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FROM CABARET

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Polerotica 2026 Champion
From Cabaret



POLEROTICA 2026 CHAMPION Q&A

a very special interview with the latest
portland pole goddess
page 18 | by bryan a. bybee



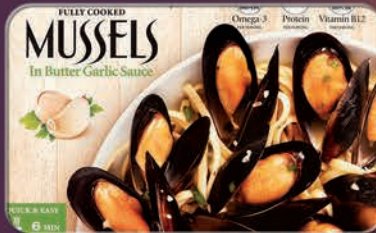
TALES FROM THE DJ BOOTH

part seven of the 12 rules of stripping series
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WORLD IN MOTION II

proposing a revamped jingle for england
page 42 | blazer sparrow



WORST FROZEN FOOD

where convenience intersects with crap
page 44 | by wombstretcha the magnificent

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the first time. I only joined because one of the qualifying rounds was at my home club, and I had previously competed in some non-*Exotic*, DJ Dick Hennessy events. But competing in *Exotic* events was a different vibe altogether. I was definitely struggling with my nerves and my under-preparation, and I thought having more props was more important than just being myself. So, my first few experiences weren't my best. But they helped me gain experience over the last few years in terms of stage presence and skills. Also, being able to watch other women from different clubs was very intimidating, but also very inspiring, and not something I got to see all the time. Watching others definitely helped me find my own way to *Polerotica 2026*.

Sometimes stage performances don't go exactly as planned. What do you remember thinking or feeling when your wardrobe slightly malfunctioned?

I have a history of props and clothing malfunctions at these events, which have really affected me and how I carried on through my performances. This year, I was finally able to let go of the feeling of messing up and just work with whatever is thrown my way. I've reached the point in my pole dancing and entertaining acts that I don't let little things affect how I finish my performances anymore. But I do remember thinking that I should have duct-taped my battery light box to my boots, but I got called on sooner than planned, so I just had to work with what I had. It was



scary seeing my lights wrapping around the pole faster than I was, but being in control of my body and knowing what I could do helped me keep performing.

Placing second last year at *Polerotica 2025*, and then coming back and taking it all is pretty incredible! What advice would you give to other performers who are looking to win it all at an *Exotic* event?

My advice for anyone competing in future *Exotic* events is to put what you think is best for you first, and don't compare yourself to the others. Just know what you can do and what you came to do, and enjoy the time we have in these events. I would also say to put yourself out there; not everyone is going to know you or follow you on social media. You have to build yourself up and don't be afraid to introduce yourself.

We always like to ask this next question! If you could travel back in time and talk to baby stripper Jess, what would you say, and what advice would you offer?

I would never wish to go backward in life, but if I could tell baby dancer Jess anything, it would be to get out of your own head. I held my personal potential back, fighting the toughest battles in my personal and dancer life, and being harder on myself wasn't necessary when I was already at my

lowest. I've lost a lot since even before I started dancing, and losing myself was one of those things—and I would never allow that to happen again.

This is your first *Exotic* cover! We're excited, and we hope you are, too! Was being featured on the cover something you thought about in the past? Were you nervous before and during the photoshoot?

I've always wanted to be on the cover of *Exotic* since I started dancing. I didn't know how or who to talk to about it, but I would always look at the magazines at work. I have a background in journalism and photography, so that has always been a big interest of mine. I love magazines and photoshoots, and I've been doing them since I was young, since my mom was a photographer. So I've had some experience, but I also enjoy going off and taking my own pictures now, too. So when I saw one of my friends from the industry on the cover, I knew I wanted to do it whenever that time came. I was actually very comfortable during my photoshoot, and the location has been on my Pinterest board for a long time, so when I knew I was gonna be on the cover, I automatically chose this shoot. It is my best and most fun shoot I've done so far!

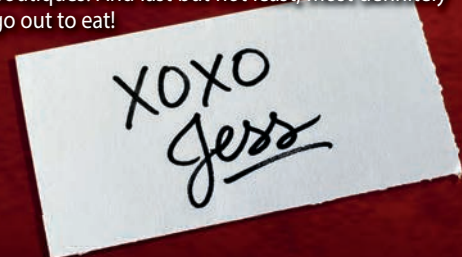
What if our readers are interested in seeing you perform? Where can they catch you on shift? Drop your socials, too!

I have performed at multiple clubs in Portland, but my home clubs right now are "Cabaret" and "Spyce Gentlemen's Club." I do switch my schedule around a lot, so the days might be random. I post my schedules and nightly pictures in my dancer Instagram, @jesspdx__ (*double underscore*).

I also go to pole studios and make my own videos, so that content is always available on my TikTok, @jesspdx.

Lastly, what consumes your time when you're not absolutely killing it on stage or striking a pose for the next cover of *Exotic*?

Most of my personal time outside of the club is spent being outside as much as possible. I love hiking and days at the beach...rain or shine. Anywhere I can take my dog for an adventure! I am very much a variety person, so I love doing just about anything! I do a lot of solo trips, but I also love doing things with my friends...getting dressed up, going out to have fun, and definitely taking a lot of pictures! If I have more free time, I sometimes like to go to places I've never been or do some thrifting around at cute shops or boutiques. And last but not least, most definitely go out to eat!



Before we start...congratulations! Your performance was absolutely incredible, and we loved your theme, outfit, and overall style. It all led to an amazing vibe! What made you decide on the theme you chose? How many other themes had you considered?

My theme was chosen based on my theme from last year, which was "City of Roses," representing myself as a rose with thorns, indicating a beautiful bloom, while still having the thorns to represent the hard times I've had—not only in my life, but also in the industry. This year, I carried the flower idea over, but chose a variety of wildflowers to represent my growth, without thorns holding me back. This had been the first full year of my self-development and maturity, in which I felt free of myself, much like a wildflower growing freely and wild in any environment. I've always considered other themes like burlesque (of course), showgirl-ish or circus-type themes, but it's hard to choose something that hasn't been done yet, and also complements oneself in an entertaining way. But hey, you can't ever go wrong with flowers. 🌸

Describe your first experience competing in an *Exotic* event and how it shaped your preparations for *Polerotica 2026*.

