

Akira Galaxy

In the songs on Los Angeles singer-songwriter Akira Galaxy's debut EP *What's Inside You*, pure and unfiltered emotional connection is everything. In their romantic vortexes, nothing seems to be in question, and consummate mutual understanding feels possible. Eventually, though, difficult moments throw deeper truths into relief, exposing the ways in which the narrators have been misled. Akira writes soulful and atmospheric alternative pop songs about being lost in these kinds of states, inserting bittersweet or acidic asides.

With divergent touchstones like Radiohead, Cocteau Twins (she covers Elizabeth Fraser's Massive Attack collaboration "Teardrop"), and Fleetwood Mac, *What's Inside You* covers a great deal of musical as well as spiritual territory across its five songs. Ecstatic but emotionally unsparring, immediate and catchy but sophisticated, the EP announces an artist eager to explore divergent ideas and already invested with a fully formed songwriting voice.

Born Akira Galaxy Ament, the 23-year-old singer cut her teeth as a musician while fronting high school bands in Seattle, having been steeped in eclectic music by her family since she was a toddler. In her songwriting and performance, she combines the grit and attitude of the alt-rock of her hometown—where she often retreats to write—with a sleeker, more transatlantic aesthetic. Aided by producers Chris Coady (Beach House, TV On the Radio, The Kills) and Sam Westhoff, the songs on the EP blend rock 'n' roll edge with synth gestures reminiscent of '80s dream pop. Akira's smoky vocals feel intimate and otherworldly at the same time, mirroring the moments in her songs when the real and the imagined seem to fold together and become inextricable.

The yearning strummer "Virtual Eyes," in particular, evokes this feeling of lost perspective. Inspired by a love affair that progressed entirely remotely, it explores —as Akira puts it— "Falling in love while the world stood still" before "going back to real life and realizing that the moment was built on fantasy." In the song's final refrain, it's hard not to get swept up in that craving for human connection, even if it ultimately proves to be a coping mechanism: "*I want your impossible devotion / So look me in my virtual eyes.*"

The arch, upbeat pop of "Wanna Be a Star" distills another moment of post- pandemic realization—the feeling of facing people and situations one hasn't seen for a long time. Bolstered by synths and guitar by John Anderson (girls) it functions as an anthem of self-actualization as well as an L.A.-specific social critique. Akira draws harsh conclusions while exploring the highest extreme of her vocal register: "*A weight in your pocket / And still not good enough for you / Your dreams are half open / Like a black hole imploded.*"

"Silver Shoes," meanwhile, looks back on an older lost love, simultaneously capturing the feeling of being in a troubled but profound relationship and tracing its slow dissolution. As happens frequently across these songs, all barriers break down between lovers; whether that is the mark of idealized love or toxic codependency feels beside the point. "*See, there's no one*

who can see you like I do ... Beyond those lies / There's no divide," Akira sings, recalling an interplanetary Stevie Nicks.

Ultimately, Akira hopes her songs will connect with people who have gone through experiences similar to hers and effectively describe inner states that feel difficult to articulate—for instance, the desire for complete knowledge of another person. In the most powerful moments on *What's Inside You*, she writes about our strange proclivities in love without judgment. These indelible songs capture emotional truth—the bold handiwork of an artist who prizes depth and substance in addition to her adventurous sounds.