To make it as a Black entrepreneur in Cleveland, you either lay out some hair, sell the hell out of some Noni juice or have a keen eye for fashion. Seeing as though this is The F.E.W.S., we're only focused on how well you can do the latter.

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This week, we've picked an individual to showcase who we believe has that eye, and can punch you in yours with his "knockout" style, only to have you "rave" about it after it's all said and done. With more than years on the fashion scene, W. Vaughn Glover has earned CP2's spotlight as a mover and shaker in the world of fashion, as seen through the eyes of Clevelanders.

Man-O-Man can he knock ‘em out

First up is Vaughn Glover, founder of Waki Wear Productions. Waki Wear (pronounced wok-ee), which most have mistaken as a line of clothing itself, is actually Glover’s production company under which he has been running fashion shows consecutively for 18 years. So, how does this self-proclaimed sweats and sneakers kind of guy do it? Through trial and error, success and misfortune, hands down, he’s got to be the only brotha on the bus who can produce a more than $20,000 production, and he’s not even a designer. Sure, he can sew a few Gordon Gartrells, but that’s merely out of respect for the craft he so passionately promotes. No dis intended, these are words straight from the fashion show producer’s mouth. Words that prove whether you love or hate a Vaughn Glover show, you most definitely can’t knock his ability to hustle.

Glover’s drive started “way back in the day” when he was coaxed to participate in a church fashion show by his mother. “My mom asked me to model in the show so I said o.k.,” said Glover, reflecting on how his 20-plus year-long journey began. That show served as the tipping of the Dominos causing other bones to fall into his lap. “It started off as a fun thing,” he said. “But there was an organization years ago called NAFAD, the National Association of Fashion

and Accessory Designers, and it was the biggest Black show in Cleveland back then. So, once I started modeling I was like, 'I wanna do that show.'" Ultimately he would land not only the gig, but also his first paycheck, motivating him to get serious about this newfound passion.

From there Glover started his apprenticeship with East Cleveland designer, Vernon Robinson, who is one of the people to whom he feels he owes his start, even if the two aren't presently on the best of terms. This is where the hands-on grueling experience of producing a first-rate fashion show was learned. Glover continued modeling for NAFAD and eventually, literally stole the show when gripes from the younger models surfaced about the show's veterans being too stuck in their diva-esque ways. Enter Glover's opportunity to venture out and start his very first show taking the NAFAD models with him. The show took place Feb. 23, 1991, and was called "Ebony Excellence" – a showcase of Black designers.

Leaving his pals back at NAFAD not to happy, Glover successfully pulled it off, establishing his brand, Waki Wear Productions, and later spawning The Fashion Knockout – an idea that came into fruition considering the amount of money designers dished out on fabric for fashion shows. "I had designers coming to me saying 'Vaughn, I did all this work and I didn't sell any garments,'" Glover said. Although he knew that quality products were costly, he in turn respectfully explained "The fabrics you use in your designs are your choice. I can't come to you and say 'I chose to give the show and I didn't sell enough tickets so, I need you now as a designer to give me $1,000.' It doesn't work like that."

So, by 1994 he had an epiphany for how to satisfy the producer and the talent. "When I put the two thing's together I said, 'O.K., a designers' competition. You pay to enter, but you can sell garments, gain clients and have the opportunity to win some money and prizes. So, that's where the birth of the designers' competition came upon, which has grown to be sponsored by Baby Lock – a major sewing machine manufacturer.

NAFAD eventually folded, while Waki Wear is in its 20-plus years of production, something Glover prides himself on as his best accomplishment. "I have the longest running consistent show in the city. To me that's major to say I've been giving this show for years." Hopefully that drive will lead him to his dream of taking his show on the road, bringing the winners back to face off in Cleveland.

Though, Glover produces at least one fashion show yearly, the Battle of the Champions happens only once every five years. So, if you've yet to see a Waki Wear production, you won't

want to wait ‘til Barack’s second term to vote for your favorite People’s Choice award-winner. Be on the lookout for the next Waki Wear production by staying tuned to callandpost.com.

Sir W. Vaughn Glover can be reached at (216) 544-7779.