

## About the Cover Art

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One of three distinguished artists whose artwork is featured on the 2008 covers of *JRRD*, Smith Iuli is a two-time champion of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF). Iuli received his first gold medal in the vocal solo jazz/rhythm & blues category of the 2005 NVCAF. He won his second gold medal in the digital art category of the 2007 NVCAF for his painting *Arc de Matatula*, pictured on this issue's cover.

Iuli is a professional blues musician (guitarist/vocalist) and graphic designer who resides in San Marcos, California. An Army veteran and full-time illustrator with the Department of Veterans Affairs San Diego Healthcare System, Iuli began creating digital art about 12 years ago but has been involved in art since childhood.

“Being a military brat and moving a lot, I had to find some kind of way to entertain myself—art and music,” explained Iuli. “I ultimately began creating digital art because of the unlimited options available to me for utilizing computer technology. The computer is a tool, just like a brush, that I use to express myself.”

For Iuli, the meaning of *Arc de Matatula* is both spiritual and personal. Spiritually, the piece symbolizes a gateway to a better life, deliverance from trying times, and “finding God.” Personally, the piece is an homage to Cape Matatula—land on the easternmost part of Tutuila, American Samoa, given to him by his grandfather.

Despite this being his second gold medal, for Iuli, the thrill of winning is not diminished. “It’s a great feeling to be a winner. Throughout my life, art and music have had a profound effect on my life. They have pulled me through some hard times and helped me celebrate the great times,” says Iuli.

“The arts are the best form of therapy because they can reach down into peoples’ souls and pull them out of the funk that they’re in—even inspire them to accomplish things that they would never ever dream of going after.”

