

C'Mon Get Happy!
Redefining "Poptimism"

A7S
Cat Burns
Muni Long
Mike Dimes
...and more!

**Your Monthly
Music Forecast!**

 memBrain

STORM REPORT

ISSUE NO. 78
APRIL/MAY 2022

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Our signature countdown of 20 buzzworthy bands and artists on our radar.

PLAYLISTS

Check out this issue's carefully curated playlists by clicking below:



ON THE COVER

Latto. Photo by Scryll Davis ©2022

ABOUT THE STORM REPORT

STORM = Strategic Tracking Of Relevant Media

The STORM Report is a compilation of up-and-coming bands and artists who are worth watching. Only those showing the most promising potential for future commercial success make it onto our monthly list.

How do we know?

Through correspondence with industry insiders and our own ravenous media consumption, we spend our month gathering names of artists who are "bubbling under." We then extensively vet this information, analyzing an artist's print & digital media coverage, social media growth, sales chart statistics, and various other checks and balances to ensure that our list represents the cream of the crop.

How do we rank?

STORM has a new formula! Artists are now given a score out of 100 that takes several factors of music success into account, including streaming, social media influence, and industry support.

Why do we do it?

Music is the best way to sell products because it creates such a powerful emotional connection with an audience. The STORM Report provides our clients with a tool to harness the music that will be the most relevant to audiences in the near future, thereby becoming very useful for the enhancement of products, promotions, and platforms.

STORM ALUMNI



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Music lifts us up, builds communities, and inspires hope. Two years into the global pandemic, and we are finally starting to see some return to normalcy. And with that comes a return to optimism. All the emotions and angst of the past couple years are fueling high energy, fast-paced new music across nearly every genre. When we set out to write this article, we started with the idea that we wanted to explore the relationship between music and optimism. But what we uncovered in our exploration was that genres have become increasingly less relevant - and these trends with more upbeat, energetic music are constant across every type of music. What has become abundantly clear is that boundaries for listeners and musicians alike are disappearing. By not having to fit into the box of a radio format, artists can now create their own sound without the need for categorization. With unlimited access to music, it can now become our soundtrack anytime and anywhere. We choose music to match our mood or needs in the moment. Not having the limits of creating for any one audience or any one genre is a big step forward for artists, and an exciting time for fans.

Regards,



Jennifer Sullivan
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C'Mon Get Happy!

Redefining “Poptimism”

By Grace Slansky and Jennifer Sullivan

We weathered the lockdown storm of 2020, picked up new hobbies, and watched as the music world was flooded with heaps of new content creators. We jammed out to new singles and shared playlists, but those songs were decidedly in line with the collective COVID-induced mood of the nation. And now, as the world is faced with a world war and even more uncertainty, we are once again in search of some form of optimism. Even in the worst of time, we seek solace in the emotional connection that only music can provide. And we'd like to call that “Poptimism.”

FINDING NUANCE IN “SAD”

2021 was arguably dominated by “sad girl indie” music, with relatable but melodramatic lyrics and gentle rhythms. However, it's important to call-out that there's more to the so-called “sad girl indie” genre than sullen breakup songs. In fact, some of the most prominent artists in the space are pushing back against the concept of the genre definition entirely.

STORM Alumna Lucy Dacus took to Twitter to voice her own feelings on the matter, calling attention to the commodification of women's trauma and the overgeneralization that came with the genre:

“Sadness can be meaningful but I got a bone to pick with the ‘sad girl indie’ genre, not the music that gets labeled as that, but the classification and commodification and perpetual expectation of women’s pain, also i don’t think my songs are sad, anyways good morning ☀️”

The reality is that music by artists like Lucy Dacus, Phoebe Bridgers, Mitski, Clairo, and more, paints a nuanced portrait of the human condition. Of course, many might want an easier pill to swallow with a cute name and a box to put it all in, but that is not the world we live in.

It also begs the question, “Are genres serving any real purpose aside from our general need to categorize the things we consume?”

