the village
VOICE
VOL. LXIII | NO. 5 DECEMBER ISSUE, 2021
Eight Voice Writers
From Back in the Day
Remember the
Inimitable Greg Tate
Like to Buy Some Bitcoin?
Barkan Looks Into
Eric Adams's Faith in
Cryptocurrency
Turman Finds Out Just
Where Michael C. Hall and
Princess Goes Are Going
The Holidays? Again?
James Hamilton and Mark Jacobson Take a Tour Through the
Years of New York's Holiday Cheers and Jeers

be patient
be persistent
be powerless

be home.

FIND YOUR HOME AT CORCORAN.COM

the village VOICE

# CONTENTS

VOL. LXIII | NO. 5
**DECEMBER, 2021**

Matt Rogers

21

In the driver's seat of a wondrous Hammond organ: Dominic Cangelosi providing that roller skating groove.

## Feature

### Bringing 253 million (give or take) musical tones into the world

Folks of a certain age were scared out of their wits by it. Kids (and the young at heart) have gone round and round to it. Jazz buffs and rock aficionados have been wowed by it. **Matt Rogers** tells the twisting, swinging tale of the Hammond organ, star of the show during the golden age of radio, soundtrack for couples at the roller rink, and go-to instrument for some of the 20th century's biggest stars.

## Inside

**4** The Front
Eric Adams is a true believer in cryptocurrency. **Ross Barkan** asks what's in it for the rest of us New Yorkers.

**8** CityState
Everyone knows that Rikers Island is a disaster. **Frank Pizzoli** talks to the folks looking for alternatives.

**9** La Dolce Musto
Which actors are going to have to paste a smile on their face as they sit in the audience and listen to Oscar acceptance speeches? **Musto** runs down the list of this year's undeserving losers.

**11** Comix
Will 2024 bring forth a reborn king? **Ward Sutton** heads to Merry Lago! for the holidays.

**12** New York Mirror
Looking to put on a local production of *The Music Man*? **Brittany Natale** went to Queens to look at rentable period gowns, hats, doublets, and shoes from stage and screen at the TDF Costume Collection.

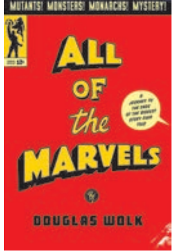
**14** The *Voice* Firmament
Remembering a colleague, mentor, and friend. Former *Voice* writers share their stories about the brilliant culture warrior, critic, and musician **Greg Tate**.

**18** Holiday Visions
Ready or not, it's the holiday season in the Big Apple. **James Hamilton** and **Mark Jacobson** look at joy and ennui past and present.

**25** Clubland
**Katherine Turman** goes the distance with Princess Goes to the Butterfly Museum, talking touring, COVID, and live shows with frontman Michael C. Hall and the band.

**27** On the Boards
Psychedelic journeys with historic personages: **Elizabeth Zimmer** takes a trip with *Flying Over Sunset*.

**28** Panel Discussion
In a review of Douglas Wolk's *All of the Marvels*, **Daniel Felsenthal** explores the personal and cultural ramifications of the Marvel Universe.




**30** Jockbeat
**Vincent Velotta** comes down hard on the anti-vaxxers tarnishing the history of social protest by star athletes.

**Editorial**
EDITOR IN CHIEF **R.C. Baker**
ART DIRECTOR **Darrick Rainey**
PUBLISHER **Brian Calle**

**Contributors**
Ross Barkan, Daniel Felsenthal, Sasha Frere-Jones, Nelson George, Michael A. Gonzales, James Hamilton, Selwyn Seyfu Hinds, Mark Jacobson, Joe Levy, Miles Marshall Lewis, Scott Malcomson, Michael Musto, Brittany Natale, Frank Pizzoli, Matt Rogers, Tricia Romano, Ward Sutton, Katherine Turman, Vincent Velotta, Elizabeth Zimmer
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Laura Bell

**Advertising**
CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER **Steven McKenna**
SALES MANAGER **Dan Flynn**
LIVE MUSIC & CLUB CATEGORY DIRECTOR **Andrew Gyger**
SALES DIRECTOR **Christopher Hubbert**
SENIOR MEDIA ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE **Jeannie Johnson**
MEDIA ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE **Craig Fralick**

**Corporate**
CEO **Brian Calle**
CHIEF OF STAFF AND EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT **Trevor Smith**
VP, EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS **Erin Domash**
CONTROLLER **Ryan Stoll**
CREATIVE DIRECTOR **Darrick Rainey**

Cover photo by James Hamilton

# ERIC ADAMS WANTS TO SELL YOU SOME BITCOIN

*Investors are mining Bitcoin upstate. New York City's incoming mayor wants to bring the crypto gold rush to the five boroughs.*

**By Ross Barkan**

When Eric Adams, the next mayor of New York City, triumphantly flew down to a political conference in Puerto Rico last month, he told reporters he had paid for his trip there. "I paid my own way. I learned the best way to tell people to mind their business is to come out your pocket and cut your own check, so I'm here on my time," Adams said at the SOMOS conference, hosted by a nonprofit benefiting the Latino community. "It's on my dollar, my dime, and my time." Adams left out that he had not traveled on a commercial airliner. Instead, he flew on a private jet belonging to Brock Pierce, a former child actor who is now a wealthy cryptocurrency entrepreneur. The Adams campaign said Adams had paid for the flight, but declined to provide proof.

The news that Adams, a booster of big business, was traveling on a jet owned by a cryptocurrency heavyweight was not a surprise for those who have been paying attention to him. Adams, a Democrat, has already said he'd take his first three paychecks in Bitcoin, and has called for cryptocurrency to be taught in schools. Along with the mayor of Miami, Francis Suarez, Adams has emerged as a prominent champion for a nascent industry that is awash with cash and drawing fresh scrutiny from regulators. "When you hear Eric Adams talk about cryptocurrency, what he's talking about is trying to impart an enthusiasm for emerging technologies, to think of New York as a home and to encourage investors and technologists to understand that they have a partner with the city," says Andrew Rasiej, a top member of the Adams transition team focusing on technology. "A lot of people are talking about having a deputy mayor for technology. The good news is we already have a mayor for technology."

Adams, the Brooklyn borough president and a former police captain, is one of the more intriguing and unpredictable mayors-to-be in modern times. He narrowly won a crowded Democratic primary with the support of outer-borough, working-class New York. At the same time, he unabashedly courted real estate and Wall Street elites, taking large campaign donations from some of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the world. Rupert Murdoch, Michael Bloomberg, and Bill de Blasio all count themselves as enthusiastic Adams backers. De Blasio forged a close alliance with the city's largest real estate developers but kept a chilly distance from power brokers in the worlds of tech and finance. Adams, a regular at tony Manhattan nightclubs, has signaled that he will be much more accommodating. Unlike de Blasio, Adams has openly picked fights with the left flank of the Democratic Party.

Cryptocurrency fits this Adams brand. The most well-known and valuable currency, Bitcoin, is barely more than a decade

**Incoming mayor Eric Adams is a true believer in crypto. Others in the city are not so sure.** Ron Adar/Shutterstock

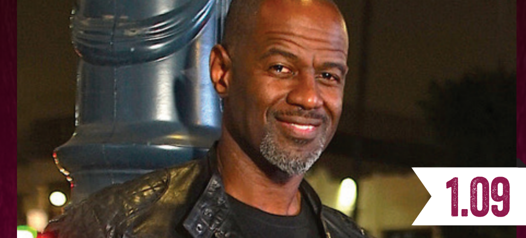
# CITY WINERY
NEW YORK CITY

AT PIER 57 AT HUDSON RIVER PARK

LIVE MUSIC | URBAN WINERY | RESTAURANT | BAR | PRIVATE EVENTS

NEW YORK • CHICAGO • NASHVILLE • ATLANTA • BOSTON
WASHINGTON DC • PHILADELPHIA • HUDSON VALLEY

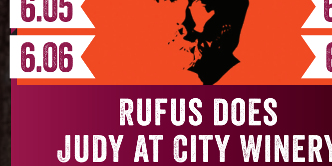
## AIMEE MANN
WITH SPECIAL GUEST
**JONATHON COULTON**
12.27-12.30 ONLY




## BRIAN McKNIGHT
(2 SHOWS)

## PATTY GRIFFIN
WITH
**ADAM WRIGHT**

| Date | Event |
|---|---|
| 1.4 | HOWIE DAY |
| 1.6 | WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE & CITY WINERY PRESENT: NATU CAMARA |
| 1.7 | WLLIE NILE |
| 1.8 | KINDRED THE FAMILY SOUL |
| 1.8 | MY EMO ROMANCE |
| 1.12 | MAX WEINBERG'S JUKEBOX |
| 1.13 THRU 1.15 | WINTER JAZZ FEST |
| 1.16 | ANTHONY RODIA |
| 1.18 | WE BANJO 3 |
| 1.20 | TIM REYNOLDS & TR3 |
| 1.21 1.22 | RICHARD THOMPSON |
| 1.25 1.26 | SHEILA E. AND THE E-TRAIN |
| 1.27 | DONNA THE BUFFALO |
| 1.28 | DUNCAN SHEIK & GERRY LEONARD PERFORM NICK DRAKE'S PINK MOON |
| 1.29 | RON POPE W/ LIZZIE NO |
| 1.30 1.31 | KEB' MO' W/ THE BROTHER BROTHERS |
| 2.12 | BRENT COBB W/ GABE LEE |
| 2.13 | JAMES HUNTER SIX |
| 2.14 2.15 | 10TH ANNUAL MARC COHN VALENTINE'S DAY SHOWS |
| 2.16 | JOE PURDY |
| 2.18 2.19 | PETER WOLF AND THE MIDNIGHT TRAVELERS |
| 2.24 THRU 2.26 | NEMR |
| 3.1 | STEVEN PAGE (FORMERLY OF BARENAKED LADIES) |
| 3.4 3.5 | COWBOY JUNKIES |
| 3.7 | ALLISON RUSSELL W/ KEYSHONA |
| 3.10 | COLBIE CAILLAT |
| 3.13 THRU 3.15 | JOSHUA RADIN |
| 3.17 | RICKIE LEE JONES |
| 3.27 | NICK WATERHOUSE |
| 4.20 THRU 4.22 | MARTIN SEXTON |
| 4.25 4.26 | SHAWN COLVIN: STEADY ON 32ND ANNIVERSARY TOUR |
| 5.7 | CANDLEBOX UNPLUGGED TOUR |

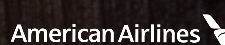


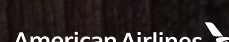
EXCLUSIVE PRESALE ACCESS, NO TICKETING FEES, & MORE!

VIEW FULL CALENDAR

25 11TH AVE AT HUDSON RIVER PARK, NEW YORK, NY 10011

@CITYWINERYNYC / CITYWINERY.COM / 646.751.6033



old, and has surged in value since early 2020. One Bitcoin is now worth tens of thousands of U.S. dollars. Once devoid of significant value, Bitcoin has made a number of traders and investors inordinately wealthy in a short amount of time. The pricing of the coin and other digital currencies, like Ethereum, is incredibly volatile; it is not

**Once devoid of significant value, Bitcoin has made a number of traders and investors inordinately wealthy in a short amount of time.**

uncommon for digital coins to gain and lose value rapidly over the course of a day. (Disclosure: I own small amounts of cryptocurrency.) Unlike an ordinary bank transaction, cryptocurrency transactions are incredibly difficult to track. There is no central bank or single administrator. Currency is sent individually on a peer-to-peer network and transactions are verified digitally in a ledger called blockchain. The anonymity can breed illegality, with international crime cartels turning to Bitcoin to launder cash.

Some crypto enthusiasts champion the coins as a way to build toward a radical libertarian future, beyond the reach of banking regulators, but more and more investors now talk up the potential for digital currencies to be used in ordinary transactions, like dollars on a debit card. Other boosters see cryptocurrency as a worthy investment vehicle, like digital gold, and a hedge against rising inflation. Large financial firms have dramatically increased their crypto investments over the past two years, ever since the price of Bitcoin surged around the beginning of the pandemic. "The analogy would be to a credit card payment system. You'd have a Bitcoin payment system," says Joseph Trevisani, a senior analyst focusing on currency and economics at FXStreet. "Does that involve infrastructure, jobs, firms operating here, and links to the rest of the financial world? Would that create jobs here? Without question."

Ultimately, cryptocurrency remains a speculative vehicle. The coins are data kept in a secure online ledger and do not exist in any physical form, unlike paper money. They gain value based on investment and *belief*. The currencies have intrinsic value because people with billions of dollars believe they do. New York City itself is home to a number of firms that trade in cryptocurrencies, but it's the poorer, upstate regions where Bitcoin operations have begun to take over. The act of mining, or creating, Bitcoin—a highly complex computer process that creates a cryptographic system that generates new Bitcoin and facilitates transactions—is incredibly energy-intensive. Thousands of electricity-guzzling servers are required; to meet its carbon-reduction goals, China banned the practice, sending several miners to New York and other states. Former industrial hubs in upstate and western New York have grown attractive to Bitcoin miners because electricity and land are cheap, even as environmental groups decry the activity and call for a ban on the practice.

Given the lack of space and the enormous energy costs, the five boroughs are unlikely to be a hub of Bitcoin mining anytime soon. In fact, there is relatively little Adams himself can do, as mayor of New York City, to directly grow the cryptocurrency industry. State government, not the municipality, regulates most financial activity. New York State is one of the strictest regulators of cryptocurrency in America, requiring firms that participate in the industry to obtain a so-called Bitlicense from the State Department of Financial Services. Akin to banking licenses, Bitlicenses require financial disclosure and anti-money-laundering and cybersecurity compliance, among other stipulations. Roughly 30 companies have won a license or charter since the introduction of the rules, in 2015.

It's entirely unclear what policy changes Adams will seek on the cryptocurrency front. His spokesman did not return a request for comment, and he has declined to elaborate further on his plans. Municipal workers must accept payments in U.S. dollars, not cryptocurrency, and it would be an exceedingly challenging endeavor to overhaul a payment-processing system for hundreds of thousands of employees. Getting more private businesses to accept cryptocurrency could be another goal, but few people are likely to abandon credit and debit cards carrying U.S. dollars for a fluctuating digital currency. "The mayor can work to change laws to get the city to accept payments for some transactions in crypto. That they can do without state approval," says John Kaehny, executive director of Reinvent Albany, a good government group. "There's an opportunity cost to everything government does. You have smart people with limited time and you're thinking about how to shoehorn the city's activities so they can use crypto ... it's stupid."

Another question, also unresolved, is whether Adams himself owns Bitcoin, or any other cryptocurrency. His campaign declined to answer a *Voice* inquiry, and he has not indicated publicly if he has bought or traded cryptocurrency. As mayor of New York City, he could have direct influence over the price of Bitcoin if he becomes a frequent enough booster. The billionaire Elon Musk has moved cryptocurrency markets through tweets alone. Adams could decide, like Suarez in Miami, to create New York City's own coin. In November, the Miami mayor announced that he would be converting the millions of dollars in proceeds that MiamiCoin has created into a Bitcoin "dividend," potentially sending money in newly created digital wallets to city residents. One avenue of interest for crypto enthusiasts—and one potential area for both risk and reward for city workers—is pension fund investment. Adams cannot directly decide how the city pension funds invest, but he could wield his bully pulpit to influence the decisions unions make. New Jersey's Common Pension Fund D has small holdings in blockchain and digital holding companies, while two pension plans in Fairfax, Virginia, have invested in crypto assets.

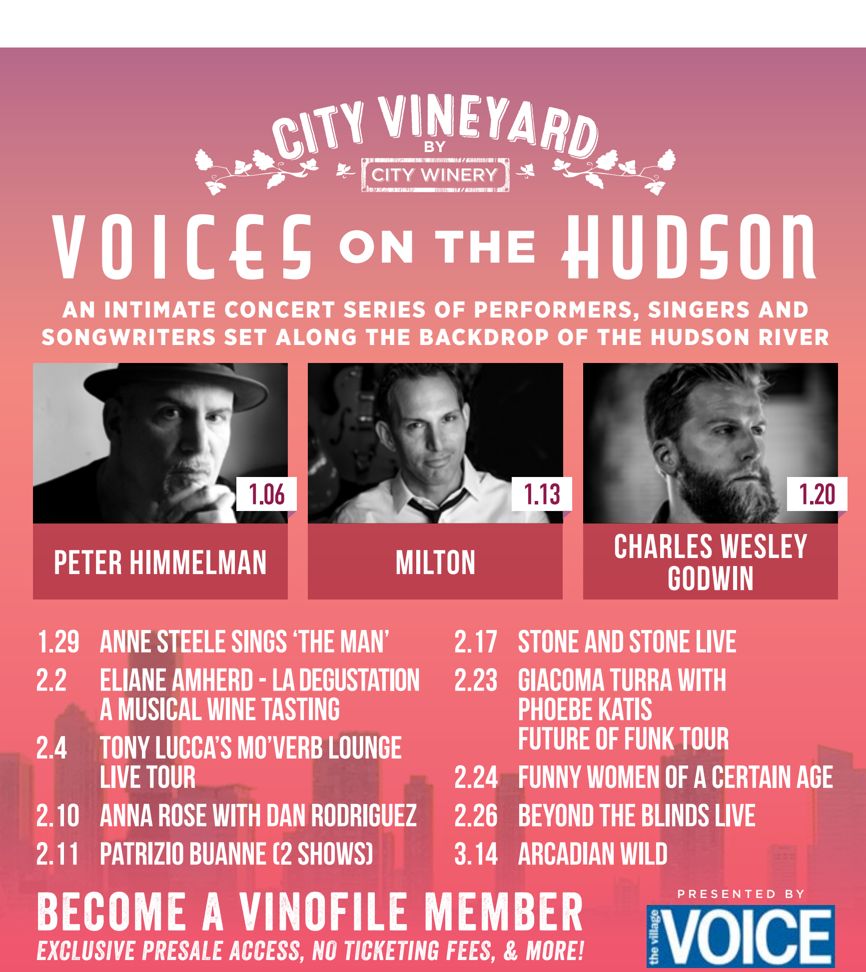
The incoming mayor's embrace of cryptocurrency is perceived, at the bare minimum, as a symbolic gesture. De Blasio was never as anti-tech as his reputation suggested—he once teamed up with Andrew Cuomo to land the taxpayer-subsidized Amazon headquarters in Queens—but he was never going to be openly friendly or inviting to the millionaires and billionaires seeking a certain amount of accommodation and ego-gratification. Tech companies did continue to expand in New York under de Blasio: Facebook last year agreed to lease nearly all the space in the James A. Farley Building, in Midtown. Supporters of the cryptocurrency industry hope, in the long-term, that Adams could seek to boost firms with tax breaks on par with those Amazon would have received, had their headquarters been planted in the city. But the grassroots backlash was fierce, especially since Amazon is a trillion-dollar company in no need of government largesse. It was also never clear that Amazon could hit its lofty job targets. And the nascent crypto industry is not yet a robust employer.

Business in the five boroughs will likely continue apace, no matter what Adams does. And for a city still struggling to recover tourism dollars lost during the pandemic and address myriad other challenges—homelessness, gun violence, unemployment—it's unclear how much it really matters whether New York becomes America's cryptocurrency capital. "If you look at New York's employment problems, it's how to employ a lot of semi-skilled and unskilled people and address income inequality," says Kaehny. "Crypto is such a non-answer." ▼

**VP, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**
sought by Moelis & Company Group LP in New York, NY. Req MS in CS, Comp Engrg, Info Systms, Engrg or rel + 2 yrs of database admin or rel exp in database server mgt, database design & application development lifecycle.

Submit resume to: **www. moelis.com/careers** and follow prompts to apply/submit a resume online.

The Village Voice is now printing every month.
Look for us on a street corner or in a bodega or coffee shop near you.




