# Punchist

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# → Pop Culture: Now in Living Color

#oscarssowhite. Whitewashing. Lena Dunham. Is the racial gap in Hollywood narrowing, or are we just playing a slow game of catch-up? GQ looks at the state of race in pop culture, including JORDAN PEELE'S NEW racially tense horror movie, the not-so-woke trend of actors playing other ethnicities, and just how funny (or scary) it is to make fun of white people

# <u>Jordan</u> <u>Peele Is</u> Terrifying

The *Key & Peele* star goes solo with a real horror story: being black in America

JORDAN PEELE'S directorial debut, Get Out, is the story of a black man who visits the family of his white girlfriend and begins to suspect they're either a little racist or plotting to annihilate him. Peele examined race for laughs on the **Emmy-winning series** Key & Peele. But Get Out expresses racial tension in a way we've never seen before: as the monster in a horror flick. CAITY WEAVER talked to Peele in his editing studio about using race as fodder for a popcorn thriller and just how evil you can make the white people.

GQ: A race-based horror movie feels extremely well timed in 2017. How long have you been working on 'Get Out'? JORDAN PEELE: I started messing around when Hillary and Barack were going at it for the Democratic nomination. It was the first time I looked at the gender and racial civil rights movements in relation to each other, and I realized that horror films about gender are some of my favorite movies. Rosemary's Baby and The Stepford Wives explored the fear of men making decisions for women in such an artful, fun, scary way.

Does the African-American experience have an equivalent? No, except [zombie classic] Night of the Living Dead. In the post-civil-rights movement era, there are no movies that really tackle the horror of race.

Why do you think that is? Black creators have not been given a platform, and the African-American experience can only be dealt with by an African-American. That might be problematic to say. And now that I think about it, [*The Stepford Wives* author] Ira Levin is a man, and he and Roman Polanski wrote Rosemary's Baby. Let's say it would be scary for a white writer and director to do something that includes the victimization of black people in this way. Of course, we have this trope where the black guy is the first to die in every horror movie-that's a way for [white filmmakers] to have their cake and eat it, too.

A lot of the horror in the movie comes from the fact that it can be scary to be black. In some situations, it's just social anxiety, but in others, there's a real threat that just doesn't exist for the white characters. One of the [great] things about Guess Who's Coming to Dinner that anybody can relate to is the uncomfortableness of meeting your in-laws for the first time and being at a party where you're the outsider. So the layer of race that enriches and complicates that tension [in *Get Out*] becomes relatable.

My dad is a black guy from Philly. I once dated a white guy from the South. Before they met, my only request to my father was "Please don't bring up slavery." Within two minutes: "Your family own slaves?" Have you ever had a meeting with parents go awry? No, I'm pretty good with parents. But there are situations where I'll feel racially isolated, and I don't necessarily know how much of it is warrantedam I being the racist one? That is what this movie is about.

The fraught relationship between black people and cops is touched on early in the movie. The main character in 'Get Out' is played by British actor Daniel Kaluuya, who sued the London police in 2013 for allegedly assaulting and falsely imprisoning him after mistaking him for a drug dealer. Still, were you hesitant about not using an African-American actor for this role? Most important was having an actor who related to the isolation of being the only

### EGG ON YOUR (BLACK)FACE An index of racially questionable role-playing

THEPUNCHLIST



Angelina Jolie: 1 (A Mighty Heart) Asian-Americans





People of color played by celebs on Halloween: countless (e.g., Julianne Hough, left, as Crazy Eyes; Jason Aldean as Lil Wayne)

Michael Jacksons played by Joseph Fiennes: 1 (Urban Myths, mercifully canceled before its 1/19 premiere) black person in a given space. My presumption was that might be a uniquely African-American experience. But when I asked Daniel, he was like, "No, bro. This is what my friends and I are always talking about, bro."

Let's talk about white people. Were you ever concerned about making the ones in this movie too evil? Part of what horror is is taking risks and going somewhere that people think you're not supposed to be able to go, in the name of expressing reallife fears. I p<mark>ut a</mark> lot of thought into [the evil of the white characters], and no one ever suggested that I change it.

