



Purp magic

Issue 3

Donwiiii





# ***DJ PRINCE***

**45**  
MOBILE

MMXIV

NUM. 0002

# SHOTTAS

featuring Sean Price



I wish you could get the feeling

(Verse 1)

Gettin twisted w/ my mystics

Configuring the logistics

For my outta-town visits

Snap straight up my po

My posture in Salamina

My taste in good grapes

Will shock a nigger like Blanka

As a toddler, used to love me some Petra

No drops on my Doppler ~~are~~ bother

My father

Blessed be the Son who got his own

Spritz of my Cologne

Pull a copper tone

My midichlorian levels

Have reached exorbitant levels

I Skywalk can't get enough of the fly talk

Wishing you participated ... Ugh

(chorus)

(Verse 2)

My itinerary lookin interplanetary  
Thank the lord that I aint got too many adversaries  
But nvr scary if they catch me they would nvr spare me  
Mercy, barely blood oozin out my capillaries  
These statements about my platelets  
Make my brain shift while I'm boarding the spaceship  
Conversations w/ the man on the wing  
He talk in tangents, he be ramblin things  
I'm cross country, I be handlin things  
I got a handle on things  
Reception full of answers adjacent to the bellhop  
I hand him my things  
Pour my poison over the rocks  
He quote me stocks  
The debt ceiling shattered from the top  
The Dow dropped a hundred knots  
And while he yap I'm getting nubs of blackberry

And ask on the back of my pake  
This yakk above average  
He still talkin finances  
I aint wanna come of classless  
Or too crass  
But his welcome overstayed  
Tip the boy nice and sent him on his way

(Chorus)

(Verse 3)

I'm achilles deep in black sand  
Skin exfoliated  
All my funds are properly appropriated  
She keep buggin me about pro-creatin  
Umbrella'd drinks keepin me stoic  
I drown her out with the ocean  
Funny enough I found her out in the ocean  
Faintly saw her smiling

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Joseph and I share relatable stories in regards to how we fell into the pursuit of writing. Cool thing is I'm friends with another Joseph who's also a writer and graphic designer at Harpers Bizarre (kudos to my brother for making the cut). Joe found *it* during a poetry and letterpress course at Pratt; I also found it during a criminal justice class at Bethune-Cookman while deciding studying a major in that building wasn't the move. He says, "It came naturally and knew this is what I'm suppose to do." The calling specifically dawned sophomore year after switching my major from criminal justice to sociology, as I revisited a message to a beloved fallen one. The lamented farewell read, "Your benevolence, warmth and cordial characteristics of such a beautiful young man shall never cease. You are my genuine definition of perfection to all mankind," signed by this 17 year old kid. Tagging street art with wheat paste is also a commonality that developed our artistic endeavors. Words and visuals, man. Words and visuals. We both grew up in the lone star state and moved to Brooklyn to shake some things up, and we blatantly understand that writing is actually challenging. "Writing is the most intense form of thought. You think about language and transcend a message into something that's digestible and pleasurable," says visual artist and poet, *Joseph Cullier*.

There's a book debut hosted by The Operating System independent press just off Bowery and Bleeker Street. Four poets fill a dark and charcoal cave-like basement with beams of light illuminating from their own readings. The last poet speaks into the mic with a sunken tone and southern accent. He insists on being comfortable along with the audience by asking for a chair. A political statement printed on a colorful dashiki swayed on top of black, straight-leg pants. Black and white, wingtip platforms were the highlight of his physical aura as he set the equilibrium on balance with a casual Supreme snapback. In his hands caressed his first published chapbook and a microphone, which he spoke incarceration and freedom language into:

"America,

You did such a good job marketing that gun fight.

It was such a success.

Everyone showed up and died.

It is revolutionary for a country to put itself on trial.

America,

Unleash your psychopaths on your own children for a change.  
I think they're getting bored with the taste of my flesh.  
I want to feel like a child right now  
And that s not a bad thing."

Joseph Cullier endures a multitude of talents resonating within words and graphic design. Randomly fiddling around with the idea of making art while pursuing undergraduate studies at Prairie View A&M in Texas, the characteristics of a freedom fighter expressed only pieces of his personal message around campus: Don't Be A Robot. A few years later the proactive black leader is teaching graphic art to college students, has landed his work in five publications, and has created The New Freedom School- a non-profit education alternative that provokes social change through art and the love of humanity. "You learn about the world, then yourself, and then your place in society and think shit is fucked up," says Cullier. Enduring a deep complex with social irregularity tied to his heavy, southern roots in New Orleans and Houston's gulf coast history, Joe challenges awareness constricting standards of American pretensions. Authorities' agendas are blatantly executed and transparent; the price tag of earth's dirt is disgustingly increasing; Con Edison is CON Edison; Optimum is Optimimum; and financially advancing with a clean conscious appears to be frozen.

While we watch this country fall into greater destruction to later be apart of the creating process, it's personally soul and spirit enriching to connect with other dots of energy who are passionate and proactive about the cause. We are in fact in the depths of a revolutionary era combating institutional values that ignore the profound roots of a culture. It's like covering up a pimple with make up or constructing a sloppy building on quicksand; the foundation is invisibly nonexistent and therefore not effective. Now is the time for newfound adults from the millennial age to provide conscious and creative knowledge through our works. Finding life rewards through education, Joe is dedicating his life to guiding students in their footsteps towards becoming great humanitarians first before becoming groundbreaking artists. While creating fine art on the side and putting the pen to pad, Joseph Cullier is a definite example of an artists' responsibility of taking experiences and interfering the masses with truth. Let's continue to get uncomfortable.









**ANDREW HURLEY | Design Apprentice God**



I was in conversation with a dear friend one early spring morning in April frolicking along the streets of China Town literally, absorbing sunrays piercing between glorious clouds. My God, as an earth child do I need to feel warmth from pulchritudinous flowers and healthy trees – let’s me know happiness is curved upward and dead layers of winter have shed its’ skin. “We can no longer say we have an old soul because time has taken care of that for us now,” I said to my boy as we chopped it up about young Cheeba and young Baby Blue. As two mid-twenty-year-old music heads who grew up engrained within the soils of funk, soul, hip hop, and overall ear magic that penetrated their respectable eras, it was hands down a given we received an old school badge in our early schooling days. From not being allowed to touch the radio in a high school car full of teenagers to college sisters poking fun at me for listening to “elevator music”, which was actually one of MF DOOM’s ‘Special Herbs’ tapes, that grandma label has been hanging around for quite some time now—it’s fine. I’ll just be timeless with music. *Samuel Jonathan Johnson ‘My Music’ cues.*

Creators who trek to New York can find circles suitable to all necessities but rarely do you meet transparent, vulnerable, and infectious people with a soul package—true guts. You find these angels floating around in a majestic disguise and you hold onto them like grandmother’s jewelry. You somehow come in contact with this compatible person on some level because time said so, and it’s almost as if you met on the sandbox back in elementary school. Another persons’ spirit and soulful groundings within music compels me to mutuality. My mama always told me my dude would have to love music and has to be comfortable dancing because she knows her daughter gets down to sound waves pouring from the speakerboxx. So it’s a gorgeous blessing to come across people in your generation who pay homage and show love to old school boogies whether the vibe rests in the S.O.S. Band, Roy Ayers, or Marva Whitney. You have friends in your perimeter who know what’s up and let you know it’s okay you weren’t the only old soul growing up in the 90s. Technological advances are what’s fast forwarding the golden clock and definitely penetrating time in rapid doses within our music culture. No one is given the time to neither digest new content nor sit on a project deemed worthy of classic success.





I recall tweeting a while back making a public announcement I was in search of my music twin. Living is a motion soundtrack from dawn to dust, like a ball traveling in distances because boundaries aren't present to force its' halt. Initiating feel good music is like feeding the body coconut water; it's very much so needed for longevity. I already knew *Andrew Hurley* was a smooth dude with some flavor simply from hanging around the way in the neighborhood, but I didn't know the berry was that sweet with how musically inclined this brother is. On the soulful tip, hop in the car with the 'Design Apprentice God' and just know Hurley will blow your mind with the classiest of the classy funk and soul cuts that dig way deep back into the 1950s. Effortlessly, this multit talented creative, who's work you can scout on chalkboards or menu boards in Brooklyn cafés and bars, organically endures a silky smooth interest for oldie-but-goodie jams that blessed Black neighborhoods and communities throughout time. Hailing from rural upstate New York, I ask Andrew, "How'd you get so fresh, dude?" He smiles as he tucks his fallen hair behind his ears and replies, *"I don't know why I listen to what I listen to. I just know I dig on rhythm driven music. I like music that's rhythm heavy."* Life's whole essence relies on a steady rhythm of fluent motion, which in music translates to the solid foundations of bass and percussion. He's not even a brotha but Hurley's DNA entails stitches from a mighty soulful clothe. He understands what it means for a song to have a pulse, for layers to fill a measure, and simply feel the music for what it is.

Each time I get up with Andrew Hurley he makes the music strings in my heart vibrate purely for the love I have for music. There aren't too many folks I'll let DJ a house shindig of mine, but I'll let Hurley take the keys and ride out the night with nothing less than underground cuts. It makes sense that he's into the red Kool-Aid since he derives from a percussion background. Putting in work with marching and jazz school bands, Hurley played drums in a metal band in high school while aspiring to tour with his own band. *"I didn't care about getting paid 'cause I just wanted to do it just to say I did it,"* says the creative. He's also got a set of turntables claiming rights as an artifact just sitting in his Bedstuy apartment, wishing their owner would hit the power switch on just to spin around the block once or twice – That's another story for another issue but that's just the point with this character. Andrew's truly a jack-of-all-trades. From set skills in visual and performing arts to running skate shops, this is a person you want to know. He's pretty badass so yes; I've come across a music twin of mine. I hope everyone finds a twin flame within where the passions lies.



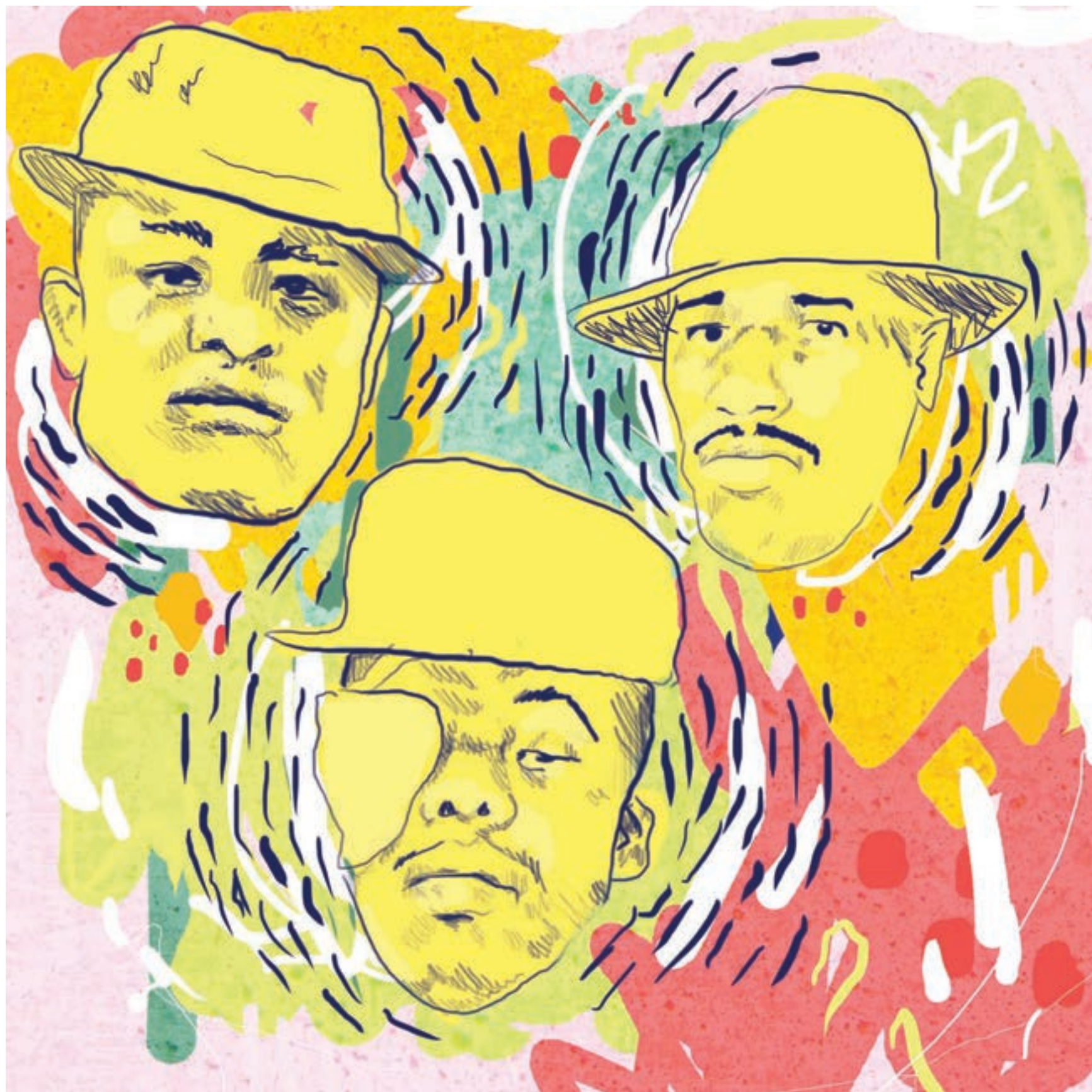






Goodie Mob





WHITLEY WATSON

Ceto Boys

The maturation of *Earl Sweatshirt* can be heard from inception. From subject matter to tone of voice, *I Don't Like Shit, I Don't Go Outside* sees the Tan Cressida proprietor naturally evolve sonically and lyrically. Some years removed from rape fantasies and Pacific Island hiatuses, Earl provides us with an appropriate follow up to 2013's *Doris*-an equally gloomy yet more succinct effort that gets the point across in less than thirty minutes. With boasting top tier lyricism (as usual), mostly self-produced beats, and reclusive motifs, the album's title pretty much speaks for itself; Sweatshirt don't like shit and he don't go outside.

