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20

QUESTIONS WITH

Melanie Tillbrook

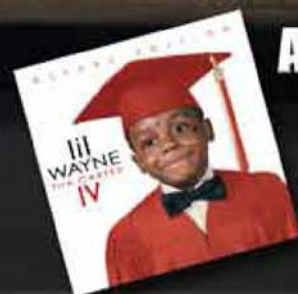
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DRIVER
SAN FRANCISCO

GOD OF WAR

ALBUM REVIEWS

lil Wayne
Tha Carter IV



Exclusive Coverage

Fresh Fest
The Kills & MC Lars

PLUS

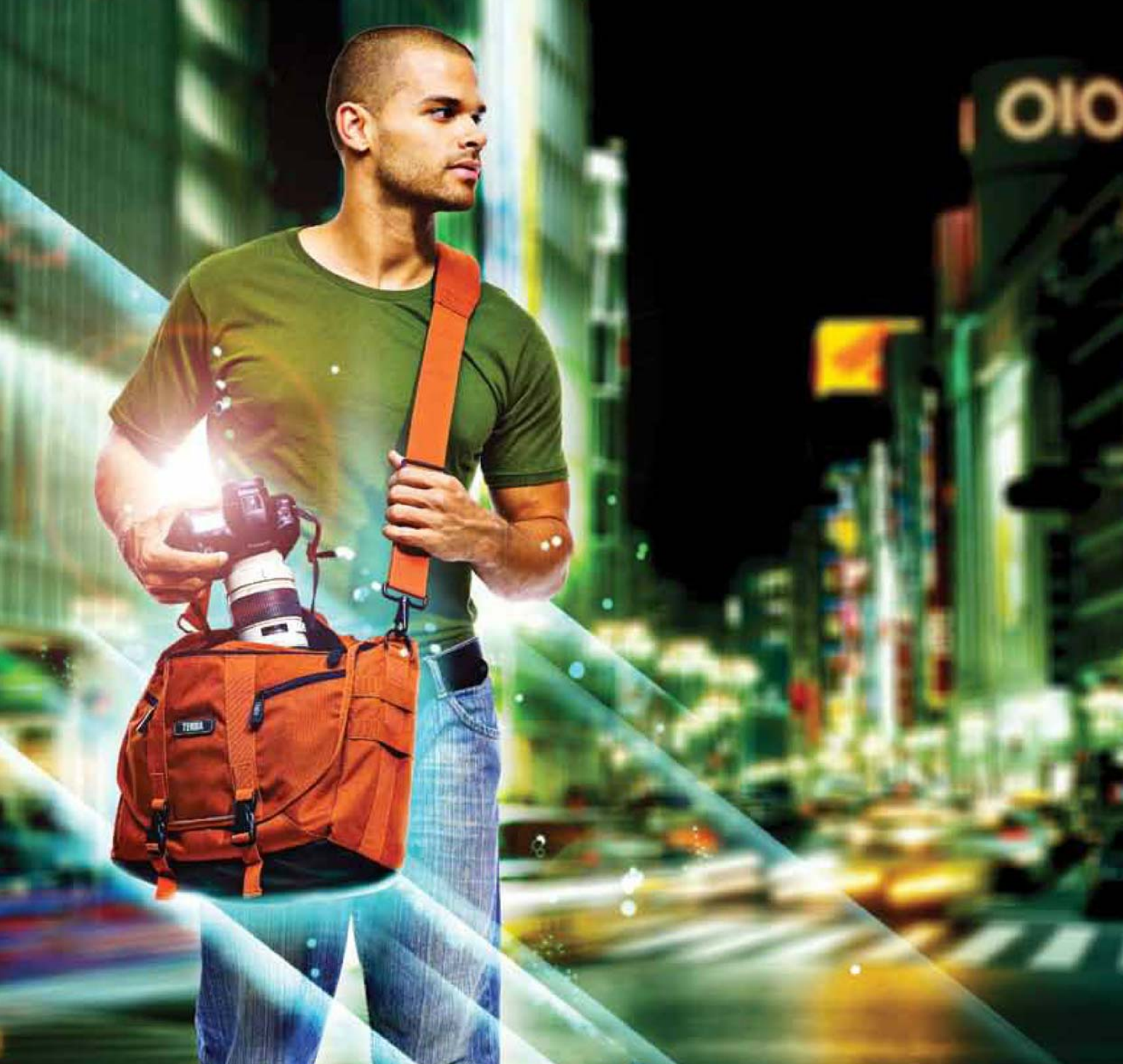
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Staind
and Whooznext Winner's
Eyes Set To Kill

Do Unto Others...
The Fisker Karma



October 2011

Anthrax
Worship Music



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Photo by Andrew Gates

Hair & make-up by Cynthia Lauran

Going Green

Has Never Looked So Good!!!

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RUKUS MAGAZINE brings its readers, not only beautiful women from around the world, but also video game reviews, album reviews, live concert reviews and photography, band interviews and information on the leading exotic cars from around the world. The magazine has been steadily increasing its readership since its launch on January 01, 2009 with a more than 2000% growth after only its second year. RUKUS MAGAZINE broke the mold on what a magazine should be and proves that digital media is the way of the future.

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20 QUESTIONS

Get To Know Your Cover Model

Melanie Tillbrook

Photography by Andrew Gates
Make-up & hair by Cynthia Lauran



Melanie Tillbrook is an accomplished model with exotic looks and an amazing personality to boot. Her heritage is of Filipino and British origin. She's originally from Hawaii, but currently lives in Miami Beach, FL. This girl is not just great to look at, she also has an education. She studied Marketing at FSU, Florida State University, before setting her sight on a career in the entertainment world. Her first modeling gigs were for catalogs, but she soon found herself as a spokesperson in the automotive and fitness industries traveling the world. Melanie is also a video vixen, being featured in nine music videos along side David Guetta, Jamie Foxx, Timbaland and Pitbull. She's also been featured in movies and international magazines. Currently, you can find Melanie traveling around the globe as a fitness and swimsuit model for some of today's most popular brands. With her athletic body, caramel colored hair and shining personality, she's sure to be a hit wherever she ends up.





20 QUESTIONS

1.What's your Ethnicity?

My ethnicity is Filipino and British, fifty-fifty, but I was born sunny Hawaii.

2.What's your zodiac sign?

I am a Sagittarius; fun, adventurous and honesty are our characteristics.

3.Where are you from originally?

The beautiful Honolulu, Hawaii is my birthplace, but I grew up in Tampa bay, FL, So, I'm definitely a Florida girl.

4.What did you like most about growing up in Florida?

I love the sun and beach. So definitely spending my time on the beaches and soaking up the beautiful sun was my favorite part of growing up there. I'm a beach bunny and love being near the water—that's why I love living in Miami Beach now.

5.What kind of mischief did you get into growing up?

Well, not too much mischief. I had older girlfriends who used to kidnap me from school (don't worry, I was a good student), and we would go to the beach and theme parks. And I rocked a fake ID thanks to my cousin. But doesn't everyone have one of those things?

6.What's the craziest thing you've ever done?

Probably my craziest experience was going on tour with Snoop Dogg as a backup dancer five years ago. I was shocked how his fans reacted. The girls on the road were so silly! They would throw themselves at celebs and I thought they were just ridiculous. It was the unassuming girls that were crazy.

7.What's your favorite hobby and why?

My favorite hobby is probably a mix of both sporty things (paddle boarding, swimming, dancing, etc.) and fashion. I love fashion and shopping.

8.What's your guilty pleasure?

My guilty pleasure is two things. Reality TV, like Keeping up with the Kardashians, Man Vs. Food and Millionaire Matchmaker. The second thing is frozen yogurt with fruit. I'm obsessed with my Froyo! [laugh]

9.Who do you admire?

I admire my mom. She is an amazing sweetheart who has taught me so much!

10.What's one of your personal goals?

I plan on taking over the world...[laugh] Just kidding, I have a goal to be a successful businesswoman. To work in TV as a host is also a goal of mine. I have a million goals, it's tough to pick just one.

11.What do guys compliment you on the most?

They compliment me on my long legs and my eyes the most.

