

Artistic COLLABORATION

Ask anyone when the last time they bought an album because the cover art caught their eye, and it's likely most will have to pause and think.



As streaming services and playlist apps continue to dominate the music industry, attention to the visual component of an album is more nostalgic than popular among music lovers everywhere. However, when a sound recording and a visual image clicks, it creates a lasting impression. Think of Pink Floyd's prism, or the world-famous Rolling Stones tongue. Where is this generation's iconic album cover? It's never been just about the music, and while cover art style and popularity has certainly changed, two talented Phi Psi alumni are getting back to basics with their artistic collaborations.

A self-starter, Frank Ruvoli (*Wabash '09*) began teaching himself to play guitar during his sophomore year of college after a shoulder injury halted his baseball career. By his senior year, he was writing his own music and landing gigs in local restaurants and bars. He even opened for country star Clayton Anderson that same year. Catchy melodies followed by ambient and soulful guitar riffs have made this modern jammer's songs so addictive. He gained attention from his peers and became known for his feel-good tunes that are reminiscent of John Mayer and Dave Matthews. Since graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy, his passion for the music scene continues to grow. As a self-taught

bass and drums player in addition to playing the guitar, Ruvoli also has learned how to successfully record music without an actual studio by founding a record label called Fire Tree Records.

"I write, record, and produce everything on my own. My Philosophy major helps make songwriting way more approachable," Ruvoli said. "I wanted to make recording more accessible to myself and others, which is why I established FireTree."

Ruvoli is inspired by the huge amount of talent that lives in the Northwest Indiana/Chicagoland area, and hopes that this label will help his fellow artists produce the music they love. He has since released two EP's, one called "Places I've Been" and the other titled "Dreamers." He has since become a popular live musician in his community.





For the 15-foot "Hand," sculpture currently on display at the Cincinnati Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park, John Vosel created a structure out of repurposed material.



A people person, Ruvoli also works as a freelance marketer, he gives youth baseball lessons, and recently acquired his real estate license. He has known fellow talented artist and Phi Psi brother John Vosel (Wabash '11) since their undergraduate days. The two finally got the chance to work together on designing the cover art for his first EP.

"John and I lived together in the Phi Psi house at Wabash, and I've always been so interested in the differences in our creative processes," Ruvoli said. "He starts with pieces and builds an idea from there, as opposed to my songwriting. It's a lot easier to have a big idea and fill in the blanks along the way. His involvement and passion for painting, drawing, and sculpting is one of the things that drew me to the artistic world after my baseball career ended."

Vosel graduated from Wabash College in June 2015 with a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts, concentrating in sculpture. He is a young, well-rounded artist with a huge range, including designing a mural in the Cincinnati Zoo, working as a student assistant in the Wabash Fine Arts Center, and constructing set designs for the Wabash Theatre Department. His work has earned him several collegiate and industry awards, and he has moved on to pursue his Master of Fine Arts with a concentration in sculpture at the University of Cincinnati. His inspirations come from the art movement Fauvism, which focuses on bright unrealistic colors, and the reality distorting that comes from street graffiti.

Fauvism can be seen in the two album covers he designed for Ruvoli, which are also a testament to his exquisite talent for drawing and painting.



"When it comes to painting and drawing, I'm interested in distorting reality with color," Vosel said. "Making a two-dimensional object look as three-dimensional as possible through the use of bright, unrealistic color evokes emotion and adds layers of complexity."

To create such a multifaceted, dimensional look for the album covers, Vosel used a unique combination of acrylic paint, spray paint, and colored pencils.

"The variety of textures these different utensils possess is crucial when trying to create depth on a flat surface" Vosel said.

While drawing from his interests in street art and graffiti by the use of spray paint, it was also important for Vosel that his art to be reflective of Ruvoli's music. He is no stranger to combining his own personal style with someone else's vision as he is frequently contacted for commissioned paintings.

"It's important to not let your own personal style take over when collaborating artistically with someone," he said. "It's taken practice, but now I enjoy the challenge. I had so much fun listening to and internalizing my friend's music to produce cover art, and we are both proud of it. I look forward to doing it again."

Congratulations to these two young men as they flourish in their careers. To stay updated on their stories, see upcoming shows, or to buy and commission art, visit their respective websites at www.frankruvoli.com and www.johnvosel.com.