



# Aidan Gallagher Has No Limits [Q&A]



Photo By Allan Zaki

There are many facets to Aidan Gallagher. On the surface, his scene stealing prowess as the co-star of *The Umbrella Academy* has catapulted him to an immense level of popularity on a piece of prime real estate amongst Hollywood's brightest young A-list celebrities. But beneath the surface of this 17-year-old actor lies a multi-instrumentalist. An independent singer-songwriter who doesn't seem to care about the mainstream attention that his music may garner in the future, only the substance for which it can bare. Musically, his original compositions like "I LOVE YOU" and "4<sup>th</sup> of July" draw early comparisons to acoustic-pop artists like Jack Johnson and Passenger. While lyrically some of his introspective words jump off the paper as if they were indie pop-ballads written by singers like Jason Mraz or Aqualung back in 2003.

For Aidan Gallagher the musician, the year 2020 began with a sold-out show at the Troubadour in his hometown of Los Angeles, California. This live performance on January 6<sup>th</sup> was supposed to be his introduction to the tour life. In fact, a couple weeks later, he even announced that he would be playing a live set at SXSW in March. But...just as quickly as the *Neon Lights Tour* began, it came to an abrupt end due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although his first ever headlining tour has been temporarily delayed, it hasn't stopped Aidan Gallagher from publishing fresh content for his listeners along with a series of new music videos.

There are many facets to the year 2020. On the surface the pandemic this year alone has derailed the plans of some of the world's most talented independent recording artists. But when you're an intuitive songwriter like Aidan Gallagher, times like these can provide the backdrop for some of the most emotional compositions that you may create.

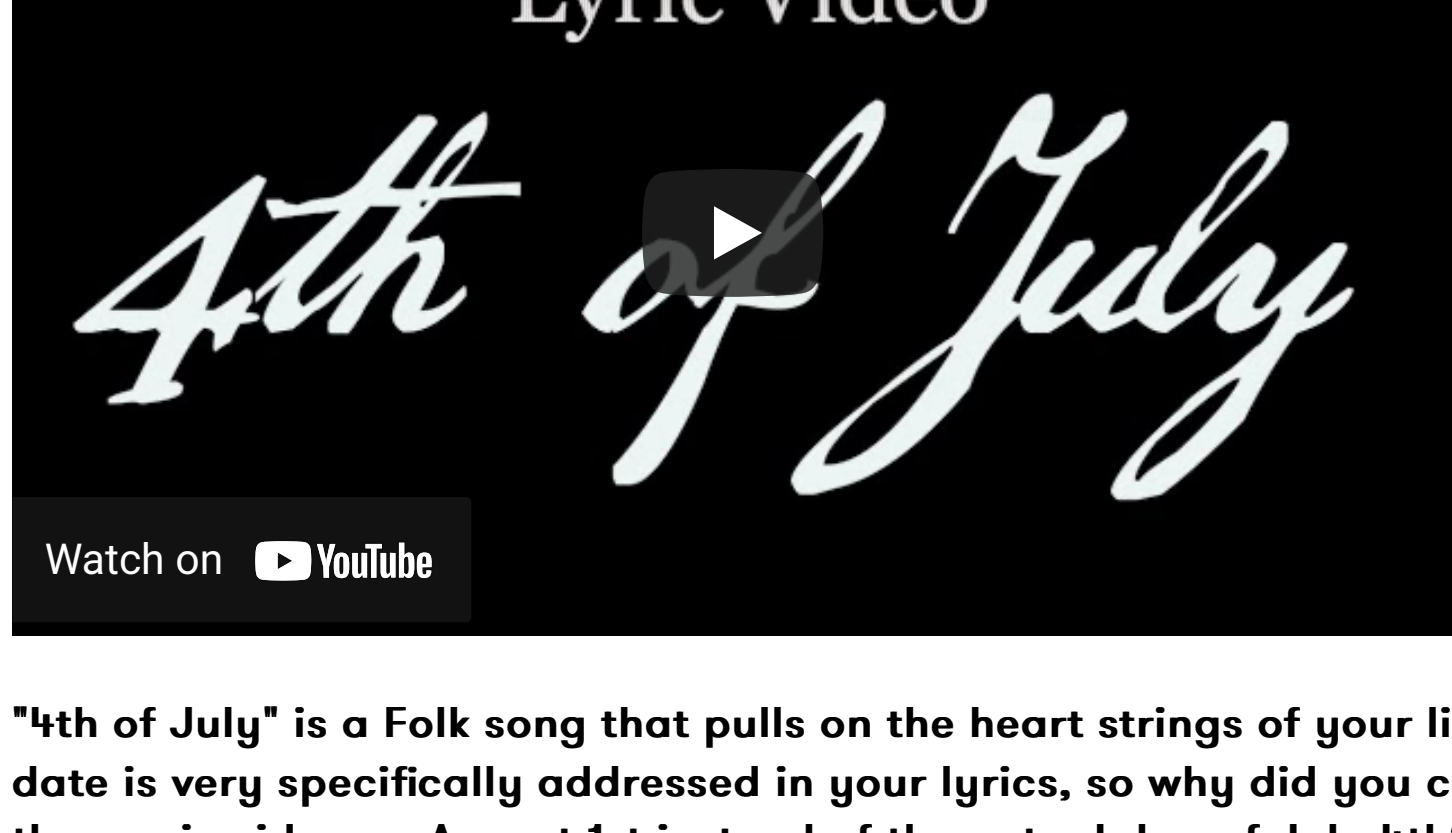
We caught up with Aidan Gallagher to talk about his emotional subject matter, his dream collaborations and his future plans to balance his music endeavors with a budding acting career.

