



EMMALINE

Singer, violinist, songwriter
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Emmaline (rhymes with clementine) is a 22-year-old singer and songwriter possessing a smoky, jazz-infused, genre-fluid voice admirable as much for the range of traditional sounds she draws upon, as for her startling freshness—fresh, as in new and innovative as well as in attitude and sly humor. Her songs are bold in statement and soft in feel, her flow supple and precise. She prides herself in being one who has listened with deep intention to her heroes—Anita O'Day and Billie Holiday, Erykah Badu and D'Angelo—and has already learned to rise above questions of category with a healthy sense of musical identity and forethought.

"I consider myself a jazz singer," Emmaline says. "I have been singing jazz my entire life—I studied it and I think that there is a place for me in the jazz world. Whether my music is strictly jazz I cannot say and in fact, would rather not. To me jazz is art, not a set of rules."

Emmaline's success speaks for itself: On her first U.S. tour in November of 2019, she performed as the opening act for 10-time GRAMMY winner **Chaka Khan** at the **New Jersey Performing Arts Center**. On her own, Emmaline has headlined countless, sold-out shows at some of the country's most notable jazz clubs such as **The Jazz Standard** (New York City), **Scullers** (Boston), **Blues Alley** (Washington D.C.), **The Jazz Kitchen** (Indianapolis), and **Keystone Korner** (Baltimore). She has performed in a wide range of situations on stage and online—with big bands and orchestras, singing Jessie J's "Domino" (à la Billie Holiday) for **Postmodern Jukebox** and "It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing" with the world renowned **Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra** —and has amassed a substantial social media following. Her first official release—the six-song EP "**All My Sweetest Dreams**"—was released in September of 2019, and due to the confidence and clarity of the music, the release turbo-charged the tempo of her career ascendancy. Her sophomore EP, "**Necessity**," is set to release on October 2, 2020, and Emmaline claims that her listeners are in for a surprise.

"In my opinion, the songs on my upcoming EP release are quite contrasting to the ones on my first release. I wanted to show my fans another side of me, a more vulnerable and musically versatile side of me."

According to Emmaline, her upcoming EP features a wide range of musical styles and genres: from classic Neo-Soul to a psychedelic, futuristic arrangement of her favorite jazz standard,

“You Don’t Know What Love Is.” Emmaline makes an even bolder statement with “Necessity,” the title track of the EP, by showing off her immaculate vocal control and technique in a reflective guitar and vocal duo performance. Though acoustic ballads aren’t conventionally considered for title tracks, it’s clear that Emmaline has no intention of doing anything by the books.

“I wanted to flip the script with the Necessity EP and show myself and others that you don’t need to do things in a conventional or predictable way to achieve your dreams. I self-produced the entire record by myself with my guitarist, Ryan Mondak, recorded it in my home studio with my friends and funded the whole record by myself. The process was completely organic and completely me. I’ve never felt more myself.”

Her story thus far: Emmaline hails from Anderson, Indiana—an hour northeast of Indianapolis—where she grew up in a musical family; her father, a jazz pianist, her mother, a journalist, and both siblings musicians as well. She credits the lack of distractions in what was a primarily rural environment for honing her focus early.

“I think that kind of solitude, being out in the country, played a big part in my musical growth. From the time I was very young, we would sit at home in the evenings and play music or have these listening parties in our bonus room upstairs—my dad had a record player and the majority of what we listened to was mainly jazz: big band music and also solo artists like Chet Baker and Bill Evans, and R&B and soul and more modern things, like Brian McKnight and Lalah Hathaway and Erykah Badu.”

Emmaline began violin lessons at the age of four with a local teacher, recalling “I’d always be so nervous and shy about going to my lessons, but when we were actually making music and working on how to actually play my instrument, it made me really excited and motivated to practice.” She still plays the violin yet considers her interest in singing as the turning point that led her to her career path.

“I always loved to sing. I remember, I must’ve been about eight years old, I asked my dad, ‘How can I become a better singer?’ He gave me this record by Take 6 with a cover of the Donny Hathaway song, ‘Some Day We’ll All Be Free,’ featuring Lalah Hathaway. He said, ‘Listen and learn how to sing the entire song exactly how they sing it—word for word, note for note—that’s where you should start.’ That was the first song I ever worked on all the way through. Even though I was just singing it to myself, I felt I had accomplished something very important, something I had never tried to do before!”

Upon graduating high school, Emmaline entered **University of Cincinnati’s famed College-Conservatory of Music (CCM)**, first focusing on violin performance, then commercial music production, and eventually settling into the jazz program in her sophomore year. She began to develop her own songwriting skills—from “writing little songs here and there, mostly just lyrics and melody because I didn’t play a chord-based instrument”—to writing her first complete song as an academic assignment. “It was called ‘Kingdom Come.’ Just another melodramatic, break-up song waiting to be written, but I heard it all the way through, the overall sonic quality with drippy, reverbed guitar and sparse drums, almost timpani-like. Very cinematic.”

