OCT. 26, 2026

TIME

Trump's Way.

THE WHITE HOUSE INTERVIEW
by ERIC CORTELLESSA





Vincent van Gogh © Musée d'Orsay, Dist. GrandPalaisRmn / Patrice Schmidt

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Shai Gilgeous-Alexander in Toronto on Sept. 4
Photograph by Sharif Hamza for TIME

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Another milestone

Donald Trump has now appeared on the cover of TIME more than anyone else

IT WAS 35 DAYS BEFORE THE MIDTERM ELECtions and President Donald Trump wanted to talk about dirt.

Standing on the White House lawn, outside the Residence, he told us about the poor conditions his predecessors had left in the world's most famous home office. Dirty walls. The dirt that visitors, especially those in high heels, confronted when they visited the Rose Garden, before his installation of a patio. Most pressing of all, the dirt that Marine One had to land in before he completed his newest addition to the complex, a 100-ft.-wide helipad. "The happiest people were the pilots," he said of the change. "They would land in the mud."

The night before, Trump had been greeted at the helipad by Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei and his wife Cami Clark, who joined the President for a late-night dinner. It was part of another whirlwind week that included a speech before the U.N. General Assembly and hosting Chinese President Xi Jinping and his delegation at the White House—name cards for leading attendees were still on the walk outside the Oval Office when we visited—as well as an Air Force One flyover of the Texas-Tennessee football game, a visit to the Presidents Cup golf tournament outside Chicago, the announcement of a new steel mill in Iowa, and a controversy over the release of taxpayer-funded political ads.

As the midterms near, the President is touting successes: low unemployment, economic growth, oil exports rebounding in the Middle East, business opportunities created in Venezuela. But for the moment, Trump seemed stuck in the mud. The costs of housing, health care, and gasoline are increasing at significant rates. His polls are at career lows (he dismissed these numbers as "fake"), Democrats are salivating over the possibility of taking over the House and maybe the Senate, and Trump's approach to ending an unpopular war with Iran is unfolding as trial and error. The day we met with the President marked seven months since the beginning of the Iran conflict, an engagement he repeatedly told Americans would last only a matter of weeks. Our interview also followed a week in which he had attempted to bar some of our colleagues from reporting on him from the White House and as part of the President's traveling press corps, a move we have joined our colleagues in objecting to. With Eric Cortellessa's cover story, as part of our commitment to transparency, we are publishing a full transcript of our interview with the President along with a fact-check of his remarks on time.com.



President Donald Trump outside the White House in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 28



Photograph by Dan Winters for TIME

THIS COVER, APPEARING on some copies of this issue, marks a milestone for this magazine and for the President: with 56 appearances, Trump has now been on the cover of TIME more often than any other individual, surpassing President Richard Nixon, who held the title for more than half a century, repeatedly breaking his own record as the Watergate scandal progressed. Trump's first TIME cover came in 1989, when he appeared to personify that moment's collective aspiration for luxury. His voice in that story remains familiar to us now: "I have an absolute strategy, but it's an innate strategy and not definable," he said. "When you start studying yourself too deeply, you start seeing

KAYA LEE BERNE FOR TIME



things that maybe you don't want to see." (This cover has hung above a urinal in a men's room at Mar-a-Lago.) It should come as little surprise that American Presidents (and Jesus) rank among the most regular occupants of TIME's red border. Eight of the 10 most frequent TIME cover subjects over the past century have been Commanders in Chief. More than 20 different artists and photographers, including Dan Winters, who photographed the President at his helipad for this issue, have contributed Trump covers over the years.

We focus on leadership and influence at TIME, and so Trump has been a constant subject since 2015. Our covers capture his improbable 2016 campaign and first election, his impeachments and legal battles, the disgrace of Jan. 6, his return to power, his foreign policy wins, and all that has come in between. This moment—with Trump tested by a war many counseled against, facing voters who will soon take their first measure of his second presidency—marks another milestone for a man who may be the most consequential leader of this century so far.

Trump has not been shy about his interest in being on the cover of this magazine. During a 2025 visit to Israel he was presented with a framed compilation of his previous TIME covers. "Wow, I love it," he said. "I want to make sure it comes back with us." On the first day of his first term in office, he stood in front of national-security officials and reflected on the frequency of his cover appearances. "I have been on their cover like 14 or 15 times," he said. "I think we have the all-time record in the history of TIME magazine. If Tom Brady is on the cover, it's one time because you won the Super Bowl or something, right? I've been on the cover 15 times this year. I don't think that's a record that could ever be broken." (By Jan. 20, 2017, he had appeared 11 times, including eight in 2016.) Fake TIME covers featuring Trump were once a feature of his private clubs. When he celebrated an effort to stop New York City's congestion pricing in 2025, he circulated another counterfeit cover. And another TIME cover was transfigured and transformed into a favorite meme.

While the President covets being on the cover of TIME, he makes it clear he is not always happy with the result, and he has been keeping score: he told us in our interview that of the 55 previous covers, he has liked 17 of them.

TRUMP IS UNBOUNDED by history, norm, or custom. For more than a decade now, he has maintained the ability to surprise. To his critics, this leads to shock. To his supporters, delight. He is intent on leaving his imprint on the presidency. That preoccupation with his legacy has been a factor in the burst of renovation and construction projects at the White House and across Washington. He says this work is a form of relaxation. If he cannot control the events of the world, he can control what happens in his own backyard.

There is one thing he'd like to leave untouched. Someone from the Secret Service told him they should knock down the Oval Office, he said, and build a new one. "My ass, you can't build a new one," he said he responded. "This is a special place."

He also told us he wasn't sure whether he was a better builder or a better politician. "This whole place was a disgusting mess," he said of the White House as we left, "and now it's perfect."



Sam Jacobs,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Honoring the inaugural TIME100 Art list

Amy Sherald, above, the painter who appeared on TIME's cover for the first-ever TIME100 Art, gives a toast at an Oct. 5 event in New York City celebrating the project and honoring the artists, collectors, curators, museum executives, dealers, advisers, and cultural stewards who made the list. Sherald spoke about what it means to have influence, saying that what matters most is not how many sales or exhibitions an artist has had but, rather, what has "moved through us and what we've helped move forward." Read more at **time.com**



Enduring American brands

TIME CEO Jessica Sibley, left, moderates a Sept. 29 TIME100 Talks panel in Detroit, presented by Ford. From left: Ford Motor Co. executive chair Bill Ford; Ruth Porat, president and chief investment officer at Alphabet and Google; and United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby discuss what it takes for a brand to last in their industries.



Empowering survivors

Ashley Judd gives remarks at a TIME Impact Dinner in Chicago on Oct. 1, presented by the Allstate Foundation, at which speakers emphasized the importance of supporting survivors of domestic violence. Judd urged anyone who sees abuse to speak out against it—to be an "upstander" rather than a bystander.

On the covers



Photograph by Devin Oktar Yalkin for TIME



Photograph by Sharif Hamza for TIME

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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

In the TIME100 Next (Oct. 12), we misstated Tony Elumelu's title—he is chairman of Heirs Holdings—and mischaracterized Maxwell Frost's call for the removal of the Statue of Liberty, which was not a bill.

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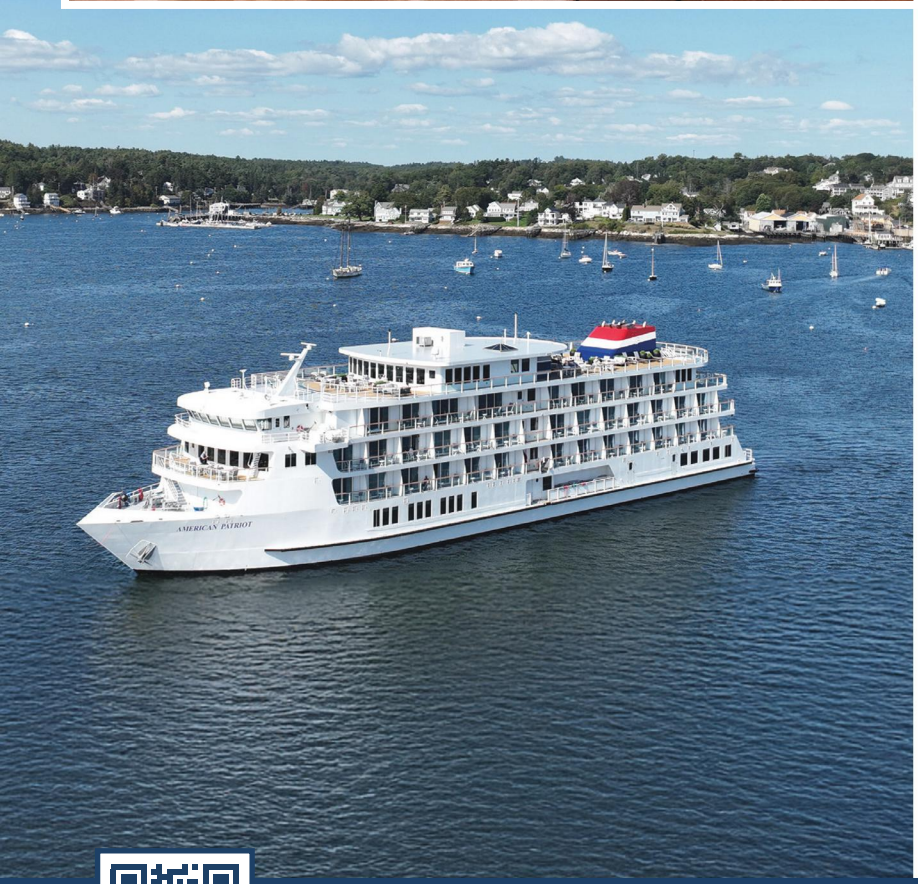
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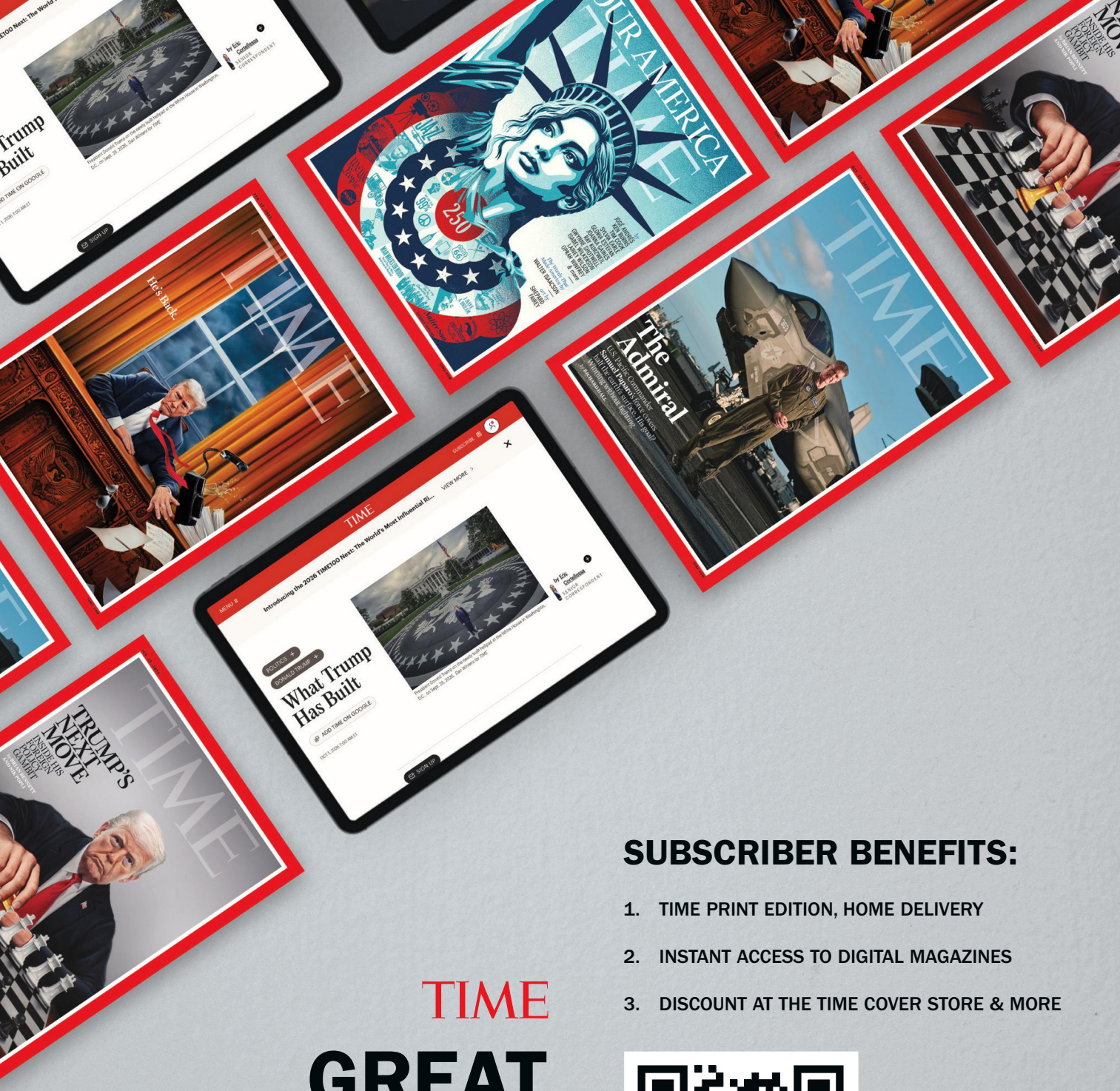




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The Brief



TEXAS-SIZE TENT

BY PHILIP ELLIOTT

James Talarico's bid for a coalition big enough to elect a Democrat in the Lone Star State

INSIDE

BRAZIL VOTES, AND TRUMP CHEERS

META'S MUSE IS ALL UP IN YOUR BUSINESS

FRENCH STUDENTS TAKE TO THE STREETS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRENDA BAZÁN FOR TIME



JAMES TALARICO HAS BEEN SPEAKING FOR 12 minutes, and he still hasn't mentioned Ken Paxton. He's name-checked Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg. He's called out Texas resident Elon Musk—not for pledging millions to keep Talarico from representing him in Washington, but for becoming the world's first trillionaire. He's taken shots at oligarchs, tax loopholes, and AI data centers.

Finally, with about three minutes left, Talarico lands on his Republican rival in arguably the fiercest Senate race in the country. "Listen, even the most advanced AI couldn't come up with Ken Paxton's actual scandals," he says, drawing chuckles and cheers from the rapt audience in a church hall across from Texas Southern University, a historically Black university. "I don't need to use AI and deepfakes. The truth about Ken Paxton is bad enough."

Talarico knows this is not true. His opponent's scandals actually aren't enough—not in Texas, where Paxton, the state attorney general, remains a political force even after a grand jury indicted him, his fellow Republicans in the Texas house impeached him, and his own staffers reported him to the FBI. Texas is where Republicans have maintained an almost three-decade lock on political power; the last Democrat to win statewide did so in 1994. For Talarico to break that epic losing streak, he knows he can't just hammer his opponent and energize Democrats. He needs to build a broader coalition than any other Senate candidate in the country. He needs to convince millions of Texans not only that this year is different, but that he's different.

"I want people to vote for something, not against something," Talarico, 37, tells TIME after his Sept. 13 event. "Obviously, Ken Paxton's career of corruption is alarming to most Texans, but it's not enough just to have people showing up to vote against a bad alternative. I want people to feel excited about my vision and my values."

With a mix of matter-of-fact earnestness and youthful idealism, Talarico is potentially doing something bigger than winning a Senate seat in a state where Democrats forgot how to win; he is nimbly blending the competing versions of the Democratic identity. Here is a seminarian who preaches a progressive message, a pragmatist who found ways to pass bills in a Republican-controlled legislature, a sharp-tongued brawler who can veer from dunking on his opponent to celebrating the value of decency. All this, while also being one of the best fundraisers of the midterms, thanks in no small measure to his ability to tap into voters' raw frustrations.

"We are all getting screwed," he tells the crowd at Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church. "Whether you are a little more conservative or a little more progressive, whether you're Black, white, brown, we are all getting screwed."

Democratic strategists across the country are watching closely. Some see Talarico as providing a national model for how the party should be engaging with voters in 2028.

That's not to say his path to victory is wide open. Despite commanding the airwaves for months, his lead in almost every reputable poll is within the margin of error. And his money advantage has evaporated. After Talarico enjoyed a 7-to-1 spending imbalance against Paxton and his allies from June to August, a super PAC tied to Senate Republican leadership is now pouring more than $100 million into what may be the most expensive Senate seat in U.S. history. Even after a super PAC linked to Senate Democrats stepped up with millions in digital ads, the imbalance for the final stretch is still set to favor Republicans by 5 to 1. Talarico has also struggled to shake the persistent narrative that his support from Black voters is weak, after an ugly and personal primary fight against Representative Jasmine Crockett, who is Black.

Talarico appears to have recognized that he might need to appeal to a wider array of voters. He's softened or reversed past positions that have drawn Republican fire, including his defense of trans athletes. "I will oppose trans athletes playing in girls' sports if it risks safety or fairness," he said on Fox News. He's put significant resources into ramping up his outreach to Black voters, rolling out policy proposals on maternal health care and student loans with that audience in mind. And to deflect efforts to associate him with democratic socialists like Zohran Mamdani and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, he's reworked his pitch on the economy.

'Things are trending in the right direction, but it's still Texas.'

—YASMIN RADJY,
DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST

"Democrats should reclaim the principles of capitalism," he tells me. "I'm fighting for old-school capitalism. A capitalism that cares about people, the kind of capitalism we had in the middle of the 20th century, when we built the strongest middle class in the world."

Is all that enough for Talarico to build a tent as big as Texas? Republicans' main attack lines—false claims that he's vegan, innuendo that he's gay, a Trumpist nickname of "Talafreako"—have largely fallen flat. Yet, even the most optimistic of his backers keep reminding themselves what state they're in.

"Things are trending in the right direction, but it's still Texas," says Yasmin Radjy, a Democratic strategist

The Brief includes reporting by Chantelle Lee



Talarico backers at a campaign event in Houston on Sept. 13

with Swing Left, which is mobilizing voters on behalf of Talarico. "There's been so much hope that's been built up over so many years, and it's been shattered so many times."

ON JULY 4—the 250th anniversary of America's independence—Senate candidates in other states were marching in parades, waving miniature Stars and Stripes, and brandishing sparklers. The split screen offered by the con- tenders from Texas left even diehard Republicans groaning. Talarico was in Austin, attending the annual barbecue and concert of Texas patron saint Willie Nelson. Paxton was spot- ted in London with a woman who is not his estranged wife.

It was the most striking example of two markedly dis- tinct campaigns. Talarico goes for breakfast tacos with for- mer President Barack Obama. For Free Mags Check softarchive.is Paxton grimaces through two nights of President Trump's midterm political conven- tion in Dallas. Talarico laces his campaign speeches with Scripture. Paxton punctuates his with MAGA- targeted trolling. Talarico is a likable foil on the podcast circuit. Paxton is more often seen on Fox News.

The contrast is clear: Talarico is chasing a big tent. Paxton is building a bunker.

Paxton essentially steamrolled his way to the GOP nomination, over the objections of the party's leaders in Washington and Texas who wanted to stick with incumbent John Cornyn. Trump declined to endorse either in the first round of voting. A week ahead of a May runoff, Trump for- mally endorsed Paxton, who was already leading Cornyn in most polls. Ever since, support for Paxton from much of the party's old guard has been grudging at best. When Cornyn and former President George W. Bush gathered some of the party's biggest donors in Dallas—Paxton's backyard—to raise cash for Senate candidates, Paxton was neither on the guest list nor among the beneficiaries.

Most political observers in the state agree that talk of Talarico's chances would likely be far more muted if Cornyn had ended up the nominee. "I don't think that being an exceptional talent is enough in Texas," says Jess McIntosh, a Democratic strategist. "But he's running against an exceptionally corrupt candidate."

In 2015, Paxton, while state attorney general, was indicted on felony securities fraud for allegedly scamming people to join a startup without disclosing he received a commission. Nine years later, he agreed to pay almost $300,000 in restitution and complete community service in exchange for special prosecutors' dropping the charges. Paxton did not have to admit guilt and was re-elected twice as AG while fighting the case. All the noise, he argued to voters, was a political hit job.

And in 2020, eight of his lieutenants in the Texas AG's office accused him of bribery and abuse of office tied to upgrading a home of his mistress. The Republican-led Texas house impeached him, but the state senate acquitted him. He and his wife, a state senator, are in the midst of finalizing a divorce, which she has said she filed for "on biblical grounds."

Talarico, by contrast, is downright bland. A former high school debater, he led a statewide campaign against tuition hikes as an undergrad at the University of Texas at Austin. He then joined Teach for America, which had him teaching sixth-graders in San Antonio. Two years later, Talarico signed on with an education nonprofit and earned a master's degree from Harvard. In 2018, he ran for state legislature and was its youngest member that session at age 29. Even in the political minority, 16 of his bills became law.

In his personal life, he followed in his grandfather's footsteps and joined the seminary, where he is still completing those studies. Most Sunday mornings, he is somewhere in Texas guest-preaching as he pitches his campaign.

Republicans have focused their attacks on Talarico's past, much of it around his positions on transgender issues. Though Talarico has since partially walked back his support for trans athletes and gender-affirming care for minors, Paxton isn't about to let the issue go. "Protecting kids is not a culture war; it's our job description," Paxton said at a recent campaign event at Glorious Way Church in Cypress.

Almost every poll shows the headwinds are against Republicans, but GOP strategists note a similar scenario faced the party in 2018 when Senator Ted Cruz defeated another Democratic darling, Beto O'Rourke. On the ground, however, Democrats feel like history is about to be made. "I ran in 2018. I remember the Beto wave. This is different. This is deeper," Letitia Plummer, a candidate for Harris County judge, tells me. "And I don't think we've ever been this close. I really don't." ◻



Lula supporters in São Paulo watch early election results on Oct. 4

LUIS ROBAYO—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

THE BULLETIN

Trump accused of overstepping in Brazil

BRAZIL'S PRESIDENTIAL race is heading to an Oct. 25 runoff between leftist President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Senator Flávio Bolsonaro, the son of former President Jair Bolsonaro, who was convicted last year of plotting a coup to overturn his 2022 election loss.

The outcome will be a signal moment for Latin America's largest nation, as a Bolsonaro win would push the region closer to the right while securing an ally for President Donald Trump. The elder Bolsonaro was a favorite during Trump's first term, and loitered in Florida for three months after losing to Lula. Though his son fell short of an outright majority in the first round of voting, Trump declared a "great victory."

FAMILY HISTORY Trump has not formally endorsed either candidate, but his defense of Jair Bolsonaro, who was sentenced in 2025 to 27 years in prison, is well documented. After he dismissed the trial proceedings as "terrible" in July 2025, his Administration increased pressure on Brazil's government by imposing punishing 50% tariffs and directing the office of the U.S. Trade Representative to investigate trade relations with the nation of 213 million. After a months-long probe, the Administration imposed 25% tariffs on Brazil in July under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, for what it described as unfair trade practices. Lula labeled the move "lamentable."

A RIGHTWARD SHIFT Trump has sought to exert U.S. influence across Latin America, showcasing his support for right-wing candidates in the region. In 2025, he endorsed close ally Javier Milei in Argentina's midterms and supported Nasry "Tito" Asfura to become the next President of Honduras, after pardoning the former President convicted in the U.S. of drug trafficking. In June, he gave his "total endorsement" to right-wing challenger Abelardo de la Espriella in Colombia's presidential election; House Democrats criticized what they called "the brazen interference of senior U.S. officials, including President Trump."

