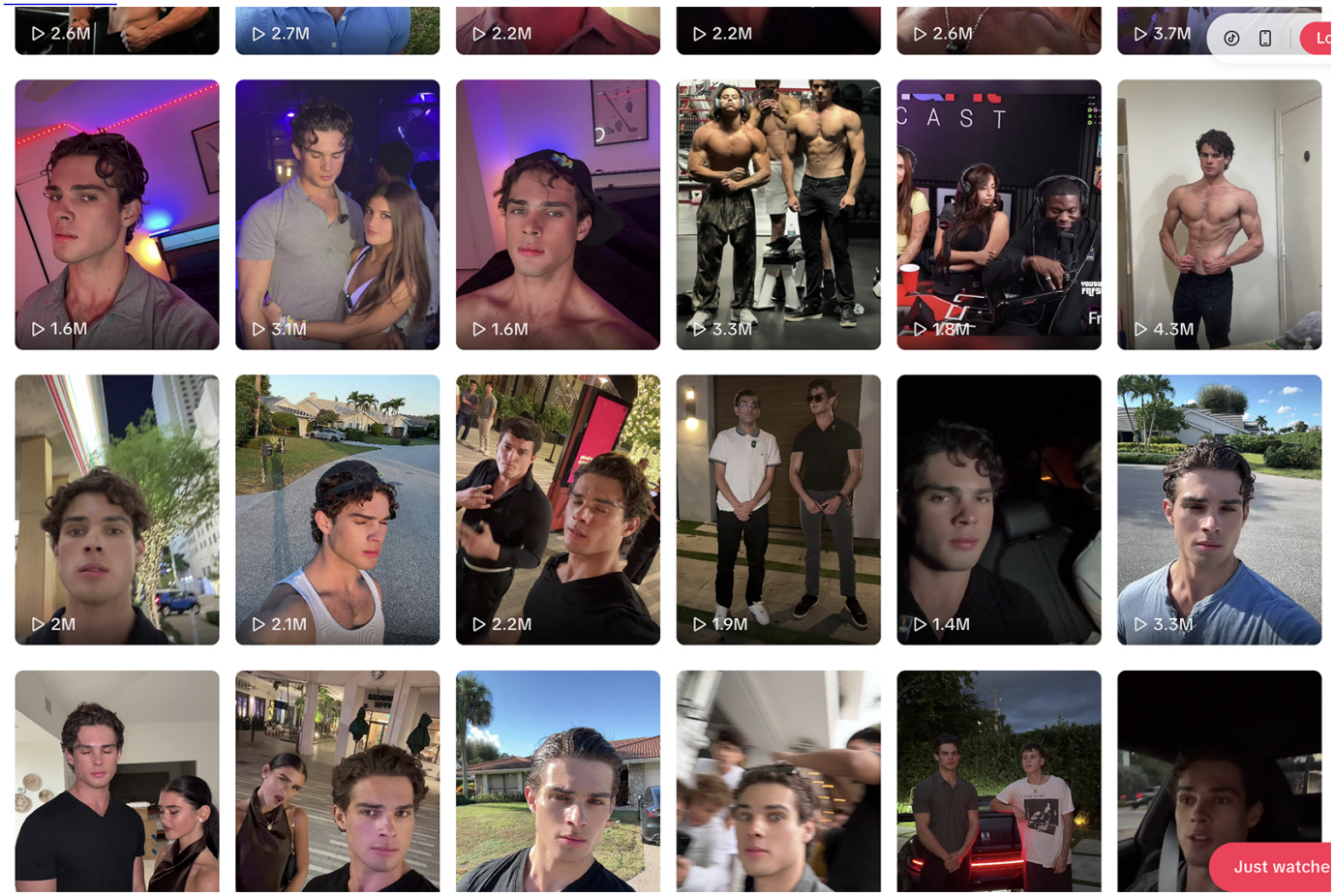
Culture



Recent social media posts by Clavicular. (RNS screen grab)

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April 2, 2026

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Braden Peters, a streamer who goes by Clavicular, posted a recent video last week announcing he would broadcast his life 24 hours a day for a month on Kick, where he has about 250,000 followers.

