

Cole Blakely

Full Artist Bio

Abridged Version on CV

Cole Blakely a former award-winning musical director of a competitive collegiate a cappella team, singer/songwriter, loop pedalling guitarist, vocalist and entertainer from the Canadian Western Interior. He is well-known for his dynamic stage presence, loop pedal creativity and distinct midwestern indie punk vocals. Fusing both music and comedy, Cole's hybrid approach to entertainment captivates audiences with his larger-than-life personality, electrifying creativity and well-worn musicality. Cole always performs with a passion, honesty, and vulnerability that connects to audiences and makes his work memorable.

Cole's musical journey began at the ripe age of ten when his older sister brought home an acoustic guitar as a souvenir from an out-of-town trip. Infused with jealousy over their sister's "new toy," both Cole and his younger brother pleaded with their parents to also buy them guitars - to which they bought an electric guitar and an acoustic guitar for Cole and his brother, respectively.

While Cole's siblings quickly grew tired and gave up on their new hobby, Cole remained diligent. Playing the guitar not only came naturally to him but became a newfound source of expression and passion for the youth. Quickly advancing beyond the teachings of his first novice guitar teacher, Cole was passed off to his hometown's renowned guitar guru, Morgan Toutant. Simultaneously, Cole began learning the electric bass through his school's band program.

Cole's curiosity and talent continued to flourish under Morgan's teachings until the age of 13 when an unexpected change in vocation for Morgan left Cole without guidance. Undeterred (and honestly a bit fatigued from only playing heavy metal on the electric guitar), Cole picked up his younger brother's old acoustic guitar and began to transfer as much knowledge he could from the electric guitar to its acoustic counterpart.

By the 9th grade, Cole became an adept finger-picking style acoustic guitarist and double bassist, and decided to challenge his own musicality further by adding vocals to his performance. Left with only a taste of music theory from Morgan, Cole nosedived into understanding the underlying principles of music in order to further understand the thing he adored and further hone his musical abilities. Overtime, through his self-teaching of music theory, Cole was able to add a plethora of additional instruments to his toolkit - including the piano, drums, ukulele, and banjo.

In 12th grade, Cole met now-emerging Westcoast artist Aza Nabuko and the duo decided to co-write and record two alternative indie pop songs - *Strangers* and *When We Fell in Love* - together for Aza's self-titled debut EP. Soon after, seeing their son now as an experienced songwriter and studio musician, Cole's parents bought him studio recording time for his own live off the floor debut EP later that year as a high-school graduation gift. However, Cole declined the offer and graciously asked his parents if they would consider spending the money they



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generously offered on a Boss RC-300 Loop Station. Inspired by the likes of Ed Sheeran, Cole became set on incorporating loop pedalling into his own artistry.

While the young 18-year old originally wanted to pursue a full-time music career fresh out of highschool, a rare and exceptional academic opportunity at the University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO) was offered to Cole - which he reluctantly took. Although he was a successful student who would later graduate with a Bachelor of Arts Degree Double Majoring in English and Psychology, Cole spent much of his undergraduate years working with his newfangled passion, the UBCO Beats A Cappella Club.

While initially joining the UBCO Beats as a casual one-off member in the first year of his post-secondary studies, Cole quickly took a liking to this new musical community of peers and mentors and the unique musical challenges that a cappella style music provided. Within 2 years, Cole went from noodling around on some a cappella arrangements twice a week with friends in empty university classrooms to performing at the highest international level of competitive a cappella as the musical director of his own a cappella group - The Trill Seekers.

Over the next four years, Cole would grow and regularly take this newfounded group to compete in the International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella (ICCA's - the same competition portrayed in the *Pitch Perfect* franchise). As musical director, Cole was tasked with not only arranging and choreographing 10-12 minute-long a cappella style arrangements for his group, but was also responsible for teaching both the performance and musicality of these arrangements to his peers.

In the 2019/2020 season of the competition, Cole was awarded "Outstanding Arrangement" at the ICCA Western Quarterfinals in Tacoma, Washington where his group took 3rd place. The following season, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Cole conducted his group virtually and gathered recordings from around the world to put together an a cappella style mega compilation that won "Outstanding Choreography" at the ICCA Western Quarterfinals and advanced his group to the Semifinal Round.

During his time off of the international stage as a musical director, Cole and the UBCO Beats collaborated with a variety of artists such as Aza Nabuko, Justin J. Moore, The Okanagan Symphony Orchestra, and Swiss Loop Beatboxer, Martin Oliver, at both self-produced and externally sponsored shows.

In 2022, When Cole's studies at UBCO - thus his time with the UBCO Beats - came to an end, he moved across the country to study audio engineering and recording at the Ontario Institute of Audio Recording Technology (OIART). Through his studies, Cole cemented the backend technical skills needed to be a relevant independent artist in the modern music industry. In 2023,



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Cole graduated with honours from OIART with the highest GPA in the school and received the Kurosman Scholastic Achievement Award for his academic excellence.

Synthesizing everything he has learned from his humble beginnings, to ghost writing for other artists, to songwriting for himself, to receiving an English and Psychology degree, to creating an internationally competitive award-winning a cappella group, to receiving an honours diploma in Audio Engineering, Cole is finally living his 18-year-old self's dream and moving fully forward as an independent artist.

Excited to share not only his story of persistence and the unexpected twist and turns that brought him back to the thing he has always loved, but also his visible and audible passion for music and performing, Cole is currently seeking employment as a performer on the cruise ship circuit while he simultaneously works on his debut studio EP.

