

Carr's point underscores a larger, more significant trend. Netflix is competing not so much with the established Hollywood infrastructure as with its real nemeses: Facebook, Apple, Google (the parent company of YouTube), and others. There was a time not long ago when technology companies appeared to stay in their lanes, so to speak: Apple made computers; Google engineered search; Microsoft focused on office software. It was all genial enough that the C.E.O. of one tech giant could sit on the board of another, as Google's Eric Schmidt did at Apple.

These days, however, all the major tech companies are competing viciously for the same thing: your attention. Four years after the debut of House of Cards, Netflix, which earned an astounding 54 Emmy nominations in 2016, is spending \$6 billion a year on original content. Amazon isn't far behind. Apple, Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat are all experimenting with original content of their own. Microsoft owns one of the most profitable products in your living room, the Xbox, a gaming platform that is also a hub for TV, film, and social media. As The Hollywood Reporter noted this year, traditional TV executives are petrified that Netflix and its ilk will continue to pour money into original shows and films and continue to lap up the small puddle of creative talent in the industry. In July, at a meeting of the Television Critics Association in Beverly Hills, FX Networks' president, John Landgraf, said, "I think it would be bad for storytellers in general if one company was able to seize a 40, 50, 60 percent share in storytelling."

t would be wrong, however, to view this trend as an apocalypse. This is only the beginning of the disruption. So far, Netflix has merely managed to get DVDs to people more quickly (via streaming), disrupt the business plan of the traditional oncea-week, ad-supported television show, and help solidify the verb "binge" in today's culture. The laborious and inefficient way shows and films are still made has not been significantly altered. That set I visited in Los Angeles with its 200 workers wasn't for an NBC or FX show; it was actually a production for a streaming service. The same waste and bloated budgets exist across the entire industry. To put the atrophy into perspective, a single episode of a typically modest television show can cost \$3 million to shoot and produce. By comparison, a

typical start-up in Silicon Valley will raise

that much to run a team of engineers and

servers for two years.

But all those TV workers feel as if they are in safe harbor, given that the production side of a project is protected by the unions—there's the P.G.A., D.G.A., W.G.A., SAG-AFTRA, M.P.E.G., and I.C.G., to name just a few. These unions, however, are actually unlikely to pose a significant, or lasting, protection. Newspaper guilds have been steadily vanquished in the past decade. They may have prevented people from losing jobs immediately, but in the end they have been complicit in big buyouts that have shrunk the newspaper industry's workforce by 56 percent since 2000. Moreover, start-ups see entrenched government regulation, and inert unions, not so much as impediments but as one more thing to disrupt. Uber and Lyft have largely dominated unions and regulators as they have spread around the world. Unions did not impede Airbnb from growing across American cities. (The company has 2.3 million listings in 34,000 cities.) Google, Facebook, ad-tech giants, and countless others have all but stampeded demands for increased privacy online from groups such as the A.C.L.U. And that's just to cite the most obvious examples. In the 1950s, CONTINUED ON PAGE 193

# "IN MY MIND, HOLLYWOOD IS DYING," MIKE MORITZ TOLD ME.

# John LEGUZAMO

John Leguizamo's one-man show Spic-o-Rama electrified a generation of Latinos in 1992 and brought Hollywood to his door. As the actor-writer-producer returns to his downtown, Off Broadway roots, with Latin History for Morons at the Public Theater, LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA recalls the door that Leguizamo opened for him

Photograph by ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

Cuz I'm young, gifted, and Latino. —John Leguizamo, Spic-o-Rama.

don't remember which family member taped it off HBO for me: we didn't have cable at the time. But I remember the scrawl on the side of the VHS tape in my handwriting: Spic-o-Rama. I remember popping in the cassette and seeing John Leguizamo leap across the stage in orange baggy jeans and braces, playing the dorky, nine-year-old Miggy. Then he was Crazy Willie, a Persian Gulf War vet with serious relationship issues. Then Raffi, a flamboyant would-be Elizabethan actor in Jackson Heights. It slowly dawned on me that Leguizamo was playing every member of his hilarious, dysfunctional family, on his own electric terms.

Indeed, Frank Rich wrote in his New York Times review, "John Leguizamo arrives on stage in 'Spic-o-Rama' like a hip-hop star, leaping and bouncing in the flash of strobe lights to thunderous music and the cheers of fans. . . . Mr. Leguizamo is a star, no questionhe doesn't need a strobe to burn bright-but he also announces himself from that moment as an actor of phenomenal range."

Spic-o-Rama hit me (and a generation of future Latino writers) like a thunderbolt. As an erstwhile theater kid whose knowledge of it was strictly confined to traditional musicals

such as Oklahoma! and Fiddler on the Roof, witnessing a Latino actor write and star in his own show, reveling in the specificities of our culture with brilliant, razor-sharp wit and a uniquely hip-hop energy, exploded my every notion of what theater could be. More important, it exploded Leguizamo's career: after his one-man shows, Hollywood would surely come calling.

or our Spanglish generation, Leguizamo was our Man on the Inside: we cheered for him as "Benny Blanco from the Bronx" in Carlito's Way. We watched him hold his own against Leo DiCaprio in Romeo and Juliet and Ewan McGregor in Moulin Rouge! We watched him play fabulously against type in To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar. Because we watched him play everybody in the beginning, we knew simply one role would never be enough.

It is only fitting, then, that Leguizamo comes back to the stage with a new show at the Public Theater-downtown, Off Broadway, where his story began. In Latin History for Morons, he endeavors to teach his son about unsung Latino heroes. For those of us who discovered, through his work, a link between the theater and our own specific stories, Leguizamo is the young, gifted, and Latino hero we'd been waiting for. □





# As race riots swept the nation in the summer of 1967, its most beloved movie actor was Sidney Poitier, whose three films that year-To Sir, with Love; In the Heat of the Night; and Guess Who's Coming to Dinner—would also make him Hollywood's box-office king. Charting Poitier's

coolly uncompromising navigation of his symbolic status, LAURA JACOBS recalls the pointed message he sent to white America



t was the "long hot summer of 1967," so called because racial unrest had reached full boil. Riots-"the language of the unheard," in the words of Martin Luther King Jr.—were exploding in city after city, from Atlanta to Boston, Birmingham to Milwaukee, roaring in Newark and Detroit. Malcolm X had been shot dead two years earlier, and Stokely Carmichael's Black Power, in all its incendiary eloquence, was sweeping up the young, both black and white. It was slash-and-burn civil-rights activism, and it terrified parents, enraged racists, and unsettled the White House. America the melting pot was a crucible in crisis.

But at the movies, even in the South, the crucible was cool. In 1967 the country's biggest film star, its most loved actor, was black. He had the self-containment of a cat, the swoop of a hawk, the calm of a saint. His poise was a form of precision, and his precision, intelligence that ran deep. He was Hollywood's first African-American matinee idol (though technically Bahamian-American) and the last of an Old Hollywood breed-the gentleman hero in the bespoke suit. His name was Sidney Poitier.

In that roiling year, with disobedience civil and uncivil at critical mass, Poitier was at the height of a singular career. He was starring in three huge hits-released in June, August, and December-the receipts of which would make him the country's No. 1 box-office draw of 1968. Each film was indelible, and each brought themes unique to Poitier, who was then 40, to artistic culmination and resolution. To Sir, with Love came first, directed by the triple-threat talent James Clavell-screenwriter, director, and the author of epic novels such as Shogun. A low-budget sleeper about a high-school teacher in London's roughand-tumble East End, the film rose to the top of the charts-carried by the 60s youthquake-where it stayed. In the Heat of the Night followed, directed by the up-and-comer Norman Jewison. A murder mystery set in a sweat-stained South of sin and insinuation, it won the Oscar for best picture. Completing the trinity was Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, directed by that master of the message movie. Stanley Kramer, and graced with performances by Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. This problem comedy, which Columbia Pictures tried twice to back out of-first when it found out that the subject was inter-racial marriage, and again when it learned that no insurance company would underwrite Tracy, who had serious heart trouble (in lieu of insurance, Kramer and Hepburn put their fees in escrow)-not only played in the South but made more money for Columbia than anything it had previously produced.

Sidney Poitier's presence in these films said wordlessly to the world what Carmichael, in 1966, had said pointedly to white America: "Civilize yourself." Poitier was symbolic, the most civilized man in the movies.

# A Star Is Born

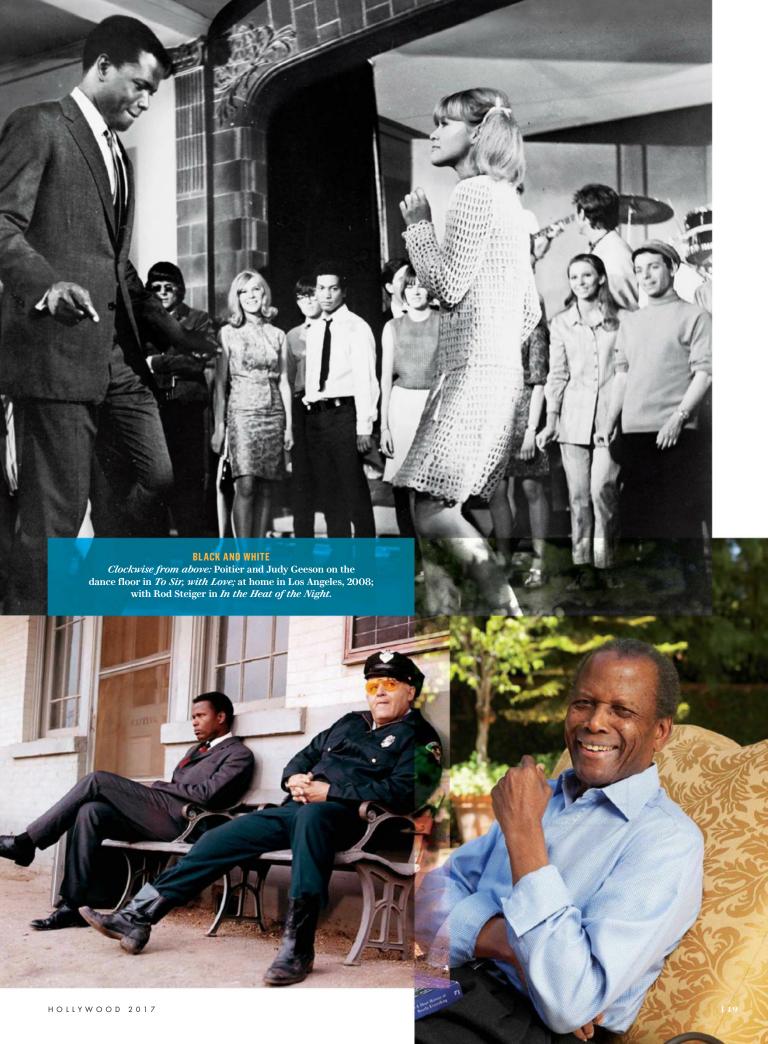
e was born in Florida in 1927, when his parents, Reginald and Evelyn Poitier, Bahamian tomato farmers, traveled to Miami to sell their crop, and Evelyn, pregnant with the last of her seven children, went into premature labor. So, Sidney was an American citizen. But he was imprinted forever by Cat Island. the home to which the three returned. This sinuous spit in the Caribbean, where Poitier spent the first 10 years of his life, was a sun-drenched paradise without glass windows, doors, or storefronts and thus free of man-made reflections. "I never got a fix on my color," Poitier would write of those years. "No reason to." He didn't see himself in a mirror until the family moved to Nassau, when he was 10. And it wasn't until he was 15, when his aging parents sent him to live with an older brother in Florida, that he met institutional racism. which baffled him. Poitier went north within a year, uneducated, broke, and alone, but with a wealth of wisdom from parents he revered. "Charm them, son, into neutral," his mother once told him. And that's what he did, in New York City.

Poitier, who turns 90 this month, has written eloquently about his coming-of-age and magisterial career-more than 40 films-in three books: This Life (1980), The Measure of a Man (2000), and Life Beyond Measure: Letters to My Great-Granddaughter (2008). "I have been very blessed by a career that has given me both joy and gratitude," Poitier says

today, when asked to look back, "and I am very thankful for the help of many wonderful friends and associates along the way. All this would not have happened if not for their strong belief in me."

It was a belief in himself, however, and an "I'll show 'em" drive, that got him through his dishwashing days in Manhattan. He improved his reading during breaks and tamed his singsong Caribbean cadences

POITIER HAD THE SELF-CONTAINMENT OF A CAT, THE SWOOP OF A HAWK, THE CALM OF A SAINT.



# "THERE'S A MYTHOLOGICAL ASPECT TO POITIER," SAYS THE FILM CRITIC MOLLY HASKELL.

by repeating, for hours daily, everything he heard on the radio. In 1945 he was accepted into the training program at the American Negro Theater, a group that placed artistic expression over political statement. Poitier never looked back as the theater pulled him forward. By 1950 he had a starring role in his first feature film, No Way Out. A noirish hospital drama that tells the story of a voung black doctor (Poitier) hounded by a white thug crazy with hatred (Richard Widmark), No Way Out was directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, who was committed to seeing racially mixed pictures. "You're going to be awfully good in this movie," he said to Poitier. "You're like a Roman candle." And he was right. The Poitier hallmarks were already in place.

"He always had a movie star's concentration," says the film critic and scholar Elvis Mitchell, "that ability to peer into the camera and just listen in a way that made you wonder what he was thinking. And he knew how to use his body-that physical aplomb of his. I mean, there's almost a wit in his movement. He made you realize what a rare occurrence this was, seeing a black man in command of his own physicality in the movies. That was one of the things that made his presence so key and such an extraordinary thing to behold. Just watch him walk into a frame. As a kid the first movie I saw him in was The Mark of the Hawk. He was like a blade carved out of ebony, just so beautiful in it."

"Sidney really was sui generis," says Margo Jefferson, whose award-winning memoir, Negroland, was published in 2015, "and more daring because of his looks. That dark skin and that gaze, and his short hair and somewhat fuller features-this was pretty new, and it was very exciting. He never clowned around-and we were so touchy about clowning. He was unimpeachably dignified, but he could smolder. And I think we were partly identifying with what was being contained."

And then there was that princely posture, the graceful pivots and charged pauses that gave second thoughts and moments of silence a kinetic emphasis. The African leader Poitier plays in 1957's The Mark of the Hawk is named Obam, which means "hawk" but also

"to lean or bend," and there is something lofty, bending but un-breaking, about the way Poitier lives in a movie. As is true with that of all the greats, his filmography constitutes a form of poetics. From the purring young tough in Blackboard Jungle (1955) to his bighearted stevedore in Edge of the City (1957), to the escaped prisoner chained to Tony Curtis in The Defiant Ones (1958), Poitier is a

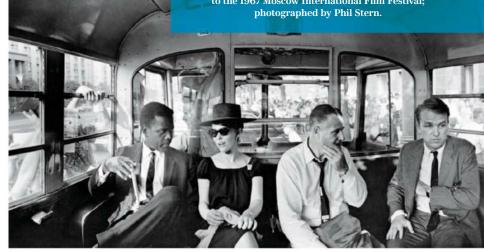
man bridging differences, flying higher than prejudice. In 1963, in the role of Homer Smith, an itinerant carpenter who builds a

Poitier knew that as the first, and for a time the only, black leading man in Hollywood he was representing an entire race. He insisted on humanity, wiping the slate clean of the demoralizing stereotypes that had come before, roles he characterized as "bugeyed maids and shuffling butlers."

"Poitier embodied the black image for the dawning Age of Integration," Aram Goud-

# THE REST IS HISTORY

Opposite, Poitier with his best-actor Academy Award, for Lilies of the Field, 1964. Below, with Susan Strasberg, Stanley Kramer, and George Stevens en route to the 1967 Moscow International Film Festival;



church in the desert for five German nuns. he's an archangel in white denim. The movie was called Lilies of the Field, and it brought Poitier the Oscar for best actor, a first for an African-American man.

"There's a mythological aspect to Poitier," says the film critic Molly Haskell. "He's a liminal figure who can pass between worlds."

"A star like Sidney," says the actress Katharine Houghton, who made her film debut as Poitier's fiancé in Guess Who's Coming to Dinner. "has a brand. And Sidney worked very hard as an actor to make that brand. We didn't use that word then, but O.K., so who do I want to be? I want to be heroic; I want to be intelligent; I want to be noble; I want to be sensitive. As a black man, he was going to be judged. He knew this. He had to be better than a white man. And that was his great gift to America. He chose to be the perfect man."

souzian writes in his sweeping biography of 2004. Sidney Poitier: Man. Actor. Icon. "By the late 1950s, he was the Martin Luther King of the movies."

# The Year of Magical Filming

v 1967 the Poitier persona was an event in itself, larger than life. His three directors that year—Clavell, Jewison, Kramer—pull the camera in close whenever they can, filling the aface, piercing in anger, beatific the camera of its own accord tesmerized by his hands, which ellectual, as deliberately inflected lings. In each movie he wears a part as if it were a form of light—as armor—double-vented in To single-vented in In the Heat of an event in itself, larger than screen with his face, piercing in anger, beatific in delight. The camera of its own accord seems to be mesmerized by his hands, which are almost intellectual, as deliberately inflected as his line readings. In each movie he wears a gray flannel suit as if it were a form of lightweight knight's armor—double-vented in To Sir, with Love; single-vented in In the Heat of



the Night: no vents in Guess Who's Coming to Dinner. ("He's never gotten his due as a style icon," notes Elvis Mitchell. "You hear the talk about Cary Grant and Steve McQueen, but I don't think anybody wore a suit better than Sidney Poitier.") All three movies take place in the present, and in all three Poitier-virtuosic with silence and stillness, a tilt of the head, a turning away-holds key scenes in suspension, opening up shears of uncertainty, long seconds of What's-going-on? and What-arewe-feeling? while the ground is invisibly shifting. All three pictures crossed lines.

"It's a remarkable year for Sidney," says Jewison. "All three films are carried by his presence, and they're all battering against discrimination in some way, in some form."

o Sir, with Love is the charmer. Based on the 1959 autobiographical novel by E. R. Braithwaite, the distinguished Guyanese writer, teacher, and diplomat, who died last December at 104, it was brought to the screen on a tiny budget, \$640,000. Poitier believed in the material and worked for scale (\$30,000), unusual for a star, but he also forged a back-end deal that gave him a percentage of the box-office gross-a new maneuver in Hollywood and a deal Columbia would rue when the movie hit big, the eighthhighest-grossing picture of 1967, with a cumulative take of \$42 million.

Filmed outside London at Pinewood Studios and on location in the East End, To Sir, with Love falls into a 50s genre that was still in play in the 60s-disaffected and delinquent youth-and it made a satisfying bookend to the tough Poitier had played 12 years earlier in Blackboard Jungle. He was now the new teacher, Mark Thackeray-"Sir"-who takes on a class of unwashed artful dodgers and must find a way to groom them for life. What's fascinating is the way director Clavell serves up Sir as a heartthrob. Academics writing about Poitier have complained that sexuality was kept out of his movies, somehow missing the physical charisma right in front of them ("They're reading the ego-text not the id-text," says Margo Jefferson), but Clavell surrounds his star with females old and young who gaze and gaze in admiration and something more. The crush that student Pamela Dare—actress Judy Geeson of the glycerine glow-has on Sir really was daring. And also lovely. Their graduation-day parting, the camera moving between her face and his in emotion undefined, is radiant.

"The relationship with Judy Geeson," says Molly Haskell, "captures as well as anything I can think of that attraction between student and teacher, all the more erotic-and generous rather than selfish-for being held back."

p next was Norman Jewison's In the Heat of the Night, set in the cotton town of Sparta, Mississippi, and cinematically gritty and gorgeous. In the Heat of the Night returns to the theme of The Defiant Ones-two men, one black, one white, bonded together by fate-only here the title would be "The Defiant One." As the homicide detective Virgil Tibbs, passing through Sparta on the way home to Philadelphia, Poitier brings a simmering cool to a character who is way ahead of everyone else. The white other is Rod Steiger as police chief Bill Gillespie, and he knows only too well that he can't

"They were both playing at the top of their games," says the movie's producer, Walter Mirisch. "When you take two fine actors and you put them together, they challenge each other and rise to new heights. And the plot worked to enhance that."

solve the murder without the help of Tibbs.

Poitier and Steiger are jazz-sharp, their rhythms tight and wary and bluesy and funny. (Steiger won the Oscar for best actor.) But where Steiger is all mouth, chewing his gum in double time, Poitier's got the movie in his hands. The camera moves in when he palpates the dead body, when he steadies the wrist of the widow, when he takes hold of a suspect's forearms. "It was because he was a forensic detective," says Jewison. "He's interested in detail and always looking for clues. But I was also quite aware of the black hand on the white skin. I was trying to reach."