Aside from the Left Brain produced "Off Top", Earl completely took the reigns on this project production-wise under the handle *randomblackdude*. Cuts like "Huey" and "Wool" follow an OF-esque sound pattern with the use of layered organs, olde tyme saloon keys, chippy hi-hats, and deep driving bass lines. Other tracks like "Mantra" and "DNA" see Earl experiment with drum patterns for a more bouncy, popular sound but by no means a "pop" finished product. The album's continuity is impeccable in that it is not very easy to distinguish one track from the next due to its seamless transitions, making for an easy listen from Genesis to Revelations. Though the album boasts continuity and flow, each track has its own identity and air of ominousness. Light on big name features, Earl shares the beat on four cuts off the ten track LP. Easily holding his own, but perfectly complemented by past collaborators like Vince Staples and Na'Kel on "Wool" and "DNA" respectively, Earl creates the appropriate pockets for his cronies to showcase their wit. Playing somewhat of a quarterback role on tracks, he provides the same luxury to new collaborators Da\$h and Wiki on "Grown Ups" and "AM//Radio" respectively; constructing sounds that suit they're unique styles all while managing to effectively get his point across.



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Lyricism has yet to fall by the waist side for the “Grief ” rapper. Rapid fire vice, indulgence, and consensual relations (finally!) are showcased ever so eloquently on “Mantra” with lines like “only time I ain’t eating when the cho-cha stanky/listening to Pre getting throat while I lane switch/bitches by the three licking coke off the pinky.” Off Top seemingly finds Earl gaining awareness of self as he raps “what a bastard that baby was/little mad nigga missing dad never praying much/right around the same time his grandmamma drank a bunch.” Earl’s topics on IDLSIDGO range from family issues to dealing with stardom to girl problems; a slight contrast with his past efforts, but only due to the method of delivery which is a bit less verbose and more flow focused.

With age comes wisdom and in Earl’s case, at the top of this year, the legal right to drink. Sir Sweatshirt’s growth as a young man and an artist is blatantly evident on IDLSIDGO: new delivery, new problems, and new ways of dealing with them. *The face of Tan Cressida is no longer the Pippen to Tyler’s Jordan, but more so the Thompson to his Curry. Mind the skill set. Check the stats.*

## MR. WONDERFUL x ACTION

No stranger to the unconventional, *Action Bronson* steps out on faith with his second studio album, ‘Mr. Wonderful.’ As fate would have it, faith lands Bronson square on his two feet as the album capitalizes on Bronson’s confident and eccentric style. He employs past collaborators for guest verses and production, straying not too far away from the formula that brought him to the forefront. Riddled with an air of classic rock mashed with rap drums, and topped with signature Bronson braggadocio adventure verses, Mr. Wonderful resurrects a sound purists have been deprived of since the mid 2000’s. *Although sonically reminiscent of days past, the effort helps fill a Grand Canyon sized void that has echoed the cries and pleas of rap heads for the last ten years.*

The album opens with the Billy Joel sampled “Brand New Car” showcasing Bronson’s start and stop rhyme style, heard in past cuts like “9-24-11” and “9.24.13”. Bam Bam doesn’t oversaturate the record with one style though as he brings us through bass head ballads with “Thug Love Story 2017 (The Musical)” and a blues cut sung by the Flushing native himself with “City Boy Blues”. Production remains steady throughout the project with producers who have helped develop Bronson’s sound throughout his career. *Statik Selektah*, *Party Supplies*, *The Alchemist*, and *Mark Ronson* all get their hands dirty on the boards for Mr. Wonderful. In comparison to his past efforts, Mr. Wonderful sees Bronson experimenting with the sound and structure of his full-length feature.

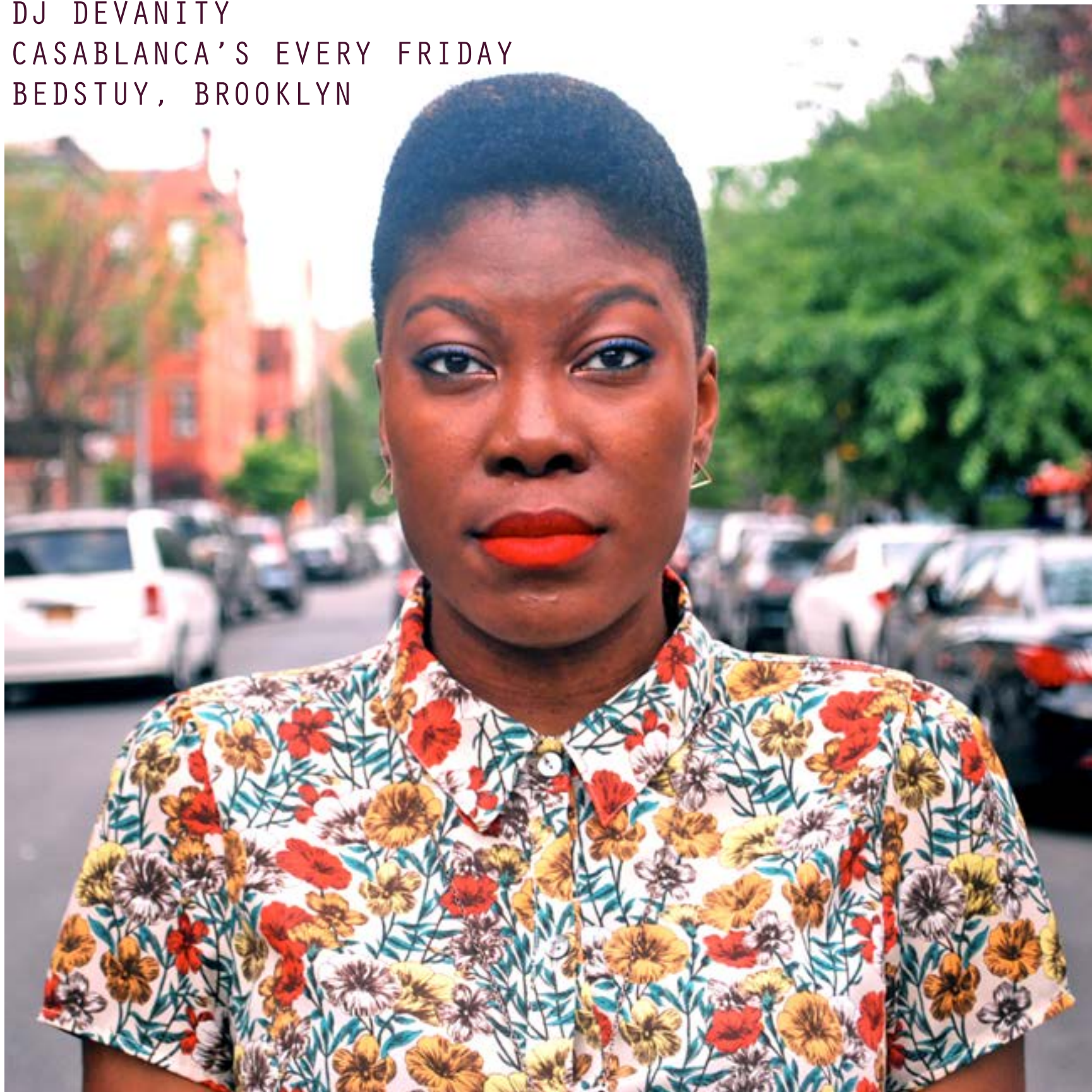
Laden with keys and bluesy guitar rifts throughout Mr. Wonderful gives listeners an adult contemporary feel in contrast to the ever so evident trap sound of the day. Topics range from exquisite culinary experiences to his coming of age in the industry to phone conversations with mom. We even get a few cameos from arguably the most colorful non-rapping shit talker in the game today in Big Body Bes. Of course, carved out pockets of vivid imagery are riddled throughout the project in classic Bronson fashion. He begins “The Rising” with “Fly Mary in to sing to the cow before we slaughtered it/and then I ordered it” alluding to the assumption that all Bronson’s meals are anointed and prepared with specific direction. Bronson has an epiphany of sorts on the lead single and closing track “Easy Rider” with lines like “We took acid for ten days straight up in the mountains/ started running with the stallions/ playing Frisbee in the West Indies/did the tango with my kidneys/eyes open now I know just who my kids need.”

Action Bronson knows exactly what he wants out of this game. Sticking to his successful formula while still managing to innovate shines evident in Mr. Wonderful. There are no famous cameos, no trap records, and damn near no radio singles in a time where the aforementioned are keys to success in the industry. Mr. Wonderful is undoubtedly Bronson down to his bear elements, standing at the helm exclaiming, “It’s me.” And the crowd goes wild.

WORDS X BRANDON  
MORNING



DJ DEVANITY  
CASABLANCA'S EVERY FRIDAY  
BEDSTUY, BROOKLYN







**Israel David | Installation Boutique**



I traveled to Florida for undergraduate studies at the Great Bethune–Cookman University in Daytona Beach. Don't even misconstrue the image in your head; sounds like a beach party every night with exotic creatures from all walks of life, with bodies made up of gods and goddesses, but MTV's Spring Break drowned right along with the pulsation of the itty bitty town back in the early '00s. Therefore, that dirty magic had to be created with innovative college personalities in order to fulfill what we imagined hiking to the sunshine state would be all about. I went to school with a lot of folks from the east coast: Boston, New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia and the DMV area, but there was a southern-like charm with a hustlers mentality in Philly and Maryland people.

Residing from southern grounds of what's basically Mexico, our worlds in undergrad could and did easily collide. Philly people walked with an extra pep in their kicks with a flavor that only resides there—anyone can detect the classic Philly beard! The city's street mural game is strictly on point and convincing. Some of my closest relationships are with those who hail from the 215. Somehow I knew early on in middle school through the designs of music inspirations that Philly had a warm designated place in my heart. *It's truly magical to travel elsewhere to discover what you already knew.* Sitting down with fashion guru in stride, *Israel David*, over coffee in a quiet, peaceful backyard in Crown Heights instantly brought me back to those easygoing collegiate days hanging with those Philly charms. Israel kicked off our conversation with: "Philly breeds hustlers."

From selling shirts on Franklin Ave. to opening Installation Boutique, Israel David's grind from start to end will be historic content for the Crown Heights archives. This business-savvy, fashion leader is nowhere near meeting the Omega since he's only in the second quarter and in control of the game, pacing it. *"I feel the frequency is high to connect and make things happen. It's not the six-degree separation anymore. It's more like two or three,"* states the entrepreneur as we chopped it up about painting independent ideas with manifestation glitter, and letting them shine as industries have changed along the years. Israel's background rings in music as mama is a jazz vocalist and papa made sweet music with some of the greats we know as *Nina Simone, Bob James, Chaka Khan, Stevie Wonder, and Billy Paul*. I knew there was hot fire in Philly's music scene...I just knew it. Once aspired by P. Diddy's fashion sense and self-managerial pursuits intertwined with Russell Simmons' heavy influence on hip hop, Israel David sought out to find himself as an A&R. "In 2002

big budgets were cut. By 2007 the music industry was really over,” says Israel--Not that this reality crushed his dream to fall into the music industry since he took interest of the wears and cuts of fashion early in age. “I watched my grandma cut patterns with newspaper so by 16 I was making my own clothes.”

Imagine a punk teenage Bul who plays the violin and trumpet. He sports a red mohawk and designs his personal DIY wardrobe which includes platforms. I believe there's truth in authentically engrained hip hop heads enduring an appreciation for the new wave scene as both worlds nursed each other in the late 70s into the early 80s. I also believe the previous two sentences speaks volumes not only gearing the influences of the fashion forward mogul, but reveals Israel's substantial and interpersonal relations he endures to connect international dots. Carving his way into the industry by dressing and styling for high end brands while attending Temple University, the newfound creator and owner of Installation NYC, soon found himself working in production management and visual direction with French Connection, Ralph Lauren, Marc Jacobs, and LVMH.

The treadmill picked up into high gear shortly after the young prince found himself conducting fashion endeavors in Argentina for a year. Recalling memories he stowed away for a later story finally came to life as Israel eyes lit up as we talked about his South American experiences. We're



WORDS X CHEEBA CRUZ  
PHOTO X COURTNEY JEFFERSON



never too young or too old to get out there and shake some marbles up outside of our comfort zones. Lessons rest in the experience, not in the perspective of the experience. This guy was 24 years old making elite moves and rolling around with Lenny Kravitz. Returning to New York for Israel was like making homemade tamales – ALL from scratch. So one does what one needs to do, settle, and make it through like a champ. Most workers of the 9-to-5 who decide to branch out of that circle and land themselves into self-employment, probably have had that one or few job experiences when time and courage suggested enough is enough. After each storm comes a golden ticket and now the entrepreneur allows himself to march to his rudiment because he can.

Installation Boutique is an NYC based designer and adoringly-homey, women and men's consignment store located in Crown Heights. While promoting emerging designers, the store is a place that creates a cushy environment with pieces that glamour a consumers' closet. The cozy shop has recently teamed up with the A\$AP Mob and Leisure Life for some pretty bomb events. "All the arts correlate while creating a scene," says David as he's the brains behind a movement at 733 Franklin Avenue pushing fashion awareness, music, and the arts. We need a leader with qualities to get the job done to preserve cultural fineness that bleeds in these Brooklyn streets. "There's no more retail on Franklin Avenue. The Ave sold out." VC elects Israel David to come through and be one of the greats to get 'er done.











WORDS X CHEEBA CRUZ  
PHOTO X COURTNEY JEFFERSON

## THE LAM HAUS PROJECT | Rooted In Jamaica

This summer was a hot one indeed. I know of southern heat but damn. Maybe it was the facade of the city's new gleam that made 2012 a magical one. At the time accumulating experience in high end fashion required me to crusade to all sorts of events and get lost more often than not, since I was fresh to New York's grid. A pattern of pompous energy settled within these crowds so it was relieving attending an Ivana Helsinki and On The Lam pop up event. I was immediately attracted to the marriage and family-business hustle. I knew because Lilli Danschu and Sibnavus Francis, creators of the On The Lam brand, have a benevolent and simultaneous bond with each other that's transparently noted. The couple's energy got to my wallet so I made a purchase. I quickly ran through a jar of mineral bath scrub Ivana Helsinki blessed me with, and three years later, I'm still wearing my charcoal grey, tie-dye tee that has a baby hole in the gut. Three years later, it's also a gift from the heavens to witness the duo dynamic couple glow with love with a little one on the way.

The endearment reigning over Lilli's aura right now looks just like the fuchsia flower she is—electrifyingly radiant in her prime season. Busy and beautiful, Lilli admits to looking at her brands' bio just to keep track of what her and hubby are diving into. Currently soaking up radiant nutrients in the sunshine state, while diligently putting time toward another DIY project building a revitalized community in Jamaica, 'Lillinogood' and 'Sibnogood' never cease their rotation of innovations. Since launching the androgynous-inspired fashion line in 2010, the power partners are not only consistently fondling with creative triggers for their urban wear, but offer visual media services in film and photography, while running a traveling kitchen. *"We want to be apart of the artist and ecotourism movement,"* states Sib.



