WHAT'S NEXT? —*Global*

Preface
From fashion and art to politics, media and governance, Monocle meets eight frontrunners to discuss their successes so far and the fresh challenges for the year ahead.

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Fadumo Dayib
Presidential candidate, Somalia

On not being afraid to challenge the status quo

For a presidential candidate just weeks ahead of the vote, Fadumo Dayib is remarkably resigned to losing. Like many of her fellow aspirants Dayib is a dual passport-holding member of Somalia's far-flung diaspora, an elite group whose privileges over those left behind frequently foster resentment. But, unlike any of her competitors, she is a woman and in a patriarchal society such as Somalia that makes her shoe-string run for the presidency both impossible and impossibly significant.

The 44-year-old has lived more than half her life in Finland where she has raised four children while making a career in public health and at the UN. But she has now made it her mission to change her homeland, to break the stranglehold that clan has held on Somalia for as long as anyone's oral history can tell. Putting herself forward for the presidency is risky to life and reputation but she is determined, single-minded and sees her doomed candidacy as a first step and an opportunity to speak and be heard. She sits down with MONOCLE in Nairobi.

Q&A

How did the experiences of migration shape you?
I was born into displacement. I have always been an alien so the fact I was in Finland didn't make me feel any different. I knew I'd reached the land of opportunities. The first night in Helsinki it was very quiet, there was snow on the ground and I knew I would take the opportunity I'd never had to study. I knew what I wanted from my time in Finland, that I wouldn't waste my time. I took that opportunity seriously but I also knew I would not stay in Finland for the rest of my life, that asylum wasn't a permanent status for me. Whereas others were talking about settling in I always had my bag by the door with the understanding that I would go back to Somalia.

Why get involved in Somalia's toxic, sometimes deadly politics?
When I announced my candidacy for the first time it was when the government said we would have democratic elections: one person, one vote. Now we have reverted back to the clan system [whereby the four major clans get a priority allocation of parliamentary seats and political appointments] and I find it repugnant. From a very young age I became aware of it through violence: the scars on my body come from that. I wasn't assaulted or beaten by strangers: my own people did that because my father or mother came from a different clan. People take that clan hatred out on innocents. It is a dysfunctional system and the international community is complicit. How do you bring a modern electoral system and just impose it on an ancient, despicable system and say this democratic structure can sit on top of an undemocratic one and think it will yield results? It's insane.

What do you have to offer Somalis?
I'm coming with a clean slate. I've not raped, I've not pillaged, I've not looted, I've not killed, I'm not an Islamist, I'm not a tribalist. I am a competent, qualified, patriotic person. I am not driven by power. My journey is about social change. The work I will do is not only about 2016. We need to challenge traditional, cultural and religious values, we need to shake the foundation to be able to build a much better one.

You admit that you have no chance of winning. Why compete?
It is about social change and one part of that is challenging the political elite in order to say there is an alternative. We don't always have to put up with a warlord, an Islamist, a thug, a tribalist or a man. Someone like me – who comes from a disadvantaged background but has made something of her life – can, and should, challenge the leadership if it is not doing what it should. I have watched for 26 years from the sidelines, always hoping somebody would come and bring order. Somalia deserves better and Somalis deserve better and if we don't challenge the status quo Somalia won't exist much longer. I see my candidacy as a moral obligation.

Does your involvement legitimise an illegitimate process?
This is a selection, not an election and is no better than 2012. Corruption has expanded. I'm not a pessimist – that's not my business – I am an optimist, but also a pragmatist and a realist. We need to hold the government accountable, we need people who are on top of them all the time, following every cent that is given to them, holding them to their word – and that's going to be my job.

