



On Their Way Show Notes:
Episode 10-Halo Wheeler

'On Their Way' Theme Song composed by Bajio Alvarado
(It's light and energetic. It puts a little pep in your step)

Jade: Hi, I'm Jade and this is the season finale of *On Their Way* season one! Can you believe it's been ten weeks already? I certainly can't. It's been such a fun time, and I really learned a lot about podcasting and about myself. You know this season was a love letter to my university Howard University, but it was also a love letter to the ingenuity and excellence of my people, and I'm so proud of everyone I interviewed and everyone who's like them. I am so happy. I'm so glad, but I don't want to get too sentimental, so heads up the season finale of *On Their Way* is coming right at you and remember this is a WGC production.

'On Their Way' Theme Fades

J: Starting in the church, Halo Wheeler began leading songs with the church choir. From there, she went on to be named the 2010 winner of the McDonald's presents the Gift competition and thereafter, the 2011 Museum of Urban Arts Youth Entertainer of the Year. She has opened up for famous singers such as Frankie Beverly and Maze, Chrisette Michele, and Kelly Price. Halo has also released her very first CD entitled "This Is Who I Am" in August 2014 and is currently writing and preparing for her second release. She graced the stage in many productions such as *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Once On This Island*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *The Drowsy Chaperone* and many more. One of her favorite roles is *Young Celie* in *The Color Purple*. Halo was awarded the Gates Millennium Scholarship which funds her education until her PhD. With this scholarship she enrolled at the illustrious Howard University where she majors in Music Business with an emphasis in Jazz Voice. Her latest release, LA LA LA, is a fun summertime R&B jam about love. Halo gives all of her glory and honor to God for all of the many things that he has done in her life thus far. She looks forward to where her journey will take her in the future. Hey, Halo! How are you doing?

Halo: I'm good. How are you?

J: I am doing really well. I'm really excited to have you here. I must say I like your music and I like your work. So, this is exciting.



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H: I'm super excited to be here. Thank you for having me.

J: Of course, of course. So, I'm just gonna launch right into the first question. The first question I ask everybody, where are you from and where are your roots?

H: I am from Birmingham, Alabama. Right here in the South at the heart of where the Civil Rights Movement basically began. So, I have a lot of roots in just the history of the city. I love being here. I love living here.

J: Okay, and when did you find out that music was what you wanted to do?

H: Music has been a part of my life from a very young age. I would say since I was about seven years old, that's basically when I knew that music was it for me. I-

J: Oh, go ahead.

H: Yeah. I sang a...I led a song with the church choir at that time, and when I was on stage singing, I just felt free. I felt at home, I wasn't nervous at all. It just felt like it's where I was meant to be.

J: Wonderful, and from that time of the church choir to now, how do you, how would you describe your development? How would you describe your music and artistic development over, just over the time that you've decided that music was what you wanted to do?

H: Yeah. My parents have been very big supporters of my dreams, my craft, and my goals. So, once they realized that music was basically it for me, they really started to put me in different programs to help develop my craft. So, starting very young. When I was in elementary school, I was a part of a lot of ensembles. I was a part of an ensemble called make it happen, where we learn basically the basics of theater: stage right stage left, you know, those types of things, and then I started to do small productions from there. And then in 20....I believe 2011, I started singing with a jazz band and we did performances all around the city.



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H: So, I mean, I can definitely say that my experiences and those situations have definitely been my teachers and experience has definitely been my biggest guidance and things during my development.

J: Yeah. Well, that sort of opens up two questions for me. So, I'm going to do the first one. So, you mentioned how, in part of your development, what sort of helped you along was a theater camp and I know in your bio, you said you've been in shows such as *Little Shop of Horrors* and *The Color Purple*. So, I would like to know is musical theater is still something you want to do? Because I personally know you as a singer solely. So is theater still something that you, that you want to be a part of and are passionate about?

H: Oh, absolutely. *Little Shop of Horrors* was actually just last year.

J: Oh! Kudos.

H: Um, so yeah, so musical theater is definitely one of my passions and it's something that I definitely want to be able to dive into. I wouldn't call it my, my sole purpose on this Earth. Like I have friends who are theater babies. Like, theater is everything that they do.

J: Mhmm.