My first experience in an *Exotic* event was actually *Miss Exotic Oregon 2024*. It was definitely nerve-racking for me to even be on Dante's stage for

THE P-TOWN HAPS

I'd like to open by thanking the Clinton Street Theater for allowing us to shoot this month's *Exotic* throughout its historic venue. Originally opening in 1915, it's one of the oldest operating cinemas in Portland and is most certainly a notable cultural landmark of the City of Roses. Thank you for giving us the opportunity! 🙏

With that, it's on to birthdays...we've got two of 'em this month! The first is Aspen's *Jorts of July* Birthday Party on Saturday, July 4, at Devils Point. Later in the month, it's Sultry's *Speedway* Birthday Party on Saturday, July 18, also at Devils Point. Happy birthday, ladies, from all of us at *Exotic*!

Moving on to industry events, it's Stripper Warz 3 on Thursday, July 2 and July 9, at Flesh and Bones Lounge. Then, on Saturday, July 11, it's Stiletto's Grand Opening Party. For those not in the know, Stiletto is a brand new club that has replaced Guilty Pleasures at 136th & SE Powell. Stop in and check out Portland's newest strip club! Next, it's Kit Kat Club's 13th Anniversary Party that's so big it's going to take two night-fulls (nightfalls?) of debauchery to properly celebrate. Make sure to visit them on Friday, July 17, and Saturday, July 18, for more burlesque, comedy, rollerskating, and clowns than you'll know how to process.

Saturday, July 18, is a busy industry day and night, because it's also AJ's Sports Bar's Softball After Party, Club 205's Car and Bike Wash, and Hawthorne Strip's 20th Anniversary Party—what a mouthful! And by the way, two-fucking-decades is a long time! Congratulations, Jared and Mary! Moving on to Saturday, July 25, it's a very special night at Club Rouge in Beaverton: Showgirl of the Year '26—a national competition with massive cash and prizes, that's open to all entertainers across the US! Make sure to check out their ad on page 6 for more info. Also on Saturday, July 25, it's Desire's Wet 'N' Wild Bikini Car Wash...which is timed perfectly, because on Sunday, July 26, there's a car show at AJ's Sports Bar. Get 'em cleaned at Desire and bring 'em to AJ's Sports Bar the next day. Stay tuned for more pro tips!

Wrapping up events for July, Dick Hennessy's 15th Annual *Vagina Beauty Pageant* starts this month! We have all the important dates listed to the right, and make sure you check out the event spread on page 20.

POLEROTICA 2026

The Pacific Northwest's original and largest pole competition came to a close last month over Memorial Day weekend. The night was filled with many outstanding performances, and it was truly a memorable evening! A very special congratulations goes to *Polerotica 2026* Champion Jess, representing Cabaret. Don't miss our interview with her on the left-hand page!

We'd also like to recognize the amazing performances by Kit Kat from Kit Kat Club, who placed 2nd, and Lexi from Club 205, who placed 3rd! We are truly blessed to have witnessed all of their outstanding and unique performances, and we deeply respect all the hard work that goes into the entire process!

Check out pages 38 and 39 to see photos of all the entertainers in action during their performances at the *Polerotica 2026* Finals.

What's next, you ask? We'll see you this fall for *Miss Exotic Oregon 2027*!

And, by the way, it's *Exotic's* 33rd anniversary, but there's no party. Okay, bye-bye.

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- SAT 04 – DEVILS POINT – ASPEN'S "JORTS OF JULY" BIRTHDAY PARTY
- SAT 04 – PLAYGROUND CABARET (SEATTLE) – INDEPENDENCE DAY AFTERPARTY
- SAT 04 – STARS CABARET (SALEM) – 4TH OF JULY CELEBRATION
- SUN 05 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET
- THU 09 – FLESH AND BONES – STRIPPER WARZ 3
- FRI 10 – FLESH AND BONES – VAGINA BEAUTY PAGEANT 2026 ROUND 1
- SAT 11 – JO'S SALOON – VAGINA BEAUTY PAGEANT 2026 ROUND 2
- SAT 11 – STILETTOS – GRAND OPENING PARTY
- SUN 12 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET
- SUN 12 – PLAYGROUND CABARET (SEATTLE) – COMIC STRIP BURLESQUE SHOW
- FRI 17 – FLESH AND BONES – VAGINA BEAUTY PAGEANT 2026 ROUND 3
- FRI 17 – KIT KAT CLUB – 13TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY (PART I)
- SAT 18 – AJ'S SPORTS BAR – SOFTBALL AFTER PARTY
- SAT 18 – CLUB 205 – CAR AND BIKE WASH
- SAT 18 – DEVILS POINT – "SULTRY'S SPEEDWAY" BIRTHDAY PARTY
- SAT 18 – HAWTHORNE STRIP – 20-YEAR ANNIVERSARY PARTY
- SAT 18 – KIT KAT CLUB – 13TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY (PART II)
- SAT 18 – SECRET LOUNGE (SPRINGFIELD) VAGINA BEAUTY PAGEANT 2026 ROUND 4
- SUN 19 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET
- FRI 24 – BOTTOMS UP – VAGINA BEAUTY PAGEANT 2026 ROUND 5
- SAT 25 – ANGELS – DAISY DUKE CONTEST & AMATEUR NIGHT
- SAT 25 – CLUB ROUGE (BEAVERTON) – SHOWGIRL OF THE YEAR '26
- SAT 25 – DESIRE – WET 'N' WILD BIKINI CAR WASH
- SAT 25 – LAS CARIÑOSAS CABARET VAGINA BEAUTY PAGEANT 2026 ROUND 6
- SAT 26 – AJ'S SPORTS BAR – CAR SHOW
- SUN 26 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

