What is your idea of perfect happiness? Hanging out with my kids and all my friends and family. What is your greatest fear? Burying people I love. Which historical figure do you most identify with? I admire a lot of historical figures, but the people I most identify with are those who don’t become famous—they’re moms and other normal people. What is the trait you most deplore in yourself? My PTSD. What is the trait you most deplore in others? Lying and a lack of morals and ethics. I am not very good at singular answers. Sorry. What is your greatest extravagance? When I was turning 40, I bought a Porsche. The fact that I was doing it kind of repulsed me, and I realized I was having a midlife crisis. But 10 years later, I still drive that car every day and I love it. What is your favorite journey? I am really digging this whole journey. It’s bloody and raw at times, but in general I am grateful for the whole ride. What do you consider the most overrated virtue? Beauty. What do you dislike most about your appearance? I’m actually just trying to go with the groove of getting older ... and be happy celebrating the phases of the human experience. If there was a drug made tomorrow that made you live forever looking like your 20-year-old self, I wouldn’t take it. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I would take better care of myself. Not so that I could look different outwardly to the world, but so I wasn’t stressed out. If you could change one thing about your family, what would it be? My mom and dad and sister passed away, so I guess I would have them all be alive. If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be? I would be a little Persian cat, a white one, that never grew past the kitten phase. I could fit in the palm of your hand for my whole life. What is your favorite occupation? Being a mom. What is the quality you most like in a man? I think the strongest quality a man can have is to be gentle. It takes incredible strength to endure life and still be gentle. And ethics are really important to me in partners—strength, gentleness, and integrity. And humor. I told you, I can’t give a singular answer. What is the quality you most like in a woman? The same qualities I love in men. Not that men and women are the same, but I love those qualities in all people. Who is your favorite hero of fiction? I love the story that we know about Jesus, and I do believe Jesus lived ... but there’s a lot more to the Jesus story. I think there are aspects of it that are historical fiction, and there’s so much missing from the story that I’ll never know. I’ll never stop wondering what that all was. Who are your heroes in real life? I love Martin Luther King Jr. And I love Jesus. And I love my boyfriend. And my family, and my kids, and my friends. How would you like to die? Peacefully in my sleep before I get really sick. No long illness. I don’t want to die in a hospital. What is your motto? I wish I had one. A motto, I mean.
The Rise of Michael B. Jordan

The Black Panther star makes his move from matinee idol to Hollywood mogul

By Joe Hagan / Photographs by Cass Bird
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Nº 4

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A decade after the crash, Goldman Sachs is keen to win over Main Street. With new C.E.O. David Solomon, the company is ready for its makeover.

The Technicolor Dreams of Michael B. Jordan
BY JOE HAGAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY CASS BIRD
Black Panther star Michael B. Jordan wants to be his generation’s leading man—and create a one-man franchise to rival Denzel and Cruise.

The Y Squad
BY ADAM GIRALSKY
YAMAM, Israel’s special police unit, is the world’s most elite counterterrorist force. Now they have decided to share their tactics—and their secret history.

On the Cover

Goldman Sachs Moves to Main Street
(Projected new annual revenue by 2021)
COMMERCIAL BANKING
INVESTMENT BANKING

$1.5B
$2B

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“If there was a drug that made you live forever looking like your 20-year-old self, I wouldn’t take it.”

PATRICIA ARQUETTE, p.154

Queen Elizabeth
BY BRITT HENEMUTH
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANIEL JACKSON
Australian actress Elizabeth Debicki lights up the screen in *Widows*, Steve McQueen’s new heist film. Here, she sparkles in couture.

The Sultan of Bling
BY MARK SEAL
ILLUSTRATIONS BY R. KIKUO JOHNSON
For years, he traveled the world as a Saudi prince, royal entourage in tow, accepting millions of dollars in gifts and investments. Then the truth came out.

Mad Man in the Mirror
BY JOY PRESS
PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIP MONTGOMERY
The creator of Don Draper faces his own accusation of misconduct as he returns to TV with *The Romanoffs*.

Opening Act
Kristine Froseth is the next star of Netflix, by way of Norway.

Books
A literary-minded political candidate shares her must-reads.

Fashion
A Ferragamo heel gets an over-the-knee update.

Field Trip
Master showman Ken Fulk transforms a church into an arts club.

Beauty
All about blushing.

Fairground
Ralph Lauren’s 50th-anniversary show celebrated the designer’s career in a Central Park dreamscape.
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81 The New Establishment
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SUPERMUNDANE AND MATT DORFMAN
Welcome to Vanity Fair’s annual ranking of America’s 100 top power players, from Wall Street and Washington to Silicon Valley and Hollywood. (Let the debate begin!)

"Imagine a leader like Teddy Roosevelt, who strove to forge a common purpose among conservatives and progressives."
DORIS KEEARNS GOODWIN, PRESIDENTIAL HISTORIAN, p.76
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From the Editors

Behind the Issue

Michael B. Jordan, clockwise from top left: in a 1972 Chevrolet El Camino outside a school in East Hampton, New York; with V.F. executive fashion director Samira Nasr on East Hampton’s Louse Point beach; at the Louse Point beach.

It’s fitting for a star of Michael B. Jordan’s wattage that even a photo shoot has a cinematic arc. For the images that accompany our profile of Jordan, which begins on page 100, the Vanity Fair team and photographer Cass Bird headed out to the eastern tip of Long Island, to a part of the Hamptons known as the Springs, where Jackson Pollock, Nora Ephron, and other creative lions have lived and worked. That list also includes Cass, who retreats to the Springs with her own family, so she knew exactly what spots to hit for some magical late-summer light. First stop was a local public school, which was gearing up for the fall semester. Michael held court on the court with some neighborhood kids, who got him to pose for selfies.

And Cass offered up some magic of her own when she coaxed Michael into the water, wearing his Saint Laurent tuxedo, just as the sun was dipping below Gardiners Bay.

The result was infectious. Executive fashion director Samira Nasr and editor Radhika Jones were knee-deep before long. One of the pictures from that dip became our cover—that of a star emerging. —KIRA POLLACK
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Joe Hagan

"The Technicolor Dreams of Michael B. Jordan"

p. 100

“This was my first major Hollywood profile; I ordinarily write about politicians and media figures,” says Hagan, the author of the Jann Wenner biography, Sticky Fingers. “I was enthralled by Jordan’s personal history—how his success as an actor speaks so powerfully to our cultural moment, in ways no politician can.”

Michelle Ruiz

“Skin in the Game”

p. 116

The highlight of Ruiz’s reporting “was being on the dance floor at the NFL cheerleaders’ reunion in Nashville this past July, doing the ‘Cupid Shuffle,’” she says. “Everyone was wearing sparkles and four-inch heels, and no one was out of step.” Ruiz is a contributing editor at Vogue.com.

Jon Meacham

“The Once and Future King”

p. 74

“I first met Obama 14 years ago,” says Meacham, the presidential biographer and author of The Soul of America. “Even then he was a strangely forceful persona, whose power came from his preternatural calm. He has always seemed at once participant and observer.”

Mark Seal

“The Sultan of Bling”

p. 134

The V.F. contributing editor read the first report on Anthony Gignac’s latest scam in Miami’s El Nuevo Herald. “I started researching what turned out to be his decades of incredible cons,” Seal says, “and picked my jaw off the floor.”
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The highly anticipated contemporary series, *The Romanoffs*, is set to premiere on Amazon Prime Video Friday, October 12 with new episodes released weekly, on Fridays. *The Romanoffs* is created, written and directed by nine-time Emmy award winner Matthew Weiner (*Mad Men*) and reunites 14 of *Mad Men*’s creative team. Featuring eight unique stories about people who believe themselves to be descendants of the Russian royal family, each episode takes place in a new location with a new star-studded cast. Set in seven countries around the globe, *The Romanoffs* was shot on location on three continents.

### EPISODES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. THE VIOLET HOUR</td>
<td>OCT 12</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Set in Paris, an ancestral home holds the key to a family’s future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>STARRING:</td>
<td>Aaron Eckhart, Marthe Keller, Inès Melab, and Louise Bourgoin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOCATION:</td>
<td>Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. THE ROYAL WE</td>
<td>OCT 12</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>With their marriage in a rut, a couple finds their own temptations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>STARRING:</td>
<td>Corey Stoll, Kerry Bishe, Janet Montgomery, and Noah Wyle.</td>
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<td>LOCATION:</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. HOUSE OF SPECIAL PURPOSE</td>
<td>OCT 19</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>A movie star and a director go head to head in a battle over what is real.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STARRING:</td>
<td>Christina Hendricks, Isabelle Huppert, Jack Huston, Mike Doyle, and Paul Reiser.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOCATION:</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. EXPECTATION</td>
<td>OCT 26</td>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>Over a single day in New York City a woman is confronted with every lie she ever told.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STARRING:</td>
<td>Amanda Peet, John Slattery, Emily Rudd, Jon Tenney, Mary Kay Place, and Michael O’Neill.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOCATION:</td>
<td>New York City</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. BRIGHT AND HIGH CIRCLE</td>
<td>NOV 2</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>A trusted friend under suspicion tests the loyalties of a tightly-knit family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STARRING:</td>
<td>Diane Lane, Ron Livingston, Andrew Rannells, Cara Buono, and Nicole Ari Parker.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOCATION:</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. PANORAMA</td>
<td>NOV 9</td>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>In Mexico City, an idealistic reporter falls in love with his mysterious subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STARRING:</td>
<td>Juan Pablo Castañeda, Radha Mitchell, and Griffin Dunne.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION:</td>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. END OF THE LINE</td>
<td>NOV 16</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>On a trip abroad to pursue their legacy, a couple faces destruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STARRING:</td>
<td>Kathryn Hahn, Jay R. Ferguson, Annet Mahendru, and Clea Duvall.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION:</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. THE ONE THAT HOLDS EVERYTHING</td>
<td>NOV 23</td>
<td>London &amp; Hong Kong</td>
<td>In a story that circles the globe, a man tries to escape a family curse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION:</td>
<td>London &amp; Hong Kong</td>
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WATCH FRIDAYS STARTING OCTOBER 12
FROM THE CREATOR OF MAD MEN

THE ROMANOFFS

FRIDAYS STARTING OCT 12

prime video
Sebastian Kim

“In photographing Disney’s Bob Iger and Uber’s Dara Khosrowshahi for this year’s New Establishment list, Kim “wanted people to see them up close and personal.” Plus, he adds, “seeing the Uber campus was a treat.”

Doris Kearns Goodwin

“Goodwin, author of the newly published Leadership: In Turbulent Times, was inspired by a comment from Trump: “You hear lots of people say that a great deal is when both sides win. That is a bunch of crap.” She immediately thought of Teddy Roosevelt’s Square Deal, which was designed for both sides.”

R. Kikuo Johnson

“My approach to creating an illustration is to distill the article’s conflict into a single narrative image,” says the artist, who teaches at the Rhode Island School of Design. For this piece, Johnson “couldn’t resist the opportunity to portray the impostor prince and his bejeweled Chihuahua.”

Adam Ciralsky

“The V.F. contributing editor has reported on Israel and the Middle East for nearly two decades. “I was struck that the YAMAM has operated in the shadows for more than 44 years,” he says, “and has allowed others to take credit for its harrowing work.”
Editor’s Letter

November 2018

Since the last time this magazine published its annual New Establishment list, the Establishment has taken a number of well-deserved knocks. Down the titans fell—a bunch of them, anyway—from Hollywood to Palo Alto to Washington, and so the New Establishment of 2018 is newer than ever. “Disruption” has been the irritating buzzword of our era since the tech boom began, but it’s arguably in the past 12 months that this ethos started to democratize itself and become a true cultural force, one that delivered returns. Once upon a time, the disruptors tended to be the people in charge; now they can also be the women who fight harassment, or underserved audiences who turn out to see Black Panther and Crazy Rich Asians, or political candidates who answer to their constituents over their party and their party’s donors.

A list like the New Establishment offers a snapshot of a moment, with signs of things to come. Not every face is new, of course, but even the familiar ones are up to fresh tricks—buying, selling, podcasting, uprooting to the West Coast, making content deals with a former president, getting tweeted at angrily by the current one. In these pages you’ll find the architects of mergers and deals that will shape what we watch and how we watch it; the new C.E.O.’s brought in to detox corporate cultures; the political newcomers who, win or lose in November, have already shifted the way we talk about issues like gun control, reproductive rights, and progressivism in general. The big tech companies still bestride the narrow world like lumbering Colossuses, but even they have been called to account for the role they’ve played, whether willingly or (worse?) unwittingly, in the unraveling of democratic institutions, the undermining of a free and accountable press, and the tainting of codes of civility and decency. And the work of the taciturn G-man in our No. 1 spot remains the wildest card in Establishment politics. Not to add to the burden on his shoulders, but he could end up seriously disrupting the 2019 list.

I am always curious to know what notable people’s parents think of what their children do for a living, so it makes me happy that Joe Hagan logged some quality time with Michael B. Jordan’s mother and father while reporting his cover story on the Black Panther star. You get a sense of how the two of them see him—their handsome young man who’s making good on his upbringing—while the rest of us see a screen idol in the new Hollywood mold, from his prestige roles (in The Wire, Fruitvale Station, and Creed, to name a few) to his plans to produce. Neither view is incorrect, though on a sunny day in the Hamptons in August he was just a guy looking extremely cool riding a bike no-handed down a quiet lane, casually repelling sand flies with nothing more than his charisma. I didn’t anticipate that the day would end with my walking into the bay to join him for a photo, but it seemed like the right thing to do. Jordan’s world now is one of possibility, and how exciting for all of us to be along for the ride.

RADHIKA JONES, Editor

Photograph by Christopher Legaspi
THE 8
THE RETURN OF
AN ICON
Kudos to Amanda Fortini for a wonderfully written, non-stereotypical profile [“The Change Agent,” September]. And to Michelle Williams—from another perfectionist Virgo, who is still searching for radical acceptance in this world—thank you. Your words, which were captured so beautifully in this article, are an inspiration to never stop seeking what we want, desire, and deserve. Know that, while your roles on film may help us escape, your role as a woman of strength and conviction helps us believe in a better future and in the freedom that comes with equality.

Never once have I teared up over an interview with an actor until now. Thank you, Michelle Williams, for sharing. As a woman, mother, wife, and actor getting back in the game in her early 40s, I have struggled. In your honesty, I have found something that helps me.

On the afternoon that I read David Ewing Duncan’s piece on the practice of cloning pets, I sat at home caring for my dog, Scooter, who is in the twilight of his life [“A Clone Is Born,” September]. As I prepare for his death, I wonder how I will fill the void he leaves behind. Duncan’s article superbly empathizes with these struggles while expounding upon the myriad issues surrounding pet cloning, including where ethical lines are to be drawn (no surprise that Jurassic Park is invoked).

Duncan makes it easy to see the appeal of cloning a pet to those for whom it is a viable option—it provides the potential for the near-perfect replacement of a lost family member. Nevertheless, my opinion on replacing a lost pet is still this: adopt. There are countless animals in shelters and foster care who can love and support us just as much as our old ones did, if only we give them the chance.

CORRECTION: On page 126 of the September issue (“Decorative Arts”), the date of the photograph of Katharine Hepburn was incorrect. It is from the 1957 film Desk Set.

“In the Mood for Love”  
by Wesley Yang, September

Retro-chic is something I’ve always felt excluded from in Hollywood. The ability to relate to a U.S. fashion-magazine spread for the first time, with the Crazy Rich Asians story, feels awfully significant. @nancywyuen

“Growing Up Jobs”  
by Lisa Brennan-Jobs, September

This is such an emotionally complex story. I’m always amazed by the generosity that some people are able to feel toward those who have deeply wronged them. But that generosity is often a mark of self-love, despite it all. @OhTimehin

Fab Five Freddy and Max Roach

Wrote the editors: “Who makes us beg, scream, cry, and crawl? It’s graffiti artist and rapper Fab Five Freddy and his godfather, jazz legend Max Roach, in a commission by the Kitchen, the Lower Manhattan center for performance and eccentric behavior.”

Carly Gillum, Chicago, Illinois

Jessica King, Chicago, Illinois

Hayden Smith, Camarillo, California

Correction: On page 126 of the September issue (“Decorative Arts”), the date of the photograph of Katharine Hepburn was incorrect. It is from the 1957 film Desk Set.
There’s no ‘off’ button with Americans. It’s crazy. For me, being around nature and horses in Norway is the best ‘off’ button there is.”

Kristine Froseth, 23, star of the Netflix films Sierra Burgess Is a Loser and Apostle
V.F.’s Krista Smith speaks with Kristine Froseth, the Norwegian model turned actress.

You’re practically the face of Netflix this fall as a star of two new original films. Yes, and they’re very different. In Sierra Burgess Is a Loser, a high-school comedy, I’m Veronica, the mean girl. High school is an awful time, so I wanted to show the conflict that creates a bully. And in Apostle I play Fion, who gets wrapped up in this cult, along with her lover. It’s a thriller with Dan Stevens and Michael Sheen, and it’s very, very dark.

You were first discovered as a model in Norway, right? I was in Oslo, which doesn’t really have a fashion community, but I was scouted at my local mall, walking in this catwalk event that they hosted. Three months later, my family moved to the States, so the timing was amazing, because it all continued for me in New York.

But you were born in the U.S. What was it like growing up between here and Norway? Because of my dad’s job, we would move every three to four years between two very different worlds—Norway and New Jersey. In Norway, we lived in the woods, so we could run around and play. New Jersey was a lot more competitive: the playdates were scheduled, the parents were nervous, and I was a lot less independent. There’s no “off” button with Americans. It’s crazy. For me, being around nature and horses is the best “off” button there is.

What’s your ideal “off” button day? Well, the bread in Norway is amazing. I would wake up and have two pieces that I get at a bakery right next to my family’s apartment, in Oslo. You must add this brown cheese on top of it with butter and strawberry jam … maybe two pieces of chocolate. It really is the best breakfast. Then I would travel to Drøbak, which is my hometown, an hour outside of Oslo, and I’d swim and eat some ice cream. That sounds like a perfect “off” button day.

Did modeling prepare you for an acting career? It changes with each project. Often, you’re not able to be as creative—it’s up to the designer or the photographer to play and experiment. But with some projects, I would talk with the photographer to create a character and a world together, so it became very similar to acting.

Your first major role was in the J. D. Salinger biopic Rebel in the Rye. What was that like? I couldn’t stop smiling on set. I had no idea how movies were made, so it was mind-blowing.

But since then you’ve been busy with a roster of roles. Are you starting to feel at home on set? I’ve always been a complete cinephile and watched way too many movies growing up. But I never really knew how to get into it, so I never had the guts to try it. It’s complete luck that I get to do this for a living. I’ve always been obsessed with human nature, and now I get to be a detective of sorts and dive into a character’s psychology—it’s a dream.

Reading List Georgia’s Democratic candidate for governor, Stacey Abrams, authored the political memoir Minority Leader this year—and eight romance novels before that, including Deception and Never Tell. Her current must-reads are equally eclectic:

**HISTORICAL FICTION**

*The Moor’s Account*, by Laila Lalami

“This novel about Estebanico, a Moroccan slave who was part of the de Narváez expedition, excavates the horror faced by Africans and native peoples in 16th-century Florida. His story makes the reader turn uncomfortable, angry, and bereft—but it’s impossible to turn away.”

**ROMANCE**

*Honest Illusions*, by Nora Roberts

“Roberts’s ability to blend suspense and romance, and to craft intense characterizations without losing the thread of any story, delights the mind and the heart. Plus, her heroines are fiercely independent, and her heroes are flawed and dashing. Excellent romantic fare.”

**NONFICTION**

*The Dictator’s Learning Curve*, by William J. Dobson

“Dobson investigates how authoritarianism has taken on the trappings and lessons of modern institutions to strengthen its ability to strip nations around the world of their democracy. A timely handbook for current political times.”

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What Kristine Loves

**Style icon:** Diane Keaton

**Favorite bag:** My mom’s old Norwegian leather school backpack

**Favorite shoes:** Prada booties

**Favorite sneaker:** Nike Air Max 97

**Product you can’t live without:** Weleda Skin Food

**Lipstick:** Chanel Poudre À Lèvres Lip Balm

**Favorite hotel:** Le Bristol Paris

**Necessary extravagance:** Rent in New York City

**Favorite discovery:** HU cashew-butter dark chocolate

**Whom do you text the most?** My dad
Enlighten Up

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THE VENETIAN RESORT | LAS VEGAS
SKY HIGH
A classic heel gets a reboot

Salvatore Ferragamo was both a technical genius and a born showman: he invented a last that made high heels shockingly comfortable, and he made stacked “Rainbow” platforms for Judy Garland, and ultra-femme four-inch pumps that Marilyn Monroe wore on-screen and off. It was Salvatore’s daughter Fiamma, though, who gave her father’s company its bread and butter, the Vara. Introduced in 1978, with its patent finish and sturdy, not too high heel, the kicky yet practical pump has served as a well-mannered companion to all manner of influencers, from Princess Diana to Alexa Chung.

For resort 2019, Ferragamo women’s creative director Paul Andrew has given the Vara an injection of joie de vivre, stretching the stalwart design up, up, up into an over-the-knee boot. Andrew, who until last year worked strictly in footwear, says he works in the Ferragamo tradition—that is, “toe to head.” The designer envisions a “modern creative” starting her look with these boots, then throwing on Italian knitwear or double-dyed raw denim to spend “a crisp Sunday at the Guggenheim.” The leather thigh-highs have all the history and tradition of the brand’s most iconic shoe, Andrew says—he’s just given them a somewhat subversive twist.

—MAGGIE BULLOCK
Design impresario Ken Fulk unveils St. Joseph’s Arts Society, a shrine to culture and entertaining.

**CHURCH AND TASTE**

“When I first saw it, it was filled with 10,000 pigeons and was raining inside,” says Ken Fulk of the earthquake-ravaged Romanesque-revival church he has restored to become St. Joseph’s Arts Society, a new arts club in San Francisco, where the interior designer and event planner is based. “It had this decrepit grandeur with a higher calling.”

Three years later, sumptuous furnishings, antique sculptures, and contemporary art fill the soaring space, now an incubator for emerging artists and a showstopping site for Fulk’s legendary parties. Tucked among the vestry and choir lofts are a cocktail lounge, an Assouline book salon, a Carpenters Workshop Gallery, and the French apothecary boutique Buly 1803. “You can buy a drink, a book, or an extraordinary piece of art,” Fulk says. “It’s a place to celebrate how art in every form elevates our lives.”

—LOUISA STRAUSS

I purchased this 19th-century zinc statue at the Paris flea 15 years ago.

I have a thing for obelisks and have been collecting them for years. They originated in Egypt as a tribute to the Sun God and then were brought to Rome. I wanted to have some tension between contemporary art and what came before.

Since I was four years old, I would dress my family’s dinner table with flowers. Now, for the first time, our arrangements are available to the public in the Flower Factory.

The church is framed out of steel, which made upgrading it feasible. Without that, it would’ve been impossible in San Francisco, where the earth moves.

The salons along the nave can be fully enclosed with Pierre Frey fabric. You can have an afternoon tea, a private meeting, or canoodle over drinks.
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We didn’t merely try something different. We crafted an entirely original experience. With accents like Kiriko glass, designed by hand then delicately etched with thousands of cuts to catch the eye and transform in the light. A 416-horsepower1 twin-turbo engine paired with a 10-speed Direct-Shift automatic transmission takes you from 0 to 60 in just 4.6 seconds.1,2 All this is complemented by cutting-edge technology with one of the largest Head-Up Displays in the industry.2 The Lexus LS 500 isn’t simply unique. It redefines what a flagship luxury sedan can be.

1. Ratings achieved using the required premium unleaded gasoline with an octane rating of 91 or higher. If premium fuel is not used, performance will decrease. 2. 2019 LS vs. 2018/2019 competitors. Information from manufacturers’ websites as of 5/21/2018. 3. Performance figures are for comparison only and were obtained with prototype vehicles by professional drivers using special safety equipment and procedures. Do not attempt. ©2018 Lexus
Charles Darwin once called blushing “the most peculiar and most human of all expressions.” We are one of the only animals that, when hoping to hide, turn a color designed to stand out. For those of us who are particularly prone to the phenomenon—whose faces burn fuchsia at the least opportune moments—blushing is a bodily betrayal. It is “not only involuntary,” Darwin continues, “but the wish to restrain it, by leading to self-attention, actually increases the tendency.” At its core, it’s a distinct sign of self-awareness. Mark Twain put it well: “Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to.”

Science has advanced 146 years since Darwin’s findings set forth in The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals, but the evolutionary point of blushing is still far from understood. “We know that it’s caused by the dilation of blood vessels,” says dermatologist Dr. Joshua Zeichner, similar to the simple flush caused by exercise and extreme temperatures. But while flushing is a straightforward indication of the body’s release of heat, the dilations that cause a true blush are more mysteriously governed by hormones: adrenaline, when the trigger is embarrassment; oxytocin, when it’s provoked by libidinous thoughts.

Perhaps this marriage of sex and mortification is why blushing has covered some fertile literary territory. To blush connotes not only virtuousness and vulnerability but also eroticism. Jane Austen’s spirited heroines light up like stoplights at the mere mention of a beloved’s name—a coy form of blushing, John Wiltshire writes in his 1992 Jane Austen and the Body, that “declares sexuality in the very form of its denial.” In Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Aurora Leigh, she writes, “Girls blush, sometimes, because they are alive, / Half wishing they were dead to save the shame.” In Romeo and Juliet’s balcony scene, the doomed (and thus far virginal) teen girl says, “Thou know’st the mask of night is on my face, / Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek / For to-night.” On paper, it is almost always women who blush.

While Zeichner notes that it’s impossible to completely eliminate blushing—and, really, why would you want to?—there are treatments and products that can help the chronically flushed. The Vbeam is a pulsed-dye-laser treatment that works especially well on broken capillaries or rosacea. More lo-fi options include sucking on an ice cube before a stressful event, or a wellness practice such as yoga or meditation, which can help ease anxiety. Prescription topicals, like Soolantra or Rhofade, treat the perma-flush that accompanies rosacea, while color correctors like the Dr. Jart+ Cicapair line soothe redness while providing light coverage. One could also, of course, choose to enhance rather than reduce. History has been kind to those who don a heavy blush, from the circles of rouge on Queen Elizabeth I’s cheeks to Diana Vreeland’s deep stripes, to the cheekbone-hugging purples favored by Grace Jones. These women, the antithesis of shy maidens, would never tip too easily into embarrassment. There’s a quiet power to a glowing face. It can signal embarrassment, sure, but also vitality, sexuality, health, vigor. A blush, sometimes, is the most charming proof of life.

―MARISA MELTZER
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CAPTAIN AMERICA

After 50 years of fashion with equal parts aspiration and inspiration, Ralph Lauren has reason to celebrate

By H. W. Vail

Ralph Lauren—the man who sublimated a certain American identity into style—celebrated his half-century career with a golden jubilee in Central Park. Vintage trolley cars ferried guests, in black-tie and ball gowns, from the park’s 72nd Street entrance to the Bethesda Terrace for a runway show and dinner. A lifetime’s worth of cultural icons—from Oprah Winfrey to Steven Spielberg to Kanye West—turned out to toast the Bronx-born designer. The dinner followed a show of the spring 2019 collection, featuring Ralph Lauren hallmarks like denim vests and cowboy boots along with velvet gowns and double-breasted tuxes. Pierce Brosnan, looking suited for a James Bond reprise, said, “It’s the bow tie, it’s the suit. It’s an emblem of that character and forever so.” Pierce wasn’t the only Brosnan present. “My son is in the show,” Brosnan said. “He doesn’t know that I’m here. He’s 17, and he landed this job just a few days ago.”

For who’s who and more, turn to page 72.
“Ralph Lauren is such a great example of Americana.”
—HILLARY CLINTON
"ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FILMS I'VE EVER SEEN."
- Joe Morgenstern

"NO ONE ELSE IS MAKING MOVIES LIKE THIS TODAY."
- Stephanie Zacharek

"EVERY IMAGE - EVERY EMOTION - IS PERFECTLY SET IN PLACE."
- Owen Gleiberman

"FIVE YEARS AFTER THE INTENSITY OF 'GRAVITY' USED THIS MEDIUM TO TRANSCEND EARTH'S BOUNDARIES, 'ROMA' RETURNS US TO STABLE GROUND FROM A BRILLIANT NEW PERSPECTIVE. IT BEGS FOR MULTIPLE VIEWINGS."
- Eric Kohn

"THIS IS CUARÓN'S GREATEST FILM YET."
- Chris Nashawaty

"AT THE HEART OF IT ALL IS A WONDERFUL PERFORMANCE FROM YALITZA APARICIO, WHO BRINGS TO THE ROLE SOMETHING GENTLE, DELICATE, STOIC AND SELFLESS. SHE IS THE JEWEL OF THIS OUTSTANDING FILM."
- Peter Bradshaw

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"A RICHLY TEXTURED MASTERPIECE, 'ROMA' IS CINEMA AT ITS PUREST AND MOST HUMAN."
- Tomris Laffly
Book ’Em There’s a mini-boom of literary scams on the big screen. Why revisit the likes of J. T. LeRoy now?

Early in the film Can You Ever Forgive Me?, struggling writer Lee Israel, played by Melissa McCarthy in a salt-and-pepper wig and worn-out clothes, crashes a book party at the elegant New York apartment of her literary agent, played by a deliciously snooty Jane Curtin. It is 1991, a time before Amazon.com, social media, Oprah’s Book Club, or any of the seismic forces that would hit the publishing world over the next 27 years. The odious celebrity-author complex, however, is already alive and well. In the center of the party, flanked by groupies and bellowing some self-aggrandizing comment, is best-selling novelist Tom Clancy, who has managed to achieve wealth and acclaim just as copies of Israel’s latest book, a biography of Estée Lauder, are gathering on the remainder piles. Clancy excels at the increasingly important art of self-promotion. Israel, a cranky, lonely woman, has neither the will nor the talent for it.

“Why can’t you just do what you do?” McCarthy asks me, explaining the discomfort Israel had with her industry’s move toward telegenic authors. “Why do you have to also be the shiny star behind it? Something I loved about Lee is that she was never going to do that. She was never going to perform, and show up, and sparkle. It was more like ‘Read my book, or not. But I’m not going to play that game.’”

Failing to play the game meant failing to work, at least until Israel found another avenue for her talents, convincingly impersonating some of the greatest writers of the 20th century in forged letters. As the film, based on Israel’s 2008 memoir of the same name, details, the author spent 1991 and 1992 at vintage typewriters, lovingly composing some 400 letters that she sold to collectors and dealers as original works by writers such as Dorothy Parker and Noël Coward. Having developed an ability to get inside the minds of her subjects while writing biographies, Israel was now performing a kind of ghost-writing, albeit illegal.

McCarthy’s fabulist will have competition this fall. Following a summer when con artists seemed to be making headlines everywhere, autumn will see a host of movies based on bookish frauds of a certain vintage. In addition to Can You Ever Forgive Me?, due in theaters October 19, there’s Jeremiah Terminator LeRoy, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. That film stars Laura Dern as author Laura Albert, who invented the androgynous, H.I.V.-positive teenage-boy hustler-author persona “J. T. LeRoy” to sell her early-2000s books, Sarah and The Heart Is Deceitful Above All Things, and enlisted her sister-in-law, Savannah Knoop (Kristen Stewart), to dress up in a wig and sunglasses and help carry out the ruse. Israel was eventually caught by the F.B.I., Albert and Knoop by a New York Times journalist. Arriving at roughly the same time is a literary-scam movie of a very different sort. A Million Little Pieces, which also premiered at T.I.F.F., stars Aaron Taylor-Johnson as James Frey, in an adaptation of Frey’s 2003 memoir of addiction that was later revealed to have been significantly fictionalized. This movie takes the
“GORGEOUSLY FILMED. CHRIS PINE IS EXCELLENT.”  
Los Angeles Times

“A BIG, BLOODY MUD-AND-HONOR EPIC. IT COMES IN BLAZING, LIKE A KING.”