## New York University
## Division of Special Studies in Symptom Management

### HIV+ and experiencing discomfort related to Peripheral Neuropathy?

You May Be ELIGIBLE
To Participate If You Are:

- HIV+/AIDS
- Experiencing pain, numbness, aching, burning, or "pins and needles" sensation in the lower legs and/or feet for 2 months or greater.
- 18 years of age or older.

**The study involves testing the use of Acupuncture/ Moxibustion, a traditional Chinese medicine therapy, for the relief of lower extremity neuropathy in persons with HIV/AIDS.**

As a participant, you will be asked to attend one baseline session, 12 Acupuncture/Moxibustion sessions & three follow-up sessions, maintain a symptom diary and complete questionnaires.

There is no medication given as part of this study.

Compensation: You will be compensated for your time. If you attend all session you will receive a total of $220. You will also receive a round trip MetroCard at the end of each session to cover your travel expenses.

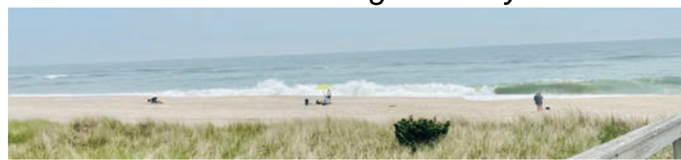
**CALL (212) 365-0346**

# BUILD YOUR GET AWAY DREAM IN FIRE ISLAND

## *Create your own elegant Fire Island escape!*

Great location within minutes walking distance from the Sayville Ferry, Dining, Nightlife, and white sand Beaches.
With just a short stroll to the Great South Bay, and downtown Sayville shops and restaurants. Fire Island ferries and parks with playgrounds for the kids. This location is one of America's premier LGBTQ+ communities.
**INVESTORS** - Great rental income potential! (staff housing/vacation rental)

*There is something for everyone!*



The top attractions to visit in Fire Island are:

- Robert Moses State Park
- Fire Island Lighthouse
- The Sunken Forest
- Sailors Haven
- Ocean Beach
- Fire Island Parasail

185 Holly Walk Sayville NY 11782

## CHERRY GROVE

- Price: $375,000
- Lot Size: 3920
- Acres: 0.09

Please call for more info.

www.realtyconnectusa.com

Please call 631-334-1447 to schedule showing.
Realty Connect USA- Oakdale
1215 Main St, Oakdale NY 11769

P: +631-646-3604
E: jhuber@realtyconnectusa.com
A: Jasmine Huber

P: +631-806-7456
E: sbyrnesrealty@aol.com
A: Sue L Byrnes

# RIKERS ISLAND IN THE CROSSHAIRS OF REFORM

*Can a borough-based system of jails improve conditions for inmates and officers alike?*

**By Frank Pizzoli**

In *What to Do About Closing Rikers*, a recent Vital City report, co-authors Elizabeth Glazer and Michael Jacobson call Rikers Island a "humanitarian crisis," and recommend numerous fixes, eventually leading to a borough-based jail system with 2,200 beds. (Vital City is a venture dedicated to actionable ideas that will strengthen New York City's social fabric, and issues reports each quarter in advance of the city's budget.) The report also calls for 250 medical and/or mental-health beds in city hospitals, in order to place inmates in treatment-appropriate settings. (Jacobson told the *Voice* he was hoping for an eventual total of 1,000 hospital beds.) According to NYC Department of Correction deputy commissioner of public information Patrick Gallahue, the current census at Rikers hovers between 5,300 and 5,500.

Glazer previously served as former governor Andrew Cuomo's deputy secretary of public safety, and led Mayor Bill de Blasio's Office of Criminal Justice. Jacobson spent the 1990s serving as Mayor Rudy Giuliani's probation and corrections commissioner, and is currently executive director at the CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance. As their report went to press, this past September, the humanitarian crises at Rikers burst into public view. That month, New York State Attorney General Letitia James did an official tour of the facility, telling Fox 5 News the jail is "plagued by dysfunction, neglect, and violence." Amidst staffing shortages, de Blasio has relieved corrections officers of performing courtroom accompaniments with 100 NYPD officers. At one point last summer, as the DOC faced a surge of corrections officer resignations, as many as 3,000 of the 8,000 officers were not reporting to work at Rikers. Correction Officers' Benevolent Association president Benny Boscio told radio host John Catsimatidis about dangerously long hours and unsafe working conditions: "We're having the roughest time in my 22-year career ever. Officers are working triple shifts, which includes … in some cases 30 hours straight. It's a really unsafe situation for us.… My corrections officers are suffering."

In October, Governor Kathy Hochul and de Blasio arranged transfer to two state prisons for about 230 women and transgender individuals, as one measure to remedy officer shortages. Melvin Collins, 39, told CBS New York in early October that he'd been detained for three years awaiting trial on felony-burglary charges. "Officers' lives are in jeopardy, it's true. And the inmates' lives are in jeopardy too," he said. "You have so many violent people coming into jail because of what they're getting picked up for off of the street. I've gotten jumped. I've gotten sexually assaulted." He has 13 stitches in his face from stabbings and was on suicide watch at the time of his television interview. By early December, 15 inmates had died while in custody, according to Pix 11 Live News.

> **White-Harrigan admires Vital City's report, "but unless the buck stops with someone with authority in the mayor's office, it's just another report."**

These conditions exist in spite of numerous policy-reform recommendations coming from every direction. The problem is, there's no coordination. "The NYC criminal justice system is not a system. No one part answers to any other part. Every group involved has their own views on how to proceed with everything, including reform," Glazer tells the *Voice* in a phone call. Jacobson explains, "We're going from a highly concentrated system into a dispersed one spread throughout the city," adding that this means "several things need to happen simultaneously, involving many city departments—labor relations, budget, staffing." Calling the current imbroglio a "structural problem" with "no figure whose central job is to focus on closing Rikers," the Vital City report recommends that Adams create two new leadership positions: a deputy mayor for justice policy and operation, who would manage the interacting parts of the justice system and oversee Rikers' infrastructure, construction, and social programming, and a second position that would report "to the new deputy Mayor, with an unswerving commitment to the transformational goals of the project—with day-to-day responsibility for the project." Political insiders whisper that Mayor-elect Adams will indeed 'elevate' the profile of the city's corrections services by having it managed at the deputy mayor level, as called for in the report.

**The Justice 4 Women Task Force, created by the WCJA, protesting at Rikers Island.** Women's Community Justice Association

Would better coordination through new mayoral positions with teeth make a difference? Reverend Sharon White-Harrigan, executive director of the Women's Community Justice Association, thinks so. She serves on Adams's transition team and his Public Safety Committee. "Our movement to decarcerate, advocate, and organize was created because the women of Rikers were often treated as an afterthought," she tells the *Voice* by phone. WCJA's mission is the closure of Rikers' Rose M. Singer facility housing women and gender-expansive New Yorkers—"We must work to get them home," White-Harrigan says. A justice-impacted woman of color herself, she served time at Rikers in 1992 while being adjudicated on manslaughter charges resulting from a death that occurred while she was being raped: She stabbed her assailant in self-defense, leading to her rapist's death. Echoing Glazer, White-Harrigan says, "Coordination would help. Why do we keep calling it the 'criminal justice system' when there's no seamless system in place?" She admires Vital City's report, "but unless the buck stops with someone with authority in the mayor's office, it's just another report."

Sasha Ginzberg, executive director of the Borough-Based Jail System within the DOC, is tasked with constructing jails in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx that can house 3,300 residents in smaller-scale housing facilities that are near their communities of origin. Moving forward, her core principles involve "building smaller, safer, and fairer facilities with no more than 32 residents housed in single cells," she tells me in a phone interview. The new construction will have modern air conditioning, heating, and natural light. "We are intentionally developing a new model setting that includes adequate space for interviews, counseling, lawyers, educational programs, and outdoor recreation directly in the housing unit," Ginzberg explains. "We want to provide residents with what they need, and deserve, as they move through the system."

On better coordination of reform efforts through the two specifically tasked mayor's office positions called for in Vital City's report, Ginzberg says, "Centralized is always better, but doesn't often exist in a city and bureaucracy our size." Even so, reform efforts have come into better focus due to "the impressive movement formed by justice advocates, formerly incarcerated individuals, and the DOC," she adds. So passionate about her goal, Ginzberg tells the *Voice* she's already filed an application to have the island designated a "public space" when the 2027 hoped-for closure of the jail finally occurs. "Rikers Island needs to close," Ginzberg stresses.

Regarding the media reports that on some days last summer as many as 3,000 corrections officers were not available for work, Gallahue states, "Efforts to get staff back have reduced absenteeism by 81% and have reduced the number of 'triple shifts' by 93%." In mid-September, City Hall issued an executive order declaring that any officer who is AWOL will be suspended without pay for 30 days.

A former public defender who represented thousands of cases, NYC City Council member Tiffany Cabán, District 22, who represents all of Rikers Island, tells the Voice by phone that she doesn't believe shifting to a borough-based system is the answer. She explains, "We should be pursuing a multi-pronged public health approach that is empirically proven to increase public safety where policing and incarceration have failed." Cabán wants "the public to know that, for example, released-on-bail data indicates less than 1% of those released are rearrested and a small number within that percentage for a violent crime. That's empirical evidence showing that downsizing and eventual closing is the proper approach." She concludes, "We need to finally acknowledge that the system of incarceration itself is part of the problem." V

La Dolce Musto

# THANK YOU AND GOOD NIGHT

*Ten great '21 film performances that won't get an Oscar nomination*

By Michael Musto

The best performances every year are from actors trying to appear gracious about not getting Oscar-nominated, even though by all rights, they know they deserved to win. Alas, some of these actors happen to be in relatively obscure flicks that don't have a big Oscar push, and others are simply ignored in favor of flashier performances. Other factors pop up, too, like the fact that the nominators don't feel they owe the actor a nod based on their body of work, not to mention that they might not be what's known as "a member of the club"—i.e., a known player within the Hollywood scene. Here are my 10 favorite 2021 turns given by actors who will simply have to settle for my appreciation instead of the Academy's.

**Renate Reinsve**
***The Worst Person in the World***

In this bracingly original Norwegian film by Joachim Trier, Reinsve is a 30-something Oslo native who impulsively switches careers—and personal direction—as readily as she changes outfits. She leaves her loving, long-term boyfriend for a guy she meets at a party, clearly entranced by the spontaneous silliness of their physical games, which include armpit sniffing and spending time in the bathroom together. All through this and the pathos that follows, Reinsve—who won Best Actress at Cannes—is suitably unpredictable, making Julie riveting without ever sugarcoating her choices. Alas, Oscar won't choose to nominate her, since the category will most likely be filled with Princess Di, Tammy Faye Bakker, Lucille Ball, and other bigger names.

**Martha Plimpton**
***Mass***

*Mass* is a low-budget gut-punch of a film in which the parents of a teen who's been murdered via gun violence at school meet with the parents of the kid who did the shooting.

**These actors will simply have to settle for my appreciation instead of the Academy's.**

All four actors are good, but Plimpton is by far the standout as the victim's mom, who strains to be polite and nonconfrontational but can't help exploding into anxious rages. I would call Plimpton a lead, but she's landed in the Best Supporting Actress competition, where she's up against costar Ann Dowd, who's also gotten praise and a push. The result will probably be bupkis.

**Dakota Johnson**
***The Lost Daughter***

The costar of *50 Shades of Grey*—and daughter of Melanie Griffith and Don Johnson—has turned out to be a real actor.

While Olivia Colman is deservedly getting honors for her *Lost Daughter* performance as a vacationing professor with seriously conflicted views about family, Johnson is also terrific as a younger woman facing a similar struggle. Her support helps Colman shine, but that kind of thing only gets you a "thank you" in someone else's speech.

**Jeffrey Wright**
***The French Dispatch***

In Wes Anderson's dizzyingly clever ode to journalists abroad, so many art-house actors pop up that the second you start thinking, "Where's Tilda?" she's there, with false teeth. And in the last of the film's three chapters, Jeffrey Wright (*Basquiat*) arrives as a food writer who's partly based on James Baldwin via A.J. Liebling. Wright comes off skillfully loquacious, but it's the kind of sophisticated performance that film critics groups are more likely to recognize than the Oscars are.

**Milena Smit**
***Parallel Mothers***

Penelope Cruz is en route to getting nominated for her captivating performance in Pedro Almodóvar's melodrama (complete with an old Hollywood twist), but Smit also scores as the young lesbian who has evolving feelings about whether she wants a baby and what she's willing to do about that situation. As with *The Lost Daughter*, these parallel mothers give parallel performances, but unfortunately, there's only room for five people per category.

**Eugenio Derbez**
***CODA***

Mexican comedy star/director Derbez is fabulous as the unconventional music teacher of a hearing daughter of deaf parents. He's quirky, tough, and ultimately lovable, coaching the girl to sing "Both Sides Now" with guts instead of prettiness. (That she later seems to ignore everything she learned is one of the film's problems, and certainly not the actor's fault; his lessons were persuasive to *me*.) Fellow supporting players Marlee Matlin and Troy Kotsur are understandably getting noticed for their heartbreaking work, but Derbez's scene-stealing antics might not have enough gravitas for Oscar to bite. What's more, while the film was scooped up at Sundance for a whopping $25 million, it didn't end up being a hit, and that kind of cash-flow crisis has a tendency to impact trophy-holding chances. Derbez is crowd-pleasing in a movie that hasn't drawn crowds.

**Devyn McDowell**
***Annette***

In Leos Carax's avant-garde musical allegory, a puppet baby grows into a real girl, played by McDowell, who is now all of 7 years old. McDowell has only one scene, but that's not the problem; Beatrice Straight won Best Supporting Actress for a single, seething scene in *Network* (1976), and McDowell is as powerful as Straight was. In her spotlight moments, she has to make you forget the amazing puppet she's morphed from, while also holding ground with dad Adam Driver in recrimination-filled dialogue and singing, and she is miraculously good at all of it. But the movie is too weird for Oscar's taste, and besides, children don't usually get Oscar nods. For every nominated Quvenzhané Wallis (the stunning star of 2012's *Beasts of the Southern Wild*), there are a lot of rudely snubbed Jacob Tremblays (he was astounding in 2015's *Room*). My feeling is that the Oscars should bring back the honorary award for juveniles, which they gave starting with Shirley Temple and ending with Hayley Mills. That type of special prize also serves to spare kids from direct competition.

**Siân Heder directs Eugenio Derbez in *CODA*.** Apple TV+

**Corey Hawkins**
***The Tragedy of Macbeth***

Hawkins (*In the Heights*, *Straight Outta Compton*) is superb as Macduff, the Thane of Fife, who gets locked into a competition to the death with the title character in Joel Coen's dark and whispery Shakespeare adaptation. He's tough and poignant and, according to Indiewire, he "runs away with a movie that keeps him largely on the margins." The problem is, there are so many actors doing great work in the cast that even Coen's wife, three-time Oscar winner Frances McDormand, probably won't get nominated for her stir-crazy Lady Macbeth.

**Kathryn Hunter**
***The Tragedy of Macbeth***

Yes, this *Tragedy* may be begetting another Oscar casualty. Playing all three witches who predict Macbeth's terrible fate, actor/theater director Hunter coos and melts and reappears and haunts, laying the groundwork for the film's startling tone. But while Hunter did win Best Supporting Actress from the New York Film Critics Circle, my dark prophecy is that Oscar nominators will find her turn too esoteric for their taste (and there's that actor overload problem, too). But not to worry—Oscar favorite Denzel Washington's bravura achievement as Macbeth is sure to get noticed. He'll be nominated tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow....

**Harriet Sansom Harris**
***Licorice Pizza***

All kinds of actors are nabbing kudos for Paul Thomas Anderson's swirling look at a bumpy 1970s relationship, but one of the funniest scenes of the year has Broadway/TV fave Harris as a memorably wacky power broker. Harris plays Mary Grady, a real-life, now deceased casting agent, who pummels Alana Haim's aspiring actress character with questions, comments, and concerns from outer space. ("You're like an English pit bull dog!" Grady exults. "With sex appeal! And a very Jewish nose!") No one could have played the scene better than Harris—but screaming and crying is usually an easier road to a nomination. V

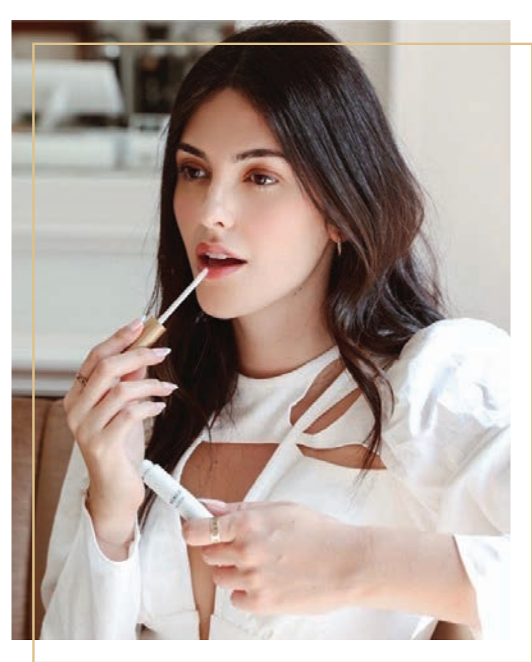
It's time we ascend beyond "anti-aging" and "turning back time." We believe in transformative skincare that is in complete support and celebration of the present you.

LUXURY WATERLESS
**TRANSFORMATIVE**

**Bloom**
La Milpa Lip Treatment
A healing nectar for your lips.

**#BEPRESENT**

You are beautiful.
You are glowing.
You are remarkable.
In this moment.



Free standard shipping to the U.S. | **miageskin.com**

O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL! FOLLOW YONDER D-LIST STAR TO HIS NATIVIST NATIVITY AS HE PLOTS ON HIS THRONE TO BE REBORN FOR 2024. THIS AIN'T NO MANGER, IT'S …

# Merry Lago!

♫ FRAGILE EGO, ♪ STAR OF THE RIGHT, ALWAYS AGGRIEVED ♪ AND FULL OF SPITE …

… NEVER LEAVING, STILL DECEIVING, ♪ REVELING IN DEMOCRACY'S ♪ PLIGHT!

BEHOLD, I BRING YOU TIDINGS OF A GREAT PLOY, WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL EASILY-DUPED PEOPLE …

FOR UNTO HIM, IN THE BEACH OF PALM, A SUCKER IS BORN EVERY MINUTE.

AND THIS SHALL BE A SIGN UNTO YOU TO COUGH UP SOME CASH. YE SHALL FIND THE MAN-BABY, WRAPPED IN A SWADDLING NECKTIE, LYING AS USUAL.

THE LITTLE GUNNER BOY

♪ GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN ON TWITTER AND REDDIT AND EVERYWHERE! ♫ GO TELL IT ON FACEBOOK ♫ THAT VOTER FRAUD IS REAL! ♫

KFC

diet Coke

MyPillow

BA-A-A!

MAGA

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR? KA-CHING!!

GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, MYRRH, AND CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED

INSTA-TAN

SUTTON

# THE SECRET LIFE OF BROADWAY COSTUMES

*Some of the stage's most recognizable outfits get an eco-friendly encore in Queens*

**Words and photos by Brittany Natale**

To my left: A psychedelic feathered tunic from *Hairspray*. To my right: A pair of leather boots that look to have been worn by Thomas Jefferson (the stage character, not the politician). No, I'm not backstage at the Neil Simon Theatre circa 2002, nor did I just pay a pretty penny to see Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*. In fact, I'm not even in Manhattan—I'm a borough away, in Queens, at the TDF Costume Collection.

If you are a lover of the theater, or just enjoy the wardrobes, this collection is equivalent to heaven—but instead of rosy-cheeked cherubs backed by angelic harp music, you'll find bedazzled suits and brocade opera gowns. Oh, the drama.

