

TABLE OF CONTENTS



The following photos are from Paul Kwiatkowski's new book, *And Every Day Was Overcast*, a novel about messed-up adolescence in south Florida's decaying suburban landscape, out this month from Black Balloon Publishing. Check out andeverydaywasovercast.com for more information.

VOLUME 20 NUMBER 10

Cover by Marcel Dzama

AL QAEDA'S TEENAGE FAN CLUB

Syria's Extremist Revolution Is a Youth-Culture Phenomenon 28

HELL'S WARM WELCOME

On the Road with Sugar Pie DeSanto 32

PISS AND ROOT BEER

An Interview with Marcel Dzama, as Raymond Pettibon Paints Nearby 64

ON TOUR WITH NIRVANA!

Unseen Photos from the 1989 Heavier Than Heaven Tour . . 70

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FUNERAL 76

IT'S LITTLE, BUT IT'S MEAN

Baddest Grandpa in the World Irving Zisman Talks Scoring Poo-Na-Na and Grandparenting Skills 84

STROLLING THE CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES WITH 120,000 SYRIAN REFUGEES

The Fallout of Chemical Warfare in Jordan's Za'atari Refugee Mega Camp 90

SCRAP OR DIE

Metal Thieves Are Tearing Cleveland Apart Piece by Piece 98

SWIMMING WITH WARLORDS

After Twelve Years of War, a Road Trip Through Afghanistan 106

UNTITLED 126

TABLE OF CONTENTS



From And Every Day Was Overcast by Paul Kwiatkowski

Masthead	18	Li'l Thinks: Riffing	120
Employees	20	Rat Tail: "DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMMMMNNNNNN" ..	122
Front of the Book	22	Skinema	124
DOs & DON'Ts	36	Reviews	128
Fashion: Bottoms Out	44	Stockists	132
Fashion: Legs	54	Johnny Ryan's Page	134



FOUNDERS Suroosh Alvi, Shane Smith

CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER	Eddy Moretti (eddy.moretti@vice.com)	PRESIDENT	Andrew Creighton (andrew.creighton@vice.com)
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	Rocco Castoro (rocco.castoro@vice.com)	PUBLISHER	John Martin (john.martin@vice.com)
MANAGING EDITOR	Ellis Jones (ellis.jones@vice.com)	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	Ben Dietz (ben.dietz@vice.com)
CREATIVE DIRECTOR	Annette Lamothe-Ramos (annette.amos@vice.com)	ADVERTISING DIRECTOR	Shanon Kelley (shanon.kelley@vice.com)
SENIOR EDITORS	Jonathan Smith (jonathan.smith@vice.com) Wes Enzinna (wesley.enzinna@vice.com) Ben Shapiro (ben.shapiro@vice.com)	ONLINE ADVERTISING DIRECTOR	Ryan Duffy (ryan.duffy@vice.com)
SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITORS	Harry Cheadle (harry.cheadle@vice.com) Wilbert L. Cooper (wilbert.cooper@vice.com)	DIRECTOR OF INTEGRATED SALES	Thobey Campion (thobey.campion@vice.com)
ASSOCIATE EDITORS	Krishna Sai Andavolu (krishna.andavolu@vice.com) Angelina Fanous (angelina.fanous@vice.com) Nicole Jones (nicole.jones@vice.com)	ACCOUNT MANAGERS	Stewart Stone (stewart.stone@vice.com) Andrew Freston (andrew.freston@vice.com) Alex Redmond (alex.redmond@vice.com) Dustin Marucci (dustin.marucci@vice.com) Zach Weinberg (zach.weinberg@vice.com) Peter Fairman (peter.fairman@vice.com)
PHOTO EDITOR	Christian Storm (christian.storm@vice.com)	PRODUCTION & CIRCULATION MANAGERS	Tommy Lucente (thomas.lucente@vice.com) Kalynn Rubino (kalynn.rubino@vice.com)
GLOBAL EDITOR	Andy Capper (andy.capper@vice.com)	ONLINE OPERATIONS	Jonathan Montaos (jonathan.montaos@vice.com) Anahita Tajmaher (anahita.tajmaher@vice.com) David Flynn (david.flynn@vice.com) Chris Powell (chris.powell@vice.com) Julien Khelif (julien.khelif@vice.com)
FICTION EDITOR	Amie Barrodale (amie.barrodale@vice.com)	SALES ASSISTANT	Josh Schwab (josh.schwab@vice.com)
ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR	Dave Schilling (david.schilling@vice.com)	COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR	Alex Detrick (alex.detrack@vice.com)
CONTENT MANAGER	Ryan Grim (ryan.grim@vice.com)	COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER	Rory Ahearn (rory.ahearn@vice.com)
REVIEWS EDITOR	Sasha Hecht (reviews@vice.com)	CHIEF STRATEGIC OFFICER	Spencer Baim (spencer.baim@vice.com)
WEST COAST EDITOR	Jamie Taete (jamie.taete@vice.com)	GENERAL MANAGER	Hosi Simon (hosi@vice.com)
WEEKEND EDITOR	Mitchell Sunderland (mitchell.sunderland@vice.com)	MARKETING DIRECTOR	Jonathan Hunt (jonathan.hunt@vice.com)
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT	Miyako Bellizzi (miyako.bellizzi@vice.com)	DIRECTOR OF PLATFORM	Sterling Proffer (sterling.proffer@vice.com)
ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	Ren Potts (ren.potts@vice.com)	EXECUTIVE CREATIVE DIRECTORS	Tom Punch (tom.punch@vice.com) Danny Gabai (danny.gabai@vice.com) Ciel Hunter (ciel.hunter@vice.com)
ART DIRECTOR	Matt Schoen (matt.schoen@vice.com)	COMPTROLLER	Richard Bisson
ADVERTISING ART DIRECTOR	Jordan Rein (jordan.rein@vice.com)	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE	Angela Zucconi (angela.zucconi@vice.com)
LAYOUT	inkubator.ca	ACCOUNTANTS	Richard Ouellette, Gerald Max, Sylvain Prairie
WORDS	Kelsey Bennett, Paul Blondé, Kate Carraway, Amrai Coen, Caisa Ederyd, Nicholas Gazin, Brett Gelman, Robert King, Julia Küntzle, Milène Larsson, Cass McCombs, David Means, Ian Moore, Chris Nieratko, Bruce Pavitt, Johnny Ryan, Kevin Sites, Hannah Lucinda Smith	GENERAL COUNSEL	Jon Lutsky (jon.lutsky@vice.com)
PHOTOS	Kelsey Bennett, Paul Blondé, Janicza Bravo, Steve Double, Robert King, Olga Kravets, Julia Küntzle, Paul Kwiatkowski, Peter Larson, Jason MacDonald, Dara Moreno McCollough, Chris Nieratko, Brayden Olson, Bruce Pavitt, Ben Ritter, Matin Sarfraz, Kevin Sites, Hannah Lucinda Smith	DIRECTOR OF IT	Ariel Rubio (ariel.rubio@vice.com)
ILLUSTRATIONS	Marcel Dzama, Albert Herter, Penelope Gazin, Rachel Levit, Johnny Ryan, Michael Shaeffer	HUMAN RESOURCES	Robyn Warr
INTERNS	River Donaghey, Spencer Fox, Jesse Golomb, Bobby Hess, Sofya Levina, Zeynep Lokmanoglu, Pat O'Malley, Noah Tavlin, Lesley Thulin	OFFICE MANAGER	Glenda Pacheco (glenda.pacheco@vice.com)
VICE NEW YORK	Send us: Letters, DOs & DON'Ts, all CDs for review, magazines, books, neat stuff, etc. 99 North 10th Street, Suite 204, Brooklyn, NY 11211 Phone 718 599 3101 Fax 718 599 1769	WEB DESIGN	Jesse Knight (jesse.knight@vice.com) Brady Bryant (brady.bryant@vice.com)
VICE MONTREAL	127 B King Street, Montreal, QC, H3C 2P2	VICE SPAIN	Joan d'Austria 95-97, 5 1, 08018 Barcelona
VICE TORONTO	360 Dufferin St. Suite 204, Toronto, ON M6K 1Z8	VICE AUSTRIA	Favoritenstraße 4-6/III, 1040 Vienna
VICE UK	New North Place, London, EC2A 4JA	VICE MEXICO	Merida 109, Col. Roma, Del. Cuahutemoc, Mexico DF 06700
VICE AUSTRALIA	PO Box 2041, Fitzroy, Victoria, 3065	VICE BRAZIL	Rua Periquito 264, São Paulo, SP, CEP 04514-050
VICE NEW ZEALAND	PO Box 68-962, Newton, Auckland	VICE BULGARIA	5 Ogosta str., 1124 Sofia
VICE SCANDINAVIA	Markvardsgatan 2, SE-113 53 Stockholm	VICE AFRICA	Unit 3, The Rosebank Fire Station, Baker St./Bath Ave., Rosebank, JHB
VICE ITALY	Via Watt 32, 20143, Milano	VICE CZECH REPUBLIC	Haštalská 1, 11000 Praha 1
VICE GERMANY	Brunnenstr. 196, 10119 Berlin	VICE PORTUGAL	Praça Coronel Pacheco, nº 2, r/c—4050-453 Porto
VICE NETHERLANDS	PO Box 15358, 1001 MJ Amsterdam	VICE POLAND	Solec 18/20, 00-410 Warszawa
VICE BELGIUM	Lamorinièreststraat 161, B-2018, Antwerpen	VICE RUSSIA	4th Syromyatnicheskiy Lane, 3/5, Building 5, Moscow, 105120
VICE FRANCE	21, Place de la République, 75003 Paris	VICE CHINA	Suite 307, 94 Dongsì Shítiao, Dongcheng District, Beijing, China 100007
		VICE JAPAN	3-31-5 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, Japan 151-0051

All submissions property of VICE Media Inc. The entire content is a copyright of VICE Media Inc. and cannot be reproduced in whole or in part without written authorization of the publishers. For subscription information go to www.vice.com. Printed in the USA by Quad/Graphics Inc., an EPA partner through the Climate Leaders, Energy Star, and SmartWaySM Transport Programs. The inks used contain 27 percent renewable resources. Please recycle.

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



HANNAH LUCINDA SMITH

Hannah Lucinda Smith is a war reporter and photographer whose compulsion to travel to the world's most hostile regions is probably related to growing up in a very boring small town in the British East Midlands. Since February, she's been reporting from Syria on frequent trips across the border from her current home base in Turkey. During her time in the region, she has become an expert at crossing borders illegally, hung out with al Qaeda fighters, slept in caves, and downed many gallons of chai. "I tell the stories of the ordinary people I meet in conflict zones," she has said of her work. "Ultimately the real story of war is the story of the people who are stuck in the middle of it through no fault of their own, and it is by spending time with them that you can get close to the truth of the situation."

See AL QAEDA'S TEENAGE FAN CLUB, page 28



DAVID MEANS

David Means has published more than 50 stories in magazines ranging from *Esquire* to the *New Yorker* to *Zoetrope* while garnering all kinds of well-deserved accolades and awards for his work. One recent highlight of his career was the performance of his story "Michigan Death Trip" this summer at the Latitude Festival in England by WordTheatre, a troupe that includes actors from *Game of Thrones* and *Downton Abbey*. The very same group will be performing the story of David's that appears in this issue, "Instruction for Funeral," in LA on October 13. If you're in the area, we highly suggest you check that weirdness out, and before that, read the aforementioned story—maybe you'll even glean a few ideas to make your own funeral less boring.

See INSTRUCTIONS FOR FUNERAL, page 76



KEVIN SITES

War correspondent Kevin Sites's first conflict zone was a low-rent, lakeside resort in Ohio on the Fourth of July. As a 16-year-old part-time photographer for his hometown newspaper, he was sent to take nice pictures of kids eating candy apples and folks watching fireworks. Instead, he found himself surrounded by six Hell's Angels demanding the roll of film he had just shot of them. When he refused, they ripped open his camera and confiscated the film. In retaliation, he nudged one of their bikes with the bumper of his dad's Buick, watched them go down like badass dominoes, and then flipped them the bird on his way home to have a bowl of Captain Crunch for dinner... Or so he wishes every night since. For this issue he took a hellish road trip through Afghanistan, hitting the same cities he first visited 12 years ago when the US started blowing the place apart.

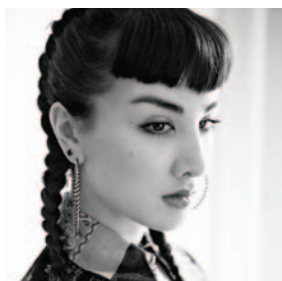
See SWIMMING WITH WARLORDS, page 106



PETER LARSON

Peter Larson is a 25-year-old Ohioan who normally shoots portraits of musicians. (He'd like everyone to know that he photographed Selena Gomez, but we could care less.) For this issue we had him follow our editor Wilbert L. Cooper through the junkyards and vacant houses of Cleveland. Will was there to report on the thriving scrapping economy that has exploded thanks to an astronomical global demand for metal and the repercussions of the housing crisis, which has led to thousands of buildings being left vacant and vulnerable to those who want to harvest their copper and steel. Thanks for helping Will out and taking such great photos of depressing shit, Peter. We hope your home city figures out how to get itself out of that economic hole it's currently in.

See SCRAP OR DIE, page 98



MIYAKO BELLIZZI

Miyako Bellizzi has been working freelance for us for two long years, lugging clothes to and from fashion shoots, styling models and other assorted weirdos, and completing many other thankless tasks. This fall, we finally realized how dumb we were not to have hired her full-time as an editorial assistant long ago. So we did. She's been doing a great job at keeping the editors organized and sane, but she also ran off by herself and produced and styled a shoot of leggy babes that was so hot a staffer who shall remain unnamed was caught licking the print proofs of it in the bathroom. She also walks around every single day of the week with outfits featuring loads of tie-dye and marijuana leaves, forcing everyone else in the office to realize they dress like losers. Thanks, Miyako, and welcome aboard!

See LEGS, page 54

THE UNHAPPY FATE OF GHANAIA WITCHES

In Ghana, witches are real. At least, enough people believe they are for accusations of sorcery to be a serious thing. The lucky ones wind up in one of the country's six "witch camps," where village chieftains offer them safety from persecution, but even those (which hold around 800 women) are hardly idyllic sanctuaries. Here's what happens when women are branded witches:



WORDS AND PHOTO BY
JULIA KÜNTZLE AND
PAUL BLONDÉ

A woman is generally accused of witchcraft by her family or neighbors after someone contracts a disease, suffers a tragic death, or, sometimes, just has a bad dream. Awabu, a woman in the Gambaga camp, told us her daughter-in-law called her a witch after she dreamed Awabu was chasing her with a knife. A 2012 survey from the nonprofit ActionAid reported that more than 70 percent of the women in one camp were widows.

Accused witches have no way to prove their innocence, so they are beaten, tortured, banned from their villages, and sometimes lynched or even burned to death.

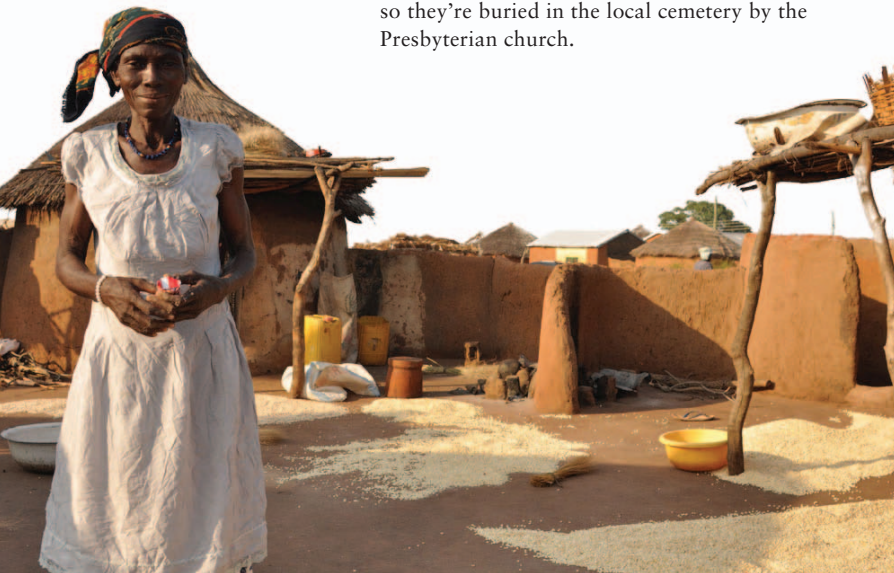
If they are banished or flee, like Awabu, the women find a way to the camps, some of which were established over 100 years ago. (One, in the village of Gnani, also accommodates male witches, a.k.a. wizards.) Once at the camp, a priest will perform a ceremony to determine a witch's guilt or innocence by throwing a sacrificed chicken at her feet.

If the chicken lands faceup, the woman is not a witch. If it lands facedown, however, the woman must undergo more rituals, like drinking chicken blood, to exorcise the witchcraft from her body. Either way, she needs to stay in the camp indefinitely under the protection of a village priest.

The huts in many camps are rudimentary and have no running water or electricity. The women strong enough to farm often work on their priest's land, giving him a portion of the crops they harvest. If they aren't well enough to work—many suffer from what the Western world would call mental illnesses—they have to survive by begging.

Once they arrive, the vast majority of witches spend the rest of their lives in the camps. In Gambaga, some who had attempted to go back to their former homes returned missing an ear or other valued body part. They are technically free to leave, but in reality are trapped by custom and superstition. The Ghanaian government has sporadically demanded that these camps be shut down, but nothing has come of that rhetoric.

When women in the Gambaga camp die, their families often refuse to take their bodies, so they're buried in the local cemetery by the Presbyterian church.



Your Baby Is Worthless if It Isn't a DJ



BY NICOLE JONES

Photo courtesy of Natalie Elizabeth Weiss

Hey, how's your baby doin'? What kind of music is it listening to? Kidz Bop? The Wiggles? Fuckin' Raffi and shit? Well, that might be fine for *some* people's kids—if they want them to crawl through life without taste or musical development. If you really loved your baby, you'd be dropping \$200 to send it to Baby DJ School.

The school was started up in September by Natalie Elizabeth Weiss, a composer and DJ from Brooklyn who has shared the stage with LCD Soundsystem and the Dirty Projectors and was recently a fellow with the Brooklyn Philharmonic. She's willing to teach tykes as young as three months old about "the wonderful worlds of electro, hip-hop, and house," according to her press release, which also promises that "little ones will be introduced to playing and handling records, mixing and matching beats, and creating fun and funky samples using modern DJ equipment."

While the idea of babies droppin' beats underscores just how easy DJs' "jobs" are, it's also a great way to introduce kids to creating music—after all, your baby probably can't play the piano, but it can produce some noise using a MIDI trigger.

If the trial class in mid-September, which was well received by babies and parents alike, is any indication, it looks like Natalie's project is going to be a roaring success. Soon, your non-DJ children will be ostracized by their terrifying, laptop-wielding peers, and eventually all music will be made for and by toddlers. I, for one, welcome this development and recently asked Natalie for some tips on how babies could hone their DJ skills. Here's what she said:

- "The most important thing about being a DJ is being a selector. If you don't match one beat, if you don't run it through one effect, if you don't drop one well-placed air horn, but you have cool tracks, that's all you need." She encouraged parents of baby DJs to "have them be active listeners when they're selectors," and offers instructional directions like, "Wow, do you hear that bubbly texture? I feel bubbles in my arms. Do you hear the bubbles? Where are the bubbles in the song?"
- "Having equipment that they can use easily" is also key. That means a laptop, a soundcard, and a MIDI trigger.
- "Keep the drinks far away. When adults are having drinks you want to keep the laptop far away, and the same is true with babies. Those sippy cups always spill."

BEING A MUSLIM SEXOLOGIST IS A TOUGH GIG

Islam isn't a belief system known for its liberal stance on sexuality. Though the Prophet Muhammad said in the Qur'an that men should treat their wives to some foreplay before putting it in, the scholars who've interpreted his words have generally been less cool with making sex fun—many going so far as to say that oral sex is completely forbidden.



BY IAN MOORE

Photo courtesy of
Fatima El-Hajj



Lately, however, there have been signs that the Muslim world is becoming at least a teensy bit more open-minded when it comes to genitalia. In 2007, Heba Kotb, the Arab world's first Muslim sexologist, started answering questions about doin' it on her Egyptian TV show. Others have followed in Kotb's footsteps, and now Muslims in Denmark have their own sexologist to turn to in Fatima El-Hajj. The 24-year-old devout Muslim says that since opening her practice in Copenhagen a couple of months ago, she's been overwhelmed with curious clients, while also facing prejudice from both xenophobic Danish bigots and fundamentalist Muslims. I emailed her to find out more about the Muslim sex-advice biz.

VICE: When did you become interested in Islam and sexuality?

Fatima El-Hajj: Having been born into a Muslim family, I knew extremely little about sex and its place within my religion. It was taboo and people didn't really talk about

it, but the more I looked into it, the clearer it became just how negative and distorted many Muslims' views on sex were. I couldn't understand why my own religion had such a depressing view of it. It's a human right for each and every person to enjoy making love—why shouldn't Muslims be part of that, too?

As an adult, I became fascinated with spirituality, and three years ago, I suddenly found myself at a tantra festival, and all sorts of impressions overwhelmed me. I remember feeling cheated in regard to all these facets of sex that had been kept secret from me. I became a full-time tantra practitioner, and at the same time was studying literature about sexuality within Islam and discovered a wealth of information and detail I hadn't had the slightest notion even existed.

Like what?

For instance, keeping one's partner erotically satisfied is a great way to win blessings. It's also written that a man may never ejaculate before the woman has achieved orgasm. Both

partners are expected to smell good, as well as keep properly manicured nails and well-groomed pubic hair. This all helps to ensure a healthy sexual appetite.

So is there a conspiracy of sexually lazy dudes keeping all this under wraps?

There are many Muslims who view sex as something wrong and shameful, whereas Islam views it as something beautiful.

What sort of questions do these misinterpretations lead to in Muslims?

I've had people ask me if too much sex is unhealthy. One woman even asked me if it was common to experience vaginal discharge after sex, because her aunt had told her it was. Young Muslims tend to go to their elders to ask such questions, and unfortunately, the answers are rarely reliable. Intercourse before marriage is forbidden, so quite often parents tend to stigmatize [sex]. The only problem is that this stigma tends to stick around later in life.

Selling Safe Sex to the Developing World



BY HARRY CHEADLE

Screenshot courtesy of
DKT International



Population growth is slowing in most of the world, but not in Pakistan—the UN estimates that the country had 173 million residents as of 2010, up from 143 million in 2000, and only 111 million in 1990. This is a problem, especially in rural areas where poverty and lack of government services are widespread. DKT International, an NGO that provides birth control throughout the developing world, is among the organizations trying to contain the country's population bomb, and it's doing so with condom commercials that are too hot for Pakistani TV.

DKT was founded by Phil Harvey, who made his fortune selling sex toys, condoms, and porn through his company Adam & Eve. DKT sells rather than donates condoms in

order to take advantage of retail distribution networks (shopkeepers have to be able to profit from something to stock it on their shelves) and because buying family-planning products encourages people to value and actually use them. A big part of DKT's strategy is not just educating people about birth control but marketing their products, which is why they aired a commercial that showed Pakistani supermodel Mathira married to a goofball of a dude because he used the company's Josh Condoms. Unfortunately, the spot drew complaints for being "immoral" and was pulled off the air in late July by conservative government censors.

Christopher Purdy, executive vice president for DKT, which has operated in Pakistan since last year, said the problem with the ad was not just Mathira's image (she's the Marilyn Monroe of Pakistan, he said) but the somewhat hidden implication that the couple had sex before tying the knot.

The ad was also accused of promoting oral sex because Josh Condoms come in a strawberry flavor, but that's "in the eye of the beholder," according to Christopher. "Why

you'd want a strawberry-flavored condom is usually just to mask the scent of the latex," he said. "The irony is that we've been selling strawberry-flavored condoms since we started [in Pakistan], and that's our number-one variant."

DKT's condom commercials vary a lot from country to country—their Brazilian TV spots are very sexy, while their Ethiopian ones don't show any skin—and in this case, they were able to get an edited version of the ad back on TV in September, along with a follow-up commercial that features the same actors and characters. The NGO is also expanding its efforts in rural areas, where people are less connected to mass media; their end-of-the-year goal is to have 200 midwife clinics in the country that can provide not just condoms but also IUDs and other medical procedures.

Currently, Christopher said, "If a women wants to get an injection, she may have to travel by bus for four hours... If we can reduce that travel time and put a clinic within walking distance or a 15-minute motorcycle ride, it makes life a lot easier."



THESE ENVIRONMENTALISTS FILM BLOWJOBS TO SAVE MOTHER EARTH

Ever since the free-lovin' 1960s, lefty types have combined sexual liberation with environmentalism, but never so literally as the men and women behind Fuck for Forest. The German nonprofit makes porn—often featuring stereotypically dreadlocked, tattooed hippies banging each other in Berlin parks or cramped apartments—then sells it to raise money for conservation efforts around the globe.



BY AMRAI COEN

Photo courtesy of
Fuck for Forest

When FfF was founded in Norway in 2004 they received six months' worth of seed money from the government, but officials later found out about the porn and cut them off. The group moved to Berlin later that year, where they continued their smutty crusade. Today you can get a monthly membership to their website—which gives you access to more sexy videos of young activists with unkempt pubes than you'll ever need—for \$15 a month. Whatever else they are, they're savvy fund-raisers who've collected roughly \$500,000 by my count.

Unfortunately, they have trouble giving away their sex-tainted cash. "It's difficult for us to donate the money," FfF co-founder Leona Johansson told me. "Many NGOs are afraid of us."

The World Wildlife Fund told them that it would take their money, but wouldn't allow any official connection between the two organizations because "we cannot be linked to certain types of industry." And the Norwegian Rainforest Foundation refused their donation outright. "I cannot see that this helps the work for the rain forest," the foundation's director told a Norwegian TV station after Leona and her boyfriend, FfF co-founder Tommy Hol Ellingsen, had sweaty sex onstage at a music festival.

Michal Marczak, a Polish filmmaker, recently spent more than a year shooting a documentary on FfF, which will be released this month. Michal has footage of the group's members fucking in front of an audience in a Berlin basement and convincing strangers on the street to have sex for their cameras—they're like the BangBros, only they scavenge food and clothes from dumpsters.

