



CXLOE colors in between the lines of light and dark with her brand of pop

By **Murjani Rawls** - Dec 13, 2019

Some pop music today strives to air on the side of caution. Maybe not ruffle too many feathers. Perhaps slightly graze our most carnal desires in the appeal to strive for universal acclaim. Then there's the type of pop music that digs deeper into the darker places. Says the quiet parts [ⓧ] louder. Pushing the boundaries a bit. Now, reading this initially, you may immediately think of "dark" with a negative connotation. Sometimes, it's better to ask forgiveness than ask for



permission, but CXLOE is asking for neither. Her songs are made with individuality to let you know that it's ok to embellish those parts of yourself from time to time.


After tinkering with different musical flavors, Australia's own CXLOE has infused her personality into her personal brand of pop music. Songs like "Sick" and her latest single, "Devil You Know," shows that she's able to utilize a range of topics like sexuality or relationship dynamics and meld it with upbeat, catchy songs that would play in those steamy scenes in a sensual movie. I spoke to CXLOE about a number of things ranging from her earlier struggles with the music industry, her newest single, and the inspiration behind the essence of CXLOE.

I wanted to talk about the video for "Devil You Know" to start our conversation off. There is a lot of imagery that you use with mirrors that goes along with the song's concept. It also has an earthy vibe and a play on certain camera angles to it as well.

I think the whole thing with the music video and the mirrors and stuff like that goes back to the idiom of the devil you know and the devil you don't. How you can have two different sides to yourself. I really wanted to touch on because this song is quite dark conceptually. I wanted the music video to be a bit lighter. Also, to show the reflection of the person that put forward a lot of the time because it's easier. It's better to know that person than what someone is actually capable of if that makes sense? With the clothing, the landscapes, and the color palette, they were a lot softer just to counteract the depth of the lyrics and the meaning of the phrase.

Yeah, I noticed just watching the video you played with colors and light against the forest. There are some deeper purples and parts where there is more sunshine.

That was so cool. That was in the pine forest. I've actually never been to these locations before in Australia. It was so awesome for me as well because I live here and I'd never been to a lot of the places before. We went to this cool pine forest in the Blue Mountains, but then in post-production, they added purple throughout. It just tied in everything beautifully.

Diving a bit deeper into the song itself, it hints at everybody having a shadow side, right? When we think of being with someone, there's always these rosy feelings, but everybody has a ker side to them.



I think, especially in LA, I'm realizing that. I think sometimes I'm better off knowing that other side. I'm like, ok, I'm happy with this person and what they are portraying to me and I think I'm just I'm better off knowing what they're actually capable of." I don't want to go there. That was kind of the incentive as well behind the song. There's that lyric that says "you don't want to fuck with me." It's kind of like back off. You don't want to see the other side because it's better to just get what you're given right now.

In your career, you tested sounds like conventional pop and R&B, but you were able to create the concept of CXLOE. This extension of you within the dark pop realm. With all the songs that you released, does this feel more like home?

Yeah, it's weird. I'm kind of finding myself out as I go. There was definitely that pinnacle moment where I was like, "oh, okay, great! I know where my sound belongs." I did experiment with a lot of music for a long time. Then, I kind of found this place that felt right to me. With each song that I put out, I'm kind of unraveling each layer of me.

Sometimes, I write songs and I don't know what they mean at that moment. Then, a few months after I go through something, I'm like, "that's what that meant." It'll all make sense even if it's in a backward way. It's been really cool kind of being able to portray that side of me because it is an extension of me. CXLOE is part of me. I think when I get on stage or when I get behind the mic, it's really fun for me to jump into that character. However, it's so much a part of me that it's very much the same thing.

You've stated that in the beginning stages of your songwriting journey that it was a little bit tougher for you to articulate how you felt like relationship-wise. As you have become more confident in your abilities and voice, has that process got a bit easier for you?

I think so. I think I definitely found myself and I definitely am more comfortable with voicing how I feel. I think I've stopped caring. I'm caring in the right ways. The people that I work with I feel super comfortable around now because I've done the whole game working with lots of different producers and writers. Now, I know the ones that I love and I know the ones that I like to write and work with. I do feel comfortable when I'm in the room with them and I can kind of just jump into these concepts and not really feel afraid.