12.What's your favorite body part on yourself?

I'd say my smile and sometimes my tummy.

13.What's your least favorite body part on yourself?

What is not to love? I'm lucky, everything is right where it needs to be. Probably my elbows. Just kidding.

14.What do you look for in a guy?

I look, first and foremost, at confidence, intelligence, kindness and someone who is driven. My biggest pet peeve is someone who's lazy; can't stand it.

15.What's the first thing you notice about a guy?

First thing I notice about a guy is his smile. I love a beautiful, sincere smile.

16.What's your ideal first date?

My ideal first date is a trip to Italy followed by Dubai... Okay, totally kidding. I love to grab a bite and talk and get to know my date. Maybe a few glasses of wine...

17.What turns you on?

My turn-on is honesty. Even if it isn't the ideal thing, I love someone who tells me how it is. Also, I'm attracted to someone who is athletic. I love a guy who can compete and who is physical.

18.What turns you off?

Turn-offs are laziness, bad hygiene and stinky breath...Gross!

19.What's your biggest pet peeve?

People who complain and are so pessimistic—I can't stand it. I seriously want to tell people: look how blessed you are in your life, you have family and friends, what more do you need.?Complainers need not complain to me.

20.Who's your celebrity pass?

That's tough, I'll name a few: Ryan Reynolds, Jake Gyllenhaal and Chris Evans.

RM

PIT PASS

Get In The Driver's Seat

It's About Karma

Written by Nicolas Bates

Up until now, the manufacturers of most electric vehicles had only one thing in mind: efficiency. Tesla Motors, with their Roadster, had a different outlook on what an electric car should embody, and created one of the fastest zero emission all-electric vehicles to hit the market. Fisker Automotive, co-founded by automobile designer Henrik Fisker and investor Bernhard Koehler, had a different idea, however, on what an electric vehicle should exemplify, and the plug-in hybrid luxury sports sedan, the Karma, was created.

Before being told the Fisker Karma was a plug-in hybrid, most automotive enthusiasts would probably already take an interest in the car based solely on its looks. With its high-arched wheel wells, its long, flowing body and its extremely long wheelbase (falling within a quarter of an inch of the Mercedes S-Class), the car exudes an air of sophistication. There is no question when eyes fall upon this car, that it is, in fact, a vehicle of luxury. The Karma seems to have a slight incestuous bond with the Aston Martin DB9 and V8 Vantage, but that comes as no surprise as Henrik Fisker had a hand in the design of both vehicles. The slightly futuristic look of the car is well suited to its more-than-slightly-futuristic "go parts."

The Karma boasts a total range of 300 miles; 50 miles of which are zero emission and 250 miles of which



SPECS

Fisker Karma

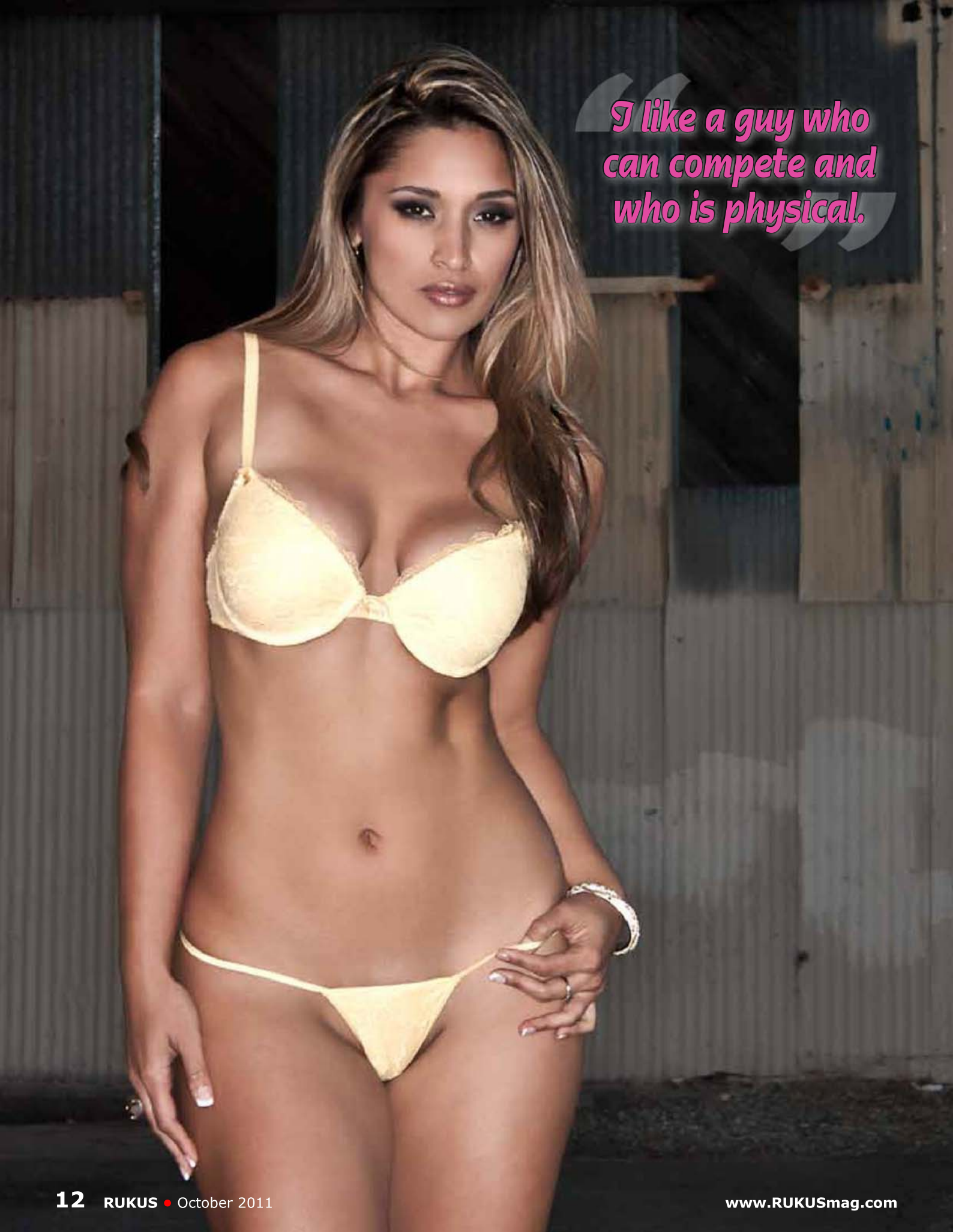
| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Price: | \$96,895+ |
| Drive Motors:: | AC perm-magnet synchronous |
| (DM) HP & Torque: | 402 hp, 959 lb-ft |
| Generator Engine: | Turbocharged and intercooled |
| | DOHC 16-valve 2.0-liter inline-4 |
| (GE) HP & Torque: | 260 hp, 260 lb-ft |
| Generator: | AC perm-magnet synchronous |
| Horsepower: | 235 hp |
| Transmission: | 1-speed direct drive |
| 0-60 MPH: | 5.9 secs. |
| Top Speed: | 125 mph |
| EST. MPG: | Combined, electric only: 85 MPGe |
| | City/hwy: 33/38 mpg |



are internal combustion-assisted. The Karma's internal combustion engine is a 2.0-liter General Motors Ecotec turbocharged four-cylinder providing 260-hp. The internal combustion engine never actual powers the Karma; instead it powers a generator that is then tethered to two AC motors that turn the differential. The Karma is also outfitted with a 20 kW-hr Li-on battery for propulsion purposes. The final output of power the Karma receives is that of 402-hp. Thanks to its 1-speed direct drive transmission, the Karma has a massive output of 959 lb-ft of torque. The driver decides how quickly they would like to reach their destination with a choice of two drive modes: stealth mode and sport mode. In stealth mode, the car relies solely on its 20 kW-hr li-ion battery for propulsion. This will get the car from 0-60 mph in 7.9—nothing short of disappointing. However, switch to sport mode and the car will receive a boost from the 2.0-liter Ecotec. Now the car will do 0-60 mph in 5.9 seconds. Oh, much, much better. Considering the Karma has a curb weight of 4,100 lb., 5.9 seconds isn't too bad at all.