For southerners in the 60s, this inter-racial touching was transgression. But it was nothing compared with The Slap-a sensational moment in movie history. "Iconic," says Mirisch. "Everybody remembers it." It takes place in a greenhouse, where Tibbs and Gillespie meet with the town tycoon, Eric Endicott (Larry Gates). A cock crows in the distance just as it dawns on Endicott that a black man is questioning him. He slaps Tibbs across the face, and Tibbs responds with a duelist's backhand, stunningly swift and elegant. The camera cuts to Gillespie, who is caught between awe and shock, and Endicott demands to know what he's "going to do about it." Steiger, an in-themoment Method actor, rehearsed his response a dozen different ways in search of the right moment. "You've never seen it before," Jewison remembers telling Steiger. "You've never seen a black man slap a white man back in your life." Gillespie's three-word answer-"I don't know"—implicitly supports Tibbs.

"The movie was eerily and electrically capturing something about the Zeitgeist," says the film historian Elizabeth Kendall. "Sidney Poitier playing a character with agency-I remember how important that felt in 1967. You had the feeling a veil was being lifted, a bandage was being pulled off from a wound, and things would be revealed, things would be available to understand."

"The way Poitier carried himself," says Jefferson, "for my parents it was like vengeance and justice and aesthetics. Don't you see we've always carried ourselves like this?! But now, he's there."

"I hoped that our picture was going to change everything," says Mirisch. "There were editorials written when the picture came out that saw it as a harbinger of a new age. Well, it was the beginning of it." And while Poitier today says, diplomatically, that he has "no favorite" among his films of 1967, and is "happy to have been in all three," it is also true that he had a deeper involvement with In the Heat of the Night, actively collaborating on the development of the script. As Mirisch writes in I Thought We Were Making Movies, Not History (2008), remembering the call from Poitier, who'd just seen the finished film, "I shall never forget his excitement, his enthusiasm, and his pleasure. I felt a tremendous sense of fulfillment."

oitier's last movie of the year, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, saw him reprising his first big role, the idealistic doctor in No Way Out, but now he was John Prentice, a global expert on tropical diseases engaged to the daughter of white liberals in San Francisco, a couple portrayed by that hallowed Hollywood pair, Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy (who died three weeks after his last scene was shot). Director Stanley Kramer, who had directed Poitier in The Defiant Ones, was known for making films with Important Themes—four times as a producer and/or director he took on the subject of black-white relations in America—but critics, especially in the same year that saw the irreverence of Bonnie and Clyde and The Graduate, thought him square. Square or not, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner contained another first. At the end of its opening sequence, shot on location at San Francisco International Airport, Poitier and Houghton (who was Hepburn's real-life niece) climb into the backseat of a cab and share Hollywood's first passionate kiss between a black man and a white woman. Yes, there'd been a kiss between Poitier and Elizabeth Hartman in A Patch of Blue, in 1965, but it was clouded with restraint.

Kramer's kiss "was done as a processed shot," Houghton says, "and if you'd been on the set when we filmed the one kiss you would have gotten chills because there was such tension. Tremendous tension. You have a lot of people on a film, a lot of different political opinions. Not everybody's coming from the same point of view. I was continued on page 189



Sherry Lansing at home in Chicago, early 1950s.

# Sherry Lansing

As a new biography charts her rise, the first woman studio chief tells how her father turned movies into a passion

y earliest memories are of watching movies with my father. As I was growing up on the South Side of Chicago, in the late 1940s, he was my entire life. I knew very little about the outside world-the skyscrapers that were beginning to change the skyline, the immigrants pouring into

the city, the gangsters, the jazz. All I knew was how much I loved him.

He was a businessman by profession but an artist at heart. He had come of age in the Depression, then lifted himself up by sheer hard work, buying apartments and renting them out, eventually doing well enough that he could afford to send his sister to college, even though he had never been able to go himself.

By day, he made a solid living. By night, he would sit at home and open his soul to the operas he adored, singing "Figaro, Figaro!" to me as *The Barber of Seville* blared from his record player; or crying, with tears running down his cheeks, as he tried to explain Madama Butterfly and its heartbroken heroine. "Don't you understand?" he'd say about the villainous Pinkerton. "He'll never come back. He'll never come back again."

I didn't understand. But I did understand his passion-and never more than when he took me to the movies. Each weekend, we'd drive to the Museum of Science and Industry, a palace of

miracles. There was a reproduction coal mine, where you could see seemingly real miners at work; there was a chicken coop where you'd observe live chicks as they hatched; there was a television screen with a hidden camera that somehow let you watch yourself on TV. And above all there was a reproduction nickelodeon.

When I was a child, the nickelodeons were long gone. It had been two decades since the end of the silent era, and they were as much a thing of the past as black-and-white films are to boys and girls today. But here, in this tiny theater, my father and I would sit together, enchanted by the flickering images. There was Charlie Chaplin, twirling his little cane. There was Harold Lloyd dangling from a clock. And there was Buster Keaton, his face expressionless, even as a house collapsed around him, missing him by inches.

This was my Hollywood. It had nothing to do with the Hollywood I would work in. It was all about my father. As we sat together in the dark, I'd gaze at him, mesmerized by his laughter, longing to make sense of the things that so moved him. I didn't fall in love with the movies—I fell in love with my father's love for them.

And then one day, we stopped going.

I was eight years old when I woke up, pushed my dolls aside, and came running downstairs to find strangers in the house. When I asked where my father was, they told me he had been taken to the hospital. He'd died of heart failure. His death changed my life. I searched through all the places we had known, hoping to find him again. But I never did. Not even in the nickelodeon.

But as a teenager I started going back to the movies and rediscovered the things he had loved. Lost in the magic of the Jeffery and the Hamilton theaters, I was shaken by the passion of Susan Hayward, playing a convicted murderer fighting to survive in I Want to Live! I was captivated by the charm of Audrey Hepburn in Sabrina. And I was transformed by the gritty drama of The Pawnbroker and its hero, a man who had fled the Holocaust, not unlike my mother. I fell in love with the movies all over again.

This time, I was determined to make them my life. Perhaps that way, I could keep my father's memory alive. □

# "Get Me Ma

A ballroom full of household names—John Travolta,
Scarlett Johansson, Charlie Sheen,
Jonah Hill, etc., etc.—will swear there's no one
in Hollywood like Marty Singer when it
comes to fighting studio battles, suppressing
scandals, and keeping the tabloids at bay. Singer's
most notorious client, Bill Cosby, is no
longer on that list. DAVID MARGOLICK reports
on the mega-lawyer's mojo

# Ity Singer! THE MAN TO CALL Marty Singer, photographed at Craft in Los Angeles, where he meets clients for lunch. HOLLYWOOD 2017

ers, Steven Seagal, Eddie Murphy, Nicolas Cage ("Thanks for being the best lawyer in the world"), Stevie Wonder, and Mike Myers ("Yea, though I walk through the valley of San Fernando, I fear no man: for my litigator is a mean son of a bi@\*#"). And the videotaped tributes were more spectacular, with cameos by James Caan, Sylvester Stallone, Bruce Willis, Magic Johnson, Marie Osmond, Paula Abdul, and Scarlett Johansson. "Marty Singer, Marty Singer ... you lifesaver, you!" Johansson purred. "You are a real-life superhero."

Even TMZ, which covers the pratfalls of so many Singer clients so assiduously, weighed in on the tape. Its founder, Harvey Levin, recalled his very prototypical first encounter with Singer ("He called and threatened me"), and then various subalterns wisecracked about Singer's trademark manner (blustery), appearance (semi-portly), and work habits (dogged). A TMZ staffer named Mike described Singer's attempt to protect the Olympic-gold-medalist snowboarder Shaun White. "There was [sic] naked photos floating around, and Marty Singer called me at like eight o'clock on a Sunday and said, 'You can't put "Triple X" in the headline!" he gushed. "And I'm like, 'He's on top of a naked girl with his balls showing, with all the red hair-what do you mean I can't say it?' He says, 'You can't say "Triple X!" There's no penetration!"

he guests

who gathered for the Beverly Hills Bar Asso-

ciation's annual "Entertainment Lawyer of

the Year" dinner nearly five years ago may

have anticipated another of those dreary

evenings-one more oxymoronic "lawyers'

gala," filled with the customary droning speeches and lame attempts at fun. But the

honoree for 2012 was different. It was Marty

Singer. Nothing about him is dull-especially

So, the crowd was bigger than usual, with

around 400 people crowded into a ballroom

at the Beverly Hills Hotel. The commemo-

rative program was fatter and more star-

studded, with ads from, among many oth-

the company he keeps.

Joining Singer at the head table was one of his most stalwart clients, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and perhaps his most remunerative one, John Travolta. (Fending off—or burying—all those allegations of gay assignations can be extremely lucrative.)
But what really made the

speakers-stars who appeared in ascending orders of magnitude. The M.C. was Tom Arnold, whom Singer has seen through four weddings and more than 20 years' worth of legal problems. He praised Singer for that rarest of elements on Hollywood's periodic table: loyalty. When he and Roseanne Barr split, he recalled, Singer, unlike just about everyone else in town, stuck with him, even though Barr ("a fucking walking lawsuit") generated vastly more billable hours. He told of asking Singer to enforce the confidentiality agreement he and Barr had made during their divorce, one he'd believed she'd breached by going on Saturday Night Live and proclaiming to all the world that his penis is only three inches long. "Marty is passionate, but he's also very honest," Arnold explained, "and he's like, 'Well, do you have a three-inch penis?""

The director William Friedkin then declared that "there are two words that strike fear in the hearts of every network head or studio chief," and paused pregnantly. "Marty Singer!" the crowd dutifully chanted back. Then Sharon Stone slunk to the microphone. "You call Marty because Keyser Söze is a fictional character," she said. "You call Marty





"I don't like Marty Singer, because I want to be

because vou need someone like Mike Tyson in the Holyfield fight." And with that she made the sound of chomping into something, like an ear, then spitting it out. "Marty is such a badass motherfucker," she went on. "When people give me a hard time, I just c.c. Marty," she said, snapping her fingers. "And very rarely do they consider continuing with their harassment of Sharon Stone." She, too, extolled Singer's loyalty, nearly choking up as she did: whenever she had stumbled or been pushed, she said, it was Singer who'd reached out and pulled her back up.

Next up was everybody's favorite train wreck: Charlie Sheen. Among Singer's many, many other rescue missions, he had recently gotten Warner Bros. to pony up for dropping Sheen from Two and a Half Men. "I got a hundred million reasons to say, 'Thank you, Marty," Sheen said. But he was just warming up. "A lot has been said about my past exploits, but trust me, I never screwed any hooker as hard as Marty screwed Warner Bros.," he went on. "Marty Singer might be the only person who's fucked more people in Hollywood than I have."

But nowhere in sight, not even in the printed program, was the man who'd soon supplant Sheen as Singer's most notorious client: Bill Cosby. The two were then working together, closely and happily. "Get Marty for me!" Cosby would periodically tell aides-and part of what Singer had to celebrate that night was keeping a lid on charges that Cosby had drugged and sexually assaulted all those women. "He's like a masseuse," Sheen had joked about Singer. "He's hands-on, gets paid by the hour, and you always, always-always-get a happy ending." But with Cosby it hasn't been so. Two years later, the lid on the Cosby cases finally blew. And in the middle of it all, Cosby and Singer quietly, and mysteriously, parted ways.

## The Problem Solver

t \$950 an hour (likely to

rise this year)-and ever on call, even while playing golf at the Brentwood Country Club (the place took a record two years to admit him) or on a cruise-Martin Dori Singer, 64 years old, born and raised in Brooklyn, is Hollywood's concierge consigliere. He has remained so for 30 years or more, even as the competition grows and the Internet has made his business ever more frantic and complex. More than any other Hollywood lawyer, Singer, seeing celebrity coverage metastasize from checkout lines to television to Twitter, has colonized territory other lawyers have shunned, and turned garbage into gold.

Geeky-looking and heavyset (a Marvin Hamlisch type) and utterly unaltered (a couple of chemically or surgically enhanced specimens, Schwarzenegger and Sheen, have delighted in ridiculing his appearance), Singer is a throwback: the scrappy, working-class, selfmade son of European Jewish immigrants, who studied nights at C.C.N.Y. and Brook-

lyn Law School rather than go off to fancier places so that he could support his newly widowed mother (a survivor of Auschwitz) and little sister. Nearly 40 years after decamping to Los Angeles, where various snooty law firms spurned him, the scent of Eau de Canarsie still clings to Singer. His hardscrabble origins, he believes, have given him a great competitive advantage over sun-softened locals. "The California lawyers had the surfer's mentality, which was 'Hey, 5:30, 6 o'clock, rather go surfing now' or 'I'll get to it tomorrow,'" he told me in a conference room at Lavely & Singer, the Century City law firm he established with John H. "Jay" Lavely Jr. in 1980. He'd just apologized for keeping me waiting-busy killing a story for a client, he explained.

Singer is a family man. He's been married to his wife, Deena, for 41 years, and is more

likely to spend an evening with her and their three dogs or go to a Lakers game with their three kids than dine with clients at Mr. Chow. He might hang around with Priscilla Presley or Stallone but not with most of those he represents (and certainly never with Cosby, who always approached him, CONTINUED ON PAGE 189

**LEGAL EASE** From far left: Singer, on his law firm's opening day, 1980; with Bruce Willis in 2000; with Liev Schreiber and Tom Arnold in 2016; with Charlie Sheen at the Beverly Hills **Bar Association** dinner honoring Singer, 2012; at the same event with Sharon Stone, Kelly Preston, and



Marty Singer," one of Singer's competitors confesses.



# tume Drama

Coco Chanel was already an international icon, worth a fortune, when she arrived to work in Hollywood, in 1931, after a long courtship by studio mogul Samuel Goldwyn. Chanel's designs, Goldwyn believed, would make his stars more glamorous, turning his movies into fashion events. SAM KASHNER chronicles an expensive, if very elegant, mistake

## **DESIGNING WOMAN**

Coco Chanel during a working visit to Los Angeles, in 1931.

n 1931, Gabrielle Bonheur "Coco" Chanel was 47 years old and had been a household name in Europe and America since the age of 30. She had been raised in an orphanage after her

mother died. As a young woman, she had worked as a shop assistant and a cabaret singer before becoming a designer of hats, setting her on a path to being the most famous of the Parisian couturiers. Employing hallmarks of early-20thcentury modernism in her designs-she knew many of the godfathers of modernism, including Stravinsky, Diaghilev, Cocteau, even Picasso-Chanel reimagined haute couture. A line of costume jewelry and her famous perfume, Chanel No. 5, made up the Chanel brand, which became synonymous with high style, privilege, and good taste. Her signature initials—gold, interlocking C's—continue to exert global influence today, well over 100 years after her birth. Last year, Chanel, valued at \$7.2 billion, was No. 80 on Forbes's list of the world's most valuable brands. Today, a bottle of Chanel No. 5—the first synthetic perfume ever created-is sold somewhere in the world every 30 seconds.

In 1931, Chanel didn't need Hollywood. Hollywood, however, needed Chanel. Or so thought movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn, who ran United Artists. He believed that "women went to movies to see how other women dressed," according to A. Scott Berg in his 1989 biography, Goldwyn. Film designers, unlike couturiers, were really theatrical costumers, whose designs, it was widely felt, "lacked elegance and mimicked fashion without being so itself," in the words of film scholar Kristen Welch. As movie audiences dwindled after the Wall Street crash of 1929, Goldwyn was looking for new ways to bring in moviegoers-especially women. In Chanel he saw his chance. With her designs, Goldwyn felt, Chanel would bring "class" to Hollywood.

Only the big stars had been actually designed for, and that had not always gone well. Lillian Gish had rejected the clothes designed for her by Erté, whom Louis B. Mayer had brought to Hollywood. Greta Garbo had difficulties with MGM designer Gilbert Clark. But Goldwyn felt that Chanel would be irresistible, so he offered her a guaranteed \$1 million to come to Hollywood twice a year, to "dress his stars, both onscreen and off.... Chanel was to put the actresses in styles 'six months ahead' of fashion, in order



to offset the inevitable delay between filming and release," according to Rhonda K. Garelick in her 2014 biography, Mademoiselle: Coco Chanel and the Pulse of History.

With offscreen clothes designed for stars such as Gloria Swanson and Norma Talmadge, the stars' images would meld seamlessly with their screen glamour.

Goldwyn reportedly told French journalists, "I think that in engaging Mme. Chanel I have not only solved the difficult problem of how to keep clothes from being dated, but also there is a definite service rendered American women in being able to see in our pictures the newest Paris fashions-sometimes even before Paris sees them."

# Glove Story

ike Chanel, "starting at an early age, Samuel Goldwyn invented himself," wrote Berg. Born Schmuel Gelbfisz in Warsaw, Poland, in 1879, he had to support his mother and five siblings after his father died young. To escape life in the Jewish ghetto and the prospect of conscription into the czar's army, Gelbfisz turned his "doleful eyes" to-

ward America. On New York's Lower East Side, he found that he had merely exchanged one crowded ghetto for another, so he took a train to Gloversville, in upstate New York, a mecca for Jewish immigrants, who had forged the glove-manufacturing business there. He found success as the premier salesman for the Elite Glove Company, but it was an alliance with his brother-in-law, Jesse L. Lasky, of Lasky Feature Play Company, that brought him into the moving-picture business. By 1924, after changing his name to Goldwyn, he had become a major movie producer, among the tough, immigrant moguls who created Hollywood. Unlike Chanel, Samuel Goldwyn loved the movies.

Initially, Chanel refused Goldwyn's generous offer. She had a number of reservations. First and foremost, she didn't want to be seen as Goldwyn's employee or as a United Artists contractee. When, after a year, she finally accepted, she made it clear to the press that she was an autonomous agent, telling The New York Times that she

Goldwyn believed that women went to movies to see how other women dressed."





wasn't becoming a "costume designer," and that in Hollywood she would "not make one dress. I have not brought my scissors with me. Later, perhaps when I go back to Paris, I will create and design gowns six months ahead for actresses in Mr. Goldwyn's pictures."

She arrived in New York in early March of 1931 and, before continuing on to Hollywood, holed up at the Pierre hotel with a bad case of "the grippe." Nonetheless, she endured a press reception in her honor in a suite bursting with flowers. Greeting reporters in a rose-red jersey with a white knit blouse and a long string of pearls looped around her neck, she brought out an atomizer and generously spritzed the group with a not yet numbered new scent, according to Chanel biographer Hal Vaughan. (Chanel numbered rather than named her perfumes, because she thought naming them vulgar.) Not an avid moviegoer, she told the press she was heading to Hollywood to work on an idea, not a dress. When asked by The New York Times what she expected to find in Hollywood, she answered, "Nothing, and everything. Wait and see. I am a worker, not a talker, and I am going to my work."

With her were two traveling companions:

## **BIG BLACK DRESS**

Gloria Swanson in a Chanel-designed gown in 1931's Tonight or Never. Opposite, Samuel Goldwyn and Chanel in L.A., in 1931.

Misia Sert, a well-known patron of avantgarde artists, who had posed for Toulouse-Lautrec, Bonnard, Renoir, and Vuillard, and had been painted in prose by Proust (she was a model for Madame Verdurin and Princess Yourbeletieff in Remembrance of Things Past); and Maurice Sachs, a young writer and secretary to the avant-garde artist Jean Cocteau. The three boarded a luxury express-train car to Los Angeles, commissioned just for them, with an all-white interior, for the nearly 3,000-mile, four-day journey, amid buckets of champagne.

When Chanel arrived at Union Station in Los Angeles, Greta Garbo was there to greet her, with a European kiss on both cheeks. But Chanel eventually found herself more impressed with a haughty, angular, auburnhaired beauty named Katharine Hepburn.

At a reception in Chanel's honor held at

Goldwyn's lavish, Italianate house in Hollywood, there to greet her were such local luminaries as Marlene Dietrich, Claudette Colbert, Garbo again, Fredric March, and directors George Cukor and Erich von Stroheim, who clicked his heels while kissing Chanel's hand, asking, "You are a ... seamstress, I believe?" according to Axel Madsen in his 1991 book, Chanel: A Woman of Her Own. (She forgave him that remark, later uttering, "Such a ham, but what style!")

he New York Times generally welcomed Chanel to America, whereas the Los Angeles Times got its back up at the implied suggestion that Hollywood needed European fashion to give it a boost. The local press was devoted to the idea that Hollywood was already a major influence on American fashion. Who needed Paris? WORLD'S STYLE CEN-TER SHIFTS FROM EUROPE TO LOS ANGELES was how the newspaper announced Chanel's visit to Hollywood. The implication was that Chanel was coming to Hollywood not to lend her brand of chic to the industry but because Hollywood had replaced Paris

as the center of fashion, and its gravitational pull had brought her to its shores.

United Artists set up a lavishly decorated salon equipped with a sewing machine and dress mannequins for Chanel to use, in the hope that she would be making a long-term commitment to Hollywood. But she refused to use it, a situation the local press picked up on, describing her as a snob disdainful of Hollywood, rather than the exemplar of European sophistication that Goldwyn had thought he was buying.

The future director Mitchell Leisen and his assistant, Adrian, were both assigned to help Chanel on Palmy Days, her first film for Goldwyn. Adrian, born Adrian Adolph Greenberg, affected a French name and Continental manners, but he was sure to be found out by a true Frenchwoman. However, it didn't matter to Chanel—a shape-shifter herself—because she saw that Adrian was quite a good designer, and she respected that. She particularly admired the wardrobe he'd designed for Garbo in Mata Hari, in 1931, which seemed to anticipate Chanel's own collection for that year.

