"All the News That Fits"
STEVIE WONDER ON QUINCY JONES
Issue 1394
December 2024
Rolling Stone
The Rolling Stone Interview
STEVIE NICKS
SPORTSBOOK NATION
The $11 Billion Rise of Online Sports Gambling
THE BODY IN THE BASEMENT
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"My life is different. But I'm still the same me"
PHIL LESH
1940-2024
"This is the kind of pressure I want"
TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET
On Becoming Bob Dylan

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AMERICA'S NEXT
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DUPLEXITY

2024 AMERICA'S NEXT TOP HITMAKER

The LA music scene is no stranger to birthing the next generation of iconic musicians, and DUPLEXITY is living proof of this tradition. With an electric blend of pop-rock, these "Irish Twins" have been killing it since the moment they hit the stage. At just 17 and 18 years old, Savannah Judy and Luke Judy are fresh, ambitious, and hungry to carve out their own space in the industry. Recently crowned America's Next Top Hitmaker, the duo is riding high on momentum—and they're just getting started. "The music hustle is serious in LA," they say. Living in a city so rich with live music and diverse sounds has shaped their eclectic style. One night, they can have an acoustic set at a jazz club, and the next, they're rocking out at a hard rock gig at Troubadour or Whisky a Go Go. That variety is the lifeblood of DUPLEXITY's music, which draws inspiration from '90s alternative rock, southern rock, and a hint of metal.

Music has always been part of Savannah and Luke's DNA, thanks to their parents, who exposed them to a wide range of genres from a young age. "We grew up with everything—classical, punk, hip hop, you name it." Their broad musical foundation set the stage for DUPLEXITY's unique sound. From Pearl Jam's Ten to Radiohead's OK Computer, early musical influences have left a mark on their songwriting and performance style.

Creating new music is a meticulous process for DUPLEXITY, but it's also where they thrive. Starting with the concept, they layer in melodies and finish off with lyrics. "We're always in motion," they say, juggling their time between rehearsal, songwriting, studio sessions, and college. With their growing catalog of diverse songs, including their latest single and fan favorite, "Copy and Paste," DUPLEXITY's mission is to master the skills to play all genres, much like their idol and dream collaborator, Lady Gaga.

Beyond their talent (they are also professional SAG-AFTRA actors), their familial bond sets DUPLEXITY apart. Performing together isn't just about sharing the spotlight—it's about sharing life. Their post-show ritual involves gathering around the kitchen table with their parents, laughing, reflecting on the night, and often bringing friends into the fold. It's a grounded, family-centered approach that keeps them humble despite their rapid rise.

As for what's next, DUPLEXITY has big dreams—playing SoFi Stadium in LA or Madison Square Garden in New York tops their bucket list. "It would be a dream come true to play there," they admit. But for now, they're focused on continuing to build their fanbase, making new music, and doing what they love most: performing together. As the 2024 America's Next Top Hitmaker, the sky is the limit for DUPLEXITY. And if their drive and talent are any indication, we'll be hearing a lot more from this dynamic duo for years to come. Keep an eye on these rising stars—they're just getting started.

TikTok: @duplexityband | IG: @duplexityband
YouTube: @Duplexityband | ffm.bio/duplexity

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AMERICA'S NEXT

TOP HITMAKER

ARTISTS ON THE RISE

THREE FINALISTS STEP INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

IG: @itscaseyjame | FB: caseyjameplays

CASEY JAME

Casey Jame may have Kentucky roots, but she's truly a product of Nashville's iconic honky-tonk scene. Growing up in Music City shaped her in many ways, marrying the influences of country, bluegrass, and the rich musical culture surrounding her.

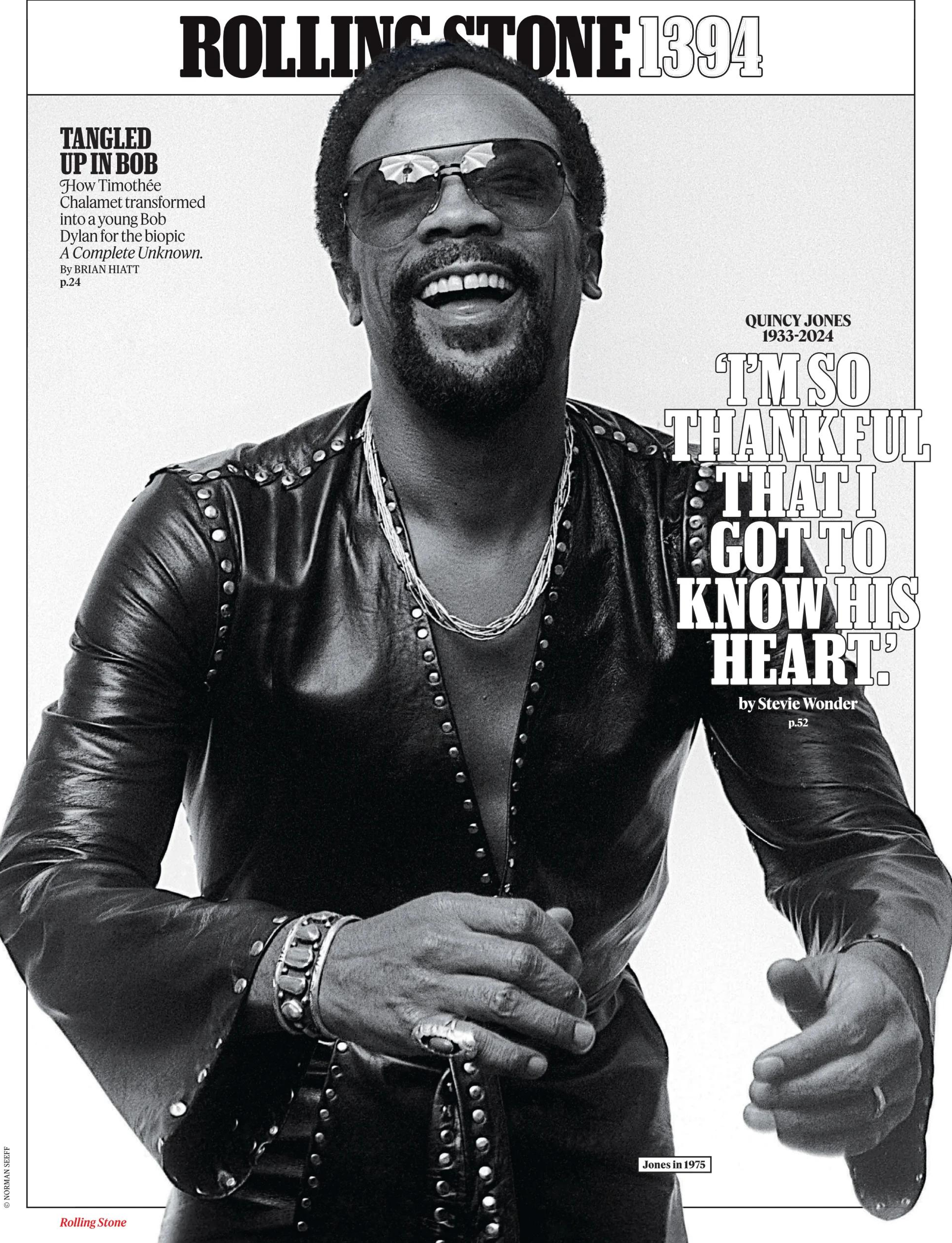
Her bubbly yet casually sexy style is a fusion of the genres she loves, blending them with the storytelling style of artists like Sara Bareilles and Lizzy Mcalpine. Her theatrical upbringing, influenced by her mom's involvement in community theatre, adds an extra layer of musicality. "I was singing before I knew words, as the story goes," she laughs, recalling early church performances at the age of four. Those gospel roots inspired her passion for music, but it was watching Kelly Clarkson win American Idol that sparked her dream of pursuing music as a lifelong career.

Jame's songwriting process is raw and personal, drawn from her own experiences. "I've been writing since middle school, mostly about boys," she admits with a grin. "Usually just freeform writing in a journal. I'll just start going and see what fun or interesting things come out of it. I used to get really bogged down with trying to write something 'relatable.' But it's funny; the less I try to be relatable, the more sense my songs make." Starting young, she collaborated with Nashville producer Curt Gibbs at 13. Now, her creative process often begins with lines jotted down in her phone, which she pairs with melodies on guitar or piano. It's a relaxed, organic method that lets her capture the feelings as they come.

From NYC Broadway theater venues to Nashville's local stages (also on Broadway), Jame is always chasing that unbridled human connection that makes performing special. "No matter if you're performing in front of thousands or two people in a bar, there's this beautiful connection in a pretty lonely world because music is universal," she says. "I just want you to know I love you, and I'm proud of you. Wherever you're reading this from, I'm glad we found each other. "

Look out for Jame in a new musical in New York City called Music City this fall. It's all about a songwriter from Nashville. Worlds really do collide.

ROLLING STONE 1394



TANGLED UP IN BOB

How Timothée Chalamet transformed into a young Bob Dylan for the biopic *A Complete Unknown.*

By BRIAN HIATT

p.24

QUINCY JONES 1933-2024

'I'M SO THANKFUL THAT I GOT TO KNOW HIS HEART.'

by Stevie Wonder

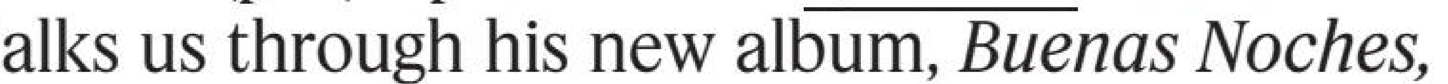
p.52

Jones in 1975

© NORMAN SEEFF

READ ALL ABOUT IT

STEVIE! UZI! RAUW!


LIL UZI VERT, p.22

RANDOM NOTES

SAPPHIC POP, p.18

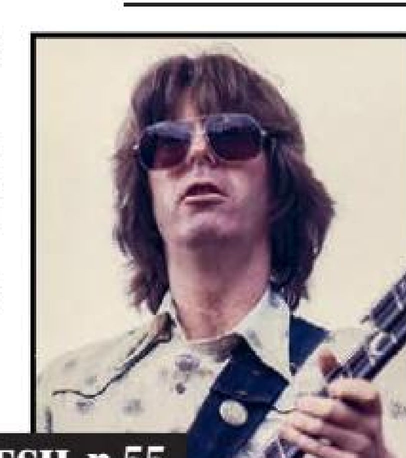
Saba teams up with **No I.D.** for an album that brings out the best in both of them (p.13). Spanish artist **Quevedo** talks us through his new album, *Buenas Noches,* while we look at whether **Kanye** may be pursuing a redemption arc in Asia (p.15). **Chappell Roan's** and **Reneé Rapp's** banner years mark a sapphic shift in pop music (p.18). As America reconsiders the **Menendez brothers'** murder trial, we gather more explorations of the case (p.21). Fresh off a new project, **Lil Uzi Vert** talks about rehab, running into fans at Guitar Center, and what it means to be honest with yourself (p.22).

> **"Those are always the songs I'm most happy with. I'm a businessman by trade, an artist by heart."**
> NO I.D. ON WORKING WITH SABA

FEATURES

STEVIE NICKS, p.40

In her in-depth *Rolling Stone* Interview, **Stevie Nicks** talks about reproductive rights, why **Fleetwood Mac** are finished, and much more (p.40). A cold case from 1969 that involved New York's once-thriving nightclub **the Scene** gets some key answers (p.46). **Phish** bassist **Mike Gordon** honors his musical hero **Phil Lesh** for his unique, limitless impact in the **Grateful Dead** and beyond (p.57). A yearlong trip into the world of **sports betting** reveals the secrets of a billion-dollar industry (p.58).


PHIL LESH, p.55

REVIEWS

Rauw Alejandro gets over a major breakup by turning to the musical roots of Latin pop (p.68). While **Father John Misty** dances with death, **Gwen Stefani** gives herself her flowers (p.70). We look at how a new generation of musicians is helping **Southern rock** rise from the ashes (p.72). On the silver screen, **Nicole Kidman** gives mature-female desire the attention it deserves in ***Babygirl*** (p.74).

RAUW ALEJANDRO, p.68

CONTRIBUTORS • ISSUE 1394

Inside Rolling Stone

MASKED AND (NOT) ANONYMOUS Chalamet behind the scenes of his shoot

TAYLOR MCNEILL
Stylist

Taylor McNeill tapped into her love for Bob Dylan and his music when she styled cover star Timothée Chalamet for this issue. First, she tracked down the hatmaker who worked with Dylan on the 1975-76 Rolling Thunder Revue tour. Then, with the goal of "capturing a feeling without needing to copy the exact same thing," she borrowed a bouquet from an original Dylan hat and affixed it to a Yankees cap. The L.A.-based stylist also closely collaborated with photographer Aidan Zamiri and Chalamet himself as she created a look that resonates with the actor's own personal style. She adds that she, Zamiri, and Chalamet are "very in sync in the way we think about fashion and communicating an idea through clothing." McNeill's styling work has appeared in *Vogue, GQ, Harper's Bazaar,* and other magazines.

McNeill

DAVID HILL
Contributor

When David Hill was tasked with examining the world of sports betting for this issue's "Sports Book Nation" (p.58), the New York-based writer relied on his immersive reporting style, spending a year talking to people who are deeply involved in the industry, including several high-rolling professional gamblers. "Sports in America is almost like a by-product of gambling," he observes. "We invented a lot of games so we could bet on them. It's always existed, right under the surface." Hill's last *Rolling Stone* feature, "Sin City at 200 mph," looked at Formula 1 racing in Las Vegas for our February 2024 issue.

BRIAN HIATT
Senior Writer

With more than 70 cover stories under his belt, longtime *Rolling Stone* writer Brian Hiatt has profiled superstars from Taylor Swift to Prince to Kendrick Lamar, but one legend he has yet to talk to is Bob Dylan. For this issue's cover story (p.24), he got what might be the next-best thing: a series of in-depth conversations with Timothée Chalamet and his castmates in the Dylan biopic *A Complete Unknown*. While reporting, Hiatt found himself returning to Dylan's earliest music, which is heavily featured in the film. "It reminded me of how powerful he or anyone could be with just a voice and acoustic guitar and a harmonica," Hiatt says. "Timothée does a great job of showing you that, too." Since 2016, Hiatt has also hosted the *Rolling Stone Music Now* podcast. He wrote the cover story for our Musicians on Musicians issue in November.

Hiatt

Weinman

SARAH WEINMAN
Contributor

Sarah Weinman, who has been writing about true crime for more than 20 years, began by studying forensic science — because "crime was a way to understand the extremities of human behavior," she says. In this issue of *Rolling Stone,* her story "The Body in the Basement" (p.46) delves into the mystery behind the Jane Doe whose remains were discovered hidden in a block of concrete in a former New York City nightclub decades after its closing in 1969. Through diligent research and reporting, Weinman was able to uncover more details about the woman who was ultimately identified by the NYPD as Patricia Kathleen McGlone, and find clues about her death. But there's still more the Canadian-born writer would like to know about McGlone and what happened to her. "The story can only go so far, but I'm certainly not done with it," she says, with the hope that her piece can help bring more attention to McGlone's story.

ON THE COVER Timothée Chalamet photographed by Aidan Zamiri in New York on Aug. 27, 2024. Styling by Taylor McNeill at the Wall Group. Hair by Jamie Taylor at A-Frame Agency. Makeup by Ana Takahashi at Art Partner. Produced by Object & Animal. Executive producer: Emi Stewart. Producer: Reese Layton. Production coordinator: Bomin Ahn. Production designer: Griffin Stoddard at Streeters. Art coordinator: Vivian Swift. Leadman: Jordan Yasmineh. Sweater: Balenciaga.

FROM TOP: AIDAN ZAMIRI; THEO WARGO/GETTY IMAGES/COACHELLA; MARIA-JULIANA ROJAS; COURTESY OF NINA SUBIN; COURTESY OF TAYLOR MCNEILL; FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES; ED PERLSTEIN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES; MARIA-JULIANA ROJAS; MARCO PERRETTA

NEED4COGNITION

PAUL TAYLOR

Paul "Need4Cognition" Taylor grew up in the Third Ward in New Orleans and channels the vibrant energy of his hometown into his music. He blends jazz, bounce, and second lines with trap symphony, hip-hop, and pop. His sound is a fusion of storytelling and soulful instrumentation, creating what he describes as a "mesmerizing masterpiece" that lingers with listeners. Inspired by his work in mental health, Need4Cognition began writing music almost impulsively and hasn't stopped. With a background in performance—from marching band to church choirs—he brings a seasoned confidence to the stage.

Despite growing up with his father on death row and his mother, who had limited resources, Need4Cognition has overcome many trials. "The only thing that can stop you from achieving your highest self is yourself," he says. "Be relentless in your pursuit, and when an opportunity presents itself, go after it like it is the last. I love you, Iman." Now running his full-time company, Need4Cognition, LLC, this powerhouse continues to push boundaries, providing opportunities for others and spreading his empowering message through art.

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Apple Music: Dirty Buckets, Vol. 1 - Album by Moppy

MOPPY

Moppy is an emerging voice in the rap scene, and his music is a bold reflection of his life—raw, shocking, and relatable. Having grown up in various Chicago suburbs, Moppy now calls Cicero home. Influenced by Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, Insane Clown Posse, and Tech N9ne, Moppy's sound is shaped by a blend of 80s and 90s rap, R&B (thanks to his older sister), and even some country music (thanks to his uncle).

Moppy's genuine storytelling distinguishes him from other artists, positioning him as a singular talent in a competitive industry. Known for his intricate lyricism and unique flow, Moppy has a natural writing style driven by his emotions, transforming his personal experiences of both struggle and triumph into powerful narratives. His raw energy is simply captivating.

"I like that people can listen to my music and know they're not the only ones who are alone in certain situations. A lot of my music has shock value, and it's very truthful because of what I have been through; people can relate to that," he says. Moppy's music resonates with listeners, creating a shared space where fans can find solace and solidarity in his authentic lyrics.

CORRESPONDENCE

Love Letters & Advice

THE FIGHT AHEAD

The return of Donald Trump to power is both the unlikeliest of political comebacks and an American horror story. The continuation of the Trump era, one of the ugliest and most divisive in American history, will likely only splinter us further apart. His victory over Kamala Harris is a setback for the rule of law, reproductive health care, and the climate — and that's just for starters.

But the loss of a major battle does not mean that participating in politics is no longer worth the effort. On the contrary, over the next four years, the hard work becomes more crucial than ever.

> **By electing Trump, we've embarked on a long, dark journey over perilous waters.**

At *Rolling Stone* that means reporting the stories that matter. Trump, a would-be authoritarian, and his plutocratic allies — most notably Elon Musk, the richest man in the world — have an extremist agenda. You can count on these new robber barons to seek to remake America for the benefit of their pocketbooks. Expect more tax cuts for the wealthiest, bizarre tariffs, less regulation, and an intensification of the never-ending culture wars, along with the threat of mass deportations. On top of all that will come the inevitable chaos of Trump's leadership style and the sniveling actions of his cronies. It's a grim forecast. We will be investigating all of these topics and a lot more in the coming years — that's our duty as a publication that was founded with a spirit of defiance and commitment to the truth.

The country's institutions barely held together during the first Trump administration. In a second, they will be tested like never before. By electing Trump, we've embarked on a long, dark journey over perilous waters, with a half-mad captain at the helm. Politicians who aspire to be strongmen demand the press embrace our roles as watchdogs. *Rolling Stone* will not shy from holding the administration to account. In fact, we have already started digging.

Sean Woods, Executive Editor

Three Cheers From Jelly Roll
This Zach Bryan and Springsteen interview is remarkable. I couldn't imagine how Zach felt in that moment. What a beautiful and inspiring thing to witness. Always cheering for Zach, he is the greatest of this generation.
@JellyRoll615, a.k.a. recording artist Jelly Roll, via the internet

Connecting Generations
Nice way to wake up, to read this beautiful piece. My 17-year-old son turned me on to Zach. And my son now loves Springsteen almost as much as I do. This piece nicely captures the ties that bind these artists and their generations of fans. To quote Zach, "gratitude."
@Koch, via the internet

A New Fan
I've been listening to Bruce the last 15 years. I've started listening to Zach the last few months. To see them talking about their creative process is so special.
@TonnyMollema, via the internet

RS WINS BIG AT PRESS AWARDS

L.A. PRESS CLUB
Rolling Stone's writing, photography, design, audio, and social media nabbed 18 nominations at this year's Los Angeles Press Club Awards. This is the most nominations *RS* has ever received.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR NEWS DESIGN AWARDS
RS picked up more wins at the Best of News Design Creative Competition. We received a silver medal for the illustration that ran with our 2023 story "The Lost Children of Football," and 26 awards of excellence.

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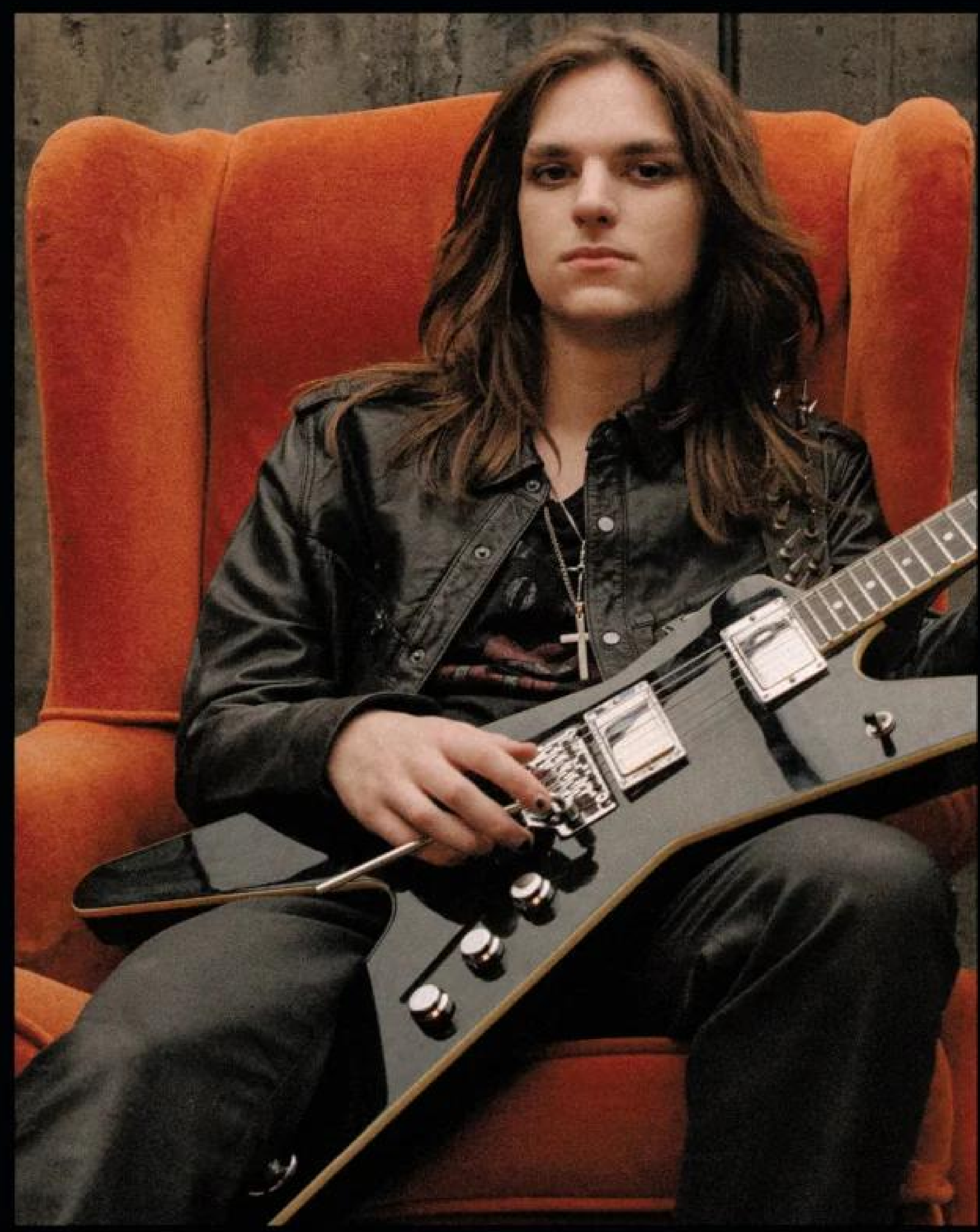
AMERICA'S NEXT TOP HITMAKER



$2.1 MILLION RAISED

TOP LEFT TO RIGHT **CASEY JAME, STEPHANIE WOOTEN, MARY HAGEN, JOSEPH WOOTEN, TREY BRUCE, NOELLE BRANDT, VIRGINIA FADDY**
BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT **NEED4COGNITION, LUKE JUDY, SAVANNAH JUDY, MOPPY**

COLLABORATION ROCKS

Thousands of hopeful artists participated in Colossal's 2024 America's Next Top Hitmaker competition for $10,000 and the opportunity to perform at the Future of Music Showcase, all while supporting MusiCares. Congrats to Indie Rock duo DUPLEXITY for taking the title. We'll see you in Austin in 2025.

Colossal, the leading professional fundraiser, united a dedicated team of partners, including Gibson Gives, DTCare, industry leaders Joseph Wooten and Trey Bruce, and MusiCares' Humans of Hip Hop ambassador Busta Rhymes to raise $2,173,906.50 million for MusiCares.

This effort underscores the importance of collective action—success is never achieved alone. Together, they helped to provide crucial support for music professionals in need but also created invaluable opportunities for artists to gain exposure and advance their careers in the music industry. The partnership highlights the ongoing commitment to nurturing talent and supporting charity.

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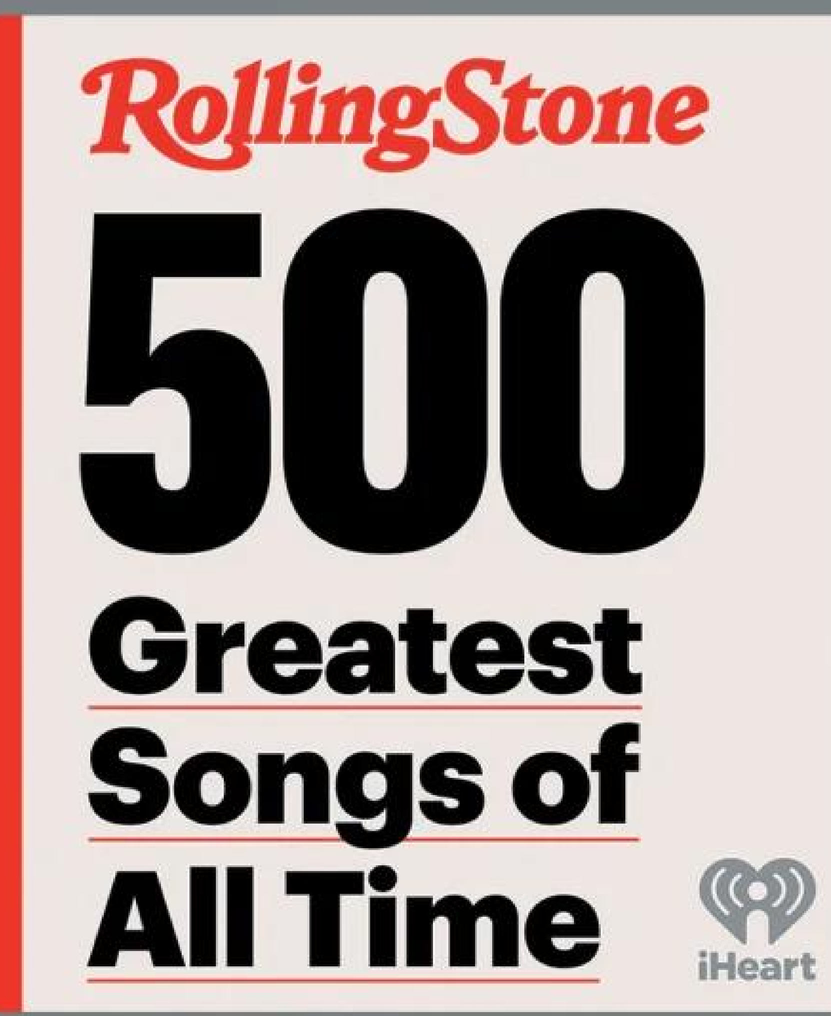

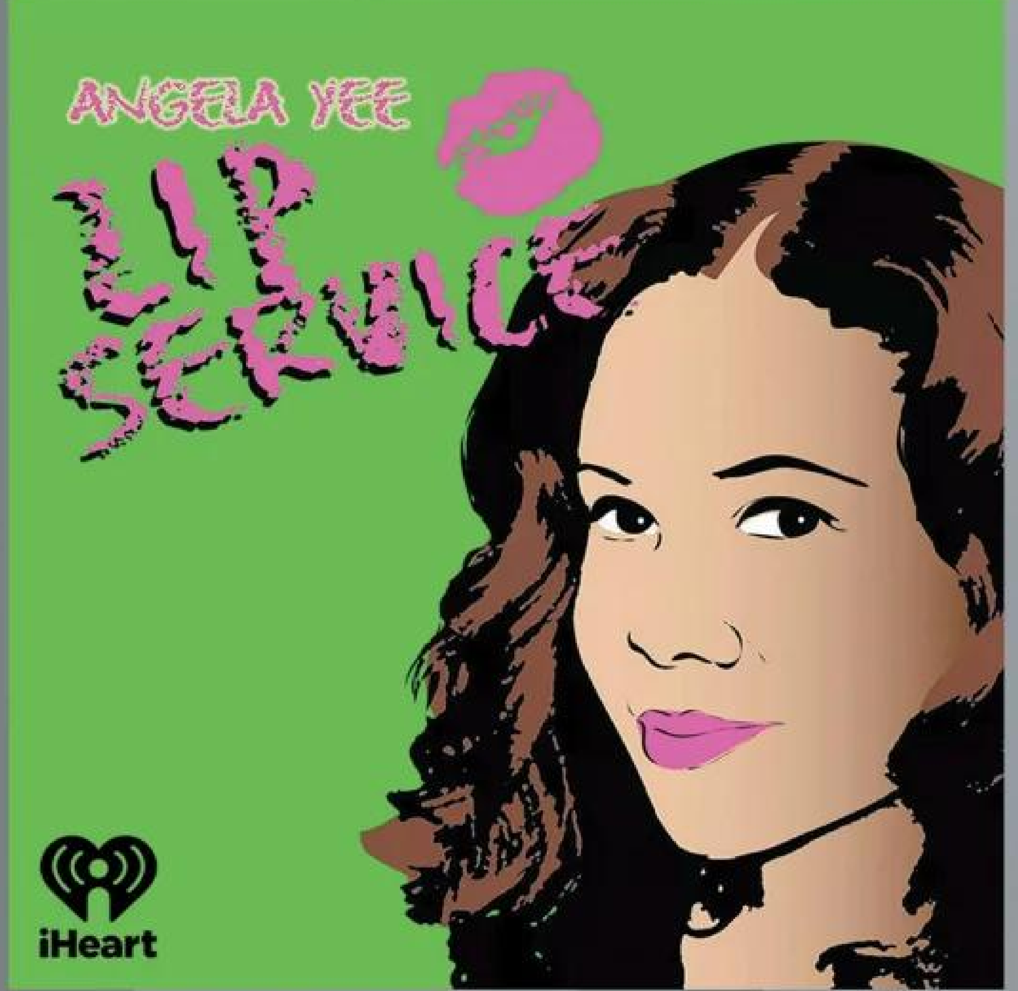

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DYNAMIC DUO

SABA BEGINS A NEW STORY

The Chicago rapper teams up with revered producer No I.D. for an album that brings out the best in both of them

By MANKAPRR CONTEH

Photographs by DANIEL DORSA

Despite being 23 years his senior, prolific producer No I.D. has a much more childlike air than Chicago indie rapper Saba, who is quietly pensive, if not a tad guarded. When we meet at No I.D.'s Los Angeles studio, the pair sit next to each other at a long desk. No I.D., 53, swivels toward us when he's amused, making animated faces and cracking mischievous smiles. And even as the person who molded a young Kanye West and oversaw the production of Jay-Z's most introspective album, 2017's *4:44,* No I.D. still considers himself a perpetual student — he and Saba, 30, are even enrolled in a photography class together as he works on a coffee-table book. "I never like to disrespect a genre, so, education," he says, toying with a Leica.

The photography class is a bit of a side quest. Right now, their main task is wrapping up a joint album, *From the Private Collection of Saba and No I.D.,* which they've been working on since 2022. Due out in January, it's a refreshingly rich and cohesive testament to their individuality and the promise of hip-hop. With a deft mix of soulful samples and original loops, the album feels like a sliver of sunlight hitting you while you uncover treasures in your grandma's attic. Saba's raps are full of the sage self-excavation of someone who spends a lot of time in their own head. "I'm an introvert, but I'm popular," he says knowingly on a song that seems to slickly reimagine Janet Jackson's "I Get Lonely."

While Saba may not have quite the name recognition of No I.D.'s past collaborators, like Jay-Z, Common, or Nas, the younger MC helped define the jazzy, cerebral sound of Chicago in the 2010s alongside peers like Noname and Chance the Rapper. Though he has built a dedicated fan base that packs out shows and streams him devotedly, *Private Collection* feels like a reintroduction, in which he's as skilled at magnifying the minutiae of his life — like growing out his hair and taking up yoga — as he is at processing horrors like the killings of some of the people closest to him. Yet the album radiates optimism and personality, a bright mosaic of the pair's layered lives.

SHADOWBOXING Saba (upper right) and No I.D.

'Hop on the truck. Let's go ride.'

Before working with No I.D., Saba was influenced by a long line of mentors, like his dad, an R&B singer who performs as Chandlar, and his uncle, producer Tommy Skillfinger, who helmed the first version of the *Private Collection* song "Big Picture" just before he died last year. No I.D. knew both of them well on the scene in Chicago, which is also his own hometown. But he's not eager to take on the title of mentor for himself. "I don't think I've ever in my life said, 'Hey, I'm going to mentor anyone,'" he says. "That's marketing." What he's actually done, he says, is gotten to know people he's seen something special in, and shared what he knows with them. "I just go, 'Hey, man, hop on the truck. Let's go ride. We'll see some things, we'll talk, we'll take some photos.'"

> **"He just trusted me with 100-plus beats. He gave me a shot. Let me just get something done."**

Early in their relationship, No I.D. tried to sign Saba when he was an executive vice president at Capitol, but Saba — who'd seen success as an independent artist — was skeptical. "I would always be like, 'Bro, just come on, man. It's me!'" No I.D. recalls. "When I worked at labels, people viewed me totally different than who I am. It's like, 'I'm a warrior. I'm one of you. Why is this conversation going like this? I'm Harriet Tubman!'... And it's like, 'Nah, you're with them.'"

