



jacket. **SOBOYE**  
 t-shirt. **Emporio Armani**  
 trousers. **Jean Paul Gaultier**  
 shoes. **Zara**  
 glasses + rings. **CHANEL**  
 belt throughout. **MARK AND LONA**  
 earrings + hat throughout. **Nile's own**  
 necklaces throughout. **Dior + Antique Pearls**  
 guitar. **Nile's "Hitmaker" Guitar – 1959 Fender Stratocaster**



# nile rodgers

photography. **stephanie pistel**





hat. Nile’s own  
sunglasses + rings. CHANEL

# gatekeeper of groove

His funk is notorious and his soul penetrating. Nile Rodgers is the songwriter, producer and guitarist behind some of the most iconic hits of our time. He makes everybody dance.

*Schön!* caught up with Rodgers the morning after his 71st birthday bash, which popped off on the final night of his North American tour with Duran Duran. The entire arena surprised him with a *Happy Birthday* sing-along upon the final chord of his performance. Simon Le Bon was waiting with a gift of pearls – a Rodgers’ emblem – saying, “What’s better than a string of pearls? *Two* strings of pearls.” Rodgers says, “It was literally the greatest birthday of my life.”

Even if you don’t know him by name, he’s certainly made you move. Nile Rodgers is who superstars call when they want to go higher. He has collaborated with an astounding array of artists; in the ‘80s he produced Duran Duran’s biggest single *The Reflex* and, most recently, his teamwork with Beyoncé for *Cuff It* became her longest-charting single, enjoying 35 weeks on Billboard’s Hot 100.

How does this alchemist weave guitar strings into gold? “Every morning I wake up with a song in my head,” he tells us. “It’s nothing that I try to do.” He finds hidden gems in everyday life, saying, “Every song I’ve written has been nonfiction based. It’s something that I see, something that I feel.” Rodgers echoes a pearl of wisdom imparted by civil rights activist Harry Belafonte: “‘Artists are the gatekeepers of truth.’ That’s always stuck with me. When I’m writing a song, I want to be writing about the truth.”

Rodgers’ appreciation, love and support for artists is fundamental to his mission and underlines his genius collaborations. “When I’m working with an artist, I study them,” he explains. “I go back, and I listen, and I listen, and I read. I believe all of us are on an artistic arc. I always try and be that guy taking you to the next place in your journey.”

He honed his distinctive guitar style – a sound that would epitomise dance, funk and disco – in New York’s vibrant music scene. A fortuitous meeting with bassist Bernard Edwards in the early ‘70s set the stage for extraordinary greatness. In 1976, they formed CHIC. Their groove was infectious, their style was elegant and their impact was profound. CHIC’s hits *Everybody Dance*, *Le Freak* and *Good Times* became anthems of the era, sparking a feeling of liberation at a time of social change.

Rodgers’ guitar wizardry, Edwards’ bass prowess and their shared commitment to crafting sophisticated, danceable tunes made them legends of disco with an influence that extended far beyond the club. Rodgers’ production of Diana Ross’ album *Diana* spawned hits like *Upside Down* and *I’m Coming Out*. For Sister Sledge, Rodgers produced *We Are Family*, a song he affectionately refers to as “a monster”. His inventive production of David Bowie’s *Let’s Dance* album ushered in a new epoch of Bowie’s career.

One of Rodgers’ most celebrated collaborations was with Madonna. Together, they created the chart-topping album *Like a Virgin*, featuring iconic jams *Material Girl* and *Dress You Up*. He remembers talking with her about the production concept: “She had all digital demos. Everything was programmed and synthesised. I said to her, ‘What if we play all that programmed stuff? It will have a vibe to it.’ And it wound up being amazing!”

He says the dazzling tightness of Giorgio Moroder’s Donna Summer records inspired him to sharpen his craft. “I thought he could play like that, so I sat at home just practicing,” he recalls as he plays air guitar and mimics the sound of the synthesiser bassline of *I Feel Love*. “When I met Giorgio later, he said, ‘No, I had a pulse generator that was just doing one note at a time!’” Laughing, Rodgers adds, “So, when you hear CHIC’s *I Want Your Love* and you hear that guitar that is so super tight... That’s just how we play.”

Rodgers is a symbol of resilience, creativity and the unifying power of music. His contributions to the industry have earned him numerous accolades, including induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and multiple Grammy Awards. But perhaps the most remarkable thing about Nile Rodgers is his ability to make us dance, smile and feel alive with his music. His groove is the heartbeat of countless parties, the soundtrack to unforgettable memories and a source of joy for millions.

Nile Rodgers’ podcast *Deep Hidden Meaning* is on Apple Music.

words. Mike Furey

photography. Stephanie Pistel @ Tempomedia  
retouch. Stephan Lesger  
location. T-Mobile Arena, Las Vegas



*Blouse / Giorgio Armani  
Earrings / Kathy's own*

*Opposite  
Full look / Giorgio Armani  
Jewellery / Kathy's own*





Blouse / Giorgio Armani  
Earrings / Kathy's own

## blazing anew

American Horror Story icon Kathy Bates entertains and enlightens in Netflix's new comedy *Disjointed*.

Kathy Bates is relishing her latest role as Ruth, a marijuana-legalisation advocate who also owns and operates a pot dispensary in Los Angeles with her son and friends. Hilarity and hijinks ensue as they smoke their own stash, but beneath the humour lies a certain truth: Bates is a two-time cancer survivor who uses medical marijuana to assuage her own pain. "I hope people laugh their asses off," she says, but "also learn more about the benefits you get health-wise."

The Academy Award winning actress is joined on the show by the formidable talents of co-creators Chuck Lorre (*Two and a Half Men*, *The Big Bang Theory*) and David Javerbaum (*The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*). Each 30-minute episode is recorded in front of a live audience: "They are going nuts!" says Bates. "It's so much fun to hear them go berserk laughing. Especially nowadays, people really need an escape and a laugh. Also, maybe, they will take away the ideas that Ruth has."

Bates is clearly excited to portray someone whose passion and advocacy is aligned with her own. "I usually play the dowdy characters in the dumpy dresses and stuff," she says, "but this time I get to play a really cool hippie-type woman who has been fighting for the legalisation of pot since she was 16, a true apothecary who is passionate about the fact that marijuana is a healing drug. She has so many patients who she is helping deal with different diseases."

Bates explains that the cast has a cannabis consultant in West Hollywood (very much like the character she plays), who has given them better insight into real dispensary life. "We're serious about what we are doing in that way," she stresses, "but it's also hysterical. The show has a lot of really whacky elements that you've never seen before. We have animations that can go into characters to see what they're thinking, fake commercials and a YouTube [channel with a] couple of stoners who are off-the-chart stoned."

The show also features music, an aspect that plays on talents that Lorre, Javerbaum and Bates have in common. Lorre wrote the theme song for *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and Javerbaum is an accomplished musical-theatre lyricist, librettist and Grammy winner. "I always wanted to be a singer," Bates admits. "When I was growing up, I would lock myself in my room and go to another place playing the guitar. My first role in a movie was Miloš Forman's

*Taking Off*. I had written a song when I was a teenager and I played it in the film." For *Disjointed*, Martin Guitar, "the finest out there", designed a guitar called the D-420. "The base has been decorated with all sorts of pot symbols and designs. So I picked it back up again and I'm starting to play more. It's a real comfort for me."

Marijuana has also been a comfort to Bates, who has a California state-issued doctor's prescription. "I've had cancer twice and lymphedema, a swelling in my arms, which is painful," she explains. "I have other aches and pains. I'm very fond of Indica, let's just put it that way."

*Disjointed* airs at a time when just over half of the USA has legalised medical marijuana and eight states also allow recreational sale and consumption. Yet it remains illegal on a federal level. According to the US federal drug policy, it is still considered to be a "Schedule 1" drug (a classification reserved for drugs that have "no currently accepted medical application"). Reclassifying marijuana would allow millions of Americans to benefit from its therapeutic value.

Bates adamantly stands behind the need to change federal legalisation: "Politicians have come out and basically said that [marijuana] is the devil. That kind of ignorance is keeping people – countless people I know dealing with nausea and cancer with chemotherapy – from having that help. [Marijuana] has become indispensable to people who are suffering. To neglect this is really cruel, in my opinion, and it's ignorant. Did I say ignorant? I hope I said ignorant. It's also really old-fashioned and out of date."

