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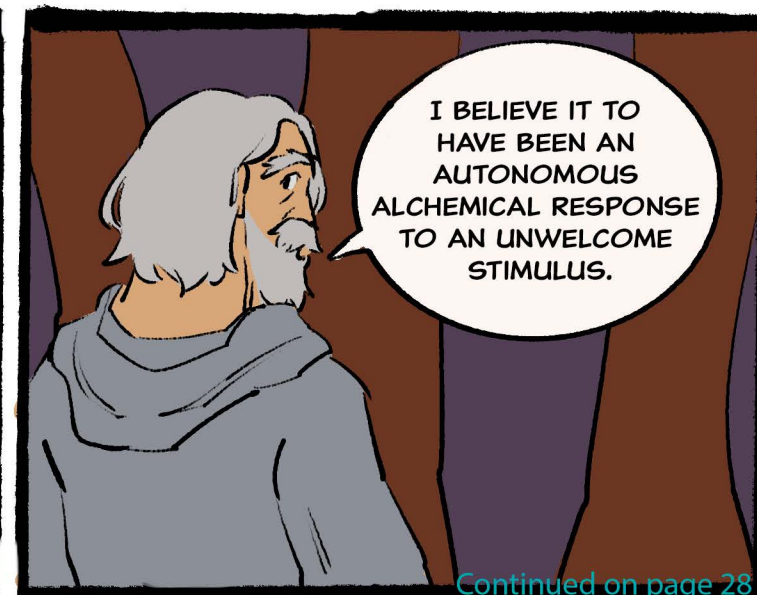
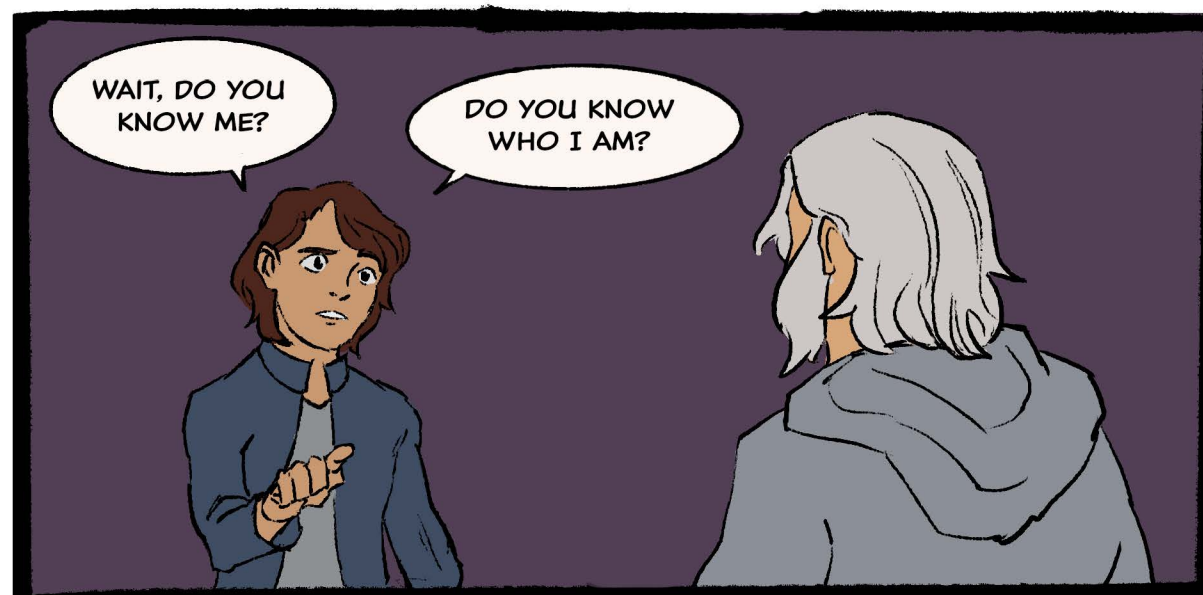
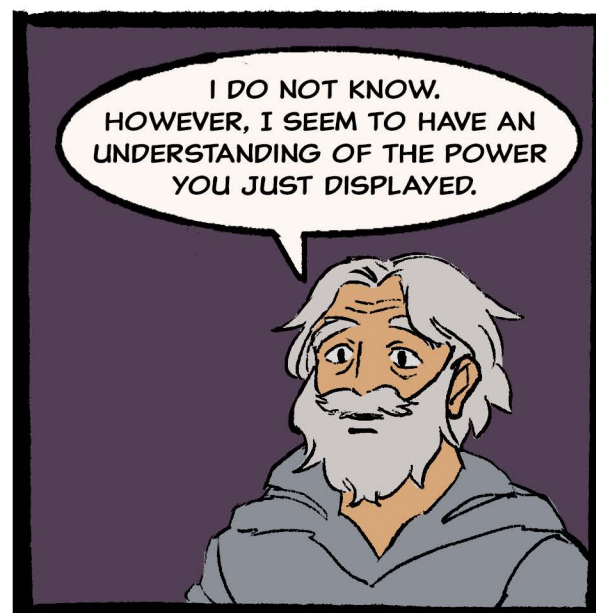
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GRIDLOCK Dance Seeks Truth and Accessibility in the Digital Age

