

Interview: Tamar Berk

The Talented Singer/Songwriter Discusses Her Third Solo Album



S.W. LAUDEN
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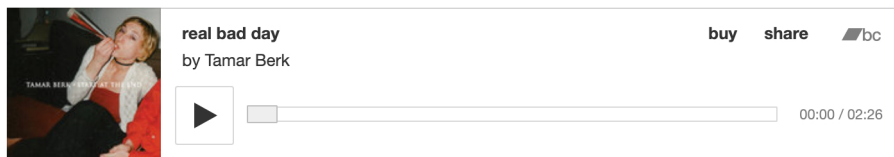


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San Diego-based singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist Tamar Berk is on a roll, releasing three impressive solo albums in as many years.

It started with the introspective collection *The Restless Dreams of Youth* (2021) which takes a thoughtful look back on “Cleveland” while confronting persistent insecurities with “Skipping the Cracks.” Berk followed up with *Start at the End* (2022), an emotionally-charged collection which grapples with the death of her father.



Her latest album, *tiny injuries* (August 18, 2023), continues to explore themes of grief and isolation, but with an even more intense gaze. Edgy lead single “Drop in the Bucket” considers the scars often caused by longterm relationships, a theme echoed on shimmering second single “if u know, u know.”

These 12 tracks combine confessional lyrics with polished pop production and undeniable hooks to propel the songs forward. “Sunday Driving” feels like a long lost Go-Go’s summer road trip anthem, while “Walking Hurricane” taps into the garage-/psychedelic spirit of The Bangles.

That's a tightrope to walk for even the most accomplished songwriters, but Berk—along with an impressive cast of collaborators and guest musicians—easily delivers.

I caught up with Berk to discuss *tiny injuries*, her major influences, and what's next.



Tamar Berk Interview

Congrats on the great new album! How did *tiny injuries* come together?

Tamar Berk: I had just released *Start at the End* and was working on promoting that. I let some time pass and wasn't even sure I was going to put out another album so quickly, but as a songwriter I start getting itchy and paranoid that I'll never write another song.

There was a lot to deal with in the aftermath of my father's death and though *Start at the End* felt cathartic and really dealt with his death in some ways very directly, *tiny injuries* sort of had me looking at myself and who I was now. I changed from the moment he died and honestly, not all for the better. I was starting to write a lot and songs sort of came in a very hodgepodge way. Which I suppose is where my head is at.



This is your third solo album in as many years. Is this the most prolific you have ever been as a songwriter?

Tamar Berk: Hmmmm that's a good question...No and yes. No because I've been writing and recording songs since I was 16 and have hundreds and hundreds of songs that were just not always released. And yes, because self-releasing music has become much more manageable, so there is the impression that I've been more prolific because my songs are out in the world!

I think as a female musician, you can't help but be influenced by the female solo artists and bands that came before you simply because I used to listen to/watch them and just dream of one day doing that and being that cool.

How do you think you've evolved as a songwriter since releasing *Restless Dreams of Youth* in 2021?

Tamar Berk: I think musically I am thinking more about the overall vibe of the song than ever before. By default a song has a vibe, but oftentimes it ends up being not the vibe I was going for due to instrumentation, vocal take, etc. So I'm trying to be more aware of the bigger picture and emotional vibe of the song. Lyrically, I'm digging a lot deeper and saying a lot of things now I might not have said before.



***Tiny injuries* opens with the excellent second single "if u know, u know." I can hear an interesting collection of influences on this one, ranging from Big Star to Phoebe Bridgers. Does any of that ring true?**

Tamar Berk: Ohhhh I love that! I played this song solo at a songwriters night here in San Diego and someone handed me a post-it afterwards that said "I love that song it's like Blink 182 meets Phoebe Bridgers." And honestly, that makes sense too!

Something that always fascinates me as a songwriter is the influences that people hear in my songs! When I'm writing I'm literally never aware of that, but then when people mention influences they hear I'm usually like, "That makes sense! I love them!"

I've been playing music for a really long time and do know a lot of people. I've got amazing musicians in all the places I lived...Chicago, Portland and San Diego.

Two of my favorite tracks from *tiny injuries* are the first single, "Drop in the Bucket," and "Walking Hurricane," both of which remind me of The Bangles in different ways. Would you consider them a big influence?

