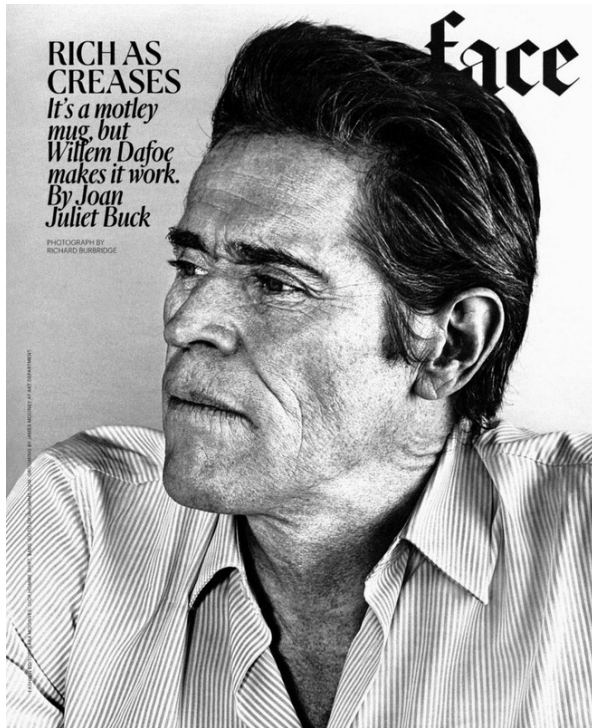


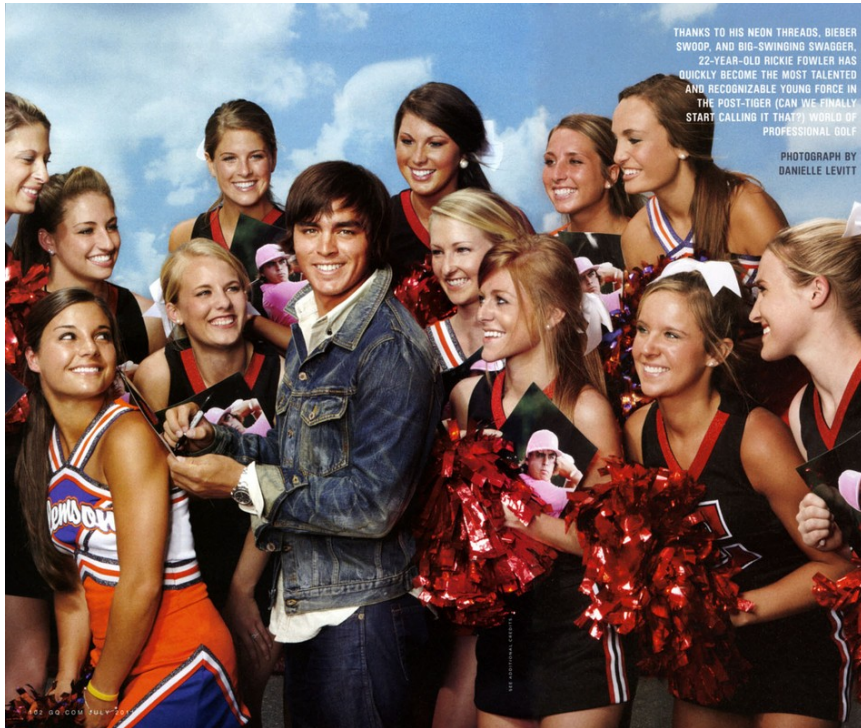
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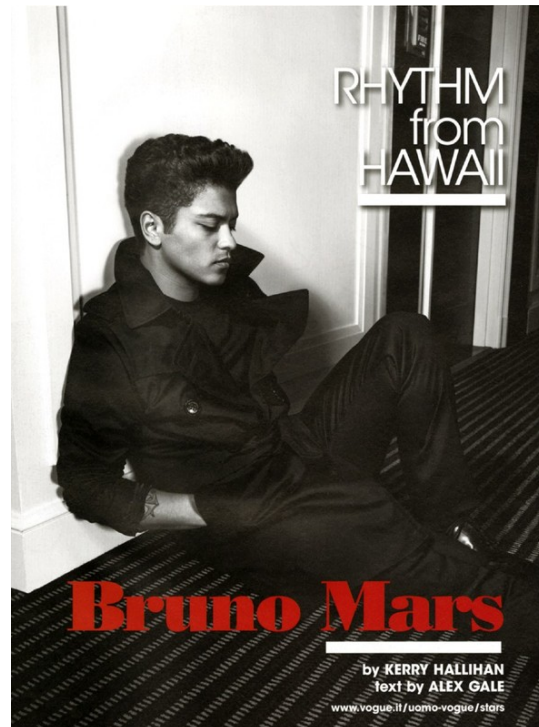
SLICK
Rickie

Back in April, just days before his Masters debut, 22-year-old Rickie Fowler sauntered into the media room at Augusta National wearing a hat, not a fedora or a driving cap, it was more the sort you see on skate rats—oversize and fat-billed and, most appallingly, backward. Here stood Fowler—when you'll maybe know for his Kool-Aid tones and teen-throbbly looks—confirming his alleged irreverence. Before he knew it, an Augusta member wordlessly plucked the hat off Fowler's head and flipped it around, as a schoolmaster might with a misbehaving child. "I think the older fans got the wrong impression," he says. "The story got turned to make me look like a punk kid."