**Ones to Watch: With all of the success that you've enjoyed over the course of the past two years, you've become one of the most recognized actors in young Hollywood. But now you're starting to get a lot more attention as a recording artist. In fact, you currently have four music videos that have garnered over 1 million views on YouTube. Those are very impressive feats to have accomplished without the support of a major record label. What was your personal goal when you first started releasing music? And are you happy with the reception that your music videos have received so far?**

**Aidan Gallagher:** There was always less of a defined personal goal in terms of a release schedule other than just to make great music and put it out there and if people enjoy it, that's really gratifying. I've always made music as a means of working out emotions and because it's one of the most rewarding hobbies one can have.

**Two singles that you've released this year are "I LOVE YOU" and "Blue Neon." Lyrically, they're both heartbreaking tracks that teenagers can relate to. But you also reference some introspective experiences that many adults in their 20s or 30s can relate to. What inspired the lyrics to these songs?**

I've often found that the melodic structure and the micro-tonal characteristics of a riff are what inspire the emotional landscape of a song. When I hear music, I see colors and shapes and textures that I couldn't necessarily describe to another person. I let that imagery inform my emotional state and the subject matter of the song. The lyrics always coincide with this. Sometimes the lyrics relate more to the music than myself and other times they are stripped word for word from my own personal experience. Either way the lyrics always come from an honest place. I don't see how you could create anything of value without that.



**"4th of July" is a Folk song that pulls on the heart strings of your listeners. The date is very specifically addressed in your lyrics, so why did you choose to release the music video on August 1st instead of the actual day of July 4th?**

Thank you! I'm really proud of that song. It brought together a lot of what I've been learning about music production and engineering. It gave me a chance to show what I can do. A lot of people have asked about the timing of videos and our team has found through the advice of some very wise music industry people and just trial and error that it's best to release a listening only video first. I like the idea that people will listen to the work before they start dissecting the visuals. I want them to have their own interpretation and not necessarily the visual scenery I put on it.

**Of all the musicians and bands that have released music videos in 2020, which ones have inspired your imagination the most, when it comes to creating your own videos?**

