

On her incendiary debut EP *a study of the human experience volume one*, 18-year-old singer/songwriter GAYLE shared a batch of songs capturing the most specific and vividly real emotions: the tension between longing for connection and fearing vulnerability, the risk and thrill of refusing to compromise your own needs. Released in early 2022, the six-track project features her electrifying smash single “abcdefu”: a double-platinum anthem that held the #1 spot on Top 40 radio for three consecutive weeks, topped the Billboard Global 200 for nine consecutive weeks, hit the top 3 on the Billboard Hot 100, and propelled the Nashville-based artist to such milestones as earning her first-ever GRAMMY Award nomination in the prestigious “Song of the Year” category, being named as a Billboard Music Awards finalist, and earn such honors as American Music Award and People’s Choice Award nominations in “New Artist of the Year,” 2 MTV VMA nominations, and an NSAI Award in their “10 Songs I Wish I’d Written” list. In the midst of navigating that whirlwind success, GAYLE headed back into the studio to create *a study of the human experience volume two*—a powerful new EP that doubles down on its predecessor’s unapologetic truth-telling, revealing even more of her inner world and cementing her status as a singular and immediately fascinating songwriter.

“With this new EP I wanted to go a little deeper and tell more of my story, to give more context for why I am the way I am,” says GAYLE, whose accolades include appearing on Billboard’s “21 Under 21” list and on Variety’s “Power of Young Hollywood Impact Report” for 2022, as well as being named a YouTube Artist On The Rise and an MTV Global Push Artist. “I want people to know that I’ve definitely had those moments where the world feels so confusing and unpredictable, and that no one is alone in what they’re feeling or going through.”

Made with producers like Noah Conrad, Ryan Linvill, and Pete Nappi, *a study of the human experience volume two* contains such deeply personal songs as “god has a sense of humor”—a heavy-hearted yet quietly epic piano ballad with an existentialist bent. “I wasn’t really raised with religion, and at some point I realized that other people have this belief system that helps them to understand why bad things happen,” says GAYLE. “That song is about wanting to have hope, and being torn between a pessimistic and optimistic perspective on the world. Because at the end of the day, I want to believe that we’re all just doing our best.”

Expanding on the wildly carefree spirt of “abcdefu,” *a study of the human experience volume two* embodies a more lighthearted mood on “indieedgycool,” a brilliantly sardonic and bass-heavy track. “That title came from making fun of the pressure I put on myself sometimes to try to be cool,” says GAYLE. “I wanted to poke fun at the idea of there being a hierarchy of coolness, and to put on the persona of someone who takes that too seriously.” The EP’s most blissfully upbeat song, “snow angels” came to life with a bit of serendipitous help from GAYLE’s big brother. “It can be so easy to spiral out about the state of the world and how stressful and terrifying everything is, but you still need those moments of just having fun with your friends,” she says. “I wrote a whole song about that concept and then I talked to my brother, and he told me something like, ‘If I’m gonna be partying, I just wanna make snow angels in the grass.’ It fit so perfectly with the song, I had to go back and rewrite it.” And on “fmk,” blackbear joins GAYLE for a playfully chaotic duet speaking to the ups and downs of obsession. “I got blackbear to jump on the track, and turned it into duet about loving someone so intensely but also being intensely annoyed by them,” she says.

For GAYLE, the most fun moment in the making of her new EP took place in the writing of “Alex,” a scathingly honest breakup song. “I was writing with some friends and telling them the story of when I realized I needed to break up with my ex, and one of them said, ‘Break Up With Alex’ would be a great song,” she recalls. “I told them that the last thing I’d ever want to do is to put my ex’s name in a song, so then they said to me: ‘Cool, we’ll write it without you and you’ll wish you’d written it with us.’ And so here we are.” In all of the sessions for *a study of the human experience volume two*, GAYLE embraced an unbridled freedom in the creative process. “It’s about making the best thing you possibly can, and seeing what comes from that,” she says. Because she has chromesthesia (a phenomenon in which sounds manifest as colors), GAYLE also finds songwriting to be a highly sensory experience. “Any song I make or hear always has a color to it,” she explains. “The first EP was orange but this one is blue, which is the complementary color for orange. There’s a lot of green and gray and white in these new songs as well, and it felt really exciting to work with a whole different color palette.”

Growing up outside Dallas, GAYLE first explored her musical side at age seven after discovering jazz and soul vocalists like Ella Fitzgerald and Aretha Franklin. Within the next few years, she’d taken up piano and guitar and started writing songs of her own. “Because I was so young, I was mostly talking about emotions I’d never experienced—a lot of times I’d watch a movie, and then try to write a song that created that same feeling,” she says. Determined to take her songwriting to the next level, GAYLE made her first trip to Nashville at age 10 and soon began playing in bars around town. “I very luckily found some people who were willing to write with a 10-year-old, and fell in love with the whole process of collaboration,” she notes. After nearly two years of traveling back and forth from Texas, GAYLE and her family relocated to Nashville, where she started booking up to five co-writing sessions a week. By the time she was 14 she’d crossed paths with famed pop songwriter/publisher Kara DioGuardi, who promptly took on the role of her mentor. “Kara always pushes me to be the most honest I can possibly be,” GAYLE says. “It’s completely changed my writing, and taught me to really show my vulnerability rather than trying to hide it.” A perfect embodiment of that approach, her debut single “dumbass” marked a major artistic breakthrough for GAYLE, emerging from her improvisation of its stunningly blunt opening lines: “I do this thing where I close off/My feelings, and I take my clothes off/So I don’t have to open up to my boyfriend.” Along with quickly landing on coveted playlists like Spotify’s New Music Friday and TIDAL’s Rising: Pop, “dumbass” paved the way for her signing to Atlantic Records/Arthouse Records in May 2020. Her massively successful major-label debut, “abcdefu” has now amassed over two billion streams, while GAYLE has appeared on major TV shows like “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon” and “The Late Late Show with James Corden.”

With her latest triumphs including taking the stage at England’s historic Wembley Stadium, touring with Tate McRae and AJR, and playing a run of shows with pop-punk legends My Chemical Romance, GAYLE aims for what she refers to as “messy imperfection” in all of her live shows. “I truly believe that music is a unifying force, and I want to give people the space to be completely themselves and to see that there are other people in the world who feel the same way they do,” she says. And as she’s witnessed over and over again in the past year, there’s a certain undeniable power in fully owning and accepting your truth. “My songs tend to come from being uncomfortable with what I’m feeling and not wanting to focus on it, but then getting to the point where I just need to get it all out,” she says. “If my music can help other people to make better sense of themselves, to come to terms with who they are and what they’re feeling, then that means the world to me.”

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