Electric vehicles will have to be our future if we want sustainable travel. This is being debated less and less. With what Fisker has created with the Karma, society will be brought into the world of electric vehicles with much more ease. However, with almost a \$100,000 price tag, electric vehicle technology is still at a premium; especially when said vehicle is deemed a "luxury vehicle." Regardless, what the Karma is and what it has brought to the table cannot be easily scoffed at. Perhaps the Karma is the good energy at the beginning of a trend that will shape the future. RM





*I like a guy who
can compete and
who is physical.*



STATS:

Birthday: December 5

Height: 5' 8"

Weight: 128 lbs.

Measurements: 34C-25-36

See more of Melanie at
[Twitter.com/MsMelaniet](https://twitter.com/MsMelaniet)

ALL ACCESS

The Latest Albums Reviewed

Mr. Carter's Home

Photo by Nabil
Written by Jeremy Weeden

"See me, I got the world in my hands" declares Lil Wayne on his newly released album, *Tha Carter IV*, and it is not just the usual bragging one expects in hip-hop. Lil Wayne is actually telling the truth. The anticipation leading up to *Tha Carter III*'s release seemingly never subsided as Wayne reached new heights of popularity, and that and has yet to cease. While maybe not technically "the best rapper alive" anymore (Jay-Z seems to have reclaimed that mantle for the time being), Lil Wayne is still one of the best and unquestionably the most popular rapper currently. *Tha Carter IV* should not disappoint any of his fans, from the ones who may believe this to be Wayne's fourth album to his diehard fans who know this is actually his *ninth* album. Due to such a long career and the different musical styles he has taken on at different times, it can be hard for a veteran artist to please everyone, but Lil Wayne does a good job of mixing his different styles on *Tha Carter IV*. The result is an album that is not as hard as *Tha Carter II* or as commercially pleasing as *Tha Carter III*, but still a very good album that draws influences from Wayne's history, as well as the newer sound of his protégé, Drake.

The album begins with Wayne rapping over a horn-laden beat produced by Willy Will. This same track will be heard twice more on the album with other rappers, including Andre 3000, Nas, Tech N9ne, Busta Rhymes and others. Lil Wayne gets it first, however, and while he spits a nice verse, the other rappers who flow over it later on the album rip the track much harder. Perhaps Lil Wayne knew his verse did not measure up and this could be the reason why what could have been an epic posse cut is broken down in to three separate tracks: the intro, interlude and outro.

The next track on the album, "Blunt Blowing," truly starts "the Weezy show" as the clever lyrics and catchy hooks one is accustomed to hearing from Lil Wayne take flight on this song. The hook is very repeatable and with witty lyrics like, "Yeah, I put it down like my hands hurting/I'm on a natural high, but I land perfect/Some of us are lovers, most of y'all haters/But I put up a wall, and they just wallpaper," it is easy to see this song as a possible single. Another standout track on the album is the Drake-assisted "She Will." This is Lil Wayne's tribute to the strippers, and between the bass-heavy beat from T-Minus and the vivid lyrics Drake sings in the chorus, one can effortlessly picture the scene being painted. "How to Hate" featuring T-Pain is a humorous look at philandering women and women who put you in the dreaded "friend zone." T-Pain sings about a woman who always leaned on him for emotional support while going through things with other guys, but never giving him a chance to date her. Lil Wayne raps about a cheating lover, roasting her with clever lines like, "You used to be the shit/ But now you ain't shit, bitch."

Tha Carter IV may not end up Grammy-nominated for album of the year like its predecessor. It's no hip-hop classic like *Tha Carter II*, but it is still a good album. The album features good production, good choruses and better-than-average lyrics. That coupled with Lil Wayne's immense popularity ensures *Tha Carter IV* will be one of 2011's biggest albums. As he says on the second track, "Hello, Weezy, welcome home!"

Lil Wayne: *Tha Carter IV*

Label: Young Money/Cash Money

Website: <http://lilwayne-online.com>

★★★★★

Release Date: August 29, 2011



ALL ACCESS

The Album Reviews Cont'd



Coming Back

Photo by Matthew Rodgers
Written by Paul Lyons

A lot can happen in eight years. In 2003, thrash-metal gurus Anthrax released their triumphant comeback album *We've Come For You All*. It was a return to form for founding member and rhythm guitarist, Scott Ian, new lead guitarist Rob Caggiano, bassist Frank Bello, drummer/guitarist Charlie Benante, and longtime singer John Bush. Yet, just when things began to go right for Anthrax, everything started to go wrong...

First, Frank Bello left the band. Then, in 2005, Anthrax decided to bring back former lead vocalist Joey Belladonna, Frank Bello, and lead guitarist Dan Spitz for a reunion tour of their 1984-1992 lineup. After the tour was over, Joey Belladonna decided he wanted to leave the band again, so they hired Devilsizer singer Dan Nelson to sing, re-hired Rob Caggiano on lead guitar, and started work on a new studio album. Yet in 2009, Dan Nelson was let go, so they brought back John Bush on vocals. A year later, John Bush was out, and none other than Joey Belladonna was back on lead vocals. With seven years of musical chairs behind them (for now), the band went back into the studio to finally complete their (three-years-in-the-making) brand-new studio album, which features the pun-in-cheek title of *Worship Music*. Produced by the band, *Worship Music* features 13 kickass, original tracks, plus a hidden 14th track at the end (a cover of the Swedish hardcore band Refused 1998 song "New Noise").

Beginning with the moody drone of the short instrumental "Worship," Anthrax explodes into high gear with the machine gun riffing of the fast and furious "Earth on Hell," an angry, bold song about revolution and destruction. "Kill the old guard," so says Anthrax. "The Devil You Know" features a great, extremely syncopated guitar riff that compels you to do some serious headbanging. Charlie Benante's drums are (appropriately) on fire during the song, and Rob Caggiano's killer guitar solo lifts the music up to new heights.

Not letting up, the band follows this with "Fight'em Till You Can't," a pounding, metal barnburner that was offered up as a free download in June. Featuring tough and ready-to-take-on-the-world vocals by Joey Belladonna, the song reflects the strength and unrelenting resolve to survive, and to find the darkness inside you in order to fight off the most evil of all evils: zombies.

"I'm Alive," a fast shuffle, is the most straightforward rocker on the album, while "Hymn 1" is its most unusual track. At only 38-seconds, the instrumental song features a haunting cello performance by Alison Chesley. "Hymn 2" features a 44-second, driving snare drum cadence.

Two of the standout songs on "Worship" lean in a more commercial direction. "The Giant" starts out in a fast 2/4 time signature, then 40 seconds in, Joey Belladonna belts out a catchy, anthem-like chorus in 4/4 time: "Caught between the lines of right and wrong/Yeah, caught between the things that I don't know..." The other standout song, "Crawl," is Anthrax's answer to a love ballad. It starts out slow, with Belladonna's vocals way up in the mix. The pace picks up in the song's bridge, as well as its big chorus of "If you crawl, I'll follow, I'll follow." The chant of "Crawling, crawling, crawling" near the end of the track is very powerful, and Caggiano once again blows the roof off with his guitar.

Anthrax has done right by their fans with *Worship Music*, delivering a strong album filled with the right mixture of heavy, fast and dark sounds. Here's hoping that this current lineup of the band stays intact for years to come...but I wouldn't count on it.

Anthrax: Worship Music

Label: Megaforce

Website: <http://Anthrax.com>

★★★★☆

Release Date: September 13, 2011

ALL ACCESS SPOTLIGHT

Myspace.com/Evidence



Evidence, *Cats & Dogs*

Do you ever wonder what people mean when they use the phrase “real hip-hop”? Well, if so, Evidence of Dilated Peoples is here to provide you with an answer via his second solo album, *Cats and Dogs*. *Cats and Dogs* is an album for the true hip-hop heads and Evidence does not attempt to hide it. You will not find any mainstream producers or features here, strictly hard, head-nodding beats and honest lyrics. The album features production from The Alchemist and DJ Premiere and has very few guest appearances, the most notable being from Raekwon, Prodigy and Ras Kass. “I Don’t Need Love” is an emotional tune in which Evidence talks of finding out his mother was ill and of her eventual passing. The vivid storytelling and heartfelt lyrics throughout the album provide a captivating listen as the listener is taken inside Evidence’s life on each track. Evidence is no lyrical wordsmith but he is more than capable of providing witty, anecdotal stories for the listener to vibe to. *Cats and Dogs* will not be heard on the radio or blasting in your favorite club, but it is a solid album with substance and stories that most anyone can relate to.

