



THE MULTICULTURAL ISSUE

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Cover illustration by Rob Gibsun

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

One characteristic I have always loved about VCU was its appreciation for other cultures. Being located in Richmond, Va. gives our amazing university even more ability to establish its diverse population with open arms and open minds. In my opinion, it is vital for a university to allow its students to express themselves, give them a wide variety of ideals to pursue and most importantly, the freedom to learn whatever they need that makes them happy with their education. Please let this issue of INK magazine be your guide to all the cultural wonders of VCU and Richmond.

In this magazine, you will find articles on the VCU dance culture, reviews of some of Richmond's many cultural restaurants, our featured artists Slam Nahuatl, an exclusive interview with lead guitarist, Alan Simpson of This Time It's War and some other amazing articles about the many multicultural joys that the city of Richmond has to offer. Of course, never miss the always amazing fashion spread, featuring the many different coat styles keeping you warm this winter. Thank you to my incredible staff of writers, photographers, artists and designers for making this fantastic November issue!

EMILY EASON

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VCU'S DANCE CULTURE IN JEOPARDY?



WITH ALL THE DIFFERENT CULTURES AND traditions that are shared at VCU, none are more universal than dancing. No matter where in the world people come from, everyone likes to dance and everyone has their own style and flare. Anyone who has any interest in any kind of dance style what so ever can defiantly find it here at VCU. Whether it is hip-hop, swing or ballroom, it can be found on campus. Do not be concerned if you've never taken a class before in dance in your life, because all of the organizations start from the very bottom and work with you step by step. Before you know it you'll be the envy of all your friends with your new, flashy and slick dance moves.

If you want to learn the latest in hip-hop choreography and street dancing, then look no further than Blank Canvas. Blank Canvas is the B-Boy/hip-hop dance crew here at VCU, and out of all the dance groups I have attended, they seem to have the biggest following. They can be found almost every night at the Franklin Street Gym practicing their amazing skills in break dancing, popping and hip-hop. On Thursday nights however, is the night they invite students to come and learn how to dance.

Each week the crew holds an open choreography session taught by a different member of the team. Every class begins with a simple stretch followed by a small warm up routine, which by itself makes you feel like you could go out and try out for a spot on "So You Think You Can Dance" or "Americas Best Dance Crew." After the warm up, the choreographer for the night will give a quick rundown of what they will be teaching along with showing the class the entire routine for the night. Once the rundown is complete, the real work finally begins with the choreographer breaking the dance down step by step, as well as breaking it into a beginning, middle and end. Once the steps for each section of the piece have been mastered, the entire dance is put together as one complete product. To challenge the class the room is split in half (or into four groups depending on how many people show up) and each group does the choreography for the instructor to see who mastered the choreography better. Even if you completely screw up the steps, (like myself) it's all in good fun and everyone is very respectful of

one another. If you are looking for a very entertaining, very fun and very challenging experience, then hip-hop may be the style for you. Blank Canvas holds free classes every Thursday night on the third floor of Franklin Street Gym on the Monroe Park Campus at 7:30 p.m.

If modern dancing is not your thing and you're looking to unleash your inner Danny Zuko, or Sandy Olsen, then the Swing Club may be more your speed. Like Blank Canvas, Swing Club focuses on the art of 1950s swing dancing for both beginners, as well as seasoned veterans. What makes this class a little bit more unique than the other dance clubs, is where the practices are held. Most dance classes are held at Franklin Street Gym on the Monroe Park Campus or at the Larrick Center over at the MCV Campus, because both contain some sort of dance studio inside. Swing Club steps out of the box by doing their classes outside in the courtyard behind Hibbs Hall. As the sun begins to set the street lamps turn on around the campus, giving the class a setting, similar to that of an old Fred Astaire or Bing Crosby movie. If you are a fan of the classic American dance styles that are contained in swing, then definitely consider joining Swing Club behind Hibbs Hall on the Monroe Park Campus, Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

Finally, over on the MCV Campus is Ballroom Dance Society. Unlike Blank Canvas and The Swing Club, Ballroom Dance Society does not focus on one individual dance style. Instead, they incorporate all dance styles that are done within a ballroom setting, such as the cha-cha-cha, salsa, the waltz and the samba. Each week the class teaches two different types of dance styles usually complete opposites of one another, such as the cha-cha which is a more rhythmic style, and then moving into the waltz, which is more structured and frame dependent. Ballroom Dance Society is one of the few dance groups that has different tiers to their organization. For example, Blank Canvas and The Swing Club focus on one specific dance style and build's the whole class up over the course of the year. Because Ballroom touches on so many styles of dance, each style is given a basic rundown over the course of the semester. That way everyone gets an

understanding of the differences and similarities of the different forms. This would be a great opportunity for anyone who appreciates dancing as a whole. Ballroom Dance Society meets every Wednesday at the Larrick Center on the MCV Campus at 7:30 p.m.

Unfortunately, it would seem that the dance organizations will be in danger once this semester is over. According to Bethany Bidgood, president of Ballroom Dance Society, all dance organizations are going to be banned from the Larrick Center (this includes the recreational sports exercise room), University Student Commons and the Hunton Student Center, due to the possibility of damage being done to the studio floors. The only possible location left for the dance organizations to conduct their classes is in the Franklin Street Gym; however, the space is very limited and is mainly used by actual dance majors. Unless another location can be found, these groups will not be able to hold their classes for future semesters. If anyone has any ideas where the dance organizations could hold their classes, feel free to visit the groups' Facebook pages with possible locations.

With such an extensive art program at VCU, it is no surprise that dance is so heavily supported by the student body. The best part about these dance organizations is that they usually are on different days. That way, people who want to learn more than one particular style have the chance to experience all of the different flavors the school has to offer. There is no fee to join these groups and there is no pressure to attend every single session, mainly because something new is always being taught each week, making each class refreshing and exciting. If you have a passion for dancing or never danced in your life, joining a dance organization is defiantly a satisfying experience for the professional and the recreational.

BY CORT OLSEN
PHOTOS BY CORT OLSEN

SIMPLE STEPS FOR HAIR WRAPPING

HEAD WRAPS ARE A CHEAP AND EASY WAY to look chic and can be a striking contrast to your everyday look. There is a wide variety of head scarves sold with different designs, patterns and colors to fit your personality and look. The scarves used in the picture were hand woven in Ethiopia, which added a tribal look to the outfit. Traditionally head wraps were mainly worn by men among cultures in the Middle East, North Africa and India sometimes known as turbans or bulle over time they evolved into fashion pieces gracing the presents on luxury fashion designer runways and on the heads of celebrities. Here are five easy steps to get the look!

STEP ONE: Get a long piece of material.

STEP TWO: Grip the right and left end of the fabric and firmly place it around your head.

STEP THREE: Tie the pieces in your hands together over your forehead and make sure it is tight enough to stay on but not blocking off your blood circulation.

STEP FOUR: Twist together the two stands of the excess material all the way to the bottom and hold firmly at the end to keep a tight twist.

STEP FIVE: In a circular motion, twist the scarf around to make a spiral at the end of the twist tuck in the rest of the scarf to keep the spiral secure.



the
spiral

STEP ONE: Fold the scarf diagonally in half to make the shape of a triangle.

