

THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

THE NEXT GEN ISSUE

The rising stars,
ascendant execs and
viral influencers leading
Hollywood through
transformative times

+

A HEARTBREAKING RIFT OF STAGGERING INTENSITY

Toph Eggers on
his estrangement from
brother Dave

TRUMP'S (EUROPEAN) CULTURE WAR

SELENA'S SECRETS

Gomez may be the most followed woman on the planet and a newly minted billionaire,
but the *Emilia Pérez* star still has to trick her way into auditions:

'We don't tell them it's me'

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“I didn’t understand how [Hollywood] worked.
I didn’t think it would change my life.”

The *Holdovers* actor Dominic Sessa



THR Next Generation actors David Jonsson (left) and Dominic Sessa were photographed Nov. 11 at Broken Shaker in Manhattan.

On Jonsson: **Louis Vuitton** men’s denim jacket, jeans and shoes; **David Yurman** jewelry; stylist’s own tank. On Sessa: **Bottega Veneta** jacket, shirt, pants and tie.

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Meet the rising stars poised to lead your new favorite blockbuster, prestige indie and streaming obsession — *The Hollywood*

Reporter reveals its 31st annual Next Gen List with the 35 executive talents who should be on your call log and, for the first time, introduces the inaugural class of Next Gen: Content Creators.

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A Heartbreaking Rift

Toph Eggers was introduced to millions as the younger brother and emotional core of Dave Eggers’ 2000 memoir, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*. After an up-and-down Hollywood career, Toph emerges to tell his side of their shared story and begin his next chapter, one that does not include his famous sibling.

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Ridley Scott has been fiddling around with a *Gladiator* sequel since the original film arrived in theaters in 2000. But there was one big problem: He killed off his hero in the first movie.

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Best actor winners run an unusually wide temporal range. Sometimes we see them for 15 minutes; sometimes they’re on the screen for more than two hours.

Photographed by **Guy Aroch**

"BLOODY BRILLIANCE"

IndieWire

"FANG-TASTIC"

COLLIDER

"STILL-RIOTOUSLY FUNNY...
TRANSCENDENT"

AV CLUB

"HILARIOUS...
SO SHARPLY HONED"

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"TV'S BEST COMEDY...
AS AMUSING AND INVENTIVE AS EVER"

DAILY BEAST



WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS

BEST COMEDY SERIES

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Oscar season brings a fevered obsession with movie lengths. It's both logical and silly.

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The Grammy-winning songwriter who's crafted hits for the likes of Rihanna, Ariana Grande and Madonna talks about her song "Made for Me" getting nominated this year and whether she wants to continue writing for others or making her own music.

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Patrick Gibson's about to go on a murder spree in *Dexter: Original Sin*. Luckily for him, he likes the sight of blood.

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24 "I want to go where the joy is," says "Made for Me" singer Muni Long, up for four Grammys this year.

29 "I was starting to feel like I was on a conveyer belt of doing audition tapes when this script came through," Patrick Gibson says of *Dexter: Original Sin*. He was photographed Nov. 4 in Beverly Hills.

70 From left: Dave Eggers' then-girlfriend; Dave Eggers; his late sister, Beth Eggers; and brothers Bill Eggers and Toph Eggers in the 1990s.

On the Cover Selena Gomez was photographed Nov. 7 by Guy Aroch in Beverly Hills.

Saint Laurent dress, earrings; **Michael Kors** faux coat.

Patrick Gibson photographed by **Jennifer McCord**

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The Report

Behind the Headlines



Moana, Swords and Sorcery Set to Save Thanksgiving

With *Wicked*, *Gladiator II* and *Moana 2* on the menu, look for domestic box office receipts to soar past \$300 million and set a new record for the five-day holiday as the industry hopes to move past a 'disappointing' post-Labor Day quarter **BY PAMELA McCLINTOCK**

As Ridley Scott and his high-profile *Gladiator II* cast — including Denzel Washington, Paul Mescal and Connie Nielsen — walked the red carpet during the Nov. 18 Los Angeles premiere, a makeshift wall prevented them from seeing an enormous Christmas tree perched at the entrance of the Ovation Hollywood mall adjacent to the TCL Chinese Theatre.

Consider it a symbol of Christmas coming early this year for all of Hollywood, with tentpoles *Gladiator II*, the musical *Wicked* and the animated juggernaut *Moana 2* hitting the big screen. "For the first time in a long time, there will be something for everyone at movie theaters this Thanksgiving," notes one top studio executive.

By all accounts, the three films are expected to fuel the biggest Thanksgiving in history in terms of overall revenue, a rare bright spot in the post-pandemic era. The boost will help narrow a worrisome year-over-year gap in domestic box office earnings due to a lack of product resulting from the lengthy 2023 labor strikes and ongoing COVID-related delays.

Thanksgiving 2018 holds the record for generating the most revenue in terms of overall ticket sales for the five-day corridor, which runs from the Wednesday before the holiday through Sunday. That year, thanks to films including *Ralph Breaks the Internet* and *Creed II*, revenue reached \$315.6 million over five days, the only time it's cracked \$300 million, not adjusted for inflation.

Get ready for that record to be broken. Walt Disney Animation's music-infused adventure *Moana 2* lands Wednesday, Nov. 27, and is tracking to open to a massive \$125 million to \$150 million for the five days (some think it could climb even higher), hence the moniker "Moanapocalypse." If tracking proves correct, *Moana 2* will score a top five-day Thanksgiving debut domestically and the biggest five-day Thanksgiving gross of all time, not adjusted for inflation. *Frozen 2* (2019), which opened the weekend before the holiday, as opposed to midweek, holds the record with \$125 million in ticket sales.

Universal's *Wicked*, based on the smash hit Broadway play, is likewise looking to sing and dance its way to eye-popping

numbers. Like *Gladiator II*, it will debut Friday, Nov. 22, to get a jump on the holiday and provide some distance from the *Moana* sequel. It's tracking to open with \$85 million — again, exhibitors think it could come in higher, perhaps north of \$100 million.

Gladiator II, from Paramount, also appears to be in fine fighting form. Opening a quarter of a century after the original *Gladiator* won the Oscar for best picture, it's tracking to debut to \$65 million or more during the Nov. 22-24 frame. (Between the two live-action crowd-pleasers, box office pundits are hoping for a "Wickiator" phenomenon à la Barbenheimer.)

Movies opening the weekend before Thanksgiving, rather than midweek on Wednesday, can often come close to repeating

The Report

Behind the Headlines

Heat Index



Maverick Carter and Ben Winston (left)
Is SpringHill plus Fulwell 73 a merger of convenience or necessity? Either way, the moguls' pair-up will create an unscripted powerhouse.



David Zaslav
As part of a settlement, he keeps *Inside the NBA* alive — but Warner Bros. Discovery will produce it for ESPN while ceding its quest for a rights deal with the league.



Brendan Carr
Donald Trump's pick to run the FCC will look to rein in the reach of Big Tech and relax rules around how many TV stations an owner can have in a market.



Mark Thompson
The CNN CEO presides over ever-shrinking ratings — the network trailed MSNBC and Fox News in the lead-up to the election and after it — even as he preps for a digital future.

Showbiz Stocks

\$130.89 (+12.3%)
TKO GROUP (TKO)
A good relationship with Trump (the president-elect showed up to UFC 309) doesn't hurt the owner of UFC and WWE as it seeks deals.

\$6.77 (-4.5%)
LIONSGATE (LGFA)
The independent studio is still feeling the pain of a disappointing earnings report, even as former Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin accumulates a growing stake.

Nov. 13-19

their opening number during the official five-day holiday weekend — if they click, that is — explaining why most are betting on overall revenue besting the 2018 Thanksgiving number, fueled by the combination of *Moana 2*, *Wicked* and *Gladiator II*. It might seem counterintuitive to open three tentpoles so closely together, but it's proved again and again that for certain times of the year — whether summer or the year-end holidays — the marketplace can support multiple titles if they feed their target demos.

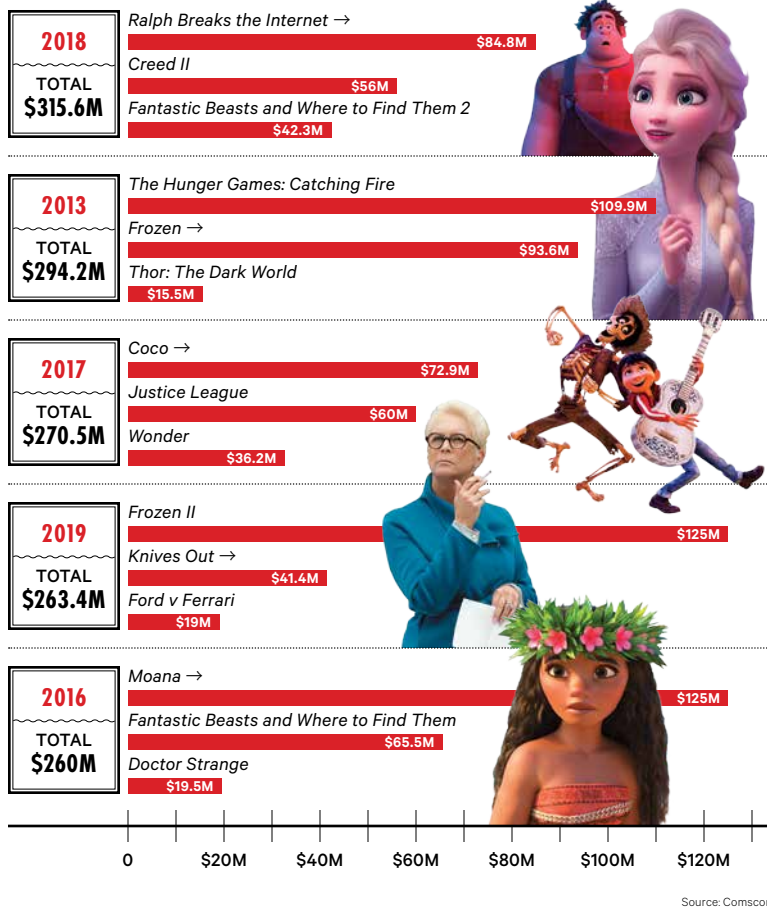
Gladiator II's target audience is older and younger men, but women are expressing interest as well, according to tracking data shared with *THR*. *Wicked* is leaning heavily female, but polling shows that boyfriends could turn up. And both could get parents and their older and adult kids. *Moana 2* is clearly the biggest family play but could also attract teenagers and younger adults.

Paul Dergarabedian, Comscore's chief box office analyst, adds that “the holiday is shaping up to bring some excitement to what has been a rather disappointing post-Labor Day moviegoing marketplace.” *THR*

No Turkeys Here

It's looking like this year will serve up a record in terms of domestic revenue for the five-day Thanksgiving weekend, thanks to *Moana 2*, *Wicked* and *Gladiator II*. The holiday's five biggest years so far:

TOTAL DOMESTIC REVENUE (FIVE DAYS) AND TOP THREE TITLES



Landman to Hit Man: Texas Monthly's IP Machine

The demand for compelling stories from, yes, the heartland is paying off for the venerable magazine

BY JAMES HIBBERD

Amid the launch of **Taylor Sheridan**'s latest series, *Landman*, oil isn't the only precious resource being discovered in Texas. Content from the venerable publication *Texas Monthly* has been enjoying an unprecedented boom of interest from Hollywood, with adapted projects ranging from the Paramount+ drama and **Richard Linklater**'s recent Netflix movie *Hit Man* to the HBO limited series *Love & Death* and the Discovery+ documentary series *How to Create a Sex Scandal*.

Why so much from the venerable 51-year-old magazine, and why lately? One reason is the entertainment zeitgeist has caught up to what *Texas Monthly* has always done well. The magazine has a long history of compelling and in-depth true crime reporting, particularly by award-winning writer **Skip Hollandsworth** (who wrote the piece that inspired *Hit Man*). “He writes about murders and horrible things that have happened, but also manages to find a level of dark humor in the characters that come out of those stories and worlds,” says **Megan Creydt**, *Texas Monthly*'s executive producer for TV, film and podcasts.

The publication also made a concerted effort five years ago to evolve from a magazine into more of a “journalistic storytelling organization,” Creydt says, which included launching a podcast studio (*Landman* was based on a 12-episode show from 2019 titled *Boomtown*, hosted by **Christian Wallace**). There was also a representation shake-up, with *Texas Monthly* shifting to CAA under

agent and Texas native **Ann Blanchard**. “She's put together a whole team of scripted agents that we work with — we have a few feature agents and a couple of nonscripted agents,” Creydt notes. Such moves include making a first-look deal at HBO — where it

helps that Max head of originals **Sarah Aubrey** is a former *Texas Monthly* intern.

And then there's just the fact that the Lone Star State is arguably the most audaciously Americana state, one with a specific, larger-than-life personality. As the country's second most populous state (behind California), it contains a wild mix of extreme wealth and dire poverty and dense cities and endless, scenic empty spaces. The result is a place that's just a bottomless story generator for a publication that's long been willing to give its talent months to work on a single piece (the writers and contributors also enjoy revenue sharing from stories that get picked up).

William Boyles Jr., the screenwriter behind such films as *Cast Away* and *Apollo 13*, co-founded *Texas Monthly*, so cinematic storytelling has always been part of the publication's DNA. “It's great narrative journalism,” Creydt says when asked to divulge the publication's secret to its recent success. “There's also an understanding in Hollywood that [it's worth] paying attention to other parts of the country, and Texas is certainly its own world. There are so many rich characters and stories here you're not going to find in a New York publication.” *THR*



Billy Bob Thornton in *Landman*, based on a *Texas Monthly* podcast.

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DEMI MOORE



THE SUBSTANCE

A FILM BY
CORALIE FARGEAT

BIG DATA

Numbers Game: Streaming Gets Added to TV Ratings

An industry regulator's approval opened the door for first-party streaming data to supplement traditional TV ratings. Will it make a difference? **BY RICK PORTER**

A recent decision by a little-known industry oversight group could end up having a sizable impact on TV ratings and the ad business that relies on them.

The Media Rating Council, which accredits audience measurement models from such companies as Nielsen, Comscore and VideoAmp, gave a thumbs-up to Nielsen's plan to incorporate first-party data from streaming outlets into its national TV ratings panel. The "panel plus big data" measurement has the potential — at least for live events — to show that a noticeably higher number of people are watching a given program than the panel-only measure.

The sample size for panel plus big data measurement, it needs to be noted, is exceedingly small at the moment: The only Nielsen client using the new measurement so far is Amazon, and then only for Prime Video's *Thursday Night Football* telecasts. Still, what data there is shows a good-sized boost with the addition of Amazon's streaming data. Nielsen's panel-only figures have *Thursday Night Football* at 13.2 million viewers per game this season; the big data addition pushes the audience up to 14.26 million, a gain of more than a million viewers (about 8 percent).



Prime Video's *Thursday Night Football* gets a viewership boost with new measurement methods.

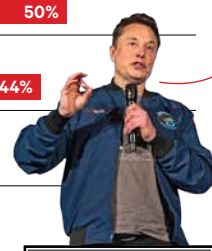
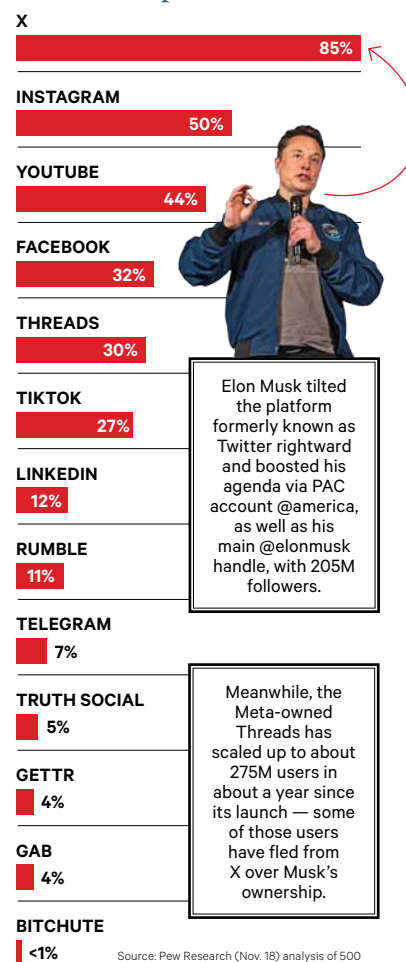
That increase tracks with (again, limited) multiplatform data from other outlets that occasionally report combined TV and streaming numbers for live events. NBC's *Sunday Night Football* is averaging about 18.9 million TV viewers this season; with streaming on Peacock and other digital platforms (as measured by Adobe Analytics), those games rise to 21.3 million, a gain of about 13 percent. Fox, ESPN and CBS also have noted streaming boosts for live sports, although not as regularly (CBS also is in a contract dispute with Nielsen at the moment and not using the latter's ratings product).

Nielsen is in talks with some other clients to use the panel plus big data measurement for live events. What it won't do, however, is show supplemental same-day viewing for most regular programming — an episode of, say, *Chicago Fire* doesn't stream on Peacock concurrently with its NBC broadcast the way that *Sunday Night Football* does. But with live telecasts among the most reliable audience draws on TV (and, in the case of *Thursday Night Football*, streaming), the new tool could help networks and streamers make the case to advertisers that an even bigger audience is out there. **THR**

MEDIA

Where the News Influencers Roam

A new study finds that Elon Musk's X boasts the largest share with 100,000-plus followers



Elon Musk tilted the platform formerly known as Twitter rightward and boosted his agenda via PAC account @america, as well as his main @elonmusk handle, with 205M followers.

Meanwhile, the Meta-owned Threads has scaled up to about 275M users in about a year since its launch — some of those users have fled from X over Musk's ownership.

Source: Pew Research (Nov. 18) analysis of 500 influencers with more than 100,000 followers.



Inside View Jake Paul vs. Mike Tyson

NETFLIX
108M viewers 1 Live event

Netflix says 108 million people worldwide tuned in to the Nov. 15 spectacle between social media star turned boxer **Jake Paul** and 58-year-old former heavyweight champ **Mike Tyson**. Despite a glitchy telecast, the event was the biggest boxing draw in recent years, though probably not in history. Worldwide viewing numbers are notoriously fuzzy, but it's likely the biggest fight since a 2017 match between **Wladimir Klitschko** and **Anthony Joshua** drew a nine-figure worldwide audience (with estimates ranging as high as 500 million viewers). — R.P.

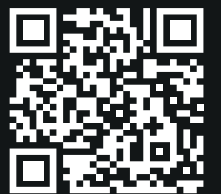
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ELECTION AFTERMATH

The New Trump Resistance: Europe's Filmmakers

Across the ocean, moviemakers position themselves as defenders of progressive values. But many of their funds rely on government-backed subsidies, and those nations may not be inclined to pick a fight with the president-elect

BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH

In December 2016, shortly after **Donald Trump** was elected president for the first time, the European Film Awards kicked off with an *SNL*-style cold open. Polish director **Agnieszka Holland**, sitting behind the desk at a mocked-up Oval Office and flanked by machine gun-toting guards, played POTUS.

"We have occupied the White House," the European Film Academy chairwoman intoned, added that she and her team would not leave until "democracy and tolerance" were restored. With intolerance on the rise, Holland said, the work of European filmmakers was more important than ever.

In the wake of the 2024 presidential election, with Democratic-leaning creatives in Hollywood still reeling at the fact of a second Trump term, European filmmakers, festivals and cultural institutions are again positioning themselves as the global defenders of progressive values.

"If you compare it to the rest of the world, Europe is still a place where democracy, human rights and freedom of speech are highly valued, and there's an awareness that they are something to be defended," says current EFA CEO **Matthijs Wouter Knol**, who predicts the talent at year's European Film Awards — set for Dec. 7 in Lucerne, Switzerland — will again raise their voices against Trump and the far right.

"There's the feeling again that we need to double down, that [political] films are more important now than ever," adds

Havana Marking, the British documentarian and director of *Undercover: Exposing the Far Right*. "That's really exciting."

Days after the U.S. election, Sweden's Göteborg Film Festival, the most important event for the Scandinavian film industry, announced that its 2025 event (Jan. 24 to Feb. 2) would include a special section focusing on "the power of civil resistance and disobedience," featuring films with themes that would incite the MAGA faithful, including abortion rights (**Dea Kulumbegashvili's** wrenching drama *April*), climate change (Finnish documentary *Once Upon a Time in a Forest*) and a scathing critique of Israeli occupation in the West Bank (the documentary *No Other Land*).

"We talked a lot about not only what is happening in the U.S., but about authoritarian governments the world over," says Göteborg festival artistic director **Pia Lundberg**. "We talked about courage and resistance and the fact that to be brave and to show resistance, a certain amount of disobedience is very often necessary."

"Smaller festivals, ones that are more dependent on state support, are getting nervous."

Havana Marking, British director

With many fearing Trump's victory will have a chilling effect on the production and release of left-leaning films — "We've been trying to find an American buyer" for *Undercover: Exposing the Far Right*, says Marking, "and after the election, it feels very unlikely" — there's hope that Europe will become a haven for progressive cinema.

The Trump-critical drama *The Apprentice*, starring **Sebastian Stan** as Trump and **Jeremy Strong** as his '80s-era Svengali mentor, **Roy Cohn**, relied on Danish and Irish backing and **Ali Abbasi**, a Danish-Iranian director, to get made. (U.S. funding, in the form of an investment from Kinematics and its Trump-friendly billionaire owner, **Dan Snyder**, nearly torpedoed the film when Snyder objected to its portrayal of the once and future president. Snyder eventually sold his stake in the movie back to *Apprentice* producer **James Shani**.)

Progressive American cinema is not dead, but over the next four years, U.S. filmmakers may find in Europe a more welcoming environment. "The position and attractiveness of Europe as a place to make and to shoot films, as a place where making movies like this is still possible, will only grow," says Knol.

Marking, however, warns that Europe's own authoritarian shift does not bode well for cinema's progressive future, as Europe's film industry, unlike that in the U.S., is heavily dependent on state subsidies for funding.

Undercover: Exposing the Far Right had its festival premiere Nov. 19 at International Documentary Festival Amsterdam, just months after the Netherlands swore in the most right wing government in its modern history. Meanwhile, right wing or far-right nationalist parties are in power in Italy and Hungary; are part of the government in Finland; and support the government in Sweden and Serbia. National elections in Germany in February are expected to see a surge of support for the extremist Alternative for Germany party, the AfD.

"The IDFA had been very supportive of our film and were excited to show it; they felt it absolutely was necessary in the current environment that they're in," says Marking, "but the smaller festivals, ones that are more dependent on state support, are getting nervous in case the new right wing governments take away their funding."

European filmmakers and cultural institutions might see themselves as the new "resistance" to the incoming Trump government. But as right wing extremism gains ground across the continent, the European industry may find the defense of "democracy and tolerance" best begins at home. **VHR**



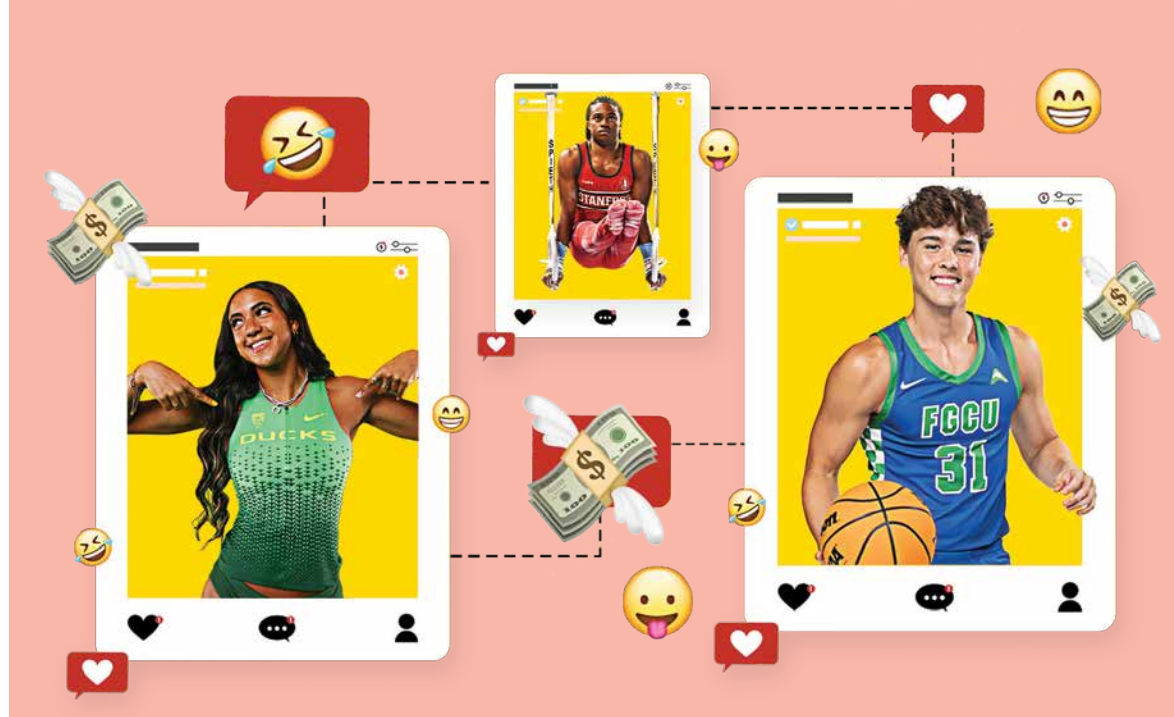
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CREATOR ECONOMY

Money Ball: How College Athletes Are Raking in the Big Bucks

Thanks to a booming NIL rights market, even bench players are getting rich BY TANYA TIANYI CHEN

Three years later, overturning the ban against college athletes making money from their name, image and likeness (also known as NIL) is having major payoffs. Not only are students able to make considerable secondary income, but it has opened up new careers for some who no longer are setting their sights on going pro. Several young athletes across different campuses and sports say that the new NIL policies have changed their relationship to their sport, their career prospects and even how they engage with fans.

In 2021, the NCAA overturned a ban that previously had prevented any college athlete from making money from brand deals. The ban was widely criticized for schools cashing in on a student's name, image or likeness but not letting the students themselves pocket any of the profits. A majority of students *THR* interviewed say they did not start pursuing social media deals or making money until the past year or so, after the overturn. Some report that they are now making \$5,000 to \$10,000 per post. For those who are still tracked to compete in their sports after graduation, like 21-year-old **Khoi Young**, a gymnast at Stanford University, social media will only help launch and expand their

personal brands as pro athletes. "A good way to propel my career after school is to keep growing my social media," Young says. "I don't see myself as solely a content creator, but I think it's a good supplement."

But for others, it has completely changed the game, obvious pun intended. **Brandon Dwyer**, a senior men's basketball player at Florida Gulf Coast University, is using his social media presence to pave a new path for himself in the sport: as a personality or comedian. Dwyer says when he realized he was probably going to bench more than he'd play at the professional basketball level, he knew he had to focus his talents elsewhere. Or, rather, to nurture a different kind of talent.

On TikTok, where he has 1.2 million followers, Dwyer often makes fun of himself for being an average basketball player — at least in the context of the NBA. He has an ongoing series where he documents and jokes about his journey to scoring his first-ever point on the team.

"When people could see I could take a joke, people started following me," Dwyer says. "I make relatable basketball content, where people can laugh at me or share it with their friends. ... I realized, 'OK, I can monetize this and I could make this my job.'"

Dwyer, who's pursuing a master's in finance, started making money in May from his posts and skits. Though he, like others in this story, wouldn't divulge exact numbers (and because influencer income can vary greatly month to month), he says he averages "somewhere in the five-figure range every month." He's since been signed to a six-month management deal with Clementine to help him navigate and negotiate brand sponsorship opportunities better.

These days, on top of his schoolwork and basketball practices, he estimates he spends up to 20 hours a week working on his social media, mostly on conceptualizing, filming and engaging with his audience. It's still feasible for him, he says, but he won't

Above, from left: Athlete influencers like Gianna Bullock, Khoi Young and Brandon Dwyer as well as (below) Shaqir O'Neal can earn \$5,000 to \$10,000 per post.



make a final call on whether he'll pursue it full time until he graduates.

Gianna Bullock, a track and field star at the University of Oregon, says she still has her sights set on going pro when she graduates, but influencing has given her so many new avenues that the sport traditionally never had. "It's changed my perspective for what I want for a career," she says. Bullock explains that, traditionally, a professional runner would sign one major title sponsor that would pay for all their events and gear. "You're more locked in; you can't do five deals a month," she says. But now with influencing, there are theoretically endless opportunities one can pursue.

Bullock signed with Empower agency and inked deals with brands like Dick's Sporting Goods, Reebok, Uber and McDonald's that have amounted to "tens of thousands of dollars" per deal. Plus, posting on social media as yourself helps to humanize women athletes better, she adds: "Especially for female athletes or athletes of color, we are portrayed as more masculine. I think it's super interesting that we can be portrayed as girly-girls, too. We like doing our skin care; we're not always sweating and working out."

Bill Carter, an NIL expert who founded the consultancy firm Student Athlete Insights, says that "75 percent of all NIL transactions in the first year [after the 2021 ruling] were social media" related. NIL is benefiting the "Division I mid-major athletes" more than anyone else because they are focused on the social media pipeline. "It's opened more doors for me on the business side," says **Shaqir O'Neal**, a senior at Florida A&M University — and, notably, the son of **Shaqille O'Neal**. The college student, a forward on the school's men's basketball team, has 3.5 million followers on TikTok, where fun content with his dad and lucrative brand deals are bountiful. O'Neal adds, "Basketball is not going to last forever." **THR**



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A professional headshot of Danielle Pistotnik, a woman with dark, wavy hair, wearing a dark blazer and a necklace. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

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THE RACE

It's About Time

The obsession over movie run times during Oscar season is both logical and silly

BY STEVEN ZEITCHIK

No good movie is too long, and no bad movie is short enough," **Roger Ebert** once said, responding to the moviegoer's common lament that a film was good but "too long."

The line always rushes to mind this time of year, with its frequent complaints of scenes too stuffed and paces too leisurely. If you don't like a movie, all fine, he'd argue. But to love a movie and then demand its shortening is to miss the point. If the food is delicious, can the portions really be too big?

Yet one suspects this season, even ol' Rog might have had second thoughts. The majority of the current best picture top 10 on *THR*'s Feinberg Forecast clocks in at a length of at least two hours and 10 minutes, with three of those films (*Dune: Part Two*, *Wicked* and **Brady Corbet's** immigrant epic *The Brutalist*) at least two hours and 40 minutes. Time is money. And at the multiplex, we are all **Elon Musk**.

At three hours and 35 minutes, *The Brutalist* tops even its swollen counterparts. The **Adrien Brody** vehicle is an opus so swaggy

about its run time that it builds in an intermission — stopping the film midway through to drop a 15-minute countdown to the next act. That's enough time in football to go to the locker room, hear an inspiring pep talk, binge-watch three episodes of *Nobody Wants This* and come back out for the second half.

At least that's better than *Wicked*, which, after two hours and 40 minutes of modeling popular and defying gravity, ends in a cliffhanger — you need to come back next year for the second part. By the time the story wraps, Dorothy will be sitting on a gingham couch playing mah-jongg at an independent living facility.

The world's attention span is shrinking, news stories are becoming clips, and songs are now reduced to 15-second TikTok videos. Yet on the big screen, the films just keep inflating. In 2010, the first time the Oscars nominated 10 films, half of them didn't even exceed an hour and 50 minutes. In 2024, most of the likely nominees are two hours or more.

Some of this can be chalked up to the increasing number of films of independent origin, without the market considerations built into their production. (Studios, at least with the mid-range movies in the 2000s and early 2010s, favored shorter films.) And some of it is attributable to the streaming factor. You don't have to worry about length so much if you know viewers can just pause and come back later — something many did for **Martin Scorsese's** three-and-a-half-hour Netflix drama *The Irishman* five years ago and may well do this year with the more manageable-but-still-field-strolling two hours and 10 minutes of *Emilia Pérez*.

The studio films that get through Hollywood's tight greenlight bottleneck these days also tend to do so because of their filmmakers' clout — the kind of clout that makes cuts for no man. If **Ridley Scott** and **Marc Platt** think a movie should stretch the length of the Honolulu marathon, then lace up your shoes and hold out the Gatorade, a 150-minute epic it will be.

The trend has been moving this way for some time. If you wonder whether you're imagining that Oscar best picture winners have gotten longer over your lifetime, you're not: Of the 10 shortest winners in history, the majority came out before 1975. Look at the list of the longest winners, on the other hand, and the majority came out after that year. Don't be fooled by a few 1950s epics — from *Titanic* to *Schindler's List* to *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, many of the longest winners come from right here in our era.

This supersizing arrives with a double

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REGGIE GLOSSON

**ON BEING NAMED A
2024 NEXT GEN HONOREE BY
THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER**

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Awards



edge; it's a point to lament before seeing the film but worth taking pride in after making it through. At a CAA tastemaker screening of *The Brutalist* on Nov. 16, the jokes about bathroom breaks were abundant before the screening, but such talk quickly morphed into marveling about the film's epic-ness afterward. Much of that is because of *The Brutalist*'s greatness, no doubt. But some audience members also were just congratulating themselves for making it to the end.

Ditto for filmmakers, for whom excessive length can seem less like a sign of vanity than a mark of audacity — in a world of itchy hitting the skip-ad button five seconds into the YouTube video, a reluctance to tap quickly on the chess clock. Corbet's project was so ambitious, no distributor would touch it when he shopped it in development. "It turns out not everyone was really excited to make a three-and-a-half-hour architecture drama," he deadpanned after the tastemaker screening,

though this played less as regret than as humblebrag. When a moment later Corbet said he shot the film in 33 days for \$10 million, the audience let out a gasp, and you could practically hear ballots being checked off. To shoot a

By the time *Wicked* wraps, Dorothy will be sitting on a gingham couch playing mah-jongg at an independent living facility.

movie this long that fast — well, surely such a feat deserves a prize.

(The acting impresses on similar terms. For Brody to turn in his Hungarian-inflected volatility day in and day out, filling one frame after another, as he does, would seem to make

him worthy of all the acting prizes. Same for **Ariana Grande** and **Cynthia Erivo**, who shot the two-part *Wicked* across three calendar years, from December 2022 to January 2024, minus a pause for the actors strike.)

At the Cannes Film Festival a number of years ago, **Steven Soderbergh's** two-part, four-hour **Che Guevara** biopic, *Che*, coyly acknowledged its length with a satisfying gambit: Festgoers were given a boxed lunch upon entering the theater, giving a screening the vague aura of an afternoon hike.

One of the paradoxes of the streaming era is how, even amid its trigger-finger addictiveness to the next episode, binge-watching also has conditioned us to long investment times. The phenomenon has now extended to our Oscar-screener habits, in which we anxiously squirm to get to the next movie in the portal but will unthinkingly invest three hours of time once we arrive.

The impulse to cater to such instincts is laudatory and a little beside the point. Certainly in a climate of so much distraction, a movie that offers the chance to bubble out the real world for an extended period is noble. But we still shouldn't equate quantity with quality or ignore subject matter relevance. Some movies merit their length; you wouldn't want to rush through the Civil War or the Holocaust. But not every Oscar contender is *Gone With the Wind* or *Shoah*.

