

LA WEEKLY

AUG. 21 - 27, 2026 | VOL. 48 / NO. 42 | LAWEEKLY.COM

how **anees** built a career on **connection**

by mark stefanos

CONTENTS



ON THE COVER:

Photo: Nathan Hong

Cover and issue design: Mark Stefanos

FOOD 2

Viva La Mamma brings a Vienna-born Italian concept to Beverly Grove.

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

CULTURE 3-4

Circular fashion company Project ReWear is redefining what happens to clothing donations.

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

MUSIC 5-8

How singer, rapper and songwriter anees has built a career on a loving, personal connection with his fans.

BY MARK STEFANOS

CLASSIFIEDS 4

LAWEEKLY

EDITOR IN CHIEF: MARK STEFANOS

SENIOR EDITOR: MICHELE STUEVEN



FOOD

VIVA LA MAMMA IS THE PERFECT BLEND OF ALPINE INDULGENCE AND CALIFORNIA STYLE

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Viva La Mamma, the new Vienna-born Italian concept on West 3rd Street, is a seamless melange of Austrian alpine textiles, Northern Italian cuisine and spritzes, all enveloped in California indoor-outdoor style, blending interior comfort with the outdoor energy and uninterrupted flow of Beverly Grove.

The 4,000-square-foot space is a combination of art installation and dining room with statement lighting, custom finishes, and plush velvet booths against larger-than-life murals, the crown jewel of which is what the team calls *The Cathedral*, an original spray-painted mural titled Praying Madonna with Doves, created by Austrian mural artist Max Rocks.

Rather than gutting and rebuilding,

the Austrian Viva group made a deliberate choice to refine the existing space by reupholstering bench fabrics, adding new lighting including pink Italian glass chandeliers, and selecting wall art.

Deep reds, soft blues, and warm golds meander through the tri-level space that includes a rooftop patio with slogans like “in mamma we trust” sharing wall space with graffiti and bold graphic typography.

The whimsy, warmth, chaos, and pleasure of Italian dining translate to the menu as well.

Drink menus are renditions of vinyl record covers that include a full bar program and no less than ten different spritzes, including a cooling Viva La Mamma Spritz with gin, Viva La Mamma prosecco, and a mix of citrus served with a biodegradable pasta straw. Happy Hour is from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m and includes deals on focaccia pizzas, pasta tasting boards for sharing, and spritz pitchers.

And on the subject of pizza, the Sweet But

Psycho is a must-order. The spicy pie combines bacon jam, Gorgonzola dolce latte with jalapeno and onion.

The housemade pasta lineup is something sorely overdue on menus. Instead of having pasta and sauces dictated to the diner, Via La Mamma gives the option to choose from pasta styles like casarecce, linguine, mafaldine, orecchiette or gluten-free spaghetti and pair them with sauces like an oozy burrata arrabbiata, rich beef ragu, the broccolicious with broccoli pesto, crispy broccoline and parmesan, or the Pacific Kiss with fresh prawns, white wine tomatoes and arugula.

Pair any of the above with a Summer Romance salad, an energizing combination of arugula, shaved fennel and grapefruit topped with gorgonzola and walnuts.

You'll find the icing on the cake at Viva La Mamma's dramatic tiramisu, enough for two. And to round it all out and settle things down before you take a stroll down West Third, indulge in a true regional grappa or schnapps from a selection you won't easily find like this in one place anywhere else in town. **LA**



Sweet But Psycho Pizza

PHOTO: MICHELE STUEVEN



PHOTO: WONHO FRANK LEE

PROJECT REWEAR IS FIGHTING FAST FASHION AND LIGHTENING LANDFILLS

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Project ReWear is a circular fashion company founded by Kimberly Lau and Linda Young that is redefining what happens to clothing after it's donated. But as they see it, they're just two moms who saw too much waste and came up with one big idea to leave the planet a better place for their kids, while also being affordable, accessible, and stylish in

the process.

As a woman-owned business serving communities across Ventura and Los Angeles counties, they've built a measurable circular business model that connects resale, donation, redistribution, and affordability, all to keep clothing in use, out of landfills, and within the local community for as long as possible.