*Disjointed* is available on Netflix now

Words / Mike Fury

Photography / Alexander Saladrigas @ Cerutti + Co.  
Fashion / Douglas VanLaningham @ Photogenics Army  
Casting / Anissa Payne  
Hair / Creighton Bowman @ TMG-LA using R+Co  
Make Up / Kristee Liu @ TMG-LA  
using Skinolor de la Mer & The Moisturizing Matte Lotion la Mer  
Fashion Assistant / Jeremy Friend





top. **Alabama Blonde**  
hat. **Piers Atkinson**  
earring. **Graziela Gems**

# the invisible muscle

Bright new star **Victoria Pedretti** is poised to thrill tens of millions again — this time with *The Haunting of Bly Manor*.

Recently seen as Love in the Netflix hit *You*, Pedretti began her television career two years ago in the *The Haunting of Hill House*. In follow-up show *Bly Manor*, she plays Dani, an *au pair* who looks after two orphaned children in a country estate. While other cast members also return, *Bly Manor* is a whole new haunting based on the 1898 novella *The Turn of the Screw* as well as an amalgamation of Henry James’ gothic romance tales.

Pedretti touches on a theme she hopes will inspire conversation among viewers: how love and sacrifice are often misconstrued. She says, “These children have been told that they need to sacrifice to show that they care. We teach children this in many different ways; if they have been traumatised or abused they are told that their life, their safety and love require sacrifice.” But in this story, the children are surrounded by a group of people who “reeducate and encourage them to do what is right, to do what feels good.”

In tandem with this concept, Pedretti says, “I think the show absolutely emphasises the power that we innately possess that people around us tell us we lack because [doing] that upholds systems, which may (or may not even) serve them. I think the most radical thing we can do is be ourselves in the confines and constructs that we exist in — even if it’s dangerous — and not only be that, but embrace ourselves and teach others to embrace us as well.”

Pedretti dares to push beyond screen acting’s technical conventions to express real life, which knows no bounds, bringing a uniquely artistic richness to her roles. She raises her voice dynamically and fills the frame with her body to accurately mimic the rawness of reality. She explains, “My training was in theater, so the idea of projecting was very important. But then when it came to film, I noticed that people would talk about a different style: ‘When you’re acting in front of the camera, you have to be small. You can’t move so much. You can’t speak so loud.’ I found that not to be true.”

Pedretti takes voice and movement classes to increase her flexibility and physical strength, but she also practices yoga as a means to access a deeper well of personal strength. “I like the idea that I can just hold my body up off the ground. There are tough moments where you’re just like, ‘I’m gonna die’, but then you’re like, ‘No, I’m not. I’m strong.’” She laughs and says, “It’s good for the brain.”

Beyond the physical, Pedretti explains that there’s a transcendent aspect that is essential to her process: “I don’t know how to describe it except an ‘invisible muscle’ we are absolutely able to strengthen. For me, that relates to a journey inward that is wonderful, in that it applies to my work but also to my life: the ability to observe, to not judge and to understand. I think it’s really spiritual and magical.”

Empathetic by nature, Pedretti finds effortless connections to her characters by approaching from a place of love, aligning herself with their stories. She will “quickly look at a character and be like, ‘Ah... love you. You went through that *thing* and you just keep doing it.’” She extends this compassion to herself, using meditation as a means to balance the intensity of her character portrayals, especially while working on *The Haunting of Bly Manor*. “I was losing my goddamn mind,” she admits, “so I needed something to bring me to where I was [in the present moment]. I was like, ‘I need to just be here.’ I’ve gotten to delve into it in a more passive way as I’ve been in the pandemic, tip-toeing back and forth with it and really developing a strong relationship where I feel like it’s more sustainable and incorporated into my life.”

In terms of future projects, Pedretti is curious about “the way in which we can offer anything that’s interesting. When I say interesting, I mean not conformist and not conventional — things that delve into what is taboo and what hasn’t been seen before. Many shows are doing completely new things, like *Bly*, reinventing themselves, digging deeper and going further.”

*The Haunting of Bly Manor* premieres on Netflix on 9th October.

words. **Mike Furey**

photography. **Filip Milenkovic**  
art direction. **Faith Picozzi**  
fashion. **Mimi Cuttrell**  
talent. **Victoria Pedretti**  
casting. **Alabama Blonde**  
hair. **Martin-Christopher Harper @ The Wall Group**  
make up. **Alexandra French**



# PABLO VITTAR

PABLO VITTAR'S BORDERLESS HEART GIVES IT 111%

**BRYAN HUYNH**

Photography

**NICOLA FORMICHETTI**

Creative Direction

**MIKE FUREY**

Text

Pop star and drag's reigning queen of social media Pabllo Vittar is earning international respect and bringing much-needed visibility to Brazil, as human rights are being threatened there. Vittar is the first drag queen to be nominated for a Latin Grammy Award (for Best Urban/Fusion Performance in 2018 and Best Portuguese Language Song in 2020), the first to win an MTV Europe Music Award (Best Brazilian Artist 2019 and 2020), the first to be on the cover of any Vogue publication globally — even the first queen to be named “Man of the Year” by GQ Brazil. It seems shocking that there were so many firsts still to be had. Her successes remind us of how far we have yet to go: not just in terms of recognizing uniqueness in mainstream media but with seeing real progress for the LGBTQI+ community in Brazil. Vittar dares to be himself — and herself — in spite of an openly homophobic political administration that systematically stokes violence and suppresses freedom of expression. Blazing forward with a message of personal strength from the heart, she transcends language and resonates deeply beyond the shores of Brazil. The more you hear, the more you'll love.



Vittar was raised in the Northeast region of Brazil, where forró and tecno brega music originated. She says, “I grew up listening to that nonstop amongst pop divas like Donna Summer, Aretha Franklin, and Whitney Houston.” In 2015, she combined these influences to create a version of Major Lazer’s song Lean On with her own original lyrics, called Open Bar. Producer Diplo shared the release on his Twitter and, shortly after, the two collaborated alongside Brazilian pop star Anita to create Sua Cara. The song yielded world-wide attention and landed them the Latin Grammy nomination.

Flash forward: Vittar is three albums deep with Sony Records Brazil. Her latest one, 111, is trilingual and features: Brazilian favorite Ivete Sangalo, Mexican “Latin Queen of Pop” Thalía, and English singer-songwriter Charlie XCX, among others. The album has had over 750+ million streams to date.

This sparkling songstress and fierce dancer is earnest at her core. One of Vittar’s alluring qualities is the optimistic endurance which she says she got from her mother, who survived “through hard times and never gave up on happiness and hope for a great future and life for her and her family.” She taught young Pablo how to “deal with problems, celebrate the joyful times, and keep everything simple and down-to-earth no matter what.”

“Growing up gay in Brazil is not easy,” says Vittar. “My mom used to work all day long. My sisters and I would take care of each other. [They] never let anyone bully me at school or on the streets.” Now Vittar happily extends that support to others, especially to “gay kids who are ultra-feminine who can relate and see that there’s nothing wrong with that and you don’t need to hide it!” She explains, “We still live in a society that tells us what to do and how to behave! So, my piece of advice is to create a support network with others that are maybe living the same process.” The support that Vittar suggests includes social media, where she has garnered tens of millions of followers: 35+ million across all platforms combined. We have real

conversations there and I love it; they are my support to keep on going with my work,” she says. “Some of them I have become good friends with.”

Fans love her for the realness she exudes — she isn’t trying to be something or someone that she is not. She wears her flaws as proudly as her tattoos. “They see me being fierce and sexy but also clumsy, having trouble with language, and laughing about it.” That lighthearted spirit, as well as her passion, radiates through her music. She says, “My inspiration comes most of the time from personal experiences. But there are also random subjects like those covered in *Parabéns* — the guys and I were joking around after a studio session and out of nowhere we had a great song.”

To appreciate Mz. Vittar properly, it’s important to know a bit about the danger lurking in Brazil beneath a veneer of progress. Pro-LGBTQI+ legislation has passed over the last decade. (Same-sex marriage was legalized in 2013. Citizens were allowed to change their name and gender on official documents without undergoing surgery in 2018. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity was criminalized in 2019.) Yet, violence towards LGBTQI+ individuals has been rising to unprecedented heights. Last year, The National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals (ANTHRA) reported that the number of trans persons killed in Brazil increased by 70%. (Their analysis says it’s most likely even higher than that, due to lack of reporting.)

