

Christian French

For Christian French, music isn't just about self-expression—it's about finding life's silver lining. The singer-songwriter, who rose to prominence over the past few years with a string of hit singles and a pair of EPs, has etched a space in pop music that examines the hardships of anxiety, doubt and insecurity in a way that doesn't brood or self-deprecate. Instead, it filters his perspective through a lens of positivity, connecting with a legion of fans who identify with his brand of optimism in the face of everyday struggles.

"There's just not a really good platform to talk about anxiety with people today," explains the 23-year-old. "Music is a great way of introducing that idea and letting people know they're not alone. That's the most important thing for music for me: that genuine connection and genuinely helping them out."

Fans have witnessed firsthand how French has blossomed from a young upstart posting John Mayer covers to Soundcloud into an artist who isn't afraid to speak his mind while concurrently developing his voice. In the past few years, he introduced his crisp, guitar-plucked sound with the independent release of 2018's debut *natural colors* EP, which has racked up more than 43 million Spotify listens to date and chased it with last year's breakthrough *bright side of the moon*, a six-track manifestation of his ruminations on mental health matched with tales of romance.

But it's been the instant connection with listeners to his authenticity that's given the project continued life. After *bright side of the moon* released last August, "head first" has organically grown to become one of his most resonating singles to date, amassing more than 20 million Spotify spins and 1.4 million YouTube views. The track, produced by Andrew Luce, was inspired by the uncertainty of high school love. Over strutting percussion and flickering guitar strums, French sweetly recalls the butterflies he experienced every time he encountered his crush, and the helplessness he felt in struggling to express it.

"Each song has a message that people can feel like they're not alone or can get a sense of inspiration," he says. "I just want to be the person that inspires growth in other people's lives and helps them along their journey so they don't get stuck."

That sentiment carries over to his upcoming EP, which he plans to have out this summer. Embodying a more confident sound that straddles pop and rock without losing the introspective clarity of its predecessor, it's a step forward musically for French, "I feel like I've become more precise with what I want to say. It's just another elevation of the sound, of the lyrics, of everything."

"All of this is really new to me, and so at times, I get really overwhelmed and anxious. I'm just trying to figure out how to keep my mental health well with all this new stuff going on, and that's something

everyone's going through. They're all trying to figure out life. I just want to write down my experiences as I'm going and seeing if it helps anybody that needs help.”

For French, learning to articulate those kinds of thoughts through music began at home, growing up in Fishers, Indiana. He learned to play piano by watching YouTube instructionals and started posting covers online, but it wasn't until college at Indiana University that writing original music became a reality. He soon dropped out and chased his dreams to Los Angeles, releasing a few singles before landing with “By Myself,” a collaboration with producer Triegy that has 45 million Spotify listens and set the framework for his *natural colors* EP. With a small wave of momentum, he found himself reaching an even bigger audience after his covers secured him the opportunity to tour with Chelsea Cutler and Quinn XCII.

Today, though, music for French is less about industry acclaim than it is about being understood by the fans that have followed him down this path. “I feel like a lot of my crowd is of the young age where we're trying to decide what to do with our lives and I know that can be a huge decision that weighs super heavily,” he says. “I just want to make people feel more at peace during this time that good things do take time, and you don't have to have everything figured out.”