

One-On-One With Style Guru **MARV NEAL**



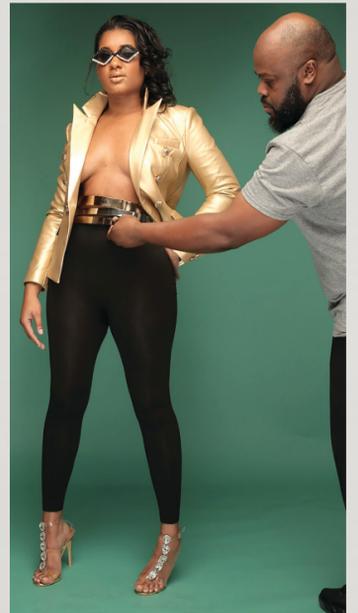
By Jordan Woods

The past few months have driven many people into a much-needed space of self-reflection and discovery. But even when the world fully reopens, we will each continue to learn more about who we are as individuals Every single day. One of the main ways we will communicate that to the world is through our personal style.

Marvin "Marv" Neal not only does this for himself, but goes a step further by helping other individuals, and some of the biggest brands around, do the exact same thing. With an impactful background that includes a personal shopper position with Versace, work with prominent figures such as Toni Braxton and Joique Bell, spreads in publications such as Ambassador Magazine and work featured during New York Fashion Week, Neal has uniquely high level of understanding on how to create looks that demonstrate who people are, to the world.

Marv's Personal History

Marv: So I come from a single parent, single mother home, but I was raised in a house with three or four different generations in one house. So it was my great-grandmother, my grandmother, the oldest Aunt, the middle aunt, and my mom. I was the only boy. I used to sit and watch them, how much they paid attention to dressing, and how their friends all would come over to see what they had new. My one aunt worked retail right Downtown [Detroit]. There used to be a store inside of the Renaissance called Carnaby's. She used to take me to work with her on Saturdays or Sundays, when she had to close. That was my first introduction of seeing how women would come and buy clothes. I remember at about four or five, maybe six, I started paying attention to it.



I come from a family where the men were tailors a long time ago. The women all knew how to sew. My aunts, my grandmother, great-grandmother, worked at a cleaners for years. That's what she retired from. So I guess it's just in my DNA to be kind of around clothing. That's pretty much my background. I'm born and bred here. Come from the women. Paid attention to detail. The men that they married or dated all dressed well too. So I think it's just a thing of just paying attention to fashion.

Discovering His Purpose

Marv: I think I always knew that I wanted to do fashion, I just don't think that I ...I'll say this, at first it was being six, seven, eight, we would draw Michael Jordans, the Jordans, or dream of drawing and designing a Jordan [shoe]. Just whatever Nikes or Adidas that were out, we would draw those. So I started out with loving to draw, and then it went to, maybe high school, I kind of knew that I wanted to be a fashion designer. But then I was like, "There has to be somebody that dresses the people in between." I knew it had to be, where there was a bigger brand, where the people that were in the magazines that I was looking at came from.

That's how I found out about Puff's baby mom, Misa Hylton Brim. So it was her, Groovy Lew, those names I would see all of the time inside of all of the Vibes or Sources [Magazines], and all of the things that were written, once hip-hop was really hitting. So I would just see their names, and it would be like "wardrobe stylist", or "fashion consultant". I was like, "That's what I want to do." So by the time I got to high school, like '94, I knew. So after that, I didn't know what I had to do. I just figured I had to go to fashion school, and then move to wardrobe styling or move to New York to do it.

See **MARV NEAL** Page **B-2**

Detroit Artist Jai Fears Releases Debut EP, Gemini

Singer, actress and dancer Jai Fears will release her debut EP, Gemini, June 12th on all streaming platforms including Spotify, Apple Music and SoundCloud. This seven track project highlights Fears' multifaceted personality, her passion for Detroit and drive to succeed, by any means necessary. In addition to this project marking a milestone in Fears' career, it will also be released on the eve of her upcoming birthday.