For years, they stayed in touch, getting to know each other more organically. No I.D. came to understand Saba's stoic nature, playfully nicknaming him Confucius, and Saba got to experience No I.D.'s taste for Michelin-star dining experiences. "Since working with him, he's taken us to a few different tasting menus that have been real extravagant," Saba says. "The food is some art shit."

They've gone back to Chicago together and talked through their complicated relationship with their hometown. Chicago is the place where the murder of Saba's cousin and collaborator, John Walt, sculpted his stunning 2018 album, *Care for Me*, and where he lost another close friend, DJ and producer Squeak, not long before he finished his last album, 2022's *Few Good Things*.

Saba says one of his first studio sessions with No I.D., in 2019, was "memorable as fuck." "He made 20 beats in one sitting," Saba says. "He just sat in the corner, made 20 beats, gave me 20 beats, and then went home." No I.D. remembers wanting to feel out Saba's approach in the studio: "I'm not proving much at this point. I'm just doing what I love. And I remember going, 'I wonder how he's going to take to this event.'" As they revisit this memory together, Saba strokes his chin reflectively. No I.D. points it out: "He'll [make] that face right there and you'll be like, 'What's he thinking?'"

So when Saba received a pack of more than 100 beats from No I.D. while he was on the road in 2022, it wasn't exactly unprece-

FAST FACTS

SPECIAL GUESTS
A song called "Crash" features vocals from Raphael Saadiq and Kelly Rowland, who dropped by No I.D.'s studio. "I'm like, 'You want to sing on that?'"

COLE WORLD
No I.D. played "How to Impress God" for J. Cole, who was a fan: "He was like, 'I'd get on that one.'"

PRODUCTION BY PATRICIA BILOTTI FOR PBNY PRODUCTIONS. PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSISTANCE BY TAYLOR GALLOWAY AND SPRUCE BOHEN

dented. Still, Saba took it as another test: "He just trusted me with 100-plus beats. He gave me a shot. Let me just get something done." Though Saba was already in the midst of major life changes — losing Squeak, leaving Chicago, and buying a home in Los Angeles — he managed to make 13 songs that reflected the transitory time.

No I.D. had made those beats in about a month as a way of challenging himself. "There's producers, and there's beatmakers," he says. "The industry has shamed the beatmakers and made them some type of subservient, inferior hip-hop tool. I felt like, 'Man, I became too much of a producer. I need to be a beatmaker again.'"

Saba handled those beats expertly. "I was like, 'Oh, yeah, this is what I'm talking about,'" No I.D. says, recalling when he got the first songs back. He was down to put them out as a mixtape — but Saba thought they could go even harder. "I think it's just looking at what I'm capable of and what he's capable of and going, 'This is a nice introduction. What are we making, though?'" Saba says.

"How to Impress God," the album's next-to-last track, points to the game-changing power the pair wield. It's both haunting and hopeful, with Saba vividly imagining God nearly berating him, before the conversation takes a different turn. "That song serves a few different versions of myself," he says. "A more vain version of myself, where I just get to flex my accomplishments — I haven't done that at any point in my career. But it's [also] like, 'So what?'"

No I.D. turns to Saba. "I never even said this to you, but people are going to look at that one and go, 'I wish I had said that,'" he says. "Those are the songs that I'm always most happy with. I'm a businessman by trade, an artist at heart." Ⓡ

LATE NIGHTS

QUEVEDO'S FAST LIFE KEEPS SPEEDING UP

The Spanish rapper and singer talks about four standout tracks from his new album, *Buenas Noches*

By JULYSSA LOPEZ

The Spanish singer and rapper Quevedo spent some sleepless nights back home in the Canary Islands this fall. He'd been busy visiting family before the November release of his new album, *Buenas Noches,* and the wait for the project was keeping him wide awake.

Insomnia inspired the whole LP, in fact. *Buenas Noches* is a look at all the things that kept Quevedo up as he skyrocketed into stardom. He made a splash when he first appeared on the Spanish-music scene in 2020, scored a mega viral hit single in 2022 with Argentine producer Bizarrap (the video for "Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 52" currently has more than 675 million views on YouTube), and then released his acclaimed debut album, *Donde Quiero Estar,* in 2023.

The quick rise was a lot for the 22-year-old, whose full name is Pedro Luis Domínguez Quevedo. *Buenas Noches* captures two years of late-night celebrations and late-night longing. "It's that feeling when you're awake at 3 a.m., staring at your ceiling," he says. Here, he breaks down some of the tracks from the new LP.

Quevedo

"Duro"

This is one of my favorite songs I've ever made. The drumbeat is really different [from] what's happening in music right now, but it somehow still has this essence and the delivery and the wordplay you hear in reggaeton. My last song, "La Última," was an unloading about how not everything is great in the music industry. The album has a lot of moods, but I wanted to come back so people know that the Pedro who loves making music is still here.

"Halo"

I grew up listening to reggaeton in the Canary Islands, but it doesn't mean necessarily that I've lived that life. That song features La Pantera, a rapper who is one of my closest friends, and it was a way of playing and creating a moment where we pretend to be tough. In the verse, though, we joke and there's the humor of saying, "Look, we're not actual gangsters." Throughout the whole album, there are small touches that have a sense of humor.

"14 Febreros"

A while ago, a TikTok came up with a song by Sin Nombre, and I remember loving it. Later, in the studio, my friend who worked on the album came and said, "You have to listen to this artist, you're going to love him." And he played "Total" by Sin Nombre. I was like, "This guy from the Dominican Republic who sings. He has these amazing melodies — what were his influences? He probably grew up listening to dembow and Justin Bieber." And that fusion of things sounds so good, and he's a pioneer in that. I was like, "This guy has to be on my album."

"Buenas Noches"

I decided to close the album with this because I thought it was a way of telling people what I felt over the last year. It's me reflecting about my personal life with my friends in Spain, and my artistic life, with travels and events. And it's about how when I have one, I can't have the other, and how I'm always missing one side. It was something I felt deeply. Ⓡ

THE OLD KANYE

IS KANYE PURSUING A REDEMPTION ARC IN ASIA?

Concerts in China and South Korea suggest the controversial artist's box-office potential remains strong overseas

BY ANDRE GEE

Earlier this year, footage of Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, and his four children dancing together at his ¥$ *Vultures* Listening Experience in China went viral. The clip, along with another of him dancing to his 2013 cut "On Sight," were rare moments of positive attention for Ye. His no-filter ethos has drastically dampened his star power stateside, as fans in the U.S. have a fielder's choice of reasons to be done with the once- →

FROM TOP: ALEX CASCALLANA; ALDARA ZARRAOA/REDFERNS

YEEZY OVERSEAS Ye's listening session in Hainan, China, filled a stadium.

revered artist. Whether it's his MAGA support, his 2018 "Slavery was a choice" statement, his 2022 barrage of antisemitic comments, or his more recent sexual-misconduct allegations, he now seems more infamous than beloved here. Yet that doesn't appear to be the case in Asia.

Ye performed in September for a packed crowd at Wuyuanhe Stadium in Haikou, the most populous city of the Chinese province of Hainan. It was his second show at the stadium in two weeks, following an appearance at a major cultural festival earlier in the month. Haikou is known for its resorts, but it turned into Yeezy World for a short time. The *L.A. Times* reported that the tour brought in $7 million in ticket sales, and Chinese outlet Xinhua projected that the show would gross 373 million yuan (roughly $53 million) for the city. Days earlier, Haikou had been hit with Super Typhoon Yagi, the strongest such disaster to hit the resort island in 75 years. But fans still flocked there for the show. Earlier, Ye held another listening experience at a sports complex near Seoul, South Korea. To this point, he has had only one *Vultures 2* listening experience in the West, at Salt Lake City's Delta Center. For this album cycle, at least, he's chosen a locale where he's less polarizing.

Fans in the U.S. have a fielder's choice of reasons to be done with Ye, who seems more infamous than beloved.

A lifelong connection with Asia

Asia has played a notable role in Ye's life. He lived in China for a brief time as a child when his mother was a professor at Nanjing University. Nodding to this history, he recently posted an Instagram photo of his younger self in China with the caption "Back" and wore a hoodie with Chinese characters that translate to "told you." Japanese artist Takashi Murakami designed Ye's *Graduation* and *Kids See Ghosts* album covers. He's long done shows in Japan, where he's now rumored to be relocating.

Back in the States, his stock couldn't be lower. If his unabashed Donald Trump advocacy and anti-Biden "presidential campaign" weren't enough to annoy fans in 2018 and 2020, his November 2022 declaration of going "death con 3 on Jewish people" and his *Drink Champs* double-down were the death knell for many others. Unlike the response to his 2018 appearance on TMZ, where he declared that "Slavery was a choice," the backlash wasn't relegated to angry tweets this time — he lost his billionaire status. Adidas discontinued its ongoing partnership with the Yeezy brand, talent agency CAA dropped him as a client, and Balenciaga and *Vogue* severed ties with him. Since then, reports have surfaced about corrosive working environments at his companies. His former assistant Lauren Pisciotta has accused him of emotional distress and sexual misconduct, with specific allegations that he masturbated in front of her and sent her explicit text messages and videos of himself (including him having sexual intercourse); Ye's lawyers have called the accusations "baseless."

Looking for a new audience

For many, Ye's mounting misdeeds have eroded whatever bright-eyed memory they carry of him as the ambitious, soul-sampling dreamer from Chicago. Yet his worldwide fans, for better or worse, seem to have decided that his comments and allegations don't overpower their connection with his music.

Though there were Korean X users who called out his appearance in Seoul, there are others in the region who may not understand America's social climate. Perhaps the full harm of "Slavery was a choice" or "death con 3" doesn't inherently distress the majority of fans in China or South Korea the way it does the Jewish people or Black people who are directly affected in the U.S. That might mean their perception of Ye can be more about his music.

His worldwide fans seem to have decided that his comments don't overpower their connection with his music.

These are the fans who amped him while he danced to "On Sight." For that fleeting moment, he was "the old Kanye," dancing untamably, riveting a packed stadium with a boundary-pushing sound. His seemingly random decision to hold shows in Haikou seems in lockstep with his purchase of a sprawling ranch in Cody, Wyoming, in 2019; it seems he'll go wherever he feels called. Perhaps these Asia shows are a seasonal blip, and demand will subside. However, CNBC recently reported that the Chinese economy is in bad shape, and *The New York Times* revealed that the country's box-office movie sales have dropped by half since 2023. Ye has showed he's still a reliable box-office success over there. A new chapter with a new audience might allow him to salvage whatever is left of his legacy — as long as he doesn't piss them off, too.

STRIKING A CHORD

"TO GO AFTER THEM LEGALLY WOULD BE LUDICROUS. IT'S A SHARED LANGUAGE OF MUSIC."

Elvis Costello

THREE YEARS AFTER the release of Olivia Rodrigo's "Brutal," Elvis Costello is still responding to questions about why he didn't sue her for allegedly ripping off chord structures from his 1978 track "Pump It Up." As he put it on social media once, "That's how rock & roll works."

Costello and Rodrigo

Tribute

LIAM PAYNE 1993–2024

Mourning the kid brother of One Direction

His openhearted warmth always kept people rooting for him. By Rob Sheffield

SHINE ON Payne performing with One Direction in 2014

The first night Liam Payne ever did a headlining solo show, the first One Direction song he sang was a deep cut: "History." It's not the most famous 1D song, but it's one of their most direct statements about the bond they shared with their audience. Liam surprised the crowd with it on that first night, at New York's Beacon Theatre in June 2018, complete with a video montage of One Direction over the years, as he sang, "You and me got a whole lot of history/We could be the greatest team that the world has ever seen." There are so many clips of Liam singing "History" in his solo shows, openly inviting the audience to celebrate that history with him. He always let them take over and sing the final hook by themselves: "We can live forever!"

"History" might seem like an odd way to kick-start your solo career, but it was a very Liam gesture — his way of keeping faith with everything that he, the band, and their fans built together. He honored the history they shared — but also the history everybody hoped he still had ahead of him. That openhearted warmth was there in his songs, his voice, his effervescent onstage presence. That's why so many people felt a deep personal connection with him, and kept rooting for him.

And that's why the world has been grieving since the tragic news of his death on Oct. 16, after falling from a third-floor hotel-room balcony in Buenos Aires. He was only 31. The circumstances of his death are still mysterious. He was the 1D member who seemed to struggle most after the group ended. But something about Liam made it easy to hold out hope that he'd make it. He had a lot more to give, more history to make.

One Direction were a brotherhood — even when they were a troubled and pained brotherhood — with five very different personalities and aesthetics thrown together into an accidentally perfect combination. Liam always came on like the kid brother of the group, with his boyish air of vulnerability and eager-puppy live enthusiasm. He was the one who seemed totally guileless.

That spirit was always there when he sang — you could hear something bruised and unguarded in his voice. In the 2013 classic "Story of My Life," a hit he co-wrote, Liam sings the most pained lines alone: "She told me in the morning she don't feel the same about us in her bones/It seems to me that when I die these words will be written on my stone." As in so many 1D songs, the boys tell the story together, tossing the mic back and forth. In the video, Liam gazes into the mirror before he sings the key line, "Although I am broken, my heart is untamed still." It's a moment that encapsulates everything people loved and connected to about him.

Liam wasn't the biggest One Direction fan in One Direction — that would be Niall — and admitted he often had trouble getting along with the others. But he was deeply attached to the group identity, and he was the one who had the toughest time moving on. 1D went on an alleged hiatus in 2015, a charade that dragged on for four years, until Harry finally came out and declared in *Rolling Stone* that the group was functionally finished. Liam, unlike the four others, seemed confused about what to do next. "How do you go from there?" Liam asked in his infamous 2022 Logan Paul interview. "I still don't know who I am."

The last to test his solo wings, Liam started on the wrong foot with "Strip That Down," his 2017 debut single with Quavo. He tried to dismiss the group, rapping, "I used to be in 1D/Now I'm out free/People want me for one thing/That's not me." He sang about boozing and grinding on groupies — two months after becoming a dad — as Quavo added, "She gonna strip it down for a thug." There are many words you could use to describe Liam, but "thug" wasn't one of them.

He had well-publicized problems with substance abuse. In 2022, he alienated fans with that disastrous, drunken Logan Paul interview, where he bragged that Simon Cowell built the whole group around him. "He kind of started with my face and then worked around the rest," Liam said. He boasted that he was 1D's most successful soloist. (Harry's "As It Was" was in the middle of a 15-week run at Number One at the time.) Liam went to rehab after that, but his troubles continued. He once revealed that he was terrified his son, Bear, born in 2017, might grow up to be a pop star. "Bear loves music, which kind of scares the crap out of me," he told the U.K.'s *Hits Radio Breakfast Show*. "This job's a bit scary."

At those solo shows in 2018, he was clearly touched by the affection from the crowd. "I'm so overwhelmed," he said in New York. "I've missed that sound since I played with my boys." He mostly sang covers of recent hits by Ed Sheeran, Pink, and Charlie Puth. But the emotional payoff was "History." The room erupted as he pleaded, "This is not the end!"

It was a vulnerable moment, for sure — he didn't try to hide how much he needed those cheers. Yet it was also a generous moment, acknowledging that the fans were in the room because of their shared history, the same reason he was there. One Direction's music just keeps getting more influential and beloved, nearly 10 years after they split. And the emotion Liam brought to "History" sums up everything people loved about him. Moments like this are the words that will be written on his stone. Ⓡ

He had a lot more to give, more history to make.

PAUL BERGEN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

2024 IN REVIEW

INSIDE THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF SAPPHIC POP'S BANNER YEAR

For young queer fans, 2024 was a dream come true, with newly minted stars like Chappell Roan and Reneé Rapp. For the artists, it was complicated

By ABIGAIL COVINGTON

Halfway through their set, Muna address the elephant in the stadium.

"We just wanted to acknowledge that someone very special is missing tonight," says the indie-pop trio's lead singer, Katie Gavin. It's day one of All Things Go, an independent-music festival that fans nicknamed Lezbopalooza due to its largely queer, female, or nonbinary lineup, including Chappell Roan. Except the day before Roan was scheduled to appear onstage at Forest Hills Stadium in Queens, New York, she pulled out.

"We love Chappell so much," Gavin continues, as the young, eager audience, a quarter of whom have donned pink cowboy hats, quiet down to hear what this wise stateswoman of sapphic pop has to say. "You know, we started as a queer band in 2014, so we've really been given the time and the grace that we needed to be nourished as artists." Gavin leans over to plug her acoustic guitar into her amplifier as she goes on: "We wish nothing but that times a million for her, so sing this one for Chappell." And with that, the trio launch into a strummy, slowed-down cover of Roan's "Good Luck, Babe!" and the audience does as Gavin has gently commanded them to do. They sing every word in unison. They sway together, too, gently rocking from side to side in the purple and pink light. When Gavin's bandmate Naomi McPherson, who rarely sings lead, belts out the high note in Roan's epic bridge, I look to my left and see two young women crying. No one expected this moment. That's the thing about queer artists, though: They are always brushing up against, bursting through, or staring down other people's expectations about who they are and how they should behave.

"We are standing on the shoulders of sapphic artists who've been doing this for so long."

You'd have to stop the world

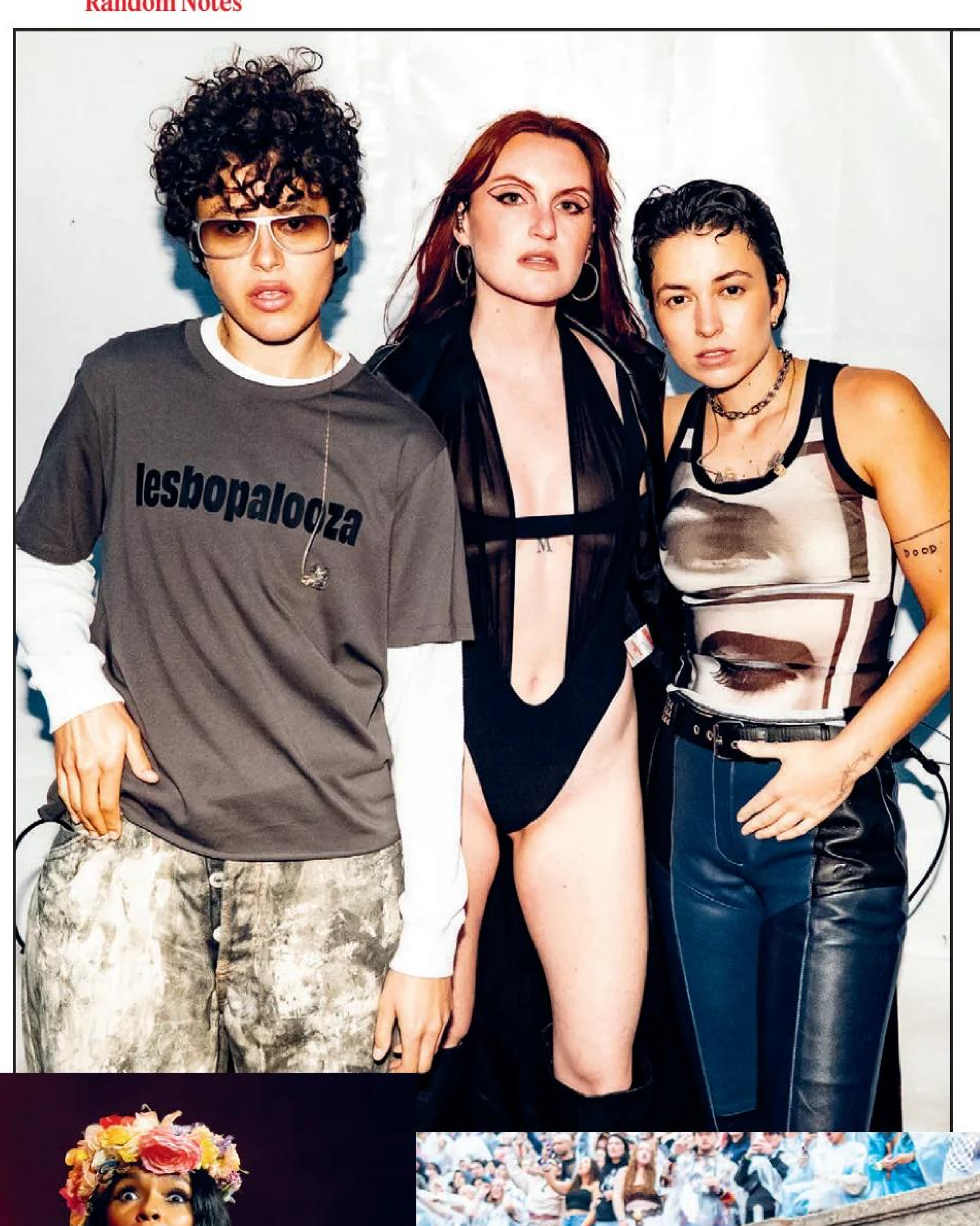
Muna's cover of "Good Luck, Babe!" at All Things Go stood in startlingly well for the highs, lows, and sheer chaos of the past year, when queer and nonbinary acts like boygenius, Victoria Monét, Reneé Rapp, Towa Bird, Muna, Kehlani, Janelle Monáe, Billie Eilish, and Roan have dominated pop culture to such an all-encompassing extent that many in the media dubbed the moment a "lesbian renaissance."

Start with the song: "Good Luck, Babe!" is quite possibly the only bop about compulsory heterosexuality to ever land within *Billboard*'s Top Five. It was one of the leading contenders for →

Photographs by MARIA-JULIANA ROJAS

“There’s just much more specificity and delight.”

RAPP SUPERSTAR
Reneé Rapp onstage at All Things Go



← 2024's song of the summer, as clip after clip of Roan performing it on the festival circuit went viral, fueling the song's momentum until it hit like a heat wave — scorching, inescapable, and all anyone could talk about. Second, there was the stark absence at Forest Hills of the song's owner. Roan has been at the epicenter of this so-called renaissance, and her warp-speed transition from "gaymous" to famous has been bumpy, to say the least. Her difficult, discourse-laden ascent highlights just how complex navigating mainstream success as a marginalized person can be. Queer pop stars often carry the weight of the entire LGBTQ+ community on their shoulders.

"The people at the top are still cis white dudes. That didn't magically change this last summer."

Finally, Muna. This is the band that arguably kicked off the whole sapphic pop, queer joy, whatever-you-want-to-call-it movement a few years ago, when it released its feel-good hit single "Silk Chiffon" with Phoebe Bridgers. McPherson even predicted in a since-deleted tweet circa 2022 that "Silk Chiffon" would usher in an era of sapphic pop, much like the one we now appear to be living in.

So how does it feel to have predicted the future? "I was right," says McPherson when we speak a few days before All Things Go. "You could call me Nostradamus. Naom-o-stradamus!"

All jokes aside, Muna know they wouldn't be here were it not for the artists who came before them. "We are standing on the shoulders of lesbian, queer, sapphic artists who've been doing this shit for so long," McPherson says.

Right again: Because as much as this overtly sapphic pop-culture moment feels new to a large swath of young queer people, it's happened before — in the 1980s and 1990s, when artists like Melissa Etheridge, Tracy Chapman, k.d. lang, and the Indigo Girls all saw major success. "The lesbian was all over the culture," says Kaleb Goldschmitt, an ethnomusicologist and popular-music scholar at Wellesley College. "It was very mainstream."

Saying it out loud

Still, there's something different about this moment. To put it bluntly, the music is hornier and happier. Take Etheridge, who had to speak in codes in the early Nineties. "Her album being called *Yes I Am* was a big deal," says Alyxandra Vesey, a feminist popular-music scholar at the University of Alabama, "but she also doesn't get to say what the 'am' is." Now, Roan, Rapp, Muna, and all the other queer pop stars get to say the previously unspoken part out loud. "There's just much more specificity and delight than we had access to 30 years ago," Vesey adds.

Unfortunately, the past year hasn't changed everything for every queer artist equally. There's no escaping the blinding whiteness of sapphic pop's supposed golden era. Towa Bird — whose onstage kiss with Rapp draws screams from the All Things Go crowd — tells me she spends a lot of time wondering if there is room for her in an industry that prefers its pop stars white and femme. Rapp, delightfully uncensored as always, says there is more work to be done: "The people at the top are still fucking cis white dudes. That didn't magically change over the course of this last summer. Those bitches are still there."

Maybe mainstream artists will get queerer and butcher and more diverse. A gay girl can dream, can't she? Or maybe sapphic pop's golden era will sunset. Nobody can predict the future, except Muna of course, and they aren't worried about it. For them, success isn't about staying in the spotlight but sustaining a career on their own terms. Or as Josette Maskin, the band's lead guitarist, puts it: They just want the freedom to create "without having to care about who the fuck it's for." ®

STARS ALIGNED Clockwise from top: Muna; Chappell Roan fans in full "Pink Pony Club" glam at the All Things Go festival; Julien Baker; Towa Bird; and Janelle Monáe

ALTERNATE HISTORY

AN ORIGINAL TRUE-CRIME CASE GETS A CLOSER LOOK

As America reconsiders the Menendez brothers' brutal murder of their parents thanks to two Netflix series, we gather five more explorations of the case

By ELISABETH GARBER-PAUL

The murder trials of Erik and Lyle Menendez gripped the country in the Nineties. The first resulted in a hung jury in 1994. Though the brothers admitted that they'd shot their parents to death in the family's Beverly Hills home in 1989, the question was motive: Were they, as the prosecution argued, spoiled rich kids who acted in cold blood, seeking a shortcut to their inheritance? Or, as the young men tearfully claimed on the stand — in one of the first extensively televised trials broadcast to a rapt nationwide audience — had they acted in self-defense after years of sexual abuse at the hands of their father, with their mother standing idly by? A subsequent trial ended in two life sentences for the brothers, who have so far served 30 years in prison. But thanks to those TV cameras, the way we digest and talk about crime in America was forever changed. Decades later, Netflix has thrust the controversial case back into the public conversation with the Ryan Murphy dramatization *Monsters,* as well as a docuseries, *The Menendez Brothers.* As chatter about the trials peaks, here are five works that will take you even deeper into the story.

SERIES

Law & Order True Crime: The Menendez Murders (2017)

In the only season of *Law & Order True Crime* ever to exist, Edie Falco stars as Erik Menendez's attorney, Leslie Abramson, just one of many Wolf Entertainment veterans to appear in the show's eight-episode run. It's only loosely ripped from the headlines, and definitely focuses more on law enforcement than the boys themselves, but for anyone wanting a little more *dun-dunnn* in their true crime, it's a must-watch.

DOCUMENTARY

Menendez + Menudo: Boys Betrayed (2023)

Before his career in Hollywood, Erik and Lyle's father, José Menendez, ran record labels in New York, and in the early 1980s, he signed the Puerto Rican boy band Menudo. A handshake part of that deal, according to this Peacock docuseries, was the band's manager at the time giving José access to former Menudo member Roy Rosselló for the purpose of sexual abuse. The allegations were shocking yet credible enough that recently-unseated Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón used them to urge a judge to reconsider the brothers' case.

BOOK

Justice: Crimes, Trials and Punishments (2001)

Writer Dominick Dunne (portrayed by Nathan Lane in *Monsters*) was admittedly not without bias in his coverage of the Menendez story — he believed the brothers were liars, particularly about the allegations of sexual abuse, and he held a special hatred for Abramson, who reminded him of the lawyer who defended the man accused of beating his daughter to death in 1982. But this collection of his *Vanity Fair* articles is a document of the mainstream take at the time, and the brothers are mentioned repeatedly in the subsequent chapters on O.J. Simpson, illustrating myriad ways their case permeated the culture, especially when it came to true crime.

PODCAST

American Criminal: The Menendez Brothers (2024)

Though this five-episode series is probably the most balanced and journalistic entry on the list, it is not a dry recounting of the case. Instead, the team behind this podcast uses intensive research to shape a nearly four-hour narrative (told by gravelly-voiced actor Jeremy Schwartz) that offers the feel of pulpy true crime, but goes deep into the family dynamic, the crime, the trial, and the aftermath.

TV MOVIE

Menendez: Blood Brothers (2017)

There isn't a ton of room for nuance in this Lifetime movie, which offers a sympathetic look at the brothers' side of the story — but that's not why it made this list. Told from Lyle and Erik's point of view, it largely makes Dr. Jerome Oziel (the psychiatrist to whom the brothers confessed) and their father, José, the bad guys. The real beauty, though, is in the portrayal by a strangely maternal Courtney Love — yes, that Courtney Love — of their mother, Kitty, who haunts Erik after the crime, keeping his spirits up. Ⓡ

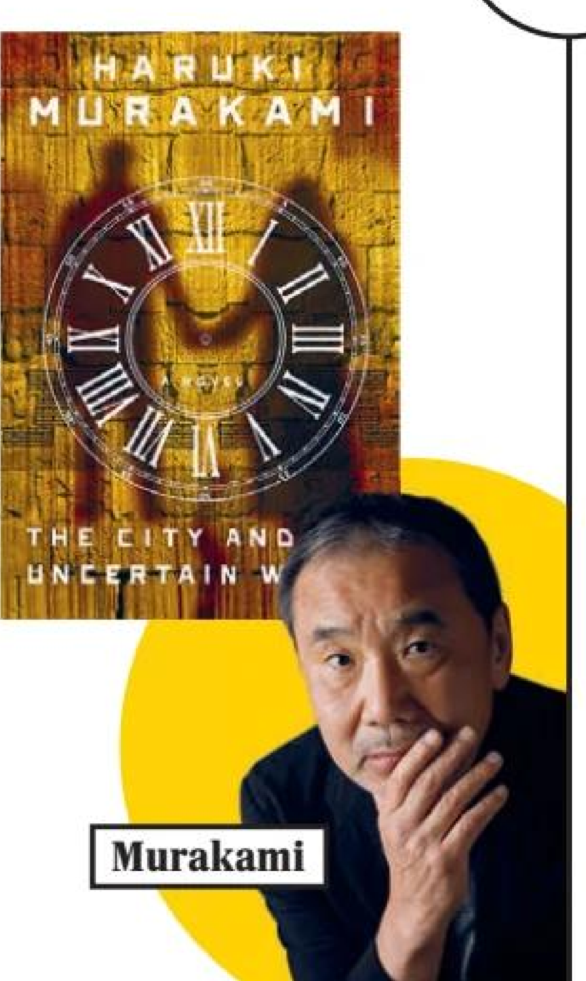
PICTURE OF INNOCENCE? Erik (left) and Lyle Menendez in 1989

READ

RS RECOMMENDS

THE REAL LIFE OR JUST FANTASY?

THE CITY AND ITS UNCERTAIN WALLS
Acclaimed author Haruki Murakami started this novel — his first in six years — during the lockdowns of 2020. That **DISORIENTING REALITY** permeates the story, which ventures into a city surrounded by inescapable walls, where people are separated from their shadows. Every page is a step into an increasingly off-kilter world.



Murakami

FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: ROBIN PLATZER/GETTY IMAGES; JUSTIN LUBIN/NBC/GETTY IMAGES; LIFETIME TELEVISION/EVERETT COLLECTION; RONALD L. SOBLE/"LOS ANGELES TIMES"/GETTY IMAGES; ELENA-SEIBERT

Q&A

LIL UZI VERT 'MY LIFE IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT, BUT I'M STILL THE SAME ME'

The rapper talks about rehab, running into fans at Guitar Center, and what it means to be honest with yourself

By JEFF IHAZA

At the Roc Nation offices in New York City, Lil Uzi Vert is wearing an all-white fit — a T-shirt from the cult Japanese label Skoloct, white jeans, and a white beanie with the word "Them" stitched in gothic font. It's just before the release of their LP *Eternal Atake 2,* an album on which Uzi is tapped back into the vibrant sense of creativity of their earlier work, but with new maturity.

Uzi has been giving a decent amount of thought to their legacy and influence. At 29, they're at the forefront of a rap world that they helped create since releasing their breakthrough mixtape, *Luv Is Rage.* A lot has happened since then — viral hits, a stint in rehab, music leaks. But they say they've sharpened up their operation and are looking forward to dropping more music. "I have a tight house now, and my life is totally different," Uzi says. "But I'm still the same me."

Do you feel like this new generation looks to you as a leader?
No, they look at me as a brother. A long time ago, I was on my high horse. But I always remember times when certain people, when I first came out, broke my heart on a musical level because they didn't give me respect. And I don't blame them because [it was like], "What have you done?" But then, when I did it, they didn't want to give me respect. So I just try to stay out of everybody's way in a respectful way and only come around when I'm asked for.

***Luv Is Rage* came out nine years ago. Do you look back at that time nostalgically?**
It doesn't even seem like it was long ago, because I've never done anything else in my life that I could say [is] that great. I remember going to prom, and that was lit. But I went to prom two times.

I went to prom with a girl, and then I went to prom by myself, and I realized that going to prom by yourself is crazy. I was supposed to go with this girl, and we didn't go because she was my friend's girl.... It's crazy, nowadays that's really his baby mom. But when we were younger, she was really short, and I was short. We were popular. But my man was like, "Yo, bro, you trying to go to prom with my girl." I'm like, "No." So I went by myself.

This is what you remember before the music took off?
I didn't do nothing else after that. I went to school, I graduated; there was a store that I worked at for four days, and I quit. And my mom kicked me out because she was like, I'm in the way. I was getting too old. I moved with my grandma to a nursing home. When I moved with my grandma, my friend took me to the studio. I kept telling him that I rap because he was lit, but I really didn't. So, I was trying to learn how to rap. I was listening to Kendrick, Big Sean, and Drake, but then I listened to Lil B and Mike Jones. So I was trying to flex all that.

How did your time in rehab inform the past year for you?
With that type of thing, no matter if it's in the flesh, physical, mental, or anything, it's always a bumpy road, every day, for everyone that ever went through that process. It's never just a walk in the park. And when it comes to that type of stuff, it's just all about being honest with yourself, because it's not about no one else. Because if you put it on anyone else, then you'll be somewhere high as a kite. You just have to be honest with yourself, and when you are honest with yourself and get clarity, you'll come to it and want better.

How do you feel about turning 30?
My whole thing is this: Whatever age you are, right, and however you look at life, if you have more or the number of millions of your age, then you are good. If I got more than 30 million, I'm cool.

What's the wildest fan interaction you've had?
I had this one kid follow me from America to Portugal and stayed outside my hotel for maybe ... bro, the kid was out there for a month every day. It was creepy. I'll never forget that kid's face. He's an orange-haired kid. In my life, I'll never forget his face. He's probably grown now. I saw him at Guitar Center a year and a half ago, trying to act normal.

Guitar Center?
Bro, they were having a sale in Guitar Center out here. And when I go to Guitar Center, I'm there, and I don't know how he got the drop on me. I don't really want to say this, but I kind of appreciate him. I don't, but I do, because he obviously saw something in me that I don't see, but just see it from a distance.

There was this one girl, and she was very different. I don't know what she believed in, but she was leaving weird stuff in my car. Different types of little dolls and shit. She looked cool in a way that was scary. But it was like I could almost smell the look. But it was swaggy.

