

Narration: Music is, without a doubt, a large part of Black culture. In the Black community, it serves a tangible purpose. Yes, it's true - we make incredible music. But, more often than not, it also doubles as a political statement, or an act of resistance. Looking at both the creative and production side of things, it is clear to see that Black folks have taken their rightful place in the world of musical innovation.

My name is Gloria Essien, and I'm taking a look at how Black students at Brown navigate the music sphere on campus. Over the course of my time here, I've seen music serve as both a unifying force within Black community and as a healing mechanism during rougher times. I sat down with a few of my friends to talk about how they use and create music.

B: I'm Brandon Burke.

A: ... and I'm Anye Angwafo. And we're two members of SOUL Studios.

N: SOUL Studios is a group of students that curate playlists and create original videos to accompany those playlists.

B: SOUL Studios is really just... I wanna say at its core, it's just a brotherhood-

G: Mm.

B: Of just guys who like to create, is what I'd say. We just create on a lot of different levels. Like each one of us has a, I wanna say a "specialty" of just our realm in the arts sphere, so whether it's audio or just visuals. Like "visuals" as in video content, or graphic design. We try to do it all really.

A: Yeah, and we definitely, like what Brandon was saying, we definitely kind of help push each other and, uh, even though we might have different "specializations" or whatever, we're always supporting one another in whatever we're doing, and tryna, y'know... that's really what the core of it is, it's just people coming together and helping each other out and expressing themselves in whichever way we can, and that's what we're here for.

G: Anye, what's your specialty?

A: I'm not one to box myself in [*laughter*], but if I have to, I would say probably the video side, the video-editing side.

**Narration:** Alongside the audio playlists they create, SOUL Studios uses visual elements - like music videos or animations - to supplement the vibes.

G: What about you, Brandon?

B: I'd say, the uh... the playlists. And maybe, I think, some of the captions, like Facebook. The status-

A: Yeah, the marketing.

G: Mm.

A: He's BEO, so...

B: True, tru-

A: - y'know what I'm saying? You gotta be on that marketing.

B: As I study it in school, I apply it to SOUL, really.

A: Anything marketing, I leave it to Brandon. *[laughter]* He knows what he's doing on that one.

G: Beautiful. Um, so let's talk about the music side of SOUL Studios. What do y'all do?  
*[laughter]*

B: We try to give you music for different moods and settings.

A: Yeah, different energies, all the playlists... hopefully have different energies, you know, we listen to it different times and different spaces. Like, we're not making our own music right now, but what we do is we do know a lot of music and we know pretty much what music would fit in a certain genre, or setting I guess. So whether that be you lookin' for a pregame playlist, or you kind of in your feelings, it's "Real Nigga Hours"-

A: True, you in your bags 2am, Twitter is poppin'?!

B: That's what I'm sayin'.

A: You goin' to throw on the playlist.

B: We just wanna give people something they can put on shuffle and not have to think about again, because it's annoying when you go on your phone, one song plays, the next song you don't wanna hear. Then you gotta go search for a next one. So we try to give you something to turn on, listen to, and enjoy the whole time and not have to worry about.

G: Talk about "Real Nigga Hours", I heard you say that a lil' bit before. *[laughter]* What does that mean to y'all?

B: I can't tel- you named the playlist "Real Nigga Hours", so...

A: Did I name it?

G: When did you release the playlist?

B: I mean the first volume was like early last December, it was like right after Gambino dropped his album.

A: Aw, yeah...

B: Yeah, so I mean... it's really like a contemplative type playlist, like you tryna chill... people listen to it when they're like studying for their midterms and stuff, so it's like you know, you're in your bag and you're tryna like study for your midterm maybe in your feelings [*laughter*], it's just any situation when you're tryna really chill. It's almost like the opposite of the pregame in terms of like energies, and pregames are just wild and whatever, but you know what I'm saying? When the Real Nigga Hours hit, you calm and you thinking and you're contemplating, so that's the inspiration and that's how the sound is kind of much more mellow in the sense.

B: If anybody who really wants like a definition of when Real Nigga Hours start - [*indistinct*] - it's like after 1am really.

