

Start at the End is Tamar Berk's second solo record, and one that no doubt must have doubled as a therapeutic exercise for the talented San Diego, CA-based singer/songwriter. Written after her father's unexpected passing in 2021, it's a song cycle of sorts about dealing with grief, and one in which Ms. Berk lays bare her feelings in her pointed, potent lyrics: she's standing crying in the checkout line, she wants to throw out all the crap, she's having a real bad day, and she lacks self-control and sometimes she says the wrong things. Nowhere is the depth of her loss more apparent than on the brief, deeply felt ballad "You Already Knew," where she pours her heart out to her late father in a set of lyrics that are both personal and relatable. The arrangements and performances throughout ***Start at the End*** are varied and always engaging: aside from the appropriately hushed slower ones (the autobiographical "June Lake" is absolutely stunning), there's a bit of straightforward guitar pop on the punchy "Dandelions in My Flowerbed," a balls out, "Eff this, let's kick out the jams" vibe via "Real Bad Day," some angular, alt-rock churn on "Tragic Endings," the ultra-catchy, truth-telling "Alone Tonight," and the sweetly life-affirming "Just Be." It's a highly nuanced, special collection of tunes that evokes feelings of sadness, urgency and, ultimately, hope and redemption—and it obviously all emanates straight from Tamar Berk's heart. **Grade: A**

