

# Charlie Puth in Singapore: 'I want you to passionately hate me or passionately love me'

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**Fresh off his chart-topping hits See You Again and We Don't Talk Anymore, Charlie Puth is in Singapore for his debut concert. He spoke to Channel NewsAsia's Genevieve Loh about life, collaborations and online bullying.**

SINGAPORE: Before 2015, it was safe to say not many people knew who Charlie Puth was. Barely a year later, the 24-year-old is now one of the world's fastest-rising pop singer-songwriters with three Grammy nominations, a Golden Globe nod and a massive breakout hit under his belt.

He touched down in Singapore on Wednesday (Aug 10) for his first concert here as part of his Nine Track Mind Tour 2016 to promote his debut studio album. Although visibly jet-lagged, the Manhattan School of Music and Berklee College of Music graduate perked up as he shared with Channel NewsAsia what his life is like at the moment.

"Tiring!" was his first response. But he then gave a more considered answer.

"It feels very good to be me. I come from a very humble background, with all these songs in my laptop that I now get to perform to lots of people around the world. The songs are from my heart, so it's very cool," he said.

Among those heartfelt songs is the massive breakout hit See You Again, recorded with Wiz Khalifa, which became a four-time platinum smash that topped the Billboard Hot 100 for 12 weeks. Other hits that have struck an emotional chord include Marvin Gaye and We Don't Talk Anymore, on which he collaborated with the likes of Meghan Trainor and Selena Gomez respectively.

For the boy who first started his own YouTube channel in 2009 posting comedy videos and acoustic covers, the journey to global fame has been lightning quick. Since then, Puth has written and produced for many pop and R&B A-listers, including Lil Wayne, Jason Derulo, Trey Songz and Fergie.

So, as he now has the commercial and artistic clout to be able to collaborate with whoever he wants, who tops his list of potential partners?

"I actually had a chance to open for Billy Joel, and that was cool ... there were 45,000 people in the stadium and I received a standing ovation from the audience. It was nuts! I really model my music after him," he shared.

"And I'd also love to work with James Taylor. And I know you're thinking, 'Gee, Charlie, you're a piano player, why would you want to work with a guitar player?' (It's) because James Taylor plays guitar very interestingly! And anyone from the golden age of the 70s - (all that) rich, dense music, I am very much about."

While he has achieved massive success, he wasn't always popular. At school, he was constantly bullied, and the lessons he learned from that experience have stood him in good stead for dealing with negative criticism on online platforms like YouTube. And he has plenty of advice for those who are trying to develop a career for a predominantly digital audience.

"You have to be the person to change it. You can't rely on other people to change it," he said. "For example, if there is some drama going on Twitter, people just want to get a reaction out of you...I'll see it happen and I'll be like, I'm happy with myself. I don't need to look at this right now. I'll turn it off and pretend it's 2004 and I have a Motorola Razr and I don't even have Twitter, because it hasn't been invented yet. And I'll just play the piano," he said.

"I think I'm good on people's list for most of the time. But on the off chance, it's important to remember why you're here. And realise that it's the talent that you have."

But isn't social media a double-edged sword, because every artiste needs to have a presence on such platforms, which have as many haters as fans?

"You're so right, it is a double-edged sword. My whole thing is if you have people who don't like what you do, and if you have people who do like what you do and no in-between, then you're doing something right!" he explained. "I want you to passionately hate me or passionately love me. Because if you passionately hate me, then it lends to the art as well. Because it's almost like a goal for me to want to win them over!"

- CNA/gl