

OCTOBER '25 A

THE CHRD

MAGAZINE

THE AYAMI

SHE BURSTS INTO OCTOBER
WITH A VOICE THAT CANNOT
BE IGNORED

GLOBAL GELO

THE FORMER ATHLETE IS
STILL TAKING THE WORLD BY
STORM

UP NEXT?

OUR 5 ON THE RISE

SPECIAL FEATURE
FRANCESCA
TARANTINO

— *Intro*

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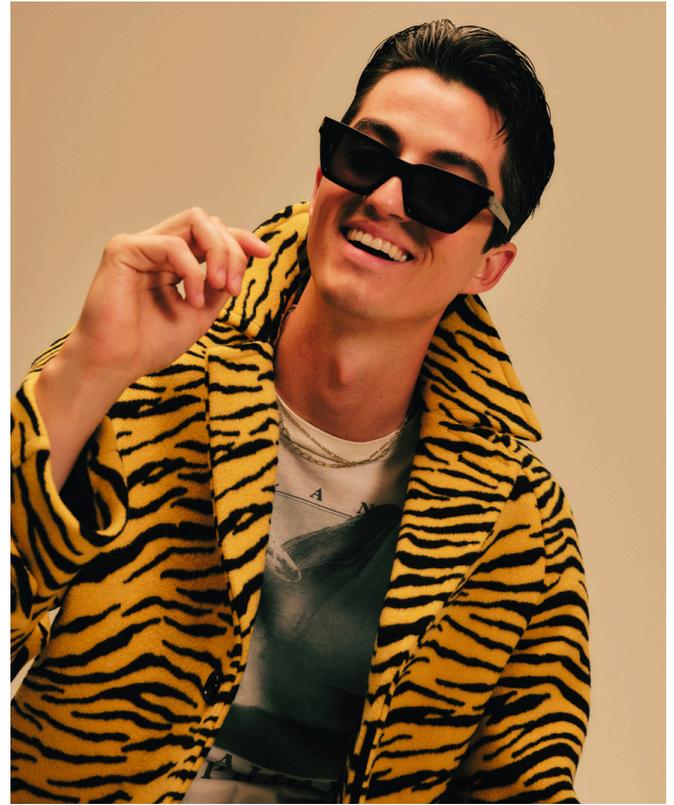
After a sold-out headline tour across Asia, pop artist and producer [elijah woods](#) is back with a vibrant new single, "Slicked Back Hair." The track follows his recent release "Ghost on the Radio" and is a first look at his highly anticipated debut album, *Can We Talk?*, which arrives on October 14.

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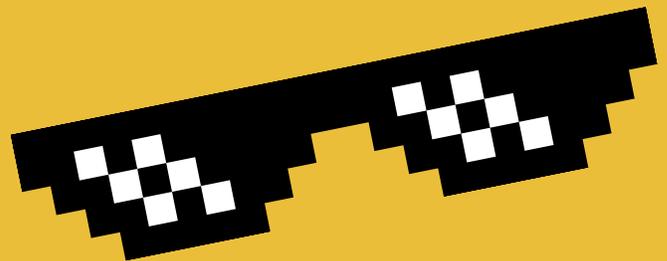


A Love Story Rekindled:

“Slicked Back Hair” is a feel-good anthem that’s both playful and heartfelt. It explores themes of growth, vulnerability, and lasting connection. As Elijah explains, the song is about “meeting someone who changes everything—the kind of person who turns you from a caterpillar into a butterfly.” With his signature blend of clever hooks and catchy production, the single perfectly captures the sound that has fueled his rise as a global independent artist.

This debut album marks a defining moment for Elijah, who has spent the last five years building a massive global presence entirely on his own terms. He has amassed over a billion streams and built a fanbase of more than 5 million followers without the backing of a major label. *Can We Talk?* leans into the emotional depth of his music while showcasing the infectious pop sensibilities that have made him a force to be reckoned with.

With his debut album on the horizon, Elijah Woods is primed to make 2025 his biggest year yet, reintroducing himself not just as a viral creator, but as a fearless songwriter and producer defining his own future.



GELO



In the hyper-competitive world of professional sports and entertainment, few stories are as surprising as the continued ascent of Gelo. Born LiAngelo Ball, the middle sibling of the Ball basketball dynasty has officially traded the squeak of sneakers for the thump of a studio beat, and the move is paying off in a massive way, proving that success often lies just outside the expected lane.

GELO

"Despite the initial public skepticism that follows any athlete pivoting to music, Gelo's journey has been marked by viral success, a lucrative record deal, and high-profile performances that cement his status as a serious contender in hip-hop.

