

mxmtoon

At 21, singer-songwriter mxmtoon (aka Maia) stands tall as one of the brightest and most engaging voices of her generation. Known for her dreamy folk-pop and introspective lyricism, the Oakland-raised, Brooklyn-based artist is also a gamer, podcaster, and activist, who has built a deep, symbiotic connection with millions of fans through a steady stream of content on TikTok, Twitch, Instagram, YouTube, and Discord.

In her latest endeavor—providing the musical voice of Alex Chen, the protagonist of *Life is Strange: True Colors*—Maia combines two of her greatest passions: music and gaming. A longtime fan of the popular narrative adventure franchise which boasts over 20 Million unique players across its lifetime, the artist felt an instant connection to Chen: a queer, 21-year-old Asian American musician who is sharp and sensitive, yet often struggles to navigate her own emotions. The resemblance to the character, which Maia calls “eerily similar,” made the creative process seamless, however. “It was really fun,” she recalls. “I had a lot of liberty with what I wanted to write about.”

All four songs appear on the *Life is Strange: True Colors* EP, which features an mxmtoon original, the heartfelt “in the darkness” plus two inspired covers: Radiohead’s “Creep” and Violent Femmes’ “Blister in the Sun.”

The soundtrack marks the latest in a steady stream of mxmtoon projects—including a full-length album, one graphic novel, and a pair of EPs that bookended 2020. The acclaimed *dawn* and *dusk* (Maia’s second and third EPs, respectively) found the artist broadening the scope of her work—exploring new sounds and fuller production, as well as partnering with outside writers, including Carly Rae Jepsen and Tune-Yards’ Merrill Garbus. Maia has also become a sought-after collaborator, appearing on projects by Ricky Montgomery, G-Flip, and Noah Kahan, among others.

As her platform continues to grow, Maia frequently speaks to an array of issues that are close to her heart, including Black Lives Matter, mental health awareness, the environment, and LGBTQ+ rights. In recent months, amid the alarming rise in violence against Asian Americans, Maia has also become an outspoken advocate for the AAPI community including being a part of a Twitch panel with the platform’s founders. “I think it’s a huge privilege that I’m able to talk about these issues,” she says. “Hopefully I can inspire others to think more critically and stand up for what they believe in.”

The world is listening. Over the past year, Maia has taken part in a variety of high-profile appearances, including a dialogue about violence against the AAPI community on Twitch and an MTV News roundtable during Queer Music Week. The artist also voiced her support for gun control on Full Frontal with Samantha Bee and was featured on a TIME 100 Talk, where she spoke about the future of entertainment. Last fall, to encourage voters ahead of the presidential election, Maia joined Reps Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan Omar on Twitch for a historic game of *Among Us*.

In September, she launched 365 days with mxmtoon—a year-long, short-form history podcast that covers a different topic every day. “It’s great to be able to inspire people to stay curious,” she shares. “I think the goal with anything that I do is to help people discover things that they’re passionate about.” The podcast has featured John Batiste, Carly Rae Jepsen, Julien Baker, Cautious Clay, Jade Bird, Dayglow and more.

Maia’s fan base is certainly passionate, as evidenced by her streaming and social numbers—both of which are staggering when one takes into account her DIY approach. mxmtoon’s self-released music averages 1.5 million streams daily across all DSPs, while her songs have amassed an astonishing 810 million cumulative streams on Spotify. Across her social media platforms, Maia engages with more than eight million combined followers, including 2.6 million fans on TikTok. Her Instagram profile is close to surpassing one million followers, while her YouTube channel boasts nearly 875,000 subscribers.

From here, there’s only room for exponential growth—and the possibilities are endless. Over the summer, Maia played to her largest audience yet at Lollapalooza. Soon, she’ll continue the momentum at festivals like Outside Lands and Brazil’s Power of Pride. Between shows, the tireless artist is also working on new music. “I hope to keep pushing myself and make something that feels really different,” explains Maia. “I want mxmtoon to be a diverse sonic playground.” She adds, “Everything is open-ended for me right now, but I see that as being incredibly liberating and exciting.”