Michal also accompanied the group to the Amazon Basin, where they attempted to bring the indigenous people their money and their message of copulation for conservation. But the locals called them liars and child rapists and refused to take their charity. The filmmaker told me he was fascinated by the clash of cultures: "The side commonly regarded as developed is exposed as more savage than the culture they are trying to help."

Does Sweden Discriminate Against Christians?



BY CAISA EDERYD

Illustration by Michael Shaeffer

This spring, Sweden, normally considered one of the most free, equal, and democratic nations in the world, was reported to the European Committee of Social Rights for allegedly violating the human rights of pro-life doctors and nurses. Three Christian organizations (Pro Vita, KLM, and FAFCE) filed a formal complaint against the government for not allowing medical workers to exercise freedom of conscience and refuse to perform abortions. The issue has now spilled into a larger debate that's familiar to most Western countries, but odd in liberal Sweden.

The groups filing the complaint initially claimed that this was about medical workers' rights, but Ulrika Karlsson, a politician who belongs to the center-right Moderate Party, wrote in a blog post last August that it's part of a larger campaign against the right to abortion, a view that was seemingly confirmed when Ruth Nordström, a lawyer for Pro Vita, responded to that post with one of her own, titled, "Sweden Needs Stronger Legal Protections for Unborn Children."

Ulrika told me that pro-lifers' position is both unpopular and absurd. "It's not about 'unborn children' because they are fetuses. Most abortions in Sweden are performed before week nine," she said. "If you are in week nine in your pregnancy, it's not a child. It's a fetus!"

Christian points of view are often dismissed out of hand in Sweden, said Bitte Assarmo, a left-wing Christian and former editor-in-chief of pro-life magazine *Liv & Rätt*. She told me that people in favor of freedom-of-conscience laws are portrayed as "evil people who don't allow others the right to their own bodies."

Bitte added that considering how small a minority pro-life Christians in Sweden are, it shouldn't be a problem to find doctors who are willing to perform abortions, so why force pro-lifers to commit what in their eyes is a horrible sin?

That argument carries no weight with the anti-freedom-of-conscious majority. "In Sweden, the law is above religion and faith," Ulrika told me. "If you work in Swedish health care, you cannot *not* treat children, or stop treating someone who's ill just because that is against your religion." If you have a problem with that, "you should probably look for another job."





The al Qaeda motorbike gang in Menbij, Aleppo province, July 2013

AL QAEDA'S TEENAGE FAN CLUB

Syria's Extremist Revolution Is a Youth-Culture Phenomenon

WORDS AND
PHOTOS BY
HANNAH LUCINDA
SMITH

I can pinpoint the exact moment when I realized Syria had turned into *Mad Max*. We were driving through Manbij, a small tumbleweed kind of town in the dusty northern outskirts of Aleppo province on a Friday afternoon during Ramadan, about a month before the August 21 chemical-weapons attacks that finally forced the international spotlight onto Syria's two-year civil war.

Manbij's deserted streets radiated in the midday heat of the holy month. Shopkeepers had pulled the crinkled metal shutters down over their doorways. When you're fasting in Syria in the summertime, the daytime is for sleeping.

Our driver stopped the car on a side road near the yellow-gray town square. "Look," he said.

We peered through a scrim of dust at a set of vague shapes in front of us. The figures quickly sharpened into an oncoming pack of men on motorbikes, roaring up the road with horns beeping. As they approached, the drivers' passengers stood up on their seats with their arms outstretched, brandishing the black flags of al Qaeda as they yelled into the sky.

I fumbled for my camera.

"Be careful," said the driver. "They won't be offended because you're a journalist taking pictures. They'll be offended because you're a *woman* taking pictures."

The gang circled the square on the shiny little two-strokes that the Syrians call "smurfs."

From the passenger seat, my friend—a Syrian with a sharp sense of irony—looked back at me. "Well," he said, "that's freedom. You never could have had a motorbike gang under Bashar."

It was then that I realized Syria is a completely different country than it was even a year ago. Its transformation had happened so seamlessly that only by looking through my notes and photos from the previous six months did I see this progression for what it was: radicalization.

The influx had been steadily mounting for the past year and change, but today all of a sudden, it seems as if al Qaeda is literally *everywhere* in rebel-held Syria: its logo on banners pinned in the windows of barber shops, its songs blasting out from car stereos, masked fighters at checkpoints, and Syrian teenagers sporting the getup of the jihadists in their Facebook profile pictures. And rather than the nebulous amalgam known as the Free Syrian Army, foreign-backed jihadist groups—Jabhat al-Nusra, Ahrar al-Sham, and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) being the most ubiquitous of the bunch—have become the factions that young Syrian men want to join. FSA brigades suddenly seem old-fashioned and irrelevant; the green, white, and black of the revolutionary flag and

jumbled, piecemeal camouflage fatigues of those old-style fighters seem distinctly last season next to the sleek black uniforms and balaclavas of al Qaeda. It is simply no longer fashionable to be a moderate, liberal revolutionary in Syria.

"Before all this, my life was just like yours," a teenager named Salam from the city of Aleppo told me as he took surreptitious drags on my cigarette. "I used to leave my house at 6 AM, skip college, and go to spend the day with my girlfriend." It was daytime during Ramadan, and Salam should have been fasting, but instead he kept bringing me an endless stream of coffee so he could drink it himself when no one else was looking.

Meanwhile, Syria's foreign jihadists follow a strict Salafist ideology that's as alien to most native Syrians as it is to the Pope. Abu Mahjin is a jihadist from Iraq who is fighting with ISIS, the most hardcore extremist faction in Syria. By the time I interviewed him in July, towns like Menbij in northern Syria were teeming with young men just like him: foreigners hostile to the West and the media who had come to Syria with the specific intent of establishing an Islamic state.

During our interview, Abu Mahjin made it clear that he bases his life in its entirety, to the smallest of details, on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and the word of the Qur'an. That means lots of praying, no cigarettes, and absolutely no contact with women other than relatives before marriage—a lifestyle that's a hard sell to teenage boys, even those in Syria with a proclivity to Islam.

But it is Abu Mahjin and his comrades' unwavering devotion to their cause that makes them such a dangerous force in war-torn Syria. Well trained, disciplined, and effective on the front lines, they have quickly filled a void within a multipronged civil war that, up until the end of August, no Western country wanted to touch with a 20-foot Tomahawk missile.

Increasingly it's jihadist groups like ISIS—and not the FSA—that lead the majority of the opposition's successful attacks on regime bases. Even though Salam, the teenager from Aleppo who bummed a smoke from me, doesn't share their uncompromising ideology, he admires their fighting prowess; everyone wants to play for the winning team, even if their motives are questionable. He showed me a video of a checkpoint attack carried out by Ahrar al-Sham, one of Syria's largest—and perhaps its most powerful—brigade of freedom fighters, with an estimated headcount of 10,000 to 20,000, who also make up a significant portion of the umbrella Salafist rebel group the Syrian Islamic Front. In the clip, combatants rig a pickup truck with a remote-control driving mechanism, pack the bed with TNT, and guide the unmanned vehicle straight into their target. The explosion sends a giant ball of flames shooting 60 feet up into the air. I was impressed, Salam jubilant.

After replaying the video for me four times, Salam showed me a shrapnel wound on his leg. "I got this when I was fighting with a jihadist brigade," he said. "My father was so angry when he found out. He thought I was still fighting with the FSA."

In late 2012, Salam, like many young Syrians, decided that the FSA brigade in which he had originally enlisted had become weak and ineffectual. He defected and joined Liwa Islamia, yet another al Qaeda-aligned jihadist group. It was a well-thought-out decision that had nothing to do with his religious beliefs. "When I was fighting with the FSA, if someone was injured, they would leave him behind," he recounted. "But the jihadists will never do that. Even if someone is killed, they will get his body back, no matter what."

From across the room, Salam's friend Abu Waleed nodded in agreement. Abu Waleed is a friendly bear of a guy who



carries his rotund belly proudly. He was so candid and agreeable that I could barely get my head around the fact that he is a jihadist rebel.

"You don't look like a terrorist," I said to Abu Waleed.

He laughed. "Well, I didn't used to have this beard," he replied. "In fact, I used to think that all people with beards were terrorists. But now I would say that I'm a member of al Qaeda, yes."

Like Salam, Abu Waleed left an FSA brigade to join the largely Syrian-composed Islamist rebel group Jabhat al-Nusra. It was quite a turnaround from his former life; just two years ago, he worked at the duty-free store in Aleppo's civilian airport, selling alcohol and cigarettes to tourists. In old photos he showed me he is clean-shaven with a crew cut. When I met him he was sporting luscious shoulder-length hair and a bushy beard. His Facebook profile picture is the seal of al Qaeda.

Salam took another forbidden drag of my cigarette before opening a photo on his laptop. It depicted him posing in a balaclava and an explosives belt. "Look, I'm going to be a suicide bomber. BOOM!" he exclaimed, cracking up with laughter as he watched the horror spread across my face.

Khalifa, a graffiti artist in Aleppo, sprays a smiley face onto the wall of a building destroyed by a Scud missile, February 2013.



Fighters from the Free Syrian Army eat ice cream in Saraqeb, Idlib province, May 2013.

If the flight of young Syrians from the FSA to al Qaeda is proof that extremism is taking root in Syria, then recent changes in what sort of music is popular among young people are indicative of an overall cultural shift.

“For the past two years I’ve been listening to the same 40 songs, over and over again,” Mahmoud, an antiregime activist from Aleppo, said as we drove to the Sharia court. “I’m getting a bit bored of them now.”

I was in the passenger seat dressed in an *abaya*, looking ridiculous. “I’m a bit bored of them too,” I replied. “Although there is one that I *really* like.”

The pop charts no longer apply in Syria. As soon as you cross over the border from Turkey, you enter a whole new musical paradigm—one that provides the soundtrack to an increasingly violent civil war with no clear end in sight. I’ve tried introducing some of the Syrians I’ve met to English tunes that make me less homesick. My Syrian friends turned their noses up at them, and it didn’t take me long to understand why. Amy Winehouse doesn’t exactly jibe well with landscapes lined with blown-out buildings and pockmarked with bullet holes. Instead, rebel-held Syria jams out to songs penned by al Qaeda, exemplifying their all-inclusive recruitment tactics, which now begin at the cultural level. And they can be very catchy.

In the interest of full disclosure, I must admit that there’s an al Qaeda tune I like so much that I had it stuck on repeat for quite some time. Roughly transliterated from the Arabic, the song is called “*Awjureeny*,” and when I listened to it in the safety of a friend’s kitchen, a world away from Syria, its eerie blend of undulating vocal harmonies brought back visceral

memories of driving through apocalyptic landscapes on the road to Aleppo.

“Awjureeny” is included on a compilation of jihadist anthems that Soheib, an anti-Assad activist in Aleppo, copied onto my hard drive. The file’s thumbnail is a picture of Osama bin Laden. Wanting to know more about the song’s meaning, I messaged a Syrian friend on Facebook: “What does ‘awjureeny’ mean?”

Thirty seconds later he replied. “Hurt me,” he wrote.

“It’s a jihadist song,” I typed back.

“I know it,” he replied. “He’s talking to his wounds. The emotional ones.”

He’d confirmed what I’d already worked out: you can’t spot a jihadist tune by its lyrics. Lyrically, al Qaeda’s songs aren’t far off from Vera Lynn’s. There are the ones about being separated from your homeland, and others about the people who’ve passed on to a better place. It turns out that the jihadists have a sentimental side, and they choose to express it through music.

Soheib collects and studies jihadist songs the way a nine-year-old boy is captivated by insects and lizards—not because he likes them, but because he’s a geek and is compelled to catalogue them like rare baseball cards. During my time with him in Aleppo, we listened to his jihadist playlist in the car everywhere we went because he thought the music softened up the soldiers at the many Islamist checkpoints throughout the region. Soheib let me into the secret of how to spot an al Qaeda tune as we drove past a notorious kidnapping spot. “Jihadist songs, there are no instruments,” he said. “If it has instruments, it’s not jihadist.”

The songs’ a cappella compositions are both their distinguishing feature and their genius. Al Qaeda’s anthems are



stripped-back choral requiems. They feature beautiful, haunting melodies that make the shattered visages around us look cinematically stunning. They elevate the sense of dislocation and abandonment that permeates everything in Aleppo: the streets in the city where every building has been shelled; the villages we pass on the road from the border that are intact one day, flattened the next.

That's why everyone I have traveled with—jihadists, activists, fighters, and other reporters and fixers—listens to songs like “Awjureeny” almost exclusively: because they tap into the mood so perfectly. Al Qaeda is the Simon Cowell of the war zone, churning out hits the war-weary public wants and in doing so, providing itself with the perfect promotional gimmick. Those melancholy dirges capture the exact mood of Aleppo in summer: muted, suspicious, and two years into a grisly civil war. And this is precisely the reason why Mahmoud and most of his peers will keep playing them ad nauseam until the melodies and lyrics bore deep into their subconscious.

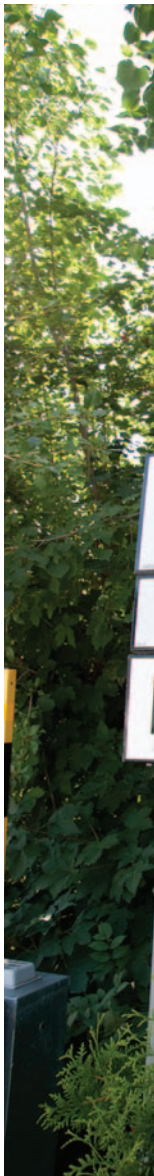
I have a ritual when I return from Syria to Antakya, the Turkish border town where I'm usually based when I'm in the region. After I've dumped my flak jacket and showered, I call my friends in Turkey—a mixed bunch of Syrian refugees, foreign journalists, and photographers—and we head to a bar to get drunk. Abdullah is an easygoing guy from Latakia, a city on Syria's Mediterranean coast. His head is shaved, and he has a sardonic sense of humor, greeting me the same way every time I return: “Hey, Hannah, welcome back! How was Tora Bora?” But in this instance he's only half joking.

My day-to-day existence in Syria has largely consisted of witnessing an intractable, complex, and seemingly hopeless sociological and ideological transition in slow motion. Every time I go back it seems that national allegiance has succumbed to al Qaeda just a little bit more, as if this warped version of Islam is penetrating every bone of a once tolerant, multicultural, and accepting country—before it descended into a state of constant, increasingly violent warfare. Two years ago no one would have listened to jihadist songs on their car stereo, or flown the flag of a terrorist group from the back of their motorbike, or posed for a picture wearing a suicide vest. Now it's all just part of the scenery.

To completely understand how al Qaeda has taken root in Syria, one must pay close attention to the details. It's pointless to talk about religious brainwashing because that has little to do with it, at least in what have become the “traditional” ways in which extremism has flourished over the past decade in the Middle East. In reality, and at its essence, Syria's transformation is due to a catalytic mixture of two elements: impressive fighters who have nothing to lose and clever marketing. In the same way that gang culture in the West comes in tandem with its own outlying cultural influence over music and fashion, so too does al Qaeda in Syria. Jihadist culture is perfectly designed to attract the country's disenfranchised teenage boys, cutting them off from their studies and social lives by making them believe they can shift the tide of a dirty war, that at its most basic level, they can do absolutely nothing about.

From what I've seen, it's working, but to what end, I am not sure. *WES*

Rebel fighters from the Tawheed brigade, an Islamist group aligned with the FSA, guarding the Sharia court in Aleppo, February 2013.



HELL'S WARM WELCOME

*On the Road with
Sugar Pie DeSanto*

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY
KELSEY BENNETT

Hell is a quaint little village in Norway that's the resting place of 1,600 souls. There are red-roofed houses, a post office, a grocery store, even a church. It literally freezes over during the winter, which is yet another example of why its pun-friendly name draws tourists throughout the year. Weirdly enough, *hell* means "luck" in Norwegian, but the locals play up their association with the netherworld. When you pull into the train station, there's a sign that reads HELL GODS-EXPEDITION, and the town's most famous native, Mona Grudt, who won the 1990 Miss Universe beauty pageant, proudly called herself "the beauty queen from Hell."

Then there's the annual Blues in Hell Festival, which was founded by Kjell Inge Brovold, better known as "Hell Boss." This year, the festival brought a host of legendary American blues singers to the peaceful village, including Sugar Pie DeSanto, who is best described as a more unhinged and modern version of her late duet partner and childhood friend, Etta James.

Sugar Pie was my ticket to Hell. I first saw the 78-year-old, 4'11" spitfire on New Year's Eve 2012—she hopped on the stage, kicked off her stiletto heels, and gyrated with the intensity of a woman 55 years her junior.

When I asked if I could take some photos of Sugar Pie, her manager asked me to accompany them to Detroit, where she played Aretha Franklin's Christmas party. A year later, I got offered the chance to go to Hell with Sugar Pie. How could I have said anything other than "Hell, yes"? *VICE*

Dive into the icy heart of Hell, Norway, and its very special blues festival this month on VICE.com.



OPPOSITE PAGE:
*A train conductor
stands outside Hell's
station.*

**THIS PAGE,
CLOCKWISE FROM
LEFT:** *How to go to
Hell.*

*Two doors in Hell's
hotel.*

*Hell's famous
sign. For a while it
disappeared, and
one local legend is
that a longtime train
conductor, who was
a devout Christian,
stole the sign and
burned it after he
retired. Whatever
happened to the
original sign, it's
since been replaced.*



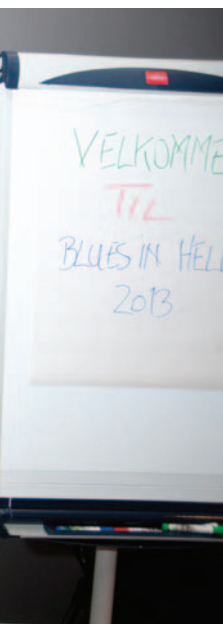
THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Mona Grudt, the most famous woman to ever hail from Hell, won the 1990 Miss Universe crown and still refers to herself as "the beauty queen from Hell." During the pageant, a fellow Miss Universe contestant read her palm over breakfast one morning and told her she would die of a brain tumor.

Sugar Pie DeSanto and her band rehearsing in one of their hotel rooms.

Kjell Inge Brovoll, a.k.a. "Hell Boss," the founder of the Blues in Hell Festival.

Clearly, all dogs don't end up in heaven, as these puppies show.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Every time Sugar Pie performs, she picks a man from the audience and locks him up with her signature scissor-leg move. She claims her selection process has nothing to do with attractiveness—it's all about his build.





Playing songs from a laptop does not a DJ make. However, the right potion of tinctures does a laptop DJ make: 1/4 cup Sailor Moon, 1/2 cup Fairuza Balk (albino edition), 12 Chiclets, four eyes, two chords, and 32 stickers from the nearest party store.



This tiny little dwarf is a mystical beam of light. This tiny little dwarf is a being so pure. This tiny little dwarf will grow and lead humanity toward an evolved state of existence.



Where are my dragons?!



There's a swell of a flamenco guitar. A figure walks through a thick mist into my longing view. Legs long, gait wide. Arms crossed, hands big. Face stern, mouth parted. Eyes penetrating my innards. I feel him at the base of my rectum.



Teacher for the class, teach me to be better. Teach me to be good. Teach me what is bad. Teach me to teach you to teach me. Cut me when I fail, show me how small I am compared to you.

DON'Ts



Leprechaun 5: Tiny Violin. Starring Redd Boxx as Leprechaun 5. Written and directed by Fartin Scorecrazy.



I just want to make sure the bow doesn't make me look like a pile of incinerator-bound garbage.



Perez Hilton.



Under that blanket of stomach lies of a layer of rot so deep.



In the end, life was not so beautiful. The number 1,000 flashed in his head over and over again, filling his every waking moment with a crushing anxiety. Yet somehow, no matter how many times he wrote it down, he could not get it out of his head: 1,000! 1,000! 1,000! Eventually he went completely insane.

DOs



When a Jewish boy turns 13, he becomes a man. He is given the responsibility to carry on his people's traditions, preserve his lineage, and party so hard that the charred corpses of Adolf Hitler, Eva Braun, Joseph Goebbels, Magda Goebbels, and the six Goebbels children turn in their unmarked graves inside their former bunker in Berlin.



Bounce that booty on that tramp, Mami. Shoot my dick off, Mami. Bounce on that tramp and shoot it in my mouth, Mami.



A chat with two "Joths" (Japanese goths)
 Joth Girl: 手をつないで。魂で魂。(Hand in hand. Soul in soul.)
 Joth Boy: 黒い手。黒魂。(Black hand. Black soul.)
 Together: 暗い心。暗い愛。神はありません。ちょうど私。ちょうどあなた。(Dark heart. Dark love. No God. Just me. Just you.)



Giuseppe, shine my shoe. Giuseppe, shine my sole. My sole shine now. And there Giuseppe go.

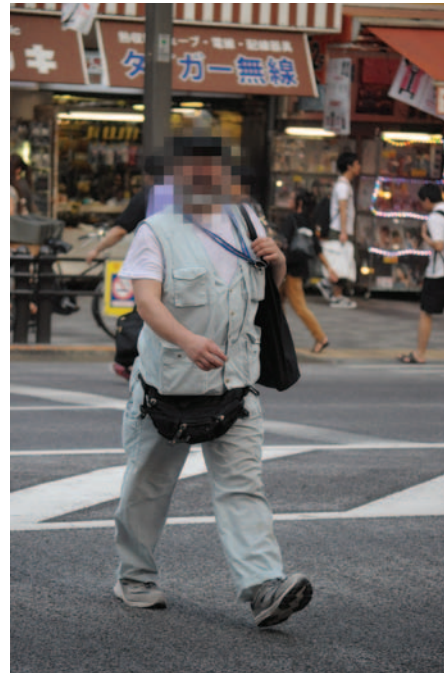


The fools in this church pray to their Christ. Not me, I pray to your back. Your back so smooth. Your back is my Christ.

DON'Ts



Everybody's gotta have a pig in their life. Someone lovable, unassuming, and fat as fuck who just loves to eat and shit and smell like shit. A companion who will never leave your side. No matter how many times you tell him that you never want to see him again.



The Cleveland man who kidnapped three women and kept them captive for ten years was sentenced to life in prison without parole. Yesterday he hung himself with a bedsheet. The day after that, his spirit took a stroll on the streets of Okinawa to see if he could snatch fresh trim.



This is Salmon Casper reporting live from Lollapalooza. This just in: concerts in fields are still only attended by white people.



Q: What's wet and gray and lumpy and red and covered in taut pink flesh?

A: That girl whose labia minora was covered in big broccoli warts.



Fashion week in Ukraine is totally crazy. All-night party. All-night dancing. Coke, pussy, big dick. Sun going up, sun coming down. Style. Everywhere you turn, inspiration.



***BOTTOMS
OUT***

PHOTOS BY BEN RITTER
STYLIST: ANNETTE LAMOTHE-RAMOS

Shoot Assistant: Bobby Viteri
Fashion Coordinator: Miyako Bellizzi
Production: Navia Vision (naviavision.com)
Hair: Nathalie Lozano
Makeup: Celina Beach
Location: Palm Beach International Raceway (racedir.com)
Models: Ashley Sky, Bianca Tagliarini at Ford, Daniela Pouban at Next

Special thanks to Eyla Cuenca, Victoria Rondón, Derick G. (derickg.com), Lou La Vie (loulavie.com), Oscar Olivares, South Beach Exotic Rentals (southbeachexoticrentals.com), Andrew Mclymont, Josh del Sol, James Tate of TaTe Design

See both the cars and the babes in action in a video coming soon to VICE.com.



Shown To Scale top and skirt, Privileged shoes, Melody Ehsani earrings and ring



American Apparel swimsuit, Vivienne Westwood x Melissa shoes, Melody Ehsani earrings



Dimepiece top and leggings, Melody Hasani earrings and ring, KAMIKAIKULTURE singlasses



Cheap Monday dress, We Are Handsome bikini, Privileged shoes



AGAIN dress, Forfex boots, Melody Ehsani earrings and ring, Luv AJ cuff



Unif top and shorts, Forflex boots, Melody Elisaní earrings, vintage ring



Nasty Gal dress, Betsey Johnson shoes, Melody Ehsani earrings





Norma Kamali bikini, Privileged shoes, Melody Ehsani earrings

LEGS

PHOTOS BY BRAYDEN OLSON
STYLIST: MIYAKO BELLIZZI

Shoot Assistant: Bobby Viteri

*Models: Ella Pearson at APM, Erin Meuchner, Fauve Schoen,
Holly Lynn Falcone, Linda Attias, Meaghan Mullaney*

Adidas shorts and shoes, Cheap Monday bra, Stance socks, Wanderlust bracelets, Bing Bang rings





Mango skirt, Betsey Johnson shoes, Bing Bang bracelets, RVCA jumper





Vintage flannel, Wildfox swimsuit, Betsey Johnson shoes, vintage bracelet





Wildfox top, Converse shoes, Fuct socks, Bing Bang ring, Nike sweatshirt and shirt, Globe pants, Vans sneakers, Fuct socks

Nanushka jacket, Mango shoes, American Apparel socks, Bing Bang bracelet and rings





Wildfox bikini; Wildfox swimsuit; Wildfox bikini top, Bondi Bath bottom, vintage necklaces and anklet; Wildfox towel





PISS AND ROOT BEER

*An Interview with Marcel Dzama,
as Raymond Pettibon Paints Nearby*

BY NICHOLAS GAZIN
ARTWORK BY MARCEL DZAMA
PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN STORM



OPPOSITE PAGE: *Eight strong winds*, 2005; ABOVE: The author, Marcel Dzama, and Raymond Pettibon in David Zwirner Gallery, surrounded by Raymond's works in progress.

Depending on your familiarity with—or curiosity about—the current state of visual art, you may or may not be familiar with Raymond Pettibon or Marcel Dzama. Raymond Pettibon is a great artist. Marcel Dzama is a great artist. My name is Nicholas Gazin, and I would like to be a great artist, but for now, I'm totally OK with being a great opportunist.

A few months ago, someone told me that Marcel had a big monograph coming out. It's called *Marcel Dzama: Sower of Discord*, out in early November from Abrams, and Raymond wrote the foreword. I selfishly interpreted this information as an excuse to spend time with two of my idols, and so I proposed a three-way interview as a way to subtly interrogate them and, hopefully, learn some of their secrets. Luckily they agreed.