Entertainment

FROM DAVID MACKENZIE  
THE DIRECTOR OF HELL OR HIGH WATER

A NETFLIX FILM

OUTLAW KING

IN SELECT THEATERS AND ON  
NETFLIX | NOV 9
Imagine the innocence of the times. This riled up about a literary deception! Indignant questioning of Frey. Getting cringe-worthy, in re-watching Winfrey's there's something almost quaint, if seemingly incessant war on the truth, the era of so-called fake news, and a memoir at face value. But it's impossible to recall the book without also recalling the moment in 2006 when Oprah Winfrey, who had helped drive A Million Little Pieces to the top of the best-seller lists by making it one of her book-club selections, lambasted Frey on her talk show for lying. In the era of so-called fake news, and a seemingly incessant war on the truth, there's something almost quaint, if cringe-worthy, in re-watching Winfrey's indignation questioning of Frey. Getting this riled up about a literary deception! Imagine the innocence of the times.

Though all three films center on the pre- and early Internet eras, such frauds have been on the national conscience again lately. This year has already given the entertainment industry some real-life scams to savor, from the silver-tongued impostor who was calling around Los Angeles pretending to be prominent Hollywood women like Amy Pascal and Kathleen Kennedy to alleged fraudster Anna Delvey, who ran up hotel bills around the world in the guise of a New York socialite and who will soon be the subject of a Netflix series by Shonda Rhimes. There was also the ex-cop who rigged the McDonald's Monopoly game, detailed in a news story that producers planted in order to spark a bidding war over the film rights, which Ben Affleck and Matt Damon ultimately won. In that case, even a story about a scam seemed sort of, well, scammy. Something about our current national mood suggests we're yearning to see con artists, to watch their rise and, more hungrily, their fall. As the public looks for answers, can the scams of seasons past, just now getting the movie treatment, offer any?

**Hollywood loves** a handsome con man, from Paul Newman’s gift pool player in The Hustler to Robert Redford’s streetwise grifter in The Sting, to the dapper gang of cardsharps in Ocean’s 11 and its remake. But the unorthodox swindlers in Can You Ever Forgive Me? and Jeremiah Terminator LeRoy are women who spend their time at book parties and use typewriters and telephones instead of playing cards and guns. “There was something so refreshing about seeing a female character who just unabashedly is herself,” says Can You Ever Forgive Me? director Marielle Heller. “And doesn’t apologize. And is the smartest person in the room, and knows it. And isn’t going to let anyone get away with thinking otherwise. And that’s such a quality that you’d normally see in a male character.”

Both Can You Ever Forgive Me? and Jeremiah Terminator LeRoy are more interested in the psychology motivating their scammers than in the scams themselves, and both films reveal the perversities of the celebrity-author-driven publishing industry their protagonists were attempting to work within. When cultural gatekeepers began demanding that our authors be larger-than-life figures, is it any wonder that some of them took it too far? “Sarah, I do think it was a great book,” says Justin Kelly, who directed Jeremiah Terminator LeRoy from a script he wrote with Knoop. “A lot of people had it on pop-culture books of the decade. Some of those people felt like they wanted to take it off their lists when they found out that it was Laura Albert and not J.T., and I just find that so fascinating. The book is the same.”

In stretches, Can You Ever Forgive Me? unfolds like a buddy movie, as Israel enlists an accomplice in her scam: a charming, street-smart, H.I.V.-positive friend named Jack Hock, played by Richard E. Grant. Among the many pleasures of Can You Ever Forgive Me? is the way Lee and Jack cavort in a dirtier, more accessible, early-1990s Manhattan, a city where a floundering writer could still cobble together the money to rent a pre-war apartment and keep herself stocked in scotch. Heller made frequent use of the remaining vestiges of that era, like Neil’s Coffee Shop, on the Upper East Side, and Julius’, a gay bar in Greenwich Village. “I always feel like I missed this perfect moment in New York, this interesting, grittier, more artist-driven time,” Heller says. “This movie is sort of as that was ending and New York was shifting and artists were getting pushed out. In so many ways I related to what that must have been like for somebody like Lee, to feel their city changing. And to feel like there was no place for her anymore. And just what a painful thing that is.” New York has also changed in ways specific to the literary world since the early 90s, such that when Heller started location scouting, she found many of the bookshops where Israel sold her letters had closed or were in the process of closing. Early-90s New York was also a moment filled with loss for the city, and for many, like Israel, in its gay and artistic communities. “We thought a lot about this particular era in New York, in the middle of the AIDS crisis [when] so many men were dead and dying,” Heller says. “And people like Jack were...
MICHAEL DOUGLAS  ALAN ARKIN
FROM CHUCK LORRE
The Kominsky Method
A NETFLIX ORIGINAL SERIES
SOME FRIENDSHIPS NEVER GET OLD
NETFLIX  |  NOV 16
finding themselves very alone. And women like Lee—I mean, Lee was alone for her own myriad of reasons. So these two people who were very alone, finding each other by this twist of fate was such a miracle because they, in any other time, probably wouldn’t have opened up to each other.” In the case of Jeremiah Terminator LeRoy, which unfolds a decade later, Albert created J. T. LeRoy as an H.I.V.-positive teen, which may explain why many felt disposed to help him and why many felt angry and betrayed when he turned out to be fake. Ira Silverberg, LeRoy’s agent at the time of the reveal, told The New York Times that “to present yourself as a person who is dying of AIDS in a culture which has lost so many writers and voices of great meaning, to take advantage of that sympathy and empathy, is the most unfortunate part of all of this.”

Jeremiah Terminator LeRoy reveals that it’s a period movie in a different way than Can You Ever Forgive Me?, in just how unfathomable it is to us now that someone could become as famous as J. T. LeRoy did without getting caught sooner. “Belief is powerful, and it can make people do some crazy things,” Kelly says. “Ira Silverberg, LeRoy’s agent at the time of the reveal, told The New York Times that “to present yourself as a person who is dying of AIDS in a culture which has lost so many writers and voices of great meaning, to take advantage of that sympathy and empathy, is the most unfortunate part of all of this.”

Knoop at a San Francisco clothing-store opening that was posted online.

“I don’t think this would have happened at all post-Facebook and -Instagram,” Kelly says. “The eventual reason that The New York Times unveiled the story was a photo online of Savannah at this trunk show. Somebody saw it and was like, ‘Huh, that looks a lot like this J.T. person.’ Post-2007, I just don’t think a story like this would ever happen.” In a wink to his audience, Kelly’s movie casts Love as herself. Like many, Love was duped by Albert and Knoop, but she seems to have found the whole hoax so weird and wonderful that she hasn’t held a grudge. That may be in part because of the complicated psychological story Jeremiah Terminator LeRoy tells, in which Albert is working out her own demons of childhood abuse and body image in the fictional character she created.

There’s a strange poetry to the idea that these women who were trying to game the celebrity-obsessed publishing world are now the subjects of movies themselves. To be taken seriously by the literary cognoscenti, both women pretended to be someone else, in a kind of extension of the long-standing practice of female authors from the Brontë sisters to J. K. Rowling taking on male or gender-neutral pen names. In their day, Israel and Albert had to pose. Now they’re being played by Oscar-nominated actresses, their inventiveness reconsidered and even fêted at film festivals.

For his part, Frey is still writing, including an autobiographical novel released this fall, Katerina, which seems to be an attempt to re-litigate the Million Little Pieces contretemps, in that it focuses on a writer with an addiction and experience of public shaming. Frey’s publisher, Simon & Schuster, says Katerina “echoes and complements that most controversial of memoirs, and plays with the same issues of fiction and reality that created, nearly destroyed, and then re-created James Frey in the American imagination.”

Critics have been less generous, with The Washington Post calling it “a million little pieces of narcissism [that] may be the worst novel of the year.” While it’s probably true that Oprah—and the rest of us—over-reacted to Frey’s embellishments, it also seems clear he hopes to wring every last possible moment out of what remains of his literary bad-boy status. That Frey is now being played in a movie by a shaggily handsome and gifted actor, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, won’t hurt.

It’s easy to picture Israel, who died in 2014, rolling her eyes at all these tales landing on-screen. One day while filming in Julius’, McCarthy says, she noticed an older man watching her work. “He said, ‘I was a good friend of Lee’s,’” McCarthy tells me. “And immediately I’m like, ‘How am I doing? Would Lee have been happy about this?’ He was being very sweet about it. He goes, ‘Well, happy wasn’t really Lee’s gig. But she would have loved this attention on her work. That she would be very, very pleased with.’”

“Belief is powerful, and it can make people do some crazy things.”
TONI COLLETTE
STEVEN MACKINTOSH
SOPHIE OKONEDO

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WHY WONDER
WHEN YOU CAN WANDER?

ALL EPISODES
OCT 19

NETFLIX
He is as cool as ever—the Mr. Spock of modern American politics, a man who can do the split-fingered Vulcan salute and intone “Live long and prosper,” a tribute to the television series that “Barry” Obama first watched growing up in Honolulu more than half a century ago. To visitors and staffers who call on him in his Washington offices, in the West End section of the capital, near Georgetown, the former president’s conversations are thoughtful and wide-ranging. As he works on his much-anticipated memoir (there is no firm publication date), he is able to toggle between timelines, free to choose among stories from his campaigning days for the Senate in downstate Illinois to Iowa vote totals, or from American demography to the state of global democracy. In his off-duty wardrobe of jeans and a casual shirt, a go-cup of tea at hand, still graying subtly but surely, and looking even leaner than in his White House days, he tends to take the longest of views on the state of the nation since his successor assumed power. Recently, he has sagely remarked to those who ask, worriedly, about the Age of Trump: “Things are never as good as we think when they’re going well, and never as bad as we think when they aren’t.”

Barack Hussein Obama has been like this forever: unflappable when everyone else is flapping wildly, reasonable in a swirl of passion. Ten years ago this month, he was elected as the 44th president of the United States, a moment more than a few Americans had not believed they would live to see. In the weeks after Obama defeated John McCain, in 2008, I asked George H. W. Bush if he had thought an African-American could win the presidency in his own lifetime. “No, I didn’t,” Bush 41 replied. “But then I met him, and I totally get how he did.”

And therein lies a fundamental element of the Obama story: he is the particular that made the general possible. There is an ancient debate about the relative role of human agency in history—a fancy way of speculating about whether events are shaped more by broad forces (demography, economics, geography) or by the characters and characteristics of individual leaders at a given moment. The answer is usually mixed, but there’s no doubt that, say, Abraham Lincoln’s political gifts and moral compass enabled him to save the Union when others might have failed. Or that Franklin D. Roosevelt’s complexities informed his ability to rescue capitalism and lead a reluctant nation to global responsibility.

These are early days for a historical verdict on Barack Obama. But it seems safe to say that his background—as a child raised in Hawaii, the son of a white mother and a Kenyan father, together with the hyper-vigilant care with which he approached the task of living a life balancing disparate traditions, influences, and worldviews—was critical to his rise to the pinnacle of American power. Never a candidate of grievance, he won majorities in two national elections by appealing to the future, not by exploiting the past or by fueling familiar culture wars.

Obama has always led a charmed political life. Though the young state senator’s credit card was rejected when he tried to rent a car while attending the 2000 Democratic National Convention, in Los Angeles, things quickly turned in his favor. Four years later, political opponents in Illinois imploded all around him, opening a path to the U.S. Senate. (A rival for the Democratic nomination was accused of physically assaulting his ex-wife, and the Republican nominee dropped out after his former wife said that he’d asked her to accompany him to
A night owl, he writes his first drafts in longhand, staying up into the early hours of the morning.

...the rise of nativism, xenophobia, propaganda, and fear in the broadest of contexts.

Framing our own moment of fear was one of his goals on a summer trip to Africa to deliver a lecture in honor of Nelson Mandela. Describing the backlash to globalization in recent years, Obama acknowledged the American and European movements that have “tapped the unease that was felt by many people who lived outside of the urban cores, fears that economic security was slipping away, that their social status and privileges were eroding, that their cultural identities were being threatened by outsiders, somebody that didn’t look like them or sound like them or pray as they did.” That he was speaking the same week that Trump was roiling the NATO summit, and holding a bizarrely buddy-like press conference with Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, gave particular force to Obama’s words about America’s need to lead against strongman politics—and the “bigger and bigger lies” of authoritarians.

He also made a special plea for the straightforward role of fact in public life. “Too much of politics today seems to reject the very concept of objective truth,” Obama said. “We see the utter loss of shame among political leaders where they’re caught in a lie and they just double down and they lie some more.”

Lately, Obama has been out making the rounds, rallying voters before the midterms. “There’s always been [a] darker aspect to America’s story,” he insisted in a September speech in Illinois. “It did not start with Donald Trump.” He continued along these lines the next day, in California: “When you look at the arc of American history, there’s always been a push and pull ... between those who promote the politics of hope and those who exploit the politics of fear.”

For the most part, however, Obama has been living his days outside the constant oompah of the national circus. He is deeply engaged in planning his presidential library, due to open in Chicago in several years. His foundation is focused on grassroots organizing and leadership at home and abroad. (The prevailing descriptor is “civic innovation.”) He and Michelle have signed a whopping deal to develop content for Netflix. And with the former First Lady’s memoir, Becoming, out this month, her husband, in his private hours, is focused on his.

A night owl, he writes his first drafts in longhand, staying up late into the evening and early hours of the morning. He mostly works in a sparsely decorated study in the Obamas’ house in the Kalorama section of Washington, D.C., and in his wood-paneled West End office, where he’ll put an old LP on his Shinola record player while he’s working. (Otis Redding, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Bruce Springsteen, and Duke Ellington are the usual suspects, with some Brandi Carlile, Leon Bridges, and Kendrick Lamar thrown in.) As staffers are busy doing research and interviewing former Cabinet members and senior officials to help jog his memory, he mainly sits alone, drafting one sentence, then another.

Obama’s personal answer to our current plight? Tell a better story. Insist on a more appealing counter-narrative. And follow his wife’s counsel to go high when they—meaning Trump—go low. Obama believes in this rhetorical prescription to his core. And why shouldn’t he? He mastered American politics by telling his own story, and Trump rose to high office by telling a different one. Democracies are by nature emotional entities, and it’s not much of a reach to think that historians will see the Obama-Trump pivot as the starkest of examples of the competing American narratives of hope and of fear.

In Africa, Obama spoke plainly. “Let me tell you what I believe,” he said. “I believe in a vision of equality and justice and freedom and multi-racial democracy, built on the premise that all people are created equal, and they’re endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights. And I believe that a world governed by such principles is possible and that it can achieve more peace and more cooperation in pursuit of a common good. That’s what I believe.” It’s his story, and he’s sticking to it.
Teddy vs. Trump

From the Square Deal to The Art of the Deal, the perils of too much bully, not enough pulpit

Picture a man with an unquenchable thirst for celebrity, who gets into rows with everybody, who has a gift for punchy quips that make headlines; a man of undeniable charisma who so craves being the center of attention he wants to be the baby at the baptism, the bride at the wedding, and the corpse at the funeral. “While he is in the neighborhood,” one critic grudgingly concedes, “the public can no more look the other way than the small boy can turn his head away from a circus parade!” We speak, of course, not of our current president but of Theodore Roosevelt, based on depictions from more than a century ago.

As a presidential historian, I am often asked which of our past presidents might be best suited for our current moment in time. No doubt it would be Roosevelt. T.R. could surely master our social-media age and especially the Twitterverse with his vivid, memorable aphorisms: “Speak softly and carry a big stick.” “Don’t hit till you have to; but, when you do hit, hit hard.” “It is hard to fail but it is worse never to have tried to succeed.”

Like President Trump, Roosevelt took office in turbulent times. At the turn of the 20th century, the Industrial Revolution had shaken up the economy much as the technological revolution and globalization have redefined our lives today. Big companies were swallowing up small companies. New inventions had quickened the pace of life to a frenzied degree. People in rural areas felt alienated. A menacing gap had opened between the rich and the poor.

Roosevelt looked to the future with what he called a “Square Deal”—for the rich and the poor, the capitalist and the wageworker. Candidate Trump promised to utilize his skill, which he laid out in The Art of the Deal, to bring America back to a simpler time of greatness. But, in the end, the success of any deal depends on the character and the experience of the dealer. No one would argue that either Roosevelt or Trump suffered from a deficiency of bravado or confidence. Yet Roosevelt grew in power precisely because he grew to know his limitations, because he developed the humility to acknowledge his mistakes. After his first, wildly successful term in the state legislature, he developed, in his own words, a “swelled” head. Whenever opposed, he would yell, pound his desk, and retaliate with venom. While his blistering language made great newspaper copy, he soon found himself bereft of support. It began to dawn upon him, he conceded, that he was “not all-important” and that “cooperation from other people” was essential.

That President Trump has not developed such humility is evident. When asked during his campaign whom he consulted on foreign policy, he said, “My primary consultant is myself, and I have a good instinct for this stuff.” Accepting the Republican nomination, he noted, “Nobody knows the system better than me, which is why I alone can fix it.” In the long run, however, the presidency has a way of...
humbling even the most self-assured. While both Roosevelt and Trump were born to extraordinary privilege, Roosevelt’s empathy slowly expanded through his long political career. As a state legislator, he investigated the dreadful conditions in New York City’s tenements. As police commissioner, he roamed the slums between midnight and sunrise. His understanding of his fellow citizens broadened during his time in the armed forces, as New York governor, and as vice president. In sum, he was amply prepared as a leader in 1901 when the assassination of William McKinley catapulted him to the presidency at age 42, the youngest man ever to occupy the White House.

During the unprecedented Republican-primary season of 2016, long and broad public service was perceived as a liability. The times were ripe for a candidate with no political background to catch the lightning. Things were so topsy-turvy and toxic, it seemed as if we had left a world where experience, temperament, and character mattered, and entered one where knowledge of history and government and law had all been jettisoned. Candidate Trump brilliantly capitalized on these atmospherics by railing against the political status quo and giving a voice to those who felt excluded.

Campaigning and stoking one’s base, however, is not governing. Governing requires bringing sides together, rather than simply tallying wins and losses. This understanding of leadership has eluded Trump so far. “You hear lots of people say that a great deal is when both sides win,” Trump maintains. “That is a bunch of crap.... I always win.”

**Imagine a leader** like Roosevelt, who sought a fulcrum point between contending sides, who strove to forge a common purpose among conservatives and progressives. To knit classes and regions together, he traveled by train for weeks at a time through rural areas and cities in places where he had been defeated as well as in states he had won. He listened to local complaints and spoke in folksy language that reached the hearts of his countrymen. His inclusive leadership sutured, rather than exacerbated, divisions.

Imagine a leader who developed remarkably collegial relations with the press, those now termed the “enemy of the American people.” Roosevelt invited reporters to meals, took questions during his midday shave, and, most importantly, absorbed their criticism with grace. A celebrated journalist mercilessly lampooned Roosevelt’s memoir of the Spanish-American War by claiming Roosevelt should have called the book *Alone in Cuba*, since he placed himself at the center of every action and every battle. Roosevelt replied with a winning capacity for self-deprecation: “I regret to state that my family and intimate friends are delighted with your review.”

Consider today the novelty of a leader like Roosevelt. When friends warned him against keeping on the slain McKinley’s Cabinet, fearing some members might not be loyal to the replacement president, Roosevelt replied, “If the men I retained were loyal to their work they would be giving me the loyalty for which I most cared.” What mattered was their sworn loyalty to the job and the country—not their personal fealty.

Imagine a leader who used “the bully pulpit,” a phrase Roosevelt coined to connote the platform inherent in the presidency, to educate the American people about the importance of a healthy civic life. “Bully” to Roosevelt meant first-rate or superlative: gaining one’s objective by persuasion rather than through the darker meaning of bullying. “Civic life,” Roosevelt preached, “must be marked by the fellow feeling, the mutual kindness, the mutual respect, the sense of common duties and common interests which arise when men take the trouble to understand one another.” Acrimony and antipathy develop, he argued, when “the two sections, or two classes, are so cut off from each other that neither appreciates the other’s passions, prejudices, and indeed, point of view.”

The Square Deal, the slogan that would come to characterize Roosevelt’s entire domestic program, was predicated upon this fellow feeling and a determination to be fair to all. “I believe in rich people who act squarely, and in labor unions which are managed with wisdom and justice. But when either employee or employer, laboring man or capitalist, goes wrong, I have to clinch him, and that is all there is to it.”

The Square Deal, like all deals, hinged upon intention, promises, pledges, and execution. All deals are based upon stability and coherence. The words that make up a durable deal cannot be granted one day and walked back the next. Roosevelt called words that were emptied of meaning “weasel words,” as if a weasel had sucked out the nourishment of truth and left behind an empty shell.

**Today, a pattern** has emerged of misspoken statements, half-truths, invented distractions, and outright fabrications. Critical analyses and disagreements are termed fake. Blatant falsehoods are repeated and disagreements are termed outright fabrications. Critical analyses and disagreements are termed fake. Blatant falsehoods are repeated again and again. Yet constant repetition of an assertion does not make it true—except perhaps in the nonsense realm of Lewis Carroll’s *The Hunting of the Snark*: “Just the place for a Snark! I have said it thrice: What I tell you three times is true.”

This is beyond simply winning or losing. There is a terrible danger in growing accustomed to the erosion of meaning in our political discourse. Serious, perhaps lasting, damage is being done to our identity as Americans and to our democracy. We are moving in a direction in which trust will be vaporized and truth becomes a fugitive.
Being a journalist in a war zone used to ensure a measure of safety. Victims of conflict often viewed correspondents as messengers who could tell the world about their plight; combatants knew the grave repercussions of harming unarmed news crews. No longer. As social media has become the modern-day medium for history’s first draft, the line has blurred between seasoned correspondents and “citizen journalists.” Increasingly, those who attempt to cover conflict have become targets themselves. This hard truth became all too real with the death of Marie Colvin, targeted by Syrian-government troops seven years ago. As a feature film about Colvin, A Private War, is set to open in November, Marie Brenner writes about the legendary war reporter.

A few days after Marie Colvin died, I arrived in London to write about her life for Vanity Fair. I spent hours by photographer Paul Conroy’s bed at the hospital where he was recovering from the explosions that had killed her and almost cost him his leg. One of the first stories he told me took place outside Sirte, during the Libyan civil war, where he and Colvin had been trapped for days. Minutes from deadline, in a speeding car heading for the border, there wasn’t a whisper of power they could use to transmit Marie’s copy from her laptop. The driver screamed as Conroy crawled onto the back of the car with a booster, sand blowing in his eyes. Marie hit Send. Then Paul and Marie screamed with relief as the car streaked down the highway. “I have never seen journalists who worked this way,” the driver told them. “Well, you have never worked with The Sunday Times,” Marie yelled.

In January of this year, the newsroom of The Sunday Times (U.K.) came into full view when I visited the set of the film A Private War—director Matt Heineman’s cinematic rendering of the eponymous piece I wrote for Vanity Fair in 2012. It will be released this month and stars Rosamund Pike as Colvin. On the day I visited, a pivotal scene was being filmed: Colvin was determined to get herself assigned to Sri Lanka in April of 2001 to cover a yet unreported situation in which refugees were under siege by government forces. She had a shouting match with her editor in the meticulously re-created newsroom. The afternoon I spent on set was unnerving, as I knew what was coming for Colvin once she left the safety of that space. She would go to Sri Lanka and lose sight in one eye due to a grenade thrown at her after announcing she was a reporter and wear an eye patch for the rest of her life.

Heineman, just 34, has been nominated for an Academy Award for his documentary Cartel Land, but has never made a narrative feature film. He has, however, directed City of Ghosts, detailing the lives of several of Syria’s citizen reporters. He was galvanized by Colvin’s career and for three years has worked tirelessly to bring her life story to the screen; no easy feat. Colvin was a paradox—a fount of exuberance with devoted friends whom she would regale with stories from the field, shaped into performances that camouflaged the raw truth. Colvin’s sangfroid and wit fit beautifully in London media and political circles, but there was a price: PTSD, nightmares, alcoholism. She was not interested in the strategy of war but rather in the real human dramas of those who have suffered the consequences. Marie Colvin had a mission that she turned into a vocation: to go to the most violent places on earth and bear witness to what man does to man, no matter the personal toll.
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Valley_of_the_BOOM

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JANUARY 2019
THE NEW ESTABLISHMENT 2018

ILLUSTRATION BY SUPERMUNDANE
Movers and Makers From Washington to Hollywood, the 100 Power Players on our annual list are reshaping the world we live in

By Nick Bilton

Last December, Bob Iger sat down for dinner in his Brentwood home with his wife, the journalist Willow Bay, and their two teenage sons and shared some unexpected news. Outside, the wind rustled the citrus trees and vegetable gardens. Inside, Bay and the kids looked on with dread. Recently, to the mild trepidation of his family, Iger had been flirting with the presidency. As he began his disclosure, his family members could have reasonably thought that their lives were about to be overturned by campaign stops and the circus of modern politics.

Instead, Iger was announcing his latest deal. The board of 21st Century Fox, he said, had just voted to approve Disney’s $52 billion acquisition offer for its entertainment assets, ranging from its film studio to the FX network. (The final price would later climb to $71 billion.) It was a career-defining consummation, and Iger, who is 67, told his family that he would be staying at Disney for at least four years to see the integration through. One of Iger’s sons looked at him and asked, “So what does this mean in terms of your presidential aspirations?” Iger responded, “It’s off the table,” at which point his son looked to Bay, and the two high-fived.

Iger may have sidestepped a political gamble, but his decision to lead the world’s largest media company in this age of unprecedented mayhem and innumerable lurking acroymic threats—O.T.T., A.I., S.V.O.D.—is not without its own risks. Technology has arguably upended Disney’s portfolio of assets—news, entertainment, sports, theme parks—more in the past decade than in the previous hundred years. When Iger took over for Michael Eisner, Netflix was competing with Blockbuster. Now, under the leadership of Reed Hastings and Ted Sarandos, it is the world’s second-largest media company, with a market capitalization of $160 billion to Disney’s $163 billion, and unabashed ambitions for global dominance. Netflix, after all, has upwards of 130 million monthly subscribers and recently won the same number of prime-time Emmys as HBO; it’s the culprit, the looming threat, behind the season’s rash of media mergers—including not only Disney’s play for Fox but also AT&T’s $85 billion acquisition of Time Warner.

In 2001, futurist Ray Kurzweil predicted that our society would effectively experience 20,000 years of technological progress in the forthcoming century. We are now watching this new paradigm unfold, and it may—along with our still nascent reckoning regarding acceptable workplace behavior and our society’s now two-year-old reckoning with the Trump presidency—be the most significant leitmotif coursing through this year’s New Establishment list.

In the past year, Iger has gone from presidential hopeful to, once again, media savior. In the same time, Robert Mueller has indicted dozens of people for cyber crimes. Jeff Bezos has upended grocery shopping and fashion. A year ago, few people outside the technology industry had ever heard of Dara Khosrowshahi. Now, as he leads Uber to a likely I.P.O. next year, he is arguably the most important C.E.O. in the Valley.

Khosrowshahi knows that things move fast. Uber’s dispatching algorithm that connects drivers with riders can also predict where drivers will be needed at specific times and help usher them in that direction. Amazon is readying technology that will be able to predict when you’re out of milk and automatically drop it off at your house before you’ve even realized it. Venture capitalist Marc Andreessen just invested $65 million in a company that is hoping to replace lawyers with machine learning—maybe not such a bad thing.

During my conversation with Iger, he placed his iPad Pro on the table in front of me and played the trailer for the new Lion King movie. As the African chant Nants ingonyama bagithi Baba began, there were clips of wild animals running through the tundra and an aerial shot of birds flying through the sky. Then I saw a scene of a baby lion that was so real I wondered how on earth they’d taught the animal to act on cue. This was when I realized that the clips had all been generated with computer graphics. I reminded Iger that just a year ago, at the time of the New Establishment Summit, I had asked him how long it would take before technology was so advanced that real-life actors would no longer be needed in a film. Iger said it was several decades away. Yet here it was, in front of me, suggesting the opposite. “If you’re doing this with animals, why aren’t you doing it with people?” I asked. Iger looked at me like a magician about to tell me which card I had picked. He smiled and said, “It can be done.”
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100% of the purchase price from the “Live Love” light pink t-shirts will be donated to the Pink Pony Fund of The Polo Ralph Lauren Foundation or to an international network of cancer charities.

Globally, 25% of the purchase price from the sale of each item in the Pink Pony collection is directed to an international network of cancer charities; within the United States, proceeds benefit the Pink Pony Fund of The Polo Ralph Lauren Foundation.

RALPHLAUREN.COM/PINKPONY
1. ROBERT MUELLER
Age: 74
Occupation: Special counsel, Department of Justice
Previous Rank: 6

Evidence of institutional inscrutability: The unofficial hero of the anti-Trump resistance, and the avatar of American institutionalism, may or may not satisfy the appetite of an electorate searching for answers about what really went down between the Trump campaign and Russia. But Mueller, and his nearly three dozen indictments and guilty pleas, is proof of the power of the law.

2. JEFF BEZOS
Age: 54
Occupation: C.E.O., Amazon
Previous Rank: 1

Display of Vulcan chess mastery: Antagonism from President Trump and Bernie Sanders notwithstanding, Bezos has continued to grow both his personal wealth (he recently overtook Bill Gates as the world’s richest person) and the value of his company, which hovers around the trillion-dollar mark.

3. REED HASTINGS
Age: 57
Occupation: C.E.O., Netflix
Previous Rank: 9

Started at the bottom: Hastings founded Netflix two decades ago with a thesis that consumers would one day stream billions of hours of content over the Internet. Now the company has a market capitalization of $160 billion and recently beat out HBO on Emmy night for the first time (for more, see page 96).

4. BOB IGER
Age: 67
Occupation: C.E.O., Disney
Previous Rank: 7

A new front in the streaming wars: This time last year, Iger was considering taking on Trump’s divisive rhetoric and running against him in 2020. But Iger’s political ambitions were suspended when he saw the opportunity to buy 21st Century Fox, for a cool $71 billion. An antidote to AT&T’s $85 billion acquisition of Time Warner, the move helped usher Disney into a new era of streaming—and open a new front in its battle with Netflix.

5. TIM COOK
Age: 57
Occupation: C.E.O., Apple
Previous Rank: 3

Trillion-dollar man: While other tech C.E.O.’s were skewered in the press for their role in the 2016 election mess, Apple stayed above the fray while also becoming the first American company with a trillion-dollar market capitalization. “The truth is, we could make a ton of money if we monetized our customer—if our customer was our product,” Cook recently said, in a veiled reference to Facebook. “We’ve elected not to do that.”

6. MICHELLE OBAMA
Age: 54
Occupation: Author, co-founder, Higher Ground Productions
Previous Rank: New

Returning to higher ground: As the midterms approach, the Obamas have just begun tiptoeing back onto the national scene, but they remain as influential as ever—particularly Michelle, whose forthcoming book, Becoming, is the first highly anticipated release in the family’s pair of multi-million-dollar deals with Penguin Random House and Netflix, and who launched her own get-out-the-vote campaign. The former First Lady’s upcoming book tour transcends authordom—she’s selling out stadiums à la Joel Osteen, or Mick Jagger.

7. MARK ZUCKERBERG
Age: 34
Occupation: C.E.O., Facebook
Previous Rank: 2

I’m still C.E.O., bitch! In a year punctuated by a data-prvacy scandal, disinfection campaigns, a massive one-day stock capsizing, and growing skepticism on Capitol Hill, Zuckerberg, who as a young founder infamously printed cards with the mantra “I’m CEO, Bitch,” continues to exercise nearly unchecked power at Facebook.

8. BEYONCÉ
Age: 37
Occupation: Musician
Previous Rank: 77

The breadwinner: Beyoncé and husband Jay-Z just collaborated on a 48-date tour in support of their album, Everything Is Love, which is expected to bring in more than $200 million this year. In 2017, Beyoncé alone earned more than $100 million, while her performances at Coachella, a tribute to historically black colleges, secured her role as a cultural figure well beyond the realm of music.

9. RANDALL STEPHENSON
Age: 58
Occupation: C.E.O., AT&T
Previous Rank: 8

The quant: After conquering Trump’s Department of Justice to consummate his acquisition of Time Warner, the Dallas-based telecom executive now sits atop a war chest of premium film and television programming, from HBO to CNN. “It’s enough to keep AT&T’s 159 million mobile customers glued to their smartphones.

