

LADYGUNN

ZELLA DAY

Posted by [LADYGUNN](#) on Tuesday, November 3, 2015



Despite 70K followers on Instagram, millions of Spotify plays and Youtube views, up and coming singer/songwriter **Zella Day** does not have any fans. That is at least, according to her because in Zella's view, there are no fans, just people that connect with her music. This notion, hippie-like in its intent is reflective of how Zella is

in her everyday life. From mature philosophies on love, to doe eyed musings on her blossoming career, she is a free-spirited, music-first type of performer.

She is also completely captivating. With big blue eyes, fingers filled with turquoise and long wavy hair reminiscent of her bohemian upbringing in Arizona, she's striking. As she discusses her music, and her background she is so eloquent and convincing, that I can't help but understand why her listeners adore her. She first made a splash several years ago when, on a whim, she recorded a cover of the White Stripes, "Seven Nation Army," that drew attention to her dreamy pop sound. After signing with Hollywood Records she released a full-length album this past summer, "Kicker". The record is smart, both lyrically and sonically. The songs are pop, in the sense that they are well produced and catchy but her dreamy voice and spaghetti western influences make them unique.



With the album receiving great reviews, "connectors" all across the country and a fashion cross overs with companies like *Free People*, Zella has the momentum to have an enormous career ahead of her. And from what she divulged in our interview, she has every intention of making that happen.

You're in a transition point in your career right now, going from indie unknown, to a up and comer with a following growing daily. What is that like for you?

Zella Day: It is validating. More press is validating and I have learned that it's a real imperative part of what I do. It's interesting having a record this day and age. It's probably always been like that, but I think more now. You have so many bases to cover when you come out with a record. It's like the social media, your publicity, your radio. There's so many facets in the business and I'm starting to kind of learn all of them, but it's good. It's validating to have more press and have write-ups and features and it feels like its connecting. My music is connecting.

So with that, what is your social media presence like? How has that changed for you, because it's probably a little bit more monitored and curated now right?

Not as much as you may think. I actually fought for that in the very beginning. When I signed with a record label, I didn't have very many followers on my social media platform yet and there was this kind of, you know, offered second party that was sort of going to come in and take over all my social platforms for me, which I didn't really like. So that was kind of a conflict in the beginning, just because I wanted to manage my profiles and all of my outlets. I don't ever underestimate the awareness of the people who are consuming my music, just because I know what it feels like to be falling for an artist and feel like there's a record label posting for them. I also know what it feels like to read something from an artist that you feel like is actually coming directly from them. Things like Twitter and like Periscope which I think are a direct link into somebody's life that you really admire or are curious about and I am enjoying my time in charge of that.

As far as your relationship with fans, what is that like for you? Especially if you're able to be on your social media and interacting with them.

It's changed a lot my mentality towards that. I mean, I've made music for a really long time. So before it was just because I loved to do it and there wasn't really a "fan base" listening to my music, and now there is and it's something to get used to. And social media has been a tool for me to kind of understand who is connecting to my music, which is really good for me because I feel like I know how to talk to them now because of things like Twitter and Facebook and the messages that I receive from people. I honestly hate saying "fans" because "fans" seems sort of like derogative to me. People will show up to a show and somebody makes a comment about them being like a "fangirl". It's not that you're a fangirl, it's just that you like the sounds that I make and you connect with what I say. It's cool. I have a lot of respect for that.

How much do they affect the new music that you write and are putting out?

They don't. I don't know how or why, but when I write music I am so inside my own head and I am not thinking about the outside world. The last thing on my mind when I am writing music is what other people are going to think about it, which I think is good, because it's a really good representation of who I am and my perspective on things and my true voice. It's really not being influenced by anybody.

So what is your writing process like?

Well as you know, writing is like a muscle, like you have to be constantly working at it and if you stop working at it you become rusty. So I try to write often, whether it just be like little verses or little pieces or fragments of songs. Inspiration and writing are two different things and when I'm inspired, like, it doesn't happen all the time. It hits me and it hits really hard and that's really easy. When I'm inspired it's super easy to write because I feel like that door and that channel is kind of opened. I figured out how to find a way to go with that and sort of subconsciously drive this wave of whatever is coming through. So there's like two sides of the coin where you have to know both how to harness inspiration and then also work on your craft. It's definitely work, like I work really hard to get the songs that I write because sometimes not every song can be just completely inspired and like this amazing experience. Sometimes you want to say something and you have to work really hard to say it. Some songs take weeks to write because I'm not really sure if like those parts are fitting together in the right way or my message is clear. Then other times I write a song in like an hour. Really it just all depends, so the process is always different.

One of the songs that you have that I love is "East of Eden." Was it inspired by the book?

It's definitely inspired by the book. I was reading that book when I moved to Long Beach from California and it was really a tremulous time for me. I was eighteen, wasn't going to high school because I was doing independent study. I was kind of thrown into an adult world recording music. I had a job at a restaurant and everything was a little bit more amplified for me as a young adult. I was testing my boundaries and "East of Eden" has a lot of that.

So as far as other songs, the Seven Nation Army cover, what was that all about and what was the reaction?

It's so funny that you ask that. This morning I was reading a review about the Portland show. It was a really good review and they actually bashed on Seven Nation Army. They were like, "This is a really boring cover." It was just so funny. I love those kinds of reviews because everyone has a different favorite art and set, so people just connect to completely different moments. Seven Nation Army is kind of a favorite. I read today for the first time, someone was like, "I hate it" and I was like, "Okay, fair enough." That was an accident, it was a happy accident. I was in the studio and we were tracking guitars for different songs with one of my really good friends, Joseph Keef, whose band is Family of the Year. We were just sort of talking about Jack White and playing around with some White Stripe covers. And we started playing Seven Nation Army and my producer turned around and was like, "You guys need to record that. That sounds incredible!" So that's the second pass. The recording that you hear is the second pass and we released it and it was number one on Hype Machine in like two days. I didn't even know what Hype Machine was. I was still living in Arizona and I had no idea what was even going on, but it like circulated this kind of buzz that I was not expecting. It has actually been annoying at times because I've resented that people know me just from the cover, but it is a part of my introduction into the music world, I guess.

