

SoFaygo wears Sunglasses by Gentle Monster,
Hooded Sweatshirt by FFFPOSTALSERVICE,
Trucker Jacket by AIREI

A HEADARTZWORK

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Shirt by STRIKE OIL, Diffraction Hunter Jacket
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I WENT THROUGH A LOT OF ADVERSITY

Discovery in music has always been the highest currency—that hot tip from a friend that ends up being your new favorite artist. Consider this feature an intro by way of the notoriously selective Travis Scott to SoFaygo and his new record, *Pink Heartz*.

Hailing from Atlanta, SoFaygo's journey hasn't been a standard one but then his sound isn't typical either, informed less by the swagger so common in hip-hop and infused more with a raw emotional honesty that's both challenging and compelling to the listener. The title, *Pink Heartz* itself is a reference to "wearing your heart on your sleeve and being completely yourself no matter what anyone else says or does." SoFaygo is laser-focused on being himself and doing things on his terms.

What seems like a fast rise, belies years of hard work behind the scenes and humble beginnings. Spending part of his childhood living in a trailer with his grandmother and extended family, SoFaygo found solace in music and creativity and soon mastered his first song using GarageBand. Whilst he's renowned for his lyrical flows, in person SoFaygo is measured and thoughtful in his responses. Talking about music is where he comes alive, starting with his first ever track created in 4th grade. "The song was called 'Baby I Need You', and it was a love song. It had some, like little cool lyrics, some little kid-friendly lyrics in there. It was dope, though. I like having recorded my first song that young." Spurred on, he began teaching himself to mix and produce his own tracks and found an unlikely space to share his music---in gaming. "As kids we would play Roblox. The music came in a little later. I started posting music on SoundCloud and then I started promoting my songs on Roblox. When you join the games, they have boom boxes so you could put the audio in there and it'll play the song. So I was doing stuff like that but mainly because it was fun."

Today his writing and promotional process is a little more sophisticated but still informed by a sense of creativity and leaning into inspiration when it strikes. "Sometimes on a normal day, I'll think of a melody in my head and I'll be singing this melody over and over again. I won't even know the lyrics yet. I'll just be humming this melody in my head. Then if I hear a beat that I really like, I'll try to match them together and kind of tweak the melody to make it fit the beat. This is my process." The same is true in the studio. "While I'm in the booth coming up with the song, I'm not writing or anything like that. I'm just in my head coming up with lines and then I'm saying them. I'm just blurting them out. I kind of just freestyle in my head and then try to say what I'm saying."

Taking it in stride is all part of SoFaygo's instinct to go with the flow. From releasing tracks on SoundCloud, he started getting deeper into the underground scene which eventually led to meeting one of Travis Scott's managers, Barry Johnson. Initially, SoFaygo was in a bit of shock.

Barry had worked with Travis for a while, so connected me with him and he really wanted me on the team. It was kind of hard to believe but I registered it. I was really contemplating whether it was the right decision for me. You always gotta weigh out your decisions when you're making any type of deal with anybody. So I waited it out and I was like, 'yeah, this seems like a good ass opportunity for me.'

It's in these moments that SoFaygo's quiet confidence and determination really shine as most young artists would have jumped without thinking. But he has a quiet assurance in himself that's evident. Some of that drive and determination comes from his upbringing.

I'M JUST DOING ME



Sequined Shirt, Pants and Derby Shoes by
Dries Van Noten, Tank Top by Blake from Ohio,
Ring by Roses Metals



I STILL REMEMBER WHERE I CAME FROM

ing; knowing hard times, he's focused on transcending them. "I went through a lot of adversity. I was made fun of in school, didn't fit in with crowds and the cool people but I feel like I'm soaring above it. I'm just doing me, for real. Those are things that I think about sometimes but I still walk around this to this day, holes in my clothes, just comfortable. I still remember where I came from."

These days Sofaygo's humble approach serves him well, and given the caliber of collaborators on *Pink Hertz*, that's inspiring. He describes working with Pharrell Williams. "For the Pharrell track, we actually went to his house and recorded that song in Miami. An introvert by nature, he appreciated how Pharrell approached their working together.

He was a real humble dude, real chill. He wanted me to come in the house and sit next to him so he could catch my vibe and really try to figure out how we were gonna do this beat and how we were gonna make this thing work. So I went in there, we were chopping it up, talking whatever and we just caught a vibe. And I listened to the beat when he was done, the final thing. And I was like, 'wow, this is hard.'