Jai Fears' talents are exemplary when it comes to the music and entertainment industry. She's spent years working as a backup dancer for singer, songwriter and record producer, Charlie Wilson, and has even earned the title of becoming his protégée. Her resume doesn't stop there - she's performed with the likes of Aretha Franklin, N'Sync, Stevie Wonder and John Legend during the 2006

Super Bowl and at the 2010 Royal Oak Arts Beats and Eats Festival. Once Fears made the decision to go all in for her music career, momentum picked up and hasn't slowed down. She has gone on to win BET's 106 & Park Wild Out Wednesday competition and open shows for recording artist such as Keyshia Cole, K. Michelle, Boyz II Men, John B, Howard Hewitt and Ryan Leslie.

Fears' debut project, Gemini, not only solidifies her talent as an artist but also gives fans an opportunity to learn more about who Jai Fears really is. From her single *I_t_l_l_D_o_*, where Fears details her determination to live a good life regardless of her circumstances, to her ballroom track, Detroit Vibe - listeners truly get a closer look into what Fears is passionate about.

"I'm proud of being born a

Gemini and it plays such a big role in who I am," said Jai Fears. "With this being my first full project, I really wanted my fans to get to know me, which will definitely help them understand my artistry. With the help of my producers, Justin Credible and Cordell Walton, I've really been able to put my heart and soul into this project and I'm really excited for fans and everyone else to receive it."

Moving forward, Fears hopes to work on visuals for her remaining tracks, celebrate the release of her EP and book live performances once the Michigan stay-at-home executive order is lifted.

Jai Fears' EP, Gemini, can be found on iTunes, Apple Music, Spotify and SoundCloud. To learn more about Jai Fears, her most recent project and upcoming shows, visit JaiFears.com.





Marv Neal

From page B-1

So I would work retail, and just learn how to dress the mannequins, and how to edit down real good, and know what really goes with what, and still have your own style in there. So I'd say about high school is where I really, really knew, for sure, this is what I want to do.

Marv's Experience Fashion in Roles

Personal Shopper

Marv: So for a personal shopper, it falls into the realm of wardrobe styling. You would basically shop for, it could be someone like you, to corporate, all the way up to an actor or somebody like that. You could just be the person that basically shops for them. You would have to have a little bit of style, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you're dressing them.

Wardrobe stylist

Marv: Wardrobe stylists are more the people that dress the bigger things, so magazines, video, even with some movies, that might come up under costuming. They'll usually be kind of close with, sometimes, even the creator director, and then the creative director is over all of that too. Then you have people that just do closets. They don't really necessarily want to do it, they just come in, clean your closet, organize your closet, and make it suitable for whatever your lifestyle is. If you want to get rid or purge a bunch of stuff, you have people that do that. Then everything has a price, depending on what it is.

Creative Director

Marv: I think with me, the creative director role just kind of fell into play, because I'm always the one that people ask when they're like "I don't have an idea how I want it to look, period." So they're like, "Get me to how my hair should be, how my makeup should be, where I should be shooting at," or whatever the case may be.

Stereotyping and Nepotism in Fashion

JW: Would you say that in the fashion world, once you're dealing with the higher end products and bigger brands, that it's harder for people of color, or people from single parent backgrounds to break in? Because there is a lot of those-

Marv: Stereotypes?

JW: Stereotypes, and then in the corporate world, I know from my previous experience, that a lot of jobs are reserved for friends of friends.

Marv: Exactly.

JW: Would you say it's the same in the fashion world?

Marv: It's the same in the fashion world. I mean, everything with me has been kind of like undeniable, just because I have the work to show for it. So they kind of can't really deny it.

JW: The work is the work.

Marv: The work is the work. But I think that I'm still not the first one that people come to, because they want to let their friend do it, or give their friend a chance. A lot of times, it shows that your friend doesn't really have the experience, or know what to do, or your friends got on set, and was running their mouth about something when they weren't supposed to.

So to me, it's best that you just hire someone that really knows what they're doing, or has the experience, because I've worked from the higher end magazine and celebrity, all the way down to just, my homegirl just texted me today about a birthday dress. So I get it all day. Never any off time, there's always someone asking. So I think that it plays a part, even, still, because there is a lot of stuff going on here that I don't get called for. I always kind of feel like I should, you know what I mean? I don't get mad, I just keep working.