Written by Silas Valentino & Jeremy Weeden
Edited by Nicolas Bates

Theophilus London, *Timez Are Weird These Days*

The cover to Brooklyn rapper Theophilus London’s debut album, *Timez are Weird These Days*, features a standing London sporting a Run DMC/Amish/Hipster look. This cross-sampling of style not only defines London’s wardrobe, but also his approach to music. *Timez are Weird These Days* is a mixing bowl of KiD CuDi rapping, TV on the Radio backup vocals and 1980s funk grooves. Theophilus London has the swag of Hall and Oats and the voice of a rapping Morrissey. Musically, London can make jams guaranteed to shake your rump. Album highlight “Why Even Try” has a popping baseline and a sing-a-long chorus that can get the groove going. Both “Why Even Try” and “Love is Real” could have been released in the ‘80s, and no one would have been the wiser. Theophilus London isn’t the greatest rapper out today, but he does have the style and eclectic music, and it seems as though he is beginning to round up a fan base.

Myspace.com/TheophilusLondon



Myspace.com/RiseToRemain



Rise To Remain, *City Of Vultures*

Rise to Remain’s debut album *City of Vultures* begins with a recording of a rainstorm and noises of a busy downtown intersection. Chaos, trains and violins soon follow and we’re left with a feeling of darkness and diabolical fear. And then, bang, like a bug hitting the windshield of a train, “The Serpent” begins. Double-pedal kick drum, screeching guitar licks and lyrics of hell on earth become the soundtrack to your newest nightmare. And this is only the first two minutes of the album. Rise to Remain is the newest metalcore sensation from London. Since 2006 they have been releasing EPs and singles through their MySpace and now time has come for their debut LP. *City of Vultures* is almost a non-stop rush of heavy metal madness; however, they do break it down here and there with clean guitars and clean vocals. The album is very eclectic and should be revered for such. Fans of Machine Head, Times of Grace, and With One Last Breath could easily slide in Rise to Remain to their jukebox rotation. This fall, the band will join Trivium, In Flames and others on the Defenders of The Faith Tour III. In terms of heavy metal, Rise to Remain shall defend to the end.



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LIVE & LOUD

The Live Show Reviews

The Kills

Photos by Nicolas Bates
Written by Katie J. Norris

Glittering with the illusion of stars, a dark blue light begins to grow on the leopard print backdrop as we hear the first punk rock guitar note. A spotlight reveals VV and her neon pink hair. The second spotlight shines on a focused, well-dressed Hotel, as he plucks away at perfect notes on one of the smoothest electrics guitar ever heard. As eccentric, raw and underground as their song structure and their style may be, they are very well rehearsed and perform as professionally as any other major artist. VV stuck to the mic for the first few songs as Hotel jammed away on his guitar and triggered their pre-recorded tracks. It was impressive to see that, performing live, this band of only two was able to sound like a full band. They also physically worked the stage like a balancing act, respectively remaining stoic for affect, and then appearing as if they were absolutely losing control for those “freedom moments.” The latter was especially true for VV, with her wild hair.

As their set picked up momentum, the subdued background lights popped into brighter, non-primary colors to visually electrify some of the hits. The Kills played “U R A Fever,” “Satellite,” “Future Starts Slow,” “Black Balloon,” “Sour Cherry” and “Heart is a Beating Drum,” among others.

VV proceeded to solo her guitar skills, beef up some of the tunes with live piano, and juggle the pre-recorded tracks like a demon dj, all while that Jem and the Holograms-inspired hair created its own personality.

The sold out venue—which seemed to be comprised of 80% of Silver Lake—was a wall of cheers after every song. Amateur, hazardous swing dancing had begun in any free floor space that could be found, and those that got crammed in rows were too busy singing along to care about claustrophobia. The show closed with “Last Goodbye,” which circled us back to the dark blue, non-descript constellation backdrop as we got a dose of bittersweet emotions with the slow, piano ballad. The duo was demanded to return to the stage for two encores. It was nothing short of a fantastic show with all the rewards. Dare I say, they *killed* it.

Show: The Kills
Venue: The Wiltern

Date: September 10, 2011
City: Los Angeles, CA



LIVE & LOUD
LIVE SHOW REVIEWS CONT. 2

MC LARS

Photo by Nicolas Bates
Written by Paul Lyons

He studied English at Stanford. He loves Iggy Pop, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, as well as *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* He shouts out exclamations like, "reading is awesome!" Clearly, this 28-year-old Berkeley, California native is no ordinary hip-hop artist. Fiercely independent, MC Lars (a.k.a. Andrew Robert Neilsen) does things his own way. He releases music on his own label, sells his own merchandise, and he never holds back on speaking his mind. It's this kind of raw expression mixed with an intellectual bent, which wowed the rapturous, packed audience at West Hollywood's Troubadour on September 27th.

Before the show even started, the chanting began: "MC LARS! MC LARS! MC LARS!" The crowd wasn't just ready. They were ravenous for what was about to happen. Backed by a live drummer and bassist, MC Lars burst onto the Troubadour stage with a contagious amount of energy that spread throughout the historic club. Opening the concert with the title track of his new album *LARS ATTACKS!*, MC Lars performed an exhilarating 10-song set that had people singing, clapping and jumping up and down.

Using two video screens (on either side of the stage), MC Lars used images to complement his fast-paced, hip-hop rhetoric. For example, during the second song, "History's Greatest Assholes," pictures and videos were used to accentuate each of history's assholes (i.e. Hitler, Stalin, Jack the Ripper, Pol Pot and more). Better still, MC Lars got the entire Troubadour to shout out the "assholes!" part of the song's chorus.

"Welcome to the independent hip-hop show!" announced the intellectual rapper before the evening's third song. "I feel like we're all here tonight because we support something different." And different they got with "Generic Crunk Rap," a parody of mainstream hip-hop found on his 2006 *The Graduate* album. This time around, the master MC had the crowd shouting out "GET CRUNK!" after various lines in the song's chorus (e.g. "Buy cars (GET CRUNK!), Take shots (GET CRUNK!), Have sex (GET CRUNK!").

Before performing "Annabel Lee R.I.P"—closing track on *LARS ATTACKS!*—MC Lars gave credit to the song's inspiration: Edgar Allen Poe. "I want to give a shout out to an old-school rapper; a master of iambic tetrameter." During "White Klds Aren't Hyphy" (from 2009's *THIS GIANT ROBOT KILLS*), MC Lars had the crowd jumping high in the air. "Super Scope" (another track from *LARS ATTACKS!*) was introduced as a song about "how hip-hop saved my life."

The emotional core of MC Lars' dynamic set was "Twenty-Three," a song written about his friend Patrick Wood who committed suicide in 2006. Lars confessed, "I never really recovered from that." He went on to add that he works with the American Foundation For Suicide Prevention and, during his U.S. tour, has raised over \$1300 in donations for the non-profit organization.

Introducing "Ahab," MC Lars proclaimed, "I'm kind of a literature rapper. I love to take the 16th-century, 19th-century poems, plays, books and turn them into songs. I created this genre called Lit-Hop." Speaking of which, the next song, "Hey There Ophelia," was inspired by Shakespeare's Hamlet. It was dedicated to Misty Dawn, a beautiful redhead in attendance that night, who had appeared in the "Lars Attacks!" music video.

To close out the show, MC Lars belted out the Edgar Allen Poe-inspired "Mr. Raven," an early gem from his 2004 release, *The Laptop EP*. Once again, he encouraged the crowd to participate in the song. With MC Lars at the helm, everyone happily sung along to "Who's that (who's that) rapping? Who's that rapping at my chamber door? Mr. (mister) Raven! All up in my grill like, "Nevermore."

