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P. 18

## THE REBIRTH OF SAM ANDERSON

Years of hard living left this bartender lost and unfit. Then he put on an old pair of running shoes.

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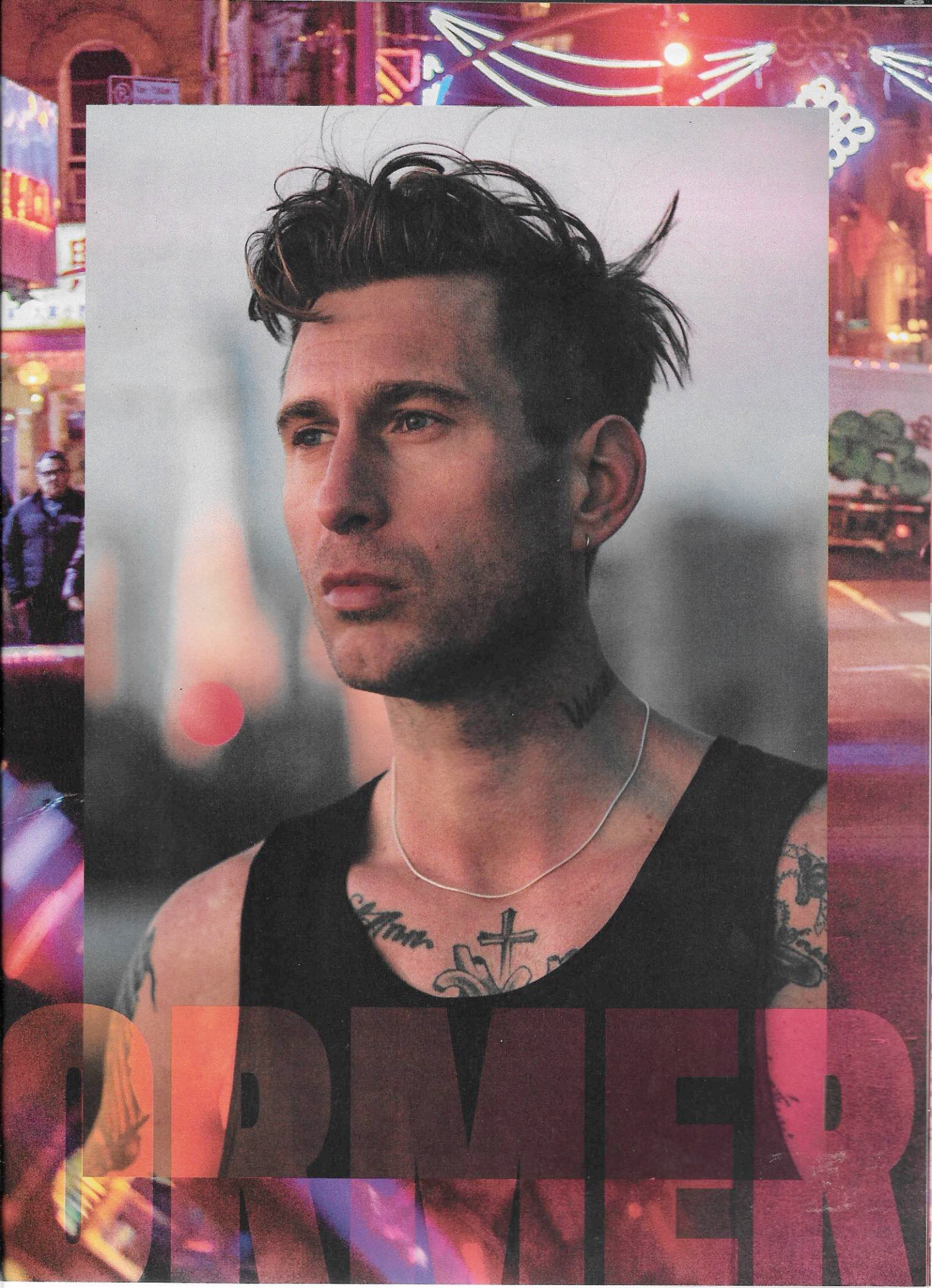


BY CHRISTOPHER ROSS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
PARKER FEIERBACH

**SAM ANDERSON WAS A STEREOTYPE—A TATTOOED AND SURLY NEW YORK CITY BARTENDER WHO PARTIED AS HARD AS HE WORKED. THEN ONE SHORT, HARD RUN BROKE THE MOLD, CHANGING HIS LIFE, AND THE LIVES OF A CASCADE OF INDUSTRY FRIENDS HE TURNED ON TO THE SPORT.**






# DRIVER









# IT WAS MIDAFTERNOON ON A THURSDAY IN 2010 AND SAM ANDERSON WAS WAKING UP TO A FAMILIAR SENSATION: A PUNISHING HANGOVER.

