

Hot this month *Pioncertown, Stranger Things, Alain Ducasse, pie vs. cake*

American Airlines

American Way

OCTOBER 2017

**"YOU
ALWAYS
WANT
MORE"**

TODAY SHOW'S
JEFF ROSSEN
ON HIS BATTLE
WITH ICE CREAM



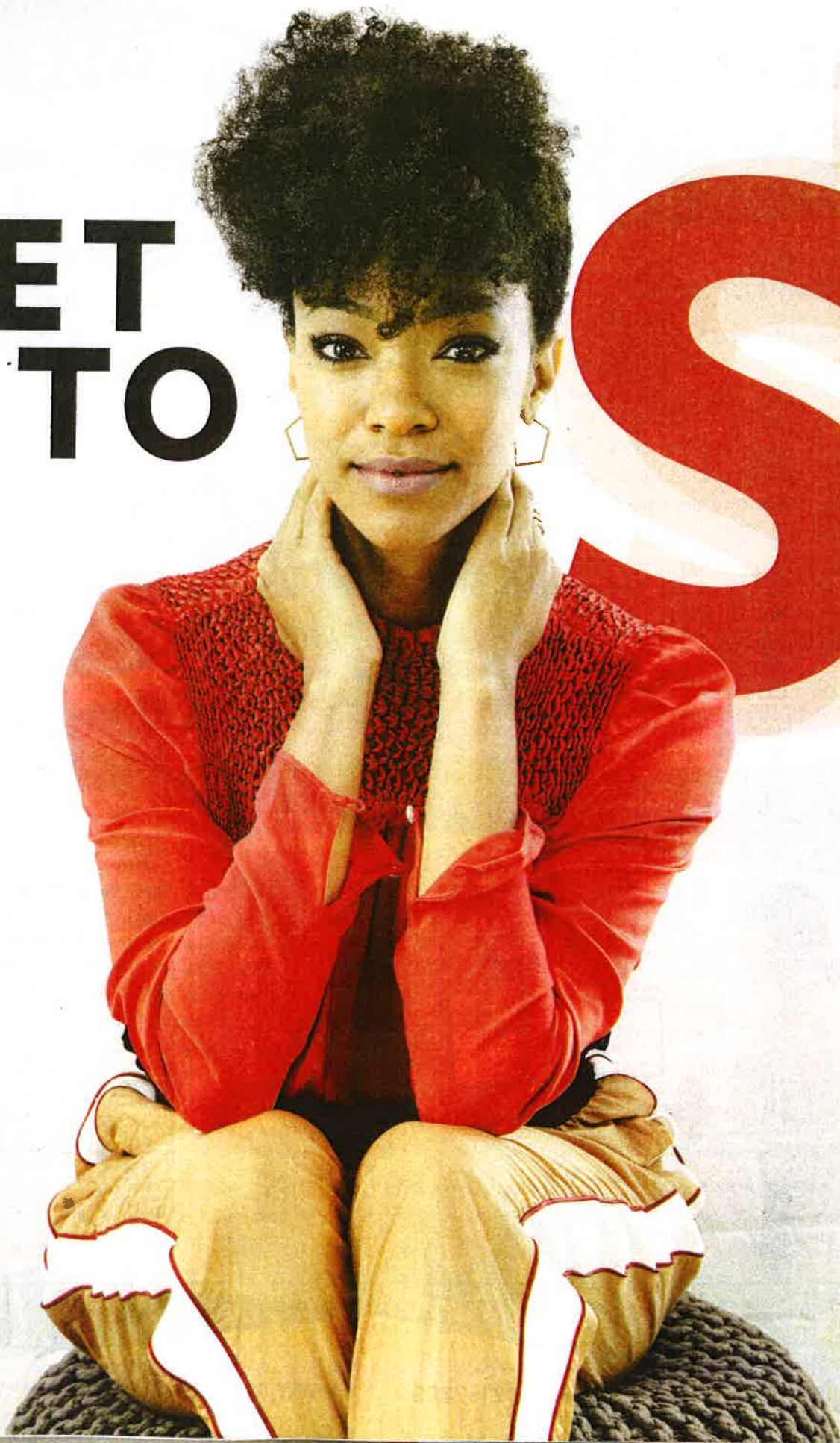
HOW HARRY
POTTER
ENCHANTED
THE WORLD
**GLASGOW'S
GRUB
GROWS UP**
MEET BLADE
RUNNER'S
LEADING LADY
**FISHTOWN:
PHILLY'S
OFF-THE-
HOOK HOOD**

