

HONEYMOON BY BEACH BUNNY

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It's insane to see how big Chicago indie rock outfit Beach Bunny has gotten recently. If you wanted to get in touch with the band a year ago, all you had to do was shoot a message to their Gmail account; their guitarist, Matt Henkels, would reply within hours, more than optimistic to personally give away guest list spots and photo passes to their shows. They were an underground favorite around the Windy City, opening for names like The Front Bottoms and (Sandy) Alex G at local venues, and playing the smaller stages at Riot Fest and Lollapalooza. Though 2020 has barely begun, Beach Bunny already has much to be proud of. They are embarking on a major headlining tour this spring, getting featured in renowned publications like *Pitchfork* and *Rolling Stone*, and are still reeling over a new contract with NYC indie label Mom + Pop Records. The release of their first full length album, *Honeymoon*, on February 14 is just one more achievement to add to their steadily growing list.

For lead vocalist Lili Trifilio, being honest has never been an issue. She's been releasing confessional-like songs under the name Beach Bunny since 2015, years before moving towards a full band, now featuring Henkel on guitar, Anthony Vaccaro on bass and Jon Alvarado on drums. It was her 2018 EP *Prom Queen*, though, that truly introduced the world to the songwriter who just *gets it*: all of the angst and turmoil of being young and in love. She's quickly become the unofficial queen of heartbreak. Trifilio's wallowing, raspy voice hits people where it hurts, and her solemn soliloquies have led many to question whether or not she is our generation's Liz Phair or Alanis Morissette.

The "sad girl" mindset can only go on for so long, though. In the aforementioned *Rolling Stone* profile, Trifilio hinted at her uncertainty about the new release at hand.

"The majority of *Honeymoon* was written in 2018 and recorded in 2019, and I feel like [during] those two years, I was going through a lot of life changes," she admitted. "At the time, I didn't really know my worth and had lower self-esteem, so a lot of the *Honeymoon* songs are dramatic, sad ballads."

Honeymoon definitely feels like a downer at some points. It probably stems from the album's ironic title, most of the songs feeling more appropriate for break-ups than a post-wedding party. Still, *Honeymoon* stands for a moment in Beach Bunny's career that deserves to be explored in depth. It is the band's ability to create those relatable, mosh-worthy songs that has gotten them this far; *Honeymoon* does not disappoint in that respect. Opening track "Promises" is the power punk anthem that is sure to open the pit later this year, even with its intense insight into insecurity and paranoia. "Rearview" speaks to constantly feeling inadequate alongside a soft acoustic opening, before erupting into a cacophony of guitar. Songs like "Ms. California" are the closest thing Gen Z will get to grunge. Trifilio is witty with her lyrics, poking fun at the hypocrisy and unrealistic expectations of Hollywood ("Everything's better in California," she practically sings with a sneer).

That unabashed introspectiveness is what made us fall head over heels for Beach Bunny in the first place. It's Trifilio's lyricism and perceptive nature that is truly relatable, her words feeling like our own. Fan favorite "Dream Boy" is an anthem for those trying to find "the one," all while being buried under the unrealistic expectations of that fantasy. Trifilio emphasizes the importance of her heart and boundaries, telling that hypothetical boyfriend, "if you're gonna love me, make sure

that you do it right.” It’s a wake up call in many ways. For all the emo vibes, Beach Bunny reminds us that there is still good in giving your heart to someone else. These songs are a push forward, the light at the end of the tunnel that lets us know whatever lies ahead is for the best.

Trifilio is already thinking about her own future as well, hoping to continue progressing as a songwriter who creates material that matures as she does.

“Now I’m trying to write more empowering songs,” she states. “Maybe talking about the same things, but I have a more healthy mindset.”

Honeymoon remains an album to latch onto nonetheless. It’s an auditory manifesto for anyone trying to gain control over themselves; an ode to the people we are, the people we were, and the people we hope to become. *Honeymoon* knocks down the walls we’ve put up around ourselves. Within these songs, we see the reward in expressing our frustrations, in validating our vulnerabilities. Though we may make mistakes—whether in love or artistry—we are also allowed to grow from them. Like Trifilio sings to her lover on “Cloud 9,” “you will always be my favorite form of love.” Beach Bunny, with their constant retrospection, will always be ours too.