

LADYGUNN



THE OBSESSION ++ CONFESSION ISSUE
SHIRLEY MANSON / SANTIGOLD / BEACH HOUSE
SPIRITUALIZED / MARINA & THE DIAMONDS / GOTYE
GABRIEL MANN / M.WARD ++MORE

ISSUE 5

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CONTRIBUTORS

MICHAEL DONOVAN

Michael Donovan has found a strong underground following for being the harbinger of the Post Bourgeois art movement. Mixing fashion and fine art, his distinguishable raucous and raw style mixed with his aggressive nature has been applied to work for Bullet, Wonderland, Lovecat and many others while his more conservative and exciting observant work has been applied to clients including The Pierre Hotel, MAGIC/Project, Reed Smith, Marie Claire Turkey, and others. He’s created epic 25+ page fashion stories for Smug, Pacific Standard and Vision China. Recently, Donovan has added video and sound production to his forte of art mediums.

OBSESSION: Moving forward.
CONFESSION: I need someone to do all my dirty work because I don’t have the patience to do it myself.



POLLY BROWN

Artist and guest art director for this issue, Polly is originally from London. Heading straight from Central St Martins into freelance work for both fashion and art industries she is now living and working in New York City.

OBSESSIONS: Jules Verne, the colour yellow and Pinkberry.
CONFESSIONS: but then i would have to kill you.



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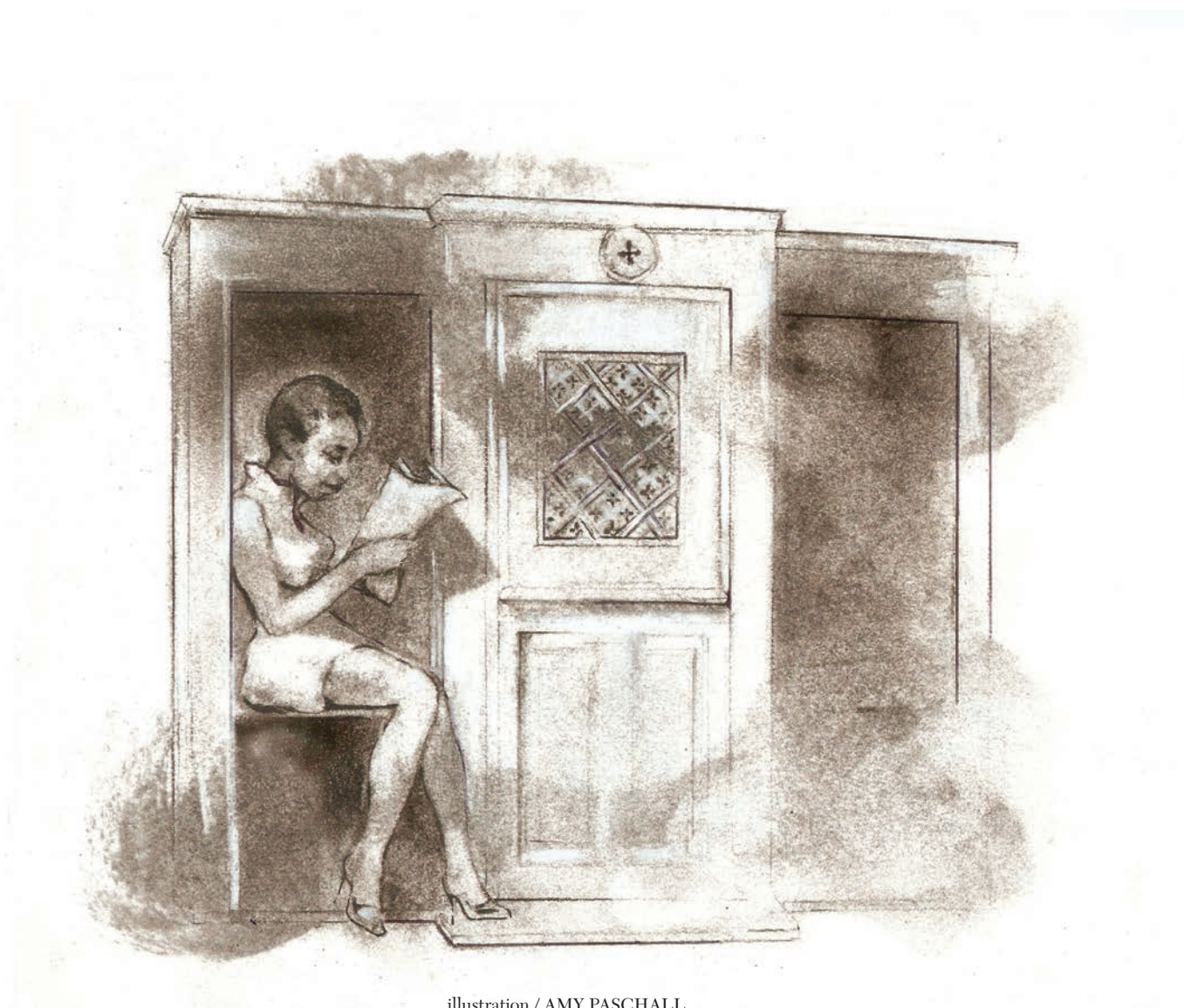


illustration / AMY PASCHALL

Well this certainly is a milestone. The 5th issue of LADYGUNN is one that I have been looking forward to and I still can't believe it came so fast. It seemed so far away and unattainable to put together 5 issues of the magazine and over a year later we are going stronger than ever! Now I am proud to put a 5th issue of my favorite magazine behind me. For this issue we want to bare all to our loyal readers and have the talent do the same. The Obsession + Confession issue was the perfect way to do this.

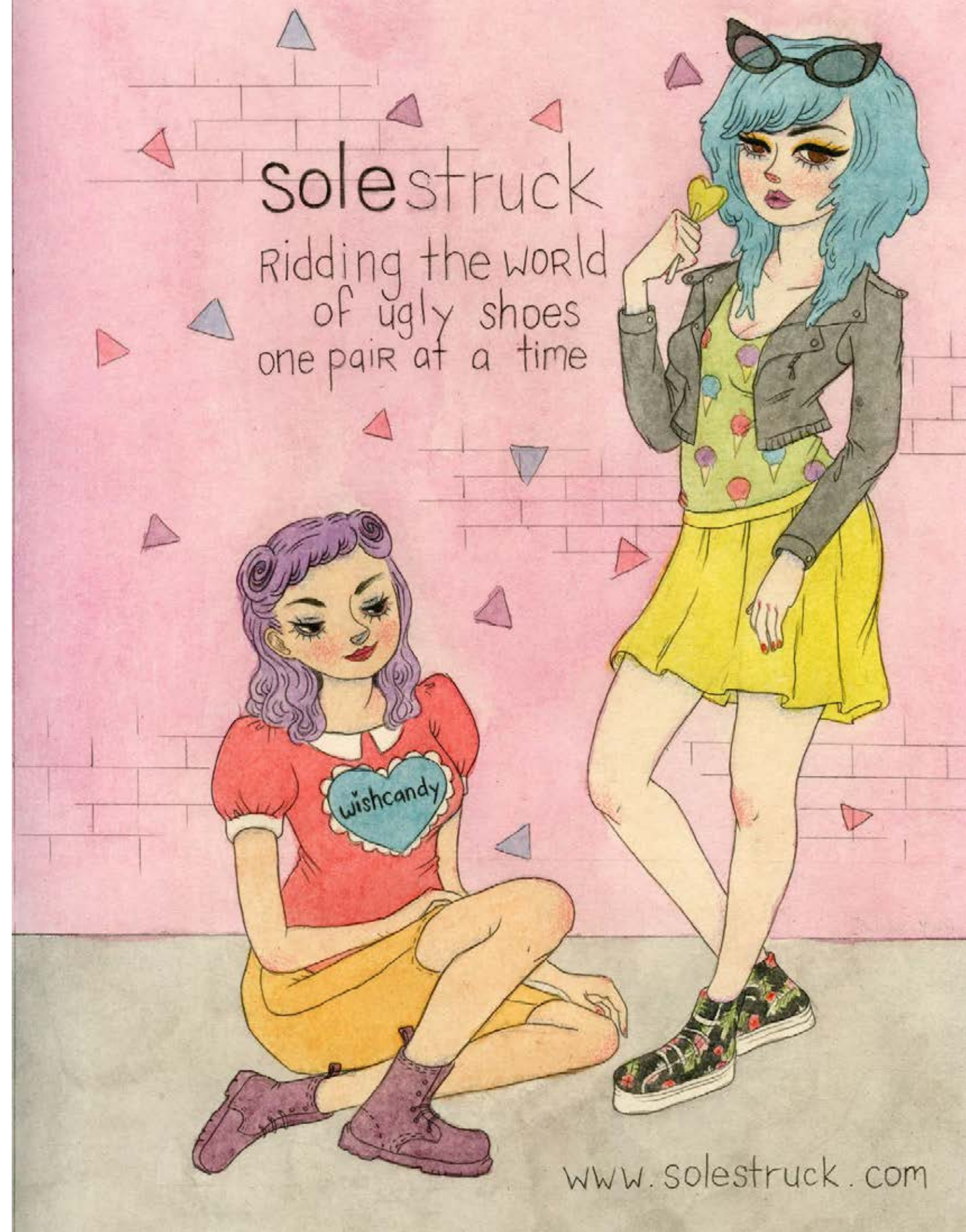
As far as obsessions go, I for one can't stop singing the songs of our cover girl Santigold, including "Disparate Youth" and "Big Mouth," and watching the corresponding videos off her recently released sophomore album *Master of My Make-Believe*. It's so good. Our other cover girl Shirley Manson and her band Garbage have also recently put out a new album after 7 years. "Not Your Kind of People," the title track off the new album is so seductive and Garbage noir that it'll make you fall in love with the band all over again. Gotye's "Somebody That I Used To Know" has also been playing over and over in my mind and is the perfect song to have accompany your daydream about all the things you could say to your ex-boyfriend. This whole issue has musicians with new albums that are the perfect soundtrack for your hot weathered adventures.

I need to confess that I'm a reality TV junkie. I rarely tune in to scripted television shows, but two most recent shows that have made it into my Hulu queue for the pure thrill of the fucked up situations and beautiful actors, are PRETTY LITTLE LIARS and REVENGE. It's not a coincidence that we have both Tyler Blackburn from PRETTY LITTLE LIARS and Gabriel Mann of REVENGE in this issue. I mean seriously... SWOON!

This whole issue is pretty epic and we are happy again to bring you another installment of LADYGUNN full of our favorite obsessions and confessions!

Have fun reading and looking and dreaming. And remember: we love you!

skaco





VOUS NE POUVEZ PAS CACHER.

photography / MICHAEL DONOVAN stylist / CHRISSIE GUGGEMOS

hair / DAKOTA HEMAN FOR DAKOTAHEMAN.COM

make up / ELISA FLOWERS USING MAC COSMETICS

models / ALENA BLOHM @ MARILYN

Sweater, THE REFORMATION. Dress, SAVANT. Leggings, IRO. Sneakers, ASH.



Jacket, ACNE. Dress, MAURIE AND EVE. Socks, STYLIST'S OWN. Sneakers, ASH.



Sweatshirt, THE REFORMATION.

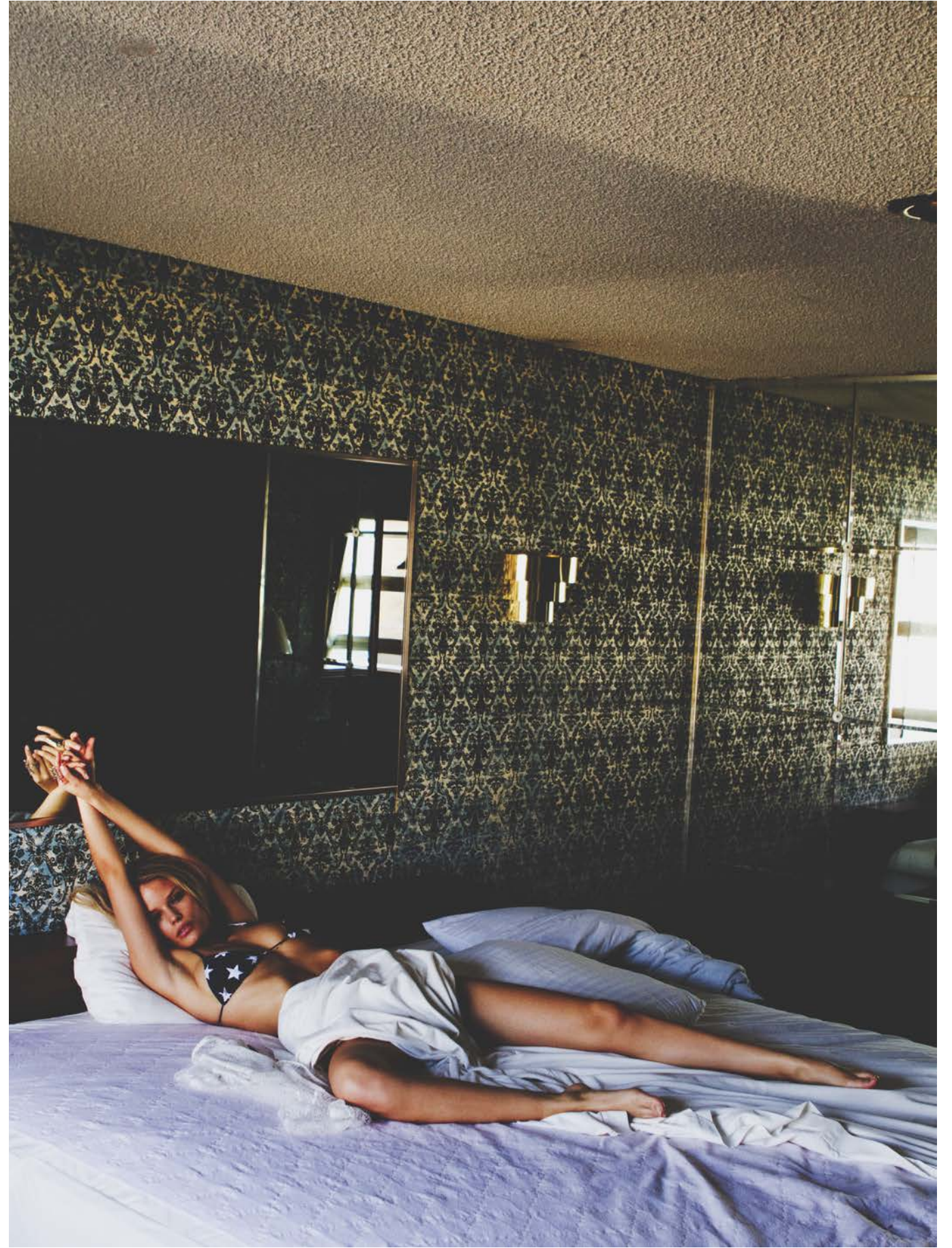




Sweatshirt, The REFORMATION. Skirt, SAVANT. Necklace, MADE BY STYLIST. Shoes, JEFFREY CAMPBELL for I DON'T Like MONDAYS.



Sweater, IRO. Leather Pants, ACNE.



Swimsuit, STYLIST'S OWN.



Top, **STOLEN GIRLFRIENDS CLUB**. Swim suit top, **STYLIST OWN**. Rings, **LOW LUV BY ERIN WASSON**.



Jacket, **IRO**. Pants, **STYLIST OWN**. Shoes, **JEFFREY CAMPBELL for I DON'T Like MONDAYS**. Bag, **SILENT DAMIR DOMA**.



Dress, **VINTAGE.**

SANTIGOLD

story / **HEATHER SEIDLER**

photography / **MICHAEL DONOVAN**

stylist / **ALLISON ST.GERMAIN**

makeup / **DEVRA KINERY @THE ART-DEPARTMENT**

hair / **YUSEF FOR PAUL LABRECQUE SALON @ FACTORY DOWNTOWN**

Musical savant Santi White, who records as Santigold, is currently one of the hottest and most inventive artists in the music world. A self-taught singer, writer and producer, she has collaborated and toured with a prolific list of the music industry's major heavyweights: Pharrell, Diplo, Beastie Boys, Kanye West, MIA, Björk, Coldplay and most recently the Red Hot Chili Peppers. The respected talents she has worked with are as diverse as the infectious tunes she creates. To say Santigold is ahead of the curve would be an understatement. Four years have passed since her self-titled debut and Santi has returned at last, and returned with a synchronized vengeance.

Santigold's sophomore album, *Master of My Make-Believe*, was recorded on Jay-Z's label Roc-Nation and its collaged melodies are a smash and grab of hip-hop, Robo-dance, electropop, New-wave reggae, 80's synth, Jamaican beats, Indian rhythms, and Afro drums. Santi puts things together in a way that cross-pollinates so many genres that it's a genreless sound that hodge-podges soft ballad blues and protest songs with faraway vocals. The work is an invigorating bucket of worms, writhing together to create a completely different genre, the post-internet, post-everything, gloriously saturated new.

Brooklyn-based Santi, spent her childhood in Northwest Philadelphia, where she hop scotched from an all-black kindergarten to a primarily all-white school grade-school to an exclusive Quaker high-school [Germantown Friends School] and then later attended college at the elite Wesleyan University. Her mixed education lent a hand to her being whomever she dared to be.

"I was kind of a jack of all trades as a kid," Santigold says. "I was into everything under the sun for about five minutes: ice skating, karate, violin, guitar, field hockey, lacrosse, gymnastics, tap dance, etc. Music was the only thing that has been constant all the way through."

Before planting her own roots as a singer, Santi tried her hand at being an A&R rep for Epic Records, which she quickly realized wasn't right for her. Before making solo gold under her original name Santogold (which later changed to Santigold for legal rea-

sons), she penned songs for Christina Aguilera, Ashlee Simpson and Lily Allen. When she decided to pursue her own musical endeavor, it was a gradual process. At first she figured she'd write a record without ever performing it. But soon after she found out that she loved being onstage and with increasing frequency it became another extension of her captivating presence.

Repeated listening to *Master Of My Make-Believe* can leave you feeling like you've come into another world—Santi's world: a handmade, perfectly cooked feast of beats not just to dance to, but also to feel to, stomp to, march to or simply to walk to. *Master of My Make-Believe* is masterful because it is both reptilian and cerebral. It bounces back and forth between melodies that appeal to your mind and beats that stick to your bones.

Santigold describes the album as being about knowing that whatever you dare to see for yourself or for the world, you can create. About being the ruler of your reality. It's like being on the edge of something dangerous but peaceful, on the brink with the madness briefly paused. It's a genre-bending ode to youthful defiance, independence and illusion. There's an elemental feel of edginess mixed with calm stoicism throughout. The yin and yang of the album work together towards a greater whole, an uncharted tour of its ringmaster's multicultural musical language. The songs are untethered to any thematic or conceptual whole, allowing Santigold to do what she does best: invent. "My songs are always really personal, even though the way I write lyrics, the meaning is sometimes vague. So the songs are left open enough for the listeners to interpret in a way that has personal meaning to them," she says. "My songs almost always start with melody rather than lyrics. The lyrics actually usually come out of the melody. They are all personal [inventions] in their own way."

Santi's unwillingness to adhere to preconception led to the decision to steer the horse herself this time. "Making this album was a challenge for me. I was at the helm of the project by myself this time around," she explains. "Though I worked with many producers, I was the only constant, so there was no one else to share in any doubt I felt, or the struggles I ran into trying to pull things together on any given day. I had to dig really deep and



On Cover; Cross Leggings, **DANIEL PALILLO**. White Tee, **BLOOD IS THE NEW BLACK**. Leather Jacket, **THE SWAY**. Sneakers, **VANS**. SantiGold's own jewelry.

find the confidence needed to have faith in my vision, and see it through to the end. It was definitely a growth process for me, and a testament to the power of creativity. It will lead you if you let it.”

Her sound retains an enticing roughness – mirrored in the visual world that accompanies it – and her attitude, a welcome simplicity. Unlike her first album, *Make-Believe* evolved organically without a roadmap. “[I had] no blueprint at all. I just jumped in with absolutely no game plan. I was actually unusually clear when I first started the writing process because I had just come back from climbing Kilimanjaro, and I flew straight from Ethiopia (where we had gone after Tanzania, to visit a UN Refugee camp that supplied water in a region where it was scarce) to Los Angeles to work with Switch,” Santi says. “It was pretty ambitious to think that I’d actually get anything done. I guess I felt invigorated and thought I would explode with new life experience. Instead, I mostly slept on his couch and we cooked on the grill. But we did come up with the drums that would later be used on the song ‘The Riot’s Gone,’ so it was well worth it in the end,” she says.

“It wasn’t until several months later that I started to get anywhere. I guess I just needed some time to process all the living and experiences that I’d had over the past few years. There had been no real down time since putting out the first record to process anything. I went straight from touring the first album for two years, to training for and then climbing Kilimanjaro, straight into working on the new record. I didn’t know what I had learned yet or what new I had to say.”

On *Master of Make-Believe*, recorded in New York, LA, and Jamaica, SantiGold returned to the producers who worked on her debut like Switch, Diplo and John Hill, But she found that writing wasn’t so easy this time around. “It was a challenge, mostly because I went there with expectations. I thought I knew exactly what to expect, exactly what the process would be like, etc. That’s the worst way to go into creating something new.”

She labored for a year on the album, traveling to Jamaica with Diplo and Switch and calling in new collaborators Nick Zinner [of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs] and Dave Sitek [of TV on the Radio]. “We were all at a different place in our lives, and different places as artists, and everyone brought their own baggage to the table. I had an amazing time all the same. At the end of the day, being in Jamaica with friends is never bad. And

it gave me the break that I needed to actually hear the noise inside my head and sort through it. Which led to me getting a lot of writing done there, which was a real breakthrough. It was productive, just different than what I expected. I realized when I was there that I needed to go work with some new people and put some fresh energy in the mix. It’s always great working with new people because you get different things out of yourself. And then later, I ended working with my old crew again with less pressure on it, and it went way better.”

Her new work exemplifies not only where she’s been for the past four years, but where we’ve come as a transfigured music culture. The results of her evolution are beautiful, peculiar and hardly formulaic. The significant difference between the two albums is simply the passage of time. It’s the elements of time and change that affected her approach to the songs. “I learned to trust my instincts. The biggest challenge was to be the only constant amongst so many producers. I didn’t have one engineer who I always worked with, so it was pretty hard to keep everything organized, collect all the pieces, and pull things together. Especially since nowadays everyone works in different programs and everyone works on different speakers. So when you’re moving around from studio to studio, the songs often sound really different depending on what room you’re in. It was really hard moving around when I was trying to hone in on the details.”

After her ephemeral difficulties at the offset, Santi’s newfound energy and confidence was partly due to discovering transcendental meditation at the genesis of the album. Sitek introduced her to an L.A. Transcendental Expert, who helped her reflect on where she had been. “I think meditation changed me and therefore affected the record. But it’s weird because it just changed me back to the person I already was, just restored the confidence I already had, but on a deeper level. It helped me to be more tuned in to my creative ideas and get rid of all the stress that was cluttering my mind. It pretty much dug me out, like one might dig out a car stuck in the sand that’s just spinning its wheels.”

SantiGold is in the rarified crop of socially conscious artists who make true, home-brewed art and are somehow allowed on the main platform even if their sales aren’t guaranteed. For these artists, actual substance is valued over fanfare. Tracks like her majestically mashed up “Disparate Youth” have the blithe buoyancy of a faraway place. The electro-balladry of “The Riot’s Gone” feels like a haunted inward address to the

instability of loss and uncertainty, both facilitator and personification of an uncertain world with lyrics like: “I’ve been looking for a fight/All the trouble that I know/Trying to lose the world inside/But it’s got no place to go.”

“‘The Riot’s Gone’ was about feeling like myself again after having felt uncharacteristically angry after my Dad’s death,” Santi confides. “I actually wrote most of these songs in 2010 before all of the shit hit the fan, but I think it was drawing from that same undercurrent, those feelings of restlessness and frustration, and a sense that we had better start paying attention or else. I mean so many things were happening, just to the Earth alone, from birds falling dead from the sky, to oil spills, nuclear explosions. I’d just come back from Africa where people don’t even have clean water to drink, which is said to be the next thing we’ll be fighting over after oil. On the other side, just turn on the TV and you’ve got a celebrity-crazed, false-reality obsessed world, that is a bit concerning. That’s the reality I was writing about.”

The tight-lipped SantiGold fiercely guards her privacy successfully while still thriving in the public eye. She seems to straddle the line between loathing material excess and embracing it. She’s not yet accustomed to the trappings of mega-fame. Is it tough for her to balance the desire for success with wariness toward fame? “It’s not so tough yet,” she answers. “I don’t think about fame too much. I mean, it’s definitely weird when you’re somewhere just minding your own business and you realize someone’s been watching you and you’re like, I hope I wasn’t talking to myself or picking my nose or something. But I just focus on getting my art right, and hope the rest will follow. I want to be successful. But I believe success is different to each individual.”

Money and sales are such huge driving forces in the music industry, but SantiGold makes her own unique art while navigating within those parameters, which only lends more cred to her craft. On the cusp of international stardom with a would-be breakthrough hit album, a lot more people will be hearing what SantiGold is saying. Santi is not about to simply submit to the agony of the scrutiny they demand. “I don’t like being put under a microscope. That’s one thing about ‘fame’ that’s really weird and dangerous to the individual,” she says. “As a person in the public eye, I learned last time around, you really need to protect yourself from other people trying to scrutinize or dissect you. It’s no good.”

Santigold's publicist and good friend Aleix Martinez first met her back in 2003. "She was such a dynamic performer even then that I was an instant fan and she has never stopped surprising and thrilling me," Martinez says. "She has worked tirelessly for years and it is beautiful to see someone find success on their own terms without ever betraying their instincts or compromising their vision. Aside from being a visionary original, she is one of the kindest and most generous people I've ever encountered. Not every artist has their audience's best interest at heart and with her it's never a question. She is a champion not just for art but for anyone trying to create and change the world around them. It's an amazing thing to be around."