It seems like you've been treating music more officially in the past few years. Has a shift happened for you?
Not the past few years. I just started last month, bro. I ain't going to lie. I just have to provide for my family. It's a difference between providing for yourself and providing for your family. I put in a lot of effort so I don't make anyone look bad. Or at least, if I make them look bad, at least they put up and rich.

What kind of experience are you trying to bring to the live performance in this era?
I'm trying to be a human visualizer.

GARRETT BRUCE

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Chalamet on the rooftop of his old apartment building in New York's East Village in August

TANGLED UP IN BOB

How Timothée Chalamet transformed into a young Bob Dylan for the biopic *A Complete Unknown*

By BRIAN HIATT • Photographs by AIDAN ZAMIRI

PREVIOUS SPREAD: PANTS BY CELINE. THIS SPREAD: PANTS, JACKET, AND JUMPSUIT BY PRADA. PAGE 32: SHIRT: CUSTOM. PANTS BY CHANEL. HAT BY LOUIS VUITTON: VIRGIL ABLOH ARCHIVE. PAGE 33: HOODIE BY BALENCIAGA.MASK DESIGNED BY AIDAN ZAMIRI. MASK PRINTED BY RADIMIR KOCH. PAGE 35: VEST BY CELINE. HAT BY NEW ERA LIDZ. PAGE 39: BOOTS BY LOEWE.

COVER STORY

e’s traveling through the north country today. Eighty miles from Canada, where the winds, it’s been said, hit heavy on the borderline. As his rented Toyota pickup truck reaches a tree-shaded suburban intersection, he kills the engine and bounds out into late-January air. He’s layered a down jacket over a gray sweatshirt, the hood yanked over his mussed brown hair. His destination is a boxy, cream-colored little house on the corner, down a walkway framed by twin shrubs. To its left is a newish street sign: Bob Dylan Drive. • He spent the past hour and 20 minutes navigating an iced-up Highway 53, fishtailing enough between Duluth and Hibbing, Minnesota, to send the insurers of at least two major Hollywood franchises scrambling for Xanax. But Timothée Chalamet is on a mission, and this pilgrimage is one of his final quests. • He was supposed to have four months to get ready to play a young Bob Dylan onscreen. Instead, thanks in part to a pandemic and a few Hollywood strikes, he’s had five years. It’s all gone pretty far. He started off hardly knowing a thing about Dylan, and ended up a self-proclaimed “devoted disciple in the Church of Bob,” dropping references to outtakes (1963’s “Percy’s Song” is an obsession) and Dylan-bootleg YouTube channels. “I had to push the preparation, the bounds,” he’ll tell me, “almost to psychologically *know* I had pushed it.”

He’s been working with a vocal coach, a guitar teacher, a dialect coach, a movement coach, even a harmonica guy. At one point, he wrote out Dylan lyrics on sheets of paper and taped them to his walls. Chalamet brings his acoustic guitar to the singing lessons, where he’ll sometimes, without warning, show up talking in Dylan’s voice. In the film, *A Complete Unknown,* which opens Dec. 25, we’ll end up hearing Chalamet singing and playing entire songs, for real, live on set. “You *can’t* re-create it in the studio,” he argues later. “If I was singing to a prerecorded guitar, then all of a sudden I could hear the lack of an arm movement in my voice.”

Chalamet grew up worshiping Kid Cudi, with “dead-on-arrival aspirations of rapping” in his own right. He’s still a devoted hip-hop fan, but now he’s rewired his brain so profoundly that he’s starting to get into the Grateful Dead. And even as he shot other movies, Chalamet never quite left Bob Land. On his phone is a video of him on the set of *Dune* singing “Don’t Think Twice, It’s All Right” in Paul Atreides’ intergalactic pajamas, and a photo where he’s playing guitar in his Willy Wonka outfit.

A white-haired 82-year-old named Bill Pagel emerges from the house to greet Chalamet. Pagel, a retired pharmacist and perhaps the world’s leading Bob Dylan collector, bought the place in 2019. Dylan lived here with his family between the ages of six and 18, and Pagel is quietly turning the house into a full-fledged museum in its former occupant’s honor, restoring it and filling it with items from his collection. Chalamet spends an hour in the house, sitting in the very bedroom where a young Robert Zimmerman gazed out at snowy ground and pondered his future. He shuffles through a collection of 45s Dylan actually owned — Little Richard, Johnny Cash, Gene Vincent, Buddy Holly.

Chalamet ducks out for a scheduled tour at the local high school, where he sees student actors rehearsing on the very stage where Dylan played with his teenage rock & roll band. Even the Steinway piano he bashed away on is still there. When the teens in the drama club realize who’s watching their rehearsal, they freak out, and Chalamet spends a while answering their questions.

Before leaving town, he heads back to the house one more time, this time trailed by three young women who jump out of their car, seeking an autograph or a selfie. Pagel hustles him inside, where Chalamet takes in a key artifact hidden away in the basement: a drawing Dylan made circa 1960 on the back of his copy of an album by the archetypal protest singer Woody Guthrie, who wrote “This Land Is Your Land.” The young Dylan, in the process of remaking himself in Guthrie’s image, sketched himself on a road to New York, marked with a “Bound for Glory” sign. At the end of the path is a drawing of Guthrie.

Dylan was manifesting his actual future in the Greenwich Village folk scene, not to mention the eventual plot of an awards-season Hollywood biopic that would attract a generational heartthrob more than 60 years later. In January 1961, in a moment vividly reenacted, with some light fictionalization, in *A Complete Unknown,* Dylan found Guthrie at the New Jersey hospital where he was being treated for Huntington’s disease. The upstart took out his guitar, and sang for his hero.

It was the beginning of the improbable four-year journey the film chronicles, in which Dylan became Guthrie’s artistic heir, igniting a generation with the raw prophecy of his imagistic lyrics and the countrified snarl of his voice, before strapping on a Fender Stratocaster and transforming into something else entirely. Along the way, he was mentored by Guthrie’s friend and fellow folk singer Pete Seeger (played in the film by an impressively unrecognizable Edward Norton), fell in love with the young artist and political activist Suze Rotolo (renamed Sylvie Russo in the film, and played by Elle Fanning), and dabbled in a musical and romantic coupling with fellow singer Joan Baez (Monica Barbaro), whose fame initially eclipses his own.

Unlike so many other Sixties heroes, Dylan stubbornly kept on living, molting through phase after phase as the decades piled on, and he’s not done yet. But his very persistence may obscure just how much he changed the world in his initial run, including that Dylan-goes-electric moment, which was really a gradual, multiyear transformation of style and subject matter, from acoustic protest songs to thunderingly abstract rock. Many assumptions we take for granted about popular music across genres — that superstars can be unconventional vocalists, that pop can be a vehicle for deep personal and political expression, that lyrics can be poetry, that artists can transform radically between eras — have roots with Dylan’s work from 1961 to 1965. His impact went way beyond rock: Artists from Stevie Wonder to Nina Simone covered his songs, and as George Clinton recently reminded me, even the sound and lyrics of Motown changed after “Like a Rolling Stone.”

It’s been suggested that Dylan is too mysterious, too alien, for the kind of linear narrative *A Complete Unknown* attempts, that he could only be captured by a movie like 2007’s *I’m Not There,* which kaleidoscopically splits his role among multiple actors. The new movie’s director and co-screenwriter, James Mangold, already added the best kind of

Senior writer BRIAN HIATT wrote the November cover story, an interview with Bruce Springsteen and Zach Bryan. He hosts the *Rolling Stone Music Now* podcast.

STYLING BY TAYLOR MCNEILL AT THE WALL GROUP. HAIR BY JAMIE TAYLOR AT A-FRAME AGENCY. MAKEUP BY ANA TAKAHASHI AT ART PARTNER. PRODUCED BY OBJECT & ANIMAL. EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: EMI STEWART. PRODUCER: REESE LAYTON. PRODUCTION COORDINATOR: BOMIN AHN. PRODUCTION DESIGNER: GRIFFIN STODDARD AT STREETERS. ART COORDINATOR: VIVIAN SWIFT. LEADMAN: JORDAN YASMINEH. PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSISTANCE: ROWAN LIEBRUM AND TUCKER VAN DER WYDEN. DIGITAL TECHNICIAN: HOPE CHRISTERSON. OBJECT & ANIMAL PRODUCTION ASSISTANCE: MARLO RIMALOVSKI AND MATTHEW RAMOS. STYLING ASSISTANCE: BRODIE REARDON AND KENNEDY SMITH. SET ASSISTANCE: GIANFRANCO BELLO, LEA DOBROMIROV, AND TRINITY DAVISON.

"YOU'RE
CONNECTED
TO DESTINY.
BUT IT'S
FRAGILE."

Chalamet inside his first apartment, in the East Village, where his former roommate still lives

YOU MAY CALL ME TERRY
OU MAY CALL ME TIMMY
MAY CALL ME BOBBY
CALL ME ZIMMY

IT DONT
MATTER

COVER STORY

Hollywood gloss to Johnny Cash's life story in his last music film, the Oscar-winning 2005 biopic *Walk the Line.* (More recently, he served as Steven Spielberg's handpicked successor, directing last year's *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*.) Mangold refuses to believe that Dylan's world-shaking genius means he can't be shown as a human being, an idea he mocks in the voice of a clueless critic: "How do you *write* about Bob Dylan? It's not eclectic enough! You should be *bleeding* about Bob Dylan!"

That said, it's hard to overstate the challenge the filmmakers faced. "People are deeply protective of Bob Dylan and his music legacy," Chalamet says, "because it's so pure in a sense, and they don't want to see a biopic mishandle that." Not to mention that he was playing, in his understated words, "someone who wasn't a straightforward person," an artist who's always taken a certain glee in shrouding his true self. On top of that, he had to manifest much of that performance musically. "He never wanted to take the easy way out," says Chalamet's guitar teacher, Larry Saltzman, a high-end session musician who toured for years with Simon and Garfunkel. "If I presented something to him like, 'OK, this is the real way, but there's a little bit of a shortcut,' his answer to that was always 'Don't show me the shortcut.'"

Chalamet eventually sends Mangold a photo of Dylan's hand-drawn map, and the purity of its hero worship underscores the director's point that maybe Bob isn't so elusive after all. "It's really just an act of admiration and love," Mangold says, pondering Dylan's journey. "This young man shows up. He's inspired. I mean, it couldn't be less complicated."

In that map, and his entire time in Minnesota, Chalamet also starts to see something in Dylan he recognizes, a feeling he's not afraid to acknowledge he once had himself: "You're connected to destiny. But that connection is fragile."

Timothée Chalamet doesn't look anything like Bob Dylan right now. Here in New York, in the last days of August, he barely looks like Timothée Chalamet. *A Complete Unknown* wrapped 10 weeks ago, and on the other side of the country, Mangold is leading a postproduction sprint to get the movie out for its Christmas Day release. Chalamet is already preparing to shoot his next project, Josh Safdie's *Marty Supreme,* in which he plays a 1950s ping-pong champion. Accordingly, he's cut his fluffy hair, which turns out to have held at least 25 percent of his essential Timmy-osity. The stubbly mustache and goatee he's grown knock off another 10 percent. When he sneaks into a chaotic, overcrowded Timothée Chalamet look-alike contest in Washington Square Park a couple of months later, hair still cropped, goatee gone, mustache grown in further, he somehow looks less like himself than the guy who wins.

We meet in the lobby of the Chelsea Hotel, where Dylan once lived; in the film, there's a poster-worthy shot of Chalamet on a misty evening in front of its vertical neon sign, in full Dylan-in-'65 regalia. It feels a lot less iconic when we stroll by it in broad daylight, with Chalamet dressed like a college kid, in cargo shorts and a long-sleeved white T-shirt, tasteful gold chain around his neck, brown Yankees cap pulled low. The only reminders of his preposterous level of celebrity are his Nike Field General '82s, a reissue he singlehandedly popularized when he showed up to an NBA game in a prerelease pair last year.

We head west on 23rd Street, crossing Eighth Avenue, with Chalamet casually dodging bikes like the Manhattan native he is. It's an overcast weekday afternoon, and the streets are crowded, but somehow, no one even glances his way. "This feels like home," he says. "I feel good." He has a meeting later with Safdie — who was relieved to learn that today's interview was about Bob Dylan, not his apparently top-secret ping-pong project — and has to fly out to France soon for the birth of his older sister's first child. Nevertheless, Chalamet is palpably relaxed as he strides along, hands in pockets. Finishing the movie after all of this time has got to help, but he swears he never felt burdened by it all. "This is the kind of pressure I *want* in my life," he says. "This is the kind of pressure I love."

"I WENT HOME AND I WEPT THAT NIGHT. A SONG I'D BEEN LIVING WITH, WE BROUGHT IT TO LIFE."

Near the beginning of the film, Dylan meets Guthrie in his grim hospital room, where, in one of the film's deviations from fact, Norton's Seeger happens to be already visiting. Bob introduces himself with the name "Dylan" for what may be the first time in his life, with a subtle mix of defiance and hesitance. Then he plays "Song to Woody," one of Dylan's first great songs, start to finish. It's a make-or-break sequence in more ways than one, and it happened to be one of the first major scenes Chalamet shot. Even as the film's Guthrie (Scoot McNairy) and Seeger are judging Dylan's performance, the audience is doing the same with Chalamet. In the finished movie, it all works, down to the guitar picking, the sweat on Chalamet's pallid forehead, and the subtle prosthetic on his nose. "His performance," says Norton, "is off-the-charts great."

"I went home and I wept that night," says Chalamet. "Not only because 'Song to Woody' is this song I've been living with forever, and I felt like we brought it to life, but also because I felt like I could take myself out of the equation. The pride I was feeling had no vainglory in it. I just felt, 'Wow, this is like old-school theater or something.' We're, like, bringing life to something that happened, and humbly and bravely going on this journey to hopefully bring it to an audience that otherwise wouldn't know about it. That felt like an honorable task."

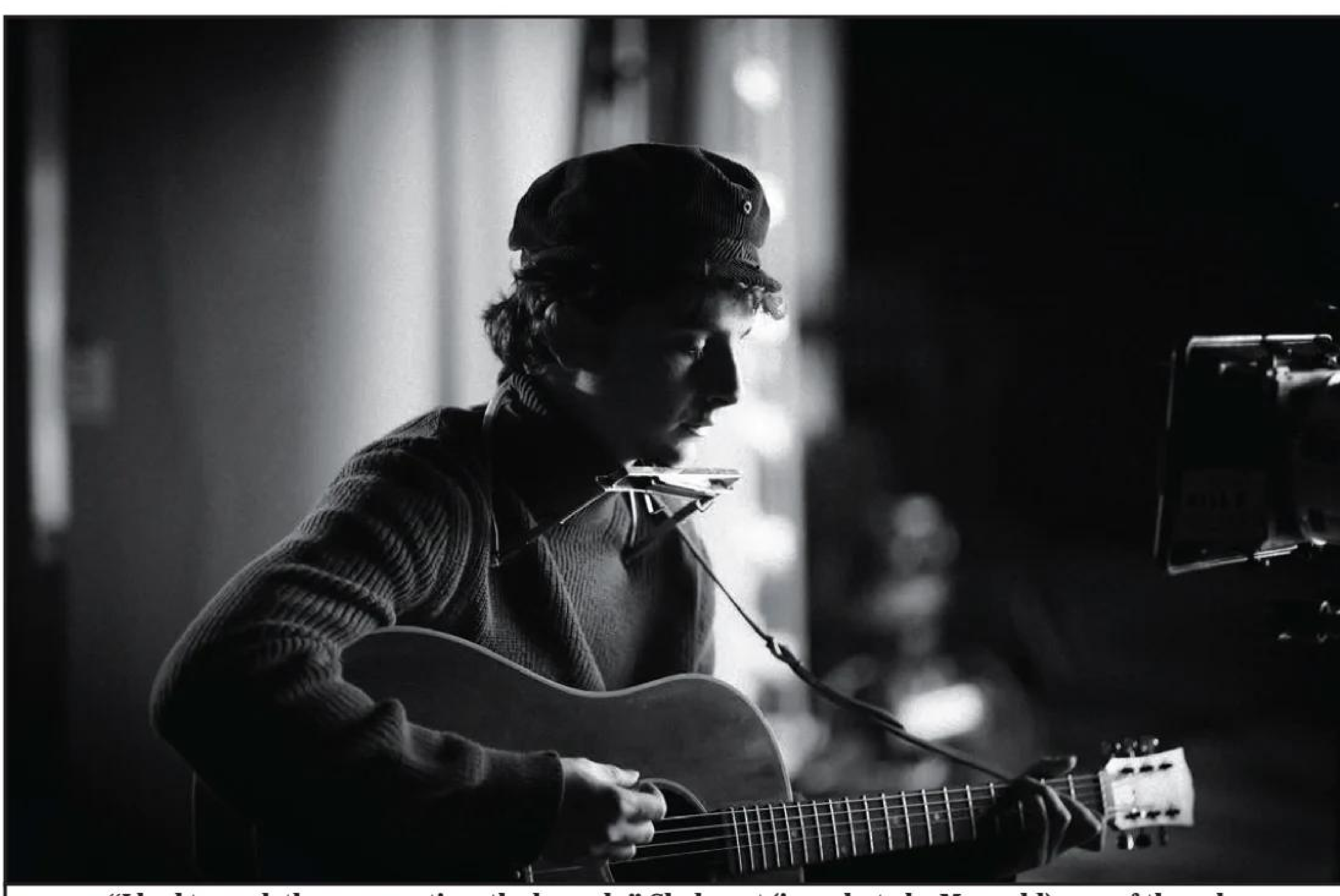
He first encountered *A Complete Unknown,* originally titled *Going Electric* and based on Elijah Wald's 2015 book, *Dylan Goes Electric! Newport, Seeger, Dylan, and the Night That Split the Sixties,* in an emailed list of potential projects, before Mangold was attached. At that point, Chalamet had a fairly vague idea of Dylan as a distant figure music fans were obligated to revere, an artist beloved by a childhood friend's dad. Initially, Chalamet simply liked Dylan's look. "On a quick Google, there was something behind the eyes, you know?"

He soon learned that Dylan at first saw himself as a rock artist, but ended up a folk-music superstar, before winding his way back to rock stardom. Chalamet quickly mapped that scenario onto his own experience. In the slightly ahistorical way he likes to see it, Dylan, for all his reverence of figures like Guthrie, Lead Belly, and Odetta, used the folk world as a sort of back door. "If he couldn't become Elvis or Buddy Holly immediately," Chalamet says, "he found Woody Guthrie and stuff that was a little more accomplishable, and happened to be really good at it. And that immediately hit a bone with me."

Chalamet became a movie star with roles in indie films that punched way above their weight commercially, playing a sexually awakened, fruit-violating teen in *Call Me By Your Name*, a virginity-snatching jerk in *Lady Bird,* a tortured young addict in *Beautiful Boy,* a lovestruck suitor in *Little Women.* But as a kid, he obsessively rewatched *The Dark Knight,* and quiet dramas were never his dream. He auditioned for action franchises, movies like *Maze Runner* and *Divergent,* and failed every time. "I would always get the same feedback," he says, with real pain. "'Oh, you don't have the right body.' I had an agent call me once and say, 'I'm tired of getting the same feedback. We're gonna stop submitting you for these bigger projects, because you're not putting on weight.' I was *trying* to put on weight. I couldn't! I basically couldn't. My metabolism or whatever the fuck couldn't do it."

He was a brilliant young actor with an extraordinary knack for choosing rich indie

COVER STORY


"I had to push the preparation, the bounds," Chalamet (in a photo by Mangold) says of the role.

roles, but he was also taking what he could get. "I was knocking on one door that wouldn't open," he says. "So I went to what I thought was a more humble door, but actually ended up being explosive for me." Chalamet eventually found his way into the *Dune* movies, and he unabashedly sees his turn as a sandworm-riding space messiah in the year 10,191 as his own going-electric moment. His earlier roles, he says, were "so personal and vulnerable. There's an intimacy to that work that I hear in Bob's early music, in his early folk songs." He pauses, and seizes the metaphor. "And then eventually you want to use different instruments."

He also related to the idea that Dylan's story, and his art, can't be boiled down to any particular trauma. Unlike Cash or, say, Dewey Cox, he's unburdened by his past, doesn't look back. Dylan has never once had to think about his entire life before he plays, and neither has Chalamet. "I related to the feeling that my talent could be my talent," he says. "I could draw the picture of an unconventional upbringing. I grew up in arts housing, Manhattan Plaza, which is a funky way to grow up. I could try to paint it negatively to you. I could try to paint it positively, but it's a bit of everything. It's nuanced." His point is that it doesn't matter. "I don't need to point to some thing in my youth. Your talent is your talent. The thing you gotta say is the thing you gotta say. You don't need the Big Bang."

Elle Fanning has been acting since she was three years old, but she'd never been this excited for a rehearsal before. During preproduction for *A Complete Unknown,* an assistant sent her an itinerary for the week, casually mentioning a rehearsal with Mangold … and Bob Dylan. "I was like, 'Oh, my God!'" she says via Zoom, her blue eyes sparkling. It's a Sunday afternoon in October, and she's relaxing in her hotel room in Norway, on a day off from shooting a movie with director Joachim Trier. "I was thinking about all these things to say and ask. I was picking out my outfit. 'I'm meeting Bob Dylan today!'"

The creators of *A Complete Unknown* are hoping the movie births a whole new generation of Dylan aficionados, and believe it or not, there are already some Bob-is-babygirl Gen Z stans on the social media fringes. But Fanning, 26, was way ahead of them. She's been a fan since age 13, when writer-director Cameron Crowe introduced her to Dylan's music on the set of *We Bought a Zoo.* "I wrote 'Bob Dylan' on my hand every day in middle school," she says. Playing Dylan's first love, then, couldn't have been more perfect for her: "It's like I manifested this part."

"I RELATED TO THE IDEA THAT MY TALENT IS MY TALENT. WHAT YOU GOTTA SAY IS WHAT YOU GOTTA SAY."

As she steeled herself to meet her idol that day, Fanning opened the door to find Mangold, bearded and authoritative-looking. Next to him was Timothée Chalamet. No one else. The confusion was simple: In the interest of immersion, Chalamet was listed as "Bob Dylan" on the production's call sheets, and a game of telephone had ensued. "I'm probably the first person in life," Fanning says, "to be let down by having a rehearsal with Timothée Chalamet, right? Like, the first girl in history."

While he certainly wasn't on set, the real Dylan was, in fact, involved in *A Complete Unknown,* and even has an executive-producer credit. During the pandemic, he had several meetings with Mangold in Los Angeles, and eventually went through the screenplay, line by line. "Jim has an annotated Bob script lying around somewhere," Chalamet says. "I'll beg him to get my hands on it. He'll never give it to me."

"I felt like Bob just wanted to know what I was up to," Mangold says. "'Who is this guy? Is he a shithead? Does he get it?' — I think the normal questions anyone asks when they're throwing themselves in league with someone."

Mangold won't say it directly, but Fanning says she was told it was Dylan himself who wanted the film to avoid using the real name of his first New York girlfriend, Suze Rotolo, who died in 2011. She was an artist and activist who introduced him to left-wing politics, inspired "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right," among many other songs, and appears on his arm on the cover of his second album, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan.* In Dylan's eyes, Rotolo was "a very private person and didn't ask for this life," Fanning says. "She was obviously someone that was very special and sacred to Bob." Nearly 60 years after they broke up, Dylan was still protective of the woman he once called "the could-be dream lover of my lifetime."

Even though the character is renamed Sylvie Russo, her arc is one of the least fictionalized in the film — a scene where she challenges Dylan on his name change and secrecy matches Rotolo's accounts in her 2008 memoir, *A Freewheelin' Time.* Dylan personally added a line to the screenplay for his character during one of their fights. "It was something like, 'Don't even bother coming back,'" Fanning says. "We know the arguments were real, so maybe he was remembering something — or regretting something that he said to her." (In the film, Russo laments the idea of returning from a European trip to "live with a mysterious minstrel," and Dylan, whose first album flopped, retorts: "Mysterious minstrels sell more than a thousand records. Maybe you just don't come back at all.")

Fanning's deeply felt performance keeps the Dylan-Russo relationship at the emotional core of the film, complete with a gorgeous farewell-through-a-fence scene that seems destined for a future magic-of-movies montage. The sequence, in which Dylan lights two cigarettes between his lips and hands one to Russo, nods to a famous bit in the 1942 Bette Davis classic *Now, Voyager.* Fanning and Chalamet each watched the movie the night before they filmed it. "Timmy cried watching the movie," Fanning says. "I was like, 'You *cried*? All right, softie!'"

THIS PAGE: JAMES MANGOLD. OPPOSITE PAGE: JOSE PEREZ/BAUER-GRIFFIN/GC IMAGES

TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET

Fanning herself teared up involuntarily the first time she heard Chalamet sing on set. "We were in an auditorium, and I was sitting amongst all these background artists," she recalls. "Jim would let Timmy come out and give the crowd a whole concert. He was singing 'Masters of War' and 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall,' and I was like, 'Jesus.' All of us were kind of shaking, because it was so surreal hearing someone do that. So perfectly done, but it wasn't a caricature. It was still Timmy, but it's Bob, and this kind of beautiful meld. That gave me chills." Afterward, she heard some of the extras debating whether Chalamet was lip-synching. "I tapped them on the shoulder and I was like, 'He is singing. I *know* he's singing!'"

Before the shoot, Fanning was warned that Chalamet would "keep to himself" on set, except with her. They already knew each other well after playing a couple in 2019's *A Rainy Day in New York,* and staying close also suited their characters' relationship. Monica Barbaro, whose Joan Baez has a spikier, more contentious fling with Dylan — "You're kind of an asshole, Bob," she tells him in one postcoital scene — didn't meet Chalamet until a week before production began. When she did, he was already dressed in Dylan's clothes. "I had a lot of friends," Barbaro says, "who were like, 'Have you met him yet? Have you met him?' But it just felt like the right thing to wait and just meet in the context of these characters ... the way she saw Bob."

Barbaro, who played the only elite female fighter pilot in *Top Gun: Maverick,* emphasizes that Chalamet wasn't so Method that she had to call him "Bob" (though Mangold says sometimes he chose to). "It wasn't so full-on," she says, laughing. "It wasn't 'Don't look him in the eye' or anything like that. We said hi, gave each other a hug. I was like, 'I just saw *Dune*!'"

But on set, Chalamet did stay "in his own world," Barbaro says, "in a way that I think Bob often was as well. And it was actually really conducive to the dynamic between Bob and Joan." Once, when the two actors started chatting as themselves between takes, Mangold noted that Chalamet's Dylan voice was slipping. "And at that point," Barbaro adds, "I think we both were just like, 'Nope, no more talking!'"

Chalamet did a lot of that kind of thing, trying to keep his headspace clear. "He was relentless," says Norton. "No visitors, no friends, no reps, no nothing. 'Nobody comes around us while we're doing this.' We're trying to do the best we can with something that's so totemic and sacrosanct to many people. And I agreed totally — it was like, we cannot have a fucking audience for this. We've got to believe to the greatest degree we can. And he was right to be that protective."

Chalamet says he learned how to set a tone on set from his former co-stars. "The great actors I've worked with, Christian Bale on *Hostiles*" — Bale, in his younger days, infamously took umbrage at distractions from his work — "or Oscar Isaac on *Dune,* were able to do that," he says, "and guard their process, particularly for something that's really like a tightrope walk." For Chalamet, part of it was an effort to erase the burdens of stardom and return to how it felt "when people aren't curious about how you go about your work, because they don't know who you are yet. Which is how the experience was for me on *Call Me By Your Name*."

"GOD FORBID I MISSED A STEP BECAUSE I WAS BEING TIMMY. I CAN BE TIMMY FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!"

He can sound almost plaintive as he tries to make all of this understood. "It was something I would go to sleep panicked about," he adds, "losing a moment of discovery as the character — no matter how pretentious that sounds — because I was on my phone or because of any distraction. I had three months of my life to play Bob Dylan, after five years of preparing to play him. So while I was in it, that was my eternal focus. He deserved that and then more.... God forbid I missed a step because I was being Timmy. I could be Timmy for the rest of my life!"

There was no stopping the fact that the exterior shots were plagued by amateur and professional paparazzi alike, something that's happening just as much on *Marty Supreme* as it shoots in New York. It certainly threw off other cast members. "That was a lot to navigate at times," Barbaro says, "to have a bunch of people watching, iPhones out, and be like, '*It's 1961. I'm walking down the street with a suitcase and no phone.*'"

Chalamet doesn't want to complain about it. "That, you can't do anything about, truly," he says. He likes to tell himself it's a good thing, because it means people "care about the shit you're working on to some degree."

They also care about him, of course. From the outside, at least, Chalamet seems to have navigated his fame with unusual elegance. He dates Kylie Jenner, but mostly in private. He's more famous than any influencer, but posts less on social media than Dylan himself lately. In the film, though, his Dylan is besieged and traumatized by celebrity, and Chalamet's portrayal of the paranoia, fear, and isolation it brings on seems notably real. When I raise the topic, he's silent for a good 20 seconds, says he could give a 45-minute-long answer, and then dodges instead. "I just don't want to use those words, 'isolated' and 'fear' and 'paranoia,'" he says, sounding slightly paranoid. "I just think it's not the correct way to go about the fortune and blessing that it is to work, whether they ring true or not, and bring attention to that kind of feeling-state. Even if it's valid, it's not really somewhere I want to go."

His early life is thoroughly archived, thanks to growing up under the eyes of an online panopticon that spares no one. We have pictures of him cuddling with his high school girlfriend, Lourdes Leon; a 2012 talent-show performance of him rapping as Lil' Timmy Tim to a comically rapturous audience of female classmates has more than 5 million views on YouTube. But part of him

Fanning (left) says the first time she heard Chalamet sing as Dylan "it gave me chills."

COVER STORY

seems to yearn to be more enigmatic, more Dylan-like. He may also know it's not really possible, which is perhaps why he pulled the incredibly un-Dylan move of popping up at that look-alike contest. In our interviews, he veers between can't-help-himself confessional torrents and extreme caution, with little in between.

"We can relate to each other in the sense, like, we've been doing this for so long," says Fanning, reflecting on Chalamet and the film's depiction of the burdens of fame. "People do feel like they have an ownership of you. How are you going to break free of that, or how do you carve your own path?... Would we say Timothée's rise to fame is the same as Bob's? Maybe. It's all relatively similar, right? You're young and then something hits, and then it's like an explosion." She laughs. "But we do know Timothée's name is really Timothée Chalamet, and I think we know where he grew up, and we've seen photos of his mom. And he has a sister, and didn't he go to LaGuardia" — New York City's celebrated performing-arts high school — "or something? We know that! You are not a mystery."

Chalamet still hasn't met or talked to Dylan, though he'd love to. But Barbaro did have a chat with the real-life Baez. "I kept having dreams about meeting her," Barbaro says, sitting on a studio couch in the same building on the 20th Century Studios lot where Mangold has been editing the movie. She needed prosthetics to match Baez's teeth, but naturally has her cheekbones, and still exudes some of her character's brunette earthiness in an oversize denim jacket over a skirt and leather open-toe sandals. "And I'm not really a person who's like, 'I had a dream about it. I must go follow,'" she says. "I was so immersed in research, and it still felt like there was something missing in not approaching her. It just felt like there needed to be a connection made." When she did get Baez on the phone, the singer and activist told her she had been hoping Barbaro would reach out.

Barbaro felt almost guilty about taking part in relegating a legendary artist to a love-interest role, however artfully portrayed. "Her life is so much more significant than just the part it played in Bob's life," Barbaro says. "She deserves her own biopic, limited series, whatever." Baez herself helped Barbaro get over it. "At one point, she was like, 'I'm just in my garden, looking at birds.'... I was like, 'Oh, yeah, you don't live or die by what this movie says about you.'" Barbaro's Baez, true to life, carries herself as Dylan's peer, sparring with him onstage and off. Their dynamic is real enough that a scene where the two cultural icons bicker in their underwear feels almost transgressive, like something we're not supposed to see.

In real life, Dylan was initially a lot more interested in Baez's younger sister, Mimi, a character who inevitably had to be excised from the narrative. "I just couldn't," says Mangold. "If you have all these people, you end up with a parade. Let's say 40 percent of the movie is music, right? Now you only have 75 minutes left, including credits, to tell the human story. It's incredible how fast you have to pick and choose what you investigate."

Barbaro pushed back on even minor factual alterations, down to the fact that there's no evidence of them ever actually singing "Girl From the North Country" together, and the inclusion of multiple scenes of Baez and Dylan holding dual guitars in duets, when in reality Baez would let Dylan handle the playing. "Jim was like, 'I just love that image so much.'" Or, as Mangold puts it to me later: "You can't make it like a Wikipedia entry."

The actress' biggest challenge was trying to approximate Baez's singing voice, a more classically beautiful instrument than Dylan's. Barbaro had hardly sung in public before, let alone in a movie, so she was terrified. Like Chalamet, she worked with vocal coach Eric Vetro, who trained Austin Butler to play Elvis Presley. And she was a whole lot less finicky about overdubs — after I've already seen a cut of the film, she was about to take one more pass at her performances, trying to get Baez's wide vibrato just right. Even so, she doesn't expect to impress Baez herself. "She'll probably hear this and go, 'Nope!'"

"YOU GOTTA NOT TAKE YOURSELF SO FUCKING SERIOUSLY. JUST ENJOY LIFE."

During the film production, Barbaro was also shooting the Arnold Schwarzenegger Netflix series *FUBAR,* where she plays his daughter. As it turns out, Schwarzenegger is a Baez fan, and his first concert was one of her late-Sixties performances. "Play for me," he said, and Barbaro found herself singing "Don't Think Twice" for the Terminator.

Edward Norton stepped in to play Pete Seeger at the last minute, after the actor originally cast, Benedict Cumberbatch, had to drop out. That gave him a mere two months to prepare for a role that required both a complete physical transformation and performances on the banjo, an instrument he had never played. Sipping coffee in a Malibu, California, cafe not far from his house, Norton says he's not looking forward to discussing his process. "If I'm sitting in front of a fucking camera," Norton says, "and someone's saying, 'So, talk about how you learned the banjo, or you fucked up your own teeth, or you shaved your head' or whatever, they are asking you to explain the trick before you've done the trick.... And you go back and look at Dylan in 1962. The guy is 21 years old. And somehow he knew then: You don't let people behind the fucking curtain."

But let it be known that Norton did fuck up his teeth for real, allowing a dentist do something unfortunate to his mouth to approximate Seeger's crooked smile. And he did shave his hairline back, and did translate his extant guitar skills to the banjo as best as possible in two months, though there's inevitably some trickery on the harder parts. And he did manage, as much as Chalamet did with Dylan, an eerie replica of Seeger's real voice. He's since had his normal teeth restored and regrown his hair. At 55, he's still *Fight Club*-fit, and the way his ice-blue stare intensifies in passionate conversation is familiar from a couple dozen movies.