The interview took place at David Zwirner Gallery on West 19th Street in New York, where Raymond was working on some new pieces. There were tables covered in paint, scraps of food and bottles of booze were scattered about, and a couple of dogs were running around, scampering between pieces of very expensive art resting on the gallery floor. I guess I looked hungry, because Raymond kindly gave me an extra hot dog that he'd ordered before I arrived. Marcel showed up shortly after that, and I pressed the record button on my phone. We talked a lot about dog pee, and I'm still unsure if I should apologize about that, but hey, when your heroes want to talk about canine urine, what are you going to do about it?



Marcel's book comes out November 5 from Abrams. Isn't it pretty?

VICE: Raymond, one thing I like about your work is its lack of preciousness. The last time I interviewed you, a dog urinated on one of your drawings, and you seemed mostly unfazed.

Raymond Pettibon: Well, I wasn't into my dog doing that, but it's happened a handful of times. I said on Twitter recently that one of my dogs pissed on my drawings and their value went up twice over.

Marcel Dzama: I had a rabbit that used to spray his urine all over my paintings. I thought he improved them.

My grandfather painted a family portrait for one of my mom's friends, and there was a problem with what they thought was dripping varnish, but actually one of his cats had sprayed it.

Marcel: When I have drawings lined up, my cat will scratch the sides like a scratching post.

Raymond: When dogs take a leak on a drawing, it's so acidic that you just have to throw everything out or cut out the urine stain. I don't want to make it hard for people who do conservation. With some artists, there's no question of their arrogance. Like the abstract expressionists purposely made it hard on posterity by painting with house paint with no thought as to how it would get preserved down the line. I don't want the people who buy my work to worry about preserving it.

My mother saved my art that I did when I was three, four, five, six years old. This was done on the back of mimeograph sheets, and they're in impeccable condition. It's not hard to get paper that's entirely acid free... Unless you're drawing blotter acid, which is an entirely different thing.

How old are you guys?

Marcel: I'm 39.

Raymond: I'm 39. I've been 39 many times.

Are you nervous about your 30s ending?

Raymond: I'll be 39 for a while still.

Marcel: I'm fine with it. I just had a baby last year. I think if I hadn't had my son I'd be more nervous about aging. I had a lot of friends and relatives who had passed away the year before, and I was so depressed.

Raymond, is that your baby pictured on your shirt?

Raymond: Yeah, that's Bo when he was younger. He's got really curly hair now.

Why do you spell your tweets all weird on Twitter?

Raymond: That's largely just an irrelevancy. Why not add a y to every other word? It slows down the experience of reading the words, and makes them not just communicative devices but objects. It doesn't hurt anyone, yet it does cause uproar in the Twitter community. I get shouted down off every Soulja Boy and Lil Wayne group because of my spelling, but I'm getting criticized by people who are largely illiterate. I've got the history of Western literature in my head. I've read every major writer and poet there is. I think I know a little bit about literature. Take James Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* for his spelling—he invents every other word. He uses combinations of words coming from Chaucerian English to Icelandic, and I'm

getting schooled because I spell *Lil Wayne* with two *i*'s instead of one. There are reasons why I do things, and it's not that I'm a bad speller. This isn't that important to me because I don't give a fuck.

Marcel, are you on Twitter?

Marcel: No, I don't have time for that sort of thing, but Raymond's a poet.

Raymond: I did it for the challenge. I first got on just to tweet Burma-Shave jingles.

I should probably focus on Marcel at this point.

Raymond: Marcel's style encompasses so many things besides just paper. He does theater, film, and sculpture, but you can always tell it's his work from his first line.

[At this point, Raymond turned away from us to work on his painting, and I continued to interview Marcel alone.]

Raymond mentioned theatrical work. A lot of your stuff reminds me of *The Nutcracker*.

When I'm drawing, I see it as a stage performance. The animals are actually people in costumes. When I was in Canada, I would draw very minimal compositions with two characters. After coming [to New York], my images became much more claustrophobic. I like imposing order on chaos and turning it into a grandiose opera.

Is that how you generally view your creative process?

Yeah. A lot of the time I'll be automatic-drawing, and I won't know what I'm doing at the beginning. By the end I'm trying to make sense of it.

Are any of the things you paint based on dreams you have?

Yeah, but not so much anymore with the baby—I live on coffee now. I used to keep a sketchbook by the side of the bed. It wasn't so much that I'd wake up and write down the dream, but I'd get ideas when I was between dreaming and being awake.

You're a guy who makes a lot of stuff. There are those statues and lights and salt and pepper shakers and Uzama action figures based on your art.

Well, those all came out around the same time, when I first came to New York. I have a little bit of a collector tendency. When I lived in Canada, I had a bigger house. I had a big record collection and little lead characters.

Can you talk to me a bit about your interest in the color brown? It's all over your work. A lot of people are turned off by brown, but you make very good use of it.

Oh yeah, I do like that color. Once in the mid-90s, I was making root beer, and I spilled some root-base syrup onto my sketchbook and started playing with it. I've been painting with root-base syrup ever since. There's no acid or sugar in the syrup, it's just the root base, so it doesn't fade or make the paper brittle. Also, seeing Leonardo da Vinci's sketchbooks with the drawings done in brown lines had an impact. Somehow brown feels important. *me*



TOP: Raymond works on one of his many paintings blanketing the gallery floor.
BOTTOM: Marcel draws a bat for the author.



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE STARTING TOP
LEFT: *Alchemy*, 1998; *It's My Nature*, 1999;
Untitled, 1997; *Untitled*, 1999

OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE STARTING
TOP LEFT: *Que Mata Sombra de Leones en la*
Pradera or Who Kills the Shades of Lions on
the Plain, 2007; *Mind Games*, 1996; *Detail*
of On the Banks of the Red River, 2008



ON TOUR WITH NIRVANA!



Unseen Photos from the 1989 Heavier Than Heaven Tour

PHOTOS BY BRUCE PAVITT AND STEVE DOUBLE
TOUR DIARIES BY BRUCE PAVITT

In mid-October of 1989, Kurt Cobain was in Europe holding a plastic basin full of vomit. The puke belonged to Tad Doyle, the 300-pound former butcher from Idaho who, at the time, had found mild success with his grunge band, Tad. Nirvana and Tad were out on a 42-day, 37-show European tour together, and dealing with Doyle's gastrointestinal malfunctions had somehow become one of Kurt's daily responsibilities—he would go on to name the song “Imodium,” later retitled “Breed” on *Nevermind*, after Doyle's anti-diarrhea medicine.

Sub Pop co-founders Bruce Pavitt and Jonathan Poneman joined the tour in Rome the following month. They traveled with the bands

for eight days, and Bruce snapped hundreds of photos along the way. The tour culminated at LameFest UK, at London's Astoria Theatre (now the Rainbow Theatre), which was shot by Steve Double for the British music mag *Sounds*. For some strange and inexplicable reason, none of these photos from the tour have been published in print until now. We're delighted to present them here for the first time, along with snippets of Pavitt's tour diaries from the road. They are excerpts from the new book *Experiencing Nirvana: Grunge in Europe, 1989*, out November 14 from Bazillion Points Books. We encourage you to put on your pit-stained smiley-face shirt with the X'ed-out eyes, crank up *Bleach*, and enjoy. 





Monday, November 27
Piper Club, Rome

Jon and I arrived in Rome to connect with two of the new Seattle groups we were working with: Nirvana and Tad. Our mission was to assist in any way possible prior to their big Sub Pop showcase in London (LameFest UK), where they were to perform with their headlining labelmates Mudhoney. The British media was notorious for launching music careers, and we hoped that this event would be a defining moment for the artists.

In particular, we were concerned about Kurt Cobain, singer for Nirvana, as we had heard that he was feeling resigned and homesick, and was suffering from exhaustion. Jon and I were hoping to help raise his spirits with a show of support. Everyone knew that it was crucial for the bands to arrive in London in good shape, as the three-band LameFest UK was by far the biggest show of the tour, with the potential to have a huge impact via the influential British press...

The Tad band got onstage and started their aggressive, lumbering set, showcasing tracks from their debut album, *God's Balls*. Taunting the crowd, bass player Kurt Danielson fell into the audience, yelling, "Fuck the Pope!" while drummer Steve Wied kept the beat. After 40 minutes of provoking the Rome citizenry, the world's heaviest band then retired upstairs to recuperate.

Nirvana's turn was next... Ten songs into their set, Kurt, frustrated with his guitar, smashed it completely and climbed a tall stack of speakers. The crowd looked on, with many drunk spectators yelling "Jump!" It was a dramatic moment, potentially harmful. I witnessed the event from the club floor, stunned, while Jon and Tad looked down from the artists' area on the second floor. Everyone was holding their breath, not sure if Kurt would actually jump. We were panicked, and extremely concerned for Kurt's well-being.







*Sunday, December 3
Astoria Theatre, London*

"Hello, we're one of the three official representatives of the Seattle Sub Pop scene from Washington State!" Kurt Cobain screeched into the microphone. Nirvana then tore into their typical opener, the riff-heavy "School." Rocking hard, Kurt immediately broke a string. Frustrated, he hustled off stage to replace it while Krist and Chad starting pounding out a Stooges cover, "I Wanna Be Your Dog." In the confusion, some of the crowd climbed onstage and began diving off.

"This is our last show of the tour, so we can do whatever the fuck we want!" yelled Krist.

Kurt rejoined the band, and Nirvana leaned into "Scoff," soon finding their momentum. Kurt's voice was soulful and intense. Kurt then leaped high and fell to his knees, beginning the guitar lines of their first single, "Love Buzz." The crowd went off and the tension mounted. Nirvana had energy and presence.

Seven more songs into the set, as they played their cover of "Molly's Lips," Kurt screamed out his enthusiasm for his favorite UK indie act. "This song was written by a band called the Vaselines! They're the best band in the world!"

More stage diving... Mark Arm from Mudhoney looked on, speechless, at the band that was about to dethrone his own.

Kurt then pitched his guitar to Krist, who used his bass as a bat. Taking a big swing, Krist destroyed the recently purchased guitar. Thank God they were going home.







INSTRUCTIONS FOR FUNERAL

BY DAVID MEANS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RACHEL LEVIT

Once we were at a fancy literary-award party. It was one of the fancier ones we have been invited to. People were dressed formally, the bar was open, and dinner was served at round tables alternating men and women. In addition to old-timers with names we recognized but may not have read, there were a couple actors and important folk and... You get the picture. It was that kind of thing—but everyone was acting like it was normal. Then a murmur arose. Heads turned, and we looked around and followed everyone's eyes to one man. He walked closer, and we started to overhear people saying, "David... Dave..."

It was David Means, considered by many to be the short-story writer of the moment. He has published four books of stories, including Assorted Fire Events (which won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize), The Secret Goldfish, and The Spot (a New York Times Notable Book), and has also been awarded two O. Henry Prizes and was named a 2013 Guggenheim Fellow. Right now he's working on a new collection of stories and a novel. Below you'll find a new story by David about his fictitious (or at least we think so) funeral arrangements. We liked it a lot and so will you.

Dear Morrison: As instructed, I've put down a few thoughts about a memorial service. I'll have this notarized later in the morning. The house is quiet. The river is catching dawn light. I've been up all night.

As the mourners arrive, play Glenn Gould's version of the Bach's French Suite no. 2 at a volume loud enough to mask the shuffling of feet and the scraping of chairs and, if it happens to be spring, the sound of birds outside; if it's early fall and windows are open, the dead-leaf rustle. Include a note in program: "On good days William Kenner felt the glory of existence in the phrasing, in the arched fingers striking the keys. He spent way too much time imagining Gould on the shore of the lake, hands deep into his pockets, head bent forward, with the Canadian sky looming over him. He spent too much time trying to connect Gould's so-called idea of north with his own Michigan idea of north: those sudden midsummer chills that hit Petoskey, and that one night in particular when the pine cones froze off the trees and drummed on the tin porch roof outside his bedroom window." When everyone's seated, play "Like a Rolling Stone." Note in the program: "When alive, Kenner spent too much time pondering Dylan's lyrics and never did figure out who that mystery tramp might've been, although he did often like to think that the figure came out of the hinterlands, one more American sociopath, perhaps, and he knew the type from his own boyhood, having seen them come and go, taking his sister out at night, pulling up at the curb in the summer haze of the street lamp." Everyone should remain seated during this music portion of the program, including Don Philpot, who, if

he's still alive, will be nervously pinching the flesh on his upper lip where, as a teenager, he had a mustache. He'll be fidgeting because—I like to imagine—he'll be thinking about the Newburgh deal. He might also be thinking about the time the four of us went down to the Amish quilt auction in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and we got into an argument about the motions of the spotters. Philpot maintained that the men doing the signaling were intuitively manipulating the invisible field of energy—those are his words exactly—that formed around any kind of interaction that might lead to a deal. If you were keen enough, he claimed, you could tweak this field to your own advantage in the bidding.

Next, play the original versions of Louis Armstrong's "West End Blues" and then "St. James Infirmary," (six minutes 31 seconds total), at which point—presumably—Philpot will break into one of his sweating fits, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, adjusting his ass on the seat, sulky with shame.

Please note in the program the following: "Kenner sat on the board of the New York State Real Estate Ethics Committee and chaired the Committee for Real Improvement in Real Estate. He worked tirelessly for justice." On the other hand, if it's clear that I was killed by Sullivan, please substitute the following: "Kenner tangled with the Evil. Gangster. Sullivan, who, in concert with a dear friend, shafted him out of the land in Newburgh and proceeded to build the Highland Estates, yet another bedroom community of commuters who had to cross the bridge to catch the train in Beacon when, if I'd had my way, they might've taken the ferry that Kenner (I) was well on the way to putting into service, having already, at the time of the bid, through

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FUNERAL *by David Means*

careful nursing of connections to the state, received all the permits and pilot certificates necessary to develop a high-speed Newburgh/Manhattan service.” I pondered way too much not only the bedroom community that Philpot built, the cluster of nondescript buildings, the terraces with unusually low railings (the jerk had the Newburgh building inspector in his pocket too), but also the lives of those who lived in the units and commuted to Manhattan from upstate every day, rising at dawn, dressing quietly in the dark so as not to wake their wives, or husbands, and then slogging across the miserable bridge to the train and the long ride down to the city, and then, hours later, returning home in the dark—except in the summer, when the glorious Hudson Valley, bathed in warm dusk, would mock their servitude; whereas I, through financial finesse and my intuitive sense of the volume needed to project my ideas past the scratchy noise of the real estate market, had found a way to spare the commuters such a fate. Just as Louis Armstrong, with his ability to play loudly and in tune at the same time, was able to project through the limitations of the Victrola and then, later, of mono AM radio filled with static. His horn threw itself in the front of the background noise, doing whatever it wanted to do, joyful and strong.

When the Armstrong piece is over, please ask for a moment of silence. If Philpot is still alive and in attendance—with sweat beading on his brow and his long legs jittering—he’ll find this short pause unendurable, and he’ll sense that Armstrong is mocking his inability to play the market honestly.

Note: I would like my body to be on display, dressed in a clean white shirt, black tie, dark trousers, along with my hand-sewn Italian shoes. (Please have them resoled.) I’d like the undertaker to clean up the razor-burn blemishes under my chin and trim my eyebrows and my ear and nose hairs. Please tilt the coffin slightly toward the room so that a view of my body is unavoidable. If my face is disfigured by an act of violence—most likely at the hands of Sullivan, but possibly Bob Hartwell, who had a grudge against me because of the tree-chopping incident, the border dispute, and the subsequent surveying expenses, and who stopped acting in a neighborly fashion around 1991—do your best to clean up the blemishes on my neck and the small crater on my left eyelid, which still bothers me because I remember the cauterizing tool the dermatologist used, the unexpected burst of pain, and the smell of flesh burning. Again, even if my face is a Cubist mess, please present it to the mourners. Please put a note in the program, or make an announcement after the moment of silence:

“It was William Kenner’s wish that each of you take one last look at his face. Please make every attempt humanely possible to take at least one glance. Even if his face fills you with the sharp envy (you, Philpot!) of

knowing that he’d had the Archdiocese of New York in the palm of his hand when he negotiated the easement for the entry road to the retirement home for nuns, which later became fondly known around town as the Nunnery. Kenner often admired the meadow property—beautiful as the grass swayed in the wind off the river, only 30 miles north of Manhattan. Kenner had bought the meadow long before he moved to town. He and Ann rented a car and drove out of the city in search of a country house, a weekend retreat, and when they came to the meadow, with the palisade looming over the northern border, they got out of the car, waded into the grass, and fucked each other senseless. Then, on the way out, Kenner spotted the FOR SALE sign and bought the land that would, years later, retrospectively, even a score.”

One afternoon, over lunch, we declared ourselves business partners of the old-school type, willing to seal deals with a handshake and a smile. Why bother signing a contract when friendship and trust would suffice? You may recall, Don (my corpse might say), that Ann and I made a number of overtures of friendship to you and Marie. One was the invitation to join us for our annual trip to the Amish auction near Lancaster. These were, you’ll recall, the days when we were keeping a tally of our dinner-party invites. We owed you an invite equivalent to three of your parties, and I figured that even with your petty accounting you’d see a trip to Amish country at our expense as the equivalent to eating Marie’s food three times. I figured, and Ann did, too, that you understood that we attended your dinner parties out of compassion.

Note to Morrison, if you’re still alive and still my counsel when you get this document, or to Comstock, or Swinburne, if you take over as my counsel, or to whoever at Morrison, Comstock & Swinburne happens to land the job of tending to this document, here are a few key points:

- After the tidal flood, the terraces’ collapse, and subsequent lawsuits, Don’s betrayal of me with Sullivan’s help probably cost him a shitload of legal fees.
- Again, in retrospect, the score between us was already even, because long before the Newburgh deal I’d fleeced the Archdiocese, and therefore Rome and indirectly Philpot’s supposedly devoted wife (she wasn’t), who—as Don told me one evening as we hiked together to the top of Hook Mountain—Oz-like, majestic—saw herself as a vassal of Rome and, through Rome, of the Holy Spirit. In other words, by dickering with the Archdiocese, which was determined to build the home for the nuns on that property, I was actually dickering Don’s wife, who tithed a percentage of your income to the Church and thus, via the Church and the meadow deal, to me.



- I simply did what any self-respecting businessman might have done if he'd had the good fortune of owning the sliver of land that the Church needed to house retired nuns in dignity and safety, with a beautiful view. I didn't buy the meadowland intending to exploit it.
- In death I'll feel absolved of guilt and yet still sorrowful about the rending of a friendship.
- I intend, if I'm not killed by Sullivan, or in a freak accident of some kind, to continue telling my son the story of Philpot's betrayal as a lesson in how deep trust and friendship can be exploited for material gain. I intend to sit him down again and say: "Son, I don't know if you remember my old friend, Don Philpot, who used to come over to the house when you were a boy." My hope is to wait until I'm on my deathbed to tell him the story again, making use of the deathbed aura, the beep of the machine as a backbeat. I'll explain that our friendship went back to my childhood in Michigan, before I moved out here, and I'll tell my son about the time when Don and I were slapping a puck around on Portage Pond, and on a dare he skated as close as he could to the

inlet where the creek went under the road. He fell through the pale blue ice, and I shimmied on my belly with my stick, spreading my legs to disperse the weight as I guided him to shore. Then I took off his wet clothes, wrapped him in my coat and took him to my car, where I cradled and hugged him to warm him. I saved his life. He said as much over the years. He said, I owe you my life, Kenner. He said it over lunch that day. He said, That time you were playing around with that kid, Brent, in the rail yard, you saved his foot, and then a few months later, you saved my life. Not bad. Most of us would be satisfied with saving one foot, or a life, but to save a foot and a life is a big, big thing, he said. And I said, Don, it was nothing. All I did was help you slide along the ice to the shore, and it wasn't that far. I'll tell my son that he thanked me again and again over the years for saving his ass. His ass, I'll tell my son. He told me I saved his ass. But the way I think about it, I saved an ass. I'll stress that it's dangerous to do business with an old friend. Precise memory vaporizes when it comes into contact with cash. (Morrison: It's possible that by the time these instructions get put into action I'll have already told the story again to an older version of my son, so it's possible that

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FUNERAL *by David Means*

my son will be giving Philpot the evil eye during the moment of silence. If you're alive and attending, please watch him. If he gives Don the evil eye, you can safely assume that he's heard the lifesaving/ice story as it relates to the Newburgh/betrayal story. If not, you can assume that I didn't have a chance to tell it to him again because I died at the hand of Sullivan, who, I might as well add here, called me the other night, I think. Someone called with a thick accent, or with a handkerchief over the mouthpiece [do they still do that?] and spoke in a mumbled tone about vindication.)

- I tried—and I'm still trying—to instill in my son a sense of compassion strong enough to develop into an ethos of love, so that he'll eventually be able to find it in himself to forgive a heinous, albeit typically American, act of financial violence, along with a betrayal of a handshake: an extended squeeze of flesh on flesh and a big up-and-down shake that lasted for about a minute as we chuckled and agreed that we were the best of friends and that no written contract was necessary. A sense of shared destiny threw us back to the Midwest, and I mentioned this to Philpot after the shake. I said: Isn't it amazing that two fuck-up kids from the sticks are closing a friendly handshake deal for what might be the largest landgrab north of Bear Mountain in years?
- As an example of extreme forgiveness, I told my son the story of Bill Burdick, who opened fire on a Pizza King. I painted a complete picture: gray sky over an upstate town. Diners eating pizza, folding food into their mouths. You have to see it, I told my son, who was only ten at the time. Imagine ten people sitting at tables with red-and-white checks, a red candle at each, I said. Five days before Christmas, mind you. A postcard tableau, a warm port in the storm of a recession, with most of the storefronts outside boarded and a few other buildings gutted by arson fires. Everything cozy inside, with a jukebox playing Louis Armstrong's original version of "What a Wonderful World." Eating pizza, they were oblivious to the misfortune walking down the street. But that pizza parlor, for whatever reason, was waiting for Burdick. (My son looked bored. He rolled his eyes.) Just as the patch of land I purchased years back, the so-called meadowland up the road, you know, the meadow where we go sometimes to walk, was begging to be denuded and graded in preparation for digging; you smooth and grade first and then you dig out the hole, line it with plywood, and pour a foundation. (I'll retell the Burdick story again when he's older. You forget most of what you hear at age ten. You get the rudiments and then let the rest float away. That piece of meadow I owned was begging

to be exploited by the Church, so to speak, I'll say, if I live. If I don't live, he'll still have the basic gist of the Burdick story to instruct him on compassion and forgiveness.) I unfolded—and might do so again in the near future, if I live—the pizza-parlor scene in order to prepare him for one of the main points, which was that Burdick had admitted that he massacred the pizza parlor "for the hell of it because it was waiting for me to do it," he said, first in the initial police interrogation and then, later, in front of the packed courtroom. Burdick took the stand *against the advice of counsel* and explained, simply, that he'd killed 15 folks "for the hell of it."

(Morrison: Do you remember the conversation we had a few years ago, in which you explained to me that one out of every 20 or so clients could be counted on to go against your counsel? You said: "It's often the most judicious souls, the considerate ones who go against the advice of counsel." Then, in another meeting, you told me: "It is counsel's advice that you keep your mouth shut about Sullivan. Let it go. Do not attempt to approach Sullivan. Don't make public or even private statements about Newburgh, Sullivan, or Philpot.")

- The other point of the Burdick story was that the sole survivor of the Pizza King massacre, LeAnne Kelly, whose St. Christopher medallion necklace deflected a kill shot to the chest, had offered forgiveness to Burdick. "If Burdick could attempt to kill me for the hell of it, then I have every right to forgive him for the hell of it," she said in a television interview. She had big, hazel eyes and a long, elegant nose. She spoke with composure, pursing her lips slightly, pursing them some more, and then releasing her mouth into a gorgeous smile. I wasn't saved from the financial bullet of betrayal, I'll say to my son, or will have said, No such luck for your old man. I didn't have a St. Christopher medal around my neck, so to speak, to spare me betrayal by an old friend.

As for the eulogy and all of that, I think I'll leave most of it to the living (whoever they might be) to plan that part of the service, although let me say for the record that I'd like the Reverend Woo, if he's still around, to give one of his long-winded, incomprehensible sermons, drawing from the Book of Job and whatever passage he can find that contains the word *vainglory*—something from Philippians, perhaps. Note: please ask Woo to pound on the word *vainglory*. And then I assume that there will be the usual personal comments from grieving family members and then, if I live long enough, perhaps my son, perhaps a young man by now, might get up and tell the story of my taking the train down to Yonkers to find Sullivan, one clear winter day (yesterday, to be



INSTRUCTIONS FOR FUNERAL *by David Means*

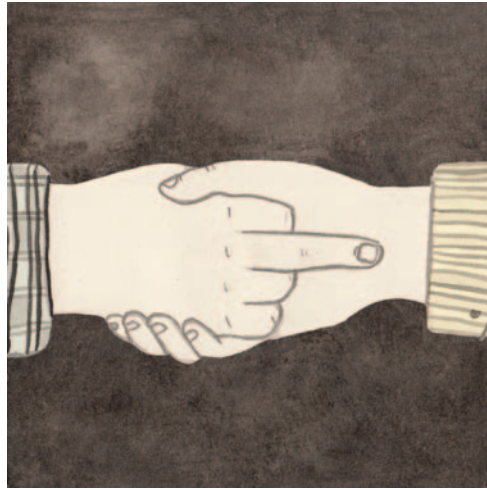
precise), and going to his so-called social club, a ratty little building with windows covered with faded newsprint. I'd seen the building many times on the news, during coverage of the so-called Boss War, in the summer of 1987, when Sullivan was supposedly solidifying control of the Eastern Syndicate, as they kept calling it. On television, it was a classic brick storefront with an old sign—Hudson Shoe Repair—with missing neon tubes. When I saw it in person, it looked astonishingly shabby, a stubby brick building in a block of high-rises and condos not far from the railroad station. In person, it seemed to radiate a criminal desperation. Just seeing it, from across the street, filled me with confidence. The Sullivan gang—according to reports—was now fragmented and losing power by the day. I like to imagine that my son will use this story to illustrate my gumption, my fearlessness. The truth is, I *felt* fearless. Fueled by my anger and my almost cosmic sense of betrayal (You, Don! You miserable liar. Judas. Handshake deceiver), I marched right up to the door, gave it a knuckle-rap and waited for an eye to appear in the eyehole. Someone on the other side of the door grunted a phrase. I knocked again and heard the grunt again. Password, the grunt seemed to be saying, and I said, I don't know the password. I'm here to speak to Sullivan. He doesn't know it, but he's expecting me. When the door opened, I was facing an old man with a cane. He was toothless, with one eyelid stuck shut. He kept one hand clutched behind the lapel of his tweed jacket, looked me up and down with his good eye and said, What do you want? I said, I've come in search of the truth about a matter. And he said, What matter? And I said, It's an upstate matter. (Let me stress here that I had an intuitive sense of how to speak.) Upstate how? he said. And I said, Upstate land. Stay here, he said, and he closed the door and left me standing outside in the fresh air, with the blue sky overhead. I stood and stood and felt my feet on the ground.