AUGUST

- SAT 01 – LAS GATAS (PDX) – VAGINA BEAUTY PAGEANT 2026 FINALS
- SUN 10 – LUCKY DEVIL – 20TH ANNUAL BIKINI CAR & DOG WASH

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- CASA DIABLO – 2:30PM-7PM (WED-SUN) • CLUB 205 – 10:30AM-8PM •
- DEVILS POINT – 3PM-6PM • DESIRE – 6PM-9PM • DV8 – 12PM-3PM
- FLESH AND BONES – 4PM-8PM (TUE-FRI)
- LAS CARIÑOSAS – 4PM-7PM (MON-THU)
- THE LOUNGE – 11AM-4PM • LUCKY DEVIL – 3PM-6PM



FRIDAY JULY 10
ROUND 1

SATURDAY JULY 11
ROUND 2

FRIDAY JULY 17
ROUND 3

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CABARET

SATURDAY JULY 18
ROUND 4

FRIDAY JULY 24
ROUND 5

SATURDAY JULY 25
ROUND 6



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12 RULES for STRIPPING

TALES FROM THE DJ BOOTH
BY DJ HAZMATT

literally go with the flow...don't stand out, and become practically invisible. Think of this strategy as the polar opposite of showing up to a No Kings rally in a Pikachu suit with a megaphone, or a Best Buy midnight release in boxing gloves. Instead, you'd be the black-hoodie-and-mask blur that is nearly impossible to distinguish from their comrades at the protest, or the "just looking for the restroom, oops I grabbed the last PS5" clueless dad navigating Black Friday chaos. While others are seeking attention, you are simply there to participate and then disappear, often for a bottom line or cause (in your case, tips and dances) and not "look at me, here's my Instagram, please plaster my face all over social media until I'm arrested for petty arson and/or trampling employees." Chaos, to you, is like rain. Peace, to you, is a river. As water, you are unaffected either way. Blend in, don't stand out, and you will make *bank*, even with guys who don't frequent strip clubs (bachelor parties, birthdays, etc.), simply because your lack of flavor or style will allow your basics to shine and appeal to the widest net of customers. The stoic stripper is unaffected by environmental changes; thus, her income doesn't vary when said changes occur.



What does the Be Water stripper look like? The girl next door, especially through a 1990s *Playboy* centerfold insert lens: the nondescript, obtainable eight, whose personality is vanilla regardless of skin color. Interests? "Going on trips with my girls." Type of man? "A good smile." Tattoos? "A butterfly on my ankle." Favorite food? "Brunch." Favorite music? "Pop and some rap." The trick here is to be the "type" of every single dude who thinks he has a type, without actually being any specific type. Whatever the vibe is at the club, Be Water dancers will flow with it. If there's heavy metal

blaring, casually nod your head. If there's chill hip hop playing, casually sway your hips. Be the background character of your choice in any open-world video game (but also, don't stab someone for bumping into you). Blend in, and your lack of any off-putting flavor or spice will actually benefit you where the bulk of men are concerned. Most guys don't come to strip clubs looking for best friends, girlfriends, or business partners (well, at least guys with money and social skills don't). We only pretend to care about your interests, and our money is yours the second you stop swimming upstream against the current, and just smile while bouncing your chest. The appeal of Be Water is similar to the appeal of hearing Sublime at the weed dispensary: you just blend in and feel right. Even if you're not the main attraction, you aren't off-putting, and no one is going to leave the stage when you step up.

Ideal stage names for Be Water strippers are fake-real names, i.e., Lindsay, Stephanie, Jessica, etc. Be the girl your customer is afraid to talk to in the elevator, the stacked librarian with the "silencers" sweater, or his barista crush. Boring is better, because to many men, boring means peaceful, and he already has chaos at home. Bat your eyelashes, nod, and smile. Also, keep work at work. Don't go to the after-hours events, don't start a "stripper page" on social media, just blend in and soak up the money when it appears. Plus, if and when you decide to retire, you won't have a trail of evidence documenting your career as "...um, what was her name?" If you're planning on actually paying for college with your pole dance earnings, this is your route (plus, you can always blackmail a few of your professors if you pick day shift at a club near campus).

Money Persona 2: Subculture X, Turned Up to 11 (Be Fire)

This is the exact opposite of Be Water, but it works for the dancers who embrace it fully. If you are confident that you have a "type" your customers may be into, this is where you, the [insert subculture] girl, look, talk, dance, and behave like a music video or comic book representation of said subculture. If there were an action figure made of you, would your fans know it was you? If so, this is your category. The complete opposite of Be Water, the Subculture X dancer fully embraces and commits to a style. Of note, it might not even be a subculture—just a fully committed-to persona that doesn't clock out or switch up.

One of my favorite dancers in this genre is Malice, who probably doesn't even need an introduction, if you've been in Portland clubs

In previous columns, I've hinted at the idea that strippers who refuse to get in where they fit in will inevitably leave their shifts broke and frustrated. But I haven't broken down the two most profitable personas, which, if applied consistently, can result in an endless stream of customer tips. I'm sure there's some larger, socio/psycho-logical reason why these load-out builds work, but I'm not about to dust off the degree I shouldn't have and fill a porno mag with academic jargon and ivory tower bullshit. This advice falls into the "drunk white women in groups love Journey and Madonna" genre of wisdom, in that it's just true, and I don't really know why.