TO
BOLDLY GO

Sonequa Martin-Green takes command of the new Star Trek

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SWAPPING
ZOMBIES FOR
KLINGONS,
SONEQUA
MARTIN-GREEN
WARPS FROM
*THE WALKING
DEAD* TO THE
BRIDGE OF
*STAR TREK:
DISCOVERY*

Words **PHOEBE REILLY**
Photography **AMANDA FRIEDMAN**

EITHER SONEQUA MARTIN-GREEN IS AN EASY laugh or she's giddy from exhaustion. At breakfast, the star of *Star Trek: Discovery*, which began streaming in September on CBS' All Access service, was so overjoyed when her açai bowl arrived that you would have thought the waitress brought her one of Oprah's Favorite Things instead of granola and fruit. "I'm very dramatic," she explains, before bursting into a fit of teary laughter when I refer to the bowl's giant blackberry as a prickly little bugger. "I'm sorry," she says, eventually composing herself. "I'm easily amused."

Dressed in a black mesh top and high-waisted shorts, her hair in an elegant French twist, and sporting a small leather backpack, the 32-year-old Martin-Green looks stunning on this sunny Hollywood rooftop, worlds away from her intergalactic new role. She's the first black woman to ever lead a *Star Trek* series, and has quickly become Trekkie royalty, a role that leaves very little time for leisure: She hops a plane back to Toronto tonight, and tomorrow continues filming the 15-episode season, which has been underway since January. "It's a long, arduous process," she says cheerfully.

Yet she nearly missed the opportunity. Last year, her commitment to AMC's *The Walking Dead* overlapped with production on *Star Trek* by one week, nearly costing her the starring role. Fortunately, a delay in the latter's air date (from May to September) meant that her tenacious *Walking Dead* character, Sasha, could make a heroic exit just in time to allow Martin-Green the opportunity to join what she calls "a gigantic endeavor."

She isn't exaggerating. *Discovery* marks the franchise's first return to TV since the prequel *Enterprise* ended in 2005; expectations are stratospheric. Each episode reportedly costs upwards of \$7 million, and casting for Number One, as Martin-Green's character was first known in the press, took most of 2016. In fact, its popularity is critical to the success of CBS' nascent streaming platform. She is predictably circumspect when discussing this. "The temptation is to buckle under pressure," she says diplomatically, using her arms to feign paralysis. "But maintaining an attitude of gratitude really helps me concentrate."

The new show takes place a decade prior to the events of *Star Trek: The Original Series*, which premiered in 1966, and is separate from the current film franchise starring Chris Pine. As First Officer Michael



Burnham, Martin-Green is the first protagonist in *Star Trek* history who isn't a Starfleet captain. "I liken it to *Downton Abbey*," she says of the prospective shift. "That sort of upstairs-downstairs thing is being explored here. You get to see the quarters of the ship. You get to see my aspirational journey. It's a layer of the story that we haven't seen before."

But, thus far, much of the focus has been on the diversity of the cast, which includes Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) and *Rent*'s Anthony Rapp as the series' first openly gay character. The topic is fraught, mainly because it remains so noteworthy in 2017. "In the future, it's this utopia we dream of, where these issues are no longer part of the conversation," says Martin-Green, who speaks with a mix of poise and urgency befitting her theater background. "But I wouldn't dare get tired of

Above: Dress: **ETRO**;
choker: **CZ** by
Kenneth Jay Lane



“MAINTAINING
AN ATTITUDE
OF GRATITUDE
HELPS ME
CONCENTRATE.”

CROSSROADS

A look at
other careers
Martin-Green
considered

Computer Programmer

“When I was 9, we first got a desktop, and I would be on it all day. I learned how to type 90 words a minute—I thought, Well, I need to be a computer programmer. It wasn’t until I was 15 that I said, ‘What in the world is a computer programmer?’”

