

Meet Rising Artist Damoyee Janai (Interview)



Credit: Rebecca
Hudson

Damoyee Janai is one of those rare people who find their calling at a young age, had a support system to pursue it and continues to make vigorous steps in her path as an artist. The 19-year old singer, writer and multi-instrumentalist released her third album, *The Whole Truth* on her October 4th birthday. The new music is an emotional composite of her life over the past couple of years expressed in a clear contralto that is both knowing and inquisitive. Sonically she is beholden to R&B, jazz, and pop and she openly embraces all of those influences without apology. The Dallas, Texas native has been recording since she was nine, won multiple awards including the Next Generation Monterrey Jazz Festival twice and tours in between her studies at the Berklee College Of Music. In this interview, Janai talks about becoming an artist, *The Whole Truth* and her love of soundtracks.

How did you know you were an artist and how old were you?

I started playing piano and studying music theory around age two and then I composed my first song when I was nine but it was actually age 13 when I realized I could truly be an artist and I recorded my first project it was an amazing and eye-opening experience.

You're from Dallas, Texas and there is a lot of music and culture there. What is it about the area that has influenced you?

I would say definitely the diversity in music. My music lurks

in between several genres and I believe my surroundings has a lot to do with it. Just being exposed to all kinds of music and having an appreciation for that. Iâ€™m definitely influenced by other artists from the Dallas area who made a name and legacy for themselves like Erykah Badu, Norah Jones, Leon Bridges and my favorite band out of Dallas is Snarky Puppy and all the players with their own individual projects especially Bobby Sparks and Shaun Martin. Thereâ€™s just so many great artists from Dallas.

What was it like when you participated in the Roy Hargrove tribute?

That was one of the most memorable experiences I had through my senior year. To learn the history of not only Roy Hargrove but the history of jazz especially the roots of jazz, what inspired jazz also what inspired Roy Hargrove to write, play and compose the music he did and him collaborating with so many people from the Dallas area and them sharing their stories of working with him and how much he has impacted them. I miss that experience it was amazing.

You're only 19 and have just released your third album, *The Whole Truth*, have you always been so organized and what is this new album about?

My parents raised me to be focused, determined and to have structure and Iâ€™m grateful for that. Also being an artist is hard especially because thereâ€™s so many things happening in your brain at once and it can be overwhelming at times. *The Whole Truth* embodies a series of life events that occurred over the past couple of years of my life. I was dealing with so much pain, broken relationships and other personal issues. I was also overcoming some past struggles in the midst of all that I was trying to establish myself as a music artist in my community. Being that Iâ€™m not just a musician or a singer or a composer Iâ€™m all of that and that makes it even more challenging to create a lane in a world that can be cookie-

cutter. I never felt like I had to prove myself I let my work speak for itself.

You made a statement that *The Whole Truth* is more personal than your first two records, what kinds of things are you talking about this time that you didn't before?

I would say overall *The Whole Truth* is about my journey up to this point. Each song represents an event or a person that is a part of my story and for me a lot of the songs are timeless even though I wrote them at the time being. Like "Change" and "Independent" I like those songs because I like to move forward and I hope those songs will be inspirations for others as well.Â Â

What do you want to do with your film scoring studies at the Berklee College of Music?Â

I am loving it here at Berklee I'm actually undeclared but I'm looking into the film scoring major. I would say what I love the most here is the community not everybody is the same but everybody supports each other.Â

Does social media influence your work as an artist?

I'll say yes growing up especially during my middle school years I would say the cyberbullying perspective you know bullying in general not just on social media it definitely put an impact on how I build myself as an artist.

Any dream projects for a wishlist?

I would love to work with Disney. Disney inspired me at an early age. You know how most people talk about the main character in a storyline I would always hunt down that soundtrack I always had a knack not just for movie soundtracks but like short films and TV show soundtracks.

Any favorite soundtracks?

I would say *The Incredibles* is the first one that's definitely one of my top favorites and Wally.

Keep up with Damoyee Janai at her [Official Site](#) and [Instagram](#)