
The BEAST of BURDEN

In the past ten years, Dia and her sister Meg Frampton have left their hometown in suburban Utah to chase their musical dreams. Navigating through various underground labels to the high-profile Los Angeles music scene, they, with the aid of accomplished artist manager Mike Kaminsky, have continued to tackle their passions. They never knew where they would end up; all they knew was how to write songs that hit “here, here and here”-one’s heart, mind and ears.

By Rachel Ann Cauilan

PUBLISHED
FEBRUARY 23, 2015

LOS ANGELES. A city of doe-eyed dreamers and cutthroat competitors; a city of newfound fame and fleeting fortunes; naïve dreams and swanky rides; health-conscious hipsters and ruthless industry people who all think they’re better than you.

It’s the entertainment capital of the world. The catalyst for fostering the next “big thing!” Turn around the corner and you’ll find dozens of aspiring talents battling each other out. One audition after the other. Throwing it out into the sky with no expectations. Some give up their whole lives for this. They want their names and faces to be recognized by the masses. It’s one in a million. It’s art. It’s commerce. It’s the intersection of art and commerce. It’s where you hope to turn your biggest dreams into reality.

There Mike Kaminsky was. A lanky, pale-skinned 34-year-old artist manager whose full-bearded mane can only be groped by his sidekick kitty he calls “Adventure Cat.” He was just one of those dreamers who strived to combat Hollywood’s denial of real suffering in the world.

But, with his artists producing number-one songs, hit multi-platinum records, having appearances on MTV and touring the world, Mike never expected to experience any of the success he has had in his life.



Just thirteen-years earlier in 2002, Mike was fresh out of the misery of college at the University of California, San Diego. He studied Economics but switched to Communications and Film once he found it in his heart to do something that interested him. He went on to run the local TV station at his school and, with a few music videos from an obscure rock band under his belt, he found himself as the assistant manager of Taking Back Sunday a year later. After he felt he gained just enough knowledge, he decided to leave and started his own record label.

Mike lived in a tiny two-bedroom shack of a house in the middle of a “crappy” Los Angeles neighborhood. He lived with one other roommate and girlfriend who stayed in his room at the time.

One night, his roommate came home and told him, “Hey, I hope it’s cool but I met these two girls. They’re in this band and I think they’re really cool. They’re recording an album and don’t have anywhere to stay, so I told them they could stay here.”

Mike, thinking they would only be there for a few days, obliged and let them sleep on his floor. The two half-Asian sisters from Utah looked like a couple of lost teenagers. A couple days later, three more guys came and ended up sleeping on his floor for a month.

Meg Frampton was 19, played guitar with curious eyes and had a quiet maturity about her. Her younger sister Dia, with a naturally warm and playful demeanor, grew up singing in county fairs and charmed everyone around her with her baby-doll brown eyes at just 17. The other floor-crashers included drummer Nick Price, bassist Ryan Groskreutz and lead-guitarist Kenji Chan.

Mike initially ignored them for the first couple of days. After he noticed they were still there and eventually talked over dinner, he grew a strange liking towards them.

“There is something very charismatic about those two girls,” he thought.

Perhaps it was their naïve dreams, charming sisterly banter or fact they had literally left home and had no idea what they were doing. It was as if they wanted to win so badly at something—so badly to succeed—and he admired that.

It was 2005 and he decided to take them on.



THE BAND TOLD HIM THEY WERE PLAYING A SHOW at South by Southwest (SXSW) and wanted him to come out and see them play. Mike agreed and later flew out to Austin, Texas and found them playing at a bar outside of SXSW.

“It was the worst show I ever saw in my whole life,” he confessed.

Each member of the band decided to dress in honor of his or her favorite musical genre. One guy wore a metal t-shirt. Another wore a punk cut-off jacket. One of the girls wore a pretty dress. Everyone played their own part without listening to what everybody else was playing and did not see how their part fit into the performance as a whole.

“This is a disaster,” Mike thought.