H: Um, I wouldn't call myself a theater baby, but it's definitely something that I like to reach into every now and again, because it's so much fun to be able to play different characters and singing in a different style is always a challenge for me as well, so.

J: Okay, and then my second question from that first answer that you gave was, so you mentioned how you were in a couple of jazz ensembles and personally, I know that I've first found out about you and your music through The Soul Sistas which is, for listeners, a three person jazz trio. Fantastic. But, um-

(Halo and Jade Chuckle)



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J: So, so how does it differ working with an ensemble and then working as a solo artist and can you just talk to us about what that sort of dichotomy is like?

H: Absolutely. Working with a group is always fun. It's a fun challenge though, in that, especially with The Soul Sistas, we are three individuals that come from three totally different backgrounds and in a lot of ways, our musical style differ as well. So, I think the biggest challenge for us is to be able to blend all three of those styles. Of course, we have moments where our interests overlap, which always help us, but we have three different voices, three different styles and so just working together to blend ourselves into one sound is definitely challenging. And then also with being in a group, it's almost a humbling experience in a way of that it's not all about you-

J: Mhmm.

H: You know, when you're singing on stage you can take as many liberties as you want, because you know, there's no one right, depending on you, but possibly your band, but when you're in a group, you have to do things as they're rehearsed for the most part, because you have, you know, two, three, four, or however many other people, depending on you to do the things that you rehearsed. So, I would say that those are the....those two things are the biggest differences in being in a group and being by myself.

J: Okay. Okay that's understandable, and you mentioned that you, that sometimes in a group, your artistic styles can differ, so can you kind of describe to us what your artistic style is?

H: Yes. So, I am Neo-Soul, R&B, and Gospel all the way.

(Jade and Halo Chuckle)

H: Those are my biggest, biggest influences. I mean, I started off in the church, so of course the gospel is at the foundation of that.

J: Of course.



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H: And then moving on into when I started with the jazz band. So, I have a lot of jazz influences because I'm a jazz student now, as well.

J: Mhmmm.

H: But I would say that my heart lies with R& B and Neo-Soul.

(Halo Chuckles)

H: So many of my favorite artists are like Jill, Scott and Ledisi and Anita Baker. So, just those classic voices that's, that's really what I gravitate to.

J: That's interesting because when I was listening to *LA LA LA* this afternoon in preparation for this interview, Anita Baker did definitely jump to mind. So it's, it's interesting how your influence is so palpable when you actual work.

H: Thank you. Absolutely.

J: Yes. Yes. Now, one thing that I did want to ask was what do you sort of do to warm up before you perform for an audience? Like, what are your pregame rituals?

H: Ooh.

J: If you have any.

H: This is a fun question. Yeah. Uh, actually I do. It differs from performance to performance because it, uh, you know, just technical things happen. However, I would say on the day of the gig, I'm definitely gonna wake up and I'm going to be listening to music all day however, it's not going to be the music that I'm performing. So, if I'm doing an original set, I'm going to be listening to everybody but myself that day, um, just because I want to start pulling influences and ideas from other places. So, I start there. I also just try not to answer my phone.



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H: For the most part I put my phone on do-not-disturb on gig days because I just want to stay focused. I want to be in the zone, you know, at all times. Other than that, I make sure that I warm up my voice, like a lot, because usually on my gigs, I'm screaming and hollering and talking and laughing and rapping and, you know, doing whatever comes to mind

(Halo Laughs)

H: When I'm on a gig. Um, so I like to be able to use the totality, like, use all of my instrument and just to go along with using all of my instrument, I also like to make sure that I'm, like, fully warmed up in my full body. So, if that means me doing yoga that day, if I have enough time, then I might do, you know, me a 15-minute yoga situation or just some stretches, something to get my body ready to be active. Those are pretty much my pre-show rituals.

J: Alright, and I actually want to talk about a show that you did do. So, on March 10th in 2020, you performed an hour long concert at the Millennium Stage, which is in the Kennedy Center, and I'm going to link to it in the show notes, the full video, cause they have it up, but can you just sort of talk to us through what that process was like? It was a fantastic show. So, can you just sort of talk to us like how it got organized and what it was like doing it and the entire thing in general?