Santigold is one of the only—perhaps the only—solo black indie artist currently in the limelight. Even as she is now championed by Jay Z, who recognized her would-be stardom, the paradox is, no doubt, the fact that her whole vibe is low-fi and DIY.

Santigold's live performances offer high-energy machine-gun pop that earns the rare fluid interplay between the well-orchestrated exotic and the provocative. Onstage, Santigold is the embodiment of her songs, framed by her synchronized dancers, whose rump-shaking choreography lends to the efficacy of her act and extension of her sensibilities. She has a hand in everything from their choreography to their custom costumes. Through this, she's redefining what it means to have background dancing. "My dancers and I do the choreography together, and it's done in a style similar to the way that I make my music," Santi explains. "I wanted to draw from various dance styles and piece them together in the same sort of collaged way that my songs are put together. I think it really helps to bring the music into a context that helps the audience to understand the music in a physical way."

According to Santi, she and her two trusty backup dancers, Desiree Godsell and Monica Hatter-Mayes, pull fancy footwork from all over the place—from African tribes to Gene Kelly, from teenagers doing the Jerk to whatever's big down South right now. Fusing her subtle, succinct movements as she precisely sings alongside her dancer's robotic and skittering rhythmic multiplicities.

After touring nonstop for two years, Santi still maintains and adheres to a fresh attitude about her live shows and looks forward to bringing her new songs to the world-wide stage during her upcoming headlining tour. "The experience of performing each song tends to become its own thing live somehow, more based on the live energy of the song, which is sometimes different than the recorded version," she says.

In the midst of the flurry of activity between the day she decided to sing her first lyric nearly a decade ago and now, Santigold has become ready for all that's about to come her way. The humanity portrayed in *Master of My Make-Believe* reveals a redemptive vision for an unforgiving geo-political, polyglot environment. The anthemic lyrics of "Disparate Youth" convey that well: "We said our dreams will carry us/And if they don't fly we will run/Now we push right past to find out/How to win what they all lost. We know now we want more/A life worth fighting for."

"I want to live more gracefully, like to try to be more like the calm at the center of the storm," Santigold says. About the change she wishes to see in the world: "I want us to live more harmoniously." Seems like she's making that dream a reality indeed. ■



Leather Jacket, **THE SWAY**. . White Tee, **BLOOD IS THE NEW BLACK**. Santigold's own jewelry.



BEACH HOUSE

photography / FILIPPO DEL VITA story / HEATHER SEIDLER

stylist / Turner (TURNER-NYC.COM)

makeup/ KIMI YUKI MASAWA hair / BRIAN FISHER

shot @ THE ACE HOTEL, NYC

Not much of an introduction is needed as to who Beach House are. Reigning throne bearer of the dream-pop circuit, the Baltimore-based duo of Victoria Legrand and Alex Scally are ready to deliver their fourth installment, *Bloom*. The album, recorded in a secluded Texas town, offers ascendant indie-pop that earns that rare distinction of sounding the way America feels: full of saffron sun and streaks of sadness. It's more than just the willowy slice of atmospheric pop most are eagerly expecting. If anything, it's the whole dream itself.

Bloom is equal parts indie rock, ethereal soul and outsider pop, all of which are a gestalt model of the dream-pop label that follows Beach House around. Haunting melodies? Check. Hypnotic atmospherics? Check. Light and dense lyrics? Check and check.

Since the pair came together in 2004, their own personal experiences have morphed into a collective vision that has produced some of the most magnificent albums of the past decade. In 2010, their third album, *Teen Dream*, was heralded throughout Internetland and championed fiercely by in-the-know indie cognoscenti, sitting atop of pretty much every year-end Best-Of list. Beach House's newest offering is poised to do the same. Each song flows delightfully into and out of each other, carried over as the music erupts into a tapestry of sound, much like gates opening to caverns of abandoned imagination.

Legrand's quietly magnificent but soaring vocals indelibly soothe and allure while Scally's dew-dripped guitars blend together to create a mélange of noise unified by a great landscape of sound to settle around your ears like a perfumed cloud. All of this leaves little doubt as to the band's ability to touch new ground and create its most immersive and expansive effort to date. Most of all, it encompasses such a broad spectrum of feelings and sounds that it's eluded journalistic pigeonholing solely due to its flexibility in the face of definition.

LADYGUNN spoke to Legrand and Scally about the new album, new directions and a little bit about who they are, giving us an indication of the type of people who have created a sound that has been mimicked by other bands, but never duplicated.

LADYGUNN: First I want to know what does "Bloom" represent for you?

VICTORIA LEGRAND: For us it's another work of ours. "Bloom" as a title is something abstract—like most titles are. It becomes what it is because of some feelings. It just happens. Not something too intellectual should be done about it. When you listen to it, hopefully you'll hear and feel the things inside of it that the title draws from.

It's a really spiritual experience listening to this album. Not in a gospel sense, but in a way that comes from inside of you.

VL: That's all I could really ask for when someone listens to our music. We've moved on from the record in the sense that we've finished it. We've been working on it for two years now. The process of making an album generally takes two years from the first idea that you have down to the artwork to preparing for the tour. At this point, we're just anticipating the release.

Did you have a particular blueprint for this album when you first started writing it or did everything evolve organically?

ALEX SCALLY: Organically on its own. You can just actually put that for every answer and that's probably what I'll be saying. People always want a backstory. People always want to know what it means. And we don't know. We start to play a song, we begin to play a few bars and then it becomes something else. And then once you have more songs you start seeing the whole album and it just evolves in a feeling and that evolves into other songs.

VL: There's never a blueprint, all there ever is a few ideas and inspirations that you keep with you and hold onto. There's never a plan—you

have to have a moment of art on each song. You work diligently and passionately, but you don't really know at the beginning where you're going to end up. You follow a thread and it becomes a record. It tells you where to go. It tells you how big it's going to be. In the beginning, you don't know any of that stuff. A lot of it becomes out of your control—the trial and error becomes part of the process. You try to maintain the first few moments that inspired you. You have to make sure to take care of that inspiration, building structures that preserve that.

You recorded for a few months in Texas. Did you feel getting away from your home town was an essential part of making this album?

AS: The first time we did it, we had too many distractions. So I think that's why we like to go away to a studio. Somewhere where we don't know anyone and there's nothing to do except make music in the studio.

VL: Well, we'll write everything and record the record twice. We've done this for every album. We write everything and then perform it all to get production ideas. We know how we want things to sound and feel all the time. We don't really have any loose ends, so when we go to record there are no interruptions. We don't worry about the arrangements because we know what the identity of the song is. I think that for us, being there for seven weeks, we need to concentrate and not be distracted. Being in that part of the world provides that. It's a small town. There's nothing really there. There's a lot of openness, big skies, it's just desert. It affects you somewhat as a person, but artistically we're control freaks. Everything is already composed.

Even though you say that, I think the album definitely has a sense of exploration. Is there a particular moment that inspired you or pushed you in a certain direction—a particular time or place that stands out as a defining moment that inspired you?

AS: Victoria and I get a lot of inspiration from everything. I think we kind of live our lives like children or something. I think we very much get caught up in the kind of wonder of everything. I get caught up with the love of things and the feeling of wonder. That's just something that I've always been obsessed with. And I stress that that's a big part of this music is expressing that wonder. Exploring it and believing it. So we feel really lucky to be able to travel. Even though you don't get to see a lot of places for more than an hour, just meeting some of the locals is a source of inspiration. It just sticks in your mind. We finally got invited to Japan and when we went, it was completely mind blowing. And you can say that about just about anywhere. I think there's no end to the beauty and wonder everywhere for us.

VL: I really feel like life is pretty insane and miraculous. Every day something happens that ruins or changes you, and I think that traveling all the time, touring, is one of the biggest inspirations. It's the experience of life itself. Those things are always behind our records. Because we're musicians, it's how we express the things in our lives. We just feel compelled to do it. We don't know why; we just make records because we want to. We're lucky that people see and hear things inside the world we create and maybe connect to our experiences, too. A lot of it is subconscious. In music and art, there's an invisible frequency that happens when you're looking and hearing something. That energy that you put into a work of art is literally vibrating through you. I think that there have definitely been things in my life that have inspired a moment creatively, but I find things to be more fascinating when they reach a more universal feeling. They can come from small moments, but move closer towards that larger thing—closer to the sun. It's never going to be like a Sheryl Crow song where it'll be about the guy I met at the bar smoking a cigarette. There's nothing wrong with that, but that's not an inspiring world for me.

Do you ever dream songs? Or lyrics or a sound and wake up singing it? Or try to recreate something that you've dreamt?

VL: Definitely. I've woken up to a melody and tried to remember it. I

also will have heard one in my sleep and recorded it. When that happens it could be important or it could be nothing at all. Sometimes the melody doesn't stick around, and it's just your brain adjusting other things. A lot of people experience colors when they hear music. It's the feeling that a color gives you more than something visual, if that makes any sense. The colors that we choose or pick in our live shows are very deliberate. They're themes that we've played with.

When you play your older material in a live show, songs you wrote eight years ago, do you find a way to connect to the mood of when you first wrote them?

AS: I think so. It's also the audience. You sort of live off of the energy that the audience is giving back to you. Because I don't think we would be playing those songs if we were alone. We usually like to play songs that people are going to get in the moment. We cater a lot to our audience. We put a lot of effort into making a show feel like something. In our turn, we're playing these old songs and not making it feel horrible because were trying to do it for people who know them and want to hear them.

What's the biggest highlight in terms of your career—places you've travelled, people you've met?

VL: There've been so many amazing things that have happened, so it's hard to choose. Going to Japan for the first time was a very beautiful moment in our lives. One thing that I always try to remember is that every day has a special highlight or lowlight, but it doesn't matter because there's going to always be an up and down. In the recent years, I think my trip to Japan was something that I never thought I would do. Whenever you think something can never happen, that's when life throws a surprise at you. I kind of feel like having zero expectations is the best way to be.

Alex, where do you think you'd be in your life if you hadn't met Victoria?

AS: That's a good question. I think I would be playing music, not necessarily in a band but just making it. Because that's what I was doing before I met Victoria. I like a lot of things. I have a lot of interests. There are a lot places I could be in. I could be a teacher. I could have gone back to school and done science stuff because I really like science. I could have done carpentry because my father was a carpenter and I may have continued to work with him because it's really nice. Or in a different band. There's no way I would have been in as good a band as I am in with Victoria, so it'd be likely be a crappy band. So who knows? It is really fun to sit and think about the forks in your life.

You've been quoted as saying that on most of your albums, you only work on two instruments. Is this the same for *Bloom*?

AS: Yeah, I think we work in very much same way. We start every song just the two of us and a lot of the direction where we go is based on what two people can play using two or three instruments. Then we try to make an orchestra out of a couple instruments.

VL: Our core instruments—Alex on guitar and me with the keyboard—are on all of the records. But we've always used more than two instruments. What I was trying to explain is that at the core of the writing process there is always a guitar, a keyboard, and a drum machine. All of the songs we've ever written have involved an organ and a keyboard and a guitar. I think that our ability to construct songs has developed over the years. Our ability to extrapolate landscapes or feelings or big moments out of these simplistic elements and not just piling on different instru-

ments and sounds for no reason.

I think maybe our first record is the most simplistic in terms of guitar, keyboard and drum machine. On "Bloom," there are about fourteen different types of keyboards: piano, organs, a few different electric keyboards, Yamaha, etc. We really have all these amazing sounds, but they have to make sense. They have to fit in the melody and the feeling. There is no end to the universe of sound. When you listen to the record, there are sounds that you can't quite make out what it is, and we spent so much time trying to establish that. There'll be a sound like the fluttering of wings or electronic things on the keyboard. That's something we care about a lot. It's about cultivating and discovering precious things.

Is it tough for you personally to balance the desire for Beach House's success with weariness towards fame?

AS: That's another good question. No because I think that we try all the time to avoid certain types of exposure. I think there's a really big difference between that cheap fame where people know who you are in your personal life and where people know you as an artist and for your music. I think we're trying all the time to go through that at once. Artists worry that people won't appreciate what you do, but we very much worry that people understand what we do. We turn down a lot of things that are offered because we don't think it's the right kind of exposure. It's about what we've developed and our aesthetic for our fans.

What kind of feelings and influences trickle into your sound or infiltrate your songwriting?

AS: I think something that is constantly a source of inspiration is that feeling of love when you get into art. You get this thing where something is really beautiful. And then really horrifying at the same time. I think it's that feeling, which you find in so many places in art and film and visual art and music, that whirlwind feeling of beauty and horror. It's such an insanely inspiring feeling. for us.

Yeah I think that dichotomy of light and dark is something that's very essential to the albums that I connect to. You can take a really beautiful melody and counteract it with a certain lyric or a way of singing that lyric and it can just create that feeling...

AS: Yeah and of course we're talking about subtle abstractions. I think more than anything it's the multiplicity of things. I think that Victoria and I feel like you just don't get any joy when you experience art that's too simple, like 'I'm happy' or 'I'm mad' or 'This is horrible.' It's not realistic, it doesn't hold a mirror to reality. Things that are truthfully art are twisted.

The theme of this issue is "Obsession and Confession," so what's your current obsession and if you could confess anything to Ladygunn, what would it be?

VL: I'm currently kind of obsessed with bananas right now. My confession is that I'm currently needing to sleep a lot. Actually another obsession of mine right now is the Kentucky Derby horse that just won. I'm trying to find out about this old horse. I think I get obsessed with things pretty often so it's hard to find one particular thing.

AS: In my down time I've been reading about the modern world of physics. A lot of crazy stuff is going on right now in technology. A confession...um, my first arena concert was No Doubt. ■



On Victoria; Shirt, **KENZO**. Grey Moto Jacket, **ACNE**. Jeans, **COURT**. Rings; Her own **BLISS LAU**. On Alex ; His own clothes.

Marina Diamandis, the 26-year-old Welsh singer-songwriter known by her stage moniker MARINA AND THE DIAMONDS, dominated 2010 with her debut album and will no doubt repeat that feat in 2012, with the release of her sophomore effort *Electra Heart*.

In a rather short period of time, pop sensation Marina and the Diamonds garnered major recognition in the UK with Best Artist and Hottest Woman nominations across the awards shows, winning Best UK Act at the 2010 MTV Europe Music Awards and sweeping the tops of every major year-end poll. Her debut was certified silver in the UK before it was even released, making her the perfect candidate to support Katy Perry during her CALIFORNIA DREAMS tour. The songstress is also the opening act for Coldplay's 2012 worldwide tour.

In addition to her vivid music, Marina is also distinguished for her unique taste although her appeal extends far beyond her notable good-looks. With her operatic-pop voice and Velcro catchy songs she proves to be an arresting performer who incidentally has a beguilingly recognizable appearance. VOGUE UK took notice of this and featured Marina on their website for a month-long editorial, where she wrote daily about her style choices and glamour routines. Marina also became a brand ambassador for MAX FACTOR, bringing her wide-eyed face even more exposure.

Born in Wales, raised in Greece and currently residing in London, Marina's upbringing is as untraditional as her music. It's also a hardly known fact that Diamandis has a rare sensory condition called Synesthesia, which causes you to involuntarily see letters, numbers, sounds, even musical notes as different colors. Unless you're into dropping acid, imagining that perspective might be rather difficult. It'd certainly be interesting to see what's going through her head while she is composing a song. Pastel pinks, sky blue, mint green and lemon yellow? She tells me her current obsession is the color pink. "My obsession right now is pink. I love it and I literally want to look like a walking heart!" she says with a chuckle.

A self-described indie artist with mainstream pop goals, Marina unapologetically revels in her own electro-pop world, creating uncompromising dance songs. Plus she's unworried about fame or being under the microscope. "I feel like people are uncomfortable about the idea of art being in the commercial world," Marina says. "But for me, I think the minute that you do your first gig, you're selling your music. I think that everyone has to make money at the end of the day, but as long as it's actual art you're selling I think it's okay. Feelings about art and its commerce and how you can operate in that and in the knowledge that you are a product, I'm very comfortable with that really. I think as long as it goes outside of it and doesn't go into the creative process, that's fine."

Thinking of your album as a product to pitch is generally a foreign concept to most artists, particularly in the press-shy indie world. "I get why people have reservations about it," she tells me. "It's not very romantic, is it? People think of art as something magical and the way in which we make it is magical. But once it's made... you end up being a product in the pop world. You can go against reality and create something but you have make sure it's profitable too."

With her new album, Marina is poised to dominate this year's musical landscape profitably without being manufactured or marginalized. She plays out a menagerie of female archetypes and has yet again created imaginative, hotly-tipped pop music for the masses. With the album's first single, the Diplo-produced track "Primadonna", Marina and the Diamonds deliver another blazing pocket-rocket exploding onto airwaves and dance-floors, becoming her highest charting single to date. The album is crammed with likewise glam-pop anthems that prove to be quite infectious, living up to their author's ambitious aspirations.

Marina cites love and world-renowned conceptual artist Jenny Holzer as one of the biggest influences on *Electra Heart*. "She's [Holzer] got this work called TRUISMS. It's basically a series of statements, based on letters of the alphabet—there are ten truisms that begin with A. It's a bit weird, it's a universal truth. That's an inspiration when I'm writing. Even though it's an album inspired by love, it didn't end up being about a specific person but rather because something happened at the beginning of writing it. I realized I was collecting all these truths about love because of the experience of the past year. I just felt there wasn't a song out like that...where you have been hurt by someone and where you can feel the truth and humor at the same time. I think that's my skill as an artist."

It's apparent that Marina possesses a genuine realness that's singularly lacking in today's fame-seeking bloated Bieber-ruled pop world. One senses that Marina, like her idols Madonna, Kate Bush and Annie Lennox, is a woman with gobs of talent who will do things her own way. "I relate to those women because they basically defied stereotypes. I'll never be the girl to do incredible ballads—I'm much more of the cerebral type," she explains. "That's kind of the identity of the record. When describing herself she's refreshingly honest. "I crave a natural, simple life whilst chasing an artificial, dirty dream," she admits. "Can you be within popular culture without becoming it?"

For a girl who is ready to take over 2012 and compete with the master class of Florence + The Machine and PJ Harvey, that's a good question. A very good question indeed. We'll see how it gets answered. Shine on you crazy diamond. ■

MARINA AND THE DIAMONDS

photography / SHANNA FISHER story / HEATHER SEIDLER

hair / ALBERTO GUZMAN makeup / APRIL GREAVES

SHIRLEY MANSON

story / **LOGAN BRENDT**

photography / **FRANK W. OCKENFELS**

stylist / **MARJAN MALAKPOUR @ WWW.MARGARETMALDONADO.COM**

assistant stylists / **MARNIKA WEISS+ BEAU BARELA**

makeup / **DONALD SIMROCK @ MARGARET MALDONADO**

hair / **CLYDE HAYGOOD @ MARGARET MALDONADO USING MOROCCAN OIL**

Shot @ **MILK STUDIOS, LOS ANGELES.**

“It was extraordinarily surreal and really frightening familiar, like seven years hadn’t passed at all,” Shirley Manson says in review of Garbage’s show the night before, their first show in that many years. As she sits in the makeup chair at Milk Studios in Los Angeles, hair flowing down and almost makeup-less face glowing, Manson confesses she had doubts about being able to remember how to perform at all. The feeling quickly passed as soon as the music started and she was up on the Bootleg Theater stage.

Manson is a consummate professional. With seventeen years of experience as the lead singer in Garbage, plus years in bands prior to that, she definitely knows what she’s doing. When you watch Shirley perform, you’re mesmerized at the beauty and strength. She brings enormous fascination to the band with her lush voice, thought-provoking and personal lyrics, and unique aesthetic style. With the rest of the band comprised of immensely successful musicians and producers like Butch Vig, Duke Erikson, and Steve Marker, it’s no wonder that Garbage has become as successful as they have.

It has been seven years since Garbage’s last album. Their fifth studio album, *Not Your Kind of People*, is being released on their own record label, STUNVOLUME. They’re proud of the result and don’t care if you like it or not. They have their own style and don’t fit into the mold. After years away from each other, they convened at the Atwater Village recording studios in Los Angeles to talk, drink wine, and see what music could come out of it. The result was the song “Battle In Me”. This was the one that made them get excited about making music with each other again. Manson knew right there that they were going to make a really good record. “It was sort of the key to me, because I felt like this is exactly how we should sound. It’s who we are as a band, and it didn’t sound like anybody else,” she says, feeling like if she could get excited about the track, then it had the potential to excite other people.

Manson seems almost mythical on stage and in music videos and comes equipped with a “don’t fuck with me” kind of attitude. Many have taken notice of her since 1995 and watched her evolution not only as a singer, but also a fashion icon. For the past seventeen years, she may have taken more than a fair share of knocks, but she’s had grand successes as well. Visually, it’s as though time has never touched her. She’s youthful and vibrant. One thing that has always

made her stand out is her ability to be open, honest, and embody female power and elegance. In short, Manson’s got her shit together. While her makeup is being applied, we talk about the new album, the world tour, her art obsessions, and her personal life.

After a seven year hiatus, it was challenging to get started all over again. “When a band [takes a year off], there’s this kind of crazy momentum that occurs that keeps the ball rolling. For us, we took so much time off, that we had no momentum. It’s sort of like the laws of inertia. It takes a phenomenal amount of force to get the ball rolling again.”

During Garbage’s break, Manson as well as the rest of the band had gone on to take care of their personal lives and embarked on other musical journeys. Manson guest starred on tracks for Gavin Rossdale and Serj Tankian, and also developed an acting career as well. Her biggest role was on the weekly television show TERMINATOR: THE SARAH CONNOR CHRONICLES, where she played one of the main characters, a shape-shifting female Terminator disguised as a CEO of a high-tech corporation. After that, her acting teacher felt that she needed to go audition for more things, because Manson was starting to get scared at the idea of auditioning. One audition she decided to go on was for the upcoming film KNIFE FIGHT with Rob Lowe and Eric McCormack, which is about the dark side of politics. “[My acting teacher] was encouraging me to start getting out and getting rejected. She said, ‘The only way you learn is by going up for these roles and failing. So go fail.’ But in this particular instance, I got the gig,” Manson laughs her charismatic and throaty laugh.

Now that Garbage is back in full power, they’re starting their first world tour in years, with the added talents of bassist Eric Avery of Jane’s Addiction fame. They’ll be playing Rome for the first time, which is a dream of Manson’s, and returning to Japan, which she also looks forward to. A lot of places for her are returns to cities she’s obsessed with. Manson says, “We wouldn’t be doing this if we weren’t looking forward to it.”

You’d think with all the hard work they’ve done to achieve the end results of *Not Your Kind of People*, Garbage would celebrate. But they don’t. Manson says, “We watch other bands do that sort of stuff: throw big parties and invite famous people. But for some reason we

Gold lame jacket, **THOMAS WYLDE**. Gold chain belt, **THOMAS WYLDE**. Gold necklace, **CHARLES ALBERT**. Gold and black diamond ring, **LONDON MANORI**. Black body tube, **JEAN COLONNA AVAILABLE @ justoneeye.com**. Boots, **JEROME ROUSSEAU**.

never get to the point where we feel like we're done. There's always something else that needs to happen." That something else is usually promotion, photo shoots, tours, and interviews like this. It can be difficult and tiring, but Manson handles the role well.

Because Manson's voice is in top form on this album, I ask what she's been doing to maintain its luster. "Nothing," she replies. "It's weird to have spent my whole life as a singer, since I don't think of myself as one." She doesn't do vocal exercises or anything else to strengthen her voice. She also won't be able to tell you if she agrees with others who consider her a contralto. Manson was a soprano when she was a child singing in the choir, but she never adjusted the title placed over her. "I don't think I'm a soprano. I don't know what the hell I am," she smiles. When I mention she could be a contralto; the lowest female singing voice, she says, "I love that. I'll take it."

Manson's into alternative female voices, personal influences like Siouxsie and the Banshees, Cocteau Twins, and Patti Smith. These are the records she went back and listened to before recording the album, the voices that inspired her to be an artist. "There's a lot of pressure I think for women right now to take the easy road out and make pop records, and dance as fast as they can, and look pretty and be young, be this and be that. It's just at odds with who I am. I got to the point where I felt a little isolated, like, 'Is there nobody else out there that feels like I do? Sick of all this kind of stuff?' So that's why I went back to touch the stone."

When Garbage first began in 1995, it was a great time for alternative music. "I was lucky. I rode that wave. I think it's really, really hard now for women with an alternative voice to be heard. It's almost impossible," she says. Manson is a big believer in female empowerment and she's not just frustrated with the music industry, but with culture as a whole. "It's what I call the Mad Men culture, where women are expected to be perfect. I just find it really a little dull after a while, and really uninspiring, because I want to see a little mess. I want to hear the truth about something. I think as human beings, we're really messy."

Ironically, part of Manson's messiness is her non-messiness. As a true Virgo, she says, "I'm very controlling. I'm a neat freak." Even though it's at odds with her visual aesthetic of liking homes that are very arty and bohemian, she says it's not her. "I pick things up and tidy them away all the time. My mum grew up in an orphanage, so she was really disciplined. She just taught me to be really disciplined in that way. My house is very neat. I'd love to be messy. I love going into homes that are all sprawling with life. I want that, but I can't live in it."

As her hair is styled, she remarks on how wearing her hair down always makes her feel like she looks submissive, saying "I'll see long hair on other women and think, 'God, she's got beautiful hair', but I just don't identify with that [look]." The hair style that she loved the most which horrified people, was when she shaved her head. "I dyed my hair blonde and I loved it. Everybody else was like, 'Oh my God, she looks awful!' I felt free and beautiful. I performed on Letterman once and I think my hair was all shaved except for what Americans call 'bangs', and people from the record company were calling me up going, 'Your hair is a disaster, what do we do about it?'" Now that they are on their own record label, she is able to maintain more of her artistic expression without having to worry about what someone else is going to say.

