

MICAH, JULIAN, & LUKAS | ONLY NY

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The [Only NY](#) office has all the makings of a streetwear giant's headquarters. There are boldly-painted skateboard decks bordering every inch of the office walls. There are witty stickers plastered everywhere – the same ones that we've definitely seen before on the New York City streets. And the founders pull off really cool hats. Effortlessly.

But this isn't just about streetwear, although [Only NY](#) is arguably one of the best brands in the game. It's about a ten-year dream in the making – one that started from a college kid with an idea (and five simple t-shirts) and grew into a full-blown streetwear mainstay, with the bragging rights of collaborations with everyone from [Greats](#) and [Vans](#) to the [City of New York](#). The born-and-bred NYC lifestyle of the small, tight-knit team of artists and creatives at [Only NY](#) – including co-founders [Micah Belamarich](#) and

Julian Goldstein, along with designer Lukas Witek – bleeds through in every hat, t-shirt, and pair of kicks that the brand releases to their dedicated fanbase. There's a reason why Only NY feels so quintessentially New York – and that authenticity has resonated with streetwear fans around the world.

We met Micah, Julian, and Lukas in their headquarters in Harlem, NY – appropriately located in their old stomping grounds on the Upper West Side – to chat about the beginnings of Only NY, their advice for young creatives looking to get into the game, and the legacy they hope to leave with the brand. Explore Only NY's story:



HOW DID ONLY NY START?

Julian: Micah and I are high school buddies. He went away to college for a year, came back and went to FIT, and Only NY was at first like a pet project.

Micah: Yeah, a passion project. It's kind of how it originally started, just with five t-shirts – but with the idea that it could be a brand. And as we expanded the line each season, we kind of figured out how to do it all along the way.

WHAT CREATIVE BACKGROUNDS DO YOU EACH BRING TO THE BRAND?

Julian: My major was liberal arts, but I got into photography the first or second year of college and then went to FIT for continuing ed, and took classes there while Micah was there doing graphic design.

Micah: Yeah, I did communication design and then graphic design, and that's kind of how I got into the whole design thing.

Lukas: I had a media studies background.

SO NONE OF YOU HAD A 100% FASHION BACKGROUND.

All: No.

Julian: I guess it's more that we come from an art world. Micah's mom's an artist, my dad has numerous clothing stores that he started with his father.

THEN WHAT ATTRACTED YOU ALL TO THIS IN THE FIRST PLACE?

Micah: Not necessarily fashion, but in high school we were really into – and a lot of kids our age were – collecting clothing. Like North Face, all these collectible pieces. So that was always a thing that we knew about. And then it was all about creating our own stuff, making our own brand...and now, you know, kids are collecting our stuff. That's kind of how it all started.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MOST RECENT COLLABORATIONS YOU'VE DONE?

Micah: We actually didn't do any collaborations until about a year ago. We planned it that way, where we wanted to stand on our own and make a name for ourselves before collaborating with other brands. So we went probably six or seven years without doing it. And then we got to a point where it was like, okay, now it makes sense to start doing it – first we did it with Greats, the shoe company, Pro Keds, and then we did something with the City of New York, which was our big thing.

AND YOU'VE DONE SMALLER COLLABORATIONS, TOO –

Micah: That's our Artist Series, and we're going to be coming out with new ones. We've worked with Jean Jullien, Chaz Bundick of Toro Y Moi, Andy Rementer, and others.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR PEOPLE STARTING OUT?

Micah: That's a tough one. I'd say a lot of hard work, dedication, and focus. Don't wait until you graduate to think, *what do I do now?* Start thinking about it while you're still in school, so you can start applying to internships or seeing if things might work out for you – so that you're not wasting a lot of time.

Only NY was started at the end of my second year at FIT, which was good and bad. It took some of my focus off of school, but it was also good because I got an internship with American Eagle that turned into a freelance in-house job. I basically had a job before I graduated. And I learned a lot there that I could apply to Only NY. But turning down a full-time job with them to pursue our own thing with Only NY – yeah, I was a little anxious.

Julian: Especially around the time we were doing it. It was 2008, right in the recession.

WHAT LEGACY DO YOU HOPE TO LEAVE WITH ONLY NY?

Julian: It all goes back to the collecting aspect of this that we're drawn to – it would be really cool if people are still holding onto certain pieces, and hold appreciation to some of the designs that we've put out. That would be really cool.

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