

ANIME • GAMING • COSPLAY • TECH | MARCH 2025 | ISSUE #4

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Otakus Asylum
MAGAZINE

ZEHAHAHAHA!

**The Will of D Cosplay
Brings Blackbeard to Life**



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

By Omar Owens, Founder & Editor-in-Chief

Every time we release a new issue of Otaku Asylum Magazine, I'm reminded just how far we've come. What started as a dream—an idea to carve out a space for otaku, gamers, wrestling fans, and creatives to feel seen and celebrated—has grown into something real, something powerful. And honestly? It's still kind of daunting... but we're chugging along.

This journey hasn't always been easy, but it's been worth every step. Each issue is a testament to the community we're building—one full of heart, hustle, and unapologetic passion. And now, more than ever, people are reaching out, ready to contribute, collaborate, and shape the future of this magazine. That alone keeps me going.

To our sponsors, thank you for believing in this vision. To our new readers, welcome to the Asylum—we're glad you're here. And to everyone who's supported me so far, whether by sharing a post, submitting content, showing up to an event, or just saying "keep going"... thank you. You've made this possible.

We've got so much in the works, and I can't wait to share it with you. The best is yet to come. Let's keep building.



Stay nerdy,

Omar Owens

Certified Geek, Bonafide Nerd, Editor-in-Chief of Otaku Asylum Magazine



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BLACK COMMUNITY AND OTAKU CULTURE: A GROWING CONNECTION BY STERLING JR.



The world of "otaku" culture, deeply rooted in Japanese anime, manga, and other aspects of pop culture, has seen a steady growth in global popularity over the last few decades. A particularly fascinating development within this movement is the increasing engagement of the Black community with otaku culture. Historically, anime was often seen as a niche interest, but now it has gained widespread appeal across various cultural groups, including Black audiences.

Many Black fans of anime have created a vibrant and thriving subculture, where anime isn't just a form of entertainment, but also an expression of identity. This connection stems from the shared experiences of representation and escapism. For many Black viewers, anime offers a space where they can explore complex characters, rich storytelling, and diverse worlds, often outside the confines of the stereotypes or lack of representation found in mainstream media. Characters like Samurai Champloo's Mugen, or the empowering roles of characters in series like Afro Samurai and Black Lagoon, have resonated deeply with Black audiences.



Additionally, anime culture has inspired Black creators to explore how Black identity fits into anime aesthetics and storytelling. This is reflected in fan art, cosplay, and even the development of new series that combine anime influences with the richness of Black culture. For instance, shows like Cannon Busters, created by LeSean Thomas, showcase Black characters and narratives within an anime-style universe, bridging cultural gaps and providing a voice to underrepresented communities.

The crossover between Black culture and otaku is not only seen in creative production but also within the fan community. The rise of anime conventions and online spaces where Black fans can connect, share experiences, and express their love for the medium is palpable. Social media platforms, like Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram, have allowed Black otaku to form communities where they discuss anime, showcase cosplay, and highlight issues of representation.

In summary, the relationship between the Black community and otaku culture is an evolving and dynamic one. It reflects the universal appeal of anime as a storytelling medium that transcends cultural boundaries while providing a space for fans to find connection, creativity, and representation. As the presence of Black fans in the anime space continues to grow, so too will the influence and impact of Black voices within the broader otaku community.



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Mia De'nay
@mia_denay

Mia De'Nay is a dynamic Memphis-based creative whose work blends fashion, fandom, and fierce originality. As a model, cosplayer, and creative director, she brings striking visual storytelling to her shoots—many of which are in partnership with the Memphis cosplay collective Code Bluff. Mia's cosplays reflect both her love of anime and her innovative eye, often reimagining characters with bold, high-fashion flair. Whether she's behind the camera directing or in front of it slaying a look, Mia is a rising force in the Southern cosplay scene.



Lawrence Sterling Gant

@lawrencewasthere

Lawrence Gant is a Memphis-based cosplayer known for his strong presence and stylish execution. With a creative eye and an effortless cool, Lawrence often brings powerful male characters to life—from comic books to anime—with a confident edge that makes his cosplay stand out. Whether solo or as part of a collaborative shoot, he's carving out space for Black nerds in cosplay while showing off Memphis flavor and flair in every look.

Samurai Stevie



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@samuraistevie_97

Samurai Stevie is a rising cosplayer who blends bold energy and deep fandom love into every look. As a Black female cosplayer, Stevie is making her mark with stunning transformations and confident expressions of anime and pop culture. On TikTok, she captivates audiences with dynamic transitions and cosplay showcases, while on Instagram, she highlights both her craft and her passion. Her love for samurai aesthetics and anime-inspired fashion gives her content a unique edge that stands out in the Southern cosplay community.

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A GUIDE TO RECOGNIZABLE PLAIN CLOTHES COSPLAY

Not every character you might want to cosplay wears a distinctive suit with a copyrighted emblem on their chest to identify them. In fact, some of them wear pretty much the same things we do every day. So how do you make your plainclothes characters recognizable? The **Phoenix Sisters** are here to help.

While playing or modeling a character in everyday attire may seem simplistic, the art lies in capturing the spirit of our beloved characters. Fear not, cosplayers, for we unveil the secrets to mastering recognizable plain clothes cosplay!

Strike the Pose

Much like the allstars they emulate, cosplayers can channel the essence of their characters through iconic poses.

Our most obvious examples are our Sailor Scouts. The girls from Sailor Moon spend as much time out of costume (if not more, truly) as they do suited up. But they have very specific signature poses.

Rei, AKA Sailor Mars, stops mid-strut for one of her main freeze-frames. Meanwhile, Minako, AKA Sailor Venus, points an accusing finger when she breaks the fourth wall. So, when we did pop punk outfits for these two, we made sure to hit those specific poses.