As textile waste continues to gain national attention, Project ReWear is demonstrating that a locally driven, data-backed circular economy can be both environmentally impactful and financially sustainable.

More than 23,000 pounds of clothing and textiles have been saved from the landfill since opening in December 2024 through Project

ReWear's circular resale and donation ecosystem, which includes its Thousand Oaks boutique, where items are donated and then sorted in its nearby warehouse.

More than 1,000 thrifters attended the first two WEARhouse Sale events, in which more than 2,500 pounds of textiles were diverted in just two days during the May 2026 event.



PHOTO: MICHELE STUEVEN



Kimberly Lau and Linda Young.

PHOTO: MICHELE STUEVEN

The Landfill Project weighs and tracks every item sold, and The Don8 Project follows clothing from donation through resale, redistribution, and community impact, creating a level of transparency that's rarely seen in the resale industry. Through its partnership with LA-based non-profit Bundles of Kindness, wearable clothing is redistributed to individuals experiencing homelessness, families in need, and school-age children through community organizations and local school partnerships across Los Angeles.

"Fast fashion is fun, trendy fashion with lots of fast production and overconsumption," Lau tells *LA Weekly* inside the meticulously organized warehouse filled with clothing items, some of which still have the original tags on them. "It's cheap, and the average person might only wear it once or twice. Even though it doesn't have a long lifespan, our goal is to keep that circulating everywhere for as long as possible until hopefully the demand slows down. With fast fashion, which is fashion mass-produced by places like Temu, Zara, H&M, the cost is so cheap, it's not worth returning something because that costs more than the original price of the clothing. So it ends up in landfills."

"The planet is drowning in textile waste, so we wanted to make some kind of impact and be changemakers in that space and think about

thrifting differently," Young chimes in. "I've got two teenage kids and so does Kim. I started picking up lost and found items from my kids' schools, and I'd go once a month. I had this huge SUV at the time, and it would be jam-packed just from one pickup. I started to think, this is just one school, once a month. There's so much stuff out there.

"Because we have disposable clothing that's cheap and we can replace it, what happens is a lot of people will buy something for their child, and if it gets lost, most people just won't bother to pick it up," she says. "They'll just go and buy another one because it's so easy to replace."

This July, the European Union implemented a ban prohibiting large companies with more than 250 employees from destroying unsold clothing, accessories, and footwear. Operating under the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, the law forces fashion brands to shift toward recycling, donating, or reselling excess inventory instead of sending it to landfills or incineration.

The pair – who met in a thrift shop – have created a business model that is as attractive as it is sustainable and planet-friendly.

The Project ReWear store feels like you've just walked into a Beverly Hills or Melrose Ave. boutique. Using her marketing background, Young has created a whimsical and enticing

thrift store where everything is repurposed. Old chairs serve as clothes racks, skateboards as shoe displays, old 45s as clothing separators, and used playing cards for price tags. And yes, there's a men's section as well as a fitting room.

Everything goes from \$2 to \$18, with high-end items like Prada, Michael Kors, and Gucci at the highest price of \$27. Donations are taken by the pound in exchange for coupons and discounts. One day will bring in 300 pounds of items.

"Because of overproduction and overconsumption of fast fashion that started around 2010, the typical donation facilities like the Salvation Army were overwhelmed then," says Lau. "Now imagine we have four seasons in a year. They are constantly getting inundated. They don't have

the team, staff, or facilities to hold it all. We figure if it's still good, it's going to go somewhere. That's not the case. Somewhere around 20 percent ends up getting recycled or purchased, and 80 percent of it ends up in landfill or sent overseas to be someone else's problem. Places like Ghana are drowning in textile waste."

"We're trying to reverse that percentage to 95 percent of items," says Young in a boutique that is bursting at the seams and needs expansion. "We have sections that we sort and store things into different categories and decide what to do with the unwearable items. We'd love to have someone with a sewing machine we can employ to upcycle garments for us. We don't discriminate against any brands, because the landfill doesn't either." ■



Kim Lau in the Project ReWear sorting room.