I felt like a man ready to defend his honor. I felt like a man ready to defend his honor against the forces of evil, so to speak. I felt like a man standing outside an old shoe-repair shop in the Yonkers business district,

with the sound of the Metro-North train arriving at the station a few blocks away, trailing a long strand of tension and stress as it tried to brake to a stop; and then, a minute later, the repowering, the gathering steam. It was an express, I knew, because expresses were diesel-powered so they could pass Croton, where the third rail ended, and head all the way up past Beacon to the end of the line in Poughkeepsie. The sound of the train leaving filled me with strength—I'll explain to my son. A minute later, the door opened and the man appeared again and gestured me with a wave of his cane into a dark room that smelled of bootblack and cleaning compounds and gun oil. There were a few old tables and even older chairs. The man led me to the back, lifted a gate, and pushed me behind a counter where,

in a reclining chair, Sullivan sat with a cigar in his mouth, a friendly look on his face. (If I'm dead now, Morrison, please know that it has something to do with the feeling I got when I saw his face, because it seemed to me, as he gestured toward a chair, that he had honest eyes, deep twinkling blue. It's also possible—if I'm dead now and you're reading this a few weeks later—that I was fooled by his casual voice as he said, Go ahead, state your business. Tell me who you are and what you want. It was a fatherly voice.)

I dove right in and told him everything from my point of view. I told him about Philpot (you, Don!) and our early friendship, the time I saved his life on the ice in Michigan, and then about the handshake deal and the Newburgh land and our agreement to use state funds to finance a high-speed ferry service to the city. As I spoke, he listened attentively and swung his cigar in the air, making short looping gestures, as if conducting. Again, his eyes seemed to twinkle as I spoke of the bond I'd felt with Philpot, one that came from sharing hour after hour of our boyhood days. We were further bonded, I explained to Sullivan, by our both having abandoned Michigan for the East Coast. As he listened, Sullivan's eyes seemed to tear up. (Up until this point, I now see, I had not gone against your counsel, Morrison. I was simply a confessor bemoaning a business deal gone sour.) I was nothing but a lonely man in Yonkers, on a clear, beautiful winter day, spilling his soul to a man



INSTRUCTIONS FOR FUNERAL *by David Means*

who was notoriously quick-tempered; who had killed, according to news accounts, at least a hundred men. He seemed, as he swung his hand, trailing smoke, to understand my honor as it related to risk and death, and I'm sure now, as I write this (it's late and I've been drinking) that he understood, up to a point, my willingness to go against common sense. I'd even say that he seemed impressed with me as he said, Go on. I get it. Go on. You left the homeland for the East. So I did go on. I accused Philpot (you, Don!) of conspiring with him against me on the silent bid for the Newburgh land. I implied, against the advice of counsel, that the two of them had been in cahoots against me, and that someone would have to pay for the crime, somehow.

If I tell this story to my son, I'll stop right here, pull short and avoid describing being led out of the social after shaking Sullivan's hand. I'll say I got confirmation that Philpot had truly fucked me. I'll keep it clean and simple. I'll avoid telling my son about the way Sullivan's face changed, about the way his eyes became dead cold, blurry blue, and his lips became firm and tight against his teeth in a smile that seemed politely politic, charged with a task of hiding a placid, benign malice toward his audience. (As a matter of fact, Sullivan looked a bit like old photos of JFK. Beautifully haunted as he looked out at the world with a gentility and authority tempered with physical pain.) I'll avoid telling my son about the way Sullivan's attention went from me to his cigar, which he examined carefully, and then, after clearing his throat a few times, he began to speak in a voice that was tight and intense. He told me about his best friend, years back, in Hell's Kitchen (Back when *hell* was still in the *kitchen*, he said), a kid named Kenny Bruen, and how they worked together, pickpocket schemes on the subway, this and that, until they were both working for what he called a higher establishment. Then one day the fork appeared, he said. The big fork that always appears. Then he looked past me and said, Right, Johnny. Doesn't that fork always appear? Best friends, you gonna end up with that fork. It's gonna happen. You put trust in his basket, and the other guy the same amount of trust in your basket, and one of the baskets is gonna *feel* too fucking heavy. It's simple physics. Now don't get me wrong. I'm not relating this directly to your story. I mean, you and Philpot. What do I know? For all I know he screwed you over because you pulled him off the ice. Maybe you should look at it that way. You might've done yourself a favor and left him to sink like a stone. The way I see it, I should've let Kenny die before I had to kill him. On a roof we were running from some punks and had to make a jump to another building. Nothing we hadn't done a million times before, and then he got snagged on an air vent or something, lost his footing and ended up—fuck if I really know how it happened, I didn't see it—hanging from the ledge, like in a movie. I got his

hands and hauled him up and we did what you did. I mean hugged and held each other. Kenny said, You saved my life. I said, I didn't do anything you wouldn't do. He said: Still, you saved my life. And now when I think about it I knew right then on the roof that I'd probably have to kill him if he kept talking like that. I eventually had to tell him. I said, Kenny, stop saying you owe me your life. I don't want hear it. You don't owe me a thing. Then a few years passed. I mean time went along, and we were doing a sit-and-wait on a guy who owed big on a horse at the raceway. We were in the car for about 12 hours, waiting for this guy to come out, and we got bored. So Kenny starts going back to the old days and ends up talking about that time he almost died and how I helped him out and all, and I knew right then, in the car, that I'd have to kill him. It was in the cards. Just by virtue of the fact that I knew he couldn't go on owing anyone so much without taking something from me.

That's the way it works, Sullivan said, and then he stopped speaking and stared at me. The room was getting dark. So what I'm seeing is Philpot fucked you over, but only to give you the excuse you need to kill him. You don't see it that way, but it's that way if you look close enough. Believe me, give it long enough and you're going feel it in your bones. Now, I'd like you to look at it from my perspective. Don's a good feed. I feed him lines and he legitimizes deals and feeds me a take and we both part ways until the next feed appears. If something doesn't happen to you, it'll happen to him, and I'm not sure I can afford that. Sullivan drilled his eyes at me and said: I could kill you now, right here, but that's not my style. You came to me and I asked you to talk. It's not my style to kill a guy who was asked to tell a story and told it. I've got other ways of doing things, he said, vaguely, and then he made a gesture and the old man put his hand on my shoulder and we walked through the smell of shoe polish (and maybe gun oil. I swear, Morrison, I smelled gun oil), and then I was outside in the wintry twilight. Right then, standing there, I understood that I was either a man who was going to be killed by Sullivan, or a man who, by some good fortune, was going to live into old age, unless I died of some other cause. Weirdly enough, Morrison, I felt better knowing that the two possibilities were in play. On the train home I felt a weight lifting. The river outside was flowing with steely resolve. My options, which before the meeting had seemed innumerable and impossible to pin down, suddenly seemed delightfully few and clear.

As I write this, Ann is asleep upstairs. I just checked on my son, and he was asleep, too, making his little snoozy sound, with the faint twilight coming into his room through the window. Everything, right now, is safe and cozy. *UCEB*

© David Means, 2013



IT'S LITTLE, BUT IT'S MEAN

Baddest Grandpa in the World Irving Zisman Talks Scoring Poo-Na-Na and Grandparenting Skills

BY ROCCO CASTORO
PHOTOS BY JASON MacDONALD

For the past few months, VICE has received dozens upon dozens of calls alerting us to the shenanigans of one Irving Zisman. If that name sounds familiar, it's because Irving is the sexually vigorous 86-year-old who appeared on the final season of *Jackass* and in the three feature films that followed, in which he serves as a role model for plain-speaking and horndog octogenarians across the globe.

Irving's antics sometimes make people uncomfortable, but I believe his popularity stems from his willingness to say what other people are afraid to acknowledge: namely, that old people can be horny with the best of them, and that this is nothing new. Still, it came as a surprise that, according to our readers, Irving had been popping up across the United States for the past six months or so.

In August, a lucky lady whom Irving had tried and—to her detriment—failed to seduce in Charlotte, North Carolina, gave me Irving's phone number. Much to my delight, he picked up when I cold-called him, and I learned that the *Jackass* crew had been documenting his impromptu cross-country road trip following the death of his wife a few months before. The result is *Jackass Presents: Bad Grandpa*, which will hit theaters on October 25.

Irving was kind enough to invite me and a small crew down to document the final days of filming, and besides being punched in the testicles by Jackson Nicoll, Irving's nine-year-old co-star, who plays his badly behaved grandson Billy, I learned a lot about how I plan to behave as a senior citizen.

Some people say that Irving is actually Johnny Knoxville in elaborate prosthetics and makeup, and given that the posters for the movie list him as the star of the film (and the fact that we filmed him in makeup), I guess I have no choice but to believe this claim. However, during my time with Irving, he never broke character once, which leads me to wonder whether 1) Irving is a real person and this has all been an elaborate ruse on the public, or 2) Johnny Knoxville is the Andy Kaufman of our generation, fully immersing himself in a role that blurs the line between entertainment and reality. Either way, I guarantee this movie will give you hope that as an old person you don't have to be whiny and smelling like urine all the time.

Given that complaints and piss are the two things I hate the most, I had the foresight to secretly record my initial conversation with Irving, which you can read in full below. At the time, I was unaware that his wife had passed.

Some months later, we also arranged a photo shoot in a hotel room with Irving and a few lovely ladies who had no problem with his virile, liver-spotted nature. Everyone had a fucking blast.

VICE: Hello, is this Irving?

Irving Zisman: Hello? How are you... Who is this?

This is Rocco. I'm the editor in chief of a company called VICE. Can you hear me, Irving?

Hey! Speak up!

Well, Irving, I've had readers of VICE across the country email and call me, saying that they've seen an old guy perving out on their girlfriends, driving an aquamarine green '81 Lincoln Continental around with a young blond-haired child, and... how do I say this delicately... doing things that wouldn't exactly be classified as good parenting or grandparenting, as the case may be. I just want to know what's up. Why am I getting so many calls? What have you been up to? You're referring to my little cooter-stretching grandson Billy.

Yeah, is he bait?

Is he what?

Is he bait for the cougars?

No, he's not bait. He's a little cock-blocker is what he is!

Does your wife know what you're up to? Wouldn't it upset her?
My wife passed away, thank God.

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

Happiest day of my life.

Then I guess... I'm happy for you?

Yeah, you should be happy. She didn't give me any poo-na-na for the past 25 years.

Twenty-five?

At least 25 years.

Shit, and I imagine you made it clear that you wanted it?

I was begging for it, even from her! I remember the last time we had sex; pulling down her panties was like unwrapping an old piece of candy.

Like a Werther's Original?

You gotta use it or lose it, Rocco.

How long were you married to her?

Damn near 50 years.

Well, that's a problem sometimes in marriages, right? Everything kind of dries up, I guess.

Yeah, I mean, you're out whoring around and having a good time and gettin' all this poo-na-na, and then you get married, and you only have one place to get the poo-na-na, and she shuts the door. She shut both doors, by the way, if you know what I mean.

Were they ever both open?

Oh yeah, when cotton blooms on the poontang trail, go around back to deliver the mail—that's my motto.

Rain, sleet, or snow?

White, yellow, red, or black, makes no difference in the sack. My preferred woman is within reaching distance. Who gives a shit about color? The only color I see is pink.

What was the first thing you did when your wife passed away?

The first thing I planned to do was to go out and dive in a big bowl of that ham saddle. You know what I'm talking about. Poontang, it's Mother Nature's candy, and I was going out to get a whole bag.

“The first thing I planned to do was dive in a big bowl of that ham saddle. You know what I'm talking about.”

Back to your grandson, though, you said he was causing you some trouble with the ladies? Why has he been traveling with you on what was supposed to be an X-rated trip?

Well, I got my grandson dumped on me at my wife's funeral. My daughter had to go back to jail, so she left the kid with me right at my moment of freedom. I had to take his little ass all the way across the country to North Carolina, to his no-good father.

And you haven't been able to use him as an asset? I feel like puppy dogs and little kids can be assets when you're looking to attract ladies.

He's not an asset, he's an *asshole*!

Why didn't you try to pay it forward and leave him with his father?

I tried to ditch him the whole time! I tried to ship him to Raleigh. And they almost let me.

What do you mean, “ship him”? Like in a box?

Yeah, in a box. I almost got away with it.

And then you were stuck with him. I get it now. Too bad.

Yeah, there's nothing you can do. He's too young to ride the bus and they wouldn't let me ship him, so I had to drive his little ass all the way to North Carolina.

Were there times you were really close to getting some poo-na-na that he ruined?

Yeah, I was close! Real close! I went to one of them strip-teaser

clubs one night—my theory is, never go to a female strip club, OK? Because those girls are onstage getting paid, all right? They just wanna get paid. Go to male strip clubs, because the women there are hotter than panties on a clothesline, and they're just gaggin' for it. You're gonna be the only nonworking guy in there, you gotta use your head, use your head, Rocco!

And by that, you mean both heads, right?

Yes, both.

I doubt you're discriminatory so... younger women, older women, what was their initial reaction, usually, when you propositioned them? Were they turned on?

Yeah, 18 to 80, blind, crippled, or crazy, I'm not picky at all. And of course they're turned on! But ya know, I got the kid back in the room. I can't leave him there all night, so eventually I gotta go home.

You could have put him in the closet or something.

Yeah, yeah, but you don't want the little rally stopper having to listen to all the *ooohs* and the *abhs*—that gets a little dark.

Do you have any problems downstairs? Can you still get the boa uncoiled?

I might be too old to chop the lettuce, but I can still toss the salad, Rocco.

One of the people who initially tipped me off to your little excursion said you told her you aren't very well endowed. Could that be part of your problem?

Oh yeah, it's little, but it's mean. Life is easy, it's me that's hard.

So you really didn't get laid once?

Not once. But I gotta say, I'm so happy that school has started again, because Billy's in school and I can just roam free all day long. I've been hitting those oriental massage parlors.

Do you have to ask for the happy ending, or do they just know that's what you're looking for?

Oh, they ask you what you want and you say, “I rike” to rick’ kitty kitty.”

What is that?

What, you don't like lick kitty kitty?

Do they let you do that?

Sure, sure! Put the ol' septum to the rectum. You know what I'm sayin'?

Yes, I do. But tell us a little bit more about your trip. What other situations did you find yourself in because of your spoiled-brat grandson?

Well, he damn near killed me on a kiddie ride. I was sitting there talking to this young lady, this beautiful Latina, and some damn ride of his wasn't working so I had to go check it out. It damn near broke my neck when it exploded and shot through the glass of the store it was outside of. Another thing—I don't like to talk about it, but I got my dong accidentally stuck in a soda machine.



How'd you do that?
I was trying to fuck it.

Well, did you put quarters in it beforehand? Because maybe that was the problem...
No, I put my jim-dog in it!

But you didn't pay for that function. You always have to pay for these things.
Maybe if I'd paid, it wouldn't have gotten stuck, huh?

Maybe. How'd you get it out?
I had to tug!

Were you worried you were going to rip it off?
Yeah! I asked a lot of people for help. But let me tell you, when you have your jim-dong stuck in a soda machine, people aren't that helpful. They didn't want to get within about ten feet of me. But I got it out eventually, and I applied some sports cream, and I'm fine now.

Do you have any tips for picking up ladies that might be helpful to our readers?
I'd say scratch where it itches and rub where it twitches. That's

some damn good advice. Also, if you can't get it up, don't get it out, all right? You didn't just show up to kiss and eat doughnuts, it's gotta be all business. You gotta be confident, Rocco. Women don't like little shit rabbits, they like confidence.

Can we get more specific? Let's say you take your grandson to get ice cream, and you see a nice lady sitting down by herself, how would you approach her?

You just introduce yourself real politely, lean in where the little boy can't hear it, and whisper to her, "What I lack in size, I make up for in speed." They really respond to that.

Are you referring to the speed at which you bring them to orgasm, or the speed at which *you* achieve orgasm?

Oh, speed at which *I* achieve orgasm; it's not gonna be much of a commitment the other way.

Do you suffer from low-hanging testicles? I imagine that could be a problem, even if you do manage to convince a lady to get naked with you. Rumor has it they're naturally averse to balls, especially when they have enough slack to be tied into a knot. Just between you, me, and the wall, mine do hang a little to the south, but what I do is I just put my nuts in my butt, and that way, I get around pretty easily.



Are you worried about STDs? Do you practice safe sex?

When you get to be my age, who gives a shit really about safe sex? I'm 86 years old. What's the worst that can happen?

Do you come from a long line of virile men? Was your father a ladies' man like you?

Yeah, he was a real man-whore; I always looked up to him for that. Great man.

As horny as you are at the moment, it sounds like you were still faithful to your wife while she was alive.

Well, if you don't count my hand, the couch, or the oriental massage parlors, I was 100 percent faithful to my wife. I figure if you're payin' for it, you're not cheatin'.

Some people might have a difference of opinion on that.

When you start cheating with civilians, that's when it's cheating.

Is there a certain age you can reach at which those rules don't apply anymore?

Yeah, when your wife dies. That's when those rules don't apply anymore. I have news for you, Rocco: she's dead now.

Where are you based right now? Are there a lot of prospects around?

Well, my daughter, who's in jail right now, she got a place in Redondo Beach, and I brought my grandson out here for school. I'm loving it here on the West Coast! Gorgeous! The poontang capital of the world! Ohhh my God, what a school of tuna out here.

What do you say to the people who are made uncomfortable by seeing a man of your age exercising his sexual prowess and freedom? They can go shit in Memphis, that's what I got to say to them. People are too caught up in what other people are doing; just mind your own damn business. I ain't hurtin' nobody.

Have you ever inadvertently hit on someone's wife or girlfriend? What was the fallout?

Oh yeah! If the husband's not within reaching distance that's fine too. It's all about proximity.

How about alcohol? Is that something you use as a way to break the ice?

I'll drink anything too thin to eat. I love the booze. I tried that cocaine back in the 70s, never liked it though. Every time I would do it I would get a sinus infection, and I couldn't get an erection. So I'm wondering, why the fuck am I doing this cocaine? It's like pushing a chain with my cock, like playing ping-pong with an oyster when I do cocaine, so the hell with cocaine.

What about Viagra?

Oh sure, sure, Viagra I love, that is a delicious treat. It's workin' like a bran muffin on me, I'll tell you that right now. Sometimes it gives me a bit of a headache, but it all works out in the end.

How about pornography? Are you a fan?

Sure, I love pornography!

Have you been able to freely enter the world of internet porn since your wife passed?

Yeah, I got me one of those computers and got on the world-wide internet.

Would you ever think about starring in a porno film? Some people have a fetish when it comes to old folks.

Oooh, that sounds like a good idea... we could call it *A Serving of Irving*, or, *Eat Me in St. Louis*.

You could be holding two hot dogs on the cover.

Keep going, keep going!

I think we're going to end this interview now. I don't want to get you too excited and shoulder the responsibility for anything that might happen afterward.

Geez, you're gonna leave me like this?

“When you get to be my age, who gives a shit really about safe sex? I’m 86 years old. What’s the worst that can happen?”

I'm going to leave you hanging, or maybe erect as the case may be.

Well, the day is still young. I can go down to the happy spa and catch the last train to Cooterville, I guess.

That's gross, but I will offer you the opportunity to leave our readers with some words of wisdom. Got any?

Yes, I'd like to say to your readers: There's no such thing as bad poontang, some are just hairier than the others. Never forget that, kids.

I'm sure they will never, ever forget that.

And remember: Never, *ever* get your knob polished by a gal who chews tobacco. That is unless you got a bee sting on your jim-dog. And never look a gift whore in the mouth.

What if she wants it in the mouth?

Well, I guess when in Rome...

When in Rome, take out the bone? I don't know... Is there another rhyme there?

Wow, hey—you leave the comedy to me, you prick.

OK, Irving, maybe I'll talk to you soon, maybe I won't, but I'll be living vicariously through your penis until then, which sort of makes me want to puke, but whatever.

OK, if I don't see ya through the weekend, I'll see ya through the window, kid! *VICE*

Jackass Presents: Bad Grandpa is out in theaters October 25. Watch down-and-dirty, behind-the-scenes footage this month on *VICE.com*.



STROLLING THE CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES WITH 120,000 SYRIAN REFUGEES

The Fallout of Chemical Warfare in Jordan's Za'atari Refugee Mega Camp

BY ROBERT KING AS TOLD TO ROCCO CASTORO AND ANGELINA FANOUS
PHOTOS BY ROBERT KING



On the morning of August 21, Mohamed watched rockets fly over his village outside Damascus, Syria's capital. Shortly after the bombs exploded, rumors spread throughout the neighborhood that the rockets had been loaded with sarin nerve gas and were deployed by the regime of President Bashar al-Assad against the neighborhood because it was a stronghold of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), the ragtag rebel army established by defected government soldiers who oppose Assad's rule.

Mohamed is a farmer, not a combatant, but he told me he promptly went to a local FSA outpost, where the rebels were giving instructions on how to survive the chemical-weapons attack: "Place cold, wet towels over your face," an FSA soldier had instructed him. "Stay low to the ground. Close all your doors."

But when Mohamed returned to his house, it was too late: two of his children, whom he'd left playing in the garden, were dead.

Mohamed left Syria, and five days later, I met him during my visit to the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, about 100 miles from Damascus. The camp was opened in a collaborative effort between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Jordanian government last July. Since then, Za'atari has become home for the vast numbers of Syrians, like Mohamed, who have fled the violence and trauma of their country's civil war, which began in March 2011.

If the severity of the Syrian conflict can, at least in part, be measured by the number of refugees it has created, the Za'atari camp is a microcosm of just how bad things have gotten across the border: when it opened, Za'atari housed a mere 100 families. Today, it includes 120,000 residents and is the fourth-largest city in Jordan and the second-largest refugee camp in the world.

To gain access, I had to pay a Jordanian official who, in return, allowed me to shoot stills and video throughout the camp. He also provided me with a driver and a translator; however, after we drove through the desert and arrived at Za'atari's first checkpoint—about ten miles from the Syrian border—I was told by a different official that a Jordanian police officer would also have to accompany me during my interviews.

Inside a linoleum-tiled, air-conditioned office on the edge of the camp, I argued with even more officials that having a police officer with me would make my interviews uncomfortable and compromise my reporting. To my surprise, they agreed and let me enter without a police escort.

The camp itself is located on a three-square-mile slab in the middle of the desert and surrounded by barbed wire. The first thing I noticed was that it didn't look like the trash-strewn mess I had expected, but instead appeared neat and orderly. All told, Za'atari costs approximately \$500,000 per day to run, and it looks it.

When a family arrives, UN workers give them a tent or shipping container to live in, evidenced by the white Conex boxes fashioned into makeshift homes that line

the dusty streets. Each day, residents are also given dry and canned goods, water, and bread—an estimated half million pieces are distributed daily—but beyond these essentials, residents are on their own. As I walked around interviewing people and taking photos, I found huge tents selling mobile phones, groceries, even wedding dresses, arranged along boulevards that have basically become public bazaars. As has been widely reported, one of the streets has even been named the Champs-Élysées.

Three hospitals are peppered throughout the camp, and though there have been rumors of rapes, gang activity, and drug dealing as the camp has grown, it's still much safer at Za'atari than, say, inside Syria. Many of the hardships its residents face began well before they arrived at the camp, abandoning the lives they were forced to leave behind: families killed in combat, houses destroyed, careers abandoned. Despite the trauma residents of the camp have experienced, many long to return home, a prospect that, as the civil war intensifies, is becoming increasingly unrealistic.

"Being bombed in Syria is better than being here," a young man named Hussein told me. He claimed that hundreds of people were leaving the camp every day, either to return to Syria and fight, or to flee elsewhere. (The UN doesn't have official statistics regarding departure rates, though they have admitted that they are occurring). "The water they bring us is like red sand," Hussein continued, sighing.

Others I spoke with were leaving the camp optimistic that the US would attack Damascus in the coming days and Assad would eventually be removed from power. Now it appears that Russia and the US have brokered a deal with the Syrians to relinquish their chemical arsenal; in the interim, the refugees in Jordan and elsewhere will be forced to wait it out.

At Za'atari, I met other people who said they were victims of the chemical attacks that the US and other Western nations have blamed on Assad, a charge the Syrian president continues to deny. And while it's impossible to confirm these accounts, meeting these refugees was one of the hardest things I've ever done during my decades of conflict reporting. One woman, who ran an orphanage for kids whose parents have been killed in the war, told me how her husband won't let her turn on the TV anymore because the news accounts of the fighting gives the little ones nightmares. The children, she said, already couldn't sleep most nights.

I met a mother in her small shipping-container house nearby whose anecdote seemed to sum up the situation as succinctly as any I've heard during my two-plus years documenting the war in Syria: She explained to me that there is a school at Za'atari, but it's sparsely attended and many kindergarteners have forgotten the alphabet. They want to play "revolutionary games" instead. "My five-year-old tells me every day that he dreams of carrying a machine gun," she said, "and going back to Syria." 

Watch Robert's footage of the Za'atari refugee camp this month on VICE.com.













SCRAP OR DIE

Metal Thieves Are Tearing Cleveland Apart Piece by Piece

BY WILBERT L. COOPER

PHOTOS BY PETER LARSON

Special thanks to Jim Henry

One sweltering afternoon in July, I found myself breaking and entering into a derelict warehouse on the east side of Cleveland. I was in the middle of a crash course in metal theft from a man named Jay Jackson. Dressed like a plumber with a crumpled blue baseball cap on his head, Jay's muscular physique belied the fact that he was once a crackhead. These days his life still revolves around illegally acquired goods, but not ones smoked, snorted, or injected: Jay makes his living stripping copper and steel from abandoned buildings like the one we were sneaking into, selling his yield by the pound to scrapyards for quick cash.