Later, he sat down with them and asked the band what they wanted to accomplish, what message they wanted to portray and what they should be wearing to at least be cohesive.

“It just never occurred to them,” he recalled. “It was like, ‘Oh yeah. Never thought of that.’”

IN A CITY IN SUBURBAN UTAH CALLED ST. GEORGE, sisters Meg and Dia Frampton, born to a Korean mother and English/Dutch father of six, made up about 0.8% of the Asian population living in a city that was more than 87 percent white. Naturally, the girls always felt a little different.

One Christmas, Meg received a karaoke machine and Dia an acoustic guitar; but, they soon realized their affinity for the other's gift.

The two formed their first band when Meg was in the eighth grade. Once they got to high school, they began to play local gigs and performances with friends in a band called Jade Harbor, named after the street they grew up on.

"I believe that in many situations ignorance and naiveté are a blessing," Meg later wrote on her blog. "You don't know how difficult things are really going to be, and if you don't know how difficult they are going to be, you aren't afraid to try in the first place."

As young teenage girls, they weren't afraid of failure.

Meg wrote a couple of songs after having just learned to create a chord progression. Dia, likewise, grew a liking towards the LeAnn Rimes records her dad showed her and instantly knew she wanted to be a singer.

"[Our] dad has always believed in his dreams—sometimes blindly," younger sister Jade mentioned. "He's the type of guy that says, well if you want to be a singer, you better go out and start singing... He lets you dream, but he also wants you to make those dreams happen."

In one instance, he took the girls to a music convention in Los Angeles called Taxi, an independent A&R company that helped songwriters, artists, bands

and musicians supposedly get their music heard by record labels or get placed into movies or video games. He emphasized to the girls that this was an opportunity and, "You're only young once."

The girls didn't take the entire process too seriously. They developed small crushes on fellow singer-songwriters and, during the last panel of the event, all of the songwriters brought their demo CDs to be assessed.

Four intimidating judges stood before them in a conference room as they listened to submissions with blank expressions.

The girls walked up to a pleasant looking woman. "She won't be too hard on us," Meg whispered to Dia.

They nervously handed their CD of random songs over as the lady smiled and popped her headphones on. The girls grasped each other's hands and shared a nervous glance.

Thirty-seconds in, the lady set her headphones down.

"I don't know if it's just because I've been listening to really bad music all afternoon, but I think this is really great!"

She handed the CD back to them. Dad Frampton jumped on the opportunity and told the lady about his girls being a "huge local hit." He handed the lady his card and they happily exited the room.

"She's the one!" Dad Frampton exclaimed.

"She's the reason we came!"

The manager-lady saw their potential and continued to look after the girls. She advised them to record a real demo CD with live studio musicians and take professional photos. But, before she took the two girls on as her clients, she flew out to Utah to watch an



intimate performance of Jade Harbor.

After the performance, the manager-lady shook her head and softly said, “The band has to go.”

Perhaps she didn’t think the girls were ready. The girls, young and dissuaded by disappointment at the time, decided to call it quits. That was the end of Jade Harbor.

Doghouse called *Something Real*. While their early songs had lyrics that were dense and complex, it was easy to see how different these girls were. They weren’t writing your ordinary teenage songs about heartbreak or cheesy love stories; rather, they wrote with a literary audience in mind.

They were young and didn’t have a lot of life

“I would rather work with a band that believes in themselves and really wants to win at all costs than a band that could write a good song,” Mike said. “You could learn how to write a great song, but drive is something that’s inherent within your personality. [Meg & Dia] can be mistaken for being naïve—like yeah, we’re gonna make it, we’re gonna go on the road and tour and we’re just gonna keep doing this until it works. It’s been ten years and Dia’s still doing it and still fighting.”

IN EARLY 2005, THE GIRLS RECORDED THEIR FIRST ALBUM, *Our Home Is Gone*, at a studio they could barely afford in Las Vegas. It consisted of mainly acoustic tracks of Dia singing and Meg playing guitar. They made 1,000 copies and, after playing a couple of shows, they decided they wanted to take their sound further and form a band.