He'd been bartending at the Goldbar in Manhattan until 6 a.m. the night previous, a shift that included throwing back some 10 shots of tequila and mezcal, smoking nearly a pack of cigarettes, and capping it all with a few beers to wind down. He'd fallen asleep drunk as the sun rose. At least on this day, the warm summer sun was still high in the sky; with Anderson's schedule, it wasn't uncommon for him to get out of bed after dark.

The chain of on-the-job hangovers was beginning to feel *Groundhog Day*-esque, fading into one, long, deepening hangover. That particular afternoon, though, something struck Anderson: a desperate desire to escape, to exert some modicum of control, and maybe, a little, to intensify the pain. He decided to go for a run. Surprising himself as much as his artist roommates, he pulled on shorts, a T-shirt, shoes, headed out the door of his East Williamsburg apartment in Brooklyn, and began to jog.

In the stifling New York City heat, his head throbbed and his heart felt like it might explode. Throughout the first

mile, he gasped for air. He managed to get halfway across the Williamsburg Bridge and then turned around, in too much pain to enjoy the view or any pretense of accomplishment. The interlude might have seemed like a futile exercise in suffering, save for the moment he stepped into the shower at home. As the water ran over him, Anderson experienced a sudden rush—the quintessential runner's high—and one to rival the kind he usually got from booze and drugs. The feeling was a visceral sense of release.

**T**oday, Anderson rolls out of bed around 5 a.m. on a chilly December morning and heads to Brooklyn's Prospect Park for a 6:30 a.m. workout. The 36-year-old will join Black Roses NYC, a local competitive running crew, for a couple fartlek loops, hitting a sub-six-minute-mile pace on the faster intervals. Prospect Park is a beacon for the early-rising runners of the borough, and Anderson's morning excursion isn't all that remarkable, save for the fact that he still belongs to a tribe far better known for getting home, rather than getting up, at the crack of dawn.

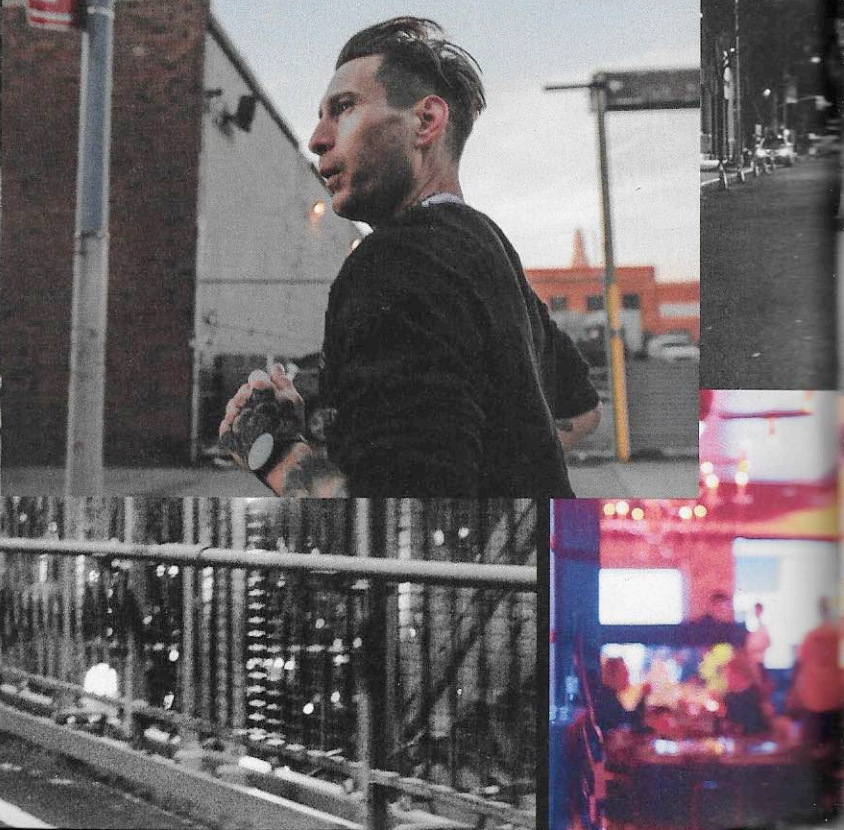
He's working now on the Lower East Side, a haunt tucked away beneath a red-pink awning—Chef Danny Bowien's acclaimed Mission Chinese Food restaurant. There, as beverage director, Anderson curates natural wines and devises innovative cocktails to match the plates of koji fried chicken, salt cod fried rice, and dan dan noodles that crowd each table. It's a job that caps his decade-long career of slinging drinks at some of the best bars in the city that never sleeps. When he's not pouring a glass of biodynamic Burgundy tableside, you'll likely find him running, and doing so with a radical passion and spiritual intensity that has helped inspire a minor sea change in the lifestyle habits of New York City's service industry.