Besides systemic racism, what are you afraid of? Ghosts? I want to believe in ghosts. I love ghost stories. We were shooting *Keanu* in New Orleans, and the whole cast went on this ghost to<mark>ur, led by this sexy,</mark> swarthy guy. Like, "If these streets could talk, they'd tell some pretty scary stories. But you probably don't want to hear about that...." I was looking over at Method Man like, "Oh, my God, I brought a member of the Wu-Tang Clan to this fucking ghost tour. He's going to hate it." At the end of the tour, Method Man raises his hand. I was like, "Oh, here it comes." He goes, "Sometimes I wake up and I feel something sitting on my chest. What is it?" And I'm thinking, It's blunts, it's blunts, stop smoking blunts. But the tour guide is like, [nodding] "That's going to be a night hag."

One more question: Is 'Get Out' coming out during Black History Month on purpose? Yeah!

# TV: Black-ish (But Mostly Still White-ish)

Though I am a conscientious black woman, I mostly watch TV while trying to fall asleep rather than looking for nuanced differences between shows geared toward black audiences and those that, well, aren't. Turns out when you watch television while fully conscious, there are discrepancies.

### THE MARVEL SHOWS Luke Cage (Netflix) vs. Daredevil (Netflix)



Most superheroes have endearing ailments that impact how the world responds to them. Like, Daredevil/ Matt Murdock (Charlie Cox) is blind. Luke Cage (Mike Colter) is black. Although he

is able to use the power of echolocation to dodge bullets, people sometimes try to help Murdock cross the street. Meanwhile, Cage has super strength and impenetrable skin. He still deals with things that better on Luke Cage.

regular black men trying to look out for themselves in Harlem face: Cage struggles to make rent while working two jobs as a dishwasher and a janitor. Also, the music is much, much

### THE MAINSTREAM HITS Empire (Fox) vs. Madam Secretary (CBS)



*Empire* is a celebration of the black nouveau riche—hoverboards as actual transportation, wigs for miles. But the show also confronts race. In the season-two premiere, Taraji P. Henson, a.k.a. Cookie

Lyon, dresses like an ape at a rally to free her ex from prison. Watched on mute, it looks like a Black Lives Matter protest. That's a beautiful thing to see on TV.

On Madam Secretary, there's one recurring

black character. (She works for Téa Leoni's Elizabeth McCord.) If Cookie were in Elizabeth's world, she wouldn't be the hero. She'd be a punch line. Or worse: a victim for Elizabeth to save.

### THE INDIE-AUTEUR SERIES Atlanta (FX) vs. Girls (HBO)



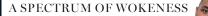
Just like Girls' Hannah, l'm a young woman. A self-centered writer living in New York, even! Unlike Donald Glover's character on Atlanta, l'm not an unemployed single parent with a criminal record. But wouldn't you know which show I connect with more? On Atlanta, a woman wears a headscarf while she sleeps. A

white acquaintance feels overly comfortable saying "nigga."

Girls got some backlash after season one for its treatment of race. (Ignoring it.) Creator Lena Dunham responded by bringing on Atlanta's Glover to play Hannah's black Republican boyfriend. Like Dunham, Hannah sees a lack of diversity in her life and comes

up with a half-assed solution. Glover's arc ends when Hannah. claiming she doesn't "see" race, dumps him with an accusation of fetishizing her whiteness. Dunham winks at the audience to show her self-awareness. Then, like Hannah, she makes them feel bad for pointing out racial problems that she doesn't want to think about.

Even as culture changes, a series like Atlanta, by and for black people, is a rarity. But as we see more shows like this—when fictional black people can be regular and boring like fictional white people—then we can truly ascend, on TV and everywhere else. Glover, Issa Rae (HBO's Insecure), Michaela Coel (Netflix's Chewing Gum), and many others have furthered that movement. I'm grateful for that, and even more grateful that this means more very hot black men will be on my screens ASAP.—магіан змітн



SUPER

Lemonade

The Carmichael Show's Cosby episode, which also grapples with Mark Wahlberg's '80s hate crime and Michael Richards's N-word rant.

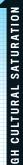
Matt Damon playing a hero in ancient China in The Great Wall. Asian-Americans saw whitewashing. The Chinese were reportedly psyched.

