

Latheem Gabriel



By [Martin Myers](#)

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Latheem Gabriel is an artist who has been writing music since the age of 16. He is trained on the violin and guitar and considers his music social, global, and self-conscious. His music is inspired by his experience as an activist, a human being, and his experiences within social and relationship dynamics.

He is a rising star and will appear this weekend at the second Oude Molen Eco Jazz Festival on Sunday, 26 November 2017.

I caught up with Latheem, last week.



■ *When are you happiest?*

I would have to say I'm at my happiest when I'm at the ocean. Something about being in such a huge body of water, diving through the waves leaves me with a feeling of complete presence. It's the only time I ever feel like a child again!

■ *What does music mean to you?*

Music is my catharsis. It's sharing my soul. The stage becomes my confessional and I feel close to God. Music is a space where I can be angry without being violent, where I can grieve without being lost. It's a space where I can feel self-pity and not be ashamed of it. But it's also a place where I can connect with another human being on a tangible level. Music has and always will be, to me, the most powerful means of interconnection.

■ *Any funny moments on stage?*

Yes! I'm always peppering my performances with a bit of humour, but I do recall a moment in which I was performing in skinny jeans (skinny jeans should not be worn during performances) and as I sat down my pants ripped right between my

legs! I was forced to perform the rest of my set with my legs crossed!

▣ ***Your heroes?***

I've never really seen other artists, as heroes because we're all human, but major musical influences have definitely been Alanis Morissette, Tracy Chapman, and Sarah McLachlan. Yes, I know, they're all female but that's okay. Feminine energy has always spoken to me more. Over the past few years, I have looked in other directions for inspiration and a bunch of local artists have motivated me to keep my dream alive. DJ Black Coffee, Nakhane Toure, and Auriol Hayes. Of course, if we're talking non-musical personages then anyone working toward the betterment of their fellow brother and sister.

▣ ***Which living person do you admire most and why?***

Wow, that's a tough one. I have so many people I look up to. I look up to people who have survived great challenges in life and surfaced greater than who they were before. If I were to pick one I would say, Nakhane Toure. He represents the atypical example of someone who is not only gay but continues to break boundaries in music and film. As an artist, he has dealt with death threats because of his openness and, having met him personally, continues to be humble in the face of it all.





What is your most treasured possession?

I could say it's a twelve-string acoustic guitar given to me when I first started writing music, but that's cliché isn't it? It's actually a stuffed dog I still have from when I was a baby. It's more than sixty years old! I've moved around a lot, across the country at times, but I've always held onto him. His names 'Old Dog'.

▣ ***What makes you stand out?***

This is always such a loaded question. I'm funny. I've also been told that my music is something that isn't really out there in South Africa at the moment. Not sucking this out of my thumb, I swear. I also love connecting with my audience so my shows are not just singing, it's about identifying. Did I mention I'm funny? I had a show at the same time that the Whitney Houston tribute was running and I felt bummed that a lotta people went there instead, so I performed a Whitney song in a pair of heels as a thank you to those who came. Not easy.

▣ ***If you were not a musician what would you do?***

Well, I always wanted to be an astronaut. I would definitely want to be in space. Interesting though, since sound doesn't travel in space; it would be the opposite of singing.

▣ ***Pick five words to describe yourself?***

Creative, emotional, spiritual, self-deprecating (at times) and funny.

▣ ***What song changed your life?***

All I Really Want - Alanis Morissette. It spoke to an angsty teenager like nothing else did. It was my first exposure to rock and I was bitten. I decided that's what I wanted to do...reach people through music. It was difficult in the beginning because my voice had broken at that time and for about a year I sounded like a bad idea. But all I really wanted was to sing.

▣ ***Who do you love?***

I'm always falling in love. I fall in love with the slightest breeze. I guess I'm kinda waiting for the next breeze. But if love is anything like our current water situation then it's scarce and bad if swallowed!

▣ ***What is your favourite word?***

'However' - it allows me to loophole anything I've just said.

▣ ***Your greatest achievement?***

This year, there was a bundle of achievements. It's challenging notwithstanding. But I would say launching my debut EP. I had worked so long toward that and when it happened I thought 'okay, here it is, the first tangible proof that I'm a singer'. I was like, I'm good, and I can go now. But now there's so much more I want to do!

▣ **What do you complain about most often?**

Men! I run my own blog www.upsidetocatastrophe.wordpress.com and most of my articles are about relationships, love, and my ever-ongoing issues with men. Romantically speaking. I think they're okay of course and we'd like to have them around, but do we need them? I don't mean to sound prejudice against my own gender but look at the world! Being gay, this really creates a paradox for me!

▣ **What is your fear?**

Spiders. A paralyzing fear of spiders. That and not having been all that I can be. Achieved all that I can achieve. But greater than this, having regrets when I die.

▣ **Happiness is?**

The ocean. Listening to the one you love breathing. A chicken gatsby. Watching a sunset from a mountaintop. Feeding the hungry. Prayer.

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Upsidetocatastrophe.wordperss.com (blog)

<https://soundcloud.com/latheem> (soundcloud)

www.latheemgabriel.co.za

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