H: Thank you. Um, yeah, of course. So, the Millennium Stage show....Wow. It came by surprise. I remember I was driving home a few months prior and a friend of mine called me and was like, "Hey, would you be interested in doing something on the millennium stage?" I'm like "would I be interested?"

(Jade Laughs)

H: "Heck yes. Sign me up, it's the Millenium Stage." So, the process began. I wanted to do my show very differently. I like to stick to my roots. So, I wanted to make sure that I brought all of my musicians,uh, that I'm used to gigging with from Alabama. So, I was able to work it out with Kennedy Center. They were super, super nice and super cooperative, and I was able to bring my entire band from Birmingham, Alabama, to D.C. to perform a show with me.



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H: Now-

J: That's amazing.

H: Uh...absolutely as amazing as it was, it was the most stressful situation ever because-

(Jade and Halo Laugh)

H: Because there was really no time for us to actually rehearse. I'm going to be honest. Like I believe they got in there...they got in town the night before the show. Um, so I mean, we were up running that show for hours to make sure that we got right, those entrances and exits. Because one thing about the Kennedy Center is that they aren't letting you go over your time. So, if they're giving you an hour, they're cutting your sound at, you know, at that hour mark.

J: Mhmm.

H: So, we wanted to make sure that we were staying within the parameters, that Kennedy Center gave us. Um, so we ran that show into the ground, honey, and I did not care how tired they were because I am just a huge perfectionist, but the show turned out absolutely wonderful. The energy was super amazing, and I think it was just such a blessing because this was the last show that Kennedy, the Kennedy Center had before COVID. So, this was like my last big performance before the world shut down.

H: Mhmm.

H: So, the Kennedy Center show has been one of my greatest blessings pre-COVID. Yeah, for sure.

J: Yeah. And I also want to go to a different show, which happened post-COVID, which I was pretty interested in. So, on July 23rd, You did *Black Girl Things*, which was like a virtual concert of sorts.



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J: So, can you talk to us about how you came up with that idea and then how you implemented that in this virtual realm that we're in?

H: Absolutely. So, once COVID hit, um, as you know, most people know artists and creatives, we took a big hit because we weren't able to sing at these venues because they were closed. I knew that I wanted to capitalize on the fact that everybody's at home, you know, people don't have a whole lot to do or a lot of opportunities to, you know, be engaged. So, I came up with *Black Girl Things*. Me and a few creatives in the city, we sat down and we planned. I knew that I wanted to celebrate Black women. I mean, this was right when Breonna Taylor, when the Breonna Taylor incident had happened and I, as a Black woman, was fully enraged, and so I wanted to put my politics and my art together and just celebrate who we are as Black women, because there are so many facets as to who we are and what makes us amazing, and so I wanted to definitely highlight that during *Black Girl Things*. So, on top of the performance. I also wanted to include video elements within the performance as well.

J: Mhmmm.

H: Um, so I separated the show into four segments, and the segments were named after the elements, fire, water, air, and earth, and I took these four elements and I connected it back to the Black woman experience. So, if you ever get a moment to just watch it, I have one of the segments out on YouTube as well. But *Black Girl Things* was amazing. I was able to collaborate with different businesses in the city, different musicians in the city. So. Wow. It...that has been my greatest performance blessing post-COVID. So-

(Jade and Halo Chuckle)

H: It's really amazing that you were able to highlight both of those things. So, yeah.

J: Well, yes of course. I try...we try to be comprehensive here at *On Their Way*.

H: Absolutely.



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(Jade and Halo Laugh)

J: Well, you've mentioned it a couple of times about your roots in Birmingham. So, I want to know, after you graduate from Howard, do you want to go back to Birmingham? And if so, what's the music industry like there and how do you plan to integrate into it?

H: So, the music industry...I'll start with what the music industry is like in Birmingham. It's very R&B. It's very, very R&B. It's so my scene in the sense of that. I, however, think I want to move, honestly. I want to experience a new city. I've been gigging in Birmingham since I was about 11 years old, and so I feel like I have almost, if you will, reached the bounds of my performance experience in the city. So, I want to be able to branch out a bit more post-grad to another city and see what it has to offer, but the music scene in Birmingham is quite rich and upcoming actually. We have a lot of new venues in lieu of COVID actually. We have a lot of new venues opening and musicians doing a lot of different things in the city to help singers and everything and everyone advanced forward. So, I love the music industry here in Birmingham, but I think it's time for me to branch out and fly a bit in a different city.

