

Street performer Snap Boogie creates first dance NFT company

By Renée Abbott

Snap Boogie has a dream, and that dream is “to do a show where people pay \$100 to come watch [him] do [his] thing on the big stage.” He says it at the end of every performance, after imploring the audience to give him \$100 each, partly as a joke but partly because of this dream. Years and years into performing, that dream has not faded.

[Snap Boogie](#), born Cjailon Andrade, is a street performer in Boston who specializes in tap, acrobatics, charming the audience, performing, and most of all, the titular move: boogieing. On any given weekend you can find him performing at Faneuil Hall, his favorite place to perform, on Newbury, at a halftime show at a game, or performing at a private event. Weekdays however are devoted to his newest business endeavor: starting his own NFT business.

This former “America’s Got Talent” semi finalist has it all: charm, charisma, a sense of humor, talent and the entrepreneurial spirit.

A typical show of his goes like this: he starts by finding a kid on the street to help him set up, that kid will be part of the show later, he promises. Then he warms up by putting on his tap shoes and tap dancing on a piece of wood he carries around on his dolly along with his speaker and signs with QR codes to payment sites. He dances as the crowd starts to gather, onlookers eager to see what he will do and he willfully gets them to stand around the rope he has set out. He then brings the kid out and has them imitate his moves.

He will do something other than point to the kid, a few words are exchanged, the watch-and-follow method doesn’t require much explanation or invite many questions. The tricks he does get increasingly harder and he tells the kids, “now, don’t try this until you are at home,” looks to the audience and says “that’s what the saying is right?” He is at ease, in his element, inspiring young people and enticing passersby. He does a flip and gestures for the kid to do the same. The kid of course, doesn’t, so Snap Boogie lifts the kid and flips them over himself, with grace and ease that only practice can create. Their parents watch anxiously from the sidelines, some laughing, some tensely grinning behind their camera phones.

He then starts the show for real, he grabs some audience members, many of whom get pushed forwards by their friend or grabbed by Andrade himself. He lines up the three women he has taken with the child in the middle and tells the audience that he needs to flip over them, the main attraction of the performance. He then brings out two men, one white and Black, and challenges them to a sort of dance off. Him leading the Black man and then challenging the

white man to “out Black” the other one. It is a somewhat political parody of the way that white guys can’t dance, the audience loves it and both men take it in stride.

At this point, he tells the child they are done, the tricks he does are much too dangerous (“In this country, we care about women and children,” he says. The audience isn’t sure whether or not this is a joke – they laugh anyways, but it is not his biggest hit.) But first, the kid deserves \$20, he says, and it is their \$20, they danced and flipped their way for it. So they can have it, if they can reach out. An adorable comedy show ensues as Snap Boogie hands up the bill high above the reach out the child as they jump and jump before he finally lowers his hand enough so they can grab it. The crowd goes wild and the kid takes a bow.

Now comes the real part: the dancing. He boogies, he improvises and he pops to “Don’t Stop ‘til You Get Enough” by Michael Jackson. Some of the moves involve his hat, some of the moves are complex flip series where he does a front walkover type thing with one hand over and over and over again until the audience is dizzy. This is where he seems most alive, truly dancing, like he said, this is what got him to season six of “America’s Got Talent.” At one point, he works his way down to the ground, and he pauses his music and says the real trick is getting up. Of course, that is just a setup for the punchline where he groans and slowly gets up as if plagued by chronic back pain and age (of which he is 29 years old).

Eventually, he flips over the volunteers to the climax of the song “Mr. Clean” by rapper Yung Gravy but before that, he implores the audience for donations, whether it is cash in the bag he holds up or through Venmo, cash app or crypto, all of which can be found on the sign he holds up. But if the audience doesn’t have enough money, he asks for a hand shake because he “believe[s] live street theater should be for everyone whether you have money or not.” When he flips, the crowd goes wild, it was what they were waiting for, it was what they were terrified for, and it was what the volunteers themselves dreaded.

Despite using the same jokes, music and tricks for every show, a lot of what he does involves improvisation and responding to the crowd.

One of his audience members, Emma Connolly from Emmanuel College, said that she had seen him perform in Provincetown Cape Cod before but still wanted to watch his show again.

“I think one of the things I was just thinking about as I was watching is how it still feels like the first time that I was watching it, it's super cool to see,” Connolly said. “Even though he's doing the same thing, it still entices us to watch the whole show.”

During one of his shows while he was dancing, an older white woman came up to him and began dancing alongside him. He gave her a hug and joked, “Mom, I told you to stay in the car, I gotta do my show!” He danced with her, (“everybody give it up for my mom”) and let her take her bow. It seemed so natural, he has a sort of chemistry with everyone which is part of what makes him so successful. After the show I asked him about it and he said that he had never seen that woman before in his life.

Drunk people sometimes heckle him or interrupt the show, but he says he just has to go with it. He seems to make a real genuine connection with every audience member he interacts with.

“That's kind of why I'm out here,” Andrade said. “I'm out here because I love people.”

People love him too. Kenia Gomez from Cuba, who has seen many street performances across the globe, loved the show and Andrade himself.

“I thought his personality was so lively, that impressed me the most, he engaged everyone, even the children,” Gomez said.

During our interview, a man walked up to us and complemented Snap Boogie. The man identified himself as a “street preacher,” and imparted his blessings on Andrade.

“You lighten up the energy and the vibration of the planet,” the man said. “God bless you”

To Andrade, this type of interaction was nothing new.

“I take all the blessings. Somebody gonna pray for me, I'm just gonna take it,” Andrade said. “Even if I don't believe in your God, there's some sort of great energy. I don't know how to explain that. The law of attraction is really there ... I'm not 100% philosophical or anything like that.”

