

Indie pop sensation Katherine Li has released her debut EP *Crush(ed)*. The 19-year-old singer-songwriter has always had a passion for performing, taking piano lessons at an early age and putting on shows for friends and family as a child. But it wasn't until 2019 that Li decided it was time to pursue it professionally. That year, she wrote a note to herself, asserting that she would make her dreams of becoming a singer come true. Like magic, the manifestation worked.

When Li uploaded her first TikTok in November of 2020 — a video of herself singing a medley of Bruno Mars hits — the video was received with overwhelmingly positive comments, encouraging her to share more. But Li wanted to expand her musical horizons, and began writing original songs that touched on a deeply relatable topic: heartache. She amassed a rabid fanbase of hopeless romantics, who felt seen by Li's heartfelt songs about romantic woes.

On *Crush(ed)*, Li shows how much her songwriting has evolved in the past couple of years. The EP is centered around the concept of the cyclic journey of infatuation on an unrequited crush: the sensation of butterflies in your stomach that you get when you fall for someone new; the self-deprecation of deciding there's no chance for you to be together; the devastating disappointment when the crush doesn't blossom into a relationship; and the denial that there ever was a true interest in that person to begin with.

"I like to see my songs as a different kind of love song because most love songs are about breakups or being in love," says Li. "My songs are mostly about what happens when you didn't break up and you weren't in love—or you could have been, but it was just one-sided. I don't hear a lot of songs that talk about that, which is interesting because it seems like there are a lot of people who feel the same way I do about unrequited love."

Li takes influence from Taylor Swift, crafting infectious pop melodies with unforgettable lyrics that take you back to that adolescent, innocent way of experiencing love. For *Crush(ed)*, Li teamed up with producer Joe Avio, who was the perfect person to guide Li through her first EP. "Working with Joe was an awesome experience. It was super cool to see the songs actually build out," says Li.

Li's music has touched such an overwhelming number of fans because she's a rare artist who is fully authentic. Like many of her fans, Li is a teenage girl navigating those complex emotions that come with facing adulthood. The Toronto native balances her music career with studying commerce at the University of Toronto.

"Miss Me Too," "Happening Again," "Never Had a Chance," "We Didn't Even Date," and "I Don't Care" were released as singles, each receiving over 1 million streams on Spotify. "Never Had a Chance," a piano ballad about wanting to give up on waiting for a crush to reciprocate their emotions, gained over 12 million streams, becoming Li's biggest song to date. "My brain hasn't fully comprehended that number," she admits, noting that she's had "nothing but good experiences" with her loyal and growing fanbase.

The singles (with the exception of "I Don't Care") were featured on American Eagle's music-focused back-to-school campaign for the fall, creating a short film that brings Li's narrative to life. "It was really fun, especially putting together the whole concept of it," says Li.

She also released an official music video for the lead single, "Miss Me Too." Capturing the intimacy of her EP, the video features Li dancing in her bedroom, singing about yearning for the crush who can't escape her mind.

With *Crush(ed)* out, Li is eager to share fresh material with fans. "After the EP, we're not going to wait too long until the next song comes out," she says. "We just want to keep being able to give more music." She's currently in the process of recording a new batch of songs in her hometown of Toronto, Canada, that will arrive on the next record.