Seeger, born in 1919, was nearly a generation older than Dylan, combining music and activism since the younger man was a toddler. (Baez told Norton that Seeger was too formal to be comfortable with hugs from his young friends, a detail Norton uses amusingly onscreen.) He was blacklisted during the McCarthy era, pushed to the margins of the culture. So while the film's Dylan and Seeger have a closer relationship than the real-life ones did, there's no doubt that the actual Seeger was overjoyed to see Dylan reaching kids by the millions with his early protest songs. Norton shows me a photo on his phone of Seeger and Dylan sitting side by side on a trip to the South, and another where Seeger is watching Dylan perform to a huge crowd, his face alight with paternal joy.

But Dylan was, in the end, loyal mostly to his own artistic urges, rather than to any particular community or set of politics, which broke both Seeger's and Baez's hearts. "It turns out Dylan is in fact a musical artist, not a political figure," Norton says. "Pete Seeger's integrity is totally different from Dylan's integrity, and when they parted ways, neither fundamentally reduces the other." Norton clearly put something of Bruce Springsteen, his friend of 30 years and a Seeger disciple, into his performance, in the glimpses of flintiness he shows behind the public face of affability.

The final break between the two men, while Dylan was onstage with a full-on rock band at the Newport Folk Festival on July 25, 1965, is one of the most mythologized and factually muddled moments in Sixties musical history — always presented as the actual "gone electric" moment, even though Dylan had a rock band in the studio with him as early as 1962's "Mixed-Up Confusion," Continued on 76

THE ROLLING STONE INTERVIEW

STEVIE NICKS

'I WILL BE RAGING, AND I WILL KEEP DANCING'

By ANGIE MARTOCCIO • Photograph by RANDEE ST. NICHOLAS

THE ROLLING STONE INTERVIEW

Every second feels like an eternity when you're hovering four inches from Stevie Nicks, noodling around with her blouse. This is Stevie Nicks, the first woman to be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame twice — as a member of Fleetwood Mac and as a solo artist. Stevie Nicks, whose legendary shawl collection resides in its own temperature-controlled vault. Stevie Nicks, who, at 76, has become an obsession of younger generations, from her *American Horror Story* appearance to the original poem she wrote for Taylor Swift's *Tortured Poets Department* to a recent viral TikTok video, where she intensely stares down her ex-boyfriend and bandmate Lindsey Buckingham during a 1997 performance of "Silver Springs." (Yes, Nicks has seen it.) • This is also Stevie Nicks, who's somehow gotten a long, spiraled, gold ring she's wearing stuck in the mesh fabric of her blouse, requiring the up-close-and-personal assistance of an interviewer she met only minutes ago.

She is surprisingly nonchalant as I lean over her, delicately unwinding the thread from each loop of the ring. "It happened [recently] onstage," she says of the ring tangling. "It was stuck on my 'Gold Dust Woman' cape, and the most handsome guy on our entire tour ran out and was down on one knee trying to undo it. I felt like a princess in a Cinderella movie." She laughs. I loosen up. Miraculously, I free the material from the ring without a single tear. "Thank you, honey," she says sweetly.

Nicks has been in Philadelphia for the past three days, wrapping up a massive tour and recording a Christmas song with former NFL star Jason Kelce. Tonight, she's in her signature all-black attire, save for hot-pink hair ties that hold her blond, elegant French braid. Her tiny Chinese crested dog, Lily, saunters in and out of the room, occasionally sitting on Nicks' lap and staring at the massive charcuterie plate in front of us.

The spread will go untouched over the next three and a half hours while Nicks takes me on a wild ride through her life — and, at one point, into the bedroom to meet her Stevie Nicks Barbies. There's the prototype, dressed in her beloved "Rhiannon" black dress, and the official Stevie Barbie, released last fall. Nicks didn't love Barbies as a child, but there's something special about this doll. "I never in a million years thought this little thing would have such an effect on me," she says, holding the miniature Gold Dust Woman.

Nicks is more prolific and driven than ever. She's also unmoored from her famous band. After a successful tour with the classic Fleetwood Mac lineup in 2014 and 2015, Buckingham ran into conflict with his bandmates — and with Nicks in particular — leading to him being fired from the group in 2018. The 2022 death of Christine McVie, whom Nicks calls "my musical soulmate," truly seems to have ended the band; Nicks says she's done with Fleetwood Mac for good. Instead, she launched a two-year-long solo tour, which just wrapped a couple of evenings before we talk at the 30,000-seat Hersheypark Stadium.

She'll perform to millions shortly after our conversation, when she appears as the musical guest on *Saturday Night Live* for the first time in more than 40 years. When she steps onto the stage at Studio 8H, she'll play her women's-rights anthem "The Lighthouse," which Nicks wrote following the demise of *Roe v. Wade*. Featuring guitar and co-production by Sheryl Crow, it's a cathartic rocker in which Nicks compares herself to a lighthouse, guiding women and encouraging them to stand up for their power.

"You know what I always think of when I say *SNL*?" she asks me. "Stevie Nicks Live."

Where do you prefer that I sit?
You're good right there, as long as you don't think you have Covid.

No, I don't.
Well, thank goodness we're done [touring] for a while, so I can go home and not have a mask on all the time. As a singer with asthma, I fucking hate the masks, but I wear them. People give you dirty looks. I dare anybody to give me a dirty look. I would just say, "Hey, you know what? I'm Stevie Nicks. And if I get sick, my entire thing goes down. Forty families are out of work. So that's why I have a mask on, asshole."

I can't get [Covid] again. I mean, I'm old, so I'll only be around for another 15 years. But you guys have another 30 or 40 years, so you should think about it.

Fifteen years sounds pretty exact.
I'll probably live to be hatefully 95 years old. I have no want to be that old, honestly. I mean, I'll have an electric scooter, and I will be raging and I will keep dancing. But I'm not looking forward to that, really — I think that's too old. My mom died at 84, and my dad died at about 80, but I'm a younger person at 76 than they were at 76. So I figured 88, 89.

Are you afraid of death?
I'm not afraid of dying, but what I am afraid of is not getting everything together, because I'm so busy. And that's why I'm really glad this tour's over, so that I can go and work on an album. I haven't been able to do a lot of the creative things that I love in many, many years. I draw, I write songs, and I write poetry. I'd like to make a perfume because I actually have a smell that I love. I like to design blankets. Cashmere blankets are my favorite thing. That is what I buy for my friends if there's a special occasion. I bought Travis Kelce a blanket.

Don Henley and J.D. Souther took me into a store in Los Angeles called Maxfield Blue, now Maxfield, in 1977. And they took me there, and I got my first cashmere blanket. I always laugh and say, "They taught me how to spend money," those two guys.

J.D. died recently — I know you briefly dated him back in the day.
It's been a terrible, terrible tragedy. And then Kris Kristofferson. [My assistant] came in to tell me something today. And she goes, "So, Stevie..." Every time she says "So, Stevie," I go like, "Please don't tell me that somebody else died. I wish you would just come in, say my name, and don't say 'so' before, because it's starting to set me up for tragedy, because we're old."

What new music have you been working on?
I have so many ideas for songs that I want to do. There's some songs that I didn't write that other people wrote that I'm going to call them on the phone and say, "I'd really like to sing this song with you. How do you feel about that?"

I also have so many poems that are ready to go. I wrote a poem about one of the women stars of one of my favorite crime shows, *Chicago P.D.* That's medicine for me, and I can't wait to go to the piano and sit down with it. I've written a song called "The Vampire's Wife," which, I think, is one of my best songs I've ever written. Because it's like "Rhiannon," a story of a character. Who knows, I might call this next album *The Vampire's Wife*.

It seems like you're bursting with all of this creativity.
I got diagnosed with this thing a year and a half ago called wet macular degeneration, and it is not a good thing. I was seeing all these colors, big things of purple. I was having, like, acid trips. And I'm going, "I'm not taking any acid, so I don't understand what this is." Now, every six, seven, eight, nine weeks, I have to have a shot in each

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STEVIE NICKS

one of my eyes. That's going to be for the rest of my life.

There's dry macular degeneration, which my mom had. Her whole thing was doing the financial books for my dad, because she was a financial little wizard. When she was about 80, it was really hard for her to see. In a way, I think it killed her because she was so brokenhearted that she could no longer do this. So when I got diagnosed with this, all of a sudden, I'm going like, "You know what? You need to finish these drawings, because what if you start to lose your sight?" I haven't drawn in years ... but my drawings are as important to me as my songs.

You just released "The Lighthouse," which you were working on for two years.
When *Roe v. Wade* was banished, I turned on *Morning Joe* and I swear to God, I thought Mika [Brzezinski] was going to crawl over the desk. What she did was remind me what a loss this was. Because I can remember being so happy when it came into being in 1973. It was like we were safe.

It's not just about not being careful and having an abortion. It's everything. It's all the health care. It's an ectopic pregnancy. It's all the procedures that need to be done in our bodies that half of us don't ever have and half of us have a whole lot more than other people. I was just really freaked out after I saw [the news], and that was the inspiration for this song.

I wrote the words in the morning. I never write in the morning, and I hadn't even had a cup of coffee. But I just wrote the whole thing. Then I closed the book and went back to sleep. It sounds like Marvin Gaye walking down a seedy alley and singing about life, and he runs into Dave Grohl and the Foo Fighters when he turns the corner. That's how I hear it.

It's a really important message, especially in time for the election.
I'm going to reach out to women and say, "You have to vote." You have to. I never voted until I was 70 years old because I wasn't at all political. I was incredibly busy, I was having a fitting, and I didn't want to do jury duty. It's a big regret.

It's really hard for women to be open about their own abortions. How have you always found the courage to talk about yours?
Well, mine really wasn't let out to the public by me — it was let out to the public by Don Henley [who impregnated Nicks when they briefly dated in the late Seventies]. He called me to apologize. I said, "You know what, Don? We did go out for about a year and have remained such good friends. 'Leather and Lace' [their 1981 duet] draws us together forever." So, anyway, he let that one out of the bag. I probably would've never. Why would I say anything about it? Everything was totally legal.

It was, like, 1977, or going into 1978. Don was the first guy I actually went out with after Lindsey and I broke up. When this pregnancy happened, it was like, "What the heck happened? I am completely respectful of the world rules here, and all of a sudden this happens to me and I can't figure it out." I go to my GYN, and he says, "Well, you've been protected by your Copper-7 IUD, but you have a tipped uterus. That IUD is only protecting half of you, and we didn't know that."

Now, what the hell am I going to do? I cannot have a child. I am not the kind of woman who would hand my baby over to a nanny, not in a million years. So we would be dragging a baby around the world on tour, and I wouldn't do that to my baby. I wouldn't say I just need nine months. I would say I need a couple of years, and that would break up the band, period. So my decision was to have an abortion. If people want to be mad at me about that, I don't really care, because my life was my life and my plan was my plan and had been since I was in the fourth grade.

So Fleetwood Mac would have been done.
Done. And that would've been sad, because I would not have married Don Henley. That was a really fun relationship, but he was in a bigger band than me. Those boys were rock stars, par extraordinaire. Nobody in that band was ready to get married and have children. So I knew it would just be on me, and I wouldn't have even known what to do with that responsibility.

I have another example of something that was very scary for me. I have a friend who had an ectopic pregnancy. She went on to have a little girl who is my little

DREAMS
Fleetwood Mac circa 1975: Mick Fleetwood, Nicks, John McVie, Christine McVie, and Lindsey Buckingham (from left)

SILVER SCREEN COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

"I NEVER HAD DOUBTS THIS WOULD BE MY LIFE. I BELIEVE IN ME. I BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH OF STEVIE."

THE ROLLING STONE INTERVIEW

soulmate goddaughter that I absolutely adore. She would've died if this had been the old days. And this little girl that I love so much would not be on this Earth. So right there, there's two completely different scenarios. Why weren't we schooled in that? Why were we never told about that in high school or even college?

But now "The Lighthouse" can teach others.
On the plane, I told [bandmate and musical director] Waddy Wachtel, "I don't know what to call this song," because we'd been calling it "The Power Song" forever. And he just looked at me and he said, "What about 'The Lighthouse?'" I used to have a dream that I would buy a lighthouse and it would have that twisty staircase that would go all the way up. I would have a little place at the bottom with a bed and a bathroom, and that would be my place when I wanted to go and record by myself, right on a cliff.

So I said, "OK, 'The Lighthouse.' So I am the lighthouse, because I am the wisdom and I have the stories." We are the women that can tell all these young women from 15 up to 45. We are that light that goes out, and we bring the ships in so they don't crash. We save lives every day. The way I feel about this upcoming election is that Kamala Harris is the lighthouse, too.

Did you ever look back and wish that you had had children or—
Never. Maybe I knew then that I had to be me, in Fleetwood Mac, a huge band that was on its way to being legendary, to be able to be the lighthouse. Not only did it allow me to follow my dream of being this rock & roll woman, but it allowed me to be this person that just wrote this song. I wanted to write something that would be helpful in this situation, because this could be my finest hour. This could be the most important thing I've ever done, this song.

I was not looking for this to be like a hit record. I don't care. I mean, all the people that are my age, we gave up on hit records a long time ago. With everything streaming, it's like 300,000 plays. It's like, "What is that?" I don't know how to maneuver myself around that. And I'm not interested in it anyway, because I'm the only person that isn't always on a phone.

Is there internet on your iPhone?
It isn't connected. It's just a camera.

I'm envious of that.
I hate it. About 10 years ago, Katy Perry was talking to me about the internet armies of all the girl singers, and how cruel and rancid they were. I said, "Well, I wouldn't know because I'm not on the internet." She said, "So, who are your rivals?" I just looked at her. It was my steely look. I said, "Katy, I don't have rivals. I have friends. All the other women singers that I know are friends. Nobody's competing. Get off the internet and you won't have rivals either."

I'm sure you're glad Fleetwood Mac didn't have to endure social media.

"I AM THE LIGHTHOUSE. KAMALA IS THE LIGHTHOUSE, TOO."

It would've been terrible. We never had terrible paparazzi. Our fans always really honored us and treated us with care. Nobody chased us down. It was all fun. It was never terrorizing. It was never stalking. It was never weird. I couldn't live like that.

Pop stars are really struggling with that these days, particularly Chappell Roan.
Evidently she likes my music a lot. Me and a friend of mine went and looked at her schedule, and it was outrageous. What she's already done and then what she's going into. It's as bad as any schedule we ever did, and she's new, and she's young. I said, "They'll burn her out if that's what they want to do, because there's always somebody to replace you." It must make them all very fearful. That's why it's good that Chappell just said, "Well, go ahead, replace me. I'm canceling because I'm not going to drop dead for all you people."

Taylor Swift has also been great at setting boundaries.
Do you see my little bracelet? [*Points to a friendship bracelet Swift gave her.*] I haven't taken it off for almost a year. She is really smart, but she also went through a lot before. She's in a good place right now, and I think she has a good man. I hope they fall deeper and deeper in love and ride off into the sunset. He does his thing and she does her thing, and then they come back together and get married and have babies if she wants that. I just want all of that for her.

How do you think Vice President Harris is doing as a candidate?
I think she's doing great. If [Trump] loses, he's just going to get in his limo and go back to Mar-a-Lago and probably get another TV show, and have lots of great vacations and play a lot of golf. He's just going to have fun. Good god, he's 78. It's the opposite to "Girls Just Want to Have Fun." Nobody has to worry about him. He's just going to go do what he does.

Do you feel optimistic about the election?
I feel very optimistic about it. I love the fact that she laughs. I love the fact that she's full of joy. I love the fact that she fell in love with somebody later in her life, and has a family and that they call her "Momala." I love that. I have great respect for her, being willing to take on such a serious job, with so much going on in the Middle East and Ukraine, which is my heart. It's like, "I won't have a real life now for a long time, so if I don't call you, don't take it personally."

I loved your "childless dog lady" photo. But people pointed out that you didn't explicitly endorse Harris. Do you want to do that right now?
I think I'm totally endorsing her by naming her as a lighthouse. I don't like the word "endorsing," but what I like is the fact that she is our great hope to save the world.

You played President Clinton's inauguration in 1993. Would you perform at Harris'?
I might.

Are you able to understand why so many women see you as an icon?
The word "icon" is difficult for me, because I think of "icon" as a big Greek statue of a girl in a cape. But I'm good with it, because I've worked hard to be whatever everybody thinks that I am. I wrote a song once, it's called "Sweet Girl," and it says, "I chose to dance across the stages of the world.... Many are the cities that I never saw at all." That's what I feel like I've done, just dancing across the stages of the world. That's why I appear to be a lot more youthful than I am, because my spirit is youthful. As long as you can dance, you are youthful. I'm 76, but I'm just incredibly limber. The dancing really comes from that.

[*Nicks pauses and wraps her leg around her head to demonstrate.*]

What I wanted to do my whole life was affect people. I love telling my stories onstage. That is what makes me happy, and that's why I'll never stop touring. Because if I stop touring, then I'll stop dancing. I go on a summer tour next year, and I [will] do 40 shows. That's what Fleetwood Mac used to do.... And you know there is no more Fleetwood Mac now, because when Christine [McVie] died, Fleetwood Mac died. We cannot replace her.

Would you ever release a formal statement about it?
I kind of released a formal statement about it at the show, the night before last.

When you said it was the last time you'd dedicate "Landslide" to her.
Since the day she died, we made that montage, and we have done that every single night. And I cry every single night. I said, "We have to let her go now. We have to say goodbye to Christine, safe journey."

What was your last conversation with Christine like?
This is the tragedy of it: I had not talked to Chris for a long time. Fleetwood Mac would be together for two solid years and then we would stop. During that time, when I went to do my own thing and went on tour, we hardly ever talked on the phone. She lived in England. The time difference was screwed up, so it was very hard for us to talk.

We got a phone call from someone. He told us that she was ill. I said, "OK. We're going to rent a plane right now, and we're going to come over there." And then we got a call back. Her family said, "Don't come until we see how things go here." Her family is super funny, as was she. They said, "If you and Mick, that tall man, walk into her

STEVIE NICKS

SONGBIRD
Nicks (right) onstage with McVie in 1977. "We cannot replace her," Nicks says of McVie, who died in 2022.

RICK DIAMOND/GETTY IMAGES

hospital room, she'll go, 'Am I dead?'" So anyway, a few hours later they called and said that she'd died. So I did not get to say goodbye to her. My plan was to go and sit on her bed and sing "Touched By an Angel" to her, like I did with my dad, for two or three hours or however long it took to either bring her back or send her off. I didn't get to do that, and I was angry.

Because this was a different kind of friend. This was my music soulmate, my best girlfriend. We kept that band afloat, the two of us, by keeping the peace, no matter what. By never letting people carry their problems into the studio, by stopping fights before they started, by making sure that our work was stellar. Even when we were doing lots of drugs, we had our eyes on everyone and everything. We were the keepers of Fleetwood Mac, and that is why we cannot replace her. We did replace Lindsey two times, and it was OK. No fighting, super fun. But Christine was different.

To be fair, you did tour without Christine, from 1998 to 2015.

We did. And it was good, because when you took Chris' six songs out and replaced them with three of Lindsey's and three of mine, we became a harder rock & roll band. We were like AC/DC, and it was fun.

So when she called and said, "I think I want to come back," I'm like, "Well, we've turned it into a super rock band now since you left. You need to come and see us in London and make sure that you actually want to come back. And if you do, then we have to change back to the original Fleetwood Mac, and we're fine to do that." So she came up and did a song, played organ, and she said, "I want to do it." I'm really glad now, of course, that that happened.

I had her from 1975 until she died, and I miss her every day. And I just finally realized being onstage the night before last, in the rain in front of 30,000 people, that it was time for us to let her go. And stop being so sad, because I cried every single night. It's like, "Fly. We're not holding you down anymore."

Did you see Lindsey at Christine's celebration of life?

Christine threw down a hurricane on top of Nobu, which is where we had it. Almost blew the whole place away, honest to God. Tore down the entire deck that was all decorated and everything. So it was kind of crazy. We all felt like she was there, because it was really intense. The only time I've spoken to Lindsey was there, for about three minutes. I dealt with Lindsey for as long as I could. You could not say that I did not give him more than 300 million chances.

> **"'ICON' IS DIFFICULT FOR ME. BUT I WORKED HARD TO BE WHAT EVERYBODY THINKS I AM."**

Do you regret not cutting ties even sooner than you did?

No, I think that all just happened the way it should have. It happened one night, not planned, at a MusiCares [benefit concert]. I didn't even tell anybody it had happened in my head until the whole ceremony was over. I took with me that night a song that I had done with LeAnn Rimes called "Borrowed." I took it with me to play for him because I thought we could do this song beautifully.

That's when he wasn't very nice to anybody; he wasn't very nice to Harry Styles. I could hear my mom saying, "Are you really going to spend the next 15 years of your life with this man?" I could hear my very pragmatic father — and by the way, my mom and dad liked Lindsey a lot — saying, "It's time for you guys to get a divorce." Between those two, I said, "I'm done."

So you would never even consider a proper farewell tour?

No.

Is there any other development besides his heart attack?

I'm sure that if there was, I would know. There's so much heart disease in his family that it's really not a surprise. So, I wish him the best. I hope he lives a long life and continues to go into a Continued on 77

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THE BODY IN THE BASEMENT

In the 1960s, the Scene was the hottest club in New York City. Three decades after it closed, a teenage girl's remains were discovered inside, leaving authorities with a mystery to solve — and revealing just how easy it used to be to disappear

By SARAH WEINMAN • Illustration by JOAN WONG

It's a hot summer night in 1969, and for those of a certain age — young enough to turn on, tune in, drop out — Steve Paul's the Scene is your place. As a spectator, a musician, a hanger-on. A place where the music comes first, even if you do end up scoring dope or going home with somebody.

The line to get in stretches all the way down West 46th Street and around the corner to Eighth Avenue. It's a long walk down rickety steps to a dark, crowded, cavernous basement that's more like a maze. There's Steve Paul, not yet 30, tall and striking, with a mop of dark hair and attired entirely in blue, doing his usual insult shtick to weed out the chaff — and anyone he hasn't insulted is clearly somebody.

Like Linda Eastman, Paul McCartney's lady, the one who takes all the pictures. Or Jimi Hendrix, ready for another jam session lasting until at least 3 a.m. Or that record exec — Ahmet Ertegun or Clive Davis, maybe — ready to sign up the hot new band that has only played here. Or Johnny Winter, honing his blues act with his long mane of white-blond hair, or Jim Morrison, lighting everyone on fire, including himself.

Everyone is ready to party, shimmy on the dance floor, take a hit, then another, and make out (or more). But what the audience doesn't see is the tension on Steve Paul's face, wondering if he's going to get shaken down so badly the price will be his life. Or the sadness of knowing that all parties have to end, almost always by someone else's decree.

The party would end for someone else, too, a terrible secret that same basement harbored for more than three decades. She was first known as Midtown Jane Doe, when her remains were found in 2003. Twenty-one years later, in April 2024, the New York City Police Department announced her true identity: Patricia Kathleen McGlone. Only 16, her life thrown away, strangled, wrapped in a rug, and buried in cement.

She was never supposed to be discovered. She was never supposed to be known. Even tracking down a picture of her has proven elusive. So many of the people in Patricia's life, like her mother and father, her con-man half brother, and a much-older husband who is the key "person of interest" in her death, were awfully adept at disappearing before their secrets and lies could be revealed.

For decades, Patricia McGlone was a cipher, a ghost. Now, her story can finally begin to be told. Her life and death are intertwined with the story of New York and its music scene in the 1960s — full of rising stars and wannabe mobsters jostling for prime position — and with the way things used to be done, until they weren't.

FOR DECADES, PATRICIA MCGLONE WAS A CIPHER, A GHOST. NOW, THE STORY OF HER LIFE CAN FINALLY BEGIN TO BE TOLD.

A Skull Rolled Out

A "bone case": That's what law enforcement calls cases where the remains are skeletal, years interred, evidence eroded or disappeared altogether with the passage of time. The remains of the girl soon nicknamed Midtown Jane Doe certainly qualified.

The building where she was found, 301 W. 46th St., had few tenants left in February 2003, stubbornly clinging to apartments that had housed sex workers, drug addicts, and others just trying to get by. The storefront had changed several times since the Scene closed, housing a pornographic-video shop, a dive bar, and now, a restaurant, which intended to turn the basement into a walk-in freezer.

Demolition was the building's endgame. (Its replacement, the Riu Hotel, wouldn't be finished until 2016.) On Feb. 10, 2003, construction workers noticed a raised concrete slab behind an aging coal furnace in the basement. Six feet wide, five feet long, and a foot high. It seemed out of place. One of the workers took out a sledgehammer and smashed it.

A skull rolled out.

The arriving cops quickly deduced there'd been a crime. The slab revealed so much awfulness, later confirmed through forensic anthropology: the bones of a girl, lying in the fetal position, hands and feet bound together by an extension cord also wrapped around her neck. She'd been bundled up in a rust-colored rug, and at some point, cement was poured on top of her. The girl wore a size 32A bra, clear pantyhose, and a glittery frock. They

IMAGES IN ILLUSTRATION BY DON PAULSEN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF THE NYPD COLD CASE SQUAD

recovered a ring with the initials "P Mc G," a Bulova watch issued in 1966, a dime dated 1969, and a plastic toy soldier. And there was DNA from an unknown source — possibly a white male — from a hair found in the rug.

There was so much evidence — unusual for decades-old remains — and yet identifying Midtown Jane Doe stumped the NYPD. They knew she was between 16 and 21 years old, standing between four feet 10 and five feet four. She came from a middle-class family, the cops surmised, because she'd had significant dental work done, though there was more recent tooth decay.

But other clues shifted the time window on the body's placement. A bag of rat poison found in the slab was initially believed to have been manufactured in 1979. A clothing label from the International Garment Workers Union, which didn't appear to exist before 1988. If the girl hadn't died in the 1960s, then she must have been born later. So when detectives searched for potential missing persons, they began with the birth year of 1958 — five years too late.

The NYPD was also thrown off by additional testing that seemed to indicate the girl was of Irish descent, but likely from the Midwest — and, perhaps, part of the "Minnesota Strip," the area of Hell's Kitchen where sex workers congregated between the 1960s and early 1990s that earned its nickname from the urban myth of young Midwestern women being deliberately trafficked there. "At this point, we believe she was a young, middle-class woman who probably hopped on a bus to New York full of dreams, but who ended up on the streets," then-lead Detective Gerard Gardiner told the *New York Post* four days before Christmas 2003.

It would take another two decades for the NYPD to learn that the girl had been born and raised in Brooklyn, and that the watch, dime, and toy soldier were the most significant clues. Some of the delay owed to the red herrings, still not entirely explained, but due, perhaps, to construction work in the 1970s and 1980s. A lot had to do with the condition of the bones, which were too degraded to extract enough DNA for testing at that point.

As time went on, tests grew more sophisticated. With more than 1,250 cold cases in the New York City area, most from the 1980s and 1990s involving decades-old human remains, every new identification bolstered the chances Midtown Jane Doe could be next. Even then, given the minuscule amount of DNA, it took several tries and a lot of luck — but eventually there was a meaningful result, thanks to the work of Astrea Forensics in California. "They probably spent the better part of a year working on it," says Bradley Adams, head of forensic anthropology at New York City's Office of Chief Medical Examiner. "They wouldn't take no for an answer. And shockingly, they ended up with a profile."

An actual profile meant the cold case had become hot again. Gardiner had long since retired, and after cycling through several other detectives, the case was now being investigated by Ryan Glas, a Bronx-based detective who joined the cold-case unit in 2021 and was assigned Midtown Jane Doe a year later.

"THE LAB WOULDN'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER. AND SHOCKINGLY, THEY ENDED UP WITH A PROFILE."

In March 2023, the unit ran Midtown Jane Doe's DNA profile through CODIS, the national DNA database maintained by the FBI, without success. The next step was to try its luck with investigative genetic genealogy, the technique that made headlines in 2018 when used to identify the Golden State Killer, effectively changing the game with respect to unsolved murders.

Genetic genealogy had been around for years, used to trace family-tree connections or find lost or adopted relatives. But its application in criminal investigations turbocharged the profession, with star genealogists like CeCe Moore (seen on *Finding Your Roots*), Colleen Fitzpatrick and Margaret Press (founders of the DNA Doe Project), and labs like Parabon Nanolabs in Virginia and Othram in Texas. More than 650 cold cases have been solved through their efforts so far.

DNA from unidentified victims or perpetrators could be uploaded into public databases like FamilyTreeDNA and GEDmatch — the one that caught the Golden State Killer — and generate a list of probable relatives. Ideally, the DNA similarities could be close enough to discover a child, parent, or sibling. Finding a first cousin was also a great result.

A forensic rendition of Patricia Kathleen McGlone. No known photograph exists.

Most often, the possible matches were more distant, third or fourth cousins, and a full family tree would have to be built to figure out whom the uploaded DNA profile belonged to.

That was the task for Linda Doyle, a veteran genetic genealogist who joined the NYPD on contract in June 2022 and would become one of the first-ever full-time staff genealogists for any police department the following year. Doyle, tall with ash-blond hair, turned to genealogy after working as a tour manager for musicians like Lights and Mandy Moore: "Problem-solving is the thread that has connected all my careers," she tells me. She often works on many cases at a time, and the enthusiasm and excitement she expresses as she describes her work is palpable. But when she tells me about Midtown Jane Doe, it's clear from the catch in her voice and the rise in pitch that this case was different. Surely, someone must be looking for her?

Doyle found promising news from studying the public DNA-database results. There was a first-cousin match on the paternal line, and a first cousin once removed on the maternal line. "So we knew there would be an intersection of these two genetic networks coming together with a union that produced the child," she explains. She scoured public records, old newspaper articles, obituaries, and court documents. And the only name that seemed to intersect both of these family trees was a girl named Patricia McGlone.

Doyle discovered the name in an obituary for a man named Bernard McGlone. She thought of the ring found with the remains. "It was a really great clue," she says. More digging by Doyle and Glas unearthed guardianship papers in a Brooklyn court, a marriage record in Virginia, and birth, baptismal, and confirmation records for Patricia. All signs pointed to an identification.

But investigative genetic genealogy can never confirm a person's identity. It's viewed as a presumptive lead that requires additional verification to stand up in court. Midtown Jane Doe would have to be matched to a relative through mitochondrial DNA, which is passed down from the maternal line.

Doyle and her team looked again at the maternal first cousin once removed. She turned out to be the mother of a victim in the Sept. 11 attacks, and had submitted DNA for identification purposes. That DNA profile was still on file, and it matched. Midtown Jane Doe was Patricia Kathleen McGlone.

Her identification was announced in April 2024, six months after Doyle joined the NYPD full time. But far too many questions remained. How did Patricia end up in the basement of Steve Paul's club, and why?

Welcome to the Scene

There were rock-music clubs all around New York City in the 1960s: Ungano's on the Upper West Side, the Cheetah Club farther down Broadway, Fillmore East on Second Avenue. But none quite produced the same sense of

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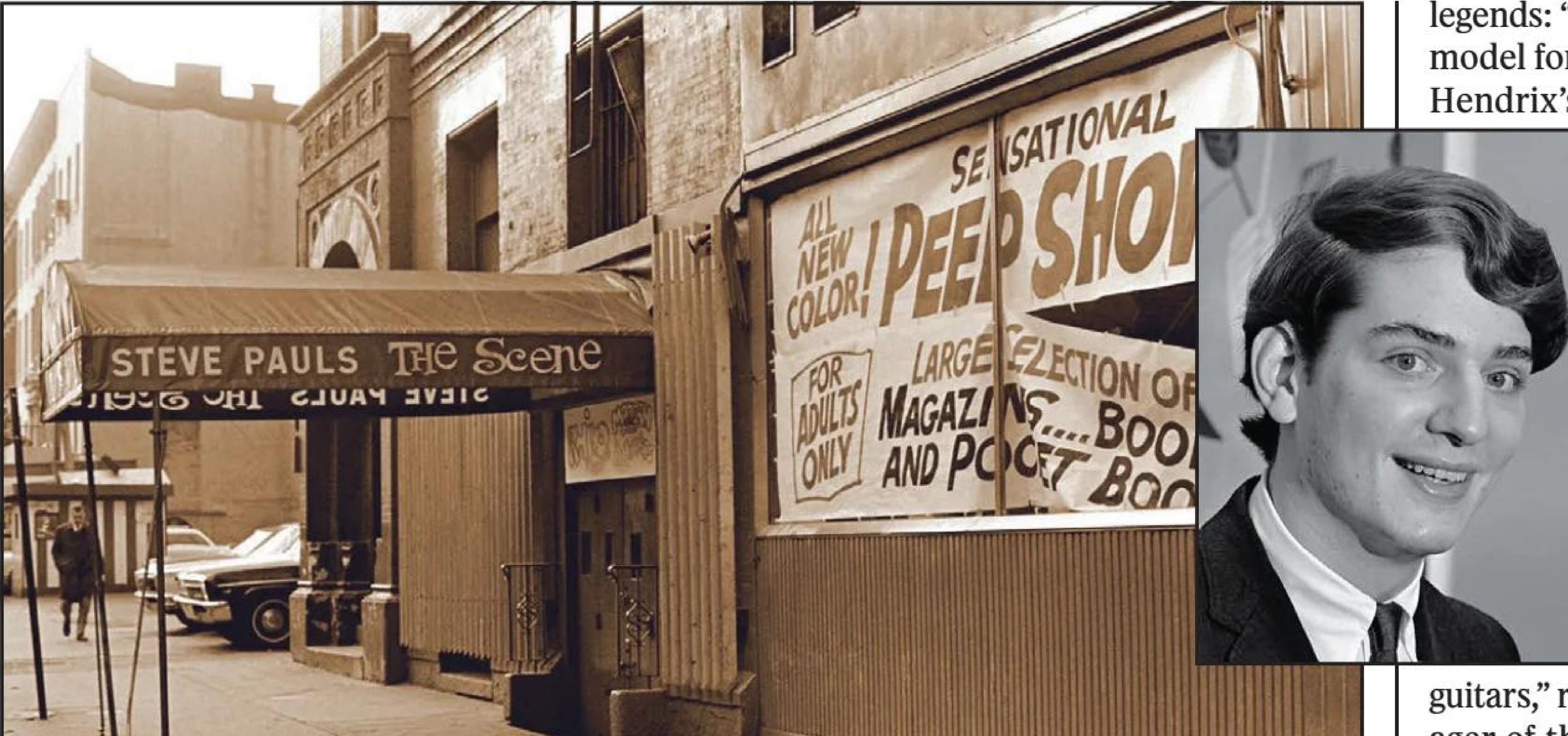

Many big bands of the 1960s got their start at the Scene in New York, owned by Steve Paul (right).

nostalgia as Steve Paul's the Scene. "People were always being seen at the Scene," says Lucy Sante, author of the essential New York history *Low Life,* who's currently working on a book about the city in the 1960s. "It was a kind of music-industry hangout. You've got all these record-company executives, music-publishing people, and musicians." It was an industry bar, but "it was also a hip bar," Sante adds. "It's got this cachet of being the bar of its time for a certain contingent."