What is the role of the international community in the upcoming elections in Somalia?
The international community is playing around in Somalia. They are complicit in this apartheid clan system and the gender quota system. The international community should have insisted women select their own candidates, not the clan elders who believe your only role is in the kitchen. And then there is corruption. All the money the donors are pouring into Somalia is not accounted for. How long are you going to be dumping money in a country that doesn't take its responsibilities seriously? Where there's no accountability? — TMC

PHOTOGRAPHER: ANDREW RENNEISEN

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Sofie D'Hoore
Fashion designer, Brussels

On reaping the rewards of a commitment to timelessness

On Monday mornings Sofie D'Hoore kisses her son and husband goodbye at their coastal home in Saint-Idesbald, Belgium, before making the 140km drive into Brussels. Here, from 08.00 to midnight, Monday to Thursday, she designs the collections that have won her eponymous fashion label a quiet global following over 25 years. Then, each Friday afternoon, she bids farewell to the fashion world, decompresses with a three-hour piano lesson, and then she's off home to the beach. Weekends are strictly for family.

This regimented approach and ability to distance herself from the more fickle aspects of fashion have helped her brand become a success. Modest and witty, D'Hoore's intense passion for her craft is offset by a lighthearted Belgian pragmatism about the medium she chooses to work in. "At the end of the day they are just clothes," she says, taking MONOCLE through her studio near Brussels' Rue Antoine Dansaert shopping strip. Here, across two floors of an old warehouse, a team of creative and business talents help fulfil the orders from the world's most tasteful boutiques. They may be "just clothes" but D'Hoore's work – relaxed, feminine, delicately constructed but astoundingly durable – transcends the fashion seasons.

At a Sofie D'Hoore stockist in Brussels, the shop assistant's eyes brighten when asked to explain the clothes' appeal. "No one selects fabrics like Sofie," is the response as fingers leaf through the fine silks, cottons and lambskins used in her work. Fabrics are D'Hoore's greatest fascination. Chantal Spaas, her business partner of 25 years, regales buyers with tales of D'Hoore's machine-like precision in flicking through thousands of fabric swatches at Swiss cotton mills to masterfully pluck out just what she needs. It's a gift appreciated by the world's most thoughtful high-end fashion customers, in D'Hoore's case about a third of whom are in Japan and South Korea. In Europe the brand is lauded by top buyers such as Maureen Doherty from London's Egg in Kinnerton Street, who has stocked Sofie D'Hoore for 10 years.

The global nature of the brand and its dedicated following were key reasons it sailed through the financial crisis in 2008. At this point shops could only afford to order what would definitely sell and buying habits changed. With thriftiness a factor, mainstay brand names became less coveted and it was those promoting timelessness and durability in fashion that trumped the churn and seasonal burn mentality of some larger labels. Sofie D'Hoore prospered and continues to this day.

Q&A

You take a practical approach to your creative process. Can you talk us through it?
I have three full-time pattern makers, which is enormous for a company this size but it is how I like to work so ideas can be materialised immediately. I prefer this to having five people searching for "inspiration" all day. Finding ideas isn't the problem, the problem is channelling your ideas in the right direction. For me inspiration comes in the working process; when I work in this practical way I can refine a piece as I go.

How do you connect with your audience as a brand?
My audience recognise themselves in the clothes. The brand fits the kind of women who have their own unique personality and who want to express this in the clothes they choose and not feel overwhelmed by a style that is put upon them. There is not an abundance of clients like this so we have to be a truly global but still small company.

You have been successful in Japan from the beginning. What has been crucial to your success there?
It's a client that appreciates the detail. We work extremely hard on finishes to make them appear simple, which is so well received there. This is very satisfying for a designer.

How do you make women feel relaxed in your clothes?
There are so many tricks in my patterns that makes women feel elegant and comfortable without necessarily knowing why they do. I think that's why a lot of female designers are doing well at the moment. At the end of the day, they can feel what women feel. Male designers appreciate the body of a woman in a different way. They see women like goddesses and they take an approach that gives a very beautiful result.

How much of your daily work is about business and numbers?
I'm very mathematical so I love the numbers side of the business. I'm not just looking through 10,000 fabrics for the most beautiful one: I'm also finding the best price. I'm very tough when it comes to bargaining. When you know the product so well you know what everything is worth. This takes experience but also business skill.

