

GRACE

FMA

With her smoky, timeless voice, impressive songwriting chops, and youthful take on pop-soul, singer and songwriter Grace Sewell is one of 2016's freshest success stories. The 19-year-old Brisbane native burst into the public consciousness with her chart-topping debut single "You Don't Own Me," a hip-hop-influenced cover of Lesley Gore's 1963 emancipation anthem of the same title. Featuring new verses rapped by G-Eazy and co-produced by Parker Ighile and its original producer, the legendary Quincy Jones, the song, which appears on Grace's 2015 debut EP *Memo* (Regime Music Societe/ RCA), has become Grace's international calling card. A hit in the U.S., "You Don't Own Me" has racked up nearly 50 million Spotify plays. It also reached No. 1 in the UK and in Grace's home country of Australia, where it is certified triple-platinum.

"I think the reason people connect with 'You Don't Own Me' is because the message behind it is so powerful," Grace says. "I was 17 when I heard it, the same age Lesley was when she recorded it, and it gave me goosebumps. It made me feel proud to be a woman."

Grace injects that same empowered attitude into the sassy, soulful songs she has recorded for her debut full-length album FMA, an acronym for "Forgive My Attitude." "I've always been a bit different," she says. "I never really fit in. As a young girl, I was super into music and very eccentric. I always thought it was important to have an opinion and to be authentic-- which doesn't always fit in with society's expectations of women. The title is a sarcastic apology for being true to who I am." She also adds, "I also wanted the title to relate to the music on the album. Some of the songs are about heartbreak, but they're not about being so heartbroken that you cannot move on with life. The lyrics still come from a position of power. Whatever it is I'm singing about has a cheekiness behind it and I wanted that attitude to be reflected in the title."

FMA's first single, "Hell of a Girl," is a post-break-up pep talk where Grace reminds herself that even though it feels like the end of the world when a relationship ends, she'll know she'll always be okay. "It's about self-worth, loving yourself, and knowing that you'll move on to something better," she says.

Grace shows her more vulnerable side on "New Orleans," which she wrote when the effects of her sudden success — working long hours, not sleeping, and being away from family and friends — took their toll. "When you're so focused on something you can

forget to be a human and do normal things,” Grace says. “All these feelings just poured out. It was 4 a.m., there was nobody in the studio, and I was just mumbling words. I wrote the song in the booth with all the lights off in one or two takes.”

Grace co-wrote all the songs on *FMA*, which, soundwise, strike a balance between a warm, vintage soulfulness and a crisp, modern energy thanks to production by her long-time collaborators Parker Ighile, Prince Charles, and Progression. “I have pretty vast musical tastes, everything from Fleetwood Mac to Etta James and Ella Fitzgerald, as well as Lauryn Hill and Amy Winehouse. It’s all music that makes you feel something. I’m also massively influenced by hip-hop, so it’s kind of a melting pot, but with lyrics told from a 19-year-old girl’s perspective.”

Grace Sewell wrote her first song at age 12, but can’t remember a time when she wasn’t singing, having first fallen in love with “the old soul and Motown greats, like The Temptations, Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight, Smokey Robinson, and Ray Charles” that her mom favored. She comes from a musical family, including her father (a singer the press used to call “the Australian Tom Jones”) and her grandparents, Betty and Graham Brewer, who once supported The Bee Gees on tour. Three years ago, Grace wrote “Boyfriend Jeans” and recorded it on her laptop with Apple in-ear headphones. “That’s what got me my deal with RCA,” she marvels. “It opened up a lot of doors.”

Now on the brink of worldwide stardom, Grace is ready for people to hear more of what she can do on *FMA*. “It means nothing if what you’re doing doesn’t provoke a feeling. That’s why I love soul music and that’s what I want to do. I want to bring back that moment when you listen to a song, and it makes you want to cry, laugh, smile, and dance — all at the same time.”

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