

## HEYMOUS MOLLY

One day back in 2009, Omar Tavaréz was sitting on a bus in Germany with Pitbull having a heart-to-heart. At the time, Tavaréz was the global superstar rapper's drummer and musical director. A massive pop and rock fan, he'd begun to harbor the desire to be an artist in his own right. "Pit said, 'Look, what do you really want to do? Who do you want to be outside of drumming?' This was in the early stages of me making my own beats," Tavaréz explains. "I told him that I wanted to get involved in the music business, maybe front a band, be a producer. He was like, 'All right, cool, man.' He has always wanted us to evolve." Last year, Pitbull became the first person to hear the music that Tavaréz has made under his alter ego Heymous Molly, including the buoyant, summery first single "Life's A Beach." "He loved it," Tavaréz says. "He's like, 'Who the f\*\*k is this singing?' I was like, 'Dude, it's me. This is my solo project.'" Tavaréz also played it for Charles Chavez, the CEO of Latium Entertainment, who was so impressed that he signed Heymous Molly to Latium's new partnership with RCA Records.

"Life's A Beach," which Tavaréz co-wrote with Miami session vet and producer Aaron Fishbein (Enrique Iglesias, Beyoncé) is a breezily appealing combination of sunny pop and lightly funky hip-hop grooves that offers a window into Tavaréz's Miami lifestyle. Born to Dominican parents in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City, Tavaréz moved to north Miami at age three and, growing up, was immersed in the salsa and merengue music that was ever-present in his neighborhood. "Being Hispanic is a party in the house until 5 in the morning, people dancing, having drinks, listening to Celia Cruz and Tito Puente," he says. "I've always had melody and harmony in my head, it was infused in me as a kid." The family's next-door-neighbor was a Colombian kid named Carlos, who was a drummer. At age four, Tavaréz took an interest in watching Carlos play and was soon banging on an extra snare drum and sticks the older boy had given him. "My parents had one of those reclining couches where if you take a stick and hit the side, it gives you a bass tone," he explains. "I would put the snare drum on top of the couch and use the side as my bass drum. No one taught me that. I just knew instinctively that one would sound high and one would sound low. That's where it all started."

Young Omar absorbed his father's favorite music of the '70s: The Doobie Brothers, Ohio Players, Earth Wind & Fire, Chicago, Toto, and eventually the "yacht rock" of the '80s, artists like Christopher Cross, Kenny Loggins, and Bobby Caldwell, before getting into jazz as a teen (Miles Davis, John Coltrane) when he started taking drum lessons. He performed his first paid gig at age 15, playing an event in the lobby of the *Miami Herald*. "I brought my entire drum set — three toms, two floor toms, all the cymbals — to the gig," he says with a laugh. "They're looking at me like, 'Yo, what are you getting into? This is a jazz gig. All you need is one bass, a snare, a ride cymbal, and that's it.'" He made 50 bucks and his fate was sealed.

After attending performing arts middle and high schools, Tavarez honed his chops attending the University of Miami and performing in various groups, including a rock band with members of production team The Fliptones (who are now producing songs for Heymous Molly). He also got session work playing drums on a rock remix of Birdman & Lil Wayne's 2006 track "Stuntin' Like My Daddy." "I was like, 'I got 600 bucks to play drums for an hour? This is awesome.'" But Tavarez's life truly took a turn when one of Pitbull's employees caught him at a club playing drums with a local hippie jam band called Suénalo and approached him with an offer in 2008. "He said, 'I've got a Cuban rapper out of Miami who's interested in putting a band together.' I said, 'The only Cuban rapper in Miami that's the shit is Pitbull. If the gig is for Pitbull, I'll do it.' Our first show was the Calle Ocho festival and the next day we were in Pensacola, Florida, starting a two-month U.S. tour." Promoted to musical director in 2009, Tavarez helped create the epic rock sound of Pitbull's live performances. "I wanted it to sound fuller than it does on the albums, like a rock band," he says. "That's what people want to hear when they come to a show."

Tavarez brings that innate sense of showmanship to everything he does. At 6'1", he's a commanding presence, with a natural charisma and the lively patter of a born entertainer. His transition from drummer to frontman sprung organically from that first conversation with Pitbull on the bus in Germany. Encouraged, he began making trips to Nashville to collaborate with seasoned writers and hone his songwriting skills. The result is the songs he's currently working on for his debut album, which mine feel-good territory. "The lyrics are true to my lifestyle," he says. "I hang out with my friends on the beach and chill, talk to beautiful women, and drink Wet Willies. It's 'sandals, no shoes, no shirt, no problem.'" Even the name he's chosen for the project, Heymous Molly, connotes fun with its flirty take on chatting up a woman. "It's sort of like, 'Hey Miss Molly,'" he explains. (It also has the added benefit of rhyming with "famous.")

Sonically the music is influenced by the bright melodies and laid-back grooves of the '90s alterna-pop/rock acts he loves, like LEN, Sugar Ray, Uncle Kracker, No Doubt, and Sublime — artists who captured the effortless, carefree feeling of waking up each morning to a sunny day. "I want my music to have a positive vibe," Tavarez says. "I want it to help people let loose and relax and get their mind off of whatever problems they're dealing with. I want it to be an escape."

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