

THE
NEW YORKER

GOINGS ON

Peter Morgan's "Patriots" Heads to Broadway

Also: The soft-rock palette of Arlo Parks, the tearjerker musical "The Notebook," Eric Fischl's paintings of bourgeois cocoons, and more.

Alex Barasch

Culture editor

When climate protesters rose from the audience to disrupt "**An Enemy of the People**"—a revival of the Ibsen play, starring Jeremy Strong, which opened this week on Broadway—with cries of "No theatre on a dead planet," my first thought was that it was all rather on the nose. Strong stayed in character as a doctor fighting to raise the alarm about inconvenient scientific truths, resisting calls to evacuate the stage and insisting that the crew should "let them speak." Michael Imperioli, in keeping with his role as a politician seeking to protect business interests, dismissed the activists' assertions as "speculation"—and helped push one of them out of the auditorium. (The crowd, unlike the actors, promptly forgot the moral thrust of the story; many responded to the protesters' expulsion with cheers.) The production had already felt a bit chaotic: minutes earlier, an aquavit-branded bar had descended from the ceiling,

SKARSTEDT

and we'd been offered shots. It seemed plausible enough that Sam Gold, the show's director, might have planted the demonstrators as a meta-theatrical flourish. My plus-one and I debated whether the stunt had been his bid to yoke a nineteenth-century play to twenty-first-century concerns, until we reached the lobby, where a Strong stan informed us that this had *not* happened when she'd seen the show a few nights prior.

The protesters' action, like the revival itself, was a slightly clumsy attempt to engage with the crises of our time. More successful is **"3 Body Problem,"** the new Netflix adaptation of Liu Cixin's 2006 sci-fi novel, which comments on our world via both the recent past and an improbable future—one in which humanity is forced to prepare for an alien invasion due in a few hundred years. The TV series—the work of the "Game of Thrones" showrunners, David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, along with a third creator, Alexander Woo—updates its source material for the era of anti-vax and 5G conspiracy theories. As my colleague Inkoo Kang notes in her review, the distant but inexorable, existential threat also makes a tidy metaphor for climate change.

Artistically, the other option, of course, is to confront the present head on. Radu Jude's **"Do Not Expect Too Much from the End of the World,"** which enters wide release on Friday, captures modern life online and off, following an exhausted production assistant as she scouts out participants for a workplace-safety video—and shoots offensive, often baffling diatribes for Instagram. ("I criticize by way of extreme caricature," she explains.) Up-to-the-minute references range from the war in Ukraine and the indignities of the gig economy to the misogynistic influencer Andrew Tate. The movie ends with a quietly brutal forty-minute sequence in which a man's account of his own injury is gradually stripped of any details that might damage his employer. Another character defends the edits by appealing to cultural precedent, noting that even the first-ever documentary, by Louis Lumière, involved a degree of fakery. "Fiction was there from the start," he says. The reverse is true, too: fiction, from Ibsen to Jude, has always contained a kernel, at the least, of reality.

SKARSTEDT



Jess Hong in "3 Body Problem."
Photograph by Ed Miller / Netflix

Spotlight



Illustration by Valentin Tkach

Broadway

The fall of the Soviet Union set the stage figuratively and, in the case of Almeida Theatre's "**Patriots**," literally, for the rise of Vladimir Putin. In the play by Peter Morgan (who also plied levers of power as the creator of Netflix's "The Crown"), the patriots in question are corporate oligarchs concerned for Russia's future, including the billionaire Boris Berezovsky (Michael Stuhlbarg), who taps a St. Petersburg's politician, a then obscure Putin (Will Keen), to succeed President Boris Yeltsin. After a year in London, where Keen's performance garnered an Olivier Award, the production arrives stateside, just in time for our own momentous election. Helmed by the Almeida's artistic director, Rupert Goold, "Patriots" marks Netflix's *début* as a Broadway producer. Ah, the beauty of capitalism.—*Dan Stahl* (*Barrymore; previews begin April 1.*)