Accessorize with Intention

A well-chosen prop can really specify a character for the viewer, even if they don't have a go-to symbol. Take our Buffy the Vampire Slayer shoot, for instance. Faith's sentimental knife that she got from the mayor and Buffy's ever-trusty stake work as visual cues that instantly link us cosplayers to our "chosen" roles. (Pun intended.)

Props also add depth and authenticity to our portrayals. Using them doesn't just help you tell who we are. They allow us to pose in ways that show what these characters love to do. It's a great way to put the "play" in cosplay. You can also use background props, like Kelly did for her Jessica Jones photoshoot. A well-placed liquor bottle in the background reminds us that Jessica is struggling to cope. We put her background struggle in the background of the photo with that one, very intentional prop. Characters have a wide variety of objects associated with them, be it a weapon, a gadget for their job, a particular vice like cigarettes or booze (looking at you, Constantine cosplayers!), or equipment and gear of that character's hobbies. Pick one and carry it around with you in your costume. It helps more than you may have noticed, and makes it easier to tell a story in your photos. Deathnote photoshoot.

Quick Tip: To get small pigtails to stand up more (like Misa's), as opposed to trying to lay flat along your scalp, use multiple hair ties. Layering them on top of each other gathers the hair further away from their roots.





Replicate Distinctive Features

It can be the subtle details that make all the difference at times. By highlighting features synonymous with the actors who embodied those characters, like Sarah Michelle Gellar's distinctive (and adorable) nose, cosplayers can pay tribute to the classic portrayals that really embody the character for us.

Look at Crayle's makeup contour in her Buffy pictures, for example. Makeup can be a super useful tool in helping you look more like a specific actor or character, especially in the face. Then even the simplest facial expressions will look more like your chosen character's too.

Speaking of facial expressions, no matter who your character is or how they dress, we wholeheartedly recommend practicing the expressions they make in a mirror before you walk the con floor or visit the studio with your photographer. Muscle memory applies to facial expressions too, and practice makes perfect.

Play Up Unique Traits

Beyond their outfits and facial expressions that determine a character's style, cosplay characters are also defined by unique choices they make as people to keep up a certain aesthetic.

For example, Faith LeHane has a tattoo on her bicep, so Kelly always ensures to draw that on.

In the anime Deathnote, Misa Amane may wear different outfits across episodes, but her signature hairstyle remains the same, so Crayle made sure to style her hair in Misa's iconic pigtails when she did her Deathnote photoshoot.

Quick Tip: To get small pigtails to stand up more (like Misa's), as opposed to trying to lay flat along your scalp, use multiple hair ties. Layering them on top of each other gathers the hair further away from their roots.

The Power of Pairings

Putting your character alongside a more recognizable sidekick or partner can instantly raise their recognizability.

Karen Page dresses pretty plainly in business attire most days, but when you put her next to the Punisher or Daredevil, you can immediately know she's Karen. Crayle drafted her husband to do that in February 2024 during a downtown photoshoot.

Many side characters get the shaft in the wardrobe department. Fortunately for us B-listers fans, it's usually easy to find someone else who will cosplay the main character from your movie or comic to make you more recognizable when you're with them.

And if you can't find someone who already cosplays that character, just do what the Phoenix Sisters do: pressure someone into agreeing (politely, of course), and help them put the costume together.

Set the Scene

Context is king for plain clothes cosplay. By choosing the right setting, you can remind viewers of your character through their surroundings.

Cassandra and Eve from *The Librarians* each have a signature style for sure. Cassandra wears quirky color combinations and Eve keeps that government agent look long after she becomes a Guardian. But it's even clearer that they are from *The Librarian's* TV show when we stage these characters in front of a giant book case full of hardbacks and curios.

Setting the stage is even more important for Crayle's Karen Page, as her style can be almost plain. We make sure to always have notebooks on hand for her, and once even posed her right outside a newspaper office to remind our fans that Karen becomes a journalist.

If you're taking photos outdoors or in public, just grab a large bag and some set dressing with you. Merging the best props with the right settings really elevates your storytelling.



Creative Edits Are Always An Option

We're living in a digital age, and the ways to express creativity are limitless. You can "photoshop" a wide variety extra effects or text onto your cosplay images.

(We prefer Canva and Paint.net to products from Adobe. Both are free. We encourage you to try a couple different programs to find out which one fills your needs.)

For our *Librarians* photos, we framed a shot that included the magical news clippings book up front and center, but then added Cassandra's visualizations of "mathemagics" in post.

When Crayle dressed up as Sarah Connor, she later drafted a "Wanted" poster with text on it to bring you into the world Skynet wanted to bring about.

You don't have to be a graphic design pro either. Adding an appropriate bit of text or logo to a photo makes a plain clothes cosplay stand out more. There's even nothing stopping you from simply typing the character's name or catchphrase directly above them.

In the game of plain clothes cosplay, every detail matters. By incorporating these tips into your cosplay repertoire, you'll be sure to capture the essence of your characters so that other people can identify and enjoy them right away. But even if others don't recognize you, the point is that YOU are having fun. So don your everyday attire, embrace your inner hero (or villain), and cosplay anyone you want, even if you aren't sure if people will know your character right away.

Want More From the Phoenix Sisters?

You can follow Phoenix Sisters Entertainment on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. To get our exclusives, spicy content, and early access, join us at www.Patreon.com/PhoenixSisCosplay.

Tech Tips from the Community

Password Safety from HexDaddy

Hey reader, Hex here, let's talk about being safe out there. No, I'm not talking about condoms- although please practice safe sex - I'm talking about protecting yourself in this big scary digital world. Are you still using that same password you've had since you were in middle school across all your accounts? I get it, but it's wrong and "sexyb1sh1" is not a good password.

