

People Love to Hate This Fake Private Equity Guy

Johnny Hilbrant Partridge has found social media fame as PE Guy, a character who embodies obnoxious entitlement.

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PE Guy, played by Johnny Hilbrant Partridge, provides an insider's view of Nantucket in a recent video. His face is distorted by a filter. [Johnny Hilbrant Partridge](#)



By **Guy Trebay**

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In little more than a year, Johnny Hilbrant Partridge, a former spin-class instructor, has vaulted from obscurity to social media celebrity thanks to his online character, a private equity banker known as PE Guy. With his punchable face and confident demeanor, he is the prosperous finance bro you love to hate.

“We’ve all been at a wedding stuck talking to a guy or girl who was insufferable,” Partridge said by phone from the home he shares with his husband in Wellesley, Mass. “They have no awareness and want to ram their success down your throat.”

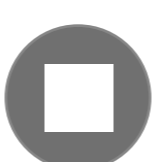
Partridge, 36, tested out the character in the mirror of his phone camera before fleshing it out on social media. Now he has more than 500,000 followers.

“You can’t really scream in people’s faces and tell them they’re annoying,” Partridge said. “How do you shut them up?”

And what better season for PE Guy than summer, when wealth-flexing seems to be at its most egregious? Take a recent video in which he stands against the backdrop of a shingled beach house, addressing a Nantucket newcomer in smug tones.

Nostrils flared, eyes bulging (thanks to a video filter), PE Guy spews out humble-brags in a fatuous baritone. “I’ve been coming here for years,” he says. “Family’s got a compound out in ‘Sconset,” he adds, making a reference to Siasconset, a laid-back Nantucket town marginally less infested with billionaires than other spots on the island.

Peppering his speech with references to things familiar to the island’s cognoscenti, he urges the hapless day tripper to “get a Gripah” (a local beer) “at Cisco” (a local brewery) before hitting “the Gazebo” (a tavern by the harbor).



The video is part of a series in which PE Guy takes aim at high-toned resorts including Kennebunkport, Me., and Palm Beach, Fla. In a post on Watch Hill, R.I., PE Guy blathers: “Well, it’s discreet here. Wifey’s family’s been summering in Watch Hill for over a century, so ... It was really easy for us to get into the Misquamicut club, so ... And the house overlooks Taylor Swift’s house. So.”

In the imaginary world of PE Guy, every man has a Harvard M.B.A., drives an Ineos Grenadier S.U.V. and skis at Zermatt. His soliloquies make frequent reference to the three precocious children he has with his fictional spouse, whom he calls “wifey.” The kids’ names? Tarantino, Montauk and Ebidta — an acronym for earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization.

Partridge grew up in Winnetka, Ill., an affluent suburb outside Chicago, and graduated from the University of Denver in 2012 with a business degree. His attempts to land a high-paid position in finance tended to sputter out.

“You sometimes had that feeling of, ‘Am I behind?’” he said. “Should I have gotten that finance job out of college?”

After moving to Boston in 2016, he took a job as a SoulCycle instructor. He was happy in the work, despite the pitying glances he sometimes attracted when he described what he did for a living. “People would be like, ‘Is that your real job?’” he said.

Social media, Partridge suggested, was largely to blame for the death of discretion among the rich. “My parents and my friends’ parents would say, ‘We don’t talk about money — it’s just rude,’” he said. “Now it’s a total one-upping. People do things they would never do if they couldn’t post about it. They fly first class just to post from the first-class pod.”

In March 2025, Partridge made his first Instagram foray with PE Guy. The next morning, he saw that it had racked up 70,000 views. “I thought, ‘Oh, it’s a fluke, but let me try again,’” he recalled.

By now, PE Guy is fully developed. Along with his posts, Partridge said he earns tens of thousands of dollars to perform at events sponsored by the very types he skewers.

If the response he gets from the targets of his humor tends to be warm, that may be because his creation mines the pathos lurking beneath the machinery of social striving that often attends preposterous wealth.

“I’m married to an oral surgeon, and PE Guy is doing well, so we’re just fine,” Partridge said. “Still, I look back at the finance interviews I had, and I think I was just one wrong ‘yes’ away from spending a lifetime being unhappy. It makes me sad sometimes to see people I once liked turning into something nobody can stand.”

