**The Regrettes**
***Further Joy***

“There’s so much pressure to constantly better yourself,” Lydia Night, lead singer and songwriter of The Regrettes, says. “We’re obsessed with social media, which makes it easy to obsess over self-growth and unhealthy amounts of productivity. That phrase, ‘further joy,’summarized what it meant to be on the hamster wheel of constantly chasing happiness, but in turn, that’s what makes you unhappy,” she adds, acknowledging the shared inner turmoil she, guitarist Genessa Gariano, bassist Brooke Dickson, and drummer Drew Thomsen were dealing with at the start of last year. “I was stuck in a loop of wanting to be better, wanting to be good, and therefore I couldn’t be here. I couldn’t be present.” The desire to break free of that cycle is what the band’s third album, *Further Joy,* is all about.

As the pandemic set in and Los Angeles shut down, The Regrettes were having a full-blown identity crisis. Lydia had been touring since she was 12-years-old, meeting guitarist Genessa when they were just teens in music school. As a band, they’d been on stage long before their 2017 debut, *Feel Your Feelings Fool!.* And, by the time they released their critically acclaimed LP *How Do You Love?* in 2019, they’d formed a cohesive lineup with Brooke and Drew, setting themselves on a steady upward trajectory. They’d spent the past two years headlining sold-out shows across North America and Europe, performing at mainstay festivals like Coachella and Reading and Leeds and playing their hit singles on *Good Morning America*, *Conan*, and *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*. As *NME* said of their sophomore album, The Regrettes were “truly unstoppable” until they weren’t.

“So much of our identity is tied to music and performing,” Brooke says, adding that without the distraction of playing live, they were forced to answer the question: “Who am I when I’m not performing?” That shared inner inquiry can be heard in the band’s most actualized, collaborative, and vulnerable album to date, a self-aware soundtrack for those interested in what Lydia refers to as “dancing the pain away.”

In January of 2021, after more than a year apart, The Regrettes reconvened for a 10-day writing retreat in Joshua Tree. They went on hikes, stargazed, transformed their living room into a disco, and had candid conversations, some of which made their way into songs. They left the desert with a vision for the record and demos in hand, slowly bringing it to life through zoom writing sessions, and working separately with producers Jacknife Lee and Tim Pagnotta. They experimented with their sound, pushed their creative limits, and Lydia, who was once skilled in the art of “writing a song in 30 minutes and then not touching it” recalls writing then editing her deepest truths. Although the subject matter is anything but light, she still calls itthe “poppiest, and danciest” album they’ve ever made.

You can hear that levity in “Monday,” an upbeat track Lydia wrote at the peak of her anxiety disorder. “Once you accept what's going on with your mental health, sometimes it gets worse before it gets better,” Lydia says. “Accepting I had anxiety and depression was extremely scary because then it became real. This song comes from the validation of those feelings.” The song’s music video introduces the character “Joy” – a pink representation of the unattainable yet ideal self the album pushes against.

In “Out of Time” Lydia sings “all of these anxieties come over me/ just let me breathe” at a panicked pace, sonically capturing the feeling of running out of time. In “Barely On My Mind” Lydia replays scenes from “a really gnarly, abusive relationship,” she processed during the lockdown. On the song, Genessa turns up distortion, Brooke experiments with palm muting, creating a tight poppy sound, and Drew lives his ‘80s R&B pop dream thanks to the percussion overlaying his drum track.“We've all had terrible experiences with abusive men,” Brooke says of the track. “There's no sweet way to put it, that one's an angsty banger.” In, “Subtleties (Never Giving Up On You)” Lydia discusses her path to self-acceptance. “‘Subtleties’ in particular feels super pretty, and beautiful, but is one of the darkest songs of the album lyrically,” Lydia says. “I've struggled with eating disorders for a large portion of my life starting when I was 15, which eventually turned into body dysmorphia. Me singing ‘Never giving up on you’ is me singing to myself.” In “Homesick” Lydia taps into feelings of longing. “I’d been going through this whole pandemic process with my boyfriend and I hate feeling codependent but I felt so codependent when he left. I had gotten so used to, without even realizing it, having that person around and relying on that person.” Though it’s a love song, “Homesick” still captures the dangers of yearning too much. “There are moments and lyrics that still give you a glimpse into that dark place I was in, like the one-line ‘fetishizing the thought of you lying’ I love that lyric because I feel like that’s my anxiety to a T.”

For Brooke writing “You’re So Fucking Pretty” together was transformative. “That was a new experience for us, both sonically and emotionally,” she says. “We hadn't explored that space together. That was a big moment for us and it’s a really special moment on the album. Lydia recalls the relief of being open with her bandmates without feeling embarrassed or scared. “It's the first time I've ever written directly about a girl I had a crush on and it took me a while for me to even allow my brain to accept the fact that I'm bisexual,” Lydia shares. “Writing this was important for me because it just validated my own sexuality.” For Genessa, “You’re So Fucking Pretty” was an opportunity to write a song they wish they had when they were younger. “As a queer person growing up it definitely felt like there weren't many songs I could relate to, and I feel like this song would have been something I would have held really close to my heart as a kid. I hope that happens with other people. I don't think it necessarily has to be this queer anthem but I think someone else could listen to it and feel the same way, or a girl could feel that way about a boy she likes. Boys can be pretty too.”

The band wrote, “La Di Da” to capture what Lydia calls “the action a kid would have, of putting your hands over your ears and saying ‘la la la’ to block out everything.” The call to action was inspired by their impromptu desert dance party. “I have a playlist of 2000s songs and when we were in Joshua Tree, we had a dance party with these colored lights with gels,” Genessa says. “It may have been the Black Eyed Peas, some song telling us to put our hands up. You don't have to think, you have no choice but to dance because it's telling you what to do. That’s such a freeing feeling.” Drew remembers the song, being a “total departure” from the band’s typical path in the studio. “I was playing an organelle, this really cool synth with wooden buttons,” he shares. “That first thing that comes in on the song, that little synth part I was playing, Lydia heard that and loved it, so I kept playing and she started singing. It was one of those songs that came out very quickly.” Writing those songs together gave the band a newfound sense of ownership. “There's a passion behind the actual music itself now that hasn’t been at that level before,” Drew shares, adding, “It’s the first album that feels like *our* album.”

The song “Nowhere” draws inspiration from an Alan Watts quote, “You can’t live it all unless you can live fully now.” The line left a lasting impression on Lydia. “What *Further Joy* means, that chase for happiness, that quote sums it up,” she says. “You’re never going to experience real life if you’re chasing something.” It’s the lesson that allowed The Regrettes to pause, go inward separately, and still land in the same place together, becoming a tighter unit than they’ve ever been. “So fucking much has changed on a personal level which translates into my lyricism and the way we are with each other, how close we are with each other,” Lydia recognizes. “We've bonded so much.” It’s also the lesson Lydia hopes listeners walk away with. “We all deserve happiness and to be present, and we'll never get there if we feel so much shame and guilt for not being there already,” she adds. “Don't get caught in the hamster wheel of chasing joy.”