In today's digital world, your online accounts are more valuable than ever. If you are reusing that same password over and over, all it takes is for one site to have a data breach and then cybercriminals have access to your social media, your banking, your credit cards. Even if a site doesn't get compromised, it would take less than 1 second for a brute-force method attack to crack sexyb1sh1. Think about that, your password can be cracked in less than 1 second. On the other hand doing something as simple as making your password Th3S3xyB!sh1 makes it so that it would take centuries to crack that password.



 bitwarden



So now you're saying, ok cool well I'll just change my password to that on everything! Problem solved! No, problem not solved because you're still one data breach away from them having that new password and trust me, cybercriminals will try that password and email everywhere they can think of to try to get access to more information. You need secure, diverse passwords. Say it with me so I know you understand. "I. NEED. SECURE. DIVERSE. PASSWORDS." Yes that means every site has a different password, suck your teeth at someone else.

"But how am I supposed to keep up with all these passwords, Hex?!" Well, you're in luck because they make these things called password managers that will make up secure passwords for you and keep track of them. No, we aren't talking about Chrome's password manager, though even that's better than using the same password everywhere. There's a number of options out there, but if you're a cash-strapped nerd like me, you're not about to pay \$10 a month just for some damn passwords to be stored.

That's where **Bitwarden** comes in, it's a free password manager that offers features in line with all those premium options out there and it'll even do some things those others won't do. And if you're feeling really nasty, they do offer a premium plan that offers a 2 Factor Authenticator (don't worry I'll tell you all about what 2FA is another time) and other features for just \$10 a year. Yes, annually, not monthly.

Now nothing out there is perfect and even password managers **can be compromised** (looking at you LastPass), but there are ways to minimize that too. We'll talk about some of those ways in future issues. Hex, signing out.



THE WILL OF D

**EMBODYING BLACKBEARD &
THE ART OF METHOD ACTING IN COSPLAY**

COSPLAY IS MORE THAN JUST DRESSING UP—IT'S AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE, A PASSION THAT BLENDS PERFORMANCE WITH CREATIVITY. FOR THE WILL OF D COSPLAY, IT WAS THE ALLURE OF TRANSFORMATION AND SHARED JOY THAT DREW HIM IN.

Inspired by the magic of superhero movies and the ability to embody beloved characters, he found his calling in cosplay.

His cosplay journey began with a lighthearted moniker—originally considering “Double Stuf Cosplay”—but his deep love for One Piece and the growing recognition of his Blackbeard portrayal led to the evolution of his identity.

Thus, The Will of D Cosplay was born, a name rooted in the very lore of One Piece.

His first cosplay? Steven Universe at MomoCon 2016. Complete with the cheeseburger backpack, ukulele, and shield, it was a full-fledged dive into the craft. Now, years later, with a transformed look—covered in tattoos and a beard fit for a pirate—he has truly found his signature.

Becoming Blackbeard: The Method Behind the Madness

When asked why Marshall D. Teach (Blackbeard) became his go-to character, the answer was simple: it just felt right. Seeing a lack of Blackbeard cosplayers making a real impact, he saw an opportunity to bring the character to life like never before.

His preparation was intense. He binged all of One Piece in eight months, absorbed character breakdowns, watched videos, and spent hours perfecting Blackbeard’s iconic laugh. But his first big test came at MomoCon 2022—stepping into the crowd, nerves high, he let out Blackbeard’s laugh. The reaction? A mixture of joy and fear. That was the moment he knew he could truly embody the character.

The Power of Presence: Embodying a Character Beyond the Costume

It’s not just the look—it’s the energy. Whether it’s sea shanties, good company, or the occasional grog, he fully immerses himself in the pirate persona.





The most surreal moment? Being recognized at WasabiCon 2023 in Jacksonville, FL—a city he'd never been to—by fans who had seen him on TikTok. That was a game-changing realization of just how far his impact reached.

His presence alone turns heads, but it's when people hear his voice and see his mannerisms that they truly believe he is Blackbeard. Some even insist he should be in the live-action One Piece series.

Breaking Barriers as a Black Cosplayer

Being a Black cosplayer comes with its challenges, but he handles them with grace and a bit of snark. However, he's also witnessed positive change: more inclusivity, body positivity, and a rise in fellow Blackbeard cosplayers. Seeing this representation grow fills him with pride.

His advice to fellow cosplayers of color? He quotes Blackbeard himself:

"They can laugh at us all they want. Because when you aim high, you often come across fights that just aren't worth fighting."

A Future on the High Seas

What's next for The Will of D Cosplay? He laughs, a hearty and familiar "ZEHAHAHAHA!", before sharing his excitement for the road ahead.

"I'm definitely excited for MomoCon this year. My fiancée helped me budget, so even with our wedding coming up in November, I get to go!" he grins. Yes, the legendary Blackbeard is also planning a wedding, proving even pirates have a soft side.

Beyond conventions, he's expanding his creative reach. "I'm writing a book—The Fractured Isles. It's a dark fantasy story about a man who wakes up over 500 years in the future after being freed from a void-like pocket dimension."

And, of course, the cosplay never stops. "I'd love to take on Joker—he's got such a range. Lobo from DC Comics would be insane to pull off, that space biker energy is right up my alley. In One Piece, I'd love to cosplay Franky, Lucky Roux, or Blueno. So many great characters to step into!" As for the ultimate dream cosplay? "The Designer from DC Comics. The fit is just too clean," he smirks.

