



Mavi Soothes The Pain At His “Laughing So Hard, It Hurts” Show

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Up-and-coming rapper Mavi graced Union Stage on May 18, bringing with him DC natives Ankhlejohn, El Cousteau, WiFiGawd, Fali and fellow Charlotte native Ahmir for a high energy show.

The 23-year-old Charlotte native, who has made a second home in the District, is nearing the final stops of his international “first-ever headline tour,” “Laughing So Hard, It Hurts,” which was originally announced with 30 dates and yielded several sold-out shows, including DC. first-ever headline tour: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CmMjhLqpiWt/>

Each artist brought a unique style of engagement: Ahmir’s high-energy ownership, Ankhlejohn’s surging back-to-back recitation, El Cousteau’s electrifying intense switch-up delivery, WiFiGawd’s in-your-face persona and Fali’s intimate crowd work while vibing to his beats.

Fali, a producer, met Mavi in DC through mutual friends. “[I] was feeling good the whole night, [it’s] very welcoming performing in the city,” he says.

The concert’s attendees were a mixed group of young fans eagerly recording, jumping and reciting the hooks of their favorite songs.

“I like the sound of the DMV so hearing people like WiFiGawd and El Cousteau is always enjoyable cause they’re consistently energetic. Listening to Ankhlejohn is refreshing because it’s

not normally what you hear from artists from DC or the DMV in general,” said Jordan Harris, a PG County native.

Mavi, known for his measured, vulnerable lyricism, opened for Jack Harlow’s Creme de la Creme tour in 2021 and was nominated for the 2023 XXL Freshman class. He raps with a steady urgency, delivering messages imbued with Black cultural knowledge.

“The first time I saw Mavi, he was opening up for Jack and performed five or six songs. He’s changed so much in that short amount of time, in such a great way. Now he’s more comfortable, and because it’s his own tour, he knows he can do his own thing,” says Nia Manning, a Charlotte native who attended middle and high school with Mavi.

“At the Charlotte show, the majority of the people were there for Jack Harlow and it showed — because of how the Fillmore is set up, you can feel that vibe if you don’t know someone. And me and my friends were screaming for him and it was real chill on the other end. But on this tour, it warmed my heart to see people rapping his music, cheering for him and it added more to the show for me. In both settings, you can tell he was extremely grateful for what he had, he was grateful for being there, for being present, for being with these people and interacting with them.”

Mavi’s rhymes are reflections of growing up and learning to navigate love, grief, loss, manhood, and making it, as he also proclaims himself as Mayor, spelled out on his glittering chain and with the support of fans to back it — he has over 2 million monthly listeners on Spotify alone.

During the concert, fans went bar for bar with him, sang with him, danced with him, created a sea of shining flashlights and leaned across the front-row barrier for a chance to dap him up. Mid-way through the show, Mavi instructed each section of the audience to fan the section next to them and everyone obliged.

“That’s community care, n—,” he says laughing, and then adds a reminder for everyone to stay hydrated.

In addition to tracks from the tour’s titular album, attendees were treated to songs across Mavi’s discography. He began releasing music via Soundcloud in the mid-2010s, dropping his first ep, “Beacon,” in 2016. This was followed by his debut album, “Let the Sun Talk,” in 2019, which he created while a freshman at Howard University.

Harris attended Howard at the same time Mavi did. He is also a rapper, alias Hoodie, who crossed paths with Mavi on campus at open mics and student functions.

“I first found out about Mavi from an open mic. We both were performing and I could see that people were excited for his turn. He was definitely good too,” says Harris. “Mavi makes great music with great content. I like his stuff cause it feels like he expands the boundaries of content that you’d usually hear in rap. Also he’s extremely poetic in how he conveys his message. He raps in literary devices and rapidly with complex rhyme schemes and it’s always entertaining.”

At the onset of the pandemic, Mavi returned to his hometown and created another ep, “End of the Earth,” which was released in 2021. After clearance issues arose while working on his next project “Shango,” Mavi shelved it and returned in 2022 with his sophomore album, “Laughing So Hard, It Hurts.”

“What I love about Mavi’s music is that it reminds me of home and different moments I remember in high school, talking to him about music. There were things we just wouldn’t agree on ... I hear what he thinks about, what he truly wants to embody, I hear his confidence,” says Manning. “Even though we weren’t at the Charlotte show, it still felt like home. You can tell Mavi really loves DC, he loves how DC helped him become the man he is today, and he had no issue showing that gratitude, which really stood out to me.”

As the show came to a close, the crowd began chanting his name, and he performed additional songs, intermittently affirming, “DC, I love you.” The show ended with the audience singing along to “Self Love”: “Just because I love you! Just because I love you! Just because I love you!”

“He’s a way better performer now,” says Harris. “I had only seen him in small settings similar to Tiny Desk that Sesh Collective would throw around 2018-2019 but it’s drastically different now and not just because of the setting. His enunciation and voice projection have improved a lot and his songs are lot more bouncy now.”

After the show was over, fans had the opportunity to meet Mavi and take photos. Manning, an avid record collector, brought her vinyls for the occasion.

“It felt great having him sign my record, these are mementos now. This isn’t just a famous person, this is home, this is a part of Charlotte that I can have in my current home in the DMV. It’s nice,” said Manning. “It was cool seeing this confident person rap eloquently, be himself, interact with the crowd, just be him and that’s beautiful.”