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THE BEST OF THE U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

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## Editor's letter

The mailbox at the end of my driveway is crammed to bursting with political fliers. My phone chirps with text after text from pollsters and get-out-the-vote activists. Every weekend, I get stuck in the traffic overflow from yet another candidate's event. And I can't turn on the TV without seeing endless commercials for Donald Trump, for Kamala Harris, for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Josh Stein (the commercials for Mark Robinson, his Republican opponent, abruptly stopped a few weeks ago, after he was outed as a fan of trans porn and a self-proclaimed "black Nazi"). That's right, I live in North Carolina, one of this year's crucial swing states.

My state started early voting this week and promptly got stampeded by candidates and canvassers. Nobody can tour the western region around Asheville, where they're still digging out from Hurricane Helene, but the rest of the state was one big rally. The Democrats gave us Harris filling the Eastern Carolina University coliseum in Greenville, then running mate Tim Walz

in the central cities of Durham and Winston-Salem, and then Bill Clinton hitting a bunch of small towns on a bus tour. The Republicans sent veep pick JD Vance to speak in Wilmington on the coast, while Trump will swing by a suburb of Charlotte next week. It's unclear whether all this electioneering will make a difference. North Carolina is often called purple, but we're really more of a deep magenta. We haven't voted for a Democrat for president since 2008. It's true that we often split our ballots and pick a Democratic governor even when we prefer the Republican as president—but that might just be a reflection of a state GOP that is much further to the right than the average Carolinian and offers extremists as nominees (see: Robinson).

Still, the political experts seem to think it's a toss-up, so our mailboxes and stadiums and cellphones will be under siege for another month. Of course, it could be worse. At least I don't live in Pennsylvania.

**Susan Caskie**  
Executive editor

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# Trump ramps up threats against political ‘enemies’

## What happened

With three weeks to go until Election Day, Donald Trump took a turn toward overt authoritarianism this week, escalating his anti-immigrant rhetoric, branding his political opponents as “evil,” and saying federal troops should be deployed against them. During a Fox News interview, Trump responded to a question about Election Day interference by foreign agitators by saying, “The bigger problem is the enemy from within.” He cited “radical left lunatics,” including Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), who led the prosecution in Trump’s first impeachment trial. “It should be very easily handled by, if necessary, by the National Guard, or if really necessary, by the military,” he said. At a Fox News town hall on women’s issues in Georgia, Trump said domestic enemies, including “you know, the Pelosis, these people” are a worse threat than China or Russia. “They’re Marxists and communists and fascists,” he said. “They’re so sick and they’re so evil.”

At a rally in Aurora, Colo., Trump called the city a “war zone,” falsely claiming that gangs of Venezuelan migrants had taken over residential buildings in the Denver suburb. “I will rescue Aurora and every town that has been invaded and conquered,” he declared. Vice President Kamala Harris “has imported an army” of “migrant criminals from the dungeons of the Third World,” he said, and sent them “into your community.” Speaking in Reno, Nev., Trump made the false claim that migrants were crossing the border with weapons “more sophisticated” than those carried by U.S. soldiers, and predicted things would “end unpleasantly for them.” Polls continued to show a deadlocked race, with only a point or two separating the candidates in each of seven swing states. Some showed slight gains for Trump; an NBC News national poll had the pair tied 48-48, a 5-point gain for the GOP nominee since last month.

Harris called Trump “increasingly unstable and unhinged.” At an Erie, Pa., rally she played video clips of Trump’s “enemy from within” comments and his recent declaration that police could solve America’s crime problem with one “violent day.” Trump is “out for unchecked power,” said the Democratic nominee. In an interview in Detroit with Charlamagne tha God, the popular radio host said Trump’s platform “is about fascism. Why can’t we just say it?” Harris responded, “Yes, we can say that.”

## What the editorials said

Voters must “take Trump’s rhetoric seriously—and literally,” said the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Some Americans tell themselves he’s just showboating when he “belittles dehumanizing insults, toxic lies,” and second-term plans that sound “like the schemes of a 1930s aspiring dictator.” Voters should heed the recent warning of Gen. Mark Milley, whom Trump hand-picked to head the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the former president is “fascist to the core” and a five-alarm threat to America. Or they could just listen to Trump’s increas-



Trump on Democrats: ‘They’re so evil.’

ingly alarming threats, which prove that “he belongs nowhere near power.”

For a “chilling preview” of how a re-elected Trump would carry out his “autocratic plans,” examine Project 2025, said *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. The 920-page document from the archconservative Heritage Foundation details a scheme to round up and deport millions of immigrants, stock the federal bureaucracy with MAGA loyalists, dismantle the FBI, and put the Justice Department under Trump’s thumb. It would “upend fundamental freedoms” by barring same-sex marriage and wiping out protections for LGBTQ people. “Under Project 2025, if Trump wins, everyone else loses.”

## What the columnists said

As Election Day looms, Trump’s “racist, anti-immigrant messaging is getting darker,” said **Myah Ward** in *Politico*. He’s zeroed in on the “closing argument” that Americans are under assault from “animals” with “bad genes” who are pouring over the border—and that only he can save the nation. Experts say such xenophobic rhetoric is straight from the authoritarian playbook. “These are not just Nazi-like statements,” said Robert Jones, founder of the Public Religion Research Institute. “These are actual Nazi sentiments.”

There’s a political strategy at work here, said **Jonah Goldberg** in the *Los Angeles Times*. The conventional wisdom is that Trump must temper his message so as not to alienate likely voters who are undecided. But he’s targeting a different audience: low-information Americans who typically don’t vote—but might be persuaded to if they believe “America’s very existence depends on it.” He can court them with “celebrations of bigotry, crudeness, and violence” while resting secure “normie” Republicans will back him no matter what.

## What next?

Donald Trump this week “gave an ominous sign” about what may happen should he lose to Harris next month, said **Mini Racker** in *The Daily Beast*. At an interview at the Economic Club of Chicago this week, Bloomberg editor John Micklethwait asked the Republican whether he’d commit to “a peaceful transfer of power.” Trump didn’t answer, and claimed the transition of power in 2021—when a MAGA mob stormed the U.S. Capitol building and battled police—had been “very peaceful.” While the polls fluctuate, one election-night prediction can be made with “total confidence,” said **Svante Myrick** in *The Hill*. No matter who is leading or how many ballots remain uncounted, “Trump will claim victory and dare the world to dispute him.” He’s been laying the groundwork “by repeating lie after lie”: that Harris can win only by cheating, that voter fraud is rampant. Because some swing states will only start counting mail-in ballots on Election Day, it may be days before we have a final result—and Trump and his allies will seize “any window of uncertainty” to claim victory. It will be ugly, “and we have to brace ourselves.”

Meanwhile, Trump benefits from a “strange” phenomenon, said **David A. Graham** in *The Atlantic*. Even as he loudly and publicly vows to deploy troops against American citizens, remake the federal government, and launch a campaign of “retribution against political adversaries,” many voters don’t believe he’ll actually follow through. It’s “unfathomable” to a significant share of the nation that Trump really wants to implement such extremist ideas—even though all indicators suggest he does.

Another hard truth is increasingly undeniable, said **Nick Catoggio** in *The Dispatch*. Like many, I assumed that once Trump “showed his fascist tendencies on the trail,” appalled voters would “recoil.” But that’s not what’s happening. Trump is now running a “flagrantly fascist” campaign backed by half the electorate, and it’s increasingly hard to believe they’re unaware of exactly what they’re voting for. If he wins, that shocking reality will hit the rest of us “like an asteroid.” And “no one is prepared, I think, for how profound the impact will be.”

## ...and How They Were Covered

# FEMA struggles as costs of hurricane relief mount

### What happened

President Biden visited Central Florida this week to survey the damage wreaked by Hurricane Milton, as the soaring toll of the South's back-to-back storms—which could exceed \$200 billion—began to strain the resources of federal disaster relief agencies. Hurricane Helene, which killed at least 228 people when it battered the region last month, knocked out water services to parts of western North Carolina. Hospitals and schools in Asheville are digging their own wells, while residents rely on donated jugs of water to flush their toilets. “It is an extreme health crisis looming if we don’t get these toilets flushed,” volunteer Elle DeBruhl told NPR. FEMA workers were providing assistance across the region but briefly suspended work amid rumors of armed militias threatening them (see Talking Points, p.16). In Central Florida, Milton killed at least 25 people last week and spawned dozens of tornadoes and 15-foot floods. Speaking in front of a collapsed house in St. Pete Beach, Biden announced \$600 million in aid for storm victims, saying the government would help them not just recover but “build back stronger.”

Yet federal funds are already running low. Allocated \$20 billion in disaster relief funds for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, FEMA spent more than half that sum in the first two weeks. The Small Business Administration, which has received some 50,000 applications from those affected by the two hurricanes, is totally out of money and said it would have to halt loans until Congress approved more funding. But Congress is out of session until Nov. 12, and House Speaker Mike Johnson has ignored bipartisan calls to reconvene it so it can pass emergency aid. “It would be premature to call everyone back now,” he said, adding that Congress would eventually approve “the appropriate amount.”

### What the editorials said

“Another hurricane, another day after,” and still more than a month left in the storm season, said *The Palm Beach Post*. Floridians barely had time to survey the damage from Helene before Milton plowed through, forcing us to hunker down or evacuate again. Debris from the first storm became projectiles in the second; in St. Petersburg, a crane crashed through a high-rise.



A gutted house in Swannanoa, N.C.

While “the emphasis now is on recovery,” we’ll soon have to focus on building resiliency. We can’t keep doing this.

These hurricanes don’t just hurt the locals, said the *Las Vegas Sun*. They “have ripple effects across the U.S.” Hospitals all over the country are currently delaying surgeries because a key maker of IV fluid products, Baxter International’s plant in Marion, N.C., flooded during Helene. FEMA “does a heroic service” in helping communities recover, but what about industries? We need to revamp our whole emergency response program and “substantially enlarge” FEMA’s capabilities.

### What the columnists said

In this “time of national crisis,” Republicans are “holding American disaster relief hostage,” said **Chris Brennan** in *USA Today*. Johnson flatly refuses to reconvene Congress so that FEMA can get the funds it needs. He’d “rather campaign for Donald Trump,” the very candidate spreading the lie that emergency aid funds have been spent on illegal immigrants. Apparently, the needs of hurricane victims must “wait until after the election.”

Yet Floridians can’t wait—their bills are mounting now, said **Rob Wile** in *NBCNews.com*. Most of them don’t have any flood insurance at all, while those who do are largely covered by the state’s public flood insurer, which is teetering toward insolvency. Florida homeowner insurance premiums, meanwhile, have skyrocketed, in some places shooting up 400 percent in the last five years. Frustrated, some residents are pulling up stakes. “I’m done,” said Nichol Fountaine, whose Siesta Key home flooded in both storms. “I love it, I’ll visit it, but I don’t want to live it anymore.”

This will only get worse, said **Tony Romm** in *The Washington Post*. “Climate calamities are becoming more frequent, deadly, and costly in a country already facing massive fiscal challenges.” America once experienced so-called billion-dollar disasters just a few times per year; in 2024, they happened “every three weeks.” Congress can’t seem to find just a few billion right now, yet we’re projected to need over \$128 billion annually to respond to hurricanes, wildfires, and other climate emergencies. With the national debt topping \$35 trillion, that’s a recipe for another disaster.

### It wasn’t all bad

■ A diver bitten by a shark ended up with an extraordinary memento of the attack: an earring made from the shark’s tooth. South African Angus Kockott was diving in French Polynesia in May when a 7-foot gray reef shark bit into his arm. The 20-year-old Kockott fought off the shark with a small knife used to cut diving lines, then got airlifted to Tahiti, where doctors took the tooth out of his arm. Wearing the earring, Kockott says, “feels like the close of this chapter. I got through it, and I’ve got my trophy hanging on my ear.”

■ For Nashville resident Doug Owen, seeing neighborhood dogs brightens his day so much that he decided to reward them. He purchased an old gumball machine that could dispense dog treats—they’re free because, Owen says, “dogs don’t carry cash”—and attached it to a wooden pole next to his house. Soon, neighbors started coming by for the treats, giving him the chance to interact with the animals and their owners. Owen’s family used to have a dog, but their pet died 15 years ago. Mingling with the neighborhood dogs helps him reduce the isolation of working remotely. So far, Owen has bought two more boxes of treats and plans to keep dispensing them. “I don’t want dogs mad at me,” he said.



Owen, with treats

■ In 2010, scientists planted a 1,000-year-old seed from a Judean Desert cave that was discovered in the 1980s. To sprout the species, the team soaked the seed in hormone-infused water, and after 14 years, the tree is almost 10 feet tall. Now, experts believe it could be the source of “tsori,” a balm mentioned in the Bible. Through an analysis of its leaves, resin, and branches, the team identified compounds with potential cancer-fighting properties. “It was just a single seed, and to have one chance for that to germinate is extremely lucky,” said botanist Louise Colville.

## Harris: Can she win back wavering Black, Latino voters?

Black Americans have historically been “unflinching supporters” of the Democratic Party, said **Maya King** in *The New York Times*. Yet there is “growing alarm” that lukewarm Black enthusiasm for Vice President Kamala Harris could cost her next month’s election. Harris this week unleashed “a blitz of national media interviews and campaign ads” aimed at Black voters, and in Pennsylvania unveiled “a policy agenda targeted heavily at Black men,” 20 percent of whom plan to vote for Donald Trump, according to a recent poll. Overall, Harris still leads Trump among Black voters by 78 to 15 percent. But that’s a sharp drop-off from the 87 percent who supported Joe Biden in 2020, and could “doom her fortunes” in a close election. Harris has a similar problem with Latino voters, said **Julio Ricardo Varela** in *MSNBC.com*. They support Harris 54 to 40 percent; 61 percent voted for Biden in 2020. And the Latino gender gap is even wider. Among Latino men ages 35 to 49 in the swing states of Nevada and Arizona, Harris trails Trump by 14 points and 20 points, respectively. The Democrat needs to “stop that gap from growing,” and while the “Hombres Con Harris” outreach effort she launched last week is smart, it comes “very, very late.”



Meeting with supporters in Detroit

“Harris’ polling panic” is understandable, said **Zachary Faria** in the *Washington Examiner*. But her campaign’s “toxic identitarianism” won’t help. Voters recognize pandering when they see it, and will resent the implication that they’re “obligated to vote for Harris” because of their skin color. For sheer condescension, nothing tops former President Barack Obama in Pittsburgh last week, said **Paul Butler** in *The Washington Post*. The “scolder-in-chief” accused Black men of coming up with all kinds of “excuses” to not support Harris, when the real reason, apparently, is “we aren’t feel-

ing the idea of having a woman as president.” Sorry, but insulting Black men as sexist pigs “is a bizarre way to try to win their votes.”

Is “Black men’s reconsideration of the Democratic Party” really surprising? asked **Charles Coleman Jr.** in *The New York Times*. While successive Democratic administrations have paid lip service to our priorities—police reform, closing the “racial wealth gap”—Black men get little real attention from policymakers. The “Opportunity Agenda for Black Men” Harris released this week, with its offers of business loans and jobs in the legal marijuana industry, amounts to a “vision of ‘less last’” that’s unlikely to have us flocking to the polls. As for Latinos, said **Michael Baharaeen** in *The Liberal Patriot*, many simply feel they were better off economically under Trump. A majority “do not believe Trump is referring to them” when he rants about immigrants “poisoning the blood” of America, and many support his plans to finish the border wall (43 percent) and mass-deport those here illegally (45 percent).

This isn’t about loyalty, said **Perry Bacon Jr.** in *The Washington Post*. Blacks and Latinos “should stick with the Democrats” out of pure self-interest. Under Democratic presidents from the 1970s on, Black and Latino family incomes grew \$1,000 and \$800 a year, respectively, compared with \$335 and \$100 under Republicans. Harris’ outreach to nonwhite voters is welcome, said **Nia-Malika Henderson** in *Bloomberg*. But the real “problem that needs solving” is not the Black men who make up a sliver of the electorate and will overwhelmingly vote for Harris. It’s the white people who make up 80 percent of voters in a swing state like Michigan—a majority of whom will vote for Trump against *all* of our interests.

### Only in America

■ In the homestretch of the election, 17 porn stars have launched an ad campaign warning of a GOP plan to ban pornography. The “Hands Off My Porn!” online ads alert voters in seven swing states that the Project 2025 blueprint for a second Trump administration declares outright that “Pornography should be outlawed,” and that “the people who produce and distribute it should be imprisoned.” Porn-enjoying voters “need to take that threat seriously,” says veteran adult entertainer Holly Randall.

■ The Trump campaign’s last-minute outreach to Mormon voters is off to rocky start. A dedicated website launched last week included in its online store a \$25 “Latter-Day Saints for Trump White Coffee Mug” and a set of two branded foam beer-can holders. After critics noted that most devout Mormons drink neither coffee nor alcohol, the items were quickly rebranded as “Mug” and “Beverage Coolers” respectively.

### Good week for:

**Exciting new chapters**, after Ryan Salame, Sam Bankman-Fried’s lieutenant at collapsed crypto-fraud firm FTX, announced on LinkedIn that “I’m happy to share that I’m starting a new position as inmate at FCI Cumberland!” Salame joins a team of more than 1,000 felons at the federal prison, for an engagement expected to last 7 years, 6 months.

**Useful idiots**, after former Hollywood action star turned Russian immigrant Steven Seagal, 72, released a new documentary in which he declares his willingness to fight in Ukraine “and die if need be” for Vladimir Putin. The Kremlin has not yet responded to Seagal’s offer.

**Panda diplomacy**, after two giant pandas from China arrived at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., a year after the zoo’s last three bears were returned to their homeland. A Chinese official expressed hope that Bao Li and Qing Bao, both 3 and fluffy, will help “stabilize” U.S.-China relations.

### Bad week for:

**Dressing provocatively**, after a man in a red-and-white-striped shirt flagged down police in Tybee Island, Ga., to complain he’d been “verbally assaulted” by a stranger shouting, “Where’s Waldo?” The victim appeared “highly intoxicated,” according to a police report.

**Grand masters**, after chess pro Kirill Shevchenko, ranked 69th in the world, was booted from a Spanish tournament for allegedly using a phone hidden in a bathroom to cheat. Shevchenko, 22, aroused suspicion with his frequent mid-game toilet trips; a phone was found in a stall together with a note in his handwriting that read “Don’t touch!”

**Misdirection**, after an Oregon man and woman were arrested when police discovered a bag full of illegal drugs, labeled “Definitely Not a bag full of Drugs,” during a traffic stop. Three months earlier, a Florida woman had been arrested with a bag of drugs labeled “Bag of Drugs.”

### In other news

#### DOJ accuses Virginia of illegally striking voters off rolls

The Justice Department filed a lawsuit against Virginia last week, accusing the state of purging names from voter rolls in violation of federal law. The National Voter Registration Act prohibits states from removing voters from registration lists within 90 days of an election. But on Aug. 7, Virginia’s Republican governor, Glenn Youngkin, ordered the state’s Department of Elections to perform “daily updates to the voter list.” Those updates included removing some voters from the rolls unless they could prove their citizenship within two weeks. The DOJ said a similar effort to identify noncitizens registered to vote in Virginia’s Prince William County earlier this year was mistaken in 43 of 162 cases. Youngkin called the suit “a desperate attempt to attack the legitimacy” of elections in Virginia; the DOJ said the state’s efforts have likely “confused, deterred, and removed” eligible voters.

# The U.S. at a Glance



Miller

## Riverside County, Calif.

**Just a fan:** A man arrested for bringing two loaded guns to a Donald Trump rally last week is suing Riverside County after its sheriff said officers prevented him from trying to kill the former president.

Vem Miller, 49, said he's a Trump supporter and was carrying weapons for self-defense because he's received death threats connected to his work for his media company, America Happens Network. Deputies found the guns in Miller's car at a checkpoint. They also discovered fake passports and a fake license plate, suggesting Miller was part of the fringe "sovereign citizens" movement. Miller said that Sheriff Chad Bianco made false claims about him when he told reporters that his deputies "probably stopped another assassination attempt." Authorities haven't found any evidence that Miller was plotting to assassinate Trump, and he's not in custody. "Everything they said about me is untrue, provably so," Miller said. "Unfortunately, [Bianco] appears to have committed career suicide."

## Boca Chica, Texas

**Historic catch:** Elon Musk's SpaceX made a breakthrough in space travel this week by returning its booster back to Earth after launching its attached rocket, Starship, into space. Seven minutes after takeoff, the 400-foot-tall Starship rocket detached from its booster—which, at the flight director's command, ignited its engines to propel itself back to the launchpad. Its 232-foot frame was then safely caught by metal "arms" on the launch tower. The technical feat proved a rocket launcher can be reused, which would reduce the cost of launches by roughly 10 times. Musk sees that as a prerequisite



Booster returns.

to his grand project of colonizing Mars, and he called the achievement a "big step towards making life multiplanetary." Just days later, SpaceX sued the California Coastal Commission, which refused SpaceX permission to increase the number of launches from Vandenberg Space Force Base to 50 a year. Before the rejection, one member of the commission attacked Musk for "hopping about the country, spewing and tweeting political falsehoods."

## Hampton, Va.

**Mystery drones:** More than a dozen drones swarmed a Virginia military base for weeks last year, and the Pentagon doesn't know why, *The Wall Street Journal* reported last week. For 17 days in December, drones appeared around Langley Air Force Base after sunset, breaching restricted airspace over an area that has one of the largest concentrations of national security facilities in the country. The drones measured about 20 feet long and sped across the sky at over 100 miles per hour. Some shined small lights. Air Force Gen. Mark Kelly compared the scene to science fiction. "Close Encounters at Langley," he said. Defense Department, FBI, and Pentagon officials couldn't determine the drones' origins, and efforts to track them proved fruitless. Drones also flew over a Nevada government site last year, and there were recent reports of drone swarms near a California Air Force base.