They met drummer Nick Price when Meg got into a minor car accident and a friend recruited her to Price’s family-owned-auto-shop. After they lectured to Nick on how serious they were about playing music and touring the country, Nick agreed to join. They found bassist Ryan Groskreutz shortly after and guitarist Kenji Chan online. Collectively, they called themselves Meg & Dia.

“We knew that if we wanted to make something happen, we had to chase after it and not wait for it to come to us,” Dia mentioned.

While on the road, the band scored a gig opening up for a band called Limbeck. They got in touch with their tour manager—Mike’s roommate at the time—who worked with an independent label called Doghouse Records. He showed Meg & Dia to Doghouse, who then went on to sign them, and a year later they released their first record under

experiences, Mike noted. It was easier for the girls to get an outside perspective from famous classic authors.

From the song “Monster,” as inspired by John Steinbeck’s novel *East of Eden*, the girls wrote: “Violet wrists and then her ankles / Silent pain / Then he slowly saw their nightmares were his dreams.”

It seemed as if no one could understand their songs unless they read the book first. Mike even noted, “There are some words in there that don’t fit. It doesn’t make sense.”

Their music was “trying a little too hard to be smart, when really it should just aim for above-average,” a critic on the online music website *AllMusic* wrote. “*Something Real* is still fine, overall, but because it hasn’t quite figured out how to approach adult topics with a youthful gaze—or vice versa—it ends up falling a bit short.

But, they were passionate. In a live MTV performance of “Monster” in 2006, barefoot Dia swung back-and-forth as she held her microphone low in front of her face; her vocals crooned over listeners as Meg sang back-up and strummed her electric guitar ferociously; the rest of the band jammed and swayed across the carpeted floor as the power-driven rock riffs instilled a euphoric musical high within the band.

The girls were ruthless. Through self-promotion, they became MySpace's Vans Warped Tour band in the summer of 2006 after "MySpace Tom" Anderson found a message to fix a bug on their page. He entered them into a contest to play as the official MySpace band and won. They stole fans' hearts on the road as they told quirky stories about sleeping in Wal-Mart parking lots and buying a kid's Tom Petty t-shirt while signing CDs at their merchandise booth. Their average riffs and guitar-driven choruses with a straight-forward, pop-rock sound fit in well with the Warped Tour crowd. Together, their songs appealed to their young, emo and teenage angst-ridden listeners.

While the original bassist and guitar player left the band to focus on a solo career in late 2006, they found guitarist Carlo Gimenez through YouTube and bassist Jonathan Snyder through Mike's mutual friend later that year. This ended up being the final five-piece act in which the band would return the following year to play the Hurley.com stage. At this point, the band had gained momentum.

AS A KID, Mike was your average lost teenager. He found that life—such as religion and the media—was all a story to make everyone feel better.

After school some days, he visited a used CD store across his high school in Thousand Oaks and drowned himself in some really obscure records. He experienced Nine Inch Nails' *Downward Spiral* at maximum-volume and suffered through a severe depression. When he couldn't replace his peers, he found that these records—where someone had eloquently put into words what he was feeling—were kind of like a rite of passage.

"I think it's the first time anyone ever said you're allowed to have more than one emotion," Mike mentioned. "It's very hard to get an honest thought on TV or the radio, and when everyone else is surrounded by that, it's hard to get an honest thought from other people."

It was then that Mike discovered it was perfectly normal for humans to experience other emotions and feelings other than happiness. Living in a society that often masks away sadness, pain, suffering



or disappointment—and makes you feel shame for having those feelings—music made him feel like he wasn't alone.

He felt it was his mission to contribute to the honesty of feeling in the world. And he wanted to help the artists that would do that.

WHILE IN COLLEGE at the University of Utah, Dad Frampton used to tell Meg,

"You're going to regret this. You really don't need to go to college."