The journey to here started with that wheezing trot to the Williamsburg Bridge and is one that continues to push him to search for the next level today. Standing in Prospect Park and cutting a tall and wiry silhouette aside the 3.36-mile park

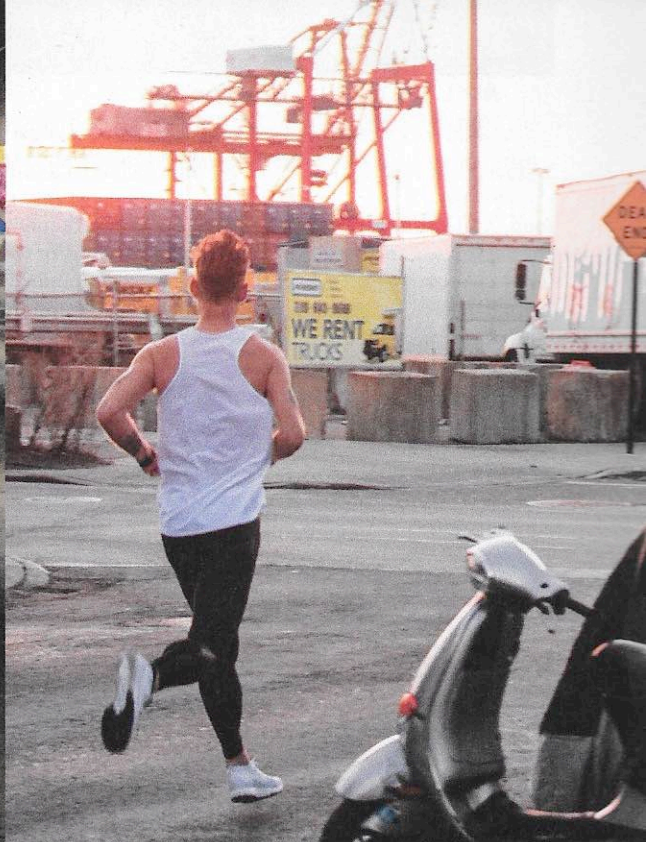
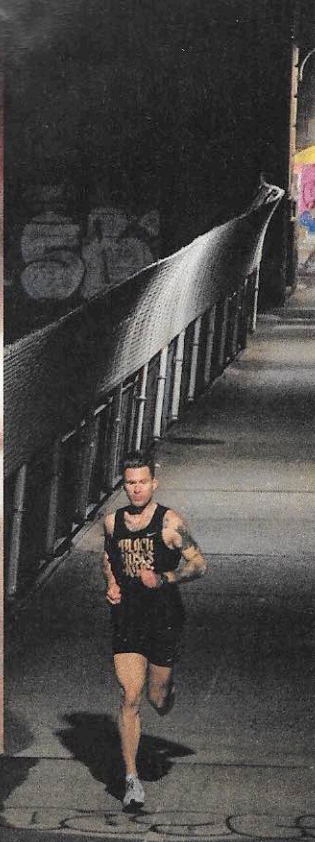
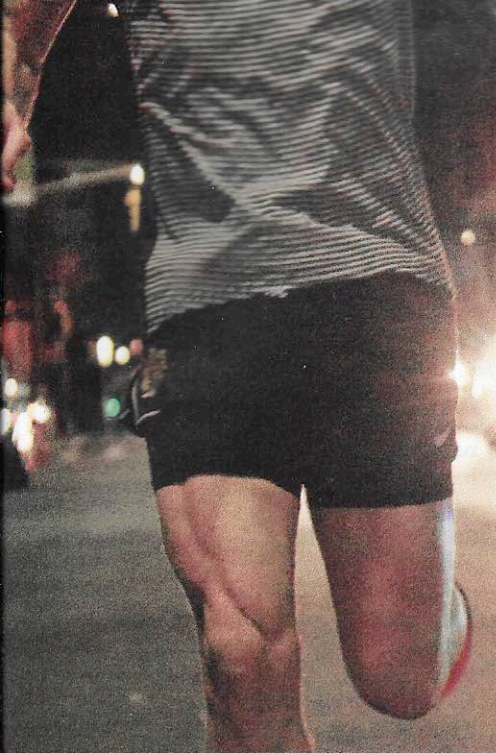