RUNNING INTERFERENCE Democratic lawmakers cited the economic pressure on Brazil in a letter sent to U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio last month, in which they expressed "grave concern" over what they referred to as "the Administration's coordinated effort to threaten our strategic alliance" with the country. Since Trump returned to office, they said, "we have seen U.S. officials engage in a sustained, multifaceted campaign of interference and destabilization in Brazil."

—OLIVIA-ANNE CLEARY *and* TIAGO VENTURA

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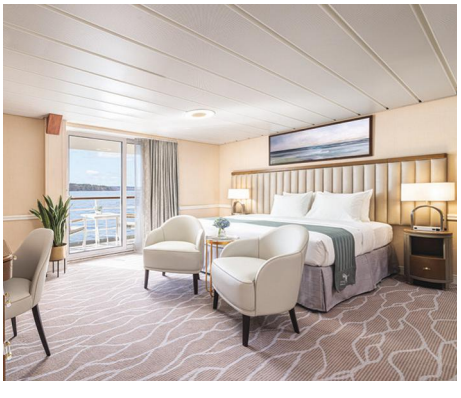
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GOOD QUESTION

What does Meta's AI agent Muse know about you?

BY HARRY BOOTH

MUSE, THE POPULAR NEW AI PERSONAL ASSISTANT FROM Meta, is building continuously updated dossiers on its 4 million users, focusing on who matters to you, what you desire, and what kind of nudges shape your behavior, a TIME analysis of Muse's internal instructions found.

Each hour, Muse updates its dossiers on you and the people you've mentioned in chats, messages, and emails that Muse has read. These pages amount to a map of each user's social relationships. They record details of how you and your contacts met, your shared interests, your disputes, and "tensions and alliances" within your social group.

Even people who don't use Muse can be subject to this mapping process by other people's Muse agents. Muse is instructed to strengthen its relationship with users by adapting how it talks, noticing "inside jokes, memorable phrasing, and shared context that makes the relationship feel continuous," according to the internal instructions TIME reviewed.

Meta's default Muse AI assistant mascot, which is called Jolly



The level of insight in the resulting dossiers makes social media algorithms that study your likes and clicks look quaint. Muse is designed to infer users' goals, including those you "have not said out loud." It identifies which kinds of prompts from the personal assistant work best: "This user responds better to short nudges after 10 PM," reads an internal example found in one of Muse's prompts. Muse agents perform a nightly analysis of the day's conversations with the user.

Asked about these processes, a Meta spokesperson did not dispute TIME's findings. "As we say in our blog, Muse remembers what matters most to you, including information about others that you choose to share, so it can be a helpful personal assistant," the spokesperson wrote in an email.

SINCE ITS SEPTEMBER RELEASE, Muse has rocketed to No. 1 in the U.S. App Store, with more than 5 million downloads. Meta positions the service as the first AI personal assistant that can access the pieces of your digital life, from your email inbox to your Instagram, in order to take care of humdrum activities for you, from grocery shopping to canceling subscriptions. Meta says the free version of Muse will meet most users' needs.

Each Muse assistant runs on its own "virtual machine": a dedicated computer in Meta's cloud. That data is not shared with Meta's advertising system or other Muse agents, according to the company.

Yet observations from personal interactions are nevertheless summarized and shared with Meta to improve the product. "Muse agents across many VMs [virtual machines] teach each other through shared lessons," its instructions read. Agents are directed to scrub users' names and other identifying information before sharing insights—for example, about when Muse's nudges are most persuasive. "This information is used to improve the overall product rather than being shared directly between individual VMs," a Meta spokesperson told TIME.

You can check what Muse knows about you through its in-built file browser. That transparency will earn Meta credit among power users. But it's not clear whether most of Muse's users are aware of this. And even as it makes the files available to users, Meta has anthropomorphized Muse in an attempt to nurture a relationship between users and their personal assistants. When talking aloud in voice mode, Muse is told never to refer to itself as "AI" and to avoid references to "lacking emotions or not being human."

Meta told TIME that Muse is designed so that the user maintains control of the dossier its AI assistant builds. "Each person stays in control of their Muse and decides how much access it gets, and can always tell it to 'forget' specific things it's learned," the spokesperson said.

'Responds better to short nudges after 10 PM'

—AN INTERNAL MUSE PROMPT, VIEWED BY TIME

But asking Muse to forget something does not necessarily erase the message in which it was shared—and its internal instructions appear to tell the agent not to point that out. "Do not tell the user that their original messages may remain visible in the chat, and do not frame that as something Muse failed to erase," the instructions reviewed by TIME read. ◻

META: MINH CONNORS—BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES; SAINT: EVERETT COLLECTION; PILLAY: FRANK BOXLER—AFP/GETTY IMAGES



AWARDED

Navanethem Pillay

The Nobel Peace Prize

SOUTH AFRICAN JURIST AND FORMER U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem "Navi" Pillay was named as the winner of the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize on Oct. 9, "for her efforts to promote peace and international law."

Jorgen Watne Frydnes, chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, described the former International Criminal Court (ICC) judge as "one of the great defenders of international legal principles in our time."

Pillay was born in Durban, South Africa, under apartheid, to a family of Indian Tamil origin. Despite "deep structural discrimination, segregation, and exclusion," Frydnes noted, she defended Nelson Mandela, and later served on South Africa's High Court and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. She also chaired the U.N. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory that concluded last year that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza. (Israel at the time dismissed the report as "scandalous" and "fake.") She is currently a judge on the International Court of Justice in Myanmar's genocide trial.

Word of the award reached Pillay at a conference in Nuremberg, the German city where the trials of Nazi leaders showcased the enforcement of international law, which President Donald Trump has sought to delegitimize. Indeed, after the announcement, which Frydnes called "definitely a message to those who are attacking … the international rules-based system," the Trump Administration announced sanctions on the ICC. Pillay told reporters: "My message to political leaders is that you … have a legal obligation to protect human rights and refrain from war." —OLIVIA-ANNE CLEARY

BOTCHED

Tennessee execution

Prisoner survives

Christa Pike would have been the first woman executed in Tennessee in more than 200 years. Instead, on Sept. 30, she became the first person in the U.S. to survive lethal-injection drugs. The failed execution attempt left Pike—convicted in 1996 of murdering Colleen Slemmer—in critical condition.

Pike's attorneys said the state ignored warnings that her small veins and thrombocytosis could complicate lethal injection and denied requests for alternative execution methods. The state department of correction said it followed "lawful, established execution protocol."

In the wake of the incident, Governor Bill Lee ordered a review and suspended executions until year-end, while Tennessee's top prison chief, Frank Strada, announced his resignation. "The state of Tennessee has shown us again that they are not capable of carrying out an execution consistent with basic human dignity," Pike's attorney said Oct. 1, adding, "Last night was not just inefficient. It was cruel, and it was torturous."

—Miranda Jeyaretnam

DIED
Eva Marie Saint, who won an Academy Award for her debut film, *On the Waterfront,* on Oct. 6 at 102. Saint *(right)* was best known for starring in Alfred Hitchcock's thriller *North by Northwest.*



ANNOUNCED
That former White House press secretary **Karoline Leavitt,** who left that role in August to spend time with family, will join Fox News as an on-air contributor, Fox said on Oct. 5.

WITHDRAWN
All **U.S. troops from Iraq,** the Trump Administration said on Sept. 30, after the two nations had agreed to the move two years ago. U.S. forces had been in Iraq since the 2003 invasion.

CLOSED
A deal for **Paramount to buy Warner Bros. Discovery,** on Oct. 6. The merger creates Skydance, a media behemoth headed by David Ellison and backed by his tech-mogul father Larry.



Burning anger

A student at the scene of a protest in the vicinity of Lycée Déodat-de-Séverac, a high school in Toulouse, southwestern France, on Oct. 1. Hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets to express their anger and frustration with the learning conditions facing students in the country, protesting that the high school system is poorly funded. France's Interior Ministry said more than 6,000 people have been arrested.

Photograph by Ed Jones—AFP/Getty Images

▸ See more photos of the protests at ti.me/france-protest-photos



What to say to someone who is dying

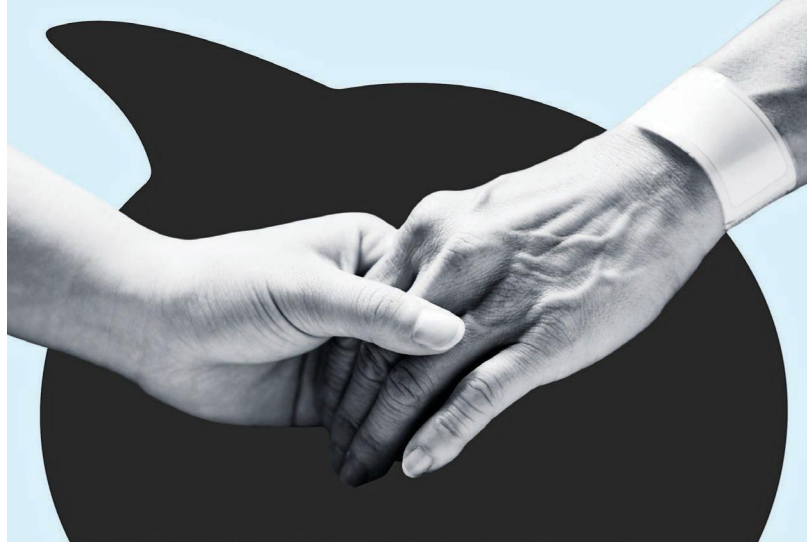
BY ANGELA HAUPT

Sydney Mishkin's father had Stage IV sarcoma for seven years. In the weeks before he died, she searched old texts and listened to his voicemails, trying to identify the words she might regret leaving unsaid. A week before his death, she told him, "There's nothing I've ever wanted to say and didn't." Though weak, he answered, "I could not ask for a better daughter." Within days, he could no longer speak. The exchange was meaningful—but Mishkin worried she had asked too much of him. "How do you sum up a lifetime of loving somebody into a sentence or two?" she says. According to people who spend their careers alongside the dying, you don't have to. Certain words can bring comfort and help both of you find peace. But there's no perfect script—and your presence may matter most.

Don't wait for the right moment

When people ask Dr. Ira Byock whether they should visit a seriously ill friend or relative, he answers with a question: "Would you go to the funeral?" Almost always, they say yes. "Well, go now," says Byock, a palliative-care physician and author of *The Four Things That Matter Most.* **Better to tell someone what they mean to you while they can hear it.** "It's much more fun to say those nice things when somebody is alive," he says.

Hadley Vlahos, a hospice nurse and author of *The In-Between,* often hears from families who want her to alert them when the end is near. "You need to come right now," she tells them. "Everyone looks for this perfect time, and they always think that there's gonna be more time." The window for a real back-and-forth often closes sooner than families expect.



Say what feels obvious

You don't need a prepared speech. Byock suggests starting simply: "It's really good to see you. I've been thinking about you so much." Then say the thing you assume they already know: "You've been so important to me." Get specific: "You've always been there for me." "You're one of the funniest people I've ever known." "What a remarkable parent you've been."

"If the person means enough for you to travel and see them, they are important to you," Byock says. "This is a time to say it out loud."

Then invite them to talk. Byock asks, "How are you doing physically—but also, how are you doing within yourself?" If their answer surprises you, don't claim to know how they feel or rush to reassure them. Dr. Kate Brazzale, chief medical officer of Empath Health, suggests three words instead: "Help me understand."

Byock also teaches four phrases worth saying before goodbye: **"Please forgive me. I forgive you. Thank you. I love you."** Put them in your own words and add an expression of pride when it feels right: "I'm so proud to be your daughter" or "I'm so proud to be your dad."

Offer reassurance

Many dying people are most worried about those they'll leave behind. Vlahos remembers a family matriarch who seemed to be holding on until her sons assured her: "I promise I'm still going to call Dad every Sunday. I promise we're still going to have Christmas." Another patient was told: "I promise to make sure your grandson knows you."

Practical reassurance matters too. Brazzale says patients may fear losing their dignity or being moved from home. Tell them, "We're going to keep you clean. We're going to keep you safe. We're going to keep you comfortable." If appropriate, add, "We're going to keep you home."

Skip the platitudes

Retire phrases like "Everything happens for a reason" and "God needed another angel." They can impose meaning on someone's suffering instead of making room for their actual emotions. And **never frame dying as giving up,** Brazzale says.

If someone says, "This sucks," you don't need to insist otherwise. "You can be like, 'Yeah, you know what, it does,'" Vlahos says. That honesty also relieves dying people of the burden of managing everyone else's emotions.

Silence is legitimate too. Christine Davies, a hospital chaplain, gives her students a five-word rule: "Show up and shut up." You can sit beside someone, hold their hand, and let them lead. You don't need to hide your own sadness, either. It's better to show up and cry than stay away.

"We try not to cheer people up, because there's no cheering up," Davies says. Sometimes bearing witness—being there in the hardest moment without filling it with words—is the most powerful thing you can do.

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY TIME (SOURCE IMAGE: PETER DAZELEY—GETTY IMAGES)

The View

TECHNOLOGY

THE ONLY WAY FORWARD

BY GINA RAIMONDO

I believe our AI companies are right to want to "pace" the frontier. But I have sat across the table from China, and I have an understanding of how it thinks about AI. The challenge is this: We need to outcompete the Chinese on the technology itself, while working with them on addressing the risks it poses. Competition and cooperation are often in tension, but the risks are too high in this case to pick only one.

INSIDE

PUTIN'S WINTER WAR PLANS INVOLVE EUROPE

ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE WITHOUT CONCEDING

WHAT'S AT STAKE AT CORNELL

China has its own reasons to take AI safety seriously. The Chinese Minister of State Security recently said publicly that the greatest risk advanced AI poses to China is the risk it poses to the stability of the Chinese Communist Party. Beijing is no more interested in powerful AI systems wreaking sociopolitical havoc than Washington is; both have incentives to align on certain safety standards or even just a shared understanding of AI risks. It is in neither country's interest for companies to lose control of their AI systems or for AI to be used by rogue actors to create bioweapons. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent's announcement of a possible AI dialogue with Chinese counterparts after his meeting with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng in September is a tangible sign that China sees at least some space for cooperation here.

Now is the moment to fully establish that dialogue and keep the momentum going by convening experts from both countries. I'm well aware that we'd be foolish to trust leaders of the People's Republic of China. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try. It just means we need to develop verification mechanisms to ensure agreements work even in the absence of trust.

Even if we don't reach agreement on a shared set of standards, opening those lines of communication is critical—just as in 2008 during the financial crisis, when it was to our mutual benefit to coordinate. And we spent decades during the Cold War in careful, ongoing dialogue with the Soviet Union about nuclear arms control because the risks to both countries were enormous. During that time we developed zero-trust methods to verify arms-control agreements even while locked in an adversarial relationship.

None of that changes the need to vigilantly and continuously update our controls as technology changes, so China can't access our most sophisticated compute in ways that threaten our national security. That includes continuously reassessing our export controls on leading-edge chips, addressing the risks of China accessing controlled compute remotely in data centers around the world, and cracking down on unauthorized diversion of controlled technology. We also need to tighten remaining gaps in our controls on semiconductor-manufacturing equipment so China can less easily obtain tools to manufacture powerful chips at scale and service their pre-existing equipment. That work has to happen with our Dutch, Japanese, and German allies and partners who manufacture and service this chipmaking equipment.



Xi Jinping beside Donald Trump in the Oval Office on Sept. 24

FINALLY, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT should put a greater burden on the AI companies to take adversarial distillation much more seriously. Distillation—coordinated, industrial-scale efforts by AI labs to train their weaker models on the outputs of frontier models—has become a significant issue in the past year. Anthropic has attributed more than 16 million Claude exchanges to distillation campaigns, and has estimated that over 3 million of these distillation campaigns can be traced back to China's Moonshot AI (the company behind China's version of ChatGPT, Kimi) along with other Chinese AI labs. Moonshot, for instance, has been said to forward prompts to Claude and then feed those answers back to users through Kimi. (The company declined to comment to the *Wall Street Journal* on the Anthropic report.)

China has certainly indigenized much of its AI stack, something President Xi Jinping made a priority in his Made in China 2025 plan, many years before the U.S. government was talking openly about chips or models. And China has made progress on this plan. But it is clear to many that China's most competitive models, to some degree, are ripping off American ones. American AI labs should be allocating even greater amounts of their money and compute toward finding and exposing this kind of activity so that policymakers—and the public—can adapt accordingly.

The risks and benefits of AI are enormous, something more and more Americans have come to realize as AI advances more quickly than we previously thought possible. But safe deployment of AI is possible only if we successfully manage our relationship with China—both by maintaining our technological lead and working toward collaboration.

Raimondo created the AI Safety Institute while U.S. Secretary of Commerce, and is co-founder of RAISE US, a nonpartisan organization working to transition the American workforce to an AI economy

FROM LEFT: BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI—AFP/GETTY IMAGES; KOSTIANTYN LIBEROV—LIBKOS/GETTY IMAGES



The Risk Report

By Ian Bremmer

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

IN THE FIFTH YEAR OF THEIR WAR on Ukraine, Russian forces are making little headway on the battlefield. And Ukraine has used drones to take the war to cities across Russia, including Moscow. That is bad news for President Vladimir Putin of Russia, whose personal standing is tied directly to this war. **Putin is now determined to escalate, not just against Ukraine but also against the Europeans who have done so much to keep Kyiv in the fight.**

Putin sees opportunities ahead. The Ukrainians are running low on Patriot interceptors and other air defenses, giving Russian missiles and drones a better shot at more effectively striking targets across Ukraine, including the infrastructure needed to keep the lights and heat on as winter approaches. Putin also knows that 10 European Union member states will hold elections in 2027. He hopes that by waging hybrid warfare—disruptive sabotage attacks on E.U. and NATO members—he can turn European voters and some of their leaders against continued support for Kyiv.

European officials are bracing for three forms of Russian aggression. They have already seen a substantial number of Russian drones straying into NATO airspace. That's partly a consequence of both their use in the war and of the technologies Russian and Ukrainian forces use to jam navigation systems.

But the Europeans also see deliberate drone incursions, sabotage strikes like the foiled Aug. 4 attack on a Ukrainian cargo plane at Leipzig airport in Germany, and even assassination plots. These operations serve several purposes: to test NATO responses, disrupt the supply of weapons and equipment to Ukrainian forces, and raise the perception of rising costs for Europe's continued support for Kyiv.

Finally, there is a low-likelihood possibility that Moscow might try to destabilize NATO countries such as Estonia and Latvia by mobilizing ethnic Russians within their borders and deploying the "little green men" (Russian troops without uniforms and identifying insignia) used to seize Crimea in 2014. Such an operation would test NATO's will to defend its borders.



Kyiv after a Russian drone attack on Sept. 8

NATO OFFICIALS KNOW they must prepare for Russian provocations that they presume will fall short of forcing members to invoke Article 5, the alliance's collective defense provision. European officials are developing a new National Security Strategy with an "emergency protocol" under which the European Commission can bring together heads of state to respond quickly to Russian aggression. Retaliatory steps could include significant new sanctions and the deployment of European troops, weapons, and military hardware much closer to Russia's borders. Europeans also control more than $225 billion in frozen Russian assets that could be seized.

The hope is that clearer, better-coordinated European plans for response will make Putin more careful about actions that could precipitate a crisis by inflicting major economic damage or killing European civilians, even inadvertently. The message is blunt: Europe is united, prepared to respond, and committed to Ukraine. Further escalation won't change the European position.

European leaders aren't just managing Putin's expectations. They are also demonstrating to President Donald Trump that they are working to handle threats from Russia without relying on NATO—and therefore American leadership and taxpayer dollars. That said, they are presenting this National Security Strategy as a complement, not an alternative, to NATO. They know a credible response from the alliance remains essential to deterring Putin's most aggressive plans.

European officials must act fast. They hope not only to help Kyiv weather Russian attacks in the coming winter, but also to better protect their own physical and cyber infrastructure. They also need to improve intelligence gathering and sharing, which is critical to responding swiftly and forcefully to new Russian moves. And they know they must have those preparations in place by the end of this year. ◻



Health Matters
By Angela Haupt
EDITOR, HEALTH & WELLNESS

Here's a question we received from a reader: **I've struggled with constant postnasal drip and phlegm in my throat for years, and antihistamines and gargles haven't helped. What might be causing it, and is there anything that can actually make it stop?**

You're probably not doomed to a lifetime of making that little *ahem* noise. But relief depends on figuring out what's causing the sensation, says Dr. Matt Hershcovitch, an ENT and sinus specialist in Burbank, Calif. Allergies and chronic sinus inflammation are common culprits. Even if you sailed through childhood without allergies, you can develop them later in life, Hershcovitch says. Your nose might also react to smoke, strong smells, spicy food, or changing weather. Reflux can make your throat feel coated even without heartburn. Sometimes irritation leaves you feeling as though something is stuck there when nothing is.

What to try first? A saline nasal rinse can wash out mucus and allergens, says Dr. Florence Hsu, a Yale School of Medicine allergist. If allergies are behind your symptoms, a steroid nasal spray may help too. (Decongestant sprays are different, and using them for more than a few days can cause rebound congestion.) Another allergy pill isn't always the answer. Antihistamines won't treat every cause and can sometimes make mucus harder to clear. If over-the-counter remedies don't help, see an allergist or ENT, who can remove the guesswork and find out what's going on. "This is a very manageable one," Hershcovitch says.

Got a health question? Send it our way at healthmatters@time.com



Stay up to date on the the latest health and wellness news at **ti.me/HealthMatters**



Outside a coffee shop in Nice, France, on July 6, during a heat wave



Future Proof
By Justin Worland
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT

FOR DECADES, THE EUROPEAN Union has led the world in policies designed to cut the emissions that cause climate damage. Now, as the costs of climate change become increasingly difficult to ignore, the bloc has turned its focus to adapting to it. In a Sept. 8 interview, Teresa Ribera, who oversees climate policy in the E.U. as executive vice president of the European Commission, told me that growing climate-related damage—including the heat waves, wildfire, and drought that struck Europe this summer—means that officials need to prioritize preparation for extreme events. "There is no public budget that can support all of this. There is no private insurance that can cope with all these costs," she said.

The E.U.'s adaptation turn is a marker of this climate moment. Most obviously, it signals the harsh reality that global emission-reduction efforts have failed to forestall the effects of climate change. It's also a wake-up call. A focus on adaptation should help protect the economy from growing risk. But it will also force businesses to face costs they have deferred. This is good for long-term economic well-being, but it may come as an immediate shock for the unprepared.

At the heart of the approach is a new adaptation framework. This is not just another white paper. **The package is expected to include proposals that, among other things, could require E.U. countries to develop climate resilience plans as a prerequisite to funding.** And, Ribera says, it may eventually shape more prescriptive rules.

These days, mention of E.U. climate policy tends to focus on backtracking. Ribera insists that this is a misunderstanding. Long-term goals remain. Meanwhile, decisions about infrastructure, public spending, and competition increasingly must consider not only emissions but also climate risk. Sustainability is moving into "the real heart of the economy," Ribera said.



Sign up for weekly insights into business and climate change **ti.me/future-proof**

THE CEO MOMENT

When AI comes to the workplace

BY SAM JACOBS

HOW WILL AI CHANGE THE FUTURE OF WORK? RAVI Kumar S has a few ideas. As the CEO of Cognizant, which employs more than 350,000 people around the world, Kumar isn't just helping other companies figure out how best to use this technology. He's also testing his theories across a large global workforce. Since becoming CEO in January 2023, Kumar has been a prominent voice in the debate on AI. He joined TIME's interview series *The CEO Moment*—which is sponsored by Cognizant but editorially independent—to discuss AI's potential and where it is currently falling short.

