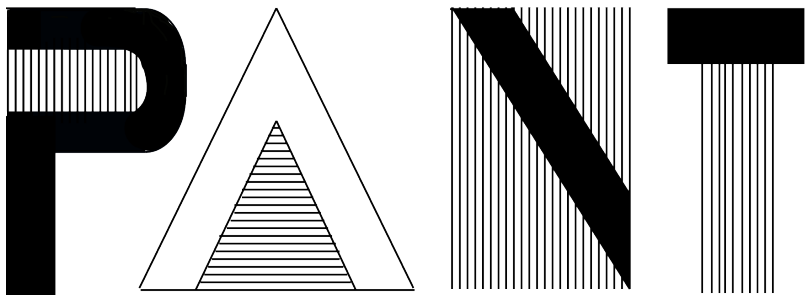
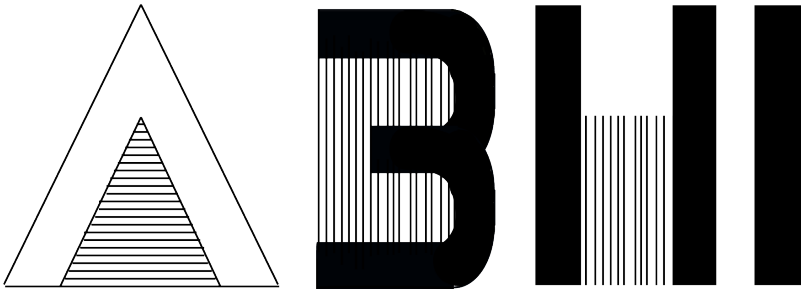
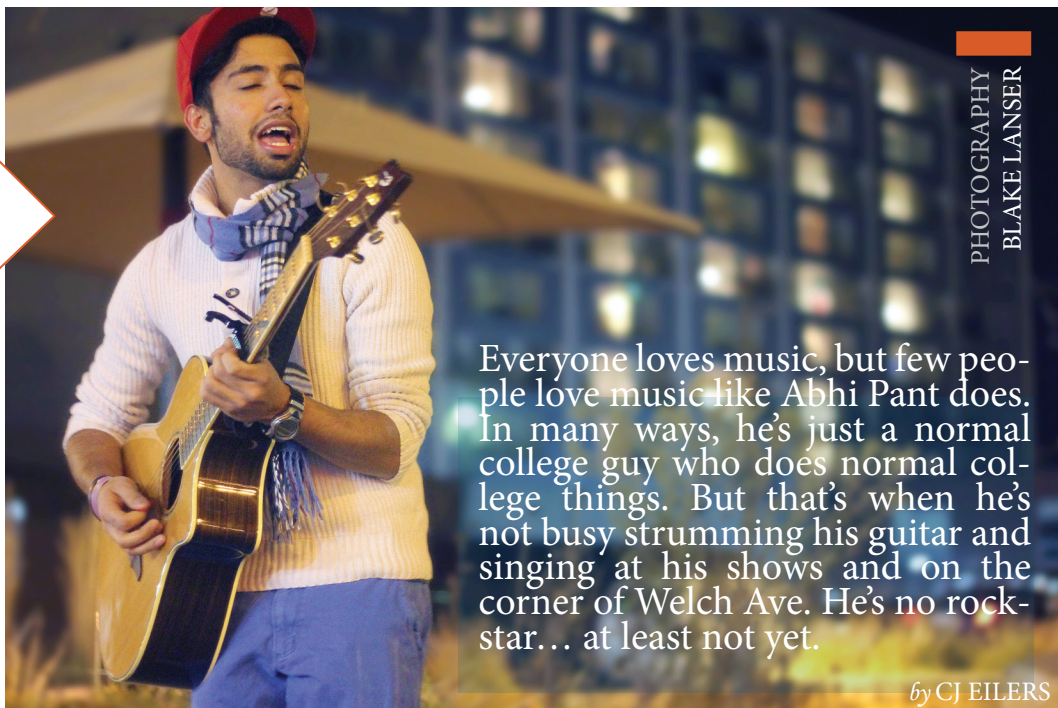


WHY



IS ON THE RISE



PHOTOGRAPHY  
BLAKE LANSER

Everyone loves music, but few people love music like Abhi Pant does. In many ways, he's just a normal college guy who does normal college things. But that's when he's not busy strumming his guitar and singing at his shows and on the corner of Welch Ave. He's no rockstar... at least not yet.

by CJ EILERS

## EARLY BEGINNINGS

Abhi Pant still remembers how heavy the Les Paul felt in his 14-year-old hands. Its red and yellow paint gleamed. The guitar still serves as a reminder of his musical beginnings and a homage to his idol, family friend Guaray Saini, the one who handed him the guitar with equally powerful words, "Thank me when you are accepting a Grammy."

