

LABRINTH

Labrinth is a London-born singer, songwriter, and producer who has already made a name for himself in the UK with a string of Top 5 singles from his idiosyncratic, boldly innovative debut album *Electronic Earth*, as well as for his work writing and producing tracks for such artists as Rihanna, Mike Posner, Usher, Tinie Tempah, Gorillaz, Professor Green, and Ms. Dynamite. Sonically, Labrinth's own sound is hard to pin down, ranging from speaker-blowing dubstep, to ominous electro rock, to orchestral funk, to the soulful piano balladry that characterizes his UK No. 1 single (and Stateside debut) "Beneath Your Beautiful," an emotionally powerful duet with BRIT Award-winning Scottish singer Emeli Sandé that Labrinth wrote with Sandé and his RCA Records label-mate Mike Posner ("Cooler Than Me," Justin Bieber's 3x-platinum "Boyfriend"). Labrinth likes it that way. "I want to keep people guessing," he says. "I want my music to have its own flavor and be as honest as it can be. I enjoy having the freedom to create whatever comes to my mind without sticking to one sound or formula."

The seventh oldest of nine musically gifted kids, Labrinth grew up singing gospel hymns in the church choir, an experience he credits with teaching him how to harmonize and perform. He also sang in a gospel group with his extended family of aunts, uncles, and cousins, and later joined a band with his siblings that performed in jazz and soul clubs around London. "I would've been the ugly duckling if I hadn't become a musician," he says, adding that the family's financial circumstances may have been modest, but "music kept us rich." At 15, Labrinth began creating his own tracks, inspired by his older brother who did the same out of his bedroom. Labrinth launched himself as a producer with rapper Master Shortie's "Dead End," which landed him a publishing deal with EMI. In February 2010, "Pass Out," a track he co-wrote, produced, and guested on (uncredited), debuted at No. 1 on the UK Singles chart, won a BRIT Award for "Best British Single," and earned Labrinth a prestigious Ivor Novello songwriting award. His second collaboration with Tempah, "Frisky," debuted at No. 2. Labrinth was off and running.

In June 2010, music mogul Simon Cowell approached Labrinth about signing with his label Syco Records (becoming the first artist Cowell signed in six years who was not associated with a talent show). "Simon heard me singing on some of my demos and asked whose voice it was," Labrinth recalls. "When I told him it was me, he said, 'That's crazy, you're an artist,' and made me an offer. He gave me full creative control, which no other label would do at the time. I was like, 'This is what I need in my life. This is going to give me the opportunity to grow.'"

Electronic Earth debuted at No. 2 in the UK and has sold more than 300,000 copies worldwide thanks in part to “Beneath Your Beautiful,” which hit the top spot in the UK and Ireland and went Top 10 in 20 countries. Now Labrinth is poised to make an assault on the U.S. charts. “Beneath Your Beautiful” is already climbing *Billboard’s* Adult Pop Songs chart, while its striking video, featuring Labrinth and Sandé trading verses, has racked up more than 41 million views on VEVO. Labrinth says it was inspired by his experience becoming a solo artist.

“A lot of people in the public eye appear to have perfect lives,” he says. “You see their Instagram and they always look perfect, they seem to have it all. For me, coming up as an artist happened very fast and it was very scary. I thought, ‘How can I keep myself honest in this business?’ I wanted to write a song that said, ‘Let me see beneath what looks amazing on the surface and see the real stuff.’ I’m sure a lot of people wanted to see the real me, instead of me acting like a pop star who thinks he’s better than everybody. I think it’s a great introduction to who I am. Because I’m saying, ‘Let’s not front. I want to be honest with you, and hopefully you’ll be honest with me, and we can create something special from there.’”

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