

PLEASE NO BACON

PNB NATION

by Roosevelt Franklin

It started with a couple of kids from the hood, multiethnic like NYC and graffiti: Black, Puerto Rican, Chinese, Japanese, Jewish. They were all writers, running with a loose collection of artists and other hip-hop minded ragamuffins. Putting their names on trains and other public spaces was, at the time, dying a slow death. The ghetto game of getting fame faced the Darwinian dilemma of evolution or extinction. While they still rocked legal walls, more insidious seeds began to germinate while silk screening t-shirts on the rooftop of their high school. PNB was born under the sign of an upside down dead pig, symbolizing for them a future of freedom from the system.

The first shirts were simple; a picture of a "Hello, my name is" sticker and a wild style tag written across it with the PNB trademark on the back. The idea was to have their work shown on a canvas bigger than All Borough. Now, all across the globe at any time of the day, their names and pieces are seen floating down the street or on billboards 50 feet high overlooking the city. PNB has successfully gone from a couple of knuckleheads getting up to a multimillion-dollar business. The owners just recently turned 30.

Graffiti is a means of expression originating from the slums of America. In a society where these youth are told from the get they're nothing and will always nothing, that naturally they are the worst of the worst, it is also a means of get back and psychic resistance. It's these kids way of saying "I exist, I am someone. In fact, I'm better than good, I'm all that. I'm

the king of reality. I make your world beautiful, seen?" Indeed, PNBnation has conquered the world. Leaders in the street wear and urban fashion game, they set it off. They're trendsetters who've inspired a whole flock of imitators trying to bite their style. Now, with the recent departure from partnership with the clothing companies Supreme and Perry Ellis, they're focusing energies on handling their own independent distribution, beginning with their Spring 2001 line, Revolution.

The theme of the collection celebrates the revolutionary spirit of Hip-Hop culture, the same energy that helped PNB nation turn the fashion industry upside down almost ten years ago. Stenciled graphics of Che Guevara, up raised black fists and breakdancers are portrayed on different pieces from long sleeved to brightly colored Hawaiian shirts. The images often work on more than one level, having multiple meanings. One shirt sports a picture of a turntable with the caption "PNB for an Armed Nation", playing with the concept of fighting for freedom with music and using the turntable arm as the focus of the pun. The collection is meant to be practical urban wear, rugged while still flavor. There are also tie-dyed camouflage pants, different colored kufis and hooded jackets which also unzip into vests. They've even revived one of their earliest shirt designs, an all black shirt with the "Hello, my name is," sticker done in red and the names of three African-Americans murdered by NYPD done in green. Bling bling from an organic, grass roots Hip-Hop perspective; this is how PNB shines for the new millennium.