Playing on the various services On The Lam provides, from Lam Spread to Lam Chops to Lam Haus, the mission of The Lam Haus Project is the ultimate way of a ‘philanthropic pursuit.’ “We’re tying in all pursuits into one and giving back to the community,” says Sib. The couple joins forces with ‘By Any Meals’, a five-borough food drive that feeds families, so it’s in good nature for the two to build an infrastructure sustaining a reliable eco-system, created for the people by the people of the land of Grange Hills, Jamaica. Designed to provide a village with job opportunities in agriculture while allowing artists of all traits to live and build on the site, The Lam Haus is inspired by natures’ patterns to continue their work building community development. During our last meet at ‘The Great Georgiana’, I chowed down on a bomb Lam Chops plate of kale with chickpea yogurt, grits and eggs, and anxiously let the two know to notify me of the first artist outreach when the operation is running and revitalizing Jamaica’s rich soils. Lam Chops landed weekend brunch gigs at the poppin’ Clinton Hills bar and restaurant that gets extra points for providing a stage and turntables to get their music events on a Brooklyn radar. It’s nice to see a venue take care of the DJ while letting clientele know the space doesn’t fool around about the music – much respect.

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*“We’re going back into the land. Young people like us have the resources to revamp the agriculture industry as well as tourism industry. Money isn’t going back into the infrastructure and tourism is where the money is at in Jamaica. We’re using this to our advantage to make it more than what it can be. We’re taking gentrification on in Jamaica since there’s a lot of land given away from the natives.” / Sib*







WORDS X CHEEBA CRUZ  
PHOTOS X RYAN LYONS





Borders Bookstore mused a mental reservation filled with curiosity, hovering over language and music early on in youth. The two story maze that felt like a cooler version of a library, appeared as a translucent freedom zone for personal interests. There was paper literally everywhere in a multitude of formats. I was a nerd then for school supplies and now a dweeb for office supplies; there's always been a kinetic connection of rejuvenating fresh creativity. *Again, you know who you are when you're five.* The sweetest component Borders acquired was its' music section; an angelic safe haven with wings guarding the sanctuary. The 90s was a memorable era where alternative, grunge, dance pop, electronic house, r&b, andddd.. gangster rap controlled the radio with forever young memories of solid traffic hour mixes and tape cassette recordings. I would anticipate hopping out of the car, strolling into the music section at Borders to sit down for as long as I could before my mother was ready to go. Listening to albums on display and then deciding to make a purchase is a deceased mechanism the consumer shall never see again. Barnes and Noble stripped the electric outlets in 2007. Borders Group closed in 2011. Coffee shops sprout like azaleas in May in 2014.

Journalists, writers, and book fondlers have been forced out of workspaces, relocating to local coffee shops– and then there's Starbucks. It becomes a “death to books; birth to Wi-Fi” ideology since our work is computer-based. In a perfect square perimeter coveting around my block, I stroll past two coffee shops and either spanking new buildings, or ones stamped with confirmation that new condos will soon be arriving. Meanwhile the liquor stores and Western Unions are lit with everyday, surviving Bedstuy patrons. The same block where a 2014 December execution of two cops took place is the same block where residential backgrounds are rapidly altering and businesses are popping up. Reconnect Café is one of the coffee shops on the avenue that not only receives high appraisal for its mission and service, but because its an establishment that isn't offensive to the community. Their story is actually quite endearing.

Throughout the day Ms. Anna sits on a bench while giving away her warm smile, a wave, and an offer to buy you coffee. B.A., who works the Laundromat, is ready to spark positive conversation about life while exposing a high intention to serve orderly and with polite mannerisms.

Father Jim has a devout presence that's embedded in uplifting communal struggle. Father Jim's sidekick, mentee and manager of Reconnect conducts a snugly space suitable for all ages and statuses, while playing an imperative development role not only to the young men who work the café, but to the surrounding families. His generosity to make a sandwich for a resident he knows from growing up in the neighborhood or stepping outside to give an elderly man a cup of Joe, are only minor gestures that rest on the surface of his character. Just reaching 30 years of youth, Efrain Hernandez is most gracious for the gift to foster entrepreneur skills to the youth, opposed to the lifestyle he knows all too well; and for avoiding seeing six feet under.

Waking at five in the morning to assist a group of young men compiled from Bedstuy committed to redirecting their lives, together they make make Apple Turnovers; Tres Leches; and the popular Bedstuy Cookie. Along with running a bakey, the young men also push a graphics shop. Efrain Hernandez has traded in dusty hustler notions of street life to lead a herd of becoming adults through testimonial works. With a strategizing plan to help take care of his family, the 'Puerto Rican Goat' found a way to make fast money as a kid growing up in Bedstuy. "There used to be 25 people on the corner 'til 4am so it was easy," says Efrain. It wasn't until after both of his best friends were murdered when he turned to priest of former Our Lady of Montserrat, Father Jim O'Shea, for consecration over his life. Father Jim visited a troubled youthful version of Efrain while surviving through incarceration and told himself *"Once I came home I would give Father Jim five years of my life."*

Five years later, the pair has successfully fulfilled the mission of the Vernon Ave Project to mentor young troubled men by birthing Reconnect: a bakery, café, and graphics company. Efrain mentions his mentor and work partner "forces his will on folks and everyone loves him." Father Jim has been a resident of Bedstuy for over 20 years while witnessing misappropriate targeting toward the Black community- especially red dots waiting for black and brown males. Understanding that equipping the youth with equitable resources to substantially contribute to the greater masses is what creates a conscious language within Reconnect Café. Sure, it's apart of the gentrification plates shifting but customers who greet the shop leave with an awareness while preserving the lives of our young men.



A close-up portrait of Alexis Mena, a man with dark skin and dreadlocks, wearing a dark brown wide-brimmed hat and a dark jacket. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a warm, textured wall.

VC:

Who  
Is  
Alexis  
Mena?

INTERVIEW X CHEEBA CRUZ  
PHOTOS X DREAD THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Alexis Mena is an Afro Latino alchemist, farmer, yogi and multi disciplinary artist. Just your every day guy from the county of the Kings.

**VC: How did you get into serious urban horticulture?**

AM: I was born into it. It's part of my culture being from the Caribbean. It's the only way you keep yourself from starving when you're poor. Growing up first generation American, my family always grew things in our backyard or a patch of dirt in front of my house. My grandmother is a guerilla farmer.

**VC: How many gardens do you cater to in Brooklyn?**

AM: I have helped to build six skate parks, three community gardens, two green spaces, and I'm building my first school garden at the school I work at. I tend to six gardens currently.



**VC: What albums are in rotation right now?**

Thunder Cat's 'Apocalypse', FKA Twigs, and Boris Gardiner's 'Every Nigga is a Star'; this is the album Kendrick [Lamar] sampled in his new album. I looked it up it and was feeling the tunes, so I put it into rotation.

**VC: When did you realize a corporate- to-artist transition was in calling?**

Well I started as an artist. I have been doing graffiti since I was 12. I got arrested a lot so I got into painting murals to stay out of trouble. My mother got me into real estate at 16 working for some Hasids collecting rent for them. I got my real estate salesperson license at 18 and then opened a real estate office with my best friend and our brothers at 21. I was also a loan officer for a while. I worked for a few banks before the 2008 market crash. I lost everything: my office, my job, my car, my fiancé at the time, and eventually my sanity. Becoming a capitalist made me a lot of money but not happiness and definitely not peace. Societal



standards told me losing everything meant I had no value anymore. I locked myself in my room for five months to read the torah, the Noble Quran, and the Bible looking for an answer to a question I was scared to ask myself. I decided organized religion wasn't for me but I was a very spiritual person, and came to the realization that we each carry our own religion. **Everyone creates their own when they decide their personal system of beliefs.**

AM: I studied Yoruba and Santeria under my aunt for a while and discovered yoga and meditation around the same time. I attended the University of Youtube and educated myself on everything from Kundalini Yoga to the origins of Alchemy. This is when I reconnected with my ability to create. I started drawing, sculpting and building again. I decided my transformation from artist to capitalist, and back to being an artist, was something a lot of people in my community were experiencing. I decided to become a teacher in order to share my experience and help others in their transformation.

**VC: Much kudos on being one of the first resident artists at ReNew Lots Artist Incubator in East New York. How do you plan to impact the community at the new space?**

AM: My plan is to work together with the other artists in residence. There are a core group of designers, thinkers, and doers who I have assembled, and with the communities of ENY and Brownsville, we will work to create opportunities for the people of these communities to gain economic and political power in an effort to change our current socio-economic situation. We will do that by creating a safe inviting space, putting on quality programming, facilitation workshops and events that cater to the issues black and brown folk are still facing. I can't change anything. Only we can do it together.

**VC: What current projects are you working on?**

AM: We are putting together a Skillshare where artists and thinkers share their ideas and knowledge. We are planning a local film festival and a music festival to rival Afro Punk now that they went corporate; various events and programming that will bring back the roots and culture to our people.

**VC: Top 3 albums.**

AM: Lauryn Hill's MTV Unplugged album— that ish changed my life, yo. Thank you, Ms. Hill. **If you want to know where hip hop really originates from listen to Bunny Wailer's 'Black Heart Man' and The first Last Poets' album.**

Bodies move here from all crevices of the world with a human natural tendency to find cozy acceptance at a local restaurant, pastry shop or bar. Fresh businesses pop up everyday in Brooklyn; there's now a Starbucks off of Myrtle Avenue in Clinton Hill. It's imperative to snuggle into a place that feels like family and it's *love* every time there's a get-up. Skytown Café and Bar was a second home to a hub of artists mobbing in Bushwick and Bedstuy for a good run. Whether if it was celebrating late night summer shenanigans and rolling out of bed the next morning to get coffee or brunch, this place was considered our 'Cheers'. A dim setting at night accommodated by yellow luminance from candlelight, made it easy to write on blocky elongated, wooden tables. I dig on "nature feels" that an establishment presents; I want to experience roots of a jungle filled with species of trees living in New York.

A couple of solid, living room moldings took place for a couple of years at Skytown. An investment of character was built into the bar with just a small circle of the above artists mentioned who are everyday people. We're in our twenties and have our own quirks so together it's always a TV series. Sam Perry was a bartender who is a king of cocktails—he's the guy you want to hire for private kickbacks because his personality is charmingly comfortable and social.





Sam and his wife, Laura Martinez, is an adorably profound item to witness. Born in France with work tracks in Madagascar, Laura found her Nevada love and career in New York after peddling a job opportunity in London. She made the right decision.

After excursions living in this city for three years, it's been stimulating to see the "corporate-to-artist" transition amongst this circle. I'm proud of each and every person out of Skytown because this is a distracting city, but we move here with purpose to get' ir done and handle up on business. Even if we're in the bar and restaurant industry, the better focus is on our artistic crafts and the notion of us blossoming under the same peddle is amazing. Magic happens when you sit down just to figure it out. You don't imagine the exact possibilities that will run into you nor do you think about how broad the rubber band can stretch. I don't believe artists go into their work with an exact vision board set but it's like meditation, once you commit things rapidly change. Quit your day job to commit to your real dreams. Nah, I'm joking but watch the purple magic bubble when you focus in on your gifts.

Laura started with a fresh notebook, pens and markers that hubby gave her. She sat down one night and unraveled what she collected from studying African art through basket weaving and experimenting with metals and woods onto paper. *"I found myself jumping out of my bed at night to draw out something I saw,"* Laura excitedly says as we're talking over coffee at Reconnect Café. She goes into explaining how she dove into tattoo apprenticing at a shop in Bushwick just by walking in. Her sketchings soon scattered to restaurant design and products such as a biker helmet. She goes on to mention: "Everything happens without me looking for it. I've gotten all my jobs by word of mouth." Sam lets her practice on him and she's had to buy an appointment book to pencil in her friends and new clients. She's absolutely kicking ass! *"I would love to work with sculpting since it's about a balance with lines and geometry. It's gotten to the point I can draw perfect lines without a ruler,"* Laura continues.

I discovered Laura and Donwill have a peculiar artist similarity: both *hear music and see shapes*. In the music world it's common to come in passing with folks with synesthesia, but to listen to both Laura and Don paint the picture with this ability is like finding a counterpart.

“I’m biased to the drums because percussion relates to my work within lines. I hear drums and see lines.”

**VC: Girl. Tattoo apprenticing sprung into full-time artist in a couple of months! What kind of pieces are being requested of you?**

LM: I’ve been tattooing almost my own drawings that people choose or commissioned me to do. I have tattooed some of my designs on arms, ribs, back, legs and even on chests. I’m lucky to have people around me who trust me from the beginning and push me to do it even if I had to practice on them. But I’m glad to realize that they were true to push me and the results went well pretty fast!

**VC: Are your clientele friends of yours or fresh faces that trust you through word of mouth?**

LM: Both actually- mostly friends at the beginning then word of mouth turns into friends of friends. The best part of tattooing is being able to meet new people and being able to share an intense and deep moment with them very quickly. You get to know them in an uncommon way, a connection full of mix feelings: excitement, joy, fear and pain. You have to make them feel comfortable. Have them give you their trust since you are about to mark them forever with your art. There is something absolutely magical and mystical in the moment of giving a tattoo. It’s a true and deep exchange between us though.

**VC: What are your summer goals?**

LM: I’m actually going on a trip with Sam very soon from the beginning of July until next January- so six months total! A travel that will start in France, my country, Spain, and then Asia (Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Buma). A beautiful trip that will permit me to take new inspirations from different cultures and traditions. **A lot of my drawings are inspired from Madagascar traditional protection symbols after I spent some months there. I want to keep travelling to discover new people, their cultures and the symbols that are always full of history and strength.** I know Asia is going to be a real new turn with so many new things to discover about my creativity.



**VC: You live in Bedstuy. How have you seen the neighborhood change?**

LM: People from the neighborhood are getting pushed out by landlords so they can make more money. It's hard to see also knowing that some of these places, like Elisa's coffee shop that was in the corner of my building, had so much soul, history and love inside. I feel Bedstuy hasn't changed as much as



Bushwick is right now, yet, but we all can see it coming more and more. It's hard to realize that in a few years Bedstuy might become a new Williamsburg, losing the beautiful history and soul that we all love by living here.