Gelo's decision to pivot was recently made crystal clear on the podcast "Bag Fuel," where he revealed the significant financial disparity between his former and current career paths. As a player in the NBA G League, Gelo stated he was earning a mere \$3,000 a month. "As a grown man? That ain't it," he candidly remarked.

The real turning point came with his breakout 2024 single, "Tweaker." The track became a viral sensation, racking up nearly 20 million streams on Spotify and earning praise from rap heavyweights like Meek Mill and Lil Yachty. This instantaneous success quickly led to a multi-million dollar offer. Gelo signed a deal with Def Jam Recordings and Universal Music Group reportedly worth up to \$13 million, with \$8 million guaranteed. This unprecedented deal also granted him full ownership of his music and his own label, Born2Ball Music Group.



LA FRANCE CLOTHING

A portrait of Francesca Tarantino, a young woman with long, dark, wavy hair, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. She is wearing a black lace top. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Francesca Tarantino

At just 17 years old, Francesca Tarantino is not merely an emerging talent—she’s a force of nature in the pop-rock scene. Hailing from Orlando, the prodigious artist has quickly become one of the most decorated independent musicians of her generation, sweeping local accolades like Best Singer/Songwriter in the Best of Orlando 2025 and Best Local Musician in The Local Magazine 2025. Yet, it was her February 2025 single, "Hold On To Me," that truly solidified her status as a power player.

Francesca has always been a triple threat, writing, singing, and playing both acoustic and electric guitar. But with "Hold On To Me," she added a crucial fourth credit: producer. This self-produced single quickly became a landmark achievement, showcasing her command not only of performance but of the entire creative process.

The track’s success was immediate and historic. "Hold On To Me" soared up the charts of the global indie platform aBreak58, landing her in the number one slot for the third time. This makes Francesca the FIRST artist ever to have three consecutive number one hits on the influential platform—a stunning feat for an artist still in her teens.

F R A N C E S C A



"Francesca Tarantino is a rare find—an artist whose vocal power and technical guitar skill are matched only by her maturity as a songwriter." - Jason Howard (The Blvd Magazine)

Francesca's music, which blends raw rock energy with vulnerable pop sensibility, is resonating deeply within the independent music community. Her rock ballad, "Tragedy," earned her the Song of the Year Multi-Genre award at the 2024 Josie Music Awards at the legendary Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, TN. She has also been awarded the Bronze for USA Female Emerging Artist of the Year at the ISSA Awards, was nominated for two Hollywood Independent Music Awards, and is currently nominated for three Josie Music Awards.

This recognition isn't manufactured; it's earned through tireless work. Since she was 14, Francesca has been actively gigging across Central Florida, playing 100 shows in 2024 and on track to play close to 150 live shows in 2025.

Francesca has released seven singles since 2023, showcasing an impressive work ethic that fuels her growing catalog. Her current single, "Spider On The Wall," is another bluesy rock and roll offering that she self-produced, where listeners can hear her blossoming skill not just as a vocalist, but as a commanding lead guitarist.

T A R A N T I N O

A SURPRISING START

Her journey began not in a garage band, but surprisingly, in musical theater. However, the pull of the rock legends her parents played—like Aerosmith and Deep Purple—proved too strong. She ultimately traded the stage lights of school productions for the demanding schedule of a working independent musician.

This commitment to her craft and her love of performing isn't just to local clubs; her powerhouse vocals have been featured at major sporting events, where she has delivered the National Anthem for teams including the Orlando Magic (NBA), the Tampa Bay Rays (MLB), the Miami Marlins (MLB), and the Jacksonville Jaguars (NFL).



A BORN ENTERTAINER

The young artist maintains a tireless gigging schedule across Central Florida, playing over a hundred shows a year. Her stage experience isn't limited to local venues like Hard Rock Live Orlando and the Dr. Phillips Center for Performing Arts.

You can watch clips of Francesca's live performance at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame here: [Francesca LIVE from Rock & Roll Hall of Fame](#). This video is relevant as it showcases her live performing ability and one of the major venues she has appeared at.



With an active catalog of seven singles released since 2023 and an unwavering dedication to her craft, Francesca Tarantino is more than a teenage sensation; she is an industry outlier whose brother, Dominic, also crafts the visual elements for her music videos.

The immediate future for Francesca Tarantino is one defined by relentless artistic output and rigorous touring, demonstrating her ambition to break into the national scene. Having already made history on the indie charts and gained proficiency as a songwriter, vocalist, and now self-producer, her focus is on expanding her musical catalog through more singles and the potential release of a full EP.

Simultaneously, her commitment to live performance is unwavering, with close to 150 shows projected for 2025 across Florida and select out-of-state festivals, a testament to her dedication to the stage.