"Scraping is just like being an entrepreneur," he said, leading me toward a gaping hole in one of the warehouse's walls, which we then scurried through. "It's just a job, and you can make as much money as you put into it."

Earlier that day, I'd used Google Street View to map out our jaunt through the epicenter of the city's thriving scrap trade, the neighborhood known as Central (counterintuitively located on the east side of town). But the building Jay and I broke into looked completely different from what I had seen on my computer screen. The photos on Google, taken in 2009, showed a tidy vacant office building with nearly all of its windows intact and sturdy wooden boards blocking off its many entrances. But now it looked like the aftermath of a drone bombing in Afghanistan: every window was blown out, every orifice torn open. The stinking carcass of a rodent was splayed on the floor. The drop ceiling had been ripped down, revealing empty tracks where ventilation, piping, and wires once snaked through the building. I couldn't believe that we were only a ten-minute drive from the stadiums, skyscrapers, and fine dining of downtown Cleveland.

The place may have looked like a dump to me, but to Jay it was a treasure trove of unknown proportions. "I could bring my torches in here and cut that steel box right over there," he said, tiptoeing as he critiqued the work of the scrappers who'd already hit the spot, rattling off a litany of different ways to disassemble the building "properly."

Jay and his cohorts, he explained, didn't do hit-and-runs; they worked in teams, living in an abandoned building like this for weeks while meticulously taking apart every square foot for all it was worth. A scrapper like Jay can earn a couple thousand bucks on a big haul. Metal thieves with his approach are so good at tearing things apart, in fact, that sometimes the City of Cleveland has had to replace support beams and girders of buildings after they've been gutted so the huge structures don't just collapse. Jay, by his own reckoning, told me he was in the "deconstruction business"—and in Cleveland, business is booming.

Like many tangential commodities in this tumultuous economy, the good fortune of Cleveland's scrappers is a direct result of the misfortune of the city's home and business owners. Between 2000 and 2008, Cuyahoga County, which encompasses Cleveland, racked up the most foreclosures per capita in the country—a whopping 80,000 houses were repossessed by banks, or about one out of every eight homes. Entire blocks were abandoned or sold to financial institutions, which have in turn left these homes sitting empty.

Shorty Rock on the streets of Central, the neighborhood that is the epicenter of Cleveland's scrap trade.

The east side of the city, the heart of the scrapping industry and the hardest hit by the recession, in many places brings to mind the rotten mouth of a meth addict, with decaying structures in every direction and great, gap-toothed spaces where homes and businesses sheltered and provided livelihoods for thousands of Ohioans. Today there are more than 16,000 of these empty properties, each stocked with lucrative goodies that can be scrapped, such as aluminum siding, metal-laden appliances, copper wire, and plumbing, all just waiting to be ripped out of the walls.

Due to the combination of the 2007 mortgage crisis and a roughly simultaneous rise in metal prices worldwide, scrapping has exploded in cities across America. And nowhere more so than in Cleveland, which has the highest number of reported metal thefts per capita in the country. As a result, Cleveland has become the sort of city where ten to 20 manhole covers go missing in one night and a toddler falls into one of the pits left behind; where people joke about getting electrocuted just walking down the street because the ground wire has been plucked from all the telephone poles; where copper statues downtown honoring important figures in American history have been replaced by composite ones painted to look like copper to deter thieves. The scrappers, in other words, are *everywhere*, boldly tearing away at the city's infrastructure in broad daylight like vultures hovering over a pack of lemmings that followed one another over the edge of a cliff.

Cleveland has become the sort of city where ten to 20 manhole covers go missing in one night and a toddler falls into one of the pits left behind.

So it wasn't surprising when Jay and I, after snooping around the warehouse for a bit, bumped into another scrapper on the ground level. Filthy and sweaty, he said his name was Sean. We caught him sizing up some heavy beams that Jay believed could fetch about \$300 per ton at the yard. Naturally, Sean refused to be photographed and didn't seem too happy to see us—he wanted this spot all to himself. Trying to spook us, he told what sounded like a tall tale about how he was working for the building's owner, who was trying to salvage the place before turning it into a fish farm. "He'll probably be here in about an hour," Sean said. Jay didn't think he was very convincing.

It was obvious that Sean didn't want to talk to me, but when I asked him how much he could score in an average haul, he couldn't pass up the chance to brag: "I'm living in a nice-ass house. You could look at where I live and you'd never think I scrap. To be a scrapper, you've gotta be a hustler by blood. I make money—about \$200 a day. I know how to get it."

Jay and I left Sean to his work. As we stepped out of the decrepit warehouse and into the sunlight, I turned to Jay and asked why he scrapped instead of finding a job that people might find more respectable. He looked at me like I was an idiot and flashed me a receipt for \$511.

"This right here," he said, "some folks don't even make this in a week. If I'm working a minimum-wage job, I'm not getting this. I'm going to get maybe \$300. What's \$300 gonna do you? How can you provide for your family or put a roof over your head with \$300?"

I didn't have an answer.

Although I was born and raised in Cleveland, the rabbit hole I crawled down with Jay was nothing I'd seen in the 20 years I spent growing up there. The Cleveland I'm from is the one you read about in fluff pieces in regional magazines that describe at length how the city is being revived thanks to gentrification and urban renovation. There is a renewed vitality on the west side of Cleveland, and I see it when I hang out with my old friends who didn't jump ship and move to other cities after college, like I did. They live in spacious lofts west of the Cuyahoga River, where old warehouses are being converted into alternative-living spaces for artists, and it's not hard to catch a farmer's market or drink a locally brewed IPA—a little dollop of Brooklyn's gentrified renaissance sandwiched between the city and the suburbs.

Back on the east side, it's a totally different story. There, old and abandoned warehouses and factories aren't going to be renovated anytime soon—they'll just continue to rot in plain view for years, maybe even decades. It's here that the stories of metal scrapping, a clear symptom of the city's dismal economic prospects, have become a gray-market industry.

While I was in town, I was invited to a big dinner with my girlfriend's family, who have also lived in Cleveland for decades. Everyone at the table had a horror story about metal theft. They piled on anecdotes, from local churches and beauty salons that were hit for their air-conditioning units to homes raided for their siding and wiring.

"It's so bad, people go around painting NO COPPER on their houses now," my girlfriend's dad said. "But that's almost an invitation, if you ask me."

After spending time with Jay and learning how scrappers strip homes and what they look for, I was curious about the other side of the equation: how they fence their goods so easily.

One morning, wandering around the east side not far from where I spent time with Jay, I met a guy who goes by "Shorty Rock." He was pushing a shopping cart of random scrap down East 55th Street in Central and agreed to let me follow him around as he scavenged and, more important, as he sold his stolen goods to a yard. We wouldn't have to walk far; there were countless abandoned buildings and scrapyards lining every block. If Jay is a "professional" scrapper, a master of big-money jobs, Shorty is more representative of your average hustler who just sells what he can find on the street to survive.

Shorty was short, of course, and talked fast and with a Southern drawl. As he pushed his rickety shopping cart, he explained that his game was simply haphazardly ripping whatever he could grab off a house, stuffing it into his cart, and running off with it. On his very best day fencing metal odds and ends, he said he had made \$111—a rare score.

On the day I met Shorty, he had been pilfering the skeletons of homes since 5:30 AM and was on his way to cash in at the New Western Reserve Recycling Center, just down the street. As we walked, Shorty told me his story, one typical of most scrappers: he was 51, had spent eight years in the penitentiary, and hadn't been able to land a steady job since he got out in 2002. "I've been out longer than I was in there," he said. "And I can't even get hired at Walmart."

As a young man, Shorty said, he had never imagined he'd be covered in dirt and sour sweat in 90-degree heat, lugging stolen metal down the streets of Cleveland for a few bucks. He told me he was originally from Arkansas and claimed to have a couple years of college down in Georgia, but had been kicked out for committing aggravated robbery—the cause of his first stint up the river.



As Shorty told me about his time in the pen, I thought about Jay. Even though Jay made bigger hauls than Shorty, their backstories were similar. Jay had been to the penitentiary six times in his life—mostly for drugs—and agreed to help me out at the behest of local law enforcement to avoid going back in again for a violent altercation he'd had with another scrapper over who would haul in a load. And, like a lot of the scrappers I met, Jay had a history of drug abuse; scrapping had initially helped him support his habit. However, now that he was relatively clean, one of Jay's biggest hustles was buying stolen scrap from addicts for bargain-basement rates at all hours of the night and then selling that scrap to legitimate yards in the morning at a profit.

Shorty was a talkative guy. As he pushed his cart along the street, he spun several yarns about the scrapping life. The most interesting—and one that I had no way of verifying—was about an undercover millionaire who earned his fortune stockpiling scrap from properties owned by Case Western Reserve and University Hospital—large institutions in Cleveland that sprawl across a tremendous amount of land and equipment in the city.

"This dude opened his house up," Shorty told me, "and nothing fell out but metal. He could make \$2,000 in an hour by selling that stuff." The story was the scrappers' version of a Horatio Alger tale—if you hit hard enough, anybody could get rich doing this.

While it's very hard to believe that individual scrappers are making millions off stolen metal, with Cleveland's average income at just \$27,470, and one in three people living below the poverty line, metal theft beats many of the other job opportunities—both legal and illegal—in the city. Considering that the supply is endless, the risks of getting caught are low, and the ability to distribute is as easy as walking down East 55th, it almost seems like a sensible career path for many.

"I wish I knew about this scrapping shit when I was 20," Shorty said as we arrived at New Western Reserve Recycling, a dreary little yard tucked around the corner. "By now, I would probably have my own legit company and be sitting back, married with 25 kids."

Shorty then performed a ritual I would witness dozens of times during my trip, as he fenced clearly stolen items at scrapyards with no questions asked: An attendant took Shorty's load and placed it on a wide cement floor scale, where he weighed it and took a photo. Then a clerk at one window printed out a ticket, which he could redeem for cash at another window. When Shorty claimed the money, they linked the load to a digital profile the yard keeps on file that includes his photo. This new feature is mandated by recent legislation designed to enable law enforcement to trace stolen scrap back to its seller—but according to Cleveland police officials from the Central neighborhood, like Vice Sergeant Heather Misch of the Third District, it's not helping.

TOP: Jay Jackson walks down a secret path to Wilkoff and Sons, one of Cleveland's largest scrapyards. They buy most of their metal from smaller operations, shred it up, and ship it across the US and overseas. Jay said he frequently steals metal from this yard and sells it to other yards.

BOTTOM: Towering piles of scrap at Wilkoff and Sons. The ladder on the right is used by scrappers to sneak in and steal metal.

Part of the problem is that it's nearly impossible to differentiate between scrap metal that isn't stolen—when a property owner lawfully dumps off some old sinks or wiring, for example—and scrap metal that was ripped out of a vacant or occupied building. There's also the fact that metal thefts often aren't reported, at least in the case of abandoned homes, because there's frequently no owner around to realize they've been robbed for quite some time. Criminal scrappers will also travel across city and state lines to unload hauls, or mask their metal by melting it down, banging it up, or bundling it with other scrap so that it's harder to trace.

But Shorty didn't have to do any of that at the local yard. He was able to get rid of his haul of siding and other metal bits, lifted less than a mile away, without hassle. When he received his cash, he flashed me the receipt clutched in his grubby palms and grinned. The result of five hours spent scrounging the streets? \$5.54.

In the past decade or so, scrapping has become a major phenomenon across the US. As with most clandestine and illegal activities, precise numbers are hard to quantify, but Gary Bush, a metal-theft expert at the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) in Washington, DC, believes the increase in scrapping in recent years has been significant. ISRI created a Scrap Alert system in 2008, which has made it easier for police departments and metal yards to alert each other of criminal scrapping activity. Some police departments' vice squads, usually tasked with investigating drug- and sex-related crimes, have also begun investigating metal thievery, and according to ISRI, metal-theft claims rose more than 500 percent between 2009 and 2012.

Meanwhile, the image of the dirty metal hustler has penetrated the cultural consciousness. AMC's new Detroit-based crime drama *Low Winter Sun* features several stories that take place at the nexus of scrapping and drug dealing, and Detroit rapper Danny Brown famously flipped Young Jeezy's drug-dealer anthem "Trap or Die" to explore the ins and outs of the metal-theft game with his track "Scrap or Die," reimagining scrapping as a form of class warfare against property owners: "This metal crowbar's gonna get us through the door," he spits. "We come to take everything, nigga, fuck the landlord."

It makes perfect sense that Detroit—America's most vivid and stereotypical symbol of postindustrial collapse—would serve as the setting for so much scrapper mythology. The scrapper is the perfect antihero of this landscape, creeping through the shadows and sifting through the wreckage of the American economy, trying to turn a profit from it any way he can. Many scrappers got into the game to replace some other form of lost work, and now, with 14 million vacant



TOP: A dumping area in one of Cleveland's many scrapyards, where scrappers can bang up household appliances and consumer items and extract their metals onsite.

MIDDLE: Councilman Anthony Brancatelli, of Cleveland's 12th Ward, outside an abandoned house in Slavic Village; its aluminum siding had already been completely scrapped, save for that on its stoop.

BOTTOM: Throughout Central, manhole covers have gone missing. In most cases, they've been swiped by thieves and scrapped for their copper.

homes across America, they are yet another reminder of the largely unresolved financial crisis and its lingering effects on American cities. What better figure to embody the resulting contradictions of this recession than these postindustrial termites. They are at once some of the most pernicious creations of the recession, literally scrapping the future of their cities, and also enterprising Americans—in the most classic of ways, as an attempt to pick up the pieces of a broken economy out of necessity and with true grit.

Although the setting for these types of “American hardship” stories in newspapers and magazines is often Detroit, Cleveland has a far more serious scrap problem than the Motor City. It’s true that Detroit is second to Cleveland in overall metal-theft claims nationwide, but it doesn’t even rank in the top ten when you break down these claims per capita. Cleveland has 73 claims per 100,000 residents, according to a study by the University of Indianapolis. The next closest city, Flint, Michigan, has 66 claims per capita; Cincinnati and Dayton, Ohio, also top the list. Cleveland remains number one, and scrapping here has even caught the attention of the FBI, who have recently been investigating and busting organized rings for transporting stolen metal across state lines and stealing from federally regulated electrical substations.

On a national level, most experts partially view the recent rise in scrapping, beginning around 2008, as a byproduct of skyrocketing prices for steel and copper, which was itself the result of increased demand for those metals worldwide. According to Joe Pickard, chief economist at the ISRI, scrap prices began to climb then and reached their peak in 2011, when copper was fetching as much as \$4 per pound. Most scrapyards owners, law-enforcement officials, and informed scrappers believe this rise in demand was the result of a building boom in China; however, Joe told me he believes it also has to do with US mining production falling behind projected outputs. Either way, about 30 percent of the scrap that is illegally lifted out of the homes and warehouses of the United States is likely to make its way overseas; some of it is then sold right back to US buyers in the form of cheap industrial and consumer goods. And although mining production in the US has ramped up in the past two years, and the Chinese building boom has cooled significantly, the criminals who learned how to scrap between 2008 and 2011 show no signs of being thwarted—instead they’ve adapted their skills to strip abandoned homes left over by the foreclosure crisis.

This is what has made Cleveland such ripe soil for the growth of scrappers. According to Councilman Anthony Brancatelli, who is leading an effort to fight scrapping in the city, the seemingly unlimited supply of scrap made available by the city’s uniquely beleaguered housing market is another key factor responsible for the boom. And Anthony would know: his ward contains Slavic Village, a Polish, black, and Hispanic neighborhood that was hit harder by foreclosures than any other zip code in the US and is still being ravaged by metal theft.

One morning, I met Anthony at a quaint Polish diner in the heart of Slavic Village. It took 15 minutes before he could get from the entrance of the diner to the booth where I was sitting because he had to shake hands and greet every person in the place with a dad joke that was just witty enough to impress, but not too funny to offend. He looked like a consummate statesman, and even on that scorching summer day he sported the politico wardrobe of an ill-fitting blazer and lapel pin.

Over some wheat toast and scrambled eggs, Anthony explained to me how you can trace the city’s housing troubles back to the late 90s, when people were “flipping” homes en masse: buying up properties, moderately investing in them, and then selling at inflated prices. Back then, rehabs of crummy houses were going for as much as \$100,000, overvalued properties that were the first wave of foreclosures to hit the city. Then, in the 2000s, the housing market became very competitive thanks to exotic financing mechanisms. Mortgages were handed out like candy and people were buying way above their price point with no ability to pay their debts.

It was at this time, around 2008, that scrapping prices started hitting record highs. The lure of these high prices have led to what amounts to organized criminal scrapping. Guys like Jay started working in teams and renting industrial construction equipment to make bigger hauls. Then scrappers were stripping neighborhoods that weren’t completely abandoned yet, and soon after that manhole covers started disappearing and even electrical substations became prime targets.

“It was so bad,” Anthony said, “that contractors were driving their vehicles into the scrapyards because they were getting more for their beat-up pickup truck than they than they would if they were working.”

The wreckage someone like Shorty Rock does for \$100 in scrap can cost tens of thousands of dollars to repair.

As the rest of the country pulls itself out of the housing crisis, Cleveland’s rate of mortgage delinquency and foreclosures remains at 9.5 percent. Anthony is adamant that the creative destruction of abandoned properties is the only solution to city’s housing issues. He serves on the board of directors of the Cuyahoga County Land Bank, which buys up blighted properties and either tears them down, or, in rare cases, rehabs and sells them to new owners. Anthony told me they’ve taken 500 properties offline in the past five years.

After breakfast, Anthony took me to my first “bando,” a blighted and vacant home in his ward, a few minutes from East 55th. The place looked like it had been ransacked by Huns. The front door was wide open, aluminum siding completely torn off, and every other imaginable piece of metal, even the hand railing on the stoop, had been stripped. Inside were jagged holes in the drywall where piping and electrical wire had been yanked out. Anthony has been providing simple solutions like working with the city to cut off the utilities on homes like this. Often, when scrappers remove the pipes, the structure is flooded with water that runs for days, and when they tear up the electrical wiring haphazardly, it can lead to fires.

“I can’t push demolition enough,” Anthony said to me as we stepped out of the foul atmosphere of the derelict house, back into the summer sun. “The more abandoned properties you have, the more abandoned properties you’re going to get. Which is why we’ve got to take them off the market.”

Anthony’s thinking is that empty lots are better than blighted buildings, because the damage caused by scrappers dismantling them from the inside out makes them just that more unsellable—the wreckage someone like Shorty Rock does for \$100 in scrap can cost tens of thousands of dollars to repair.

After we left the bando and drove around Slavic Village, I saw community gardens on every block and two or three house-size gaps between homes on any given street. On one block, there was a huge velodrome for bicycle races, which was built on property acquired through foreclosures. Based on the 20 years I spent growing up in Cleveland, I had a hard time believing anyone older than 13 in Slavic Village owned a bicycle, let alone knew what the hell a velodrome was, but it's clear that residents and legislatures of Slavic Village are getting so much land through this acquisition process, they don't quite know what to do with it.

If Anthony and locals favor demolition, though, to people like Shorty and Jay—unemployed and without many legal job prospects—demolition represents a wasted economic opportunity. As I left Slavic Village, I thought of something Shorty had told me. “You’ve got thousands of condemned homes in Cleveland,” he’d said. “What do they do with all the stuff in those buildings? They send it to a landfill. Why wouldn’t you let someone who is unemployed go into a building and get what they can get? It’s going to be demolished anyway.”

The same economic forces that created the housing crises also helped create the scrappers who survive on its wreckage.

Maybe that is the paradox of scrapping: the same economic forces that created the housing crises also helped create the scrappers who survive on its wreckage. And so, while city leaders like Anthony might see scrappers as their enemies—leeches on the city’s meager resources—both parties are part of the same destroyed economy and neither will likely stop harassing the other until the city finds some larger economic salve for its wounds. They’re all on this sinking ship together.

Demolition does have one upside—the opportunity to build something new and exciting in the place of what’s been torn down. The Slavic Village neighborhood is, unfortunately, an anomaly on the east side of Cleveland, with its velodrome and community gardens. Unlike the west side of town, with its hip, unconventional workspaces for artists in old factories, the east side is looking more and more like one of those ghost towns you see in old westerns. It’s not hard to imagine tumbleweeds blowing down the middle of some streets in Central—before falling into an uncovered manhole.

While the scrappers of the city make a decent living stealing metal, the best gig in the game is to run a yard: they’re the pawnbrokers who never have to get their hands too dirty, and rarely face related charges. Curious about the ethics (or lack thereof) when it comes to receiving stolen goods, I asked scrappers and others the best place to sell hauls, and one owner’s name in particular was on the lips of everyone: Henrietta Kolger, also known as Cookie.

Jay and Anthony both alleged, on record, that Henrietta and her yard, Tyroler Scrap, is a place that would buy any piece of metal, no matter how bent, ripped, or pried off it appeared to be. Vice Sergeant Misch had it on her short list of sketchy yards to watch. And even a victim of scrapping I interviewed had actually recovered his stolen property at Tyroler.

I had been trying to lock down an interview with Cookie for weeks, but whenever I called, her staff gave me the run-around: “You’ve got to call before 3 PM, she’s never here in the late afternoon.” “Whoa, she doesn’t get in until like 2:30 PM. You’re gonna have to call back tomorrow.” “Damn, you just missed her. She went to the bank to make a deposit...”

Cookie and her associates were right to be wary. Heat was starting to come down on Cleveland scrapyards. Local journalists and the cops had been poking around lately, and the last thing she wanted was to get caught up in some mess. Eventually, after visiting Tyroler in person two days in a row and explaining to her that I only wanted to offer her side of the story, since everyone was talking about her anyway, she did concede to a sit-down to speak her piece.

Cookie’s yard is not like most of the other ones on East 55th, many of which have sprung up in recent years alongside the rise in scrap prices. Tyroler is a small mom-and-pop operation that has been independently owned since 1935. Cookie’s late husband, Robert Becker, took ownership of the yard in March of 1988. A master welder who lived to work with metal, Robert spent every nickel he had to buy it.

Two months after Robert purchased his dream business, he had a massive heart attack at 45 years old. Before his death, Cookie had worked as the manager of a hotel, but in honor of Robert, she decided to pick up the pieces and keep Tyroler up and running. The business now employs her oldest daughter, her youngest son, and her second husband.

Tyroler is set up like most small yards, with a truck scale outside for the big loads and an oversize light-blue garage that contains a payout booth and a smaller scale for the kind of stuff brought in by cart-toting small-timers. The pay booth is where Cookie spends most of her days, cracking open the cash register and sliding greenbacks through a shelf to scrappers.

After so much hype, it was a bit disarming to meet the “top mama” of Cleveland scrap metals. I imagined she was going to be a hard-edged, fast-talking, stone-cold hustler. But when I stepped into the wood-paneled pay booth, which buzzed with the sound of air-conditioning and smelled of Mexican takeout, I met someone else. Cookie is a frail, withered woman with a quivering voice and varicose veins you could see through her cool, translucent skin. She wore comfortable shoes, and had a lumbering step that would make it tough for her to just walk across the yard. And she sported the puffed-up short haircut Midwestern white women get once they start receiving copies of *AARP the Magazine* in the mail.

Right away it was clear Cookie had an idea of her true value within the community—that she believed herself to be a good person. “I treat these people really nice,” she told me when I asked about her reputation among her clients. “I’m not prejudiced. I never look at somebody and think they’re beneath me... I’ve been here so long, most of my customers call me ‘Mom.’ When they pull into the yard, they yell, ‘Hey Mom! How are you doing? How are you feeling?’”

She lamented the days when the poor blacks kids of the neighborhood, barefoot and dirty, used to be able to collect aluminum cans for money to buy ice cream in the summertime. The increased regulation of the industry in the past few years means that these days you have to be 18 or older to sell scrap at a yard, even empty soda cans.

When I began telling her what I had learned about Cleveland’s scrap trade, Cookie’s face turned up at the thought of scavengers ripping siding off of people’s homes, and yards selling that



metal to countries like China. She told me about how she had pushed local politicians at City Hall to institute scrapping permits—but her voice was drowned out.

Like all yards in Cleveland, Tyroler matches all sales with state IDs, a practice that hasn't curbed theft. When I asked Cookie why some of those same customers had fingered her yard as the place where they sell all of their stolen wares, she looked hurt.

"When people get caught, they'll just say stuff to try to keep themselves out of a lot of trouble," she said. "But you know, Richard will tell you, he runs my outside yard. Richard, do I take manhole covers?"

Richard, her second husband, chimed in behind me, his mouth half full with some funky slop: "The only way we take them is if a contractor has given an authorized letter."

I told Cookie that one of my sources had accused her of buying stolen manhole covers.

"I've heard when the scrapyards are closed there are people who will buy that scrap," she said. "They pay a lesser price for it. Chris and I are the only two who do the scale in this place."

Then she encouraged her daughter to chime in, too, shouting, "Chris, if I brought you a truck that had manhole covers, what would you tell me?"

Chris popped her head into the booth where we were sitting, and spoke methodically. "We wouldn't buy it," she said. "Nobody here would take them. We're not allowed to buy that."

I'd come to Tyroler with the name of a manhole scrapper, who was turned in only a few months prior. When I asked Cookie to check her ledger, her hands started to shake and her voice fluttered. Unlike the newer yards—which use a computer program to match images, scrap hauls, and ID profiles—Tyroler still used a paper binder for its records.

"Tell me how you spell his last name, and I'll look it up," Cookie said.

"J-E-F-F-E-R-Y S-H-U-G-A-R-T," I replied.