J: Hmm. Okay. Now you mentioned that you've been gigging in Birmingham, since you were 11, and that you've been singing in some capacity since you were in single digits and you're, you're 20 something years old now. So, I want to know how are you keeping up this sort of stamina because that's a long period of time to be dedicating your life to...to a specific artform.

H: You know, it's just the passion. The passion is definitely keeping me...keeping me moving forward because there's always something new that I can reach for and something new that I can aim for, and, you know, even though we're in this testy COVID season, there's even new things that I could attain to or reach for, technological wise. Like, so, the virtual show, *Black Girl Things* was my tester, if you will, for the COVID season. So, now I know I can do something virtual, let's blow it up even bigger. So, I think it's definitely the passion that's driving me to do more and more and more over these years.

J: Okay. So, it's the passion that's driving you to more and more, but still in music, it's a kind of high octane environment. It can be pretty stressful. It can be personal.



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J: So, I just want to know how do you, how do you maintain and care for your mental health as an artist in the music industry?

H: I go to therapy.

(Halo Laughs)

J: Okay.

H: Listen, listen, I have a therapist, honey, and she is good to me.

(Jade Laughs)

H: Okay. And, but also just, just to be honest, there are moments when I go dark. I cannot stress enough how important it is to take brain breaks from things.

J: Mhmm.

H: Um, so there are moments where I just don't post on social media, like I should, or there are moments where I just have to kind of step away and I take those moments to really, really assess my mental health. So, I do a lot of journaling in those times when I've stepped away, I'm usually writing a lot. So, that's usually what I do to take a break from the stress, because it is extremely stressful. There's a thousand people trying to get to this one...It feels like there's a thousand people trying to get to this one goal, and so there are times where I am down. There are times where I don't feel like I am enough, but I just take those moments to step away. Like, I say, journal, write, pray, get back centered. That's extremely, extremely important, especially in this COVID season. I keep bringing up this COVID thing because it's so, I mean, it's here!

J: Mhmm.

H: And it's affecting everyone and in totally different ways. So yeah. Mental be taking care of your mental health is extremely important.



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J: Yes. Yes it is. Now one thing that I did want to know: so, you write your songs, the songs that you sing, like *La La (La)* and *Body Heat*, you wrote those as well, yes?

H: Yes.

J: Okay. So could you walk us through what your songwriting process is like from conception to production to music videos to post?

H: Absolutely. So, every song is different. I will be honest, but with most songs I'm given a beat already. I work with a producer out in Huntsville, Kelvin Wooten with Wooten Productions and usually we sit together in the studio and he's like, "how are you feeling today?"

(Halo Laughs)

H: He's like, "how, how you feeling today? What you wanna, what you wanna accomplish today?" And so we'll start rapping. We'll talk a bit, and based on our conversations he'll start creating music. It's the most amazing thing to watch, honestly. And then once he starts creating the music, it's like simultaneously I'm writing and he's creating the beat. And so it's a collaborative effort. He'll throw some ideas out there. "Hey, do you like this lick?" I'm like, "eh, let's try something different." "Okay. What about this lick?" "Okay, cool. Let's put it in." So, it's a very step by step process, but we're simultaneously working. As I write, he's creating. Once I get in the studio, when we lay those vocals down I think it takes about....it might take about four hours to get the song completely tracked out and ready to go. Then we'll do another session where we'll do the real vocals, and then after we do the real, the real vocals, he begins to mix and master and, depends on what his workload is, but about two weeks later, we have a song. Yay!

(Jade Laughs)

H: Um, Yeah. So, it's a very quick turnaround, you know, depending on, you know, what everybody has going on.



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H: But then once I have the song, I usually release my songs before I release the actual video for the song. So, I let the song kind of get some play, and to see how everybody's feeling about it. You know, it may not need a video. I'll....you know, every song I may not need a video. So, for the songs that I do decide to do a video on, I work with. T.L. (Benton). That is actually...he is a Howard grad with Mecca Filmworks, and we sit down and we conceptualize. We sit down and we talk about storyboards visions. What do I see for the song? What does he see for the song? And, you know, we collaborate and I think the best thing about creating songs and videos and all those things is the collaborative effort. I'm able to sharpen my ideas against their ideas and see, see what type of creative efforts they're bringing into the process as well. So, that's always fun, but yeah, once T.L. and Im you know, get the storyboard and the vision...once we start fundraising.

