

Jingle stuff, youthful pop stars, Sabrina Carpenter, Lauv and all that fame



Sabrina Carpenter took off for fame via the Disney Channel, and 2018 has been a breakout year for her. (Amanda Charchian)

By **Allison Stewart**
Chicago Tribune

Like Demi Lovato and Selena Gomez before her, Sabrina Carpenter used the Disney Channel as a springboard to pop stardom. Carpenter, 19, first began releasing music while starring in the series “Girl Meets World.” After years on the cusp she’s had a big 2018, releasing her third, most ambitious full-length, “Singular: Act 1” (home to the new single, “Sue Me”), and co-starring in the film “The Hate U Give.”

Pop star Lauv, 24, has also had an eventful year: His new hit single, “There’s No Way,” is a duet with his new-ish girlfriend (Julia Michaels, also a pop star). He also dropped “I Met You When I Was 18,” a collection of his finest, most heartbreaking-est EDM-pop songs, including the multi-platinum “I Like Me Better.”

He also gained traction for his My Blue Thoughts project, in which brief notes written by fans and dropped in a blue box at Lauv’s shows are collated and put online. It’s an innovative-and sometimes heartwrenching-new way to communicate with fans: Lauv and Carpenter both have devoted social media followings.

Lauv, born Ari Leff (“lauv” means “lion” in Latvian) is at work on his official debut; Carpenter is currently assembling “Singular: Act 2,” both slated for release next year. Lauv plays B96’s Jingle Bash at Allstate Arena on Saturday, Carpenter appears at KISS FM’s Jingle Ball at Allstate on Wednesday. In separate phone interviews, Lauv and Carpenter discussed their recent stints as stadium show openers (Lauv opened shows for Ed Sheeran, Carpenter for Ariana Grande), and their fraught early years.

The following are excerpts from those conversations:

On their teenage growing pains

Lauv: Growing up, I played in bands, and my sister would drive me and my friends on tour. We were fourteen, fifteen, and we would play to zero people. I don’t consider myself a super confident person, especially when I was younger. I didn’t really like high school or anything. I felt outside the main vibe of high school. I went from wanting to be an artist when I was a kid to spending a few years trying to be behind the scenes, and write pretty songs (for other artists), before really focusing on myself.

Sabrina Carpenter: I started songwriting before I ever booked my first role on a television show or a movie. ... I don’t want to say it’s harder (starting out as a Disney star). I can’t say because I don’t know, but for some reason there’s this, not negative energy, but a “You have to prove yourself to me” kind of energy when you come from that network, for whatever reason. I don’t quite understand it.

On finding their voices during their early years

Carpenter: I was always given the ability, but I don’t think I ever took as much of the opportunities as were probably there. I don’t think I was comfortable enough around the people I was working with, that I felt I could completely control the room, and I could control what I could be and sound and feel like. I was trusting a lot of other people that they knew better than I did, and I should let them take the lead.

Lauv: I felt like I wasn’t using music the way I wanted to. I wanted to say things with the music, and I was like, “Okay, then you have to go and actually do it.” It wasn’t like I was unhappy having attention. I feel awkward under pressure and unsocial sometimes, but I wanted to have my own platform.

On forging a deeper bond with fans through social media

Carpenter: If I didn't have (social media), I wouldn't be able to access them so easily, and I wouldn't be able to talk to them and know if they're liking the things that I'm doing. ... It's so nice when I get to talk to them on a more personal level. Not, "My people (will talk to) your people." We get to connect as friends.

Lauv: Every night, I've been going through the (blue thoughts) notes, and I take photographs and put them on the online site, so fans can see that somebody halfway through the world is going through the same thing as them, and feel like they're not alone. I haven't really gotten anything (alarming). If there was something, for safety my team would be forced to do something. But it's more like people talking about struggling with an eating disorder, or losing a parent, or maybe having a crush on their best friend.

On what they learned from their stints as stadium tour openers

Lauv: Just by observing (Sheeran) and being friends with him, he treated me and my crew so well on tour.... It had made a big difference for him when he was treated like that, and he decided that when he was playing big places, he was going to treat people under him with that same level of respect and hospitality. He's a rare example of somebody who's just a normal dude who's really dedicated to his craft. He writes songs every day, he's focused on the music, he's focused on being a good person, and he works hard, and that was really it. That's inspiring to me.

Carpenter: As long as I'm honestly being authentic and happy and enjoying what I'm doing still, that's all that really matters, but ever since I was a little girl I've always wanted to play arenas and stadiums. Every chance I get to be on a stage like that, I never take it for granted.