The 40-plus-year-old collection is the brainchild of the Theatre Development Fund (TDF), the not-for-profit organization that has been devoted to making the performing arts more accessible since 1968. (You are likely familiar with their iconic red "TKTS" booth in Times Square, offering discounted Broadway tickets.) The collection came about when the Met Opera donated costumes from 22 productions during their Lincoln Center move. After a short storage-space stint upstate, in Saratoga Springs, TDF took the reins and jump-started a rental program for theater nonprofits to borrow from. The collection spent its earlier years near Columbia University before making its way over to the West 20s, where it lived from the 1970s through 2011. Currently, it is housed on the lower level of the historic Kaufman Astoria Studios, and boasts an extensive inventory of costumes, accessories, shoes, and more. Though "extensive" may be an understatement—they now have somewhere around 85,000 items on hand.

"The collection of things available for rent only comes in via donations," explains Stephen Cabral, the director of the TDF Costume Collection. "No money is spent on purchasing or altering." Even with this vast array of material, Cabral, who has been involved with the collection for nearly 30 years, says that they do not consider themselves a "one-stop-shop." For instance, you most likely will not find much contemporary clothing here. What you will find is many aisles, each three- or four-tiers high, full of showgirl outfits, Renaissance dresses, men's 19th-century suits, medieval headpieces, and 18th-century bustle drapes, to name just a few genres covered.

To illustrate just how specific we're getting—there is a section designated for tabards and surcotes, garments that were commonly worn in the Middle Ages. There is also a wall dedicated solely to shoes, organized by color and style. (During my visit, I came across an understudy's pair of bright-pink heels from the *Mean Girls* musical.) Items are split into two rooms, labeled "regular stock" and "special stock," with "special stock" holding unique, historically significant, or pristine-condition pieces. Think, flashy sequined blazers worn by famous stars and puff-sleeved dresses the Bridgerton sisters would be jealous of. As items age over time, they may eventually end up in the "distressed" section. "Distressed stock works well for something like *Les Mis* or *A Christmas Carol*," Cabral points out.

Donations sometimes come in from Broadway when a show ends, if a show is a limited run, or when musical numbers are cut during previews. A large number of contributions also stream in from touring companies, theaters, film productions, and more. In 2016, the inimitable Bob Mackie donated 35 wardrobe boxes full of his designs, including glittery pieces that were featured on *The Carol Burnett Show* and in Bette Midler's *Gypsy*. Because of its convenient location, the collection will sometimes get pieces from Kaufman Astoria Studios productions that have wrapped. To this day, they still receive donations from the Metropolitan Opera, the company that helped spark it all. "There are still some Met Opera pieces [in the collection] from that 1960s donation," Cabral adds.

The rental program, which was once upon a time only open to nonprofits, now services a wide range of clientele. Whether people need to get their hands on historically accurate costumes or just want to add some razzle-dazzle to a project, they come here. The collection has done weekly rentals for *Saturday Night Live* and has supplied costumes for photo shoots, and pieces have also appeared in award-winning films such as *Birdman* and *12 Years a Slave*. Of course there are also countless smaller productions, such as a New Jersey high school's recent rendition of *Beauty and the Beast*, that utilize the collection's stock. In 2019 alone, it lent costumes to more than 1,000 productions throughout 35 states, saving an innumerable amount of costumes from the landfill along the way. "For a lot of our customers, we are also helping them save money," Cabral tells the *Voice*. Rental prices are affordable and depend on the costume, rental times, and production size, with nonprofits receiving a discount. The collection even has a mail-order program in place for those who may not be located near enough to visit and pick up themselves. The staff is constantly making magic happen, whether the customer lives in Manhattan or Minnesota.

Running through the collection is a thread of emotion and an air of mystery; sometimes items come unlabeled, making it hard for the collection's staff to know the exact origins of a piece. "I always wish the costumes could speak," says Cabral, "because I would like to know their lives." And oh, the stories they would tell.

**Marching off to new fates on stage and screen.**

### The Intricate World of Costumes

The world of costumes may look all glitz and glamor, but it has come a long way since its bleak beginnings. As explained by Marlis Schweitzer, professor of theater and performance studies at York University and the author of *When Broadway Was the Runway: Theater, Fashion, and American Culture*, for most of the 19th century, many Broadway stage actors paid for their own costumes—for example, chorus girls were left to shell out for their shoes and tights. "While managers of elaborate Shakespearean productions would occasionally pay for some costumes, this privilege was often restricted to leading ladies, leaving supporting players to pay for their own gowns and accessories," Schweitzer tells the *Voice* by email. Although some performers were reimbursed, many were not. "It wasn't until the successful actors' strike of 1919 that managers were financially obligated to provide costumes for all performers," she adds.

Starting in the 1890s, Broadway shows were not just entertainment spectacles but also conduits for consumerism. It was then, Schweitzer explains, that commercially focused theater managers began to

realize the significance of outfitting their leading women in impressive couture. "Women of all ages and social backgrounds flocked to the theater—as did designers and buyers for department stores," she says. A century before livestreaming and the Internet, this was a way for fashion lovers to discover new trends.

Nowadays, we might see celebrities partnering with unexpected industries (heard about the recent seasonal Mariah Carey McDonald's menu?), but these quirky collabs aren't anything new. Decades ago, department stores would often join forces with theaters during Broadway show openings. "For example, in 1910, show windows along Fifth Avenue and 34th Street celebrated the opening of the new play *Chantecler*, starring box-office favorite Maude Adams, with elaborate windows swathed in red fabric and chanticleer lace," Schweitzer relates. "In this way, the stage and show window merged into one—merging theatrical spectatorship with a consumer gaze." The reimagining of theater design and costume, the deaths of the biggest commercially focused theater managers, and the rise of the Hollywood celebrity eventually caused the curtain to come down on this cooperative method.

**Running through the collection is a thread of emotion and an air of mystery.**

Triffin Morris, director of the costume production graduate program at UNC Chapel Hill and author of *A History of the Theatre Costume Business*, points out that there have been costume makers in New York City for centuries. "The earliest shop I could document was Dazian, established in 1842, which is now a business specializing in theatrical fabrics," Morris says, going on to explain that at the turn of the 20th century, small costume shops and a handful of larger operations that created, rented, and sold the costumes began popping up, and by the 1920s there were midsize businesses credited in playbills.

The grandfather of the modern costume shop, however, is Ray Diffen, an Englishman who made his way to America because of Sir Tyrone Guthrie, an influential theatrical director. "Ray, in turn, employed well-known people in the industry, such as Jane Greenwood, Barbara Matera, Sally Ann Parsons, and Martin Pakledinaz," says Morris. "Barbara and Sally Ann both went on to form their own shops." You may be familiar with Parsons's brilliant creations for the Rockettes, or Matera's extravagant pieces for one of Broadway's longest-running shows, *The Lion King*. A number of significant changes have also occurred in the industry over the years. "The biggest is probably the specialization," Morris states. "It is now unusual for a person to both design and create the costumes." Another is the quality of the costumes—older costumes were frequently heavier, and fabrics, such as cotton and wool, would often break down more quickly. "The invention of stretch fabrics has meant that garments can fit tighter and be more comfortable," she says. "All of these factors mean that modern garments hold up better over time and are more comfortable for the performer."

You can never have too many shoes—and always keep an extra pair for the understudy.

### The Show Must Go On

Today, New York City's costume industry is one that is deeply collaborative and has a close relationship with the Garment District. Many different people from varied backgrounds come together to help bring a costume, whether for the stage or screen, to life. Timelines can vary, with film-costume schedules often being tighter. Those for Broadway are often built to spec, and require exact measurements of performers. "I keep saying there's no 13th floor at Macy's, where you can buy all your costumes for Broadway," Brian Blythe, founding member of the Costume Industry Coalition, says, laughing. "It is a cottage industry in New York City." It has also faced its fair share of struggles because of the COVID-19 pandemic. But the costume industry is not only iconic, it is also a vital part of the city. Whether you're getting a custom costume made or renting through TDF, the city's costumers have proven that they can not only transform the stage but they can also transform lives.

**It wasn't until the successful actors' strike of 1919 that managers were financially obligated to provide costumes for all performers.**

"When people leave the theater, in particular, they are usually talking about the performers and 'Weren't those costumes beautiful?'" Blythe says. "There is a human connection between creating a character through costume, and that human connection is what people latch onto when they are moved by a performance or they see themselves in a performance. It is definitely something that needs to continue to be celebrated." V

Mad hatters: Ready for prime time again.

# FLYING HIGH: MEMORIES OF GREG TATE

*Funk, jazz, rap, painting, literature, sci-fi, race, film, history—the extraordinary writer could explicate and elevate any subject under the sun*

I only knew Greg Tate to nod hello to in the hallways of the *Voice* offices, back in the late 1980s and early '90s. I wasn't writing for the paper yet, but like so many readers, I had long been dazzled by his uncompromising, often funny, always incandescent prose.

How about this, from a 1982 *Voice Literary Supplement* article, "Harlem When It Sizzled": "Consider Harlem's '20s as a kind of funked-up Weimar Republic for *bloods*, and you'll have a grasp on why that era has gone down in Afro-American lore and literature as a time of grand cultural renaissance. Which is to say, one where radical trends in Afro-American art and politics converged with the black bourgeoisie in a bacchanal of strident nationalism, new money, and bohemian revelry."

*C'mon!* That is one dense ideas-per-sentence ratio, but man does it go down smooth.

So there I was, a painter with a day job pasting up ads, and I was too shy to do more than say hello to this guy with the intimidating intellect.

But now, as the editor of the *Voice*, I realize what a dope I was not to strike up a conversation with a writer who sometimes added "Iron Man" to his byline. Tate passed away last Tuesday, December 7, at the age of 64, and I've just finished editing a group of pieces by those who were inspired by him, worked with him, and called him friend. This was one brilliant yet open-hearted, generous guy, who would've been happy back in the day to school me on Jean-Michel Basquiat ("Flyboy in the Buttermilk: The Crisis of the Black Artist in White America," November 14, 1989). Ultimately though, I didn't completely miss my chance—because, as you'll see below, Greg Tate always had something for everybody. —***R.C. Baker***

Greg Tate's colorful array, 2017. Tricia Romano

### Sentence for Sentence, One of the Best

When I was in my 20s I was lucky to begin freelance writing at the *Voice*, largely because of its great music editor Robert Christgau, who'd built an amazing roster of Black writers. Most entered the paper through writing a "Riff" for Bob, and then began contributing throughout the paper. These were scribes who were documenting the vast array of popular culture that was rising out of the streets and clubs of '80s NYC and transforming music, film, literature, theater, art, and all the spaces in between. Stanley Crouch, Lisa Jones, Barry Michael Cooper, Joan Morgan, Harry Allen, and Carol Cooper were among the folks whose bylines appeared regularly in those pages.

But there was no one with the style, insight, and range of Greg "Ironman" Tate, a D.C. native filled with enthusiasm for the bohemian, the adventurous, and the radical. Greg was a fabulous writer who understood rhythm, metaphor, and hyperbole like a master musician does harmony, timbre, and tone. Sentence for sentence, Greg was one of the best writers in a publication that was all about attitude, personal POV, and cultivating your singular voice.

Unlike some of my *VV* comrades, who boasted and strutted when they had a big piece in the paper, Tate was always easygoing and mellow, with a disarming manner that made him a natural leader. Off the page, he co-founded the Black Rock Coalition and a marvelous ensemble, Burnt Sugar Arkestra, which took his extensive musical taste and manifested it in covers of classics and original compositions that reflected his critical insights. In the community of NYC artists who came of age in the '80s, Greg was a touchstone and mentor.

I haven't cried yet about his departure. I have just moved through my days in a daze, stunned that I won't read another piece by him, see him with his band, or sit down with him again in fellowship, talking about where the culture was, is, and will be. I do a lot of documentaries now and had plans to include him in several of them, because Greg knew so much and was great at sharing his knowledge. There's no one who can fill the void he left. He was that unique and that brilliant. —***Nelson George***

### Heart for Miles, Soul for Light Years

I was the music editor of the *Voice* from 1989 to 1994, and I edited Greg Tate during that time. Though let's be honest here, editing Greg's music pieces was a little like being the coach who looks up from his clipboard and says it'd be a good idea if Michael Jordan played that night. (And so long as we're being honest, Phil Jackson did a lot more to help Jordan elevate his game than I ever did for Greg.) Then later, in 2016, I came back to the *Voice* as interim editor in chief, and Greg was willing to come back and bless us with his writing—a Pazz and Jop essay, reviews of Jay-Z and Kendrick Lamar, a cover story on Barry Jenkins and *Moonlight*. I'd like to take some credit for that (and—keeping it 100—that Jay-Z piece actually needed some work), but I knew it had much more to do with the *Voice* than with me. The *Voice* was a place that let him run free, flex, shatter the backboard glass, rewrite the rules of what could happen on the page and in your mind, squeak and scrawl and squawk and skronk, blow his goddamn horn pretty much any way he wanted to, which was lots of different ways. And he wanted to make sure others had the chance to do the same.

The compassion. That man's compassion. It was in everything he wrote—heart for miles, soul for light years—but it was also there every time he walked into the room. The *Voice* music section published the great writing of Joan Morgan and dream hampton because Greg walked those writers over to my desk and introduced them. If a writer makes a difference one time out, that's a lot. If they make a difference every time out, that's god level. If they then make it their mission to open doors for others to do the same, they're Greg Tate.

Miles Davis died on September 28, 1991. It was a Saturday. Greg delivered his copy on Monday morning. I read it and wondered: How? There was stuff in there that would take a lifetime, and I didn't quite get that part of it was figuring out how to put your whole lifetime into what you wrote. The piece is in *Flyboy in the Buttermilk*, and I'm going to quote the part I never forgot, the part that was like thunder and birdsong and the barbershop and a lecture hall and a prayer service rolled into one: "The reason black music occupies a privileged and authoritative place in black aesthetic discourse is because it seems to croon and cry out to us from a postliberated world of unrepressed black pleasure and self-determination. Black music, like black basketball, represents an actualization of those black ideologies that articulate themselves as antithetical to Eurocentrism. Music and 'ball both do this in ways that are counter-hegemonic if not countersupremacist—rooting black achievement in ancient black cultural practices. In the face of the attempt to erase the African contribution to world knowledge, and the diminution of black intelligence that came with it, the

# HARLEM WHEN IT SIZZLED Gregory Ironman Tate with Home on His Mind

**Headline from the December 1982 *Voice Literary Supplement*.** VV Archives

very fact of black talents without precedent or peers in the white community demolishes racist precepts instantaneously. In this war of signifying and countersigning Miles Davis was a warrior king and we were all enthralled."

So too with Greg Tate, a warrior of the mind, a king to all who read him.
*—Joe Levy*

### Mind Zapper

On Tuesday, December 7, Pearl Harbor Day, writer-musician Greg Tate died. For many people who considered him a friend and mentor, as well as folks who knew and loved his work, it's yet another day "that will live in infamy." I first met Tate in the offices of the old *Village Voice* building on Broadway. It was 1986 and I'd joined the just begun Black Rock Coalition (BRC), a

**If a writer makes a difference one time out, that's a lot. If they make a difference every time out, that's god level. If they then make it their mission to open doors for others to do the same, they're Greg Tate.**

national nonprofit organization dedicated to the complete creative freedom of Black artists, after meeting Living Colour guitarist Vernon Reid in Sounds, a cool new and used record shop on St. Marks Place.

Though I'd initially begged off with the "I'm not musician" excuse, when Reid mentioned that writer Greg Tate was involved, I knew I wanted to be down. As a wannabe writer since childhood, I was constantly searching for literary heroes who would inspire me higher. "You guys should meet," Reid said. I had no thoughts of me and Brother Tate, as I sometimes affectionately called him later, becoming homeboys, but as an avid admirer of his work for four years, I was happy just to be in his aura.

In 1982, I was living in Harlem but rode the D train every day to Fort Greene, in Brooklyn, where I was attending Long Island University Brooklyn as an English major. In those years, the *Village Voice* was a weekly that came out on Wednesday morning. As an aspiring bohemian who relished provocative arts criticism and reportage, it was a necessary periodical purchase that I read while taking that long ride to campus.

As a fan of various kinds of music ranging from Sly Stone to Led Zeppelin to the Sugar Hill Gang, whose groundbreaking 1979 song "Rapper's Delight" was rap's first big hit, I read the record reviews first. Over time certain names became familiar (Robert Christgau, Lester Bangs, and Greil Marcus), but at some point the byline "by Greg Tate" appeared and instantly zapped my mind as though electric-shocked.

The first review I absorbed was on funk master George Clinton's then latest disc *Computer Games*. However, Tate's critique ("Beyond the Zone of the Zero Funkativity") wasn't like anything I'd ever read. While I'd come of age in the era of new journalism (Tom Wolfe! Joan Didion!) and the gonzo dispatches of Hunter Thompson, Tate's texts were all that and a bag of Blackness. Tate not only dropped dime on the P-Funk nation and the album, he wrote in an Afro language that rocked funky joint.

Damn near 40 years gone, I can't remember the exact words, but reading the piece straight felt as though someone put a mojo on me. Tate's review was hypnotic and I was in a trance until the last word. You must understand, in the early 1980s there weren't many (any?) Black writers in mainstream arts publications, let alone a wordsmith utilizing poetic prose, sci-fi references, swaggering syntax, and other textual trickery that brought the subjects (music, books, art, and film) alive.

Tate's sentences were sprawling fire-breathing dragons of many colors. The end of that story was the beginning for me, the moment I realized that a Black writer could be smart and street simultaneously, a cool nerd who could hang on the corner with the dice throwers, chill in a jazz club with the sax blowers, and, later, lean over a typewriter until the morning light knocking out the many paragraphs that make a dope story.

While decades later it might sound hyperbolic, Greg Tate, both the man and his work, changed my life: the way the crime writing of Chester Himes changed my life, the way soul godfather James Brown changed my life, the way funnyman Richard Pryor changed my life, the way Harlem, Pablo Picasso, Gordon Parks, and my book- and movie-loving momma, Frankie, changed my life.

Between that first Tate article I read and our first meeting four years later, his work schooled me on numerous subjects that included post-structuralism (and the Harlem Renaissance), free jazz (especially Cecil Taylor), cyberpunk, the hopscotch narratives of Ishmael Reed (and Don DeLillo), and the noir shoe-gaze drone of AR Kane.

In addition, Tate put his stamp on the sonic/art/dance phenomenon that was/is hip-hop culture and rap music, becoming a town crier for the culture as he championed Run-DMC, Public Enemy, and De La Soul. One of his titles is "pioneering hip-hop journalist," but, like flyboy Jean-Michel Basquiat, he wore many crowns.

When I wrote my first record reviews for a small punk zine in 1986, dropping pseudoscience about Fishbone and the Beastie Boys, I bit Tate's style so hard he must've woke up screaming. Over the past few days, digging various memorials and memories, I realized I wasn't the only one. "We imitated Tate's writings the way hopeful be-bop musicians in the '50s tried to play like Bird," I explained to a friend hours after I heard he was gone.

I was blessed to discover Greg Tate's black magic realism when I was in college and used his artistic beacon of bugged-out Blackness as the guiding light in how I heard and viewed the world. For a generation of writers that followed in Greg Tate's giant steps, he taught us how to transcribe sounds and visions into textual worlds of wonder, WORD! *—Michael A. Gonzales*

### A Man You Could Trust

Greg Tate *was* the *Voice* music section, for me. I first encountered his writing in 1982, when I was 15, well into my decision to be a musician and start a band. As far as I could tell, music criticism was written by people who'd never been in a recording studio or played a show. Tate's writing was different, as if he were there with us, feeling the same surges of disbelief and wonder.