Paul had already cycled through several lives by the time he opened the Scene in 1965, at just 24 years old. Born and raised in Dobbs Ferry, 45 minutes north of Manhattan, Paul moved to the city when the ink on his high school graduation certificate was barely dry. He had a dream of owning a club like the ones that had long fascinated him on television: "I'd create me a world of reality within the world of reality. Make your dreams come true," Paul said in 1967.

While still in his teens, he did public relations for the Peppermint Lounge — where the Twist became a craze — saving up money for his dream palace. He found it in Hell's Kitchen, a rough neighborhood in transition, which had been staunchly controlled by an Irish-mob faction run by Mickey Spillane — the gangster, not the pulp novelist — whose grip had begun to slacken as young upstarts began to assert themselves.

Paul alighted on the basement of 301 W. 46th St., which housed a speakeasy called the Cave of the Fallen Angels during Prohibition. Its 5,000 square feet, with irregularly placed brick walls and passageways, was a true labyrinth, designed for getting lost, hiding out, or both. It was perfect.

The Scene, Paul would later say, was supposed to be "a common denominator for the fusion between music, musicians, people who like music, and people who are music in their very being." And in the early years in particular, the club did just that, bringing together the likes of Andy Warhol and the Factory (who shot a film there), Tennessee Williams, Sammy Davis Jr., Richard Pryor, Liza Minelli, and "swarms of jet-setters, Broadway dancers, motorcycle riders, and Manhattan's moneyed elite," per a 1967 profile by the rock magazine *Hullabaloo.*

Leonard Bernstein showed up one night, walking to the edge of the dance floor to check out the masses. When a *Newsday* reporter went up to ask the famed composer and conductor what he thought of the nightclub, Bernstein paused, looking out at the dance floor and then back, grinning. "You don't think in this place," he said.

For the next couple of years, the Scene hosted bands on the verge of intense fame. The Velvet Underground did multiple shows there. So did the Lovin' Spoonful and the Rascals. Paul became so connected with new talent that, for a spell, he even hosted television specials, one memorably showcasing Aretha Franklin as "Respect" was climbing the charts. There was also room for novelty, what with Tiny Tim of "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" fame opening many a night, when it wasn't a karate show by the martial artist who also doubled as the club's bouncer.

But the bubble soon burst. The lines got shorter, the crowds thinner, and by early 1967, the Scene was in serious trouble. "We owed $90,000," Paul told *Hullabaloo.* "We weren't even doing business on Saturdays. You know where that's at. Real nowhere is the address." It took a bailout from a group of artists including Allen Ginsberg and a change in focus: From now on, the Scene would concentrate almost exclusively on rock music.

The club's second life gave it a necessary jolt. The Doors had a residency there throughout June 1967, their earthy energy attracting an in-the-know audience ready to spread the gospel of Morrison and his bandmates. ("I like to hang around Steve Paul and listen to him rap," Morrison once said of the Scene. "He's funny.") Audiences thrilled to sneak-preview boldfaced names, before they were names, like Van Morrison, Fleetwood Mac, Pink Floyd, and Three Dog Night. Some, like Hendrix, would return often after they became living legends: "[The Scene] was like a mini-forum model for every arena he would ever play," Hendrix's biographer, David Henderson, wrote in *Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky.* "The shouting stark frenzy of the close room is what he brought with him to every stage around the world."

And the Scene gave back equal energy, with its anything-goes jam sessions that could feature people like Hendrix, Morrison, and Janis Joplin rolling around in a fight — "The three of them were in a tangle of broken glass, dust, and guitars," recalled Danny Fields, former manager of the Ramones, in 2012. "The bodyguards had to send them home, each in their own limousine." Or the most notorious night at the Scene, when a drunk Morrison pretended to give Hendrix a blow job onstage, moaning all the while into the microphone.

The good times continued to roll. But there was an expiration date, even if Paul couldn't quite predict when it would arrive.

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Troubled Childhood

Even after identification gave back her name, the mystery of who killed Patricia McGlone is still a bone case, because like skeletal remains, the facts hardly add up to a complete picture of who she was and how she lived.

The lack of known information about her seems almost intentional. But Patricia's life also reflects an earlier time when transience was easy, when digital records were almost nonexistent — no smartphones, no internet, no established local youth shelters, no national runaway hotline — and when more-troubled lives could be shed with the ease of a butterfly emerging from a cocoon.

"A kid could disappear into these subcultures," says Karen Staller, author of *Runaways: How the Sixties Counterculture Shaped Today's Practices and Policies.* "If a young person doesn't drop a dime in a payphone and call home, there's no tracking of that kid."

Patricia's parents were married, except they weren't. A Virginia certificate confirms the June 23, 1952, union of long-haul trucker Bernard McGlone and his much-younger wife Patricia Gilligan. Bernard said he was 45; he was 50. Pat's age is listed at 21; she was actually 20. The bigger problem was that Bernard was already married with children — twice.

The father of two sons from a first marriage that ended in 1935, Bernard met Helen Zatorski in the early 1940s. They were married near Niagara Falls in 1943, then returned to Brooklyn, where Bernard Joseph Jr. was born in August 1946. Itinerancy was an asset in his job: How easy was it to start a third family? So easy that Helen and the younger Bernard had no inkling for years. Not of the bigamy, nor of baby Patricia, born on April 20, 1953, in Brooklyn, and baptized at St. Patrick's Church in Bay Ridge three months later.

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF THE NYPD COLD CASE SQUAD; DON HOGAN CHARLES/"THE NEW YORK TIMES"/REDUX

Bernard Sr. — and yes, with so many repeated names, it gets confusing — somehow kept his dual families separate. That apparently changed around 1957, when he left Helen and his namesake son, now 11, for his other family, though he "kept in touch," according to a private timeline of his life that Bernard Jr. would write decades later, titled "Sad But True." A year later, Helen was diagnosed with breast cancer; she died in 1960 at age 46.

Bernard Jr. was 14. He had nowhere else to go, so he moved in with his father, stepmother, and half sister Patricia in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. There's little doubt that Bernard Sr. was away a lot. Perhaps he had abandoned this blended family, too. Whatever the case, he died in June 1963, officially 53 but really 61. He left both of his younger children a little more than $1,700 — about $17,000 today — to be doled out piecemeal through Pat, until they turned 21, after which each could access the cash in full.

That's when things grow murkier. And for Patricia, much bleaker.

Patricia was 10 when her father died. School records confirm she'd faithfully attended P.S. 94 from first through fourth grades, but switched to Catholic school in the fall of 1963. She attended Our Lady of Perpetual Help Academy through early 1966, and was confirmed at the basilica around the corner that March. But by the fall, Patricia was repeating sixth grade at St. Michael's, her attendance growing more sporadic.

Patricia never appeared by name in any of her school yearbooks, conveniently absent whenever it was time for picture day.

She'd also become truant. She switched schools one last time at the end of 1968, attending P.S. 136 for a mere eight days before dropping out for good. Her mother later said the girl had become "an addict." Whatever crowd teenage Patricia had fallen in with wasn't good. But it also seems her mother, Pat, knew a lot more than she let on.

After Bernard Sr. died, Pat spent the last few years of her life, until her untimely death in 1972, at age 40, with another married man, George Layburn. She told family members she had remarried and that Layburn was her husband. (He stayed married to his legal wife until her death in 1996; Layburn would follow suit three years later.)

"WE'LL TRY AND MAKE IT LAST," PAUL SAID OF THE SCENE IN 1967. "BUT IT WON'T. NOTHING GREAT LASTS."

In his timeline, Patricia's half brother wrote that his stepmother and her live-in boyfriend were "very bad people"; he didn't elaborate. By the mid-1960s, Bernard had already experienced significant calamity. He dropped out of high school, lying about his age to get a job. A month before his actual 18th birthday, an accident at work led to the loss of a thumb and part of a forefinger. His weight ballooned to 305 pounds, though a year and change working at a Berkshires dairy farm in Massachusetts shed the weight in half.

By the fall of 1969, Bernard, then in his early twenties, was living in Jersey City, New Jersey. He'd been hired as a bookkeeper for First National Stores in nearby Kearny. He used a different name, Leonard Diamond, and also falsified his credentials, claiming a degree he didn't have from Ithaca College. (Diamond, whose identity he stole, however, did.)

Over the next eight months, according to legal records and *The Jersey Journal,* Bernard allegedly skimmed more than $62,000 (roughly $502,000 today) from his employer before skipping town. Bernard was arrested on July 11, 1970. (The case was later dismissed, though civil suits allowed the company to recover some of the stolen money.) He would later claim his arrest came about because of his "stepparents' schemes," but it's unclear what he meant.

Bernard left town and changed his name again, cribbing it from a cousin who died in 1973. He bought a bachelor's degree in engineering from a known diploma mill. He moved around the country, getting jobs in Michigan, Missouri, and Kansas, marrying a single mother he met through a classified ad.

Though Bernard came clean to his family about some parts of his life before his death in 2012, he never mentioned having a half sister — nor did he reveal his birth name.

Shortly before her stepson's arrest, Pat was interviewed by an insurance investigator, and she mentioned she hadn't seen or heard from her daughter since 1969, around the time of the girl's marriage. Which makes what happened next stand out: On May 15, 1971, Pat made one last plea for Patricia's money. The girl was 18, Pat wrote in her application to the Surrogate's Court in Brooklyn, her Social Security payments were set to stop, and she needed this to survive. Patricia's signature didn't match her handwriting. It looked an awful lot like her mother's, though.

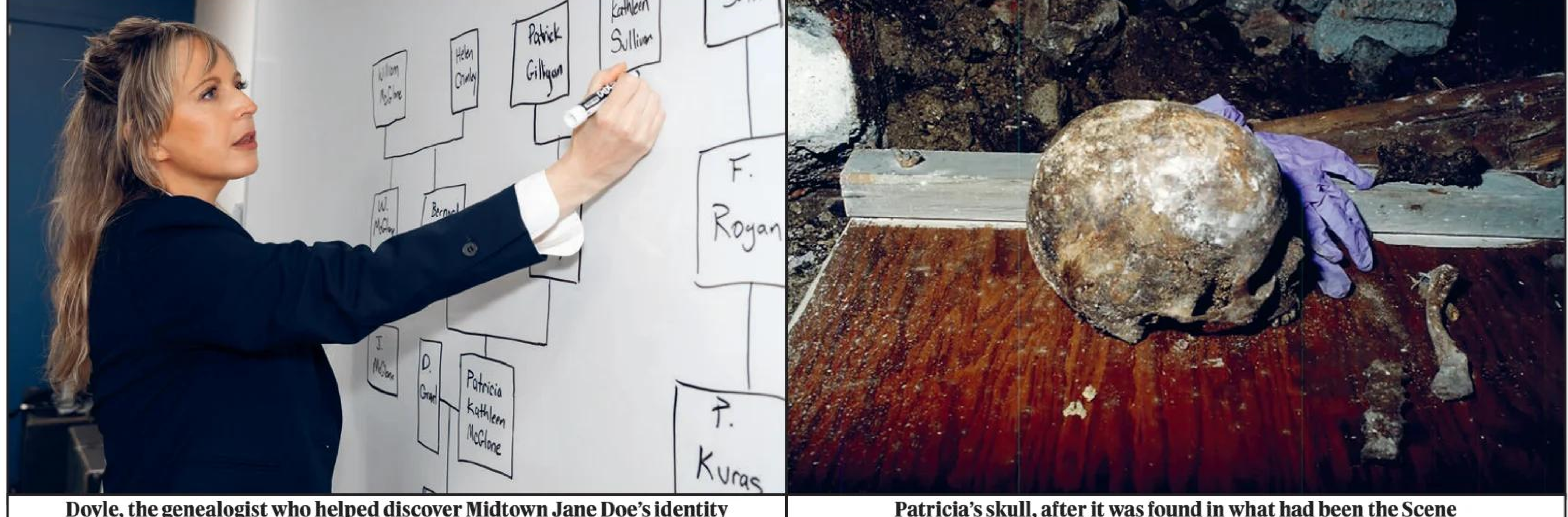
The Final Shakedown

The last days of the Scene weren't much fun for Steve Paul. The vibes had soured. Young mooks from Brooklyn were trying to start trouble, demanding protection money. As the Velvet Underground's Sterling Morrison recalled in a 1970 interview, "The liquor laws work in such a way that if you have a trouble spot your liquor license can be revoked. So, organized crime comes in and says, 'I want a piece of the action,' and they say, 'No, you can't have it.' So they just start these giant fights there. And the clubs lose their license."

Paul didn't want to deal with these guys anymore, one of whom, improbably, became a star in his own right.

In the late 1960s, everybody called him Junior. Genaro Anthony "Tony" Sirico Jr. — the actor who played Paulie Walnuts on *The Sopranos* — attracted trouble in his youth, but things really didn't get out of hand until after he married and had children. A few years into his marriage, he would say in later interviews, he met another girl for whom he was ready and eager to ruin his life. He started committing petty crimes and moving in a tougher crowd to curry her favor.

Whatever the case, Sirico was knee-deep in organized crime by his late twenties, though according to his younger brother, Robert, a Grand Rapids, Michigan-based priest, Sirico



Doyle, the genealogist who helped discover Midtown Jane Doe's identity

Patricia's skull, after it was found in what had been the Scene

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF LINDA DOYLE; COURTESY OF THE NYPD COLD CASE SQUAD

Police want to know where Bernard McGlone Jr., Patricia's half brother, was around the time of her death.

was never a made man. Robberies and shakedowns were his thing, usually in the company of neighborhood pals. ("He was a knife guy, not a gun guy," according to former drug smuggler Jon Roberts, who gained fame thanks to the documentary *Cocaine Cowboys.*) By the summer of 1969, Sirico had made a regular art of forcing his way into nightclubs, refusing to pay for admission or drinks, and threatening the owners with guns or baseball bats if asked to leave. On at least one occasion, he threw a bouncer out a window to make his point. "I'm Junior Sirico," he'd say, "you better learn how to give me the respect I deserve." (Sirico died in 2022.)

Paul had known the party couldn't last forever. He'd predicted it in 1967 to *Hullaballoo,* when the Scene was starting its second act: "This time, we'll try and make it last. But it won't. Nothing great lasts all the time."

Two years later, Sirico was breathing down his neck. Paul wouldn't capitulate. He'd rather close down the Scene than hand it over to the Mob. After it closed around August 1969, Paul fled to Greenwich, Connecticut, where he owned a home, and hid out there for a few years. He had plenty to do otherwise, pivoting to manage the careers of people like Johnny Winter, the albino blues guitarist whose write-up in *Rolling Stone* had wowed Paul so much he'd flown down to Texas, signed Winter as his first client, and flown back to New York to start cajoling labels to take Winter on. (Clive Davis would do so for Columbia Records, in what was then the most lucrative contract in rock music.)

By 1973, Paul owned a record label, Blue Sky Records, signing David Johansen and Muddy Waters, among others. He produced cabaret shows and haunted art galleries looking for new talent. He settled into a relationship with the artist Robert Kitchen, one that curdled a few years before Kitchen's death in 2009 and Paul's in 2012, at 71 years old.

If Paul knew anything about a teenage girl buried in the basement of his former club, he never shared the information with anyone I spoke with. Not Susan Blond, the longtime music publicist (and former Andy Warhol disciple) who met Paul at Max's Kansas City and called him one of her "three best friends." Not Tariq Abdus-Sabur, whom Paul befriended late in life and hired to run his last venture, the arts and culture website downtowntv.com.

And if Sirico knew anything, he didn't share it with those closest to him. He'd been convicted in 1971 for felony weapons possession after being caught shaking down a different nightclub, serving 20 months in prison. When he got out, he caught the acting bug and moved to L.A. (According to Abdus-Sabur, Paul was "shocked when he actually saw [Sirico] on *The Sopranos.*")

Many years later, Robert Sirico remembered discussing a later murder case in which his older brother was a person of interest ("He was very dismissive — 'They're just doing it because I'm famous now'"), but nothing about a girl. Robert could see his older brother being "very violent in a confrontation with a man if there was some kind of insult or threat. I don't see him plotting the murder of a girl."

An Incomplete Puzzle

In December 1968, Patricia McGlone switched schools for the final time. A record indicates she left St. Michael's because of a "medical event." Patricia dropped out in May 1969. Like for so many girls, then and now, the cause was a pregnancy.

The school records that listed her dropout date also indicated that she was about to marry a 32-year-old man named Donald Grant, the unborn child's presumed father.

Those records were true, to a degree. A wedding ceremony took place on May 7, 1969, at the Church of All Nations on Second Avenue in Manhattan. Patricia's mother was one of the witnesses — and according to her, the baby was born around August 1969.

But there was almost nothing true about Donald Grant. His name was fake. His birthdate was fake. The names of his parents, listed on the marriage certificate? There was no James Edward Grant or Carrie Elizabeth Johnson with a son named Donald born in Pittsburgh.

There was, however, a Donald Grant born on Feb. 28, 1937 — a day after Patricia's mystery husband — who died in infancy in Ohio, not far from Pittsburgh. It's harder to do now, but stealing a dead person's identity and making it your own was a common trick for those looking to shed their names for all sorts of reasons — especially criminal ones.

One detail on the marriage certificate, however, could be verified. Grant listed his address at the time as 301 W. 46th St. A telephone directory from 1969 also listed a Donald Grant at this address. He wasn't listed there the year before, or the year after. Grant also noted his occupation as "musician," which was an interesting choice for someone who lived in the very same building as the Scene in its last year and who would vanish from the public record after the club closed. Burying a body in the wake of the club's closure would be ample reason to flee as soon as possible.

Needless to say, the NYPD is very interested in learning more information about Donald Grant, and hearing from anyone who knows him. Grant — whoever he might be — is a person of interest in Patricia's death. "With any homicide, you always look to the person closest, right? And especially if it's a domestic," Detective Glas tells me. "It's unfortunate that it's such a common name."

They also want to know more about Bernard McGlone Jr.'s whereabouts around the time, what with his penchant for fraud schemes and shifting backstories. Glas says Bernard hadn't been ruled out as a person of interest, either. And the NYPD certainly wants to know more about the whereabouts of Patricia's baby, whom they believe was given up for adoption right before her murder. But they can't discount more morbid possibilities for what happened to the child.

Glas acknowledges that the case is "a puzzle," one with so many pieces that don't quite fit together yet to form a cohesive whole. But if that DNA profile from an unknown white male produces a possible match, more information emerges about Patricia's child, and someone — anyone — comes forward with information about the girl so long known as Midtown Jane Doe, then the pieces can add up to a more realized portrait of Patricia McGlone, and why she ended up murdered and buried in the basement of the Scene.

"I just want someone to acknowledge her existence other than us," says Doyle, the NYPD genealogist. "It breaks my heart that she could go through her short life and be erased. I cannot come to terms with no one knowing who she is." Ⓡ

COURTESY OF THE FAMILY

TRIBUTE

QUINCY JONES

1933-2024

By STEVIE WONDER

Jones in 1969

TRIBUTE

You can hear the influence of Quincy Jones, who died Nov. 3 at age 91, in practically every genre of music. In the music of Stevie Wonder — who grew up listening to Jones' work with Ray Charles, Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, and others, as well as Jones' own records — the producer's influence lives on most strongly in the way Wonder arranges his music and in the verve of his singing.

The two artists worked together several times, and Wonder still marvels at what it was like to hear Jones record his songs, especially noting a 1973 version of Wonder's "You've Got It Bad, Girl." "Hearing him sing 'You've Got It Bad' is mind-blowing because I never imagined Quincy Jones doing my song," Wonder says. "The more I talk about it, the more I feel emotional. I think, 'Wow, I'm so thankful to the most high, the God that I serve, that I've had the opportunity to know this great man and to know his heart.'"

Here, Wonder remembers Jones in his own words.

I met Quincy at the Apollo Theater when I was 14. I heard, "Oh, Quincy Jones is here." So I ran downstairs and met him. I knew him from his music, from the work he had done with Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald and on and on and on. I had a lot of questions. "Does Ray Charles read braille music?" I was so curious.

Losing Quincy is more than heartbreaking. As we lose great people in various genres of music, I know the orchestra in that wonderful world beyond here — musicians, singers, dancers, actors, actresses, producers, all the people that we've met on this journey — is something incredible, far more than we can even imagine. I'm just disappointed that he wasn't here for longer.

Quincy spread his message of music and love for as long as he was in our presence. Obviously, he was the one who really orchestrated "We Are the World," putting it all together, bringing people together, and the whole idea of "Leave your egos at the door." That whole deal was amazing.

It brings tears to my heart to think about how and where he came from and to know that he was able to grow through all of it. When I look at life every day and I think about how ignorant and irresponsible that people who don't get it can be, I'm motivated to continue to talk about life, sing about it, and write about it, because that's what Quincy did. He connected with people who had those great talents, and he was able to bring the best out of them.

Quincy's foundation was love. His foundation was the gift that he was given. His foundation was the relationship he had with Ray Charles, and everyone he worked with. There are so many voices he introduced us to. You can hear it with Minnie Riperton. My first wife, Syreeta, she sings on some of the songs that he did with the Brothers Johnson; you can hear her in the background. Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Ella Fitzgerald — just so many great people that he did music with.

As I got into working with [producers] Bob Margouleff and Malcolm Cecil, I was able to do things with the Moog synthesizer and the ARP [synthesizer] to arrange music. My curiosity was "How can I do more of this, and how does this work?" I was like a painter with different colors to create the different music that I did. And it's because of what I heard from Quincy — the things that he did with Count Basie or the various orchestras that he worked with. Those were my motivations.

Wonder (left) and Jones in 1978

> "HE MOTIVATED THE IDEA OF GIVING AND GETTING THE BEST — NOT FOR THE MONEY OF IT, JUST FOR THE ART OF IT. YOU CAN HEAR THAT IN HIS MUSIC."

The most important thing Quincy taught me was "Don't stop until you know you got it like you want it, until it feels good to you." He said, "Don't settle for your vocals just being OK; make sure that you give it all that you've got. Don't be afraid of learning what you don't know." So he also just motivated the idea of giving and getting the best — not for the money of it, just for the art of it. You can look back and hear all of that when you hear his music.

When I recorded "Just Good Friends" with Michael Jackson and Quincy, I'd heard the song, and the idea of the song was fun. It was just a wonderful moment. Years later, there was a record where he had myself, Ray Charles, and Bono doing "Let the Good Times Roll." That was fun. The three of us weren't together; they did their parts separate. But Quincy put it together like we were there at the same time. And that's sort of the genius. Lots of times, it's no different from doing a movie. You have to make it feel like it was right there and then. And he was able to do that, put the pieces together and have a great moment together.

The fact that he has left us with such great music and such great productions and so many things that people of all ethnicities can appreciate ... you can listen to all these great things he's done and go, "Wow." In his life, at 91 years, he moved the needle forward.

In recent years, I wanted to do a harmonica jazz project with him. I wanted to do the old and new standards. We didn't get to do that, but that's not to say that I won't. Just in honoring what we talked about doing, I'm going to do some stuff like that.

Quincy should be remembered as one of God's greatest gifts to the world. He should be remembered as a star that we will keep burning for as long as we, as humans, exist, by carrying on the messages and the music that he did.

If I could have chosen my last words to Quincy before he made that transition, I would have to borrow something that Duke Ellington would always say: "Quincy, I love you madly." ®

As told to Kory Grow

PREVIOUS SPREAD: PIERRE FOURNIER/SYGMA/GETTY IMAGES. THIS PAGE: © BOBBY HOLLAND/MPTVIMAGES.COM

TRIBUTE

THE FOUNDATION
Lesh onstage in 1966

PHIL LESH

1940-2024

By DAVID BROWNE

Guitarist Warren Haynes sometimes had his doubts about where things were headed when he was jamming with Phil Lesh. After Jerry Garcia's death in 1995, Haynes, himself no stranger to taking music to its outer limits by way of extended jams, frequently joined Lesh onstage in either a re-formed version of the Grateful Dead or with Lesh's own band, Phil Lesh and Friends. "Sometimes the jams would get so out there, and I would maybe think something was not clicking, not working," says Haynes. "I would look over at Phil, and he would just have a huge grin on his face — it was just about chasing it. When it was on the risk of falling apart, or even when it did fall apart, it was just as fun for him."

Lesh wasn't the frontman for the Dead, nor was he the band's flashiest presence, onstage or off. He rarely sang lead on any of their songs. Other aspects of the Dead — Garcia's interstellar guitar solos, the dual wallop of drummers Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann, Bob Weir's country covers (or his ponytail) — stood out more.

But Lesh, who died Oct. 25 at age 84, embodied the Dead as much as anyone in the band. From their music to their fan base to the way they sold concert tickets out of their office in Northern California, the Dead didn't do anything conventionally, and the same could be said of Lesh. If Garcia was Captain Trips, Lesh was the first officer: the gatekeeper, mad scientist, and, ultimately, the fiercest defender of the band's mission. Starting soon after Lesh joined, the Dead began to break free of the blues and R&B covers that dominated their early repertoire and venture into improvisations that could collapse and rebuild over the course of nearly an hour (as in the case of some of the superlong versions of "Dark Star"). Lesh didn't just make us rethink the role of the bass; he helped the culture reimagine how a rock band could expand and mutate. The idea, as he said in 2014, was to avoid doing "something somebody else had done."

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TRIBUTE

When Lesh joined the Dead — then known as the Warlocks — in 1965, he was already out of step with the rest of the gang. In high school, he played violin and trumpet, and in college, he studied with experimental Italian composer Luciano Berio. As he said in 2014, he "detested" rock when he first heard it in the Fifties: "I thought it was totally infantile. Three chords over and over again. I'm coming from Beethoven and Mahler." For Lesh, musical boundaries were for chumps.

Meeting Garcia, though, changed everything, and not only because, as a single child, Lesh was eager for a surrogate brother. Recalling his life-altering conversation with Garcia at Magoo's Pizza in Menlo Park, California, in 1965, Lesh said, "He sat me down in a booth when they took their set break. And he said, without preamble, 'Listen, man, I want you to play bass in the band. I know you can do it. I know you're a musician.' And that's when I realized, this is what I'd been waiting for. I didn't go back to classical." He soon introduced Hart to the music of Indian tabla musician Alla Rakha and Kreutzmann to the works of John Coltrane. "It was a chance to play with Jerry, and it was a chance to redefine part of that music," Lesh said. "Shape it in my own image, if you will. I could bring my training and compositional sense to that level while still collaborating."

"[LESH'S] OPEN-MINDEDNESS ABOUT MUSIC SURPASSED ABOUT ANYONE I MET," SAYS WARREN HAYNES.

IN THE BEGINNING Lesh (center) and the Dead on the corner of Haight and Ashbury in San Francisco, 1966

Most bass players in rock & roll bands provide a solid low-end foundation for what's around them, or are content in supportive background roles. Not Lesh. He used his bass — which often had six strings rather than the standard four — to poke around the melody, pushing, prodding, and nudging the music out of one section and into a fresh, uncharted one.

Sometimes Lesh played as if he considered his bass, not Garcia's guitar, the lead instrument. "Phil had a completely original take on the bass," says onetime Dead pianist Bruce Hornsby, who grasped Lesh's avant-garde side when the two would play improvised bass-and-piano sections during shows in the Nineties. "He made the bass an equal conversational partner in the music." Talking with *Rolling Stone* in 2013, Robert Hunter, the band's lyricist and often its toughest critic, put it most succinctly: "If you take Phil out, you've just got the Garcia band, and that's a whole different thing."

In the world of the Dead, Lesh had another role, as their most persnickety and contrarian member. In 1968, he instigated a band meeting in which Weir and singer, organist, and harp player Ron "Pigpen" McKernan were confronted about their shortcomings and were nearly sacked. "It was me who encouraged Jerry to think about those issues," Lesh remembered in 2014. "I was more frustrated than he at first. Maybe he wasn't listening in the same way I was." During the making of 1968's *Anthem of the Sun,* Joe Smith, then head of Warner Bros., the Dead's label, groused in a letter to the band, "It's apparent that nobody in your organization has enough influence over Phil Lesh to evoke anything resembling normal behavior." Later, Smith recalled, "when I went to meet with the band, [Lesh] tells me he was very sensitive. I had 60 artists to deal with. I had Frank Sinatra. I couldn't waste all that time with Phil Lesh!"

But in Lesh's mind, the Dead had standards and had to meet them, over and over. Anything less undercut the band's mission. When the Dead came back after a two-year sabbatical in the Seventies, they weren't the same for Lesh. "Somehow it wasn't about the music anymore," he said in 2014. "It was about the scene — being touring musicians, being on the road, being rock stars or something. It just seemed less about the music and where we could take it." To the consternation of the band's various managers and the other band members, Lesh would doggedly question a plan or scheme he didn't think was right for the band — like making music videos, including one for their surprise 1987 hit, "Touch of Grey." Lesh complained that he felt like "a

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TRIBUTE

sideman" during sessions for the more radio-friendly records the Dead began making for Arista, starting with 1977's *Terrapin Station*. Lesh's unhappiness over that situation only exacerbated a drinking problem.

Early on, though, Lesh provided the Grateful Dead with one of the band's all-time most poignant moments. Their classic 1970 album *American Beauty* opened with the rare sound of Lesh's voice, singing over chords folksier than anything he'd done before. Written as his father was dying of cancer, "Box of Rain" found Lesh sounding as if he were keeping himself in check, singing lines like, "What do you want me to do/To do for you to see you through?" As Hunter told *Rolling Stone* in 2013, it added up to a "once-in-a-lifetime song."

A few years later, Lesh took lead-vocal duties on two very different songs on *From the Mars Hotel*: the beautifully spacious "Unbroken Chain" and the jaunty country shuffle "Pride of Cucamonga." But thanks to what he called "too much alcohol and advancing age," Lesh eventually lost the ability to hit the high notes. "I was a little relieved," he said in 2014. "It was always a challenge to sing and play at the same time." Lesh resumed recurring vocal duties later, in his own bands, but it remains a shame that we never heard more of him (other than some high harmonies in their early days) in that role with the Dead.

As Garcia was grappling with drug addiction by the early Eighties, Lesh, by his own admission, wasn't in any position to help: "I was medicating myself, so I didn't have to think about it," he recalls. Lesh said he hit a low point with his drinking during the same era. "That period is a little hazy," he said. "I don't like to revisit it very much. I didn't like myself in that period." In 1982, he met his future wife, Jill, quit drinking and drugs, and began to turn his life around; they eventually had two sons, Brian and Grahame. According to Grateful Dead lore, Lesh demanded cocaine be banned from the Dead stage when Garcia was in the grips of his issues. (When asked about it in 2014, Lesh said the story was "possible.")

TOUCH OF GREAT Lesh (right) jams with Weir in 2018.

In a way, it took Garcia's death in 1995 to liberate Lesh. For several years after, he didn't play much music; sometimes he'd sit in with Dead cover bands and find himself startled by how much they sounded like his old outfit. (In 1998, Lesh also had a liver transplant that led to a tradition of his own: talking about the importance of organ donors at every gig he played.) But re-creating the Dead's music note for note wasn't enough. "I knew some of those people could play it, but I per- Continued on 76

TRIBUTE

'BIG, HUGE, BEAUTIFUL'

By MIKE GORDON

Phil Lesh is one of Mike Gordon's biggest heroes. Gordon, the bassist for Phish, became aware of the Dead in high school and soon zoned in on Lesh. The two met in the Nineties, and played together regularly until Lesh's death.

I thought Phil was the most unique part of the Grateful Dead. It didn't surprise me that Bob Dylan said that in his book *Philosophy of Modern Song*, when he was talking about ["Truckin'"]. Usually there are all these expectations about the bass: a lot of repeating patterns, having an allegiance to "the one" and to the root note. Phil didn't have any of those allegiances. He avoided them all.

The first time I really met him was in '99, when [bandmates] Trey [Anastasio] and Page [McConnell] did the shows with him at the Warfield [in San Francisco]. I asked if he would have lunch with me. This is a big hero of mine, and he came to my hotel, and they had made special menus that said "Bass Players Luncheon." He said, "I'm going to keep this forever." It was only four years after Jerry [Garcia] passed. I remember him having some anger that Jerry seemed to choose drugs over his friends. With people that know about addiction, it's more complicated than that. [But the lunch] was special. I had rented a scooter, which I was zooming around San Francisco on, and after lunch, I asked if he wanted a ride. He was like, "Nope, I'll walk." Which is probably a good thing.

The day he passed away, [Phish] opened our concert with "Box of Rain." Other than our first couple of years, it's been taboo to play Dead songs, because early on we were compared to them too much. So it's only every couple of decades we play a Dead song. I have a picture of all of these people in the front row crying from "Box of Rain" that night.

I was thinking about the most recent visit, which was in March [at a Phil Lesh and Friends show], where I got to give him his cake for his 84th birthday onstage. Sometimes it works with two bass players, and sometimes it doesn't. What was interesting for me that night is how what we were doing on the bass and [our] tones were so different, despite how influenced I've been. It was a really good blend. Phil was smiling the whole time. Afterward he said, "We have to do this again."

If people can allow themselves to get into the Dead's music, they'll find that there's never been more beautiful bass playing. There's this quality that just blossoms like a little bud turning into a flower, and then a forest of flowers in front of your soul all in a few minutes. It all sounds idealistic and kind of heady, but if people can get past that wall of "Oh, this is weird" and experience it, what they'll see is this big, huge, beautiful playing style and approach to music that is unprecedented. And it will never be like that again.