About Town

Dance

When Trisha Brown died, in 2017, the **Trisha Brown Dance Company**, which had been performing her works for decades, had to find a way to go on. In 2022, for the first time, it invited a guest choreographer to make a piece; this year, the young Frenchman Noé Soulier’s “In the Fall” marks its second such creation. It will be performed alongside “Glacial Decoy,” a work from 1979 that’s both regal and haunting, featuring five dancers in diaphanous white dresses who lope and glide in front of projections of coolly neutral black-and-white images. The evocative set design is by Robert Rauschenberg.—*Marina Harss* (*Joyce Theatre; March 26-31.*)

Broadway

Though twenty years removed from the tearjerking film and another eight from the Nicholas Sparks novel, the musical “**The Notebook**” feels as fresh as the rainwater that drenches the meant-for-each-other lovers Noah and Allie. Kudos go to the directors Michael Greif and Schele Williams, whose sensitive staging involves physically situating an older Noah and Allie alongside their younger selves. (The characters are each played by three actors, at different ages.) Similarly inspired are the stylishly color-coded costumes by Paloma Young; Ben Stanton’s corresponding blue-and-gold lighting; and Bekah Brunstetter’s book, which never lacks for feeling or humor, even if it could use more second-act plot. Ingrid Michaelson’s songs get the job done, and

SKARSTEDT

some of the performances flabbergast, especially that of Maryann Plunkett, as the oldest, dementia-stricken Allie. Bring tissues.—*Dan Stahl (Schoenfeld; open run.)*

Alt-Pop



Photograph by Alex Waespi

When the British singer **Arlo Parks** released her first album, “Collapsed in Sunbeams,” in 2021, she appeared as a fully formed artist dealing in a soulful, musing alt-pop sound, her confessional songcraft glowing with all the wonder and angst of youth; it scored her the Mercury Prize, for the best record released in the U.K. or Ireland. Parks’s second album, “My Soft Machine,” released last year, felt a bit less personal but more ambitious by an order of magnitude, adding the producer Ariel Rechtshaid (Adele, Vampire Weekend) and the Brockhampton beat-maker Romil Hemnani to fill out its soft-rock palette. In the cradle-song melodies of a Phoebe Bridgers collaboration, “Pegasus,” and the SZA-ish dream-pop of “Puppy,” the hazy details of a reverie come into focus.—*Sheldon Pearce (Brooklyn Steel; April 2.)*

Broadway

SKARSTEDT

The title of the new musical “**Water for Elephants**,” adapted from Sara Gruen’s 2006 novel, is slightly misleading. There’s only one elephant, Rosie (a lovable puppet designed by Ray Wetmore and J. R. Goodman), and she prefers whiskey. But as the ringmaster (played by a thrilling, chilling Paul Alexander Nolan) of Rosie’s Depression-era circus declares of audiences, “You gotta give ’em lies.” He’d know, as he bitterly watches his wife and star performer (Isabelle McCalla) drift toward a handsome young veterinarian (Grant Gustin) hired to treat his overworked animals. The good-woman-cruel-man-gallant-savior triangle is nothing new, but Jessica Stone’s staging, Rick Elice’s dialogue, and the acrobatic choreography are so energetic that it’s hard to mind. The show’s music, by PigPen Theatre Company, fares best when channelling the circus’s zaniness.—*D.S. (Imperial; open run.)*

Art

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Art work © Eric Fischl / ARS / Courtesy the artist / Skarstedt; Photograph by John Berens

