

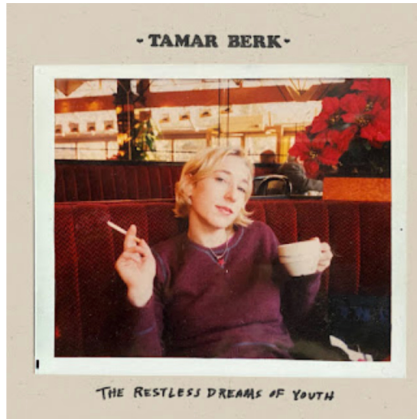
Pure Pop 4 Now People

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 2021

Tamar Berk: A review and an interview

By Henry Lipput

Tamar Berk was in bands in the 90s at the same time a number of guitar-driven women were changing the face of indie music. With her marvelous solo debut *the restless dreams of youth* ([Bandcamp](#)) Berk announces "I was there. I heard you. And this is what I have to say now."



 [in the wild](#) by Tamar Berk 

the restless dreams of youth is an ultra-melodic soundtrack with honest and adult lyrics about the many phases of relationships. Berk plays guitar and keyboards and has assembled extremely talented musicians who get exactly what her songs need.

The album kicks off with the pure pop treasure of "skipping the cracks" with lyrics that refuse to look back when a relationship ends: "And I don't really miss you/And I don't even feel bad/When you said you would see just how you felt I wasn't even mad/And it's only when someone asks me.../That I'm reminded of your silly face/And the stack of vinyl records you left at my place."

"in the wild" is another nugget in the same musical vein but despite its upbeat tone and handclaps (I'm a sucker for handclaps) there's an undertow of just holding it together: "And I'm not one to cry or hold your hand/During the sad parts of the movie I'll just smile and pretend/That I'm doing fine, but inside I'm a mess/Cause even the previews make me weepy, I confess."

Tip toeing around each other in a relationship is the theme of "heavy & abusive," an absolutely rocker: "I don't know why we keep having these kinds of mornings/When every little look feels like a warning/And walking away feels exactly the same as saying goodbye."

"shadow clues" has a very spooky vibe (and [video](#)) because it can haunt you when you don't know what that other person is thinking or what they might do. And "cleveland" is a lovely tune but its lyrics question where someone is in their life with the Midwest being a metaphor for finding you're back where you began.

In a recent email exchange Pure Pop had the opportunity to talk to Berk about her previous musical outings, her influences, and how the album was put together.

Pure Pop: *the restless dreams of youth* is your first solo album. What groups or musical projects were you involved in before this?

Berk: When I lived in Chicago, I put my first band together and it was called

ABOUT ME

Pure Pop For Now People

I'm a very picky musical appreciator who likes to listen and write about new music.

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Starball. It was a proper power pop band that had some revolving members. We did very well and gained a nice little following mostly in the Midwest. You can still find an album called *Superfans* on Spotify!

While in Chicago, I also started an electro punk band duo with my husband called The Countdown which signed to Invisible Records an electronic/industrial label in Chicago. This band was so much fun! It had been described as 'Sonny and Cher' on meth! The songs were electronic punk dance songs that focused on paranoia, big brother, and the deepest, darkest secrets that people carry with them throughout their lives. My favorite album was our self-released *Your Friends and Neighbors* which you can find on Spotify. We actually had one 'hit' called "Human Resources" and you can find that video on YouTube!

After moving to Portland, my husband and I started a 60s/70s garage band called Paradise and released three albums. I played Hammond organ, Farfisa, piano, synth, Wurlitzer...any kind of keyboard you can name, I played it in Paradise. We played some amazing shows! Our last release was a double album rock opera, if you can believe it! It's called *Dawn of Paradise*. I was also in a very popular 60's garage band called The Pinnacles. In this band, I played Farfisa and sang back-up. This band opened for many amazing bands including The Sonics! We had a big following and released many singles and two full length albums.

On top of these main bands, I was in several other smaller bands as well as gusted on many friends' albums.



Pure Pop: What are your influences in terms of songwriting and arrangements?

Berk: This album includes a combination of old and new songs so I suppose my influences have to include a range of musicians and bands. About four of the songs were plucked from old four-track demos I wrote many moons ago and reworked with new lyrics and new parts. The truth is, I love the simplicity of a good power pop song with a traditional arrangement, but I also like to experiment and create some unconventional songs. I am a sucker for simplicity and in fact, one of my goals with this album was to keep the songs as lean as possible. I would say that some of my influences for this particular album include early Liz Phair, Juliana Hatfield, Aimee Mann, Elliot Smith, The Who, ELO, The Cars, Guided by Voices...and probably more that were in my subconscious!

Pure Pop: Your album came out this year and was recorded during Covid. How did you put the songs together? How did the musicians provide their parts?

Berk: Actually, about three years ago I started collecting songs and recording demos and promised myself that I was going to put out a solo album at some point.

In 2019, I actually contacted some musicians and we began rehearsing and working on those songs in hopes to go into the studio, but when Covid hit, the studio plans died. I had to rethink everything so I decided to use my own producing and engineering skills and put together the basic tracks.

Then I had my friend Matt Thomson who is a producer and engineer help add more tracks to prepare them for a drummer. My friend Matt Walker who plays drums with Morrissey, Garbage, and Smashing Pumpkins lives in Chicago and he has a home studio and was willing to take on my project. I'm so lucky to have had him play on this album! His drumming is OUT OF THIS WORLD!

Then, I called Chris Davis, the guitarist who had been working with me pre-Covid. He's an incredible guitar player and was already familiar with the songs.

the black watch
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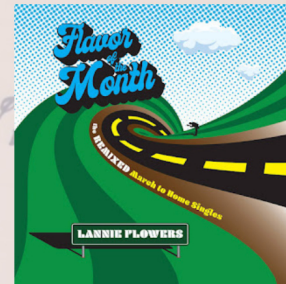
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He also had a home studio so he sent me his incredible guitar solos and we just plugged those into the songs.

As we worked, we would send tracks back and forth until eventually all the songs were completed. I played all the rhythm guitar, piano, strings, Wurlitzer, harpsichord, organ, and soon enough, all the tracks were ready to be mixed.

Then I called Sean O'Keefe to mix the songs. He's worked with Plain White T's, Fall Out Boy, and most recently Beach Bunny. All of this was done over the wire!!!

Then Justin Perkins of Mystery Room Mastering mastered the album, and it was finally done. It was a tedious process and, at times, very frustrating and I had many nights of tears feeling anxious about how it was all going to turn out. I couldn't be happier with the way the album sounds!



Pure Pop: Are you writing songs for a follow up solo album?

Berk: Yes, I've already started and though I have some songs in mind, many will need to be re-recorded as they are in demo form. I'm not going to rush though!

Pure Pop: Once Covid restrictions are lifted do you plan to tour to support the restless dreams of youth?

Berk: Yes, I would love to get some musicians together but everyone I know is in about ten bands so I may have to start playing out myself and do a little solo thing until I can find some musicians that have some time! I would love to tour for sure!

on [June 15, 2021](#)



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