10. MASAYOSHI SON
Age: 63
Occupation: C.E.O., SoftBank
Previous Rank: 24

One hundred billion reasons: With its $100 billion Vision Fund, Japanese giant SoftBank has quickly become one of the most powerful players in tech, muscling out rivals with its massive bets on Uber, semiconductors, and WeWork, among dozens of other companies. Son, the company’s enigmatic founder, has said he expects artificial intelligence to surpass humanity “within the next 30 years.”

11. DARA KHOSROWSHAHI
Age: 49
Occupation: C.E.O., Uber
Previous Rank: 42

Übermensch: A little over a year ago, few people in Silicon Valley had heard of the Iranian-born entrepreneur running Expedia. But after Uber nearly imploded under Travis Kalanick, Khosrowshahi appears to be turning around a company that seemed like it was about to crater from self-inflicted injuries. Can he stay the course and take Uber public next year (for more, see page 94)?

12. LARRY PAGE
Age: 45
Occupation: C.E.O., Alphabet
Previous Rank: 2

Gravity-free zone: Neither a record-breaking $5 billion fine from European regulators nor the president’s constant Twitter barrage could impede Alphabet, Google’s parent company, which continues to beat Wall Street expectations as it also creeps toward the vaunted trillion-dollar market-capitalization threshold.

13. LEBRON JAMES
Age: 33
Occupation: Athlete, producer
Previous Rank: 76

Showtime: When James signed his four-year, $154 million deal to play with the Los Angeles Lakers, some wondered if the move was intended to get the four-time N.B.A. M.V.P. closer to Hollywood. His SpringHill production company, with offices on the Warner Bros. lot, is working on a remake of House Party and a sequel, Space Jam 2, starring James and produced by Ryan Coogler. James is also involved in TV projects for HBO, Showtime, and NBC.

“Every technological change always brings two steps forward and one step back.”

—REED HASTINGS, IN FEBRUARY 2018, ON HOW TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING SOCIETY
14. **SERENA WILLIAMS**

Age: 37  
Occupation: Athlete, activist, investor  
**Previous Rank:** New  

**The G.O.A.T.:** The winningest player in modern history returned from pregnancy to reach two Grand Slam finals, redefine motherhood in sports, and continue as a board member of SurveyMonkey, all while remaining the world’s highest-paid female athlete.

15. **KEVIN FEIGE**

Age: 45  
Occupation: President, Marvel Studios  
**Previous Rank:** 21  

**Mister Fantastic:** Marvel Studios has released 20 hit films in the past decade, and this year may have its first best-picture contender in *Black Panther.*  

**Expect Feige’s power to grow under the coming Disney-Fox merger,** which will see popular Fox-licensed characters from the X-Men, Deadpool, and Fantastic Four comics united under the Disney banner, and Feige’s trusted stewardship.

16. **JEAN LIU & CHENG WEI**

Ages: 40, 36  
Occupations: President and founder, Didi Chuxing  
**Previous Rank:** 11  

**Globalization and its discontents:** Didi has been on a tear since running Uber out of China in 2016. The company has aggressively expanded its ride-sharing empire into Mexico, Australia, Japan, and throughout Southeast Asia.

17. **THE #METOO MUCKRAKERS:**  
Ronan Farrow, Jodi Kantor & Megan Twohey

Ages: 30, 43, 38  
Occupations: Journalists  
**Previous Rank:** New  

**Mogul-hunting:** Their reporting for *The New Yorker* (Farrow) and *The New York Times* (Kantor, Twohey) brought down Harvey Weinstein, opened the floodgates of #MeToo journalism, and culminated in a shared Pulitzer Prize. Kantor and Twohey

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**THE HOUSE OF MOUSE**

**Bob Iger** was mulling a run for the White House until the opportunity arose to acquire many of the most storied assets from 21st Century Fox. Herewith, he explains his thinking—and where the future of media is headed.

**Are you still considering a bid for the presidency?**

It wasn’t just something I was talking about with reporters and friends and colleagues. I was actually doing some work on it. But the primary reason I dropped it was because of this Fox deal.

**What did your family say when you told them?**

They high-fived each other.

**Will you rethink your decision in 2024?**

Right now I’m not doing it in 2020. I am running the company through 2021. I have made no decision about what I’ll do afterward. I have thought very little about it.

**Netflix spends $8 billion a year on content. In the 21st Century Fox deal, you essentially spent $71 billion to acquire a library. Why not just spend $7 billion a year and make 1,000 new things?**

We didn’t just buy the content library. We bought the capability of making more. We bought the machinery in place, which is people and structure. That’s why we bought Pixar and Marvel and Lucasfilm.

**You fired director James Gunn over offensive tweets. Was that the right call?**

The most important thing a C.E.O. does is create a value system for the company. Then, it’s incredibly important as a company to establish those values and then to live by them.

**So this applied to Roseanne too?**

I made the decision on Roseanne within minutes. [Disney-ABC Television Group president] Ben Sherwood called me and said, “Here’s this tweet, this is what she said,” and I said, “You know what this probably means?” And he said, “Yes, it’s bad.” And I said, “My sense is that she has to go.”
signed a high-profile book deal and walked the Oscars red carpet. Farrow churned out exposés that ended the careers of New York attorney general Eric Schneiderman and CBS C.E.O. Les Moonves.

18. **SHERYL SANDBERG**

**Age:** 49  **Occupation:** C.O.O., Facebook  **Previous Rank:** 12

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**Creature of Congress?**

If Sandberg has aspirations beyond being Facebook’s number two, she will have to help Zuckerberg fix the most powerful social network on earth—especially given what’s at stake in the 2018 midterms and 2020 election. Otherwise, she may again find herself testifying before Congress.

19. **ELON MUSK**

**Age:** 47  **Occupation:** C.E.O., Tesla, SpaceX, The Boring Company  **Previous Rank:** 1

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**Post-peak Musk?** After years of receiving adulation in the press, Musk made headlines this year for all the wrong reasons. While SpaceX has grown into the world’s most important aerospace company, Musk’s personal behavior has rattled Wall Street (see chart on page 92).

20. **DANIEL EK**

**Age:** 31  **Occupation:** C.E.O., Spotify  **Previous Rank:** 30

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**Not bad for a failed musician:**

Ek, who once dreamed of being a musician, has now created the world’s most popular music-streaming platform. Spotify, which eschewed the traditional banker-laden pre-I.P.O. road show, is now worth $33 billion, and growing. The next frontier: video.

21. **KENDRICK LAMAR**

**Age:** 33  **Occupation:** Musician  **Previous Rank:** New

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**Pulitzer Kenny:** In addition to his 12 Grammys, 17.8 million albums sold, and net worth of $58 million (thanks, partly, to deals with Nike and American Express), Lamar this year received a Pulitzer Prize for his album DAMN., the first non-jazz or classical record to win the award in its 75-year history.

22. **RUPERT MURDOCH**

**Age:** 87  **Occupation:** Outgoing executive co-chairman, 21st Century Fox  **Previous Rank:** 10

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**Ulterior motives?** At a glance, Murdoch’s once unimaginable divestiture of 21st Century Fox looked like a white flag in Big Media’s war with Silicon Valley. But look a little closer: the octogenarian mogul got to keep the things he likes best—Fox News and his global newspaper fleet—and it doesn’t hurt that he and his brood are set to become Disney’s second-largest shareholders, either.

23. **STEVE BURKE & BRIAN ROBERTS**

**Ages:** 60, 59  **Occupations:** C.E.O., NBCUniversal; C.E.O., Comcast  **Previous Rank:** 22

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**Outfoxed:** It’s been a bumpy year for the top two executives of NBC. The company’s news division was rocked by #MeToo scandals, and Roberts had to call off Comcast’s pursuit of 21st Century Fox when the bidding got too hot. The good news is that NBC and Comcast were ahead of the game in the M&A frenzy that continues to upend Big Media.

24. **SUNDAH PICHAI**

**Age:** 46  **Occupation:** C.E.O., Google  **Previous Rank:** 20

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**Lying low:** Pichai’s steady stewardship of Google and relatively low profile have allowed him to sidestepp controversies involving the company’s monopolistic power, the proliferation of conspiracy videos on YouTube, and an ill-received plan to launch a censored version of its search engine in China. In the meantime, Google is quietly making a major push into A.I. and challenging Amazon with its own smart-assistant device, Google Home.

25. **KEVIN SYSTROM**

**Age:** 34  **Occupation:** C.E.O., Instagram  **Previous Rank:** 60

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**The only thing people like about Facebook!** Not only has Instagram managed to replicate all the successful parts of Snapchat, but it’s also Facebook’s last, best hope: a platform insulated from the data-privacy scandals and misinformation that have plagued its parent company.

26. **JAMIE DIMON**

**Age:** 62  **Occupation:** C.E.O., J.P. Morgan Chase  **Previous Rank:** 39

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**The new king of the Street:** Thanks to Trump’s new tax law, J.P. Morgan Chase is rolling in the dough like never before. Last year’s quarterly profits reached a record of $6.5 billion to $7 billion or so, and profits this year have poured in at more than $8.7 billion every three months. With the retirement of Lloyd Blankfein at Goldman, Dimon is the undisputed king of Wall Street banks.

27. **RICHARD PLEPLER**

**Age:** 58  **Occupation:** C.E.O., HBO  **Previous Rank:** 26

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**The Insta of China:** Tencent, which owns the super-popular app WeChat, is the first Asian-based tech company to hit a $100 billion market cap.

28. **SATYA NADELLA**

**Age:** 51  **Occupation:** C.E.O., Microsoft  **Previous Rank:** 54

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**No more Clippy:** Microsoft has been on a tear since Nadella took over as C.E.O., in 2014, and his expansive vision for the company continues to transform its corporate culture. After buying LinkedIn, Nadella resumed his shopping spree this year with the acquisition of code database GitHub for $7.5 billion.

29. **TED SARANDOS**

**Age:** 54  **Occupation:** Chief content officer, Netflix  **Previous Rank:** 27

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**The closer:** Netflix’s seemingly bottomless checkbook has irritated every competitor in Hollywood, but it’s Sarandos’s personal salesmanship that has helped close key deals with marquee show-runners such as Shonda Rhimes and Ryan Murphy, and endeared Netflix to skeptical cinéastes like Alfonso Cuarón and Martin Scorsese.

30. **MA HUATENG**

**Age:** 46  **Occupation:** C.E.O., Tencent  **Previous Rank:** 38

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**The Parkland Students**

**Occupations:** Gun-control advocates  **Previous Rank:** New

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**The kids are all right:** After surviving a harrowing massacre at the hands of a lone gunman, Emma González and David Hogg, along with several of their peers, organized the March for Our Lives, which drew nearly two million people, making it one of the largest marches in American history. Cameron Kasky, Jaclyn Corin, and Matt Deitch have helped turn it into a movement.

“More isn’t better, only better is better—but we need a lot more to be even better.”

—RICHARD PLEPLER, AT HBO TOWN HALL, JULY 2018
What will Hope Hicks do next?
Is Elon Musk out of his mind?
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32. **STEPHEN COLBERT**  
Age: 54  
Occupation: Talk-show host  
Previous Rank: 40  

**Late-night Trump bump?**  
The comic’s unflinching nightly takedowns of Trump, along with viral monologues and a guest roster that included John Kerry, Bob Woodward, and Beto O’Rourke, have helped push his ratings past those of his tamer competitors Jimmy Fallon and Jimmy Kimmel.

33. **PETER THIEL**  
Age: 50  
Occupation: Chairman, Palantir; managing partner, Founders Fund  
Previous Rank: 17  

**Army of one: Tenacity pays off.** In 2016, Palantir, co-founded by Trump supporter Thiel, sued the government over an unfair bidding process in trying to secure defense contracts, and won. Earlier this year, the U.S. Army announced it had awarded Palantir an $876 million contract for battlefield software.

34. **BRIAN ARMSTRONG**  
Age: 35  
Occupation: C.E.O., Coinbase  
Previous Rank: New  

**The Bezos of crypto?**  
If there’s one thing that happens very quickly in Silicon Valley, it’s your net worth going from nothing to everything. A few years ago, Armstrong was a software engineer at Airbnb. Now, he’s at the forefront of everything to do with cryptocurrency and bringing Bitcoin to the masses after co-founding Coinbase, the app that allows you to buy and sell crypto with the ease of shopping for toilet paper and toothpaste on Amazon.

35. **REESE WITHERSPOON**  
Age: 42  
Occupation: Actor, producer, entrepreneur  

**Evidence of brand prowess:**  
The Oscar winner’s personal

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**Lisa Borders,** former W.N.B.A. president, recently underwent a secretive interview process to become the inaugural president and C.E.O. of Time’s Up, the anti-sexual-harassment organization

Time’s Up was purposefully started as a movement without one single leader.  

**What inspired the change?**  
There has to be someone who can help coalesce all of those voices and articulate it crisply and clearly to a broader group. We need a formal structure so that we can be as impactful as we need to be.  

**How did you learn about the opportunity?**  
I had a conversation with a group of women who said, “Take a look at this: You are doing this work already at the W.N.B.A. It is the same mission, but a different battlefield—and potentially more impactful.”  

Time’s Up has been vocal about Les Moonves, and has urged CBS to donate his still-pending $120 million severance. How did the organization conceive and coordinate this effort? This is not about any one person. This is about bad behavior. We are talking about making systemic cultural and societal change with regard to women, how they are treated in the workplace, how they are perceived, how they are received. We want to be true to our mission, which is making sure the world is comprised of safe, fair, and dignified workplaces for women. So anything that jeopardizes that or displays the negative of that, we’re going to push back against it.

It’s been a year since The New York Times and The New Yorker published their pieces on Harvey Weinstein.  

Do you remember where you were when you first read them?  
I was in New York at W.N.B.A. headquarters. I remember reading them, thinking this is horrific. I really didn’t know that much about it except what I read in the newspapers or saw on television. What I did not envision is that there would be the civil-rights activist Tarana Burke and all the amazing work that she and the women of the #MeToo movement have done. I did not envision that it would catch fire.
Laurent-Perrier

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@laurentperrierrose  Photo credit: Iris Velghe / Illustration credit: Piero Le-Tan

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brand extends to her Draper James lifestyle line, a popular book-of-the-month club, and her digital-media company, Hello Sunshine, a joint venture with AT&T and Peter Chernin, which just signed TV deals on five series: three with Apple, one with Hulu, and another with Amazon—all with the central focus of telling female-driven stories.

36. JONATHAN GRAY
Age: 43
Occupation: Incoming C.E.O., Blackstone
Previous Rank: Not Listed

May the Schwarz be with him: For years, Gray has run the hyper-successful real-estate portfolio at Blackstone—the private-equity behemoth with more than $439 billion in assets under management—masterminding its buyout of Hilton, one of the most successful Wall Street deals ever. Now he’s getting what he deserves: the blessing to succeed founder Stephen Schwarzman as the firm’s C.E.O.

37. JASON BLUM
Age: 49
Occupation: C.E.O., Blumhouse Productions
Previous Rank: 35

Prestige play: After helping to nab almost $2 billion worth of box office in a decade with genre franchises, Blum gained awards cred by notchting best-picture Oscar nominations for producing the feature-film debuts of directors Damien Chazelle (Whiplash) and Jordan Peele (Get Out).

38. CHRISTOPHER STEELE
Age: 54
Occupation: Former intelligence officer Previous Rank: New

Golden-shower glory: The former head of M.I.6’s Russia desk compiled the infamous dossier that raised the possibility Donald Trump was vulnerable to Russian blackmail. Steele even grew a beard and went into hiding—merely adding to his mythic reputation on the left.

39. LOGAN GREEN
Age: 34
Occupation: C.E.O., Lyft
Previous Rank: 33

The alter-Uber: Now valued at a lofty $15 billion, Lyft has managed to avoid the negative attention that its primary competitor, Uber, regularly attracts. The company is also eying an expansion: as of August, Lyft had surpassed 5,000 driverless BMW rides, and in July the company acquired bike-share operator Motivate.

40. BRIAN CHESKY
Age: 37
Occupation: C.E.O., Airbnb
Previous Rank: 23

No longer VRBO for millennials: Airbnb launched a luxury-vacation rental service, and has toyed with the idea of starting its own airline. Chesky has eyed 2019 for an I.P.O., but nothing’s set in stone yet.

41. TRAVIS VANDERZANDEN
Age: 39
Occupation: Founder and C.E.O., Bird
Previous Rank: New

Display of disruptive expertise: Before founding electric-scooter upstart Bird, VanderZanden was chief operating officer at Lyft and, later, V.P. of international growth at Uber—jobs that would set him up for the familiar task of dealing with local regulations and bringing new transit options to cities worldwide.

42. FRANÇOIS-HENRI PINAULT
Age: 66
Occupation: C.E.O., Kering
Previous Rank: 66

Investor payoff: Pinault is the first C.E.O. of a fashion conglomerate to make sustainability not just a talking point but part of the company’s underlying culture, and has invested heavily in this goal. He has also invested in young talent at the helm of his major houses.

43. VITALIK BUTERIN
Age: 24
Occupation: C.E.O. and founder, Ethereum
Previous Rank: New

Boy genius: Buterin is worth around $100 million (double that on a good day) after co-founding Ethereum, the efficient and blockchain-friendly crypto-currency that banks and financial institutions have fallen in love with.

44. DAVID ZASLAV
Age: 58
Occupation: C.E.O., Discovery Communications
Previous Rank: 41

Display of acquisition-philia: Zaslav kicked off the year with Discovery’s $12 billion takeover of Scripps Networks, including HGTV, the Food Network, and the Travel Channel. With more M&A on the horizon, Discovery could be seen as a potentially attractive target for a mega-merger, itself.

45. J. J. ABRAMS
Age: 51
Occupation: Producer-director
Previous Rank: 46

And now appearing on the small screen ... The eminence largely behind Star Wars, Star Trek, and Mission: Impossible is currently directing Star Wars: Episode IX, and recently joined forces with Tencent to launch gaming division Bad Robot Games.

46. THE WOMEN OF TIME’S UP

OCCUPATIONS:
1. KERRY WASHINGTON—Producer
2. EMILY WATTENBERG—Producer
3. AMY ROBINSON—Producer
4. SARA PERKINS—Producer
5. EMILY RAMER—Producer
6. ANGELA KAPLAN—Producer
7. DENA WALSH—Executive Producer
8. KELLY SCHRADER—Executive Producer
9. CHRISTIE BOLAND—Executive Producer
10. JANET ZAINI—Executive Producer

Power in numbers: When the #MeToo movement took off, a number of powerful Hollywood
women began holding planning meetings last fall, eventually expanding their ranks to include more than 300 women in the entertainment industry. Time’s Up has since raised more than $20 million for its first C.E.O., Lisa Borders (page 90).

47. DAVID TEPPER
Age: 61
Occupation: President, Appaloosa Management
Previous Rank: New 1

Don’t hate the player: This year has been a mixed bag for Tepper. His fund lost approximately 10 percent of its value in the second quarter, but he’s still worth around $11 billion, and he recently acquired the Carolina Panthers football team for a record $2.2 billion.

48. JOHN STANKEY
Age: 55
Occupation: C.E.O., WarnerMedia
Previous Rank: New 1

The new boss man: As of June, he’s the guy in charge of Warner Bros., HBO, CNN, TBS, and a lot more. Not bad for a career phone-company executive whose name didn’t register in media circles just one year ago.

49. LAUREN PEW JOBS
Age: 64
Occupation: Founder, Emerson Collective
Previous Rank: 44

The media-industry savior: Her primary media project for the next several years is The Atlantic, which Emerson bought a majority stake in last year. But media gossips can’t help wildly speculating about what other companies might one day reap the rewards of Powell Jobs’s strategic beneficence.

50. SHONDA RHIMES
Age: 50
Occupation: Founder, Shondaland
Previous Rank: 83

It’s Shondaland, and we’re just living in it: The prolific writer and show-runner has decamped to Netflix, lured by a four-year, nine-figure deal that gives her the freedom to put her unique stamp on a slate of series, mini-series, and films.

51. RYAN COOGLER
Age: 32
Occupation: Director
Previous Rank: New 1

Hollywood hitmaker: Coolector just may deliver Disney a rare non-animated best-picture Oscar nomination, for Black Panther, when the nods are announced in January. The Marvel film grossed more than $1.3 billion worldwide this year, refuting naysayers who doubted whether the film, with a predominantly black cast, would sell overseas.

52. JEFF ZUCKER
Age: 53
Occupation: President, CNN
Previous Rank: 14

Season of change: He’s heading into the coming election season with a new contract, a new boss, and a mission to keep the fire burning with CNN’s wall-to-wall coverage of the man Zucker once transformed into a bawdy embodiment of reality TV.

53. JORDAN PEELE
Age: 39
Occupation: Director, Shondaland
Previous Rank: 59

Popcorn auteur: With his directorial debut, Get Out, Peele suggested he is that rare kind of filmmaker who can captain a box-office hit and ignite a deep and lasting cultural conversation. At his company, Monkeypaw Productions, Peele is extending his idea of popcorn-friendly genre projects into five TV series and multiple movies.

54. DAVID SOLOMON
Age: 56
Occupation: Incoming C.E.O., Goldman Sachs
Previous Rank: New 1

The after-Lloyd: On October 1, he has a big new job, succeeding Lloyd Blankfein to run Goldman Sachs, where he’ll either keep the powerful investment bank in its lane or spearhead an expansion to compete better with bigger, more profitable commercial-banking rivals.

55. MARC ANDREessen
Age: 47
Occupation: Managing partner, Andreessen Horowitz
Previous Rank: 29

Disrupting the bottom of the ocean: Andreessen is starting to invest in A.I.-related technologies that will eat jobs in the U.S., including Atrium, a legal technology firm that plans to replace some lawyers’ duties with machine-learning algorithms.

56. BRADLEY COOPER
Age: 43
Occupation: Actor, producer, director
Previous Rank: New 1

Display of political intelligence: First, he persuaded Lady Gaga to deglamorize the lead in his Oscar-buzzy directorial debut, a remake of A Star Is Born. Then he showed an early cut of Star to Steven

Musk tweets an April Fool’s Day joke about Tesla going bankrupt. Funny!

Says the car business is “hell”; sleeps in the Tesla factory.

Model 3 production is temporarily halted.

Muisk berates guy doing his job on analyst call.

Makes his public debut with new girlfriend, the musician Grimes, at the Met Gala.

Apologizes to Unsworth.

Baselessly asserts on Twitter that Vernon Unsworth, a British cave diver who worked to free the soccer team, is a “pedo.”

Musk dispatches help to a Thai youth-soccer team trapped in a cave.

Tesla lays off 9 percent of its workforce.

Goes on a Trumpian rant about the media; proposes a Web site called Pravda, which he had already incorporated, to track the credibility of reporters and news outlets.
Spielberg and the keepers of Leonard Bernstein’s estate to get the composer’s music in a biopic that he will star in, direct, and produce.

57. **RIHANNA**  
**Age:** 30  
**Occupation:** Musician, entrepreneur  
**Previous Rank:** New  
**Work, work, work, work:** She’s a hit-making recording artist (more than 250 million records sold, nine Grammys, 14 No. 1 singles); a fashion icon with a newly launched lingerie line and collaborations with Puma and other brands; and an actress (Ocean’s 8). Her Fenty Beauty cosmetics debuted a year ago and earned $100 million in its first 40 days.

58. **VLADIMIR PUTIN**  
**Age:** 65  
**Occupation:** President, Russian Federation; election meddler  
**Previous Rank:** New  
**Vlad the Impaler:** The Russian leader recently won another six-year term, hosted the World Cup, and humiliated Donald Trump in Helsinki. His approval ratings in Russia have fallen, but he still commands the sort of fear Trump only dreams about.

59. **JACK DORSEY**  
**Age:** 41  
**Occupation:** C.E.O., Twitter and Square  
**Previous Rank:** 50  
**A tale of two companies:** Square has seen its value almost triple in the last year. Twitter’s value, on the other hand, bobs up and down like a yo-yo, as it remains the president’s favorite mouthpiece and occasional weapon.

60. **RYAN MURPHY**  
**Age:** 52  
**Occupation:** Producer  
**Previous Rank:** 49  
**Three-hundred-million-dollar man:** The TV super-producer once joked he’d be buried on the Fox lot, but when Netflix courted Murphy earlier this year—a few months before the studio’s merger with Disney was approved by shareholders—he signed a $300 million, five-year deal with the streamer.

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**THE TURNAROUND ARTIST**

**Dara Khosrowshahi** opens up about life after Travis, cleansing Uber’s culture, and autonomous vehicles

What’s it like being C.E.O. of Uber, with all that attention? It’s quite literally like drinking from a fire hose. **What have you learned?**  
You’ve got to be quick on your feet, and you have to react—you have to keep building and not get distracted. **Is Uber’s DNA harmful? Can it be fixed?**  
I think that there’s a part of the DNA of the company that I very much want to keep—of absolute belief and taking on a giant and building a service that has never been built before. There’s an inclination for speed and execution at a size and speed that I don’t think any company can match. **Is Silicon Valley receiving retribution for societal problems it initiated?**  
I think there absolutely is a reckoning here. It might have started with Uber, but it’s not going to end with us. It’s bigger than Uber. Anyone who meets the people at our company understands that Uber can be a force for good. **Uber seems to have turned around quickly, but how does the tech industry change itself as a whole, given its recent problems?**  
Many of the C.E.O.’s out there right now are in reactionary mode. In the next year we have to move from reaction to execution. The rules of the game have changed. Previously, our job was to just build a platform. That scope and definition has expanded. This is a new world that we’re all entering. If you go in with the absolute true intention of doing the right thing, the world will understand that you make mistakes—you’ll find forgiveness, and you’ll have room to make mistakes. **You paused your driverless-cars division recently. Do you plan to re-start it?**  
We had a tragic accident. As a result of that, we suspended all driverless testing on roads until we complete a top-to-bottom audit of the technology. When an event like that happens, a bell is rung. It’s a temporary stop. Ultimately the cars will be safer. Ultimately it’s on us to build it right, and that’s really what the pause is about.
61. **Jeffrey Katzenberg & Meg Whitman**

*Ages: 67, 66*  
*Occupations: Founder, C.E.O., Mindy Kaling*  
*Previous Rank: New*  

**The $1 billion bet:** When the former C.E.O. of DreamWorks Animation and the former C.E.O. of Hewlett Packard Enterprise and eBay joined forces last spring on a mobile-first streaming platform called NewTV, they raised $1 billion in their first financing round from companies such as Sony Pictures, Viacom, Disney, and Comcast.

Although there have been rumors aplenty that a change is afoot, TPG, unlike its private-equity rivals, has no plans for an I.P.O.

65. **Priscilla Chan**

*Age: 33*  
*Occupation: Co-founder, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative*  
*Previous Rank: 75*  

**Evidence of election-hacking remorse?** Chan and her husband, Facebook C.E.O. Mark Zuckerberg, have been busy in 2018, pouring millions into midterm-election initiatives with the help of Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz’s Open Philanthropy Project.

66. **A. G. Sulzberger**

*Age: 38*  
*Occupation: Publisher, The New York Times*  
*Previous Rank: New*  

**All in the family:** Sulzberger, who took over the publisher’s job from his father this year, inherited a newly revitalized Times, with a growing subscription model (2.9 million digital subscribers and counting), a new media darling (The Daily podcast), and one mightily aggrieved reader in the White House.

67. **Tim Sweeney**

*Age: 47*  
*Occupation: C.E.O., Epic Games*  
*Previous Rank: New*  

**The genius behind the flossing phenomenon:** Fortnite, the crown in Epic’s portfolio, has become a global phenomenon, played by professional athletes, middle-aged middle managers, and tweens alike. In total, the battle-royal-style concept has attracted some 125 million gamers.

68. **Hans Vestberg**

*Age: 55*  
*Occupation: C.E.O., Verizon*  
*Previous Rank: New*  

**The ultimate data guy:** Under Vestberg, who was promoted this summer from chief technology officer to succeed Lowell McAdam, Verizon wasted no time reining in the ambitions of the Yahoo-AOL media mash-up known as Oath. Vestberg likes content as much as the next guy, but he has bigger fish to fry: rolling out Verizon’s next-gen 5G network by year’s end.

69. **Robert F. Smith**

*Age: 55*  
*Occupation: C.E.O., Vista Equity Partners*  
*Previous Rank: 86*  

**Hacking software stocks:** Step aside, Oprah. Smith, the founder of Vista, one of the nation’s most prolific and successful private-equity firms, is the country’s wealthiest African-American, with a net worth of $4.4 billion. At Vista he’s Mr. Everything: C.E.O., investment guru, and head of investor relations. The last is probably his easiest job, given his wild success at investing in software, and only software.

70. **Evan Spiegel**

*Age: 28*  
*Occupation: C.E.O., Snap*  
*Previous Rank: 28*  

**Zucked:** Spiegel has seen his stock, user numbers, and net worth fall over the past year after Instagram and Facebook copied almost all of Snap’s features to great success. But he made about $640 million in its I.P.O.

71. **Jimmy Pitaro**

*Age: 48*  
*Occupation: President, ESPN*  
*Previous Rank: New*  

**The pinch hitter:** After eight years dutifully heading up consumer products and interactive media for Disney, Pitaro got Bob Iger’s blessing to run the conglomerate’s vaunted sports brand in the wake of John Skipper’s drug-related exit. Pitaro wants ESPN to move away from the political commentary that thrust the network into the white-hot center of the culture wars.

72. **Dwayne Johnson**

*Age: 46*  
*Occupation: Actor, producer*  
*Previous Rank: 37*  

**Baller:** Johnson was 2018’s second-highest-paid actor, according to Forbes, but the top in actual box-office earnings.

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**I will always be the hardest working person in the room.**

—Dwayne Johnson, in *Esquire*, on his secret for success

(George Clooney earned the No. 1 spot by selling his Casamigos tequila brand.)

His combined 179 million followers on social media have been the engine by which the star markets his films, which he now also produces, through his Seven Bucks Productions company.

73. **Ava DuVernay**

*Age: 54*  
*Occupation: Producer-director*  
*Previous Rank: New*  

**Breaking down barriers:** DuVernay has been advancing the careers of women and people of color in the entertainment industry part of her legacy. From hiring only women to direct her OWN series, *Queen Sugar*, to distributing women’s films through her company, Array, to becoming the first woman of color to direct a movie with a budget over $100 million, *A Wrinkle in Time*, DuVernay has pushed hard to open up new possibilities.

74. **James Gorman**

*Age: 60*  
*Occupation: C.E.O., Morgan Stanley*  
*Previous Rank: New*  

**The long game pays off:** Gorman, a former McKinsey management consultant, had his doubters when he re-oriented the white-shoe Morgan Stanley around the asset- and wealth-management businesses after the financial crisis. In the last year, Morgan Stanley’s market capitalization exceeded that of Goldman Sachs.

75. **Adam Neumann**

*Age: 39*  
*Occupation: Co-founder, WeWork*  
*Previous Rank: New*  

**Wingman:** WeWork is no stranger to the adage “Spend money to make money,” and...
over the past year, the real-estate work-space tech venture has done plenty of the latter in pursuit of the former—acquiring a bevy of start-ups across sectors and making investments in others, including the women-only social club the Wing.

**76. EDDY CUE**

**Age:** 53  
**Occupation:** Senior vice president, Apple  
**Previous Rank:** 73

*After the iPhone:* As interest in the iPhone wanes, Cue has overseen the growth of two emerging businesses: Apple News, and the tech giant’s forays into film and television projects. Apple is reportedly spending more than $1 billion on original content.

**77. BOBBY KOTICK**

**Age:** 55  
**Occupation:** C.E.O., Activision Blizzard  
**Previous Rank:** 57

*A new call of duty:* Kotick, the godfather of modern gaming, will need to re-invent the wheel to stay relevant in the next couple of years as games like Fortnite, which are free to play, become cultural obsessions.

**78. JOHN LANDGRAF**

**Age:** 56  
**Occupation:** C.E.O., FX  
**Previous Rank:** New

*Peak Landgraf:* The head of cable-network FX has distinguished himself for both his astute analysis of pop culture (he coined the term “peak TV”) and for incubating award-winning shows such as *The Americans* and *Atlanta*. As Disney takes over Fox and sets its sights on streaming dominance, Landgraf’s long view could be an asset.