What does Belgium as a fashion nation stand for today?
Antwerp Royal Academy of Fine Arts is fantastic under the stewardship of Walter Van Beirendonck [formerly of the school's iconic "Antwerp Six" alumni]. He is the right person at the right place and is creating what a fashion school should be: somewhere to liberate every possibility before entering the industry. Visiting it you feel an explosion of creativity. — NSG

PHOTOGRAPHER: JUSSI PUIKONEN

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Mevlut Cavusoglu
Foreign minister, Istanbul

On Turkey's domestic and international outlook

"Please don't ask me to look at that ugly building," says Mevlut Cavusoglu as he poses for photographs in a hotel overlooking Istanbul. Below is the Ataturk Cultural Centre, a mid-century centrepiece on Taksim Square, built to welcome the world's stars and today a concrete husk plastered with nationalistic banners. The minister imagines an opera house there instead, something "baroque style".

There's a bit of swagger in Cavusoglu's disdain for this Republican-era icon. Since the coup attempt in July, when Turks spilled out onto the streets to face down the military, the Justice and Development party has felt renewed confidence in its right to rule. Most notably this has been expressed in the detention of tens of thousands of people across the civil service, judiciary, military and press.

The foreign minister is frank about the political populism in the West that he feels unfairly targets president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and rails against Europe's insistence on the primacy of its own ideology. During our interview an aide stands at our side, hands on his hips. "He's always like this," says Cavusoglu. "He puts on pressure so you don't ask difficult questions."

The tone is quite different from when MONOCLE last met a Turkish foreign minister. In 2011 the unassuming Ahmet Davutoglu – who went on to be prime minister and was later dismissed after a rift with Erdogan – was balancing EU demands with his "zero problems with neighbours" policy, and projecting Turkish soft power to Africa and the Balkans.

Turkey sits on the frontline of Syria and in 2016 led an incursion to retake towns from Isis on its border. The country is a bulwark against restive Russian influence but questions have been raised about whether this troubled democracy has a future in Nato, despite having the second-biggest military in the alliance. Turkey's foreign policy has never been more important.

Q&A

Is Nato still important to Turkey?
Yes but the alliance must be reformed. We want Nato to cover the whole of Turkey [by increasing air and sea surveillance]. Also we are for the enlargement of Nato and would like to see Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Georgia join.

If the US refuses to extradite alleged coup mastermind Fethullah Gulen, how far is Turkey prepared to go with its claim?
We've had good co-operation with the US in the past but because Gulen lives there, anti-American sentiment has increased tremendously in Turkey. If he is not extradited then our relations will be negatively affected.

Turkey's had a very proactive foreign policy. Is this still the case?
Yes. If you're not ready to face problems like violence, refugees and terrorist organisations then these problems will come to you. We are planning partnerships in Africa and embassies in Asia Pacific and the Caribbean.

Is Turkey's policy towards Syria still that Bashar al-Assad must be removed?
We are seeking a political solution, which means bringing everybody together. Do you believe that the different opposition groups will get together under Assad's leadership? No way.

Russia is accused of war crimes in Syria. How do you explain the rapprochement between Turkey and Russia?
Before one of Russia's jets was shot down last year we had better relations and nobody questioned that. We do not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea. We disagree on Syria and Assad: Russia has been bombing Aleppo and we have raised this with them. Having good relations doesn't mean that we agree on everything. Countries in this region should balance their foreign policies and not have to choose between one side or the other.

Why does Turkey still want to join the EU?
Many EU policies have failed – its security, enlargement and integration policies for instance. But Europe is still the most stable, prosperous and developed place. Turkey is part of this continent and we can contribute a lot when we're in.

Are investors concerned about how far Turkey is going with the ongoing purge?
We don't see this. We are meeting leaders from other countries and have a lot of incentives to encourage investment. We are going to build our third nuclear power plant, we have huge railway projects and many countries are interested in being involved. The measures we have been taking since the coup have made our armed forces more efficient, practical and reliable.

