

Brain King

Social savant Douglas Campbell connects L.A.'s rock stars and rocket scientists | By Gary Baum | Photography by Peden + Munk |

At the moment, nobody reigns over the nexus of this town's creative spheres—academic, artistic, scientific and entrepreneurial—quite like 31-year-old Douglas Campbell, the key maestro behind downtown's buzzed-about ongoing monthly Mindshare confabs. The roving TED-like events, which mix pontification with partying (“We call it ‘enlightened debauchery’”), lure hundreds of plugged-in members of the local culturati to hear big-idea-types like sustainable-exploration heartthrob David de Rothschild and noted futurist John Smart hold forth on everything from environmentalism to immortality. “When we started in 2006, there was a lack of a feeling of an intellectual community in this far-flung city,” says RISD-educated Campbell, who is American-born but grew up in England, where he attended the toff-tastic elite boarding school Harrow, alma

ma er of Churchill, Byron and Nehru. “Mindshare acts as an initial spore for it.” One example is Campbell’s upstart new-media firm, Syyn Labs. It brings together DIY-friendly researchers and engineers from egghead

fiefdoms like JPL to work on attention-getting techno-art memes (involving, say, elephant guns, jerry-rigged cars, and Gary Numan in the Mojave Desert) for corporate giants on the order of Disney and Google—as well as for-the-love-of-it larks like OK Go’s music video last year for “This Too Shall Pass,” which featured perhaps the most extensive Rube Goldberg apparatus ever caught on film and is now closing in on 20 million YouTube hits. “I’m into experiential juxtapositions,” he says of the always-cross-pollinated projects, before acknowledging his golden touch with drawing fervent followings to those same endeavors: “Apparently a lot of others are as well.” ▣

Campbell's Hots

Taking business calls while strolling through the Huntington's gardens; Vipassana meditation; working part time on organic farms; apocalyptic planning; bar crawling in a tuxedo; eating cake at Alcove in Los Feliz

Campbell's Nots

Late-for-yoga road rage; fear of the unknown; slack-tivism; emotional warfare; bars with lines; Brussels sprouts; silence in crowded elevators; single-use plastic bottles