Goldwyn had chosen Palmy Days, an Eddie Cantor-Busby Berkeley musical, as Chanel's first assignment because frothy song-and-dance movies were wildly popular during the Depression, as moviegoers sought escape from their troubles in cinematic fantasies. It was Chanel's job to design dresses for Palmy Days' star, Charlotte Greenwood, as a "physical culturist," i.e., a gym instructor. As sportswear was one of Chanel's métiers, that wasn't a problem, but the Busby Berkeley production numbers featuring the Goldwyn Girls-especially in a pre-Code, rollicking gym routine called "Bend Down, Sister"—stole the show. Though the wobbly tale was one of the most popular musicals of the year, Chanel's small contribution played little part in its success.

Adrian tried to explain to Chanel that film wardrobes had to be "photogenic" and that subtlety would not translate to the screen. There was another difference: in couture, the mannequins were meant to enhance and show off the design; on-screen, the design was meant to show off and enhance the actresses.

## French Leave

hanel found more acclaim with her next picture, Tonight or Never, starring Gloria Swanson as an opera diva. Swanson was already celebrated as one of "the Top Ten Best-Dressed Women in the World," but there was a problem: the actress already had a designer she preferred to work with, René Hubert, and she resisted Chanel. Goldwyn pointed out to Swanson that she didn't have the contractual right of refusal, so Chanel

was brought in. With the imperious Swanson as her mannequin, Chanel designed a wardrobe that managed to be both beautiful and understated, particularly a stunning white gown. But by then Chanel was no longer in Hollywood.

If the couturier had been trumped by the costumer, Chanel would be reassured of her importance when she returned to New York on her way back to France. She toured the city's major department stores-Saks Fifth Avenue, Macy's, Bloomingdale's-but was most impressed by what she saw downtown on Union Square. Arriving at the discount store S. Klein there, she found cheap knockoffs of her designs being sold in warehouselike surroundings, where women pawed through merchandise without the help of salesladies and tried on dresses straight off the rack. A designer dress that sold for \$20 on Fifth Avenue could be had for \$4, in cheaper fabric, at S. Klein. In huge, communal fitting rooms, women tried on dresses beneath signs that warned, "Don't Try to Steal. Our Detectives Are Everywhere," posted in several languages. Most of her contemporaries would have been appalled, but seeing that piracy was the ultimate compliment paid to success, Chanel loved it. Then, she decamped to Paris. She had been unimpressed by the luxuries of Hollywood-"Their comforts are killing them," she would later say, according to Garelick-and she may have harbored a vestigial resentment against America because that is where her father had drifted when he abandoned the family. "[Hollywood] was like an evening at the Folies Bergère," she said. "Once it is agreed that the girls were beautiful in their feathers there is not much to add."

Back in Paris, Chanel modified the terms of her agreement with Goldwyn, telling him that she would be designing for Hollywood from Paris, and that his female stars would simply have to travel to Europe. Swanson was already in London at the time, so it was easy for her to be fitted at Chanel's atelier on the Rue Cambon, this time for an orchidhued gown trimmed with mirrors. However, when Chanel discovered that the actress had gained weight between fittings, she was furious and demanded Swanson lose five pounds. What she soon found out was that Swanson was secretly pregnant by her Irish lover, playboy Michael Farmer. The actress insisted on wearing a stiff rubber corset to hide her pregnancy, which Chanel thought would destroy the lines of the dress, but the designer managed to conceal the weight gain and was able to introduce her signature look to American audiences by dressing Swanson not only in gowns but in ropes of pearls worn over a tailored suit. In some scenes, the dark-haired Swanson even "bears a striking

resemblance to Chanel herself," as Kristen Welch has observed, turning Swanson "into the embodiment of the Chanel ideal."

Tonight or Never was meant to take Swanson from being a silent-movie star into the era of sound. Photographed by the great Gregg Toland (Citizen Kane) and directed by Mervyn LeRoy (Little Caesar), the movie didn't garner the attention Goldwyn had hoped for, in part because the sensational news of Swanson's personal life—her divorce from Henri, Marquis de la Falaise de la Coudraye and rushed marriage to Michael Farmer—overshadowed the publicity for the movie. But Chanel's designs won acclaim.

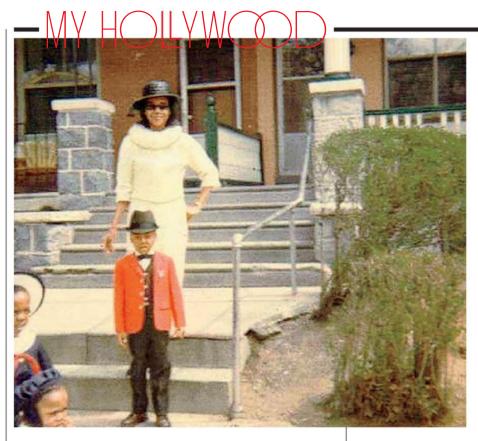
In her third and final film for Goldwyn, The Greeks Had a Word for Them, three exshowgirls rent a luxury apartment to attract potential millionaire spouses. The story would be remade several times, most memorably in 1953, as How to Marry a Millionaire. Chanel's fame eclipsed that of the picture's stars, Joan Blondell, Madge Evans, and Ina Claire. Movie posters announced that the gowns were by "Chanel of Paris," and reviews of the film praised them. Although four of her gowns would be made available for sale to the public, the film was not a hit, and Chanel's designs couldn't save it.

## Haute and Cold

he collaboration between Chanel and Goldwyn was deemed less than successful by the press, on both coasts. The New Yorker reported that her costumes were not showy enough; she "made a lady look like a lady. Hollywood wants a lady to look like two ladies." Depression-era films glittered with silk gowns and feathers and sparkled with diamonds; Chanel's muted tweeds and jerseys didn't have the same pizzazz.

"The most elegant Chanel . . . was a washout on the screen," complained one Hollywood costumer, according to Garelick. After all, the designer had told The New York Times on first arriving in America that "real chic means being well-dressed, but not conspicuously dressed. I abhor eccentricity." Not fully grasping, perhaps, that she needed to go over the top, she didn't want her designs to overshadow the actors. The begrudging Los Angeles Times had been right all along: the American public looked to Hollywood, not to Paris, as the center of world fashion.

It would be another 22 years before haute couture would come back to Hollywood, this time in the form of Hubert de Givenchy's designs for Audrey Hepburn in the 1954 Billy Wilder film Sabrina. His costumes for that movie and Audrey Hepburn's seven subsequent films launched a waifish yet chic postwar look that still resonates today.



Lee Daniels, aged six, with his mother. Clara, at their home in Philadelphia, with cousins Tredina and Tracey Watson.

# fabulous music, making their dreams come true. It changed my life forever. Later, I did a brief stint at a college

people adorned in glitter and singing

outside St. Louis, where I worked at a theater soaking in everything. After a year, I ran out of money and decided to do the only logical thing. With seven dollars in my pocket I took a bus to the promised land-Hollywood. I slept on the streets for a while, until I got a job

cleaning at a church in return for a bed. They had a little theater, where I started directing, still without a clue that that was what I was doing. Simultaneously, I started working at a nursing agency that made house calls.

t was around that time that AIDS hit, and no one knew what it was or how it was contracted. With death tolls quickly rising, I hired five nurses and started my own agency. I sent them to the homes of dying men, a concept no one dared do at the time. I made a lot of money, but it was the most terrifying time of my life. I lost all my friends and kept waiting for someone to tell me I was H.I.V.-positive. It never happened, and I'm still thankful for that miracle.

During that time one of the producers of Purple Rain came in to pay a bill for his mother and asked me what I really wanted to do. The answer: make movies. Next thing I knew I had sold my nursing agency and was driving onto the Warner Bros. lot.

I started in casting and then went on to manage some incredible actors (such as Nastassja Kinski, Loretta Devine, Wes Bentley, and Michael Shannon).

Everyone has moments that stick out. For me that was when Paula Kelly came in to audition. I had seen her incredible work, but she blew me away. The role eventually went to another actress, but I started managing her. Paula reinforced in me the idea to always dream even bigger. In a time when African-American actors were being told there were no roles for them, she reminded me of the importance of creating your own destiny.

This was pre-Spike Lee and after the blaxploitation era. Men such as Bob Fosse and John Waters were my inspirations, but I had no mentors and had to pave my own way.

I eventually went on to option and produce Monster's Ball. I studied Roberto Schaefer's camerawork and learned the ins and outs of a set. Halle Berry made history. I've never looked back.

A dream always has to start somewhere ... and it's what you do with it that makes the difference.  $\Box$ 

# Lee Daniels

His success as a producer and director has been no fairy tale, though it began with *Cinderella* 

s early as I can remember, every Christmas my siblings and I would huddle in front of our small black-and-white TV to watch Cinderella, starring Lesley Ann Warren. We were swept away to a magical place where dreams replaced the rats that ran in front of us. I instinctively knew that

I wanted to be part of a world much bigger than the one I was living in. Lesley Ann dared me to dream, and to dream BIG.

The first thing I ever read cover to cover was Edward Albee's play Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? I lined up my family on the front stoop of our building, and we snapped bubble gum and ate Popsicles as I directed them. That's when I got the bug, long before I knew what a "director" was.

At 16, I stole my mother's Eldorado and drove from Philly to N.Y.C. to sneak into a production of Dreamgirls. It was black



# The Real Ex-Husband of Beverly Hills

David Foster is not just the man behind countless pop hits and movie scores, working with everyone from Michael Jackson to Madonna to Josh Groban. Thanks to four marriages, the composer-producer is also paterfamilias to an equally impressive number of reality-TV stars, including Gigi and Bella Hadid, Brody and Brandon Jenner, and Sara and Erin Foster. ERIC KONIGSBERG finds the newly (and unusually) single Foster gripped by a new love: Broadway

wo Canadian rock 'n' rollers of a certain age were having lunch in a coffee shop near the Sunset Strip. What did they talk about? Songwriting, of course. The two men were David Foster and Bryan Adams, old friends and fellow travelers, and while the latter's name probably rings a bell for his string of radio hits in the 1980s—"Summer of '69," "Cuts Like a Knife," "Run to You"—Foster is noth-

ing less than a music-industry institution. As a composer and producer, he has nearly a hundred hit singles, working with the likes of Barbra Streisand; Earth, Wind & Fire; Alice Cooper; Rod Stewart; Donna Summer; Olivia Newton-John; Céline Dion; Andrea Bocelli; Josh Groban; Toni Braxton; Madonna; Jennifer Lopez; Mary J. Blige; Christina Aguilera; Kenny Rogers; Kenny Loggins; Kenny G; and—hold your applause—Michael Bublé.

Way back in 1985, *Rolling Stone* called Foster "the master of...bombastic pop kitsch." He is ubiquitous. To date, Foster has won 16 Grammys. With 47 nominations to his name, that's even a decent yield. Along the way, he has written songs or scores for dozens of movies and has been nominated three times for an Oscar for best original song.

As it happens, both Foster and Adams recently set their sights on Broadway, and over lunch they lamented that this new arena is tougher than anticipated. "It's a slugfest," said Foster, who is composing all the numbers for a Betty Boop musical. "I've written 35 songs, but the thing about Broadway is you've got to be prepared to throw your best stuff out." While a movie theme song is a one-off and can typically make it into the final production on its own merits, writing for Broadway requires volume—and a good song is only as necessary as the job it's being asked to perform within the narrative arc. To wit, Foster's favorite number, which he'd written as the

curtain-raiser, was moved into the middle of the plot and radically repurposed by a new director. "It was called 'Wake Up,'" he said. "Now it's 'Lean In.'"

Adams, for his part, is in the thick of a stage adaptation of the movie *Pretty Woman*. "Try writing a love song without the word 'love' in it," Adams said. "That's the nature of their story. The minute either of them says 'love,' it's over."

"I couldn't do it," Foster said. He laughed. "My songs are all about love—explicitly." This is a man whose best-known songs include "Love Me Tomorrow," "After the Love Has Gone," "It's the Falling in Love," "Stand Up for Love," "To Love You More,"

and "Will You Still Love Me?" Then there are "Love at Second Sight," "Love by Another Name," "Love Lights the World," and "Love Will Show Us How." And let's don't forget "Glory of Love," "River of Love," "All I Know of Love," and "You Can

BORSALINO.

Never Ask Too Much (of Love)." Not to mention the "Love Theme from St. Elmo's Fire."

You'd think that Foster, now 67, would have had enough of silly love songs. But his personal life, much like his oeuvre, is an unbroken chain of romantic folly. Foster has been married four times, most recently to Yolanda Hadid, a former model and a costar of The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills, from whom he is currently in the middle of what will be his fourth divorce. "I tend to go from marriage to marriage-leaving one wife for another," Foster said. "This is the first time in my adult life that I've been single. It's a very powerful feeling, but I'm not used to it. Someone said to me recently that you need to be very careful about the person you pick to spend the rest of your life with. It's kind of weird that I'm hearing that now and thinking, Oh, right." At the end of 2016, Foster began dating Christie Brinkley.

In December, Foster was in the news when it came to light that he was considering an offer to direct the musical program for Donald Trump's inauguration. He says he took so much heat from his friends, especially Brinkley, that he declined the invitation, but he remains "saddened" that "as an immigrant myself.... I couldn't be involved." (Foster now holds dual U.S. and Canadian citizenship.) He adds that he was a Hillary Clinton supporter.

Foster is on the tall side, with sandy-gray, multi-directional hair and a demeanor much less square and earnest than one expects of somebody whom Peter Cetera, a founding member of the band Chicago, gratefully lauds for his "white-bread, Canadian genius." On the lone episode of her show in which Foster agreed (reluctantly) to appear, Hadid presented her husband with an anniversary gift of "racy" beach shots of herself; he thanked her and promised never to reciprocate.

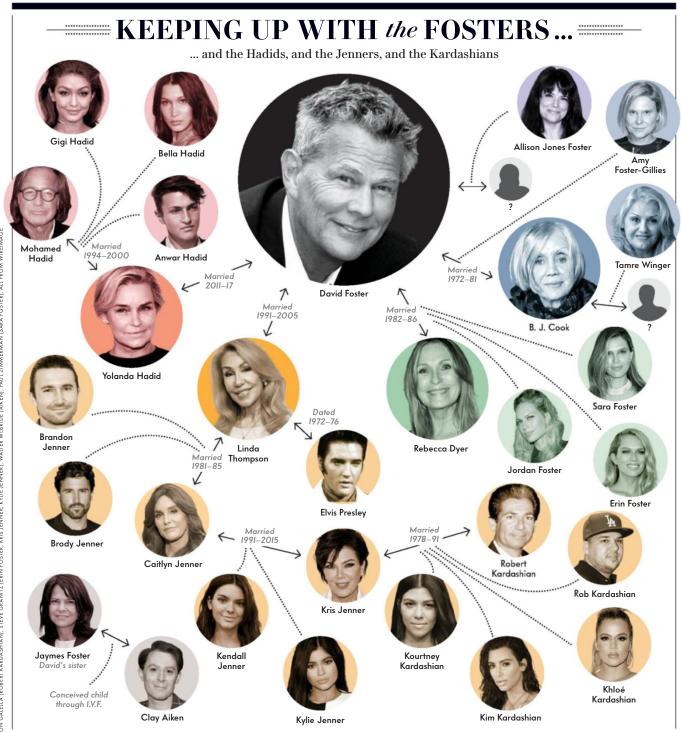
One unintended product of his self-effacing charm—and his series of marriages—is that he stands quietly at the center of an additional, non-musical universe: reality TV. A staggering number of people raised in his home have become reality-TV stars—famous for being famous, infantes and infantas of TMZ. Foster remains close to them all. As his daughter Sara Foster puts it, "He's basically the Patient Zero of the Kardashian phenomenon."

# II. Family Tree

et's start with the most recent household and work backward. Foster's stepdaughters from his marriage to Yolanda are the models Gigi and Bella Hadid; their careers were enabled by exposure, alongside their mother, on *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*. Both have also been guests on



YIED BY SCIASCIA GAMBACCINI; GROOMING BY JASON SCHNEIDMAN; PRODUCED I IOCATION BY DEBORAH BURCH; FOR DETAILS, GO TO VE.COM/CREDITS



Keeping Up with the Kardashians. And both have starred in the music videos of their boyfriends: Bella dated the Canadian singer the Weeknd. Gigi is involved with Zayn Malik, formerly a member of One Direction.

Foster's stepsons from his third marriage, to the actress and songwriter Linda Thompson, are Brody and Brandon Jenner—the sons of Caitlyn Jenner (formerly Bruce Jenner). Thompson had previously been married to Bruce and, rather famously in a different era, was one of Elvis Presley's girlfriends. (Thompson, in her recent memoir, mentioned what

she saw as Foster's insane jealousy of Elvis's ghost, but he says, "It wasn't jealousy. I just got tired of having a TV crew in our house every year on the anniversary of his death, and hearing my wife declare him the love of her life.") In 2005, the Jenner boys had their own reality show on Fox, The Princes of Malibu. The central conceit was that Foster had given his layabout stepkids six months to find jobs and get out of his 12,000-square-foot house. ("It had a funicular train and secret rooms with codes you needed to enter them," Brandon Jenner says. "Larry Ellison owns it now.")

Although only six episodes were shot and only the first two ever aired-it was through this experiment in the genre that the boys' father's third wife, Kris Jenner, got the idea to launch her own show about the lives of her six children. She had four from her ex-husband, the lawyer Robert Kardashian, and two with Bruce Jenner. Their names were Kim, Kourtney, Khloé, Rob, Kendall, and Kylie. You know the rest of the story.

Meanwhile, Amy Foster-Gillies, Foster's daughter from his first marriage, to the singer-writer B. J. Cook, has written hit

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records for Bublé, Groban, and Destiny's Child. And one of his sisters, Jaymes Foster, became a gossip staple when, at 50, she gave birth to the in-vitro baby of 29-year-old Clay Aiken, the American Idol star.

Moving on: Sara and Erin Foster, daughters from Foster's second marriage, to Rebecca Dyer, created Barely Famous, a clever reality-show parody that has aired on VH1 over the past two years. (A third sister, Jordan, is a stylist in New York.) Sara and Erin play dopey versions of themselves, which can be interpreted only as an attempt to achieve some distance from what the world expected of them. Episodes were devoted to plotlines such as the "Sara" character's attempt to raise her Q rating (by endorsing a brand of vaginal wipes on social media) and both women's misguided envy of their empty and spoiled but hot-and fictitious!-step-siblings (in an episode titled "The Foster Sisters' Sisters"). While the Fosters wrote the episode with the idea that the Hadid girls would be in on the joke and play themselves, Erin says, "Gigi bailed a week before we shot it to do a big Chanel shoot. We cast random models as them instead. My dad saw it and said, 'That was a little harsh, don't you think?""

"We were the only Foster kids who didn't want a reality-TV show," Erin goes on. "We realized there has to be a show about that. The show is who we could have become if we had not been raised well" and pursued more traditional careers in writing and acting. She proudly notes that she had been working at Free People, a clothing store, before she got hired as a writer for an NBC sitcom, The New Normal. And she clarifies: "I'm the writer and Sara's more of the actress. She was in 90210. She doesn't physically write, but she was very much integral to the creative process."

Sara adds, "If I were on a reality-TV show, no director would talk to me again. Not if you're seen throwing salad at your husband."

Extended-family events in the Foster clan can be populous. "There were some big Thanksgivings," Brandon Jenner, who is now a folk musician, says. "When I got married, five years ago, we decided to restrict it to only parents, step-parents, and blood siblings because, between my wife and me, that was 34 people. If you include step-sibs, you'd go to 134." Still, he considers Foster "really my father. He's the man who slept in the master bedroom during our childhoods. He was there for most everything, although Bruce"-now Caitlyn-"was the one who taught me to ride a bike."

Through it all, Foster has remained a close friend of Mohamed Hadid, the Beverly Hills developer, who had been previously married to Yolanda. They have a weekly lunch together at Il Pastaio. "I introduced them," Hadid says, "and he's turned out to be one of the best stepfathers to my daughters. It's a blessing."

A typical evening with Foster inevitably brings some confusion. One night, between a party for Lionel Richie ("My man is the mayor of this town," Richie says, "and, yes, I tease him about both of us having children who embarrass us on TV") and a late dinner at Nobu Malibu with John Mayer, he decided to stop for a drink at Wally's, on North Canon Drive, where-in hopes of getting a better table-he asked the hostess if his ex-wife happened to be in the restaurant. "Which one?" the hostess replied.

It took Foster's own daughters a long time to get over their resentment about how devoted he was to the Hadid and Jenner children. "It's hard as a kid looking at your stepsiblings and asking why they each had three cars when we didn't," Sara Foster said over breakfast with her father the following day. "By the way, it's a lot worse leaving a woman with a five-year-old, a three-year-old, and an eight-month-old than leaving a woman with Lyme disease"-Yolanda Hadid has detailed her bout with the illness on her TV show and in an upcoming memoir. "When they were dating, my sisters and I sat him down and said, 'If you don't marry her, you're the biggest fool on the planet.""