SAD BANGERS AREN'T GOING ANYWHERE

As we waved goodbye to 2021, the supposed year of “sad girl” music, we welcomed 2022, the year we hoped would allow us to “forget our troubles and get happy.” And as we push back against the generalization of songs that evoke honest emotion as “sad,” there has been a massive wave of upbeat singles, many of which maintain the relatability and honesty, just with higher beats per minute (BPM). In 2020, BBC reported that the average BPM of songs jumped to 112 beats per minute, the [highest since 2009](#).

But while the beats were getting faster, the lyrics of popular songs were increasingly darker and more filled with angst. From Swedish pop star Robin's “Dancing on My Own” in 2010 to Dua Lipa's “New Rules,” the 2010s were fueled by what Californian mathematician Natilia Komarova called “sad bangers” in 2017. Poet, essayist, and cultural critic Hanif Abdurraqib, in a recent report for the [New York Times](#), shared, “The magic in this type of song is that it doesn't ask you to lay your burdens down. Bring the burdens with you, if you can carry them. You don't have to part with your precious sadness in order to enter the portal of a song that might also entice you to dance, or throw your head back in ecstasy.”

MENTAL HEALTH AND MUSIC

And it isn't just music to heal our sadness. In recent years, people around the world have sought innovative ways to cope with the growing anxiety, uncertainty, boredom, and social isolation associated with COVID-19. In June 2020, the Global Council on Brain Health, an independent science and policy collaborative devoted to understanding brain health, [released a report](#) concluding that music has “significant potential to enhance brain health and well-being for individuals of different ages and different levels of health.”

[According to a study](#) last year, evaluating the moods of participants during the COVID-19 pandemic in four different countries on three different continents, listening to music to regulate mood was a “strong predictor for affective well-being.”

MUSIC AND THE MARKET

Beyond the individual, there is also a rising belief that the increase of happy, or simply more upbeat, songs and positive sentiment in music has led to happier markets and overall business performance.

While studying mood is objectively difficult, a 2021 study from the [Journal of Economic Studies](#) indicated when countries collectively are streaming happier songs, markets perform better. Alex Edmans of London Business School and three co-authors gathered data on the average positivity of songs that people in 40 nations listened to on Spotify. The researchers then compared that data with the performance of each country's national stock market over the same period. They wanted to see if there was a correlation between mood, as reflected by the music played, and financial returns. There was:

“We find that music sentiment is positively correlated with same-week equity market returns and negatively correlated with next-week returns, consistent with sentiment-induced temporary mispricing. Results also hold under a daily analysis and are stronger when trading restrictions limit arbitrage. Music sentiment also predicts increases in net mutual fund flows, and absolute sentiment precedes a rise in stock market volatility.”

It's about to be summer music festival season again and the world is starting to cautiously open back up. Looking into the not too distant future, we predict some epic upbeat party tunes and, if the data is correct, a thriving market ahead.

REVISITING “POPTIMISM”

If happy tunes are good for our well-being and our economy, why isn't everyone getting on board the “Poptimism” train? Historically speaking, the term Poptimism came into play in 2002 with the global resurgence of pop superstar Kylie Minogue. At the time, Kylie was garnering critical acclaim, but didn't fall into what was at the time considered “serious music.” Minogue's 2002 album “Fever” included one of the most defining pop songs of the decade, “Can't Get You Out Of My Head,” and became the first “pop” album reviewed by [Pitchfork](#), who had devoted all of their attention to exclusively reviewing indie and rock music. Even more notably, the album was given a favorable score of 7.6 out of 10.

Poptimism first began to be viewed as legitimate after the publication of Kelefa Sanneh's article in [The New York Times](#), “The Rap Against Rockism,” in 2004. In the piece, Sanneh blasted

the standard-bearing of “Rockism,” arguing that pop music is just as worthy of being treated as a repository of ideas as rock music. Why should we treat pop songs, which often have more ubiquity and longevity than the “best” rock songs, as being worthless?

MOOD VS GENRE.

Now that we are discovering music through playlists and social media platforms where songs are tagged and heard by mood, genres seem to be becoming increasingly irrelevant. The evolution of tech and culture have slowly morphed music into a genreless landscape. The previously defined borders between genres, geographies, and even eras of music have become increasingly more fluid.

