

PVRIS's Lynn Gunn Takes Charge and Dances Away the Demons On *Use Me*

By [Margari Rawls](#) Aug 18, 2022

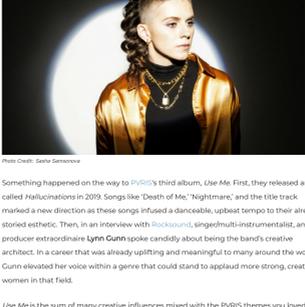


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Something happened on the way to PVRIS's third album, *Use Me*. First, they released an EP called *Hallucinations* in 2019. Songs like "Death of Me," "Lightmare," and the title track marked a new direction as these songs infused a danceable, upbeat tempo to their already storied esthetic. Then, in an interview with [Rolling Stone](#), singer/multi-instrumentalist, and producer extraordinaire **Lynn Gunn** spoke candidly about being the band's creative architect. In a career that was already uplifting and meaningful to many around the world, Gunn elevated her voice within a genre that could stand to applaud more strong, creative women in that field.

Use Me is the sum of many creative influences mixed with the PVRIS themes you loved before. The videos for "Cimeme A Minute" and "Dead Weight" shows a more colorful palette – a departure from the more macabre themes of 2014's *White Noise* and 2017's *All We Know of Heaven, All We Need of Hell*. With everything that's she gone through, the exhaustion, heartbreaks, and expectations of others, Gunn's creative fire permeates in full force on *Use Me*. It's an album that will have you meditate on the pain and give you the energy to dance through it.

I spoke to Gunn about how it felt to take ownership of her creative process, how the changes of *Use Me* came about, and what's she's learned during the time of quarantine.

It's 2017, and you just released *All We Know of Heaven, All We Need of Hell*. When I listened to the album, I felt for you because it sounded as if the music was born out of a darker place. There were a lot of expectations put upon the band after the success of *White Noise*. I can imagine that's a lot to take on. Briefly looking back, how did you transform from all the stress and strife that brought?

Yeah, it's funny, it feels like a different lifetime and a different person, I'm always trying to learn, grow, and evolve as a human. I think when you do what we do, it's amplified and you do it and much crazier increments. Sometimes, it's under like a lot of weird pressure. For me, a lot of that was making our second album and then touring off of it while we were making it. I was just depressed and burnt out. I don't know, it's a dark time.

I just had to learn to pull myself out of that. I started going to therapy and taking actions to give myself a little self-care. Just not be so hard on myself. I got to like a good place to do that and was still working through it once we started touring. It didn't necessarily go away, but once I kind of got a better handle on that, I started having a lot of vocal issues on tour. It was a scary thing because it was the biggest shows of our career so far and I didn't have a working voice. I think a lot of singers are, too. I've always been really sensitive about my voice. I used to get terrible stage fright and anxious about performing. So to not have like much control over how I could sing, definitely added stress, pressure, and frustration to it. I learned so much during that time. I don't think I would be where I am if that didn't happen.

I had to learn to think positively and integrate that fully into my life. Plus, learn how to do that during times where it might not seem like there's any hope. I had to reestablish my relationship with performing, touring, and what we do. I just got flipped on my head and had to face a lot of old patterns and programming that I just wanted to rewrite. I'm in a much better place now and I'm grateful for the experience despite how dark and heavy it was. I think that always comes with a time like that. I think when you lean into it, you can learn a lot and grow from it. That's always the approach I want to take with anything.

There was a particular song on that album I felt hinted at where PVRIS was going to go with the *Hallucinations* EP and that's "Same Soul." I was glad to see you made that the last single on the album. It almost serves as a bridge into "Death of Me." This new, upbeat, alternative hybrid that you were going for. There are still aesthetics that PVRIS fans would recognize, but it feels like a fresh start.

Appreciate that. I think songs like "Same Soul," "Noia 1," "Anyone Else," and "Winter" on the last record were good indications of where my head was that and where I saw things going. Yeah, I think things are just naturally been progressing that way. I always want to write and create music that I want to listen to and stuff that I was listening to.

I'm influenced by a lot of different genres and artists. So I think naturally, it's always kind of felt open-ended with where parts could go. I still want to maintain that essence of you never know what you're going to get – with some like common threads through and through. The *Hallucinations* EP was definitely a nice introduction to where we're going, where *Use Me* is now.

I like the interview you did in *Rolling Stone* because it was a declaration of you being the creative force of PVRIS. Think of rock and alternative music; Billy Corgan is synonymous with The Smashing Pumpkins and Trent Reznor with Nine Inch Nails, etc. It was great to see a woman take ownership of the creative process in the band. To come out and say, "I built the blocks to this." Did it feel liberating for you to get that out in the open?

Things have always naturally been that way. Especially with just how I was created. A lot of it was me flying and going into sessions alone. That was hectic because of scheduling, timing, and the way things were planned out with getting the album completed. I had to track every instrument, and that was a circumstantial thing. It was also something that was being nurtured by working with [JT \[Daly\]](#).