The early '80s was an almost implausibly healthy time for music in New York. Alongside the rap and detuned guitars, there was a third stream that has been slightly obscured by history. The variants of jazz and improvised music coming out of the loft scene and the cohorts around Ornette Coleman were white-hot in 1982. There's no single reason why this chapter doesn't have the same profile now as, say, "Beat Bop" or Glenn Branca, but I am glad that Tate wrote about Cecil Taylor and David Murray and everyone who was creating that wave of live music in downtown Manhattan. All of that was as important as the stuff getting press beyond the *Voice*, and without Greg Tate, much of it had no critical corollary in the press. As much as we love him for the bigger pieces, his work on downtown jazz was an important intervention that changed my focus. I trusted him because of what he said about Bad Brains in that 1982 article, and that translated into my feeling OK about trying Cecil on Greg's word in 1983. The coin of the realm when connecting people is trust, and few generated it like Greg Tate.
*—Sasha Frere-Jones*

### The Parade of Black Excellence and Beauty

When I think about Greg Tate, I don't think about his writing, I think about him as a person. I picture his kind face, I see his sly smile, I hear his warm chuckle and his low, smooth voice. I see his colorful array of hats and scarves and tinted glasses, his nonchalant way of holding court, which was commanding and effortlessly cool, nonetheless. I think of one summer afternoon sitting on the steps of BAM, taking in the "parade of Black excellence and beauty," in Greg's words, basking in their glory.

Greg had an aura, if you believe in such things, that vibrated. Standing next to him was like standing next to the sun. Compared to many people, I didn't know Greg that well—or that deeply— but that didn't matter. He treated you just the same.

In 2000, I was newly hired at the *Voice* as an editorial technical assistant, which was slightly more than a glorified intern. I sat across from the communal computers and it was my job to help writers get their stories into the archaic ATEX editorial system. Greg would banter with me as I set up a Hotmail account for him and imported his pieces. Once, I glimpsed a rough draft of an article and ribbed him: "Mr. Tate! Where is the punctuation!" He chuckled, "Gotta give the editors something to do."

We developed a rapport—he would tease me for not liking jazz (my father was a jazz bassist) but loving epic deep house and

46 VOICE FEBRUARY 22, 1983

**GREGORY IRONMAN TATE: Michael Jackson:** *Thriller* (Epic) 10; **Prince:** *1999* (Warner Bros.) 10; **The Time:** *What Time Is It?* (Warner Bros.) 10; **Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five:** *The Message* (Sugarhill) 10; **James Blood Ulmer:** *Blackrock* (Columbia) 10; **Trouble Funk:** *Drop the Bomb* (Sugarhill) 10; **Bad Brains:** *Bad Brains* (ROIR cassette) 10; **David Byrne:** *The Catherine Wheel* (Sire cassette) 10; **Kid Creole and the Coconuts:** *Wise Guy* (Sire/ZE) 10; **Aswad:** *New Chapter in Dub* (Mango) 10.

**Tate's ballot for the 1983 iteration of the Voice's Pazz & Jop Supplement.** VV Archives

THE RETURN OF THE BLACK AESTHETIC

# Cult-Nats Meet Freaky-Deke

**By Greg Tate**

**Headline from the December 1989 *Voice Literary Supplement*.** VV Archives

techno ("You like the jazz of today," he said, to which I had no comeback). Years later, when I had written something about my father and jazz, he emailed: "Awwwww—another victim of jazz snobbery at home and work ... the apple never falls far from the tree/we become our parents by and by ... but let me know how many jazz fanatics offer to send you jazz they know you'll like—you've made yourself a target and we're relentless, like jehovah's witness! GT."

As the *Voice* went through its many iterations, I began to work on an oral history book about the paper, and when his band stopped in Seattle, Greg and I went out for Chinese food. I expressed my reservations about doing a project of such magnitude. Who cared, except us? He told me to have faith in the subject, and in myself.

"Because," he said, over the din of the clanging dishes, "they still write books about Hamilton and Beethoven and shit. The beauty of the reading public is there's a huge film-going and music following for this, with no hype. A hit can be a book about the history of salt. Or the natural history of the senses. The millions of people who bought those books probably never thought about salt before or were curious about it, nor were they curious about the history of perfume. Those writers brought them into the show. Right?" he said, looking at me through his tinted glasses.

"People who read—they're like an intellectual silent majority. For books, you just do your work. You do it right and they will find you. So don't think about it. You have to completely get out of the journalistic mindset of it being topical or trendy—they're gonna read it because you make it interesting to read."

Later, when I wrote a Facebook post asking for title advice, Greg's submission inspired the title I tentatively settled on: *Commies, Hippies, Pinkos, Queers!: An Oral History of the Village Voice—the Newsweekly that Changed the World*.

"Fred McDarrah used to lovingly and jokingly refer to it as 'Our Commie Pinko Fag Rag,'" Greg posted in the comments. "Uptown when I told folk I wrote for The Voice they said 'Oh You Write For That Gay Paper.' And not as an insult but just as a matter of fact. Cause nobody asked if I was gay—they just recognized the paper had a bold uncompromising sexual identity in a time and place when being gay was equated with being loud proud and militant like being Black was.

"All that said my hat in the ring is—with all apologies to 80s rap sensations Whodini—*The Freaks Came Out To Write*, then sexy retrospective subtitle.......Alternately I got *Once Upon A Time At The Voice: The Oral History Of A Black, White, Commie, Pinko Queer Rag Red All Over*."

A genius, as always.

A few years later, I went to re-interview him in NYC. And I had another request: I wanted (finally) to go to a jazz club with Greg Tate in Harlem. He must have been amused—all those years of ribbing had finally paid off. He emailed: "I'll be Black in town and down."

But he had a family emergency, so we never got to do it. It is one of my greatest regrets. Greater still is that he will never be able to read the book he encouraged me to write. *—Tricia Romano*

### These Three Words

Grief can punch you full in the face. And the legs will wobble, like Zab Judah catching a bad one from Kostya Tszyu. But when it waylays you, then grief seizes your heart, chokes your chest, and even the scream that you fucking need to give voice to right now dies stillborn in your throat. The way I felt looking at three words on my phone in the middle of a meeting.

*Greg Tate passed*.

I don't have a unique claim to calling Tate friend, mentor, or creative lodestone. What I do know, what I hold dear in this moment, is the memory of being a young Black man learning to write in the pages of the *Village Voice* of the early and mid-'90s under the tutelage of Greg Tate. Not that he would have claimed such an assignation had you asked him. Tate was only being, well, Tate. The sun just shines. We're the ones who bathe in the light.

But then the sun sets. We're left in the dark. Trying to remember the feel of that heat on mind and soul. Trying to sift every fragment of memory. Mine have been tumbling fast and free since I read those three words, like a run of Coltrane quarter notes, to use an analogy that befits Tate.

I'm the kid in college sustained by the *Village Voice*, my daily bread. The 22-year-old walking into 36 Cooper Square already enthralled by my personal trinity of the word—Nelson George, Lisa Jones, and Greg Tate. They were all wizards, but Tate was my Gandalf. I certainly followed him around like a Hobbit. Terrified that I'd annoy him, but helpless to do anything else.

Some days that meant munching lunch on Astor Place as Tate schooled me on the finer intricacies of Paul Beatty's *The White Boy Shuffle*. Some days it meant Tate listening to me struggle with young writer anxieties, like the time this magazine called *The Source* wanted to hire me as music editor and I was waffling until Tate said go take the damn job.

**We weren't best friends, we were something more Algonquin Round Table-ish on the Black-hand side.**

You were never going to be Greg Tate. You were never going to imitate him. Which was, in a way, freeing. What he did was give you permission. To fully invest yourself in the art of the word. To find your own balance of rhythm and melody. To seek a poetic beauty even in the context of writing critical narrative. And to paint it unambiguously Black.

**Always leading the way: Greg Tate onstage with Burnt Sugar at the Théâtre de Cachan in Val-de-Marne, France, February 2010.** Miles Marshall Lewis

I am now far older than Tate was when we first met. Something I find astonishing. A fact that has less to do with my own inevitable graying than with the stature Tate held even as a man in his 30s, the weight we all invested in him, and the grace with which he bore it.

All of which, in the end, gives me three different words to hold onto.

*Greg Tate lives.* —***Selwyn Seyfu Hinds***

**Black It Up a Bit**

Quoting from memory: "What color were the ancient Egyptians? Blacker than Mubarak, baby." I think that was the lead, or nearby it, to an essay Greg wrote on Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*. It was a very Tate flip-and-twirl: The heated late-'80s debate over *Black Athena* concerned race and the ancient world, but Greg plopped it on top of the morning paper. He made it impossible to look at Egypt's president/dictator Hosni Mubarak in the same way again. Greg embraced the performance of race with consistency, devotion, compassion, and playfulness; taken all together, that was unique to him and a public service. He was *fun*; thus, "*baby*." I remember editing him once when he said, "We've got to black this paragraph up a bit." Greg's pieces read like

**We imitated Tate's writings the way hopeful be-bop musicians in the '50s tried to play like Bird.**

live performances, which they assuredly were not; extracting an essay from him could be as fraught as surgery. He was absolutely serious about getting his role right—Greg "Ironman" Tate from Harlem U.S.A., as he used to sign himself on the *Voice*'s Letters page. He appeared there frequently, often under attack, usually making offense the best defense. He believed in revolution through music, a public-private revolution, and on the occasions when that wasn't enough he pushed outward into his beloved science fiction, flying the Afrofuturist flag. It's weirdly easy to imagine Greg, with his laughing sweet smile, revolutionizing the hereafter. —***Scott Malcomson***

*[Editor's note: Those classic Tate lines opened a 1989 multi-page feature with the equally Tate-ian headline "History: The Colorized Version, Or, Everything You Learned in School Was Wrong."]*

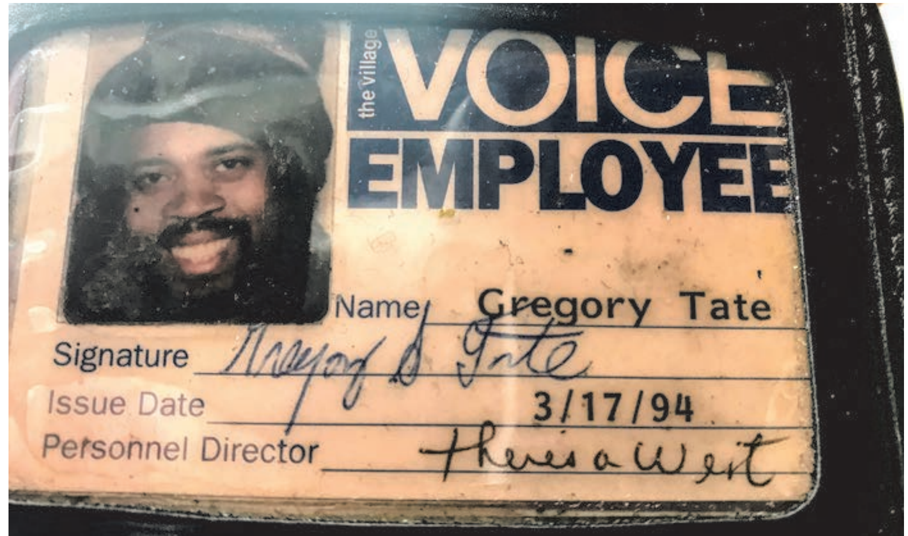
**Lessons We Didn't Know We Needed**

I first met Greg Tate in the flesh the same summer day I dropped LSD in Fort Greene Park, July 1995. I remember asking him his favorite Beatle straightaway (John, obviously), as if that were the most important conversation to get out of the way. Publishers were giving Tate the runaround for his unpublished novel, *Alter'd Spayde*, and—tripping on acid or not—I couldn't fathom a world where a Greg Tate novel could get rejected. (I'd learn the vagaries of the publishing industry myself years later.) I was 24. Though I'd already been reading him since high school, Tate was only 37.

When my mother thought Michael Jackson's "Bad" video was so fantastic back in 1987 and I had reservations that I couldn't articulate (being 16 years old), the *Village Voice* published Tate's "I'm White! What's Wrong with Michael Jackson," and I knew I wasn't crazy. Reading Tate's Miles Davis obit in the *Voice* years later, he wasn't afraid to say Miles "went out like a roach" for how he abused Cicely Tyson. When he dissed Public Enemy for the misogynoir of "Sophisticated Bitch" and "She Watch Channel Zero?!," I got lessons in feminism I didn't know I needed. Reading *Flyboy in the Buttermilk* the same summer of my *Vibe* magazine internship, I'd also worked downtown as an elevator man, and some rich older tenants laughed at the book's marketing tag: "Are you ready for the hiphop nation?" (I still spell "hiphop" without the hyphen mainly because of Greg's propensity.) My thought was: The joke's on you, jack. Greg Tate is one of the strongest, most creative critics of culture in America, period.

Someone gave me his phone number for a Meshell Ndegeocello story I was writing for *The Source* magazine, told me to call him at 2:00 a.m., and there he was: available, wide awake, full of brilliance for a kid he didn't know. He complimented me on the piece that hallucinogenic day in Brooklyn; Tate reading me, encouraging my writing, was HUGE to me. As I got a much better handle on my writing process over the years, I felt as if I could see the matrix code of other writers' work as I read it. I could never read the matrix of Greg's work. To say his writing was one part Amiri Baraka, two parts P-funky Afrofuturism, with some Black cultural nationalism, arcane musical references, and a few million-dollar words thrown in is to say nothing. The code of his writing was far too heavily encrypted for that. Reviewing DMX in the *Voice*, I once got away with the word "floccinaucinihilipilification"—it didn't bring me any closer to sounding like Tate. Nothing could, for any of us. Young padawans with the pen all tried to write like him and failed; it's how we found our own village voices.

I named my LLC "Furthermucker Films" last year because Tate used the word consistently. His "Hardcore of Darkness" essay (1982) talked up how surprised he was that his brother Brian loved a new dreadlocked punk band called Bad Brains: "goddamn, these furthermuckers must not be bullshitting." Later that year, in "Beyond the Zone of the Zero Funkativity," he mentioned that George Clinton's *Computer Games* (the one with "Atomic Dog") was "one signifying furthermucker 20 times over." For me, furthermuckers muck further. It's folks who stretch the envelope, think outside the box, go beyond the pale. Like Tate himself. Fourteen years ago, Greg permitted me to "Go forth & let the furthermucker fly and multiply"—we were talking about my old blog, Furthermucker—and so I did, making my roots clear to folks who know their Tate-isms.




**Workin' man.** Tricia Romano

Just last week I texted Greg, asking him to make a cameo in my short film, *Numbers Up*. He'd be on an Amtrak that day, he said, but "congrats on the directorial turn." He donated to my film-fundraising Kickstarter last year. He was famously supportive, always down to look out for the cookout. I published him in my lit journal, *Bronx Biannual* (a speculative fiction story he called "Pangborn"). He published me in his lit journal, *Coon Bidness*. I tapped him for my latest book, a biography on Kendrick Lamar. We weren't best friends, we were something more Algonquin Round Table-ish on the Black-hand side, something more literary and unique. He was the greatest mentor I never had.

Then there's his music. I'd first see him perform with Mack Diva, one of the many proto-iterations of Burnt Sugar, at Kokobar cybercafé, in Fort Greene in the mid-'90s. (My favorite tune: "Blessed," from *The Witches of Bushwick*.) Me and writer Karen Good Marable once had a special moment ringside at the Blue Note watching Burnt Sugar take flight. Living in Paris for seven years, I'd catch Burnt Sugar a few times at the annual Sons d'Hiver festival in Val-de-Marne. I filmed him in Paris for a documentary of mine. After Greg and I conversed onstage at Morehouse College some years ago, producer Chuck Lightning, of Janelle Monáe's Wondaland posse, whisked him off to hear some early *Dirty Computer* demos. Despite Tate's co-sign, an invite wasn't extended. (Insert "LOL" here.)

For years, I lived in Harlem right between him and my father, on Edgecombe Avenue, and that felt right. (I hit up one of Tate's annual New Year's parties that he used to throw at his apartment like a literary salon.) I watched him and my father in *Summer of Soul* this year (my dad, Darryl Lewis, attended the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival, the subject of Questlove's documentary), and that felt right, too. Always been a proud son of Tate, one amongst many. I'll never again get to yell "TATE!" down the block when I see him coming first; that gets me choked up. Ase, furthermuckers.

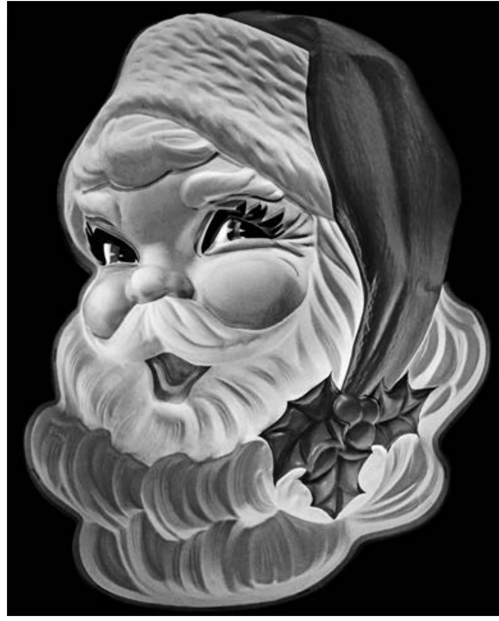
—***Miles Marshall Lewis***

**Lewis and Tate reading at the Hue-Man Bookstore, in Harlem, May 2006.** Brenda Joyner

# THE SPIRITS OF THE SEASON, THEN AND NOW

*Two longtime* Voice *hands look at a half-century of holiday craze and malaise in Gotham*

**Photos by James Hamilton, captions by Mark Jacobson**



**Lighted Plastic Santa, 1979**
Truth be told, I've never been one for the so-called "Holiday Season," my views being pretty much in line with those of Sergeant Raymond Shaw, the brainwashed assassin played by Laurence Harvey in the original *Manchurian Candidate.* "Twelve days of Christmas," Shaw/Harvey says with weary patrician disdain. "Isn't one loathsome enough?" Be it the totemization of a fat Aryan paladin of capital who keeps tabs on who's been naughty and who's been nice and the NSA-like lists he checks twice, the annual exhumation of Andy Williams's "It's the Most Wonderful Time of Year" to accompany the approach of yet another panhandler, the hellacious traffic, or the crap weather—the shortest days of the year are typically my longest.

**Christmas Tree in an Apartment Building Lobby, 1988**
It isn't that I am a reflexive Scrooge or refuse to participate in a consensus of joy. I can picture myself as the Dad of Big City fantasy: bounding out of a yellow cab in front of a Park Avenue apartment house to hand the smiling doorman an armful of brightly wrapped presents from FAO Schwartz and a little something special for the wife from some guy on 47th Street, because really, who are you if you don't have a diamond guy on 47th Street? I want to be merry, ho, ho, ho. I want to be gay, hey, hey, hey. But when I walk into the lobby of an anonymous apartment house smack in the middle of The Season, it just makes me lonely and blue.

**Cop and Santa Street Salesman, 1970**
Maybe this feeling has something to do with how the little cruelties of "normal" life—a slight at work, the rise of the price of gas, the seemingly arbitrary exercise of power by local authorities—take on an extra edge during the Holidays. "*Look at this!,*" you can hear Fox News say during their War Against Xmas coverage, reporting on the ticketing of this poor soul whose only crime was selling blow-up Santas. *"Right on Christmas Day."*

**Rockefeller Center Ice Rink, 1981**
Or maybe it is the hustle of the mass culture. When confronted by the relentless, seasonal, fake entreaty to universal brotherhood, you recognize your inner Harry Lime and admit you wouldn't know, or care, if one of those little dots down there suddenly stopped moving.

