



A dusky-voiced 20-year-old singer/songwriter from deep in the mountains of Arizona, [Zella Day](#) makes electro-charged, guitar-driven indie-pop that's steeped in a magic of her own invention.

After teaching herself to play guitar at a young age and writing her first batch of songs in her teens, Zella began honing a songwriting style rooted in real-life stories but shaped by her infatuation with everything from desert mystique and old spaghetti westerns to the psychedelic culture of '60s California. Lacing her lyrical storytelling with sunlit melodies and heavy beats, the L.A.-based artist now delivers her full-length debut with **KICKER**—an intimate but gorgeously expansive album. Zella explains, “The music’s spiritual resonance is clearly influenced by the Northern Arizona mountains that sheltered my creative energy from any outside implications of city mentality. The creatures I encountered while exploring the depths of my mind and the small town full of secrets all hold great importance to the characterization of this record. One of the most important characters that embody this story is KICKER.

“I was a young girl beginning to understand what my existence meant to the world around me, and KICKER was the ranch horseman that was coloring my imagination with the legends of his native culture. I look back now with a realization of how perfect the timing was when he came in to my life; little did I know I was being presented with a divine guidance that led me deeper into the interworking of my creative visions that contribute to my artistry today. The name of my album is in honor of the person who ignited a flame in my dream realm.”

Revealing her own power to bend reality into something much more enchanted, **KICKER** arrives with Zella having already racked up nine #1 Hype Machine singles and drawn raves from the likes of *Interview*, *Vice*, *Nylon*, and *Soma*, who note that “*There is an incandescent quality that Zella Day possesses... it resonates throughout her songs with flawless grace.*”

In bringing the album to life, Zella worked closely with her longtime collaborators Wally Gagel and Xandy Barry (a production/songwriting duo known for their work with Best Coast) to weave in lush yet hard-hitting electronic elements that deliver a dreamy intensity —as well as the stunning string arrangements that Zella

recorded with an orchestra at the legendary Capitol Studios. Featuring lead single [“Hypnotic”](#) (a brash but breezy track that hit #1 on the Alt Nation Alt 18 Countdown at the start of 2015), **KICKER** matches that richness of texture with an emotional intricacy that makes each song instantly captivating.

Throughout **KICKER**, Zella uses her songs to explore toxic relationships and breakups and broken homes, love and lust and fascination of all kinds. Thanks to her poetic sense of imagery, magnetic vocal presence, and otherworldly sound, the album blurs truth and fiction, dark and light, beauty and pain.

With its title referencing the old Arizona mining town where her parents married, the gloriously pain-drenched album-opener **“Jerome”** offers an imagined portrait of the coal miner’s wife who became Zella’s namesake (“It’s about the ghost of Zella and my idea of what her life was like,” she explains. “I think of her as a girl getting married off by her family and going crazy in the cage that was now her life”). Built on a mesmerizing arrangement of strings, trumpet, piano, and infectious beats, **“The Outlaw Josey Wales”** gives a nod to Clint Eastwood’s 1976 Western of the same name. And in its wistful vocal work and lilting melody, **“1965”** achieves a different kind of time-warping as Zella sings of longing to live in a more charmed time.

Elsewhere on **KICKER**, Zella touches on the trouble that comes with growing up and getting older, with the fierce and chilling **“Sweet Ophelia”** taking a bravely nuanced look at loss of virginity and **“Mustang Kids”** (a synth-soaked hip-hop-tinged track featuring Florida-bred rapper Baby E) giving a gritty glimpse at “what it’s like to be a bored kid in a small town with nowhere to go and nothing to do,” as Zella notes. On the bittersweet and breathtaking **“High,”** she reflects on a toxic relationship where the only connection comes from indulging in self-destructive behavior (sample lyric: “As long as we keep getting high/Keep burning like we’re never gonna die”). Also proving herself skilled in laying down a gut-punching love song, Zella channels her raw emotional energy into tracks like **“Jameson,”** a stripped-down and soulful number that illuminates the heartbreak of loving someone in the depths of despair. And in naming her favorite song on **KICKER**, Zella chooses the hushed and lovely piano ballad **“Compass,”** a serenade to her tiny hometown of Pinetop, Arizona. “When I was living in Pinetop, all I wanted was to get out,” she says. “But now that I can look back on where I came from, I realize more than ever how much that place is a part of me.”

At age 14, shortly after getting her start playing music at a nearby coffeehouse owned by her grandmother, Zella recorded an album of her own material. With buzz building after the album’s release, she then began making frequent trips to Nashville to join in songwriting sessions with musicians like John Paul White from the Civil Wars. But while working in Nashville went a long way in sharpening her songwriting craft, Zella envisioned her music taking on an edgy sonic atmosphere that departed from the Nashville aesthetic. Soon enough, she landed a deal with LA tastemaker label B3SCI, who released Zella’s debut self-titled EP on limited edition vinyl last fall. From there, she created her imprint Pinetop Records in partnership with Hollywood Records, and set to work on creating the ethereal and electronic-enhanced sound that makes **KICKER** so dynamic.

Fresh off a West Coast tour—and gearing up to play major festivals like Lollapalooza this summer—Zella is awaiting **KICKER**’s release with a fluttery anticipation. “Sometimes I have to close my eyes when I’m listening to these songs, because I feel like I’m telling everyone all my secrets,” she says. “But at the same time I’m proud that I was able to be that fearless and not hold back from putting so much truth into the album.”

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