

EPIISODE 068

CHICKEN AND THE WOLF

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Jordan and Jeremy Coon, Brethren Design Co.

AND

Philip Phillips, Chicken and the Wolf

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Follow-up, a weekly podcast that goes in depth into projects recently reviewed on Brand New featuring conversations with the designers, and sometimes their clients, uncovering the context, background and design decisions behind the work.

ARMIN VIT

Hi, this is Armin Vit and welcome to episode number 68 of The Follow-up.

This week we are following up on Chicken and The Wolf, a Nashville-style hot chicken, quick service restaurant with three locations in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Created by the husband and wife team of Philip and Danielle Phillips, the restaurant's first location was a tiny 360 square-foot food stall inside Mother Road Market, Tulsa's first food hall. It then opened a second location in the food hall in the Bank of Oklahoma Tower and its third location, finally a standalone restaurant, opened late last year along historic U.S. Route 66 on the location of the Phillips' first restaurant, Lone Wolf, which started as a food truck in 2015. Serving fried chicken tenders and sandwiches, Chicken and the Wolf is well known for its spice level, advising its customers to order a level or two down from what they are used to because as its tagline says, it goes hot in, and it goes hot out.

The project, designed by local firm Brethren Design Co. was posted on Brand New on February 20, 2023. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast068 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast068, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Jordan and Jeremy Coon, brothers, Co-owners, and Co-creative Directors of Brethren Design Co.; and Philip Phillips, Co-owner of Chicken and the Wolf.

In this conversation we hear about the Phillips' realization that their brand wasn't keeping up with the conversation around their product which may sound like a very logical thing to realize but, as a business owner, it's often one of the hardest. Once they found a partner in Brethren, with whom they shared a lot in common — among other things as Philip noted, they were “all raised on Mr. T, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and swear words” — they were able to develop a tone of voice, visually and verbally, that was, almost literally, pure fire. Also sharing an affinity for skateboard culture and fart humor, the identity found its stride through a funky custom typeface and a seemingly endless supply of kick-ass illustrations including, as we find out towards the end, a wizard dipping chicken tenders in a cauldron full of hot sauce because of course. The episode runs a little over our usual time but you try and contain Philip's evident passion and enthusiasm for what he and his wife have created in partnership with this dynamic brother duo.

Now, let's listen in as Bryony follows up with Jordan, Jeremy, and Philip.

BRYONY GOMEZ-PALACIO Those around me know I am a fan of all things spicy. From food to language and everything in between. So it's no surprise that I want to get to know more details on how Chicken and the Wolf evolved into a visually spicy brand that matches the extra spicy food they have to offer. Jordan, Jeremy, and Philip, welcome to The Follow-Up.

JORDAN COON Thank you. Nice to be here.

BRYONY If we could just take a moment to give us your names and who you're representing.

PHILIP PHILLIPS My name is Philip Phillips. I'm representing Chicken and the Wolf. I am Co-owner with my wife Danielle Phillips.

JORDAN I'm Jordan Coon with Brethren Design Co., Co-Owner and Co-Creative Direction.

PHILIP Jeremy Coon, little brother of Brethren, Co-Owner as well. We wear a lot of hats as it's just the two of us, so we do it all.

BRYONY Sounds familiar. Philip, let's start with you to figure out a little bit of where Chicken and Wolf comes from. So if you could take a minute to tell us how, and when, you and Danielle your wife started Chicken and the Wolf.

PHILIP We were approached a handful of years ago, I think four years ago by a company in town called theuh, Lobeck Taylor [Family] Foundation. They were starting a food hall here in town. They were trying to be the place as like a starting grounds, an incubator for a lot of local concepts that have ideas, you know, home cooks that are wanting to learn how to start restaurants. So they were creating a food hall with like 18 stalls inside of it, and they approached us because my wife and I have a concept in town called Lone Wolf that is about 11 years old now. We started as a food truck and we were really popular, grew into a couple of restaurants and Lone Wolf is really what we were known for in town. We were the lone wolfs of the food industry and we were known as Lone Wolf.

So we were approached by this food hall concept. They wanted a couple of local anchors to be in the food hall—places that weren't gonna turn over kind of annually as it's an incubator kitchen. So they approached us, but they wanted to see if we would create a new concept for this space. For a couple of years, my wife and I had been obsessing over hot chicken. Nobody was really doing hot chicken here in Tulsa yet. There were hot chicken sandwiches here and there, but nobody was really doing a full-blown Nashville-style hot chicken concept. And we were just waiting for some of the other local concepts that have way more money than we have to do it. We knew that

somebody was gonna do it at some point, but we got approached and we finally said, well, you know, I mean I guess this is our opportunity.

We've been waiting for somebody to do hot chicken. Nobody's done it, so let's just take the plunge. If we're giving opportunity to create something new from scratch, let's do what we've been waiting for. We just jumped in and said, you know, we're gonna do hot chicken. We were basically given a four month timeframe to create this concept, write all of our recipes, create our identity, do everything. We just jumped into it. We didn't have a name yet, and actually the name came from our three-year-old, his name is Phoenix. We were driving around Tulsa and we had both of our kids in the car. It was five and three at the time and we were just spitting out names. Said guys, we have to come up with a name for this restaurant. We took a full year to create Lone Wolf's name. We spitballed that with all of our friends and everybody we kne. Before we'd settled on the name, we had a bunch of horrible names. We just said, well let's just do this as a family. If my kids know that we're Lone Wolf, everything's about Wolfs. And we said, you know, we're making a chicken restaurant. And my wife and I at the time were reading nonstop fairy tales to our kids at nighttime. We're reading books every night of the week and we said, we kind of want this name to feel like a fairytale. That's the only direction that we had is we wanted the name to feel like a fairytale. My three-year-old in his innocence and also ignorance, the first words he blurted out of his mouth were: chicken and the wolf. And we just simply said, you know, this is amazing! We actually liked this.

