

# T O M I

On her new EP *What Kind Of Love*, TOMI is singing for her life and, in turn, lighting the way out of darkness for her listeners. Her style is characterized by ferocious guitar and resounding vocals—an unfettered, urgent, and emotionally supercharged sound that was forged from a ruthless determination to sing, play, and do things her own way, even in the face of life’s obstacles.

This method of creating is hard-earned. As a new arrival to New York, TOMI grinded her way through the punk scene, midnighting at dive bars while she supported herself with dull administrative day jobs. “Sometimes,” she says, “we were playing to, like, three people a night.”

After she got fired from a secretary job at an investment bank, TOMI said ‘fuck it’ and started honing in on the intense, expansive set of sounds first demonstrated on “Carry You,” a vulnerable, bluesy ode to a lover who’s halfway out the door that appeared on her 2017 debut EP, *Used To*. She describes it as an explosion of pent-up creative energy: “The first EP was easy because I was working this shitty job and was also in this pretty intense relationship. I had so much built up over the years that I had never released, and it came out really quickly.”

After that giant emotional emission she thought, ‘That’s out into the world already, so now it’s time to really dig. What are you trying to say?’ She attacks the subject matter on *What Kind of Love* with a similar uncensored energy. The culmination of a journey towards self-empowerment, TOMI (who has been writing songs since she was a kid) here fully realizes her voice even as she sings about finding it, integrating all her past experimentation and influences into sonically vast yet lyrically personal episodes. Whether it’s the raw protest at a lover’s cruelty in “What Kind of Love” or the elegiac regret of “Think About It,” the lyrics are instantly accessible, while the sound is epic in its sweeping range. There’s a little Karen O in the yelping chorus of “Every Morning,” and, like a mid-80s Bruce Springsteen, “What Kind of Love” could fill an arena with yearning.

RCA signed TOMI on the strength of early demos, empowering her to take up as much space as she wants—to flex her talent and create more complex songs. In her words, she was able “to actually make everything I’ve been hearing in my head for however many years.” The achievement of creating this EP frees her to admit, “It’s been years of people — men — telling me what to do, or how to write music, or how to make a pop song, or how to make it not a pop song...At some point, I just got pissed off, I think.”

TOMI took matters into her own hands, channeling this frustration into the raw and emotive *Used To*. She wrote and recorded all of the tracks originally in her bedroom in Brooklyn, “You can hear the songs unfold as they were written, the vocals are all first or second takes, I didn’t want to fuck with the initial feeling.” This intimate emotion is what makes the EP so instantly captivating. With a new chapter on the rise, TOMI continues to reach further, bringing her live influences to the forefront of *What Kind Of Love*. “This is my time to do it my way.”

Her genuine desire to connect with an audience on an energetic level has made TOMI a powerful draw in her live shows. She recently completed her debut tour, opening for Electric Guest, and her first-ever show

was a sold-out night at Brooklyn's Music Hall of Williamsburg — a big change from her dive bar days. “We were playing to rooms of people who were actually listening,” she says. “I was able to connect and see their reaction to the songs. I'd never played any of the songs live before.”

If people respond in an intense way to TOMI, they are reflecting back the intensity of her gifts. The *What Kind Of Love* EP reflects an artist who is driven to extend her hard-won freedom to her listeners. “I really want to grow with people,” she says. “This EP feels like I'm finally able to breathe. It's an exhale. I really want people to experience that. OK, we're on this journey, and it's just going to get more expansive from this point forward. The album is sounding epic.”