

# MAIN COURSE

Philadelphia's Arts and Entertainment Magazine

Fall 2014



FREE

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ART COLUMNIST Mary Anna Rodabaugh  
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PHOTOGRAPHER Max Grudzinski  
PHOTOGRAPHER Robert "Redstar" Harold  
PHOTOGRAPHER Ryan Powell  
ADVERTISING Chanel Ali  
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Ryan Jacques  
LAYOUT Mediumless

## **Contributors**

WRITER David Amadio  
POET Jessica Housand-Weaver  
POET Rosalind Kaliden  
CARTOON Ted Hazard

## **Founding Staff**

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STAFF WRITER Melissa Simpson  
FOOD WRITER Iris McCarthy  
COMMUNITY WRITER Nova Giovanni  
WRITER Tiffany Livingston  
PHOTOGRAPHER Atiya Walker-Dykes  
WRITER Zenique Gardner

## **The Editor's Letter**

We have choices. You make the effort to decide what you want to wear. Now, think for a moment about what you actually choose to do. Do you choose what clothes to wear? Did you make a choice to read this statement? What about cooking? When you don't like what someone cooks, you cook it yourself correct? Or, you modify it with spices and condiments? Whatever happens, you make a decision. So, if you don't like the content you're reading, why don't you go make your own or find something different? If you don't like the way education is taught, why don't you come up with another way. We must take it upon ourselves to become the change we want to see. We must learn to cook our own food.

**BRYAN CARTER**

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# WALL STREET TO ROSA'S FRESH PIZZA

by Gina Lee

It's 8 a.m. on a Saturday. Twenty-six-year-old Mason Wartman sits behind the counter of Rosa's Fresh Pizza, the pizza shop he named after his mother. His back faces the entrance door and he's completely engrossed in his laptop. When he finally emerges, he's the epitome of a college student: a boyish figure dressed in gray shorts, flip-flops, and a black T-shirt that reads *Brave New World* across the top, Aldous Huxley across the bottom.

It's early. But when you're gearing up to make nearly 45 pizzas in one day, arriving at the shop two hours before opening to heat the ovens is a necessity. Wartman is no stranger to hard work or working in a shop. Prior to Rosa's grand opening in December, before Wartman started spending his days manning a pizzeria, he spent three years on Wall Street performing sell-side equity research. Hand-picking stocks is a little different than hand-kneading dough. So how does one go from equity stock research to mastering the art

of making pizza to be sold for only \$8 per pie, \$1 a slice? “With great difficulty,” Wartman chuckles.

You’ll find only three products behind Rosa’s counter: dough, sauce, and cheese, because unlike other pizzerias, fresh pizza is the only product this shop offers. But that doesn’t mean Wartman didn’t have to prepare heavily for his new business endeavor. He took cooking classes and did a lot of reading on how to make dough, and the “math” that goes behind it. Sitting at a countertop usually occupied by patrons, Wartman describes how he had to tweak the amount of cheese to get a perfect pie, and how he tried different variables to

## "the young ex-Wall Streeter's stock portfolio looks pretty good"

get the sauce just right. But Wartman notes that his dough formula has not changed at all and is kept on an Excel spreadsheet. Where else would a stock researcher turned pizza maker keep his dough recipe?

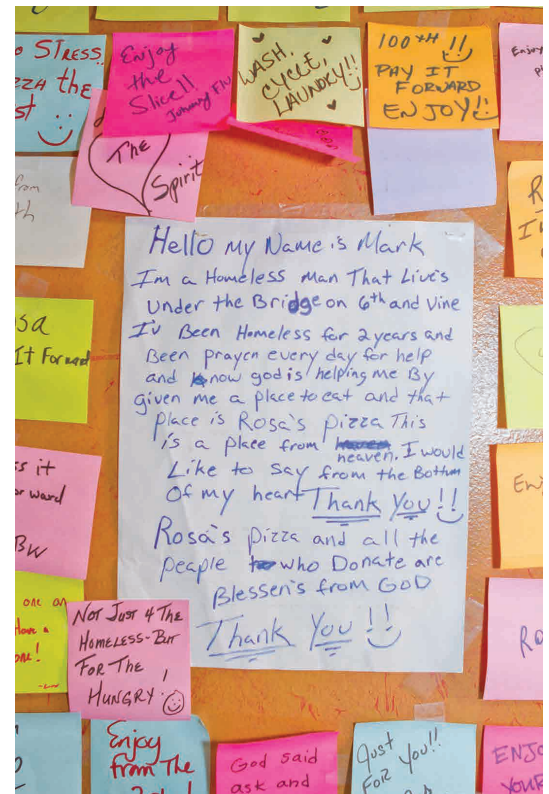
Opening a pizza shop wasn’t always the plan for Wartman, but after reaching a plateau on Wall Street, where most of the work he performed was product-driven, Wartman was ready to dive headfirst into the popular New York City “dollar slice”

business, only he would open his shop back home in Philadelphia—a venture the ex-research associate felt would do well in the city. “I like business,” says Wartman, “and I like simple elegant businesses.” Word on the street: Philadelphians like pizza too. Now, Wartman and his team of seven focus on the perfect dollar slice and serving his loyal customers, many of whom come from the homeless community.

Situated on the quiet, underdeveloped block of 11th and Chestnut, the isolated Rosa’s sells about 50 pizzas a day, on average. “Our pizza is pretty good, I think,” Wartman says proudly. A true risk-taker, Wartman wasn’t afraid to open his pizzeria on the quarantined block, away from the heavy Center City foot traffic. Rosa’s also sits just a couple of doors down from another pizza shop, Paulie’s Pizza, that doesn’t sell dollar slices but does offer a more selective menu than Rosa’s. Despite the competition, Wartman ideally would like to see the block where his pizza shop sits turn into a “restaurant row.”

The allure of the dollar slice has people running to Rosa’s, but one step inside this pizzeria and the dollar slice is no longer the draw. What you’ll find are walls covered in colorful Post-it notes, part of Rosa’s pay-it forward initiative, which started about three months after the business opened. One Sunday, a customer came in after reading about the newly established pizzeria and its popularity among the homeless community. Through this customer, Wartman learned of a little tradition born in Naples, Italy called *caffè sospeso*, or suspended coffee, in which a customer pays for a cup of coffee in advance for a future customer who can’t afford a cup. The barista keeps record of all the donations. When a less fortunate customer walks in and wants to know if there’s any coffee available, he or she simply asks whether “*anything’s suspended*.”

At Rosa’s the idea is the same, but the Post-its represent the number of donations the shop has collected and brings a bit of life to the otherwise dull orange walls. When customers pay it forward, they’re given a Post-it and asked to write a small message to accompany their donation. Then they pick a place on the wall and hang their note. In just three months, Wart-





man's shop has given away 1,700 slices of pizza. The walls of Rosa's are nearly filled with bright sticky notes from people kind enough to pay it forward, as well as notes from some of the homeless, including one of gratitude from Bill Lindsay, "on behalf of the homeless population." The written notes are becoming a great dialogue between the customers who pay it forward and those who benefit from the donations. 3M, the maker of Post-it Notes, based out of St. Paul, Minnesota, heard about Rosa's pay-it forward initiative and graciously contributed \$500 to the program, donating a huge box of assorted sticky notes.



Wartman, the humble twenty-something with his very own pizza shop covered in sticky notes, doesn't think any of this is a big deal, innocently stating, "It's just a pizza shop." But it's *his* pizza shop, and as blasé as he makes that sound, Wartman's fingers are crossed that he doesn't start a dollar slice trend in Philadelphia. He'd like his shop to be *that* shop, and makes it clear that he doesn't want to be in the business of selling "dollar pizza." "We sell Rosa's pizza," he remarks, "and it happens to be a dollar."

To say that the young ex-Wall Streeter's stock portfolio looks pretty good is an understatement. It's how he funded Rosa's Fresh Pizza. "Nowadays, it's easy," he says. After sifting through

the garbage stocks, calculating yields, and checking earnings, eventually you will find a couple of really good stocks. Sticking to what you know seems to be the way to go, which is why Wartman keeps his portfolio tightly centered around tiny commercial banks, generally with a market cap of \$50 million or under, and of course oldie but goodie tech stocks like Microsoft, Xerox, and Cisco. "If I couldn't pick stocks then I wouldn't have financed this thing as comfortably," he admits. "That's the secret sauce, really, to the pizza shop."

Outside of his shop, you'll catch Wartman buried in the books. "Starting a business is a lot of hurry up and wait," he says. So, reading has become his number one pastime. "Just in the six months that it took me to start and open up this shop, I've probably read thousands of pages. Tens of thousands of pages." When it comes to business and finance, Wartman is into value investing reads by Warren Buffet and Benjamin Graham, but his current interest is in politics and presidential biographies. He's currently reading Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.'s *A Thousand Days*, a biography of John F. Kennedy. Wartman thinks it's pretty cool to read about former presidents,

even those he didn't like due to opposing views, admitting that after reading about them, their way of thinking seems perfectly reasonable. "I would encourage everyone to read biographies about presidents they dislike, except [Ronald] Reagan. Reagan was just terrible. He's the only one that I disliked more after reading." His innocent, boyish laugh rings out through his shop.