Yet this purge has touched lots of elements of society. We're seeing journalists detained.
If you say that journalists are arrested because of journalism I wouldn't agree with you. It could be a policeman, a military officer, a person working for media outlets [of Gulen]; whoever was involved or supported the attempted coup shall be brought to justice. — CL

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António Mexia
EDP CEO, Lisbon

On championing clean energy and culture

With 12,000 staff and operating in 14 countries, Portugal's gas and electricity provider EDP is the country's biggest company. It is also the third-largest renewable-energy business in the world with a significant presence in the US. The EDP Foundation, the company's philanthropic vehicle, funds cultural and social projects around Portugal: in October the Museum for Architecture, Art and Technology (Maat), financed by the foundation, opened in Lisbon to international fanfare. The man at the helm of both is 59-year-old EDP chief executive António Mexia. We sat down with him at the company's new riverfront headquarters in Lisbon to discuss power and his passion for the creative industries.

Q&A

Is the energy business changing?
Historically this has been a conservative sector, run by monopolies and large companies. The future is different. The focus is undoubtedly on clean energy and unlike traditional power stations, renewables are decentralised. Now everyone can be a producer of energy. As a business we're investing in start-up companies that work in the sector and in the area of big data. Big data is a particular focus for me because I think it will be another revolution for this industry. We need data around everything, from how to be more efficient and problems in the grid to our customers and how they use energy. Consumers can be proactive in becoming more efficient and reducing their bills.

What clean-energy projects are you working on and how significant will renewable energy be in the future?
We're still in a transition model but in Portugal, wind, solar and hydro can easily supply 60 per cent of our power needs. What is driving the speed of this transition is technology rather than concerns about climate change. Improvements in wind and solar technology mean costs have come down by 80 per cent in less than 10 years. One of our biggest projects is Wind Float Atlantic, which is the most advanced off-shore wind technology in the world. It enables us to deliver energy generated by wind turbines without needing to access the seabed by using a floating platform that can endure waves of 17 metres and high winds. It's beautiful too.

What is the next big challenge?
I believe the next big development will be in storage. At the moment storage of wind power isn't viable and significant storage of renewable energy is really only commercially feasible with hydro. But we're seeing the beginning of a revolution in storage. Electric cars show you what is possible. A few years ago it was impossible to get a range of more than 100km; today 400km is the norm.

How important are energy-security considerations?
While we are transitioning, security of supply is important. You need gas and coal for the times when you don't have sun and wind. You need the supply side guaranteed and this is not well managed in Europe. The UK, for example, could have issues with capacity this winter. Cyber security is an issue too. I met with the heads of energy from Europe, Japan, China, Australia, the US and Canada, and the US was obsessed with cyber security. It is critical – if you can stop the power sector in a country you can stop everything: hospitals won't work, even running water depends on energy.

In 2012, China Three Gorges became a majority shareholder in EDP. Should people be worried about this impacting energy security?
Having a specific shareholder in a power plant or the grid does not affect your security. You need to check systems but it's not about creating scapegoats. I open my market, you open yours; the whole world needs to work more on this.

Your new headquarters is something of a statement. Why did you invest in such a prominent building?
Headquarters like this change the way people think and work and also change the relationship between the city and us. We want to contribute to creating a more cosmopolitan and more open society and deliberately designed it so that the ground floor is a public square. Early next year we are opening a restaurant on the ground floor designed by Jasper Morrison.

Do you work with a lot of designers and architects?
Eduardo Souto de Moura and Alvaro Siza have designed power stations for us. I've just started talking with Alejandro Aravena who is going to design an extension to these headquarters. And I am working with Philippe Starck on a restaurant at the Maat site.

You seem to enjoy the creative side of the business. Maybe in another life you would have had a more creative job?
I don't believe in reincarnation but if I could come back in another life as an architect that would be very nice. — TL

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Ian Moir
Woolworths Holdings Limited, CEO, Sydney

On the future of retail

Ian Moir is sitting in his office at David Jones overlooking Sydney's Hyde Park, wearing a white open-neck shirt, black blazer and silvery stubble. On the wall behind him are black-and-white photographs of glamorous women from David Jones catalogues of the 1950s and 1960s. They're part of what he calls the "wonderful history" of one of the oldest continually operating department stores in the world.

