



STYLING by LYN ALYSON
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Sweeping back to form with a host of new revelations about herself, the world and where home is for her, *The Hardest Part* is Noah Cyrus' map back to herself as she tracks a path of self-discovery and shares the advice that got her there.

Cyrus is here to bring you comfort with her latest record, with the intention that the songs she created to self-soothe and process a host of difficult emotions will also help us all do the same. Coming out of the pandemic and period of personal darkness, she is raw, honest and earnest about her quest to find solace in her own songwriting and emerging from isolation via the connections and collaborations in her work. "This record brought me back to life again," she says over Zoom on a fine morning in LA. "It was an opportunity to be around people that are positive influences on me and my world. Also, being so close and working so closely with people I admire so much was extremely healing for me."

It's not just the relationships that the album allowed her to nourish that benefitted her though, Cyrus approaches her work with a clear plan and enjoys a linear process in her songwriting, as she puts it: "Having a

Noah

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I'm learning how to be at peace with myself

Sweater by Natalia Fedner, Earrings by MISHO,
Rings by Jacqueline Garrity



I was isolating a lot

routine and structure allowed me to find who I am, not just lyrically, but sonically, and musically, which was a very healing process for me."

Certainly there's a sense of scale and ambition in this record which surpasses her previous work, but in a gentle way that's welcome and reveals further nuances of her as an artist. She describes this transition. "Initially the music had been pretty simple and I think we just found a way to elevate my sound and keep it simple without overpowering the lyrics." Much of this was achieved with layers of sound which creates a rich subtlety to the record and allows for new discoveries with every listening.

Another place the elevation is evident is in her lyrics, there's always a wry, catchy humor to her titles, case in point "I Got So High That I Saw Jesus" but on this record, the lyrics are more evolved, reflective and observant. For her lyrics to act almost as a journal allows her to visualize moments she's experienced and then to draw them into a more collective experience—it's this generosity which makes her work so vulnerable and compelling. "I am a very visual person so I'm really good at recreating visual moments that I've lived, and really being able to paint the picture. I can remember every single aspect of that situation, what the person smelled like, what the place smelled like, what it tasted like, what I heard, what I saw, what I felt, I remember everything."

Another very tangible influence on her was Nashville, where her childhood home is, and that she views as a sacred place in many ways. "Nashville. You get off of the airplane and you get out into the country or, in my case the farm with my dad, and the air is just different. You breathe in and it's light and it's clean and it just feels different. I swear sometimes I'll wake up in the morning and I'll step off my dad's porch and I'll just sit there and I'll take 10 deep breaths because I just don't get to breathe air that pure. Whether that's an emotional thing or a real thing, that's how it feels to me to be at home with my family and the people I love."

By contrast, on "I Burned LA Down" she takes us through a tour of the pain a breakup brings along with the brilliant visual metaphor of a city on fire. For her, the fires represent a lack of control "I was feeling that personally in my life, and poetically, it felt quite relatable to me and my feelings and how I felt out of control with this relationship I was in. As I was writing this song, up north was completely engulfed in flames. I related to it and was inspired by it a lot, but also of course that stemmed from fear and anxieties of climate change and what we're facing right now too."

Another gift she has is to bring a collective experience and make it tangible in a personal way for people. Something you'll find, for example, with "Loretta's Song", which she wrote in honor of her grandma, recently passed away. The initial intention for the song was that it be a gift to her mom: "Something that could give her strength and something that she could use to feel close to her mom every single day, just by listening to the record." She describes how thoughtfully she crafted the song "including reminders or messages that, I think Loretta would really want my mom to hear." Part of this came from a sense of guilt at not being as available for her mom during a difficult time. "I was really deep into my addiction with downers and it caused me to isolate myself. I was isolating a lot already, but once... once grief came into the mix and a loss came into the mix that isolation went even further and I spiraled even more, so I wasn't as present as I wanted to be."

This record brought me back to life again

To focus on where she was though is not half as interesting as the journey she's taken to where she is now, and it's clear this record has really helped paved the way for her to find peace with herself and the world around her. "This record completely reconnected me with me. I felt like I was lost personally. I felt like I was lost spiritually. I felt like I was lost musically. I reconnected with myself and who and what I want to share, and what I want that to sound like and feel like, and what I want people to take away from it. I'm just very clear minded all around and can make decisions very clearly and I feel like I haven't had that type of control in a long time."

Part of this stems from the personal work she's done alongside this record, which she says now means she finds herself "the happiest I've been since I was a kid." She talks candidly about her healing process outside of her work. "I know I neglected myself for a very long time, and so I'm really learning how to be at peace with myself and comfort myself. I was talking about this yesterday with Jay Shetty and healing your inner child is so important as well. My inner child was reaching out of desperation to be healed. So I'm really doing my best to do so right now, because, I know once I do that, I'm gonna feel a lot of growth in myself. So I'm working on that every day and this album was a huge start."

"This album completely saved my life. I think had I not had this record, I'm sure my recovery would've been successful but it would've been way more difficult, it just gave me so much strength to keep going, because I knew that there was something on the other side." It's clear the community she found in creating it was just as healing and some interactions were fundamental in shaping how she wrote. "I bumped into John Mayer and he told me about some of my songs he liked. He said 'keep singing songs like this that'll last the rest of your life and you'll never really feel like you're working. Just keep singing songs that are gonna last a lifetime.'" For him that represents success. "If you can just continue writing these songs that are going to not just be good in a year from now, or 10 years from now, or you write songs that make you feel the way writing 'July' or 'I Got So High I Saw Jesus' make you feel, then your music is going to last forever." These became her guiding principles for the record, as she puts it "for me, I just set out to keep looking for that feeling and to keep writing songs that gave me that same strong feeling. In doing that, I've written an entire album."

For Cyrus, working this way was not about just writing hits but also finding the truth in her work. "In essence, that advice to just keep searching, keep writing, keep working—it will help you make songs that are honest, that people will wanna love and listen to forever."

We discuss if there is something she wants her fans to be able to take away from the record and her response is immediate. "I hope that this record can give a lot of comfort to people. I hope it can bring people who are missing home or far away from home closer to that. I hope that this can bring a lot of peace and understanding to people. I hope it can help people get to know me." If one thing's clear, it's that Cyrus has found herself in the making of this record and listening at home, we all just might get to discover her too.

@noahcyrus



Dress by Patou, Hat by Stetson, Rings by Laura Estrada Jewelry, Elevated Court Shoes by Vivienne Westwood, vintage; Necklace by Cavalli, vintage