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Winters

Sellout Nation!

GQ's Guide to
BEING THE BEST BRAND
YOU CAN BE

Starring

DANNY McBRIDE

Remember when "selling out" was the worst thing an artist could do? If you licensed your song to an ad, you were a sellout. If you let them make your novel into a movie, you were a sellout. If you wanted to make a commercial, you had to do it in Korea so no one here would see it. But now? Everyone does it. Oscar winners. Knighted sirs. Even Bob Dylan. And no one cares! The big risk now isn't selling out—it's doing it wrong. GQ teamed up with **DANNY McBRIDE** and his *Vice Principals* co-star **WALTON GOGGINS** to demonstrate how to sell out without selling your soul



A Brief History of SELLING OUT



**We're
Okay with
It If You
REALLY
Commit**

Ryan Reynolds is an actor, a man, and a deeply committed brand ambassador of Swiss watch manufacturer Piaget. —MAGGIE LANGE

GQ: If you were stuck on a desert island, which three Piaget watches would you bring? **Ryan Reynolds:** Two Polos and an Altiplano. The Altiplano, I love. It's so beautiful. What I really need is a desert island.

What type of watchband best represents your soul? If you're talking about a soul, and a soul is transcendent, a metal watchband. That's a dangerous question. What if I was like crocodile skin?

Which Piaget watch represents humankind as it currently exists on earth? I don't believe that a Piaget watch reflects the nature of our society right now. It reflects the nature of how we could be, how we would want to be. The world is in a state of slightly perplexed chaos right now. A Piaget watch is the utopian destiny to which we are inexorably marching.



THE BEATNIKS AT THE 1965 Newport Folk Festival should have known something was up when Bob Dylan walked onstage, trailing a suspicious cord behind him. He plugged in his Stratocaster and launched into "Maggie's Farm," but he may as well have been performing a Puccini aria, since he was barely audible over the boos. The charge: The harmonica-tootling folk king had Sold Out. But when we look back through the Snapchat filter of 2016, it's clear what he was really doing: expanding his brand.

When pop stars began signing endorsement deals in the '80s, they weren't just accused of dumbing down their art but of exsanguinating its authenticity. Madonna feigned Pollyanna purity in Pepsi commercials, and even David Bowie, the ghostly prince of the avant-garde, slummed it in Japanese sake ads. When electro-elf Moby licensed every song on his album *Play* to brands like Nordstrom and Volkswagen Polo, he found himself in artistic purgatory, too pervasive for original fans and too weird for anyone not looking to buy a German supermini. Musicians didn't even need to align with companies to earn the scorn of the sellout police. After Metallica hired a producer who had worked with Bon Jovi, chat rooms filled with metal geeks whining about how mainstream they'd become. Commitment to artistic purity had curdled into hair-splitting snobbishness.

Everything changed as the '90s progressed. Hip-hop was about upward mobility; the conspicuous presence of platinum and Patrón didn't undermine artists' success, it legitimized it. After Jay Z blew up in 1998, he eviscerated the false dichotomy of authenticity and wealth, acquiring critical

acclaim along with a portfolio of partnerships and investments: Samsung, Budweiser, Tidal. Unlike with the sellouts of the '80s and '90s, Jay Z's hustle was part of his artistic narrative, the scrappy Brooklyn drug dealer made good.

As hip-hop and its Midas values have seeped into the mainstream, selling out is no longer a transgressive act. It's now mandatory to extend your tentacles into brands—as long as you do it right. Alicia Vikander and Vuitton pair like champagne and caviar. Matthew McConaughey's Lincoln commercials align perfectly with the machismo kitsch of the McConaissance. When Gwyneth Paltrow endorses a \$15,000 dildo on Goop, she's luxuriating in her "other half" wellness branding.