But Meg, like any other young teenager, had convinced herself that she needed an education to find a real job. She thought her and her sister's gigs around town wouldn't give her that.

She worked at Abercrombie & Fitch while in college and, one day during work, she found herself attempting to figure out the chord progressions and vocal melodies of the songs that played in the store. At the end of the day, all she could think was, "What am I doing?"

After her shift, she ran out of work and called Dia.

"Dia, you have got to get up here!"

"What? Why? I'm still in high school."

"I know, but high school isn't that important!"

"You're starting to sound like dad."

"So."

"So. I'm not coming up there."

"School isn't quite what I thought it was. My job,

although I'm grateful, is not what I'm supposed to be doing with my life! We need to start playing music again. I've written a few songs. We'll find a new band. Just come up here... Please?"

"No."

"Please? There are cupcakes in Salt Lake..."

"Okay."

“THOSE WERE PROBABLY SOME OF THE BEST TIMES WE HAD AS A BAND,” Mike revealed, referring to the band’s time on Doghouse Records.

One day, Doghouse came to the band and told them that they felt there was “something good here.” They wanted to take them to a bigger label.

Doghouse brought them to Warner Brothers. It was both Mike and the band’s first major label experience. They mentioned girls in rock bands such as Evanescence and Paramore doing really well, and thought if the band put more emphasis in rock they would do well. In 2007, they signed a deal with Sire/Warner Bros. Records and ended up working with one of the most famous rock producers to produce their long-awaited 2009 album *Here, Here And Here*.

With experimentation in new instruments (strings, synth, harmonica and alternative percussion), guest vocalists (Tom Higgenson of Plain White T’s) and songs with mature themes such as religion (“Black Wedding”) and politics (“Are There Giants Too, In The Dance?”), the band delivered a solid record.

But, as soon as the record was finished, everyone who helped the band at the label got fired or left. The CEO of the label who worked on their record thought his team wasn’t sharing his vision. He decided to shift gears, fire everyone, and the record was left in space. The band basically put the record out themselves.

They went on and returned to play at Vans Warped Tour 2009 from June through August. After, the songs were never heard again.

As Mike grew close with one of the heads of the label and felt it wasn’t working out, he asked to get dropped and the label dropped the band.

Naturally, the band was discouraged. No one

knew what they were going to do. But, Mike found the silver lining.

“You can make any kind of music now that you want. You don’t have anyone telling you to make a rock record or make a pop record,” he told them. “You can literally do anything you want to do. And that was the flash of inspiration that got everyone excited again.”

“I was 22, I think,” Dia remembered. “I got a job at a coffee shop. I was trying to get into Broadway but realized it’s even more difficult than being in a band. I moved [to New York because] of ‘quarter life crisis,’ shall we call it. It was a whim. There was no thought behind it. I just thought, New York City? Well, fuck it. Alright.”

REMEMBERING THOSE DAYS
RECORDING THAT SUMMER of 2010 in a beachside cabin by Tillamook, Oregon, Charlie Vela, a music producer, recording engineer, and early friend of Mike remembered that the band was in good spirits.

“[We were in] this little beach community, about an hour from Portland, and there was this cool little bar we’d go to after recording a lot of nights.”

The band spent a little more than a month out there. Noting that they were in one of those “little sleepy vacation towns,” Charlie remembered that that bar was where they would come up with ideas for the next day.

One night, Charlie recalled, “There was a really slow song that played and we had a couple of drinks. Everyone was like, ‘Oh this song is so great! I love this song so much! Why is this song so great?’ And we were like, ‘Oh it’s because they did this and they also did that and they only used three chords. It’s really simple and that’s why it’s so awesome.’”

After being inspired that night by the Rolling

Stones' "Beast of Burden," they woke up the next day and worked out ideas to produce the slow-moving, feel-good song "Bandits" off of their 2011 self-released album *Cocoon*.

The band had scraped up every last penny they could to make that record. When the record was done, labels weren't interested and the band didn't have enough money to hire a publicist. All they could do was get in a car and play shows until their bankroll ran out.