by **Charlie Maybee**

photos courtesy of Bill Gorman

Accessibility in dance has been a growing topic in the last several years, especially in the wake of the 2020 Pandemic, and Madeline Maxine Gorman (also known as Max) is creating space for disabled people to find joy in dance. A queer, disabled, and neurodivergent dancer and choreographer herself, she and her company GRIDLOCK Dance seek out opportunities to illuminate on these and other aspects of identity and mental health using a collaborative, mixed media approach to movement.

The company sprang forth from Gorman's debut work ADDICT which explored how addicts are represented in American mass media and how it impacts their ability to recover. Using modern dance as the primary genre of expression, it demonstrated her early emphasis on collaboration with live string quartet, piano, and spoken word all onstage together in a lively mix of social commentary all of which persist in the company's guiding principles to this day.

"I think we make work in a collaborative way" says Max. "It's really important to me to pay my dancers which is a big part of what GRIDLOCK does in creating opportunities for people. And exploring some of those themes about how mass media affects our mental health, which grew out of loving to choreograph and make things."

From an inside perspective, (who has performed with the company's inception and now acts as Associate Artistic Director) confirms these characteristics of Gorman's process saying "Max comes in with a really strong vision of the piece as a whole. She knows where she wants it to go and usually has a couple of movement phases that we're going to use to get there. And from that point on, she really involves the dancers in the creative process. It's a lot of collaboration and variations."

Speaking on the company's most recent work, Veritas, which premiered as part of the 2023 Atlas INTERSECTIONS Festival, Boegel also says "we had a lot of discussions as a cast about what the message of our show was going to be". It's that simple wording of "our" demonstrates the culture of Max's approach and how community-oriented her creative process is. The fact that the dancers feel that level of ownership and autonomy over the piece's expressive output is critical.

But this latest piece also cultivates communal questions about truth and its tenuous relationship with mass media outlets, so having the work come from the ensemble says a lot about how Gorman is trying to keep her style of leadership



MegaGoneFree

Continues To Transform Toward Her Most Authentic Self



by Charlie Maybee

When it comes to rapper, singer, and songwriter, MegaGoneFree, there is no singular identity or category that truly captures her expansive personality or approach to music. The Baltimore native began carving out a unique space for herself in high school where she found a space to experiment with her artistry and creativity.

"I would say that I really started songwriting in high school" she says, "I joined this club called the FLOETIC LYRICISTS where students came and shared their creativity. There were rappers, spoken word artists, singers, and we would all come together and share things we wrote like an open mic kind of thing. It really opened me up to how helpful songwriting can be when it comes to mental health. And I've been songwriting ever since."