**79. TRAVIS KALANICK**

**Age:** 42  
**Occupation:** Founder, 10100; C.E.O., City Storage Systems  
**Previous Rank:** 23

*He’s baaack ...:* A year after leaving his post as C.E.O. of Uber in disgrace, Kalanick is making a comeback: as the founder of a venture called 10100, which will invest in e-commerce and real-estate companies, and as the C.E.O. of real-estate start-up City Storage Systems.

**80. WHITNEY WOLFE HERD**

**Age:** 29  
**Occupation:** C.E.O., Bumble  
**Previous Rank:** New

*I’m with her:* Herd’s dating app—built on the premise that women making the first move fosters more interesting conversations and better connections—is now worth a billion dollars.

**81. THE PODSTARS**

*Jon Favreau, Jon Lovett, Tommy Vietor, Dan Pfeiffer*  
**Ages:** 37, 36, 38, 42  
**Occupations:** Podcasters  
**Previous Rank:** New

*Friends of the pod:* They’re the new cabal of audio phenoms proving that podcasting is a place for star power—and money. In two short years, former Obama staffers Jon Favreau, Jon Lovett, Tommy Vietor, and Dan Pfeiffer have turned Crooked Media, home of Pod Save America, into a revenue-generating powerhouse that can sell out Radio City Music Hall.
### 82. Bonnie Hammer
Age: 63
Occupation: Chair, NBCUniversal Cable
Previous Rank: 65

The queen of cable: Hammer is set to become possibly the longest-reigning female executive in TV history. And Steve Burke and Brian Roberts will increasingly rely on her as NBCU fights for terrain in a landscape dominated by Netflix, Amazon, and Bob Iger’s latest land grab.

### 83. James Murdoch
Age: 43
Occupation: Outgoing C.E.O., 21st Century Fox
Previous Rank: 56

Alone in the world: The admired and respected Murdoch, who bears a resemblance to the Kendall Roy character in HBO’s Succession, has been tight-lipped about his next act after the Disney deal closes and he exits the family business. The pervasive assumption is a new investment vehicle of his own design.

### 84. Katrina Lake
Age: 31
Occupation: C.E.O., Stitch Fix
Previous Rank: 90

The clothes make the boss: When Lake’s tech-retail company Stitch Fix held an I.P.O. in November 2017, she became the youngest female founder to take a company public.

### 85. Donald Glover
Age: 33
Occupation: Actor, director, musician
Previous Rank: New

Renaissance man: In 2018, Glover was master of multiple pop-cultural domains: he starred in the movie Solo, nabbed 16 Emmy nominations for his TV series Atlanta, and hit No. 1 on Billboard’s Hot 100 chart with “This Is America.”

### 86. The Talking Heads
Rachel Maddow, Chris Cuomo, Anderson Cooper, Don Lemon, Nicolle Wallace,

### 87. Nancy Dubuc
Age: 49
Occupation: C.E.O., Vice
Previous Rank: 86

The professional: As Vice co-founder Shane Smith stepped back from the day-to-day, Dubuc was brought in to tame the wilds of the company’s corporate culture—and make sure its #MeToo problems (not to mention revenue issues) are fixed.

### 88. Stewart Butterfield
Age: 49
Occupation: C.E.O., Slack
Previous Rank: 87

The only person everyone actually likes: The unofficial Nice Guy of Silicon Valley, Butterfield sits at the helm of a now ubiquitous workplace-messaging company. This year, Slack was valued at $7.1 billion.

### 89. Chris Meledandri
Age: 59
Occupation: C.E.O., Illumination
Previous Rank: 68

Evidence of tween-world domination: The producer and illumination founder and C.E.O. has a hand in several animated-film franchises—Ice Age, Despicable Me, Minions, The Secret Life of Pets, and now Sing—with sequels for the latter three currently under way. Despicable Me 3 alone brought in more than $1 billion worldwide last year.

### 90. The Collison Brothers
Ages: 30 (Patrick); 28 (John)
Occupation: Founders, Stripe
Previous Rank: 84

Ireland’s greatest export: It took less than eight years for the software developed by the Collison brothers, who grew up in County Limerick, to become the $9.2 billion payment platform of choice for everyone in Silicon Valley.

### 91. Channing Dungey
Age: 49
Occupation: President, ABC Entertainment
Previous Rank: New

No holds barred: The first African-American woman to head up a major broadcast television network, Dungey made her name developing hit shows—but grabbed headlines this year when she canceled Roseanne after the show’s star issued a racist tweet.

### 92. Bill Gurley
Age: 52
Occupation: General partner, Benchmark
Previous Rank: 35

It’s all on Dara: Gurley’s firm is one of Silicon Valley’s more prolific venture-capital concerns, thanks in part to its early bet on Uber. The company is hoping that Khosrowshahi can stick to his plan and take Uber public next year.

### 93. Mohammed Bin Salman
Age: 33
Occupation: Crown prince, Saudi Arabia
Previous Rank: New

Jared’s boy in Riyadh: Through his family’s $1.4 trillion fortune, M.B.S. has earned audiences with some of the American business community’s biggest names, including Google co-founder Sergey Brin, Apple C.E.O. Tim Cook, and Amazon C.E.O. Jeff Bezos—and, yes, Jared Kushner.

### 94. The Ground-Breakers
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley, Andrew Gillum, Beto O’Rourke

Ages: 28, 44, 39, 46
Occupations: Democratic hopefuls
Previous Rank: New

The left’s best hope: If Bernie launched the democratic-socialist revolution against ossified neoliberalism, these are his successors—avatars of the left’s flirtation with universalism and its best attempt to close the enthusiasm gap (see next page).

### 95. Arlan Hamilton
Age: 37
Occupation: Founder, Backstage Capital
Previous Rank: New

Equity for all: Hamilton’s firm aims to rectify Silicon Valley’s woeful gender- and racial-inequality dynamics. She has invested in excess of $4 million in more than 100 companies led by under-represented founders, and this year she announced a new, $36 million fund exclusively to invest in the ventures of black women.

### 96. Sallie Krawcheck
Age: 53
Occupation: C.E.O., Ellevest
Previous Rank: New

Disrupting the Street: One of the most senior women on Wall Street, Krawcheck was more or less defenestrated from her big jobs at both Citigroup and Bank of America. She’s now the co-founder of one of the largest digital businesses focused entirely on helping women to better invest their money.

### 97. Audrey Gelman
Age: 31
Occupation: C.E.O., the Wing
Previous Rank: New

Taking flight: Gelman, a Lena Dunham pal and former Clinton campaign staffer, is...
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is preparing to become the youngest member of the House of Representatives. But is the quixotic Bronx universalist ready for the sharp elbows and sycophants of the swamp?

How are you preparing to weigh the urgent desires of your progressive base—such as universal free college education—with the reality that most change in Washington is achieved through incremental compromise?

I think all of us are committed a thousand percent to winning back the House, because, frankly, it’s existential for the country. Almost every major institution is at stake. We are living in a world where impeachment is a realistic possibility. But in relation to the party, my whole thing is, well, what constitutes the party? Is the party just every elected official, or every donor? Or is the party every registered Democrat in the United States? I like to think it’s the latter. That’s where I come from.

As a democratic socialist, what changes are you proposing to your party?

I think we can compromise on our tactics and how we get there, but we can’t compromise where we’re going. As a democratic socialist, what changes are you proposing to your party?

Reporting by Nick Bilton, Maya Kosoff, Joe Pompeo, Gabriel Sherman, William D. Cohan, Abigail Tracy, Emily Jane Fox, Bess Levin, Tina Nguyen, Claire Landsbaum, Ben Landy, Kiriti Smith, Anna Lisa Raya, Joy Press, Rebecca Keegan.
LITTLE BLACK STRETCHY PANTS

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THE UNAUTHORIZED STORY OF LULULEMON
BY FOUNDER CHIP WILSON

CHIPWILSON.COM
MADE IN THE SHADE
Michael B. Jordan, photographed in East Hampton, New York.

Clothing by Louis Vuitton; shoes by Common Projects; socks by Pantherella.

The Technicolor Dreams
Michael B. Jordan

Inspired by Wakanda and his Newark upbringing, the Black Panther star is building a singular career, equal parts Denzel, Tom Cruise, and Louis B. Mayer

By JOE HAGAN Photographs by CASS BIRD
Styled by SAMIRA NASR
It’s right around the time I’m prattling on about racial diversity in Hollywood that Michael B. Jordan, the movie star, floors the gas pedal and sends his blade-like sports car ripping down the Pacific Coast Highway, a fast-forward jolt that turns Malibu into a kinetic blur of pink and blue.

“Oh Jesus Christ!” I cry out.

I grip the armrest and see terrible visions of us slicing a beach bum in half as he accidentally stumbles into the road or exploding into that white van that looks to be edging unexpectedly into our lane.

“I got you,” Jordan assures over the engine roar.

When he finally slows—imagine the Millennium Falcon after hyperspace—he turns to me and flashes that winning Michael B. Jordan smile, a dazzling display of superstar teeth that sends 7.3 million Instagram followers into squeals of delight (“YOU’RE SO HOTTT, BABY!!!”). A nervous laugh catches in my throat. A minute later, Jordan does it again.

“We’re at a hundred right now,” he mentions, cutting left to avoid a car. “110.”

Me: “Oh shit.”

His oversize sports jersey says “Fear of God” on it.

It’s quite a rush, but for a split-second it does cross my mind that Jordan is unnecessarily tempting fate. What if we kill somebody? What if we’re pulled over for reckless driving? A black man doing—let’s see, 127 m.p.h.—at four in the afternoon? In lily-white Malibu?

More is being risked here than our necks, something that Michael Bakari Jordan, of all people, is equipped to understand. Jordan was the star of Fruitvale Station, the 2013 breakout indie hit directed by Ryan Coogler, in which Jordan played Oscar Grant, the real-life black youth gunned down by a transit cop in 2009 for a lot less than speeding. Jordan himself says that, a few years before, he was racially profiled, stopped for alleged speeding, and got searched, handcuffed, and detained on South La Brea Avenue. He informed the officer he was late for a flight at LAX. “I think I mighta said something slick,” says Jordan. “‘Cause it was the end of the month, I was like, ‘Oh, you guys trying to meet a quota.’ I said something like that. That probably didn’t help me at all.”

By the time the cop let him off—without a ticket—Jordan had missed his flight. At the time, he was starring in Red Tails, the George Lucas movie about black fighter pilots.

When Jordan finally gears down, we look at each other and laugh. A lot just happened. And then it dawns on me: in rocketing down the Pacific Coast Highway and freaking out the white writer from Vanity Fair, Michael B. Jordan had just turned a theoretical conversation about race into a palpable theater that requires no words at all.

This might be the most optimistic time in history for black artists in Hollywood, and Jordan, who starred as the villain Killmonger in Black Panther, an urban antihero who smolders with sex appeal, has become its most distinct leading man. As his co-star in Fruitvale Station, the actress Melonie Diaz, told me, “This is our time. This is our time to be leading men and leading ladies—how does that feel? I think Mike gets that.”

Jordan has declared that he wants to advance the cultural aims of black people on film. He also wants to become a matinee idol on par with Leonardo DiCaprio or Matt Damon, which means he wants the ultimate kind of racial equity—to be a movie star, full stop. “I’m first and foremost a black man, for sure, but what I’m trying to do, and what I’m trying to represent and build, is universal,” he says.

“We live in the times where everything is based around race,” he says. “And for me, it’s like, I get it, I understand. It just makes everything so loaded. When the way to do it is to Trojan-horse it, so then people look up, and say, ‘Oh wow, what happened? I didn’t even realize that.’”

On the surface, Jordan’s two goals might seem incompatible—to be both black and not black. But Jordan’s biggest films to date, both directed by 32-year-old Coogler, have cannily achieved a parity between racial advancement and Hollywood entertainment—Creed, which flipped the script on Rocky by putting a black boxing hero at the top of a traditionally white franchise; and Black Panther, which embedded an almost entirely black cast and Afrocentric themes in a tableau of Marvel comic superheroes.

This Sunday afternoon in Malibu, on a trip to a burger joint up the coast, perhaps the real point is the car, an Acura NSX—a stunning white objet d’art with a low, sleek sci-fi design (I couldn’t figure out how to open the door) and a window in back for viewing the turbo engine. The nearly $160,000 machine is part of an endorsement deal Jordan cut with Acura—an arrangement orchestrated by Phillip Sun, his agent at William Morris Endeavor, after the first Creed movie, in 2015, wherein Jordan played Adonis, the illegitimate son of boxer Apollo Creed, and Sylvester Stallone played the aging Rocky Balboa. The car is a dream come true for a kid from Newark who used to race illegally with friends in high school and obsess over this very model while his devoted and politically aware parents toiled in a small catering business while ferrying him to modeling gigs and plotting his future in a hostile world.

Built on this hard-won foundation, Jordan is aiming for breathtaking heights. His ambition is to be not only an actor, but a one-man movie studio whose every move has a dollar sign attached to it and for whom nothing is left to chance. With multi-million-dollar endorsement deals, his own production company, and a new marketing-and-consulting start-up in the works, he’s applying the old Jay-Z adage—“I’m not a business, I’m a business / I am a business, man”—to the business of moviemaking. “He knows exactly what he is, which is a commodity,” says Tessa Thompson, his co-star in Creed II, the new sequel. “Then be owner of it, really and truly.”

It’s a lot of pressure on a 31-year-old whose journey isn’t just his own. An entire community is depending on this particular commodity—his parents and siblings and an ever growing entourage of advisers, friends, and consultants, not to mention the black actors, writers, and directors cheering his success because it is theirs as well. His agent is casting him as the Tom Cruise of his generation. His publicists are campaigning for an Oscar for his role in Black Panther. He could go all the way or the whole thing could blow up—and not only at 127 miles an hour.

The first time I see Michael B. Jordan he’s playing a demonstration game of air hockey in a gigantic arcade in a Hollywood mall. Jordan hosts a yearly fund-raiser called the MBJAM, selling tickets to fans and bringing in celebrity friends to draw attention to lupus, the chronic autoimmune disease his mother,
ON THE HORIZON

Jordan says his upbringing has influenced many of his roles.

Clothing by Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello.
Donna, suffers from. His entire inner circle is here—high-school friends and movie-industry pals, his agent, his agent’s assistant, his high-powered publicist, his publicist’s assistant, his personal assistant, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and, of course, his parents. Jordan, in an olive-green satin bomber jacket and designer sweats, does a photo shoot for Coach, his latest endorsement deal, and an interview with E! Channel, with his mother by his side. Jamie Foxx shows up for the photo splash. Lena Waithe gives an interview. It’s a family affair.

When Jordan goes home, his family goes with him—to Sherman Oaks, where his parents and younger brother Khalid, a Howard University grad who works in development at Warner Horizon Television, live with him in a mansion he purchased in 2016. In part, it’s to care for his mother, but also because his parents remain deeply engaged in his career and life. When he holds business meetings at the house, his father will come in with a plate of sandwiches. There are portraits of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Marcus Garvey on the walls, and bookshelves filled with black history and literature, most of it belonging to his father. His mother’s artwork—large multicolored Impressionistic paintings—hang on the wall.

Donna Jordan, an elegant woman in her 60s who wears an African print dress and her close-cropped hair dyed sunflower yellow, is a classic stage mom. She casually calls me “baby doll.” Her son’s career began at her doctor’s office when the receptionist suggested she get her 11-year-old into modeling. “I was just at the time thinking about college tuition and that sort of thing,” Donna Jordan says. “Little did I know that it was going to be job, after job, after job, after job.”

A sweetly introverted geek who obsessed over anime comic books, sci-fi films, and the New York Knicks, Jordan modeled for Kmart and Toys “R” Us before landing a bit role in the Cosby Show revival in 2000. Jordan’s main memory of Bill Cosby is the aging star asking him to practice brushing his hair for a scene. Cosby didn’t let him stop brushing for an entire afternoon, until Jordan’s scalp was raw and burning. Needless to say, it gave Jordan a dim view of acting. As Jordan summed up his attitude in an early interview: “Fuck that.”

Jordan’s first big role was as Wallace on HBO’s The Wire, a child gang member who is killed by an older friend after he witnesses a murder and becomes a liability to his crew, the Barksdale Organization. Jordan was 15 years old, doe-eyed, cornrows in his hair, with a wounded glower that could break unexpectedly into a room-altering smile. His mother wept when she watched the death scene. Jordan was hardly an actor, not even a school play to his name, but his unformed screen presence was exactly what writer-producer David Simon was after. Veteran actors like Andre Royo, who played the street junkie Bubbles, took Jordan under their wing, showing him, for instance, how to act like he was high on drugs. “He came to me, little young kid, but just eager to learn, with like, ‘Hey Dre, you mind giving me some pointers? You think you can help me out with this?’ And I was kind of laughing to myself like, ‘I hope he’s ready.’”

The Wire was not an immediate hit, but Jordan’s ambitions
were ignited by the attention. Maybe he could be the next Will Smith. He took out his cornrows and declared that he was through being typecast. His first film role, a year before The Wire, had been as a Chicago street urchin named Jamal in Hardball, a feel-good comedy-drama about a group of hard-knocks black kids converted into a baseball team by a white coach, played by Keanu Reeves. “With the braids out, I should have more options,” Jordan said at the time. “I’m being thrown urban roles right now, but I don’t plan on doing these my whole life.”

Soon after he was typecast again, as Reggie, a troubled teen in the ABC soap opera All My Children, what he later called “a fucking stereotypical black role.” But it did give him a four-year contract and more training as an actor, not to mention an income.

When Jordan’s role in All My Children wrapped, in 2006, he was 19 and had decided to move to Los Angeles and pursue a career. A family friend, Sterling “Steelo” Brim, whom Jordan met on the set of Hardball, joined him, and the two scratched for work. Jordan would spend the next few years trying to find roles that suited his ambitions, but Hollywood at that point had precious little bandwidth for rising black superstars.

“Remember when I first came to L.A., and me and my mom, we went to all these agencies trying to get representation and they passed on me—WME passed on me, CAA passed on me, Gersh, all these guys fucking passed on me,” says Jordan. He says it gave him a “healthy chip” on his shoulder. (So did his name, which was never going to be his alone.) Jordan was a renter maker who overcomes his demons to help win the championship, throwing a Hail Mary pass in the final play. It was Jordan’s most complex and richly drawn role to date, and his cocked eyebrow, easy smile, and rangy sex appeal seemed to pop on the screen. Friday Night Lights quickly became his calling card, leading to a role as a benevolent teenager named Alex for two seasons of Parenthood, on NBC; as Steve in the teenage sci-fi thriller Chronicle, directed by Josh Trank; and, crucially, a role in Red Tails, the George Lucas–produced historical account of the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II, a squadron of African-American fighter pilots. Jordan was disappointed that his best scene was cut from Red Tails, and the movie was a commercial and critical flop, but Jordan stood out in a cast of top black actors, including Cuba Gooding Jr. and Terrence Howard, and it led to offers of roles in potential blockbuster franchises, including Fantastic Four. Jordan took the Fantastic Four role as the Human Torch—a controversial casting decision because the Human Torch was originally a white character (to quell fan uproar, Jordan published a personal essay entitled, “Why I’m Torching the Color Line”). The movie, also directed by Josh Trank, seemed like Jordan’s ticket to the big time, but it was destined to flop badly, nearly damaging Jordan’s career. Before Fantastic Four
Fruitvale was a powerful piece of political art, perfectly pitched to its moment. Jordan’s Method acting became legend: He moved to Oakland one month before shooting to retrace Grant’s steps and spend time with Grant’s family and friends, keeping detailed notebooks to help him fully realize his character and immersing himself to the point where some people didn’t know where “Oscar Grant” ended and Jordan began.

When Coogler met Jordan, the two bonded instantly, as millennials who loved Jay-Z and the Brazilian indie film City of God, but also as young men from predominantly black cities, Oakland and Newark, situated across bodies of water from major metropolises. “You get inspired, the possibilities, the dreams, what opportunities are over there,” says Jordan. “It gives you this hunger to get across the water, across the bridge, across the tunnel, to the other place.”

Coogler, the son of a community organizer and a probation officer, had spent a year and a half trying to persuade Sylvester Stallone to entrust him with the Rocky franchise and extend the six-movie story line with the tale of Adonis Creed, the illegitimate son of Apollo, Rocky’s onetime nemesis and later best friend, who died in Rocky IV at the hands of a Russian combatant played by Dolph Lundgren. It was Stallone’s wife, Jennifer, who finally convinced her husband to do it. Preparing for Creed required Jordan to live like a monk, training six days a week to chisel his body into that of a credible middleweight boxer. His abs became part of his newfound profile as an actor, as did a newly charged idea of black political consciousness. He dressed up like Malcolm X for a GQ fashion spread.

Fruitvale and Creed forged the relationship between Coogler and Jordan, and the two were now viewed as a package. With Black Panther, Marvel Studios gave Coogler the firepower to shatter the preconceptions of what a “black” film could do—a $200 million budget (by contrast, Fruitvale Station cost $900,000). Coogler co-wrote the screenplay, including the final scene in which Jordan, as Killmonger, is felled by a sword and spends his dying moments—lips quivering, eyes welling with tears—gazing
“If it was ever a time to get distracted or, like, drop the ball, this is not it.”
out over the Afro-futuristic utopia of Wakanda, declaring, “It’s beautiful.” In a nod to black history that is also a powerful slice of cinematic melodrama, Killmonger asks King T’Challa (Black Panther) to “bury me in the ocean, with my ancestors better than bondage.”

The film has grossed $1.3 billion worldwide.

Last spring, at the Met Gala in New York, Michael B. Jordan arrived in a ninja-style pin-striped suit with a black belt hanging down like a panther tail, created by the first-ever black men’s wear designer at Louis Vuitton, Virgil Abloh. Amid the red-carpet flashbulbs and avant-garde couture, the new faces of a blackrenaissance found one another in the crowd and posed for an impromptu group photograph, with Jordan standing among Janelle Monáe, Daniel Kaluuya, Tessa Thompson, Lena Waithe, John Boyega, Cynthia Erivo, Chadwick Boseman, and Letitia Wright. In a year when the top movie was Black Panther; the best show on television, Atlanta, was about characters orbiting a black hip-hop artist; and a real-life hip-hop artist, Kendrick Lamar, won the Pulitzer Prize, the picture felt like a gate-crashing and a cultural watershed. Afterward, the group converged at the Up&Down club, in downtown Manhattan, and marveled at their moment. Jordan “looked at me and he was like, ‘We got to keep going. We have to keep going.’” recounts Lena Waithe, the creator of Showtime’s The Chi. “I said, ‘I don’t got no plans of stopping.’”

After the gala, Jordan posted a picture of himself on Instagram standing next to Donald Glover, the creator and star of Atlanta, with the caption “Synergy . . .” “Me and Donald, we got some things brewing also,” Jordan tells me. “Timing is right, you know?”

Steven Caple Jr., the director of Jordan’s next film, Creed II, calls this moment of black solidarity in Hollywood a “movement.” During the filming last March, Jordan and Caple often talked about black historical figures whose stories might make a great movie or TV series, like Fred Hampton, the Black Panther who was murdered in his apartment in 1969, or Mansa Musa, a Malian historical figure of the 14th century known to many African-Americans but virtually unknown to white people. Musa was reputedly one of the richest men in the world. “When people look at black people it’s hard for them to think beyond slavery,” says Caple.

“We don’t have any mythology, black mythology, or folklore,” Jordan explains to me as we cruise past billboards for Atlanta and HBO’s Ballers in West Hollywood. DJ Khaled’s “I’m the One” is on the car stereo, and I notice Jordan’s iPhone alias is “Bruce LeRoy,” the black martial-arts hero of the 1985 film The Last Dragon. “Creating our own mythology is very important because it helps dream,” says Jordan. “You help people dream.”

While promoting Fantastic Four, Jordan came out of the box with a rough-hewn ghetto biography that could have been a backstory from The Wire. “I’m from north New Jersey, bro,” he told GQ. “I come from nothing. I come from sleeping in the kitchen with my family with the oven open to keep us warm during winter, you know?”

With the GQ reporter tagging along, Jordan becomes incensed when a maître d’ at a restaurant makes him wait too long for a table, then sticks gum under the table to avenge the perceived racial slight, and then gets drunk on tequila cocktails. “My home, growing up,” he said of his neighborhood in Newark, “is hood as fuck.”

His mother, Donna, was none too pleased. “It was so crass,” she says now. “A little embellished—actor’s license.”

“The hood was the hood,” she says, sighing. “Yes, when we got up in the morning, there was possibly crack vials and condoms on the street. The hood was around us and it was the hood, but our experience was different.”

Jordan says his parents didn’t witness everything he did—getting held up at gunpoint or seeing a crime scene, which was “normal” for Newark, he says—but he regrets his early braggadocio and chalks it up to wounded pride. In truth, Jordan was mostly shielded from the blunt end of Newark because his parents worked for years to build their own version of Wakanda out of the dregs of urban decay.

Jordan’s parents thought deeply about the optimal strategy for African-Americans to survive and prosper on a field that was heavily tilted against them. Jordan was born during the crack epidemic of the late 1980s, when George H. W. Bush was campaigning for president partly by inciting racist fears with the infamous Willie Horton ad. Newark had one of the highest crime rates in the country, but Jordan’s parents plugged their children into a close-knit Afro-centric community that was a version of the aspirational Cosby world, one that had evolved from the black nationalism and self-empowerment politics of the 1960s. In real terms, it meant a loose network of black churches, black schools, black political organizations, black-owned newspapers, and black clubs. Jordan’s was the kind of insular and conservative upbringing that Ta-Nehisi Coates, in his 2009 profile of Michelle Obama for The Atlantic, called “a functioning, self-contained African American world.” “We helicoptered them,” says Donna of her three children. “They were not out of our grasp at all. We orchestrated everything.”

“They were always having sleepovers and having people come over and cooking,” says her son. “My house was the house. You would get a great meal and play basketball outside or video games or watch a movie.”

When Jordan was growing up, his father would regularly dispense nuggets of liberation philosophy and black history to his children, citing canonical books on the African diaspora like The Destruction of Black Civilization, by Chancellor Williams; Stolen Legacy, by George G. M. James; or Ethiopia and the Missing Link in African History, by the Reverend Sterling Means. “Whenever I would go by the dining room, he’d always be reading,” says Michael B. Jordan. “My dad was very adamant about educating himself and giving us a sense of identity and to understand where we come from, and it’s not everything that’s taught in the history books, in the schoolbooks.”

Jordan’s budding acting career was a source of pride in the Clinton Hill neighborhood of Newark, and, for his family, a source of income. By the time Michael B. Jordan was acting in The Wire, his father had quit his job working nights as a supervisor at John F. Kennedy Airport to start an independent catering business, beginning with lunches at Jordan’s junior high, a tuition-based private school called Chad, founded by the Black Youth Organization in the 1960s with an continued on page 147
The Y Squad The world’s most elite counterterrorism unit
Now the YAMAM commandos of Israel have decided to sha

By Adam Ciralsky

LOCATION Tel Aviv, Israel
DATE December 2017

YAMAM rappellers simulate retaking a skyscraper from terrorists.
has long kept its missions and tactics closely held secrets. Their strategies—and their hidden history
On a spring evening in late April, I traveled to a fortified compound in the Ayalon Valley between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. The location is not identified on Waze, the Israeli-built navigation tool, and so, as far as my app-addled cabdriver was concerned, it does not exist. Then again, the same could be said for its inhabitants: YAMAM, a band of counterterror operatives whose work over the last four decades has been shrouded in secrecy.

Upon arrival at the group’s headquarters, which has all the architectural warmth of a supermax, I made my way past a phalanx of Israeli border police in dark-green battle-dress uniforms and into a blastproof holding pen where my credentials were scanned, my electronic devices were locked away, and I received a lecture from a counter-intelligence officer who was nonplussed that I was being granted entrée to the premises. “Do not reveal our location,” he said. “Do not show our faces. And do not use our names.” Then he added, grimly, and without a hint of irony, “Try to forget what you see.”

YAMAM is the world’s most elite—and busiest—force of its kind, and its expertise is in high demand in an era when ISIS veterans strike outside their remaining Middle East strongholds and self-radicalized lone wolves emerge to attack Western targets. “Today, after Barcelona,” says Gilad Erdan, who for the past three years has been Israel’s minister for public security, “after Madrid, after Manchester, after San Bernardino—everyone needs a unit like YAMAM.” More and more, the world’s top intelligence and police chiefs are calling on YAMAM (a Hebrew acronym that means “special police unit”). During his first month on the job, recalls Erdan, “I got requests from 10 countries to train together.”

I made my way to the office of YAMAM’s 44-year-old commander, whose name is classified. I am therefore obliged to refer to him by an initial, “N,” as if he were a Bond character. N’s eyes are different colors (the result of damage sustained during a grenade blast). His shaved head and hulking frame give him the vibe of a Jewish Vin Diesel. At his side, he keeps an unzipped, unbelievably vicious Belgian shepherd named Django.

Last fall, Israeli officials agreed to provide *Vanity Fair* unprecedented access to some of YAMAM’s activities, facilities, and undercover commandos. When I asked N why his superiors had chosen to break with their predecessors’ decades of silence, he gave an uncharacteristically sentimental response: “It’s important for operators’ families to hear about our successes.” (Field “operators,” as they are called, are exclusively male; women sometimes serve in intelligence roles.) N does not discount less magnanimous reasons for cooperating, however.

First, YAMAM has devised new methodologies for responding to terrorist incidents and mass shootings, which it is sharing with its counterparts across the globe. (More on this shortly.) Second, Israel, as an occupying power, faces international condemnation for its heavy-handed approach toward the Palestinians; and as a result, some top officials evidently felt it was time to reveal the fact that governments—including a few of Israel’s more vocal critics on the world stage—often turn to them, sotto voce, for help with their most intractable security problems. And last come the bragging rights—perhaps the unit’s most meaningful rationale.

YAMAM, it so happens, recently won a bitter, 40-year bureaucratic battle with Sayeret Matkal, a secretive special-forces squad within the Israel Defense Forces (I.D.F.). Sayeret Matkal was formerly the *ne plus ultra* in this realm; indeed, *Vanity Fair*, in an article published right after the 9/11 attacks, called the group “the most effective counterterrorism force in the world.” It counts among its alumni political leaders, military generals, and key figures in Israel’s security establishment. And yet, when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a Sayeret Matkal veteran, had to quietly designate one unit to be the national counterterror A-team, he chose YAMAM over his old contingent, which specializes in long-distance reconnaissances and complex overseas missions.

Netanyahu’s decision, supported by some of the prime minister’s fiercest foes, had all the sting of President Barack Obama’s selection of the navy’s SEAL Team Six (over the army’s Delta Force).
to conduct the 2011 raid on Osama bin Laden’s compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. YAMAM is part of the national police force—not the military or the Mossad, which is Israel’s C.I.A., or the Shin Bet, the country’s domestic-security service, which is more akin to Britain’s M.I.5. And yet, in recent months, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has blurred some of the lines between these agencies’ duties. YAMAM’s primary focus involves foiling terror plots, engaging militants during attacks, combating crime syndicates, and blunting border incursions. In contrast, the military, in addition to protecting Israel’s security, is often called upon to respond to West Bank demonstrations, using what human-rights activists often consider excessive force. But as Hamas has continued to organize protests along the fence that separates Israel and Gaza, I.D.F. snipers have been killing Palestinians, who tend to be unarmed. What’s more, Hamas has sent weaponized kites and rockets into Israel, along with mortars and rocket barrages, prompting devastating I.D.F. air strikes. While members of the YAMAM have participated in these missions as well, they have largely played a secondary role.