As told to Alison Weinflash

FROM TOP: JAY BLAKESBERG/RETRO PHOTO ARCHIVE; DANNY CLINCH

SPORTSBO NATION

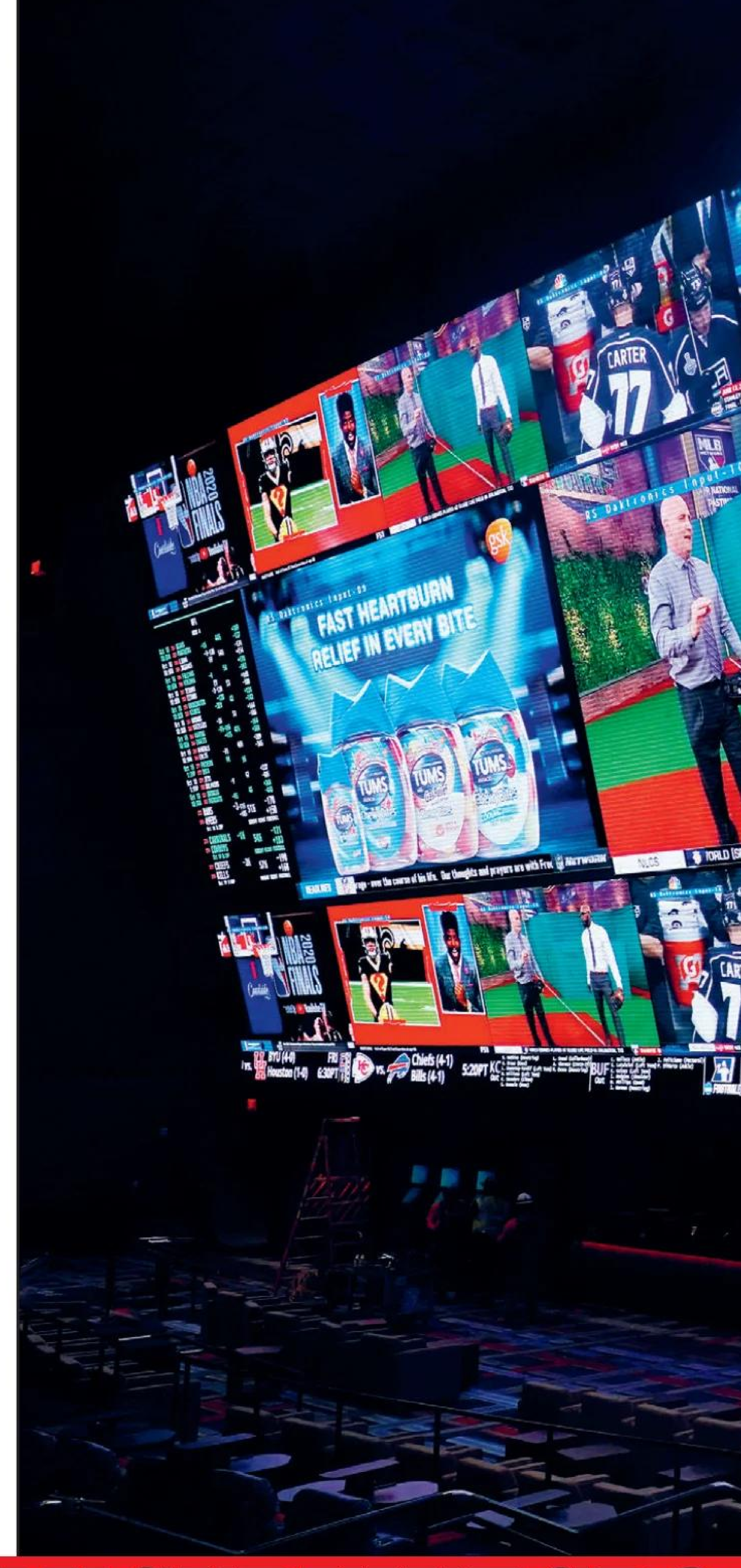
DOUBLE DOWN
Brody shows his technique at a recent New York Yankees game.

OK

From Vegas to the black market, betting companies have taken over sports. Inside a billion-dollar industry that could be on the bubble

By DAVID HILL
Photograph by COLE WILSON

Shohei Ohtani walks up to home plate at New York's Citi Field, and the L.A. Dodgers fans, who are well in attendance on this Wednesday afternoon, are up on their feet. ● "So, ideally you get a pop-up, right? You got like five seconds in the air. God forbid the guy drops the ball." ● I'm sitting in the outfield with Scott Brody, who is not paying the fans around us any mind. He is intently studying the players in the outfield, as well as the cellphones he has in either hand, with sportsbook apps loaded up on each one and ready to fire. "So when that ball's in the air, you can submit the under on the bet because the guy's on second base. He's not gonna score."



Brody is a large man, a former Division I football player, an Iraq War veteran, and a devoted surfer. Scott Brody isn't his real name. It's a pseudonym, and many of the other names in this story are as well. Brody is a gambler — a damn good one — and he's so good he worries that if the sportsbooks knew his real name, they wouldn't let him bet anymore.

That may sound like an absurd boast, but it isn't. Brody is what is known as a "courtsider," and he is the bane of any sportsbook. He goes to live sporting events and bets on his phone — well, phones, because he has a few of them. He loads one with an over bet, one with an under, waits for a batter to get a hit and tries to press the right bet on his phone before the sportsbook can adjust the odds. Most people at home watch the game on a delay, so they can't beat the sportsbook's information. But in the ballpark, where someone from the sportsbook is also watching the game and adjusting the odds, you can, because you only need to beat that guy.

"You can see the left fielders just jogging. It's already out of bounds. It's already out," Brody says, teaching me how to analyze the body language of the players to anticipate the result of a play faster than the sportsbook's guy. "We got the infield in … but they've increased the chance of a hit by like 20 percent by being on the edge of the grass."

DAVID HILL is the author of *The Vapors: A Southern Family, the New York Mob, and the Rise and Fall of Hot Springs, America's Forgotten Capital of Vice.* Last year, he wrote about Formula 1 for *Rolling Stone.*

Brody, like many, started taking betting more seriously during the pandemic. With a master's in accounting and a knack for statistics, he got into sports-modeling. After discovering sports-betting guru "Captain Jack" on YouTube, he studied and built his own predictive models. Within a few years, he was making enough to quit his job and gamble full time. "My goal is to be good enough to bet offshore and go back to being the world's fourth-best surfer over 6'6" in Hawaii."

PASPA, which stands for the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act, was a law in the U.S. that prohibited sports betting, except in a few states, like Nevada. It was overturned by the Supreme Court in 2018, and ever since, sports gambling has exploded into the American zeitgeist. Ads for sportsbooks have dominated televised events, made their way into the stadiums and arenas of professional and collegiate sports alike, and even onto the jerseys of the athletes themselves. Talk of point spreads and totals, once taboo over the airwaves, are now not only common topics among the sports commentariat, but also displayed in the chyron scoreboards right on the screen. It seems like everyone who isn't betting on sports likely has someone in their life who is. Revenues for sports-betting companies reached nearly $11 billion in 2023, up 44.5 percent from the year before.

"AMERICA CAN SURVIVE SPO SURVIVED ILLE ROXBOROUGH.

The biggest among these are DraftKings and FanDuel, two companies that started out running Daily Fantasy Sports competitions, but moved quickly into sports betting post-PASPA to capture more than 70 percent of the market, leaving legacy casino brands like Caesars and MGM in their dust. They accomplished this by getting a head start on the competition with technology and customer acquisition, then investing heavily in market-

SCREEN TIME
Circa is the first casino in Las Vegas to center around sports betting.

JOHN LOCHER/AP IMAGES

RTS BETTING. IT GAL BETTING FOR YEARS," SAYS

ing, saturating the airwaves with ads, and offering huge promotions to new customers. What accompanied that deluge and the ability for anyone to have a sportsbook in their pocket was a significant rise in gambling, including problem gambling, particularly among young men under 30, for whom problem-gambling behaviors are three times more prevalent than the rate of the rest of the population. And then there are the scandals involving athletes gambling and sometimes even fixing games. This has given the impression that sports betting appeared out of nowhere and is corrupting sports.

I have a different perspective. I'm from Hot Springs, Arkansas, which was once the gambling capital of America and remained a sports-betting hub well into the 1990s. As a kid, I had friends whose family members were bookies. Hell, there were bookies in the chamber of commerce. In college, I was too punk rock to go to football games, but never so much that I wouldn't bet on them. Gambling, to me and mine, was something we did for fun, and something everyone we knew did. By the time the PASPA repeal happened, I was the proverbial frog in the boiling pot of water. I didn't understand what all the fuss was about.

But beyond my own unique perspective, the fact is American sports and gambling have always been inextricably linked. The original professional baseball team owners would bet with one another on their teams. Early 20th-century bookmakers frequented the ballparks and stood in the stands, just like the one Brody and I were sitting in, and took bets from the gamblers who filled the seats. Until the NFL was popularized in the 1950s, the most popular sports in America were baseball, boxing, and horse racing, three sports associated with gambling. In fact, some of the earliest owners of football teams in America were gamblers or bookmakers themselves; from Tim Mara to Art Rooney, the original NFL owners had made their fortunes at

tracks, betting on baseball, or by bookmaking. Football saw its popularity skyrocket in postwar America, when televised sports and the invention of the point spread fueled a gambling boom so large it inspired congressional intervention. In 1950, *Life* magazine declared America "the gamblingest nation that ever existed."

Yet despite America's deeply entrenched propensity to bet on sports, regulating gambling hasn't panned out the way anyone had hoped. This year, a number of sportsbooks have pulled up stakes and left the business, choosing to eat the losses of costly licensing fees rather than continue on. In search of higher profits, some sportsbooks have started limiting gamblers whose bets win while accepting bets of any amount from those who stand to mostly lose, including problem gamblers, sending the winners back into the arms of the offshore sportsbooks and barroom bookies the regulated industry had promised to replace. Eye-popping endorsement deals and marketing budgets are being dramatically scaled back. State legislatures that once welcomed sportsbooks and their promises of tax-revenue windfalls with open arms have grown frustrated after those companies couldn't deliver. After a cascade of 38 states adopted sports betting, voters and legislators in the states that have yet to come on board have pumped the brakes, with California, Georgia, and Texas all recently rejecting it. The tide appears to be receding.

"Captain" Jack Andrews (left) and Rufus Peabody started sports-betting tool Unabated.

COURTESY OF UNABATED

"EVERYBODY'S LIKE, 'OH, YO BOOKIE? IS IT A MOB GUY?' THE STIGMA N AN OK THING TO

For the past year, I traveled across the United States and Costa Rica to spend time with bettors, bookies, politicians, and athletes to take the temperature of the American sports-betting industry. I'd meet plenty more people like Brody — gamblers whose skills pose an almost existential threat to sportsbooks that pictured America as a nation of suckers. What I learned was that sportsbooks, state governments, and gamblers are all reconsidering a lot of what they assumed about this business, and that we just might be experiencing the beginning of the end.

Back at the ballpark, as Ohtani readies himself for the pitch, Brody readies a $500 bet.

Crack!

Brody smashes the button on the phone. A wheel spins. The ball sails deep into the rafters. A home run. The Dodgers fans around us are so loud you'd have thought the game was in Los Angeles. Brody isn't cheering. He's grimacing. The bet didn't go through. The button man beat him this time.

"Ah, that sucked, man! That was a home run! Ohtani! We had that!"

Hawaii will have to wait.

THE GAMBLER

"Under six and a half makes sense." Captain Jack is sitting at the counter in the DraftKings sportsbook at Resorts Casino in Atlantic City, hunched over his iPad looking at a screen filled with numbers. "A lot of this adds up into a bet that seems reasonable based on everything I know." He looks at his projections for strikeouts for Boston Red Sox pitcher Nick Pivetta, and compares them to the lines at DraftKings. The verdict: He likes it. The problem: DraftKings doesn't like Captain Jack.

"Captain Jack" Andrews (not his real name) is in his forties, with the manic look of a mad professor who has been up all night working in his lab. In a sense, he has. He has a degree in chemical engineering and worked as an IT director at a law firm, but starting around 2008, he made more money gambling — counting cards, betting sports, hustling casino bonuses — than he did at his job. By 2012, he quit and became a full-time pro.

Andrews probably doesn't fit your stereotype of a professional gambler. There's no tracksuit, no pinkie ring. He's a mild-mannered professional who you'd never cast a suspicious glance at. But despite his normal appearance, his life is quite remarkable. Andrews is blacklisted from casinos all over the world, and lots of sportsbooks won't take his bets. His real name is a well-kept secret. Today in Atlantic City, he wears a baseball cap pulled down low over his eyes. "I'm keeping my head low like this because the camera is at the top of the kiosk," he explains. Sure enough, a small camera is aimed directly at us, and a sign next to the kiosk warns that if we make multiple wagers on the same bet, our bets could all be voided. That's a way for DraftKings to enforce betting limits on kiosks, which are anywhere from $100 to $250 in some cases. "I don't think that is gonna hold up with the DGE," he says, referring to New Jersey's Division of Gaming Enforcement, "but this has been on there for over a year now." We ignore it. We each bet $200 on Pivetta under 6.5 strikeouts and head off in search of the next kiosk to make the same bet.

For Andrews to make any kind of bets on baseball props, something that has long been his bread and butter, he has to bet them at these kiosks. He can't bet them at any of his online accounts, and he can't go up to the window and risk being identified by the sportsbook as a professional. So he settles for $250 a pop because action is action. "I can't bet a single penny on these at home," he says.

Andrews may shield his face from kiosk cameras, but it is well-known online. If you've searched anything gambling-related on YouTube, you've likely seen him. He's made more than 30 videos and countless livestreams to educate gamblers on how to make smart, or "sharp," bets. Since PASPA, Andrews has become a public figure, teaching beginners and recreational bettors how to "lose less" and turning "Captain Jack" into its own persona and brand — sort of a gambler's Carl Sagan. In his gentle and professorial delivery, his videos present a sharp contrast to the

over-the-top pick-shilling sports-betting content online.

"Too many people look at sports betting as a 'get rich quick' scheme. They want to bet a little to win a lot," he says. "That naturally leads them into parlays and same-game parlays — bet types that give the house a 20 to 30 percent house edge." Parlays are bets where multiple wagers are combined in order to create a bigger payout for a smaller investment. The more bets you combine, the more you can win, but the longer the odds.

Andrews says sports betting doesn't need to be this way, and when players learn how to make smarter gambles, it's better for everyone, including the sportsbooks. Bettors who lose right away are less likely to come back, which is bad for a sportsbook that spent a fortune to acquire them. "Our collective challenge, it's not an industry secret, is retention," said Adam Greenblatt, CEO of BetMGM, during an interview with journalist Contessa Brewer. Greenblatt says that while new players were the name of the game at first, now 90 percent of MetMGM's growth is coming from current players betting more. Chris Capra from Caesars agrees: "If every operator in the state of New Jersey reactivated 10 percent of the base of customers that they already have, that is hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue to the state."

Sporttrade CEO Alex Kane

COURTESY OF SPORTTRADE

"A sports bettor who views it as a developing skill, the way one might approach poker or even chess, becomes a more sustainable bettor," argues Andrews. "Sustainability is the tide that lifts all boats, from bettors to sportsbooks to state tax revenue."

Along with Rufus Peabody (real name, believe it or not), one of the world's top sports bettors, Andrews started Unabated, a company that provides bettors with tools like odds screens, simulators, and odds calculators to help them find an edge over sportsbooks. Gamblers like Brody have used Unabated to turn their hobby into something that earns enough to go pro. According to Unabated, many users make $30,000 to $100,000 a year betting on sports, with some earning "big six figures" full time.

Andrews estimates that less than one percent of U.S. sports bettors earn more than $100,000 annually. The major American sportsbooks apparently like it this way and want nothing to do with professionals. Jason Robins, DraftKings' CEO and co-founder, once stated that sports betting "is an entertainment activity. People who are doing this for profit are not the people we want." Since PASPA's repeal, both the number of gamblers and the amount wagered has steadily grown. Today, 38 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico have some form of regulated sports betting, with five more joining last year. The American Gaming Association reported that in 2023 Americans wagered more than $119 billion on sports, up 27.5 percent from the year before. The majority of that sportsbook revenue — 65 to 80 percent, depending on the company — now comes from a small percentage of VIP customers, including high rollers who lose millions and potentially problem gamblers who lose more than they can afford.

This makes winners a problem for sportsbooks. And they've chosen to deal with it by placing strict limits on customers who demonstrate an ability to win over the long run, even if they lose in the short run. "I got limited by DraftKings in September 2018, less than 30 days after they went live in New Jersey. I was down $600. I wasn't even betting a whole lot," Andrews says. "I was betting second-inning lines. And the head trader at the time, who I later met, said, 'I just knew because you were betting second-inning lines, you had to know what you're doing.'"

"Regardless of if you're a professional or not, if you do your homework and you actually have a chance to win or show the ability to win, you'll be cut back," says Mike Fulner (pseudonym), a well-respected, international professional gambler.

Elihu Feustel, a professional sports bettor from Indiana who sometimes consults for sportsbooks to help them profile their players, agrees. "I can quickly identify 90 percent of winning players in the first 20 bets," he tells me, indicating that he doesn't look for whether they win or lose, but whether or not they made bets at a better price than where the market closed, something gamblers call "closing line value," or CLV.

In the first couple of years after PASPA, limiting was something reserved for serious professionals — people like Andrews or Gadoon "Spanky" Kyrollos, who in the early days of legal sports betting in New Jersey gained notoriety exposing sportsbooks that were "kicking him out" by limiting his bets. Back then, Spanky was trying to bet tens of thousands of dollars a game. Today, sportsbooks have become so risk averse that they have extended this type of limiting to all levels of players, including me! During the course of reporting this story, after betting hundreds of dollars a game and winning at three different sportsbooks, my bets were limited, sometimes to as low as a penny a bet.

To give some context, this would never happen at an online casino where someone wanted to gamble on slot machines or blackjack (though for decades, brick-and-mortar casinos have treated blackjack card counters — people who can keep track of how many high and low cards are left in a deck to know when they are more likely to win — similarly). Casino games have odds set in stone and almost always favor the house. You can win short term, but long term, the house knows it will win. In sports betting, things are more dynamic. There's a lot of information that is important to setting prices, like injuries, lineups, even weather, and the sportsbook has to compete with bettors for that information and to make sure they don't end up flat-footed on any given bet — of which there are often thousands of options to keep track.

Once upon a time, bookmakers managed this risk one bet at a time, always adjusting the odds and keeping track of which customers were more likely to win so they could use their bets to help figure out the right prices to set for the rest of the market. Today, some sportsbooks choose instead to move their odds "on air," which is to say they simply copy another (often offshore) sportsbook's lines. They profile winning players, but rather than use those players to their advantage, they limit how much they can bet. Everyone else can bet any amount they want, whether $100 a game or $100,000 a game.

This practice is so widespread they have a name for it: "Ban or bankrupt." Andrews has made exposing it a personal crusade. In May, he spoke at a roundtable on limiting organized by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission. Andrews had a captive audience, and the regulators took him seriously.

The sportsbooks first issued canned statements defending their choice not to participate (DraftKings claimed their "risk management" was confidential), but then relented and showed up en masse to another roundtable in September. At that meeting, FanDuel admitted to limiting players. "Some users may have more information than we do.

U'RE BETTING WITH A LOCAL OW HAS BEEN REMOVED. IT'S DO. THERE'S CORPORATIONS BEHIND IT."

Some users may have a better model than we do," said Cory Fox, FanDuel's vice president of product. "We're comfortable taking wagers from them, but we have to do it in a responsible manner that protects our company."

DraftKings defended its practice of limiting during the roundtable as well, but claimed it doesn't profile players as winners or losers, looking, instead, for the particular kinds of bets a person might be adept at. "When we're talking about limiting, it's limiting a behavior," said Jake List, senior director of regulatory gaming compliance for DraftKings. "That's more the focus than 'Is this person customer type-A or type-B.'"

BetMGM claimed that it only limits what it calls "advantage players," which amounts to about one percent of its bettors. FanDuel claimed that it's even less than one percent of its players who are limited. But a simple search of DraftKings mentions on X reveals that if this cohort of gamblers is that small, they have a mighty voice.

This year, a new nonprofit called American Bettors Voice formed to advocate for sports bettors. Founded by "Spanky" Kyrollos, along with former casino executive Richard Schuetz and legendary gambler Billy Walters, ABV has tried to educate the public and regulators about what bettors are experiencing.

But should anybody be sympathetic to the pro gambler? Isn't it true what DraftKings CEO Robins says — that sports betting is simply entertainment? Just because we made it legal for people to earn a living accepting sports bets, does that also mean we should make it possible for people to earn a living placing them?

Andrews says focusing on professionals like him misses the point. He says the issue isn't about how much people should be allowed to win, but whether it's fair to deny anyone a chance to win at all, especially when winning is what's being advertised. "If we were to have a panel of a hundred recreational bettors," he says, "you would be surprised at the number that believes sports betting is not fair."

Andrews and I retire from our journey up and down the Atlantic City boardwalk to have dinner in a café while we watch the Red Sox-Rockies game and sweat out our Pivetta bet. Pivetta has six strikeouts, and I swallow hard, figuring this is going to be an expensive meal. Andrews is unfazed. "I don't hate our chances," he says. A couple of walks later, and there's a meeting on the mound. Pivetta is pulled, one strikeout shy of going over. I'm elated. I look to Andrews for a fist bump. His head is buried in his iPad, studying the numbers on Unabated for the next game.

THE CEO

I meet Alex Kane at Citizens Bank Park on a blistering Juneteenth for a Phillies-Padres matinee. The ballpark is packed, and the sun beats down on us. Kane and I are sweating, literally and figuratively, because we have a bet on the Phillies. "I never really was much of a sports bettor," he tells me, "but really my love is the Phillies."

This is notable, as Kane is the CEO and co-founder of Sporttrade, a startup sports-betting company. Young, slender, and sharply dressed, with a wisp of red hair, Kane is at ease in the ballpark. He's a sports fan, but a bit of a nerd about it. He's less finance bro than tech bro, though he comes to sports betting with a finance degree from Drexel University. In college, a golf teammate introduced him to sports betting, and Kane became fascinated by how odds and prices were determined. "Trading has been around as long as betting," he says. "I started to realize they were very close to the same thing."

Kane noticed in sports betting, odds were set by bookmakers, much like how New York Stock Exchange prices were once set by specialists: "Now, anyone can offer a price, and exchanges bring buyers and sellers together." He envisioned doing this for sports bettors — building an exchange to eliminate the bookmaker. By the time PASPA came down, Kane started building Sporttrade.

It was an uphill battle. Competing against FanDuel and DraftKings, each with years in daily-fantasy sports, and casino giants like MGM and Caesars spending millions on marketing, made customer acquisition tough. The licensing fees in New Jersey, among the first states to allow sports betting post-PASPA, were also steep, and the required partnerships with casinos or racetracks were costly.

"NO STATE HAS SAID WE'VE SCREWED UP SPORTS BETTING SO BADLY WE'RE GOING TO RESCIND IT."

After partnering with Bally's for a license, Sporttrade began taking bets in 2022. Sporttrade's growth has been modest. In June, a slow month for sports betting, FanDuel led New Jersey with $29,147,618 in revenue, while Sporttrade earned $134,880.

FanDuel and DraftKings control about 60 percent of the New Jersey sports-betting market. MGM and Caesars have struggled to keep up with them. It's clear that DraftKings' and FanDuel's head starts on developing mobile technology through daily-fantasy sports and their strategy of an all-out assault on customer acquisition is paying off.

For years, it felt like you couldn't go 10 minutes without seeing a sportsbook ad (though the American Gaming Association notes that in 2023 there were 31 pharmaceutical ads for every sportsbook ad). Today, sportsbooks are rethinking this, as there's little market share left to capture. "In hindsight, we vastly overpaid for a lot of those opportunities," says Eric Hession, president of Caesars Sports and Online Gaming, of marketing deals with sports teams, athletes, and celebrities, which have included J.B. Smoove, the Mannings, and Super Bowl ads.

In addition to burning cash on marketing, sportsbooks made outrageous deals with state legislators, like in 2021, when they agreed to a 51 percent tax rate in New York — 15 percent higher than the next-highest state tax rate at the time. FanDuel and DraftKings were eager to enter the lucrative New York market, but one year into the deal they went before the state legislature asking to lower the rate, calling it "an unstable foundation." Meanwhile, New York has brought in more than $2 billion in sports-betting revenue in three years and is unlikely to renegotiate.

Some sportsbooks have surrendered. While there were 27 companies in New Jersey at legalization, today there are only 13. "My idea was that big companies would buy the small ones," says legendary Las Vegas bookmaker Roxy Roxborough, who sold his own company to British bookmakers William Hill in 2012. But bigger sportsbooks like FanDuel and DraftKings already have customers. "It turns out small companies don't have anything to offer unless they have better technology. And they don't, so you can just let them go broke." Among the casualties in New Jersey have been casino company Wynn, which left in August 2023, and the major international sportsbook Betway, which left the state's market this year. Penn Entertainment, which operates the ESPN Bet sportsbook after inking a 10-year, $2 billion deal with ESPN last year, has projected a $510 million loss this year in its mobile sportsbook division. Sporttrade may be among the smallest operations, but it's still standing.

The Padres hit a home run near us. A chant of "throw it back" breaks out, and the fan obliges, as is customary at Citizens Bank Park. "That's so great," Kane says, smiling as Phillies fans cheer when the ball plops back on the field. The Phillies, however, are losing, and our bet is in jeopardy. But Kane is nothing if

COLE WILSON

ENEMY OF THE BOOKS
"Courtsiders" like Brody (center) have a timing edge.

not an optimist, and he's taking that optimism for his company all the way to Pittsburgh.

THE POLITICIAN

As I head out of the Steelers locker room, I follow everyone down the tunnel in a full sprint, AC/DC blaring from the stadium loudspeakers, a cameraman right up in my face as I emerge onto the field. I turn to see myself on the jumbotron high above Acrisure Stadium. Next to my awkward mug is the image of a young bearded man smiling in a suit and tie. His name is Shawn Fluharty, and he's in his 10th year as a member of West Virginia's House of Delegates. He's from Moundsville, West Virginia, the son of an electrician and a teacher's aide for special-needs students, a self-described "trailer park kid." "I do not have the political pedigree whatsoever," he tells me. But today, in Acrisure Stadium, he's the man. He's the president of the National Council of Legislators From Gaming States.

Fluharty has brought NCLGS to Pittsburgh for its biannual meeting, and running through the tunnel with me are state senators and representatives from places like Georgia, Florida, and Washington. They're here for more serious business than pretending to be Steelers. It's at these meetings that NCLGS members work together to write the laws that regulate gambling. When they see Fluharty standing in the section of the end zone above us, they wave and call him "Mr. President."

Fluharty paid attention to the effort to overturn PASPA early, and felt bullish about its chances of winning. He helped write and pass a sports-betting law in West Virginia that would trigger the second the Supreme Court decision came down, "and we were one of the first states out the gate."

Many state legislatures adopted sports betting with the hope it would generate new tax revenue. But sports betting is a low-margin business. The revenues in some states haven't been as high as legislators were led to believe they'd be, and nowhere has seen the kind of money New York has brought in. In its first year of legal sports betting, Colorado collected only $6.6 million, leading legislators there to reconsider the way they tax sportsbooks.

BY 2023, AMERICANS WAGERED MORE THAN $119 BILLION ON SPORTS, UP 27.5 PERCENT FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

A few blocks away from the stadium I find a large group of conference attendees schmoozing at a local bar. There are more than just state legislators at NCLGS in Pittsburgh. In addition to operators like Sporttrade's Kane, there are executives from FanDuel, who have sponsored a meet and greet with Steelers great Jerome Bettis later in the week. There are also gamblers here. It seems everyone wants an audience with the politicians.

At the bar, I run into Spanky, gregarious and baby-faced in a bright-blue-checked blazer. In one hand, he clutches a lighter he uses to light everyone's cigars. In the other fist, he clutches a wad of hundred-dollar bills. He's trying to pay for everybody's drinks, and a representative of a gambling-industry consultancy is trying to beat him to it. Spanky, a true gambler, believes the biggest bankroll always picks up the check, but the consultant whips out his corporate credit card and Spanky backs off. "I'm not gonna do battle with a corporate card, bro," Spanky says, and he turns to the bartender and orders a drink.

Spanky was invited to NCLGS by Fluharty to participate in a panel called "Making a Living Off the Odds," which was easily the most-attended panel of the week. Everyone was there to see Billy Walters. Walters is as close to a celebrity as you'll find in this world. He's been featured on *60 Minutes* and has been the subject of articles and a book during his nearly 70 years of betting on sports. After spending three years in federal prison for insider trading, Walters was pardoned by President Trump in 2021 and last year published a bestselling memoir, *Gambler: Secrets From a Life at Risk*. Walters is retired today, but he's still unhappy with how he sees things unfolding with regulated bookmaking.

"I'm here all on my own. I'm no one's hired gun," Walters says to begin the panel. He goes on a tirade for several minutes about everything from the way gamblers are taxed, the way winning players are limited by sportsbooks, and the ineptitude of modern American bookmakers. "With all due respect, the majority of the people that are licensed that do this today don't have a lot of expertise when it comes to booking sports."

He's got a point. Sports betting has been legal in Nevada since 1949, and Americans have bet with illegal bookmakers since at least the late-19th century. Over that time, plenty of people have learned this business inside and out. Today, however, the major sportsbooks are publicly traded and run by people with business and tech backgrounds.

Chris Jones, head of communications at FanDuel, argues that sportsbooks today are a whole different animal than how Vegas used to be. "Operators with scale are processing 50,000 bets per minute during major events like the Super Bowl — volume that retail bookmakers in Las Vegas or Atlantic City did not see," he tells me. If you look at the FanDuel or DraftKings betting menus, you'll find thousands of options, from propositions on individual player performances to outcomes on every drive or possession or at-bat, not to mention the ability to place bets live during a game. Most Las Vegas sportsbooks don't offer as many bets, because it's simply too much to manage. At a certain scale, bookmaking becomes a technology issue rather than one of human expertise. In time, FanDuel's trading and risk-management operation should also benefit from its acquisition by Flutter Entertainment, a global sports-betting company. "It's important to understand that this is only year six of legalized sports betting," Jones says.

Those tasked with regulating and writing legislation are neophytes, too. Some, like Fluharty, turn to experts like Walters for guidance. "I'm big on letting the experts tell me," Fluharty says. From the Massachusetts Gaming Commission investigating player limits to Oregon Rep. Andrea Salinas and Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal's Gambling Addiction, Recovery, Investment, and Treatment (GRIT) Act, aimed at addressing sportsbooks targeting problem gamblers, more officials are learning how to fix the industry. They have no choice. As Fluharty puts it, the toothpaste is already out of the tube. "Not a single state has said we've screwed up sports betting so badly we're going to rescind it," he says. "That's not going to happen with anything still making money."

THE ATHLETE

Elizabeth Thielen has always been a fighter. In her early twenties, when she was only five feet two and 112 pounds, she wandered into the storied Lower East Side Boxing Club in Erie, Pennsylvania, and became the gym's first-ever female prospect. Three months into training, she won her first fight by breaking her opponent's nose. She went on to win back-to-back Pennsylvania Golden Gloves titles. When the women's national amateur championships came around, the workers from Erie's GE plant threw a party to raise the money to send her. She came back home with the national championship. She was profiled in a book and in *The Washington Post*. She was going to be the next big thing in women's boxing. Then she injured her wrist and arm. "I was accessing adrenaline regularly, fighting, then went from that to nothing," Thielen says. "And there was one place in my life where I felt something similar — at a casino."

"I WAS ACCESSI
THEN WENT FROM THAT TO NOTHING. TH
I FELT SOMETHING SIMILAR

Former boxer turned reformed gambler Elizabeth Thielen says she lost six figures during her addiction.

COURTESY OF EPIC GLOBAL SOLUTIONS

NG ADRENALINE REGULARLY, FIGHTING, ERE WAS ONE PLACE WHERE — AT A CASINO."

Thielen found that gambling fueled her need for the rush she got from boxing, so much so that she would sneak away and spend six or seven hours at a time at the casino. "I would have to bet in very risky ways in order to get the adrenaline, increasing my bets, playing blind," she says, referring to gambling without looking at her cards. "That was extremely costly." She'd lose money, then chase those losses by betting more. Ironically, this was exactly how she was trained as an athlete: Never give up. Keep fighting. But at the casino, it was devastating. It's called the gambler's fallacy — the belief that if you keep trying, things will eventually break your way. Unlike in sports, there was nothing an athlete like Thielen could do to change the odds in her favor. Things never broke her way. She lost more money than she can remember. "It's safe to say it was in the six figures." She had sold so much gold to the pawn shop they had come to depend on her. Once, when she didn't show up, a shop sent someone to her house to see if she was OK, and to ask if she had any more gold she wanted to pawn.

Today, Thielen is a certified gambling counselor with EPIC Global Solutions, and she works with college students, leagues, sportsbooks, and casinos. A growing number of states now require sportsbooks to fund responsible-gambling initiatives. Counselors like Thielen are needed because young people and problem gamblers are especially vulnerable. Her background as an athlete is particularly relevant, as recent scandals involving athletes and betting have made states (and the public) nervous about gambling's impact on the integrity of sports.

Jontay Porter of the Toronto Raptors was caught betting against himself and shaving points. Alabama coach Brad Bohannon gave inside information about his pitcher to a gambler for betting purposes. Stories like these have sparked public outcry over gambling's potential to corrupt athletes and coaches, and new ones seem to pop up every week.

The industry argues such scandals prove the system is working. "We don't know what we don't know," says Tres York, senior director of government relations for the American Gaming Association. "Sports-betting scandals aren't new. Now, they're being brought into the light. We have a legal, regulated industry to do that, and the technology to identify it."

While it may be in the industry's interest to frame the issue this way, that viewpoint isn't wrong. It's almost certain that athletes have shaved points, taken dives, or bet on themselves for as long as there have been sports. And it's true we're better equipped to catch them now.

Professional gamblers, often blamed for athlete corruption, also play a role. They can spot irregularities before regulators or sportsbooks because they monitor the markets constantly. Sometimes, an irregularity in the betting market points to a valuable bet, like an oddsmaker's mistake, but sometimes it's a sign of something insidious.

Earlier this year, Temple University basketball players were suspected of shaving points. Gamblers tipped off sportsbooks. Elihu Feustel was asked by a sportsbook to look at three Temple games where the first halves seemed off. "If Temple is an eight-point favorite but there are one and a half in the first half, when they should be four or four and a half," he says, "that's a giant aberration that's so large there's no way to explain it other than match fixing." (No action has been taken against any players, and the Temple investigation is ongoing.)

While it's unclear if corruption in sports post-PASPA is rising or being rooted out, what we do know is that problem gambling is increasing. The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) says gambling addiction could be up as much as 30 percent since sports betting was regulated. Nationwide, calls to gambling hotlines are up since 2018, and in some states they have more than doubled. According to Keith Whyte, NCPG's executive director, in the past year there has been one call to 1-800-GAMBLER every minute of every day.

According to NCPG, 16 percent of sports bettors meet the criteria for clinical gambling disorder. Men between the ages of 18 and 24 are particularly at risk, creating what Whyte calls a "ticking time bomb" of young people growing up not knowing what it's like to not have a sportsbook in their pocket at all times.

But a 2023 Ipsos poll found that among Americans who have bet on sports, roughly 73 percent say they place a bet once a month or less. This tracks with what sportsbooks tell us about their players — the majority gamble recreationally and responsibly, and therefore aren't very profitable for the sportsbooks. That, too, is a problem that exacerbates the issue of responsible gambling.