He hasn't won any Grammys (yet) but we think he's well on his way. A member of Sigma Phi Epsilon, it seems too fitting that his cover of Jay Z's "Holy Grail" caught a lot of Internet attention thanks to a shout-out on TotalFratMove.com. Sure, the writer compared Pant's hair to Miley Cyrus'

new do, but he also said his signing "knocked it clear out of the park." Not to mention the amount of traffic he sent to the YouTube cover that recently surpassed 27,000 views.

These monumental numbers had modest beginnings, all starting with a typical jam sesh with Saini and an acoustic guitar.

"I would go to many of his concerts," Pant said, a junior in Industrial Engineering at Iowa State. This night was seemingly normal. After a show everyone returned to Saini's house for dinner. Afterward, Saini and Pant started playing together like always but this was the first time Pant had ever played acoustic guitar. "It was one of the coolest jams because I was

playing guitar with an idol of mine," Pant remembers.

This time was different to Saini and he saw something in Pant that spurred him to hand down his own guitar. "I was quite touched by Abhi's burning desire to learn and perform," Saini said.

That guitar was so much more than just a gift to Pant. "When he gave me his guitar, he not only gave me a new instrument to fiddle around with but he gave me something to strive for," Pant said. In that moment, Saini had sparked the flame for Pant's self-described "forest fire" of a music career.

Since then, Pant has indeed strived. A multi-talent musician/singer, Pant plays piano, drums, guitar, santoor (an Indian instrument) and

"I try to create an atmosphere where everyone goes through a similar emotional roller coaster together."



sings. His older sister, Arohi, believes that Saini's guitar was the birth of the artist in Abhi, even at such a young age.

"Abhi was fascinated by all these instruments that Guarav had," Arohi said. "He got his first electric guitar from him. It was the first instrument that he was excited about getting."

He has played gigs supporting national acts such as Drop City Yacht Club,

## THE ABHI EXPERIENCE

Creature Feature, Green Tea and Nearly Flightless and has

headlined local shows here in Ames. Despite the differences in the sizes of these shows, Pant says that the atmosphere of his performances remains the same.

"I try to create an atmosphere where everyone goes through a similar emotional roller coaster together," Pant said. "It's the artist's job to make people listen to them."

One of Pant's earliest public performances is recounted by Saini, which was during the Indian celebration

of Diwali. While still learning, Pant got up during a gathering and made his best attempt at a Green Day.

"The funny thing was that the occasion and the audience was not the right kind," Saini said. "The audience was there to listen to live religious/cultural devotional songs; not punk! This did not faze Abhi. He did his thing, bowed and left."

Pant doesn't just stop with bringing his energy and experience to live shows. He takes this philosophy





with him into the studio as well. In addition to being an engineering major, he is a student of music production.

“In recording, I mainly try to be as genuine to my objective and message as possible,” Pant said. However, he explains that there’s more to it than that. “There are so many aspects of production: the size of the room, the sound you want, the beat. It’s all part of the artist you want to be.”

Pant has a wildly eclectic taste in music, and has been

influenced by everything from metal to funk. His mother, a Indian classical musician, provided him with music from that genre while his sister introduced him to Western styles of music.

“He would listen to music with me and tried to imitate the vocals,” Arohi said. “That’s when he started to sing.”

Arohi is a huge fan of her brother’s music. She listens to all his new recordings he posts on his music pages, and always shows off new songs to her friends.

“It’s his passion. He loves music,” Arohi said. “His passion makes his music what it is. He’s taken a few classes for his instruments, but it’s really his drive that makes him play so well.”