## Atlanta

**Certifiable:** A Georgia judge this week halted a new rule requiring hand counting of ballots on Election Day, saying such a change in election rules so close to the vote was "too much, too late." Pro-Trump hard-liners had secured a 3-2 majority on Georgia's election board, passing the hand-counting requirement over the objections of the state's Republican secretary of state and attorney general. Judge Robert McBurney also ruled that local election boards cannot refuse to certify results, even if they allege errors or fraud. The ruling came in a lawsuit from a Fulton County Board of Elections member who refused to certify votes in a May primary. McBurney said that giving election boards power to second-guess results—part of an effort by Trump allies to control how votes are counted—was unconstitutional. "If election superintendents were free to play investigator, prosecutor, jury," he wrote, "Georgia voters would be silenced."

## Oaks, Pa.

### Let's dance:

Donald Trump responded to two audience members passing out at his town hall event this week by stopping his planned Q&A and swaying to his favorite songs on stage for half an hour. After the first person fell ill and the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center fell quiet, the Republican presidential nominee requested that his staff play an instrumental recording of "Ave Maria." The event's moderator, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, tried to get back to the question-and-answer format. But another person fainted, and Trump once again requested "Ave Maria." After briefly returning to an immigration chart, Trump decided to abandon the event's original agenda. "Let's not do any more questions. Let's just listen to music," he said. "Who the hell wants to hear questions, right?"

Alongside Noem, Trump bobbed his head and swayed to songs from his campaign playlist, including Sinéad O'Connor's "Nothing Compares 2 U" and Village People's "Y.M.C.A.," a Trump rally favorite.



Noem and Trump

## Raleigh

**Scandal lawsuit:** North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, the state's Republican nominee for governor, sued CNN for defamation this week over a report that he posted offensive comments on a porn website years ago. In September, CNN detailed how between 2008 and 2012 a user with an account linked to Robinson's email on the site Nude Africa defended slavery, bragged about being a "black NAZI," claimed to enjoy transgender porn, and said he preferred Adolf Hitler to Barack Obama. The lawsuit called CNN's allegations "recklessly false," but failed to provide evidence beyond saying Robinson has suffered "data breaches." CNN reported that the Nude Africa username—"minisoldr"—mirrored usernames Robinson created for other online accounts. "Minisoldr" also shared information matching Robinson's biographical details and accessed Nude Africa from near his home. Robinson was endorsed by Donald Trump, but many Republicans have abandoned him and polls show him losing by a wide margin.



Robinson



Canadian Sikh protesters

### Ottawa

**Rift with India:** Canada kicked out India's ambassador and five other diplomats this week as part of a growing investigation into the 2023 murder of a Canadian of Indian origin. Citing intercepted communications, Canadian authorities said the diplomats had gathered intelligence on multiple Sikhs in Canada who were subsequently threatened, attacked, or even killed. India called the allegations "preposterous" and expelled six Canadian diplomats, including the ambassador. Last year, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accused India of being behind the June 2023 killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a naturalized Canadian agitating for a Sikh homeland in India's Punjab region. Nijjar, who was wanted by India in connection with a 2007 bombing, was fatally shot in British Columbia.



The explorer

### Seville, Spain

**Columbus was Jewish?** DNA analysis revealed this week that Christopher Columbus, long believed to have been from Italy, may instead have been a Sephardic Jew from Spain. Forensic scientist José Antonio Lorente of the University of Granada obtained permission to open Columbus' Seville tomb in 2003, but had to wait 20 years for DNA technology to improve enough to compare the bones with those of Columbus' son, Hernando. Tests indicate that both men had "Jewish origins," Lorente said. Historian Francesc Albardaner said he believes the explorer was from a family of Jewish silk spinners in Valencia—something Columbus either didn't know or hid. In 1492, the year Columbus first crossed the Atlantic, Spain's Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand II ordered the expulsion of all Jews who wouldn't convert to Catholicism.

### Morelia, Mexico

**Lime wars:** Mexico deployed 660 soldiers to the lime-growing region last week to protect farmers from extortion by drug cartels. More than half of the lime-packing warehouses in Michoacan state closed temporarily in August after Los Viagras and other criminal gangs demanded kickbacks from farmers and distributors. The military said soldiers would patrol packing houses, escort fruit-transport trucks, and guard wholesale markets around the towns of Apatzingan, Aguililla, and Buenavista. In just their first week, the troops have seized 10 guns and two grenades. Back in 2013, lime growers established Mexico's biggest vigilante movement in an attempt to fight back against cartels that were trying to tell them when to harvest and what prices to set.



Cartels want a cut.

### Lampedusa, Italy

**Outsourcing migrants:** Italy this week became the first EU country to ship migrant arrivals to a non-EU country, sending 16 men from Bangladesh and Egypt to Albania. Under far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Italy has set up two processing centers in Albania, a country that was once a reclusive communist dictatorship. Italian judges will rule on the asylum applications, and Albania will send those rejected back to their home countries. The EU has endorsed the plan, similar to a now-canceled deal Britain struck with Rwanda, as "out-of-the-box thinking" that could prevent people from attempting dangerous sea voyages to Europe. Human rights advocates say it could expose migrants to abuse, with one lawyer describing the centers as "an Italian Guantánamo."



Arriving in Albania

### Stuttgart, Germany

**Nightmare at the opera:** Eighteen theatergoers reeled out of their seats to seek medical treatment for nausea and fainting last week during performances of *Sancta*, an opera featuring live piercings, live sex acts, and gory violence. Maurus Zinser of Stuttgart's Staatsoper conceded that the performance included "things happening onstage that we are not used to in an opera house" but said patrons had been warned. *Sancta*, directed by norms-busting Austrian performance artist Florentina Holzinger, is based on Paul Hindemith's 1920s opera *Sancta Susanna*, about a young nun struggling with lust who steps onto an altar nude and strips the loincloth from Christ. Holzinger's version also features naked nuns roller-skating past a wall of crucified bodies.



Defending Morales

### Parotani, Bolivia

**Morales rape allegations:** Coca farmers and other supporters of Evo Morales blocked roads in central Bolivia this week to prevent the former president's arrest on charges of raping a teenage girl. Police in Parotani, a town in the region where Morales lives, fired tear gas to disperse a crowd and arrested six people. Morales, 64, is under investigation for rape and human trafficking based on a sexual relationship he allegedly had in 2015—during his presidency—with a 15-year-old member of his political youth guard. The girl's parents were said to have permitted the relationship in exchange for political favors, and the girl gave birth to a daughter in 2016. Rally organizers said they would not be deterred from protecting Morales' "freedom and reputation."



# The World at a Glance

## Jerusalem

**U.S. deepens involvement:** The U.S. agreed this week to give Israel a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense battery, or THAAD, one of America's most advanced anti-missile systems. Washington is also sending 100 troops to Israel to operate it, marking a significant increase in U.S. involvement as the war in the Middle East escalates. The THAAD system, designed to shoot down ballistic missiles, will boost Israel's air defenses as it prepares to respond to Iran's Oct. 1 ballistic missile attack, which did little damage but showed that Israel's sophisticated missile defenses could be overwhelmed. But the Biden administration warned that it could cut some military aid if Israel doesn't allow significant amounts of humanitarian supplies into Gaza within 30 days—just after the U.S. election. Some



U.N. forces: Under fire

400,000 Palestinians are trapped in northern Gaza; the United Nations said Israel has blocked nearly all food aid from entering for the past two weeks.

On the war's Lebanese front, Israeli forces fired on several positions of the U.N. peacekeeping force known as UNIFIL, injuring four soldiers. UNIFIL's 10,000 troops have been stationed in Lebanon along the border with Israel to provide security since Israel's first invasion in 1978. U.N. leaders said the attacks could constitute a war crime. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has accused the peacekeepers of acting as a "human shield" for Hezbollah, said they were now in "harm's way" and should withdraw. Meanwhile, Hezbollah forces launched a swarm of drones at an Israeli army base in northern Israel, killing at least four soldiers and wounding dozens more.

## Kaesong, North Korea

**Blowing up roads:** North Korea this week dynamited sections of unused roads near the border that were once intended to connect the country to South Korea. The demolition followed allegations by the government of North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un that South Korea had flown drones over the capital, Pyongyang. Kim Yo Jong, Kim's powerful sister, said Seoul's "military gangsters" would "pay a dear price" for the alleged intrusion. South Korea called the blasts a "highly abnormal" act of pique that violated inter-Korean agreements and responded by firing warning shots. North Korea built the roads, along with rail links, in the early 2000s during a period of détente—using \$133 million worth of money and materials borrowed from South Korea. It has yet to pay Seoul back.



Not a thru street

## Beijing

**Threatening Taiwan:** China deployed a record 125 aircraft, as well as an aircraft carrier and many ships, in large-scale military exercises around Taiwan this week to simulate the sealing off of Taiwanese ports in a potential invasion. A day after the war games, President Xi Jinping traveled to Dongshan Island, where communist Chinese forces beat back a 1953 invasion attempt by nationalist Taiwanese forces. The displays were a response to last week's speech by Taiwan President Lai Ching-te, on Taiwan's national day, defending the right of the island of 23 million to freedom from annexation. Beijing, which considers Taiwan a renegade Chinese province, has long threatened to take Taiwan by force if it formally declares independence; this is the second major drill since Lai became president in May. "These activities are coming closer and closer to Taiwan shores," David Sacks of the Council on Foreign Relations told *The New York Times*. "We see the sophistication increasing."

## North slope of Everest, China

**Climber remains found:** A group of climbers including *Free Solo* co-director Jimmy Chin said last week they appear to have found the frozen booted foot of a mountaineer who disappeared on a 1924 British expedition to conquer the world's tallest peak. They came across the foot on Everest last month, and a label on a sock identifies it as belonging to Andrew Comyn Irvine, a 22-year-old Oxford student last seen with climb leader George Mallory 800 feet below the summit. "It's like finding a needle in 100 haystacks," Chin said. Mallory's body was found in 1999, but historians still aren't sure whether the two reached the 29,032-foot peak. If so, they would have beaten Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, who made the first confirmed Everest summit, by 29 years.



Irvine's boot



Egypt is downstream.

## Cairo

**Stress on the Nile:** A major 10-country partnership to share water from the Nile River went into effect this week despite opposition from Egypt and Sudan, desert nations that fear they'll wind up with less water. Upstream countries, including Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have signed the Cooperative Framework Agreement, which establishes the Nile River Basin Commission to allocate the river's resources. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed—whose country is building a \$4 billion dam for electricity that could reduce water Egypt needs for irrigation—urged the holdouts to join the "Nile family." But "Egypt's water security is an existential issue," said Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty. "We will not accept any infringement on our share from the Nile."

### Pacino's glimpse of the hereafter



Al Pacino had a near-death experience, said David Marchese in *The New York Times Magazine*. It happened in 2020, when the actor came down with a severe case of Covid in the early days of the pandemic. “I had a fever, and I was getting dehydrated and all that,” says the actor, 84. “So I got someone to get me a nurse to hydrate me. I was sitting there in my house, and I was gone. I didn’t have a pulse.” Within minutes an ambulance arrived and paramedics rushed in, along with a pair of doctors. As they examined him, Pacino’s eyes opened. “They said, ‘He’s back. He’s here.’” So what did he experience? “I didn’t see the white light or anything. There’s nothing there. As Hamlet says, ‘To be or not to be.’ It was no more. You’re gone. I thought, Wow, you don’t even have your memories. You have nothing. Strange porridge.” Last year, Pacino became a father for the fourth time—was that a reaction to recognizing his own mortality? “I have to really think about that. I don’t know. Maybe?” He’s clear, though, that late fatherhood is one more reason he’s happy to continue to be rather than not. “That has been a campaign for me to stick around a little longer if it’s possible.”

### Why Gilmour declined a space ride

David Gilmour is glad he’s not starting out in the music business today, said Christopher Lord in *The Guardian*. The 78-year-old former Pink Floyd guitarist deems the streaming era a grim one for music makers. “The rich and the powerful have siphoned off the majority of this money,” he says. “The working musician has to go out and play live—they can’t survive any other way. They won’t do it by the recording process, and that’s a tragedy because that is not encouraging new music to be created.” But any nostalgia Gilmour has for the old days does not extend to wanting to reform his classic rock group. “Absolutely not.” His long-running animosity toward founding Pink Floyd member Roger Waters, who has peddled antisemitic tropes and conspiracies about the war in Ukraine, still burns hot. “I tend to steer clear of people who actively support genocidal and autocratic dictators like [Russian President Vladimir] Putin and [Venezuelan President Nicolás] Maduro.” He recalls playing a gig in Moscow pre-Putin—“back when one wasn’t ashamed to”—and shares that he was asked if he wanted to go up into space. “I had seen their rockets and capsules in the space museum in Moscow, and I nearly shit myself and said, ‘No, thank you.’ They were rickety and held together with nuts and bolts.”



### J-Lo's struggle with self-esteem

Jennifer Lopez reads the online comments, said Nikki Glaser in *Interview*. “I’ve been doing this a very long time, I hate to admit,” says the actress and pop superstar. “I know everything that’s being said about me is not who I am. [But] if I see something that’s hurtful, I’m not Teflon.” Lopez, 55, admits to wrestling with self-esteem issues since her early years in the Bronx, where she was raised by hardworking but often absent parents. “My whole life has been proving my enoughness.” Self-doubt can land even when she’s performing in front of an adoring crowd. “You’ll be onstage in an arena of 50,000 people, and everybody’s jumping up and down, and there’ll be one or two people with resting bitch face. Like they hate you. And you’re zeroed in on those two people.” Her recent separation from husband Ben Affleck brought on a dark night of the soul—“my whole world exploded”—but it also helped Lopez grow. She says she’s learned how to give herself “a bit of comfort and love” and to be alone. “On the other side of it, I think to myself, ‘That is exactly what I needed. Thank you, God. You had to hit me really hard over the head with a f---ing sledgehammer. Don’t have to do it again.’”

### In the news

■ **R. Kelly’s** estranged daughter last week accused the disgraced R&B star of sexually abusing her when she was 8 or 9 years old. Buku Abi, now 26, made the claims against her father in a new documentary, *R. Kelly’s Karma: A Daughter’s Journey*. “I just remember waking up to him touching me,” she said. “From that moment on, I was a different person.” Abi said she told her mother, Andrea Kelly, about the abuse in 2009 and that they reported it to police. Authorities classed the accusation as “unfounded” at the time, saying too long had passed “between the events occurring and Jane Doe reporting the incident.”



An attorney for Kelly—who is serving a 30-year prison sentence for sex trafficking, racketeering, and child pornography—said the singer “vehemently” denied the “hurtful” allegations.

■ **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.** told journalist **Olivia Nuzzi** that he wanted to “impregnate,” “control,” and “possess” her during their nearly yearlong sexting affair, her ex-fiancé claimed in a Washington, D.C., court filing this week. The filing by *Politico* reporter Ryan Lizza, 50, came in response to an earlier filing by Nuzzi, 31, in which she claimed Lizza hacked her devices to discover details about the affair and then tried to blackmail her into staying in their relationship. Lizza called those allegations a “disgraceful lie.” He said he ended their engagement after Nuzzi, a star reporter at *New York* magazine, “admitted” to having what she called a “toxic” affair with 70-year-old “sex addict” Kennedy. Lizza said it was Nuzzi who “pleaded” they stay together. Nuzzi’s

counsel said the filing was full of “salacious and irrelevant claims”; a spokesperson for RFK Jr. called the claims “categorically false.”

■ **Dr. Dre** is being sued for \$10 million by his former marriage counselor, who claims the rap icon subjected him to a “malicious campaign of harassment” after he helped mediate Dre’s divorce from his now ex-wife, Nicole Young. Celebrity psychotherapist **Dr. Charles Sophy** said Dre—born Andre Young—began bombarding him with “abusive” text messages in early 2023, 14 months after the couple resolved their disputes. According to the suit, Dre wrote Sophy that he was “going to have to pay” and that he “f---ed with the wrong one.” The therapist claims that in one incident, Dre recruited several associates to impersonate FBI officials to enter Sophy’s home; he now wears a bullet-proof vest out in public. Dre’s attorney said his client was “mistreated” by Sophy, who should have his medical license “terminated.”

# Briefing

## Nature vs. nurture

Pit bulls have a vicious reputation. Are the dogs or bad owners to blame?

### How dangerous are pit bulls?

Despite making up 6 percent of the U.S. dog population, pit bulls are responsible for 22.5 percent of dog attacks—more than any other breed—according to a 2019 study that examined five decades of research. And of the 521 Americans killed by dogs from 2015 to 2019, 66 percent were attacked by pit bulls, reports the nonprofit victims' group DogsBite.org. Two fatal attacks occurred last week. A 1-year-old in Texas was mauled to death by his babysitter's three pit bulls, with a sheriff saying the animals played a minutes-long "tug-of-war" with the boy's bloodied body. Days later, a pack of 10 pit bull mixes killed a 59-year-old man in a backyard in Albany, N.Y., only stopping when a police officer shot dead one of the dogs. Pit bull owners say such incidents are largely the result of bad owners. "Pit bull-type dogs are innately no more likely to bite or attack humans," said Sara Ondrako, founder of the American Pit Bull Foundation. If they are mistreated, then that can "lead to serious problems." But Colleen Lynn, president of DogsBite.org, argues that these stocky animals—which can weigh from 30 to 90 pounds—are a risk to people because they have been "specifically bred with incredible aggression and fight."



*Descended from fighting dogs*

### What were pit bulls originally bred to do?

Fight other dogs. Modern pit bulls, a loose grouping that includes the Staffordshire bull terrier and the American pit bull terrier, descend from the old English bulldogs used in bear- and bull-baiting. In those blood sports, dogs would try to subdue the larger animal by biting its snout and dragging it to the ground. When those sports were outlawed in Britain in the early 1800s, breeders mixed their bulldogs with terriers to create a more agile canine better suited for dog fighting. Experts say that fighting heritage can still be seen in pit bulls today, in their large, strong jaws, muscular neck and shoulders, and behavior. The animals seem to have a high threshold for pain, often don't growl or give a warning that they're about to strike, and have a stubborn "hold and shake" bite style that can shred tissue and break bones. A 2020 study that looked at 182 people admitted to trauma centers with dog bite injuries to the face found that, compared with other breeds, "pit bull terriers inflicted more complex wounds" and that their attacks "were often unprovoked." Pit bull advocates argue that research in fact shows the dogs are unfairly maligned.

### What evidence do they cite?

They point to studies conducted by the American Temperament Test Society, which has put tens of thousands of dogs through drills to assess their aggressiveness, stability, and friendliness around people. About 88 percent of American pit bull terriers put through the test have passed, a higher share than for bearded collies, beagles, and Dalmatians. Some canine experts also cast doubt on pit bull data, because DNA studies indicate that bullmastiffs, boxers, and

other breeds that have pit bull-like muscular bodies, square heads, and short ears are often mistaken for the animals. Still, what is accepted is that pit bulls are often bred for musculature and that their fierce reputation means they are more likely to be bred and owned by people who will encourage aggressiveness. "They want to 'pack heat' via their dog, so to speak," said animal behaviorist Nicholas Dodman. The dogs had a very different reputation a century ago.

### How were they viewed back then?

In the late-19th and early-20th centuries, pit bull-type dogs were regarded as loving, all-American family pets. Helen Keller, Mark Twain, and President Theodore Roosevelt all owned one, and the animals were especially popular among the working class. The sturdy, loyal dogs were seen as a "symbol of pure tenacity and American fortitude and individualism," said Bronwen Dickey, author of *Pit Bull: The Battle Over an American Icon*. But in the 1970s and '80s, pit bulls lost their family-friendly image and came to be seen, as *Time* put it, as "time bombs on legs."

### What changed?

A surge in urban crime led to a boom in "very fly-by-night" businesses selling "unstable" pit bulls as guard dogs, said Dickey. Reports of dog bites spiked in big cities. Meanwhile, dog fighting grew in both popularity and brutality, with owners using steroids, amphetamines, and cattle prods to heighten aggression. A humane campaign led the blood sport to be banned in all 50 states by 1976, and attention then turned to the threat posed by the fighting dogs. In 1980, the city of Hollywood, Fla., issued the nation's first pit bull ban after a dog tore the face of a 7-year-old boy. Hundreds more breed-specific laws followed. It's not clear whether they are effective. Some unscrupulous dog owners get around bans by switching to more-powerful breeds (see box). In 2020, Denver scrapped its three-decade-old pit bull ban, which a study found had delivered negligible improvements in public safety but cost \$100 million to enforce. Yet in the first year after the ban was nixed, city data showed that pit bulls were responsible for more bites on people (117) than any other breed.

### What could be done to curb attacks?

Some animal rights groups, including PETA, say all pit bulls should be spayed and neutered to curb the breed's population. Others want more education for people who buy or adopt a pit bull—emphasizing the need to never leave children unsupervised with the animal, for example—and for authorities to crack down on negligent owners. But pediatric plastic surgeon Michael Golinko, who has operated on numerous children attacked by pit bulls, believes that phasing out the dogs through bans is the best policy. "I'd much rather be on that side of the argument," he said, "advocating for a child's safety than for the right to own a pretty dangerous animal."

### An XL threat

After Britain banned pit bulls in 1991 following a string of gruesome attacks, breeders found a loophole. They argued that the even bigger American XL bully—a mix of pit bull, American bulldog, and other breeds—was exempt from the restriction. The animals, which can grow to 130 pounds, make "an excellent family dog," according to the U.S. United Kennel Club. But fatal dog attacks spiked after their introduction in the U.K., from about five a year to 16 in 2023. That same year, XL bullies were responsible for 44 percent of dog attacks, despite accounting for barely 1 percent of dogs. The British government banned the breed last December; all existing owners need an exemption for their dogs, which must also be muzzled and neutered. It came too late for Emma Whitfield, whose 10-year-old son, Jack, was mauled to death by a 100-pound XL bully in 2021. "We're missing a massive piece of our family," she said.

