



Manchester's underground star IAMDDDB is set to take hold of 2023 with her sixth volume of a series adored by fans. Being named one of BBC's 'Sound of BBC' in 2018 and touring with Bryson Tiller and Lauryn Hill cemented her place in the hearts of music lovers across the United Kingdom. She is now ready to reach new heights and take us along for the ride.



You're on your way to the Indian Tour – How do you feel your music has been received internationally? In the UK, you are widely welcomed and praised as a pioneer in the 'Urban Jazz' genre, placing Manchester on the map and being embraced with open arms. How did touring with Bryson Tiller and Lauryn Hill impact you? What were those experiences like?

It's so mad – even when you say that, I'm still taking it in like, 'wow, I actually did that'. These are people that I listened to growing up, so for me; it was a real mindfuck. I think that seeing the reception of my music worldwide opened my eyes to my responsibilities as an artist, as I have a certain level of authenticity and truth I must upkeep in my artistry.

There are a lot of people I can influence, and if I am, I need to ensure that I'm being as pure and the most authentic version of myself that I am, so I have to make sure that I'm true in my artistry, my music and whatever it is that I put out. So that I can lift the vibration, as I'm not trying to take anybody to hell, including myself [She chuckles at the notion]. So I always have to look at the intention of everything I'm doing and make sure it aligns with the better good of everyone in general.

What would you say is your 'truest' project to date? You've released five volumes, each showcasing a different theme and musical tonality; from my understanding, the 6th is on the way as well –

[She shouts excitedly] I can't wait for you guys to hear it!

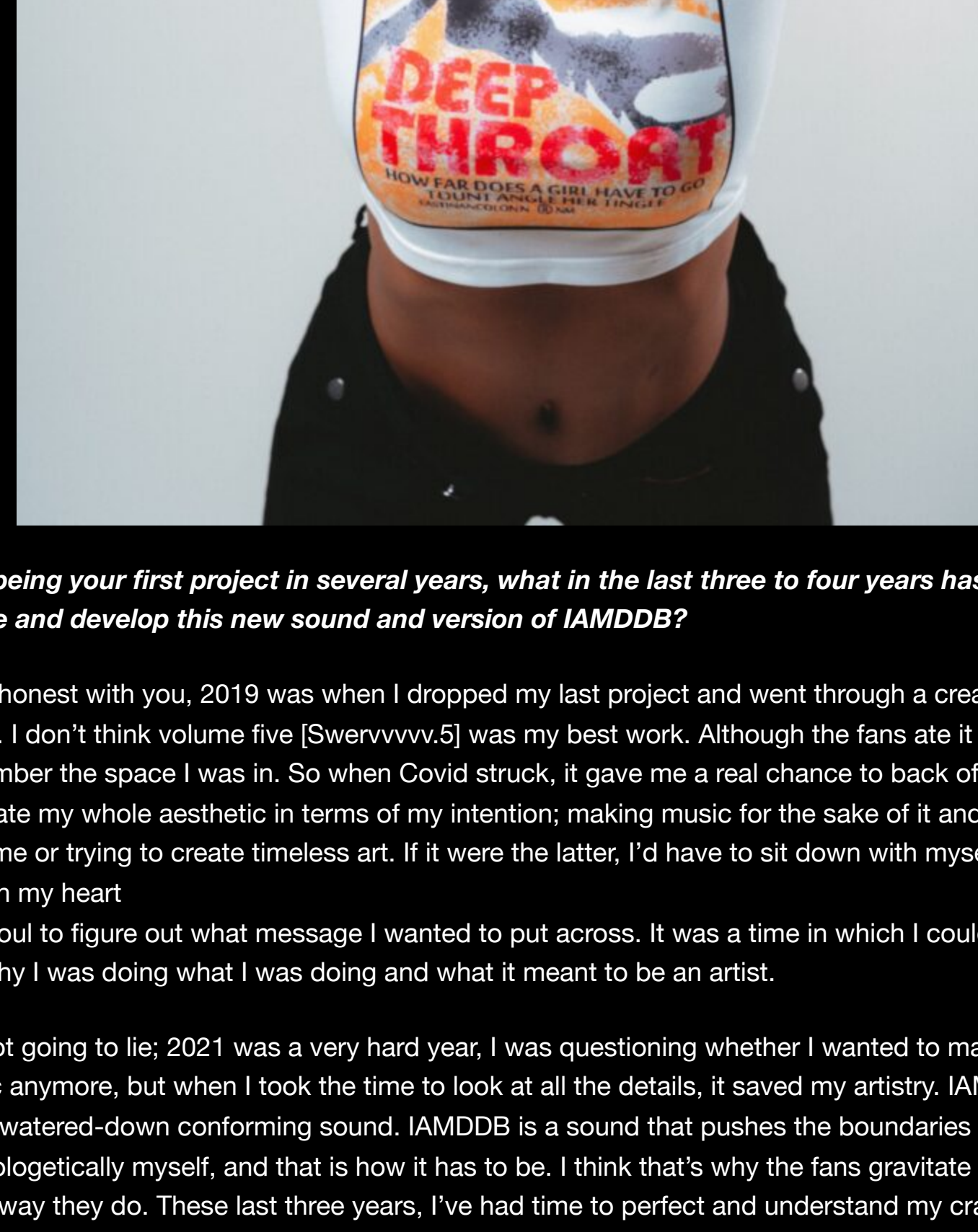
Would you say the upcoming release is your 'truest', or would you attribute that to a previous project?