Yet those viewers TikTok-ified into shorter attention spans may have the last laugh. The current top movie on the Feinberg Forecast — the film that may be left standing when all is said and done — is *September 5*, a 91-minute cinematic bullet that covers just 22 hours in narrative time and, with its fast dialogue and high-pressure situations unfolding in an ABC Sports production booth, is over practically before we even realized that it began. **Tim Fehlbaum's** movie would be the second-shortest best picture winner of all time, outlasting the shortest, 1955's *Marty*, by a minute.

If the season ends up becoming a three-way race among *September 5*, *Wicked* and *The Brutalist*, as it well could, it will be a competition not only between different avenues into these movies' themes of otherness but a referendum on cinematic chronology itself. Do we want our contemporary films fast and relentless, like modernity? Or do we want them endless, languorous, indulgent — the kind of thing we used to mock Hollywood for but that now seems almost charming in a world of cutthroat data-driven efficiency? No bad movie is short enough, but any long movie by definition must be good. **VHRR**

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Muni Long wrote hits for (from left) Sabrina Carpenter, Mary J. Blige and Mariah Carey.

you want to continue to write for others or focus on your own music?

I want to go where I'm loved and appreciated. I want to go where the joy is. The dumb shit that happens behind the scenes when lawyers and A&Rs and record execs get involved, it's so unappetizing. It's like, "Hey, guess what? I'm willing to pull this song and walk away because I don't want to deal with the headache and the silly shit." It's not that complicated.

When I work with artists like **John Legend** or **Mariah**, it doesn't take all that. It's very simple. All the extra shit that comes with it, that means that someone is trying to devalue you or finesse you out of something. I don't want no parts of that.

It makes me think about how tough it must be for songwriters who aren't also performers.

It's hell. Why do you think I stopped? I said, "Oh, no, there has to be another way, honey, because this ain't it."

During the writers strike in TV and film, there were a lot of people who said streaming paid them in pennies. Was that the case for you?

Absolutely. Sometimes you look at your quarterly statement and you're like, "Oh wow, \$1,000 for 500 million streams. Great. That's awesome." The sheer volume that I have to write in order to make an income that makes sense [is insane]. What saved me is that I have quality and quantity, whereas some of these people, all they have is one or two records. And I got taken advantage of and stolen from and all that.

You mean not getting credit for something?

Not getting credit, not getting paid, the producer running off with the money. Anything you can think of, it happened to me. But my goal was to be where I am now, and those people who did those things to me are nowhere to be found. **VH1**



THE DOWNLOAD

The Loophole That Landed Muni Long a Grammy Nom

If not for a live version of 'Made for Me,' the singer-songwriter who has penned hits for Rihanna and Selena Gomez would have missed her moment **BY MESFIN FEKADU**

Muni Long's "Made for Me" reached platinum status, hit the No. 1 spot on R&B/hip-hop radio and, much like her breakthrough groove "Hrs & Hrs," went viral on TikTok — with users posting hilarious and playful videos to the lyric, "Twin, where have you been?" It was inevitable that *the* R&B song of the year would be showered with Grammy nominations.

But it didn't qualify for the 2025 show, technically speaking. The song was released Sept. 15, 2023, the last day of eligibility for the 2024 Grammys. It was submitted to that show — a risky move that didn't pay off: The song was too new and didn't garner any noms.

Long posted about the bad news on social media — a video of herself lying on the floor in distress with the caption: "When management tells you 'Made for Me' isn't eligible for any Grammys."

But her team regrouped and found a loophole used by artists who came before her: Submit a live version of the song. It wouldn't qualify in all categories, like song of the year or best R&B song, but it would be eligible for record of the year and best R&B performance — where it indeed landed a nomination. And the

Grammy love for the singer — a respected songwriter who has crafted hits for **Rihanna, Ariana Grande, Selena Gomez, Madonna** and **Miranda Lambert** — was powerful: She swept the R&B categories, also landing noms for best R&B album, R&B song and traditional R&B performance.

"The biggest lesson [and] takeaway is you have to be very intentional about what you're doing, and I think that was the

nominations in multiple categories, song of the year possibly.

"Ruined Me" was inspired by your split from your husband of nine years and is nominated for best R&B song. What was it like writing that song?

Literally, it was the last song [I recorded]. I wrote the song in probably 20 minutes. That's how it always is. If it takes me longer than that, I just need to move on.

"You look at your statement: '\$1,000 for 500 million streams. Great.'"

mistake we made," she says. "I will never let that happen to me again. I'll always make sure we're taking it seriously. 'What's the plan? What are we doing?' And even if no one else has a plan, I have my own plan."

Was it a relief when you found out there was a way to submit "Made for Me" for Grammys?

It's like a fork in the road. I could be grateful that I'm even in the conversation this year. Then there's the other path: If we weren't so in disbelief at how massive the song was ... I think that we could have had multiple

Is it easy to write that quickly when you are being vulnerable?

It really doesn't matter what the subject is — I remove myself from the process. To be honest, I'm not super vulnerable. I might take a piece from my real life, but the rest of it is theater. I want you to feel the emotion that I'm trying to evoke. That's it. My actual feelings around my current situation is like Michael Myers, Chucky. I'm not going to write a song about that, obviously.

You've written for Sabrina Carpenter, Kelly Clarkson, Mary J. Blige and Florida Georgia Line. Do

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WORLDWIDE LOCATIONS

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Jim Gaffigan was photographed Oct. 29 at his neighborhood spot Elvis in New York City.

CREATIVE CLASS

Jim Gaffigan Is Finally Invited to the Party

Fresh off his turn as Tim Walz on *SNL*, the newly svelte stand-up discusses comedy's move toward meritocracy, the RFK Jr. joke he backed out of telling and why he'd rather have a 'clean' act than an 'edgy' one

By Lacey Rose

I

"It is great to be here, I look good," jokes **Jim Gaffigan**, who's just sauntered out onstage for what will be his 11th stand-up special. "I don't know if you know, but I'm normally a fat guy. But since I've lost all this weight, now I'm just arrogant."

The Skinny, his new hour, will kick-start Hulu's ambitious push into stand-up with monthly specials beginning Nov. 22. Gaffigan and his Mounjaro jokes will serve as the streamer's guinea pig, a role he previously played at Amazon Prime Video back in 2019. In between, the Grammy-nominated comic, journeyman actor and *CBS News Sunday Morning* commentator released his special *Comedy Monster* on Netflix, still the 800-pound gorilla in a booming market.

"What **Ted Sarandos** has done is insane and contributed to comedians making an incredible living, but the dynamic has shifted, and the more players in this, the better for stand-up," he says via Zoom from New York, where he's just taken two of his five children with his longtime wife (and frequent collaborator), Jeannie, to vote on Election Day. And though our hourlong conversation wades heavily into politics — after all, Gaffigan's just played VP nominee **Tim Walz** on *Saturday Night Live* and emceed the Al Smith charity dinner with now President-elect **Donald Trump** present — he doesn't want his comedy to be political. Or, rather, his audience doesn't want his comedy to be political.

So, how did you land on SNL?

Once **Steve Martin** turned it down, me and some other doughy Midwestern types were pitched on social media because casting is now done by public referendum. But I've been around long enough to know there are certain things you just can't campaign for, so I stood back. Then I got an acting job in the U.K. this summer and [my reps] call the night before and say, "Hey, so we've been kind of telling people that you've been doing these impressions of Tim Walz in funny messages to us."

Had you?

I hadn't. I was like, "Are you saying that I need to do some videos like that?" So there I was, in my hotel in Leeds, recording my impressions. It's all so secretive, and you don't know if it's going to get to these people. It's just a total roll of the dice. But I knew how to do it. I mean, me and Tim Walz, it's not that different. He just has a brightness in him that I once had, [before] I lived in New York or worked in the entertainment industry for so long.

Your career took off when David Letterman anointed you on his show. What's the 2024 equivalent?

It's so fluid now. There's a truly democratic element to stand-up today. It's not a total meritocracy, but there's something about **Sebastian Maniscalco** selling out six Madison Square Garden shows that's just undeniable. **Theo Von** having that impact on the zeitgeist, you can't deny that stuff. And **Nate Bargatze**, who did it without podcasts! [When I was coming up,] it was the *Roseanne* era. If you were a great comedian, you became a sitcom star.

It's also a very different America that comics traverse. Does any aspect of your comedy or the response change as you travel?

This is, for lack of a better term, the Trump era. When he first won, I'd never talked about it. But the guy who opens for me, he went through periods where he would, and people wouldn't respond negatively, they would just look at the ceiling. So, I stay out of it. People go to shows to escape, and there's just a fatigue surrounding the two teams.

With folks like **Joe Rogan**, it can sometimes feel like comics are almost captains of those teams. I did the Al Smith dinner, and I knew it was a no-win situation, but [I said yes because] I'm a history buff and a Catholic. I tried to do it very much down the middle and in the spirit of Bob Hope, but there were still people upset. I want to be able to look my children in the eyes, and I pride myself on a certain amount of authenticity, but I really do feel America is like, "We don't need to know what you think."

Depending on which outlet you read, you either destroyed Harris or you destroyed Trump.

It was so insane. And at points, I was probably this person, but

"I really do feel America is like, 'We don't need to know what you think.'"

there were a lot of people who are like, "How could you be in the room with that guy?" It's complicated. I'm sure us even having this conversation, **Rob** [Gaffigan's publicist] is going, "Cut it off! Don't talk about this!"

Trump was mere feet from you as you were cracking jokes. There's got to be some calculation of, "Do I go for it?" And, "How hard do I go?"

There were adjustments. We had this joke about **RFK Jr.** But once you're in the setting, you're like, "You know what? I'm not doing it." **Cheryl Hines** was there. There's no sense in an innocent bystander getting shrapnel on her.

You've long prided yourself on having the kind of audience where a Mormon couple could be seated beside two lesbians. Can that still happen today?

It can if your shows aren't a piece of advocacy for either side. But, by the way, I understand that people feel powerless and want to do anything to make sure we avoid the end of our republic.

You're considered a "clean" comic, which is a characterization that's always irked you. Why?

The only adjective comedians want is "funny." With categories on a streaming platform, "edgy" is more positive than "clean" — but I'm constantly looking for what to watch while I sit next to my 12-year-old. By the way, edgy is ridiculous, too. It's lazy.

[Editor's note: On Netflix, Gaffigan's specials fall under "Goofy," "Marriage" and "Food"; they're absent from "Provocative" and "Politically Incorrect."]

A few years ago, you told Marc Maron that you were comfortable with your level of fame but wished it opened more acting doors. Has that changed?

There is this naive expectation of the entertainment industry that **Tom Hanks** is going to invite you in, and that just doesn't exist. That said, I love acting. Every time I go to Sundance, I'm thinking, "All right, this is the one. Now I'm going to be able to play **Jesse Plemons**' older brother!" Going back to *SNL*, that's what I wanted. Being at the afterparty and hanging out with **Martin Short** and **Jon Hamm**, I'm not the type who would just go to that party if I wasn't on the show. So, having the unconscious invitation to be present is really an enormous relief. I assume that [the *SNL* exposure] has probably had some impact, but everything's fast-moving. In the end, I'll just be considered a really good-looking guy. So what am I going to do about that, right? **VH1**



Gaffigan played Tim Walz on *SNL* this fall alongside Maya Rudolph as Kamala Harris, but he's yet to meet, much less hear, from the former VP nominee.

Photographed by **Amy Lombard**

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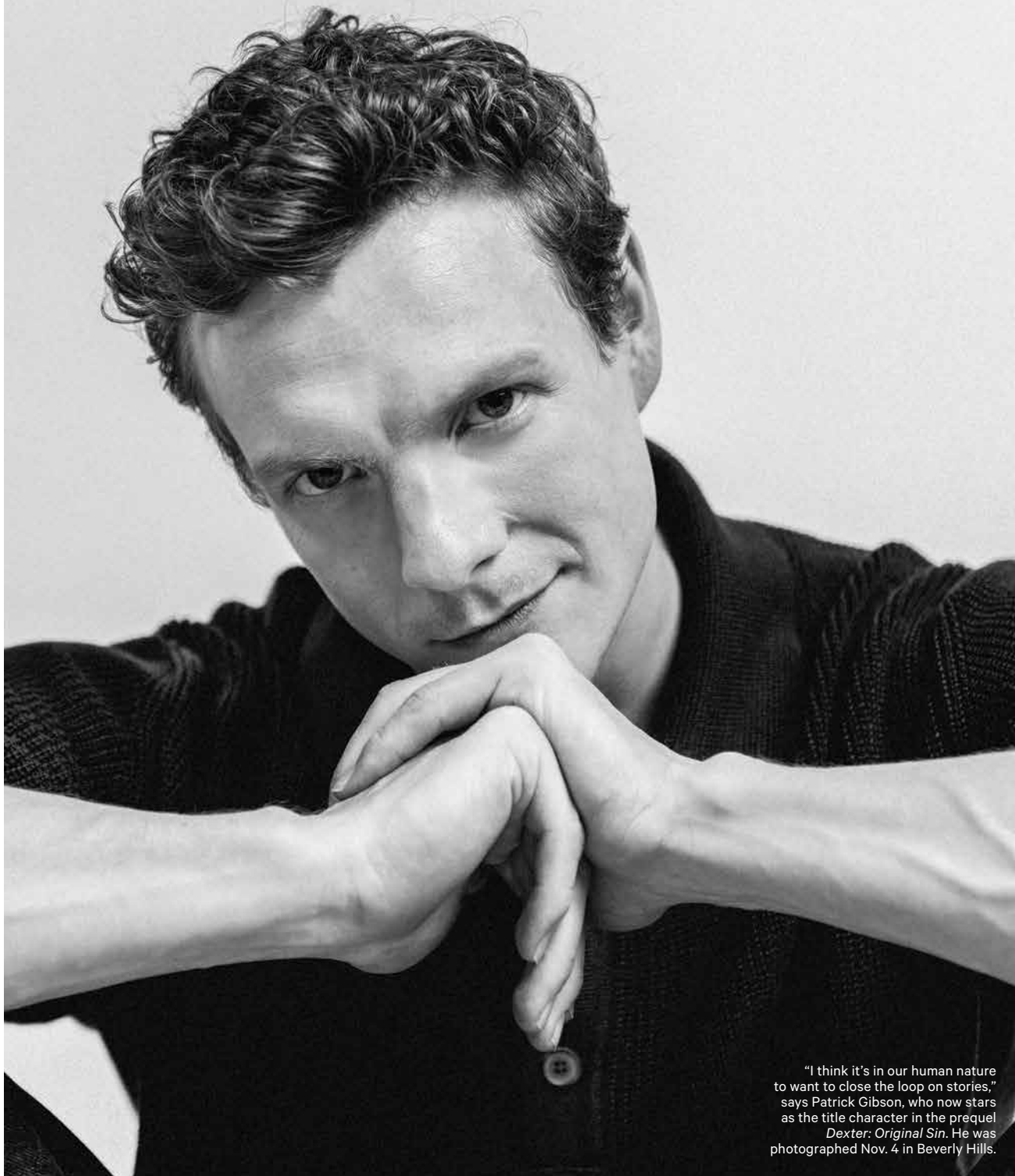
About Town

People, Places, Preoccupations

NEXT BIG THING

Portrait of a Killer as a Young Man

Patrick Gibson's about to go on a murder spree in *Dexter: Original Sin*. Luckily for him, he likes the sight of blood By Seija Rankin • Photographed by Jennifer McCord



"I think it's in our human nature to want to close the loop on stories," says Patrick Gibson, who now stars as the title character in the prequel *Dexter: Original Sin*. He was photographed Nov. 4 in Beverly Hills.

When Patrick Gibson was auditioning to star in *Dexter: Original Sin*, there were a few items that never came up but probably should have. The first was his comfort level with the sight of blood; the series is a prequel to the Emmy-winning mid-aughts dark comedy about an avenging serial killer, to which gore, however tastefully done, is integral. The second was the matter of The Wig. The prequel's timeline directly coincides with the original's infamous flashback to Dexter's first kill, during which **Michael C. Hall** dons a hairpiece not dissimilar to that of Lord Farquaad's (plus, it's stringy) — Gibson, as his fans well know, has a signature look of blond curls.

Luckily for all involved, Gibson, the 29-year-old Ireland-born actor who broke big in *The OA* and starred in *The Darkest Minds* and *Shadow & Bone*, is a very cool customer. He's not at all squeamish, instead finding the filming of the gruesome kill scenes to be rather therapeutic. "That sounds mad," he says with a laugh. "But it's when Dexter is finally himself, and has dropped his mask, so it's quite relaxing." And though the show's creators didn't broach the topic of the wig — which, in the prequel, reads a bit more **Jerry Garcia** — until after the actor signed on, he found humor in his drastically different look (see next page). "I put that wig on and thought I looked bloody gorgeous, like, 'I've arrived.'"

The offer to audition for *Dexter: Original Sin* came during what Gibson describes as a quiet period between roles. He shot to stardom at the still-tender age of 21 when *The OA* became one of Netflix's early original hits, but he has taken care to pace himself ever since. "I was starting to feel like I was on a conveyer belt of doing audition tapes when this script came through," he says. "I was worried about the idea of a

About Town

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prequel, but then I read it and was like, ‘Oh, no — this is sharp.’” After eight or so auditions, and after a photoshop mockup assured the creators that a dye job and brown contacts could improve his resemblance to Hall’s, Gibson broke his dry spell. And though he was relieved to learn he only had to wear the wig for a few scenes (Dexter gets a much-needed haircut early in the series), he found the more tempered makeover portion a bit off-putting. “They dyed my hair red, and that was weird for me at first,” says Gibson, who will keep his crimson locks until filming wraps in late November. “They did my eyebrows, too, so I



Dexter Morgan (portrayed in the prequel by Gibson) gets a much-needed haircut early on in the new Showtime series.

had [visible] eyebrows for the first time in my life. I had to learn how to act with them.”

Original Sin is part of Showtime’s recent creative pivot, focused heavily on expanding existing IP — spinoffs of *Ray Donovan* and *Billions* also are in the works — and it enters the *Dexter* canon under the watchful eye of its dedicated fandom. The group’s love for the show has been tested by an original series finale widely viewed as disappointing and even brutal, as well as a reboot (2021’s *New Blood*) that failed to take off. “I’m not sure if I’m fully prepared for this because I don’t know what’s to come, but I know that once it’s out in the world, it doesn’t really have anything to do with me anymore,” he says. “I’m hoping I can bring some of myself to this character while also honoring what he did.”

Meanwhile, *The OA*, **Brit Marling** and **Zal Batmanglij**’s sci-fi phenomenon, remains one of the most requested reboots the world over. It ran for two mind-blowing seasons before Netflix inexplicably ordered a cancellation, cutting off the narrative after a huge cliff-hanger centered on Gibson’s Steve Winchell. Fans picketed the streamer’s L.A. headquarters (a visual precursor to 2023’s *Hot Strike Summer*), circulated petitions and even purchased a billboard in Times Square calling for the show’s return.

“That whole time was so wild, and it’s so crazy that I was in something that meant that much to people,” he says, noting that he still stays in close contact with the show’s creators (and, last year, his close friend and fellow Londoner **Harris Dickinson** starred in their long-awaited follow-up, *A Murder at the End of the World*). When pressed, he admits that he still remembers *The Movements*, a dance-like sequence that became integral to the show’s supernatural plot. “It’s in a quiet place inside me, and I think that will be the case forever,” he says. “I’m still very confident that they will be used again at some point. I don’t feel any rush for the show to come back, but I think it’s in our human nature to want to close the loop on stories. This will niggle for a long time, and we want to finish it.”

When *The OA* first came out, Gibson had to figure out how he wanted to show up publicly. He found doing interviews quite difficult, not knowing how to act when the light shined on him and not his character. He’s learned as he gets older that the antidote to a life in the spotlight is stricter self-privacy; where he used to regularly post personal pictures of his actor friends and girlfriend **Maude Apatow** on Instagram, he’s pulling back as he nears the release of *Original Sin* in December. “I think about the actors I loved growing up, and they kept their anonymity. I didn’t hear much about what **Philip Seymour Hoffman** was having for breakfast,” he says before adding, “Not that I’m putting myself in the same category.”

He also relies heavily on his peers — Dickinson, fellow Irishman **Anthony Boyle** — for levity. “When things are tough and someone hasn’t worked in a while, I’ve found people who are really supportive of each other. We’re there to remind each other that we’ll get another job.” **THR**

Ojai There! An Iconic Theater Reopens

After years of disuse, the century-old Ojai Playhouse relaunches, just in time for awards season **By Gary Baum**

The 110-year-old Ojai Playhouse, a historic movie theater darkened for the past decade, has been revived by music industry impresario **David Berger**. He bought the silent era property after selling his VIP concert ticketing firm Future Beat in 2018 to a company now owned by WME and moving to industry-favored Ojai. Berger has invested more than \$10 million to turn the theater into a state-of-the-art venue, all while preserving its iconic facade.

Other high-profile Hollywood figures with homes in the area — including Universal Studios head **Donna Langley** and **Eric Goode**, the *Tiger King* and *Chimp Crazy* documentarian who’s developing the boutique El Roblar Hotel across the street — also had looked into purchasing the Playhouse. “I grew up as a ticket-taker and usher and concessionaire and, later, a projectionist at theaters just outside of Boston,” Berger says. “So, for me, this was meant to be.”

The 200-seat Playhouse will screen first-run studio films, art house offerings, repertory cinema and select small-scale live performances. Think, in L.A. terms, a cross between the ArcLight, the New Beverly and Largo at the Coronet. It debuts Nov. 22 with multiple showings of *Heat*, something of an inside joke (“because the neighborhood has given me so much heat about

OSYTER PATRICK WYNNE/PARAMOUNT, WITH SHOWTIME OAI/INTERIOR © CROCE/LOI OAI PLAYHOUSE OAI/EXTERIOR CHRIS COPPOLANO/APLA PLAYHOUSE ERVIO GILBERT FLORES/VARIETY VIA GETTY IMAGES; THERON MONICA SCHIPPER/GETTY IMAGES; SALDANA JAMES DEAN/VSC IMAGES; BAILEY SAVERIO MARFA/GETTY IMAGES; KIDMAN BRYAN BEDDEN/GETTY IMAGES FOR NETFLIX; GOLDBLUM AMY ADAMS/GETTY IMAGES; BOULDER PICTURES/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; BOULDER DANIEL ZUCHNIG/GETTY IMAGES FOR WCNW.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

THR'S HOT DATES

NOV. 20

THR's Next Gen Party
THR will toast this year's up-and-coming Hollywood talents — both in front of and behind the screen — at a Next Gen celebration at Soho House Holloway.

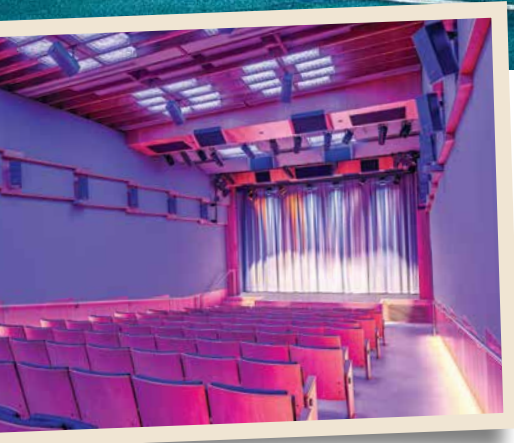
NOV. 20

Nightbitch Premiere
Amy Adams will prowl the carpet in support of her new film at its Los Angeles premiere.



NOV. 21-23

Las Vegas Grand Prix
F1 revs up in Sin City for its second annual race, featuring a 3.8-mile track that weaves through the neon heart of the Strip.



From top: A vintage photo of the Ojai Playhouse, built in 1914; the renovated interior, featuring Dolby Atmos surround sound and lighting inspired by artist James Turrell.

how long it's taken to open"). The near-term calendar also includes a thematically appropriate **Werner Herzog** double billing of *Fitzcarraldo* and *Burden of Dreams* — as a nod to the quixotic endeavor of bringing the Playhouse back to life after it was heavily damaged by a water main break — as well as the set-in-Ojai *Easy A* and, on Christmas Eve, the twofor of *Die Hard* and *Bad Santa*.

Since it's awards season, and Ojai and neighboring Montecito are dense with Academy voters, there also will

be showings of *Anora*, *The Brutalist*, *Conclave*, *Sing Sing*, *Emilia Pérez* and — as a sneak peek — *Babygirl*. “We’ve begun building relationships with studios,” Berger says. “They know who lives around here.”

Berger has tricked out the Playhouse with seemingly all the AV equipment money can buy: Dolby Atmos surround sound, a Simplex 35mm reel-to-reel, Barco 4K digital projection and top-of-the-line streaming capabilities. But his proudest achievement may be custom quadratic diffusers along the theater’s ceiling that, yes, optimize acoustics but also feature lighting that can be programmed to color-match the sky in real time.

“We have a camera outside where we look at, for example, the Topatopa Mountains and can capture the ‘pink moment’ at sunset that everyone loves and then put it in the theater,” he says of the effect, which draws inspiration from revered conceptual artist **James Turrell**, a founder of the Light and Space movement. “It’s magic.” **THR**

CITRUS CASTS A SPELL

Limes and lemony hues proved magically delicious at the *Wicked* premiere. Plus, Nicole Kidman enchanted in embroidery and Zoe Saldaña swaggered in a suit By Alison Edmond



1. CYNTHIA ERIVO

Louis Vuitton

Hey, turns out it is easy being green, at least at the *Wicked* premiere.

2. CHARLIZE THERON

Schiaparelli

Freed from her Dior contract, she dressed like a Greek goddess for the *Baby2Baby* gala.

3. ZOE SALDAÑA

Saint Laurent

Nodding to her buzzy new Netflix movie, *Emilia Pérez*, she showed up in men’s mode for *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*.

4. JONATHAN BAILEY

Dolce & Gabbana

Forget the yellow brick road — just follow this actor’s shirt at the *Wicked* premiere.

5. NICOLE KIDMAN

Dolce & Gabbana

Kidman’s embroidered gown was appropriately bewitching at the *Spellbound* bow.

6. JEFF GOLDBLUM

Prada

Attending the *Wicked* premiere in frock coat and frilly shirt, this wizard never looked hipper.



NOV. 21-24

Star Wars in Concert

C-3PO actor **Anthony Daniels** will host four nights at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, with the L.A. Phil playing **John Williams’** scores alongside clips from all nine films.

NOV. 22

Snowflake Ball

The fifth annual NYC charity event, put on by the Fifth Avenue Snowflake for Humanity Foundation, will honor chef **Daniel Boulud** and benefit Citymeals on Wheels.



NOV. 22

amFAR Benefit

During F1 weekend, the AIDS research nonprofit hosts its inaugural Las Vegas event.

Sylvester and **Jennifer Stallone** are honorees; **Diana Ross** will perform.

NOV. 22-23

Avatar: The Last Airbender in Concert

A live orchestra will accompany a nearly two-hour recap of the animated series’ three seasons for two nights at the Dolby Theatre.

NOV. 23

Cyndi Lauper: Girls Just Wanna Have Fun

The ‘80s icon will bring her international farewell tour — her first major run in more than a decade — to the Intuit Dome, with opening act **Daya**.

The Best (and Worst) Celeb Booze Brands

Forget Oscars and the Walk of Fame. The flex du jour in Hollywood is hawking your own liquor line. *THR*'s expert panel separates the swill from the swell By Brad Japhe

Credit — or blame, as the case may be — generally goes to **Sammy Hagar**. The former **Van Halen** frontman kick-started the celebrity booze movement when he launched his own Cabo Wabo Tequila back in 1999. The trend went into overdrive in 2017 after **George Clooney** offloaded his Casamigos tequila label to Diageo for a cool \$1 billion. Suddenly, every A-list (and A-list aspirant) wanted in. And though the ubiquity of celebrity brands has reached the point of parody, their performance is entirely serious, outpacing the industry as a whole. But which of them are any good? *THR* has convened a panel of mixologists and booze experts to single out their favorites — and those best relegated to the bottom shelf.

THE BEST Amante 1530 Sting

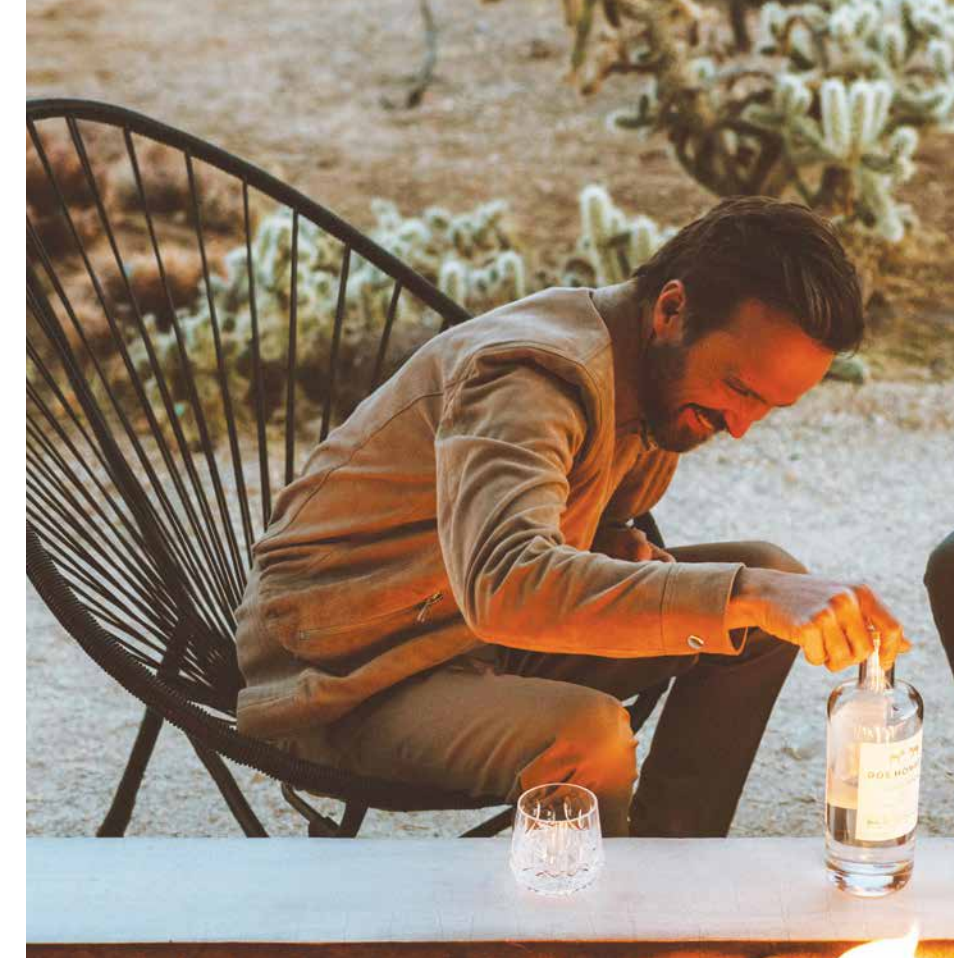
If there is a message in this bottle, it's that Italian-style aperitivi needn't have such a high sugar content. The rock legend, who owns a sprawling villa in Tuscany, has put out a higher-alcohol version that emphasizes the bitter in bitter-sweet. "Sweeping all of the other aperitifs out of the way, Amante has quickly become a staple for me at home and behind the bar," says famed Los Angeles mixologist **Yael Stormborn**.

Brother's Bond Bourbon
Ian Somerhalder, Paul Wesley
Former *Vampire Diaries* co-stars Somerhalder and Wesley introduced their brand in 2021 as a sweet and slightly spicy take on the category. Complex yet

accessible, it became an instant hit. Now it's joined by three other expressions on shelves, including, most recently, an elegantly blended rye along with a whiskey built entirely from grains grown through regenerative agriculture.

Dos Hombres Mezcal
Bryan Cranston, Aaron Paul
"Dos Hombres proves that Cranston and Paul still know a thing or two about making something seriously addictive," notes **Dan Dunn**, host of the top-rated beverage podcast *What We're Drinking*, of the *Breaking Bad* actors, who worked with artisan producers in Oaxaca. Their mezcal, he says, is "smoky, smooth and just the right amount of bold, with notes of apple, mango and a whisper of earthy spice."

Four Walls Whiskey
Glenn Howerton, Rob McElhenney and Charlie Day
Unlike every harebrained scheme the actors come up with behind the bar on *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, this blend of Irish whiskey and American rye is not a complete disaster, says Dunn. "In fact, they didn't screw it up at all. Expect rich, malty notes



with a playful punch of spice, followed by a mellow, caramel finish that's as sweet and unsuspecting as Charlie's well-meaning innocence."

Harmony; Origen Vodka
Woody Harrelson
Founded last year by the vegan *Cheers* actor, the Holistic Spirits Co. debuted with two sustainable, plant-focused liquors: Harmony is a crisp and botanical 90 proof gin with hints of coriander and pineapple. Origen Vodka is a refreshingly herbal, somewhat creamy take on the otherwise neutral category, distilled from organic wheat. The products have earned the approval of top bartenders. "The entire approach of Holistic Spirits has literally never been done before," says Stormborn.

Lobos 1707 Tequila
LeBron James, Issa Rae, Arnold Schwarzenegger et al.
This top-shelf agave spirit came to market in late 2020 and has lured a range of celebrity investors, including James, who can frequently be seen in marketing material for new releases. But the real slam dunk here is the juice. Each traditionally made expression of the Mexican spirit spends time in sherry barrels sourced from Spain. There's not a bad bottle in the bunch.

Meili Vodka
Jason Momoa
If anyone knows the value of good water, it ought to be Aquaman. Momoa, who launched his vodka in early 2023, claims to use one of the country's purest springs, in the mountains of



JAMES: COURTESY OF LOBOS 1707; TEQUILA: PAUL: COURTESY OF DOS HOMEBRES; CLOONEY: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES FOR CASAMIGOS; HAGER: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES FOR VAN HALEN; HARRISON: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES FOR HOLISTIC SPIRITS; SOMERHALDER: CHRIS DELMAS/AP; WESLEY: BRONCE; KEVIN MAZUR/REIMAGE FOR PARKWOOD



Left: *Breaking Bad* co-conspirators Aaron Paul and Bryan Cranston (right) share a tippie of their Dos Hombres Mezcal. Below: George Clooney (left) and Rande Gerber, co-founders of Casamigos, promoting the tequila during the pandemic.



think Mexico's national spirit should taste like vanilla extract," says Goldfarb. Fournier concurs on the merits of the juice itself but adds, "One of the things that Casamigos might have done right is convince people to try tequila, and if their current sales dip is anything to go on, it seems that once people start tasting the wider category, they start making their own choices."

Indoggo Gin
Snoop Dogg

"Snoop Dogg may be a hip-hop icon, but when it comes to gin, he's definitely not 'dropping it like it's hot,'" says Dunn. "Sure, he's got 'Gin and Juice' credentials, but Indoggo is more liquid candy than gin. It's an artificial berry blast that leaves your taste buds dazed and disappointed. This one's got all the finesse of a bad remix."

