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ANNIVERSARY  
ISSUE

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FROM CABARET



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# LET'S PUT THE UM... IN YUM

BY ESMERALDA RUPP-SPANGLE

We live in a world filled with people who have a total inability to see eye to eye on just about anything: from political issues, to whether socks and sandals are an affront to all that is good, to what invisible deity we prostrate ourselves before, we love a good squabble. However, there can be great value in taking a moment to reflect on the things we do share. While human culture and history are littered with strife and conflict, there are a few things we can all pretty much agree are A+. In that category, sex, sleeping in, and food all come to mind. In that spirit, let's take a dive into some of the more obscure and outlandish facts about what we chow down upon. That's right, our food; sometimes grotesque, sometimes mystifying, occasionally deliciously bizarre... and bizarrely delicious.

## Figs Are the Only Non-Vegan Fruit

That's right, folks, the Fig Newtons your mom called a "cookie," and you called, "God, these again?" are the only cookie filled with dead wasp meats. When a female fig wasp hears the clarion call of her biological clock, she enters an unripe fruit and lays her eggs, pollinating it as she goes, and eventually dies trapped within the fleshy enclosure. Her wingless male children are born inside the fruit first. They fertilize the still unborn females, dig escape tunnels for them, and perish. The new generation of female

wasps are then born pregnant inside the fig. They exit through the tunnels excavated by their brother-husbands and go off to start the magical and repulsive cycle again. Truly, nature at its most incestuous.



## Asafoetida, or the Devil's Dung

While many of us love a good chicken tikka masala, the spices used in Indian foods can seem obscure in the extreme, asafoetida (ass-uh-fetid-uh) being the prime example. Some religious sects prohibit the consumption of onions and garlic (pardon me, but fuck that noise), as they are said to inflame passions or some such nonsense. An alternative that's now widely used in many Indian dishes is what's colloquially known as the Devil's dung. It's a resin (sort of a sap-type deal) that's extracted from

the root of an herb, dried, and powdered. The smell of uncooked asafoetida is so bad that the only time I've ever bought it, the specialty spice shop I visited kept it double bagged, in a tightly sealed jar, in the back room, on the furthest shelf up. The fragrance it produces is redolent of sulfur, sickly farts, and death. When cooked in a pan with a bit of butter, the smell blooms into one of oniony, garlicky goodness. Why one wouldn't just use actual onions and garlic is perhaps a mystery that I will never comprehend, likewise to how in the *hell* someone was desperate enough to try and use this as a spice in the first place.



## Beaver Butt Juice

If you've ever seen a nature program where a mammal uses its stank to



claim territory, or have had the unfortunately odorous experience of dealing with a cat who shows their love by pissing on your laundry, you'll be unsurprised that beavers do something similar. Beavers of both genders secrete a chemical via their castor sacs (next door to their anal glands) that's used to tell other beavers, "Bugger off, this spot is mine." The interesting difference here is that beaver butt juice (known as castoreum) was once widely used in an array of human products, including perfumes, vanilla extracts, and a popular Swedish schnapps called "Bäverhojt" (literally translated as "Beaver shout," which is one way to put it, I suppose). While not as popular as it once was (mainly due to the inconvenience of, uh, milking a beaver's anal secretions), it still makes its way into foods and fragrances today. So, who knows if you've ever had a pudding laced with beaver *ass sauce*? Nobody, that's who.

### Cochineal

While we've all heard the "fact" (a total myth, which may come as a relief to many of you) that humans swallow an average of 8 spiders a year in our sleep, we don't often consider the other bugs we may or may not know we're chowing down on. Despite the rising popularity of cricket chips (a bland and mealy disappointment, in my experience), most people would prefer not to voluntarily consume bugs. Bad news for you then, because if you've ever eaten anything that uses Natural Red 4 dye, you've been ingesting powdered insects. This grisly preparation of pulverized Hemiptera is used to make the *carmine* colorant used in sausages, alcoholic drinks, cheddar cheese, cookies, and more. The next time you're enjoying a suspiciously red jam, stop and appreciate the creative spirit of the food scientists that crafted your insect-laden treat.

### Avocados Shouldn't Exist

Despite hyperbolic parables expounding on how avocado toast is a sinister representation of everything wrong with kids these days, most of us will scarf down good guacamole with gusto. How the avocado has managed not to go extinct is a bit of a mystery, however. Everyone knows that plants make seeds, and seeds need some way to spread. If a seed falls too close to a parent, it will be overshadowed and outcompeted for light and nutrients. To facilitate the spread of seeds, animals are often seduced into being unwitting dispersers of them via the alimentary canal. Sometimes when seeds are excreted, the poo pile they're left in even helps fertilize the seedling. So, what exactly has a mighty enough gut to handle a seed as big as an avocado pit without a painful and extended trip to the loo? The answer is almost certainly *Megatherium* or giant ground sloths. They were (most paleobiolo-

gists agree) the primary consumer (and excreter) of avocados until they went extinct some 13,000 years ago. Between the time that the last *Pleistocene Megatherium* pooped its final avocado seed and the time modern humans discovered we liked them damn things too (and began cultivating them), it's a distinct wonder how this peculiar plant managed to not get dead. Regardless of how or why let us bonk burritos and just be happy they didn't.