**Intrepid, 1996**
If the Holidays are supposed to be about the preservation of the past through tradition and ritual, nothing in the Big City is immune to change. Every day things disappear. A few nights ago, as we drove down what New Yorkers still call the West Side Highway, despite Giuliani renaming it Joe DiMaggio Highway in 1999, we noticed that the cursive "Seasons Greetings" on the front of the USS Intrepid that James had photographed a few years before was no longer there. That is just as well. After all, in 1944, the newly constructed Intrepid fought the Japanese at Leyte Gulf, the largest battle in recorded naval history. Hundreds of boats were involved, dozens of which were sunk. More than 20,000 men and women lost their lives. Two decades after that, the Intrepid played its part in the carpet-bombing of Vietnam, killing who knows how many thousands more. Regardless of what one believes about the price Americans must pay to maintain their freedom, the USS Intrepid, with 100 planes of prey perched on its 870-foot-long deck, including detachments of VA-36 Roadrunners and VA-60 Waldos, not to mention a full complement of 127 mm anti-aircraft cannons, could hardly be described as an emissary of peace on earth, goodwill to men.

**Keith Haring in the Subway, 1981**
This doesn't mean that the hometown would be better off without the Holiday Season. As explained by Romanian philosopher Mircea Eliade, there are two kinds of time, the sacred and the profane. Each society must invent its particular version of sacred time and place, the recurring "*axis mundi*" of its existence. You've got to have the sacred to offset the numbing, endless procession of the profane. Once established, the sacred creates a continuum of its own, an archetypal portal to a unperimetered landscape where the conventional boundaries of past, present, and future fade away. That said, the local suspects that Eliade's magic doorway to the sacred plays better on a smaller, more specific mnemonic canvas, like, say, a single blank space in a subway station frequented by denizens of a vanished downtown subculture.

**Camels Backstage at Rockefeller Center, 1988**
In the times of pandemic, even the Biblical is not fixed. As documented in this Hamilton photo from 1988, there have always been three camels backstage waiting to make their appearance during the Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacle. Yet, as I noticed while attending the show with my granddaughter last week, even that had changed. About to turn 4 years old, it was Alice's first show, which I found appalling. Ordinarily, she would have been to plenty of shows and movies by now. Instead, she's spent a full third of her time on the planet cooped up in a one-bedroom apartment in Ridgewood, Queens, with her telecommuting parents. Radio City wouldn't make up for all that, but the grandeur of the surroundings and cumulative number of children's smiles over the past 90 years has done much to mitigate the demoralizing factoid that the hall, built by the robber baron Rockefellers, is now in the stubby hands of James Dolan, unloved owner of the New York Knicks. For Alice's visit, we even got to meet a Rockette, the fabulous Soultana. This duly noted, it was quite a shock when the Three Wise Men arrived onstage on their camels. There were only two of them! Two Wise Men on two camels, as far as I counted. Was one at the vet, or simply taking the night off? Was it an oblique commentary that two camel-riding Wise Men were sufficient in this anti-intellectual era? A "supply chain" issue? Did the management simply assume no one would notice? Luckily, none of this concerned Alice, which was all that mattered.

**Passing Souvenir Menorahs From One Mitzvah Tank to the Other, 2021**
It was the first night of Chanukah, so the plan was to drive out to 770 Eastern Parkway, Temple of the late Rebbe Schneerson, the proclaimed messiah of the Lubavitch people of Crown Heights. Yahweh saved us the trip, as the rebbe, or his likeness, came to us. Through the eerie post-pandemic quiet of Midtown came the caravan of horn-honking "Mitzvah Tanks," each bearing a giant photo of the Brooklyn savior. From every window of the converted RVs poked the heads of young revelers passing boxes containing menorahs to each other and shouting their now familiar question to motorists and passersby: "You Jewish?" For Jews like me, who grew up in the not-so-promised land of Queens dutifully attending Hebrew school and lighting eight successive candles to place in the window, this is a vexing question. You can tell them that you don't see how your religious background is any of their business. You can tell them, "Yeah, but not like you," which is accurate, since getting Bar Mitzvahed and duking it out in schoolyards with classmates who mockingly sneezed "ah-ah-ah-Jew" when they saw you coming will never be enough. It is a problem of identity, like so many others in the Big City. Go to Colorado, tell people you're a New York Jew, part of a century-plus saga of immigrant brilliance, and they don't believe you because you're not wearing a black hat. On this night, however, my resentment all but vanished. The palpable joy, the delirious happiness pouring from the Mitzvah Tanks made it impossible not to give in. There's something that gets me about almost any ecstatic religious experience, and the Chabadniks are nothing if not ecstatic. For a moment it didn't matter that many of the celebrants thought the earth was created six thousand years ago, and wouldn't get vaccinated unless the rebbe told them to. They were waking up the town, bringing the party. So I answered, "Yeah, I'm Jewish," which was followed by a cheer and a shower of boxed-up menorahs flying out of the Mitzvah Tank windows. Hamilton didn't get one, but then again, not being one of the Chosen People, he didn't expect to.

**Andrew and Child (on the cover), 2021**
Then there's Andrew, a Black Santa. Jolly as all get-out, surrounded by the Halal carts and hawkers of knock-off Gucci bags on 49th Street, this was Andrew's first stint as a sidewalk Santa. Being a self-described "Times Square person," who hung around with the breakdance troupes that would attract tourists six rows deep on hot summer nights prior to the 2020 lockdown (in addition to putting in time as Big Bird and Grover), Andrew thought he'd give the gig a go. It was something of a revelation. "I put on this costume and I can just feel all the negativity flow out of me," Andrew says, peeking over starburst-frame glasses. Being Santa is "the real cure for depression, my own and everyone else's, just talking to the kids. Grown-ups too, everyone. They love me and I love them." He says he even gets to bring joy to his old buds from the breakdance days, Cowboy and Ray the bucket drummer, showing off the airline-size bottles of Fireball Cinnamon Whisky, which he keeps as presents for the crew.

**Macy's "Believe" Sign , 2021**
"Think we got to get that," I said to James as we passed Macy's. New York is known for extravagant Holiday store windows, but this was different, just a stark three-story cluster of white lights spelling out "Believe" in script affixed to the unadorned 34th Street facade of the town's most famous emporium. *Believe*. Compared to the LCD riot around the corner, the single word was as stark as a commandment from preacher Jonathan Edwards' 1741 sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Believe! But what was supposed to be believed during the Holiday Season of 2021, in the midst of the slow-motion apocalypse, with mutant viruses shape-shifting every other day? Was it the products displayed in the store's ground-floor windows: Burberry, Longchamp's, Tissot, Footlocker, Sephora? Or the fake-weed dealer in the truck across the street? Was it one narcissistic paean to the cult of self-empowerment, or were they really talking about God and faith? It was something to contemplate, a challenge of sorts, I was thinking, when Hamilton said, "It's not much of a picture." But then he shifted angles. He didn't do much, just a few degrees to the right and up, but that's Hamilton for you, a reader of the imperceptible. The adjustment put the Empire State Building, only a block away, into the shot—the glorious Empire, spire of Kong, in our hearts forever the tallest building in the world. Now, it was a *picture*. Because if there was anything we believed in during this Holiday Season, or ever, it was The City, the one we knew, the one that was and will be. V

Feature

# THE STRANGE HISTORY AND VIBRANT PLAYERS OF THE HAMMOND ORGAN

*From* The Shadow *radio show to Billy Preston and the Beastie Boys, the big, boxy B-3 organ has been wowing listeners for going on a century*

**By Matt Rogers**

In 1927, when Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer* packed theaters across America, Rosa Rio thought her future as an organist was curtains. Fresh out of Eastman School of Music with a degree in silent-film accompaniment, the NOLA native had thought she'd made the big time in the Big Apple, securing regular gigs playing the magnificently massive pipe organ, with its four rows of keys, at Brooklyn's Fox Theater. "The thing I thought I was going to be doing for the rest of my life," Rio (1902–2010) told me in a 2006 interview, "was playing the big theater organ for silent motion pictures." By the end of the 1920s, however, the roar of the "talkies" had muted the dreams her parents had previously tried to discourage. As was true for most professionally trained women of that era, teaching had to suffice—until Rio heard about a new instrument showcasing at piano company Steinway on 57th Street. Called a Hammond organ, it uncannily bore her theater-organist husband's last name, but neither he nor the sales reps seemed to know how to work the thing, which looked like a peculiar wooden piece of furniture. But for 25 cents an hour, you could practice at the store, getting any sound you wanted. So Rosa Rio—aided by her gift of absolute pitch—spent many weeks "just experimenting with the drawbars to get the sound I wanted on that organ." The man who had invented these mechanical drawbars, Laurens Hammond, was all about such experimentation. Located just above the upper keys, a drawbar could be gradually pushed or pulled, each increment mimicking the stops and tabs used to change airflow (and hence, sounds) on a pipe organ. The reportedly tone-deaf inventor told *Popular Mechanics* he'd designed his new instrument to be "flexible enough to allow the musician to explore new possibilities in beautiful tone colors … [and] also permit him to blunder into horrid noises."

Despite not being a "he," with the opportunities that offered, Rio soon found her sonic mix of beauty and horror on this burgeoning keyboard, then found herself pulling those drawbars for America's hottest medium for talk shows and entertainment: radio. On Sunday evenings, millions of tantalized listeners across the country heard her lurid accompaniment for the soon-to-be-iconic radio drama, starring 22-year-old wunderkind Orson Welles, which asked, "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?" Not only did the Shadow know, but Rio's evolving know-how synthesizing tones and emotions proved effective. "We could get odd qualities out of the Hammond organ that you could not get out of any other," she recalls. "You could do any kind of effect, [including] what we called in the trade 'stings,' to make you feel the terror of the voice of Orson Welles." With *The Shadow* a smash, Rio's radio career flourished, an in-demand auditory staple stationed behind a 400-pound "portable" keyboard, which was rolled on dollies through the corridors connecting Rockefeller Center's NBC studios in order to bring musical fright to shows such as *Inner Sanctum*, *Counterspy*, and *The Haunting Hour*. Though it was startling the lives of millions, Rosa Rio believed the Hammond organ had saved hers.

**On January 2, 1897, Laurens Hammond may have noticed a shadow lurking** over him as it gently planted a kiss on his cheek around 2 a.m., before leaving the room where the 18-month-old and his exhausted mother, Idea, lay in their Evanston, Illinois, home. Laurens's mother had noticed, but her toddler's restless nights had left her too exhausted to rouse. The previous 12 nights had also been restless for her husband, William, who'd been involved in a scandal through the collapse of the National Bank of Illinois, where he'd served as second vice president and director. William was also a director in a startup company trying to exploit the burgeoning technology of electricity; specifically, electric streetcars on the south side of Chicago. The startup had received a $2.4 million loan from Hammond's longtime employer—upon closer inspection, the books looked cooked. Although many were to blame, the father of four resolved that the only way to remedy his role in the disaster was to go for a final walk along the shore, not far from the Hammond homestead. With the New Year barely a night old, he stepped off a pier into the shadowy waters of Lake Michigan. No suicide note was found—only a scattered, rain-soaked trail of handwritten ledger notes.

Being the only Hammond son, perhaps Laurens would have drifted into finance had his father not allowed the Calumet Electric Street Railway Company to shatter his mind and short-circuit any filial advance. But a $60,000 life insurance policy (nearly $2 million today) allowed the Hammonds the financial freedom to uproot and move closer to European relatives. Idea pumped her artistic side, displaying her paintings in Paris, while the kids were schooled in French and German. Laurens loved to tinker. He demonstrated his nascent forward-thinking by designing an automatic automobile transmission that Renault engineers were entertained by, but ultimately rejected—first not believing the 12-year-old standing before them was responsible for the design, then not believing that steel could bear such a mechanical burden. Undeterred by the thumbs-down, Hammond kept messing around, patenting a $1 barometer at 16. His inventive mind returned stateside when World War I rumblings encouraged his mother to move the family back to Evanston. Upon eventually graduating from Cornell University in mechanical engineering, he set his course on becoming what he called "an independent inventor."

And so Hammond invented, having substantial success throughout the 1920s, with numerous inventions, sales, and brushes with celebrity under his belt. But Ziegfeld Follies' royalties for his stereoscopic Shadowgraph lasted only so long. He'd estab-

**Rosa Rio pulling a drawbar in 2006, and also at the keys in the previous century.** Matt Rogers

lished the Hammond Clock Company in 1928, and one day he went about tearing apart a cheap piano in his Evanston workspace loft, above an old grocery store. It wasn't payback for the piano lessons he'd hated as a child. Tickless clocks and 3-D movies (using his stereoscopic Teleview invention) had made him a master at developing small synchronous motors that could keep perfect time, regardless of the irregular starts and stops that regional electric power companies commonly provided to households. The Hammond Clock Company made over 100 different models, selling enough timekeepers to support 700 employees, but by 1932, with the Great Depression already forcing 150 other clock companies to liquidate (with Hammond Co. on the hook for $400K to banks as well), he and his team of engineers were desperately chucking ideas against the wall to see what stuck, no matter how gimmicky.

Their latest gimmick involved ripping apart that piano in order to hook up "tone wheels"—metal wheels about the size of a dollar coin, not unlike the ones turning his clocks—to switches he'd wired under the piano keys. Hammond imagined that maybe it could be an inexpensive, toyish keyboard one could plug into a common home radio's speakers through which one could generate some—generously speaking—"music." Yet the deeper the engineers dove into generating tones from electric current, and the more tones they measured and frequencies they produced from these consistently revolving wheels, the more they realized they were onto something worth making noise over. Hammond gobbled up the latest physics research on musical sound, treating each spinning tone wheel generator as a harmonic math problem, not unlike what Dr. Thaddeus Cahill had done in 1897 when he patented his Telharmonium—the world's first synthesizer—the same year Hammond became fatherless. Cahill utilized similar concepts and technology, upon which Hammond would improve, particularly the theory and use behind turning tone wheels into sound generators.

**"I'm going to scare a lot of people with the incredible number of tones on the Hammond organ before I die."**

Cahill's wondrous machine—also called a Dynamophone—was essentially a power plant, as each tone required its own motor and banks of transformers to mix the tones. His first iteration, the Mark I, was "only" 14,000 pounds, while the subsequent Mark II and III versions, built of steel and brick, weighed over 200 tons, were 60 feet long, and manipulated by rows of keys. Because speaker systems didn't exist, the $200,000 apparatus took advantage of the technology of existing telephone wires to broadcast its sounds directly into telephones, and then into rooms via phonograph-like megaphones. Unlike Cahill, however, Hammond had no interest in creating tones through a telephone line (and further irritating telephone operators confused by sudden waves of "music") and instead planned to utilize the speaker technology of the day. He also learned that pairing a coiled magnet with each tone wheel was essential to any consistent and sustained sound creation.

The first sonic breakthrough mimicked a flute. "Instruments" were added until they had 91 tone wheels connected via switches to two manuals (keyboards) and designed drawbars. Pedals were added for bass notes and volume. Laurens Hammond called it an organ, and soon hauled it to the patent office—which Hammond described as having "marvelous acoustics"—gave a demonstration and lecture for the office's impressed employees, and was expedited a patent on April 24, 1934. The show certainly helped, but the promise of manufacturing jobs during the Depression was key.

Word spread. Henry Ford wanted half a dozen of what Hammond called "these Model A organs," and offered to help manufacture them (Hammond politely declined). George Gershwin wanted one. The Roosevelts. No matter the steep $1,250 Depression-era price tag. Hammond lassoed this celebrity demand for promotion, and utilized theater organists to demonstrate his creation at racetracks and roller rinks. Organist Milt Herth played one on his "Stompin' at the Savoy" solo on the radio. Manufacturing only two organs a day at first made it hard, but eventually Hammond sold 1,400 organs in the first year; his PR department claimed each organ could generate an infinite amount of tone colors and harmonics yet was thousands of dollars cheaper than any pipe organ. That advertising translated to over half-a-million dollars in sales over the first two years, while also attracting playerhatin' heat from pipe organ purists, who rejected said claims for Hammond's "organ," organizing enough ire to convince the Federal Trade Commission that the Hammond Clock Company was indeed perpetrating a fraud in even calling it an organ.

"Porter Heaps told me he wanted to refute all of these erroneous stories being put out about the Hammond organ," recalled Rosa Rio, who in 1937 was readying for *The Shadow*. "And he did." Heaps, a church pipe organist who worked for Hammond, did so as part of an ear test Hammond had ingeniously devised to prove his musical product was, indeed, an organ. Fifteen lucky students, along with nine not-as-lucky subpoenaed musicians and experts, assembled at the University of Chicago's chapel to decide on aural legitimacy. In one corner stood the chapel's colossal Skinner pipe organ; in the other was the opponent, at about 1/30th the cost, with its tone cabinets concealed behind the organ pipes. Screens blocked the jury's view, so theoretically they could only hear the 300 classical music snippets performed. Score: 50% hit rate for the students; the "experts" swung between chance and 90%. Some say the fix was in,

Matt Rogers collection

**Fifty-three organists and 10 tons of Hammond organs at Chicago's Soldier Field, in 1949.**

but FTC lawyers changed their tune, allowing Hammond's claim that this wooden box was actually an organ—but with a stipulation. Hammond's marketers would need to chill on their claim of tonal infinity. Hence, after much "research," Hammond capped the number of tones their organs were capable of producing at a mere 253 million—almost two tones for every American.

Though they didn't get a dollar for every tone produced, millions of greenbacks flowed into the newly minted Hammond Instrument Company. Laurens was awarded the Franklin Institute's John Price Wetherill Medal for this scientific sonic invention, which by WWII found its way onto the Queen Mary, no less, and into over a thousand churches spread over three dozen countries. One of those countries was Brazil, where a young red-headed organist was holding court in a swanky Rio hotel. The tourists admired her high-heeled pedal work, as well as her swinging organ arrangement of a local *choro* called "Tico Tico no Fubá." That Latin swagger may have belied the squareness of Ethel Smith's name, but it was just the fresh combination Hollywood was looking for. In the 1944 film *Bathing Beauty*, Smith was showcased on a Hammond BV, her blue high-heeled feet spotlit, the instrument surrounded by a dozen mature "girl scouts" out of a Hugh Hefner dream, who plead for Smith to "go below the border for some South American jive." Smith complies, putting her finger and foot virtuosity on full display. The resulting "Tico Tico" made Smith a star, and sold many a platter for Decca Records, regardless of whether Rosa Rio thought Smith's act was jive (she did). Laurens Hammond was as thrilled as Smith's tambourine tappin' scouts, as it was the white girl consumer demographic of his dreams. For Smith, four more features followed in quick succession, then Disney nabbed her for 1948's *Melody Time*, in which she performs "Blame It on the Samba"on a blonde Hammond emanating animated bubbles, while Donald Duck and José Carioca serenade her. It was quite an impressive run—and an exemplar of post-war cultural appropriation—and synched nicely with Hammond's capitalist pursuit of a home invasion.

In the summer of 1949, the *Chicago Tribune* wanted to go big in celebrating the 20th anniversary of its Chicagoland Music Festival, hoping for 100,000 spectators to invade Soldier Field. So in addition to the usual singing contests, dance routines, and marching bands (including 1,000 accordionists!), the publication looked locally for unique entertainment. Now a $5 million company, Hammond's latest line of Model M spinets—smaller, cheaper, geared for the home—sought to spin heaps more bottom-line gold, and Porter Heaps was tapped to lead 53 organists, aptly christened the Hammond Organ Ensemble, with four concert organists and the rest amateur. All dressed in white, they were arranged midfield facing conductor Heaps like a precursor to today's Wi-Fi icon. Exactly how many of the quarter-million tones performed by 10 tons of Hammond organ were heard above the crowd's "oohs" and "aahs" during the ensemble's generation of "La Golondrina" and "The Lost Chord" is, unfortunately, lost to history.

Out on the West Coast, meanwhile, another independent inventor was making history in the Land of Make Believe in a makeshift L.A. television studio, as the star of one of America's first all-music TV shows: *Korla Pandit's Adventures in Music*. The beautiful, beturbaned, three-piece-wearing organist never said a word during his performances, his composed stare, flitting fingers, and percussive hand slaps instead doing all his communicating, as the mysterious musical elixir emanating from his Hammond C-2 guided the viewer—usually with an exotic dancer assist—to the far-flung locales of Turkey, Brazil, and India. Which was where—in his mind, manner, and myth—Pandit was from. John Roland Redd, a fair-skinned African American music savant from Missouri, who knew his opportunities as a Southern Black man were

fallow, had invented in Pandit the perfect character for Hollywood, and steadfastly carried Pandit's identity as his own until he died (even his kids thought he was a Brahmin from New Delhi). It was genius-level cultural appropriation that made Ethel Smith's Latin-tinge maneuvers seem rookie-league. Like Smith, Pandit demonstrated that this instrument was a natural for the screen, as overhead camera angles revealed the dexterous, all-limbs demands required by such peculiar playing of peculiar sounds—what would eventually be categorized as "exotica."