## The likelihood of another 'red mirage'

Ed Kilgore  
New York magazine

It's almost certain that Donald Trump will prematurely claim victory on Election Night due to the "red mirage," said Ed Kilgore. Trump did so four years ago as early voting results on Nov. 3 showed he narrowly led Joe Biden when polls closed. These tallies disproportionately represented in-person Republican votes, in a year when 46 percent of the electorate voted by mail-in ballot because of the Covid pandemic. Trump's "red mirage" disappeared as millions of mailed votes were counted in battleground states. He cried election fraud and even asked the Supreme Court to "stop the count" of "late votes." For this election, the percentage of voters using mail ballots will be down from 2020, but the partisan gap will persist: 42 percent of Harris voters plan to vote by mail, compared with just 20 percent of Trump supporters. Mail votes usually take longer to count, so is there any doubt Trump will declare victory when the polls close and insist that counting cease? He's already claimed that "millions of Democratic votes will be fraudulent," and his campaign plans to "challenge ballots (and voters) it considers suspect," delaying results certifications. "A majority of his supporters will believe he's won," triggering another "election-denial saga."

## America's swing-state obsession

David Faris  
Slate

America is trapped in "swing-state mania," said David Faris, and it's all because of the Electoral College—"the single most ridiculous institution in the democratic world." In the U.S., we do not elect presidents by a national democratic vote, but through 50 mini-elections in each state that produce slates of either Republican or Democratic Electoral College delegates. Since most states are solidly red (Republican) or blue (Democratic), this election will be decided by just seven swing states that could go either way. These purple states contain less than 20 percent of the population, but both parties flood them with "the overwhelming majority of all ads, staff, and campaign visits." Kamala Harris now supports fracking solely because it's economically important in swing-state Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, candidates can largely ignore the 109 million Americans in the four most populous states—California, New York, Texas, and Florida—since their electoral results are predictable. The Electoral College has been "deeply unpopular for decades"; in 2000 and 2016, it produced victories for candidates who lost the popular vote. That could easily happen again this year—creating even more anger and chaos in a polarized nation. Swing-state politics "is rotting our brains and harming democracy."

## Trans issues may cost Democrats

Editorial  
The Wall Street Journal

A big "sleeper issue" in this year's election may be the Democrats' support for transgender athletes competing against girls, said *The Wall Street Journal*. In a Gallup poll last year, 69 percent of Americans agreed that "transgender athletes should only be allowed to compete on sports teams that conform with their birth gender." That's not bigotry—it's "a matter of fairness" and "common sense." Most parents feel that it's not right for "their daughters to compete against athletes who were born male" and therefore enjoy a distinct biological advantage. But progressives have fallen in line with the radical contention of transgender activists that gender is purely subjective and can be flipped like a switch. The issue is becoming a significant factor in many Senate and House races. Vulnerable Democratic Sens. Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, and Jon Tester of Montana are all under heavy Republican fire for their support for trans athletes in girls' sports. "Those aren't Montana values," says one frequently played ad criticizing Tester. A majority of Americans resent having left-wing gender ideology imposed on them. Though progressives consider the trans issue "out of bounds," it just "might cost Democrats control of Congress."

### Viewpoint

"Here's a bit of advice to help maintain your sanity over the next few weeks until Election Day: Just ignore the polls. You're probably looking at them for the same reason the rest of us are: to know who'll win. But they just can't tell you that. Neither candidate is leading by more than 2 points in any of [the swing states]. The polls can't tell you the way in which they're going to be wrong, nor by how much. So give yourself a break. Step off the emotional roller coaster. There's nothing more the polls can do for you."

Ezra Klein in *The New York Times*

### It must be true... I read it in the tabloids

■ A Dutch museum had to retrieve an artwork resembling two empty beer cans after a worker threw it in the garbage. The work, by French artist Alexandre Lavet, sat atop a glass elevator at the LAM museum in Lisse. The dented cans were meant to look "as if they had been left behind during construction," said the museum, but had actually been "meticulously" hand-painted. That was overlooked by a mechanic, who took them for trash. A curator said the rescued work had been moved to "a more traditional place."



■ A Washington state woman who often fed raccoons had to call the sheriff's office after she was trapped inside her house by a mob of 100 of the furry bandits demanding food. The unnamed woman had for decades fed a handful of raccoons, but their numbers abruptly "exploded," said a Kitsap county sheriff spokesman. "Somehow, the word got out in raccoon land, and they all showed up expecting a meal." Responding deputies were "shocked" by the size of the swarm, he said. State officials advised the woman to stop putting out food.

■ A Polish man was sentenced to 22 months in prison after he sneaked into two homes in Wales and cleaned them up. Damian Wojnilowicz, 36, put a bag of groceries away, emptied a recycling bin, refilled bird feeders, and mopped a floor; he also washed his own clothes, took a shower, and cooked a meal. One of the homeowners said she was so alarmed by the mysterious cleanup that "I was too scared to stay in my own home." Wojnilowicz's lawyer told the court that his client was homeless and apologized for scaring the owners.

Life  
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memoirs



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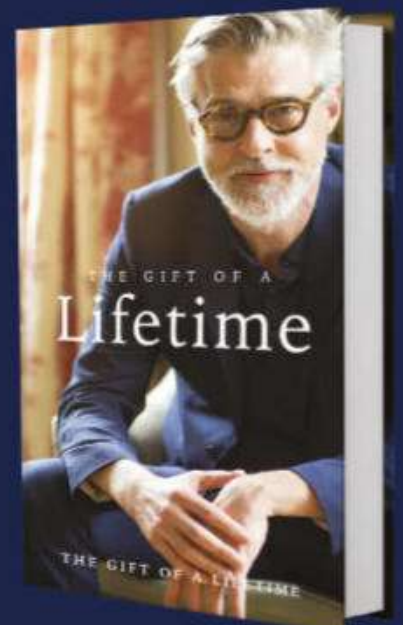
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## SPAIN

## Losing our young men to the far right

José Nicolás  
*El País*

Gen Z men and women can't agree on much, said José Nicolás. While women ages 18 to 27 are the most progressive cohort in Spain, men of that age are increasingly likely to identify with the far right. The split is particularly pronounced on immigration—"one of the main concerns of Spaniards" these days—with nearly two-thirds of young men saying migrants increase crime, while less than half of young women agree. Such a political divide "isn't limited to Spain," of course. Surveys show similar gender gaps in the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. That's because many young men now get their news from social

media, particularly from toxic male "influencers and YouTubers." With platform owners like Elon Musk weakening content monitoring, far-right X accounts and "racist Telegram channels" have become firehoses of misinformation, "blasting out the biggest nonsense they can think of" to get views. These "sham gurus" rip into minorities and women to get attention, and it works. Spain's Alwise Pérez, for example, propelled himself to a seat in the European Parliament by trashing immigrants on Telegram. Women tend to be repulsed by this "extremist and insulting content," but many impressionable young men can't seem to look away.

## EUROPEAN UNION

## Europeans should hear Orban out

Wolfgang Koydl  
*Die Weltwoche (Switzerland)*

Liberal members of the European Parliament booed Viktor Orban as if he were the "devil himself" when he addressed them last week, said Wolfgang Koydl. Denouncing the Hungarian prime minister as corrupt was one of their milder insults. One center-right European People's Party leader called him a "security risk for Europe," while a member of the leftist Green Party called him a "dictator." What did Orban, whose country holds the rotating six-month European Council presidency, do to provoke the wrath of the "woke Brussels bubble"? Nothing but deliver a speech that "was a passionate commitment to Europe." He forced European lawmakers to face unpleasant

truths: that its bureaucracy is bloated and needs trimming, that "unbridled migration has fueled antisemitism, homophobia, and violence against women," and that the decision to punish Russia for invading Ukraine by boycotting Russian energy has "triggered an economic crisis." It was a wake-up call that was long overdue. Of course, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen and her minions "didn't want to hear anything about it," because "things are going great for them." Ordinary European citizens, though, are "being forced to shell out more euros every year." The bloc simply has no choice but to evolve and adapt. Let's hope that by "ripping off the mask," Orban has started that process.

## United Kingdom: Johnson's dishy, self-serving memoir

"*Unleashed* is an appropriate title" for Boris Johnson's new book, said Tom Peck in *The Times*. From the first chapter, the former prime minister comes roaring out "like Scrappy-Doo, fists flying everywhere." He clobbers "everyone who stood in his way" before and during his 2019–22 tenure as well as anyone who criticized him over the scandals that contributed to his downfall. Every event gets "a Kapow! of some kind"—he literally writes "kerchingeroo!" in describing the success of his vaccine task force. "The mask of cartoon Boris is never truly permitted to slip for a second." Still, his writing, honed by his many years as a newspaper columnist, never lacks zest. Covid forced the government to impose "weird restrictions on human contact, like something out of Leviticus," he writes, lamenting that "we auto-napalmed our own economy like a suicidal Buddhist monk." Sure, the book is great fun while you're reading it, said Alice Thomson, also in the *Times*. And then you remember: "Oh, my God, this clown was prime minister during the worst pandemic in a century."



'Cartoon Boris': He was actually prime minister.

Johnson's "playground" name-calling is a bit much, said Nicola Sturgeon, former Scottish first minister, in *The New Statesman*. Former Prime Minister Theresa May is referred to as "old grumpy knickers," current premier Keir Starmer as a "pointless traffic cone," and Donald Trump as "an orange-hued dirigible exuberantly buoyed aloft by the inexhaustible Primus stove of his own ego." Such "breezy, breathless, boosterish brio" is vintage Boris, said former Tory minister Michael Gove in *The Spectator*.

*Unleashed* is a "box of Turkish delight" for his fans, and I'm still one of them even though I am pilloried in the book for having urged him to resign. For his critics, though, the memoir is "confirmation that he approached the leadership of a G-7 nation as Mr. Toad approached driving." Johnson defends his most divisive choices, including his decision first to back Brexit and then—in his fervor to get Brexit done—to suspend Parliament. Does he forget that that last decision provoked the Supreme Court to give him "an unprecedented rebuke"?

The book is simply a laundry list of "reasons why he was right about everything and why it was so terribly wrong to remove him from office," said Ian Dunt in *iNews.com*. Johnson salts his 772 pages with juicy tidbits, like how he considered an "aquatic raid" on the Netherlands to grab Covid vaccines and his suspicion that Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu "planted a bug in his toilet." Yet the "only really revealing element is the extent of the anger he still harbors" against his critics. He seems to believe the Tories would still be in office had he remained at the helm. Indeed, this is no "candid farewell memoir," said Fraser Nelson in *The Telegraph*. It reads like "a comeback manifesto from someone who is still blowing kisses at MPs ('I don't blame any of them')." That Johnson might one day regain leadership of the Conservative Party isn't as far-fetched as it may seem. In an era when Trump could well win another term as U.S. president, "it's unwise to rule anything out."

# Best Columns: International

## Gaza: How much more can Palestinians endure?

The children of Gaza “now know the sound of bombs better than the sound of laughter,” said Palestinian journalist **Mohammed R. Mhawish** in *+972 Magazine* (Israel). Over a year of conflict, Israeli forces have killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and blasted more than half the territory’s buildings to rubble. Families have fled again and again, only to be bombed in their tents in so-called safe zones—including four people killed in a strike on Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital just this week. When Hamas started this war by killing nearly 1,200 Israelis on Oct. 7, 2023, I felt a complicated swirl of emotions, including sorrow for the Israeli civilians who were harmed and “utter terror at the unbridled violence that I knew would rain down on Gaza in the aftermath.” My “staunch belief in our right as Palestinians to resist occupation and siege” clashed with “skepticism that the Hamas attacks in southern Israeli communities would bring us any closer to our quest for freedom.” Indeed, after months of slaughter, the people of the world “scream for a cease-fire.” Yet the “bombs just keep coming,” and the “blood on Gaza’s streets is no closer to drying.”

This is a “crime of genocide,” said **Sari Al-Qudwa** in *Ad-Dustour* (Jordan). Israel aims to drive out the rightful residents of the territories and replace them with Jewish settlers. In northern Gaza, Israel is launching a “complete siege and stopping all humanitarian aid.” Civilians are left with two options: “displacement or death by starvation.” Yet even in the face of all



A child victim of a strike on a Gaza City school

this, Israel has failed to crush the resistance, said **David Suleiman** in *Al Jazeera* (Qatar). After a year of war, Hamas can still “blow up tanks, engage in battles,” and fire rockets, and ever more young men are joining its ranks. Israel didn’t expect such fierce pushback, just as it didn’t foresee the support Palestinians would get from allies. The Houthis in Yemen have effectively halted navigation in the Red Sea, while from Lebanon, Hezbollah has showered Israel with missiles.

That proves Hamas “did not make a mistake when it sent the vanguard of the liberation war to

pounce on the Zionist settlements that pollute the land of Palestine,” said **Fayez Abu Shamala** in *Felesteen* (Gaza). Operation Al Aqsa Flood—so named because it was aimed partly against Israel’s aggression against Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem—was intended to preempt the “great battle against the Arab peoples” that our Zionist enemy was preparing. We refused “to die by the gallows of fear, passively waiting.” As Israel now expands the war into Lebanon, we see we weren’t wrong. But how long can the Arabs hold out in the face of such violence? asked **Christine Hanna Nasr** in *Al Quds* (West Bank). The Palestinian people “are the biggest losers from this unceasing conflict,” but they are not the only ones. The war is only expanding, with cities being destroyed in Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. And now Iran is poised to join its allies Hamas and Hezbollah in the fight. “The fuse lit on Oct. 7 is still aflame, and the rockets are burning everyone.”

### JAPAN

## A warning from the survivors

Editorial  
*Asahi Shimbun*

Has the world forgotten how unfathomably destructive nuclear weapons are? asked *Asahi Shimbun*. In 1945, when the U.S. dropped the only nuclear bombs used in war, tens of thousands of people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were incinerated immediately, and tens of thousands more died slowly over the ensuing weeks, of radiation sickness or of excruciating burns. “Survivors in both cities rose from the nuclear wasteland” to tell the world what had happened, to make sure it would never happen again. Now Nihon Hidankyo, the survivors’ collective that has waged a decades-long campaign to rid the world of these ghastly weapons, has won the Nobel Peace Prize. This recogni-

tion comes at a time when the international community urgently needs a reminder of the peril we all face. While many believe the risk of a nuclear war abated after the Cold War ended, in fact the number of “active warheads” is once again growing. We are seeing “an unending chain of foolish actions by nuclear-armed countries.” Russia “has openly embraced nuclear blackmail as a means to gain control over its neighbors.” China, which isn’t bound by any nuclear arms pact, is rapidly expanding its arsenal. As the Japanese survivors “grow older and pass away,” their message must be heard. Nuclear bombs cannot be allowed to fly once again. Another “catastrophe is imminent.”

### CANADA

## Maybe we don’t need more babies

Laura Wright  
*Toronto Star*

Let’s stop the panic about Canada’s plunging birth rate, said Laura Wright. Yes, fertility has hit an “all-time low of 1.3 children per woman,” even as Canadians are living longer. We’re told this demographic crunch amounts to a “national emergency,” because too many people will be drawing from public pension plans and health care while too few will be working to support them. But the declining birth rate is a result of trends that we don’t actually want to change—things like increases in women’s education and workforce participation. And you can’t just force people to have more babies. We’ve tried “quick-fix, silver-bullet pronatalist

policies like baby bonuses,” and they don’t work. That’s why we “shouldn’t try to change our fertility rates to ensure our social systems can function.” Rather, we need to “change our social systems so that they work for our families and society today.” The Canadian Pension Plan was created in 1965, when the fertility rate was 3.2 children per woman and life expectancy was 72 years, a decade shorter than it is now. Fortunately, productivity has soared in the intervening years, and we now have significantly more wealth to share than we did in the ’60s. It’s time to “reimagine the social contract” to account for our new demographic realities.

## Noted

■ Donald Trump's campaign has broken long-standing precedent by not participating in the official process that will allow a seamless transfer of power should he win the election. His team has missed two key deadlines to sign agreements with the Biden administration; it has also failed to submit an ethics plan to identify people who would need security clearance to begin receiving classified information during a transition. *CNN.com*

■ China's defense industrial base is expanding rapidly. Its shipbuilding capacity is roughly 230 times that of the U.S., and from 2021 to early 2024, the country produced more than 20 large warships and 400 modern fighter planes, and doubled its arsenal of nuclear warheads. China can now acquire weapons systems five or six times faster than the U.S. can. *Foreign Affairs*

■ Republican presidential election campaigns have outspent Democrats 18 to 1 at fast-food joints during the current election cycle, according to an analysis of candidates' meal expenses. That disparity is partly explained by

Donald Trump's preference for McDonald's: Of the \$35,900 that all federal candidates have spent at the chain since January 2023, Trump's campaign accounted for 86 percent, or \$31,000. *The Washington Post*

■ September was the bloodiest month for Russia since the start of its war in Ukraine, with U.S. and British military analysts putting Russian casualties at more than 1,200 a day. More than 648,000 Russian troops have been injured or killed since the February 2022 invasion. *The New York Times*

## Hurricanes: The toll of misinformation

"Toxic lies are surging in the wake of Hurricanes Helene and Milton," said Miles Bryan and Sean Rameswaram in *Vox*. There's the bogus rumor circulating on social media that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is limiting payouts to disaster survivors to \$750. Then there's the false claim that FEMA is blocking the delivery of aid materials and spending relief money on undocumented migrants. Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and other MAGA types have shared those lies with their online followings, using them as a political cudgel against President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. The real-world "consequences of that have begun to show," said Aaron Blake in *The Washington Post*. Federal recovery workers this week had to evacuate from storm-devastated Rutherford County, N.C., after reports that armed militia were "out hunting FEMA." Local authorities later arrested a 44-year-old man armed with a rifle and two handguns in connection with alleged threats made against FEMA. The seriousness of those threats is not clear. What is clear is that the swirl of misinformation "has led to heightened tensions and delayed recovery efforts."

Meteorologists are also seeing conspiracy theories and death threats "flood their inboxes," said Lorena O'Neil in *Rolling Stone*. Alabama's James Spann—a 46-year forecasting veteran—says he's



A FEMA worker in Asheville, N.C.

received hate mail accusing him of covering up a government plot to whip up hurricanes and aim them at Republican areas. Washington, D.C., meteorologist Matthew Cappucci says he's received hundreds of messages accusing him of creating hurricanes from space lasers. Those lies have been boosted by Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.), who

recently wrote on X, "Yes they can control the weather." Consider this "a dress rehearsal" for what will happen in November, said Joe Perticone in *The Bulwark*. The same people spreading incendiary claims and AI-generated images of teary-eyed abandoned children in North Carolina and Florida will soon "be focusing all their powers on generating confusion about the election."

The weather conspiracists may have one thing right, said Marina Koren in *The Atlantic*. "Milton and Helene really might have been modified by human influence—just not in the way Greene and others claim." Carbon emissions from our burning of fossil fuels have warmed the planet. And warmer skies and seas provide extra energy for storms to swallow up, making it more likely that hurricanes "will transform into rainier and windier disasters without historical precedent." These colossal storms "are not political plots; they are premonitions of our climate future."

## Media: A too-tough interview on Israel?

"Journalists are supposed to ask tough questions," said Ruth Marcus in *The Washington Post*. But a co-host on *CBS Mornings* has raised a firestorm at his own network for the sin of committing "good journalism." It started when celebrated author Ta-Nehisi Coates visited the show to promote his new book, *The Message*, which likens Israel's treatment of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank to that of Blacks in Jim Crow America. In a tense seven-minute interview, co-host Tony Dokoupil, who is Jewish, asked Coates why he included no references to Israel being surrounded by enemies bent on its destruction, or to Israeli children "blown to bits" in terrorist attacks. "What is it that so particularly offends you about the existence of a Jewish state?" he asked. After offended staffers raised an "uproar," CBS News officials "rebuked" Dokoupil, saying he'd failed to meet editorial standards. How cowardly, said Matthew Hennessey in *The Wall Street Journal*. Network execs wilted under pressure from self-righteous "woke" upstarts whose anti-Israel views were challenged—and who don't understand what a "real journalist" does.

Coates was the one asking the "really tough questions," said Karen Attiah in *The Washington Post*. Saying he wants to speak for those "who don't

have a voice," the author asked "why we should accept policies subjugating people based on race and ethnicity anywhere in the world." Dokoupil wouldn't answer, and he set the terms of the debate in "troubling" fashion, opening by saying Coates' book "would not be out of place in the backpack of an extremist." When "humanizing Palestinians is recast as a form of extremism," we "are in dangerous territory." Coates should not have been served only softball questions, said Andrea Williams in the Nashville *Tennessean*. But he deserved a "civil discourse," not a "one-sided" attack.

But this *was* a civil discourse, said Robby Soave in *Reason*. It might not have been standard morning-show fluff. But "an opinionated host" grilled "an opinionated guest" known for "provocative" writings on race. An unruffled Coates held his own, the pair had a "substantive" exchange, and "viewers can make up their own minds about it." That's what journalism is supposed to look like, and to call it "a lapse of journalistic integrity is ridiculous." While several CBS employees shed tears at an internal meeting about the Dokoupil matter, Coates himself said he wasn't angered by the interview, and "in truth, he probably welcomed it." After all, "nothing sells books quite like controversy."





# Talking Points

## Musk: Why he's gone 'dark MAGA'

As he morphs into a Bond villain, Elon Musk has developed a diabolical “plot for a global takeover,” said **Will Bunch** in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

The world's richest man has thrown “his pile of loot and growing influence” behind the authoritarian Donald Trump—donning a black hat, calling himself “Dark MAGA,” dancing and fawning over Trump at a Pennsylvania rally, and pouring at least \$80 million into his pro-Trump PAC. Musk has also turned his social media platform, X, into a pro-Trump bullhorn. He's

posted about Trump more than 100 times and has aggressively promoted right-wing conspiracies to his 200 million followers, including false claims that Jews and Democrats are importing immigrants to engage in massive voter fraud. In return, Trump has promised to appoint Musk head of “government efficiency”—giving him the authority to axe thousands of federal jobs and reshape Washington. For all to see, Musk is engaged in “a brazen attempt to buy the American government.”