PHOTO: MICHELE STUEVEN

LA WEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS

EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

Live-Service Project Manager: 3 yrs wk exp req'd. Wage: \$90,168-120K/Yr. Head of Business Development: B.S. in Business Administration, International Relations, International Business or related plus 5 yrs wk exp req'd. Wage: \$140K-180K/Yr. Send resume to Pearl Abyss America, Inc., 1230 Rosecrans Ave., Ste. 230, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266, Attn: S. Yi.

Platform Product Manager: Master's in Bus. Admin., Mgmt. Science or related major plus 1 year wk exp req'd. Wage: \$139,984-146K/Yr. Send resume to Krafton Americas, Inc., 2121 Park Pl. Ste. 250, El Segundo, CA 90245, Attn: H. Yoo.

Market Research Analyst, F/T. Bachelor's in business management, marketing, economics or any related. Mail resume: Mail resume: Chebshian & Associates, 840 W Glenoaks Blvd, Glendale, CA 91202.

Senior Designer (Bush Interiors, Inc. dba Jamie Bush + Co) (Los Angeles, CA): Lead interior architecture dsgn concepts, produce constructn docs, & mng procurement. Reqs exp w/ : mng projects w/ budgets & timelines; AutoCAD or ArchiCAD; Design Manager, Fohlio, or smir; 3D mdlg s/w: Rhino, Sketchup, ArchiCAD; 3D rendering s/w: Twinmotion, Enscape, V-Ray; Bluebeam Revu; Adobe Creative Suite (InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator); interpret archtctrl plans, sections & constructn details; coordnte w/ consultants; constructn phases & respond to site condtns. Reqs: Masters degree or frgn equiv in Architecture, Architectural Dsgn, Interior Dsgn or rtdt fld, & 2 yrs exp as Architectural/Interior Designer or rtdt. Alt req: Bachelors & 5 yrs exp. Hybrd optn to WFH. Trvl reqd: 10% in U.S., i.e. Montecito, CA, New Orleans, LA. Salary: \$98,488 - \$108,000/yr. Send resume to sd@jamiiebush.com.

Institute for the Redesign of Learning seeks a **Speech-Language Pathologist** in South Pasadena, CA to provide assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of speech, language, social communication, and related disorders for children in an educational setting. Master's degree, or foreign equivalent, in speech language pathology or a related discipline. Speech-Language Pathology license by the State of California. \$74,589/yr. Resume to: Institute for the Redesign of Learning, 99 Pasadena Ave., South Pasadena, CA 91030.

Heaven Doggie Foods LLC d/b/a T-Swirl Crepe seeks **Gen. Mgr.** Mstrs. in Hospitality, Rest. Mgmt. or closely rel. field. Manage daily ops, quality control, hiring/firing. Website: Temple City, CA. Mail resumes to: 5708 Rosemead Blvd. #105, Temple City, CA 91780.

Accounting manager: Analyze financial operations; prepare financial record & Tax return. BA degree in Business management, agricultural and food business management or related field Req'd. Resume to CRYSTAL WHOLESALE INC 3737 SOUTH SANTA FE AVE, Vernon, CA 90057.

Data Analyst: FT \$77,584/yr. Bach. in Info Mgmt, Biz Analytics or rel. + 6mo exp. using Excel macros, Python, SQL/Power BI req'd. Mail resume to Attn: CFO, Krol & Krol, 5924 San Fernando Rd., Glendale, CA 91202.

Tax Accountant - KL Tax & Accountancy Inc. - Diamond Bar, CA. Master's in Accountancy, or related; 12 mos exp as a Tax Acct or in a substantially similar position. Exp must incl: 1) handling tax compliance processes for individuals, partnerships, or corporations; 2) researching tax code & preparing tax memoranda for clients; 3) working w/ audit teams to assess whether tax accts are appropriate for financial statements. Email resume to contact@kltaxes.us; \$81,931/yr.

GoElite, Inc. seeks **Strategic Partnership Specialist.** Bach. in Bus., Mkt. Res. or rel. field req'd. Lead mkt res. initiatives, identify long term p'ships. Salary: \$52,707. Website: Pasadena, CA. Mail resumes to: 680 E. Colorado Blvd. #180, Pasadena, CA 91101.