Whether it's commanding the seas as Blackbeard, stepping into new roles, or writing his own stories, The Will of D Cosplay is nowhere near done. His journey continues, fueled by passion, community, and a whole lot of **ZEHAHAHAHAHA!**



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Makkar;
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MEMPHIS WRESTLING'S ROOKIE OF THE YEAR IS READY TO TAKE OVER



Stepping into the wrestling ring is a daunting challenge, but for Makkari Kandy, it was a calling. Named Memphis Wrestling's Rookie of the Year, she's proving that dedication, passion, and a love for both wrestling and pop culture can lead to a promising career. We sat down with Kandy to talk about her journey, inspirations, and what's next for the rising star. Makkari's path to professional wrestling wasn't immediate. She first trained at the WrestleCenter on November 20, 2023, but it took time before she took that leap. Coming in as a fan, she sought advice from established wrestlers like K Toomer and Gio Savage before deciding to join. A seminar, where she had zero experience, set the foundation for her career.

"The way I felt after the seminar and watching everyone wrestle made me want to take the next steps into becoming a pro wrestler," she recalls.

Her motivations to pursue wrestling came from two unique places: the monotony of her "shoot" job and the inspiration of Power Rangers. Sitting behind a computer all day made her realize she wanted more. "I only get one chance at living; better to find out now than grow old and wonder 'what if?'" she explains. Power Rangers instilled in her a belief that she could achieve anything with hard work, and wrestling became the closest thing to living her childhood dream.

"It's silly, I know," she admits. "But growing up watching wrestling and Power Rangers, I always thought both were cool. The most attainable of the two was pro wrestling. Power Rangers inspired me to never give up and to believe I can do anything I set my mind to, as long as I put in the work."

Her wrestling idols include Melina, Rikishi, Naomi, and AJ Lee. She's taken inspiration from each, integrating their styles into her own. "My finisher, Kandy Krush, is inspired by Melina's Snapmare Driver," she says. "They've all influenced me to become everything that makes a pro wrestler."

Earning Rookie of the Year

Being named Memphis Wrestling's Rookie of the Year was a surprise for Kandy. "I didn't think I would win it. I thought it was going to be crowd favorite CJ Blaine," she admits. "It's truly an honor that the fans voted for me." Her rapid rise came with challenges. After just a few months of training, she debuted in March 2023, much earlier than expected.

"I didn't think I was ready," she says. "But I told myself that if I didn't try, I wouldn't know what I was capable of." Learning while actively competing was difficult, but with advice to be patient with herself, she found her rhythm.

"The hard part was learning while wrestling on the show. Part of me felt like I had to rush and learn while everyone else could learn at their own pace. But I was told that I don't have to rush and to have patience with myself. That helped me slow down a bit."

One of her standout moments so far was working with wrestling legend Tugboat, also known as Shockmaster. "That was the first time I got to work with a wrestling legend," she says. "That moment hasn't been topped yet."



Training, Style, and Character

Kandy trains twice a week, supplementing with gym workouts and match studies. "A typical training day includes workouts, rolls and bumps, drills, and then matches," she details. While she's open to learning all styles, her focus is on blending technical wrestling with a brawler's intensity. "I am by no means a master of anything yet!" she laughs. "But my goal is to achieve a mastering level of technical wrestling. I'm open to learning all styles, but my main focus is a mix of technical and brawler."

Balancing in-ring performance with character work is a conscious effort. "I have to think, 'What would Makkari do?' How does she come out to the audience? Before the match starts, what is she doing? What does she do between moves to establish her character?" she explains. "I balance it out by wrestling, then adding my flair to it."

Kandy describes her wrestling persona as a mix of Bubbles from Powerpuff Girls, Harley Quinn, and a hint of AJ Lee, combined with her real personality. "Makkari Kandy is bubbly and sweet like her name, always smiling, but tough when she needs to be," she explains. "Although I take inspiration from other characters, me and Makkari aren't much different. Even my fellow trainees can't tell the difference sometimes!"

Beyond the Ring: A Gamer and Cosplayer at Heart

Outside of wrestling, Kandy is a lifelong gamer and cosplayer. "Gaming is my escape," she says. "I've been playing my whole life."

Cosplay is another passion, though she wishes she had more time for it. "I wish I could do it more often, but if I can go to a convention once or twice a year, I'll be content."

She also streams on Twitch under the name Makkari Kandy, where fans can connect with her. She makes an effort to engage with her audience both online and in person. "I try to connect on Discord because of my Twitch streaming. I'll reply to most comments too. If it's in person, I try to speak to fans if I come out during intermissions or after shows!"

Goals and Dream Matches

Looking ahead, Kandy's goal is to have great matches and expand her reach to a national audience. "I'm my own biggest critic," she says. "I always feel like I could do more—not just moves, but how I sell, how I interact with the audience."

Beyond wrestling, she hopes to travel more, with dream destinations including Japan, England, South Korea, and Norway. As for dream matches, Naomi tops her list. "I think it'd be a fun match!" she exclaims. "If it was a guy, for some reason, I want to face The Miz. I have no explanation why—I just want to!" she laughs.

Advice for Aspiring Wrestlers

For those looking to break into the industry, Kandy keeps it real. "This career path is not for everyone. You will literally put your blood, sweat, and tears into this," she warns. "Pro wrestling takes a toll on the body, and despite what people say about wrestling, it is dangerous. You can get hurt or injured."

But for those who are truly passionate, she has strong advice. "You have to invest time and money. Learn the basics and study because learning never stops. Invest in yourself mentally and physically. Always ask questions and listen. Be patient with yourself because it's not going to click overnight."

With just over a year under her belt, Makkari Kandy has already made a name for herself in Memphis Wrestling. As she continues to grow, refine her skills, and expand her audience, one thing is certain: she's here to stay, and the wrestling world should take notice.