After the concert, MC Lars told me of how he loved the Troubadour audience, how "the crowd was crazy!" "I thought they were hungry for something different. There was a lot of love." He added, "This niche has grown, y'know? The intellectual hip-hop world has grown and it's awesome." Awesome is right. If you're into hip-hop and want something less generic and a little different, check out MC Lars' live show.

Show: MC Lars
Venue: The Troubadour

Date: September 27, 2011
City: West Hollywood, CA



MC Lars

LIVE & LOUD
LIVE SHOW REVIEWS CONT'D

Fresh Fest

Photos by Nicolas Bates
Written by Katie J. Norris



The highly anticipated Fresh Fest show at Nokia Theater sold out (7,200 tickets) two weeks before the event, advertising a lineup of radio station 93.5 KDAY's rap artists. After opening act, local rapper, Julio G, and 2nd II None, Young Buck took the stage. He definitely hyped up the audience, well, more like ordered them to get up "out their fuckin' seats." But hey, it worked. After opening with a recognizable song, he pronounced much love for Pac and slid into another gear, rapping out a tribute and inviting the crowd to "put those 2's in the air!" For some of his time on stage, Young Buck performed a few of his radio-played tunes, but took a lot of artistic liberties rapping a cappella for a good portion of his set. With his black shirt, black hat, dark sunglasses, and monogrammed necklace, Young Buck seemed almost like an overly confident, tortured artist doing an aggressive poetry slam, barking theatrical rhymes into the mic, more than a typical, mainstream rapper. But it mixed things up, and the rapid-fire, fresh lyrics kept the audience listening

WC (Dub C) was next to grace the stage. He had select guest artists come up and share a few tracks with him throughout. Collectively, they kept it going from introduction to farewell. His posse was the first of the night to completely "decorate the stage" with their bodies. As distracting as it can sometimes be for this element of a rappers' performance, their head bobs were in an accidentally tight unison, which seemed to encourage the audience to move to the beat as well. WC kept the dj hard at work spinnin' the tracks while he struck his songs one after the other, occasionally coming up for air. Overall, it felt well rehearsed and didn't feel rushed or unorganized.



WC (Dub C)



E-40



Twista



Mack 10

Twista. This is an artist with a strong career who has developed into an incredibly professional performer. Taking the stage with a talented hype/co-rapper, Twista damn near snuck up on stage. As soon as he took the mic, he spit-fired his recognizable, speedy lyrics and rocked it! No half-drunk stage groupies for this guy. His set was smooth and classy. It had an air of confidence and effortlessness that came from a practiced-with-love choreographed stage movement. This was the kind of set that earned respect without asking. He had the dj prime some of his older hits and definitely hit us with some new lyrics, articulate as ever. It was impossible not to get in to this set.

Next to take the stage was Mack 10. This was entertainment in a completely opposite way. His groupies staggered on stage in large clumps all dressed in red and white with 40's of beer or red solo cups in their hands. Mack 10 and his guest artist were the only two taking anything remotely seriously. And even that was a difficult task with the scene taking place right behind them. He rapped on his tracks as solid as ever, and the crowd was in to it, dancing right along. Yet his set seemed to be a tug-of-war between the enjoyment of music and the live version of some reality-show distraction unfolding two feet behind him.

After Mack 10 came something completely different. E-40. Contrary to the previous artist, E-40 was composed, focused and came off more mature overall. There wasn't an air of arrogance or a gang of task-less stagehands. This guy was all about the music. He called on the dj to intro some older hits, pulling out some favorites from way back. The audience responded with a huge spike in volume. He blended the past with the current and mixed in some newer tracks. It was an enjoyable set that provided a feeling of satisfaction all around.

Headliner, The Game (now officially "Game"), finally took the stage after a long wait. This was something else. Game had an actual band—all very young-looking musicians filling out the dj-played beats or solely creating them right then and there. This, of course, gave the audience a whole new experience and a real sense of fulfillment making it well worth the wait that was imposed on the audience before the set. Each band member stood out in their own way, in clothing and in playing mannerisms. The only thing uniform was their perfectly choreographed, simple, head movement. They looked tight! Game started out center stage with high energy. It seems a passionate performance had unfolded. Yet, he kept bringing it up to even higher levels, surprising the audience at every step. His beats were fantastically well rounded and his selections of guest artists were all just as talented. Despite the amazing level that each individual brought to the stage, no one overshadowed Game, however. It was professional and appealing to watch, and smooth and energetic to listen to. And, of course, it didn't hurt his audience appreciation that he kept removing another piece of clothing every two or three songs either. Well, maybe his female audience appreciation, anyway.

Show: Fresh Fest
Venue: Nokia Theater

Date: September 24, 2011
City: Los Angeles, CA



Game

Exclusive Interview: Staind's Mike Mushok

Photo by Chapman Baehler
Written by Michelle Oberg



RUKUS MAGAZINE: Tell me about the 9/11 charity show you did in New York.

MIKE MUSHOK: We were initially trying to create an event coinciding with the release of our new record [*Staind*] and it just so happened it was the 10 year anniversary of the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center. We were in New York and we thought it would be a great idea to try and coordinate and maybe give a little something back by being able to do the show.

RM: I'm a New Yorker and I thank you for that.

MM: No problem. We were actually in New York a few days before it happened. Obviously I couldn't imagine what it would be like when it happened but we know a lot of people who live there and it affected so many people nationwide.

RM: Were there families who are involved with the foundation present for the show?

MM: Yes, we met with some of the people there before the show. It was very nice to see how appreciative people are and for us it's what we love to do: play music—and to incorporate that in to giving something back is wonderful.

RM: Now that you have been a part of something bigger than just a usual show, do you have intentions of playing more benefit-type shows?

MM: We look at what is out there for sure and what we are able to do. Aaron does one for the school system where he lives and his kids go to school, so he does that every year. We always definitely try to do what we can to try and help out.

RM: Staind is going to be coming up on 20 years soon. Do you have any intention of doing a feature length documentary, since that's all the rage these days?

MM: [laughs] Right! There really is one in the works with what we put out in the record and we're continuously filming extra footage to see if we could get something together and what it might be. If there is an interest and people want to see it...

RM: Let's talk about your new record *Staind*, which was released September 13th. Originally it was going to be called *Seven*. Why did you opt for this record to be the self-titled album?

MM: I think we kind of came back and thought about the title and where we were with the record and it was really a return to where we started and why we started playing music and why we started the band—which was really being a heavy band. With that we decided to self-title it. But then there's still a reference to *Seven*, which the album art has.

RM: Is there a track on the album that you're personally attached to?

MM: I don't know. You work so hard on an album from beginning to end. I do have to say, for myself, I can definitely put the record on and listen to the whole thing and enjoy. I am really proud of the way it came out. It was a tough one to make. I think "Eyes Wide Open" defines what the record is. I think "Sailing" is a cool song, and "Wanted" is great because it's different for us with the rapping on it. It's pretty diverse.

RM: The band seems to be really involved with your fans and the community and you seem to keep yourselves quite public like with the webisodes you released showing the making of *Staind* with the writing and recording process. Is there a point where you draw the line when where you're sharing becomes too personal for public consumption?

MM: I try to keep my personal life with my family separate. It's funny with this age of social media, my manager tells me that I need to have a Twitter and post all the time and I'm like, "No, I really don't, I just want to play guitar." His response is "It's more than that now." What am I going to say, "I'm having a cheeseburger with my family"? I think everyone is trying to be a star with social media. Who gives a fuck if you're buying a pair of shoes? It's just crazy how small the world has become and how immediate news and stories can be. I also think Twitter shows the intelligence level of a lot of people. There's no filter, you can just go and put it out there and whoever is following you knows your business.

RM: To be fair, you guys are lucky that your fans have Twitter pages dedicated to your music so they get your news out there pretty quick.

MM: I know and I have been doing Facebook posts lately. I've also done blogs, too, because people will call me up and ask me. I really don't have a problem doing it but it's just so different from when we started. We used to be able to just go and play music [laughs] and now there's just a lot more to it.

