**MARYJO**

A 21-year-old singer/songwriter hailing from Cleveland, maryjo has the kind of unforgettable voice made for heart-melting piano ballads. But while songs like her spellbinding debut single “Love Fools” show a phenomenal vocal command—often drifting from full-throated belting to a gorgeously fragile delivery—it took years for the Knoxville-born artist to overcome a longtime fear of singing in front of others. As she got older, she worked through that shyness by sharing videos on social media, revealing her disarmingly down-to-earth personality and soon amassing a dedicated following that now includes over 1.3 million followers on TikTok. After winning over audiences as a fan-favorite on season 19 of “American Idol” (where she joined Jewel for a crowd-thrilling duet of the superstar singer/songwriter’s “Foolish Games”), maryjo landed a deal with Atlantic Records and began creating a debut body of work that lets her powerhouse vocals shine to full effect.

One of seven daughters born into a highly musical family, maryjo first showcased her innate vocal skills by trying out for a school talent show at the age of eight. “I taught myself to yodel and then auditioned for the talent show, got up onstage and started yodeling in this huge room full of cheerleaders and whoever else,” she laughs. “I didn’t make the cut, but I do think it ended up helping my voice as far as teaching me how to hit different pitches.” When her family moved from Tennessee to Ohio that same year, however, maryjo developed a serious case of stage fright. “I completely shut down and stopped singing in front of other people,” she says. “I’d wait for my mom to go out to the grocery store or something, then go sing alone in my room with the door shut.” Although she still dabbled in writing songs (partly on piano, an instrument she took up in fourth grade), it wasn’t until she started posting videos online that maryjo began regaining her confidence as a singer. As her following expanded, she earned her spot on “American Idol” in late 2020—a turn of events that helped her to blossom as a performer. “What helped me most was the rest of the cast,” she notes. “We’d hang out all the time and I got so comfortable singing in front of them, and now it’s easy for me to sing for an audience. It was exactly the push I needed.”

An Elvis obsessive who names confessional singer/songwriters like Julia Michaels and Lewis Capaldi among her main inspirations, maryjo next devoted herself to finding her authentic voice as an artist. “When I first went into sessions, the sound we were coming up with was very much like cookie-cutter pop,” she says. “Finally I had to stop and say, ‘This isn’t what I’m supposed to be doing.’ I took a step back and asked myself why I was trying for something that didn’t feel right, and because of that we honed in on a sound that feels like me: something I can put so much emotion into when I’m singing, so that I can give the audience something real to connect to.” Co-written by maryjo and recorded with Nashville-based artist/producer Logan Maggio, “Love Fools” fully echoes her timeless sensibilities, unfolding as a stripped-back but soul-stirring ballad featuring GRAMMY®-nominated and two-time ACM Award-winning blind piano virtuoso Gordon Mote. As she opens her heart about a toxic romance, maryjo intensifies the song’s breathtaking emotion with her raw yet nuanced vocal work. “For so long whenever I sang alone at the piano I’d add those little cracks in my voice or sing with a bit of a rasp, but I never knew if it sounded good,” she says. “Now that I’ve gotten so much more comfortable, I love putting all those details into my performance. I just try to do whatever I can to really deliver the message of the song.”

With her follow-up singles including a heavy-hearted but radiant track called “Traffic”—a soaring reflection on repeating the same patterns in a relationship—maryjo has found something of a second home in the studio. “Whenever I’m recording I feel like I’m transported into another world,” she says. “I’ll turn the lights down and wrap up in a blanket, get super-comfortable and just focus on pouring as much emotion as I can into the song.” Along with assembling a close-knit community of collaborators, she’s spent more and more time writing on her own, channeling her creative energy into dreaming up songs with a powerful impact. “With every song I sing, I try to think about every single angle that people could hear it from and all the ways they could possibly connect to it,” says maryjo. “I’m already getting my therapy from the whole process of writing and recording, so I want to make sure that I’m giving people something that helps them tap into their own emotions and makes them feel better about whatever they’re going through.”

**CONNECT WITH MARYJO**

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