There's one more thing that Mason Wartman thought we should know about Rosa's: "We sell the best pizza in the city for only a dollar a slice, but coming in to learn about how we help the homeless is the most important part."



# WE KNOW THEM AS CITY RAIN

by Nathan Leff

TO DENY THE POWER OF THE INTERNET IS TO ADMIT ONE'S OWN IGNORANCE

Twenty years ago, the radio, in its last gasp of relevance, gave us an idea of what was really hot. If a band was getting extended radio play, then they were considered pretty popular. Now, the chart performance of a single is almost irrelevant compared to the number of views your song can get on YouTube. In a very direct way, YouTube is a constantly active, grassroots indicator of who is listening to what, recording the age, race, education, and general income level of the people watching, even down to the most popular time of day for certain types of music. The basements and garages of the old school have been converted and compressed into the channels of an ever-increasing number of endeavoring musicians.

Philly's own City Rain is one such act. Following the release of the video for their hit song, "the Op-



timist,” which was viewed by more than 80,000 people in its first week, the band has seen a huge upswing in their popularity, earning them one of the highly coveted spots at this year’s South By Southwest Festival. Looking to find out more about their transformation from hometown favorite to national anthem, we caught up with Ben Runyan and Scott Crumpston of City Rain to talk about how it all got started, and where they see it headed.

**NL:** What was the first album you heard that made you consider music as a real possibility?

**BR:** Superfly! I’m dead serious. I was ten-years-old and we had a Honda Odyssey that had a CD player, which at the time was quite fancy. My dad had gotten the CD, and why wouldn’t he. He grew up in the 50s and 60s, so I’m sure he saw it in theatres. Whether it was as a joke or not, I’ll never know. So he put on this CD and it had all these songs—“Superfly,” “Pusherman,” “Freddie’s Dead,”—where the syncopation, the rhythm, and the tightness and overall vibe were unreal. It made me feel something I hadn’t felt before, because my previous exposure to music was, let’s face it, the 90s, which sucked. Load was one of the CDs I was into at the time. Chumbawamba was another one. *Superfly*, though, by Curtis Mayfield, was one of the first albums to really inspire me.

**SC:** Hmm...I have to go back here. I’d have to say it was *Jagged Little Pill*, the Alanis Morissette album that everyone had. Listening to that the first time, I thought, “I like music. A lot!” My parents never really listened to music.

They were more of the casual “put music on in the car” kind of listener. B101 kind of people. I had to discover a lot on my own, mostly from going to local shows around here, which is where I discovered this band Silver Tide that really locked me into rock music. So it was cool learning about music from a local band playing live. Then I fell for the Beatles.

**NL:** What was your first live show like, and what did you take away from it, good or bad?

**BR:** Honestly, it wasn’t until Scooter, this German techno band. I saw them in Chicago when I was sixteen. In Germany, they have more number one hits than Madonna and Michael Jackson combined, but never really made it across the pond, in terms of popularity. It’s really campy, euro-trash music. It’s nonsensical, but the production was unlike anything I had seen before. Total catharsis. I know most Germans will hate me for saying this, but I refer to them as the “Nickelback of Germany.” I took an 18-hour train ride to Chicago, met up with these people I had met online, stayed with this girl I had just met. It was great!

**NL:** When and why did you take the first step towards making your own music?

**SC:** For me, it was pretty early. Every summer, my family would go down the shore for a week during the summer for vacation. So there I am, thirteen-years-old, walking on the boardwalk, and I saw these guys sitting on a bench playing guitars. They were maybe two or three years older than I was, but I saw that they had a little crowd, a little community around them, and I thought, “That’s what I want to do.” As an introvert, that immediately struck me as a way to meet people who seemed to be my kind of people. My buddy knew how to play guitar, and so he went down to the boardwalk to play and I would sing, poorly. By the next year, I wanted to be

"I refer to them as the “Nickelback of Germany.”"

able to sing and play by myself, so that’s when I picked up a guitar. So that’s how it started: being part of a community and finding a different outlet to meet people.

**BR:** It wasn’t till my freshman year of college, when I was around nineteen. I grew up in the Episcopal and Lutheran churches, which had a lot to do with my singing influences, as well as high school theatre. Then I took an extended break from those things, until I really discovered electronic and dance music through guys like Armin van Buuren, Scooter, and Above and Beyond, European dance music acts that weren’t at all popular over here until about three or four years ago. In 2005, if you





liked that kind of music you were the “techno guy” at your school, and no one really got it. I was really into synthesizers and how they were able to make these soundscapes with synthetic instruments. Then I got into a “coffee table” version of all this, and started City Rain in 2007. It began as an instrumental electronic project, a very down-tempo kind of electronic music with some very melodic, pop sensibilities. No vocals, but very ethereal, like something you’d hear on a soundtrack. Slowly, over time, I started to find my voice and started singing in 2009, and when I left college in 2010 I joined up with the original bandmate. That’s when we became a real band, and I started learning how to write songs.

**NL:** With that in mind, what would you say is the absolute worst song you’ve ever written?

**BR:** There’s this song from an unreleased LP from 2011, which is out there on the internet I’m sure, on Russian pirating websites, because we actually sort of “half-released” it. There’s CD copies floating around, and it’s called “Friends.” It’s the only song I’ve ever written that’s not in a first-person perspective. It’s about somebody who goes to the mall to meet girls and creep on them. The chorus of it is “We’re gonna make some friends tonight,” but there’s this weird, uncomfortable sexual undertone to it. It’s a brilliant song, but it’s really disturbing, and I hope no one ever hears it.

**SC:** Basically, the first ever EP I wrote with my high school buddies. We were kind of like a mishmash of different influences. Our lead guitarist was a metal dude, so we pretended to be a dark, pseudo-metal, hard rock, Pearl Jam-style band, but we were fourteen, so I don’t know how much insight you really have into the darkness of the world, especially living in the suburbs. So that whole record was just awful. It was good to learn how to record, and really play your instruments, but the musical and lyrical

content was all pretty bad. For instance, one song was called “Kill on Sight,” which I guess was a nod to Metallica’s *Kill ‘Em All*. You gotta write those bad songs though, just to work it out.

**NL:** Let’s talk about the opposite. What is the best song you’ve written, in your opinion?

**BR:** We had a song before Scott joined called “I’m Gone” that was a mini-YouTube indie hit kind of thing, which up until “the Optimist” was kind of like “our song.” It resonated with a lot of people, and I felt that was our first truly good, original song.

**SC:** I guess it was before City Rain, with my third band. I’ve been in a lot of bands with similar and different people, but this was when I was like sixteen or seventeen. Within a few years of writing some of my worst shit, I started working with some people who really knew what they were doing, which is what you want to do: surround yourself with people who know more than you do. We recorded an EP right after high school, and while some of it was kitschy, it was just miles away from what I’d been doing. That’s when I thought, “I really know how to construct a song here,” and getting attention from people when you’re seventeen- and eighteen-years-old is great. That’s when it went from “it’s fun playing music” to “Ok, I can really do something here and I’m gonna pursue this in a more serious manner.”

**NL:** So how did you two come together?

**BR:** It's a pretty good story actually. We went to elementary school together for a year, and there's this great picture of us together at a birthday party eating cake. After that, Scott went to a different school, and we didn't see each other for at least fifteen years. Then in the summer of 2012, the ex-bandmate and I started to fall apart and it was clear that he wasn't serious about the music in the same way I was. So Scott and I started talking, mostly about management in the beginning.

**SC:** I would have been a shitty manager!

**BR:** True. So Scott and I had dinner at Dock Street Brewery in West Philly, and we started talking about it. The other bandmate left, then I left my girlfriend, who I'd lived with in West Philly for over a year. So I invited Scott over to jam and I had this rough draft of "the Optimist" semi-completed, and he just started riffing on it, and it really brought the song together. We tried a couple other songs, and the same thing happened. I had an upcoming show at the Fire, because I had been playing as myself for four or five months at this point, still as City Rain, but just me, and I invited him to play. After that we played in New York at the Public Assembly in front of two-hundred people. When we played "the Optimist" it was the first time in seven years of playing music, four or five of those live, that I saw something immediately resonate with people. After that we released "the Optimist" video, and from there it's been a steady upward trajectory over the last year.

**NL:** Given the access to unlimited time, money, and resources, which artist would you like to help create an album and join on tour?

**BR:** This band we play a lot with in Philly called Revolution, I Love You. I really feel like over the last five years their songwriting has come into its own. Their recent EP, *Atlantic Ocean EP*, has a song on it that reminds me of vintage Bruce Springsteen or Billy Joel, and I think that with the right people around them they could create a really timeless record.

**SC:** I'd pick this kid I work with who goes by the name No Stranger. Super-talented dude with an incredible, powerful voice. He's one of those people who is so good that you wonder, "Why doesn't anyone know about you?"

**NL:** What advice would you give to yourselves five years ago?

**SC:** You just gotta commit. You gotta believe in what you do and don't have a fucking ego.

**BR:** You're in for a hell of a smack in the mouth!

Two by Jessica Housand-Weaver

## Carbon

Here, let me  
peel back  
that sweaty polo  
streaked with shop  
grease. Your faded  
Levi's split  
at the knee. Those scuffed  
steel-toed boots. The stained  
thermals with holes  
in the sleeve. Let me  
burn against you. Naked  
as newborn stars.