Pant has been involved with multiple projects over the last few years. Two of those projects include Bull of Arc and The Underwater Elephant.

## HE’S LOCAL

Bull of Arc was an alternative band that featured other Iowa

State students, with Abhi singing and playing guitar. The band started performing in venues across Ames in January of 2012 and they soon had opportunities to travel and expand their fan base. However, different expectations led them to disband for the time being.

The Underwater Elephant is Pant's current project. For the most part, it's an experimental solo project, but Pant collaborates with artists

## ECLECTIC INFLUENCES

like Nnamdi Igbokwe, a local amateur rapper. Unlike Bull of Arc, Underwater Elephant finds itself drawing from rap, R&B, hip-hop, electronic pop and other sources.



“A lot of it is also influenced by the sounds I’ve heard in the different countries I’ve lived in,” Pant said. “Basically, I’m trying to get out of my comfort zone with this project and try completely new things. The project is about 5 months old and so far it’s been super interesting.”

A member of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, Pant has played multiple shows for several Greek events, including the Greek Bash 4 Hope that was organized by Hope 4 Africa, a non-profit student organization that raises money to promote education in Africa. Meredith Whitlock, president of Hope 4 Africa, explains how Abhi has



become a fixture in the Greek community.

“People really enjoy Abhi’s work because he does his own music and other’s music,” Whitlock said. “He promotes himself so well and he’s a really nice, down-to-earth guy.”

Whitlock met Pant at another music event that her organization puts on, Muziki 4 Hope. The event featured Bull of Arc this past spring. Meredith and her team enjoyed Pant and his band so much that they asked him to play for them again this semester.

**“He’s entertainment at your fingertips,”** Whitlock said. **“You don’t come across guys like Abhi all the time.”**

Pant has also taken his talent to the web, independently releasing his material on sites like YouTube and Soundcloud, including his “Holy Grail” cover.

The video has caught the eye of several acts such as nationally acclaimed indie

RYAN BUSH COURTESY





group Young the Giant, as well as several DJ's who are interested in working with him.

"I've been working with two recently," Pant said. "Ozzie is a DJ from the UK that does a lot of crazy, trance electronic songs. Then there's DJ's Neverendingstory. We are releasing a single I did with Danny Cole and Nnamadi called Brainstorm."

Success and attention doesn't seem to affect Pant and how he takes every chance he can get to play shows in Ames. During weekends, you can sometimes find Pant on Welch Avenue on the warmer nights, playing guitar and singing near the bus stop across from Kum and Go. Passerbys stop their partying for a few minutes to listen to Pant play. The amount of people who stop and listen hardly matters to him. He just wants people to enjoy themselves.

"I just do it whenever I feel like it," Pant said. "For me, it's a way to to practice and it's such a cool experience to have

someone stop, listen, smile and sing along."

However, not everyone enjoys his street playing.

"A guy from a bar tried to take the mic and sound system away from me," Pant said. "I had Charlie Fovey, a football player, around to help with drunk people, and he stopped him."

Still, Pant enjoys playing in Ames. He explains that Ames itself is a music scene that continues to grow and grow.

"I think Ames is like a melting pot," Pant said. "There is so much different stuff and definitely has an up and coming music scene. I think the one thing they need is more festivals, more outreach and more appreciation."

As for future plans, Pant plans to continue working with DJ Ozzie, though he is unsure when the final product will be finished. His project with DJ's Neverendingstory, "Brain Storm," which features Igbokwe and Danny Cole is on SoundCloud and YouTube. Igbokwe feels that working

## UNRELENTING ENERGY

with Abhi does anyone wonders.

"The best part about working with Abhi is feeding off his creative energy," Igbokwe said. "It's weird, but when I perform with him, I get that energy that you don't get from performing alone. He can know the difference between a good or bad melody, just like that."

Although unsure where his career in music will lead, he is excited to try new things. Currently, Pant is working on an EP through his Underwater Elephant project and plans to have it released on January 15th. At such a young age when he was first handed a guitar, to supporting national acts today, Abhi Pant plans to keep making music forever. "The fact that my dad's buddy believed in me enough to just hand me a Les Paul encouraged me tons. So it really did mean a lot and I promised him big things. Now I live and breathe music and the fire will only stop burning when I'm done living."