

Sophie Powers just wants to make you *feel*. Call her music whatever you want – hyper-punk or alt-pop or glitch-rock or any other manner of contrived portmanteau – but don’t forget that crucial fact: The 18-year-old star is on a mission to reinject genuine emotion into a pop landscape that’s more alienated than ever. Think of her as an avenging angel – a vocalist and songwriter who, after having her own emotions callously dismissed as a teenager, is looking to make sure that never happens to anyone else ever again. A pop star as well as a fashion designer, whose boundless creativity is constantly being expressed in both fields, Sophie is leading the charge of a new generation of sharp-minded, creative outcasts. “My emotions were always invalidated as a young girl – you’re always being told, like, ‘You’re a teenager, you’ll get over it’,” she says. “I don’t care if it’s extremely sad or extremely angry – I just want to make music that makes people feel validated and powerful.”

That mission statement courses through NOSEBLEED – Sophie’s debut single for Atlantic Records in partnership with Gabe Saporta’s TAG music, and a brilliantly sardonic rebuke to the societal expectations that are placed upon the shoulders of Gen Z. Frenetic, abrasive, and above all catchy, it plays as a magnificent reintroduction to Sophie’s singular world after the breakthrough success of her 2022 EP *Red In Revenge*. In a magnificently snotty deadpan, she sings about her generation’s unique combination of information overload and emotional deficiency: “We don’t care at all/And we feel nothing even though we feel it all”. “Gen Z is very messed up,” Sophie says. Written at a time when Sophie was “suppressing [her] own inner artist”, it’s a striking, cutthroat excoriation of a modern world that wants to place all its hang-ups on the younger generations. “Society expects so much of young girls and women, it’s literally insane. This song is about keeping up appearances and then essentially just rejecting them, and one day not giving a fuck – but it’s also about how society as a whole is so fucked up where Gen Z is just numb from it all.”

NOSEBLEED, like all of Sophie’s music, has a deeply rebellious spirit – the result of an upbringing listening to iconoclastic stars with an anarchic glint in their eye. Growing up, Sophie was drawn to strident, powerfully confident pop stars like Lady Gaga and Kesha, who struck down expectations of what it meant to be a “female artist” with little more than their own star power; the first show she ever went to was a Bruce Springsteen concert, an artist unafraid to unpick the social mores of conventional North American society and who made his way to arena stages through wry subversion. Avril Lavigne, Canada’s patron saint of sarcastic, singular weirdos, was also a key influence. So you can understand how Sophie became the artist she is today: She was raised by musicians who valued individuality and, more importantly, pure honesty, above all else. “I want to put stuff out that combines alternative pop you hear on the radio with something that you heard on the radio 30 years ago,” she says. “I love music that feels nostalgic – but it has to feel fresh, too.”

That subversive attitude towards genre is also expressed in Sophie’s visual aesthetic, which stands out distinctly compared to her contemporaries in the alternative pop world. As with her music, there is nothing cookie-cutter about Sophie’s outfits: she designs them all herself and carefully constructs them with a seamstress that she works very closely with. Sophie’s attention-grabbing style speaks to her unique, wide-ranging tastes; she is an avid anime fan, which is reflected in a visual world that feels hyper-real, bright and visceral.

Born in Toronto and raised in an extremely musical family, Sophie knew she wanted to be a performer from an early age – and although she says it was “pure delusion” that led her to doggedly pursue music, she clearly saw in herself a keen pop instinct. She would write songs and sing in private, improving her skills behind the scenes until one day at age 15, while she was at camp with a group of girls she hardly knew, she performed some songs over the campfire. The encouragement of those relative strangers emboldened Sophie; the next year, she asked her parents to let her transition to online school, in order to better pursue her dream of becoming a musician. She moved to Los Angeles, where she currently resides, and by the time she was supposed to start 11th grade, Sophie was booked to tour the US with NOAHFINNICE, and decided to drop out entirely to seek out the future she had always envisioned for herself.

Now, Sophie is on the precipice of that kind of stridently alternative, powerfully emotive fame she herself had gravitated towards as a young person. She is successful as both a musician and a fashion designer, evidence of her multifaceted, boundaryless approach to art. Her heroes – influential cult artists like Kellin Quinn, of Sleeping with Sirens fame – are becoming her peers; old schoolfriends are coming to her shows unprompted, and there are billboards with her face on them in her hometown of Toronto. It would feel miraculous, were it not for Sophie’s doggedness, talent, and sense of hard work. Most important of all: people are connecting with her music, finding in it the kind of affirmation and confidence that Sophie sought from music when she was younger. “Growing up, when I didn’t have friends to support me, I would lean into music,” she says. “That’s the reason I make music now – to help other people get through what I went through.”