Gender and sexuality aside, Brazil has notoriously censored artists — especially musicians — in recent history. During its military dictatorship (1964-1985), those with values different to the government’s were arrested, tortured, and, in some cases, killed via death penalty. Many freethinkers voluntarily exiled themselves to places like New York City, London and Paris to avoid abuse (and they were not allowed to return later). When the dictatorship ended, and democracy resumed once again, a report was released stating that

authorities who had been in charge were fully aware of the brutal and illegal treatment taking place at the time, despite their claims that they had always operated according to the law. Additionally, a commission proved that the Brazilian government concealed information regarding missing persons. Yet, none of the offenders were brought to justice. Only in the last decade have the atrocities of that time begun to be addressed. In fact, a documentary about censorship in Brazil was even censored from distribution as late as 2009.

It's important to know this history given that the current Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, was a member of the Brazilian army during its rule in the 70's. Since his 2019 election, he has openly attacked homosexuality and artistic freedom. This past year, he denied governmental funding for endeavors that do not align with what he considers to be "Christian values." But many recognize his actions as blatant assaults and attempts to censor. Vittar says, "Not just me but a lot of people are here fighting against this kind of people! The worst thing is that is not only our president, he represents and gives voice to a lot of people that now think that kind of violence is okay!" She alludes to criminal groups that often insight violence towards artists and journalists who oppose state values. "We resist, we will resist, as we always do, and step by step we are trying our best to change the scenario for the next generations!"

Being so vocal requires rest too, which is different than silence. Alone time is important to think about our decisions and goals." The only time Vittar calls for real silence is when she's working her beauty regimen: "It doesn't matter if I wake up in a good mood or in a bad mood, my morning skin care routine has to happen quietly... and also the one before going to bed." On her days off, she likes to "try some new makeup that the brands are always sending me, new techniques and stuff." What makes a classic Pablo Vittar look? "Fierce makeup, a look that makes you feel sexy as hell, some boots and great hair." With her

favorite designers including The Blonds and Weslah, it's fun to dream of what fashion collaborations could be created with this burgeoning superstar. She says, "I have been talking to a designer that I really love too and we are planning a collab, but I can't say anything else about that right now, just that you are all gonna love it!"

The extra-worldly photoshoot featuring this international phenomenon was fittingly captured in four countries. Creative director Bryan Huynh in Toronto collaborated with fashion director Nicola Formichetti in Los Angeles and CGI artist Rodolfo Hernández in Mexico City; director of photography Erna Cost captured Vittar in São Paulo. Vittar LOLs in appreciation, saying, "There is no one creating visuals like theirs. Especially during a pandemic when you can't leave your apartment, they are able to transport you to different worlds."

Formichetti explains, "I thought by not being together, and not traveling anywhere, we'd be stuck. But, with the new digital world, we got to create the impossible. That's the beauty of working in this kind of way." Together, nonetheless, the team carefully created an imaginary realm a reflection of her musical world, where she is able to live freely, beyond any confines.

"I had all these ideas," Formichetti chuckles. "We were thinking, if there was a goddess of the digital world, what would it look like? Computer games meets Grecian goddess and cyberpunk. I like to pile stuff on to everybody so that they can't even move. That's why I was excited about the idea of making digital clothing." But when he saw the images coming in, Formichetti decided to keep his approach minimal: "I just loved the purity of Pablo — vulnerable and powerful. It just felt so beautiful, almost like an ancient beauty from a mystical civilization. I was like, 'We don't need to add any more stuff.' So we just played with Pablo's hair and makeup and added little things: digital tattoos, a shoe..." He matter-of-factly adds: "I never do barefoot. I wanted to create something that was almost impossible to walk in that matched the surrounding. I love that





we get to be so creative but not lose the soul; sometimes digital projects can be very soulless.” Despite the distance and the digitalization, Vittar shines through.

Formichetti says this is just the beginning of a “beautiful collaboration we will continue in the future. I definitely want to tackle the digital clothing more. The possibilities are endless. I’m happy to be involved in Pablo’s journey.” Huynh shares the same sentiment: “It is incredible seeing such a prominent LGBTQI+ artist living joyously; it is the ultimate act of rebellion against hate.” In terms of the future, Hunh says, “It does feel like there seems to always be this pushback in fashion to go back to raw imagery or film photography, which is fine, but the industry should also nurture artists who want to explore the digital side of things. Both sides can exist simultaneously, In fact, the more different approaches there are, the better for everyone.”

Vittar certainly has many sides covered: the feminine, the masculine, the fantasy and the heart. Lifted into a magical safe haven with the support of likeminded artists, she ultimately extends an invitation back into her real world — one steeped in rich culture and fearless spirit. She invokes a time when “suffering ends and love will grow” and hopes that you will “come be happy,” without judgement. ★



coat. **Luu Dan**  
suit. **SANDRO**  
jumper. **Helmut Lang @ Paumé Los Angeles**  
shoes. **G.H.BASS**

# take me to the river

**Kelly McCormack bursts with boundless curiosity, moving from actor, to singer, to avant-garde artist, embodying larger forms more suitable for her limitless expression as she goes.**

McCormack’s latest performance as Natasha in Eva Victor’s award-winning film ‘Sorry, Baby’ explores an archetypical, adversarial Type-A personality with “something a little off kilter...She’s this Anne-of-Green-Gables-cosplaying-Virginia-Woolf-wannabe-horse-girl,” McCormack explains. “I told Eva, ‘I’ll do this part if you let me have extensions that go all the way to my butt.’ There is this kind of competitiveness [between two female characters] triangulated by this male character who is the professor.”

Despite the humour, the film’s subject matter goes quite deep. McCormack says, “They manage to capture how mundane sexual violence is for women, and how a lot of [the] fallout is you connecting with your best friend, and the two of you just talking by rote about what needs to happen next. The fact that Eva was able to capture this tone is ground-breaking.”

Traditionally, sexual violence has been portrayed as a “catalyst that sends the man on a revenge story – or a referendum on the woman’s virginity or purity. So, it’s this big moment. It is a very dramatic before-and-after moment for a woman,” the actor tells us. However, the value of this film is it is zeroing in on how quietly it treads. “It is truly this lonely undercurrent that moves through the rest of your life. Eva’s specificity, flavour and comedy: I have never seen something like it. It has cultural value towards a subject that I’m very passionate about.”

McCormack received the script for ‘Sorry, Baby’ while she was finishing her master’s degree in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Oxford, investigating boys’ clubs, homosocial behavior and the critical question: “How do men discuss rape when they are alone with themselves?”

Feeling that her thoughts couldn’t be contained within her thesis, McCormack created an art installation ‘Robes & Latin: Or, How to Get Kicked Out’, in which she displayed what she considers to be her “disemboweled feelings and thoughts that came with studying this topic”. This spillage from one medium into the next — across disciplines and modalities — epitomises her nature. When one expression isn’t enough, she extends into the next.

She paraphrases librettist Oscar Hammerstein: “When you can’t say it, you sing it. When you get to the point where you can’t sing it, dance it.” She explains: “It’s the constant revelation that I cannot use this language to express myself adequately. Then you move to the next, and it just gets heightened, and heightened, and heightened.”

McCormack unravels a common misconception about acting today: “There’s a big difference between truth and honesty. People think acting is about ‘I have to be so honest,’ – especially right now, in the language that people have about opening-up – but the truth is everything you’re not able to say with words; that you’re only able to sing about.”

The former coloratura soprano continues, “I’m really only telling the truth when I’m singing. I always feel like I’m missing that one currency that in musical theatre you have. Telling the truth: it’s like a river. The music provides you this river so directly. Music for me has always been the main event. So, I gravitate towards film projects about musicians, because I’m always looking for that river back.”

In 2020, McCormack wrote, directed and starred in ‘Sugar Daddy’, a film about a struggling musician who supports herself through a paid dating service in which she showcases a wide range of singing and performance talents. Over a span of two and a half years, McCormack developed original music for the film with musician Marie-Hélène Leclerc Delorme, AKA Foxtrott.

Looking to the future, McCormack says, “In my next film, I play a medieval page. I’m also writing this project about a divorced playwright, and that will end up being a play. I just directed this film loosely inspired by Connie Converse, a musician who put out one record in the 50s and disappeared. They’ve never found her. The film is this metaphysical disappearing act. We used many lo-fi theatre techniques to make this funhouse of this character’s last night.”