For *Not Your Kind of People*, Manson was inspired visually, as music is inspired by all the senses. Surrealism has been big for her recently, and you can see it in the recent music video for "Blood For Poppies", their first single off the album. There's a strong reference to the 1929 silent surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou*. Not to mention the surrealist influences in our photo shoot where Manson collaborated with famed photographer and friend Frank Ockenfels. Manson's visual aesthetic, including photos and music videos, is very much a collaborative effort and not



manufactured. As a female lead singer, she just doesn't want to be a fashion model in photos. She has ideas that she wants to express and artistic avenues she wants to explore, and is very devoted to these sorts of things when she is able to create.

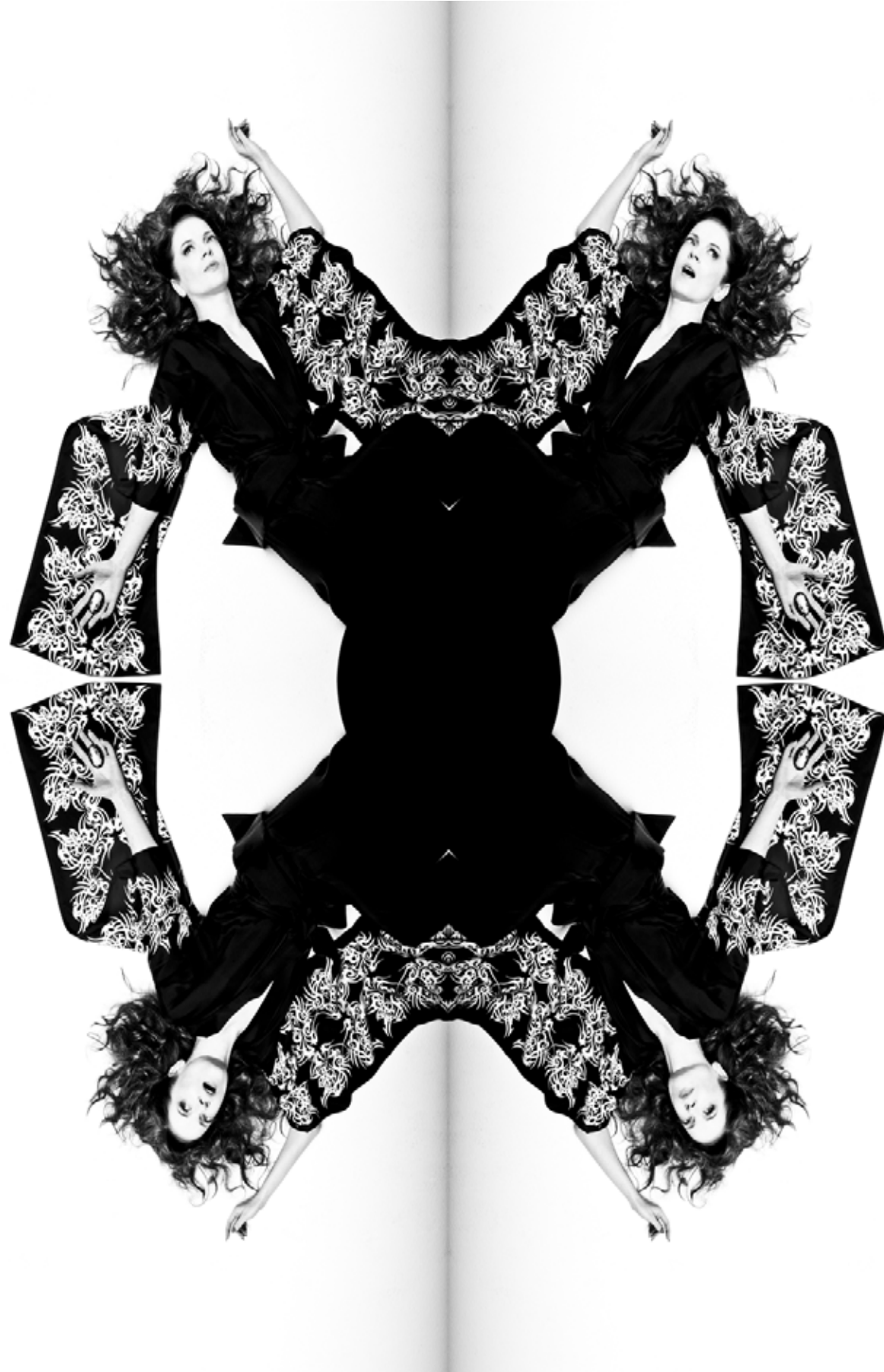
Some of her visual influences while writing these new songs were artists like, Louise Bourgeois, Tracey Emin, Francesca Woodman, and many female surrealists. Manson has many personal and strong attachments to these artists and their work. "I got like really dangerously obsessed with Louise Bourgeois," she says. When Manson was in London years ago and was looking for something to do one day, she and her good friend Sophie Muller (who directed many of Garbage's music videos, including their last video for "Tell Me Where It Hurts"), stumbled upon the work of Louise Bourgeois at the Tate Modern. "We [also] traveled to Paris to see the retrospective there, and we saw it in New York. Like total weirdo fan girls," she laughs. "At the time, Louise was ninety-six years old (she has since died) and still making art. She held salons at her New York apartment, bringing in new artists and discussing her work and being really generous. She just totally changed my whole outlook on what it means to be creative and what it means to take chances, and age, and be human, and be real."

When Manson is asked if she ever gets uncomfortable or feels pressure when someone says that they admire what she does, or thinks of her as their idol, she replies, "I think when I was younger and that would happen, I'd feel unworthy of that kind of comment." As she has had a lot of time to reflect on the music she created with Garbage and everything they've done in their long career, she realizes that these compliments are a huge privilege. "It's enormously flattering when somebody says, 'You've touched my life,' because I know what it was like for my idols." Her voice grows softer and more sentimental. "My idols touched my life." She continues, "At the risk of sounding like a crazy person, I love it. I can't get enough if it," she says, laughing. "It means a lot to think that maybe something you said or a song you wrote brought comfort or inspired somebody. That is amazing." She agrees that the relationship with one's idol is a weird one. With a smile, she says, "You're talking to somebody who, when I met some of my idols, burst into tears. I really lost my shit and cried when I met Patti Smith."

Last year, Manson also got the chance to interview the legendary and gorgeous redhead Raquel Welch for ELLE Magazine. "It was really surreal to be the interviewer. Suddenly I got a whole different perspective of the art of interviewing. The art of listening. The art of curiosity. All dying arts at this point. To write for ELLE was a big honor for me, and to meet somebody as inspiring as Raquel Welch was also such an incredible sort of gift, because you don't often get to meet somebody that's a legend and has been through everything."

With so many gorgeous examples, it's a wonder why society doesn't seem to prefer those with red hair and instead, as Manson has put it in the past, they get a "rough ride". Manson thinks it's because eugenically, culture is programmed to eradicate the weak genes. "We're rare and recessive, and I think evolution just destroys anything that's weak. That's just how it goes. I think what's at play is just an inherent disgust with our recessive genes."

With all the media attention on bullying now, Manson finds it hard to give advice or insight for those who are currently being bullied, because she knows it's hard. "I have to say, there's been a lot of talk by a lot of celebrities talking about bullying. But, a cruel comment isn't bullying, it's just a cruel comment." Manson becomes even more serious and continues, "Bullying is relentless and daily, and literally a



reign of terror. It's very difficult for a young person to navigate that. I'm not sure what really is the best advice, because it's almost impossible to bring comfort to someone who's enduring that." Between psychological and physical bullying, she hopes that those being psychologically bullied can realize that, "Words are just words. They're not real. If you have the ability to switch that noise out of your life— just realize they're words and turn the volume down on it, that would be the greatest advice I could give to a young person. But when you're young, you can't necessarily receive that kind of information." She also encourages those being physically bullied to seek help and tell somebody, have somebody intervene, or go to the police. "Again, when you're scared, it's hard to want to push up against that. It's awful. I'm glad I'm not young anymore," she says.

Asked for her best piece of career and life advice, Manson feels that people, and young women in general, need to learn how not to be discouraged so easily. "They try something and they get a knock, and then they just let that define them forevermore. They don't want to take another hit so they just stop chasing their dreams, and they make do with boyfriends that they're not really in love with. I think you just have to get to the point where you get hit and you stand back up. You just keep doing that. [Even if] you take a lot of hits and you're like, 'I'm still not where I want to be and I've still not got the life I want,' well, then you just have to keep trying." It's good advice for everyone, because it's so true.

With the new songs on *Not Your Kind of People*, Manson reflects on what experiences from the past seven years inspired them. One of the major turning points was the death of her mother. Manson stopped wanting to make music after her mother died because she no longer saw the point in it. "My success was way more fun for my mum in some ways than it was for me. My mum was so proud. So, not to have that around— I just felt that there was no point in me pursuing anything like that anymore," she says. It took about two and a half years for Manson to get back to the original reason she wanted to make music, be creative, take risks, and put herself out there, which in the end, she felt was constructive for her. She adds, "To lose someone you really, really love is really, really painful, but can also in a strange and unexpected way be empowering."

As I wonder if this somehow strengthened or destroyed any sort of spirituality she had, she confesses, "If anything, it just reaffirmed my beliefs of nonbelief. But it strengthened my resolve as a person. As an adult, I sort of realized that I had to take responsibility for my own life, be a grown-up, and really enjoy my life and not feel guilty about that." ■

SPIRITUALIZED

story / **ERICKA CLEVINGER** photographer / **BRIAN SCHUTZA**

Confession: Jason Pierce is Obsessed with HIMSELF. Double confession: I am too!

On my trip to New York City, I got the privilege of meeting with Jason Pierce of Spiritualized. This proved to be a challenging task. After sleeping thirty minutes past my alarm, taking the subway the wrong direction, walking eight blocks in the pouring rain, I finally decided to take a cab to the Ace Hotel. That's where Jason Pierce was waiting. And the journey was well worth it.

Over coffee and eggs, Pierce and I discussed his newest album, *Sweet Heart, Sweet Light*. It's his seventh studio album and was made while undergoing Chemotherapy for liver cancer. The outcome: a traditional album stuffed with sentimental proclamations of life. Between the clanking of dishes and the chatter of voices, I fell into a trance listening to the wise words of a man who has lived a satisfying life in a love affair with music. When asked to touch base on the theme of our issue, "Obsession + Confession," Pierce explained that the only life worth living is one spent completely devoted to yourself and the things you find beautiful. His intoxicating mix of fragile strength and boyish devotion made almost every word uttered pure poetry. The way Pierce spoke of his album, life, and soul is too beautiful to be filtered through my own voice....so I'll let him do the talking.

LADYGUNN: Whats your favorite part about making music?

JASON PIERCE: Well I just got out. It's been a couple years since my last album. The exciting part is being on the road and playing shows -making records is just the only way to keep going. When I run out of shows, I have to go and make a record. Making a record is the really fucking hard because I'm not just making music, I'm trying to capture something. I want my records to be the most grandiose, detailed, joyous things - but I also want them to be personal and fragile, all within the same three seconds. That's really hard. Whereas playing shows is about the immediacy of the great flow.

What would you like to say about your new album?

I wanted to make a really fucking beautiful album. Whether I succeeded or not is irrelevant. I didn't set out to make the greatest record in the world - just an honest one. This record is quite traditional. I got seriously into free jazz and improv music, where it's about making sounds within the instrument. I find it more

interesting when people try and find different sounds within their instrument, rather than looking for abstract sounds. I got into the actual playing of music.

Most great albums quietly sit on your shelf and when you take them down and listen to them you think, 'Man that's a really great album.' I started thinking that most of the great albums are made by kids ages nineteen to twenty-six, and they're full of arrogance of youth. They're throwing rocks at you and messing up your floor and they have the wisdom and folly of youth - but I'm not a kid anymore. To me the worst thing is when people try to relive their youth. I wanted to make something that was fitting to my age, and still a beautiful record. Rock and Roll ages poorly - getting bloated and clueless, or trying to relive what they had. I just wanted to make a record that is where I am now, so I did.

Can you tell me what you're obsessed with now?

I have this thing where I want to invert the chord. Where you take the base note and you put it back on the top. I want to get the next highest instrument and keep doing that. But I don't want to invert the chord and get rid of the old chord; I want to keep it always. So when I'm making these things, it's like finding a tipping point so it's not too dense and full of everything. I'm completely obsessed with it. It's like trying to find the formula behind music. I can play the same song every day for a year and different things will still affect me. Its like OCD - I don't mind going through the motions.

What was the first album you became obsessed with?

Well, I feel like I got lucky with the first album I bought. These are a chain of chemists in the UK called Boots that used to sell records. I was in there when I was fourteen and saw The Stooges album called Raw Power and bought it without any prior knowledge. I can't remember why. I think I bought it because of how Iggy looked in his silver pants. I like all of Iggy's stuff. I still do.

What advice would you give a young musician?

First off, DON'T TAKE ADVICE. Second, BE TRUE TO YOURSELF and third, DO WHAT YOU WANT TO DO. It's really simple. I remember the first record we made with Space-men 3 [Pierce's alt-rock band from the 1980s], we went to a studio and the guy who owned the studio had a giant desk around him that you had to climb a ladder to get to. No one else could get near it. He controlled our music and

I thought, 'I never want to make a record like this again. I want to be there pushing the faders and understanding what it is that makes your music work.'

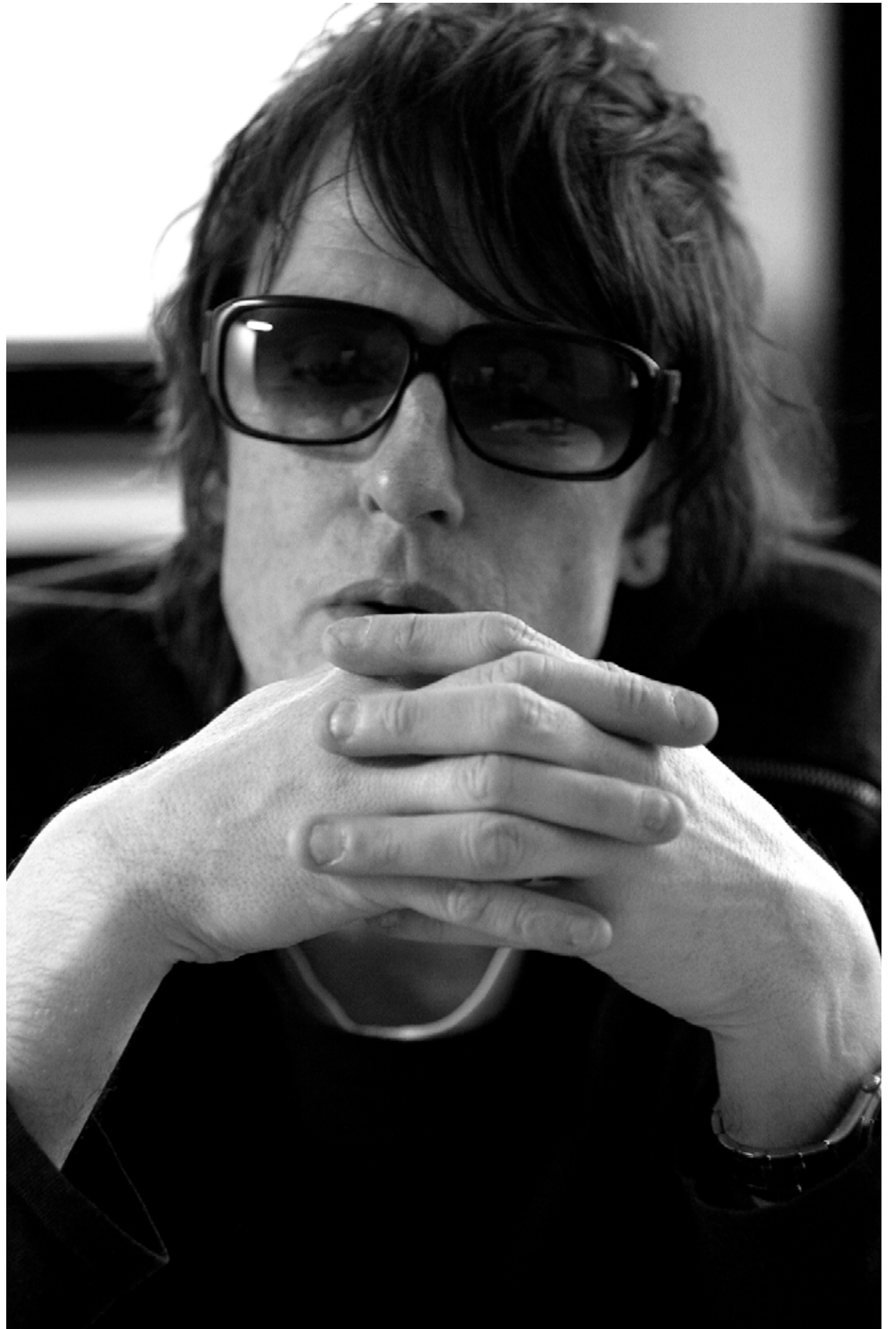
Music can be too loud, too soft, too treble or too base. All you have to do is balance it. It's not difficult. But you have to understand what it is that you are doing. The only way to understand it is to do it. To make fuck ups, to make mistakes. You learn more from mistakes than you ever will from someone giving you advice of what to avoid. Jump into it - take your life jacket off and jump in.

Do you feel lucky to have the career you have?

I'm locked into a cycle where I tour as long as I can. When I'm done - I make a record. But over time when I make a record, I feel like one of those guys going into the Battle of Waterloo. You put your tunic on and it's all brand new and you strap your bullets around you and you put on your new hat and you think, 'Wow, this is going to be exciting. You forget about the horror and battle. Then you're actually there and everyone is trying to shoot you and it's full of misery. I'm not suggesting that making a record is really like being in a battle, but I forget how fucking hard it is. I forget how obsessive you have to be and how much it becomes the most important thing in your life. There's no point doing it unless it is the single most important thing in your life. It's like trying to document something. There is no point trying to document something that isn't beautiful, that isn't fully realized.

You get one shot at making a record. You can't take a record back and make changes. Once I've finished it—it's not about me anymore. It's about how it related to the people who listen to it. It's really important that you've explored every way it could be. With music or art, it's like you're throwing all the pieces up in the air and they settle.

My obsession is in the details of this record and the way the songs fit together and the balancing act to make it work. But after it's released, it's not about that. It's about someone driving across the desert or First Avenue with someone they love, and they're playing my music and it moves them in a way they'll remember for the rest of their life. In a way, obsession is completely irrelevant. ■



story / **HEATHER SEIDLER**

photography / **SHANNA FISHER**

stylist / **ANNIE PSALTIRAS @ THE WALL GROUP**

groomer / **KIM VERBECK @ THE WALL GROUP**

Outside the trendy, single-man’s den known as King’s Road Café, nestled in the heart of West Hollywood, Gabriel Mann has locked his keys inside his car. For the fourth time this month. First order of business, call AAA. As we wait, no topic is off-limits and it’s a good hour before we get anything official down on tape. But more on that later. First, let’s introduce the subject of my story, the 6’2, thirty-nine-year-old actor/model from Connecticut with the unassuming good looks of one who isn’t too conscious of his pleasing outer appearance.

Unembellished by the stylings of the upper-crust character he portrays onscreen, Mann is dressed casually in a gray cotton sweater and comfy cargo pants, whose baggy pockets are the likely culprit of his often-lost keys. His sweater hangs on his shoulders like the wind adorably blew it there. Mann comes across as a highly attentive and happy actor, pleased even to be doing an interview on a Saturday afternoon—an incalculable rarity amongst thespians, especially those on top-rated TV shows.

Mann portrays the duplicitous Nolan Ross on ABC’s successful nighttime drama REVENGE. For the uninitiated: take the plot of the novel “Count of Monte Christo,” plop it into the Hamptons, make the protagonist a disgruntled young lady, add a dodgy billionaire, a few townies, a corrupt matriarch, and the premise of REVENGE begins to unfold. Who doesn’t enjoy a juicy modern re-telling of retribution and sordid scandal? Mann’s character Nolan is a technological kingpin with seemingly illimitable wads of cash, peacocking through the Hamptons with a proclivity for dastardly deeds and pop-collared Polo shirts. His character’s eccentricities don’t fall far from the young billionaire boilerplate, but there’s an affable naivety and fragility about this lonely/afflicted rich guy that keeps fans drawn to his stinky-doings. He’s the classic archetypal villain, capable of being both a brilliant bad-die and a sympathetic softie.

Even when the contrarian Nolan takes his revenging a bit far, consider the bit of benevolence imbued in Mann’s mercurial portrayal of him, be it proactive or otherwise. Mann talks openly about Nolan’s moral ambiguity and the perks of bringing such a questionable protagonist to life.

“I think he’s torn between two parallel sides of himself,” Mann explains. “He’s the

dichotomy of a bottomless pit of loneliness and riches, coupled with the rejection that he experienced growing up from people he looked to for support. So this has turned him into a rather twisted character. In certain moments, he can be very strange and cerebral, and in other moments he’s a complete bully and messes with everything. To me, Nolan is very much a little kid looking for approval. The beauty of this character is that my parameters are pretty wide at this point.”

With the show’s many plot-twists and cryptic cliffhangers, Mann himself is continuously wondering which direction his character will go. “We usually get the scripts the day before shooting, so we’re sort of living in the moment. When you get a script far in advance, you get the arc of the character in the story and then you can prepare accordingly. I was initially very afraid of taking on a series where the plot and character twists are kept so close to the vest. At first, I didn’t know how to build a character without knowing what their intentions are. As we went along, I started to realize this was just like life—you never know what’s going to happen next. Something about that dynamic is really, really fun because it keeps you on your toes. I’m someone in the past who has always extensively prepared before I went in front of the camera. So it’s been a pretty incredible time because it’s really allowed me to expand my view of how I work and what’s possible as an actor. I’ve really felt as though this is a new chapter in my career unlike any that has come before. I’m completely grateful for it, and happy that I didn’t give up when I had all of those initial fears.”

Over the years Mann has shown up in diverse film/television roles both big and small, from the BOURNE IDENTITY trilogy to MAD MEN. But his current role has catapulted him into the candied hearts of drama-loving women worldwide. Although “star power” can lead to all mentions of blinding ego, clothing endorsements and slim shadiness, there are those actors whose steady rise to the top isn’t laden with particular garish unusualness and emotional corruption. Mann, thankfully, is one of those. The actor is that rare combination of genuine modesty, enthusiasm for what he does and candid gratitude for what success brings him. The perfect parity of the sincerity and fluidity of a truly forthright, unpretentious actor. You could be around him for

a mere few hours and feel like you’ve gotten the same treatment as someone he’s known for years.

“For a very long time I’ve worked and worked, sort of off the map, and really kept an under the radar anonymity. Now it’s a little bit harder to go to the bodega and get a six-pack of beer looking like hell. People are taking pictures of you and screaming,” says Mann. “Part of the REVENGE portion of my career was having a chunk of my hair pulled out at an award show by some woman I couldn’t identify until she was running down the red carpet with, literally, a hunk of my hair in her hand. Hopefully she didn’t end up making a voodoo doll or something. In a kind of backwards way, I was kind of happy that happened because I knew I had turned a corner in my career,” he laughs. “I’m like, ‘Enjoy it while it lasts, my friend!’” For further proof of his humility, look no further than the modest car he locked his keys into. Despite his growing television star salary, he still drives his early-nineties, gold Saturn station wagon, humorously named “Golden Globe.” During his talk show debut on the Ellen DeGeneres Show, she gave him a bumper sticker that reads: “In this beat up car is a HUGE, HUGE TV star.” Gotta hand it to you, Ellen. Nailed it. Navigating within an industry that is gravely hyper-critical and judged at every turn can be a skill not oft endowed. Mann seems to embody the acuity necessary to tether the line and chart those grimy waters without drowning. “The best part of having the success of this show come at this part of my life is that I’ve been able to have a balanced perspective on what this is,” Mann admits. “It’s been wonderful that I kind of lucked into something this successful. I think to either take that for granted or let it blow too much smoke into yourself is a recipe for disaster. As quick as it comes, it goes.”

Mann reveals he was two weeks away from quitting acting and moving back home when he got the script for REVENGE. When recalling stories about his past hard-knocks, he flashes an adolescent smile and recalls a particular turning point in his life. “I remember staying at a friend’s apartment in New York—she had just moved in—and had no furniture yet. She was sleeping on couch cushions, so I took the floor. In the middle of the night, the refrigerator broke, so I woke up sleeping in a puddle of dirty fridge water. I thought, ‘THAT’S IT—one day, one day—I’m going to sleep in the best

GABRIEL MANN



Leather jacket, **VINTAGE**. T-shirt, Belt and Boots, **CHUCK’S VINTAGE**, Los Angeles. Jeans, **J BRAND**.



bed ever.” Fairly certain he’ll never have to worry about acquiring a bed again.

With all the glorified scheming in his onscreen world, Mann’s thoughts aren’t much concerned with retaliations. “I don’t really believe in revenge. I think the boomerang of karma will take care of things for you,” Mann says. Similarly he doesn’t buy into the emphasis on appearance or spectacle of beauty that also inhabits his onscreen Hamptons microcosm. “So much of us get hung up on what we see, and people get misinterpreted and misunderstood on such basic visual cues. I’m just more interested in the quality of a person’s soul,” he says. “If I could, I’d invent a pill that people could take that would allow people to see through a person to what their essence is, see past everything on the outside to see what the truth of their heart is.” Rather refreshing to hear from an emerging actor who obviously isn’t notching his belt, collecting Lamborghinis, or vetting an agenda to be a laconic and loaded high-quote celebrity.

