

Tamar Berk adds up all the *Tiny Injuries* for her third album

“The cumulative effects of death by a thousand paper cuts”



Tamar Berk: externalizing the internalized.

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Indie pop singer-songwriter **Tamar Berk** grew up playing piano and started writing songs on guitar as a teenager. While living in Chicago, she played in regional bands — like her first, power pop group Starball, known for tracks like the 2001 song “New Year’s Day” (“I wanted to write a holiday song,” recalls Berk). She went on to play in an electro-punk duo with her husband that they named The Countdown and a Small Faces cover band called Deep Joy, and she briefly had a group with Kim Thompson called Sweet Heat. Relocating to Portland, she played keys with the Pynnacles, and her next group, Paradise, released three albums, including a rock opera. After she moved to San Diego, her debut album *The Restless Dreams of Youth* was released in summer 2021, and earned a San Diego Music Award nomination. Her sophomore full-length from 2022, *Start At the End*, was nominated for the Best Pop Album SDMA, while she earned another nom for Best Pop Artist.

Now she has two new singles, “Drop in the Bucket” and “If U Know, U Know,” both from her upcoming third album *Tiny Injuries*, due August 18. “*Tiny Injuries* represents the cumulative effects of the ‘death by a thousand paper cuts’ we have all been through since Covid broke,” she says, “a veritable roll-call of neuroses, frustration, and just plain feeling sorry for yourself. I didn’t feel as crushed emotionally during this album in comparison to the last one, which made me question every choice I was making.” Regarding the album’s first single, she says “‘Drop in the Bucket’ explores the idea that relationships change because of the little cutting remarks, hurtful words, and arguments that add up over time. Eventually, this can lead to resentment, anger, and codependency, weighing down a relationship. As the old saying goes, you can’t take something back once you say it.”

A video for “Drop in the Bucket” is streaming online. “My idea for the video actually came to me in a dream in which I was a ballroom dancer...I thought that would make such a cool video, even though I had never done it before. I searched for a ballroom dancing teacher and found Ksenia Stravica, who teaches private classes at Champion Ballroom in Kearny Mesa. So I got together with

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...avica, who teaches private classes at Champion Ballroom in nearby mesa. So I got together with her for about a month, and we worked together to choreograph a dance. I come from a ballet background, so combining our influences made for a strange and wild little dance. The final piece was filmed by this amazing local videographer, Brandon Mosquera, at this really cool space I found called FemX in central San Diego."

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She describes her other new single, "If U Know, U Know," as "Big Star meets Phoebe Bridgers." The track deals with Berk's feelings of confusion, isolation, and dislocation after the death of her father. ("The sun comes up but I'm already down/Wander room to room, but you're nowhere around.") "I recently learned that we are always mourning something: a child leaving home, houses, cities, jobs, friends, marriage, a death, ourselves, our youth. There are things I like about getting older, but the thing I hate most is how much longer the list of things that I'm mourning has become."

Talking about the album's title, she continues in a reflective vein: "We all go through life having experienced things that affect us and cause problems, whether we know that at the time or not. Lots of anxiety and memories we can never rid ourselves of. Some of them are small, and some are bigger, but they are injuries that remain with us. And it's not about 'Poor me.' Everyone internalizes these injuries, and none of them are tiny."

Recorded in her home studio, Berk produced *Tiny Injuries* with Matt Walker (Smashing Pumpkins, Garbage, Filter), and the twelve tracks were mixed by Sean O'Keefe (Fallout Boy, Plain White T's). Berk played the majority of the instruments, including rhythm and lead guitar, piano, synth, organs, bass, and percussion. But the album also features guest musicians, including Eels bassist Allen Hunter, Witch Mountain guitarist Rob Wrong, **Loons** guitarist Christopher Marsteller, Maita bass player Matt Thomson, **Penetrators** guitarist Chris Davies, trumpet player Everett Kelly, and Smashmouth's Matt Klooster, who provides some bouncy Farfisa organ on "Walking Hurricane."

"I like pulling people into an emotional vibe with me," Berk says. "Life can change on a dime. And sometimes you don't know what to do. This is the first time I don't have a plan." She will debut *Tiny Injuries* when she plays an album release show at the **Casbah on August 5**.

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