Rule 7: Pick a Persona & Stick to It

Men (who make up the bulk of strip club customers) are simple, stubborn creatures when it comes to interacting with half-naked women. We may *think* we have diverse tastes, but if given the option, most of us either have no preference at all or we stick to our "type," regardless of secondary traits like race, age, or appearance. I've dated white girls, black girls, older girls, younger girls, city girls, country girls, and even a few gingers—yet, every one of them smoked weed, listened to downtempo techno, and enjoyed long drives to random places on the coast, because my type is actually just "chick from Oregon." So, regardless of looks, age, or ethnicity, my type exists in a wide net, but where my specific type is concerned, it's about as diverse as a Portland City Council meeting. Since I'm aggressively average where pretty much any statistic is concerned, I'd suggest strippers take this into consideration when interacting with men at the club—either be a complete blank slate, upon which the average dude can project his own fantasy, or an extremely specific "type." But you need to be genuinely one or the other, because guys can smell bullshit (and they can get that on the dating apps for free).

Money Persona 1: Be Water

A rule of mob mentality, whether protesting social injustice or trampling elders for a Black Friday sale, the idea of "be water" means to

for more than a few weeks, but in case you were born in the 2020s, she has an extremely dialed-in punk rock, horror-movies-and-Hollywood, glam-but-not-tacky, badass vibe that extends far beyond her appearance. While most dancers would give me a rough set of suggestions for music and/or operate off of a short, boring playlist from a computer, Malice would approach the DJ booth with a CD booklet, complete with burned CDs that featured tried and tested punk, metal, and that Gangsta Boo song about tipping dancers. She had pre-planned sets that would vary depending on who was sitting at the stage, and they all seemed to work. "Hey, DJ, play track one from this CD, and then tracks two and five from this CD." This was in the 2010s, not the 1990s, by the way, and I'm convinced that the only time our CD players would get used was when she was on shift. I once asked Malice if she wanted to make a folder on the house DJ computer, and she just told me straight up that her CDs work and she knows what works, so there's no reason to change it. And guess what? It fucking worked. Whether intentional or not, Malice presented herself as a whole-ass character, not just "Oh, I like some stuff by Misfits, if you want me to dance to it." The nomadic, stories-for-days, punk rock, West-Hollywood-coded heavy metal girl doesn't have a fucking Spotify playlist; she has CDs. Telling Malice she can't use CDs would be like telling Snoop Dogg he can't smoke. When you are fully yourself and committed to the bit, others will make exceptions for you.



There's a handful of other dancers in the area who take a similar approach, whether a Juggalette stripper (Kali, I believe...please don't remove my Hatchetman tat if I spelled that wrong), or many of the Kit Kat "retro-showgirl" dancers, who would look just as good in a black-and-white movie as they do in person in 2026. These dancers don't partially commit to the bit—they adopt every aspect of Subculture X and run with it. And, because of the full commitment, men who aren't even in the same ballpark where "type" is concerned still end up tipping these dancers well, because there's no room for negotiation. Juggalette Kali isn't going to dance to Mumford & Sons. Burlesque Betty isn't going to wear sneakers while dancing to Macklemore. The Subculture

X dancer is comfortable and doesn't seek approval, and because of this, she makes consistent money (or is able to assess whether or not she can, in any given club or setting). In this way, Subculture X dancers don't rely on fitting into various flexible "types," as much as they double- and triple-down on earnings when a dude has their type in mind. Malice makes money regardless of whether customers at the club like punk rock, but she makes a lot more when punkers are at the club.

Where Be Water dancers are unaffected, Subculture X girls are unapologetic. Both of these approaches work with men because they are non-negotiable presentations and require no additional work on our part. No games, no "Gee, I wonder if she's cool," no drama, just fantasy girl A or fantasy girl B. Hot tub, or roller coaster. Juice, or gin. And they mix perfectly, so most guys will try both.

Broke Persona: Pandering Faker

Here's what doesn't work: trying to turn tricks. Contrast the "confident in my own style" approach to one where pandering is obvious and dishonesty abounds. This is where a dancer will switch up her style and taste based on who's in the room, and it becomes obvious that she's only doing so to make money. Unlike the Be Water stripper, a pandering stripper will *pretend* to cater to customers while clearly not enjoying the idea of doing so. Of course, the entire goal of a shift as a stripper is to make money, but you're selling a fantasy, not a charity or a scam. That "hello fellow teens" meme of Steve Buscemi holding two skateboards comes to mind whenever a dancer sees my KMFDM shirt, and tells me she loves "Kill Mother Fucking Depeche Mode" and their song about fucking animals. I have much more respect for the hood chick who asks if my shirt is gang-affiliated before dancing to her own music. Being genuine, even as a salesperson, is a gold mine. It's like walking onto a used car lot and seeing some gearhead chewing tobacco and blasting Sammy Hagar—I'd be much more trusting of him than some douchey, brown-suit-and-sunglasses car salesman type, who pretends to like Wu-Tang because he saw my W tat. Yeah, they're both technically salespeople, but the guy who looks the part is gonna get my attention a lot faster than the sleazy dude trying to suss out what will make me spend money.

In short, either be water or be fire. If Be Water and Subculture X were restaurants, one would be a huge buffet where any and all options were available, while the other is that Italian

restaurant on Barbur, where the Mafia vibes owner won't leave egg out of the salad dressing upon request, because "it comes with egg." Don't half-ass it. Don't pander. Let the DJ pick all of your music, or none at all. Be the girl next door, or the exciting chick her husband fantasizes about. But don't be somewhere in the middle. Don't try to Nirvana shirt your way into the hearts of guys who can tell you hate music with instruments. Of course, this isn't me going against prior month's advice and telling strippers not to pander—rather, I'm telling you *how* to pander, and it's either water or fire, all or none.



