Laufey

"As a musician, my goal is to bring jazz and classical music to my generation through a more accessible road," declares the composer, singer, producer, and multi-instrumentalist Laufey. The Los Angeles-based, Icelandic-Chinese Laufey is looking to bridge the gap between the past and the present, the history books and social media, the Reykjavik concert hall Harpa and the Los Angeles rock dive Troubadour, by writing, recording, and performing songs that are truly timeless, inspired by jazz greats and classical masters while possessing a point of view that could only be conveyed by a 21st-century twentysomething.

Last year, that trailblazing approach paid off. Laufey (pronounced lāy-vāy) began 2022 with a performance on *Jimmy Kimmel LIVE!*, and she closed it out as Spotify's most-streamed jazz musician of the year. In the wake of that whirlwind, while blowing out tours of North America, Asia, and Australia, playing and recording a live album with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, and debuting in Spotify's Top 10 with her first full-length *Everything I Know About Love*, she managed to continue her story by completing *Bewitched*, her second album.

"I think I even surprised myself," she says of the quick turnaround between albums one and two. "But this album almost feels like a second chapter to my first—I had so many thoughts I needed to get out there, and so many songs."

Laufey is still drawing from jazz and classical music on *Bewitched*, with cuts like the smoldering string-assisted ballad "Promise" and the tender "Letter To My 13 Year Old Self." Other moments, like the upbeat rhythms of "Lovesick" and the drones lurking in the background of "Haunted," reveal an expansion of her musical palette, while the lyrics speak to her ever-growing cache of personal and professional memories, which she'll add to this fall when she performs with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. "I had all these new life experiences and thoughts and things that I was going through at the time, and I just ended up writing a lot," she recalls.

While *Everything I Know About Love* shows what Laufey calls her "hopeless romantic" side, *Bewitched* has a more mature outlook, although it's still in love with love. "This is a love album, whether it be a love towards a friend or a lover or life," she asserts. "The first album also touched a lot on things like moving out of my childhood home and moving into a new city for the first time—being an adult. With this one, I've experienced a little bit more of that, and I'm writing about the magic in the love of being young."

Not that the magic is always, well, magical. "From the Start," a breezy bossa nova cut, showcases Laufey's quivering alto and to-the-quick lyrics. Blending a mid-century vibe with text-message-ready lyrics—"she's so perfect, blah, blah, blah," Laufey sings at one point—its

expressed frustrations about “falling in love with your best friend” makes its brushed drums and strummed guitars feel like an escape.

Laufey, who grew up between Reykjavik and Washington, D.C., and who studied cello at the Berklee College of Music, co-produced and used all live instrumentation on *Bewitched*, harnessing her deep musical knowledge, as well as the expanded songwriting capabilities afforded to her by a recently acquired grand piano. The fairy-dust-flecked waltz “Bewitched” and the sweeping “California and Me” were both recorded with the London-based Philharmonia Orchestra, which she also collaborated with on the 2021 single “Let You Break My Heart Again.” Other tracks feature what Laufey calls the “Laufey string sound,” which comes from her layering multiple cello parts, played by her, and violin parts, played by her twin sister Junia.

The combination of Laufey’s self-assured musicianship and deeply felt lyrics takes the idea of “classic” music, whether it’s slotted as classical or jazz—or even blue-chip pop songs written by the likes of Carole King or Taylor Swift—and humanizes it, creating a deep-seated connection with listeners that goes deeper than hitting “play” on a streaming service. “There are very few examples of artists who are onstage with an orchestra one day and making TikToks the next,” she notes dryly. Laufey’s straddling of those two worlds has put her in a singular place across music, and with *Bewitched*, she’s ready to ascend to the next level.