

# FEMALE SNEAKER FIENDS

Ladies, do you still get surprised when you see another female rockin' those Stussy Dunks? Dudes, are you still shocked when a woman walks by with the Rayguns you've been sweating for months? Well, those days are gonna be getting mighty regular, real quick. Females are blowing up the sneaker world right now! Don't believe it? Check this out...we got females not just hunting, not just collecting, but representing all aspects of the sneaker game. This article highlights just a few of the women who are holding it down for the ladies all over the world. Nike, look out for Pointer and Rose Choules. Alife, don't sleep on Rosemary Frazier of GoliathRF. Sabotage, respect KGiovanna and her hungry-hungry customs. And Sneaker Freaker, keep an eye out for that crazy lady kickin' it up on her website...



ROSEMARY FRAZIER OF GOLIATHRF

Okay, so what about the 'middle-men'? Not so fast there either. Here comes Rosemary Frazier of GoliathRF showing that women can run some of the flyest sneaker boutiques out there! And folks are flocking to Harlem to see what she's got coming in from all over. It's definitely worth the trip...

### How did you pick the name of your store?

The name came about from a joke. Goliath to mean big, taking over. So we are taking over Harlem, so to speak. We opened in September 2004. Although Goliath is the only boutique in Harlem we are starting something that will soon become the norm here.

**Did you work in any sneaker stores before you came here?**  
Never! But I shopped in a lot of them!

### Wow, so how many sneakers do you have?

I have about 90 now. Which, for a collector, is not really a lot, but for a girl collector...it probably would be more but they don't make a men's sneaker down to my size sometimes. Otherwise it'd be many more.

### What are you wearing on your feet today?

Today I am wearing my Navigation Shox.

### Getting down to business, what would you say to a woman who wanted to open a sneaker store?

Just do it. Anything in life worth having comes with hard work.

### What has been the most important decision you have made?

Buying product I know I like and would wear. Sticking to purchasing items that are quality products.

### How long do you have to be in the business before you make money?

That is too general a question. It all depends on the goals of your store. Is your goal to be successful or to make huge profits? The time scale on either could come first. It depends on what you call 'success'. Is it monetary? Any business can take a couple of years before you turn a real profit. Don't judge success by monetary rewards. Success could come first and money second.

### What was the biggest challenge of your first year?

Staying in business, having product to offer your consumer. Especially if you do not have a Nike account. You have to make connections and establish yourself amongst others in this business as a serious business-minded person. On the outside things look fun, but behind the scenes you are working constantly.

### Are there customer questions that just make you roll your eyes?

Well, it depends on how the question's presented. Sometimes people come in and are like, 'Why are your sneakers so expensive?' Depending on the mood I'm in, I'll say, 'Let me explain to you...' Or I'll say, 'You know what? If you can find them somewhere else cheaper, go ahead.' And then they usually come back and say, 'Oh, I couldn't find those anywhere.' Now that is why they're the price they are. Cuz I found them for you. I did the search for you. And they keep coming back.



POINTER FOOTWEAR

If you're a cover-to-cover Sneaker Freaker reader like myself, you may have already read about Pointer, the up-and-coming little sneaker/shoe company cranking out some creative new designs with a real London feel. But what you probably don't know (and definitely don't expect - don't lie!) is that one of the primary designers is a female. Rose Choules is no joke. Read on...

### What sparked your first interest in sneakers? How old were you?

I was 13 and chilling out after school wearing my brand new forest green PUMA Clydes, and this girl Rachel came up to me and said, 'Hey, I like your trainers,' which led to us being best friends all through school. I thought, 'Yeah, they are nice.' So I sat down and drew them.

### Are you a sneaker fiend?

I'm not a consumer; I don't collect shoes. But I can make them by hand, design them and produce them, so it's my mission to shake up the footwear market and prepare for females doing their thing. My aim is to build up a really good female line that a guy hasn't come near. How do they know what we want? No offence to men of course, it's just that I can make my own shoes...so I'll decide! I've also started collecting rare vintage plimsols. I don't know what it is... It's addictive once you start, the more you like the more you hunt, the more you hunt the more you see, then you're a goner.

### How long have you been designing sneakers?

Only 14 months as a full-time job... Not very long!

### What sneaker are you most happy with (that you designed)?

It would have to be the 'Growler' that I designed with Mat Fowler and Hannah Draper (playarea) because it's great producing ideas with people who are on the same wavelength. It feels like there's a real culmination of our styles on that shoe.