RM: Speaking of the music, you recently parted ways with Jon [Wysocki]. Was this amicable? How did this come about?

MM: I talked to him recently. Will it continue? I don't know...who knows? It wasn't an easy decision. Look, we got together to write a record in December, it was tough and I don't think everyone was on the same page. It became apparent that everyone doesn't have the

same motivation. It became apparent really quickly. We tried following through with the process and at the end of the day I think through a lot of discussions and trying to figure things out, probably it was what was best for the band.

RM: It's tough and it's not easy to talk about. Again, that goes back to having your life public.

MM: No, it's not. It wasn't an easy decision or a quick decision. It's something that dragged on for a while, but ultimately, this is where we are now and we're just trying to move forward.

RM: What's the hardest part about being in a band?

MM: The hardest part about being in a band is having a family and being away. On Monday I leave for Europe for three weeks and my kids are going to be 5 in November. Look, I just did five days away, most weekends and press stuff. While that was happening my wife calls me with my daughter on the phone and she was crying because she missed me. I sat on the phone with her for a half hour and there really isn't anything harder than that. This is something new. When I toured before they were younger and didn't really get it, but now they do.

RM: Do they come to your shows when you play close to home? Do they like your music?

MM: Yes, I live in Connecticut so when we do shows locally they come out. They want to go, they like to go. My son always asks, "Dad, can I come to your show, I wanna come to a show!"

RM: Is Sal [Giancarelli] going to become a band member or remain as a touring drummer?

MM: Right now he's just going to be our touring drummer. As we move forward we'll see what happens. We're still trying to figure out everything with Jon's situation and how that officially is going to end. For the most part, it has, but just the legal end of things. I don't think we're actively looking right now for a band member. But Sal is there and he's doing a great job. I think we're just going to for now continue on this way, at least for the touring cycle and then address it from there.

RM: ...'s film soundtracks. The most recent, *Dark of the Moon*, features "The Bottom," which is on *Stained*. Was that song written for the film?

MM: Our manager knows the gentleman who puts those soundtracks out. The timing just so happened to coincide with our record. At the time that they came and asked we had five songs done. I just felt like "The Bottom" sounded so mechanical, which is great for that film. We submitted to it and that's just how it worked out.

RM: What is your goal for 2012?

MM: Really just go out there and tour and go places we've never been. We're going to Europe soon and when we get back we will be trying to put together a really nice package tour starting March. Then we'll go back to Europe for the summer and come back again to do a tour in the States, then Japan later in the year. So the goal is to continue touring and supporting the record.

RM: What was the first thing you bought with your first big paycheck with *Stained*?

MM: I got a new truck. That was great, and then I got my parents something.

RM: What is the craziest thing a fan has done to get your attention?

MM: One time this kid was coming through a line where we were signing and this kid took his artificial leg off for us to sign it. He told us his mom was going to kill him.

RM: If you could have dinner with anyone in the world, dead or alive, who would it be?

MM: My wife.

RM: If you weren't a musician what would you be doing?

MM: My goal originally, if the music thing didn't work out—which happens because I know a lot of guys who are better than me—I was going to go to law school to be an attorney. *Stained* came up along the way and the LSAT's just went by the way side. I thought the band was really good so we pursued that. When *Stained* happened I was in my mid-to-late twenties. I can appreciate more. I won't name names, but when people have success so young and early on it gives you no idea what the world is like and you're completely out of touch with reality. I always said thank god this didn't happen to me when I was 18.

RM: What advice would you give a younger band whose trying to catch their big break?

MM: Our path, personally, that we followed just led us to being signed. Here's the thing, it's all kind of common sense. You got to work for it really, really hard for anything that you want to be successful in. It's never going to just come to you. My advice is write as many songs as you can. If you're in a band just make sure you're with people who are on the same path and have the same goals about the band and who you think are good enough to help get you there. You'll know that I was in a ton of other bands and I knew we never had a chance because there was something about it, but then I met Aaron and we started writing together; I knew we had something. The other thing is ultimately to help other bands and play with other bands. We would befriend other bands in other states and say, "Hey, come play with us" and we'd go back and play shows for them. We got signed because we always played with this one band that we loved. Then the drummer called me one day and said, "Hey, we're opening for Limp Bizkit, the first slot is open, it's only 20 minutes, but you can play." We said, "Let's play!" So play whenever and wherever you can. There's nothing like being on stage and playing. Play in your room all day long, but it'll never be the same.

RM: Do you have any final words for our readers?

MM: We're touring Europe right now and we're working on the next tour package in the spring. We'll try to put together the best package that we can so it's enjoyable for everybody. And lastly, without our fans we wouldn't be here and doing what we love to do, so we're extremely thankful for them.

RM

LIVE & LOUD
LIVE SHOW REVIEWS CONT. 2

WHOOZINXT
WINNER

Exclusive Interview: Eyes Set To Kill's **Alexia Rodriguez**

By Michelle Oberg



RUKUS MAGAZINE: Tell me about your new record, *White Lotus*. You were quoted saying, "We wanted to use a white lotus to symbolize how confident and focused we are." What is the message or goal you are trying to get out?

ALEXIA RODRIGUEZ: I guess the ultimate goal is to burst out of the screamo world. We've always been more fitting into the metal world and right now were doing really well on a screamo tour, but we're in a weird spot where our fans are super diverse, which is a good thing, but we want to appeal to the older crowd. So the goal is to reach a wide variety of people and as many as we can.

RM: A lot of the songs on the record are very emotionally-based around relationships. Whose experiences are those?

AR: There's some relationship ones, there's one positive and then there's my first real love song. Mainly, the concept of the album is where we are with the band and how clear minded we are but, yes, I write about stuff that I have been through recently between my band and my boyfriend and people who just didn't believe in me. It's a couple different types of ideas in each song; they're not all about relationships. It's not all about intimate relationships, it's more about relationships with people in general. The last album I was comfortable writing about pain and the relationship I was in before. I was stuck in it and I just didn't want to be in it anymore. So for this album I wanted to dig deeper.

RM: It's difficult to express your life through lyrics. Does it ever come back around when performing on stage and singing about something so personal?

AR: Yes, sometimes. There was a song I wrote about for an ex-boyfriend and I really don't give a shit about him anymore, so when I sing the song I think about something else. The same way you can listen to another artist's song and interpret your own meaning. I want to still feel while I'm singing so I think about something else who pertains to the lyrics. The one downfall now is my boyfriend thinks I'll be thinking about my old boyfriends when I sing but I am really not; it's retarded. You can change your words into different meanings; it doesn't always have to be so literal.

RM: You covered Nirvana's "Polly" and Hole's "Doll Parts" for *White Lotus*. Why did you opt for the two lovers from the '90s-grunge era?

AR: It's funny; everyone thinks I'm contradicting myself by doing that. But I'm a fan of music and all the drama. I love Hole and I love Nirvana most. Those two songs, I had a connection with both of them. "Doll Parts" feels like I wrote those words because I personally felt them and I chose "Polly" because I love the unplugged version and I do a lot of unplugged music for our shows. That song really spoke to me because I too strip a song down to its skeleton.

RM: Are you trying to go for the grunge sound with ESTK?

AR: Yeah, kind of. We've always had a tiny aspect of it, whether it's self-loathing lyrics or a slower tempo of a ballad. Anissa and me have grown up with that. It's cool because it shows the fans we are into with the music that we've grown up on.

RM: Since you did cover those songs, were there any legal issues involved putting those songs on your album?

AR: No. I mean, they get full copyright of it but we didn't have any problems. I got permission; I didn't steal anything.

RM: What is the hardest part about being on tour?

AR: Of course, missing family and friends, but not being able to shower when you want and not having full privacy. Girls need that sometimes. Anissa and me aren't really high maintenance—at least one of the guys in the band is pretty high maintenance. We're pretty laid-back and don't really complain. We're just happy to be out on the road. Being on the road feels more like home than home does. Home is starting to feel more like vacation. We've had members quit because they couldn't do the whole touring thing anymore. There were some people that we were friends with who were in the band a long time ago and now they are feeling bad on the decisions they made since they're working at Blockbuster.

RM: What's your answer to them?

