

December 22, 2009

## 9 Most Intriguing People of 2009

*ROB KALESSE AND KELLY HOUSEN*

We met Bill, executive director of the non-profit Light Up The Queen Foundation, on a frigid day in January, when he gave us our first look inside the theater, which hadn't seen any activity in half a century.

And since moving back to the area from New Orleans, fundraising for the Queen has been his main priority, scheduling countless concerts at makeshift venues up and down Market Street, and even getting WXPN involved as a key sponsor.

Now just \$2 million shy of the \$25 million goal, construction has begun on his dream, with renovations taking place daily. Given the scope of the project, the variables are many, but as of now, they're looking to have the place rocking by spring or summer of 2011.

"Our next big event is to hold an all-day festival we're going to call Big Noise in the Neighborhood, on May 15," Bill said. "We've got David Bromberg and his wife Nancy involved, and will be broadcasting the event live on WXPN."

Bill is also planning the 2nd annual Mardi Gras on Market, for Feb. 26, when Trombone Shorty will make his second appearance in Wilmington in the last year. The event will feature specials and cajun-themed food and drink at participating Market Street restaurants, as well as a crawfish boil and masquerade ball.

-- Rob

### **KRISTEN MARGIOTTA**

One look at Kristen Margiotta's surrealist illustrations, composed of cartoonish characters with deep eyes and goth garb, we could immediately see her work fitting in a Tim Burton film.

Of those characters, Ivy Spookerton, the protagonist in "Better Haunted Homes and Gardens," a children's book published earlier this year, was what first brought Kristen to our attention.

Since the book release, Kristen has exhibited her published works at the Talleyville Frame Shop, and her paintings at the Red Mohawk Gallery at 9th and Tatnall in Wilmington, and even way out west in New Mexico.

"I contacted Pop Gallery in Santa Fe and asked if they'd like to feature some of my work," Kristen told us. "I'm a big fan of their gallery and so far my paintings have gotten a really good response. I might even head out there for an exhibition with all female artists in May."

Meanwhile, Kristen's art, as well as copies of "Better Haunted Homes and Gardens," are now available at her online store, which is up and running at [www.kristenmargiotta.com](http://www.kristenmargiotta.com).

-- Rob

### **RICH NEUMANN & TINA BETZ**

If there still remains the notion that downtown Wilmington is dead on the weekends (or after 5 p.m. on weekdays), two people intent on squashing that stereotype are Rich Neumann and Tina Betz, both members of Mayor James Baker's staff.

Rich and Tina were the energetic and fun-loving forces behind bringing Wilmington its first Fringe Festival back in late October. The three-day celebration, sponsored by Spark, gave local and far-off artists a chance to exhibit the unconventional and absurd.

"We had three goals we wanted to accomplish," Rich said. "The first two were giving residents the opportunity to see exciting and edgy entertainment without traveling, and to give the chance for artists locally to explore more creative forms of expression."

The third goal? Giving Wilmington the credibility of being a place where people can do hip and innovative things, thus further quelling the idea that the city shuts its doors and boards up its windows after dark.

"One of the the things I was most pleased to see was that we had every arts association participate in some way," Tina said. "The Mayor, the people, the artists, everyone supported the event at a level that I haven't seen since arriving here in 2001."

The response was so positive, in fact, that Rich and Tina are about to start working on a second Fringe Wilmington, which they're tentatively planning to be a five-day festival starting Sept. 29. The call for artist submissions will begin as early as March 1.

-- Rob

### **GROUCHY GREG WATKINS**

Outside of Vice President Joe Biden, there might not be a more famous Delawarean outside our state lines than Grouchy Greg. As founder and C.E.O. of [www.allhiphop.com](http://www.allhiphop.com), Greg rubs elbows with the likes of Snoop Dogg and Ariana Huffington on a regular basis.

Greg was one of our main tour guides in exploring the world of Hip Hop that's alive and well in Delaware, introducing us to young, emerging artists and giving us a detailed history of the scene that started back in the '80s.

Since we chatted in August, Greg has been busy as ever, celebrating the 12th anniversary of his Web site, which recently won Best Web Site at the B.E.T. Awards in October, and cracked Yahoo's Top 10 Most Searched list.

He has also launched a new site, [www.raresoul.com](http://www.raresoul.com), a daily dedication to R&B and soul music. But his biggest project for 2010 is a television show he's formulating for Delaware Channel 28, the cable access channel.

"It will likely hit the airwaves sometime in January and it's one of the biggest projects I'm going to try and tackle in 2010," Greg said. "It'll combine elements of interviews I've done with celebrities and some things nobody else is doing right now. It's gonna be cutting edge, for sure."

-- Rob

## **JEREMIAH WEED**

Of course, this version is a bit lighter (70-proof) although sweeter, and there are scads of stories on the Internet about the legend of Jeremiah Weed. But rather than bore you with all that, we'll let the man tell the tale himself.