The way in which artists make records and collaborate, and the genre rules we’re willing to bend (as both music creators and listeners), has forever been changed. As Dick Clark famously said, “Music is the soundtrack of your life.” Now that we have access to a seemingly infinite playlist, we can instantly find a song to match the moment and our emotional state of mind.

Throughout the industry, there has been a rising shift away from genre in recent years, and for good reason. A few examples:

- Spotify started the rollout of “mood” filters, giving listeners the ability to sort their favorite songs according to their desired mood in 2021. This is a noteworthy step towards mood filtering rather than genre filtering. It is also likely informed by research like a recent study by UC Berkeley that found that music evokes at least 13 emotions—and can even be mapped/categorized as such.
- Festivals have continued to shift programming line-ups away from any one genre to by matching the popularity of the artists with the size of the stages. Lollapalooza, once considered the ultimate alternative rock festival, is now being headlined by Doja Cat, Dua Lipa, J Cole, Green Day, Machine Gun Kelly, Lil Baby, Kygo, and Metallica in 2022. It doesn’t get any blurrier than that.
- Industry awards events like the Grammys have been called out for years by mis-categorizing artists for genre-specific awards or creating categories for genres that didn’t ultimately survive. (Fun fact: Gloria Gaynor’s “I Will Survive” won the first and last “Best Disco Recording” Grammy Award in 1980, just as the genre petered out.)

And so, as the music genre potentially becomes a thing of the past and what it means to be a musician evolves, perhaps it’s time to rethink how we categorize music. Music that makes us happy, or energized, or calm, or even sad may very well be how we will discover our new favorite tracks in the future.

Will there be an award for “Best Sad Song” some day? We don’t think that idea is so far-fetched. Perhaps by making music more inclusive, and eliminating the pre-conceived genre barriers of yesteryear, we will focus more on what unites us rather than what divides us.



PLAYLISTS

Check out this issue's carefully curated playlists by clicking below:



Spotify



YouTube

STORM TRACKER

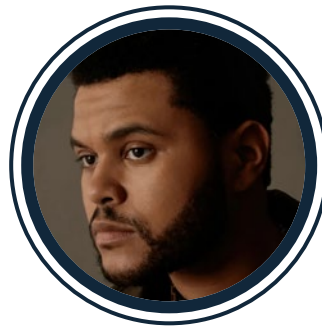
Tracking Our STORM Report Alumni!



DUA LIPA

(STORM No. 39)

Dua Lipa has had an exciting year, travelling across the U.S. for her Future Nostalgia tour. Her tour has solidified her role as a pop superstar and she is not slowing down. Last month she collaborated with Megan Thee Stallion on "Sweetest Pie" and she is set to collaborate on a track with Katy Perry in the near future. Dua Lipa also is currently working on her third studio album and we cannot wait for more dance anthems from her.



THE WEEKND

(STORM No. 8)

The Weeknd headlined Coachella in collaboration with Swedish House Mafia who he released the hit "Moth To a Flame" with Swedish House Mafia. The Weeknd is going down under later this year, as he embarks on the Australian leg of his After Hours tour, with Doja Cat (STORM #23) set as the opening act. Also having recently won a Grammy Award for "Best Melodic Rap Performance," the Weeknd is on a roll.



EMILY BEAR

(STORM No. 63)

Emily Bear has had an incredibly successful year and at just 20 years old, she is certainly not slowing down. After collaborating with Abigail Barlow on The Unofficial Bridgeton Musical inspired by the Netflix hit Bridgerton, the album was released to great critical acclaim. Emily Bear most recently won a Grammy Award for Best Musical Theatre Album for the album, making her the youngest winner in the history of that category. We cannot wait to see what this music prodigy has next in store.

STORM FORECAST

Events And Happenings For Your Radar

GET READY TO LAUGH AT "NETFLIX IS A JOKE" FEST

April 28- May 8

Netflix's upcoming "Netflix Is a Joke" Fest is the streaming giant's first ever live comedy festival, and it will be taking over Los Angeles for 11 days. The festival will feature 130+ comedians performing in over 25 of LA's most iconic venues from Dodger Stadium to the Troubadour. Featured comedians include David Letterman, Amy Schumer, Hasan Minhaj, and John Mulaney, among many more. It is being billed as "The Biggest Comedy Event in History (Probably)"—and we can't wait to check it out!