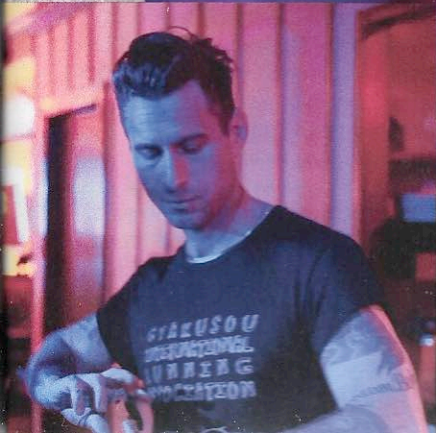
**EVERYTHING THEN WAS MEASURED  
BETWEEN EACH BOTTLE OF BOOZE  
GIFTS FROM RUNNING IS I DON'T FEEL**







**BY TIME BETWEEN EACH CIGARETTE,  
OR LINE OF COKE. ONE OF THE  
THOSE CONSTRAINTS ANYMORE.**





loop, Anderson catches his breath from the fartleks, and smiles, "It feels really good to be reeling off workouts like that in mid-December." After he gets his wind back, he lopes twice around the misty, tree-lined path for a cooldown, making for 19 miles altogether that morning. The mileage is standard for Anderson these days. Last November, in the New York City Marathon, he set a new PR of 3:04, an impressive achievement for a cube-dweller, let alone someone who regularly puts an 11-hour workday on his feet.

Even four years into this commitment to running, acquaintances and friends sometimes have difficulty squaring the ultrafit, locked-in Sam with the darker, wilder Sam they knew eight or nine years ago. Old Sam was a paragon of the bar world's excesses: a chain-smoking, alcohol-swilling, coke-sniffing whirling dervish. "There was a reckless, punk-rock attitude to him," says Austin Hartman, 30, who bartended with Anderson at the Williamsburg hot-spot Hotel Delmano in Brooklyn. "It wasn't carefree; it was self-destructive." Anderson readily acknowledges the charge. "I was known for a really nasty attitude and being about black leather, cigarettes, sneering," he says. "That's what happens when you're hung over every day for 12 years."

**S**am Anderson was born in Fullerton, California, in what he describes as a fundamentalist Christian cult. His parents, ex-hippies, subscribed to a harshly apocalyptic worldview in which the Antichrist might arrive any day to savage the Earth. "We were taught that the end of the world was just around the corner," he says. "They raised us to believe that we would not live long." With their parents, Anderson and his siblings—Paul, now 34; Tim, 29; and Celeste, 25—moved constantly, never putting down roots. Trips to the doctor or dentist were

infrequent. What was the point of planning for the future if deliverance was soon at hand?

A lonely, mostly friendless teenager with his nose in the pages of Rainer Maria Rilke poetry, Anderson rejected his parents' doomsday outlook and, around age 13, began going for long runs in the middle of the night. "It was a way to get free of the influence of my parents—I could go and have 45 minutes to myself," he says. "I remember having a lot of insight into who I was and the convictions I had." Among those convictions were that his parents' end-times prophecies were wrong, that his own values did not align with theirs.