Think of it with the genders swapped (assuming you're straight or bi). You're at the function and you, the single female with attention to spare, see three dudes who you find attractive. First dude, nondescript and fluid, chatting with everyone, not adding much to the convo, but fully comfortable wherever he ends up. He's mysterious, that's attractive. Second dude, giant mohawk and facial tattoos, but a really nice smile and a firm handshake. He's confident, that's attractive. The third dude asks what you're into, pretends to be into it, smells of bullshit and alpha male YouTube tips, switches up his stances during conversation, and tries to appeal to you while not really showing his true intentions. He's giving "the ick," as kids would say. This is how it works for men in the club. We like mystery and confidence, but we can suss out grifters from a mile away (unless we're buying stocks or voting).

TalesFromTheDJBooth.com

@RainmanMcMillin on IG

I don't check Facebook.

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WIENER DIAMONDS

By Nate Hazen

The TV static of the void, which I'd recently come to occupy, began to dissolve, and I found myself once again within my own body, which I discovered was presently staring at the fluorescent ceiling lights of the friendly neighborhood tobacco shop. How the hell did I get here? I couldn't for the life of me recall.

A halo of familiar faces began forming around the periphery of my vision. For a moment, I thought I was having some sort of bizarre religious experience, until a hazy memory began to form, wherein each of the faces in the halo had been there in the shop, just prior to my momentary trip to purgatory. The faces, which I finally understood were those of people standing over me, all looked rather concerned, so I felt it prudent to put them at ease. I sat bolt upright and declared with all the confidence I could muster, "I'm okay."

A short ambulance ride later, I arrived at the emergency room of a nearby hospital. It seemed not everyone back at the shop concurred with the self-assessment I had made about my health. Perhaps, I thought, I simply hadn't mustered sufficient confidence; a long-running character flaw of mine. Or maybe, just maybe, the pool of blood I'd left on the floor had sown the seeds of dissent among the halo people.



Once I'd gotten all settled in at the ER, they let me know that I would be needing some stitches, but first, they wanted to scan for possible brain damage. I figured I'd save the hardworking ER staff a few unnecessary man-hours of labor, so I spoke up. "Not likely, doc. I've got the thickest skull you've ever seen. You could open a coconut on this bad boy and not even break my concentration." Content with having done my good deed for the day, I pulled my phone out of my pocket, opened Instagram, scrolled for a moment, got bored, closed Instagram, and immediately opened Instagram again to post the selfie I had taken in the ambulance.

The doc considered my words for a moment, then called for an orderly. When the orderly poked her head into the room, the doc told her, "I'd like to put a rush on his CT scan," then glanced at me with a look that expertly walked the expressive razor's edge between disapproval and pity.

"Sure, let's hold off on the stitches!" I thought to myself, "After all, how serious could a gaping head wound possibly be?"

I was beginning to piece together the events leading up to my impromptu Humpty Dumpty impression. Kendall, the club's bartender, had asked me to walk with her around the corner to the tobacco shop, so she could buy a new vape. Just before we entered the shop, I had mentioned to the bartender that I'd found myself battling one of the deadliest of male maladies: the dreaded tummy ache. We entered, and while Kendall waited in line, I began feeling existence fading out from under me. The tummy ache felt like a medically relevant detail, so I mentioned it to the doc.

The doc heard me out and told me that since I was getting scanned anyway, they'd go ahead and add on an abdominal scan. Before wheeling me over to imaging, the doctor had a few questions. "Have you used any substances today?" He must have noticed me attempting to take a mental inventory, and jumped in to simplify things for me: "I'm really only concerned with stuff like if you've done, like, a lot of cocaine today."

"A lot of cocaine? In this economy? We should get **your** head scanned while we're at it!" I re-

torted. The doc endeavored valiantly to appear sympathetic to what I'd just said, but let's be honest, he's a doctor. He probably **can** afford a lot of cocaine, even in this economy.



After a half hour inside the giant industrial hula-hoop that is the CT scan machine, they wheeled me back to my room in the ER. The doctor returned shortly to hit me with the scan results. "Well, it looks like there's no sign of concussion or brain damage."

"Told ya!" I said, with just enough smug satisfaction in my voice.

"You sure did!" replied the doc. "And you were right; you have an impressively thick skull. How the hell did you know that?"

"I loved dinosaurs when I was a kid. Pachycephalosaurus was my favorite. I used to pretend to be one every day at recess by running headfirst into a brick wall. Made one of the teachers on playground duty **really** nervous, so after the school called my mom and dad, I got to go see a whole bunch of different doctors."



"Well," said the doc, "that explains a lot. Now for the other thing. It seems your little tummy ache was caused by a kidney stone."

Shit. That wasn't what I wanted to hear. I was no stranger to kidney stones. Last summer, a stone the size of Alderaan served as the catalyst for my first doctor visit in a decade. They

had to go in with a Death Star, by which I mean a camera and a laser, and blast the damn thing out of me. It was as if millions of voices suddenly cried out in terror, only to be abruptly silenced. Damn, I wish I could have stayed awake for that procedure, so I could watch the camera feed. I fucking love Star Wars.

The doctor had told me that the size of the stone made it unlikely that it would pass on its own. I might have ignored the whole situation entirely, except that he said it was merely unlikely, not impossible. My mind conjured the worst possible outcome. What if, I wondered, I passed the stone while receiving a blowjob, and the poor lady who showed me such kindness wound up with a Kurt Cobain-style lobotomy? No good deed goes unpunished, after all. That would make me the Courtney Love of the scenario, and I decided Courtney Love was the wrong role model; this time, at least. It made me shudder to think of the incredibly specific brand of PTSD I'd wind up with if that happened. In the statistically likely event of a subsequent kidney stone, I imagined myself getting arrested, jacking off in a clock tower somewhere, with a rifle scope on my dick, while singing Nirvana songs between sobs, "Come as you are!" I opted for the laser.