Guy Trebay is a reporter for the Style section of The Times, writing about the intersections of style, culture, art and fashion.

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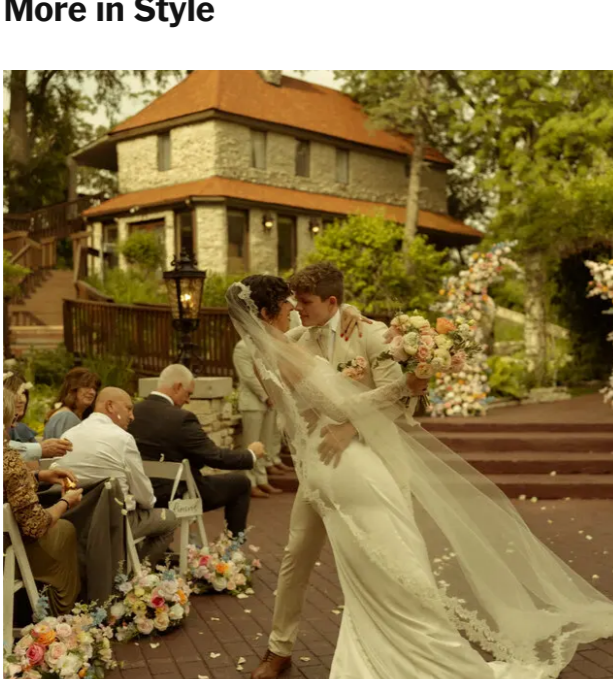


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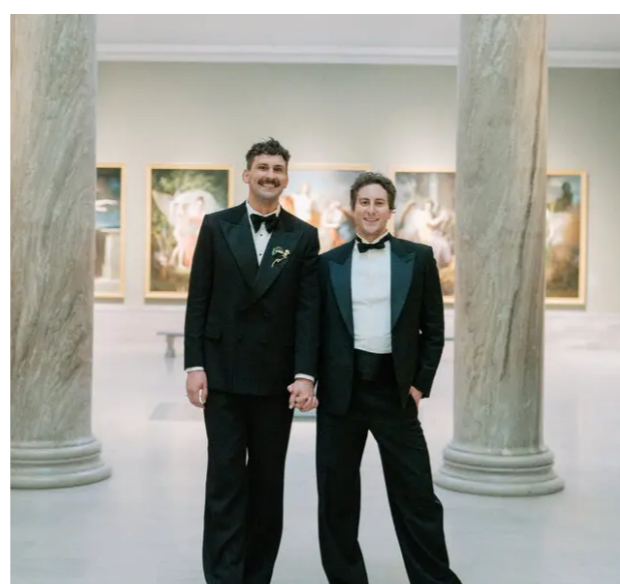
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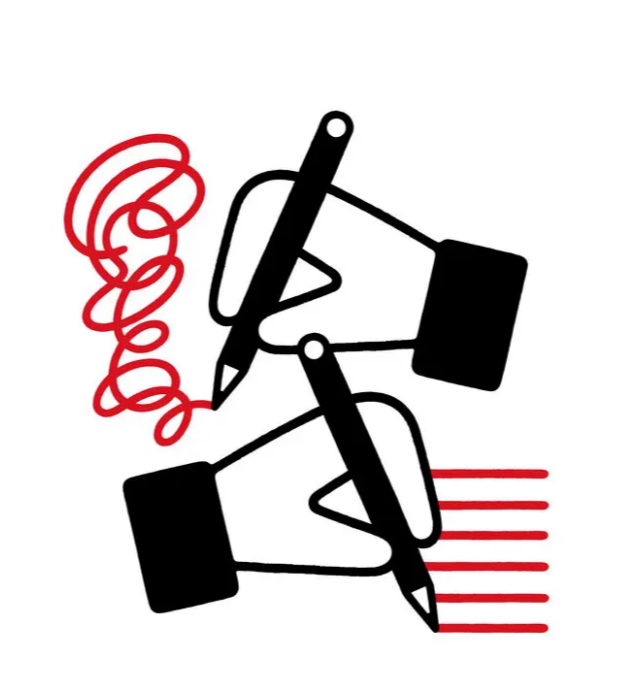
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