Off and on for a year, I followed N and his team as they traveled, trained, and exchanged tactics with their American, French, and German counterparts on everything from retaking passenger trains to thwarting complex attacks from cadre of suicide bombers and gunmen firing rocket-propelled grenades. YAMAM’s technology, including robots and Throwbots (cameras housed in round casings that upright themselves upon landing), is dazzling to the uninitiated. But so are the stats: YAMAM averages some 300 missions a year. According to N, his commandos have stopped at least 50 “ticking time bombs” (suicide bombers en route to their targets) and hundreds of attacks at earlier stages. “I’ve been out with the YAMAM on operations,” John Miller, the New York Police Department’s deputy commissioner of intelligence and counterterrorism, told me in his office, a few blocks from the World Trade Center. “There are a lot of outfits that have a lot of knowledge and do a lot of training, but that’s different from a lot of experience.” He pointed out that for every terrorist attack in Israel that makes the news, there are 10 that are prevented by YAMAM acting on perishable intelligence provided by Shin Bet. Avi Dichter agrees wholeheartedly. After serving in Sayeret Matkal, he joined the Shin Bet and in 2000 rose to become its director. He now chairs the Committee on Defense and Foreign Affairs in the Knesset, Israel’s parliament. For years, he admitted, counterterrorism officials shared only a portion of their most sensitive intelligence with covert operatives, out of fear of its being compromised. Now, Dichter says, YAMAM representatives sit in Shin Bet’s war room to ensure they have the full picture. “It took us a long time to understand that you can’t keep information from the unit you’re asking to perform a mission, because what they don’t know may undermine the entire operation.” When I asked him how he would describe the unit to outsiders, he said, “YAMAM is a special-operations force that has the powers of the police, the capabilities of the military, and the brains of Shin Bet.” They are, in effect, the spy agency’s soldiers.

The N.Y.P.D.’s Miller, for his part, claimed U.S. law-enforcement agencies benefit from YAMAM’s successes. A former journalist, who once interviewed bin Laden, Miller maintained, “You can learn a lot from the YAMAM about tactics, techniques, and procedures that, when adapted, can work in any environment, including New York. It’s why we go to Israel once or twice a year—not just to see what we’ve seen before but to see what we’ve seen before that they’re doing differently. Because terrorism, like technology—and sometimes because of technology—is constantly evolving. If you’re working on the techniques you developed two years ago, you’re way out of date.”

Kirstjen Nielsen, Trump’s secretary of Homeland Security, concurs: “We have a lot to learn from [Israel—YAMAM in particular] in terms of how they use technology as a force multiplier to combat an array of threats. Over the last 15 years, we at D.H.S. have partnered with them on almost every threat.”

**A NEW PARADIGM**

“I saw a few Hollywood movies about fighting terrorism and terrorists,” N said. “But the reality is beyond anything you can imagine.” Back in the States, I trailed him and his entourage, who met with the L.A. County Sheriff’s Department’s Special Enforcement Bureau, as well as New York City’s Emergency Service Unit, which falls under Miller. “Terror organizations used to take hostages because they wanted to achieve a prisoner exchange; now they’re trying to do something different,” N observed, remembering a bygone era when terrorism was a violent means of achieving more concrete political ends.

The conventional wisdom for how to deal with fast-moving terrorist incidents has evolved over time, most notably in hostage situations. Since the 1960s and 70s, first responders have sought to establish a physical boundary to “contain” an event, engage the perpetrators in dialogue, draw out negotiations while formulating a rescue plan, then move in with a full team. Similar principles were adapted for reacting to kidnappers, emotionally disturbed individuals, and mass-casualty incidents.

But over the last 20 years—a period that dovetails with N’s rise from recruit to commander—he and his colleagues have come to treat terror attacks the way doctors treat heart attacks and strokes. There is a golden window in which to intervene and throw all their energy and resources at the problem. While units in the U.S. have tended to arrive on the scene, gauge the situation, secure a perimeter, and then call in specialists or reinforcements, YAMAM goes in heavy, dispatching self-contained squadrons of breachers, snipers, rappellers, bomb techs, dog handlers, and hostage negotiators. Metaphorically speaking, they don’t send an ambulance to stabilize a patient for transport. They send a hospital to ensure survival on scene. Moreover,
Nowadays, some terrorists aren’t interested in negotiations or even survival.

they establish mobile units with clear lines of authority, not an array of groups with competing objectives. These teams can rove and respond, and are not unduly tethered to a central command base.

“The active shooter changed everything,” John Miller elaborated. Nowadays, the terrorist or mass murderer isn’t interested in negotiations or even survival. “He is looking for maximum lethality and to achieve martyrdom in many cases.” Because of this, the response teams’ priorities have shifted. The primary objective, said Miller, echoing YAMAM’s strategy, “is to stop the killing. That means to use the first officers on the scene whether they’re specialized or not. The other part is to stop the dying. How do you then set parameters inside as the people are chasing the threat, going after the sound of gunfire, engaging the gunman? How do you get to those people who are wounded, who are still viable, who could survive? American law enforcement has struggled with [this] since the Columbine case”—when responders waited too long to storm in. “We’ve got to get inside within 20 minutes. It can’t be within the golden two hours—or it’s not golden.”

Major O, the 37-year-old who commands YAMAM’s sniper team, explained that one of the unit’s signature skills is getting into the assailant’s mind-set. “We try to learn every terrorist attack everywhere in the world to find out how we can do it better,” he noted. “Our enemies are very professional, too, and in the end they are learning. They try to be better than us.”

To maintain its edge, YAMAM, after analyzing far-flung incidents, fashions its training to address possible future attacks. In the time that I spent with the operators, they rappelled down a Tel Aviv skyscraper and swooped into an office dozens of floors below, testing alternative ways that responders might have confronted last year’s Las Vegas attack in which a lone gunman on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay hotel fired more than a thousand rounds at concertgoers, killing 58. A YAMAM squad also spent hours on a dimly lit platform taking over a stationary Israeli passenger train—alongside members of France’s elite Groupe d’Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale. (The French had come to Israel, in part, to practice such maneuvers, evidently mindful of 2015’s Thalys rail attack, which recently found its way to the big screen in Clint Eastwood’s The 15:17 to Paris). And at a telecommunications facility north of Tel Aviv, Israeli operatives simulated a nighttime mission with Germany’s vaunted Grenzschutzgruppe 9, facing multiple gunmen and explosions in all directions. Taking it all in, I felt like I had unwittingly been cast as an extra in a Michael Bay movie.

As they briefed their European guests, the YAMAM team preached its gospel of never allowing the perfect to be the enemy of the good. “To be relevant and to win this battle, sometimes you must go with 50 percent or 70 percent knowledge and intelligence,” N said. As he considered what his counterparts faced at places such as Orlando’s Pulse nightclub or the Bataclan concert hall, in Paris, N asserted that in today’s scenarios, unlike those in the 20th century, “we don’t have the privilege of time. You must come inside very fast because there are terrorists that are killing hostages every minute.”

**The second directive**

The inside story of YAMAM’s genesis has not been told by its leaders, until now.

In 1972, during the Summer Olympics in Munich, members of the Palestinian group Black September kidnapped and murdered 11 Israeli teammates. The cold-blooded attack—and Germany’s botched response—prompted Israel’s prime minister Golda Meir to initiate Operation Wrath of God, sending hit squads to track down and kill the group’s organizers and others (later depicted in Steven Spielberg’s Munich). And though it may have escaped public attention, a secret second directive would go forth as well, which ordered the establishment of a permanent strike force to deter or defeat future attacks.

This mandate would not be realized until two years later, after terrorists sneaked across the border from Lebanon, killed a family of three, and took over an elementary school in Ma’alot with 105 students and 10 teachers inside—hoping to negotiate for the release of their brethren held in Israeli prisons. Sayeret Matkal raced to the scene and mounted a disastrous rescue attempt. Twenty-one students perished. Addressing the Knesset, Meir exclaimed, “The blood of our children, the martyrs of Ma’alot, cries out to us, exhorting us to intensify our war against terrorism, to perfect our methods.”

Following the attack, counterterrorism responsibilities—especially the delicate art of hostage rescue—shifted from the I.D.F. to a new police unit, initially
dubbed the “Fist Brigade” and, later, YAMAM. Chronically underfunded, ostracized by the military, and deemed an unknown quantity by the intelligence services, the unit was a backwater. That is, until Assaf Hefetz was put in charge. He was a well-regarded I.D.F. paratrooper with important friends, among them future prime minister Ehud Barak. Hefetz had supported the April 1973 operation in which Barak—famously disguised as a woman—infiltrated Beirut and killed several Palestine Liberation Organization leaders as part of Israel’s ongoing retaliation for Munich. Hefetz professionalismized YAMAM, persuading skilled soldiers to join his new police commando unit—whose work was a secret to all but a handful of Israelis.

In May, I visited Hefetz, aged 74, in the seaside hamlet of Caesarea and found a man with the body of a 24-year-old and the hearing of a 104-year-old. Like many of his generation of Israelis, he speaks his mind without regard for how his words may land. “After 18 months, I had recruited and trained three platoons, and I knew that my unit was much better than the army,” he insisted. “But I was the only person in the country who thought so.” In due course, he found an eager partner in the spymasters of Shin Bet, who agreed to let YAMAM try its hand at the treacherous work of neutralizing suspected terrorists.

Still, it was Hefetz, personally, who first put YAMAM on the map. On the morning of March 11, 1978, armed guerrillas arrived on Zodiac boats from Lebanon, coming ashore near Haifa. Once inland, they encountered and murdered an American named Gail Rubin, whose close relative happened to be Abraham Ribicoff, a powerful U.S. senator. Next, they flagged down a taxi, murdered its occupants, then hijacked a bus. Traveling south along the picturesque coastal highway, they threw hand grenades at passing cars and shot some of the bus passengers. The attack was timed in hopes of disrupting peace talks between Israel’s prime minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat.

The rolling pandemonium came to a halt at a junction north of Tel Aviv. “When I arrived, my unit was [still] an hour away,” Hefetz recalled. The bus had stopped, but it was a charred wreck. “No one knows [exactly] what happened. Call it the fog of war.” Hefetz soon learned that some of the assailants had escaped on foot and were moving toward the beach. He grabbed his gun and gave chase, eventually killing two of them, capturing a third, and rescuing some of the hostages. In the process, he took a bullet to his right shoulder and lost hearing in one ear. The incident, known as the Coastal Road Massacre, claimed the lives of more than three dozen people. But Hefetz’s valor raised the question: given what YAMAM’s commander accomplished on his own, what could the unit as a whole do if properly harnessed?

The answer was a decade in coming, during which time YAMAM was bigfooted by Sayeret Matkal during its response to terrorist attacks. In the notorious Bus 300 affair, for example, Sayeret Matkal commandos stormed a bus to rescue hostages and claimed it had killed four terrorists when, in fact, two had survived. The pair were turned over to Shin Bet operatives, who, a short distance away, murdered them in cold blood. The debacle and its aftermath, which disgraced Shin Bet chief Avraham Shalom—who had ordered the on-site assassinations and then tried to cover it up—left an indelible stain on Israel’s institutions and international credibility.

In 1987, Alik Ron, a man with deep credentials and a devil-may-care attitude, took over YAMAM. He had served in Sayeret Matkal and participated in the legendary 1976 raid on Entebbe, in which an I.D.F. team stormed a Ugandan airport and successfully freed more than 100 hostages. “I was in our most elite units and took part in the most celebrated mission in our history,” said Ron, who in retirement has become a gentleman farmer. “Only when I was in charge of YAMAM did I realize I was in the company of the most professional unit in Israel.”

And yet when he first addressed his men to say how proud he was to lead them—describing all the great things they would accomplish together—they broke out laughing. Apparently, the operatives were fed up with being highly trained benchwarmers, always left on the sidelines. Ron persevered nonetheless. And he is withering in his assessment of his old unit (Sayeret Matkal) and its oversees. “Nobody, nobody, not the head of Shin Bet, not Mossad, not the prime minister, can give me an order [to kill terrorists after they have been captured]. He can get me an order, but I will do like this,” he said, lifting his middle finger. “I will not murder them. I will have already killed them in the bus.”

Ron soon got the chance to try things his way. In 1988, he learned that three terrorists had crossed in from Egypt and hijacked a bus full of working mothers on their way to Dimona, the epicenter of Israel’s top-secret nuclear-weapons program. As Ron raced toward the Negev Desert to link up with his team, he saw CH-53 Sea Stallions on the horizon heading in the same direction. Pounding his fist on his dashboard and unleashing a stream of expletives, Ron recalled, he screamed, “Sayeret Matkal ... again?!”

Ehud Barak was on one of those helicopters, a man who...
Skin in the

Forty years ago, the N.F.L. turned cheerleaders into sex objects.
Now they’re fighting back

By MICHELLE RUIZ

FANTASY FOOTBALL
The Dallas Cowboys led the way in selling sex on the sidelines—while paying cheerleaders next to nothing. “It was a business,” observed three veterans of the squad. “And we were the merchandise.”
they call each other “girls,” even though they are grown women now, some of them grandmothers in their 60s. Few look it: most are lithe and fit from a lifetime of exercise. Early this morning they convened for a variety of fitness classes, including a “werkout workout,” a “hot heels dance class,” and “cheer Zumba,” followed by a panel on the “Good, Bad, & Ugly” of cosmetics procedures. Now they are buzzing around a banquet hall set up in a club-seating deck on the upper level of Nissan Stadium in Nashville, home of the Tennessee Titans. There are nearly 500 former N.F.L. cheerleaders—Washington Redskinettes, Seattle Sea Gals, Chicago Honey Bears, Buffalo Jills, and the queen supremes, the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders. (“When they walk in, you can just tell,” says one alumna.) They have gathered for the biennial National Football Cheerleaders Alumni Reunion, and the room is crackling with the bubbly brand of energy that many of the girls call “sparkle,” which also serves as an implicit dress code. There are sparkles on dresses, sparkles on earrings, sparkles on stilettos. “It’s awesome to get re-united with my cheer sisters, as we like to say,” gushes Jennifer Hathaway, a former Atlanta Falconette whose eyes are dusted with sparkly shadow.

The ex-cheerleaders have been drawn here by their shared past—a collective nostalgia for their days on the sidelines, their moment in the spotlight. But despite their giddiness at being re-united, they know there is no escaping the present.

Over the past year, the N.F.L. has faced a rash of lawsuits and ugly allegations over its treatment of cheerleaders. Five former members of the Washington Redskins squad say the team flew them to Costa Rica in 2013, stripped them of their passports, and required them to pose topless before wealthy fans. In March, former cheerleader Bailey Davis sued the New Orleans Saints for firing her over an Instagram photo she posted of herself in a lacy bodysuit. And in June, six former cheerleaders filed a federal sex-discrimination suit against the Houston Texans, alleging they were paid less than the state’s minimum wage and relentlessly body-shamed by the squad coach, who called them “jelly bellies” and “crack whores.”

“I had no idea that once I became a Houston Texan cheerleader, all of my dreams would slowly be shattered,” one of the plaintiffs, Morgan Wiederhold, said at a news conference.

The teams have all denied the allegations, and the N.F.L. insists that it “supports fair employment practices.” The cheerleader alumni assembled at the reunion, meanwhile, aren’t eager to discuss the league’s #MeToo moment. “Since we’re being real and honest with each other, the last couple of years, there have been some controversies in the N.F.L.,” the evening’s co-host, Lisa Guerrero, chief investigative correspondent for Inside Edition and a onetime Rams cheerleader, acknowledges when she takes the stage. “I know that some of these controversies have been painful, and some of them have been difficult for us to deal with as a unit. But what I like to say to people is that had it not been for the background I had in the N.F.L., there’s no way that I could have been on television or have the sisterhood that we all have. We’re here to celebrate.”

Some women at the reunion say privately that they experienced similar mistreatment during their time in the N.F.L. But rather than sympathize with their modern-day “cheer sisters,” they seem intent on siding with their old teams. “None of this conversation about the pay, and the discrimination, and the treatment—none of that is new to me,” says Cathy Core, founder of the now defunct Chicago Honey Bears. “My feeling is that when you come into a group, you sign a contract. You know what you’re getting into. Nothing that you’re gonna cry about is gonna make it any different.”

None of that is new. Such dismissals contain a tacit admission of a deeper reality. The low pay, the body-shaming, the draconian rules about appearance and behavior that apply to cheerleaders but not to players—these are not the work of a few rogue coaches or lecherous owners. The N.F.L.’s current crisis, in fact, is the result of a series of carefully crafted marketing plans put into place by teams across the league in the 1970s to sell sex on the sidelines. One by one, front offices from Buffalo to San Diego gave N.F.L. cheerleading an extreme makeover designed to tap into the fantasies of male fans. The move took place at the very moment that pro football was transforming itself into the world’s most lucrative sports-entertainment behemoth: All together, the N.F.L.’s 32 franchises...
are worth an estimated $80 billion, according to Forbes. To woo TV viewers, court sponsors, and boost their brands, teams systematically set out to turn their cheerleaders into sex objects—ones who would serve as cheap labor in the hope that the opportunity would rocket them to stardom in Hollywood or the media.

“They own you,” says Debbie Kepley, a personal trainer in Los Angeles who performed as a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader during the boom years of 1976 to 1978. “Even though they wanted you to be a representative of the Cowboys, you were still just an accessory—a sideline accessory. It’s like being a Miss America—you will do anything they say to be a part of all of the glitz, the glamour, the cameras, the excitement and hope. That’s where they take advantage of people.”

Three sisters who joined the Cowboys squad after Kepley—Stephanie, Suzette, and Sheri Scholz—put it even more succinctly in their 1991 tell-all memoir, Deep in the Heart of Texas: Reflections of Former Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders. “It was a business,” the sisters observe, “and we were the merchandise.”

In the beginning, cheerleaders were neither modest women nor sexy women. In fact, they weren’t women at all. As college football took off in the early 1900s, enthusiastic male students in the then all-male Ivy League organically spilled out of the stands and onto the sidelines, becoming the first “yell leaders” and “rooster kings.” Perhaps not coincidentally, when cheerleading was a predominantly male activity, it carried considerably more weight. “The reputation of having been a valiant ‘cheer-leader’ is one of the most valuable things a boy can take away from college,” The Nation wrote in 1911. Though male cheerleaders endured at some upper-crust schools (think George W. Bush at Yale), there was a Rosie-the-Riveter-ing of the sport during the Second World War: as men shipped off overseas, women stepped into their saddle shoes.

Cheerleading hit the big leagues in 1954, when the Baltimore Colts cheerleaders became the first full-time squad in the N.F.L. Their look was more Jackie than Marilyn—letter sweaters, bobby socks, and homemade pom-poms. They got dressed in the stadium’s boiler room, all huddled around a single mirror. In
what would become an N.F.L. tradition, the founding Colts cheerleaders were paid exactly nothing. Other teams soon followed suit, debuting cheerleaders of their own, including the Dallas Cow-Belles & Beaux, a group of coed high-school students who tumbled and made human pyramids.

Cheerleading retained its girl-next-door innocence until one fateful day in November 1967, when a Dallas burlesque performer named Bubbles Cash sauntered through the stands at a Cowboys game wearing a micro-miniskirt and carrying cotton candy. Photos from the game show the men around Cash going nuts; local newspapers crowned her the “belle of the football.” Cash, a canny crowd-pleaser, blew kisses to her admirers.

The unexpected sensation did not go unnoticed. Tex Schramm, the Cowboys’ general manager, shared Cash’s flair for marketing. “Schramm was known as the P. T. Barnum of the N.F.L.,” says Dana Adam Shapiro, director of Daughters of the Sexual Revolution: The Untold Story of the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders. “He was the one who had the initial vision for showgirls on the sidelines of sporting events. He realized there’s a lot of downtime in football. It couldn’t just be guys on the field running into each other. You had to turn it into showbiz. And the cheerleaders were one of the ways that he turned it into the greatest show on earth.”

A former executive of CBS Sports, Schramm had already tailored the game to the TV era, helping to pioneer instant replay and create the Super Bowl, America’s most valuable sports brand. Now, inspired by Cash, Schramm re-invented the cheerleaders as sexy, glamorous, scantily clad showgirls, dressing them in the now legendary royal-blue halter tops, star-spangled vests, hot pants, and white go-go boots. “We had to tie the knot a certain way to give us the most cleavage,” recalls Kepley, who made the team in 1976. “Very few people had fake boobs back then. They were just starting to hit the market.”

Raised a scrappy latchkey kid by a single mom, Kepley was working as a clerk at federal bankruptcy court when she heard an ad on the radio for Dallas cheerleader tryouts. Women were asked to come dressed in short-shorts and halter and to free-dance to disco music while the judges subjected their bodies to unabashed assessments. “We were supposed to be wholesome but sexy,” Kepley says, “like a Barbie doll.”

The new cheerleaders, in fact, were deliberately cast to fit a wide range of male fantasies. “Each girl’s ‘look’ was a part of the big scheme,” the Scholz sisters wrote in their memoir. “There was the long-haired blonde, the girl with the...
ponytail, the pigtails, the tall brunette, the perky little brunette, the bouncy blonde, the sultry redhead.” Guys in the stadium would fixate on their preferred type. “Men would be yelling down, Shake it, Stephanie! Shake it!” recalls Stephanie Scholz, who started out as a pageant queen in Lubbock before moving up to the Cowboys squad.

The new image was engineered especially for TV. Andy Sidaris, the director of ABC’s Monday Night Football, patented the “honey shot”—the practice of cutting away from the game between plays and beaming appreciative shots of the Dallas cheerleaders to millions of viewers across the country. “I got the idea for honey shots because I am a dirty old man,” Sidaris admitted from his control room in the 1976 documentary Seconds to Play. “You gotta show some girls—and occasionally we’ll get a football play in there.”

The N.F.L., meanwhile, looked on without objection. Schramm had personally given Pete Rozelle, the league’s commissioner, his first job in football, on the P.R. staff of the Los Angeles Rams. “Rozelle courted and massaged the television and Madison Avenue leaders,” Richard Crepeau, author of NFL Football: A History of America’s New National Pastime, has observed. Like Schramm, Rozelle “knew that sex sells.”

With the league’s blessing, the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders—known reverentially as the D.C.C.—exploded into an all-out pop-culture sensation. They were featured on playing cards, inspired a TV movie starring Jane Seymour, made cameo appearances on The Love Boat and Family Feud, and circled the globe on U.S.O. tours at the express request of the Defense Department. And thanks to another of Schramm’s marketing schemes, they appeared on a splashy, unequivocally sexy poster meant to rival the whoopee cushions and fake poop at Spencer Gifts, wallpapering the bedrooms of teenage boys across America. Shaw received $14,000 for the shoot, and the Cowboys made at least $1.8 million from the poster. But when I ask Shaw if the cheerleaders shared in the revenue, he bursts out laughing. “Oh no,” he says. “I paid them more than anybody with nice catering. They didn’t get anything.”

At their peak, the D.C.C. as a unit were, by some calculations, nearly as famous as Fawcett herself. But while they were brand ambassadors and game-day draws and razzle-dazzle performers featured on nationwide TV, they were paid around $100 per season, before taxes—barely enough to cover gas to the stadium and dry cleaning for their iconic uniforms. As one former cheerleader told filmmaker Dana Adam Shapiro, “We became million-dollar showgirls who made $15 a game.”

The Dallas model of sexing up the cheerleaders sparked what Sports Illustrated called “the Great Cheerleading War of 1978,” as rival teams raced to match the Cowboys in displaying “belly buttons, busts, and backsides.” The Bengal’s dressed their squad in sarongs decorated with hand-painted tigers. The Chargers replaced their old uniforms of white leotards, pleated skirts, and tennis shoes with white briefs, blue satin halters, top hats, and gold lamé boots. “Everyone is trying to out-Dallas Dallas,” an assistant Falcons manager said at the time.

In Chicago, Bears owner George “Papa Bear” Halas declared that he wanted to have his own set of “dancing girls” on the field, to distract fans from a losing season. The team tapped Cathy Core, who had left a convent to coach cheerleaders for a church middle school, as founder of the Honey Bears. Halas, Core says, “knew right from the beginning that he had to give the people something more for their dollar.” According to Core, the team intentionally dressed the Honey Bears in a white one-piece leotard with a lace-up front to accentuate “the type of body we wanted to see in that particular costume: girls who could be a little more endowed on the top.”

Former cheerleaders say that while the teams dressed them like hookers, they were expected to comport themselves like virgins. To maintain the proper balance between sex and sparkle—to protect, in effect, the particular brand of fantasy they were creating—the Cowboys and other teams implemented a host of stringent rules. Most were pioneered by Suzanne Mitchell, a former P.R. executive whom Schramm put in charge of the D.C.C. Ostensibly meant to “protect” the cheerleaders, the original rules laid the groundwork for the kind of rigid policing that has sparked the present-day backlash among many millennial cheerleaders. No chewing gum. No wearing blue jeans. No appearing drunk in public. And absolutely no love handles.

In a precursor to today’s “jiggle tests,” Mitchell set rigorous body standards before “body-shaming” was even a concept. She instituted regular weigh-ins. “You would stand there and they would say, ‘O.K., I want you to turn around one inch at a time,’” Scholz recalls. “I am five foot five. I weigh 105. And they still wanted me thinner.” Mitchell created lists of what she considered problem areas and circulated them to the entire squad. “I was always on a list that said thighs,” recalls Dana Presley Killmer, who joined the team in 1980. Other lists singled out those who needed to slim their midsections, those who needed to lose 5 pounds, and those who needed to drop 10—all within days, or else risk being benched. “There were a lot of girls who got into
eating disorders,” Scholz says—or diet pills and cocaine. Some lived on salads, yogurt, and beef-bouillon cubes plopped in hot water, when they ate at all. To shed last-minute water weight, Killmer encased her thighs in Saran Wrap, pulled on plastic dance pants, and rehearsed for hours. “We would go home and shower and be four pounds lighter,” she says.

Another of Mitchell’s rigid rules had a lasting effect across the N.F.L.: a ban on interactions between cheerleaders and players. Enforcement of the prohibition, however, was often skewed by gender. “A lot of the guys were cheating on their wives with the cheerleaders,” Kepley says. But if they were caught by the team, the cheerleader would usually take the fall. At the Honey Bears, Core recalls, “we had to let one of the girls go because she was in a pretty serious relationship with one of the guys.” But when it came to the player, the team did nothing. “Do you think I’m gonna bench him?” Jim Finks, the Bears’ general manager, scoffed at Core. “He’s not gonna lose his job.”

Dallas also pioneered the practice of boosting its bottom line by having the cheerleaders make paid appearances at events like car shows and golf outings. But as millennial cheerleaders now allege, serving as the team’s de facto ambassadors alongside fans, V.I.P.’s, and sponsors didn’t always feel safe. Mitchell banned appearances where alcohol was served and sent along bodyguards, but cheerleaders still remember how uneasy they felt at such events. As the Scholz sisters recount in their memoir, “One man flew a group of cheerleaders to Memphis to make an appearance at a huge indoor arena.” But that night, when they arrived, “there wasn’t anyone there except eight or nine of his close buddies rolling around in this huge building that held about 10,000.” The man “was loaded and just wanted to have his own little private personal appearance.” At one point, a fan began stalking Stephanie Scholz, waiting for her after games and calling her at night. “I can definitely relate to the MeToo movement,” Scholz says. “I was horrified. I had to change apartments and telephone numbers.”

Sometimes cheerleaders made extra money for such appearances—as much as $500 for an event. But in a trend that continues to the present day, they were paid little to nothing for their work on game days. For the Honey Bears, it was as little as $10 per game. In San Diego, “the girls were not paid a dime,” says Rhonda Crossland, former director of the Chargettes. While the team racked up millions, the Chargettes held car washes and bake sales to pay for their uniforms and travel to away games.

Lynita Shilling, who joined the Chargettes in 1977 at age 20, overlooked the lack of pay because she was an aspiring actress who hoped the squad would launch her career. “Now I see that the amount of time I put into it, the amount of dedication, the amount of volunteering for public appearances—it was just totally inappropriate and inequitable,” she says. “Man, they were getting a sweet deal.”

Back then, however, there were no N.F.L. cheerleaders filing lawsuits over pay. “I mean, what are you going to sue for? Back wages?” Shilling says. “There were no wages.”

In fact, it didn’t take long before N.F.L. cheerleaders began to fight back against the low pay and inequitable rules. Kepley’s breaking point came in 1978, when the Cowboys defeated the Broncos to win Super Bowl XII. After the game, the D.C.C. were rushed off the field at the Louisiana Superdome and ushered onto a waiting plane, where they were forced to sit for hours, without food or water. “I think it was because they didn’t want us back in Dallas celebrating, going to nightclubs,” Kepley says. “You still can’t convince me to this day that they didn’t keep us on that plane on purpose.” To add insult to injury, Kepley and her fellow

Teams went after cheerleaders who posed in *Playboy*. “It was an issue of power,” says one.
FRISKY BUSINESS

Marketing N.F.L. cheerleaders as sex objects came at a steep price. From left: Suzanne Mitchell, the Dallas squad director who instituted rigorous body standards that were widely imitated; the 1977 poster that sparked a craze; Cowboys general manager Tex Schramm, who led the move from sweaters to halter tops, with N.F.L. commissioner Pete Rozelle in 1970; attorney Gloria Allred with former Houston cheerleaders pushing for higher pay, outside N.F.L. headquarters in June.

The cheerleaders themselves understood what was at stake. “It’s an issue of ownership and power,” says Shilling. “Anything that takes away from their power and control is threatening to them. When we were featured in Playboy, it was a bad reflection on management.”

The key difference between Dallas and Playboy was one of audience. The Cowboys, who operate in the heart of the Bible Belt, were careful to package the cheerleaders to appeal to male fans, without drawing the ire of their wives or ministers. “The Cowboys weren’t dummies,” says Cohen, the Playboy editor. “Here they had big hair, big boobs, bouncy, smiley young women parading up and down the sidelines. They were well aware of what was necessary to get them the notoriety they were looking for—for drive ticket holders, drive eyeballs to TV, drive advertisers. They knew exactly what was going on.”

Ironically, as the years passed, the N.F.L. shifted in Playboy’s direction. Over the next three decades, the cheerleaders found their uniforms getting skimpier and skimpier—hot pants made hotter with V-shaped dips at the waist. Seductive posters gave way to swimsuit calendars and lingerie calendars. The pay, on the other hand, remained as low as ever, even as the league’s profits soared. In 1995, one squad of cheerleaders decided to do something about it. The Buffalo Jills became the first and only squad to unionize, demanding better pay and equal treatment. “We were just tired of being used and abused,” says Erin McCormack Oliver, a co-captain who helped spearhead the unionization drive. “We were unique, intelligent, talented women, and we wanted to be respected for that.”

The Jills, who were paid nothing at the time but one ticket per home game and a parking pass, managed to negotiate a paycheck of $25 per home game or personal appearance. But the victory proved short-lived. The squad’s sponsor, Mighty Taco, dropped the Jills after they unionized. “Just being professional was a bridge too far for them,” Oliver recalls. A local restaurant owner eventually agreed to step in, on one condition: the Jills must drop their union affiliation. Without the protection of collective bargaining, the Jills once again found continued on page 153.
SOLOMON’S DILEMMA

GOLDMAN SACHS

BECAME THE POSTER

CHILD FOR WALL

STREET GREED.

CAN ITS NEW C.E.O.

FIND A WAY TO

SATISFY MAIN

STREET’S NEEDS?

BY WILLIAM D. COHAN
David Solomon was caught off guard when Lloyd Blankfein told him he would be taking over as C.E.O. “I needed a moment to collect myself,” he says.
After lunch on March 1, David Solomon was standing at his desk in his 41st-floor office at Goldman Sachs, high above the Hudson River, answering e-mails and talking on his telephone headset. For the previous 15 months, Solomon had been locked in a competition with Harvey Schwartz, with whom he served as co-chief operating officer at Goldman, for one of the most coveted positions on Wall Street. One of them would be picked to succeed Lloyd Blankfein, the bank’s chairman and C.E.O., whenever he decided the time had come to step down.

Suddenly, Blankfein yelled to Solomon from his office next door. “Can you come here?” the boss called. “I want to talk to you about something.”

Solomon walked into Blankfein’s office, just as he had hundreds of times before. But this visit was different. “The board has made a decision,” Blankfein told him, without preamble. “You’re going to be my successor. I’m going to talk to Harvey about it in the next couple of days, but I just wanted to tell you that.”

Solomon was flabbergasted. He had no idea that Blankfein had decided to retire, let alone that the board had already met to approve him as C.E.O. “I thought I was doing a good job, but I didn’t think that he was leaving,” Solomon tells me. “I needed a moment to collect myself.”