Tesla Tequila
Elon Musk

"Elon Musk's Tesla Tequila comes in a bottle that can't even stand on its own," observes Goldfarb. "And that's only the second-worst thing about this overpriced swill." The more objectionable aspect to this 15-month-aged añejo, he says, is that it's a fairly muted expression yet still demands as much as \$3,000 a bottle online.

MoShine
Nelly

"Of all the things you could do with moonshine — traditionally the drink of outlaws, bootleggers and general badasses — you decided to filter it through peach and passion fruit Jolly Ranchers?" asks Dunn of the \$30 liqueur billed as the ultimate party drink. "Whether or not Nelly actually did that is beside the point. It tastes like he did."

Wolf Moon Bourbon
Jason Aldean

"Just because you can sell out arenas doesn't mean you should sell out and slap your name on a whiskey bottle," says Dunn of this 80 proof whiskey from the beloved country star. "The nose gives you a faint whiff of caramel and oak, but it's mostly drowned out by a wave of *meh*. Is it smooth? Sure, but so is tap water." **VIII**

Montana. It not only makes for an award-winning, subtly sweet spirit that you can actually sip, but it also helps raise awareness (and funds) for water conservation, a cause dear to the actor's heart. Meili has put Momoa's money where his mouth is without sacrificing quality, notes **Adam Fournier**, beverage director at Spago in Beverly Hills.

The Sassenach Blended Scotch Whisky
Sam Heughan

The *Outlander* star and notable Scotsman's flagship bottle is made for connoisseurs of the category. It's a 92 proof sipper that noses with ginger and dried apricot and leaves the mouth with a wash of butterscotch and crème brûlée. Last year, it took home the top prize for world's best scotch

at the annual Singapore World Spirits Competition.

Singani 63
Steven Soderbergh

Soderbergh got his first taste of the hyperlocal Bolivian floral brandy known as Singani while on location filming *Che* in 2007 and decided to go all-in, well before celeb spirits became a trend. "It has become a kind of cult darling in the Los Angeles beverage scene," says Fournier. "This is a great example of a style of spirit that would have never been seen by the vast majority of people drinking it in the U.S. if [a celebrity] hadn't gotten behind it."

Sweetens Cove Bourbon
Peyton Manning, Andy Roddick

This craft whiskey brand was launched in 2020 by a consortium

of retired Hall of Fame athletes. To ensure their cache of well-aged Tennessee and Kentucky bourbons was upgraded to all-star status, they enlisted the aid of another legend in her own respective sport: whiskey blending. "Sweetens Cove is great whiskey because they get out of the way and let a real pro, master distiller **Marianne Eaves**, handle the production," says **Aaron Goldfarb**, author of *Dusty Booze: In Search of Vintage Spirits*.

Sir Davis Whisky
Beyoncé

Beyoncé made her entrance into the booze space this fall in spectacular fashion. Forming a 50-50 partnership with LVMH, she tapped the legendary whisky maker behind Ardbeg and Glenmorangie to craft a scotch-inspired American rye, which takes its name from the singer's great-grandfather, a Prohibition-era moonshiner. "Everything about this product makes sense: the story, the distillers behind the juice, the branding," says Stormborn. "Well done."

THE WORST
Casamigos

Formerly George Clooney, Rande Gerber

"This brand, notorious for the use of additives, has made Americans

Bibulous brand ambassadors, from left: Jason Momoa (Meili), LeBron James (Lobos 1707), Paul Wesley and Ian Somerhalder (Brother's Bond), Sam Heughan (Sassenach) and Beyoncé (Sir Davis).





The De-Kardashian-ification of America

Plastic surgeons on both coasts are noticing a clear trend: Women are eschewing exaggerated hourglass figures and injectables (so 2021!) for a more athletic, less obviously redone look: 'It's the tweakment movement' By Beth Landman

It wasn't so long ago — just last year in fact — that social media was awash with would-be **Kardashians**: super-straight shiny hair, bee-stung lips covering blinding white teeth, doe eyes streaked with mascara and a wasp waist dividing an ample butt and prominent breasts. But — in tandem with the rise of Ozempic and other GLP-1 medications — that image is fading fast. Even the Kardashians themselves are deflating, with butts apparently reduced and fillers seemingly dissolved. But as always in plastic surgery, it's all about the details, and those vary from industry to industry. *THR* asked surgeons on both coasts to reveal what their clients are asking for these days.

Less (Conspicuous) Is More ...

"Lifts and even breast reductions are on the rise, along with tummy tucks to make the midsection look more fit," says New York plastic surgeon **Darren Smith**. He also reports a 25 percent uptick in mini

arm lifts, which give the area a more streamlined and toned appearance, without the unsightly scars of a true brachioplasty.

"I see a 20 percent increase in women coming in for lifts this year over last," notes **Lyle Leipziger**, chief of plastic and reconstructive surgery at both North Shore University Hospital and Long Island Jewish Medical Center. "And those that want implants only want to go up one bra size."

... But L.A. Is Gonna L.A.

Some things don't change: L.A. still wants bigger boobs — an average of 200 ccs more per implant than on the East Coast, says plastic surgeon **Troy Pittman**.

Safer Stuff

Pittman reports that women nationwide are clamoring for Motiva, the new implants approved in September by the FDA that are more biocompatible, meaning there's less risk of rupture or capsular contraction that results in hardening. "They've put to

bed a lot of safety issues and are a game-changer," he says.

'Injectable Backlash'

The country is in the grip of filler fear. Dr. **Annie Chiu**, who has a practice in Redondo Beach, feels it's largely the result of social media. "We are facing an injectable backlash, and the filler market has been down in '24," she observes. "At first, everyone was encouraged to get that very contoured, over-filled Instagram face, but now there is a real fear of looking weird. My colleagues think that L.A. is more overdone, but there is bad work



everywhere, especially Miami and Dallas, and the Housewives of New York don't exactly have that subtle look." Chiu points out the counteraction was felt by **Kristin Davis** when she appeared in *And Just Like That*. "She is a consummate New Yorker and was attacked online for being overfilled, but she had it corrected and now looks better."

Howard Sobel, a New York dermatologist, reported that his patients from Los Angeles still want a fuller, more rounded face than his New Yorkers request. "They want an exaggerated feminine look because that gets you noticed, but that look has never been New York. They bring in pictures of celebrities they want to look like, but they don't even have similar facial structures."

Facelifts Get a Facelift

Ironically, facelifts are now seen as less drastic and altering than injectables, and even fat that was routinely added during a lift is being avoided. "I continue to see an increasing number of patients

Illustrations by **Visbii**

trading years of fillers for a facelift, and many of them are adamant about not looking overfilled with fat grafting,” says **Sean Alemi**, a New York facial plastic surgeon. “In fact, I would say that I’m performing almost 80 percent of my facelifts without fat these days. It’s a new era.”

Fashionably Late

The typical customers for body work long have been women from their 20s to their 40s. But doctors notice a trend of people coming for such procedures later than ever before. “I now have women in their 60s, 70s and even 80s coming in to get their breasts and tummies done,” says Leipzig.

Start 'Em Young

People may be getting work done later, but they are also starting earlier and doing less drastic surgeries,

“In L.A., it’s not unusual for an 18- or 20-year-old to come in for filler – it’s a rite of passage.”

Dermatologist Soren White

some even without going under. “It’s the tweakment movement,” says Alemi. “People in their 40s don’t want to wait until aging affects their entire face, so they are getting lower eyelid skin pinches and upper lid lifts to get rid of hooding, using just local anesthesia. It freshens without changing the shape of the face.” Leipzig also has witnessed a marked increase in requests for mini facelifts from women in their 40s.

Dermatologist **Soren White** says his colleagues in L.A. are seeing patients come in even earlier for anti-aging. “In L.A., it’s not unusual for an 18- or 20-year-old to come in for filler — it’s a rite of passage,” he says.

Your Wattage May Vary

When it comes to smiles, “L.A. has more of a brighter, bigger, wow effect, and it doesn’t have to look natural,” says **Larry Rosenthal**, a New York dentist whose patients have included **Donald** and **Ivanka Trump** and **Sumner Redstone**. “In New York, people want a wider smile.”



From left: Lara Trump, Kimberly Guilfoyle and Laura Loomer

WILL MAR-A-LAGO FACE TAKE OVER D.C.?

Even as the rest of the country is dialing back, cosmetically speaking, MAGA figureheads are cranking it up — and it may just catch on

A viral meme from earlier this year showing before and after shots of several women in **Donald Trump’s** immediate orbit — RNC chair **Lara Trump**, **Don Jr.** squeeze **Kimberly Guilfoyle**, conspiracy theorist **Laura Loomer** and South Dakota governor and confessed dog killer **Kristi Noem** — pointed to an undeniable trend. Their faces had all, over an unspecified period, morphed from conventionally human to makeup-caked, angular cheekboned, full-lipped, **Fellini**-esque exaggerations of the dolled-up Fox News anchorwoman look. And it’s not just the women: Few of us can remember the content of former Florida Rep. (and possible future attorney general) **Matt Gaetz’s** RNC speech last summer, so fixated were we on the new elfin arc of his eyebrows. (And the less said about **George Santos** and his Botox habit, the better.)

As with everything Trump, the look represents a brash departure from well-established D.C. norms. Could Trump’s return to the White House trigger a nationwide surge of Mar-a-Lago face in defiance of the 2024 vogue for deflation and discretion? After all, the White House has a proud history of trendsetting, from “**Jackie** style” to **Michelle Obama’s** championing of designer **Jason Wu**, to Trump’s knee-length ties.

Washington style trends may be more conservative than in L.A. and New York, but the city’s politics and media personalities are just as prone to seek cosmetic assistance. “Everybody gets some tweaking,” said dermatologist **Tina Alster**, who counts **Nancy Pelosi** and **Wolf Blitzer** among her patients and is among D.C.’s most renowned aesthetic doctors. “**Kamala** has been maintaining for a long time, **Biden’s** Botox is sometimes overdone, Trump has a ruddy complexion that needs some tending to,” assesses Alster. (*THR* has not confirmed any of these public servants’ cosmetic regimens.)

If indeed the Trump restoration does spark a plastic surgery bonanza, don’t expect Capitol Hill to admit it. Alster treats her patient visits like CIA exfiltrations. She has a back door and secret staircase to shuttle politicians and media bigwigs discreetly. “I try to book those with Secret Service early before other people arrive, or late, after they leave, and I take great pains to make sure I separate the appointment of Democrats and Republicans by at least an hour.” And, she says, standard before and after pictures are often forbidden: “Some of the Republican operatives have been adamant that I don’t take any photos of them and insist on putting their charts under alias names.”



Dr. **Marc Lowenberg**, whose office has treated the teeth of **Martha Stewart**, **Julianna Margulies**, **Heidi Klum** and **Cindy Crawford**, says New York patients specifically ask to not have the West Coast style. “I have a guy in my chair right now who said he doesn’t want his teeth to walk in the room before he does. People say, ‘I don’t want Hollywood white.’ Things have been toned down, but in general, in L.A. they call more attention to your smile than we do here.”

Lowenberg feels that D.C. is still even more under the radar. “The veneers have always been more conservative, with the exception of **Joe Biden’s**, which were so white that people commented on them.”

Not So On-the-Nose

Noses also have become more natural as surgeons say goodbye to the upturned and button varieties. “Noses have changed; we try to leave more structure behind now,” says **Linda Li**, a Beverly Hills plastic surgeon who was in the original cast of *Dr. 90210*. “You want a nose that fits. If you have a broad face, a tiny-ass nose looks ridiculous.”

I’ll Have What Tom Cruise Is Having

Buccal fat removal, once a hugely popular procedure in L.A. that sharpened facial contours, is on a sharp decline. “I am getting fewer requests for it now because it can accelerate the aging process and make people look gaunt,” observes **Carl Truesdale**, a Beverly Hills facial plastic surgeon. Truesdale says there is a greater emphasis on the neck now, including removing some salivary glands. “Men see that **Brad Pitt** and **Tom Cruise** are looking younger, and they are opting for a sharper jawline, which can be achieved with submandibular gland removal and muscle tightening.”

No More Fox Eye

Truesdale also is seeing less lateral brow lift, a swing **Matt Gaetz** seemed to have missed. Notes Truesdale, “Last year, people asked to look like **Bella Hadid**, but this year the fox eye is downtrending.” **THR**

TRUMP: LOOMER; WIN/MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES; GUILFOYLE: ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY IMAGES; GAETZ: AP PHOTO/SCOTT APPLEWHITE

About Town

Overheard

Yes, I Did Say That!

A look at who's saying what in entertainment

Compiled by Mikey O'Connell



Oh wow. People are actually in this bitch!

Quinta Brunson

The actress and writer, on ascendent social media platform Bluesky, acknowledging the mass migration of public figures who are abandoning X (formerly Twitter) over its toxic environment and owner Elon Musk's financial backing of Donald Trump.

It was such a relief to ... be able to do a real film.

Pamela Anderson

The actress, onstage at a *Deadline* event, shading some of her acting credits (see *Barb Wire*, *Scary Movie 3*) while promoting her role in Gia Coppola's well-reviewed *The Last Showgirl*.



Fortunately, I won't be around to experience the four years.

Dick Van Dyke

The 98-year-old actor and outspoken Democrat, confronted by paparazzi in a parking garage, offering his funny (albeit dark) response to Trump's reelection.

America demanded it, and now it's happening ...

Conan O'Brien

The comic, in a news release, hyping "Taco Bell's new Cheesy Chalupa Supreme" before acknowledging the reason for his statement: He's hosting the 2025 Oscars.



Do your job.

Denzel Washington

The actor, on BBC Radio 1, calling out Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences voters for never honoring *Gladiator II* boss Ridley Scott with the best director Oscar.

Please don't let me be the one that makes it turn to pewter.

Billy Bob Thornton

The actor, to *THR*, jokingly expressing a concern that his show *Landman* might ruin creator Taylor Sheridan's reputation for having the Midas touch in TV.

It may not be in the media business.

John C. Malone

The Liberty Media chairman, on CNBC, suggesting that the future of his media enterprise (parent company to SiriusXM, etc.) might not include owning ... media.

FLASHBACK! Did I Really Say That?

Nov. 13, 2021

I usually stay pretty hydrated. I need to go to the bathroom a lot.



Dwayne Johnson

The actor previously confessed to *Esquire* that he's been known to pee in water bottles while working out. After reports earlier in 2024 suggested that he was doing it on the set of *Red One* — and often was very late to shoots — he told *GQ* in a Nov. 12 video that "yeah, it happens." (Johnson also called the controversy around the reports "bullshit.")



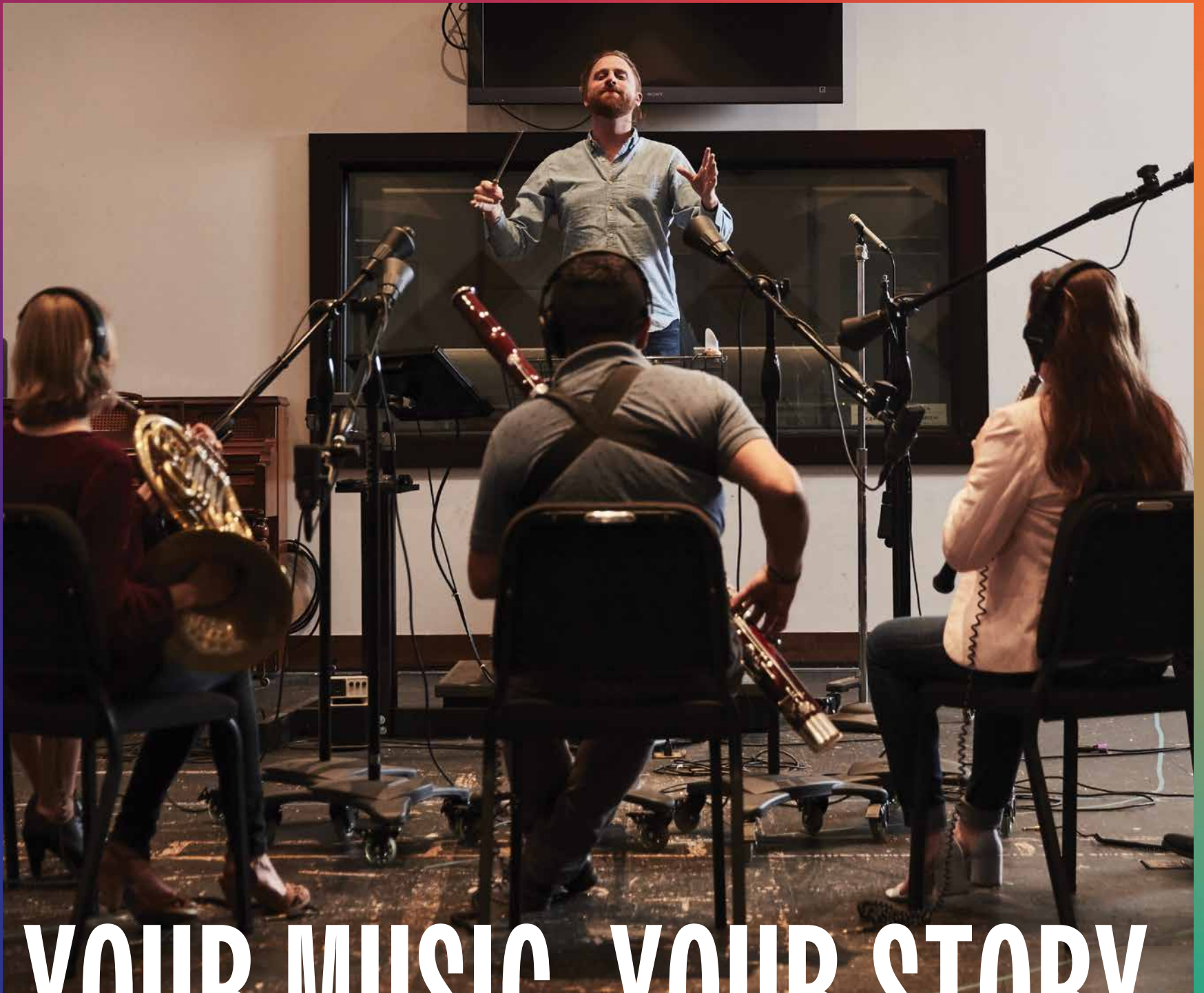
Marriage can be difficult.

Casey Bloys

The chairman and CEO of HBO and Max, at a Nov. 12 media event, offering his take on George R.R. Martin calling out *House of the Dragon* co-creator Ryan Condal in a since-deleted post criticizing the second season of the *Game of Thrones* spinoff.

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BENJAMIN HOFF: "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power" orchestrator

The Reason Your Agent Isn't Calling You Back? Pickleball

Edited by Benjamin Svetkey and Julian Sancton



Minions vs. Monsters — or at least NBCUni vs. Disney — compete in the Entertainment Pickleball League.

If you happened to be passing through Calabasas and heard a loud “twocking” sound, we can explain. On Nov. 16, a slew of Hollywood’s most powerful players (and, in this case, we’re using the word literally) assembled on the courts of the Calabasas Pickleball Club for the Entertainment Pickleball League’s championship tourney. Although they began just a few months ago, EPL’s games are quickly shaping up to be Hollywood’s biggest draw this side of the Academy Gala, with agents and execs from just about every entertainment company forming squads — most with pun-filled names like Disney’s Monster Dinks, NBCUni’s Dis-Pickleball Me and CAA’s Dill Makers — to participate. “We started with four teams,” says **Zee Batal**, the TV producer who launched the league in late

September with reality TV showrunner **Erica Hanson**. “Now we have eight. By January, we’ll have 16. Everyone from Amazon to Roku to Sony.” According to Hanson, part of the league’s appeal is the chance for members to meet professional rivals in a way that doesn’t involve stealing one another’s clients. “It’s fantastic to see this sense of community and connecting,” she says. Batal, for one, believes there’s no limit to how big the sport can become in Hollywood, suggesting it’s already replaced golf and tennis as the preferred backdrop for negotiation. “It’s just easier to do business on the pickleball court,” he says. “It’s more social, not as stuffy. If tennis is like boxing, then pickleball is like MMA fighting.” As



Team Gersh (LFG) took home the crown, beating defending champion Netflix.

for the recent tournament, congratulations to the Gersh agency’s team, Let’s F*cking Gersh, which beat Netflix’s Netflix and Dill for the championship.

Want to Get Married in the Brady House? It Could Happen!

L.A. is no stranger to obsession — but at least **Tina Trahan** has a groovy one. The 54-year-old art collector, ex-wife of former Starz and HBO chief **Chris Albrecht**, purchased the Brady Bunch home about a year ago for \$3.2 million from HGTV after the network gutted and renovated the interior to look like the sets on the show, chronicled on *A Very Brady Renovation*. In the months since, Trahan has compulsively filled the house with every painting, knick-knack, book cover and random prop featured on the classic sitcom. “I’ve added over 300 Easter eggs,” says Trahan — everything from Safe detergent boxes to green paper towels to the Bradys’ three vehicles (a 1971 Plymouth Barracuda, ’71 Plymouth satellite station wagon and ’73 Caprice Classic convertible), which are parked outside. The only thing left for Trahan to figure out is what to do with the place. So far, she’s come up with a contest, The Brady Experience, which will fly five winners to L.A. next year to tour the home and eat “pork chops and applesauce” with such *Brady Bunch* castmembers as **Barry Williams** (Greg) and **Christopher Knight** (Peter), with proceeds going to No Kid Hungry. Trahan is mulling other offers, like the guy who said he’d pay her \$5,000 for an hour inside the house. Then there’s the idea to host weddings on the property (Williams has graciously volunteered to officiate). “They say it’s the second-most-photographed house in America outside of the White House,” Knight tells *THR*. But as far as we know, the White House doesn’t use Safe detergent. — SETH ABRAMOVITCH

Has the Unity Started Yet? Stars Get Hammered for Their Votes

The election may be over, but here in Hollywood the vote-shaming is just getting started. Celebrities on both sides of the aisle are finding themselves dealing with withering online attacks for supporting their candidates of choice, even when it turns out they didn’t vote for them. For starters, MAGA world is demanding a boycott of Disney’s upcoming *Snow White* reboot because the actress cast in the title role, **Rachel Zegler**, dared to post that she was “shocked” and “heartbroken” over the election results, concluding her thoughts with a perhaps inelegant “Fuck Donald Trump.” (Of course, right-wingers have been fuming over *Snow White* since Disney named the Latino actress as its lead back in 2021.) On the other side of the divide, left-wingers went after *Family Ties* actress **Justine Bateman** for her post-election tweet saying that she was “decompressing from walking on eggshells

Got tips? Email rambling@thr.com

Hitched, Hatched, Hired

Inside the industry's celebrations and news



Look familiar? The Brady living room, obsessively and compulsively re-created by superfan Tina Trahan.

for the past four years.” Although Bateman has declined to reveal whom she voted for, followers of her feeds couldn't have been entirely shocked by her seeming support of Trump; between warnings about the dangers of AI, she's lately been railing against woke culture. What was shocking to some, though, was that Bateman's post was liked by **Reed Morano**, a director on the Trumpy dystopian Hulu drama *The Handmaid's Tale*. Morano's friendly click stirred enough online toxicity that she felt compelled to post a photo of her actual ballot proving that she voted for **Kamala Harris** (she's since deleted the post). Finally, at least for now, there was the drama surrounding Broadway star **Nicole Scherzinger**, who made the alleged mistake of liking comedian **Russell Brand's** IG post of a MAGA-looking red cap emblazoned with the words, “Make Jesus First Again.” (Brand, who is facing allegations of sexual assault, recently converted to Christianity.) “Many presumptions are being drawn, which do not reflect who I am, what I stand for, or who I voted for,” the former **Pussycat Doll** posted in an apology for her positive remarks about Brand's headgear. “Like so many others, in times of adversity and uncertainty, I turn to my faith. I believe that the posts I engaged with were about encouraging people to choose love and faith.” **VIR**



Justine Bateman



1 Natalie Burn and Timothy Woodward Jr.
2 Lilly Margot Gottsegen
3 Timothy West

Weddings

Director-producer **Timothy Woodward Jr.** married actress-producer **Natalie Burn** on Sept. 21 at the Chateau Bouffemont in Paris.

Births

Carlee Weinbaum Gottsegen, a publicist at The Lede Co., and **Alex Gottsegen**, an editor at the Game Show Network, welcomed **Lilly Margot Gottsegen** on Sept. 12.

Congrats

David Chalian was promoted to CNN Washington bureau chief and senior vp Nov. 14.

John Storey was hired as CAA's new CFO on Nov. 13.

Jesse Wallace was appointed senior vp and head of distribution at Hallmark Media on Nov. 15.

New England Patriots owner **Robert Kraft**, Goldman Sachs CEO **David Solomon**, Hearst CEO **Steven Swartz** and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation CEO **Maribel Pérez Wadsworth** joined the Paley Center for Media's board of trustees Nov. 12.

Andrew Bennett was upped to vp Prime Video Europe and global business development Nov. 13.



2

Niara Simon-Hollis was promoted to head of marketing for media company Tastemade Nov. 12.

Luke Esselen joined Amplify Pictures as a scripted series executive Nov. 13.

Deaths

Timothy West, the British actor who starred in *The Day of the Jackal* and with his wife, *Fawlty Towers* star Prunella Scales, in *Great Canal Journeys*, died Nov. 12 in London. He was 90.

John Kimble, the talent agent who represented the likes of Julie Andrews, Henry Winkler, George Clooney, Ann-Margret and Matthew Perry, died Nov. 10 in Dallas. He was 79.

Tim Sullivan, a novelist who wrote, directed and/or starred in microbudget horror and science fiction films, died Nov. 10 of congestive heart failure in Newport News, Virginia. He was 76.

Paul Engelen, the British makeup designer who earned two Emmys and two Oscar nominations in a career that included work on *Batman*, *The Phantom Menace*, *Gladiator* and *Game of Thrones*, died Nov. 3 in West Sussex, England. He was 75.

John Peaslee, the writer and producer who worked on the sitcoms *Coach*, *Just Shoot Me!* and *According to Jim*, died Nov. 1 of natural causes in Sherman Oaks. He was 73.



3

To submit, send an email to hjh@thr.com

About Town

The Red Carpet

Governors Awards

Hollywood, Nov. 17



2



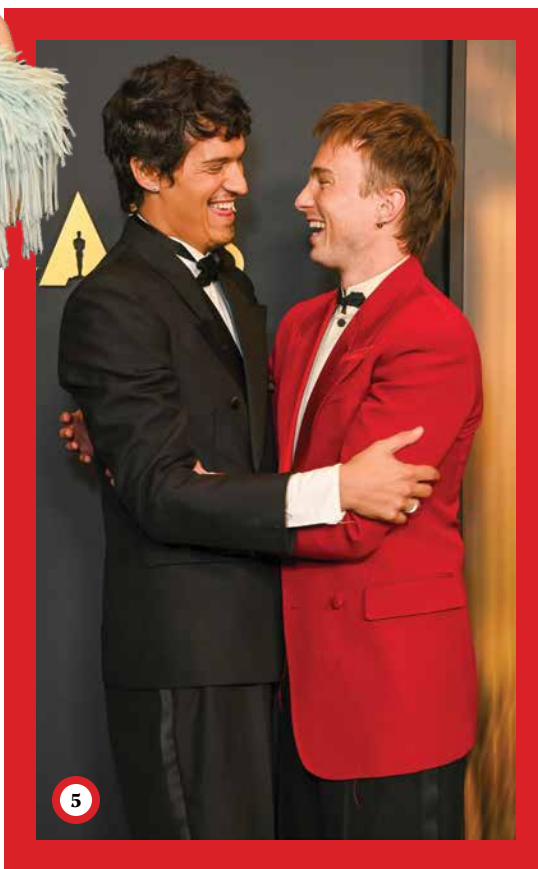
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Party Crawler

(Honorary) Oscar Night

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences handed out its annual crop of honorary Oscars to industry legends at the star-studded Governors Awards over the weekend, in a ceremony emceed by **Colman Domingo**. This year's recipients included the late **Quincy Jones** (presented by **Jamie Foxx** and accepted posthumously by his children), casting director **Juliet Taylor** (presented by **Nicole Kidman**), filmmaker **Richard Curtis** (presented by **Hugh Grant**) and *James Bond* producers **Michael G. Wilson** and **Barbara Broccoli** (presented by former *Bond* **Daniel Craig**).

(1) Jones' children (from left) **Martina Jones**, **Rashida Jones**, **Quincy Jones III** and **Kenya Kinski Jones** accepted on their father's behalf.

(2) **Angelina Jolie** made a rare appearance with 16-year-old son **Knox Jolie-Pitt**. (3) From left: honorees **Wilson**, **Broccoli**, **Curtis** and **Taylor**. (4) **Saoirse Ronan** in custom **Louis Vuitton**. (5) *Queer* co-stars **Omar Apollo** (left) and **Drew Starkey** on the photo line.

Are You Not Entertained?

Gladiator II arrived in London's Leicester Square in royal fashion, as stars **Paul Mescal**, **Denzel Washington**, **Connie Nielsen** and director **Ridley Scott** walked a Roman-themed carpet and shook hands with **King Charles III**. **Pedro Pascal** and **Joseph Quinn**, who are in the midst of filming *The Fantastic Four: First Steps* in the U.K., also made an appearance in support of the sequel, coming 24 years after the original **Russell Crowe** starrer, which went on to win best picture.

(6) **Pascal** and **Nielsen** kept close on the carpet. (7) From left: **Washington**, **Scott** and **Mescal**. (8) **Quinn** in **Prada**.

— KIRSTEN CHUBA

Gladiator II

London, Nov. 13



6



7



8

JOLIE, RONAN, APOLLO, JON KOPALOFF/GETTY IMAGES; JONES, ETIENNE LAURENT/VIA GETTY IMAGES; BROCCOLI, VALERIE MAGON/AP VIA GETTY IMAGES; PASCAL, KATE GREEN/GETTY IMAGES FOR PARAMOUNT PICTURES; SCOTT, GARETH CATTENMOLE/GETTY IMAGES; QUINN, SHANE ANTHONY SINCLAIR/GETTY IMAGES

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FRIDAY

BLACK



Sharing the Spotlight

"I don't ever need to be the star. If anything, that scares me because it feels like the responsibility is mainly on me," says Selena Gomez, who was photographed Nov. 7 in Beverly Hills.

Styled by Erin Walsh
Alaia faux coat; Wolford bodysuit,
tights; Anabela Chan earrings;
Bulgari flower ring; A. Jaffe ring;
Christian Louboutin shoes.

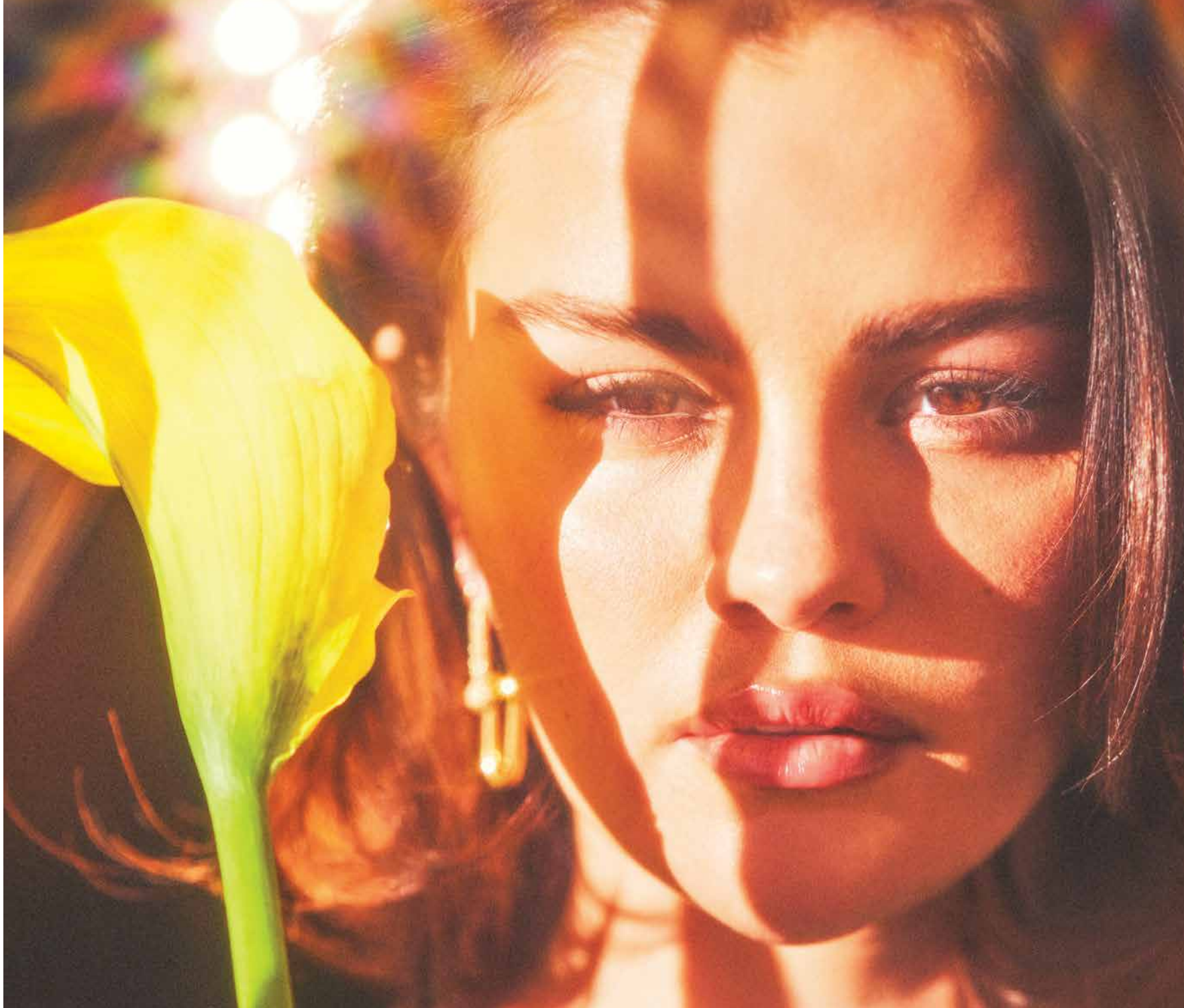
A photograph of a woman's legs in black high-heeled shoes resting on a mosaic table in a desert setting. The background is a vast, arid landscape under a clear blue sky. The woman is wearing a dark, possibly black, dress with a white fur trim. The table is made of small, square mosaic tiles in shades of blue and green. A large, dark, textured object, possibly a piece of furniture or a sculpture, is visible in the foreground on the right.

SELENA

IS WAITING FOR YOUR CALL

Despite successes like *Only Murders in the Building* and the Oscar buzzy *Emilia Pérez*, the most followed woman on the planet still has to trick her way into auditions: 'We use a tactic where we don't tell them it's me'

By **Lacey Rose** Photographed by **Guy Aroch**



Ask Selena Gomez what she gets out of acting that music has not historically afforded her, and she replies in no uncertain terms: “Sanity.”