Tamar Berk: Ohhhh I really love The Bangles reference! Someone else who was writing a review mentioned track 2, "Sunday Driving," sounded like the Go-Go's!

I think as a female musician, you can't help but be influenced by the female solo artists and bands that came before you simply because I used to listen to/watch them and just dream of one day doing that and being that cool.

The Bangles and The Go Go's were huge in my life! They were cool while being catchy and poppy which is exactly what I wanted to be

and poppy which is exactly what I aspired to be.

You played most of the instruments on *tiny injuries* yourself. Do you consider yourself more of a multi-instrumentalist, or is there one instrument that you most gravitate to?

Tamar Berk: Piano/keys/synth/organ is my first instrument, and I'm pretty good at it. I'm a decent rhythm guitar player, but I play solos like a piano player and can really only play very simple solos. Usually one's what I write! Haha. I can hold down the bass parts, but I wouldn't call myself a bass player. I can keep a beat on the drums and that's about it!

I generally write on piano or guitar depending on what's right next to me! haha.



You also have a long list of collaborators and guests on *tiny injuries*. How did you put that impressive roster together?

Tamar Berk: I've been playing music for a really long time and do know a lot of people. I've got amazing musicians in all the places I lived...Chicago, Portland and San Diego. First off, my drummer and co-producer of this album, Matt Walker, introduced me to a lot of amazing musicians like Mike Klooster from Smashmouth who played Farfisa on "Walking Hurricane," and Joe George who played lead guitar on "Gonna Call It."

I met Joe Dilillo on Facebook as I really dug his solo project and his guitar playing. I also put the word out for a trumpet player and someone suggested Everett Kelly who was just superb on my track "Permanent Vacation." Alan Hunter from Eels played on "Walking Hurricane"...we were bandmates for a bit in Portland in my band Paradise. Matt Thomson also played bass and he's from Portland and he also engineered my band Paradise's full-length rock opera (yup I wrote a rock opera) and helped me record both of my first two albums. Rob Wrong, one of the greatest soloists I've ever met, is from Portland and has a studio and is in the band Witch Mountain. He played on "if u know, u know" and the incredible solo on "1997."

Chris Davies is one of the most creative guitar players I've ever met and I know him from San Diego where I guested on piano in one of his bands. Chris Marsteller is from San Diego and in the band The Loons, but he's actually in my live band now and he plays on "Sunday Driving."

The thing is, I like working with anyone who likes my songs and has great ideas. The only prerequisite is that I suppose they need to be able to send me digital files because I produce all the tracks in my home studio.

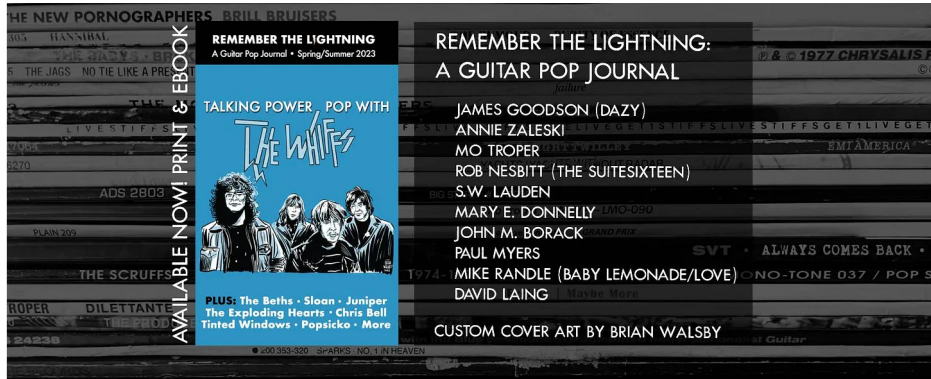
What's next for you? Any plans to tour for *tiny injuries*?

Tamar Berk: I have my big album release party at The Casbah on August 5th here in San Diego and I am playing the IPO Festival (International Pop Overthrow Festival) on August 19th at The Black Cat also in San Diego. My dream would be to play in Portland and Chicago...working on it. :)

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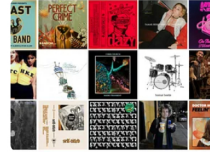
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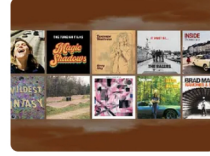
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