**VC: How can you be apart of gentrifying here without being offensive?**

LM: Just by sharing love with the people that are actually still here. It's nice that everyday I see the same people and families sitting on these old stoops. And we always share a conversation, a smile, and a "have a beautiful day", it's been two years now since these simple conversations and simple moments of love became a part of my daily life. That's what is still beautiful. It's still there in Bedstuy and even if it's changing, I'm glad to see that love is still there. These people who have been through all the history of Bedstuy make my street feel like home. It's a comfortable feeling to know that we are kind of "protected" here. Every time I walk the street I know there is always a familiar face keeping an eye on me if I ever need help.

**VC: How can artists who freshly relocated to Bushwick and Bedstuy contribute to what's happening?**

LM: Just by keeping these simple moments happening. I was seated on my stoop and met people from the next building. Once they realized I was tattooing they shared it with other people from the area. And a simple conversation on the stoop became the beginning of new projects and shadings. **It's important to stay connected.** I'm glad to see that there are places like Reconnect Cafe doing a beautiful job at keeping that love spirit in Bedstuy. No matter who you are or where you come from, that place has a real soul and such great energy that brings together old families from the neighborhood and recent movers. It's also beautiful that most bars and coffee shops in Bedstuy and Bushwick keep organizing art shows. It's a great way to meet new artists from our area and stay connected. It's a good way to make communication stronger as well as simply sharing these simple smiles everyday.





WHITLEY WATSON



TAKING  
THE SLAB  
OUT FOR A  
SPIN DOWN





# GREEN STREET





‘The Will To Win’ is more than the latest album pumped out by a Boston hip-hop trio seeing features from Mickey Factz, Raekwon, and Geechi Suede from Camp Lo. ‘The Will To Win’ is also more than a title with attributions dressed up in detrimentally surreal experiences, while exercising a true definition of music storytelling on a human level. These four little words appear to be an enticing and encouraging message to put the petal to the medal and come out on top despite interferences, but for the members of Green Street, this is the survivor’s pledge. ‘The Will To Win’ is a shattering explosive chapter of tears, sorrow and blood that Vulgar Colors and photographer, Ryan Lyons, were allowed to step into for a personal dosage of understanding. Once staring fiercely at three separate testimonials of brotherhood and unconditional love for music, the ascension continues to fly high in a green utopia tucked away in Myrtle-Wyckoff in Bushwick.

The groups’ name, Green Street, derived from a project under Blue Note Label by trio, guitarist Grant Green, drummer Dave Bailey, and bassist Ben Tucker that was recorded on Aprils Fool Day in 1961. The vinyl was entitled ‘Green Street’ in which case happens to be the groups’ favorite album. Soiled with rich hip hop seeds in fruition on jazz lands, its been favorable for Ren, Soup and A-Live to open up for Lupe Fiasco and have album appearances from Oddisee, Phonte of Little Brother, Darien Brockington, and Donwill.

As he greeted us at the door with an amiable smile and sparkly clean attire, producer and master of the bass, Renaissance, provokes earth tone colors fluctuating between tree bark brown and forest green -- Ren could easily be shimmery bronze as well. It’s recognized he’s a smooth brother with soul from jump street as he escorted us into a pad where brick and various shades of wood are quickly noted. A charcoal portrait of Muhammad Ali, abstract symmetry bounded by a white frame, and a four piece Jazz band decors one specific wall in a cozy cave. Black Star, Raekwon and Dilla vinyl covers are coasting in the mix amongst other classics. A Tribe Called Quest is bumping subtle lyrics in the background as we all acclimate to a fresh circle just formed. It’s a true Hip Hop forum when the musicians, journalists, and photographer are present.



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WORDS X CHEEBA CRUZ  
PHOTOS X RYAN LYONS

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Soupa's aura is azure blue; calmly playful and smooth sailing, but armored with force. The MC is casually sporting high top Converse, black sweats, a tribal pattern hoodie, and a hat sitting backwards. I joke with him that he looks like a guy I'd see in the "Mass Comm" building during undergrad (he studied film). A-Live, the one-hitter knock out, is more of a sunray gradient of orange and red with faint hints of yellow. There's a philosophical element and peaceful assertiveness to this MC. You can tell he thoroughly digests experiences and transforms lessons into a language that's a checkpoint in 'the rapper's package.'

The two MC's substantial lyrics weighing over Ren's influence of Brazilian samples, Jazz drum persuasion, and eclectic base rifts, creates a 90s relevancy infiltrating light hooks over rhythmic driven verses. Accents of brass instruments and melodic layers in jazz, as well as early hip hop samples and boom bat drums, inspire Renaissance's beats. The ingredients A-Live, Soup and Renaissance creates continues down a path that was created before them of feel good music and special lyrical delivery. Green Street shows homage to a special era of trailblazers in their records and surroundings. I could relate to the house décor dressed with music touches as we heavily slunk into rotation about hip-hop's current make up, Lupe Fiasco and Kanye West, and how faintly waving to death naturally invigorates Green Street's 'will to win' in this industry.













**DJ PRINCE | Back to Wax 'Shottas'**

The phrase “It’s go time” has just seen a brand new surface– instead “*It’s renaissance time*” says DJ Prince. A personal DJ for Brooklyn’s *Skyzoo* and heavy producer for hip hop collective, Kooley High, Sir Prince has been brewing up concoctions in the laboratory since last year in full preparation to straddle mountains in 2015. Since *Largeup.com* released ‘Shottas’ by DJ Prince featuring *Sean Price*, the record is available for purchase at *Fat Beats*. Note how “record” is used in its’ proper context as the Long Island musician is making sure to sparkle hella light onto the wax game. Sending a salute to ancestral origins of DJs lighting up New York parties with monster homemade systems, turntables, and rhythm–steady vinyls, the head strong lion is is not only illuminating the 45”, but the cover art is classic like a journalists’ fountain pen.

Prince has a good grip onto mastering dancehall and Caribbean vibes blending into a classic hip hop piece. As a producer and DJ with roots embedded in Jamaica, he has an upper advantage to the game as reggae pursues heavy bass while hip hop mirrors the same. It’s clockwork. His beats for eats either speed it up or mellow it out. “Jamaica is rhythm,” states the prince. Parallel to the lion logo mounted with Mobile Kitchen, Prince maneuvers with a pursuit of passion– hence the word “mobile.” There’s a small margin for non productive days that will always include an endeavor dedicated to music.

With a few projects manifesting in the background for now, there’s plenty of business to take care of in present times from the Mobile Kitchen family. There’s a new 45” vinyl with “DJ Prince ‘Shottas’ with Sean Price” in newspaper typography that has some cyphering rounds to make. With aspirations to “solidify world distribution,” the The Long Island kid is putting it into motion to tag up Japan and Germany with vinyl markings. A newly cultivated project with dashes of seasoned influences is necessary to connect dots from the past to relevancy. “*My purpose is to emulate all that old stuff to reach the youth and those who don’t know,*” says DJ Prince. It’s a historical point that this process even took place.

WORDS X CHEEBA CRUZ

PHOTOS X COURTNEY JEFFERSON



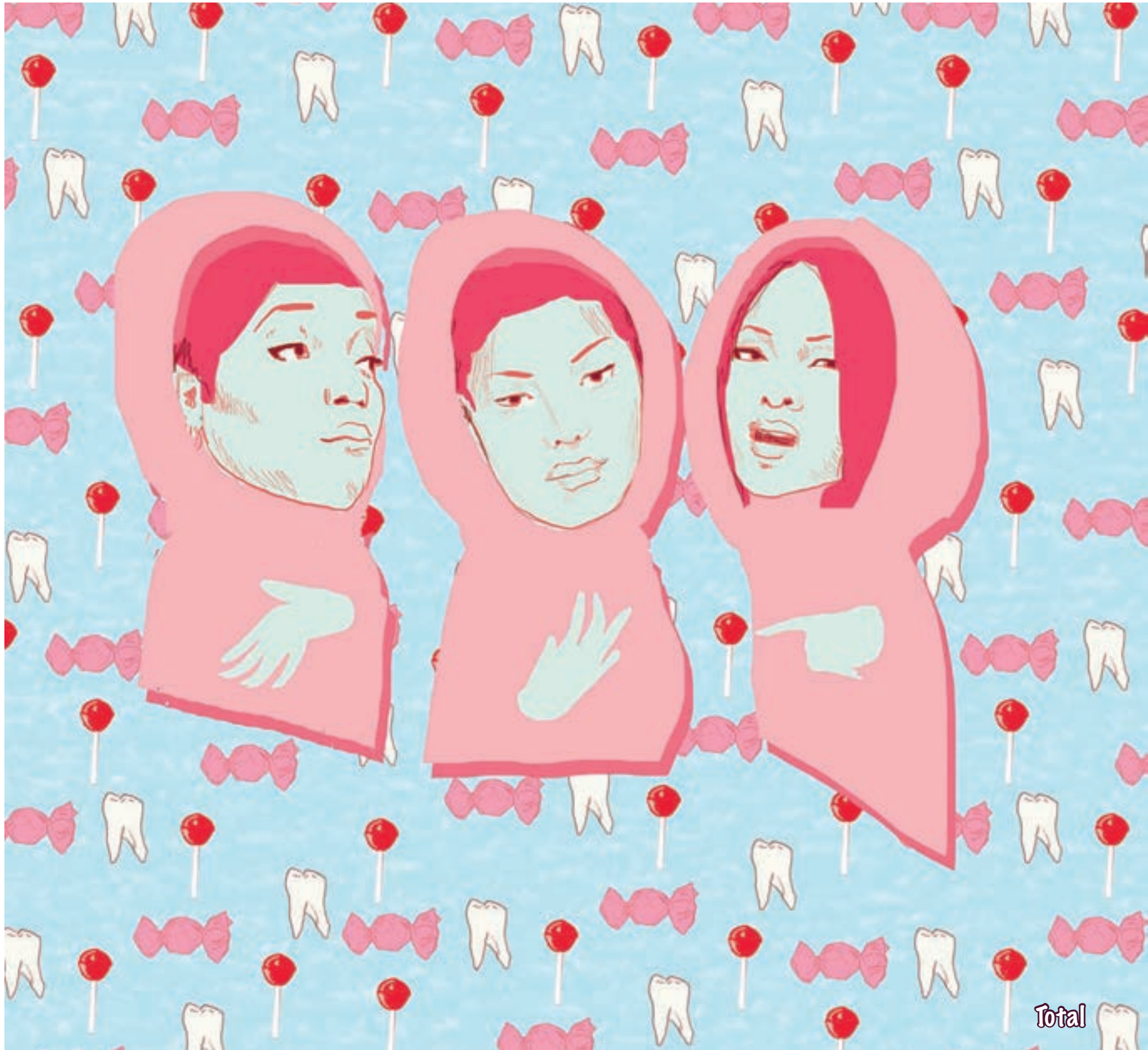
# SOUR SOUL X BBNG X GHOSTFACE

Hip hop has had an on-and-off love affair with jazz since the early days. Clearly deriving elements from the genre, hip hop has since taken on another form somewhat far removed from its jazz counterpart. Luckily, we have bands like *BADBADNOTGOOD* to bring us back to the essence. Their fourth full-length effort, 'Sour Soul', with assisted vocals from the legendary *Ghostface Killah*, is a live-music junkie's wet dream. With no apparent conceptual direction other than that of great raps and smooth instrumentation, the marriage made over music between BBNG and Starks is a treat for hip-hop heads and jazz lovers alike.

The young Toronto trio provides us with a sound reminiscent of an old movie score. As you listen to the album, visions of sepia tinted scenes with Ghostface serving as the main protagonist automatically pop into your head. Just over thirty minutes, 'Sour Soul' serves as a relatively short film, although no shorts are taken with respect to production and lyrics. The band compliments Ghost quite well, who is known for his descriptive, tangent flow that often takes listeners off the deep end by mid track. As not to overwhelm heads with just raw raps, BBNG strategically and effectively fits instrumental tracks and breaks into the album showcasing not only the trio's jazz roots, but also their ability to construct a cohesive hip hop album. The effort begins with an easy introduction in "Mono" quickly followed up by the album's percussion heavy title track "Sour Soul" where Ghost makes his entrance with the opening line "Cleanse me..." From there rapid-fire flows from the founding Wu member as he riddles the record. He is assisted by the likes of Danny Brown, a resurrected Elzhi, windy city native tree- and the indubitable DOOM throughout the project. Each feature is perfectly placed with sounds that compliment each guest's unique style. Starks veteran rhyming ability allows him to shape-shift on tracks, adapting to various styles of play delivered by the band. Ghost gives us his smooth, Pretty Tone bravado on "Tone's Rap" with lines like "Caddy suede is brush/the velvet shirt is crush/the diamonds in my teeth are flush/I'ma fly nigga." *He also delivers hood psalms* on the Tree assisted "Street Knowledge" where he raps, "Bitches is actresses, just screw em and leave/they fuck up your whole operation like Adam and Eve/ don't play the rooftops/ change the color of your blue tops/ and them bags with the smiley faces get new stocks."

No stranger to constant hard work and unexpected collaboration, Ghostface Killah delivers very well over BBNG's instrumentation. Another successful effort for both acts, 'Sour Soul' brings the genre of hip hop full circle by tapping into a veterans sharp abilities, and providing a live sound from a collective whose background is that of

the classically trained. The sound is refreshing in its imperfection as opposed to the typical pressed up studio productions of the day. It's like playing a live show straight from your iTunes: complete with a pig-masked drummer and Iron Man as the lead singer.





'Tetsuo and Youth' stands tall and alone in a roped off section of Lupe's catalog. A different take on a story that's already been told, Lupe provides us with a seasonally themed effort chalked full of advanced lyricism, versatile production, and social commentary. Serving as his closing arguments at Atlantic Records, 'Tetsuo and Youth' once again showcases the range of Lupe's artistic prowess. His ability to construct a radio friendly single and facilitate an underground posse cut, all while aligning said tracks with their respective motifs, places Lupe in a class of but a few. He seems to appease his label, his fans, as well as himself with his fifth installment. Freedom to roam and create has allowed *this project to blossom into a hip hop elite's undeniable opus.*

The album is split into the four seasons of the year, each track audibly coinciding with its respective season. The album begins in the summer with an ambient instrumental and a lengthy, yet rewind-worthy "Mural." The summer portion of the album gives listeners an upbeat sound with vibrant production and layered lyricism. Lupe, as usual, keeps it cryptic with respect to subject matter and lyrics, leaving listeners the task of dissecting and overanalyzing. Fall is ushered in by "Prisoner 1 & 2", Lupe's take on America's prison system from the perspectives of a prisoner and a guard; an appropriate opening for the fall season. Fall is characterized with a less optimistic tone than the previous season. Lupe delves into the food industry, the justice department, relationship issues, and other subjects in this portion of the album. Production, handled mostly by S1, also takes on a brisk and gloomy feel characteristic of the season. Even colder and a bit more morbid is Tetsuo and Youth's winter. Driven by blatant social commentary, the winter portion of the album touches mostly on the realities of people living in hoods throughout America. Winter opens with the feature heavy "Chopper" followed by the Ty Dolla Sign assisted single "Deliver." Once again the production, this time mostly by DJ Dahi, remains consistent with the season: cold, dark, and ominous. The album ends with "Spring"- signifying a new beginning in Lupe's life and career.