Musically, Tarantino is a unique fusion, channeling the powerful, guitar-driven energy and vocal prowess of classic rock legends like Heart (Ann and Nancy Wilson), Aerosmith (Steven Tyler), and Kiss, while incorporating the sharp songwriting and emotional vulnerability found in modern pop-rock artists such as Paramore (Hayley Williams) and Avril Lavigne. This specific blend of classic grit and contemporary pop sensibility positions her as a leading figure in the resurgence of pop-rock, appealing to fans of both arena rock anthems and modern, introspective alternative music.

"There is a palpable passion in her music, particularly in tracks like 'Truth Cannot Hide.' She's not just paying homage to the greats; she's using classic rock as a foundation to build a thoroughly modern and massive sound that feels destined for the arena stage. She is the embodiment of the Pop-Rock resurgence, proving that the genre is alive and well in the hands of this next generation."

EMILY JENSON

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THE AYAMI
BOLD & FEARLESS

BY EVELYN MARIE & EMILY JENSON



COVER STORY

THE AYAMI

TAKING THE WORLD BY STORM

She burst into October with a voice that cannot be ignored. With her new single “Papa” – released on October 1 – The AYAMI steps into her power as an Afro-pop and Afro-R&B artist who transforms struggle into anthems of resilience. This October, she isn’t just celebrating a birthday; she is celebrating a rebirth.

The AYAMI is an Afro-pop / Afro-R&B / Pop artist whose sound blends soulful vocals with African and diasporic rhythms – the heartbeat of her music. After reclaiming her independence from a restrictive partnership, she released “Papa” on October 1 as her first fully independent single. She now plans monthly releases, each carrying cinematic depth, powerful lyrics, and energy designed to inspire.

*“‘PAPA’ IS THE FIRST
TIME I LET MY VOICE
BREATHE WITHOUT
LIMITS. IT’S NOT JUST
A SONG — IT’S MY
DECLARATION OF
FREEDOM AND
STRENGTH.”
-THE AYAMI*

The Ayami

For six years, The AYAMI worked under a producer who limited her creative voice and held back her projects. Music, the very essence of who she is, was used as a tool of control. But when that chapter closed, she chose not silence, but strength.

She poured everything into her writing, creating an entire body of work on her own. Out of that came "Papa," released October 1 — her first independent single. It's a song about resilience, about standing tall after heartbreak, and about finding your own path when every door seems to close.

"My music is deeply inspired by African and diasporic rhythms. They are the heartbeat of my sound," she says.

Her vision is to merge raw emotion with Afro-driven energy, crafting songs that are both deeply personal and universally moving. Every month she plans to release a new single — each one a story, each one carrying a strong message of empowerment.



"Her voice has a crystalline quality that instantly draws you in, but it's the depth of her arrangements and the nuanced storytelling that truly sets her apart. She's creating something genuinely cinematic." - Evelyn Marie



But for The AYAMI, independence is just the beginning. "I want to work with teams who can amplify what I already do — big production, global reach, and partners who understands that my art is both personal and universal. For now, I'm building loudly — releasing, creating visuals, and bringing an uncompromised version of myself to listeners everywhere" she explains. The drive is clear: her music is built for global stages, for big emotions, and for audiences everywhere.

"Papa" is not only a single — it is the start of a new chapter. It declares her independence, her resilience, and her readiness to step fully into her place on the world stage.



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MAGAZINE

OCTOBER: TOP 5 ARTISTS ON THE VERGE OF STARDOM

BY EVELYN MARIE



ARTIST NAME: AMAARAE

📍 GHANA

Right on the verge of superstardom, singer and songwriter Amaarae is a Ghanaian-American artist known for her distinctive, genre-bending sound that masterfully fuses pop, R&B, Afrobeats, and alté with an often ethereal, whispery vocal delivery. Born in the Bronx, New York, and raised between the U.S. (Atlanta and New Jersey) and Accra, Ghana, her cosmopolitan background deeply informs her experimental ethos and non-conformist style, which has been hailed by Vogue. Her career exploded following her critically acclaimed 2020 debut album, *The Angel You Don't Know*, particularly due to the massive, globally charting success of the "Sad Girlz Luv Money" remix featuring Kali Uchis, which went viral on TikTok. Amaarae continues to push boundaries with her music, exploring themes of fluid gender and sexuality, and in 2023, she released her highly anticipated sophomore album, *Fountain Baby*, via Interscope Records, further solidifying her status as a trailblazer in the new wave of African global pop.