Most of the time, everything kind of works off of social media. I don't have a problem with reposting older stuff, just because you get a new audience every day. We all know how Tumblr, to Twitter, to Facebook, to Instagram, everybody has their own algorithm. So there might be

somebody that you've been following, but just didn't see the work pop up. So every day, I try to always post and show my presence, keep my hashtag everywhere, which is #StyledByMarv, that way that people can kind of see everything, everywhere.

On Current Style Trends in Detroit

Marv: I think the core of Detroit is still kind of the same, it still has the urban flare to it. I think Detroit has a certain flare that, what happens with that is that the opportunities that aren't here, or the jobs that aren't here, you get the people that are traveling in and out of town...the people see them at the club, and wondering where they're from, because we've just got a certain kind of swag about us.

But with the gentrification going on, there are a lot of people from Brooklyn that have moved here. So you kind of get the New York lazy functionality, but it's still fashionable. I guess that's just really your Downtown or Midtown. But if you go east or west, in the hood, then it's still the same. Your Fly Fresh, your denims, your dunks, your coat to match, that kind of thing. I think fur is a Detroit thing. So all of these grandmas or uncles with the fur on, and they're out, us getting into that realm, everybody wants a fur collar, or something. I think it's still core Detroit, of course with the Cartier, and the certain things that you see, you just automatically know, it's Detroit. But I think it's starting to be a little bit more where even Detroiters are starting to be a little bit more open to not being so local driven, or showing their wealth.

Finding Your Personal Style

Marv: I would just say that the best thing to do is to know your personal style and knowing your sizing. Sizing is a big factor. So for someone like you, who is a little bit taller than me, will always be finding the big and tall, and then finding a good seamstress, or a good tailor that will take your things in. I think with the brands here, it's that just we don't really have much, here in Michigan. You have Somerset, of course. Nieman Marcus and Saks kind of cater to all of those...then there is an H&M down here [Downtown Detroit], now. So in Downtown Detroit, you've got a little bit more showing up. So yeah, I think that it's just a thing of knowing your sizes, and being open to buying pieces that complement in your closet, that you can interchange, because that's just important.

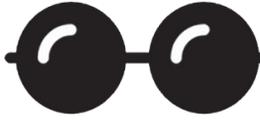
Spring and Summer Wardrobe Tips

Marv: Invest in a good jacket, whether it's a denim jacket, or just some kind of jacket of a good material. It doesn't necessarily have to be warm or anything like that. I think coats in the springtime play a good part in how you look. Summer, summer is kind of...with women, it's a lot of being put together without overly doing it. So make sure that your maxi dress and your undergarments are good for the summertime. I think sometimes people get a little lax. But undergarments play a good part of your maxi, and make sure that you're not jiggling everywhere.

With the guys, it's just always about being kind of cool. Again, just putting those glasses into play. Clean shoes. Clean, white gym shoes, and just looking like you're happy that it's a new season, that kind of thing. It's really about, if you buy the correct pieces, you'll be interchanging those winter pieces into spring, especially here in Michigan it goes right from being 60, 50, 20 degrees to jumping to 65, 70. So I think it's about whatever nice denim you can buy, interchanging them with a nice polo, or something like that for the fellas, a nice rocker tee always does the trick. Just looking like you don't really care, but you do care. That kind of thing.

Marv's Goals

Marv: My goals going forward are just to be more involved with the things coming to Michigan, whether it's being a creative director or wardrobe stylist for whatever is here. Just being more involved in my city, because I don't want to miss opportunities here, even though I've worked outside of everywhere else, I don't want to miss opportunities that are here. I feel like with all of the stuff that's coming here, I shouldn't have to leave from here.