As the café is closing shop, we wrap up the interview just as Gabriel has to split to go on a date. The actor’s refreshing blue eyes can’t hide their excitement and incredulity as we head out the door. He comments on the difficulty of dating in Los Angeles. It appears he too has weathered a few swims in the murky LA dating pool. I agree, finding love through the eternal lambada of La-la Land can be a messy affair, not for the faint or vengeful of heart. ■

Shirt, **STEVEN ALAN**. Jeans, **J BRAND**. Vintage Levi’s jacket, Vintage belt, Vintage boots, **CHUCK’S VINTAGE**, Los Angeles.

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ALEX BRECKENRIDGE

story / **HEATHER SEIDLER**

photographer/ **SHALON GOSS** *stylist* / **CALLAN STOKES**

hair / **RAMSELL MARTINEZ** *makeup* / **JENNIFER CHARM**



Dress, **RACHEL PALLY**. Gold and Pearl Necklace, **STYLIST OWN**. Gold Necklace, **VANESSA MOONEY**. Bracelet, **AQUA**.

It's a sunny day in Los Angeles, which is not a rare occurrence, but this is a particularly lovely, bright day. When I sit down across from Alexandra Breckenridge, I'm greeted with a radiant nuclear bomb smile, red-hot waves of hair and preternatural poise. We are seated on a bench under a canopy of trees at a café in Griffith Park, the sunlight streaking through the watercolor branches. I quickly discover, just as there's no pretension in the way Breckenridge performs, there's no pretension when you talk to her.

With her porcelain complexion and wide-set eyes, the 30-year-old actress has the doll-like good looks of fabled fairy tale princesses—but the forthright and sharp-witted mind of a modern day lady. Breckenridge is not new to acting with regular roles on *FAMILY GUY*, *LIFE UNEXPECTED*, *TRUE BLOOD* and *DIRT*. But her big breakout came this year with her performance as the sexy ghost-maid Moira on the macabre hit-show *AMERICAN HORROR STORY*. Playing a maid who does more than just clean house, Breckenridge's scorching performance has gained her notoriety amongst the male gender, portraying an overly-scintillating vixen with both sultry etherealness and unsettling eroticism.

"Now I get these weird, gawky rocker guys asking me out on Twitter and through friends.. But I'm not that girl in the TV show. I'm not walking around in an S&M outfit, rubbing my tits," Breckenridge says. "I'm pretty normal. I'm pretty nerdy. I'm refurbishing my doll-house."

Raised in Connecticut, Breckenridge relocated to Los Angeles at twelve years old and landed her first TV roles in 2000 on *DAWSON'S CREEK* and *FREAKS AND GEEKS*. Not a bad a start. Over the last decade, she has appeared in a wide spectrum of film and television roles and has been successful while remaining under the radar until now. Her perspective is still the same and is what it should be.

"It's been very interesting to act for fourteen years and steadily work the last six and not have to get any other sort of job between gigs," she says, joyfully sipping on her tea like it's nectar from the sky. "Before now I've just been working and not really getting much recognition for anything. Then suddenly you do a part in a show, you get really big and people recognize you all the time and want to take pictures, do all these interviews, and there's all this handshaking. It's really bizarre because you get all this gratification and get noticed and you're like,

'But I've been here for a while!' I don't know how to describe it really. It's a strange place to be because I'm still the same person and I don't think any better or worse of myself, but other people's opinions of me have risen and I don't know what that is, I don't know how to describe that feeling."

She lets out warm laughter. "It's like now you're noticing me? I've been here all along. Do I actually deserve this now or what? I don't know."

In such a cloak-and-dagger industry, the vigor with which Breckenridge clutches on to her own authenticity is something you'd like to help her to keep to. As she stands at the precipice of her success, her smarts and her forthrightness makes you root for her. Her less than modest and hard-earned fanbase is something she's happy didn't come immediately, early in her life—her every move tracked with Lohan-like vigilance.

"I'm so glad I never became famous when I was a teenager. Because I did tons of drugs then," she admits. "When I was in school I was on acid and doing coke and experimenting with mushrooms. I was kind of fucking off because I was a teenager. But I could see how much easier it would be if you had all this money and fame. That really sucks because you're in the public eye doing those things and going through those things and it just facilitates that in a way and it makes it worse. Where I luckily just got out of it, where at twenty-one I was like 'I'm done!'"

As we guzzle more tea, the conversation turns to the secret food shops of LA's Koreatown, what it was really like filming that infamous *AMERICAN HORROR STORY* "basement" scene (wherein she seduces and subsequently bites off a man's penis) and her clandestine love of dirty Miami hip-hop. We also speak of her future. "I'd like to have somewhat of a steady film career and have a house somewhere and hopefully have a boyfriend," she states. "I want to have kids so badly. I'm just not in a place to take on that responsibility right now. By the time I'm thirty-five maybe. I'm turning thirty in May. So I'll hopefully have solidified some of those aspects in life." Breckenridge reveals herself as a girl who is headed in the right direction and couldn't be happier to be there, steadily raising that bar while carving her place in the Hollywood stone. ■

GOTYE

story / **LOGAN BRENDT** photography / **WARWICK BACKER**

“I haven’t been holding out like, ‘I need to be a massive pop star otherwise I’ve failed,’” Wally De Backer, otherwise known as Gotye, light-heartedly replies when asked if he’s happy about finally being an internationally recognized music artist. However, he certainly has become a massive pop star. His hit single, “Somebody That I Used To Know,” off of his third album, *Making Mirrors*, and its accompanying video have become an internet sensation. You might even go as far as calling the hysteria over the video somewhat of an obsession, as it has gathered almost two hundred million Youtube views.

As for this well deserved success, the Belgian-born, Australian-raised De Backer says, “I guess it’s been a gradual building thing for me. With this song breaking through in the UK and in the States, it’s exciting.” Australia, where he still lives, warmly received his music for quite some time before the appreciation spread internationally. De Backer was disappointed when he wasn’t able to get his second album, *Like Drawing Blood*, released on a label in the United States. It ended up only being available through iTunes and he wasn’t able to get proper promotion for it. Although, it rings true that success is better late than never.

Now having played Coachella and SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, Gotye’s success has continued to soar. He doesn’t get nervous before he goes on stage because he knows what he’s there to do. But with TV, it’s a different story. “[TV performances] require me to really focus and I have to try to focus on not letting nerves affect the way I sing.”

One of the instruments he plays live are drums. “I love playing percussion and drums— what you can do with two hands, two feet, or any part of your body, and sticks. It’s a very direct, visceral relationship you have with hitting things, making rhythms.” He currently doesn’t get to play drums as much as he would like, as he’s trying to learn other types of sound creations like synthesizers. He also loves to do what he is more known for, which is sing. “There’s a very physical thing that happens there when you sort of really feel that opening up in your chest. I tend to feel it more when I’m in an acoustic space.”

De Backer isn’t jaded by the music industry. Though since he’s an introvert, he prefers the creative process of music as opposed to the promotion. He says, “I know I’ve done interviews where somebody called me first thing in the morning, and I’ve just been so not interested to talk about myself or answer the same questions with pretty much the same answers, or even felt like I had the energy to try. Or I might have had twenty interviews that day, and the first one’s a complete dud where I’ve just been totally tired and kind of bratty. Afterwards I feel kind of embarrassed, like, ‘Oh, I didn’t have to be an idiot to that person.’” However, during this interview, he is nothing but kind.

Growing up, among his musical influences were Kate Bush and Depeche Mode. “I was genuinely just obsessed with [Depeche Mode],” he says. “They were the only band for me for a long time and influenced me when I started doing the material that became my first Gotye record.” He often analyzed their records. It became a turning point for him where he decided he had to start listening to some other kinds of music so that he wasn’t taking so many cues from Depeche Mode songwriter and member Martin Gore’s production and lyrical vocabulary. De Backer says, “It was maybe like my apprenticeship in songwriting— my

self taught ‘following the master.’ At some point, I kind of went, ‘I don’t just want to sound like a Depeche Mode imitator, so I’ve got to find some way to start my own thing.’” His own thing, he has definitely done.

I joke that because of his extensive Depeche Mode knowledge, he could have joined the band after Alan Wilder left. He laughs youthfully, sounding excited about the notion, as though a childhood dream just flashed across his mind. Gotye has also drawn comparisons to other great artists like Sting and Peter Gabriel. He says he’s sometimes self-conscious about it, but finds it a great compliment. “The Police are one of my favorite bands ever, and Peter Gabriel’s records are some of the most interestingly produced, beautifully-written albums of the 70s and 80s.” Though he wonders if people will dismiss his music as a result. “I’m kind of aware that maybe more hipster preps will see those regular comparisons to those artists, going, ‘Oh Gotye makes very 80s sounding music.’”

However, Gotye is certainly not outdated. He has a clear beauty to his voice and a brilliant way of creating music that is catchy without being infectiously obnoxious. Gotye finds my perception flattering and hopes he has achieved that. He grew up loving the kind of music that is, “Very catchy and often very tightly arranged and has a real element of exploration and idiosyncrasy— you could listen to it in twenty years’ time and it would still make sense.” Since Gotye’s music isn’t so blatantly in your face, you can listen to it over and over because there’s something memorable, but at the same time something different, each time. Maybe that’s why his “Somebody That I Used To Know” video has been so largely viewed. He seems to have found the key to success.

His lyrics also intrigue people who try to decipher the meanings behind them. “Some people read some of my lyrics and find them poetic on their own terms,” he says. “I’m kind of looking for that space of confluence between certain words and melody and harmony. The texture of the sounds you use creates its own world. Maybe you can’t quite put your finger on what it is, but it makes you feel sometimes confusing, maybe conflicting feelings and emotions.” He adds that his intentions are very different from those of other pop music where, “The lyrics are pure fluff, or there’s a very clear intention.”

If you’re wondering if anyone he’s dated has called him up to complain or inquire if they were the inspiration behind, “Somebody That I Used To Know”, he says, “One [ex-girlfriend] was concerned that the song was about her and was like, ‘Is that true? Should I be worried?’ and I’m like, ‘No, it’s not about you, and that’s just gossip.’”

Now that he has reached mainstream audiences, Gotye has heard from people he admires who like his music, like producer Matthew Herbert who worked with Bjork. “He’s an intellectual powerhouse in terms of his approach to producing and music sampling. That’s what’s flattering—that someone like that who’s working at such a high level is into what I’m doing.” On the flip side of the coin, he says with a laugh, “There’s been a bunch of artists— the Jonas Brothers and Chad Kroeger from Nickelback. I’m kind of like, ‘Wow these people are fans of mine.’ It’s too funny.” He does enjoy the fact that many different musicians from different genres are responding to the music that he creates. “Maybe it means I’ve found a peculiar balance that’s somewhere between pop and catchy... and unique in its own way.” ■





Blazer, **TIMO WEILAND**. Tank Top and Pants, **DROP DEAD**.

BRADLEY SOILEAU

story / **ALY VANDER HAYDEN** photographer/ **LEE O'CONNER**

stylist / **KOKO NTUEN** assistant stylist / **ALEX TAMAN**

assistant photographer / **JACK CLARIZIO**

Bradley Soileau (Brad-lee Swah-loh) : Asshole. Model. Lana Del Rey Murderer. Skater. DJ. Tumblrer (defff666.tumblr.com). Tattooed dude from those music videos. Blunt motherfucker. More than what you think?

Obsession: “A\$AP Rocky and Porcelain Black.”

Confession: “I have something to confess, but I can’t just yet. You’ll see soon, though.”

Who are we kidding? Every staff member at LADYGUNN would happily let Bradley Soileau slack off around our apartment all day looking this hot. But while we’ve been away at the office, we’ve learned to watch this one. We first met Soileau when security broke up a fistfight he started at our launch party, but he quickly exceeded and defied our expectations of the stereotypical asshole model. He couldn’t have been more obliging and down-to-earth during the night we spent talking with him over Modelos and spliffs in a Greenpoint apartment. Even though he recently married grunge goddess Porcelain Black, Soileau will always be an obsession in our eyes. He’ll steal your heart, your best pair of Diesel jeans, the alcohol from your parent’s bar, and anything else he can get his tattooed knuckles on.

THAT SOUTHERN CHARM

“They cried [with] every tattoo I got,” says 26 year-old Soileau of his parents. “They hate the person I’ve become.”

Trying to imagine model, DJ, and aspiring music producer Bradley Soileau as a punky skateboard preteen listening to Black Flag and Suicidal Tendencies in a conservative, Southern Baptist home is brain-melting. With three home-schooled younger siblings, raising a rebellious older Soileau seemed to be more than his parents were willing to take on.

“I don’t think my parents could really deal with me fucking around while they had to take care of my brother, who is special needs,” says Soileau.

After emancipating himself at 14, Soileau left his hometown of New Orleans, and moved to Jacksonville, where he “hung out with biker gangs—straight up Hell’s Angels.” Soileau’s audacious nature did not die in Louisiana, however, and he soon became Florida’s poster boy of an at-risk teen.

“I got most of my tattoos in prison,” admits Soileau. “Me and two guys robbed a UPS truck filled with a shipment of Diesel clothing. We just rolled up in our van, unloaded the truck, and got the fuck out of there.”

Safe for six months, Soileau thought he was out of dodge for good until one of his cohorts ratted him out after being arrested for another crime. Police officers broke into his house, threw him down onto the ground, and took him to jail where he remained for two years. “It was literally like fucking COPS-style,” remembers Soileau. His tattoos and punk attitude prove not to be mere contrivance, but derive from actual experience.

THE IRON CITY

With only one letter from his grandparents saying, “Don’t die!” Soileau finished his prison sentence without any other interactions from his family.

Constantly getting into fights, Soileau racked up three broken legs and a broken jaw before getting out. The guards, Soileau recalls, were not any less threatening.

“They strip you down, humiliate you, demoralize you, tell you have a small dick. One guard had a jar full of teeth that he collected from beating the shit out of prisoners.” Scared Straight offered a welcome distraction when the organization toured through the prison.

“The guards would tell you to be crazy and scare the shit out of the kids,” laughs Soileau. “Guys would pull out their dicks and just be like ‘This is going up your ass!’ There would be that one fat kid in the back who stole a Snickers, and you know he will never steal again.”

Two years, a shaved head, some casts, and a lot of tattoos later, Soileau was released from prison and left Florida for New York City.

HUSTLER LIFESTYLE

“Thank god for Lana Del Rey,” says Soileau, explaining how he was chosen by the Hollywood-pop songstress in a casting call for her “Born To Die” music video and part deux, “Blue Jeans.”

We like to think Soileau is living a lavish life-style after landing the spotlight gig, but it’s easy to forget the bleak reality that goes along with modeling: low-paying editorials and even lower-paying runway shows, especially when you have a look as edgy as Soileau’s. Before beginning modeling in New York City, Soileau went through the basic odd jobs.

“I was offered a position at a clothing store in Harlem, but then I [realized] I could just sell weed and make a bunch of money.”

Though it paid the rent, Soileau’s dangerous lifestyle gave him a shattering wake-up call. While Soileau and a friend were delivering “some weight” to a few guys Soileau had previously done business with, they had a gun pulled on them.

“They shot my friend and then we beat the shooter’s ass and got our weed back. That’s when I decided I was over selling weed.”

Quite serendipitously, Soileau was soon scouted in the East Village by his agent Dave Fothergill,.

It seems as if the only certain things in Soileau’s life are his aspirations. Soileau is set to star in another Lana Del Rey music video to complete the trilogy consisting thus far of “Born To Die” and “Blue Jeans.” To push his acting further, Soileau also hopes to be involved in short films — without the Danny Trejo, gangster type-casting.

Along with producing and DJing he confides, “I really just want to make a bunch of hardcore gangster rap alums so I can get enough money to record my dream country album.” And really, what career would be complete without a Johnny Cash-style country record sung by the fairest of the tattooed punks? **■**

A man with light skin and short blonde hair is lying on his back on a patch of green grass. He is wearing a long-sleeved shirt with a dark blue and black leopard print pattern. His right arm is raised, with his hand flat over his eyes, shielding them from the bright sunlight. His left arm is bent, with his hand resting near his chest. The lighting is bright and direct, creating strong shadows on his face and the grass.

I TOLD MY GIRLS HE COULD GET IT.

PHOTOGRAPHY / JASON RODGERS

STYLIST / JAVIER LEWIS

PHOTOGRAPHER ASSISTANT / JACK CLARIZIO

MARKET EDITOR / TATIANA JOHNSON

MODELS / CONNOR @FUSION, WILL@Q , ADAM@MAJOR, NICK@MAJOR

ASSISTANTS / LINDSAY WHITE, LINDSAY ROCHE, MIA CALOTTA





Tank, BRIAN UNDERWOOD. Sweatshirt, OBEY. Jeans, CHEAP MONDAY.



Shirt, TIMO WEILAND. Pants, CHEAP MONDAY. Hat, SUPREME. Sunglasses, CHEAP MONDAY.
Opposite Page: Sweatshirt, CHEAP MONDAY. Shorts, VANS. Belt, CHEAP MONDAY. Underwear, C-IN2.



NICK WATERHOUSE

story / KOKO NTUEN photographer / RONY ALWIN

“Have you ever listened to Buddy Holly?” Nick Waterhouse asks in an incredulous tone when I mention the comparisons he gets to the famed and framed icon. I don’t tell him that I haven’t in years. Confession: I asked because that’s what “the blogs” are all saying. I have been listening to Waterhouse’s record, *Time’s All Gone*, and decided more than the easy Buddy Holly comparisons (white dude singing good music in glasses), his music is in a category I can only describe as “Nick Waterhouse.”

In this daring new genre is a bit of jazz, some Skatellite-ish sounding rhythms, R & B, and hints of punk rock all mixed into something that that is one splendiferous force to be reckoned with. But Waterhouse doesn’t care what people call him, “I don’t want to label it. I’m just going to play it. You can call it whatever you like,” He says.

That might sound pretty bad ass for a guy who looks as refined as he does, but Waterhouse did grow up with his dad listening to Black Flag.

Waterhouse’s initial musical offering was a vinyl-only teaser called *Some Day* that now goes for upwards of three hundred dollars on Ebay. He followed that up with a full-length album called *Time’s All Gone* this May, a sophisticated and high-energy nod to the sound of yesteryear. The man with an affinity for 45s and jives recorded his eleven track feat almost entirely live-to-tape, all while working full-time and playing live shows to promotes his music. Now, Waterhouse has finally given up the day job to fill our playlists with finger snapping tunes, cool cat heavy sounds that you’ll be able to play for years to come.

Despite all of the press Waterhouse is garnering from *Time’s All Gone*, he’s as excited as ever to talk about his new album. In fact, he sounds as if it’s his first time talking about it. “I’m very happy to be interviewed,” he says matter-of-factly. He speaks in a casual yet educated way that shows he’s a veteran of the music industry. But his tone shows his passion for it. His humbleness is a rarity in a sea of homogenous indie bands

putting out albums and it’s refreshing to talk to someone who has enthusiasm for every aspect of the process.

The production of the album, for one thing, is impeccable. So I tell him. As a girl who grew up listening to tapes and my dad’s old records, putting *Time’s All Gone* in my CD player was a wonderful surprise. The rich, horn-heavy sounds coming out of the speakers made me feel like I was discovering something new for the first time in some underground, East Village jazz club in the 1960’s. Waterhouse is understandably proud of the production and counts that as one of the main items that he is careful about.

The production is certainly well-crafted and the sounds come together like a revival of the early days when artists recorded sessions in the same room that would go on to be musical master pieces. I ask Waterhouse about that method. “That’s the trick,” he answers. “People always ask me like, ‘What’s the trick?’ And that’s it. It’s not caring that you hear the saxophone on the drum mic, because that’s what has the dimension. I mean, my record is in mono, but I feel like it’s a lot more dynamic than stereo records I hear. If you listen to the album you hear the timing, the togetherness of the band that makes you yearn for more.”

As for Waterhouse’s obsessions (besides carefully crafting a near-perfect record), he likes good coffee, good cocktails, 45 rpm records, and picking a good color to paint my room. “Oh and locally shot movies from the 1940’s. Blood and noir movies.” In fact, he’s on his way to see CRISS CROSS tonight. The Burt Lancaster-starring film noir was all shot in downtown LA in 1949. Getting him to give us a confession is a lot harder. Waterhouse bashfully stalls before finally admitting, “I’d rather my shows be at six o’clock. I don’t do drugs. That’s my confession. I’m not punk at all. I’ve never smoked weed.”

I don’t know Nick you seem pretty punk to me... ■

LISSIE TRULLIE

story + photography / KATIE FISCHER

stylists / KOKO NTUEN + KATE CHERRY hair + makeup / NICOLE BRIDGEFORD

Contrary to her public persona, Lissy Trullie can’t stand being called tough. Instead she sees herself as shy, sweet, awkward and nerdy. During an afternoon coffee at The Soho House, I was able to sit down with the singer/songwriter and experience first-hand how her signature deep voice belies her gentle nature, as illustrated in her self titled debut album *Lissy Trullie*. Sitting swathed in a Charles Anestia peacoat, Trullie reveals her obsession of the moment: trying to find a twelve-string guitar for her upcoming tour. She fell in love with the instrument while recording her recent album and trolls online for up to eight hours a day looking for just the right one.

Trullie’s fashion sense “walks a thin line of androgyny” and battles her dislike of being seen as hard or rough. Admittedly, her take on it is enviable. Her favorite article of clothing is a t-shirt her friend gave her that has the band Slant 6 (a 90’s D.C. band) across it. She treasures it so much she won’t wear it and it’s one of her most prized possessions. Her style icons are Patti Smith, Diane Keaton, Mary Stuart Masterson, Martha Plimpton, Katherine Hepburn and Marlene Dietrich. It’s this rare combination of quirky spark and attention to detail that has led Trullie to be the artist she is today.

Trullie grew up in Washington D.C. where she attended Catholic schools and was often teased for her red

hair. Playing the guitar at the age of eleven, her main musical influences were her father’s favorites: old R&B and soul. By the time she was a teen, her musical taste had expanded to such bands as The Makeup, Bad Brains, Bratmobile and Fugazi, all part of the indie rock scene in D.C. Trullie admits she struggled with academics until she found solace her junior year of high school at the art boarding school Walnut Hill. Trullie credits the school with pushing her “to make [her] own voice.”

Asked to describe her music, Trullie answers: “I don’t know...I think it reflects my state of mind a little bit, which is kind of messy but swept together into a neat pile.” She also attributes her songwriting style to a creative-writing teacher who taught her “just because something is meaningful to you doesn’t mean it will be to someone else,” and that you have to work to make it universal to everyone else.

This philosophy is reflected in Trullie’s music. She doesn’t feel that “lyrically art should be self-reflective ...you should have a concept as to what your doing or what you’re saying.” Today some of Trullie’s favorite bands are Micachu and The Shapes, Gang Gang Dance, Unknown Mortal Orchestra, Chelsea Wolfe & Telepathy.

Maybe one of her favorite bands knows where she can find that 12-stringed guitar... ■

SAMANTHA RONSON

story / **HEATHER SEIDLER** photography / **JUSTIN COIT**

stylist / **AUBREY BINZER** hair + makeup / **STEPHANIE NAVARRO** @ JENNY KARL HAIR +MAKEUP AGENCY

While most might know Samantha Ronson for her considerable skills on the turntable, her storied relationship with ex-girlfriend Lindsay Lohan, or for her famous family (superproducer Mark Ronson is her brother, twin sister Charlotte is a renowned fashion designer and her stepfather is Mick Jones from Foreigner) people might not know Samantha is also an avidly creative singer/songwriter/remixer and has been for quite awhile.

Regardless of what people think they know about Ronson from the headlines, the internationally recognized disc jockey is ready to prove what's she's really capable of and show everyone her serious musical stylings. A decade in the making, LA-based Ronson has just released her debut album, *Chasing the Reds*, a unique collection of solid pop-rock gems.

Ronson's years of silent tolerance to misconstrued tabloid scrutiny hasn't been an easy cross to bear, and every quid deserves a quo. With her new album, Ronson finally gets the last word, through heartfelt lyrics set against a slinky hybrid of grooves and sonically well-crafted melodies. Ronson sits down with Ladygunn to have a sincere chat about her new record, media misimpressions, and what it was like growing up a Ronson.

LADYGUNN: Most people just know you



as a DJ, which means they aren't unfamiliar with the fact you've been song-writing for over a decade. In 2004 you had an album [on Rock-A-Fella Records] that got shelved, and it took you seven years to make this next album. Why now?

RONSON: I had just been travelling so much as a DJ, so I didn't really have time. When I was home, I was just too exhausted all the time. Then I thought, "F*ck it! I should start writing songs again." My manager hooked me up with a couple songwriters because I just needed someone else to motivate me to finish a whole song, as opposed to what I normally do, which is just half-finish a bunch of songs. With the business being the way it is these days, I didn't want to ever put myself in a position again where I was basically stuck with someone else for a whole record, where you have no control of the product. So after meeting with different labels, I decided to put out the record myself. I spent every last dollar I had putting the team together and making the record. It was literally a money pit of life. I feel like Tom Hanks!

Did your background as a DJ influence the direction or sound of your record?

I think it's more like my music influences my deejaying, because it's so different from anything that I would play in the club. I would say that I wanted the record to sound like when you drop an AM radio into the ocean, but it's still working. Or when you were younger and you would color a page with crayon and scratch out the drawing over the color. In the production aspect, my DJ influence came into play.

