

5 things you need to know about Ben Platt

1 In 2020, he received a Golden Globe nomination for Best Television Actor in a Musical or Comedy Series for "The Politician."



2 He sang the national anthem at the 2022 MLB All-Star Game.



4 One of his earliest performances was alongside Kristin Chenoweth in a performance of "The Music Man" at the Hollywood Bowl in 2002.



3 He is starring alongside Beanie Feldstein and Blake Jenner in a movie adaptation of "Merrily We Role Along," which will be filmed over 20 years.



5 On the latest season of "RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars," Platt served as a guest judge.

GETTY IMAGES; CHENOWETH, AP

PLATT

FROM E1

Ahead of his San Diego show, Platt offered up some time to be interviewed about everything from Beyoncé to whether fans can expect new music soon.

Q. How are you?

A. Pretty good. As we get closer and closer (to the tour), it's a mixture of pure excitement and deep terror, which is how it should be.

Q. What excites you to talk about these days, or what do you wish people asked you about more?

A. Wow. That's a nice question. I guess the tour goes without saying — and the content of the tour — but if we're talking in general, I just made this "Theater Camp" film with my closest friends and my partner, Noah. The four of us made a short film back in 2017 and have been developing it into a feature for many years and finally got to make it this past spring. It finally has been made public since June, I think, so I haven't really gotten to talk about that much, but I'm really excited about that.

Q. What was it like adapting something from a short film and turning it into something broader and longer?

A. It was challenging, but really fun, especially since I had the privilege of doing it with my two closest friends and my partner. We all wrote the film together and spent a lot of the pandemic, the four of us in my house, writing together, and I think, luckily, it's a world that we're all very familiar with and that we all come from. That's not just camp — and some of us having been to actual theater camp or to other kinds of camp — but also just theater and growing up as a young person in the theater and the types of overly intense, slightly abusive theater teachers that one might encounter. I think it was really fun to juggle making sure there was tons of room for character study and bits and comedy and just to live in the reality of the world but also enough through line and story and arch to support a 90-minute feature.

Q. So you're starring in that film and also a



VINCE AUNG

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musical at New York City Center this fall. How do you balance all the different mediums you work in, and where does your solo music fall in the priority list?

A. I think it varies. I think the thing I feel most fortunate for, in terms of the fact that I have my hands in a few different pots, is that each one kind of helps me to appreciate the others. When you spend however long prepping and shooting a film, it's a wonderful challenge and experience, but by the end of it, I think you're so ready to experience something with a bit more control and instant gratification — you know, things that are live and live performance. And then, you know, you spend some time onstage and it feeds your soul and then you get fatigued and depleted and then you think, "Oh, it might be nice to kind of go in my house and write a film." So I'm just really lucky

to get the opportunity to do things that highlight how wonderful the other things are. Then I would say, solo music is kind of this through line that I kind of view as an umbrella over the whole thing in the sense that, as much as I love doing theater and as many great experiences as I've had on film and on camera et cetera, there's not really anything that compares to an outlet where you're getting to express your own experience and process and channel your own emotions and things you're going through and your own sound. It's unparalleled the amount of personal connection that comes with putting out your own music and writing your own music. That's the one kind of constant chugging underneath everything that I always find that I'm eager to get back to when I've been away from it too long.

Q. How excited are you to be going on tour?

A. Incredibly excited. It will be a full three years, when I play my first show, since my last proper performance, so obviously there's a lot of anxiety and fear that comes along with that — like I think many people are experiencing after the pandemic — in coming back to new things, or old things that feel like new things, but feel like an unknown in a way it never has before. But overriding that is just a real, pure excitement to get back to doing what I think I consider my home base in a sense that performing live is what I've been doing since I was a very wee child, and that's, you know, where I feel the most myself. So that's something I've really been missing and a feeling that has been hard to replicate during the pandemic, so I feel "excited and scared," as (Stephen) Sondheim would say.