Which seems to happen quite a bit. After all, look at the hair spilling down the neck, less gaffer than dirt flier. (Fowler raced monstrous growing up in California.) Or that grin, not unlike the one a two-tan rich kid might flash you from the end of the bar when you catch him checking out your girlfriend's ass. Or perhaps most obviously, the colors: fruit-stuck purple, Oklahoma State orange. All of which makes it tough for Fowler to convince people that he's the differential workhorse he turns out to be.

Fowler kept to the PGA Tour in 2009, after his sophomore year of college. His whip-quick, homepun swing—elicting exceptional power from his five-foot-nine frame—complements the audacious brevity with which he tears around a course. He made enough runs up leaderboards last season to win Rookie of the Year and notch a shot on the Ryder Cup squad. All stand-alone impressive, but what can't be over-estimated is the crackling charge this sort of presence gives a sport struggling to market itself in the absence of Tiger supremacy.

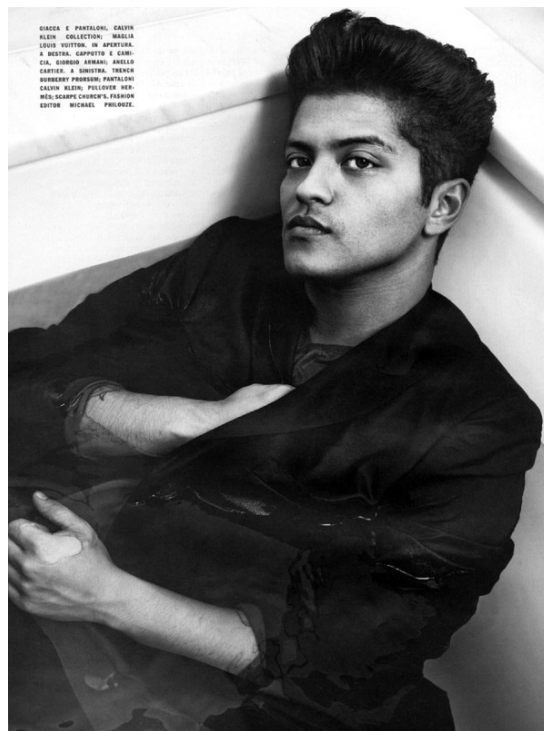
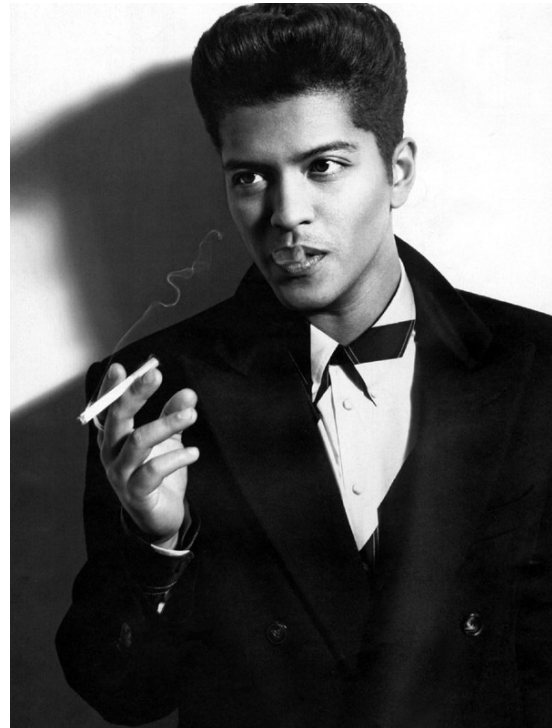
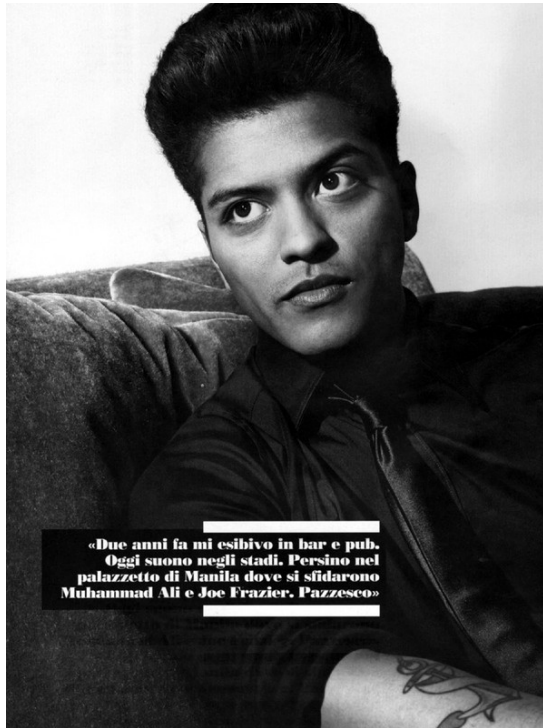
"I draw a younger crowd who can relate to me," says Fowler. "Some of the girl fans will message me online, saying, 'We're the reason I watch golf.'" This isn't to say he's turned the course into a Justin Bieber concert. But if you find yourself amid the swarm of young women—more than you remember from your last time at a tournament—know that, yes, many of those female fans are, in fact, slipping Rickie their phone numbers. "But look, I've got a girlfriend," he says, cracking a diplomatic smile. "So I'm not calling them back. But it's flattering. Plus, the guys I'm paired with seem to like it." Rickie, I hope there's some girls out following you today. —DANIEL RILEY



