

POP FLASH.



Considering [last year was a curveball that no one expected](#), 2021 [seems destined to deliver double the music we hoped for in 2020](#). That is, if pop stars who are happy to do it themselves have anything to do with it. Yes, pop has traditionally been the genre of sold-out stadium shows and producer-packed studio sessions, but with the rise of laptop production, TikTok fanbases, and an eager young audience stuck at home and looking for distraction, bedroom pop is back in a big way. And just because it was made at home doesn't mean some of these stars aren't headed for massive stages, either.

As we all navigate the transition between pandemic life and post-quarantine bliss, there's going to be a sweet spot for artists who aren't quite supernovas but were never meant for the world of indie after all. Expect the barriers that Billie Eilish broke down to change a lot about what we expect from female stars, whether that's how they sing or how they look, act, and dress, and there's lots of other changes on the horizon, too. Like self-correction for diversity and inclusion of all genders and races, and a creeping hint of rock and other forgotten sounds making their way back into the mainstream. So whether they're collaborating with established icons, blowing up on social media, or changing the way we think about a trip to the DMV, here are our picks for rising pop stars to watch this year.

— *Caitlin White, Uproxx Pop Critic, on the [rising pop stars of 2021](#)*

NUMBER ONE STUNNERS



OLIVIA RODRIGO

Now that Olivia Rodrigo is entering her third week as a chart-topping artist, and murmurs from the peanut gallery — that is, her rumored ex-boyfriend and his new girlfriend — have quieted down a bit, the real impact of “Drivers License” is going to be felt. It’s the first song by a female artist to stay at the No. 1 spot on the *Billboard* chart for three weeks since Ariana’s “7 Rings.” This isn’t just a TikTok-fueled one-hit wonder we have on our hands here; Olivia is the natural progression of a trend to take pop music seriously, to take the subject matter of young women’s hearts seriously. From Taylor Swift and Ariana Grande to Selena Gomez and Lorde, Olivia is here to take the torch those women lit and run with it. “Drivers License” is a No. 1 hit, but Rodrigo has the potential to be so much more than that. And every week this song triumphs is another tally in the column of victory for the pop girls as a whole.

[LISTEN](#)

BIRDY SURRENDER OUT NOW



BUBBLING UNDER



BEN SCHULLER

Though Ben Schuller might be best-known as one-third of the gaming-themed musical group NerdOut, he's ready to change his tune. I mean, now that going to parties and socializing has been put on hold due to the pandemic, we're all nerds anyway. Maybe nerdiness becoming cool is what made it old hat to Ben, who has spun out into synth-pop with the single "Blueberry Diamonds," an R&B-leaning track that's about as far from nerd culture as it gets. His new album *Roaring 20s* will be out later this year, and with a built-in audience and an ear for pop's current sound, Schuller has a strong debut on his hands.

[LISTEN](#)

REMEMBER WHEN

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, HARRY STYLES!



27 years ago yesterday, the world welcomed Harry Styles with open arms. It only took 16 years for the One Direction star to begin seriously pursuing his career as a musician by joining the British version of *American Idol* — *The X Factor* — and masterminded into one of the best-selling boy bands of all time. But even after 1D started to show cracks, it was clear Harry was going to emerge as a solo star, and not even Zayn's early attempt to claim the throne could stop that. After the commercial success of his debut album, *Harry Styles*, and the critical acclaim of his follow-up, *Fine Line*, Harry is poised to become one of pop's biggest and most beloved voices. So can we get concerts back asap, because I still haven't seen him live, and I've heard that's the only way to experience this music. Happy birthday Harry, here's hoping you'll be on the road again soon.

LISTEN

A promotional banner for a radio show. On the left is a portrait of a young man with short brown hair, wearing a dark sweater. To the right of the portrait, the text reads: **COVERNATION** (in a small font), **TAKEOVER TUESDAY** (in large, bold, outlined letters), and **WITH LIVINGSTON** (in a small font). On the far right, it says: **TUNE IN TO THE LIVE PERFORMANCE FEB 2ND @ 6PM EST**.

LOVE LETTERS



ZOE WEES

If you haven't heard Zoe Wees' new single "Girls Like Us" yet, then you will soon. The German star is only 18 years old, but she's already taking off in a massive way due to the empowering, vulnerable track. Previously Zoe has written about her struggles with childhood epilepsy on an earlier single called "Control," and "Girls Like Us" continues in a similar vein, putting words to just how difficult it can be to be labeled as different. But no matter what you might be struggling with, the track is relatable enough for pretty much anyone to sympathize. It's a song about struggle that takes a defiant tone, and spotlights Zoe's powerful voice in a big way.

[LISTEN](#)

Was this email forwarded to you? Sign up [here](#).

YOU SAY YOU WANT MORE MUSIC?

→ [Follow](#) the official playlist

→ [Indie Mixtape](#) has the scoop on all the best emerging artists



This email was sent by: Warner Music Group 1633 Broadway New York, NY 10019 USA
This email was sent to: zac.gelfand@gmail.com

[PRIVACY POLICY](#) [TERMS OF USE](#) [UNSUBSCRIBE](#)