

Adrian Adel: Artist, Muse

Adrian Adel started out as a singer with Portland funk band Fatman. Then she discovered photography. Today Adel is a photographer and graphic designer with a clientele that includes Many Portland musicians, including Liv Warfield, Luck one and Rose Bent. D.J. Khalid even recorded an intro for her website. *The Skanner's* Helen Silvis caught up with Adel at the Albina Press coffee house N. Portland.

HS: Are you originally from Portland?
AA: I'm from the Bay Area to be exact but I moved to Portland in 1995 and fell in love with the city. I've lived all over the USA. I'd lived in 10 different cities before I was 10 years old. In the 80's, my parents were a part of the cable boom so we moved from city to city whenever a new cable job came about. In my 16 years in Portland, I did venture out and moved to Los Angeles only to be chewed up and spit out. Now, I don't want to live anywhere else! Not that I'm a fan of the cold and wet, what I like most about the Northwest are its natural resources and that people are trying to preserve them.

HS: How did you land in Portland?
AA: My parents had moved here for work and I was fresh out of high school, in the midst of making a decision to attend college. I wanted to study music and English so I could be a teacher. But my grandfather, who had promised to finance my college education, didn't agree with my major. He was very old school and wanted me to study law, medicine or technology. So, after he let down and I refused to give in to his demands, I decided to move to Oregon. My mother had told me about the music program at Mt. Hood Community College. After getting caught up in entry level jobs, I ended up joining a band shortly after I moved here and lost sight of school.

HS: Tell us about that band.
AA: It was a 16-piece funk band called 'Fatman', named after the atomic bomb dropped by the Enola Gay. The music



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and performance was inspired by Pink Floyd with a little bit of Beastie Boys mixed in. We had a full trumpet section, full backup vocals, two drum kits, 3 guitarists, turn-tables, an emcee, you name it. Our lead singer was J.R. Pella (from Drunk at Abby's) who was well known for heating up stages around town. He is an extremely talented singer. We also featured a lot of artists during our two-year run, such as Tahoe Jackson, My-G and Mic Crenshaw. It was amazing to me that 16 people would show up to rehearse twice every week for two years, in addition to the weekly gigs we had. We came to life right as Five Fingers of Funk left the city to tour so we were able to step right into that empty spot. We played nearly every venue and event in town, like the Crystal Ballroom, Berbati's Pan, Tonic Lounge and even La Luna when it was still standing. I had the best time of my life with those people and I still keep in touch with several of them. We reminisce from time to time but it just makes me feel old!

HS: Do you still sing?
AA: I wish! I'm kind of thinking about getting my own thing together. I just miss performing so much. Ever since I can remember, I wanted to be a professional singer. I had always been a backup singer, performing with bands like Hungry Mob and Basic Shapes. In 2001, I went "solo" and took my chances with a move to Los Angeles to pursue a career in music and sound engineering. Thus came about the stage name "Adrian Adel". I've had the opportunity to share the stage with some incredible artists including: Mic Crenshaw, Michael Franti and Spearhead, the late Guru, Dead Prez, The Coup, Pete Miser and the Five Fingers of Funk, and Macklemore. I had been a very active musician in Portland up until 2007. That was when my photography business started to take off and I just kind of let my music go. A lot of people don't know me as a singer, just a photographer. That's ok with me. I can live through them instead!

'Getting to do what I love and see a legend in the process is amazing to me at times'



DJ Chill photographed by Adrian Adel



Portland rapper Sacrafice photographed by Adrian Adel

HS: How did you get into photography?
AA: It was almost accidental! I took some photographs for a friend and realized I was pretty good at it. So I asked a few musician friends of mine around town if I could shoot them, too. Having those shots in my portfolio really helped me land work along with the referrals I was getting. One of my first big shoots was with Obie Trice for Coast 2 Coast Magazine. I tend to get a little star struck at times so that shoot was kind of comical. I had asked the CEO of Coast 2 Coast, Lil' Fats, to not allow me to speak to Mr. Trice except to ask him to move his chin this way or that! I did a bit of work for Coast 2 Coast and ended up getting an official approval shout out from DJ Khalid. Another big shoot I did was for Liv Warfield right as she was breaking from her label and taking her singing career into her own hands. She's still a client of mine and is still touring with Prince and the NPG.

HS: You've done some fashion shoots too?
AA: Jessica Kane and Carrie Woomer discovered me and had me shoot a few spreads for their plus-size magazine, SKORCH Magazine. They helped set up a shoot with plus model Diana Z. from America's Next Top Model as well as plus model Mary N. who didn't quite make the final cut. But I was able to shoot both of those ladies as well as Kasia from the recent season through SKORCH. I still work with SKORCH and am in the process of planning a shoot for a fashion spread for their next issue. I love working with these ladies because they appreciate edgy photographs. Just because woman are plus-sized, it doesn't mean we're not young, fun, edgy and like cute stuff, too!

HS: What are you doing currently?
AA: I tend to do a lot of work for musicians who need promo photos and graphic design for album art and websites. This week, I'll be travelling to Olympia, WA to cover the KRS-1 show with Speaker Minds. I'm super excited about it. Getting to do what I love and see a legend in the process is amazing to me at times. I really appreciate my clientele. Artists like Liv Warfield, Luck-One Conscious, Illaj, Rocket-One, Kenny Mack, Soul P., DJ OG One, J-Kronic, Gretchen Mitchell, Blaze', Speaker Minds and DJ Chill have helped my business and keep it a word of mouth type of thing. I really love my job!

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