



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

News at IUPUI

'Queen of Fuzz' reflects on creating Jawz and Jazzy

BY [TIM BROUK](#)

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Jennifer Q. Smith adjusts Jawz's jersey at her Avant Garb studio in downtown Indianapolis. Smith created Jawz about 10 years ago. *Photo by Tim Brouk, Indiana University*

*"She's the 'Queen of Fuzz' / There is no other / Jawz and Jazzy / Call her mother"**

Jennifer Q. Smith is the owner of Indianapolis' [Avant Garb](#), a studio in [The Stutz Business and Arts Center](#), where she gave birth to two IUPUI Jaguars and refined their predecessor. While it's been a while since the youngest mascot, Jazzy, was introduced in 2015, Smith is still fond of the work she has done for IUPUI.

"I have love for all of these Jaguars," said Smith -- "Queen of Fuzz," according to her business card -- who has made more than 600 mascots for companies, universities, nonprofit organizations and professional sports teams since 1986. "I believe IUPUI has led the charge with these Jaguars, especially with the grouping that we have."



__Jennifer Q. Smith holds a picture of Jinx, Jazzy and Jawz in her studio. Smith created Jazzy and Jawz and updated Jinx. *Photo by Tim Brouk, Indiana University*

After stints in Berkeley, California, and New York, Smith became based in Indianapolis in 1988. Then, IUPUI's mascot was the Metros, but a decade later, the Jaguar was introduced. Smith was brought in to finish the Jinx concept. The family expanded to Jawz, a more fur-ocious sibling with triple the number of teeth than the more lovable, huggable Jinx. Jazzy is the youngest, and she is a favorite of Smith's, who believes IUPUI was ahead of the curve in introducing a female version of the mascot. Years later, her office is getting numerous orders for female mascots -- some of which were directly inspired by Jazzy, Smith revealed.

Smith also created IU East's Rufus the Red Wolf, and she is currently building IU Northwest's new RedHawk mascot.

Founder and president of the [National Mascot Association](#), Smith painted and sculpted at Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and at San Carlos Art School in Mexico City. She made costumes at the Juilliard School in New York and at Beach Blanket Babylon in San Francisco before launching her own business.

Question: What are some of your other thoughts and memories from when you developed IUPUI's mascots?

Answer: We had Jinx, but IUPUI came back and wanted something with more of a "game face," so that was Jawz. He's fabulous. Then they said, "Men aren't the only ones on campus, and the women's sports are strong, so we want Jazzy." We played with a little bit of Indianapolis' jazz history, so it all works. It's pretty amazing. They're great.

Q: What kind of work did you do with the early Jinx costume?

A: We actually took over Jinx. Some other company made it first. The people at IUPUI wanted it to maintain the same look, but they wanted it to have more expression -- but without people looking at the face and saying, "Wait, that's not our Jinx." You'd be surprised how many mascots get updated. You want to maintain the integrity of who the mascot is. We were able to make Jinx look like he went to a really fabulous summer retreat, but it was still Jinx. We may be updating Jawz soon in a similar way.

Q: What is your work process like?

A: Sometimes it's just a matter of changing some of the materials. We use a fabulous designer, Tom Sapp, in Georgia, who we've been working with for seven or eight years. We've never met in person, but we talk to each other on the phone daily. He's terrific. He's able to take a look at what is and what could be.

Sometimes a customer's only idea is that they need a mascot, but that's enough. We've been doing this since before mascots were a big thing. Now, Indiana's getting a [Mascot Hall of Fame in Whiting](#). We're going to be the mascot state.

We plan a million hours (laughs). It takes a lot of time. It takes two or three or four people working for a couple of weeks per mascot.

My daughter Anne Dougans is really good at shoes. We have someone who's really good at bodies. We call in people for various things like interior structures. I generally make the heads. We have people who do our electronics. We can light up mascots and make them blink.

There's a lot of engineering that goes into these things. It's not just a costume. There are muscles to be made, fat suits to be made with special tubing. We use thermal plastic that's used in the medical industry. You heat it, and then you can form it.

Q: What were the first mascots that you created?

A: It was a chocolate chip cookie for a very small chocolate chip cookie company in Berkeley, California. I started in my Berkeley garage. The name of the cookie company was some slang term in Italian that meant "addiction." I have no idea what it was, but those chocolate chip cookies were addictive.

They had rented a half of a table way in the back of a dessert and pastry show in San Francisco, which was a very big deal in 1986. This teensy-weensy, little-bitty company had a mascot. So, what was on the front page of the next day's San Francisco Chronicle? Their mascot. And I thought, "This is pretty cool." Then my second was for Hewlett-Packard. So I went from a teensy-weensy company to a company that does nothing teensy-weensy.

Q: Where do the IUPUI mascots rank for you in terms of the many Indianapolis mascots you've created?

A: IUPUI, I think, leads the pack. I really think you lead the pack. IUPUI has been creative, and they've paid attention. They've updated. IUPUI is amazing. You could write a manual on the importance of the mascot and the vision of the mascot. You look at your students, you look at your games -- it's great. The Jaguars speak well for IUPUI.