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# 10 YEARS OF THE ROOTS PICNIC

Questlove and Black Thought tell us how it all began and what to hit up this year. 9



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THE FUN STARTS HERE



# The Roots Picnic turns 10

wknd



The Roots have been going strong since 1987. NBC/MARK SEUGER

Black Thought (top) and Questlove met each other at Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA). GETTY IMAGES

Questlove and Black Thought reflect on how it all began.



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The Roots Picnic always brings the heat but this weekend, get ready for an even more epic show. The annual daylong music festival is celebrating its 10th anniversary, and some of music's biggest names are taking the stage at Festival Pier, including Lil Wayne, Solange, Kimbra, Jeezy and Pharrell, who will be backed up by the Roots themselves.

The legendary Philly band has come a long way since 1987, when its founders, Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson and Tariq "Black Thought" Trotter met in the principal's office at Philadelphia's High School for the Creative and Performing

Arts (CAPA).

"He hates when I tell this story," says Questlove. "My version is that we met on the first day of school when I was in the principal's office getting free tokens for SEPTA, and he was in the office getting suspended on the first day of school."

As their friendship grew, the pair learned a lot from each other.

"I was so much in the streets at the time," Black Thought remembers. "I was exposed to a more street side of the city and running free before school, during school hours and after school. Ahmir was more sheltered and more laser-focused on becoming a professional musician."

Black Thought introduced Questlove to the music his parents wouldn't let him listen to, like Public Enemy, NWA and Ultramagnetic Emcees. In turn, Questlove introduced Black



The Roots have a lot of love for their hometown fans. DAN SOZANSKI

Thought to the musicality of hip-hop — showing him the original songs that were sampled in his favorite tracks.

"He was able to play all of those breakbeats and I was a young emcee constantly looking for beats to rap on. It was the perfect fit," Black Thought adds.

They officially became a band when Questlove was trying to impress fel-

low Philly musician Amel Larrieux at CAPA.

"We were talking about Boyz II Men performing at the Valentine's Day assembly, and she caught me in a Jon Lovitz moment. I was like, 'Yeah I have a group,' he recalls. "I immediately run to Tariq and punch him and I'm like, 'If anyone asks you, we're a group, OK?' I didn't get the girl, but I got a career."

The Roots have been going strong ever since. So what's the secret to their longevity? While 10 years is impressive for a music festival, 30 years as a band is almost unheard of.

"Constant re-evaluation, reinvention, mutual respect, professionalism — and separate tour buses," reveals Black Thought.

"My bus is Gryffindor

and Tariq's is Slytherin," Questlove jokes. "My observation is that open marriages are probably more successful than monogamous ones. It allows you to do other projects and always come back home. And that's what we've always done with the Roots."

If you plan on going to the Roots Picnic this weekend, Black Thought suggests you make a weekend of it.

"It's a one-stop shop for cool hunters," he says. "Head out on Friday night for my comedy show at Punchline, which is followed by Questlove's DJ set at The Fillmore. On the morning of the Roots Picnic, do the Roots Rock Run 5K in Germantown to get your engine going so you can really embrace the day."

The 10th Annual Roots Picnic is tomorrow, with the show beginning at noon. For more information, visit: [rootspicnic.com](http://rootspicnic.com).

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