Though Pandit's show was initially regional, bigger TV platforms helped mainstream Hammond organs over the 1950s. Long before Fonda and Simmons, exercise pioneer Jack Lalanne brought his war on flab to living rooms, as he cheerfully flexed, stretched, and summoned, all to the encouraging, improvised (and no doubt sweaty) Hammond organ accompaniment of Dave Bacal, known for his *Latin Touch* LP. Soap operas were also migrating to the small screen from radio. *As The World Turns* featured Rosa Rio, while another soap, *Front Page Farrell*, featured her buddy Dick Hyman, who also had his hands in game shows, such as *The Jan Murray Show* and future *Let's Make a Deal* host Monty Hall's NBC debut in New York City.

Hyman, who recorded more than 100 albums throughout his long career (as well as performing with jazz giants like Bird and Dizzy), never met a keyboard he couldn't hack—the Hammond organ was no exception. "The Hammond organ was the original synthesizer," Hyman tells me. "It was a way of constructing tones by their overtones—by their harmonics—and, as such, it was considerably more an efficient musical instrument than, say, a Moog synthesizer." Hyman's use of tone wheel harmonics was not only efficient for games and soaps but also for numerous "lounge" LPs in the '50s and '60s, featuring punny titles such as *Strictly Organic*. He was the go-to keyboardist for the Ray Charles Singers, The Brass Ring, and lounge-meister Enoch Light. David Harkness, Richard Wayne, and David Helman were just a few nommes de Hammond he employed, some for *Reader's Digest* box sets that are still collecting Goodwill dust at a store near you. "Some had a groove, some were more muzaky," Hyman remembers. "My career kind of illustrates the varied uses of the organ, because I had several careers going. One as a jazz player and the other was these pop aspects. I never played organ in a roller skating rink, but I made an album which pretended I was doing exactly that."

Dominic Cangelosi didn't have to pretend, having started playing his Hammond in roller rinks like L.A.'s Moonlight Rollerway in 1958, as well as recording a rainbowed plethora of skating-themed organ 45s for Rinx Records. "Yellow records were waltzes, purple records were tangos, orange records are foxtrots," Cangelosi tells me. "They were color-coded so that when a [skating] coach or teacher wanted a certain tempo, like, say, a waltz, they would pick a yellow record." If you enjoyed exercising to an organ with Jack LaLanne, then why not try skating to one? Millions did, as Hammond organs found their way into rinks—roller and ice. "The Hammond organ responds to skating because you can get a lot of percussive sounds out of it," says Cangelosi. "Which is what's needed in skating, because they like to skate to a heavy beat." Cheering fans in baseball stadiums and hockey arenas were also being egged on by the mighty dynamics of the Hammond. The company now had numerous models from which to choose, including a spiffy one called the B-3, which had a beefier vibrato and harmonic percussion, geared toward the working musician. In its quest to become America's aural apple pie, however, Hammond PR folk knew "mom" was the secret to keeping that whitebread buttered. "Mothers seem prettier in a home that has a Hammond organ," blurbed the company-issued *Hammond Times*, reading like a magical domestic cure-all, an instrument that "fills her home with harmony that leaves no room for tensions."

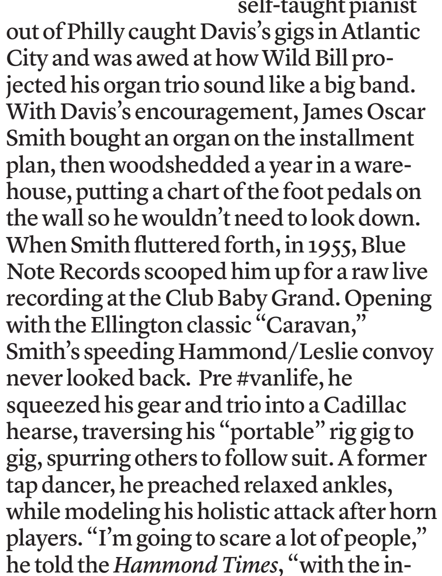
Back in 1937, there was plenty of tension when Don Leslie brought his brand new Hammond organ home, set it up, and began to play. The sound he was getting lacked the richness he'd heard in the big L.A. showroom where he'd been hooked. Leslie loved theater organ, and was tantalized by the Hammond's promise of emulating one. "He figured out it wasn't the organ but the Hammond speaker that sounded inferior," says Pete Fallico, a longtime Hammond historian and founder of the Jazz Organ Fellowship. "So he built one that better emulated that wonderful Doppler effect produced by a true pipe organ." Leslie happened to be a radio engineer and inveterate tinkerer, so he invented a tone cabinet whose revolving innards—via the flick of an attached switch on the organ's console—could essentially "throw" treble and bass around a room, better emulating the way pipe organs spread sound in space. But when he proudly took his new "3-D" wooden speaker to Hammond to demonstrate how he had just improved their product—even offering up his innovative technology in exchange for employment—his Doppler tuchus was shown the door. Perhaps a bit cocky from its FTC victory, Hammond was not interested in collaboration. Undeterred, Leslie formed his Electro Music company and began making different-sized Leslie speakers for churches, theaters, and anyone who'd take them. Demand grew so much that customers entering Hammond dealer showrooms would insist that their Hammond organ purchase come with a Leslie speaker, instead of the provided Hammond tone cabinet. Though forbidden by Hammond honchos to display Leslies, savvy sales reps stashed the speakers for their clients, a secret handshake that would ramify music for years to come.

Matt Rogers collection

The Shadow saved Rosa Rio's career.

While Hammond rejected Leslie's invention, jazz musicians were all ears. Although Fats Waller had recorded a 78 of "Jitterbug Waltz" on a Hammond organ in 1942, and Duke and Basie had toyed with tone wheels, the overwhelmingly Black world of jazz clearly had not been Hammond's target. Black churches, sure, but Laurens's mind was clouded when it came to clubs. Don Leslie's wasn't. And how many churchgoing musicians (and clubbers) sitting in pews had nodded in and out Sunday morning after a late-night Saturday club gig, the power of the organ and the Leslie reverberating in more than a few weary heads?

By the late '40s—with the big bands in which they'd worked now too expensive to deploy—a few enterprising pianists applied their orchestral chops to the Hammond/Leslie combo heard in these churches. "Wild" Bill Davis was one of the first to strip his act to Hammond organ, guitar, and drums, gigging throughout the Eastern seaboard and eventually landing a record deal at RCA Victor. "Bill had a different style, a wonderful big band sound," recounts Dick Hyman, who shared a regular gig with Davis at Well's Chicken & Waffles, in Harlem. "He used the Leslie speaker, but it was a different kind of use than that which would recall a theater organ; he used it so it sounded like a whole brass section. I learned quite a bit just sitting opposite." Hyman wasn't the only one getting schooled. A young self-taught pianist out of Philly caught Davis's gigs in Atlantic City and was awed at how Wild Bill projected his organ trio sound like a big band. With Davis's encouragement, James Oscar Smith bought an organ on the installment plan, then woodshedded a year in a warehouse, putting a chart of the foot pedals on the wall so he wouldn't need to look down. When Smith fluttered forth, in 1955, Blue Note Records scooped him up for a raw live recording at the Club Baby Grand. Opening with the Ellington classic "Caravan," Smith's speeding Hammond/Leslie convoy never looked back. Pre #vanlife, he squeezed his gear and trio into a Cadillac hearse, traversing his "portable" rig gig to gig, spurring others to follow suit. A former tap dancer, he preached relaxed ankles, while modeling his holistic attack after horn players. "I'm going to scare a lot of people," he told the *Hammond Times*, "with the incredible number of tones on the Hammond organ before I die."



"The first time I heard Jimmy Smith I almost had a heart attack," saxophonist Lou Donaldson recalls to me. He stood front row in the recording studio on many Smith sessions, including 1959's now iconic *The Sermon!* "I didn't know what that was—a train, a hurricane, something." That "something" was a wall of sound incarnate, and groove greased onto everything Smith touched, no matter the genre, across many dozens of LPs, thus shaping the soul of jazz and eventually seeping into the worlds of blues, soul, funk, rock, reggae, and, later, hip-hop. Smith became notorious for his competitive mean streak; if you didn't know he was the King he'd surely—particularly if you were a bassist—tell ya. "Jimmy would introduce himself as the world's greatest bass player," renowned session bassist Jerry Jemmott tells me. "That's the pride he had in his ability to play bass lines, and he played great bass lines—no doubt about it!"

Record labels big and small scooped up organists around the country. Millions of albums sold on the backs of folks such as Jimmy McGriff, Richard "Groove" Holmes, Mel Rhyne, Gene Ludwig, Jack McDuff, Don Patterson, Larry Young Jr., Freddie Roach, Hank Marr, "Baby Face" Willette, Lonnie Smith, Charlie Earland, Reuben Wilson, and scores of others. Many recorded their 12-inch platters over in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, on engineer Rudy Van Gelder's Hammond C-3. Most "serious" jazz critics scoffed, associating the sound with low-brow pursuits and the number of funky pop tunes. But packed clubs became organ rooms, a Hammond organ and Leslie speaker permanently parked onstage. The organ trio sound grew so popular that organists were often being paid double union-scale for their bass-player-less gigs. Planned obsolescence wasn't hip yet, and the overengineered technology proved durable on the road.

The C-3 heard on Van Gelder's gilded wax was basically a B-3 in fancier furniture, which mattered only if you had wanted to show off the footwork down below that a C-3, with its top-to-bottom wood frame, would obfuscate. Women were most visible onstage in the jazz scene "manning" a Hammond organ—as compared to other instruments—and fancy footwork, as Ethel Smith had illustrated, was a must-see part of the show. Singer and pianist Sarah McLawler, who'd been leading her all-female jazz group, the Syncoettes, since 1949, was entranced by what she'd seen Wild Bill Davis achieve, switched to the Hammond, and began recording. Her trailblazing encouraged other women—notably, Shirley Scott, Trudy Pitts, Bu Pleasant, Gloria Coleman, and Rhoda Scott—to take their church-honed Hammond skills to a bigger platform. Whereas Ethel favored heels, Rhoda Scott preferred her feet bare. A minister's daughter out of New Jersey who learned to play on the church's B-3, Scott found inspiration at places such as Newark's legendary Key Club, where she'd hear artists like McLawler with her husband, violinist Richard Otto. "Sarah on organ played in her stockings," Scott remembers. "And the

violin and the organ sounded so good together, I would listen with ears and eyes wide open and be thrilled." Scott applied that thrill to all her limbs, but particularly to her feet, which danced their own pedal orchestra. Often paired with just a drummer, her unparalleled limbastic shows stretched instruments and bodies alike. After recording a few obscure LPs locally (and being often confused with the better-known Shirley Scott), she moved to Paris, recording and spreading B-3 gospel throughout Europe.

By the time Jimmy Smith was cookin' *Back at the Chicken Shack*, Laurens Hammond had retired. But the company was having it both ways during the 1960s. They reaped from white and Black markets, men and women, from the home and the club, and from their tacit auricular handshake with the Leslie speaker. The circuits were laid out. One took root in Memphis, where 14-year-old Booker T. Jones snuck into a honky-tonk and had his ears and mind blown by Brother Jack McDuff's trio. "Jack McDuff could just mesmerize people with a Hammond organ," recalls Jones. "I was making $7 a night playing bass, but Jack McDuff didn't have a bass player." Inspired, Jones decided to switch to the organ, found three local OGs who became the MGs, and proceeded to make instrumental hits, their undeniable grooves thickened by Jones stacking his organ bass on Donald "Duck" Dunn's electric bass lines. In 1962, "Green Onions" set a new R&B standard, raising the bar organist Bill Doggett had set with "Honky Tonk" six years earlier. "I don't think there would have been a 'Green Onions' without 'Honky Tonk,'" states Jones. "I was just so influenced by the feeling, the melody, the rhythm, the sound of the Hammond, the way it made people feel. It just mesmerized the whole city."

**"Mothers seem prettier in a home that has a Hammond organ," blurbed the company-issued *Hammond Times*, reading like a magical domestic cure-all.**

In NYC, the mob-tied Sweet Chariot Night Club, billed as a "Nite Club with Soul," certainly sounded like a good idea in 1963—besides actual churchgoers picketing out front, objecting to the jazzed-up gospel 'n' liquor mix, who wouldn't want to hear fire and brimstone in a swanky midtown Manhattan club, all the while being served by waitresses decked out in sexy angel outfits? Nineteen-year-old guitarist and regular patron Al Kooper certainly did, attracted also to the driving, mesmerizing Hammond organ playing of club organist Bobby Banks. Part of the club's ruse was a deal it had with Columbia Records to record its concerts, hoping to give a wider secular ear a taste for the commercial sacred. Kooper's buddy—Columbia staff producer Tom Wilson, who'd been working with upstart Bob Dylan—was tasked to lead the club's debut session. The resulting LP, *Introducing the Sweet Chariot*, is a sanctified scorcher, featuring the likes of the Lorraine Ellison–led Golden Chords and The Nathaniel Lewis Singers, all backed by Bobby Banks's fiery, foot-stompin' organ. The club's evanescent luck wasn't as lasting as the album's deep cuts, however, as within the year the church protesters won out.

Kooper's luck proved much better. He loved Banks, Booker T., and Jimmy McGriff, but knew such organ runs were beyond him. Chutzpah wasn't, though, so when Tom Wilson asked if Kooper wanted to attend a Dylan session Wilson was producing, Kooper jumped, hoping perhaps to sneak in a guitar lick or two. As fate would have it, he instead found himself behind a Hammond B-3, staring at his hands 'cause he couldn't hear the notes from his fingers, as the Leslie was isolated elsewhere in the studio. He'd snuck onto the organ when Wilson was distracted, discovered fortuitously that it was already on (he lacked the startup know-how), and began riffing on some song he'd just heard Dylan working on called "Like A Rolling Stone." When Wilson protested to Dylan after the take that Kooper was no organ player but simply a guitarist, Dylan reportedly responded, "I don't care what he is, make the organ louder!" The Kooper "style," based on ignorance, grit, and bliss, would be copied throughout rock 'n' roll.

Around the time that Kooper's fluky Dylan assist floated up the pop charts, but before the electric guitar ruled the world, you'd just as likely hear an organ solo as a soloing six-string. And as 18-year-old Billy Preston was busy proving live and via his second LP, he needed no Hammond help whatsoever. Though Jimmy Smith surely would've title-scoffed, Preston's aptly named *Most Exciting Organ Ever* kicked off with Dylan mentor Pete Seeger's "If I Had a Hammer," then proceeded to show off Billy's gospel-rooted bag of instrumental R&B and soul. An impressed Ray Charles, who'd briefly messed around with a Hammond, hitched Billy's flamboyant singin'/dancin'/playin' routine to his own revue for touring and TV. Preston still found time to "free funk" for his next album, *Wildest Organ in Town!*, a collaboration with another church-trained organist making pop inroads, Sylvester Stewart, and also had time to lend his hands to the King of Wild himself—Little Richard—joining fellow precocious wildman Jimi "Jimmy James" Hendrix for future Richard keepers like "I Don't Know What You Got But It's Got Me."

As the story goes, Little Richard couldn't handle the guitarist's wildness, and Hendrix, tired after years of chitlin' circuit constraints anyway, took his freak flag to the U.K. (the rest is history). Preston, always looking to stretch himself out, took his wild-ass talents to London too, where he was wrangled to augment the sound of the biggest band in the world. As exemplified in Disney's current Beatles documentary opus, *Get Back*, we see Preston—though playing a Lowrey organ, not a Hammond—earn his unofficial title as the fifth Beatle. We also see the Leslie speaker being used as a tool not for organ but guitar. George Harrison had encouraged his bandmates to try using it for guitar and vocals (check "Tomorrow Never Knows"), and eventually it became a go-to tool for other singers and guitarists, such as Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood, digging the psychedelic vibe the Leslie could bring to tape.

Around the same time, Deep Purple's organist, Jon Lord, squeezed his B-3 onto the set of Hugh Hefner's TV show *Playboy After Dark*, amongst a throng of lingerie'd ladies and "far out" dudes, who'd all soon be dancing orgiastically to the English band's debut smash hit, "Hush." "Hush" could also have been Lord's ironic name for his screaming Hammond/Leslie combo, to which he added Marshall amps for even more power. A classically trained pianist, Lord's life became organ-centric after hearing the bluesy grit of Jimmy Smith, McDuff, McGriff, and others, who transistorized inspiration for a slew of keyboard psychedeliacs: Goldy McJohn and Steppenwolf were growling road anthems; Mark Stein and Vanilla Fudge were laying out loud, sludgy soul; Steve Winwood was jamming first with the Spencer Davis Group, then Traffic, while also slipping into Electric Ladyland for Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile"; Felix Cavaliere, of the Rascals, filled most bass parts of their hits with his pedals; Robert Lamm pushed the Chicago Transit Authority, and on and on.

The Hammond/Leslie tag-team circuit had spread throughout pop music and geographical fiefdoms, and well beyond the predominantly white world of psychedelic rock. Up in Detroit, Funk Brother organist Earl Van Dyke had been fueling the Motown sound. Down in New Orleans, organist and bandleader "Poppa Funk" Art Neville led the mardi gras mambo funk party with McCartney faves the Meters. In Kingston, Skatalite founding father and rock steady pioneer Jackie Mittoo's handiwork laid reggae's foundation; out East, in Plainfield, New Jersey, Bernie Worrell musically organized the ineffably funky chaos of Funkadelic; down South was Greg Allman and his band of brothers; and out West, Gregg Rolie was singing and playing his gringo ass off for Latin rock maestro Santana, while Bobby Espinosa and El Chicano were living la *Viva Tirado* in L.A. And even Stockhausen was employing it over in Europe, for experimental works like "Mikrophonie II."

And as arena and stadium shows, with their expected pyrotechnics, exploded in the 1970s, organists such as Lee Michaels and Keith Emerson met the demand by juicing and stacking Leslies, while Brian Auger said the hell with it by mainlining directly into a set of Marshalls. The world of jazz organ also demanded a heavier bottom, as '70s record producers' low-end theories sought electric bassists to buttress the B-3. Organ vets like McGriff, Groove Holmes, Shirley Scott, and Jimmy Smith knew they didn't want a bass player, but hip-hop heads certainly were thankful (until the lawyers arrived) 20 years later for all that soul and funk jazz sample fodder. Prime example, the Beastie Boys even named a song after Smith's "Root Down," after ripping the groove, and named another "Groove Holmes," arranged by "the fourth Beastie Boy" keyboardist Money Mark, after the group rediscovered their instrument-fiddling ways. Over the course of a half-century, the roots had indeed been put down.

So if the Hammond organ sound was so prevalent, and more than 1,000,000 organs sold worldwide, how did Laurens Hammond's company go bankrupt in 1975, two years after he died, at the age of 78, and did Don Leslie, who lived to be 93, have the last laugh?

*"TUNE IN TO THE NEXT EPISODE OF …" [ORGAN SWELLS]…* V

Matt Rogers

**Dick Hyman never met a keyboard he couldn't hack.**

# PRINCESS GOES GOES ON TOUR

*Of rocking during a pandemic, and frontman Michael C Hall's fame*

**By Katherine Turman**

It's Thanksgiving eve, 2021, and a youngish (20s to 30s) crowd of reasonably hipster music lovers at The Sultan Room, in Bushwick, appear to be, well, thankful to be mingling cheek-by-jowl in front of the low-slung stage. The circular room's space-age, mid-century mien is bathed in blue light, there's a line at the bar, and about 10% of the convivial patrons are masked. Bouncers check IDs and proof of vax on the sidewalk right outside the front door.