### What part of the sneaker design process do you like the most?

Sketching; always. Because that's what I love to do primarily. But it's great when I'll draw something which I know I can develop, and I know I'm going to be pleased with the final shoe. It's a weird feeling, like you've jumped the first hurdle.

### What do you think is the biggest challenge in being a woman sneaker designer?

[laughs] Yeah, it's a challenge. Most people buying Pointers probably don't know it's me designing them. I think people would assume it's male driven like most brands (although I work with a man who runs the company). But, to be honest, I find it more challenging that I'm 23 and doing the job I do. I get a bit nervous

when buyers come into the office - and it's not that I'm a girl - it's that they are sometimes double my age...

### What are the benefits?

When I tell people what I do they seem really shocked because I'm a girl, and I secretly get off on that, but the main benefit is wearing my own shoes. It basically comes down to following through with producing something you want to wear. Also, hopefully I'm attracting more girls to do the same...

### Any advice for female shoe designers?

You have to know every job along the line and how things will be done. It's a basic principle, I suppose. If you can do that, it will make you a more conscientious designer. I'd also say just do exactly what you want - don't feel pressured by the fact that the industry is male-orientated - it will just make you come up with fresher designs. Don't hide the fact you're a female designing, that is what will make you stand out.

### What's the next thing you foresee in sneakers?

I foresee people taking matters into their own hands. People love working on collabs because they have influence on the final product which they can be proud of. It's a whole different thing to buying existing shoes in the shops. Like Nike iD: people want a hand in choosing their own colourways.

### What else do you want female sneaker fiends to know (or just all of us crazy fiends out here)?

Don't be afraid to say if you think something's shit. There seems to be a widespread epidemic of 'the emperor's new clothes'. Just buy what you're into, and what makes you feel good. And if that doesn't exist then help us produce it! We are half the population, and that needs to be represented.



### What does KGiovanna stand for?

Katherine is my first name and Giovanna is my middle. When I was younger my parents always called me Katherine Giovanna so I kinda just ran with it. It had a nice ring to it.

### When did you do your first custom? How old were you?

I was 19 and in my junior year of college. It was Valentine's Day. I returned sneakers I had gotten for my ex because he broke up with me and I got myself a pair instead. I decided to cheer myself up by making shoes. Weird, I know. It was a pair of white-on-white Air Force Ones. It was a lot of fun although I had no idea what I was doing, and I got paint all over my apartment. I was scared that I would be in big trouble with my landlord because there was pink paint all over the wall and the floor in my kitchen. Basically, I put on a bunch of my favorite CDs and painted for hours until it looked cool (and till I almost passed out from the fumes). I called them the Bubblegum Joints. They were 3 colours of pink with splatters all over. At the time I thought the shoes were amazing and I thought I was the shit but now I look at them and, compared to my work now, they were so sloppy.

### So what got you hooked?

While researching pointers on how to do custom kicks I came across all the sites put up by sneaker heads with their collections and I was immediately hooked. I didn't know how serious and passionate some people were about collecting shoes. I almost felt deprived. It was crazy! I remember seeing designs by Methamphibian and Emmanuel Labor and being so blown away by the craftsmanship and the artwork, but then thinking to myself, 'Where are the females in this game?'

### What is your favourite custom job so far?

Honestly, I don't have a favourite. But the ones that made people really stop and notice me are my Slimer Joints. Something about those crazy green shoes made people go, 'Oh shit!'

### What are your recommendations for the amateur who wants to paint sneakers?

Be prepared to spend a lot of time doing it and be prepared to drink a lot of Red Bull. People who don't do kicks tend to think it's a hell of a lot easier than it looks. Customizing is not for people who are impatient. It takes skill as well as patience. I spend about 9 hours on each pair of kicks I do because I handpaint them for the most accuracy. Also, there is a lot of trial and error. Trust me, I have a whole mound of beater kicks I like to experiment on. I taught myself EVERYTHING through experimentation.

### Have you run into any sexism being a female in the sneaker world?

Like in any other industry, men don't take women too seriously when it comes to business. People still have that 1950s mentality that a woman should sit there and try to look pretty. Eff that, I am college educated and I'm not going to just sit there and let my talents go to waste. Apparently a woman with her own business is still crazy, even in 2005. It's sad. I get a lot of hesitation when I do business with people, like guys need me to reassure them 400 times that their kicks will come out nice. And when they see them sometimes I want to be like, 'See, I told you asshole.' But that's not really good for business. It's the Jersey in me, what can I say...

