



“The Art of Avoiding”

By: Ellis Carmichael-Willins

“Do you ever think about life without fear? I had a conversation with my Dad a couple years ago and we talked briefly about how my brother and I were always “so careful”, even from a young age. It got me thinking about what it means to be careful. Especially now, as I enter adulthood, fear continues to rear its ugly head everywhere I turn. There seems to be an overwhelming amount of it in my day-to-day life, despite my attempts to shake the hold it has on me. Fear accompanies each phase of life and how we let our fears influence our actions is entirely up to us.”

To read the full story, click the link below!

[Read Here!](#)

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“The Art of Avoiding”: An Original Piece on Fear and Pain

Artist of the Month:
Rachel Caffey!

GoFundMe Link and Story!

MtP's Artist of the Month:

Rachel Caffey!

Rachel Caffey, born and raised in Little Rock, Arkansas, is a multidisciplinary artist with a voice of velvet. Having graduated with a BFA in Musical Theatre from CCPA at Roosevelt University, Rachel began filming self-tapes, taking classes in the community, and honing in on life post-conservatory. Around Spring of 2023, the concept arose for her podcast "Who's Got Biz Buzz" - A common catchphrase heard by freshman of the conservatory, denoting an update on all the happenings in the theater and live performance world.

"Right now, because it's still in the baby stages and I'm still building the first season, it still feels like 'This is my hobby!' but it has everything to do with my career as an artist, and my friends and the community that's been built here." Rachel goes on to describe the nuance between accessibility and isolation in relation to self taping. Its main perk being, you don't have to live in the exact location you're auditioning in. The downside? Performers often are left to do these tapes alone, reading scenes to no one. It provokes a sense of derealization, and it was this isolation that was the ultimate catalyst for Rachel to begin recording the first season of "Who's Got Biz Buzz" in Fall of 2023. "I was feeling really isolated and alone in my own experience as an artist going through auditions and things like that, and getting back out there. And I knew I probably wasn't the only one experiencing that."



Rachel growing up in Little Rock, AK



Growing up in Little Rock, Rachel was accustomed to life in the city and looked towards Chicago to expand her worldview and artistic toolkit. "It wasn't a huge shock when I got to Chicago, it felt like a bigger downtown then I was used to. But there were little bursts of moments where I realized how much I didn't know living in the south." Rachel describes her schooling experience as a unique one, beginning as a homeschool student until Third Grade before entering public school. Rachel often felt her community existed outside of school, and struggled to connect with her classmates. "I did community theater productions because I didn't go to an arts school or anything like that, they were more of a science and math school. Which is cool, but I was not good at those things." She says with a laugh. "I knew people, but I didn't really connect a whole lot with the other students who went to my school." One student in particular, named Leo, left a lasting impact on Rachel, having lost his life to a rare terminal illness after spending the majority of his schooling in the hospital. With her community mostly outside of school, Rachel expresses the pain of losing her friend "He was the one I was closest to." Rachel's time at Roosevelt offered her an opportunity to connect with people her age who were going through major life events in real time. The conservatory life is not for the faint of heart, and even now, Rachel is finding ways to be grateful for the experience. "Roosevelt was the biggest gift because I needed a sense of social equity and justice." Rachel expresses how her upbringing in the south was inherently conservative, and this was truly brought to light by the experiences at Roosevelt. Rachel has since dedicated her artistry towards becoming an ally for social justice. "I'm still learning to this day, and will always try to do whatever I can to fight for that equity for all people."

After graduating, Rachel began auditioning and pursuing a career outside of CCPA. Shortly after, her world was shaken. In January, Rachel underwent surgery to remove a cyst that had been resting on the front of her neck since she was 17 years old, resulting in her temporary hiatus from singing. "When I first started losing my voice, it was a culmination of spiritual, emotional, childhood wounds, as well as physical. [...] When we have illnesses pop-up, it's our body telling us that something's not right with our physical body, but also I think it's emotionally connected." Rachel had even gone to an Ear, Nose and Throat specialist who found...nothing! The medical diagnosis Rachel received was that her vocal chords were simply inflamed, and she must learn how to use her voice differently. "I felt like I lost a piece of myself and I didn't feel like I knew who I was after that." Nevertheless, Rachel embraced this new reality and continues establishing her identity outside of her artistry. "Our bodies change, our voices change, aspects of ourselves change, and it was really about just accepting that and learning how to pivot."

Rachel took this as an opportunity to continue expanding her toolkit and take classes that would help her achieve her goals. She is currently exploring improv at iO Theater, and has just completed level one this past April. But more than that, she understands that film and theater are entirely different beasts and made strides to adapt to digital performance. "It's hard to find the heightened reality and still make it authentic, especially in musical theater."

Rachel took an audition based film course with casting director, Brittani Ward, through Ward's Accomplished on Camera program. "I was seeing some posts circulating around Instagram a little bit after quarantine and friends had recommended the course and so I was like 'Sure! I'll try it out!' Rachel's attitude towards these kinds of opportunities has awarded her the ability to have fun as she works, which is often more important. "I always know that it's gonna be a good class when I walk in the room and it's led by someone I want to hang out with."

"The gatekeepers don't necessarily hold the keys to our future."

-Rachel Caffey



Caffey pictured performing in a CCPA Production

Rachel has since embraced the liberation that comes from film. "It's been fun to have freedom to fail." Oftentimes, actors who film their own self-tapes become hypercritical of their performances. Rachel has had to check this impulse and recognize when it's time to relinquish control. "There is no perfect take; You look at what you're given, you interpret it, and then you see if there's something that can change in the next take" she says. It takes absolute trust in yourself and your abilities to surrender to this process. Rachel says simply, "It's all about what you do with your work once you get there."

Rachel is continuing to take classes and hone in on her skills outside of the conservatory to apply these skills in real time and has plans to write and produce her own script by the end of the year. "I would love to get booked with an agency, but we will see! I'm just taking it one day at a time, and trying to maintain balance in all things." The team at Mount Productions cannot wait to see how high Rachel can soar, and will gladly be here to support her every step of the way. Be sure to follow Rachel on Instagram (@rachel.caffey) and stay updated on her incredible journey!

Support our Mission: Donate to our GoFundMe!



Creating a film requires a significant amount of time, effort, and passion. As a startup, we are funding our projects independently. While some may view this as a substantial risk, it's a risk we are willing to embrace to fulfill our mission.

Adapting the film industry to align with the changing world is crucial for us, and we are fully committed to it. We invite you to take a chance on us, to support us in our creative endeavors. There are countless untold stories waiting to be shared, and Mount Productions aims to empower artists to bring their visions to life by providing them with resources and fellow artists who share a similar vision.

The money raised from this GoFundMe will not only go towards our start-up costs, but will also aid in the telling of numerous LGBTQ stories that would otherwise go unheard.

LINK: <https://gofund.me/06647465>

VIDEO: https://youtu.be/akyV64y8_BA

Artist of the Month: We want *YOU*!

Mount Productions highlights multi-disciplinary artists who are making waves in the creative scene here in Chicago.

As Artist of the Month, you'll be promoted on our social media and have a written interview in that month's newsletter.

All applications will be considered for future months, so no need to apply more than once. We look forward to meeting and learning more about you!



Contact us at mountproductioninfo@gmail.com