Psychologist

“I’m just so fascinated with the way humans interact with each other. Like, what led you to this moment? Why do you think the way that you do? I spent an amazing amount of time pondering and thinking and meditating and imagining the workings of the human mind.”

Movie Star

“Theater is my home, but it was film that I was dreaming of. *Toe to Toe* was my very first film. It was the beginning of everything for me. But I did some TV right after my first film, and it just kept going. Then, *The Walking Dead* came and that was that.”

talking about it. It’s so important and necessary in a time such as this.”

Burnham’s backstory is particularly pivotal: Raised by Spock’s dad, Sarek (James Frain), she is the first human to attend a Vulcan Learning Center, with its emphasis on logic and emotional suppression. There’s little else she can say in terms of plot, and as if on cue, our friendly waitress interrupts to see if we need anything. Martin-Green turns to her. “You’re an actor, aren’t you?” Martin-Green asks, and receives a yes. “I feel you.”

It wasn’t too long ago that Martin-Green, who did stints on Fox’s *New Girl* and ABC’s *Once Upon a Time*, was similarly aspiring. Growing up with her seamstress mom, retired dad and older sister in Russellville, Alabama, she wasn’t exposed to a ton of pop culture. “Churches, family, soul food, tractors, trailers, cows,” she says, taking a sip of her latte, which

has arrived with a heart in the foam. If anything, her household preferred action movies: “I missed out on a lot of the classics because we were too busy watching Jean-Claude Van Damme do splits, Steven Seagal break arms and Chuck Norris do roundhouse kicks.” But it was during a high school rehearsal for Christopher Durang’s play *Identity Crisis* that she realized “this is what I’m supposed to do with my life.”

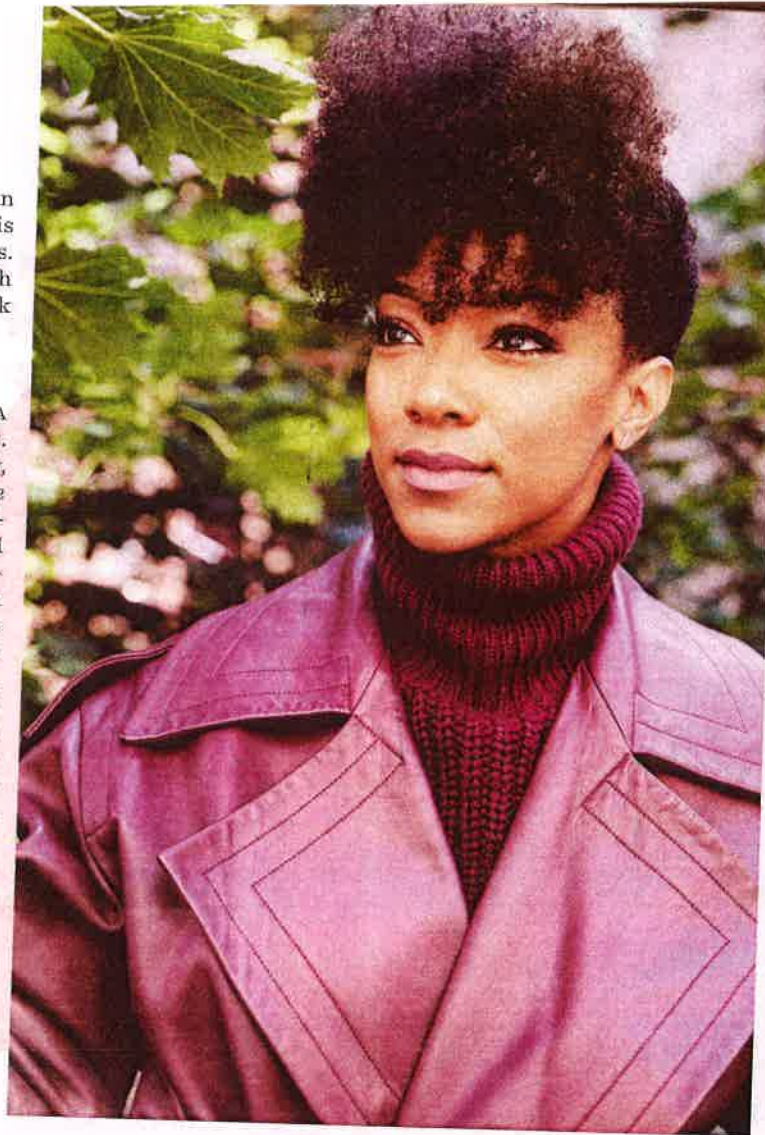
Martin-Green studied theater at the University of Alabama, and would have moved to Los Angeles after graduating in 2007 if not for her mentor, Seth Panitch. “At that time, African-American roles for women were few and far between,” says Panitch, the head of the university’s acting programs, via phone. “I asked her, ‘What roles do you see yourself reflected in right now?’ And she said, ‘None.’” Martin-Green was one of Panitch’s >