## The Watch

Starless night swept in,  
hooked corners, bruised  
your side of the bed.

Our headboard shook  
like a widow after the funeral,  
knees veiled in hollow folds.

The wind billowed satin,  
*La Llorna* raging  
at a black-hooded sky.



# ACQUAINTED WITH FOOD?

by Brooke Brunson



The city of Philadelphia is home to a wide variety of diversity, history, and culture. Blended with talent and richness in creativity, the city is constantly bustling with something fun to do. As a native of Philadelphia I have always been proud to call this city my home because of all the things there is to offer.

One of my favorite adventures to embark on during the summer is to take a nice bus ride down to South Street and explore some of the cute little shops and boutiques in the area. Some of my favorite places to visit are Magpie Artisan Pie Boutique, a cozy bakery/cafe that has a vintage vibe and which offers a seasonal melody of savory & sweet pies that can be eaten sitting down or taken on the go; Loop, a quaint little yarn shop that displays colorful samples of yarn and which is known for their creative designs and incorporated educational classes that teach people how to knit and crochet; and last but not least, Pink Elephant, which is a stylish and modern women's clothing boutique that stocks trendy street-wear, party dresses, shoes, handbags, jewelry, and much more.

While visiting South Street, you can also check out events like "The Dog Days of Summer," which for 3-years in a row has been a popular summer competition that takes place under the Shambles in historic Headhouse Square. The competition features hot dogs and homemade sausages curated by 20 restaurants and food trucks around the region, including Alla Spina, Bistro Romano, Brauhaus

Schmitz, BrazBQ, Bridget Foy's, Cavanaugh's, Cherry Bomb Bus, Copabanana, Headhouse Oyster & Crab Co., Hot Diggity! Industry Bar, Lucky's Last Chance, Misconduct Tavern, Noir, Rex 1516, Sancho Pistola's, and more. A panel of judges that include media, chefs and celebrities will award three prizes to the top grill masters, including a \$1,000 first place award. The ticket-buying public will also have the opportunity to try all of the hot dog creations and vote for their "fan favorite" dog.

In addition to the competition, 20 contestants will compete in an amateur topping contest that features a Philadelphia theme this year. All topping combinations should be inspired by a favorite street, neighborhood, sports team, restaurant, or even favorite Philly-centric ingredients like local beers, pickles, and produce. The winner of the toppings contest will have their creation featured for a month on the menu at Hot Diggity! So if you are a foodie, love hot dogs or sausages, or you feel like you are the next big star, then definitely try your luck.

Another mainstream staple that Philadelphia is best known for are, obviously, the cheesesteaks. Around here, the best place to grab a good steak is either Pat's King of Steaks or Geno's Steaks which both sit directly across from one another in South Philly. Despite being rivals, the businesses are still very good at what they do. With so many mixed reviews from various customers, people still travel from all over the world just to grab a steak from Philly.

The next time you come to visit, remember to grab yourself a steak from Geno's or Pat's on the way out!

# MAIN MC COURSE

FIND OUT WHAT'S REALLY  
GOING ON IN THE CITY  
OF BROTHERLY LOVE

FOOD, FASHION, FILM,  
ART,

ONLINE WEEKLY  
TWICE YEARLY PRINT

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Two by Rosalind Kaliden

## Eagle on the Edge

Fancy feathers,  
less common  
than the red-tailed hawk's,  
draw along  
the porch roof's edge,

An overture,  
a glimpse  
into the garden.

Browns  
the awning makers  
would do best  
to imitate.

## Shawnee State Park, 1958

My twin brother trades Scout patches  
at Valley Forge National Jamboree,  
an Eagle Scout patch on his chest pocket.

Mother's spoon in my delicate cup,  
stirs honey into black tea.  
She teaches me pant maker's patterns  
and serging seams.

Father's metal measuring tape rolled up,  
weighs heavy in my slender hand.  
Salvaged steel beams  
from our burned out school hold up  
his sheltering home.

Young teens race the beach laughing,  
a tan windbreaker, navy polka dots,  
parents walking behind hand-in-hand.

The steady fall breeze rolls brown leaves,  
rounding footprints into mounds of sand.



# GEEK CULTURE

by Bryan Carter

## RADIO, ANIME & STREAMING MEDIA PROJECTS



Like many other facets of mainstream culture, "geek" culture suffers from a dearth of visible Black people, such as cosplayers (people who dress and act as their favorite fictional characters), comic book devotees, and card gamers. Until now. Inspired by renowned animator/director Masami Obari, Jason Richardson started his own "geek entertainment hub", J1 Studios, in order to diversify the geek culture scene so that marginalized people can pursue their interests that deviate from stereotypes. Being a first generation Jamaican-American, Richardson fully understands cultural clashes and intends to use his passion to bridge a gap between overlapping identities.

What started as a childhood activity for Richardson has now garnered him a host spot on the award-winning live radio show Black Tribbles, award-winning recognition for J1 studios, and larger visibility within the Philadelphia geek scene.

Photo Credit J1 Studios by K.D. Morris



“The first of my Jamaican family to be raised in America, I was born in Philadelphia, PA. I moved around a little bit, but spent most of my life in the Philadelphia area. J1 Studios is my Geek Entertainment Hub. The name came about because I am a big fan of the famous animator/director Masami Obari and his book G1. I decided to name my company J1 Studios, which also means, “Jason will be number one!” Simple and direct, that sums up J1 Studios. Think of us as a one-stop shop for just about anything geek-related. We cover everything in geek culture: game reviews, movie reviews, coverage of geek culture events, as well as creating our own comic books, novels, and music. We are one of the weekly locations for cosplayers (people who dress and act as their favorite fictional character) with our Cosplay Spotlight Wednesday. I am Jason Richardson.” Jason Richardson of J1 Studios

**What do you do outside of J1 Studios?**

Outside of J1 Studios, I am a graphic designer and one of the five hosts of the award-winning live radio show Black Tribbles.

**What spawned the idea of creating J1 Studios?**

I always created things as a kid. I developed games, comics, and my little radio dramas as a child. I just saw an opportunity to make it my profession.

**As an introduction to J1 Studios, what could someone expect to find on your website or while attending one of your events?**



Variety. We provide so many things on the site that it can be overwhelming. The events obviously show that we are a crew that’s really trying to give something that we (as fans) would want. A by-fans, for-fans ideal.

**How would you describe geek culture to someone who’s unfamiliar with the term?**

It’s anything they’re passionate about, but it deals with entertainment, comics, science fiction, video games, board games, and novels (mainly fiction). Anyone can be a geek. Jocks are geeks about their favorite sports teams, and comic book readers are geeks about the titles they read.

**I’m familiar with the term “geek,” but does geek culture truly exist?**

I want people to see that black geek culture exists. That’s the thing people don’t know about. People do not know black geeks are a real thing.

**But what’s the difference between black geek culture and regular geek culture?**

Black geek culture needs the exposure so that it becomes a part of regular geek culture. If you pay attention to the media, you would think that black folk don’t exist in the scene. I can tell you that friends and family members have at one point introduced “black geeks” as “the whitest black people” they know. You lose your identity as a black person when you step outside of the stereotypical black roles that culture has made for us.

**Is it safe to assume your goal is to expose black geek culture while also expanding on geek culture as a whole?**

Indeed. At some point I want it to all be under one roof, comfortably. I want it to all just be called geek culture. The first step is for all ethnic geek cultures (not just black) to be recognized without animosity. This goes for women as well.

**Who are some of the major names in Philadelphia’s geek culture?**

Obviously, major names in Philly’s geek culture are the Black Tribbles (Len Webb, Kennedy Allen, Randy Green, and Erik Darden). There’s Ci-



pher Prime's Will Stallwood, comic book artist J.G. Jones, Damien Warsavage, and Eric Small. There are more but these are the ones I can think of at the moment.

**J1 Studios and Black Tribbles won two awards at this year's Geekadelphia Awards. How did it feel receiving those awards?**

I was so happy to see Black Tribbles up on screen for Streaming Media Project of the Year. Being on stage with my Tribble crew was amazing! All those people looking at us and listening to what we had to say was phenomenal! As the winner of the 2014 Geek Of The

Keeping those friends who want to get into the industry as badly as you do. Friendships end, especially if you happen to advance farther than your friends do. You start to see the truth behind your friendship. Usually, people you were close with in the past become estranged, and those you never expected to help you are the ones spending their last dime in support of you. Those are the friends you need to respect. In the past, due to family situations, I ended up on the street. That's an obstacle that I never want to deal with ever again.

**What future projects are you working on?**

"He told me that one day I would be a great artist."

Year award, I was blown away. All the press generated due to the awards still baffles me. I'm like: "You care to know who I am?" It all felt like the hard work was finally paying off.

**I recall one of our conversations in which we discussed J1-Con. Kindly fill everyone in on the details of this event.**

On September 14th, from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m., we are going to be holding our annual anime convention, located at 3801 Market Street, First District Plaza, 3rd Floor. Expect to meet various YouTube celebs, like the famous anime voice actor Vic Mignogna (the voice of Edward Elric on *Full Metal Alchemist*, Broly on *DragonBall Z*, Tamaki on *Ouran High School*, Nagato on *Naruto*, and more!) We'll have vendors where you can buy anime DVDs, games, plush dolls, and action figures. The added touch is the video game and card game tournaments. Prices to enter the convention range from \$10.00 - \$30.00.

