EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

"There's No Plan B. There's Only a Plan A."

Keemo, the Syrian-American creator known as Keemokazi, on the high school deadline that launched a family content career, his mom the scene-stealer, shooting his biggest videos on an iPhone, and the new album arriving on his 24th birthday.

Interview by Paul Salfen · AMFM Magazine

Keemo has a simple rule for a career that has already pulled his whole family into the frame. There is no Plan B. The Syrian-American creator known as Keemokazi told Paul Salfen of AMFM Magazine that a backup plan would only split the work in half. The conversation landed as he was finishing a new album in his bedroom, lining up a family reality series for the end of the year, and still shooting his biggest short-form videos on a regular iPhone. The music arrives November 29, 2026, the day he turns 24.



Source: Image supplied via Anderson Group Public Relations.

THE DEADLINE

Paul Salfen, joined on the call by Lillian, opened with the career that now mixes music, TikTok, and acting, and with a family rule that could have ended all of it. Keemo had a deadline from his dad. If the entertainment work did not take by the time he finished high school, college and a conventional job were next.

"When I was growing up, I've always wanted to pursue a career in this entertainment space," Keemo said. He bounced between acting camps and music. Content creation was not even on the map. "I never thought of actually doing content creation or doing social media because it wasn't a thing back then. It was either you become, you know, someone based off of acting, or music, or in movies, or, you know, TV shows, whatever it may be."

Then the calendar ran out at the same time the world shut down. "During COVID was, I was about to graduate high school. Now was the deadline, my dad told me. If you don't make anything work within that space by that time, you're gonna have to come, you know, go to college, get a good job, whatever."

It worked out. TikTok was taking off. At first he did not even want to download the app. He did anyway, and the first couple of videos started to move. "And that's when social media and influencing really became a thing."

It is a real job now, Salfen noted, and his dad is on board. "Most definitely," Keemo said. "The entire family does it now."

MOM, THE COMEDIAN

In the early days it was Keemo, his five sisters, and a house full of what Salfen called "girl energy." So who is the biggest troublemaker, besides Keemo?

"Honestly, I would say my mom."

Salfen laughed. Keemo did not walk it back. "Always. She's always down for everything, she's always giving the biggest reaction, because she's Syrian. She's from the Middle East, so when they come out here and they're just, you know, hit with pranks or funny reactions and stuff like that, she's cursing in Arabic, she's just doing, you know, loud behavior, so she's hilarious."

The punchline is that this was her idea all along. "She actually told me she wanted to be a comedian when she was older, so I guess she's a comedian now, because she makes millions of people laugh daily."

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SIBLING MODE AND BUSINESS MODE

Working with the people closest to you is a blessing, Keemo said. It is also a balance that has to be managed on purpose.

"You need to understand when it's time to do business, when it's time to film, and when it's time to basically, you know, turn off that sibling mode. Because you know how siblings get. They're always saying, not now, no, I have an appointment, I gotta get my eyelashes done, but at the same time, we are all involved so much that it is our job."

The fix is unglamorous and effective. He puts his sisters on a calendar. "I literally create plans with my sisters using a calendar app. So it's gotten to a point where it's like, I have to book them, we have to check each other's schedule, and we communicate very well. But yeah, you really have to separate that sibling and business mindset."

Salfen offered the old warning about going into business with family. In this case, the work became the entire family.

AN ALBUM FROM THE BEDROOM

Before the social platforms ever took off, Keemo was already making music. "I dropped my first music video and songs when I was 14," he said. Once the audience arrived, he folded the songs into the same family world that made him recognizable. He writes hip-hop and rap tracks around whatever is moving, then brings his family in to react or to star in the videos.

He recently released an album about six months before this conversation, with a music video for every song and a role for each family member. "Instead of, you know, having, you know, random people or crazy, you know, models within my music videos, it's literally my mom or my sisters, you know, playing a role with them."

That approach is also a strategy. When millions of people are waiting on a new project, they are not all waiting for the same reason. "You're always looking for a way to, you know, communicate the music or a new project with the reason why people followed you in the first place. And that's why I include so much of the family and my sisters, and what we actually, you know, went viral for within different type of projects."

The next album is dated with care. "We have a new album coming out, November 29th on my 24th birthday, and this one means a lot to me because it's just, we made it, or I made it right out of my bedroom, so, you know, it's so close. Based on moments and, you know, just having fun with it."

A tour is the conversation after that. He has already played shows in Malaysia, a few dates across the UAE, and closer to home. "Once this album goes out, we're gonna talk about the tour next, hopefully."

Salfen asked about Broadway too. Keemo has not thought that far. "Broadway would be great. I don't think I have the voice for that." A reality series, he said, is much closer. "A reality show is actually something we're working on, at the moment, as we speak. So, you guys, you should expect something coming out at the end of the year."

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PICK IT UP AND PRESS RECORD

Kids stop him all the time, wanting the same path. His advice is blunt on purpose.

"The best thing you can do is just start. That's literally the best advice." He grew up watching the same YouTubers those kids watch now, staring into the mirror and cataloging gear. "What camera are they using? Like, what microphone is that? Like, I need the best and craziest equipment, I can't start, but honestly, my best videos were just filmed on an iPhone. The oldest version, too, so you don't need expensive equipment to start, you don't need, you know, the best microphone, you just have to pick it up, press record, and be yourself."

Focus on your own life, he said, and make it interesting to you. Other people will follow. "I always say there's 8 billion or 7 billion people in the world, you know, you can find your niche, you can find your supporters, you just have to start."

