

OUR PEOPLE:

Q&A with Arron Malachi

Entertainer, photographer

by Jeff Taylor :: **qnotes** contributor

Singer and parodist Arron Malachi learned the power of comedic performance at a young age. He recalls being in the sixth or seventh grade when he faced down a girl on his bus that had been picking on him for some time.

"This girl used to pick on me and make fun of me on the bus... there was this Blaque song '808'... and for some reason I just made up an entire song about her [set to it]."

He waited for the song, which was getting heavy airplay at the time, to come on while they were on the bus. When it did, he sang along, with his lyrics in place of the regular ones, and shut his bully down. He says he "always used to make up little silly songs as a kid," but this had a different feel to it.

"I found it was a way to kind of get her to leave me alone, but I found out that it made people laugh. Just making up silly songs, it just kind of went from there. And as I got older it got dirtier, and more funny, as more experiences in life come along and I come into who I am. It just kind of spun off from there... it's just kind of natural for it to go in the direction that it went. It's just something that kind of happened, and I just kept going with it."

No one in their right mind would ever think of picking on Malachi today, but he is still out there entertaining people with his song parodies, or remixes as he calls them, and his wild and provocative performances. Among his biggest were his performances at Pride Charlotte in 2013 and 2014, as well as emceeing this year.

Malachi is also still fighting to continue making a name for himself wherever he goes, even though he cannot be easily categorized.

"They call me androgynous, that's usually the term they use for me," he says.

"It took awhile for me to get recognition... because some of the older drag queens, the traditional type of drag queens, didn't really think I was what was needed, because I wasn't a quote-unquote drag queen," Malachi says.

"So it was kind of hard to get their respect in the beginning, but it's hard not to respect someone that comes in there and consistently gives you a good show that people are actually entertained by. It's hard to ignore the crowd."

He points out that he now feels he is a part of the "sisterhood," as other performers have gotten to know and respect him. While Malachi has the goal to reach out to a broader, wider-reaching audience by taking advantage of his increased exposure of late, he says he will always talk up Charlotte for the support the city has shown to him.

Are you from Charlotte originally?

Not originally. I'm from Columbia, S.C. originally. But I've been here since 1999.

What brought you here?

My mother retired from the Army. She was still in the Army in '99 when we originally moved here. So the military brought us here.

Did you move around a lot as a kid?

So so. Not too, too much. We started in South Carolina, moved to Florida, came back to South Carolina, went to Georgia — right outside of Atlanta, [in] Stockbridge — and then came to Charlotte in '99 and have kind of been here ever since.

When did you first start performing onstage?

Of course, we all start in school. I used to make little parodies here and there in school, but didn't really get into it until I graduated. I started at a club called Club Mix, off S. Tryon here in Charlotte. Went out there, and got booed off the stage because I messed up somewhere. I was completely nervous. So, so nervous, and Club Mix was kind of like Showtime at the Apollo. They're not going to clap for you just because you walk out onstage. You had to really work for it and really earn it.

This was when you were how old?

19, I believe. 19 or 20. Very humbling experience to say the least... I left and kind of came back and watched a few other shows... then just really worked on being comfortable and listening for my music cues and stuff like that and making a mix that would cater to me and what I want to do. I went back out there and won the talent show. I took about a good month or so, found some confidence, and then just went out there and owned it.

Were you nervous to go back out there?

I was nervous, but I knew what had happened... [I just needed to know] that I could do it. [Knowing] this really isn't anything different from being in high school and having to get on stage and perform for people. It's no different, [except] I get to do whatever I want to. No filters, no nothing, just go out there and cut up and just have a good time. Any time I can go out and cut up, they can tell I'm having a good time and they usually go ahead and have a good time with me. So, it was just kind of one of those things where [I told myself], "You got this, just go out there and have a good time and, hopefully, they'll like it." And, they did. And, it's kind of been history ever since then.

How do you find stuff to wear onstage and how do you decide what to wear?

[Laughing] I go to Forever 21 and rue21. I go someplace like that. I like flowy stuff, I like tight stuff. I like stuff that shows off my legs, because people always talk about how much they love my legs and how pretty my legs look. So, it's very hard to not want to show my legs, [and] my ass, because everybody likes it. You know, everybody likes it when you show skin. So, you know, I just try to make sure I give the people what they want [laughs].

You're also a photographer. Tell me more about your photography work.

[I've been a photographer for] *Pocket Rocket*, I shot the HRC Gala for I believe two years now, two or three years now. Anytime there's an HRC event in town, I'm usually there. When Michelle Obama came for the DNC, I was there for that; HRC had me take pictures for that event as well. [As well as] the Stonewall Kickball league, I've shot some stuff for them before.

How did you first get involved with photography? Did you study it formally or**did you take it up on your own?**

I just picked it up. I was working at Best Buy and I just kind of picked it up. I was like, I'm always the guy taking pictures when all my friends go out. Why not just go ahead and see what this is all about? What's the big deal with all these cameras? Why are people getting these cameras? Next thing you know I'm \$8,000, \$9,000 in the hole... if it's really something you want to do. Photography is not cheap. But, it's a lot of fun. I enjoy doing it and I've actually met so many people within the community here from photography alone.

What's next?

I feel like I'm on the "I Am Booked" tour. [In addition to a number of local shows coming up], ever since Pride came around, and I got to emcee and a lot of people got to see me, social media has gone crazy a bit. So, there are a lot of people like, "Hey, how can I get you here?" or, "What do you want to do?" I'm hoping more opportunities come around... That's kind of my goal for the end of this year; beginning of next year, is to really branch out and be seen. I want to perform in Atlanta, I want to perform in Florida, I want to go to New York... all I need is a foot in the door. Because once you give me a microphone, and five to seven minutes to do my number, you're gonna love me. I have no doubt about it. You're going to love me. You're going to want to have me back. ::



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