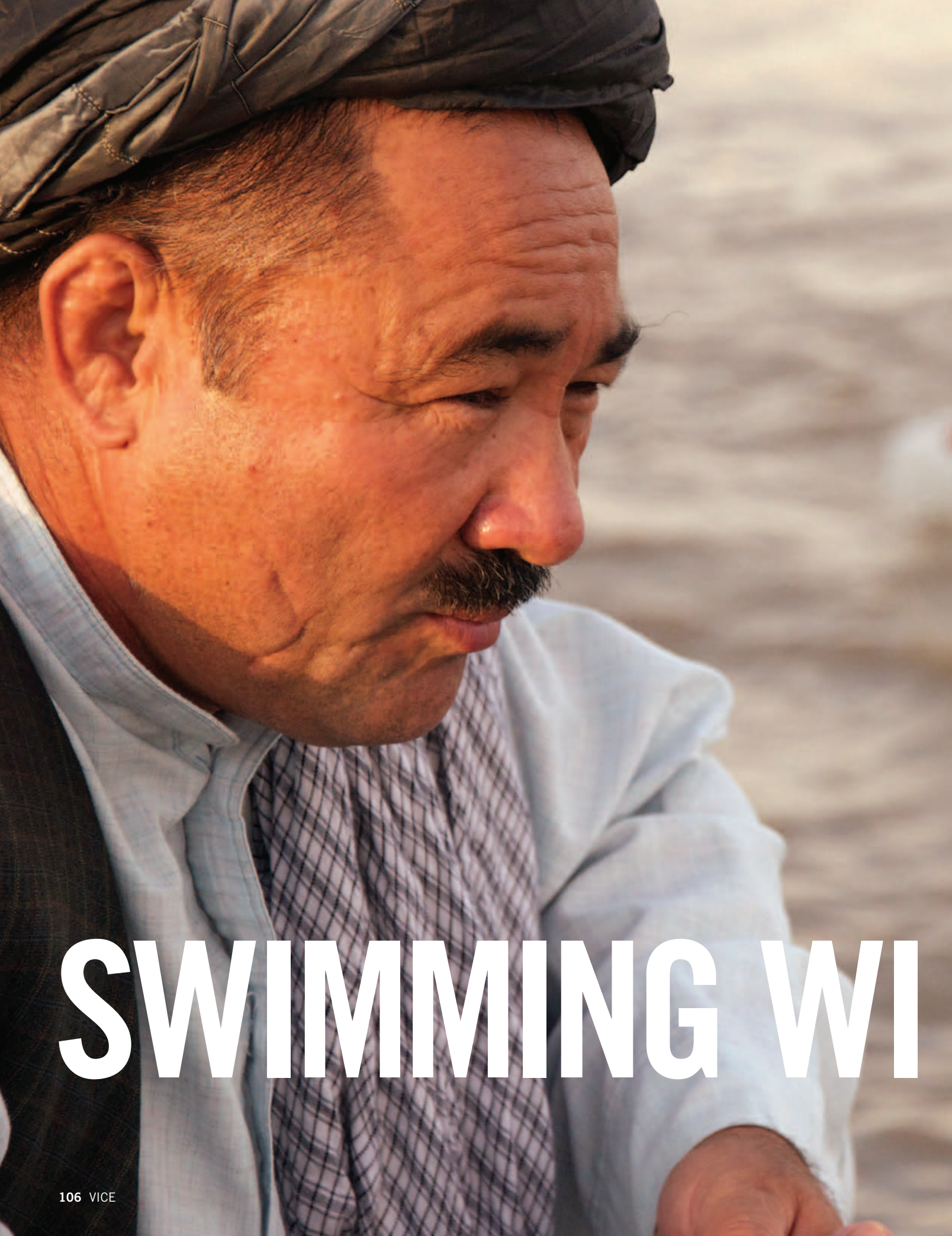
She flipped through until she finally got to S, and we scanned down rows of what looked like mug shots. *Shugart* was nowhere to be found. It all seemed about right. Neither of us had much of anything else to say other than goodbye.

Leaving the yard, I ran into a scrapper who was stripping reams of copper wire with a blade. I asked if I could speak with him or let my photographer take his picture, but he balked back.

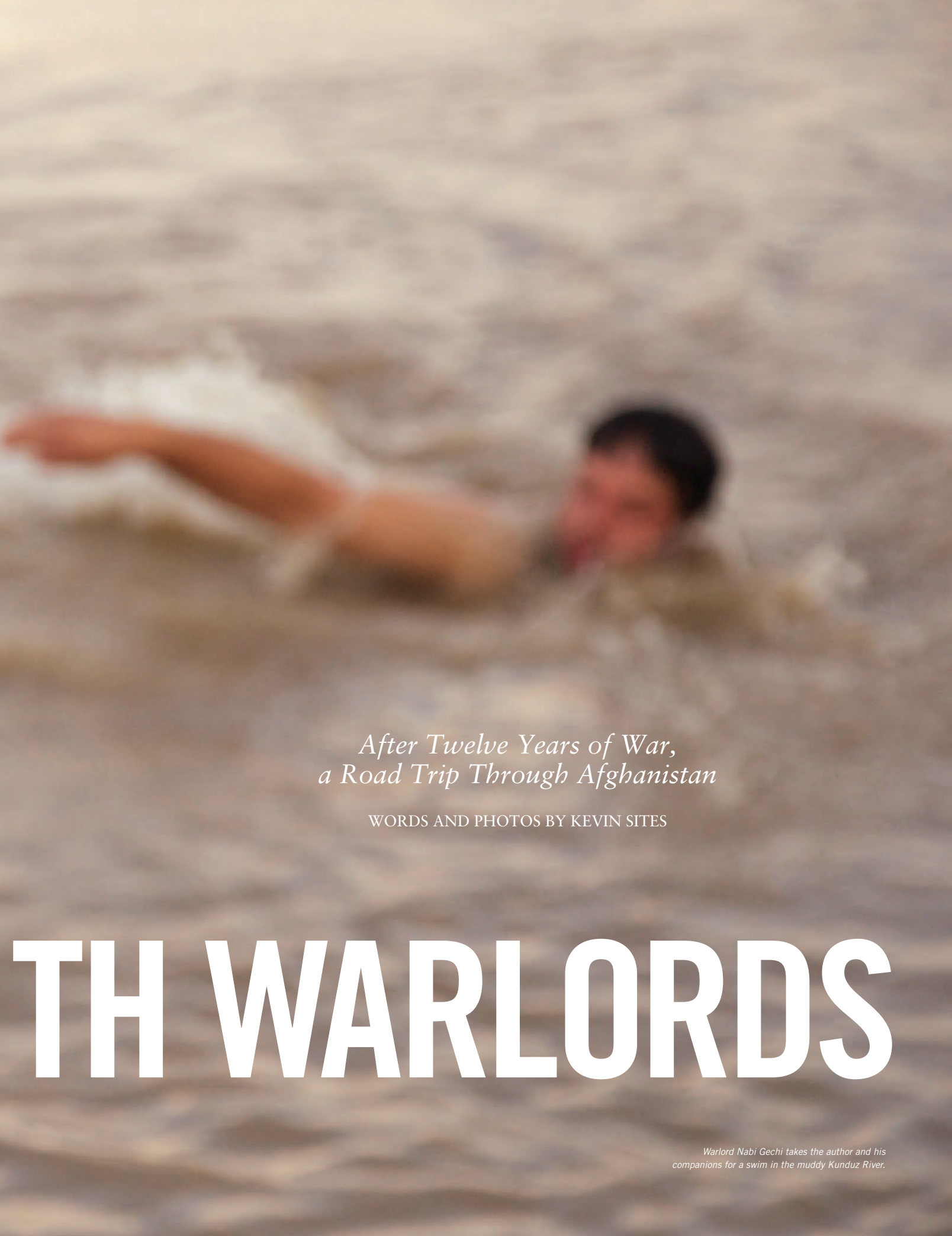
"I ain't saying nothing," he said. *WES*

Due to the criminal nature of metal theft, some names in this piece have been changed to protect their identities.

*Henrietta
"Cookie"
Kolger, the
owner of
Tyroler Scrap,
paying out
money to
a scrapper
for assorted
metals.*



SWIMMING WI

A photograph of a man swimming in a river. The water is very muddy and brown. The man is in the middle of a stroke, with one arm extended forward. The background is a blur of the same muddy water.

*After Twelve Years of War,
a Road Trip Through Afghanistan*

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY KEVIN SITES

TH WARLORDS

*Warlord Nabi Gechi takes the author and his
companions for a swim in the muddy Kunduz River.*

Under the cover of a moonless night in mid-October 2001, I found myself loading thousands of pounds of camera equipment and supplies onto a giant pontoon boat on the northern bank of the Amu Darya River. The pontoons were normally used to carry weapons to the northern Alliance troops fighting the Taliban on the other side of the water. With all the gear and colleagues, there didn't seem to be any room left on that raft for allegory, but I remembered feeling like one of the damned souls of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, about to be ferried across the River Acheron to hell. The American air strikes had begun, and I was headed into Afghanistan.

I was dispatched by NBC News only one week after Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda terror network attacked the US, crashing planes into the Pentagon and the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. I arrived in Afghanistan in October to bear witness to America's righteous anger and retribution. It was swift and unrelenting.

In my first month on the ground, I watched as the US obliterated al Qaeda's bases and, with the help of its Northern Alliance allies—a mix of mostly ethnic Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara Afghans—toppled the Taliban government that had hosted them. But the war, as we well know, did not end there.

I returned to Afghanistan in June for my fifth visit, on the eve of America's 2014 planned withdrawal, to attempt to understand what had happened to the country in the 12 years since I first set foot there and what might happen this time, after I left.

I reentered in exactly the same place I had crossed on my first visit: the Amu Darya River from southern Tajikistan into northern Afghanistan. The once busy Kokol-Ai Khanoum border crossing that allowed weapons, spooks, US Special Forces, and journalists like me was now a dusty shadow of its former self—a remote, dilapidated outpost that has been overshadowed by real bridges constructed or refurbished by the Americans and located near larger and busier population centers to help with the flow of commercial goods and war materials moving into and out of Afghanistan.

At the crossing, I found the same pontoons moored to the banks, left unused because so little cargo travels back and forth here these days. I stepped into an ancient, rusted motorboat,

one weld away from sinking, and made the three-minute crossing a second time, uncertain, just as I had been in 2001, what or whom I would find on the other side.

On that first trip to Afghanistan, I felt like the very personification of the intrepid foreign correspondent: riding on horseback with my colleagues to a series of World War I-type trenches where we watched Northern Alliance fighters talk to their Taliban counterparts on handheld radios, teasing and cracking jokes in between killing each other.

In late June 2013, a dozen years later, my hair and beard were graying, some of those colleagues had been killed, the horses were gone, the trenches were empty, and I rode shotgun in a blue Toyota Corolla with the word *BAHMANI*—Persian for “avalanche”—emblazoned in red and white on the hood and both sides. I had asked my Afghan colleague and interpreter, Matin Sarfraz, to find us a car that might fly under the radar and not draw the attention of the locals or anyone else who might be curious as to why we were zooming around Afghanistan. The result was the *bahmani*-mobile, owned and driven by Matin's cousin Dost Mohammad.

I had heard from my contacts that warlords, independent of the government, were exerting their influence. So I asked Matin to take me to meet one named Nabi Gechi who resides in a district outside Kunduz province in northern Afghanistan.

Nabi Gechi's men looked like pirates to me. Not skinny Somali pirates, but the kind you'd find illustrated in a Howard Pyle book or on a ship in the middle of the 17th century, wrapped in dark turbans, cold steel, and hard looks.

Their faces were a microcosm of Afghan society—Turkman, Hazara, Uzbek, Tajik. They were men who've fought with Nabi for years, even some who had previously fought against him at one time or another. But they were all men who earned their living in blood. To lead killers like this you must be the best killer of them all, and they must believe that you are difficult, if not impossible, to kill. If they didn't, at least one among them would have tried to claim the price on his head.

“There's a \$500,000 reward to kill Nabi,” said Mullah Jilani, a former Taliban soldier turned militia lieutenant. “The Taliban are very afraid of him.”

Two years ago, when Jilani was with the Taliban, he also wanted to kill Nabi. In fact, shortly after Nabi was hired by the village elders to provide security for his home district of Qali Zal in the Kunduz province, Jilani says he set out alongside more than 200 of his Taliban comrades to assassinate him on his own turf.

Instead, Nabi routed them. According to Jilani, Nabi executed a flanking maneuver straight out of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. Eventually he corralled most of his Taliban pursuers into the local market area. Then, using his weapon of choice—a Russian-made 40mm rifle-mounted grenade launcher—he killed the platoon's commander.

Hiding in plain sight, the blue Toyota Corolla “bahmani-mobile” the author used to travel around Afghanistan.



“After that,” said Jilani, “we called off the attack and left the village.”

When Nabi later skirted a second assassination attempt by the Taliban, Jilani arranged a meeting with the feared warlord.

“I told him, ‘I don’t want to fight you anymore—there’s no benefit for either of us,’” Jilani said. Shortly after, he switched sides and began fighting under Nabi’s command against the Taliban.

Since then, Nabi’s reputation as the fiercest Taliban killer in the north has grown to almost legendary proportions. In early July, he directed an attack against a house filled with Taliban. After his men surrounded it, Nabi, again using his beloved grenade launcher, personally unleashed a hell storm that was extreme, even for war-torn Afghanistan.

Nabi fired not just a dozen, 50, or even 75 of his high-powered explosive grenades at the structure. (They’re meant to be lobbed in a long arc at targets hundreds of meters away.) Haji Mohammed, Nabi’s son-in-law and bodyguard, said he watched as the commander fired 123 grenades as if they were rifle bullets—straight at his target.

I came to the Qali Zal district to meet its most feared and revered warlord—who until recently had been on the payroll of the US military. Nabi made his name not with talk, but by becoming one of the top players in Afghanistan’s number-one national commodity: warcraft.

So it was surprising when, in 2009, Nabi gave up the fight to start a successful fish and kebab restaurant in Mazar-e-Sharif. But two years later, the local elders asked him to return to Qali Zal, which had once again become overrun with Taliban, and provide security. The city was also steeped in a massive drug

problem. Half of the province’s 30,000 drug addicts come from Qali Zal, an afflicted group of hashish and opium users that includes many children.

Nabi recruited and reconstituted his loyal followers into a standing militia of 300 men, set up 18 command checkpoints, and shut down Taliban operations in the district.

Malika Gharebyr, the head of women’s affairs for the district, told me that the Taliban harassed her every time she left her house. “Nabi brought security here,” she said when I visited her at her home, the day after I’d left Nabi’s compound. “It’s much better now.”

Also asked to help clear up Qali Zal’s drug problems, Nabi helped provide protection that allowed the government to move in and destroy poppy fields in the area.

“Without Nabi, we wouldn’t have been able to eradicate the fields,” said Abdul Bashir Morshid, the head of the Department of Counternarcotics in Kunduz. According to NATO’s Regional Command North, the American military was initially so supportive of Nabi’s efforts that they sent in Special Forces soldiers to train, arm, and pay his men as part of a controversial program known as the Critical Infrastructure Police (CIP). His men composed one of the dozens of irregular units mostly set up in northern Afghanistan. It was the perpetuation of an American counterinsurgency tactic used in Iraq: find a way to badge certain types of militiamen (preferably the nonideological kind), arm them, pay them, train them, and hope that the next time, they’ll be shooting in the opposite direction. This plan seemed to work with cases like the Sons of Iraq program in Anbar province, as long as the money continued to flow.

*Nabi’s
militiamen
awaiting
orders.*



In Afghanistan, the CIP were given yellow armbands, but no uniforms, and were co-opted, at least part-time, to fight the Taliban. But many of these CIP units, taking advantage of their new positions' guns and badges, began to moonlight in ways that undermined their mission: shaking down the local communities, extorting them for food, fuel, and whatever else they wanted. Before long these sort of allegations were directed at Nabi's militia—who were accused of “taxing” the locals for security by taking payments in bags of wheat and chicken to eat or sell on the market, even though each militia member was being paid about \$200 a month from a NATO discretionary fund.

The CIP program was created by the Americans with the help of NATO—reportedly without the knowledge or consent of President Hamid Karzai, who ordered it dismantled over a year ago, citing fears that irregular forces with no official or financial connection to the national government might one day pose a threat to it.

Eventually, the American money dried up, along with the CIP program—but Nabi's militia did not. Largely operating off a security tax made up of foodstuffs regularly delivered to his compound and checkpoints in the district, the militia has been able to stay in business.

While he's been a proven asset in the fight against the Taliban, Nabi has evolved into what President Karzai had feared most: a battle-tested, off-the-books warlord with no formal allegiance to the Afghan government—a wildcard who can operate independently and without oversight. Against the government's wishes, in an attempt to solve one problem covertly, the US military had inadvertently reinforced the most popular

of Afghan franchises: *warlordism*, a largely hopeless prospect in which he with the most guns wins.

Qali Zal's elders, who showed up by the dozens to meet with me at Nabi's compound on my arrival, said that they need the protection of Nabi and his men. They told me that President Karzai should endorse the militia as a full-time, government-backed local police force, or send in another of their own. Until then, they said, the community had no other option but to accept the security Nabi's militia provided, even if they had to pay for it; they admitted, however, that not everyone in the community was happy with the taxes.

“The people asked me to come here and provide security,” Nabi said to me. “I'm happy to serve them, and if I've done anything wrong, I should be in a court and let them speak out against me for my crimes.”

After my meeting with the elders, Nabi took me on a tour of a few of his strongholds—high-walled compounds with watchtowers where his men were on constant lookout for approaching Taliban. While we were meeting with the village elders, Nabi acted the silent, humble servant, letting others talk on his behalf. When he did speak, his voice was so soft you had to lean in to hear him. And while his face betrayed nothing of the sort, I still sensed—or maybe projected onto him—a quiet malevolence lurking below the surface, which he could summon at any moment.

This is in part because I had heard so many stories of his ferociousness in combat, but later I felt this tension again at the broad, muddy Kunduz River, where he took us for a swim at dusk. There, like kids on summer break, Nabi and I plunged

The author in a tricky situation with Nabi, a northern Afghanistan warlord who wanted to wrestle.
Photograph by
Matin Sarfraz



into the coffee-brown water. The current was so strong that we had to swim with the full force of our bodies to avoid being swept miles downstream.

As we climbed out onto the riverbank, Nabi slapped down hard on my shoulder and threw his leg in front of mine, as if he was about to toss me onto the ground. I was taken aback by his aggressiveness and wondered if I had done something to piss him off, or if he was just having some fun.

I looked over at Nabi's men. They were laughing uproariously. I'm not a bad wrestler, but I couldn't see any clear way out of his grasp. If I had made any real effort that resulted in his even accidentally losing face in front of his men, there would be a problem, especially since I was planning to stay at Nabi's compound that evening. On the other hand, if he legitimately took me down, or I let him, he'd likely lose some respect for me, and I still had a lot of questions I wanted to ask him that might be harder to ask depending on the outcome of our impromptu match. My gut quickly led me to choose an Afghan standoff.

For a while I held him at a distance, smiled, and tried to maintain equilibrium, doing my best to avoid provoking him any further. After a few minutes of this, he grew bored with me and broke away from the grapple. I took a deep breath, relieved.

Back at his compound that evening, Nabi was a gracious host, serving us appetizers of fresh watermelon, nuts, raisins, and tea, and then feting us with a big dinner of *pilau* (an Afghan meat-and-rice dish), heavy flat bread, yogurt, and Mountain Dew. Matin, Dost, and I were his only guests besides his two lieutenants, and Nabi chatted candidly with us in between taking phone calls, which came one after another for hours.

A little later, Nabi's tea boy connected a camcorder to a television in the room. He hit play and we watched footage of the aftermath of his crew's most recent victory over the Taliban. Their bodies were blackened, peppered with shrapnel and stiff with rigor mortis. There were close-ups of the entry and exit points of their wounds, as well as body parts detached from their former owners by one of Nabi's grenades.

Toward the end of the video, they were piled into the back of a pickup like cordwood and presented as a gift to the Afghan National Police at their headquarters in Kabul. Nabi's men also recorded the resulting press conference, at which the police chief declared Nabi a hero. I looked over to see Nabi's reaction to his celebrated accomplishments, but he was already asleep and snoring, sprawled out on the floor like a bearskin rug.

The next morning, we woke at dawn, but Nabi said he wanted to show us something before we left the compound. He guided us down a stairway that led to a dark enclosure under his house.

The cramped space was filled with the sound of rushing water, whirling motors, and spinning gears. Attached to a wall outside the compound, revolving in the current of a man-made waterway diverted from the Kunduz River, was a large paddlewheel. Nabi said he had constructed this small hydroelectric plant to generate a continuous power supply for himself and many of the nearby shops and businesses. This infamous and unflappable killer with a grenade launcher had made something mechanically beautiful, endlessly practical, and potentially very profitable. He said that if he were able to do this at a bigger scale and get permission from the government to divert more water from the river, he could potentially generate enough power for the entire district.

Nabi was indeed a spectacular instrument of war, but also, I realized, effective at creating instruments of peace if the opportunity arose. It made me wonder what he might be capable of creating if he could hang up his grenade launcher and devote all of his energy to projects like the one in his basement. But

But the truth is, I think that Nabi will be dead within a year or so. While hard to kill, he is also a very tempting target.

the truth is, I think that Nabi will be dead within a year or so. While hard to kill, he is also a very tempting target. Warlords have a short shelf life in Afghanistan.

Matin told me that he had heard from friends that trouble was building in Taloqan, a region not far from Nabi's compound. So we piled into the bahmani-mobile and headed west, driving along the Amu Darya River until we reached the entrance to the city.

We soon arrived in downtown Taloqan, which at the moment looked like an Afghan version of Occupy Wall Street. Cops were everywhere. Four hundred of them, at least. Some were decked out in riot gear, and there was even a cherry-red fire truck with a water cannon for crowd control. The truck was a gift from the German contingent of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which had helped train the local police forces. Streets were blocked off with Humvees, parked at strategic corners and carting machine-gun mounts. Even more cops were guarding the perimeter of the city in the official vehicles of the Afghan National Police—green, super cab Ford pickup trucks, also “gifts” from ISAF.

The situation was that ethnic Uzbeks had been staging a peaceful protest here for over a week, angry at what they believe is a lack of Uzbeks in both the provincial and national governments. Things came to a head when the Takhar province police chief, an Uzbek, was fired by Afghanistan's minister of interior and replaced with one of the minister's cronies, a Tajik from Logar province, Colonel Abdul Hanan Qataghani.

We were seated in Colonel Qataghani's office when one of his officers brought in four men handcuffed to one another. The officer said that the Uzbeks were trying to smuggle AK-47 rifles into the protest site. The colonel nodded and the men were taken away. I asked how his men had discovered the guns.

Once allies against the Taliban, ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks fight each other on the streets of Taloqan in June.



"We use spies inside the protest to keep us aware of what's going on," he told me. "It's their right to protest, but we've mobilized our forces, and we'll be waiting for orders from the interior ministry for any further action."

A good sign, I thought, that the government was tolerating the concept of peaceful protests, while simultaneously policing its edges for sparks of violence. It was a blatantly Western tactic and made me think that maybe the \$7 billion the US had spent in training the ANP was finally beginning to pay off.

It was clear that the ANP in the northern provinces were about to face the first real-life test of their training with a challenge that was far more mundane than a showdown with the Taliban. The stakes, however, were just as high: if they were unable to secure a contained area filled with lawful protesters, the population would continue to lose confidence in the ANP, something the Taliban could capitalize on even more, following the withdrawal of international forces.

Considering its history and reputation, however, the ANP's success was far from certain. Many experts see them as one of the most crooked institutions in Afghanistan. And since they are also the de facto "face" of the national government for most Afghans, it's an unfortunate reality that 53 percent of them regard the police as corrupt, according to a survey from 2011.

Out of the ANP's roughly 157,000 personnel, most are illiterate—less than 10 percent can read or write—and an estimated four out of ten police recruits test positive for drugs. With only six weeks allotted for the training of new recruits, some critics claim that their position of authority simply makes them more efficient at extorting those who they are supposed to be protecting. But it's easier to understand their participation in these sort of extracurricular activities when you consider that theirs is one of the most dangerous jobs in the country. In late July, Afghanistan's interior minister announced that a whopping 2,700 Afghan policemen had been killed in the preceding four months. Not to mention that, according to a report by the United States Institute of Peace, Afghan police officers are killed at three times the rate of ANA soldiers.

Still, Colonel Qataghani was steadfast in his claims that things were under control. "This is a completely Afghan operation," he told me. "We can take security into our own hands."

After we left the colonel's office, we walked down the street to meet with Haji Jamshed, one of the leaders of the Uzbek protest who also serves as a member on Takhar's provincial council.

"We will try our best not to be violent," he said. "But if the government is violent against us we will respond... With stones and sticks, not with bullets."

I spoke to him inside a small, glass building located on the central downtown traffic circle that police use to monitor motorists. At this point, the Uzbeks had been occupying the building for a week, utilizing it as a headquarters for organizing the protests.

I asked Haji Jamshed whether, as a member of the provincial council, he was concerned about the police's ability to maintain order. If they failed, would this confirm the international community's worst fears about Afghanistan's ability to handle its own security or, even worse, embolden the Taliban to exploit the situation?

"That's not up to us to decide," he said. "We simply want our rights." Our conversation was interrupted by his cell phone's ringtone. He answered, listening intently to the caller before hanging up and relaying the information to me: "It seems the government is organizing a counterprotest."

"How do you know that?" I asked.

"We have our informers inside," he said, smiling.

While Afghanistan's ethnic Uzbeks and Tajiks have historically been distrustful of each other, there have been times when they have been forced to put aside their differences and align to fight greater enemies. The first instance was during the Soviet invasion in the 80s, and in more recent times they have banded together against the Taliban. But while they share the common goal of ousting extremists from their country, 12-plus years of constant battle have also deepened longstanding rifts between the two factions. To provide a balanced ethnic representation in the government, the country even has two vice presidents, one of each ethnicity.

A few hours later, I saw this rift turn violent in downtown Taloqan. Five hundred men lined the street, taunting each other. The Tajiks stood on one side, with the majority of the police forces standing behind them in what appeared to be a display of support. Standing about 100 feet away on the other side were the Uzbeks. A member of each group carried a large Afghan flag, but the Tajiks also hoisted a photograph of Marshal Fahim, the most prominent Tajik in the national government and Afghanistan's more powerful "first" vice president.

At first only insults were hurled, but the atmosphere soon bristled with menace as young men gathered stones. One side was shouting things like "Kill all the Uzbeks," and the other responded with declarations such as "This area is for Uzbeks, not Tajiks." Soon the first rock was thrown—I didn't see by whom—and both sides unleashed volleys of stones and debris.