Salfen assumed the iPhone era was over. It is not. "I use just a regular iPhone to film everything" when the work is short form: Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and TikToks, shot and edited on the phone. Longer YouTube videos might be an iPhone too, or a DJI Osmo, the little pocket camera. "There's cameras that go up to $3,000, this one's under $500. So, it's not always about having the most fancy, craziest equipment, it's just having what's convenient and gonna make your workflow easier."

Editing is the same philosophy. Built-in phone apps are enough if you can cut a clip and lay music under it. He used to download videos off YouTube and recut them just to learn. "So by the time, you know, social media took off, I was already knowing how to, you know, cut videos up. And now I've taught my sisters, so it's a lot more convenient if you know how to do a couple of things on your own."

> *"My best videos were just filmed on an iPhone. The oldest version, too."*

A ONE-MAN ARMY

Outside the family, the team is still small by design.

"I'll be honest with you guys, I am like a one-man army. I shoot, edit, direct, produce, script everything." For YouTube, he leans on a close friend from Germany, his videographer, because those edits eat time. The bigger lifts, including the ten music videos around an album and the reality series they are shooting now, are when that friend flies in. "So he's actually staying with me now for the next two months, and we're gonna knock out this reality show. So even the reality show doesn't need an entire big team. As long as you have the vision, the idea in your head, you can make it happen with a good partner."

The series, Keemo said, will look like the family content audiences already know, only closer. Fans keep asking about the older sister who has not been in videos, and whether a sister is getting married. He is prepared for the chaos of a house with five sisters and their mom once the cameras stay on. "It's gonna definitely touch on more privacy that we haven't really put out online yet."

Is that scary? "It's definitely scary, but you have to understand, at one point, you can't really keep everything private if this is gonna be your full job." They already run reality-based short-form content. "We're characters within our own world, and people view us as the family channel. So, you know, we're playing into that, and that's exactly what we want to do."

Fame has not rebuilt his social life from scratch. In Arab culture, he said, families stay close to other families, so he grew up with his parents' friends' kids and still has them. "I would honestly say in my circle, I have no more than five friends, and it's been that way since forever." He does have a girlfriend. "She actually went to high school with my sister, so I feel like we've always kept everything very close by."

THE HAIL MARY

Salfen hosts a show with Dallas Cowboys great Drew Pearson, who caught the original Hail Mary, and he asks guests for the moment when they had to go for it.

For Keemo, that moment keeps coming back to COVID and a dancing app he wanted nothing to do with. "TikTok was coming out, and it was being promoted as a dancing app. So, I was like, I don't dance, I'm not downloading this, this is corny." Then someone at school showed him a video that had done a million views without a dance in it. "And I was like, what? You're not even dancing? You could do that?"

He downloaded the app and started posting everything. At school, people would leak his songs off his phone and try to make fun of him. He stayed locked in anyway. He had grown up reading books about the law of attraction and manifesting a goal by acting as if it had already happened.

"I think the first big step was just blocking out the noise, and I think a lot of people, you know, struggle with what their friends are gonna think, or what their neighbor might think. So just getting over that was the biggest thing and the biggest help, because once you start to not care what people think about your next project or what your next move is, you have absolute freedom and creativity to work towards anything. So I downloaded the app, and I just posted my entire camera roll, and I just kept going. And then I found something that worked, and then I locked into, you know, what works, and I continued to do what people were there for."

The leaps have not stopped. The reality series, the new album, more long-form YouTube ideas, even sitting for this interview, he said, are all part of shooting for higher heights.

Asked who he would want to work with, he landed on the rapper Russ. "He was able to, you know, go platinum multiple times, sell out arenas, and he always preaches how he didn't need, you know, a bigger team to help him. He didn't need a label, he was able to just continue building his stardom and fan base through his basement, through his own laptop and computer." That example matters to someone who started without a map into the business. "With that mindset, you'll always hold yourself back if you think you need something bigger, but once you realize it's as simple as you make it, that's when the real, you know, attraction will come."

The concepts themselves still come from ordinary life. A family hang, a moment with friends, a camera already rolling. "I'll be like, that's a funny idea. Or that moment right there was hilarious."

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NO PLAN B

Salfen talks a lot about success mindset on his show, and he asked what Keemo tells himself to stay on the path.

"I've always had the mindset where once you want something, you have to just lock in on it. There's no Plan B. There's only a Plan A, because if you have a Plan B, you're 50 percent on Plan A and 50 percent on Plan B, but if you only have a Plan A, you're 100 percent on it. So you have to just understand that in the end, it all works out, as long as you put the work in."

Even on the days when something is not working, or the work starts to feel old, or the ten-year question creeps in, he does not build an exit. "I don't think, like, what am I gonna do after this? I just think, okay, well, we need to continue to build this. It's like watering a plant every day. You don't just wait for it to die, you have to continue feeding it."

Salfen loved the image. The album is due on his birthday. The cameras are already in the house for a series he says should arrive by the end of the year. The phone is still in his hand. For Keemo, the job is the same as it was when he finally downloaded the app and posted the camera roll: keep feeding the plant.

FIND KEEMO

Artist / creator: Keemo (Keemokazi)

New album: Arrives November 29, 2026, his 24th birthday (title not announced in the interview)

Recent album: Released about six months before this conversation, with a music video for every song and family members in the clips

Reality series: In production with his family; expected at the end of 2026

Watch and listen: YouTube @keemokaziofficial; TikTok and Instagram @keemokazi; Spotify: Keemokazi

Interview conducted by Paul Salfen for AMFM Magazine.

Paul Salfen is Managing Editor of AMFM Magazine and a veteran interviewer of film, television, music, and sports figures. He is the author of Going For It!, a collection of Hail Mary moments from the artists and athletes he has spent two decades putting on the record.