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# COLLECTIVE

ISSUE 3

THE  
MAN  
BEHIND  
TED

EWAN  
MCGREGOR

WHAT MAKES  
HIS HEART  
BEAT FASTER?

25  
WAYS TO  
UNLOCK  
YOUR  
CREATIVITY

GRASSROOTS  
TO GLOBAL

WORKING  
FOR THE  
WHITEHOUSE

JBRAND  
ORACLE FOX

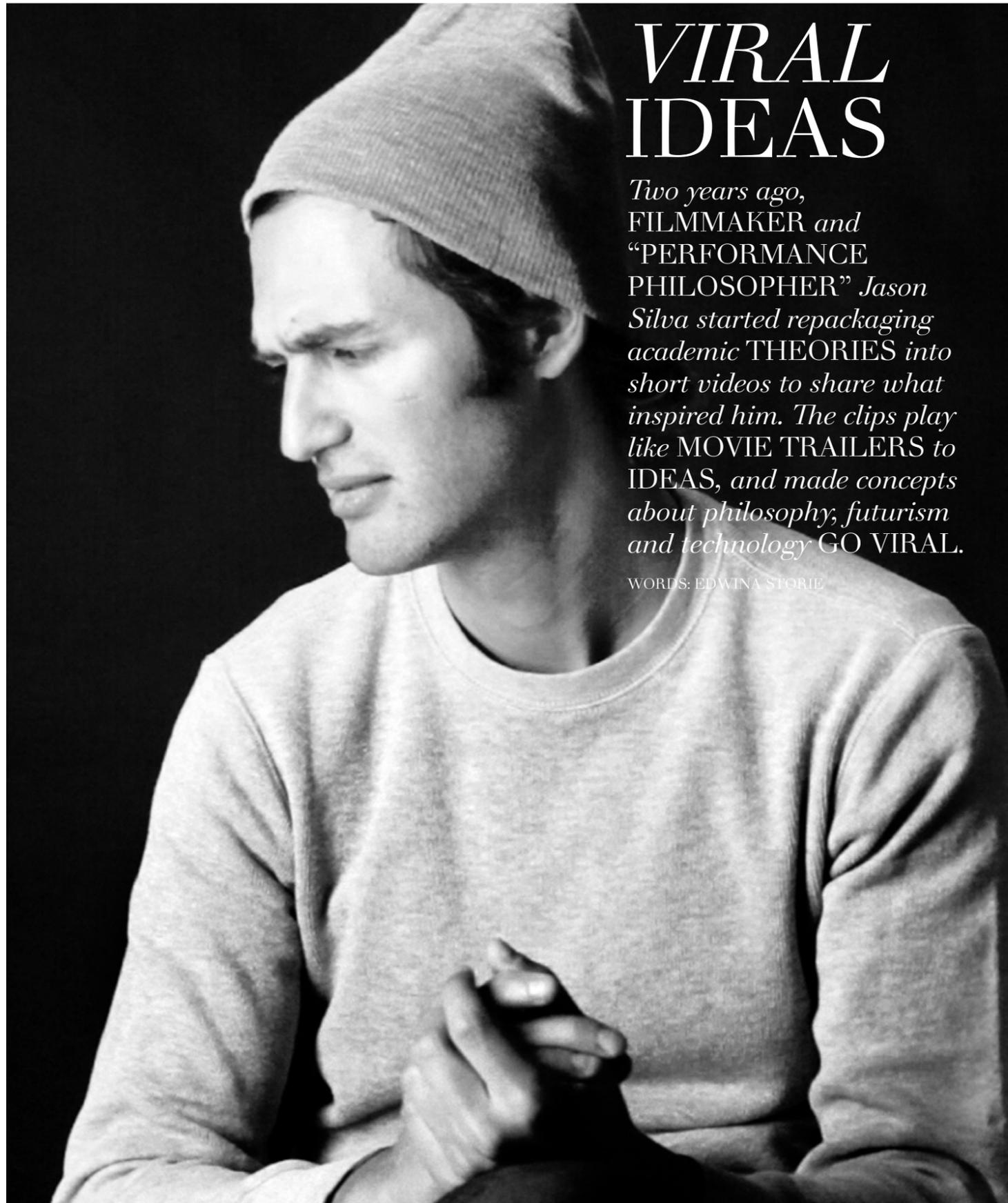
+84

OTHER INNOVATORS

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& KIRK  
LOVE. RESPECT. SIMPLICITY.

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# THE NEW CLASS



## VIRAL IDEAS

Two years ago, FILMMAKER and “PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHER” Jason Silva started repackaging academic THEORIES into short videos to share what inspired him. The clips play like MOVIE TRAILERS to IDEAS, and made concepts about philosophy, futurism and technology GO VIRAL.

WORDS: EDWINA STORIE

SOME DREAMS and ideal careers don't have a specific goal. Some simply begin as a passion that develops until it reaches that marker of success where you're paid to do what you would for free. Jason Silva's career is like this. He essentially created his own occupation as a performance philosopher to be able to use media to spread philosophical theories.

Jason explains his work as combining “academic ideas with the power of sexy packaging.” Being fascinated by philosophical ideas about humanity, technology, and the future, he began to translate these concepts into short videos to show how they can be invigorating and inspiring, rather than complicated and boring. Sharing the clips online with mainstream audiences, they rapidly went viral.

In his video *The Biological Advantage of Being Awestruck*, he rhapsodises to the camera explaining how an experience of awe forces us to expand our mental capacity just to be able to take in the wonder, while in *To Understand is to Perceive Patterns*, he shows the audience how the man-made world mimics the natural world, with the internet's intermingled structure matching that of the human brain.