So we started putting together a story about the chicken and the wolf; and it was this whole storyline about the Gruffalo where the chicken is afraid of the wolf, but the wolf winds up respecting the chicken. They ride around together as a pack, the chicken is protecting the wolf. So we had this whole like comic book idea in our head and this fairytale about it, but we had no idea direction of branding. So we put together really quick branding that was really basic. We didn't know what

our identity was gonna be, yet. So we put together a package with a designer we were working with at the time. It wasn't really full-blown design work, it was more drawings and then we could just choose something that we liked. We put together a very quick identity for Chicken and the Wolf, just slapped it together, got ourselves open.

That's kind of how it was brought to light. We were simply approached, we were given an opportunity, we seized it, we accepted the first name our child gave us <laugh>. Later that year it backfired on us in the fact that Bon Appetit, you know, every year they announced their favorite restaurant of the year. Well, the year that we formed our LLC, we heard of a restaurant called Turkey and the Wolf.

BRYONY Oh no <laugh>.

PHILIP We were like, oh no, oh no. But we just went ahead and rolled forward with it anyways, we didn't really know anything about 'em at the time. But then they've grown to be fairly popular. So it has been a contested name, you know, Chicken and the Wolf, Turkey and the Wolf. There's Owl and the Wolf, Turtle and the Wolf. There's everything all over the world. <laugh> Our name came out of context from Lone Wolf, and our innocent three-year-old, and building a fantasy name.

BRYONY And serving chicken. So it makes sense.

PHILIP Yeah, it makes sense.

BRYONY So how long did you have the slap together branding before you thought, okay, let's move on to a new rebrand?

PHILIP I think that it was two and a half to three years, and it was really the pandemic when it came down and shut everything down. We continued operating all through the pandemic as a to-go operation. But I mean, I think the pandemic made a lot of people sit back and take a look at their businesses and say, what are we really doing here? Why are we doing this? Is this something we stand behind? And when we sat back and looked at Chicken and the Wolf, you know, what we

saw was: we're not representing who we are. And also a lot of that was figuring out that first year, who are we gonna be? You know? And a lot of the way the public engages with you is part of what creates your identity. It's got like making a child. You have a hope is what it's gonna be, but you really have no idea where it's gonna go.

And so we realized that we became this place that was all about adults reconnecting with their inner kid. I've never in my life had more grown men and grown women come to me and readily talk about their bowel movements.

BRYONY All right! <laugh>

PHILIP By creating Chicken and the Wolf, it started this dialogue of, hey, let me tell you about my morning. It was this constant thing where we're constantly giggling with grown adults about the fact that our chicken is so spicy, you get to experience it multiple times. <laugh> We came up with this tagline, "it goes in hot, it goes out hot". So our hashtag became #hotinhotout. And so it really turned into this whole dialogue about just embracing the fact that even though we put on grownup clothes we're still the teenagers that we wore 20 years ago, it started to evolve into this childlike—

BRYONY Humor and sensibility?

PHILIP Immature humor, which is what I've always been, a foulmouthed kid my entire life. We started to look at that and say, oh well maybe we can just embrace who we are. And so when we looked back at and we said we wanted to change, it was really about us saying, you know, what we've created here doesn't represent who we are. And when we did that, we were looking at other places, and what we wanted to do with Brethren was we wanted to become uniquely who we are. We didn't want to even take a look at anybody else's branding. We didn't wanna look at colors, we didn't wanna look at fonts, we wanted to look at nothing. We wanted to sit down with somebody to say, Hey, let's tell you who we are and let's try to make some branding that's

representative of exactly what we personally are. Sitting back and saying, who are we and why are we doing this? And really starting with the branding has opened up our whole world of now we really know the lane that we're in.

BRYONY So it seems like the food hall was an incubator for your identity to find yourself, and the pandemic made it nice and slow and steady in that process. Jordan and Jeremy, how did you get involved?

JORDAN It's interesting. Jeremy and I started about the time Chicken and the Wolf came out. I live in Tulsa, Phillip's in Tulsa, Jeremy's in St. Louis. But I've been a fan of Lone Wolf for years. Like my first agency job, I used to walk down to Lone Wolf Food Truck and get it all the time. So I've been a fan of what Phillip and Danielle have been doing for a long time. And when I saw Chicken and the Wolf launching on Instagram, I actually reached out to them and was like, Hey, I don't know if you guys have branding yet, but we would love to talk about it with you. And Phillip replied and he said, Hey man, I saw your stuff. It's really cool. We already have branding. We'll keep you in mind in the future. It's funny, Philip and I would see each other from time to time, our kids were going to the same early—

PHILIP I was about to say, how about every day of the week? Like we didn't know each other yet. So we had only had that email communication. I actually didn't even know what Jordan's face looked like. We had only had that email. We took our kids to the same Mother's Day Out program. So like every day of the week I would be walking in and he'd be walking out and everyone's like, I swear that's him...

JORDAN <laugh>

PHILIP Branding. But I'm so socially awkward when I'm just like with my kids, it's like Dad life.

JORDAN Yeah.

PHILIP We never once stopped and addressed one another.

BRYONY That is hilarious.

JORDAN Yeah. And then I think Philip reached out when the time felt right. Like kind of piggybacking off what he said, coming out of the pandemic. It was after that first wave I think we started that engagement and went from there. It was like, what do you guys think about rebranding? And Jeremy and I always position everything from, we do like to have a discovery session. I think one thing that was so beneficial is Philip and Danielle, they really do have such a good sense of who they are and I think we're all kind of cut from the same cloth in a way. Like Jeremy gr skateboarding a lot, Philip played music and so did I. And we all come from like punk rock and skateboarding. We are lucky in that sense. And I think that's why this project is successful too, is that we all understand where each other comes from. It just started organically in a sense, and it was almost like a long time coming.

PHILIP Yeah, being very similar in age and background. We were all raised on Mr. T and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and swear words, <laugh>. So you know we have a lot in common.