While this is merely a glimpse down some of the storied halls of culinary curios, it's a good opportunity to stop and reflect on the insect content of your food or the unsung importance of sloth poop and beaver butts.

*Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle can make a mean curry and promises to use only a little Devil's dung in it. She can be found on Instagram (@esmeraldasilentcitedel), the Book of Faces, or MeWe.*





## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

"The state of the industry is good" — and I say that in my most presidential voice possible, followed by the all too familiar "C'mon man!" Okay, all politicking aside, I'm definitely *reaching* with "good," but it's certainly getting a hell of a lot better! At the time of scribbling this, we're estimated to be back to a fully open Pacific Northwest as we are a wiry pube away from a 70% vaccination rate in both Oregon and Washington. Assuming the statisticians didn't screw the proverbial pooch as they did on the 2016 election forecasts, you should be reading this while enjoying your Moscow Mule, fully demasked, at 1:57 a.m. Oh, the envy! While you sit distracted, enjoying all your newly reclaimed freedoms, don't forget to get your ass up and tip for the final stage set of the night. Freedom and power come with responsibilities — make Peter Parker proud!

Fully open in the PNW comes at no better time, as anniversaries are in the air. We'd like to wish both Hawthorne Strip and Cabaret a Happy 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, as well as Stars Cabaret a Happy 26<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. And not to grandstand, but if you haven't heard yet, we're now 28. That's a combined 84 years of debauchery, which

even outdoes your perverted grandpappy. Take that, Geepa! Make sure you check out *28 Years of Exotic* on pages 40-43. Lots of memories over the years!



We'd also like to welcome X-Sensual, a new lingerie modeling studio, to the industry! Check out their tantalizing ad on page 6, and I bet you'll be hot, bothered, and ready for an erotic, private show!

## MISS EXOTIC, ANYONE?

While not yet official until all restrictions are "officially" dropped, let's say it's all *but* official that we will be planning *Miss Exotic 2022* for later this year. So you missed industry events, you say? You're not the only one, Sparky — so did we! We'll have to track down DJ Dick Hennessy and see if he's ready to return from his sabbatical in Myanmar. Last I heard, the only way to get him messages was via pigeon or hand-carried on elephant back.



However, time is of the essence. We've heard that the reigning *Miss Exotic*, Axel, is contemplating charging us a service fee for having to store the crown a year longer than agreed upon, so we'd like to get a new goddess crowned and avoid the penalty!

Watch for more announcements about *Miss Exotic 2022* in the August issue.

Stay cool out there, folks! And, please be responsible with your new "big kid" bedtime. 2:30 a.m. is the major leagues!

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# COLUMN

BY WOMBSTRETCHA THE MAGNIFICENT

## THE WIDE WORLD OF STRANGE SPORTS

As long as man has existed, he has sought things other than the pursuit of bare survival. Ever since the first cavemen kicked around the severed head of a tribal enemy for fun and contest, sport has existed.

Records, from cave paintings to stone tablets, describe sporting contests and games since the beginning of human history, and now, in the year 2021, we have more sports than ever. Pretty much any activity can be cobbled together into some sort of formal league with standard rules, and this is where the call of journalism has directed me. I present to you readers, in no particular order, a list of the oddest sports I could find, which people currently still play, worldwide.

### CycleBall

Now, this sounds almost like it ought to be some sort of Tron-like spectacle, but it, in fact, dates back well over a hundred years.

You see, it began in 1893 (*if you can believe that*) by some Germans who thought polo would be fun but did not want to pay what a horse costs just to play it. How is it played? Well, it's really nothing at all like polo, so I

dunno *what* the Deutsch Brothers were thinking.



The game is actually more like soccer, except it's played on fixed-gear bicycles with no brakes. Oh yeah, and there are only two players on the floor per team, with one keeping goal and the other trying to score. Rules are also vaguely similar to those of soccer, in that you cannot touch the ball with any part of your body except your

indeed. Had the creators ever *seen* polo being played? Is it possible that they'd just heard someone describe it once and got it all wrong? We shall never know, I suppose, but CycleBall is growing in popularity across Europe and in Japan. It's only a matter of time before we see it in North America, so brace yourselves.

### Goat Pulling/Buzkashi

Speaking of things that are a lot like soccer, we come to the sport of Buzkashi, AKA Goat Pulling, AKA Goat Grabbing, AKA Goat *Dragging*. It all depends on who's translating and from what language. You see, this one hails from the far-off lands of the ancient Orient, where it originated among Turkic nomads between the 10th and 15th centuries. That's some historical provenance, for sure!

*“The name of the game is  
Freeballin' in Ferret Land...”*

head — or your bicycle. Penalties apply if your feet touch the floor. Polo,

How is this played, you might ask? Is

the poor goat hurt? Relax. The goat is, in actuality, already dead before the game begins, having been decapitated a short time prior. The dead goat, which is basically the “ball” in this game, serves as the central item of concern in a contest between two teams of 10-12 people on horseback (or sometimes YAK-back), who must grab this dead goat and place it in a goal on one end of the playing field. Rules say you must stay on your horse/yak at all times and that you can use your horsewhip on other people’s horses/yaks, but not the people themselves. You are also required to hold on to the goat with your own arms or legs, and you cannot fasten it to your steed in any way. Other than that, pretty much anything goes. Nowadays, it is primarily played in Afghanistan, where it is their national sport, and draws huge crowds of tens of thousands. Hey! This one is actually more like polo than soccer, now that I think about it.