**Who has inspired you? What was it about them?**

A homeless man named Eugene who used the money he saved to buy me an art set. He told me that one day I would be a great artist. Don't get me wrong: I had my mom, cousins (like David Mitchell), even friends (like Kevin Siter) who inspired me to move forward. My main concern has always been creating worlds and information for everyone to enjoy.

**What obstacles have you faced since starting out with your brand?**

I can't get into too many details, but I will be bringing back my card game that I developed back in 2003.

**A card game? Details please.**

Best way I can describe it, without giving anything away, is that it's the essence of a fighting game. It's a 1-on-1 fighting game through cards. I pick a character, you pick a character, and we battle until someone is KO'd, or there's a "time over." It will make use of all the characters from the J1 Studios properties.

**What advice would you give to other people trying to do what you are doing?**

Know that there are way more sacrifices in the beginning to get where you are going, and it's never instant success. As quick as you grow is as quick as you burn out. Create that slow, solid foundation first. Get as much advice from as many people as you can. Study the people who made it. Learn how they made it. Don't just think you are going to start where they are now, or you will be heartbroken with your outcome. Support others because there will be a point when you will need them to support you.

To learn more about J1 Studios and their yearly anime convention visit [j1studios.com](http://j1studios.com) and [j1con.com](http://j1con.com).

# LIFE GOALS

by Jamillia Kamara

We chose Nina Ball—known by her popular stage name “Lyrispect”—as a print edition feature artist due to her demonstrated commitment to community empowerment, artistic expression, and taking proactive measures to fulfill her life goals. Look out for her work with The African American Film Festival Releasing Movement, The Philadelphia Arts Museum, Black Girls Rock! and a personal album release in the coming year.

**JK:** You coined your stage name, Lyrispect, from a foiled attempt at starting a program in Baltimore. What advice do you have for people experiencing challenges while attempting to carve out a creative space?

**NB:** “Make a plan to put aside a consistent amount of time each week. For example, if you can’t put aside one day during your weekend, commit to spreading out 6 hours towards your creative goals each week. Goal setting and planning will be your most effective tool. Decide what you want and create a strong product. You do this by enlisting the advice of people whose opinion you respect. Once you have a strong product, you’ve won half the battle. Next you have to work on your networking and your pitch!”

**JK:** We spoke briefly about the possibility of hearing hip-hop/alternative music from you in the future. Can you tell us how you are navigating that journey and when we can expect to hear it all?

**NB:** “Yes! I am really excited to be exploring my creative voice through Hip-Hop! The journey has been slow but steady. I am fortunate that there is a quality handful of people that want to work with me in realizing my potential in this arena. I have done a couple of [collaborations] but I am still finding my stride in working with others. I am a perfectionist when it comes to the official writing that I release.

When it comes to my musical influences, most of them aren’t Hip-Hop. That’s why I think my body of work will ultimately sound like a mash up of a wide range of influence. I like indie, jazz, folk, Afrobeat, gritty trap, rock and R&B. I feel like you



can find and ride the flow of any well-composed piece of music.”

**JK:** The music and poetry scene in Philly can seem intimidating to outsiders. How do you suggest new poets and musicians break in, gain a following, and stay relevant?

**NB:** “The best piece of advice I can give is [to] show up, talk to people, stick around and stay consistent. It can take people a while to connect the dots that you are here to stay and not just passing through. Express your passion about your art and talk to and support other artists. We have a community here and we all rotate through different spaces at different times. If you give up too soon, there are some people that you will never meet. If you truly do it for the love of expression, people will respect the purity of your intentions and embrace that.”

**JK:** We’ve seen you work with numerous groups across the spectrum, from AFFRM to the Philadel-



phia Museum of Art and Black Girls Rock! How do you decide who to collaborate with, and what types of programs should we expect you to be involved in for the rest of 2014?

**NB:** “I have three primary stipulations: [the work] has to be something I am already deeply passionate about, aligned with my aesthetic and level of integrity, and it has to be attempting to change the world in some way.

My work with Black Girls Rock! gets to the core of how I believe we can all change the world, as mentors. We cultivate the most promising young leaders that we have access to and we seek to make them better humans and responsible citizens and leaders in their field of choice. I have been a Director for Black Girls Rock Queens Camp for Leadership and Excellence since its inaugural year in 2011. We are now in our 4th year and we have seen our graduating classes go on to prestigious colleges and make their mark in media and within their individual communities.

The work I do as National Volunteer Coordinator for the African-American Film Festival Releasing Movement (AFFRM) fulfills my desire to elevate and be a part of the promotion of more realistic images of Blacks across the Diaspora as told by *US*. It’s a lot of hard work getting the word out and translating social media interest to real-life attendance and support. Our core of volunteers is our backbone in helping our reach to go viral. I want my little nieces and nephews to continue to see accurate reflections of themselves, untainted by underlying racist themes, caricatures and cultural misconceptions... I want to be a part of changing the landscape of media offerings as both a champion of Black film and a writer, director and facilitator of art and the Black Aesthetic.

It [was] an honor to be contacted to work with the historic Philadelphia Museum of Art to produce a series of events through Art After 5. I was very lucky that Sara Moyn gave me a lot of artistic freedom in choosing the artist lineup and themes of the night. I started off doing a free event called

“Pay What You Wish Wednesdays”. It brought record numbers to that particular gallery and I was subsequently offered 3 “Art After 5” slots over the course of several months. I feel I have an eye for quality and there are so many artists that I still want to get on to that big stage in the Grand Stair, so that all the [locals and] tourists from around the world can see just how much diversity Philadelphia-based artists have to offer. I love bringing people together to enjoy transformative art.

This year, I am doing a lot of writing. I have been studying more and taking notes in a few different areas and I am just about ready to pull the trigger. You can expect to see my work surface in a myriad of ways because I have so much input in various artistic arenas. I got some simple yet great advice from Debbie Allen recently, who is known to have achieved greatness as a dancer, choreographer,

actress, producer and director. She said, and I’m paraphrasing, “You can only do one thing at

“Make your mark,  
create your space.”

a time. When I’m directing, everything else has to take a back seat, and so on and so forth.” That really struck me because her body of work resonates with me and I know if she is giving it to me straight like that, then I best listen and pick my first lane to own and master.”

I am so excited, I have a new book coming out! It’s called “The PreCursor”, early and signature works by Lyrispect. It’s the first of a series of creative projects (literature, audio, film) I’m releasing under the umbrella “Spectrum of a Supernova”. This book is my baby! I compiled it and self-published so it’s raw and vulnerable...but I wanted it to be that way. I write about love, revolution, social change, magic, and futurism. It contains most of my signature poems and some of my strongest written work to date. It’s really affordable. It will be available in the U.S. then Canada, and then an international release is scheduled this fall! It will be available for order through my website. [lyrispect.com](http://lyrispect.com)

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# CITY OF EXPRESSION

by Mary Anna Rodabaugh

## A DAY TRIP THROUGH THE ART SCENE

My morning commute starts with a 45-foot tall steel clothespin sculpture at 15th and Market Street. It continues west on Girard Avenue, passing the quiet Rebekah Templeton Contemporary Art gallery nestled between a vacant store and a tattoo parlor. Along the way, numerous murals, both painted and mosaic-style, adorn the sides of several buildings.

A short walk around my work neighborhood will eventually lead me to the corner of Fifth Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue. Right on the corner is a striking piece of street art: a wall with spray-painted graffiti dedicated to the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. This particular wall is a “permission wall,” that is, a piece of property which can be altered due to the permission from the property owner.

The commute home provides additional treasures. Back to Claes Oldenburg’s *Clothespin*, past Robert Indiana’s *LOVE* sculpture, and down the Ben Franklin Parkway I go. I’ll pass the Swann Memorial Fountain at Logan Square. Inside the fountain there are three large Native American sculptures, each representing the major waterways of Philadelphia (Schuylkill River, Delaware River, and the Wissahickon Creek). After passing the square, the Moore College of Art and Design always has inventive student work on display in their large front window exhibit.

From sculptures to street art, ground-to-roof murals to paintings, my commute spans a mere three zip codes and I’m exposed to a diverse array of artistic works, each with a different purpose. Each presenting a different perspective. Each created with different materials.

This is Philadelphia.

The City of Brotherly Love is known for

cheesesteaks, soft pretzels, the Liberty Bell, a highly diverse dining palate, and quality craft beer production. Aside from its rich history and delicious culinary opportunities, Philly has a vibrant, profound, and, at times, exotic art culture.

Nearly everyone has heard of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, one of the largest art museums in the country. The Perelman Building, located across the street from the main museum, features the Art Museum’s most cutting-edge collections as well as a lesser known public library.

Down the street at 2151 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the Rodin Museum houses an incredibly comprehensive collection of pieces by renowned French sculptor Auguste Rodin.

The Barnes Foundation of Philadelphia, at 2025 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, is hailed as an educational art and horticulture institution. The Barnes offers visitors the opportunity to enjoy a vast collection of French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings.

The Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, located at 118 North Broad Street, is home to collections from 19th and 20th century artists, as well as contemporary works created by regional artists.

For unique, thought provoking art exhibits guaranteed to generate interesting discussions, look no further than the Institute of Contemporary Art at 118 South 36th Street.

Germantown’s Woodmere Art Museum, at 9201 Germantown Avenue, is a hidden treasure chest of art. This museum is dedicated to celebrating the extraordinary talent and works of Philadelphia artists.

Philadelphia is also home to many individual art galleries sprinkled throughout the city. The Arthur Ross Gallery in University City is a modest one-room gallery located in the Ann and Jerome Fisher Fine Arts Library at the University of Pennsylvania.

Philadelphia’s Magic Gardens, a vibrant and massive indoor/outdoor gallery of mosaics, sculptures, folk art, and even recycled art by Isaiah Zagar, can be found at 1020 South Street.

In North Philly, Kensington’s recently renovated Frankford Avenue Arts Corridor features a diverse selection of artistry, including artist studios, a shared sculpture workspace, fine art galleries, and various arts programs for the community.

Interspersed between cafes, shops, bars and restaurants are over 20 different art galleries in the Old City District. On the first Friday of each month, these galleries offer snacks, drinks, occasional live music, and, most importantly, the opportunity to speak with the current exhibiting artists.

Exhibiting artists love interacting with the public. It is one thing to go into a gallery, admire the pictures, and maybe form your own interpretations about the work at hand. It is a whole other experience to come to your own conclusions and then speak to the artist about his or her intentions. Viewing any work of art is a cognitive experience. Your brain processes the colors you see. You unknowingly try to identify exactly what you are looking at. You decide which aesthetics appeal to you and which do not. The work may confuse you, trigger a distant memory, inspire you, or just look interesting. This experience is a defining feature of artistic expression.

Which brings us to the very microcosm of Philadelphia's art world. You have the museums, you have the galleries, but down at the bottom sits perhaps some of the most overlooked talented artists in the city: the street artists. These are individuals who create numerous works of art, including t-shirts, paintings, cartoons, caricatures, sketches, jewelry, handbags, sculptures, and photographic pieces. They attempt to sell their work from the

streets. Street artists and vendors are a common feature during the Frankford Arts Corridor and Old City First Fridays.

Many times, you get the opportunity to watch them at work. Sometimes they are meticulously creating various types of jewelry. Other times they appear transfixed, sketching the scene before them. Let's not forget the artists who use the streets as their canvas and produce works of art not for profit but to spread a message. All of these valuable individuals contribute unique elements towards the city's art culture. They should not be overlooked.

On your next commute, look at your sur-



roundings. Do you see an interesting sculpture or a vibrant mural? Check it out. Find out why it is there. Figure out where it came from. Learn something new during your everyday routine.

We've got history. We've got cheesesteaks. We've got really good beer. Yet we also have a growing, thriving, and valuable art environment that is begging to be explored.



# There Must Be Some Mistake

by John Timpane

*This is the day the Lord has made;  
Let us be glad and rejoice in it.  
Walk down the road. They come uncalled,  
Not the worst sign of word made good*

Badly: in Hebrew, nowhere verse.  
Here is the verse the Psalmist made,  
Psalm 118, verse 24:  
*The Lord has done it this very day;  
Let us rejoice today and be glad.*

Adiós, favorite Bible lines?

Have to read backward, find the *it*  
*Done this today ... here ... rescued ... how? ...*  
*Answered ... that's awesome ... answered whom? ...*  
*Me, as in us. Dumfounded thanks,*  
Whatever it is that answers. *We:*  
Rock that the builders tossed, no arch  
Planned for *us*. God redrew their plans,  
Cornerstoned castoff *us*. Now *we* are  
Holy and hard. *Whatever it is, it's*  
*Marvelous in our eyes.*

So much for  
Strictly constructing.

Who messed up?  
It wasn't Jerome in his room in Rome, but  
Hebrew-Greek-Africa-Jerome.  
Seventy gents, the Septuagint,  
Fumbled the relay. Some smart Greek  
Garbled the grokking, Hebrew harmed.  
Onward to Africa. Ambushed there.  
African Christians, party bunch,  
Latined defenseless Bible Greek  
Crazyhead-time ... until the Pope  
Ordered Jerome to fix this. He  
Peeked at the Greek (the Hebrew, no),  
Rescued the error from erase,  
Punted it down the future – to  
Me in the road, remembering.

Error is error, which is wrong  
Except when it works. Then they call it  
History. Ask Columbus. His  
Reckonings wrong, the *Niña* sailed  
(Manatees “mermaids” ... big brown  
eyes).

Bell spilled the acid – Watson came,  
First-ever game of telephone.  
Stumbled on relativity,  
Einstein did, thanks to Poincaré;  
Rubbery Goodyear; Fleming's dish  
Bearded with fungus. Some mistakes  
Hit a new target with a miss.

Word is imperfect present. Word  
Rises from precious fallings-off.  
Word mortars up the dry stone walls,  
Everychurch packed with human mess,  
Everymouth singing anguish, glee,  
Tone-deaf and broken in the flail,  
Song in the trash and bruises. Word,  
Miracle in the maculate,  
Throws us its voice down dirty sluice

Clean. Is verse true or not? I punt.  
Error that betters original  
Sings as King David might have sung  
But didn't, or maybe he should have. I'm  
Glad that giftless Greek misread,  
Made out of old verse new, revealed,  
Hiding unhidden, all that is  
Found in the mistranslation.

You:  
Walk in this day, walk in this it,  
Nameless. Who knows enough to name?  
*Thanks* isn't in there. Who could thank,  
Think of a thanks rejoiced enough?  
Since we mistake, rejoice, be wrong,  
Glad in the it we're wrong about,  
Never to know how wrong we are,  
Glad in a world that raises word.  
This is the day we break, the day  
Daybreak will break us, best of breaks.  
Breaking us makes us, makes our day,  
Makers remaking, breaking, broken,  
Making our gladness in the breaks.  
God, what a break to have this day.

# GPS THE DARKNESS

by Dariel Figueroa

## INSIDE 1982 LOCAL FILMAKERS' NATIONAL FILM



Tommy Oliver is a great many things. Producer. Writer. Director. Cinematographer. Survivor. And, on this day, it is once again hard to get him on the phone. This is the third time trying to conduct an interview with the talented writer-director of *1982*. Our previous meeting had imploded when I had called him as he was awaiting a flight out of California and he had no cell reception. But, this time, he calls and finally I can ask him all the questions I have about *1982*, the debut feature film based on his turbulent childhood.

I wasn't sure what to expect with Oliver. Judging by the subject matter of his semi-autobiographical film, it was possible I would be having a conversation with the "vitriolic-artist," the kind so infused with rage that it took some sort of great work of passion to dispel and ventilate the volcanoes of venom churning inside his being. Teeth would certainly thrash their way through my phone's receiver to gnaw at any part of my face available should an errant question careen his way. Instead, his calm, tempered voice cracks the anticipated air. "I was a kid that grew up with a crack-addicted mother."

*1982* tells the story of a family of three that begins to crumble under the weight of a mother's relapse into the world of drug addiction. It largely centers on her husband, who, while trying to take care of their daughter, sets out to find his wife as she bounces through the Philadelphia streets searching for her next fix. It's a situation so close to Oliver's heart—

he both wrote and produced the film—that he knew no one else could direct but him.

"As a producer, I'm not a micromanager. But, if I had brought someone on [to direct], because of the nature of the script being derived from my childhood, I would have smothered whomever I had brought on. So, it was out of necessity."

Immediately, a sense grew within me that this was not a damaged man like so many other children of addicts. This was an intelligent, introspective, and highly thoughtful man; one who had traversed through a tunnel of sharp jagged things to find a light on the other side. In fact, it was this strength that urged him to even shoot in his childhood Philadelphia home where the production would be harder to manage.

"Putting this film together was incredibly difficult. I was given a deal to go to Canada to shoot this, and without any guarantee at all that I could find money anywhere else, I turned it down. Philly is such a character and there is no replicating that or faking that. I wanted it to feel authentic, plus the whole idea of giving back to Philly and my neighborhood specifically was a big part of how I wanted to go about it."

The result is a film that is textured, baked, and bronzed in the '80s Philadelphia sun. Handheld cameras and an increasing sense of urgency and hopelessness ratchet up the tension as the disease of addiction chips away at this nuclear family. And then there is the fearsome drug dealer played with bravado by Wayne Brady. Yes, *that* Wayne Brady. Why him?