Musk used to be a progressive, said **Nick Bilton** in *Vanity Fair*, but “made this ideological pivot” for “deeply personal” reasons. He began moving to the right when California Democratic officials



A coalition of billionaire populists

see Trump as an antidote to the “stifling orthodoxy” of modern progressivism.

Musk is only pretending to be “anti-establishment,” said **Tom Nichols** in *The Atlantic*. He and Trump have both found to their dismay and anger that their wealth “cannot buy respect.” They've figured out, however, that they can get the attention and admiration they so desperately need by pandering to class, racial, and cultural resentments, and posing as champions of free speech and the little guy. But make no mistake: If these “pluto-populists” are in charge, “life will only become harder for everyone who isn't wealthy or powerful.” In the end, “the joke is always on the voters.”

forced him to close his Tesla plants during the early days of the Covid pandemic, and then was “truly radicalized” in 2022 when his transgender adult child severed ties with her unsupportive father. Musk later said that losing his “son” ignited his desire to “destroy the woke mind virus.” Musk has joined a growing group of “anti-woke” ex-Democrats, which includes the likes of Tulsi Gabbard and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., said **Rich Lowry** in *National Review*. They are the “refugees” from the lunacy of the Left—and

## Trump and Putin: Definitely not a hoax

“If you had ‘Trump/Russia redux’ on your October surprise bingo card, you're in luck,” said **Cathy Young** in *The Bulwark*. A new book from legendary journalist Bob Woodward has revealed stunning new details about Donald Trump's alliance with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Woodward reports that Trump sent Putin sophisticated Abbott Covid testing machines early in the pandemic for his personal use, when they were scarce and Americans were dying in droves. The Kremlin confirmed it received them. Woodward also states that Trump has had up to seven calls with Putin since leaving the White House in 2021, potentially violating the Logan Act, which outlaws private citizens interfering in U.S. foreign policy. Trump said he wouldn't comment on private calls with Putin but added, “If I did, it would be a smart thing.”

In other words, “the Russia hoax is still not a hoax,” said **David A. Graham** in *The Atlantic*. Special counsel Robert Mueller concluded that he couldn't prove an explicit criminal conspiracy between Trump and Putin, partly because Trump promised and then gave pardons to his key Russia intermediaries Paul Manafort and Roger Stone. But contrary to what Republicans often assert, Mueller and the Senate Intelligence Committee

both detailed frequent, secretive contacts between the Trump campaign and Russia, and found that Trump welcomed Putin's help. Now we know Trump even gave this “bloodthirsty dictator” Covid tests when Americans needed them. “So much for America First.” In a telling detail, said **Jonathan Chait** in *New York* magazine, Putin reportedly told Trump to keep his Covid-test gift a secret, saying, “People will get mad at you, not me.” This shows the Russian strongman “felt a continued investment in Trump's success” and was concerned with “maintaining Trump's domestic viability.” What is that, if not “collusion”?

Trump's alliance with Putin has grave implications for Ukraine, said **Heather Digby Parton** in *Salon*. Trump has promised to quickly “end” the war if he's elected. His running mate, JD Vance, has indicated Trump will withdraw military support to Kyiv, forcing a peace deal that'll be equivalent to “Ukrainian surrender.” Trump and Putin's “little clandestine chats” are even more alarming given that Trump has been indicted for “absconding with classified documents.” Not surprisingly, U.S. intelligence has found Russia is again creating a torrent of fake online content to help Trump. If Trump wins, “Putin's work will have paid off.”

### Wit & Wisdom

“Crisis makes it tempting to ignore the wise restraints that make men free.”

**Sen. Frank Church, quoted in *The Free Press***

“Brevity is the soul of lingerie.”

**Dorothy Parker, quoted in *The Wall Street Journal***

“To be beautiful is like being born rich and having to get poorer and poorer.”

**Joan Collins, quoted in *The Times (U.K.)***

“The average human lifespan is absurdly, terrifyingly, insultingly short.”

**Writer Oliver Burkeman, quoted in *The Atlantic***

“It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it.”

**Ben Franklin, quoted in *Investment News***

“Trust is like the air we breathe—when it's present, nobody really notices; when it's absent, everybody notices.”

**Warren Buffett, quoted in *Forbes***

“I have spent my life judging the distance between American reality and the American dream.”

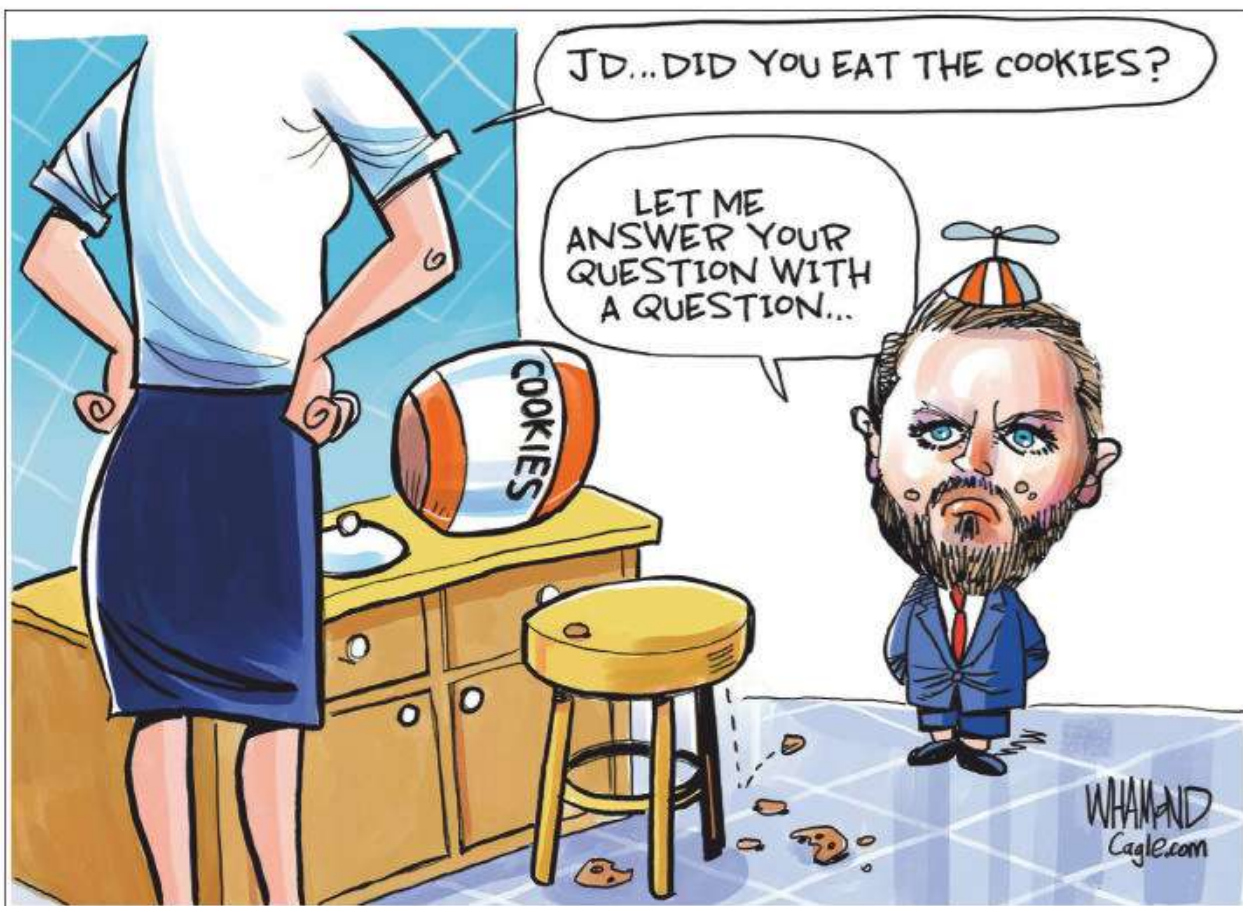
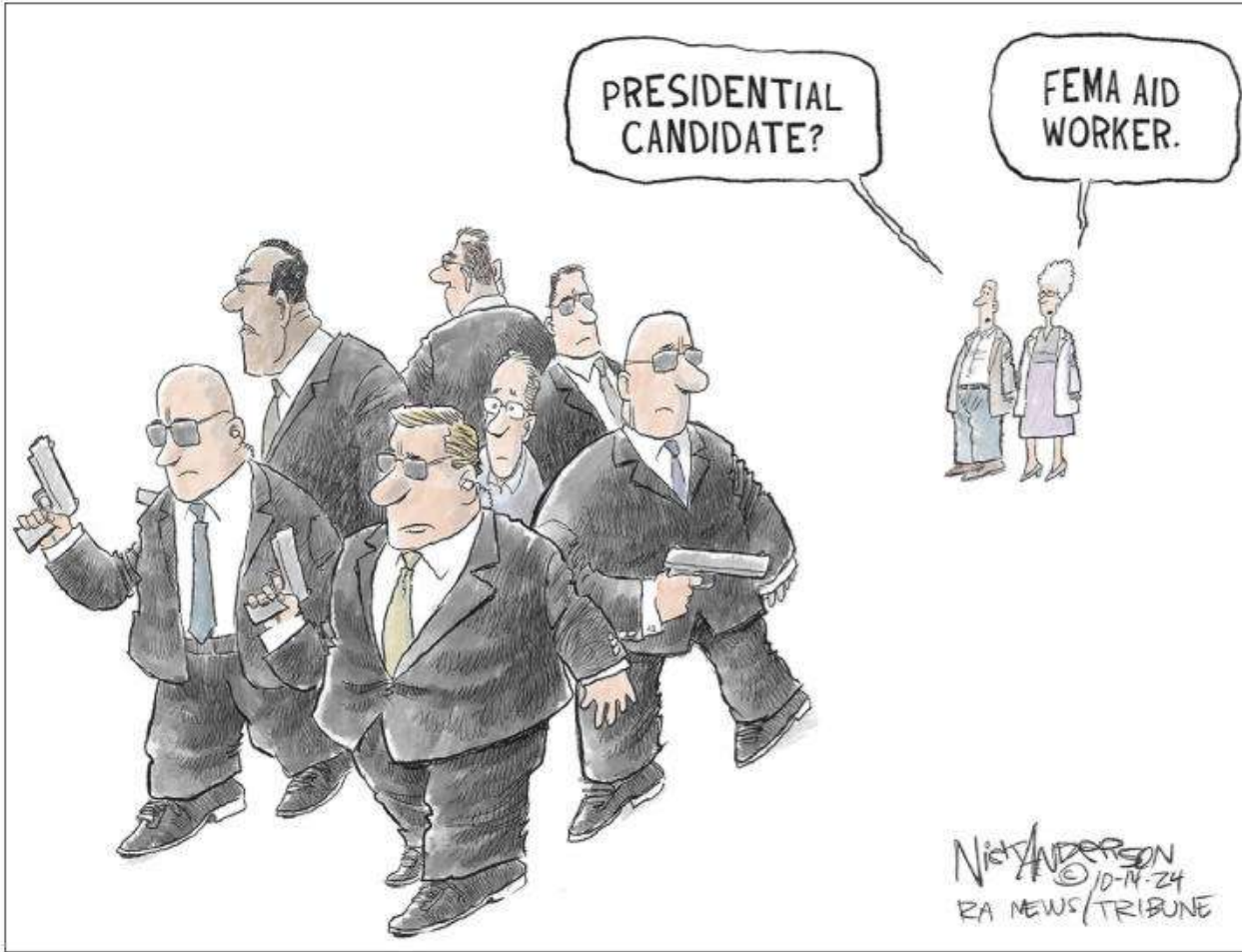
**Bruce Springsteen, quoted in *Observer***

### Poll Watch

■ **72%** of American voters, including **95%** of Democrats and **48%** of Republicans, believe that Kamala Harris will accept the results of the 2024 election if she loses and publicly acknowledge that Donald Trump won. Only **24%** think the same about Trump. **61%** of Harris supporters say that it's very important for the losing candidate to acknowledge the opposing candidate as the legitimate president. Only **32%** of Trump supporters agree.

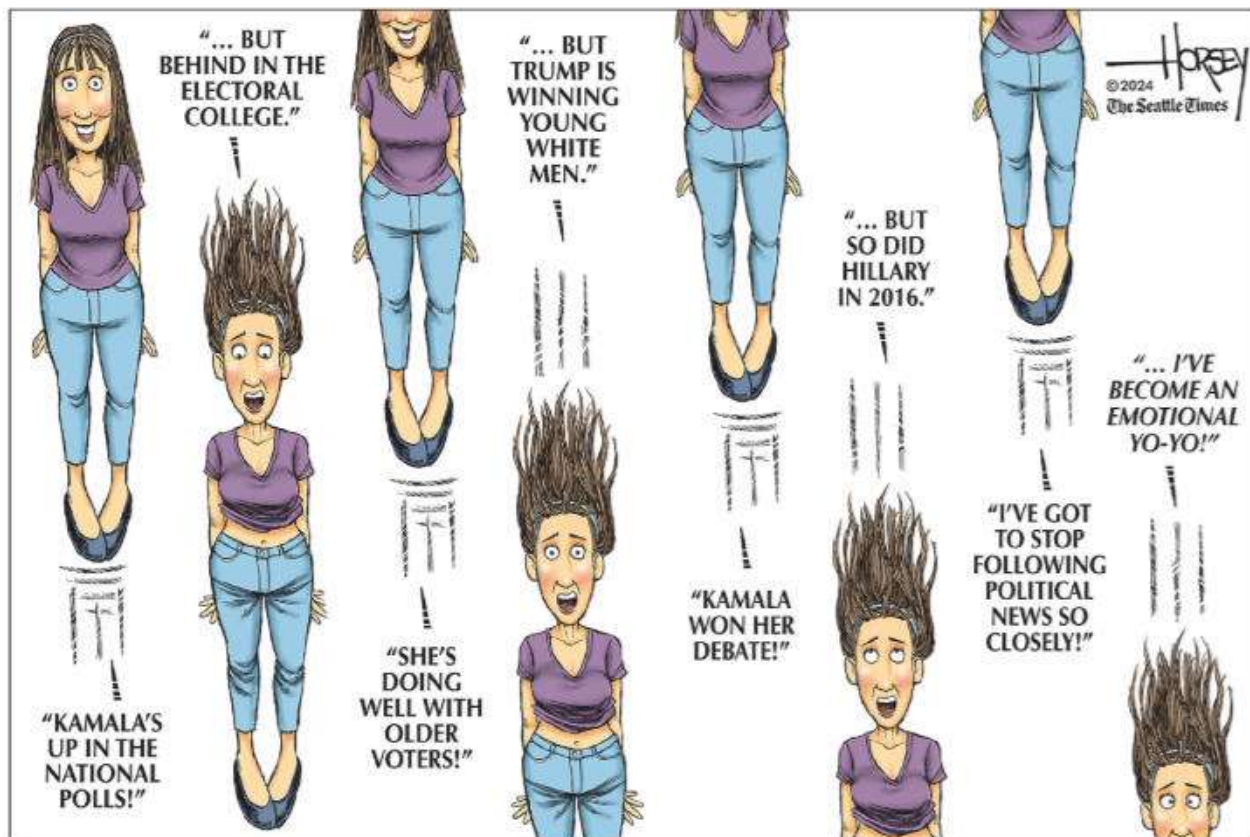
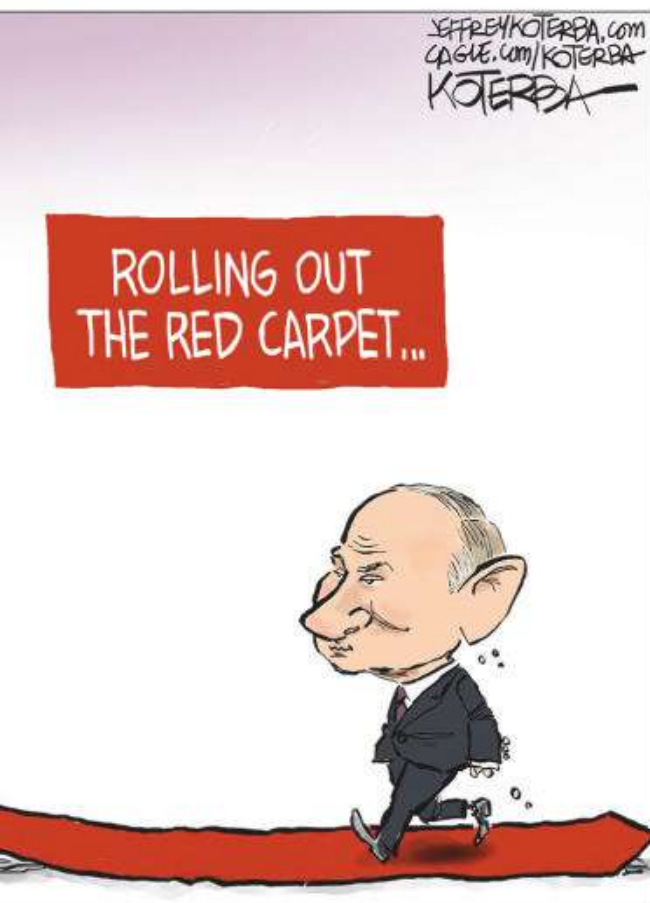
Pew Research Center

# Pick of the Week's Cartoons



# Pick of the Week's Cartoons

For more political cartoons, visit:  
[www.theweek.com/cartoons](http://www.theweek.com/cartoons).



## Search: Why lawyers are suddenly Googling ‘breakup’

The breakup of Google has now become a very real possibility, said Elaine Moore in the *Financial Times*. Last week, the Department of Justice suggested that the \$2 trillion company “could be split apart” after being found guilty of illegally monopolizing the internet search market. It’s a sign of “how far the U.S. government is willing to go to shift the balance of power in tech,” and the first time that a tech giant has come under legitimate threat of a breakup since Microsoft in 2000. Even though Microsoft won its appeal against dismantling its empire, “the fight exhausted resources that could have been put to use elsewhere.” Google risks the same fate. It is “being tied up in legal battles just as its rivals are raising record sums to develop artificial intelligence.”



After a trial, the DOJ is pushing for harsh sanctions.

Before you start planning for the end of Google, understand that the Justice Department alone “can’t order a breakup,” said Dave Michaels and Jan Wolfe in *The Wall Street Journal*. “That power lies with courts.” To turn this into reality, the government has to convince a judge “that lesser remedies won’t work.” But Judge Amit Mehta in Washington, who sided with the regulators in August, has “little modern precedent to guide him on when such a forceful remedy is appropriate.” The government made several suggestions, including spinning off Chrome and Android as separate companies, said Dave Lee in *Bloomberg*. But its

“more interesting” remedies are aimed at Google’s AI ambitions and its “secret search sauce.” Regulators have “heeded the complaints of many companies” that claim they’ve been “strong-armed into feeding Google’s AI, since opting out would also mean being excluded from search results.” They’re also asking the judge to “force Google to give rivals some access” to its data and algorithm. Such actions would “blow a significant hole” in Google’s current competitive advantage *and* hobble its ability to keep up with rivals in AI.

Separating Chrome and Android from search wouldn’t change Google’s dominance, said *The Economist*. The court could end Google’s long practice of paying Apple and others to be the default search engine on devices. But that might not even be necessary. “There is emerging evidence that Google’s grip on search is slackening as generative-AI tools gain ground.” One recent survey found that ChatGPT is already “the go-to search engine” for 8 percent of Americans. That’s partly because of how infuriating Google is now to use, said Matthew Lynn in *The Spectator* (U.K.). Its size has made Google “complacent” and far less innovative and exciting than it used to be. Maybe if Google was broken up a search spin-off could solve the problem obvious to every user: “The main search page has become so cluttered with ads it is hard for anyone to find anything useful.”

### Innovation of the week



A robot conductor led a human orchestra in Dresden last weekend, said Deborah Cole in *The Guardian*. The three-armed MAiRA Pro S performed “the aptly named Semiconductor’s Masterpiece for 16 brass musicians and four percussionists playing wildly diverging time signatures,” in which some “begin slowly and accelerate while others slow down.” The robot clutched “a trio of stubby lightsabers, each with a different color, to mark time”; each of the three sections of the ensemble responded to its own baton “to create cross rhythms.” Markus Rindt, the artistic director of Dresden’s Sinfoniker, said the composition was too complex for a mere two-armed human. While MAiRA Pro S is “the most technically advanced” robot conductor, it’s not the first: Another “automaton with a baton” led the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 2008.

### Bytes: What’s new in tech

#### ■ Investigating OpenAI’s black box

“Somewhere in the United States, in a secure room, on a computer unconnected to the internet, sits the source code for ChatGPT,” said Jacob Shamsian in *Business Insider*. It’s being reviewed by lawyers for *The New York Times*, which is suing OpenAI and Microsoft over copyright infringement. The discovery process includes “inspecting ChatGPT’s code and training data” for evidence that it has “illegally hoovered up over 10 million *Times* articles to train ChatGPT and Microsoft’s Copilot without compensation.” The security around the source code is taken extremely seriously. The room is heavily guarded, and the lawyers “are forbidden from bringing their own phones, flash drives, or any other electronic devices.” They can take notes on an ‘airgap’ computer with a word-processing program, which gets wiped after each session.

#### ■ Apple’s ‘smart home’ plans

“Over the next two years, I expect home hardware to be a top priority for Apple,” said Mark Gurman in *Bloomberg*. For all of Apple’s dominance elsewhere, its home products—namely the HomePod speaker and Apple TV—have had mixed results. The company is now setting out on an aggressive new strategy to “conquer the smart home” and get “Apple screens and soft-

ware throughout the house.” Among the new products it’s working on is a “robotic tabletop device” that will “focus on home-security monitoring, advanced videoconferencing, and media playback.” The screen will be positioned atop a swiveling robotic limb and use AI “to understand its surrounding environment so it can sense who is looking at the screen, what people are doing, and who is speaking.”

