

Born and raised in Zimbabwe, Donel now 19-years-old, has spent the last few years honing his unique pop vision, which seamlessly blends Top 40 and R&B with the sounds he grew up listening to, like Afropop. “I’m not just a straight Afrobeats artist, I’m Afro-influenced,” he clarifies. A good portion of everyone met Donel in 2018 on The Voice where he won over the judges with his captivating voice, charming personality, and animated moves. A self-taught dancer, he grooved his way to the finals, stealing hearts across British airwaves (and YouTube) after sharing a dance with his grandmother on stage. Donel’s showmanship made him a favorite in the United Kingdom and the experience overall was just the beginning as he landed runner up out of the top five.

Donel decided to ground himself in England that same year and released his first hit, “Bang Like a Drum,” a misty party-starter that quickly garnered over 4 million streams. He followed it up a year later with his single, “Planets.” Soon after, his mother suggested he finish school and for months he kept a grueling schedule, waking up early for driving lessons, and riding a 2-hour evening train to London so he could record at night. Soon after converting an old shed into a home studio, he began reaching out to producers for mentorship as he taught himself how to record his vocals.

Donel filled every second carving out a new sound. With his heart-melting voice, he threads his native Ndebele into his Chris Brown-inspired hooks. He quickly caught the ears of Walshy Fire and Mr. Eazi, later releasing the flirty “Wish You Well” on Eazi’s emPawa Africa label in 2020. Artistry Records CEO, Max Gousse, was so blown away by Donel’s talent that he and A&R, Monica Payne, quickly signed him to their Warner Records venture. On his upcoming EP, African Boy Pt.1, we get a taste of what’s to come: basslines that will make you move, drums that’ll loop in your head, and smooth lyrics tailor-made for swooning.

