

# News+Notes

▼ Johnny Depp, Chelsea Handler, Gwyneth Paltrow, Oprah Winfrey, and Lena Dunham



## WHY STARS ARE HITTING THE BOOKS

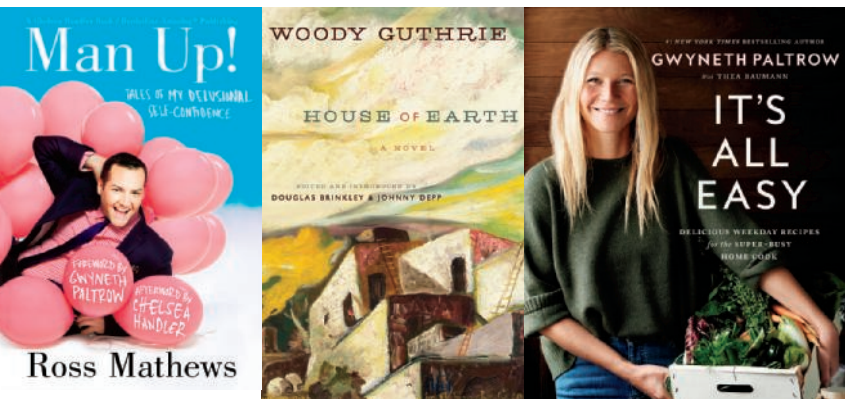
The latest evolution in lifestyle branding isn't a signature fragrance or namesake wine—it's a publishing imprint. Just ask Lena, Gwyneth, and Oprah.

By Isabella Biedenbarn



### HER GIRLS ALTER EGO HANNAH

Horvath may never become the "voice of a generation" as she'd once hoped, but Lena Dunham is getting close: Last week, Random House announced the creation of Lenny, an imprint curated by Dunham and Jenni Konner that will publish "voice-driven" fiction and nonfiction starting in late 2017. Lenny books is both an emblem of the success of Dunham's best-selling 2014 memoir, *Not That Kind of Girl*, and an extension of Dunham and Konner's widely shared email newsletter of the same name.



◀ *Man Up!* by Ross Mathews, *House of Earth* by Woody Guthrie, and *It's All Easy* by Gwyneth Paltrow

While Dunham's background makes her a natural fit in the book world, she's certainly not the first celebrity to forgo branded wines and luxury perfumes in favor of an eponymous publishing imprint. Back in 2010, comedian and author Chelsea Handler launched her own imprint, Borderline Amazing, at Grand Central Publishing. Johnny Depp founded Infinitum Nihil at HarperCollins in 2012 and has published a handful of books, including the obscure Woody Guthrie novel, *House of Earth*. More recently, Gwyneth Paltrow launched Goop Press at Grand Central Publishing (her first title, *It's All Easy*, hit bookstores April 12), Oprah Winfrey announced an as-yet-unnamed imprint at Flatiron Books, and Michael Mann Books just found a home at HarperCollins.

Between social media and projects like the Lenny and Goop newsletters, celebrities in 2016 can exert their influence over millions of followers with a few taps on their iPhones. Imprints allow them to extend their reach and refine their brand even further. "If you look at the kinds of celebrities that are [starting imprints], I think they already, in a sense, have been curators in different areas," says Karen Murgolo, editorial director of Grand Central Life & Style. "Oprah Winfrey has been a curator for years in her show and magazine. With Lena Dunham, she has a philosophy of what it's like to be a woman in this day and age, and people listen to her. They want to hear more from her, and [it's] the same thing with Gwyneth." Random House editor in chief Andy Ward, who will oversee Lenny books, agrees. "Once her newsletter was up and

running, and Lena was getting a real sense of the impact it was having, [an imprint] made a lot of sense."

Another boon for publishers: These celebs are used to selling themselves—and others—in a way most writers probably aren't. "I've never met anybody who's such a tireless promoter," says Beth deGuzman, a VP at Grand Central, of Handler. "You're talking about somebody who's had a very successful show, so she knew what it took to get something off the ground." In addition to her herculean marketing efforts, Handler was very hands-on when it came to her imprint's products—she even helped edit Ross Mathews' book, *Man Up!*

While Paltrow and Dunham don't plan to actually do any editing, they'll still be heavily involved in the process of cultivating and nurturing writers, most of whom won't be famous. The Goop-branded authors will be experts in their fields—skin care, diet, and so on—but at Lenny books, "you'll also see a lot of noncelebrity authors who we can try to publish really well, as a way to develop talented writers," says Ward. "That, to me, is the core mission. Having a list full of celebrity books is not really why we got into it."

Additional reporting by Christian Holub

## BOOK 'EM!

Here's who we think deserves their own imprint. (Banks Books has a nice ring to it, don't you think?)

BY CHRISTIAN HOLUB



**REESE WITHERSPOON**

Witherspoon—who snapped up the movie rights to *Wild* and *Gone Girl*—has become one of Hollywood's most powerful literary tastemakers.



**JASON SEGEL**

Not just an actor and screenwriter, Segel is also co-writer of a middle-grade horror trilogy. His imprint could be a home for smart, funny prose for all ages.



**MINDY KALING**

All of Kaling's books have been such joyful, hilarious reads that it seems like a no-brainer for her to help cultivate the next generation of authors.



**ELIZABETH BANKS**

Like Witherspoon, Banks has amassed an excellent track record when it comes to scooping up the film rights to women-centric novels.



**B.J. NOVAK**

Novak's got literary chops: He's penned both a short-story collection and a children's book. And his role with The List App demonstrates his curation skills.