IN EARLY 2011, Mike received a call from a casting agent who told him, "I'm working on this show. I can't tell you anything about it but it's a reality show."

Immediately, Mike turned his friend down by saying that he received calls to do reality shows every day.

"But this one's different," the agent pleaded. "We don't make fun of anyone."

Shows like *American Idol* were all about making fun of contestants and laughing at how bad everyone was, Mike explained. "It's so stupid."

"We only do the best of the best and the goal of the show is to let the singers improve as the show goes on," the agent went on. "So they start good and end great."

That idea intrigued him.

Mike called Dia and told her, "Dia, this album [*Cocoon*] is so cold. No one will touch this album. I have this opportunity for you to be on TV for like ten

seconds, but maybe if you're trying out at auditions people will notice it and it can spark something."

Dia repeatedly said no.

"I don't like reality TV music shows," she mentioned. "I think it's kind of a cheap way to go about it. Just play music and write music that you love and tour your ass off. There's no golden ticket."

"You don't have a choice," Mike finally convinced her. "We have nothing else to go on. We can put the record out to like ten people, or we can try this."

Having had no idea what the show was about or who the coaches were even going to be, Dia decided she had nothing to lose. She agreed.

In a big warehouse room, there were four chairs and a lone microphone that stood about ten feet in front of them. Dia came and sang Norah Jones' "Come Away With Me" for about thirty seconds and left.

She thought, "That was weird. Well, who wants tacos?"

If Dia had learned anything in life, it was that you couldn't take life too seriously. She didn't pinpoint any one thing as her one and only chance. She's failed a million times in her life and wasn't afraid to fail or not get the callback. She just wanted to get her "fucking tacos."

At one of the callbacks, the team started talking to Dia and one of them asked, "What's the most embarrassing thing that's happened to you on tour?"

Dia recalled a time when she was on tour in New York and felt "deathly sick." She was crawled up on a couch, sweating because she had a fever and was on her period. She said she danced around onstage in her leggings and dress and by the end of the show, she found a big lump in her leg and saw that her tampon somehow fell out and got caught in her legging.

The whole room died of laughter. The casting director instantly wanted her back.

"She got on the show and she's like, 'Damnit! Now I gotta be on the show! This sucks!'" Mike said.

It never occurred to any of them how big the show, later revealed as *The Voice*, would turn out to be.

Blake Shelton, Adam Levine, Christina Aguilera and CeeLo Green were later announced to come onto the show as celebrity coaches who took contestants whose voices they liked under their wing. Dia,

who felt a little uneasy without her sister Meg with her (they hadn't known duos could audition and Meg was initially a guitar player), was turned off by the huge-scale performances she was forced to put on.

"There were lots of performers on the show that were cruising and having a great time [thinking] this is so fun," she remembered, "[but] I was constantly like, 'Oh my gosh, I'm nervous, there's so much pressure, I hope I don't trip on stage because of these big high heels they put me in.'"

From the blind auditions to the battles, in which Frampton was paired up with another singer to sing the same song and was judged on who "sang it better," every step on the show became a surprise to her.

"She would always be at the bottom, like she never got cut but she was always just about to be cut," Mike observed.

One week, Dia's boyfriend at the time suggested her to do a hip-hop song. Dia agreed. And while Mike was in the room while she played the song, he remembered feeling the oxygen get sucked out of the room.

"No one had done a reinterpretation of a song," Mike remembered. "Everyone just did cover songs. At the time, it was like karaoke. It was so stupid."

Dia's soulful and dark rendition of Kanye West's "Heartless" made her an overnight sensation.

"I remember sitting backstage [and] somebody came over to me and said, 'You're trending.'" Dia, claiming she is not computer-savvy, asked, "I'm trending? What? What does that mean?"

