

Beabadoobee wants to show you she's more than a viral TikTok song

By [Anying Guo](#)

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There are a few things to know about Beabadoobee: She loves Veruca Salt (the band, not the “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” character), she doesn’t use TikTok despite her fame being attributable to it and she doesn’t really care what you think.

It’s easy to chalk up Bea Kristi (Beabadoobee is her stage name) as another young artist on the bubble of stardom, but the 20-year-old’s influences and ambition orbit outside of the platform that has made people ask, “Beaba-who?”

Kristi’s debut studio album, “Fake It Flowers,” was completed days before a shutdown began in March in the United Kingdom, and released during a surging global pandemic. But she says this time has been a creative blessing in disguise.

“You know, every single little detail of ‘Fake It Flowers’ is perfected,” says Kristi, who is now staying home with her family in Harrow, a town in Greater London. She spent the first part of the shutdown with her boyfriend, honing the “visual aesthetic” of the album with inspiration from his art and photography books, and films such as Harmony Korine’s “Gummo.” “I had so much time to live in my album for a bit. I don’t think [many] artists can do that because you just go on tour straight away, so I kind of store that as an advantage for myself.”

The first song she ever wrote, “[Coffee](#),” was written about her boyfriend, uploaded for her friends’ ears three years ago and meant as a “fun song, a side thing.” But you’ve probably heard it in some form since, especially if you use TikTok, where it went viral: The single became the chorus for Powfu’s inescapable remix “[death bed \(coffee for your head\)](#),” which has been streamed more than 4 billion times since its official release in February.

The attention “was definitely overwhelming. The song didn’t sound anything like me, but I’m thankful for it for existing,” says Kristi, whose voice is sped up and notched higher in the remix. “It’s only given me opportunities.”

For someone whose own TikTok intake is limited to cute animal videos accompanied by the song on her Instagram feed, that’s pretty impressive. Once comments of “You’re that ‘coffee’ girl, right?” died down (which Kristi was initially confused by because she has never actually worked in a cafe), she saw an organic pattern of people discovering her music beyond that single.

On “Fake It Flowers,” Kristi couldn’t be further away from the girl making a cup of coffee for your head. “I think I see I’m still naive now, but I was so naive then,” she says, although she still sees parts of herself in older songs. During the 2017 EP “Space Cadet,” she says, “I thought I knew everything. Then I wrote ‘Fake It Flowers’ and realized I didn’t. I think it was just growing up.”

Jamie Oborne, co-founder of Dirty Hit, the label that signed Kristi, remembers the first time he heard her music. A co-

worker's Spotify playlist carried into his office and, intrigued by the song playing, Oborne asked what he was listening to.

"He said, 'Oh, this artist Beabadoobee, she's amazing,'" Oborne says with a chuckle on a call from London. "I was like, 'Yes, but who? Beaba-who?' Then we started Googling her."

Oborne, who refers to his roster of artists as a little family — the label represents the likes of the 1975, the Japanese House and Rina Sawayama — describes his first meeting with Kristi as comparable to breathing oxygen for the first time, instantly connecting over parallel experiences and mutual music tastes.

"I believe everything she says," Osborne says. "That's how great artists are great artists, they help us bridge those gaps with other people."

It's easy to forget, with her cool calm and instant command, that Kristi was born only in 2000. The background of her childhood was soundtracked by '90s-era artists such as Veruca Salt, the Cranberries, Suzanne Vega and the Sundays. But she didn't see many musicians that looked like her in any decade. And in an industry rife with culture vultures and blurred lines of appropriation, Kristi is hyperaware of how someone like her — "a small little Asian girl on Instagram" — can be perceived.

"Everyone expects me to keep my mouth shut and to be clean and pristine," she says. "Sometimes I do feel like I have to bite my tongue at times, but I'm starting to not give a f--- anymore."

Although her focus will always be her music, Kristi hopes that she can be a beacon of representation for a younger version of herself out there: sick of expectations, ready to change the world and down to dance in the mirror in their underwear.

Beabadoobee is at her best when she sounds like a friend shouldering your emotional baggage, translating heartbreak and disappointment into true catharsis. Her sound may be thrash-ready, but the lyrics are the tender words of a young woman who feels and thinks deeply. “Fake It Flowers” is a diary of the conflicting emotions love brings. Kristi says not all of the songs are autobiographical, but snapshots into a world that rebrands teen angst as a lesson about never underestimating your own feelings.

Talking about the incomparable feminine rage of artists such as Fiona Apple (and Veruca Salt, of course) makes Kristi smile. “Oh my God, that was the whole point of ‘Fake It Flowers,’ ” she says. “It’s to empower women. I’m giving it to the girls that were like me when I was 15 and going through the [stuff] I did, you know?”

On “Care,” the single released ahead of the album, Kristi’s repetition of the song’s title in the chorus is a familiar purge of frustration that liberates and leaves the listener feeling lighter. “I don’t want your sympathy,” she sings, “ ’cause you don’t really care, care, care.”

Pete Robertson, who has helped produce Kristi’s music since her 2019 EP “Loveworm,” remembers when she came in with a demo of “Care.”

“The first time I heard it, the instrumentation and the production just kind of wrote itself in my head almost instantly,” says Robertson, who was formerly a part of the British band the Vaccines. “The way she writes her songs, just guitar and vocals, she implies where the drums are going to be. And I remember . . . hearing that in my head as almost like a unified piece of music. I was like, that’s the sound of the record.”

For Kristi, “Fake It Flowers” is the beginning of a career that she hopes is more multifaceted than solely musically inclined. During the shutdown, her head has been churning with new ideas — in movies, in fashion and, of course, in music. Peers such as Michelle Zauner of Japanese Breakfast, who is releasing an upcoming book, [Crying in the H Mart](#), are finding creative fulfillment outside of music, and Kristi counts herself in that crowd.

She finds inspiration with children, particularly with her 8-year-old brother. “Children have such a different outlook of the world,” she says. “They’re the future thing. It’s important to take care of that.” She’s listening to new music while at home, recently loving the Notwist, the Cardigans and Leo Bhanji. And she writes every day, a practice she thinks is essential for any artist.

“I always want to do music,” Kristi says. “But I do think there’s going to be a point in my life that I’ll get into the nursery school teaching profession, because I guess that’s always been my dream.”

Kristi is living at the cusp of young adulthood and celebrity, dealing with social media trolls, mourning the loss of touring and enjoying just being a 20-year-old in love. There’s little she isn’t prepared for, and people like Oborne and Peterson see her confidence growing concurrently with the artist she is.

“I mean . . . you don’t know what the future will look like,” Kristi says, “but I’m always down.”