Shapeshifting from visionary to writer, performer to director; moving from word, to song, to larger expression; McCormack’s goal as an artist is to remain a mystery to herself as she “tracks the animal within”.

**‘Sorry, Baby’ will be in US cinemas in July.**

words. **Mike Furey**

photography. **Robin Harper @ Early Morning Riot**  
fashion. **Kat Typaldos @ Forward Artists**  
talent + art direction. **Kelly McCormack**  
casting. **Alabama Blonde @ Strike the Blonde Casting**  
hair. **Lynzi Massey**  
make up. **Sasha Borax @ BRIDGE Artists using YSL Beauty**  
set design. **bishop @ Little Apple Projects**  
fashion assistant. **Lydia Gingrich**



coat + shoes. **Gucci**  
shirt. **Balenciaga**

**beth ditto**

photography. **ben duggan**  
fashion. **douglas vanlaningham**





jacket. **Gucci**  
shirt. **Cecilie Bahnsen**  
skirt. **Yang!**  
earrings. **Madewell**

# radical radiance

**Beth Ditto is a fervent voice for feminism, queer culture and body-positivity, but her recent work approaches alternative visibility and acceptance in subtler tones.**

Following the disbandment of her dance-punk group Gossip, former front-woman Beth Ditto embarked on a solo career. She joined forces with Grammy-nominated producer Jennifer Decilveo to create *Fake Sugar*, an album of love songs. She also recently made her big-screen debut in the film *Don't Worry, He Won't Get Far on Foot*. In both projects, Ditto embraces her country roots, re-contextualising stereotypical political associations. By doing so, she brings audiences closer to her heart and reveals deeper facets of her identity.

Ditto was raised in Judsonia, a small town outside of Searcy, Arkansas. To escape its religious dogma, she moved to Olympia, Washington, and sang passionate songs fueled by frustrations with society. But the recent passing of her father encouraged her to revisit sweet memories of her childhood. As nostalgic nods, Ditto enmeshes familiar Southern American children's songs and square dance patter calls like "Hambone" and "swing your partner do-si-do".

"*Fake Sugar* was my 'back to Arkansas' love-hate relationship with it. It's more of this acceptance of it than this fighting of it (what I did for my whole youth), which is funny because I don't have much acceptance for it anymore," says Ditto, alluding to the resurgence of hate groups today. "I'm mad at it again."

In delicate contrast, Ditto sings of romance, inspired by her ongoing divorce. She believes that love songs are particularly powerful and revitalising during this time of political resistance. "I have always thought of queer love as subversive and radical," she explains. "Just being alive and taking care of yourself is a radical sentiment because the hope is that we will shrivel up, die and go away. We're talking about every kind of counter-culture, every kind of marginalised person. They're going to do anything they can to make you disappear, even if it's just making you feel small or telling you that you'll never find love and that you are lonely in the world. When you take that into consideration, just making a queer love song – knowing that that's about your people – is so empowering."

In a separate move, Ditto made her acting debut earlier this year in *Don't Worry, He Won't Get Far on Foot*. The film, directed by Gus Van Sant, is based on the life of the late macabre cartoonist John Callahan. Callahan, played by Joaquin Phoenix, was an alcoholic who became quadriplegic after a car accident and learned to draw with his two hands pressed together.

Ditto portrays Reba, his friend and a fellow Alcoholics Anonymous member. She took inspiration from her two aunts to play the role. "Because [Reba] was very close to characters I knew, Gus trusted me with her," she says. While cameras were rolling, Ditto went off-script to share a true story about her aunt that made it to the final cut. She says the film shows "this really nice balance between talking about sobriety, disability [and] the bureaucracy that comes with addiction. It shows every angle of this person – how his existence was. He wasn't this perfect person, but he still deserved to have a movie made about him. His story is strong and empowering to other people in different ways."

In addition to her work in music and film to promote greater awareness for underrepresented individuals, Ditto is an emblem for women of all sizes in the fashion world. She has walked runways for Marc Jacobs and Jean Paul Gaultier and even designed her own plus-sized clothing line for two years.

While she is proud of the recent progress within the body-positive movement, she asserts the need for an even wider range in the media. "I think the presence is incredible, everyone supporting everyone. It's come miles and miles – there's no denying it. With that being said, I always have to talk about how there is a lot of intersectional fat-positivity that isn't on the Internet. Right now, what's happened is that there's been this acceptance of white 'thick' girls. They have a big ass, a small waist and big tits. More power to them. I couldn't be more happy. But there has to be room for women of colour, for trans women and women who don't necessarily have those perfect bodies. I think that's what we're fighting right now: white supremacy and the emphasising of a beauty standard within the body positivity movement."

words. **Mike Furey**

photography. **Ben Duggan**

fashion. **Douglas Van Laningham @ Photogenics Army**

talent. **Beth Ditto**

hair. **Blaine Provancha**

make up. **Caroline Hernandez**

video. **Riley Robbins**

production. **Villani Productions**

photography assistant. **Roman Udalov**

fashion assistant. **Jeremy Friend**

location. **Fais Do Do**





Jacket & T-Shirt / Rochambeau  
Jeans / Julius  
Rings & Bracelets / Chrome Hearts  
Hat / John Brown

## directing the dark

When director Johan Renck asked David Bowie to write the theme song for his new series, *The Last Panthers*, he initiated a deeper collaboration that would inspire Bowie's final works.

Johan Renck reached out to David Bowie and, by the following day, they were on the phone. Having never written music for television, yet feeling connected by a kindred aesthetic, Bowie encouraged an active dialogue to ensure the song would be apt and mutually meaningful. The 45-second tune expanded to become *Blackstar*, the ten-minute title track of Bowie's album. Renck directed videos for the song and its follow-up, *Lazarus* – now regarded as Bowie's farewell to fans.

Swedish-born Renck began his career in the early '90s, directing music videos for his own dance duo, Stakka Bo. This led to commercial projects that, over time, garnered him a stellar reputation. Before Bowie, Renck helmed videos for Madonna (*Hung Up*, *Nothing Really Matters*), Kylie Minogue (*Love at First Sight*) and The Knife (*Pass This On*). He also worked with artists New Order, Robbie Williams and Robyn but, over the last five years, gravitated towards drama, directing episodes of *Breaking Bad*, *Vikings* and *The Walking Dead*.

"I prefer the dark," Renck says, "but pure darkness is just depressing." He attributes his penchant for darker things to sinister Swedish folktales, music influenced by the occultist Aleister Crowley (such as that of Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin), as well as 1970s fashion photographers Guy Bourdin and Helmut Newton. "Fashion, back then, had an edge to it," he explains. "It could be provocative and also have a sense of humour. Fashion today is totally pretty and completely pretentious." For these reasons, Renck makes a conscious effort to inject what he calls "some weird sense of wit" or "humour in the darkest corners" into his fashion films. Some of his commercial clients include Nike, Levi's®, and Karl Lagerfeld. He has also directed campaigns for H&M's collaborations with top designers and, most recently, Calvin Klein Jeans, featuring Justin Bieber.

An understanding fashion and short and long forms of video, as well as being the subject of some of his own work, paid dividends to Renck's creative connection with Bowie. "We found a common ground and understood each other," he says. Despite being one of the few people who knew the reality of Bowie's imminent death, Renck remained centered: "I didn't feel that I had to do a Bowie video that does not reflect some of [his] mileage" nor to be completely progressive. He has been doing it so long and so great that he has become referential to himself. He himself is part of the expression and I want to honour that."

Still, Renck resists drawing direct lines from symbols depicted in *Blackstar* and *Lazarus* to Bowie's past. He carefully delineates the difference between image and meaning, believing signification depends on an individual's perspective and former associations: "People ask me what [my work is] about and I say 'it's up to you.' I have my relations and I know what it's about for me." In the same spirit, Renck says he never asked Bowie to explain his rationale. "[Bowie] had a lot of ideas and thoughts that he communicated through drawings," he says. "But I never tried to second-guess where his thoughts came from or meant. They had significance to me... and that's how I worked with them."

Rather than describing the meaning of his images, Renck details his process: "Whether you are a songwriter or a photographer or a poet, you try to transform psychology into something you can share with other people. So first you have to isolate what the actual feeling is that you are looking for. Then you start seeing what shape or form it can take in a sound, picture or narrative." He explains that this process will corrupt and change the emotion, affecting a transformation, so that you begin with one feeling and end up with another: "You never know if it's going to be good or bad until you've done it."