When Welsh immigrant David Jones opened his eponymous store in Sydney in 1838 he said he wanted to sell both "the best and most exclusive goods" and to carry stock that "embraces the everyday wants of mankind". The same could be said of native Scotsman Moir's ambitious approach to retail as the chief executive of Woolworths Holdings Limited. The group – which is based in Cape Town, South Africa, and has no links to the US, UK and Australian businesses of the same name – acquired David Jones in 2014 in a deal worth AU$2.1bn (€1.5bn). Within a year of the takeover Moir had breathed new life into the struggling retailer, reversing a four-year slide in earnings and reporting a 29 per cent increase in operating profit to AU$162m (€113m).

The remarkable turnaround exemplifies Moir's innate aptitude for retail. After six years in the job he now oversees about 1,300 stores that employ more than 43,000 people across 14 countries, stretching from New Zealand to Namibia. Under the umbrella of Woolworths Holdings are Woolworths South Africa (one of the country's oldest retailers), David Jones and the Country Road group, which includes Australian fashion brands Country Road, Witchery, Mimco and Trenery, with menswear brand Politix arriving on shelves soon.

The hands-on nature of Moir's work means that, although he lives in Cape Town, he travels regularly to the David Jones headquarters in Sydney and Country Road's base in Melbourne (where his family also lives). "I do Cape Town to Sydney regularly so there is a lot of flying but I've been doing it for years now and it's something you adapt to," he says.

Before Moir was handpicked for the Woolworths job in 2010 he had been CEO of Country Road for 12 years. He admits it's been a challenge adapting to the South African market. "It is politically and economically more difficult and as a business you need to be involved in the transformation that is happening in the country," he says.

Since 2010 Moir has implemented a successful strategy of introducing Country Road brands to South Africa and South African brands to David Jones. He has also started a new label that is sold in both countries, trading on the advantages of shared seasonality. "If you look at the bestsellers, a winner in South Africa tends to be a winner in Australia. So there are more customer similarities than you might think."

In one respect his new role is more manageable than his previous one. "I've had the misfortune to try to run two hemispheres before at Country Road [with operations in the US and Australia] and you need very deep pockets and even then it's not easy," he says. "Even the big guys such as Zara find it a challenge: Zara was in Brazil for 15 years before it went anywhere else in the southern hemisphere."

Now, however, Zara, H&M and their ilk are aggressively expanding and posing a new set of challenges for Woolworths. He is prepared to meet them head on though. "Unless you can compete with these brands on fashion, lead time and price you are not going to survive."

Moir intends to not only survive but to thrive. His aim is for the Woolworths Group to be the leading retailer in the southern hemisphere. His plans include more shops across sub-Saharan Africa, more David Jones department stores across Australia and the consolidation of the New Zealand market following the opening of the first David Jones in Wellington in July. More selected takeovers are also on the cards. "We'll continue to acquire more businesses but we're always careful to acquire something with similar values and culture so that it doesn't eat the other brands for breakfast."

Achieving scale is, for Moir, essential for the survival of the business. "There is going to be major structural change in the retail world due to the digital tsunami we're experiencing. If you don't integrate physical and digital, there is no future for you," he says. "And the best way to integrate is with scale because it allows you to invest in the best infrastructure, the best interfaces for systems as well as the best online offering and the greatest physical stores."

Adapting to new technology is another essential ingredient. By the end of the year Moir will introduce systems that will trigger customers' smartphones when they walk into a shop, suggesting offers based on their shopping history. The future is also about food. Moir speaks with enthusiasm about the New York outpost of the Italian brand Eataly, which is less a shop and more a dynamic space filled with cooking classes, wine nights, book launches and specialist food presentations. Regular visitors to David Jones can expect a similar concept to be rolled out soon.

Listening to Moir speak about global shopping trends and how technology is changing the business, it's clear he's a truly passionate retailer. "I still walk into the Country Road headquarters and get a buzz every morning," he says. "And I still walk into our Woolies shops every day and love them." — GKS

PHOTOGRAPHERS: JARED SOARES, MICHAEL FRIBERG

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Jackie Biskupski
Mayor, Salt Lake City

On being an outlier in conservative Utah

Salt Lake City is the headquarters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the capital of conservative Utah. Yet it is also the place that set a vacationing university graduate named Jackie Biskupski on the path to coming out of the closet – and some 25 years later being voted in as the city's mayor.