GoElite, Inc. seeks **Copy Writer.** Bach. in Eng., Comm. or rel. field req'd. Write copy for blog posts/co. ad./mktg. materials. Salary: \$49,878. Website: Pasadena, CA. Mail resumes to: 680 E. Colorado Blvd. #180, Pasadena, CA 91101.

ZestFinance, Inc dba ZestAI seeks **Machine Learning Engineer** in Burbank, CA. Create experiments and develop prototypes, with the goal of developing robust and efficient production-ready software. Telecommuting permitted. \$115,000-150,000/year. Apply: <https://www.jobpostingtoday.com/> Ref #16015.

Accountant, F/T Bachelor's Accounting, economics, or any related. Mail resume: Etage Group LLC, 6740 Corbin ave, Reseda, CA 91355.

Quantitative Data Analyst (Entry-Level): Review various financial documents & statements of client companies & analyze quantitative financial data of financial docs and statements, etc. Req. BS degree in Statistics or Mathematics, & must have taken "Probability & Statistics" and "Real Variables" courses. Apply to: Choi Hong Lee & Kang LLP. Attn: Ilisup Lee. 3435 Wilshire Blvd. #480, Los Angeles, CA 90010.

ZestFinance, Inc. dba ZEST AI seeks **Data Analysts** in Burbank, CA. Translate unstructured business problems into well-defined quantitative analysis projects. Telecommuting permitted. \$101,712 - 135,000/year. Apply: <https://www.jobpostingtoday.com/> Ref #44992.

Community Relations Coordinator, F/T Bachelor's in Communications, Public relations, Journalism, English, Philology, Linguistics any related. Mail resume: ARMAV ENTERPRISE, 600 N Brand Blvd, ste 215, Glendale CA 91203.

Accounting manager: Compute taxes owed and examine financial statement. Master's degree in business administration or related field Req'd. Resume to CYK TAX & ACCOUNTING, Inc. (dba \ Yoon & Co. CPA), 3435 Wilshire Blvd Ste 2550, Los Angeles, CA 90010.

Farmers Group (Woodland Hills, CA) seeks **Lead Data Scientist** to use advanced analytics, ML & data mining to improve bus. results and lead complex cross-functional projects. Remote option from anywhere in U.S. Salary: \$186,026/yr. Apply: Farmers.com/ Careers, Job Id 35583.

Sr. Software Engineer - Req'd: BA Computer Science & 60 mos. exp in full-stack software development; or MA Computer Science & 36 mos. exp. in full-stack software development. Spec. reqmts: demonstrated proficiency in C#, JavaScript, Angular, .NET Core, .NET Web APIs, SQL & MongoDB. Employer accepts spec. reqmts gained thru employment experience &/ or academic coursework. Telecommute from any U.S. location. Software development, design & deployment of NEOGOV's Microsoft ASP.NET-based software application solutions within web-based SaaS product suite. F/T, \$184,558 - \$184,558/yr. Governmentjobs.com, Inc. dba NEOGOV, El Segundo, CA 90245. To apply: Shagun Sharma, Talent Attraction Specialist - recruiter@neogov.net.