On the morning I see Thielen speak on a panel at a gaming-industry conference in New Jersey, Behnam Dayanim from the law firm Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, which counts FanDuel, DraftKings, and BetMGM as clients, speaks on a different panel about ways companies can address problem gambling. When asked about instituting deposit limits as a guardrail to keep people from losing too much, he said, "I don't think it's a secret that larger wagerers are our most profitable customers." To illustrate, he refer- Continued on 78

Reviews

★★★★★ CLASSIC ★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ FAIR ★ POOR

The Historic Heartbreak of Rauw Alejandro

The innovative reggaeton superstar gets over a major breakup by turning to the musical roots of Latin pop. By Reanna Cruz

Rauw Alejandro is already a star. But his new album, *Cosa Nuestra,* named after a classic 1969 LP by Puerto Rican salsa icons Willie Colón and Héctor Lavoe, sees Alejandro striving for something grander: to put himself in the same timeless Puerto Rican canon as his idols. It's an album inspired in near-equal parts by R&B and the Fania All-Stars; a record that draws equally from Pharrell Williams, who is featured on "Committed," as much as it does from salsa legends like Frankie Ruiz, covered by Alejandro on "Tú Con Él."

Over the course of his previous four albums, Alejandro's finest skill has come to be his ability to alchemize genres. His 2021 sophomore project, *Vice Versa,* switched readily from glossy pop to rowdy reggaeton instantaneously; certain tracks on last year's *Playa Saturno* and its predecessor, *Saturno,* could have been sent down from a neighboring galaxy's all-night *discoteca.*

Cosa Nuestra is no different. Over the course of its 18 tracks, it switches gears to look to the past as well as the future. Traditional Latin instrumentation and hazy, jazz-club sonics are frequently blended with stadium-filling synthesizers and fluttering hi-hats. He's always had a penchant for the dramatic — and on this record, the character of Rauw Alejandro instead goes by his birth name, Raúl, which, according to him, "has more of a telenovela vibe." That "vibe" is due in part to the use of a live band that includes his father, also named Raúl, on guitar. It's a synergy that becomes evident on the bachata-like outro of "Déjame Entrar," the sultry guitar on "2:12 AM," and the pleasantly surprising saxophone on "Khé?"

It's also an album about heartbreak. Last year, Alejandro and his then-fiancée, Spanish pop star Rosalía, called off their engagement; it makes *Cosa Nuestra* his first project post-split. The forlorn narrator isn't something new when it comes to Latin music. So it makes sense, then, that Alejandro turns to those who came before for inspiration.

This pivot, in its blatant homage to the classics and the *orquestra* days of yore, stacks the odds against Alejandro at times. What gave a lot of salsa musicians like Colón and Lavoe their charm was the ability to appear as both alluring gangsters and empathic storytellers. Alejandro, despite his best intentions on songs like the project's smoky opener, "Cosa Nuestra," is a bit too polished for it to totally work.

It's not to say that he isn't trying. What he continues to do well, though, is assert himself as one of the most exciting reggaetoneros working today. Songs like "Il Capo" and "Baja Pa' Acá" sound like they'd excel live, alongside large plumes of smoke and blown-out speakers. A highlight is the rave-ready "Mil Mujeres," a song that morphs from a twinkling serenade to a EDMerengue, complete with laser sound effects, phonk 808s, and a drum-and-bass breakdown.

A lot of the record also aims to outfit this "Raúl" character as a playboy with a sensitive side. On "Amar de Nuevo," he laments, "*Sufrir no es nuevo pa' mí*" — "Suffering is not new to me" — and on other songs, like "Se Fue," a duet with Italian singer Laura Pausini, he talks about someone leaving, for reasons he can't quite figure out. It's easy here to read between the lines as to who that person could be, and suggests a more candid, mature Alejandro. But

★★★½
RAUW ALEJANDRO
Cosa Nuestra
SONY

as much as he yearns for his lost love, he also fixates on a sex-forward lifestyle, almost to the point of parody. It seems more intentional than earnest, but still: "Espresso Martini" is a silky R&B come-down filled with awkward phrases like "*El sexo es el lenguaje,*" and the album's closer, "Sexxxmachine," is just as hedonistic.

But that song is endearingly genuine too. In the album's final moments, Alejandro thanks his fans, his collaborators, and his band. *Cosa Nuestra,* after all, translates to "our thing." No matter what comes his way, it's all love, whether it be for his previous relationships, his new affections, or his Puerto Rican idols. Ⓡ

SHAWN MENDES OPENS UP AND BARES ... SOME

★★★
SHAWN MENDES
Shawn
ISLAND

FROM THE VERY beginning of his fifth album, *Shawn,* Shawn Mendes makes it clear he still doesn't know who he is. Opening track "Who I Am" is riddled with the anxiety and disillusionment of a quarter-life crisis: "Got a lot of talk in my brain right now/Everything's hard to explain out loud," he sings in the first verse.

On *Shawn,* he tries his best to detail everything that's happened to him in the past two years since he abruptly canceled his *Wonder* world tour and watched the unraveling of his relationship with Camila Cabello become a public spectacle. His journey of self-exploration leads him to a folkier sound than ever before: Mendes strips away his radio-pop penchant for a more rootsy, Americana-infused sound. For the most part, it works for him; the John Mayer acolyte takes to this form of barefoot introspection like a fish to water and is at his most powerful when he pairs it with the truly honest storytelling.

On "Why Why Why," he bares all about an experience of nearly becoming a dad, while on album standout "Heart of Gold," he opens →

Illustration by NICOLE RIFKIN

CRITICS WEIGH IN
WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SONG OF 2024?

I know **"Love Me Jeje,"** by Tems (right), is going to be at the top of my Spotify Wrapped this year, rightly so. It's sunshine in a song. —MANKAPRR CONTEH

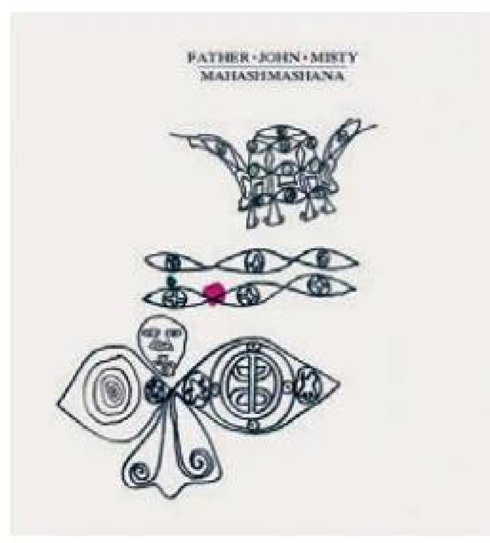
Jessica Pratt wrote the greatest closing track of 2024 with **"The Last Year,"** a soothing curtain call where Pratt's beloved trill states a beautiful prophecy: "The storyline goes forever." —LEAH LU

Raye served up a career-defining vocal performance on the seven-minute opus **"Genesis,"** a record that spans big-band jazz, gospel, pop, and R&B with some hip-hop sprinkled in, too. —LARISHA PAUL

If U2 did a Texas country-rock song, it'd sound like **"Radio Wave,"** a career high for Silverada (f.k.a. Mike and the Moonpies), with a whoa-whoa chorus and a dig at the Americana genre. —JOSEPH HUDAK

← up about missing a funeral for someone in his ex-lover's family when they likely needed him the most. The album would be stronger, however, if Mendes let himself sit in the confusion with a little more stillness. He makes the mistake of being too restless to be fully realized; his lyrical attempts at proving that he's come out on the other side of this experience lead him to half-baked clichés and weak affirmations, as heard on forgettable, cheesy moments like "The Mountain" and "Rollin' Right Along." The most cliché of all is a cover of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah," an unnecessary and overdone moment that adds little to the story of the song or even Mendes' own journey.

There's still clearly plenty of emotional reckoning that Mendes — as a teen idol turned young man grappling with heartbreak — should let himself parse. In the album's most successful moments, he proves he's at his best when he embraces his uncertainties. **BRITTANY SPANOS**



FATHER JOHN MISTY DANCES WITH DEATH

★★★½

FATHER JOHN MISTY
Mahashmashana
SUB POP

DEATH COMES FOR us all, but not before time makes fools of us first. And that interminable in-between, life — all-consuming, enthralling, devastating, and dynamic as it is — when you really get down to it, is largely spent dying. *Mahashmashana,* the new album from Father John Misty, isn't an effort to square that circle, but feels fascinated by that monumental conundrum with only one answer.

But while his focus may be on the end, *Mahashmashana* is anything but dour or doleful. It's flush instead with Josh Tillman's typical cryptic wit and heady musings. The album's title track begins with the lines "His body is a Gelson's/Her soul, the fallen star" — a spiritualized reference to the upscale Southern Californian supermarket chain used as a launchpad for an epic meditation on corporeal form. Whereas Tillman's last album, 2022's *Chloë and the Next 20th Century,* was a trippy take on Old Hollywood and the Great American Songbook, *Mahashmashana* largely returns to the sweeping, Seventies-steeped orchestral pop rock that's always suited Father John Misty best. Most of the songs stretch past the five-minute mark, allowing Tillman and co-producer/arranger Drew Erickson to offer up a panoply of tones and textures. "She Cleans Up" is a rugged, chugging garage rocker; "I Guess Time Just Makes Fools of Us All" dances across a vast disco landscape; and "Josh Tillman and the Accidental Dose" draws you in with a sweet soul groove before serving up blown-out string stabs.

The biggest sonic swing is "Screamland," where an atmospheric hush builds to a, dare we say, Coldplay-esque explosion of synths. And Tillman's characteristic lyricism ("Stabbing at the ashtray like it might give up the truth/Like it might finally confess who else you're nearly faithful to") settles into one of his more plainspoken choruses: "Stay young/Get numb/Keep dreaming/Screamland." Whether it works is likely a matter of taste, or maybe even just your mood that day; but to the extent this choice succeeds — and it largely does — is a testament to Tillman's commitment to grand gestures. **JON BLISTEIN**

GWEN STEFANI GIVES HERSELF HER FLOWERS

★★★

GWEN STEFANI
Bouquet
INTERSCOPE

GWEN STEFANI'S VOICE burns white-hot at the center of any project she's involved in, and her still-agile mezzo-soprano is the main attraction on her first album since 2017 — an aggressively pleasant collection that continues her rebranding as a down-home country gal. "Somebody Else's," the jumpy pop-punk cut that kicks off the album, is powered by resentment and regret, with Stefani letting an ex know she's thrilled he's moved on. It's one high point of an album that attempts to split the difference between Stefani's pit-ready past and country-wife present. (She married Nashville star Blake Shelton in 2021.) "Pretty" is a slide-guitar-accented ballad in which Stefani gathers up her regrets before revealing that she "never felt pretty 'til you loved me." *Bouquet* is stuffed with flower imagery: The anniversary-party-appropriate "Bouquet" is littered with sunflowers and roses; the road-trip-playlist-made "Marigolds" turns its titular flowers into a marital bed; and "Purple Irises," a sparkling duet with Shelton, uses its blooms to signify mutual contentment. Stefani's glide toward her garden of delight is enjoyable enough, if a bit bland when inhaled all at once. **MAURA JOHNSTON**

STAFF PICKS: FIVE RECENT ALBUMS WE CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF

HALSEY
THE GREAT IMPERSONATOR
Halsey has been so many different people over the past decade. But *The Great Impersonator* is her rawest, darkest incarnation yet. Halsey stands alone as she turns 30, confessing that she has no idea who she is anymore. This is the bleakest music Halsey has ever made, and that's saying something.
ROB SHEFFIELD

TYLER, THE CREATOR
CHROMAKOPIA
With his latest, Tyler reaches the conclusion of what feels like a career-long narrative arc, except even with Tyler as the director, real life doesn't play out like in the movies. Throughout *Chromakopia,* we find him dealing with aging in a world very much of his own creation.
JEFF IHAZA

Tyler, the Creator

FLYING LOTUS
SPIRIT BOX EP
The new Flying Lotus EP kicks off making joyous noise with "Ajhussi," a bubbly house track that's unlike anything the experimental hip-hop artist has done before.
Throughout *Spirit Box,* he connects to low-fi house music as well as with new collaborators, like R&B innovator Dawn Richard and Indian singer Sid Sriram. It's the sound of an established trailblazer picking up a spark from some younger fire starters.
SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON

POM POM SQUAD
MIRROR STARTS MOVING WITHOUT ME
On *Mirror Starts Moving Without Me,* the Brooklyn grunge band mixes tough introspect and pop smarts. On album opener "Downhill," singer Mia Berrin makes a daring promise to come "back from the dead." Meanwhile, tracks like "Running From Myself" and "Everybody's Moving On" chronicle the experience of moving past the monstrous parts of yourself that are better left behind. **MAYA GEORGI**

Halsey

JOHN WELLS
WHOLE WORLD BURNIN' DOWN
Baltimore MC John Wells acknowledges our whole world burning down with the title of his latest project, a confessional on grief and the pursuit of money in "an amount only mad professors can count." Wells makes sense of the loss of his father and shares his poignant observations on society — and our purpose within it. **ANDRE GEE**

FROM TOP: MATTHEW BAKER/GETTY IMAGES; CHRISTOPHER POLK/"BILLBOARD"/GETTY IMAGES; VALERIE MACON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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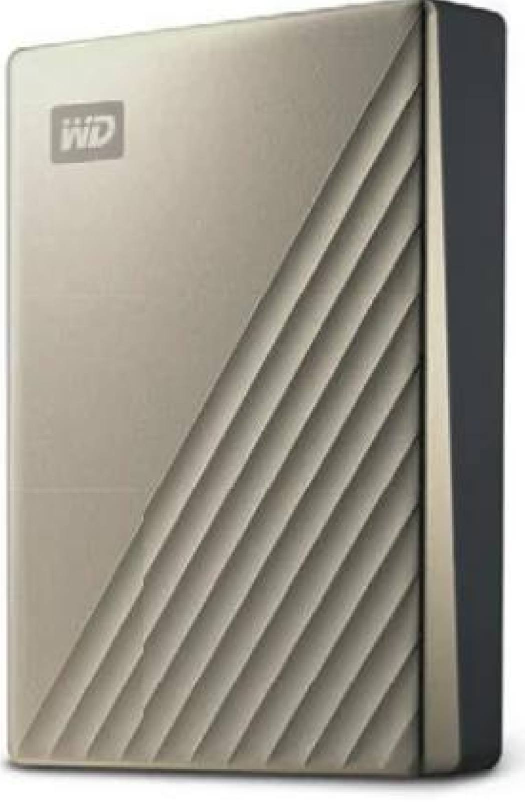

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Essay

SOUTHERN ROCK IS RISING FROM THE ASHES

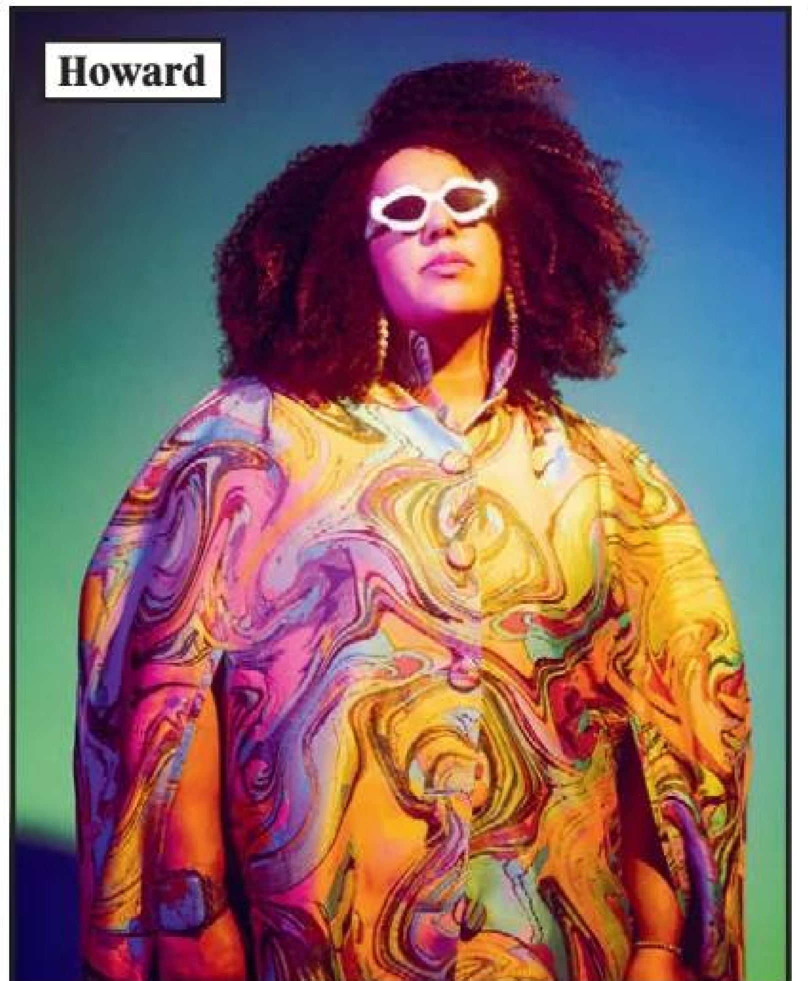
A new generation of musicians is reimagining the region and reshaping music. By Will Hermes

The American South is a mess of cultural contradictions, and if those contradictions have sometimes stoked the dumpster fire of U.S. politics in recent years, they've also fueled some of the best music being made right now. In 2024, the story of rock is a story of Southern rock.

On two of the year's best albums, *Tigers Blood* and *Manning Fireworks,* Katie "Waxahatchee" Crutchfield (Alabama) and Jake "MJ" Lenderman (North Carolina) have made 21st-century classic rock with indie-rock smarts and unmistakably Southern sensibilities. Zach Bryan (Oklahoma), the left-field hitmaker with a line from Bruce Springsteen's "State Trooper" tattooed on his left bicep, made a Southern-rock album in all but name, with chiseled anthems of individualism in a Southern literary tradition, and a Springsteen cameo to boot. New LPs by Brittany Howard (Alabama), Sturgill Simpson (Kentucky), Rosali Middleman (North Carolina), Margo Price (Illinois > Tennessee), Billy Strings (Michigan > Kentucky > Tennessee), Gillian Welch (New York > California > Tennessee), and Dave Rawlings (Rhode Island > Tennessee), not to mention Willie Nelson and any number of nominally "country" artists, furthered the argument that top-tier rock and rock-adjacent music are growing like old-school weed below the Mason-Dixon. Southern rock even got play on the 2024 political stage.

What's up here? One could point to various things. As a subgenre, "Southern rock" has long been considered a redheaded stepchild, kind of absurd when you consider that rock & roll *is* Southern music: Ask Little Richard (Georgia), Sister Rosetta Tharpe (Arkansas), or Elvis Presley (Mississippi). Rock & roll migrated north and out West; it morphed; scenes rose and fell. For a hot Seventies minute, "Southern rock" classics by the Allman Brothers, the Marshall Tucker Band, the Charlie Daniels Band, the Outlaws, and Lynyrd Skynyrd sat alongside LPs by the Grateful Dead, the Eagles, Poco, Neil Young, and the Flying Burrito Brothers on the shelves of rock fans coast to coast, border to border. All of these records distilled the sounds and mythology of the South into what was simply, at the end of the day, American music.

Lenderman


Howard

Crutchfield

The misapprehension of the "rebel flag" as a racially neutral Southern-pride emblem by certain bands tainted the Southern-rock subgenre, and what signified a progressive "New South" to some suggested retrogressive antebellum nostalgia to others. That was a central point of Drive-By Truckers' 2001 *Southern Rock Opera,* a touchstone that finally got a properly mastered vinyl reissue this year. "It's actually *more* timely now than it was when we made it, unfortunately — because of all the racial aspects of where we are politically right now," Patterson Hood told me earlier this year, before his Alabama-born band began a *Southern Rock Opera* revival tour. He wasn't wrong: Read up on South Carolina gerrymandering, or talk to someone in Springfield, Ohio, about pets and immigration.

Lenderman grew up on the Truckers sound, and you can hear their influence in his music, as well as Neil Young and the Band's, too — musicians whose Canadian perspectives complicated the notion of Southern rock from the start. Lenderman's politics are less overt, more baked into his storytelling, which echoes regional authors like Larry Brown and Harry Crews, channeling dubious characters with deadpan empathy. "I've got a houseboat docked at the Himbo Dome/And a wristwatch that's a pocketknife and a megaphone," he sings on "Wristwatch," conjuring dipshit braggart machismo with a snarky nod to South Carolina's Hippodrome Horse Complex, home to suburban cowboy wannabes. Elsewhere on the album, a Bible waver is told ruefully: "One of these days you'll kill a man/For asking a question you don't understand."

Hood is a big fan of Waxahatchee, Lenderman, and his band Wednesday, who made last year's Southern-rock gem *Rat Saw God.* The other great 2023 Southern-rock album was *Weathervanes,* by Jason Isbell, who got his start in the Truckers. It's telling Isbell was asked to play at the Democratic National Convention. Backdropped by the image of a giant American flag hung on a barn, he sang "Something More Than Free," his unsatisfied-workingman's anthem of a laborer being bled so dry he's too exhausted to attend church on Sunday. Hood and the Truckers, meanwhile, played a delegate party hosted by Arizona's Mark Kelly. Conservatives wanted Southern-rock signifying, too. At the RNC, Michigan carpetbagger Kid Rock shouted out Hank Williams Jr. and Run-D.M.C. between cheerleading Trump chants, while Nashville's Sixwire covered the Allmans' "Midnight Rider" alongside Merle Haggard's "America First." A recent Trump ad shilling $100 "silver" coins with his image on them had a cheesy Skynyrd-knockoff soundtrack.

Of course, "Southern rock" is also about bands like the B-52's and R.E.M., as unashamedly progressive as they were Southern. So it was fitting to hear Michael Stipe and Isbell playing R.E.M. songs at a Harris-Walz rally in Pittsburgh in October, hoping to swing things in a positive direction. They also sang Isbell's "Hope the High Road," an on-point prayer for coming together to build "a world you want to live in." It was the kind of unifying performance that musicians, and politicians, should aspire to more often.

In 2024, the story of rock is the story of Southern rock.

FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: CHARLIE BOSS; BOBBI RICH; CHRIS BLACK

THE MAGIC OF TAYLOR SWIFT

Taylor Across the Eras

THE STORIES BEHIND HER GREATEST HITS

HER MOST REVEALING PROFILES

ON NEWSSTANDS NOW

OVER-50 SHADES OF PLAY Lust blooms between Dickinson and Kidman.

Finally Got Some Satisfaction

As a CEO who tumbles into an affair with her intern, Nicole Kidman gives mature female desire the attention it deserves in *Babygirl*. By David Fear

Maybe you've noticed a serious uptick lately in May-December screen romances that favor the older-woman side of the equation. That still won't prepare you for the raw, unfiltered sub-dom showcase Nicole Kidman gets with boyish twenty-something Harris Dickinson in *Babygirl*. Since the Nineties, Kidman has not exactly been timid in portraying characters whose desires stray into the realm of kink (think *Eyes Wide Shut*, *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*, *The Paperboy*). In this drama from Dutch filmmaker Halina Reijn, she explores the power dynamics inherent in an affair between a CEO and her intern. The question quickly becomes: Which party genuinely holds the power, and which gets pleasure by giving it away?

When we meet Kidman's tech executive Romy, she's in the middle of intimate relations with her theater-director husband, Jacob (Antonio Banderas). After they coo postcoital sweet nothings to each other, Romy slips away into another room and furiously masturbates to online porn. She loves her spouse, her two teenage daughters, her high-octane job, her tony New York apartment, and the family's quaint getaway upstate. But satisfaction — the carnal kind — eludes her. Even specific instructions she gives in bed end in frustration.

Enter Samuel (Dickinson, sure to cause damp brows and sweaty palms by the dozens). Even before they formally meet, Romy spies him forcing an aggressive dog to heel in the street. There's something about the way he bends the animal to his will that makes her take notice. Later, in the office, Samuel makes an impudent comment during the interns' group introduction to the boss and, during a one-on-one with her, cracks that what she really wants is not to control but to be controlled. It's inappropriate, but not inaccurate. During work drinks at a bar, Samuel sends her over a glass of milk. She gulps it down. Soon, he has her lapping that same beverage out of a saucer like a kitten. And the master-and-servant foreplay has barely even begun.

Reijn's previous movie was the 2022 millennial horror-comedy *Bodies Bodies Bodies*, but it's her 2019 debut, *Instinct* — in which a therapist is infatuated with a rapist client — that set a precedent for this subversive take on the Pandora's box of sexual repression. Desired females are a subject as old as the movies, but the medium has always had a hard time tackling female desire without a sense of puritanical judgment or heavy panting. *Babygirl* tries to waltz over this minefield. Occasionally, it trips over its own stiletto-heeled feet, and you sometimes feel like it's one food montage away from becoming *9 ½ Weeks: The 21st-Century Edition*.

Banderas and Kidman

BABYGIRL
In Theaters
DEC. 25

Yet it's Kidman — and specifically, her willingness to go there in terms of presenting a sexual liaison involving humiliation, shame, and, ultimately, liberation — who keeps this drama from devolving into Skinemax-by-numbers. It's the most naked performance she's ever given, with the physical exposure being the least vulnerable aspect of it all. The way she balances Romy's inner conflict, not to mention the sense of risk that provides the real erotic thrill, never falters or feels less than feverish, even when the script does her no favors. From the title on, *Babygirl* will start conversations about consent, the fetishization of control, and the rush of crossing a half-dozen forbidden lines. Even the lessons-learned ending leans toward the healing power of deviancy under the supervision of a designated driver. But Kidman makes it feel like not just a provocation so much as a tantalizing what-if. As in: What if a movie were to take outré female sexuality seriously? What if the fodder of an "adult movie" could be turned into something as unique as a movie for real adults?

FROM TOP: A24; NIKO TAVERNISE/A24

Danson

GOOD GRIEF

TED DANSON IS SHERLOCK OF THE RETIREMENT HOME

★★★★

A MAN ON THE INSIDE
Netflix
STREAMING NOW

A *GOOD PLACE* reunion between actor Ted Danson and writer Michael Schur works beautifully in this clever, poignant comic-mystery series. Danson plays retired college professor Charles, adrift since the death of his wife, who agrees to work as an undercover operative for private detective Julie (Lilah Richcreek Estrada) to help her solve an apparent jewel theft at a San Francisco retirement community. The stakes of the case are deliberately low, so the focus can be on Charles climbing out of his grief with the help of his new friends (played by an ace group of older character actors like Sally Struthers, Stephen McKinley Henderson, and John Getz), making peace with his daughter, Emily (Mary Elizabeth Ellis), and finding out that there's still plenty of life left for him to enjoy. Danson is dryly funny and achingly vulnerable, and Schur's fellow *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* alum Stephanie Beatriz shows a completely different side of herself as the retirement home's kind, overworked director. Not as laugh-out-loud funny as Schur's other series, but utterly lovely. ALAN SEPINWALL

POSTWAR HERO

A SURVIVOR'S GREAT EXPECTATIONS

★★★★½

THE BRUTALIST
In Theaters
DEC. 20

BEFORE WORLD WAR II, Lázsló Tóth (Adrien Brody) was a celebrated Hungarian architect who studied at Bauhaus. After the war, he is just another Jewish immigrant who escaped the camps and came to the U.S. to seek sanctuary. But a chance to renovate the library of a rich and powerful industrialist (Guy Pearce) leads to an even bigger opportunity for Tóth: Design and construct a major community center in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. This commission will allow him to bring his wife, Erzsébet (Felicity Jones), to America. It will also make him a slave to his toxic benefactor and destroy him mind, body, and soul.

Clocking in around three-and-a-half hours (including an overture and an intermission) and displaying the scope, excess, and ambition of the New Hollywood mavericks' shoot-for-the-moon projects, actor-writer-director Brady Corbet's throwback to the days when giants ruled single-screen theaters is like a gift from the heavens. The filmmaker labored for seven years on this mutant hybrid of *The Fountainhead, The Conformist,* and the *Godfather* movies, and it should be met with an equal degree of awe and admiration. It's not that they don't make movies like this anymore — of course they don't! — so much as no one bothers to present this type of sprawling narrative with this level of storytelling, chops, nerve, and verve. If *The Brutalist* is not a new Great American Epic, the kind that takes advantage of everything the medium has to offer, it's as close to one as we're likely to get in 2024. D.F.

SCHOOL TIES

FROM TROUBLED BOYS TO BROKEN MEN

★★★½

NICKEL BOYS
In Theaters
DEC. 13

MOST FOLKS would have turned Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer-winning novel about a Florida reform school rife with racism and abuse (based not-so-loosely on the real-life Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys) into a straightforward, straight-faced drama about yesterday's evils and today's reckonings. RaMell Ross decided to go down a road completely unpaved and, dear God, does it make all the difference. The filmmaker borrows the experimental, stream-of-consciousness style of his documentary *Hale County This Morning, This Evening* to tell the story of Elwood (Ethan Herisse) and Turner (Brandon Wilson), two young men who bond while trying to survive life in what feels more like a prison camp than a "corrective" institution. Ross also presents the entire film in dueling first-person perspectives, switching between the teens at key moments. It's the sort of gamble that will turn off those expecting the usual awards-season misery porn, and leave any viewer willing to give in to this unique take on American history — a lopsided judicial system and racial inequity — an emotional wreck. Kudos. D.F.

Domingo

TALKING DEAD

WHERE MEDIA, RACE, AND POLITICS COLLIDE

★★★

THE MADNESS
Netflix
STREAMING NOW

IN THIS APTLY NAMED political thriller, CNN pundit Muncie (Colman Domingo) is framed for the murder of a white-nationalist leader and becomes a pawn in a dangerous game played among the dead man's followers, a violent antifa cell, and multiple billionaires and government agencies. No one ever actually says "This conspiracy goes all the way to the top," but it's heavily implied throughout. Created by playwright Stephen Belber, *The Madness* has a lot on its mind about race relations, activism, and disinformation that allows corporations to "play three-card monte with people's minds." The story builds in craziness, including the introduction of Alison Wright from *The Americans* as a lethal corporate fixer, before running out of steam in the final chapters. But Domingo is a commanding presence throughout in leading-man mode. A.S.

IN BRIEF
More to See

Keira Knightley and Ben Whishaw are spies for hire on a big case at Christmastime in the fun, if overstuffed, Netflix miniseries **BLACK DOVES (DEC. 5)**. ● You think modern motherhood won't change you? **NIGHTBITCH (DEC. 6)** puts toddler-mom Amy Adams through the ringer before liberating her through some animalistic, after-hours transformations. ● Jude Law takes on Midwestern white supremacists in **THE ORDER (DEC. 6)**, a 1980s-set thriller that has no resonance whatsoever today, no siree. ● Real-life female boxing champion Claressa Shields gets the sports-biopic treatment in **THE FIRE INSIDE (DEC. 25)**, which charts her rise from scrappy hopeful to Olympic gold-medal winner and activist; *Star*'s Ryan Destiny is Shields, and Brian Tyree Henry is her coach, Jason Crutchfield.

Adams

IN THE WORDS OF... TERI GARR

In a 2008 AV Club interview, the late comedic screen star held forth about some of her famous directors

FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: COLLEEN E. HAYES/NETFLIX; AMANDA MATLOVICH/NETFLIX; ANNE MARIE FOX/SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES; ALAN SINGER/NBCU PHOTO BANK/NBCUNIVERSAL/GETTY IMAGES

as well as half of *Bringing It All Back Home,* released four months before Newport. Not to mention that "Like a Rolling Stone" was already charting at the time of the festival. But the crowd, at least part of it, did boo him. And at least in the most archetypal version of the story — which the movie leans into, hard — Seeger was deeply offended by Dylan's decision to drown out his own lyrics, and violate the festival's communal, rootsy spirit with raucous noise.

"Every single person I talked to who was there, like literally there at the moment, said that Pete blew a gasket at a level they had rarely seen," Norton says. Even the movie doesn't dare include the clearly apocryphal tale that Seeger grabbed an ax to literally cut off the power, but it does nod to the fact that there were axes nearby, thanks to a work-song performance that day. And the movie attempts something even more audacious, bringing in an infamous incident, a certain shout of betrayal from the crowd, that actually happened in the U.K. a year later. "Jim wasn't interested in doing another documentary," Norton says. "He was interested in almost a fable."

In any case, Dylan himself has always had little interest in literal historical truth. His own memoir, *Chronicles,* is more postmodern textual game than actual autobiography, and he worked with Martin Scorsese to lace 2019's *Rolling Thunder Revue* documentary with an extraordinary amount of fiction. Norton, who's texted with Thom Yorke about how "punk rock" Dylan's performances in that film are, finds it all hilarious, comparing Dylan to the "mythological trickster." "He's such a troublemaker," he says, noting the singer's "obvious pleasure in obfuscation and distortion."

Norton says Mangold told him that Dylan insisted on putting at least one totally inaccurate moment — he won't reveal what — into *A Complete Unknown.* When the director expressed some concern about the public's reaction, as Norton tells it, Dylan stared at him. "What do you care what other people think?" he asked.

Chalamet and I make our way to the edge of the Hudson River, right next to the indoor sports complex Chelsea Piers. We sit side by side on a bench, facing a vast, sunless horizon, dusted with gray mist. That's when we start talking about destiny. His time in Dylan's home state, Chalamet says, reminded him of his visits to the French hinterlands. "My dad grew up in the Minnesota of France, you could say," he says, talking quickly, with urgency. "So I would spend my summers in that region, and I would feel the exact same way. You feel boxed in — and you feel like you have something more to say."

"I could relate to that so deeply in my own life, my own career," he continues. He felt pointed toward a particular future, but also that he could be easily knocked off course. "'If you want God to laugh at your plans, say them out loud.' In my early career, even close friends could say something that just throws you for a week. And then, in determination, you gotta put yourself on a certain path. I never changed my name, but I understood it. I felt it in my core in some way." Why would Robert Zimmerman need to become Bob Dylan? You might look in the mirror, Chalamet suggests, and realize your name doesn't reflect "the gravitas of what you feel inside."

When I bring up the weird number of parallels between Paul Atreides, Bob Dylan, and maybe even himself — the whole Chosen One, Lisan al Gaib, messianic fate thing — Chalamet considers the idea quite seriously. "The massive difference in the framing is, for Paul Atreides, the destiny is preordained, and it's part of his resentment for his status. He feels like it had nothing to do with him, in a sense. And it's a great source of existential strain. And for Bob, it's the mischievous joy in knowing, yeah, your talent, your special ability is your own doing, your own gift from God in a sense. I think there's probably always a pride in that for him." And why is Chalamet drawn to these savior roles? He laughs, finally. "Hey, man," he says, "they're finding *me.* Not the other way around."

During high school, he felt like he had to dodge "drugs and alcohol everywhere." "I felt like I had this little nugget that I had to protect, of potential or something." He starts talking again about something else he shares with Dylan — that burst of vertigo-inducing fame when they were barely out of their teens. "It's some shit at that age," he says. "It really is." But he quickly changes the subject.