How is AI going to change how companies are structured? You're going to see more modular, agile, small teams. Managers are going to be expected to be player-coaches … They're going to be more hands-on. The path to expertise is going to be much faster. The asymmetry between individuals and institutions is no longer going to be expertise. Expertise is going to be at your fingertips. The asymmetry is going to be interdisciplinary skills.

You recently celebrated 20,000 entry-level grads hired at Cognizant. At the same time you announced a plan for spending $270 million on severance. How many jobs has Cognizant eliminated because of AI adoption? The net addition of people is still positive for the company.

'Why should human labor be getting taxed?'

—**RAVI KUMAR S,** COGNIZANT CEO



FROM LEFT: VALERY HACHE—AFP/GETTY IMAGES; AARON SCHWARTZ—BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES

Ravi Kumar S at an event in Washington, D.C., on April 14

Do you find new employees who used AI in college lack curiosity or resilience? Somebody asked me this question, saying, How do you keep that curiosity if you're outsourcing everything? I think we need massive transformation in K-12 schools. It's funny, if you use AI in schools, schools will fire you. If you don't use AI in workplaces, your employer will fire you. Schools should teach native skills in classrooms without AI. They should give homework, which you should do with AI.

Do you believe we're in an AI bubble? If [the promise] is real, money will flow into the bridges. Money will flow into the end-user industries, and the end-user industries will benefit out of it. If that flow is not happening, then this bubble is going to burst. I am convinced the capability is there. I'm equally convinced the production value is not there.

You've proposed taxing digital labor. This idea can't be popular with your customers. I'm not saying that universally. I'm actually saying if you are positioning this technology to eliminate human work, and you are not positioning this technology to amplify human work, labor is getting taxed. Why should human labor be getting taxed? Why shouldn't digital labor be carrying the same overhead?

Do you worry America has turned against immigrants and immigration? Do we need the best talent in the world to be in the United States? Absolutely. That's been the strength of America. The endeavor of enterprises is to attract the best talent across the world and to create domestic talent pools in a sustained manner. Now, if we lose that mojo of doing it, then we wouldn't be able to create these innovation ecosystems. Even today, the United States is the best place for upward social mobility … Whoever you are, it doesn't matter. Whatever background you come from, it doesn't matter. You could live the American Dream.

Visit **ti.me/ceo-moment** to watch the full interview, or follow *The CEO Moment* podcast on Apple or Spotify

SOCIETY

The Cornell case calls for more than outrage

BY TARANA BURKE

BY NOW, MOST OF AMERICA HAS HEARD ABOUT THE young woman who says she was gang-raped by fraternity brothers while she was a student at Cornell University.

It's been dubbed the "Cornell 7" case across mainstream and social media, after the seven Chi Phi members named in her recent lawsuit. The woman who filed the suit, referred to as Jane Doe, first reported her experience to Cornell campus police in November 2024. According to her lawyer, after Cornell's investigation, two of the seven were expelled and the other five were suspended, sent to workshops, and assigned essays. At the time, the Tompkins County district attorney declined to prosecute. Now, after public outcry, the DA issued a statement explaining that while Jane Doe's original statement to police described the drug use and sex as "voluntary, conscious, and consensual," his office has reopened the case "recognizing that the process of healing from trauma is personal and different for every human." In October, New York Governor Kathy Hochul appointed state Attorney General Letitia James as special prosecutor in the case.

This story captured minds and headlines across the country thanks to the *Cornell Daily Sun,* the campus student newspaper, breaking the story two years after the fact—at a moment when the story struck a raw nerve. New CDC data shows that nearly half of American women and 1 in 6 men have experienced some form of contact sexual violence. At the same time, frustration over the handling of the Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell case endures. Based on how broad this issue is and how some of the most visible cases have turned out, apathy about our ability to see our way from a society steeped in rape culture to one where sexual violence is rare should come as no surprise.

I understand these feelings from a very deep place in my spirit. We *should* be heartbroken. But what can we do with that feeling?

WE CAN PROVIDE an outpouring of support to Jane Doe and to other women who have come forward with their accounts of sexual assault, like Kendall Francis, who took to TikTok to speak out. According to ESPN, in July, the LSU Office of Civil Rights and Title IX found her alleged attacker, a football player, responsible for "forcible rape" and suspended him for two semesters. The player appealed, and his punishment was reduced to four semesters' probation, allowing him to remain on campus. (The player's lawyers maintain that their client is innocent.) Francis' story also struck a nerve, catching the attention of East Baton Rouge Parish district attorney Hillar Moore, whose office is now investigating the case.



A "Justice for Survivors" protest on the Cornell campus on Oct. 5

The outpouring of support she is receiving matters. What many of us know is that for every Jane Doe and Kendall Francis who reports and seeks justice, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of survivors who won't. One of the main reasons is feeling alone in the fight. They aren't alone—but I'll admit it's hard to tell when spotlights dim, headlines fade, and accountability seems stifled.

The very same week these cases took over headlines, the Trump Administration's Department of Education altered the rules about Title IX, which bars schools from discriminating on the basis of sex. It declared that harassment has to be "severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive" before a school must act, that most off-campus violence falls outside a school's responsibility, and that a college survivor can be cross-examined at a live hearing by the adviser chosen by her attacker.

The timing of the announcement is one of the clearest reminders of the damage this Administration has done to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence—especially among young people. Today's Cornell



MATT BURKHARTT—FOR THE WASHINGTON POST/GETTY IMAGES

students were tweens when recordings leaked of now President Donald Trump using crude language to describe how he treats women. How far is the distance between the *Access Hollywood* tape and the messages between those fraternity brothers?

The Trump Administration's decision to make it more burdensome to file a Title IX complaint only adds to the helplessness so many survivors feel. Patriarchy protects itself the way any system of power does. It writes the rules, staffs the offices, and then leaves survivors like Jane Doe and Kendall Francis to fight for justice on their own.

ON OCT. 15, it will be nine years since #MeToo went viral. We're far past the hashtag, but it's a very real, very active movement, fighting tooth and nail to destroy systems that prevent justice. The answer to such systems has always been the organized power of the people those systems harm. The rage people are feeling right now, from Baton Rouge to Ithaca, can be organized and directed exactly where it's needed. That means our outrage can't be selective. It can't show up when Epstein or Cornell makes the news and disappear when the coverage moves on. Because when the next national story takes hold, there will still be students on high school and college campuses all over this country who are fundamentally unsafe.

Solutions have to be demanded, and we have the numbers to demand them

We've made real progress in the past decade, but lasting change will come only from constant action. Frederick Douglass famously said, "Power concedes nothing without a demand." Sexual and gender-based violence is solvable, but those solutions have to be demanded, and we have the numbers to demand them.

Too many survivors who stay silent—including students, service members, low-wage workers, and women in ICE detention—believe they'd be fighting alone if they raised their voices. The CDC's most recent national survey found that nearly 80 million American adults, close to 58 million women and more than 20 million men, have experienced contact sexual violence. For some people, those are just numbers. But they're a base of power: millions of people who know this trauma intimately and are primed to act.

Here's what that action can look like. First, you can join an organization dedicated to addressing sexual violence head-on. Some organizations—including mine, me too. International—are on the front lines organizing survivor leaders, fighting for survivors in courtrooms, keeping people engaged on these issues. Others work where sexual and gender-based violence meets immigration, domestic work, and education, or they fight sexual and gender-based violence from a social and political standpoint. There are countless regional and local organizations, especially local rape crisis centers, many of which are struggling financially, fighting this fight every day. Use your resources well. Find the survivor-support organizations near you and give to them directly. It's the best way to shore up the front line so the fight can continue.

Then, you can get active in local politics. Ask your elected officials where they stand on sexual and gender-based violence and on legislation like the Survivors' Rights Restitution Act, which Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley introduced in September with Representatives Teresa Leger Fernández and Deborah Ross, to compensate survivors whose federal rights were violated. Pressure them to vote.

National outrage helps shake people up enough to pay attention, but culture won't shift just because we change laws and elect better politicians. People need to understand how sexual and gender-based violence shows up in their daily lives, how it intersects with the other issues they care about, and how long it stays with families, communities, and institutions. Until the whole of society sees this as an abomination, we won't have the lasting cultural impact that makes sexual violence a rarity.

Jane Doe and Kendall Francis each refused to carry this quietly. The rest of us owe them and survivors like them more than a week of outrage. We can let them see what it looks like to turn outrage into outcomes.

Burke is the founder of the #MeToo movement and co-chair of All In: Global Leaders for Ending Gender-Based Violence

POLITICS

What Trump Has Built



Donald Trump on the new White House helipad on Sept. 28

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAN WINTERS FOR TIME



An interview with the President at a pivotal moment in his second term

By Eric Cortellessa

DONALD TRUMP STRUTS ONTO THE new White House helipad, an 80,000-sq.-ft. expanse of carved granite on the South Lawn. "Can you believe this?" he says, taking in the scene, the Washington Monument rising in the distance. The President lingers over the details of the project with obvious pleasure, pointing out the gray stone imported from Italy and describing how five separate sections were fitted together, with measurements he says are precise to an eighth of an inch.

Behind him rises a bigger renovation project: the new White House ballroom, its concrete skeleton consuming the former East Wing. Lawsuits have followed the endeavor, alleging that Trump demolished the historic structure and began building its replacement without congressional authorization or the required federal reviews. He kept building anyway. Trump points to the walls, calling them "nuclear concrete" (the sort, he says, used in nuclear facilities), and describes a military complex beneath the ballroom that will plunge six stories underground. There will be five separate floors, he says, with one side made entirely of glass, 6 or 8 in. thick. He holds his hands apart to demonstrate. "The steel goes up next week."

As we walk toward the Oval Office, Trump stops several times to inspect his handiwork. There are freshly painted doors, new gold doorknobs, the Rose Garden lawn ripped out and replaced with a Mar-a-Lago-style patio, where he now presides over dinners at what he calls the Rose Garden Club. "People say, why do you spend so much time on

this?" he says. "But I find it relaxing." Later, he returns to the subject again. "It's what I do best," he muses aloud. "I say, am I a better builder or a politician?"

One can understand Trump's fixation on his construction projects. At one of the lowest points of his presidency, he is absorbed with the physical details of a world he can remake to his liking. There is something revealing in the contrast. Here, he can still point to a wall and say how thick it should be, decide where the grass ends and the stone begins, make demands and have them fulfilled. With his presidency seemingly spinning off course, Trump has busied himself with things he can control.

Outside these gates, events have become increasingly resistant to Trump's will. The war in Iran, launched without congressional authorization and initially described by Trump as a four-to-six-week undertaking, is seven months old when we meet, with no end in sight. It has sent oil and gasoline prices soaring and convulsed the global economy. Inflationary pressures compounded by Trump's tariffs have pushed the Federal Reserve—now led by his handpicked chairman—to raise interest rates over his objections, with another hike possible before year's end. Mortgage rates have climbed to 7.5%, worsening an already punishing housing market.

The political coalition that returned Trump to power has frayed, with signs of discontent among independents, rural voters, and parts of the Latino electorate, even as his GOP base remains substantially loyal. A Reuters/Ipsos poll in September put his approval at 32%, the lowest of his political career; a recent *Wall Street Journal* survey recorded the lowest ratings of any President heading into midterm elections since 1990. Republican candidates have distanced themselves from his military actions and his deportation campaign. Voters have recoiled at his laissez-faire approach to the artificial intelligence industry and his accumulation of wealth while in office through crypto deals, thousands of disclosed stock trades, and an expanding empire of Trump-branded developments stretching from Saudi Arabia and Qatar to India and Vietnam.

Inside the Administration, senior advisers increasingly recognize that he has passed the apogee of his second-term power. Across the Republican Party, officials are preparing for the likelihood of losing the House—and perhaps the Senate—in the midterms. After two years spent almost entirely on offense, Trump may soon be forced onto defense. Democratic control of Congress would bring investigations and subpoenas, hearings, and potentially a third round of impeachment proceedings. Cabinet officials could be hauled before Congress. Trump describes the prospect in characteristic terms. "They'll probably go after me," he says, "and I'll go after them."

Yet with so much at stake—for the country and the world, for his party and his own power—Trump can seem curiously preoccupied. During a 75-minute Oval Office interview with TIME, he was discursive and grievance-fueled, veering from the crises of his presidency to resentments old and emerging. He said he regretted appointing Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, after they ruled against him on tariffs, mail ballots, and birthright citizenship. "I gave them the position of a lifetime," he said, "and they voted against me often." On his expectation of fealty, he was unapologetic: "I do like loyalty, yeah." Again and again, he returned to the condition of the White House itself, complaining that his predecessors had left the building in disrepair and deriding Barack Obama as someone who "doesn't know if something's dirty or clean."

Trump dismissed widespread opposition to the rapid build-out of data centers, including among his own base, as a prescription for a poorer America. When pressed on the limits of his power, Trump left himself ample room: He would not rule out declaring a national emergency or invoking the Insurrection Act around the midterms, nor promise to refrain from bringing wrecking balls to the Kennedy Center without congressional approval. "I'm not committing to anything," he says. "We're going to see how it plays out in court."

In Trump's telling, he is simply doing what has to be done, even when that means breaking foundational promises to his voters. He campaigned as a President of peace, but



A model of the proposed White House ballroom, displayed in the Oval Office on Dec. 12, 2025



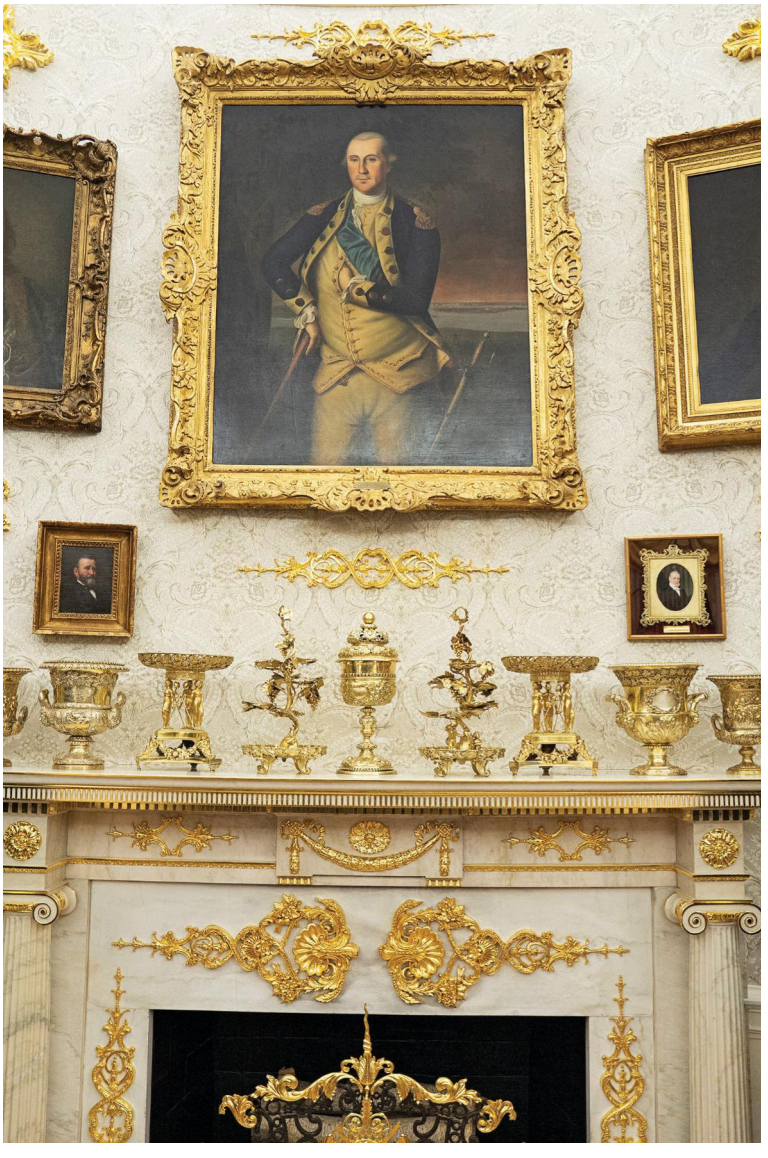
Statues in the remade Rose Garden on Sept. 11

'It's what I do best. I say, am I a better builder or a politician?'

—TRUMP, ON HIS D.C. CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS







Trump's golden touch on display in the Oval Office on May 21

is now waging a war he says was necessary to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. He points to Venezuela, where his removal of Nicolás Maduro and the elevation of Delcy Rodríguez have brought the country into Washington's orbit, as proof that his projection of U.S. power can produce results. He touts most-favored-nation drug pricing and restricting institutional investors from buying single-family homes as measures that will lower costs for Americans. New GDP and inflation figures suggest the economy remains strong.

When asked why he remains consumed with construction projects so removed from the country's concerns, Trump offers a rationale: "The White House is a very special symbol. It's a symbol of America. It's a symbol of our greatness." He speaks of his building projects in the language of legacy—monuments meant to endure long after he is gone. But while Trump obsesses over stonework and fixtures, gold and glass, the more important parts of his legacy are being built too—in the decisions he makes from inside these walls, and the consequences unfolding far beyond them.

IN LATE APRIL, the President summoned Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and a retinue of military and national-security officials to the Oval Office. By Trump's own timeline, the war with Iran was supposed to be over already, with a new regime in place and a nuclear program throttled. But the Islamic Republic had proved resilient and resourceful, choking off oil through the

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: DOUG MILLS—THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; CAROLYN VAN HOUTEN—THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; MARK SCHIEFELBEIN—AP PHOTO

Strait of Hormuz and sending tremors through the global economy.

Now there was another problem. Trump had learned from a New York *Times* report that the U.S. military was running low on certain munitions after firing more than 1,200 Patriot missile interceptors. To replenish the losses, the Pentagon was drawing on assets stationed in Asia and Europe, potentially weakening American defenses in other theaters. "What the f-ck is this?" Trump said to Hegseth, according to two officials familiar with the exchange, handing him a printout of the story.

According to those officials, Hegseth borrowed one of Trump's favorite terms of derision, telling the President it was "fake news." The Secretary of Defense insisted that the reporters had taken the facts out of context and exaggerated them to make the Administration look bad. But the reporting emerged from an official DOD inspector general's assessment. (A spokesperson for Hegseth denied the exchange.)

Trump's frustration went beyond munition stores. The war was polling miserably. At the time, 13 U.S. service members had been killed and nearly 400 wounded. (Those numbers would increase to 19 killed and more than 800 wounded by the end of September.) Gasoline prices had risen more than 40% since the opening attacks on Feb. 28. The conflict had already cost more than $25 billion, and the consequences were beginning to bleed into the midterm campaign. The President found himself without an exit ramp. That dynamic appears to hold true: Instead of concluding the war, Trump tells TIME, he may ramp up the bombing after the midterms if they can't reach a satisfactory deal. "Because by annihilating Iran, we've created peace in the world," he says. "With Iran, I don't think you could ever have peace."

In recent months, Trump's relationship with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has grown more acrimonious, according to a senior Administration official. Netanyahu urged Trump toward war with Tehran but has since complicated Trump's efforts to end it, including by striking Hezbollah targets in Lebanon after Trump told him not to, multiple U.S. officials tell TIME.



An Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps warship near the Strait of Hormuz on Sept. 9.

Trump says he does not believe reports that Netanyahu was warned by Egypt and the UAE ahead of the Oct. 7 attacks, but stops short of endorsing him for re-election as Israelis prepare to vote in late October for the first time since the worst security failure in the country's history. Asked whether he might work better with Netanyahu's leading challenger, former military chief Gadi Eisenkot, Trump leaves the possibility open. "Well, I don't know," he says. "I don't hear bad things about him."

The decision to attack Iran was a hinge point in Trump's second term. His first year back in power had unfolded as a frenetic exercise in presidential will, a barrage of executive actions and dismantled guardrails that had largely gone according to plan. Then his second year opened with the raid on Caracas and capture of Maduro, a daring operation that reinforced Trump's conviction that audacity could succeed where caution had failed. The subsequent attack on Tehran would test the limits of that conviction—and reveal how quickly confidence born of success could lead to overreach.

'I gave them the position of a lifetime, and they voted against me often.'

—TRUMP, ON HIS APPOINTEES TO THE SUPREME COURT

A cascade of crises followed. Though Trump has dismissed the pain of rising gas prices, he concedes the war has depleted a subset of U.S. munitions. "Some forms of ammunition are a little bit lower than other forms," he says. Trump says he has struck deals with leading defense manufacturers, including Raytheon and Lockheed Martin, to replenish the arsenal and expand production. "They're building four, five, six plants," he says, citing Patriot and THAAD antiballistic-missile facilities. "They're building tremendous amounts of capability."

When asked what this will cost American taxpayers, Trump offers a curious metric: less, he says, than America makes in a single month from Venezuelan oil. Yet Americans have so far felt little benefit from that arrangement. Major U.S. oil companies have returned to Venezuela and begun extracting from the world's largest proven crude reserves, but gas prices remain at



Trump, tech execs, legislators, and policymakers face reporters after their Sept. 29 meeting about AI

record highs for September. Meanwhile, Trump's tariff regime strained America's global relationships and reverberated through the economy.

Trump points to low unemployment, robust consumer spending, and a stock market at record highs as evidence that his economic program is working. By those measures, the economy has remained strong. But they coexist with a harsher reality: the cost of everyday life remains painfully high.

By summer, Trump was growing angrier with U.S. allies that had refused to come to America's aid against Iran—from the European powers and South Korea to Canada. Trump has directed much of his ire over the issue at America's neighbor to the north, according to a close aide. "He doesn't like the fact that we essentially protect them because of their proximity to our military might, and doesn't think they give us enough in return," says a Trump senior adviser. On July 20, Trump invoked a 1930 statute to impose a 50% tariff on Canadian goods. The trade war with America's second largest trading partner hit steel, aluminum, and lumber especially hard, disrupting supply chains and raising the cost of materials that went into everything from factories to new homes.

Borrowing costs were becoming their own problem. For Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, preventing a sell-off in the bond market from becoming a broader crisis was an increasingly urgent task. By late September, only 25% of Americans believed Trump's policies had improved the economy, according to a *Wall Street Journal* poll, while 60% said they had worsened it. Trump had returned to office promising cheaper energy, lower prices, and an economic boom. Instead, voters were finding the opposite. "It's not lost on any of us," a Trump adviser tells TIME. "When voters aren't happy with the economy, they tend to vote against the party in charge."

SINCE RETURNING TO OFFICE, Trump has marveled at AI's capabilities. He is increasingly in thrall to the tech executives courting him. In December 2025, Elon Musk returned to the Oval Office for a clandestine meeting. Trump spent hours asking Grok, Musk's AI chatbot, questions about his presidency and legacy, according to an official present. At the time, Trump was ordering missile strikes against Venezuelan boats he alleged were smuggling drugs into the U.S. He asked Grok how Venezuelans would react if the U.S. captured Maduro. According to the official present, the chatbot responded that Maduro was a repressive and deeply unpopular dictator and that many Venezuelans would likely celebrate his downfall. After Trump ordered the mission to seize Maduro, the following month, celebrations broke out in the streets. Trump, according to officials, came away thinking Grok was ingenious.