This time, though, the laser ended up unnecessary. The doc suggested that if I didn't pass the stone within a few days, I should make an appointment to get the Death Star procedure. I got the impression he had never seen Star Wars; they blew up the Death Star after it blew up Alderaan. It took a lot longer than a few days, but eventually the stone made its way down to my bladder, where it took up residence for nearly a week. The whole time it was there, I could feel the damn thing scratching at my prostate like Richard Gere's gerbil. Then one fateful day, while peeing in the shower, the stone shot out of me at something approaching Earth's escape velocity, straight through the wall of my shower and into the next apartment. "Relieving myself" took on a whole new meaning that day. The good news is, the neighbor in the apartment next to mine is expected to make a full recovery. The bad news is, I'm definitely not getting my security deposit back.



They say you have to suffer for your art, and Nate Hazen has been out there grinding. He is a bouncer, stand-up comedian, writer, and manufacturer of top-quality kidney stones.

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This Month's BRAIN SCRAMBLES • AND • RAMBLES

BY HANNAH ONE CUP

Some months are more productive than others, and that goes without saying. The reasons for this vary from person to person. For me, personally, it has a lot to do with the number of thoughts rambling around in my brain at once, each trying to fight for supremacy and rule over what I obsess over that day, week, or month. I've been trying to get better at writing things down so that I don't forget what I was thinking was important at that time. But that absolutely is not a realistic request of someone with ADHD and other undiagnosed underlying mental health conditions. I also tend to write like Bret Easton Ellis and make myself sound like Patrick Bateman from *American Psycho*, thanks to my train-of-thought style of writing. I believe I went into this a bit in a past article, where I went over what the 'Notes' section in my phone looked like. A lot of nonsense, even to myself. The issue with notetaking is that if I don't remember that I've written it down, I won't recall the context for why it's in my Notes, and I'm then left with half-ass thoughts like "Aisle 001, Bay 17," which I assume is related to something at Home Depot, but I'm not about to go check, at this point. That note is 4 months old, so it matters little. Probably.

This month's thoughts revolved a lot around my friends, who are all making me poor because their birthdays are in June or July. One is in October. That's the outlier. I then started pondering their moms

and how they must have all been huge hoes during Halloween, or they were really into the romance of candy corn and decided to have baby sex. This created an abundance of Cancer and Leo babies, and years later, they became my friends after discovering their worst complexes and asking for a light. Pretty sure it's because, as a Capricorn, I stop them from buying sports cars and/or listen to their concerns while actively mentally trying to solve them without them knowing I did anything...all while neglecting my own downward spiral into the bottomless pit of overspending and self-loathing. I'm not a fraud; I never claimed to be Jesus. You all just come to me for some reason, assuming I have answers to things that you don't want to ask AI for help with.

Which leads me to the next topic: AI. I have no problem with AI. Used productively and thoughtfully, it can be extremely helpful. Just don't have it write your music or paint your pictures, hack. I do have a problem with the amount of water it takes to house their giant brains, and I believe this could all be solved if they'd throw the problem out into orbit, as we do with all the thousands of satellites now decommissioned and floating around Earth as space debris. It's possible, but expensive. Also, my brain often works in simplistic, unrealistic, black-and-white solutions, so take my opinion with large grains of salt. Right now, a single query from AI uses a little over 1 bottle of water (0.5 liters). Jot that down in your notebook, and remember libraries and books still exist. Again, no problem with AI, just the fact that I'll probably be watching how much water I drink in the next couple of years.



My class never had a high school reunion, and I still keep waiting to see if it will ever happen. Or am I supposed to initiate that crap? Someone is, and it probably

shouldn't be me. I then realized that when I was in high school, none of the classes ahead of me had reunions either. And neither has my partner. I don't really wonder how everyone is doing anymore because all your faces are on the internet every day, so I don't really miss you guys that much, sorry, not sorry? I hope you're all doing as well as you say in your pictures. You do your makeup really nicely, and I love your hair. You'll have to tell me your secret someday, if we ever have a reunion. Also, how did you end up with that boy from school who used to make fun of you for no reason? You had a baby?! What? Awkward, no, I just have dogs...yeah, that party would be a hoot. I won't be the one starting that at the local watering hole. What's local for you now? Oh, still the local watering hole? Okay, cool. Good to see you've all grown and stuff.



I watched *The Amazing Digital Circus* movie and cried more than I ever had in a movie, probably since *March of the Penguins*. There's a part in there that really struck a nerve and made me sad, thinking about people I miss that aren't here anymore. Have you ever gone and thought...*they're gone, and they missed the best part. I wish they had just been able to stick around a bit longer.* That'll get you into a dark place, so don't stay there. But that's another reason I take medications. Anyway, let's deflect...

Shipping costs through Glitch are insane. I had never purchased anything through Glitch before, but they happen to house the majority of the legit collectible items

for most of the indie, or YouTube shows you watch, like Helluva Boss, Digital Circus, yada yada yada... They're based in Canada, but most of the products come from China. And I get trying to recoup your costs and overhead, but \$14 for shipping on a keychain that already costs \$8.99 is highway robbery. International highway robbery. I realized this has been an issue with consumers for years, and if you go on Reddit (*which I never usually do*), hundreds of people post the same thing every time a new show comes out that they want memorabilia for. I wrote them an email twice, because I really wanted almost 200 bucks' worth of stuff from the site, you know, to support the actual creator of the show, rather than going through Hot Topic. But shipping was going to be another 79 dollars, and I didn't want to pay that. I have yet to hear back, and it's probably the same case for the hundreds of other people also crying about shipping fees. So, I went to Hot Topic. Because I'm not a great person, and an even worse consumer.