It wasn't just the intuitive approach of the legendary producer that resonated with him, though but the advice he gave. "He sat us down and had a conversation with us and he was just giving us advice about the industry and the way we move. How to watch out for certain things and be cautious and not move too fast. Taking your time with this and having fun with it. He reminded me to have fun with it because that's the best part. It's no fun when you're looking at this like a job."

Aside from Pharrell, *Pink Hertz* sees collaborations with Gunna, DJ Khaled, Don Toliver, Lil Uzi Vert and Ken Carson. When speaking about Ken and their work on the song "Hell Yeah" he lights up and we discuss if the energy between them is motivating for him or more of a rivalry. "Sometimes I can be competitive when it comes to how I'm delivering. When I get sent features or somebody wants me to jump in on their song, I'm listening to everybody else, thinking: 'How can I come on here?'" With Ken though, the relationship is more chill. "It was really just us cheering each other on for real. We really did our thing in our own separate lanes. So it was really cool to see it come together."

He's influenced by coming up in Atlanta and gives a nod to several artists he loves including Lil Uzi and Playboi Carti but a notable inspiration for him is Young Thug. Why? "It's just, he's a character. He's not afraid to be open about who he is and what he likes. He's just so expressive in his music and his lyrics, it really inspires me."

A standout example of his writing on the record is the track "Goin Back". "I'm just talking about how I'm just not going back. You know, I made it. I made it this far. There's a lot of people who don't want to see me win but there's also a lot of people who do want to see me succeed. I'm just letting people know this is a new Faygo. This is not the old person that they knew from two years ago." Discussing how he's changed in the creation of this record, it's clear the shift is as much a mental one as it is creative. "I definitely think I'm more determined. I feel like my head is straighter. I've matured a lot over these years. I'm on a new level from what I used to be. Everything is becoming more serious now, you know?" For him this song is the summary of his journey as an artist. "It's a personal song. I'm talking about a lot of things that I used to go through and what it was like for me coming up. It's a lot and that's why that one hits!" The importance of this to him is evident.

Everything that I'm doing is what I've always wanted to do. I'm just really trying to be more open about it. It makes me feel free when I can perform in front of people or pose in front of a camera and just look good. I like to express myself and it's a very euphoric and melodic sound. Not one a lot of people are tapping into or bringing to the table, you know. It's a very bouncy sound when it comes to production, and it takes you on a trip so I call it 'wavy.'

The sentiment is part of a significant shift in new hip-hop artists towards more sensitive and nuanced lyrics instead of gritty truths and brash swagger. We discuss why he thinks this is the case. "Those types of things are still a part of hip-hop culture but I feel like some of the new generation of artists are definitely bringing more emotion into hip-hop and being more expressive. Other than just doing the same old thing talking about big chains and girls and cars, we're bringing more creativity to it. More fun and more of a message." If there's a key message in his songs, it's one of empowerment.

One message that I always get out is, just be yourself. A lot of times I feel like we can get caught up in what everybody else is doing and it takes away from our energy as individuals. I just remind my fans, just always remain yourself: 'Ain't gotta change for nobody. You ain't gotta conform to nothing that you don't want to conform to. Just remain yourself.'

One place where SoFaygo has had to stay strong and focused is signing to Travis' label Cactus Jack Records. You only have to look at any internet forum and there are a million comments, but he's not fazed. "I feel like everybody's gonna have an opinion. Everybody has opinions. That's it. We're humans, you know what I mean? It's on us to make our own decisions and I made my own decision and I'm sticking with it." For him the selling point was Travis himself and the chance to be mentored by him. "It was a great opportunity and I felt like I could learn a lot. They've done a lot over these years, branding wise, performance wise and helping me make connections and build relationships. It was stuff I could apply to what I had or what I'm building."

In terms of advice he's received from Travis or what he's learned so far, the most important thing he's picked up is this: "You gotta keep your head in the game. At all times. This is our life, you know what I'm saying? Like with this artist's life, we gotta wake up and think about these things. We gotta breathe this and make this a lifestyle so we can keep doing it." The closing track on his record, "Forever", reinforces this sentiment. He says of his lyrics: "I was just talking about the life that I'm living right now. I wanna live it forever. SoFaygo might have big aspirations but he's in no hurry to get to the top. His closing mantra? "Don't rush it. Don't rush the process. What's the phrase? It's a marathon, not a sprint. Facts."

@sofaygo

IT'S NO FUN
WHEN YOU'RE
LOOKING AT THIS
LIKE A JOB