But few have done it with the cocky insolence of Bob Dylan, the OG sellout. Dylan doesn't need to expand his brand anymore, but he's doing it anyway—a middle finger to his Newport hecklers. Over the past 15 years, Dylan has appeared in commercials for Victoria's Secret, Pepsi, Chrysler. At 75, he doesn't give a fuck. And neither does anyone else. —EMILY LANDAU



In 1965, **Bob Dylan** was asked what product he would ever sell out for. His response? "Ladies' garments." Four decades later, the voice of a generation appeared in a Victoria's Secret commercial, fulfilling his prophecy and paving the way for these enterprising celebrity heroes.





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The Long Arc of the Perfect Sellout: MICHAEL KEATON

1989: Starred in Tim Burton's film revival of *Batman*.

2014: In *Birdman*, portrayed an aging actor haunted by the superhero he played as a young movie star.

2016: Cast as the villain in next year's *Spider-Man: Homecoming*.



With a little help, Walton Goggins has enough energy to clean *THE WHOLE HOUSE*.

There Are Things That

MONEY CAN'T BUY

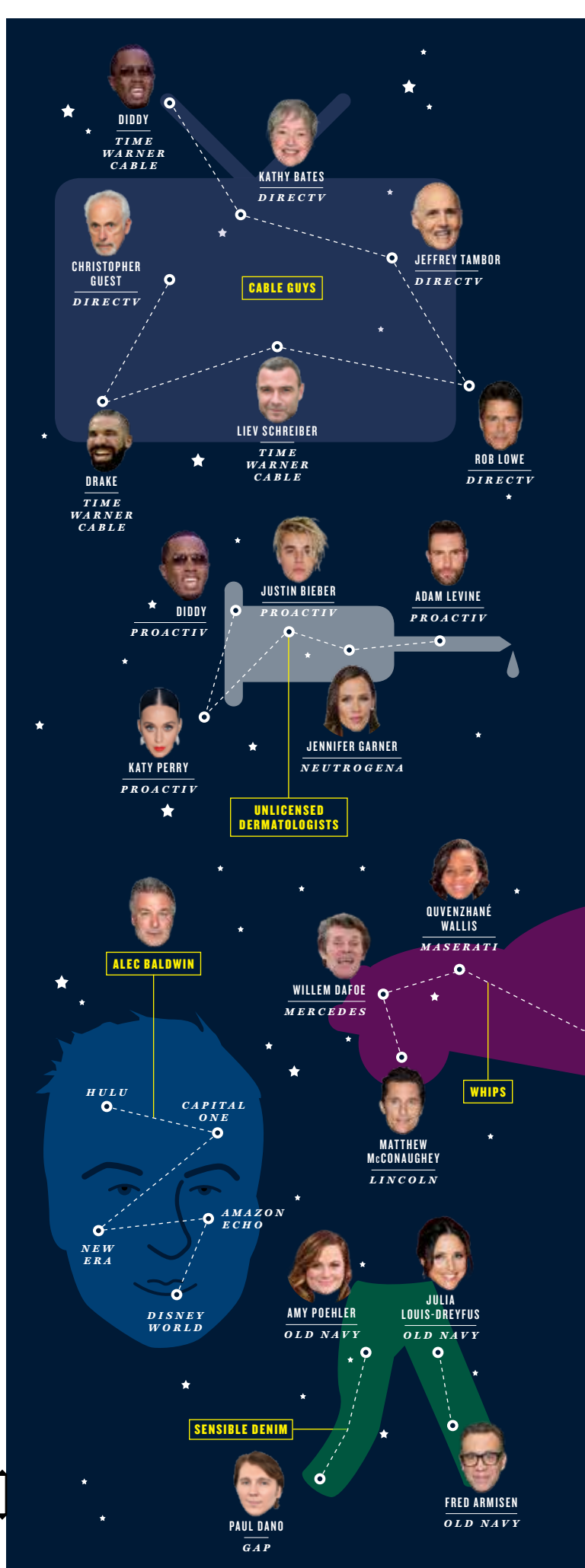
Wisdom from the agents behind celeb paydays

"Beyoncé turned down a Facebook post for a hair brand. Her people said, 'You can come up with \$2 million—she won't take it.'"
—Mike Heller

"Anne Hathaway was offered \$500,000 by some billionaire in, like, Bahrain to come and have dinner."
—Mike Esterman
[Editors' note: She did not go.]