Renck says that this revelatory moment often comes for him "during the editing process". He concludes: "Vince Gilligan (*Breaking Bad* producer) taught me a lot about risk-taking and that you have to be brave. Also, you can do whatever the fuck you want. You decide the story you want to write."

Words / Mike Furey

Photography / Cyrill Matter @ Marek & Associates  
Fashion / Kisha C. Jones  
Grooming / Riad Azar  
Location / Candy Studio NYC



Sophia Loren for Harper's Bazaar, 1970

## glamour & grit

*His name may be forgotten, but his images remain iconic. Schön! rediscovers the man who changed the face of fashion photography.*

"You see a woman in a ball gown with a gun and you say, 'Oh, that's fashion,' but that started with Chris von Wangenheim. Not too many people know who he was, which is why we did this book," says Roger Padilha. Roger and his brother, Mauricio Padilha, are co-authors of *GLOSS*, the first monograph on Chris von Wangenheim's photography, and co-owners of MAO, a fashion PR agency in New York City. Von Wangenheim "took what was happening in culture and re-imagined violent scenarios with high fashion," explains Roger. Before that, fashion photography was meant to fascinate or to inspire awe but not to shock people.

Von Wangenheim moved from Germany to New York in 1965, at a time when civil unrest was fervent. Riots erupted as the result of a police shooting in Harlem and continued to break out "at intervals regular enough to make natives and tourists alike picture the nighttime streets as hostile jungles, teeming with predators and regressing into barbarism," as described by Mark Caldwell in *New York Night*. Crime reached unprecedented heights by the late 1970s; murders and felonious assaults more than doubled in comparison to the previous decade. Von Wangenheim would photograph at night with a ring light to simulate the flashlights and siren lights of a crime-scene. One of his iconic images features Patti Hansen posing seductively in front of a burning car in New York. "You don't know if she's a victim or if she did something," says Mauricio. This photograph inspired scenes in the 1978 film, *Eyes of Laura Mars*.

The 1970s marked a peak in the sexual liberation movement that challenged traditional codes of gender and sexuality, including the normalisation of contraception, public nudity and premarital sex. Pornography became mainstream; *Deep Throat* played in local movie theaters across the United States. These changes in culture encouraged magazines to reshape their formats to appeal to erotic desires. "There was a marriage of pornography and fashion that pushed the limits to see how much people would accept," says Roger. Fashion magazines like *Oni* and *Viva* began to include *Playboy*-esque centrefolds, while *Playboy* started covering fashion.

In 1972, Diana Vreeland, veteran editor-in-chief of American *Vogue*, was fired. She explained, simply, that, "They wanted a different magazine." In the same year, American *Vogue* became von Wangenheim's primary outlet. He also photographed for the German, French and Italian editions, as well as for *Esquire*, *Playboy*, *Interview* and *Viva* magazines. One of von Wangenheim's favourite muses was the late supermodel Gia Carangi, who did her first major fashion shoot with him. His notorious images of her standing naked behind a chain link fence were depicted in the film, *Gia*. "People know this photo because they've seen Angelina Jolie recreate it for the movie, but they've never [actually] seen it; it was never published," says Mauricio. Not until now.

Von Wangenheim is also well known for his advertisements for Christian Dior, Calvin Klein and Revlon. He was given unprecedented freedom to make

whatever pictures he liked for Dior, which introduced its *Your Dior* campaign as an attempt to make the brand more approachable. Von Wangenheim shot Lisa Taylor in diamonds, as a Doberman pinscher clenches its jaws around her wrist – an image that now adorns the cover of *GLOSS*. But while the images appear to be spontaneous, Mauricio elucidates that von Wangenheim "would strategically plan exactly what he wanted to shoot before anybody got there."

Von Wangenheim didn't indulge much off set; he preferred creative conversations about work with his friend and mentor, Helmut Newton. There was a playful competition between the two and they would inspire each other to go further. Roger and Mauricio, who finish each other's sentences, explain, "Chris would do a photo of a woman being pushed into a swimming pool, so it looks like she's about to fall in. Then Helmut would do a picture of someone just about to hit the water. So then Chris would do another image, that would come out a couple of months later in *Vogue*, of a woman completely submerged [with] her feet sticking out."

Von Wangenheim died in a car crash in 1981, at the age of 39. At this time, fashion photography was not considered to be art, so it was not preserved well. Archives for top publications consisted of negatives stapled to magazine pages placed on shelves. Most became damaged over time. Therefore, only a dozen or so boxes of von Wangenheim's personal work remained. Christine, his only daughter, brought them to the MAO showroom so Roger and Mauricio could compile the book. *GLOSS* finally gives Chris von Wangenheim's formerly ephemeral legacy its deserved permanence.



*GLOSS: The Work of Chris von Wangenheim, by Roger and Mauricio Padilha, with a Foreword by Steven Klein, is published by Rizzoli New York this September.*

Words / Mike Furey





jacket. CHANEL  
top + skirt. Yohji Yamamoto  
shoes. Christian Louboutin  
earrings. Swarovski

# to love is a righteous act

Transported through time by the spell of music, Zoë Bleu Sidel catches glimpses of herself in the mirrors of her characters, recollecting little pieces, spiraling from dreams into magic-filled life.

“She knows what she wants. She gets what she wants when she wants it,” Sidel says of her 15th Century character Elisabeta, in the forthcoming film ‘Dracula: A Love Tale’. “She’s a princess, but she acts like a queen. She’s got a regal, kind of bitchy presence,” she jests. “The clothes really bring the role to life. I have this beautiful velvet dress encrusted with pearls and it makes the bosoms looks amazing. Everything is covered, but it’s done in such a way that you can see that she’s sensual.”

Drawing inspiration from Francis Ford Coppola’s 1992 adaptation of Bram Stoker’s masterpiece, French filmmaker and director Luc Besson’s ‘Dracula: A Love Tale’ explores themes of eternal love and reincarnation. Sidel explains, “The very classical, historical way of thinking about ‘Dracula’ is ‘I’m going to suck your blood,’ and ‘You are mine,’ but that’s not this Dracula. It’s really something else; it’s a love story, not a horror film. It’s like ‘Romeo and Juliet’.” Both of Sidel’s characters (Elisabeta and Mina) share a profound connection with Dracula, played by Caleb Landry Jones, which transcends lifetimes. Sidel describes it as “soul love”.

To build chemistry, Sidel and Landry Jones took lessons in Butoh, a style of highly expressive avant-garde dance theater characterised by slow, controlled movements, contorted body postures and an intense focus on internal emotion rather than external aesthetics. For Sidel, the experience became a wordless, almost spiritual means of connection – physically, emotionally and beyond. “It was interesting to try and create a friendship through dance and music,” she tells us. Another way they connected was by listening to certain albums at the same time, which especially helped for specific scenes. For instance, there is a lullaby that threads through the film and music is the thing that weaves Elisabeta with her Victorian-era alter ego Mina, connecting them through time.

This transcendence between souls and roles had a significant impact on Sidel creatively. She wrote poetry from the voice of her characters, which allowed her to stay in-character and discover parts of herself, “picking up little pieces of Zoë that I maybe didn’t know were there”. “My music project L’ESPIRAL was heavily impacted,” she adds. “I’ve made four of those [poems] into songs that I’m going to record this summer.”

Sidel riffs on the musicality of life and love: “Everything is music, isn’t it? All of existence has a vibrational frequency; that’s music. Love is a frequency; it’s music. Like star-crossed lovers, a world begins between these two souls, these two people fall in love. And there is a music to it.” Going deeper in the spiral, she muses: “Reincarnation makes sense to me, like the seasons, like leaves falling from the tree. You know, leaves grow on the branches, fall to the ground, [the tree] becomes a scarecrow, and comes back again. There is a cyclical pattern to most things in life, in nature, and it makes sense to me that we are similar. Maybe in this AI-Cloud-crazy-technology-world that we live in now, we are further and further away from the notion that we are part of nature, but we’re not so superior. We really have a lot of the same DNA as all these other things that die and come back to life.”