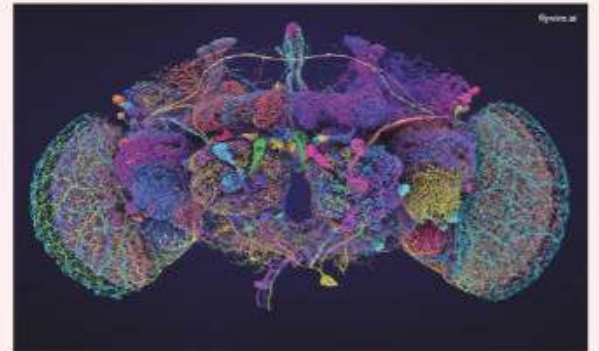
#### ■ The AI network vs. the house cat

AI pioneer Yann LeCun thinks experts are exaggerating its potential, said Christopher Mims in *The Wall Street Journal*. LeCun, who is the chief AI scientist at Meta and one of the key creators of the neural networks that power modern AIs, believes “AI is a powerful tool.” But he doesn’t think that today’s AIs can get close to anything like “human-level intelligence.” He disagrees with many fellow AI leaders that AI “is a danger to humanity”—but that’s because he believes that modern AI systems are in most ways no “smarter than a house cat.” He says that today’s models are so good at the relatively simple task of predicting the next word in a text “that they fool us.” And “pouring more chips and data” into the models won’t make them more capable until they can “learn in a way that’s analogous to how a baby animal does,” via perceptual information.

## A leap forward for neuroscience

Scientists have mapped the millions of infinitesimal connections in a fruit fly brain—a landmark achievement that could pave the way for unprecedented insights into how the human brain works. The fly's poppy seed-size brain is tremendously complex: More than 140,000 neurons are joined together with 50 million connections. Researchers began the multiyear project by slicing the organ into 7,000 thin slivers, then imaging each section with an electron microscope. They used artificial intelligence to analyze the structures—some as small as 4-millionths of a millimeter wide—and

then recruited a global army of hundreds of scientists and volunteers to help correct the AI's errors. The resulting wiring diagram has already led to some significant discoveries, reports *The Guardian* (U.K.). Researchers have identified “interrogator” neurons, which appear to combine different types of information, as well as “broadcasters,” which send out signals to coordinate activity. While the technology isn't yet there to map the wiring on a human brain, with its 86 billion neurons and trillions of connections, a project to do the same for a mouse brain should be complete in five to 10 years. “You might be asking why we should



*Fifty million neural connections*

care about the brain of a fruit fly,” says study co-leader Sebastian Seung, from Princeton University. “My simple answer is that if we can truly understand how any brain functions, it's bound to tell us something about all brains.”



*Each mound is a labyrinth.*

### Termite city from Neanderthal era

The southern harvester termite mounds found on the west coast of South Africa and Namibia are phenomenal feats of engineering. Constructed from dirt, saliva, and feces, they contain vast labyrinths of nests, tunnels, and chambers that extend 11 feet underground. Now a new study has found that some of these *heuweltjies* (Afrikaans for “little hills”) are up to 34,000 years old—a staggering age given that the previous record holder, a mound in Brazil, is just 4,000 years old. Over the millennia, the insects have built up a hard layer of calcite to protect against aardvarks. If there is a breach, it is quickly resealed. “When we dig a soil profile that breaks any part of the mound, we see that the termite soldiers and workers switch into a sort of emergency mode and appear almost instantly,” lead author Michele Francis, from Stellenbosch University in South Africa, tells *The New York Times*. “The soldiers guard the tunnels, and the workers do the repair work.” Heuweltjies may also help combat climate change by trapping carbon, since much of the plant matter the termites eat ends up bound to minerals. Each mound can sequester about 15 tons of carbon.

### Infant victims of the pandemic

Sudden deaths of infants surged during the pandemic, and researchers have sev-

eral theories to explain why. A new study found that the overall rate of sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUID)—a category that includes sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), which occurs in sleep—began rising in July 2020. The following year there was a pronounced spike between June and December, with the monthly rate up between 10 and 14 percent over pre-pandemic levels. Possible explanations for the extra deaths include Covid itself as well as the pandemic's indirect effects, such as limited access to health care for babies born during lockdown. But another potential culprit is respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Rates of RSV declined early in the pandemic as a result of social distancing precautions, but then shot up out of season when restrictions were lifted in 2021—an increase that mirrored the rise in infant deaths. “We don't know what makes babies who die from SUID or SIDS more vulnerable, whether it's genetics or something else,” co-author Erich Batra, from Penn State, tells *The Washington Post*. “It could be that infections like RSV amplify those factors.”

### The right way to take blood pressure

The next time you get your blood pressure checked, make sure your arm is in the proper place—if it's not, new research suggests, the reading could skew high. The arm should be supported on a table, with the middle of the cuff at heart level. Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury, or mm Hg, using two numbers: systolic (the upper figure) and diastolic (the lower). Researchers repeatedly measured the blood pressure of 133 volunteers with their arms in three different positions: supported on a desk, as recommended; resting in the lap; or dangling at the side. They found that both readings for the lap group were about 4 mm Hg higher than they should have been, while for the dangling group the systolic reading was overestimated by 6.5 mm Hg and the diastolic reading was up by 4.4 mm Hg. The findings are a reminder of “the importance of taking the time to do these steps properly,” senior author Tammy Brady, from Johns Hopkins University, tells *CNN.com*. “Somebody could be prescribed medication who doesn't need it at all.”

### The jellies that meld together

Comb jellies—see-through, walnut-size blobs unrelated to jellyfish—have evolved a neat trick, reports *Scientific American*: They can fuse their bodies into one. Biologist Kei Jokura discovered the ability after a pair of injured jellies that he had left in a tank merged into what looked like one organism but with two heads, two mouths, and two anuses. The muscles of this chimera even contracted as one when poked, suggesting that it shared a nervous system. To replicate the phenomenon, Jokura and his colleagues did what they called “Frankenstein



*No sense of self*

experiments”—slicing comb jellies, then placing them near one another—and the invertebrates fused together nine out of 10 times.

When the researchers fed these Franken-jellies brine shrimp that had been dyed, they saw that the food could be eaten by one jelly, travel through the guts of both, and then be pooped out by the second jelly. This implies jellies lack allorecognition, the ability to distinguish between self and nonself. Studying their immune systems, researchers say, might one day help doctors avoid transplant rejection in humans.

# Review of Reviews: Books

## Book of the week

### From Here to the Great Unknown: A Memoir

by Lisa Marie Presley and Riley Keough  
(Random House, \$32)

Lisa Marie Presley's posthumously published memoir "clocks her disintegration in real time," said Allison Stewart in *The Washington Post*. The only child of Elvis and Priscilla Presley battled addiction for the final 14 years of her life, and she never recovered after her only son, Ben, committed suicide in 2020. But Lisa Marie began taping recollections for an autobiography several years before she died at age 54 of complications from weight loss surgery, and the project has been completed by her daughter, actress Riley Keough, who added her own memories in alternating passages. "The book is of two minds: It's an unadorned, conversational memoir that's more matter of fact than gossipy. And it's a frank, almost unbearably heavy meditation on grief."

"Anyone who's skimmed tabloid headlines at the grocery store knows the basics," said



The future co-authors in a photobooth snapshot

### Elisabeth Egan in *The New York Times*.

Lisa Marie was 4 when her parents separated, and 9 and inconsolable when she saw her dying father carried out of Graceland, his famed Memphis mansion, after a heart attack. From 11 to 14, she was abused by her mother's boyfriend, and soon she was being hounded by paparazzi and publicly criticized for her looks and weight. "I guess

I didn't really have a shot in hell," she tells us. She claims her brief marriage to Michael Jackson was happy until his drug use escalated, and she did enjoy one pleasant decade raising Riley and Ben before she turned 40 and began a free fall into opioid addiction.

"It's a lot," said Chris Willman in *Variety*. "But it's not a slog." Instead, "*From Here to the Great Unknown* is engrossing from start to finish." The book "falls squarely into the realm of autobiotragedy, bracingly looking at how depression and addiction issues repeat themselves generationally," but "with almost none of the sentimentalized overlay you might expect a book of this kind to impose." The story benefits from Keough's "often preternaturally calm take on the chaos that was her mother's life," but no punches are pulled. Instead, the book displays "a brutal honesty that you have to think probably wouldn't have survived if Lisa Marie had survived long enough to clean up the rawness of her feelings on the tapes she left behind. For better or worse, and you have to think better, she was captured at a point in time when she had exactly zero f---s left to give."

## Novel of the week

### Our Evenings

by Alan Hollinghurst  
(Random House, \$30)

"*Our Evenings* is that rare bird: a muscular work of ideas and an engrossing tale of one man's personal odyssey," said Hamilton Cain in *The New York Times*. Alan Hollinghurst's "languorous, elegant" new novel surveys recent U.K. history through the eyes of Dave Win, a gay Burmese-English actor who we see rise from working-class austerity with the aid of a wealthy family whose scion becomes an anti-immigrant champion of Brexit. Though the novel "insists on patience as it doles out its pleasures," it offers insight into a constellation of male relationships. "Lovers vanish; friendships wither on the vine; mentors rarely falter; husbands hang on during tough times," and all of it is managed by the master stylist best known for 2004's *The Line of Beauty*. "*Our Evenings* is not Hollinghurst's strongest book, but it may be his saddest," said Charles McGrath in *The Atlantic*. "Almost as if wearying of itself, the novel doesn't so much end as just come to a stop, seemingly overwhelmed by the mess that contemporary Britain has become. Brexit, Covid, bloodshed in the streets—even Thatcher's England was happier than this."

## Han Kang: 2024's Nobel laureate

As publishing has atrophied in recent years, "readers have displayed a stubborn tendency to actually want to read surprising, interesting stuff," said Mark Krotov and Alex Shephard in *The New Republic*. That helps explain why South Korean novelist Han Kang was already a literary star in the U.S. when, on Oct. 10, she was named this year's winner of the Nobel Prize in literature. Eight years ago, when an English translation of Han's *The Vegetarian* was published here, readers made it a hit, opening the door for translations of four other Han novels, including one that arrives in January. The Swedish Academy, as it should, is now championing global literature with a capital L, and anything that brings more Han to these shores is "very clearly a good thing."

Han herself is in no mood to celebrate, said Joyce Lee and Ju-min Park in *Reuters*. The 53-year-old author has conveyed through her father, the respected novelist Han Seung-won, that she doesn't wish to attend press conferences or be otherwise feted while wars are raging in Ukraine and the Middle East. The older Han quoted his



Han: A quiet rebel

daughter as saying, "The Swedish Academy didn't give me this award for us to enjoy, but to stay more clearheaded." Readers who know her work will appreciate that she has always been troubled by human violence, said E. Tammy Kim in *The New Yorker*. "She applies a light, often experimental touch to heavy themes," including South Korea's hidden history of state crackdowns and, in *The Vegetarian*, the plight of women under patriarchal rule.

That novel "will find readers around the world for decades to come," said Ed Park in *The Atlantic*. In it, a Korean family disintegrates when a previously docile housewife stops eating and serving meat and, wishing to cease being a member of the human race, eventually suspects she's turning into a plant herself. "A feral work of imagination" the book keeps readers off balance. Han recommends her next book, *We Do Not Part*, as a starting point for her new readers, said David A. Tizzard in *The Korea Times* (South Korea). But don't overlook *Human Acts*, an earlier novel about a different government massacre. "The monsters in Han Kang's works are not born of fantasy. They are us."

# The Book List

## Best books...chosen by Trevor Noah

Trevor Noah's new book, *Into the Uncut Grass*, is an illustrated fable about a child's journey beyond the security of home. Below, the former host of *The Daily Show* and the best-selling author of the memoir *Born a Crime* names his favorite books of 2024.



**The Message** by Ta-Nehisi Coates. The return of one of America's best writers to nonfiction, seven years after the publication of his 2017 collection *We Were Eight Years in Power*, makes the publication of this book an unmissable literary event.

**What If We Get It Right? Visions of Climate Futures** by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson. Johnson is perhaps the most famous climate scientist in the world, and in her new book she brings together a range of experts to explore possible solutions to the climate-change crisis. *What If We Get It Right?* is a book full of joy, justice, and love for the future.

**All Fours** by Miranda July. Quirky and smart, July's second novel tells the story of a married middle-aged woman who throws herself into an affair with a younger man. It's about how we find the lives—and romantic constructs—that serve us, and it has been shortlisted for fiction's National Book Award.

**Martyr!** by Kaveh Akbar. Another of the current National Book Award finalists, this debut

novel from poet Kaveh Akbar unfolds a hard-to-describe but totally original story about displacement, history, and family secrets. A brilliant voice and unlike anything out there.

**Did Everyone Have an Imaginary Friend (Or Just Me)?** by Jay Ellis. A unique coming-of-age story from the actor, whose imaginary friend helped him survive a rocky childhood.

**Catalina** by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio. This exceptional novel from the author of *The Undocumented Americans* follows an undocumented immigrant during her senior year at Harvard. It's about how we navigate a world of difference—a world that might not seem to have a place for us. It's also funny and raw and wise.

**James** by Percival Everett. Probably the best novel of the year, by a writer who is finally getting his due. Another National Book Award finalist, it retells Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* from the perspective of Jim, and it's unforgettable—subversive, but also genuinely entertaining.

## Author of the week

### Sophie Kinsella

Sophie Kinsella is still adjusting to her new reality, said **Elisabeth Egan** in *The New York Times*. Less than two years ago, the best-selling author of the *Confessions of a Shopaholic* series learned that she had a terminal disease. "I couldn't say the word 'cancer' for a long time," she says. But the cancer was real: She had a brain tumor that would soon



be removed in a marathon surgery. Chemotherapy and radiation followed. But there is no cure for glioblastoma, as she knows, and as she eventually told her five children, now ranging in age from 12 to 28. "There were tissues. But there was also resilience," she says. Kinsella herself was already writing about the experience, in a notebook she kept near her bed.

Her new book, *What Does It Feel Like?*, isn't memoir. Instead, it's a novella about someone just like her: a successful middle-age novelist and mother of five who learns she has terminal brain cancer. Somehow, it's also a love story—and funny. "The title guided me," she says. "The irony is that I've had this incredibly fortunate life. I've had an ability to write and I've been able to have children and I met the love of my life at college and it's all fallen into place so brilliantly until, boom, the hammer blow of fate." The blow of fate, however, is not the end of the novel's story. "It took me a while to figure out how I was going to have a happy ending," she says, "but I was absolutely determined." Meanwhile, Kinsella, 54, is taking life outside her writing a day at a time. Every morning, her husband reads the papers and delivers a cup of tea along with a hopeful story about someone who's beating the odds on a grim diagnosis. "I really want to be someone else's story of hope," Kinsella says.

## Also of interest...in affairs of the heart

### Kingmaker

by Sonia Purnell (Viking, \$35)



In this new biography, Pamela Harriman is "far more than a racy caricature," said Brenda Cronin in *The Wall Street Journal*. Though *Kingmaker* "doesn't stint on Harriman's parade of paramours," from Prince

Aly Khan to Fiat heir Gianni Agnelli, Harriman emerges as "a shrewd political operator" whose dalliances earned her access to power's inner circles and eventually a U.S. ambassadorship. Clearly, "the woman who chose to be addressed as 'Madame l'ambassadeur' had the last laugh."

### Want

by Gillian Anderson (Abrams, \$28)



The question "What do women want in bed?" is forever worth asking, said Kimberly Harrington in *The Washington Post*. Fifty years after the similar *My Secret Garden* was a best-seller, actress Gillian Anderson has

curated a collection of sexual fantasies submitted by anonymous women, and "Want is an apt title." While the book includes "plenty of humor and spark, many of the fantasies are rooted in being desired, hungered for, and catered to in ways that are lacking in the letter writers' lives."

### Scaffolding

by Lauren Elkin (FSG, \$28)



Lauren Elkin's debut novel pairs the tales of two affairs that, "crucially, she neither justifies nor condemns," said Lily Meyer in *The Atlantic*. In 1970s Paris, a student cheats on her husband with a professor; in the

2010s, a psychoanalyst, Anna, lusts for a neighbor and impulsively sleeps with an ex. Elkin "writes these events as complicated adventures in wrong decisions," and her slippery narrative "makes plain that we can never completely know one another."

### Don't Be a Stranger

by Susan Minot (Knopf, \$28)



Susan Minot's new novel "holds a mirror up to anyone who has ever fixated on an elusive love object," said Julia M. Klein in *The Boston Globe*. Ivy Cooper, 51, is a recently divorced single mother when she

falls into bed with a musician in his mid 30s, and "from the beginning, the red flags are waving." It's troublingly obvious that Ivy is more invested in the affair than her new lover is, as Minot builds "a searing portrait of both sexual addiction and self-delusion."

## Our Town

Ethel Barrymore Theatre, New York City ★★★★★

Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* has been with us since 1938, and "if you think of the play as small, sweet, or old-fashioned," said Jesse Green in *The New York Times*, "you have the soul of a rock." Wilder's masterwork, "in any good enough production," is "titanic," and the new Broadway revival is "more than good enough"—unbearable both in its beauty and in its refusal to offer beauty as a cure to human life's tragic brevity. Jim Parsons' "mercilessly acute" narrator is our guide to Grover's Corners, N.H., a small town whose residents include Emily and George, a young couple played by Ephraim Sykes and Zoey Deutch. We see the pair fall in love and get married before Emily dies in childbirth and is granted a chance to revisit a single day of her life. Though the action is set between 1901 and 1913, director Kenny Leon blends in contemporary costumes and foregrounds an interracial couple. His message is clear: "The 'Our' in the title means everyone."

For anyone who watches the play unfold, "Wilder's reminder of the fleetingness of life will always pack a slug to the gut," said Naveen Kumar in *The Washington Post*.



Parsons puts it all in perspective.

You don't have to fully identify with his small-town characters or their conformity to social norms to be struck by *Our Town's* message that we are fools if we take for granted the mundane details of our brief lives. The details Wilder and Leon show us, unfortunately, remain "hopelessly bound to conformity." Though Leon's staging is lovely, "I found myself craving a daring challenge to the idea of convention," a repudiation of norms that redefines the meaning of "a typical American life."

## Blue Eyed Soul Sung by Brown Eyed People

Black Ensemble Theater, Chicago

★★★★★

In Jackie Taylor's latest jukebox musical, "there's no room for negative energy," said Emily McClanathan

in the *Chicago Tribune*. The

show assembles an all-Black cast to perform soul and R&B songs originally made famous by white artists, and the whole point is that all people are one. Taylor, the founder of Black Ensemble Theater, stages the action on a set that evokes a Greek amphitheater and casts six actors as the Essences: human attributes, including Mind and Soul, that we all share. "The framing device gets a little muddled, if truth be told," said Kerry Reid in the *Chicago Reader*. Fortunately, "once this cast starts singing, you probably won't care about the philosophy lesson." Standout numbers include "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'," a medley of Tom Jones hits, and a version of Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You" that "tears the roof off."



Britt Edwards as Passion

## Jelly Roll

Beautifully Broken

★★★★★



"Jelly Roll is quickly becoming America's counselor in chief," said Chris Willman in *Variety*. On his third album since he turned away from rap and broke through as a country crooner four

years ago, the late-arriving Nashville superstar leans "more heavily than ever" into songs about being down and out but seeing a light in the distance. "When, at the beginning of the 12th song, he sings, 'Ever been rock bottom? At the bottom of a bottle?' your immediate response might be 'Yes, during pretty much all of the preceding 11 songs.'" Still, the tattooed 39-year-old Tennessean "gets away with it," because listeners associate him with jovial bear hugs, and there's enough musical uplift in the 28-track album's mix of "anthemic rock" and "mildly trappy pop." As for the country influence, said Alexis Petridis in *The Guardian*, it's "largely confined to a little banjo or pedal steel and floor-stomping rhythms." Fortunately, the songs, tailored by a small army of Nashville pop writers, are "well written enough" to keep you listening. "The originality, such as it is," comes from the singer's "gravelly, untutored voice" and his "lyrical fixation on addiction."

## GloRilla

Glorious

★★★★★



GloRilla's debut studio album "hearkens back to the glory years of the dirty South," said Mosi Reeves in *Rolling Stone*. "Alas, it's not the Aughts anymore," and the 25-year-old Memphis

native who's been rap's next big thing for two years sounds uncertain about how to move forward. "Most of *Glorious'* 15 tracks feel truncated, snipped into quick two-verse, two-and-a-half-minute bursts to capture internet-addled attention spans." They also borrow samples and choruses from decades-old rap hits. Elsewhere, the artist born Gloria Hallelujah Woods incorporates gospel or R&B on tracks apparently aimed at "Grammy-size" acclaim, only proving that she's better when "going hard," stringing together filthy, funny rhymes in "her patented sharp flow and deep, gruff voice." In short, "*Glorious* is uneven," said Kyann-Sian Williams in *NME*. "There are a handful of certified hits," including "Whatchu Know About Me," with Sexyy Red, and "How I Look," with Megan Thee Stallion. Yet "questionable" additions suggest that "better quality control was needed." Still, given its girl-power themes and GloRilla's "undeniable energy," *Glorious* is "worth a listen."

## The Smile

Cutouts

★★★★★



*Cutouts* is the kind of album Jonny Greenwood dreams of making, said Zach Schonfeld in *Pitchfork*. The Radiohead guitarist has said he prefers a creative process that yields records that

are "90 percent as good but come out twice as often." And so arrives the second album of 2024 from Radiohead spin-off the Smile, which pairs percussionist Tim Skinner with Radiohead vets Greenwood and Thom Yorke. Though it's cobbled together from the same sessions that generated January's *Wall of Eyes*, this "looser, funkier" collection is "too good to be dismissed as a bastard child," and it showcases the "near-telepathic chemistry these three musicians have honed." Where *Wall* skewed somber, *Cutouts* ripples with "newfound vibrancy," said Roisin O'Connor in *The Independent*. Though "The Slip" is "steeped in Yorke's signature paranoia," Skinner's "woozy beats" and Greenwood's "Bowie-style guitar squalls" lend it a playful edge. All three sound like they're having fun on "Eyes & Mouth," in which a skewed, Chic-style riff morphs into "dazzling scalar melodies." With the Smile this on point, waiting for new Radiohead music is a lot easier.