As far as critics of your music are concerned, it's one thing to have a music critic say "I didn't really like it", but I feel like especially for young artists coming up, YouTube commenters and Facebook commenters are a whole different beast. What has that been like for you?

It makes me afraid to say this, because I don't want it to take a turn, but people have been really supportive of me. My press as far as those critics has been really positive and I don't know why that is. It's different for every artist. Sometimes they have all these hateful commenters on a YouTube video it's a good thing, because it's kind of like this controversial thing. For Lana del Rey there was two sides, her fans and haters. They were both equally as passionate and they talked about it on the Internet, so that was really good for her. It's hard for me to find like the shitty comment that has some sense in it because if there is something hateful or negative, it usually doesn't even really make sense as to why they're saying it. They're just saying it and it's just buried by all the good stuff, which is cool. That's really what I'm trying to promote. My music and my shows, like it is about this kind of togetherness and this unity that I feel music creates and my sort of writing and playing. That's what it was for me and my small town, like they connected me to so many important people and friends in my life. I am trying to do that kind of on a bigger scale now; make people feel something on a much larger scale.

Your videos are really cool. How much of a part in that process do you actually have?

I coproduce them and codirect them and stuff. I'm like behind the monitor calling shots with my best friend who's directed all my music videos. The first one we did was "No Sleep to Dream", which isn't there anymore. We took it down and released like the EP and the record and stuff, but there's so much music. It's kind of hard to keep track of. "No Sleep to Dream" was the first video we made and it was when I wasn't signed. We had no money to do it. We went out into the desert and shot for twenty two hours and we wrote the treatment together. I casted it and styled it. Then we did "Sweet Ophelia". We had a small budget for that and it was the same thing. I brought in one of my girlfriends who styles and I was like very much a part of that and wrote the treatment. Then "Hypnotic" was the same thing. I work with my friends and that's been really beneficial for me. At the end of the day, when you're sitting down and asking me questions, creative questions, about like the videos and content, I have done all of it. There's nobody doing it for me. There's no man behind the desk in a cubicle at some record label like writing treatments for me and telling me who to be. That's why I signed with Hollywood, because I have creative control over what I'm doing and I've gotten to choose who I work with.

You have a lot of control over your image then too?

All of it. I don't do anything I don't want to do.

So what would you describe your personal style to be?

Well there are a couple of things I'm really inspired by. When I moved to California from Arizona, I was so ready to be away from Arizona because, I took it for granted, like all the kids do growing up in their small town. They're just like, "Fuck this place because it's not who I am. You know, I'm ready to move on and grow and like find myself." Moving to LA, we figured out all sorts of this revelation of like, oh no, actually where I'm from is beautiful. I'm the only girl from my town that's here in LA playing music and doing this right now. I'm the only one that can bring where I'm from into what I'm doing visually. Also sonically, so on the record too there's some spaghetti western weaved throughout that. My style too, like my belts and my turquoise, that's very Arizona. I grew up next to the Aperture Reservation so I was very inspired by the native culture. It's something that I've embraced since living in California. There's also my mother's mother, they're Swedish. They grew up in Long Beach California and they were like 60s flower children. I grew up around a lot of strong women, all of which I've looked at pictures of them since being eight years old. Looking at photo albums of them and their crocheted tops with no bras and their messy hair and no makeup. So very like salt of the Earth strong.

Do you like California?

Well, I actually love California. Where I'm living right now in Silver Lake, it's exactly where I want to be. I think that people aren't really meant to just stay in one place their whole lives. They're just like a chapter, another phase of growth, that I think we all need to go through. Whether it be just travel or living somewhere else that you can kind of travel. We know through our roots and understand more about ourselves. It's reflective. So moving to California was very reflective for me and I am very aware of that and grateful. I don't think I'm going to stay in California forever. Maybe I will. I'll just go to the mountains in California. I think I will end up back to where I started, just small town mountain girl. But I also know that this time of my life, when I'm recording a record and I need to be in the scene, like right there in the hub in the epicenter, that's where I am. I've found my happiness there and I think that LA, even though it's funny to hear everybody's like perceptions of LA, I'm sure it's the same for you living in New York. People are like, "LA is so superficial. It's so this, it's so fake." It's like do you know how many millions of people there are in LA? So if you find your people and your little tribe, you're going to be fine. You just have to find people that are like you. People that you feel safe with and that you love. That's kind of what I've done.

You have a boyfriend, right? What is that like, being a touring musician and having a relationship too?

It's never worked for me. It only works now because the person that I'm with really truly understands what I'm doing and is excited for me. It's like I have to I ground myself. Like sometimes I disconnect from the relationship because in some way shape or form, you're gone and away. You can't be missing that every day. It's just when you are counting the days is when it becomes exhausting and hard. Being twenty, I really need to be where I'm at and chase down the opportunities and he's on my team. It's cool. We don't talk about there's this many days until I see you or like I really miss you. I mean we already know that we miss each other, that doesn't really need to be said anymore. He's confident in me and I think that's what works about it.

As your career moves forward who do you want to emulate, or If you could walk in another musician's shoes for a day, who would it be?

It's hard. There's so many people that I really love. I think Joni Mitchell. I'd like to be lady of the canyon for like a day or two, if that makes sense.















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