At 16, Anderson ran away from home to live with friends of his parents, then leapfrogged to move in with his own friends in Lincoln, Nebraska. By 18, he was supporting himself with odd jobs like roofing houses, and he worked nights at a newspaper-packaging facility to save money for college tuition. He paid his own way at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, studying creative writing and poetry composition. Six months after graduation, he moved to New York City and began bartending. It was then that he "really put the gas down" on drinking, smoking, and drug use.

That initial Williamsburg Bridge run was a glimpse into an alternative way of life for Anderson, but it wasn't until 2013 that he committed to running consistently. He continued to drink heavily, but he quit cigarettes and started to run every night, even in subzero temps with snow on the ground. Every time he went for a jog, he felt less tempted to smoke. And he set a goal of running the 2014 New York City Marathon, which he discovered he could qualify for through the New York Road Runners "9 + 1" program: run nine scored, qualifying races and volunteer at one NYRR event, and you're guaranteed entry. This was Anderson's chrysalis period, and "there was nothing pretty about it." He was still out at 3 a.m. partying, but he dragged himself to the 8 a.m. start, still drunk, for the Bronx 10-Mile.

As his dedication to the sport deepened, Anderson began to discover a profound joy and love for running that was as much philosophical as physical. He

realized the indulgent habits of his youth had been an effort to dull a sense of existential anxiety, and that running could grant him a Buddhistic calm in the face of reality, with all its uncertainty and ups and downs. (In 2015, he quit drinking for nine months, and today drinks only sparingly, mainly wine on the weekends.) Running was a way to channel the raw energy that had led to his self-destructive habits, but one that also immersed him in the present, facilitating a mindfulness that allowed him to break free of preoccupations with the past or future.

"When I was being raised, everything was measured in intervals—the years until Jesus comes back, the years I have left to live," says Anderson. "It puts this segmentation into your life. And I think I carried that out without knowing it by becoming an addict. Everything then was measured by time between each cigarette, between each bottle of booze or line of coke. One of the gifts from running is I don't feel those constraints anymore. Running is continuing, forward movement that helps you move from a state of existence like that to lightness and freedom."

**B**artenders tend to share certain traits: a rejection of the 9-to-5 grind, a desire for work that is physical and creative, an intensity and energy that can overstep the bounds of moderation, for good and ill. "We have personalities that are very, for a lack of a better word, addictive," says Ivy Mix, 32, co-owner of Brooklyn cocktail bar Leyenda and cofounder of the women's drink-making competition Speed Rack. "We get enthused; we tend to tunnel vision into stuff. And as awesome as cocktail creation and the spirits industry are, sometimes the outcomes are not so good."

A 2015 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration study found that the (Continued on page 79)



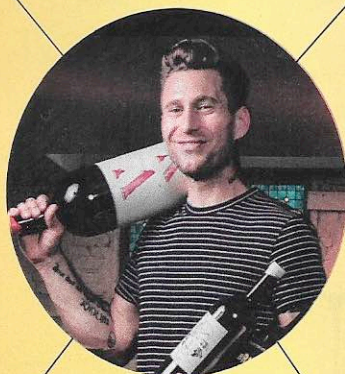
# SLINGING IT FORWARD

THANKS TO SAM ANDERSON'S INFLUENCE, SOME OF THE BEST NEW YORK CITY BARTENDERS AND BOOZE PURVEYORS ARE RUNNERS. WHAT'S MORE, THOSE RUNNERS HAVE PASSED THE PASSION ON TO THEIR FRIENDS. HERE, HOW ONE PERSON CAN HAVE A WATERFALL OF POSITIVE EFFECTS ON AN INDUSTRY.



**Daniela Soto-Innes**

James Beard Award-winning chef for New York City restaurants Cosme and ATLA. Anderson helped coach Soto-Innes, 27, to run a half marathon in April. "Running has been the extra energy, happiness, and inspiration I need," she says.



**Sam Anderson**

Beverage director for Mission Chinese Food in New York City. Quietly leading by example can create powerful change for those around him, Anderson says. "It radiates positivity into the community. It just flows out. When your cup's running over, it's obvious."



