**ABIR OFFICIAL BIO**

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When she was 18-years-old, New York City-based artist ABIR took a two-month-long trip to Morocco, the North African country where she was born. Although she’d visited multiple times since moving to Virginia at the age of six, returning to Morocco as an adult was nothing less than life-changing. Struck by the country’s dazzling beauty and her intense connection with its way of life, ABIR flew back to the States with a few dozen cassette tapes from Moroccan musicians, and soon became a student of music from the Arab world.

“I started studying greats like Umm Kulthum, and fell in love with melodies and arrangements that you never find in western music,” says ABIR. A daughter of the east and west, ABIR had her heart set on bridging the two worlds for reasons far beyond music. “The last year has been such a transitional time as far as really owning my identity, and that allowed me to get to the point of making the music I always wanted to make—something that challenges people’s perceptions of what it means to be an Arab woman in the modern world,” she says.

Coming off the success of her gold-certified record “Finest Hour” and 2018 debut EP *Mint*, ABIR’s new EP *Heat* instills a thrilling new energy into the pop landscape, in part by introducing elements of the music she grew up on. Created with L.A.-based producer Mick Schultz (a two-time Grammy Award nominee known for his work with artists like Rihanna and Young Thug), *Heat* unfolds in lavish string work and complex yet commanding rhythms and melodies, often sculpted with traditional North African instruments. When matched with ABIR’s magnetic take on pop/R&B, the result is a gorgeously textured body of work, perfectly spotlighting her hypnotic vocal presence and extraordinary range.

On the lead single to *Heat*, ABIR presents a potent intro to the EP’s message of finding strength in self-celebration. With its kinetic beat and lush string arrangement, “Inferno” offers some brilliant commentary on gender roles in dating. “In all of my songs, I aim to push the narrative,” says ABIR. “So often we associate the guy in the relationship with being noncommittal or 'not looking for anything too serious right now’—whereas in my world, women control how serious or not a relationship becomes. A woman’s love is an inferno, and not to be played with.”

While *Heat* shows ABIR’s more vulnerable side on the soulful breakup song “Last Lap,” much of the EP lets her strong-minded nature shine to its fullest extent. In the spirit of breaking boundaries, “Yallah” emerges as one of the project’s most powerful tracks, an unbridled anthem for marginalized communities everywhere. “‘Yallah’ is about more than me being a Muslim woman—it’s for anybody who stands for something that goes against the grain,” says ABIR. “The word ‘yallah’ in Arabic means ‘Let’s go’ or ‘Come on,’ so it’s my way of expressing, ‘Forget what the haters say. Let them keep talking, because we’re gonna keep fighting for what we care about no matter what.’”

Though she spent most of her childhood in Arlington, Virginia, ABIR grew up deeply immersed in Moroccan culture. As she prepared for the writing and recording of *Heat*, she devoted herself to drastically expanding her knowledge of Moroccan music, which included studying the Arabic scale and learning how to integrate it into her energetic take on pop. A classically trained musician, Schultz also played an essential part in constructing the EP’s spellbinding sound design. “The first time I met with Mick I told him my vision, and when I came back a month later he’d done so much research and created all these sounds that were exactly what I was looking for,” says ABIR. “He completely understood the world I wanted to go into with these records, and together we were determined to find the right balance for the sounds.”

In bringing *Heat* to life, ABIR headed back to Morocco and shot two videos in the desert outside Marrakesh, carefully assembling a team made up almost entirely of Arab creatives. “So many things I’ve always talked about doing, I finally got to do with this project,” she notes. To that end, she considers *Heat* to be the culmination of many years of growth and self-discovery—a journey that extends to a newfound connection with the meaning of her name, an Arabic word that translates as “fragrance of a flower” and ultimately signifies a certain blossoming to ABIR. “I’m so comfortable in my skin, and I just want to share what I represent and what my culture is,” she says. “I know that we have so much to offer the world, and I’m not afraid to get loud about it.”