



“At the end of the day, I can know I did well or I didn’t — but it was me.”

Photograph by YURI HASEGAWA

# ROUND 1



→ “People coined this the influencer election, and I think it’s the first of many influencer elections to come,” Pearson told me in November. Here, Trump’s influencer network is on full display.

“This party represents a new beginning,” says conservative creator Xaviaer DuRousseau, 27. “Young people have always been inherently rebellious. So when you are constantly having mainstream media telling Gen Z that we’re not allowed to think this, or we’re not allowed to be vocal about voting for Trump, a lot of us just became so fed up. And finally, we became non-apologetic.” 🗨️

#### ARTIST YOU NEED TO KNOW

## HOW HANNAH BAHNG CREATED HER OWN PATH

The Korean Australian singer-songwriter is winning fans with her confessional indie-rock songs

By JAE-HA KIM

**W**hen Hannah Bahng arrives at Chicago’s Millennium Park, she makes a beeline for Cloud Gate — the 33-foot-high public sculpture by artist Anish Kapoor that is known colloquially as the Bean. Bundled up in baggy everything, the singer-songwriter examines the Bean from multiple angles before picking a spot to pose for photos to share with her fans.

After spending Thanksgiving with her U.S. manager, the 20-year-old Australian musician has “Pass the Cranberry Sauce” (from *Bob’s Burgers*) on her mind, breaking into humorous renditions of the song as we walk to a nearby coffee shop. There, she will fight me to pay the check — just two Koreans of different generations, where tradition dictates that the elder (me) should pick up the tab, but the younger (her) keeps pushing my credit card away. The amused barista eventually tires of our back-and-forth and comps the drinks.

When Bahng kicked off her first solo tour this past December in Dallas, she wasn’t sure how it would go. “That was my first time onstage, besides playing with my high school band,” she says as she settles into a counter seat with a matcha latte. But she found that she loved how it felt to connect with her fandom, known as Blues.

On that sold-out tour, Bahng debuted her new single “what never lived,” which deals with the ambiguity of situationships in pensive tones that recall Billie Eilish and Pictoria Vark. “Personally, I’ve never been able to get out of the talking stage,” she tells me. “I’ve never been in a romantic relationship. I’ve kind of never even kissed anyone. I feel this is extremely relatable for a lot of people.”

Born and raised in Sydney, Bahng is the daughter of Korean immigrants who moved to Australia searching for a better future. “They always encouraged me to pursue the path I wanted,” she says, tearing up. “My parents didn’t have those kinds of choices.”

As a kid, Bahng knew she wanted to go into music — but, like so many diasporic Koreans before her, she didn’t think she would be accepted in the Western music market. So, as a young teen, she set her eyes on launching a career as a K-pop artist in South Korea.

“For the longest time, I thought that was the only path available to me,” Bahng says. “But during the pandemic, when I was in high school, I had this epiphany. What if I did something completely different, where I could have so much freedom and be able to be hands-on with *everything*?” →

As a fan of K-pop, she isn't slamming the industry. After all, her older brother Chris — known professionally as Bang Chan — is the leader of the popular idol group Stray Kids, and she and her brother are close. But she went another way, posting covers on TikTok until she found a manager who encouraged her original songwriting.

Today, Bahng writes her own songs, directs her own music videos, and designs her own merch; she usually does her own hair, makeup, and styling, too. "I like to stay busy," she says, laughing. "As an indie artist, I don't have big-label money to back me up. But I really enjoy the entire process. At the end of the day, I can know that I did well or that I didn't, but that it was me at the time." 🎧

LIVE FROM THE DMV

# NOOCHIE THREW A PARTY AND THE WORLD JOINED IN

The D.C.-area rapper's *Live From the Front Porch* video series has attracted major stars and won millions of views

By ANDRE GEE

If you've watched any of D.C. rapper Noochie's *Live From the Front Porch* YouTube performance series, you've seen his front steps, where stars like the Lox, Chance the Rapper, and Robin Thicke have all performed with live instrumentalists to the tune of more than 6 million views. But upon visiting his home, I quickly learn that the key to his success is a couple of yards offscreen on the front lawn, where dozens of crew members are setting up five cameras, enormous speakers, and a giant white tarp before the arrival of Cordae and Anderson .Paak for today's performance.

Noochie immediately daps me when I walk onto his lawn and invites me into the home, tucked away on a back street featuring similarly detached, single-family properties as far as the eye can see. The home is astir with several people watching the Thicke episode, released earlier that day. I see the signatures of previous performers scrawled on a living-room wall, alongside artwork and a photo of James Brown. The scribbled walls and hordes of guests



D.C. PROUD Noochie's show always celebrates his hometown.



ON THE MIC Anderson .Paak (left) and Cordae perform at Noochie's house.

(as well as juicy, flavorful barbecue offerings from DCity Smokehouse) give the front room a green-room vibe — it just happens to double as Noochie's actual home.

Along with being the director and executive producer of *From the Front Porch*, Noochie is also an unheralded lyricist who deftly chronicles his life and times on projects like 2017's *New Regular* and his *Sneaky Tape* series. The son of currently incarcerated D.C. rap pioneer Roger "Oneway Boobe" Vincent Jr. (of local legends the OY Boyz), Noochie signed to Atlantic Records in 2017, then left the label two years later. He took things into his own hands, promoting his independent releases with clips of himself rapping on his front porch. What began as marketing now has him planning a star-studded *From the Front Porch* live event at the Kennedy Center on April 4. "I'm excited about it because a lot of people don't know what to expect," he says. "I don't even know what to expect because this is uncharted territory."

The internet is full of online performance series, such as NPR's *Tiny Desk Concerts*, *On the Radar*, and *Colors*. *Live From the Front Porch* separates itself from the pack as one of the only series with a recognizable host, and the only one with an unmistakably D.C. vibe. From regularly hosting go-go royalty on the show to featuring Noochie's New Balances and Washington Commanders fits, the series is a welcome beacon for a region that's still not as culturally recognized as it should be.

Noochie grew up in southeast D.C. with his parents and five siblings. He spent his youth following his father, Boobe, as he pursued his music career. "My dad was always the nucleus of a lot of shit, whether it be musicians or family members that needed shit," he remembers. "Fat Trel, Shy Glizzy..." he adds, naming two of the region's most popular rappers. "I seen him give them a place to record and be safe away from any negative street shit that's going on."

Boobe was incarcerated in 2018 after pleading to a 15-year sentence in a case Noochie would rather not speak on. Noochie says he talks with his father often, and feels like his own moves in the DMV are a "full circle" reflection of his father's legacy. Noochie is undoubtedly the nucleus of today's shoot, alternately coordinating with his production crew, talking with loved ones on the lawn,

Photographs by FARRAH SKEIKY

GUTTER CREDIT