Lupe, never one to short us with lyrics and flow, remains intricately verbose throughout Tetsuo & Youth. Lupe opens the *Nikki Jean* assisted "Little Death" with "Now bring it out like a finger in the back of your mouth/ cherubs and cerebellum/Tara at Sara wedding Sam marrying Sam/band pushed upon the finger of Sam's hairiest hand." The bars refer to the pressing social issues of science versus religion and gay marriage. "Adoration of Magi"

ties in themes from video games Metal Gear Solid and Double Dragon with lines like "Low on energy find peach cobbler then gobble it/ yea, its food in them drums and boxes/ if you beat 'em up then they'll drop it/and they'll

# TETSUO + YOUTH X LUPE

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WORDS X BRANDON MORNING

GRAPHICS X WHITLEY WATSON

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rapidly flicker til they disappear/blinking gradually quickens 'til they isn't here." The lines point out ways of regaining your health throughout the game, which Lupe metaphorically connects with the realities of kids in the inner city.

The science of rap according to Lupe Fiasco is a course that the FnF general has been spoon-feeding us since the Fahrenheit mix tapes. The fifth edition of his teachings finds us at a time when structure, balance, and cohesiveness aren't a main focus in the collection of works of a hip-hop artist. Refreshingly so, Lupe once again lays a foundation and sturdily builds upon it, setting a much-needed precedent for his peers..





The Firm

DJ ILL DIGITZ  
KOOLEY HIGH  
BUSHWICK, BROOKLYN





One Word :



Tanya

# DONWILL

# Morgan



PHOTOS X COURTNEY JEFFERSON  
WORDS AND INTERVIEW X CHEEBA CRUZ



Just like my birth, June is a miraculously intense month. June was the introductory month into academic freedom after ending a long school year, but deep sea diving into softball tournaments as a kid. Z!NK Magazine sent me an email extending a marketing internship- I moved to New York on June 5th of 2012. It's also the same day Bethune-Cookman's campus grieved the suicide of a beloved band and mass communications student. Over the years I've learned to accept duality in my realms; a particular order of event and its' impact resurrects in waves of two. It's pretty much concrete at this point in my life, and if I was misguided, I just activated the force. *DJ Ill Digitz* of Kooley High hooked up *Vulgar Colors Magazine's* premiere launch party June 1st, 2014. Solstice hit shortly after and the magazine took on an additional component as a project house curating DJ parties and community events. One year later, VC is cohosting rap shows with *Dash Speaks*, *Jean Grae* and *Donwill* of Tanya Morgan, and releasing its' third issue... in June. Not even the direction of the breeze could tell me these musical pavements could happen. There was something sparkingly about seeing an italicized 'Music Critic' title on MTV or VH1 that was aspiringly glossy growing up as a kid. It's nuts the notion in a far away childhood, is a reality in moderate motion these days. In regards to my complex birth, I'm supposed to be three years older.

Don blessed me up with that opportunity to cohost with music monsters that have slayed the industry with a pretty tough line up of artists. Hip hop isn't something you slip on from time to time. It's an instilled design that isn't taught. So when dirty hip-hop heads who have turned into figures reach out for collaborative work, it's a full circle of purple magic: forever faithful to the underground. As a music journalist my tokens of appreciation run dramatically deep this point in the game. Since *Digitz* and *Charlie Smarts* from Kooley High skated on the front cover of the debut issue, the recognition from active hitters in the game and receiving thank you's for the inspiration, are golden presents that pop up at any given time. The reward comes from preserving a culture with a specific language through the use of writing. *Skyzoo's DJ Prince* is trill for this one: "*Writers control the culture. Your pen game is way better than a lot of people.*" I just want to penetrate the music game by documenting with a pen and pad. I thank all the artists who've rocked with VC thus far.

The reinforcement that you are who you are when you're five and propel personal magic early in youth, is indeed a surreal feeling. The cool part growing up a music head in the 90s is absorbing the conclusion of an analog style, therefore, millennial teenagers still caught a good mainstream wave going into the early 2000's. Artists such as *Tame Impala*, *Tanya Morgan*, amongst countless others who controlled online platforms during the mid to late 2000s, have risen to see a long endured career from digital investments. Material, especially production, in hip hop records during this time were still blazing with producers receiving critical hype from blowing up on Myspace and OkayPlayer. We see *Little Brother* produced for *Destiny's Child* and *Jay-Z's* 'The Black Album', an album in alignment with 'The College Dropout' and 'The Love Below' for an '03-'04 hip-hop holy trinity. Rooting for these producers and MCs during a transitional period from middle to high school, and now interviewing a product of this process, DonWill, is insane in the membrane.

*Von Pea*, MC and producer, and MC, Donwill, formed a relationship on *OkayPlayer.com's* message board as the two carried a similar energy. Releasing debut album, *Moonlighting*, in 2003 with influences of *Mobb Deep's* 'Streets Raised Me' and *Big L* on tracks like 'We Right Here' and 'Paper Thin', automatically put the group on the radar. Underground DJs spun at a spot called Shantytown in Jacksonville, Florida where I won't forget nights of sipping Lambic to *MF DOOM*, *Von Pea's* 'Pretty' or *Cool Calm Pete's* 'Lost.' Underground music always finds a way to reach audiences in capsules. *Tanya Morgan* has teamed up with biggies like *Ghostface Killah*, *Drake*, and *88 Keys*, and has earned the points to hold down a reoccurring slot at the CMJ Festival while making light road appearances. The boys did a coast-to-coast spring tour, performed a few shows with *Green Street*, and are hitting Canada for a few weeks in June and July.

While Donwill has actively put in more than ten years of production work and performing as a lyricist with *Tanya Morgan*, he admits to "slowly becoming a homebody dude" and "shopping for a new city." Don's got over 22 episodes with his podcast series, 'Bad With Names', while playing 'The Mechanic' in *Jean Grae* and *The Everybody's Pregnant* band.





Accidentally falling into DJing four years ago has landed him weekly gigs- a relatable story as to how he and Von Pea made a joke out of the feminine name Tanya Morgan. It started as a way to trick people but ended up reversing on the two musicians when the first album attributed more acclaim than expected. Featured on VSCO's grid and Reebok photographer, Courtney Jefferson, teamed up with VC to chime in on a Greenspoint studio where we chowed down on pizza and talked about Nick Offerman dapping Don up for his "tight raps"; how teaching junior high made him give up the classroom; and how studying engineering, photography and graphic design led to his ultimate calling of music.

“  
My relationship with music is changing. I used to really enjoy the road. Now I enjoy the studio more than the road. Performing is draining if you're doing it right.”

Donwill

Roll Bounce is playing in the background a quarter into the interview.

VC: Are you into sxsw?

Don: Artists don't break anymore because the companies are there and flying in Snoop Dogg and shit.

VC: I can remember how easy it was; Og's like Scarface was at one of your favorite bars showing local love. You got the performance and the conversation with artists.

Don: Oh yeah, you're from Houston? We're doing our first show ever in Houston. Tanya Morgan has been to Texas a million of times but our first appearance is in Houston this tour.

VC: \*\*Screams\*\* Do you guys know what venue?

Don: We are doing Alley Cat. \*\*Lists all cities\*\*

VC: H-town, whatudo? Have you ever been to Oakland?



Don: I. loveee Oakland. I have a good relationship to the city. On our first tour we went on was a disaster. Our label was stationed in Oakland and the dude from our label was just like, “dude just make it out here and we’ll take care of you.” So it was a month of hell to get to there but it was paradise when I got there. I had me a little girlfriend for a little while. I had an apartment here in New York but I was just living out there. I had my own keys to an apartment. At one point I had my friends car.

VC: Something about Oakland man. I’ve haven’t been but all my softball teammates in college were from California, and all told me I had see San Francisco-- I know there’s a hippie origin. Now that I live in New York, I can see the structure commuting from San Francisco to Oakland being similar getting to Brooklyn from Manhattan. The flavor is in the smaller cities directly outside of two big cities.

Don: The Manhattan and outer bureau thing is a good analogy. When you go to Oakland it definitely feels like you’re in Brooklyn.

Don: I don’t have a good time in southern California. Every time I go it’s either a quick trip or I don’t know anyone at a weird ass party that ends weird. Since the tour starts in L.A, I’m gonna hang out with people in the city that can show me something and not the party scene, but a cool taco stand. I’m shopping for a new city.

VC: How long have you been in New York?

Don: Eight years.

VC: Yeah, there’s this New York ticking clock.

Don: Two years is standard. Five years is I know this city. 10 years is I’m a vet. I’ve had to sit through mayoral politics and seen the neighborhoods change. It might be time, man.

VC: Folks are moving out. It sucks to read articles where new Yorkers feel the city doesn’t have the same culture anymore.

Don: And it’s the natives; people who were born and bred this city. People that bleed this city; its kinda crazy. It’s a crazy thing to see people say I gotta get outta here.

VC: What’s up with Tanya Morgan’s upcoming tours?

Don: We haven’t toured extensively in a while. We’re rebuilding our reach in smaller markets with the road. Landscape changes, venues change, promoters change, fans change, people

get babies. It gets to a point where people can't go out and support you. We're really on some shit where we know our fan base and they have to find a babysitter. I wasn't excited before because I've slowly become this homebody dude. I've built myself here. I DJ here. I do regular studio sessions. Leaving is a strange feeling to have.

VC: Naturally, this city is a mecca for whatever artistic niches you have. You gotta get out to regroup but as time goes by it becomes apparent why you stay here for 15 years.

Don: My relationship to music is changing. I used to really enjoy the road. Now I enjoy the studio more than the road. Performing is draining if you're doing it right.

VC: Ooo, good one!

Don: On the road I'm giving everything and you can't effectively live a dual life. I know I've become the dude who enjoys creating stuff more than showing people. Showing people is fun but I like to tinker in the lab. I like working on shit.

Don: It's funny man. The new album we're working on with the one we're going on tour with, we've been working on this album, but it feels insane to say it, it's been five years at this point. It's dope to see the songs still hold up sonically. It doesn't sound dated. There's no reference to it sounding old.

VC: It's tight when music is timeless; when you follow a cool, independent magazine because it's classic. You can make something classic and timeless. It doesn't have to be a blog where you're just throwing up shit just to get the clock working. Nah, you have the content just make it fit your groove.

Don: that's a thing about taking your time with it, too. There are songs that just didn't make it because they weren't good at it. You look at D'angelos album and you're like welp!- He took his time with it and it really worked out for the best.

VC: Ah! You're in my head. So you like his album? What albums did you jam on in 2014?

Don: I do, but I don't remember what happened. His album cleared the field like there's nothing else to play. You have to read me some names that will help.

VC: HA!

Don: In a weird way I don't consume music the same way either. I look at music the same way I look at movies now. If I'm gonna watch a movie, I'm gonna watch a movie. I gotta be





in the mood. When I listen to any album I want to decide I'm gonna play this album for the next hour. I wanna invite it into my life. The last album I tried to listen to that I didn't successfully hear was Lupe's album.

VC: I was coming for that one. Everyone is messing with me on this one!

Don: What came out around the same time Lupe album came out? Was it J. Cole?

VC: Lupe came out in January. J. Cole was December.

Don: There's something about that album that may have been an underground album that I was checking for. By the time Lupe album came out I had ear exhaustion. I got to the second track and I was like holy shit he's redefining everything. I was texting someone like yo, Lupe may jumped to my number 2 spot. I got to the second track..

VC: murals!

Don: And was like oh..ok! I got deeper into the album and the exhaustion kicked in and I was like I gotta do this album its proper listen. I love that second track so much and I'm so ready to listen to it.

VC: It's been forehead-squinters with the reactions when I ask about Tetuo and Youth. I'm fired up about this album and about hip hop right now.

Don: Really?

VC: I really am.

Don: Ah that's a dope feeling.

VC: Honestly, I cant remember the last time I've felt this way. There's been a rough patch of folks not making solid albums; front to back albums. We've gotten a lot of single and visuals but with Lupe's album, I feel its so cover to cover solid. Yeah, you can skip through like two tracks but the biggest statement being made is he makes you come up there. So either you're gonna try to understand or its gonna fly right over. Fa real fa real, 'Little Death'..

Don: With Nikki Jean? That's the song I cut it off on.

VC: \*\*Drops pencil\*\* What!

Don: Noo! I cut it off because it was so good and I just wasn't listening.

Give everything its adequate attention. That's all I ask people to do.

VC: Yeah man, even Courtney knows cause I've been talking about this album. That little death..it's a classic Lupe joint. It mellows out the album; it's easy on the brain.

Courtney: He's rapping his ass off.

Don: Lupe is one of the artists that meant something. He means something. He was like the first wave of Kanye students.

Courtney: He embodies all those people that encompass good people now. He can do all of those things.

Don: Skateboard, Con Fu, animation stuff... contrived or not, it meant something. Jay-z thought it was cool. =

VC: Totally. It's a Kevin Hart moment when Jigga shows up at your show and you just know what's up.

Don: The quote was: "How does it feel I'm here?"

VC: You gotta pay homage.

Don: It's not even a joke.

Courtney: It's like I've come to a certain level now; it's real. Jay-z is here you know? Once you get on a Jay-z's radar, you're on everyone's radar.

Don: I'm trying to think what other albums came out last year.

VC: Krit, Freddie Gibbs and Madlib

Courtney: Cole

VC: Aw Court, you bought a whole pizza. You should of told me.

Courtney: You know I'm hungry; I'm gonna eat. I like Krit. He pumped out an album and a mix tape. Everybody eat.

Don: Everybody eats!

VC: It's like fam in here. Don, I gotta say thank you. This is the fun part about my job being an editor: the interviews, the shoots, creative directing... it's the cream.

Don: Thanks for having me man.

VC: When did you get into spinning?

Don: That's a good question. I'm trying to remember. The first time I DJ'd was in Cincinnati for a Christmas party four years ago. A friend of mine wanted to throw a holiday party and I was joking like you should let me DJ and he said ok, cool. I was like oh shit.

\*\*Laughs\*\*



So I was like I guess I should learn how to DJ

VC: Yeah, like I got like 2 weeks- gooooo!