With the album title *Chasing the Reds* is there any reference to Breakfast at Tiffany's? In terms of the "Mean Reds"? Yeah, definitely. Also, "Chase the Reds" is actually a poem I've written. It's like when you have a crush on someone and you want to follow them somewhere. It's about being stopped at a red light, metaphorically, or chasing break lights. When you're chasing someone you know there are going to be so many roadblocks and that you shouldn't be doing it. But you almost can't help yourself. It's like the universe is giving you four billion signs to turn around. You're pulled over, and it's raining. You don't even necessarily want the person, but it's the chase. Sometimes you even know they're a terrible person. Chasing the reds is anything you do that's self-destructive, but the attraction that goes along with it.

There's this great quote from you that I remember reading where you said you hate playing for hipsters because when you DJ the Top 40 hits, they're too cool to dance along, but when you play the more underground, indie stuff they still won't dance either...

It drives me nuts! I'm not catering to f*cking assholes with fake-vintage sweaters. I'll be the first person to admit that I spend a lot of money to look like a degenerate asshole, but I don't do it to look cool. I just like my vintage band t-shirts and my fucked up jeans. Okay, so they're Dior...I don't f*cking care! I'm not trying to hide my wealth. I drive a Porsche. I'm not going to pretend that I don't work for a living and that I don't have nice things. I just can't stand posers. It's like you're trying so hard to be so different but you're all the same. I'm down with anyone as long as they are who they are. I'm down with the cheesy club rat in the bikini top. Just do you. I'm all for anything that's real.

What's the biggest misconception the media has of you, and what's something they don't generally know about you?

One major misconception is that I'm some spoiled brat that's never worked a day in her life and sits around doing drugs all day. I never grew up poor, but I've been supporting myself since I was twenty. I haven't taken a penny from my parents since then.

I feel like I'm such an easy target [in the press], and people just love shitting on me. I don't respond to people because it just gives them what they want—attention. Do you know how hard it is to take the high road for so long? Because of it I've had eczema, panic attacks, I used to even get nosebleeds ...I had so much anxiety in the recent past. I just thought, "I'm not going to get into wars with these people." These people can say anything they want, but there'll never be any proof to anything they say. If I had done drugs in the past, I would've been caught by now. Especially when my every move was tracked on camera because of dating Lindsay Lohan. I've never been caught because I've never done anything!

What most people don't realize is everything I have, I got from working my ass off. Yeah, deejaying seems glamorous, but do you want to get up with me at 5am, catch a plane, try to squeeze in as much sleep as possible, which isn't much, then DJ all night, go back to your hotel and try to get that small amount of sleep again, then hop on a plane again? I started off deejaying in New York from 10 pm to 4am for a hundred dollars a night, schlepping heavy -ass records everywhere. Kids now-a-days can use their iPods. People call me an iPod DJ, and I say to them, "Sit with me in the booth for one night and call me a f*cking iPod DJ." There's a reason I've been doing this for so long. ■

MIIKE SNOW

story / **LOGAN BRENDT** illustration / **ANDREAS NILSSON**



Miike Snow gets the point across that they're anything but a typical "indie pop" band. The band, comprised of singer Andrew Wyatt and Swedish songwriters/producers Christian Karlsson and Pontus Winnberg, are currently touring in support of their second album *Happy to You*.

In the past, Christian Karlsson and Pontus Winnberg have been somewhat in the shadows, using their production skills to contribute to the successes of Madonna, Kylie Minogue, and Britney Spears, including her Grammy award-winning hit "Toxic." The ability to effectively collaborate has helped them as a band, especially on their eerie song "Black Tin Box," featuring pop darling Lykke Li.

For Miike Snow, the change from writing and producing to performing has come easily to them since they've all been in bands since they were kids. However, they're still moderately unaccustomed to the scene. Not quite nervous about touring, they say, "It depends on what show it is. We're at the beginning of this tour, so it's tenser because there's a lot of stuff going on that we're not really used to. We're about to play fifty or so shows." They understand the work that goes into making a band successful, including a flurry of shows and interviews. The men of Miike Snow are accepting of the task, but obviously worn by the nonstop demand.

Just before Miike Snow goes on stage at Ter-

minal 5 in New York, sound check is definitely happening. Drums repetitively pound in the background. This is most likely similar to the endless amount of interview questions that the band has received over the past couple of months since they have been busy promoting *Happy to You*. There is a great deal of enthusiasm when the show starts and the air is filled with their crystallized, rhythmic sound accented with electronic distortions and a flood of drums, brass, and string instrumentation. Still, they aren't yet quite used to being in the spotlight and can be surprised when they hear a song of theirs in public or somewhere on television.

Whether it's during their downtime or on tour, the place that the guys from Miike Snow most enjoy being is in their own environments: their homes. "Otherwise, we'd be stupid to be living there." Blunt, but genuine. They confess that they can get emotional over their songs, though not necessarily on stage, but more so

when they're writing them. Not wanting to divulge too much, the band members seem intent on keeping an air of mystery about them. The desire for some anonymity is also particularly evident in their live stage show with the masks that they wear, most likely wanting the music to be more prominent than themselves. In a day and age where the demand for information about the public's favorite music artists have become the norm, it could only potentially frustrate a band that has a real desire just to make music.

Wyatt grew up surrounded by punk rock and jazz, and used to frequent the Village Vanguard Jazz Club in New York when he was younger. He admits, "I feel like the last generation of people who were doing something interesting [in jazz] was like twenty years ago. I don't see anything new happening in that [genre] that makes it exciting." As for music that they love to listen to, Wyatt says, "I've been listening to The Outsiders, a Dutch band from the 60s [considered to be the originators of the garage rock genre]."

Miike Snow's eclectic knowledge and background in music has delivered a style all their own. Whether listening to their album or experiencing their live performance, you'll feel like you're running through an auditory film noir forest— attractive, yet slightly unnerving. ■

TYLER BLACKBURN

story / PARICE GRANT + KOKO NTUEN

photography / SHANNA FISHER

groomer / TANIA HAHM @ JENNY KARL HAIR + MAKEUP AGENCY



The California-bred, 25-year-old Tyler Blackburn has been stirring things up on ABC Family's PRETTY LITTLE LIARS with his role as the rough around the edges, yet compassionate Caleb Rivers. The LA native has been around the block, getting his start opposite Emma Roberts in the Nickelodeon series UNFABULOUS, and had a primary role in recent independent film PEACH PLUM PEAR. Admired by tweens, teens, and adults alike, the PRETTY LITTLE LIARS followers are, in a word, obsessed with Blackburn.

But how could you not be? His dark features, chiseled jaw line and perfect hipster flair are a recipe for certified hotness. Tyler seems like the Johnny Depp or Keanu Reeves of our generation. His laundry list of projects is only getting longer and with PLL fans excitedly awaiting the Season 3 premiere set to air in June, we are fascinated to see what he will do next.

Blackburn knew from an early age that he was meant for a career in acting. "I did always want to be an actor, to be honest with you," he says. "Since I was in pre-school, I knew I wanted to be an entertainer of some kind." He attended a performing arts pre-school as a child and had dreams of starring in a revival of THE WIZARD OF OZ, "When I was a kid, THE WIZARD OF OZ was the shit. I wanted to be the scarecrow so bad. I remember that, distinctly thinking 'I just want to do this.'" Recently, he hasn't been so far off from this childhood fantasy as he stars in the web series WENDY, a modern day interpretation of Peter Pan, alongside actress Meaghan Martin. In the series, Blackburn

introduces the world to his voice, singing original songs "Save Me" and "Find A Way." The song "Save Me" has an official music video on YouTube getting thousands of hits from PLL and Wendy fans. Music has always been a huge part of Tyler's life. "Well, music in general is something I'm passionate about. I listen to music all day, every day," he says.

Blackburn isn't ready to release an album...yet. Hes still dedicated to developing his talent on the silver screen. He ready to dive into new full-length film projects. Much like his character in Caleb of PPL, Blackburn is ready to take on a challenge. He can't wait to try different genres. "I would love to do something with action in it, like a Quentin Tarantino film or something like that. And I would love to do, like, a really high profile movie, but one that's sort of dark and edgy. For some reason Interview with the Vampire pops into my head. And obviously working with Tim Burton would be amazing."

Blackburn may have the drive for Hollywood fame, but he is far from the famed young Hollywood clubbers that are staples on TMZ. "I don't really go out...you know, I have to go to certain stuff. But I don't go out to nightclubs." Of course, he isn't opposed to having a good time. Blackburn has lived in LA most of his life, he is far beyond the glam scene. "I mean, I go to bars and stuff, but I grew up in LA. I don't feel like living a fancy life or anything." He may not be into fancy frivolities, but Blackburn definitely has his Hollywood crushes. "I really like Jennifer Lawrence right now. She's bad ass for sure. Oh and I went to a premiere last night and was about a

foot away from Scarlett Johansson. She is quite the babe, let me tell you."

Blackburn's low-key approach to life is reflected in his chill, laidback fashion sense. His look melds Downtown cool with a California vibe. The paparazzi have snapped him appearing like an off-duty model, with his dark flowing locks pulled back into a ponytail or neatly tucked under a slouchy knit cap. Despite his put-together appearance, Blackburn is far from being a label hound. His wardrobe is a mix of sleek high-end pieces along with treasured finds from H&M. "It's not about brands. I could be anywhere and if I see something and I know I like it,

I want it.." He even admits that shopping is a favorite past time. You may even call it an obsession. "I'm actually a little bit obsessed with clothes and hats and boots and those types of things," Blackburn says. A guy who actually enjoys shopping? We approve. Blackburn may seem like the whole package, but he has a checkered past. In his exclusive, cathartic confession to LADYGUNN, Blackburn didn't only admit to his failed attempt at kicking his tobacco habit, but also that he was a bit of a rascal. "I once stole a hundred dollars from my friend in high school," he says, chagrined. A handsome guy with a dark side and a bright future indeed. We can all admire that. ■

M. WARD

story / HEATHER SEIDLER photography / AUTUMN DE WILDE

How I first came to know M. Ward was in 2007, while I was watching the offbeat movie "THE GO-GETTER and I heard a song so neat I had to pause the movie and immediately Google to find out who was responsible. It was, of course, M. Ward.

You may know M. Ward from indie super-group Monsters of Folk, which he formed with Conor Oberst, Mike Mogis and Jim James. Or you may have discovered Ward alongside Zooey Deschanel as the "him" half of their hit band She & Him. Or perhaps you know him simply as himself: Matthew Stephen Ward, the prolific 37-year-old singer/songwriter/guitarist, the consummate folk-rocker. And if you don't know M. Ward yet, you should want to.

Ward has been making expansive solo albums since 1999 and has steadily gained a reputation as a revered collaborator and sought after musical partner who's worked with an impressive long list of indie-famous artists. He's not far from world-renowned status having pitched his tent on that fine line between commercial viability and artistic integrity, creating records which chart well but also remain consistent, honest and unique. *A Wasteland Companion* is Ward's newest and eighth studio album. It has the laid-back nostalgic sorcery from his earlier recordings and was conceived as a travelogue to reflect his varied junctures. Ward's aesthetic, finely-tuned sensibilities have produced a record that transcends the overused "back porch" sentiment, a record meant to be peeled back and explored many times in pursuit of making time stand still and finding something new yet familiar.

When I first sat down with Mr. Ward to discuss his new album, I saw from the offset, he's as immensely thoughtful in his conversation as he is to his musical approach. We were strangers sitting across from each other in a trendy cafe, yet he was instantly that same familiar voice that has reverberated through my speakers for years. Dressed in a black blazer and pants, he spoke softly, pausing often to consider his answers before announcing them. His responses were elegant and genuine, his manner charming, his convictions unbroken.

The making of *Wasteland* took Ward all over the map. Leaving the confines of his Portland studio where he usually records his material, he ventured to eight different studios, from New York to Nebraska to England. Among the eight studios was producer John Parish's haunting space beneath an ancient church in Bristol, England, where PJ Harvey and Portishead have recorded.

"Over the last ten years, I've been getting invitations to come see studios around the world and I've never had time to record there, so this is the record where I finally just made the time to record in new places and experiment with different musicians, different rooms and different gear," Ward says. "It's pretty exciting to go into a new room and have an engineer who really knows everything about the domain and the equipment. It was a good experiment for me and I think I'm going to record more records this way. Instead of just recording within the same four walls, which is exciting too, but I like the idea of bring in an element of chaos and unpredictability to how the song goes from point A to point B."

Like its predecessors, 'Wasteland' offers cotton-soft melodies that remind listeners that, though you're weary of the world, you're not alone. The searching atmospherics of the album's songs are what make them feel as if the whole album came from eight different suites in the same hotel. Another element which Ward considers carefully is to create a sense of equilibrium, to find an intricate balance between shadow and light in his music; art that incorporates opposites. "I think the new record has more experiments and a better balance between dark and light. It's

a balance that I'm constantly working on," Ward expresses. "I'm trying to get the balance right on so many levels but I think that a good song or record should have peaks and valleys, moments where you want to laugh, moments where you want to cry. And it should have surprises—twists, and turns. I think you have to acknowledge the dark side of the street, in films, books, music, whatever, but I think it's also important to make something hopeful."

Ward says the two most necessary things in his work are inspiration and instinct. "I think people question their instincts maybe too much or they have managers or labels that question them for them."

It was important for Ward to make sure the tracks on *Wasteland* didn't tie themselves to any past ethos. For this musical journeyman, a structured approach or method doesn't need to exist when music is a way of life. "It's different every time. I normally start with a couple dozen songs and the ones that make the record seem to fit together in some way. It's important that the record has surprises and isn't redundant," he explains. "I think if something has already been said production or lyrical wise, it's important that it's not said again. So I prefer records to have a lot of different styles and rhythms."

Ward is faithful to those surprises and rhythms when he translates them onstage. His live performances are another element behind why he has earned the distinction of a venerated master in the folk-tinged indie world. When asked how he keeps from getting too comfortable or bored with songs after playing them for over a decade, he tells me: "I like to try to think about what might have inspired the song and if I can sort of keep that in mind then I'm able to find more to draw from than just a song. I think that's what you have to do when you tour is you have to keep reinventing songs, if you're going to stay interested. I'm constantly learning how to do that better."

That determination to do things better is what keeps his fans and peers captivated. Ward's songs are at their best, timeless. And at their most enduring when his songwriting bears the weight of mistakes made and an authentic life lived. Thirteen years into a career that began modestly, M. Ward has quietly ensnared the ears and hearts of the indie culture and its leaders. ■



SHANE WEST

story / **HEATHER SEIDLER** *photography* / **TEREN ODDO**

Thirty three-year-old Shane West has been familiar to television fans since his early days on *ONCE & AGAIN* and subsequent years playing doctor on *ER*. With a plethora of film roles under his belt, West has proven he has the wherewithal to reinvent a well-known character in a way that makes us keep watching.

West is currently known for his proficient ass-kickery on CW's top-rated show *NIKITA*, a revamped, progressive reimagining of the *NIKITA* franchise. Currently in its second season, the lady-spy series is unique in its darker tone with a buffet of high-octane action and inceptive plot twist-ers. West clocks the hours as Michael, a highly-trained operative in a shady government agency of clandestine ex-criminal assassins.

Onscreen he doles out some pretty intense badass-ness without breaking a sweat and juggles a far from docile romance with Nikita, being her trainer turned enemy turned ally turned lover. West has a specialty for seat-of-your-pants hardcore butt-kicking without looking like a big bag of biceps while doing it. Not to mention, his character is essentially the backbone of the series and one debonair harbinger of justice. Though in real life, West hardly comes across as an undaunted assailant ready to gut-punch your daylight's out, which isn't to say he can't look intimidatingly cool and fear-less when he needs to.

The Baton Rouge native moved to Los Angeles in 1991 and booked his first film role in *LIBERTY HEIGHTS* in 1999, which is around when I first met him. Over the years I've experienced how pleasantly laid-back he is, how sharp-witted yet silly he can be and how dedicated he is to his craft and to his friends. Oh and also, when he's in the room, women notice. Which is a whole other kind of article. I had the pleasure of talking to him about his role in *NIKITA* and life outside his work.

LADYGUNN: Obviously, you're no stranger to TV, but this role is different from anything else you've done. Do you enjoy all the gun work and physical stuff? I'm sure you had to go through specific training, tell me about that.

SHANE WEST: It's such a different experience between my real life and my career. To be in my thirties and get a job like this is amazing. To have a shot at playing a role like this is so exciting. The character was supposed to be older originally, but then I took a stab at it. With all the training and fighting and guns...it never gets boring that way. When you're out of town for ten months shooting in another country—it can kind of get old. But I show up to work, and they teach me this crazy new fighting trick, like something involving fire and it's like being a kid again. You get to live out your childhood fantasies.

What have been some of your favorite scenes to film in this season?

I'd have to say, aside from the obvious fun, macho scenes with a myriad of weapons that my character has to fire—which has been a lot of fun—it would have to be the exploration of Michael and Nikita's relationship. What's been exciting and difficult is trying to keep them together as a couple, while at the same time, stopping these injustices in their lives and around the world. That's been difficult. That's the most difficult thing to maintain is this kind of off-and-on relationship.

One of the best parts of this show is that they have these natural conflicts, but they don't let it get in the way of their battle with the evil that they are already signed on to deal with. You get some episodes where they don't even talk about their emotional troubles, but then you get some that are mostly about

that. That's definitely what's been the most fun for me.

When you're not filming what do you do in your down time in Toronto?

I've managed to keep myself busy at the gym. I'm also very much a movie and literature addict, so I make sure I keep my bookshelf filled with books and am constantly ordering movies on Amazon. A friend of mine who works for Playstation just sent me some games. I kind of retired from video games five or six years ago, but I figure during this cold weather it's something good to keep you occupied. It's -20 degrees F outside! We've been organizing a lot of cast dinners lately—the food in Toronto is amazing. You never get bored with the food. We get everyone together so that they can get things off their chest and bond without having to be at work.

The theme for this issue of LADYGUNN is Obsession, so who was your first obsession? And who or what is your current obsession?

I'd have to say when I was younger, because of my upbringing with my parents, I was exposed to a lot of music. I was pretty obsessed with The Clash and The Kinks growing up. Anything that involved them—I listened to their records over and over again pretty much until it was my life. [Laughs] Also I had a major crush—I don't know if you could call it an obsession—on Courtney Cox growing up. It would have to be Courtney and Mia Sara from *FERRIS BUELLER*. I just had a massive crush on both those two.

I'd say now—I've kind of become obsessed with health, whether it be eating right, working out regularly instead of once every year, making trips to the doctor to make sure things are going well, and all that. I've also become kind of obsessed with my career, choosing the right jobs, making sure my production company gets off the ground, and being a part of that side of the industry. Family and friends have always been really important to me even more so now as my friends have started to become my family. I think that would be more currently what I'm obsessed with.

Okay, you're stepping on a time machine and it's taking you ten years into the future. What will we find Shane West doing then?

I guess this goes back to the obsession question with my future—I think that ten years from now the classic answer would be to say a wife and children, which would be great but I would never pressure it. I think that it would be more along the lines of what I'm actively pursuing today, hopefully further along in my career and being more involved in production. I just want to be able to continue doing the jobs that make me feel stimulated as an actor. I want to create meaningful relationships along the way. ■



INDIA DE BEAUFORT

story / **ILYSE KAPLAN** *photography* / **PAYAM**

hair + makeup / **STEPHANIE NAVARRO** @ **JENNY KARL HAIR +MAKEUP AGENCY**



When I met India De Beaufort on a rainy day in Beverly Hills, it seemed she not only brought her British charm, but the dreary weather along with her. The actress, who currently stars as the con-ning India Jourdain in the ABC Family hit show, *JANE BY DESIGN*, is much like her character—but not in the way you'd imagine. Her gracious attitude is far from the evil ways of the onscreen India, but her love of fashion fits in perfectly with the role.

After appearing in children's television shows and landing a supporting role in *RUN FATBOY RUN* in the U.K., the Liverpool-born actress has found her groove in American television. For this up and comer, I learned it's not only her acting that fans can look forward to. She's a female with great depth and a dedication to the hobbies she excels at. So far, her passions have led her to success and even to styling her *LADYGUNN* shoot for herself. There is no question De Beaufort will be on our radar for years to come, but in what arena?

LADYGUNN: The theme of this issue is obsession, so what are you obsessed with at the moment?

INDIA DE BEAUFORT: I'm always obsessed with crafts. Lately I've had this obsession with studs—nail head studs. I'm such a dork but I could spend all day—actually, I did spend all night last night and I'm going to spend all day today- studding. When I leave here, I'm going to the craft store to pick some up.

When you were younger what were you obsessed with?

Britney Spears. When I was ten or eleven her performances were so thrilling. She was by far the best performer out there. Christina had the voice at the time but for me, I could watch Britney all day. She was a big part of my life.

Your character on JANE BY DESIGN is obsessed with fashion, so what fashion are you into right now?

For me, it's always vintage. I do a lot of flea market shopping. I love

to take vintage pieces and do alterations. I think this year there is going to be a real trend of 50's pencil skirts. I like that the look is more demure as opposed to revealing all your assets. I was meant to be born in another time, except I would have been a feminist, I couldn't have been a wife at home.

I was noticing the fantastic clothes you get to wear on the show. Do you get to work with the stylist to choose your outfits?

I cannot take credit for that. Olivia Miles does all the styling and she's amazing. She created this very unique idea of what the character is and what she wears and that's why even when I'm sewing, I have Olivia in the back of my mind.

You seem to be the complete opposite of your character, being that you're not a bitch. Where do you draw inspiration?

I don't know that I've met anyone like [India Jourdain] in real life. You definitely take pieces from people. I watched Meryl Streep in *THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA* - her depth is something I would like to work on more. The writers write the words and I just have fun getting to say things I would never ordinarily say. How often do you yell at someone or get up in their face?

Did you think “Jane By Design” would be such a success when you first read for the part?

Sometimes when you read for a job you just pick up a script and go, 'Yep that's it, that's mine.' That was a good feeling as well for the character because she just takes. When we shot the pilot, we knew it was something special because girls love fashion and also it was fun and whimsical and light. We got off to a steady start and we don't know where it will go from here. To be sitting here about to shoot more episodes is a great feeling. ■



THE TING TINGS

story / GINA TRON photography / BRIAN SCHUTZA

If you were to tell me you’ve never heard of The Ting Tings, I would tell you that unless you live your life as a social recluse, you are incorrect. Whether or not the band name rings a bell, one of their songs certainly will. Thanks to the usage of their song “Shut Up And Let Me Go” in the dancing iPod commercial a few years back, that song will haunt me forever. And I’m okay with that. There are a lot worse things that could be burdening the mind than the tunes from this spunky British duo.

Katie White glimmers as a sort of new-age lovechild of Shirley Manson and Blondie and is a great match with the tight jeans-loving Jules De Martino. The two have certainly blown up since their debut album, “We Started Nothing.” They started a lot more than nothing when the album leaked onto the Internet in 2008. It propelled their indie anthem, “That’s Not My Name,” to hit #1 on the UK Singles charts. Given the multitude of ads their songs have been used for, it’s almost as if their first album was created to give life to thirty second spots.

Their new album, *Sounds From Nowheresville*, is a little different. It holds promise and potential for growth as more serious artists. Sophomoric albums are always scary for bands, especially one with monstrous success like The Ting Tings. “This album took us a while. We really worked hard to try to get something that we felt was authentic,” Katie tells us. They spent eight months in a Berlin basement recording, admitting to isolating themselves to do so. The end results are tracks that have more depth and substance than their songs of the past. Not that it’s heavy, by any means. It still poppy and fun, but the sounds have definitely matured. “Hit Me Down Sonny” has a great mafia chic vibe to it and “Give it Back” gives back some of the Ting Ting’s trademark sounds. The album has a pseudo-Midwestern vibe despite the duo’s Manchester background. Twangy and poppy, it would make the perfect soundtrack for a G-rated version of Natural Born Killers.

“Our fans are really enjoying it,” Katie said, “and live, its really working out well.” They have been touring the globe recently, with a tour to South America on the horizon when Ladygunn caught up with them. “Its been chaotic again, which is kind of worrying but exciting at the same time,” Katie said. One worrisome travel tale involved urgent medical attention. “We

filmed David Letterman and I woke up the next morning and had to have my appendix removed.” Oh yes, there is nothing more fun than becoming unexpectedly sick. Especially when you’re far from home. But the impression that The Ting Tings made on America though, has been quite healthy. “The US tour has just been amazing. It’s rocking. It’s a treat,” Jules said, although he is looking forward to some chill time. “We always get about half-way through it [the tour] and were like, ‘I wish we were just laying around doing nothing.’” Ahh, don’t we all. “Eh, the grass is always greener!” chimes in Katie.

The grass is always greener too, when you are pining over the unattainable, and nothing is more unattainable than a romanticized celebrity crush. “My celebrity crush would be Penelope Cruz. I think she’s really hot,” admitted Jules. Katie, on the other hand, was not so quick to decide which celeb she found cute. “Who do I think is hot?” she asked, and it took her quite a while to come to a conclusion. Katie finally decided on a Ryan Gosling, an easy choice. “He’s quite hot. But he’s not super hot. He needs a really cool role to make him hot.” I’m with her on that. Celebrities just don’t do it for me, but Ryan is pleasant on the eyes.

Speaking of pleasantries, guilty pleasure music is Jules’ obsession. “My guilty pleasure is listening to bands like ABBA, “Dancing Queen” and stuff like that.” This ABBA enthusiast is also a tequila enthusiast. He confessed he’s a big fan of it, especially “Before shows.” Katie’s obsession is appropriate to the Ting Ting’s touring lifestyle as of late as well. She is obsessed with traveling, appendix removal and all. “I got addicted to it. It’s quite damaging because you end up ignoring real life.”