AR: Well, you have your health...and your mom.

RM: Who's your favorite artist to tour with?

AR: We've toured with a bunch of different bands. We toured with Drop Dead Gorgeous a lot and like them, but I don't even know if they're still a band. Our favorite tour was with Dr. Acula; they're really fun to party with. We always bump in to them on the road, too. We'll be on our day off, traveling through to another city and then there they are. It's crazy. I think we're destined to be band best friends.

RM: Do you check out other artists on your time off?

AR: We try to do that but we end up on long drives in the middle of nowhere on our days off. We'll go to local bars or do karaoke or go to the movies on our time off. We'll have days where we just go and do laundry.

RM: What's a typical party night like for you on tour?

AR: After we play we usually, if we don't have to drive, go to a bar. We're the band that tries to get all the bands to hang out together at a bar. Then we'll move to a hotel party and then crash.

RM: Has there been any crazy party or fan experiences?

AR: There was a fan that went to our New Mexico show that bought us a bunch of bottles. We were parked in Wal-Mart and he was one of those cool fans who just wanted to hang out; it wasn't creepy. He wanted to enjoy our company. We were kind of drunk and we all went into Wal-Mart and I saw those little-kid play cash register and I said I liked it and we should buy this, but we didn't. The next day he showed up with the little register. Now Chino, our merch guy, plays with it at the merch table and he gets more tips now because of it, which is weird and funny.

RM: You just got back from touring in Asia. What was that experience like?

AR: It was incredible. We've toured in Europe before and we have a ridiculous amount of fans overseas. We've never been to Asia before and it was surreal to see people who don't speak our language singing our songs. It wasn't sad but there were some more poor parts of the country that we passed through and it opened my eyes to appreciate what I have.

RM: Does that make you want to do a benefit-type show for the next Asian tour?

AR: I think we should do that in the future. We've never done anything like that but we've always wanted to.

RM: What is something that most people don't know about you?

AR: I don't know if it's hidden, but I think I'm a good painter. I sell prints of my art at shows. I like to cook, too and I make things taste really good but it always looks really ugly on a plate.

RM: Have you ever stolen anything?

AR: I used to have a stealing problem when I was 8. When I was 8 I stole a wallet—not a person's wallet—but one that was on sale at a store. After that I developed a little problem. I stole my friend's key chains and wore them to school on my backpack and apparently I stole my cousin's money. My mom said I went to therapy at school for it, but honestly, I don't remember any of that except for stealing the wallet because it was shiny and I liked the texture. When I stole it I didn't think it was bad, I really don't know. It's funny, because now I always buy really shiny things like sparkly shorts or shiny glasses and I never end up wearing them so I think it's my childhood coming back around.

RM: When you write songs about specific people do they know it's about them and have they ever approached you about it?

AR: It's really weird, I've written all negative songs about my ex-boyfriend and he never said anything. I think he was just an airhead and just didn't get it or care. My boyfriend now, I wrote a love song about him and I thought it was romantic and he'd be flattered but he wasn't fazed. I think it's because he's seen me write about others in the past so he doesn't take it seriously since he knows I can write about anything. At the same time though, he doesn't realize those were all negative. But I also don't want to go to them and be like "I wrote this song for you," because those weren't romantic. It's more selfish writing than selfless.

RM: Are you a romantic?

AR: I am, yeah. Every relationship I've been in I didn't care that much about except for the one I'm in right now. No matter what, I always try to give the most I can. I prioritize my relationships. For this one I definitely want to be with this person for forever so I've matured and I'm not going to sacrifice everything because I've done that in the past and you get taken advantage of and getting hurt.

RM: Do you have any band news you'd like to share?

AR: Yes! Please make sure you mention that the band and me are so thankful for our fans. We wouldn't be touring or writing music if it weren't for them. Thank you all!

RM

COMING UP...

Models To Keep An Eye On

ARIANNA VARELLA

Photography by Andrew Gates
Make-up & hair by Aprille Ricafranca

Arianna Varella is a rare mix of Tahitian, Puerto Rican and Norwegian. She is originally from Inglewood, CA. After graduating from Palisades High School she decided to move across the country to New York City to garner inspiration for her writing. She's currently working on a book based on her unique experiences as a teenager growing up in Los Angeles, CA. After experiencing all that New York City had to offer, she packed up and traveled throughout Asia, Europe, South America and Australia for the next three years before moving back to Los Angeles. Currently, Arianna resides in West Hollywood, CA where she is pursuing modeling, acting and salsa dancing. She is also doing work as a red carpet correspondent for some major events. Arianna can also be seen in music videos and on *Entourage* and *Shameless*. She's got a lot going for her, knows what she wants and just how to get it. Look out world, here she comes!







THE STATS

Birthday:
May 7

Zodiac Sign:
Pisces: inscrutable, charming, extremely passionate.

Measurements:
34C-24-34

Height:
5' 5"

Weight:
116 lb.

Ethnicity:
Tahitian, Puerto Rican and Norwegian.

Hometown:
Los Angeles, CA

Turn Ons:
Originality, wit, passionate, life experience and aggression.

Turn Offs:
Bad hygiene, all-trendy, no culture and too quick to judge others.

Guilty Pleasure:
Dead authors.

Pet Peeves:
Douchebags who bring their representative on the first couple dates disguised as someone I'd actually like.

Celebrity Pass:
2pac. I'm serious. He was the realest ever!

See more of Arianna at
[Twitter.com/AriannaVarella](https://twitter.com/AriannaVarella)

COMING UP...
Models To Keep An Eye On CONT'D





ERICA GRISBY

Photography by Andrew Gates
Make-up & hair by Petra Levitt



Erica Grisby was born and raised in Salt Lake City, UT. Her beauty comes from her mix of being African-American and Welsh. She's into nursing and plans to become a nurse practitioner. Since her big move to Los Angeles, CA, Erica has been doing quite a bit of modeling for some major companies and plans to pursue it even further. She would like to travel the world and visit as many countries as possible before she turns 25 years old. One of her daily goals is to smile everyday and enjoy life in general. Erica seems to have some reasonable goals and we're sure she'll achieve them all. We here at RUKUS wish her the best.





THE STATS

Birthday:
July 21

Zodiac Sign:
Cancer

Measurements:
34C-33-25

Height:
5' 6"

Weight:
115 lb.

Ethnicity:
Half African-American
and half Welsh.

Hometown:
Salt Lake City, UT

Turn Ons:
Confidence.

Turn Offs:
Someone who
overstates and
underachieves.

Guilty Pleasure:
I am addicted to sugar.

Pet Peeves:
When I catch a guy
constantly checking
himself out in the
mirror.

Celebrity Pass:
Drake.

See more of Erica at
modelmayhem.com/erica2011

GAME ON

The Latest Games Reviewed

Get In and Drive

Written by Heather Spears

DRIVER: San Francisco is probably the farthest thing from any car game you have ever played. A fantastic story mode, 11 different online modes and the ability to overtake in a split-screen, co-op match, this game is sure to entertain. The player feels like they can really drive like the pros with sensational driving abilities like long drifts, sharp bends and fast boosts. Ubisoft's latest release will provide gamers with a unique gaming experience they won't find anywhere else!

John Tanner has spent his life putting criminals behind bars but has he met his match in **DRIVER's** next title? In **DRIVER: San Francisco**, main character John Tanner is forced take on a restive manhunt to eliminate his enemy, Charles Jericho. Jericho makes a gripping escape from a prison van and is on the loose to terrorize the city of San Francisco. Tanner and his partner chase down their rival, ending the pursuit in a brutal car accident that leaves Tanner in a daze. Even with life-threatening injuries, Tanner's mind is still focused on finding Jericho. He will go through whatever it takes to find San Francisco's greatest threat.

