

KHALID

Freedom unlocks power.

Five-time GRAMMY® Award-nominated multiplatinum maverick Khalid morphed from a D.I.Y. online phenomenon into an international superstar by creatively embracing such independence. He continues to do so on his 2019 second full-length album, the appropriately titled *Free Spirit* [Right Hand Music Group/RCA Records]. An unbelievable and unprecedented four-year journey ushered him to the forefront of popular culture and music.

Now, he continues to push culture forward by pushing himself first and foremost.

“I’ve learned the capability I have as an artist,” he explains. “I don’t want to limit myself to one sound or genre. I love music across the board. I might write a folk song in my Notes app, or I might go into the studio and do an R&B track. My purpose is to make music that’s true to me. I have the chance to relate to people around the world. That’s a blessing, so I want to push it as far as I can go, experiment, try new genres, and tell stories I haven’t told.”

His story feels as remarkable as ever. A self-described “introvert and loner in high school,” he shared the breakout single “Location” on the eve of his graduation. The song would eventually go quadruple-platinum and introduce his double-platinum full-length debut, *American Teen*—which ascended to #4 on the Top 200, occupied its Top 20 for 48 weeks and spent a total of 51 weeks on the respective chart. Vaulting to stardom with billions of streams to his credit and a regular position as one of the Top 3 “Most-Streamed Artists in the World” on Spotify, he garnered five GRAMMY® Award nominations. He also took home honors at the Billboard Music Awards, Teen Choice Awards, MTV Video Music Awards, and American Music Awards. Receiving acclaim, *Rolling Stone* christened him “a pop prodigy,” and *Time* described how “His thoughtful, relatable reflections on modern youth culture and the limitations of love are just as pitch-perfect as his soulful, measured delivery.”

His voice resounded beyond genre and throughout the mainstream, gracing smashes a la Calvin Harris’s “Rollin” with Future, “1-800-273-8255” with Logic and Alessia Cara, “Silence” with Marshmello, “Lovely” with Billie Eilish, and “Youth” with Shawn Mendes, to name a few. He also teamed up with Normani for the double-platinum “Love Lies,” which captured #1 on Top 40. Plus, this phenomenon sold out three headline tours, and the Mayor and Council of El Paso bestowed a “Key To The City” upon him, proclaiming September 13th, 2018 “Khalid Day.” Along the way, he grew up personally and sonically.

“From writing my first song ever in 2015 to finishing the record in 2019, there’s a lot of progression,” he affirms. “I’m adapting to my own sound and my own voice. Over time, I’ve learned a lot more about what I want to make as an artist. I’m writing songs in ways I wouldn’t

have written before. The lyrics all come from feelings. Songwriting is like poetry or literature for me. It's fun to create something out of nothing."

As he traversed the globe on this whirlwind rise, Khalid embraced a wider swath of influences than ever before. He cites everyone from Fleetwood Mac to Wham! And A-ha as cornerstones of his own playlists. The songs on *Free Spirit* reflect a genre-less energy as they artfully thread together R&B, pop, alternative, folk, and eighties sensibilities. His emotionally charged delivery, big picture aspiration, and diaristic lyricism codify the vision.

"I want to become a free spirit," he goes on. "It's an aspiration of mine, so the record details my journey. It goes from being very happy at times to very sad to very honest to very reflective. Music is an escape for me. *American Teen* showed a lot of innocence because I was 17-years-old when much of it was written. *Free Spirit* is more mature. I'm 21, and I feel like I'm finally comfortable talking about how it really feels to be sad and happy. The songs bookmark moments in my life. Creatively, I'm making some of my favorite music of my life so far." Hence the first single "Talk." Backed by production from Disclosure, its neon synths and handclaps dot a glitchy soundscape as his falsetto takes hold on the question, "Can we just talk?"

"It's simply a love song," he goes on. "It's very fun and R&B. I dig the vibe. At the same time, it's just different for me. I've never tapped into who I am like this. I felt like the experiment worked."

Elsewhere, groans of distortion and an ominous beat brush up against his dynamic delivery on "Self." "I wrote it in a darker headspace," he admits. "I needed to get 'Self' out of my head. I took some time off to understand why I was feeling the way I was and what I was going through. Instead of allowing it to affect my growth, it inspired me to grow more and write." Eighties energy drives the bombastic "Outta My Head" with its slick strut, bass groove, and steady beat. Meanwhile, clean guitars entwine with his heavenly harmony on "Bad Luck," which "is about recognizing you're in love with bad luck and need to embrace good energy for a change."

At his most free, Khalid has the power to make an enduring statement.

"I'm just a student of music and life," he leaves off. "If someone can press 'play' on my song and feel a little bit better afterward, that's all I'm looking for. I only want my music to create good memories. Hopefully, it does."