

Mahalia - Biography - Jan 2021

Long version

Growing within a talented family in Leicester, Mahalia Burkmar was always destined to make her mark on the music world. Signed to Asylum Records at the young age of 13, her gifts were lovingly honed and supported by her parents, both who hail from musical backgrounds. When asked where she gets her discipline from, it's an easy answer for Mahalia: her mum. "When I was younger, I used to sing on stage with my eyes closed and my mum would literally walk over to me and tell me to open your eyes because once you close them, you disconnect from your audience immediately."

From a young age, Mahalia has had a number of values instilled in her which have ultimately aided the success of her career, one such value being understanding the power of winning the room - something she learned from street busking. "My mum made me busk for four to five hours on Saturdays, just for practice, and set me a challenge of making one person stop every two minutes." If she made ten people stop, she'd completed it: "That's how I learned to win over a room because you're dealing with hundreds of people striding past you in a city centre."

This confidence and self-assuredness can be seen in all parts of Mahalia's musical journey, from when she began releasing acoustic music in her late teens to when she took the plunge to move to London just before she turned 18. This marked a huge turning point for the singer: for about a year, she crashed with friends, sleeping in spare rooms or on their sofas while she tried to manage the culture shock of living and making music in such a fast-paced and expensive metropolis. "I definitely wasn't doing much. I was doing a few live shows and writing but I wasn't putting that much out."

Mahalia decided to move back to Leicester in 2017 and during that time, she wrote her breakout single 'Sober', the track that turned everything on its head. "I remember all my family just getting so excited about how the track was doing on YouTube, messaging me every time it hit a new milestone." After a year of feeling like she didn't know what she was doing, the response to 'Sober' quelled any doubts about whether this was the right path for her: "It was the kick up the arse that I needed in order to move forwards."

The last few years have seen the singer go viral with 41 million views on a COLOURS session, tour internationally both as a support act and a headline name, collaborate with well-loved artists such as Burna Boy, Ella Mai and Little Simz and release her long-awaited debut album *Love and Compromise*. The Leicestershire native describes the soulful album as a tracing of the journey she was taking to figure out love and life, inspired by legend Eartha Kitt's unwavering views on relationships and compromise: "My mum played the video for me and I remember being so in awe because I had never heard a woman, particularly one in the public eye, talk like that. She questioned the interviewer about why she should have to compromise for a man and it played such a big part in my understanding of myself, my growth and loss of naivety."

With such an impressive host of achievements under her wing at the age of 21, it's little wonder that Mahalia found herself nominated for the 2020 BRITs Best Female Solo Artist Award. The star, who found out while abroad on holiday, describes the moment as utterly surreal: "I was bawling. It felt like seven years of work was just coming out of my eyes."

Even a pandemic couldn't dampen Mahalia's energy as she released even more music in 2020: an EP entitled *The Isolation Tapes*. Carrying the singer's signature blend of soulful lyrics and eclectic sounds, her new project soothed all those finding themselves in COVID-enforced lockdown, while offering a glimpse of some of the music that didn't make it onto her debut album because she simply hadn't yet found a way to tell those stories. "I have a lot of music that I really care about, all real stories and I want people to hear them. I don't feel like it should always be an album, sometimes you should just let people hear what you're feeling."

The three-track EP is an amalgamation of feelings of love, rejection and searching across three different relationships: songs that the artist had struggled to put words to until this year. 'Too Nice' paints the picture of an 18-year-old woman in throes of going-out club culture and meeting stush men, 'Plastic Plants' sees an older Mahalia at 20 searching out a love that isn't shallow or fake, while 'BRB' explores the heartache of travelling and being temporarily separated from that new-found love.

2020 alone has marked a year of achievement for the Leicester-born star. Alongside a feature on up-and-coming fellow Midlands rapper Pa Salieu's debut mixtape '*Send Them To Coventry*', and Headie One's #1 album '*Edna*', Mahalia also received a GRAMMY nomination for 'All I Need', Jacob Collier's single of which she features alongside US rapper, Ty Dolla \$ign. In addition, Mahalia snapped up three MOBO nominations for Best Female Act, Best R&B/Soul Act and Album Of The Year for *Love and Compromise*, winning in the first two categories.

