

Tone Stith

Tone Stith's *FWM* is the sound of an artist totally in control of their sound—charting a unique path through embracing their vision and total immersion in songcraft. Stith's follow-up to 2018's *Good Company* EP is lush, more fully realized, and more personal than anything the 25-year-old R&B impresario has done before. This is a musician introducing a new side of himself, all while continuing to invite longtime listeners into his aural world.

FWM is the latest step in what's already been an accomplished career for the Los Angeles-based Stith, who went from experimenting with Frooty Loops production software as a teenager to being discovered by industry mogul Jas Prince and nabbing co-writes for artists like Chris Brown. Since releasing the impressive and sumptuous *Good Company*, he's continued to mature his sound and his artistic outlook.

"I've gotten older," he explains. "I've been taking my time and reflecting on the music that I've been making—really living life, taking all that in, and making sure it came through my music. I've been creating, but I've also been focusing on bettering myself, honing in on my craft, and becoming the best artist I can be."

FWM came out of a marathon month-and-a-half studio session in Los Angeles last November, a creative environment that became a revolving door for fellow musicians to pitch in on the project's classically modern sound. "Everybody that came in and out of the studio brought different energy and vibes—things that, if it were only me writing and producing, would've come out a different way," Stith explains. "Having other people come together made it into what it is."

"I'm excited for the world to hear this different side of me. It's more relatable," Stith states before discussing the origins of *FWM*'s name: "It's pretty much telling everybody that, you've seen me around for the last few years, you know my name, but now it's time for everybody to really 'f' with me, and I'm going to show you why you really need to by welcoming me into your world."

Among the artists that Stith welcomed into *his* world this time around: H.E.R., who appears on and co-wrote the low-key "When You Love Someone," and Lonr. on the wavy "Keep It Real." "He has a whole different side to his music, so we were putting our worlds together and it came out really cool," Stith says about collaborating with the L.A. singer.

The velvety first single "FWM" is a low-slung swagger anthem—or, in Stith's words, "It's a cool way of saying 'Everyone loves me' without flexing too much. All I keep around me is good energy, and I'm giving it back." Then there's the lithe snap of "When I'm With You," inspired by the R&B of the early 2000s that Stith was raised on: "I remember where I was at when I heard

that music for the first time, and when we made that song in the studio it gave me the same vibes.”

FWM closes out with the spare, affecting “At the End of the Night,” which showcases Stith’s impressive falsetto. “It’s very intimate,” he explains. “When you listen to it, you feel like it’s just me and you in the room.” And drawing more attention to his voice is essential to *FWM*’s creative aims: “The last few years, I was experimenting more. But after taking a few years off, I’m very in tune with myself, and this project showcases that. There’s a vision—a place I know I want to be at—with this music. There’s no limit to what I can do.”