Foster volunteered that he hadn't introduced his girls to any new girlfriends in the past year.

"Please wait," Sara said.

# III. "Transitional Phase"

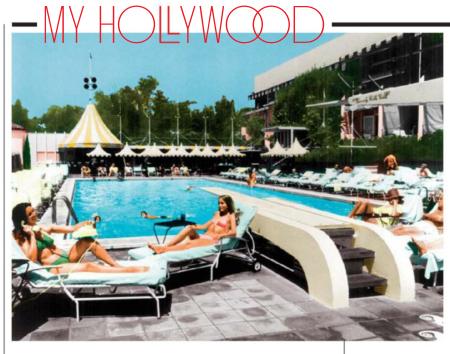
ne morning found Foster at the Yamaha grand piano in his new bachelor pad, recording a play-along video for the 75th anniversary of the student orchestra at his old high school, in British Columbia. He gently sailed through "Love Theme from St. Elmo's Fire," a wordless evocation of tenderness and ambition battling for primacy in the soul of the nascent yuppie. At the 1985 Grammys, it lost to the Miami Vice theme song for best instrumental, and one imagines that Patrick Bateman has killed people to this song.

Foster wore jeans, Ugg boots, chunky eyeglasses, and the sort of asymmetrically embellished sweater that Barneys sells fewer of than expected every autumn. His apartment is in Westwood's Wilshire Corridor, a long strand of high-rises for people daunted by all the outsourcing required to maintain an estate in Beverly Hills. The Weeknd also lives in the building. Until Foster's interior decorator can fully roll up her sleeves, the design scheme remains very much Single Mogul: awards-banquet shots, bare floors, large photographs of a nude model eating different kinds of junk food, powder-room walls hung floor-to-ceiling with platinum records. There's an Ed Ruscha "word painting" in the entryway, opposite a giant portrait of Foster himself made entirely of Nespresso pods (a gift). "For a transitional phase, he's really upped his art game," said Niki Cloyd, the decorator, who was there to work on lighting.

Foster has lately been spending more time at the piano than he has in decades. "I've been up past midnight all week, woodshedding," he said, playing compositions by the great jazzman Clare Fischer. His chops come by way of a childhood devoted to jazz and classical music-he calls Puccini's aria "Nessun dorma" "the perfect pop song," though he also says he fell to pieces when he first heard the Beatles' "She Loves You," as a young teen. He formed a rock band. the Teen Beats, and dropped out after the 11th grade to tour with Chuck Berry. "My father cashed in his life savings, \$1,700 in retirement bonds, to buy me an electric piano and an amplifier I could bring to England," Foster said. "My mom must have convinced him it was worth it. I didn't appreciate Chuck Berry when I was in his band, but now I get it. Anyway, I was no good yet, and he didn't like me either." His next band, Skylark, had a Top 10 hit in America (the slow-dance gem "Wildflower") in 1972, enabling the group to move to Los Angeles with a record deal.

"The band broke up and so did my first marriage, but I stuck around and kept writing and playing as a session musician," Foster said. "When I try to remember the songs that made my career, my mind goes to the houses they bought me." Cheryl Lynn's disco anthem "Got to Be Real," which he co-wroteto the enduring delight of D.J.'s at weddings and office parties everywhere—helped put him in his first Malibu mansion. He continued to trade up after subsequent collaborations with Earth, Wind & Fire (he co-wrote "After the Love Has Gone"-his first Grammy winner, for best R&B song, in 1980-and many of the numbers on the album IAm), Michael Jackson (he co-wrote songs on Off the Wall and played on songs on that album and Thriller), and Chicago (all of the above for the LPs Chicago 16, 17, and 18). Then came Whitney Houston's soundtrack to The Bodyguard, Natalie Cole's Unforgettable ... With Love, several Céline Dion albums, and Toni Braxton's "Un-Break My Heart."

"I've been within the four walls of a studio for 45 years, making music and getting food slid to me under the door," Foster said. His children and stepchildren have memories of stars showing up at CONTINUED ON PAGE 192



A guest takes a phone call poolside at the Beverly Hills Hotel, 1950s.

# Lisa Birnbacl

Hanging out at the Beverly Hills Hotel pool was a newcomer's introduction to a classic status symbol

hen I started on the show-business beat, back in the olden days of 1982, writing profiles of movie stars and directors, I was always put up at the Beverly Hills Hotel. The pink stucco compound was the center of above-the-line show business, an industry hub-being seen there was practical-

ly a professional advantage in itself. The air was soft and fragrant, with a mixture of the garden, aftershave, Bain de Soleil, and possibility.

Part of the charm of planting oneself at the hotel was that one could be followed by one's phone calls. The tradition of being paged started in the bar of the Polo Lounge in the 1940s. "A [little person] dressed like the Philip Morris bellhop walked around carrying a chalkboard with bells on it, with the guest's name written in chalk," explains Robert Anderson, the great-grandson of the builder and original owner of the hotel, as well as its historian. As the pool became an equally important retreat, operators would forward calls to the pool office. There, they would announce over a loudspeaker the name of the guest who was being sought. When the guest had been located, one of the pool boys or Svend Petersen, the pool manager and lifeguard, would bring over one of the many square, clunky, standard beige push-button phones of the day, which had extra-long cords so they could travel throughout the large patio and pool area.

While self-consciously perched by myself on a chaise at the pool, fake-reading and watching wide-eyed as a parade of insiders greeted one another, I couldn't help but become absorbed by the periodic announce-

ments that punctuated the pink peace and calm. "Mark Goodson, Mark Goodson. Telephone call." For the uninitiated, we were in the same place as the man who co-produced *Password, Match Game*, and all the game shows I watched when I was home sick from school. That wasn't nothing. An exceptionally tan older fellow in a Speedo would get up and raise his hand to indicate that he was the phone call's intended subject.

Former studio president Sherry Lansing explains the many uses and feints of being paged. "It was one of the ways of letting people know you were there," she says. "I also heard that people used pages to get out of things." You'd get your secretary to call you at the Polo Lounge to tell you an "emergency" had come up at work. "Or you could have her pretend to be someone else." Though, she quickly adds, "I never did it." Producer Marcia Nasatir remembers that it was not considered rude to take a phone call at the Polo Lounge: "It was what you wanted to happen," she says. "'Oh, Marcia Nasatir is here? Who's she having lunch with?""

Some pool habitués were known for being paged frequently, such as Dave Tebet, NBC's V.P. of talent, who lived in the hotel, and Contessa (née Alice) Cohn, a woman whose IMDB credit lists only "Xanadu, dancer 1980." "People were getting themselves paged just to have their names said," Anderson explains. "Contessa Cohn had herself paged." And, says longtime pool bartender Gus Tassopoulous, "some people made up names—everyone got a kick out of it."

ventually, I, too, asked the switchboard to forward my calls to the pool. I blushed to the inside of my tank suit when a call for me actually happened, and as I stood up to get it, a man asked me whether I was indeed Lisa Birnbach. Yes, I nodded. "Great, I want to talk to you when you're done." So this was how it worked! I walked back slowly from the phone—not over-eagerly—to the chaise of the producer who no doubt was going to hire me to write a film for him. "Are you the author of *The Official Preppy Handbook*?" Yes, I am. "Do you live at One Fifth Avenue?" Yes, I did! "Do you wear clogs?" Yes . . . "I'm your downstairs neighbor. You really stomp around. Could you please stop?" I stopped. And so did the tradition of paging at the pool: in 1991, after a page accidentally interrupted a business deal, stopping it in its tracks, the hotel decided it was time to end the custom altogether. Besides, soon thereafter most guests had a cell phone.



# THE DEADLIEST KLATCH

ig Little Lies, coming to HBO this month, is where the mommy wars get real, what with an elementaryschool fund-raiser—Trivia Night, no less-ending in bloodshed and a crushed skull. The place is Monterey, California, and the murder suspects are multiple, beginning with Madeline Martha Mackenzie (Reese Witherspoon), the tightly wound queen bee of the stay-at-home brigade; she could be Tracy Flick rounding toward 40. We meet Madeline at drop-off on first-grade orientation day, where she takes newcomer Jane Chapman (Shailene Woodley) under her wing. Jane is a young single mom who has moved to town for reasons possibly mysterious. She and her angelic-looking son are soon in the crosshairs of Renata Klein (Laura Dern), C.E.O. of the workingmom division. How was her summer? "Well," Renata says in a silly-me voice, "I joined the board of PayPal. What was I thinking adding one more thing to my life?" You can practically hear the entire P.T.A.'s teeth grind. Filling out the parent directory: ethereal former lawyer Celeste Wright (Nicole Kidman), who, we discover, has a thing for rough sex, and Bonnie Carlson (Zoë Kravitz), the lithe yoga mom Madeline's ex-husband traded her in for. Those are the suspects. Each could also be the victim: Big Little Lies, written and produced by David E. Kelley (Ally McBeal, The Practice), holds back that card as well, at least through the first two episodes. But just when you think you're settling in for a delicious campfest—a more urbane Desperate Housewives, say-the series deepens and darkens. With Kidman and Witherspoon driving the project as executive producers and a 2014 novel by Australian author Liane Moriarty as its starting point, this limited-run series is really about the masks people wear in public, and the richer selves they reveal in private-not just moms navigating the shoals at pickup and drop-off but all of us, perhaps even A-list actresses. -BRUCE HANDY

Laura Dern. Reese Witherspoon, and Nicole Kidman, photographed in Los Angeles. **DERN WEARS** CLOTHING BY DIOR. WITHERSPOON WEARS A JUMPSUIT BY BRANDON MAXWELL; EARRINGS BY TIFFANY & CO. KIDMAN WEARS CLOTHING AND A CUMMERBUND

BY ALEXANDRE VAUTHIER; BRA BY LA PERLA; RINGS BY DAUPHIN AND KOVA.

# THE

When Michael Crichton died, at 66, he was the master of the scientific thriller, writing-and directing and producing-hits in every medium: The Andromeda Strain, ER, Jurassic Park, and many more. Now, with Crichton's Westworld reincarnated as an HBO hit, and a posthumous novel, *Dragon Teeth*, headed both for bookstores and the TV screen, SAM KASHNER

goes to the heart of Crichton's unparalleled pop-culture reign

magine. An amusement park where you can be hunted by a velociraptor-make that two velociraptors-or step gingerly over the tail of a sleeping T. rex, like the characters do in *Jurassic Park*. Or be dropped to the bottom of the ocean, as in Sphere, or ride atop a fast-moving train in Victorian England, as in The Great Train Robbery. Or be shuttled on a fast-moving gurney, like the patients in ER.

Welcome to Crichton World, which continues to flourish even after Michael Crichton's death from cancer, in 2008, at the age of 66, after a staggeringly prodigious career as a writer and director of science-based thrillers.

There has never been anyone quite like him in the history of the movies. In his lifetime Michael Crichton wrote 18 major novels, most of them best-sellers, including The Andromeda Strain, The Great Train Robbery, Jurassic Park, Congo, Disclosure, and Sphere. His books have sold more than 200 million copies worldwide, and





13 of his novels were made into major films, many of them huge financial successes (the Jurassic Park juggernaut alone has earned more than \$3.5 billion worldwide). He also directed seven films (including Westworld, Coma, The Great Train Robbery)—all of this making Crichton rich beyond the fantasies of most writers.

He also created video games and the long-running TV show ER. In 1995 he achieved a breathtaking pop-cultural moment when he had the nation's No. 1 best-selling book (The Lost World), the No. 1 movie (Congo), and the No. 1 TV show (ER), a trifecta he repeated in 1996 with Airframe, Twister, and ER. No one has topped that—not Stephen King, not John Grisham, not J. K. Rowling. At the height of his career, Crichton was reportedly earning \$100 million a year. His cultural ubiquity was such that a New Yorker cartoon showed a woman in a bookstore asking, "What can you recommend that's not by Michael Crichton?"

arly on, Crichton segued into films, writing screenplays and directing, admitting that once he had started down that road it was hard to return to the lonely ordeal of writing novels. He found uncanny success in television with ER, based on a screenplay, Code Blue, written about his experiences as a student at Harvard Medical School and years later developed for television with Steven Spielberg.

He was immensely tall. Six feet nine inches tall. So tall that it was often a problem for him, beginning at age 13, when he was already over six feet, weighed a skeletal 125 pounds, and was routinely hounded by bullies. So tall that he often felt like an outsider, an alien, an Ivy League oddball, but tall enough that he could see beyond the horizon before anyone else. Spielberg said that Crichton was the

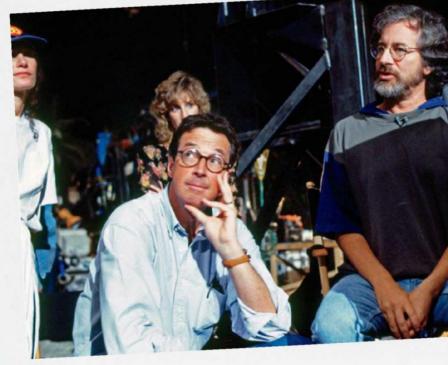
tallest man he had ever met, and naturally that impressive height—whatever its drawbacks—gave him a certain added authority on the sets of the seven films he directed.

George Clooney, who credits his long and distinguished career to his breakout role in ER, said that "Michael was always referred to as a Renaissance man. That's because he was so good at so many things. Doctor. Writer. Director. And he was a stunning six-foot-nine figure. He would walk in the room and all the rest of us mortals felt somewhat inadequate. It was something you had to see. He could reduce giant stars and brilliant directors to little kids looking up to this gentle giant."

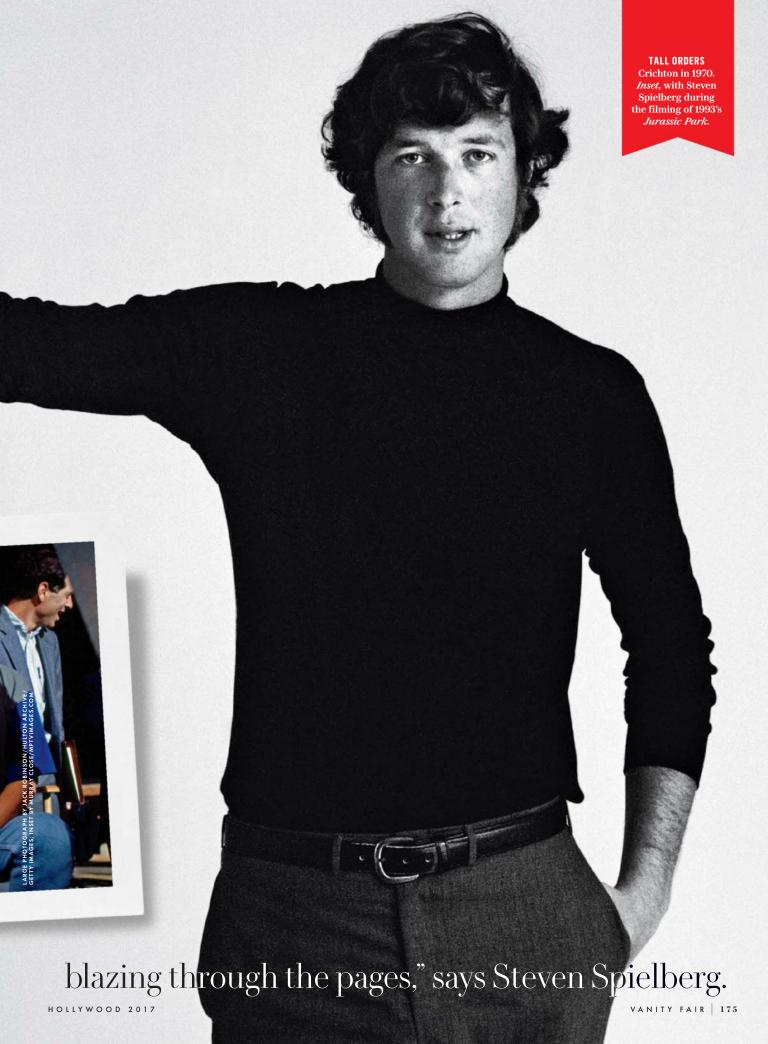
His intellect was just as intimidating, and his scientific curiosity certainly made an impression on Hollywood. "He was a stone-cold genius," said Michael Douglas, who starred in Coma and Disclosure. "He really was a gentle giant, very shy but intimidating. This guy was off the charts as far as intellect was concerned."

Crichton began his directing career with Westworld. If you haven't watched either the 1973 film, starring Richard Benjamin, Yul Brynner, and James Brolin, or the new cable incarnation on HBO, starring Anthony Hopkins, Ed





"You couldn't catch your breath ... when you were





Clooney says, "He reduced giant stars and brilliant

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EVOLUTIONARY CINEMA
Clockwise from top left:
Crichton with James
Brolin, Yul Brynner, and
Richard Benjamin
on the set of Westworld;
with Michael Ovitz
and Spielberg in 1994;
with Sean Connery
on the set of 1979's The
Great Train Robbery;
working on the same film
with Donald Sutherland
and Connery.

Harris, and Evan Rachel Wood, it's about a vacation theme park peopled by animatronic creatures so perfect that you can't readily tell them apart from humans. Their role is to allow paying guests to act out any fantasy they wish, including sex, murder, and mayhem, in one of three realms—the Wild West, the Roman Empire, and Medieval Europe.

When a relentless black-clad gunslinger menacingly played by Yul Brynner stops following the encoded script and begins killing guests, revenge of the machine ensues. One of the show-runners of the new HBO series, Jonathan Nolan (brother of *Memento* and

Dark Knight director Christopher Nolan), told Rolling Stone he remembered being terrified as a child by Brynner in the 1973 film.

Richard Benjamin reminisced about being cast as Peter Martin, the out-of-his-depth guest in *Westworld* who is pursued by the gunslinger. "Paula [the actress Paula Prentiss, Benjamin's wife] and I were in New York, and we got a phone call from [famed talent agent] Sue Mengers saying, 'There's a movie called *Westworld*, and I think you should do it,'" he explained. "'It's Michael Crichton—he's brilliant,' and she hung up the phone."

Although Westworld was the first feature film Crichton directed, Benjamin felt that "he knew exactly what he was doing. It went very smoothly and easily, and he was, you know, this quiet presence, but in total command. The theme—Don't trust technology; it'll go

crazy-ran throughout his work."

That was indeed Crichton's *idée fixe*: our scientific and technological creations—whether highly sophisticated A.I. or DNA-cloned dinosaurs—will slip from our control and try to **destroy** us. It seems that as a culture we are **catching** up to Michael Crichton's dark view of **scient**ifically enhanced life.



richton's novel *Dragon Teeth* will be published in May by Harper and is being adapted for a six-hour television series, to air on the National Geographic Channel. Co-written by screenwriter Graham Yost (*Band of Brothers, The Pacific*) for Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, the series features two of the great dinosaurbone hunters of the late 19th century, Edwin Drinker Cope and Othniel Charles Marsh. Yost calls their relationship "the greatest scientific rivalry of all time."

Yost never actually met Michael Crichton, but they spoke at length on the phone in 2001, when Amblin considered making a sequel to *Twister*. "The idea was there would be a swarm of tornadoes that would hit Chicago," recalled Yost, "so we were kicking that around, but then there was 9/11, and I



directors to kids looking up to this gentle giant."

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said, I don't think anybody wants to see buildings falling down."

Dragon Teeth is "a big adventure story with science at the heart," Yost explained, "and that in many ways sums up a lot of Crichton's work. The difference is there isn't necessarily a dark sort of turn. There's no dinosaur eating the patrons. There is the sense of these two men, Cope and Marsh, and how their rivalry deforms them. And how William Johnson"—a fictional character Crichton created to tell the story—"has to navigate between them and find his own life."

It's easy to see William Johnson as a stand-in for the author: he's an Ivy League student, aware of his entitlement. It wouldn't be the first time Crichton wrote a version of himself into his novels and screenplays. Jeff Goldblum's character in Jurassic Park is Crichton-like in some ways: a tall, much-married intellectual, specializing in chaos theory. He also speaks the movie's theme, reflecting Crichton's opinion about scientific meddling: "Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could that they didn't stop to think if they should." And in ER, the character played by Noah Wyle has certain Crichtonlike attributes, so much so that during the run of the show Wyle drummed up the courage to ask the author if, indeed, he was playing a version of Michael Crichton. Wyle explained, "I just assumed, since he wrote it in 1974, after he finished his [time] as a medical student, and my character was finishing his third-year rotation and doing his internship in the E.R., [that] I was playing Michael. And when I broached that to him, he kind of smiled and said that he felt he was a composite of all of the characters. Burst my bubble!"

Despite Crichton's vague demurral, Wyle admitted that he used Crichton "as a bit of a prototype for the character—the idea of this really smart guy choosing to put himself in less than savory circumstances, both for his education but also to test his mettle."