BRYONY Well I can't relate exactly. I do have four brothers. I'm familiar <laugh>. It would be good to understand a little bit of Brethen's work environment. It's the two of you,, is there somebody else involved? You're in two different cities. How do you approach projects?

JORDAN We're in two different cities. Nobody else is involved really <affirmative>. We have partners that can do things that we can't that we bring in, and we actually did bring in my buddy David Hoffer to help us with signage, he does environmental signage and things like that. Our process with branding is pretty much the same every time. The outcome is always different of course, but we start with a basic discovery session. You know, I had worked at agencies for 10 years previously where I built this system where we engage in the tone of voice and discuss like what we want out of the brand, who the customers are, visually where we want to go. It's usually like an hour and a half. Doing it with them was so easy just because even the "hot

in hot out”, the hashtags, like some of the taglines that came through, Philip already had that tone of voice. So ,we were able to then just start executing on that. But that’s basically our process. Jeremy, you want to talk about our first round of creative, like how we usually approach that as far as like identity?

JEREMY COON With first rounds we usually just focus on type to get a good direction. We usually give like two to three options... with Chicken The Wolf, we did four. With each option we usually explore a little bit, maybe some sub-marks to see the legs of the typography, and then we also show it on mocks as well. With every first round of presentation you gotta show logos on mocks. That’s for us, we think looks flat and it looks amazing, but sometimes you just gotta throw it on a shirt or something. With Chicken the Wolf we did relative stuff so we threw it on food wrappers, like a little chicken to-go box. We threw it on a skateboard as well cuz Phil loves skateboarding.

PHILIP And as a client being able to see all of that stuff helped dramatically. It really helped shape the direction that we went. Being able to see in those mockups, it’s not necessarily what our purveyors can actually create, but it gives us a great idea of where we needed to start. I mean it was incredible from a client aspect to be able to see all of that.

JORDAN Yeah.

JEREMY Yeah. It makes it come to life and it makes it seem real.

JORDAN Jeremy and I make our own fonts. We’re super into typography and I think there was a period in design where everyone was having kind of marks, especially in the restaurant business, I’m like, a typographic logo is the best way to go, I feel like. And when you can have unique typography you can stand out so much. Pretty much everything we pitched directionally was a custom typographic mark that could have the legs. And the one that we landed on was some typography that we started, and Jeremy and I definitely felt that was the way to go. And then Philip and Danielle gravitated towards the same one. So it was

the preferred direction. The name is so long like Chicken and the Wolf is so many letters, we ended up making an entire typeface out of it, which I think comes through in the branding with the taglines. Some of their taglines back to the brand. I think when you see things like “Cluck yeah” you can see it, and know that that’s Chicken and the Wolf once you’re familiar with the ecosystem of it.

JEREMY Yeah.

PHILIP Yeah, it was super important.

JEREMY Yeah, it creates huge brand recognition, being able to have such a custom typeface and used to cross the board that way. <affirmative>

PHILIP That was big for us. You know, when we brought it to him, we wanted to embrace the fact that the majority of my life outside of work has been about skateboarding, and skateboarding and art. And so we really wanted this to feel like the Bones Brigade, basically just every little bit of pop culture that we grew up put into some sort of professional typeface. I mean, you know, I see Pe-wee’s Playhouse when I see it, I see Bones Brigade when I see it, I see Lance Mountain’s, old art, like, I mean there’s so much that I see in this and a lot of it is just, it’s the overall vibe. It gives the exact vibe of: we are here to provide an experience, you’re gonna have an experience where you can come here. It’s going to obviously be lighthearted. The typography was so absolutely imperative and it really sums up all of the feelings even without the imagery. You can see what we’re going for through the typography.

BRYONY And of those four directions, Philip, was it an easy choice for you and Danielle? or did you go back and forth a little bit and come up with feedback later?

PHILIP It was crystal clear for me which one I liked. I typically don’t have a hard time deciding, but my wife is the polar opposite of the way that I operate, which is great in business because it forces me to constantly reflect upon the things that I would just bowl in a china shop through...

JORDAN <laugh>

PHILIP You know, it was clear to me which one it was. But we always make sure to send all of our things to our family members. You know, we have a very diverse family as far as their backgrounds, and opinions, and beliefs, and how they operate in life. So when we can send it out to all of them, we typically get a very clear idea as to which direction we should go. Now I will say when we sent these out, it was a cluster fuck <laugh> because everybody's opinion was totally fucking different. <laugh>. Basically what we found out in asking other people, and Danielle and I really honed this in our opinions, became kind of set like concrete, once we sent it out to everybody and we realized that this is not cut and dry. Everybody liked all four designs. So there was little groups and all of the members that we sent out to that all gravitated to specific designs.

And when you broke those family members apart—who they are—it made perfect sense that this one was for this group, and this is for this group, and this for this group. So we were left with four options that would all work, all dependent upon your viewpoint. It turned our opinion into concrete in the fact that we said, okay, well we're gonna be who we are. We are gonna be who we are, we know which one we like. This represents us. We know that our heart says this. Even though we have family members telling us that is definitely the wrong direction, <laugh> we're gonna go with family members that put it in this direction.

JORDAN Some of the initial directions survived throughout the branding. Like there was a version where we had all the type was on fire basically, and we kept the chicken from that, that was on fire. And we've used it as the graphic element in certain places, like on the side of the building, or on the parking thing. And we've kind of thrown that into other elements. So it's funny how some of it all could work together...

PHILIP Right!

JORDAN Again, we were pushing to have that typographic voice, but some of the stuff was so graphically fun and the brand is so fun, we felt some of it could survive and it did.

PHILIP I mean if you look at our stickers or our shirts that we've printed so far, there are elements from all four of those branding packages cuz we were like, you know... <laugh> It could work... <laugh> And it has, it absolutely has. Because you know we have that set and stone <affirmative> typeface, that set in stone font, that is the main font. So all of these little other things are just design flourishes that work in conjunction. <affirmative>

BRYONY And Philip, had you encountered the idea of having a custom typeface before this project? Or was this a novel idea?