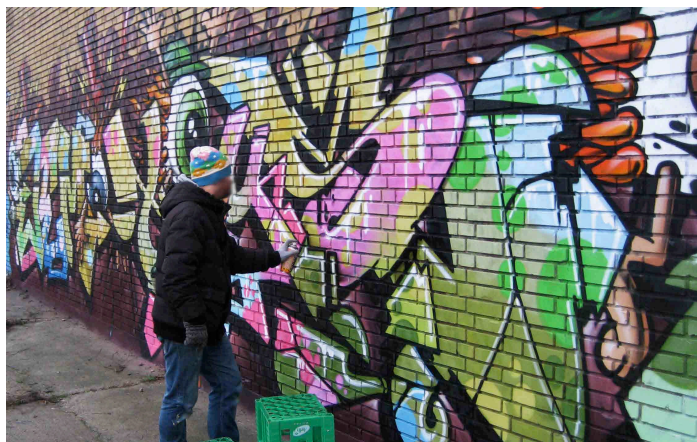
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# GRAFFITI: BLIGHT OR EXPRESSION

by David Amadio

In the fall of 1993 I was a freshman at Temple University. Since I didn't own a car and I still lived at home with my parents, I commuted to school on the Market-Frankford El, boarding at 69th St. and getting off at 15th for the Broad St. transfer. This was the pre-smartphone era, before the deluxe infinity of podcasts and playlists, before the Cloud. SEPTA riders were confined to more terrestrial diversions back then: a novel, a Walkman, or in my case, the city itself.

My interest lay not in the buildings, stately and storied as they were, but in the volumes of graffiti written on their walls and rooftops. From the mobile vista of my rocky window seat, I bore daily witness to the work of kings, all-city legends whose pieces hijacked the eye and held it captive long after the train had left them behind. The eastbound El dives underground on its way to 40th St., and peering into the yellowish light of bald tunnel lamps I marveled at the subterranean gallery of black-and-silver throw-ups, the names pulsing by like faces in a dream: OZ, MOE, KAIR, NOPE. When Temple placed me on academic probation in the middle of my second semester, those names became more relevant to me than the names of my classes, for in them I had discovered an entirely new object of study, one as mesmerizing as it was mysterious, as enthralling as it was elusive.



The history of Philadelphia graffiti dates back to the early 70s, when writers like COOL EARL, CHEWY, and CORNBREAD ruled the day. For many of the pioneers, “getting up” provided an alternative to joining a gang, the dominant means by which young black and Hispanic men sought to create identities for themselves. In the Robert Moran documentary *Sly Artistic City*, aerosol veteran SATCH credits graffiti with fulfilling his “sense of belonging,” introducing him to an underground community of imaginative and intrepid artists dedicated to “catching fame” in the slickest way possible. So active was this community, and so prolific its members, that by the time Wilson Goode

took office in 1984, Philadelphia had become known as Graffiti City—and a lot of residents were sick of looking at it.

Forty years after CORNBREAD spray painted his name on the side of an elephant, Philadelphians react to graffiti with either cool indifference or mild amusement. One sign of the city's increasing tolerance of graffiti (and graffiti-inspired art) is the *Love Letter* mural project helmed by Steve Powers, the artist more commonly known as ESPO. Completed in 2010 with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, the murals—painted on city-commissioned walls between 63rd and 45th Streets in West Philly—are a series of bold, colorful, highly visible messages intended to assure even the most despondent El riders that they too are loved by someone. Powers, the project's man-about-town, is an ex-graffiti writer who once cost taxpayers thousands of dollars in buffing fees. By trading in his outlaw status for a higher civic responsibility, Powers has earned graffiti wider public approval, but in so doing he has forfeited some of its natural mystique, much of which resides in the consummate anonymity of the practitioner.

Ten years ago I observed a flesh-and-blood graffiti writer leaving his mark on the city. It was shortly



before midnight, and I was standing outside the Trocadero in Chinatown, not expecting to see anything out of the ordinary. Then, like Sasquatch emerging from the trees, a lone figure walked up to a shuttered storefront across the street and tagged his name in black spray paint, a tall, sweeping autograph inscribed with flair and grace in just under five seconds. When he was finished, he stepped back to briefly inspect his work and then melted into the flux of people coursing down Arch St.

For several moments afterward I stared at the tag as if under a spell. I couldn't determine whether the tag had produced the writer or the writer had produced the tag, and I started thinking that perhaps I had hallucinated the whole thing. In our casual investigations of the mythic, it is not uncommon to find traces of the phenomenal, but it is far rarer to glimpse the phenomenon itself, as it is happening, in real time. I had witnessed a true "hit," but because of the aura in which I had always enveloped graffiti, I struggled to verify its authenticity. I couldn't reconcile the magical emanation with the human hand responsible for its being. It wasn't until I watched Tony Silver's *Style Wars* that I learned to acknowledge the person behind the piece, and to view graffiti as the first word in a silent, spontaneous dialogue between writer and reader.

I'm 38-years-old and I'm still reading the city, perusing, these days, from the cockpit of my car. Instead of rooftops and subway tunnels, I prefer water towers and viaducts, the "heaven spots" along 95 North, the underpasses in Chester. There is no shortage of signatures to admire: AQUA, TOBER, DRAMA, BAD. And certain ones still have the power to captivate, they still command the

sudden authority to take me out of myself. Graffiti, well-placed and well-executed, animates the brick and mortar cityscape in the same way that a deer enlivens the mute backdrop of nature. Both thrill us in their salience, their vitality, their assertiveness. I felt this excitement driving south out of Nice in the spring of 2007, as what seemed like



an endless ribbon of back-to-back pieces unfurled by my window, invigorating the slab of staid French highway with names, names, names, each one a detonation of color, a loud pronouncement of artistic identity. Graffiti's energy is so strong that even when the stringent try to power-wash it away, the letters remain visible through the blast marks, "ghosts" clinging to the surface.

As long as there is graffiti, there will always be a curious kid from the 'burbs to wonder at its provenance, and, if that kid is daring enough, to go out into the night and "get up" with the best of them. I never took it that far, content to perfect my hand in private. The only people I've ever been comfortable sharing my graffiti with are my children

(gangsta', I know). Whenever they're drawing at the kitchen table, I seize a marker, tear out a sheet of construction paper, and fill it top-to-bottom with several iterations of my tag. My son and daughter pore over the page, trying to make out the individual letters, and in their faces I see the same inquisitiveness that drew me to graffiti back in the early 90s. After squinting and scrunching, they eventually interpret the name, and this brings everyone a measure of joy. Because when we successfully read a piece of graffiti, whether it's a scrawled tag on the hump of a mailbox or a majestic burner on the flank of a train car, we fulfill not only the writer's sense of belonging, but ours as well.

“Wayne,” Oliver laughs, “is so much more talented than people realize. He just wanted to be a part of it and I believed in his talent and I’m glad that I did. He was damn good.”

A crackle of sound comes from the phone and Oliver’s voice goes quiet. The sounds of roads running by a car window can be heard. He’s driving. Are you still there? “Yeah,” he says, “just this GPS. Sorry.”

What about filming in the actual house in which your mother experienced her battles with drug addiction. Is that easy? How can someone confront the ghosts of pain still trapped in that Philadelphia row home?

“It wasn’t hard [to film there] for a couple of reasons. She was addicted when I was from the ages of three or four until ten. A lot of the difficult things I needed to deal with I dealt with prior to going back. Had I not done that, I would have never been able to make it through this film. That said, there was one time on set when I started crying.”

My respect for a man who is able to confront the phantoms of a pained childhood—through the lens of a camera no less—grows. Gone were the moments before when I had imagined bicuspid breaking through my phone. Oliver’s voice goes silent again. I chalk it up to his GPS. He comes back. “[Filming *1982*] was completely worth it. My temporary discomfort was nothing if it could help somebody talk about [addiction] with someone else or help them to realize they are not alone. In that sense, it was easy.”

Oliver and I start to break away from talking about production woes, and acting, and camera techniques: we focus on *meaning*. Isn’t that what cinema is all about in the end? The feelings you derive? The connotations you take home with you and the discussions a film can force you to undertake?

“I did a small private screening in Philly partnering with the Department of Human Services,” he says. “There were kids from foster homes,

and emergency shelters, and a number of other at-risk situations. Afterwards, we went down to one of the facilities and we had some of the most emotionally charged conversations I can remember having. The reason for that was, so many of the kids talked about how no one has ever seen their side. Every other movie has portrayed the glamorization of the drug use, or the drug dealer or the industry, and not shown what [they] went through.”

Indeed, *1982* truly shows the devastating effects that addiction can wreak through a familial structure, but Oliver does this in a naturalized way by not showing drug use on camera in the film. If you have known an addict, you know that you’ll rarely ever see them using in front of you. It’s quite the opposite of a film like *Requiem for a Dream*.

“A lot of it [addiction] came down to how I experienced it and how I remembered it,” he says. “To this day the idea drug use bothers the living hell out of me. I can’t watch people sticking needles in themselves. It’s something I didn’t want to see. The imagination is such a powerful thing. It is just as real, just as dynamic, just as visual as actually seeing something, if not more.”

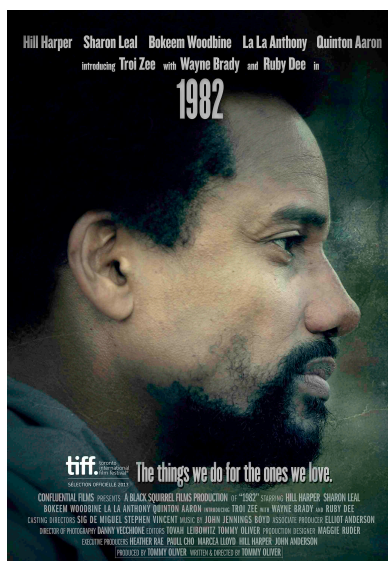
And then I have to ask...what about your mother? What did she think of the film?