MC
DAVIS



THE RISE OF A CHAMPION IN THE MID-SOUTH WRESTLING SCENE



Memphis has long been a battleground for wrestling's toughest competitors, and one name that continues to carve its legacy into the scene is MJ Davis. As the current Bluff City Wrestling Champion and one half of 901 Wrestling's Tag Team Champions, Davis is proving why he's one of the best in the Mid-South. From high-flying inspirations to dominant performances in the ring, Davis is a force to be reckoned with.

The Beginning of a Dream

For Davis, the love of wrestling started young—age four, to be exact. Watching Jeff Hardy and Rey Mysterio soar through the air ignited something within him. "I saw them doing those high-flying moves, and I said, 'One day, imma be able to do that,'" Davis recalls. A pivotal moment came when he attended a Monday Night Raw event and met a local wrestler, who pointed him toward training. From that moment on, Davis was locked in. His career had begun.

The Road to Bluff City & 901 Wrestling

Davis's journey in Memphis wrestling has been one of determination and resilience. He originally entered Bluff City Wrestling as part of a tag team during its early days. However, he took time away to explore other promotions across the country, honing his craft and proving his worth. When he returned, it wasn't just to compete—it was to claim the Bluff City Heavyweight Championship, a title he now proudly holds.

His path to 901 Wrestling was paved by Dustin Anthony, who saw Davis's potential at an event in Middleton. From there, Davis solidified himself as a staple in 901 Wrestling, capturing the 901 Tag Team Championships and establishing himself as one of the top stars in the promotion.

Continued on Next Page

The Birth of the Top Shottaz

Tag team wrestling requires chemistry, and for MJ Davis and Don Montana, that chemistry came naturally. "We've always been cool since we met," Davis says. Their decision to team up wasn't just about friendship—it was about domination. Together, they formed Top Shottaz, a team that has won gold across multiple promotions and become one of the most dominant duos in the Mid-South.

The Mentality of a Champion

Holding the Bluff City Wrestling Championship isn't just about the belt—it's about the validation of years of hard work. "Being Bluff City Champion means everything to me because it showcases that I'm the best wrestler in all the Mid-South, without a shadow of a doubt," Davis says confidently.

His in-ring style reflects this mindset. A blend of power and athleticism, Davis is a bruiser who can also take to the air when necessary. "There's a lot that y'all have yet to see," he teases, encouraging fans to stay tuned for what's next. When it comes to preparation, Davis keeps his approach simple yet effective: dominate and showcase why he's the best. That mentality fuels him in every match.



Challenges and Milestones

Despite his success, Davis recognizes the weight of Memphis's legendary wrestling history. "The biggest challenge is trying to live up to the history of this city," he admits. Memphis is home to some of the most iconic names in the business, and Davis is determined to carry that legacy forward.

One of his proudest moments came when he squared off against Mr. Anderson (Mr. Kennedy) at Hub City Wrestling. "That's my most memorable match so far," he says. But Davis isn't stopping there—he has his eyes on a dream match with Keith Lee, believing their blend of strength and agility would create something special in the ring.

The Future of Memphis Wrestling

Memphis wrestling stands out because it's about more than just moves—it's about character, storytelling, and crowd interaction. Davis believes the local scene is evolving but still has room for growth. "It has the potential to be better if a lot of factors get fixed," he notes.

As for his own future, MJ Davis is far from done. His goal this year? Expand his reach and wrestle in at least five new states. With his drive, skill, and championship pedigree, there's no doubt that wherever he goes, he'll continue to prove why he's one of the best in the game.

Follow MJ Davis's journey and witness the reign of a true Mid-South powerhouse.



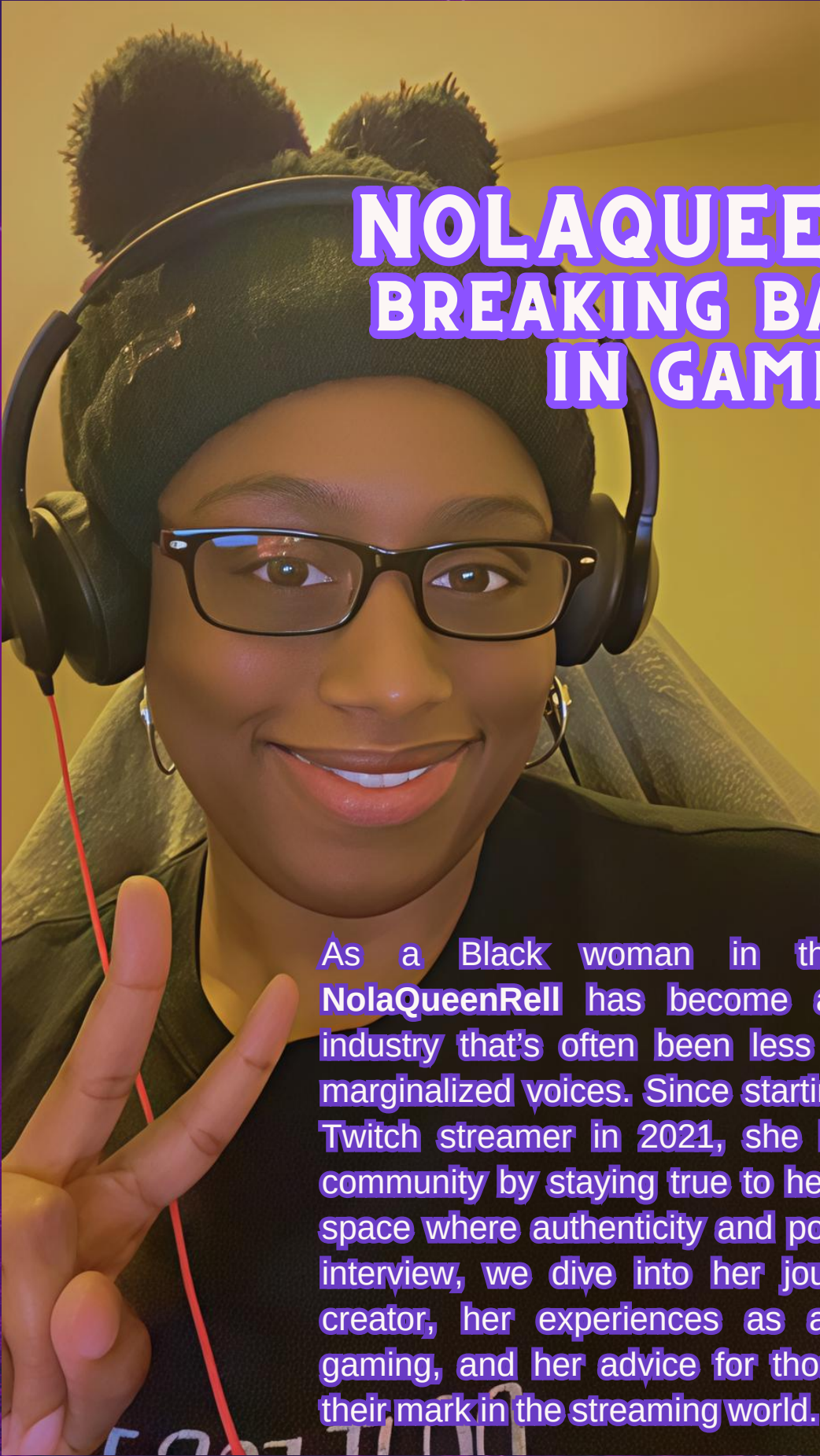
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A portrait of NolaQueenRell, a Black woman with her hair in two large, fluffy buns, wearing black-rimmed glasses and large black headphones. She is smiling and making a peace sign with her right hand. The background is a warm, yellowish-gold color.