(Halo and Jade Laugh)

H: Once we get that money, right, it's time to make a video.

(Halo and Jade Laugh Harder)

H: Yeah, for sure. And once we get that video done, I give him his time to edit or whatever, and once that editing is done, we release that video and here we are, here we are.

J: Alright. Well, one of the things that you said was that you really enjoy working with the team in the collaborative process. So, how do you go about creating a strong team? How have you done that in the past?

H: Definitely networking, and that's something that I know I have been taught and has been beat over my head since the moment I stepped onto Howard's campus was just learning about your networking and strengthening your network, ad so I took that very seriously. Throughout my entire life I've taken it very seriously. So, just connecting with different people on campus, connecting with different people via social media, I've even fostered some relationships, you know, just via email, reaching out to certain people.



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J: So, just being observant of the work that they put out, and if that's something that I feel like that could be useful in my toolbox, then I reach out to them, try to create a business or a personal relationship. So, yeah, definitely that's how I've been able to collaborate with so many amazing people, just not being afraid. I can say to the listeners out there just to not be afraid to step out there and actually reach out to people because there are people out there, there are resources out there to help you and that want to pour into you and give back. T

J: Well, thank you. I hope that helps....I hope that helps somebody who's listening right now. Now, one thing I did want to ask you about was your YouTube channel, which you started well, not started, it's been going on for some years, but I've noticed you started putting out videos that are more typical of what you'd see on YouTube. Like mukbangs or fashion hauls or things like that. And so I want to ask, uh, what brought about these new video topics and how do you create YouTube videos that, um...nope let's go with the first question. What brought about your shift and your focus on your YouTube channel?

H: Yeah, well, I think my peak, I think where I really wanted to start putting out new videos was sometime last year I saw this craze about mukbangs and I got obsessed with kind of watching them.

(Halo and Jade Laugh)

H: And then I just kind of realized like, I could do this. I like to talk, you know, I love to eat-

(Jade Laughs)

H: So, why not try it? And then of course the self doubt rolled in and I was like, "you know what? No, that's not for me. Let me just stick to singing." And then COVID rolls around and I'm like, "Hmm. Let me try something new, you know, I mean, why not, why not try something new?" So, then I just began to plan and execute and here we are with the new YouTube channel. And I'm one of those creatives that likes to try whatever, you know, like if it peaks my interest, I'm going to step out there and I'm going to try it because you never know, you just never know. And so far, the YouTube journey has been interesting.



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H: It's a different world than, you know, standing up and performing, but it's so fun. Like, it's so fun to be in front of the camera and talking and I really enjoy that. I think, um, during Black Girl Things, I actually interviewed someone and I realized like, wow, I like interviewing people.

J: It's great! Yeah.

H: It is, yeah. It's, it's actually kind of fun.

J: Mhmm.

H: So, um, I just, I have really enjoyed my journey of just trying new, trying new things within the realm of entertainment. It's, it's really been peaks and valleys, but overall, it's just been a great experience with just jumping into new things.

J: And I want to pick up on something you said in that comment, and then something you said a little earlier. So, you mentioned how, like the self doubt sort of kicked in and you thought like, "Oh, I can't do this until COVID happened and you were like "why not?"

(Halo Chuckles)

J: You mentioned earlier that sometimes self doubt creeps in and you go dark. And so I'm sort of wondering, like, how do you combat that self doubt? Cause I know that's something that a lot of people....I personally struggle with that I know other people do too. So, how do you, how do you work through that?

H: So through two, two ways, my first way I combat that self doubt is definitely words of affirmation. Okay. I am that girl, like I have to stand up in front of a mirror and I'm like, "no girl, you can do this". And this is exactly how I talk to myself in the mirror, you guys.