I feel like I put my all into all of them. In terms of the truest form, I'd say that the first one [Waeveyby, Vol.1] is the rawest uncut version of IAMDDDB; following through from that, the third one [Hoodrich Vol.3] is the one that cut me through the industry and helped me be seen worldwide.

In terms of my best work, I'd say volume six and volume seven (coming in 2023) are definitely my best work. Not only am I liberated in my spirit but also in my sound and genre. I explored the boundaries of the genres and worked with features I could not do before, as I had to wait and establish myself before they could come to fruition. So I'm really excited, and I can't wait for you all to hear it.

Would it be similar music to what we have heard before? What can your fans expect from the upcoming volumes?

So 'Where did the love go?', which dropped today, was a little bit of Drum'n'Bass and Jersey Club. On the project, they can expect Old-School Urban Jazz, definitely some trap music. It's giving New Age; it's giving Gothic trap – we aren't doing the basic trap anymore; There will be some Afrobeats, reggae. There is so much flavour in volume six. There's a sound to fit every mood. Whether you are old or young, boy or girl, sad or angry, there is something there for everybody. I think it's a very cohesive listen from beginning to end, and there are no skips for me. We have some amazing features, all males, one from London and two from the States, so it's gonna be good vibes.



This being your first project in several years, what in the last three to four years has helped shape and develop this new sound and version of IAMDDDB?

If I'm honest with you, 2019 was when I dropped my last project and went through a creative block. I don't think volume five [Swervvvvv.5] was my best work. Although the fans ate it up, I remember the space I was in. So when Covid struck, it gave me a real chance to back off and re-evaluate my whole aesthetic in terms of my intention; making music for the sake of it and to pass the time or trying to create timeless art. If it were the latter, I'd have to sit down with myself and search my heart and soul to figure out what message I wanted to put across. It was a time in which I could figure out why I was doing what I was doing and what it meant to be an artist.

I'm not going to lie; 2021 was a very hard year. I was questioning whether I wanted to make music anymore, but when I took the time to look at all the details, it saved my artistry. IAMDDDB is not a watered-down conforming sound. IAMDDDB is a sound that pushes the boundaries of genre, unapologetically myself, and that is how it has to be. I think that's why the fans gravitate towards it the way they do. These last three years, I've had time to perfect and understand my craft, so I know how to align it with the message I want to put into the world. I'm glad I've taken my time – if I hadn't, I would be giving them fifty per cent of what I am capable of. So I'm confident that volume six it's going to spin people's heads in the best way possible.

You value independence highly, so it is fitting that you are an independent artist yourself. What have been some of the significant challenges you have faced as a widely regarded and highly sought-after independent artist?

It has been challenging, I'm not going to lie – I've been managing myself for the last three years. However, it has been extremely rewarding in the same breath of it being challenging. I've been able to experience so much, see so much, learn so much and really see the ins and outs of this industry. Thank God that I had the people I learn around me that can help and support me as I was going through this journey. It's not just about the business or the money; it's about the intention and the heart behind it. That's what separates me from being a sh*t independent artist or a great independent corporation.

So I've had fun. It's been a lot of education and sleepless nights, but it's been worth it because of the music and success when it does arrive, and the attention and drive I've dedicated to my artistry was full. Instead of having a label do all the work for me and me not having a clue as to what is going on behind the scenes, being a director and CEO of a label is fun [She laughs]. I'm getting this bag with my friends and seeing my flowers, which I think is really important, especially as a young black woman in this industry.

What would you advise young upcoming artists? I understand that Lauryn Hill gave you some unforgettable advice whilst on tour – So here's an opportunity to pass the baton.

[She laughs] I would say to keep God at the centre of everything you do, keep your spiritual grounding solid in your daily activity. You need that as it's your protection.

Ensure that your finances are in order, know where your finances are and be on top of it. If you leave it in the hands of another, you can never know what could happen. Ultimately, as an artist, you are a corporation, a brand, and you have to care about the business aspect too, or someone will come in and swindle you. That's just how the game goes.

Make sure to have fun because if you're not having fun, then something isn't connecting; you are not a slave to anything. So you should be enjoying it. Be in control of your creativity, be flamboyant and don't be afraid to try new things; do things other people are afraid to do. That's how you become a trendsetter. Be open to trial and error, don't be so focused on being perfect. None of us are.

