

Insider

THING TANK

A REVIEW OF THE WEEK IN THINGS



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IT COULD BE VERSE

After grumpy animate scarecrow **Donald Trump** dodged a question from a reporter asking which Bible verse was his favorite, the Twitterverse filled in the blanks with the stunningly productive #TrumpBible hashtag. (Sample tweet: "Great flood, total disaster. Totally mismanaged by Noah, not a smart guy, total loser, couldn't even save the dinosaurs.") It's sort of like the Bible, but way greater, way classier, employs thousands of people. For a bonus dose of Trump, be sure to check out the Huffington Post's exquisite compilation of him saying "China" 3 billion times.



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SELF-PORTRAIT WITH MANGLED PILLOW

A newly launched funding campaign on IndieGoGo for the **PetBot** — "the world's first smartphone for pets" — promises a device that "uses 'petifical intelligence' to detect, record, share and notify you when your pet is active" and allows your pet to snap a selfie of sorts by robo-luring it in with treats. As if your cat weren't vain enough. (Seriously, Chairman Meow, get over yourself.)



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BORN TO RUN

Politico uncovered shocking documents that reinforce many Americans' suspicions that New Jersey governor and GOP presidential candidate **Chris Christie** is also a dweeb: a series of gushy fan posts to a Bruce Springsteen listserv ("Chris from Mendham, NJ," "mostly a lurker") that breathlessly document shows, setlists, and even an account of a "Brush With Bruce at 30,000 feet" ("He was everything I hoped he would be..."). The posts date from 1999 and 2000, back when Christie was just a lobbyist with a dream and a serious misunderstanding of what "Mansion on the Hill" was driving at.



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WINNERS AND LOSERS

Last Sunday's **Miley Cyrus**-hosted installment of the MTV Video Music Awards was (clears throat, turns up reverb) the Most Tweeted Award Show Of All Time (21.4 million cutting insights, total), which is sort of like being the garbage can with the most flies, but still! Impressive! Most of these tweets concerned matters of great import, like Kanye West's announcement of his 2020 presidential run; Nicki Minaj's announcement that she reads the Times and totally saw what Miley said about her and is standing right here, Miley; and humanity's announcement that we've had a good run and may just want to pack it up while we still have some dignity left. A selection of music videos were also given awards.

MICHAEL ANDOR BRODEUR
REUTERS; SHUTTERSTOCK; ASSOCIATED PRESS; GETTY IMAGES



TV CONFESSIONS MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of "The Hours" and part-time Provincetown resident will receive the first annual Rose Dorothea Award for literary excellence, presented by the town library, on Sept. 19.

Favorite show of all time, and why?

"The Wire." I'm sure I stand among many in naming this as my favorite show of all time. It seems to be, by general consensus, the greatest contemporary TV show yet.

It possesses all the qualities of a great novel. Its scope and scale are epic. It charts, exquisitely, the ways in which its people create, and are created by, social and cultural forces far larger than any individual life.

And — rare in any narrative, particularly a crime drama like "The Wire" — it refuses to judge or dismiss any of its characters. The drug dealer is every bit as complex, and important, as the cop trying to send him or her to jail. No one is cannon fodder. No one is

there simply to get blown away, to the satisfaction of viewers. Every death is mourned, including the demise of characters who've done truly terrible things.

I mean, Charles Dickens would surely have loved it.

Favorite show this summer, and why?

"True Detective," second season. I'm not sure why so many people feel let down by the second season — maybe it's just that general tendency to refuse to forgive any storyteller for telling a story different from the one we first loved.

It's dark and sinister and beautifully shot. It's compassionate and yet rigorously unsentimental. The actors are all remarkable. I love it.

Favorite bad TV, and why?

"RuPaul's Drag Race." Because it's RuPaul. Because it's drag. Because it has a strange underlayer of gravitas that's difficult to define, that has to do with fanta-

sy and transformation in ways that transcend wigs and makeup. A friend of mine, a fellow fan, said it's like an issue of People magazine, edited by Joan Didion. I can't do better than that.

What's at the top of your Have-to-Watch list?

The ones I feel (or have felt) compelled to see, every single episode, in alphabetical order: "Dexter," "Game of Thrones," "Homeland," "Mad Men," "Masters of Sex," "Orphan Black," "The Sopranos," "True Detective," "The Wire."

Which show's world would you want to live inside?

None of them. That's part of what draws me to my favorite shows. They all take place in fascinating, often dark and dangerous worlds, and I love them in part because I can visit their worlds without any thought of taking up actual residence there.

MATTHEW GILBERT



RACHEL ENNEKING

LAUGH LINES RICH VOS

"I'm obsessive-compulsive. If I go to sleep at night and my dresser drawer is open this much — one inch — I have to get up and close it. You never know when a shirt's gonna fly out and attack you."

VOS PLAYS LAUGH BOSTON
FRIDAY AND SATURDAY

NICKA A. ZAINO III

HIGH FIVE

WHAT COUNTS IN MUSIC TODAY

From hard rock to intimate acoustics, Lou Barlow has traversed many a musical landscape, and has no plans to stop. Now 49, the Massachusetts-raised musician returned last November to live in Greenfield after 17 years in Los Angeles. A founding member of Dinosaur Jr., Sebadoh, and the Folk Implosion, Barlow ventures from his indie- and heavy-rock bands through his folksy solo career. Though he still rocks on stage as a bassist every now and then, expect to see Barlow solo, guitar-strung baritone ukulele and microphone in tow, at Allston's Great Scott next Tuesday, celebrating the arrival of "Brace the Wave," his first solo album in six years. We asked Barlow to identify the five lyricists who have most inspired his own songwriting.

Joni Mitchell

"I've always loved Joni Mitchell, and I think her album 'For the Roses' has really inspired me lyrically. . . . It's personal, and really beautiful. There are a lot of songs talking about her jealousy. . . . It's

really fiery, while revealing that she's really scared."

Joanna Newsom

"She plays harp and sings. There's a song called 'The Book of Right-On.' Even though she sounds kind of fairylike, her lyrics are devastating, and this song, it scares me — because her perception is so clear, it's almost of someone superior in the relationship."

Black Sabbath

"I think their body of work [is] pretty accessible and very tuneful. And I love the lyrics. . . . There's a song called 'Hand of Doom,' which is about heroin addiction. I think Black Sabbath really articulated the dark side of the '60s into the '70s. People are always talking about how terrible it is right now. . . . I don't believe that, I don't think it's true. But I do believe that if you were around in 1969 or 1970, things were really bad. Things were legitimately bad. People were being drafted, the Vietnam War was being shown on TV. Armageddon was a very real

thing for people. And I think Black Sabbath really articulated that. This song is sort of about using heroin as an escape."

Sufjan Stevens

"[His songs] are so nakedly powerful and honest, like honest admissions about relationship politics. One is called 'All of Me Wants All of You.' He has this really precise pronunciation of things."

Dinosaur Jr.

"The leader [and songwriter] of the band, J Mascis, was a really powerful singer to me. . . . I met him in high school, and he was a year older than me. But I felt that he was 20 years older — he was just at another level developmentally than me. In the first two records I was involved with, his lyrics were really imaginative, and really powerful for me, to have someone that I knew, who was a huge part of my life."

Lou Barlow performs at Great Scott on Tuesday at 9 p.m. Tickets: \$18. www.greatscottboston.com
MALLORY ABREU