So, there you have it. The ramblings of a person who just took their Adderall. I wonder if you all think like this? Can any of you HEAR your thoughts? Like...do they have voices? Richard laughed when I asked him that, because he thought I was joking. I assure you, I am not. Man, if you read this article, I tip my hat to you. We should probably be friends, because I understand you. I'm pretty sure at least one person out there was like, "This is exactly how I think!" and they will most likely never write to me because they don't want any new connections they have to respond to. Well, fear not. I probably won't respond either. So write away, I'll love you for it. Stay snappy, Portland—and out of the sun. We aren't built for the sun. You know better than to do otherwise.

Hannah One Cup can be found indoors, one foot from the breeze of an air conditioner, playing video games with her dogs, hoping the magazine's editor enjoys her articles. She sits in anticipatory silence, hands in fists, as she shakes her arms up and down in nervous excitement. Her dogs are judging her constantly. Email her at hannahbird6@gmail.com or find her on Facebook, even though she says it's dumb.

[Editor's note: I, indeed, do enjoy the aforementioned articles.]

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World in Motion II by Blazer Sparrow

By the time this issue comes out, it'll be day 4 of the Round of 32 for the 2026 World Cup.

Even though I'm *abysmally late* in submitting this, I have *no idea* who those thirty-two teams are. Very likely, you're going to see Brazil, France, and Germany in there. Mexico, Argentina, and Spain are also obvious. It would be *wild* if America were actually in there. It's possible with my man Poch in charge. He's magic, you know.

But this piece is about none of those fine teams that will surely win (not America, obviously). This piece is about another team that is more than likely going to make the round of 32, and hell, possibly up to the semi-final, but almost certainly not going to take that cup home.

ENGLAND!

And more specifically, this piece is about the reason they're not going to win the cup. It's not because of the undeniable talent of the players, it's because there hasn't been a decent England national football team song since...well, ever.



England has one star above those three lions, from 1966. Unless my research is flawed (it often is), there was *no* pop-inflected team song to take them to victory. I've read that Lonnie Donegan's "World Cup Willie" was sorta retroactively made the official team song after their landmark victory. Either way, it seems that every World Cup since, there's been an attempt to create a rallying pop song every four years, for all the die-hard, drunken Brits to chant along. None has worked. They got close in 1990, making it to the semi-finals. That year, the team song was written and performed by New Order, an all-time favorite of yours truly, and inarguably the only pop group up to the task at the time (I can't imagine The Cure or Depeche Mode doing a football song).

Despite the valiant rapping effort on the part of John Barnes, the song did not help England bring it home.

Yes, I'm well aware that the song in question, "World in Motion," cannot be objectively described as "good," but goddamn what a collab. Sorry to be a hater, but none of the team songs since have been handled by anyone with the street cred, cultural weight, and downright awesomeness of New Order. Who the fuck is Embrace? Also, apparently, a reunited Take That (sans Robbie Williams) did one for the 2014 World Cup. England didn't even make it to the knockout stage that year.



I propose the following English hitmakers get the asses off their golden thrones and try to put together a rallying song to surpass New Order's "World in Motion!" The bar is exceedingly low, so this shouldn't be hard. Below are my proposed artists and the likelihood that their song will give England that second star!

Coldplay (Feat. Marcus Rashford)

Against the will of God and Nature, Coldplay remains the biggest hitters from the Sceptered Isle. Even today, they probably consistently fill stadiums more than any other British artist. Again, against the will of God and Nature. It seems fair that they would be up to the task to do a "World in Motion II." There is simply no way they could write anything worse than the original New Order song. Hell, they can get Marcus Rashford to do a rap! Apparently, he likes grime and is a fan of Dave (the rapper, not the person). He must be able to do a rap at least on par with John Barnes's.

Likelihood Resulting in World Cup Championship: 0%

Arctic Monkeys

Honestly, this would be more of a retroactive thing. If Arctic Monkeys had written an adolescent, angst-fueled banger in 2006, when they were still young and hungry, maybe that woulda taken England past the

quarter-finals. I'm sure they coulda whipped up something better than fucking Embrace. Sorry for picking on Embrace so much during this piece. I just learned about their existence while writing this, and now I'm mad about it. Regardless, I don't know if these four Sheffield brats could recapture that lightning in a bottle now that they're pushing 40, but they might as well try. Again, the bar is embarrassingly low. Listen to that Embrace song. "World at Your Feet." I had to listen to it, so now you have to.

Likelihood Resulting in World Cup Championship: 5% (50% if they wrote one for the 2006 World Cup)

Charli XCX

Apparently, Charli is a Liverpool fan, so this isn't exactly out of left field (pun intended). I could see her being persuaded to pen a stadium-filling banger for the sake of that second star. She doesn't even have to be a big football fan. Apparently, New Order weren't. They needed to get Keith Allen to write most of the lyrics for theirs. What Charli can do fucking well is get people riled the fuck up. I was at a wedding recently, and the DJ dropped Icona Pop's "I Don't Care," and goddamn if I didn't feel like throwing a couch out a window, and driving 90mph off a cliff. Her venture into "rock music" isn't going so great, so a move like this couldn't exactly hurt her career.

Likelihood Resulting in World Cup Championship: 69%

Oasis

Their recent reunion tour has proved that Oasis IS the voice of working-class Britain. I have seen so many Premier League matches end with a stadium full of proper lads belting "Don't Look Back in Anger." This song could write itself. The Brothers Gallagher are clearly not interested in making another album, but they seem to be quite interested in making money. They could even cover one of their own songs and change the words to be vaguely about football. I can't be convinced that an England national team song written by Oasis wouldn't catapult them to the finals, and finally bring the cup home with literally every pub in England singing along to whatever low-IQ, drunken nursery rhyme these Old Mancs shit out.