Emmaline's ensuing experience at CCM was challenging as she was the school's sole female jazz major at the time, but as she reports, her real-world experience, building her own career online, eventually proved more educational and valuable than what she was learning in the classroom.

"Promoting myself as a musician on social media was something I was not taught in school. It was my own idea. From the very beginning, when I decided to be a vocalist and a songwriter, I knew that I needed a fanbase if I wanted this to work. And so far, I have been able to do that by posting my music on Instagram and Facebook. People immediately started responding. It's been very encouraging. My social media presence made it possible for me to create my first recording ["All My Sweetest Dreams"]. I started a Kickstarter campaign for \$25,000, which eventually received more than \$41,000 from my fans, which gave me the ability to release my first EP independently!"

Co-produced by Emmaline and featuring songs she wrote or co-wrote, "All My Sweetest Dreams" made for a bold and melodically lush debut. It was produced by veteran producer **Jason Olaine** (**Roy Hargrove, Dave Brubeck, Bad Plus**, etc.) and co-produced by Emmaline herself, her guitarist **Ryan Mondak**, and noted jazz producer **Seth Abramson**. A seasoned group of jazz players—many of whom were part of trumpeter Roy Hargrove's funk ensemble RH Factor—contributed, including trumpeter **Maurice Brown**, saxophonist **Jacques Schwartz-Bart**, keyboardist **Bobby Sparks II**, bassist **Ben Williams**, drummer **Jason "JT" Thomas**, plus a string quartet (featuring Emmaline as the first violinist), and Mondak on guitar.

The recording sessions took place in Brooklyn, NY at **Strange Weather** the same week that Jazz at Lincoln Center presented its memorial concert in tribute to Roy Hargrove. At the forefront of "All My Sweetest Dreams," of course, is Emmaline's voice: a singular lyrical instrument in its own right, immediately recognizable, at times playful, and always poised and confident. Such is the precision in her singing ability—her perfect pitch notwithstanding—that she delivered all her vocal tracks, lead and background, in one afternoon, each demanding no more than one take.

The process of creating her upcoming sophomore EP release, "Necessity" poses a great contrast to that of her first release. Emmaline and her crew recorded the entire album in merely two days at her newly built home studio in Cincinnati, Ohio, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Originally, I was planning on recording the Necessity EP at a really great studio in my hometown. But once COVID hit, my studio dates continued to get pushed back and by the time June rolled around, it began to look like I would never be able to record the album."

After talking it over with her guitarist and studio engineer, Ryan Mondak, Emmaline began to craft a different plan. She built her own vocal booth, soundproofed her entire basement and began preparing to record the EP from the comfort of her home with Mondak as her studio engineer.

"We had to roll with the punches and adapt to the circumstances. I'd been wanting to transition into recording primarily from my home for a while, and this seemed like the perfect opportunity to take that step. The whole recording process just felt right. The instrumentalists on the **Necessity EP** are all musicians in my touring band, we've been playing together for around 2½ years now—we're all great friends too, which made the recording process even more special."

The band consists of Emmaline's long-time friends and colleagues: guitarist and studio engineer **Ryan Mondak**, keyboardist **Dev Marvelous**, saxophonist **Chelsea Baratz**, bassist **Sam Reuscher**, and drummer **Isaiah Cook**. Emmaline's ethereal vocals and virtuosic violin playing can be heard throughout the entirety of the four-song EP. In improvisatory spirit and feel, it's no surprise that she identifies herself first as a jazz vocalist and instrumentalist as her music fully supports that claim.

As a member of a generation somewhat free of past musical assumptions and associations, Emmaline regards jazz as an exciting invitation to both honor the pioneers and help move it forward with new sounds and influences—all while being conscious of how the question of jazz identity can be such a dividing point among players, critics and listeners alike.

“I don’t want to step on any toes with saying this, because my dad is a jazz musician and he is very aware of the “this is jazz, this is not jazz” argument. I just think at this point, what is jazz anymore? We have Robert Glasper, and he’s using advanced harmony and improvisations and this great jazz vocabulary while incorporating all of these R&B and hip-hop ideas into his music and that doesn’t make him any less jazz than Miles Davis in my opinion.

“Jazz is not only bebop. It’s not only swing. It’s all of that, and also what is happening today. Among people in my age group, the opinion on this really varies. But personally, I think this whole playlist and streaming culture today is awesome because people can listen—and they are listening—to all of it, to things they never would get to if they didn’t have access. Because of this, the music is evolving and something new and creative and extremely musical is coming out of that.”

While many are predicting great things ahead for the singer, to hear it from Emmaline herself, her aspiration is one of outreach more than self-promotion—though she does have one modest goal in mind:

“My hope in releasing music is to get me one step closer to being able to inspire and encourage as many people as possible around the world with my music. Honestly—if just a handful of folks relate to my songs and can find some kind of peace listening to them, then my career will be a success in my book!”

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