(Jade Laughs)



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H: I'm like, "no girl, you got this. Don't don't....whoever that is in your mind, you need to squash her because she's not telling you the truth. This is not the truth. You can do this." I am the person who can't read off an affirmation, so I make up my own. I talk to myself as if I am my own personal motivational speaker. Okay. "Like, girl, you got this." That's my first way. Secondly, I've created a really, really great circle and village of support. When I'm feeling those moments of self doubt, I have other creatives that I reach out to my mom is someone else I reached out to my sisters. Those are people that I reach out to and I'm like, "okay, this is what's going on right now, guys. This is how I'm feeling. I don't think I can do it." And of course their... as your circle of support, they come back and they're like, "no, you can do this. You were made for this." You know, I get scriptures, I get quotes and all kinds of things jumping in my phone once I reach out to my circle of support. So, that's just something I would definitely....another thing I would recommend to the listeners is find...find you a few people that you can consider to be your circle of support or your accountability partners. Just someone you can reach out to when you're feeling a little low so that they can lift you up.

J: Hm. Okay. Speaking about a circle of people who can sort of hold you accountable and sort of lift you up. I want to talk about mentors, cause I know that's a very important thing in every artist's life. So, can you tell me who your mentors own and how you went about finding them and then how you go about building healthy, functional relationships with them?

H: So one of my mentors is actually my producer, Kelvin Wooten, and that relationship happened extremely organically. And I think that honestly, the best way to find your mentors, is allow those things to happen organically. So, with Kelvin, uh, he actually attended my church and I was singing and he heard me and he approached me and was like, "hey, I see you have this gift. I would like to help you." That's literally how that, how it's, how it began, and since then I believe that I want to say that that was 20....10 when, when we linked up and now here we are ten years later-

J: Ten years.



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H: Yeah. I mean, he's still someone that I can reach out to when, when I need help with something or when I just don't know, you know, just those types of things. I would say that as we've gotten, you know, more busy because listen, Kevin Wooten is that dude, if you don't know who he is, please look him up. Y'all is like that guy within, you know, production. He's done stuff for Jill Scott, Anthony Hamilton, Raphael Saadiq. He, he really is doing this thing out here. Um, but as we've gotten busier, I would say that our communication has kind of fallen off a bit, but I would say as the mentee, I try to make it my duty to reach out to him as much as possible so that he can know, "Hey, I'm still interested. I'm still here. I still, you know, want to learn from you. I still value everything that you say." He's probably my biggest, my biggest mentor. And just with fostering a healthy relationship, keeping, keeping the lines of communication open is extremely important.

J: Now, you write your own songs with Kelvin. He writes the beats and you write the lyrics and such, and you also you also sing songs that are written by other people. Like for instance, you did a really great cover of what was it...it was a Tina Turner song...it's escaping my mind, but you cover other people's songs as well. So, what's the difference in singing and performing songs that you wrote and singing and performing songs that other people have written.

H: Singing covers is fun. However, I think that it's very important when you sing the cover to keep a certain amount of integrity because, you know, I like to make songs my own. I am that type of girl, but at the same time, I think that there are still moments where you can recognize, "Oh yeah, she's singing "The Way" by Jill Scott. You know what I mean?"

J: Mmm.

H: I think it's important to do that because the songwriter wrote that song a certain way for a reason, because they were feeling that particular way on a particular day.

(Halo Laughs)



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H: So, um, I think that's the biggest difference because when I'm singing my own music, it might come out the same as the record, but you know what, tomorrow it might sound completely different, and I like to be able to take those liberties on stage. Um, I like to be able to have that, that freedom, you know, when I'm on stage. So that's, I think that's the biggest difference.

J: Okay. Okay. And another thing that I wanted to ask you was, so one thing that I noticed when I watched some of your live videos and live performances was that you have this sort of vibrancy about you...you have a stage presence. How did you develop that stage presence? How did you go about creating that vibrancy?

H: One Christmas my dad bought me every live Beyonce concert on DVD.

(Jade and Halo Laugh)

H: I mean, from like her *Dangerously In Love* album, I want to say, all the way up to like her album 4. So, I had four DVDs to watch. At all times of Beyonce's live concerts, and I attribute this to how I found my stage presence, honestly. I watched those videos religiously. I know those lab arrangements,

(Halo Laughs)

H: Like the back of my hand because I watched them so closely.

J: Mhmm.