ELECTRIC DAISY CARNIVAL

May 20- May 22

Electric Daisy Carnival (EDC) will hold its second festival in seven months in Las Vegas at the city's Motor Speedway, where hundreds of DJs and artists are scheduled to perform. One highly anticipated set is from Kx5, a new project featuring Kaskade and Deadmau5. Other artists to look forward to include Dillon Francis, Alesso, Illenium, and Zedd.

LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE

May 25-30

As Memorial Day weekend approaches, dance music lovers are gearing up for the return of Lightning In A Bottle. Set to take place at Buena Vista Lake, this festival offers a stacked music lineup, and well as workshops and seminars that attendees can experience. This year, the Do LaB announced the new Compass programming for this year's festival with all sorts of speakers, visionaries, yogis, and more with different spaces provided to add to the transformational element of the festival.

BOTTLEROCK NAPA VALLEY

May 27-May 29








Also returning for Memorial Day weekend is BottleRock Napa Valley at the Napa Valley Expo. Over 75 acts including Greta Van Fleet and Chvrches will play across the event's four stages. Attendees can also look forward to some delicious food from the celebrity chefs set to hit the Williams Sonoma Culinary Stage. Attendees can also customize their festival schedules with the BottleRock app.

LET'S ALL GO TO THE MOVIES

May 2022

As we start venturing back into theatres, there are quite a few big releases hitting the big screen in May 2022! Next month, we will see the release of the following highly anticipated releases: *Doctor Strange and the Multiverse of Madness* (May 6), *Firestarter* (May 13), *Downton Abbey: A New Era* (May 20), *Top Gun: Maverick* (May 27), and, last but certainly not least, *The Bob's Burger Movie* (May 27).

ICON KEY

-  YouTube
-  Spotify
-  Instagram
-  TikTok
-  Genre
-  Similar Artists
-  Label




STORM WARNING



The 20 Artists
On Our Radar

1 **A7S**

 **9K**  **12.8M**

 **14.7K**  **695**

 **Dance/Electronic**

 **Madeon, Alesso**  **Universal**

Alexander Tidebrink, aka A7S, is a Swedish producer, songwriter and singer. His dance pop tracks have been featured at festivals across the globe. Already a certified hit-maker, he released his first non-collaboration track "Nirvana" in 2021. His latest release, "Everything But You," with Clean Bandit was just released this month and already has 10M+ streams on Spotify. Photo by Glide Photos ©2021

2 CAT BURNS

▶ 37K 🎧 5.8M

MAYA'S
TOP PICK!

"By exploring what is going on in her head and heart, the fast-rising star's powerfully honest songs are resonating worldwide."

—NME

📷 166K 🎵 1.1M 🎶 Pop 🎧 Jorja Smith, Ella Mai 🎧 RCA Records UK

Cat Burns is a 22-year-old singer-songwriter from London whose candid and healing pop music unpacks weighty themes of anxiety, queer acceptance, and relationships. Her journey from bright-eyed busker to Top 10 artist has been an organic one over the past few years; perhaps among the most representative of the increasingly-unpredictable music industry landscape today. Photo by Juanita Richards ©2022



**LAUREN'S
TOP PICK!**

303K **4.45M**

3 MUNI LONG

585K 820K R&B Beyonce, Summer Walker Def Jam/ Supergiant Records

Muni Long is a decorated songwriter who has now stepped into a spotlight of her own as a singer. Formerly known as Priscilla Renea, she has written hits for artists such as Rihanna, Mariah Carey, and Selena Gomez. Her silky voice is a match made in heaven for her R&B tracks. Recently signed to Def Jam with her independent imprint Supergiant Records, her track "Hrs and Hrs" was certified gold last month and reached number one on the R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay chart. Photo by Tony Bowen ©2021

