

PJ HARDING & NOAH CYRUS

PEOPLE DON'T CHANGE

Whether or not you believe in fate, its steady hand might just place you exactly where you're meant to be. It certainly brought **PJ Harding** and **Noah Cyrus** together. Their paths first crossed in Bali at a 2018 summer songwriting camp. Even though they were never properly paired, PJ wound up contributing guitar to Noah's "Good Cry" and "*wished they had a session together.*" That wish came true a year later. At the same retreat in 2019, PJ and Noah unlocked the kind of chemistry that comes along once-in-a-lifetime. They penned four tunes for what would become her 2020 EP [The End of Everything](#), including the title track, "**I Got So High That I Saw Jesus**," the double-platinum "**July**," and "**Young & Sad**." Noah smiles, "*From the moment we met, I just wanted to be in a band with PJ so bad! Even though neither of us expected to be here, it's honestly my dream collaboration, and that's not bullshit because I knew it immediately.*"

Returning to L.A. in the fall, they kept writing without a schedule or a plan. In the face of the global pandemic, they continued crafting songs over the internet. This unfettered creativity against all odds gave birth to their 2021 collaborative EP, [PEOPLE DON'T CHANGE](#) [RECORDS /RCA Records]. Underscored by flashes of folk eloquence, Americana elegance, bluegrass energy, and country heart, the EP emanates light in a moment when it's needed the most.

That light shines brightly on the lead single "**Dear August**." Delicately plucked acoustic guitar and dusty mandolin echo under a confessional call-and-response between PJ and Noah. As their voices entwine, harmonies flutter through the hook which prays, "*Dear August, tell me that there's light at the end of all this starless night.*" In some ways, it could be considered a spiritual successor to "July."

"Last summer, '**July**' was really connecting, but it was an incredibly uncertain time," recalls **PJ**. "I'm fairly easygoing, but I was deeply anxious about being in Los Angeles with the pandemic getting out of control. I was having lots of discussions with my family about moving back to Australia. We eventually did. '**Dear August**' was written as a love letter to the future, hoping there's a light on the other side. We haven't seen the light, but we're still looking."

"It was full circle and funny for us to write '**Dear August**' after '**July**,'" observes **Noah**. "I was going through a lot. I suffer from anxiety and depression. We were in this cloud of darkness where it's very easy to fall into bad habits. July and August 2020 were the hardest parts of quarantine for me. I lost my grandma, and I was looking to the future for hope. The song reminds me you will get to the light at the end of the tunnel. It may not be perfect, but you'll get there."

The accompanying music video brings this story to life. The stacks of letters, classic car, and blue dress conjure resonances of *The Notebook*. Mirroring the vocal back-and-forth, PJ shot his scenes in Australia, while Noah filmed in a remote California locale. Despite the distance, they come together in the video. “It’s funny because I look like I’m in the desert somewhere compared to PJ who’s surrounded by incredible greenery,” she laughs. “I feel like the video shows the depth of the song.”

“Dear August” represented one of many creative high watermarks during the making of the EP. After writing initial ideas in person, PJ and Noah commenced work remotely as the world shutdown due to COVID-19. Regardless of the distance, they grew closer as collaborators and friends and completed tracks at a prolific pace. For Noah, the vibe nodded to some of her earliest influences such as Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan. PJ shared his Dylan obsession, while drawing on inspirations ranging from M. Ward to Australian songwriting legend Paul Kelly.

“At heart, this is really a raw, homemade record,” **PJ** states. “There’s a strong folk tradition in Australia, which you can possibly feel. There’s certainly a lot of Nashville in there too. I feel like Noah is really the guiding force here. She’s the soul of this record.”

“This wouldn’t have happened without PJ,” counters Noah. “He’s the most talented dude I’ve ever partnered with. I genuinely admire him as a writer, singer, musician, and artist. Writing songs before, I honestly felt a little lost. It felt special to go back to my roots and make something with guitar and piano like what my dad made me listen to as a kid. I felt like I was able to put my true self into this. I could be who I am at the core—which is just Noah from Nashville.”

On the EP, “Slow Train Coming” rolls along on soft strumming towards PJ’s listless and lovelorn refrain offset by a bluesy wail. Then, there’s “Cannonball” -- PJ carries this lilting lullaby in a low register that barely lifts above a whisper before Noah joins him on the chorus and delivers a plaintive verse of her own. “*I could listen to him sing that over and over again,*” she adds. “*It’s one of my favorite parts of the EP.*”

Meanwhile, the somber hum of “The Best of You” gives way to “The Worst of You” where another heartbreaking harmony sails over wistful guitar as Noah asks, “*So why am I still trying to prove that I can love the worst of you?*”

“‘The Worst of You’ is so personal to my story,” admits Noah. “There are some very hard lyrics in it. Hopefully, people feel it.”

In addition to collaborating with Noah, PJ has garnered a reputation internationally as a songwriter and producer. In 2017, he stood out as the most nominated writer at the Australian APRA Songwriting Award. Meanwhile, Noah has quietly emerged as one of pop’s most daring, disruptive, and dynamic voices. Since 2016, she’s already built a diverse and deep catalog, including platinum hits such as “Make Me Cry” [feat. Labrinth], “Again” [feat. XXXTENTACION] and earned a Best New Artist Grammy nomination in 2020.

In the end, music from PJ and Noah just feels meant to be.

“For me, this was a really unexpected, but beautiful opportunity,” PJ leaves off. “It’s some of my favorite music ever. I’ll be proud of it forever. Hopefully, I’ll get together with Noah at some point in the not-too-distant future and play it for people.”

“I’m not just making music for the moment,” Noah concludes. “I want to make music you can listen to 20 years from now. It makes me happy to hear PJ say this is some of his favorite music, because it’s mine by far. I’m eternally grateful and inspired by him. I don’t want it to be over, and it hasn’t even really started yet. That’s the best part. In fact, as soon as we finished, I was like, ‘*You think we’re going to do a second EP?*’” she laughs.