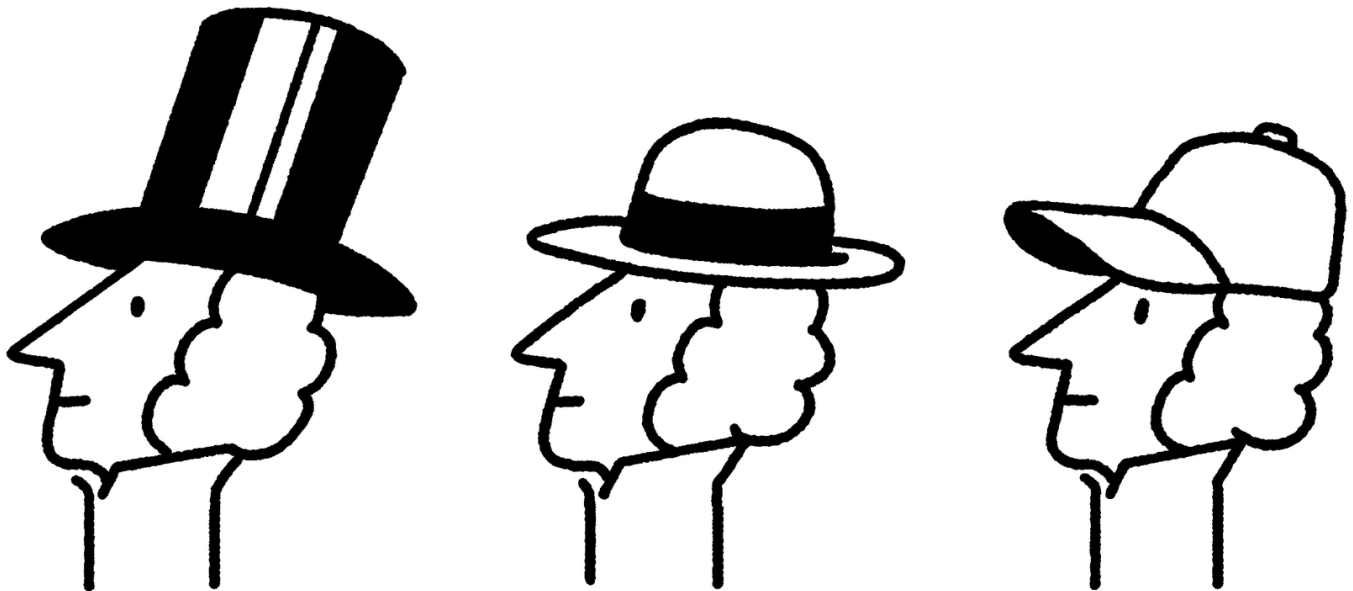
It's been almost fifty years since **Eric Fischl** began to paint well-nourished, spiritually starved people trapped in bright bourgeois cocoons. His style hasn't changed greatly along the way, and that's probably for the best, stasis being one of his major themes. For his new series, "Hotel Stories," he renders bodies with the usual smudgy virtuosity, packing each image with lively details that somehow bring out the over-all emptiness of the setting. The sneakily claustrophobic "Last Days at Tender Cove" shows two lovers resting on a bed in a room that overlooks beautiful, luminous waters—unless the windows are just electronic screens. Lushness with a bitter finish: I'm not sure there's

SKARSTEDT

another artist working today who does it better.—*Jackson Arn (Skarstedt; through May 4.)*

Movies

The grandiose title of the Romanian director Radu Jude’s new film, **“Do Not Expect Too Much from the End of the World,”** matches his artistic and social ambitions. The nearly three-hour movie details an overwhelmingly busy Sunday in the life of a Bucharest-based production assistant named Angela (Ilinca Manolache), who’s working on an industrial-safety video. She fights through traffic to meet prospective interview subjects, who recount their appalling stories of accidents and injuries; she faces her haughty Austrian bosses; she makes foul-mouthed satirical Instagram videos. The movie centers filmmaking itself, by way of clips from an actual 1981 Romanian film about a female cabdriver whose story connects surprisingly with Angela’s own, and in a scene of the safety-video shoot that’s as uproarious as it is outrageous.—*Richard Brody (In theatrical release.)*