HOW ANEES BUILT A CAREER ON CONNECTION

BY MARK STEFANOS

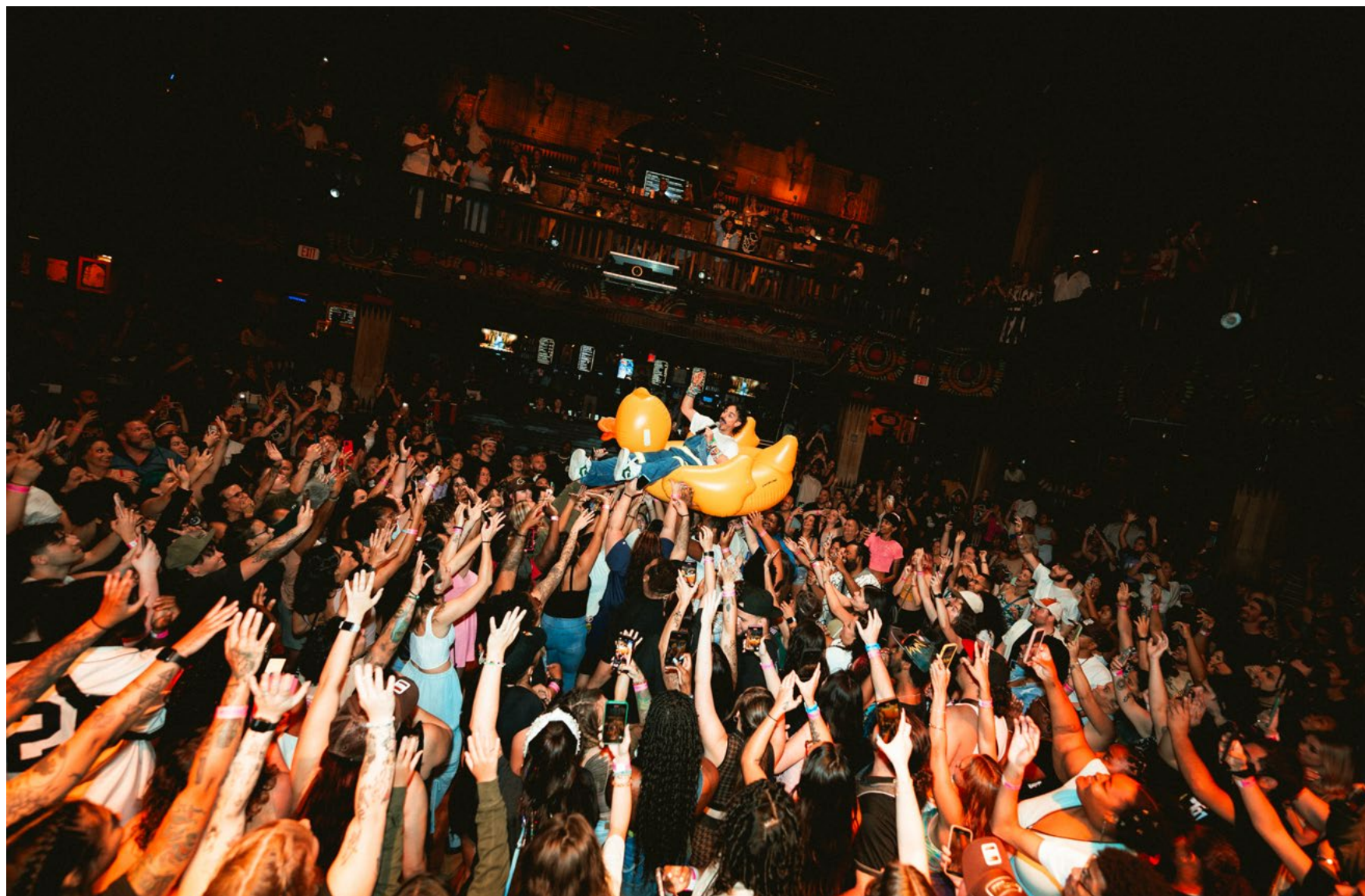


PHOTO: NATHAN HONG

When anees takes the stage at the Globe Theatre, this Saturday, Aug. 22, for the Los Angeles stop on **The Lucky Duck Tour**, it will mark another chapter in a relationship with the city that he's been building for years. Since 2022, the singer, rapper and songwriter has staged five free shows on the Santa Monica beach, drawing thousands of fans. Those gatherings have grown alongside his career into a recurring tradition that has become central to how he thinks about music and community.

"I think this is probably the city and the community that I've done the best job of investing my personal time with," he tells *LA Weekly*. "And I think that fans from certain areas recognize that. They know when you've put in work to build a relationship with them — not just to have fans, but to build a relationship with them."

The beach shows began just as anees was taking his career to the next level. With his first one in January of 2022, he thought five people might come — about 50 people showed up. The next month,

roughly 300 came. By May, he had more than 1,000 people gathered on the sand. He would come back in 2023 and 2025 drawing even more. He called the gatherings "the reincarnation of summer camp," a description that would prove to be fitting for an artist whose work has increasingly centered on the idea of creating a place where people can feel connected.