Cjaiilon Andrade grew up in Roxbury and attended Mount Pleasant High school, Andrade joked that “we all called it mount pregnant, there's reasons for that.” He never graduated and instead dropped out to pursue dance. He performed with the Floorlords occasionally, a Boston based hip hop group founded in 1981, but is mostly self taught. He took inspiration from Michael Jackson, which is evident through his choppy movements and affinity for Jackson songs while performing.

“I had a lot of energy, I got ADD and anytime the music was on, I was ready to go,” Andrade said.

He inherited the name “Snap” from his uncle who was a legendary street performer in his day. Boogie came from his chosen style of dance. According to Andrade, a lot of dancers call themselves “something Boogie” as a way to identify their art.

“People said he was like really really good, he could do all his power moves both ways,” Andrade said.

He was 18 years old when he was on “America’s Got Talent.” In his audition video he spoke about how dance kept him off the streets and helped him pay his mother’s bills.

His [audition](#) in New York started with moonwalking, then flashing his signature smile and doing a slow motion animated wave to the audience, that he still does at his shows today. He does breakdance moves on the floor, intricate flips and spins, classic boogieing and more to command the audience, who after his performance chant “Vegas, Vegas” indicating that they want him to move to the next round in Vegas. The judges immediately loved him, they described him as a “free spirit,” a “beast,” and his moves were “electric.” Judge Piers Morgan remarked that he was “humble when he talks, then arrogant when he dances, it’s the right way around.”

He continued on to Vegas week where he impressed the judges with a short [performance](#) and moved onto the quarter finals where he [performed](#) with backup dancers and wore an all white ensemble complete with a white fedora. The judges applauded his ability to take his moves from the street all the way to a real theater where he worked with choreographers and had to appeal to a much larger audience than passersby at Faneuil Hall. At the semifinals, he [performed](#) a dynamic piece starting with an orchestral rendition of Coldplay’s “Viva La Viva” before diving into a much more Snap Boogie type song – “Boogie Wonderland” by Earth, Wind & Fire.

His reign on the show ultimately came to an end at the semifinals, but that didn’t stop him from capturing viewers' hearts and being recognized on the streets.

Andrade also briefly [appears](#) in 2013 comedy “The Way Way Back” starring Liam James, Steve, Carrell, Allison Janey, Toni Collette, Jim Rash, Maya Rudolph and more about a kid who while navigating complex family relationships, spends the summer in Wareham, Massachusetts, and works at Water Whiz. Andrade is the dancer who the main character Duncan has to reprimand

for dancing at a waterpark. His breakdance moves take center stage in his scene and while playing the same character he essentially is in real life, his charisma shines through. Andrade's character urges the kid character to dance and encourages him to spin on his head.

Andrade has now turned his attention to the digital space. He launched his company Beauty in the Streets in 2021 and works to create the very first dance NFT company. The idea is to ensure that dancers and their dance moves do not get plagiarized by big gaming corporations. In the past few years, NFTs or non-fungible tokens, have risen in popularity and value as the crypto currency world has expanded. Non-fungible means that it is unique and cannot be traded for another one, whereas a bitcoin would be considered fungible because it can be traded with another bitcoin and they have the same value and use. NFTs are a part of a larger blockchain system which is a way of storing data. Essentially, NFTs can be anything, an animation, a video or a work of art. By buying an NFT, one is essentially buying the ownership of the product. In Boogie's case, he is creating an animation file of a person's dance move that can be used in video games or the metaverse. Andrade also has a "subscriber only" portion of his website where for \$10 a month he explains Crypto to the subscribers in Zoom meetings.

He is doing this so that other dancers are able to take ownership of their moves and become a part of the crypto community.

"The reason I say mine is a real project is because there's something behind it," Andrade said. "This thing can last forever because what we're doing is we're getting dancers closer to getting intellectual property. If you buy the NFT, it allows you to buy the dance move inside the game."

Some dancers in his company so far are the [Williams Brothers](#), a viral TikTok and Instagram account, which posts videos of four brothers doing trending dances, Poppin [John](#), a youtube sensation for his breaking moves, [Shafar](#), a dancer popular on Instagram and TikTok, and more. His experience in the entertainment industry has allowed him to connect with people to join Beauty in the Streets.

"We're creating an ecosystem to build something for the future," Andrade said. "A lot of companies have tried to steal my idea, but we have the community."

His first [NFT](#), an animation of a character doing one of Andrade's signature moves, repeated front walkovers with one hand, was posted by Alterverse in 2021. As he [describes](#) on Beauty in the Street's youtube channel, he takes a dance move, turns it into an emote for a video game, turns the emote into an NFT that is attached to a code and it is put into the blockchain.

According to Andrade, by giving dancers an opportunity to own intellectual property in the blockchain, it is opening up a new world of opportunities and royalties for them.

“My thing is a solution to companies stealing dance moves and fortnite stealing dance moves and things like that,” Andrade said.

Dance moves in videos are not a new concept, fortnite dances have been around for a long time and in sports video games, the players frequently have their own victory dance moves. Andrade says that he was flown out to Los Angeles to create dance moves and motion capture for the NBA 2K game, but it didn't work out because they didn't give him the rights to it. He is currently working on patterning his website and app.

Balancing his NFT company and finding time to perform on the street and for private companies takes work, but as demonstrated by his act, balancing is one of his strengths.



Andrade dancing with an audience member who he will later jump over.



Andrade performs at Open Newbury street on a sunny afternoon.



The young participant jumps for money while audience members encourage her.



Andrade's sign with QR codes for virtual payment is displayed throughout the performance.