

POP LIFE.



The scrutiny that young women — hell, all women — face within the music industry is well-documented. With "[Blouse](#)," the sole single released from her sophomore album, *Sling*, Clairo adds her own grievances to that lengthy petition. Movements like #MeToo and an increased emphasis on diversity and equality have reflected a more public longing for a cultural shift, but not much has budged. Perhaps it's young women who are the most shocked by how little the status quo of sexism and misogyny seems to change, despite lip service to the contrary. Older generations have grown weary, or wiser, in the fight. Or, simply absconded away from the unsafe offices of leering executives, opting to pursue a different kind of life. On *Sling*, Clairo is weary and absconding — both suit her incredibly well.

At 22, Claire Cottrill is still young, two years younger than her frequently-cited peer and [now collaborator, Lorde](#), though the two women share the unsettling-but-coveted experience of teenage stardom. "What this industry does a lot is drain young women of everything until they're not youthful any more," Cottrill [remarked to *The Guardian*](#) in one of her few interviews in support of her second album as Clairo. She prefaces that thought with the implied premise: "There's a lot more that we can squeeze out of her before she's done." Within that context, it's not surprising that a famous teen — crowned the next big indie star, then immediately torn down for her father's corporate connections — would eventually fantasize about a life of rural domesticity. Committing to care for herself and others is a way of reclaiming a connection to the joy of youth, a respite from the calculating prurience of record labels. Isn't the mother the dichotomous opposite of the whore?

— Caitlin White, *Uproxx* pop critic on [Clairo's sophomore album](#).

NUMBER ONE STUNNERS



BTS

BTS is now the kind of massive pop act that they replace themselves at No. 1 on the *Billboard* charts. With the release of their new single, "Permission To Dance," they've maintained a grip on the charts, simply swapping out the song that's reigning in the primary spot. While I'm personally still firmly on team "Butter" — and plenty of fans I know are still rocking out to "Dynamite" — "Permission To Dance" has the kind of orchestral swells and feel-good lyrics that are impossible not to groove to. Check out the latest edition to their catalogue of hits above, and know that "Butter" might not be over; even with this brand new single in the fold, that earlier track is still lingering at No. 7.

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BUBBLING UNDER



NOA KIREL

She might not be on your radar yet, but Noa Kirel won't be bubbling under for very long — she'll be a massive presence in American pop by the end of the year, mark my words. The Israeli pop star released her first English-language earlier this month, "Please Don't Suck," and it's the kind of old school earworm that is destined to blare out of boomboxes, car stereos, and DJ sets all summer long. And for those who want their pop stars to come correct with the dance moves too, nothing gets more than having [Sean Bankhead](#) choreograph your video. You might've spent the weekend watching his choreo in the Normani video (see below for more on "Wild Side") so Noa is in great company. As far as the sentiment, well, that's the only standard I have going into a first date anymore too. Highly relatable.

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CHECKOUT

CHARLI XCX — 'HOW I'M FEELING NOW' (LIMITED YELLOW VINYL)



This Charli XCX project was written and recorded in real-time during the first months of the COVID-19 lockdown, reflecting the various feelings and experiences while being cooped up. It was also created in collaboration with Charli's fans, making for a truly unique creative experiment. Today, we're offering readers access to an extremely limited pressing of the album on yellow vinyl, with just 1,000 copies available worldwide. Act quickly.

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REMEMBER WHEN

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, SELENA GOMEZ!



Later this week Selena Gomez will celebrate her 29th birthday. If that doesn't make me feel old, I don't know what will! Selena has been famous for most of her life already, but usually hitting 30 is a good milestone for pop stars to settle down and figure out what adulthood will look like for them. We all know Selena's good friend Taylor Swift went through something of a transformation around the time she turned 30, learning to write songs in a less personal way and generally getting used to a stable, loving relationship that put all the drama to bed. After years of an on again/off again relationship with Justin Bieber, there's nothing that Selena deserves more than happiness. Lately it seems like she's been giving all her love to her flourishing Rare Beauty brand, so cheers to another child star turning their celebrity into something that's more sustainable than touring forever. Happy Birthday Selena! Go grab a lip gloss from her collection if you're so inclined, I swear by [Nearly Rose](#).

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LOVE LETTERS



NORMANI

If you hang out on the music internet at all, then you already know the impact that Normani's new single is having. She teased a tiny snippet of "Wild Side" earlier this year, and fans almost went berserk back then, that's how starved they are for this 5th Harmony diva to fully break out on her own and give them a full-length solo album. "Wild Side" is the perfect follow-up to "Motivation," as Normani turns to Cardi B after getting an earlier co-sign from Ariana Grande, perfectly straddling the world between pop and hip-hop just like those two more established artists do. The choreography and Normani's flawless execution might be what has everyone's jaw dropping right now, but the song's slow and sultry R&B feel will keep it simmering long after the memes and dance videos die down. Having a pop video that feels like a true event was something we all missed, and Normani is bringing that back in a big way.

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