PHILIP It took me straight back to my 2002 typography class <laugh> that I fucking hated! <laugh> I hated typography so much as a design student because I was just simply not good at typography. However, I've known this whole time, I always think in design, I wanted to be a graphic designer for college. I wound up going at a food instead. You know, it's always been knocked into my head. And anytime I look at a billboard, anytime I look at a logo, I'm looking at typography design. And I'm looking at it from a viewpoint and like, I fucking hate that cause I'm not good at it. <laugh>

I'm just no good at that. So I've known how important it is, but it wasn't front and center with... the designer that we originally went with, with our packages was somebody that I went to college with for graphic design. I knew him through college, knew that he was good at work, but he's creating a whole business thing on his own side and it really wasn't about putting together branding packages. So he was kind of doing stuff as a favor for us. He was giving us really cool drawings and imagery and stuff like that, but there was never a focus on the typography aspect of it. And I always felt gypped in that regard, that there wasn't something creative or something custom being put

in. I was absolutely ecstatic to know that we were gonna go all in on typography with Brethern.

JORDAN I forget that we went to the same program actually, different times. We went through the same design program <laugh>. That's so funny.

PHILIP Yeah. <laugh>

BRYONY You know, we've never had a client and designer go through the same program before.

JORDAN Isn't that wild? That has to be extremely rare. <laugh>

PHILIP Yeah, that is wild. So you did the same bullshit typography classes I did?

JORDAN Yeah, except for I loved them <laugh>. I was like-

PHILIP Had they moved on to digital yet? Cuz we were still doing everything pencil. Yeah, pencil and paper. Even the drafting class. When I was doing drafting, there were no fucking computers. <laugh> We had to draw all of our grids. It was insanity.

JORDAN Yeah, we were still hands on and I think that was beneficial to us to where we are now. Cuz that Chicken and the Wolf type started on the iPad drawing. I mean it's digital, but it's still that hand element to it.

JEREMY When I use a pen and paper now, I'll like draw a line and I'll double tap it, but try to erase it, like undo it <laugh> and I'm like, oh, I'm using a paper. It's crazy.

PHILIP Draw one line. Oh that's exhausting. That's just exhausting. <laugh>

BRYONY All right, so you knew which direction you wanted, you had a clear foundation for it. Let's get into more of the details. I wanna focus, especially in the illustration. It's quirky, it has so much character, it's so surprising in how the prey becomes a predator of the predator becomes the prey, and all of that. So I'd love to hear how those stories came about, how you developed all of the illustrations and the particular style.

JEREMY Yeah, we just talked about what it represents. I mean, you're eating chicken, but like we even came up with a tagline, "Don't be a chicken, eat like a wolf". You're eating like a wolf, you're eating like the hot chickens. But we even come up with illustrations where like the chicken is in the wolf's belly or the, the wolf is in the chicken's belly. Kind of having that narrative... when it came to the illustration style, because of the way that story was and just how it was, it just felt primitive. I just kind of thought about stripping it down, something simplistic and primitive, like almost cave drawing-esque style, <affirmative> just kind of developed from that.

JORDAN And I think we knew in the future we would wanna have more fun and fuller illustrations, but from like a brand level perspective...

JEREMY Yeah...

JORDAN We thought as icon-like that we can keep them, they would have a lot of legs in placement and easy reproduction to where when we're making merchandise and stuff and we have a big mural in there as well, that's when we can get to illustrate a wolf and really detail the hair and the chicken and everything like that. But from a brand perspective, it was nice to have these icon-like illustrations, the predator/prey thing happening, and then just the inclusiveness of them carrying each other in their bellies we thought was very interesting.

JEREMY The fact that black and red, the two colors of having it simple like that, it just, it just hits hard on the brand as well.

PHILIP And it wasn't even—believe I asked them about this—it wasn't a decision on their part, but when the first package came back and you're looking almost tribal in the way the design is, I instantly went back to, you know, we were pushing for like bones brigade style design work, you know, we wanted early skateboarding stuff. And it was so a surprise to me that they came onto this without even really using this as a reference. But I was really inspired by early Lance Mountain drawings. He was kind of the one that took skateboarding into a more artistic direction, as far as board design goes. And some of his early designs

were these black and red tribalistic looking designs that were on a skateboard. And I remember riding the guys or calling him and saying, oh my gosh guys, this is amazing, did you take this inspiration from the Lance Mountain stuff? And they're like, no. What are you talking about? <laugh> Well this is, it's incredible that it landed on this cuz it all came together exactly the way that it should.

BRYONY I wanna know what your kids have to say about the illustrations.

PHILIP Oh, my kids love it. All my kids are all about farting <laugh>. They love farts.

They can't handle anything spicy whatsoever—they will cry for 25 minutes like you just hit 'em within the kneecaps. But they love farts, so it's great.

JORDAN <laugh>. Yeah, it was funny when they were moving one of the new locations into a food hall, it's kind of in a corporate setting and we had that meeting with all of the corporate team, the oil and gas people, and they loved the chicken with the wolf in its belly. And we thought they were gonna be so afraid of it. They were like, that's—

PHILIP They were obsessed! <laugh>

This is the funniest thing we've ever seen. Now please take away all of the things that say "cluck yeah", you can't have that <laugh>, but we really like this clever chicken with a wolf in his belly. <laugh>

BRYONY Well I think there's a sense of humor behind the suits. It has to come out somehow.

JORDAN Yeah, yeah, for sure.

PHILIP Yes. <laugh>, it comes out hot!

BRYONY You have now three locations, <laugh>, is that correct?

PHILIP Three locations? Yeah. And my wife was supposed to be here, but she's actually out with our broker right now, scoping another location. So, um, world domination plan. <laugh>

BRYONY Fantastic. So I take it, the feedback from the outside world is where you need it. I would love to hear some specifics.