# Review of Reviews: Film

## Anora

Directed by Sean Baker  
(R)



A sex worker glimpses  
the good life.

“Sean Baker has spent his career chasing American hustlers of every stripe,” said **Justin Chang** in *The New Yorker*. In his Palme d’Or–winning latest film, the director of *The Florida Project* and *Red Rocket* introduces Ani, a New York City stripper played by Mikey Madison “with a bawdy effrontery.” When the feckless son of a Russian oligarch falls for Ani, and promptly marries her in Vegas, the union clearly won’t survive discovery by the groom’s family. Yet the three toughs sent to end the pairing don’t exactly bury Ani, and Baker’s “virtuoso” farce “reveals itself in the final stretch as a cracked fairy tale.” The initial romance, a “classic screwball-comedy matchup,” proves “exhilarating and fun to watch,” said **Stephanie Zacharek** in *Time*. Until the



Madison with her beau: Daydream believers

heat rises, Mark Eydelshteyn’s Ivan is as “playful as a wolf pup,” while Madison is “simply wonderful.” Ani seems so capable and in charge that it’s “wrenching” when she realizes her lucky break can be stripped away and fights like a wildcat to resist. As Madison’s stunning performance unfolds, Baker is “attuned to every single moment, letting the small moments linger until they all accumulate into something substantively shattering,” said **Chase Hutchinson** in *Collider*. Somehow, “without ever losing its comedic edge,” *Anora* develops into “a clear-eyed indictment” of the way the wealthy forever skate away from all trouble while the rest of us unwittingly fight one another for scraps. The closing scenes, which reinforce this idea, “hit like a ton of bricks.”

## We Live in Time

Directed by  
John Crowley  
(R)



A tragic love story,  
scrambled

The new Florence Pugh–Andrew Garfield romantic tearjerker “seems less a film than an impeccably curated Instagram account that’s been jumbled out of sequence,” said **Glenn Whipp** in the *Los Angeles Times*. Director John Crowley and screenwriter Nick Payne apparently believed that they could create a fresher weepie by shuffling the timeline of theirs. But the strategy instead distances the audience from Pugh’s Almut and Garfield’s Tobias. “We barely know them,” so even when we see Almut dying of cancer soon after the pair meets cute and decides to have a child, “it’s difficult to share their heartbreak.” Garfield and Pugh “mesh perfectly” here, so it’s frustrating that the film “keeps saddling them with one contrived situation after an-



Garfield and Pugh: Fatal devotion

other,” said **Nick Schager** in *The Daily Beast*. Almut and Tobias meet when he’s hit by her car on a highway. Their daughter is born in a gas station bathroom. In fact, “*We Live in Time*’s greatest accomplishment is jamming more sentimental and silly incidents into 107 minutes than any romantic drama in recent memory.” Silliness isn’t the worst of it, said **Rich Juzwiak** in *Slate*. This film’s “totally bonkers” premise is that Almut, a celebrated chef, risks her life to bear Tobias a child, then later refuses life-extending treatment in order to devote her final six months to planning a wedding for her and Tobias to share. “This is a traditional, nay conservative, movie dressed up in funky clothes,” and it’s “destined to be a signpost of terminal heterosexuality.”

## Super/Man

Directed by Ian Bonhôte  
and Peter Ettedgui  
(PG-13)



The real-life heroics of  
Christopher Reeve

Christopher Reeve wasn’t just a solid choice to play Superman in the 1978 movie that made him a star, said **Owen Gleiberman** in *Variety*. With his “fleet muscularity” and “handsome-hawk profile,” he was “so perfect that he could have been drawn by Roy Lichtenstein.” Stardom followed, but as everyone who goes to see the “moving, wrenching” new documentary about his life already knows, he was paralyzed at 42 in a horseback-riding accident. In storytelling as elsewhere, though, “God is in the details,” and this film “fills in his life with an absorbing richness.” There’s “little original in the way this story is told,” said **Michael O’Sullivan** in *The Washington Post*. “Interviews with a handful of Reeve’s Hollywood colleagues—



Reeve in a 1996 Herb Ritts portrait

Jeff Daniels, Glenn Close, Susan Sarandon—introduce some helpful context.” Meanwhile, the young Reeve is depicted as slightly less than saintly. Still, the movie is “an almost guaranteed tearjerker,” and not just for the expected reasons. It will also make you realize that Reeve never achieved his aspirations as an actor. Reeve’s shift to advocacy after his 1995 accident adds Hollywood lift to what’s initially “a Shakespearean tale of rise and fall,” said **Siddhant Adlakha** in *IndieWire*. But the clarity of the main storyline allows the filmmakers to work in supporting characters, including his wife and three children, giving *Super/Man* unexpected depth. “As much as it’s a movie about one man’s struggle, it’s a family drama too, and the way his paralysis shifts their dynamic over the years is enrapturing to watch.”

## Streaming tips

**Horror movies for Halloween****Oddity**

In this recent Irish horror release, which is as bizarre as its title suggests, a woman is murdered after letting a glass-eyed mental patient into her countryside manor. Soon, her blind, psychic twin sister arrives to investigate. *AMC+*

**Longlegs**

The setup of this summer hit is all too familiar: A young female FBI agent hunts a serial killer steeped in the occult. But director Oz Perkins is a master of conjuring terror, actress Maika Monroe is terrific, and you've never seen Nicolas Cage this unhinged. *\$10 on demand*

**I Saw the TV Glow**

Earlier this year, director Jane Schoenbrun delivered a chilling fable about young people living screen-dominated lives with this film about two 1990s teens whose identities are twisted by their obsession with a late-night TV show. *\$6 on demand*

**In Flames**

The horrors build slowly in this excellent 2023 debut from Pakistani-Canadian director Zarrar Kahn. A medical student and her mother have just lost the patriarch of their family when a series of predatory, violent men begin targeting them. For women in an oppressive society, Kafkaesque menace is always lurking. *\$3 on demand*

**Reality+**

The horror movie everyone should try to catch in theaters this month is director Coralie Fargeat's *The Substance*. This 2014 short from Fargeat is the next best thing. It's set in a near-future where a brain-chip implant allows people to see themselves with perfect physical attributes—but only for 12 hours a day. *\$3 on demand*

**Don't Move**

In this Sam Raimi-produced nightmare, a woman in a remote forest is injected with a paralytic drug by a stranger, and given a chance to escape in the brief time before her body shuts down. Kelsey Asbille stars. *Netflix*

**The Week's guide to what's worth watching****Breath of Fire**

Yoga is typically a soothing practice. That wasn't so for Katie Griggs, aka Guru Jagat. The leader of the Ra Ma Institute, a Los Angeles kundalini yoga studio with a fervent following, Griggs trafficked not only in intensive breath work and poses but also in conspiracy theories, belligerence toward staff, and questionable financial dealings. She died of a pulmonary embolism in 2021. This four-part documentary revisits her story. *Wednesday, Oct. 23, at 9 p.m., HBO/Max*

**The Pasta Queen**

Eat your pasta-loving heart out, Stanley Tucci. Italian social media star Nadia Caterina Munno, whose family has made pasta for generations, hosts this hunger-inducing, gorgeously shot new series, which follows her travels through Puglia, Emilia-Romagna, and other stunning regions of her home country. She meets with top chefs and food producers and shares some recipes along the way. *Thursday, Oct. 24, Prime*

**Before**

Billy Crystal, is that you? The actor, known for comedy classics such as *When Harry Met Sally*, takes a surprising turn by starring in this thriller series as a child psychiatrist who is grieving the death of his wife when a boy with a troubled history arrives on his doorstep. The doctor/patient connection deepens when the boy seems to have haunting insights into the doctor's past. Judith Light, Rosie Perez, and 11-year-old Jacobi Jupe co-star. *Friday, Oct. 25, Apple TV+*

**The Remarkable Life of Ibelin**

In the real world, Mats Steen was a boy from Norway suffering degenerative muscular dystrophy. In the online *World of Warcraft*, where he spent thousands of hours of his brief life, he was Ibelin, a burly warrior who forged powerful alliances with other gamers through many harrowing virtual campaigns. This moving documentary marries Steen's vastly different lives through home footage, *Warcraft* re-creations, and stories from friends and family. *Friday, Oct. 25, Netflix*



The kid and Billy Crystal in 'Before'

**Lioness**

The first season of *Lioness* had its moments, but it didn't exactly roar. The Taylor Sheridan-created series about a terror-fighting CIA special-ops team was bogged down by uneven storytelling, but there's too much talent involved not to give it another chance. Season 2 begins with Zoe Saldana's officer-in-charge feeling the weight of the sacrifices she's made for the *Lioness* program as she trains a new operative to infiltrate an emerging threat. Nicole Kidman, Morgan Freeman, and Michael Kelly also return. *Sunday, Oct. 27, Paramount+*

**Other highlights****NBA Season Tipoff**

The NBA regular season begins with two games: the New York Knicks against the champion Boston Celtics followed by the Minnesota Timberwolves vs. LeBron James' L.A. Lakers. *Tuesday, Oct. 22, at 7:30 p.m., TNT*

**Canary Black**

Kate Beckinsale returns to action-thriller duty, playing a CIA agent whose husband is kidnapped by terrorists. *Thursday, Oct. 24, Prime*

**2024 World Series**

October baseball heads for its finale, as the two pennant winners meet in Game 1. The series will start Oct. 22 if the matchup is decided early, but that's unlikely. *Friday, Oct. 25, time TBD, Fox*

**Show of the week****Somebody Somewhere**

Bridget Everett's bighearted, Kansas-set semi-autobiographical comedy series has had a real over-the-rainbow run across its first two seasons. Now a Peabody Award winner, the show enters its third and final season with Everett's character, Sam, still quick to joke about life's absurdities and now firmly attached to the circle of friends she discovered when she returned to her small hometown amid a midlife crisis. But as other positive changes happen around her, particularly for her best friend, Joel, Sam confronts old insecurities again, and wonders what, if any, happy ending might await her. *Sunday, Oct. 27, at 10:30 p.m., HBO/Max*



Everett (right) with co-star Jeff Hiller

## Food &amp; Drink

## Pollo e peperoni: Street food comes home for dinner

“This is a classic Roman dish that you may catch a pleasant whiff of while walking cobblestoned streets at lunchtime either in Rome or New York City’s Little Italy,” says Alex Guarnaschelli in *Italian American Forever* (Clarkson Potter). “It’s almost a hybrid of a chicken cacciatore and a sausage-and-pepper hero sandwich.” The chicken and roasted peppers hold center stage, but the heat and salty notes from the pancetta and pepperoni “take me to street food in the best way.” The dish is best a day after it’s made, and nice with broccolini and some garlic bread to sop up the juices.

## Recipe of the week

## Pollo e peperoni

¼ lb pancetta, cut into small cubes  
3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil  
4 oz pepperoni slices  
1 (3½- to 4-lb) whole chicken, cut into 8 parts (breasts halved, thighs, and drumsticks; save the wings for another time)  
Kosher salt  
¼ tsp red pepper flakes  
1 cup dry white wine  
1 (28-oz) can peeled whole tomatoes  
4 large garlic cloves, lightly crushed  
3 large red bell peppers

In a large skillet set over medium heat, cook pancetta in 1 tbsp olive oil, stirring occasionally, until crispy and browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon,



A satisfying three-meat indulgence

transfer pancetta to a small bowl, leaving the fat behind.

Raise heat to medium-high and, in same skillet, add pepperoni slices, and cook until browned and almost crispy, 2 to 3 minutes. Drain on a paper towel. Pour off grease from the skillet and use another paper towel to wipe it clean.

Arrange chicken on a baking sheet in a

single layer; season with salt and half the red pepper flakes. Turn pieces over and season with salt and the rest of the pepper flakes. Add remaining 2 tbsp olive oil to skillet and return to medium-high heat. When oil begins to smoke lightly, reduce heat to medium and use a pair of metal tongs to add chicken pieces, skin side down. Allow chicken to deeply brown, untouched, for 5 to 8 minutes. Turn pieces over; brown for 5 to 8 minutes. Use a spoon to remove excess grease.

Add wine to skillet and simmer gently until liquid all but evaporates, 8 to 10 minutes. Add tomatoes and garlic and reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer until chicken registers 165 degrees in thickest part of meat, 30 to 35 minutes.

Meanwhile, roast bell peppers. If using a gas stove, place peppers directly on a gas flame and char on all sides until skin blackens. (If you have an electric oven, use its broiler.) Refrigerate peppers to allow them to cool, 5 to 10 minutes. Peel and discard skin. Cut peppers open, remove seeds, and slice flesh into ½-inch-thick slices.

Add peppers to sauce in the skillet and shut off the heat. Let chicken rest for 10 minutes on stove. Serve straight from the skillet, topped with the pancetta and pepperoni. Serves 4 to 6.

## Dirty soda: Welcome to the age of tricked-out mega beverages

Black coffee? Diet Coke? Not in today’s America, which has recently become “a nation of soda jerks,” said **Priya Krishna** in *The New York Times*. In a trend that marries “a very American need for instant energy” with “a very American desire for self-expression,” customers suddenly can’t seem to get enough of tricked-out customizable beverages, whether from established coffee chains such as Starbucks or fast-expanding soda drive-throughs like Swig and Dutch Bros. Want a little raspberry puree and coconut cream with your Dr. Pepper? Or a shot of Coca-Cola in your S’mores Cold Brew? The possibilities are limitless in this brave new world of \$10 make-your-own beverages, and “with such a variety of ways to consume caffeine, many customers visit these chains several times a day for a pick-me-up.”



of *Mormon Wives* has given the trend an extra boost, said **Emily Bloch** in *Bon Appétit*. Most Mormons don’t drink alcohol or caffeine, but the Salt Lake City women featured in the series swoon over dirty soda—a concoction of soda, cream, and flavored syrup that swept Utah soon after

Swig opened its first outlet in 2010. TikTok influencers and celebrity fans such as Olivia Rodrigo helped the local vice spread, and now Swig is expanding nationwide, Sonic has launched a dirty soda menu, and McDonald’s has rolled out CosMc’s, its own Franken-bev chain. Of course, this is no health trend. Soda is bad enough, and by making the soda dirty, consumers are loading up on extra sugar and dairy fat. Asking fans to limit their splurges probably won’t help. As *Mormon Wives* cast member Layla Taylor says of her habit, “I’m only going to live to, like, 50. But it makes me happy.”

The month-old reality show *The Secret Lives*

## Spirits: Best ryes under \$50

Apparently, “rye’s return was just a matter of time,” said Clay Risen in *Punch*. America’s oldest spirit, which all but vanished during Prohibition, initially failed to excite the drinkers who sparked bourbon’s early-2000s boom. Today, though, “scores of distilleries are making rye, and drinkers have come to embrace its alluring diversity.” Below are three of the best, which are relative bargains to boot.

## Dad’s Hat Pennsylvania Straight Rye

(\$45). An exemplar of the Old Monongahela style, this rye features “a nose of aromatic wood and baking spice, along with lychee and flowers.”

**Catoctin Creek Roundstone Rye** (\$50). This Virginia-distilled rye has “notes of burnt sugar,” and at 92 proof, an “oily” texture perfect for drinking neat.

**Michter’s US1 Kentucky Straight Rye** (\$47). A bartender favorite, this single-barrel offering has “a red-hot cinnamon profile with a grainy sweetness to balance it all out.”



## This week's dream: Cappadocia—an otherworldly region

Thanks to its hoodoos and its Silk Road heritage, Cappadocia is “a magnet for history enthusiasts, outdoor adventurers, and anyone who owns a camera,” said Danielle Hallock in *Thrillist*. Every morning, the sky above the desert region of central Turkey fills with hot air balloons that provide visitors dramatic views of the area’s geological wonders, and visiting is worthwhile “whether you’re interested in the Silk Road, hiking otherworldly landscapes, or indulging in Turkish baths, wines, and other delights.” Because dozens of valleys in Cappadocia “burst with fairy chimneys,” the spires also known as hoodoos, “it truly seems like the outdoor offerings in the region are endless.” Just consider one popular alternative to the balloon rides: paragliding at dawn while “watching the sun play a symphony of changing colors on the rock formations.”

To enjoy the fairy chimneys from ground level, you’ll need to hike or join an ATV tour, as cars are largely forbidden. To avoid



Sunrise amid the balloon tourists

the crowds in the Pigeon and Love valleys, head instead to the Meskendir Valley. “Full of fascinating caves and small dwellings,” it also connects to Rose Valley, where functioning cafés and the remains of a 9th-century church and are built right into the rock. There’s also much more to see below the surface, because Cappadocia is riddled with ancient subterranean settlements or

cities. “You’ll come across dozens during your trip, but the biggest underground lairs are Derinkuyu and Kaymakli,” each burrowing more than 100 feet into the earth.

After exploring, make time for another local tradition: “a generous spread of *mezzes*, breads, soups, kebabs, and saucy meats.” You can feast “just like old merchants used to” at Hanedan, a restaurant in Avanos built in the style of the caravansaries (literally “caravan palaces”) where hundreds of travelers at a time once stopped for nourishment. At any of Cappadocia’s local bazaars, you’ll want to sample the strong, gritty coffee and “succulent” figs. If you’re curious enough to inquire about the region’s history, you’ll find that the stories “go as deep as the cave cities.” For anyone who skips the balloons and stays on the ground, Cappadocia offers “countless options for losing yourself.” At *Shoestring Cave House in Goreme* ([shoestringcave.com](http://shoestringcave.com)), cave guest rooms start at \$100.

### Hotel of the week



The firepit at the heart of it all

#### The Lodge at Marconi Marshall, Calif.

The Lodge at Marconi “feels like a sophisticated, laid-back, improved version of summer camp,” said Tasha Zemke in *Outside*. And what a history. A half century ago, the 62-acre state park it sits within was home to the notorious Synanon cult, which was eventually forced to cede the property and its enviable perch on Northern California’s Tomales Bay. Today, after a recent remodeling, the 45-room property is “all good vibes,” with families, wedding parties, and day-trippers all enjoying the views, trails, wildlife sightings, and gathering places. Marconi’s array of “mid-century modernistic” buildings blend into the landscape, and the central firepit truly brings guests together.

[lodgeatmarconi.com](http://lodgeatmarconi.com);  
doubles from \$249

### Getting the flavor of...

#### An ersatz White House

“If a video game and a history museum had a baby, it would be the People’s House,” said Roxanne Roberts in *The Washington Post*. The new interactive museum, which occupies the first three floors of an office building a block away from the real White House, offers visitors a more immersive experience than they can get on a traditional White House tour. All are welcome, for example, to snap selfies inside the museum’s fully furnished replicas of the Oval Office and Cabinet Room. And a roughly 12-foot-tall scale replica of the White House’s exterior becomes engulfed in digital flames as viewers hear about British soldiers’ 1814 attack on D.C. The state-of-the-art projections continue on the second floor, dropping guests into the middle of a state dinner and pivotal debates among Abraham Lincoln’s Cabinet members. The White House Historical Association, which created the free museum, even thought to include classrooms, a lecture space, and a giant gift shop, “because—well, did you even visit if you didn’t buy a souvenir?”

#### Halloween in Macon

If you and your coven need a phantasmic spot to celebrate Halloween season, try Macon, Ga., said Stacey Leasca in *Travel + Leisure*. Macon is home to nearly 180 Victorian mansions that are all “pretty darn spooky and absolutely filled with ghosts.” The paranormal sleuths at Ghost Hunt Weekends offer tours every weekend in October, hitting historically haunted

locations such as the Grand Opera House, Fort Hawkins, and the Douglass Theatre. There’s also the Saints and Sinners walking tour through Riverside Cemetery, “with actors representing spirits of some of Macon’s historic characters,” plus Haunts & History on the Hill, which tours Macon’s Intown neighborhood. Now in its 17th year, the annual Thriller Parade attracts “hundreds of zombies who re-create Michael Jackson’s ‘Thriller’ dance sequence.” Overnight visitors will want to stay at the 1842 Inn, said to be haunted by the ghost of a mayor who died there in 1900. And if you visit Macon early next October, don’t miss the annual Witches Float, an event in which costumed paddlers ride the Ocmulgee River.

#### How to avoid unethical souvenirs

Don’t ever be the tourist who brings home civet coffee, said Andrea Sachs in *The Washington Post*. Or queen conch shells. Or camel hides. “Even if a shopkeeper guarantees the souvenir is legitimate, the United States might not agree.” Exotic plant and animal products are often bewitching to travelers, but purchasers can unwittingly cross ethical lines. Indonesian civet coffee, for example, is made from beans defecated by palm civets, cat-like creatures that are kept in cruel conditions and force-fed coffee cherries. In the Caribbean, queen conch shells look like harmless trinkets, but the mollusk is a threatened species. In Mexico, love charms are made from dried hummingbird parts and violate U.S. law. Even caviar can be trouble. Be sure yours comes from an approved fish species, and carry home no more than 125 grams.