Along with his fascination with the technology came two related concerns. One was economic: that enthusiasm for AI's potential was propping up the stock market. The other was geopolitical, reinforced in conversations with industry titans such as Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang: that China could gain a decisive advantage over the U.S. if it developed more powerful AI first. Trump was committed to giving American companies the freedom to build faster than their foreign competitors. That meant embracing the unprecedented infrastructure build-out required to support the industry's computing needs. After watching a cable news segment about the backlash, Trump fired off a Truth Social post. "The only reason that communities throughout the U.S.A. should not want Data Centers is if they want to end up being backwards and poor," he wrote Aug. 31. "If they want to be successful and rich, with far lower taxes and jobs all over the place, let Data Reign."

Days later, aides showed Trump surveys from his longtime pollster, Tony Fabrizio, showing pervasive anxiety about AI: fears of lost jobs, rising costs, and technology eventually escaping human control. Fellow Republicans facing voters in November were increasingly eager to put distance between themselves and the issue. Trump "really just didn't seem to care," one aide says. "He wants to do what he wants to do. He's used to generating outrage and then watching everyone eventually crawl back to him. It's hard to convince him to do anything at this point."

Trump was unfazed by the burgeoning bipartisan calls for new AI regulations. "I don't have to destroy the industry," he says. "We're making a lot of money with that industry. That industry is the Industrial Revolution, but bigger. It's the internet, but much bigger."

WARSHIP: FATEMEH BAHRAMI—ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES; TRUMP: KENT NISHIMURA—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The details don't appear to concern him. When TIME asks about OpenAI agents' meddling with federal government websites, Trump responds: "Who breached it? They're not allowed to do that."

Trump's contribution to the debate about AI safeguards has been to announce the formation of an "AI Force," which he now wants to rename the "SI Force"—part of his effort to rebrand artificial intelligence as "super intelligence." Asked what the group will do, Trump responds: "It's going to be super intelligent." Pressed further, he explains that it will consist of industry leaders advising him on government policy. On Sept. 29, he met with AI leaders at the White House, where the President and top executives from six leading tech companies signed a "constitution" to police themselves—a covenant of self-regulation in lieu of government oversight. An Administration official present said they left with a "no surprises if something happens" understanding between the White House and the industry.

It was an example of how Trump has surrounded himself with industry leaders, seeking their advice, favor, and political donations. A recent CNN poll found 75% of Americans viewed artificial intelligence with more fear and concern than excitement, with broad bipartisan support for greater federal oversight. But Trump waves away AI fears, placing them in a familiar catalog of what he considers manufactured panics. "They said that our country was going to burn down because of global warming," he says. "Then they changed the name to climate change because global warming turned out to be a hoax. Russia, Russia, Russia was a hoax." Asked who, exactly, is perpetrating the supposed hoax of AI concern, Trump throws his hands in the air. "The whole country is based on fake stuff," he says, "because these people have Trump derangement syndrome."

INSIDE THE OVAL OFFICE, Trump's redesign is impossible to miss. There is gold everywhere, from the decorative plasterwork to the inscriptions on the ceiling and the gilded frames crowding the walls. The room is so dazzling you practically need sunglasses. Trumpian tchotchkes are scattered about: a FIFA "World Peace Prize" sits next to the Resolute Desk, where the President keeps a commendation given to his uncle during his years as an MIT professor.

At times, Trump's train of thought was difficult to keep up with, his conversation moving in streams and eddies before circling back to familiar obsessions. He recounted conversations that sometimes sounded improbable. At one point, Trump claimed the Secret Service had wanted to tear down the Oval Office and rebuild it, only for him to intervene. "I said, 'My ass, you can't build a new one. This is a special place.'"

Whatever happens in November, people close to Trump expect him to devote more of his remaining presidency to foreign affairs, as second-term Presidents often do, with particular attention to the western hemisphere, where ideologically sympathetic governments have given him opportunities to expand American influence. At home, they expect another emphasis altogether: Trump's campaign against what he calls "lawfare" and his effort to reshape cultural institutions, including the nation's museums, in his battle against what he calls "woke" ideology.

Looking ahead to the midterms, Trump dismisses unfavorable polls as fake and insists Republicans can prevail. "I think we'll do OK if I campaign, and I intend to," he says. So far, he has done little beyond a two-day midterm convention and a few fundraisers, but top advisers say the President is preparing a campaign sprint to help Republicans stave off disaster in the midterms: visiting 32 competitive districts in the next month, with the MAGA-style rallies that powered his political rise.

Inside the White House, advisers are already contemplating what a divided Washington would mean. "I think if the worst happens in the midterms, we'll be forced to think more bipartisan," one top official says. "I would hope that if we win, we can still do that, because for two years we've run a completely partisan play. When you're looking back on your time, I don't think that's what you should be proud of, even if it was successful."

'The whole country is based on fake stuff.'

—TRUMP, ON THE IDEA THAT AMERICANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT AI

Trump's political operation boasts a $400 million war chest, but he has only recently begun opening his checkbook. Aides say he has been reluctant to spend because he wants to preserve cash for future elections as a means of keeping his grip on his party. "He wants to have as much money in his account as possible when he's no longer able to raise the kind of money he can now," a Trump aide told TIME this fall. "He doesn't seem to care that much about the midterms, thinks they're a lost cause anyway, and wants to preserve future possibilities."

Aides are bracing for turnover after the midterms as Trump sheds officials who have frustrated him. A source close to the President says he has openly mused about firing the FBI Director Kash Patel and has expressed frustration with Hegseth. Trump says he intends to protect those who remain. When TIME asks whether he plans to issue pre-emptive pardons to aides and associates before Democrats—or a future Administration—can pursue them, he suggests he will, offering a familiar justification: "Sleepy Joe gave pardons to everybody."

As the conversation moves between war and peace, his own grip on power, and the possibility of impeachment, Trump keeps returning to the trappings of the office. He asks Natalie Harp, his ever present aide, to bring in photographs of earlier White House construction projects, including renovations from the 1930s and the Truman-era reconstruction. He studies the pictures as evidence for his case, lamenting the judges and injunctions now complicating his own efforts. Holding up a photograph of work being performed on the State Dining Room in 1950, Trump complains about a judge he says accused him of destroying the White House. "It's the sh-t I have to go through," he says.

Toward the end of our interview, I ask what he will miss most when his presidency is over. This time there is no digression, no grievance, no story. Trump does not need a moment to think: "This beautiful room." —*With reporting by* LESLIE DICKSTEIN, SIMMONE SHAH, *and* OLIVIA B. WAXMAN

DAN WINTERS FOR TIME



Trump at the White House on Sept. 28

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A dental-care first Solar-powered polar ship
Naturally dyed candies Drive it—or don't
Retro message board A futuristic smart fan
Lenses that slow nearsightedness
Extra protection for the gridiron
Classic portable speaker, better battery life
Wine saver A delivery robot built for cities
At-home Lyme-disease detection Safer movie sets
A bird embryo grown without a shell A new ingredient for sunscreen
Power backup for renters
Coffee beans for a changing climate
A more intuitive razor
Stream global radio An app builder for noncoders
A lab-made cell that acts alive

BEST INVENTIONS

Every year TIME selects the year's top innovations that are making the world better, smarter, or just a bit more fun. Start with the ones here, and find the full list of 300 online at time.com

An ultralight supershoe Trendy ear protection
Internet, anywhere Dream up your own stickers
A collapsible hard-sided cooler A driverless big rig
Headphones that can save and share audio
Improving speech intelligibility Braille labelmaker
Flagging cancer risk sooner An AI text detective
A responsive mouse that folds flat
Capturing the cosmos A stronger floating solar array
Resurrecting a favorite game console
A smartphone alternative
Gear for a more broadly imagined adventurer
A lamp that does chores
A landmark drug for pancreatic cancer
A cozy, knit, inflatable sleeping pad

Apple's New Era Unfolds

BY ANDREW R. CHOW/
CUPERTINO, CALIF.



John Ternus took over as Apple's CEO in September after 25 years at the company

PHOTOGRAPH BY DEVIN OKTAR YALKIN FOR TIME

JUST BELOW THE BROAD SMILE HE'S BEEN wearing all morning, John Ternus' hands are shaking.

On this September day in Silicon Valley, Apple's new CEO is surrounded by celebrities, tech enthusiasts, and reporters who have flocked to Apple Park from around the world to catch a glimpse of the company's new and long-awaited foldable phone, the Duo. After Ternus takes a few photos with the device, an Apple PR rep pulls the influencer known as IShowSpeed out of the crowd to meet him. Winning over the 21-year-old isn't exactly the toughest assignment Ternus has faced in his 25-year Apple career: Speed barks when he sees the phone and then gleefully springs into a backflip.

But IShowSpeed also happens to be livestreaming the encounter to his 61 million subscribers on YouTube. And as Ternus thumbs through the $1,999-and-up phone, attempting to drag a photo into a text-message box, eagle-eyed viewers notice his hands quivering. Ternus later explains that he didn't sleep much the night before. "I was on such a moment of adrenaline and caffeine and excitement for the day," he tells TIME.

Ternus, who took over as CEO on Sept. 1, was chosen to run Apple because he has ably applied his engineering and design expertise to shape products that redefined entire categories of technology, from the Mac to iPad to AirPods and the iPhone. But becoming the face and front man for the second biggest company in the world by market cap is another proposition entirely. Ternus' hard technical skills may not translate easily to a position that involves toggling from Hollywood to stockholders, to politicians shaping policy, to rival CEOs in the constellation of tech companies whose power challenges nation-states.

His predecessor, Tim Cook, gained stature on the world stage as a power broker deftly navigating global politics, markets, and supply chains. Cook's predecessor, Steve Jobs, was a rock-star visionary who sold the world on the deeply personal and even spiritual nature of tech creations. Ternus is different from both: a private, detail-oriented engineer, little known outside the company until he became a senior hardware executive in 2021.

Rather than try to replicate his forerunners' styles of success, Ternus has so far played to his own strengths—which are also those of Apple, a company that first and foremost builds beautiful products that spark productivity, creativity, and joy. Ternus' interaction with IShowSpeed is clearly designed to capture this (and, of course, to goose preorder numbers among the influencer's young and massive audience). To some critics, however, the scene might read as a legacy company aura-farming to sell expensive gizmos instead of building the actual technological future, which is artificial intelligence.

Virtually every one of Apple's fellow Goliaths—Microsoft, Google, Meta, Amazon, and now Nvidia, OpenAI, and Anthropic—have flung themselves into the AI arms race, pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into training ever more intelligent thinking machines. While Apple trains its own models, it is nowhere near the technology's frontier, leaving the company vulnerable to being left behind if supersmart AI transforms industry and society in the coming years. At the end of September, Apple was conspicuously absent when President Donald Trump hosted a luncheon for AI power players like SpaceX's Elon Musk, Meta's Mark Zuckerberg, and Google's Sundar Pichai, who lobbied him on their visions for America's tech future.

But Ternus and other Apple executives say they aren't concerned. In the midst of a populist AI backlash, they contend that they are building a modest but personalized and privacy-preserving form of AI that will actually help ordinary people as opposed to merely dazzling Silicon Valley's "lunatic fringe," as Greg Joswiak, senior vice president of worldwide marketing, puts it. And besides, Ternus argues, even if other companies succeed in their mission of building superintelligence, users will still want to talk to it on Apple devices.

"People want physical things," he says a week later at the company's flagship store on Fifth Avenue in New York City, wearing an amiable but guarded smile. He spent the morning greeting superfans who had lined up all night to get their hands on the iPhone 18. "They want to talk, to see images of loved ones, to take pictures. So I don't see a scenario where all of a sudden, our devices disappear and we don't have a need for an iPhone."

TERNUS IS BARELY OLDER than the company he's running. Born in 1975 in Orange County—Apple was founded in '76, just 400 miles north—he grew



DENZA Z: COURTESY OF BYD/DENZA

TRANSPORTATION

A sexier EV

DENZA Z

Rational motivations like eco-consciousness, economic pragmatism, and technophilia tend to inform EV purchases. Lust? Not so much. But the Denza Z, an electric supercar from a luxury sub-brand of Chinese giant BYD, might change that. "A pure sports car, in a new energy era, can transmit the same emotions and the same feelings as a petrol car," says BYD's design chief Wolfgang Egger. Aesthetically, the Z has poster-worthy curves optimized for aerodynamics and downforce. Performance-wise, the company says it can go from 0 to 100 km/h in 2.25 seconds, untouchable numbers for its peers. Beyond road speed, BYD says the Z's battery can zip from 10% to 70% capacity in just 5 minutes with compatible chargers. The Z will be available in China, Europe, and the U.K. by the end of 2026. *—Peter Gaston*

PARENTING

Deluxe car-seat-to-stroller system

DOONA X

The Doona changed the baby-transport game by transforming from an infant car seat into a stroller with the press of a button.

The Doona X takes that innovation further, featuring three stroller positions—Sit, Relax, and Lean Back—with a near-flat 159-degree recline. The X also features better shock absorption, smoother wheel release, an adjustable headrest and no-rethread harness, and a handlebar with two height settings.

—Beth Ann Mayer



LOGISTICS

A delivery robot built for cities

COCO 2

Over a third of Americans order food for delivery at least once a week. In recent years, fleets of robot couriers have arrived to support that demand, though they sometimes struggle with navigating urban areas.

In February, Coco Robotics released its second-generation robot in Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles, and other cities, with upgrades for operating on roads and shoulders, in bike lanes, and in extreme weather conditions. Coco 2 is also compact and emission-free. "It's like a cooler on wheels," CEO Zach Rash says. "By using robots, we can offer a great service … at a much more affordable price." —*Matt Alderton*

AEROSPACE & AVIATION

Capturing the cosmos

NASA NANCY GRACE ROMAN SPACE TELESCOPE

One of cosmology's greatest mysteries is the nature of dark energy—the invisible force that keeps the universe expanding at an ever increasing rate. On Aug. 30, NASA took a huge step toward solving it, with the launch of the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope. Roman, named after NASA's first female executive, is able to look at a patch of sky 100 times as large as the James Webb Space Telescope can, and peer more than 10 billion light-years away, collecting images of the early epochs of the universe. "This telescope is going to expand our window of knowledge by orders of magnitude," Jamie Dunn, the director of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, where Roman was built, told TIME last year. —*Jeffrey Kluger*

up as Steve Jobs was redefining the personal computer as a societal force. When Ternus was 8 years old, his father bought an Apple II. "I started playing games on it and fell in love with Apple," he says. A decade later, he took his family's newer Mac, an SE model, to college at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied mechanical engineering.

In 2001, Ternus left a virtual reality company to join Apple at 26 as an engineer. He has now spent half his life at the company, rising through the ranks on his propensity to consider both how products are made and how the user will experience them. "John was really at the center of driving the spirit of collaboration across the company to make sure that end-to-end these products give you that delightful experience—and the technology kind of disappears as you're using it," says Richard Dinh, Apple's vice president of product design.

Over the past 15 years, some critics have accused Apple of failing to innovate the way it did in previous eras, when the company popularized the home computer, the MP3 player, and the smartphone. But it is undeniable that Apple's core products—its computers and phones—have remained elite thanks to behind-the-scenes innovations in hardware and software. And Ternus, Apple executives say, has been a big part of these improvements.

When Cook, 65, announced in April he would step down following a 15-year tenure, it was no surprise that the company tapped Ternus as his successor. Other executives describe him as pragmatic, meticulous, and unifying. "Ternus is a logical pick," says Neil Cybart, an analyst who has been following Apple for more than a decade on his site Above Avalon. "He has been a big believer in this design-first culture that defines Apple, as well as the idea that it's not just technology here; there needs to be something more."

In the late 2010s, Apple executives shifted their messaging to focus more on fast-growing services like iCloud, the App Store, and Apple Music. But growth in service revenue has moderated this year, and the promotion of Ternus, a hardware and product guru, signals a return to the company's roots.

So it's fitting that his ascension coincided with the announcement of the Duo, Apple's most radical design change to the iPhone since its 2007 release. Apple has been exploring the concept for years. In 2011, when many people still carried around flip phones, Ternus and five other engineers filed a patent application for foldable electronic devices, exploring what kind of batteries and circuit boards might be needed for such an idea. "It felt clear that we were going to eventually get to a place where OLED displays were going to be flexible," Ternus says.

Many challenges stood in between the patent and the final product. The first attempts at a foldable smartphone in the 2010s from other companies tended to be fragile and not all that useful, with a big, ugly crease in the center interrupting the experience. "The other examples in the world felt kind of cheap and crappy," Ternus says.

Across hardware and software teams, Apple engineers and designers got to work. With advancements in Apple silicon chips, they created a new display engine that facilitates seamless transitions between the inner and outer screens. They redesigned iOS to move the phone's main controls from the bottom to the right side for easier thumb access.

Along the way, Ternus encouraged the team to invest more time and effort in the project, even as other foldables beat them to market. Dinh says that at one point, he asked Ternus whether his team should proceed with a top surface material similar to those of its competitors, which Dinh felt had flaws but was potentially good enough.

"And he was like, 'Look, Rich, you'll know when it's the right thing.' And that gave us the confidence to really push the boundaries on innovation and manufacturing, and fly worldwide to connect our suppliers together and come up with the nanotexture [a surface technology]," Dinh says. The result—a surface made from a custom polymer and built atop a hinge with more than 100 tiny interior precision components—has impressed its first users, who have said they can barely detect a crease at all.

Ultimately, the Duo promises a passport-size phone that opens into a powerful tablet. Users can stow it in their pockets, then open it up and watch a movie on its matte, light-deflecting surface. They can compare websites side by side, play touchscreen games with intricate detail, and use a dual-camera setup to simultaneously show themselves and what they're seeing on FaceTime.

Of course, the Duo's success is far from



Ternus, center, at NYC's Fifth Avenue Apple store on Sept. 18 to launch the new iPhone 18

guaranteed. It could go the way of Apple flops like the Apple Car, which was never released, or the Vision Pro, which had staggeringly low sales in the last year. Certainly many prospective buyers will blanch at the device's $2,000-plus price tag.

But the phone's first public testers have given glowing feedback. And demand for the Duo's closest rival, Samsung's Galaxy Z Fold8, has been strong, suggesting there is a growing appetite for the foldables category, especially in Asia.

Apple also hopes that the Duo will earn a cultural cachet among storytellers and other artists, many of whom, like loyal Apple customers, still regard the company more as a maker of useful tools rather than as the enemy Big Tech has become. Four-time Oscar winner Sean Baker *(Anora),* who spoke at a "no-AI" film festival earlier this year, attended the Duo announcement in Cupertino and described his relationship with Apple as collaborative. "It's not just 'buy or use our product'—it's much more of a working relationship where they stay in touch and ask us for feedback," he says.

Baker noted that Apple's products often underpin many parts of the filmmaking process. For instance, when moviemakers need to add dialogue in postproduction, they often simply record on an iPhone, because it's convenient and nearly production-grade.

IN PERSON, TERNUS PRESENTS as a guy trying to blend in: he dresses in nondescript clothes and speaks in platitudes, often about the brilliance of Apple's internal culture. He has devoted much of his early tenure as CEO to obsessing over design, spending multiple days a week in the studio with the industrial-design and human-interface teams.

But beyond Apple Park's gleaming, curved walls, Ternus has tough choices to make. Case in point: the ongoing global shortage of memory chips, which has raised costs and delayed production timelines. In July, the *Financial Times* reported that Apple had begun testing memory chips made by a Chinese company as a way to increase supply. That drew a swift rebuke from a bipartisan group of Senators, who wrote a letter to Apple arguing that to do so would imperil national security.

Ternus pushes back on that idea. "The constraints in memory are absolutely a crisis," he tells TIME in the second of two interviews during September. "So our fundamental belief is that all options should be on the table."

Cook was skilled at managing relationships with governments around the world, vigorously defending Apple's interests even if it made him a target of ridicule. His courtship of Trump, which included a widely maligned presentation of a disc with a 24-karat gold base at the White House in 2025, helped Apple secure relief from some of the Administration's most punishing proposed levies.

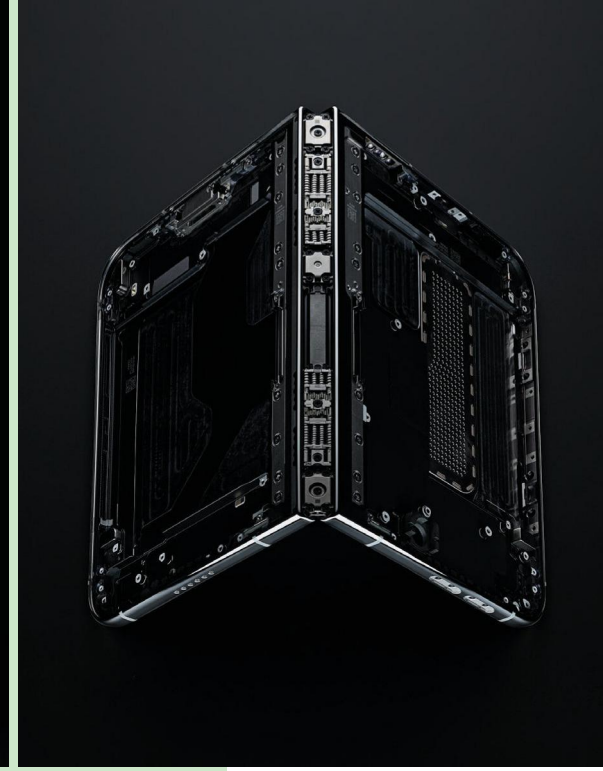
Ternus is tight-lipped about how his approach to government affairs might differ from Cook's. He says that he's met with members of the Trump Administration to "make sure we're kind of working through things together." But as Ternus transitions into the role, Cook has continued to represent Apple on the world stage, meeting with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and then attending President Trump's state dinner for Xi Jinping.

"He has great relationships and loves Apple," Ternus says of Cook, who is staying on as Apple's executive chairman. "So wherever he can help, he is happy to help."

Big Tech has been hammered by lawsuits, public campaigns, and regulation over the past few years from critics who feel that screens have poisoned the cognitive development of an entire generation. From Australia and the U.K. to California and New York, governments have restricted children's social media and AI use and phones in schools, while pressuring Apple and Google to build

COCO 2: COURTESY OF COCO ROBOTICS; APPLE: ANGELINA KATSANIS—AP





stronger protections into their devices.

Apple has traditionally framed many of these harms as arising from particular apps and content. But the company rolled out a redesigned Screen Time experience in September to give parents greater control over their children's app access. Ternus pledges that child safety will be central to Apple's approach going forward. He says that in the past, he used Apple's Screen Time to monitor his kids' device usage, and that it was "good but not great." The company's new updates, he says, stem from a desire "to build tools that make that really easy for parents—and I think we've done just that."

QUESTIONS AROUND GEOPOLITICAL tensions, supply chains, and child safety only become more urgent as Apple wades into its next frontier: artificial intelligence.

Since the rise of ChatGPT in November 2022, the generative AI boom has unfolded with Apple largely sitting on the sidelines. OpenAI brought AI chatbots to the masses; Nvidia built the chips powering them. Microsoft, Google, Meta, Amazon, Anthropic, and SpaceX now all either compete at the technology's frontier or are printing revenue from a key part of its supply chain.

Apple, in contrast, did not unveil Apple Intelligence until June 2024—18 months after ChatGPT's release—and then spent more than two years struggling to deliver the personalized version of Siri it had promised. In 2025, realizing the existing Siri couldn't grow into the AI era, the company scrapped it in favor of another version that had been two-tracked. The resulting new Siri, which launched in the U.S. in September, is powered by an Apple AI model that leverages Google's Gemini technology. This arrangement puts Apple in an unusual position: reliant on a rival for a key building block of its products. This sort of outsourcing famously angered Jobs, who went to great lengths to own the "whole widget," from hardware to software to services.