PHILIP Feedback has been fantastic. The conversation before we changed branding was only about our food. There was no conversation behind the branding whatsoever. And now, I mean, I would say the branding is half the conversation. Absolutely. I mean it is equal parts with the chicken. It's just as important as the chicken. It's made, you know, this whole adult playground kind of vibe. You know, it's not a playground, but it feels like it when you walk in.

The feedback that we've gotten from other local business owners is nothing but envy. And I'm so glad at that <laugh> because typically when you're going into restaurants, you're trying to be serious and you're trying to, you know, in your head, at least from an owner standpoint, you're trying to not look like a fool. You're trying to not look dumb or not look outdated or not look whatever. You're trying to be cutting edge. You're trying to be part of the crowd or make the crowd, you know, you're trying to stand out. I think it's counterintuitive for most local business owners to poke fun at themselves, or to maybe make things be a joke around what they're doing. That's the response that we've gotten mostly is, I wish that we could do what you're doing because clearly you're having so much fun at what you're doing. Everybody that sees our branding sees how much fun it is and that's really all that I've gotten from other local business owners is envy it. Hey, I wish that we could laugh at ourselves too. And it's really just open that up. We get to laugh at ourselves constantly, but it's also looks so good, and so clean, and so professional, that it has complete integrity behind it. So it's not a joke. You can laugh at it, but it is no joke. <affirmative>

BRYONY Let's go back to the branding for a moment, there's two elements that I want to cover. One is the monogram, which was one thing that was discussed on Brand New as: is this necessary? Is this not necessary? Is it on brand? Is it not? What was the thinking behind it? What was the need? and why does it look the way it does?

JORDAN I will say Philip is not a fan of it, for the most part.

JEREMY He was in the beginning. No,

PHILIP Which one?

JEREMY Just the monogram.

JORDAN The sports logo.

JEREMY <laugh>. Yeah.

PHILIP Oh, the sports logo. Yeah. Absolutely. No, because I fucking hate sports. I absolutely hate sports. You know, sports is just a bunch of men chasing a ball. <laugh>, all right, give me a freaking break. I'm sorry to everybody that loves sports. I apologize. I know that that is deeply offensive to a lot of people. But I was a skateboarder. I was a skateboarder because that's who I wanted to be. I didn't want to be an athlete. I wanted to be an athlete, but an artistic athlete. So when we saw that, I was like, Ooh, sports. Huh? Sports, Ooh, I don't know. I don't know. It continued to grow on us and I mean, it looks so aesthetically clean and pretty and you can see it on so many different things.

JEREMY Yeah, I mean for us too, like depending on whatever the brand is, if it has an opportunity for a monogram, might as well whip one up, right? If the letters look cool... what we tried to achieve on it was looking like bones, like the "CW" is just bared down to the bones to kind of relate to the actual typeface of the brand, and then just thrown into a flame to create that heat.

JORDAN And we felt like the "W" had almost like a chicken claw feel to it as well. And I think with the name Chicken and the Wolf being so long, there

are people that refer it “CW” or “CxW”, at least in text and things like that. <affirmative> Part of us wanted the visual shorthand to exist somewhere within the branding. When we were seeing some of the comments from Brand New readers and stuff, that was the one thing that I did expect to feel as sort of a disconnect. But the way it’s used in placement in the space and other places, I feel good about it. It’s a great pocket print for merch.

And I think our approach always is maximalism where, oh yeah, a lot of people that aren’t fans of our work think that we do too much, but we’re kind of of the guard of just that one mark anymore. I think it’s boring, especially in a restaurant. We like to blow it out and have this large library of assets and this large tone of voice. And I think a lot of brands now, especially in food and beverage and things like that, are almost pivoting towards lifestyle brands as well. The lifestyle aspect of it and the variance of the branding gives you more opportunity for merch and stickers and fun things like that. So that was really our intention with that, I think.

PHILIP And it does help with the fact that, you know, with Lone Wolf for 11 years, we’ve always signed off any media posts or anything with “LW”. You could identify us by hearing the two words. “LW” anywhere in town. If somebody said “LW”, everybody knew that it meant Lone Wolf. So when we started Chickening the Wolf, we signed off everything “C+W”, it made perfect sense that it just ties it all back together. It gives that recognition with just two letters. And I think that that’s really powerful. If you can simply put two letters together and you can know that we’re talking about Chicken and the Wolf.

BRYONY It gives you one more asset. Philip, how it been for you to have a gazillion assets where the first iteration of the brand was a lot more limited?

PHILIP It’s fantastic. I see the world that way. When I look at things, when I see white walls, I say, well that’s a waste. I look at every place I go into and I have to control my mind because I have this visual diarrhea, <laugh>

of art that could be anywhere. Because like, look behind Jordan right now, look at his background, look at all of those little pieces of art behind him, infinitely entertaining, you know? And that's the way that my mind works. You know, I was raised on PeeWee's Playhouse and I wish to everything on earth that I lived in that house. <laugh> You know, I mean I, I love visual explosions and so getting to have all of these elements to play with and knowing that I no longer have to accept white walls because if we want to, we can make a scatter print anywhere of 10 of these different elements. And we've got a really vibrant design. I love it. I'm absolutely ecstatic that we have so many different elements.

BRYONY It's your own playground, right? <affirmative> So let's talk about the neon sign. I think that was an exciting and different element. How did that come about Phillip? and then Jordan, Jeremy, how did you actually produce it?

PHILIP We've had this space on Route 66 for a handful of years. It used to be Lone Wolf and with the pandemic we closed it down, and we converted this over to Chicken and the Wolf. We worked on it for probably a year with Brethren on coming up with how the exterior of the interior is gonna look. We always had a sign pole on our property, but we never utilized it. And this year in town, the Route 66 commission put out a grant program where they would match funds up to \$20,000 if you wanted to put a \$40,000 sign in, the city was gonna match you 20. So you're gonna invest 20 if you want 20, you know, 10, whatever. So they have a really fantastic program as long as you're willing to work with the city, go through their paperwork, and their permitting process. It got kickstarted that we wanted to do this because we were embracing the fact that we're on Route 66.