As Biskupski says from the city-hall office she moved into in January, Salt Lake's stodgy reputation is undeserved. "I always joke about how busy the gay bars are here during General Conference," she says, referring to the semi-annual Mormon gathering. In another sign of the city's progressive leanings, it recently renamed a street after gay-rights activist Harvey Milk; one of the road signs is propped up in Biskupski's reception.

Once a private investigator, Biskupski, 50, entered the Utah legislature in 1998. As mayor her priorities include dealing with air pollution, homelessness and climate change. She's already banking on a second term. "Ten years ago I knew I wanted to do this," Biskupski says. "The mayor's office was the last stop on my list. And it was just waiting for the right time."

Q&A

You were born in Minnesota. How did you find yourself here?
I came to Salt Lake City after I graduated from college just to ski, and that's when I realised that I was not in long-lasting relationships with men for a very good reason. I met a woman and we ended up getting involved. I think she knew I was a lesbian but I didn't. And then you have that first kiss and you're like, "Oh God, no wonder I don't like guys. OK, now I get it."

Your political success in a place like Utah is heartening.
Salt Lake City is a very blue dot in the middle of a red state. Our city is very good about electing openly gay people so for me to run for mayor was not an issue. We did a poll before I decided to run and it showed there was a segment of the population who would not vote for me simply because I was a single mum and I was a woman. It wasn't about being gay at all. So during the race we just led on that: being proud of being a mother.

What kind of interaction do you have with the LDS church?
I think they were very nervous about working with me in the beginning but I think what they have realised is that I'm not interested in attacking them for their beliefs. I certainly don't want them to attack me for mine. And we have been working on economic-development ideas together; we've been working on cleaning up an old landfill. They have their Days of '47 parade every year and there's my wife and me sitting in our car in the parade and participating. Does that create conversation? I'm sure it does.

Last year it was suggested that Salt Lake City had solved homelessness thanks to a housing-first approach. Can you expand on this?
We figured out a way to help a segment of the homeless population – the chronic homeless – but only one segment. It's just 11 per cent. There were a lot of people who came to see me this year because of that story and I'm like, "Oh, we have a long way to go."

How is climate change impacting the city?
Our snowfall is our water resource. Every year the snowpack is melting sooner and quicker and because of that we have droughts. Global warming is having a significant impact on our community and it is imperative that city government plays a role in addressing it. One of the things we did as a city this year was work with Rocky Mountain Power, creating a path for our entire city to be run by renewable energy by 2032.

The metropolitan region that includes Salt Lake City, known as the Wasatch Front, is sprawling. Do you consider this a problem?
Part of the issue of sprawl is that our population doubles every day as people commute in for work. And so sprawl in and of itself has contributed to poor air quality. We created Trax [light rail] lines during the Winter Olympic era to try to get people out of their cars. And people do use it but not at a level that mirrors the number of people coming and going from the city. Last year there was a ballot measure that would have created a tax increase for transport; those dollars would have been used for Trax line and bus-line development. And the county voters voted it down. We have a lot of work to do to get that back on the ballot and help voters understand why it is so important.

Do you have aspirations beyond Salt Lake City?
I see retirement in eight years, that's what I see. I want a real opportunity to spend time with my family.

Speaking of your family, you got married in August.
We got married up in a canyon here and it was spectacular. There was a waterfall in the background. We were uniting two families – I now have two sons and a lovely wife. — AG

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Marty Baron
Editor, 'The Washington Post'

On shepherding his newspaper into a new era

Marty Baron is a firm believer in the high altar of journalism, the kind that shuns click bait and saccharine stories about fluffy animals. Although the executive editor of *The Washington Post* doesn't give away too much during interviews, one can sense that palpable notion of journalism in its purest form – as a societal pillar – coursing through his veins as he speaks in considered sentences. "Holding powerful individuals and institutions accountable is, I'd say, the highest purpose of journalism," he says, leaning back in an office chair at the paper's downtown headquarters.