66K 134K Hip Hop/Rap Baby Keem, Joey Bada\$\$ Encore Recordings

Mike Dimes is a rapper from Texas who rose to prominence in 2021 with the viral success of "My Story" on TikTok. Shortly after, he kept the momentum going by putting out his debut project DLOG, followed by his new album *In Dimes We Trust*, released in March 2022. At this point, it's safe to say he's making waves in the rap game. Photo provided by management ©2021

55K **4M**

4 MIKE DIMES



5 DYLAN CONRIQUE

341K 3M



1.4M 2.9M Pop Selena Gomez, Zendaya KYN Entertainment

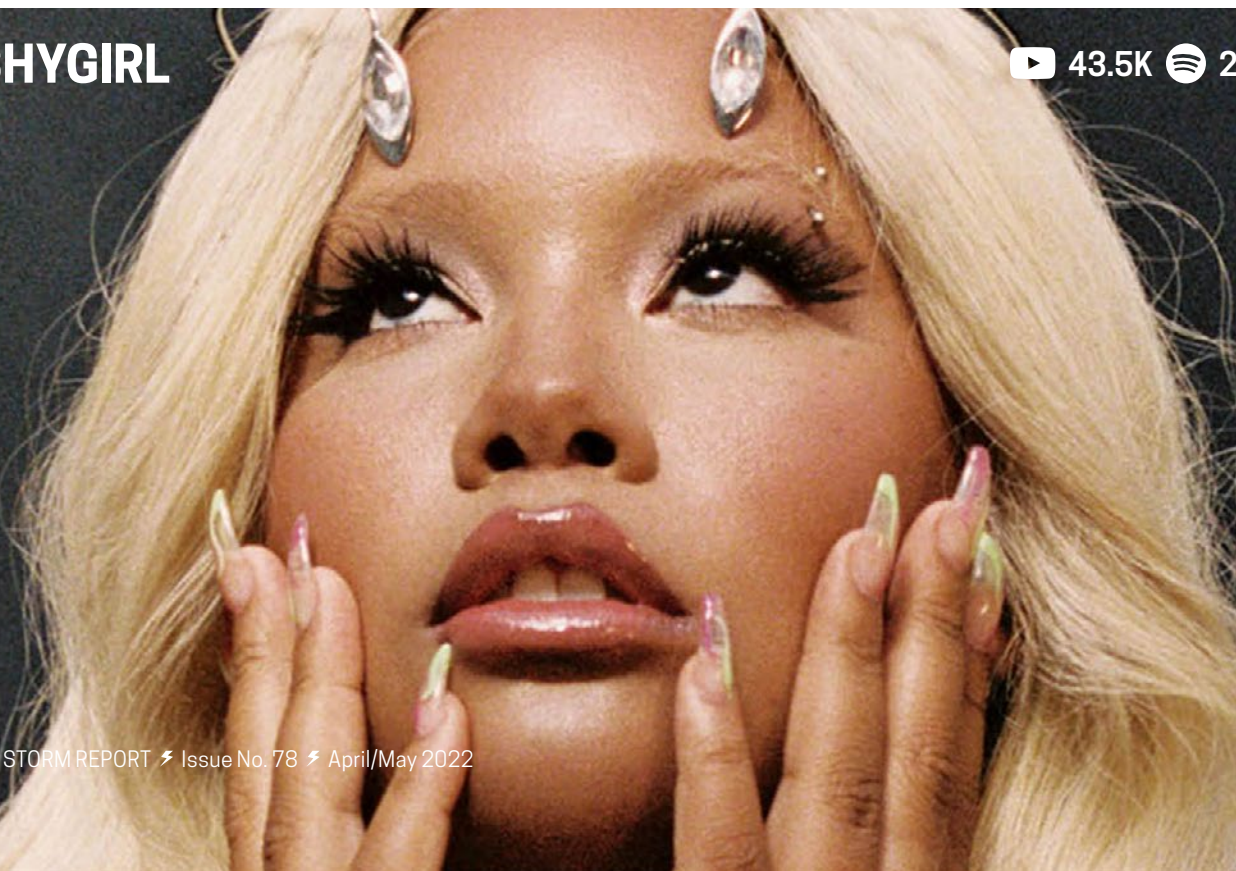
At just 17 years old, Dylan Conrique is an extremely talented singer-songwriter. Her music is filled with emotional and vulnerable lyrics that many teenage girls can relate to. Her track "Birthday Cake" showcases her powerful vocal range, and has already garnered over 23 million streams on Spotify. Photo by Lauren Dunn ©2021