#### The Spielberg Collaboration

athleen Kennedy-co-founder of Amblin Entertainment in 1982 and now president of Lucasfilm—who produced Jurassic Park, Congo, Twister, and others, explained, "I always say Michael Crichton [wrote] science fact, not science fiction. ⊢ He was deeply interested in what was going on with technology and scientific experiments, but he always seemed to find a way to make complex ideas very accessible because he found a way to talk about them through big entertainment."

When asked about Crichton's enormous output, Kennedy answered, "He was incredibly driven. I think more of it just came from this insatiable desire to understand these complex ideas and where technology was going, where medicine was going, or science was headed."

Spielberg noted that "Michael brought credibility to incredible subject matter. He was a master builder of a scientific logic to keep the science fiction grounded so it could be believed by people all over the world. And I had not met anybody who had ever done that before. And he did it over and over again in a lot of films and books. I've always believed that the more incredible your stories, the more credible the science has to be."

Spielberg recalled that he was beginning a seven-year contract as a television director for Universal when he first met Crichton, after being asked to give the author a tour of Universal Studios. Crichton had just sold The Andromeda Strain to Universal.

"I remember I did all the talking because Michael hardly said a word," Spielberg recalled. "He was very shy, he was very reticent to get into a conversation, but he seemed to be taking everything in, and he seemed to be acting with interest at everything I was pointing out to him, like Lana Turner's dressing room or Alfred Hitchcock's office or Western Street, where they made [the television series] Wagon Train. And he was agog the whole day that we spent together, and we often talked about it when we became engaged in a professional collaboration."

They became friends, and one day Crichton called Spielberg and said, "I want you to read a first draft of something I've written, kind of about myself when I wanted to be a doctor." It was the 150-page Code Blue screenplay, and Spielberg loved it and committed to directing it. "I mean, you couldn't catch your breath trying to keep up with him when you were blazing through the pages [of his screenplays and books]... When he [later] co-wrote Twister for me, I probably read that script in an hour, and I'm a slow reader, and I was blazing through it.

"Michael and I started working on the re-writes," Spielberg recalled, "and I didn't know much about medicine, except-well, I knew as much about medicine as any hypochondriac knows, which is often more than the doctors. And Michael respected how much I knew about medicine, based on my fear of everything that could go wrong."

Over lunch, Spielberg asked what else he was working on, and Crichton said "he couldn't tell me, it was a secret project, but I kind of wouldn't let it go. And after a couple of days, Michael, swearing me to secrecy, said, 'O.K., it's a book about dinosaurs and DNA.' And that's all he would tell me. And I wouldn't give it up, so I finally got him after several weeks to tell me pretty much the whole story. When he finished telling me, I committed to direct it.... I probably had one of the best times of my career directing that script."

#### The Archives

he late writer's vast archive is examined and catalogued in a house that Crichton owned in Santa Monica. In the kitchen is a large photograph of Alfred Hitchcock autographed to Crichton, in the living room a display of Crichton's books, posters for the movies, advertisements for the books, the Timemagazine cover from September 1995, and a script for ER, signed by members of the cast, preserved in a Plexiglas frame.

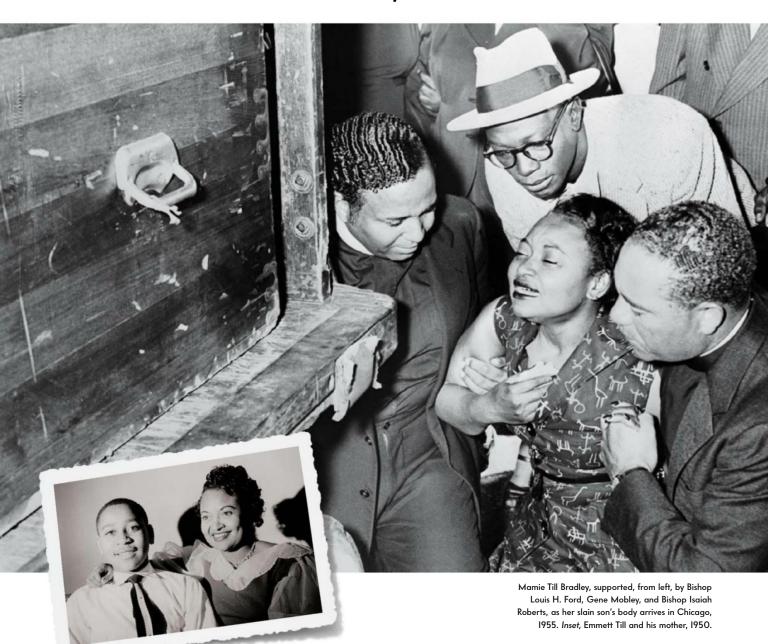
In a large room next to the kitchen, the writer's widow, Sherri Alexander Crichton, and two assistants had laid out on three long tables samples of her late husband's letters, original scripts, postcards, and manuscripts. White cotton gloves were available in case we wanted to handle any of the material.

Sherri, a graceful former model, first met Crichton a year after she'd moved to Los Angeles from New York when a friend of his set them up on a date. "Sherri, you guys have so much in common," the friend encouraged her. "I said, 'What's that?' He said, 'You're both tall." (She is five feet eleven.) Sherri expected to have many more years with her husband, but, tragically, he died three years into the marriage, leaving her alone and six months pregnant with their son, John Michael, and the archives of his vast empire. (Michael Crichton also has a daughter in her late 20s, by his fourth wife.)

"The archive was always very important to me," she said, "because if it didn't get preserved now it was never going to get preserved. Life passes on. Michael's books would hopefully still be in print, but maybe not, if there's not someone there who cares, advocating for them.

"Michael always charted everything," she added. "This year he did this; this year he did that. There are some like Dragon Teeth that are fully formed, pure Crichton. Then there are pieces that are just ideas." So we take a look at Crichton's idea files, which fill five cabinet drawers and which are in the process of being organized and scanned. The sheer range of his interests is dizzying: anthropology, astrology, bacteria, Bali, bats, biochemistry, breeding, cancer, chaos, cloning, computer hackers, criminal investigation, Degas, dinosaurs, DNA, dreams, Eastern European continued on page 194

# EMMETT, STILL



n the summer of 1955, a 14-year-old Chicago boy whistled at a white woman in Mississippi and for that was tortured, beaten, and shot to death. His

suspected killers were acquitted by an allwhite jury in just over an hour. His name was Emmett Till. And in 2017, as Black Lives Matter draws attention to police killings of unarmed people of color, and as white supremacists receive renewed public exposure, Hollywood is asking moviegoers to say Till's name-loudly. (This season has already brought forth two compelling books: Duke

scholar Timothy Tyson's The Blood of Emmett Till as well as Writing to Save a Life, a meditation by PEN/Faulkner honoree John Edgar Wideman.) On the horizon is a six-episode HBO series-with Jay Z, Will Smith, and Casey Affleck among the executive producers-based on Devery Anderson's 2015 biography, Emmett Till. Next, Whoopi Goldberg and Fred Zollo (Mississippi Burning, Ghosts of Mississippi) will produce a film based on a script by Keith Beauchamp, who, a dozen years ago, sparked renewed legal interest in the case through his powerful documentary The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till. Meanwhile, Boyz N the Hood's John Singleton is attached to direct a third Till drama, to be produced by Michael De Luca (American History X, The Social Network), with a screenplay by Jerry Mitchell, the MacArthuraward-winning journalist whose reporting since 1989 has helped convict four Klansmen of fatal 1960s hate crimes. Empire's Taraji P. Henson is slated to portray Till's resilient mother, Mamie Till Bradley, who, by insisting that photos of her son's disfigured body be published, served to galvanize the civil-rights movement. Says Steven Caple Jr., a force behind the HBO mini-series, "We're not competing. We just want one of us to get it right." Odds are they will. -SHEILA WELLER

# The Citic AND THE

With her impassioned defense of the widely panned 1967 film Bonnie and Clyde, The New Yorker's Pauline Kael helped launch the American New Wave and propel Warren Beatty into permanent orbit.

More than a decade later, the powerful critic would leave her perch to accept the invitation of Beatty to co-produce James Toback's Love & Money.

The experiment failed, and Kael left Hollywood under a cloud. LILI ANOLIK tracks the seduction: Who was taking advantage of whom?

And what exactly was at stake?

he facts, verifiable:

In 1979, New Yorker film critic Pauline Kael, 59, accepted an offer from actor-director Warren Beatty, 41, to help him produce Love & Money, a script his production company had acquired and set up at Paramount. Love & Money was to be the second feature of writer-director James Toback, 34, whose first feature, Fingers, Kael had reviewed ecstatically the year before. Toback was also a personal friend. She took a leave of absence from The New Yorker, headed to L.A.

Kael and Toback began working together. She wanted substantial changes to the script. He did not want to change the script substantially. She was removed from the project. Beatty secured a new deal for her at Paramount as a creative production executive. At the time, Paramount's chairman was Barry Diller, a fan. It was not to Diller, however, that she would be reporting. It was to Don Simpson, senior V.P. of worldwide production. There were a number of properties she wished to develop. Simpson rejected all but one. Her contract was for five months. When it lapsed, it wasn't renewed. She returned to *The New Yorker* in the spring of 1980.

These, as I said, are the matters of fact, checked and established, of the situation. And before I



obscure them or re-arrange them, deface them with conjecture and speculation, intuition, feminine and otherwise, I wanted you to see them plain. Now you have. We still can't get started, though. There are a few more things you should know first, mostly about the leads, Kael and Beatty: who they are and where they came from, what they meant in Hollywood and in America, in the worlds of movies and letters and politics, in the late 1970s.

#### Flashback, Hers

auline Kael was born in Petaluma, California, in 1919, the youngest daughter of a Polish-Jewish chicken farmer. She attended Berkeley, dropping out a few credits shy of graduation, but stuck around the Bay Area, running in bohemian circles and writing plays. As her 20s turned into her 30s, she was still running and writing. The plays went unproduced, and she supported herself with a series of go-nowhere jobs. Her wheels were spinning.

And then, suddenly, purchase. In the mid-50s she changed it up, switched from stage to screen, creative writing to critical. She was given a weekly movie column on listener-sponsored KPFA. She also took over a local art house, the Berkeley Cinema Guild. Two points worth emphasizing about these apprentice years: the radio spot meant her reviews were written to be spoken, performed, in essence, and managing a theater meant movies were a commercial proposition for her as well as an aesthetic. And the two points are actually one: her background was equal parts show and business.

Her reviews were, without question, show business. They swung. Were fast, funny, combative, and hugely entertaining. Unlike her plays, which were mannered, inert, and a big fat drag. (That one was titled Orpheus in Sausalito tells you all you need know.) And she grasped that while the potential of movies—"the great bastard cross-fertilized superart"-was vast, realizing that potential was, especially in America, and under the studio system, near impossible. Which was O.K. by her since she adored trash, trash with some snap to it, anyway.

Kael was a local phenomenon but became national when her first collection, I Lost It at the Movies (1965), hit the best-seller list. Two years later, her phone rang. It was The New Yorker's William Shawn. Would she be interested in the position of staff critic? She'd been discovered at last. An ingénue at 48.

Not just an ingénue, though. An erotic sensation. Lauren Bacall, 19 and insolent, giving Humphrey Bogart a lesson on how to whistle in To Have and Have Not. As a movie critic, Kael was young, hot, and a walk on the wild side, even if as a human being she was middleaged, bespectacled, and easily mistaken for somebody's maiden aunt. Sitting in the dark, watching, was her favorite turn-on, her eyes so avid they were like fingers, stroking and caressing the gorgeous, oversize images up on the screen. That's why for Kael seeing a movie was having sex with a movie. And the thrill of reading her writing on movies was close to the thrill of movies themselves, was close, in other words, to the thrill of sex.

So Kael's movie sex life was killer. How about her sex life sex life? Well, according to Toback, by the time she joined The New Yorker, it was over: "She was done with men." She costumed herself accordingly. Writer John Gregory Dunne recalled meeting her at a party in the 70s: a "birdlike woman in a Pucci knockdown and orthopedic shoes." Producer Marcia Nasatir, Kael's friend: "I never believed those shoes. It was like the bad feet or whatever it was was in her head." Or Kael's way of getting in your head. Kael was intensely responsive to chic and beauty and eroticism without having claims on those qualities herself. She knew it and wanted you to know she knew it. Which is why she separated-sharply, distinctly, unmistakably-Kael the writer from Kael the person.

And you could argue her sex life was over before it began. She was married once, to Ed Landberg, head of the Cinema Guild, who described the union as "a business arrangement." And before Landberg, there was just one affair of consequence, with the experimental filmmaker James Broughton, father of her only child, Gina. Broughton, however, was bisexual leaning toward gay. Says Nasatir, with a laugh, "Gina was immaculately conceived."

I marked Kael's discovery as the moment William Shawn made her staff critic. But, in fact, that was the moment before the moment. Her breakout at The New Yorker came when the magazine bought a 9,000-word piece rejected by the New Republic on a shoot-'em-up gangster picture called Bonnie and Clyde.

#### Flashback, His

arren Beatty has spent three-quarters of his life as a movie star, one measly quarter as a mere mortal. To say he was born on March 30, 1937, in Richmond, Virginia, is thus a misleading statement. His true birth date is March 3, 1960, the day Elia Kazan cast him in Splendor in the Grass. So fast and hitchless was Beatty's ascent, it seemed fated. But getting to the top was one thing, staying another.

Jump-cut to 1966. Beatty, now just shy of 30, had a few interesting failures (Lilith) to his credit, plus a few uninteresting (Kaleidoscope). He was still famous, though more for his offscreen life than on, all those leading ladies he

captivated. Which brings us to his reputation as a stud, and he was one, unequivocally. His conquest list reads like the combined wish lists of three generations of American males. Yet, in a fundamental sense, he was the opposite. In spite of his prodigality and prowess, he never came across as aggressive or swaggering. In fact, there was something passive, almost feminine about his sexual persona, so fat-lipped was it, so sultry-eyed and lazy-limbed. He perpetually had the look of somebody who'd just risen from a rumpled bed. In other words, he became a love god by conducting himself like a love goddess.

By the mid-60s, American movies were as bland and characterless as they'd ever been. Beatty: "I was always looking around. I was certainly aware of what was going on in France." No surprise. That country then was rampant with enfant genius directors. Girlfriend Leslie Caron: "Warren was very keen on the Nouvelle Vague. I contacted Francois Truffaut to have lunch. François was pretty sharp and he understood Warren wanted to star in Fahrenheit 451. He said, 'Oskar Werner has that role, but there's a script I can't do because of Fahrenheit. You might be interested.""

When Robert Benton and David Newman saw Breathless and Jules and Jim, they were so knocked out they decided to write an American version of a Nouvelle Vague movie. It would be based on the Depression-era bank robbers Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. As in Breathless, there'd be abrupt shifts in tone; and, as in Jules and Jim, there'd be a love triangle. Clyde, crazy about Bonnie but gay, needed to throw a guy, C. W. Moss, a fellow outlaw, into the mix in order to make it happen. (Director Arthur Penn would persuade Benton and Newman to change Clyde's homosexuality to impotence.)

Beatty was ready to make his move. Had to, ready or not. Friend and collaborator Robert Towne: "Conventional wisdom was that Warren had shot his bolt. He was in a precarious position." Besides, there'd always been a double-edged quality to Beatty as an actor, the feeling that he was deliberately following in Brando's and Dean's footsteps, while at the same time dragging his feet. Maybe he didn't care to take orders, something actors, even movie-star actors, must do. Now he'd be giving them. He didn't just star in Bonnie and Clyde, he cast it, produced it, and pretty much everything-elsed it. Benton: "Warren was the guiding spirit."

The reviews were bad, The New York Times's Bosley Crowther's the worst: "a cheap piece of bald-faced slapstick." And then came Kael's with its them's-fighting-words opener: "How do you make a good movie in this country without being jumped on?" Her review altered not only her own fate, securing her a position at The New Yorker (incidentally, Crowther's cost

him his position, the *Times* firing him after 27 years for missing both boat and point), it helped alter the fate of the movie. Says writerdirector Paul Schrader, "Bonnie and Clyde came out. It flopped. The critics saved it. Joe Morgenstern reversed himself in Newsweek. It became a hit, was on the cover of Time. Pauline's review set that up. Nothing to date had shown the power of film criticism like that." The review helped alter movie history's fate, too, because Bonnie and Clyde was the ripple that swelled into the American New Wave.

#### Montage, 1967-79

e're nearly up to speed.

Beatty, Penn, and Towne were only the beginning. Peckinpah, Altman, Cop-

pola, Scorsese, and De Palma soon followed. Suddenly American movies were smart, adult, alive-a mass entertainment on the verge of becoming a mass art. Kael's writing took on a messianic quality. And why not? The New Wave wasn't something she was watching from the shore. No, she was speeding down its face,

zipping into its tunnel. She wanted to keep the momentum going, ride it forever-perhaps the reason she began doing dicey things, like reviewing movies in rough-cut (Nashville), forming personal ties with directors (Peckinpah), and gathering disciples, young, mostly male critics who aped her taste and tone. In 1973, her fourth collection won the National Book Award, a first for a book on movies. She was more than a cultural critic, she was a cultural heroine. Her days as the farmer's

daughter, a lone voice heckling the East Coast intelligentsia from the sticks, were over. She was a New Yorker—The New Yorker—now.

And speaking of The New Yorker, Kael's partnership with it, while successful, wasn't easy. Its style was genteel, hers was not. And she clashed violently with William Shawn. Kael's editor William Whitworth: "Nobody at the magazine argued with Mr. Shawn. Pauline did. In the proofs of her Goin' South review, you can see he has a kind of fit in his handwriting, when she refers to Jack Nicholson [as being 'a commercial for cunnilingus']. I worried about his health. He'd already had a heart attack." Shawn, possibly to keep her in check, retained Penelope Gilliatt. The Current Cinema column, much as Kael wanted it to be, needed it to be (as the critic for only half the year, she wasn't quite earning a living wage), was not hers alone.

In the years following Bonnie and Clyde, Beatty's star grew ever larger and more lustrous. Nor was his influence limited to Hollywood. He seemed to be one of the men defining his era, was in perfect sync with the erratic pulse of the country. Two of Kael's favorite movies of the 70s were his: he was the lead in Robert Altman's McCabe & Mrs. Miller (1971) and the lead, producer, and co-writer of Hal Ashby's Shampoo (1975). His greatest commercial hit of the decade came in 1978, when he was the lead, producer, co-writer, and co-director of the romantic comedy Heaven Can Wait. This one, though, she didn't like. Hated, in fact. A "little smudge of a movie," she called it. That Heaven was inoffensive was precisely why it offended her. It was the kind of film that Bonnie and Clyde was reacting against: old-fashioned, genial, soft, safe.

#### A Twice-Told Tale, the First

nd now, 1979:

It was a classic story of sexual suspense, Kael and Beatty the lover-adversaries. She was from the New Yorker family, a publishing-world institution,

and revered, but also middle-class, priggish, and convinced of its own virtue. As the rebellious daughter, she was forever threatening to send daddy Shawn to an early grave. Yet she was wild only to a point, and still very much in the fold. Beatty was the dark prince of Hollywood, an aristocrat-rake living a life of excess

> and indulgence. He admired Kael, whose brilliance and restlessness matched his own. He disliked, however, the power she, as the most influential film critic in America, wielded, Her immaculate faith in her judgment and inviolability were a reproach to him. And a provocation.

> He'd been pursuing her for years (Kael, from an unpublished interview with writer Peter Biskind: "Beatty called after the [Bonnie and Clyde] review. He's charming and comes on very personally, as if you've always been friends"), without



# HER MISTAKE WAS IN BELIEVING SHE NEEDED THE MOVIES. REALLY, IT WAS THE OTHER WAY AROUND.





success. Every time he suggested she run off with him, use her smarts to make movies go right before the fact rather than point out where they went wrong after, she demurred. She was happy where she was, she said.

And then, suddenly, she wasn't. The New Yorker was putting her under severe strain: the allowance it granted was a pittance, and, more gallingly, it insisted on treating her like all its other children, making her share her column. Beatty sensed her susceptibility. In early '79, he phoned under the guise of asking for advice (Kael: "Beatty wanted my assurance that he should back Toback"). He then suggested, very casually, that the three of them work on the movie together. A splitsecond's hesitation, a single breath slipping in before her answer: "Yes."