H: I watched the way the Beyonce would interact with the audience the way she would speak in between songs. I mean, down to the nitty-gritty of what was going on in those performances. And I think that's basically how I began to find myself. Honestly, yeah, I could say....I don't think I've ever really told that, tell that story before, but yeah, Beyonce definitely was the one to help me find my stage presence.

(Halo Laughs)



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J: Do you still do that? Do you watch other performances and other artists to try to find out what they do and then replicate that for yourself?

H: Absolutely. Absolutely. I watch different performances all the time, whether I'm trying to find different vocal techniques or performance techniques, or just the way people do their arrangements. I think it's important to study. I am definitely a student of the craft at all, all times.

J: Hm. Okay. And here's one thing I wanted to ask you. So, how do you know when a song is successful? Like how do you judge a song success for you?

H: You know, that is a loaded question. For me, a song that is successful....is when I know that...hmm, that's a good question. I would say that I know that a song is successful. When people come to me, weeks later, I was like, "girl, I was listening to *Body Heat* the other day and fill-in-the blank or "girl, I was listening to *LA LA LA*" or "girl, I showed *LA LA LA* to-." That is when I know "okay. I think I'm on the right track here. I think I've had a successful song." I try not to base it off of numbers, even though that's how the industry is, but if, if I obsess over numbers, then I won't be able to celebrate the accomplishment. And so I like to, uh, take it on a case by case basis with people like, "okay. I think people are really rocking with the song. The general consensus is that people are rocking with it," and so that's success to me.

J: Okay. And I know that earlier, you said that you liked to experiment and just sort of try out what you want cause why not? And I want to know, are you planning to experiment with the song genres that you do or the things that you do within the songs at all?

H: Absolutely. So, for the second project that I want to put out, I really want to tap into the jazz influence a bit more. I want people to be able to hear that and pick that out. That's one of the biggest things that I want to experiment with. Yeah. Yeah. I think that is.

J: Alright, and might I ask, why jazz? Why is that what you want to experiment with?



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H: Jazz is something I want to experiment with because first of all, I'm in school for it, and so it's like, "I want the, I want the folks to know-"

(Jade and Halo Laugh)

H: This is what I have spent this past four years, you know, dedicating my life to, but also just on a, on a more serious note though, jazz is extremely difficult. It's an intricate genre because it's different from any other thing I think I've ever studied in the sense of like, you have to know your stuff to be able to sing jazz. It's not like gospel, like, where you can listen to a gospel tune and just sing it. Jazz is like, you need to know the chords, you need to know the theory behind what you're singing. I just believe that jazz comes from a much more informed place, and so I want to be able to showcase that in my music, that I am an informed singer. I don't just arbitrarily sing notes because it feels good or it sounds fun. I mean, of course I want it to feel good, but I also want it to come from an educated standpoint as well.

J: How much does the replay in your songwriting process? Can you talk us through that?

H: Yeah, absolutely. I would say in my first album I had no theory.

(Halo Laughs)

H No theory under my belt. I was, how old was I? I was, like, 13-years-old. I was a baby. Now with this newer music that's happening or that I'm in the process of writing, it's playing a much bigger factor for me. I'm knowing these chord changes. I'm knowing where I want it to go. I know now, like, okay, I don't want this to be in this particular key because I know what sounds good in my voice now. And so even if I haven't been able to completely dive into that jazz aspect, I'm still able to come from a more informed place vocally. I know exactly what I'm singing and I can sing this particular line over this particular set of chords. And so, yeah, it's just been extremely amazing to grow in my gift and my education as well.

J: And since you're about to graduate from Howard, how do you plan on continuing this musical education outside of an academic environment?



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H: So I.... like I said, I've always been a student of the craft.

J: Mhmm.

H: So, I think just continuing to, like I said, watch those videos and listen to artists that I have discovered throughout my Howard journey. Like, so now I can add someone like Betty Carter to my list of artists that I listen to and I can dig into her journey. Before I got to the collegiate level, I actually would learn about an artist. I would take an artist about a quarter. So, at one point I knew everything that was to know about, uh, Anita Baker and I knew everything there was to know about Ella Fitzgerald and all of their top songs, and here's some of their famous licks and, you know, just those types of things. I take it that seriously because I think it's that serious. Like music is extremely important to transforming lives. And so I feel like, if I am an artist, if I call myself an artist, it is my duty to learn as much as I can about my craft so that I'm able to transform as many lives as I can.