Speaking of reincarnation, Sidel says, “Life keeps presenting funny situations and people have entered my life where I’m like, ‘There is no way this is the first time we’ve met.’ Sometimes I walk into a place or travel somewhere and I’m like, ‘I’ve been here before.’ I get this strange feeling in my body – almost like a humming sound when something rings true. It’s a knowing feeling, a gut instinct that almost has a sound like music in a way. When something feels really right, you know it in your whole body, and it almost vibrates. That’s the feeling I get when I’ve gone to these places. I don’t know how, when or why, but it’s nice to dream about.”

Sidel raves about Besson’s vision and direction: “Luc is a magician. He’s like a wizard from the ocean. He’s an architect of dreams. He painted a picture for me: it was as if he took me down a corridor, opened a window and showed me his dream – with very little words. It was almost like his presence gave me vision.”

**‘Dracula: A Love Tale’ will be in cinemas later this year.  
L’ESPIRAL’s album “‘SQUACK!’ cried Love’ will be out in October 2025.**

words. Mike Furey

photography. Annabelle Foucher  
fashion. Noémie Fourmeau  
talent. Zoë Bleu Sidel

casting. Alabama Blonde @ Strike the Blonde Casting  
hair. Alexis Mercier  
make up. Aurelie Dehecq  
fashion assistant. Fatima Mouici





RETNA  
Pinche Des Madres Voy A Ser Una Chingadera Sofisticata Hora Si Mamonsitos No Pues Gwow  
2015  
Enamel and acrylic on canvas  
108 x 96 inches

## god of graffiti

*Having once used fashion billboards as unauthorised canvasses, graffiti and visual artist RETNA is now sought after by major brands to transform their buildings' exteriors with his mesmerising hybrid calligraphy.*

With clients such as Nike, Louis Vuitton and American Apparel, RETNA's fashion credentials are unquestionable, but the links to music are just as strong. He led one of the largest collectives of graffiti artists in Los Angeles, but his transcendent works soon garnered him a reputation within the contemporary art world and one of his first collectors was recording artist Usher. Since then, he has created album artwork for Bush and Justin Bieber, as well as having his art featured in music videos by Mary J. Blige, Puffy, Kylie Minogue, The Pussycat Dolls, Will and Willow Smith.

"I don't go soliciting work," the artist explains. "I'll have a bunch of celebrities come over and they know it's private. We just shoot the shit. Usher has been a friend for 15 years. I have worked with numerous musicians and done some collaborative paintings with Swizz Beatz. They'll come by the studio, play me their new music and we'll work on some stuff. It's really dope in that sense."

"Growing up kind of solo," RETNA says he works "in a way where there's a couple of paintings that go together so it's [like] a family." He was born and raised in Los Angeles and takes great pride in his city and graffiti art roots. Aligned with crews AWR (Art Work Rebels/Angels Will Rise) and MSK (Mad Society Kings), RETNA is a member of The Seventh Letter, an exclusive group of legendary street artists who are commissioned to create merchandise and authentic campaigns for corporate clients.

The Seventh Letter in the Roman alphabet, "G", stands for 'Gods of Graffiti'. It's also the title of an epistle by the philosopher Plato that explains how the Truth cannot be written and must be understood through multiple approaches, only to be gleaned in a sudden flash. This burst relates to RETNA's intense and prolific work. He reached new heights for the graffiti community and broke into the mainstream fine art world after hand-painting the tail of VistaJet's largest plane. The airline then sponsored his first solo show, *The Hallelujah World Tour*, which stopped in New York, London, and Hong Kong in 2011.

RETNA's style springs from exploration of identity. "Being of mixed race – Native American, African American, and Spanish – I was trying to find similarities through groups of people and where I fit in the grand scheme of things," he explains. "I found a lot of it through their art forms and monuments. We are all one people. We just grew up in different areas." His

aesthetic "started with Old English calligraphy and street writing," and, from there, it was "influenced by a lot of different cultures: ancient hieroglyphics, Asian calligraphy, Hebrew and Arabic writing." He currently uses a diverse range of media in his works, including painting, photography, and sculpture.

Humility is an important part of RETNA's character as an artist. "I'm just a conduit for the creative energy to flow through," he says. "I in no way get attached to it like it's all about me. I didn't invent the circle. I didn't invent the line. There will come a day when I am no longer here and these pieces that I've done become something that is here for humanity. I'm fortunate that I've been allowed this energy to create works that inspire people and make them happy. The more you give, the more you receive."

This philosophy of giving back is demonstrated through RETNA's work with children: for example, he mentored a group of thirty students as a part of the Louis Vuitton Young Arts Project at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and actively donates works to auctions benefiting youth and medical charities. He has worked with the Foundation Fighting Blindness (for retinal disease), Smile Design Gallery (which provides free dental care to those in need), Inner-City Arts, P.S. Arts, Heal the Bay Charity Project and Waves for Water.

As for upcoming projects, look towards San Francisco, where RETNA will be the artistic designer for San Francisco Opera's production of *Aida* and will show at the Legion of Honor alongside two 5,000-year-old Egyptian mummies. For a contemporary artist influenced by ancient cultures, we couldn't think of a more fitting setting.

*RETNA's exhibit at the Legion of Honor will open on 14th May 2016.*

*Aida will be at the San Francisco Opera from 5th November to 6th December 2016.*

*Words / Mike Furey*





nyjah huston

in Louis Vuitton  
photography. cozy  
fashion. devin & athena

opposite  
full look. Louis Vuitton



full look. Louis Vuitton





full look. Louis Vuitton

# board meeting

Nyjah Huston is arguably the greatest skateboarder of our time. Schön! catches up with him amidst qualifying competitions for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, as he skates towards gold.

Huston's resolve is clear as he reflects, "I feel healthier mentally and physically than I did before the last Games." Two months ahead of the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, a sprained wrist with a torn ligament curbed Huston's performance, so he's taking it easier ahead of this summer's event. While still training hard, the 13-time X Games gold medalist and six-time World Champion has made a choice to skate less in the streets. With the immense pressure that comes with competing at the highest level, balance is crucial. "The number one challenge is dealing with the nerves," Huston shares. "We all want to make our people proud. When it comes down to it, that's all you can do. Do your absolute best, prepare the best you can."

Huston attributes his strength to his Rastafarian upbringing. "Being raised a Rasta is a very healthy and very positive way of living," he explains. Discipline played a key role in shaping him into the skateboarder he is today. He reflects on his childhood, acknowledging the demanding coaching style of his father. "At the time, I wasn't having the most fun," he admits. "There were rough memories where it was my dad pushing me to skate a big rail and me not feeling ready." Yet, Huston recognises the value of that early push: "Those are the type of moments that made me into the person and the skateboarder that I am today."

Skateboarding thrives on individuality. "Everyone has their own bag of tricks that they do and ways that they skate," Huston explains. "It's about finding those tricks, finding what works for you, and also mixing it up. It really has a lot to do with keeping an open mind. It's not always about going out and doing the hardest tricks. It's about having your own style and using the different spots to your own way." Huston himself embodies this approach. "I'm always working on new tricks. I have a few in mind that I want to bring out during the Olympics," he teases. "There's a strategy to it."

While the Olympics represent the pinnacle of competitive skateboarding, Huston doesn't lose sight of the sport's essence. "I love going out there and being able to compete in these big contests," he tells us, "but when it comes down to it, skateboarding is really enjoying life, going out and having fun with your friends. It's the best thing ever."

He speaks about the broader impact of skateboarding. "I want to influence as many people out there to pick up a board," he says, but cautions, "It takes a tonne of resilience on getting through that pain and those rough falls, rough moments, and still be down to get back up and go for it again." If you have that in you – and I hope you do – it's going to be worth it, and it's going to be a fun life."

Huston's excellence extends beyond the board into high fashion and big business. He's carved a niche for himself in the world of skateboarding style, but highlights the importance of the balance between comfort, functionality and aesthetics: "Skate shoes are tricky. They have to be safe enough, but also have the good board-feel... and then also you want the shoe to look good."

This dedication to design extends beyond footwear. Two years ago, Huston launched his own skateboard company, Disorder, which also offers shirts, hats and hoodies. He hints at future collaborations, mentioning his interest in working with high fashion brands, and expresses admiration for Pharrell Williams, creative director of Louis Vuitton, recognising him as someone who understands the synergy between skateboarding and fashion.