### How do guys look at you being a sneaker customizer? Are they surprised?

When I first started customizing till this day, I put my work up on my Myspace page. I get like 100 messages a day from guys who can't believe I do sneakers... There is even apparently an entire thread about me on NikeTalk that I never saw. The internet is that crazy! I also get guys who come up to me on the street and ask me where I get my kicks done, and when I tell them I did them they give me a puzzled look, like they expected me to tell them my boyfriend did them or something.

### How much do they cost? Can folks order from all over?

Most of my kicks tend to be in the \$100-200 price range. I have a Paypal account and I take money orders and cash as well. Hopefully I will have a website up soon. Meanwhile, they can reach me at kgiovannacustoms@hotmail.com



KGIOVANNA, CUSTOMIZER

So what about after you found your favourite store, picked your dream sneakers, and walked out with your new babies? The story's not over if you're into making one-of-a-kinds. You gotta customize! In case you're still a rookie like me, you might go to a pro like KGiovanna. I hooked up with her to learn more...



LORI LOBENSTINE, FEMALE SNEAKERFIEND.COM

Well, last but not least, there's Lori Lobenstine who runs a website just for female sneaker fiends. I figured she had to be nuts (especially because she was interviewing herself!), but she actually had some rather insightful things to say...



### What made you decide to start a website?

Well, I really thought of it about a year and a half ago. I was having one of those disconnect moments, like when your bank account is empty but you are lining up for \$300 sneakers. Anyhow, I wasn't seeing hardly any females in the books and websites about sneakers, and yet I knew a whole mess of female sneaker heads just in my own little part of the world. So I figured there's got to be as many female sneaker fiends out there as there are Dunk colourways (approximately a gazillion), and I decided to try to find them. Since the best way to connect with folks these days is on the web, I thought, 'Hell, let me do something here.' I didn't know a lick of web design, but I'm learning, and meanwhile I'm out here raising an army of female sneaker heads! Look out...

### Why do you call yourself a fiend?

Well, the word fiend makes me think of someone who's gone beyond rational. They HAVE to have something, you know? And it's funny because, in general, I'm a person of moderation. But sneakers wreck all that (not that I've robbed or stolen for them...yet). And even when I have them I obsess about them. I might be in a meeting, or on the phone with someone, and I'm just drooling at my new kicks totally ignoring everything else! It's bad...

### Why do a website just for females? Isn't that divisive?

Not at all. In fact, a lot of guys have been really supportive because they respect the content and understand that it's different from other sites, not in opposition. I think true sneaker fiends have a lot of respect for other fiends, male or female. And it's not like women are coming to my site and avoiding the others. To the contrary, some women are loyal visitors to SF and other sites, and others are just learning about them through my site, so it's a kind of bridge into the online sneaker community.

### Are there really female sneaker fiends from all over?

Absolutely! FSF is still pretty new, and we already have visitors and content up from England, Australia, Italy, Singapore, France, Sweden, Germany, Canada, Scotland, Hong Kong, New Zealand, not to mention all over the US. I love it that women and girls are jumping on board, and I really had no idea how many are already designing sneakers, customizing them, selling them, etc. It's a great time to be a female sneaker fiend, let me tell you!

### How have the established sites felt about your new site?

Folks have been super-supportive. Truly. It's hard getting a new site out there and recognised, and it's really helped when sites like SF, CT, Sneakergame, Hypebeast, SlamXHype and Ladykickz have given me a shout out. Right now I'm also working on a little collaboration with Sneaker Pimps which should be really fun.

### What are your dreams in this work?

Wow, I have a lot of dreams! Let's see: I want to travel the world visiting and photographing my peeps, and then come out with a book about us with interviews, photos, collections, stories, etc. I want to design some sneakers for women that are so hot that all kinds of sneaker freaks are queuing overnight, and men are learning their size in women's! Haha! And I want to meet Missy Elliott, Ellen Degeneres, Dawn Staley and some other famous fiends. And you know what? I'd love to get paid for this so I can quit my day jobs!

So there it is, folks. Just the tip of the iceberg. Next issue I'll be covering the naked male models in Sole Collector, the huge Nike ad campaign for the Taurasi II's, and the FSF world tour! Girls got dreams...