It's a special strip in Tulsa, obviously Route 66 is a special strip all the way across our country. But the particular one that we're situated on is the only strip really in Tulsa that has neons going up and down the strip. There's never been a neon except there's this old ones from

the fifties, this Meadow Gold neon that's massive. Doesn't really, but there's like old school massive ones. And then we're littered with this whole row of new school plastic, LED, fake neon garbage that I really hate looking at. When we realized that we had an amazing design team to work with that was willing to let us spill all of our ideas and create these things that are far surpassing what we had in our head, we said, okay, we should actually commit to this grant program. Let's go ahead and go into debt a little bit more and let's make a really badass sign that showcases what we think a neon sign should be.

That's on Route 66. We decided to go through the grant program. We were starting to get that all button up. We know that we were gonna get the funds, so we decided, well let's go all in on this and let's make the biggest one that we can do. So let's match what they're gonna match us. So we wanted to have a \$40,000 neon sign <affirmative>, which is unbelievable to even like say <laugh>. If you, if I said that three years ago, you probably would've found me faking my own death and living in Mexico just to avoid the fact that I was gonna go into debt to do a sign. But now it's amazing. It's crystal clear that we needed to do it. It would make this new property that we're doing basically when we were modeling the exterior of the building and we're modeling it with graphics on the exterior of the building, it all looks great, but it was also missing something.

And the moment that we started working with Brethren, we were introduced to HofferWaska, which is David Hoffer. David Hoffer has won an award for restaurant design, Ted's Escondido that he did. We got to come in and meet him and see some beautiful interior work that he was doing and he started saying, you know what? I love your branding, and I love what Jordan's doing. And apparently Jordan and Hoffer have had previous experience with one another. So Hoffer was excited basically saying, Hey, I'll help you guys put together a design. This isn't something that I really need to charge for, that I need to make a bunch of money off of. I'm just excited to help you guys. So

my wife and I at that time were just swallowing in all of the gratitude that somebody with such experience was willing to work with us just because they liked what we were doing.

We started putting together ideas for the neon sign with them all together in the same room. And initially I feel so immature, ignorant in it, it was like, oh, neons, Las Vegas. Let's make this look like, uh, Stardust or something. Looks like a crazy Vegas neon sign. You know, with flashing and moving elements. Maybe the chicken moves and then the wolf comes and swallows him. There's sequential steps, you know, that's all gonna make the wolf swallowing the chicken. And it was like with all these flashy star points and things like that.

I bull in a china shop was like, yes, let's do it. We're going forward with this. Fortunately they sat back and they took a couple weeks and said, well, let's see what our minds can come up with. They came up with this flame design, with offset flickering flames above it. So at nighttime when you can't see the posts that are holding up the flickers, those things are just floating in mid-air at nighttime.

They up with this not only a flame, but a modern design flame that looks exactly like it fits in our branding package. The lines of the flame go symbiotically with the lines of the logos. Whereas our initial idea was to just create this Vegas style neon and it was so disconnected from the branding. Yeah, I'm sure the elements were up there, but in no way did it feel like the branding at all.

JORDAN Yeah.

PHILIP Them coming up with this shape and the shell of the flame and the idea of an ever flickering flame. So the steps now are not wolf swallowing chickens, it's interior elements of the flame flickering sequentially, and then those offset pieces also flickering. So at nighttime this whole neon is just a ever flowing flame out of rigid lines. It's pretty amazing.

JORDAN And to touch on that, David Hoffer, he has been one of my mentors in my career. At my first agency, I met him, he's about 20 years older than me, he's just been a great person in my life. And he's done environmental signage and neon signs. And like Phillips said, this was city ordained. We had to work with the city. Pover knows everybody at the city. You know, he's done signs in Tokyo, he is done signs in Tulsa, like all over the place. So we knew we needed someone that had actual experience with signage. We could have probably designed something and got it produced, but we would've ran into headaches, and hiccups, and I think some of that conversation with Hoffer, like even Jeremy and I were pitching to Phillip's point stuff where the flame's coming out of the wolf's butt and his mouth and it's moving and it's like so crazy. Yeah. And Hoffer was like, man, you guys have all these little flame icons. He's like, just keep it simple. Make it a huge simple statement. Having Hoffer there and that guidance we're immensely grateful for it. I don't think it would've been as successful of a sign. Hoffer is just a great person to work with and he's super talented, knows what he's doing. He understood how the movement could work without being too much. And I think that sign ended up costing more than it was originally bid. Right?

PHILIP You have all these flame elements. Let's just make a statement that says what this place is and that's what the sign does. You look at the design and it makes an absolute statement as to what you're getting ready to walk into. They proposed it was gonna cost us \$40,000, which is already an incredible amount. They came back after putting together the whole package and they said, listen guys, we're really sorry, but we underquoted this sign. This sign's gonna cost about \$58,000. My instinct, right then, I just said, that's cool, I'm sorry you guys wasted all your time, just go ahead and scrap the project. Cause there's no way in hell I'm gonna spend \$58,000 on a sign. So I apologize, you guys wasted your time on this.

I'm really thankful that that was my gut instinct to just say, well then we just have to walk away from this because the company took time

to think about the sign that they were about to create. They realized that this is a really impressive sign, pretty incredible sign. Everybody in town's gonna know that they are the ones that created this sign. So fortunately, owner of the company came back and said, we want to build this sign. So what we're gonna do is we're going to rethink the sign. Now there's certain elements that we are gonna strip away from this thing to bring the budget down, but ultimately you're gonna get a pretty badass sign. You're gonna get a more expensive sign for what you're paying. So we just said, great. Fantastic. Amazing. That's also a testament to the design of this sign, the readability of the sign that the company that is going to actually put all of their time and resources into creating it was willing to basically just accept this as a wash, just to be able to create the sign.