### Downhill Shovel Racing

Starting in the early 1970s at the Angel Fire Ski Resort in New Mexico, resort workers would sit on snow shovels and use them as improvised sleds to get from point A to point B faster than walking. It sort of blew up a bit after that, with the peak of its fame being an event at the 1997 X Games (which I recently learned is *still a thing*) in which a competitor got seriously injured, and the sport was thereafter banned. It still exists quietly in various places, with the resort which began it all still playing host to the world championships. I’ve never wanted to go upwards of 70 mph (112 km/h) on a shovel before, but I kind of do now.

### Zorbing

You’ve probably seen this, but neither know how it’s played or what it’s called. Zorbing is when you get into one of those giant inflatable hamster balls, or, you guessed it, *zorbs*, and



roll down various inclines in order to achieve superior distance and/or speed. In the group zorbing variant, you must try to come in first in a race, and you’re not *supposed* to ram other contestants. It’s not all that exciting to describe, though it certainly seems like it would be fun to do. It is primarily included in this list, so we’ll all final-

this competition look like? Surely it must look like wrestling, right? Well, the answer there is “*kinda*.” Much like your uncle’s second wedding, it mostly looks like two large, snorting ungulates trying to beat each other to death with their necks. They do this in the wild, too, so they’re not coerced into something unnatural, and a top-



ly know what to call that shit.

### Camel Wrestling

No, you do not wrestle the camels; they wrestle themselves. How do you get them to do this, you ask? Well, it seems that if you trot a sexy female camel in front of two males, they’ll compete for her affections. What does

deck wrestling camel can be sold for over \$20,000 USD after a few victories. It remains unknown if they let the victor have the camel poon after they win or if it’s all a big tease.

### Mountain Bike Bog Snorkeling

Okay, so regular bog snorkeling is odd enough, but mountain bike bog



snorkeling definitely caught my eye. In the sport of bog snorkeling, contestants must swim through a meter-wide trench cut into a nasty peat bog, for roughly 55 meters, in an attempt to get the best time. *Swim?* Okay, no. You must wear a snorkel, mask, and flippers but are not allowed to use proper swim strokes; instead, relying on the flippers to get it done. In the mountain bike version of the sport, instead of flipping your way through, you are atop a modified mountain bike and pedal your way through the sludge, with your eyes typically barely above the surface of the bog. I guess when you give a Welshman nothing to do for a while, you're gonna get this sort of thing. There are dozens of leagues across the globe.

### Ferret-Legging

It is unknown when this sport first originated, but I would wager dollars to doughnuts that it came about as the result of excessive alcohol consumption.

For you see, ferret-legging is when you stick two ferrets down your trousers, tie off the ankles, and cinch your belt tight. You "win" by lasting the longest before letting them out.

Rules are as follows: the ferrets cannot have been tampered with. That means

no drugging, no blunting their sharp little teeth, or any other such foolishness. Also, the competitors cannot be drunk or drugged. You really must *feel* this ferretry going on all up in ya pants. Oh, and there's one more rule: you cannot wear underpants. Yup. The name of the game is Freeballin'

in Ferret Land, with all the attendant risks to your tackle. Also, despite the recent gender equality trends, there is sadly no women's version, though this was attempted in the mid-2000s, where the animals would be interred in a lady's shirt, but this was discontinued due to lack of willing participants.

So, there's my list. I wanted to fit chessboxing in there, but it's all main-stream now that the Wu-Tang wrote a song about it. I am on my way to find my local goat pulling league.

Be a good sport!

-WStM

*Wombstretcha the Magnificent is a semi-professional ferret-legger, ape taunter, mustard enthusiast, writer, and semi-retired rapper from Portland, OR. He can be found at his website, wombstretcha.com, on Twitter as @wombstretcha503, and on MeWe (yay!) and Facebook (boo!) as "Wombstretcha the Magnificent."*



