



shirt by burberry prorsum.

100

TRACKS OF HIS TEARS

SAM SMITH GETS EMOTIONAL ON HIS DEBUT ALBUM, *IN THE LONELY HOUR*. BY JOSHUA GLAZER. PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANNA ROSE



SAM SMITH really wants you to buy his album. He really wants *me* to buy his album, too, which he loudly proclaims to everyone in his Berlin hotel suite after I mention receiving an advanced copy of *In the Lonely Hour*, his upcoming debut, from his publicist. “He should *pay* for it!” he scolds.

He’s joking, of course, though it’s a little hard to be sure. At 6’2”, with another two inches of pompadour on top, the 22-year-old British singer-songwriter who first appeared on electronic duo Disclosure’s 2012 hit “Latch” is an imposing figure. But the real force doesn’t lie in Smith’s physical stature as much as the sheer power of his personality. To call Smith a character is a bit of an understatement. He’s more like a fit constantly on the verge of happening, and whether that outburst is one of pure joy or utter sadness doesn’t seem to make a difference. One minute he is brashly ordering glasses of champagne for the room, and the next, he’s wickedly offering to “get dark,” before going into confession mode about the subject matter of *In the Lonely Hour*.

“This album was almost a form of self-harm,” he admits, referring specifically to the five out of 10 songs that directly address an autobiographical story of unrequited love that took place during the recording. “I was so lonely and in love with a person who didn’t love me back. If I weren’t writing the album, maybe I would have cut the person out and not spoken to them. But because of my situation, I courted it a bit. Literally went out and set the fire.”

That level of honesty has become Smith’s calling card, in interviews as well as in his music, and he delivers it with aplomb. It can be heard on the album’s lead single, “Stay With Me,” which starts out as a quiet confessional of a one-night stand gone wrong, until the gospel choir suddenly cries out the chorus, pleading for the stranger to remain. It’s dramatic in the way all good pop music should be, and refreshingly absent of the sheen of swagger

that coats most radio tracks these days. In its place are Smith’s plaintive tales, delivered in his soulful voice with a doe-eyed stare that’s equal parts Boy George and a pre-stubble Justin Timberlake.

From that sincerity standpoint, it’s appropriate that Smith’s breakout moment stateside took place on an episode of *Saturday Night Live* hosted by Louis C.K., a comedian whose mega-success has resulted from unabashed honesty in the face of his everyman tribulations. The biggest difference: While C.K.’s middle-aged struggles are usually

resolved with a comedic “fuck it,” Smith’s youthful naïveté means he’s likely a long way from a similar resolution. And while that’s probably good for fueling his songwriting fire, it’s hard not to feel a touch of sympathy when Smith’s headstrong denials kick in.

“I think the album has completely, once and for all, killed my obsession with unrequited love. I’ll never put myself through that again,” he insists. When I joke that he, like everyone, most certainly will repeat that particular mistake, Smith’s huge blue eyes become steely: “If I start fancying someone who is

“THIS ALBUM WAS ALMOST A FORM OF SELF-HARM. I WAS SO LONELY AND IN LOVE WITH A PERSON WHO DIDN’T LOVE ME BACK. IF I WEREN’T WRITING THE ALBUM, MAYBE I WOULD HAVE CUT THE PERSON OUT AND NOT SPOKEN TO THEM. BUT BECAUSE OF MY SITUATION, I COURTED IT A BIT.”

unobtainable, I will run the other way. I promise you.”

Then again, there might be good reason to believe in his determination; he has conquered challenges before. An obese child, Smith battled his weight issues with the help of his father, who went so far as to become a certified fitness instructor to coach his son. Smith says that his emotional openness comes from the Y-chromosome as well.

“We don’t think before we speak. We say how we feel. We live with our hearts completely out there,” he says, comparing himself to his dad. But Smith is careful to

include his whole family in the support network that helped *In the Lonely Hour* through its difficult birth. “My family was on the other end of the phone every night when I’d ring up sad. In a way, it’s a magical album for them because they were there living it with me.”

Despite his family’s intimate participation in the making of his music, there may still be a few confessional surprises for them on the album. Smith begins to squirm a little when he thinks about it, although there is a sense of extroverted thrill mixed in with the trepidation. “The things I say in my songs are things I won’t say to my mother. And the whole world is going to know now,” he says.

While that vulnerability is both scary and exciting, Smith admits that it’s a necessary part of finding himself as an artist, as well as growing as a person. And he knows that ultimately, his soul-baring is the reason why the audience has responded to his music in the first place.

“I always get panicky because I get so emotional in everything I do,” he says. “I call my mum up, and she says, ‘Sam, it’s your *job* to be emotional!’”

jacket by [suit](#).
stylist: [nina](#)
[byttebier](#). grooming:
[sabine szekely](#).

