

bülow

18-year-old Megan Bülow never expected her anti-romance anthem, *Not A Love Song*, to catapult her into the spotlight before she'd even finished high school. In fact, she very nearly didn't release it at all.

bülow - who goes by her surname "because I wanted to keep it totally gender neutral" - arrived at a writing session two years ago armed with a chorus she'd recorded on her phone's voice notes. "But it was just me and the producer who were really vibing to it," she recalls, so the song got shelved. It wasn't until a year later, when she and that same producer stumbled across the demo again, that they recognised its magic. "We were like, 'What the hell, why didn't we do anything with this?' We ended up finishing it that day."

The resulting song - a flirty, cutting kiss-off to a guy who's got too attached - went viral. As more and more fans were drawn to its playful gender role reversal, it racked up nearly 20 million streams on Spotify. It reached No.1 on the Hype Machine Chart, No.11 on the Global Spotify Viral Charts, and got bülow signed to Republic Records in the US, and Polydor in the UK. She had no idea, when she was discovered by independent Canadian label Wax Records at a summer camp a few years earlier, that this is where she'd end up. "I think we expected it to be a way longer process," she says. "Nobody expected so many people to hear that song, it was crazy."

Not that she ever saw any other future for herself. During an unusually nomadic childhood - she lived in Germany for eight years, England for six, Texas for two, Holland for two, and is now moving to Canada- it was music that anchored bülow. "Moving around, I didn't

always deal with it very well. Having to start over is definitely difficult, but through the difficult times of not fitting in or missing home, I was able to express all the nervousness, excitement, anger and fear that I had built up, through my music." She wrote her first song at the age of eight, inspired by her "badass" hero Avril Lavigne. By eleven, having discovered the guitar thanks to Ed Sheeran, she was busking - "I'm pretty sure illegally" - all over London. "I just showed up one day with all this gear, and my parents were like, 'Where are you?' I was like, 'I'm in Kingston, busking!'"

That youthful tenacity has carried through to her two EPs - last year's *Damaged Vol. 1*, and its sequel *Damaged Vol.2*. With its intricately woven electro-pop - all springy beats and weird, layered soundscapes - her music captures that youthful combination of exuberance and anxiety. It is at once tongue-in-cheek and deeply earnest. On *Honor Roll*, which channels Purity Ring's wonky pop sensibility, she explores the pressures of high school, and the fear of standing on the precipice of adulthood. "I get so scared sometimes," she sings plainly, "I don't know what's next for me." On the plainly titled *You & Jennifer*, which evolves from a piano ballad into a twitchy vocoder chant, she responds to the sting of rejection with unapologetic pettiness. "I know all the shit I heard, you can take these bitter words / Fuck you and Jennifer, go fucking make love to her." Jennifer, she quickly points out, isn't the real name of the person in question, "but it's a very honest song."

Elsewhere, she channels the existential angst of youth. On *SAD AND BORED*, which features a guest verse from one of her favourite rappers, DUCKWRTH, she lists the ways she tries to keep herself busy. "I never let myself get

to the point of boredom, so the song is kind of ironic," she says. "To me, a day of doing absolutely nothing feels like an eternity of missed opportunities, where I could have become better." But it is another line on Honor

Roll that exposes her deepest fear. "It's just that I don't wanna get older," she sings, "I don't wanna die." Death, she says, "has been something that, since I was very young, I was very, very scared about. It was just the sadness of the fact that everyone's gonna die." Still, she tries to look on the bright side. "Before death, life is all about having something to hold onto, and be remembered by. That's what's so cool about music; it's something that'll always be there, for the next generations to hear. That's what's so powerful about it."

Now she's finished her school exams, bulow can get on with the business of being remembered. Her parents were adamant that she should finish school, even after she signed to a major label. She would most likely have done so anyway - "When I start something, I have a really difficult time backing down from it, so I always felt like I had to finish" - but now, she's ready to focus every fibre of her being on music. "It was always my dream to do this," she says firmly. "I think I was really meant to do it."

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