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Rilee

FROM  
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*Rilee*

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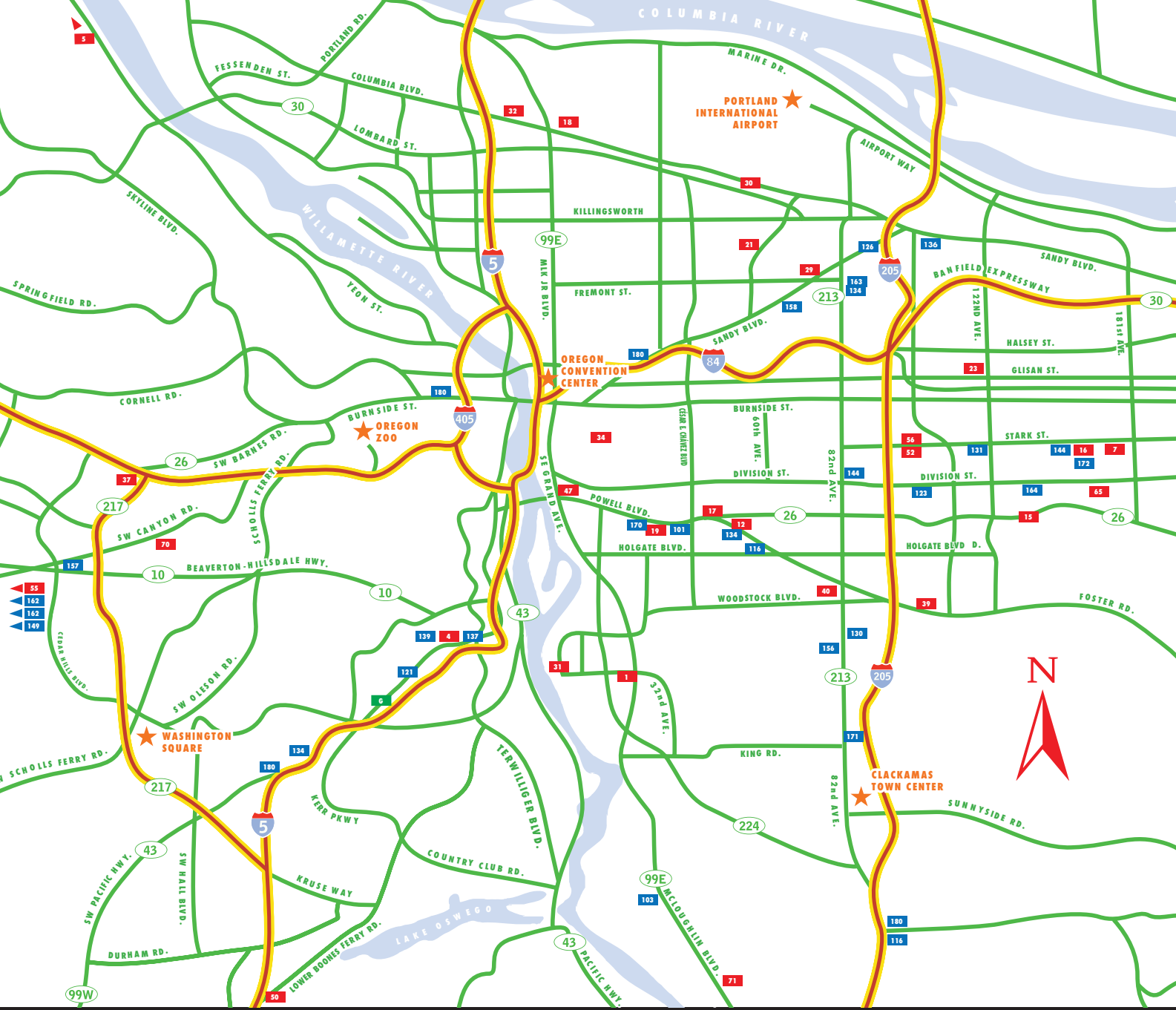
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# HOW TO LAND A DATE IN THE PNW

I realized after being mandated to become socially distant that my social skills had seemed to deteriorate. What's more, I'm now uncertain of where they started at to begin with. I do think it is worth jotting down some helpful tips I've picked up over the past few weeks (while things have started opening back up) on how to properly pick up a person in the Pacific Northwest. And as a backup plan, how to just cut your losses and go home to your liquor cabinet (or liquor counter, or table, or couch, or wherever you stash that stuff). Because it seems like saying "Hey, how are you?" and "Hey, I haven't had intimate contact with anyone in over a year because of social distancing with strangers, wanna chat?" are two very different

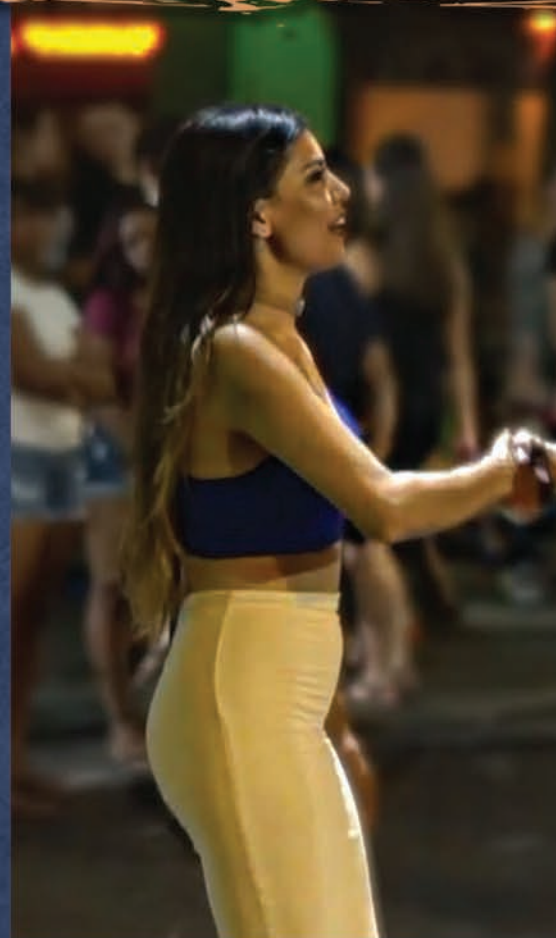
ways to approach a human being. Who knew?

I will attempt to teach you how to soften up the latter with some sexy eye moves, pouting lips, and wispy hair motions. (If you don't have hair, you can still do the movement, it's fine. It'll just look different.)