JORDAN Yeah. It was a very cool moment to go in there with Philip and his wife when the sign was in the shop on the floor and we're like, oh my God, this thing is so huge.

PHILIP I mean, it's seven o'clock in the morning, the sun hadn't really risen yet, and in the warehouse it was pitch black. And you know, this is a massive warehouse. So when you say black, I mean it's really dark in there, but you walk in and the entire space has this ethereal, deeply satanic red blue about it, <laugh> and you're like, what the fuck is in this place? And you realize it's just our sign. It's only our sign illuminating this. It's pretty incredible.

BRYONY So how tall is the actual flame?

PHILIP The pole itself is 18 foot tall, I believe. And then I can't remember if the sign is the same.

JORDAN I think the sign is like eight and a half feet tall to 10.

PHILIP It's 10-foot. That's right. So we're on a 18 foot pole with a 10-foot tall sign. Yeah. When you stand up next to it, it's towering over you and it's as wide as your car.

BRYONY That's why I asked. <affirmative> I can imagine body size...

PHILIP Yeah. Yeah. It's huge.

JORDAN Yeah, it's massive.

PHILIP Yeah, it's big.

BRYONY That sounds fantastic. Sounds like a great process for everybody bringing in the expertise from everybody in, everybody getting excited, and adding what they could to it.

PHILIP Yeah.

BRYONY When you started the project, was the Chicken Bones Brigade part of this? or did that come in later as you saw how things were evolving? and then everybody jumped on it?

PHILIP These great two gentlemen here created the name <laugh>. If I remember right, you guys did come up with it, right?

JORDAN Yeah. I mean, we're just reaping the name, but yeah, we, yeah, well

PHILIP Obviously, but like we had already started sponsoring local skaters as a company. I put it out a couple years back. Basically I sat back and realized, you know, whenever I was a teenager and in my early twenties when out skateboarding here in Tulsa, there was not the scene that there is now, or the acceptance of skateboarding that there is now. Now it's in the Olympics. It's really growing into what it should be. But when I was doing it and really active in it, there wasn't anybody that was supporting it locally. You know, we had petitions at City Hall to get skate parks built and they laughed us out of City Hall. Nobody cared about it back then. So what I started realizing is the position that I'm in as a business owner in town, that I have a platform that's able to highlight the things that I wanna highlight.

And I really hadn't looked at it in the past 10 years as though this was like a platform for me to be able to, which sounds silly. Your restaurant

is a platform to express yourself, but not really the things that you do outside of your restaurant. I went all in and just finally said, you know, I think that I want to sponsor local skaters, and what I want to do is anybody I sponsor, I wanna give free food for as long as they're sponsored by me. They have a free meal every day of their lives. Because I know when I was a teenager skating, food insecurity was a big thing for me. Skating, a lot of it was a way to avoid the hunger because we were pretty poor growing up. And so if I went out, I didn't have any cash in my pocket to run and grab lunch.

So I was skateboarding. What we wanted to do was be able to offer free food to somebody that we sponsor, and we wanted to give it a platform to be able to highlight their skating skills as well. So we can push posts through our media and through our platforms. And then also if they're going to do competitions, we can pay for their entry fees into competitions. Just being a little minor sponsor, just doing a small amount for 'em. But we started doing that and we started sponsoring skaters. We had just started doing that before we started this conversation with Brethren. Jordan and them knew coming into this, I think it was actually Jordan that said, you guys wanna do something for a skate team? Since you're sponsoring skaters, you actually want to have a team name. And so then they sent back the first imagery, which you know, Stacy Paralta is gonna sue your asses<laugh>. It was Chicken Bones Brigade. It was just crystal clear, like of course that's the name.

JORDAN Yeah.

JEREMY Yeah.

PHILIP And you know, if we ever have to, it can be just The Chicken Bones.

JORDAN Yeah.

PHILIP It just made perfect sense. I think I started crying when I saw the logo the first time. It was like all of my childhood dreams are coming true here.

JORDAN Yeah.

PHILIP And then these sons of bitches sent me skateboards that actually have the branding on it. It has my name on the skateboard, and I cried again when they showed them.

JORDAN Yeah. As soon as we created that graphic, I think we're in like that culture where people feel like nothing is ownable. And I know IP is a weird thing, but we're just like, whatever. You know, this is part of fun, for kids and everything like that <affirmative>. So we did kind of a rip off the Bones Brigade with a chicken instead of the traditional skull. Once we made that, Jeremy and I were like, we gotta get these boards made and send some to Philip <laugh>.

JEREMY For sure.

JORDAN It was fun.

BRYONY That sounds like a great project to add.

JORDAN Yeah.

BRYONY Where no matter where it's coming from, where the idea comes from, there's great value for the local community without a doubt. And now they can—

JORDAN For sure.

BRYONY —wear it more proudly, and have fun with it, and embrace that energy that you're bringing to the restaurants and to the community.

JORDAN Totally.

PHILIP It helps create this whole lifestyle brand <affirmative>. It helps to sum up who we are.

JORDAN Yeah.

PHILIP Just another piece of the puzzle to when somebody hears “CW” or Chicken and the Wolf, they get the whole vibe and the whole feeling just by hearing the name.

BRYONY It all makes sense. Now I wanna know for each of you, what was the most satisfying aspect of this entire project? From beginning to end?

JORDAN With the type of work that we do, we meet all kinds of people. We work with all different types of people from different walks of life and different industries. This was one of those projects that it was kind of close to our hearts and the fact that it comes from our community where Jeremy and I grew up, Philip and Danielle have similarities in the lens that we look through life, and when those things happen, I think you're almost guaranteed a successful project. Just the excitement of all of it was so much fun.

The neon sign is a highlight. The way the brand has been accepted is a highlight, the kind of friendship that we all have now, and then to continue to work together and build upon this. And you know, Philip has so many big goals with this brand, and it's such a big personality and a fun person to work with, it's just like a joy. We have a lot of work going on, but when we're doing stuff with Chicken on the Wolf, it's super fun.