As I waded in to shoot video and photographs, Matin told me to be careful. He had heard some men behind me say, "Look, there's a foreigner, hit him with some stones, and they'll think it's coming from the other side." Fortunately, no one acted on the suggestion.

It wasn't long before members of the crowd removed their head scarves and fashioned them into homemade slingshots. A violent rhythm ensued, with the Tajiks advancing with their flag as if they were storming the Bastille. They were momentarily repelled as the Uzbeks charged ahead in the same fashion, stopping just short of crossing the invisible but innately understood dividing line. The battle finally got started when the Uzbeks grabbed hold of a Tajik man and beat him. The Tajiks responded by pelting the second story of a nearby house where a small group of Uzbeks watched the fight.

Uzbeks in Taloqan protest for more representation in the provincial and national governments.



Instead of using their new fire truck's water cannon or other tactically sound methods to disperse the increasingly agitated crowd, most of the police watched the brawl from behind the Tajik line and did nothing to stop its escalation. Between lulls in the fighting, a dozen officers would approach the mob and impotently attempt to separate the groups by chiding them as if they were dealing with a couple of schoolkids fighting on the playground.

I watched the debacle unfold for several hours until the sun began to set and it seemed that things were winding down, so I left. But a few hours later I learned that I was wrong: shortly after my departure, the protestors had taken their guns out and started shooting each other. By the time the mob had dispersed, three people were left dead in the street and 52 others had been wounded. What began as a peaceful protest escalated into a deadly gun battle the police had failed to contain.

Even more depressing, the incident served as yet another example of how the billions invested in staffing, tactical training, and nonlethal weaponry for the ANP all seemed like a complete waste. As I contemplated this failure, I wondered if the situation was even more convoluted than it appeared: Had the phone call that the Uzbek leader Haji Jamshed received when I arrived downtown pointed to something sinister? He mentioned that the government was organizing a counterprotest. It made me wonder if the ANP had forgotten their training on purpose, or perhaps they were even responsible for instigating the violence.

The police denied the allegations of complicity, but their inaction, especially when things turned violent, could itself be considered criminal. It raised a key question the international

What began as a peaceful protest escalated into a deadly gun battle the police had failed to contain.

community has been trying to answer for years: Would Afghan security forces be capable of doing the job on their own when there weren't any more American or other NATO troops around to provide support? If the results of this Uzbek-versus-Tajik confrontation were any indication, the answer, at least in Takhar province, is clearly no.

A week after crossing the border into northern Afghanistan, we headed to the country's capital, Kabul. While the journey is less than 200 miles, it took me five days in 2001, which included time spent getting lost in a minefield and dealing with one of our trucks flipping over on the icy descent to the other end of the Salang Tunnel. Improved roads and security have today shortened the route to about five or six hours, but trouble with the bahmani-mobile doubled the time for us. We didn't arrive until after midnight.

In Kabul, Matin and Dost handed me off to one of my oldest and best Afghan friends, a relentlessly intelligent man named Haroon Khadim, who worked with me as an interpreter in 2001 and on nearly all of my trips to the region since. After we spent some time catching up, I told him I wanted to see Kabul's most notorious drug den, the area underneath the Pul-i-Sokhta Bridge.

Drug addicts gather by the hundreds under the Pul-i-sokhta Bridge in west Kabul to shoot up, smoke, buy, and sell.



On the morning of our visit, hundreds of drug addicts had gathered in the perpetual darkness and filth to shoot, smoke, buy, sell, or nod off after using heroin.

In one spot, we saw a group of men, syringes in hand, shooting each other up—the junkie version of a circle jerk. Nearby there was a young guy wrapped in a head scarf, lying on the bank, legs crossed, hands in pockets, and enveloped in a narco-doze that would appear almost peaceful if it weren't for the river of shit, piss, and toxic sludge that flowed next to him.

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium, the material from which heroin is made. A lesser-known fact, however, is that Afghans have now become leading consumers of their own product, with an estimated 1 million addicts—about 8 percent of the total population, according to a United Nations survey.

I climbed down a dirt path next to the bridge and cautiously stepped around its hellish perimeter, concerned that every foot-fall could push the tip of a dirty syringe through my boot.

I stopped when I found a good place to take a few photographs, and while I was shooting one of the addicts made a run at me, shouting, "What is he doing here? Why is he taking pictures?"

Haroon tried to intercept him, but the man followed me as I scaled back up the bank. As I reached the top, he grabbed my arm and reached for the camera. I yanked the camera back, pushed him away, and raised my fist with the threat that I would pop him one if he persisted.

Just then another man, a 23-year-old named Hasibullah, patted the guy on the shoulder, telling him to calm down and explaining that we were "guests" here.

"If they're guests, why does he have his hands raised like that?" the man asked, confused.

Hasibullah responded by sending him back down under the bridge and then walked us to the street. I still wanted to speak with some of the addicts, so Haroon invited Hasibullah to sit inside our car and chat. He told us about the realities of life under the bridge, while adamantly denying that he was a drug addict himself.

"It's hell down here. We sleep in the dirt and shit," he said. "Everyone is always fighting, but once they inject, they just fall

asleep, fall down, and forget where they are. When someone dies, the government comes and gets the body and they hold it for the family to pick it up. There are doctor's assistants down there, university graduates, soldiers. They have family issues, lost people in the war, economic problems, or [had] too much money, started having fun, and now can't stop."

As I talked to Hasibullah, a guy wearing a dirty red leather motorcycle jacket over a stained traditional shalwar kameez lumbered over to the driver's-side window. He introduced himself as Shir Shaw and said he also wanted to talk about life under the bridge, but his stench was so awful that we decided against letting him into the car and spoke to him through the open window instead.

Even though he was only in his 20s, his face was already forged in the permanent weariness of an endless drug hustle, with bloodshot eyes and pupils that looked like pinpricks. He said he'd been using heroin, first mixing it with hashish during his time serving in the Afghan Army. He stole, begged, or made a few dollars a day helping to fill seats in taxis, exhausting his bounty on a few ampules of heroin. He spent his days shooting up, his nights scrounging for money.

This kind of product demanded by users like Shir Shaw has ensured that the people who cultivate and sell the drug won't be going anywhere any time soon. Poppies can thrive in even the poorest of soil, and Afghan farmers can make up to \$10,000 a year per hectare of raw opium, which is a sharp contrast to the \$120 earned per hectare of wheat. Nearly 900 tons of opium and 375 tons of heroin are exported from Afghanistan every year, according to the UNODC Opium Survey.

Despite the \$541 million the US Agency for International Development (USAID) spent from 2009 to 2012 to help Afghan farmers develop financially viable alternatives to growing poppies, the windfalls of the crop might be harder to kick than the drug it produces. And the billions more that have been spent on eradication and interdiction efforts (the US spent \$782 million in 2005 alone) have had little impact.

Opium cultivation also helps fund Afghanistan's seemingly never-ending war. The UNODC estimates that the Taliban may have earned as much as \$700 million from the poppy crop in 2011 alone, and despite billions spent by the international community on counternarcotics programs, widespread corruption within the Afghan government has severely undercut efforts to reduce both cultivation and trafficking.

Nowhere was this fact more evident than in my conversations with Shir Shaw and Hasibullah. When we finished talking, they asked us for money. Instead we gave them bags of juicy red plums—far from what they were jonesing for, I was sure, but far easier on my conscience. I watched as they sulked away, disappointed, heading back under the bridge.

Although my revisiting of Afghanistan coincided with the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, when the Qur'an required Haroon, like all able Muslims, to fast from dusk till dawn, he was a true sport and agreed to take me 100 miles east of Kabul to Jalalabad.

We made the two-hour trip in a blue station wagon that was owned by Haroon's brother and blended in even more than Dost's bahamani-mobile. The dry midday heat had reached 100 degrees by the time we arrived, soaked with sweat and dehydrated.

Jalalabad was another place where I had spent considerable time during my first stint in the country. I returned because I wanted to see if the security situation had improved in this volatile region in the years since the fall of the Taliban.

This former Afghan soldier who calls himself Shir Shaw lives under the Pul-i-sokhta Bridge in Kabul, shooting up during the day and hustling for money at night.



In 2001, Tora Bora, located just south of Jalalabad, served as the final stronghold for al Qaeda and the Taliban during their winding retreat to the relative safety of Pakistan. It was there, inside the White Mountains, that Western media outlets had reported Osama bin Laden had built a multilayered, underground fortress large enough for thousands of fighters, an elaborate ventilation system, an ammunition depot, a hospital, roads, and even a hydroelectric plant to power it all.

By December of that year, three months after 9/11, the US had bombed Tora Bora so mercilessly that Afghan and US forces were able to infiltrate and eventually control the area. A thorough search proved bin Laden's rumored elaborate hideaway never existed. There were only pockets of small, naturally occurring caves that couldn't have hidden more than a few hundred men.

At that time, I traveled from Kabul to Jalalabad, and then on to Tora Bora. There I saw American B-52s and B-1B bombers drop 15,000-pound payloads on the al Qaeda and Taliban fighters who clung to life inside mountain crevices.

On this trip, I wanted to return to Tora Bora to determine whether or not the once infamous gateway for Taliban fighters from Pakistan to Afghanistan had quietly reopened for business at some point in the last dozen years. The scuttlebutt was that the road to Tora Bora had become rife with bandits, Taliban, and roadside bombs. On our arrival at the ANP headquarters in Nangarhar province, we discovered that this assessment wasn't far off the mark when Deputy Provincial Police Chief Mohammad Masum Khan Hashimi told us that there had been a roadside-bomb explosion there the past week.

Mohammad asked us how important our story was, and in the interest of full disclosure, I must admit that I exaggerated:

The scuttlebutt was that the road to Tora Bora had become rife with bandits, Taliban, and roadside bombs.

I implied that what I would be reporting from Tora Bora could potentially impact the US-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement, the plan that details the scope and extent of US support following the planned 2014 withdrawal of American forces.

The plan has yet to be finalized, but the overwhelming majority of Afghan National Security Forces agree that some form of continued support from the US military and its allies after the withdrawal will be necessary to ensure the stability of the region. What hasn't been agreed on is exactly what types of support the agreement will entail—air power, fuel, more weapons, supplies, spare parts, and even continuing to station a few thousand troops in the country are all on the table.

Resignedly, Hashimi told us that he'd do his best but asked us to come back the following day for more information.

The next day we returned to the ANP headquarters as Hashimi had asked, and he told us the safest passage to Tora Bora was by helicopter. The bad news was that the provincial police didn't have one.

I asked if driving ourselves to the mountain was a reasonably safe undertaking.

"You might get there," Hashimi said, "but I don't know what might happen after that."

US soldiers from the Sixth Squadron Eighth Cavalry Regiment use a tree line for cover while on patrol near the village of Baraki Barak in Logar province in eastern Afghanistan.



“Why?” I asked.

“Because,” he said, “the Taliban control Tora Bora.”

And there was my answer. The Taliban’s revolving gateway into Afghanistan was most definitely back in business, and likely had been for some time. With or without bin Laden’s mythical fortress, Tora Bora—a security hole that wouldn’t stay plugged—was still a major headache for the Afghan government. We decided to stay put.

It turned out our decision was probably a wise one. A few weeks later, I heard from my contacts in the area that the local ANP fought a two-day battle with the Taliban near Jalalabad. Twenty-two officers perished in the firefight along with 76 Taliban. Contrary to what I had witnessed during the protest in Taloqan, certain elements of the Afghan forces are still willing to fight.

With so much time and money having been invested in equipping and training the Afghan military, I wanted to be sure to see them in action before the end of my journey—especially since so much was riding on their ability to secure their own nation, once the international forces left. Afghans could fight—history had proven that—but could they now fight as a national army, rather than so many ethnic militias pledged to regional warlords?

To find out, I left Kabul and traveled to Logar province where I embedded with a joint operation of American troops from the Sixth Squadron Eighth Cavalry Regiment and ANA soldiers.

The chopper ride to Combat Outpost Baraki Barak is just 30 miles from Kabul, but it’s a world away in terms of their respective populations’ hearts and minds, and the surrounding terrain.

Logar is a conservative region filled with Taliban sympathizers who are inherently suspicious of foreigners’ intentions, and its geography is just as inhospitable and complicated. From the helicopter, I peered down on the hundreds of irrigation canals and waterways that divide rich swaths of farmland filled with fields of clover, summer wheat, and watermelon. While beautiful from the air, it was almost certainly hell for the soldiers who had to patrol it on the ground, as it provided cover for the enemy in every direction.

On the ground at the combat outpost, I met an Afghan interpreter the American soldiers called 007. They didn’t know his real name, or any of the names of the other interpreters. Instead they all had nicknames like Dragon or Boss. It was safer for them that way. Still, it was strange to hear the US soldiers yell, “Where’s 007? Get 007.”

007 had worked as an interpreter for the American military for five years. He had lost plenty of friends over that time, and the fact that he was still alive spoke to his luck and caution. Some of the Americans joked about how quickly he dove for cover when they were fired upon by the enemy. He shrugged. They were going to be in Afghanistan for nine months, but his deployment never ended.

Later, out on patrol, we walked together along the river that irrigated the patchwork of wheat and clover fields near the village of Baraki Barak in Logar Province. 007 told me he wanted to get a visa and come to the United States. A special expedited visa for military and government interpreters in Afghanistan is the reason many of them choose this type of dangerous work.

“If all the educated Afghans leave for America, who will be left to run this place?” I asked. “Just the warlords?”

Afghan National Army soldiers rest in a patch of clover during a joint patrol with American troops in Wardak province.



He didn't have an answer.

Between our conversations, 007 monitored radio chatter from some of the ANA and local police that followed this worn and weary platoon of American soldiers from the 6-8 Cavalry.

The "retrograde," or withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan, means that when soldiers die, get injured, or complete their deployment, they aren't replaced. This unit, like most around the country, is feeling the effects of this pullback. At the moment, its platoons, squads, and fire teams are functioning at about half of their former strength.

Carved into the plywood ceiling of one of the buildings back at their combat outpost was the sentence *THERE'S NO REASON TO HIDE HOW WE FEEL*. When I read it, I couldn't help but think of the manpower shortages caused by the retrograde, and how it might make the final deployments for the remaining foreign troops even more dangerous.

But if there was widespread disillusionment, the graffiti etched into the ceiling was the only evidence I saw of it; everyone was keeping their mouths shut if they were at odds with their current situation. Every day the US troops dutifully completed their foot patrols—vehicles were useless in terrain crisscrossed with irrigation canals—and fueled themselves with energy drinks, dip, and the knowledge that, at a little over four months, their rotation here was almost halfway done. But their mission—training and assisting the local Afghan security forces—seemed far from complete.

While I had embedded with the American military many times during my reporting in Afghanistan, my last was probably the most revelatory. I needed to see what kind of legacy the US was leaving behind. There certainly was blood: more than 2,100 American service members were killed in combat here, thousands more injured. Had they helped to create a sustainable national army that could fend off the Taliban? More important, did they believe they had actually gained something in the last dozen years worth fighting for?

At the moment, it didn't seem so. 007 told me about the ANA radio chatter.

"They are saying they are tired—and hungry," 007 said of the chatter, laughing. Even if it was a wholly unprofessional discourse to be having over the radio, who could really blame them? Of course they were tired and hungry. It was Ramadan, and most Muslims were fasting. It was also the middle of a summer afternoon, the temperature in the mid-90s. I found it hard not to suck down my own canteen in front of them.

Later, 007 and I walked along one of the nameless small rivers surrounding the base, even wading through it at times, which almost made the terrain seem tropical and brought to mind pictures and news footage of American troops in the jungles of Vietnam. The ANA troops, on the other hand, circumvented the water, taking shortcuts or going through fields, doing almost anything to avoid getting their boots wet. I couldn't decide if they were being lazy or smart.

An hour later, we had pushed off the river and walked north under the cover of a narrow tree line that ran parallel to the road. We heard a single shot, followed by a three-round burst behind us. Everyone dropped to the ground.

The Afghans shouted back and forth, creating more confusion. The American platoon leader, Lieutenant Michael Hourihan, called up Dragon and 007 to translate as he spoke with the ANA by radio.

Within minutes, a group of ANA troops and local police led a short, bearded Afghan man in his late 20s up the road toward the Americans. His hands were bound behind his back with a scarf, probably his own. The ANA and police said the

More than 2,100 American service members have been killed in combat in Afghanistan, thousands more injured.

man was the driver of a motorcycle whose passenger ran away when they were shot at. The radio operator said they started shooting because he had overheard Taliban radio chatter that the rider had been wearing a suicide vest.

"I shot in their direction so we could capture them," said an ANA squad leader named Zabiaullah, "but there was also a woman nearby and I didn't want to hit her." He said the men on the motorcycle hadn't fired first, nor did they seem to be carrying any weapons, but also suggested the man who successfully fled could've been hiding some under his clothing.

The radio operator said that once they captured the motorcycle driver he heard more Taliban radio chatter that their mission had been aborted. Their prisoner denied these accusations, telling the ANA soldiers that he had simply been giving the other man a ride. He didn't even know who he was, he said. It was almost like an episode of *Cops*; the ANA troops obviously didn't buy it and escorted him back to their base.

Lieutenant Hourihan thought that the motorcycle might be rigged with explosives. He wanted to blow it up where it was parked.

"No, no," said one of the Afghans. He waved the lieutenant off, while his fellow soldier hopped on the bike and prepared to start it up.

"Do not start that bike," the lieutenant ordered, firmly.

They looked at him defiantly, rolled it away a few yards, kick-started the engine, and rode off. Lieutenant Hourihan shook his head.

When we returned to the base an hour later, we saw the two Afghans on the commandeered motorcycle, cleaned up, out of uniform, and heading away from the base.

007 looked at me and rolled his eyes. "Those guys," he said.

The Americans and Afghans on the patrol didn't seem to be working together very well, with plenty of suspicion and

Afghan National Army soldiers and local police with a captured suspect they said was aiding a possible suicide bomber in Logar province.



maybe even a little contempt evident on both sides. But maybe, I thought, that simply didn't matter anymore. Their on-the-ground partnership was in the process of dissolving, and most military experts agree that the Afghans don't have to necessarily fight at the level or with the tactics of Western armies to win this war—they just have to fight better than the Taliban. While American assets like airpower, high-tech weaponry, and logistical support certainly provided an edge, the time left for that edge was waning.

I returned home a week after my visit to the combat outpost in Baraki Barak unable to clear my mind of this question: Had the Afghan forces there actually prevented an attack on the American troops by stopping a supposed suicide bomber riding on the back of the bike or was it simply a way to steal a motorcycle so a few of them wouldn't have to walk all the way back to their base? I just couldn't be certain and that unknown answer spoke volumes about the effects the US military's decade-long presence has had on those who are now charged with ensuring Afghanistan security.

Uncertainty is a strange emotion to have after a dozen years of war, \$600 billion spent, and more than 2,100 US and countless others' lives lost. Any venture capitalist would expect a better return on the investment. But who was to blame? The Afghan government? Corruption is so bold that it even levied a departure tax on American military vehicles withdrawing from the country. Or was the American government at fault for dispersing military and humanitarian aid

here as if it were wildly spraying out of a fire hose, without responsibly vetting who they gave it to or accounting for it once it was given? It was yet another question with an answer that may never be known.

America hadn't come here in 2001 to save the Afghans, of course—it had stormed in on a mission of vengeance and national security to smash al Qaeda and overthrow the Taliban. Under the narrow scope of those early goals, it was a "mission accomplished." But in regards to the long-term goal of nation-building, of helping to create a stable, secure Afghanistan, it has obviously fallen short.

I thought back to what one Afghan man had said to me while I was traveling in the north: "The Americans have changed the lives of everyone here, even the Taliban." *Afghanistan had done the same to us*, I thought. Americans have been forever changed by this once and perhaps future failed state, where so much has been wagered over the past dozen years.

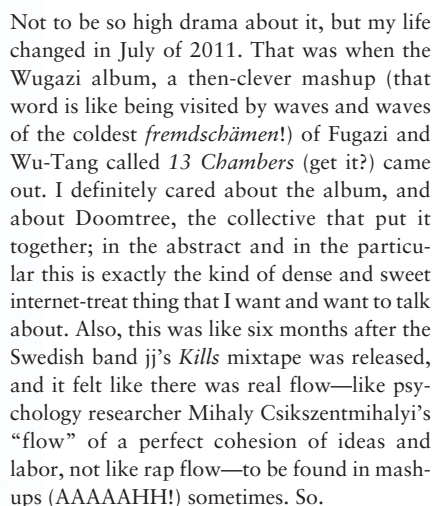
I knew it had changed me, defining my existence for one-fifth of my life. Over the years, I became intertwined in its myth and magic. I lost friends and colleagues and certainly my own innocence. Afghanistan was and is a beautiful and brutal place. Infuriatingly incongruous, it's a country where the world's best hospitality coexists alongside honor killings, a society that shrouds its women in burkas but dresses up its young boys as dancing girls, a people strong enough to defeat outside invaders, but unable to stop fighting themselves. It was, and is, a nearly perfect reflection of the good and evil in all of us. *QCB*

Shadows of soldiers from US Third Battalion, Seventh Infantry Regiment on an early-morning patrol in eastern Afghanistan.



BY KATE CARRAWAY, ILLUSTRATION BY PENELOPE GAZIN

120 VICE



Riffing is something like mutual masturbation (coincidentally, saying “riffing is like mutual masturbation” could make a cool riff). It is essentially the small talk of anyone who, at some point in their adolescence, learned how to throw dice about their thing, whatever that may be, music or movies or whatever, instead of having regular conversations. Social, jokey, and jockey, peer-on-peer riffing is the casual and ongoing assertion of opinion, specifically for some specific think-scene, which might be between two people, or a silky thread of smooth talk between a zillion strangers on the internet, endlessly one-upping. Its first and most important requirement is that there only be a finite number of people who are invested in getting it and who can relentlessly evolve a given riff-thing.

entertaining, demonstration (about what you know, what you read, what you saw, who you are) and getting noticed for it. Riffing is, by necessity, about distance and being at least one step removed: familiarity without challenge.

It was soon after I walked away—so fucking rude!—from my friend that I realized it was because I didn't want to spend any more time as the kind of person whose social value has to do with ephemera, with sanctioned humor, as processed and refined as white sugar, and knowing about something because it is new. I also noticed, then, how rarely people say in those same peer-spheres something like "I'm wrong." Not "I *was* wrong," an a posteriori apology, but "I'm wrong," or "I don't know," or "I'm not interested," instead of laying down some trope about a band. Apart from that last thing, which can serve as a jocular power move on the riffing circuit, it is this refusal of vulnerability that makes riffing such a sinister friend-for-eve; crafting all those looping nuggets, ready to be tossed out and traded, monotonous and tidy, relieves us of the pain and responsibility of the complexity of modern life, even in these casual, quick moments, and of thinking harder (and weirder, and slower) and then subjecting our friends to our bigger, wronger, and ultimately—I promise, I hope—better ideas. This is all so far removed from the internet's influence, exemplified by the fact that people were riffing the same way when DOS was still a going concern (riffed!). But maybe it gets worse, with a riffer's and the internet's age and ensuing confidence. Last year, the writer Emily Gould tweeted, "For a long time as a younger person I mistook conversations for pop quizzes about my knowledge of various topics. Sorry about this everyone." Girl, don't be. Everybody does it.

More of Kate's Li'l Thinks can be found at twitter.com/KateCarraway.



RAT TAIL: “DAAAAAAAAAAMMMMM- MMMMMMMMMMMMNNNNNNN”

BY BRETT GELMAN, PHOTOS BY JANICZA BRAVO

Featuring Janicza Bravo as Blackie O

*Below are the lyrics to the long-lost classic “Daaaaaaaaammmmm-
mmmmmmmmmmnnnnnnn” by the completely unknown white
80s hip-hop artist, Rat Tail, whose current whereabouts are
unknown. It was transcribed from a cassette tape discovered last
November, wrapped in a ball of human hair in a garbage dump
in Guadalajara, Mexico.*

DAAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMNNNNNNN
I say,
DAAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMNNNNNNN
Put your hands in the air and say,
DAAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMNNNNNNN
DAAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMNNNNNNN
I say,
DAAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMNNNNNNN
If you hate all the hate say,
DAAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMNNNNNNN

Black and white and white and black
To all you racist suckas, time to take your hate back
Say goodbye to all the anger, stop saying hello
'Cause the wack that you attract in your mind is not mellow
Your thoughts are trash, poisonous like a crack stash
Flash back to slavery back to now like a back flash
Your ignorance is wreckin' shit like a car crash
So stressin' I'm confessin' that it's giving me an ass rash
Don't look at race or color, everyone's your brother, sister,
mother, father, don't bother
Thinking what you're thinking 'cause you know it got you
stinking
Like a bum on the corner in the afternoon drinking
But you can't blame him 'cause his ass got canned
By a racist white man, also known as the man
But the man ain't the man if he don't act the man
And respect his fellow man 'cause that man is a man

DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMNNNNNNN
Why you hatin' like that
DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMNNNNNNN
You're hatin' so wack
DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMNNNNN
Stop the hate attack and judging all God's children as just white
or black
DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMNNNNNN
Your mind needs a Tic Tac
DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMNNNNNN
Hate, hit the road, Jack
DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMNNNNNNN
You best get back on track, 'cause if you don't, Rat Tail is gonna
give you a smack

DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMNNNNNNN
Rat Tail ain't hatin'
A fly girl fly and you know that we datin'
Any type of skin tone in my bed, in my home
The only color that I see is the gray of my phone

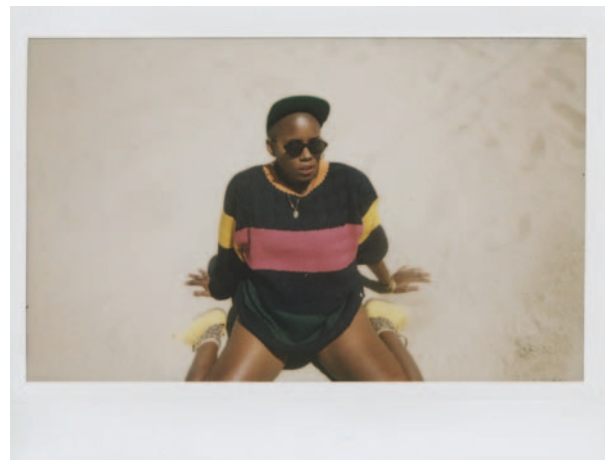
Booty-call all types of girls all around the world
 God blessed the world with all different types of girls
 I love my face and my dick between black and brown thighs
 Black pussy on my face like I'm wearing a disguise
 I can't really see how you can sleep at night
 Your mind ain't right, and your shit ain't tight
 Far from dynamite, not quite fantastic
 If you keep up the hate, I'm gonna snap like elastic
 See Rat Tail is the man 'cause I love my fellow man
 If you don't understand, I guess you're not the man
 'Cause a man ain't the man if he don't act the man
 And respect his fellow man cause that man is a man

DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 Why you hatin' like that
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 You're hatin' so wack
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 Stop the hate attack and judging all God's children as just white or black
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 Your mind needs a Tic Tac
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 Hate, hit the road, Jack
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 You best get back on track 'cause if you don't Rat Tail is gonna give you a smack

DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 I say,
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 I say,
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN,
 motherfucker
 Say,
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 For MLK say,
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 For Malcom X say,
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 For my man Gandhi say,
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 And for Rosa Parks say,
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 For Harriet Tubman say,
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 For Medgar Evers say,
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 For my man Mandela say,
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN,
 motherfucker
 Say,
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN

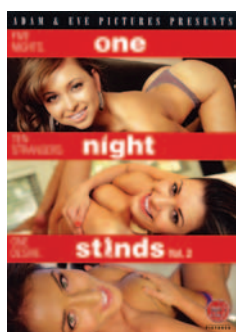
Fuck the KKK, they not OK
 Fuck the KKK, they not OK
 Fuck the KKK, they not OK
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN,
 MOTHERFUCKER!
 DAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNN

VICE will be publishing the lyrics to one of Rat Tail's masterpieces each issue for at least the next nine months. Read them all and listen to Rat Tail's second long-lost track, "Motorola Queen," at VICE.com/rat-tail.