For instance, in the beautiful PNW, it seems like anytime you try to look someone in the eyes, the other person takes this as a possible threat, immediately looks another direction, or pretends to idly stare just past your shoulder, and walks right through you as if you were Casper the Friendly Ghost. I used to take this as a personal offense and grumble after the person walked by. But I realized, especially now, that with masks making the eyes the actual window to the soul, I may not have come off as strong as I should have. So here are some helpful tips on how to pick somebody up in the PNW (mask on or off).

If the scenario above is in full swing and the other party is ignoring you, gruffly bump their shoulder, so it doesn't seem like an accident. Let the other party's confused glare pierce through your soul as you don't apologize. Continue staring at them. When they inevitably either shake their head in disgust and leave or whisper obscenities under their breath, tell them you like their jacket (or shirt) and that you just had to see what it smelled like after it rubbed up against you. This is bound to get juices flowing. That's when you invite them to meet your parents.

Say the weather is exceptionally windy that day (chances are high that the Pacific



# PACIFIC NORTHWEST 2021

BY HANNAH ONE CUP



cause “you looked so cute”? Well, now you’ll look more adult and “risqué” in it since, you know, you’ve grown about 3 feet, and several shirt and pant sizes since then. Let your arms and legs fall where they may here. Don’t bother zipping up the thing, because once someone (anyone at this point) makes eye contact with you, immediately start ripping that bad boy off like you were The Incredible Hulk and it was a phone book, run until you stand 6 feet away from that person, and start telling them all of your hopes and fears. They’ll enjoy how open you are in many ways. It’s cute.

Last but not least (since my list was a bit more detail-oriented), when you find someone you have had a genuine conversation with once and would like to continue this into an actual date, invite them out to a fancy restaurant. Invite them out, tell them you will meet them there, and never show up. Wait to see if the person actually shows up; if they do, you know that they were definitely into you for your wads of cash you’ve saved in your shoe (that’s

where my three 20s are, anyway...). You don’t want to be taken for a sucker, so you just laugh at the fact that this person has to now either sit alone and eat an expensive dinner by themselves or leave, embarrassed that they took up a reservation at a restaurant for no reason. If they do *not* show, that’s when you know it’s true love. That’s when you know it’s okay to call them 16 times a day, just to check in. That’s when you can start leaving them cute notes and flowers at their work and in their car and beside their bed because it’s love. Restraining orders aren’t real and for sure will not keep your love on hold.

Aside from these four tips, be you, but extra. You’ll be sure to find the one sooner than later if you just act a little extra...

*Hannah One Cup lives life on the bitter side of Portland, hands out free, unwanted love advice, and has graciously collected 13 restraining orders in the last year and a half. If you’d like to be her 14th, feel free to find her on Facebook, or staring at your window.*

fiercely for any length of time can look fairly intimidating or life-threatening. This is fine. Keep staring. Once they notice, move those eyebrows up and down if you still have them. If not, wink your eye and mouth the words, “You’re mine,” flip your hair violently, and hand the now mortified piece of human your AOL email address on a crumpled up receipt from McDonald’s, that you kept for just this moment, and slap that ass. Yours or theirs. But not both. Never both.

This one is pretty easy. Walk outside in nothing but the birthday suit you were given as a baby. You remember that one-sie that mom gave you that one year be-



Three vinyl records are arranged horizontally against a yellow background. Each record has a different logo on its center: a blue and white stylized 'W' logo, a black and white globe logo, and a red and white abstract logo. A large, thick red 'X' is drawn over all three records, indicating they are crossed out or rejected.

# HAPPY MAJOR LABEL INDEPENDENCE DAY!

by Blazer Sparrow

There's a one-in-thirty-one chance that you are reading this on the Fourth of July – that glorious day this nation's forefathers threw off the shackles of that tyrannical monarchy and were finally able to enjoy the profits of the land and people they owned. Thanks to their strongly worded letter to the king, we no longer have to deal with political dynasties today.

But I digress.

While you are probably celebrating this holiday with some good ole fashioned bbq and an explosive or two, this column is about music, not former British colonies rebranding. Since Instagram invents new holidays every three seconds, this seems like a good opportunity to co-opt the whole freedomcore aesthetic for us lowly musician types.

Liberty is in the air, and I think we should celebrate our own rebellion against oppressive forces of power. I'm talking about those tyrannical, controlling major record labels. If you can cel-

ebtrate those forefathers that you are one hundred percent probably not related to, I think the indie music scene



deserves to blow some shit up in honor of those brave souls who stuck it to the man by declaring independence from any real chance of making a living at music.

After all, America's favorite pastime is cultural appropriation. It seems like we'd just be following in the tradition. Indie does stand for independent. I think. There we go! We don't even have to change the name of the holiday! We're just celebrating our freedom from a support system taking a fair cut, like you! See? We're the same. We're all greedy bastards that just want the whole pie.

It is also important to craft a narrative. Give yourself an origin story that makes you look cool. Just like you hot dog eaters, we also have a nice, tidy history to feel good about. You see, around the late '70s and early '80s, super, totally talented acts that totally deserved more attention and money than what they were getting decided that the reason they weren't getting signed was because they were way too awesome and edgy for major record labels. Their sound was way too fresh and innovative. Those fat cats holding the purse strings just didn't under-



stand — and they were the gatekeepers to the whole industry! It wasn't fair.

