



**MORE THAN A LITTLE BLACK DRESS**

*Maliyah Abenir the owner and fashion designer of Averynthe and Co Owner and co designer of Homomilk Estudio*

*PHABRIK- WHERE WERE YOU BORN?*

*Maliyah - I was born in the Philippines and raised in Canada.*

*P- WHEN DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CLOTHING DESIGN?*

*M- Since the age of ten I always read fashion magazines, drew gowns, loved beautiful fabrics and had a curiosity about garment construction.*

*P- HOW DID YOU BEGIN?*

*M- In 2009, I attended Bishop McNally High School. Back then, I wanted to be an architect so I studied construction and design. Learned programs such as AutoCAD and was taught house rendering and how to use machines for constructing furniture.*

*In 2010, I signed up for the Advanced Arts Program and studied arts history and drawing, paint, and sculpting.*

*There wasn't a fashion program so I asked my teacher, Miss Howell, if I could do my projects with fabrics and she was so delighted to see a student use a different medium she gave me a workspace, a sewing machine and some selvage fabrics from the previous drama class. In 2012, she provided a wonderful opportunity to have a fashion show during an Arts Night Event, and I showcased 45 garments.*

*After my high school graduation, I applied to schools such as Parsons, NYC, CSM, London, FIDM, Los Angeles and Instituto Marangoni, London. I was accepted in 3 schools but I took an opportunity here in Canada.*

*P- WHERE DID YOU STUDY?*

*M- I accepted the offer at John Casablancas Institute Vancouver to study Fashion Business. I moved to BC on my 19th birthday and resided in Vancouver for 2 years. I love Vancouver and I felt truly accepted with my creative peers.*





DESIGNER Maliyah Abenir - Averynthe  
PHOTOGRAPHER Eluvier Acosta / Más Studios Intl  
MODEL Marie Kamara / Mode International Models

*P- WHEN DID YOU START AVERYNTHE?*

*M- In 2013 is when I started designing I went back to Calgary after 2 years in Vancouver and started my brand. I went to different fashion weeks such as WCFW, VFW, YYCFW, and other fashion shows. The one fashion show that stood out for me the most was WCFW, because I feel like I belong to something so important to me. Ferd Isaac, Sandra Fernandes and the WCFW team were the main superheroes in my fashion life because they helped me showcase my designs and grow as a fashion designer. My first debut at Western Canada Fashion Week was in 2014. To this day, I'm still showcasing at WCFW, which is truly amazing to be a part of the WCFW family.*

*In the end of 2016, I left Calgary and moved to Toronto to study Fashion Techniques and Design at George Brown College for 2 years. Loved to live in Toronto however it was tough, school during the days and work at nights and weekends. It really took a toll on me but I graduated and showcased my final project at George Brown College.*

*P- HOW DIFFICULT WAS YOUR TRANSITION?*

*M- Everyone who met me at WCFW knew me as an openly gay diva. I was really flamboyant. In 2015, I started using makeup and in 2017 I began to wear dresses, and wigs, and eventually transitioned to become a woman. This process has taken more courage than anything else I have ever done. At times I did not think I had enough courage to suffer the public humiliation and discrimination. Caught between two worlds lead me to dark moments of depression and suicidal thoughts and thanks to the support of my open-minded family and my fashion family I am now a transgender woman and I am proud of it.*

*P- HOW IS COVID AFFECTING YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS:*

*M- This pandemic has changed me immensely as a person and my creative thinking. Being inside drove me insane because the majority of my inspiration comes from outside, what people are wearing, buildings and nature. It also affected my business, fabric stores were closed, no access to the items I needed and many of my orders were delayed for months and even cancelled. It's a tough time for me, and other artists but regardless of what is happening in the world, I still have hope and I am moving forward!*