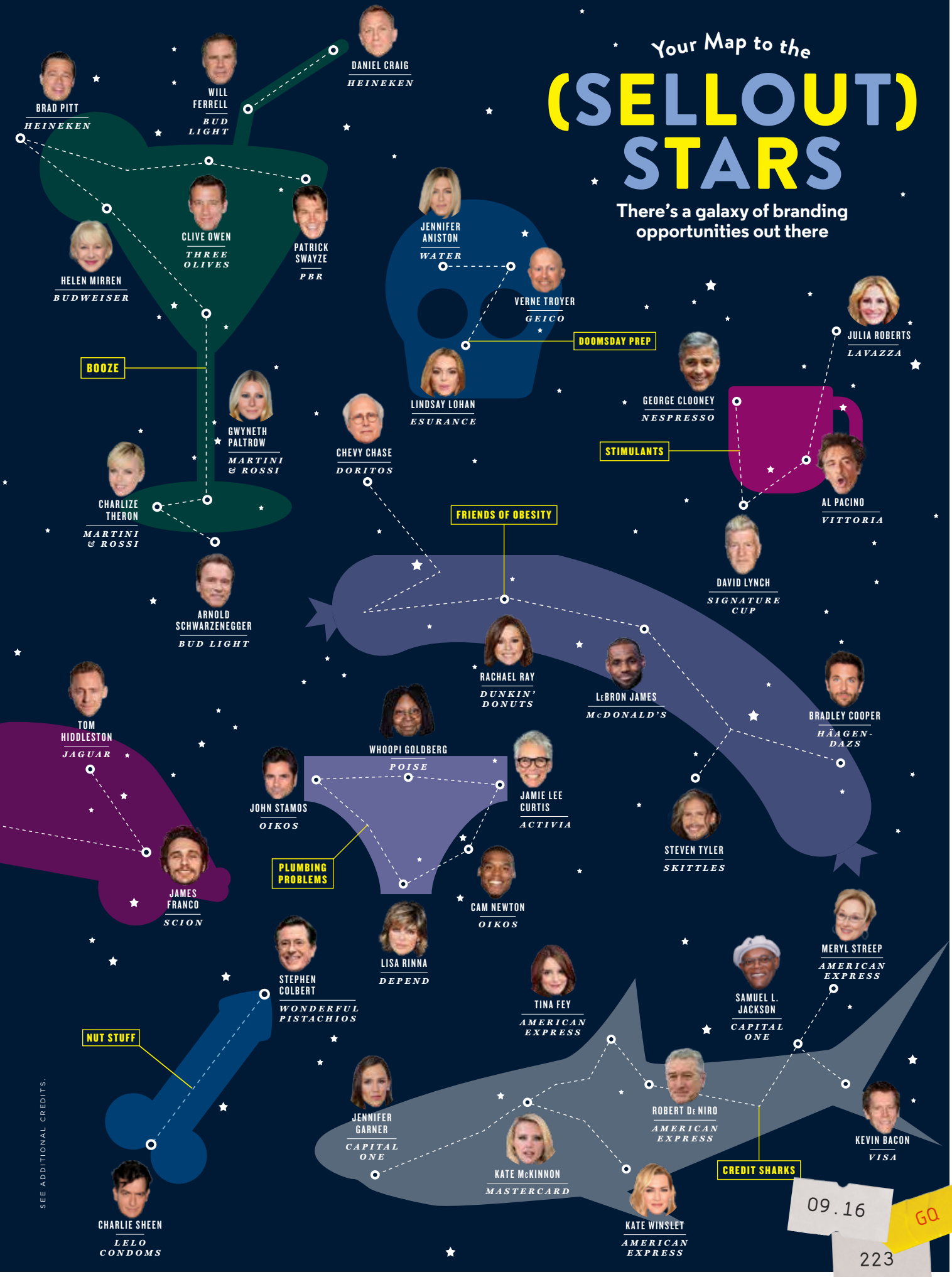
"Up on that stage, it's all the same shit. It doesn't matter if it's a bar mitzvah. It's more, 'Am I doing this for some dictator's kids?'"
—Steve Einzig

APPEAL: Robin Williams • **FAMILIARITY:** George W. Bush ➡➡



Your Map to the (SELLOUT) STARS

There's a galaxy of branding opportunities out there



SEE ADDITIONAL CREDITS.