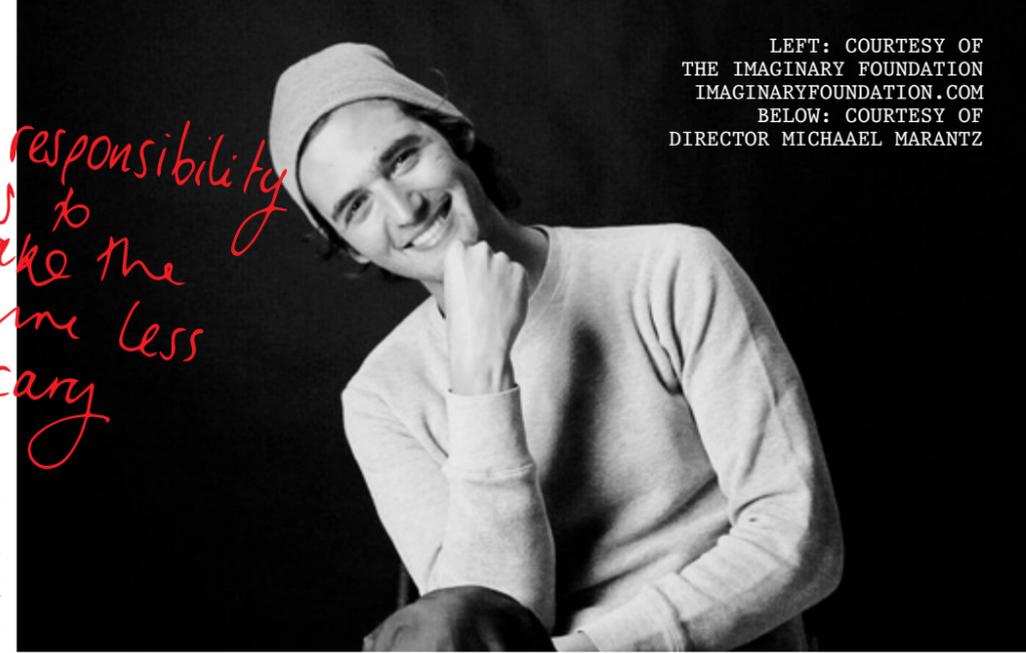
“I think my responsibility is to make the future less scary,” he says. “Big ideas need to be presented in a way so that their bigness doesn't become terrifying, but that it actually reflects their grandeur.”

Despite having only started making the videos in 2011, Jason says they've been viewed more than two million times. Within just two years he has been invited to present at international seminars such as TED Global, to speak on innovation at Google and Microsoft, and most recently, to host the National Geographic's highest-rating premiere program *Brain Games*.

In between these major projects he presents keynote talks on technology and creativity for corporate events. His captivating content paired with his natural charisma and strong social media presence has been integral in building his profile. His work, his words, and his personality have all become his business.

VIDEOS FOR IPAD  
*Radical Openness for TED Global 2012*  
*The Biological Advantages of Being Awestruck*  
*To Understand is to Perceive Patterns*

My responsibility is to make the future less scary



LEFT: COURTESY OF THE IMAGINARY FOUNDATION  
IMAGINARYFOUNDATION.COM  
BELOW: COURTESY OF DIRECTOR MICHAEL MARANTZ

“Ultimately my brand is authenticity,” he explains. “So my only orientation is asking, ‘Am I being truthful? Am I being authentic?’ I've relied mostly on instinct and my keen observations about how ideas travel and shape reality.”

Jason's success is proof of our desire in this age of information to engage with well-packaged ideas. His videos quench the same thirst for curated knowledge and entertaining information that has seen the popularity of educational platforms like TED explode.

“I like to think I traffic on the currency of inspiration,” he says. He explains that he began making these videos to capture the fleeting feelings of inspiration he had when contemplating philosophical ideas such as the theory of singularity which argues technology could make us immortal within decades.

“The wonder I felt when contemplating these concepts is what I wanted to encode [in my videos and] in the very delivery of the ideas themselves,” he reveals.

This fascination with “being immersed in an idea” began while he was studying philosophers and futurists in college. An opportunity to present for Al Gore's progressive channel *Current TV* suddenly saw him interviewing the academic experts he idolised, and developing his passion for technology and media.

“I had some savings after I left *Current* and basically just cut down on my expenses and focused on creating independent short-form content. Technology has made cameras and editing equipment infinitely more affordable, and production costs have dropped. So I was able to invest in my own content and gamble on serendipity when it came to promoting that content online. Once I saw the traction the videos were making, I knew I was onto something.”



“[The process of finding exposure for my work] felt very organic. No publicists and no money – just a desire to share inspiration.” He reached out to like-minded people and leveraged off relationships with bloggers and podcasters to share his work through social media.

Creating and interacting with his viewers online soon lead to ticking numbers on his Vimeo account, growing followers on Twitter, and invitations to present at international events. Yet sometimes it's hard to keep up with your own achievements.

“Trying to recreate the ‘virality’ of one video can be humbling. To see one quickly reach half a million views and another barely hit 50,000 can be a bit of a setback,” he says. “But [it's] also a creative challenge.”

Jason is proof that inspiration can go viral, and that a yearning to share your ideas can lead to reaching your personal definition of success. “Success is living the best version of yourself,” he says. “It's writing the script of your life and then getting caught up in a universe that is working with you instead of against you.” ■