Grey-haired, with a stubbly beard and his shirtsleeves rolled up, Baron is every inch the newspaper man. And the 62-year-old's illustrious career – 40 years in newspapers and 17 as a top editor – reflects it. During that time he has worked for all the major "legacy newspapers", as he calls them, starting at *The Miami Herald* in his native Florida, before migrating to the *Los Angeles Time*s, *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe* and finally the *Post*, which he has stewarded since the beginning of 2013. Highly respected within the industry, he has earnt display cases' worth of Pulitzer prizes, from helping oversee the Spotlight investigative team's uncovering of sexual abuse at the heart of the Catholic church in Boston at the start of the millennium – made into an Oscar-winning film – to the *Post*'s decision to run with Barton Gellman's National Security Agency story thanks to files supplied by a certain Edward Snowden.

Yet despite being a decorated alumnus of traditional journalism – and its one-time torchbearer – Baron is also, by his own account, something of an anomaly. "I seem to be an odd creature in the sense that how is it possible that someone who was so steeped in traditional newspaper journalism could be leading an organisation that has made such tremendous digital progress?" That digital leap traces its roots back to an October day in 2013 when Jeff Bezos – consumer mogul and Amazon billionaire – announced that he would be buying the newspaper for $250m (€228m). It was a watershed moment, bringing down the hammer on 80 years of family ownership by the Graham clan.

Bezos has undoubtedly ushered in a new era at the *Post* – a heritage publication but one that had been in steady decline – and has pushed the editorial floor to exploit the intersection between technology and journalism, while buffing up the paper's online presence. Under his ownership the newsroom has added about 140 staff, many of them "engineers" working alongside traditional journalists, which has resulted in a sharp uptick in web traffic.

While Bezos's arrival may not have been a Damascene moment for Baron, he recognises that he is in "the reality business" and that change was inevitable. Not that he's sure what the precise future model for running a news organisation might be. "Is it unsettling?" he asks. "Sure. It would be great if there were all sorts of certainty in our business and it was in many ways like it used to be. But that world no longer exists."

Having a backer such as Bezos sitting atop an organisation does come with its advantages nonetheless and, while his pockets may not be bottomless, they're certainly deep. His endowment has given the *Post* the luxury of having what Bezos calls a "runway" to take risks and be experimental – and arguably more so than its rivals.

Baron explains that Bezos isn't a "personal charity" and the ultimate goal is to figure out how to make the newspaper "sustainable". Yet while Bezos is certainly exigent, the *Post*'s executive editor is insistent that the new owner stays out of news. "I've never had a story idea from him," he says. "He doesn't insert himself into the day-to-day journalism." Rather, he's there to offer ideas on tactics and strategy, regularly speaking with senior executives and hosting planning sessions from his Seattle base a couple of times a year.

While *The Washington Post* may be striding out in bold new directions, Baron isn't ready to torch the fundaments of traditional journalism just yet. He is still firmly wedded to the need for investigative reporting. The *Post* is steeped in the tradition thanks to Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein and their exposure of the Watergate scandal.

Baron calls probing reports "absolutely core to our mission", something that was reinforced during the recent presidential campaign. Indeed he doesn't buy into the notion that the press failed to investigate Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton – and least of all the *Post*. He cites Trump's decision to revoke the paper's press credentials at one point as proof that it was ruffling feathers – or at least that yellow mat of hair. "It's not that we didn't take Trump seriously," he says. "I think that we failed as a profession to detect the depth of grievance in society that led to Donald Trump in the first place."

Wary but accepting of the ever-faster speed of the daily news cycle, Baron sees no reason why quality control should be sacrificed, even if it's sometimes the undesired result of feeding the online breaking-news beast. But he appears almost wounded talking about the vitriol unfurled against the media – unwarranted in his opinion – during the most populist moments of the election and the "you're either with us or you're with the terrorists" attitudes seeping into a polarised US society.