Don: A lot of times I try things out and figure it out in front of everyone. I don't know how to DJ but here we go. It's not even on some "I wanna catch up and DJ now" but its an new toy. I knew early on in my rap career I admired the DJ.

VC: You gotta give the DJ some.

VC: So Don are you in a band with jean Grae?

Don: \*\* -Laughs\*\* We are in a band called Everybodys Pregnant.

VC: The video is organically super funky and fun.

Don: Jean is probably is one of my favorite people in life. She's inspiring in terms of what she achieves. We're in the comedy circle so when she does quirky stuff, she hits me. I'm the keyboard player the mechanic and I'll be dropping an album as the mechanic.

Don: I'm very cognitive that I'm around some very cool people. I don't take it for granted at all.

VC: What's your favorite instrument?

Don: Its cliché: any percussion instrument is the backbone. Even when you think of the 808... that's my favorite. I used to play trumpet in elementary school. My mom called me like hey I found your trumpet. I told her to send it. I'm gonna pick it back up and make some noise. Piss my neighbors off.

VC: Since you like the drums, what color can you relate it to?

Don: Red or green. Red because you notice it instantly and green is neutral. Even when you have a neon green, it's bright but its not bright. It's like grey in my mind. You know when people are like that bass line is blue?

I'm like I think you're being weird right now but Von is like that. Jean is like that. I can describe instruments with shapes.

VC: Violin?

Don: Triangle. I hear shrilling.

VC: Bass.

Don: Square. VC



**MARKUS PRIME | Holy Appointed One**

Social media has the power to hold a specific weight on exposing special people with embedded talents, while the entire world has the ability to absorb ones profile. It may get lost in transaction when we click the “send” button just how open we are to signing our content for ownership over to the internet Gods, and also just how mighty ones contribution to humanity can affect another person. When you come across a specific Instagram page that’s radiantly popping with a rack of followers you’re instantly intrigued. It is called Instagram with constructed evident purpose. Sometimes that affection makes some pretty scummy folks out there, somehow functioning, act on a notion to blatantly take advantage of someone else’s movement, and make a commodity investment to monetize on a product. Prevalent visual artist of this era, *Markus Prime*, has been penetrating the hearts in the art world and appreciators of Black art– even enough to flatter international audiences to levels of thievery. Choking and deserves rage? Yes, but endless amounts of rich treasure deposits into Prime’s existence. It’s an awkward kudos to send him but if someone jacks your operation, it means you’re doing your job; his work is that captivating. It’s clear by his audience the sharpie maniac was created to not only grace these times with rooted empowering pieces, but to get a particular conversation rolling ascending Black people to higher grounds.

While flooding the Internet with Black illustrational art, there’s a primitive connection to Markus Prime having a royal tie to his last name. As an artist drawing from free space in his imagination, Markus is an advocate for accentually depicting women in his works, showing a physical and internal strength that’s truthfully embedded in women. Young girls can look at his drawings that reflect these women in the making, while inspiring these young hearts to love their curls. Some men take note to build a more positive perspective toward women. The young guru is leading a tribe of his own while “changing the view on Black women and impacting beliefs,” says Markus. Fueling from passion that *“the subject of Black women is very heavy,”* continues the popular figure, the free-form artist is no doubt penetrating today’s culture with a pure custom penmanship that’s mastering animation. It’s like inhaling a fresh first pull of spring air following particular artists who have been chosen to lead through art because these works are causing arousing responses. *“I’m just expressing something that everybody agrees with– I can’t push a culture without people agreeing. The response is obviously necessary,”* states Prime.

WORDS X CHEEBA CRUZ

PHOTOS X DREAD THE PHOTOGRAPHER



This modern chapter of American history is certainly dumping a transparent awareness onto socioeconomic status. Gaps keep extending and the public's trust for the police keeps thinning out like the blood of your local alcoholic surviving on your Brooklyn block. Folks continue to carry on frustration with the music industry and journalists are pissed because bloggers exist. However, the managerial pen is being passed down now. Some of the right people have been chosen to lead this generation and hold a responsibility to curve a majority perspective to the left. Hip hop is re-modeling a face that's motivating for preserving the culture. Photographers are reshaping the image of the radiant Black woman back into her just elegance and divine presence. Artists are exerting a necessary energy that's cultivating present culture while documenting the times. If these times are inquisitively taking up massive space in our brains that results in frustration, artists are exhibiting just that. It's a revelation to partake in the experience. Creators have to tell the truth in their works and I currently like what I'm seeing from the Y generation.

One adequate factor to the dual design of a millennial person is that one has the best of both worlds. A millennial can stray away from a laptop because memories of running around outside until the streetlights came on linger in a childhood box. We grew up to our parents playing funky records over dinner parties and were the first teenagers to lose sleep due to AOL instant messenger. With some growing pain experiences and screw ups under the belts of this generation, only because time and experience is a great teacher- and sometimes an ass whooping. This *group* is currently leading platforms.



## Dread The Photographer

**VC: What is your favorite subject and/or place to photograph?**

Dread: Brooklyn. The emotion in the buildings and people and scenery make me feel things like no other.

**VC: Can you remember your first experience with a camera?**

Dread: No, but I remember at a very young age going with my grandmother every week to get her film developed. My love for photography started then.

**VC: When did you realize that you saw the world differently than others do?**

Dread: My first year of art school. I was a photography major and it was then I realized my photographs and subjects were different than those of my peers.

**VC: What is your understanding of the meaning of life?**

Dread: **I'm not very sure. I just understand we as humans have one life to live so it should be lived passionately.**

**VC: What is it that motivates you each morning to continue cultivating your craft?**

Dread: My mother and supporters; supporters who don't even know me in real life but send me such beautiful messages that I inspire them on so many levels. It's a beautiful thing to feel.

**VC: In regards to your "Van Gogh" tattoo, what do you admire most about him? Is there a painting that particularly moves you?**

Dread: I admire him for his extraordinary amount of passion. He died because he felt if he couldn't paint anymore then there was no reason to live. I think to have that amount of love for something to risk your life for it is incredible.

**VC: What does this book, which incorporates both poetry and photography, intend to accomplish?**

Dread: Mainly, I just want other people like me to know they are not alone. It gives others the voice to express how they feel if they are not able to do so themselves.



**VC: You have completed your first book, Return to Sender. What inspired the title?**

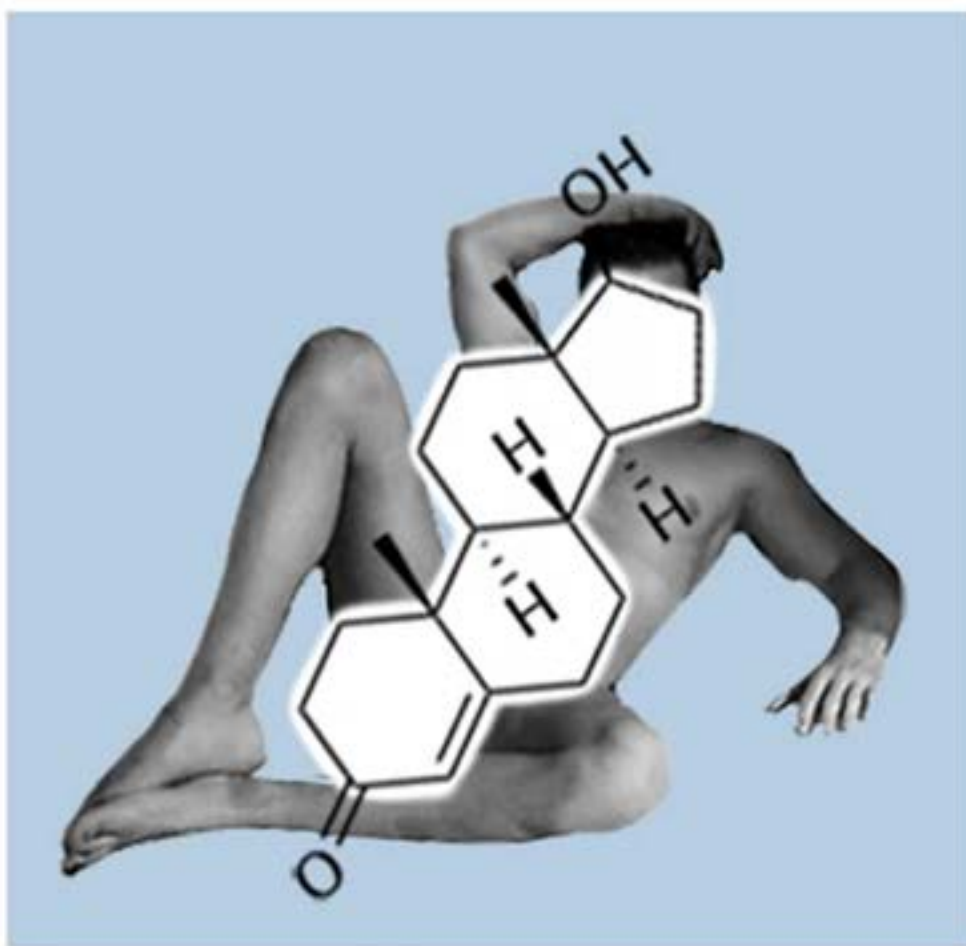
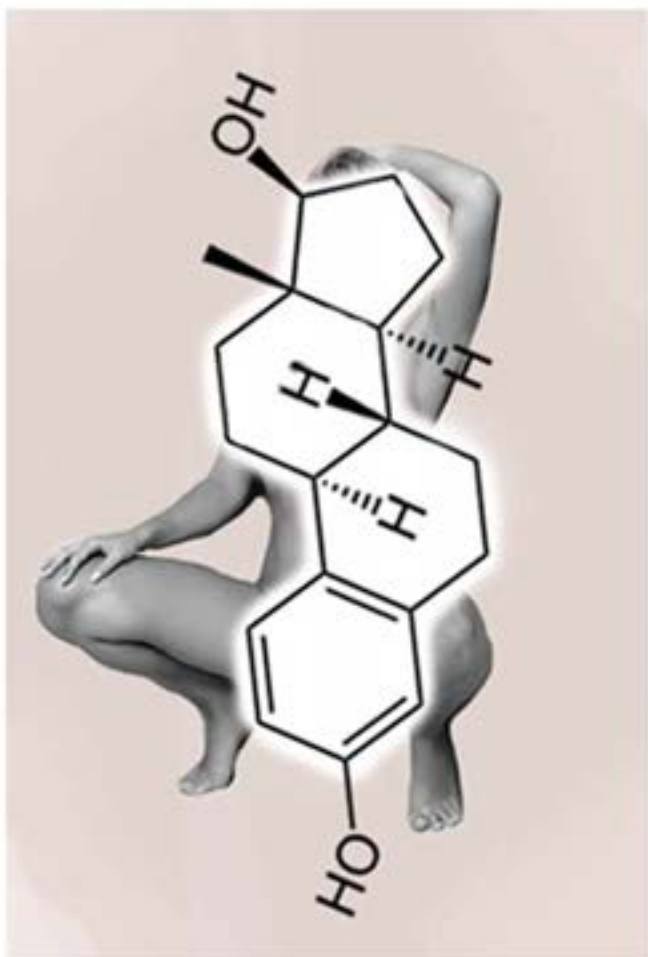
Dread: The writing in this book is for someone (a few women) - and for whatever reasons, **I think if they ever received my writing in the mail or however they'd return to sender.**

**VC: Do you have a potential release date in mind?**

Dread: Summer 2015.

**VC: Which writers have most influenced your writing style?**

Dread: Bukowski and Anais Nin have influenced me a lot. One is so raw and to the point and the other is so passionate and romantic - they're lovely. Some of my favorite books that are intense and made me feel things are: Million Little Pieces by James Frey, Just Kids by Patti Smith, and Women by Charles Bukowski.





**KWESI ABBENSETTS | Visual Mastermind**

I USE INSTAGRAM TO SHOW MY WORK, THE VARIETY OF  
IT, THE RANGE OF IT. I  
USE IT TO SHOW ME.

WHO IS ME?

ME BECOMES ABOUT THE PEOPLE I PHOTOGRAPH, THE  
PLACES I PHOTOGRAPH, THE  
THINGS I PHOTOGRAPHED. I PHOTOGRAPH FOR MY CUL-  
TURE AND AS AN IMAGE  
MAKER I AM REPRESENTING BLACKNESS AND BROWNNES,  
AS LOVING. MY IMAGES  
ARE ABOUT LOVING, LOVING MYSELF AND HAVING FUN  
WITH CREATING IMAGES OF  
"ME." MY INSTAGRAM FEED IS NOT ONE PRECISE OR-  
DER, AND NEITHER IS IT  
RANDOM IT IS A REPRESENTATION OF THE MULTIPLIC-  
ITIES AND VARIETY OF MY  
EXISTENCE, LOCAL, OVER SPACE, OVER BORDERS. MY  
INSTAGRAM REFLECTS AND  
UNLIMITED REFLECTION OF ONE MANS VIEW OF THE  
BLACK EXPERIENCE, YET  
STEPPING FROM POLITICS, IT IS ALSO A REFLECTION  
OF A LIVING  
EXPERIENCE. MY SUBJECTS AND MODELS AND DOCUMENTS  
IN MY PHOTOGRAPHS ARE  
INVESTED WITH DIGNITY, ALLURE, RICHNESS AND  
OPPOSING REDUCTIVE IDEAS.



Books are stacked on top of a polished cream colored desk. Lens are scattered about while fresh flowers rest in an awkwardly broken red wine bottle that sits in the window. Striking remnants of sage cut the air while lingering around the room. The studio is stained with marine blue paint. Shades of red, yellow and green find a way to pop out into existence while entering a visionary trance deeper into the writings on the wall. This privileged space portrays the role of a grand visionary board. As the artist sits and stares at his muse, it's evident one reflects ideas and experiences from the people that rest on the colorful, animated wall. Particular pairs of eyes from images meet your eyes despite the angle, while sharp features from African and Indian masks beam a royal pride. It's as if you can absorb the spirits' warm and calming energy. Black and brown subjects, ripped out magazine pages, incense trinkets, and splattered art pieces display a fair truth about photographer and visual artist, *Kwesi Abbensetts*: the anomaly of a photographer endures a rich sensuality that provokes innovative and original work beyond another artist of his time. Abbensetts' imaginative and sparkled eye is documentation that only the real truly feel.