That Kael had put herself in desperate peril with this alliance was plain to everybody save her. Friends begged her to reconsider-Hollywood was a place of evil and cunning! She'd spent her life among gentlefolk!-but she was determined. Things turned sordid quick. Almost as soon as she entered Beatty's protection, he withdrew it, when Toback betrayed her six weeks in. (Toback: "I said, 'Warren, I can't function under these circumstances.") All at once, she was exposed, vulnerable to the industry she'd been dishing it out to for years. And the industry, which worshipped and adored women, though not as much as it feared and loathed them, especially if they were intelligent or disdainful, could hardly wait to pay her back. She was passed off to Don Simpson, a souped-up, coked-up Sammy Glick whose instinct for the lowest common denominator would make him one of the most successful producers of the 80s. Her spirit crushed, she was tossed away. She returned to the East a broken and tragic figure.

hat's the Seduced and Abandoned version of the story. It's the one that appeared in Brian Kellow's biography of Kael, A Life in the Dark, and Peter Biskind's excellent history of the American New Wave, Easy Riders, Raging Bulls. I understand why it's caught on. It plays. Meaning it jibes with Beatty the legend, a man so beguiling he need only look at a woman and she's hooked, hypnotized by the image of herself reflected in the bedroom of his eyes (Schrader, quoted by Kellow: "[Warren] wanted to hunt [Pauline] down, and get her. If she was a twenty-two-year-old starlet, he would get her in one way. If she was a sixtyyear-old film critic, he would get her another"), and the smoothest of operators (Buck Henry, quoted by Biskind: "[What Warren did to Pauline] is so Machiavellian, even I can't quite believe it, except that it was War-

ren"). It doesn't jibe, however, with Beatty the person. There are two kinds of chasers: chasers who chase to take down, and chasers who chase to catch. Beatty's the second. Look at his squeezes, main only-Joan Collins, Natalie Wood, Leslie Caron, Julie Christie, Michelle Phillips, Diane Keaton, Madonna, Annette Bening-and you start to notice a pattern. These are smart, willful women with minds and careers of their own. Kael is Beatty's type, in other words. Besides which, Kael, her review of *Heaven* notwithstanding, had been tremendously supportive of him. As Towne says, "Her review of Bonnie and Clyde changed everybody's lives." So, as far as revenge as a motive goes—it isn't one.

#### A Twice-Told Tale, the Second

he story of Pauline and Warren was the story of Bonnie and Clvde. Take Bonnie at the movie's start-carnal. restless, not getting any younger. Under her bedroom window stood a boy, a hood-Romeo. To impress her, he stuck up a market. She was in his lap before he could pull the getaway car to the side of the road.

There's a clear resemblance between Bonnie's attitude toward men and Kael's toward movies, at least the ones made in America: game, hot to trot even, but disappointed. Experience had taught them that you could depend on men and movies for a couple hours' worth of mindless excitement. Little else, though. Wrote Kael: "The movie doesn't have to be great; it can be stupid and empty and you can still have the joy of a good performance, or the joy in just a good line." Beatty would show Kael, as Clyde would show Bonnie, however, that she didn't have to set her sights so dismally low. Bonnie and Clyde proved that movies, American movies, could be more than a fast fuck in a boosted car, could be real love and a dream come true—an art for the people.

Not that Kael didn't give as good as she got. Like Bonnie she was a writer who immortalized her man in print. When Bonnie read Clyde her poem, the one that would be published in newspapers across the country, he said, "You know what you done there? You told my story.... You made me somebody they're gonna remember." A more apt description of what Kael's review did for Beatty is hard to imagine.

And didn't that spate of Hollywood movies from 1967 to 1979, from Bonnie and Clyde to, say, Apocalypse Now, feel like a crime spree? As if the American New Wavers were pulling a fast one? The spree couldn't last, of course. Sooner or later lawmen, i.e., studio men, would catch up. Or, worse, audiences wouldn't. Times had changed. Kael understood this. In 1978's "Fear of Movies," she wrote: "Now that the war has ended . . . [people havel lost the hope that things are going to be better.... So they go to the movies to be lulled." But I'm not quite sure Beatty, who was considerably younger and had been knocked around far less, did. The chaos of the 60s and early-to-mid-70s-Vietnam, Watergate-made for an opening, though it was closing quick. Kael prophesied the end of Pauline and Warren when she wrote of the "new cultural Puritanism," as surely as Bonnie prophesied the end of Bonnie and Clyde when she wrote of the "sub-gun's rat-a-tattat." (Did Kael foresee, too, the medium's end? That the VHS revolution was just around the corner? That the 70s would be the last decade in which movies were truly a tribal experience?)

Maybe Kael went to Hollywood, at least in part, to thwart this prophecy. Beatty had eyes for Kael, and Kael for Beatty, but they weren't able to relate in a direct way. They'd need a go-between, a C. W. Moss. Toback, who'd just made Fingers, a genuinely alarming movie about a concert pianist-cum-debt collector, would do nicely in that role since he excited them both. Writer George Malko recalls seeing Fingers with Kael: "She lifted up out of her seat, and even as she was settling back down, she was breathing fast." Toback, on screening Fingers for Beatty: "Warren stood after it was over and walked around in circles for a good two or three minutes." So Toback, quite literally, got Kael panting and Beatty erect. And Kael and Beatty used Toback to work each other up. Kael had socked

it to Beatty for Heaven, accused him of going commercial, selling out. It wasn't only a review, it was a taunt. And a dare. Beatty double-dog-dared her back with an offer to produce. Kael and Beatty had been leading anti-Establishment figures for a decade-plus. which meant that they'd become the Establishment. By getting behind Toback, an artist, yes, but also a pickup artist, the protégé of composer Aaron Copland and orgy buddy of football player Jim Brown, they would prove that the spark hadn't gone out of their rebel spirits, that they were still subversive, undaunted, young. Viewed from that angle, the crazy scheme starts to seem not so crazy after all, or possibly just crazy enough to work. Of course it was neither. It was the look Bonnie and Clyde exchanged-passionate, agonized, doomed-before the hail of bullets.

hat Kael had been hit was obvious instantly. Spitting out teeth and blood, she crawled back to The New Yorker. Only it wouldn't have her. Whitworth: "Mr. Shawn felt Pauline had sullied herself." Eventually, Whitworth convinced Shawn to reverse his decision. Pauline resumed her post, but it wasn't much of a homecoming. Two months in, Renata Adler, in The New York Review of Books, declared Kael's latest collection "piece by piece, line by line, and without interruption, worthless." It was the most savage attack Kael had ever endured. She remained at the magazine until she retired in 1991. Never again, though, would she be so dynamic a critic or writer.

Beatty made it out, not just alive but stronger. It was the late 70s, the Cold War as chilly as ever, and he was able to persuade Paramount to give him \$25 million for Reds, a biopic of Communist John Reed. Except not so fast. Beatty's wounds were as mortal as Kael's if less visible, and his death slower. While he'd continue to direct and act in movies, none were as urgent or essential as Bonnie and Clyde or McCabe & Mrs. Miller or Shampoo. Though Reds would win him an Oscar, the film, in CONTINUED ON PAGE 188

# THE SCREENWRITER ROBERT TOWNE SAYS, "HER REVIEW OF BONNIE AND CLYDE CHANGED EVERYBODY'S LIVES."

## IT'S A WONKA WORLD



Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman, the songwriters behind the Broadway musical Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, in New York City.

SHAIMAN WEARS A JACKET BY MR. TURK; PANTS BY MASSIMO ALBA; SHOES BY BROOKS BROTHERS. WITTMAN WEARS A JACKET BY J. CREW; PANTS BY MR. TURK; SHOES BY PRADA. POCKET-SQUARES BY THE TIE BAR. HAIR PRODUCTS BY ORIBE; GROOMING PRODUCTS BY TOM FORD FOR MEN.

n these strange times, in which the public sits mesmerized by an unpredictable plutocrat and Oompa-Loompa-orange skin has been normalized, it's apt that Willy Wonka is coming to Broadway. He'll be played by the rascally Christian Borle-recently of Falsettos and Something Rotten!—in a new stage adaptation of Roald Dahl's Charlie and the Choco-

late Factory that re-unites the powerhouse

creative team behind 2002's Broadway

musical Hairspray: the director Jack O'Brien and the songwriting duo of Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman.

Technically, the musical, which opens in April at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre, is the U.S. debut of a production first mounted in 2013 in London's West End. But Shaiman and Wittman stress that New York audiences will see a show very different from the U.K. version, which was directed by Sam Mendes and starred Douglas Hodge as Wonka. "I'd say the Broadway version will be more comedic," says Shaiman. "What Jack and Christian have in common is an inclination to be a little silly." Shaiman and Wittman have written brand-new songs for the score-which, Wittman explains, "is in a sort of English, Dahl-appropriate vein, with elements of the Beatles, the Kinks, and British music hall"—while their friend Basil Twist, the MacArthur-fellow puppeteer, has come on board to enhance the show's visuals.

The result, Wittman says, is "a fun show about greed and poor impulse control"and, perhaps, after Hamilton, Broadway's next golden ticket. -DAVID KAMP

#### **Kael and Beatty**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 186 retrospect, appears a slighter achievement, the subject matter more daring than it. At heart, it's a conventional Hollywood picture, its rabble-rousing hero as cute and cuddly as a kitten, as a movie star. Plus which, I don't think it felt like enough. After finishing it, this three-and-a-half-hour epic on politics, he turned increasingly to the real thing, becoming involved in Gary Hart's two failed presidential campaigns. The fun had even gone out of fun. Madonna was his big relationship in the 80s, a love affair that had all the passion of a corporate merger. He found contentment, at last, in marriage and children. Yet his contentment is tinged unmistakably with its opposite. Never being satisfied is what gave him his edge, kept stagnation at bay. How could he not be a little wistful?

#### Thrice-Told a Charm?

The Bonnie and Clyde version is the version I find more plausible. Obviously. I've already dismissed Seduced and Abandoned as so much cornball claptrap. To talk of villainy and virtue, sin and redemption, in post-pill, pre-AIDS Hollywood is lunatic. Only, here's the thing: Seduced and Abandoned won't be dismissed, because while Kael's humiliation was professional, it was, in a deeper sense, sexual. Granted, there wasn't any sex going on. But there was sex not going on. Schrader: "Jimmy then was thin, handsome, an irrepressible raconteur and hustler. He was the Jewish Warren Beatty, and with a lot more kinks in his hose." And Toback admits, "If I wanted to push it in a sexual direction with Pauline, I could have. There was never a minute's awkwardness between us. It was just there."

So, the question then becomes, Did Kael do it all for love? The answer is another question, What else? Her official reasons-fear of growing stale as a critic, eagerness for new worlds to conquer-are true but insufficient. She had to have been impelled by something stronger than reason. Had to have known at some level what was in store for her too. The stakes were just so wildly uneven. She was giving up both job and home to move to L.A., a city where, as she once wrote, "a man can get along without his honor, but not without his car." And she couldn't drive. Beatty, conversely, stood only to gain. Reds was always the priority, Love & Money a side project. And Kael, says Schrader, "was the bête noire of film at that time." If the hire worked, Beatty had tamed the shrew; if not, he'd as good as. So win or lose, he won.

Another twist: actress Veronica Cartwright's encounter with Kael and Toback just before the Hollywood foray. Kael, who'd raved about Cartwright in the past, requested a sit-down. They were having cocktails when Toback appeared. Cartwright: "Pauline had invited him. It was an odd relationship, very intense. I got a vibe like it

was a little kinky. After our drink, Pauline asked me to a screening. I told her I couldn't. Maybe she liked me. Maybe it pissed her off that I didn't reciprocate, because she never mentioned me in a review again. I don't know whether or not she was gay. Maybe she was gay and Toback was her protégé. I mean, she facilitated a meeting between me and him, and I couldn't tell if it was an audition or she was setting me up with him or what." Toback as Kael's id, acting out her secret longings? Well, it's a theory, and Toback doesn't dismiss it: "If I ever thought Pauline might be gay, it was for Veronica. No critic has ever hyped an actress to me as she did Veronica. And I do think there was a vicarious leap going on with me and Pauline. There are certain people where, when you go into detail, they not only welcome it, they want more. Never was there a stop sign with Pauline. It was always laughing and 'Oh, honey, oh, honey."

What was going on in Beatty's mind? Why did he imagine Kael capable of so radical a career change? Beatty: "My thinking was influenced by the Cahiers du Cinéma guys. To me, it seemed like a natural progression, film criticism to film production." As reasoning goes, it's reasonable. And maybe that's that. No need to look deeper or further. But then there's the timing. Kael had tried to talk Beatty out of Reds, his passion project, told him to do Toback's movie instead. And this right after her brutal Heaven review. I seriously doubt that he set out to do her harm, as Schrader and Henry suggested. So does Toback: "When I asked that Pauline be fired, Warren was 100 percent opposed. He admired Pauline." Perhaps, though, there was an unconscious desire on Beatty's part not to take her out but on, show her he wasn't intimidated.

And then there's the air of degradation and moral downfall that hovers over the episode. Now Kael was no Victorian waif. She was a modern woman, and tough. She was tender too, though. As a romantic—and nobody as ardent about movies could be other than—she was, fundamentally, a pure-heart. And so the betrayal she experienced was double, by the man she loved and by the thing, the second the more damaging. Naturally, she'd known going in that Hollywood was a cesspool. Knowing something intellectually, however, is different from knowing it viscerally. In any case, her enchantment with the movies was over. She didn't, it seems, admit this to anyone, maybe not even to herself. Yet the proof is in her prose. When she returned to reviewing, she sounded like her old self. Too much. Her tone became less passionate than bullying, her praise less extravagant than excessive. (Casualties of War has the same kind of purity as Grand Illusion?) It felt as if she was faking it. Says writer James Wolcott, "In the last couple of years, she despaired. She didn't care about the films. I'd suggest she try something else. 'I can't re-invent myself. I'm a movie critic,' she'd say."

Kael's mistake, I think, was in believing she

needed the movies. Really, it was the other way around. Movies are an art that is only intermittently an art. She, however, was an artist, always and invariably, the equal to any director or actor she covered, the superior to most. In writing about one thing, she managed to write about all things. Her movie reviews were cultural criticism, sociological treatise, personal essay. Through sheer passion and craft, she transformed what was intended to be a consumer guide into a literary vehicle as supple and expressive as the short story or sonnet. Not by the end, though. The form she started out transcending she wound up trapped by. And the final scenes of her career were the final scenes of Sunset Boulevard, except she was Joe Gillis and Norma Desmond, the writer floating dead in the swimming pool and the actress-murderess descending the staircase as the cameras flashed, a star who'd outgrown the pictures that had gotten so small.

#### **Closing Credits**

nd now, back to the beginning. I called and aren't. (Basically, I let you think we were standing on solid ground when I knew perfectly well it was quicksand.) In Beatty's telling, he was far from a lead in this real-life drama: "My role, if that's what you want to call it, was to encourage Love & Money to get made at Paramount, but not as an active producer, certainly not as a star." He didn't ask Kael to produce. It was vice versa: "She said, 'I'd really love to produce a movie.' I said, 'I think I can make that happen."

This is counter to Toback's telling. His take on Love & Money, ultimately made, but at Lorimar, and without Kael or Beatty: "Of the 14 movies I've done, Love & Money is my least favorite, a distant last place. I shouldn't have got rid of Pauline. I regret it." His willingness to do himself the dirty, make unflattering admissions, gives his account the ring of truth. That and the fact that it aligns with the characters-so far as I understand them, anyway—of the people involved. Also helping his cause: Kael backs him up, posthumously. As do Barry Diller and Kael's lawyer. Kenneth Ziffren, non-posthumously.

So Beatty, it would seem, got it wrong. It could be that his memory's on the fritz. Or it could be that he's intentionally trying to deceive, wants to dissociate himself from a failed movie and a dark episode in Kael's life. Or it could be that Toback nailed it: "Warren, at that time, was also selling Heaven Can Wait and developing Reds. So he had three things going on, only one of which was Love & Money. I had nothing else on my mind. I'm going to remember better!"

A final possibility: that Beatty, an individual not given to mistakes, didn't make one here. In which case, all I can say in my own defense is that I was following his advice. After all, it was he who quoted to me the man he played in his most recent movie, Howard Hughes: "Never check an interesting fact."

#### Poitier 1967



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 152 too naïve to realize that this was extremely upsetting to people. The whole plot was taboo. And to make a comedy? About inter-racial marriage? It was an event."

Loving v. Virginia, the Supreme Court decision that invalidated laws prohibiting interracial marriage (director Jeff Nichols tells the story in his acclaimed Loving, released last November on the eve of the decision's 50th anniversary), was handed down 19 days after production on the film finished, so Kramer's theme was flush up to the minute. As Mark Harris writes in his splendid study of 1967's big movies, Pictures at a Revolution (2008), "Neither Columbia nor the critics anticipated the breadth of the film's demographic appeal. Older moviegoers turned out in force to watch Hepburn and Tracy together one last time; younger audiences, among whom Poitier had built a big following with the release of To Sir.

with Love, showed up to see him again; and for the first time, black moviegoers were recognized as a massive force at the box office."

#### "The Man"

By using Poitier's "perfect man" to set up a drawing-room test for untested white liberals, making him too perfect for anyone to object to, Kramer had moved the Poitier persona to a pinnacle that was also an endgame. Young African-Americans were beginning to ask if there was no way out of this unjust standard, one that Poitier himself described as "You're gonna have to be twice as good as the white folks in order to get half as much." A more radical black pride was moving into the mainstream and African-Americans wanted to see black actors in black stories. The hero of integration gave way to the hair-trigger bravado of Shaft and Super Fly. Poitier saw the backlash coming— "The angry 'payback' of the black exploitation film was just around the corner," he wrote, "and my career as a leading man in Hollywood was nearing its end." He understood and accepted it as a necessary step forward for his race. He took a breather and then moved to new ground, directing and acting in black romances and a handful of hugely successful comedies.

Poitier was silent when it came to the psychic cost of being singular for so long, a pressure that takes a subterranean toll. In that year of 1967 a phenomenal young footballer named Orenthal James Simpson took the field at the University of Southern California. In hindsight, it's hard not to see those herculean sprints into

the end zone as a metaphor—a man attempting to out-run his color. Also in 1967, five brothers from Gary, Indiana, signed on with Steeltown Records as the Jackson Five. The youngest of them, the most mercurial, was named Michael. He too rejected his racial profile, sculpting his nose, bleaching his skin, evolving into a Disneykin. To survive as a symbol requires untold reaches of inner strength. In *Film Comment*, in 2011, the cultural critic Stanley Crouch wrote of how Poitier not only created heroes up on the screen but expanded "our understanding of human commonality by imposing his will, courage, and integrity in three dimensions. What you saw was what you got."

He never ran and he didn't pale.

"I'll tell you a story," says the actor Scott Wilson, who portrayed Harvey in In the Heat of the Night, his first feature film. "I was 24 when the film was shot. And my 28th birthday I celebrated in Harlem. A friend of mine, Al Freeman Jr., who played Elijah Muhammad in Malcolm X, it was his wife's birthday as well, and we were going to celebrate our birthdays together. So taxis wouldn't take you into Harlem at that time. It was considered not a safe place to go. I said, 'Al, are you sure you like me?' And he says, 'Come on down-you'll be fine.' So I did. We went out to a nightclub, and I was the only white person there. And all of a sudden there was a huge line of people who were coming up to the table wanting my autograph because I had worked with The Man. That's what they said. The Man. You worked with The Man."

#### **Marty Singer**



continued from page 157 he says, only through intermediaries). Not that there aren't opportunities. Michael Jackson, Oprah Winfrey, Tom Hanks, Britney Spears, Naomi Campbell, Jim Carrey, Kevin Costner, Liev Schreiber, Matt Damon, Celine Dion, Jamie Foxx, Justin Timberlake, Brendan Fraser, James Gandolfini, Anthony Hopkins, Alicia Keys, Stacy Keach, Demi Moore, Katy Perry, Joaquin Phoenix, Jeremy Piven, Brett Ratner, Sofia Vergara, David O. Russell, Liam Neeson, Don Rickles, Adam Sandler, Steve Bing, Martin Scorsese, Jerry Bruckheimer, Kiefer Sutherland, Marisa Tomei, Whitney Houston, Eddie Murphy, Jean-Claude Van Damme, Simon Cowell: he's represented

them all, plus sports figures like Dennis Rodman, Serena Williams, and Albert Pujols, plus politicians like former senator Harry Reid, plus plutocrats like Sheldon Adelson and George Soros, plus paramours (Sumner Redstone's ex Sydney Holland), plus many others he can't or won't disclose

The bulk of what Singer does for his clients—at various times with me he pegged the number at 70, 90, and 98 percent-he says no one ever knows. Most of them first encounter Singer under what Stone called "dubious circumstances." They are in trouble-not existential trouble, maybe, but about to be embarrassed, or outed, or harassed, or exploited, or extorted. Through guile, bluster, finesse, intimidation, and money, Singer makes their problems disappear. He scares off or placates the reporters, the parasites, the crazies, the opportunists, the aggrieved. He keeps an unflattering documentary on Bruce Willis off the air, gets Arnold Schwarzenegger guntoting bobblehead dolls pulled off the shelves, or, by settling a hit-and-run for her, lets Halle Berry go off to make (and win an Oscar for) Monster's Ball.

Around Hollywood, his letters to anyone about to report anything nasty about one of

his clients are as familiar, and predictable, and apocalyptic, as the Haggadah of Passover, recounting the smiting of the ancient Egyptians. (This magazine has received its share of them over the years.) They repeat the guts of a proposed story—that a celebrity is linked to the Mafia, say, or approaching a nervous breakdown following a stint in rehab, or hitting on under-age girls (or boys), or neglecting animals, or abusing the help, or tossing chicken bones around a hotel room, or having sex in a stairwell during a Bar Mitzvah-then explain why such things couldn't possibly be true, then list the plagues that will rain down on anyone daring to publish them. "Proceed at your peril" or "Govern yourself accordingly," they inevitably conclude. They spook the uninitiated and the uninsured. They impress the press, which invariably calls Singer the "Legal Pit Bull" or "Stealth Rottweiler" or "Doberman" or simply, in a nod to his first two initials, "Mad Dog." And, to those who get them most frequently, they amuse. "You're jamming my shredder," a tabloid editor once jokingly complained to him.