“My own mother did not understand what I went through until she saw this movie. It took some 20 years lat-

er for her to understand the implications of what she was doing. The hope is that people just understand a little bit more. Understanding will help addicts realize how difficult it is for their loved ones, even though they think they are only hurting themselves.”

Oliver is that rare person who has been able to not only break through a handicapped childhood, but who has used that experience for a greater good. And, just like a person with a GPS through the darkness, he has some directions for you.

“If you want to do something, if you want to have a career, make something. Don’t talk about it. People respond to people who get stuff done. No matter what it is. Get it done. Make the best of what you have and don’t wait for someone else to say yes.”





The cover art is original and its ballpoint pen on wood... a dope artist found my pic online and rendered it. I woke up one morning tagged by one of my friends to the pic on Swizz Beat's Instagram page with over 7,000 likes! After I got over the initial shock, I knew this had to be the cover for one of my creative projects. The artist agreed! The PreCursor was the perfect fit!

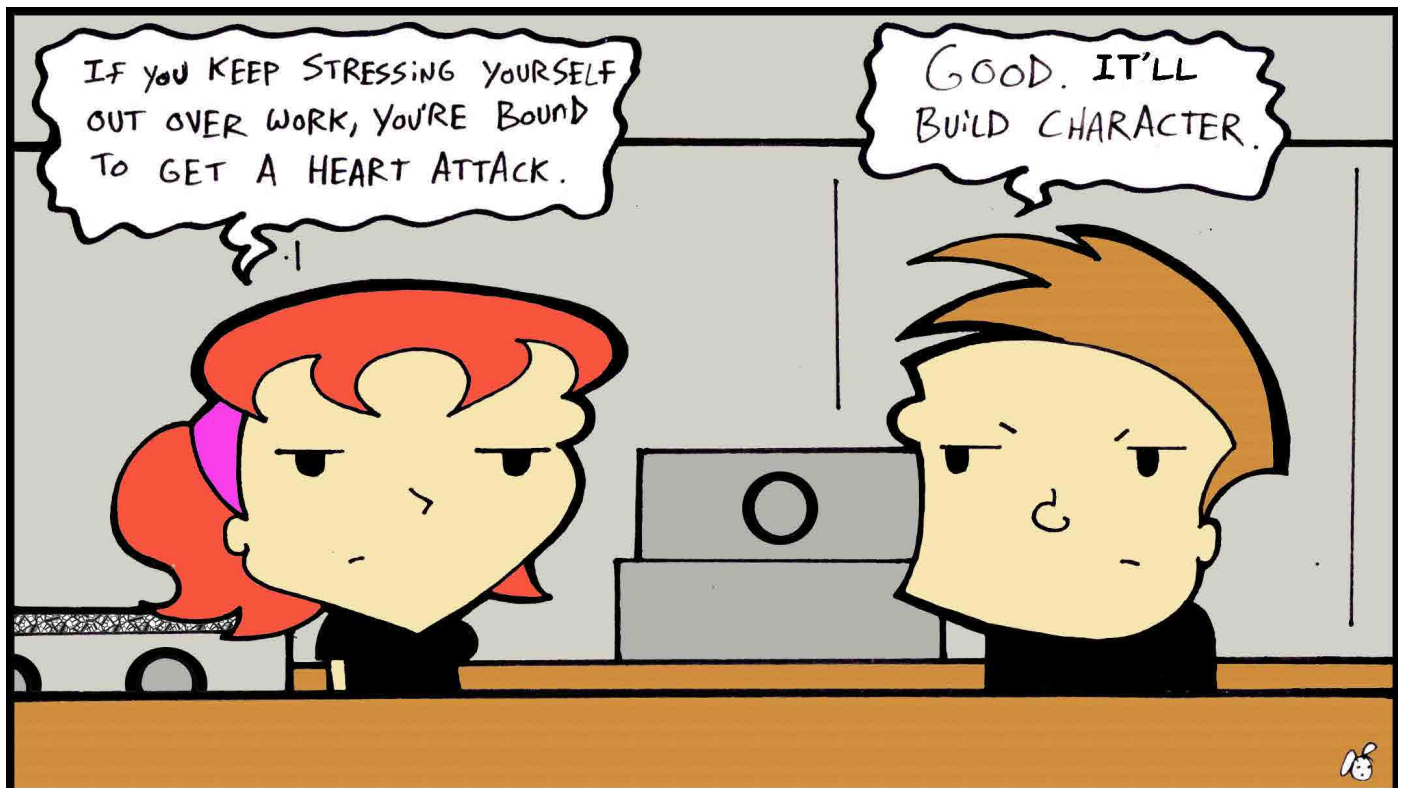
**JK:** Feel free to tell us anything else you find relevant!

**NB:** How can you own your image, cultural pride, and history if someone else is telling your story? We need fresh voices to keep the legacy alive. Make your mark, create your space. I run on **PASSION**.

People always see what you have and they want a shortcut to success, or they start to treat you differently. But they never really know how hard you have worked, what you have sacrificed, and what you have experienced to get there. I'm talking about changing your personal work hours to match a headquarters in a time zone that is 3 hours behind you. I stay up late into the night meeting deadlines and wake up early in the morning to get a swim or a workout in and do it all again the next day. My creativity and my intelligence fuel my income. It takes a lot of energy to be "on" so much, but I am pacing myself. I can see myself founding a company or taking an Executive Director role in an arts organization. I have a structured intellectual need that has to be filled alongside my creativity. My goal is to stay humble and to soar beyond my wildest imagination!"



## WHINE and DINE by Tedd Hazzard





# JACLYN ENGLISH'S GAME

by Bryan Carter

## FULL COLOR HAUTE COUTRE IN OLD CITY

At 29-years-old, Jaclyn English's accessories have been featured in across country. "Born to a talented seamstress mother and engineer father, I was raised in New Jersey," says English, "spending most of my life in Deptford, NJ. I attended college in Ewing, and have since relocated to Haddonfield. I am currently employed as a web application developer, working the whole software engineering process from start to finish. Imagine the movie Office Space in real life, and you've got it. In my spare time, aside from making jewelry, I enjoy singing at local open mic nights, attending any concert that is going on, and baking tasty treats for everyone I

know. I am Jaclyn English."

**BC:** What was in the inspiration behind your desire to create jewelry, and why the name "Game Jewelry"?

**JE:** I grew up with a very crafty mother who from a very early age promoted creativity. I perused the aisles of the local craft stores, and would get lots of beads and supplies to use. In recent years, I have truly desired to discover the inspiration in everything around me, and experiment with various materials. In particular, I have always been drawn to bright, bold colors, geometric shapes, and playful silhouettes. Creating something truly unique



has always been the end goal. The word “Game” embodied that spirit.

**BC:** By day you’re a programmer and by night you’re a jewelry designer. How did that happen?

**JE:** My fascination with technology began when I was very young. When I first sat in front of a computer, I immediately wanted to learn all I could and use the resources I had so that I could make something useful. The power of the personal computer continues to be awe-inspiring to me, and I love the challenge of problem solving. Perhaps, in many ways, these are traits that I inherited from my father. I have not found these interests to be at odds with my creative energy. Instead, I am driven to merge the two, by making something that draws on the two seemingly opposed aspects of my personality. In both areas, you use the materials available to you to make something—what you do with that result clearly differs, but I find similarities in the design process.

**BC:** I remember seeing your jewelry at Philadelphia Fashion Week 2012 and immediately my eyes were glued to the Lego pieces. Specifically, why does your jewelry focus on them?

**JE:** In my first attempts to use unconventional materials, I initially worked with other game pieces—namely Scrabble tiles. I wanted to continue on that theme—game pieces—and posed the question to others looking for some inspiration, and Legos was a suggestion that was soon provided. It struck me as brilliant, because the aesthetic seemed ideal. I went to buy myself a box of Legos, got out my drill, and started designing.

What I have found in presenting my line is that Legos are extremely nostalgic, and the love for them is universal across generations and shared by men and women. I know I built with them during my childhood as many did; wearing them allows me and others to tap into that part of their youth.

**BC:** When you started out with Her Game Jewelry, did you have a direction for your business? For

# "I wanted to continue on that theme—game pieces—"

example, were you enabling customers to experience something?

Photo Credit: Kajsa

**JE:** At the very start of my business, I saw it as complete leap of a faith—a real risk for someone like myself who had settled into a secure, standard job. However, I knew I needed to take a chance on something I have a passion for. Accessorizing offers me a chance to express myself in a fun, fresh way, and that is the feeling I want to share with prospective customers.

**BC:** I’m pretty sure you’ve encountered bumps in



the road. What has been your greatest obstacle?

**JE:** Ultimately, a great challenge is presenting a product that is innovative and discovering the audience for that product. Using an unexpected medium will get the attention of the consumer, but one must also demonstrate that it is also wearable, sophisticated, and versatile. Even as I discover new materials to use and consider new designs, that continues to be the task at hand.

**BC:** What’s kept you sane after all the trials and tribulations with Her Game Jewelry? What rein-

forces your desire to continue moving forward?

**JE:** An increase in sales or mass appeal would certainly be great—there is no denying that. However, that is not the motivation to keep trying, as that ultimately will not provide fulfillment nor satisfaction. I continually receive positive feedback from those I encounter at shows and boutiques for creating something that is unlike what they have seen before. The process of making something new never ceases to bring me joy, and I would not give that up for anything.