Besides the awards and nominations, it's also been a year of deep personal growth, one that Mahalia describes as a real rollercoaster in her personal and professional life. "By September, I think I was just tired - tired of being inside and tired of not being able to do what I do while going through a break up. It was a confusing time." It was also a time that has caused her to reflect on the relationships around her and, in turn, has spurred even more music.

After the lifting of the first lockdown, she found herself able to head to the studio on a regular basis. "My creative juices started flowing and it must've taken about a month of being in the studio but I found my rhythm; I was going in and coming out with concepts, ideas and full songs that I was in love with."

Realising a lot about herself and the negativity she wanted to remove from her life, it has born the catchy new 'Jealous' featuring US rapper Rico Nasty. The head-bop inducing track offers an inversion of the way men and women are stereotypically conditioned to speak about themselves and what they're told they should and shouldn't feel. With the strains of a guitar, underlying trap and Mahalia's signature soulful sound, the listener is taken on a journey - one that challenges

them throughout. “I really wanted to capture how jealous and unsupportive friends can break your heart, more than any romantic relationship.” Never shy of exploring different sounds, Mahalia’s ‘Rizzla’ is also a sizzling new song featuring Jamaican reggae sensation Koffee. Capturing carnival vibes, wistful summer memories and romance on the dancefloor, the singer gives a nod to her Jamaican roots with a track that will undoubtedly be played on repeat for summers to come.

Reflection has been the thread running through Mahalia’s latest projects and while the current global situation offers little more than uncertainty and anxiously looking ahead, the singer hopes that her music will encourage her listeners to carve out time to also look back and re-evaluate: “We’re all fixated on how we can make ourselves better during and after this period of time but I want people to also reminisce on lovely or painful situations they’ve lived through and how they’ve helped shape the people they are now.”

Mahalia - Biography - Dec 2020

Short version

Growing within a talented family in Leicester, Mahalia Burkmar was always designed to make her mark on the music world. Signed to Asylum Records at the young age of 13, her gifts were lovingly honed and supported by her parents, both who hail from musical backgrounds.

A certain confidence can be seen in all parts of Mahalia’s musical journey, from when she began releasing acoustic music in her late teens to when she took the plunge to move to London just before she turned 18. This marked a huge turning point for the singer: for about a year, she crashed with friends, sleeping in spare rooms or on their sofas while she tried to manage the culture shock of living and making music in such a fast-paced and expensive metropolis.

Mahalia decided to move back to Leicester in 2017 and during that time, she wrote her breakout single ‘Sober’, the track that turned everything on its head. After a year of feeling like she didn’t know what she was doing, the response to ‘Sober’ quelled any doubts about whether this was the right path for her.

The last few years have seen the singer go viral with 41 million views on a COLOURS session, tour internationally both as a support act and a headline name, collaborate with well-loved artists such as Burna Boy, Ella Mai and Little Simz and release her long-awaited debut album ‘Love and Compromise’. With such an impressive host of achievements under her wing at the age of 21, it’s little wonder that Mahalia found herself nominated for the 2020 BRITs Best Female Solo Artist Award, her second BRIT nomination following on from being one of three BRIT’s Critics Choice Award nominees in 2019.

2020 was also a year of big achievement for the Leicestershire native. Alongside a feature on up-and-coming fellow Midlands rapper Pa Salieu's debut mixtape *Send Them To Coventry*, Mahalia also has a Best R&B GRAMMY nomination for 'All I Need' to look forward to in 2021. She also snapped up three MOBO nominations for Best Female Act, Best R&B/Soul Act and Album Of The Year for *Love and Compromise*, winning in the first two categories.

For Mahalia, the work never stops and this year, she's releasing even more music: an EP entitled 'The Isolation Tapes', carries the singer's signature blend of soulful lyrics and eclectic sounds, set to soothe all those finding themselves in COVID-enforced lockdown.

The lockdown period also provided the catalyst for the catchy new 'Jealous' featuring US rapper Rico Nasty. The head-bop inducing track offers an inversion of the way men and women are stereotypically conditioned to speak about themselves and what they're told they should and shouldn't feel. Never shy of exploring different sounds, Mahalia's 'Rizzla' is also a sizzling new song featuring Jamaican reggae sensation Koffee. Capturing carnival vibes, wistful summer memories and romance on the dancefloor, the singer gives a nod to her Jamaican roots with a track that will undoubtedly be played on repeat for summers to come.

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