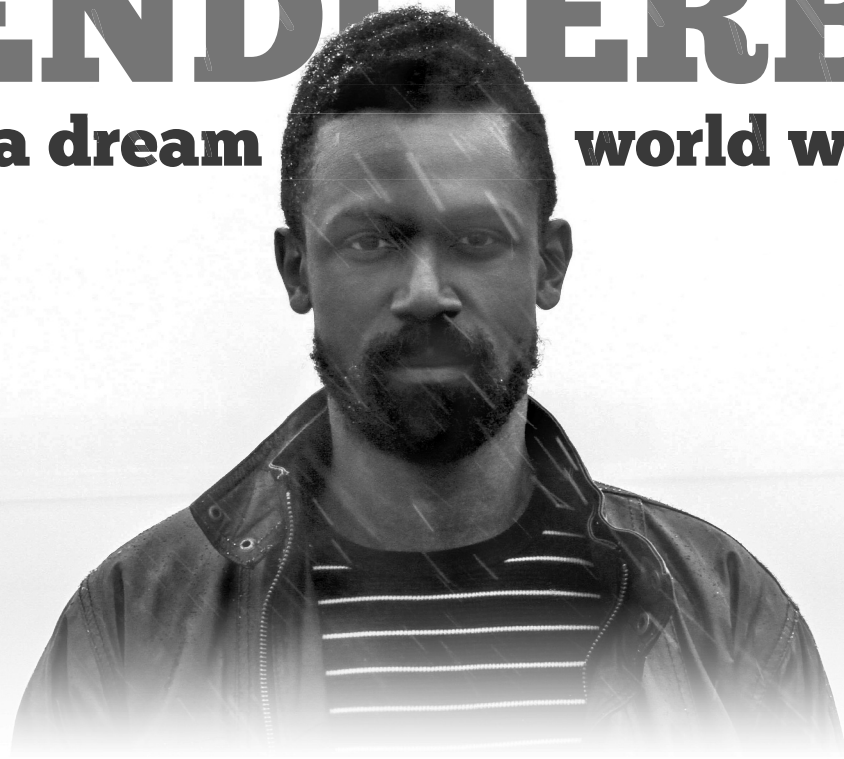


FRIENDLIER BEAR

Creating a dream world worth exploring



Philip Payne sharpened his teeth playing in orchestral and jazz groups in his hometown of Philadelphia, and he has continued his musical journey in Harrisburg as FriendlierBear.

His debut EP, *Arise, Jack Russell!*, was released in November. For the analog folks out there, he plans to release a physical copy in a few months. But first, he explains, he wants to see what the online response and the response in the community is going to be.

It was two years ago that Payne moved to Harrisburg to attend ministry school at Youth With A Mission. During his time there, he had the opportunity to work in some of the poorest areas of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Orissa, India.

He also met his wife at YWAM – at which point, he muses, “Life kind of started over.”

Reflecting on the move and the places he’s lived, Payne appreciates the contrast that he’s experienced.

“I lived in different parts of the city – South Philly, West Philly – my whole life,” he says. “And then when I moved to Central PA – the environment, the landscape – I really dug it. I think it’s a cool retreat from all the noisiness of the city. I sort of got the best of both worlds.”

Payne began recording the songs for *Arise, Jack Russell!* a year ago in the living room of his home in Mechanicsburg. He wrote and performed all the music, sourcing percussive sounds from household objects and incorporating orchestral instruments into the production.

“I started with a lot of acoustic sounds,” Payne says. “So all of the percussion is really just me tapping on a pot or a pan or using handclaps and luggage. I don’t use any real drums.”

Having studied clarinet, saxophone and piano in school, Payne was

inclined to teach himself a little guitar for the project.

And he describes the process of creating the music as “just having an idea and then trying to see it through.”

“I would record some phrases on guitar and then add and manipulate them to create this almost foreign sound,” he says. “I used a lot of orchestral instruments. Used some bells.”

For Payne, the FriendlierBear concept was born out of serendipity and meaning, similar to the method by which he wrote the songs for the album. If the names he drops – like “Jack Russell” and “Gorecky” – immediately send you on a Google-powered scavenger hunt, don’t feel bad.

“I pull off random ideas and try to make songs out of them,” Payne explains. “I didn’t want to polish the titles. I wanted to leave them as raw and random as my brain is.”

As for the concept behind Payne’s pseudonym, he says, “Bears are unpredictable. They’re from the wild, from the forest, and I’m afraid of them. But in the dream world, bears can be friendly.”

It’s the perception of the dream world that Payne is interested in exploring on *Arise, Jack Russell!*

“I really wanted to convey that there is a reality in dreams that I think is super empowering,” he says. “And it’s something that I’ve come in contact with.”

The music and lyrics on the EP illustrate moments of taking flight and soaring. For Payne, FriendlierBear allows him to imagine an elevated existence in a very real way.

“The reason why I’m fascinated with flight is because I feel that flying signifies untapped, unlimited possibility,” he says. “And I feel like it’s important for us as communities – as well as moms, dads, construction workers or presidents – to understand that there is a very real aspect of the human experience; that you really can do anything.”

Of course, flying doesn’t always go as planned. Payne shared the influences on his musical journey from childhood to adulthood, taking in the classical world and the jazz world at the same time.

“I like those moments in classical where it’s just so big,” he says. “Those moments in jazz when it’s just so complex. As a kid, I developed a taste for it in soundtracks. I was really attracted to bands like Sigur Rós and composers like Brian Lock.”

“I experimented a lot when I was a teenager and made a lot of hip-hop beats. So I made these really terrible hip-hop mix tapes. I was doing electronic beat making. It was so bad,” he laughs. “But it was part of my journey to the FriendlierBear. This sound is kind of an amalgamation of all those things.”

Payne says he feels privileged to have a list of creative friends who helped FriendlierBear come to fruition. He and C.J. Stimple mixed the album, and Joe Bunting mastered it. Talain Rayne shot the photography for the promo and album artwork, and A.C. Golden, whom Payne met while bussing tables at Olive Garden, directed and produced the music

videos for the singles “Arise, Jack Russell!” and “Oh, Great Gorecky.”

“He was really ambitious,” Payne says of Golden. “And a year later, he moved to Amsterdam and he was like, ‘I’m doing videos now. Check me out.’ So I ran some concepts by him, and he just took off with them. The turnaround was amazing.”

Payne’s motivation to keep moving forward with his music is strong and is reinforced by the opportunities that have come his way, including getting featured on the popular free music website Noisetrade, working on a licensing opportunity with Music Bed and putting on a live show in March of 2015 in cooperation with Grizzly Prints – a new clothing and design company in Orwigsburg.

But one of Payne’s biggest goals with his music is to pursue making soundtracks. He’s currently working on a film project with Harrisburg’s Covert Film.

“I really want to create an experience for indie artists and independent filmmakers and playwrights that are doing creative things,” he says.

The ethereal dreamscapes and sounds that elevate the senses on *Arise, Jack Russell!* exemplify Payne’s talent for pairing sound with the human experience.

“There are these subtle experiences we all have that you can’t explain,” Payne says. “I just wanted to touch on the greater human experience. These values; these themes of love being the greatest human experience. It’s almost like gravity. It’s always there.”