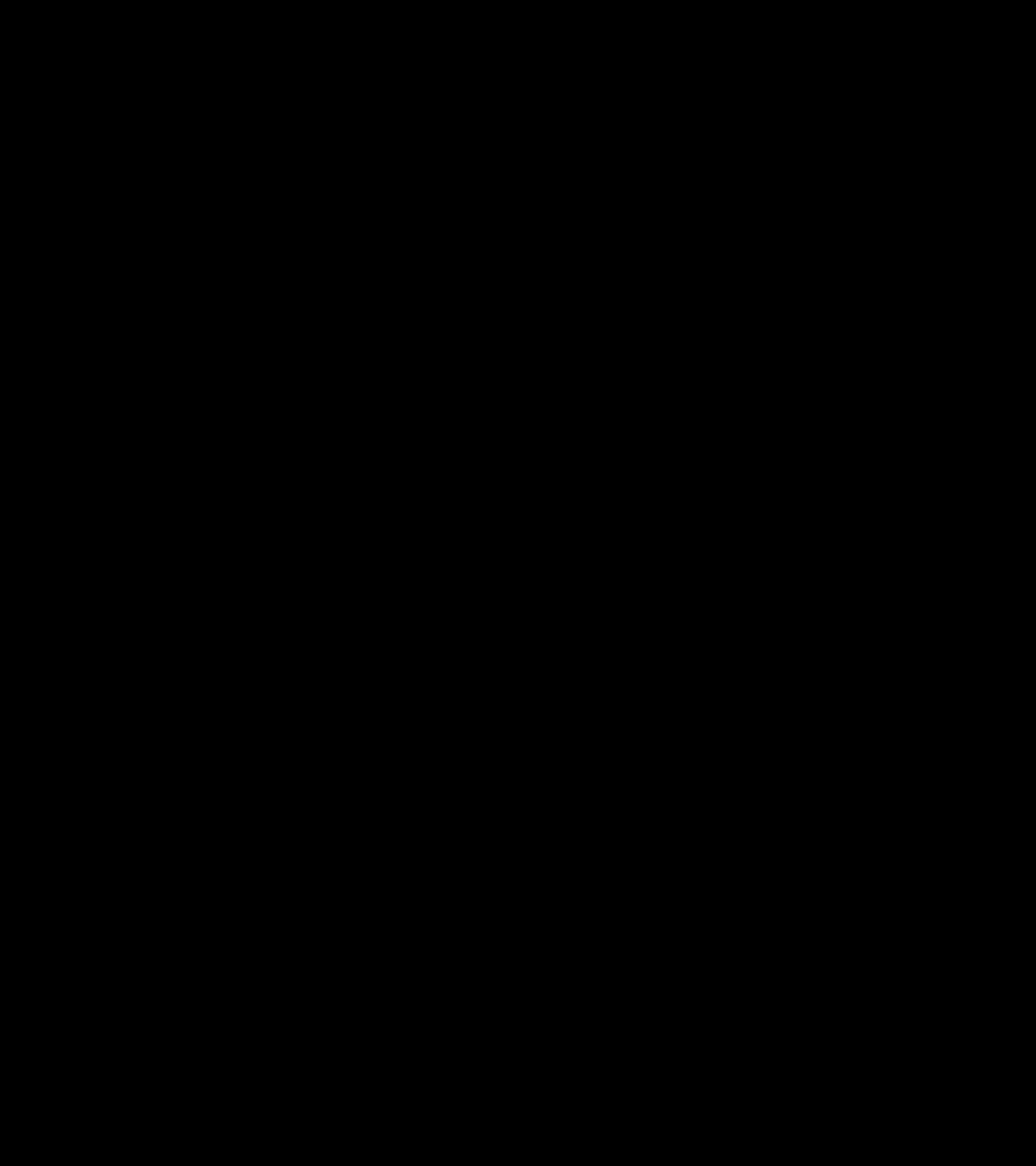
With that being said, do you have any flowers to give to artists that are catching your attention right now?

Yes! Right now, I am his biggest fan – Len. He's a rapper from London, one of my favourites and I'm telling you, he is about to blow! He's fresh and flamboyant – he is himself and takes up space.

There is this girl named – BINA. She's also from London and on the come up too. She's a jazz vocalist who has an incredible voice. I'm really looking forward to them taking space up in the industry because when they do, it's going to create a shift where real music is gonna be the trend.

Thank you for your time IAMDDDB – It has been incredible to hear about all the exciting things to come.

Thank you! I can't wait to be releasing music again that will change the frequency!



IAMDDDB has set her targets and intends on taking her career to new heights. The musician is primed and ready for whatever this year may bring. With her sixth volume set to release and tours about to begin, there is no stopping the underground star from reaching the top.

Words by Ramy Abou-Setta