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KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO  
AMERICA'S VETERANS

# Best Properties on the Market

## This week: Homes in the Scandinavian style



**1** ◀ **Snowmass Village, Colo.** This 1989 contemporary was designed for ski country. Updated in 2018, the house has a skylit living room with floor-to-ceiling stacked-stone fireplace and pale wide-plank floors; five bedroom suites, one with separate entrance, fireplace, and kitchenette; and a refreshed kitchen. The lot includes a patio surrounded by aspens with hot tub, firepit, and grill, plus access to hiking trails; the slopes, golf, and shops are a five-minute drive. \$7,700,000. Ann Wilkinson, Slifer Smith & Frampton Real Estate/Luxury Portfolio International, (970) 618-8591



**2** ▶ **Germantown, N.Y.** L-Wing, an organic-modern four-bedroom built in 2023, blends Scandinavian design with Japanese. The house, two cedar-clad rectangles with shed roofs, features high, beamed ceilings, wood-framed windows, white-oak and concrete floors, a sunken living room with central suspended fireplace, an oak-clad kitchen, and a wraparound deck. The 12.26-acre Hudson Valley property has rolling grass slopes, woods, and a Zen garden; Hudson is 20 minutes away and New York City about two hours. \$3,875,000. Raj Kumar, Four Seasons Sotheby's International Realty, (201) 689-0533



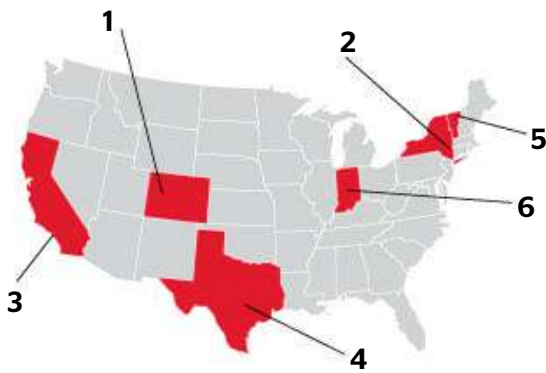
David Fitzgerald



**3** ◀ **Los Angeles** Venetian-plaster walls with shadow reveals, bright airy spaces, and light-wood floors and built-ins give this organic-modern new home its classic Scandinavian feel. The six-bedroom house has an open main space with fireplace, chef's kitchen with Taj Mahal stone counters and hidden pantry, and wall of pocket doors leading outside. The landscaped double lot in Mar Vista's Oval district includes a pool, spa, and yard flanked by bamboo and podocarpus. \$5,495,000. Mario Aceves and Shane Willcox, The Agency, (310) 339-9510



**4** ◀ **Austin** Design-build firm Chrear crafted this 2024 four-bedroom with Scandinavian and Mediterranean-modern elements. The house features roofline and clerestory windows, curated tiling and fixtures, a handcrafted oak staircase, and an open main area including a double-height vaulted living room with lime-washed linear fireplace and a gourmet kitchen with white-oak cabinets, marble counters, and walk-in pantry. Outside are a geometrically landscaped front and a backyard with mature trees, patio, pool, and in-construction studio casita. \$2,495,000. Shay Millheiser, Kuper Sotheby's International Realty, (512) 800-1000



**5** ▶ **Burke, Vt.** This 2019 one-bedroom in Darling Hill was inspired by Scandinavian farmhouses. The main living area has vaulted ceilings, Italian-tile floors, and a minimalist chef's kitchen with open shelving and floating cabinets; sleek wood stairs lead to a lower level with polished concrete floors and the bedroom suite. The 6.1-acre wooded property on the Kingdom Trails has garden beds, granite walls, and paver patios; Burke Mountain is five minutes' drive. \$875,000. Libby Ratico, Century 21 Farm & Forest, (603) 475-5589

## Steal of the week



**6** ◀ **Indianapolis** Wood accents and pops of blue enhance the Scandinavian-style design of this energy-efficient frame-winged house, built in 2019. The two-story, three-bedroom home is anchored by a clean-lined, white and dark wood eat-in kitchen and adjoining living room with French doors leading outside. The lot in Bates-Hendricks, five minutes' drive from Fountain Square, includes a historically sourced brick patio, rock garden, water feature, and two-car garage topped by a fenced turf deck. \$425,000. Doug Fredbeck, Keller Williams Indianapolis Metro North, (317) 522-8785

## The News at a Glance

## The bottom line

■ Nvidia shares hit an all-time high this week to push the AI firm's market capitalization to \$3.4 trillion, just behind Apple's. Its shares are now up almost 180 percent for the year and have soared more than 10-fold in two years. *CNBC.com*

■ In September, the average selling price of a three-year-old electric vehicle was about \$28,400, less than that of a gas-engine vehicle of the same age and a 25 percent drop from the start of 2023. Within the past year, the average list price for a used Tesla Model 3 or Model Y dropped about 25 percent. *The Wall Street Journal*



■ Lab-grown diamonds now account for 46 percent of total U.S. diamond jewelry sales. The average lab-

grown diamond has grown 60 percent to 1.9 carats since 2020, but the average price has fallen by 30 percent to \$2,657. The average natural stone diamond this year was 1.4 carats but sold for \$6,628. *Axios*

■ In 1990, the U.S. accounted for about two-fifths of the overall GDP of the G-7 group of advanced countries; today it is up to about half. Average wages in America's poorest state, Mississippi, are higher than the averages in Britain, Canada, and Germany. *The Economist*

■ The share of U.S. households who say they might miss a minimum debt payment over the next three months rose to 14.2 percent in September, the highest rate since April 2020. *Bloomberg*

■ There were 3,286 petitions for union representation filed with the government in fiscal 2024, up from 1,638 in 2021. This marks the first increase in unionization petitions during a presidential term since Gerald Ford's administration, which ended 48 years ago. *Fortune*

## Wall Street: Bank gains point to growth ahead

The economy looks just fine to Wall Street banks, said David Hollerith in *Yahoo Finance*. Earnings from the U.S.'s biggest investment banks and lenders this week signaled "a dealmaking revival" and optimism "that the start of an interest rate-cutting cycle at the Federal Reserve will mean more deals in the future." Fees from investment banking jumped 56 percent from a year ago at Morgan Stanley, pushing profits up 32 percent, while "the combined investment fees at Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, Citigroup, and JPMorgan Chase were \$6.5 billion," a 27 percent rise from last year. JPMorgan's chief financial officer, Jeremy Barnum, said the results were "consis-



Dimon: Main worry is geopolitics

tent with a soft landing," meaning diminishing recession fears.

Consumers are still giving mixed signals, said Telis Demos in *The Wall Street Journal*. JP Morgan and Wells Fargo "both reported slowing card-spending growth and rising late card payments." And internationally, the geopolitical situation that JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon warns is "treacherous and get-

ting worse" still weighs on the world economy. But the bulk of economic data in the U.S., such as strong numbers on retail spending, are holding firm. Amid the debate over whether the economy is headed for "a hard or a soft landing," there is also a third option: No landing at all. Just steady growth "at a moderate or better pace."

## Boeing: Raising cash amid strike and layoffs

Boeing will try to raise as much as \$25 billion to bolster its balance sheet, said Leslie Josephs in *CNBC.com*. The troubled plane maker said this week it "has an agreement with a consortium of banks for a \$10 billion credit agreement" and could offer equity or debt "to increase liquidity" over the next three years. Last week, Boeing's new CEO, Kelly Ortberg, "warned that the company plans to lay off 17,000 employees, or 10 percent of its global workforce." The machinists' strike "remains at an impasse" as it enters a second month.

## Energy: Big Tech expands on nuclear ambitions

Google and Amazon both made investments this week in nuclear energy projects to power their data centers, said Alexa St. John and Jennifer McDermott in the *Associated Press*. Google said it is "signing a contract to purchase nuclear energy from multiple small modular reactors" under development from Kairos Power. Amazon is investing \$500 million in multiple projects aimed at developing small nuclear reactors for use in Virginia and Washington state. "The plans come as the owner of the shuttered Three Mile Island nuclear power plant" in Pennsylvania works to restart the reactor for Microsoft to buy the power.

## Locked up: Walgreens accelerates store closings

Walgreens is closing 1,200 of its stores over the next three years, said Jordan Valinsky in *CNN.com*. The closures, announced this week, represent about 15 percent of the chain's 8,000 locations in the United States. They come "amid a challenging time for drugstore chains, which are being hammered on a few fronts." Pharmacies have seen "declining profits from filling prescriptions," while retail sales "face pressure" from big-box stores like Target and Walmart. Walgreens and other chains have faced criticism and ridicule for locking up many items in an anti-shoplifting measure that has alienated shoppers.

## Sports: NFL commissioner plays in top CEO league

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell has become one of the highest-paid executives in the country, said Ken Belson in *The New York Times*. Goodell runs "the wealthiest sports league in the world," with annual revenues now exceeding \$20 billion per year, up from \$8 billion in 2010. "As the league has prospered, so has Goodell," whose annual compensation now tops \$63 million. He recently orchestrated a plan "to allow teams to sell up to 10 percent of their multibillion-dollar clubs to private equity groups," a decision that will make team owners—and presumably himself—"even richer."

## The FBI mints its own special crypto-coin

The FBI created a fake crypto token to bait scammers, said Gaby Del Valle in *The Verge*. Federal law enforcement developed an Ethereum-based token called NexFundAI "with the help of 'cooperating witnesses'" and used it to track traders involved in so-called pump-and-dump schemes that manipulate digital currency markets. Investigators caught three firms—ZMQuant, CLS Global, and MyTrade—making "false claims about their tokens," not knowing they were falling for a law enforcement trick. The firms quickly jumped in to buy and sell the tokens, manipulating trades to "create the impression of an active trading market." Liu Zhou, the founder of MyTrade, "allegedly told promoters of NexFundAI that" his firm was "better than its competitors because they 'control the pump and dump' allowing them to 'do inside trading easily.'" The Department of Justice charged the firms and individuals connected with them with "widespread fraud and manipulation" in crypto markets.



# Making Money

## Long odds: Political gambling gets its moment

Guessing the winner of November's presidential election could also now win you some money, said **Kevin T. Dugan** in *New York* magazine. A "Washington appeals court cleared the way" earlier this month for online startup Kalshi to legally "open up gambling on elections," ruling that regulators had failed to show the public would be "irreparably injured" by the new betting markets. Whether that's good for democracy is another question. Political prediction markets "allow bettors to put money down on, say, Kamala Harris or Donald Trump winning on Nov. 5." The price for each bet (on a scale of 0 to \$1) shifts depending on who the market thinks will win at any given moment. Some analysts say these markets "can reflect shifts in popular sentiment and election dynamics faster than scientific polls," and they have studied offshore gambling sites like Polymarket and Predictit that have long allowed political betting for non-U.S. residents.

The attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump in July "led to quick profits" for a few enterprising traders, said **Alexander Osipovich** in *The Wall Street Journal*. On Polymarket, some traders were quickly buying up "thousands of contracts tied to Trump's victory" in November and selling them as his odds soared "when photos of a bleeding Trump raising his fist ricocheted around the internet." Such activity has fed into worries that "election bets warp voters' incentives and encour-



A new market lets Americans bet on elections.

age election manipulation." Can we trust Kalshi or other betting sites to avoid conflicts of interest? asked *The Washington Post* in an editorial. What's to prevent "a candidate from throwing an election, or being pressured into doing so?" The availability of election gambling will only "fuel distrust in the process," which is already under threat.

A lot of big claims have been made for how the "wisdom of the crowd" will give us insights into elections, said **Nitish Pahwa** in *Slate*. Backers claim that these markets can be "more accurate than the media and better at predicting outcomes than the polls." But when enough money was at stake, political markets based in Europe were subject to manipulation. And they have seen "irrational actors"—die-hard supporters of a candidate—"come in and skew things wildly." Beyond focusing on the legality of such markets, we should be asking ourselves how our society became increasingly filled with risk-takers, said **David Wallace-Wells** in *The New York Times*. "Total wagers placed by Americans" now surpass \$1 trillion, according to some estimates. That money has to come from somewhere. A study recently found "online sports betting reduces stock market investment by nearly 14 percent," suggesting that young people are forgoing long-term strategies for a quick score. "As in any casino, there are winners," but "on net, this appears to be a fairly clear-cut social loss."

## What the experts say

### ■ Signs of life in the housing market

"The housing market's Ice Age is finally thawing," said James Rodriguez in *Business Insider*. The rate for a 30-year fixed mortgage is back down "near the lowest it's been in two years," and should keep falling as the Federal Reserve lowers interest rates. That's not only good news for potential buyers. It should also ease the "lock-in effect" on many potential sellers who had been afraid to list and "give up a good deal" on the mortgage they had secured before rates started to soar in 2022. Already, there are signs that inventory is loosening up. "The number of active listings in September was up by 34 percent from the same month a year ago," and the number of new homes going on the market was up 11.6 percent.

### ■ Investing attitudes are forged early

Investors' appetite for risk is heavily shaped by the market environment they grew up in, said Jared Blikre in *Yahoo Finance*. According to a study by Jack Manley and JPMorgan Asset Management, Baby Boomers generally have a very "cautious and diversified approach to investing" because of the hyperinflation scare they lived through during the 1970s. Gen X's journey "has been one of boom-bust cycles," which has shaped a risk

profile that's more "cautious but optimistic." Millennials have less faith in the markets, since they came of age during the dot-com bust and lost fortunes again during the 2008 financial crisis; many of them believe traditional investing is "pointless." Gen Z's portfolio is "concentrated heavily in high-risk assets like crypto," because they "have yet to experience the full brunt" of a bear market.

### ■ Pro athletes' off-season money woes

Lending to professional athletes ramps up when the season winds down, said Brendan Coffey in *Sportico*. For many players—such as those entering arbitration or free agency—the offseason can mean months of waiting to get their next paycheck when the new season begins. But their unique position "means a lot of traditional loan options are often closed to them." That's opened up an opportunity for specialty lenders like Sure Sports, a Florida-based firm that "provides unsecured loans it brokers from a network of lenders—often regional banks." The interest rate for players with guaranteed contracts is running around 6.5 percent to 7 percent. Sure Sports said it is seeing more business-savvy athletes "seeking larger sums of money to start business ventures or fund investments."

## Charity of the week



Each year, the nonprofit organization **Feeding Tampa Bay** ([feedingtampabay.org](http://feedingtampabay.org)) collects, stores, and distributes tens of millions of pounds of groceries, including fruits and vegetables, through local food pantries to in-need residents in 10 counties in west-central Florida. This October, Feeding Tampa Bay is also responding to two historic natural disasters—Category 4 Hurricane Helene and Category 3 Hurricane Milton—by deploying their FEMA-trained volunteers to provide emergency aid to impacted Floridians. Just one day after Hurricane Milton made landfall, the organization began distributing water, hygiene supplies, and groceries through mobile food pantries stationed at community centers. It is currently inviting volunteers to sign up to distribute aid and is accepting food donations and monetary donations that can be directed to hurricane relief supplies via the Feeding Tampa Bay website.

Each charity we feature has earned a four-star overall rating from Charity Navigator, which rates not-for-profit organizations on the strength of their finances, their governance practices, and the transparency of their operations. Four stars is the group's highest rating.

## Robotaxis: Is Tesla running on autopilot?

Even when he's telling the same old story, Elon Musk puts on a good show, said **Andrew J. Hawkins** in *The Verge*. On-stage at Tesla's "We, Robot" event last week, the tech tycoon finally unveiled the company's long-awaited robotaxis—a self-driving van and a two-seater CyberCab without a steering wheel or pedals. Attendees got to explore futuristic prototypes of the vehicles "as images of parking lots transformed into verdant gardens" flashed on giant screens behind Musk. Tesla's humanoid robots were even on hand serving out drinks—though it turned out humans were remotely controlling them. That couldn't disguise how Musk was rehashing "tired promises of a fully autonomous vehicle that was 'just two years away.'" Unfortunately, "we've been down this road before. Many times." Musk first assured us that Tesla's Full Self-Driving software was "two years away" in 2016. Eight years later, his blockbuster event delivered no evidence of "real progress for the driver-assist feature."



So far, Tesla's robotaxi is fueled by promises.

There's a lot riding on this vision of the future, said **Liam Denning** in *Bloomberg*. "Bullish analysts now routinely ascribe the majority of Tesla's value to visions of robotaxis and robots." But the event felt bizarrely improvised. When audience members asked about the self-driving capabilities of Tesla's other vehicles, "Musk brushed them off with a laugh and a 'Let's not get nuanced here.'" It's disappointing that a CEO who spent "two hours spitballing with former President Donald Trump on X only had about 20 minutes' worth of stuff to say about a vaunted revolution in transportation." Some of what he did

say didn't make much sense, said *The Economist*. He's proposed selling the CyberCab for "less than \$30,000." By contrast, Google's Waymo self-driving vehicles cost "around \$150,000 apiece." Much of that is hardware, including "the expensive sensors" as well as "lots of in-car computing power to make sense of it all." On the other hand, people used to say space-flight was expensive. But Musk's other company, SpaceX, has managed to bring "down the price of launching by a factor of 10."

Tesla wasn't really trying to sway its critics, said **Tim Higgins** in *The Wall Street Journal*. The stock fell almost 9 percent the day after the event "amid investors frustrated with the continued lack of details for how the company is going to make the very complicated transition from maker of cars to maker of robots." But details are boring to true believers. Fans "spent the evening riding around and posting fawning videos of their experience," helping the event "go even more viral." It adds to their conviction that Musk is again at the cusp "of a new technology era." Three days later, SpaceX pulled off "an engineering world first," said **Hasan Chowdhury** in *Business Insider*, proving to doubters that Musk "could deliver on cosmic-scale ambitions." Musk has made a lot of "big promises that seem fiendishly difficult to accomplish," whether that's designing massive reusable rockets or autonomous cars. When SpaceX's Super Heavy spacecraft launched and re-landed "into the chopstick-like arms of the 'Mechazilla' tower"—a feat he once likened to "Karate Kid with the fly"—it was a reminder to "never bet against Elon."

## Silicon Valley lauds genius, loves copycats

**Evan Ratliff**  
*Bloomberg Businessweek*

Will the real OpenAI please stand up? asked Evan Ratliff. We all know OpenAI, the \$157 billion generative AI kingpin and maker of ChatGPT. But a case making its way through California's courts suggests that the founders, Sam Altman and Greg Brockman, stole the idea from a Silicon Valley technologist named Guy Ravine, creator of a company called—Open AI. In March 2015, Ravine registered the open.ai domain. He set up meetings with Google's Larry Page and other leaders in machine learning to discuss an AI nonprofit "built around open research and collaboration." After OpenAI (like Open AI, but without a space) launched in Decem-

ber 2015 with "a billion dollars in funding commitments," Ravine's efforts were doomed—but Ravine did trademark the words "Open AI." Now, close to a decade later, OpenAI (no space) is suing Open AI (with space) to get the trademark, while Ravine's Open AI is countersuing, alleging theft of ideas. The lawsuit is a window into a Silicon Valley that, for all its talk of genius and innovation, "thrives on appropriation." And it's hard not to see the irony here of OpenAI, "a company facing a raft of lawsuits, from publishers and writers, accusing it of stealing copyrighted works" treading to federal court to accuse a "single person of trying to profit off its identity."

## Entrepreneurs face a world of terror

**Heidi Mitchell**  
*The Wall Street Journal*

Running a haunted house is a scary business, said Heidi Mitchell. John LaFlamboy, an actor, started out running haunted houses for other people with his company, Zombie Army Productions. In 2016, LaFlamboy, with his business partner, Rick Rudie, was ready to open a Halloween attraction, Hells Gate, outside Chicago. The partners "spent around \$2 million, including \$400 apiece for basic foam corpses," as well as a \$15,000 animatronic dragon. They had built the house themselves on 66 acres of empty farmland and "carved paths in the woods and across a swamp" leading up to it. Haunted houses, which have "just one very vulnerable

month to earn their money," are a study in how hard it is to make a midsize business work; 60 percent "don't make it past their third year." The 120 or so actors on the HellsGate site are "paid \$125,000 for eight weeks of work." Insurance runs LaFlamboy about \$64,000 annually, and there's EMS on site in case of any incidents. HellsGate has turned into one of the lucky ones. It drew 55,000 visitors paying \$35 a ticket, grossing more than \$2 million last year, and has added two bars, food concessions, and a gift shop. Even so, success is never assured: It still has only 25 days each year to terrify customers enough to make them come back.

# Obituaries

## The Kennedy matriarch who became an activist

**Ethel Kennedy**  
1928-2024

Ethel Kennedy led a life marked by privilege and glamour, but also tragedy and loss—and she turned it into a life of activism. Her parents died in a plane crash when she was 27, and she lost two sons, to a skiing accident and a drug overdose. When her husband, Robert F. Kennedy, was gunned down while running for president in 1968, Ethel, then a mother of 10 and pregnant once again, was by his side. Stoic in the aftermath of an assassination that rocked the nation, she was named America's most admired woman that year. She never remarried, but threw herself into raising her children and carrying on her husband's legacy of public service. Through the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights foundation, she spent decades campaigning for causes such as gun control and poverty alleviation. "Nobody gets a free ride," she said in a 2012 documentary made by her daughter Rory. "Dig in and do what you can, because it might not last."

Ethel Skakel was born into "a family not unlike the Kennedys," said the *Los Angeles Times*, "big, boisterous, Catholic, and rich." Her father was a coal magnate who raised the family in a 31-room mansion in Greenwich, Conn. Athletic and fiercely competitive, she attended Manhat-



tanville College, where roommate Jean Kennedy introduced her to her brother Robert on a ski trip; the two married after graduation. When RFK became a counsel for Senate Democrats, the pair moved into a sprawling Northern Virginia estate called Hickory Hill. The home became a magnet for "Washington kingmakers, Hollywood stars, Nobel Prize winners," said *The New York Times*. Ethel hosted parties and served as "den mother, ringmaster, chief practical joker, and seasoned political pro"—even providing the crucial push to persuade her husband to run for president.

After his death, she "largely avoided the public eye" as she worked for her causes, said *The Boston Globe*, "although she never strayed far from it." A granddaughter overdosed at the Kennedy compound in Hyannis Port, Mass., in 2019; more recently, the family was riven by the presidential run of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., condemned by numerous siblings. Ethel, who continued her advocacy into her 80s and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2014, stayed quiet about her son's candidacy, just as she'd always balked at discussing her husband's death or other family matters. "All this introspection," she said in the documentary. "I hate it."

## The factory manager who fought for equal pay

**Lilly Ledbetter**  
1938-2024

Lilly Ledbetter battled for years so that women would get paid equal to men—though she never saw a dime of the back pay she herself was owed. The tire plant manager was awarded \$3.8 million in 2003, after she sued her employer, Goodyear, for paying her \$18,000 a year less than her male peers. But the Supreme Court in 2007 overturned the award, ruling in favor of the company because of a technicality: She had filed her suit more than 180 days after Goodyear's initial decision to underpay her. The loss spurred Ledbetter to push for legislation that would expand workers' window to sue, and just two years later, President Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law. "Goodyear will never have to pay me what it cheated me out of," she said. But with the passage of the act, "I have an even richer reward."