For anees, that connection has become the foundation of a career that has been built entirely independently on the strength of his magnetic personality, soulful music, and the intimate,

look-you-in-the-eye-real relationships he builds with his audience.

anees began releasing songs in 2020, building a following through social media and performances from his car. For many listeners, his music came into their lives with "sun and moon," the guitar-driven love song he released in April 2022.

The track became his breakthrough, eventually reaching No. 1 on the Billboard Philippines Songs chart and making anees the first international artist and the



PHOTO: ETHAN VOYAN

first English-language song to reach the top of the chart. A Filipino musician, JRoa, had recorded a Tagalog open verse that helped propel the song on TikTok before the two collaborated on an official remix.

The success was difficult to predict. When asked what he thinks caused “sun and moon” to connect so strongly in the Philippines, anees pauses. “Zero clue.”

Then: “God.”

I press him, and he offers a theory. “My music — how sing-alongable it is, how simple it is, and how vocal-forward it is — I understand why the people with the best voices in the world, the Filipinos, would embrace it,” he says. “How it became so beloved in that country, only God knows.”

The song’s success came after years of

work. Before “sun and moon,” there was “slip,” the romantic 2021 single that drew Justin Bieber’s attention. Bieber unexpectedly joined one of anees’ Instagram Live sessions, where the two talked about music, faith and their wives. After the Bieber appearance, he gained more than 10,000 followers in roughly 30 minutes.

The moment accelerated anees’s trajectory, but the groundwork had been laid long before the livestream.

Born Anees Mokhiber, anees grew up in Northern Virginia in a household where music was everywhere. His parents played Stevie Wonder, Nina Simone, the Beatles and Frank Zappa alongside Arab music, pop, rap, R&B, soul, funk and jazz. “My dad and my mom are hip-pies,” he says. “They just loved music, and it was always playing.”

His father’s family has Lebanese Orthodox roots stretching back more than a century in the United States. His mother’s family has a more recent Palestinian history: his mother was the first of her siblings born in the United States, while her four older siblings were born in Palestine.

His mother speaks Arabic fluently, but his father’s side did not. “But my dad has almost reversed the tide and has really swung back in the direction of embracing every element of his roots, which is why our household was so passionate about embracing our roots,” anees notes.

Hip-hop became another formative influence. His sister’s CDs introduced him to Lauryn Hill, Nas, Mos Def, 50 Cent and Eminem, followed by Kanye West, Lil Wayne, Kendrick Lamar and J. Cole. “I listened to every different type of hip-hop. But I think I was naturally drawn to the wordsmiths, to the ones that really used words as like a magic wand. And I really soaked that up from them.”

He studied philosophy and sociology at George Mason University, graduating in 2014, then continued at George Mason’s Antonin Scalia Law School, graduating in 2017 “I went from student loan debt to student loan debt,” he says with a laugh.

While his legal career materialized, music kept calling, and anees has described freestyling as a way of working through a difficult period after law school.

The idea of community runs through nearly every part of anees’ career, and he traces much of it to summer camp. He spent five years as a camp counselor. His first album, *summer camp*, drew directly from those experiences, and he has described camp as a place where he learned about freedom, self-love and the kind of deep connection he wanted to recreate through music.

The current tour is called the Lucky Duck Tour, named after the rubber ducks anees throws into the audience — a spontaneous bit that has become a recurring ritual. “It has become like a sensation, where I can turn even the most monotone, introverted person into a little child just by throwing a rubber duck in their direction,” he says. “I can transport a grown man to their childhood with nothing more than a rubber duck.”

It’s an effective tool because it taps into

something anees takes seriously: the strange intimacy of performing for people who may have never met him.

“My summer camp upbringing is what really trained my mind and my heart and soul to seek connection — deep connection,” he says. “It’s not just about saying hi to my fans. It’s about looking into their eyes and seeing them.”

He describes that connection in almost spiritual terms. “No matter how many shows I do, it’s never gonna feel normal to me that people that I’ve never met know every word to a song that I wrote,” he says. “That is like divine. That is God-given.”

anees’s independence is one of the more consequential parts of his story, particularly because he connects it directly to his creative and political freedom. “I don’t trust a lot of people, and I definitely don’t trust 99% of the music industry,” he says.