"I live in a luxury condominium in downtown Miami, the penthouse," Peters said with a deadpan affect in the video. "My name is Clavicular. I'm 20 years old. I believe in looksmaxxing — the idea of maximizing physical attractiveness by any means necessary in order to ascend." He looks directly into the camera, as if addressing a mirror.

"My ratios are almost golden now."

Peters, who has said he is Catholic, speaks about self-optimization in the language of religion: discipline, hierarchy, "ascension." In the larger looksmaxxing community, physical transformation is treated as a moral imperative, one obtainable by persistent self-denial and the pursuit of an ideal form. To some observers, including religious scholars and Catholics in his milieu, the ethos resembles a kind of inverted asceticism: a life structured around sacrifice and perfection, not to a higher power, but to the self.

"Religious asceticism is oriented toward Jesus Christ and the spiritual life, as opposed to the carnal life," said Jordan Castro, a Christian cultural critic, co-director of the Cluny Institute and author of the book Muscle Man. "(This community) is just oriented toward something completely different. It's very, very different."

The video continues following Peters as he walks through his apartment, rattling off in a flat cadence all the substances he says he takes and pausing to study his reflection. At one point, he opens a refrigerator stocked with nothing but a carton of eggs and a vial of a clear liquid substance. It ends with a call to arms: "When it comes to ascension, if you're not looksmaxxing, you're not lifemaxxing," he said. "And if you're not lifemaxxing, you're nothing."

The general looksmaxxing community, an online outcropping of the incel (involuntarily celibate) forums and embedded within the manosphere, takes on

qualities of religious practice: an all-in zeal for perfection, adherence to an ideal standard, communal accountability among men who rate one another and an ascetic emphasis on denying bodily desires like food — even the promotion of a form of celibacy, a devotion generally reserved for priests, in which infertility caused by steroid use is treated as a sacrifice in pursuit of a higher ideal. Peters, who emerged from a niche subculture of incel men on 4chan, has become the movement's enfleshed prime example.

Now 20 years old, he has appeared on the cover of The New York Times and GQ, credited with popularizing a distinct vocabulary, promoting a rigid ideology and closing fashion shows. Peters, a persistently controversial figure, was arrested on Thursday (March 26) for allegedly instigating a fight at a short-term rental.

Authorities told RNS via email that Peters had allegedly orchestrated and filmed a fight on Feb. 2 between two women for online content. Just days before the alleged incident, Peters was kicked out of a Miami club for dancing to Ye's antisemitic "Heil Hitler," alongside prominent manosphere figures Nicholas Fuentes and Andrew Tate.

Peters is also under investigation by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission after a livestream on Thursday appeared to show him firing a handgun from an airboat in the Everglades at what appeared to be a dead alligator. No charges have been announced.

Online, where Peters gets millions of views on his videos, commenters respond with GIFs of Patrick Bateman, the sociopathic protagonist of the film adaptation of "American Psycho." Some praise him, "OUR GOD BTW," one writes, and "Kid just keeps ascending," another says, while others mock him. A common insult is that he's "gay."

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"They're not gay or straight," said Miles Shore, a 27-year-old classical musician, devoted Catholic and model who walked in a fashion show alongside Peters last month for designer Elena Velez. "They're autosexual in a way," he said of the looksmaxxing community. "They're so narcissistic, they basically don't have a sexuality. And they're afraid of and uninterested in sex."

Because of anabolic steroids, which Peters said he has been using since before puberty, he claims to be infertile, though he still speaks often about having sex with women. Peters did not respond to requests for comment. He has said publicly that he began using testosterone as a teenager and has suggested to his followers that early hormone use is a necessity to achieving the full effects of looksmaxxing.

Last year, Catholic bishops in the United States came out against hormone therapy for minors seeking gender-affirming care, a position also taken by many far-right commentators in or adjacent to the manosphere. The bishops have not addressed the use of hormone therapy for minors pursuing hypermasculine or "gender-emphasizing" goals like looksmaxxing.