ARTIST NAME: IYLA
📍 LOS ANGELES

iYLA is an emerging alternative R&B and pop singer-songwriter originally from Los Angeles, California, specifically the San Fernando Valley, who has quickly gained attention for her unique, genre-blurring sound. Blending sultry vocals with R&B, jazz, and hard-hitting trap beats, the Irish and Italian songstress first broke through with her 2018 debut EP, War + Raindrops, which included the viral hit "Juice." Following that success, she's released projects like Other Ways to Vent (2020) and Appetite for Disaster (2023), featuring collaborations with artists like Method Man and Benny The Butcher, and has been recognized as a YouTube Music Foundry Artist. Her debut full-length album, WEEPING ANGEL (2025), is her most personal work to date, channeling her experience with grief and creative rebirth into a project that is both vulnerable and fiercely confident, showcasing her growth into a dynamic and essential voice in modern R&B.

PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: @KADIS.WAV @GPW11 @LUCASDIAZ @OHITSCARLOS91 @BONNIENICHOALDS @THEARTIST.RAY



ARTIST NAME: LIHTZ
PHILADELPHIA

Budding superstar singer/rapper LIHTZ is a versatile and multifaceted artist hailing from Philadelphia, PA. Born in West Philly before moving to the "Uptown" area, where he began honing his craft. His journey includes a brief move to Atlanta to focus on his sound and a significant early cosign from fellow Philly artist Gillie Da Kid, which helped launch his career. Lihtz, who early on went by Lihtz Kamraz. Gained wider attention after being featured on Meek Mill's track "Never Lose," and later, he was handpicked by Future to be featured on the curated compilation album 1800 Seconds Vol. 2. Known for his blend of melodic vocals and raw, heartfelt, street lyrics, his music often explores themes of pain and reflection, as exemplified by tracks like "Serenity" and the popular single "Crash Out." Beyond music, Lihtz has also showcased his talents on screen, appearing on the hit TV series Empire.

ARTIST NAME: KIRBY

MISSISSIPPI

Budding superstar KIRBY (born Kirby Lauryn Dockery) is a singer and songwriter whose music delivers a refreshing blend of R&B and modern neo-soul, rooted deeply in the musical traditions of the American South. Born in Memphis, Tennessee, and raised in Southaven, Mississippi, KIRBY has an impressive pedigree: she first broke into the industry not as a performer, but as a top-tier songwriter, penning massive hits like Rihanna, Kanye West, and Paul McCartney's "FourFiveSeconds," as well as Beyoncé's "Die with You" and Ariana Grande's "Break Your Heart Right Back." Her transition to full-time artist was sparked by a self-imposed "A Song A Day" YouTube challenge, which eventually led to her signing with Roc Nation and releasing her acclaimed 2020 debut EP, *Sis*, a project celebrated for its live instrumentation and soulful, contemporary sound that pays homage to her Southern roots.

PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: @CHAUNCEY.MANGUM @HOMER808 @ROB_KLEINER @NICK_MOVSHON @HASHTAG.DAVEGUY



ARTIST NAME: BARRY HENDRIX

📍 LOS ANGELES

In a digital landscape often criticized for its fleeting trends, rock artist Barry Hendrixx has carved out a unique, buzzworthy space, effortlessly bridging the gap between nostalgic punk and a forward-thinking rock aesthetic. Hailing from St. Louis (with deep roots in the East Side of St. Louis, Illinois, before moving to Los Angeles), Hendrixx first went viral with dynamic, fresh covers of 2000s-era pop-punk and rock anthems, injecting songs by artists like Fall Out Boy and Avril Lavigne with a raw, electrifying energy. His distinct look—a fusion of contemporary street style and classic rock swagger—has established a new visual language for the genre. Now, as his original tracks also start climbing the viral charts, Barry Hendrixx is proving he's far more than a cover sensation, delivering honest, cathartic rock music built for the modern generation.

PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: @REXJUDE_ @_MADDY_PARKER

BONUS
PICK

ARTIST NAME: WILFRED CISSE
📍 LONDON, UK

WILFRED CISSE is the buzzing UK rapper who is giving the genre a fresh aesthetic with his unique, sharply-dressed look. Born in Ivory Coast and having moved to the UK in 2004, drifting around London before eventually settling in Essex, Cisse's visual style—often a suit paired with an afro—has already been recognised by campaigns like Ralph Lauren's 'new London boys,' drawing comparisons to the polished, "gentlemen rap" looks of Jidenna and early Janelle Monáe. The London-based artist, who once worked as a tailor on Savile Row, brings a cinematic quality to his music that matches his dress sense, filming, editing, and colour-grading his own phenomenal content. His dedication to a distinctive visual language, which riffs on surrealism and has seen him create entire videos with a camera balanced on a shoe, has started to go viral, cementing his status as an artist as compelling to watch as he is to listen to.

PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: Wilfred Cisse