They're awaiting a New York trio with eclectic talent, a so-far smallish local and national profile ... and an arguably world-famous singer beloved mostly for his work onscreen. That said, Princess Goes to the Butterfly Museum vocalist Michael C. Hall met his band compatriots on Broadway, when the three were in the musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, Hall stunning vocally and visually as the titular bewigged genderqueer East German singer.

Multi-instrumentalist Matt Katz-Bohen, whose young daughter suggested the band's mouthful of a moniker (which doesn't fare much better as PGTTBM, though "Princess Goes" seems to be the preferred shorthand), is a current member of Blondie; drummer Peter Yanowitz has logged time with The Wallflowers and Morningwood, among others. Hall, known to most through his multilayered portrayals of TV's Dexter and funeral director David Fisher on *Six Feet Under*, is a somewhat enigmatic lead singer, which suits Princess Goes' art-rockish, dancey, moody, New Wave leanings. There also seems a debt owed to *Lazarus*- and *Blackstar*-era David Bowie. (Hall starred in the New York production of the off-Broadway play Lazarus, with the Star Man's personal blessing.)

The trio could as easily gig with Euro glam-rock upstarts Maneskin, or, had they been a band in the 70s, could have traveled in the same circles as German-born East Village icon Klaus Nomi. Diversity and defying easy categorization can be an artistic boon, though not necessarily for radio or easy commercial success. But Katz-Bohen offers, deadpan, that Princess Goes might get airtime "wherever Taylor Swift is played, I guess. WFUV is a great station. Even New Sounds on NPR."

Onstage in a button-down black shirt and sooty smudged eye makeup, with angular streaks on his cheeks, Hall emotes with a restrained focus and passion not unlike his TV characters. For this show, Yanowitz shines in a glitter headband, while keytar-keyboard-Thunderbird-bass-playing Katz-Bohen sports an asymmetrical haircut and multi-tasks seamlessly between keyboards and strings.

The group vibe matches the music. At The Sultan Room, they play songs from their 2021 full-length debut, *Thanks For Coming*, plus older tunes and some new songs slated for the next LP. Many of Princess Goes' songs feature space-age, cinematic, semi-orchestral post-rock musical elements (think soundtracks to the late-'70s films *Coma* or *Logan's Run*). There's the creepily haunting, futuristic yet irresistibly danceable "Nevertheless," which seems thematically akin to "Ketamine," a song off their 2019 EP that also appears in the first season of *Dexter* revival *New Blood*. The lyrics were inspired by Hall's own guided ketamine journey, which he described in a previous interview as "the phenomenon of having the experience of parallel and in some ways contradictory trips with someone and how that mirrors the challenge of maybe being in a relationship."

Post-Thanksgiving, Princess Goes headed to the U.K. for their first-ever tour there. After their initial shows, the trio appears on a Zoom screen, smushed together on a sofa backstage at the 200-capacity Esquires club, in Bedford, England. Soundcheck completed, the band talked to the *Voice* about their full-circle journey during the pandemic.

"We played at the Mercury Lounge on March 12, 2020, the night before New York City shut down. And then the first time we played again was back there, on October 30, 2021," says Yanowitz. "So it was kind of like finishing what we started." Of the October return gig, Hall says, "It was like everything had been just a really long, detailed, boring dream. So it was really celebratory. I think people were just really excited to be out and seeing live music in a room full of three-dimensional human bodies."

When the group started out, several years ago, the lyrics to "Love American Style" were the first Hall wrote for the band. That tune's still in their set; asked to elucidate on his growth since then, the frontman offers, "I don't really know. With these guys, I have such license to just try whatever emerges and try to make it work musically. In some cases, the lyrics or a melody comes first, but I think because this is sort of a new thing for me, I try not to spend too much time analyzing how it's happening or what's working and just keep going."

During the 2020 lockdown, Princess Goes completed *Thanks For Coming*, which they say was not particularly influenced by the pandemic. The grinding, almost head-banging heaviness of "Vicious" segues into a lovely delicate section, the unexpected dynamics perfect. Another sublime live entry is the almost childlike feel of "Tomorrow's Screams," *Thanks for Coming*'s 13th track. On the record and live, the dark drama is compelling and cerebral, boosted to the more primal rock side when Katz-Bohen picks up a bass.

The album-cover image is a photo of a black and white building with four columns under an ominous sky. It's not a museum, per se. And definitely no butterflies. "It's a facade of an abandoned mall in Ohio," Hall explains. "We were interested in the idea of some photograph of an abandoned mall just because it seems to encapsulate something essential about the current vibe in the country. We found that exterior photo, [which] also looked kind of like the entrance to a museum. And it looked kind of like a skull as well. It just resonated with all of us. So we went with it."

The Sultan Room, site of Princess Goes' last gig before heading overseas, is a creatively and carefully rendered 300-capacity venue (with a companion restaurant, Turk's Inn). It is also the first NYC venture for co-owner Varun Kataria. The live room debuted in June 2019, before the pandemic

**Michael C. Hall taking the lead at The Sultan Room, in Brooklyn.** Alexander Thompson

struck. "We took off like a rocket ship upon opening. We were surprised by it," Kataria recalls. "We presented the music we believed in and people showed up for it in droves. Alicia Keys played a secret show a little over a month after we opened, a jam session with Gary Clark Jr., Kamasi Washington, and Leikeli47, among others. We could barely believe what was happening." Kataria says that he views The Sultan Room as having "something of a Vegas by way of Istanbul, futuristic mid-century lounge vibe" but with a "Midwestern spirit of warm hospitality, not typical of New York club culture," and Princess Goes definitely fits that aesthetic bill.

**So, is music back in New York City?** The answer, from nearly everyone, seems to be "Yes and no."

Kataria literally says, "Yes and no," explaining, "On one hand, I've had plenty of nights of dancing and seeing shows and thinking 'this feels normal,' while on the

> **"We were interested in the idea of some photograph of an abandoned mall just because it seems to encapsulate something essential about the current vibe in the country."**

other, we've seen a number of cancellations due to COVID, and international performers getting stymied by COVID regulations or backlogs in bureaucracy." His experience is that show-going habits are ever-changing. "Some shows have felt surprisingly exuberant, the audience zealously drinking and dancing, while others that we expected to perform well turned out to be duds, beyond any explanation other than something that feels like generalized anxiety about going out." Says Katz-Bohen, "There's so much going on and so many shows. We saw Idles play two nights in a row at Terminal 5. Amazing. No social distancing. They were like, sharing spit with everyone in the audience. And gloriously so."

One might hope that the spitters are triple-vaxxed, as the Omicron variant had just become headline news the night of the Princess Goes Brooklyn show. On the threesome's U.K. tour, which ended on December 9, in Toxteth, in Liverpool, the band was jazzed to be playing their first-ever gigs out of New York. In our Zoom, four shows into that tour—which would include stops in Dublin and Belfast—the band members offer their take on playing in the U.K.: "Here it feels like nobody's wearing a mask, and it just feels like people are excited about going to shows and feels kind of normal actually," observes Yanowitz, "in the sense that a lot of people are turning up for the shows and they're ready to rock. They were loud and enthusiastic. And they have been for all four shows that we played so far. They've been really engaged. They know the music." However, a few shows after that Zoom chat, one of the band's too-packed U.K. gigs had to be divided into two performances, due to just-launched capacity restrictions. But bands and audiences both appear eager to cooperate and make concessions if the end result is in-person live music and togetherness.

Kataria observes, "While it does feel good to be back in the swing and presenting events that are generally well attended, it doesn't really feel like the time to breathe a sigh of relief." Bushwick, one of New York's younger, busier later-night scenes, often appears the same as it was in the "before times." "Shows are happening all over Bushwick," says Kataria. "But there is a gravity to it, an appreciation that I feel now, and I get a sense that others are feeling it too, that being in dark rooms together and listening to loud music with cool lights and assorted beverages is something we really like to do, and we miss it tremendously when we can't do it."

The Princess Goes' Sultan Room show was packed when the band took the stage. "I'm sure Michael C. Hall's profile helped with attendance, but in all other ways it was a real rock show, with exuberant performances by the artists and authentic enjoyment in the crowd," recalls Kataria. There's a history of actors-turned-musicians, including David Duchovny, Kevin Bacon, and more, and some who go the other way, like Alana Haim and Jared Leto. It's reductive to dwell on, but also impossible to ignore. "I mean, probably there's a certain percentage of fans who check out the music because they know me [from TV], you know, and that's, that's cool," says Hall. "You know, hopefully, once they listen to the music, they're either into it or not. And that's what it's about after that, you know, but, yeah, it's definitely a part of what gets people curious initially."

Despite their bona fides, like most any new band, Princess Goes' started at the bottom: small clubs in New York where the band walks through the crowd to get onstage, tiny dressing rooms, and finding time between family and other gigs to create together. They do have what they term the "clubhouse," their own studio and practice space in Union Square. But the struggle to get a leg up as a band is as real for them as it is for any new lineup. Hall, who is 50 but looks much younger, was in a short-lived band in college, but this is his first shot at the real thing. Each member brings different musical influences to the group, and, as Yanowitz explains, they share "the DNA of playing in *Hedwig*. It's not just a glam musical or pop music, it's a little bit all over. It's got ballads. So in that sense, we like to keep a palette of all those kinds of music in our writing."

Katz-Bohen went to NYC's La Guardia (the high school that 1980's *Fame* was based on), Yankowitz grew up with a pianist-composer and sometime-painter dad, but Hall had a more suburban musical experience in North Carolina and Vienna, Virginia. "I was friends with this kid who had three older brothers and we would go down to their basement—red, white, and blue shag carpet—and play their records," Hall recalled in a previous chat. "I remember getting Queen's *The Game* and Styx's *Cornerstone* for like my second- or third-grade birthday party. I would listen to them both every day when I got home from school. I remember memorizing the words to "Babe" [Styx] because I wanted to sing it to this girl that I liked after school."

Reviews of the U.K. dates mention, but don't dwell on, the fame of the band's frontman. Writer Natalie Owen saw the Rescue Rooms gig in Nottingham and cited "the charmingly beautiful electronic rock music … where each song has its own identity." A write-up from the Thekla party-boat show in Birmingham did note that "some members of the audience kept making non-intrusive heckles inquiring 'what happened to Dexter?'" But Hall? The reviewer writes, "The performer extraordinaire responded to the inquiries with quick wit and the signature smile."

Although *Thanks For Coming* came out in 2021, its follow-up is already essentially completed, and the musicians are eager to tour as much as possible. But Princess Goes is also getting its business house in order. "One thing that came out of the pandemic, we were able to find management. We didn't think that was even something that could happen, especially during a pandemic," Yanowitz says over Zoom, back at the Esquires club. "We found this amazing group of people [Linda Carbone and In De Goot Entertainment], and they helped us find an international and a U.S. booking agent. Slowly, we're just inquiring out to people that are into what we're doing."

More pandemic bummers, though, haven't dampened the band's enthusiasm: "We're already going to come back over here because we had to postpone our shows in Germany and Ukraine. We're going to be having fun and exploring what this band can do live, which is this world that is new to us because we're only really used to playing one show [at a time] in New York, and then waiting. So this is crazy," Yanowitz tells me, looking around their backstage area, rife with graffiti. "Like, we're doing shows every night, so every night is different. Energy is different. Our energy is different. We just try to be in the moment and like, see what we can bring to the night, you know?" The band's attention is pulled away from the Zoom conversation as Katz-Bohen looks to the side, where a club employee is apparently gesturing to Princess Goes that it's showtime. It's a bit after 8 p.m. in England.

As for next year, COVID willing? As Princess Goes to the Butterfly Museum prepares for their debut show on the Esquires stage—which has also held Muse, Coldplay, and Royal Blood—Yanowitz enthuses: "More rocking in 2022!" V

**Princess Goes, with their game faces on.** Paul Storey

On the Boards

# TRIPPING WITH THE STARS

*'Om' Is Where the Heart Is:* Flying Over Sunset *finally lands*

**By Elizabeth Zimmer**

Southern California has attracted more than its share of seekers for a century; the remarkable light, dry heat, silly palm trees, pulsing ocean, and sweet bougainvillea overwhelm the senses. Add to these the mind-altering capacity of drugs like LSD and you have a promising theatrical concept.

Writer/director James Lapine and his collaborators, composer Tom Kitt and lyricist Michael Korie, got their new musical, *Flying Over Sunset*, on its feet nearly two years ago, only to have it vanish, along with all the Broadway shows, at the dawn of the pandemic. The extremely informative house program, with essays about the four main characters and much else, was published early in 2020 and has been waiting patiently for this moment, with the show finally open at Lincoln Center Theater's Vivian Beaumont.

I went to graduate school in SoCal about a decade after the events of Lapine's "biofic," grounded in a series of real encounters and taking liberties with the future. The piece collects two high-powered figures and their guide, all users in the mid-'50s of the newly rediscovered chemical lysergic acid, and eventually deposits them in the opulent Malibu digs of Clare Booth Luce, "woman of the century," who was by turns, and sometimes simultaneously, a playwright, a media queen, a congresswoman, and the U.S. ambassador to Italy. Married to media magnate Henry Luce, who founded *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, her extraordinary life was touched by tragedy when her only child, her daughter Ann, died in an accident at the age of 20.

***Sunset* begins as grand opera and ends as a sitcom.**

Played here with brittle brio by Carmen Cusack, Mrs. Luce invites two equally influential men—British writer Aldous Huxley (played by British actor Harry Hadden-Paton), whom she already knew, and Cary Grant (American Tony Yazbeck), another Brit, who transformed himself from an impoverished child vaudevillian into one of Hollywood's major matinee idols—to join her and Gerald Heard, the Anglo-Irish writer and scholar who in real life guided both Luce and Huxley on their first acid trips and who here is played by Robert Sella, to join her at her oceanfront home for a shared experience. Heard urges his famous charges to chant a mantra before, during, and after their LSD-fueled adventures.

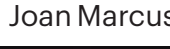
Back in the day, we young '60s academics, clustered down the coast from the setting of this show, used to joke about a doctoral examination that would merely require candidates to state "the mystic syllable of complete content." The answer, of course, was "OM."

*Sunset* begins as grand opera and ends as a sitcom; begins infused with the wonderful tap choreography of Michelle Dorrance and finishes with a bunch of talking heads so altered by their chemical adventures that all they do is shut up and chant. In between, the marvelous, trippy lighting (by Bradley King) and mid-century modern scene design (by Beowulf Boritt) carry the characters from a Hollywood drugstore, where Huxley rhapsodizes over the paintings of Botticelli he finds in an art book while his dying wife picks up a prescription; to the Beverly Hills office of Grant's wife's psychiatrist, to whom Grant behaves with imperious rudeness; to Clare's patio, where, all alone, she manages a dramatic orgasm without benefit of digital manipulation.

And that's just the first act, along with the revelation that Grant, an abused child, was originally Archie Leach, a young dancer and acrobat whose mother dressed him in girls' clothes and whose father had his wife committed, causing her to vanish mysteriously from Grant's life. "The function of the brain is to protect us from being overwhelmed by this enormous mass of information," Grant's wife's shrink tells him. "[LSD] helps us to rediscover events from our past that may give us insight into ourselves." Yazbeck as Grant tap-dances up a storm with his younger self, played by Atticus Ware. Other supporting actors fill multiple roles as well as dancing, including Emily Pynenburg (who also does a turn as Sophia Loren); Laura Shoop, who plays Huxley's wife; and Kanisha Marie Feliciano and Michele Ragusa, who perform other key figures in the lives of the principals.

Joan Marcus

**Tapping into the senses: Tony Yazbeck as Cary Grant.**

The score is mostly forgettable, with the exception of the title song, whose refrain brings to mind Sondheim's "Nothing's Gonna Harm You," from Sweeney Todd. The show's message is benign and timeless: BE HERE NOW. But when "now" lasts nearly three hours, and when most of what the audience gets to do is watch other people tripping, and when the superb tap dancing by the entire cast in Act 1 disappears into the flowery bowers and crashing waves of Act 2, that mystic syllable of complete content starts to mutate. By the end, instead of feeling elevated by the meditative sound of "Om," we find ourselves murmuring "Oy!" 

**Dancing through the doors of perception: Harry Hadden-Paton as Aldous Huxley.**

Joan Marcus

**Flying Over Sunset**
Vivian Beaumont Theater
150 West 65th Street
212-239-6200
Through February 6, 2022

# LET US COMPARE MYTHOLOGIES

*A new book ventures to the farthest reaches of the Marvel Universe and returns with stories to spare*

**By Daniel Felsenthal**

In a utopia, there'd be an issue for everyone. For me, it was *Uncanny X-Men* No. 414, which I read on the floor of a Pine Sol–scented Barnes and Noble when I was 11. Seated pretzel-legged in one of the aisles, I found something unexpectedly weighty in the Marvel comic: Abused by his father, a boy literally explodes. A lapsed superhero named Northstar discovers him in his home's rubble. Northstar is gay, we know, because Professor Xavier, founder of a school for "gifted youngsters" with mutant powers they need to learn how to control, wants to hire the flying, ultrafast Canadian; he'd like to diversify his teaching staff so that his students have homosexual role models.

"Huh?" I thought, dropped from the drab retailer into a friendlier dimension. I'd never read anything so frankly queer before. The year was 2002, and I only knew gayness as the butt of jokes. Studio films were smattered with swishy stereotypes for comic relief, while the lyrics of Top 40 hitmakers like Eminem and DMX made mincemeat of homosexuals. In the wide world of graphic novels, superheroes might have been popular fluff, but they were still the just-off-center province of nerds, meaning they could address the marginalized with empathy. The experience of difference was the hidden soul of Marvel's corpus: Secret identities, found families thrust together by their afflictions, and outcasts with life-altering urges that manifested around the time of puberty had evident nonstraight connotations. Possibly because of corporate oversight, these undertones only occasionally rose to the surface. Yet rise, they did.

In Issue 414, Northstar admits his sexual orientation while flying the exploding boy to safety. The child freaks out. "You're a fruit," he exclaims. "Put me down." The boy's uncontrolled powers kill him, but only after he and Northstar have a heart-to-heart. Reading this scene, I felt as though split sides of my own fledgling self were speaking calmly: the child who had inhaled a culture of bizarro brutality and discrimination, and the adult who was attracted to men and did not want to ostracize anyone.

Marvel's writers and artists often know how to reach these places in young—mostly male—readers. I came for the spectacle of cartoonish violence, the largesse of adventure. I stayed because past the masks and glitz were alienated, relatable characters with wasted good intentions and emotional turmoil they locked inside. In the past two decades, the Marvel Cinematic Universe has saturated society so deeply these tales no longer feel like the province of outsiders. I've gotten older, too, yet the company's stories still reverberate in my head like personal philosophies. "With great power comes great responsibility," Peter Parker's Uncle Ben tells him. Behind the weariness of this line's overexposure is the weight of mythology, like a favorite verse from the Bible one quotes in a moment of self-doubt.

Douglas Wolk's new book, *All of the Marvels: A Journey to the Ends of the Biggest Story Ever Told* (Penguin, $28), draws on how Marvel's narratives are both intimate and culturally embedded. The project has an inescapable hook: Wolk read all 540,000 pages of comics the corporation has published since 1960. A discerning fanboy, he excluded particular imprints and character lines he did not consider "canon," yet the book bears the alluring scent of the completionist, someone who reached the end, as the opening sentence tells us, of "the longest continuous, self-contained work of fiction ever created...." Critically, Wolk doesn't log all 27,000-plus comics that compose the publisher's lumbering megatext, but cherry-picks a series of through lines he sequences with a conversational, entertaining voice and casually whip-smart analysis. There's a section on Marvel's failed forays into the movie business during the 1980s and early '90s, an ignominious period that made its characters seem unfilmable; chapters that dive deep into the psyches of Spider-Man and Doctor Doom; an interlude that discusses the surprising predominance of nurse protagonists in the publisher's early years; and another that considers the legendary working relationships of writers and artists such as Stan Lee and Steve Ditko. Wolk highlights a mixture of what matters most in comics history, and what he likes. If there's an issue for everyone, Wolk knows which comics have touched on his own idiosyncrasies—and when Marvel's mirror version of the world, Earth-616, rotates with surprising relevance around our ailing planet at large.