Nyjah Huston is more than just a champion skateboarder: he's an artist, an entrepreneur and an advocate for the freedom skateboarding offers. As he prepares for the Olympics, his focus remains laser-sharp, but his ultimate goal reaches far beyond the medals, inspiring a new generation to embrace his world. "Skateboarding never gets boring," he states. "There are always new tricks to learn... Being out with your friends street skating: It's always a new experience, a new day, new spots to skate, new cities to skate. It's limitless."

words. Mike Furey

photography. Cozy @ Early Morning Riot  
fashion. Devin & Athena  
talent. Nyjah Huston  
casting. Alabama Blonde @ Strike the Blonde Casting  
grooming. Randi Riesselman  
grooming assistant. Jenna Lee  
special thanks. The Team @ Louis Vuitton



*Dress / Mary Katrantzou  
Shoes / Miu Miu*

*Opposite  
Dress / Erdem*



*grace gummer*

*photography. christos karantzolas  
fashion. nicolas esfuxius*





Jacket /IRO  
Top / Miu Miu

## into the dark

Grace Gummer confronts cyber-warfare, defies sexism and grapples with dark psychology in the Emmy-nominated *Mr. Robot*.

Can *Mr. Robot*'s writer and director Sam Esmail predict the future? That's what Grace Gummer believes: "By the end of Season 1, he said, 'Our democracy has been hacked,' and then the election happened. *Mr. Robot* is a show of our time. It's relevant and it's scary."

Starring alongside Rami Malek and Christian Slater, Gummer plays Dominique 'Dom' DiPierro, the FBI agent called in to investigate a massive computer hack that has destabilised society. The actress has garnered a reputation for taking on powerful roles. In the Amazon series *Good Girls Revolt*, she portrayed Nora Ephron, the woman who championed a sexual discrimination lawsuit against *Newsweek*. Before that, she encouraged fellow witches to rise against an axe-man in *American Horror Story: Coven*.

Now, she's playing a detective in pursuit of New York City-based hacker vigilantes and Chinese hacker-assassins. Gummer describes Dom as "a mix between Jodie Foster in *Silence of the Lambs* and Frances McDormand in *Fargo* – this sort of unlikely heroine finding all the answers and slipping through the doors quietly and secretly without anybody knowing. [She is] ruled by her instincts, her love of what she does and what she thinks is real, moral and good for the world."

Gummer's research involved meeting with two female FBI agents in the cyber division. She was curious to know if they experienced any sexist behaviour at work and was told, "If a woman is in charge of a case and walks into a room with her partner, who happens to be male, the person being interrogated immediately looks to the guy, as if he is the person in charge." Gummer says that while "Dom may struggle with this [behaviour], she is not ruled by her gender. She's not fueled by any kind of rage in terms of that. She's just good at what she does. She's smart and clever. She acts on her instincts."

Yet, when Dom is outside of work, "she doesn't know herself," Gummer says. "I am pretty much in touch with who I am and how I move through the world. I don't think Dom is. She has a mask for herself and I don't. That's part of the challenge of playing her. It's hard for me because I don't have a lot of darkness in my life. I have a lot of love surrounding me; I have a good family and friends."

Dom, in contrast, lives alone and seeks answers to questions about love from her Amazon device, Alexa. Gummer adds, "When I was shooting *American Horror Story*, I was also in a dark place for a really long time. It took me a second to be back in my life, to be myself. To force yourself out [of such a role], you have to do a lot of work. I admire theatre actors who perform eight times a week. It's really grueling."

When she's not on set, Gummer loves to "travel, get outside the city, read, swim, bike-ride and be present with the world". She has also recently tried counselling, which helps her mitigate the emotions that linger after remaining in character for weeks at a time. While shooting *Mr. Robot* can be a "cathartic release, in the sense that I don't get to cry for seven hours during the day, but I can do it for work and it feels sort of good," Gummer admits that "it's hard to come out of that, to go home, to make chicken."

Dipping in and out of darkness is required for Gummer's acting objectives. She says, "I want to make art that tells a story, that gives its work to the world and gives people something to think about. There are times when you just want to do something because it's funny or silly and you want to laugh, but I think I definitely seek out roles that have meaning."

*Season 3 of Mr. Robot premieres on the USA network and in the UK on Amazon on 11th October.*

*Words / Mike Furey*

*Photography / Christos Karantzolas  
Fashion / Nicolas Eftaxias*

*Hair / Menelaos Alevas @ See Management NY using Leonor Greyl  
Make Up / Claire Bayley @ L'Atelier NYC*





**jacob batalon**

photography. **alvin kean wong**  
fashion. **charlie ward**



all clothing. **AB.AD**  
bracelet. **John Hardy**





# we can be heroes

Jacob Batalon acquires new powers in the second season of *Reginald the Vampire* and conjures spirits in horror film *Tarot*. He speaks to Schön! about embracing individuality, defying expectations and witnessing the supernatural.

Jacob Batalon shows audiences a new kind of hero who finds superhuman strength on his own terms, but one of the greatest challenges he faces in his career is “overcoming this self-inflicted wound of thinking that I’m just what everyone thinks that I am”.

Beneath his likeability and laid-back nature lies a commitment to elevating his craft and blooming beyond his *Spider-Man* stardom. He’s breaking free from typecasting and embracing the opportunity to portray a wider range of characters – “just being what I want to be for performances outside of interpretation”, he explains.

Batalon chose to take on the title role in *Reginald the Vampire* – Syfy’s series based on the popular *Fat Vampire* books – for the opportunity to represent those who “feel they are not seen or heard as much. Growing up, I never really experienced anyone who looks like me being the leader of a show. I thought it was a fun story about how this one normal guy switches up the narrative.”

This uniqueness extends into the show’s comedic, dramatic, romantic and complexly satisfying storytelling. Batalon reveals that there are new dynamics coming in the next season. “Season 2 is like Season 1 on steroids,” he shares, but stresses the show’s deeper intentions: “The vampire theme is just a backdrop of a human story. In a way [it’s] our American society.” *Reginald* subverts the traditional hierarchy: “In school, you see the popular kids and the jocks and the cool girls and whatnot. When you’re a kid, you sort of think that that’s how life goes.” Instead, Batalon implores us to “trust and believe in who you are and don’t try to change for anybody. Don’t think that you need to conform to some sort of stereotype in order to be cool and successful in life. What makes you cool and unique is your individuality and the things you like.”

This focus crosses into Batalon’s personal life, having lost 100 pounds on his weight-loss journey. “I’m taking more of an initiative and responsibility with my overall health,” he tells us, but his approach to discipline is refreshingly relaxed, as well as undeniably effective. “You don’t have to look or be anything to be whoever you want or do whatever you want,” he says. “It’s more about longevity in life.” His trick is not being so hard on himself with a rigid schedule, and instead “have a certain structure to follow. Having moderation helps me stay on course.”

Batalon admits that maintaining consistency despite life’s ebbs and flows is tough but emphasises dedication and patience. “Things like health don’t change that much overnight,” he explains. “There’s going to be a lot of lows. There’s going to be a lot of highs. There’s going to be a lot of plateaus as well. It’s the mentality that you need to have in order to keep the core.”

In addition to *Reginald the Vampire*, Batalon explores the supernatural in Sony’s upcoming film *Tarot*. The narrative involves a group of friends unleashing spirits by using a forbidden Tarot deck. When asked if he is superstitious, Batalon says he is, to an extent. “I try not to step on cracks,” he admits. “I definitely stay away from spilling salt on the table. Just the very ‘normal’ ones. Zendaya told me, ‘You can’t split a pole.’ If you pass a pole, one person has to go first.” And how about fate? A hint of amusement dances in his eyes as he reveals, “A couple days before I got the call to be in *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, I read my horoscope. It said, ‘Your life is going to change in ways that the universe feels you’re ready for.’”

Batalon’s meteoric success has come from both good fortune and unwavering graft – “You have to work hard to get lucky,” he states – but right now his future is brimming with possibilities. As we speak, he’s just come back from a physical for Paramount’s action movie *Novocaine*, which will be shot in South Africa.

Whether he’s fending off spirits in *Tarot*, sinking his teeth into another season of *Reginald*, or charming audiences in upcoming projects, one thing is certain: Jacob Batalon is a unique force with a hopeful message: “You have the ability to be your own hero.”

*Tarot* is in cinemas on 3rd May.