It took Solomon nearly 24 hours before he could think straight again. Even more disorienting was the fact that he could not share the news with anyone outside the firm, including his family, for another nine days, when the bank would announce the transfer of power. He spoke with Schwartz, who offered his congratulations. “He was disappointed that it wasn’t him,” Solomon recalls, “but he was very generous and humble.”

Widely seen as a steady hand who helped re-invigorate the investment-banking business at Goldman, Solomon represents a sharp shift from Blankfein, a risk manager known for placing big, calculated bets. In 2007, Blankfein netted the firm $4 billion by authorizing a “big short” against the mortgage market, and in 2009, in the midst of the global financial meltdown, he led Goldman to its best year ever, raking in nearly $20 billion in pre-tax profits. But those freewheeling days are over: In the post-crash regulatory environment, despite some rollbacks by the Trump administration, Washington continues to actively discourage Wall Street risk-taking. It falls to Solomon, who stepped into the C.E.O. job on October 1, to navigate Goldman through the intricacies of the new landscape—a task Blankfein more or less abdicated, in hopes that the pendulum would swing back to a more permissive era.

By necessity, Solomon will be forced to adopt a strategy that is much more staid—and likely less profitable—than the one Blankfein forged. It’s a role he’s particularly suited for: having worked at a handful of Wall Street banks that no longer exist, Solomon has seen firsthand that past performance is no guarantee of future results. “He’s got no shortage of challenges, but it is an amazing franchise and the brand is great,” says Jonathan Gray, president of the Blackstone Group, who has known Solomon for years. “If somebody asked, ‘Would I bet on Goldman Sachs under David Solomon’s leadership?’ Absolutely.”

Solomon is cut from a classic Goldman mold, in the sense that—like many of the firm’s leaders before him—he’s an ambitious middle-class striver. One of three business-minded brothers, he grew up north of New York City, in Westchester County, where he attended Edgemont High School. His father owned a small printing business, and his mother sold hearing aids. In his high-school yearbook picture, Solomon is seated on a large boulder, sporting a mop of dark hair parted down the middle, Monkees-style. (Like Blankfein and Hank Paulson before him, Solomon now embraces his baldness, which has become something of a Goldman signature.) His yearbook quotes foreshadow both his work ethic (Emerson: “The success of a job well done is to have done it”) and his self-reliance (Thoreau: “What a man thinks of himself, that is what determines, or rather indicates his fate”).

After majoring in political science at Hamilton College, Solomon was rejected by Goldman for a two-year analyst position. So he headed to 1 Wall Street, where he spent a year in the training program at Irving Trust, now part of Bank of New York Mellon. “You basically went to graduate school at the bank for a year,” he recalled in a Goldman podcast. Afterward, in 1986, he moved to Drexel Burnham Lambert, the investment bank made infamous by junk-bond pioneer Michael Milken, where he received an education of a different kind.

Meetings with Milken began at six A.M. in New York City—which was three A.M. in Los Angeles, where Milken lived. Solomon marveled at Milken’s energy. “As a 25-year-old, this was an entrepreneurial place where you were given an awful lot of rope,” Solomon says. “If you were good and took the opportunities you were given, you could excel incredibly quickly.” Drexel allowed him to interact with C.E.O.’s in ways he could not have done at a more traditional firm. He sold commercial paper and then high-yield junk bonds, the financial instruments favored by companies with less than stellar credit ratings. “It really got me fired up about finance,” Solomon said on the podcast.

But throughout Solomon’s time at the firm, Milken faced allegations of insider trading and racketeering. In 1990, after pleading guilty to lesser charges, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison and fined $600 million. Drexel, slapped with a fine of $650 million—the largest ever levied under the Depression-era securities laws—filed for bankruptcy and went out of business.

Today, Solomon remains friendly with Milken. When Solomon’s father was diagnosed with prostate cancer, Milken would call regularly to check in and see if he could help. What Solomon took away from his experience at Drexel wasn’t Milken’s penchant for risky deals, but his discipline. “His work ethic and the way he processed information and the way he read and absorbed, it was extraordinary and it still is,” Solomon says. “You see him today, you go to his office, and there are papers everywhere that he’s read and marked up. He’s got an incredible ability to digest information, and then synthesize it and communicate around it.”

In 1991, after a brief stint as a vice president at Salomon Brothers, Solomon moved to Bear Stearns as managing director of the bankruptcy and high-yield bond group. He quickly rose through the ranks. In 1995, at age 33, Bear named him co-head of investment banking. As a boss, he was tough but respected. “Some
people who didn’t meet his standards dis-liked him,” says a former Bear executive. “But he was the real deal.”

Ironically, Solomon’s new position at Bear Stearns inadvertently paved his way to Goldman. In 1997, Bear and Goldman were the lead underwriters for the Venetian casino and resort in Las Vegas, which was being developed by business magnate Sheldon Adelson. Solomon co-headed the Bear team, while Jon Winkelried, now the president of TPG Capital, led the Goldman team, along with Steven Mnuchin, currently serving as Treasury secretary. Winkelried quickly came to admire Solomon’s judgment, his command of the facts, and his willingness to be a team player. “He was very collaborative,” Winkelried says.

In January 1999, after an elaborate closing dinner for the deal at a resort in Cancun, Solomon and Winkelried flew back together to New York on the same flight. “You should really come to Goldman Sachs,” Winkelried urged. Solomon, by then one of the top executives at Bear Stearns, demurred. “I really don’t think I would do that,” he said. But Winkelried persisted, repeatedly inviting Solomon to dinner and making the case for moving to Goldman. Winkelried even offered Solomon a partnership—one of the few times Goldman had bestowed the coveted position upon an outsider. The wooing was extraordinary: it’s generally more difficult to get a job at Goldman than to gain admission to Harvard. But Solomon was still ambivalent. “I was really reluctant,” he recalls. “It was a big, big decision. It wasn’t like I was dying to work at Goldman.”

Then one day, in the midst of the full-court press from Goldman, Solomon had what he calls a “bad interaction” with Jimmy Cayne, the longtime C.E.O. of Bear Stearns. To grow the business, Solomon wanted to hire a senior banker from Merrill Lynch, but he needed Cayne to sign off on offering the recruit enough Bear stock to match the unvested shares he would lose if he left Merrill. Cayne wouldn’t do it, and Solomon returned to his office, peeved.

The phone rang. It was Winkelried. “Are you coming to Goldman Sachs?” he asked yet again. Solomon agreed to meet the firm’s top brass, and he came away impressed. He also consulted with Blankfein, whom he knew socially from the Hamptons. Finally, after a dinner with

Solomon is cut from a classic Goldman mold. Like many of the firm’s leaders before him, he’s an ambitious middle-class striver.  

D A Y  I N  T H E  L I F E
Solomon makes the rounds at Goldman’s headquarters in New York City, speaking at a weekly market huddle and visiting the asset-management floor.
John Thornton, then the co-president of Goldman, Solomon told his wife, “I’m going to go to Goldman Sachs.”

In September 1999, after discussing the move for several weeks with Bear Stearns, Solomon joined Goldman. “It was their gain and our loss,” Warren Spector, a former co-president of Bear, would recall years later.

But Solomon’s ambivalence about joining Goldman cost him, at least initially. Had he joined the firm that May, before its initial public offering, he would have hit the financial jackpot like the rest of Goldman’s partners, some of whom were suddenly worth $300 million. “If I had really understood the economics of the I.P.O.,” he says, “I probably would have come sooner.” He sold his Bear stock well before the firm went under in 2008, though, and his Goldman stock is now worth around $47.5 million. Last year, before being named C.E.O., he made $21 million in total compensation.

Goldman being an insular culture, there was always the chance of organ rejection. “If somebody came in and didn’t roll up their sleeves, that could happen,” Winkelried says. “But David wasn’t like that. David was a hard worker. He had something to add, and he very quickly found himself at home.”

Over the next 12 years, mentored by Winkelried, Solomon rose through the ranks, first as head of Goldman’s financing businesses, then as co-head of investment banking, and finally as chief operating officer alongside Harvey Schwartz. The initial betting inside Goldman was that the C.E.O. job was Schwartz’s to lose. (“It’s not like my ears were closed,” says Solomon. “I heard that, too.”) Blankfein, according to one former longtime executive at the firm, was impressed by Schwartz’s performance as chief financial officer. “Harvey was crushing it,” the executive says. He handled everything well—earnings calls, regulators, investor relations, the board. “Lloyd felt like, ‘Well, look at this guy.’”

But over time, according to the executive, the “stress of the situation” began to weigh on Schwartz. He became “monomaniacal” and uncomfortable with “surrendering control.” Many inside the firm came to see him as “a control freak.” He is said to believe that some people at Goldman “conspired against” his candidacy. (Schwartz declined to comment, but a source familiar with his thinking called such characterizations “simply not accurate.”) Whatever his state of mind, Schwartz decided he needed to know whether it was going to be him or Solomon who would succeed Blankfein. He called the question with the board—only to discover that he didn’t have either Blankfein’s or the board’s support. “He did not handle the situation particularly well,” says a former Goldman partner who is close to Schwartz. “If Lloyd had another four or five years to go, it could have played out quite differently. Because Harvey is actually much better externally than people give him credit for.”

With no way forward, Schwartz decided to leave Goldman. Solomon says he wishes Schwartz had agreed to stay, but concedes he would have left the firm, too, had he been passed over for the top job. He declines to say whether he thinks he played the situation “smarter” than Schwartz. “My approach to it was very, very simple,” he says. “I was excited to be the co-president of Goldman Sachs. If the firm thought that I’d be the best guy to run the firm, I’d be excited to have the opportunity to do it. If the firm didn’t think I was the best guy to run the firm, I’d go to something else. It wasn’t defining me.”

Love it or hate it, Goldman Sachs has always displayed an uncanny knack for finding the right man at the right time to lead the firm. Sometimes the right man is a banker; sometimes the right man is a trader. The right man has never been a woman. First it was the indomitable investment banker Sidney Weinberg, who saved the firm after the stock-market crash in 1929. Then it was Gus Levy, who expanded Goldman’s banking franchise into trading—making a fortune for himself and his partners along the way. Then it was Robert Rubin (later a Treasury secretary), Steve Friedman (later a national economic adviser), Jon Corzine (later a governor and senator), and Hank Paulson (who rescued the firm twice—first as a rainmaker, then as Treasury secretary during the financial crash in 2008). Each of them found ways for Goldman to make more and more money, regardless
of the prevailing market conditions.

But Solomon faces a challenge that no Goldman leader before him has been forced to confront. Ever since 2008, when the Federal Reserve took the unprecedented step of making Goldman a bank-holding company and giving it access to its short-term borrowing window following the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, Goldman has effectively been subjected to the same financial regulations as big commercial banks. And despite the recent loosening of banking rules under Trump, Solomon doesn’t see much regulatory relief on the horizon. “It’s evolving,” he says, “but it’s not going away.” So Solomon is planning to reposition Goldman in a way that his predecessors would have found not just unthinkable but downright distasteful: he’s moving the storied investment bank increasingly into commercial banking, offering cash management to its corporate clients and small loans to average Americans to help them pay off their credit-card debt.

The move represents a subtle but decisive shift away from the early part of the Blankfein era, when Goldman made the bulk of its profits from trading and from making high-stakes proprietary bets, like the one against the housing market. “David understands well that you can’t out-Lloyd Lloyd,” says the former longtime Goldman executive. “He’s not going to be Lloyd. He’s going to move as far away as possible from that, and that’s smart. In time, all of Goldman’s risk prowess will go by the wayside, and we will just be a commercial bank.”

Though it won’t be opening any bank branches, Goldman has already made a big bet on Marcus, its online consumer-loan business (named after the firm’s co-founder). At Solomon’s direction, it has more than tripled its corporate-loan portfolio to $100 billion. It has also made Goldman Sachs Bank USA more of a priority, offering interest rates well beyond those of its deposit-rich adversaries like JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, and Morgan Stanley. Solomon expects such moves into commercial banking to add $2 billion to Goldman’s annual revenues—on par with what the firm forecasts the coming increase to be from investment banking. “I want to make Goldman more durable,” he says. “We’re thinking about how we diversify the footprint and add more for our clients over time.”

There’s a certain irony in Goldman’s pivot toward Main Street. In the aftermath of the global financial crisis, Goldman came to symbolize everything that many Americans find distasteful about Wall Street: the self-interest, the rapacious greed, the preoccupation with finding new ways to make money. Goldman’s sterling reputation took a serious hit. “We got knocked around a bit,” Solomon acknowledges.

But the new emphasis on commercial banking doesn’t mean that Goldman is abandoning its traditional strengths: underwriting securities and advising clients on mergers and acquisitions. One of the first things Solomon did after being named C.E.O., in fact, was to hit the road to meet some of the firm’s biggest clients. He went to London. He went to Sweden. He went to China. “I’m going to have to make an investment,” he figures, “and build my own relationships with these people.”

High on his list for a personal visit was Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia. In May, Solomon went to Riyadh to meet M.B.S., as the prince is known, with Dina Powell, the former deputy national-security adviser who had organized President Trump’s extravaganza to Saudi Arabia last year. Powell had just returned to Goldman as a partner, one of only seven women on the firm’s 33-member management committee, to head up the firm’s efforts to do business with sovereign-wealth funds. “M.B.S., you are the crown prince of Saudi Arabia,” she said in introducing him to Solomon. “And, David, you are the crown prince of Goldman Sachs. It will be good for you two to get to know each other.”

Solomon and M.B.S. had 40 minutes together. “He’s extremely impressive,” Solomon says. “He’s got a lot of energy. He’s passionate about what he’s doing. He’s very, very engaged in what he’s trying to accomplish, and he’s trying to change his country, which has an impact on the world for the better.”

Solomon told M.B.S. that Goldman’s capital, its network of relationships around the world, and its premier advisory business could be very valuable as the prince executes on his 2030 Vision plan to turn Saudi Arabia into a “global investment powerhouse” and to reduce its dependence on the production of fossil fuels. The day before we met in his office, Solomon was in Jeddah for a meeting with top Saudi ministers to hear how they intended to meet the 2030 goals. “The ministers are very compelling in the story that they articulate,” he e-mailed Blankfein afterward, as he headed home on the company’s private jet. “But you’ve got to execute, and the execution’s going to be hard.”

Another of his major priorities as C.E.O., Solomon says, is to attract more women and people of color to Goldman. “While we have made progress in recent years on women’s representation and ethnic and racial diversity, there is still significant progress to be made,” Blankfein and Solomon wrote in a March memo. But some who understand the dynamics at the firm doubt that Solomon really cares about diversifying the mix of people at Goldman. “Don’t believe any of that,” one former board member recently told a friend. “It’s all window dressing.”

There is one aspect of being a boss that is clearly a personal passion for Solomon: insisting that employees enjoy a better balance between work and play. To attract the best and the brightest, he says, Goldman must continue to “be a place where people work hard. But it’s also got to be a place where people have opportunities to live their life and pursue other interests and invest in their families.”

In this area, Solomon has led by example. For starters, he’s an adrenaline junkie. He cycles. He spins. He runs. He skis. He golfs. He kite-surfs. (He earned his wings at a kite-surfing boot camp on the North Carolina coast.) He scuba-dives. He hikes. He’s in the gym every morning at six with his trainer. He’s been known to walk down the uninterrupted sidewalk on the east side of Central Park West on the weekends, wearing his headset, taking one conference call after another. “When I get interested in something, I try to do it at a very, very high level,” Solomon says. “I like accomplishing things.”

Solomon’s best-known passion is house music. At least once a month, he DJ’s in Manhattan dance clubs under the name D.J.-D-Sol. He has been an opening act for the legendary Paul Oakenfold, and has played with Liquid Todd. In June, he released his first track, a remix of Fleetwood Mac’s “Don’t Stop (Thinking About Tomorrow).” It debuted at No. 39 on the Billboard dance mix chart. (“Better than the original for continued on page 146.”)
QUEEN ELIZABETH

As her new film, *Widows*, hits theaters, Elizabeth Debicki wears this season’s couture

*Photographs by Daniel Jackson / Styled by Samira Nasr*
Clothing by Chanel Haute Couture.
The discovery of Australian actress Elizabeth Debicki was one of those mythical big breaks of Hollywood: In 2011, after Baz Luhrmann had cast his kaleidoscopic $105 million interpretation of *The Great Gatsby* with bankables—Leonardo DiCaprio, Carey Mulligan—he went looking for an unknown to play Jordan Baker and spotted promise in his countrywoman. At the time, she recalls, “I had no money, I couldn’t pay my rent.” But she got the callback and hopped a flight to L.A. The rest was, as they say, boats beating on.

Since then, Debicki has been seducing le Carré heroes in mini-series (*The Night Manager*), traveling the cosmos with Marvel (*Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*), and playing villain for Guy Ritchie (*The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*). Next month, she stars in Steve McQueen’s *Widows*, a crowd-pleasing heist film with dark twists of inequality and corruption, penned by McQueen and Gillian Flynn. Debicki plays Alice, a doll-like Polish-American woman stunted by her abusive marriage. The role was not easy—Alice has only ever known danger.

“It’s so subtle. The casualness of the violence is so affecting,” says Debicki. Her character embraces a new kind of danger as one of four unlikely women (played by Viola Davis, Michelle Rodriguez, and Cynthia Erivo, all of whom “smashed it,” says Debicki) who must finish the job after their husbands’ robbery goes awry.

“I remember being so anxious. At one point, I went up to Steve and grabbed him. ‘Put your hands on my heart.’ And he goes, ‘That’s nothing.’” Debicki says the director “is only after truth. Once he has the performance, you know it’s safe.”

McQueen admires her in return. “She threw everything right on the floor and amazed me,” he says. “I think she found herself. It’s strange to say that, but she was so enjoying this really hard task.”

Debicki credits her fearlessness to a grade-A mentor and onetime onstage co-star: Cate Blanchett. “She taught me a performance has to be messy and scrappy before it can take flight,” says Debicki. “There is no better acting class.”

—Britt Hennemuth
The Sultan of Bling

He lived the life of a Saudi prince, and investors all over the world fell for it. But the truth turned out to be even more incredible than the lie.

*By Mark Seal  Illustrations by R. Kikuo Johnson*
he tells me, and I want to believe him. After all, he has traveled the world as royalty—the son of the king of Saudi Arabia, no less.

Leading international investors know him as His Royal Highness Khalid bin al-Saud. He moved in an entourage of Rolls-Royces and Ferraris, his every whim tended to by uniformed housekeepers and armed bodyguards. A suave British-born C.E.O. handled his business affairs, and a well-connected international banker marketed his investment deals to a select few, leaving him to live a life of astonishing excess.

Ever since he was a boy, he had been pitted against his royal brothers in an expensive game—to see who could “outdo the other one” in spending, he liked to say. Khalid was surely winning. He was in negotiations to purchase 30 percent of the famed Fontainebleau hotel in Miami Beach for $440 million, and he was selling early access to what promised to be the biggest I.P.O. in history: the initial public offering of Aramco, the Saudi oil giant. Until last June, when the Saudi government shelved the plan, the I.P.O. was expected to be worth more than $2 trillion.

Khalid could regularly be overheard talking on his phone with the likes of Bill Gates and Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton. “I’m sick and tired of Trump calling me and inviting me to the White House!” he often complained. He kept in touch with his father, the Saudi king, on FaceTime, and, if you were lucky, he would let you listen in. But the prince’s favorite companion was Foxy, his beloved Chihuahua, whom he draped in diamonds and designer dog clothes and toted around in a $2,690 Louis Vuitton dog carrier. He stuffed other Louis Vuitton bags with stacks of $100 bills, tossing the money from his $2,690 Louis Vuitton dog carrier. He stuffed other Louis Vuitton bags with stacks of $100 bills, tossing the money from his $2,690 Louis Vuitton dog carrier. He stuffed other Louis Vuitton bags with stacks of $100 bills, tossing the money from his $2,690 Louis Vuitton dog carrier.

He lived in a penthouse on Fisher Island, the super-wealthy enclave that sprawls across 116 acres south of Miami. But he spent much of his life on his yacht and private jet, which he chronicled religiously on his Instagram account, Prince-dubai_07. There were pictures of Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, the fabulously wealthy grandson of the first Saudi king, whose major stakes in U.S. companies alone include Citigroup and Twitter. (“Uncle,” Khalid posted beside one photo.) “My new yacht,” he said in Instagram videos from his travels, “my plane,” and “my Ferrari.” There were endless posts of pieces of jewelry from his vast collection. “Birthday gifts from the fam,” he wrote alongside twin diamond watches draped over $10,000 bundles of cash. His star-struck followers couldn’t get enough. “Ohhh, lawddd!”

I had spent weeks tracing Khalid’s incredible trail before his e-mail arrived. “As you might know, my story is not what it looks like,” he wrote. “There is so much to tell and so much that needs to come to the light.”

He would tell his story exclusively to me, he promised, if I left out certain parts. Like so many of his offers, it was one that promised a wealth of opportunity, in return for very little. In the end, though, I decided to decline. Because Khalid wasn’t writing me from his yacht, or his penthouse on Fisher Island, or his father’s palace in Dubai, but from a cell at the Federal Detention Center in Miami, where he awaits trial on charges of fraud, traveling on a fake passport, impersonating a foreign official, and identity theft.

His true identity, which was revealed after his arrest at J.F.K. airport last November, isn’t Prince Khalid of Saudi Arabia, but Anthony Enrique Gignac, a Colombian orphan adopted by an American couple and transported to Michigan when he was six years old. Embarking on a life of crime and deception that spanned 30 years, he became an “epic con artist” for whom “no scheme is out of reach,” according to a U.S. attorney. His most recent scam involved allegedly duping 26 international investors out of $8 million, while simultaneously attempting to con Miami billionaire Jeffrey Soffer, the ex-husband of supermodel Elle Macpherson, into taking him on as a partner in the Fontainebleau hotel. Gignac initially pleaded guilty to both schemes—only to reverse himself at a hearing in July, where his attorney successfully argued for a trial by jury.

“So big, and there was a 2.2 percent chance that there was some truth in his asinine lies, that you kept going. He was so talented, and pulled off so much shit, I don’t even know where to begin.”

It began in Bogotá, where the future prince was born José Enrique Moreno in 1970. Parents unknown, he was one of Colombia’s 13,000 “throw-away” children, many of whom became foot soldiers in the country’s brutal drug war. “They have no name and no nationality,” wrote one of Gignac’s attorneys, Karen J. Davis Roberts, in a 2007 sentencing memorandum. Some kids worked as drug runners, sniffing glue to numb themselves to the cold and hunger. Many who tried to sell drugs on their own wound up murdered by the cartels. Those who survived “were treated like rodents,” wrote the attorney. “When most children at the tender age of five were going to kindergarten, snuggling in their warm beds at night after being fed a full meal, Tony was in the streets of Bogotá foraging for food, stealing if necessary, and just looking for a dry, safe, warm place to rest his five-year-old head and somewhere to take care of his three-year-old brother. What Tony learned in his first few years of life was survival at any cost—survival of the fittest.”

Gignac added his own vivid details to the story. “I was raped when I was five years old and sold on the streets to have sex with
men to feed my brother,” he once testified under oath. “You do not know the pain that I’ve gone through.”

After two years on the streets, deliverance arrived on June 13, 1977, in the form of Jim Gignac and Nancy Fitzgerald. A middle-class couple from Plymouth, Michigan, they came to Bogotá to pick up Jose and his brother through an adoption arranged by a local orphanage. Whisked away to their new home in Michigan, the boys would “stuff their cheeks with food at dinner, looking like two little chipmunks because they weren’t sure they would get another meal,” the attorney wrote.

Renamed Anthony, Tony was a fast study. By second grade, he could speak English as well as his American-born classmates. But his early years in Bogotá had left their mark. As a street kid, he struggled to survive, while the rich lived in huge houses with walls and security guards. “He yearned for the good life and the limelight,” says someone who knew him when he first arrived in America. “He wanted to be someone important.”

From early on, Tony’s desire for status had a way of blossoming into lies. His mother was so rich, he told his first-grade classmates, that she owned the historic Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island. His biological father, he said in second grade, was the actor Dom DeLuise. “Tony was involved in convincing anyone in school that he had money, that he had power,” the attorney wrote. “Because if he had the combination of power and money, then he would never be alone.”

One day, when Tony was in sixth grade, his mother received a call. “Your Mercedes is ready,” the caller told her. Tony, it turned out, had duped a car dealership into believing that he was a Saudi prince whose dad was going to buy him a Mercedes. An eager salesman picked him up at a shopping mall and gave him some test rides. When neither payment nor prince arrived to pick up the car, a sheriff’s deputy was dispatched to the Gignac home to find out what was going on.

Tony’s parents tried to get him help. “He started therapy at 12,” says Lisa Whitehead, a clinical therapist who knew Tony when he was young. “They sent him to a camp, and he would tell everybody that he had great wealth and importance.”

Things got worse when Tony’s parents divorced, and his brother went to live with their father. “The one person who meant anything to me, my brother, who I took under my wings, was taken from me,” Gignac later testified. He suffered a mental breakdown, and spent time in two psychiatric hospitals and a halfway house as a ward of the state. “But he ran away at age 17,” his attorney wrote. “He was alone on the streets, and felt that his mother had abandoned him.”

Determined to avoid repeating the life of a street kid, Tony set out to remake his entire identity. Convincing an Arab family in Ypsilanti, Michigan, that he was a prince, he warned them that his father’s secret police would pay them a visit if they didn’t take him in. Around the same time he was living with them, he had one of his first run-ins with the law: at age 17, he was caught masquerading as “Prince Adnan Khashoggi,” the notorious Saudi arms dealer, who was then the world’s richest man.

Two months later Gignac turned up in Los Angeles, where he was convicted of using a credit card with the name “Omar Khashoggi” to bilk a limousine company out of $8,650. “He was attracted to Hollywood because of all the glamour and wealth,” recalls Lisa Whitehead, who became his mother’s partner after the divorce. “That’s where he said he met a prince—a real prince.”

Whether or not the prince was real, the story provided Gignac with the perfect pose for what would become a series of elaborate cons. “I had a sexual relationship with certain members of the Saudi royal family since I was 17,” he testified at a 2007 sentencing hearing. “This is one of the most powerful families in the world. They are secretive. There is no information about these people on the Internet.” Because homosexuality is a crime in Saudi Arabia, Gignac seemed to suggest, the prince was forced to support him for the rest of his life—or face the consequences. “You are killed, executed, pushed off a high mountain,” he told the court, “which is what they do to homosexuals.”

The Saudis have denied any connection to Gignac. “He was not a member of the Royal Family nor associated in any way with the Saudi Royal Family,” an assistant to the U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia told federal officials in 2003. But to Gignac’s family, it all seemed real. “When he got arrested, he would have the prince’s credit card,” says Whitehead. “Somebody always paid the bills. Maybe they wanted to keep him quiet? We actually worried for his safety.”

The person who seemed to fall for the story most deeply was Gignac himself. As a street kid from Colombia growing up in a lily-white town in Michigan, it had been tough to fit in. His voice was feminine, he wore his hair in a bowl cut, and he struggled with his weight. “He was just a short, fat, talking machine,” says one of his former attorneys. Now, with a kiss from a supposed prince, the boy who felt like a frog was instantly transformed into a prince himself.

Gignac, claiming to have legally changed his name to that of a real Saudi prince, Khalid bin al-Saud, started off with small-time grifting. “Prince of Fraud,” the Los Angeles Times dubbed him in 1991, when he “stiffed the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel for $3,488 in room and food charges during a four-day binge in July. He racked up $7,500 in limousine bills burning up the freeways from Torrance to Malibu on excursions that lasted until dawn. He talked Rodeo Drive shopkeepers out of a set of Louis Vuitton luggage and a rare coin collection, only to leave the hotel in handcuffs despite repeated promises that his father, the prince,
would make good on his debts.” Employees of the famed Wilshire Boulevard hotel addressed him as “Your Highness.” He was 21.

A year later, after serving a brief stint in jail, the freshly crowned prince moved into the Ritz-Carlton in San Francisco. Using an American Express card under the name of “Khalid bin al-Saud,” he bilked the hotel out of an extended stay. After serving 53 days in jail, he failed to report to his probation officer. Flying to the idyllic Halekulani Hotel in Honolulu for the Christmas holidays, he conned an unsuspecting couple into writing him a check for $8,500—“for a share in an oil field in Saudi Arabia which didn’t exist,” according to court documents.

“I don’t want to talk to you!” Gilbert Goetz tells me when I call, before slamming down the phone. In July 1993, Prince Khalid checked into the Walt Disney World Grand Floridian Beach Resort in Orlando, where he ran up more than $14,000 in fraudulent credit-card charges. He pleaded guilty, was given probation, and once again vanished. A month later, he turned up at the Grand Bay Hotel, in Coconut Grove, where, on December 30, after a credit-card shopping spree, he invited two men up to his suite to party.

These were no princes. They beat and robbed him, according to The Miami Herald, and the police were called. Again, Gignac disappeared, this time to Chicago, where he was finally arrested and extradited to Florida for swindling the Grand Bay out of $27,000 and the local Saks Fifth Avenue of $51,175. Charged with fraud and grand theft, he was sentenced to 616 days.

Being locked up, however, did nothing to deter Gignac’s creative impulses. Before his trial even started, while he was sitting in jail, he began contacting lawyers as Khalid bin al-Saud. One of those who rose to the bait was Oscar Rodríguez, a Miami attorney. “He said he was a member of the Saudi family, and they were going to get him bail, and his father was going to pay for my services,” Rodríguez recalls. Sensing a business opportunity, the attorney enlisted two bail bondsmen, Tom O’Connell and Francisco Marty, to post a $46,000 bond to spring the prince from jail. “Oscar was just mesmerized,” recalls O’Connell. “He thought he was going to be the attorney for the whole kingdom.”

“Bullshit,” says Rodríguez. “But he did say when the Saudis got in trouble, I could be the lawyer to take care of them.”

Two of O’Connell’s bondsmen picked up the prince from jail and drove him back to their office, where they waited for the money from his family. But the hours passed, and the funds never arrived. “Listen, Prince, the money’s not coming,” Rodríguez told him. “We gotta put you back in jail.”

But on the way back to the detention center, the prince came up with another idea. “There’s an American Express office,” he told the bondsmen. “Can you stop there?”

He entered the office in tears, claiming he’d been mugged, his credit cards stolen. He said his father, the king, would be “most upset,” The Miami Herald later reported.

American Express agreed to issue a replacement card if he could correctly answer a security question: “What were your last two purchases?” Gignac, miraculously, was able to verify the last two purchases on the card belonging to the real Prince Khalid—one in California, one in France. “Fearful of offending Gignac if he truly was actually a prince, American Express

“**I’m Prince Khalid bin al-Saud!”** he shouted. “**I’ve been kidnapped! If there are any of my loyal subjects here, please call the embassy and CNN!”**
issued him a Platinum card the next day,” the Herald reported. The card had a $200 million line of credit.

Gignac immediately booked two limos and embarked on a shopping spree, his bondsmen in tow. Heading to a jeweler on Miracle Mile in Coral Gables, he bought two Rolex watches, along with a bracelet covered in emeralds and diamonds. The bill came to $22,120.

Next, accompanied by O’Connell’s bondsmen, Gignac flew home to Michigan.

“He bought out the entire first-class cabin of a Delta flight,” O’Connell recalls. “Because a prince can’t sit on a plane with anyone else.” Gignac visited a university, where he promised to donate $1 million in exchange for a scholarship for a friend. Afterwards he turned around and headed back to Miami. “He flew up and back in one day,” O’Connell says. “We thought, He is the prince!”

Then a call came from the American Express fraud department. “They told us, ‘He’s not the prince! He’s committing credit-card fraud right now!’” says O’Connell. “We called Oscar and said, ‘He’s not the prince! And he’s gonna boogie!’”

Rodríguez was stunned. “He’s on a plane to New York with my wife and my daughter!” he replied.

Rodríguez’s wife was taking their daughter to school in New York City. The prince had upgraded them to first class, and booked an entire floor of the Four Seasons Hotel. Rodríguez immediately phoned his wife and said, “Make sure he stays in the room!”

The lawyer, accompanied by O’Connell and Marty, jumped on the next flight to New York. There, they headed to the Four Seasons, where they entered Gignac’s suite and ordered him to surrender.