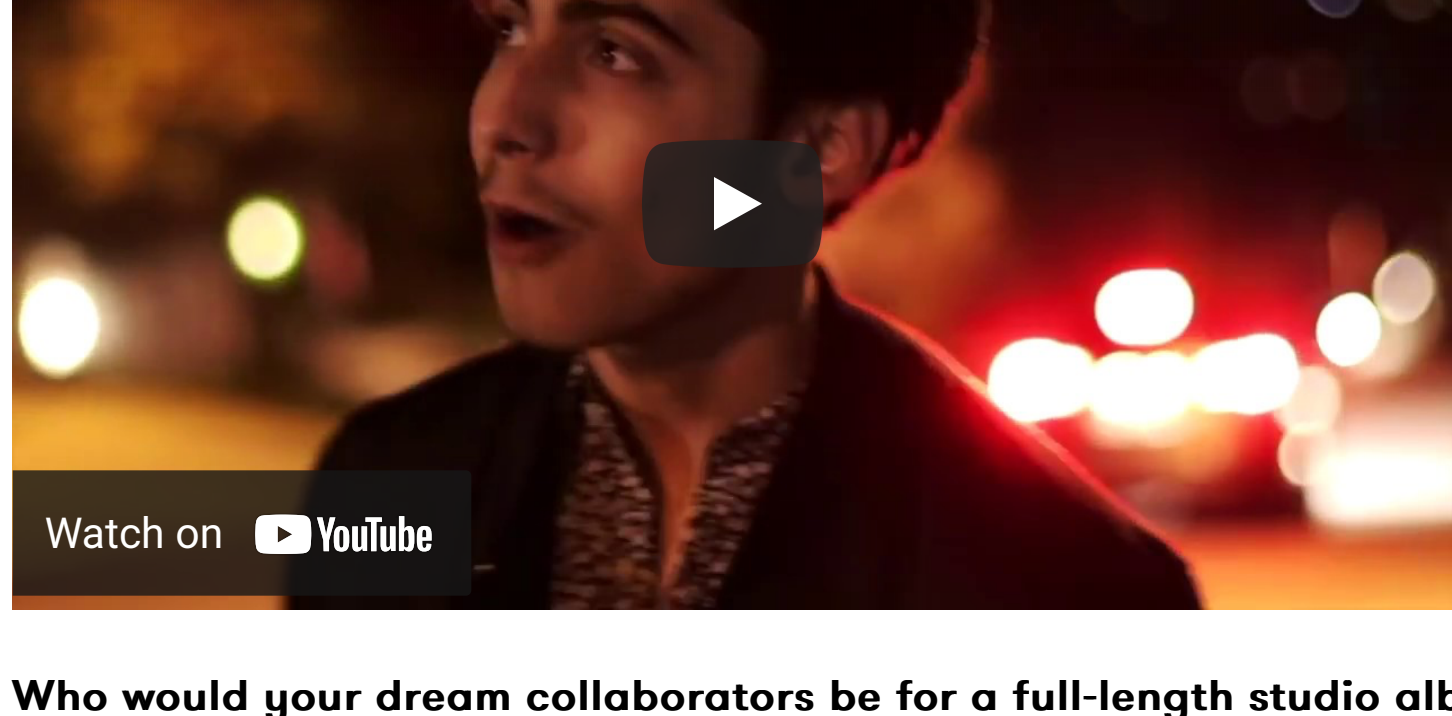
I often find myself influenced by a variety of artists across musical genres. To give an example or two, I really love what Jacob Collier and Finneas are doing with their videos. But at the same time, some of my favorite videos are the ones that are stripped down, and the artist is just performing their song in a studio or on a stage. I think it puts a beautiful focus on the music and the emotional texture of the song.

**The 2020 Blue Neon Tour was going to be your first heading tour, but it was cancelled back in January due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Can you tell us a little bit about what you had in store for this tour?**

Well, I was lucky that I got a chance to kick it off at the Troubadour here in Los Angeles. Just that alone was pretty cool. I had a full tour planned to go around the country and then travel to international cities and do meet-and-greets with my fans and really connect. I was really looking forward to my first SXSW performance, so that was a really hard pill to swallow when they cancelled the festival. But all things considered, I've been incredibly lucky in my life and my little plans pale in comparison when you look at the state of the world right now.

**How many songs have you recorded since the pandemic shutdowns began? And will you be releasing an EP or debut album anytime soon?**

"I Love You" and "4<sup>th</sup> of July" were released this year but everything else I'm doing is currently in a state of flux. I've definitely got the songs but it's a balance of finding the time to put into recording them. I have a large catalog that I'm really proud of that will be coming out one at a time as I can get to it. With [Covid-19] it's really slowed down my ability to record because I have to engineer everything myself. With "4<sup>th</sup> of July" I had 3 different engineers on rotation come to my house to work so it kept me working on a strong schedule and we knocked it out fast. When [Covid-19] put everyone in quarantine I lost that team and schedule. We'll get it back though.



**Who would your dream collaborators be for a full-length studio album and why?**

Wow, I mean, if I was ever lucky enough to work with any of my idols, I'd be over the moon. If I got to collaborate with another artist for an entire album it would probably be on a production or writing level. I'd love to work with John Mayer, Finneas, Charlie Puth or Ed Sheeran.

**If you could pick any film director to direct the first music video from your debut album who would it be and why?**

Honestly, I don't think in terms of music videos. I only think about music. Once a song is produced then I have the luxury to get into the ideas for a video. I do have some raw visual impressions in my mind of what the song means to me but it's hard to say until the song is done. Though there are many film directors that I'd love to work with as an actor such as Wes Anderson, Quentin Tarantino, Damien Chazelle and the list goes on and on and on.