NOLAQUEENRELL BREAKING BARRIERS IN GAMING

As a Black woman in the gaming world, **NolaQueenRell** has become a trailblazer in an industry that's often been less than welcoming to marginalized voices. Since starting her journey as a Twitch streamer in 2021, she has built a thriving community by staying true to herself and creating a space where authenticity and positivity reign. In this interview, we dive into her journey as a content creator, her experiences as a Black woman in gaming, and her advice for those looking to make their mark in the streaming world.

A Journey of Growth and Connection

When NolaQueenRell first picked up the controller in 2021, she didn't expect her hobby to transform into something so meaningful. "What started as a hobby quickly turned into something deeper," she shares. "It's been an amazing journey of growth and connection with my community." Her streaming style reflects the vibrant energy of her New Orleans roots, where she has created an inclusive environment that feels like a second home to her viewers.

Reaching Twitch Affiliate status was a major milestone for Rell, one that she credits to the unwavering support of her community. "The support from my community was unreal," she recalls. "It made me realize how amazing the people I've connected with are, and how much I want to keep growing and creating with them."

A Streamer with a Diverse Playstyle

NolaQueenRell's streams are a blend of fun, suspense, and community interaction. Her current favorite game to stream? Dead by Daylight. "It keeps things exciting with all the suspense and thrill," she explains. "And the community vibes are always on point." But her game choices aren't just about what's trending—they're about what fits her vibe at the moment. "I like to play games my community enjoys. I'll even run a poll sometimes to get everyone's input!"

Staying fresh and entertaining isn't just about playing the latest games. Rell keeps things lively by staying authentic and connecting with her viewers as if they're hanging out in person. "It's all about being authentic, enjoying the moment, and connecting with my community," she says.

Building a Community and Collaborating with Like-Minded Creators

Being part of communities like the Twitch Black Guild and Black Girl Gamer Code has been pivotal to NolaQueenRell's growth. These spaces have provided support, collaboration opportunities, and a sense of belonging. "They've helped me grow not just as a creator, but as a person," she says. Her collaborations with groups like Big Creatxr, Bunnii Gang, and HackWork have also played a significant role in shaping her brand and fostering valuable connections.

When it comes to building a loyal community, Nola emphasizes the importance of being genuine and creating an inclusive space. "Just have fun, be yourself, and build a space where everyone feels welcome," she advises. "Let things happen naturally, and don't rush the process."

The Challenges of Being a Black Woman in Gaming

As a Black woman in a predominantly white industry, Rell has faced challenges like racism and misconceptions. But rather than letting negativity affect her, she focuses on her purpose and the positive impact she's making. "You need thick skin to navigate negativity," she says. "But I stay focused on my purpose and don't let it get to me because Black women are here to stay, and we're building something powerful."

Being authentic and true to herself has helped Rell create a supportive community. "When you're authentic, people connect with that," she explains. "It's about the people who do vibe with you." She believes that representation matters in gaming and hopes her presence in the space can inspire others. "If even one person looks up to me and feels empowered to pursue their passions, that's what truly matters," she says.

Continued on Next Page



*“Black women in gaming
are here to stay, and we’re
building something powerful.”*

- NOLAQUEENRELL

Advocating for Greater Representation and Support

One of the most important things Nola believes the gaming community needs is more visibility and support for Black women. “Black women in gaming need more recognition, mentorship, and celebration of their work,” she states. “The industry should offer more opportunities for leadership and content creation.” For Rell, fostering inclusivity is key. “The gaming community can work toward being more inclusive by amplifying Black women’s voices and creating safe spaces where they can thrive without fear of discrimination.”

Her commitment to representing her culture and identity is integral to her content. “It’s important for me to show up authentically and create space for others who share similar experiences,” Rell says. “Whether it’s through music, discussions, or the way I engage with my community, I strive to create a space that’s inclusive and representative of who I am.”