Katie is also obsessed with constantly adorning particular articles of clothing she owns. She confessed to us that she hadn’t washed her top in three shows. “Some girls will be like, ‘Oh I can’t wear the same outfit twice!’ whereas I get obsessed with it [a favorite outfit] and just wear it to death! I don’t smell because everything else is clean but the top needs a little wash tomorrow.” No smell, but a tinge of dirty to this pop-star. And their new album is bringing a tinge of grit to the typical commercial-safe sounds of The Ting Tings. ■

OF MONTREAL

story / GINA TRON + HEATHER SEIDLER photography / PATRICK HEAGNEY

LADYGUNN got the opportunity to delve into some self-indulgent territory with Of Montreal’s frontman Kevin Barnes. Barnes discussed the vibe of his new album, *Paralytic Stalks*, which he admits is of a self-indulgent nature. He told us he was “Working through this sort of weird period of depression and psychosis. I don’t even know why. I just went though a strange period in my life.” Luckily he was able to channel these negative feelings into a quite the prolific and sonically abstract album.

Rather than merely channeling the negative feelings into dreary songs, Barnes allowed the darkness to evolve into something more uplifting. “I’m trying to transcend and put myself in a better place. When people are suffering it doesn’t really help them to sing melancholy songs. I’m gonna try to create a better situation for myself through art and music and not just sort of revel in the darkness and the anger and frustration.” Despite some of the songs on *Paralytic Stalks* sounding “fairly boring and colorful,” the subject matter is much darker than in previous Of Montreal albums. Yet, like some of the band’s previous work, it’s still a “celebration of all things dark and bright in the human experience.”

The writing and recording process was quite therapeutic for Barnes. “If I was to sit in my bedroom just brooding and feeling the pains, it wouldn’t really help me at all. I try to channel that negative energy into something more positive.” No angst-filled teenagers here! Speaking of teenagers, Ladygunn asked Barnes what advice he would give his teen self if he were able to travel back in time. “Does advice work?” he inquired. “I feel you just have to listen and experience and figure it out for yourself. I went to see a therapist for a while and realized I benefited from seeing this person. But I was really just benefitting from talking to myself.” For “Paralytic Stalks,” self-expression was successful. “I used the creative process as a form of therapy to help me navigate through [the negativity].”

Visual navigation will be in order for those who attend the band’s upcoming live performances. “What we’ve prepared for this tour is fairly impressive, visually,” Barnes says. He spoke of twenty projectable spaces that create “A pretty dense visual experience...it’s hallucinatory and impressive. Its definitely very psychedelic and very powerful!”

Barnes’ brother, Barnes’ wife Nina, and Nick Gould have been making the video productions and have been working for three months putting it all together. “It’s not just random images happening. Everything is created to work with the music.” And the end result sounds quite epic. “The first time I saw it..I felt that fear in your eyes and your brain when you can’t understand what’s happening.”

When asked if the band fears their time in the spotlight won’t last, Barnes told us that the level of perceived success is irrelevant. “I want us to exist. I want to be making music. And whether or not we’re successful

commercially, it’s about the personal satisfaction that comes from creating art and the life you want to live. I understand there will be ups and downs and I feel really blessed that we’ve had success and were able to reach a larger audience.” Barnes also has little fear about the monetary and critical success of *Paralytic Stalks*. “I’ve sort of accepted the fact that some records will be more commercial than others. I’ve had this urge to make something complex and somewhat challenging”

Barnes mentions writer Phillip K. Dick as an influence. “He’s a fantastic writer and his brain works on such a higher level than everybody else. He was in some shack eating dog food for years and never stopped writing.” So regardless of fame and fortune, Barnes would be making music. It’s his passion, his drive. “Its almost a curse in a way to be driven,” he says, echoing what all artists understand in one way or another. That fun thin line between being celebrated and being loathed, between being steps away from a psychotic homeless person and being astronomically successful. Drive is a killer, but it’s also a catapulting mechanism.

And that curse of the drive for better or worse (in the case Of Montreal, better) has remained the constant in the band for the last fifteen years. Barnes claims that within the decade and a half, the band “hasn’t changed that much really. The sort of spirit that drives us is the same...we have the same motivating facets. Now it’s just a bigger production.”

Of Montreal has certainly come a long way since the days of Barnes’ youth, when he drenched his genius mind in the sounds of David Bowie and The Beatles. He was inspired by Davie Bowie’s knack of making records that sound nothing like the records that were released prior. “They’re all just so different. I think they’re very inspiring but also it kind of made me think that’s a good challenge for me. I really try to make something that is not following a user format.”



Another one of his childhood influences was also Barnes’ first obsession: none other than the captain of weirdness himself, Prince. “I was definitely obsessed with Prince. He was the first artist I really connected with. I remember watching his videos and being so confused but also mystified by his androgyny and sexiness and strange spirituality.”

But Prince has been relegated to the back shelf, since Barnes’ main obsession now is his eight-year-old daughter. And himself. “I’m definitely interested in the creative process and figuring out what I’m gonna do. That’s my main obsession, is myself.” [Laughs] Barnes is undeniably driven, always looking to up the ante on the creative front. He’s a true artist, indeed. “My whole life is focused on making music. If I didn’t have that id be so lost and extremely suicidal,” he joked. At least we really hope so. ■

SILVERSUN PICKUPS

story / **LOGAN BRENDT** photography / **AUTUMN DE WILDE**

“I’m not used to being so spontaneous,” confesses Nikki Monninger, bassist of indie darlings Silversun Pickups. On their third album, *Neck of the Woods*, Silversun Pickups stay true to their original sound while exploring new elements, thanks to the spontaneous production style of famed producer Garret “Jackknife” Lee.

Monninger stands out not just because she’s the only female in the band but also because of her bass playing which, especially on this album, is remarkably good. I ask about about “Gun Shy-Sunshine,” an exceptional track on the album. Monninger agrees that it’s also one of her favorites since she was able to explore deep sub-bass. “Jackknife pushed us to try new things. I liked his style of recording,” she says.

Part of what Monninger refers to is the electronic sounds featured in another excellent song, “The Pit.” “I think that’s why we chose [Jackknife] in the first place. We knew he had a more electronic background, and a lot of experience in that realm. So we didn’t want to necessarily change our sound, but we were open to things like that and suggestions he had.” Other production ideas brought to the table, including classical and funk music, inspired her as well.

For *Neck of the Woods*, deluxe CDs are being marketed that include a different band photo in each one, along with hand-cut lyrics to make something unique and special for each person. In love with the idea, Monninger says, “I really appreciate album artwork.” Because physical record sales have gone down in favor of digital distribution, it will be nice for the fans to have something that encases the recordings as a work of art.

Since the recording is complete and they’ll now be playing live,

Monninger admits, “The finality of it puts more pressure on performing. It’s definitely gotten easier though. The bigger the venue is, the easier it is to play. I’ll be nervous when we first start. We haven’t played in a year and a half.”

Disappointed by the lack of females in successful bands, she says the music business doesn’t account for women very well. “When we went [on tour] a while back, they had switched the girls’ bathroom and put a sign over it saying, ‘Guys’ Bathroom,’ so there were no girls’ bathrooms. But then the ratio is like fifty to one, so I can see why they would.” As Monninger stays light in tone, she continues to comment on gender stereotypes that she’s had to endure. She recalls, “Sometimes when we’re at festivals, and it’s not uncommon, people will try to usher me to the side when we’re about to go on stage, and go, ‘Oh you can watch from there.’ I used to think that was funny, but it happens on a regular basis.”

Monninger was inspired by women like Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth, and encourages girls to join bands to keep the music industry’s male to female ratio more equal. “LADYGUNN did an article recently on my friend Julie’s band, Deap Vally. I was just reading it and am so happy that they’re in here.” She also loves The Happy Hollows. “I think Sarah [lead singer and guitarist of The Happy Hollows] is one of the best musicians. She’s so interesting to watch.” Monninger is also into Beach House, as well as An Horse, Magnetic Fields, and Band of Skulls.

Happy to bring awareness to smart and talented females in the music business, Monninger is also an inspiration to other girls who have picked up an instrument and learned how to play because of her. “I’m happy if someone’s been inspired by something I’ve been doing. That’s always nice to hear,” Monninger delights. ■



HOT CHIP

story / **GINA TRON** photography / **STEVE GULLICK**

“Instead of carving up the wall/Why don’t you open up/We talk?”

I confess I was ready to carve up the wall with frustration when I sat down to interview the electro-indie band Hot Chip. I interviewed Alexis, Joe, and Owen of the UK band at the Tribeca Hotel, and what a bag full of spicy little chipmasters they are. “We’ve all known each other since we were 11,” Alexis soon informed me. Oh, fuck me, I thought. This meant they’d probably be communicating to one another in their own language of non-verbal cues and inside jokes. And that is just what they did.

The band members were a bit restless and full of snarky jokes. They told me they were in New York for press so I assumed I was one of the many in a string of interviewers to bark questions at them. I asked if they spoke to many before me. “No, not too many,” Alexis said. “Quick estimate, I’d say we’ve talked to seven people today, but that’s not including people like strangers waiting on us at restaurants.” But serious answers or not, they were a fascinating and fun band to speak with.

Alexis and Joe began playing music together when they were 17. “We played songs that were a bit like Smog songs, and we played some covers of Pavement and Spaceman 3, then we started to make stuff that was a little bit more influenced by current R&B and hip hop in terms of production. We blended our own songs with that sound.” Since forming Hot Chip in 2000, the band has released five killer albums, including their latest, *In Our Heads*, set to drop this summer. Their rise to fame has been slow and steady. Joe mentions, “We’ve been kind of blowing up slowly,,” Alexis pitched in: “We’ve never exploded really.”

Their success and fame has been gradual, yet they’ve been pivotal figures in the electronic world. They were even nominated for a Grammy, which they only lost to the electro-giant Daft Punk. “Slow and steady wins the race,” Joe said. “We’re the tortoises of pop!”

Their flashy video for “Ready for the Floor” from their third studio album, *Made in the Dark*, is quite memorable. I had to ask about it. Alexis told me the inspiration “Was kind of related to Prince’s ‘Back Dance’ and ‘Party Man’ where he’s dressed half as himself and half as

The Joker. And it’s also related to the idea of physical task Japanese game shows where people have to do silly activities for no real reason.” Prince is an artist who makes an appearance in a lot of Hot Chip’s work. They’ve covered his songs in addition to adding samples of “Little Red Corvette” in some of their own work.

Currently the band plans on rising Michael Jackson from the dead to work on their new music video for “Night and Day,” a comical new tune from their new album. “Michael Jackson’s going to come back...its a big budget video,” they say. Looking forward to that. Despite rising Michael from the grave, their new album has a very light and joyous vibe. Alexis joked, “It’s the Prozac we’ve been taking.” All jokes aside, part of the reason for this joy is due to something that has rightly become an obsession of theirs: their children. Alexis and Joe confessed to me about their latest obsessions, aka their daughters.

Joe’s gushed that his little girl made some audio appearances on the new record. “I recorded her using a little handheld recorder thing. It was when she was making lots of happy noises because my wife was making her laugh. I sampled one little noise and turned it into a melody on the track, ‘These Chains.’” Because Alexis and Joe live in close proximity, their daughters play together often. Will they play together musically as well in the future? “As soon they’re old enough, they’re going to start a band called ‘MicroChips.’ We’re just going to force them,” Joe said.

I asked if they had any fresh material they were working on in the future and I got quite the confession. Alexis told me, “I want to make a t-shirt that has a picture of nine chicken nuggets on it. Three on the top row, three on the middle row, and three in the bottom row. I’ll photograph that and put it on a t-shirt. That’s something I’m working on.” I asked if this new project was McDonald’s or Burger King inspired? “Definitely the McDonald’s nuggets, those are the only ones for me,” Alexis responded. Will Hot Chip be the spokesband for the Grimace in the future? Who knows. But I do hope they continue on their gradual electronic explosion that has been responsible for some bad-ass shrapnel in the ears of music lovers worldwide. ■



R.I.P TO THE GIRL YOU USED TO KNOW.

PHOTOGRAPHY / DAVID JAMES

STYLIST / IMOGEN WILSON

HAIR & MAKEUP / SOPHIE GARTH

MODELS / KATRINA AT CLYNE, CELESTINE @ RED ELEVEN

Celestine (left) Coat, KAREN WALKER. Socks, Stylist own. Shoes, Ruby. Rings, ZORA BOYD from WUNDERKAMMER. Katrina (right) Coat, KATE SYLVESTER. Shoes, TOPSHOP. Rings, MANIA MANIA.



Jacket, HELEN CHERRY. Shorts, Workshop.
Ring (left), MANIA MANIA. Rings (right), ZORA
BOYD from WUNDERKAMMER. Socks, Stylist
own. Shoes, TOPSHOP.



Jacket, RUBY. Pants, Ruby. Rings, ZORA
BOYD from WUNDERKAMMER. Shoes,



Jacket, KAREN WALKER. Shorts, Topshop.
Rings, ZORA BOYD from WUNDERKAMMER.
Opposite Page; Dress, LIAM. Choker, MANIA
MANIA.





Bra Top, KATE SYLVESTER. Pants, ALEXANDER WANG FROM WORKSHOP. Rings, ZORA BOYD from Wunderkammer. Opposite Page; Katrina (left) Dress, STOLEN GIRLFRIENDS CLUB. Choker, MANIA. Celestine (right) Dress, STOLEN GIRLFRIENDS CLUB. Rings, ZORA BOYD FROM WUNDERKAMMER.



**EVERYONE
THINKS YOU'RE FUCKING HOT.**

PHOTOGRAPHY: LEE O' CONNOR

STYLIST: KOKO NTUEN

assistant stylist / ALEX TAMAN *assistant photographer / JACK CLARIZIO*



Fur Jacket, Photographer's own. Pants, DROP DEAD.



Jacket, TIMO WEILAND. Shirt and Pants, BRADLEY'S OWN.



ALEX PRAGER

story /EMMA KA CICHOCKI *photography* /ALEX PRAGER

What are some of your reoccurring dreams?

I sometimes dream I am a tightrope walker, but high up near the high-rise buildings.

What is your zodiac sign?

Scorpio

What keeps you happy in life?

My family, my work, Los Angeles.

There's a light in the distance, what is it?

An oncoming car.

Have you read any good books lately?

Yes. NEW YORK by Edward Rutherfurd is the last book I read. It's

an epic historical fiction about New York and how it came to be what it is today.

Are you afraid of death?

No, but I'm not looking forward to it.

What's your favorite mythological story?

The one about the Trojan Horse! I like the idea of a wooden horse filled with men.

Do you generally feel a part of the human race or apart from the human race?

Very much a part of the human race. We are all connected!

DESIGNERS WE ARE OBSESSED WITH AND THEIR CONFESSIONS

story / KELSEY HERMAN

GYPSY JUNKIES <http://www.gypsyjunkies.com>

It's easy to see why the word "junkies" is on the label of this Los Angeles-based line. The vintage-inspired brand will undoubtedly leave you craving more. Gypsy Junkies makes clothes for the young, Dr. Martin-sporting urbanite that is waiting for the Kurt Cobain hologram next year's Coachella Music and Arts Festival. Lush velvets, translucent dresses, leather bodycon tops, and groovy accessories adorn the swoon-worthy fall 2012 line, which recently premiered at LA Fashion Week. The man behind the brand, Marcus Paglialonga explains, "We design for cool California style, we try to emulate that around the world."

Obsession: He's My Brother, She's My Sister! They are a New Age folk band whose percussionist tap dances on an overturned drum. It's pretty amazing!
Confession: Smoking copious amounts of cigarettes and lavender honey ice cream from Carmela in Altadena. It's seriously mind-blowing.

TITANIA INGLIS <http://titaniainglis.com/>

There are brands that transcend current trends -- landing in the realm of high, almost unattainable fashion. With minimalist, structured clothes the Brooklyn-based Titania Inglis stands alone. She believes the old adage that less is more, celebrating the versatility of monochrome in the Spring/Summer 2012. Drawing inspiration from Denmark and the Netherlands, Inglis conceives her futuristic lines by sourcing fabrics from Japanese organic cotton, French vegetable-tanned leather, and dead stock wool from New York's garment industry. The result is an environmentally friendly, everyday look for the sophisticated city girl.

Obsession: Last year was all about Iceland for me, but now I'm turning my sights to Scotland. It looks like a dark fairy tale with its splendidly craggy countryside dotted with castles, plus it has some serious tough-girl style icons in Tilda Swinton and Shirley Manson. Not to mention my dad has somehow traced our Scottish ancestors all the way back to the 1400s. I'm dying to visit there next!
Confession: I was never much for broadcasting my life on Twitter, but Instagram has been the purest addiction since I finally joined up. Sharing pretty photos from my day, and seeing everyone else's? MORE MORE MORE MORE MORE!

DAYDREAMER LA <http://daydreamerla.com/>

Grunge is back in a big way, but few master the 90s aesthetic like this Los Angeles-based label. Psychedelic, laidback, and sexy, Daydreamer LA is the quintessential West Coast brand. They specialize in slouchy, easy-breezy clothes that fit a low-key urban lifestyle. Flowing fabrics, cut outs, and unique graphics are a music festival staple this season. Although the brand is relatively new, the clothes are stocked at Urban Outfitters stores across the US and in parts of Europe. What's next for these dreamers? "A sophisticated boutique that will stock California inspired clothes." We approve.
Obsession: The new Doritos Taco from Taco bell, the color orange.com (I swear it's a real color, Google it!), watching really bad sequels, and raw

almonds. Not necessarily in that order.

Confession: Lately when I'm at work I pretend I am Sue Ellen from Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead. "I'm on it Rose!"

SGC NYC <http://www.sgcny.com/>

Put an affordable, modern touch on the basics and you have New York City-based brand, SGC NYC. Comfy jersey fabrics mixed with hot leather accents are a dark twist on classic silhouettes. They make the endlessly accessible clothes with a chilling witch wave edge -- something a 20-year-old Stevie Nicks would wear. Think 90s Berlin goth, 70s boho, and wearability that goes beyond the decades. The clothes are enchanting, casting futuristic spells and retro vibes on Voodoo fashionistas around the world.

Obsession: Light Asylum. I heard about them awhile back and I loved their music so much, but I didn't pay attention past that. Then one day I received an invite to go see them play Glasslands [a Brooklyn venue]. I did a double take at the cover picture. It was of Bruno, whom I basically had every class with in high school. They are the music in our SS 12 video.
Confession: I think if you follow our Instagram @SGCNY you know it is the amount of food I eat. It really is gluttonous. **L**



SGC NYC SUMMER 2012

IN GOD WE TRUST

story / ALY VANDER HAYDEN photography / JACK CLARIZIO

If you've lived this long without seeing the chic, witty, and understated jewelry pieces from In God We Trust's Shana Tabor, you better check them out ASAP and get yourself a heart charm necklace engraved with a poetic verse like "Balls To the Wall" or "Bless This Mess." The woman behind the brand took up jewelry making after a mere one semester at FIT when she realized the fashion industry just wasn't her thing. Luckily, with the changing of her major to Jewelry Design—an old junior high hobby—In God We Trust was born. Ladygunn got down with Tabor (see below) and after you do too, head to one of her three Brooklyn stores to treat yourself to one of those "Sweet Nothings" necklaces. Yes, you deserve it.

LADYGUNN: What are some items from your store you think we should have for spring and summer?

SHANA TABOR: Our IGWT "Drinking Situations." I personally try to consume a smaller amount of plastic, and I don't like buying things that have been stored in plastic. So to combat this, since I drink a lot of iced coffee, we started making jars with metal straws. We also have some really beautiful clothing coming out. We have a custom silk print and a really gorgeous coral and mint green anchor print. So I'm excited for those. We have some neck cuffs, or "collars." [Laughs] We also have some new good clogs.

Who's a musician who has inspired you lately?

I am obsessed with Ty Segall right now. I saw him at The Bowery Ballroom last year and he's so cute. For me, his work is just everything I like about music.

Favorite place to escape in the city in the summer?

Besides my apartment? [Laughs] I'm a big fan of Jacob Riis Beach. I went on the East River Ferry the other day and that was awesome. One of my girlfriends also has a house in Lake Peekskill, which is also really nice to go to.

Any advice for the Ladygunners out there?

I have a really hard time spending money on myself, so I'm always like, "I'm not going to buy these shoes, they're \$400. That's insane!" In the end, instead of buying those, I buy like three other pairs of shoes that kind of remind me of those shoes and they're like \$80. But then I realize I just spent the same amount of money on three pairs of shoes that don't make me happy. I guess that can be applied to anything you buy or other aspects of your life.

Obsession: Metal drinking straws and my IGWT Drinking Situation.

Confession: None of my tattoos are real, and I'm not a natural blonde. **L**





WHY IS NO ONE TALKING ABOUT WHAT A GENIUS MAX LANDIS IS?!

An Interview by Anne Walls
photography / Aristotle Dreher

This is an IMDB comment about screenwriter Max Landis. After a few minutes with the quick-witted 26-year-old, you quickly learn the writer/director/producer is a complete maniac (in a good way). To wit, Max Landis is obsessed with:

1. WrestleMania
2. Full-scale Nerf wars in the park
3. Wearing a tie every day, even though he doesn't have to
4. Drinking copious amounts of rum and cokes
5. Disney World
6. Spending a quiet evening with his cat Junkie
7. STEP UP 3D, the film

The obligatory backstory: 1985. Max Landis is born. He's the son of director John Landis (BLUES BROTHERS, THREE AMIGOS, Michael Jackson's THRILLER video). Fast-forward to 2011 and Landis is Hollywood's hottest screenwriter. Then comes 2012 and the release of his first produced feature film, CHRONICLE.

So one would expect, upon sitting down with Landis, to talk business. But instead he wants to talk about "the greatest dance film of all time," STEP UP 3D. He sums up his passion: "It's absolute glee-ful madness and a towering achievement in human

expression." Plans for Landis to write a dance movie of his own are quickly becoming less something to joke about over cocktails and more a reality.

The conversation moves on to Landis' other obsessions: wrestlers. They're a part of Landis' grand plans for this month, which he calls "Little Boy Thirty." "It's a 30-day period," he says gleefully. "Where I achieve several little boy dreams. Friday I attended a Star Trek/Star Wars Jell-O wrestling match. I'm writing the sequel to CHRONICLE. Then I'm going to Orlando with my best friend Brad."

Me: "Please tell me there will be Mickey ears involved."
Landis: "Oh yes, we're going to be very cute. It'll be a mess."

After Disneyworld, Landis will attend WrestleMania, which he calls "the ultimate dream of my life." His enthusiasm is infectious.

Me: "You know, you could be a cult leader one day."

After a look of hope flashes across his face, he says: "I could get there."

What's scarier, that he has a new action item to add to Little Boy Thirty or that he'll probably achieve it? Stay tuned. ■

medians. Louis C.K and Larry David, too. I'm really into comedians. Those are the people I look up to the most.

What's the most obsessive thing a fan has ever done?

I got invited to this private chat on Facebook. There were people involved with names like "Sonny-moore" and "ROAD HOG" - who is is Skrillex's tour manager. Also Troy Beetles, who goes by Datsik [another famous DJ]. And everyone was typing like they do. Sonny used his style of prose and ROAD HOG was in all caps. It was a huge chat and I accepted thinking it was the real people. I saw my name being mentioned and when I looked ROAD HOG was talking about my relationship with my girlfriend and Datsik was talking about kicking my ass at the next festival. I called him with concern and turns out, it was these "Role Players." These two girls made fake Facebook accounts, studied our style of prose, and researched our personal lives just to make themselves look like they were friends with famous DJs. They could have started some serious beef.

What do your parents think of all your success?

They are highly, highly supportive, it's awesome. My dad could tell you from a Wolfgang Gartner track from a Skrillex track. Before I had a manager, he was negotiating all my contracts. My mom was at my last show in North Carolina, and brought my little brothers who are eleven and thirteen. They had the time of their lives.

Is there anything you miss about your old life?

I miss my dogs. And being around my family.

What music are you currently obsessed with?

I get excited about dumb start- up genres. Recently more dustup "trap" music. ■



WHITE RABBITS

photography / Nick Simonite

Behind White Rabbits' honky tonk calypso undertones and spirited live performances, are five talented boys - Stephen Patterson (vocals/piano/guitar), Alex Even (guitar), Gregory Roberts (guitar/vocals), Jamie Levinson (drums) and Matthew Clark (drums). Hailing from Columbia, Missouri and refreshingly modest in acknowledging their success, the White Rabbits are passionate when it comes to performing and creating records. Each one is bigger and better than the last.

Their third and latest album, *Milk Famous*, pays homage to the band's own musical influences throughout the years, exposing a rawness that they haven't previously shared with the world. Having set aside an entire year to write the album (the longest they have taken to date), the White Rabbits, whilst proud of the outcome, are already playing the next record in their heads. It's all hit the ground running for this group. But all this is achievable, if you plan on living forever...

LADYGUNN: Your world tour has officially started. Is there one city in particular that you guys are really looking forward to playing in?

WHITE RABBITS: St Louis, Missouri. We haven't been there in a while and have a lot of old friends and family out there. It will be nice to play for them again.

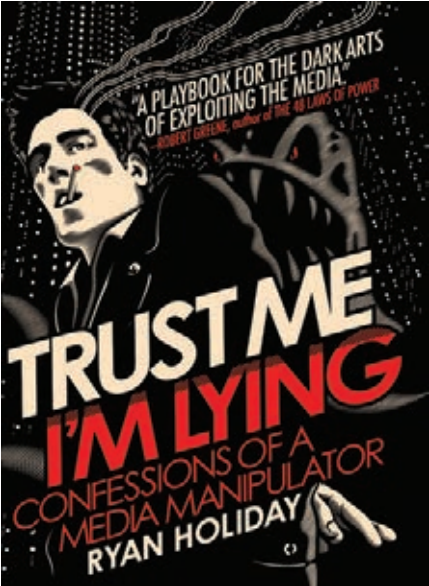
Your "It's Frightening" album took just four weeks to produce...How long did you work on Milk Famous?