Q. How would you describe the feeling of performing live like this? It's just you up there.

A. It forces you to be present in a way that a lot of these other art forms do and don't. I think there's just nowhere to hide mentally and emotionally. You have to just be there in the moment and in control. I've always been an anxious person, but I think, like many people, through this pandemic, that's been really amplified. So I find that there are fewer and fewer places where I'm able to really shut my mind down in terms of worrying about things to come or things that have already happened or, you know, just unproductive things. So I think when I'm onstage performing, it's one of the few places where I feel my mind is really quiet and I'm able to just enjoy being exactly where I am, so that's a feeling I'm really excited for. And then the other element of it is just communing with people who are supportive and who connect to what I do and connect to my songs and want to be there to see me. We've been living heavily on the Internet, obviously, for many years, but especially in the last few years since the pandemic. The Internet, you know, there are some nice things about it, but ultimately, it's a very scary and kind of horrible place. I've been able to do my best, as everyone has, to weed through to the people who really are kind and very supportive and want to connect to you, but I think being in rooms in real life with the people who have chosen to be there and want to be supportive and who I'm really concerned with delivering for and giving a great show to, you can't really replicate that either, so I'm just excited to see all those people.

Q. So this is your first tour, right?

A. That's right.

Q. What would you say this tour looks like compared with other solo performances you've done

in the past?

A. I'd say it's a little bit larger, in the sense that, just very literally, we're filling some bigger rooms so, in terms of the feeling of it and the sound and the lights, it just has to fill a bit of a bigger space so it has a bit more impact, I would say. And then I'd say it's definitely a little more pop-leaning in the sense that, my second album, "Reverie," which is kind of the basis for the tour, is a large part of the set list, and it's a very pop-forward, tempo-forward album. So there's definitely a bit more of a groove than the first time. But I'll certainly be playing some songs from my first album, as well and some covers and perhaps even a theater moment — trying to make sure there's something for everybody. But I'd say it leans more into the pop space than my first tour did.

Q. With fans not having seen you live in this way in a while, what do you hope the experience is like for them?

A. I mean, I always just hope, first and foremost, that it's a really enjoyable and meaningful night and experience and that they can forget their troubles and the troubles of the world and the apocalypse that we currently live in. I hope it's a moment of freedom in that way. I hope that whatever it is they're hoping to hear, I hope they get at least a piece of that, and that I hope I play everybody's favorite things, and even if I don't, I hope that they maybe leave loving a song they didn't necessarily know or notice before. Yeah, the priority is making sure it's an experience that allows them to forget their troubles for a little while.

Q. How did it come about to have Aly and AJ as your opening act?

A. It just kind of happened very naturally. I was looking for a support

act, and they kind of raised their hands and I couldn't really believe that they wanted to come with me because I just think they're so cool and I've loved them since I was a kid. They couldn't be lovelier and they've been doing this since I was really young, as have I, so I think we have a shared appreciation for the opportunity to still be, you know, performing and still be artists and have the ability to do that for a living. They have a love of humility, and I think they've done a really beautiful job honoring the music they came from and then also maturing and making this really, kind of Laurel Canyon-y, really cool indie-pop sound that they have now. I think it's really cohesive with the kind of music that I'm doing on this tour and they just couldn't be lovelier, so I'm very excited.

Q. I contacted a super fan that I know named Miguel to ask him what super fans would want me to ask, and he asked, No. 1: How do you like Beyoncé's new album?

A. I think it's incredible. I run to it every day. It's the kind of album where you listen to it once and you feel like you've heard it and it's like, "Oh, I love how kind of easy and breezy and like one cohesive vibe it is," and then the more and more you listen, you find different layers and moments and samples and lyrics. She's just the best that we have. I couldn't love it more. And it's super queer, which obviously I love. And I hear rumors that we're getting parts two and three in the near future, which I hope is true. And yeah, I love it. You can tell Miguel I'm obsessed.

Q. Do you have a favorite song on it?

A. Yes! I love "Cuff It," which I think is one of the first tracks. It's just a really ... it's a party vibe, as they say.

Q. The other super fan question is: Are you working on new solo music?

A. Yes, I am working on new solo music. I'm like, I'd say, a third of the way through another album. I mean obviously there have been other things that have been in the way in terms of just taking up time, and now we're focused on the tour, but when the tour is done, I'll definitely return to working on it and, sometime next year, definitely, hopefully want to put out a third record and maybe even play a sneak of one of the songs on this tour if people want to hear that, so I'm very excited about that.

Q. Last question: What is your experience with San Diego? Have you been here much before?

A. I've been a bit. My main connotation for San Diego is that I went to a summer camp in Ojai, California, my whole life, for like 10 years, and a lot of my friends from camp were from San Diego, so I would go for ... weekends to visit them. So I just equate San Diego with like, just like getting to feel like an adult and have a really fun time visiting my buddies. But I haven't gotten to go as much as like a full adult. I've seen the venue, The Shell, and it's unbelievably beautiful, so I'm really just excited to be out there. Of all the stages, it's one of the most beautiful places to play music, so I'm really excited.

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