**We heard that you're a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador. Tell us about your work with the UN. What made you want to get involved with their efforts to stop illegal wildlife trade? And why has it been so important for you to shed more light on the animal agricultural industry?**

I can't begin to tell you what a privilege it has been to be able to magnify my concerns about saving our planet through their channels. The environmental crisis is the largest and the most complex problem we face in the world. I have always wanted to use the platform I lucked into as an actor to showcase that. It all started with not being able to go surfing after a rain and that led to many realizations about carbon emissions and the role of the animal agriculture industry in those emissions. I don't want to seem preachy to people or judge anyone's choices, but I do want to spread awareness as I learn from the world's top scientists. The truth is that if we don't take aggressive action in the next few years, my generation isn't going to have a viable future in a collapsed environment. The UN is calling the next ten years the "Decade of Action." As individuals, there are a lot of small steps people can take that make a huge difference collectively such as "Meatless Mondays", cutting down on single use plastic and cash voting for the environment with your daily spending.

**You launched a five-part Q&A series on your YouTube channel back in September. Most of the questions from your fans were centered around your role as Number Five on The Umbrella Academy. Are you planning on creating any new content for your channel that primarily focuses on your musicianship and artistry as a songwriter?**

I have a lot of plans for all kinds of content and ways to stay engaged with fans and it all makes me really happy. I've been doing music performances for my Patreon members every week, and music performing has always given me happiness. I bet a lot of performers are experiencing depression once they lost the ability to tour. Patreon brought back that happiness to me. Not every person who follows me is into my music, so it's just for those who are and who would come to a show if I were touring in their city. I try to balance my time between the various things I'm passionate about; however, the past few months have really been about promoting the vote.

**You play the guitar and piano. In addition to singing, producing and engineering. Take us back to the early stages of your timeline as a musician. Were you a self-taught musician or did you have instructors and mentors help you develop your skills?**

Well, when you're first starting out you generally work on covers to develop your skills with your instrument while also making it fun. Once you can play the chords and you have an understanding of how your instrument works, you can learn things at your leisure. I started off taking lessons but eventually I stopped due to production and had to let my ear guide my learning. That's also when I started writing songs. I never took lessons for songwriting, I just watched YouTube. In particular I remember John Mayer's seminar at Berklee College of Music to be a defining influence on my methodology for songwriting. As for producing and engineering, I'm completely self-taught and rely only on YouTube research and my own musical instinct to create.

**Most of your songs could be categorized as Pop-Rock. What other genres of music would you like to incorporate into your sound?**

I like all kinds of music, so I'm not necessarily trying to find a genre to incorporate but I guess you get influenced by whatever you are listening to. Genres are so blended these days, and I really think music operates on more of a spectrum than it does on individual categorizations of itself.

**Who are your top five Pop-Rock artists/bands of all-time? And why?**

There's more than five! But since 5 is my lucky number I'll try to narrow it down but it's not in any order. Also know that this list is characterized by how I define Pop-rock. My Chemical Romance, The White Stripes, David Bowie, Queen and Foo Fighters.

**We noticed that you filmed season two of The Umbrella Academy in Toronto. How do you think the experience of living in that city helped shape you as a songwriter and artist?**

I think in order to write about life you have to live life. At this point in my life, I don't at all consider myself worldly as I simply haven't lived long enough and because of that I find that a lot of my music is introspective, and my songs often feel like the places I've written them. By putting yourself in new environments, I think it pulls new ideas out of you. Travel broadens the mind.

**Hypothetically speaking, if you had to choose between winning a Grammy Awards as a solo artist or a winning Academy Award with the entire cast of The Umbrella Academy, which option would you pick?**

Awards aren't why I make music or act. I don't think about them. I just love music and acting. Any part I can play in those fields brings me happiness and I'd love to experiment with the different aspects of those art forms. Initially I got into acting because I wanted to be a director. I also loved listening to music, but I had no idea I would be a musician until I started taking piano lessons.

**What's the plan for your music career moving forward? Do you plan to continue to release material independently or would you prefer to be signed to a major record label?**

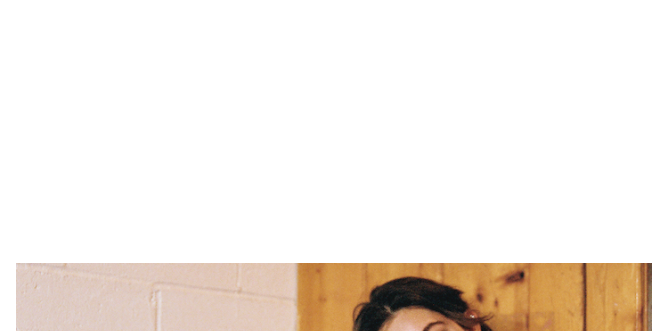
It was a hard decision, but right now it's best for me to remain an independent artist as I'm growing my music and balancing an acting career. I had really exciting offers from major labels, but they all want me to drop acting and tour full time. I also really enjoy having creative control over my songs. For the past couple of years, I've mostly been writing and because of that, I've built up a huge catalog of music to produce when I get the time. After that I'm really looking forward to being able to perform more and on tour. For the time being, I'm really excited about catching up with what I've written so that I'll finally be in a place where I can write a song and begin recording it the next day.