STEP TWO: Hang the scarf over your head leaving the third piece in the front of your head and the other two ends on the left and the right.

STEP THREE: Tie the ends on the left and the right together over the third piece in the front of your head (if the third piece gets scrunched up you can pull it down so it fits more firmly on your head).

STEP FOUR: Grip the left piece with your left hand and the middle and the right piece together in your right hand and twist them together.

STEP FIVE: Once you've finished your twist, pull it over your head and tuck it in the back of the scarf tight and secure. (If it is not secure enough you can use a safety pin)



the
warrior's
helmet

Depending on the type of material your scarf determines the way the head wrap would look. If you are going for an easy every day look, I would use a soft cotton scarf, but if you want to be a stand out then I would go for a stiffer bulkier material either way would look great!

These are just a few ways that you can tie head wraps the beginning stages are the same, you can be creative and come up with your own personalized version.

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THE PROS AND CONS TO CAMPUS STEREOTYPES

If you dress differently than what is considered “normal” you have probably noticed the frequent stares and gawks coming from strangers. If you have bright pink hair, a septum piercing, tattoos and a black T-shirt with your favorite band in illegible writing, you have most likely been a victim of stereotyping. Of course, there are all kinds of stereotyping, from the type of music you listen to, to the way you dress and even to the color of your skin. Everyone has probably experienced being stereotyped at one time or another.

Stereotyping roots from society’s standard of what is and, what is not, acceptable. Humans have the tendency to categorize people based on their physical appearance because it’s easy to make generalizations and assumptions about people based on what we see on the outside. It’s incredibly easy to judge someone at first glance. Most people already have their “first impression” of someone before the person even speaks.

But why do we continuously stereotype even when we know our generalizations may not be true? The reason could be personal insecurity or just plain ignorance.

Even as diverse as the VCU student body is, stereotyping still occurs. The punks and metal heads still have the reputation as being rebellious-anarchist druggies. Everyone in the art school is stereotyped as a pretentious “I-liked-that-before-it-was-mainstream” hipster. And if you’re in a fraternity or sorority, people often assume you’re a heavy partier, drinker and act like people from the MTV series “The Hills.”

The truth is, although stereotypes may have some accuracy to them, the generalizations attached to stereotypes do not fit everybody. Even though rap music is popular among African-Americans, simply being an African-American doesn’t automatically mean you like rap music. Having tattoos and body piercings doesn’t make you any less of a person, and just because you make good grades doesn’t mean you’re a nerd.

On the contrary, stereotypes can be positive. For instance, we all know being the new kid stinks. It’s stressful and for some people hard to overcome. This is especially true for the international students. Imagine traveling to a new country and not knowing anyone. Finding people who look like you is an easy way to make friends because you can understand and relate to each other. VCU makes finding friends easier by offering dozens of clubs and student organizations that target specific ethnic groups such as the African Student Union, Arabic Club, Chinese Student Association, Filipino Americans Coming Together and Korean Unity Gathering, etc. With all that VCU has to offer, you’re bound to make friends.

People are quick to judge, that’s just human nature, but getting to know someone can vastly change any preconceived notions. Sometimes it can be hard to express your individuality without falling into some sort of stereotype. The best way to overcome this is to simply be yourself and don’t follow any kind of unwritten code on how you should look or dress. By observation, I’ve noticed many students feel like they need to belong to a certain group. They strive to win the approval and satisfaction of their peers. It seems an awful lot like a fake way to get friends to me. For example, I often laugh when I see a group of girls trying to get into a sorority. It’s obvious to anyone who passes by that they’re trying so hard to be accepted, which just seems vain to me. Why should they have to look a certain way in order to be in a club? Why should anyone have to conform to some faction of people’s particular standard?

The only real way to overcome stereotypes is to have an open mind by embracing diversity and multiculturalism. The key is to hang out with people who are different from you while still holding on to your own individuality. And most of all, respect your peers and get to know someone before you judge them.

BY SHELBY MORTENS

GUEST ILLUSTRATION BY AMEORY LUO





EKOJI MEDITATION

EVERYONE CAN SHARE THE TORMENT of being a college student. We must always be prepared, punctual and—especially—level headed. This can become harder to accomplish than one thinks, so we must try and find a way to maintain a positive attitude and good work ethic. One way to control your stress is through simple meditation, which turns out to have many health benefits such as; reducing muscle tension and increasing blood flow in the body. But one may wonder how to actually meditate the proper way and luckily, Richmond has many places to help you in your quest for a more balanced mind and spirit.

Fortunately, I have found the perfect place in Richmond to help you reach your ultimate plateau of mindfulness and it is called the Ekoji Buddhist Sangha off of Grove Avenue in Carytown. This simplistic, little house stands on an incredibly quiet part of Grove Avenue and it is a little difficult to point out at first, considering it is just another house on the block. If the building did not have a discreet sign above the front porch, you would not have known that it is a place blessed with positive energy, waiting for you to harness it.

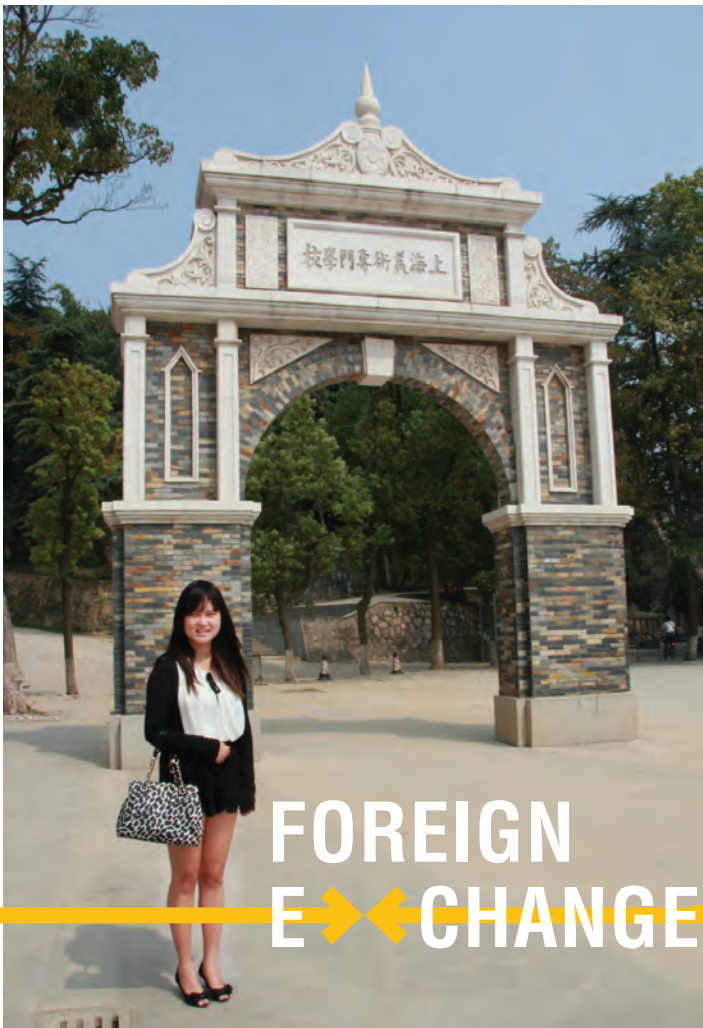
I come from a very open-minded family so, I was immediately interested in attending one of their