Dylan, of course, cracked up soon after the events of the movie, skidding off his motorcycle into semi-isolation in Woodstock, New York. Chalamet allows that his pandemic time off, which included his own stint in that upstate New York town, served the same function. It was an "imposed look in the mirror, after the slingshot, and feeling like, 'OK, this is where I am,'" he says. "But equally, you can look in that mirror too long and create a rut that's not there sometimes." Fame can increase that danger: "With attention or whatever, it's like you gotta be extra careful." He takes a breath. "And also not take yourself so fucking seriously. Just enjoy life."

He told me more than once that he was all too aware that he would never get to play Bob Dylan again, that the "role of a lifetime" is over. But I point out that's simply not true — he's young enough that he could easily reprise the part at some later point in his and Dylan's timeline.

"Oh, my God," he says. "Yeah. I've never had that thought, but you're right. If anybody was ever deserving of it, as far as shape-shifting — Rolling Thunder Revue and born-again and *Time Out of Mind* …" He brightens. "It's an interesting thought!" Ⓡ

sonally moved away from that," he told *Rolling Stone* in 2010. "I wanted to see what hardcore Southern guys like Warren or jazz guys like Jimmy Herring could bring to the music."

Thus was born Phil Lesh and Friends, a band whose lineup was as malleable as a Dead jam. Joined by Haynes and Herring, along with the Black Crowes' Chris Robinson, drummer John Molo, keyboardist John Medeski, guitarist Steve Kimock, and dozens more, Lesh yanked Dead standards out of the nostalgia circuit and turned them into living, heaving entities.

"Phil was telling everyone he was working with that he didn't want anybody to play or sing any of the Jerry Garcia signature stuff in the songs," Haynes recalls. "He wanted everybody to bring their own personality in and take a fresh approach to all the music. He had this idea that it would be really cool to interpret Grateful Dead songs in a whole new way. That was his mission at the time. His open-mindedness about music surpassed just about anyone I've ever met."

After Garcia's death, the other members of the Dead soldiered on, sometimes together and sometimes in their own bands, playing many of the songs in their repertoire. Lesh participated in reunion tours like the Other Ones and the Dead, and hooked up with Weir in Furthur. Putting aside decades of intergroup friction, Lesh regrouped with Weir, Hart, and Kreutzmann one last time for the band's 50th-anniversary "Fare Thee Well" shows in 2015. For musical and likely personal reasons as well, Lesh wasn't part of Dead & Co., the offshoot band that formed in 2015 and featured John Mayer filling in for Garcia. Asked in 2016 what Lesh thought of Dead & Co., Weir told *Rolling Stone,* "He hasn't weighed in, and I'm not sure what he would make of it. He has a different approach to the music than we've developed."

Indeed, Lesh preferred his own world, where he could continue to shape the music according to his own guidelines. No matter the lineup or venue, from his own now-shuttered Terrapin Crossroads club in Marin County, California, to one of his regular gigs at the Capitol Theatre in Port Chester, New York, one thing remained constant: One could always count on seeing Lesh, with one of his oversize basses, playing a Dead song or the occasional classic-rock cover, grinning ear to ear and bouncing on his toes.

"He had created this own version where he was in his element and was so satisfied with that," says Hornsby. "It was so palpable and beautiful to see. In his eighties, that SOB would stand there with that heavy six-string bass the whole night and never sit, and play for hours. It was something to shoot for." Ⓡ

Additional reporting by Ethan Millman

STEVIE NICKS

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studio and work with other people. He's also an icon, and he can teach people. He's not stopped in his tracks. He can still make music and have fun.

For what it's worth, I think you're a much larger icon in that regard.
Well, that was one of the problems, wasn't it?

Before Christine died, she told us that John was not in great health. Do you have any updates?
John's wife passing away [earlier this year] has been very, very hard on him. I actually have not talked to him since Julie passed away, because he made it very clear that he really didn't want to talk to anybody until he was miles away from it. I was very close to John, so I'm only following his wishes. When I get home after *SNL,* I'm going to call him — and a lot of other people that I need to speak with that I haven't been able to talk to in the last two years — and see how he is and go and see him.

You recently spoke about performing "The Chain" at future solo shows. Would it be a different version?
I found a demo of it that I actually must have had on cassette. It was a whole different song that led into the chorus of "The Chain." And when we were recording "The Chain," all they had was the part I call "the monsters are coming" [the bridge]. This great end. And Lindsey said, "You have a song. Could we have it?" And I'm like, "Sure. Why not?" So I just gave it to them. They took that part of the song off, that was the verses.

So a friend of mine said, "Did you know that there's a demo of the first 'Chain'?" And I said, "No. Can you play it for me?" And I'm going like, "Ooh, that's a good song. We could do a revised version of 'The Chain.'" I have already sent it off to Greg Kurstin, who's one of my favorite producers.

Would this new version of "The Chain" be on *The Vampire's Wife*?
Mm-hmm. And it will blow people's minds because it's a very different song. And yet, it flows right into its chorus, which is "The Chain" chorus. So I'm going like, "Well, I bet the world would love that." Because I would love that. That's a song that I wrote when I was really in my "Chain" style of writing songs. It would be great for that to come out. So that's part of what I call my ghost album.

Have you seen *Stereophonic*?
What is that?

It's an insanely successful Broadway play about a band on the cusp of stardom as they record their new album in Sausalito. So it's basically ... about you ... and Fleetwood Mac.
Really?

Yes.
How in the world have I gotten this far without knowing about this?

In 1966, during your senior year of high school, you briefly had a recording contract. Your career would have been totally different, a late-Sixties singer like Joni Mitchell or Linda Ronstadt.
It would have. My dad had a good friend, Jackie Mills, that worked for 20th Century Fox. Jackie flew me down to Los Angeles, and I went in there with my guitar and played three songs. He said, "Well, I think that you're really good, and we'd like to sign you to 20th Century Fox. We'll be in touch." I got home, and we got contracts that were sent really soon. My parents were like, "Well, of course you have to finish school." And my mom's going, "She's going to college." And I'm like, "OK, everybody settle down. It's not World War V."

So we signed them, but there was a clause in Jackie's contract that's called a key-man clause, which means if he leaves, he takes his artists with him. He left probably the summer after my senior year, before I had even gone back down there. I was released. Had I not been released, it was a five-year contract, so that would've been '67, '68, '69, '70, '71. So that would've aced out Buckingham Nicks, Fleetwood Mac. All of it.

I probably would've lived in Ladies of the Canyon, down the street from Joni and Linda and David Crosby and Stephen Stills and Neil Young. I would've wanted to be a part of that. That would've been super interesting. But I didn't ever have any doubts that this would be my life. I believe in me. I believe in the Church of Stevie.

Do you have plans to retire, or do you see yourself like Mick Jagger, doing this in your eighties?
Well, if I can stay looking pretty good.... When I think that it's age-inappropriate, I won't do it anymore. But then I think I would just bring the shows down. I'd be happy to tour all the beautiful gothic theaters of the United States and Europe, and do two hours and be able to sit in a chair for some of it. Do some songs in my whole catalog that I've always wanted to do and never done.

I'd love to see you perform rare ones, like "Kind of Woman."
Really rare ones. I can go all the way back to [*sings "After the Glitter Fades"*] "I never thought I'd make it here in Hollywood.... For me, it's the only life/That I've ever known/And love is only one fine star away/Even though the living/Is sometimes laced with lies." That's a really autobiographical song, because that is how I feel. So, I will be able to sing that song for you when I'm 90. If I'm still alive and healthy, there's no reason for me to stop doing what I do, because I love it and this was my mission.

It's not that I want to work this hard in another 10 years, but there is stuff that I really want to do. I want to travel. Harry Styles has three houses in Italy — he loves it so much. I want to go there and rent a place and stay for a while, and travel all over. I've been to Rome a couple of times, but never been there long enough to see it.

There's a sequel in the works to *Practical Magic,* the 1998 film starring Nicole Kidman and Sandra Bullock as sister witches. I've always loved that version of "Crystal" included in the soundtrack.
It's funny, because "Crystal" was recorded three times. It was recorded for Buckingham Nicks and Fleetwood Mac, and then it was rerecorded for *Practical Magic,* with me and Sharon [Celani]. Maybe we should record it for a fourth time. I definitely think they should let me be a part of music. As soon as I get home, I'm going to make that phone call and say, "Listen, you have to let me do a song in this, and at least jump off the roof with you guys."

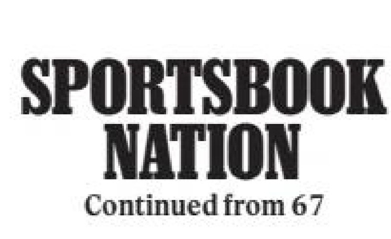
At this point, how many shawls do you think you own?
I just have the famous shawls, really. I have the "Rhiannon" blouse with sleeves. I have a "Gold Dust Woman" cape. I've had two of those over the last 40 years. I had a "Stand Back" cape. I have a white cape that I wore for "Edge of Seventeen" for a long time, but it's very long. I don't wear it much anymore. I have a long red one I love. Beautiful fabric. And the blue *Bella Donna* cape. It's in perfect shape, like brand-new.

I got freaked out at one point. People were writing about me being a witch, and I stopped wearing black, and I made the girls stop wearing black, too. [Designer] Margi [Kent] made us all-new pale-pastel outfits; it was the Eighties. And then we all looked at each other one day and said, "Why are we wearing these Easter-egg dresses? This is not us."

But I have all those outfits. That's silk-chiffon stuff, it just never, ever goes away. That's why they use it for sails. So it's all in different storage units and cases, and it's very cared for. Because someday it'll go out into the world. I love going through all of it. It's like being in a magical closet, like Narnia.

When was the last time you wore denim jeans?
A very long time ago. I wore nothing but denim jeans for a million years. I wanted to look a certain way in jeans, and when I didn't feel like I looked that way anymore, I stopped wearing jeans. As soon as I think something starts to get age-inappropriate, I stop.

What's something that you're really proud of in your career that people might not expect?
I'm proud of all the stuff that I've done. My drawings are precious to me. I will, maybe next year, do a big art show. I have so much poetry that just doesn't make it to the piano. Or makes it to the piano and I realize that it's really just not meant to be a song. It's a silly thing to say, but I do my own nails. This is the first time they've been white in 20 years — I didn't have time to put the gold on them before the last show. People say, "Who did your nails?" And I go, "Me, because I'm the best manicurist in the world." Nobody does them as good as me, so why would I let anybody else do them? Ⓡ



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ences a rumor that a single DraftKings VIP player jumped ship for Fanatics, and the player lost nearly $13 million in a month.

The industry would like to believe that the VIPs responsible for its profits are wealthy enough to afford it. But sportsbooks have proven they know how to profile their players, and some of these "large wagerers" might be players that sportsbooks know are more likely to lose — and lose big.

"A VIP host can be compensated based on handle," says Brianne Doura-Schawohl, a policy consultant on responsible-gambling issues and the former legislative director of the National Council on Problem Gambling. "Handle" refers to the total amount of money wagered. "If you're an individual who's wagering a lot and losing a lot, there's a reward for the host to continue that type of behavior with a player. It can be very dangerous."

In a statement provided to *Rolling Stone,* DraftKings says: "DraftKings' Dynasty Rewards program offers perks to loyal players, following a model similar to other companies that reward customer loyalty. Our business is rooted in fun and entertainment, and we are deeply committed to ensuring that all players, regardless of their gaming budget, engage responsibly."

When Thielen was in the thick of her gambling addiction, she, too, was strung along by perks and benefits bestowed upon "large wagerers." When she entered the casino, everything was on the house. She'd treat her friends and family to lavish meals, all paid for by the casino. It never occurred to her that these meals weren't actually free, but paid for by her gambling losses, until one night during a dinner when her husband finally asked her, "Liz, just how much do you gamble?"

"And in that moment, my gambling life flashed before my eyes," Thielen tells me. "All the late nights. All the lying. All the significant financial problems I had." She had so tightly packed it all away, just like she once did with concussions or other injuries, hiding them in order to get back in the ring. Now she was face to face with how badly things had deteriorated. She resolved to get help. It took her nearly 11 years to make back everything she had lost and get back on her feet.

But even after luring VIPs with gifts, parties, and deposit bonuses when they go broke, American sportsbooks still aren't making enough money. Many of the companies now believe their future lies in slot machines, not sports betting. In states without mobile gaming, sportsbooks are lobbying for legislation allowing them to expand from sports to mobile slots — a game with higher margins and zero risk.

Sportsbooks tell lawmakers that mobile casinos will deliver the tax revenues sports betting didn't. Currently, only seven states have regulated mobile casinos. At the NCLGS meeting, Cesar Fernandez, head of state government relations at FanDuel, gave a presentation on what the taxes his company paid had funded — road construction, teacher salaries, and state troopers. But it was actually a pitch. "What would happen if these states actually passed iGaming?" he asked, referring to an industry term for mobile casino apps. "It gives you a sense of what the actual impact could be if we looked at authorizing online gaming as a means to this end, as a means to teacher salaries, as a means to making sure that our law-enforcement officers and first responders are never subject to budget cuts."

There was scant discussion, however, of preventing problem gambling. According to a *Businessweek* survey, less than two percent of sports-betting revenue goes to problem-gambling initiatives. Adding more addictive games will only worsen the problem. "America can survive sports betting. It survived illegal betting for years," Roxborough says. "Whether it can survive a casino on everyone's phone — that I can't answer. That might be the tipping point."

Sportsbooks are in a tough spot. They want more money, but their customers, lawmakers, and the public are frustrated with how little good they've done compared to the harm. In defense, sportsbooks fall back on the same argument they've used since PASPA: If these companies can't grow, all their customers will turn to the black market.

The "black market" is a nebulous term, however, and is often applied to any sports betting that isn't regulated by the U.S. government, which is to say nearly all of the sports betting that has happened in this country for the past century. In that respect, the black market is where this business was created, its finer points sharpened and refined. It continues to this day, largely offshore, and it's where the smartest bookmakers and bettors do business with one another, setting odds that the rest of the world relies on for nearly every sport. Regulated American sportsbooks want to deprive it of American customers. I wanted to see the impact for myself, so I flew down to Central America.

THE BOOKIE

The casino at the Amapola Resort in Jaco Beach, Costa Rica, is slow tonight. A woman feeds colones into a slot machine. A group of men shoots pool. Behind a two-way mirror, in a windowless room just off the casino floor, there's plenty of action going on. This is the nerve center of BetAmapola, a licensed Costa Rican sportsbook and one of the newest in the country. Buried in an array of computer screens is J.R., who has a Raiders cap tight over his brow, and an intense stare as he studies the numbers on his screen.

J.R. was once a prominent bookie in the U.S. He grew a college side hustle into a multimillion-dollar operation in the 1990s, then decamped for Costa Rica, following a number of other high-profile bookmakers looking to avoid the long arm of the U.S. Justice Department. Over the past three decades, J.R. has gone from boom to bust and back again. He and his fellow expats have been part of every iteration of the sports-betting industry in the past 30 years. And now, as sports betting is booming back home like never before in his lifetime, he's trying to ride the wave. He's taken the reins of this formerly distressed resort in the surfing hot spot of Jaco and rebranded it into a destination for young American sports gamblers to visit. "This is where I decided to plant my flag," he tells me.

Tonight is the season opener for the NFL, and the Costa Rica national soccer team is playing in a tournament game in San José, so despite the slow night in the casino, it's a busy one for the sportsbook. Working alongside J.R. is Sean Conway, a laid-back, scruffy, late-twenties American finance grad who came to Costa Rica just days after graduation, hoping to learn the ropes as a bookmaker.

In the Amapola office, J.R. and Conway take bets, move lines, make calls to other bookmakers, furiously clicking and shouting numbers and team names as kickoff nears. Here in this windowless backroom of a tiny Central American casino is one outpost of the global market, where they handle a small share of the billions of dollars that are wagered with international sportsbooks. While there are fewer than 60 licensed sportsbooks in the U.S., there are about 300 online gambling companies in Costa Rica, including Costa Rica International Sports, or CRIS, which is one of the largest sportsbooks on Earth. "There's more bets written in San José, Costa Rica, than any other place in the world," says J.R.

Here in Costa Rica there are an array of different types of sportsbooks and business models, and they come in every shade, from black to gray to white. Books like BetAmapola and CRIS are licensed, follow Costa Rica's laws, and won't do business with gamblers in the U.S. Other sportsbooks accept American customers who use cryptocurrency or mask their location with virtual private networks. Still others operate in a gray area as "pay per head" businesses, offering their software for a fee to American street bookies but not handling any money from gambling, while bookies use the software to process bets and settle up with customers in cash, potentially violating gambling laws where they live.

J.R. asks who I like in the game. I say I like the Ravens +2.5 and ask if I can bet it with him. He agrees, on one condition: I have to parlay it with the Costa Rican national team. I agree, and we put the games on the two big screens in the office. He tells me the sportsbook is heavy with bets on the Chiefs, so he and I are both rooting for the same side.

The Ravens stage a late comeback, and appear to have clinched the cover, if not the victory, when Isaiah Likely catches a touchdown pass with the clock winding down at the end of the game. The three of us cheer so loudly in the office the casino patrons turn

toward the two-way mirror that hides us. But on further review, Likely's toe was on the line, and the touchdown doesn't count. (Costa Rica's national team did its part and won in a rout.) I hand over the $200 I owe J.R. for my bet, a pittance compared to the haircut he took on the game. He's unfazed. "Let's go eat," he says with a smile.

The real pioneer of the Costa Rican offshore gambling industry is Ron "the Cigar" Sacco, who is considered one of the biggest illegal bookmakers in American history. After a number of arrests, Sacco eventually relocated to Costa Rica, where there were no laws against sports betting, and took bets over the web instead of the phones. He did an interview with *60 Minutes* in 1992 that many cite as the inspiration that fueled a massive bookie diaspora. It may have also inspired the feds to pursue him. That same year, Congress passed PASPA, and two years later, they had Sacco in cuffs. He pleaded guilty to the federal crimes of "conducting an illegal gambling business" and "making financial transactions with the profits of crime." All told, Sacco's rap sheet included more than a dozen convictions and over five years in prison. At the time he went away, they said he was doing $100 million in business a month. When he got out, he headed to Central America, where his empire was anxiously waiting for his return.

Among those waiting for him was J.R., who arrived in Costa Rica while Sacco was in prison and was in awe of Sacco's operation.

By 2004, Costa Rica was home to hundreds of sportsbooks that were believed to be booking tens of billions of dollars in bets a year, much of it from Americans. In 2006, Congress tried once again to shut down the offshore gambling industry, passing the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act (UIGEA) by tucking it into the SAFE Port Act at the last minute. The law allowed the Justice Department to attack offshore gambling by stopping domestic banks and other payment processors from moving money to and from gambling companies. It had a considerable impact and forced a lot of offshore bookies to reconsider their businesses. Sacco sold CRIS to a Costa Rican businessman named J.D. Duarte, who stopped doing business with Americans and focused instead on Latin America. Other offshore sportsbooks did the same, blocking their websites from access by Americans and choosing instead to do business in Europe or Asia. Some converted into pay-per-head shops, licensing their technology to local bookies in the U.S. for a per-user fee. Some moved back to America and returned to their roots, becoming bookies themselves. Some, like J.R., went broke.

For the next decade, J.R. tried to build his business back up from nothing. A gambler he owed money to sent someone to Costa Rica to collect. J.R. gave him his car. "It was a slow death," he says.

He ended up hearing about an aging resort hotel in need of some upkeep. It had a casino license, but the casino had been closed for a long time. J.R.'s wheels started spinning. "I can promote a sportsbook behind this license," he thought.

J.R. persuaded the owner of the Amapola to let him take it over. He spent months putting sweat equity into the place, getting the restaurant going, getting the rooms renovated, and most important, getting the paperwork straight to get the casino back up and in action. BetAmapola is an international sportsbook that advertises itself as being friendly to professional gamblers and willing to take large bets. "Big bets in mature markets, pay quick, no bonus. That's my model," he says. "And whoever wants to bet on that model is more than welcome. Win whatever they want, they're gonna get paid on demand."

At a ritzy San José steakhouse called Doris Metropolitan, J.R. and I meet for lunch with Bill (pseudonym), another expat American bookie who relocated here in the Nineties. They make an unusual pair. Both are firmly in middle age, having married Costa Rican women and raised children and sent them off to college here. But while J.R. dresses in sports jerseys and ball caps and carries himself with a youthful urban swagger that betrays his age, Bill is more buttoned-up.

Bill and J.R. are members of a fraternity of bookies who not only came to Costa Rica behind Sacco, but have also figured out a way to survive the business through its nadir. They tell me that while the UIGEA was a major blow, the repeal of PASPA was, at first anyway, even worse. "The legals have definitely affected us, 100 percent," Bill says, referring to the regulated U.S. sportsbooks.

Bill operates a pay-per-head sportsbook, and his bread and butter has always been what they call "agents," which is really just another word for bookies. The agents drum up new business, sometimes receiving a cut of losses as their payment. Traditionally, agents have been mostly small-timers, managing customers in their fraternity houses, at their job sites, or down at the local bars. But a lot of small guys added up to big business for offshore operators like Bill.

After PASPA, most of those small-time guys lost their players to the apps, because the major sportsbook companies offered sign-up bonuses and promotional offers that were too good to turn down. The local bookie just couldn't compete with a $1,000 risk-free bet.

"Where it's dipping is the small retail player," says J.R. "The guys that bet the parlays and whatnot are not returning to agents anymore." But he believes the tide will turn and American players will come back: "The legals don't stand a chance. They're giving away money hand over fist."

Between an increasingly knowledgeable bettor pool, and marketing deals like deposit bonuses and free bets, which regulated sportsbooks write off their taxes as marketing expenses, Bill thinks the legals will soon be in over their heads. "In one or two years, they're going to be like, 'Jesus Christ, what do we have here? We have a house of shit.'"

"The legals don't care about profits. They only care about market share," J.R. says. The regulated U.S. sportsbooks, to hear J.R. and Bill describe it, cost themselves money and good customers by being afraid to do the thing they ostensibly are supposed to do: gamble.

As regulated American bookmakers continue to limit players, they also cast more new gamblers out into the wilderness in search of sportsbooks where they won't get limited. "Back in the day, when Bill and I first met each other, they had guys out there running around trying to get players," J.R. says. "Now, there's more people that are trying to get outs."

By "outs," J.R. means places to bet. And that pool of players looking for outs has only grown in the U.S. in the past six years. "Back in the '80s, '90s, 2000s, it was considered taboo," Bill says. "Everybody's like, 'Oh, you're betting with a local bookie? Is it a mob guy?' The stigma now has been removed. It's an OK thing to do. There's corporations behind it."

The proliferation of sports betting has meant that shops like Bill's are able to recruit new players from everywhere, not just states that don't yet have sports betting, like Texas and California. "You name a state, we have customers," Bill says. And while the FanDuels of the world might be peeling away the smaller bettors who would've bet $50 a game with guys like these, the big players in the regulated market are still worried about the offshore market. Chris Jones says FanDuel considers them a "major concern" because they don't pay any taxes and don't do age verification or responsible-gambling monitoring.

But FanDuel also might be concerned about the estimated $15 billion to $20 billion a year bet offshore. Just like the regulated sportsbooks, global destinations like Amapola, black marketeers, and pay-per-head agents are all trying to lure in the whales, who, they believe, they can more easily win over from the regulated sportsbooks by offering those players easy credit. While regulated sportsbooks require players to put up the money to bet, black-market bookies will give them a credit line and only settle up once a week. "The bigger guy doesn't want to sit there and continue to do wires, moving money back and forth," Bill says.

It's ironic, given that the bigger bettors are the ones the regulated sportsbooks rely on to turn a profit. But they're going to try to hang on to the ones who lose, and toss the winners back to Bill.

J.R. suggests to Bill that they can find some of these bigger bettors at BetBash in Las Vegas, a gathering of sharp sports bettors started by Spanky at a bar in New Jersey three years ago. Today, BetBash is held at the Circa Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, and tickets run from $649 to $1,499. Bill is unconvinced. I ask J.R. whether attending BetBash is akin to fraternizing with the enemy, since there will be several hundred sports bettors all Continued on 80

looking for a way to beat their bookies.

"That's why it's good for us to be out there," he says. "Just to know what's going through their head."

THE CASINO BOSS

Spanky, Fats, Chinese Mike, Stevie the Pencil — they're all here. They've come from around the world to downtown Las Vegas for BetBash. Some to network, some to learn, and many to party. Tonight, the partying begins at the first of several open bars at Circa Resort and Casino this week.

Derek Stevens is here, too. He's hard to miss — tall with the frame of a pro athlete and a cornflower-blue suit matching the hotel. I assume that's intentional — he owns the joint.

The 57-year-old Michigan native always loved Vegas. He and his brother moved their investments to Nevada in the early 2000s to avoid state income tax. Soon, he was buying small downtown casinos. Eventually, Stevens aimed to develop a large-scale, high-class resort in downtown Las Vegas. It was a bold move — nobody had built anything new downtown in more than 40 years. But Stevens liked the area, and the prices were good. He opened Circa in 2020, and it's been a hit since.

Circa is unique among Vegas casinos. Its main feature is its sportsbook — the largest in the world. It resembles an NBA arena, with two stories of stadium seats and a massive wall of screens showing every sport imaginable. While sportsbooks are a staple in most Nevada casinos today, nobody has one as big as Circa's. That's because in the casino business, sportsbooks have never been very profitable.

"Caesars had a sportsbook for one reason," says professional gambler Walters, "to service their casino customers. They really didn't even care about being in the sports business. It was there as an amenity to their hotel customers."

Roxborough says, "If you didn't have a sportsbook, your customers would walk across the street to a place that did."

In the Seventies and Eighties, Roxborough partnered with bookmaker Vic Salerno in Leroy's, one of the first sportsbook chains in Nevada. In the early Seventies, sportsbooks were taxed at 10 percent of the total amount of bets they took, but only expected to profit about four percent. The only way to make a profit was to win more bets than they lost — they needed to actually gamble against their customers. Casinos had guaranteed profits from slots and games. They wanted nothing to do with sports.

Eventually, the state lowered the taxes, and casinos reluctantly waded in. By the Eighties, Nevada sportsbooks became popular, if not always profitable, and that popularity has steadily grown. "The industry said, 'We've gotta get out of the dark ages into the modern world with these sportsbooks,'" says Roxborough. "And that line goes straight to Circa."

Stevens' bookmakers run it old-school, taking bets from all players. They're not afraid of a little risk. "We book a losing day pretty often," he says. "We're not trying to shun away professional or big-bet players. We want to work with players." It helps that Circa's sportsbook is backed by its casino, and ideally some of those winning players will donate some winnings back in the dice pits.

If Circa has a customer, BetBash attendees are likely their ultimate form. There's speed networking, seminars, workshops, and even a golf tournament. The most impressive addition to BetBash came last year, when Spanky and Stevens unveiled the Sports Gambling Hall of Fame. This year's inductees include Sacco, and a whole lot of folks from the offshore industry, including J.R., plus some who rarely come to the U.S. for fear of prosecution, showed up at BetBash to honor him.

J.R. isn't only in town to attend BetBash. He's also looking to attend the Blackjack Ball, an invitation-only dinner held every year in Las Vegas for the most successful gamblers in the world. The event is so secretive, cellphones and photos are not allowed, and nearly everyone in attendance uses a pseudonym, for fear of being discovered by casinos that work hard to ban them from playing.

Andrews has long attended the Blackjack Ball, having started his career as a card counter. But in recent years, more sports bettors have been invited to attend, and more of the regular attendees in turn have been betting on sports. "This is something I resisted for years, because I always said I'm not really interested in sports," says professional gambler Richard Munchkin, who recently came out of retirement from gambling to start betting on sports. "This is the gold rush, and there's a lot of money to be made."

I sit at Roxborough's table, which is almost entirely sports bettors. Captain Jack is here, as are Rufus Peabody, Spanky, and some others who are so low-key their mere existence is sometimes debated. There are multiple attendees who've won over a billion dollars gambling.

The original Blackjack Ball was held in 1997, and some of the attendees have been to every one of them. Ed Thorp, the 92-year-old inventor of card counting, is here, and there are a lot of older gamblers whose playing days are well behind them.

There are also a lot of younger people, including those in the 18-to-24 demographic Keith Whyte worries about. (Whyte is here, too, believe it or not. He's receiving a check for nearly $40,000, the proceeds from the event, which are donated each year to help fight problem gambling.) But he need not worry about these young men. I meet people who earn their living playing poker, slot machines, even someone who figured out how to beat the lottery and has made millions of dollars. If anyone in this room is addicted to gambling, it's only because gambling is making them filthy rich.

The marquee event at every year's ball is a team-gambling skills competition, which is mainly focused on casino games like blackjack, not sports betting. We're grouped into teams, such as the "Hall of Fame Nominees" team, the "Top Women Pros," and the "Field" (everyone not on a team, which by default includes me), and attendees can bet on the winner. The odds on each team change as money is bet into the pool, and when I go to the makeshift window to make my bet, I notice that the "Sports Sharps" team, which includes Spanky, Peabody, and Roxborough, went from being one of the longest shots on the board to among the favorites. The oddsmakers may have figured the "Sports Sharps" weren't very familiar with blackjack, but evidently some of the sharps are willing to bet big on themselves.

This ballroom holds the most successful gamblers in the world, and a lot of them started in blackjack. Many would say that game is now dead. Casinos today are too good at stopping card counters. The ones who did it for a living have moved on. They have to keep learning new games, finding new edges, because while it may not be true that the house always wins, the house always figures out how to stop those who do.

The sports bettors at the ball, veterans and newcomers alike, would be wise to heed this lesson. In the gambling world, no edge lasts forever. Right now, the sports bettors are having their moment. But the industry is at a crossroads, and the future is uncertain. Hopefully, somewhere in those screens of flashing numbers, they can deduce and project what happens next.

Businesspeople love to think of themselves as risk takers. They tell a story about themselves, and about America, that says everyone on top got to where they were by taking a big risk — a gamble — and success is the reward for their courage and foresight. But really, a lot of the people on top are no different from the folks at the Blackjack Ball — hustlers who found a sure thing.

The repeal of PASPA made it possible for people in America to make money taking bets, but they turned around and made it nearly impossible for anyone to make money placing bets. If anything, they made it easier than ever to lose.

There's some kind of profound irony in the fact that the gambling companies want to get rich off gambling, but don't want to take any risks themselves. The government, the shareholders, the CEOs, they all want their money guaranteed. The rest of us, the real risk takers, we're just looking for a fair bet at a good price.

As I stare at the tote board, I ask Rufus Peabody for advice. He may be a pro, but on this he has no pick. He only tells me not to bet on the sports bettors, because they don't stand a chance. I hand the teller a hundred bucks, and ask him to bet it on the Field. Ⓡ

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

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"I was kind of a lost soul in high school."

ON THE ROAD Lauper's farewell tour wraps its U.S. leg on Dec. 7 in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

CYNDI LAUPER

With her Girls Just Wanna Have Fun Farewell Tour in full swing, she looks back at the singers who inspired her and the reason she's never given up

What advice do you wish you could give your younger self?
I would tell my younger self not to always fight the gatekeepers. It's just important to look for a path around them. Always look over their shoulders to see what's happening on the other side and how you're going to get there. You don't have to jump in and fight everybody, because that doesn't always work.

What did you fight over?
I was told so many fucked-up things. "Why don't you just sing like this person? Why don't you just wear jeans and a T-shirt?" I said, "Well, when I get that lobotomy, I'll get right back to you."

I had this record-company guy — he said that to me, after eyeing my tits and giving me the snake eyes — "Why don't you wear jeans and a T-shirt?" But I found allies and other people who believed what I believe in. If you align yourself with like-minded people, then things go more smoothly. That's how it should be, not stay there and battle it out.

Who were the first heroes who inspired you as a kid?
My mother had all these Broadway shows that she played all the time. Then *Funny Girl* happened, so I'd hang out with Barbra [Streisand]. I'm Italian, so you learn housekeeping right away. I was downstairs doing laundry in the basement with Barbra, singing my guts out with her. I was so close to her, I was on the other side of her.

Then one Christmas, my cousin gave us *Meet the Beatles* and *Meet the Supremes*. So I met them. And I really liked them. Suddenly, there was a difference between my mother's music and mine. In those days, radio stations played everything all together. You'd have Sly and the Family Stone, then you'd have Sonny and Cher, then Eric Clapton, and Joan Baez, and Otis Redding — this wonderful palette of songs.

How did you start making music yourself?
I became a folk singer and played guitar, all the weird shit. I was kind of a lost soul in high school, lost in music and art. I had to study fashion because my family was from the fashion industry. They were the pattern makers, sewing, cutting. But I wanted to sing. I flunked out of school and took a lot of jobs. I even worked at the racetrack — I was a hot-walker at Belmont. I failed at every job. I lived a lot of lifetimes before I even became famous.

I always thought singing rock & roll was so hard, you could never sing it as a girl, right? Only men, except Janis Joplin, who ripped her voice out and drank whiskey. Janis and Grace Slick were my heroes — they were the women. And Joni Mitchell, who lived her life like a man and wrote about it. And she painted her album cover. So I thought, "Wow, she can paint, she can play, she can write. Isn't that perfect? Isn't that the life?"

How did you find your voice as a singer?
I went on an audition, made a mistake, and went with it, because, you know, strong and wrong, right? You go wrong, stay strong. You can't change. You have to just stay there. So I went to sing "I've Got to Use My Imagination," by Gladys Knight. It was a cover band. I was so nervous I jumped up an octave. Now all of a sudden these sounds come out that I didn't even know I had. I'm looking at the faces of the people during the audition, thinking, "Oh, boy, if you're surprised, you can't even imagine how surprised *I* am."

That was the beginning of the journey that I took. I lost my voice early on. But you lose it all through your career. The first time I lost it, the doctor told me, "Miss Lauper, you can never sing this rock & roll — it's bad for you. You should be singing country & western, like Dinah Shore." I was like, "Jesus, Dinah Shore? Really?" I walked out of that doctor's office like Bette Davis in *Dark Victory*.

But you didn't give up.
I never do. I used to walk past the post office, because the band rehearsed nearby. It said, "Neither rain nor snow nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." I kept reading that thinking, "Yep, that's me." Eventually, you get there, if you don't give up. Eventually.

What are the most important rules you live by?
Try and be kind to the people around you. You've got to meditate, exercise, try and enjoy your life, because life is short and then you're dead. It's important to create with joy.

You always had that independent spirit. How have you kept that all your career?
I've always got a low tolerance for bullshit. And you get fed a lot of bullshit through your life. After a while, you have to see through it and go, "I don't have to jump into that one." When something's just wrong, step back, let it go away. You step back, you'll have a better view. It's like when you paint a canvas, and the teacher will go, "OK, now step back and look at what you're doing." Because then you see the picture a little clearer. ®

Interview by ROB SHEFFIELD

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