

# Ruel

One night, about three and a half years ago, **Ruel** was sitting at the dinner table telling his parents and siblings about a girl he had a crush on. “And my whole family was like, ‘Ruel, you don’t know what you’re talking about, you’re way too young to think about that sort of stuff,’” he recalls. “And that really frustrated me. I thought ‘they can’t tell me how to feel’, so I wrote a song about it. I never thought it would lead to all of this.”

“All of this” is the success of the resulting song, “Don’t Tell Me” — a soulful, stately ballad about “not letting other people tell you how to feel because no one else knows you better than you,” as Ruel explains it. The track has garnered millions of streams and since launched the London-born, Sydney-raised singer and songwriter as one of the most exciting recording artists and captivating live performers to emerge since its release.

Things had begun to spark for Ruel a few months before he released “Don’t Tell Me,” which was produced by his mentor M-Phazes (Eminem, Amy Shark, Logic). Ruel’s official debut was a feature on the M-Phazes’ track “Golden Years.” Ruel was invited to perform on Australian radio station Triple J’s “Like A Version,” where he sang a stripped-down version of “Golden Years” and a cover of Jack Garratt’s “Weathered.” The jaw-dropping performance showcased Ruel’s dazzling voice, which can slide effortlessly from gritty tenor to airy falsetto on a dime, and the video quickly became one of the most-viewed “Like a Version” performances of the year after receiving over half a million plays in just 48 hours. Ruel watched his numbers on social media begin to climb. “My follower count went from like 100 to 4,000 in a matter of hours, which is crazy,” he says. “People I admired started following me. It was the first time I thought having a career as a musician could actually happen.”

Ruel was introduced to soul, blues, and jazz by his music-loving father, who played him Amy Winehouse, Stevie Wonder, and Dave Brubeck — all current favorites of Ruel, who also gravitated toward artists like Frank Ocean, Childish Gambino, Ed Sheeran, and James Blake as he got older. “I always sang around the house, but when I saw those artists, I wanted to learn guitar, too, so my mother got me lessons,” he says. “It was kind of boring just playing guitar on its own, so I started singing along and the teacher said to my parents, ‘We should make this a half-singing/half-guitar lesson because your son really enjoys singing.’”

Not long after, a demo of Ruel singing a cover of James Bay’s “Let It Go” landed in the hands of M-Phazes, who requested a meeting. The next day they met over

Skype. “It was early in the morning. He was looking all spic and span sitting in his studio and I was in my pajamas, like, ‘What’s up, guys!’” Ruel says with a laugh. M-Phazes connected Ruel with Australian songwriter Thief (Chromeo, Tobias Jesso Jr.) and the two wrote “Golden Years,” which Ruel says is about making the most of every moment and was inspired by standing on the balcony of his Sydney home with his dad watching the sunset. “All my songs are about personal experiences,” Ruel says. “Songwriting helps me get through things, feelings that I don’t understand myself. When I write about something, it helps me figure it out in the process. But I want people of all ages, whether they’re 15 or 50, to be able to relate to my songs.”

Not long after Ruel’s “Like A Version” episode was posted, he released “Don’t Tell Me” and was invited to write with Julia Stone, which led to him supporting Angus & Julia Stone on their sold-out Australian tour. In October, Elton John, who was on tour in Australia, requested a meeting and an interview with Ruel for his Rocket Hour show on Beats 1, telling him: “You have the most amazing voice that I’ve ever heard from a male singer at 14 years of age and it’s quite incredible.” Not long after, Ruel was invited to support his future RCA Records label mate, Khalid, on his Australia/New Zealand tour, performing to more than 5,000 people a night. A month later, “Don’t Tell Me” was featured in Beats by Dre’s #AboveTheNoise film (starring Cara Delevingne, Neymar Jr, Serena Williams, and others), which sent the track’s streaming numbers soaring once again. “I think ‘Don’t Tell Me’ fits the film perfectly, because it’s about rising above the noise, rising above people who are putting you down, which is exactly what the song is about,” Ruel says.

More than anything, Ruel is gratified to see how “Don’t Tell Me” connected with the public. “I think the song is relatable because people are always being told what they should feel by people who think they know better when they don’t.” He says “I get DMs and comments from people sharing very personal stories, like, ‘I’ve been hiding having a boyfriend from my parents for a year and they’ve just found out and they’re thinking of disowning me because they think I’m too young to love.’” Ruel says. “And I’m thinking, ‘Wow, that is my story on a million different levels that people are relating to.’ And that is just really special.”

Ruel released subsequent tracks following “Don’t Tell Me,” featured on his RCA debut EP ***Ready***, each of which received instant critical raves from the likes of *Time Magazine* who wrote “If you’re looking for someone to fill the young-pop-prodigy gap in your playlist, look no further than Ruel.” *PAPER Magazine* praised EP track “Dazed & Confused” for its “million-dollar chorus” and “slow-burning beat sure to lodge itself in your prefrontal cortex,” and *NYLON* magazine declared Ruel “the 15-year-old wunderkind your playlist is missing.”

***Ready***, his debut EP has already amassed over 100 million global streams and features standout singles “Don’t Tell Me,” “Dazed & Confused,” “Younger” and “Not Thinkin’ Bout You,” all of which have been propelling Ruel on a swift,

upward trajectory. The video for EP track “Younger” caught fire and has enjoyed over 5.5 million views since its release in August, with “Younger,” “Dazed & Confused,” and “Don’t Tell Me” all certified Gold in Australia. Having wrapped 2018 on a major high, Ruel became the youngest recipient in history to win the prestigious Aria Award for “Breakthrough Artist of the Year,” he performed at the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games, released a remix of EP track “Not Thinkin’ Bout You” featuring Grammy-nominated rapper GoldLink, performed at Tyler The Creator’s “Camp Flog Gnaw” festival, and completed very own sold out “Ready World Tour” through North America, Australia, New Zealand, Europe and the UK. Ruel is just getting started.