

## Putting the T's in Tampa

By Dalia Colón, Times Staff Writer

Published Wednesday, June 17, 2009

---

### Eleven O Twelve

Jon Mishner wanted to be a movie star. So two years ago he dropped out of USF, drove to Hollywood and slept on an air mattress with hopes of making it big. When things didn't work out, Mishner set his sites on a new goal: running a clothing company and maybe getting one of his shirts onto the back of a Hollywood celeb.

But Eleven O Twelve T-shirts — a reference to Mishner's childhood address in Maryland — aren't just for the rich and famous. After returning from California, Mishner bought a handful of cotton shirts from Wal-Mart and hand-sewed designs on them in his Hyde Park living room. Today, the shirts are made in Pompano Beach.

But the flavor is all local. One of Mishner's best sellers depicts the streets of South Tampa laid out on a cow's body, like cuts of beef. (He insists it's not a comment on which parts of town are filet mignon and which are hamburger meat.) There's also a downtown Tampa skyline tee and Mishner's favorite, a "welcome to Hyde Park" sign splattered with paint ball pellets.

"It's kind of like, 'Welcome to this uber-trendy area,' and then it's splattered with a paint ball," said Mishner, 27, who works at Raw Bar Sushi in downtown Tampa.

Even his logo tees give a nod to South Tampa, with style names including The Bayshore, The Howard, The Azeele and The Dakota.

"I'm really trying to build up Tampa. Hopefully I'll get this on a national level and really put Tampa in the conscious mind of everybody, more so to put Tampa on the map. Miami, L.A., New York, they're already staples," Mishner said. "But there's so much to do here, and the country doesn't really know about Tampa yet."

. **Men's sizes M-XL. Women's sizes S-L. \$20-30.** [tielogo.com](http://tielogo.com).

Summertime, and the dressin' is easy. Besides being Father's Day, today marks the first official day of summer — although we've already been sweating it out for months. Whether your office has relaxed its dress code or you're just looking for something to wear on weekends that won't get ruined in a downpour, get to know these local T-shirts companies and the guys behind them. — *Dalia Colón, Times Staff Writer*

### SpokenThreads

When Hunter Payne was a sophomore at Eastlake High in Tarpon Springs, he and his buddy Brandon Taylor started selling T-shirts and stickers at school. They'd brainstorm ideas, Payne would draw them on his computer, and they'd have their designs silkscreened onto "crap T-shirts," Payne said, at local print shops. Then they'd lug a duffel bag full of graffiti- and skateboarding-related stuff, hocking their wares in the hallway between classes and after school from the trunk of Payne's Honda Accord. Junior year, Payne met Reuben Pressman and invited him to join the operation.

Now college students (Payne, 18, and Pressman, 20, attend USF St. Pete; Taylor, 19, goes to St. Petersburg College), the guys have expanded their collection from streetwear to more mainstream designs.

Among their faves are a shirt that says "Make the Most of the Gulf Coast" and a shirt dubbed "Blow off Some Steam," which depicts a cartoon giraffe with smoke clouds coming out of its ears. A percentage of each sale goes to an organization that ties into the T-shirt's theme. For instance, a portion of proceeds from "Blow off Some Steam" benefits Action for Healthy Kids, a nonprofit that promotes exercise.

To order, buyers must fill out an e-mail survey with questions like "How did you hear about us?" and "Tell us what you had for breakfast." Most every applicant gets accepted, the guys said. It's to make sure buyers really want the product and to create a feeling of exclusivity. That's also why they'll never print more than 100 of each design. Each shirt comes with a signed and numbered certificate of authenticity.

"Walking around Eastlake High School, it's a very consumer culture where a lot of the kids are wearing the same kind of thing from the same mall," Payne said. "We're trying to promote individualism."

**. Men's sizes S-XL. Women's sizes none. \$30. spokenthreads.com** Hugsmugglers

It started in 2003 as an artists' collective. USF buddies Brandon Dunlap, Timothy Warner and Jeff Vreeland started doing shows in Tampa and New York City to exhibit their graphic designs, screen printings and other creative endeavors. They'd sell T-shirts alongside their more expensive art, offering something for every price point.

"That's one thing that's always going to sell. Artwork might not sell. When you live in Tampa, there's only a handful of galleries to show at, so you can't show at those galleries all the time," said Dunlap, 35, a full-time artist. "But if you're putting out shirts and designing shirts, you always have an opportunity to sell that, because that's a very broad audience that you're appealing to. That audience is huge. Plus it's an inexpensive way to collect somebody's design."

If sales figures are any indication, their most appealing shirt is "Rhino Radio," which features a rhinoceros with a boom box in its body — a nod to the work of Renaissance-era artist Albrecht Durer.

Dunlap said Hugsmugglers fans — including S.A. Martinez of the band 311 — appreciate the art history reference.

"Plus a lot of hip-hop kids dig it because it's a boom box," Dunlap said.

His business partners have since moved to the Big Apple; Warner does video installations, and Vreeland works for renowned Japanese artist Takashi Murakami. Dunlap plans to follow in a few weeks but says he'll maintain close ties to Tampa.

**. Men's and women's sizes S-XL. \$20. Buy one get one free through June. merchline.com/hugsmugglers**

---

© 2009 • All Rights Reserved • St. Petersburg Times  
490 First Avenue South • St. Petersburg, FL 33701 • 727-893-8111  
[Contact Us](#) | [Join Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Subscribe to the St. Petersburg Times](#)  
[Privacy Policy](#) | [Standard of Accuracy](#) | [Terms, Conditions & Copyright](#)