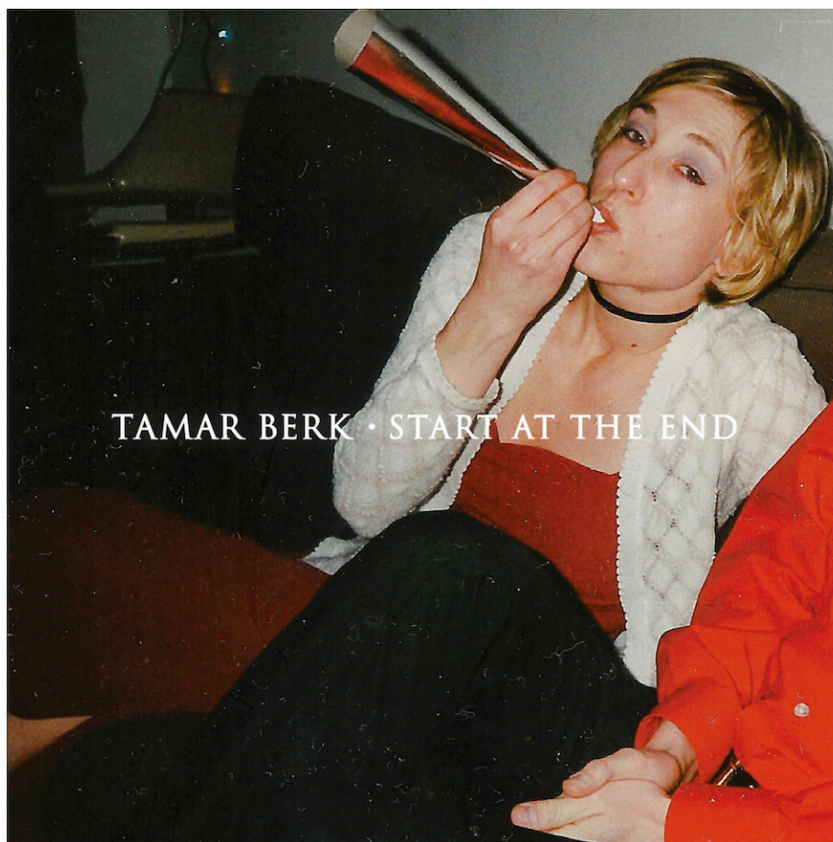


LISTEN TO THIS



TAMAR BERK • START AT THE END

Tamar Berk - *Start at the End*

On Tamar Berk's new album, *Start at the End*, nostalgia feels like a trap. On the surface, the songs evoke the post-grunge eccentricism of late '90s/early '00s indie-pop—*The Con*-era Tegan & Sara, and Fiery Furnace's Eleanor Friedburger come to mind. But unlike most pop culture that evokes the past, *Start at the End* doesn't dole out escapism. Rather, it works a little like hypnotism, luring listeners into dark submission. Beneath the exteriors lies sadness, anxiety, and heartache, and I must say: this is the nostalgia I want. This is the nostalgia we need.

"Your Permission," the album's opener, sets the tone with a sparse, haunting keyboard reminiscent of Aimee Mann's "One" or a Jon Brion composition. But immediately, Berk's vulnerable-yet-urgent voice kicks in, rendering whimsy into desperation: "Can I ask your permission, to be the perfect wife, to have the perfect life, just maybe not today." Before we can recover from that gut-punch, Berk sings, "I've been here before"—a sobering nod to the defeatism of seeing progress fail time and again.

This is to say, *Start at the End* is not a light record, even though it *sounds* like one. Bright production, ethereal beauty and pop-punk flourishes run rampant (the palm-mute guitar on "Tragic Endings" hit my '90s-loving heart), but the lyrics focus on grief, loss and self-doubt (according to Bandcamp, these songs were written after the death of Berk's father).

But the darkness on *Start at the End* makes its hope all the brighter. On the album's soaring closer "This Is Me Trying," Berk sings, "This is me trying to get through this" over an anthemic, Britpop-tinged wall of sound. It's a cathartic spell reminding us that we can't ever really return to the figurative touchstones in our minds, but ultimately growth, recovery, and joy lie ahead.

Start at the End comes out April 22. [Go pre-order it on Bandcamp.](#)