The self made photographer endures an organic aesthetic in celebration of the Black and Brown culture. Interwoven with South American roots while blossoming a childhood throughout The Caribbean, vibrational concepts of nature and beauty are easily detected in his works. *"Nature is the root of everything. It's how I grew up. Living in the city makes you look for nature."* While thumbing through Spaceship George's photography timeline, one can attach a dignified strength to subtle graciousness within his subjects. Crooked noses and distorted hair look infamously regal in reality, but endearingly accentual in a Kwesi Abbensetts photo. Capturing an essence of raw emotion and grains of stubble that dwells in the human spirit portrays true beauty that the artist not only tags his work as *"transformative and transcendence"*, but penetrates an artistic cadence that leads to legendary markings. The slow and steady artist has an aura that blinks with specks of green, blue, and with a reddish yellow hue— green like a tree rooted to earth; blue like calm waters; and a hue of the sun with warm, inviting energy meeting a strong presence.

WORDS X CHEEBA CRUZ  
PHOTO X COURTNEY JEFFERSON

With a rechargeable drive to turn the pages for fresh ideas, the Bushwick based photographer is always amped to discover an additional angle to feed his hunger for art. Effortlessly finding a new way to express time and experience through his work, Abbensetts consistently shoots around the city while studying photos and visuals. From portraits, fashion, beauty, and event photography, the artist reinvents himself into new layers that “builds a template not regurgitated nor has a reputational note to it,” says the gem. “Seeking what else is different is taking the risk,” continues the emerging filmmaker. The multimedia artist directed his first music video entitled ‘Forever’ by *Meridian Lights*, and released it within three weeks of recording the soulful Brooklyn based, alternative rock duo. Keening in on an intimate setting with singer, Bradley Valentin, and guitarist, Yohimbe Sampson, the setting is surrounded by intriguing cloths decorated in colorful patterns. As dim shadows match soft lighting, a caressing and sensual tone is smoothly suiting the lullaby. The visual’s essence is simply captured by the eyes and hands of Abbensetts.

With the animal spirit of a lion draped in an appeasing aesthetic, the Guyanese artist no doubt has no issue leading a pack of his own realm in a digital art movement. He’s one visual artist who escapades for truths and wonders of the world, and pieces these visions into story boards within his works. Telling the story and telling it correctly is imperative in all historical purposes, but American history is not to be blurred. Fans of Kwesi Abbensetts can appreciate his documentation of *the people* and the culture. Beautiful shades of rich ethnicity, backgrounds and stories fill these images in dire necessity for these same stories to be passed onto further American generations. *“It’s how it’s done. My work helps with the opposing message even though it’s not the initial message,”* states the wise artist. “I know the rules but it can be done in other ways.” Since growth isn’t marginalized in Abbensetts’ corner, the artist can definitely attest to “it’s been a good climb” since he purchased his first camera in 2006.

PHOTO X RYAN LYONS  
GREEN STREET INTERVIEW X CHEEBA CRUZ





Ren: The energy that was here in New York in the 90s has influenced all of us musically.

VC: There's a patch missing though these days.

Soup: It's not close to the people anymore. I moved here a year ago and I'd walk the block and see a kid in a store or someone my age and think they might be a hip hop fan, but who's the dude in the neighborhood? You don't know that one person from each bureau.

Ren: There's an element New York brings that's missing right now and it hasn't properly been resurrected.

Ani: I was reading an article where peoples' tastes are generationally shifting. Music has to be light, where we grew up on Mobb Deep. I can't even front because I don't listen to that anymore.

Ani: That's another thing. Mobb Deep weren't characters. They actually lived in that space and once corporate America got a taste of how it could be characterized, it became a thing. So now we have YG for gangster rap. YG is a fun thug.

Soup: You can't put YG up to a Wu-Tang member.

Ani: There was nothing fun about Ghostface you know?

Ani: It doesn't bother me.

Soup: It bothers me. It's not about knocking people out but we're authentic to ourselves so we keep it above.

Ren: It's like these eras didn't happen. If you take the Little Brother or Foreign Exchange era and you're just starting in music today at 16 years old, there's no way I can explain to you what that Myspace era meant. It was huge. That's how we got started.

Ani: A lot of these artists with their foot in the door started with Myspace: Oddisee, Tanya Morgan.

VC: Oh damn. Odissee.

Ryan: They had Myspace records!

**\*\*Laughs\*\***

Ani: We actually like their editorials which sounds crazy.

VC: It does but everything has a way of digging itself back up. It seems dated but you never know.

VC: How do you guys feel about Lupe's album?

Soupa: I really like the album. I like what he has to say but it's not an easy album to listen to

which is unfortunate because I wish that it was. He really makes you meet him on his side.

VC: It's always been that way with him.

Ani: I think Lupe is one of those artist social media had a way of ruining him. He became a what-not-to-do example, but his music having its' shape impacted our early college years.

Ren: It's good stuff.

Ani: When we talk about Blu and Lupe, these are the artists that could have really transformed their music into a respected light. They wanted to go up to a certain point and then let it be. Imagine if that became the cool. Wale was apart of that crowd but he's not doing that anymore.

Ren: I thought he was going to be the one to do it.

VC: Ryan relates to Lupe as a hood nerd.

Ryan: This album is trappy for him and it just seems off. He's trying to reach the trap kids and it's obvious.

Ryan: What's that track you like on the album?

VC: Little Death

Ryan: That's classic Lupe but he's effectively trying to get out of that range on the rest of the album because he knows that formula is only going to get his older fans, not new ones.

Ren: It's hard to maintain your old fan base while attracting new ones. Every artist is going to have a tough time with that but Lupe he just goes for it. You want the artist to grow but you don't want to feel disrespected as a fan.

VC: How'd you guys meet?

Ani: We met in high school when we were 15, 16 years old. We put out an album, which kids in high school weren't doing.

Soup: That's one of my favorite albums.

Ren: Soup and I met in college freshman year.

Soup: We're from Massachusetts but not from the same area. Telling a story on wax that was attractive to me so I initially started doing video work with these guys.

VC: How was the tour with Don and Von?

Ren: Just riding in the car with Tanya Morgan up there was crazy.

Ani: It's like if someone would have told me ten years ago it was gonna be like this I would have never seen it. We knew it was coming though because we did a record with Don.

VC: I don't want to get too heavy into it but it's a heavy matter. I want to commend you guys as people and as artist. Oh. My. God...

Ani: 2011 we put out our album and it helped to break through a lot. 2012 we were riding high trying to figure out what was next then the wheels started to fall off. I was diagnosed with kidney failure a couple of months after Res caught a lung tumor, and around the same time Soup was dealing with life. I cant say it's a fairy tale but we went through it. We were all young men growing up together as friends, artists, and men; it tested every single aspect of our relationship. It pushed us to the ultimate limit because we were battling between life and death. It also infused a crazy urgency after that. We were talking to Universal after our album dropped like we're about to blow, and then we get hit with this. Its something that's never good to the ego, especially as a man to deal with. It cuts you. It took us time to repair those relationships and ourselves most importantly.

Ren: We put our families through a lot. I was back in the studio two weeks after surgery making our first beat to our album. We were recording in my parents' attic and Ani's getting calls from his doctor, recording with a machine in his chest. His mother was going nuts.

Ani: Then we had the will to win. We debuted our first video on MTV. Some of the biggest press we got came from this but it's a complete 180. You go from death to something like this and that's a lot to do. It's a lot to process but we don't know anything else. It's intuitive to keep going and do this.

Ren: We were in the studio 20 hours everyday for eight months. Ani was bed driven but what are you going to do? All of us poured everything into the music during this time.

VC: You guys have to realize you're angels.

Ani: soup was really holding it down during the time while we were dealing with our illnesses.

Soup: Important people in my life were just doing down at the time but we have to make music and inspire people because our struggles are no different from theirs. It's so easy to feel alone in a situation but we're right here with you. We travel the world and do awesome things but we're right here with you, and I think that's why our fan base is who they are. VC





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WORDS X CHEEBA CRUZ

PHOTOS X DREAD THE PHOTOGRAPHER

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## WHITLEY WATSON | GRAPHIC PEACH

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Say what's up to Whitley Watson, a Brooklyn-based illustrator and graphic designer who's been published in L Magazine's 'Ask A Cabbie' Volume 12 Number 7. The DIY visual artist stemmed artistic energy early in childhood from watching her grandparents and was later solidified by her creative powers while in high school. Settling for science illustration during undergrad at the University of Georgia, the Georgian Peach needed an outlet to express her strong attraction for color-focus, repeated-pattern subjects. "School was cool but stuffy. There just weren't enough kids interested in illustration," says the typography aspirer. Since then, she's designed visual layouts for Intercontinental Hotels and various catering companies.

While Whitley is reflective upon her family as she produces poppy portrait visuals, her creative process is like a suitcase filled with family vacation portraits that are over a decade well seasoned. Stored as safe haven moments captured and well invested into the body's blood stream, photos have become sacred treasures for Whitley. As an artist, she chooses to produce inspiration from her photos and then the creativity flows like the ink pen goes. Look at the concept of a vision board. We create an image-based collage of idealities and seek out for adventure. "I start with pictures and Frankenstein them all together. From that comes a figurative center and I create from there," says Whitley. Harmonizing with light and fluffy auras as base images, she inserts a detailed portrait, thus creating a complimentary relationship between complexity and simplicity. Each image speaks from an everyday situational perspective displayed by everyday people.

Sweet like the color pink with a keen awareness for community longevity, Whitley and other Bushwick old-heads are strolling around the neighborhood digesting a societal concept of break up to build up. By old-heads, I'm referring to a Skytown crew who made that place what it's not today and who laced the neighborhood with original flavor... genuinely. It's critical not to move into new territory dripping with golden rich history, and take over without paying homage to its' pioneers. Some of us who moved to Brooklyn are sensitive to the culture and small independent businesses, and instead of observing the classism shift of present social conditions, we're actually about stimulating ourselves to a higher new understanding. Therefore, artists are committing to a Rites of Passage when marking a transcendental phase with a responsibility to serve the people.

Whitley is apart of a collective who advocates change through community engagement and activism. Attending community organization meetings in Bushwick while portraying political messages in her work is her way of contributing to the cause. "People are creating spaces that are unwelcoming and I think how can I be a good neighbor without taking over," states the visual artist. Contemplating methods of how new residents can blend in gracefully and consciously, including independent brands and companies, Whitley suggests working with what's already created instead of introducing new agendas that disrupts Bushwick's established congruence.



# SOMER MAY | The Divi Tree

WORDS X CHEEBA CRUZ

PHOTO X RYAN LYONS



She's a colored goat not a white one. To be loved like the adornment she gives to art is what nestles her. A west coast sun-ray reining with light in murky greys of New York, she's set out to vibrate nature's calamity and its' peoples atrocity. She's a warrior who roams the rainforest with a machete strapped against her backside. With purposeful steps of curiosity and infiltration of love, I wouldn't test her natural powers as for she's one of the good witches I know.

It's not an unusual stage in an artists' biography to mention there was a corporate to artist transformation that took place before true magic took lead. Experience rather than theory is the true teacher. One must have stared repression in its' eyes on some level to inherit relatable human characteristics through the heart, not the mind. The privileged don't always win. Visual artist and life giver, Somer May, thrives in a positive high ceiling where sincere, in-depth intentions rest and not one flake of corporate crust sheds from her skin. Watching this passionate soul react to brutal worldly affairs, community break ups and hiccups caused by corruption, gives me hope that I know a person who digests and can spit back up sacrifice.

Providing fashion visuals and design sets in cinematography as well as a year of advertisement work for Tracie Martyn wasn't Somer May's first encounter witnessing mechanism of the working machine, but an awakening to step beyond self-constructed boundaries and leap out onto instilled yet created fate. We're taught to pick a career and master it but living in modern economics has bent this concept back into a renaissance period thanks to the digital giants. Since independent and small businesses have shipped office equipment into their homes, the Internet allows pockets of incentives to make money. Therefore corporations have to cut back: Supply and Demand. While interviewing Somer she recalls early New York work experiences and blurts out, "I realized I couldn't do this anymore. I needed to be outside of an office and create." She often mutters remarks of disgust when authoritative figures abuse and misuse the wand that was given to them.

Over one of our casual house dinner conversations, the electrifying spirit shared with me a gentrification smack she received on the train. A young lady shouted, “Go back to your neighborhood!” as she was exiting Broadway-Myrtle off the J train. To know Somer is to know an everlasting love. No way is this a “oh poor little white girl” fable because not everyone believes nor practices what’s fed to the mass appeal. Not all white folks were ignorant to the communal behavior the majority of their people exuded during the civil rights era; there were white riders on the freedom bus escapades. Somer gives me a Joan Pleune, an activist who was arrested for the cause in 1961. “I can’t stand being silent about things I care about,” The Smithsonian quotes Pleune. I know the sentiment is mutual with Somer May; babygirl runs deep.

Actively involved in her community by tagging pink flowers with spray-paint on sidewalks in Bushwick (That’s right--Vulgar Colors considers this community service), attending panel discussions concerning neighborhood issues, and coordinating community events, helps to balance out her life mission to create and serve. “I just need to create things. There’s more in me to discover,” says Miss May. It’s been three years since she retired from a nine-to-five lifestyle and has been establishing her style in acrylic and oil paintings. With a fascination to explore incandescent hues of soft colors, Somer creates accentual figures and subjects out of shapes and purposeful strokes. “I like to play with purple and green because they’re royal colors.” Also playing with abstract paint splatters glossed with glitter infused between two pixie glass squares, is one of her new endeavors. “I’m not paying attention to the traditional fine art rules,” says the developing artist as she talks about her work. Framed in baby colors of pink, blue and green, you can catch these pieces hanging up for sale at ‘Old Man Hustle’ in the Lower East Side of the city. “I like art that’s deeply textured and rich in color; shadows and lighting stretch proportionally.”

