Arts & Humanities

Maude Latour: Confessions of a TikTok Pop Star

How the singer-songwriter and Columbia graduate found her voice — and her audience.

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Anna Koblish / Warner Records

In the music video for her hit song "One More Weekend," Maude Latour '22CC, wearing sneakers and a crop top, blond hair in a high ponytail, dances across Low Plaza while singing about a past romance. *Maybe I've been lying to myself since last October / 'Cause I saw you 'cross the campus, and I wished it wasn't over.* She runs

toward Butler Library and collapses on the lawn. “The song is about seeing someone on College Walk and being in love,” says the indie pop artist.

When Latour released the video in the summer of 2020, the Columbia College philosophy major and promising young singer-songwriter was already on critics’ radar. Known for her smooth, ethereal voice and insightful lyrics about youth and dating, her 2019 breakthrough EP, *Starsick*, drew comparisons to Lorde. Now, with college behind her, a record deal with Warner Records, and a third EP set for release this year, Latour continues to see her profile rise. On Spotify, she reaches more than eight hundred thousand listeners a month, and “One More Weekend,” her biggest single, has been streamed tens of millions of times.

Latour, who was born in Sweden and grew up primarily in New York and Hong Kong, says her musical journey began when she was “forced to play violin as a child.” She switched to singing and, while attending high school on the Upper East Side, did choir and a cappella. (“Deep down, I’m still just a choir girl trying to get the solo,” she says.) Her first heartbreak inspired her to start writing her own songs.

At Columbia, Latour fine-tuned her songwriting skills and shaped her artistic identity. “A huge asset was being surrounded by really motivated, creative people,” she says. “Every one of my friends became a collaborator and contributed their art or light to my projects.” Her Columbia peer Fergus Campbell ’22CC directed several of her early music videos, including “Superfruit” and “Furniture,” both filmed in dorms with casts of fellow undergrads, as well as “Walk Backwards,” set on the streets of Morningside Heights and elsewhere on the Upper West Side.

Although Latour performed numerous shows in local venues and at other college campuses, she found her biggest audience through social media. During college she amassed tens of thousands of followers on Instagram by uploading videos of herself singing, sharing candid reflections on school and life, and posting the kind of unforced, cool-girl selfies that make for Gen Z influencer gold. When the pandemic struck during her sophomore year and forced her to cancel concerts, including a debut at South by Southwest, Latour turned to performing on TikTok. “My plans disappeared, and this TikTok creature became part of my life,” she says. Her posts cumulatively racked up millions of views and led to her signing with Warner in 2021.

Latour at graduation. (instagram.com/maudelstatus)

Latour's career blossomed from that point on, and by her senior year she was juggling a busy touring schedule with a packed course load. "The absolute Columbia nerd in me refused to miss class," she says. "I would do two shows a weekend and come back to school feeling exhausted. I feel like I can do anything now." Though some people in the music scene would ask her why she bothered staying in school, she says, dropping out was never in the cards. "It was such a privilege to go to Columbia, and I was eager to soak in every moment."

Today, Latour is settling into life as a full-time musician. She recently performed at Lollapalooza and is embarking on a month-long tour this fall. Between shows, Latour records songs and creates content for TikTok ("the only currency in the music industry at the moment," she laments). She admits that she is still trying to figure it all out. "I want to feel older in my music, and it's a lot of emotional work to find what I want to say now," says Latour, who will turn twenty-three in October. "It no longer

feels like the world is ending when I have my heart broken.”

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