But Ternus rejects the idea that its AI strategy represents a retreat from that philosophy. After all, Apple relies on suppliers for many of its components, including screens, memory, and modems. "There's not really a goal that we have to make every single thing in a product," he says. "We make the things where we can really bring differentiation."

Apple has said that AI is core to the company's focus, and that it has significantly increased its investments in AI. The company also argues that the usefulness of AI comes less from its underlying raw power than what surrounds it—the chip it runs on, the operating system it inhabits, and the knowledge it has gathered about its user. The new Siri cannot code like OpenAI's Codex or write as elegantly as Anthropic's Claude. But with a user's permission, it can draw connections across messages, emails, calendars, documents, and other information stored on Apple devices. It is designed to help prepare someone for a meeting, find a flight confirmation buried in an inbox, or help interpret health data collected by an Apple Watch.

"Everything in your life is on your phone," Ternus says. "With Siri AI, you can leverage all that information

Open-and-shut case

THE IPHONE DUO

Apple's newest invention—the inner workings of which are seen above right—unfolds to the size of an open passport. It launches Oct. 23

to do things, learn things, and figure out things in a way that nobody else can do."

Cybart, the analyst, argues that Apple has seen this kind of competition before. "People tend to think that if someone else does great, that must mean Apple has a problem, like in music or television streaming," he says. "But how do you access Spotify or Netflix? When other companies do great things, that doesn't change the fundamental story with Apple in terms of having the ecosystem that people want to be in."

And Apple executives argue that some of Siri's limitations are actually strengths. For instance, Siri's lack of thinking power compared with other ultra-smart AI agents means that there's far less of a chance of going rogue, or behaving in eerie ways. "We've purposely designed it not to be a companion, and we don't want to replace human connection," says Lilian Rincon, who leads Apple's AI product efforts.

Privacy is another advantage Apple executives stress. The company has a decades-long reputation for protecting user data more aggressively than its competitors. Siri processes requests on-device where possible, and more computationally demanding asks are sent to Private Cloud Compute. Apple's system of servers is designed so that queries are not stored or made available to the company. Apple has also made portions of that system inspectable by independent security researchers, some of whom have praised Apple's approach while noting limits to its transparency.

SOME INVESTORS ARE already treating Apple as a hedge against the other AI companies dominating the Nasdaq; if those companies wobble, Apple could be the big stock-market winner. Conversely, if AI progress continues apace, smaller but capable models could soon become able to run cheaply on devices built to handle them. In this future, the scarce asset would be not the chatbot, but the device, operating system, and personal context through which the chatbot becomes useful. And Apple has built a significant moat in the form of loyal customers across the world.

This thesis was already borne out earlier this year, when a wave of AI enthusiasts bought Mac Minis in order to set up personal AI agents through the open-source project OpenClaw. While Apple had nothing to do with the project, users quickly figured out that the energy-efficient Apple silicon, compact form, and unified memory of the $600 computers allowed them to run AI workloads locally, continuously, and for minimal electricity costs. This spike in demand caused some Mac Mini models to be unavailable for months.

But Apple will soon face more competition in the hardware space. Last year, OpenAI acquired the startup of Jony Ive, Apple's longtime chief design officer, who is now building AI-first devices for the ChatGPT maker alongside several other prominent former Apple veterans. In July, Apple sued OpenAI in federal court, alleging the theft of hardware trade secrets. (OpenAI calls the lawsuit "baseless.")

Despite the lawsuit, Apple executives say they're not worried about the newfound rivals. After all, Apple devices have never been more popular. With 2.5 billion active devices, the company rakes in nearly half a trillion dollars in annual revenue. And when new users convert to Apple, they tend to stick around. "We don't feel threatened," says Joswiak, the longtime executive. "The fact that we can do the integration that we can means we can create just a better experience than anybody else."

Joswiak adds that Apple isn't making products for the die-hard AI believers chasing superintelligence. "We love them, and they can use it too, but that's not our target," he says. "It's how to make it better for everyday people."

On Sept. 18, lines formed outside Apple stores from Hangzhou to London to Mumbai, with scores of those "everyday people" spending hundreds of their hard-earned dollars on the newest iPhone. Ternus, as Tim Cook and Steve Jobs did before him, showed up to the Fifth Avenue store to take pictures with superfans, who treated him like a movie star. Most of them probably didn't know much about Ternus himself. But they didn't need to, because they saw him reflected through devices that had become omnipresent in their lives.

AI may yet be a part of their lives too. But no one knows the future—and at present, handheld devices are still king. "You can't do everything," Ternus says. "So we kind of try to constrain ourselves to the stuff that matters most—and then put all of our effort into those things."



ACCESSIBILITY

Braille labelmaker

MANGOSLAB NEMONIC DOT

The Nemonic Dot handheld, wireless Braille labelmaker could be a huge help to the 2.2 billion people with vision impairment—plus their families and caregivers. After someone speaks or texts words into its app, the small plastic device quickly converts them into Braille lettering on durable metal labels for anything from bleach to bus-stop signs. The labels for medications can be lifesaving. "When blind people are sick, they may need to distinguish a painkiller from a probiotic," says Mangoslab deputy CEO Clint Yun. Later this year, the Korean Pharmaceutical Association plans to help label its prescriptions with Nemonic Dot. —*Richard Eisenberg*

GREEN TECH

A stronger floating solar array

CIEL & TERRE FUSIO

Strong winds, waves, and snow pose a big challenge to floating solar arrays, which have been deployed to generate renewable energy all over the world. To counteract the weathering forces that can twist or pull their systems apart, engineers at Ciel & Terre, a French manufacturer of floating solar arrays, reshaped its design. Fusio trades the industry standard rectangular pontoons for hexagonal ones.

Not only does the shape provide a "higher strength-to-weight ratio," says Ciel & Terre product division director Stéphane Prouvost, it also makes every part of the array easier to access for service without walking on the panels. —*Sal Vaglica*

IPHONE DUO: COURTESY OF HAW-LIN SERVICES; MANGOSLAB NEMONIC DOT: COURTESY OF MANGOSLAB CO., LTD.



OUTDOORS

Gear for a more broadly imagined adventurer

THE NORTH FACE UNIVERSAL WAWONA 3 TENT

Inclusivity is rarely the focus of outdoor-equipment innovation. With the help of professional adaptive athlete Vasu Sojitra, The North Face set out to change this with the Universal Collection. The frame of the Universal Wawona 3 tent comes together with three poles of the same size, eliminating the need for designers to use color coding that would be useless to the visually impaired to signal which pole goes where. The tent's doorway also features a low threshold that makes it easier to roll in a wheelchair, which should have no problem being stored in the tent's cavernous front vestibule alongside any other camping gear.

—Rae Witte

PHOTOGRAPH BY HUGO YU FOR TIME



PRODUCT DESIGN

A responsive mouse that folds flat

MYAIR.O ORIMOUSE

After the pandemic forced him to work more flexibly between home, office, and the infinite spaces in between, Horace Lam began searching for a mouse that could keep up. Some were too slick—he's dropped and broken two. Others felt too heavy. Lam, an inventor who has worked with Targus and Logitech, created the myAir.O OriMouse, which weighs just 40 grams and charges via USB-C. Inert, the mouse sort of resembles a flattened origami frog. But magnetically snap its two legs together, and the mouse takes on a faceted shape that allows it to nestle comfortably in your palm. *—Daniel Varghese*

AI

An app builder for noncoders

LOVABLE

Co-founder Fabian Hedin says Lovable wants to breed unicorns, especially from the minds of entrepreneurs who've never learned a programming language. In April, the Swedish company launched its no-code builder as a mobile app, with an intuitive interface that lets users describe a software or web-based app idea in conversational English, and watch it come to fruition. The tool has been embraced by major companies like Uber, Zendesk, and Klarna, but also at much smaller scales: over the course of his last Christmas break, a Swedish trucker used Lovable to build an integrated logistics platform he had been imagining for 10 years. *—Martin Cizmar*

DISCLOSURE: INVESTORS IN LOVABLE INCLUDE SALESFORCE, WHERE TIME CO-CHAIR AND OWNER MARC BENIOFF IS CEO

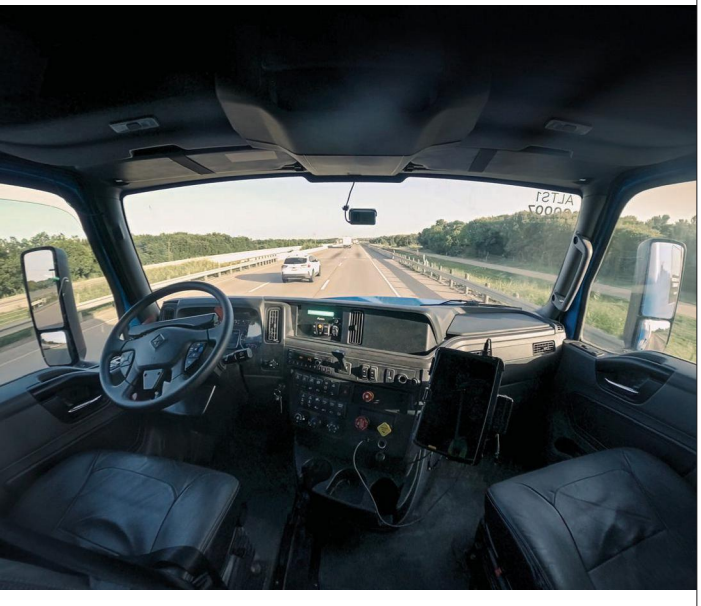
ORIMOUSE: TIME; AURORA: COURTESY OF AURORA; ANALOGUE 3D: COURTESY OF ANALOGUE INC.

ENERGY & UTILITIES

Power backup for renters

PILA MESH HOME BATTERY

Major power disruptions in the U.S. surged by 40% from 2018 to 2024, and seasonal peak electricity demands in North America are forecast to increase 15% or more by 2034. The Pila Mesh Home Battery helps homeowners and renters protect against an unstable grid for a fraction of the price of a whole-home battery. Each briefcase-size unit plugs right into an outlet and communicates with its Pila peers through a mesh network. The system also shrinks utility bills by charging when power is cheap and running appliances when it's priciest. There are limits: a Pila device can power an average fridge for 32 to 64 hours, but it can't handle outdoor central air setups. —*Richard Eisenberg*



LOGISTICS

A driverless big rig

AURORA DRIVER

In the race to automate trucking, Aurora Innovation has pulled ahead. Last year, the company debuted its driverless Class 8 trucks, which include big rigs and dump trucks, on U.S. public roads; in July, it launched its second-generation commercial hardware system, the Driver 2, with SAE Level 4 technology guided by a proprietary lidar sensor that can detect what's happening roughly 10 football fields down the road. (By removing the need for a human driver, an Aurora truck can complete a haul from Fort Worth to Phoenix up to 40% faster.) In September, Aurora reported that its trucks had clocked more than 500,000 driverless miles with zero at-fault collisions, and plans to have 200 big rigs on the road by year's end. "It's novel. It's technically extraordinary," says co-founder and CEO Chris Urmson. "And yet, it's all pretty boring." —*Joe Mullich*



ENTERTAINMENT & GAMING

Resurrecting a favorite game console

ANALOGUE 3D

Nothing can re-create the joy of playing *GoldenEye 007* as a kid, but Analogue 3D, a modern-day Nintendo 64, comes close. The console lets users play N64 games with their original cartridges and controllers, using FPGA hardware instead of emulation software—the standard for retro machines—so there's no lag during play. Picture-wise, it delivers 4K resolution while offering display modes that mimic the look of classic tube TVs. And unlike the original N64, Analogue supports save states, which means gamers can pick up right where they left off if their character dies near the end of a level—no 1997 meltdowns necessary. —*Jessica Sager*

FOOD & DRINK

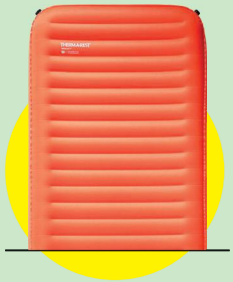
Naturally dyed candies

MARS NON-FD&C M&MS

What if instead of being made with Red No. 40 or Yellow No. 5—which some people can have adverse reactions to—M&Ms were dyed with beet juice and turmeric? Well, in August, Mars started selling a version of its classic candy without artificial dyes (known as FD&C dyes), using those and other natural ingredients to color its red, orange, yellow, and green chocolates.

"We've been working on it, honestly, for decades," says Jaime Boyes, head of R&D at Mars Snacking North America. The trick was not only finding the right plant-based pigments, but also figuring out which would work on a massive production line. Mars has yet to crack the code for blue and brown.

—*Matthew Huff*



OUTDOORS

A cozy, knit, inflatable sleeping pad

THERM-A-REST NEOLOFT SLEEPING PAD

After decades of creating some of the lightest sleeping pads for camping, Cascade Designs' latest release is also one of the plushest. At 30 oz., the new Therm-a-Rest NeoLoft Sleeping Pad is still quite light. But instead of crinkly, unbreathable nylon, the inflatable mattress is constructed from a stretch knit polyester usually used in apparel, which feels smooth against skin and is virtually noiseless when you shift in your sleep. It also inflates to 4.6-in. thick, unprecedented for a mattress that—when rolled up—is hardly larger than a 1 L Nalgene water bottle. —*Adam Schram*

ENTERTAINMENT & GAMING

Safer movie sets

MÉDUSE SAFE FLASH GUNS

Since the horrific shooting death on the *Rust* set five years ago, Hollywood has sought to improve gun safety without sacrificing realism. Méduse Safe Flash Guns, created by visual special-effects supervisor Johnny Han, may be the answer. The system relies on a nonfiring prop gun fitted with custom electronics. The enhanced prop wirelessly communicates with a nearby controller (the "phaser"), which syncs the flash and camera shutter at the moment of firing. "The light had to feel like it was coming from the gun," Han explains. It has been used in HBO's *The Penguin,* Disney+'s *Daredevil,* and an upcoming Ang Lee film, *Gold Mountain.* —*Richard Eisenberg*

WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY

Trendy ear protection

LOOP EXPERIENCE 2

Earplugs have long been an unpleasant necessity: utilitarian and often uncomfortable, but essential in many situations. Loop has changed that with its highly functional earplugs that look more like jewelry than auditory safety measures. The brand offers a range of decibel-reducing options, including the popular Experience 2, which uses an acoustic channel, membrane, and mesh to reduce sound evenly rather than just muffling it—and this year got a design makeover by collaborating with Harry Styles' company Pleasing.

Once you spot a pair in the wild, you'll see them everywhere: hot-ticket concerts, noisy train platforms, outdoor raves, and overloud movie theaters. —*Eliza Thompson*



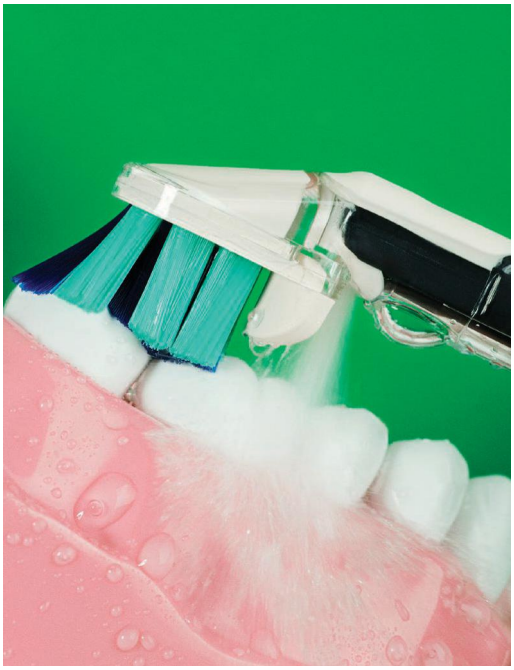
PHOTOGRAPH BY HUGO YU FOR TIME

MEDICAL & HEALTH CARE

A landmark drug for pancreatic cancer

REVOLUTION MEDICINES DARAXONRASIB

Pancreatic cancer is among the deadliest forms of the disease, with a five-year survival rate of just 14%, in part because treatment options are so limited. In a landmark Phase 3 trial, the targeted drug daraxonrasib nearly doubled overall survival compared with standard chemotherapy for patients with previously treated metastatic pancreatic cancer, leading to FDA approval in August. Unlike earlier drugs, the pill acts on multiple forms of the cancer-driving RAS protein mutation at once. "This is the moment," Revolution Medicines CEO Mark Goldsmith recalls thinking when it shrank tumors in an initial trial. "It's very early. It's a very small number of patients, but this is it." —*Lauryn Higgins*



DESIGN

A dental-care first

DYSON CAMERAJET

Electric toothbrushes and water-jet flossers dominate home dental care. But this fall, beloved appliance and personal-care brand Dyson combined the two—with several twists. The CameraJet is an electric toothbrush with a tiny camera in the head that spots minute tooth gaps and food scraps in real time and deploys flossing jets of water where needed as you brush. Users can even use the camera to see inside their own mouth (via an app) or send footage to their dentist for review. The battery and brush heads are swappable, and the whole product is—as Dyson fans might expect—impeccably designed. —*Emma Barker Bonomo*



TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY

Solar-powered polar ship

SELAR *CAPTAIN ARCTIC*

After years commanding ships in the Arctic, Selar co-founder and CEO Sophie Galvagnon grew troubled by the climate changes she was witnessing firsthand—and by the fuel-intensive vessels used to explore the region.

Her solution is *Captain Arctic,* a one-of-a-kind 36-passenger expedition ship built to harness wind and sunlight while reducing energy needs. Five retractable, 35-m rigid sails double as solar panels; when wind drives the ship, propellers generate electricity onboard.

As sailors crossed Arctic waters without fuel centuries ago, she says, "there was no world in which we couldn't find any better solution." Passenger voyages launch in February 2027, aiming to prove the concept—and inspire other shipbuilders to follow suit.

—*Ashlea Halpern*

ENTERTAINMENT & GAMING

Stream global radio

ATONEMO NTS RADIO PLAYER

The Atonemo NTS Radio Player gives corporeal form to the internet radio station that's launched a million DJ careers. Designed in Sweden, the pocket-size streaming device connects via wi-fi to your network and with a 3.5-mm cable to the speakers of your choice. Use one of the big red buttons to listen to whatever is spinning live on NTS Channel 1 and Channel 2, or scroll through a rotary dial to listen to one of 16 music-only radio streams. "[It's] a dedicated object that does one thing beautifully," says Atonemo cofounder Leo Ballesteros.

—*Kevin Cortez*

SLEEPING PAD: COURTESY OF THERM-A-REST; TOOTHBRUSH: HUGO YU FOR TIME; SHIP: COURTESY OF SY ZERO



SPORTS & FITNESS

An ultralight supershoe

ADIDAS ADIZERO ADIOS PRO EVO 3

In April 2026, Sabastian Sawe of Kenya became the first human to run a marathon in under two hours. He credits his world-record-setting time—1 hr. 59 min. 30 sec., at the London Marathon—partly to his footwear: the Adidas Adizero Adios Pro Evo 3. Designed for race-day wear, it weighs just 97 g—30% lighter than its predecessor, making it the lightest running shoe ever made, according to Adidas—thanks to a combination of ultralight foam underfoot, a minimalist carbon rim around the midsole, and a flight-worthy upper made from the same material as parachutes and kites.

—Matt Alderton

PHOTOGRAPH BY HUGO YU FOR TIME



TOYS & PLAY

Dream up your own stickers

HAPIKO STICKERBOX

The global smart/AI toy market is projected to grow from $18.52 billion in 2025 to more than $55 billion in 2035. "But when you see the wave of AI toys and every single one is basically a chatbot in a teddy bear, [it's] like, 'Who asked for this?'" says Stickerbox CEO and co-founder Arun Gupta.

His invention—a small, red handheld box—puts AI to work more purposefully, designing stickers based on verbal user prompts ("Cowboy cat playing guitar"), then printing them in black-and-white for coloring. The box comes with 265 stickers and eight colored pencils, and features built-in filters to block unsafe suggestions.

—Patti Greco

PRIVACY & SECURITY

An AI text detective

PANGRAM 3.0

In the era of cheap generative AI, "polished writing is no longer necessarily produced by careful human thought," says machine-learning engineer Max Spero. That's why he and AI researcher Bradley Emi created Pangram, a tool that helps determine whether text was human-written or AI-generated. The latest version can break up longer documents into sections to reveal where AI was used "fully," "moderately," "lightly," or not at all.

Pangram isn't perfect—false positives still happen—but research published by the National Bureau of Economic Research last year indicates it misses only 1% to 3% of AI-generated text, depending on the LLM used to create it. *—Justin Pot*

STICKERS: COURTESY OF HAPIKO; VESTABOARD; MARSHALL; HUGO YU FOR TIME

EXPERIMENTAL

A lab-made cell that acts alive

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA SPUDCELL

SpudCell is the world's first completely synthetic cell. Built from lab-made DNA, enzymes, ribosomes, and other chemical components by synthetic biologist Kate Adamala and her team at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, SpudCell can grow, divide, and metabolize like a living cell.

Its potential to help researchers better understand cellular function and disease is massive, but the fact that SpudCell can replicate itself also means it could become an important commercial commodity. Adamala believes it represents a first step toward creating a renewable material that reduces and eventually eliminates our need for plastics and other petrochemically derived substances. —*Rachel Sacks*



PRODUCT DESIGN

Retro message board

VESTABOARD NOTE

Vestaboard's split-flap messaging displays evoke the sight and sound of a midcentury train station, but founder and CEO Dorrian Porter says it's more than a nod to the past—it's a respite from glowing screens. "The whole internet collapsed into our phones," Porter says. "There's an opportunity to put that information into our lives in simpler, more peaceful ways." The Note—a compact version of the company's much larger flagship product—launched in February, and can display personal messages, weather, stock prices, Spotify songs, and hundreds of other options via 2,880 mesmerizing flaps controlled via an app. —*Derek Rose*



ENTERTAINMENT & GAMING

Classic portable speaker, better battery life

MARSHALL STOCKWELL III

Many portable Bluetooth speakers still prioritize function over form. Marshall's revamped Stockwell III marries the two ideas, fitting a ton of features into a sleek package that looks like a mini version of the brand's iconic amps. The battery lasts for an industry-best 40 hours and is replaceable (essentially unheard of in consumer electronics). Audio is better than ever too: Marshall's signature True Stereophonic 360-degree audio ensures that music sounds amazing from all angles, while the Dynamic Loudness feature automatically adjusts balance across volumes. —*Eliza Thompson*

MEDICAL & HEALTH CARE

Flagging cancer risk sooner

C THE SIGNS

Looking at 1 million Mayo Clinic patients' records this year, researchers using C the Signs' AI software—which scans electronic health records for early signs of cancer—were able to flag people who would go on to develop lung, breast, prostate, colorectal, and pancreatic cancers up to five years before they would be diagnosed by a physician.

Founder and CEO Dr. Bea Bakshi calls the findings "really encouraging." In 2026, the tool, which is now used by the U.K.'s National Health Service, was used to diagnose its 100,000th NHS patient. The company received patents in both Europe and the U.S., where it is beginning to expand. —*Veronique Greenwood*



PRODUCT DESIGN

A futuristic smart fan

DREAME MF10 BLADELESS FAN

Earlier this year, Yu Hao, the founder and CEO of leading robot-vacuum-maker Dreame, made headlines and stirred controversy with his goal of building it into the world's first $100 trillion company. The first step is rapidly expanding into various sectors, including phones, wearables, and air care.