It’s an exceedingly honest answer, which is what you come to expect after spending any amount of time in Gomez’s company. The *Only Murders in the Building* producer and star has no patience for anything less than the unvarnished truth, messy as it often is. “She’s herself, always, and I think that’s part of why her fans love her so much,” says her *Wizards of Waverly Place* co-star David Henrie, who has routinely watched her open up on personal subjects, including her battle with lupus, struggles with depression and diagnosis of bipolar disorder. “They go, ‘Oh, I see myself in that.’”

But for the foreseeable future, Gomez would rather get lost in someone else’s story, something that music has never allowed her to do. “Acting is just such a rush,” she says of the occupation that initially prompted a young Gomez and her mother to relocate from Grand Prairie, Texas, in the mid-aughts. At the time, an early stint on *Barney & Friends* had led to a leading role on *Wizards*, which sucked her into the Disney machine and, later, spit her out a chart-topping superstar. In the years that followed, music became the primary focus, a decision that garnered Grammy noms and more than 38 billion worldwide streams. It coincided with nearly insurmountable tabloid coverage and considerable challenges with

mental health, which got a close-up in her 2022 doc, *Selena Gomez: My Mind & Me*.

Now, at 32, Gomez is eager to subvert expectations, even if it means she has to claw her way into consideration. She keeps a dream board of desired collaborators and is willing to fight for the kinds of projects that speak to her the way that Jacques Audiard’s Mexican crime-telenovela-transgender-cartel-musical-fever dream *Emilia Pérez* did. The latter, which recently dropped on Netflix, has been generating awards momentum for Gomez and her co-stars ever since it premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, where its female-led cast, which also includes Zoe Saldaña, Karla Sofía

Tiffany earrings.

“
I FULLY BELIEVE I'M ONE OF THE STRONGEST PEOPLE THAT I HAVE EVER KNOWN.

Gascón and Adriana Paz, shared the best actress prize. It's the kind of career-altering experience she recognizes will be hard to replicate, just as A24's cult hit *Spring Breakers* had been a decade earlier.

Ironically, Audiard barely knew who Gomez was when he cast her in *Emilia Pérez*. He certainly didn't know of her Disney Channel origins, much less the audience of 423 million that she maintains on Instagram, making her the most followed person on the planet. In fact, when the two sat down to discuss the project at a café in New York, the French auteur was only familiar with Gomez's work in *Spring Breakers* and in Woody Allen's *A Rainy Day in New York*. “It was love at first sight,” he says

of their meeting. “I loved her sensitivity, her fragility and what she exuded.”

In truth, Gascón didn't have a great handle on her CV either, though her 13-year-old daughter was a Gomez superfan — or a Selenator, as they dub themselves. “When she found out that I was working with her, my daughter said, ‘Mom, you got to treat her well because she's suffered a lot,’” recalls Gascón, who, from their very first meeting, says she felt compelled to protect the young actress. Then cameras rolled, and Gascón was awed by Gomez's ability to be present and humble. “Of all the people that I've met in the acting world — and I've met so many — she's the most normal.” (She and Gascón's daughter have grown close, too; in fact, Gomez has passed along shoes and drove with her to the premiere.)

Over the course of a few hours in early November, the actress, producer, singer, philanthropist and entrepreneur was just as candid about the beauty company that's reportedly made her a billionaire, the decision to ultimately return to Disney with a *Wizards* sequel and the reason she's the happiest she's ever been.

I stumbled upon this quote you gave in 2020, which I want to ask you about: “I want to do movies so bad. I want to do TV so bad. I find I look too young most of the time, or people can't separate the two [the real Selena from a character], which bums me out. So, I continue to audition, and I just have to wait for whenever my time is.”

I think that's something I've always wanted. Music will always be in my soul, but I never really got to spend enough time in the field that I originally wanted to be in. And I've been very strategic and trying my hardest to pick projects that are going to be compelling and not necessarily what people would envision me doing. That's something I get a high off of. But it was funny with *Emilia*, I genuinely thought it was going to be a movie that, like, came out in France.

You weren't prepared to be swept up on the awards circuit? No. And I was very confused. I

was like, “Guys, why are we doing so many things right now?” And everyone's just laughing because it's doing well. I do think I know what's obvious, what people would maybe want to see me doing, but yeah, that's been the biggest challenge that I've faced as an actor, and probably one of the hardest things to hear.

How does that feedback present itself to you?

Well, if they think I'm too young for a part, or whatever the case may be, we use a tactic where we don't tell them it's me auditioning so that they just have to accept me auditioning. Because sometimes even them just hearing that I want to audition, they'll be like, “No, that's not going to match for what we're doing.” Or it's, “We're going to hire people that nobody knows,” and then they hire, like, Austin Butler, and I'm like, “Cool.” But I'm not angry, it's the position I have and it's OK. It just means I'm going to continue to do things that are hopefully compelling and different.

So, do you go in under a different name?

I'll sometimes send in a tape when they don't know it's me, or if it's in person, my managers will just say, “Oh, we have a client that'll have a read.” And most of the time, they'll go, “OK.” And it worked on one of the movies I did, because they looked at me as I walked in and I thought I'd lost it immediately because they went, “Ooohh.” I was like, “No, no, no, no. Just let me read.” It was *Fundamentals of Caring*, a cute little movie [with Paul Rudd]. And it worked, I got it. You kind of have to do the dance.

It's funny, I had clocked that quote thinking, “Wow, look how much has changed in four years.”

No! Somebody said the other day, “Oh, you must be getting movie parts offered [following the success of *Emilia Pérez*].” And I kind of laughed. I was like, “Nope.”

What does come your way, opportunity-wise? Put another way, how does Hollywood want to see you?

I don't know exactly, but I feel like the roles would be very similar to what I've played, which is more soft-spoken and the underdog character. And I love those movies, but I have goals of wanting to work with specific people, people on my dream board, and so whenever those opportunities arise, I'll put myself in that room, no matter what it takes. And I'll say, “Let me show you that I can do it.”

Who's still on that dream board?

There are so many. I'd love to work with Aaron Sorkin. I really love all of his movies and anything he's near. And I'm a massive fan of Scorsese, and I so badly want to make sure he doesn't quit suddenly or retire. Like, just one more, I'll be in two scenes. That's another thing that I factor in. I don't ever need to be the star. If anything, that scares me because it feels like the responsibility is mainly on me. I'm still learning. I just know that I go for things that aren't necessarily conventional.

You came off *Wizards of Waverly Place* and did Harmony Korine's R-rated indie *Spring Breakers*, which felt like a very conscious choice and an immediate way to telegraph what you were capable



Fever Dream “It's very likely that Selena's performance is formed by pain that can come from overwhelming notoriety,” says her *Emilia Pérez* director, Jacques Audiard.

of and interested in. Is that an accurate assessment?

Yeah, that's exactly why I did it. My mom always says, "I feel like I get the worst mom of the year award," because she's the one who liked Harmony's movie. But that's when I really got the bug. We had done over 100 episodes of *Wizards* and two movies for *Wizards*, and then I did a few lovely, cute projects in between that I'm grateful for, and then I met with Harmony. I love interesting filmmakers, and he was so colorful and he had so many different ways of auditioning me. It was more like, "Who are you and what is that like?" And my mom was with me the whole time. I know I was 18, but I was still so young, and he had his wife and kid there, too. I remember I was like [in a young, earnest voice], "I really want to do a cool project." And he just kind of smiled and goes, "I think you're going to be good for this part." Because that part is so [naive]. But that was the right way of dipping my toe in.

Did the leap scare anyone around you, be it your reps or your Disney-era fans?

I'm sure but everything I do is going to be picked apart. Vanessa Hudgens, who was also on Disney Channel, was in it, too. And I remember I thought I was so mature. I'm sure I sounded like I was 12. I was like, "Well, technically the movie is rated R, so [my young fans] are not allowed to see it, so they won't see it." And Vanessa's like, "Ohh-kay ..." I was so naive.

That film put A24 on the map.

Yeah, it ended up becoming a bit of a cult classic. It just was very hard to follow up, which I feel about *Emilia* as well. But I'm not in any rush to do thousands of things immediately. [After *Spring Breakers*,] I went right back into music, and I didn't really continue pursuing acting; this time, my focus has definitely shifted.

Are you still doing the Linda Ronstadt biopic?

That's still happening, though I'm not sure when. With Linda, once I met her and read two books, one of them over and over, I just found her to be so [compelling]. She had such an interesting perspective



A Billion Reasons "I don't think that I feel different," Gomez says of her newly reported status as a billionaire. "I think I'm just really proud. And also, personally, I just don't think it's anyone's business."

Chloé dress, boots; **Tiffany** earrings; **Bulgari** rings; **Wolford** tights.

on music and life, and I really admired that. She never really needed to be as successful, and she was willing to try different things. But there's a reason it's taking time. We want to make sure it's going to be good.

In the past, you've been open about having, as you put it, "this haunting feeling that people still view me as this Disney girl." But now you're back with the sequel *Wizards Beyond Waverly Place*. Why now, and what changed?

For me, there was never any issue with Disney. I mean, I understand the intensity of the work and everything, and you're young, but my experience was really lovely. I just had to separate myself for a while, and I was eager to because I'd done so much of it that I was a little tired. But now, being 32, it's a way of me honoring that part of myself, and, to be honest, it's where I got to do everything. I actually found this video from the last day of shooting *Wizards*, and I was like, "Oh my gosh," because in it I'd said everything that I was going to do [with my career]. And I don't know, maybe it's easier because I feel older and I'm able to pass the torch to someone else, and that's exciting. I also don't ever want to lose connection with a younger audience. I have a sister who's 11, and now she's into *Wizards*, so it's a whole new generation. I guess it felt like it was good, comfortable timing, but yeah, for a while, it was something I needed a break from.

Had you been approached about rebooting *Wizards* before?

No, and it was our idea. David Henrie and me. I don't think Disney believed it. They were like, "Wait, you want to go back to that?!" I'm like, "Yeah, I do."

You're also an executive producer. Knowing what you went through, what advice did you offer the younger cast?

Well, specifically with Janice [LeAnn Brown], who's the lead, she got really nervous when people started coming out for the live audience, and I told her, "I want you to have fun with it." My other advice was, "A lot of people are going to tell you that you're

amazing, that you're great, that you're this or that. You need to understand that you're human. You're allowed to have bad days. You don't need to be perfect all the time." And if she were to ever need anything, she has my number. I also spoke with her parents. I actually spoke with all of the parents just to let them know that I am a resource for them. And they may be totally fine, and that's awesome, but I'm here if not.

Was there a version of that for you when you were younger?

Just my mom. Jennifer Aniston was really sweet to me, but that was much later. She was the first one who was like, "I hear you and I see you." But when I was younger, I don't think anybody could have given me advice. I was just living and doing everything I was going to do.



Kid's All Right From left: Gomez (with David Henrie) during her run on Disney Channel's *Wizards of Waverly Place*. She then punctured her Disney image with the A24 cult hit *Spring Breakers*.

At the same time, it felt like you were aware, even then, that you were a role model. Am I right?

I remember when I realized that that was coming into play. We'd do live tapings every Friday for *Wizards*, and they were my favorite part. And we'd meet everybody after the taping, and this little girl came up to me, and she had a picture of me from a *J-14* magazine in this Abercrombie sweater, jeans and flats. She showed me the picture, and she goes, "I bought it." I looked at her, and [she was wearing the same outfit]. I had to have been 16, and she was like 12, and I remember thinking, "Oh my gosh." It may sound minute, but it was so overwhelming. So, I think I put the pressure on myself more than anybody else put it on me, and it's because I was so scared of making a mistake because suddenly it wasn't about me. It was about, well, what would people say or think?

I'm just trying to think of myself at 16 having to be a role model for anyone, let alone the masses.

The documentary [*My Mind & Me*] was me finally taking a breath and saying, "OK, so everything I've been trying to be this whole time, I'm a little exhausted and here's why." And it was a nice release, but I don't want people to think that's where I am anymore. I was very happy to share my story, but I want to make it crystal clear that that was a capsule of a time in my life and I truly believe I won't be there again because I am properly medicated and I'm seeing people and I'm taking care of myself.

You've also been adamant that people not feel sorry for you or see you as a victim. How come?

It makes me so mad because it genuinely is such a strong thing to be vulnerable. It was terrifying for



me to let people inside my world that way, but I was doing it because I felt like maybe this would help someone, and that's what I care about. I just wanted people to feel less alone, and I wanted people to understand, "Oh, she was literally going through a really hard time, that's why she canceled those two tours. But that's really cool that she wants to help other people." That's all I saw this as. And people completely misunderstood what I was trying to do with it. Not everyone, just a group of people, and they love to label me as this victim. And it's funny because the things that I walked through, I fully believe I'm one of the strongest people that I have ever known. So, yeah, that always just bothers me.

In the doc, you see people around you cautioning you against publicly revealing your bipolar diagnosis, to which you say some version of, "What? Are certain

directors not going to want to work with me?" Was there fallout?

No, and I was really surprised. What made me so happy was that afterward people were coming up to me talking about their stories. It wasn't, "Let's take a picture real quick." It became, "I actually have a story about myself that I want to share." People trust me with their truth, and I don't take that lightly.

That's a very big responsibility.

Unfortunately and fortunately, I don't know anything else, but it's important to use both of those terms because I definitely think there was a lot of time that I probably should have just focused on being a kid. But I am who I am, and I'm not really ashamed of it anymore.

You've had to contend with tabloids and paparazzi for so long. Do you feel you're able to maintain a private life?

I do, because I hang out with people who aren't really in the business that much. I mean, I have both.

One of your best friends is Taylor Swift, who's arguably one of the most famous people in the world.

Yeah, there's that. But I still feel like I have a private life. I have my places to go, and no one bothers me at, like, [my half sister] Gracie's soccer games. No one really bothers me unless I'm in the whole to-do.

Didn't I just see pictures of you and your boyfriend, songwriter/music producer Benny Blanco, on a date at Sushi Park in my feed?

Yes. But it's because I really love that restaurant! (*Laughs.*) But if you see, I'm like [*pantomimes wrapping her face in a scarf*]. I just try to not give them good ones sometimes; but other times, it's part of the job and you just have to deal with it.

You've allowed the world in on your relationship by posting sweet pictures and videos. How come?

I guess this is the safest I've ever felt in one, and I see a future with this person. And when you put a little bit out there, people are not as hungry to hunt you down. Like, if they hear something, they're

going to, but if you're like, "I did it," they're like, "Oh, well there's you, just going to Sushi Park." But there's so much of my relationship people don't see, that's just mine.

During the pandemic, you launched your beauty company Rare Beauty, which devotes a portion of its sales to mental health access and education. Was the latter baked in from conception?

least what I hear the most about, and then the blush, of course.

In September, Bloomberg reported your net worth at \$1.3 billion, making you a billionaire. At the risk of stereotyping, I've found that men will sing about their wealth while women are uncomfortable even talking about it. What's your relationship to that status?
I don't really pay much attention.



I DEFINITELY THINK THERE WAS A LOT OF TIME THAT I SHOULD HAVE JUST FOCUSED ON BEING A KID.

Everything that I did prior to Rare Beauty had an element of giving back. So, when I worked with some of the greatest brands, they were all willing to do something, and I was also willing to say I'd take it from my pay. And then when I was meeting with the final team that we had hired for Rare Beauty — which at the time was maybe five of us total — I said, "I want there to be a percentage or something; I need you guys to help me figure it out." That's when we created the Impact Fund, which started before we sold a single product.

What do you make of the company's success?

There's a real craving for people to have something accessible, something inclusive, something that isn't complicated. That's at

I don't think anything about me has changed. I don't think that I feel different. I think I'm just really proud. And also, personally, I just don't think it's anyone's business.

Chappell Roan is the latest star to be open about the mental health challenges that accompany meteoric fame. Having been so public about your own journey, are you someone from whom folks like Chappell seek advice?

I've had people maybe compliment something I've done, but no, I haven't really had anyone [famous] ask for my advice, and that's fine. I mean, I don't [share my story] for that reason. And I'd almost rather talk to someone who I met at a burger spot in New York.

What do those burger spot exchanges entail?

I'll tell you one. I had, gosh, probably four women over the age of 35, and they were like, "We're supposed to be adults, but we're here celebrating that she just got out of this really, really bad marriage, and we listen to [Gomez's song,] 'Lose You to Love Me' all the time." I ended up sitting down with them and we all talked all about it, and it was just this really lovely moment.

You're also someone who has tried to control your narrative — or at least chimed in or clapped back when it was co-opted by lies.

Definitely. I don't think that I can really control it, but misinformation bothers me in every area of life. And if it is something that I feel is so inauthentic to me, I have no problem being like, "This is not accurate." And I'll also tell you what is.

You recently clapped back at body shamers. As a mother of two young girls, I was happy that you did, but that requires guts. As you know well, trolls can be cruel.

Yeah, but I really don't care. And I am never going to look whatever way they think I should look. That's just twisted.

Looking ahead, what else do you want to accomplish, professionally?

I think I've done just as much as I wanted to do in music, but it's exciting because I feel like I haven't even started in film and TV, even though I know I've been a part of some great projects and I'm really proud of them. I like that I have to earn my position, and I love storytelling. So, I'm excited to do more of that.

When you say you've done what you wanted to do with music ...

Almost done. Music isn't going away. I just set it down for a second.

What do you get from acting that you don't from music?
Sanity.

How so?

You go into a room [to do junket press], and it's really scary to talk about music that maybe has



been a part of your story and isn't anymore. And it's really hard to sit there and talk about myself. It's draining. But every interview I've done for this movie, there's not been one personal question asked, and I've wanted to kiss every single reporter in the mouth and just say, thank you, because it's been so refreshing, and I think that that's a space that is safer for me.

Only Murders is another project that you've described as career-altering, and you've credited your co-stars Martin Short and Steve Martin. What have you learned from them?

Their etiquette, their class, their humor, their kindness. I've never worked with anyone like them. They will show up on time. They



Power Pod For her work as an actor and EP on *Only Murders*, Gomez (with co-stars Steve Martin, left, and Martin Short) is now the most nominated Latina producer in Emmy history.



Schiaparelli gown; Marc Jacobs faux coat; Bulgari rings.

will know everyone's name on set, even if you're just there for the day. They are so professional, but they have the best time because their goal is to make the camera guy laugh, and it just makes for such an enjoyable environment and, frankly, it's moving because they've been doing this far longer than I've been alive.

And then you throw Meryl Streep into the mix.

Which was a total dream come true. They say, "Don't meet your heroes." Well, you absolutely should meet Meryl. She stayed on set for 12 hours just to be there for the other actors off camera, which says everything. And she'd walk around barefoot, humming and singing. She's just so free and

lovely, and then they say, "Action," and she's impeccable. You're like, "Oh, right, she's Meryl Streep."

You used to say that it was hard for you to be happy for yourself. When did that start to change?

It was probably when my mom had my little sister. I knew I had to be a lot stronger than succumbing to people's chatter. And my sister is 11 now and deals with things so well. It's because of my parents, but also because I've always tried to be strong around her and vulnerable with her. I really do want to make this a better world for her.

Does she have a sense of how successful and, frankly, famous her older sister is?

We go to Target, we'll go bowling, we'll go places, and we don't really get bothered. And if we do, she's used to it. It does bring me joy when she's like, "I don't really want to do what you do."

How would you feel if she did want to follow in your footsteps?

I'd support whatever her dreams are, I would, but it's just nice to let her figure it out. I knew very young that I wanted to be in the entertainment industry, and I'm so grateful that she hasn't felt like I live a sparkly life, so she wants that life. I mean, she was Adam Sandler for Halloween. She wears basketball shorts. She loves Billie Eilish and Frank Ocean. She's such an interesting, beautiful person.

And it sounds like she's getting to be a kid, which is something I'm not sure you feel you got to be.

There's a lot that I missed out on, but I don't sulk in that. I also think when I was younger, [acting made me] feel like I belonged. I'd get brutally made fun of at school for being on *Barney* — I was far too old for *Barney* — but I had so much fun doing it, and, again, I liked feeling like I belonged somewhere.

Here we are, two-plus decades later, and it sounds like Hollywood is still a place where you feel like you belong. Is that accurate?

Yeah, I do. I love where I am in every aspect of my life right now, and I'm really proud of how far I've come. I feel healthy. I feel happy. I feel peaceful. **THR**



NEXT GEN

Meet the rising stars poised to lead your new favorite blockbuster, prestige indie and streaming obsession — *THR* reveals its 31st annual Next Gen list with the 35 executive talents who should be on your call log and, for the first time, introduces the inaugural class of Next Gen: Content Creators

EDITED BY **MIA GALUPPO** AND **LACEY ROSE**
PRODUCED BY **SEIJA RANKIN**
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **GUY AROCH**



KAIA GERBER

While Gerber initially followed in the professional footsteps of her supermodel mother, Cindy Crawford, appearing stone-faced on runways for Valentino and Celine, the 23-year-old has spent the past two years shifting her energy toward acting, building an impressive list of comedy credits (*Bottoms*, *Palm Royale*, *Saturday Night*) while appearing opposite heavyweights like Kristen Wiig. Even she is a little surprised. “I always thought that to do comedy you have to be really funny,” she says. “But it actually works to my advantage that I treat it like it’s serious. The type of comedy I do is to believe what you’re doing, no matter how ridiculous it is.” Audiences will next see her alongside Anne Hathaway in A24’s *Mother Mary* and Keanu Reeves in Apple TV+’s *Outcome*. As the co-founder of the popular book club Library Science, Gerber is always keeping her eye out for a potential adaptation, with producing possibly in her future. “Even if there was a book that I didn’t see a role for myself,” she says, “I could still see myself wanting to watch that come to fruition.”

— CARLY THOMAS

Artistic & Fashion Director **Alison Edmond**

Talent photographed Nov. 4 at Petit Ermitage Hotel in West Hollywood and Nov. 11 at Broken Shaker in Manhattan.

Valentino dress, socks, shoes; Suzanne Kalan rings.



EXECS

James Allen 35 Head of Scripted Films & TV, 101 Studios

LOGLINE Steers projects like *Yellowstone* and the forthcoming JonBenét Ramsey limited series for Paramount+.

THE ARC At the University of Arizona, the L.A. native threw parties for his frat and others. Before long, Allen was traversing the country, producing massive events with talent like LMFAO and Steve Aoki. Eventually, he says, "I found myself at this weird crossroads where I was paying for myself to go to school and they were teaching me how to start a business, and here I was running a business, so I ended up leaving school and doing it full time." That entrepreneurial spirit ultimately impressed David Glasser, who hired him at The Weinstein Co. and later made him employee No. 1 at his 101 Studios. In the years since, the married exec has helped build a formidable slate that's included *Yellowstone*, *George & Tammy* and *Lawmen: Bass Reeves*.

INDUSTRY BUZZWORD I WISH WOULD GO AWAY "Yellowstone-esque."



James Allen



Max Brabant



Brian Boone

Max Brabant 34 Public Figure Innovation Partnerships, Meta

LOGLINE Gets buy-in from celebrities and other public figures in the tech innovation space, from partnerships on AI initiatives to collaboration on new features launching on Instagram.

THE ARC Brabant's first stop in Hollywood was as Toni Howard's intern at ICM, followed by stints at Pantheon, ICM, Fox Searchlight and CAA, where she was at the forefront of transitioning influencers into mainstream media and guiding legacy clients into digital media. Eventually, Meta recruited Brabant, a Netherlands-raised horror film obsessive, to steward celebrity innovation partnerships, oftentimes dealing with AI initiatives. "It's a lot of reading the room," says the exec, who has helped with deals like Meta using actors' voices (see Judi Dench) in its digital assistant product. "It becomes clear very quickly, having worked with talent for a long time, the ones who are skeptical and aren't even open to it and the ones who are curious and may lean in."

MOST HOLLYWOOD EXPERIENCE "Getting the famous coconut cake from Tom Cruise."

Brian Boone 34 Talent Agent, CAA

LOGLINE Guides the careers of Emmy and Oscar winners like Lamorne Morris, H.E.R., Sheryl Lee Ralph and Ariana DeBose.

THE ARC Spurred on by a high school drama teacher who advised that he was "a bad actor" but "loud" and should be a talent agent, the Princeton grad landed a job in the CAA mailroom, where he rose through the ranks and now works with clients like *Saturday Night* star Gabriel LaBelle. Recently, Boone helped Morris transition from comedy to drama with his Emmy-nominated role in *Fargo*. Says Boone, "Younger talent gives me the ability to really introduce them to the town, to filmmakers and creators, and I feel like I can really have an influence in developing them."

BEST ADVICE I'VE GOTTEN "Return your colleagues' calls first." **IT WAS FROM** "Richard Lovett."

Execs photographed by **Birdie Thompson** on Nov. 4 and 5 at PMC Studios in L.A.

AARON PIERRE

"I've given myself permission for maybe the first time in my journey, in my career, to enjoy the moment," the 30-year-old star says. And what a moment it is. After Pierre's Netflix flick *Rebel Ridge* went to No. 1 on the streamer, he next appears in Disney's massive *Mufasa: The Lion King*, voicing the titular lion, then season four of cornerstone Apple TV+ series *The Morning Show* (during which, he reveals, he shares scenes with Jennifer Aniston, Billy Crudup and Marion Cotillard). "I'm doing what I love to do best, and I'm just being a student," he says of working with the star-studded cast. He recently was announced as one of the newest members of the DC Universe, playing John Stewart in HBO's Green Lantern series. He is sworn to secrecy but promises, "I will do my best to serve this character." Going forward, Pierre has one dream role in mind: Troy Maxson in August Wilson's *Fences*, a role that's been tackled by the actor's "greatest inspirations and heroes," James Earl Jones and Denzel Washington. — KIRSTEN CHUBA

Loewe jacket.

GERBER: HAIR BY BRUCE SCARLETT AT THE WALL GROUP; MAKEUP BY NINA PARK AT KALPANA; PIERRE AND WOONKA: TAI GROOMING BY AYALE WAMMOTO FOR NARS AND ONBE HAIRCARE AT EXCLUSIVE ARTISTS.



Gaby Cohen



Kira Cousineau



Courtney Cunniff



Alden Dalia

Gaby Cohen 32

Talent Agent, Gersh

LOGLINE Helps Katy O'Brian and reality TV favorite Ariana Madix make their next moves.

THE ARC The rep was a student at NYU when she attended a talk with Gersh's Leslie Siebert, later telling the agency co-president, "I want to be you when I grow up." Calling Gersh home since her intern days, Cohen handles a variety of talent, from up-and-coming performers to political pundits. She landed O'Brian after the actress' *Love Lies Bleeding* premiered at Sundance, booking a role in the next *Mission: Impossible* three days later. She is guiding Madix (*Vanderpump Rules* and *Love Island*) into the scripted space and navigating Hollywood for JFK's grandson and *Vogue* contributor Jack Schlossberg.

MY FIRST JOB IN HOLLYWOOD ENTAILED ... "Wrangling *Smurfs* during a press event on the Sony lot."

Kira Cousineau 35

Manager, Original Studio Film, Netflix

LOGLINE Has a heavy hand in Netflix's big-budget endeavors like Will Smith's *Fast and Loose*.

THE ARC Cousineau is no stranger to a tentpole. After a four-year stint at Simon Kinberg's Genre Films during which she worked on the *X-Men* movies, she was named director of development at Sony, where she oversaw the sequels to *Goosebumps*, *Zombieland* and *Men in Black*. Next up: helping shepherd studio films at Netflix, including the Kevin Hart action comedy *Lift* (which spent multiple weeks in the streamer's top 10) and the action thriller *Carry On*. The first reunited her with former boss Kinberg, which, she says, "was a very full-circle moment for me."

I'D LOVE TO SWITCH PLACES WITH "Dame Prue Leith from *The Great British Baking Show*."

Courtney Cunniff 35

Senior VP Film, Black Bear

LOGLINE The indie film faithful's year includes Greg Araki's latest feature and a Sydney Sweeney boxing movie.

THE ARC After graduating from the University of Oklahoma, the Dallas native was an assistant on the Oklahoma set of *August: Osage County*, which catapulted her to New York as an assistant at The Weinstein Co. and later to L.A. for Focus Features and eOne. Her latest post began this year at Black Bear with the Olivia Wilde starrer *I Want Your Sex*, Sweeney's film about American pro boxer Christy Martin and the narrative debut from the Oscar-winning doc director behind *Navalny*. All three projects started production in the same week. "Now, the playbook has been thrown out the window and it is anyone's game," says Cunniff. "That's the spirit I approach indie filmmaking with."

TALENT I'D KILL TO WORK WITH "Kirsten Dunst, without question."

Alden Dalia 35

Motion Picture Executive, WME

LOGLINE A connector of filmmakers and IP, the executive has carved out a lucrative niche digging up material for the likes of Alfonso Cuarón and Emma Stone.

MOST HOLLYWOOD EXPERIENCE

"Bumping into a client in the Equinox steam room and proceeding to run through one final 'practice pitch' ahead of their studio meeting. They got the job." Faisal Kanaan



KATY O'BRIAN

This has been an insane year," O'Brian says, reviewing her calendar. In 2024 alone, she had the Sundance standout *Love Lies Bleeding* and the summer tentpole *Twisters* and already has filmed *Mission: Impossible — The Final Reckoning*, the queer zombie movie *Queens of the Dead* and a Christy Martin biopic, appearing opposite Sydney Sweeney. And there isn't a lot of downtime in her future. When O'Brian, 35, sits for this interview, she only has a day in Los Angeles before leaving to film Edgar Wright's remake of 1987's *The Running Man*. And though the roles might be getting bigger, O'Brian says her approach to work hasn't changed much. "Attention to detail is something that I strive to remind myself to do," she says. "It matters so deeply." — ZOE G. PHILLIPS

Stella McCartney jacket, pants; Melissa Kaye earrings; stylist's own slip top.

O'BRIAN AND DESTINY: HAIR BY SHERIDAN VARDI; MAKEUP BY VALERY GHERMAN AT THE WALL GROUP





D'PHARAOH WOON-A-TAI

After he “basically stumbled into” acting as a teenager, the 23-year-old landed his first Emmy nomination this year for his work on the final season of *Reservation Dogs*, an ending he admits was bittersweet. “There could have been so much more that we could have talked about,” says Woon-A-Tai, but notes that the role opened a lot of doors. Those include a gig in Darren Aronofsky’s *Caught Stealing* and Alex Garland’s *Warfare*, starring with fellow Next Gen-er Kit Connor. Throughout his rise, Woon-A-Tai, who is of Ojji-Cree descent, has kept his activist spirit alive, going viral in September for walking the Emmys red carpet with a red palm print — a symbol of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women movement — painted on his face. Woon-A-Tai credits his grandfather for the idea and hopes “doing that steered people toward bringing awareness to the issue and less of me — I don’t want that. Focus on the issue.” — K.C.

Gucci jacket and jeans; David Yurman jewelry.

THE ARC Years before Substack was hot, Dalia, then an assistant at Sony, started an email newsletter that he blasted out every Friday with three short films and five articles he found interesting that week. Appropriately titled “Alden’s Picks,” the newsletter ballooned from 30 to 1,000 recipients. Eventually, a WME agent reached out, saying, “Why don’t you just come to WME and do what you do with your newsletter but for our clients?” Now, Dalia has built out his own department where he connects filmmakers to IP, gaining fans in Cuarón and video game designer Hideo Kojima. Recently, he set up the book *Checkmate* at Stone outfit Fruit Tree.

BUZZWORD I WISH WOULD GO AWAY “Content.”

Maia Eyre 34 Senior VP Creative Development, Columbia

LOGLINE The exec has a keen eye for material, championing the runaway hit *Anyone But You*.

THE ARC A few years ago, the Toronto native found herself in a bidding war for a spec script titled *Anyone But You*. It came down to Columbia and a streamer. “We convinced them to bet on themselves, that they could make more money and a cultural impact if they went with us,” recalls Eyre, who is expecting her second child. The \$25 million production made more than \$220 million worldwide, minted stars out of Sydney Sweeney and Glen Powell and proved romantic comedies were viable again. “And we should keep making more. I plan to,” she says of the genre. Next up: reimaginings of both *I Know What You Did Last Summer* and *Anaconda*.

HOLLYWOOD DREAM JOB “Working in Hollywood in the ‘90s.”

Emily Furutani 34 VP Comedy, Hulu Originals

LOGLINE She’s in charge of Hulu’s stand-up initiative, with monthly specials from the likes of Bill Burr, Roy Wood Jr. and Sebastian Maniscalco.

THE ARC “I’m very into manifesting,” says Furutani, a fifth-generation Japanese American raised in Southern California. She grew up on a diet of NBC comedies like *The Office* and *30 Rock* and, despite her lack of industry connections, was dead set on a career in comedy. Ultimately, Furutani parlayed an entry-level agency gig into a job at NBC International Studios, which led her to sibling Universal TV, where she worked with Tina Fey, Jimmy Fallon and Mike Schur. More recently, she made the leap to Hulu, where she’s overseeing its major stand-up initiative and working on scripted comedies at the streamer and ABC.

HOLLYWOOD DREAM JOB “Honestly, a content creator. To be clear, it’s only for the free stuff, mainly the makeup.”

Reggie J. Glosson 32 Associate, Gang, Tyre

LOGLINE Helped longtime client Dylan Mulvaney transition from TikTok star to full-fledged actress and works with firm clients like Daniel Dae Kim.

THE ARC As a student at Los Angeles filming hotspot University High School, where *Bruce Almighty* and *Pineapple Express* were shot, Glosson was friends with the theater kids without being one himself. The Columbia Law School grad later landed at Gang, Tyre, where he now works on transactions for creative heavyweights Stephen King and Michael Mann while guiding the careers of young talents like Mulvaney. When not in the office, he’s playing tennis or doing civil rights pro bono work, including for activist-journalist Myrlie



Maia Eyre



Emily Furutani



Reggie J. Glosson

Evers-Williams: "It's my chance to give back and do things in the vein of what initially got me interested in the law."

MOST HOLLYWOOD EXPERIENCE "Getting an unsolicited call from a TMZ reporter looking for an inside scoop. ... I didn't take it."

Abby Glusker 34
Lit Agent, UTA

LOGLINE Making deals for a wide range of female talent, from *Call Her Daddy* host Alex Cooper to actress Kirsten Dunst.

THE ARC The 2000s Fox teen drama *The O.C.* is partly to thank for pushing Glusker into the business. As a high schooler, the native Angeleno used some budding agent skills (pulling strings, following up, etc.) to get a set visit to the series that was then her obsession. There, she met creator Josh Schwartz and executive producer Stephanie Savage. "I loved how it all came together. And I knew that I wanted to be a part of it," Glusker says. "The rest is history." Before she even went to college at George Washington University, she interned at UTA. Now an agent, Glusker's clients include Paris Hilton and female creatives like *Aftersun* director Charlotte Wells and *Happy Face* creator Jen Caciccio.

FICTIONAL CHARACTER I IDENTIFY WITH "Harriet the Spy because I will find out."

Faisal Kanaan 31
Manager,Untitled Entertainment

LOGLINE Helps clients like Alex Convery (*Air*) and Alan Fox (Spike Lee's *High and Low*) get their projects made.

