

KARLEY SCOTT COLLINS

When Karley Scott Collins moved to Nashville from her hometown of Lake City, Florida, she arrived armed with her words – turns of phrase she’d fallen in love with, stories told to her by friends and family, and lyrics she’d jotted down in notebooks since she was 12. Some of her words blossomed from the music her dad would play on the drive to school – metal bands like Guns N’ Roses and Alice in Chains. Others came from works of literature (Cormac McCarthy) and timeless artists (Bob Dylan, her biggest inspiration).

Karley started playing the guitar as a teenager in Florida, practicing chords in her bedroom and performing songs she’d created for her parents. Mostly self-taught, at 14 she turned to a neighbor as a collaborator, playing acoustic guitar to his electric. She soon formed a band in Lake City, never recording any material but gigging and rehearsing around town, cutting her teeth while still in school. Lately, she’s been practicing under the tutelage of Black Label Society’s Dario Lorina, “because I want to learn how to shred,” she says with a grin.

A publishing deal sparked her 2019 move to Nashville, which brought new collaborators like Liz Rose, producer Brock Berryhill, Nathan Chapman, and Brett James into the fold. Karley says the creatives she’s surrounded herself with “want me to have my own voice in a song. My favorite co-writers are people who don't try to take over the room; they like to facilitate my words, but add their own unique touch to it.”

What emerged from those sessions – some pre-lockdown, some via Zoom writes, and some after – is a collection of songs so self-assured, timeless, and singular that, upon hearing them, you’ll think they’ve been rattling around your memory for decades. Songs like “Heavenly” and “Tattoos” tell poetic, resonant stories, but from entirely new angles. It’s Karley’s rich and emotionally soulful voice – an instrument that toes the line between wide-eyed wonder and world-weary knowledge – that anchors their messages. “I definitely have a very strong vision for what I want my music to sound like,” she says, “but I am also open to the magic of creating and not controlling it or putting it in a box. That’s sometimes where the greatest things in the world can happen.”

Using small-town tales and diary-ripped lyrics as a foundation on which to build shared experiences people from coast to coast can relate to, at their focal points, Karley’s songs are wrapped in lush instrumentation, neatly folding in her myriad musical influences (The Eagles, Stevie Nicks, Leonard Cohen, Willie Nelson). Backed by Warner Chappell Publishing and Sony Nashville, her debut release, “Heavenly,” will arrive Feb. 4. With more new music on the way thereafter, the 22-year-old upstart is all but assured to land with a seismic impact in the months ahead.

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