Likelihood Resulting in World Cup Championship: 100%

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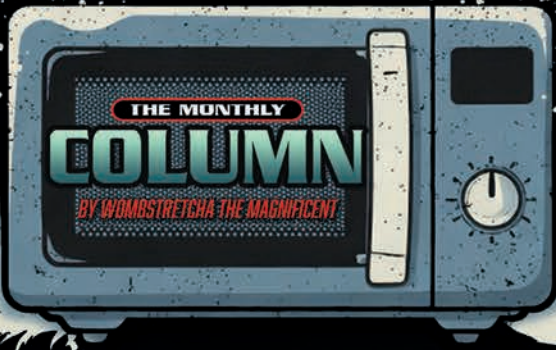
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WORST

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Ranked in no particular order, but I will say that you should not buy any of these.



Home Bake Chicken Parmesan

Inflicted on the public by Kraft/Heinz, and that might make you think, "Well, they make mac and cheese and Heinz 57 sauce. I'm sure they can make a chicken parm pretty good." No, they cannot. I got this for a couple of bucks, thinking "hy yes, this might be a tasty lunch," but I was dead wrong. This is the kind that comes in a metal tray, so you cannot microwave it. You have to bake it. 30 minutes at 425 °F, it loudly says on the package. Very well, I shall try it. I jack off for a half-hour waiting for it to come to a conclusion, as I am rather hungry. Was it worth the time? Not at all. Chicken parmesan is supposed to be chicken drenched in cheese and sauce. There was barely any. There was no cheese or sauce covering what I can only describe as oversized chicken nuggets, swimming in a kiddie pool of a minuscule amount of sauce and cheese. I had to swish them around to get anything on them. Then I turned to sauces. Okay, let's try BBQ sauce. No, that didn't work. Ranch? No, that made it worse. Hot sauce is somewhat acceptable, given that the heat makes me feel something, even if it's not a great pairing. Insert joke about relationships. It was just utterly underwhelming, as though it was built to disappoint.

Pier 33 Mussels

Perhaps I set myself up for failure on this one. Frozen seafood does not have a wonderful track record, but I've had frozen shellfish before, and it wasn't too bad. I was going to incorporate this into an also-frozen dish of buttered spaghetti. The spaghetti gets exempted from the list, as you can't really fuck it up—you would have to try hard! The mussels, however,



do not get a pass. I've had great frozen seafood, but this? THIS? I may as well have just added rubber bands to my spaghetti. Chewy, which is understandable, but no flavor, and the "garlic butter" it comes with tastes like a truck stop urinal smells. Take a pass if you ever think frozen mussels might be nice for lunch. It's possible I did something wrong, but the only way I think I could have done it right is shooting them out of a potato cannon.



Banquet Salisbury Steak

Yes, I know. We grew up eating this, and I had fond memories of latch-key life in the '80s, like a lot of us did, where we'd make these in the 'wave and play Nintendo games afterward. I was feeling somewhat nostalgic, and bought one for my lunch. I do not know if something has

changed in 40 years, but this was like eating a Dr. Scholl's insole covered in really bad beef gravy. I mean, yeah, it was only two bucks, so expectations were not exactly high, but I remembered it fondly, and like a deadbeat dad, it let me down. Unlike a deadbeat dad, it did give me a gift: the shits.



Guy Fieri's Bacon Mac and Cheese Dumplings

I am aware it is fun to pick on Guy Fieri. Guy is a total goofball, but he does like to eat, and if a guy (heh) who eats pretty much anything has a line of frozen food, you'd think that "Hey, he must have evaluated these and decided they were tasty," right? Well, he must have taken a sick day when they introduced this one. Sounds great, right? Bacon mac and cheese, in a lump of dough? How could that be bad? Well, it is. Your humble author bought them three times. "Maybe I am doing this wrong," I said to myself. This is why I tried microwaving them, then baking them, then just saying "fuck it, I am frying you assholes in my deep fryer full of pure lard." Nothing mattered. It was the same lump of crap, with smaller amounts of other crap inside it. I won't completely diss Guy, as some of his frozen shit is on board, but these things? Do not be fooled, let alone three times.

Marie Callender's Beef and Broccoli Bowl

Marie usually knocks it out of the park with her frozen stuff, pot pies, pasta, cakes, and pies. That's what we know her brand for. Unlike, say, Aunt Jemima or Betty Crocker, she was actually a real person, who looked like that aunt you knew hated you.



However, she built an empire out of pies and cakes, and then frozen foods. Died at 88 in 1995, but left a legacy. I do not know if this would be a part of her legacy that she would approve of. Beef and broccoli bowl, you say? Why does it scarcely contain either of those? There's plenty of rice and this weird sauce, but very little of the ingredients that were supposed to be the star of the show. It's like if you went to a comedy club to see Key and Peele and John Leguizamo showed up instead.

Lean Cuisine Swedish Meatballs

Lean Cuisine should really sell all my complaints right off. They have a few decent items, but I want a meal, not a lecture delivered to my intestines. I love Swed-

ish meatballs, but this is a far cry from even the ones IKEA is famous for. It's like if Swedish meatballs got really depressed, and started going to the gym to alleviate it, then they were just very lean and still depressed Swedish meatballs. It tastes like chewing. That's it. There is no sauce bandage to solve this one. It's hopeless, and it will die alone and unloved.

Therefore, if you're going the cheap route for your breakfast, lunch, or dinner, avoid the ones mentioned above. The level of disappointment provided by an unsatisfactory meal is worse than simply not eating. You might be hungry, yes, but you will not have sadness in your stomach.

Eat well, be well.

-Wombstretcha

Wombstretcha the Magnificent does not have the stomach of a goat nor COVID taste buds; he is a fresh-food enthusiast, writer, and retired rapper from Portland, Oregon. He can be found at his website, wombstretcha.com, on X as @wombstretcha503, and on MeWe (yay!) and Facebook (boo!), as "Wombstretcha the Magnificent."



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