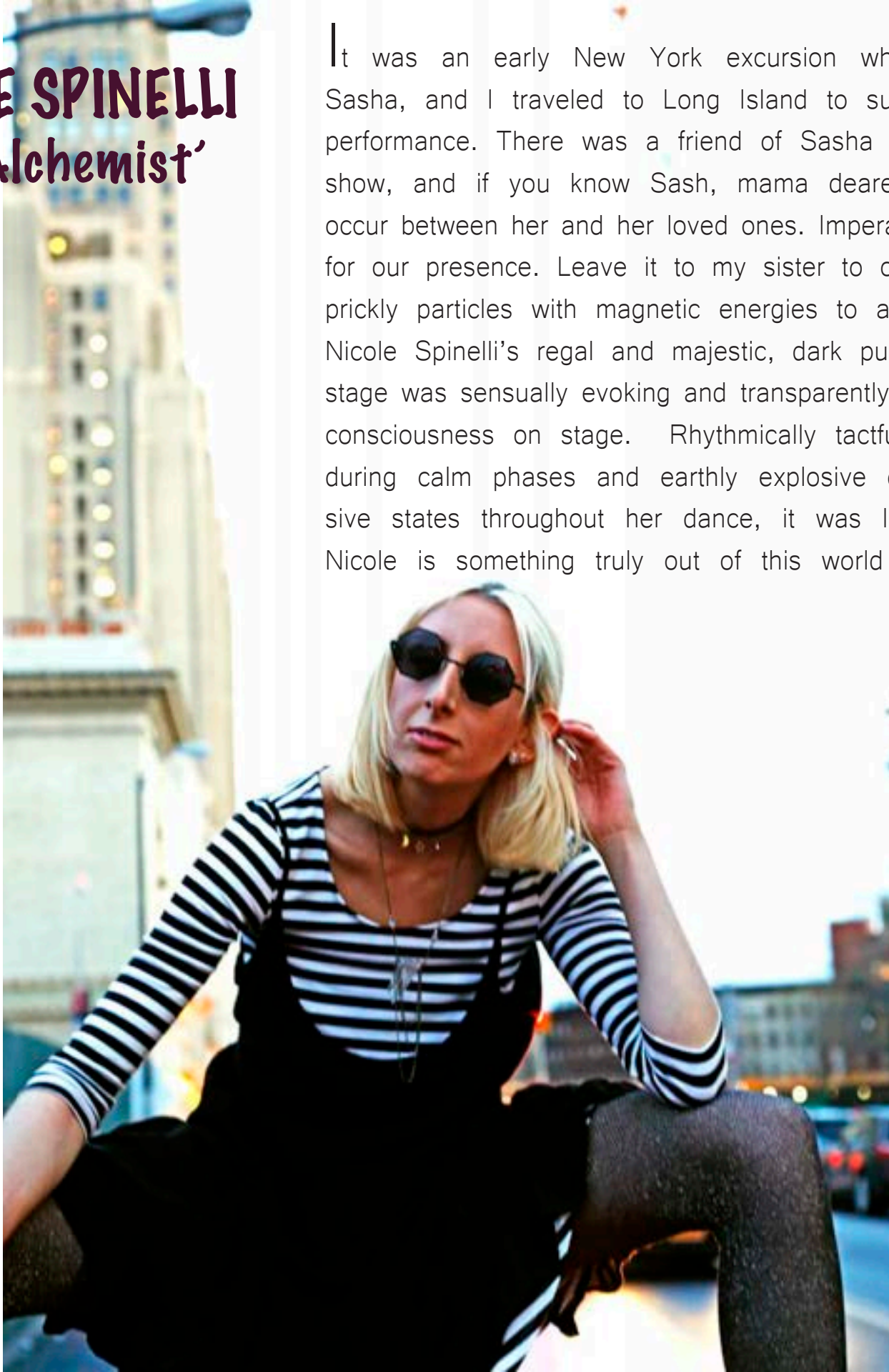


# NICOLE SPINELLI

## 'The Alchemist'

It was an early New York excursion when my sister, Sasha, and I traveled to Long Island to support a dance performance. There was a friend of Sasha dancing in the show, and if you know Sash, mama dearest transactions occur between her and her loved ones. Imperativeness called for our presence. Leave it to my sister to connect dots of prickly particles with magnetic energies to align. Absorbing Nicole Spinelli's regal and majestic, dark purple energy on stage was sensually evoking and transparently addressed her consciousness on stage. Rhythmically tactful like a swan during calm phases and earthly explosive during aggressive states throughout her dance, it was lucidly detected Nicole is something truly out of this world like an alien.

WORDS X CHEEBA CRUZ  
PHOTOS X STEPHANIE SIDIU



Knowing that Sasha's a gatherer of binding kindred spirits, the evenings' purpose became transparently familiar with inclination as the performance was drawing to an end. It's like being on the playground again spotting out a kid you have to know; you suspect a mutual light in that tiny person and let fate lead the friendship adventure. Nicole and I met in the 60s and have never let the era.

Beyond acquiring exceptional gifts that overlap one another because well, her presence reeks in noumenon traits and she's received her doula certification, it's a pure joy to even grace past Nicole Spinelli. At 25, she's got four self-published books latched under her belt, while teaching physics to high school seniors who tower over her fragile frame and slip up by poking teenage fun at her last name: "Hi, Ms. Spaghetti!" Superbly inclined in physics and philosophy, it's natural for her talents to swim in science, numerology and language. She's pretty boss hogg creating and owning Long Island dance studio, Spacefroot, and conducting workshops with the youth. Marked with a golden stamp, Nicole has had rhinoceros-like privileges choreographing pieces for Saul Williams and Grimes for AFROPUNK, The Roots Picnic and NY Fashion Week.

VC caught up with the busy body for some mod fun and metallic inspirations in Fort Greene during her photo shoot. Every time I get up with Nicole a spiritual shift takes places and the dots align themselves. A sister indeed, here's what's going on in her orbit:

### **VC: What's your highest power as a good witch?**

NS: Understanding physics! Ha! I kid.. The discovery of my gifts have always been unintentional. The greatest gift I have become aware of is my clairsentience- the ability for me to physically sense people's pain and sickness through my palms, with or without physical contact, and further the ability to maneuver and transform that pain. **I have the alchemist's touch.**

### **VC: How long have you been teaching high school physics?**

NS: The end of June marks my first full year as a high school physics teacher. It flew by, and I have learned so much more about self and human interaction than in any other setting. **The high school is a microcosm of the world.** There are a multitude of people from different walks of life- forced to coexist in one space.

**VC: What's a college experience involving physics and philosophy that brought you to a higher level?**

NS: In college I was told by my optics teacher that he would pass me in his class only if I promised not to become a physics teacher. At the time I was taking the course as an independent study simultaneously with much more advanced classes such as quantum mechanics, thermodynamics, electricity and magnetism. The optics class was simply not my priority and it was evident through my work (or lack thereof). It also didn't help that my professor was reluctant to meet up with me to facilitate any further practice. I agreed to take the passing grade and never to teach physics because at the time I thought I wanted to become an astrophysicist instead. As life would have it, when I applied for a physics teaching job years later, I was asked to do a demo lesson... a demo lesson... in.. optics. Ha. I got the job!

**VC: Do you have a favorite color or number?**

NS: My favorite color is violet; but I am biased because my sister, who sees auras, has told me that I have a violet aura. Blue is another favorite of mine (it brings me calm, and clears the senses). Lastly, green, because well... so much of the life that sustains us here on earth is green. My favorite number is 7, but specifically the 34 delineation, as it is my life path, as well as a Fibonacci number of ordered growth.

**VC: What kind of pattern do you fancy?**

**NS: I loveeee love loveeee any pattern that has fractals or is self-referencing. M.C. Escher had it down.** I'm currently reading a book about those self-referencing patterns and the possibility that they are the source of consciousness. (Gödel, Escher, Bach by Hofstadter)

**VC: Tell me about this mod look that suits you so well!**

NS: I am really into geometry and angles; I think that distinct forms fascinate and compel me because I often feel so ..blurry.

**VC: What landed you in professional choreography?**





NS: The opportunity came on my 24th birthday when I was asked by a friend who dances backup for various artists if I would be available to dance for Grimes at the Philly Roots Picnic. Although I was dancing for 45 minutes straight in 96 degree weather, with shin splints, it definitely set off a chain reaction of similar “doors” opening before me. **That same year, Saul Williams allowed me to put my choreo on his set at Afropunk as well as at a performance he did for Fashion Week.**

**VC: What were the memorable words Saul Williams said to you during your dance experience with him?**

NS: It was in an email conversation during the conceptual phases of preparing for Afropunk. Hesitantly, I mentioned a few ideas and his response was “wow- that sounds amazing!” He added, I was “free to interpret things as I will.” It felt empowering to hear that an artist I regarded so highly trusted my own creative potential.

**VC: What were your contributions to Afro Punk?**

NS: The 2013 festival, Saul wanted to break sight lines, so we decided to set my dancers up (initially) in front of the stage, standing on the gates, and then we rushed into the crowd, and danced to “They think like they books say;” which I believe has still not yet been officially released.

**VC: What’s in the works for Spacefroot Dance Company?**

NS: Spacefroot Dance Company has been ...on “sleep mode”, because I am not the same person that I was when I first created it. I feel that my perspective has shifted and I’ve needed some time to recalibrate and refine the initial concept. After putting on my first showcase in NYC last April, it became clear that I had taken a leap of faith (without looking down to make sure I was at the edge of a cliff.) As an artist, I am no longer okay with putting out material that is not completely and eloquently portraying exactly what I aim to “say.”

**VC: What’s the mission of the studio?**

NS: The mission for Spacefroot Dance Company is to provide an experience to the audience that allows



them to see old things through new eyes. My choreography is surreal and abstract, and the goal is always to shake up the perspective of the masses.

**VC: When did you know you were destined to write as well?**

NS: In 1st grade I wrote my first short story. “There is a boy in the girls bathroom” was the title (probably inspired by real events). I believed in my work and asked my teacher if I could share it with the class. She agreed. It was not until 2011 (after my grandmother, who loved poetry, passed away) that I began to write. Once I started, the inspiration was ceaseless. When I realized that I had accumulated about 200 poems, I figured... “I’d better do something with these.” A book seemed necessary. Four poetry books later and here I am now working on my first novel.

**VC: How has music influenced Nicole?**

NS: Growing up I was surrounded by live music. My dad is a bass guitarist and becomes an expert at any instrument he picks up. **My uncle was a guitarist who gave up the opportunity to tour with Alice Cooper in order to stay close to family.** The two of them had a band that would rehearse in the basement several times a month. **I believe music has been a third parent to me.** The lyrics of classic rock songs have added depth to my intellect. The soulful sound of my dad’s bass in conversation with my uncle’s guitar has been the greatest form of therapy that I will never get to experience live again, as my uncle no longer occupies his earth-body.

**VC: Vulgar Colors has a special tie to June. What’s the purple magic?**

NS: June is the month of the horse in Chinese astrology. And– correct me if I’m wrong– I do believe you launched the VC magazine in 2014, which was the year of the horse! June will always be an auspicious month as a result. Not to mention that the horse is associated with the number 7 and  $VC = 22+3 = 25 = 7$  in numerology. Judging by all of those synchronicities, I’d say that the universe is loving this project of yours as much as I am. I see travel for June. Perhaps working on expanding the magazine by promoting it in other states/ countries. Your presence is a huge part of that promotion. Anyone who meets you will know that you are someone worth believing in. **VC**



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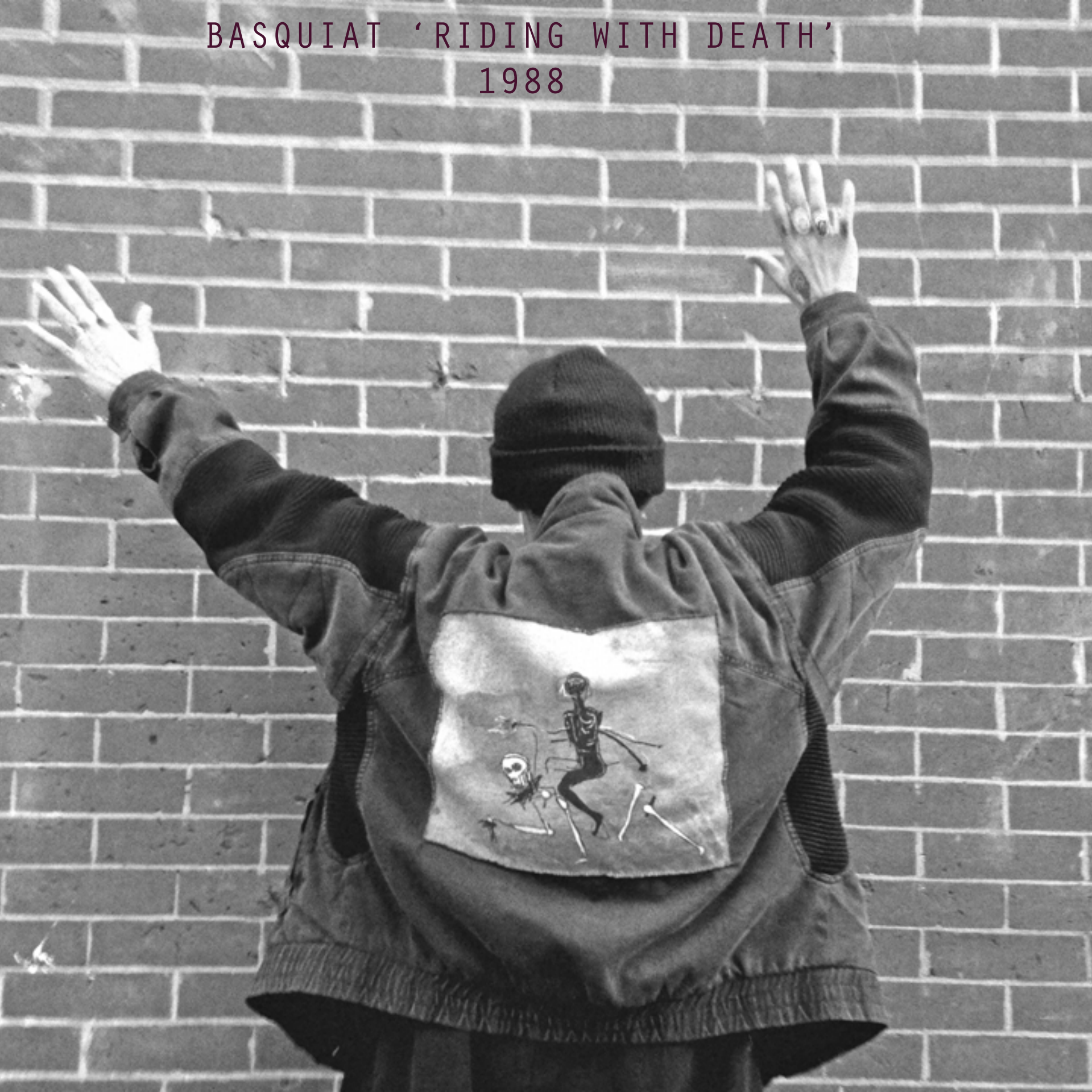
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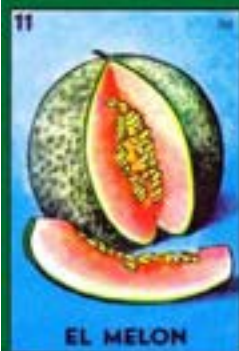
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