weekly meditations, but I am sure there are people out there that are a little skeptical about attending a “religious” practice. Let me inform you that the wonderful people of the Ekoji are not judgmental in the least bit and always welcoming to new-comers. If it is your first time with meditation, you should go a little early so the instructors can guide you down your meditative path and channel your energy the correct way. The Ekoji have five different groups associated with them, like the Zen Buddhist Group and the Meditative Inquiry Group for all that want to attend. Personally, I attended the Zen Buddhist group which meets at 7p.m. on Wednesdays, and other times as well, and it was a very mind-opening experience. I arrived a little early in order to speak with someone, seeing as I felt like the new kid at school, completely lost and confused about exactly what I was getting myself into. As I walked into the meditation room, blocked by a paper folding wall, I was greeted by a man in the kitchen, making tea. Immediately, he knew I was a new-comer and put a big smile on his face, asking me to remove my shoes, which is Buddhist custom if you do not want to disturb the sacred ground. After I removed my Chucks, I was escorted upstairs to what I liked to call learning rooms, where I was greeted by fellow

new comers and our instructor, Daniel. He showed the proper way to sit while meditating, the proper way to breathe, and several other good tips. After our brief lesson, we all went back downstairs to begin our spiritual journeys on the soft black pillows with the smell of incense filling our senses.

I am not trying to sound cliché, but after that mediation session, I felt better about everything that was upsetting me. I felt calm, collected and the world seemed much more beautiful to me as I walked back to my apartment. Before this, I had never had a good time meditating, my back would begin hurting, I could never find myself concentrating, just plain sitting. However, after meeting with the beautiful souls at Ekoji, I know exactly how to harness good energy and expel all of the nasty thought that seems to take over when stressed. So, if you feel the need to unwind and get a better sense of self, please attend an Ekoji meditation practice; you will not have any regrets. In order to find a time that suits your schedule, go to their well-organized website to learn more: www.ekoji-richmond.org

BY EMILY EASON



SIWEN WANG IS A 21-YEAR-OLD STUDENT from China who spent a semester studying at VCU this past year. She's a broadcast journalism major who loves sports, playing the piano, travelling and shopping. Siwen returned to China to continue her studies at her home university, but was happy to answer some questions for Ink about her time spent here in Richmond.

What were your expectations about coming to America and going to VCU?

Before I went to VCU, I kind of lost myself and I was really confused about what I want to do for my future career. When I was at VCU, I took a class about graphic design and I found I love doing designs. At the same time, I got a chance to go to the Student Media Center to learn how to make a newspaper or a magazine for a month. Those were all wonderful experiences that were important for my future.

What would you say are the main differences between your home university and VCU?

In my home university, most of our classes are fixed by schedule. That means we need to take classes with the same classmates and we cannot choose the time and professor. Accordingly, in China, as a class, we have more chances to do things together. For example, we have sport meeting every year, and every class fights for the medals as a whole. On the contrary, at VCU, students seem more free and open. They can choose their classes, professors, times and even places. And they do not need to take classes with same people during their whole four years.

What did you like best about the time you spent at VCU?

Cary Street Gym! It's awesome. I took a bunch of classes there, like Zumba, Pilates, Yoga and swimming. Exercising makes me happy and I met a lot of friends there.

How did you feel as an exchange student, was it an adjustment for you?

Yes. At first, it was very hard for me to take classes and have conversations with my classmates. It's not so hard to understand professors. However, when we needed to group study, I could not understand them because they speak so fast. And I am not so confident in my spoken English, so I was afraid of speaking in front of people at the very beginning. But all my group members are so nice; they always encourage me and praise me. They gave me a lot of confidence, helped me overcome my problem and move on.

What do you miss most about being at VCU?

The ample resources provided by VCU. I could borrow iPad, Kindle and digital cameras from the library. I could get a free tutor from the student center. I could get my essays revised from the writing center. I could get the free instructor to practice speaking with me from the International Student Office. Moreover, there are endless volunteer activities and fun events. The year I spent at VCU opened a new prospect in my life.

What are your plans for the future?

I plan to go to America for my graduate education. I want to apply to be a graphic design major. If possible, I hope I can work there for two or three years and then come back to China.

How would you describe your experience at VCU overall?

Excellent. I love VCU and the city. People there are so nice.

Is there anything else you would like VCU students to know about you or your country?

I found that some Americans still have stereotype of China. Actually, China is a beautiful country with rich cultures. So, if you're a VCU student travelling in China, contact me and I will show you around in my hometown, Nanjing.

BY CORINNE JEFFERIES



A DAY AT THE DELI



ANOTHER OCTOBER MORNING AND I'M SITTING outside on a bench. My stomach rumbles and I lean back, yawn. I'm hungrier than a New York Runway model before fashion week. On another note, I'm here to talk Abbas Jahangiri, the owner of Coliseum Deli & Market. It's a red brick shop with black siding on top, sitting on the block a few feet away from the busy intersection on West Broad and Bowe Street.

He's doing some work and I came a little early. A couple of minutes ago, I ordered lunch. My attention deficit disorder kicks in and I start to stare at my environment.

An opaque sky trimmed with light gray clouds, these clusters turn white under the shine of sunlight, all buoying across Richmond. A gun-metal Toyota Avalon bolts down West Broad Street. And a public transit bus hisses and chugs along the opposite lane, a road beaten down from endless travel.

To the left of me the door opens and Mrs. Jahangiri steps out. She has long black hair tied in the back by a rubber band. Wrinkles etch in her face and her black eyes shine with brightness.

"Your food is ready," she says.

"Thanks. I'll be in, in a sec," I say.

She gestures with her hand a soft wave and hurries back inside. That's Mrs. Jahangiri? She's always happy to see me—at least I'd like to believe that—and I've never seen her sad or depressed. Wish I could

learn from her strength.

Smoke from my 83 whirls round my shoulders and floats away as I stand up from the bench and walk into the restaurant. Coliseum Deli & Market is marked in red and black type on a tiny index card, which sits between two aluminum rings. A salt and peppershaker stand close to each other in a small carrying case and beside it are white and pink packets of sugar. I'm stir-crazy without a meal.

One of the waiter's comes inside the main room and places my food on the table.

"Enjoy," he says.

"Preciate man," I say.

It's a gyro wrapped in pita bread stuffed with lettuce, tomato and yogurt sauce. Flaky fries lay sprawled on the wax paper that covers the container shell.

I take a bite of the gyro and chew my food: epic deliciousness!

Silverware utensils clink behind me. Chair legs scrape the hardwood floor. Some stranger a few feet behind me slurps on a soda. On a television monitor pinned in between bookshelves, the eloquent President Obama blasts his speech.

Mrs. Jahangiri pokes her head from the doorway opening.

"My husband is coming. Sorry for the wait."

I smile and nod my head.