“I’m calling the embassy!” the prince protested. “I’m not going back to Miami!”

“You’re right, you’re not going to Miami,” O’Connell replied. “You’re going out the fucking window.” Picking up Gignac, he threw him across the room. The prince hit the wall and landed in a heap. “He came down and said, ‘I’ll go to Miami,’” O’Connell recalls.

But the prince didn’t give up. At La Guardia, while O’Connell was booking three seats to Miami, Gignac spotted three airport police officers. “I’m Prince Khalid bin al-Saud!” he shouted. “I’ve been kidnapped!” Pointing at O’Connell he screamed, “He has a gun!”

“The cops came out of the woodwork, and I have a shotgun against my head because they think I’ve kidnapped a prince,” O’Connell recalls. The prince was still yelling: “If there are any of my loyal subjects here, please call the embassy and CNN!”

After O’Connell showed the police his paperwork, the cops dispersed. Rather than risk another incident, the bondsmen rented a car for the 24-hour drive to Miami. As an added precaution, they threw Gignac in the trunk of the car. “We rested along the way and took him out of the trunk,” O’Connell says. “That is when he told us he wasn’t a prince. He gave us his real name, where he was born, everything.”

Gignac even revealed how he had managed to answer the security question at American Express. “He told us that the two Rolexes he bought after we bailed him out went to his two inside people at American Express, who gave him the answers to the question,” O’Connell says. “We drove him back to jail in Miami and got our bond back.”

Back in jail, Gignac kept right on going. One day in the summer of 1994, officials at Syracuse University were contacted by Prince Khalid bin al-Saud of Saudi Arabia. His Royal Highness stated his intention to donate $45 million to the university. His only stipulation was that the university kindly wire a portion
“I feel like a damn fool for listening to this guy,” says an attorney who fell for the scam. “I had Khalid Derangement Syndrome.”

of the taxes for the donation—$16,000—to his account in East Lansing, Michigan. “Syracuse did in fact wire this money,” wrote an assistant U.S. attorney.

The bank account, it turned out, had been opened by Gignac’s younger brother, with whom he had recently been reunited. Both men were convicted, and the prince was sentenced to 46 months for wire fraud. An additional 37 months were added to his sentence when he lit his cell on fire and covered the floor with shampoo, hoping to trip up the guards and make his escape.

In 1996, again from his jail cell, Gignac enlisted another attorney in Miami—this time to help him get what he claimed he was owed by his “uncle,” the powerful Prince Alwaleed bin Talal. When I call the lawyer, who asked not to be identified, he emits a groaning response that I would become accustomed to hearing upon mention of Gignac’s name.

“Oh, God,” he moans. “I seem to be afflicted by him. He is a serious embarrassment to me. He could convince you that he was a green toad instead of a human being.”

To verify his identity, Gignac told the lawyer to call Santa Monica College. According to what appears to be a college transcript, Khalid bin al-Saud attended the college in 1992, earning a 4.0 G.P.A. in human biology and macro-economics. (The college, citing privacy rules, declines to discuss student records.) “A campus policeman told me people would bring him to school in a limousine and pick him up,” recalls the lawyer.

One day, the prince asked the lawyer to drive to the Miami airport and pick up a famous attorney who was arriving that afternoon to discuss his case: none other than Johnnie Cochran, by then renowned for his defense of O. J. Simpson. Cochran and his partner, Carl Douglas, headed straight to the jail to meet with the prince. “They debriefed Khalid for two hours,” says the lawyer. “Everything was consistent. He didn’t miss a beat.”

Cochran was impressed, but did not take the prince’s case. “There were real questions about authenticity,” Douglas recalls. But the Miami attorney, who received his law degree from Yale, was undeterred. I show him a notarized letter he wrote to Prince Alwaleed dated February 4, 1997. Signed by his imprisoned client, it demanded that Alwaleed “execute all titles” to eight properties that “Prince Khalid” claimed had been promised to him, including an apartment in Trump Tower and $34 million in Palm Beach real estate.

The attorney stares at the letter. “I feel like a damn fool for ever listening to this guy!” he says. “I had Khalid Derangement Syndrome. I cross-examine liars for a living, and I could not trip him up. It was outrageous on its face. But so is everything about the Saudi family. He wasn’t dealing with fringe people—he was dealing with Alwaleed!”

Did you ever hear back from Alwaleed? I ask.

“Of course not,” he says.

Released in the early 2000s, Gignac returned to his mother’s home in Michigan. “We took him to dinner at the only restaurant we had here in Eaton Rapids, full of rednecks and their families, and he comes in wearing a white fur coat and driving a white Cadillac,” recalls Lisa Whitehead. (Gignac’s mother died in 2008.) “He had acrylic nails and all this gold around his neck and silk shirts, very flamboyant and feminine—an everybody-look-at-me-type guy.”

One night, the family went to see Catch Me If You Can, the 2002 film starring Leonardo DiCaprio as master con artist Frank Abagnale. The prince was not impressed. “He said, ‘I’m so much better than that guy,’” recalls Whitehead.

Gignac hired Whitehead’s 17-year-old daughter, Jessica, as his “personal assistant.” Everywhere they went, people went out of their way to help the prince. A car-rental agency gave him two Cadillacs without asking for a credit card. He dined without checks; shopped without bills—all thanks to what Gignac called his royal “boo,” implying that a Saudi prince was picking up the tab. “He said he was a kept man,” Jessica says, “and was well taken care of.”

At one point, after Gignac skipped out on a local hotel, he asked Jessica to go to his room to pick up his belongings. She found cash hidden under the mattress, jewelry wrapped in towels, and several Western Union transfers for around $10,000 each. They came, she says, from Saudi Arabia.

After a stop in Atlanta, where he scammed a local doctor out of $5,000 while saying he was in town to buy the Atlanta Falcons, Gignac’s run seemed to come to an end. Back in Troy, Michigan, on January 3, 2003, he was arrested in his white Cadillac outside a shopping mall for impersonating a diplomat. He had charged $11,300 at Saks Fifth Avenue to what he claimed was his family account, which actually belonged to the real Saudi princess Fadwa al-Saud. He also charged $17,691 to the account of his “personal assistant.”

“You cannot do this!” Gignac said as police handcuffed him in the parking lot. “You must call the embassy!”

The State Department dispatched Ed Seitz, a celebrated agent with the Diplomatic Security Services, to interview the prince in jail. In his statement, Gignac said that he “had been the lover” of a Saudi prince and “another member of the Saudi family,” and had received “hush money” not to disclose the affairs. He insisted that he had been officially adopted by Prince Alwaleed, issued a “Saudi Diplomatic Passport” by the Saudi Embassy, and given a $4.8o million trust fund to live off while he negotiated a “lump-sum settlement” with the royal family. He also claimed that the Saudis had used him as a “mule” to traffic money to terrorists.
A federal agent searched State Department databases and found “no record of the SUBJECT.” And while there is a “true Khalid Al Saud,” the agent added, he has no connection to Gignac, who assumed the name “to defraud the Royal Family of Saudi Arabia.” The real Prince Khalid faxed a notarized letter to Neiman Marcus, stating “upon oath” that he did not know Gignac and had not authorized him to charge to his account.

While he was in jail awaiting trial, Gignac tried again. Mailing a letter to Citibank, he demanded that $3.9 million from a real prince’s trust fund be wired to him. On October 12, 2006, he pleaded guilty to attempted bank fraud and impersonating a foreign diplomat. He was sentenced to 77 months in federal prison.

By the time he was released, in December 2011, Gignac was ready to up his game. Violating the terms of his probation, he headed to Florida, long a paradise for outlaws and deadbeats. With his ambition growing, he wasn’t content with merely bilking luxury hotels—he attempted to buy them. Clad in Louis Vuitton, draped in diamonds, and boasting of a Beverly Hills address, he went to the legendary Cheeca Lodge & Spa in the Florida Keys and offered $200 million for the 27-acre resort. But the hotel’s director of security didn’t buy his act, and Gignac soon found himself back in a Michigan court.

This time, though, prosecutors had new evidence against him: the F.B.I. had seized a big black binder containing all of Gignac’s “documents”—hundreds of notarized letters and faxes and legal correspondence and requests for wire transfers that served as proof of his long, if one-sided, interactions with the Saudi royals. The binder was his secret weapon—a cache of official-looking paperwork, punctuated with impressive seals and stamps, that he could draw on over and over to create the appearance of legitimacy. “When someone who is not familiar with this defendant looks at the documents,” a prosecutor said in a 2012 court hearing, “it appears as if things are, you know, sort of in order. It is sort of a con that he plays on the courts, on the system, on agents, on everyone.” The documents—many flagged “attorney/client privilege”—were merely the work of a “defendant who is a confidence man, and has been throughout his entire life.”

In the end, Gignac was sentenced to another year in prison. After the hearing, he asked the court to return his black binder to him.

Gignac had not only mastered the art of the con, he had given it his own unique spin. In a stroke of genius, he combined the classic tricks of old-school grifters—stealing a famous name, striking an elaborate pose—with the look-at-me obsessions of the social-media age. “Look at my Instagram to see whom I have been involved with,” he wrote me from jail, as if to say: How could it be a lie if I’m posting it? He turned his ethnicity into an asset, capitalizing on the fact that many white Americans can’t distinguish between a Hispanic and an Arab—especially if they’re blinded by plenty of bling. And like many con men before him, Gignac understood the nearly universal appeal of royalty: even the rich and powerful, it seems, can’t resist a crown. “If you’re trolling for big fish, the idea that standing behind you is the royal family of Saudi Arabia, people with access to billions and billions of dollars—that resonates,” says a Miami businessman who watched the prince in action. “It gives you credibility. It all adds up.”

But to take his con to the next level, Gignac needed something he lacked: access to the super-rich. He sought someone with connections and class—a front man who could open doors to those with the real money. He found him in Carl Marden Williamson, a 51-year-old British asset manager who was working out of his home in a small town in North Carolina.

Born in the suburbs of London to a working-class family, Williamson arrived in America in his 20s and married a North Carolina girl he’d met while in the British Royal Navy. Handsome and charming, Williamson offered Gignac a veneer of legitimacy: he had no police record, experience in law and finance, a British accent that sounded positively royal, and a vast network of international connections. “Carl had a Rolodex that was probably thousands of people,” says his wife, Denise.

Like Gignac, Williamson specialized in impressing people with the names and titles of his far-flung contacts. Some were legit. “He claimed that he knew everybody under the sun,” recalls Dalal bint Saud bin Abdulaziz, a real Saudi princess who spoke with Williamson several times by phone. “Last I heard he was with somebody who was portraying himself to be a prince.” But others were bogus. “He was a master global networker,” says a former colleague. “His line of bullshit would change depending on the person he was talking to. If you didn’t have a connection, he would be like, ‘Yeah, I know the guy. Let me go ahead and call them.’ It was frickin’ amazing.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 150
Matthew Weiner has written a lot of iconic television scenes. But a specific one has come to my mind frequently in the last year, while the media roiled with tales of women standing up to the powerful men they worked for. It’s from Season Four of Mad Men, when young superstar-in-training Peggy Olson confronts Don Draper in his office, angry that he’s accepted an award for an idea that she believes was hers.

“It’s your job: I give you money, you give me ideas!” he says. “And you never say thank you!” a wounded Peggy replies.

“That’s what the money is for!” he shouts.

“I’ve been both of those people,” Weiner tells me, sitting in his production office, nestled in an Art Deco landmark in Hollywood. Dressed in a pale-blue seersucker shirt and khakis, the 53-year-old show-runner is putting the finishing touches on his new anthology series for Amazon, The Romanoffs, which premieres this month. Made for around $50 million, it features a cavalcade of high-end actors (Isabelle Huppert, Diane Lane, Griffin Dunne, Aaron Eckhart, Mad Men’s Christina Hendricks and John Slattery) and was filmed in eight countries. It’s the kind of television show that only the highest level of showrunner gets to do, and it should be the victory lap of Weiner’s career, following the massive cultural success of Mad Men.

Weiner is eager to talk to me about the inspiration and process behind his new show. But in arranging this interview, I made

Matthew Weiner was one of peak TV’s most decorated difficult men. As he readies his lavish follow-up to Mad Men, he’s confronting everything about that legacy

By Joy Press
SERIES ORDER
Matthew Weiner, photographed in an editing bay in his Hollywood offices.

THE MIRROR
clear I’d have to ask about an accusation of misconduct that surfaced last November from Kater Gordon. A former Weiner assistant and later a staff writer on *Mad Men*, who won an Emmy in 2009 for co-writing the Season Two episode “Meditations in an Emergency” with Weiner, Gordon alleges that, while the two were working late one night on that series, Weiner declared that she owed it to him to let him see her naked.

As Weiner sits before me, I realize he is palpably nervous, his conversation a tangle of sentence fragments and digressions. Until last November, Weiner seemed to have an enviable career. Obsessively embraced by pop-culture cognoscenti for its chic portrait of the fraudulence and rot beneath the 60s, *Mad Men* had already ascended to the top of the TV canon by the end of its first season on AMC. It was the first show he ever created, following two seasons as a writer on *The Sopranos*. Yet as an inexperienced show-runner, he says, he was often fighting with *Mad Men*’s studio and network, “trying to convince them that the show was a success, either financially or with an audience.” While it looked to the world like he was a master of the prestige-television universe, he says he was trying to hide his panic from his writing staff.

It wasn’t just the glamour of *Mad Men* people responded to, though. It was the gender warfare. Workplace power scuffles were live wires crackling through its fictional Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce, where men loudly assess women’s bodies in the corridors and secretaries cry in the bathrooms. Peggy rises within the agency only because Don realizes she can help him harness female consumers’ desires. *Mad Men* often functioned as a Brueghel-esque horrorscape of dashing male dominance and wily female compromise, a stylized dissection of patriarchal malaise.

**At one point** while talking to Weiner, I flash back to my own first workplace encounter: an assignment meeting at a music publication. I was just 19, a wannabe freelance rock critic brimming with chutzpah and ideas. As I left the office, an assignment thrillingly in hand, I heard the male editor comment to his colleague, “Nice tits!” I think about how much that stray comment undermined my confidence and shaped my behavior for years—how I was never sure if I was hired for my work or my body; how it made me want to fit in as one of the guys. I have never forgotten that comment, but I’m certain that editor has no memory of it, doubtless one of many demeaning utterances. Casual thoughtlessness is just one of the perks of male privilege.

It’s the kind of subterranean, warped exchange that the creator of *Mad Men* might appreciate. “The show was about my interest, to the exclusion of plot sometimes, in what it is like to be powerless,” Weiner says now, seated at a big white table in the empty Romanoffs writers’ room. “Part of it was me saying, ‘Look how much everything’s changed …’ Part of me was saying, ‘It just got worse, actually, since then.’ That’s why this is such a big deal; that’s why it’s so strange to find myself being accused of being on the other side of it.”

The “other side” he’s talking about is Gordon’s accusation. In the account she gave a reporter for the Information last November, Gordon says that, after Weiner told her she owed it to him to let him see her naked, she tried to brush the comment off because it seemed like a “lose-lose.” She continued to work on the series for another season, after which she was not invited back (along with other writers, according to Weiner). She has since left the TV industry.

Weiner says he has not spoken to Gordon since she first made the allegation. “I really don’t remember saying that,” he says. “I’m not hedging to say it’s not impossible that I said that, but I really don’t remember saying it.” I realize as he’s saying this that I had expected Weiner, a consummate storyteller, to present me with a more coherent narrative. I call him several times later and ask him to clarify this sentence. If it’s not impossible that he said it, under what circumstances might he have uttered this? Weiner questions the words I’ve quoted back to him. “I know this seems weird, but I can’t imagine that I used the word ‘hedging,’” he insists. I double-check; he did.

“I can’t see a scenario where I would say that,” he continues, returning to Gordon’s allegation. “What I can see is, it was 10 years ago and I don’t remember saying it. When someone says you said something, like the experience we just had right now—I don’t remember saying that.”

He continues more definitively, “I never felt that way and I never acted that way towards Kater.”

In a recent e-mail, Gordon told me, “That was not an isolated incident, but it was the most affecting.” She has created Modern Alliance, a nonprofit dedicated to fighting sexual harassment. “Bullies with unchecked power create environments of fear,” Gordon wrote.

Shortly after Gordon originally spoke out, Marti Noxon—a consulting producer on *Mad Men* who has gone on to show-run *Sharp Objects* and *UnREAL*—tweeted that Weiner “is devilishly clever and witty, but he is also, in the words of one of his colleagues, an ‘emotional terrorist’ who will badger, seduce and even tantrum in an attempt to get his needs met.” He created, Noxon said, “the kind of atmosphere where a comment like ‘you owe it to me to show me your naked body’ may—or may not—be a joke. And it may—or may not—lead to a demotion or even the end of a career.”

Noxon finished with an unequivocal kicker: “I believe Kater Gordon.”

Weiner says that he was taken aback by Noxon’s tweetstorm. He recalls her helpfully advising him back in the day to make use of the more inexperienced members of his writing staff rather than just rewriting everything and fuming in frustration. “You can’t keep acting like ‘Nobody’s helping me,’” he remembers her saying. “And that’s where it comes from, is because you
feel like you’re alone in it.” Weiner maintained a writers’ room that sometimes had a female majority; he regularly boosted the careers of fledgling writers, and then, as Noxon pointed out, struggled to manage them. “I would tell people, ‘You can write or you wouldn’t have gotten here, but I don’t think you can write the show,’” he recalls. Women who won awards for scripts co-authored with Weiner were described in the press as real-life Peggys to his Don—a dynamic freighted with tension.

Noxon’s tweets forced Weiner to rethink his behavior as a boss, he says. “What you don’t realize ... I think this goes with all of it,” he says. “It goes with sexist language, it goes with jokes, it goes with everything about what I believe I have examined in my own behavior—is just that you don’t know that you have any power.”

Several expressions flicker across his face, which reminds me of something Mad Men conveyed so well: people are strange and contradictory. Someone can be capable of, on the one hand, producing nuanced accounts of power structures in an imaginary workplace and, on the other hand, perpetuate some of those imbalances in a real one.

Our culture’s long-running romance with the myth of male genius has only fed that tendency, bolstering the idea that being a “difficult man” or a tempestuous boss is an intrinsic part of the creative process. Not only that, but so many of our most worshipped movies and TV shows revolve around the angst and fury of troubled dudes. There is no equivalent myth of female genius. For women in Hollywood, the “difficult” label has long been a ticking time bomb tossed around as a reason not to hire them. As Designing Women creator Linda Bloodworth-Thomason recently claimed, even huge ratings success did not insulate her from the whims of a misogynist network president who disdained her brand of funny feminism.

He points to Mad Men character Pete Campbell, who spends the series resenting the easy charm and brilliance of the world’s Don Drapers. “What is it like to lean against a door your entire life and have it open? Are you just gonna walk through? You think you’re just gonna be different?” Weiner asks. “I had anger issues, and they got me where I was.”

Weiner says that the events of the last year made him re-examine things and reach out to some former colleagues to see if their memories squared with his, and to apologize if necessary. When I speak to him on the phone several days later, it is the week before Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement, and I ask him to talk more about his approach to making amends. “Some of it was talking about what it was like to work there and what I was like as a boss, unrelated to the allegation,” he says. “Those things felt like separate experiences for me last fall. I was a really tough boss.”

The world of the TV writers’ room is a place of permeable boundaries, where sharing intimate secrets with the boss can be part of the gig. “If you’re going to have people in a room who are getting that vulnerable and digging into their emotional shit,” a former Mad Men writer, who asked for anonymity out of professional concerns, told me, “as a manager you have to be really careful with the situation you’ve created and not take advantage of the fact that you can make people feel bad.” So- pranos director Tim Van Patten once told Vanity Fair of Chase, “If David finds your Achilles’ heel, he will go for it, at war or at play”—something echoed in another former Mad Men writer’s description of Weiner as someone eerily good at zooming in on and exploiting colleagues’ vulnerabilities.

“I wish that I had been more sensitive and less defensive, and more able to put myself in the place of the people that worked with me sometimes,” Weiner admits. “If I have wronged somebody, yeah, I would like to apologize. In a general sense. I am that kind of person. It makes me sad to cause other people unhappiness or if they even perceive it that way.”

The swiftly moving stream of public opinion has created
Matthew Weiner

an evolving context for considering workplace behavior. Powerful men, whether they are accused sexual harassers or garden-variety bullies, won’t necessarily get a pass from the public, regardless of the quality of their work. Weiner clearly hopes that The Romanoffs can escape the pall of controversy, that people can focus on the show rather than on him for the sake of the thousands of people who collaborated on the series, which had just finished shooting when Gordon spoke out. Weiner shows me into a room full of monitors where Romanoffs editor Chris Gay is working on sound mixes for “The End of the Line.” A powerful episode set in a desolate Russian port city, it draws on real experiences of the episode’s writers, longtime Weiner colleagues Maria and André Jacquemetton, and stars Kathryn Hahn and Jay R. Ferguson (Mad Men’s Stan Rizzo).

Maria Jacquemetton says Weiner has “always been fascinated with this idea of tragedy in the past and how the past affects the future.” So when he first described The Romanoffs to her and her husband, André, she says, he spoke of a collection of tales that “all carried this thread of people in contemporary society who believe themselves to be related to the Romanovs.” The show is packed with morally compromised characters—a racist aristocrat who develops a deep bond with her immigrant caretaker, a married couple caught in an ethical quagmire. And with episodes shot in different countries, executive producer Blake McCormick says, “those places sort of dictate that it would be different. You might have the same cinematographer, but the rest of the crew, they bring something different no matter what.”

Weiner says it wasn’t an easy show to sell, even from the guy who created one of the most acclaimed series of the 21st century. Black Mirror was a useful comparison, at least in terms of conveying that it would encompass multiple genres. Former Amazon Studios president Roy Price green-lighted the series, but by the time it was finished, Price had resigned amid sexual-harassment allegations. His replacement, Jennifer Salke, had launched an initiative to train more female directors while she was president of NBC Entertainment and has stressed inclusivity as part of her mission at Amazon. Weiner credits Salke with supporting his vision, allowing him to break Amazon tradition by dropping episodes weekly rather than in a bingeable blob.

Although shooting on The Romanoffs was pretty much finished by the time Salke took over at Amazon, she says by phone, she and Weiner “did talk about thematically how to link the episodes. And we certainly talked about that in the marketing of the show—just kind of getting behind this idea of... this group of disparate people are all sourced from that same bloodline and event, which we found really compelling.” Asked if she considered dropping the show due to the harassment allegation, she says, “That wasn’t really on my radar coming in. I’m such a huge fan of Mad Men, and it’s not a situation that I knew a lot about.”

Salke says Weiner is already asking, “When can we get started on the next installment?” She can imagine extending the series ad infinitum. “There’s Romanov descendants everywhere,” she says. While the show is an anthology, there will be subtle through lines, “like physical behavior” repeated in different episodes, because Weiner says he has a habit of writing certain gestures. “They look up for an answer at the biggest moment,” Weiner says, looking up.

Weiner shows me two objects that were important to him during the Romanoffs shoot: a framed list of rules he made for the new series and a small, weathered brass bell that one of his writers gave him. The rules include resolving stories (each episode is self-contained), banishing coincidence, and avoiding pretension. Having just mentioned Honoré de Balzac, Virginia Woolf, and filmmaker Krzysztof Kieslowski, he laughs and says that he has already broken his pretension rule.

The bell is part of Weiner’s recent desire to feel more centered; he’s started doing transcendental meditation. He shakes it and pauses as it sends a gentle trill through the room. “We would ring it before we would do a script, and I would ring it at the table read,” he says. “What I wanted to do was have everybody in a really intuitive space. To have gratitude for the fact that we were getting to do this.”

The only person bemused by the bell was Ferguson, Weiner says. “Jay was like, ‘Who are you and what happened to the guy from Mad Men?”’

Over the last year, we’ve begun to reassess artists through the filter of #MeToo. It renders the history of TV, art, movies, and literature—everything, if we’re being honest—into an ethical and emotional minefield. The current moment is serving as a reckoning with the creative workplace as well as with creatives themselves, opening up untold questions including: How much leeway, if any, are we prepared to give those we consider geniuses? And—a question The Romanoffs itself ponders—how much do we control our own narratives?

Semi Chellas, who worked on Mad Men and serves as executive producer of the show with Weiner, says “Expectation,” the Romanoffs episode she wrote starring Amanda Peet and John Slattery, was partly inspired by Woolf’s kaleidoscopic novel, Mrs. Dalloway. It suggests “there isn’t one set story that you can tell about your life. That story shifts and changes with every moment, even in a single day.”

This sort of multi-valence works beautifully in art. The muddiness of real life is another story.

David Solomon

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 129 sure!” one listener raved on YouTube, where the thumbs up outpace the thumbs down 10 to 1. The same month, while he was attending the Brilliant Minds conference in Stockholm, the former Hearst executive Joanna Coles persuaded him to DJ, on the boat that took the A-list attendees around a lake before dinner. “He was a very good sport about it,” Coles says. “He’s not your grandmother’s banker. He’s funny. He’s charming.”

The side gig has come with an unexpected upside. Every time Solomon plays at a club, he says, Goldman employees come up to him and introduce themselves. “It’s really humanized me in the firm,” he marvels. “Young people approach me and talk to me in a way that they did not before this happened.” In typical fashion, Solomon draws a management lesson from his nightlife: whereas corporate executives used to be “aloof and disconnected, in their ivory tower,” modern managers need to be “willing to be a little bit vulnerable and exposed. It makes us more human, and therefore better leaders.”

Solomon feels particularly vulnerable about the recent end of his marriage. His wife, Mary, left him suddenly about a year ago. “It’s been one of the hardest things he’s dealt with in his life,” says his close friend Chris Nasetta, the president and C.E.O. of Hilton Worldwide. Solomon and his ex-wife continue to do things with their two grown daughters. “We both feel sad that our marriage ended, but we remain close friends,” he says. “It’s not lost on me that a big part of the reason I’m here is the support she gave me over the 28 years we were together.”

Another of Solomon’s passions is expensive

PHOTOGRAPHS: LEFT, BY LANDON NO RDEMAN; RIGHT, BY CASS BIRD

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wine, which he has kept in an extensive cellar in the family home in East Hampton. In 2016, in one of his most coveted purchases, he bought seven bottles of Pinot Noir from Domaine de la Romanée-Conti—considered one of the best and most expensive wines in the world—for $133,650.

But the Domaine never made it to his wine cellar. One day a friend alerted Solomon that it looked like the pricey bottles he had purchased were showing up for sale online. Solomon confronted his family’s personal assistant, Nicolas De-Meyer, who was supposed to take delivery of wine shipments. De-Meyer, it turned out, was really Nikolas Meyer, a Vassar graduate from Findlay, Ohio. For two years, according to a court indictment, Meyer had stolen “hundreds of bottles” of wine from Solomon worth “more than $1.2 million.” Using the alias “Mark Miller,” the name of a well-known Hudson Valley vintner who died in 2008, Meyer allegedly had the bottles delivered to himself instead of to the Solomons, and then fenced them on the Internet.

After agreeing to pay the Solomons back, Meyer fled the country. Last January, as he was returning to the United States, he was arrested at the Los Angeles airport. Released on a $1 million bond—secured by $200,000 in cash and his mother’s home—Meyer has been trying to negotiate a settlement with prosecutors in New York. Solomon, meanwhile, is doing just fine. His insurance covered the loss, and he still owns a home in the Bahamas, a New York apartment in SoHo that he is renovating, and a tract of land in the Hudson Valley. Last year he sold his jaw-dropping 83-acre estate in Aspen for $36 million. Inevitably, though, Solomon’s greatest passion is for Goldman Sachs. Having worked for three investment banks that no longer exist, he knows how precarious a place Wall Street can be. He also knows how exceptional Goldman is compared to its competitors. “I was a big producer at Bear Stearns,” he says. “I built a lot of relationships there and brought a lot of relationships to the firm. But nobody ever woke up and said, ‘Hey, I need an investment banker. I think I’ll call Bear Stearns.’ One of the great things here is that people do wake up and say, ‘Hey, why don’t I call Goldman Sachs?’ That gives us a responsibility to always put extraordinary people in front of them.”

What comes through most clearly, as Solomon assumes command of Goldman, is his overriding sense of stewardship. The company will celebrate its 150th anniversary next year—a legacy its new C.E.O. is determined to extend, even if the firm must remake itself to survive, as it has done so many times in the past. “You look at the history of any company, Goldman Sachs included, and it’s not a straight line,” Solomon says. “Wall Street happens to be a place with a long history of volatility. Like any organization, we have to continue to evolve if we want to be around for another 150 years. You’ve got to have a good strategy, and good people, and a good culture—and probably a little bit of luck.”

Michael B. Jordan

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emphasis on Af rocen t rism and black pride. Donna worked as a kind of social worker at Chad, helping poor families navigate the system, and Jordan and his two siblings, Khalid and Jamila, also attended. (His parents remain on the board of directors.)

Jordan’s mother grew up in Newark in the 60s and 70s, studying painting at Newark Arts High, the first performing-arts public high school in America, whose alumni include Sarah Vaughan, Wayne Shorter, and Savion Glover (and, later, Michael B. Jordan, who attended for two years). As a teenager, she painted her bedroom walls in the colors of the Pan-African flag—red, black, and green—in sympathy with the Committee for a United Newark, a black-nationalist group founded by poet Amiri Baraka. “We would go by and we would see the guys in the berets and the army fatigues as we were going home from school,” she says.

At Arts High, her interests ran to ballet and theater—she loved the soundtrack to West Side Story—but she was also part of a student walkout in Newark in 1970 in protest over the killings at Kent State.

When I meet him at the West Hollywood arcade, Jordan’s father and namesake, Michael A. Jordan, a taciturn man in a slate-gray Nehru shirt, has recently returned from Zambia, where he was involved in building a water system for farmers, the continuation of his years-long interest in Africa. The senior Jordan, who goes by Tony, grew up in poverty-stricken South Central Los Angeles, one of six kids raised by a single mother, Dolores Jordan. His family paid regular visits to the US Organization, an educational and activist group started by Maulana Karenga and Hakim Jamal that used the term “Us” to mean blacks in the United States, which they sometimes referred to as “United Slaves.” It was Karenga who invented Kwanzaa as an African-American holiday; Jordan’s family celebrated it throughout his childhood.

In 1974, the elder Jordan joined the Marines and simultaneously became more deeply committed to the Pan-African movement, which has historically called for a degree of racial separatism, overlapping at times with the causes of the Black Panthers and rooted in a philosophy first formulated by Marcus Garvey. Garvey believed that racial parity would only be achieved if the African-American world developed its own saints and heroes and martyrs, and he encouraged black self-empowerment through business ownership.

Donna had moved to California to live with Donna’s formidable mother, Geneva Davis, who lived near a good school district in middle-class Montclair. “It’s the lineage,” says Donna. “Family is everything. You protect your family, you make sure that everyone is taken care of, you know? That structure was passed down from my grandmother and grandfather. Together, they were unbelievable. Very political, always working for politics, working in the community, making sure everyone had what they needed.” (Her grandparents built a successful business in Venice, California, in the 1940s.)

In Newark, the Jordan family eventually befriended Cory Booker, the city’s mayor, now a senator from New Jersey. “My dad used to cater for him,” said Jordan. “Me and Cory Booker, Ras Baraka, the current mayor, everybody, the Baraka family, they’re all really good friends with my family.”

Michael B. Jordan’s friends all characterize Jordan’s father as “militant,” but they mean his child-rearing style as much as his politics. When his children misbehaved, he made them pick out their own tree branch from the yard to get switched. After Jordan got his driver’s license and bought a BMW 330Ci with his acting money, he began hanging out in abandoned parking lots to race cars with illegal crews made up of black and Latino teenagers who were into “drifting,” high-speed sliding. His parents didn’t know about it, but when
Michael B. Jordan

Jordan blew out his transmission one night, he called his father for help, resulting in a confrontation. “I was scared shitless,” he says. “I knew I was gonna get it.”

At this point, Jordan was still acting as Reggie in All My Children.