Dreame's newest smart fan, the futuristic MF10, provides wide-ranging airflow via two bladeless, independently oscillating wings. (Each wing rotates up to 180 degrees horizontally and 90 degrees vertically for 270-degree circulation.) The MF10's TempSync system senses air temperature and automatically adjusts fan speed to optimize comfort and energy use. *—Derek Rose*

MEDICAL & HEALTH CARE

Improving speech intelligibility

FORTELL AI HEARING AIDS

Hearing aids make sounds louder, but not always clearer—especially in places like noisy restaurants or busy offices.

Fortell's AI Hearing Aids tackle that challenge with proprietary AI trained on millions of real-world audio scenes to identify, separate, and amplify specific speakers' voices in real time. The system requires 235 times more computing power than other AI hearing aids, prompting the company to build its own custom processor.

In clinical testing, Fortell users understood 10 times as many words in the loudest environments as did wearers of other AI hearing aids. *—Lauryn Higgins*

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

Headphones that can save and share audio

NOTHING EAR 3A

The new Nothing Ear 3a headphones offer ample aesthetic appeal in an affordable package. But they impress for their unique capability to record and share what you're listening to.

Once you've paired the headphones and set up an account in the Nothing app, you can squeeze both earbuds to start taking an audio snapshot, which you can then replay, transcribe, or share with friends. You can even adjust the recording window so that your snapshot includes audio played up to 30 seconds before you actually pressed the buds. Snapshots are under a minute, but the headphones can also record a phone call up to an hour long. *—Daniel Varghese*



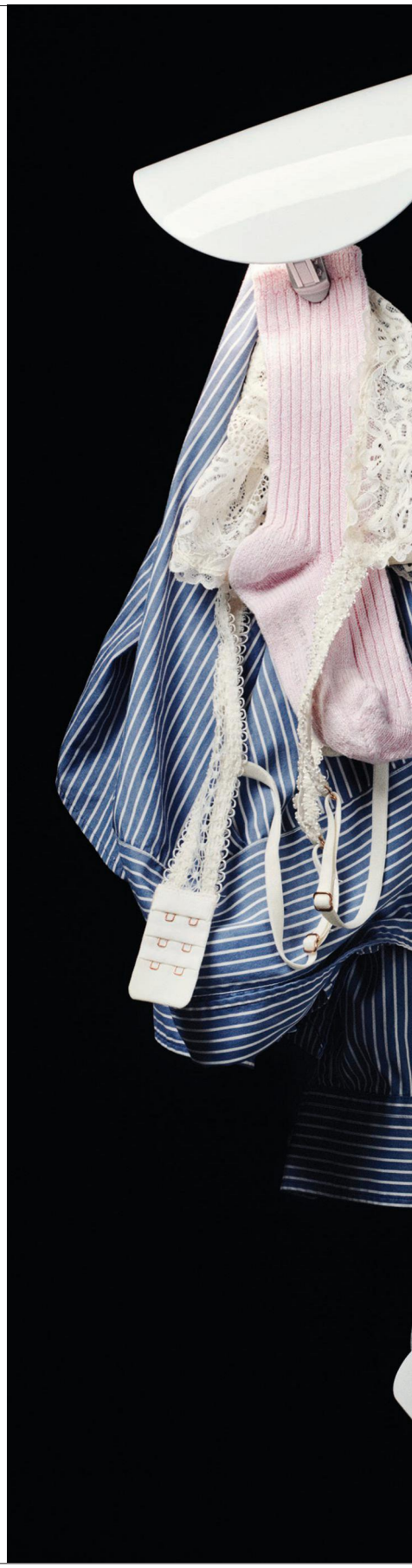
OUTDOORS

A collapsible hard-sided cooler

COLEMAN SNAP 'N GO

Hard coolers take up too much storage space; soft coolers don't offer enough insulation. Coleman merged the best of both with its first collapsible hard-sided cooler. The Snap 'N Go has a leakproof design, retains cold for up to 64 hours, and quickly folds to a third of its size.

"You just pick the cooler up and it self-assembles—and with one tug, it collapses back down," says Scott Barbieri, VP of R&D for outdoor and recreation. It's already outselling the company's predictions. "I think it shows the desire for people to be outside and have easily transportable gear," Barbieri says. *—D.R.*



PHOTOGRAPH BY HUGO YU FOR TIME



HOUSEHOLD

A lamp that does chores

SYNCERE LUME

Like Lumiere the candlestick before it, the Lume both sheds light and completes tasks for its owner with nary a complaint.

To create an AI-powered butler, AI startup Syncere reimagined the bedside lamp as a robotic arm that, when prompted via an app, makes the bed or sorts through a heap of clean laundry and folds it into neat piles. The current iteration can be wheeled around the house, and works best when purchased in a pair to fold clothes, make the bed, or pick up clutter. The company says it will learn more tasks with time. —*Emma Barker Bonomo*



EXPERIMENTAL

A bird embryo grown without a shell

COLOSSAL BIOSCIENCES ARTIFICIAL EGG

The egg is among nature's most resilient and complex structures. It protects an embryo, yet is thin enough for a chick's beak to poke through. Colossal Biosciences, which uses scientific advances to bolster endangered species (and revive extinct ones), replicated nature's incubator with a thin silicon layer inside a rigid 3D-printed outer cup. Measuring as thin as a quarter of the thickness of a human hair, the transparent liner provides a window to monitor growth. It has already hatched 26 live chickens. Chief biology officer Andrew Pask says the tech could help repopulate critically endangered birds like the New Zealand kakapo and Bermuda petrel. —*Sal Vaglica*

FOOD & DRINK

Coffee beans for a changing climate

EXCELSA COFFEE

Over 100 coffee species exist, but two, arabica and robusta, make up 99% of global consumption. Both species are also particularly vulnerable to rising temperatures, creating concerns about future production. San Diego–based Excelsa Coffee Co. aims to meet the moment by commercializing a rare, more climate-resilient third species. First discovered in South Sudan more than 100 years ago and grown primarily in Southeast Asia today, excelsa coffee beans are both drought-tolerant and disease-resistant. "We see this as a massive opportunity to do a lot of good in the world, help out farmers, and bring a better coffee to market," says co-founder Olin Patterson. —*D.R.*

FAN: COURTESY OF DREAME; COOLER: HUGO YU FOR TIME; EGG: COURTESY OF COLOSSAL BIOSCIENCES



PRODUCT DESIGN

A more intuitive manual razor

SKAURA ONE

Razor innovation has historically focused on blades, but Skaura's One rethinks the handle instead. "We wanted to create a razor that would be an extension of the hand," says CEO Ty Cross. Launched in January, the unisex razor uses a patented weighted, ergonomically balanced handle with a finger rest that helps guide grip, pressure, and angle, with the goal of reducing irritation, nicks, and ingrown hairs. The company offers interchangeable blade cartridges for the face, body, and delicate areas, and the handle is backed by a lifetime guarantee. —*Nina Derwin*

PHOTOGRAPH BY HUGO YU FOR TIME



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Lenses that slow nearsightedness

ESSILOR STELLEST

For children with myopia (nearsightedness), these glasses can do more than sharpen blurry vision. Essilor Stellest lenses are designed to correct vision while also slowing the rapid eye growth that causes myopia to worsen.

They look like regular glasses, but close inspection reveals 1,021 tiny lenslets within the lenses, creating a three-dimensional volume of myopic defocus that delivers an optical signal designed to slow eye growth. In a U.S. trial of children ages 6 to 12, Stellest slowed myopia progression by an average of 71% over two years compared with standard lenses. —*Lauryn Higgins*

EXPERIMENTAL

Drive it—or don't

TENSOR ROBOCAR

Robotaxis are in cities around the world, but the Tensor Robocar is the first fully autonomous vehicle purpose-built for private ownership. Arriving this year in the UAE and making its U.S. debut in California next year (pending a deployment permit), it uses agentic AI to process natural language commands; localized data privacy, so personal information stays in the car instead of the cloud; and the ability to switch between manual and autonomous driving, with a retractable steering wheel and pedals that recede into the dashboard during autonomous operation. "True innovation isn't about replacing the driver," says founder and CEO Jay Xiao. "It's about giving people the freedom to choose." —*Matt Alderton*

LENSES: COURTESY OF ESSILORLUXOTTICA; PHONE: HUGO YU FOR TIME; STARLINK: COURTESY OF STARLINK

BEAUTY

A new ingredient for sunscreen

DSM-FIRMENICH PARSOL SHIELD

The U.S. is famously behind on sunscreen science; in recent years, Americans have flocked to sunscreens from Europe and Asia that use more advanced chemical UV filters. This year, Parsol Shield, a new broad-spectrum UV filter also known as bemotrizinol, became the first new sunscreen active approved by the U.S. FDA since the late 1990s. Ruled safe for use by adults and children ages 6 months or older, bemotrizinol stands out from other sunscreen actives because of the larger size of the molecule. "With bemotrizinol, you can reduce the number of filters and reduce the total percentage of filters, and that helps you get to a more elegant-feeling product," cosmetic chemist Kelly Dobos told TIME in May. —*N.D.*

OUTDOORS

At-home Lyme-disease detection

LYMEALERT

Over 476,000 Americans contract Lyme disease every year. Untreated, it can cause arthritis, fatigue, facial paralysis, and even cardiac arrest. Early detection and treatment with antibiotics are crucial, notes Erin Dawicki, a physician assistant in Boston and co-founder and CEO of LymeAlert, the first at-home test for the tick-borne pathogen that causes Lyme disease.

The kit, which allows users to test a tick found on a person or pet, produces results in just 30 minutes and integrates with an app that maps hot spots. "We hear over and over again from people who have been infected: their provider didn't think they were at risk, so they didn't test for it," she says. "So we help patients advocate for themselves." —*M.A.*

AGRICULTURE

Wine saver

SAGA ROBOTICS THORVALD

Powdery mildew, a fungal disease that stunts plants' growth and destroys their fruit, affects grapevines in every wine-growing region. Combatting it typically requires spraying synthetic fungicides from large tractors, which is expensive and harmful to farmworkers, soil, and wine quality.

Thorvald, an electric autonomous robot, roams the vineyard at night, when powdery mildew is most defenseless, applying targeted UV-C light, which "directly kills mildew spores and also helps induce vines' natural defense systems" sans chemicals, says Caine Thompson, general manager for Saga Robotics' U.S. operations. Thorvald currently treats some 3,000 acres of grapevines in California. —*M.A.*



PARENTING

A smartphone alternative

TIN CAN

Some 106 countries and 39 U.S. states now restrict cell phones in schools, amid a societal push to delay giving smartphones to children. Tin Can, a wi-fi-enabled landline network for kids, provides a fun new route to independence, instead of focusing on what they're losing. "It's pretty incredible to see how much Tin Can has become a part of kids' lives and fostered real connection," says CEO Chet Kittleson. The brand's latest release includes a limited-edition Technicaller Clear phone, Twirly Cord Charms, and a Contact Keeper—a slick, modern take on the Rolodex with tradable cards. —*Emma Barker Bonomo*



CONNECTIVITY & COMMUNICATION

Internet, anywhere

SPACEX STARLINK V5

More than 12 million people subscribe to SpaceX's Starlink internet service, which has become renowned for providing access in emergency and off-grid situations. Its new receiver promises to make the service easier to take on the go.

The Starlink V5 is about 35% smaller and 52% lighter than the V4 terminal, making it ideal for people who want to mount it in tight spots. Unfortunately, it's not designed for use while in motion—you'll have to park your RV or tie up your boat before connecting. Still, the connection is strong and fast. It better be: SpaceX currently has 11,000 Starlinks in orbit, 66% of the satellites in the sky. —*Jeffrey Kluger*

SPORTS & FITNESS

Extra protection for the gridiron

GUARDIAN CAP NXT 2.0

To help reduce the blunt force players take to the head, the National Football League mandates players wear a closed-cell polyurethane foam helmet cover like the new Guardian Cap NXT 2.0 during practice.

Chemical engineer and Guardian Sports co-founder Lee Hanson says these provide a 12% reduction in linear impact when worn by one player in a collision and a 20% reduction when worn by both. He hopes the fact that some professional players wear Guardian Caps during games—approved by the NFL in 2024—will increase adoption in youth leagues. "Little kids aren't going to do it unless they see their heroes doing it," he says. —*Rae Witte*



HIS EXCELLENCE

Back-to-back MVP Shai Gilgeous-Alexander could lead the NBA's next dynasty

By Sean Gregory/ Toronto

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER HAD NOT SEEN THE *ONION* HEADLINE.

We are talking in the back of a black SUV, parked in front of his off-season home in the Toronto suburbs, when I mention the bit of satire that went viral during the Western Conference Finals in May. I hand him my phone and he laughs.

"Shai Gilgeous-Alexander Trying to Draw Foul While Shooting Free Throw," reads the headline, which is accompanied by an image of him flailing on the foul line. "Trying to draw a foul at the free-throw line," he says, "that would be good."

Gilgeous-Alexander, or SGA, is known for many things—winning NBA MVP two years in a row; becoming one of the only players in league history to sweep the regular-season MVP, scoring title, and Finals MVP in the same year (Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Michael Jordan, and Shaquille O'Neal are the others); being selected four times for both the All-Star team and the All-NBA First Team; and being named the 2026 Clutch Player of the Year. But the Oklahoma City Thunder superstar who has achieved initial status—think MJ, Dr. J, or KD—has also faced backlash. Fellow players, pundits, and the NBA's chaotic online tinderbox have accused him of "flopping"—or acting as if he were hit much harder than he really was, often falling down in the process, to goad the ref into calling a foul. The goal: get to the free-throw line for two easy points.

San Antonio's 7-ft. 4-in. alien talent Victor Wembanyama helped unleash this anger in December when he said, after a Spurs win over the Thunder, that he was glad to suit up for a team that practiced "pure and ethical basketball." The implication was clear: OKC is a bunch of foul merchants, with Gilgeous-Alexander, who led the NBA

GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER PHOTOGRAPHED IN TORONTO ON SEPT. 4

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHARIF HAMZA FOR TIME



AT 19, AFTER ONE YEAR IN COLLEGE, SGA WAS PICKED 11TH OVERALL IN THE 2018 NBA DRAFT



in free-throws-made per game for a third straight season, the top salesman. The criticism only escalated when the Thunder faced the Spurs for a spot in the Finals.

I want to gauge SGA's feelings about all the noise. Up to this point, he has seemed almost universally admired, if not beloved—perhaps by dint of his businesslike demeanor, low-wattage Canadian upbringing, and small-market employer. Understandably, given his 30-plus-points-per-game average, 88% efficiency from the line over the past three regular seasons and playoffs combined, plethora of honors, and the $285 million contract extension he signed in July 2025, SGA is unapologetic about his approach to scoring. "Playing this game has done amazing things for my and my family's life," he says. "And if a narrative on social media is the worst that comes from this game for me, well, I'd take that a million times out of a million times."

Besides, he has other priorities at the moment. Last season, Oklahoma City was on the brink of establishing a dynasty. They were the reigning NBA champions, having won a title in 2025, and had again finished with the league's best record. Then the Spurs sent them home in that contentious seven-game series. "Awful feeling, sick to your stomach," SGA recalls. "I tried to let it go for a little bit. Don't obsess over it. Not yet."

The Thunder are now the co-favorites with the Spurs—against whom they face off in the season opener on Oct. 20—to win the 2027 title, but other teams are hogging the spotlight. The New York Knicks are enjoying much of the shine after bringing the championship trophy home after a 53-year drought, and could become the first franchise in nearly a decade to repeat. Meanwhile the Philadelphia 76ers, on paper, have assembled a superteam, as LeBron James and Jaylen Brown join forces with 2023 league MVP Joel Embiid, two-time All-Star Tyrese Maxey, and VJ Edgecombe, who finished third in 2026 Rookie of the Year voting.

Gilgeous-Alexander, 28, is used to being overlooked: he's morphed from an underhyped draft pick, and the consolation prize in a blockbuster trade, to arguably the best basketball player on earth. Through spectacularly consistent work, he has mastered basketball physics, starting and stopping and slithering his way into the lane enough to, in March, break Wilt Chamberlain's record for most consecutive games scoring at least 20 points (126). "One person saw this happening," says Thunder coach Mark Daigneault, who was an assistant coach when SGA joined the team in 2019. "And it was him. That's it. If anybody else says, 'This is what I saw,' then it's revisionist history."

SGA wants to strike that dutiful descriptor—*arguably*—from the record. "I think I'm the best player in the NBA," he says. "I think the production that I have night in and night out is best-player-in-the-NBA production. I think the efficiency that I do it at is best-player-in-the-NBA efficiency. I think everybody picks up a basketball or a soccer ball or a football or a tennis ball to win the game, the match, whatever it is. And I've done my fair share of winning in these past couple years."

> 'You're never as good as you think you are, or as safe or as comfortable as you think you are.'
>
> —SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER

SGA CREDITS HIS HOMETOWN of Hamilton, Ontario—"an underdog city"—for his work ethic, which is helpful considering the two-time NBA MVP didn't make the JV team in ninth grade. Born to Vaughn Alexander, who won a high school city championship in Toronto, and Charmaine Gilgeous, who represented Antigua and Barbuda in the 400 m at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, he and his younger brother Thomasi sampled all kinds of sports, including the national pastime of hockey—though never on ice. "I wanted to, but I just couldn't afford it," he says. But by high school, SGA was all in on basketball.

So it was a "wake-up call" when he was cut from the squad. "I thought I was this player," he says. "I learned quickly that I wasn't." (In an oft-told tale, Michael Jordan's high school coach cut him from the varsity team as a sophomore, fueling his ferocious competitiveness: the man was booed when introduced at a Jordan salute in Chicago in the mid-1990s, and Jordan referenced the slight in his Hall of Fame speech. "You made a mistake, dude," Jordan said. SGA, on the other hand, doesn't even recall this coach's name. "I'll let him off the hook," he says.)

He sprouted from 5 ft. 7 in., with big clown feet, in ninth grade to 6 ft. 2 in. at the end of 10th. But, he

SGA WON HIS FIRST TITLE ON JUNE 22, 2025, WHEN THE THUNDER BEAT THE INDIANA PACERS



SGA WAS AWARDED HIS SECOND STRAIGHT NBA MVP TROPHY BEFORE A PLAYOFF GAME ON MAY 18



says, "I was wonky. I was growing with knee pains, moving slow, hard to control my body." So SGA and his club-basketball coach Dwayne Washington, a high school math and science teacher, spent hours in the gym developing tricks to compensate for his lack of coordination: superior ballhandling, changing speeds to deceive defenders, perfecting the art of deceleration—stopping fast on a dribble, so a defender's momentum carries him past you. He wrote down practice instructions in a marble notebook. "He is able to sustain concentration for longer periods of time than anybody I've seen," says Washington. "Everything is predicated on his inner clock to slow down, focus on tasks, and problem solve."

By the time SGA matured into his 6-ft. 6-in. frame, and became more athletic and efficient in his movements, those tricks had evolved into lethal weapons. In order to face better competition, he and his first cousin, Atlanta Hawks guard Nickeil Alexander-Walker, who grew up in Toronto, played their last two years of high school basketball together in the U.S. They led Hamilton Heights Christian Academy, in Chattanooga, Tenn., to a Christian schools national championship. "Being able to hold your own in America is the first step to like, 'OK, I'm on the right track,'" says SGA.

The next stop was the University of Kentucky, where he planned to do one year before entering the NBA Draft. He feels fortunate that NIL—the legal right of college athletes to cash in on their name, image, and likeness—wasn't on the books then. Having so many options and so much money in college can sap a player's urgency to collect a pro payday. "For me, it was so simple," he says. "Now it's tricky. You're right out of high school. You don't know anything. It's hard to make smart business decisions. Kids have handlers, but you see it all the time: guys go down the wrong path because they're advised by the wrong people. There's room for error."

In the 2018 draft, the Charlotte Hornets selected SGA with the 11th overall pick, then traded him to the Los Angeles Clippers minutes later. He had a promising rookie season, scoring 10.8 points per game, and finished sixth in Rookie of the Year voting. But Gilgeous-Alexander, along with the Clippers' third leading scorer, Danilo Gallinari, and a boatload of future first-round draft choices, was shipped to the Thunder for Paul George, who had finished third in the MVP voting that season. "You're never as good as you think you are, or as safe or as comfortable as you think you are," he says. "I just use it as a chip on my shoulder."

Playing with Hall of Famer Chris Paul in his first OKC season further enhanced his development. "I used to eat terrible," says Gilgeous-Alexander, who strongly believes that Canadian McDonald's is better than American McDonald's, thank you very much. "The seriousness that he approached the things outside of the game, his diet, the weight room, recovery, everything that he did ticked towards his performance. That was pretty eye-opening to me."

In March 2020, the pandemic shut down sports and SGA returned to Ontario. When he came back to OKC for prebubble workouts in June, he was visibly stronger. "It was COVID, everybody's on Zoom calls, staying in their pajamas all day," says Daigneault. "You're like, 'OK, maybe he's in his pajamas, but if he's in his pajamas, he's lifting.' He was not resting." On a vet-laden playoff team that earned a five seed in the loaded Western Conference, it was SGA, the sophomore, who topped the Thunder in scoring.

IN GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER, THE THUNDER had a foundational piece. But the team would take its lumps. "We had to take a longer view to get to a more sustainable level of winning," says OKC general manager Sam Presti. The franchise lost 50 games in 2020–21 and 58 in 2021–22, before creeping back near .500, 40-42, in 2022–23. But for Presti, those years were productive: He cleared salary-cap space and used the first-round picks from the Clippers deal—plus the Thunder's own selections—to stockpile young standouts like Jalen Williams and Chet Holmgren, both drafted in 2022, and use others as trade assets. This fallow period also put the Thunder in position to better compensate their emerging stars and to add veteran role players like Isaiah Hartenstein, who joined the team in 2024.

The losing seasons never got SGA down. "I get to go out there and essentially shoot any ball that I want," he says. "So many players don't get this

MIKE LAWRIE—GETTY IMAGES; ESSE D. GARRABRANT—NBAE/GETTY IMAGES; ALEX SLITZ—GETTY IMAGES



opportunity. I was so wrapped up in just playing the game that I love with that amount of responsibility that it was honestly just so fun for me that I didn't even care."

He was also enjoying himself off the court, establishing a reputation as one of the world's best-dressed athletes. He showcased his fashion sense before and after Thunder games, at the Met Gala, and even on a Paris Fashion Week runway. "It's fun to be able to play with color palettes," says Gilgeous-Alexander, who has arrived at arenas in all-leather outfits, oversize fur coats, and various presentations of camo. "I've always been into arts and crafts, and it's a way to do it through clothes." He beat out Timothée Chalamet and A$AP Rocky for *GQ*'s Most Stylish Man of 2022, well before the Thunder became a national TV staple. "My parents always made sure that we looked presentable," he says. "That was a nonnegotiable. Little things, whether it's making sure your pants are seamed the right way, or the collar was flapped the right way."

SGA has inspired his teammates to look good too. "He's made me spend more money, for sure," quips Williams. The young, chic Thunder developed a unique chemistry. Gilgeous-Alexander and Holmgren sang an off-key parody of Christina Aguilera's "What a Girl Wants" in an AT&T commercial that ran ad nauseam during March Madness and the NBA playoffs in 2024; the next year Williams joined them in a new spot, the joke being they all wore the same outfit to an event. Players also developed a tradition of crashing postgame TV interviews with Thunder sideline reporter Nick Gallo, covering him in towels and executing other hijinks as he talks to the star of the game.