Drumming my fingertips on my table I look

down at the Plexiglas and it reflects my oval eyes and the fan blades spin in a windmill motion, the cool air blowing on my head. The long woven tassels dangle above me. The two clay beads glare at me with black dots in their slits.

"Andrew, how are you doing my friend?"

I turn around.

It's Abbas. He's wearing a green-checkered polo, black slacks, and wide rimmed glasses. He fingers the hook of his glasses and hunches it back on the bridge of his nose. His hair is matted with black and strands of white.

He pats me on the back with his calloused hand, and then sits in the red cushioned seat across from me.

"You okay my friend?"

"Sorry. Spacing out for a second. I'm doing good sir. Let's start."

Abbas has been working in Richmond since April 2003. He used to work at a 7-11 as a manager, but he grew exhausted of working there. Not only that, he realized that he had three daughters to provide for and working at a sketch-ball place like that was not going to cut him any slack.

All his life Abbas has worked in the restaurant business. He loves people and likes seeing their happy faces when he gives them a plate of delicious Kabob and rice bathed in yogurt sauce. He worries about money but he knows that it comes as well as



expenses, so he doesn't stress out too much.

Coming over from Iran in 1971, Abbas had planned to attend a university, but it didn't work out. Still he persevered and eventually he became an American citizen. He disliked how certain people operated in Iran. He said that there was a common theme of bribery in his country and that you had to know somebody to move ahead in the social ladder, but that help would come from hard-earned money.

America remains associated to freedom and Abbas adores that quality, how failure depends entirely on your own efforts. He misses his brothers and sisters, and thinks about them frequently. The last time he visited Iran was in 2008, and it was a three-week trip.

Abbas seems to enjoy his life. His deli has been running for ten years and they do well. He has one daughter in her third year of medical school and another daughter who goes to George Washington. He hopes to run the business for another ten years and then retire.

An interesting aspect about Coliseum Deli & Market is that they have large amount of Muslim customers, with good reason. A while ago, Abbas recognized that there was a Muslim community in Richmond and many of these people go to his store. So he decided to discontinue the alcohol services out of respect for his Muslim customers. He now sells Halal, which is kosher meat.

"Seriously thanks for talking to me Abbas. Means a lot to me," I say.

"Oh it is nothing Andrew," he says.

He extends his hand.

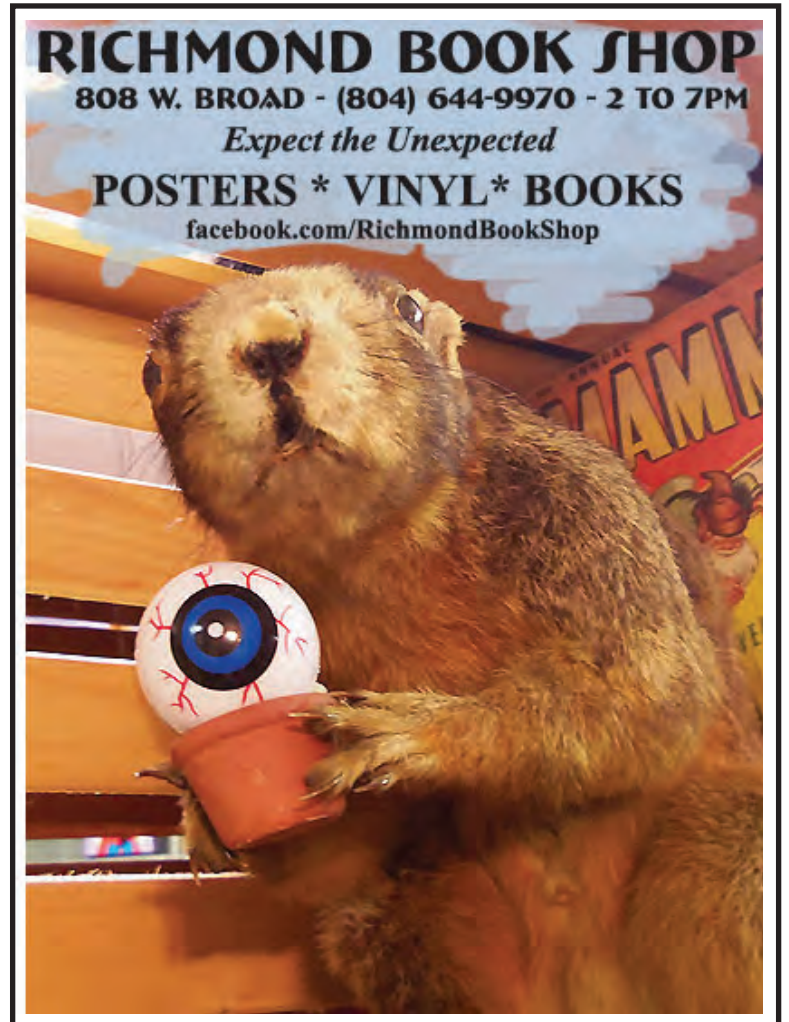
I shake it.

After I pay for my food I begin to leave the restaurant. At the entrance I turn back around. Abbas and his wife are talking to each other behind the counter. He takes her hand and slides it under his own. Their eyes are locked on each other.

And in that moment I envy them. I envy the hell out of them. I shouldn't but I do. Everyday I'm hung up on trivial matters that don't mean a whole lot. All I do is whine and complain. But, Abbas and his wife, they seem to do be doing just fine. They look happy.



PHOTOS BY ALIYAH LUSTINE



BY ANDY TRAN
PHOTOS BY ALIYAH LASTINO

AN ALTERNATIVE TO POPULAR BELIEF

WHAT IS RELIGION IN THIS new day and age? Is it a way to happiness? Is it a social construct driven towards judicial control? Or is it simply the fear of the unknown? These are all questions I believe we ask ourselves, and questions that aren't answered in our normative religions. Alternative religions attempt to answer this question in as best a way as possible. There are, of course, many different types of alternative religions, because what is a religion other than someone's interpretation of some holy work? One such alternative religion is Satanism, and like every religion, there is not just one Satanism. A modern Satanistic religion/belief system is Anton Szandor LaVey's Satanism which derives from his heavily frowned upon yet informative book, "The Satanic Bible."

In modern times and even more so in the past, books such as LaVey's bible bring up Christian fundamental concerns and fears of heretical views, however, major religious groups tend to miss the actual message of alternative religions, especially "The Satanic Bible." For instance,

LaVey's book is not at all about the worship of Satan, or the following of any cult, but rather a method of breaking away from the guilt-ridden religions that plague human happiness.

The philosophy behind The Satanic Bible has little to do with the actual Satan, rather he takes the attributes associated with "Satan" or "Lucifer," like doing things for yourself, and indulging in the carnal pleasures of the body, not only indulge yourselves, but use them as a sort of spiritual release. Many things that our current culture does are considered "evil," or "sinful" or "acts of Satan." LaVey only seeks to allow these and to thrive upon these so called "sins." While he does talk about ritual and the Christian fear of so called "satanic rituals," the truth is, that every major structure of the human culture revolves around ritual, if this philosophy of LaVey's was to work and cohere to our culture he needed to include a ritualistic side to it. This can be said for almost any sort of activity. Whether it is a sport, a job, or a place to eat, all these have some form of

ritual involved; even the act of smoking a cigarette is a ritual.