Season 2 of *Reginald the Vampire* will air from 8th May on Syfy.

words. **Mike Furey**

photography. **Alvin Kean Wong**

fashion. **Charlie Ward @ SEE Management**

talent. **Jacob Batalon**

casting + production. **Alabama Blonde @ Strike the Blonde Casting**

grooming. **Hector Simancas @ Art Department**

photography assistant. **Takeki Yasuda**

location. **Café Studio NYC**





coat, tank top + cardigan.  
**Todd Snyder**  
trousers. **Officine Générale**

# restoration hard

**Peter Demas isn’t just reviving vintage aesthetics – he’s restoring interrupted timelines of queer expression, dressing as if the ’30s and ’70s were never cut short.**

“It might look like a thong, but it's not really,” Peter Demas laughs, tugging at the strip of underwear stitched above his waistband in Dsquared2 x Invicta campaign. “Not everything looks exactly as it is.” It’s both a flirt and a manifesto. Shot against a painted backdrop of the Alps – in the dead of New York winter – the campaign leans fully into sex, satire and nostalgia. The tagline reads: “It’s not the destination. It’s how hot you look getting there.” Peter grins: “Dean and Dan understand my humour.” They also understand that his style is more than aesthetic – it’s historical repair.

Born in Panama and now based in New York, art director and model Peter Demas has built a visual language rooted in temporal rebellion. His signature mashup of ’30s silhouettes, ’70s sensuality and ’90s colour grading isn’t mere retro play – it’s resurrection. “I’m very drawn to the ’70s, because it’s a bit of the opposite of what I lived through,” he says. Growing up in a culture where masculinity was narrowly enforced, he was restricted to short hair, muted clothes and rigidity. In the ’70s, men wore platforms, satin, softness. “I do prefer to be a little bit more masculine in my sense of style, but I’m literally wearing platforms right now. I think I wear platforms almost every day.”

For Demas, fashion isn’t just a reference – it’s a reclamation. “The progress that the ’70s had... We were going somewhere, and then the AIDS crisis happened, and we went back,” he explains. “I think of my life as a kind of extension of what would have happened if we had kept going.” This philosophy predates the ’70s for him: “In the ’30s, we were going towards that progression – trans people were more accepted, the cabarets were full of queer artists. Then World War II happened, and all of that got smashed.” Demas traces the cycle with clinical precision: the repression of the ’40s, ’50s and ’60s; the liberation of the ’70s; the crash again in the ’80s. “I don’t want us to crash again,” he states. “Even in a really hard time, I want us to be able to self-express however we want to.”

Studying Creative Direction at Parsons, Demas landed his first collaboration with Dsquared2 after showing Dean and Dan a shoot inspired by their past work. It took over a year to materialise, but Demas was never discouraged. “It doesn’t really matter how long it takes me to do what I want to do professionally,” he stresses. “I’m willing to take the time because I love it.”

You see that care in his imagery. His photos glow like lost archives: glossy yet tactile, cinematic yet sun-faded. “When it comes to colouring my images, I look at the ’70s, but also a lot of images from the ’90s – specifically Versace campaigns,” he tells us. “I just love the colour of the film.” Beyond grading, he paints directly onto his photos, airbrushing them on his iPad. “It’s mostly a lost art, but I’m able to bring some of that back with Procreate. Innovation and technology should always be used to help an artist.”

Despite operating visually, Demas insists his true muse is sound: “Music is my main inspiration, which is interesting, because it’s not visual. It’s very easy for me to listen to a song and see an image in my head. Most of the shoots you’ll see have come from music.”

His next project makes that literal – a film titled ‘Foreign Car’, set in the ’70s, scored entirely with hyperpop. “Not Charli XCX,” he clarifies, “but that kind of genre. In the world I’m building, that is the music they play in the ’70s.” It’s absurd, intentional and perfectly logical in his timeline – one where history doesn’t loop but collides.

What Demas is crafting isn’t nostalgia. It’s continuity: a future built from the realities that may have been.

words. **Mike Furey**

photography. **Alvin Kean Wong**  
fashion. **Myron Hernandez**  
talent. **Peter Demas @ Cancel Communications**  
grooming. **William Schaedler using Living Proof**  
fashion assistant. **Karen Amada**  
location. **Café Studio NYC**





Bodysuit / Kiki de Montparnasse  
Dress & boots / Zaldy

## bartsch heart

*From New York to Tokyo, celebrities and club kids alike flock to Susanne Bartsch's parties but many don't know the depth of her entrepreneurial and philanthropic roots.*

In 1981, Swiss-born Bartsch moved from London to New York and opened a boutique in SoHo, where she became the first importer of Vivienne Westwood and other emerging designers. Soon after, she produced *New London in New York*, the first fashion show to feature the works of Leigh Bowery, John Galliano, Stephen Jones and more. Bartsch organised the first major fundraiser to fight AIDS, *The Love Ball*, and subsequent installments have raised £1.6 million.

"*The Love Ball* came out of pain," says Bartsch. Many of her friends were early victims of the burgeoning AIDS pandemic. She invited members of the Harlem House Ball — the community most heavily struck — to perform at the event to celebrate life. Her idea was to invite fashion brands like Barneys New York, Donna Karan and Armani, among others, to 'walk' and compete for trophies in the style of a ball. Each brand paid to be represented, to make a statement on stage for three to five minutes, and were judged by a celebrity panel. In this way, Bartsch was the first to unite counterculture, mainstream fashion and stardom for a good cause.

*The Love Ball* was followed by *Love Ball II*, *The Crowning Glory*, *The Happening* at the Playboy Mansion in Los Angeles and *Ballade de L'Amour* at the Folies Bergères in Paris. In 1992, inspired by Bartsch, Gery Keszler and Torgom Petrosian began the annual *Life Ball* in Vienna, Austria. It has since become the largest AIDS benefit in Europe. Bartsch continues her involvement by organising an event within theirs, showcasing New York artists and musicians. She also holds a holiday Toy Drive, along with her husband David Barton, to collect thousands of toys for underprivileged children each year. This December, the Toy Drive will coincide with the opening of Barton's new fitness center in Hell's Kitchen.

According to *The New York Times*, "Bartsch's name is the night life equivalent to a couture label," but, despite her reputation, she remains humble. "I can't paint. I don't act. I'm not a dancer. I'm a good dancer but not a dancer as a profession. So, I express myself with looks. I am my own canvas. I think that's an art," she suggests, as she saunters across the living room of her Chelsea Hotel apartment (Bartsch is one of the remaining full-time occupants of the historic building which was once home to Salvador Dalí, Jackson Pollock, Leonard Cohen, Janis Joplin and countless other artists).

Bartsch's personal style makes her a muse for many, including fashion designer and long-time friend Zaldy (best known for outfitting Michael Jackson and other pop stars). He says he is: "inspired by her vision and quest

for the best complete look, head to toe. Susanne can wear almost anything convincingly and brings a sexual yet fun element."

The queen of nightlife is also a curator of individuals, especially those living at the fringe of society. "The people that I bring together are mostly artists," she explains. "Some are singers. Some are actors." Bartsch hosts various parties in New York, including her summer favourite, *On Top*. There, nestled on the rooftop of the Standard Hotel, she provides a surreal haven for people of all kinds to express themselves freely against the panoramic views of Manhattan's West Side and Hudson River.

Her latest ventures focus on the fashions worn at her parties. "I saw the people doing these incredible looks and said to myself, 'What can I do with this?'" she explains. "In the clubs, they are undervalued. So I wanted to put them into a gallery setting." She is referring to *bARTsch*, an event held at the Chelsea Hotel Storefront Gallery last June. "People that came said, 'This is how it used to be in New York.'" Bartsch also held a five-day event last September, during fashion week, called *Art-À-Porter*, which comprised installations and performances in two locations in Times Square, sponsored by MAC Cosmetics.

This autumn, The Fashion Institute of Technology will host a retrospective on Bartsch, curated by Valerie Steele and Bartsch herself. The exhibition will display 80 of her looks, including her make-up and iconic eyelashes. Designers whose works will be featured include Rachel Auburn, The Blonds, Leigh Bowery, John Galliano, Jean Paul Gaultier, Pam Hogg, Stephen Jones, Alexander McQueen, Thierry Mugler, Rick Owens, Vivienne Westwood and Zaldy.

*Fashion Underground: The World of Susanne Bartsch is at FIT from 18th September to 5th December*

*Words / Mike Furey*

*Photography / Damon Baker @ Jed Root  
Hair / Raquel Martuscelli  
Make Up / Deney Adam using MAC Cosmetics*