Born into a working-class family in Possum Trot, Ala., Ledbetter married right out of high school. She raised two children "while helping support the family" with various jobs, said *The Washington Post*. Joining Goodyear as a supervisor in



1979, she worked at the plant for 19 years, often facing discrimination and harassment. Once, after she disciplined several workers, "her tires were slashed and her car was keyed." Another time her department manager "asked for sexual favors in exchange for good performance reviews." When she was near retirement in 1998, someone slipped her an anonymous letter saying she was being paid far less than every male manager in the district. "It took my breath away," she said. "I felt degraded." But then she took action. On her very next day off, she went to Birmingham and filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Ledbetter became "an activist and advocate" for women, said CNN, lobbying for the yet-to-be passed Paycheck Fairness Act, which would bar employers from using salary history to set wages. In 2014, she "made it to the White House again," said *The New York Times*, to watch Obama sign measures making it easier for women to find out if they'd been discriminated against. "I'll be happy," she once said, "if the last thing they say about me after I die is that I made a difference."

## The artist's son who taught us how to eat worms

The son of America's most famous illustrator, Thomas Rockwell lived up to his family name by becoming a best-selling writer, but it didn't come easy. His most famous book, *How to Eat Fried Worms*, came to him on a glum day in 1973, after

**Thomas Rockwell**  
1933-2024

an editor had rejected yet another manuscript. At 40, he'd been pitching ideas for stories for years and had only two poorly received titles to his name, so he began humming "Nobody likes me, everybody hates me, think I'll go eat worms"—the old children's song. "Suddenly it popped into my head," he said in 2006. "Why don't I write a book about a boy who eats worms?"

Rockwell was one of three sons of Mary Barstow, a teacher, and artist Norman Rockwell, whose depictions of American life graced *Saturday Evening Post* covers for nearly half a century. The idyllic "world of his illustrations was, in some ways, the world in which Thomas Rockwell grew up," said *The Washington Post*. As a child in Vermont, Rockwell was the cherubic young model for several of his father's paintings. But unlike his brothers, he preferred writing to drawing. In his 20s, he ghostwrote his father's autobiography, *My Adventures as an Illustrator*, before turning to writing for children. *How to Eat Fried Worms* was rejected by 23 publishers before Franklin Watts picked it up. It was an instant classic.

"Children, especially reluctant-to-read boys, loved the book," said *The New York Times*. Still in print, it has sold 3 million copies and was adapted to film in 2006. Rockwell went on to publish over a dozen kids' books. He didn't write with moral lessons in mind, he said, but they were present nonetheless. "Sometimes you have to eat worms to get something nice," he said. "You have to persevere."

# Searching for the October surprise

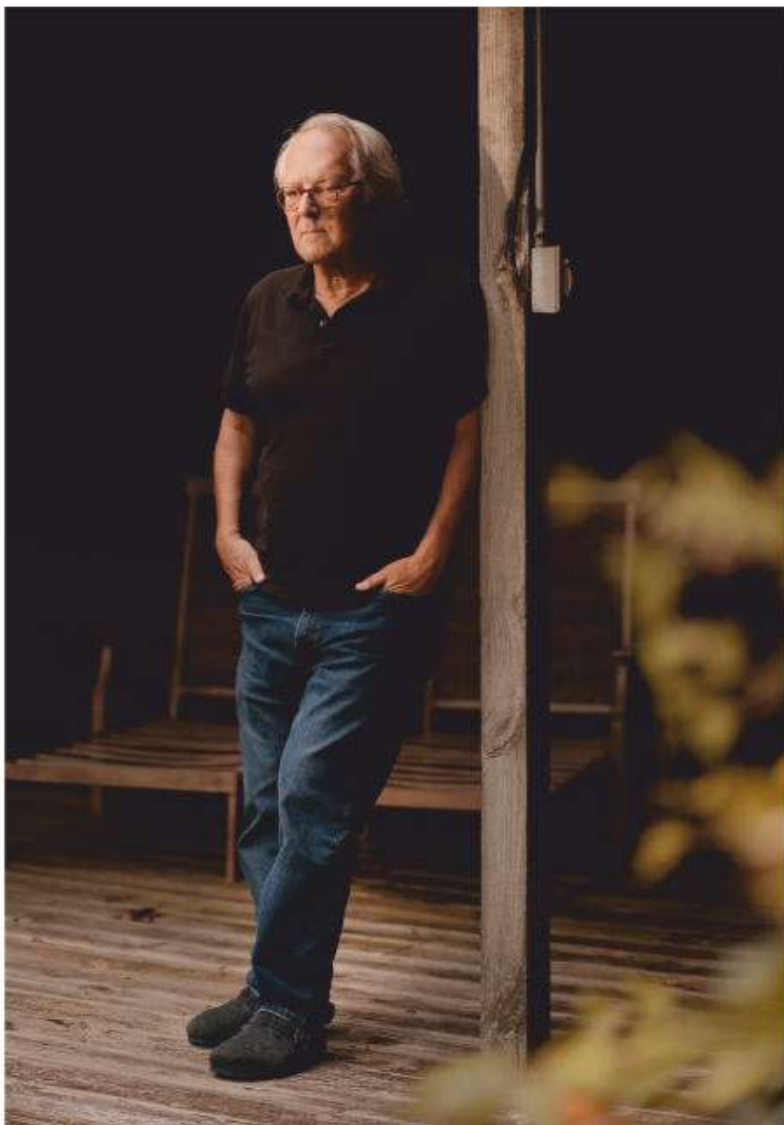
Reporter Craig Unger's career was nearly destroyed when he started investigating a possible election conspiracy, said **Gal Beckerman** in **The Atlantic**. Three decades later, he's still at it.

**T**HE OBSESSION THAT would overtake Craig Unger's life, get him labeled a member of the "tin-foil-hat brigade," and nearly destroy his career as an investigative reporter took root on an April morning in 1991. Scanning *The New York Times* and drinking his coffee, he came upon an op-ed detailing a treasonous plot that had sabotaged Jimmy Carter's re-election efforts a decade earlier—a plot that would become known, somewhat ironically, as the October surprise.

Gary Sick, a former Iran specialist on the National Security Council, was alleging that during the 1980 presidential campaign, while more than 50 Americans were being held hostage in Iran, Ronald Reagan's team made a backroom arms deal with the new Islamic Republic to delay the hostages' release until after the election. Carter, bedeviled by the international fiasco, would be denied the narrative he needed to save his sinking chances—an October surprise, that is—and Reagan could announce the Americans' freedom just after he was sworn in (which he went on to do). This story was "literally unimaginable," Unger writes in his new book, *Den of Spies*—a crime of the highest order. He was hooked.

Speaking with me about the October surprise from a leather booth at a Greenwich Village tavern more than three decades later, Unger, now 75, lit up. Uncovering exactly how Republican operatives had improbably and secretly worked out an agreement with Ayatollah Khomeini would give him a chance to be Woodward and Bernstein, or Seymour Hersh—journalistic heroes whose crusading investigations he revered. But it would not be Unger's Watergate. It would be his undoing. Within a year, the story was downgraded to a hoax and Unger was both out of a job at *Newsweek* and being sued for \$10 million. He had become, he writes, "toxic."

Unger is what anyone would call an old-school reporter. His instincts were formed during the Watergate era, when the public's reflexive trust in government was high (somewhere near 70 percent before Richard Nixon took office, as opposed to about 20 percent today) and journalists began fashioning themselves as adversaries



Unger: Crusading truth teller or conspiracy theorist?

with the presumption that the worst abuses of power were happening behind closed doors. Their role was to break Americans' credulity—and they did. When I met Unger in mid-September, a second apparent attempt on Donald Trump's life had just occurred. I asked him for his first thought. "Cui bono?" he said. "Who benefits from it?" He wasn't saying it had been a false-flag operation. But he definitely started from the premise that it might have been.

**T**HE ALLEGED LINCHPIN of the October surprise was William Casey, Reagan's campaign manager through most of 1980. Casey was the head of secret intelligence for Europe in the Office of Strategic Services, the precursor to the CIA, during World War II, and for the rest of his life maintained a broad network of contacts among the spies and dodgy arms dealers of the world. He was a furtive, mumbly guy; a Manichaean thinker; a Cold Warrior; and, as Unger put it to me, a "dazzlingly

brilliant spy." Casey also seemed to have few scruples about doing what was needed to win. He was accused of having obtained Carter's debate briefing papers during the 1980 campaign. And once the election was over, Casey was made director of the CIA.

After Sick's 1991 op-ed, every major news publication sought to follow up and investigate. Most of the reporting focused on whether Casey was present at meetings in Madrid at the end of July 1980, when the plan was supposedly hatched. Endless minutiae surrounded this question. Unger showed me a copy of an attendance chart from a conference in London around the end of July, at which Casey was a participant. For the two days he was supposedly in Madrid for the meetings, some of the check marks on the chart indicating his presence in London are in light pencil, not in pen, meaning that he was expected but possibly never showed; did he sneak off to Spain? "Anyone can see this, right?" Unger said, squinting at the chart.

The pieces of this puzzle were that tiny. Or they involved shady characters who said they were at the Madrid meetings or their follow-ups and could attest to the plotting—

people such as the brothers Cyrus and Jamshid Hashemi, Iranian businessmen who were acting, Unger alleges, as double agents, pretending to negotiate the hostage release with Carter while working with Casey to stall it for Reagan's benefit.

Unger, who had been a freelance investigative reporter, was hired by *Newsweek*, shortly after *Esquire* published his first article on the October surprise, to join a team dedicated to tracking down the plot. Like Woodward and Bernstein on Watergate, Unger imagined the team would do a series of stories leading, eventually, all the way to the White House.

And as with Watergate and other conspiracy investigations of varying credibility—whether the cigarette industry's cover-ups or Iraq's purported weapons of mass destruction—this one relied on a rogues' gallery of sources. Unger made contact with Ari Ben-Menashe, an arms dealer who claimed to be an intelligence asset for the Israeli Military Intelligence Directorate.

# The Last Word

Ben-Menashe gave Unger details about the deal and described Casey's participation.

*Newsweek* was not interested in an incremental Watergate-like build. Instead of Unger's scoops, they published an article about how Ben-Menashe was a liar who had helped invent the story of the October surprise. Other publications followed.

Unger was soon out at *Newsweek*. Then he and *Esquire* were sued for libel by Robert "Bud" McFarlane, Reagan's national security adviser (the case was thrown out, and McFarlane lost his subsequent appeal). Two congressional investigations looking into the plot were launched in the early 1990s; the House produced a nearly 1,000-page report. Both inquiries concluded that no proof of a conspiracy existed. According to the chair of the House task force, the whole story was the product of sources who were "either wholesale fabricators or were impeached by documentary evidence."

In the years since that first op-ed was published, a lot of other testimony and evidence had helped bolster the October-surprise theory, some of it from more reliable sources—notably Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, the president of Iran in 1980, who insisted to anyone who would listen that he had been aware of the plot. And just last year, *The New York Times* published a bombshell report in which Ben Barnes, a prominent Texas politician, revealed a secret he had been keeping for nearly 43 years: In 1980, he traveled throughout the Middle East with John Connally, the former Texas governor, seemingly at the behest of Casey, to ask Arab leaders to persuade Iran to delay the hostage release.

**T**HE ODDS THAT Unger will get a renewed hearing for the October surprise are low. We now live in a country where politicians seem to openly brag about lying, and enough people despise the media so much that they're willing to believe those lies anyway. Detailing a nearly half-century-old conspiracy theory, even with Unger's mass of evidence—the receipts, a videotaped interview with Jamshid Hashemi, those little pencil check marks on an old attendance chart—would read like old news to one half of the country and partisan revisionism to the other half.

I wondered, though, in my discussions with Unger, whether reporters like him bore some of the responsibility—whether the kind of skepticism and mistrust that marked his generation of journalists had helped create our post-truth reality. There were moments when he slipped from crusading truth teller to something closer to a conspiracy theorist willing to believe the most outlandish speculations. In the book, for example, with very little proof, he

entertains the idea that rogue spies looking to undermine Carter sabotaged the helicopters used in a failed hostage-rescue mission in April 1980, which ended with eight soldiers dying in a crash. I asked Unger whether he really believed this. "Well, I think it is a possibility," he told me.



*The Iran hostages, returning home in 1981*

It was easier to sympathize with Unger—to see the genuine idealism behind the swagger—when he explained why he couldn't ever let go of the theory that had so hobbled his career.

He grew up in Dallas; his father was an endocrinologist and his mother owned the biggest independent bookstore in the city. Unger told me about a visit he took to the Dachau concentration camp when he was 14, in 1963. This was instead of a bar mitzvah. While there, he saw Germans atoning for their national sins, not even 20 years after the end of the war, and it stayed with him, that honest reckoning with the past. He told me it made him think of his city's own Robert E. Lee Park, named after the Confederate general and defender of slavery, and how shameful it was that so long after the end of the Civil War, Lee's name was unapologetically honored.

"When my colleagues and I first took on the October Surprise more than 30 years ago, we became actors in a case study of America's denial of its dark history, its refusal to accept the ugly truth," Unger writes in his book. After Unger told me the story about his childhood and Lee Park, I looked up the green space and saw that it had been renamed Turtle Creek Park in 2019. Ugly truths, even in America, do occasionally get acknowledged—but it can take longer than one journalist's lifetime for that to happen.

*Adapted from an article first published in The Atlantic. ©2024 The Atlantic Monthly Group. Used with permission.*

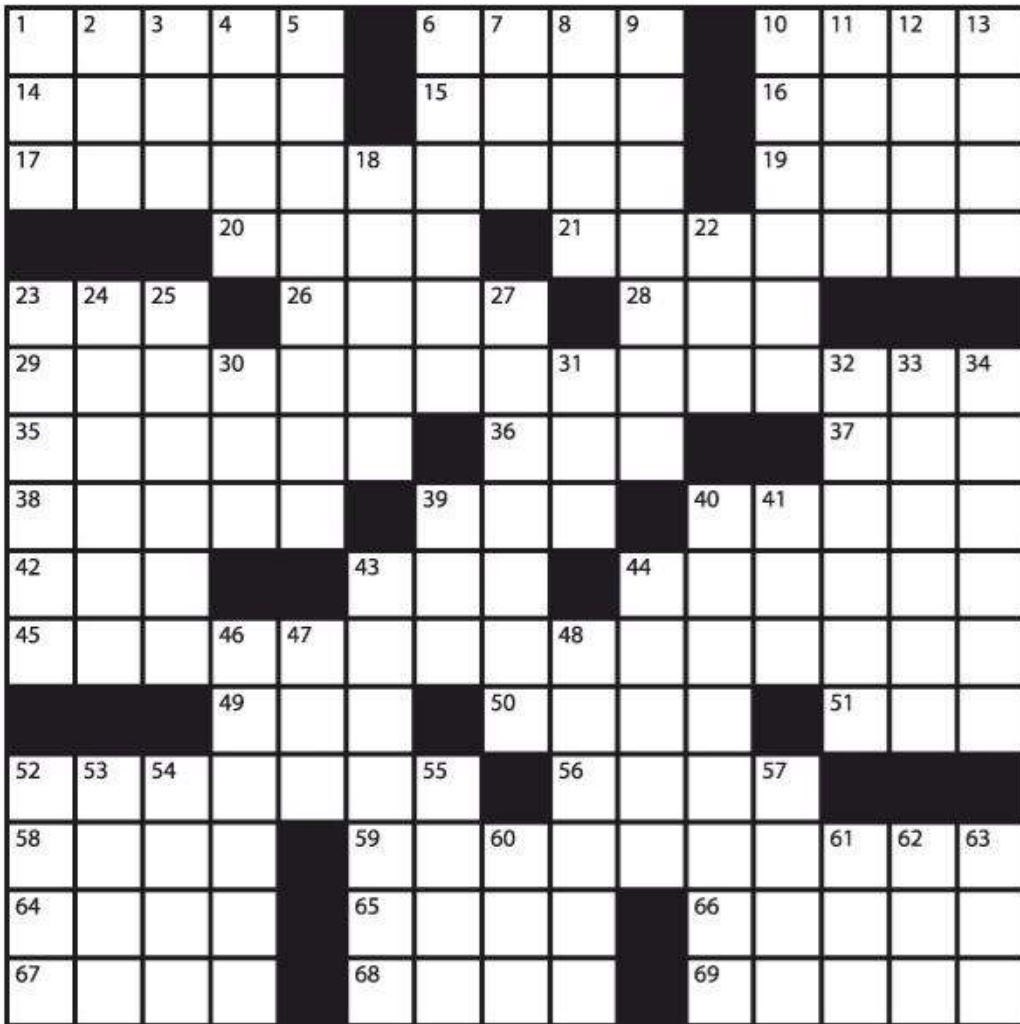
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## Crossword No. 765: The Write Stuff by Matt Gaffney



**ACROSS**

- 1 Wineglass parts
- 6 Social equal
- 10 Places
- 14 Chic Mizrahi
- 15 Roof overhang
- 16 Toiling away
- 17 Novelist Han Kang made history Oct. 10 when she became the first writer from this country to win the Nobel Prize in literature
- 19 Delhi deity
- 20 Frau's counterpart
- 21 Apply liberally, as sauce
- 23 Mil. installations
- 26 She was prime minister from 1969 to 1974
- 28 Affirmative reply
- 29 With 39-Across: Kazuo Ishiguro, who won his Nobel in 2017, is best known for this novel, made into a hit 1993 film starring Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson
- 35 Paul on horseback
- 36 Bald spot cover
- 37 Curse
- 38 Follows a command
- 39 See 29-Across
- 40 Be less than truthful with
- 42 Boathouse item
- 43 Charged particle
- 44 \_\_\_ up (botched it)
- 45 Novelist Mario Vargas Llosa almost became this in 1990, losing to Alberto Fujimori; he won his Nobel 20 years later

**DOWN**

- 1 Bro's sib
- 2 General \_\_\_'s chicken
- 3 Water, in Quebec City
- 4 Do the \_\_\_ (calculate)
- 5 Plotting people
- 6 "But will it play in \_\_\_?"
- 7 Home to the hammer and anvil
- 8 Nights before big days
- 9 No wearer of rose-colored glasses
- 10 Belonging to
- 11 Six-sided state
- 12 Proctor's announcement
- 13 Celeb
- 18 Krispy \_\_\_
- 22 Hubbub
- 23 1960s military sitcom
- 24 An attorney has passed it
- 25 Harsh

- 27 Headline performer at the 2023 Super Bowl
- 30 King, in Quito
- 31 Vote against
- 32 Main points of essays
- 33 Straight
- 34 Mass departure
- 39 "\_\_\_, a deer..."
- 40 Half of a low pair
- 41 Web access source
- 43 Modest response to a compliment
- 44 Bread or dough
- 46 Literary sailor
- 47 "Here's what I think," in a text
- 48 Señores and señoras have them
- 52 Jon of *Mad Men*
- 53 Bowling Green's state
- 54 Hilarious Lucille
- 55 Court case
- 57 Big book
- 60 It determines eye color
- 61 Spy novelist Deighton
- 62 Some T-shirts (abbr.)
- 63 "So glad to hear that!"

## The Week Contest

**This week's question:** A three-armed robot conductor called MAiRA Pro S recently made its debut performance, leading an all-human orchestra in the German city of Dresden. If a composer were to rewrite a famous piece of classic music especially for this machine maestro, what should the bot-friendly work be titled?

**Last week's contest:** A goat on a Newfoundland farm broke free from its tether so that it could join a passing half-marathon, and trotted alongside the runners for 2.5 miles before being caught by its owners. If Hollywood were to make a sports drama about a goat that dreams of achieving athletic greatness, what could the film be titled?

THE WINNER: "Hoof Dreams"  
*Bill Levine, Belmont, Mass.*

SECOND PLACE: "Hay Field of Dreams"  
*James Pearson, Anaheim, Calif.*

THIRD PLACE: "Million Dollar Baa Baa"  
*Peter Gordon, Great Neck, N.Y.*

For runners-up and complete contest rules, please go to [theweek.com/contest](http://theweek.com/contest).

**How to enter:** Submissions should be emailed to [contest@theweek.com](mailto:contest@theweek.com). Please include your name, address, and daytime

telephone number for verification; this week, type "AI concerto" in the subject line. Entries are due by noon, Eastern Time, Oct. 22. Winners will appear on the Puzzle Page next issue and at [theweek.com/puzzles](http://theweek.com/puzzles) on Friday, Oct. 25. In the case of identical or similar entries, the first one received gets credit.

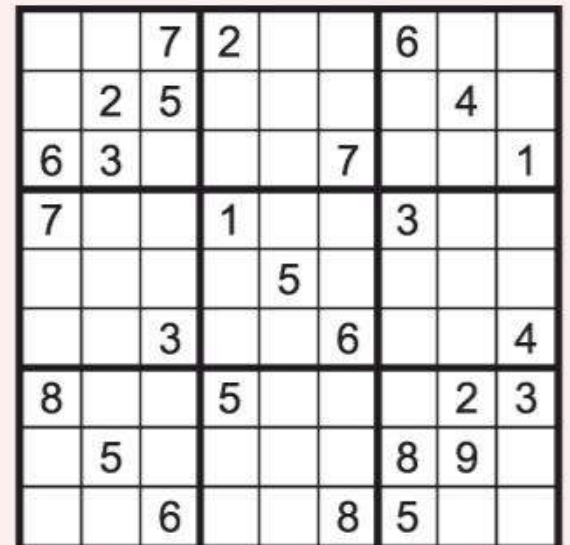
◀ **The winner gets a one-year subscription to *The Week*.**



## Sudoku

Fill in all the boxes so that each row, column, and outlined square includes all the numbers from 1 through 9.

Difficulty: medium



Find the solutions to all *The Week's* puzzles online: [www.theweek.com/puzzle](http://www.theweek.com/puzzle).

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