To these veterans, who have learned how to calibrate the seriousness of his threats with great precision, Singer is actually less

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#### **Marty Singer**

canine than feline. "A roaring paper tiger" is how Dylan Howard, the chief content officer and vice president of American Media, Inc., publishers of, among other things, the National Enquirer, RadarOnline, and the Star, describes him. Howard and others in the tabloid press praise Singer lavishly, and give him the benefit of every doubt: what may sound deceitful or delusional or willfully naïve to others-like his defenses of Cosby and Sheen-is to them genuine conviction and zealous, even matchless advocacy. Despite all the jawboning and fulminating, they and Singer are conjoined organisms in the Hollywood ecosystem, serving (and making lots of money for) one another: they manufacture plenty of billable hours for Singer, during which he occasionally feeds them a good story (usually in order to get another story quashed). When a camp for children with heart disease honored Singer at a dinner last spring, the National Enquirer sprang for a table.

#### **Tough Guy**

In the fall of 2014, as more and more Cosby accusers surfaced, the Marty Singer playbook was on full display. In letters and statements, he threatened the media and characterized some of the women themselves as liars and swindlers, extortionists and confabulators. But this time it backfired: Singer in high dudgeon had, in the eyes of some, given Cosby's accusers, too tardy to seek criminal prosecution, another crack at him-this time for defamation. Within a few days of the time in mid-November when Los Angeles crisis manager Howard Bragman told the Wrap that Cosby's lawyers should "shut the fuck up," it was arguably too late; the seeds of several defamation cases against Cosby (one brought in Los Angeles by the supermodel Janice Dickinson, another in Pittsburgh, and a third, featuring seven separate accusers, in Massachusetts) had already been planted. While the Pittsburgh case was dismissed last January, the other two are now proceeding, even as Cosby faces criminal charges outside Philadelphia.

Not that it has slowed Singer down. Just ask Dylan Howard from American Media. In the past two years he has received dozens of additional threatening missives from Singer, concerning the alleged wrongdoings of, among others, Johnny Depp, Harrison Ford, Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner, Clint Eastwood, Ashton Kutcher, Julianna Margulies, Michael Strahan, Matt LeBlanc, Hayden Panettiere, Ellen DeGeneres and Portia de Rossi, Orlando Bloom, Reese Witherspoon, George Clooney, Matthew Perry, Kim Kardashian, Michael J. Fox, Kelsey Grammer, Julia Roberts, and Jennifer Lawrence. Jake Bloom, the Hollywood talent lawyer, says he feared Singer "could have become collateral damage"—in the Cosby case—"but he seems to have extricated himself well." Along with the equally prominent industry lawyer Skip Brittenham (Harrison Ford, Eddie Murphy), it's Bloom (Schwarzenegger, Scorsese, Depp) who helped build Singer's practice in the early 1990s by fobbing off various matters concerning those A-list clients, at least some of them schmutzy, to him.

For every story Singer kills or gets taken down, there's another he's delayed, or defanged, or pushed off the front page, or had corrected or retracted. Singer is a kind of legal termite, eating away at foundations: one errant detail, he tells editors, makes a story, or a source, or a reporter, wholly unreliable. John Travolta couldn't have assaulted a male massage therapist at the Beverly Hills Hotel, because he was in Manhattan at the time. The waistline-conscious Jonah Hill didn't keep ordering, and scarfing down, French fries at a restaurant: the refills were free and his dinner companions were sharing them. Bill Cosby couldn't have forced an actress to perform oral sex on him backstage at the Tonight show in 1971, because he wasn't on the Tonight show with her in 1971.

When the facts aren't on Singer's side, he deals: exclusive interviews with his clients, or photographs, in exchange for killing stories about them or declaring moratoriums on them for a time. An editor might happily drop some half-assed scoop upon learning from Singer that the Kardashians are suing their ex-stepmother over their late father's diary or that Quentin Tarantino is going after his Oscar-winning screenwriter neighbor (Alan Ball) over his alleged earsplittingly noisy pet macaws. (Perpetually newsworthy are Singer's unceasing efforts to suppress hacked nude photos or sex videos of such clients as Eric Dane and Kate Upton, or garden-variety but surreptitiously taken shots of Caitlyn Jenner.) But Singer couldn't kill outright an exposé about Duane "Dog the Bounty Hunter" Chapman's fondness for using the n-word. With absolutely no cards to play, he appeals to sympathy—not to run stories about Priscilla Presley's botched plastic surgery, for instance. (In that instance, at least, he failed.)

"He's bright and tough, and that's a combination you don't often find," says the veteran Hollywood entertainment lawyer Bert Fields. It's hard to find any who will criticize Singer, at least publicly, either because people like him or it's just not worth tangling with him. Even normally voluble types like Gloria Allred, who has represented various men and women allegedly groped, molested, or manhandled by Schwarzenegger, Cosby, or Travolta, goes mum when asked about him. (Then again, Allred's daughter, Lisa Bloom, is the lawyer representing Janice Dickinson. And by defending a lawyer's right to be outspoken, Singer is effectively defending Allred too.) So, too, through a spokesperson, does Cosby.

Promised anonymity, Singer's critics depict him as coarse and slightly primitive—"visceral"

was how one competitor put it. "He doesn't have a great governor sometimes," another says. Though Singer does get to court and arbitrates cases regularly-he helped Ryan O'Neal hold on to his multi-million-dollar Andy Warhol portrait of Farrah Fawcett and won Tommy Lee Jones a \$17.5 million box-office bonus from Paramount for the actor's work in No Country for Old Men-they say he is more fixer than lawyer. Singer was not one of those lawyers dragged down by the notorious Anthony Pellicano, the private eye to the stars convicted of illegal wiretapping and racketeering in 2008. But a taped conversation between the two produced at Pellicano's trial placed Singer squarely in the felon's demimonde: "That's why you get hired by me and by Bert Fields and others," Singer tells Pellicano on one recording, "that even if you have a shitty case, knowing that you're on our side, you'll uncover a lot of dirt that can be used." (He says Pellicano handled only five or six minor matters for him.)

Many of Singer's fellow lawyers watched gleefully when, in 2011, a Los Angeles Superior Court judge found that one Singer letter amounted to criminal extortion. In it, Singer threatened to expose the alleged gay dalliances of Big Brother contestant and VH1 Famous Food host Mike Malin unless Malin settled a dispute with his business partner, whom Singer represented, pronto. ("Of course!" says Singer: his lawyer rivals "wanted to get rid of me!") An appeals court subsequently overruled the judge's decision, holding that Singer's threat was a legitimate legal maneuver. Another Hollywood lawyer who'd attempted, unsuccessfully, to enlist colleagues in filing a friend-of-the-court brief opposing Singer in the case said that other attorneys were too intimidated by Singer to take him on, and that many judges were, too.

It leads to a situation in which Singer has become both a bit of a caricature in the Hollywood bar and someone inspiring no small amount of envy. "I don't like Marty Singer, because I want to be Marty Singer," one of Singer's competitors confesses. "He pushes a button in me because I want to prove that I'm as good if not better. Every time I see a case he's involved with, I snap my fingers and I say, 'Damn.' I want to hate Marty unjustifiably. The truth is probably that I admire what he's been able to do and how he's built his practice."

#### The Hunter Becomes the Hunted

osby's file originally belonged to Singer's partner, Jay Lavely, and then gradually migrated to Singer. It lay largely dormant until early 2005, when Andrea Constand, an administrator in Temple University's athletic department, told the police that Cosby had drugged and assaulted her.

Constand subsequently sued Cosby (and, later, Singer), and Cosby's deposition in the Constand case provides a rare peek into the Mad Dog at work. (Singer, as a defendant, says he was not allowed to read it after it was given



#### On the Cover

Lupita Nyong'o wears a gown by Alexander McQueen; ring by Chanel Fine Jewelry. Emma Stone wears a dress by Dior. Amy Adams wears a dress by Haider Ackermann. Natalie Portman wears a dress by Dior Haute Couture; ring by Dior Fine Jewelry. Ruth Negga wears a gown by Michael Kors Collection.

Dakota Fanning wears a gown by Carolina Herrera. Elle Fanning wears a dress by Dior; bracelet by Chopard. Aja Naomi King wears a gown by Oscar de la Renta; earrings from Stephen Russell. Dakota Johnson wears a custom-made gown by Gucci. Greta Gerwig wears a gown by Marchesa; shoes by Giambattista Valli Haute Couture. Janelle Monáe wears a dress by Louis Vuitton; shoes by Christian Louboutin; earrings by Van Cleef & Arpels. Hair products by Dove (Johnson), Kérastase Paris (Portman), L'Oréal Paris (Dakota Fanning, Elle Fanning, Stone), Oribe (Adams, Gerwig, King), and Vernon François (Negga, Nyong'o). Makeup by Chanel (Dakota Fanning, Elle Fanning, Stone), CoverGirl (Monáe), Dior (Portman), Fiona Stiles Beauty (King), Lancôme (Negga, Nyong'o), Laura Mercier Cosmetics (Johnson), and Tom Ford Beauty (Adams, Gerwig). Nail enamel by CoverGirl (Monáe), Dior (Portman), Lancôme (Nyong'o), and Deborah Lippmann (all others).

Hair by Vernon François (Negga, Nyong'o), Nikki Nelms (Monáe), Mara Roszak (Dakota Fanning, Elle Fanning, Stone), Bryce Scarlett (Portman), Ben Skervin (Adams, Gerwig, King), and Mark Townsend (Johnson). Makeup by Nick Barose (Negga, Nyong'o), Mark Carrasquillo (Adams, Gerwig), Pati Dubroff (Johnson, Portman), Rachel Goodwin (Stone), Jessica Smalls (Monáe), Fiona Stiles (King), and Lisa Storey (Dakota Fanning, Elle Fanning). Manicures by Deborah Lippmann (all).

Creative-movement director, Stephen Galloway. Set design by Mary Howard Studio. Produced on location by Portfolio One. Styled by Jessica Diehl.

Photographed exclusively for V.F. by Annie Leibovitz at Paramount Pictures, in Hollywood. For details, go to VF.com/credits.

and hasn't to this day.) There's Singer on the telephone, attempting to mollify Constand only days after she went to the police, extending to her Cosby's offer to pay tuition for graduate school. There's Singer, both for and without attribution, telling Celebrity Justice that Constand's accusations were a "classic shakedown" and "sheer nonsense." (And Cosby giving him carte blanche: "He is my lawyer and he has a right to say what he wants to say.") And Singer striking a deal with the National Enquirer to kill a story about another Cosby accuser in exchange for an exclusive interview with Cosby and more to come. And Singer not just stage-managing that interview (a Cosby attorney was to be present during it but would not be mentioned in the story) but also scripting it (the tabloid would have to make do with the sort of bobbing and weaving—"he apologizes to his wife if he did anything to hurt her"-generally offered by high-profile adulterers). And Singer negotiating a two-year moratorium on any further stories in the National Enquirer about Cosby's women. In November 2006, the cases against Cosby and Singer were settled, with—as is so often the case in Singer's deals—all lips zipped.

But then, on November 18, 2014, Janice Dickinson told *Entertainment Tonight* that sometime in 1982 Cosby—in the customary guise of concerned mentor and career counselor—drugged and then took advantage of her in a hotel room in Lake Tahoe. Twenty years later, she said, she'd tried telling the same story in her autobiography, but fearing lawsuits from Cosby, her publisher, HarperCollins, which later published at least two of Cosby's books for children, wouldn't let her. Her ghostwritten book offered a sanitized—or, really, a fictionalized—account of the episode, in which an entirely sensate Dickinson spurned Cosby's advances, and Cosby gave her nothing worse than a dirty look.

News of Dickinson's *E.T.* interview, along with word that *Good Morning America* and BuzzFeed, among others, planned followups, quickly reached Singer. Contradictions between Dickinson's two accounts, plus a suggestion—which is untrue, and which she insists she never made—that Cosby's lawyers had pressured HarperCollins to omit the rape story, dominated Singer's inevitable warning letters to the press. Dickinson's "alleged rape," he wrote, was "fabricated," "an outrageous de-

famatory lie" concocted to advance her "fading career." Failing to vet her claims before reporting them, he warned, would constitute the recklessness that plaintiffs need to prove defamation. "Proceed at your own peril," Singer concluded. In public statements reflecting his increasing exasperation with the accusations, he broadened his comments to the whole universe of Cosby accusers "coming out of the woodwork" with "unsubstantiated," "fabricated," "fantastical," and "more ridiculous" claims. Those comments, along with others not involving Singer, became the basis of the defamation cases against Cosby.

Before calling Dickinson a liar, Singer states in court papers, he amassed substantiation online. That confirmed what he claimed he already knew about her through personal experience, specifically the unfounded paternity claims she'd made against one of his clients. (Though not providing a name, Singer was clearly referring to Stallone, whom Dickinson once dated.) But one of Dickinson's lawyers, Lisa Bloom, countered that Singer's research consisted largely of collecting the "snarky comments" of "anonymous Internet trolls,"

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#### **Marty Singer**

and that, by failing to interview witnesses at HarperCollins, or, for that matter, Dickinson or Cosby himself before going public with his charges, Singer was guilty of the very recklessness he was forever warning gossipmongers to avoid. And thus far at least, two trial courts have allowed the cases to go forward.

#### Good-Bye to All That

Teither Cosby nor Singer will say who left whom or why, though in the Hollywood entertainment bar, theories abound. Cosby grew dissatisfied with Singer, they go, or his wife, Camille, did. Cosby suddenly needed a criminal lawyer, something Singer isn't. (He resolved never to do criminal work, he says, after his brother-in-law was murdered, in 1991. "I did not want to help people get away with things," he explains.) Addicted to the fame and attention and fees, the thinking goes, Singer would otherwise never have walked away from such a client. Alternatively, Singer grew disillusioned with Cosby as the women, and revelations, piled up. Or Deena Singer-active with a rapecounseling center in Santa Monica-did. Or Cosby was hurting Singer's practice, scaring off other clients. Or Cosby stiffed Singer on hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees, just as he is refusing to pay the lawyers who represented him for a time (from the firm of Quinn, Emanuel, Urquhart & Sullivan) once Singer left the scene. (Cosby's representative won't comment about Singer, including whether Cosby still owes him money.) Still, others speculate that it was mutual, with both men realizing Singer had become too enmeshed in Cosby's cases to keep representing him: he has already given a deposition in the Massachusetts case brought by the seven women, while Dickinson's lawyers are still attempting to name him a co-defendant.

But some things seem clear. First, the rupture-which came in October 2015-wasn't exactly sudden. Singer had talked about walking off the case months earlier and, friends say, seemed relieved when he finally did. Second, the breach is complete: Singer and Cosby no longer speak. Third, Singer refuses to take the fall for Cosby. According to a source, the purportedly defamatory statements he made about Cosby's accusers were all team efforts, pre-approved by Cosby himself. And fourth, if Singer's been tarnished by Cosby-by defending him either too zealously or too carelesslyit hasn't hurt his business. If anything, in a town that prizes tough talk, Singer's association with Cosby has only enhanced his appeal. Singer nonetheless seems eager to leave it all behind. "The Cosby case to me is one minor part of my practice over the past-how many years have I been practicing?—39 years," he tells me. "I think I'm much more interesting than the Cosby case."

Singer refuses to comment on the defamation cases, except to say that he's confident Dickinson's case will be dismissed and that the Massachusetts case brought by the seven women should never have been filed. Last October, a federal appeals court in Philadelphia held in the Pittsburgh case that his statements were legitimate advocacy, just as Singer and Cosby's latest lawyer, Angela Agrusa, of Los Angeles, had argued. (Singer, she had told the court, was "doing exactly what a lawyer would be expected to do.") In the meantime, Singer's legal life goes on as usual: shortly after we first spoke, he filed a multi-million-dollar defamation suit for Arsenio Hall against Sinéad O'Connor for saying that for decades Hall had supplied Prince with illegal drugs. And, in the past few months, Singer has (1) diverted a sordid assaultand-battery case brought by Charlie Sheen's former fiancée into private arbitration; (2) procured apologies for reports on Tom Hanks

(the National Enquirer and the Star had said Hanks was in love with two of his co-stars and divorcing Rita Wilson) and Kim Kardashian (mediatakeout.com accused her of staging the heist of her jewels in Paris); (3) killed several derogatory stories about Harrison Ford; and (4) gotten some nude photographs of the actress Lucy Hale taken down. And going forward, he is (1) defending Jim Carrey against charges brought by the husband and mother of Carrey's late girlfriend that his conduct led her to commit suicide; (2) jousting with Harvey Weinstein in a fraud case brought by the director David Frankel; and (3) representing Schwarzenegger in a pay dispute with the maker of some nutritional supplements he endorsed.

Last year Singer signed a new 10-year lease on his Century City office, so he's not disappearing anytime soon. He says he does not feel threatened by Charles Harder, a former Lavely & Singer lawyer who, having helped secure Hulk Hogan's win over Gawker Media, could challenge Singer as the celebrities' lawyer of choice. "He's got Melania Trump, and I don't know who his other clients are," Singer says. "We have not lost one single client to him to my knowledge."

In the tribute film shown at the bar dinner for Singer, in 2012, Singer's daughter joked that the first coherent phrase out of her baby brother's mouth was "Fucking jerk." But wisdom, maturity, and the changing mores of the bar have conspired, Singer says, to mellow him out, at least a little. "Maybe the f-bombs don't come out that came out 20 years ago," he says. Still, when he talks about the boldfaced names who continue to need him, and thank him, and even worship him, the mellowness is not all that apparent. "I love a lot of my clients, and I care for them," Singer says. "I think of my clients as my family. And if somebody fucks with my clients, they're fucking with my family. Or they're fucking with me." □

#### **David Foster**



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 168 his home studio on weekends. The stories always seem to involve Madonna. "She wasn't that into us; she was there to work," Erin Foster says. Brandon Jenner recalls, "I'll never forget seeing her car parked in our driveway, how the windows were completely blacked out."

Foster estimates that, all told, he's written more than 800 commercially released songs-nearly 50 Top 20 hits-and sold half a billion records. "I was never interested in selling three records at a time," he said. "'Pop' stands for 'popular.'" In the early aughts, when his adult-contemporary style lost ground to the so-called Swedish Soundwriter-producer Max Martin and his explosion of hip-hop-inspired teenage acts (the Backstreet Boys, Britney Spears, Kelly Clarkson, Katy Perry)-Foster aimed ever more adult: "Instead of dying, I went the Bocelli-Groban-Bublé route." He discovered Bublé at the wedding of the daughter of Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney; the singer was performing "Mack the Knife." Bocelli was known mainly in Italy when a friend played an album for Foster, who quickly signed him to record the duet "The Prayer" with

Céline Dion, who says, "The verse wasn't big, so we had to make it big. When I held a high note, Bocelli made a meal of it." Foster found a 16-year-old Groban on a mixtape when he was looking for somebody "with a voice like Bocelli's" to rehearse with Dion. "I had to talk his parents into driving him to my studio," Foster recalled. Initially, Groban demurred: "I was focused on learning 'If I Were a Rich Man' for my highschool musical."

Although "The Prayer," which Foster cowrote with Carole Bayer Sager, didn't have enormous chart success, Foster considers it his best song. "It's very reverent," he said. "It's probably been covered a hundred times on these talent-competition shows. It gets played especially at weddings and funerals. The chorus is very inspirational, but the music will bring you to your knees."

#### IV. Coming to a Crescendo

In the industry, there's something known as the David Foster sound, and the components most often include the laying of a grand-piano track alongside a track played on a funkadelic Fender Rhodes keyboard; a series of chord progressions that culminate in something slightly off-kilter (a suspended chord, say, or a major second); and a pregnant pause in the chorus—which in turn is rewarded with a guns-blazing overture. "By the end of the crescendo, you've got the fucking Russian Revolution," says Richard Marx, a former protégé and the 80s- and 90s-era darling of MTV cheese balladry.

"I call it the trapeze moment, where the

singer is sitting up there alone on a wire, before everything kicks back in, twice as much," Foster said. "When Céline covered 'All by Myself,' I stayed on that note on the top of her range, then had her hold up-brieflybefore the word 'anymore.'" Dion says that, when preparing her to record the song, Foster told her to go into the shower and practice her highest note. "Then, on the day we're in the studio, David says, 'I need you to take it an octave and a half higher when you hit the grand finale. And if you can't do it, Whitney Houston's next door.' I was pregnant. My bra exploded. But he got the best out of me."

Still, there are days when Foster is unsure about his self-worth. "I write songs the whole world knows, but Burt Bacharach and Elton John write songs the whole world actually sings," he said. At Nobu, Foster got uncomfortable when John Mayer called his work virtuosic—"David's songs are never low-hanging fruit, but they'll hold up forever"-and cut him off.