Other religions such as Wicca or many goddess religions are also seen as evil, yet are in reality worshiping mother earth as a goddess and living a life of good and natural knowledge in order to keep the flows of life going. These are not religions that focus on a monastic god, a male god or a female god, but rather the personal connection with nature and god. These misinterpreted alternative religions are seen more as evil cult worship than what they really are: the next step in personalized religion in our modern times.

While alternative religions are becoming more and more popular, so too does the religious culture start to become more open minded and ready to accept more modern thoughts into what is considered spiritual or not. Soon our "Christian Nation" will finally achieve the status it originally intended, that of separation of church and state.

BY DANIEL POTES

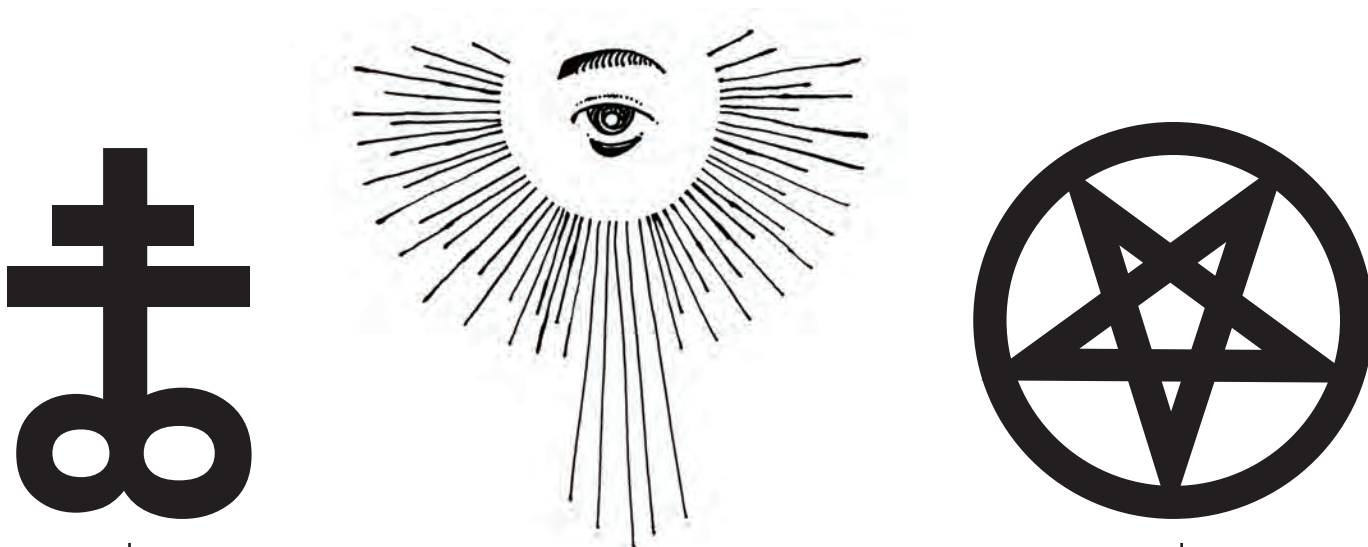


ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX FULTON

SLAM NAHUATL



THE AUDIENCE WAITING FOR THE POETS TO BEGIN.

DROP YOUR TEXTBOOK. TURN OFF YOUR television. Stop making that turkey-bacon sandwich. Get on your computer and go on to Youtube and type in “VCU Ram Slam” in the search bar. Click on one of the videos, put your headphones on, crank up the volume and listen.

If you followed the suggestions above, then you would have had the awesome opportunity to watch some great poets representing VCU and Richmond. But more importantly, these are poets who are trying to find themselves. Individuals who have the courage to speak into the microphone and carry the audience in front of them on a journey, navigating through the peaks and valleys of their hearts.

Slam Nahuatl hosts the Ram Slam and they congregate at The Shafer Street Playhouse. Poets jump on the stage and their soul bleeds from the wrinkled page clutched in their hands. Their voices rise from their throats and vibrations ascend to the ceiling.

The MC, Hamilton Graziano, is a laid-back dude with surfer’s hair who hypes up the crowd using a mixture of bravado and goofiness. He tells them to stand up, wag their hands and pounce side to side. Everybody’s having a good time, and from the smiles in their eyes and lips it seems like their

minds clogged with thoughts of classes, relationships and societal pressures have melted into bits of dust and left.

Before the Ram Slam, there is a writer’s workshop held in the back of the Playhouse building. Veteran slam artists guide the new poets and offer them recommendations on how to expand upon their poems.

Poetry is written and spoken. At the Ram Slam the poems are sung loudly and the enchanting rhymes and poignant imagery soar around the huge room. Every poet handles their cadence with expertise and the words flow with an ease that reflects the energy and hours put into constructing these verbal fragments of their character.

It’s invigorating to see the poet show vulnerability and strength, an inner power circulates through them. One girl on stage pats her hand on her chest and stares at her feet, and then breaks out into verse. She looks frightened and yet so powerful that it’s difficult to glance away. That is the ability a poet can harness. They can capture your attention and hold it until you feel their pain, their happiness and their humor.

There are a variety of poets. From each boy and girl who commands the stage rhyme and rhythm

spirals out the vocals, projecting for all eager ears. Some poets read their poems off a page in their moleskin, or a piece of crumpled computer paper. Others have memorized their poems and recite their material with few slips or pauses. There are a range of different topics that the poets talk about, which include loneliness and finding girls that “twerk” at house parties. There is also a weird but incredibly entertaining poem about a poet’s infatuation with a kiwi. Guys talk about girls and girls talk about guys. Some poets speak on their religious views. One poet talked about how hard it is to be brown.

During the short intermission breaks between each poet’s poem, music plays which includes Kendrick Lamar, Kanye West and Nujabes which plays off of bulky speakers hooked up to a laptop. Fingers snap to encourage the poets. The projector lights shine yellow circular spots on a work black platform. Black and white scorecards pop up from the judges in the audience and the emcee counts the numbers. The poet with the highest score earns a spot on the Slam Nahuatl’s team. Across the country these poets travel and battle for glory, creativity and above all, the love of poetry.

BY ANDY TRAN

FIGHT CLOUD



THE FULL BAND, FIGHT CLOUD, STANDING TOGETHER.

INTERVIEW

Justin Stuit | Guitar & Vocals | **Business Major**

Mitch Clem | Guitar | **Electrical Engineering Major**

Miles Blunt | Drums | **Music Industry Major**

Patrick Cohen | Bass & Vocals | **Guitar Performance Major**

Q
A**When did the band start playing music together?**

We've been together since the spring of 2008. We picked up Patrick, our bassist, in the fall of the same year.

Q
A**How would you describe your sound?**

Our "genre" is sort of experimental indie math-rock and partially instrumental. We kind of just do what we want and have fun with it.

Q
A**What's the inspiration for this sound?**

We don't like the standard cookie-cutter radio sound. We wanted to do something different and fun and that could connect to people who don't really listen to music, you know, interesting-- accessible, but still groovy.