**BC:** Where can someone find your jewelry? Any stores? Online?

**JE:** Currently, my jewelry is sold at Smak Parlour in Old City ([smakparlour.com](http://smakparlour.com)) and on their fashion truck, which travels to various events throughout the city, including the Philly Night Market. In addition, pieces are available at Game Jewelry's website at ([hergamejewelry.com](http://hergamejewelry.com).) Also, pieces are sold at various shows in the South Jersey/Philadelphia area.

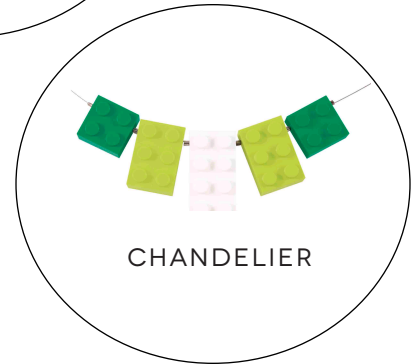
**BC:** Do you have any long-term goals or plans for your business?

**JE:** My aim is to continue growing my consumer base in the Philadelphia area and seek out local businesses to carry my items. Ultimately, I would truly love to see Game Jewelry become self-sustaining and further expand my product line to include more vintage game pieces and broaden the nostalgic appeal. I'd like to see Game be the go-to company for truly fun and unique accessories for girls and young women of all ages.

Find Game at [hergamejewelry.com](http://hergamejewelry.com) or  
Visit Smak Parlour [smakparlour.com](http://smakparlour.com)



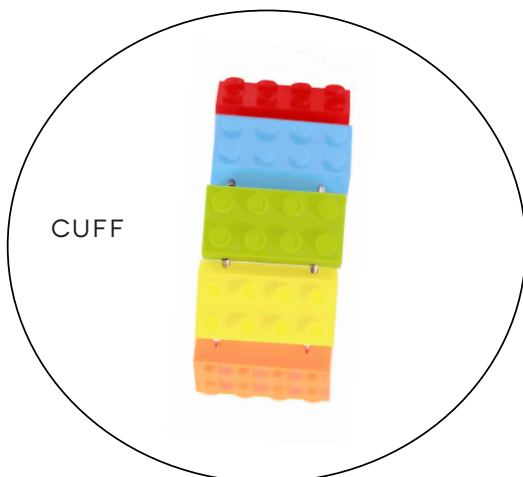
EARRINGS



CHANDELIER



SMILE NECKLACE



CUFF



IVORY CHANDELIER



BRACELET



# DEVOLUTION OF YIS GOODWIN

by Marc Londo

# PHILLY ARTIST NoseGo IS TURNING THE ART WORLD INSIDE OUT



There is a temporality to the work of Yis Goodwin. From the crazed expressions of his characters, to the cellular networks regulating their dispositions, along with the infusion of light and life that exudes through Goodwin's use of color, each piece springs from its canvas as a moment in time. A crescendo. In its grand salvo, the sum of its parts overtakes the composition as a whole as Goodwin's inner-universe uncoils through a stream of consciousness. "I just try to paint what I feel," he says. "Ideally, I would like the work to be universal. We all see the same thing but in different light."

The characters in Goodwin's work form a complex grouping of associations between the "natural





world” and the imagination, while their spontaneous devolution leads to questions of a modern crisis. By blending techniques of illustration, media arts, and graffiti, Goodwin effectively creates an aesthetic that transcends time, space, and reality. In his universe, it is quite common to see the life-like head of a great white shark emerge from the mouth of a grinning cartoon character. This eclectic layering of techniques is in itself a statement on this artist’s inclusive worldview.

Through his message of authenticity, Yis Goodwin gives viewers a reflective lens through which to reconnect with their inner child. The bold nature of his art engages his audience on a visceral level, so that viewers feel challenged to look beyond the cynicism of adulthood and satisfy the eager appetite of their imaginations. It’s a refreshing aesthetic that inspires a deep appreciation of nature and diversity. To Goodwin, it’s simply about pure engagement. “Every now and then, I will hear something about my work that stands out and it is usually from a child,” he says. “That reaction and the feeling someone gets is most important to me.”

As an artist, Goodwin has grown used to standing out. A native of Philadelphia, he first gained a reputation as a street artist under the name “Nose.” However, he wasn’t exactly a typical graffiti artist. As a youth, he attended the High School for Creative and Performing Arts in South Philly, where he was instructed on the finer points of painting still life and figure studies. While he excelled at his studies, he felt an increasing need to go beyond

the realm of his classical background. So at age 17, he ventured into the world of street art; starting, first, with typical lettered graffiti before developing his signature animated style, which integrated colorful patterns and animals.

It is fascinating to consider how those formative years manifested into the raucous style that he is known for today. His ability to paint realistic likenesses of animals and objects, while wielding a spray can with the dexterity of a paintbrush, provides added dimension to the more raw graffiti aspects of his work. Given that street art is known for being uniquely expressive of urban identity, Yis Goodwin’s own identity formation inspires intriguing questions through the layers of his work. What drives a classically trained artist to cross over into street art? The characters in his work often suggest deep connections to nature behind their colorful facades. This yen for life isn’t that unlike Goodwin’s need to explore his art beyond the confines of his highly structured artistic background.

While a student at the University of the Arts, where he graduated in 2008, his modus ope-



randi came to include a mix of graffiti, media arts, and illustration. To mark his transition into a professional artist, Goodwin took his street art persona (“Nose”) and branded himself “Nosego” by adding the first two letters of his last name. With a colorful name to compliment the outlandish characters in his work, he proceeded to market his unique brand across the landscape of popular culture. To date, Nosego has provided his services to a variety

always been a great release for me,” he explains. “I was fortunate to find a few like-minded people [Jeff Hsu, Tyson and Matt Anderson] that wanted to create something fun.”

And if there is a word that could describe Nosego’s art, it is “fun.” His bombastic style provides a fresh, non-threatening, visual presentation that people of all walks of life can appreciate. It is disarming and reflects the greater role he sees

artists playing in our communities. Thus far, he has finished eight commissioned murals, two of them through the Mural Arts Program of Philadelphia. “The art scene in Philly is broad, with great individuals or collectives, who speak with different voices spoken in a similar medium,” he says. “When I do public work, my intention is to do something that will, hopefully, beautify the community that it’s in. The beauty for me is the process and the stories it creates later.”

Thus, much like those colorful ghosts in Pac-Man, Nosego’s murals draw attention when one drives



of successful companies, including Vitaminwater, Dreamland Toyworks, Converse, and Adidas.

Not surprisingly, the funkadelic creatures in Nosego’s art have also crossed over into the realm of subculture. With their characteristic bulging eyes and cavernous mouths, the critters he paints look like they should be chasing Pac-Man. Their amped expressions and spunky colors tap into the adolescent angst that fueled the old-school skater aesthetic. Having a foot in both worlds, Nosego appreciates the counter-culture appeal of his art. Recently, he was commissioned to design the artwork for a new smart-phone game called *Rusty the Rainbow Whale*. “Games have

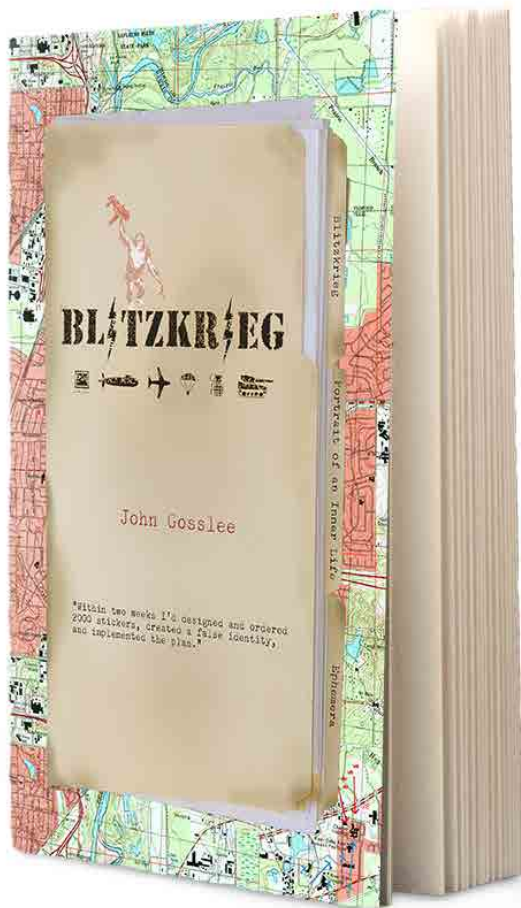
through the grid of Philadelphia. While they aren’t intended to scare, they are meant to illicit a visceral response. In Philly, we often find that our lives are dictated by the grid. Like clockwork, we take the same streets, to get to the same jobs, which order us to do the same tasks. Throughout this mind-numbing schedule, we lose something. For those of us who arrive in front of Nosego’s murals over the course of our day, perhaps we are reminded that—as human beings—we have the capacity to use our limitless imaginations, and deep within us all there is an innate connection to the natural world that we have grown detached from.

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# BLITZKRIEG

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GOSSLEE

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