“For a split-second, it was like, ‘I’m grown. I work. I make my own money. I can do this, you know? You guys can’t tell me I gotta be in at such and such, or whatever it is,’ and I got checked. I got checked. I remember the first time you think you could challenge your father and then you realize he’s a grown-ass man and you’re 120 pounds soaking wet with a pocket full of nickels.

“We got closer because of it. And, yeah, so I think that was another moment of just being young and smelling yourself, and ‘O.K., I’m grown. I wasn’t grown. I didn’t know everything. I didn’t know shit. Every disciplinary ass-whooping that I got, every time I got reprimanded, everything, it all pays off. It all makes sense. I loved him for it.”

Michael B. Jordan views himself and his peers as the generational heirs to Will Smith and Denzel Washington.

“They broke down those barriers for us,” Jordan says. “Now it’s time for us to take what they did and take it to the next level.”

In a New York Times dinner-table interview with Denzel Washington and Michael B. Jordan, the older actor, coiled and skeptical, evinced a subtle paternalistic attitude toward the younger actor. When Jordan opined on the importance of international-box-office receipts and said he wanted the director of HBO’s Fahrenheit 451, in which Jordan plays a villainous cop, to take his opinions seriously, Washington had to laugh: “Getting your big-boy voice.”

“There were no black superheroes when I was growing up,” notes Washington.

Jordan’s best movies have all been directed by Ryan Coogler, who used Jordan’s physical screen presence—his well-built body, his huge smile, the slow-burn vulnerability—to maximal effect. Whether Jordan can achieve a wider range and depth under different direction—or whether he has reached the limits of his craft—remains to be seen. But he is attempting to convert his success into something that won’t require him to be as brilliant on-screen as Denzel Washington: he’s turning himself into a business.

Jordan reportedly made only $2 million on Black Panther, though he says he gets residuals on the back end as part of the financial structure of Marvel superhero movies. But he admits he was a “rookie” when he signed up for Panther and didn’t yet command the money he can get now. “Moving forward it’s a totally different story,” he says. “This is the defining moment in a lot of different areas for me that’s gonna set up my next 5 to 10. That’s why I’m so locked in right now, because if it was ever a time to get distracted or, like, drop the ball, this is not it.”

In a film industry upended by Netflix and HBO, Jordan wants to leverage his fame into a commercial enterprise that gives him ownership of his own success and the power to break ground for black actors, directors, and producers in Hollywood. With 7.3 million Instagram followers and nearly a million Twitter followers, Jordan is quickly building a brand that includes new endorsement deals, a fast-growing production company, and a new marketing operation that will curate and target TV shows and movies to the same young, multicultural audiences who flocked to Black Panther. Jordan’s budding company is modeled on those of his sports heroes, especially the Lakers’ LeBron James, whose multi-media marketing-and-branding operation and TV production company is worth nearly a billion dollars. “Whenever I see [James], it’s love, always trying to represent our generation, represent our culture, like, ‘Why not us?’” says Jordan. “Things don’t have to be the way they’ve always been done. I just happen to do more than just act.”

Jordan talks a lot with the Jay-Z and LeBron teams and closely studies their operations. His chief ally and architect in building his own company is Phillip Sun, a 26-year-old agent at William Morris Endeavor, who has assembled the most important roster of black talent in a generation, including Lena Waithe, Donald Glover, Idris Elba, John Boyega, and Letitia Wright. “Michael’s always had the ambition of being a brand from the get-go,” says Sun, who recruited Jordan away from United Talent after the success of Fruitvale Station.

Born to parents who emigrated from Taiwan, Sun grew up speaking Mandarin, graduated from William & Mary with a degree in international relations, and was working as an on-set assistant to Parker Posey when Steven Spielberg recommended he try becoming an agent. At 23, Sun became the youngest agent at the company after William Morris merged with Endeavor, in 2009. He was advised early on to specialize and decided to focus on non-white actors, tutored by a pioneering black producer in which Jordan plays a minority here, it was always important for me to fight for talent of color because, in some strange way, I was fighting for myself, giving myself a voice,” he says.

The first Creed movie gave Jordan a kind of instant sports profile, leading to endorsement deals with Nike, Piaget watches, and, of course, Acura. It also laid the groundwork for a successful film franchise. Says Sun, “You need your franchise because in order for him to achieve all the things that he had the ambition to do, we had to make him a star, a bona-fide star.”

Sun and Jordan hope the one-two punch of Black Panther and Creed II, coming out in the same year, will solidify Jordan’s stardom. But timing is critical. Creed II was fast-tracked to take advantage of the momentum of Black Panther, shot in the course of a month last spring, edited over the summer, and, at the time of this writing, still being readied for theaters for November—an “insane” schedule, says Jordan, who showed up in Philadelphia a month early to train and try building his body even bigger than before (“I have to fit the story line”). The original idea for Creed was based on Coogler’s relationship to his late father, with whom he bonded over the Rocky movies. Co-star Tessa Thompson says Coogler didn’t conceive of Creed as a franchise, but Michael B. Jordan saw the potential instantly. Jordan says Coogler didn’t direct Creed II because the schedule for Black Panther made it untenable. (Sly Stallone was initially slated to direct the sequel, but Coogler instead recommended Caple, a former classmate at University of Southern California film school.)

Hovering over Creed II is a fear that cynical studio heads will start to think of Black Panther as a one-off that can’t translate to other films starring black actors.

Sun has explicitly told his clients—including Jordan—that the success of Black Panther will not necessarily smooth the path to more and better roles. “By no means is this over. It’s not even getting that much easier,” Sun says. “It’s just more of a conversation now.”

And so Creed II is an important test case for Jordan—to disprove, once again, the old studio cliche that black stars don’t sell overseas. “Nicolas Cage made so much money overseas,” says Jordan. “If you don’t perform domestically, and you can still make money internationally, you will always be around. That’s why Creed, Creed II, is so important nowadays, this time around, because it is more international.”

Meanwhile, Jordan is quickly building on the momentum of Black Panther, ramping up his production company as an engine for movies and TV shows that will define his brand. They’ll star not just himself but also talent he’ll always be around. That’s why Creed, Creed II, is so important nowadays, this time around, because it is more international.”

Conversely, that means avoiding becoming an actor associated exclusively with politically charged black roles like Oscar Grant. After
**Fruitvale**, Jordan started making clear he was interested in “white male” roles, by which he meant roles with universal appeal. “Michael didn’t want to be defined just by ‘Let’s send Michael all the race-related projects,’” says Sun, “which is how the industry reacts to [something like that]. We understand that Michael will get the African-American roles. I’ll find them, the industry will find me, we’ll just be presented those. It’s about seeing ourselves as a color-blind talent, which he should be.”

With all these considerations about his brand and the arc of his career, often in conflict, picking roles has become more complicated. Sun says they analyze a role from every possible angle before making a decision. (Jordan turned down the chance to produce and star in *Monsters and Men*, for instance, which is about the killing of a black man by the police.) Jordan’s personal interests remain the same as when he was 15—science fiction and comic books—but also, he says, films featuring strong women and black history. Last spring, after Frances McDormand called for more diversity on Hollywood sets during her stirring Oscar speech, Jordan announced he’d use inclusion riders on all of his productions, a contractual commitment to employing racially and gender-diverse film crews. In September, Jordan convinced Warner Bros. to institute inclusion riders across the entire studio.

Jordan has a lot on his plate. He is producing and starring in a sci-fi TV series called *Raising Dion*, for Netflix, about a black boy with superpowers (co-produced with Charles D. King’s MACRO), and making a feature film called *Just Mercy*, about a passionate young lawyer representing death-row inmates, co-starring Jamie Foxx and Brie Larson. He’s also producing a coming-of-age TV series for Oprah’s OWN network, currently titled *David Makes Man*, written by playwright Tarell Alvin McCraney, who co-wrote and produced the celebrated indie film *Moonlight*; and a historical epic about an all-black regiment during World War II called *The Liberators*—an idea Jordan’s father tipped him to. Then there’s Jordan’s next movie with Ryan Coogler, *Wrong Answer*, about a notorious standardized-testing scandal in Georgia, with a script by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Jordan is even preparing for his directorial debut with a film adaptation of the best-selling young-adult novel *The Stars Beneath Our Feet*, about a young black boy who finds hope as an obsessive Lego builder after his brother is killed by a gang.

Jordan worries about how he will get Coogler and Coates and others to fit into his jam-packed schedule. But the collectivism of the company is part of Jordan’s vision of black progress as a business plan.

“Unity is so important,” Jordan says. “You can just pick up the phone and get in contact with somebody and have an idea, no ego: ‘What’s up? You guys wanna work together? Let’s do something together.’”

Meanwhile, Jordan is prepping a remake of one of his favorite movies, the classic heist picture *The Thomas Crown Affair*, which originally starred Steve McQueen, in 1968, and later Pierce Brosnan, in a 1999 remake. Producing and directing black-centric projects while starring in roles that have traditionally gone to white actors is part of the design.

This fall, Jordan will assemble a new marketing company with two childhood friends, including Sterling Brim, a former music manager who co-hosts the MTV program *Ridiculousness*. Phillip Sun describes it as a “cultural marketing-and-consulting group” that can deliver young audiences of color to movie houses and TV screens through curated social media and music soundtracks. “We feel like we have a pretty sound perspective and opinion on how to market certain things, especially to our culture,” says Jordan.

The first customer for the start-up was *Creed II*. Sterling Brim curated the hip-hop soundtrack, which included Nas and Lil Wayne. Jordan plans on making a marketing contract with his company part of any film deal he cuts with a studio, whether it be Warner Bros. or Netflix. The idea is for Jordan to collect a revenue stream from every part of the production—his studio salary, the production, the endorsements, the marketing, the product placements, the video games, the apps. Eventually he wants to own all of his own content and be the C.E.O. of what amounts...
Michael B. Jordan

to a mini-studio, making him a de facto Holly-
wood mogul. “Our next step,” says Sun, “will
be an umbrella company to finance all of the
things we want to do, and then ultimately the
long-term plan is for that umbrella company to
own whatever content that he creates. That
is a step for Michael and the team to becoming
the mogul status that he wants to be.”

Before I fly to Los Angeles to meet Michael
B. Jordan, he expresses concern to his repre-
sentatives that Vanity Fair is sending a white
reporter to profile him. He’s been interviewed
by plenty of white reporters, but he’s also felt
misunderstood and occasionally burned.
When I ask him about this, Jordan says: “There
is an unspoken language between people of
color, black men or whatever, because they
just understand what it is, what it feels like,
my intentions when I say certain things, they
know exactly what I mean, what I’m trying to
say. And sometimes when you deal with jour-
nalists and writers who are trying to observe
from the outside, and what they think you’re
trying to say, it doesn’t always connect. It’s not
always the same thing.”

While Jordan tries to get the predominantly
white media to understand where he’s coming
from, he also has to manage his black fan base,
who have very specific and passionate ideas
from, he also has to manage his black fan base,
white media to understand where he’s coming
utes, from the time he woke up until he went
say. And sometimes when you deal with jour-
path described by his agent is a narrow one,
littered with leaving paparazzi, an obsessive
social-media sphere, box-office expectations,
cultural misunderstandings, and the double
standard for successful black men. I ask Jor-
dan about the pressure—to succeed, but also
to make his community proud, his parents,
friends, fellow actors and producers, the
whole team he’s propping up with jobs and
roles and possibilities. “I think about that a
lot,” he says. We’re parked under a tree near
Sunset Boulevard, and the racing is over. “It’s
being the guy that has the opportunities
and is in a position that can change the lives of
a lot of people that you care about. It’s a natural
weight of not wanting to fuck up, you know
what I’m saying, and not wanting—and that’s
why I overthink a little bit too much, or I’m
always thinking about ...

He pauses to collect his thoughts.

“I’m not comfortable yet because the peo-
ple around me aren’t comfortable, either, and
it’s like I gotta get to a place where I’m like,
‘All right, the thing is moving on its own. The
machine is running,’ you know what I’m say-
ing? I can check in on maintenance every once
in a while, but I gotta get the machine running,
and I gotta keep pushing this boulder until I
got some momentum. Once it starts to roll
on its own, I can kinda start to live my life a little
bit more, and that’s the sacrifice that people
don’t really get. These people you see with
these legacies, they don’t ever talk about what
they sacrificed to get there. People think these
things just happen. It’s not like that. They give
up so much of their personal life, their love life,
whatever, this, that, and personal things.”

This fall, Jordan is finally moving out of the
house he’s lived in with his parents for two years
and into a penthouse in downtown Los Ange-
les, three blocks from the home of a friend in his
entourage. Jordan says he has worked so hard
and so intensely since he was 15, he’s only man-
aged to find personal space in recent months,
often on open stretches of highway, usually at
frightening speeds. “I enjoy life 160 miles per
hour at a time,” he says. He likes the sound of
that and smiles. In a way, Denzel Washington
was right—Jordan is finding his voice. And
his mother, Donna, is already worried: “He’s
crazy,” she says. “He’s real crazy.”

“Think you can let him go now,” his father
says, breaking into a smile. “He’s done pretty
well.”

Fake Sultan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 141 Then one day,
in 2015, Williamson met a man whose talent
for bullshit matched his own. “He was called
by this guy who claimed to be a Saudi prince,”
says Denise. Gignac showed Williamson his
bank statement, which indicated that he had
$600 million in his account. “There was defi-
nitely, early on, the promise of great wealth,
which excited Carl,” says Denise. “It seemed
like he was talking to the guy every 20 min-
utes, from the time he woke up until he went
to bed.”

Even though he had no contract and no
salary, Williamson agreed to set up an invest-
ment company for the prince, one that would
be open only to a select and privileged few:
Marden Williamson International L.L.C. The
company announced its opening on LinkedIn
on July 26, 2015, its logo a distinctive crown, its
headquarters on Park Avenue in New York and
the Silver Tower in Dubai. (Denise believes
both were nothing but mailing addresses.) His
Royal Highness himself apparently wrote the
announcement, which was riddled with gram-
matical errors. It opened by praising Allah,
and introduced Williamson as a “great man
who is loyal and honest and understands the
People of our Region.”

Williamson also began to back up Gignac’s
lies. He vowed that he had known the prince
and his family for 20 years. He purchased dip-
matic license plates for the prince’s Ferrari
and Rolls-Royce on eBay. And he introduced
the prince to an investment banker in London
who specializes in connecting high-net-worth
individuals with investment opportunities. At
the prince’s request, she demonstrated her de-
votion by lending him $150,000.

“I was fooled,” says the investment banker,
who is suing the prince’s company for fraud.
“It was a big, big, big scam.”

The banker opened major doors for the
prince. Before long, 26 investors were eagerly
wiring a total of $7,957,252 through various shell
companies to Marden Williamson Interna-
tional. In return, they thought they were getting in
on a “friends and family” pre-offering of the
pending I.P.O. for Aramco, the Saudi oil com-
pany. By enlisting the aid of investment bankers
in two countries, Gignac had graduated from
mere grifting to what an expert in white-collar
fraud calls “a very complex and professional
crime that would have fooled most people—
even most successful businesses.”

One of the investors was Godefriedus
“Frits” Vranken, a respected Dutch tax law-
ner known as a master of mergers and acquisi-
tions. According to someone who observed
the deal-making, Vranken met with William-
son in Dubai and London and on Fisher Island.

ILLUSTRATION BY R. KIKUO JOHNSON

150 V A N I T Y  F A I R  N O V E M B E R  2 0 1 8
Williamson produced statements showing that he owned $600 million in property, including the palatial new Four Seasons Hotel at the Surf Club in Miami. Vranken lent Gignac a total of $4.9 million—"to earn the prince’s trust," according to the observer—and the money was later "rolled over" into the Aramco I.P.O. Vranken was also required to show that he "held the prince in high esteem" by presenting him with Rolex watches and other extravagant gifts.

In September 2017, Vranken traveled to New York to meet the prince. At the meeting, he was introduced as the "Swiss C.E.O." of Marden Williamson International. The prince told Vranken he was partnering with Bill Gates and Michael Bloomberg to build a new Four Seasons in Manhattan. During one meeting, "His Highness" took what seemed to be copious notes, which turned out to be as phony as the I.P.O.’s. "Scribes," says someone who saw them. "Like a little kid’s."

"Frits is a successful businessman who was swindled by Gignac’s complex, convoluted, and sinister fraud," says his attorney Michael Hantman. "Frits provided full cooperation to the U.S. Attorney’s Office, which hopefully will lead to Gignac’s conviction. We hope he will never again cheat so many good people."

It isn’t difficult to track what the prince did with the money provided by Vranken and his other investors. "Gettin that chicken," Gignac posted on his Instagram account, beside a briefcase packed with bundles of cash.

**The Aramco I.P.O.** wasn’t the only game that Gignac was running. In early 2017, after he finished the terms of his parole in Michigan, he headed back to Miami. As is customary for royalty, he was preceded by his emissary, William Williamson, who told real-estate agents that His Royal Highness, Prince Khalid, was interested in moving to Fisher Island, one of America’s wealthiest and most exclusive communities, an oasis whose residents have included Oprah Winfrey, Boris Becker, and Julia Roberts. "He said the prince, the son of the king of Saudi Arabia, had just undergone gastric-bypass surgery and wanted to be on Fisher for some privacy," recalls one local.

The slimmed-down prince arrived for a tour of the island, cradling his beloved Foxy, and looked at high-rise condos going for $20 million and up. "I’ve been in the biz 25 years, but he was Top 10 over-the-top, flamboyant, all the bells and whistles," says Don Pingaro, a local real-estate agent. "He had the royal name, the seal, the bodyguards, the jewelry, the entourage, the business manager. He was looking for the best of the best."

The prince quickly found his dream condo. "This is my palace!" Looking the owner in the eye, he vowed, "I will have $21 million transferred to you by morning."

The money never came. But the long con had begun. Gignac enlisted Perla Lichi, a prestigious interior designer who has worked on Middle Eastern palaces, to decorate his new home. He was accompanied everywhere by an entourage of handsome bodyguards—low-level security guys hired from shopping malls and outfitted in suits, fake diplomatic badges, and guns. And he played the rich-prince cliché to the hilt. "Every single building you’d drive by he’d say, ‘Oh, my father owns that,’" says a friend of the prince. "He’d just spend, spend, spend, dumping out cash from Louis Vuitton duffel bags and tipping hundred-dollar bills to everyone: building managers, employees, handymen. He acted like he wanted privacy, but he wanted everybody talking about him. I live in a city of bullshit, but this guy’s bullshit was through the roof."

Gignac seemed to be re-enacting the pattern that had started as a child: the more alone he felt, the more his lies increased. Unable to come up with the money to buy the colossal condos he coveted about, he rented a three-bedroom penthouse on Fisher Island for around $15,000 a month, and filled it with store-bought furniture. His phony entourage did nothing to ease the pain he felt. Lichi, his designer, shows me the flurry of texts he sent her. "I feel so alone at times, Perla," reads one. "It hurts."

In his isolation, Gignac set his sights on one of the biggest marks of his career: Jeffrey Soffer, the dashing prince of Miami, whose family’s real-estate dynasty is worth an estimated $4.2 billion. "There’s a larger-than-life quality" to Soffer, read a profile in *Ocean Drive* magazine. "Maybe it’s because *Forbes* estimates his net worth at $1 billion, or because he turned the Fontainebleau Miami Beach into one of the hottest hotels in the world. Or maybe it’s because he looks like John F. Kennedy Jr. and he’s married to supermodel Elle Macpherson. Whatever the reason, the 47-year-old Soffer, although soft-spoken, exudes power."

Soffer already possessed what the fake prince only pretended to have: a mega-yacht, a fleet of private jets, and three palatial residences. But the Fontainebleau, the crown jewel of his empire, had struggled with debt for years. So on March 24, 2017, when a call came from a London-based investment banker who said she represented Prince Khalid bin al-Saud, Soffer wanted to believe. The prince, the banker said, wanted to buy a sizable percentage of the Fontainebleau—and overpay by what some say was as much as $1.40 million. "Jeff thought he found a sucker to buy in for a crazy valuation," says one insider. "But he ended up the one being swindled." (Soffer did not respond to requests for comment.)

In May, the prince, who told Soffer that he was "a direct line to the throne," roared up in grand style at the Fontainebleau with Carl Williamson, his British investment banker, his entourage of bodyguards, and Foxy. He drove a 2016 Ferrari California whose license plates bore the word DIPLOMAT and an insignia associated with U.S. diplomatic plates. With a Visa card bearing the prince’s name, he paid for rooms and incidentals, both for himself and for his associates. Soon he was telling everyone that he was doing a deal with his "good friend" Jeffrey Soffer. "The con was happening from the moment they met," says a source close to the situation.

The negotiations stretched into August, when the prince invited Soffer and his business associates to Fisher Island. They were given a tour of his garage, filled with Rolls-Royces and Ferraris. In his penthouse, with the name SULTAN on the doorbell, they were shown an "ornate box," according to court documents, which contained a letter "purportedly from the Bank of Dubai, guaranteeing the availability of $600 million."

But before he agreed to invest in the Fontainebleau, the prince demanded that Soffer show his respect through material offerings. "He indicated that one of the customs of his country was the exchange of very lavish gifts during the negotiation process," says the source. So Soffer presented him with a Cartier bracelet worth $50,000, followed by expensive artwork. All told, he gave the prince a total of $150,000 in gifts.

Gignac tried to play the short con to rack up as many gifts as he could. "You know the long con isn’t going to fly, unless he comes up with a couple hundred million," says the source. "So it was: How long can I string this guy along until he figures it out?"

To continue the discussions, Soffer flew the prince to Aspen on his private jet. On the flight, the prince worked his Gucci-encased iPhone, posting a split-second video of Soffer on Instagram. In Aspen, he stayed at the St. Regis hotel and visited Soffer’s sprawling home, once owned by the real Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia and currently on the market for $29.5 million. But Soffer’s team was starting to have doubts about the prince, spurred by some financial red flags that had come up during their background checks.

Then, over dinner one night with the Soffer family at one of Aspen’s hottest restaurants, the prince made a fatal mistake. For his appetizer, he ordered prosciutto.

If the prince had actually read the Koran, he would surely have known one of its verses most familiar to the faithful: "Forbidden to you are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which hath been invoked the name of other than Allah."

The Soffers immediately knew something was wrong: *What kind of Muslim eats pork?* The Fontainebleau’s security team began investigating the prince, discovering “key information
that this person isn’t what he claims to be,” according to the source. The State Department was notified, and federal agents planned a raid on the prince’s Fisher Island penthouse, only to be thwarted by Hurricane Irma.

In October of last year, Williamson and the prince left the country on a business trip. Gignac used someone else’s passport. The videos he sent to his designer, Perla Lichi, showed lavish dinners in Paris and excursions to Hong Kong and London. In one video, the prince rides a camel along the beach in Dubai. “Traded in my Ferrari,” he jokes.

What the prince wasn’t able to record was his arrival at J.F.K. airport on November 19. After he presented his false passport, federal agents advised him that he was under arrest, seizing cash and items he was carrying worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

“I’m a diplomat with diplomatic status!” Gignac pleaded, still in full prince pose. When that produced no result, he added, “I have national-security information you would be interested in hearing.” In January, Gignac is scheduled to go on trial in Miami, where he will attempt to convince a jury to once again set him free.

They came for Carl Williamson just before Christmas, at 6:30 A.M. on December 14. Williamson was in the kitchen of his North Carolina home, along with one of his twin boys, when eight federal agents stormed through the unlocked doors, guns raised. “My son came downstairs having to hold his arms up,” says Denise Williamson.

The agents interrogated Williamson for six hours and searched his home office. When they finally left, Denise asked her husband if he had known the prince was a fake. “I didn’t know,” Williamson insisted. She believes that he, too, was conned by the prince. But the feds had already collected enough evidence to indict Williamson as a co-conspirator in the I.P.O. scheme.

That night, at dinner, Williamson told his wife, “I don’t want anything to eat. I’m going to bed, and I’ll see you in the morning.” Then, around 7:30 P.M., he strung up a rope and tried to hang himself. He died from his injuries two days later. He left behind a short suicide note, saying that he was sorry.

At one point during the raid, Denise recalls, the agents showed her the search warrant. Looking it over, she saw a name she didn’t recognize.

“Who is Anthony Gignac?” she asked.

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**Israeli Special Forces**

**Fake Sultan**

**THE ROAD TO SINAI**

Lately, YAMAM has gotten used to terror’s new face: extremists intent on inflicting maximum carnage with maximum visibility. “I’ve been in dozens of operations and many times under fire, [facing] many terrorists and suicide bombers,” N admitted. “But the [one] I remember more than all the others is the terror attack on the border in the Sinai Desert.”

It was August 2011, six months after the Arab Spring ouster of Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak—and three years before ISIS formally declared its caliphate. YAMAM, tipped off by Shin Bet that a large-scale attack was imminent somewhere along Israel’s southern border, dispatched one squadron and a sniper team by helicopter. They waited through the night before getting word that shots had been fired at a bus, injuring passengers inside. A family of four, traveling the same highway, was ambushed and slaughtered. “This group of ISIS-Salafi jihadists that came from the Sinai Desert, they were a different challenge for us,” N said of the 12-man death squad. “We know from intelligence that they received training abroad. They were proficient with weapons, grenades, explosive charges, [and] even had handcuffs to kidnap people.” They also brought cameras to film their handiwork.

N, who was a squadron commander at the time, was fired at twice as his YAMAM team arrived on the scene. In the skirmish, one militant detonated a suicide vest, killing himself and a bus driver, and, N recalled, “a terrorist shot a surface-to-air missile at one of our helicopters, but it missed.” Two gunmen were spotted crossing the highway. One was killed in an exchange of fire while a second took aim at a passenger vehicle, killing the driver. By midafternoon the scene seemed to be under control, and Pascal Avrahimi—a legendary YAMAM sniper—briefed his superiors, including then defense minister Barak. A short time later, shots rang out from the Egyptian side of the border. Four YAMAM operators scrambled for cover, and in the frenzy a 7.62-mm. round hit Avrahimi above the ceramic body armor covering his chest. The sniper, a 49-year-old father of three, had been killed by an enemy sniper, who simply melted back into the desert.

I joined N this past April at Mount Herzl, the final resting place of many of the nation’s fallen warriors. It was Israel’s Remembrance Day, a somber holiday when life and commerce grind to a halt. On this day, N spent time with Avrahimi’s parents at their son Pascal’s grave, embracing them and reminiscing about his outsized role in the unit. (The previous evening, as the sun descended, squad members stood in the courtyard of the YAMAM compound, having refreshments and trading stories. Family members of slain commandos were taken inside a darkened shooting range where their loved ones’ holographic images were projected in midair. The scene was otherworldly but somehow appropriate for this secretive, high-tech cadre.)

On this Remembrance Day, N mourned the loss of his friend, whose 24 years of service made him YAMAM’s longest-serving member. But he stopped at one point to stress that his team is focused less on the past than on the future: “We know the enemy will always try and do something worse, something bigger, something extraordinary that they never did before. And for this scenario we are preparing ourselves.”

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 115 Would go on to hold virtually every position in Israeli officialdom—prime minister, defense minister, commander of the armed forces, and head of Sayeret Matkal. Recalling his first encounter with YAMAM 30 years ago, Barak, now 76, expressed astonishment at how Ron and his team had somehow managed to arrive ahead of Sayeret Matkal’s helicopters, raring to go.

“We asked them what they brought with them,” Barak recalled. “It ended up they brought everything which was needed for taking over the bus. So we let them do it.”

According to David Tzur, who was a major at the time and would later take over as YAMAM’s commander, the so-called Mothers’ Bus incident was a turning point because it showcased the unit’s speed, judgment, and agility. “We were called to the field at 7:30 in the morning,” he said. “Before we arrived, we learned that eight to 10 gunmen are kind of irreplaceable.”
N.F.L. Cheerleaders

continues from page 123 themselves at the mercy of the owners. “We were back at square one,” says Oliver, who left the squad in 1999.

In 2014, the Jills made news again when they became one of the first N.F.L. squads to sue for back pay. The Oakland Raiderettes, who also sued, reached a settlement awarding them $1.25 million in back pay, or approximately $6,000 per cheerleader. But like the Chargettes before them, the Jills discovered that speaking up carried a heavy price: rather than settle, Buffalo simply disbanded the squad. Four years later, the case is still inching its way through the courts.

It’s impossible to determine how much money the N.F.L. makes off its cheerleading squads. The sale of swimsuit calendars, posters, and other cheerleading merchandise represents a relatively tiny source of revenue for most teams, according to Ray Katz, who worked as the N.F.L.’s director of marketing for 15 years. The chief money-making potential is corporate sponsorships for cheerleading squads—deals that can draw as much as $500,000 for a blue-chip organization like the Dallas Cowboys. Given the league’s outsize wealth, Katz says, it’s a “terrible business practice” to be paying its way through the courts.

That’s why, 40 years after the N.F.L. decided to market cheerleaders as sex objects, it continues to police the personal appearance of squad members. Bailey Davis, the Saint’s cheerleader who was fired for posting an Instagram photo in a lacy bodysuit, says she was told it was “trashy and inappropriate. Meanwhile I’m posing for the team’s swimsuit calendar, and they’re making money off of it.” On the other end of the spectrum, Kristan Ann Ware, a cheerleader with the Miami Dolphins, clashed with the team for being too chaste. In a lawsuit against both the Dolphins and the N.F.L., Ware alleges that team management ordered her to stop discussing the fact that she is a virgin who is waiting until marriage to have sex because of her Christian faith. “We’re just trying to help you develop into a real woman,” Ware says she was told. (The Dolphins say they “do not discriminate” on the basis of gender or religion.)

Cheerleading alumni from the old days note that the outfits and routines have become more risqué than ever. “To me, they dance like a bunch of strippers,” says Kepley, the former Cowboys cheerleader. “They’re twerking on TV. It feels like lighting dynamite: When’s it gonna explode?”

The N.F.L., for its part, is exploring ways to turn back the clock. Over the summer, representatives of the 26 teams that have cheerleading squads were summoned to a closed-door meeting with N.F.L. brass to discuss the current rash of lawsuits and allegations. In a reversal of what teams set out to do with cheerleaders in the 1970s, the league discussed making their image “less saucy and more family-friendly,” according to a source familiar with the meeting.

Some teams are traveling even further back in time: this fall, the Rams and the Saints debuted the first male cheerleaders in N.F.L. history.

But teams continue to profit from marketing their cheerleaders as sex objects. A reality show on CMT called Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making the Team, now in its 13th season, manufactures drama from body-shaming young hopefuls trying out for the D.C.C. Candidates with 20 percent body fat—well within the normal range for a healthy woman—are pressured to lose weight. In one episode, a team-hired “body-image expert” pinches the belly of a slender woman with flat abs. “You don’t want to put that body into that little tiny uniform,” he tells her.

The N.F.L.’s approach to cheerleading is out of sync with the future of cheerleading itself. Competitive cheerleading—a demanding sport that requires the athleticism and skill of professional gymnastics—has soared in popularity over the past decade. Today there are 1.25 million competitive cheerleaders in the United States, with competitions broadcast on ESPN to 100 million homes in 32 countries. “As someone who has been part of the cheerleading community my whole life and is immersed in advancing the sport, the recent wave of allegations from N.F.L. cheerleaders has been upsetting,” says Nicole LaCharue, a spokesperson for the Universal Cheerleaders Association, the sport’s top organization. “However, in many cases, what these women are doing is not what we consider modern-day cheerleading; they’re entertainers.”

The former cheerleaders gathered at the reunion in Nashville don’t dispute that characterization. Many got into cheerleading because they enjoyed the way it made them feel about themselves. They did it, they say, for the same reason women rush sororities—for the gossip sessions and the post-breakup shoul- ders to cry on amid the clouds of hair spray in the locker room. What they remember most isn’t the way they were harassed or exploited or shamed. It’s the sense of sisterhood they felt. “When people ask me if I would do it again, I always say, ‘Absolutely,’” says Killmer, the Cowboys cheerleader who was ordered to lose weight in her thighs. “It was one of the best experiences of my life.”

Even Davis, who was fired by the Saints, speaks fondly of the way her Sartians sisters would huddle together and support each other through all the abuse and the discrimination and the lousy pay. “This is horrible. I’m not coming back next year,” she recalls gr owing with her squad-mates. “And then we kept coming back—for each other.”