Q
A**What are the bands major musical influences?**

Circa Survive, Enemies, Minus the Bear, Brahms—no, just kidding-- Silver Sun Pickups, Modest Mouse, Manchester Orchestra, and of course, local Richmond bands influence us a lot, because we get to meet and play with them.

Q
A**What's the band's favorite part about being a Richmond band?**

The audience! Everyone is so fucking awesome, we love it! Every show we play is fun whether it's a scheduled venue show, like at The Camel, or an impromptu house show.

Q
A**I heard that Fight Cloud recently released a new album, tell us about it!**

Well, after four years of playing together, we finally released our debut album. We recorded it this summer in Harrisonburg, Va. Our favorite part about making the album was that we did it all ourselves, the recording, the production—all of it—except for Tim Kozak's beautiful album art.



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A HARD COPY OF OUR ALBUM
"IN AUGMENT"

LOOK OUT FOR US AT GALLERY 5 THIS NOVEMBER!



THIS TIME IT'S WAR

IT IS NO SECRET THAT RICHMOND IS ONE of the richest places in metal culture. Some of the heaviest bands that perform today have come from the very heart of Richmond. Bands such as GWAR and Lamb of God have both started right here in our city, and soon to be added to the list is the band This Time It's War. Since they have been performing since 2004, the band has gained a cult following, as well as recorded a full-length album. I recently sat down with their lead guitarist, Alan Simpson, to discuss the journey the band has been on and what direction they may be going in the near future.



INK: How long have you guys been together as a band?

ALAN: We started playing together in 2003. The band has consisted of me, our drummer, John, and our other guitar player, Justin, have been the core of the band. We've been playing shows as a band since 2004. So, we have been together for a while now.

What other bands inspire you?

Well, everyone has a different taste in the band. When we met in high school we were fans of Dream Theatre, Killswitch Engage, Lamb of God and that whole early 2000 "metalcore" scene. Now our interests have gotten broader as we've gotten older, and our sound has changed a little bit as well. We don't pay attention that much as to what goes on in metal these days, but we listen to a lot of progressive rock, like Rush.

What is your favorite venue to perform at?

Around here we played our first show at Nanci Ray-gun in 2004, it's called Strange Matter now. That has always been great for us. It's small and it's not hard to fill up. If 100 people show up, the place looks packed, and the people that work there are great. We've played at The National a couple of times, which is an amazing venue, but for your every day show Strange Matter is the best venue around here. They really do it right.

What kind of message do you think your music sends to your listeners?

That's a good question. Our lyrics have evolved from when we were younger. When we were 16 we would write songs about your typical relationship, girls and teenage angst. It's hard to say if there is a running theme in our music. Our lyrics are pretty positive for a metal band. I don't consider them to be dark. A lot of times they have a message of independent thinking and just independence as a person. Scott, our singer, writes a lot of our lyrics, and he likes lyrics that are very anthem like. He definitely gives a positive thread to our lyrics.

You kind of touched on this earlier, but do you think your sound has stayed consistent, or do you feel that your sound has changed over the years?

It has changed a lot! We've had the same core band mates me, Justin and John, but we've had a couple different singers and a couple different bass players. We've had the same line up now for about five years. As we got older the sound changed and the new members changed it a little bit, but we started out as a straight forward, simple metalcore band with a

lot of guitar solos and breakdowns. And that's fun and we like doing that, but we've branched out into a more progressive sound. Some of the new stuff we have written, that we haven't put out yet, doesn't sound metal at all. We don't sit down and say, "this needs to sound like This Time It's War" we just write, and it just happens. It definitely changes all the time, and it continues to change.

What was it like to record your first album?

The first full-length album we put out was "Terror Plots" in 2010. Before that, we put out a bunch of EP's, but that whole process took forever. We recorded it at Planet Red Studios in the southside. The guy we were working with did a great job, but there were some personal issues going on with him and we were on a label at the time that we weren't getting along with very well. This was our first album for them and things were getting tense in the studio, not between us as members, but it ended up taking us six months to record ten songs, which is ridiculous. We recorded the album in 2009 but it wasn't released until late 2010. It was a bit of a pain, but it turned out pretty good. It is definitely difficult to look back on, but we're happy with the end product.

I know that you guys are planning on releasing a new album, do you have a release date set?

Hopefully early next year. We haven't been playing many shows this year. We've been in writing mode. We have been having some vehicle problems, so we have been unable to tour and also, we all have regular jobs, so we have just been strictly in writing. We have demos for seven songs, and they are pretty close to being finished. The other guys have some other ideas that we've been throwing around, but we will probably be recording it at home, like we did with our last EP. So expect to see it early next year around spring.

Finally, for those who haven't heard your music before, where can they find you?

Best place to get our music is thistimeitswar.bandcamp.com. Our last two releases are there totally free to download, the full length album, "Terror Plots," and our last split EP with the band Fixtures is there as well. You can also go to our Facebook page, which has become our main website these days and listen to the music there as well; however Band Camp is the place to go to download all of our music for free.

BY CORT OLSEN

PHOTOS BY JEREMY LEDFORD





THE NEW SCENE AT THE HAT FACTORY

WHEN I FOUND OUT I WAS GOING TO BE shooting at the Hat Factory last April, I thought, “great, I’ll be spending most of my night keep crazy ravers from breaking my Nikon.” I had been there months before for Brain Drain, a monthly rave hosted by the Richmond DJ collective, Audio Ammo. It was fun, but maybe not the most practical place for a new photographer.

But when I stepped into the venue that chilly spring night, I immediately felt like I had clicked my heels and woke up back in Kansas. Girls donned spiked heels and skin-tight dresses. Boys swung their dreads and left ladies mesmerized with their strong Polo cologne. All of the National Pan-Hellenic Council was there, from the Alphas to the Zetas, performing steps and strolls the entire night. It was just like being back in the club scene of my hometown, Washington D.C. Only this time, I was completely underdressed in a men’s army jacket, combat boots and ripped jeans.

This weekly event, known as College Nights, started about six months ago. King Jaffe Joe, CEO and founder of the Richmond-based promotion company, Creative Nation, created the event to bring local students together. “Students present the most potential in Richmond,” Joe said.

For Jarvia Hardley, a senior at VCU, College Nights are not only fun-- their advantageous. “It’s hard getting to know students from other campuses because you always stand out as an outsider. At Hat Factory, it’s an equal playing field, making it much easier to mingle and meet new people,” Hardley said.

Another rising issue that has affected Richmond’s party scene is the increase in crime. Students have become much more wary of the people who attend their parties and events. “Aside from a few arguments here and there, I’d feel much more safe



partying at Hat Factory then roaming the streets looking for parties,” Vashti Gray, Richmond native and junior at VCU, said.

For years, Hat Factory was a club known for playing electronic dance music with events like “RVALution,” “Spooky Throttle” and “Brain Drain,” which moved to Hat Factory from Club 534 a year and a half ago. Many were stunned that College Nights, which plays hip-hop and R&B, was held in such a venue.