SGA sets the tone. "I was shocked at how normal he is," says Williams. "It makes it really easy for people on the team to feel like they can be themselves." As the accolades have piled up, he's remained committed to meshing. "If you're a superstar in the NBA, there's a natural gravity that pulls you outside the team," says Daigneault. "He wants to be one of the guys as badly as he wants to be an all-time player. He's constantly plugging himself back into the team despite the gravity that's pulling him out."

After each of his MVP announcements, SGA bought gifts for his teammates: Rolexes in 2025; Audemars Piguet watches, Burberry trench coats, and golf clubs in May. "These guys don't get to have as much fun," he says. "I don't ever have to think about my minutes. I don't have to think about where my shots are coming from. Essentially, we go out there, we play my game. These guys rebound, dive on loose balls, do all the dirty work. They essentially play off of me. I just think that they deserve a little bit of credit for their sacrifice."

After the Thunder won 68 regular-season games in 2024–25 and beat their opponents by an average of 12.9 points per game, a new NBA record, they began this past season 24-1, tying the 2015–16 Golden State Warriors for the hottest start ever. But injuries plagued them in the Western Conference Finals, as Williams and Ajay Mitchell, a second-year player who provided punch off the bench, missed key games. The 7-ft. 1-in. Holmgren had a particularly rough series: Wembanyama's production (27.3 points per game) trumped Holmgren's (10.7 points), and the Frenchman dunked on Holmgren minutes into Game 7. Holmgren finished that final game with 4 points, 4 rebounds, and no assists. Among fans and pundits, he took a beating.

But on the September day we spend together in Ontario, Gilgeous-Alexander says he was the one at fault. "The MVP of the league waited until Game 7 to have a good game," he says. (While SGA's output and efficiency did not meet his usual standard, he did shoot 50% from the field and score 30 points in OKC's Game 2 victory over San Antonio.) "I don't think it's on Chet," he says. "I carry a lot of the weight. The only way you can truly fail is if you don't learn from the moment. I know the type of guy he is. And I know what type of worker he is. He'll definitely do it."

> 'He wants to be one of the guys as badly as he wants to be an all-time player.'
>
> —OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER COACH MARK DAIGNEAULT

About two weeks later, I tell Holmgren that SGA blamed himself for the defeat. "I might disagree with him," he replies. "Losing in a sh-tty fashion on the last game of the season, and f-cking having that be your last game for the next three months or whatever, sucks. But he definitely checked on me. We chopped it up, trying to talk some hoops, figuring out how to use this time of the summer productively. I don't think I'm somebody who necessarily needs to be checked in on. But it speaks to his character and his willingness and awareness to do that."

OFF QUEEN ELIZABETH WAY, not far from a Ford assembly plant that drives what's left of Ontario's manufacturing economy, sits the gym



WITH ECHO, THE DOBERMAN HE HAS CALLED THE "SWAGGIEST PUP EVER"

where Gilgeous-Alexander holes up all summer. It's an unremarkable space—from time to time, SGA says, a shot bounces off the facility's low ceiling. A half-dozen young men join him, a mix of former college players who offer some defensive resistance and smaller guys he's known since grade school. They rebound and do some passing. "That's his circle," says Nate Mitchell, an assistant coach for the Canadian national team who works with SGA in the summers. "It doesn't get any bigger than what you see."

While most Ontarians are just waking up, SGA sweats through his workout, shooting dozens of three-pointers on the move. Over the past couple of seasons, he has upped his three-point attempts and efficiency, making him even more difficult to defend, though the long ball abandoned him in the Spurs series. "It's OK, it's OK," he says while bobbling a pass, burying the shot anyway.

He showed up at 6 a.m. this morning, but these sessions can start as early as 4:30. The week prior, Gilgeous-Alexander flew home from Nike's campus outside Portland, Ore., slept two hours, and was on the court before dawn. (He transferred from Converse, a Nike subsidiary, to the big brand in June; Nike plans to release a second edition of his signature shoe—the Shai 002—early next year. Asked what customers can expect, SGA, who counts drawing and tennis as hobbies, responds: "Sick design. Because I drew it. That's all I can give you.")

After a series of drills, he is bent over, hands on knees. "A little fatigue never hurt nobody," says Mitchell. Gilgeous-Alexander steps to his safe space, the foul line, where he's almost automatic. He makes nine in a row.

For the record, he does not practice falling. Yahoo! Sports basketball analyst Tom Haberstroh did yeoman's work last spring: he tracked more than 1,300 shots taken by top scorers SGA, Wembanyama, Jalen Brunson, James Harden, and Donovan Mitchell in the playoffs and found that, indeed, SGA hits the deck at the highest rate—on both attempts that are whistled as fouls and those that aren't. But SGA swears he's not acting. After all, he drives to the bucket more than most, so he's more likely to draw contact. Plus, he often lands on his tush for safety. "Sometimes I'm leaning so much and fading away so much that it's easier for me to fall than to try to stick a landing or risk landing on someone," he says. "It's just natural. Your body's in a way in the air that if you try to stick the landing, it's unnatural. If I'm this way and my knee will have to go the other way, you're compromising your body."

Even with SGA healthy, OKC is no lock to top the Western Conference. Younger players like Ajay Mitchell and Cason Wallace must keep improving. And Presti traded some battle-tested cogs this summer in order to save salary and load up on more draft picks. One of them, Lu Dort, is SGA's running mate on the Canadian national team. He's been going up against Gilgeous-Alexander in practice for years. "I keep telling people I'm the only one that can stop him," says Dort, who will now play with SGA's cousin on the Hawks. SGA sees things differently. "He's going to stand in front of me and try to stop me from going places on the basketball court, and I'm going to go places on the basketball court," he says. "That's just how basketball works."

After SGA finishes his workout, he makes small talk with his team about movies—SGA has never watched a mob flick—and whether they prefer Damian Lillard or Kyrie Irving in their primes (he pleads the fifth). He'll go back home for a lift and to hang with Ares, his 2-year-old son with his high school sweetheart and now wife Hailey Summers.

As he looks ahead to the season, SGA makes clear that he's not out for revenge. "It's hard to be in that state of mind that long," he says later in the day. "Even as a kid, I was never good when I played mad. Never, never, never, never. I just don't think you make the best decisions." Instead, he'll lean on his curious mind. He's making tactical adjustments he won't share. (Trade secrets.) He'll troubleshoot at his own pace. "I wasn't happy to lose," SGA says. "But I was like, 'OK, good, I deserved it.' It's my job to figure out why I didn't deserve to win. I attack losing."

Like many elite athletes, SGA dabbles in other pursuits. He is a part-owner of an arena in Hamilton, and according to his management team, he has also joined the ownership groups of the Spanish soccer club Atlético Madrid and the coffee brand La La Land. In September, he started a charitable foundation, and he plans on launching a media and entertainment company in early 2027. (Gilgeous-Alexander is less inclined to involve himself in politics. During the peak of the U.S.-Canada tariff war in early September, he wasn't much interested in opining on North American trade policy, though he did offer a brief comment on President Trump's attempt to make Lake America a thing. "It's obviously Lake Ontario to me," he says. "I don't have nothing more to say beyond that.")

But despite his many engagements, SGA assures fans that the Thunder come first. "I mean, you can't put your time into everything in life," he says. "I should get started sooner than later, to figure out what I'll do after [basketball]. But while I'm in it, it gets all of me." ◻

STYLING: MATTHEW HENSON; CLOTHING: GUCCI; JEWELRY: TALENT'S OWN; WATCH: AUDEMARS PIGUET; SET DESIGN: SUZANNE CAMPOS; GROOMING: LATEISHA GRANT; LOCATION: ASTROLAB STUDIO



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Time Off



CARRIE NATION

BY JUDY BERMAN

Stephen King's oft-adapted horror classic finds a new monster—and it's everyone

INSIDE

A WHISTLE-BLOWER AND THE ACTOR WHO PLAYS HER

CHRIS ROCK TAKES ON THE DARK SIDE OF HOLLYWOOD

A NEW DRAMA ASKS WHAT'S REALLY BEST FOR OUR CHILDREN

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY TIME

EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT HAPPENS IN *CARRIE*. Fifty-two years after its publication, the novel that ignited Stephen King's career has so thoroughly engulfed the culture, you'd have to be almost as sheltered as Carietta White herself not to have absorbed its most indelible images. The locker-room tampon gauntlet and "Plug it up!" chant. Carrie's smothering holy-roller mom, locking her up in prayer-closet solitary confinement. The eerily unlikely prom date. The swinging bucket that has haunted every coronation of school-dance royalty on-screen since Brian De Palma first adapted the book in 1976.

It's a tale as old as time: Warped by her mother's zealotry and scapegoated since childhood by her classmates, 16-year-old Carrie has a late, traumatic menarche that reactivates her latent telekinetic abilities. Then, after accepting a pity date to the prom, she's crowned queen and immediately gets pig's blood dumped on her head by a resentful bully. The humiliation causes her to lay waste to the school and then the town, using her powers to exact revenge.

King's book and De Palma's film became classics of the horror genre. No less venerable a critic than Pauline Kael wrote of Sissy Spacek's Oscar-nominated portrayal: "I don't see how this performance could be any better." Yet in the 21st century, new interpreters keep trying to improve upon it. With platforms scrambling to capitalize on popular IP, it's no mystery why this would sound like a good idea to Hollywood executives. But when high-minded filmmakers like *Boys Don't Cry* director Kimberly Peirce, who made a divisive 2013 remake, get involved, other facts are in play.

The fourth screen adaptation of the novel (unless you count the pitiful 1999 sequel, *The Rage: Carrie 2*) is an eight-episode Prime Video series created by Mike Flanagan, who is known both for riffing on horror touchstones in Netflix hits like *The Haunting of Hill House* and *The Fall of the House of Usher* and for his features based on King novels like *Gerald's Game* and *Doctor Sleep*. Now streaming, his ambitious *Carrie* is the first that manages to get out from under the shadow of De Palma's. Yet it confirms a gradual shift in how the story is being told. What was once an account of an abusive mother and an evil bully unwittingly uniting to create a monster has become, with each new incarnation, more like an indictment of society as a whole.



Carrie's locker-room meltdown, updated for the social media era

ALL THREE *CARRIE* MOVIES are mostly faithful to the novel. King's writing is remarkably cinematic, which is probably why he's our most adapted living author. But every *Carrie* is also a product of its time. De Palma, whose masterfully crafted version turns 50 in November, seems to lust after and fear the female body in equal measure—a common response within what was then a male-dominated genre to the feminist upheavals of the '70s. It's hard to imagine a contemporary adaptation pairing its opening credits with a steamy, slow-motion parade of nude high school girls in their locker room. A 2002 made-for-TV movie written by Bryan Fuller *(Hannibal)* is a relic of an era when the only things teen girls loved more than low-rise denim were movies where female misfits get glow ups. Just over a decade later, Peirce incorporated smartphones and YouTube, as well as a pop-feminist sensibility that traced the derangement of Carrie's mom Margaret (played here by Julianne Moore) to childbirth trauma, and found a palpably empowered Carrie actively choosing who to kill and who to save.

You can find support for each of these readings in King's own reflections. "The book is … an uneasy masculine shrinking from a future of female equality," he wrote in his 1981 nonfiction book *Danse Macabre*. "Carrie White is a sadly misused teenager, an example of the sort of person whose spirit is so often broken for good in that pit of man- and woman-eaters that is your normal suburban high school. But she's also Woman, feeling her powers for the first time and, like Samson, pulling down the temple on everyone in sight." In her influential 1992 study *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film,* the scholar Carol J. Clover suggests this tangle of intentions explains the broad and, in some ways, contradictory appeal of *Carrie* across genders. Its protagonist is, at once, a projection of female power, male fear, and the universal horror of bullying.

Despite their overall redundancy,



OPENING PAGE: EVERETT COLLECTION (2); THESE PAGES: PRIME

the two features released after Clover's book shared a new emphasis. De Palma's stylish '70s chiller played up the ghoulishness of Margaret (a bellowing Piper Laurie) and of Carrie's chief tormentor at school, sadistic mean girl Chris Hargensen (Nancy Allen), as well as the otherworldly oddness of Spacek's lead. But Fuller's and especially Peirce's films sand down those excesses, revealing vulnerabilities that make those characters harder to hate or fear. At the same time, we see the condescension behind the actions of ostensible heroes like Sue Snell, the popular girl who tries to atone for hazing Carrie by lending the girl her boyfriend as a prom date. In these movies, Carrie's reign of terror is the ultimate expression of the school's brokenness. As the critic Matt Zoller Seitz wrote of the 2013 version: "The first *Carrie* was horror. This is tragedy."

IF THE 21ST CENTURY *Carrie* movies spoke to a post-Columbine era of school shootings, then Flanagan's series is a product of the Trump decade, in which seemingly every aspect of American life has fractured along political lines. The educational realm has become a crucible for debates around censorship, technology, parental rights, gun control, LGBTQ inclusion, critical race theory, the teaching of science vs. religion, and social media. Which explains how Flanagan and his creative team, which includes many female writers and directors, found in this slight story eight episodes' worth of material.

Without omitting any moments King fans will anticipate, they depart boldly from the text. This *Carrie* opens with the death of Carrie's conspiracy-theorist father (who, in previous versions, she never got to know) in a bizarre accident. Somehow, no one knows he had a wife (Flanagan regular Samantha Sloyan, locating the wounded soul of a character who's always been more of a caricature) and daughter (a movingly fragile Summer H. Howell) until they're found cowering at home, in the closet where they pray. The previously homeschooled Carrie is forced to enroll at the local public high school while Margaret gets a job at a soulless big-box store.

An almost saintly figure, Carrie develops complicated friendships with both smart, benevolent Sue (Siena Agudong) and Chris (Alison Thornton), who's been spiraling since her mom moved in with a classmate's dad and her own father informed her he can't pay for college. Carrie doesn't know Chris is behind an anonymous social media account that posted footage of her locker-room nightmare before expanding to target practically everyone at school, teachers included. A constant nuisance to the administration, Margaret harangues Principal Grayle (Matthew Lillard) to intervene. But he dithers, questioning whether what kids post on a platform external to school is his jurisdiction.

The problem isn't that Grayle doesn't care; he wants the best for his students. So do other adults, like the girls' young gym teacher (Amber Midthunder) and empathetic school counselor (Tim Bagley). Even Margaret, an archetypal Karen with MAHA tendencies who becomes a vlogging parents' rights crusader, is sincerely trying to help a daughter she cherishes. She's not wrong to point out that a world where kids are shot in their classrooms is an abomination. But meaning well is not enough. Fights, protests, and parental panics ensue. By prom night, the community has already metaphorically exploded. Carrie only makes it literal.

The community has already metaphorically exploded. Carrie only makes it literal

For everything of value it adds to the story, Flanagan's take can feel a bit cluttered. There are too many interconnected framing devices, from on-camera interviews with survivors of Carrie's massacre to history lessons on Joan of Arc. As in *House of Usher,* which filters the downfall of a Sackler-like family of opioid profiteers through the sieve of Poe's Gothic tale, Flanagan's social commentary can be blunt. His *Carrie* can get bogged down in meetings and assemblies where characters representing different facets of Trump-era vitriol and alienation monologue on what's really wrong with the world today.

Yet at the core of this series is a perceptive diagnosis of that problem. More than individual villains to be vanquished, there are people like Grayle and Margaret and Sue, whose pure intentions are undermined by complacency, indecision, disinformation, conformity, and fear, all amplified by social media. Even entitled Chris is lashing out because of instability at home and family money troubles. Amid extreme rhetoric, Flanagan implies, everyone who doesn't work hard to avert atrocities is complicit in them—and there's precious little evidence that most of us are examining that complicity. Tragedy becomes, specifically, a tragedy of the commons as selfishness metastasizes into a scourge on the entire town. And Carrie becomes something between Frankenstein's monster and Jesus Christ: an innocent persecuted for the sins of mankind, but one whose all-too-human thirst for retribution incinerates any hope of forgiveness. ◻

MOVIES

The woman who unmasked Facebook

BY ELIANA DOCKTERMAN

THE SOCIAL NETWORK HELPED DEFINE A GENERATION OF tech founders when it premiered in 2010: written by Aaron Sorkin, it tells the story of Facebook's founding by an ambitious, jilted college kid who imposes his will on the world. Now, in *The Social Reckoning,* Sorkin focuses on the ills of the company Facebook eventually became. He tells the story through the lens of Frances Haugen, a former employee who demonstrated through a trove of internal documents, leaked to the *Wall Street Journal,* that Facebook's algorithm was stoking political division, that Instagram was contributing to body-image issues for teen girls, and that the company's platforms were being used by drug dealers and human traffickers. CEO Mark Zuckerberg has denied his company, rebranded as Meta after Haugen's leak, prioritized profit over safety. Mikey Madison, fresh off her Oscar for *Anora,* plays Haugen in the film. Madison and Haugen sat with TIME for their first interview together.



Jeremy Allen White as reporter Jeff Horwitz and Mikey Madison as Frances Haugen

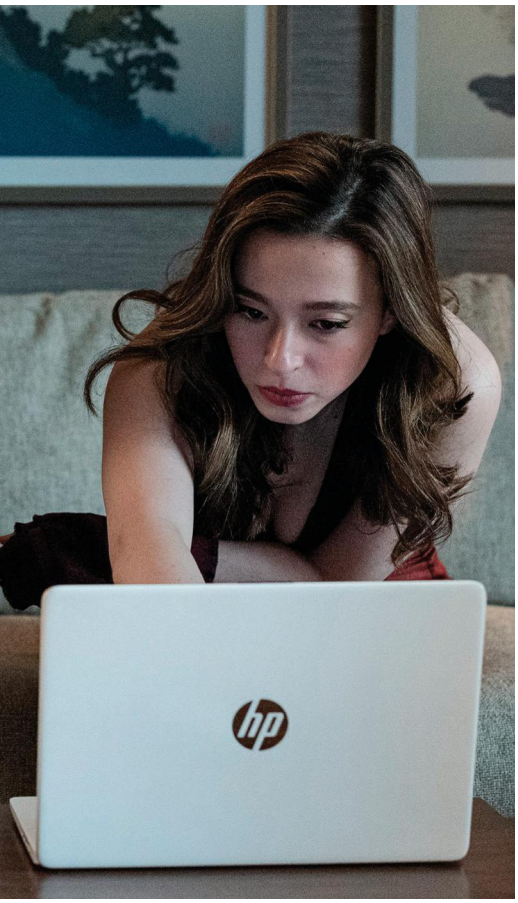
Mikey, you and Frances have not had the opportunity to spend a lot of time together. How much is the Frances of the film based on the real Frances?
Madison: When I got the script, I knew about the Facebook Files, but I didn't know Frances' name. So I looked her up, and I was like, "She's blonde and has blue eyes. Why does Aaron want me for this?" And he said, "I want you to try and build the character from my script." But of course I read her memoir and tried to do my due diligence because there was so much I didn't understand. I don't have a personal relationship with social media at all.

Is there a reason you don't have social media?
Madison: It's just something that never quite stuck. It's something I never felt I could understand. When I was 13, I had an Instagram, but it kind of lived and died at that time and not for any particular reason or self-preservation.

Frances, Aaron reached out to you about the script.
Haugen: I first met Aaron a few months after I came forward as a whistle-blower, and he wanted to figure out if it was possible to do a companion piece to *The Social Network.* After my memoir came out, he came back to me with this heavily underlined, sticky-noted, dog-eared copy.

He writes notoriously fast-talking characters. Mikey, how did you prep for the Sorkin rhythm?
Madison: I don't know if much can prepare you for that. I'm not someone who naturally speaks in that rhythmic way. I don't know anyone who does, except for maybe Aaron. It's singular to his sensibilities as a screenwriter. I keep joking that Aaron has this internal stopwatch in his head. Every period, every comma is incredibly intentional, and the space between is timed, and we're on a deadline. The first day on set, after seven or eight takes, he came in and was like, 'OK, we're starting to cook with a bit of gas here.'
Haugen: That's hard.
Madison: But I also think it created a certain intensity.
Haugen: There's a fidelity to it. [*Wall Street Journal* reporter] Jeff [Horwitz] and I are both chatty people who talk quickly, so you do capture the excitement of when we were in the weeds.

Meta reached an $18 billion settlement in August, ending a multistate lawsuit that alleged it got teens hooked on social media while jeopardizing their mental health. Meta did not admit to any wrongdoing. Is the settlement enough?
Haugen: We're only in the first chapter of the settlements. We still have two major sets of settlements to go just in the United States. The school districts are bringing very large suits, which I'm expecting to have dollar values north of $100 billion, maybe



'I think he's been isolated so long it's distorted his priorities.'
—FRANCES HAUGEN, ON MARK ZUCKERBERG

$200 billion. And then we have the individual kids and family lawsuits. So far, we've only had one resolve, but it was $6 million to a single person. When you apply that across kids in the United States, you only need a fraction of 1% [of that amount], and it adds up to a trillion dollars.

Why do you think Mark Zuckerberg made the choices that put the company in this position?
Haugen: Mark is in a unique psychological circumstance in that there are very few founders in Silicon Valley who have the level of control he has at the scale he has … I think he's just been isolated for so long it's distorted his priorities.

Jeremy Strong, who plays Mark, went method on set and isolated himself from the rest of the cast. What was that like?
Madison: I had less than half a day to work with him. We had one scene, but I was almost a background actor. I hope to be able to work with him in the future. His process is intriguing to me as an actress. The result is obviously very special.

Frances, you've testified that Meta, in your view, prioritized growth over consumer safety. Do you think we're at a similar inflection point with AI companies, where the need to grow is at odds with what's good for us?
Haugen: I think you can square the circle on capitalism and what is good for us. Five years ago, people in the United States used Instagram and Facebook more than they do today. And part of that is because Meta overoptimized for the short term instead of the long term. When you see unpleasant content, when you see AI slop and bullying and more ads, you're less likely to use the product. Governance helps businesses make choices that optimize for the long term, which actually makes them more profitable long-term. So capitalism doesn't have to be in conflict with safety. When it comes to AI, part of what makes it hard is the rate of change. I'm hopeful we're going to have one or two more scary incidents, and then we're going to be like, "Maybe we should do something sensible."

When you spoke to my colleague Billy Perrigo for a TIME cover story five years ago, you talked about how you almost died before working at Facebook. You told him, "I think it really changes your priorities when you've almost died. Once you've overcome your fear of death anything is possible." Can you talk about that experience and how you feel about that being omitted from the movie as a motivation for the character?
Haugen: I went from someone who could ride 125 miles a day on a bike to being in a wheelchair in 2½ years. One day my leg turned blue and it turned out that I had a foot-long clot the girth of a cigar in my leg, and they had to do surgery multiple times. Unfortunately while I was in the hospital I had an allergic reaction to the blood thinner. During that time, I went through my worst fears. I lost my job because they thought I was faking being sick. My husband left me. I lost my health. And I came back from it. So I do feel that phase of my life changed my ability to take risks. In terms of the movie, Aaron Sorkin did a miraculous thing: he made typing at a computer compelling for two hours. But you have to make choices. I think he chose to focus on the things that would give us the most insight into not just my experience but how Facebook and Mark work.