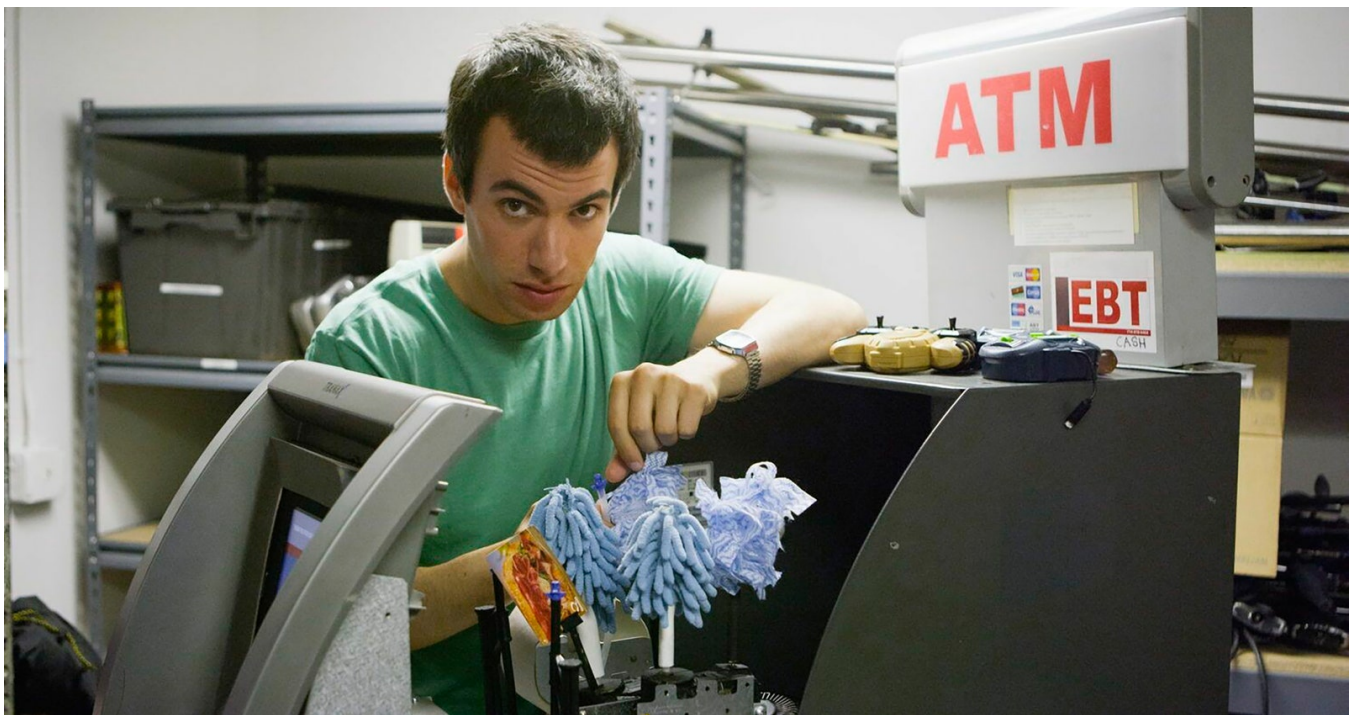


Pick Three

The staff writer Naomi Fry shares favorite comfort comedy rewatches.

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1. When I need to relax, I rewatch old episodes of “**Nathan for You.**” On the reality-comedy show—which ran on Comedy Central 2013-17 (it’s now on MAX)—Nathan Fielder plays an incredibly awkward, low-key malicious consultant attempting to help real-life small-business owners with harebrained management schemes. “Nathan for You” is admittedly a counterintuitive choice for comfort viewing, but knowing in advance how high-criinge the interactions will get has helped me let go of my vicarious embarrassment and simply revel in how pee-your-pants funny the show is. I’ve introduced my twelve-year-old daughter to it; it’s important to teach the next generation.



Photograph courtesy Comedy Central / Paramount

2. Another great rewatch is John Mulaney and Nick Kroll’s “**Oh, Hello,**” which opened on Broadway in 2016 and was released as a Netflix special. George St. Geegland (Mulaney) and Gil Faizon (Kroll) are pervy, petty, self-aggrandizing septuagenarians from the Upper West Side who love talking shit almost as much as they love Steely Dan. The bull’s-eye cultural specificity of the characters—“I am neither Jewish nor a woman, but like many men over the age of seventy I have reached that point in life where I am somehow both,” St. Geegland says—makes me laugh and laugh.

SKARSTEDT

3. Choosing a favorite season of “**The Simpsons**” is a real fool’s errand, but when pressed I’ll always go for Season 4, which, for my money, is the gold standard of comfort comedy rewatching. Life got you down? Put on “Marge vs. the Monorail” or “Lisa’s First Word” for the millionth time, and I dare you not to feel just a little bit better.