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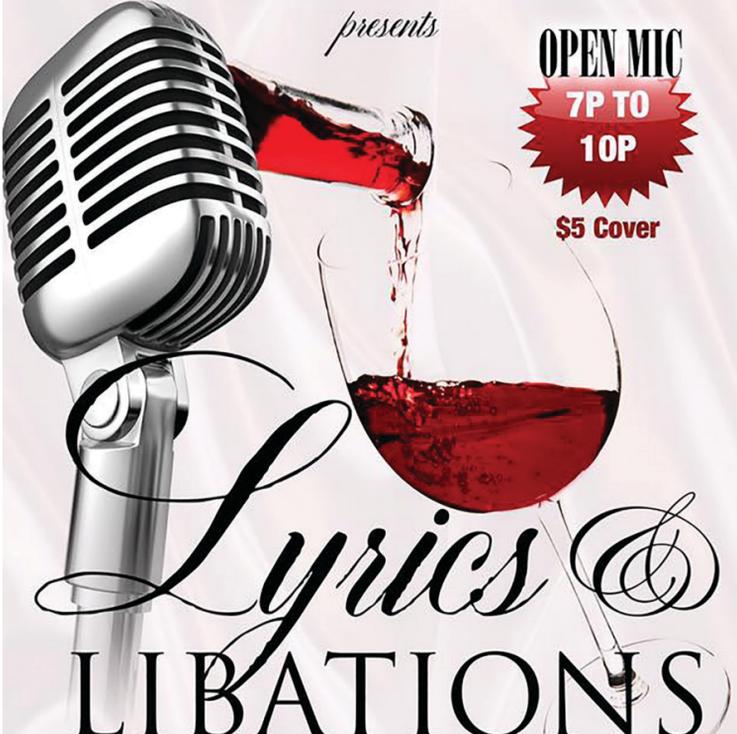
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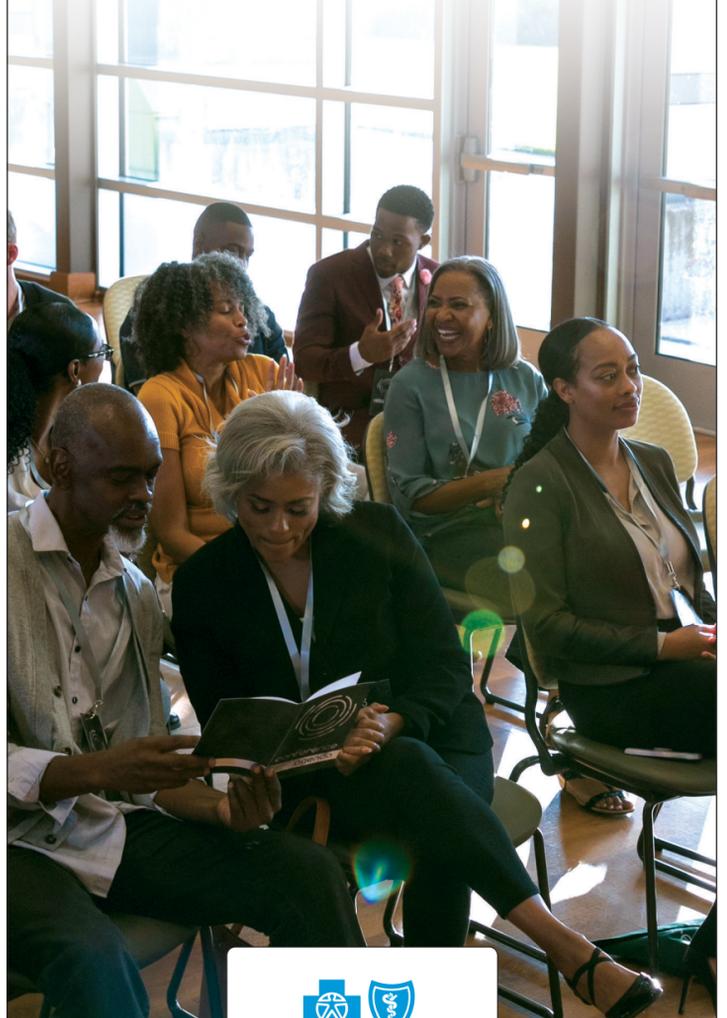
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