Almost as serious as his portrayal in *Spotlight* – making him tip back his head and laugh at one point during the interview feels like a major victory – Baron seems most at ease when he's in an unassuming role, sticking to script and avoiding the first person. He looks visibly uncomfortable when asked about what makes him a top editor and calls the resulting interest in him following the film's success "awkward". But good did come out of it, he confesses. "It has inspired a lot of young people to go into journalism, which I think is fantastic." Now they too can get on with the job in hand: holding those powerful individuals and institutions to account. — EJS

PHOTOGRAPHER: KATE WARREN

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Kadhja Bonet
Musician, California

On creating an ethereal LP that's out of this world

You'll be listening to Kadhja Bonet this time next year – and the year after, and the year after that – because she sounds like someone who fell to Earth from heaven. Perhaps as she cruised through the clouds, on realising she'd left her return too late she thought, "Well, now I'm here I guess I might as well *act* like an angel." You can't quite put a finger on her and her voice and her vibe; perhaps she's a butterfly happily flying faster than the critical net.

We endlessly replay the songs that we love when we first hear them; it's new love and we don't get them yet and we won't want to. We love them because we try to solve them like a puzzle. We're always twisting the axes of that Rubik's cube, trying to get all the squares to match. This sort of twisting, turning, puzzling, multi-dimensional view might appeal to Bonet.

We start by asking what state of mind she is in, as she's just flown from Los Angeles to New York and back again in a couple of hot-cold, cold-hot days. "Am I only supposed to have one state of mind?" she asks. "I don't think that's possible, even in a moment. Thoughts are running along like a current. Feelings and expectations change on a whim. Nothing is constant – and least of all my state of mind."

It seems that 2016 wanted to leave it until the end of October to offer up its best record: Bonet's debut LP *The Visitor*. A perfect eight-track half hour of not-quite pop music. It's soul of a sort that feels connected to the essence of someone or something, rather than just naming a genre; it's R'n'B that knows what those two letters stood and stand for. It's jazz that probably doesn't care for the name but sure knows how to listen and how to dance. *The Visitor* is mysterious; that critical net keeps snagging on the brambles and the blooms on the patch of California where Bonet made landfall and *she* invites a little mystery too. Or disinvites familiarity. Is mystery important, attractive? "I am not a novelist trying to entice my readers onto the next page so mystery is much more self-serving," she says. "It's important for me to retain my identity without fixing it in time so I am always free to evolve and be myself."

Bonet's early years were spent in Richmond, California, and the view from the bedroom window of her childhood home was "layered with particles and fingerprints, paint peeling from the perimeter". *The Visitor* invites you to study it up close, like a child absorbed in a backyard project; listening to echoes of... what, exactly? Between vine leaves run telephone wires and glimpses of broken shingles, a concrete spiral staircase and endless foliage. OK, but what about music? "My father belted *La Traviata* from the kitchen," says Bonet.

What else? She played half the notes on this album of tight horns, effortless percussion, a flute – that butterfly again – and that *voice*, herself. A prodigy, that's what we heard. "Learning instruments is always easier as a child than as an adult, like languages," she says. "I put in hours and hours, sometimes by choice, sometimes by something more akin to force." And then? "When I was five I became so enraged with my instrument I threw it across the room and it fell apart in several pieces." Was a new one presented from stage left in this little drama? "To my dismay it was easily reassembled and adhered and as soon as it dried I was back to practising." No quitting? "It was as hard for me to focus then as it is now but gratification comes with the completion of tasks and nothing short of it."

If this sounds like a note of austerity, of cold musical Calvinism rather than warm, scented Catholicism, there's none of this on *The Visitor*. The LP is a lesson in how inspiration has to meet skill, guile and craft – and those hours and hours – at least halfway.

The Visitor could have been called *The Vision*, such is its singularity, its clarity and its perfection – like pure-driven snow. Did Bonet know what it was going to sound like before she played a note? "My vision was crystal and still is. The funny thing is the execution of the vision is never exact; it's more like it runs parallel to the original intention, never quite touching it but never straying away."

But there are no waifs or strays on this concise, beautiful record; just notes, space and wonder. What did she think about when she flew back to Los Angeles, looking out at the clouds? "Serendipities – and how best to listen to them." And we're all visitors, right? "Yes," she says. "But we will visit again." — RB

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