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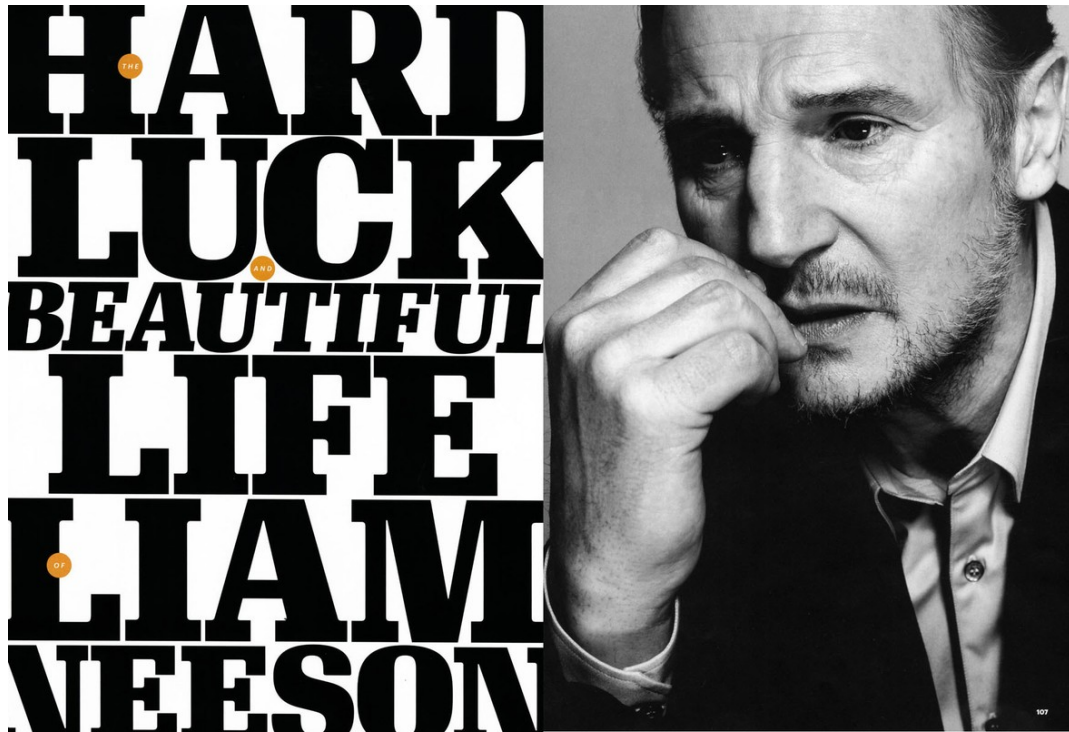
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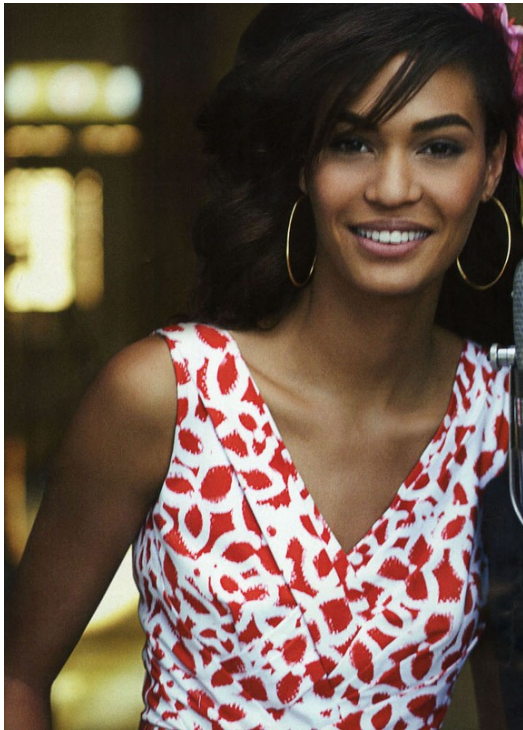
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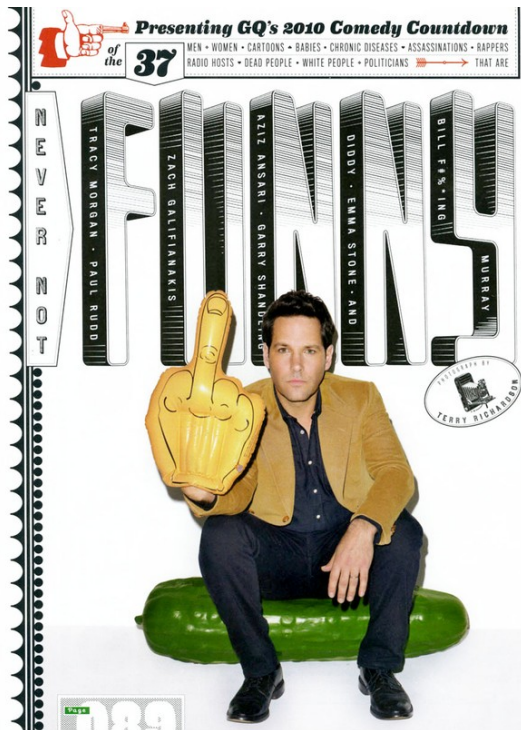
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JUST US GIRLS