156K 51.5K Electronic/Hyperpop/Hip-Hop Grimes, Coucou Chloé NUXXE

Blane Muise, better known as Shygirl, is a 28-year-old English rapper, DJ, singer, songwriter and co-head/founder of record label and creative collective NUXXE. Shygirl's music is pure energy, incorporating big elements of house, industrial hip-hop, grime, deconstructed club, and hyper pop. Her hypnotic tracks and provocative lyrics have made her an idol of the TikTok generation, and her powerful sonic and visual world has attracted both music grandees and fashion houses. Photo by Hidhir Badaruddin ©2022

6 SHYGIRL

43.5K 2.1M



GRACE'S
TOP PICK!

7 WET LEG



60.3K 1.6M

112K 256K Alternative/Indie Breeders, Pavement Domino Recording Company

Wet Leg are an Isle of Wight-based indie rock band founded in 2019 by Rhian Teasdale and Hester Chambers who make really fun music. The band came to prominence in 2021 when their debut single, "Chaise Longue," became a viral hit. Since making a splash at SXSW 2022, their self-titled debut album was released on April 8, and they are currently touring for the rest of 2022. See them live and thank us! Photo by Hollie Fernando ©2022

17.8K 194 Alternative/Indie Mt. Joy, Kings of Leon Bright Antenna

Wilderado is a Tulsa-based American indie alternative rock band. The band released their debut album, self-titled *Wilderado*, last year featuring a dynamic that is both energized and effusive. They are currently touring the U.K. and Ireland with alt-J. Photo by Grant Spanier ©2022

4.87K 1.1M



8 WILDERADO

9 ONE TRUE GOD

88K 959K

10.2K N/A Dance/Electronic

Rezz, KLOUD

Independent

One True God is a Canadian LA-based electronic producer and singer who creates dynamic house and mid-tempo bass music. His discography is versatile, ranging from melodic dark lyrics to upbeat and energetic beats. His newest release is an emotional cover of "Love Lockdown.". Photo by Tany Katz ©2021

📷 20K 🎵 98K 🎧 Pop

🎧 Sleigh Bells, WILLOW

Lilyisthatyou is a 20-year-old singer-songwriter who burst onto the music scene last year with her sex-positive anthem "FMRN" that blew up on TikTok. Born Lily Davies, her sound is in your face with vibrant, anthemic tracks. Her songs connect with listeners thanks to her brutally frank lyrics, unfiltered approach to songwriting and Billie Holiday-inspired throaty vocals. Photo by Cash Kev ©2021

10 LILYISTHATYOU

📺 6.9K 🎧 754K



11 JAMESJAMESJAMES

1.9K 574K

8,5 N/A Dance/House India Jordan, Jax Jones Stay on Sight

jamesjamesjames is a LA native currently residing in Melbourne, who makes upbeat Y2K techno music. Also known as jjj, he makes house music perfect for any occasion. His music is characterized by catchy hooks and a pumping bass, both of which can be found on his latest track "I Dunno Her." Photo provided by management ©2021





12 BRKN LOVE

20K 375K

13K 325K Alt-rock Royal Blood, The Black Keys Spinefarm Records

BRKN LOVE is a Toronto-based alt-rock band. Their music combines dark and moody components of rock with the more energetic beats found in alternative music. Their latest single "Like A Drug" has groovy elements of 70s disco and funk. Photo by Shervin Lainez ©2020

13 KAYCYY

82K 4,049 Hip Hop/Rap Lil Wayne, Jeremih Columbia

KayCyy is a Kenyan rapper and singer. He has released several singles with his debut studio album *Who Is KayCyy?* set to release this year. KayCyy has worked as a writer and credited vocalist alongside several major artists, including Ye, Lil Baby, Lil Wayne, and Travis Scott amongst others. Photo by Ueart ©2022

19.7K 82.4K



14 SASAMI

6.6K 278K

"LA artist Sasami Ashworth's second album *Squeeze* is a sparkling, writhing mass of brutality and beauty. It is not a pandemic record as such, but the extremes—encapsulating the love and violence that represent humanity's best and worst traits—have undoubtedly been shaped by that time."

