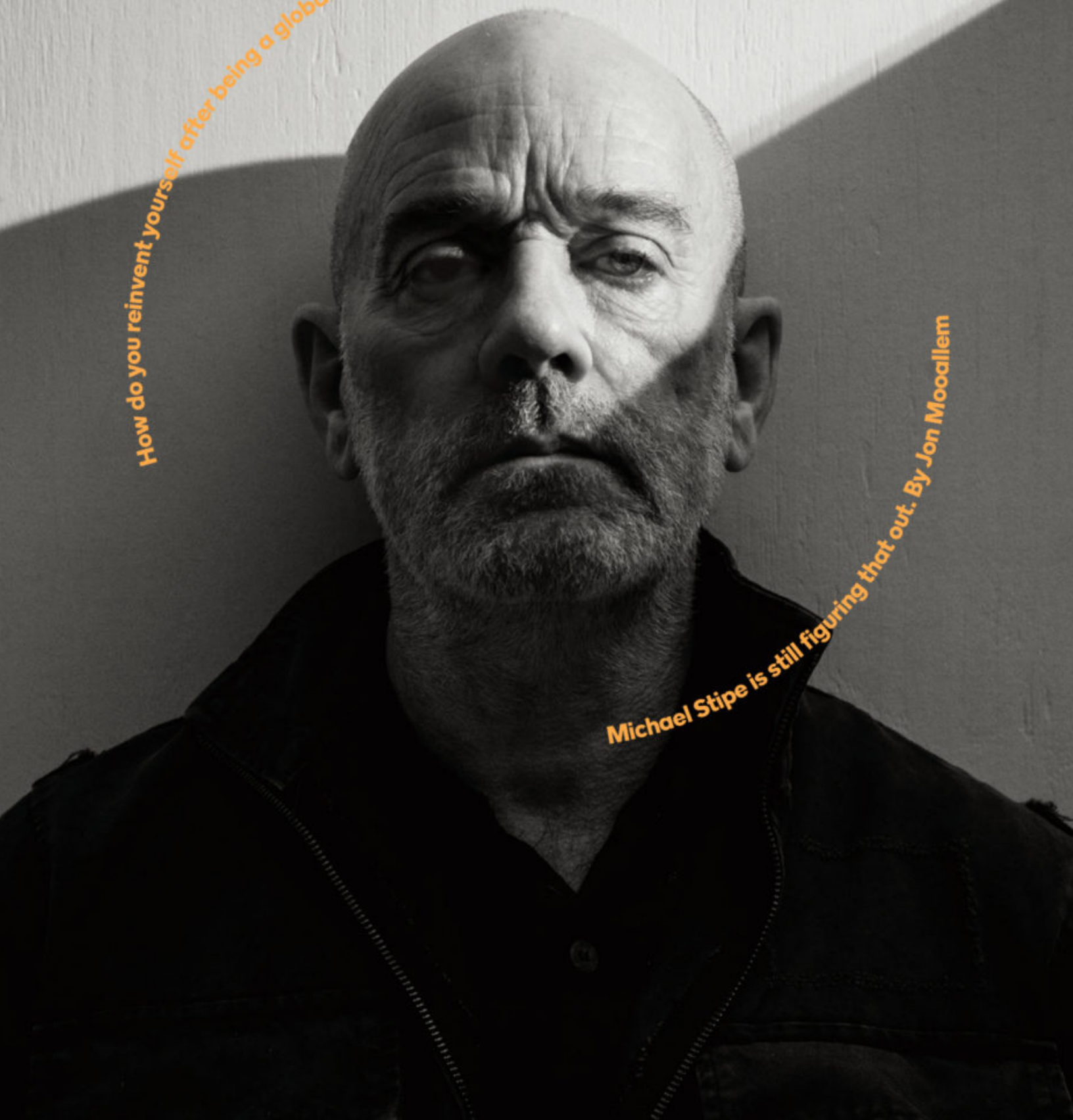


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How do you reinvent yourself after being a global superstar?

Michael Stipe is still figuring that out. By Jon Mooallem





In Transylvania, a Hotel That Offers Beekeeping and Hay Bathing

A BOUTIQUE GETAWAY IN ROMANIA'S CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS

Outside the tiny town of Simon in Romania's Carpathian Mountains, an NGO called Foundation Conservation Carpathia is creating a 66,000-acre national park. It's against that backdrop that the hotelier Bogdan Calulanu opened Matca, a 16-room hotel with 10 private villas. Matca is the Romanian word for "queen bee," the name a reference to the beekeeping practiced in this honey-producing corner of Transylvania and also to the pastoral serenity of a region that's barely changed since the Middle Ages.

Reflecting the architectural style of the area's traditional fortified farms (Transylvania was once on the eastern frontier of the Kingdom of Hungary and subject to regular raids by the Turks), Matca's guest rooms are set inside two stone-and-wood

farmhouses with interior courtyards. The rooms' earth-tone color schemes are apparent in natural linen curtains and upholstery, raw oak floors and furniture, undyed wool blankets and reed baskets that contrast with sleek Italian lighting and bathroom fixtures. Stup, the hotel's restaurant, serves dishes based on the seasonal produce of Transylvania's small farms, among them mamaliga, a Romanian take on polenta; wild mushrooms; and excellent ewe's-milk cheeses. The hotel's Ambrozie spa features a heated indoor pool with spectacular views and offers a range of treatments including phytothermotherapy, a body wrap using fermented hay. Guided hikes, beekeeping lessons and workshop visits with local craftspeople are also available. Rooms from about \$523 a night, matcahotel.com.

