

***young forever***

Nessa Barrett is kneeling in a field in the middle of the night. She looks like an angel as massive, white wings protrude from her back. As she flashes a stoic yet angelic gaze, it appears as if she's glowing. A snapshot of this moment displays on the album art of the singer-songwriter's Warner Records debut album *young forever*. "It looks pure, but there's a darkness within it, and it seems a little eerie," says Nessa of the cover. The layered sentiment also describes her sound and the artist herself, whose edgy, gothic pop is grounded in stories about heartache, mental health, and accountability.

Writing and singing have always been the saving grace that helped Barrett feel less alone in the world and less alone with her thoughts as she battled her own mental health struggles which include bipolar personality disorder and an eating disorder. While growing up in New Jersey, Barrett, who began developing her voice and performance skills by singing in a choir and becoming active in drama club, had an extremely rough childhood riddled with abuse. "I had to grow up fast because I ran away from home and came out to LA when I was 17," says the artist, who recorded her first song when she was just four years old and whose album title *young forever* speaks to an ideal world where there is no pain or suffering. "When I'm able to put my feelings into songs and people are able to relate to me, it helps."

Whereas Barrett's 2021 EP *pretty poison*was an evolutionary metamorphosis to her becoming a rising star, *young forever*represents her great artist awakening. She's found the confidence and comfort in her unique sound, exploring the creative possibilities of her talent while embracing her internal and external conflicts and taking bleak thoughts and expressing them bravely and vulnerably to help spread awareness. "I like the darkness in things," she says. "I talk about a lot of things my generation is struggling with on this album." On the moody pop-punk single “tired of california," the melody is reminiscent of Suzanne Vega's '90s classic "Tom's Diner" and similarly explores the longing for connections to other kindred spirits. Her sultry voice blends seamlessly with the puncturing drums and sharp electric guitars that entice throughout the track. "I'm so tired of California, I'm so tired of LA/ Where the real thing comes as often as the California rain," sings Barrett, who lists Lauryn Hill, the Beatles, Adele, Miguel, and Aerosmith among her influences.

Produced by Evan Blair, *young forever* offers meticulously crafted production to accompany Barrett's ethereal vocals. "I take the production as seriously as I do the lyrics," says Barrett, who often writes songs while sitting in a dark room before she goes to bed. "Everything revolves around the mood and emotion coming through the song." The psychological thriller-themed bop "madhouse" deliciously weaves synth with Barrett's manic melody. Elsewhere on the airy plea "dear god," Barrett aimed to evoke "what it felt like when people felt the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost," she says. The track nods to her Puerto Rican Catholic upbringing, during which she saw family members "speak in tongues" and "dance and shake" at church.

On *young forever*, Barrett opens up about her mental health struggles. "lovebomb" finds her singing "specifically about borderline personality disorder and how I struggle with BPD," she says. "The song's based on how I love bomb the ones I love after getting out of an episode where I treat them like shit because I'm struggling. Growing up, I was very ashamed of my struggles, so the second I got a platform, I knew what I had to do with it because I didn't want anyone to feel the way I felt - alone."

Punctuating her grit-glam marvel, for which she draws inspo from films by Tim Burton and John Waters, Barrett's music has intrinsically always been about empowering people who feel isolated. "When I put everything on paper and write how I'm feeling and form it into lyrics and make something that's so negative and painful for me in my head into a creative song that's now something beautiful, it's very therapeutic," says the singer. Case in point: Barrett's lovesick 2021 EP *pretty poison* which she dropped on National Suicide Prevention Day. The release date was significant because, as a teen, Barrett attempted to take her own life. "A lot of my songs revolve around mental health and what I struggle with," says the singer, whose 2021 track "la di die," which was produced by Travis Barker and featured jxdn, also tackled suicide.

Barrett admits many of her tracks have "different meanings to me now" following the death of her best friend, Tik-Tok star Cooper Noriega. "Cooper was my biggest fan," says Barrett, who dedicated her single "die young" to Noriega. "I feel like now, more so, I have a lot of responsibilities to not only share my story, but his." With *young forever*, a dynamic debut rooted in reflection and raw emotions, Barrett has crafted something truly special.