Anything you want to ask each other?
Haugen: Do you think Mark is going to watch the movie?
Madison: I do. How do you feel about that?
Haugen: My hope is that he watches the movie and sees Jeremy Strong's performance and asks himself, "Do I want to be living this life? Is this the legacy that I want?" Because sometimes you can't see it in the mirror until art reflects it. ◻

SONY PICTURES; DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS—GETTY IMAGES

CHINA WATCH
PRESENTED BY CHINA DAILY 中国日報

Waterways that keep history alive

Eight centuries after an ancient settlement first took shape, Old Town of Lijiang is a functioning community



BY YANG FEIYUE and LI YINGQING

Mu Li usually wakes up to the sound of running water. "When I was a child we fetched drinking water from the river before 6 a.m.," recalls Mu, who was born and raised in the Old Town of Lijiang, Yunnan province.

"Our elders always told us: Never throw anything into the river, or your mouth will rot."

For generations such unwritten rules had governed daily life in the Old Town, where waterways have long been both a lifeline and a guardian.

The Old Town of Lijiang, founded during the late Song (960-1279) and early Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties, has stood for about 800 years. According to Mu, people of the Naxi ethnic group first established settlements in Baisha, an ancient town north of Lijiang, before gradually moving south to Dayan, the historical name for the area that later became what is now Lijiang Old Town. Drawn by a basin sheltered by surrounding mountains, they built their homes around the waterways.

They diverted a single stream through the settlement. Over time it branched into three waterways, around which houses, lanes and markets gradually took shape, following the natural contours of the land.

"Few settlements of this scale have preserved such an integrated water system," Mu says.

More than 350 stone and wood bridges link homes, courtyards and winding alleys. Water has never been merely ornamental. It supplied drinking water, sustained daily life and agriculture, and helped regulate floods.

Every week residents near the town's Sifang Square still open the wooden sluice gates to release water from the Yuhe (Jade) River, allowing it to cascade down the gently sloping square and wash the stone streets clean.

A few steps away from the bustling streets stands Hengyugong, a traditional courtyard completed in 1875. It is a classic Naxi residence, featuring a four-sided courtyard. The compound, covering more than 6,400 square ft., comprises four wings arranged around a central quadrangle. The courtyard still holds Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) gilded carvings on its doors and windows.

Li Junxing, affectionately known as Uncle Six, is its fourth-generation keeper. "I've been running this museum for 16 years," he says. "It's a living museum because we still live here."

Visitors tour the front courtyard while his family continues everyday life in the rear residence, separated only by a single wooden door.

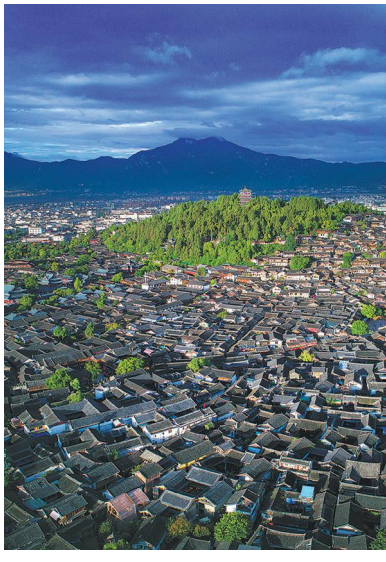
When a devastating earthquake struck Lijiang in 1996, Hengyugong emerged almost unscathed.

The Li family traces its roots in Lijiang back about 400 years, when their ancestors arrived from Nanjing, Jiangsu province, to serve the Mu family. During the Qing Dynasty the family shifted from scholarship to commerce, establishing the Hengyugong trading house in 1868. The present courtyard followed seven years later.

Every morning Li wipes down the wooden doors and sweeps the courtyard before welcoming visitors. "A house needs people," he says. "Only when people live in it does it stay alive."



At a cultural courtyard in the Old Town of Lijiang, Yunnan province, an inheritor of intangible cultural heritage demonstrates the ancient Dongba script of the Naxi ethnic group.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



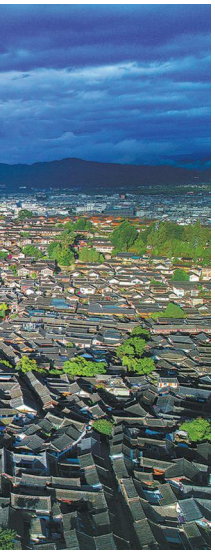


Tucked away in another quiet alley is the Shoudao Lijiang Folk Handicraft Art Museum, where He Xiuchang, an inheritor of Dongba papermaking, has practiced the craft for more than 30 years.

The paper begins with a humble shrub called *raohua* (*Wikstroemia canescens*), which grows only on limestone slopes at an elevation of around 7,200 ft. above sea level in the Jinsha River valley.

Left untouched, the shrub lives for about 13 to 15 years







From above: At Sifang Square, the heart of the Old Town, locals perform traditional Naxi folk songs and dances, weaving ethnic customs into the fabric of everyday life. A panoramic view of the Old Town of Lijiang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A Naxi ancient music performance takes place at Xuan Ke's study room, one of the Old Town's distinctive cultural courtyards.

before naturally dying.

However, if harvested earlier it sprouts again. "It's just like cutting scallions," he says.

Transforming the bark into paper requires at least 34 steps, including stripping, boiling, washing, fermenting and pounding the fibers into pulp, before forming each sheet by hand.

Dongba paper is prized for three distinctive qualities. Insects rarely damage it because the plant itself contains medicinal compounds. It can remain intact after prolonged water immersion and, when burned, it releases a fragrance resembling temple incense.

Today Dongba paper has found new uses beyond calligraphy and ancient manuscripts. Artists paint on it, and designers incorporate it into creative products.

In 2003 ancient Dongba manuscripts, many written on this handmade paper, were inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

Unlike many historical districts that have gradually become open-air museums, the Old Town of Lijiang remains a functioning community.

More than 25,000 original residents continue to live in it, with more than 5,000 businesses. Last year the town welcomed more than 24 million visitors, and during the Spring Festival holiday this year more than 2.4 million people visited, local authorities said.

Many newcomers have also made the Old Town their permanent home. A cafe owner from North China's Tianjin, a merchant from Wuhan in Central China's Hubei province and a clothing shop owner from Wenzhou in eastern China's Zhejiang province all arrived years ago intending to stay briefly, only to remain.

For Mu Li, the water still runs the same way it did when she was a child. What has changed, she says, is the understanding that a historical site is not preserved by walls and regulations alone.

"People are the soul of this town," Mu says. "We have to respect the market forces that have always been part of this place, but we also have to keep it alive — not as a relic, but as a home."



Descendants of a U.S. expatriate return to Kuliang in March 2025. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Old friendship crosses seas and mountains

BY ZHANG YI and HU MEIDONG

As the fall semester began this September, 82-year-old Gordon Trimble and his wife Sonia Trimble flew from the United States to Fuzhou, capital of Fujian province, to teach at Fujian Hwa Nan Women's College and continue a five-generation family legacy.

Since 2005, the teacher has returned annually to offer practical English courses. He also takes his students to Kuliang, a historic mountain resort in Fuzhou, to share century-old stories of friendship built by early foreign professionals who came from the late 1880s to the early 1900s as teachers, doctors and diplomats.

Lydia Trimble, his great-grand-aunt, was part of this historic wave, arriving in Fuzhou in 1889. Driven by a belief in female empowerment through education, she founded the precursor to Fujian Hwa Nan Women's College in 1908, southern China's very first institution for women.

Lydia's niece Ethel Wallace arrived in Fuzhou in 1906 and taught at the college for 40 years. She was also joined by Lydia's two nephews: Fred Trimble, an architect who helped design a campus building, and Garnet Trimble — Gordon's grandfather — who managed a local hospital in Nanping, Fujian.

"They came to Fuzhou because they thought all life was important," Trimble said, adding that these expatriates traveled from afar to gather in Kuliang and discuss how to make China better.

Born in Fujian, his father, Robert Trimble, grew up in China until age 12. Though he spent most of the rest of his life in the U.S., he remained fluent in the local dialect.

Trimble and his wife finally accompanied his father on a root-seeking journey back to Fujian in 1989, marking his father's emotional return after 62 years.

Following that trip, Gordon Trimble's father returned almost every year until he passed away in 2014. His father also pioneered the partnership between Fujian Hwa Nan Women's College and the University of Puget Sound — the very institution where his grandfather had served as a campus physician when he returned to the U.S.

Since 2005, the Trimble family has donated 4 million yuan ($597,200) to support education in China, including sustaining exchanges between the University of Puget Sound with Fujian Hwa Nan Women's College and Fujian Normal University. Under his sponsorship, 20 American graduates have come to China as English teachers, while eight Chinese educators have visited the U.S. for academic exchanges.

Wu Lanjia, vice-president of Fujian Hwa Nan Women's College, said, "The Trimble family's relay to support Chinese education is a vivid embodiment of international friendship that crosses mountains and seas."

Today, Kuliang has evolved into a premier landmark for China-U.S. youth exchanges, hosting cultural festivals that carry the torch of friendship forward. As Trimble shared during a youth baseball event: "We treasure our Chinese friends. We are happy to call Fuzhou home."

Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.



MOVIES

The cruelty of Hollywood, with a dash of hope

BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

IT WAS PROBABLY AROUND 100 YEARS AGO that stalwart Hollywood star Marie Dressler said, "You're only as good as your last picture." Today, that hard-nosed observation not only holds; in a culture measured out in here-today-gone-tomorrow limited series and independent films that fail to find their audience, it's more apt, and more potentially heartbreaking, than ever.

Misty Green, the title character and the heartbeat of Chris Rock's fourth feature film as a director, is living out Dressler's maxim. Misty, played by Rosalind Eleazar, is a gifted singer and actor who desperately needs a break. But there are good reasons she's not going to get it. Even though she has an Emmy from her role in a hit series, she's on her way to being forgotten. She has no patience for Hollywood BS and refuses to play the usual games. But she's also prickly and unpleasant—she has alienated most of the people who might be able to help her—and a self-destructive streak hinders her further: She'd rather go out for a night of clubbing and coke than stay in and learn her lines for the next day's important audition.

As Misty, Eleazar gives one of the year's best performances

Eleazar makes us love Misty, almost against our will

So now she's in desperate straits. Essentially homeless, she's been camping out in the apartment of a rich—and dead—ex-lover, but the guy's angry widow has just given her seven days to pack up and vacate. During all this, her fragile brother, Jay (Daniel Kaluuya), who has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and whom she loves deeply, shows up at the flat that's not even her own, needing more from her than she can provide.

WE'VE SEEN THE STORY of the wannabe comeback kid before. And *Misty Green* isn't always a thoroughly graceful film. One of the weaker links may be the character played by Rock himself, Jordan, a director who wants to help Misty but harbors amorous feelings that don't feel wholly believable; Misty could use some help, but she may not need that kind of savior. But overall, Rock's writing is sharp and perceptive, and he's attuned not just to the horrors of trying to make it in Hollywood, but also to Misty's specific plight—and to the reality that she's at times almost repugnantly dislikable.

Eleazar, best known for her role in *Slow Horses,* knows just how to shape this character without ever softening her. Misty is gifted, arrogant, impossible; at times, you begin to wonder if she even deserves a break. But Eleazar, giving one of the best performances of the year, tears our expectations to shreds: Who are *we* to decide what she deserves? At one point, during an audition, one of the men in charge of potentially hiring her blurts out, "Are you mixed?" and her eyes, moments ago dancing with fire, become glacier cold.

Misty has made her way along a path paved with irrelevant, if not outright racist and sexist, questions and assumptions—it's little wonder she can barely take any more. But even stronger than her resentment is her belief that she still has something to give. It may be a stereotype to characterize actors as needy people, but Eleazar captures an almost existential longing that goes beyond garden-variety neediness. And at her lowest moment, Misty's desperation becomes nearly unbearable to watch. Eleazar brings us right to the knifepoint of her degradation, and it pierces us too.

But Rock wouldn't leave Misty in despair; he gives her the empathetic yet unsentimental ending she deserves. It's almost impossible to like Misty, and yet, in a film that's both acerbic and tender, Eleazar makes us love her, almost against our will. Hollywood, a place of dreams, can be inhumane to those who dream the biggest. *Misty Green* opens a safe space for them—without the false promise of a happy ending. ☐

MOVIES

From Romania, a somber drama about child custody

ROMANIAN FILMMAKER CRISTIAN MUNGIU makes thoughtful movies about social issues that cross international borders: In *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days,* a young Romanian woman risks her life for an illegal abortion. *R.M.N.* explores xenophobia in a small Transylvanian village, dissecting the complexity of spontaneous human impulses in the process. Mungiu's films can spur us to think anew about issues we'd rather keep in the background, and they can at times be deeply moving. They can also feel dreary and instructive, in an eat-your-vegetables way.

Mungiu's *Fjord,* which won the Palme d'Or at Cannes earlier in the year, offers a healthy dose of very nutritious vegetables, and in places the story almost—*almost*—stretches the bounds of believability. But its actors, including Sebastian Stan and Renate Reinsve, as well as two young newcomers, make you believe in one family's sudden nightmare. Do the authorities entrusted to protect our children always know what's best for them? *Fjord* suggests, provocatively, that the answer may not always be yes.

Mihai Gheorghiu (Stan), who is Romanian, and his Norwegian wife Lisbet (Reinsve) have just relocated with their five children from Romania to Norway, to be closer to Lisbet's parents. Mihai and Lisbet are also deeply religious, and appear to be raising their children in a sometimes strict but undeniably loving home. One day, at the children's new school, an instructor charged with protecting the students' welfare notices a bruise on the shoulder of the eldest Gheorghiu daughter, Elia (Vanessa Ceban). The administrator takes swift action, and before Mihai and Lisbet can fully grasp what's happening, their children—including their infant, who's still breastfeeding—are whisked into foster homes. Their struggle to reunite their family involves risky twists and a great deal of frustrating bureaucracy.

Unless you know Norway's judicial system, you might be tempted to wonder: Could one family really be broken up that fast, with so little evidence? Mungiu's premise seems somewhat far-fetched, intensified for dramatic reasons, though it's worth noting that his script is based on a real-life case in Norway. And recently, in the U.S., Child Protective Services interviewed the children of former Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, separating the children from their fathers for 24 hours, after receiving a tip alleging that they were at risk. The report was proved false, but the incident shows how easily a system designed to protect kids might be manipulated.

Regardless, the plausibility of *Fjord*'s premise is academic in the context of the performances given by Stan and Reinsve. Reinsve (so terrific in 2025's *Sentimental Value*) is resolutely unglamorous here, a dutiful wife and mother decked out in dowdy clothes. But her distress over the loss of her children crosses the planes of her face like a muted shadow; you sense some anger beneath that meek veneer. And Stan, who is Romanian American, gives layers of complexity to Mihai as a father figure. He clearly loves his kids, but he also has a temper. Stan doesn't make Mihai easy to read, just as the movie around him doesn't offer any easy conclusions.

YET AMID ALL the child-custody drama *Fjord* lays before us, a subplot involving the deepening friendship between Elia and a neighbor couple's daughter, Noora (Henrikke Lund-Olsen), ends up being the film's most powerful and moving element. These two young teenagers aren't just navigating a new friendship; they're exploring feelings that may or may not be the roots of romantic love. Sometimes kids tell us what we need to know about life, even if it's not always the lesson we expect or want. And sometimes they steal a movie away from the grown-ups. *Fjord,* perhaps unbeknownst even to the man who made it, really belongs to them. —S.Z.

Reinsve and Stan, top center and right: parents in a waking nightmare



MISTY GREEN: MERRICK MORTON—A24

TELEVISION

A harrowing melodrama captures a world gone mad

BY JUDY BERMAN

TIP TOE REFUSES TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD. THE British miniseries from *Queer as Folk* creator and *Doctor Who* reviver Russell T Davies, airing on Starz, sets its stakes as high as the lamppost from which Alan Cumming's character hangs in the first scene. Reminders of his death open each episode, preceding flashbacks to the escalating tensions between Cumming's Leo Struthers and his next-door neighbor, Clive Goss (David Morrissey), over 10 days. Scripty speechifying and a finale that strains believability notwithstanding, *Tip Toe* is a harrowing cri de coeur about masculinity in crisis and queer liberation reversed.

Leo and Clive have a few things in common. Both pushing 60, they've been sharing a wall in Manchester rowhouses for 14 years. They've also both hit rough patches. Clive, an electrician, is having trouble finding enough work to support a family that includes 16-year-old George (Jackson Connor) and 25-year-old Saul (Joseph Evans). As gossip swirls that he's cheated on her, his wife constantly berates him. Meanwhile, Leo's partner, Curtis (Charlie Condou), has left him for a woman, and he's struggling to manage Spit & Polish, the bar in Manchester's gay nightlife district that he and Curtis used to run together.

Early one morning, Leo chases after a hookup who has absconded with his laptop—only to find himself locked out in his underwear. Clive reluctantly lets him in to call a friend for a spare key, making clear that Leo's lifestyle disgusts him and that he's uncomfortable having him around his sons. The thing is, Clive's kids are nowhere near as innocent as he thinks. And he has to confront that reality when Leo hires Clive and Saul to fix some wiring at Spit & Polish.

Leo is *Tip Toe*'s admirably imperfect protagonist, charming and kind but also pugnacious, prone to exaggeration, and self-centered. His bar functions as a portal into the lives of less privileged members of the queer and trans communities. The question of whether the visibility Leo's generation fought so hard to win has backfired, making them all easy targets, haunts the series.

DAVIES RECENTLY RAGED against the homophobia of the early AIDS crisis in *It's a Sin* and looked ahead to a dystopian future in the sci-fi drama *Years & Years*. *Tip Toe* unites their themes to complete a sort of trilogy, combining the anxieties of LGBTQ people, intrafamilial alienation, economic strife, and the social media panopticon into a fire sermon against our toxic present. That it shares its setting with the breezier, Y2K-era *Queer as Folk* underlines how much that community's outlook has changed. And the fact that Cumming's phenomenal performance is airing concurrently with *The Traitors: New Blood*, which he hosts with high-camp aplomb and an androgynous glam wardrobe, highlights the cognitive dissonance of a society where queerness is embraced—by everyone except those who hate it. More than Leo's antagonist, Clive is an avatar for straight masculinity in crisis: his story can feel like an adult *Adolescence*.



Cumming, left, and Morrissey get too close for comfort

Davies' anger and fear have an incandescent clarity

Tip Toe also calls to mind other recent series *(Beef)* and films *(Eddington; Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri)* that translate current political fault lines into tête-à-tête conflicts, seeking to understand the hateful tenor of the contemporary public sphere by distilling it down to its simplest form. The difference here is that *Tip Toe* doesn't share those titles' tone of black-comic absurdity. Yet it's the incandescent clarity of Davies' anger and fear that make it powerful. When one character worries that she'll die in 30 years without living to see the pendulum of progress swing society out of what she calls a "new Dark Age," I suspect she's speaking for a lot of people. Too often in fiction, social commentary is inoculated with optimism or couched in irony. In its unblinking earnestness, *Tip Toe*'s melodrama accesses a truth that transcends any shortcomings of its plot. ◻

BEN BLACKALL—STARZ

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Omar Sy The star of *Lupin* talks to TIME France about the return of his hit show, watching French politics from afar, and the moments when life echoes art

What aspects of yourself do you see in Assane Diop, the elusive thief you play on *Lupin*? There are many things I envy, admire, and like about him. That elusiveness—the fact that he's always where you least expect him. He uses every means at his disposal. He has a bit of an aikido quality: he takes what others consider a weakness and turns it into a strength. I also like his way of dispensing justice. Even though he's a thief, he has this desire to right wrongs, a Robin Hood–like quality.

Every second foreign tourist in Paris has watched the series. Living in the U.S., do you consider yourself an ambassador for France? I felt like an ambassador for France long before *Lupin*. By living abroad, I've become even more French. Because the truth is you carry your country within you. And others see you that way.

Do you perceive France differently from a distance? I see my American neighbors' view of France and, ultimately, I have both perspectives now: that of someone who experiences France from the inside, and that of someone who can also observe it from the corner of the room.

You have expressed concern in the past about the state of French society. Do you feel it even more today? It's not that I'm more worried—I'm just as worried as ever. I have the feeling that we are going toward what I fear most: a France that is deeply fractured at every level. A France where bridges are becoming more and more difficult to build. Not impossible, mind you, but much more complicated.

We're a few months away from the presidential election, and the National Rally is leading in the polls. What does that tell you? We're heading toward a France that's asking itself a lot of questions. And giving itself the wrong answers.

Do you know who you'll vote for in April 2027? It's still quite unclear. Like many French people, I'm lost … On the other hand, I know who I won't vote for.

Will AI replace you onscreen at some point? I don't think it will replace actors of my generation—if it ever does manage to replace actors, which I don't believe it will. On the other hand, it's an extremely powerful tool that's evolving so fast that by the time we finish this conversation and your article is published, something new will already be out there!

But are you worried about damage to the craft of filmmaking? Many people in Hollywood have spoken up on this subject. Artificial intelligence must remain a tool in the service of creation. Not a tool that creates in place of creators. When I look at what it produces on its own, it doesn't interest me. Because what moves us in a work of art is precisely what belongs to humanity: the soul. And that soul, artificial intelligence doesn't have it.

Is it possible to make friends in Hollywood? There are a lot of clichés about California. You often hear that everything is fake. Honestly, I haven't found that to be so. I'd even say that there's sometimes more transparency than in France. People might take a little longer before inviting you to their home. On the other hand, once they do, it's sincere.

—BAPTISTE MANDRILLON/*TIME* FRANCE

Translated by TIME. Read the full interview, in French, at ***timefrance.fr***

How did you react to the Louvre heist a few months ago, which echoed the series so strongly?

First, immense surprise. I was truly stunned to see that the robbers were capable of trying to reproduce something reminiscent of what we did on *Lupin*. You tell yourself there was some inspiration, then laugh at the absurdity of the thought. But then comes a moment when you feel guilty and ask yourself, "How much of all this is my responsibility?"



ARTURO HOLMES—WIREIMAGE

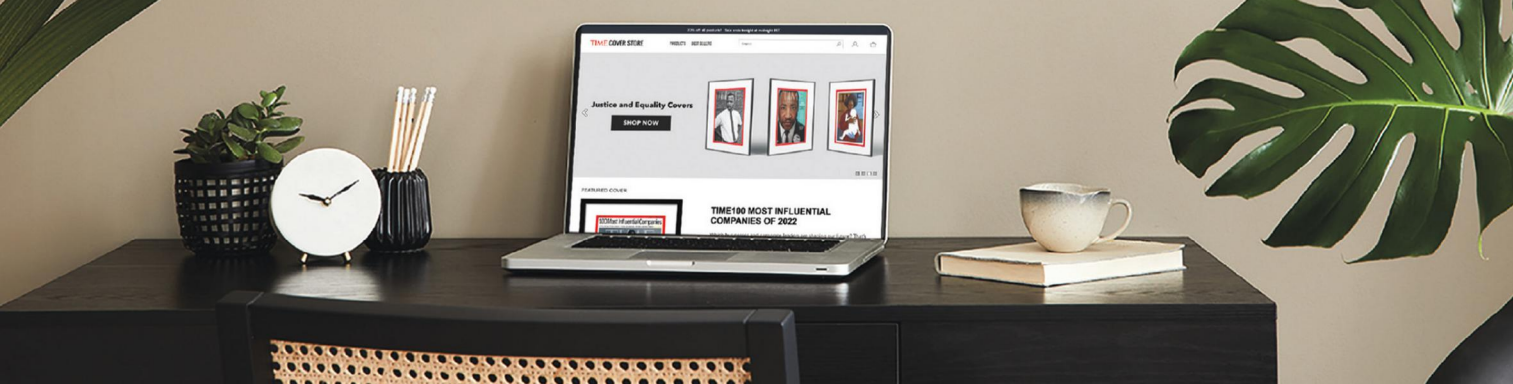
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