Milk Famous was recorded over the course of three months in Austin, Texas. We had a house that we rented there. It was a really nice change of pace - to get away from home. The only people we knew were really each other. It's great that way - it really keeps you focused on the record and you're able to kind of live it, you know? Before we went down there we were writing for about a year - trying to get inspired and to figure out where we wanted to go to next...and here we are! I'm very proud of where we ended up. It was a long process, the longest we had ever taken to write an album.

What were the major influences for you guys when putting this album together?

We were listening to a lot of DEVO, some Beyonce, Kanye's records and Paul McCartney's second solo record, where he went way outside of what people expected from him.

Paul has always been a huge influence and is my favorite drummer of all time. His first two records where he's playing everything himself, in a kind of carefree fashion, sounds like he's having a lot of fun, exploring different ideas he had, which can sometimes come off as indulgent, but it doesn't quite come off that way. To me, it sounds really fun and was a huge inspiration when working on *Milk Famous*. - Jessica Lennie



MANDATORY READING

Trust Me I'm Lying: Confessions of a Media Manipulator is out July 19th and is Ryan Holiday's debut book about all the secrets of being the wunderkind media manipulator that has garnered him lots of money, success and seats beside some of the most powerful people in media.

Ryan's Confession: I don't like music. My iPod shuffle has like 10 songs on it, which I've listened to like 300 times each.

Ryan's Obsession: Books. Books. Books, it's always been books. -Koko Ntuen



PORTER ROBINSON may be young, but his passion and dedication are the backbone to his success. The 19-year-old producer/DJ protégé has far surpassed his elders within the substance and context of his form. His live shows are quick moving, implementing seamless and freeform musical mashups. Many DJs simply play pre-recorded, eight-minute songs, but Porter Robinson mixes every thirty to forty seconds. His songs are high-energy emotional breakdowns with aggressive drops that lead to clarity. They also seek distance from Dubstep. And that's why Robinson is here to stay.

After being introduced to Dance Dance Revolution at the age of twelve, Robinson's obsession with beats led to a career. After spending six years teaching himself how to make music, his single, "Say My Name" landed #1 on Beatport, ultimately leading him from Producer to DJ. By the way, he was 18-years-old at the time. Immediately after graduating high school, he went on a six month tour where he played an average of five nights a week. And it only got crazier from there.

Taking a break from his success to spend time with his family, Robinson was so kind as to meet with us at the Thompson Hotel in New York City to discuss his career, his life, and his current obsessions.

LADYGUNN: Okay, let's get right into it. What are your current obsessions?

PORTER ROBINSON: This [animated tv] show by Pendleton Ward called "Adventure Time." It's the edgiest, most progressive cartoon out there. My phone even has one of the characters on it. It has such an advanced since of humor.

What celebrities are you obsessed with?

I'm a big fan of Tim and Eric. They're fantastic co-

photography + story / Ericka Clevenger

story / **PARICE GRANT** *photography /* **JESSICA SIM**
stylist / **IMOGEN WILSON**
ALL CLOTHING STOLEN GIRLFRIENDS CLUB

It's pretty much a guarantee that every item in the Stolen Girlfriends Club collection is a potential pin on Pinterest. The effortlessly sexy and urbane pieces from the New Zealand-based label has every mouth agape for their "Me & Mrs. Bones" collection. Hailing from the land of rolling hills and abundant greenery, the brand, touted for their seemingly endless stock of out-of-the-box presentations (a lá the funky New World Supermarket fashion show on YouTube), has grown tremendously in New Zealand and the US. Every region has a favorite item. "In NZ, we sell the latest collection pieces the best. In the U.S.A, they just seem to want our cable knit shorts!" says the label's Creative Director, Marc Moore, who started SGC in 2005 with friends Luke Harwood and Dan Gosling.

The trio named the brand after an inspirational art installation, "The name came from an art show that we had before we made clothes. Stolen Girlfriends Club was the theme and title of all the art. People loved the name so we got around to making some t-shirts and decided to name it after the art show." Thus Stolen Girlfriends Club came to fruition, a melding of multiple artistic mediums and the surfer attitude. Since its humble beginnings, the label has vastly expanded – it's currently available in Urban Outfitters and on UK online retailer, ASOS.com.

The release of previous collections like "Last Night's Party" and "The Big Come Down" were lauded as refreshing additions to the fashion lexicon. The label that started with t-shirts snowballed into women's wear, menswear, and a passion-filled array of jewelry. The label became a cult favorite of savvy fashionistas and celebs alike; Juliette Lewis, Daisy Lowe, The Cobra Snake, and Kate Bosworth are all avid fans. Azealia Banks and Theophilus London, aka LADYGUNN favorites, are on the SGC wish list of celebs to style. Moore gives LADYGUNN an exclusive confession: his current crush is on the punky MC of '212' fame. Moore says, "She has swag, talent, and really nice teeth." Aside from Moore swooning over Azealia's looks and rhymes, as an artist she is a trendsetter and game changer in her genre. This makes her a natural poster child for the brand's aesthetic, which Moore describes: "The aesthetic was based on what we wanted to wear ourselves and our friends too. The design of the collections is constantly evolving which I love - as we learn more about designing clothes I feel that the product improves greatly."

In the same fashion that the brand name was created, Moore found his muse in a friend's art show for most of the looks for "Me & Mrs. Bones." "I was mostly obsessed with our location," Moore says.. "It was a friend's place that we'd always wanted to shoot. [It's] a crazy shrine to all things death metal." Death metal is a unifying thread between the "Here Lies the Bones" campaign, deftly shot by photographer Derek Henderson who captured the sultry New Zealand stunner. The shots feature model Georgia Fowler posing with punk defiance against death metal records in eye-popping, alluring designs; unsurprisingly, the "Here Lies the Bones" collection inspired a photo essay by photographer Maya Villiger. Actually, it is not uncommon for SGC design to blossom into film or intriguing photography. For Stolen by SGC, there were impromptu photo sessions with gorgeous model Jasper Seven.

Metaphorically, if "Here Lies the Bones" is the rock n' roll funeral, then "Me & Mrs. Bones" is the modern ethereal afterlife in the underworld.

The collection is full of skull prints merging with fresh colors as they bloom across lightweight fabrics, daring bodycon dresses with flattering cutouts and playful sheer panels, and bony hands gently cup interesting places. The collection emerged recently at the SGC headquarters, to an intimate audience of fashion bloggers and devotees. The bare warehouse backdrop, a large space with concrete walls and fluorescent lighting, served as the canvas as the room teemed with excitement. The threesome nailed it; churning out an abundance of stand-out wardrobe makers, including the brand favorite: "The skeletal maxi dress in black . It's such a stand-out piece and pretty much symbolizes our whole collection," Moore explains. In spite of the appearance of perfection, there are some drawbacks to the business: "Most challenges come from making the actual product. The production side of the business is hectic. So many things can always go wrong so you need to be prepared for the worst and be able to think quickly on your feet."

In this collection, the pieces diverge ever so slightly from the collections past. "Me & Mrs. Bones" carries the torch of the heavy metal charm from "Here Lies the Bones" but is darker, a bit more mysterious with an unmistakable dash of coquettishness. The label, known as a steady proponent of DIY-ing and subversively scoffing at mass trends, has carved a niche delight for anyone from editorial assistant to gallerina. Moore goes on to describe the type of girl who would shop SGC: "She's definitely between twenty and thirty-five years old. She doesn't listen to mainstream music (but will dance to it if she's super drunk without shame). She is passionate about what she does for a living, and what she wears. I would say most of the time her career would involve fashion in some way - even if it was just a matter of looking good when she does what she does." Moore goes on to create the perfect SGC girl mixtape: Skinny Love by Bon Iver, Metronome by Pikachunes, The Boys Wanna Be Her by Peaches, Disparate Youth by Santogold, Suzie Q by Creedence Clearwater Revival, Bongo Bong by Manu Chao, Bavarian #1 by Miike Snow, Sail Away by The Rapture, Polish Girl by Neon Indian, Doeses & Mimosas by Cherub, Cruel by St Vincent, Funnel of Love by Wanda Jackson, 212 by Azealia Banks.

Who wouldn't have that obsessively in rotation? In addition to amazing details about the brand, Moore shares that he unplugged himself from a tech-free creative environment to interview with LADYGUNN. He confesses he isn't even aware of what is trending for the spring season. "I'm not too up with the trends," says Moore. "What's in fashion at the moment?" he jokes. He lives by the motto "Don't Follow Fashion." If anything he suggests that foundational pieces are the building blocks of a sound wardrobe. "I would say pants are a good start for any woman - don't leave home without them."

Though oblivious to the of-the-moment items, he isn't totally oblivious to classic luxe staples. Hence why the former surf pro made an investment in a Jil Sander coat. "The amount of money made me sweat but the investment was well worth all the great compliments I've received." This minimalist approach to art and fashion are also standbys in daily life. When asked to create a survival kit for a stay on a deserted island (with no limitations), Moore came up with this: ChapStick, beer, cigarettes, iPod, Bose cordless dock. Simple, sweet, and bare bones. ■

STOLEN GIRLFRIENDS CLUB





Confessions of A Bunny Lover

I may as well just say it: I'm infatuated with the Playboy Mansion. Have been since before THE GIRLS NEXT DOOR, definitely before THE HOUSE BUNNY, and long before I even was a proper adult. I'd like to blame my parents. I wish I could tell you that my freewheeling, late 1970s Laurel Canyon upbringing afforded me Drew Barrymore-esque nights with Hef, my tiny blonde head bobbing to whatever long-haired jam band blasted from the speakers while Bunnies in their signature ears and cuffs passed around silver platters overflowing with freshly-rolled joints and lines of cocaine.

But no. My parents fled Los Angeles for the comfortable sterility of Orange County when I was two, so I learned about Playboy and the mansion that begat it the old-fashioned way: by sneaking the magazines in gas stations. There was something forbidden and scandalously anti-feminist about the glossy breasts and breathily parted mouths that told me Playboy, and everything associated with it, was something I shouldn't want to know. Certainly only perverts looked at magazines like this. Not nice people like me and my current obsession, Mr. Bill Cosby. There was no way the lovable patriarch of the Huxtable family filthied his hands with smut like this.

But I couldn't stop. Around the age of seven, untillated (ha) by the busty women, I discovered in the back corner of the racks a much more interesting periodical called Playgirl. Clandestine, hurried flip-throughs of it became my new obsession. My main thoughts were: why did these men walk around wearing rain coats without clothing underneath – what were they going to do once they got to their offices? Surely they weren't plan-

ning on wearing those big coats all day? – and then, of course, the more pressing question of what exactly those hose-looking appendages between their legs were. I had to keep vigil over these mysterious magazines, if only to find out.

I was searching for answers one day as my dad's back was to me paying the gas station attendant, but the transaction went quicker than usual. In a fit of older sibling genius, I forced the black market magazine into my little sister's hands just in time for my dad to turn around and react. Unfavorably of course. I gave him a knowing, conspiratorial look about the reality that my cherubic sibling was destined for a life of seedy deeds and inevitable back-alley transactions, but he saw right through it and treated us both to an hour-long lecture about "appropriate behavior" and "respecting the human body." But that was just it. These Playboy kids seemed to not only respect their bodies, but celebrate them. Why was that bad? Flash forward a dozen years and I found myself living on the glorious UCLA campus that backs up against Hugh Hefner's famed Playboy Mansion. Bragging about going to a pool party at the Mansion became the gold standard for beer-soaked frat boys, but my fellow Women's Literature students and myself scoffed at such obviously misogyny. Who could condone the now-antiquated ritual of bosomy women stuffed into constricting lingerie and wearing the ears of an animal most frequently associated with fuzzy Easter goodness?

Secretly, of course, I was dying to see the fancy, Tudor-style mansion. The carefully manicured lawns teaming with exotic animals and the shimmering blue pool, complete with waterfall and notorious Grotto. Oh the Grotto.

Legend of the party spot's eye-roll-inducing "What Happens in the Grotto" tagline and inevitably disease-filled water had sullied it over the years, but it was still a place of intrigue and infamy.

So when I was offered the chance – along with a gaggle of other journalists- to enter the Mansion's hallowed gates to cover the announcement of the annual Playboy Jazz Festival lineup, I jumped. "It's just another assignment," "I love jazz," and "I hear there'll be an open bar," were all nonchalant excuses I used when questioned about my impending trip to Porno Mecca. Sure, we had to supply numerous forms of ID for the Mansion's military-style security clearances but really this was just going to be another day at the office. The slutty, clothing-optional office.

On the shuttle to the mansion, the muted chatter from the other journalists rose to a fever pitch as we turned onto the long, winding driveway and drove through the infamous, ivy-covered gates. All talk stopped as we got our first view of the imposing two-story structure that seemed to stretch back into the vast grounds farther than the eye could see.

Disembarking the bus with my trusty photographer at my side, we made our way through the body cavity search (kidding, but I probably wouldn't be the first person to be penetrated on the driveway) and down a long tunnel that let us out into the backyard. To the left, a huge white tent had been erected for the press conference. The strains of a saxophone filled the air. Directly in front of us was the sizeable pool and rocky hill that provided the waterfall's graceful dissent. But the shimmering water of my daydreams was unreflective in the hazy afternoon. The waterfall was a bit more Splash Mountain loud than soothing.

But none of this mattered because straight ahead, through a narrow, darkened doorway, almost hidden in the slate-grey cave that flanked the pool was The Grotto. Glancing furtively at my cohort, we casually separated from the flock of journalists who had spotted the cookie towers on the buffet tables outside the Jazz Fest tent. Trying to appear casual, snapping pictures of the pool and surrounding lawns, we backed our way past a few large security guards in black shirts (sans weapons, I noted) and nimbly ducked into the doorway to my dreams.

It took a few minutes for my eyes to adjust to their dim surroundings, but my sense of sight may have been delayed since my sense of smell was on overload. The stench of stale chlorine and wet, antiquated fabric assaulted my nose. It smelled like a pirate ship marooned in the belly of a beached whale. I eventually saw we were in a sort of rocky anteroom, a short hallway that had shelves built into the walls. They were stuffed full of threadbare robes and neon-colored towels. On the top shelf sat a wide assortment of crusty sun block and tanning oils, all seemingly purchased in 1987. Slightly mystified, we made our way into the Grotto itself, which turned

out to be two small pools of murky- no other way to describe it- water surrounded with rocky wall outcroppings and green, mattress-type cushions on the ground. What – or whom- had been done on these very mats was not too hard to imagine, given the general darkness and semi-privacy the Grotto offered. It was all in all...disappointing.

The only sounds were my photographer's and my breathing, and an echoing drip from ceiling water trickling onto the damp tiles at our feet. A lone beach ball slowly floated past. The whole place was so much smaller, dirtier and more tired than I had imagined for all these years. I tried to picture laughing 1960's babes flirting with gold chain wearing Kings of Industry, but could only hear the empty silence of a past long gone. Until Bill Cosby spoke.

"Alright, alright everybody! We're gonna get this thing started so everybody just sit down – that's right, you people at the bar! Get that booze and get up here!"

What was happening? Why could I hear my childhood hero's voice bouncing off the cesspool, seemingly from a speaker in the Jazz Festival tent? We rushed out of the Grotto and were almost blinded by the hot, bright sun and flock of reporters heeding the instructions to take their seats. I burst into the tent and was greeted with the amazing, if not totally confusing sight of him. Bill Cosby. Wearing maroon sweatpants and a faded grey sweater with the words "Hello Friends!" on it, standing under a Playboy Jazz Fest banner hanging above a small stage. Mouth agape, I took a seat as Mr. Huxtable approached the Playboy bunny adorned podium (did Hefner personalize everything? Even the chilled water bottles at the bar had the Playboy logo on them) and started waxing poetic about the wily wonders of jazz. What?

My brain had imploded moments before so it took me a while to hear the two reporters behind me whispering about The Cosby hosting this event every year since he was such a jazz buff. For the next hour and a half I sat, dazzled, as Bill introduced and riffed with almost every performer, flirted with drum wizardess Sheila E. (another 1980s hero of mine), and micromanaged the high school jazz band set up next to the stage. I mean, it was surreal. Bill Cosby. Live. In the flesh. Telling us stories about his wife and mother-in-law accidentally getting high during the Playboy Jazz Fest of '88. I mean, it was just...it was awesome.

The event ultimately wrapped up, but not before I managed a handshake with Mr. Cosby. I almost died. Then I boarded the bus taking us back to the "real world," still in awe at the day's events. As we drove out the gates and away from the intrigue, the faded dreams, and the glory days long past I realized something: only at the Playboy Mansion could you lose one childhood dream and achieve another in the same afternoon. Maybe the old place still has a little of that magic left in her after all. ■

story / Anne Walls

photography / Jason Chiang

DIRTY SECRETS

OBSESSION, COMPULSION AND ANXIETY IN THE U.S.

story / SARAH WRIGLEY

In a society of self-diagnosing hypochondriacs, Americans have become preoccupied with assigning ourselves certain psychological illnesses. Depression, OCD, ADHD, bipolar disorder - all of these maladies, whether individually fictionalized or reality, have manifested in a strikingly significant portion of America's population. The question is, to what end? Children are diagnosed with ADHD and medicated from an early age when sometimes they're merely tiny, sugar-fueled spazzes. What in the American culture can be at fault for society reveling in an assembled body of psychological disorders? There's no doubt that advancements in science have afforded us many different outlets for treatment and therapy (and no, I don't mean DR. PHIL) where those with psychological difficulties are no longer viewed as degenerates, forced to hide their struggle. However, the widespread corporatization and trivializing of mental disorders has unearthed a new problem: namely, that everyone has one.

What's important in this changing psychological landscape is to view the individual as just that—an individual separate from a psychological disorder rather than a defining set of symptoms and treatment plans. While some direly need medical intervention and treatment for psychological disorders, many are falsely led to believe that because they are sad, they are depressed. Or the fact that Sally likes to keep her room clean means she must have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Not by any means am I attempting to devalue the progress the American psychological system has taken or the very serious nature of psychological disorders. I merely aim to point out that the definition of what constitutes certain disorders has been blurred, so that thousands of Americans have been lead to falsely suffer in order to fund pharmaceutical corporations and therapist's bank accounts.

I sat down with a few people to talk about their obsessions, compulsions, and everything in between. I wanted to observe the individual struggle without looking to define said struggle under any predetermined attributes. The people I spoke to seemed to have found a way of coping with whatever emotional, chemical, or psychological difficulties they had by finding something within themselves to lessen the problem. For them, something existed within

the inherent self that allowed them each to find a way out.

Overall, I found that we, as human beings, are all a culmination of idiosyncrasies and inexplicabilities. And we are far more than a set of symptoms and pill bottles.

Ryan,* 20, Massachusetts

Filled with charisma and charm, the healing powers of time have given Ryan the chance to be able to talk about his difficulties with OCD with an admirable sense of honesty and ease. Ryan suffered from a series of emotional breakdowns in his youth after his father was deployed to Kabul just after 9/11. Specifically, trying to cope with the constant possibility of his father's death manifested itself in the compulsion to wash his hands, obsessive praying, and a litany of other emotional and psychological difficulties.

Ryan recalls the day his father left, changing a roll of film in the camera he brought to document his father's departure. When his hands brushed by his face, he noticed an odd, metallic smell. At the Army base that day, he washed his hands at least six times, not counting going to the bathroom or before eating. From that day onwards, Ryan's obsessive hand washing became a habit that didn't go unnoticed. Concern from his mother and ridicule from his peers did nothing but further exacerbate the problem. "My hands turned this ghastly shade of white and the lines on my palms started cracking. The skin in between my knuckles was raw and bleeding." Aside from the tangible emotional trauma Ryan was experiencing, his destroyed hands served as a visual marker of his pain, his difference from his peers. "It probably sounds like poetic bullshit, but it was definitely a physical symbol for everything that I was going through emotionally. I was an outcast, but it was definitely self-inflicted."

After a carefree childhood covered in mud, cuts and bruises from playing with friends, Ryan couldn't have been more different than this new germ-obsessed boy driven to bouts of anger and isolation.

On top of the compulsive hand washing, Ryan looked to religion as a way of helping him grapple with the idea of injustice, war, and death. The idea of religion offered an inter-

esting coping mechanism. Ryan thought that if he didn't pray for everyone he cared about, they would all die traumatically. His OCD manifested itself in yet another outlet that was fuelled by his attendance at a private Catholic school in Boston. "It just gave me something else to be compulsive about."

With age, Ryan has grown more and more disillusioned with religion and looks back on that time with a kind of rueful ambivalence. "I started getting in a lot of fights at school. I was just angry at everything." Even the smallest of conflicts seemed to incite violence in him. Ryan confesses a fear in the rage that lived inside of him while his father was away, that it could manifest itself in violence no matter how minor or childish. His mother decided to send him to therapy, which did nothing but further augment his anger. His therapist just represented the institutionalized psychology mentality of, "Well if you're going to hurt yourself, we have to tell your parents." Essentially, there was a lack of trust from the get go.

"I hate the word disorder. I don't think anyone should be ordered," Ryan says. "Everyone has their own obsessions. Just because I'm different from everyone else doesn't mean I'm a different branch of human or something. The thing that fucked up obsessive compulsiveness was MTV with that TRUE LIFE episode. It trivialized it and made everyone self-diagnose."

Ryan finally was able to regain a semblance of control when he came to the realization that he didn't want to push people away anymore. "I got to the point where I was so concerned with what people thought about me that I just stopped." Instead of medication or intensive therapy, some inherent strength in Ryan allowed him to stop. Not many OCD cases are that lucky, but today as a writer, Ryan looks to his experience with OCD as the greatest source of his inspiration. Although OCD is something that does not disappear from one's life in its entirety, he has found a way to transform his battle into a positive, creative outlet.

Marilyn,* 23, Oklahoma

Marilyn had always been a story teller according to her family. In her younger years, the lies she told were more fantastical and unbeliev-

able. She, along with those at the receiving end of the story were both aware of the fiction. It was harmless. "As I got older, somewhere around 4th grade, I realized I couldn't really stop telling the stories in normal conversation."

We've had it drummed in our heads from the time we could speak that it's wrong to lie, that there are big lies and small, and they're all bad. Our over-active, childish memories relished in the myth of the lie. A lie is our first voyage as children into a creative world—we lie because it sounds better, to get out of trouble, because it's thrilling. When we're younger, our lies are excused because we don't know any better.

There comes a point, however, when that tendency starts to diminish and the excuse of youth is no longer valid. But some people can't stop and their affliction is called "pseudological fantastica," or compulsive lying. An individual with this disorder has an interesting relationship with the truth—the lies they tell are not a delusion as such but generally have some element of the truth in them. It could be a striking moral compass, an admirable wit, or feigned popularity. It usually derives from social difficulties or anxieties. What is important to recognize about pseudological fantastica is that the individual is painfully aware of the fiction they are constructing. They are almost rendered incapable of preventing the lie from coming out. This is Marilyn.

When asked to describe the feeling of the compulsion, she says it wasn't anything that was triggered with some foresight. The compulsion was so buried in her subconscious that she wouldn't be aware of what she was doing until after the fact. "It wasn't really a feeling that made me lie or feel like I had to lie; it just would happen and afterwards I felt really bad about it if I actually fooled someone. Which I usually did."

After meeting with a therapist for depression, Marilyn only then realized the problem with her compulsion. "It affected my social life because I was extremely bullied in middle school, and it became a defense mechanism. I would lie to help my situation, which ended up only making it worse. It led me to become extremely depressed." She realized that most of what she would tell her therapist was a lie, a way of distancing herself from the reality of her unhappiness. In therapy she was taught to immediately revoke a statement after she lied. "I would have to train myself to say 'just kidding,' after every lie, no matter how much it wouldn't make sense in the context of what I was saying." She then went on to try and turn the lie into a mere exaggeration rather than a fabrication.

As an adult, Marilyn has been able to readily identify the feeling of a lie bubbling to the surface. She admits that the compulsion hasn't disappeared in its entirety, but that she wouldn't call it a regression by any means. After her social anxieties became more manageable, and she found a social niche, the desire to lie, to impress all but dissipated.

A.J.,* 21, Texas

The 21st century has seen an explosion of stimuli as the internet age has come to define our culture and society. What with the rise of the media and social networking, we are constantly being accosted with information and images. ADHD is a disorder that causes individuals to be overstimulated by their environment, battling to focus on one single task. In the United States, one in fourteen children has or has been diagnosed with ADHD. The recent rise in ADHD could be a response to the direction our visual and intellectual environment has taken where the collective attention span of society has diminished greatly.

A.J. was diagnosed with ADHD in the fifth grade after transferring from a Montessori school to a public elementary school. The rigid constraints of sitting behind a desk, following teacher's orders became too much for the young boy. "I daydreamed all the time. I think it was kind of like being diagnosed as being a twelve-year-old boy. I remember telling my teacher she should take all the pictures down and paint the walls white if she wanted me to pay attention."

A.J. raises the interesting question of the importance of diagnosis claiming that the constant medication and treatment made him painfully aware of his disorder, saying, "The awareness was probably more inhibiting and debilitating than the symptoms themselves."

After taking Adderall, a racemic amphetamine, for the past eight years, A.J., developed a general anxiety disorder that caused him to be put on Cymbalta. "They do that a lot piling medication on kids to make them okay. They all just overlap and compensate for each other." A.J. admits to having an addiction to the psychostimulant Adderall. "I've tried really hard to stop taking it, and I've succeeded for long amounts of time. I always come back, though." After a period in his high school career when the balance between school-work, family life, a job, and friends is a constant source of stress for most teens, he would take Adderall about seven times a week. It was the highest dose he had ever taken, but it was the best he had done academically. "After that, it obviously became harder not to depend on it. I couldn't imagine myself not taking it for years at a time—it kind of terrifies me."