He produced the album and was encouraging to me as a multi-instrumentalist and a producer. I don't know. It was just naturally embraced on this album. Not that it wasn't in the first two, but I think he both hyper embraced and encouraged it. It just felt like the right next step moving forward. We're all adults, have our own lives, and it's allowed for everybody kind of to focus on what they need to.

I'm just grateful that Bryan and Alex have been so supportive. I think most of our fans get it and understand it. Yeah, it was very liberating. I love talking about working in a studio. I love talking about how things are made and the creative process. I think in the past, there is this heavy pressure to uphold this illusion that everybody's contributing equally. There's such an emphasis on band culture, especially the scene we kind of came up from. Also, pressure as a woman to distract yourself, not take ownership, or lean into anything that I was doing.

So when we got asked about creating and working in the studio, I felt like I couldn't share everything. Or that I couldn't get carried away talking about it. Now, I feel free to do that. It just feels much more honest, transparent, and clear about where we're at. I think the ultimate way to freedom is vulnerability and transparency. This was the next step we had to take to further that, so it feels great.

It sounds like you're exploring all the creative freedom on *Use Me*. How was it working alongside JT on this record? Once you turn it on and listen to the arrangements on "Cimeme A Minute," you know you're in for a unique experience. From how you arranged the chorus structure to the harmonies.

Oh, it was so much fun. JT is a special human and an amazing producer. I feel like he could be one of the greatest over time. He's still kind of fresh, and not everybody's heard of him yet. We got linked about a year before we started fully working together on the album. It was in a period where I was just doing a lot of trial and error. A point where I was doing sessions with producers and writers and seeing who understood the vision and who didn't.

JT was somebody who called me up and was like, "Yo, send me a playlist. Send me all of your favorite artists. Tell me why they're your favorite artists. Also, send me your favorite producers and visuals ever." He wanted to understand my brain, the vision, and get a better sense of who I am as a writer, a creator, and what PVRIS is. He's the only person who's ever done that, which was special. Right off the bat with that call, I just felt that he was going to be the person who was going to produce the entire album.

He has a great understanding of where to place grit, aggression, and finding different ways that you can express that through production. He also had a great sense of how to kind of elevate the poppy side PVRIS, but also still lean into the heavy elements that we've always. Finding new ways to flip it on its head and introduce that aggression and grittiness just through a different lens. So, it was cool getting to work with him through that. I don't know, he just aligned and was in tune with where I'd wanted it to go. We agreed 100% the whole time. It was amazing working with JT. I have nothing but the best things to say about him.

***Use Me* going to come out in July, but you delayed the release until August to hold space for the Black Lives Matter movement. You've always been active in social causes. Does it will strange to put new music out into the world, during so many things happening at once?**

I still feel like I just want to put our art out and share it. Just put the music out and I want people to connect to it. I'm never really focused on a campaign, what our recent cycle needs to look like, or the number-based specifics. I just don't care. I just want to put music out, do it unapologetically, and I want people to enjoy it. I think COVID and the state of the world have stripped everybody of a lot of resources. The last seven months flipped not just the world on its head, but just this industry specifically.

I think we're in a bit of "okay, where do we go from here?" How do we adjust to this new way of living and putting music out right now? I think it's exciting and feels liberating. At the end of the day, all you need to do is put your music out. And if people want to listen to it, they're going to listen to it. I want people to connect to that naturally. I don't want it to be forced on anybody, and I need not dress it up into anything fancy for someone to listen to it. I think it feels good that it's just going to come out. There's less pressure around it. I'm excited for it to come out, finally.

I've always liked the lyricism within PVRIS songs. On *Use Me*, you use that imagery, but also more direct in how you convey your feelings. There are themes within this album such as with "Loveless." You say, "You're free as a bird while I carry the burden for you." On "Stay Gold," if you're just a wind passing through, I'd still be grateful." The album ends with "Wish You Well." It feels like you're hitting the eject button on that situation and saying goodbye to it once and for all. With how the pandemic has constructed a new reality for us, have the concepts of love and connection changed for you?

I think it has, and it hasn't. I really, genuinely I think right now is as, like a human collective, love is the most important thing we are leaning towards and learning to experience because I'm not sure everybody knows how to experience it or there are blocks on how to express it is. I hate to sound like such a hippie, but it's love, connection, and it's treating others how you want to be treated.

In everything I do, I always want to leave making somebody feel better or brightening up someone's day. Whether it's making a small joke or like smiling at somebody. I really think we're here to connect and to make each other not feel so alone. Quarantine has really amplified that, and the state of the world is in social upheaval. Everybody is awakening to the corruption and flawed systems within our country. We're all looking to each other now and we need to lean into that. As I dissolve and polarizing as a lot of this has been, there is a lot of good happening. I don't know, I'm a fighter for it. So that's where I'm at. I really love people and I love people connecting. I just want to see that happening more and I think in some ways, that is happening more through all of this.

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