Naturally, his issues are different from mine. I can't say I care enough about hammer-wielding Thor to enjoy a couple dozen pages and ample footnotes about his exploits, and I wish Wolk had given more space to Daredevil, whose gritty gymnastics on skyscrapers and tenements sparked my own childhood fascination with cities—plus, the blind lawyer born Matt Murdock is the rare marquee-name superhero with a physical disability. Instead, Wolk focuses on the underknown Shang-Chi—until the recent flick *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*—and the 300-comic, multi-series "Dark Reign" cycle, which Wolk argues, compellingly, is "the best work of fiction I've seen about life under the Donald Trump administration—the one that most accurately captures the slow-grinding despair and tension of that period in American culture...." Wolk's argument is weakened, though, by what he does not include. After all, the terror induced by the Trump era is hardly over, and while he mentions that "Dark Reign" actually came out during the Obama years, he neglects to consider how

**Pieces of a universe. Clockwise from upper left: *Avengers* No. 93 (1971), *Marvel Tales Annual* No. 1 (1964), *The Amazing Spider-Man* No. 102 (1971), *The Amazing Spider-Man* No. 20 (1965), *Tales to Astonish* No. 87 (1967), *Daredevil* No. 24 (1967).**

RCB collection

the story's dystopian political aspects might have allowed it to pass muster with the company's then CEO, major Republican donor Ike Perlmutter.

Wolk gives short shrift to other popular heroes, notably The Punisher, and in that particular case for plausible reasons: "He's a wish-fulfillment figure for bloodthirsty creeps; he's had his stylized skull logo co-opted by American police." The symbol has become a frightening calling card in recent years for alt-right vigilantism, but I think the anti-hero's comics often have enough sorrow, ambivalence, and pulpy, funny bluntness to defy those who read advocacy into his gun-toting persona. Wolk also does a critical drive-by on J. Michael Straczynski, whose storylines on *The Amazing Spider-Man* between 2001 and 2007 "incorporated a few intriguing ideas, as well as some very bad ones." Considering that Straczynski framed my childhood love for all things Peter Parker, I was surprised by Wolk's speedy means of dispatching with him. Still, in certain ways, disagreement isn't a liability but instead the point: Marvel's interwoven folklore allows readers to pick their own stories as well as storytellers—even if one of the misleading aspects of mainstream comics is that their true author is a corporation.

We never lose sight of Wolk's own authorship, one of the reasons he can weave together a series of curated, argumentative plot summaries over almost 400 pages. A writer with less control would put us to sleep. One chapter discusses Wolk's difficulties relating to his son, citing his passion for the arts and the boy's bent toward math and "complex systems" as an unbridgeable chasm. "I worried, neurotically," he tells us, with admirable honesty, "that the kid I loved just sort of tolerated my presence." What allowed him to bond with his then 10-year-old? Of course, the endless labyrinth of Marvel: "He had lots of questions about them all, and *I could answer them*—the first time that had really happened between us." The formulation is potent for its details (for example, how Wolk's son isn't really interested in music except for "certain video-game soundtracks"), even if any reader can predict what will bring them together the moment the chapter begins.

Wolk himself is an excellent, longtime music critic, and he devotes a fantastic interlude to the appearances of both real and made-up musical figures in the fictional multiverse. The author's omnivorous obsessions and his light touch for applying them give *All of the Marvels* space to breathe. "X-Men became to comics approximately what David Bowie was to music: the signal to every misfit out there that they weren't alone and that things might be okay after all," he tells us, with characteristic friendliness. A critic's bevy of knowledge, Wolk knows, is only as interesting as their sensibility.

The book incorporates some exemplary Marvel panels, but these are irritatingly too small to read without a magnifying glass. And Wolk's sensibility falls short in its examination of Marvel as a business, even if he makes his intentions clear up-front in a series of bullet-point disclaimers forecasting what *All of the Marvels* will avoid: "It is not a defense of Marvel's business practices, currently or historically, or of the business practices of any of their corporate parents, nor is it a defense of any of these comics' creators as people.... It's also not a defense of these comics' retrograde, myopic history of representation, in terms of both the characters who appeared on their pages and the people who created them.... It not only does not defend, but actively disavows, the elements of mainstream comics readership that try to keep it the province of straight white men, with boxes full of back issues, who want everything to stay exactly like it was when they were kids."

Granted, his book is none of these things—but it also doesn't criticize them quite directly enough. Discussing the Shang-Chi series *Master of Kung Fu* (1974–83), Wolk uses letters to Marvel's editors by the prominent sci-fi author William F. Wu, who was offended by the comic's frequent stereotyping, to show how an Asian American of the time reacted to the book's racial issues. A wise move (as usual, Wolk provides a considered, multifaceted discussion), his thoughtfulness is nonetheless a bit undermined by his effusive praise for the book's writers and artists, who rendered such stereotyping into existence. And while he delves into the colorists' absurd inability to render an Asian skin tone, he mostly lets Jack Kirby off the hook for his hackneyed depictions of the citizens of Wakanda, the made-up African nation in which the Black Panther is king. My own predilections made me wish that Wolk would linger longer on the LGBTQ embrace of X-Men, and I positively ate up his incisive analysis of how Spider-Man repeatedly contends with older father figures as mentors and villains. Then again, these are the dynamics in the Marvel Universe that always captured my imagination, even when I was too young to understand why.

Any mythology that encourages us to choose our favorite myths lends itself to consumer capitalism. As I saw myself in *Uncanny X-Men*, today's queer youth might embrace *Eternals* (2021), the first film in the MCU to have an openly gay character, though hopefully they'll remember the decade-plus it took the franchise to introduce a hero who wasn't arrow-straight. Wolk does little to recognize the company's complicated relationship with its so-called "true believers." This term, introduced with seeming innocence by the avuncular Stan Lee more than half a century ago, points to a bygone optimism in the capitalistic potential of youth culture, one which both jokingly and seriously demanded a kind of religious obedience, all in a voice like the annoying leader of a boy-scout troop. "For someone who lives in our society," Wolk acknowledges, "having some familiarity with the Marvel story is useful in much the same way as, say, being familiar with the Bible is useful for someone who lives in a Judeo-Christian society: Its iconography and influence are pervasive." Those who are aware of the evangelical stranglehold on American politics can only balk at the notion that our society is not Judeo-Christian, but Wolk's grander point alludes to how corporations create their own mythos. The stories that comprise it need not reflect a company's corporate culture, office culture, or the politics and values that its brass have in their own lives. They can, and will, be whatever brings in the most cash—whenever Marvel reflects a "minority" identity in a new comic or film, the company is only expanding into a new market of consumers. And since films make so much revenue abroad, Marvel's social perspectives are not only bound by American mores but also those of international markets with different notions about personal liberty and freedom of expression. Clearly, Wolk has a complicated relationship with superheroes, but the extent to which he buys into them makes his omissions conspicuous. Weirdly, he never even tells us that the ur-corporation of global kiddie domination, The Walt Disney Company, has owned Marvel since 2009.

In its beginning, Marvel comics stood out because they showed people the futility of their heroes, seducing their hearts while drawing a fine line of vulnerability to separate these crime-fighting allegories from fascism. Peter Parker's famous adage moves us not because Spider-Man has superhuman abilities but because his life is an exercise in disappointment and helplessness. However subconsciously, we understood his proverb as "with *very little power* comes great responsibility," and such a predicament is why many continue to find the web-slinger relatable. Yet as capitalism and fascism seem to draw closer together every-day—I can't help but think of Upton Sinclair's quote "Fascism is Capitalism plus murder"—people are fittingly revealing how they take (probably, they always did) the action-packed adventures and Übermensch abilities of superheroes at face value. Numerous news stories have covered how apparel from The Punisher, as well as from Captain America, have become ubiquitous at alt-right rallies. Of course, sympathetic characters are often used for evil gain—malignant people have for millennia co-opted the pacifistic Jesus Christ to justify wars and bigotry. Instead of painting crosses on their shields before embarking on a crusade, the devout thugs of 21st-century America put on a Target-bought skull shirt.

**A discerning fanboy, Wolk excluded particular imprints and character lines he did not consider "canon."**

Wolk doesn't purport to be interested in going behind the scenes at Marvel, perhaps because other authors beat him to it—notably, Sean Howe in *Marvel Comics: The Untold Story* (2012). But *All of the Marvels* needs at least a chapter on the company's corporate history, as well as a more direct acknowledgement of the hand its changing leadership has played in shaping Marvel's many-layered tale. Wolk writes about the imprints individual writers and artists left on particular series, but one is left to wonder: Just how much autonomy did they have, and when did their corporate bosses meddle? Wolk does take some shots at the company's inherent hypocrisy, saving this pointed couplet for his book's last line : "A story can never leave you; a corporation can never love you back." But I wanted him to twist the knife another few rotations, and then blast the company with an energy bolt and Hulk Smash it—maybe that's just my bloodthirsty self. Just after his erudite chapter on the appearance of presidents in Marvel comics, he includes a hilarious reference to Donald Trump's sole cameo in an excellent 2009 issue of *New Avengers*—the hero Luke Cage moves the future president's limousine out of New York City traffic in order to allow an ambulance to pass. "I—I will sue the—!" sputters Donald's character, too scared to complete his threat. Afterward, Wolk drops a bomb: "Trump's subsequent, uncharacteristic-for-presidents invisibility in Marvel's comics may or may not have anything to do with the fact that one of his major real-world donors and close associates, Ike Perlmutter, has been the CEO of Marvel Comics, and then of Marvel Entertainment, since 2005." The shifty, perhaps legalistically safe syntax Wolk uses while offering this significant revelation is difficult to get behind. And it must be noted that Perlmutter, the largest shareholder in Disney, is in fact a chairman at Marvel now, and no longer its CEO—he lost the position after purportedly spouting racist garbage about actors in an *Iron Man* sequel, threatening to shoot a company executive, and being generally opposed to diversity in the MCU.

Still, in large part, *All of the Marvels* is quite successful: Wolk's engrossing, rich tome is cheerfully serious about the tangled skein of an ongoing story, and he sets the bounds of his argument early and clearly. But in these decidedly non-innocent times, Wolk needs to attack the corporate overlords of the stories he loves with more than a glancing blow. If representation is threatened, stories themselves are threatened. An imperative response is to send constant, irritating missives from the bottom of our intellects up to the top of the capitalist food chain.

So peer past the surface of comics' unholy scrolls and consider how their aims might be distorted and blinkered. Remember that, like the talent of many establishment cultural facets, such as Hollywood movies, popular music, and the evening news, Marvel's creators could be so much truer to the lived experience of humanity than the vicissitudes of industry and its Doctor Dooms will allow. Let Wolk's deserving text be more than free marketing material for a corporation. That is to say: Don't buy *All of the Marvels* for the superhero fan in your life this holiday season. Buy it for the critical thinker who uses alternative worlds and fantastical allegories as a lens of analysis, so they can pick apart a failed utopia made in the image of our own. V

# RODGERS AND IRVING: ANTI-VAX ALL-STARS

*It ain't your father's athletic protest*

**By Vincent Velotta**

Move over, New York Jets! There's a new No. 1 on this year's "Naughty List" in the sporting world. And the dishonor belongs to a group that's far more formidable at damaging the sports scene: players whose rise to the top of their game has convinced them that they've risen above the facts.

The NFL and NHL have implemented vaccine policies as the pandemic continues, and MLB may do the same. Meanwhile, the NBA hasn't enacted anything yet, but select cities such as New York have pandemic-era laws that prevent unvaccinated players from performing at indoor arenas. Such policies have spawned a vocal minority of anti-vax players whose often preposterous stances have damaged the legitimacy of the athlete's voice on socio-political issues.

The perpetrators are well-known. The Brooklyn Nets' own Kyrie Irving hasn't played this season, after refusing to get vaccinated—a stand he's taken for the sake of personal freedom and being a "voice for the voiceless," adding to a long list of controversies that include his claiming the earth might be flat. "I do research on both sides," he said in 2017, before ultimately apologizing to schoolteachers who complained that his comments were causing issues in the classroom. But more research is likely needed: During the pandemic, Irving has liked social media posts promoting a conspiracy stating that vaccines are part of a plot by Satan to connect Black people to a master computer. While he's at it, perhaps Irving should ask himself who the voiceless really are. His newfound supporters in Texas senator Ted Cruz and a team at Fox News? Or the 799,000-and-counting Americans who have lost their lives to this virus?

**Elvis Presley received the polio vaccine on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, in 1956, which was credited for a massive surge in teenage vaccinations.**

Then there's Green Bay Packers' quarterback Aaron Rodgers, whose charismatic air of mellow intelligence paired perfectly with stints on *Jeopardy!* as a contestant and host. But Rodgers's chill image was shattered in November when he appeared on *The Pat McAfee Show* to discuss revelations that he misled the public about his vaccination status. Initially revealing allergies to an unspecified component of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and hesitancy toward the Johnson & Johnson option because of rare cases of blood clotting, Rodgers then went on a rant of uninformed chaos. "This idea that it's the pandemic of the unvaccinated, it's just a total lie.... If the vaccine is so great, then how come people are still getting COVID, spreading COVID, and unfortunately dying from COVID?" he asked, rhetorically. But his input is misleading; the CDC states that the unvaccinated are 5.8 times more likely to contract COVID and 14 times more likely to die from it, showing both the effectiveness of the jab and the tendency of the inoculated to disproportionately spread the virus. Vaccines aren't 100% effective, but neither are helmets. Will Rodgers play next Sunday without one?

Rodgers continued by noting that vaccines might have adverse effects on fertility, and admitting that he'd treated a bout with COVID with the anti-parasitic drug Ivermectin on the advice of comedian Joe Rogan. (Both have been debunked by the CDC and the FDA.) The quarterback missed one game due to testing positive, but can continue playing with the risk of more fines if he breaks protocol. Among the lengthy list of restrictions, unvaccinated NFL players must socially distance and wear masks at indoor facilities, and have to travel separately from the team. There are other outspoken anti-vax athletes, such as tennis star Novak Djokovic, who has put his status in January's Australian Open in limbo as he refuses to reveal his vaccination status. But Irving and Rodgers are major celebrities as well as superstar athletes, which is what makes their outrageous—and highly publicized—comments so damaging.

Because if the pandemic ended tomorrow, the actions of this duo would be what's remembered about the stance athletes took during this historic period. Are embarrassing conspiracy theories and provably false claims really what the athlete's voice is becoming known for? This is the very same platform that Muhammad Ali used in his principled protest of the Vietnam War, sacrificing three years of his prime after losing his boxing license as a consequence for refusing to be drafted into the army. In that same era, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar boycotted the 1968 Olympics—a decision that would cost the UCLA star his only chance to capture the gold in an age when NBA players could not yet participate. "... the idea of going to Mexico to have fun seemed so selfish in light of the racial violence that was facing the country," he wrote in a 2017 book detailing his relationship with coach John Wooden. In 2016, the platform was used by Colin Kaepernick when he knelt during the national anthem to protest racial inequality and police brutality—a move that ended his career as an NFL quarterback. What does Rodgers risk in spewing his dangerous falsities? A $14,650 fine for violating the NFL's mask policy and a local partnership with Prevea Health. While the backlash coming at Rodgers and Irving might mirror those who were vilified after standing up for admirable causes (Ali was referred to as the "black Benedict Arnold"), time will not turn their fiction into fact.

Aaron Rodgers: Not exactly a team player. MPH Photos / Shutterstock

The megaphone of fame is one that entails responsibility, especially in the misinformation era we live in today. While experts have varying opinions on the effectiveness of celebrity vaccine endorsements, even the most minimal of results can be lifesaving amid a global pandemic. Just ask those who remember Elvis Presley receiving the polio vaccine on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, in 1956, which was credited for a massive surge in teenage vaccinations. While they don't command anything near the star power that Presley did (nobody does, in our age of divided media bubbles), athletes like Irving and Rodgers are looked up to as role models by a similar demographic. Their words carry more weight than most—enough to overshadow genuine acts of social responsibility, like what Ole Miss coach Lane Kiffin accomplished by getting his entire football program vaccinated in a state that holds an abysmal 47% inoculation rate. Yes, Kiffin was recognized for his efforts, such as on an interview with MSNBC. But Irving and Rodgers are constantly in the headlines, an especially somber note given that the states they play in (New York and Wisconsin, respectively) are currently feeling the impact of COVID surges.

In 2018, Fox News host Laura Ingraham unintentionally coined what would become a rallying cry for athlete activists: "Shut up and dribble." The comments were aimed at Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James, after he criticized President Donald Trump; James would later use that phrase as the title of a miniseries he produced that explored activism in the NBA. But in the mess that Irving, Rodgers, and others have created, the scientific community probably now agrees with Ingraham.

One has to think that a socially active sports star like James mobilizing this issue would go a long way toward recovering the reputation lost to the athlete's voice these past two years. But the King of the Court is not the King of Rock 'n' Roll: James maintains that he doesn't consider vaccination to be a social justice issue, despite CDC data showing that minority groups are statistically more likely to succumb to COVID, for multiple reasons.

As James and other stars know, there's more to players than just the game. But in such a critical time, will they speak up to protect the legacy of their predecessors? Or will they continue to simply shut up and ... well, you know the rest. V

As an essential company, **INTELLI-TEC** has continued to strive through these challenging current events to protect you.

SECURITY SYSTEMS

ACCESS CONTROL

FIRE SYSTEMS

SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS

## Security with a Personal Touch™
## from Manhattan to Montauk

*"Under the same ownership since 1999!"*

**Long Island East End** • 50 Station Road, Water Mill, NY • 631-500-9111
**Main Office** • 150 Eileen Way, Syosset, NY • 516-876-2000
**Florida** • 1200 Clint Moore Road, Boca Raton, FL • 844-767-9922

**www.Intelli-Tec.net**

Licensed by the State of New York 12000003519
Licensed by the State of Florida EC13009902

# CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR WITH US!

MAIN STAGE

## YO LA TENGO NEW YEAR'S EVE

DECEMBER 31ST
EARLY SHOW 7:00PM
LATE SHOW 10:30PM
*VIP PACKAGES AVAILABLE

THE LOFT

NEW YEAR'S EVE WITH
JAMES MADDOCK AND FRIENDS
DECEMBER 31ST

NEW YEAR'S EVE MULTI-COURSE MENU & CITY BUBBLES TOAST
5:00, 7:30, 10:00PM
SEATINGS IN OUR BARREL ROOM RESTAURANT

FOR RESERVATIONS: CITYWINERY.COM/NEWYORK

THE LOFT

POPA CHUBBY
BLACK COFFEE BLUES BAND WITH ARTHUR NEILSON & MORE
JANUARY 1ST

MAIN STAGE

AIMEE MANN
JANUARY 1ST & 2ND
SHOWS ADDED BY POPULAR DEMAND

THE LOFT

PAUL SHAPIRO'S
NEW YEARS DAY BRUNCH
JANUARY 1ST

AT PIER 57 AT HUDSON RIVER PARK

LIVE MUSIC | URBAN WINERY | RESTAURANT | BAR | PRIVATE EVENTS
NEW YORK • CHICAGO • NASHVILLE • ATLANTA • BOSTON
WASHINGTON DC • PHILADELPHIA • HUDSON VALLEY

25 11TH AVE AT HUDSON RIVER PARK, NEW YORK, NY 10011

@CITYWINERYNYC / CITYWINERY.COM / 646.751.6033