When anees first went, viral record labels flooded his inbox. The offers didn’t appeal to him. When his team communicated that, he recalls being told that he could either let the labels help him grow or remain where he was, alone.

“And I think we’ve proven that to be false,” he says.

But his definition of independence leaves room for collaboration. He works with Indify and with EMPIRE for distribution and publishing, while maintaining control over his creative decisions.

“I don’t believe in DIY,” he says. “Do it yourself — it’s impossible. You could do it yourself, but what you’re doing is gonna be limited. I have bigger goals than that.”

For anees, the important question is whether the people around him share his values.

“The bigger my team is, is not the goal. It’s the more aligned my team is,” he says.

His legal background gives him another layer of control. He has an attorney who represents him, but he also reads his own contracts as a useful defense against deals that could compromise his independence. “Because of my legal background, I can sniff out bullshit when I see it,” he says. “I can see the traps at a 30,000-foot view.”

That freedom has become particularly meaningful as he has spoken publicly about Palestine. anees is a signatory of Artists4Ceasefire, a collective calling for a permanent ceasefire and humanitarian aid in Gaza. In September 2024, he also appeared alongside MC Abdul, Amer Zahr and the LA Palestinian Kids Choir on Macklemore’s “Hind’s Hall 2,” a protest song supporting Palestinians.

anees says he has lost opportunities because of his political positions. His independence, he argues, gives him the financial room to absorb those consequences.

“Even with speaking up about Palestine,



PHOTO: RYAN LOCKARD



PHOTO: ETHAN VOYAN

even with standing ten toes down for humanity, even with losing a lot of opportunities because of that — because I'm independent, I'll be all right," he says. "I'm not eating a small slice of my own pie, because I'm independent. I have the lion's share. And that financial freedom affords me the freedom to speak up, knowing that if I lose partners, I'll be okay."

That philosophy also explains why the idea of representation matters to him. Performing now as a Palestinian-Lebanese artist has given him a chance to change that experience for someone else.

"When I was little, part of the reason why I didn't get into music right away is because nobody looked like me," he says. "Hopefully my existence in this space tells the next generation of little Arab kids, little Palestinian, little Lebanese kids, that they do belong in this space," he says. "They do belong on stage, and it is something that the world wants from them."

The Lucky Duck Tour began Aug. 14 in Seattle and will run for roughly two months, with 27 shows before concluding in Washington, D.C. anees says the setlist will divide its attention between older favorites and newer songs, including "butterfly," "cinderella," "man on the moon" and "my baby."

He says his next album, *camp crush*, will arrive in 2027, the third chapter in an ongoing "summer camp" universe.

He also plans to finally visit the Philippines in April 2027, five years after "sun and moon" became a phenomenon there. He is considering shows in Manila, Cebu and Quezon City, with the possibility of expanding into other Southeast Asian markets.

For now, though, LA is the next stop. The Globe Theatre show is another step up from those early beach gatherings, while carrying the same basic premise: bring people together, make them feel seen and give them a place to belong.

anees traces that instinct back to his mother: "My mom is so loving, so joyful. There's not an ounce of hate in her body. It's all rhythm, melody, love, laughter. She's overwhelmingly loving. And I think that because of that — that's the foundation I was raised on. So that's just what I am. I am love. I am melody. I am rhythm. I am laughter. And it's because of my mom and my dad."

Then, with a characteristic turn toward the spiritual, he adds: "A woman's aura is the most powerful thing in the world. And my mom's aura is that of rhythm and melody."

anees's career has grown far beyond the audience he imagined when he first started freestyling in his car. Yet the basic ambition remains remarkably consistent.

"If I'm always known as an artist of the people," he says, "that to me is the greatest accomplishment. 🙏"

Follow anees on Instagram @anees.



Interested in selling an instrument or bow?
We're here to help.

Los Angeles Sep 17

Complimentary evaluations

Tariso
FINE INSTRUMENTS & BOWS

CONTACT US TO BOOK YOUR FREE EVALUATION:
info.newyork@tariso.com • +1 212 307 7224