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Shore, who is also active on X and has about 20,000 followers, despite existing in a more Catholic-leaning online space, occupies overlapping communities as Peters. The two were featured together in a GQ illustration atop an article on looksmaxxing — or, as the men's magazine put it, "the internet's most obsessive male-beauty subculture" — in it Shore wears exaggerated chin implants.

To Shore, some of this new cultural hyper-fixation on masculinity is a reaction to a decade of discourse that heavily criticized the role of straight white men in society during the 2010s. That shift helps explain why, as he put it, "men are so back."

In 2024, Shore began de-transitioning from a trans woman back to presenting as a biological male and disavowed homosexuality, pointing to his Catholic faith as a major reason. Shore said he is pursuing legal action against the children's hospital that provided him with hormone therapy at age 17 as part of his gender transition (he declined to comment further on the lawsuit because the matter is ongoing).

"I feel like the dominant political ideology in the 2010s was primarily that, like, men are bad," Shore said. "I think people are discovering that that was actually not at all true, and that things, in fact, in many ways, things are worse and are more chaotic

now."



Braden Peters, who goes by Clavicular, left, and Miles Shore at the Elena Valez fashion show in February in New York. (RNS/Miles Shore)

Shore’s experience connects conversations happening in online communities adjacent to looksmaxxing, particularly among young men in Catholic and manosphere circles, who often think about identity and self-presentation. For looksmaxxers, questions about the body revolve around an objective, hardline beautification, where physical transformation has a series of numbers and ratios

attached to it: body fat percentage, shoulder-to-waist ratio, distance between pupils divided by mid-face height (mid-face ratio).

Castro said male-centered communities online have long focused on building muscle, but the looksmaxxers' brand feels distinct.

"If you listen to Clavicular talk, he talks a lot about numbers and ratios — the perfect face ratio, body fat percentages or body count," he said. "People grasp toward that because they feel existential anxiety. Maybe you can find meaning in developing the perfect facial harmony ratio or increasing the number on the bar."

During a stream posted in February, Peters, while sitting on a bench press beside fitness and Christian influencer Alex Eubank, who has 2.7 million Instagram followers, said he is Catholic.

"That's kind of why I became Catholic in the first place … I really liked, sort of, the order that followed," Peters said. "Having some sort of authority that I believe to be virtuous, keeping people in line, because I don't think that the average person is very smart."

Shore described Peters as "very religious."

"Like, he's very much engaged in ritual and worship every single day," he added.

Peters' emphasis on order and authority carries into the ethos of the looksmaxxing community. The path to ascension requires a total commitment to self-optimization that Peters promotes, from appearance to status. Peters, known for hitting his cheekbones with a hammer in hopes of creating micro-fractures that will heal into a more masculine shape, has announced his plans to get double jaw surgery in two weeks, which will require breaking his jaw and adding sutures to enhance its size.

"In Christian bioethics, harming your body is a major no," said Angelos Mavropoulos, a Catholic moral theorist who studies body modification. Taking prescribed weight-loss drugs "to starve yourself for extreme physical attractiveness," he said, should not be confused with fasting for spiritual growth. "In Catholic theology, care for the body must remain secondary to spiritual formation," he said. "The soul comes first."

Shore admits to taking tirzepatide, the active ingredient in Mounjaro, as a GLP-1/GIP agonist for weight loss to achieve a certain look for modeling. "I immediately felt

better on it,"Shore said. "It eliminated this desire for food. It frees up your mind."

Still, Shore said that even from his perspective as a young model who is paid to maintain a certain appearance, he sees the young men participating in the looksmaxxing community as fundamentally misguided.

"The looksmaxxing thing is dangerous because it is pride," Shore said. "Just, like, look gorgeous, and then your life will be good, which is not true, by the way. That’s, like, not how it works at all. And I think a lot of these people are going to figure that out."

"I think when people start living like that, what they’re searching for is religion. They just haven’t found God yet," he said.