THE ARC As a teen, Kanaan spent summers in the Middle East reading Hemingway in his grandmother's library before returning to the U.S. in time to play football in the fall. "It was two halves of an identity," he says now. A coach at Bentley University introduced him to the sports agency world. After a brief stint at Paradigm, he joined Grandview, where he signed his first client while still an assistant. That client? Convery, who would go on to earn a WGA Award nomination for 2023's *Air*. His second client, Fox, co-wrote Lee's upcoming A24 thriller that stars Denzel Washington. This year, Kanaan also signed Oscar-nominated Ramin Bahrani and helped Eric Carrasco launch a Netflix animated series co-created with Zack Snyder.

BUZZWORD I WISH WOULD GO AWAY "I'm still not sure which Hollywood scenario calls for the term 'triangulate.'"

Carver Karaszewski 31
President, Super Frog

LOGLINE Recently tapped to run buzzy filmmaker Hiro Murai's company, the exec has a slate including Katie Dippold's *Widow's Bay* at Apple TV+ and Amazon's *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*.



Abby Glusker



Faisal Kanaan



Carver Karaszewski



Jacqueline Kim



Chelsea Kujawa



Clint LaVigne



Emily Levitan

MY FIRST JOB IN HOLLYWOOD ENTAILED ...

"Curating a bespoke trail mix with the perfect ratio of yogurt-covered almonds AND chauffeuring my boss' sick dog to chemo treatment. Sad!" Clint LaVigne

THE ARC Karaszewski was predestined for her new gig. Back when she was studying architecture at Barnard College — "basically gluing in a basement for four years," she says — the Los Angeles native and daughter of acclaimed writer-producer Larry Karaszewski (*The People vs. Larry Flint*) fashioned a side hustle as a music video producer. Murai, the lauded producer-director (*The Bear*, *Station Eleven*, *Atlanta*), got his start making music videos himself. On her way to her latest gig, Karaszewski spent a decade at Michael Ellenberg's Media Res working on Boots Riley's *I'm a Virgo* for Amazon and *Scenes From a Marriage* at HBO.

I WISH HOLLYWOOD STILL ... "Had martinis at lunch."

Jacqueline Kim 33
Talent Agent, UTA

LOGLINE Daniel Dae Kim and Ke Huy Quan look to Kim to close deals for streaming series and Oscar-winning films.

THE ARC During the pandemic, Kim found herself reevaluating the impact she could make in a shifting industry. When she left Innovative Artists for UTA in the summer of 2021, the San Diego native was determined not to limit herself to working solely with actors. Now, she counts multihyphenate talent Richard Gadd, whose Netflix series *Baby Reindeer* won the Scot three Emmys, as a client. She marvels, "It really was a word-of-mouth sensation." Kim also is proud to have been part of longtime client Quan's career reinvention, having put him in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, which netted Quan a best supporting actor Oscar.

FICTIONAL CHARACTER I IDENTIFY WITH "Monica, from *Friends*."

Chelsea Kujawa 33
Senior VP Production, Lionsgate

LOGLINE The exec moves seamlessly between action pics (*John Wick*), faith-based films (*The Greatest Christmas Pageant Ever*) and female-forward thrillers (*The Housemaid*).

THE ARC Growing up in a family of medical professionals, the Dallas-reared Kujawa assumed she would be a doctor until, as she puts it, "I had a quarter-life crisis at 18, which is hilarious in hindsight." The University of Texas at Austin grad pivoted to entertainment, eventually landing at Lionsgate, where she's worked on everything from *Jesus Revolution* to the Judy Blume adaptation *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* to the *John Wick* franchise. Most recently, she brought in the thriller *The Housemaid*, attaching Sydney

Sweeney and Amanda Seyfried. "At Lionsgate, we don't have the luxury to go back to our library from 1932. We have to find original stuff," says Kujawa, who is expecting her first child in February.

BUZZWORD I WISH WOULD GO AWAY "High concept."

Clint LaVigne 35
VP Drama Programming, HBO

LOGLINE A key member of HBO's small but mighty drama department, where his purview includes projects like buzzy hit *The Gilded Age*.

THE ARC LaVigne had not been at Netflix very long when he got a note from a former colleague, Francesca Orsi, asking whether he'd consider "coming home." Home was HBO, where LaVigne had been an assistant early in his career before putting in time at the streamer and, before that, Amblin. "Opportunities like that never fall into your lap," says the Downey, California, native, who was raised by a high school English teacher/football coach dad and forensic biologist mom. In the years since, he's been instrumental in everything from *The Gilded Age* to an upcoming series from Emmy magnet Richard Gadd. More recently, LaVigne added the role of dad. He and his husband, *A League of Their Own* showrunner Will Graham, welcomed a baby boy a little over a year ago.

HOLLYWOOD DREAM JOB "Whatever Netflix department pumps out those perfect Lindsay Lohan holiday movies!"

Emily Levitan 35
Director, Overall Deal Series, Netflix

LOGLINE Netflix's resident Shonda whisperer, she oversees the streamer's in-house talent stable behind Shondaland's *Bridgerton* franchise.

THE ARC Yes, her father's name is Steve. No, she's not the scion of a famed sitcom writer. The New Jersey-reared Levitan arrived in Los Angeles to attend USC without a single Hollywood connection. Landing at Netflix in 2018, she now oversees the most high-profile (and expensive) overall deal in TV: Shondaland. When she's not managing other deals — Josh Pate, Jonas Pate and Shannon Burke (*Outer Banks*); and Brad Falchuk (*The Brothers Sun*) — Levitan partners with the American Red Cross, CAA and The Groundlings every March on national blood drive Blood for Breck in honor of her late fiancé: actor, writer and comic Breck Denny.

I'D LOVE TO SWITCH PLACES WITH "Andy Cohen."

J.D. Lifshitz 32
Co-Founder & Producer, BoulderLight Pictures

LOGLINE One half of the producer wunderkinds behind *Barbarian* and a splashy New Line slate.

THE ARC Lifshitz had moved out to Los Angeles at 19 and landed his first job as director Adam Wingard's production assistant when childhood friend (and fellow 2024 Next Gen-er) Raphael Margules asked, "Can we make a movie for \$60,000?" That year, the duo made their first feature, *Contracted*, selling it to IFC with a deal for a sequel. (The film came in under budget at \$55,000.) It was their 2022 horror *Barbarian* from

TALENT

SOPHIE WILDE

Wilde thought 2022 horror film *Talk to Me* would be a small, local indie project — it wound up becoming her breakout role and A24's highest-grossing horror film of all time. Before her big debut even hit theaters, she received the script for Halina Reijn's *Babygirl* and was in awe of the director (whom she describes as "so fucking awesome"). The erotic thriller centers on an affair between a high-powered CEO (Nicole Kidman) and her much younger intern (Harris Dickinson), with Wilde playing Kidman's assistant. "It was a dream to work with an icon like Nicole, whose work I've grown up watching," she says of her fellow Aussie. The actress, 26, is in London shooting with another icon, Tom Cruise, for Alejandro G. Iñárritu's highly secretive (and untitled) film. She's grateful to be in so many prestige projects in swift succession but also notices that with career growth comes a lot of admin: "I now have so many more emails to answer." — SEIJA RANKIN





JOSH RIVERA

After appearing in Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story* in 2021, Rivera was out of work for so long that he ran out of money and had to start bartending. "That was an interesting thing to internalize because it's just like what the [actor's] life is," he says. "It's just really full of opportunities at one time, and it's completely barren at other times." But Rivera, 29, says there have been career highs in the past couple of years, too — a particularly notable moment came when he watched an early screening of *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes*. "A lot of stuff was going on in my life while we were filming, so it was hard for me to actually be present, but [the screening] brought back so many memories. It was a reminder that I was on the right path." Now, Rivera is the latest young talent to be tapped by hitmaker Ryan Murphy, starring as former NFL tight end Aaron Hernandez in the new season of FX's *American Sports Story*. — CHRISTY PIÑA

Burberry sweater; David Yurman jewelry.



J.D. Lifshitz



Raphael Margules



Will Maxfield



Courtney Mock

Zach Cregger that wowed the industry. But, says Lifshitz, “No one wanted to make that movie. It was like *Pulp Fiction* or *Scream* in that, yes, it is out of the box and unconventional, but it is never not entertaining.” The film ultimately earned \$45 million at the box office and landed them a deal at New Line, where they next will release the genre title *Companion* and Cregger’s *Weapons*. **BEST ADVICE I’VE GOTTEN** “You don’t have to join their circle. You just have to make your circle bigger.” **IT WAS FROM** “Jason Blum.”

Raphael Margules 32
Co-Founder & Producer,
BoulderLight Pictures

LOGLINE One half of the engine behind prolific prod outfit with credits like Netflix’s *Woman of the Hour* and A24’s *Friendship*.

THE ARC It was after making his 13th film, 2019’s *The Vigil*, that Margules, then only in his mid-20s, got massive co-sign from horror maestro Jason Blum. “I get asked a lot, ‘Who will be the next Blumhouse? Who is a good example of someone on the path to success in Hollywood today?’” Blum wrote on social media, saying that the answer is Margules and his BoulderLight partner, J.D. Lifshitz. The duo recently set up films at New Line, Netflix and A24. Margules, a dad to two daughters, is a big believer in theatrical: “On a purely business level, there is no way to establish yourself other than on a theatrical film. It’s also the most satisfying way to see things that you spend years of your life on.”

TALENT I WOULD LOVE TO WORK WITH “Jim Carrey.”

Will Maxfield 33
Partner, WME Independent

LOGLINE Helps get films from John Carney, Mike Flanagan and Ali Abbasi in front of audiences.

THE ARC The independent film business is hard; it’s even harder when Donald Trump’s camp publicly threatens legal action after your film’s Cannes premiere but before the ink dries on the (official) reviews. “It was like a triple black diamond of a film sale,” says Maxfield of *The Apprentice*, the Abbasi movie about a young Trump and political fixer Roy Cohn. After months of intense negotiations, Maxfield helped the film finally make its way to theaters in October. But festivals are always a busy time for the Columbia grad. At Sundance in 2023, he closed deals for three films over three consecutive nights, including a roughly \$20 million sale to Apple for Carney’s *Flora and Son*.

MY FIRST JOB IN HOLLYWOOD ENTAILED ... “Being a human basketball hoop for a company video when I was an intern at WME.”

Courtney Mock 33
Senior VP Scripted TV Development,
Lionsgate

LOGLINE The exec is spearheading the buzzy Seth Rogen comedy *The Studio* for Apple TV+ and the first-ever *Twilight* TV series.

THE ARC Mock’s early theatrical forays came as a teenager, when the Anaheim native began writing and performing in plays for an audience of some 3,000 through her megachurch. “A big part of growing up in the church for me was realizing that stories impact people,” she says. In time, she parlayed her passion for storytelling into a Chapman degree and some early gigs at Temple Hill and Tomorrow Studios. These days, Mock’s a top TV exec at Lionsgate, where she’s been intimately involved in everything from the CBS breakout



RYAN DESTINY

During Destiny’s first big role, Queen Latifah offered a piece of advice that would change the course of her career. Destiny was the lead of Lee Daniels’ musical drama *Star* when the elder actress took her aside. “She made it very clear to me that I should be clear with myself about what I want,” says Destiny. “That’s when I started conjuring.” Destiny made a mental list of the types of projects she’d like to be part of and kept coming back to the idea of a female sports movie. Then in 2020, while filming her recurring role on *Grown-ish*, she got the invitation to audition for the lead of *The Fire Inside*, a biopic about Olympic boxer Claressa Shields from screenwriter Barry Jenkins. “I knew I owed it to myself to try for this,” she says. “And ultimately I learned that even as a lead, I don’t have to be afraid to make mistakes.” —S.R.

Alexander McQueen jacket, pants; Melissa Kaye earrings; Suzanne Kalan ring; Selim Mouzannar ring; Christian Louboutin pumps.





KIT CONNOR

Connor is ready to break out beyond high school. He built his career as a child actor (see him as a young Elton John in *Rocketman*) before scoring the lead role in the high school rom-com series *Heartstopper*. This desire to graduate is part of what drew the Brit to Broadway, where he's currently leading *Romeo + Juliet* with Rachel Zegler, bringing Shakespeare to the Gen Z masses. "It just felt ballsy," Connor says. "It's been what I've been trying to do with my career decisions recently, just try and do things that are a little bit more ballsy." Connor, 20, isn't sure if *Heartstopper* will return for a third season, but after the curtain goes down on his Broadway stint, he'll start promoting his most adult role yet in Alex Garland's A24 thriller *Warfare*. After that, he says, "I'd like to take a little break just so that I can kind of cleanse my mind and my palate, and then I'd like to do something completely different." He adds, "I want to try and spend the next couple years just doing quite hard stuff so that I can try and force myself to get better." — CAITLIN HUSTON

Amiri jacket, knit shirt, tank; David Yurman jewelry.

Ghosts to the new *Twilight* animated series for Netflix. In her spare time, the married mom of three has been teaching herself to play piano. Says Mock, "It's been really nice learning something new and nobody here to judge it."

INDUSTRY BUZZWORD I WISH WOULD GO AWAY "Prestige-urals."

Nicky Mohebbi 34
Literary Agent, Verve

LOGLINE Guides writers like Zeb Wells (*Deadpool & Wolverine*) and Troy Quane (*Nimona*).

THE ARC After graduating from West Virginia University with a degree in biochemistry, Mohebbi nabbed a job at a Claim Jumper steakhouse outside the Warner Bros. lot in the hopes of running into any executive he could convince to give him a job in Hollywood. That didn't work, but he did meet a writer who was repped by Verve, which got him into the agency world. Now at Verve for over 11 years, Mohebbi has been assisting the careers of in-demand scribes like Jason Shuman and Ben Queen, who in September set up *Cola Wars* with Judd Apatow directing and Steven Spielberg producing, and Peter Cameron, a Marvel go-to who worked on the latest *Fantastic Four* movie.

FICTIONAL CHARACTER I IDENTIFY WITH "Wolverine. He's a complex dude."

Taylor Morgan 34
VP Drama Development, 20th Television

LOGLINE Oversees a dizzying number of Disney overall deals for producers like Jenni Konner, Jon M. Chu and Warren Littlefield.

THE ARC The New Jersey native quickly moved from the WME mailroom to the assistant desk of one of the most powerful executives in Hollywood: Ari Emanuel. After getting a B.A. in Hollywood from Emanuel, Morgan earned a master's from Peter Rice, for whom she worked while he was president at 21st Century Fox. "It was such an education, but it also let me reevaluate why I was here," she says. "What am I passionate about?" Now a married mom, she became a creative affairs exec at Fox 21 and, after the Disney acquisition, ultimately found herself at 20th TV, where she's worked on high-profile projects like *This Is Us* (NBC), *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* (Disney+) and *We Were the Lucky Ones* (Hulu).

MOST HOLLYWOOD EXPERIENCE "Air Force One calling the office line and profusely sweating while hunting down my boss at the time, Ari Emanuel, only for the call to drop (and my life to flash before my eyes)."

Ethan Neale 32
Lit Agent, Paradigm

LOGLINE Navigates the careers of rising writing talent like Qui Nguyen (*Raya and the Last Dragon*) and Migizi Pensoneau (*Reservation Dogs*).

THE ARC Neale's lucky break came in a buffet line, where he happened to strike up a conversation with the chief financial officer of Paradigm as they waited for food at an L.A. event. Neale persistently followed up and ultimately was extended a mailroom job offer. From there, he moved his way up the agency ranks and now represents an array of lit talent like Ross Evans, who penned *How to Save a Marriage*, set to star Robert Pattinson. "One of the most fulfilling things for me is reading a script and just seeing it, knowing it and starting to put together a game plan of what I'm going to do with it," says Neale, who met his wife while they were both Paradigm assistants.

I'D LOVE TO TRADE PLACES WITH "Rich Paul."

Danielle Pistotnik 29
Manager, Select Management Group

LOGLINE Turned her Mormon mom influencer clients into full-fledged reality stars.

THE ARC "At first, everyone said, 'No.' I think there was still an uneasiness between the influencer and traditional space," says Pistotnik of initially pitching the now breakout reality hit *The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives*. Four years ago, the manager, who lives in Marina del Rey with her wife and corgi, signed a cadre of Utah-based influencer Mormon moms who were popular on TikTok — Taylor Frankie Paul and Mayci Neeley, among others — and quickly saw the potential for a show. After that initial hesitation, the cast's popularity (and virality) was undeniable, and the L.A.-born and -raised rep, whose roster also included YouTuber and podcaster Fernanda Ramirez, got a green light from Hulu. Says Pistotnik of when she knew the swiftly renewed show would be a hit: "Reality TV is for the girls and the gays. All of my friends were texting me about clips that were on their [Instagram] 'For You' page. And that was just from the two-minute trailer."

BEST ADVICE I'VE GOTTEN "Don't wait for permission." **IT CAME FROM** "A movie producer sitting at the bar I was bartending at when I was 21."

Kirsten Polley 34
Senior VP Business Operations, WWE

LOGLINE A key player in major deals brokered by WWE, including the one to bring *SmackDown* back to NBCUniversal's USA Network and *NXT* to The CW.

THE ARC The UCLA grad has been key to giant deals designed to bring WWE to new audiences, including the \$5 billion pact to move *Raw* to Netflix in January after its 31-year run on linear television. She also orchestrated a five-day immersive fan experience during WrestleMania XL Week in Philadelphia, with mainstage appearances from WWE stars and live podcast recordings. Before joining WWE, she worked as an agent at CAA alongside then-co-head of TV Nick Khan, who joined WWE in 2020 as president and almost immediately recruited Polley. "With WWE," she says, "we have the opportunity to sit across so many different business areas, including content creation, live events, talent and licensing."

BEST ADVICE I'VE GOTTEN "Don't lie to your boss." **IT CAME FROM** "The assistant I was hired to replace."

Michael D. Ratner 35
Founder & CEO, OBB Media

LOGLINE As CEO of the fast-growing, vertically integrated OBB Media, he's responsible for high-profile projects with stars like Demi Lovato, Sabrina Carpenter, Charli XCX and Justin Bieber.

THE ARC The Long Island native's earliest recollections behind his father's video camera came during Hebrew school, when a still elementary-school-aged Ratner would reenact that week's lesson with his buddies. By high school, he was turning his essays into films. "Part of that was truly how I wanted to express myself, but also I loved getting the response of my friends," says Ratner, who did his undergrad at UPenn before getting a master's in fine arts from NYU. By 26, he'd founded OBB Media, where he initially made his name doing high-profile projects with Kevin Hart and Bieber. In the years since, the married exec has built out a booming multimedia production company and studio responsible for everything from a Lovato doc to a Carpenter holiday special. He's also a founding partner at Hailey Bieber's Rhode.



Nicky Mohebbi



Taylor Morgan



Ethan Neale



Danielle Pistotnik



Kirsten Polley



Michael D. Ratner



Matt Sadeghian



Adam Segal

MY FIRST HOLLYWOOD JOB ENTAILED ... "Picking up a broken-down van in Pittsburgh on my first day as a PA and driving it 67 miles to Johnstown, Pennsylvania, for a shot the next day ... for a pilot that never aired."

Matt Sadeghian 35
Manager, Brillstein Entertainment

LOGLINE From clubs to arenas, Sadeghian's stand-up clients, including Jeff Arcuri and Morgan Jay, have already sold 500,000 tickets this year.

THE ARC After a few years in his father's native Iran, Sadeghian's parents split, and he returned to the U.S. to live with his mother in a studio apartment in Panorama City. While still in high school, he began working in home lending to help pay the bills, but, after the sudden death of his mom, he decided to pursue a career in entertainment, his longtime passion. As he puts it, "The most catastrophic thing has happened to you, so I figured it could make me weaker or stronger." He forwent college and landed jobs at management outfits Principato-Young and Avalon, where he found a passion for comedy. Now at Brillstein, he's earned a reputation for finding stand-up talent like internet-savvy comics Arcuri, Jay and Trevor Wallace, along with comedian and Emmy-winning *Ted Lasso* writer Jamie Lee.

MY FIRST JOB IN HOLLYWOOD ENTAILED ... "Pretending to call from the White House to score a dinner resy. It actually worked."

Adam Segal 34
Founder, Strig Artist Management

LOGLINE After helping longtime client Quinta Brunson go from internet comedian to Emmy winner, Segal launched his own company.

THE ARC "At one point, I just woke up and realized that starting my own business was the only way to be true to myself and my clients," says Segal. This nagging dream was the reason he left Authentic Talent to launch Strig in April, and he proudly notes that his company became profitable in its first month. In college at Temple University, Segal would produce sketches with friend and actor Benjamin Norris (now Segal's longest-standing client), and it was through him that Segal began working with Brunson long before she was the creator and star of ABC's *Abbott Elementary*. Other clients include SNL featured player Emil Wakim and *Abbott* co-producers Kate Peterman and Justin Tan.

I WISH HOLLYWOOD STILL ... "Trusted in its own taste without relying on an algorithm."

Vishaal Sharma 35
Associate, Grubman Shire

LOGLINE Sharma helps LeBron James' SpringHill outfit grow its production endeavors while assisting son Bronny with endorsement deals.

THE ARC When he was 15, Sharma shot a short film that almost got him arrested. "We were filming this scene where someone was being held up at gunpoint," he says, "and someone thought it was actually a robbery and called the police."

BEST ADVICE I'VE GOTTEN

"I was lucky enough to sit with the late Mike Nichols, and he told me: 'Whatever you try in this industry, you'll be embarrassed at first. Don't worry, just keep going.'"

Will Maxfield



Vishaal Sharma



Tovah Silbermann



Christopher Slager



Ryan Tunick

Undeterred, Sharma made a beeline straight for the entertainment industry. After a career in mergers and acquisitions, he pivoted to dealmaking for talent like James, Bruce Springsteen and Robert De Niro. Sharma also represents his childhood friend turned actor George H. Xanthis, who stars in the popular faith-based series *The Chosen*.
I'D LOVE TO TRADE PLACES WITH "Lorne Michaels, circa 1992."

Tovah Silbermann 34

Manager, Mosaic

LOGLINE Represents *Ghosts* stars Richie Moriarty and Brandon Scott Jones, along with writers on FX hits *What We Do in the Shadows* and *Reservation Dogs*.

THE ARC Silbermann grew up in an ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, and "comedy was kind of the second language" in her home thanks to her parents' interest in Andy Kaufman, *Mystery Science Theater* and more. She got pulled further into the comedy world after going to college in New York, where she'd attend comedy shows and then start producing them for friends as a side gig while working at the ACLU. At Mosaic, her clients include on- and offscreen comedy talent like comedian and playwright Michael Cruz Kayne and writers on nearly every show in late night, from *The Daily Show* to *Saturday Night Live*.

WHY ISN'T HOLLYWOOD TALKING ABOUT ... "The power of Gen Z's influence on culture."

Christopher Slager 35

Head of Film, Fifth Season

LOGLINE With credits like the *Book Club* films and the Nicolas Cage starrer *Pig*, the exec now heads film operations at one of the industry's biggest indie outfits.

THE ARC "I had no idea that people sold movies. I knew people sold houses," says Slager, who grew up in Utah in a family of real estate developers. Joining WME at the tender age of 21, Slager headed to the agency's film finance group, learning the ins and outs of getting movies financed, produced and distributed. When the division was spun out of the agency, acquired and eventually became Fifth Season, Slager left his WME home and now heads film operations, which recently sold the Vince Vaughn starrer *Nonnas* to Netflix. Says Slager, who got married in October, "With the consolidation that our industry has gone through over the past decade, it has created a more critical role for independent film studios."

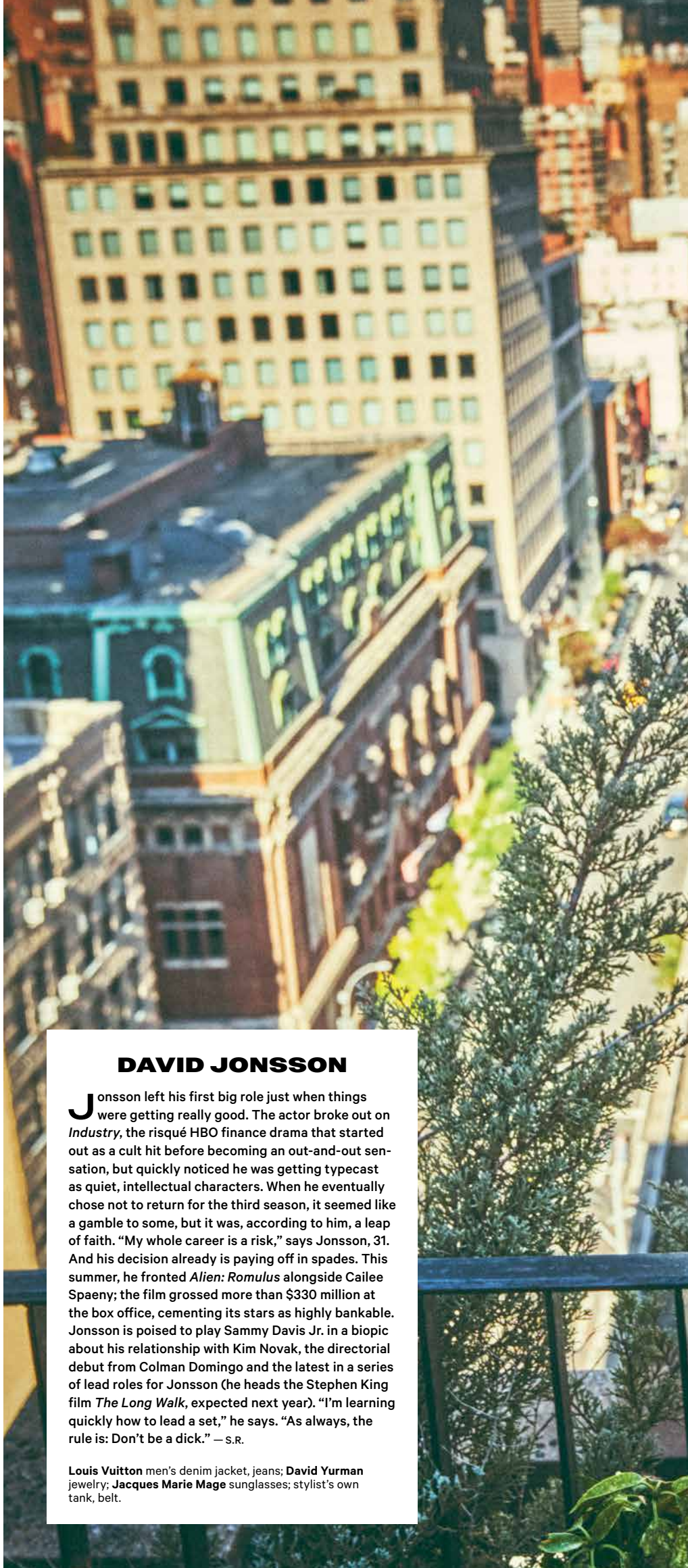
I'D LOVE TO TRADE PLACES WITH "Ina Garten."

Ryan Tunick 34

Manager, Entertainment 360

LOGLINE Pilots the careers of actors Maika Monroe (*Longlegs*) and Alana Haim (*Licorice Pizza*).

THE ARC Tunick was expected to follow a path in finance or medicine like other members of his large extended family, but at the age of 6, his stockbroker father allowed him to watch Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks*. "That movie changed the course of my life. It was just magic," he says. He later landed an assistant job at WME, where he first met Monroe. When he transitioned to management a few years later, the actress became his first client. Tunick has been guiding her career ever since, with Monroe reaching new heights this year by starring in *Longlegs*, the biggest indie hit of the year (\$125 million worldwide). The rep also helped Brian Jordan Alvarez transition from digital personality to creating and starring in the FX breakout *The English Teacher*



DAVID JONSSON

Jonsson left his first big role just when things were getting really good. The actor broke out on *Industry*, the risqué HBO finance drama that started out as a cult hit before becoming an out-and-out sensation, but quickly noticed he was getting typecast as quiet, intellectual characters. When he eventually chose not to return for the third season, it seemed like a gamble to some, but it was, according to him, a leap of faith. "My whole career is a risk," says Jonsson, 31. And his decision already is paying off in spades. This summer, he fronted *Alien: Romulus* alongside Cailee Spaeny; the film grossed more than \$330 million at the box office, cementing its stars as highly bankable. Jonsson is poised to play Sammy Davis Jr. in a biopic about his relationship with Kim Novak, the directorial debut from Colman Domingo and the latest in a series of lead roles for Jonsson (he heads the Stephen King film *The Long Walk*, expected next year). "I'm learning quickly how to lead a set," he says. "As always, the rule is: Don't be a dick." — S.R.

Louis Vuitton men's denim jacket, jeans; David Yurman jewelry; Jacques Marie Mage sunglasses; stylist's own tank, belt.

FASHION ASSISTANTS: ELLIOTT PEARSON, CHRIS GATES, MORGAN LIPSINER AND MARLEY PEARSON



DOMINIC SESSA

When Sessa scored the leading role opposite Paul Giamatti in last year's *The Holdovers*, he had one hope: to be good enough in the role that he could, someday, be in another movie. "I didn't understand how any of this worked," says the actor, who was plucked out of his own boarding school's drama department to star in the Alexander Payne film. "I didn't think it would change my life." By the time the movie's press cycle was over, he was preparing for his next role (in *Tow*, alongside Rose Byrne and Octavia Spencer) and has since booked parts opposite Michelle Pfeiffer in Michael Showalter's upcoming holiday comedy *Oh, What Fun.*, as young Anthony Bourdain in a planned A24 biopic, and in the third installment of the *Now You See Me* franchise. "I'm not trying to create or predict the next groundbreaking film," he says. "I'm trying to be part of projects that I, personally, would enjoy watching." — S.R.

Bottega Veneta jacket, shirt, pants, tie;
Jacques Marie Mage sunglasses; stylist's own belt.



and Haim from music superstar to indie-film darling, next starring in *The Drama* with Zendaya and Robert Pattinson.

MY FIRST JOB IN HOLLYWOOD ENTAILED ... “On my third day in the mailroom, *The Hollywood Reporter* took a picture for ‘Secrets of the Hollywood Mailroom.’”

Will Watkins 34
Books Agent, CAA

LOGLINE A books-focused dealmaker trusted by top authors like *Fleishman Is in Trouble*'s Taffy Brodesser-Akner, *Crazy Rich Asians*' Kevin Kwan and *Three Women*'s Lisa Taddeo.

THE ARC Watkins credits the Landmark Theatre in Bethesda, Maryland, with helping him fall in love with independent cinema as a high schooler inside the Beltway. “I got particularly inspired by the idea that people were writing [these films], which I thought was really cool,” says Watkins.

He threw himself into networking over Facebook at Boston College that landed him an internship at CAA in 2012. He ultimately settled at ICM, but after its 2022 CAA acquisition, he was back at his initial Hollywood home. Now, when he's not running or concert-going, he's scouting new material. Says Watkins about his job, “You read a novel and it completely takes your breath away. And then I have the privilege of getting to share that work with directors and screenwriters and producers who are making things that I love.”

FICTIONAL CHARACTER I IDENTIFY WITH “Jimmy on *Hacks*.”

Brian Williams 35
Executive VP Film & TV, Dylan Clark Productions

LOGLINE The producer behind Amazon series *The Wilds*, Netflix's *Bird Box Barcelona*, the upcoming Taron Egerton thriller *Carry On*.



Will Watkins



Brian Williams

THE ARC Despite growing up in Los Angeles, Williams had no interest in movies until a friend snuck him into the Aero Theatre to see *On the Waterfront*. “That is where it all started,” he says. “I had never been moved by a story and a performance in such a way.” After studying journalism at NYU, where he also produced black box theater plays, he landed at CAA, which led to a job at Scott Stuber and Dylan Clark's Bluegrass Films. After Stuber went to head film at Netflix, Williams continued with Clark at what became Dylan Clark Productions, working on a slate both in film (*Scarface*) and TV (the secret Batman Universe project, an adaptation of the best-selling YA book series *Scythe*).

MOST HOLLYWOOD EXPERIENCE “Getting emails meant for news anchor Brian Williams.”

Profiles written by Winston Cho, Ryan Gajewski, Mia Galuppo, Caitlin Huston, Katie Kilkenny, Borys Kit, Mikey O'Connell and Lacey Rose



15 Rising Content Creators Who Are Meeting Their Moment

By going viral or achieving liftoff after years of grinding, the TikTokers, YouTubers, Instagrammers and podcasters on *THR*'s inaugural list of Next Gen Content Creators have shown impressive growth this year in followers, deals and Hollywood projects

Morgan Absher 30
@Morgsyabsher

Claim to fame Podcast *Two Hot Takes* — which features Absher and guests discussing the craziest Reddit relationship stories — has amassed 60 million listens a year.

Growth Launching a second pod, while the original is the basis for its own Subreddit of 800,000 followers.

Quenlin Blackwell 23
@quenblackwell

Claim to fame Feeding Starving Influencers (YouTube videos of her cooking for friends like Lil Nas X) regularly notches 1 million-plus views. **Growth** Three years of acting lessons paid off with an appearance in Charli XCX's “360” music video and a role in Rachel Sennott's untitled HBO pilot.

Rachel Coster 28
@rach4_thestar

Claim to fame The first season of *Boy Room*, in which the Northeastern U. grad toured

the disgusting abodes of millennial and Gen Z boys, averaged around 1 million views an episode on TikTok. **Growth** Amazon Prime will sponsor the renovation of the boys' rooms for season two.

Harry Daniels 20
@harry.daniels

Claim to fame Cringey, endearing videos of him singing to everyone from Billie Eilish to Barack Obama have garnered more than 1.6 million followers. **Growth** After signing with UTA, Daniels debuted his first single, “I'm Him,” in October.

Maxwell Dent 21
@plaqueboymax

Claim to fame Attracts 1.3 million Twitch followers with relatable videos whose topics range from music to basketball to video games. **Growth** He first averaged 70 viewers during the pandemic but now reaches up to 20,000 people per stream. In April, he joined esports group FaZe Clan.

Olivia Dunne 22
@livvy

Claim to fame Having documented her life on Instagram since age 10, the elite LSU gymnast has 5.3 million followers. **Growth** She has appeared on *Sports Illustrated*'s cover and is featured in Amazon's docuseries *The Money Game: LSU*. Since NCAA relaxed its NIL rules, she has garnered deals with Vuori and Motorola, worth nearly \$4 million combined.

Katie Fang 18
@katiefanggg

Claim to fame Went viral in 2023 with a TikTok in which she sobbed while getting ready for work. Her “Get Ready With Me” videos on TikTok have amassed 5.6 million followers. **Growth** Attracting the attention of Cetaphil, which put her in a Times Square billboard ad.

Golloria George 23
@golloria

Claim to fame After discovering

From left: Golloria George, Haliey Welch, Jack Innanen, Danae Hays, Cyrus Veyssi, Katie Fang, Quenlin Blackwell, Harry Daniels and Jordan Howlett

early on that makeup brands rarely sell shades that work for her skin, the South Sudanese refugee began testing cosmetics in reviews on TikTok, where she has 3 million followers. **Growth** She's working on her own makeup line.

Meredith Hayden 28
@wishbonekitchen

Claim to fame The former Condé Nast marketer and private Hamptons chef's Martha Stewart-esque lifestyle and home cooking videos reach 3 million-plus followers on TikTok and Instagram combined. **Growth** Partnerships with All Clad, Etsy, a role in a T-Mobile Super Bowl ad and her first cookbook out in May.

