

Louise Burns: The Element Interview



Louise Burns has appreciated the craft of songwriting since she was a youngster hearing her favorite artists on the radio. The British Canadian artist took those influences and started making her own music as a teenager when she co-founded the all-girl rock group Lillix. As the bass player and co-writer in the group, she got to experience the music industry of the early 2000s after they signed with Madonna's Maverick Records. Pop fans of the era remember their cover of The Romantic's "What I Like About You" which ended up on the *Freaky Friday* soundtrack and became the theme song of the series. Three albums later the band dissolved and Burns debuted as a solo artist in 2011 with her Polaris Prize longlisted *Mellow Drama* album. Today her fifth album [Element](#) drops and she describes it as "pop music for introverts." Burns talks about the impulses behind *Element*, her favorite songwriters and changes she's seen in the music industry.

You have led the release of her fifth album with a cover of Depeche Mode's "See You." Why did you decide to cover this song? How much has Depeche Mode influenced you?

I'm endlessly inspired by Depeche Mode and am a lifelong fan. It's their ability to write incredible songs that could stand alone with just a guitar that makes them so special. It's just great songwriting!

I know you also cite Kate Bush as someone else you draw inspiration from? It seems that "I Don't Feel It Like I Used To" has some of her influence.

Thank you! I love her with all my heart. She's one of my biggest inspirations, primarily because of her innovation and ability to sort of exist in her own universe. I also love that she's a producer as well as writer. An *actual* visionary.

Are there any other British artists that have been important to you?

The list is endless, British music has been a big part of my life. The Beatles, The Kinks, Northern Soul, The Cure, Sade, Depeche Mode, New Order, Massive Attack, Peter Gabriel, Everything But The Girl, the list is infinite!

Did you feel any pressure signing to Madonna's Maverick Records at age 15 as the bassplayer of Lillix and being hailed as the rebirth of Canada's indie rock movement back in the 2000s?

I was lucky to have the blissful ignorance of youth during my time signed to Maverick Records. It was incredibly hard work, and we experienced every music industry cliché you can possibly think of, but ultimately I was so young and had no real context for what the music industry was like coming from rural small-town Canada. Having said that, the experience had some pretty serious consequences on our mental health. It's taken me a while to process certain things about that time in

my life.

As for Canada's indie rock movement, I think I was more adjacent to all of that while it was happening. I've always been a bit more of an underground artist. While I have been working the entire time, I don't think I really fit into that category on a large scale, but a lot of my friends did! I also play in a band called Gold & Youth, who were also fairly connected to the indie rock movement.

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How did Element come together? Does the album have a concept?

The concept of Element came together during the darkest days of the pandemic. I had just experienced some serious life shifts and was only beginning to find my footing again when we went into lockdown. I'd spent some time in Baja California in Mexico right before which had a profound impact on me. I wanted to create a universe I could escape into that gave me the same feeling I got when traveling down there, or anywhere for that matter. It's an introspective record. I've been calling it pop music for introverts. Lots of oceanic feelings.

The lyrical concepts are about finding strength when everything is crumbling around you, and the sonic choices I made were inspired by the natural world and a sense of movement and wonder, the same feeling I get when I travel. I wrote it between tiny apartments, and produced it alongside Jason Corbett (ACTORS) in his studio in East Vancouver. Most of our days in the studio were surreal, having to wear masks and be so careful, but it kind of fuelled the catharsis of the whole experience. The studio became my solace.

You stated that it's a great time to be working in the music industry because the gatekeepers are losing control. Can you dig deeper into that?

For most of my life, I've felt like I need to have the approval of a certain kind of person in order to advance my career. Jobs like agent, A&R, managers, even creatives like directors and photographers have been dominated by men. Some of these men have been great. Some have been not so much. The amount of music-business-power-tripping I've seen in my life is enough to drive a person mad! But, over the past two decades I have seen more and more diversity behind the scenes. This gives me hope. We still have a lot of work to do, but if I can empower one single young woman to follow her dream to become a producer or engineer, then I have done my job!

What's next?

Hopefully some touring around Canada, The UK, Mexico and South America. I've been lucky in my career to travel to many different countries around the world, and I hope to see more of it on this album cycle! I also produce and write for other artists a lot, and I'm currently very excited about the two artists I've been working with. More on that soon.

Keep up with Louise Burns on her [official website](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).