Next thing she knew, she gained 50,000 new Twitter followers overnight and sold a total of 480,000 downloads on iTunes over the course of the show. America fell in love with her unique takes on classic songs such as R.E.M.'s "Losing My Religion" and Tom Petty's "I Won't Back Down." She went on to win under coach Blake Shelton's team and was the runner-up of Season One.

Everyone thought this was the beginning of the rest of her life. That little doe-eyed girl from Utah with dreams of becoming the next LeAnn Rimes would have never expected any of this to happen. She made it on TV; her face was recognized by the masses; it was

inevitable that she was famous.

But, that wasn't so much the case.

After the show, Mike distinctly remembered feeling, "We're so screwed. No one ever wins a reality show and becomes famous. We thought it was the end of her career."

Universal Records signed Dia and gave her two months to record an album for a December 2011 release—less than six months since her stint on the show.

"I was in the studio seven days a week, for hours on end, losing my mind, and what arrived was a bunch of random songs, not a cohesive record," Dia remembered.

The record *Red* came out and it bombed immediately.



"If you think of the band as a company, then the manager is the CEO," Mike explained. "Their job is to have a vision for that company, motivate their team, and take that company in a direction ... making sure that whatever costs you'll accomplish that. Sometimes that goal changes, and sometimes it changes a lot. And it's the CEO's job to say, you know what, this goal isn't working, you should change the whole goal ... The part that's so stressful is that you probably have like fifty different people to oversee. After those fifty people—between their crew and everyone who goes along with them—there's literally hundreds of people who, at the end of the day, their life is 100% directly dictated by what I tell them to do. To have a 17-year old come to the company and be like, tell me what to do for the next ten years. Yeah, it sucks. I'm up at night worrying."

DIA CONVINCED HER LABEL, which controlled a majority of what was going on, to let her band be involved with the touring and recording. The band went on with her to tour on Blake Shelton's large-production country tour following the release of *Red* throughout 2012. But, as much as she fought to work as a band, Dia was put in the spotlight and sold as a solo act. The band became her backup and the change from band to solo-act was sudden.

Nobody at NBC or Universal really cared for the album, Mike noted. For them, the company put out Dia's album as an assignment. They didn't believe in it.

"We asked to get dropped and we finally got dropped," Mike said. "So this was now like her third or fourth label?"

After seven long years, the band decided to officially disband in 2012. Since then, Meg has created her own jewelry line called Chandler The Robot and has continued to play gigs with local bands with drummer-turned-boyfriend Nick. Guitarist Carlo took the opportunity to get married and has continued to play guitar with local bands. Bassist Jonathan also took the opportunity to express his culinary prowess and has become a well-known chef at some of the top restaurants in Los Angeles.

"I didn't want to head a different direction," Dia noted. "It just happened. Life is interesting that way."

MIKE REMEMBERED sitting back with Dia at his house trying to plan her next move.

"There were about a thousand times I wanted to quit," Dia reflected. "But when I woke up the next morning, I'd forgotten about the night before ... I really care about music and it makes me happy."

Defeated, Mike decided, "Screw it! Let's make a record you've always wanted to make. This big, beautiful, epic record."

Mike introduced Dia to his film composer friend Joseph Trapanese, who had worked on films such as *Oblivion* and *Tron*. She asked him to listen to a couple of her songs and perhaps produce and write together. They ended up having the same vision for the record, which will be released in the summer of 2015 with a six-song EP to be released February 23, under the name Archis.

Archis, a musical collaboration that has merged the symphonic instrumentation of the orchestra with pop vocals, is something beyond Dia has ever done in her career.

As she has tried to unload everything that she has learned in music from the past ten years of her career, she has never quite known if she was doing the "right" thing.

"It's very difficult," she confessed.

From being inspired by LeAnn Rimes when she

was just a little girl living in Utah, to listening to Blink-182 and Green Day when she grew into her teen years, to then working with pop writers who had written for U2 and John Mayer's band, Dia kind of figured out, "Okay, this is how you write the perfect song."