Awards shows portraying Sofia Vergara (the highest-paid TV actress) as a sexy foreign doofus somewhere between Salma Hayek and Borat.

Lena Dunham publicly imagining Odell Beckham Jr.'s sexist inner monologue at the Met Ball: "That's a dog... do I want to fuck it?"

SUPER PROBLEMATIC!

### THEPUNCHLIST



### The Unlikely Recommendation MANDY MOORE

My love for Mandy Moore is still, to this day, like candy. How could this be? Why would this be? By any fair estimation, her career has been as ordinary as her talent. (Forgive me, M.M., heart of my heart!) She currently stars in the worsttitled show in TV history, NBC's This Is Us. It's a nice show. The Golden Globes, and my mom, love it enough for it to have been renewed for two more seasons. Her most memorable previous role was as...herself, briefly, on Entourage, as one of Vinny's ex-flames, a signifier of B-list

### This Month in Superheroism

MARVEL'S 'IRON FIST (March 17 on Netflix)

who's that? Orphan/kung fu expert/ Buddhist/billionaire entrepreneur Danny Rand (played by Finn Jones)

BEFORE WE GET ANY FURTHER... Yes, he's white. (See previous page.)

OFF-DUTY WARDROBE Freshman-year-dorm-weeddealer bathrobe

ON-DUTY WARDROBE Freshman-year-dorm-weeddealer tracksuit (featuring a life-size rendering of Rand's enormous dragon chest tattoo)

AT STAKE Defeating "the criminal element corrupting his world around him." (No word on whether season two is set in D.C.)

HOW'D HE GET HIS POWERS? He "slew Shou-Lao, a feat no other warrior had ever accomplished, and plunged his hands into the brazier, imbuing himself with the mystic energy of the Iron Fist."

BRAZIER? It's like an oven.



Hollywood fame, a call her

Alba and Biel passed. Moore

broke out almost 20 years ago

man's Britney Spears/afraid-of-

leather man's Xtina-but I don't

even know if she sings anymore.

the perfect middlebrow platform

(Google-search update: She

does!) So what the hell is it? This is the core: *This Is Us* is

for her lovely blandness. She

with us, specifically on NBC.

I hope she never goes away.

-DEVIN GORDON

is right where she belongs, here

as a singer, a sort of thinking

agent probably got after Jessicas

# The Cultural Saturation Chart

Start at the top to learn about the things you won't be able to escape this March. Read lower to check out the weird stuff you can't afford to miss

# THANKS, GOD!

In addition to his labors on earth, our Lord and Savior watches over his on-screen flock. *GQ* reviews the work of the most helpful fictional deities



GOD: **George Burns**, *Oh*, *God!* AID TO MANKIND: Bringing the Word to non-believers

GOD: **Alanis Morissette,** *Dogma* AID TO MANKIND: Smiting demons

GOD: **Morgan Freeman**, Bruce Almighty and Evan Almighty AID TO MANKIND: Bestowing empathy unto the wicked

GOD: **Will.i.am**, *Joan of Arcadia* AID TO MANKIND: Begetting Will.i.am's acting career

GOD: Octavia Spencer, *The Shack* (March 3) AID TO MANKIND: In the book this is based on at least, testing a man of faith by letting a serial murderer nicknamed the Little Ladykiller (because he kills little ladies) kill a little lady (the man's daughter). Actually, this is just a dick move by God.

(0Q)

Questions while

doing Crafts with

My daughter.

How to answer these

## The GQ Survey ADAM PALLY IS A MASTER...

...of writing in crayon and stickers (in real life) and time travel (on the Fox comedy *Making History*, premiering March 5).

Would you prefer a beer in the shower or wine in the bath?

### BEER IN THE BATH

Please describe your recurring nightmare.

I've Been ton from my family and thrown into a "workers" camp in Baton Rove. Somehow I end up caring for the youngest Kushner baby who has been or phaned after its parents, Jake + Evanka have been killed for having Jen Blood by Bannon.

What movie or television scene do you most regret watching with your parents? Private Parts "have sex with the speaker" scere. Saw it with my Dad ... wish my mom was there too i) JK