J: Well, that's, that's very diligent. That's very-

(Halo Chuckles)

J: Very diligent indeed. So, one thing that I do want to ask is, and this is just about general performing again, what's your favorite venue that you've performed in? Like what, what gave you the best vibe from the space and so on?

H: Let me think. I think that my favorite performance honestly, honestly, was the Kennedy Center, and here's why-

(Jade Laughs)

H: There was just a certain level of professionalism that I don't think I had ever, um, experienced. As far as the lighting and the sound....I mean, I had to really prep for that show in a way I don't think I had ever had to prep before. It took a different type of discipline. I was writing out lighting cues.



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H: I was writing out sound cues. I mean, I had to, I had a lot being thrown at me for that particular show and the vibes were super, super amazing. Everyone was super nice. Um, the crowd was singing along, up on their feet the entire time. It was just a great energy within the space.

J: And I know that you have mentioned a few times, and it was mentioned in your bio that you're preparing for your second release. So can you tell us anything about that? Just give us a little sneak peak of, of something.

H: Yeah, sure. Um, so for the second, uh, the second release I can tell you guys that I am working with different producers now, um, I'm actually collaborating on writing as well-

J: Oooo.

H: So I'm not, I probably won't be writing them all alone. Um, so I think the second project, the biggest word that comes to mind is definitely collaboration, because with my first project, and even the singles that have proceeded this second release that I'm getting ready for, were all Kelvin Wooten. You know, like, I just stuck to the formula that was working for me at the time, but I think now it's time for me to explore a bit more, you know, find different people that I can work with. So, I'm excited about that and I'm hoping to have some features on the album too.

J: Ooo. You know you gotta love a good feature. Really brings a nice tone and tenor to the entire thing.

H: Absolutely.

(Halo Laughs)

J: Quite excited. So, we're at the last question. We're at the end of the interview and Halo, obviously you're very talented. You've been singing since you were a little kid and you're just continuing to grow and grow and expand and experiment and become a more developed and more, more whole artist, and you're very clearly on your way to success.



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J: So, I just want to know how will you know, when you've made it?

H: You know, I've had people tell me you never really arrive. You never, you never arrive. You're always learning. You're always stretching and you're always growing. And so I'll let that be the period on the, on the sentence, is that you, you never really arrive.

J: Alright-Alright. So could you tell the people where they can-

(Halo and Jade Laugh)

J: Could you tell the people where they can find you and your music?

(Halo and Jade Laugh)

H: Absolutely. I mean, I hate to end it like that, but I mean, that's just, what I've always been taught is that you never really arrived. You're always growing and stretching, but the listeners can find me everywhere @HaloWheeler. Halo, like the halo on top of your head. And Wheeler like a 4xWheeler, like how we ride down here in Alabama.

(Halo and Jade Laugh)

'On Their Way' Theme Song composed by Bajio Alvarado

J: And you have just finished listening to the last episode in the first season of On Their Way. On Their Way was created, hosted and edited by me, Jade Madison Scott. The theme was composed by Bajio Alvarado and the logo was created by Amaka Korie. You find out where to follow both of them and their amazing work in our show notes. If you liked our episode show that love by rating or downloading our episodes, follow us on IG and Twitter @withgoodco, and tell your friends. Who among us doesn't love hearing about what our friends are into, honestly? If you liked the show and you want to support us financially go over to our website, wgcproductions.com, and buy some merch from our shop. Got to be honest, the sweatshirts are deeply comfortable.



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J: You can also find episode transcripts and show notes at our website, wgcproductions.com. If you are a singer like Halo those show notes are helpful cause we like to put in some resources for singers to help you on your journey. And last things last, if you are thinking about creating something, anything at all, I really hope you go out and do it. I know sometimes it can be intimidating, God knows I know, but even just taking the smallest step can lead to a wave of internal liberation. After all, creating is joy and don't we all need a little more joy in our lives right now. Just think about it. Make sure to follow us [@withgoodco](https://twitter.com/withgoodco) so you can stay up-to-date, and remember to take care of yourselves.