Author: Miguel Costa  
December 14, 2020

👉 Aidan Gallagher 👉 Pop 👉 Rock 👉 4th of July 👉 I LOVE YOU 👉 Umbrella Academy

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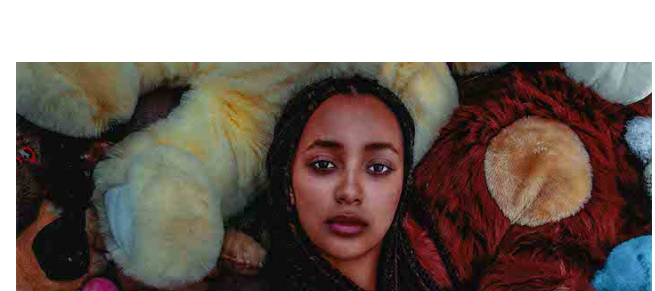
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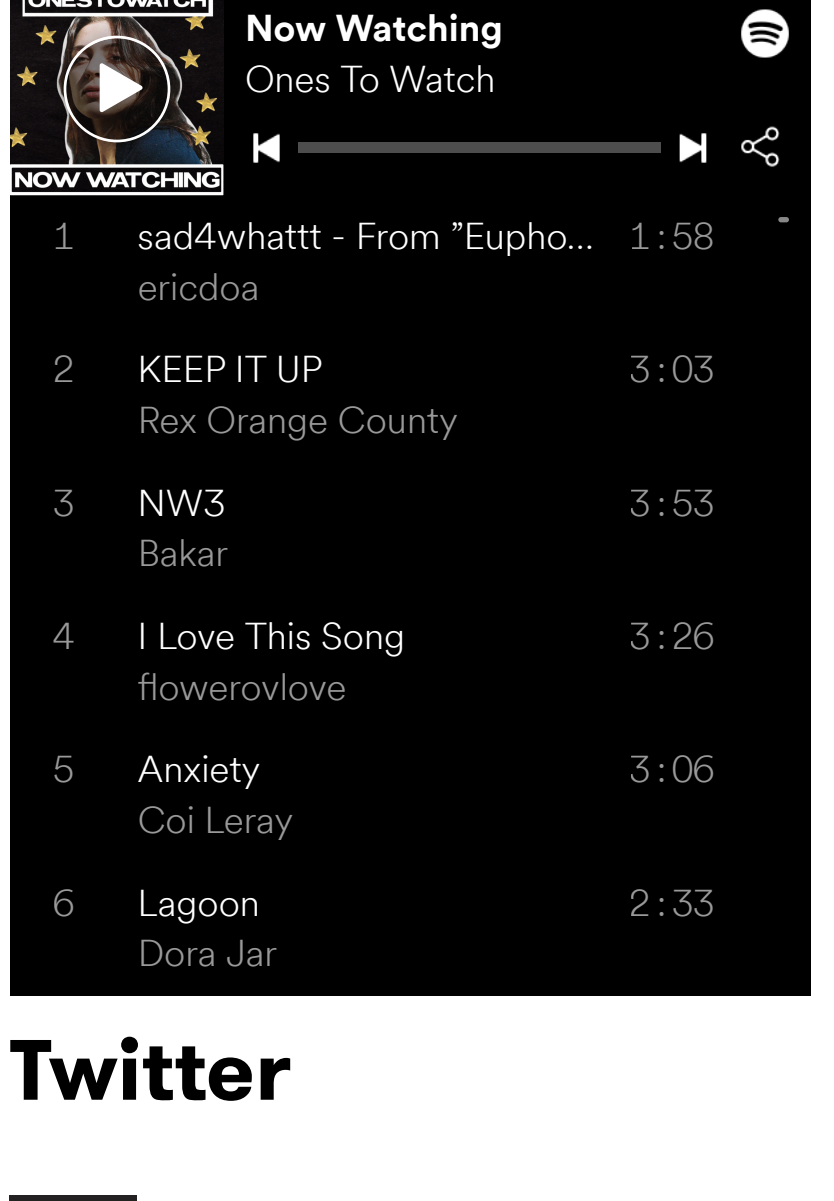


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