Balancing Entrepreneurship and Streaming

In addition to her work as a content creator, Nola is also an entrepreneur. While she balances streaming with her 9-5 job, she’s excited about future ventures, including a merch line. “Finding balance is key,” she shares. “I focus on content creation when I can while ensuring I don’t burn myself out.” Her partnerships with brands like Glytch Energy and Zenni Gaming reflect her values of sustainability and accessibility, ensuring her collaborations align with her mission to maintain integrity and authenticity.

Looking Ahead: Growth and Future Plans

Looking to the future, NolaQueenRell is excited to continue growing her platform. “I see my streaming career continuing to grow, with the goal of getting partnered and expanding into vlogging,” she reveals. She’s also working on expanding her business ventures and collaborations, though she’s keeping some details under wraps. One thing is for sure—her merch line is coming soon, and it’s sure to be something her fans will love.

Advice for Aspiring Content Creators

For aspiring content creators, Rell’s advice is clear: “Stay authentic and true to yourself. Don’t try to be someone you’re not.” She emphasizes the importance of creating an inclusive space where everyone feels valued and the importance of consistency. “Lead with positivity and kindness,” she says. “But also remember to take care of yourself and avoid burnout. Keep building genuine connections, and the rest will follow.”

Content Creators

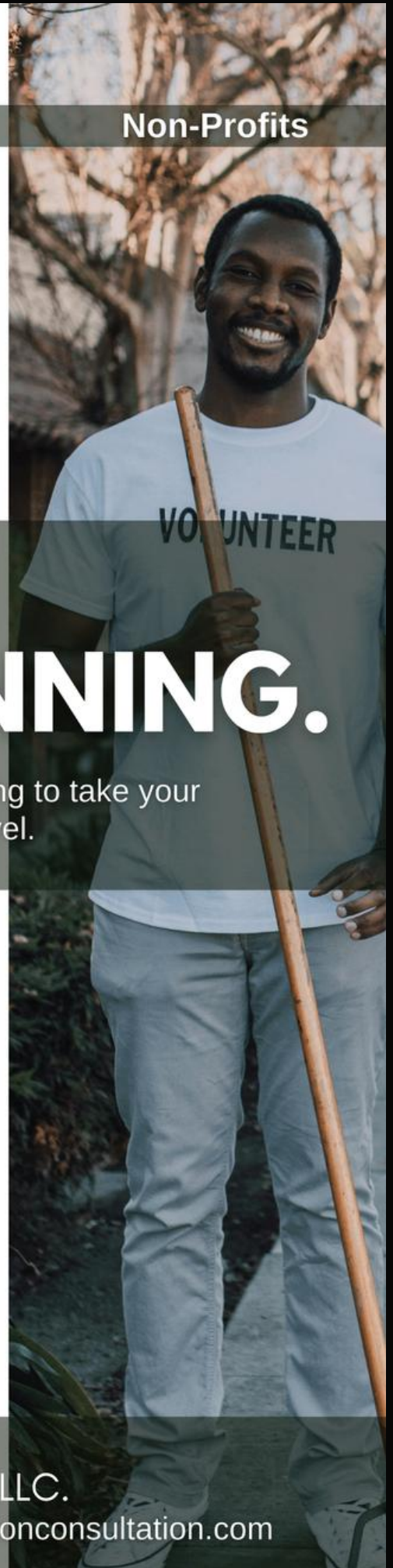
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PRO_KESADIA

When you talk about content creators who mix energy, insight, and authenticity, few names shine brighter than Pro_Kesadia. A veteran Twitch Partner, event host, esports commentator, and game developer, Kesadia is a personality who has been lighting up timelines and streams with passionate gaming takes and electric charisma since his start in 2014.



From Smite to Variety: The Evolution of a Gamer

"I remember seeing Smite in a video on YouTube," he recalls. "I love mythology, and it hit in two spots for me, so I gave it a shot." Before Smite, Kesadia tried League of Legends—but like many, bounced off the game due to its notorious toxicity. It was a college friend streaming Smite on Twitch who drew him in. Over time, however, he transitioned from MOBAs to variety content. "When I was only playing Smite, I felt I was leaving behind what made me a gamer in the first place."

A JRPG Love Story

Kesadia's passion for Japanese RPGs runs deep. "JRPGs have always been at the core of my being," he says. His mom gifted him a PlayStation 1 and a coworker donated a box of games—among them, Final Fantasy VIII, Breath of Fire IV, Megaman X4, Wild Arms 2, and Ape Escape. That bundle defined his childhood and cemented his love for rich stories and memorable characters.

"People who skip this genre miss out on incredible stories, layered characters, and the emotional messages these games deliver—though yeah, they can start slow."

Charisma Isn't Imitated—It's Created

Pro_Kesadia is known for his electric presence online, but when asked about how others can develop that confidence, he keeps it real: "It's okay to fail. Try different things, but don't be a copycat. You have to make your content fun for you—not just the viewer."

Building a Community with Intention

Behind the charisma is a thoughtful strategy for community-building. "Talk to your community on and off stream when you can. Set up community days. Ask what games they like and engage with that," he says. "Just remember—your life is the priority first."

Wearing Many Hats, Balancing Many Roles

In addition to streaming, Kesadia has worked as an actor, esports commentator, and partnered content creator for Ubisoft and Capcom. "Honestly, I don't think I've found the perfect balance," he admits. "Sometimes I have to make sacrifices or take time off. It's not easy."

Acting training, especially in improv, has played a huge role in his streaming style. "Acting is something I've wanted to do since I was young, and I use those skills every single day."