But you see, technology was advancing, and these bands realized that those really shitty demos they were making at home could literally just be the albums they put out! As for touring? Hell, everyone in the band knows someone who knows someone that lives in enough cities with some shitty dive bar. Why stay at a hotel when you can stay on a friend's sunken, threadbare couch?! I can't think of a reason. Record labels thought they cornered the market on promotion. Hell, they never heard of flyers being stapled onto telephone poles. You see, this was before the days of Facebook events that all your friends RSVP'd as a hard "maybe" to. Thus, the concept of DIY was born.

Just like this great country, we proud musicians freed ourselves from the chains of financial support, actual distribution, and an established network of promotion and representation.

Today is as good a day as ever to hoot and holler about this sea change in how we produce music, and you consume it. We're trading one evil for the

other, like those thirteen colonies. Why not just go over the top with explosions and over-drinking, as we honor the memory of those who paved the way for us musicians to also be our own bookers, promoters, managers, producers, roadies, and groupies! Complete independence! So much freedom! Maybe we'll just swap American flags for Black flags and have like... readings, or something, from Michael Azerrad's "Our Band Could Be Your Life." What we won't be doing is listening to



chart-topping, sellout pop because we are celebrating our super cool independence from that money-making garbage and those artists that don't have day jobs. Go us!

Obviously, this is a beer-fueled holiday, but it'll have to be strictly PBR. And I guess instead of burgers and hot dogs, there will be an ornate buffet of beef jerky sticks and instant ramen. Because tradition matters.

While you're getting hyphy over the signing of a break-up letter, think, too, of the shitty local band that, unfortunately, lives like a block away from you. They are part of a long and hallowed tradition of eschewing any semblance of an actual music career for a lifetime of boxes of unsold, homemade t-shirts and live bar shows to three people. But hey, at least we did it all by ourselves — without the help of any stinking, overbearing major label, with their stupid resources and connections!

To each their own, cause for celebration and libation, right? I mean, there's a chance you're reading a nudie rag at a family bbq, for God's sake. Freedom is a spectrum.



LOVE IN A PLAIN BROWN ENVELOPE: BY JAIME DUNKLE

## Even Maggots Need Love

What no one in the West tells you about becoming a Buddhist is that it's like being trapped in a Porta Potty full of your own shit, but you keep telling yourself it's everyone else's crap. Inevitably, you eat your own toxic waste, fling it at your favorite people and eventually learn to sort it out because we all know a Porta Potty doesn't flush; it fills.

Before descending into nihilism, rest assured, I have good news! All that caca fertilizes food for the body and mind. Let's remember: flowers spring forth from manure! My friends, even maggots need love.

That's me. I'm the maggot.

I've slithered out of homelessness

from under bridges, the needle-point of drug addiction, and ritualized sex abuse. I've seen the dregs, been the dregs, and have convened the dregs in rank bungalows. But those were lifetimes ago. Light never fully filled the shadows, and depression consumed me the hardest after the death of my Love, which is when I landed at a local temple.

What I've come to learn is that Buddhist temples are where we invite our demons to transform into our most precious teachers. Mine just happened to be in the form of the ugliest breakup of my entire life.

It started with The Child, who followed me everywhere. When I raked leaves in the temple's rock garden,

The Child insisted on holding the bag to contain piles of decay. I remember one time The Child wanted to kill a spider that dangled from a branch, but I showed a way to move the spider without harming it. I saw myself in The Child, and we became friends over the months I volunteered at the temple.

One day at service, The Child sat with me while The Parent was in the kitchen setting up tea for later. We chanted mantras as sandalwood incense permeated the hondo. When The Parent ascended to the pews and sat next to The Child, The Child got up and sat on the other side of The Parent, which forced The Parent to slide next to me. Knees bumped, and eyes averted as we stuttered through classical Japanese mantras. Our dynamic changed from then on.

I should've known when The Parent invited me over, and The Child wasn't at their home as I was told, things would go sideways. After that first lie, the lies piled so high I could write an entire *Book of Lies* based on them. The next lie was the worst lie and matched the last lie: The Parent was still fucking The Manipulator after their divorce. This news literally brought me to my knees in full-body sobs: first, on The Parent's kitchen



**“What I’ve come to learn is that Buddhist temples are where we invite our demons to transform into our most precious teachers. Mine just happened to be in the form of the ugliest breakup of my entire life.”**

tile; then, at the end of our relationship, on the scratched wood in front of the altar at the temple.

But it wasn’t all hell. Sometimes it was kink, like when I was spread eagle on The Parent’s bed, tied to a 10-foot bamboo pole that was thicker than my arm, a la Hojojutsu: the rope bondage technique used by Samurai to detain and torture prisoners. This was accompanied with Dao-



ist sex magic, skipping all the trust-building preliminaries and launching straight into mantra recitation and mudra penetration. In retrospect, that was the dumbest fucking idea: if not supernaturally, then psychologically, it added more layers of

delusion and power struggles for us to dissolve. Not even Kali Ma could cut through that much dramatized transgression.

Truthfully, when The Parent lured me into bed, I knew better and crawled under the sheets anyway. The love of my life had died of fentanyl poisoning seven months before, and I had no reason to care about myself anymore. I was on the brink of suicide ever since Death stole my Love, and The Parent’s deceit was the unlikely antidote. Navigating the hall of mirrors cast before me kept me too preoccupied to jump off a bridge. In an ironic twist of fate, the seductive yet toxic cocktail of sex and drama saved my life. I didn’t have that insight at the moment when the relationship rollercoaster spun out of control, though.