With 'Tough Love,' the song stood out to me because there are two meanings to it; there's one on the surface of not making a relationship easy. At the same time, I've read about your beginnings in the music industry. Unfortunately, you had some bad experiences. It's an industry that still has very long to go on how female artists are viewed and treated. It seems like you are making some headway now in finding your voice and this aesthetic being an independent artist

I feel like people want to relate to something that they can put their hands on and nothing that's too untouchable. Like, do you know what I mean? That's why I want everything I do to be super personal, personable, and to not be ever too far fetched. Starting out in the music industry is what you were saying before. There's just too much of not being treated the right way and stuff like that.

The music industry is very self-obsessed. My entire job is all about me. So I need to find something to be fulfilled by, in my soul and in my heart. Not that that doesn't fulfill me, but it is very self-obsessed. I just want to help like in any way I can with any upcoming writers, producers, artists, etc. just to conquer that initial confrontation. It's hard, especially being independent, but I'm trying.

I love that sense of camaraderie with you helping up and coming artists. From an independent artist's standpoint and what you've learned so far, like, what is the one thing that you would give as advice to someone starting out?

Oh, God, how long do you have? [laughs] I wish I had someone like to be like, "Hey, don't do that or don't sign that." Stuff like that. You don't ever have to do anything. I think that's what I would say. You don't have to go in that room with the people who make you feel uncomfortable. You don't have to do four sessions a day unless you really want to. If people are doing drugs in a room, you don't have to do that.

I think when you're starting out and you're young, you think you have to do all these things because that's the way it goes. You hear that and see it in the music industry. Especially being Australian, I can see it in the movies and we hear about it. So we think, "oh, I guess it's just what it is." It's not. You don't have to do any of that. I realized that when I got a good group of friends around me when I went to LA who were also musicians. That really turned it for me because I



had a sense of independence and power to say no. I mean, I have so many things that say, but that's definitely one of them.

Going off of L.A. and into the song 'Monster,' that was a song that you've said people pointed to and say, "ok, she's serious about this career." It was also a song that was born out of a darker time while you were in L.A. A monster can really be anything. What were some of the things you learned about yourself in your time being in California?

I wrote that song a few months after I kind of come out of the dark-ish time. I couldn't ever write it whilst I was in it. When you're in it, you don't know you're in it. It was only until I came home for a bit that I was like, "Oh wow! Ooh, what is that person?" I don't know what it is about L.A. It's great, but I didn't have that many friends there that I trusted at the time, I was kind of just going along with it and doing what I thought needed to be done.

I just turned into this person where I dropped all my morals and my values. I hold them really close, so that time was weird for me. I don't know. I think you go over there and you go into survival mode. Coming from Australia, you've left your family and my partner is here as well. So, I'm like, "this is it. like I got to do everything and be everything to make this work." It was a slow decline into just losing yourself. I think that was it for me until I realized that I didn't have to do any of that and I could still succeed which was dope.

If you listen to pop radio, you usually get the basics. Nothing too over the top or what would be considered raunchy. I wanted to speak about 'Sick' because I like how upfront it is. You don't want that conventional love with candlelight and all that. How was it writing that song and then having Gnash add his part to it?

'Sick' like vomited out of me which was so cool because with some songs, it takes a while to write. This one just rolled out of me. I wrote it with a woman named Casey Smith and a producer named BoyBoy from New Zealand. He's a really awesome producer. I came in with a concept and I was like, "this is how I feel a lot of the time." Everything I feel is to the extreme.

Yes, you're right. On pop radio, you get it touches on loving someone to death and stuff like that. I really wanted to take that extra step and go a little bit further, a little bit darker, and mo[ⓧ] extreme. The duality of like I'm either this or I'm that. I could either be tired or I'm bouncing off



the walls and stuff like that. I think that really describes me in a sense where I'm very everything I feel. I'm either super happy or sad or and stuff like.

That's kind of where it came from. Gnash just sprinkled that just perfect bit which I've been looking for for a long time. I always wanted to do a feature and we sent it to him. He came back straight away with this big awesome part. That was really fun.

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