~*Guitar World*

JENNIFER'S
TOP PICK!

52.3K 520 Alternative/Indie Jenny Lewis, Aimee Mann Domino

Sasami—the mononymic project of 31-year-old producer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist Sasami Ashworth—is one of the most eclectic artists on our list this month thanks to her genre-bending new album *Squeeze*. Former keyboardist for Cherry Glazerr, Sasami's solo project is an exhilarating fusion of metal, folk, and pop that harnesses pure emotion and her stage performances are something to behold. Photo by Angela Ricciardi ©2022



15 KUMARION
⚡ 411 🎧 225K

📷 5.7K 🎵 120 🎧 Dance/Electronic 🎧 Clams Casino, Noisia 🎧 Jadu Dala

Kumarion is new to the bass community, but has quickly gained acclaim with his track "Want It" which has been played at countless festivals. He has toured with popular EDM artists GRiZ and Liquid Stranger and has teased new music to come this year. Photo by Olivia Van Rye ©2021

16

THE BLSSM



3.6K



210K



📸 21K 🎵 1,057 🎶 Pop 🎧 Avril Lavigne, GAYLE 🎧 Fueled by Ramen

Lily Lizotte (non-binary & favoring they/them pronouns) known professionally as THE BLSSM is a Sydney-born/Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter whose music explores hip-hop, grunge, shoegaze and alternative pop, resulting in an eclectic range of sounds that meld seamlessly. their latest single "NOT TODAY" feels reminiscent of the pop-punk of the 2000s and showcases their vocal range. Photo by Jesse Lizotte ©2022



17

CMAT



4.16K



187K

📷 21K 🎵 3,117 🎧 Folk/Alternative 🇯🇵 Japanese Breakfast, Elle Musa 🎧 AWAL

Ciara Mary-Alice Thompson, known professionally as CMAT, is a singer, songwriter, and musician from Dublin, Ireland. Her debut album, *If My Wife Knew I'd Be Dead*, was released just last month and entered the Irish Album Charts at number one. Her songs feature personal lyrics uniquely balanced with a large element of humor. Photo by Sarah Doyle ©2022

18 HOKO
⚡
📺 9K
🎧 140K

📍 24K 🎵 41 🎸 Alternative, Metal

🎧 Tame Impala, The Strokes 🎧 EQT Recordings

HOKO is a genre-bending band that recently released their debut EP *Heathen* alongside intense visuals inspired by their diverse backgrounds in music, fashion, and debauchery. Inspired by artists like David Bowie, Smashing Pumpkins, Pink Floyd and The Strokes, their music pulls from the worlds of alternative, psych, and rock. Photo provided by management ©2021

**ROBERT'S
TOP PICK!**



19 LOS BITCHOS 📺 5.8K 🎧 94K

📍 36K 🎵 69 🎸 Alternative/Indie 🎧 Yin Yin, Fanga 🎧 City Slang

Los Bitchos is a London-based pan-continental group that just might be your new favourite party band. Their groovy instrumental tracks also have an element of classic rock. They recently toured Europe with indie music king Mac DeMarco, and just released their debut album *Let the Festivities Begin!* in February. Photo Tom Mitchell ©2022





© 17.1K 🎵 1,447 🎧 Horrorcore, Rap 🎤 R.A.P. Ferreira, Black Dresses 🎧 Grimalkin

Backwash, is a trans (they/them/she/her) Zambian-Canadian rapper and producer based in Montreal, Quebec who powerfully channels the deepest, darkest corners of aggressive expressionism. Winner of the 2020 Polaris Music Prize for her album *God Has Nothing To Do With This Keep Him Out Of It*, her music has roots in horrorcore, hip-hop, and industrial metal genres with themes including faith, identity, and queerness. Photo by Méchant Vaporwave ©2021