SKINEMA

BY CHRIS NIERATKO



ONE-NIGHT STANDS

Dir: Nicholas Steele
Rating: 8

adameve.com

In a past life I was Jacques Cousteau, traveling the globe in search of adventure. Just a short baker's dozen years ago, I spent no less than 28 days a month abroad on skateboarding tours. I was home so infrequently that I opted to no longer rent an apartment, but rather slept in any stranger's bed for a night or under my desk at the legendary, defunct skate mag *Big Brother*. At some point I met my wife, moved back to New Jersey, had two sons, and settled into a peaceful life of domesticity in the suburbs.

Yet not one day passes that I don't crave the open air of a strange and new place, wanting to find myself in inexplicable predicaments on foreign soil and barely escaping with my life. To try and spice things up, I've gotten myself into three car chases in the past two years, and on several occasions have just gotten in my car and driven for hours with no destination in mind. I try my best to take the family on the road a few times a year, but those adventures are different. The adrenaline rush tends to center around if the kids are going to break something or if we can pull over fast enough to avoid one of them shitting his pants.

In the immortal words of Clark W. Griswold: "I wanna paint, I wanna sculpt something massive... I want to... God, I just have a creative urge." One that only a road trip can quench. Lucky for me I work for Vans, the greatest skate-shoe company on earth, and they've been kind enough to take me on a three-week European vacation. I'm writing this on the eve of my departure, and as excited as I am to mix it up overseas, I am beginning to stress out.

This will be the longest I've ever been away from my sons. I'm missing my firstborn's first day of school and

his fourth birthday. Worst yet, what really has me sick to my stomach is that I won't be getting laid for 21 days. I haven't gone that long since I first discovered the fuzzy britches of a woman. I don't know that I'll be able to handle it. So, I sat my wife down and discussed my options. I told her the tour had a one-night stay scheduled in Amsterdam and that I needed closure. She understood, gave me her consent, but feared for my safety.

The story goes that 11 years ago, in the early stages of our courtship, I found myself in the red-light district of Amsterdam. Not wanting to cheat on my new lady, I instead opted to buy a bag full of oblong vegetables for a prostitute to use as sex toys while I masturbated: no touching involved, and I'd gladly pay full freight. Turns out girls over there don't care much for veggies. Every gal scoffed at the proposition; one sex worker got so angry that she called the enormous Moroccan security guards and nearly had me beaten senseless.

This time around I'm older, wiser, and off drugs. I believe I can broker a better deal. And in this poor economy I feel I can find a taker and finally make peace with this story. On the other hand, my wife feels that I'm just as foolish and clumsy around pussy as ever. She also fears that the Moroccans won't be as kind this time.

"Can't you just go to one of those sex shows and jerk off in a room full of people?" she asked. "I think you'd be safer. And more likely to come home in one piece."

I reminded her that there is no thrill in playing it safe. She began to cry. It's as if she knew she'd just seen me alive for the last time.

More stupid can be found at ChrisNieratko.com and twitter.com/Nieratko. Also, check out the Skinema show, now on VICE.com.

UNTITLED

BY CASS McCOMBS



Pages of poetry printed from her home computer
loose like the manuscript of life's pages
loose and rough and running over to another page
of more poetry that may well belong to a different poem
but I've been reading it this way for a while
and built my own understanding
anyway the poet died today
she died and I regretted not asking more
I should have been lusty for her light
instead, I regret her death
indeed, death is regrettable
our friend, our sister
my true mother, our poet
is gone and we failed

All day before the news
I had every candle in the house
burning for her health
meditations on many saints, on Mary
even the ridiculous Infant of Prague
which reminded me of her wonderful sense of humor
but the flames are now out

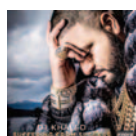
No doubt she will touch us again, assist me again
Great Woman—have mercy on my stuttering
inject me with your magic fluid
the woman seed that goes against the grain

Illustration by Albert Herter

REVIEWS



BEST ALBUM OF THE MONTH: THE BODY



DJ KHALED

Suffering from Success

We the Best/Cash Money/Universal

Let's be real for a second. Like really real. Mainstream rap is the pro wrestling of the 21st century, and DJ Khaled is the Vince McMahon that our dumb, status-obsessed society regurgitated in its own image like spoiled Cheez Whiz. Think about it: in the same way that the "Genetic Jackhammer" is the gushing, fake-blood heart of the WWE, Khaled is just faking it every single time he borks out another record. Still, his ability to instill that spirit of retardazoid grandiosity in every single rapper on this record makes *Suffering from Success* the sonic land yacht that only he could bless the planet with. And yes, your hunch was correct, a *bork* is a fart in a bathtub.

JON WANE



DOM KENNEDY

Get Home Safely

OpM

Remember that booze-cruiser you knew in college who, despite being incapable of generating a single original thought, managed to go book a one-way ticket to Bonetown, Virginia, with pretty much anybody he met? Dom Kennedy is that guy, and his music is his coveted seed. He's so leather-jacket-made-out-of-baby-otter-pelts-stitched-together-by-Inuits smooth that you know even Ed Gein would rather fuck him than kill him. YOLO TENGO



ODDISEE

The Beauty in All

Mello Music Group

If, after listening to this record, you can overcome the immediate and overwhelming desire to drop an elbow straight into Oddisee's eye

socket so that next time he doesn't try *quite as hard*, you might find that this is one of the most winning and rewarding underground hip-hop albums you've heard in the current fiscal quarter. ("Q3" if you're lame—ad guys, you realize that's like saying "LOL" out loud, right?) Still, this motherfucker is one of the most beat-up-able bipeds to ever get stuffed into a locker, so at the end of the day I can't in good conscience recommend his music in any form, and I've gotten a lot of black eyes from a lot of jocks.

GORGE CATANDAS



PROFESSOR GREEN

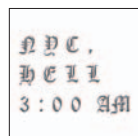
Growing Up in Public

Virgin



In college, because I wanted to waste some money "finding myself," I spent a summer in London studying British People 101. Instead I found myself slogging through Wilfred Owen's thoughts on dead teenagers, choking back breakfasts unfit for human consumption, and attending a Professor Green concert. *After all*, I thought, *he is a famous English rapper, isn't he?* Call me anglophobic or just plain close-minded, but this guy sounded like how an open sewer smells. I actually ripped a fingernail out just to make sure I wasn't dead. *Growing Up in Public* is like that experience, but worse, because someone bothered to record it for posterity. Can't you dudes get it together and give us another Beatles, or at least another Oasis?

BENT SPOON



JAMES FERRARO

NYC, Hell 3:00 AM

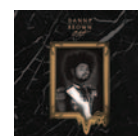
Hippos in Tanks



Sure, Eskimos have identified a thousand types of snow or whatever, but lately I've been seeking high-level collaborative-research grants to discover and map the innumerable types of boners on God's green earth. I've learned a lot, and one surprising result of my research proves that not all lap rockets originate from normal feelings of intimacy and love. (Note: see the "MDMA street-pee stiffy" or good-old morning wood for

contemporary and classical examples of what I'm talking about here.) All I had to do to fully experience the Fear Flute was listen to James Ferraro's new album, which is so pants-shittingly terrifying that it sucked all the blood vessels from my face and brain and transported them southward faster than a van's worth of AR-15s breezing past Mexican customs.

GLADYS GOOPINSTEIN



DANNY BROWN

Old

Fool's Gold



Danny Brown's been our favorite rapper for a couple minutes now, even though we know he'd blast a love load on our girlfriend's stomach if given even a pube's worth of opportunity. Actually, we like Danny Brown so much that if VICE as an editorial collective could have a girlfriend, we'd probably let him slip it in as long as we could lay claim to any child support that may or may not result. It's not like we're being greedy; most of it would go to bail bondsmen and psychiatric evaluations. And that's why we love the dude, and the reason he is able to receive fellatio onstage. And yet everyone is more offended by that (and Miley Cyrus's dumbness) than children being gassed to death in Syria.

JACK POOSTEAU



DJ RASHAD

Double Cup

Hyperdub



These days, the proverbial South Side of Chicago is often cited as a "vibrant music scene," not a spawning pool for dead-eyed child soldiers who can occasionally be coaxed into creating the bleak-as-death drill music that straight white male music critics are currently pounding off to ad speculum. But there's another side to the city that has nothing to do with tubesteaks of any sort, one that's centered around a different bass-heavy breed of

WORST ALBUM OF THE MONTH: CULTS



club music called “footwork.” It’s a lot less murder-y, and DJ Rashad is its reigning (if oft-overlooked) king. This record is crack, but its only problem is a release through some limey professor dude’s vanity label. So I guess straight white male music critics are gonna be the only ones listening to this outside of the Big Onion after all.

TEKLIFE INTERN



MOBY
Innocents
Little Idiot

Yeah, that’s a smiley, and you will have to deal with it as we have. The reasons to sneer at this self-styled “little bald idiot” far outweigh the reasons to defend him, but I’m sticking up for the underdog on this one: Moby is such a milquetoast little nothing compared with the deadmau5es of the world that he’ll probably just soldier on, releasing album after album into the ether, amid scattered choruses of “Oh, Moby has a new record out? Oh.” I’d rather praise Moby for what he’s *not* doing, instead of locating that moment where he paired a bleep with an oh-so-perfect bloop. Plus, I’d rather be lulled to sleep by the sound of his integrated conical Burr espresso grinder than the ravings of some watered-down, molly-addled 2013 version of Jenny Talia. He should stop making that tea, though, because it tastes like shit.

PAPA D. PREACH



ONEOHTRIX POINT NEVER
R Plus Seven
Warp

You know when it’s 4 AM on a Tuesday and you realize you’ve just watched the entirety of a two-hour infomercial for some carpet cleaner you’re never gonna buy, but you just can’t turn off the TV because it’s bright and shiny, and you’re a depressed insomniac? That’s how it feels to listen to this record. It’s like getting a late-capitalist massage in a postindustrial spa on the internet in 1080p. Yes, the vibes are totally vapor-wavy, but not in your typical made-by-a-15-year-old-kid-in-Norway way. Whatever.

STEVE HANDJOBS



THE BODY
Christis, Redeemers
Thrill Jockey



PARQUET COURTS
Tally All the Things That You Broke
What’s Your Rupture?

The Body is one of my favorite bands because they’re basically the Christopher Hitchens of nihilist sludge as shrieked by Donald Sutherland at the end of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. They recently relocated from Providence to Portland, and judging from this album it sounds like life up in the big Northwest blanket fort (no wonder all the racists want to move there) has pushed these dudes deeper into whatever K-hole of sightless aggression they’re currently drifting down. This one gets five upside-down crosses shoved up Regan MacNeil’s Satanic birth canal.

BSHAP

They say life on the road does odd things to the human mind, but the last time I texted Parquet Courts’ bassist Sean to ask if he’s been happy on tour, this was—I shit you not—his response: “It’s definitely not the most stable lifestyle. Horses smoking cigarettes, magic mushrooms, the fear. It’s all there, wrapped up in a poorly tied bow, mouth filled with old newspapers, the ashes of burning money peppered over the dimly lit metropolis of my past and future self’s imagination. 9/11, or worse, 9/12... fuck it may even be 9/13 at this point. Red-toothed prostitutes lumbering by a pit of bluegrass musicians plucking Dixie. Gamblers, racists, pregnant woman stomachache. A delicious quiche made from miserable ingredients. And that’s just in the last 24 hours. Alligator-skin running shoes, shellacked tortoiseshells, tiger benzos. Chartreuse with Kunta Kinte while *Reading Rainbow* plays in the background. Humongous birds. It’s fucked. What the fuck is happening in your life?” This is why we love Sean and this record.

BENJAMIN SHAPIRO



MELT-BANANA
Fetch
A-ZAP

Melt-Banana is from Tokyo, but not the Smashing Pumpkins *Lost in Translation* Tokyo, or sexy *In the Realm of the Senses* Tokyo. And you might even think they’re from the drug-addled hell-scape cartoon *Akira* Tokyo, but they’re almost actually from *Fast & Furious 7* Tokyo, if members of Atari Teenage Riot and Discordance Axis were behind the wheel. They still play the occasional grindcore song, but this record is actually way more “mature” than what you’re used to if you’ve been following their career for the past 20-odd years. Less about adorable animals and more privy to direct confrontation of the catastrophic nuclear disaster that continues to plague their country. More people should make “concept” records like this one.

ROYAL POOL



AUDACITY
Butter Knife
Suicide Squeeze

Back in high school, before I realized I was more interested in “holding the fuzzy bowling ball” than “jerking off dudes,” I was a ski instructor for a little while (and I don’t mean I was a cocaine dealer). One winter, a bunch of white South African guys did a work exchange on my mountain. None of them could ski, but they were all hot as shit, except for this one guy nicknamed Pinkie. As the winter wore on, we spent our nights drinking beer, smoking Camel Wides, and listening to horrible punk rock. Eventually, kids started to couple off, and I felt the ovary-and-ego-crushing pressure to jump into bed with somebody. One night, fueled by NOFX and 151, I clumsily pulled Pinkie into a back room and gobbled his penis like a hungry sow. After tons of screaming, he pushed me into the hallway, and later at school, I heard he said his penis had basically been scalped. “Well, he deserved it for treating me the way he did!” My lie couldn’t cover up the fact that I had no idea how to be sexual with anyone and was embarrassed and scared people would find out

REVIEWS



BEST COVER OF THE MONTH: DANNY BROWN

I was gay. Pinkie, if you're reading this, I'm sorry, and if this record accomplishes anything, hopefully it's your knowing that.

SASSY SALLY



KORN
The Paradigm Shift
Caroline



Here's Korn's "return to form" after *The Path of Totality*, which was a dubstep record for balding rap-rockers with kids and dreadlocks. Yet this sonic document harks back to the Korn of yore, the Korn of *Issues* and *Untouchables*. This is the Korn of our youth, the Korn that we, the Children of the Korn, all know and love. This is the Korn that we will remain forever faithful to. And as a lifelong Korn enthusiast, I gotta say, the sound is there, but the feeling—the just-sprouting-pubic-hair juvenile aggression that Korn imbued into every single track... Well, that shit just isn't there. It's like a bunch of fucking 40-year-olds tried to make a shitty Korn record or something. Oh wait, they did, and they can go fuck themselves.

JIM BREWER'S GENITALS



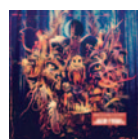
TED NUGENT
Ultimate Ballisticrock
Frontiers



There are two opposing schools of thought regarding the Nuge. One contests he's a dangerous, psychotically patriotic Tea Party nut job whose main joy in life is dragging illegal aliens behind his pickup on the way to the gun show. The other contests that he's a harmless maniac whose every word and action can (and should) be disregarded so as not to distract from his joyous shredding. Both of these opinions are completely valid, and yes, this man should probably be in jail, but he begins this new live record by calling Pennsylvania "Pennsyl-Mania," and that ain't nothin' but cool. Also, every track has a minimum of 45 guitar solos, so you might as well shut the shit up and rock the fuck out, or else shut the boring hole in your face that serves as a slot for semi-edible garbage

and ignore him. It's way easier than getting angry, since he and his family aren't really breaking any laws... Besides that time he slaughtered a baby deer without a hunting license, or that time TSA agents found that loaded pistol in his wife's carry-on. But in the grand scheme of things, who gives a shit.

TED BROGAN



RED FANG
Whales and Leeches
Relapse



Have you ever hurt yourself to hurt someone else? And no, I'm not talking about your homemade high school Hot Topic commercials when you dragged a bread knife across your forearm to get back at your stepdad. I'm speaking about irreparable, future-crushing, free-falling descents into *actual* self-destruction, driven solely by the motive to make someone else feel like shit for being peripherally responsible. *Whales and Leeches* makes me feel a lot like that: brutal, tormented, and empowered by the conflicting knowledge that the pain means I'm doing something right. On that note, off to therapy. Later!

LISA ROWE



OOZING WOUND
Retrash
Thrill Jockey



I sit next to VICE's reviews editor. She's got a pyromaniac streak and a lot of weird habits, like refusing to eat fruit. One time she sighed, slowly removed her headphones, turned to me, and said, "The only place to find serious art these days is in extreme, progressive metal." Of course, I told her that a job where one listens to popular music and writes about it will, at best, lower one's standards for art, and, at worst, retard the cognitive faculties to an eight-year-old's comprehension level. But then, out loud, I told her she was probably right. Point is, I'm sort of surprised she recommended this record. It doesn't sound particularly "serious" to me. It sounds like Bay Area 80s thrash and weed.

NEBBISH ORIPASH

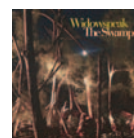


THE PURPLE ORGAN
Little Peanuts
Tripple Nipple



There are weirdos who make music, and then there are guys who commandeer a studio through questionably legal means, finger up all the instruments and knobs, and smack around a microphone while spitting out gibberish like "Ding-dong, gee-jo, let's ride the magic dragon all the way down your mom's giblest gorge and snort clouds made of rainbows while we fuck midget Smurfs—yeah, they're really small—in Dust Bowl-era Oklahoma." Then these freaks pop out the other side a few weeks later with true Mutant Music. Not that the Purple Organ, also known as Doug Black, says any of the aforementioned hogwash on *Little Peanuts*, at least not verbatim. But making catchy, blown-out, everything-and-the-kitchen-sink-that-doubles-as-a-psychedelic-drug-lab tunes that make me hard like early Flaming Lips and Butthole Surfers is exactly his forte. And I want to fuck him for it.

DR. RUTH'S PERINEUM



WIDOWSPEAK
The Swamps EP
Captured Tracks



My ex is one of those aggravating people who hates specific things for no reason. Brooklyn is one, the internet is another, and Widowspeak is a third. I never had the energy to argue with her over what exactly it was about this fairly innocuous, affable-seeming indie-rock duo that made her blood turn to searing lava. Plus, I always liked the other things she hated, so I jumped at the chance to review this EP. After all, I like what I like, and there's nothing she can do or say about it anymore. Well, J, you were right. I mean, not about the part where you cheated on me and acted like a psychotic hose beast. I'm talking about this band. They're grade-A vaginal smeg. Otherwise, you were a total asshole, and I hope you have a terrible life.

LINDA FLIPPER

WORST COVER OF THE MONTH: TED NUGENT



THE DISMEMBERMENT PLAN
Uncanny Valley
Partisan



Let's be honest for a second. Humans the world over are psyched that this record exists. My opinion on the new Dismemberment Plan record is not worth the black blood we ink these pages with. This album is not *Emergency & I*, but hey, nor is it *Travistan*, so don't be a baby about it. Anyway, if you know who the Dismemberment Plan is, you're probably going to listen to this regardless of what I have to say about it, and if for some reason, you're some sort of freakish dweebazoid who doesn't, then you probably just read this review all the way through because you were hoping I'd teach you a new euphemism for penis. Sorry.

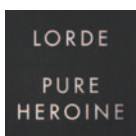
DREW MILLARD



ST. LUCIA
When the Night
Neon Gold/Columbia



St. Lucia has been plugging away at their craft since way, way back in 2012. But it was during this past year's SXSW that they really caught everyone's ear. And by "everyone," I mean middle-aged label execs and people who think waiting in line for six hours to see the Hood Internet at the Hype Hotel is a good way to spend a spring Friday (I feel like a loser for even knowing what those two things are). Whereas synth pop is a malignant tumor in the ball bag of "indie music," at their essence St. Lucia is a mole that should be checked regularly, and I guess that's saying something. I like picking at moles. SHABBA RANKS (SHABBA!)



LORDE
Pure Heroine
Virgin



Fade in. Sara "Lorde" Bareilles is primed and poised, iPad Mini in hand. It's mid-March, 2013, and she's just discovered a really cool new experimental band called the xx. She's heard them the last time she stopped in an Urban Outfitters to pick up a few imitation-rustic bird

necklaces—you can never have too many. She pulls out the iTunes gift card Starbucks gave her in exchange for curating their latest compilation, carefully reads the terms of agreement and, \$9.99 later, the xx's 2009 self-titled record is snugly nestled into her library. She hits play. *Wait a minute*, she thinks. *I've got an idea*. And then the Greek chorus sings: "FUCKKKK YOUUUUU!!!"

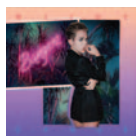
DANIEL FLANDERS



CRYSTAL ANTLERS
Nothing Is Real
Innovative Leisure



The press release for this record mentions Los Angeles about 54 times, which is about 54 times too many (AY-OH!). But seriously though, it's all about how they live in LA, signed to a great LA label, record in LA at the singer's home studio, how they've played FYF Fest a bunch of times (in, you guessed it, LA), and they're just crazy about the scene out there. Cool! Go choke on an avocado, fuck-os. This record has no teeth, and that's probably because they live in... LA. Don't get me wrong, the weather's great, but the only people I like there have already lived and succeeded in New York for a substantial period of time. Those who haven't and think it's so great: I invite you to come out east and get shanked in the face when you take too long fixing your coffee at the milk-and-sugar station. WILE E. CHODEY



MILEY CYRUS
Bangerz
RCA



Come on. You really want VICE's honest review of a Miley Cyrus album? Let's cut to the chase: another review of *Bangerz* as phoned-in genero-pop. Defensive, sanctimonious contestation that review is more focused on Miley's private cum public life than an "actually pretty OK pop album." Rebuttal that just because someone can shamelessly throw enough money around to fart out a few undeniable hits doesn't mean they deserve accolades. Abrupt, defensive outro citing the entire review as folly in and of itself. Smug self-satisfaction. There. Was that as good for you as it was for me?

My tongue is turned sideways, wedged firmly in the crevice of a confused tween. Does that help?

LOU PEARLMAN'S PUBIC WIG



CULTS
Static
Columbia



If I were a big-time record-label executive, I'd have a biiiiiig desk and a cool old creaky leather chair. And if Cults came in to pitch me their demo, I wouldn't get all starstruck. No way. I'd pour myself a tall, cool seltzer with ice while my secretary ushered them in. Then I'd lean toward them and take a sip from my drink. I'd sigh and say, "Listen up, gang! Your melodies are top dog! But the girl in the band stinks, and she's got a voice like an old orangutan. Drop her like a bag of bananas!" Then there'd be a moment of sad silence and after that, Cults would get all mad at me, talk about how they played ATP when Portishead curated, and how they got a Pitchfork Best New Music. I'd just laugh and shake my head. Then I'd take a big swig of seltzer and write, NASALLY CHICK VOCALS TOO ANNOYING in red magic marker across their demo before scooting them out of my office so I could snort drugs off my midcentury teak desk and call up a bunch of escorts who I wouldn't be able to get it up for. DON RORITOR



YAMANTAKA // SONIC TITAN
UZU
Suicide Squeeze



Our music site Noisy really likes these guys, but man, things must be straight-up apocalyptic in post-Grimes Montreal if you have to play Sino-Indian prog in Noh costumes just to get a publicist. Guess we have a difference of opinion here, and you know what they say about opinions: they're like terrible bands these days, everyone's got one. SLEUTH "JUICY" LOOSELY

VICE FASHION STOCKISTS

Photo by Ben Ritter, see page 44

ADIA KIBUR
adiakibur.com

ADIDAS ORIGINALS X
OPENING CEREMONY
openingceremony.us

AGAIN
againapparel.com

AMERICAN APPAREL
americanapparel.net

BETSEY JOHNSON
betseyjohnson.com

BING BANG
bingbangnyc.com

BONDI BATHER
bondibather.com

CHEAP MONDAY
cheapmonday.com

CONVERSE
converse.com

DIMEPIECE
dimepicela.com

FORFEX
forfex.it

FUCT
fuct.com

GLOBE
globe.tv

GUESS
guess.com

KAMALIKULTURE
kamalikulture.com

K-SWISS
kswiss.com

LUV AJ
luvaj.com

MANGO
mango.com

MELODY EHSANI
melodyehsani.com

NANUSHKA
nanushka.hu

NASTYGAL
nastygal.com

NIKE
nike.com

NORMA KAMALI
normakamali.com

PRIVILEGED
privilegedshoes.com

RVCA
rvca.com

SHOWN TO SCALE
showntoscale.com

STANCE
stance.com

TRIUMPH
triumph.com

UNIF
unifclothing.com

VANS
vans.com

VIVIENNE WESTWOOD
X MELISSA
melissa.com.br/en/

WANDERLUSTER
wanderlusternewyork.com

WE ARE HANDSOME
wearehandsome.com

WILDFOX
wildfoxcouture.com



Guess jumpsuit, Vivienne Westwood x Melissa shoes, Melody Ehsani earrings and bracelet