The experience of being on Adderall is less unnerving than that of Cymbalta, A.J. remarks. Adderall leaves the system after twenty-four hours, and its effect on the user's behavior is tangible, whereas Cymbalta and other SSRI's build up in the system and can drastically change brain chemistry. "The difference between taking the two is like smoking pot versus taking a low dose of acid," A.J. explains. Cymbalta can affect behavior without the user even knowing as it takes weeks to move out of the body.

After realizing how much Cymbalta was affecting him sometime last year, A.J. decided to stop taking the anti-anxiety drug. It was definitely no easy feat—he recalls "the terrible, terrible withdrawal experience," including sleep deprivation, blurred vision, and something called "brain zaps" which are sharp zaps of pain in the temple and a momentary feeling of vertigo. A.J. suffered through the three months it took for him to wean himself off the drug. Brain zaps are a common symptom of withdrawal from SSRI's along with a series of other non-life threatening but extremely uncomfortable symptoms. When asked to describe how ADHD has become a part of his identity, A.J. responded rather enthusiastically saying that attending an art school has allowed for him to manipulate his distraction into something productive. "It allows for a freedom and a hyper focus sometimes. You can entertain multiple ideas at once. It makes it harder to create overarching points of intersection if you can't pay attention long term."

A.J. looks at his experience with a positive light, recognizing that there are always those who are worse off. He commented on the sudden rise of cases of ADHD and more widespread use of vivants like Adderall, saying it's part of a societal evolution.

"I think ADD isn't really going to be an isolated disorder in the future but rather a mindset of a generation. It's a reaction to how much stimuli there is now a days with media and technology. It's a basic response to reality. It's something that I can put to use. Since the diagnosis for me was circumstantial so many people will never be diagnosed with it. Everyone has some of it inside of them it just manifests itself worse in some of us." ■

QUIZ

WHO'S IN CONTROL: YOU, OR YOUR OBSESSIONS??

An Essential Quiz by THE QUIZ LADY

We all have things that we like to do/eat/see/try/touch. And that's great - how nice that you aren't sitting alone in the dark eating Saltines day in and day out! But sometimes, the things that get us going are suddenly the only things that matter. We start to plan our entire lives around these things, and feel like we can't function if we don't. And that...is not so good.* When our chosen activities/people/stuff become all-consuming, we risk getting lost in them. How can you tell if you're on the verge of being sucked into the obsession vortex?! Why, take this simple quiz, of course.

*An obsession with Quiz Lady quizzes is the sole exception to this rule.

1) **Your rescue cats, Misty and Skipper, are basically your kids. They sleep in your bed and curl up at your feet while you're watching TV, and you spend more money on their special organic food than you do on your own. One day, a friend invites you to go out of town to stay at this awesome beach house for a long weekend. You:**

- a)** find the biggest bowls you have, fill them with water and food, and tell the cats you'll see 'em in a few days
- b)** call a friend and ask her to please check on the kitties after two days to make sure they're okay and have clean litter and stuff. Leave a bottle of wine as thanks.
- c)** say you'd love to come, but only if there's room for two more guests – they don't take up much space...
- d)** is this nutbag out of her mind? There's an Animal Planet "My Cat From Hell" marathon on that weekend, and you have a couple of hot dates!
- e)** you don't have any human friends with awesome beach houses. You only hang out with cats. Next question.

2) **You had this major crush in high school and never QUITE got over it. I mean, s/he was just so cute, and funny, and smart... just an ideal person to fantasize about. As the years passed, you found yourself comparing all your dates to The Crush, and even though you're in a serious relationship now, you still think about The Crush every so often. Then you learn your high school reunion is coming up, and you're pretty sure s/he'll be there. You:**

- a)** toss the notice and go on with your life. Do people actually go to those things?
 - b)** get a fabulous outfit and go find out what all your old friends have been up to. What fun – it'll be just like Facebook, only in real life!
 - c)** get really excited to see him – after all, he was a really special part of growing up for you. Because you had such high standards, look at the amazing partner you ended up with!
 - d)** immediately dump your significant other. This is your chance at last! You'll see The Crush across the high school gymnasium and everything will finally be realized... Clear the decks! Light the lights!
 - e)** well, it depends. Do you break out the album of pictures you Photoshopped The Crush into (it also includes the mock-ups of what your babies will look like, obviously) for the whole class, or wait for a private moment to share it – like when you've got him/her tied to a chair in the Nurse's office, perhaps?
- 3) **Funny story: when you were a kid, you totally loved Peter Rabbit...and you still kinda do. In fact, you still collect Peter Rabbit stuff – not a lot, just little things, like if you happen to see something. It's a nice memory from your childhood. You start dating a new person, and one night during a date s/he gives you this figurine of a rabbit - "Rabbit" from the Winnie-the-Pooh stories. You:**
- a)** realize you could never actually have sex with someone who brought you a toy on a date. Too bad – s/he was cute.
 - b)** accept the gift graciously – how incredibly sweet that s/he noticed your collection and went to the trouble of buying you such a personal gift! So what if it's the wrong rabbit? Peter could use a friend.
 - c)** make a big deal about thanking your date for the sweet gift, but mentally roll your eyes. How could s/he not know the different between A. A. Milnes and Beatrix Potter?! "Rabbit" will be living in a drawer.
 - d)** leave the restaurant and never talk to that idiot again.
 - e)** leave the restaurant and immediately use your connections to have that heartless bastard thrown in prison on a trumped-up charge. How could he do this to you? How could he do this to PETER!? When you get home, write six new poems on your "Peter Rabbit" blog and try to let time do the healing.
- 4) **You belong to a gym. In the average conversation, you mention going to it:**
- a)** never. Why would you bring up the gym? How boring.
 - b)** once, maybe? Usually to say you should probably go more.

- c)** occasionally. You're proud of your hard work! Also, your leg hurts, and sympathy is addictive.
 - d)** a lot. It's an important part of your life – why shouldn't you share it? Isn't everyone totally interested? Also, who wants the deets about the juice cleanse you're doing?
 - e)** nonstop. If you DON'T mention it – that you should've gone, or meant to, or did, or went twice, or need to, or might...it's only because you have laryngitis. Which you probably caught at the gym.
- 5) **So, the last Twilight movie is coming out soon. You:**
- a)** don't care.
 - b)** are maybe gonna go with your girlfriends opening weekend. Come on, it's fun!
 - c)** already have your tent, sleeping bag, and hot-plate ready for camping on the sidewalk the night before it opens. Not everyone gets in, you know – you can't just show up and expect a miracle!
 - d)** are pleased to announce that after only 7,548 phone calls and 15,673 emails to various local radio stations (you made your parents, whose basement you live in, help), plus six phony Make-A-Wish Foundation applications, you have tickets to the premiere!
 - e)** never want to hear the word "Twilight" again. Also, your name is legally Katniss now. DON'T forget it.
- 6) **Sex is pretty awesome, huh? You think about it:**
- a)** every second of every day.
 - b)** every second of every day.
 - c)** every second of every day.
 - d)** every second of every day.
 - e)** um...every second of every day?
- 7) **Obviously you utilize technology to make your life easier (cell phone, computer, iPad, etc.), and obviously you need those things – for work, for play, to keep in touch with family and friends. But if someone took your gadgets away for 24 hours, you'd:**
- a)** go about your business. They're tools, not your freaking life.
 - b)** probably catch yourself reaching for them constantly – especially your phone. Muscle memory is hard to overcome!
 - c)** be thrilled. What a nice break and opportunity to appreciate the stuff going on around you in real life for a change.
 - d)** wander the streets confused and alone, trying to figure out how the hell you're supposed to go on. Seriously, talk to people? In person!? Certainly NOT.
 - e)** instantly perish in a fiery ball of anger and despair.

STAFF OBSESSIONS AND CONFESSIONS....

TATIANA JOHNSON, MARKET EDITOR

Obsession: I'm a Tupac Enthusiast.

Confession: I had my first bacon cheeseburger in February.

LOGAN BRENDT, ASSOCIATE MUSIC EDITOR

Obsession: Sandwiches and comfortable socks.

Confession: I was only able to solve my Rubik's Cube by breaking it apart and putting it back together.

KOKO NTUEN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Obsession: My Acne Pistol Boots, magazines, men, money, falling in love, touching my big toe, affirmations, LADYGUNN, becoming a grown-up, finding the right pair of sunglasses and moisturizer.

Confession: I didn't need Efram's (the handsome man I met at the Santigold shoot and concert) name and number for the Santigold piece. I needed it because I totally had a crush on him and wanted to get in touch. I became obsessed with the idea of seeing him again. My friends and I did research for a week (could not find out ANYTHING), then I awoke from my spazzed out crush halo and was embarrassed for a day. I also developed a crush on Nick Waterhouse because of our amazing phone conversation.

ALY VANDER HAYEDEN, FEATURES EDITOR

Confession: At a festival last year, I snuck a security-blocked Josh Hartnett out of the press area. Then we fucked in a Porta-Potty. Well, that part was in my dreams. He was also dressed as Trip Fontaine.

Obsession: Lana Del Rey meets Betty Draper nails. I cannot get enough.

ERICKA CLEVINGER, ASSOCIATE FEATURES EDITOR

Obsession: The 90's--You can be anything.

Confession: I'm madly in love with my dog Chloe.

GINA TRON, FEATURES EDITOR

Confession: I love listening to cheesy love songs.

Obsession: I have a debilitating obsession with playing Tetris.

ANNE WALLS, EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Confession: I love Khloe Kardashian.

Obsession: My possibly autistic but sweet maniac of a rescue dog Ollie. Oh and coffee.

ON THE STREET

photography / JACK CLARIZIO



WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OBSESSION? (FROM TOP LEFT) **CHANNEE** / The weather today. **CHARLISA** / Just fashion. **FAITH** / Tried, tested, and true lipstick. **JAMES** / my next fashion line. **JUSTIN** / French toast. **KATE DEVINE** / The word “languid.” **KATE ROSEN** / Maxi dresses. **RUSTY** / Shrimp and grits. **SEL** / New York City. I’m originally from Toronto.



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THROWIN' SHADE



PHOTOGRAPHY / STEFANIE DELGADO
 STYLIST / KOKO NTUEN
 HAIR / JOEY OSO MAKEUP / HARUMI MACHII
 STYLIST ASSISTANT / AIESHA MUMFORD
 MODELS / NAOUMIE, ULLA, AND ELIZAVETA @ Q MODELS



Opposite Page From Left; All sunglasses, GREYANT. Top, RICHARD CHAI LOVE. Skirt, TIMO WEILAND. Top, RICHARD CHAI LOVE. Skirt, BLK DENIM. Top, RICHARD CHAI LOVE. Jeans, BLK DENIM. This Page From Top Left, All Sunglasses MERCURA. Orange Blazer; RICHARD CHAI LOVE. Blue Knit Top, TIMO WEILAND. Green Blazer, RICHARD CHAI LOVE. Dress, RICHARD CHAI LOVE. Bottom From Left; Dress, TIMO WEILAND. Dress, TIMO WEILAND. Top, TIMO WEILAND.

SHADY BUSINESS

PHOTOGRAPHY / DAVID JAMES

STYLIST / IMOGEN WILSON

HAIR / TALEI LEPPER AT STEPHEN MARR

MAKEUP / BEX BROWN

MODELS / IMOGEN WATT@RED ELEVEN, SOPHIE BLAZEY @ CLYNE



Sunglasses, **KAREN WALKER**. Blazers, **SEE BY CHLOE** from **WORKSHOP**.



Sophie (left) wears **KSUBI** sunglasses. Imogen (right) wears **KAREN WALKER** sunlasse. Blazers, **SEE BY CHLOE**.

I STOP THE WORLD AND MELT WITH YOU.

photography / KATIE MCCURDY *styling /* KATHERINE ANDERSON

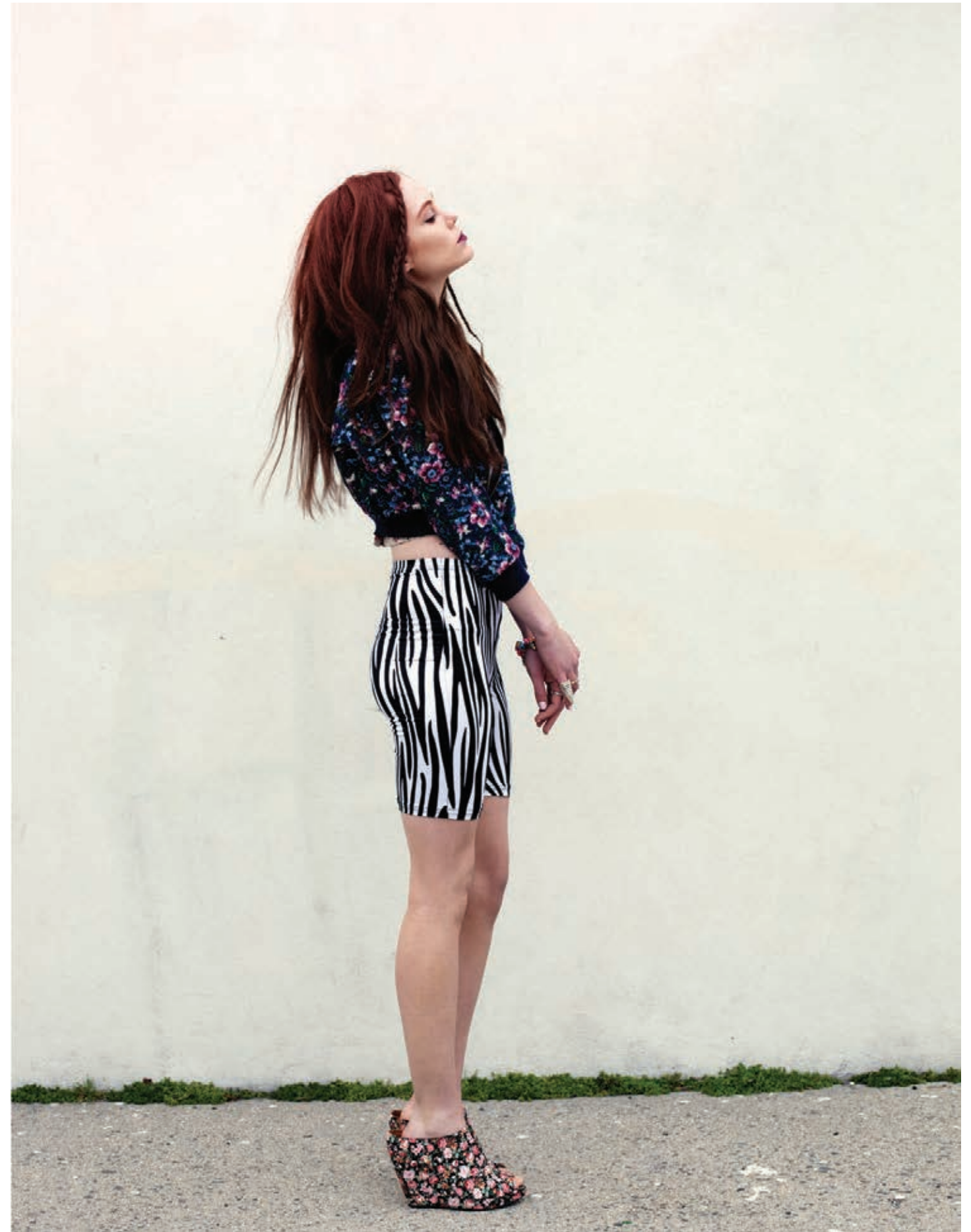
hair / TIFFANY FODOR USING BUMBLE& BUMBLE

Makeup / SUSIE SOBOL

model / TAYLOR WARREN @ FUSION MODELS



Top, **GREY ANTICS**. Pants, **VINTAGE**. Boots, **DOC MARTENS**.



Jacket, **VINTAGE**. Shorts, **VINTAGE**. Top, **KIMCHI BLUE**. Shoes, **STYLIST'S OWN**. Jewelry, **ORGANIC PEROXIDE**.



Dress, **VINTAGE**. Tights, **URBAN OUTFITTERS**. Shoes, **JEFFERY CAMPBELL**.



A woman with long dark hair is lying on her back on a bed with a patterned pillow. Her arms are raised above her head. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent purple overlay. The text 'SERIOUSLY DUDE .' is written in large, bold, black, sans-serif capital letters on the left side of the image.

SERIOUSLY DUDE .

HONEY BUNNEY
photography/ David Joseph Perez
model / Maggie Sands @ New York models

I AM ERICA KANE by Nathan Schimdt

As a child, I idolized daytime television super vixen Erica Kane, played by the delightful Susan Lucci on ALL MY CHILDREN. She set the tone for my grand gestures, even inspired me to join the circus after she went undercover in search of her estranged father (later identified as “Barney the Clown”). In romance, Erica Kane dabbled with the best and the worst, surviving it all. Erica Kane had Dimitri Marick, the dark, handsome Budapest transient. Dimitri owned a castle in suburban Pine Valley, Pennsylvania, a place I once sought to move to – convinced I was their love child. If I wasn’t, I wanted to live my life as close to hers as possible.

Now older, I search for my own Dimitri Marick in the city of Red Sox, beer guts, and pretentious gay behavior. Dimitri is a man who would whisk me away on a private jet for our Eastern European wedding, only to have my arch nemesis (a Hungarian maid) fall to her death before she could interrupt our wedding vows. Dimitri Marick failed as Erica’s husband, and she did what any wife would do, stabbing Dimitri with a letter opener. I should’ve taken this as a lesson that we lovelorn are too often fooled by romance and are spurned in the end.

I blame my mother’s avid soap opera watching during my developmental years for tainting my perception of love and romance. After my most recent heartache, I sat with a bottle of Merlot, my laptop, and sobbed uncontrollably to farewell montages of “ALL MY CHILDREN’s” dearly departed while questioning my last act of tenderness. Did he stop to appreciate the time it took to construct a Chinese take-out box that would reveal golden cherubs linked hand-in-hand, asking with boyish charm, “Will you be my Valentine?”

Like Erica Kane, I’ve had many suitors of the soap opera variety, including a recent one by the name of Tobias Startup. He was the London-trained dancer with full lips, an accent that continues to chime the bell of my irrational heart, and a pot roast for an ass. He visited Boston, cooed me with his European affection, and left on a bus back to New York. Before his London departure, he surprised me on my doorstep for one final farewell over poached eggs, tea, and cuddles.

So to do something so very Erica, I’m rejuvenating our twenty-four hour bliss with a flight next month to London. It will take everything I have not to be arrested on-site, derailing my English lover’s weekend for an immigration cell where I’ll desperately plea to the guards, “I am Erica Kane!”

As a contestant on AMERICA’S NEXT TOP MODEL once said, “If you don’t stand for Something, you will fall for anything.” I stand for the romantic gesture, often failing to see the intention. But I fall. Not just trip-over-my-shoelace kind of

fall. The kind of fall I have in dreams only to wake up before I smack the ground, preventing any terminal brain damage. Instead, I end up suffering from sweats and chest pains. Oh yeah, and HIV. But if Erica Kane could survive more than ten marriages, one rape, a murder conviction, and lusting after men who are a foot and a half taller than her, I think I can manage.

HIV was a romantic gesture made by Gabriel , aka “The Angel of Death,” a man in white loafers and a bolero, a man I mistook for a knight. Escaping a party one night, we laid on wet grass under the early morning sky. While he caressed my bleeding hand, punctured from the fence we had climbed, Gabriel spoke of his deceased sister as a star. He called me a “dreamboat,” and I called him nothing short of amazing with his Sicilian locks and one mischievous curl. He told friends he was taken by me because I had mentioned I like walking since it allowed me to observe the living. The next afternoon he was on a bus back to New York, encouraging me to follow. In my own role as a knight, I followed a day later, allowing for one more rendezvous. I told myself maybe he got a bad case of amnesia and was living in the woods somewhere, which would explain the months of unreturned phone calls.

It was a sunny day in brisk January when Gabriel finally decided to dial my number. “Hello,” he said. “I have to let you know I’m HIV-positive.” Twenty-four hours later I informed him I too had tested positive, to which he replied, “I guess we’ll always be lifelong friends.” If I truly were Erica Kane, I would have thrown a vase or donned a black designer dress. Instead, I packed my bags and moved into his artist loft in Brooklyn. Even after this I thought, “Wow, maybe this- the idea of us – was meant to be.”

My Brooklyn days were spent sipping afternoon teas in my brightly colored underwear – the finest of gay lingerie. Evenings were sultry with our naked bodies glued together by sweat and the need for attention. Sex between us was nonexistent, but I still was eager to rewrite the fairy tale romance. Gabriel gave me HIV; the least he could do was give me marriage and his life insurance policy.

If GENERAL HOSPITAL’s Laura Webber could fall in love with and marry her rapist, Luke Spencer, thus becoming the all-time soap opera super couple, then there was nothing wrong with finding love with the man who infected me. Well, other than realizing my relationship ideals were farfetched and hopeless, best suited for daytime dramas.

Why else would I allow myself the courtship of a recently excommunicated Jehovah’s Witness who had his first sexual experience at the age of 28? In the dignified words of Erica Kane, I will keep proclaiming thy name: I am Erica Kane. ■.



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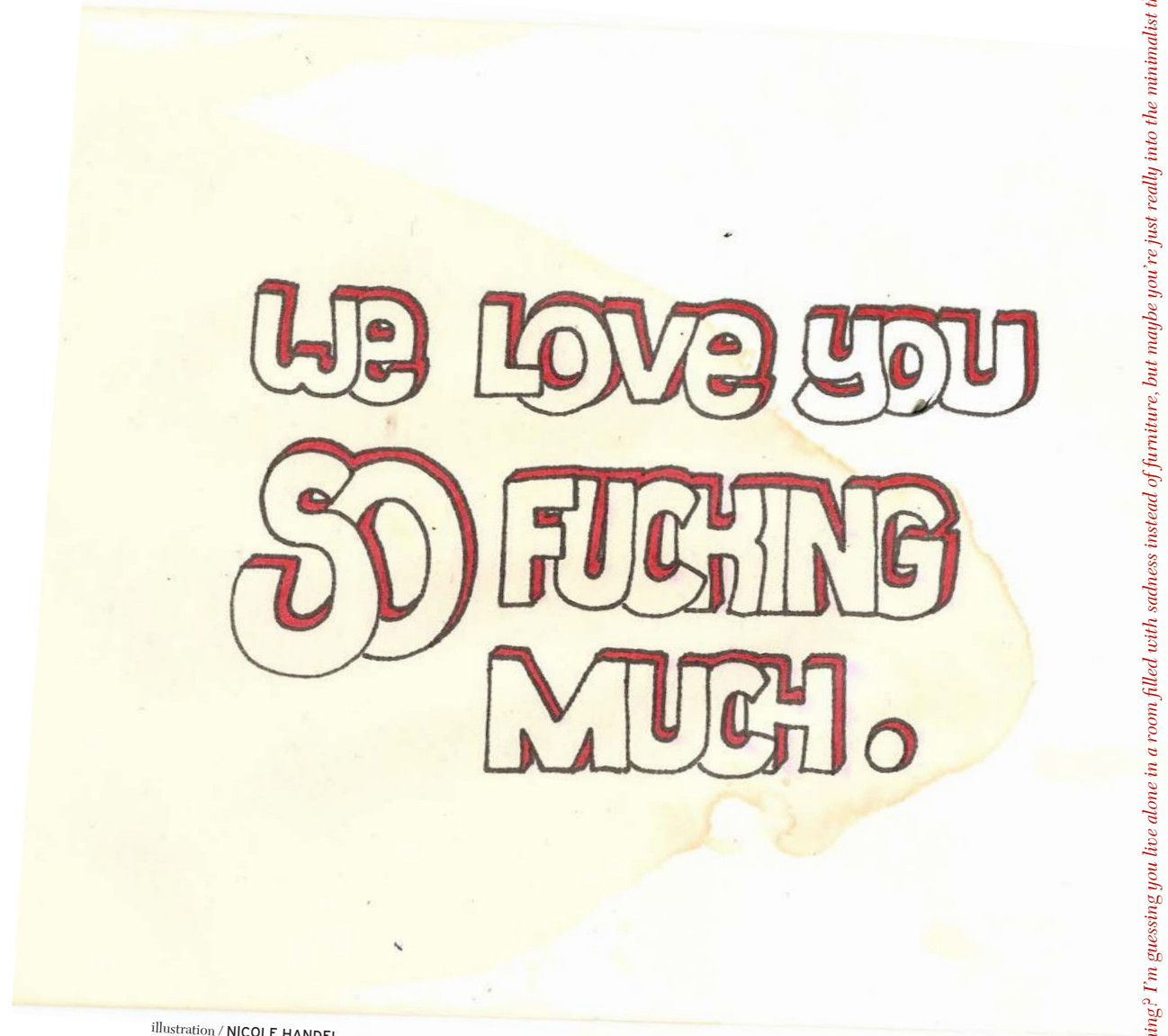


illustration / NICOLE HANDEL

ANSWER KEY:

Mosly As: NOT AT ALL OBSESSED: Um, do care about anything? I'm guessing you live alone in a room filled with sadness instead of furniture, but maybe you're just really into the minimalist thing.

Mostly Bs: NOT REALLY OBSESSED: *You cruise through life, enjoying things in the moment, but you don't really commit.*

Mostly Cs: SOMEWHAT OBSESSED: You're in the middle ground, which is a pretty good place to be. Some things really get under your skin and you can't stop thinking/talking about them, but for the most part you can enjoy things without losing your mind.

Mostly Ds: PRETTY OBSESSED: You take stuff you care about really seriously, often at the expense of other things. I'd say get a hobby... but you'd probably obsess over it. So maybe just take a few deep breaths instead. And also stop stalking people.

Mostly Es: TOTALLY OBSESSED: *You need to chill the fuck out, like, right now. I don't even know you and I'm considering taking out a restraining order.*



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