

FULL BIO (710 WORDS)

ANDY GARTRELL

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Picture this: it's early 2010, Katy Perry's California Gurls' is rocking the charts, and there's an awkward kiwi boy playing the same 4 James Blunt songs over and over on an isolated street corner in Wellington. That was the day Andy Gartrell began his musical career, making just enough money to catch the train back home.

Years later, after buying his first loop pedal in an effort to emulate Ed Sheeran, Andy returned to busking (this time choosing locations that attracted actual people).

It was 2014 when he played his first gig at a local bar. Half of his set was Disney anthems and the other half was originals, so... needless to say, they didn't invite him back. Soon after, a friend mentioned that the Wellington night market were seeking performers. Andy got in touch and was put on the rear stage in an unlit nook, hidden from most passers-by. Week after week he returned and played for hours (usually walking away with only a few more coins than he'd arrived with), but the more he played there, the better he became. He learned about what people wanted to hear, what made people stop and listen, what inspired people to sing and dance along. It wasn't long until he was moved onto the main stage, where people would crowd onto the nearby steps to hear him say, "Hi, my name's Andy, follow me on Facebook".

While finishing his musical theatre degree at Whitireia (an admittedly odd choice that Andy credits with his flair for storytelling), the young musician spent all of his spare time playing contemporary hits on the streets of Wellington and building up a loyal following. He traversed tirelessly back and forth between the city's busiest busking spots on his moped, balancing his guitar, amp and mic-stand with him (how he avoided an accident, nobody knows). He busked every day of 2016, so it came as no surprise to anyone when he was invited to play at Wellington's newest street festival, Cuba Dupa. Drawn in by his upbeat, radio covers, confessional originals and undeniable charm, that weekend-long event saw Andy play to his first huge crowd.

After opening for kiwi pop-singer Abby Wolfe, Andy was invited to perform at the first Wellington SoFar gig alongside Flix Rose and Mitchell Kirk. Shortly after, he began recording his first EP, 'Get Back Up', which quickly sold out of physical copies. As a new year's gift to himself, on the last day of 2016 he bought a new loop pedal and wrote the recently released single 'Where We Belong' within 3 days.

2017 saw crowds grow bigger. Andy attended that years Wellington City Council Garden's Magic showcase and vowed to be up on that same stage one day. A year later, he opened the show and had the crowd of 2,000+ cheering and dancing within minutes. That same year, Andy opened for long-time favourite Graeme James, receiving a stunning reception from the sold-out venue.

After a year of playing an average of 5 gigs a week, Andy rang in 2019 with a gig on the Wellington waterfront in front of an unprecedented audience. Hailed as the biggest New Year's crowd the venue had ever seen, Andy was eventually shut down by the council in the early hours of the morning because masses of people had gathered to listen and were blocking the streets.

Since then, Andy has embarked on a 'one song a week' writing challenge, which has inspired dozens of new singles. From heart-breaking ballads to party-starting bops, this singer/songwriter's sound has never felt more current, honest or relatable. The once-awkward kiwi boy has finally grown into himself and become the crowd-pleasing charmer he is today. With charisma to spare and more break-up anthems under his belt than Taylor Swift (well... almost), Andy manages to capture what it means to be a twenty-something in all it's devastating, rose-tinted glory.

When he's not playing packed out gigs at popular venues across the country, you can find him writing and recording in preparation for a series of new releases. Still armed with his trusty loop pedal and beaten up guitar, Andy Gartrell is a Wellingtonian musical icon, and is quickly becoming the capital's worst kept secret.