Looking back, instead of participating in the hurt, I should’ve bailed, but I *chose* to lash out at The Parent’s deception with self-righteous anger, over and over again on a hell-loop. Those are the times I steered the situation from bad to worse. I hate to admit it, but the end of this toxic pairing helped me shed unhealthy relationship habits. I needed to learn there is no difference between any one maggot and any other maggot. We were both to blame for all the pain.



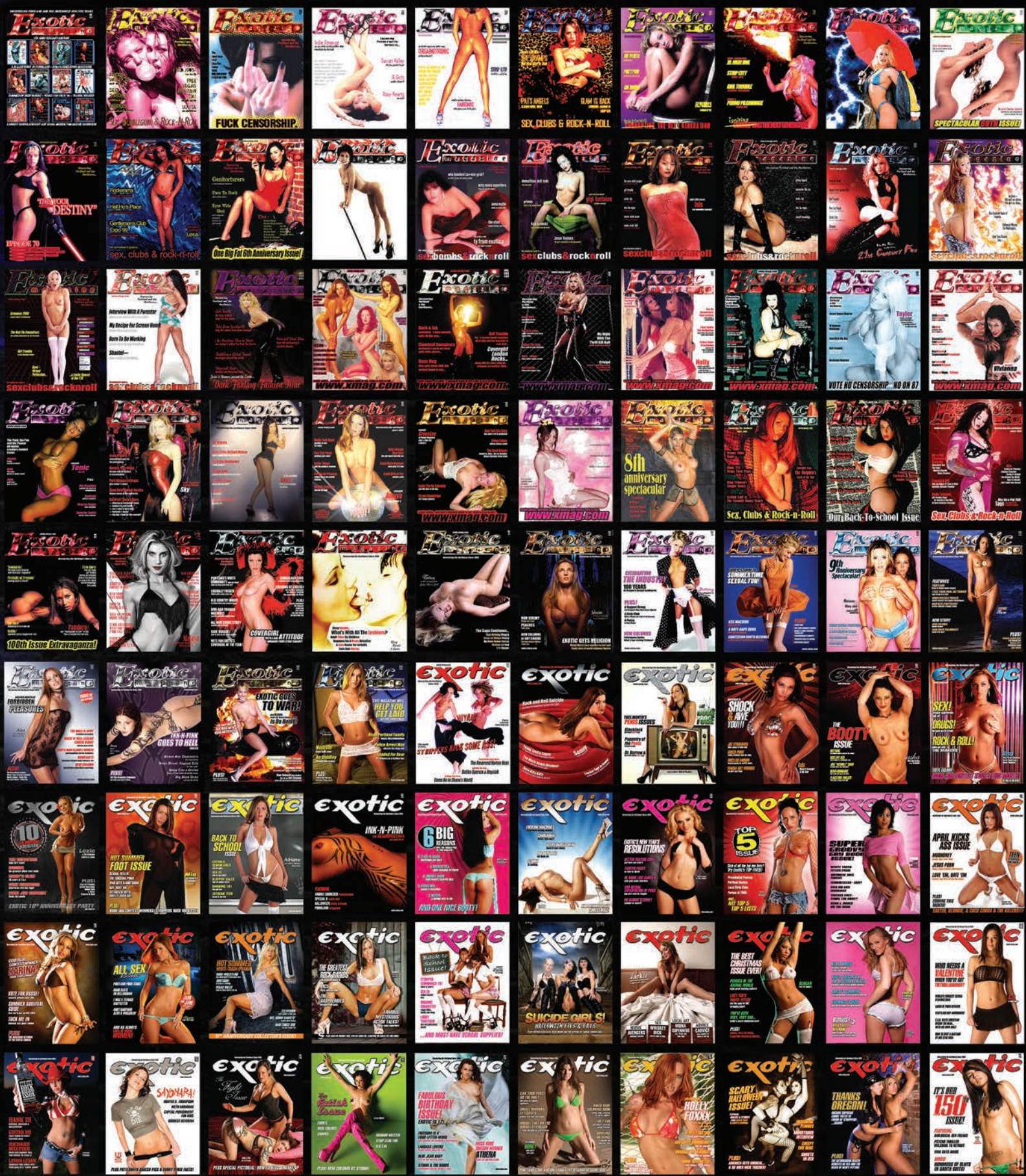
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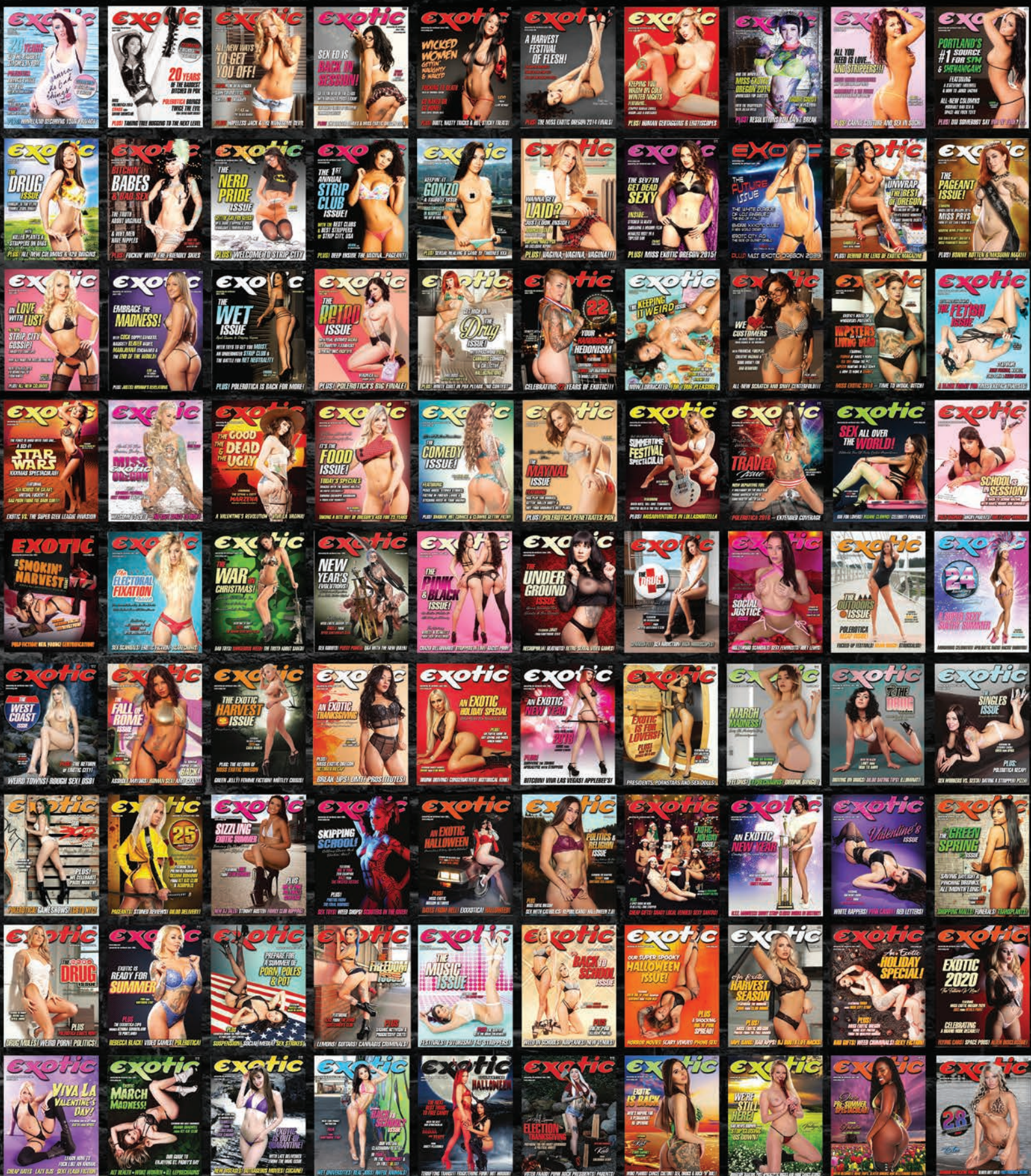
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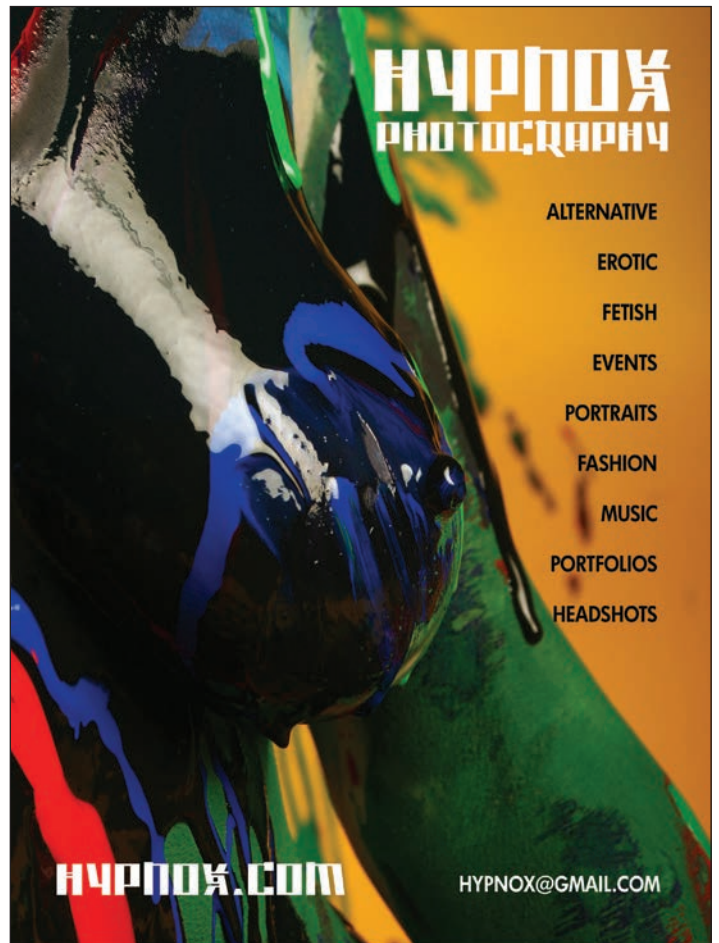
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