With that said, Tanner is left confused and a new way to play is introduced to the **DRIVER** series. As Tanner is recovering from the crash he realizes he has acquired a new skill that allows him to shift himself into any vehicles driving on the streets of San Francisco. Tanner's new ability to "shift" is unexpected and slightly corny, but sure is fun. Players would never guess that having the main character knowingly become someone else could be fun. Popping out of your car and shifting into another vehicle allows you to get to know the people of San Francisco on a personal level. This new ability brings more of a story line into the game play; not only do you follow the manhunt for national crime lord Jericho, but you also learn the troubles of a young boy trying to get his license, troubled teens who street race to try and raise money for their college fund as well as many other side stories. As irrational as having Tanner fly through the air to find a new body sounds, getting to know each character makes the game feel more personal.

Story mode will prove to be fun in many ways, but online multiplayer is one of the best ever played online. There are 11 different game types to choose from and as one levels up, they get to play more of these modes. The multiplayer is far from just racing, but players can race, play a mode similar to the game of tag, as well as see who performs the best jump, drift or overtake. It is easy to play and extremely enjoyable if you have a group of friends to play with. **DRIVER: San Francisco** has a game type for anyone to enjoy.

All in all, **DRIVER: San Francisco** is a great game to just have fun with. This is one of the few car games almost anyone could play. If you're looking for a more serious game you might want to steer clear of **DRIVER: San Francisco**, but if you just want to have fun, this is the game for you. Sit back relax and just drive.

Driver: San Francisco

PRODUCER: Ubisoft

PLATFORM: Xbox 360, PS3, Wii

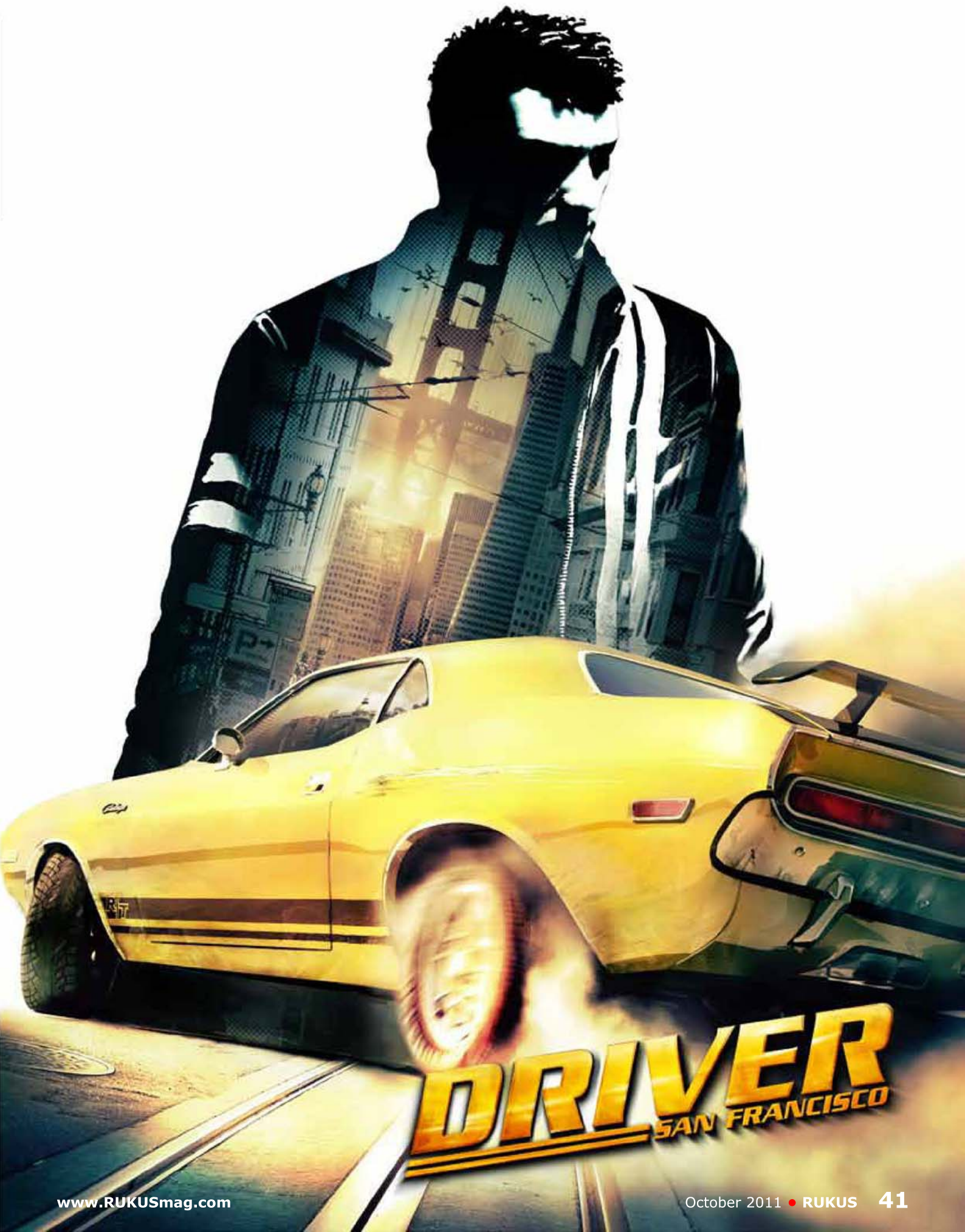
Website: <http://driver-thegame.ubi.com>

★★★★☆

RATINGS: Teen

GENRE: Action/Driving

RELEASE DATE: September 6, 2011



DRIVER

SAN FRANCISCO

GAME ON
The Game Reviews CONT'D



GOD OF WAR II

God Among Men

Written by Jesse Seilhan

Every generation, a videogame franchise emerges as the foundation for what a “good” game should be, spawning myriads of imitators and detractors, all owing their lives to this great series. In the ‘80s, Mario was king and the next decade saw the rise of sports games and RPG’s. This past decade, however, one franchise rose above the rest and is now synonymous with third person action/adventure with their creation *God of War*. The retelling of classic Greek stories combined with epic scenery, fluid combat and more style than Fashion Week has proven to be more than a success—its become a movement. The original two games launched on Playstation2, the third on PS3, but today we’re looking at two oft-forgotten entries into the series, namely the PSP titles *Chains of Olympus* and *Ghost of Sparta*. These two games never quite got the attention their bigger siblings did (mostly due to their portable console not being as popular as the home consoles), but Sony has decided to release those two in a single package for the PS3 dubbed *God of War: Origins Collection*.

The original two titles in this franchise were both given an HD upgrade and ported to PS3 with grand success, but those games were made a generation ago and show their age, even with a new coat of polish. These PSP games, however, were built for portability and travel, creating small chunks of furious combat to take with you on the bus or on a lunch break. Also, these games were already head-and-shoulders above their brethren when they came out and the up-res’ed graphics created for PS3 only made them look even better. There isn’t a single loading screen or a blemish in the graphics, nor do the audio or controls suffer from the move. In all, every effort was made to ensure smooth gameplay, which is the crux of this series. Mixing light and heavy attacks with grapples, magic and endless combos is exactly why you play *God of War* and all of that has been faithfully recreated. Aside from Kratos’ blades, players will be able to wield some giant stone fists, a spear and multiple spells that create screen-filling devastation.

The beauty of a package like this is the size and scope. Both games feature epic set pieces, designed by the Gods themselves, often twisting and turning the hero Kratos into the bowels of Hades before lifting him to the tops of Mount Olympus. Parts that should feel canned do not, even when forced to return to an area previously explored. When the camera changes perspective in a place you’ve already been, the game not only keeps it fresh by showing you something different, but often advances the story or subtly guides the player toward the next path. The level design and architecture is just as important in the story telling as the script and dialogue, something most games often forget.

The only frustration comes when a quick-time event has too short of an input window or the quick-succession shoulder button mashing doesn’t work for an unknown reason. Other than that, and the inability to switch between the two titles without quitting the game and starting over, there is little to grieve over. This two-tiered title is potentially the best value for your \$40, as was the first *God of War Collection*. Fans of this series may not even be aware of these two portable classics, but with new graphics, better controls and 3D support, there is no excuse for not playing the most influential franchise of its generation.

God of War: Origins Collection

PRODUCER: Sony

PLATFORM: PS3

Website: <http://GodOfWar.com>

★★★★★

RATINGS: Mature

GENRE: Action

RELEASE DATE: September 13, 2011



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