Representation Matters—On Screen and Behind the Mic

As a proud member of the Twitch Black Unity Guild, Kesadia highlights the power of uplifting communities. "Every person in Unity Guild is working toward the same goals. We collaborate and support each other genuinely—no favorites, just real connections."



He also weaves activism into his platform. "My stream is more than just gaming—it's a space to elevate Black voices." He recently showcased Tales of Kenzera: ZAU, a game rooted in grief and cultural storytelling. "I was excited to educate my community on its message and the story behind its development."

On Trends and Memorable Moments

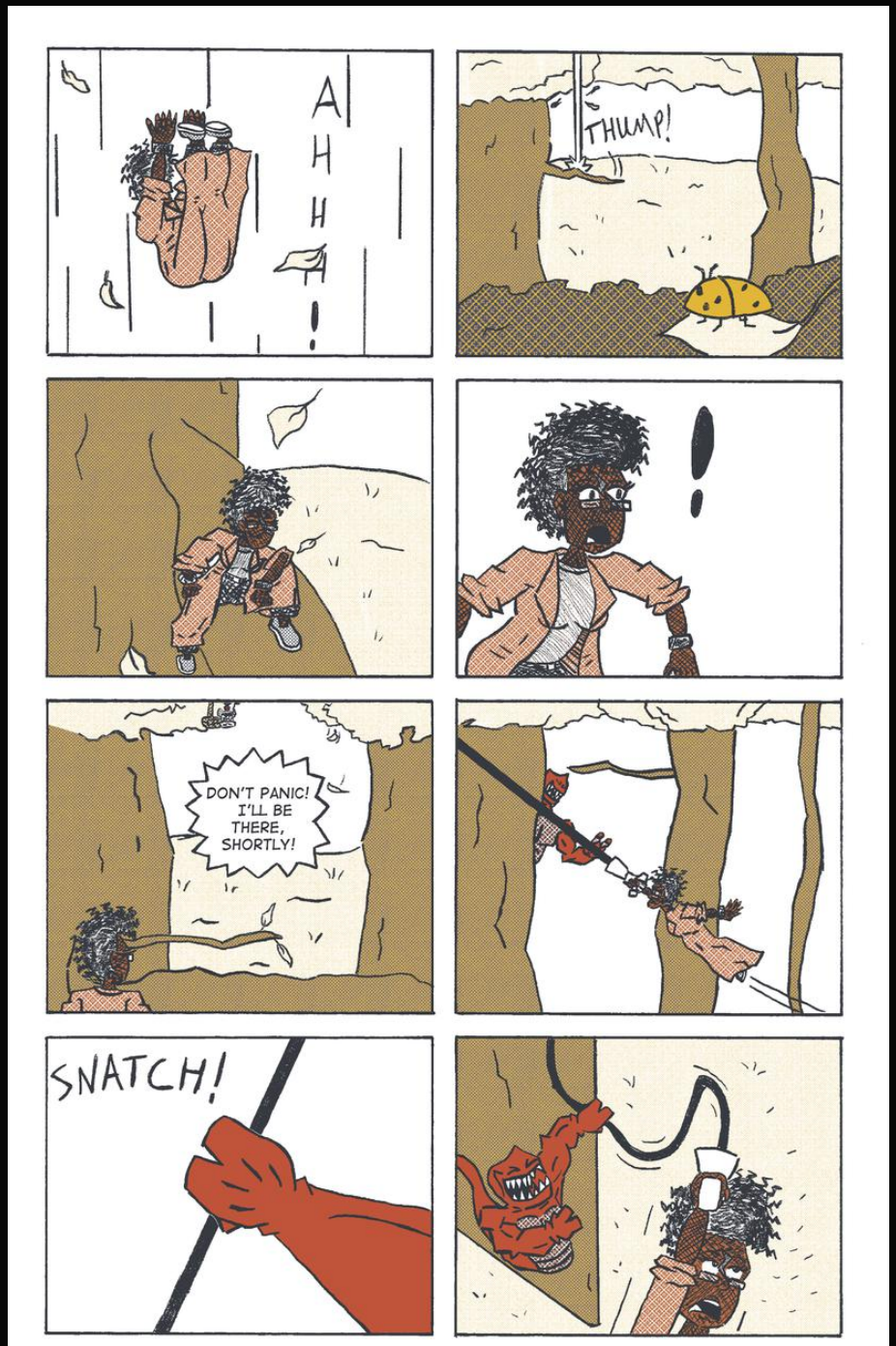
Kesadia is excited by trends like cross-play and increased inclusivity. "Cross-play helps us connect and meet more people—it's beautiful."

One of his favorite moments? TwitchCon 2018. "I got a timeslot at the Alienware booth after a shot-in-the-dark email. I brought up three other creators with me to stream Fortnite and we had a blast. That was the moment I felt like an established streamer."

Words for the Aspiring Creator

For those just starting out, he offers simple but powerful advice: "Don't be afraid to fail. You won't get it right the first time—and if you do, you're a prodigy!" He adds, "Find content you love making, not just what the big names are doing. If you're having fun, you'll have longevity."

ARTIST FEATURE



Devin Hodges is the founder of DIAST Cartoons, established in 2016 as a platform to showcase his animations and comic strips. The name "DIAST" stands for "Devin's Improving Art Studio." Devin's artistic journey began in childhood, creating paper dolls of his favorite cartoon and video game characters when no official action figures were available. At 11 years old, he took a week-long summer class on filmmaking with a focus on stop-motion animation, which inspired him to pursue a career in art and animation. Currently, DIAST Cartoons features two original comic series: the all-ages comedy "The Common Days of Cade" and the mystery adventure "Detective Konnie." Devin enjoys skating, swimming, playing video games, and reading. His artistic influences include Marco Albiero, Tadashi Yamashiita, Bob Boyle, and Larry Schwarz.