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Disembodied Old-Guy Voices

MAKE BANK

Ever swelled with pride for humanity while watching a Visa ad? Worried that your family is going to explode because it isn't "in good hands"? Wanted to eat at Arby's, even though it's Arby's? Congratulations—you've been manipulated by the voice of an old man. See if you can match the AARP-eligible actor to the corporation he's imbued with wisdom and gravitas.



Ving Rhames



James Earl Jones



Morgan Freeman



Dennis Haysbert

VING RHAMES + ARBY'S • JAMES EARL JONES + ALLSTATE
MORGAN FREEMAN + VISA • DENNIS HAYSBERT + ALLSTATE
VERIZON

If It Makes Us Think, "Why Is He Doing That?" YOU'RE DOING IT RIGHT

Julia Louis-Dreyfus doesn't need Old Navy. She's got *Seinfeld* money. I can no more picture her purchasing a pair of \$29.94 boot-cut jeans than I can Oprah seeking external validation from a Weight Watchers meeting or Diddy spot-treating his adult acne with Proactiv. Which is why this kind of endorsement—taking money you don't need for a product you don't need—is the ultimate power move.

By associating yourself with greasy teens squeezing husky thighs into cheap denim, not only do you embrace the plebes of Middle America; you prove nothing can blemish your brand.—ANNA PEELE

This season's most herculean exertions are occurring not on the NFL field but in the bleached halls of a suburban high school, as **Danny McBride** and Walton Goggins vie to become its head administrator. We talked to three-time sellout McBride (K-Swiss, Southern Comfort, PlayStation), star of HBO's *Vice Principals*, about something even nobler than the education of America's youth: ads.—CAITY WEAVER



What commercial jingle will be lodged in your brain until you die?

When I was a kid, there was a karate school in northern Virginia. Their ad was two little kids who would say, "Nobody bothuhs me." "Nobody bothuhs me, either!" Then it would cut to a shot of a bunch of people doing karate in a field, and the song was like, *[singing]* "Call U.S.A. 1000! You will...fight for life!"

So you have strong brand loyalty to that dojo. Are you usually a devoted customer? Like, do you use store loyalty cards?

I read some crazy story about a guy who was getting workers' comp. [His employers] hired a private detective and accessed, I think, his grocery-rewards card and saw that he was, like, buying alcohol and shit on certain days, which went against [the lost time] he was claiming. That kind of spooked me—that they can track your purchases and use your purchases against you. I don't want that.

You don't use loyalty cards because you want to be able to commit fraud?

You never know what opportunities might come your way. And I hate when you go to Barnes & Noble and they're like, "Are you a member of our rewards club?" I'm like, "No." "Would you like to do that?" "No. I wouldn't. I've been to fuckin' Barnes & Noble before, and I know all about it. I want this book."

What's the best music for a car commercial?

Old classic rock. That sells a truck. And house music to sell compact cars.

What's the best music for a prescription drug that prevents blood clots?

Kendrick Lamar.

Have you ever done a weird overseas commercial?

I would love to. I'd wanna be filmed in black and white with a tuxedo, half unbuttoned, walking on the seashore, looking off into the distance. It could be for any product.

You've been paid to endorse goods a few times Stateside. What do you think it is about your face and voice that makes people want to buy products?

I don't know if it does equal people buying the products. I'm pretty sure K-Swiss closed down after my ads.

As a celebrity, do you get tons of free swag?

I don't. Heineken sent me a beer keg one time. I don't think a lot of brands want to be associated with me.

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ATTENTION: Morgan Freeman • VISIONS OF FORTUNE: Bill Gates