**Nathan McCarley-O'Neill**

Bar manager at NoMad Bar New York. Marathon training helps McCarley-O'Neill keep pacing in mind while working long shifts in which he and two fellow bartenders might bang out 1,000 cocktails in one night.



**Jack McGarry**

Co-owner of top New York bars The Dead Rabbit and BlackTail, and 2013 International Bartender of the Year. McGarry, 29, turned to the sport after struggling with depression and alcoholism. "Without running, I'd be lost," he says. He's now run three marathons, and an ultramarathon, and is nearing two years sober.

**Jeppe Jarnit-Bjergsø**

Owner of Evil Twin Brewing in Brooklyn. The 42-year-old brewer runs because "it makes you feel alive. It just feels good, it makes my day better." He also believes it makes him better at his job.



**Ivy Mix**

Co-owner of Brooklyn cocktail bar Leyenda. Mix, who got hooked on running after watching the NYC Marathon, says the sport helps her stay in tune with her body and provides a dose of solitude from a relentlessly social job.



**Don No**

Craft beer distributor in Carrollton, Texas. Thanks to running, No has lost 45 pounds. "Running has completely changed me," the 47-year-old says. "My mental awareness feels sharper than ever, and I am more actively engaged with people. I feel as though I went from 'mono' to 'hi-def.'"



**Your Next Beer**

The "Raceday" beer is a collaboration between Sam Anderson and Evil Twin Brewery's Jeppe Jarnit-Bjergsø. The sour IPA is brewed with pineapple and aloe salt, and has naturally occurring electrolytes—the perfect runner reward. Look for it on the Mission Chinese menu, and at select restaurants, bars, and beer stores.



**Tim Master**

Director of specialty spirits at Frederick Wildman and Sons. "After many years in an industry full of travel, late nights, and cocktailing, I had to do something for my physical and mental health," says Master, 48, who finds that running helps him stay grounded and feel a sense of balance. He ran his first half marathon last March and plans to run two more this year.



## INTERNATIONAL

### MAY 6 - BMO Vancouver Marathon, Half Marathon & More

Vancouver, BC, Canada  
**Contact:** RUNVAN®,  
 1288 Vernon Drive,  
 Vancouver, BC V6A 4C9.  
 (604) 872-2928  
 info@runvan.org  
 www.bmovancouvermarathon.com  
*Award-winning. Stunning Running. Runners from 65+ countries.*

## NORTH ATLANTIC

### APR 22 - Ocean Drive Marathon, 10 Miler, 5K & 1.5 Mile Events

Sea Isle City, NJ  
**Contact:** Ocean Drive Run Club, Inc.,  
 1000 W. Valley Road, P.O. Box 1245,  
 Southeastern, PA 19399.  
 (609) 523-0880  
 odmracedirector@comcast.net  
 www.odmarathon.org

### MAY 20 - Run For The Red Marathon, Half Marathon & 5K

Pocono Summit, PA  
**Contact:** American Red Cross,  
 410 Park Avenue,  
 Stroudsburg, PA 18360.  
 (570) 242-7840  
 info@poconomarathon.org  
 www.poconomarathon.org  
*Boston Qualifier*

### JUN 9 - The Valerie Fund Walk & JAG Physical Therapy 5K Run

Essex County's Verona Park - Verona, NJ  
**Contact:** Tina Kaplan at The Valerie Fund,  
 2101 Millburn Avenue,  
 Maplewood, NJ 07040.  
 (973) 761-0422  
 tkaplan@thevaleriefund.org  
 www.thevaleriefund.org/walk  
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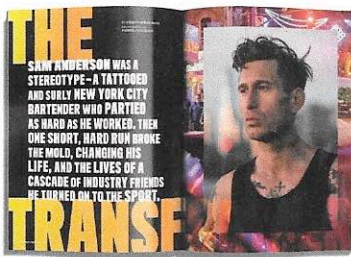
### SEP 16 - Navy Air Force Half Marathon

Washington, DC  
**Contact:** Joint Base Anacostia Bolling MWR,  
 12 Brookley Avenue,  
 Washington, DC 20032.  
 navyairforcehalfmarathon@gmail.com  
 www.navyhalf.com  
*Save 10% - Use code RWNAHALF  
 (Exp. 9/9/18)*