This social approach to songwriting and performance was formative in the development of the artistic personality that would come to be known as MegaGoneFree, and she hopes to continue carrying that energy with her saying, "I'm more on the outside of open mics now that I've moved to New York City but looking for more opportunities like that to get involved with."

Given that Mega is an artist who takes on a variety of genres, trying to nail down specific musical influences is

challenging because there are so many to choose from. "I would say that I'm more inspired by genres of music as a whole as opposed to individual artists" she admits, "but some of the people who stick out are Melanie Martinez for her lyricism as well as MARINA [Previously known as Marina and the Diamonds]." But even with these two examples, it's clear that the creation of a pop-diva alter ego through music was something that struck a chord and continues to resonate through Mega's music catalogue to date.

She spans an impressive amount of sonic territory in the span of only four singles released over the last few years. Her first single, "Broken Flowers", is a soulful slow jam that puts her vocal prowess front and center, while her latest, "Talking 'Bout Bri" takes on a theatrical, cabaret style songwriting. The workflow of these singles allows her the time, space, and energy to focus intently on delivering a more polished product.

"I feel like, right now, it makes more sense for me to release singles, one song at a time so that I can focus on more details and relaying the message what I want with one song more easily. I like telling stories, and for things to make sense in their continuous flow, so when I come out with a project, I want it to feel ready."

Breaking Boundaries and Creating Community with Women in Music D.C.

by **Emma Downes**

photos courtesy of Women in Music D.C.



Building a career as an artist, performer, or creator in any sense involves equal parts passion and talent, and access to resources and education — and disparities often abound when it comes to who has an easier time getting their foot in the door.

As a community, we are lucky to witness the leaders who step forward to bridge these gaps

and help create a truly equitable industry. Women in Music is a 501(c)3 non-profit and diverse community of artists and musicians living and working throughout the United States and around the globe. The organization expanded to support D.C.'s thriving music scene in 2015, and has since worked to educate, empower, and build a supportive community for the talented women across the DMV.

The D.C. branch's current Chapter Chair, Jesénia Jackson, is herself an accomplished composer, songwriter, & producer whose work has been featured at several national and international venues, including the New York International Film Festival. Her musical vision can be found everywhere from Off Broadway productions to indie films.

Other board members occupy careers across the music industry spectrum, from sync licensing to church choir direction. Their mission: to provide resources, contacts, and support to any woman involved in the music industry in any capacity.

"We have brand partnerships, we do sync licensing, and we cover women on the business side as well as the creative side," says Jackson. "We are partnering with a few groups to promote women's equality in music, and also a few venues where we can host a ton of networking events for women who are like me, but who don't necessarily understand all of the business work that goes into this industry. That is our main goal — to get women from every area of the industry and have them network and get to know every aspect as much as possible."

With such a broad scope of outreach and a deep-held understanding of the music scene, Women in Music D.C. embodies the sense of community that's needed in order for women to succeed — especially since the industry is traditionally male-dominated. And while D.C. and the wider DMV are home to a number of renowned venues and cultivate a rich musical history, there are not quite as many various opportunities in the practical sense as can be found in other major U.S. cities like N.Y.C. or L.A.

But rather than discouraging any effort for connection, Women in Music sees this apparent need as a calling to help creatives double down and make every chance to promote themselves count. Along with imbuing its members with networking and branding skills, Women in Music D.C. also serves as a direct provider of performance opportunities for these groundbreaking artists to showcase their work live in concert — a chance that had become valuable and hard to come by since the onset of Covid-19 in 2020.