“I chose Hat Factory as a venue because it’s spacious and accessible,” Joe said. He’s absolutely right. Richmond has its own special way of revamping old buildings into modern hang-outs. The building was built in 1896 as a paper company. In the mid-1960s, it was transformed into a hat factory (hence the name) for Lady Byrd, the wife of Richmond’s forefather, William Byrd. After undergoing major

renovations, the venue now has all the right features for a happening club. It has two levels, both with DJ stations, a bar and bar area, gigantic dance floor, stage, a runway and a cage where things tend to get a little crazy. “Girls love dancing in that cage and getting wild,” Hardley said.

College Nights take place every Friday. While the event is not exclusive to students, they do pay a smaller price to get in with college ID. Joe said club-goers should always expect “an upscale environment, celebrity appearances and all of Richmond’s toughest DJs.” Unlike previous months, however, this event is no longer for the kiddies; you have to be 21 or older to attend. Looks like I know where I’ll be spending my Fridays in Richmond.

BY BRITTNEY BARBOUR

THE WORLD OF LINGERIE IN CARYTOWN

THE CORNER OF BELMONT AND CARY Street has been completely reinvented in the last year. The intersection is the newly renovated home to two of the city's most sought after exterior styles: The Phoenix Boutique and Need Supply Co. The corner now completes the outfit with perfect mixture of style and comfort for the interior with the grand opening of Fiamour Lingerie & Intimi. Since the opening of the intimates boutique on Oct. 1, Fiamour has been steadily gaining popularity. Owners Danyelle Evans, and Sheri Harabedian are flattered by the positive feedback such as: "We are so glad you're finally here!" and, "We've been waiting for you!"

Upon entering the boutique you are greeted by the fresh scents of handmade soaps and relaxation candles. The owners have created a comfortable atmosphere with soft lighting and warm paint on the walls. Inspired by those with hard-to-fit sizes, the boutique holds a wide selection of sizes ranging from AAA-KK with a variety of global fashion de-

signers from Poland, Canada, California and Peru. The boutique carries brands such as LuLaLu and The Little Bra Co. in sizes 38AAA-38B, Skin and Blush in sizes A-D and Empreinte in D-KK.

The featured brands have been hand selected by the owners while at a tradeshow in New York. The owners made the tradeshow a very personal experience as well as an informative one by getting to know the designers and researching the brands. Not only is finding unique and uncommonly carried brands important, but so is price, the owners said. "We worked hard to cover the gambit. With bras ranging from \$40 to \$180, there is really something for everyone," Evans explained.

Fiamour proves its dedication to customer service and being the premiere lingerie destination in Carytown by offering 7-9 p.m. after hour parties! Fiamour will provide wine and appetizers for the party as well as 20 percent of sales from the evening in store credit for the host.

BY TERESA QUESADA

Contact Danyelle@fiamour.com to set up your next birthday, bridal or lingerie party today!



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COMPASS ROSE ORCHESTRA REVIEW

RICHMOND'S JAZZ SCENE IS CONSTANTLY thriving and Compass Rose Orchestra is no exception. The band released their first album, "Compass Rose Orchestra", back in February and have been gaining attention ever since. They are comprised of eight classically-trained musicians who combine their musical experiences to reproduce the sound in a unique way-- a sound that cannot be categorized as just "jazz." Traces of folk music, heavy metal and indie rock find their way into each song. Unlike a traditional jazz orchestra, Compass Rose also incorporates famous rap vocals-- like Blackstreet's "No Diggity"-- into their songs, as well as freestyle rap vocals at live shows. Their shows are comprised of a building momentum of musical energy. Their CD contains original songs as well as a few covers including "Strange Brew" by Eric Clapton. Whether you choose to experience their music live or by downloading a few tracks off their website compassroseorchestra.bandcamp.com, you will not be let down. The explosive, collaborative style of these musicians truly achieves their goal of "being the music." Look for upcoming Compass Rose Orchestra shows around Richmond. These are a talented group of musicians you do not want to miss.

BY ANNA SHCHERBAKOVA

ARTISAN CAFÉ

HIP HOP IS THE MUSIC TO YOUR EARS; smells of Shea butter and lemongrass fill your nostrils; your eyes catch the swift movements of the painter's brush against the canvas. You have entered the ARTisan Café!

Co-curators Melody Joy Short, and Adrienne Cole produce the ARTisan Café on a quarterly basis in an effort to "cater to Richmond's diverse and imaginative artisan community [by] providing a vehicle to drive their talents and skills into the community lives (www.artisancafeva.com). Short and Cole are able to promote diversity throughout the ARTisan Café by carefully selecting artisans for the event and creating a balance of representation from several mediums of art, which include fine art, cosmetics, culinary, health and beauty, jewelry and fashion design. With over 36 artisan showcases, the array of merchandise varies at each event. The event is marketed throughout the Richmond area and has enticed patrons from varying backgrounds with an appreciation for local art and growth within the community. Your next opportunity to experience the multicultural market that is the ARTisan Café is Saturday, Dec. 8.

BY DANICA GARNER





A NEW RIDE FIT FOR A RAM

Beginning Nov. 1, our new fleet of buses will provide improved technology and reliability. The RamRide buses will feature:

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A SWEET SENSATION

I TAKE A BITE.

I think it's called the "fantasie" or something like that, but it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter because the gooey, fudgy, fantastic thing melting in my mouth doesn't need a name. As the rich sweetness of soft, dense chocolate wrapped up in a nice lacing of cocoa powder blankets my tongue and intoxicates my mind, I briefly note that I wouldn't be able to concentrate on what it's actually called even if I tried. In this instant, I decide to give everything I like the same name just to make things easier on myself. Another.

"I'll have another please," I splurt, my voice lost in the chocolate truffle overload. The Chocolate guy smiles.

I don't know his name, and I wouldn't be able to concentrate on what he's called even if I tried. I just know that he, a very attractive, friendly young man that gives me great chocolate and conversation whenever I ask for it. Hmmm.

From now on I guess I can refer to them, as "Another" as well.

So anyways.

"Sure," Another says with a laugh, handing me a nicely wrapped chunk of heaven. "If you really like our chocolate from the counter, you might want to check the shelves too. We carry stuff from everywhere here." He leans on the counter and smiles in such a way that makes me agree immediately.

"Yeah I'll definitely take a look around!" I almost shriek. Too many great things are happening at once. Between his smile, the slight sugar rush and the taste lingering in my mouth, it's growing more difficult to behave like a rational human being. And honestly, I feel like I'm not alone in this internal struggle. The woman behind me is shoving things into her basket as if she is preparing for a hurricane.

Between the bacon chocolate, chocolate pasta and insect candies, to name a few of the serendipitous oddities featured at FTLOC (it'll catch on), I'm convinced that the candy itself is just as diverse as the countries represented in the shop. As I look around, I notice not only the variety of international flags hanging from its ceiling, but the diversity of its clientele. People of all different nationalities crowded together in Richmond's tiny chocolate oasis.

I start to browse, the white of my miraculously un-chocolate-stained shirt reflecting the yellows, reds, blues and greens of the gently swaying flags hanging above.