prized students; he cast her as Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*. ("The death of Mercutio is the fulcrum of the whole play," he explains. "She's also gorgeous with a sword.") Panitch instead encouraged her to move to New York to pursue theater.

MARTIN-GREEN TOOK HIS ADVICE, DOING A few off-Broadway plays and workshops. Soon, small TV roles started coming her way, including a recurring guest spot on CBS' *The Good Wife*. But then she was dealt a devastating blow: In 2010, her mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. The actress had just married fellow actor Kenric Green and was fresh from her first film, *Toe to Toe*, in which she delivered a rousing performance as a driven lacrosse player from a disadvantaged background. "It was a rough time for my family," she says. "I was in this exhilarating moment of my life. It was hard to get back to her—my older sister took the brunt of the care." She looks up to keep from crying. "I felt a tremendous amount of guilt."

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, but for Martin-Green, the disease is never far from her mind. Not only is her mom a three-time survivor—she battled colon and, more recently, stomach cancer—but also, she says, "It runs rampant in my family." Several grandaunts died from it, and her half-sister is in remission. She shakes her head, thinking. "I wish that I had been more engaged and more active in my mom's journey at the time," she says. "What I realized is when a family member is going through this, it doesn't mean that your life stops. But you have to put the puzzle pieces together in such a way that they remain the major puzzle piece."

She has avoided genetic testing for the moment. However, she recently endeavored to change her lifestyle. For instance, the açai bowl. She snapped a photo of it and hurried to add: "I am not the person who posts about



my food. I am literally just going to send this to my husband. We're newly vegan and need breakfast ideas." She's hyper-conscious of sounding preachy but, she says, "I'm learning that there's a very vital link between food and disease."







If Martin-Green's career meant that she was absent for some of her mother's illness, then she made certain it was not in vain. In 2012, with the indie *Yelling to the Sky* under >

Above: Trench: Michael Kors Collection; cashmere-mohair turtleneck: Michael Kors Collection; earrings: Bonheur Jewelry

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES DIMARCO / 2017 CBS INTERACTIVE, ALAMY (3)

WHO'S ON FIRST?

From *Enterprise* to *Voyager*, a timeline of *Trek's* first officers

					
2151 T'Pol (Jolene Blalock) <i>Enterprise</i>	2255 Michael Burnham (Sonequa Martin-Green) <i>Discovery</i>	2266 Spock (Leonard Nimoy) <i>The Original Series</i>	2364 William T. Riker (Jonathan Frakes) <i>The Next Generation</i>	2369 Kira Nerys (Kira Nerys) <i>Deep Space Nine</i>	2371 Chakotay (Robert Beltran) <i>Voyager</i>

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her belt, she moved to L.A. after auditioning for the part of Michonne on *The Walking Dead*. Though she lost out to Danai Gurira, she impressed then-showrunner Glenn Mazzara enough that he cast her as a series regular in season three. Her flinty survivor, Sasha, isn't in Robert Kirkman's comic, on which the show is based, but she evolved into a central player, and her stint on the series coincided with its highest ratings, at times even beating out Sunday night NFL games and the Olympics.