A: 1, 2am-

B: 1, 2—the music you would imagine yourself listening to at 1am-

A: -it's basically-

B: -It's chill.

A: It's basically Drake, Marvin... [*laughter*] Like that's the time period-

B: - the playlist was inspired by "Take Care".

G: Oh, I see.

A: "Take Care", "Views"... it was also-

B: - "Trap Soul".

A: Nah, what was the other joint? "2088". With Big Sean. That was a great album.

B: That was a good one.

A: So, um, you know. That's the type that we-

B: When you think of those albums, think "Real Nigga Hours", that is what we're tryna give you.

A: That is what we're tryna give you.

G: I see, I see. *[laughter]* Beautiful.

G: So, what motivates y'all to keep going, even though, like, you're both full-time students here. Got a lot going on... you know, like tryna pass all these classes...

B: Yeah... I'd say, strangely enough, I won't... I'd say the support comes after the actual execution. So, like, we'll have these ideas, but say we go out and shoot 'em or recreate these playlists. Watching the footage and like listening to the playlists is really what keeps me going because, like, our ideas are good. And they're just getting better.

A: Yeah, you can see growth. That's the thing, it's like there's some growth from just a couple months ago to, like, now. The growth and like, the play... at first we were kind of afraid, because we were feeling like "Real Nigga Hours" Vol. I was so good. Personally, for me, I was like, yo we have to follow this up with another great playlist in this series. *[laughter]* But just like the growth in seeing, like, we did that. The second one was as good. And like, the visuals are as good. And throwback playlists, like I, II, III, IV - it's all really good. And the playlists we have coming up are like really good, we just been listening to it, and the visuals, too, the ideas we have for different visuals, I was just telling Brandon right before we came, a new idea for some visuals. Like, that's just keeping us going, and the support too. Like, someone really stopped me and was like, "Yo, I saw, like, the video for..." I think, like, the Michael Jackson video. For the third throwback playlist. He was like, "I saw them, like, it's really good, like y'all getting really good at this now." That's all I needed to hear.

N: Now, I gotta let you all know that Brandon and Anye walked into this interview looking pretty dope.

G: *[laughter]* So, whatch'you wearin', what you got on right now?

A: *[laughter]* Go ahead.

B: I got this, uh, this limited edition apparently. *[indistinct]* A deadstock Brown sweatshirt. A lot of people stopped me and said they couldn't find this anywhere, where'd I get it from. I didn't know at the time I was buying it that it would disappear off this campus.

A: That's like 3 years old, right?

B: 3 years old. Uh... it's cool. *[laughter]* I got the nice all-black, but you know the brown in the sweater matches the brown in the boots.

A: The accents.

B: I tie it back. *[laughter]*

A: This one right here is the accent king. He hits you with accents anywhere, got some lil' gold somewhere, matching gold somewhere else.

G: I see that gold watch. *[laughter]*

B: Gold watch, gold hoops. Gold hoops.

*[overlapping chatter, laughter]*

A: Shoot, I just got this Raiders jacket, this the first thing I bought-

G: Okay! *[laughter]*

A: - on this campus was actually this Raiders jacket. Shoutout Sneakers Junkies. We tryna get that sponsorship, that endorsement soon.

B: Sneakers Junkies our thing.

A: Shout out, Sneakers Junkies.

B: Y'all follow me back on IG 'cause you knew I was in there with the sneakers.

N: Like Sneaker Junkies, you too can follow them back on IG.

B: SoulStudios97, Instagram, Twitter... Facebook page, SOUL Studios.

A: There you go.

B: Like, support, share-

A: That's the big thing for now.

B: - follow, retweet.

A: Also, subscribe on YouTube. Tryna see the visuals too.

B: Soundcloud coming soon, maybe.

A: Soundcloud coming soon. Maybe Soundcloud exclusive playlist, cause a lot of tough songs don't get released on Spotify or Apple Music.

B: A lot of like when we want real, real pregame stuff, like wild pregame stuff—

A: Like our *actual* pregames soundtrack is Soundcloud.

B: It's gonna be on Soundcloud.

A: We might have to hop on that.

B: For real, for real.

A: For the people, really. Cause we already listen to cool music on Soundcloud, it's to let the people know what we're listening to, really.

B: True.