A French flag. A Belgian flag. A Swiss flag. Represent. I bow my head in respect for my very distant relatives that I might have forgotten about had the chocolate legacy of the Swiss never existed.

Austria.

Germany. I hesitate. Then, I bow my head again. Kind of. Maybe I'm thinking of the Swiss distant relatives again.

Britain.

Italy. A very confident nod. My Italian heritage is very prominent. They make sure of that. I can



PHOTO BY AMANDA HITCHCOCK

never get a word in edgewise.

Looking at the shelves, there are a few names I recognize.

The Swiss "Toblerone," is a classic, triangular sweet staple from my mother's childhood that, since its creation in 1909, has transcended generations of chocolate lovers in my family.

The German Milka and Kinder bars. I stumbled upon these when I was in eighth grade. My best friend at the time, Rachel, a tall, enviably model-esque blonde of German descent, invited me over her house for a dinner of Schnitzel and potatoes. For dessert, she surprised me with German chocolate. Been a fan of the deutsche shokolade ever since.

Among the familiar, I catch glimpses of a few bright new names, ringing with the promise of unexplored taste. The Dutch De Rutjier, the French Valrhona, the Spanish Valor and Rabitos, all of these among many many others.

"Rooa-bee-toes." I squint, nearly shoving my head into the packaging.

Each syllable teeters awkwardly off of my tongue, lacking the fluidity and harmony of foreign flare, made harsh by years of American quickstep and sky scraping. I look up. Another is watching me from across the counter, smiling assuring. I blush despite myself, and glance around, hoping nobody can hear how uncultured I sound.

"That one's good," Another calls over the Great Divide (the area between the counter and the shelves), which is currently filled to capacity with the heads of other chocolate-crazed people. He smiles his smile, and again, without taking a bite, I am in total agreement. This must be the best chocolate ever. I select a few others that I have yet to try, make my way through the Great Divide to the counter, and present Another with my bounty.

"All set?" he asks.

"Guess so," I say it slowly, reconsidering my selection. "Yeah I'm all set."

Another chuckles and begins scanning my items.

"You can always come back. You're not going anywhere too far right?" He scans the last item and places it delicately into the signature golden bag. I smile up at him, throwing my receipt in with the chocolate.

"Actually, I am." I point to my bag. "I've just booked a trip around the world." Then I reach in, unwrap a chocolate right there and eat it.

"I'll be sure to send you a post card," I call, my voice thick and mouth full, as I wave my way out of the store.

"Haha have a good vacation. Come back if you want another!" he calls.

I will do that definitely.

BY AMANDA HITCHCOCK

NILE RESTAURANT



PHOTO BY JANE TAYLOR

I HAVE TO ADMIT; I HAVE WALKED PAST THE NILE SEVERAL TIMES DURING my month at VCU and never had an urge to go inside. Recently, I decided to go in and have my first experience of Ethiopian cuisine. This little restaurant is located on 309 North Laurel St., across the street from the beloved Chipotle on VCU's campus. The atmosphere is very warm and intimate seating only about 34 guests. I immediately knew the Nile had no formal dress code when my waiter approached me in his everyday attire. He was a young Ethiopian, who was great at explaining the menu for a first timer like me. I was pleased to see that menu had decent pricing with appetizers for about \$7, entrees for about \$15 and cocktails for \$8. I spent some time with the menu because it had everything from chicken, to shrimp, to salad, but I finally set my taste buds on the salmon wrap, costing around \$9. I enjoyed the culture's music as I waited on my

plate. It took only about 15 minutes before my waiter came with the plate, but I seem to be lacking utensils. He explained to me that my dish came with injera (Ethiopian flat bread) meant to be broken off and used as you would your normal spoon or fork. I can honestly say I did not care for the culture's traditional bread, it had a spongy texture as well as a sour taste, but the salmon was delicious. The salmon was sautéed with onions and bell peppers given it a mouth full of flavor. Overall, my experience was good, nothing but mind blowing. I would recommend it to someone who has never had a taste of Ethiopian food because the informality of the restaurant makes you feel like you're getting the real deal and the bar is open nightly until 2 a.m.

BY JASMINE PENDERGRASS



PHOTOS BY JANE TAYLOR

IPANEMA CAFÉ

WELL KNOWN IN THE RICHMOND RESTAURANT SCENE FOR ITS UNIQUE and flavorful vegetarian fare, Ipanema Café is nestled in the midst of the Monroe Park campus at 917 West Grace St. in a cozy below-ground space. Coming through the outdoor patio and taking the steps down into the main restaurant, diners are greeted by a friendly staff and an ever evolving menu written in colorful chalk on the blackboard by the door. Ipanema is open for lunch Monday through Friday as well as dinner seven days a week, offering an affordable option for students and food so flavorful that vegetarians, meat eaters and even gluten free dieters can enjoy it.

For those who may be unfamiliar with vegetarian dishes, I'd recommend the barbecue jackfruit sandwich, with a chipotle lime aioli and vegan slaw and served with a small side salad and thick cut sweet potato fries. With a texture and taste similar to a pulled pork barbecue, it's a good "entry level" choice in

a list of more "typical" vegan dishes. The hummus tabouleh wrap, filled with hummus, tomato and spinach in a lightly grilled tortilla wrap also served with the side salad and sweet potato fries is another great choice for the lunch-time crowd.

The atmosphere is casual but still tastefully sophisticated, with a dark wood bar opposite a wall of booths, white rope lights wrapped around the exposed beams of the ceiling, and framed art on the wall. Diners can choose between a seat at the bar, a table inside or a seat on the patio along West Grace if the weather is nice. Ipanema is definitely a spot to check out if you're a vegetarian looking for new veggie-friendly eats or just like trying new, adventurous cuisine in a local atmosphere on a student's budget.

BY CORINNE JEFFRIES

C OA *T CUL TURE*

FASHION DIRECTOR & STYLIST: ISABELLA ALTHOFF / PHOTOGRAPHER: BREE EL DAVIS / MODEL: AMANDA MOORE AT KIM ALLEY MODELS /
HAIR & MAKEUP ARTIST: CARLY CHILDERS / FASHION ASSISTANTS: HANA BALLOUT, JENNIFER MAWYER / SPECIAL THANKS TO ANTHONY HALL AND KEN PENN





VARSITY COAT, ZARA

NETTED TOP, FOREVER 21

TULIP SKIRT, BEBE



STRIPED COAT, H&M

SUNGLASSES, URBAN OUTFITTERS



HERRINGBONE COAT, ASOS

BLACK SWEATER, GAP

PLEATED SKIRT, LILY WHITE

POLKA DOT SOCKS, AMERICAN APPAREL

PATENT OXFORDS, ALDO

WOOL COAT, EXPRESS

LACE DRESS, KNITTED DOVE

NUDE SLIP, VICTORIA'S SECRET

MOHAIR BEANIE, ALDO

ANKLE BOOTS, H&M







(PAGE 21) TRAPEZE COAT, H&M

TRENCH DRESS, FOREVER 21

TIGER FLATS, COOPERATIVE

(PREVIOUS PAGE)

FAUX FUR COAT, BETSEY JOHNSON

SUNGLASSES, GARRETT LEIGHT





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