"When I first joined the team as vice chair, it was still during the pandemic," recalls Jackson. "So we did a virtual concert and we had those who signed up [for the event] submit a video of



Music and Culture Are Intertwined, D.C. Colombian Band DeSanguashington Demonstrates

By Emma Page

all photos courtesy of DeSanguashington & SOROOOCHÉ

National Hispanic Heritage Month 2022 spans from September 15 to October 15, to “pay tribute to the generations of Hispanic Americans who have positively influenced and enriched our nation and society,” and this especially applies to the musicians in our own communities. It was during this time that Alchemical Records recently caught up with three members of the Colombian American band from D.C., De-

DeSanguashington (Day-San-gwa-sheen-ton): Danny Ramirez (accordion), Richard Benjumea (guitar), and Diego Castañeda (percussion). Read more to find out what their Hispanic heritage means to them, those who have influenced them most, and which obstacles they have had to overcome on their cultural and musical journey.

DeSanguashington combines traditional Colombian folk

music with more modern/popular genres like rock and pop. The band “has emerged as one of the premier world music bands in the Washington, D.C. area, recognized and beloved by the Latino community and those who enjoy international music.” Formed in 2014, DeSanguashington is on a steady uphill journey, as they have performed at some of the best venues and festivals in the DMV area, such as: The Howard Theatre, The D.C. International Colombian Festival, and The John F. Kennedy Center’s Millennium Stage, just to name a few.

A founding/lead member of DeSanguashington is Danny Ramirez, the band’s accordionist. In the band, Ramirez makes the

accordion his own. An “empiric musician,” Ramirez started learning to play music when he was in college studying industrial engineering. His engineering background allowed him to view art through a logical lens. “The mental structure that you get when you’re an engineer can relate to music,” he says. “Music is very precise; you need to have timing and you also need to be organized in order to come up with a melody that makes sense.” He began with guitar, but once he heard the accordion, he had to learn it. He was drawn to play this instrument because of its unordinary structure (only three keys) and how he could develop his ear differently than using the chromatic guitar. He describes how





The end result of most of the art I've produced appear to meet at the intersections of intention, resources, and a healthy accomodation for the inevitable unexpected. Issue #2 is no exception.

The phrase, "pardon our dust" comes to mind in regards to the backend work taking place to sharpen our production deadlines for the magazine. Simultaneously, the website is currently under a transmutation of its own with a new look, better organized, and with advanced tools soon to be revealed.

With all we hope to accomplish in the future, I'd first like to say how thankful I am for all Alchemical Records has accomplished together as a team, and for the recognition by the local community as the recipient of the 2023 Wammie Award for Music Media. We are humbled by everyone's support and shared enthusiasm for our incrdible creative community.

Daniel Warren Hill

p.s. Do you have a letter TO the editor?
Send your message to
connections@alchemicalrecords.com and
it may appear in a future issue.

P.S. Shout out to our advertisers **Amulet**
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and now for a brief lesson in alchemy

Words themselves exist as a kind of alchemical expression. While we might find some of the beliefs, ideas, or practices around alchemy to be antiquated or outdated, the truth is that our understanding and acceptance of science is similarly applied to language. In fact, as a culture, or humanity, evolves its acceptance for, and usage of a word it can fall out of use or perhaps change the way we associate with it entirely.

For example, The olde English word "cwic" implied that something was alive. Today, we would indicate someone was swift by our use of the word "quick." The chemical element mercury was at one time called "quicksilver" or "living silver" because of its properties and similar visual appearance to silver.

In present times, mercury can be found on the periodic table of elements with the symbol Hg, which refers to a romanized form of the word υδράργυρος (hydrargyros), or "water silver."

a CRYPTOGRAM is a way of encoding a message. This cryptogram substitutes one letter of the English alphabet for another letter. Last issue's cryptogram features lyrics from 2022 Wammie Award-winning song "After You're Gone" by Calista Garcia.

K jhwfp dlweepd yfhw okhpl nkxpj k lyeemp
Htp jhwfp jyfxj hw htp cwhhwn, cqh htp lyeemp ekllypj wf.

and the answer is...

A stone dropped into water makes a ripple
The stone sinks to the bottom, but the ripple carries on.