JEREMY Like a lot of what Jordan said is the same for me. One, I mean, I love chicken. I love chicken and ranch. For me, with being in Tulsa, it was exciting for me when it was finished to come and visit and go and eat at Chicken on the Wolf. It was a really cool experience of being able to really see everything into fruition. And then likewise with the style of the brand, with it being already a successful company as a restaurant, and then being able to deface it and change it to something that's super badass. It was just really fun to work on all around, especially on the skate team stuff.

PHILIP The biggest thing here is the relationships that we've forged through this process. It was incredibly rewarding. I'm the type of person that always needs a project to be going. I have obsessive compulsive disorder and I am constantly moving forward. If I sit still, I start having panic attacks. I start fidgeting. I start doing all the things that I'm trying to always not do. So I'm always trying to push forward. My brain

is constantly coming up with ideas that probably aren't gonna land anywhere, but I'm constantly creating these ideas in my head and the fact that we now have this relationship together, I can constantly reach out to Jeremy and Jordan and say, okay, here's an idea: there's this fucking wizard <laugh>, alright? And he's dunking some chicken into a cauldron and he's pulling it out and it's red. We're making our spicy—okay, okay, well I've got this idea.

Walk away... a month and a half later, all of a sudden we've got this design sitting in my email. That was in no way what I thought in my head was gonna be created, but absolutely makes perfect sense. It fits in the brand, it works absolutely perfectly. And now we have this badass wizard dunking chicken into a cauldron all because of just random ideas that we're able to spit out and throw together and see if they land. Danielle is out looking at a location right now. Well, I'm gonna be sending Jordan pictures of that location later today and say, let your mind start thinking about what this is going to look like. Whether that lands or not. This is part of the relationship that we've created. Really the biggest thing for me is not only seeing the look on their faces when the project was wrapped up, but the fact that we're never going...

I don't see a time when we're going to stop creating things together. Yeah. I don't see an end to this. I think in most of the relationships that I have in business, I see an end to, because there's somebody that's gonna come and pick up the piece and sure, design could be that way too, cuz there's so many designers, but I physically can't see an end of this relationship. It would be foolish for either of us to end it. Having what we've created, and the bonds that we forge is absolutely the most imperative thing for us.

JEREMY You're gonna make me cry now.

JORDAN I love you.

PHILIP Oh guys...

JORDAN Love you, dude.

PHILIP I love you. Hugs. Oh man. <laugh>

JEREMY Virtual hugs.

PHILIP Big hugs.

BRYONY All right. You can now send them a skateboard with our names and get them to cry twice <laugh> and then you will be even <laugh>

And Philip without necessarily divulging any plans, but you've mentioned a fourth location. What is the most exciting thing for you right now as you look forward to all of these ideas and all of these plans that you have in your mind and that you're working on with Danielle?

PHILIP The most exciting thing for me is in my phone, my restaurant names and concepts folder. You know, I've got 15 other concepts in there that I've created over the last decade just in my brain. And I've taken the time to map them all out, you know, like what are the employee uniforms gonna be like? What's the interior feeling gonna be? Half of 'em. I've written full menus for, I mean, just pulling up on my phone here and going through restaurant names, this is what excites me.

Knowing that our relationship here is never gonna end. And we've got Foul Mouth to work on. We've got Coney Hawk, we've got Bat Boy, Wing Commander, Wolf Parade, Juicy Peach, Wiz Kid, Bowser's Castle, Cauldron Hot Chicken, Andromeda Pizza, Mariah Curry. <laugh> That's a thick ass curry!

Drop it like it's Soft, Slaughter Pies, Lord of the Wings, Belly Boy. I can't wait to create these concepts with these guys because I can't wait to see the drawings that they create.

JORDAN That's amazing.

BRYONY Jordan and Jeremy, are you ready?

JEREMY <laugh>? Yeah.

JORDAN Oh, we're super ready. Yeah. Phillip's great.

PHILIP Yeah. <laugh>

JEREMY There's are tons of bangers in there. Yeah. <laugh>

PHILIP Come on, Mariah Curry...

JORDAN We gotta do it.

PHILIP Let's do it. <laugh>

BRYONY I think we need to end it right there. That is a perfect wrap up and sets the stage for what comes next. Without a doubt, I think we'll be seeing a lot of work from you coming our way on Brand New over the next few years. Cuz I don't think this is a six month list, it's much longer than that. But it's really wonderful to see how much has evolved, not only in the design sense, but also the personal sense from that car ride when your kiddo came up with a name, how much has transpired and how many people have been touched by it. Really is a bit of a fairytale that has come to life, and now it has become a playground for all of these adults—wearing suits or not—where everybody can let their guard down a little bit, have a good laugh, have something good to eat, and move on with their day.

PHILIP And rip a fart.

JORDAN <laugh>. Yes, totally.

BRYONY I wanna thank you for sharing all of the details with me on The Follow-Up today and for participating, bringing your genuine selves, and really embracing your energy, your design aesthetic, maximallistic. Yes, there is a place for all of that. We don't all have to use boring sans serifs all the time, and be quiet. There's definitely a sensibility for this and it's very muchly appreciated. Thank you.

JORDAN Yeah, thank you for having us on.

JEREMY Yeah, for sure. It's fun.

PHILIP Yeah, it's a lot of fun. Thank you so much.

ARMIN As we've said a handful of times on this podcast: be nice to everyone as much as possible because you never who is a potential client as was the case with Jordan and Philip who exchanged polite nods during daycare drop-off for months before they knew they would be working together. Also, as we've said not once before, you should consider bringing in your toddler as a naming consultant on your project, a strategy that paid off for Philip and Danielle, who clearly have a lot of faith in their family as they also shared all the design options with them even if ultimately they went with none of their recommendations and followed their gut, which lead to what they describe as an adult playground where the main form of entertainment is spicy chicken. And fart jokes.

Today, thanks for listening. Until next time, we'll be here, we hope you'll be there.