*Back in the bluegrass state, where I's born 'n bred, drinkin" bourbon is the number one pastime, but a close second is sippin' sweet tea on those summer afternoons hot enough to make a junebug sweat.*

*With that in mind, I been workin' in the backyard where we done made our family moonshine all these years, and came up with this sweet-as-pie combo, which mixes up the sugary iced tea of the south with some high quality vodka.*

*Drink 'er straight, on ice, with water, or even with some lemonade for a bit of the sweet and the tart. It's Kentucky pride at 70 proof! Now git on out there to your boozy marts and grab a bottle for yourself. Tell 'em Jeremiah sentcha!*

-- Rob

## **MICHAEL KALMBACH**

In tracking down the movers and shakers dedicated to revitalizing downtown Wilmington, we came in contact with Michael Kalmbach after we heard about his New Wilmington Arts Association.

Earlier in the year, Michael, who also serves as the Assistant Director of Admissions at the Delaware College of Art and Design, founded the N.W.A.A., a platform which strives to enable young, emerging artists in need of space to work, store and exhibit their art in the city.

Through the N.W.A.A., Michael has worked with realty groups like Buccini-Pollin Group to secure empty storefronts and properties along Market Street once a month, and to hold exhibitions of artists for all passersby to see.

"In the process of incorporating ourselves, we've talked to other collectives who are actually insanely jealous of the set-up and lack of a building," Michael told us. "That's because we lack any overhead and have the ability to maintain that geurilla style we have."

In addition to running the N.W.A.A., Michael has been an integral part of getting the Shipley Lofts at 7th & Shipley streets renovated and filled with artists, along with help from the Shipley Village Community Development Center and the Ingerman Group.

"There are 23 lofts to fill and we're hoping that we have artists living there by March 1," Michael said.

(Go to [www.ingerman.com](http://www.ingerman.com) for more.)

As of Feb. 5, Wilmington's Art on the Town will begin its 2010 series, which will feature N.W.A.A. artwork as part of the re:Fresh Party, to be held at the Shipley Lofts, and running all month long.

-- Rob

## **CHEF JULIO LAZZARINI**

We first chatted with Julio Lazzarini in January, just as he was opening Orillas Tapas Bar and Restaurant at 413 North Market Street in Wilmington.

The restaurant has a Spanish flair, and Julio drew much of his culinary inspiration for the restaurant from his time working with Douglas Rodriguez in Miami, who is considered to be the pioneer of nueva latino cuisine.

We were already intrigued by Julio and the fresh flavors he was bringing to LoMa, but his story got even more interesting after we saw him compete in the Food Network show "Chopped," a culinary competition where four chefs are given a "mystery basket," full of ingredients to incorporate into one dish. One chef is eliminated after each course (appetizer and entree), leaving two to compete for the win with the dessert course.

In a July episode featuring Julio, he made it all the way to the dessert course, where he had to make a dish with tomatillos, crème fraîche and plain doughnuts. He made a French-toast inspired dessert, but ultimately lost to New York chef Marc Spooner's doughnut fritters.

Julio, however, doesn't view it as a loss and told us that the show "definitely put the restaurant and myself out there. A lot of people are coming from out of town to eat here."

The show also helped Julio gain some perspective.

"I realized I was a little out of touch with the stuff that I used to do. It pushed me back into the kitchen a little bit."

In 2010, Julio plans to continue to develop Orillas, with new lunch and dinner menus. He's also talking about possibly being a contestant on "Top Chef," or doing a small cooking show at the restaurant.

Whatever 2010 brings, we're sure it will be delicious.

- Kelly

## **GENTLE JONES**

We could listen to Gentle Jones (aka William Ferrell) chatter on all day. Vocalist with ska-soul-funk band The Bullbuckers, rapper, musician and funky lyricist in general, the man is hip hop from bottom to top.

Which is why we tapped him to help us with our Hip Hop issue in August, and he got right to work, hooking us up with old school rappers and DJs throughout the state, and new school artists we hadn't yet heard of.

In addition to his musical commitments, Gentle continues to interview legendary names in hip hop (like Grandmaster Scorpio of the Furious Five and Ice T) for his World News Report, at [www.gentlejones.blogspot.com](http://www.gentlejones.blogspot.com).

"I'm still rhyiming and emceeing, and things are really taking off with The Bullbuckers, including shows with The Slackers and The Pietasters," Gentle said. "But I'm also working on a children's book and even put together a puppet show called Operation Eden."

A puppet show and a children's book? Seems somewhat far-fetched, but if anyone can pull it off, it's the unsinkable Gentle Jones, who said, "I got scads of projects. Looking forward to unleashing them in 2010."

-- Rob

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