Danae Hays 31
@danaehays

Claim to fame Prank phone calls and comedy sketches portraying life as a gay woman from the South on TikTok draw 3 million followers. **Growth** Last year, comedic song “Rode Hard” peaked at No. 5 on the iTunes global country music chart. This year, she embarked on her first 30-city comedy tour.

Jordan Howlett 27
@jordan_the_stallion8

Claim to fame Fast Food Secrets Club, restaurant recipes and tips that have propelled him to 13.5 million followers on TikTok. **Growth** Collaborations with Donald Glover, Method Man, Kevin Hart and Halle Berry.

Jack Innanen 25
@yungjackinnanen

Claim to fame Absurdist

comedy videos; he built his 3.3 million following after posting on TikTok for 60 days straight. **Growth** Working with Ralph Lauren and Louis Vuitton; landing a starring role in an upcoming FX series.

Caleb Simpson 32
@calebwsimpson

Claim to fame Videos in which he asks how much people pay in rent, then tours their NYC apartments have lured 13 million-plus followers across TikTok, Instagram and YouTube. **Growth** Guests like *Shark Tank*'s Barbara Corcoran and Drew Barrymore have led to 1 billion views this year alone and brands paying six figures to reach his audience.

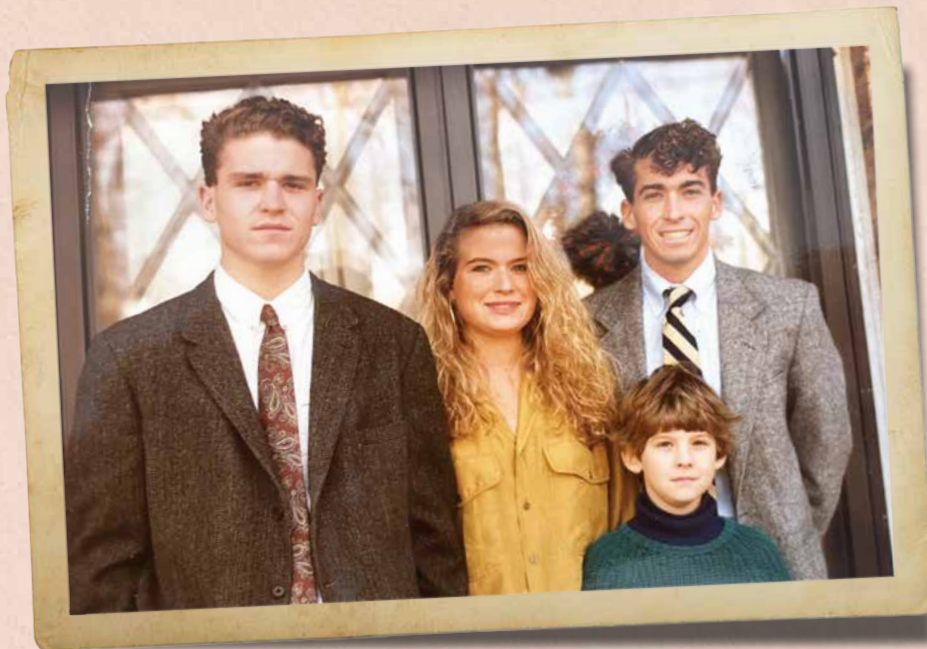
Cyrus Veyssi 30
@cyrusveyssi

Claim to fame Humorous videos about beauty, dating and their close relationship with their Iranian dad draw 622,000 followers on TikTok. **Growth** A gig co-hosting the Hello Sunshine series *Influenced* on Amazon Prime Video; being named a spokesperson for French skincare brand Caudalie.

Haliey Welch 21
@hay_welch

Claim to fame Wholesome celeb Q&As from the “Hawk Tuah girl” on the *Talk Tuah* podcast, which hit No. 3 on Spotify after its September debut and boasts 193,000 subscribers on YouTube. **Growth** Launching an AI-powered dating app, Pookie Tools, and, she teases, perhaps a line of branded pickles. — NATALIE JARVEY

GEORGE: BUNNAGRA; WELCH: KRISTLE LUNA/HUBBLE; STUDIO: INNANEN: DAVID URBANKE; HAYS: JEREMY RYAN VEYSSI; EMILIO MADRID; FANG: ARONDELSON; BLACKWELL: TOM KERR; PARADIS; DANIELS: CODY LUTTRE; HOWLETT: COURTESY OF SUBJECT



The Eggers Brood

From left: Dave, Beth and Bill with Toph in Lake Forest, Illinois, circa 1989. The older siblings would become his caretakers after the deaths of their parents.

A HEARTBREAKING

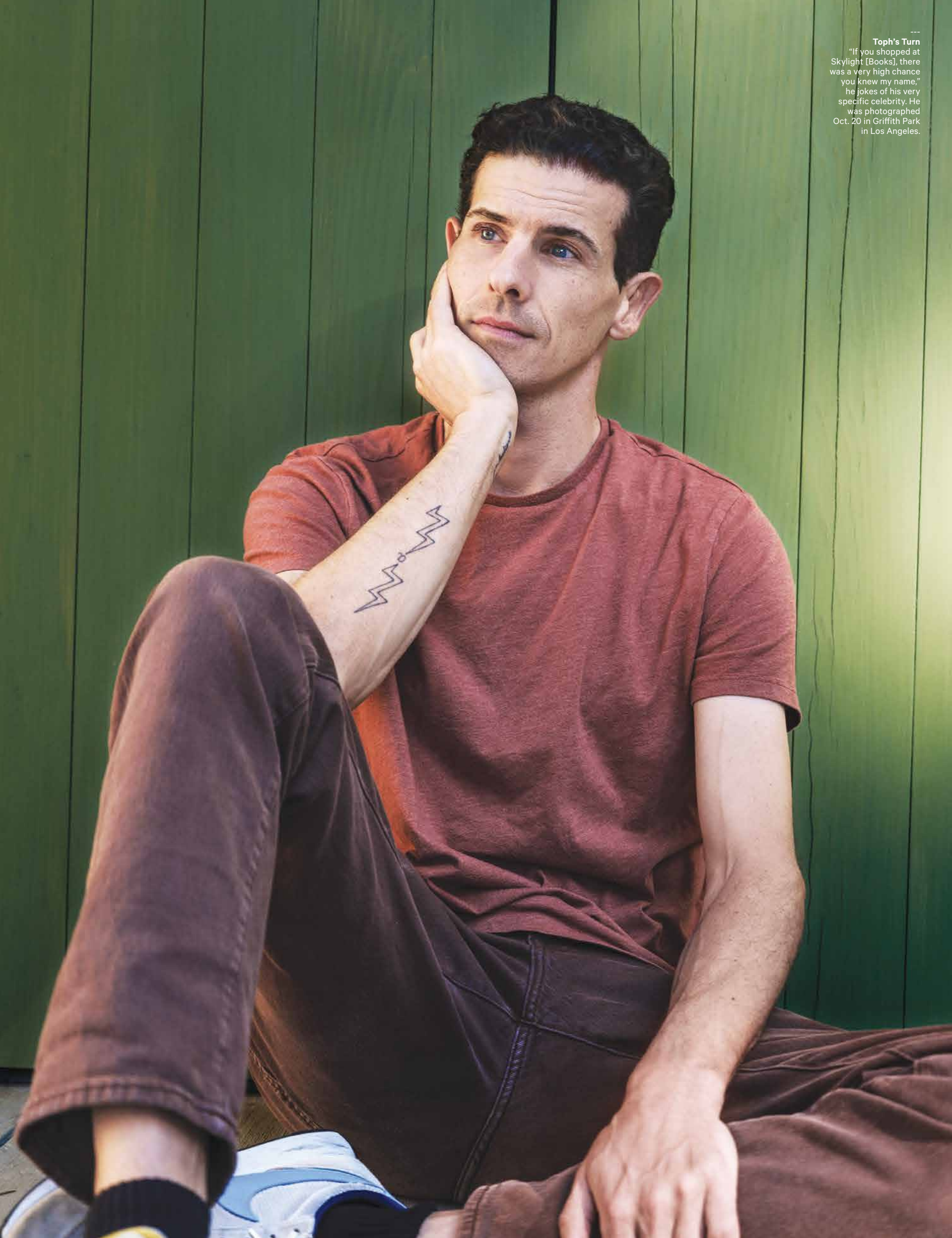
RIFT

OF STAGGERING INTENSITY

Toph Eggers, introduced to millions as the young brother in Dave Eggers' *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, reemerges eager to reclaim his narrative and explain why his famous sibling is no longer a part of it

By ... **GARY BAUM**

Photographed by ... **JESSICA CHOU**



Toph's Turn

"If you shopped at Skylight [Books], there was a very high chance you knew my name," he jokes of his very specific celebrity. He was photographed Oct. 20 in Griffith Park in Los Angeles.



Ironic Icon
 Self-deprecating and culturally fluent, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* launched Dave Eggers as a literary star in 2000.

Hollywood writing partnerships dissolve for many reasons. There may be creative disagreements, personality conflicts, workload imbalances. For the celebrated author Dave Eggers and his younger brother Toph, who'd had a run of collaborations, the rupture in their bond could perhaps be attributed to all these things. But, mainly, to far deeper, darker troubles.

"For so many years I was locked in a certain relationship with Dave, and I just couldn't see fault in him — and then, once I did, it flipped," says Toph over one of several long meals at diners and delis across L.A.'s Eastside.

Dave emerged as a literary phenomenon a quarter-century ago with *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, his memoir about raising Toph after both of their parents died of cancer within weeks of each other. The book became a generational touchstone for its joking-but-not, manic-expressive style — evidenced in the title itself, as well as the stream-of-consciousness prose — along with its wry exploration of '90s youth culture, elevating Eggers to the rare pantheon of young writers, from Jack Kerouac and Bret Easton Ellis to, more recently, Sally

Rooney, whose work transformed them into bona fide celebrities. One passage recalled how Dave, who then worked as an illustrator, narrowly lost out on being cast for *The Real World: San Francisco* to cartoonist Judd Winick.

In the book, Dave depicted Toph (short for Christopher) as a guileless kid, the personification of hope. Now, at 41, Toph is wearied and aggrieved. Fair or not, he places some of the blame on Dave. Toph's narrative is informed by years of therapy, his own as well as his more recent studies toward becoming a licensed practitioner. "I've kind of covered every bucket there is in my life," he says of therapy, "between dealing with family dynamics and job chaos and grief and suicide."

After *A Heartbreaking Work's* publication, the pair were darlings among Hollywood development executives who saw in the Eggers brothers an alluring blend of raw talent, sheer poignance and commodifiable inventiveness. In-demand Dave often tapped Toph, with whom he shared a creative sensibility and a brotherly shorthand, to collaborate. "We were the same person for 30 years," Toph says.

While Dave, now 54, has remained in the Bay Area, after college Toph moved to the Eastside, where he discovered that his brother's memoir

had turned him into a micro-celebrity — at least with a specific set. "If you shopped at Skylight [Books], there was a very high chance you knew my name," he observes, "and if you were anywhere else, there was a .0003 percent chance." (In the late 2000s, his dating life was even chronicled on media gossip site *Gawker*; he's currently single with no children.)

In the past decade, Toph has chosen mostly to avoid talking to his brother and is resigned to the notion that he may not speak to him again. Business is, in part, to blame, what Toph — a mild-mannered personality who's a dead ringer for a younger Dave and has long operated in his shadow — describes as "some weird work issues between us." Yet their rift, he believes, ultimately arcs back to the memoir and its aftermath.

Dave's book was noted and often heralded for its radical acts of confession: revealing its own inconsistencies, referencing friends' real phone numbers. But according to Toph, for all this ostentatious adherence to truth-telling, his brother kept from his readers a telling decision — to conceal in plain sight his portrait of their suicidally struggling sister, Beth. Toph believes this hidden portrayal wounded her. It's also haunted him in the years since, as he's gone on his own difficult mental health journey and emerged on the other side as a therapist-in-training, now in the final months of his academic education, who expects to specialize in grief counseling. "He had his life publicized in a way that he didn't choose," explains Lauren Steury, a friend and member of Toph's grad school cohort for clinical psychology. "That's hard."

A Heartbreaking Work famously anticipated its possible detractors with elaborate displays of self-deprecation and meta-awareness. It also emphasized the seemingly unbreakable bond of the brothers amid their tragedy as its own armor — which Toph now views with skepticism. "He critic-proofed his life, except for me," he says. "I'm the missing thread." Toph, who came forward to *The Hollywood Reporter* after years of feeling silenced, adds, "I think me speaking publicly, since he hit 'send' on *Heartbreaking Work*, has been his greatest fear."

Dave's memoir, published when the author was 30 years old, turned him into an icon of an ironic age, while his hyperfixation on realness and compulsive self-disclosure marked him as ahead of his time. The book topped *The New York Times'* best-sellers list. It was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Critics declared him a generational talent. "Eggers evokes the terrible beauty of youth like a young Bob Dylan, frothing with furious anger," wrote a reviewer at *The Washington Post*.

While Dave hasn't quite captured the zeitgeist so powerfully since, he still regularly

PREVIOUS SPREAD: VINTAGE; COURTESY OF TOPH; EGGERS: FRAME; THIS SPREAD: EGGERS: JASON TODD/CAREDEX; AWAY: FRANCIS DUHAMEL/IFOCUS; FEATURES/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; EVERETT COLLECTION; KING SPIN/ELANINE/ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; CIRCLE FRANK WASHINGTON ENTERTAINMENT; COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION



Eggers on Film

From left: Dave, a sought-after screenwriter, penned *Away We Go*, starring John Krasinski and Maya Rudolph; Spike Jonze's *Where the Wild Things Are*; *A Hologram for the King*, starring Tom Hanks; and *The Circle*, starring Emma Watson, based on his own novel.

publishes works of reported nonfiction, illustrated children's books and literary novels to commercial and critical acclaim, including the tech-dystopia satire *The Circle*, which became a Tom Hanks film of the same name and whose banning in some South Dakota schools begat an MSNBC documentary.

Dave has also netted screenwriting credits over the years for *The Circle*, as well as *Away We Go*, Sam Mendes' dramedy starring John Krasinski and Maya Rudolph; director Spike Jonze's *Where the Wild Things Are*; and Gus Van Sant's *Promised Land*, starring Matt Damon. In addition, he's launched a series of influential independent publishing outlets, among them the well-regarded *McSweeney's*, and literary-focused nonprofit ventures. (Toph notes that this humanitarianism is its own force field: "You would have to be an asshole to come after him.") He's someone who turns up at Tribeca premieres and *Vanity Fair* Oscar parties or in conversation with Barack Obama onstage at a foundation summit.

Toph's early forays into Hollywood were a consequence of his brother's memoir, whose film rights were picked up by Universal for a reported \$2 million. The project had started as a buzzy property, with Steven Soderbergh in the mix to direct and Jake Gyllenhaal circling to star as Dave. Writer Nick Hornby, hot off *About a Boy*, had taken an unsuccessful early pass at a draft. Toph, at the time a UC Berkeley student interested in film, suggested he collaborate with his brother on their own version. "In my head, I was like, 'I'll be able to exploit my exploitation,'" he recalls. Studio executives later passed on the siblings' version and allowed the book's option to lapse.

Still, Dave was in demand among creative executives, and he often enlisted Toph as a collaborator. They worked together on varied projects: a music video for the band Arcade Fire, a Cartoon Network pilot about talking animals on another planet, a Dave-directed experimental improv short in which James Franco destroyed a bedroom, breaking furniture and tearing into walls. That bedroom

happened to be Toph's own. "It's hard to communicate how much I didn't understand that I could be mad at Dave," Toph says now.

He attempted to forge an entertainment career of his own. Over the years, Toph had the usual L.A. day jobs and rent-paying gigs — assisting, cater-delivery, Frisbee coach, rideshare driver, bowling alley employee, focus group participant — and once struggled as a PA assigned to gather behind-the-scenes footage on *Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story*. ("John C. Reilly acted like I was a paparazzi that had snuck on the set," he recalls with a laugh, "like, 'Get that fucking camera out of my face.'") He made videos for *Funny or Die* and landed occasional writing gigs, some with the help of Dave's connections, on projects like

a short-lived FXX animated show and a Josh Schwartz web series.

Not much, though, worked out. Toph's telling of his Hollywood story is heavy on absurdism and abasement — a millennial *Barton Fink*. "I was a finalist at one point to go to the Sundance Lab," he says. "There was a big interview. I just answered everything wrong. 'Why do you think this movie of yours has to be made?' I was like, 'It's a comedy! It doesn't have to be made.' Just shooting myself in the foot."

He decided he'd had enough of the business after several projects fizzled. One was a film adaptation for Paramount of a children's book series he had co-created with Dave. Another was a buddy comedy at one point set up at Fox Searchlight and inspired by his real-life experience house-sitting for Jimmy Kimmel. (That one vanished after Toph had, at the urging of mentors in the business, based the script around David Copperfield, in the hope of landing the magician's approval and securing financing that never materialized).

The most personal project, though, was a possible series based on his own life, which was briefly in development at Alcon, with *Arrested Development* creator Mitch Hurwitz as a collaborator. This didn't get far along, but it fictionalized the dynamic between Toph and Dave. "There was almost a *There Will Be Blood* relationship, this older guy with this younger figure," he explains, noting that in the dramatization, his brother's proxy was "more like a Tony Robbins figure," peddling idealized notions about child rearing. (In *A Heartbreaking Work*, Dave had written of Toph: "His brain is my laboratory, my depository ... He is my twenty-four-hour classroom, my captive audience.")

Even though the project died, Dave was displeased when he learned about it. "It was like a whole fucking to-do," Toph says, his voice drained.

Dave declined to be interviewed for this story or respond to Toph's assertions other than to have several proxies — including his lawyer, Jonathan Bass, and the publisher of



"Dave needs to actually acknowledge the impact of the book. Don't try to deny my reality. It's respecting my boundaries and not fighting my life experience."

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McSweeney's, Amanda Uhle — reach out to my editors in an attempt to kill it. In his correspondence with *THR*, Bass said that Toph's feelings were “confused” and “distorted” and argued that a series of lengthy columns I had written for a blog while still in high school, 25 years ago, about Dave's influence in the insular literary world of that era, disqualified me from writing about him now as it showcased a “disturbing intensity of interest” and “unhealthy obsession with Mr. Eggers.” Uhle made similar assertions about my past reporting.

Later, just before deadline, Toph forwarded an email Dave sent him directly, calling my long-ago coverage “stalking” and alleging that my blog had prompted people to camp out on his doorstep, “tracking what I ate and what I wore every day,” eventually forcing him to briefly move abroad. He urged Toph to cease communications with me, claiming he'd notified law enforcement about my attempts to contact him for comment about this article and that a restraining order “will be issued imminently,” adding, “Toph, I cannot tell you how dangerous this situation is.”

Toph was unsurprised when he heard that Uhle claimed Dave had taken “extreme security and privacy measures for decades” over my long-ago coverage. “I couldn't tell the Domino's Pizza guy our full name when we lived together,” he says of his brother. “I don't think [his reaction] was because of you. That's just him.”

In 2014, Toph signed a deal for his own memoir. When Dave found out, he sent his brother a lengthy letter meditating on their sister Beth's life and death. “It's her laughing face I remember best,” Dave wrote in one passage, recalling her “phenomenal” sense of humor.

Toph regards the note, which he shared with *THR*, as primarily an attempt to retain control of the shared Eggers narrative. “Dave has to be the authoritative voice on any story or person in our family,” he says. “Since I was going to potentially have my own, he was like, ‘Actually, this is how it went down. Before you start telling your version, I'm reiterating: I know this better.’” For Toph, Dave's effort to influence the project was a final straw. He would later abandon the memoir altogether.

As I was reporting on Dave and *A Heartbreaking Work* in 2000, Beth contacted me that spring to counter the book, and I

wrote about her objections — primarily that her own significant care responsibilities for Toph in the Bay Area and, before their deaths, her terminally ill parents in Chicago, had been underplayed in what she considered Dave's self-serving narrative. (When their parents died, Toph was 8 years old, while Dave was 21

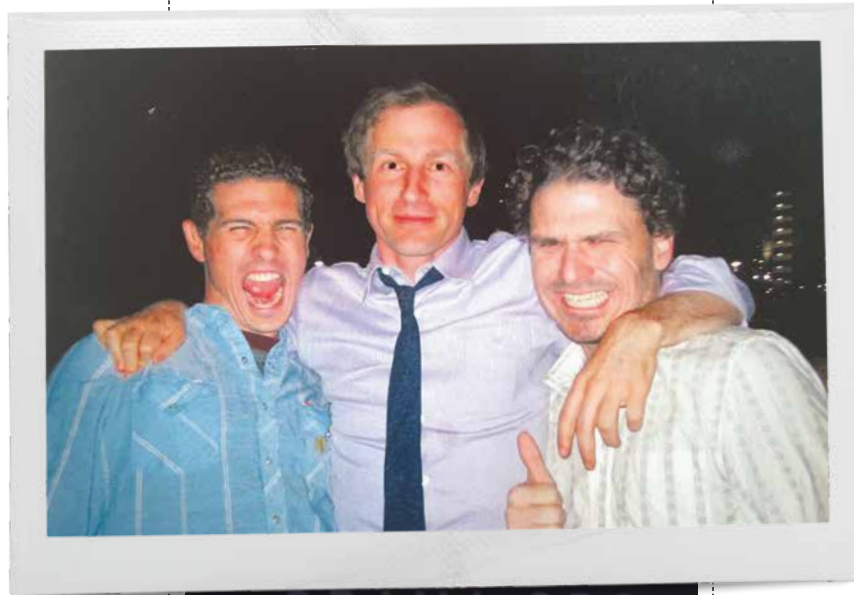
The coroner classified it a suicide. Dave later dedicated his debut novel to her.

Beth's final years were spent in and out of treatment centers battling depression. Dave and Bill managed her care while Toph, away at boarding school on the East Coast, was shielded from her spiral. “So, it was a shock [when she died],” Toph says. He agrees with his sister's original assessment that her role in his upbringing “was definitely underplayed.”

Toph believes Beth's struggles may have been compounded by what he claims to have been his brother's decision in the memoir to depict her spiral, and Dave's frustration and at times fury with it, through a lightly fictionalized suicidal friend named “John.” (An anodyne rendering of Beth herself also appears in the book, mostly in passing.) Toph says the veiling was obvious to their innermost circle.

“I'm not saying the book contributed to her [death],” he says. But he thinks Beth was hurt by the portrayal: “To see your brother get huge success and hero points for talking about having to deal with you — and you're already worried about taking too much space?”

Toph recalls reflecting on Dave's writing about “John” when in his late 20s he, too, went through his own significant mental health trouble. “It was really, well, heartbreaking to me, just how he depicted that character, and then to be in a very similar spot,” he says. “Law of transitive property, that's probably how he saw me then, too.” Toph adds, of Beth, “I think we would've been really good allies.”



Cultural Force

Dave's impact extends beyond the literary world. He's collaborated with filmmakers such as Spike Jonze. (Top: The director is flanked by the brothers in 2009; Toph was an intern on *Where the Wild Things Are*.) He's also appeared at Barack Obama's 2018 foundation summit.

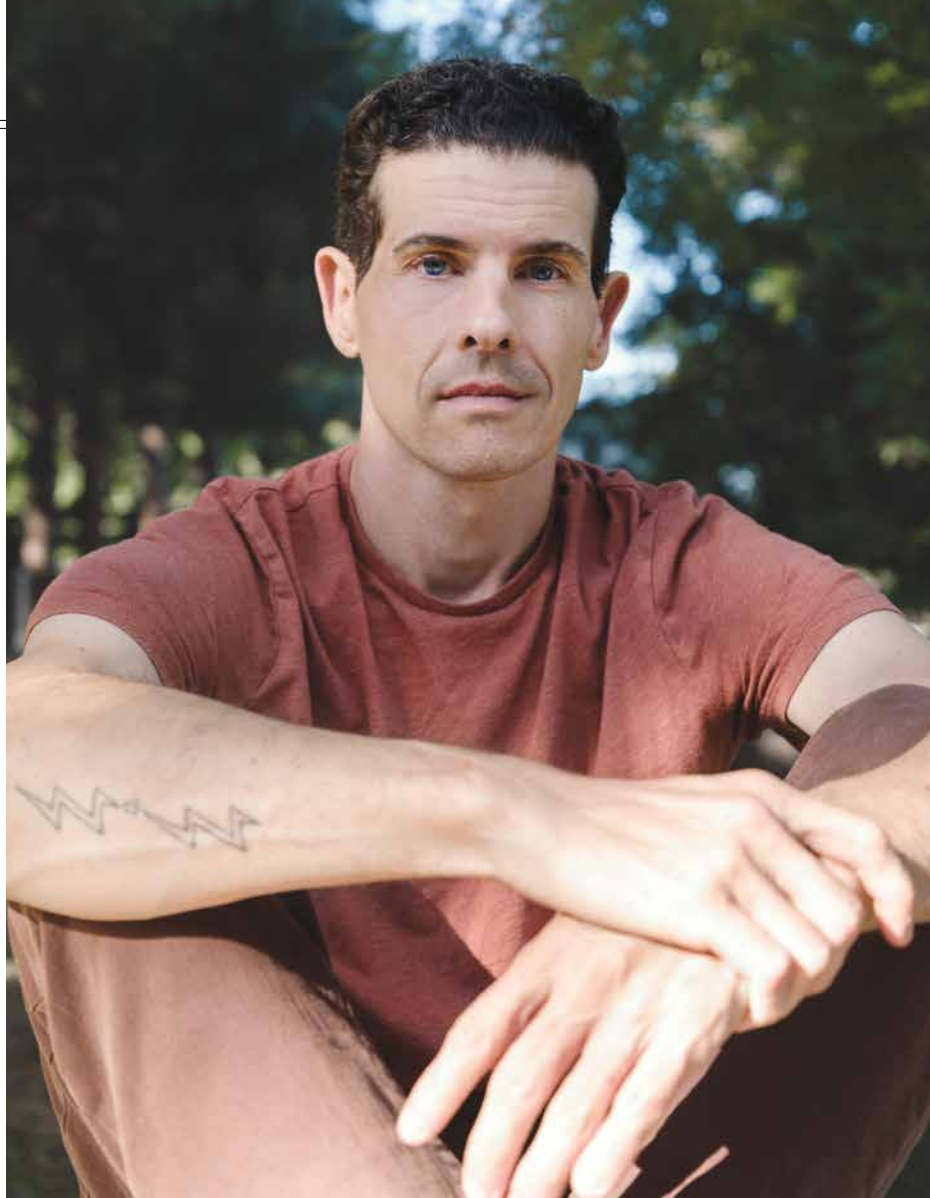
and Beth was 23; eldest brother Bill, employed in another city and who still retains a warm and ongoing relationship with both brothers, declined to speak to *THR*.)

Several months later, Beth disavowed her complaints in a retraction posted to *McSweeney's*. “I've never had a problem with the book,” she wrote, deriding her prior criticism as that of “the prototypical jealous sibling.” Underneath the note, Dave added a broad appeal, speaking on his and Toph's behalf: “We are begging for less malice.” Toph now says he believes Dave heavily influenced Beth's mea culpa, citing its linguistic style. “[Dave] has a very clear voice,” he says, pointing out a memorable self-deprecatory line in Beth's retraction about “having a terrible La Toya Jackson moment”: “Beth wouldn't have done a bit in an apology letter.”

The following year, Beth died in Northern California following a reported pill overdose.

Dave's book felt fresh a quarter-century ago in part because of its candor and adamance about the limits to expressing truth through memoir. Yet in the years since, many of the most popular exemplars of the form have been, to one degree or another, debunked — or at least reframed: *A Million Little Pieces*, *Running With Scissors*, *Three Cups of Tea*. Documentaries and based-on-a-true-story narratives (memoir's creative cousins) have also begun to face heightened scrutiny.

Over the years, Toph has wondered, rightly or wrongly, if “part of agreeing to take me on [after their parents died] was a larger scheme to have fodder for the book.” Toph has few factual objections of his own about his brother's memoir, although he acknowledges annoyance with his identity being flattened into that of the sidekick, a device deployed for tender moments and comic asides. Some of the changes he says



“What he wanted was a mediator.
My counter-suggestion was that he
should go do his own therapy first.
He was aghast at the suggestion.”

TOPH EGGERS

he requested, mostly to avoid embarrassment — like eliminating Dave’s sportive riff on how he’d once chickened out during an adolescent game of spin the bottle — were ignored.

Toph’s main critique, aside from Beth’s portrayal, is that he now sees the book — as an adult who’s undergone years of his own therapy unpacking the early deaths of his parents — advancing a false and harmful understanding of trauma and its reverberations. As he puts it, it’s “presentationally hopeful,” conveying a highbrow form of toxic positivity. He contends the memoir offers “the idea that if you run away from grief and pain fast enough, you’ll be OK.” He sees his own life, so shaped by Dave, as proving that, in fact, “no, it eventually catches up with you, and it’s really rough when it does — rougher than if you’d just dealt with things at the time.”

Toph says two Hollywood productions have been cathartic for him. One is the Oscar best

picture-winning *Ordinary People*, the 1980 drama about how grief fractures familial bonds — set in suburban Lake Forest, Illinois, the Eggers’ hometown. “Dave’s the Mary Tyler Moore mom: a denialist about what’s happening while the kid is trying to express stuff,” he explains. The other is Netflix’s critically acclaimed 2018 adaptation of *The Haunting of Hill House*, in which a man becomes a successful author after writing a best-selling book that pains his siblings for what they believe is its flawed telling of their shared past trauma. “That one’s like a one-to-one [comparison],” says Toph. “Even just the way he acts so defiant and defensive about it.”

While Toph admires *A Heartbreaking Work* as a literary work, the real-life character turned soon-to-be-therapist is most compelled by it as a psychological document. “The whole book is a confession about the book,” he explains. “Why did I need to write this book?

Why do I need attention and sympathy?’ It’s full of these confessions, but he’s not actually wrestling with them, even though it sounds like he’s wrestling with them. He never internalized them. They’re just put out there.”

Over the past decade, Dave, who at various times provided some financial assistance to Toph, has made numerous attempts to reconcile. In one letter Toph shared with *THR*, Dave posits that his brother, as a bereaved person going through “some uncovering,” may resent that “we are not at the exact emotional place” in the processing of grief. Dave says he suspected that Toph was “poring over Beth’s life, and your life, and our family in general,” and that he empathized with the intensity of those emotions, but adds, “You have to remember that I went through all this 15-20 years ago.” Dave observes that compared to Toph’s “emotional rawness,” his own distance may be perceived as “coldness.” He also emphasized that he knew what Toph has been going through; and that although he acknowledged they had “wide variation in which we’ve seen and heard,” their similarities were many, and he knew “as much as I could” what Toph was feeling.

Toph doesn’t agree. “Because he wrote the book, he thinks he processed the grief — but he didn’t,” he says. “[*A Heartbreaking Work*] is a how-to guide to bottling things up and pushing things down and ignoring them.”

Toph has rebuffed his brother’s entreaties, including a proposal that they meet with a family therapist: “What he wanted was a mediator. My counter-suggestion was that he should go do his own therapy first. He was aghast at the suggestion.” To Toph’s mind, Dave wants to mend the estrangement without fixing the problems that caused it. “He needs to actually acknowledge the impact of the book,” Toph says flatly, asserting that Dave has at times instead redirected blame for their rift to Toph’s friends, his therapist and the purportedly growing phenomenon of “no contact” disconnection. “Don’t try to deny my reality. It’s respecting my boundaries and not fighting my life experience.” Steury says of Toph: “He’s found his confidence.”

At one point, I inquired about Toph’s tattoos. He explained how one is a reference to something that *Wild* author Cheryl Strayed once wrote about the value of messiness in life, which moved him. “Our upbringing was that things have to be turned tidy as fast as possible — or ignored,” he said. Another tattoo is Beth’s initials, stylized as a lightning bolt.

The third is a depiction of the Buddhist concept of the second arrow. It teaches that how we process difficult, painful situations — the first arrow — is, in the end, up to us. “That’s been,” he explained, “important to me.” **THR**



ROME WASN'T REBUILT IN A DAY (MORE LIKE 24 YEARS)

Ridley Scott has been fiddling around with a *Gladiator* sequel since the original film arrived in theaters in 2000. But there was one big problem: He killed off his hero in the first movie **BY RYAN GAJEWSKI**

R

Ridley Scott has been trying to squeeze a rhinoceros into the Colosseum for 25 years.

Back in 1999, when he was shooting his first *Gladiator* film, he talked to animal trainers about the possibility of bringing a real 6,000-pound rhino onto his set but was told the horned animals were too difficult to control. Then he talked to CGI experts to see if a digitized one could be rendered for the movie but learned that the technology was budget-bustingly expensive.

For the next quarter-century, it became a running joke among

Scott and his crew. “If we ever do a sequel,” Scott’s producer, Doug Wick, said in an interview in 2020, “Ridley gets his rhino.”

Well, they finally did a sequel, and Ridley got his rhino, a state-of-the-art, remote-controlled animatronic version whipped up by Industrial Light and Magic that can clock speeds of up to 40 miles an hour — while being ridden by a guy with a sword.

“Our rhino was real,” Scott brags, “right down to his legs.”

There had been rumblings of a sequel almost from the moment *Gladiator* hit screens in May 2000, rumblings that grew even louder after the DreamWorks film won five Academy Awards,

including the one for best picture. But there was at least one big obstacle to making *Gladiator II*: The film’s hero, Russell Crowe’s Maximus, dies at the end of *Gladiator*. So, for that matter, does its villain, Joaquin Phoenix’s Emperor Commodus.

“One always thinks, ‘Should we really kill them or not?’” Scott says, explaining his decision in 1999 to lower his thumb on the film’s two central characters. “But it seemed to be the most dramatic thing to do, which becomes memorable because it really is about immortality.”

In the ensuing years, the ever-prolific Scott — now 86 — helmed 17 films not set in





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ancient Rome, including two in space (2012's *Prometheus* and 2017's *Alien: Covenant*). Still, the idea of returning to the ancient Colosseum simply wouldn't die.

"I kept getting told by people that *Gladiator* was their favorite movie," Scott says. "One guy said, 'I've watched it 50 times.' So that rang a bell."

