

sara kays

Sara Kays is like the one friend you have who actually listens and watches as much as she speaks. For the most part, her life is “quiet.” Her free time consists of hanging out with her brother and mother, playing soccer with her friends, and frequenting thrift shops. She loves warm beanies and also doesn’t understand “why people don’t eat croutons like chips.” When she does get “loud,” everybody else listens just as intently. She’s unassumingly built a rapt audience of 2 million followers across social media platforms, gathered hundreds of millions of streams, and received acclaim from *Billboard*, *People*, *BuzzFeed*, *American Songwriter*, *Flaunt*, *FLOOD* and more. Observations, thoughts, and truths straight from the Notes app on her phone inform diary-style stories often upheld by not much more than gentle acoustic guitar, soft ukulele, and a keyboard murmur. In 2021, the Nashville-based solo singer and songwriter makes a heart-to-heart connection on her *Struck By Lightning* EP [Atlantic Records] and more music on the horizon.

“I was pretty surprised when people connected to the personal things I’ve gone through,” she admits. “I started seeing messages, and it made me more aware. It’s comforting to share in the same struggles.”

After getting her first guitar at the age of twelve, she cut her teeth by busking for hours on end throughout high school. She performed staples such as “Champagne Supernova” by Oasis and Elvis Presley’s “Can’t Help Falling In Love With You.” Personally, she drew on influences as diverse as A Day To Remember, Mayday Parade, Panic! At The Disco, Alec Benjamin, Jake Bugg, and Kacey Musgraves. In 2018, she linked up with producer Steven Martinez online and headed from her hometown in Indiana to Nashville to start recording with him. She released singles such as “Rich Boy” and “Down Low” and cultivated an intensely engaged and supportive audience – now nearing 2 million followers on TikTok – by being disarmingly raw about everything from body image to mental health.

In 2020, her *Camera Shy* EP racked up over 100 million streams on the strength of fan favorites such as “Chosen Last,” “Smaller Than This,” and “Home For The Summer.” On its heels, she posted a clip of “Remember That Night” on TikTok during November—it exploded to the tune of 3 million views. Now, the official audio has eclipsed 200 million global streams. Meanwhile, she crashed the *Rolling Stone* “Breakthrough 25” chart, earned her first Top 10 on any *Billboard* chart, and made her national television debut with a performance on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*. *People* named her one of the “Talented Emerging Artists Making Their Mark on the Musical Landscape,” *Billboard* profiled her in its “Emerging Artists Spotlight” and *HuffPost* predicted she “may soon be one of pop music’s breakout stars.” However, everything only set the stage for *Struck By Lightning* which she announced along with her first international headline tour for Fall 2021 in addition to supporting Mt. Joy in the states and Cavetown in the UK.

Throughout 2021, Sara assembled the EP with Martinez, teasing its arrival with “Backseat Rider,” “Traffic Lights,” “Future Kids,” and “Picture Of You.” The single and title track “Struck By Lightning” [feat. Cavetown] captures the nuances of her confessionally quirky lyrics, glassy melodies, and chantable observations. It hinges around an ironically beautiful image of “Something this town will forever talk about, the two kids that were laying down and struck by lightning in front of your house.”

“The song is about being there for somebody else no matter what,” she explains. “A friend of mine struggled a lot with depression and didn’t necessarily always talk to me about it. It can be frustrating when you know someone’s going through something, but won’t say anything. So, the idea is, *‘I’ll sit out there with you in silence.’* Around the same time, my *‘For You’* page had a ton of trending videos of people laying down in driveways in the rain. I brought all of that together, and it was really cool to duet with CAVETOWN. I’m basically saying, *‘I’d get struck by lightning for you.’*”

Then, there’s the icy honesty of “Freeze.” Her voice pierces the space between sparse strumming as she confesses, *“I’m happy you’re in seventy degrees, but I wish you would’ve chosen to freeze.”*

“I’m from Indiana, and somebody I’m close to moved south where there’s warmer weather,” she explains. “I’m saying I wish you would’ve chosen me essentially over the heat.”

It’s this sort of honesty that makes Sara such a relatable anomaly.

“When you listen to me, I hope you relate to a song, or maybe it comforts you,” she leaves off. “I’m always really humbled if that happens.”

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