“Celebrities. They’re just like us.”

It’s a saying that everyone knows well and its sentiment applies to aespa, too. For example, just like their many K-pop fans and listeners, they were quite skeptical of their ultramodern cyberpunk princess concept.

AI avatar counterparts called æ? A whole new metaverse with complex lore named KWANGYA? For even the most ardent fan, it was a lot to take in, and perhaps even overwhelming to the casual music listener. But imagine how it felt to be the artist doing the concept.

“How many ‘솔직히’ (honestly) do you want to hear?” ask two voices in Konglish — a mixture of Korean and English — during a delightfully chaotic Zoom call. Laughs can be heard in the background. It is aespa’s two eldest members, GISELLE (22) and KARINA (22), getting candid, while the younger members, WINTER (22) and NINGNING (20), have the giggles.

“Do you really want to know?” KARINA playfully inquires in Korean; with the tone that she, alongside her three fellow members sitting beside her, was ready to tell me how they really felt about becoming aespa during their pre-debut.

It was at that moment that aespa broke the facade of an idol and became much more approachable than their intimidating K-pop personas and concepts. After all, these are four young, talented, and
well-decorated women that love what they do at the end of the day. And that includes this hour-long, candid conversation that oscillates between English and Korean, as aespa prepares for their most crucial and definitive year in music. All roads have led to this, and even if there are pressures both seen and unseen, they are still having a blast.

Lai Frances — *Aespa Interview: The Next Level Cover Story*

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**IN CASE YOU MISSED IT**

**Taylor Swift** and **Joe Alwyn**'s reported breakup stemmed from exiting the 'safe bubble' they fell in love in.

**Britney Spears** called out a personal trainer who body-shamed her during their first meeting.

**Lizzo** cried after being offered a role in *The Mandalorian* because her touching 'Star Wars' history with her dad.

You've heard the phrase “love at first sight,” but what about “love at first sound?” *We're recapping season 4 of Netflix's Love Is Blind* and predicting which couples will make it to the altar.

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**NUMBER ONE STUNNERS**
MILEY CYRUS

Miley Cyrus is once again continuing her reign with “Flowers,” both on this newsletter and its 11th week at No. 1 on Billboard’s Global 200 chart — making it the biggest song in the world right now. This week, it also rests at No. 3 on the US Hot 100. This has tied it with The Kid Laroi and Justin Bieber’s “Stay,” as the third longest-running record since the global chart began.

LISTEN

BUBBLING UNDER
Another K-Pop star that's started stepping out on her own is Blackpink's Jisoo, who recently debuted her solo career with a two-song project that's fittingly titled *Me*. The tracks, “All Eyes On Me” and “Flower,” showcase the range she has as an artist, going from a powerful dance anthem to something more introspective. Jisoo was also the final remaining member of the group to release some solo music, so we're excited to see where things go for her from here.

### JISOO

**CHECK OUT**

**COLDPLAY — ‘MUSIC OF THE SPHERES’ LP**
Coldplay's acclaimed album Music Of The Sphere's is available on vinyl. Per the band's eco-friendly ethos, the album is pressed on recycled vinyl, making each copy unique.

PICK IT UP

REMEMBER WHEN
MARIAH CAREY'S *THE EMANCIPATION OF MIMI'*

This day, Mariah Carey dropped her album, *The Emancipation Of Mimi*. As someone who jammed out to the (Kidz Bop versions, but still) of “We Belong Together” and “Don't Forget About Us,” it proves that Carey's songs apply to all ages and still withstand the test of time.

*The Emancipation Of Mimi* was also one of Carey's biggest albums as her tenth studio record, earning her a handful of Grammy nominations and selling over 10 million copies worldwide. The aforementioned single “We Belong Together” also spent 14 weeks at No. 1 in the US.

LOVE LETTERS

SUGA

During the last newsletter, I highlighted BTS' Jimin. However, since the band members have gone solo since their hiatus, it feels right to also shine the spotlight on Suga this week since he's been making some waves ahead of his *Agust D* solo album.
The music video for his newest single, “People Pt. 2,” finds Suga bringing his emotional lyrics from the paper to the studio. If “they say life's a struggle between resistance and submission / I say it's a struggle against loneliness / If you can't hold it back, it's okay to cry” is just a glimpse of the record, I don't think any of us are ready.

Oh, and he's also set to go on tour later this year, giving fans (both new and old) a chance to catch Suga in a close city.

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→ Indie Mixtape has the scoop on all the best emerging artists