But, she felt that a lot of it had no depth or soul. It was "structured and robotic." She strived to fight out of that "perfect song" mentality and, with one hundred-percent of creative say for this record and "not one person who can get on the phone and screw around with me," she hasn't had a care for making the next radio-friendly hit. With sister Meg working and writing in the studio with her, she's been excited to embark on this new chapter in her life.

"I still think it's such a special thing to have anybody that's been there with you on the road because being on the road is really lonely, and you meet so many people everyday and you talk to so many different people," Dia reflected. "It was just so nice to have a sister there [on tour] ... We would go out and giggle, run around in our big coats, being together having a great time. Kind of like being on a vacation."



MIKE'S PHONE kept buzzing. He checked emails, responded to phone calls, scheduled meetings. He woke up at three or four that morning. He enjoyed how quiet these mornings were. If a new song sample came in, he listened to it uninterrupted by the noise of Los Angeles traffic and nearby nuisances. Later, he drove to his office in Pasadena. He took his lunch break—maybe to meet up with a new client or discuss business—and after, he returned to his work to do it all over again.

"The nature of my job is literally the intersection of art and commerce," Mike said. "Artists only come to me implicitly because my job is to monetize art."

In a scene in the 2014 movie *Birdman*, washed-up actor Riggan Thomson (Michael Keaton) ended up in the hospital after having blown his face off. His best friend/laywer Jake (Zach Galifianakis) was elated that everyone was buying tickets to his show and he was "over the moon so happy everything's working," Mike noted.

Not having a care for the artist, who was in a hospital bed, tied up and torn, Mike paused and asked, "Like holy crap is that me?"

Mike has always been in the position to link his artists up with the right people. From mere nobodies to worldwide superstars, Mike's work was often unnoticed.

At this point in his life, Mike has done more than he ever thought he was going to do. With ten artists currently under his wing, he has had artists such as 3OH!3, The Summer Set and Itch produce number-one songs, hit multi-platinum records around the world, have appearances on MTV and tour the world. Controlling his artists' press, publicity, touring, merchandise, crew, publishing and all of the other legal duties, their careers are literally in his own two hands; and he has rarely had the time for himself.

"I'm lonely everyday," Mike laughed.

Throughout all of his accomplishments, however, Mike has found that he has never felt quite satisfied. His life was "still the same" and "you keep looking," he mentioned; but he didn't know what for.

With four other roommates, he has hosted artist parties at his spacious home dubbed "Casa de Awesome" in the Silver Lake; he has hosted dinner parties with his friends called the "Electric Bibliotheque Cafe;"

and he has even opened up his own grilled-cheese shoppe in the Silver Lake called Heywood in 2012. Above all, he has loved being a part of a creative process that has allowed him to connect with other creative people and let others feel the same things he felt when he was just a lone teenager in high school.

Mike sees and signs his artists as his friends. You spend more time with them than you do a girlfriend, he notes. And he has never given up on any of his artists.

A part of what has brought him the most joy and sense of fulfillment in his life, however, has been in seeing his friends come together to share and to show their talents.

“I see all my friends in their careers and they literally put on a suit and they go to work for someone else everyday. I’m really, really, *really* glad I’m not doing that.”



CREDITS

Rachel Ann Cauilan is a writer, blogger and music-lover based in California.

“The Beast of Burden” is a story that was researched and written for Professor Erika Hayasaki at UC Irvine’s Literary Journalism workshop, “Web Narratives.”

All information was obtained through extensive research and interviewing with manager Mike Kaminsky of KMGMT and artist Dia Frampton in the Fall of 2014. Early information from Meg & Dia’s beginnings researched from Meg Frampton’s online blog.

Images obtained from

Front-page Cover: Dia Frampton’s Facebook

Early Meg & Dia Shots/Band Photos: megdiaband’s LiveJournal

Warped Tour Photo: Raymond Flotat of Mxdwn, Warped Tour 2009

The Voice Photos: NBC Universal

Dia Photo: Interview at Hard Rock Cafe, Jakarta, January 2014

Mike and Dia Photo: Facebook

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