## NORTH CENTRAL

### SEP 15 - Air Force Marathon, Half Marathon, 10K & 5K

Dayton, OH  
**Contact:** Race Director,  
 5030 Pearson Rd., Building 219,  
 Wright-Patterson AFB, OH 45433.  
 (937) 257-4350  
 usaf.marathon@us.af.mil  
 www.usafmarathon.com



● CONTINUED FROM PAGE 64

accommodations and food-service industry ranks among the nation's top five worst fields for substance and alcohol abuse, alongside mining and construction. But recently, there's been a reckoning. Well-known chefs and bartenders have died of drug overdoses. Triumphant recovery stories, like that of James Beard Award-winning chef Sean Brock, have become more common. Meanwhile, the craft cocktail business has undergone a transformation to become a lauded professional industry. All of this has helped fuel dialogue about how to live a balanced life in the high-stress jobs that populate the country's bars and kitchens, and Anderson's personal evolution from hedonism to health has been one such catalyst. For many in the New York City bar scene, the solution to finding balance has come through running.

"Sam's taken a social responsibility," says Nathan McCarley-O'Neill, 30, bar manager at NoMad Bar New York, and a competitive marathoner who was inspired to start running thanks in part to Anderson. "He's shown that even when you're working in the drinks industry, you can still take care of yourself. This has had a major effect, especially in bartending." In turn, McCarley-O'Neill, who ran both the 2017 Chicago and New York City marathons after training with Nike's Project Moonshot, has also helped mentor fellow bartenders to begin running, too.

These days, Anderson regularly fields questions, texts, and emails from curious colleagues and friends who have heard about his running transformation—what kind of shoes or shorts or watch should I buy? What training program should I use? For Anderson, whose approach to running has been deeply guided by Eastern thought, meditation, and yoga, these questions are all part of the journey.

"Running becomes a tool for searching inside yourself for answers," he says. "Sometimes the answers or conclusions you come across don't have anything to do with running. It becomes this way to channel into places you weren't prepared to go."

Once he polishes off his Prospect Park workout, Anderson goes home to wash up and eat. He has to get to Mission Chinese by early afternoon. In addition to working the floor during service, overseeing the bar and cocktail program, and acting as sommelier, he also focuses on special events and projects. The week previous, he and girlfriend Taylor Patterson, founder of floral design studio Fox Fodder Farm, created a trippy floral installment for magazine *Bon Appétit's* holiday party, and Anderson curated the drinks. On the horizon is a spring or early summer opening for a new Bushwick location of Mission Chinese, a labor-intensive effort that he'll balance with efforts to race the Chicago and NYC marathons, plus a few trail challenges.

Nearly everyone who knows Anderson has commented on how running has helped him flourish in his career—a benefit that's proved true for many runners in the business. "It's been an incredible thing to see his creativity blossom through the levelheadedness that comes through running," says Anderson's former bartending partner Austin Hartman. "The New York cocktail industry is such a tight community, and we've all been in it together for a while. We've done a lot of growing and learning. Seeing people like Sam...it's inspiring." Hartman, who quit a chain-smoking habit a year ago, has been hitting Anderson up for running tips and plans to run his first half marathon this month.

Anderson's newest professional focus is on natural wines, whose biodynamic viticulture aligns with his holistic approach to running—and with creating a healthier shift in the industry. Doing so will require rewiring the response to stress that service-industry workers so often feel. In restaurants and bars, he notes, "you have the stressors and you have the release." And while, yes, there are plenty of other stressful jobs in the world, most don't take place in front of a wall of readily available—and detrimental—releasers. Anderson believes he's found an ideal solution. "I'm not meditating on the floor," he says, "but I have a lifestyle now that allows me not to be overwhelmed by stress." Running is at its center, and what prepares him to cope with life's suffering and joy. After all, during the course of a marathon, you have to be prepared for the giddiness of the cheering crowds, and the stretches of despair when the finish line seems an eternity away. That's echoed in the verse Anderson silently repeats during his races, from a Rilke poem, appropriately titled *Go to the Limits of Your Longing*:

"Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror. Just keep going. No feeling is final." ●