

Letters from the 99

PKAY | Debut LP

Story-driven pop that's written from voice memos, built on haunting hooks, and beating with raw heart.

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Los Angeles, CA – PKAY wrote her debut LP alone in a car somewhere on California's Highway 99.

She'd booked studio time in Los Angeles, several hours south of her home in Fresno.

On her drives back and forth, she would hit record on her iPhone's Voice Memos app and start singing.

Letters came out.

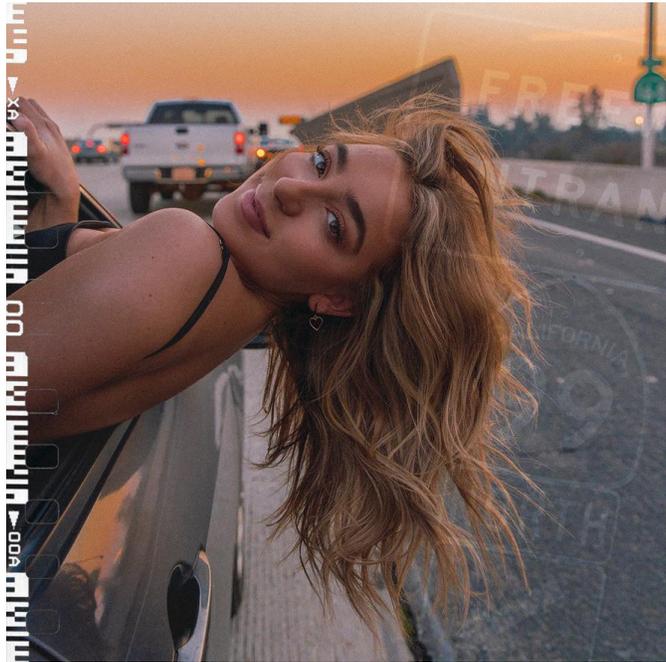
"My phone sets the recordings to wherever my location is and the location of my voice memos always shows up as CA 99 on my way to the recording studio," she explains. "One night I got home to Fresno and looked down at my phone after writing my song, "HWY 99," and it hit me: *Letters from the 99.*"

Given the unique context for its composition, it's fitting that the nine-track record opens with an unusual device for a debut pop album: a 41-second, spoken-word introduction. Speaking over reverbed synths, PKAY sets the stage for her collection of songs. "You are in the driver's seat now. Know that you are always enough, and persist until tomorrow."

From there, the stories start.

"Memories" is the first track following the intro. It's an aching recounting of a romance that didn't last, leaving memories that did. Opening with acoustic guitar and backed by thin piano lines, it has a modern-country feel to it, augmented by tasteful drum machine elements that punch its points home.

Second track "Narcissist" details the slow, sad realization that the person you're with is selfish – and that there's no way past their narcissism. Built on an arpeggiated electric guitar riff and supplemented by an R&B soundscape, it's engaging storytelling that serves as a showcase for PKAY's standout vocals. Her voice is emotive – with even a bit of a growl to it at points – but impressively controlled for quickly enunciated lyrics. Think Taylor Swift, but with more soul.



The third track, “Sweater”, is perhaps PKAY at her most Swift-like; it’s an acoustic track, set to a descending, finger-picked guitar line that’s pure sonic nostalgia.

*“Then I found your sweater
Underneath my dresser
All the memories flooding right back to me
Remember when you lost it to my bedroom closet
Used to tell me it looked so much better on me”*

The song picks up percussive elements that carry it along its 2:45 run time, but it never outgrows the feeling that it could be performed just as effectively sitting alone on a bed as it could be in front of a crowd on a stage. It’s more impactful for that intimacy.

“Karma” brings back the electricity, with a driving beat and a catchy dose of anger: “All your fake friends secretly hate you,” PKAY sings in the verse, going on to outline her biting hope for an ex’s new relationship:

*“Hope she makes your world spin round
And then you find out she’s been screwing everyone in town”*

“HWY 99”, the record’s title track, scales things back with soft keys before diving into another heavy beat that underlies what might be the album’s snappiest chorus:

*“Go ahead and paint me how you want to
Keep checking my life like it’s your version of the news”*

Directed at girl drama, it’s cutting, relatable, and above all, catchy. “Superpowers” and “Girl in ur bed” maintain the same tone; the former features a clever lyrical play on the track’s title, while the latter laments the emptiness of hook-up culture.

On album-closer “Pls call me”, though, the tone shifts. PKAY switches from pissed off to plaintive, to great effect. Carried by broken chords on keys and slowly building strings, the song never adds percussion, but there’s a rhythm and a relatability to the chorus that give the song a haunting quality. It may be the strongest work of storytelling on the album – and on an album filled with raw stories, that’s saying something.

Letters from the 99 will be released on February 22, 2022. It was produced by PKAY and James Gyerman and recorded at MIX Studios in Los Angeles. PKAY will be releasing more music throughout 2022.

PKAY Bio

PKAY wrote her debut album alone in a car somewhere on California's Highway 99.

Driving back and forth from the studio in Los Angeles, the 21-year-old indie-pop artist would open her iPhone's Voice Memos app and start singing; *Letters from the 99* was the result. It's a haunting collection of heart-on-sleeve stories, recounted by an instantly recognizable vocalist with a clear ear for pop melodies.

Originally from Bakersfield, CA, PKAY got her start singing at churches with her grandma, who, along with PKAY's great aunt, sang regularly with Buck Owens. PKAY didn't start writing her own music until experiencing heartbreak at 18. But, from that point forward, expressing emotion in music became a necessary outlet.

Like Nina Nesbitt and Olivia Rodrigo, PKAY is able to bridge the vulnerability of singer-songwriter lyricism with the electric energy of modern alt-pop, an ability that allows her to make an easy home across a variety of different genres. From country-esque acoustic ballads to R&B-inspired soundscapes, PKAY's work finds a center in its storytelling, while, vocally, she's capable of delivering lines with rich earthiness or aching longing.

And like Taylor Swift, PKAY is prolific. On average, she writes between one and three songs per day, all of them expositions of raw emotion.

"I like to be as vulnerable as possible," she says. "Letters from the 99 is a series of stories that are extremely relatable... some good, some sad, some maybe even a little mean."

Letters from the 99 is the first full-length release from an up-and-coming artist who appears poised to command wide-spread attention soon. The album was written by PKAY and produced by her with assistance from mixing engineer James Gyerman. Recorded at MIX Studios in Los Angeles, it's the first in a series of planned releases throughout 2022.

PKAY Brief

PKAY wrote her debut album alone in a car somewhere on California's Highway 99. Driving back and forth from the studio in Los Angeles, the 21-year-old indie-pop artist would open her iPhone's Voice Memos app and start singing; *Letters from the 99* was the result. Evoking Taylor Swift and Nina Nesbitt, it's a haunting collection of heart-on-sleeve stories, recounted by an instantly recognizable vocalist with a clear ear for pop melodies.

Press Quotes

"*Letters from the 99* is a collection of stories written by me, mostly on drives along California Highway 99 to Los Angeles. This album is real and raw and it is my hope that there's a song on this album for everyone. Remember, you are in the driver's seat now. You will take yourself nowhere some days and everywhere the next. Know you are always enough and persist until tomorrow; for the darkness only lasts until morning, and shame was left on the 99 at dusk. I hope you enjoy *Letters from the 99*."

"I take a lot of inspiration from Taylor Swift when it comes to my songwriting. I like to tell stories with my music and be as vulnerable as possible. I typically write 1-3 songs a day."

--PKAY

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