

In late 2015, after a whirlwind two years that included back-to-back album releases and intensive touring, singer/songwriter Miley Cyrus was ready for a break. The Nashville-bred artist had unleashed her Grammy Award-nominated *Bangerz* in fall 2013, then followed that platinum-selling #1 hit with the fantastically warped and hyper-experimental *Miley Cyrus & Her Dead Petz*. With *Bangerz* accompanied by a sold-out international tour of elaborate proportions, Cyrus considered hiding away from the world for a while. “I just wanted to chill for a bit,” she recalls. “I thought I would take a year off and, like, go chill in the jungle. But it didn’t happen. I just started writing again.”

That first burst of writing sparked a creative breakthrough that would soon lead to Cyrus’s most personal and uncompromising album yet. Stripped-back but intricately textured, free-spirited but introspective, *Younger Now* sees the 24-year-old breaking new ground and reaching a new level of self-possession in her artistry. Along with crafting every lyric and melody on her own, Cyrus worked with just one collaborator for her sixth studio album: writer/producer Oren Yoel, whose previous work includes *Bangerz*’ opening number “Adore You” and *Dead Petz*’ “Space Bootz” and “BB Talk,” among other tracks.

Built on a lucidly arranged, guitar-driven sound, *Younger Now* bears a homegrown quality that’s perfectly suited to the intimacy of each song. With the album aptly centering on Cyrus’s unforgettable voice—and her vocal presence at its most nuanced and powerful—her lyrics reveal a raw vulnerability partly inspired by a deep-rooted love of country legends like Johnny Cash, Emmylou Harris, and her own godmother, Dolly Parton. Mixing the heart-on-sleeve sensitivity of country with the revolutionary edge of ’60s rock-and-roll, *Younger Now* emerges as an album that’s blissfully defiant in its unrestrained passion.

An artist who thrives on purposeful risk-taking, Cyrus pushes into unknown terrain all throughout *Younger Now*. In addition to deepening her role in the album-making process, she stayed true to her intentions of sharing her story more honestly and completely than ever. So just as *Bangerz* brazenly documented her post-adolescent liberation and *Dead Petz* bent boundaries with its glittery psychedelia, *Younger Now* claims a new kind of freedom in what Cyrus describes as “putting my heart and everything I feel out on the line.” In all that soul-baring, Cyrus eventually arrived at an even greater self-acceptance and a fiercer refusal to place limits on her constant evolution. “I feel like it’s everything I’ve done in one record,” she says of *Younger Now*. “I feel like my 11-year old self is in here somewhere, and I feel like my *Bangerz* self is in here somewhere, and I feel like my *Dead Petz* girl is in here—a lot in the lyrics.”

As a closely detailed portrait of Cyrus’s life and journey in recent years, *Younger Now* fittingly opens with the gentle rush of the creek outside her home in Malibu. That idyllic wash of sound soon gives way to the album’s title track, a reference to Tish Cyrus’s happy observation that her daughter seems “younger now at 24 than you were at four.” But while the soaring vocals and breezy rhythms of “Younger Now” embody an irrepressibly bright energy, the album never shies away from darker and more difficult emotions. And in boldly exploring her dreams and desires, love and loss, beauty and

pain, Cyrus instills each song with an intensity that's endlessly heightened by her wide-as-the-sky melodies and stirring vocal performance.

On *Younger Now*'s lead single "Malibu," Cyrus keeps up the summery mood and shimmering feel of the title track, offering a celebration of both self-love and epic romance. From there, her bravely confessional lyrics illuminate everything from bittersweet heartbreak (on the girl-group-influenced "Week Without You") to dreamy infatuation (on the beautifully understated "I Would Die for You") to stormy exasperation (on "Love Someone," an irresistibly gritty track powered by smoldering guitar riffs). Showing the scope of its sonic and emotional palette, *Younger Now* also features tracks like "Thinkin'" (a snarling piece of power-pop) and "She's Not Him" (a soulful look at the complexities of fluid sexuality).

Elsewhere on *Younger Now*, Cyrus channels her unapologetic honesty into candid social commentary, such as on the stomping, spaghetti-western-tinged "Bad Mood" (in which she announces that "The glass ceiling's gotta break"). On "Rainbowland," Dolly Parton joins her goddaughter in a joyful, harmony-laced duet that praises the beauty of difference. Finally, the album-closing "Inspired" turns Cyrus's childhood memories of her father into a potent message of hope in troubled times. "I do believe in change, because I've seen it happen firsthand," says Cyrus, who wrote "Inspired" for Hillary Clinton and sent it to the Democratic nominee the day after the presidential election. "I've seen the change that I can do, and it's not because of being famous—it's because I have an army behind me of these young people that also wanna see a change."

Since 2014, Cyrus has helped to mobilize change with The Happy Hippie Foundation: a nonprofit that provides direct support to thousands of homeless and LGBTQ youth across the country. As founder of Happy Hippie, she's dedicated countless hours to its many initiatives, including the post-election #HopefulHippies movement encouraging grass-roots activism. Over the past few years, Cyrus's work with Happy Hippie has been recognized by organizations like amfAR, who granted her its Award of Inspiration for her efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Most recently, Cyrus received Variety's 2016 Power of Women award for her philanthropic efforts.

In her activism and in her music, Cyrus hopes to inspire others to continually open their minds and widen their way of thinking, noting her firm belief that "everyone can grow and change and expand." And while *Younger Now* captures Cyrus at a moment of immense change and newfound clarity, it ultimately finds her both honoring her past and living more fully in her truth than ever before. "This writing process has been a really different experience because I've never put out an album this way," says Cyrus, whose catalog now includes five #1 albums and nearly 30 million tracks sold. "People have been asking me, 'Is this like a re-introduction of yourself?' But it's not that at all. Actually, it's more like I am this person who embraces all my past selves. This album is the most me for right now that I can be."