Sasha took her final bow in last April's season seven finale, turning herself into a zombie to attack a sadistic enemy. After five seasons of rehearsing fight scenes and doing dozens of takes in the hot, buggy backwoods of Georgia, Martin-Green says, "I had such preparation [for *Discovery*]. It was a hard show to do, and that just builds your character and your stamina and your perseverance." Not only was she equipped for the long hours on sometimes equally woodsy sets in Toronto, burdened by weaponry (a phaser, in this case), but in fellow *Walking Dead* star Andrew Lincoln she saw "a stellar example of a leader." He built

relationships with the entire cast, something she wants to do as the de facto matriarch of her *Star Trek* family.

In interviews, Martin-Green is deferential to co-star Yeoh, whom she admires as both her fictional captain and real-life inspiration. "She's been doing her own stunts for years," she says of the action-film vet. Panitch testifies to Martin-Green's ensemble spirit: "Sonequa is somebody who understands very well that acting is not a zero-sum game. She's not in competition with anyone else. She's in competition with herself."

Predictably, with a series of this magnitude, there have been setbacks. *Discovery's* original showrunner, Bryan Fuller (*Hannibal*, *Deep Space Nine*), stepped down last October, but not before settling on Martin-Green to play Burnham, fulfilling his years-long dream of seeing a woman of color at the helm of a *Star Trek* series. "I was disappointed, because I had such a great connection with him," says Martin-Green. "But all parties involved were content with the decision." With a passionate fan base spanning several generations, she has had her share of skeptics. "We've >

Above: Sweater:
Versace; skirt:
Versace; shoes:
3.1 Phillip Lim;
jewelry: Bonheur
Jewelry

gotten a lot of negative responses so far," says Martin-Green. "A lot of people are concerned that it's not going to pay homage to what has come before. They're thinking it's just going to be space battles. What they don't know yet, and what I'm so excited for them to see, is that it is a deeply emotional story. It is more emotional than anything."

Martin-Green didn't watch *Star Trek* growing up, and is too young to remember TV's first interracial kiss in 1968, between William Shatner's Captain Kirk and Nichelle Nichols' Lieutenant Uhura, but she recalls having an ambient awareness of *The Next Generation* and the series' overall legacy. "*Star Trek* has always showcased diversity," she says. "It's always been about acceptance." Still, for any bigot with a Twitter account, like the ones who lost their collective mind over last year's all-female *Ghostbusters* reboot, there have been virulent objections to the perceived lack of white stars. "Everyone certainly has the right to speak, but

"STAR TREK HAS ALWAYS SHOWCASED DIVERSITY. IT'S ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT ACCEPTANCE."

does everyone have the right to speak hate?" asks Martin-Green. She adds, "If a human is feeling hate, they're still a beautiful human who has been perverted and broken, disillusioned and deceived. No one actively hurts someone else unless they are hurting."

In part, she chalks up her charitable attitude to becoming a mother; her son is two. "I see each and every person as someone's child," she says. Her eyes once again water. "It's really powerful." She apologizes to the waitress, who has arrived with the check. "Sorry, we're talking about motherhood," she says, extending her fist. "Pound it."

Obviously, Martin-Green doesn't share her character's Vulcan-ish worldview. Her emotions are always within reach. But she does appreciate the regard for logic. For instance, when it looked like the part of Burnham was going to slip away from her, she was remarkably at peace. "Whatever is going to happen is what's supposed to happen," she recalls thinking. Her philosophy? "When a door is closing, another is usually opening, and I am excited for whatever is around the corner."

For the foreseeable future, it's *Discovery*. As for what's next for Martin-Green, perhaps the mentor who, a decade ago, gave her such indispensable advice knows best. "I hope she gets an opportunity to play herself without being chased by a zombie or a Klingon," says Panitch. "I'd love to see her deeply explore a character in a Woody Allen movie or a Martin Scorsese movie, where the boundaries are the boundaries of our dimensions." He adds: "The mainstream is finally ready for her." **AW**

Below and opening spread: Blouse: 3.1 Phillip Lim; pants: 3.1 Phillip Lim; earrings and ring: Bonheur Jewelry

Stylist: Anna Katsanis
Hair: Giselle Modeste
Makeup: Janice Kinjo