Various attempts at a sequel script had been launched over the

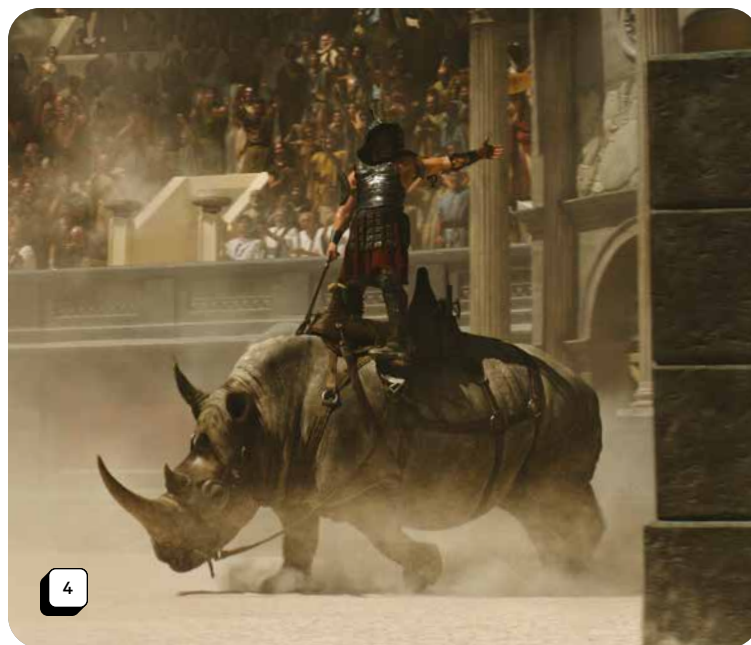
years. *Gladiator* co-writer John Logan took an early crack at a follow-up, and a prequel was one idea. When that pitch was discarded, Nick Cave was brought in to try a more ambitious approach, a fantasy version in which Maximus returned as an immortal warrior who would reappear at major moments throughout history, all the way up to World War II. But this concept never

quite gelled, and development stalled after Paramount acquired DreamWorks' live-action library in 2006.

There were other failed attempts over the decades, but in the meantime, Scott developed a bond with writer David Scarpa, who penned Scott's 2017 drama *All the Money in the World* and his 2023 *Napoleon* biopic. Together, the pair homed in on a storyline

that didn't involve bringing back Maximus from the dead. Instead, *Gladiator II* picks up two decades later with a plot that centers on Maximus' son, Lucius, played in the original by child actor Spencer Treat Clark and in the sequel as a grown-up by Paul Mescal. In Scarpa's screenplay, the onetime heir to the Roman Empire ends up getting captured and enslaved during a battle with General Marcus Acacius, played by Pedro Pascal, but ultimately escapes, turning the story into a revenge tale, as Lucius, with the helpful guidance of Macrinus, a former slave turned gladiator guru played by Denzel Washington, embarks on a quest for vengeance.

"You have to deal with people's emotional relationship to [the original] movie and to their



4

1 Ridley Scott (left) and Paul Mescal. "The physicality was perfect," notes the director of his lead. **2** "We built three full-sized ships — they could move 20 miles per hour," Scott says of the Colosseum naval battle. **3** Pedro Pascal is flanked by Fred Hechinger (left), who plays Emperor Caracalla and is known for *Eighth Grade*, and Joseph Quinn, a *Stranger Things* fan favorite, as Emperor Geta. **4** Scott finally got his rhino, seen here charging into the Colosseum.

1, 3, ADAM MONAGHAN/PARAMOUNT PICTURES; 2, 4, COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES

proprietary feelings about it,” says Scarpa of his approach to the subject matter. “As much as Ridley wanted the continuity of the world, he was not going to just do a greatest hits album of the first movie.”

Of course, another big hurdle was finding an actor with enough gravity to portray Maximus Junior, and it took a while before Scott landed on Mescal. For a time, Timothée Chalamet was in the running, as was Miles Teller. But then, one night, while Scott was bingeing the Hulu series *Normal People*, he saw Mescal and could immediately imagine the then little-known 28-year-old Irish actor in a codpiece.

Wick and co-producer Lucy Fisher met with Mescal over lunch to assess whether he could handle such a physically and psychologically demanding role. They decided he could. Then Paramount co-presidents of film Daria Cercek and Michael Ireland flew to London to watch Mescal star as Stanley Kowalski in a West End revival of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, a shirt-ripping performance that would earn Mescal an Olivier Award. “Any studio would always prefer to have a known star,” Wick admits. But “no other actor came close.”

By the time Mescal finally met with Scott — during a 30-minute Zoom call — he all but had the part. But to hear Mescal tell it, the actor gave it at least a few seconds of thought before he accepted it.

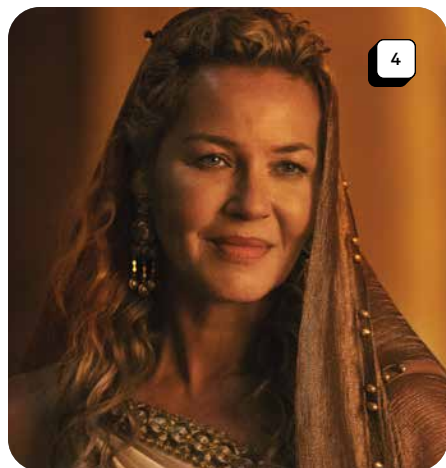
“I would’ve had a potential reticence around what the first big studio film was going to be, because it sets out your stall as an actor,” he says, referring to the dangers of action-hero typecasting. “[But] a film like *Gladiator II* is the dream in terms of studio, big-scale filmmaking because it’s in the hands of Ridley and rooted in human condition with a very clear emotional language.”

Although it must have been tempting, Mescal resisted the urge to reach out for acting tips from Crowe, who has said that he felt “a tinge of melancholy, a tinge of jealousy” about *Gladiator II* proceeding without his character. “It was useful, actually, to have a certain distance from him, because I had to go and do my own thing,” Mescal says.

Scott filled out the rest of the cast with a few familiar faces, like Connie Nielsen, who reprises her role from the original movie — Maximus’ former flame and Lucius’ mom — as well as Washington, who starred in Scott’s 2007 crime drama *American Gangster* (opposite Crowe, as it happens) and had been close with Scott’s late brother, Tony, having made five films together. “Ridley’s one of the best, so he called and I said, ‘When?’” the two-time Oscar winner tells *THR*. But Scott also cast additional newcomers in critical roles, like

Joseph Quinn, the young actor who played Eddie Munson on *Stranger Things*, as Emperor Geta, while *Saltburn*’s Barry Keoghan was originally picked to play Geta’s brother Caracalla. Keoghan exited the project before production began (scheduling conflicts) and was replaced by Fred Hechinger, soon to be seen as Dimitri in Marvel’s *Kraven the Hunter*. Hechinger was driving in his car when he got the call from his agent telling him he’d landed the part. “I realized I had to pull to the side of the road and park because my brain was breaking too much to continue driving,” he recalls.

Production began in May 2023, with shooting in Morocco and Malta just as the desert started heating up for summer. Mescal, who had bulked up for the part with extensive physical training and a steady protein diet (lots and lots of chicken), found himself melting during some of the sweltering fight scenes. “There was





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probably a bit of borderline heat stroke from time to time,” he says. “You can’t get enough water into your body in that heat. But I was lucky — nothing major.”

Washington had it a bit easier — his main challenge while filming was wearing several pounds of precious yellow metal. Costume designers David Crossman and Janty Yates (who won an Oscar for her work on the first *Gladiator*) loaded up the actor with a museum’s worth of ancient-looking Roman jewelry. “We just put more gold on, and more gold, and some more gold,” Yates says with a laugh.

1 Scott on set with Mescal and Pascal as they share a laugh between takes during an intense battle sequence. **2** Mescal taking direction from Scott. “He’s an incredibly clear communicator, and really funny,” says the actor. **3** Denzel Washington reteamed with Scott for the first time since 2007’s *American Gangster*. **4** Connie Nielsen is one of only a few actors from the original film to appear in the sequel.

The scale of the sets would have awed a Caesar, with the one in Malta, where Scott re-created a section of the Colosseum, stretching a quarter of a mile. “If you left your sun hat behind, you’d really have to think hard about going back to get it,” remembers cinematographer John Mathieson, who was nominated for an Oscar for the original film. Other portions of the sets were repurposed from leftover bits and pieces of older Scott productions. “We created a port by recycling my old Jerusalem set from [Scott’s 2005] *Kingdom of Heaven*,” notes production designer Arthur Max, who was also nominated for the first *Gladiator*.

Exactly how much *Gladiator II* cost to make is, like the fate of the lost ninth legion, something of an eternal mystery. Paramount insists the total came in at less than \$250 million, and Scott maintains he stayed \$10 million under budget. But there had been reports of the actual costs soaring past \$300 million, thanks to strike shutdowns and other issues. However much was spent, though, the money clearly ended up on the screen. The film is chock full of expensive-looking action sequences and lavish Roman excess.

“Everything was carefully considered and had to be defended, [like] the rhinoceros,” says Wick. “You go through each thing with the studio. But you don’t want fight scenes that feel like they’re repeating from the first movie.”

One sequence the team dug in their heels to include was a scene in which the Colosseum was flooded for a nautical battle between a boatload of Romans and a ship full of gladiators. As preposterous as it sounds, it turns out to be historically accurate. According to Dr. Shadi Bartsch, a classics professor at the University of Chicago, the ancient Romans really did sometimes fill the Colosseum with water for mock sea warfare, though Scott’s decision to add sharks to the pool was, in her

words, “total Hollywood bullshit. I don’t think Romans knew what a shark was.”

Scott begs to differ with the professor. “Accuracy is everything,” he insists.

For all its over-the-top extravagance, the production was nevertheless a master class in cinematic efficiency, with Scott running upward of 11 cameras per scene. There were a few setbacks, like the time one of Emperor Caracalla’s pet monkeys attacked Hechinger (who suffered a minor bite) and, more seriously, an accident during a fire stunt that sent several crewmembers to the hospital with burns

world-conquering expectations. “Hopefully, it’s going to be great for cinema,” says Mescal.

Scott, for his part, says he isn’t thinking about how the film might be received — he’s learned from hard, bitter experience not to count too heavily on a hit. But others on his team aren’t quite so cool-headed.

“Ridley is overdue,” says Washington of his thrice-nominated director. “How can he not have won an Oscar? That doesn’t even make sense. I don’t believe it, actually.”

Of course, in the unlikely event that *Gladiator II* misfires — and none of the largely positive



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(“They were OK, but they did get scorched — very unfortunate,” says Scott). But the director says he was able to wrap the entire film in about 50 days of principal photography.

Still, *Gladiator II*’s biggest battle doesn’t take place in the Colosseum — it’s the one that’ll play out in multiplexes when the film opens Nov. 22, the same day as Universal’s much buzzed-about adaptation of *Wicked*. Theater owners are dreaming of a Barbenheimer-style weekend — Glicked? Wickiator? — with both films drawing huge crowds to the box office. And it’s not just theater owners with

reports from early screenings suggest that’s much of a possibility — Scott can always give it another try with *Gladiator III*. In fact, he says plans are already being drawn up for a second sequel, though he’s tight-lipped about its possible plot. “There’s a soft footprint,” is all he’ll say of its developing outlines.

Whatever it’s about, Mescal, who recently signed on to reteam with the director for a thriller called *Dog Stars*, says he’d be more than happy to slip into a cod-piece for Scott again. “We haven’t actually spoken about it in great length,” he says, “but it’s an idea that I’d be excited about.” **VH1**

GONE WITH THE (VERY LONG) WIND

LONGEST SCREEN TIMES

VIVIEN LEIGH

Gone With the Wind
(1939)



3 hrs 58 mins | **2 hrs 23 mins**
MOVIE LENGTH | TIME ONSCREEN

60% PERCENT OF RUN TIME

Vivien Leigh holds the record for the longest performance to win an Oscar, though the work took a deep physical and mental toll on her. The film itself is also the longest to win best picture. At the 12th Academy Awards, Victor Fleming's *Gone With the Wind* also won best supporting actress for Hattie McDaniel, who became the first African American to win an Oscar. Leigh was nominated alongside Bette Davis (*Dark Victory*), Irene Dunne (*Love Affair*), Greta Garbo (*Ninotchka*) and Greer Garson (*Goodbye, Mr. Chips*).

CHARLTON HESTON

Ben-Hur
(1959)



3 hrs 32 mins | **2 hrs 1 min**
MOVIE LENGTH | TIME ONSCREEN

57.1% PERCENT OF RUN TIME

Charlton Heston appeared in more than half of William Wyler's religious epic, which also won best picture, best supporting actor (for Hugh Griffith) and best director, among others. While *Ben-Hur* is revered for its spectacular chariot race scene, Heston's performance as the titular Judah Ben-Hur is also lauded as one of his best. He was nominated alongside Laurence Harvey (*Room at the Top*), Jack Lemmon (*Some Like It Hot*), Paul Muni (*The Last Angry Man*) and James Stewart (*Anatomy of a Murder*).

BARBRA STREISAND

Funny Girl
(1968)



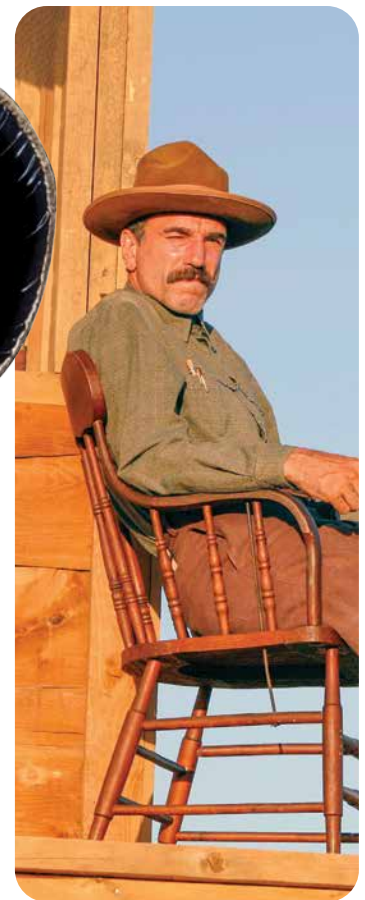
2 hrs 35 mins | **2 hrs 1 min**
MOVIE LENGTH | TIME ONSCREEN

78.1% PERCENT OF RUN TIME

Wyler's film was adapted from Isobel Lennart's book for the stage musical of the same name. Barbra Streisand, who played the iconic Fanny Brice here and on Broadway, held the screen for more than two hours in her film debut. She shared the Oscar prize with Katharine Hepburn of *The Lion in Winter*. (It's the only time two people have tied for best actress.) Streisand and Hepburn beat out Patricia Neal (*The Subject Was Roses*), Vanessa Redgrave (*Isadora*) and Joanne Woodward (*Rachel, Rachel*).

DANIEL DAY-LEWIS

There Will Be Blood
(2007)



2 hrs 38 mins | **1 hrs 57 mins**
MOVIE LENGTH | TIME ONSCREEN

74.1% PERCENT OF RUN TIME

For Paul Thomas Anderson's *There Will Be Blood*, often regarded as one of the best films of the 21st century, Daniel Day-Lewis won the second of his three Oscars (after 1989's *My Left Foot* and before 2012's *Lincoln*). With *There Will Be Blood*, which received a total of eight nominations, Day-Lewis was nominated alongside George Clooney (*Michael Clayton*), Johnny Depp (*Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*), Viggo Mortensen (*Eastern Promises*) and Tommy Lee Jones (*In the Valley of Elah*).

Lead acting winners cover an unusually wide temporal range. Sometimes we see them for 15 minutes. Sometimes they're onscreen for two hours. With Adrien Brody's *The Brutalist* running more than three and a half hours, we dive into both ends of the pool BY BEATRICE VERHOEVEN AND BRYAN ANTUNEZ

SHORTEST SCREEN TIMES

LOUISE FLETCHER

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)



2 hrs 13 mins | **22 mins**
MOVIE LENGTH | TIME ONSCREEN

16.5% PERCENT OF RUN TIME

Some think Louise Fletcher's turn as Nurse Ratched should have been classified as supporting, even though she did portray one of the cruelest movie villains to ever grace the big screen. The psychological drama, which was directed by Milos Forman, starred Jack Nicholson and featured Danny DeVito and Christopher Lloyd in supporting turns, collected all five major Academy Awards (best picture, director, screenplay, actor and actress), the first film since 1934's *It Happened One Night* to accomplish that feat.

PATRICIA NEAL

Hud (1963)



1 hr 48 mins | **21 mins**
MOVIE LENGTH | TIME ONSCREEN

19.4% PERCENT OF RUN TIME

Neal's victory marks the shortest onscreen performance for a best actress. She won for playing Alma Brown, the victimized housekeeper in Martin Ritt's morals-themed Western. She was nominated in the best actress category alongside Leslie Caron (*The L-Shaped Room*), Shirley MacLaine (*Irma la Douce*), Rachel Roberts (*This Sporting Life*) and Natalie Wood (*Love With the Proper Stranger*). Neal would get another best actress nomination for her riveting turn in 1968's *The Subject Was Roses*.

ANTHONY HOPKINS

The Silence of the Lambs (1991)



1 hr 58 mins | **16 mins**
MOVIE LENGTH | TIME ONSCREEN

13.5% PERCENT OF RUN TIME

This is another win that some think should have come in the supporting category, though Anthony Hopkins, as Hannibal Lecter, did clock additional minutes with his voice off-screen as he went on to beat out Robert De Niro (*Cape Fear*), Robin Williams (*The Fisher King*), Nick Nolte (*The Prince of Tides*) and Warren Beatty (*Bugsy*) on Oscar night. The Jonathan Demme film also raked in all five of the major Oscars, including the one for best actress, with Jodie Foster putting in 56 minutes of screen time.

DAVID NIVEN

Separate Tables (1958)



1 hr 40 mins | **15 mins**
MOVIE LENGTH | TIME ONSCREEN

15% PERCENT OF RUN TIME

David Niven received his lone Oscar for his turn as a secret-keeping war veteran in this Delbert Mann drama set at an English coastal hotel. Co-star Wendy Hiller won best supporting actress that year — and she appeared for less than 22 minutes. Niven is the only actor to win an Oscar in the same year that he served as the Academy Awards host. He was nominated alongside Tony Curtis and Sidney Poitier (both of *The Defiant Ones*), Paul Newman (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*) and Spencer Tracy (*The Old Man and the Sea*). **VIR**



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Reviews

Film

Wicked

Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande light up Jon M. Chu's vibrant adaptation of the beloved stage musical, a revisionist origin story inspired by *The Wizard of Oz*

By David Rooney

One of the signature songs of *Wicked* is "Popular" — a word that's also an epic understatement when applied to the stage musical, seen by upwards of 65 million people since its 2003 bow. Producers have been in no rush to bring the gold mine property to the screen, and their patience now pays off handsomely in Jon M. Chu's adaptation.

The filmmaker knows exactly what the core audience wants and delivers, big time. This eye-popping picture enriches the source material while saluting the Golden Age of Technicolor MGM musicals, chief among them (of course) *The Wizard of Oz*.

One criticism initially leveled at the show was that its narrative suffered from bloat. And at 160 minutes, this film — the first half of a two-part event, with the second scheduled for December 2025 — can't be accused of defying brevity. (Sorry.) But the expansion gives the material more breathing room, yielding rewards especially in terms of intimate character access and poignancy.

Chu nails what matters most, the shifting affections between two young witches. The casting is his winning hand. Ariana Grande plays the vain, princessy blond who will go on to become Glinda, Good Witch of the North, and Cynthia Erivo is the future Wicked Witch of the West, a defensive outsider regarded as a freak for her bright green skin but possessed of formidable powers. Their vocals, recorded live on



set whenever possible, are clear and strong and supple. They lend Stephen Schwartz's songs an effortless spontaneity that draws us into the characters' experiences such that we forget the genre's inherent artificiality.

Chu's vibrant world-building is a significant part of that. Working with the ace team of cinematographer Alice Brooks, production designer Nathan Crowley and costume designer Paul Tazewell, he creates a fully dimensional, immersive fantasy environment. Though visual effects are employed throughout, Crowley has worked wonders conjuring the magical world of Oz with large-scale constructions on soundstages and backlots. In contrast to so many murky-looking recent movies, the luminous color and light of *Wicked* are pleasurable in themselves.

Adapting from Winnie Holzman's book and Schwartz's songs for the musical (which in turn was based on Gregory Maguire's novel), screenwriters Holzman and Dana Fox stick close to the show's template while fleshing out the story and characters in rewarding ways.

The revisionist backstory to L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* begins as it does onstage, with the Oz citizenry celebrating the alleged death of the Wicked Witch of the West — more about which will be revealed in Part 2. When one Munchkin asks Glinda if it's true she and Elphaba were once friends, the question prompts a jump back to the beginning of their tale, to ponder the defining question of whether a person is born wicked or has wickedness thrust upon them.

Ariana Grande (left) and Cynthia Erivo play two friends who will go on to become Glinda the Good Witch and the Wicked Witch of the West.

A lot happens before the main title even appears, most importantly a recap of Elphaba's birth. When her father, Governor Thropp (Andy Nyman), sees the baby's pea green skin, he shrieks, "Take it away!" In a clever *Carrie*-esque moment, the newborn Elphaba demonstrates her instinctual powers by sending surgical instruments flying.

The governor's rejection of his daughter is compounded by the arrival of her paraplegic younger sister, Nessarose (played as a teenager by Marissa Bode). But

RELEASE DATE Friday, Nov. 22

CAST Ariana Grande, Cynthia Erivo, Jonathan Bailey, Ethan Slater, Michelle Yeoh, Jeff Goldblum

DIRECTOR Jon M. Chu
Rated PG, 160 minutes

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Reviews

Film & Television

when Elphaba, accompanying her more beloved sibling during move-in day at Shiv University, unleashes a display of protective witchcraft, Madame Morrible (Michelle Yeoh), the famed Dean of Sorcery Studies, insists on enrolling her as well.

There's a distinct Hogwarts vibe to this introductory scene, with gender-fluid uniforms by Tazewell that look like a lost Thom Browne collection. Glinda's naturally assumed supremacy is apparent from arrival, when she immediately attracts a pair of gossiping sycophants in Pfannee (Bowen Yang) and ShenShen (Bronwyn James), and an admirer in sweet-natured Munchkin Boq (Ethan Slater, the discovery of Broadway's *SpongeBob SquarePants* musical).

At the same time, Elphaba is established as a cruelly mocked outcast. Her relationship with Glinda starts on a mutually resentful note when they are obliged to share a room. As the two leads

quirk” as a talent, not a liability. She also becomes the underdog in the early stages of a romantic triangle with Glinda and dreamboat student prince Fiyero (Jonathan Bailey), who shares his pleasure-seeking credo in the exuberant number “Dancing Through Life.”

As Morrible plants the idea that Elphaba's powers could one day become her ticket to a better life, Erivo gets the first of her handful of showstoppers. “The Wizard and I” is a thoughtful “I want” song from a girl who has never dared to want anything. Another comes when Elphaba is summoned to the Emerald City to meet the Wizard (a gloriously hammy Jeff Goldblum) and suffers a crashing disillusionment. The experience is amplified by Erivo's knockout delivery of “Defying Gravity,” the signature Act I closer onstage and now in the two-part film.

While Holzman and Fox's screenplay heightens dramatic themes of injustice, persecution

This eye-popping picture knows exactly what the core audience wants and delivers, big time.

sing of their “unadulterated loathing” in the fun duet “What Is This Feeling?” they show a chemistry that will evolve and deepen as the characters' bond changes.

As an outsider, Elphaba feels solidarity with history professor Dr. Dillamond (a learned goat voiced by Peter Dinklage), one of the last animals still permitted to teach. In meetings with other fauna, he discusses the systematic marginalization of nonhumans across Oz, foreseeing a near future in which animals will be deprived of the right to speak and possibly imprisoned. This discrimination subplot is baked into the material, but it acquires new relevance in light of the recent election cycle.

Meanwhile, under Mme. Morrible's seemingly benevolent guidance, Elphaba for the first time starts to think of her “weird

and the concept of evil as a useful scapegoating tool, it also mines plenty of humor from Glinda's condescension, played by Grande with a liberal sprinkling of sugar and appealing comedy instincts.

But *Wicked* belongs to Erivo. Elphaba was always the meatier part, and the character's arc carries even more weight in this adaptation. Or maybe that's just because Erivo brings such moving personal investment to her performance.

In her best screen work to date, Erivo makes Elphaba the bruised, beating heart of the film with raw and breathtaking vulnerability. Her eyes are an expressive window into the character's lifetime of hurt or her defiant pride, and sometimes span that range and more within a single scene or line reading. Her Elphaba is an outcast hero worth rooting for. **THR**



Get Millie Black

HBO's detective drama is an unusually sharp spin on familiar tropes, as well as a dazzling showcase for lead Tamara Lawrance **By Daniel Fienberg**

A disappeared girl. A detective who seeks out the missing because of things she can't place from her traumatic past. An awkward new partnership; stern and disapproving authority figures; a twist that proves that what had seemed like an isolated case is actually part of something larger.

HBO's *Get Millie Black* is a vivid, pulsating reminder of how forcefully the cobwebs can be swept from even the stodgiest of plots if you find a location viewers haven't tired of, introduce characters who rise organically from that environment and honor those elements as thoroughly as you do the inevitably rising body count and the unfolding conspiracy.

The five-part series marks a smooth transition to the small screen for Booker Prize-winning novelist Marlon James (*A Brief History of Seven Killings*) and a breakout starring vehicle for Tamara Lawrance. It quickly takes its place in that always welcome category of off-the-beaten-path mysteries (see also AMC's *Dark Winds* and HBO's *True Detective: Night Country* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*) that prove that I'm not tired of the genre, I'm just tired of broadcast procedurals that keep the genre landlocked in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles.

Lawrance plays Millie-Jean Black, raised in Jamaica but

Tamara Lawrance plays a former Scotland Yard detective investigating a missing person case in her home country of Jamaica.

shipped as an adolescent to London, where she eventually becomes a Scotland Yard detective. She's always experienced guilt at leaving her gender non-conforming brother behind with her abusive mom, especially after being told that Orville has died. When her mother dies and something bad happens at her job, Millie retreats to Kingston, in her home country. There, she takes a new police gig and discovers that Orville is now Hibiscus (Chyna McQueen), turning tricks and living in the queer transient community known as the Gully.

Some time later, Millie has settled into a comfortable professional rhythm with partner Curtis (Gershwyn Eustache Jnr) but an uncomfortable life rhythm, trying to rebuild her relationship with the unapologetic but troubled Hibiscus. Haunted by the city and the life she used to know, Millie relies on her work to set things right. When a nurse comes into the precinct reporting that a promising teenage girl (Shernet Swearine's

RELEASE DATE 9 p.m. Monday, Nov. 25 (HBO)

CAST Tamara Lawrance, Joe Dempsie, Gershwyn Eustache Jnr, Chyna McQueen, Shernet Swearine

CREATOR Marlon James

WINNER • BEST PICTURE
GOLDEN LION  Venice Film Festival

4 EUROPEAN FILM AWARD
NOMINATIONS
BEST PICTURE BEST EUROPEAN DIRECTOR BEST ACTRESS BEST SCREENPLAY
Pedro Almodóvar Tilda Swinton Pedro Almodóvar

"Julianne Moore imbues Ingrid with a tenderness and fragility as she confronts her greatest fear, deftly navigating the intersection between loyalty to a friend and one's natural inclination for self-preservation."

-Jericho Tadeo, MOVIEWEB

"It's deeply satisfying to watch Moore and Swinton dig into such nuanced, complicated characters and see two of the finest screen performers play off each other with such persuasive, plaintive intimacy."

-Manohla Dargis, THE NEW YORK TIMES



"Tilda Swinton gives a monumental performance. *The Room Next Door*, as driven by the scalding humanity of Swinton's performance, lifts you up and delivers a catharsis."

-Owen Gleiberman, VARIETY

"Another Almodóvar masterpiece. Swinton and Moore are a flawless duo in soulful, sophisticated portrait."

-Ryan McQuade, AWARDS WATCH

"John Turturro is a fantastic addition to the cast in his portrayal of a complicated man who offers another perspective to this story."

-Clotilde Chinnici, LOUD AND CLEAR

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BEST PICTURE

Producers, Agustín Almodóvar, Esther García

BEST ACTRESS

Julianne Moore

BEST ACTRESS

Tilda Swinton

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

John Turturro

**THE ROOM
NEXT DOOR**

a film by PEDRO ALMODÓVAR

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“WALTER SALLES DIRECTS FERNANDA TORRES IN A STANDOUT PERFORMANCE. HER MAGNIFICENT, INTRICATELY LAYERED PERFORMANCE DRIVES THE PICTURE.”

-Wendy Ide, SCREEN DAILY

“FERNANDA TORRES IS UTTERLY FANTASTIC.”

-Chase Hutchinson, THE WRAP

“FERNANDA TORRES, GIVES THE KIND OF PERFORMANCE DESTINED TO BE HAILED AS ONE OF HER CAREER’S GREATEST.”

-Nicholas Bell, ION CINEMA

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BEST ACTRESS
Fernanda Torres

**I'M STILL
HERE**

Directed by **WALTER SALLES**

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Reviews

Television

Janet) hasn't been seen in two weeks, the case takes Millie all over the city, from trashy go-go bars to the homes of the very white, very condescending local elite. The search for elusive justice is further complicated when an investigator (Joe Dempsie's Luke) arrives from London seeking the same man who has become Millie's top suspect.

James, who was born and raised in Kingston by a detective mother, is invested in getting this milieu right, down to the sense of what it means to try to enforce the law in a land where the laws were designed to repress a colonized people. The drama is most potent when it's exploring what it's like for your entire identity to be criminalized, as seen in Hibiscus' efforts toward self-actualization within a culture that forces her to literally live in a gutter, or the relationship between Curtis and his husband in a country where same-sex intimacy faces social and potentially legal sanctions.

The creator's literary pedigree is evident in guiding *Get Millie Black*. Each episode is narrated by a different main character, and the voiceovers are florid and metaphor-driven — so much talk of ghosts, so few actual ghosts. But it's also tethered to the concrete by a central case that's gritty, violent and, if I'm honest, a bit perfunctory by the last of the four episodes sent to critics.

If the twists are too easily visible and the revelations a hair too formulaic, however, James still treats the genre and its conventions with respect. The dialogue has an effective crackle, blending theatrical repartee and low-key Jamaican patois with the writer's poetic impulses in a way that makes every character seem distinctive, even if they only get a few lines. That so many of the actors in this well-cast piece will be unknown to most viewers — Dempsie, aka Gendry from *Game of Thrones*, may be the biggest name, and his character is fittingly treated as an outlier — adds to the immersion.

McQueen, in her first screen credit, plays Hibiscus with a defiance that prevents her from ever feeling like a victim or stereotype. She finds notes of humor and rage alongside her character's internalized pain. The series also marks a compelling early role for Swearine, whose Janet starts out symbolically important but becomes increasingly crucial to the story. Lawrance, one of the leads in the "Education" chapter of Steve McQueen's *Small Axe*, is tremendously confident as the still center to the unfurling wildness of the story. Her Millie is imperfect, damaged and human, not to mention quite adroit at code switching with her accent and vernacular.

Cinematographer Shabier Kirchner, who worked with

**Tamara
Lawrance is
tremendously
confident as
the still center
to the story's
wildness.**

Lawrance on *Small Axe*, shoots *Get Millie Black* alongside Kanamé Onoyama. In collaboration with directors led by Tanya Hamilton, they approach the terrain from a pointedly non-touristic perspective, favoring neighborhoods and lived-in interiors to beaches and resorts. Even with James' tendency toward talkiness, the series moves at a rapid clip — each episode is under 47 minutes — and Carly Paradis' score delivers a steady heartbeat throughout.

HBO is calling this a limited series, but I hope that the unseen *Get Millie Black* finale doesn't close too many doors. I'm not necessarily interested in the next case on Millie Black's docket, but I'm sure that she and Hibiscus have more ghosts to exorcise, and five episodes in this world feels like only a beginning. **THR**

Congratulations to our partners Tiffany Dunn and Debbie White for being named to *The Hollywood Reporter's* 2024 Top Music Lawyers list.

We applaud your remarkable achievements, cultural influence and innovative contributions to the music industry and beyond.



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Composer: Captain Marvel, The Lost City, Fortnite

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THR Top Schools



The 20 Best Music Schools in the World From New York to Northridge, these institutions are preparing a new generation of composers across all media

By Jeff Bond

For aspiring composers in film and TV, the watchword these days is “technology.” With even venerable conservatories like Juilliard, the San Francisco and New England Conservatories of Music and Yale boasting tech-oriented programs, it’s clear that teaching aspiring composers how to blend traditional composition with contemporary disciplines has become essential. “COVID put a whole new emphasis on what it means to be a desktop digital musician, to where you can sit down at the computer and literally be a one-person orchestra,” says **Keith Mason**, the coordinator of music technology for Belmont University. “All the students are gravitating toward that.” Veteran composer and orchestrator **Conrad Pope**, who has worked with many of the schools on *THR*’s annual list of the world’s best music schools, adds that teaching students how to master cutting-edge tech can provide a valuable foundation for their talent: “[Music schools] can’t provide you with an original voice. You can’t teach creativity. But you can teach the craft.”

To achieve our school ranking this year, *THR* polled the members of Hollywood’s Society of Composers and Lyricists, the Composers Diversity Collective and Motion Picture Academy and Television Academy music branch members.

1 The Juilliard School

NEW YORK

Juilliard’s vaunted reputation continues to be the gold standard for music schools as it returns to the top of this list. **Edward Bilous** is the founding director of the school’s Center for Creative Technology and teaches more than two dozen students in composing for visual media and scoring to picture, and he leads an independent study in emerging and collaborative arts. Also offered is Art of the Score, a program in which Juilliard composers create original music for short films and visual media from around the world. This year, the college celebrated the 25th year of its Music Technology Center (now called the Center for Creative Technology) with the inaugural Future Stages Festival, a four-day event that screened a number of international shorts featuring music by Juilliard students. The school is also expanding classes to include composing for immersive

A scoring stage at The Juilliard School, which offers a program for students to create music for short films from around the world.

experiences and installations in reaction to the growth in theatrical multimedia attractions. Students will get increased instruction in music production and mixing to meet this need. In February, the school featured a live collaboration between its New York and Tianjin, China, campuses with musicians simultaneously performing **Terry Riley**’s minimalist piece *In C* at Juilliard’s Center for Innovation in the Arts. **TUITION** \$54,400 **NOTABLE ALUMNI** **Andrea Datzman** (*Inside Out 2*), **Jongnic Bontemps** (*Transformers: Rise of the Beasts*)

2 USC Thornton School of Music

LOS ANGELES

USC Thornton blends the disciplines of a conservatory education with an unbeatably close working relationship

From left: Berklee College of Music's Sean McMahon; Eastman School of Music.



with the motion picture, television and music industries in Hollywood. **Jeanine Cowen** is in her third year as chair of the Screen Scoring program at Thornton and stresses the opportunities students have working shoulder to shoulder with entertainment professionals at the school. "We really are this kind of petri dish for very talented, creative people who are starting to practice what they're going to do out in the world," Cowen says. "And I am still amazed at the L.A. ecosystem of creative people." Composer **Bear McCreary** (*The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*) attended USC and maintains that Thornton is a top school for prospective media composers: "For me, what USC was is proximity to filmmakers. If you don't have film students in the dorm next door, you are wasting your time."

TUITION \$69,904

NOTABLE ALUMNI Benjamin Wallfisch (*Twisters*), Jason Graves (*Gran Turismo*)

3 Berklee College of Music

BOSTON

Berklee Screen Scoring program chair **Sean McMahon** consistently has been upping Berklee's media scoring game, recruiting such visiting talent as composer **Mychael Danna** and Netflix vp music **Amy Dunning** to confer with students, and this year he will be adding several new elements to the program that already offers bachelor degrees in film and media scoring and game and interactive media scoring. Berklee has partnered with Red Bull to provide music for videos of highly caffeinated consumers flipping out over their energy drink. "They're going to fly 10 of our composers to Austria, and we're going to record at the Synchron stage with orchestral musicians from the symphony there," McMahon says. Berklee Online will be launching something even more groundbreaking: the world's first master degree in music supervision. Says music supervisor **Dave Jordan**: "Berklee has already given so much to our community, and having them teach and support the next generation of music supervisors is beyond exciting."