100



LISTEN UP:



TKTKTKTK
TKTKTKTK

let quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt explicabo. Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum vel eum iure reprehenderit qui in ea voluptate velit esse quam nihil molestiae consequatur, vel illum qui dolorem eum fugiat quo voluptas nulla pariatur?!. TKTKT

PLAY THIS: “Hkkttktk

photographed by
[tktktktktk](#)



TKTKTKTK
TKTKTKTK

let quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt explicabo. Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum vel eum iure reprehenderit qui in ea voluptate velit esse quam nihil molestiae consequatur, vel illum qui dolorem eum fugiat quo voluptas nulla pariatur?!. TKTKT

PLAY THIS: “Hkkttktk

photographed by
[tktktktktk](#)

RICK ROSS needs ice. Miami's megaton music mogul is camped out in a conference room in *NYLON Guys'* SoHo offices with several bottles of sparkling Belaire Rosé that have not been chilled to his preferred quaffing temperature. This perturbs the Bawse. Before gliding into the building, pairing a sober black T-shirt and pants with a luxurious blue fur coat, Ross's oversized entourage made a few special requests on his behalf—"healthy snacks, like trail mix, and water, *Fiji water*"—and took steps to ensure his habitual weed supply would remain constant. The refreshments have arrived. But someone forgot the ice. Cue a scramble.

TSam Smith really wants you to buy his album. He really wants me to buy his album, too, as he loudly proclaims to everyone in his Berlin hotel suite after I mention receiving an advanced copy of his recently released debut, *In The Lonely Hour*, from his publicist.

He's joking, of course, though it's a little hard to be sure. At 6'2", with another two inches of pompadour on top, the 21-year-old British singer-songwriter who first appeared on electronic duo Disclosure's 2012 hit "Latch," is an imposing figure. But the real force doesn't lie in Smith's physical stature as much as the sheer power of his personality.

To call Smith a character is a bit of an understatement. He's more like a fit constantly on the verge of happening. Whether that

outburst is one of doesn't seem to m minute he is brash champagne for the wickedly offering t into confession m of his album.

"This album was harm," he admits, r five out of 10 song autobiographical s took place during lonely and in love love me back. If I v maybe I would hav spoken to them. B I courted it a bit. Literally went out and set the fire."

That level of honesty has become Smith's calling card, in interviews as well as in his music, and he delivers it with aplomb. It can be heard on the album's lead single, "Stay With Me," which starts out as a quiet confessional of a one-night stand gone wrong, until the gospel choir suddenly cries out the chorus, pleading for the stranger to remain. It's melodramatic in the way all good pop music should be, and refreshingly absent of the sheen of swagger that coats most radio tracks these days. In its place are Smith's plaintive tales, delivered in his soulful voice with a doe-eyed stare that's equal parts Boy George and a pre-stubble Justin Timberlake.

From that sincerity standpoint, it's appropriate that Smith's breakout moment stateside took place on an episode of *Saturday Night Live* hosted by Louis C.K., a comedian whose mega-success has resulted

from unabashed honesty in the face of his everyman tribulations. The biggest difference is that, whereas C.K.'s middle age struggles are usually resolved with a comedic "fuck it," Smith's youthful naiveté means he's likely a long way from similar resolutions. And while that's probably good for fueling his songwriting

"AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL ABOUT A MILLION, THEN I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL ABOUT 10 MILLION, BUT THAT SHIT DON'T EVEN MATTER TO ME NO MORE."

fire, it's hard not to feel a touch of sympathy when Smith's headstrong denials kick in.

"I think the album has completely, once and for all, killed my obsession with unrequited

his emotional openness comes from the Y-chromosome as well.

"We don't think before we speak. We say how we feel. We live with our hearts completely out there," he says, comparing himself to his dad. But Smith is careful to include his whole family in the support network that helped *In The Lonely Hour* through its difficult birth. "My family was on the other end of the phone every night when I'd ring up sad. In a way, it's a magical album for them because they were there living it with me."

Despite his family's intimate participation in the making of his music, there may still be a few confessional surprises for them on the album. Smith begins to squirm a little when

he thinks about it, although there is a sense of extroverted thrill mixed in with the trepidation.

"The things I say in my songs are things I won't say to my mother. And the whole world knows now," he says.

That vulnerability is both scary and Smith admits that it's a necessary thing himself as an artist, as well as a person. And he knows that his soul baring is the reason why the world has responded to his music in the

ways get so panicky because I get so in everything I do," he says. "I call my and she says, 'Sam, it's your job to deal.'"

alternate version

jacket by suit.
stylist: [nina_byttebier](#). grooming:
[sabine szekely](#).