by Abigail Everdell
PHOTOGRAPHS BY Guy Aroch

After surviving a religious cult and years of druggy disarray, Christopher Owens emerges with **GIRLS**, the best new band of the year

THIS IS WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT" Christopher Owens slams his hand down on a wooden tabletop in a San Francisco diner, knocking chicken soup out of his bowl. The singer-guitarist for Girls, the fledgling band responsible for the year's most captivating—if not outright best—debut album, is referring to a moment two years ago, after he and partner Chaz Jankel parted their band's first song, "Last for Life," on MySpace. A fan had approached Owens at a Los Angeles show, opening her diary to a page on which she had transcribed the lyrics and elaborately pasted pictures of her and her friends all around them. Struck by the memory, Owens straightens up, pulling his dirty-blond hair into a pile on top of his head. "I don't care about your hand if you're like, 'It's really cool because it sounds like my guitar is being played by a cat, and I'm squealing and knocking things over, and oh my God, what a blast,'" he says with uncharacteristic fervor. "I want to make music where the person will remember the lyrics, they can sing along, and it has a positive effect."

That's more of an imperative than a desire for Owens. After spending his childhood in an apocalyptic, sexually perverse cult called the Children of God (an offshoot of the late '60s hippie fringe group the Jesus Movement), he has struggled his entire adult life to reconnect with the world from which he was once so fanatically sheltered. The 30-year-old has lived amid such extreme volatility that he hasn't had the luxury

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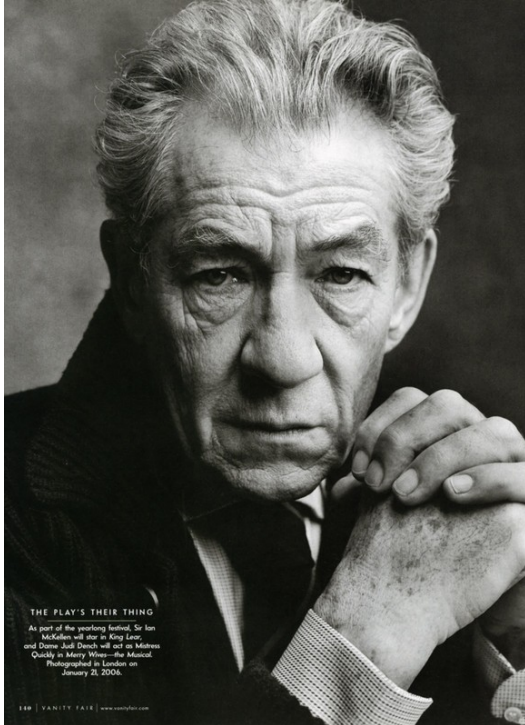
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