

On this day

In 1983, Michael Jackson's "Thriller" album goes No. 1 and remains at the spot for 37 weeks.

Black History Month Profiles

SHY LENNOX

IMAN MEKONEN
Spectrum Editor

WITH A TOY SUNFLOWER WRAPPED around his microphone stand, Richmond alternative R&B artist Shy Lennox performed a mix of covers and songs from his 2018 EP "Audition" on the Poor Boys stage Friday night.

His unpredictable range, flavorful voice and calm demeanor bring him to call himself "a professional sad boy giving you solace, giving you soul and giving you sadness."

Lennox, a recent alum of VCUarts' music program, has navigated the local music scene through his connection with the community and his playful baritone voice.

Here are the highlights from an interview with Lennox for The Commonwealth Times. Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

How did you first get into music?

So, I've always wanted to be an entertainer. And I've always, you know, considered myself a singer. I did choir elementary through high school, but when I moved to Richmond is when I feel like the birth of Shy Lennox happened. And I felt like it was because I was finally in a city where I could really create, and I was around like-minded individuals, you know, coming from NoVa to Richmond. It's just like a big shot.

But I'm just really excited to be doing this, you know? So, when did I get started in the music? My whole life. But when did I lock in? I would say around 2015 when I came to VCU.

How would you say your music career has changed after graduating from VCU?

I'm only a couple months out. But I would say that it's given me a lot more time to focus. I'm able to do shows on the stage. This Sunday, I'm going to Philly. And then next week, I'm going to New York City. And then the week after that, I'm going to Baltimore. So now, I can tour, and now I can not be worried about deadlines and assignments and shit like that. That's always a blessing.

What is it like being an artist in Richmond, being in this Richmond scene, playing at local venues like this?

It's really cute. Like, I like it a lot. For a while, I was like "I need to get out of Richmond, I need to leave like as soon as possible." But like there's good support here. I feel like 10 to 20 years from now, this is going to be like a major city. You know what I'm saying? A lot of big businesses are moving their startups here, and there's just a lot going on in the Richmond community. So I'm just really glad to be putting it on the map.

I think there's a lot of love out here and just a lot of good energy, and I think that

Richmond is a good transition place. Like I want to be here until I find my next big place to go. I have no intentions of moving back with my parents or going up to NoVa. Until I go off into my next journey — my next part of my life. I feel like this is a good place to kinda just cook and kind of grow and get better, you know?

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Shy Lennox,
alternative R&B artist

Do you have any upcoming projects?

So, my EP is already out. It's called "Audition." Really put me on the map, I feel like. Lyrical Lemonade and Afropunk shouted that out, so that gave me a lot of external support from outside of Richmond. I haven't dropped a single in months.

(That changed a day after Lennox's interview with The CT — on Saturday, he dropped "Friends," which he described as showing a more "sophisticated and polished sound.")

What's the song about?

It's about kinda like, understanding that not all relationships are conducive to a healthy lifestyle, and some things are toxic, and sometimes it's OK to just say "I think we should just be friends." You know what I'm saying? Despite how much you want to keep things together for the sake of just being with someone. It just shows, you know, throughout everything we've been through, it's best for you and for me that we're just friends.

Do you derive a lot of your inspiration from your real life?

Absolutely, absolutely. But not all of my shit. I feel like as an artist, you got to be a storyteller. And you are always telling your story, your own story. Like Billie Eilish just said "hip-hop is all a lie" and "people lie." Think about authors — we have a whole category of fiction but we appreciate people for

making books. So that should be applied in the field of music as well. I don't have a Benz but I can sing about taking a ride, you know what I'm saying? It's a story.

If you don't mind me asking, is your name actually Shy Lennox?

My name is Shyheim Hinnant. When I was in high school, I took AP lit. And we read Shakespeare's "Macbeth," and you know how they assign characters to people to read aloud? And then when it came to me, he was like "Shy — Lennox." And then my homeboy was like "Yo, that's tough." So then I like looked into the character, and I was just like "that's my new name."

"Friends" by Shy Lennox is available to stream on Spotify and Apple Music.



Richmond R&B artist Shy Lennox released a new song, "Friends," on Saturday and said it marks the beginning of a new, sophisticated sound. CT file photo