TUITION \$50,540

NOTABLE ALUMNI Jan Hammer (*Miami Vice*), **Trey Parker** (*South Park*)

4 Columbia College Chicago

CHICAGO

Columbia's two-year master of fine arts program in music composition for the screen, headed by **Kubilay Uner**, focuses on music for full-length film, television, video games and other visual media, culminating in a five-week semester in L.A. with internships, as well as thesis projects recorded by a 70-piece orchestra. "Another important part of our program continues to be our composers-in-residence — professional composers at the height of their careers who come to Columbia College Chicago to guide our students in rescoring one of their projects for seven weeks at a time," Uner says. "Alliance for Women Film Composers co-president **Heather McIntosh** (*The L-Word*) just finished her residency, and **Brandon Campbell** (*The Thinning*) is going to close out this current semester."

TUITION \$32,316

NOTABLE ALUMNI Austin Deadman (*Hamilton*), **Jonathan McReynolds** (Grammy-nominated gospel musician)

5 The Oberlin Conservatory of Music

OBERLIN, OHIO

Oberlin's liberal arts education and conservatory training afford double-major opportunities for students and include study in instrumental performance and composition, conducting,

ethnomusicology, jazz composition, recording arts and production, voice and opera theater. This fall, the school debuted a recording arts and production major in a program overseen by associate professor **Andrew Tripp**, who doubles as Oberlin's director of conservatory audio services. **TUITION** \$66,410

NOTABLE ALUMNI Mark Cohn (singer songwriter), **John Kander** (*Chicago*, *Cabaret*)

6 The San Francisco Conservatory of Music

SAN FRANCISCO

SFCM's technology and applied composition degree program boasts a film scoring

track that starts students off working with digital audio workstations such as Pro-Tools, Logic and Ableton, along with sample libraries from EastWest and Vienna Symphonic Library (these sample vendors offer pre-existing pieces of music that students can build into their own compositions). Students

use these tools to write and produce music for live instruments and ensembles of various sizes, from solo players to chamber groups.

TUITION \$54,400

NOTABLE ALUMNI John Adams, **Gordon Getty** (concert composers)

7 UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music

LOS ANGELES

UCLA Extension offers a certificate

BIG YEAR 1905

The year Juilliard was founded as the "Institute of Musical Art" by German-born conductor Frank Damrosch.



NYU undergrads can spend a semester abroad at one of 16 NYU international campuses, including London, Paris and Prague.

in film scoring suitable for composers looking to up their game and skill set and musicians eager to move from the concert hall or pop/rock world into the discipline. Students learn the ins and outs of scoring for film, television and video games; the business end of film music; and how to use essential technologies like MIDI (musical instrument digital interface).

TUITION \$15,154

NOTABLE ALUMNI Randy Newman (*Toy Story*), **James Horner** (*Titanic*)

8 The New England Conservatory of Music

BOSTON

NEC, one of the oldest and most revered conservatories in the country, keeps students up to date with its music technology concentration and the Robert Ceely Electronic Music Studio. **Conrad Pope** attended the school and has returned to speak to students. "I tried to give them an overview of scoring for film," he says. "They give students a very good music education."

TUITION \$58,910

NOTABLE ALUMNI Carl Davis (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*), **Stephanie Economou** (*About My Father*)

9 Eastman School of Music

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

Eastman's Beal Institute for Film Music and Contemporary Media offers a highly exclusive two-year master's program limited to no more than six students a year. **Mark Watters** is in his seventh year as director of the program, which was established by composer **Jeff Beal** (*House of Cards*). This year, the school has added a recording and mixing class taught by Grammy-winning engineer **Stephen Roessner**. The school's seventh Visual Music concert will be held Jan. 24 with an original score conducted live alongside a screening of **Lon Chaney's** silent classic *Laugh Clown Laugh*, as well as the world premiere of Eastman alum **Laurence Rosenthal's** *Vienna*, a 30-minute work for strings and harp, with 98-year-old Rosenthal in attendance. The school will also host its first film festival in October, with a number of scores conducted live to picture, including one for the 1998 drama *The Red Violin*, which will be conducted by its composer, **John Corigliano**.

TUITION \$65,870

NOTABLE ALUMNI Yixin Huang (*Johnny Keep Walking!*), **Garett Reynolds** (*House of the Dragon*)

10 Indiana University Jacobs School of Music

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

Jacobs' music scoring for visual media program offers a master's degree, undergraduate and doctoral minors and two certificate degrees under the direction of professor **Larry Groupé**. "The scoring program now offers an immersive scoring for episodic television course in Los Angeles every spring, taught by TV veteran **Rick Marvin**," Groupé adds. "In addition, we have been placing top assistantship positions with **Mike Post** (*Law &*



Order) and **Kevin Kiner** (*CSI: Miami*) and high-level scoring engineers.”
TUITION \$40,369
NOTABLE ALUMNI **David Baker** (jazz composer), **Alexandra du Bois** (concert composer)

11 Film Scoring Academy of Europe
SOFIA, BULGARIA

FSAE offers a one-year master’s degree program or an eight-month online graduate degree with a three-and-a-half week summer program. Former Disney music executive **Andy Hill** runs the academy and attracts Hollywood veterans who contribute as visiting lecturers (**Danny Elfman** premiered his *Cello Concerto* in Sofia in 2023). “There’s no way for me

“Our collaborations with the NYU Tisch Film, TV, Video Game Center, as well as Columbia University film school, are key features of our training.”
TUITION \$31,398
NOTABLE ALUMNI **Ariel Marx** (*A Small Light*), **Herdís Stefánsdóttir** (*Knock at the Cabin*)

13 University of North Carolina School of the Arts
WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA

After several years of offering its two-year master of fine arts in film music composition as part of UNCSA’s school of filmmaking, the program has been integrated into the college’s school of music, where it originated 26 years ago. “I

chance to study electronic music, technology and recording along with audio/video recording, editing, livestreaming and content creation.”
TUITION \$39,500, but full-tuition scholarships are available to all students
NOTABLE ALUMNI **Roger Sessions**, **David Snow** (classical composers)

15 Belmont University
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Making its debut on this list is Belmont University and its College of Music and Performing Arts, in the heart of Nashville’s Music Row. Belmont offers master of music degrees in composition and commercial music and a master of science degree in audio engineering. **Keith Mason** is the coordinator of music technology for Belmont University’s College of Music and Performing Arts, and he stresses that media scoring is central to the music school’s efforts, even if it doesn’t offer a degree in the discipline by name. “COVID put a whole new emphasis on what it means to be a desktop digital musician, to where you can sit down at the computer and literally be a one-person orchestra,” Mason says. “All the students are gravitating toward that, so we want them to have multiple skill sets and not just focus on one medium.”
TUITION \$42,540
NOTABLE ALUMNI Country artists **Trisha Yearwood**, **Pam Tillis**

16 Columbia University in the City of New York
NEW YORK

Columbia CNY’s visual arts program in the school of the arts collaborates with its Computer Music Center in the Department of Music to create a two-year sound art MFA program offered to about four students a year for an in-depth exploration of the integration of sound with other media. Students explore new media, performance and concepts and can work in sculpture, video and ceramics with Columbia’s diverse community of artists and musicians (as long as they can afford it — Columbia CNY is not cheap).
TUITION \$74,846
NOTABLE ALUMNI **Jason Everman** (guitarist, *Nirvana*), **Art Garfunkel**

17 Musicians Institute, Los Angeles
LOS ANGELES

The Musicians Institute’s Composition for Visual Media program offers courses in arranging, scoring, orchestration and music history, either in-person or online. Master and bachelor of music degrees, along with associate of arts and associate of science degrees, ground students in the basics, with master’s degrees costing anywhere from a yearly tuition in the \$25,000 range (music), to the hefty price tag of \$90,000 for a visual media masters degree.
TUITION \$32,400 (bachelor’s)
NOTABLE ALUMNI **Justin Derrico** (*Pink* touring band member), **Frank Gambale** (Grammy-winning songwriter)

18 Cal State Northridge
NORTHBRIDGE, CALIFORNIA

Its Mike Curb College of Arts, Media and Communication music department offers master’s degrees in composition and conducting. Students also can pursue a master’s in music industry administration. Its bachelor of music program is divided into composition and commercial and media writing concentrations: Composition emphasizes contemporary art music styles and techniques for the writing of chamber, symphonic or electronic music, while commercial and media writing is a scoring degree in which students learn songwriting and vocal arranging, instrumental composition and orchestration.
TUITION \$21,782
NOTABLE ALUMNI **Troy Glass** (rapper), **Serj Tankian** (*System of a Down*)

19 Los Angeles College of Music
PASADENA

LACM is just on the other side of the Hollywood Hills and offers a master’s degree in composing for visual media run by chair **James Sale**. Sale has added some specific classes most media scoring programs don’t tackle. “I’ve seen that a lot of programs don’t have specific classes, like composing for action, composing for horror, composing music for trailers and libraries,” Sales says. “I’m adding a class about theme and melody writing, and I’m also adding a class called working with temp music, which is a crucial part of our profession.”
TUITION \$27,000
NOTABLE ALUMNI **Mark Wayne Salling** (*Glee*), **Drew Louis** (*RuPaul’s Drag Race*)

20 Pacific Northwest Film Scoring Program
SEATTLE

The Seattle Film Institute’s Pacific Northwest Scoring Program, overseen by veteran composer **Hummie Mann** and program director **Sammy Applegate**, offers students a chance to earn a professional certificate in film and media scoring in less than a year. Students work on 10 scoring projects with student directors, conduct live studio recording sessions and produce electronic and synth scores, earning a master’s degree in 40 weeks. “This fall, we relaunched our original evening program as a new two-year online evening film scoring program, which gives people the chance to learn about film scoring, theory, orchestration and how to write a film cue with one-on-one mentorship,” Applegate says. “[This] will be recorded by professional musicians with a minimal time commitment of two hours a week over the course of two years from the comfort of their homes.”
TUITION \$35,000
NOTABLE ALUMNI **Antonio Di Iorio** (*Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire*), **Michael Paraskevas** (*Agatha All Along*) **THR**



A student performance at Belmont University, which makes its debut on this list.

really to argue that Sofia, Bulgaria, is a true international media center, so we’ll do our best to bring the industry to you,” Hill says. “You’re going to be able to put your music up in front of 84 musicians, and the memory of that experience and that sound will remain in your head forever.” Pope teaches orchestration at the Academy for two weeks out of the year. “What’s good about the Academy is that they have a composition assignment every week for different size ensembles,” he says. “And because Sofia is so isolated and Bulgarian is an impossible language to speak, the kids are closer because they have one workspace, where they all work all the time.”
TUITION 36,950 euros (\$39,000)
NOTABLE ALUMNI **Michael Drew** (*Dome House Six*), **Seiji Hotta** (*Rick and Morty: Samurai & Shogun*)

12 New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development
NEW YORK

Steinhardt offers students the opportunity to earn bachelor of music and master of music degrees in its Music Theory and Composition: Screen Scoring programs, run by chair **Ronald H. Sadoff**. “We consider our screen-scoring majors as filmmaker/storytellers who collaborate from the music department,” says Sadoff.

felt like our master’s program hit a ceiling for growth — that if we grew any more, there just are not enough opportunities to go around in terms of how many films the school produces,” film music composition chair **Chris Heckman** says. Heckman is working on an undergraduate degree that should be available to students in the next two years. In the meantime, he wants to push the master’s programs toward creating graduate content and working with other schools, like the International Film School of Cologne, Germany, where UNCSA students have been scoring feature-length films.
TUITION \$24,399
NOTABLE ALUMNI **Terrence Mann** (theater director, *Cats* singer), **Atli Örvarsson** (*Pirates of the Caribbean*)

14 Yale School of Music
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

Under the direction of dean **José García-León**, Yale continues to be one of the nation’s most prestigious traditional conservatories, with a stingy acceptance rate that winnows about 1,500 applications to 100 students from the U.S. and around the world. YSM does not have a media scoring program, but the school’s media production department and recording studios give students the

BIG YEAR
1894
 The year Yale School of Music conferred its first degrees. It is the only Ivy League school with a separate school of music.

Mic-Dropping Music Lawyers

Recording stars with designs on films, tours and huge catalog payoffs turn to these 16 A-List attorneys

By Mesfin Fekadu

If you're an artist trying to sell your catalog — or an entertainment company trying to buy one — you should take a closer look at the attorneys who make up *THR*'s 2024 Top Music Lawyers list. From working on **Beyoncé's** Renaissance tour and *Cowboy Carter* album to negotiating deals with Crocs and NASCAR for **Luke Combs** to linking K-pop kings like **RM** and **Jung Kook** with stars like **Megan Thee Stallion** and **Usher**, these are the dealmakers you need to know about.

Lisa Alter & Katie Baron

ALTER, KENDRICK & BARON
In the past 18 months, Alter and Baron have negotiated and closed \$1 billion in deals. They have represented Primary Wave in the acquisitions of several catalogs, including **Def Leppard**, **The Strokes**, **Ramones**, **James Brown**, **Isaac Hayes**, **Whitney Houston**, **Bob Marley** and a share of **Stevie Nicks'**. The duo has helped other companies acquire more catalogs, including Iconic Artists Group (**Rod Stewart**, **Joe Cocker**), Influence Media Partners (**Future**, **Blake Shelton**, **Enrique Iglesias**), BMG Rights Management (**Peter Dinklage**, **ZZ Top**) and Reservoir Media Management (**Sonny Rollins**, **Louis Prima**).
THE SONG THAT DOMINATED MY AIRPODS THIS YEAR Baron: "Pink Pony Club," by **Chappell Roan**. Alter: "Houdini," by **Eminem**.
MY FIRST-EVER LIVE SHOW Baron: **New Kids on the Block**. Alter: **Traffic**.

John Branca, David Byrnes & David Lande

ZIFFREN BRITTENHAM
From working on **Beyoncé's** epic Renaissance tour and film as well as *Cowboy Carter* album — which snagged 11 Grammy nominations — to negotiating **Pharrell's** *Piece by Piece* deal with Focus Features and a new Adidas agreement, Ziffren Brittenham's music department is in top form. They also negotiated a major deal for **Barry Gibb's** *Bee Gees* catalog and **Olivia Rodrigo's** *GUTS* tour, as well as her partnership with Gen Z-obsessed Stanley water bottles and lucrative Lancôme endorsement deal.

MY THOUGHTS ON AI IN MUSIC Lande: "Exciting to view the opportunities through the lens of my Gen Z clients who are embracing the technology and finding interesting ways to create using it."
MY FIRST-EVER LIVE SHOW Lande: **The Rolling Stones**

Tiffany Dunn

LOEB & LOEB
Dunn has represented John R. Cash Revocable Trust in matters concerning **Johnny Cash** trademarks, copyright and more, from a collab with Jacques Marie Mage eyewear to the posthumous *Songwriter* album to Cash's statue at the U.S. Capitol, making the late icon the first musician to be honored in such a way. For **Luke Combs**, Dunn has worked on his collaborations with Crocs, NASCAR and NBC Sports; his partnership with Miller Lite; and his Nashville restaurant, Category 10.
MY FAVORITE MOVIE OR SHOW *Legally Blonde*
ABOUT LAWYERS *Legally Blonde*
MY FIRST-EVER LIVE SHOW "At Six Flags. My first country show was **Garth Brooks**."

Damien Granderson

GRANDERSON DES ROCHERS
Granderson represented Quality Control Music in its sale to K-pop power HYBE America, and he also reps

David Lande



triple Grammy nominee **Raye**, handling performance agreements for her shows at London's O2 Arena, Coachella, *Saturday Night Live* and Royal Albert Hall. He also negotiates for **J Balvin** and **Ne-Yo**.
MY THOUGHTS ON AI IN MUSIC "AI-powered tools make music creation, distribution and consumption more accessible and personalized while helping artists and businesses optimize their processes."
MY FIRST-EVER LIVE SHOW **Fugees**
ARTIST COLLABORATION I WOULD LOVE TO SEE **Stevie Wonder** and **Raye**

Palisa Kelley

HARBOURVIEW EQUITY PARTNERS
As sales of music catalogs have skyrocketed over the past few years, Kelley has emerged as the premier dealmaker in the arena. She's helped acquire the catalogs of some of the biggest artists in the world, including **Justin Bieber**, **Nicki Minaj**, **Pat Benatar**, **Christine McVie**, **Nelly**, **Florida Georgia Line** and **Brad Paisley**. Kelley has made deals for more than 55 catalogs and 29,000-plus songs across master recordings, publishing income streams and musical compositions.
MY FAVORITE MOVIE OR SHOW *Extraordinary Attorney Woo*. I sit on the board of an organization that serves adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This K-drama about an attorney with autism is an entertaining production that leads with compassion."
THE SONG THAT DOMINATED MY AIRPODS THIS YEAR



"Not Like Us," by **Kendrick Lamar**
THE MUSIC INDUSTRY NEEDS MORE ... "Women of color in executive positions."

Christine Lepera

MITCHELL SILBERBERG & KNUPP
Lepera is the litigator artists call when they need help in court, especially when it comes to copyright, trademark and contract disputes. She's represented Universal Music Group, **Drake**, **Katy Perry**, **Post Malone** and **Dr. Luke**, among others. For **Dua Lipa**, she successfully obtained dismissal with prejudice of a copyright infringement case against the pop star and Warner Music Group for "Levitating," Billboard's No. 1 song of 2021; Lepera also won a summary judgment for **Timbaland** and other defendants on claims of infringement.
MY FAVORITE MOVIE OR SHOW *To Kill a Mockingbird*
THE SONG THAT DOMINATED MY AIRPODS THIS YEAR "Texas Hold 'Em," by **Beyoncé**

Donald S. Passman, J. Eugene (Gene) Salomon Jr. & Ethan Schiffres

GANG, TYRE, RAMER, BROWN & PASSMAN
This trio's clients mirror the Billboard charts — there's

Taylor Swift, **Billie Eilish** and **Adele**. For the latter, they worked on her Las Vegas and Munich residencies, while other deals include **Green Day's** *Saviors* album and tour, as well as **Pink's** latest live trek. The firm also negotiated the asset sale by **Cher** to Iconic Artists Group and represents Oscar-, Emmy- and Grammy-winning composer **Ludwig Göransson** for his work on *Oppenheimer* and **Childish Gambino's** latest album. They also count **Stevie Wonder**, **R.E.M.** and **Adam Lambert** as clients.
MY FAVORITE MOVIE OR SHOW *Suits*
ABOUT LAWYERS *The Verdict*
Schiffres: The Firm
THE MUSIC INDUSTRY NEEDS MORE ... Salomon: "Women in the studio and in leadership positions."

Adrian Perry & Jonathan Sperling

COVINGTON & BURLING
Perry and Sperling co-lead a team of lawyers that represented a music company in one of the largest music catalog deals in the industry. With such clients as Sony Music, Disney, Amazon, the NBA and the NFL, Perry continues to be an authority on AI deals, digital content distribution issues, and data collection and licensing, while Sperling is a go-to litigator for labels in copyright



Clients of the top music lawyers include (from left) Olivia Rodrigo, Beyoncé, Luke Combs, RM of BTS and Cher.

far too difficult for new businesses to innovate.”

Matthew Thompson

SIDLEY AUSTIN
Thompson assisted Warner Music Group in its recent reorg of Atlantic Records, including the elevation of 10K Projects founder **Elliot Grainge** to CEO. Thompson also helped WMG and its affiliates on a joint venture with 10K Projects, home to **Ice Spice, Artemas and Trippie Redd**. And he’s worked on big catalog acquisitions, including WMG acquiring the entire recorded music catalog of **Yes**.
MY THOUGHTS ON AI IN MUSIC “Keep it out. Music is a deeply human creation and experience and should stay that way.”

THE MUSIC INDUSTRY NEEDS MORE ... “Ability to connect emergent artists with fans. I know there are a ton of ways to make this happen, but so many young up-and-comers just never find their audience. It’s sad.”

Debbie White

LOEB & LOEB
Call White the queen of K-pop collabs. She’s represented HYBE — home to **BTS** — for seven years, and her recent deals include **Jung Kook** teaming up with **Usher** for “Standing Next to You”; **RM** and **Megan Thee Stallion** joining forces for “Neva Play”; and **Jimin** linking with **NLE Choppa, JVKE and Muni Long** on “Angel Pt. 1” and “Angel Pt. 2” from the *Fast X* soundtrack. She also worked on **NewJeans’** global brand ambassadorship with Coca-Cola and is busy outside of the K-pop spectrum, handling deals for clients like Hello Sunshine, **The Who, Duran Duran** and **Christina Aguilera**, for her Las Vegas residency and an Airbnb partnership.
THE SONG THAT DOMINATED MY AIRPODS THIS YEAR “Fire for You,” by **Cannons**, and “A Sky Full of Stars,” by **Coldplay**.
MY FIRST-EVER LIVE SHOW “Carpenters in Point Pleasant, New Jersey. However, the first concert I truly remember attending was **Styx** at Radio City Music Hall.” **THR**

for more than a decade, Rogers joined gamma. — the media and technology company and new wave record label — as head of business and legal affairs. There, she handles signings for partners like **Usher, Snoop Dogg** and Rebel Music’s **Sexxy Red** while also spearheading strategic partnerships. In addition, she led production legal services at Mass Appeal for the Hulu documentary *Freaknik: The Wildest Story Never Told*, about the iconic Atlanta street party that took place during the ’80s and ’90s.
MY THOUGHTS ON AI IN MUSIC “Still formulating.”
THE MUSIC INDUSTRY NEEDS MORE ... “Creativity on the business side. The traditional major record label model and traditional independent distribution model need to change. That’s why I’m so excited about being part of gamma. Anything’s possible over here.”

Jess Rosen

GREENBERG TRAUIG
Country music has always been one of music’s top genres, but in the past few years, these stars have dominated the pop scene and reached newer heights. Rosen has been working behind the scenes alongside the genre’s biggest acts, negotiating major tour deals for **Kenny Chesney, Kacey Musgraves** and **Kane Brown**, whose publishing catalog he also helped sell. Rosen — who secured more than 240 deals, collectively valued at more than eight figures, in the past year — also negotiated celebrity restaurant license deals for **Brown** and **Miranda Lambert**.
THE SONG THAT DOMINATED MY AIRPODS THIS YEAR “Summer Wind,” by **Frank Sinatra**

Angela Martinez

ANGIELAW
Martinez is the founder and sole operator of AngieLaw and represents some of the world’s biggest Latin acts, including **Ozuna, Luis Fonsi,**

Ethan Schiffres and Palisa Kelley



and royalty disputes.
THE SONG THAT DOMINATED MY AIRPODS THIS YEAR Perry: “Personality Crisis,” by **New York Dolls**
Sperling: “Am Yisrael Chai,” by **Eyal Golan**
ARTIST COLLABORATION I WOULD LOVE TO SEE
Perry: **Billie Eilish** and **Julian Casablancas**

Julian Petty

WARNER RECORDS
Warner has been on a white-hot winning streak thanks to breaking new acts like **Benson Boone** and **Teddy Swims**, along with the continued success of **Zach Bryan**. And Petty is working across those new artist deals as well as renegotiations as the label’s executive vp and head of legal affairs. In addition, he negotiated **Linkin Park’s** partnership with Riot Games and continues to work on the Warner Music/Blavatnik Center for Music Business Fellowship Program at Howard University, established after the death of **George Floyd** and aimed at increasing the pipeline for Black executives in the music business.
THE MUSIC INDUSTRY NEEDS MORE ... “Respect for its OGs. I realize it’s a youth-driven business, but there is a lot of talent and insight held by the legacy artists and older execs. We need to do a better job harvesting that institutional knowledge and talent.”

MY FIRST-EVER LIVE SHOW
“DJ Jazzy Jeff & the **Fresh Prince**. I vividly remember them rocking the house and strengthening my love for hip-hop.”

Alexis Robinson & Daniel Schnapp

SHEPPARD MULLIN
For the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), Robinson and Schnapp negotiated multiyear licenses with Netflix, Spotify, BBC, Univision and more to publicly perform the repertory of musical works of the performing rights organization. The duo also put together numerous membership and financial incentive agreements for new and existing ASCAP members **Lauryn Hill, SZA, Kacey Musgraves** and **Fall Out Boy**. Other big clients include TikTok, Vevo and the Songwriters Hall of Fame.
MY FAVORITE MOVIE OR SHOW
ABOUT LAWYERS
Robinson: *My Cousin Vinny*
Schnapp: *The Devil’s Advocate*
ARTIST COLLABORATION I WOULD LOVE TO SEE
Robinson: **Amy Winehouse** and **Kendrick Lamar**
Schnapp: **Metallica** and **Post Malone**

Angela Marie Rogers

GAMMA.
After running her own firm

'It's the New York Oscars!' The directors of the Gotham Awards are doubling down on film (no more TV honors) for its first live broadcast

By Brande Victorian



Films once again will be the sole focus of the Gotham Awards for the first time in a decade, following the launch of the inaugural Gotham TV Awards in June. The separation will allow more filmmakers to be recognized at the 34th annual ceremony, which customarily will be held Dec. 2 at Cipriani Wall Street in New York, says **Jeffrey Sharp**, executive director of the Gotham Film & Media Institute.

That includes the revival of the breakthrough performer category and the addition of a best director award as the organization bolsters its commitment to celebrating independent films in what continues to be a tumultuous time for the entertainment industry.

"A lot of the organizations and companies that weren't able to participate last year [following COVID and the strikes] because it was such a tough year are back, so the room is going to be full of our community again," says Sharp. "This is going to be a very special night."

The event's date is rather serendipitous as **Maria Callas**, whom **Angelina Jolie** plays in the upcoming biographical drama *Maria*, was born on Dec. 2, 1923. Jolie is set to receive the Performer Tribute during the awards

in honor of her portrayal of the renowned opera singer.

"The film premiered at the Venice Film Festival this year, and it was such an extraordinary moment with **Pablo Larrain**, and it being third in this kind of trilogy of female characters of the 20th century," says Sharp, referencing Larrain's previous films *Jackie* (about **Jacqueline Kennedy**) and *Spencer* (**Princess Diana**). "To be able to honor Maria and Angelina, who gives this extraordinary performance, felt like such an important moment for the show."

Also set to be honored is the cast of *Sing Sing*, which will receive the Social Justice Tribute for its telling of the true-life story of the Rehabilitation Through the Arts program at the New York prison. "The way the film was produced, all of the participants have a profit participation in the film," explains Sharp. "It was a unique way of thinking about how to finance a film and compensate your production team and your cast. It felt like such a great example of independent voices coming together."

The cast of *The Piano Lesson*, the forthcoming adaptation of **August Wilson's** 1987 play, will be presented with the Ensemble Tribute, and **Franklin Leonard**, founder of The Black

Gotham's deputy director **Kia Brooks** with executive director **Jeffrey Sharp**.

List, will receive the Anniversary Tribute, marking 20 years of the writer platform. "The work of *The Black List* is so tied to what the Gotham supports around resources and access, especially for screenwriters," says deputy director **Kia Brooks**. "These types of tributes are a really great way to show what's happening in the industry on a larger scale and how important these moments are for people like Franklin and all the creators that he's touched over the years."

For the first time ever, the ceremony will be broadcast live in 61 local television markets through a partnership with Tegna, giving films like *Anora* and *I Saw the TV Glow*, which lead in Gotham nods, widespread attention. "It's really exciting when you think about some of the smaller films and filmmakers who are not household names that are all of a sudden going to be able to reach audiences in ways that the Gotham Awards has never been able to do before," explains Sharp. "Audiences who I hope over the holidays will be going to their theaters to buy tickets to some of these films."

Sharp also promises a fun experience for guests attending the awards in person — a highlight being the open bar throughout the entirety of the show. "It's always about the energy in the room," he says. "I'm going to go out on a limb and say part of that energy is due to having the best food of the whole awards show circuit," he says, teasing a menu of steak and chocolate cake this time around. "We're going to be super decadent. We feel like it's the biggest party of the year for New York and the industry here, so we want to celebrate in style."

Doubling down on the chance to steal some of Los Angeles' movie magic, Sharp adds: "It's the only night that New York gets to celebrate film. It is the New York Oscars." **THR**

Gotham Awards
Dec. 2
New York City



From left: The films *Sing Sing*, *Maria* and *The Piano Lesson* will all receive special honors at this year's Gotham Awards.

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Return to Oz Had Trouble Going Home Again

Wicked transports audiences to the world of *The Wizard of Oz*, with Universal's adaptation of the Broadway smash starring Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo hitting theaters Nov. 22. It's certainly had a smoother road than 1985's *Return to Oz*. After winning a sound Oscar for Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, editor and sound designer Walter Murch was approached by Disney to discuss projects to direct. Murch expressed interest in an Oz story, and the studio was intrigued, as it owned the rights to author L. Frank Baum's later novels *The Land of Oz* and *Ozma of Oz*, on which *Return to Oz* would be based.

A darker and non-musical follow-up to MGM's 1939 classic,

Return to Oz stars young Fairuza Balk as Dorothy, who is called back to the titular land that has been destroyed by the diabolical Nome King (Nicol Williamson) and Mombi (Jean Marsh). Here, she meets friends Jack Pumpkinhead (voiced by Brian Henson), the metallic Tik-Tok and Billina the talking chicken.

There were challenges from the start, with the movie put into turnaround six weeks before shooting kicked off with a \$20 million budget. Once filming began, Murch found himself losing Disney's confidence. "The studio was so unhappy with the material that they were seeing, and the fact that we were falling behind schedule, that after five weeks they fired me off the film,"

Murch recalled in a 2000 interview. George Lucas — a longtime friend of Murch's, with the pair having written Lucas' first film, *THX 1138* — was brought to the London set as the team contemplated replacing Murch. "It caused quite a panic," Peter Elliott, who played one of the evil Wheelers, tells *THR* about the director limbo. Although Lucas convinced Disney that Murch should finish the job, he stuck around to help get things back on track, while Coppola and Steven Spielberg also arrived to lend a hand.

The film was released June 21, 1985, and critics compared it unfavorably to the Judy Garland original, with *THR*'s review noting that "the magic wand didn't pass over this production." *Return*

to Oz, which grossed \$11 million and landed an Oscar nom for the visual effects that incorporated claymation by Will Vinton, marked Murch's first and last directorial effort. Deep Roy, who played Tin Man, adds, "We had some difficulties on the production, but it was amazing to work with Walter." — RYAN GAJEWSKI

'Return to Oz'

By DUANE BYRGE

The Yellow Brick Road has some bumpy patches in "Return to Oz," Disney's live action/fantasy that attempts to recapture the magic of the legendary "Wizard of Oz." Unfor-

RETURN TO OZ
(Buena Vista)

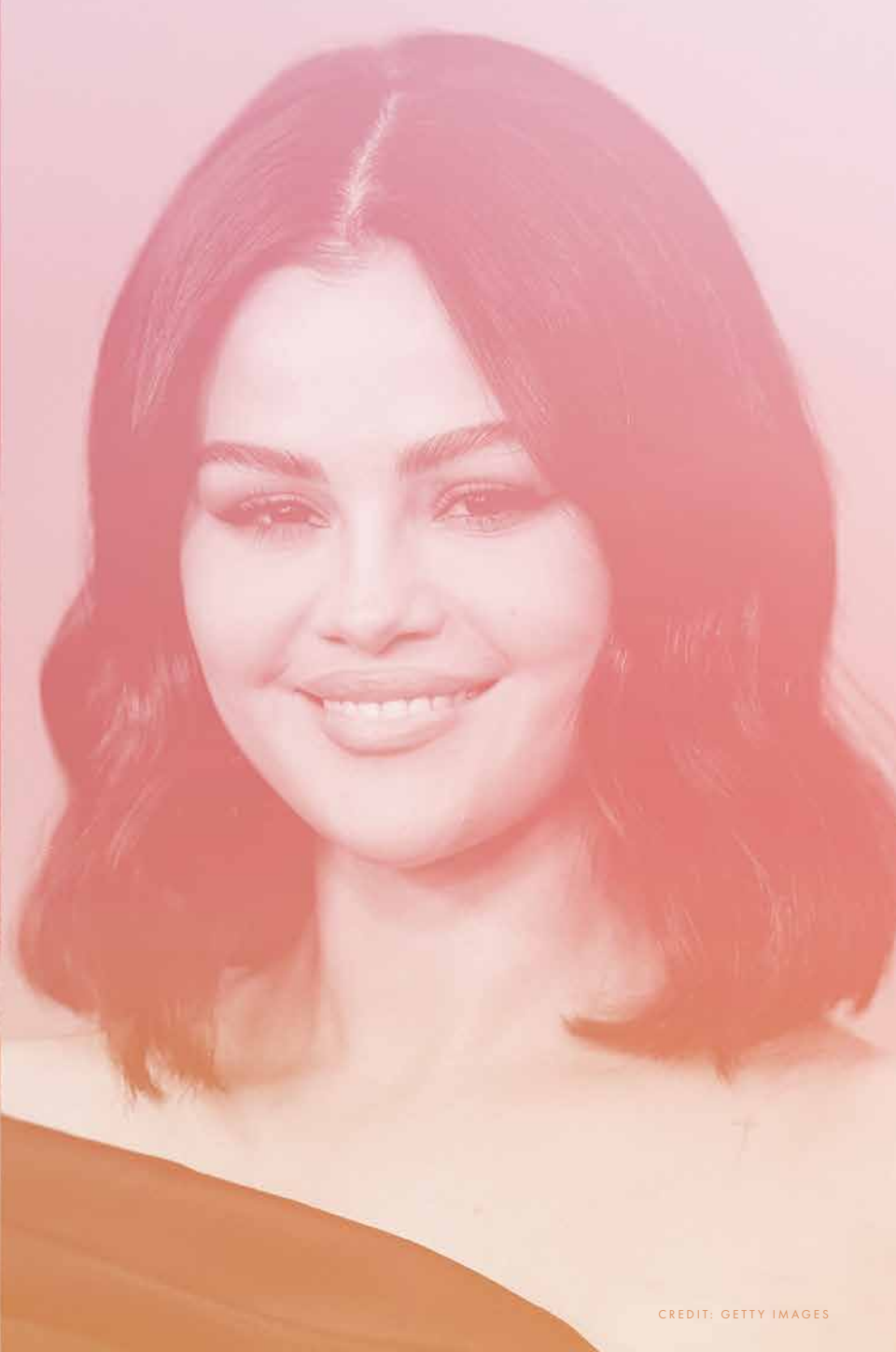
Producer Paul Maslansky
Executive producer Gary Kurtz
Director Walter Murch
Screenwriters Walter Murch, Gill Dennis

Dorothy (Fairuza Balk) reunites with the Scarecrow (Justin Case) in Disney's sequel to the 1939's *The Wizard of Oz*.

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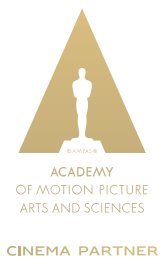
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