"John, my music is schmaltzy," Foster said. "You ought to say it."

"Do you think that?," Mayer asked.

"No," Foster said. "No, I don't."

Later, he returned to the subject once more. "The big question is: Would pop music sound any different today if I hadn't been born?" He paused briefly and then answered, "I'd say so." □

#### **Movie Disruption**



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 143 the movies were the third-largest retail business in the U.S., surpassed only by grocery stores and car dealerships. Look what Silicon Valley has already done to the other two sectors.

t the heart of the disruption is the most A profound element of Hollywood: the theater. Just as customers now generally eschew albums for singles (or streaming services such as Spotify), and hardcovers for more economical e-books, we will eventually stop going to the movies, which are already expensive, limiting, and inconvenient. Instead the movies will come to us. If the industry continues the process of "windowing" (in which studios wait weeks, or sometimes months, to release a film that has already been in the theaters onto other platforms), people will continue to steal a movie they want to see, or they'll simply stop watching them altogether. (In 2015, the top films in theaters were illegally downloaded more than half a billion times.) Meanwhile, consumers will continue to opt for other forms of entertainment, such as YouTube, Netflix, and video games, or turn to Instagram or Facebook.

And it's only a matter of time—perhaps a couple of years-before movies will be streamed on social-media sites. For Facebook, it's the natural evolution. The company, which has a staggering 1.8 billion monthly active users, literally a quarter of the planet, is eventually going to run out of new people it can add to the service. Perhaps the best way to continue to entice Wall Street investors to buoy the stock-Facebook is currently the world's seventh-largest company by market valuation—will be to keep eyeballs glued to the platform for longer periods of time. What better way to do that than a two-hour film?

This might begin with Facebook's V.R. experience. You slip on a pair of Oculus Rift glasses and sit in a virtual movie theater with your friends, who are gathered from all around the world. Facebook could even plop an advertisement next to the film, rather than make users pay for it. When I asked an executive at the company why it has not happened yet, I was told, "Eventually it will."

#### III. A.I. Aaron Sorkin

The speed with which technologies can L change an industry today is truly staggering. Uber, which is eight years old, is worth more than 80 percent of the companies on the Fortune 500 list. When Silicon Valley goes after a new industry, it does so with a punch

Hollywood executives may invoke their unique skills, but engineers are unlikely to see things quite that way. We generally assume that artificial intelligence poses a risk to lower-skilled jobs, such as trucking or driving cabs. But the reality is that the creative class will not be unharmed by software and artificial intelligence. Researchers at M.I.T.'s Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory are looking at ways to teach computers how to corral information so as to perceive occurrences before they even happen. At present, this application anticipates events that will move markets, or monitors security cameras to help emergency responders before something tragic occurs.

But there are other applications for these kinds of technologies, too. If you could give a computer all the best scripts ever written, it would eventually be able to write one that might come close to replicating an Aaron

Sorkin screenplay. In such a scenario, it's unlikely that an algorithm would be able to write the next Social Network, but the end result would likely compete with the mediocre, and even quite good, fare that still populates many screens each holiday season. The form of automation would certainly have a massive impact on editors, who laboriously slice and dice hundreds of hours of footage to create the best "cut" of a film or TV show. What if A.I. could do that by analyzing hundreds of thousands of hours of award-winning footage? An A.I. bot could create 50 different cuts of a film and stream them to consumers, analyzing where viewers grow bored or excited, and change the edits in real time, almost like A/B testing two versions of a Web page to see which one performs better.

Actors, in many ways, have been disrupted for years-from the reliance on costumed superheroes to the rise of C.G.I. filmmaking. Many agents whom I've spoken with already seem to know this and have moved their portfolios away from Hollywood to include, among others, clients from professional sports. There is a reason we see so many once promising actors, from Jessica Alba to Kate Hudson to Jessica Biel to the Mowry sisters, looking to re-invent themselves in new careers during their 30s and 40s, once their prime. The future augurs less of a need for actors other than, despite Donald Trump's puerile objections, the Meryl Streeps of the world.

Kim Libreri, who spent years in the film industry working on special effects for films such as The Matrix and Star Wars, predicts that by 2022 graphics will be so advanced that they will be "indistinguishable from reality." In some respects, that is already on the verge of happening. If you watched Rogue One, you will have noticed that Peter Cushing appeared as one of the main actors in the film, which was shot last year in London. Cushing, who died in 1994, was (mostly) rendered in C.G.I. The same was true for Princess Leia, played by the late Carrie Fisher, who has a cameo at

#### **Movie Disruption**

the end. The C.G.I.-enhanced version of herself hasn't aged a day since 1977. "While stars used to be able to make a movie, now they can hurt it," one Hollywood producer lamented to me. His outlook resembled Moritz's: "The movie star, like everything else in Hollywood, is dying."

#### IV. The Audience Wins

n all of these instances of technological In all of these instances of disruption—A.I., C.G.I. actors, algorithmic editors, etc.-there will be the exceptions. Like everything else involving money and creativity, there will indeed be a top category—those who have great, new, innovative ideas, and who stand above everyone else-that is truly irreplaceable. (Indeed, this has proved to be the case in music, journalism, and publishing.) There will be great screenwriters and even great actors. The real winners, however, are the consumers. We won't have to pay \$50 to go to the movies on a date night, and we'll be able to watch what we want to watch, when we want, and, most important, where we want.

And while Hollywood could take control of its fate, it's very difficult for mature businesses—ones that have operated in similar ways for decades and where the top players have entrenched interests—to embrace change from within. Instead, one can imagine the future looking something like this: You come home (in a driverless car) and say aloud to Alexa or Siri or some A.I. assistant that doesn't exist yet, "I want to watch a comedy with two female actors as the leads." Alexa responds, "O.K., but you have to be at dinner at eight P.M. Should I make the movie one hour long?"

"Sure, that sounds good." Then you'll sit down to watch on a television that resembles digital wallpaper. (Samsung is currently working on flexible displays that will roll up like paper and could encompass an entire room.) And you might, through the glory of A.I., be able to watch with your spouse, who is halfway around the world on a business trip.

There are other, more dystopian theories, which predict that film and video games will merge, and we will become actors in a movie, reading lines or being told to "look out!" as an exploding car comes hurtling in our direction, not too dissimilar from Mildred Montag's evening rituals in Fahrenheit 451. When we finally get there, you can be sure of two things. The bad news is that many of the people on the set of a standard Hollywood production won't have a job anymore. The good news, however, is that we'll never be bored again. □

#### Michael Crichton



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 178 politics, electric cars, evolution, gene patents, hypnosis, language, medicine, opera, parenting, photos, plants, population control, voodoo, sharks, solar systems, sleep.

Crichton applied the scientific method even to his decision to become a writer. Sherri recounted that, when starting out, Crichton "researched and discovered that there were only 200 writers in America who were making a living out of writing. But there were 6,000 students graduated as doctors. He was being very pragmatic about it. That's when he decided to become a doctor and went undercover as a writer."

His first novels, paperback pulp thrillers written while at Harvard Medical School, were published under two pseudonyms: John Lange (John was Crichton's first name, which he didn't use, and Andrew Lang was a collector of Victorian fairy tales) and Jeffrey Hudson (a dwarf at the court of Charles I who also happened to be a great adventurer-a kind of fun-house mirror image of Crichton himself).

Yet, for a writer with so many interests who wrote so many books, Crichton rarely talked or wrote about himself. A notable exception is Travels, his 1988 collection of nonfiction pieces, where you glimpse his insecurities,

his self-doubt, his occasional feelings of being a freak due to his height, and his intellect. You see his anger and hurt over his domineering and often competitive father, John Crichton, a New York journalist and executive working for Advertising Age.

Michael was flourishing in the 1970s, living in Los Angeles and rich as Croesus, but he was haunted by memories of a childhood traumatized by his father's abuse. Crichton sought to rid himself of those memories and come to termseven forgiveness—with the ghost of his father.

In Travels, Crichton recounts immersing himself in the world of psychic phenomena, which he approached with an open and critical mind; he tells several tales of derring-do, such as climbing to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, meeting the Semai tribe in Pahang, and diving on a dangerous wreck off Bonaire, near the coast of Venezuela. Perhaps that's why he greatly admired another grand adventurer, Sean Connery-the best James Bond ever, whom Crichton directed in The Great Train Robbery and in Rising Sun. He was among Crichton's closest friends from his life in the movies.

Sherri pulled out a carefully numbered box with photographs from the set of The Great Train Robbery. One was of Sean Connery sitting atop one of the movie's specially built Victorian railcars, with Crichton tenderly removing a cinder from the actor's eye. Connery appeared in the movie about "10 or 15 years" after he finished playing Bond, Crichton explained in his commentary, recorded in 1996, that accompanies the DVD of The Great Train Robbery. He considered Connery "one of the few real international movie stars who is able to also be a character. Psycho really ended [Tony Perkins's] working life. He could never play anything but a crazy person again, really," whereas Sean Connery, Crichton felt, "has very carefully enlarged the scope of his work [since Bond]. He's a very skilled actor,

and not entirely recognized for his ability."

In one of his interviews with PBS talk-show host Charlie Rose, Crichton described his admiration for Connery: "I think of him as a complete person. He has his adult side and his childish side, his male and his female side. He has everything.... He has this wonderful spirit.... He's one of the few people in the world that I would say is delightful." (When contacted by V.F. for an interview, Connery said that, regretfully, he was not up to it.)

#### The Controversies

ne needs only to look at the sheer number of books and movie tickets sold to get an idea of how popular-even beloved-Crichton was throughout his 40-year career. But there was controversy as well, in the wake of three novels that took on heat-generating topics: Disclosure (feminism and sexual harassment), Rising Sun (Japanese corporate domination of technology), and State of Fear (global warming). The last takes a jaded look at the politics of climate-change science and has as its villains a group of environmental activists. He got hate mail after State of Fear was published to mostly negative reviews.

"He was ready for the ridicule; he was ready for the conversation," said Sherri, when asked about why Crichton tackled this subject in the way that he did. "He challenged science and the models."

Spielberg believes that when the book was written the science wasn't as settled as it is now, and what Crichton was really arguing for was a less emotional approach to the topic. When the book came out, "people were not talking about global warming. And I think Michael was trying to shake things up and get people to listen, and I think he had to go out on a limb to get people to pay attention."

On Charlie Rose's show, Crichton described environmentalism as a kind of religion and argued for a coolheaded approach to the subject. When asked about the writer's conservative views in this area, Charlie Rose said, "I would hope that Michael would look at the world today and say, Whatever I did in terms of creating that piece, we're living in a different world, and I see more evidence—and it is one of the great challenges in our world that I see now. At least I hope he would say that."

Paul Lazarus, producer of the original *Westworld* and Crichton's closest friend during his early years in Hollywood, and currently on the faculty of Santa Fe University of Art & Design, recalled a long discussion he had with Crichton about the issue. He remembers telling him, "Michael, you're on the wrong side of history on this one."

The New York Times following Michael's death," recalled Lazarus. "One was on the obituary page, which gave a straightforward account of his life, and then he got one on the literary page, which took him to task for not writing profound novels... and I thought, How terribly unfair. He was a popularizer along the lines of Isaac Asimov. You look at *Jurassic Park*. I remember a few pages on string theory, and thinking, Oh, I finally understand it. But I didn't understand it at all—his genius was making you think you understood."

The New York Times had written, "As a writer he was a kind of cyborg, tirelessly turning out novels that were intricately engineered entertainment systems. No one—except possibly Mr. Crichton himself—ever confused them with great literature, but very few readers who started a Crichton novel ever put it down."

Actually, Crichton never did confuse his novels with great literature. He knew he was not a writer's writer. He told Charlie Rose, "My experience is of not being very gifted at writing, and of having to try really hard, to work very hard at what I do, to put in long hours and to concentrate on it... I don't feel in any way that I have natural abilities in this, and I just work hard. This is something I wanted to do—I wanted to be a writer, and I'm very happy to be doing it."

Crichton insisted that his books and movies were built upon "pre-existing literary forms," which he would study before embarking on his own reiteration, going about it scientifically. *Congo* owed a debt to Sir H. Rider Haggard's *King* 

Solomon's Mines, and The Andromeda Strain to H. G. Wells's The War of the Worlds. Mary Shelley's creature in Frankenstein was a model for the Terminal Man. Crichton's 1976 novel, Eaters of the Dead, owes a debt to Beowulf.

"I think that gnawed at Michael a little bit," said author Max Byrd, a longtime friend of Crichton's from their undergraduate days at Harvard, "that if you were popular you can't be very good.... Michael kept talking about Charles Dickens—Dickens was both popular and good. It vexed him when people would just say, 'Well, a pop writer or a pop scientist.' He knew the subjects; he knew the subjects he went into better than just 'pop.'"

Distinguished editor Robert Gottlieb worked on Crichton's novels while at Alfred A. Knopf. In his 2016 memoir, Avid Reader, excerpted in the September 2016 issue of V.F., Gottlieb recalls, "Michael had a strong background in science. And he had a keen eye, or nose, for cutting-edge areas of science—and, later, sociology—that could be used as material for thrillers while cleverly popularizing the hard stuff for the general public. You got a lesson while you were being scared. What Michael wasn't was a very good writer. The Andromeda Strain was a terrific concept, but ... eventually I concluded that he couldn't write about people because they just didn't interest him." Gottlieb adds, "Michael, for all his weaknesses as a writer, was unquestionably the best of his techno breed, and easily deserved his tremendous success."

Still, Crichton was plagued by feelings that his books all fell short of the mark. "I've never worked on anything, either a book or a movie, without, in some really deep way, feeling disappointed in myself—feeling that I missed it," he admitted in his *Great Train Robbery* commentary.

He felt the same way about the movies he directed: "The filmmaker thinks that he's making one picture, the production unit thinks they're making another picture, and then you run it in front of an audience and it becomes their picture." At the end of the commentary comes this confession from a man of such extraordinary accomplishments: "The feeling I have working on a picture inevitably is when you see it put together, you just want to go out and kill yourself.... Whenever you start a movie, you have the most wonderful idea in

your head. It's just magical, and glowing, and fantastic. And then, as you're shooting it, there's a continuous addressing of practical problems—people get sick, things break down, it's raining, it's too bright, it's too dark, it's too early, it's too late. And then at the end you see it all together and it's just a movie. That's all. The wonderful quality that was in your head isn't there. It's evaporated. Instead it's just this rather mundane experience and you've failed. You have absolutely failed. So you go make another movie, and you hope you'll get it the next time."

But Charlie Rose felt that Crichton "had this really remarkable ability to see the gathering force of an idea and then write to it. I think Michael understood that that criticism would be there. I don't think he thought he was creating great literature. I think he saw himself as someone who was finding a way to tell stories about his own curiosity, and it happened to be very entertaining to other people."

"He left a huge legacy," says Spielberg. "Michael had a special imagination different from most other writers'. And I think that he's got a lot of unhatched eggs, you know, and rather than let them sit around and fossilize like amber, we'd like to get those stories out to the world while they're still fresh." In addition to *Dragon Teeth*, Spielberg is adapting for film two other posthumously published novels by Crichton, *Pirate Latitudes* and *Micro*.

Paul Lazarus noticed that at the end of Crichton's life he finally came to wear his success and his fame lightly. "He also became much more comfortable around people," Lazarus says. "You would see him on the morning talk shows or being interviewed—he was smiling. He was easy with them. That's not who he was initially."

During Crichton's last summer, Lazarus invited him to address a handful of film students he had brought to U.C.L.A. "Michael," he remembers saying, "you're not looking very well," and his friend answered, "Well, I'm really very sick." But he insisted on going to the class. And he stayed for more than three hours answering questions. According to Lazarus, he was wonderful, with that sneakily shy sense of humor.

Charlie Rose summed up the feeling that has remained with many of Crichton's admirers: "Among the 25 people I've enjoyed most, he's high on the list. He was a great storyteller. I miss him." □

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# Renée FAR

The Oscar-winning actress and *Bridget Jones* star, whose next movie, Same Kind of Different as Me, comes out later this year, reveals what running by the ocean, coding, and the Obamas mean to her

hat is your idea of perfect happiness? A free day anywhere with a good dog. What is your greatest fear? Incapacitation. Which historical figure do you most identify with? Perhaps Georgia O'Keeffe. Which living person do you most admire? Jimmy Carter. Michelle Obama. Barack Obama. Geoffrey Canada. Tank Man. Marian Wright Edelman. Madeleine Albright. King Abdullah II of Jordan. Norman Lear. Malala Yousafzai. Beyoncé Knowles. What is the trait you most deplore in yourself? Self-doubt. What is the trait you most deplore in others? Egotism. What is your greatest extravagance? Frequent travel on a whim. What

is your favorite journey? A rewarding creative experience or a solo cross-country road trip. What do you consider the most overrated virtue? Happy to encounter any of them these days. On what occasion do you lie? May withhold when no good might come from my talking. Which words or phrases do you most overuse? Right now, "Seriously?" is in pretty high rotation. What is your greatest regret? Mistaking silence for grace. What or who is the greatest love of your life? I'm working on that. When and where were you happiest? Any recent gathering with friends and family; yesterday, running by the ocean; anytime, solving a problem or creating something. Right now, in bed with news and popcorn. Which talent would you most like to have? I would love to understand "code." And several languages. What is your current



state of mind? Curious. Ready. Peaceful. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? More substantial bones. Or maybe a smidge more entitlement. If you could change one thing about your family, what would it be? Proximity. What do you consider your greatest achievement? I don't think I've done it yet. If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be? A political pundit. If you could choose what to come back as, what would it be? A loved dog. Though I might not mind picking up where I left off. What is your most treasured possession? Good health. What do you regard as the lowest depth

of misery? Solipsism and self-loathing. What is your favorite occupation? International correspondent. Writer. Research scientist. Dog-walker. What is your most marked characteristic? I'm happy. What is the quality you most like in a man? Character. What is the quality you most like in a woman? Self-respect. What do you most value in your friends? Kindness. Thoughtfulness. Intelligence. Wit. Humor. Loyalty. Who is your favorite hero of fiction? John Grady Cole, Countess Natalya Rostova, Ignatius J. Reilly. Who are your heroes in real life? The fearless. What is it that you most dislike? Injustice. Intolerance. Cruelty. Violent conflict. Innocents suffering. War. How would you like to die? Preferably not soon. Asleep. No fear. No regrets. What is your motto? "It never ceases to amaze me that it never ceases to amaze me."

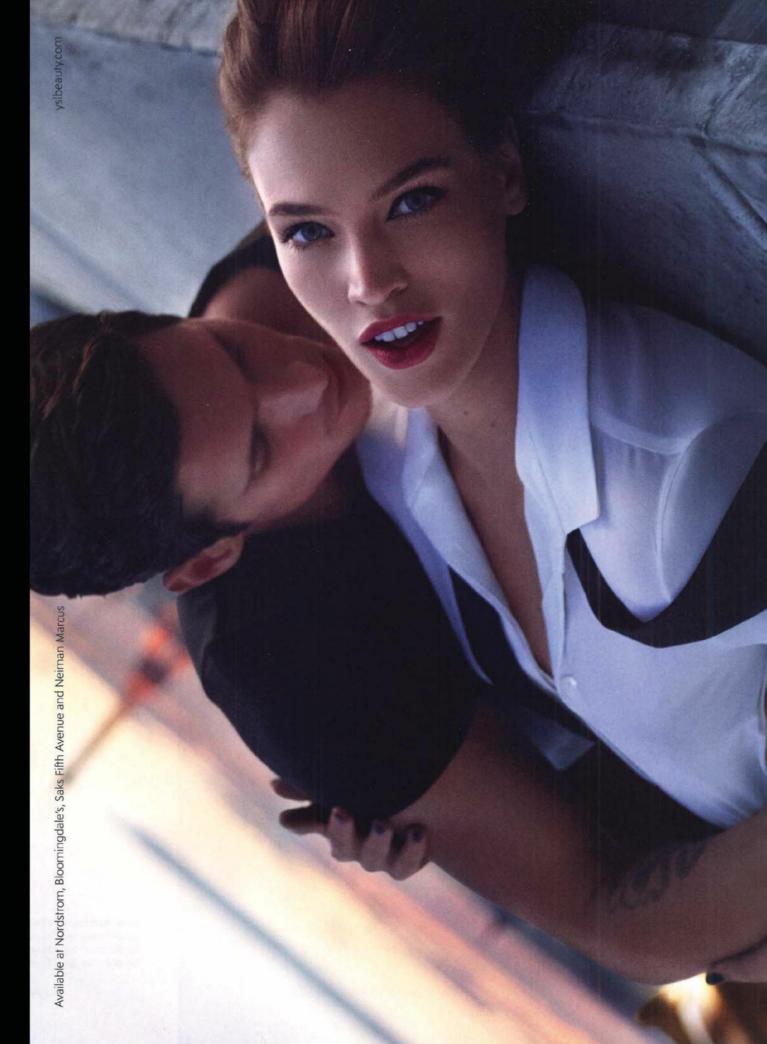
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