



"I've always been the type of person who will tell you everything and put myself out there totally unglossed," says Betty Who. "Writing is therapeutic in that way. I want other people to be able to hear a song and say, 'That's how I felt but was too afraid to say it.' And that's the beauty of music, you can really say anything you want with a catchy hook."

Therein lies the magic of Betty Who and her explosive rise to fame last year on the strength of her breakout debut EP, 'The Movement.' Her songs exorcise vulnerabilities and weaknesses, reclaiming them as anthems of joy and independence. Lead single "Somebody Loves You" debuted at #4 on Spotify's Most Viral list, racking up more than six million streams and earning her raves from BuzzFeed and Perez Hilton to SPIN and Nylon, along with spreads in Elle (who called her "your next pop obsession"), Cosmo, and more. TIME named her one of 14 To Watch in 2014, NY Mag described her as a mix of "early Madonna...Katy Perry and Robyn, with spunk and confidence," and Billboard hailed her "shimmering tracks...and arresting pop textures."

To call the EP an unexpected triumph would be an understatement, though, especially considering it was initially released independently. The grassroots success of the music, fueled primarily by word of mouth online from a passionate fanbase and Who's undeniable charisma as a frontwoman in her ecstatic live shows, led to a deal with RCA, who released her follow-up EP, 'Slow Dancing,' which debuted at #1 on the iTunes Pop Chart. Now, as Who prepares to release her forthcoming debut LP, perform on Late Night with Seth Meyers, and join Katy Perry on tour, she finds herself a far cry away from her roots as a classical cellist growing up half a world away in Australia.

"I had these dueling musical interests," says Who of her childhood. "My first tape was Britney Spears and I know every single word to 'No Strings Attached' by N Sync. But I had this cello that I started playing when I was four, and I played a lot of classical music until I was 18, so I'd be dancing in my room to 'Genie In A Bottle' and then I would go to orchestra rehearsal."

Who earned acceptance to the prestigious Interlochen Center of the Arts in Michigan, where she excelled in the rigorous classical program. On a trip to Boston during her senior year to audition for the Berklee College of Music, Who was introduced to Peter Thomas, who would become integral to her career months later when she returned to enroll in the school.

"He came to me right before he withdrew from Berklee and said we should mess around in the studio and see what happens," Who remembers. "I think from that day forward we spent almost every night at our engineer's apartment, all crammed around the computer talking about songs and what we wanted and what we didn't want. We did a lot of discovering who we were, and Peter became one of my best friends."

Though it was never their intention, the result of those late night sessions was 'The Movement' EP, and the reaction to the music confirmed that they indeed had something special on their hands.

"We basically made a name for ourselves with people who were just genuine music fans," says Who. "They wanted to see the underdog succeed because I was an independent artist."

If anything, signing with RCA has only encouraged Who to double down on those endearing qualities that made her such a rising independent star in the first place. The 'Slow Dancing' EP, her second collaboration with Thomas, opens with "Heartbreak Dream," an 80's-inspired pop masterpiece that works audiences up into a dancing frenzy live. "Alone Again" is a Prince-esque gem that poured out in just a few hours during what Who describes as a "Beyonce moment" of self-empowerment, while "Giving Me Away" is such a vulnerable, personal statement that she wasn't sure if she could ever publicly perform it.

But that's what makes her Betty Who, that vulnerable musical alchemy by which she turns deep, emotional, sometimes painful moments into cathartic bursts of abandon and collective bliss. On the eve of completing her debut LP, one thing is abundantly clear: Betty Who still has a lot more magic up her sleeve.