



MUSIC

AURORA: THE GODDESS WHO TOUCHES HEARTS

by [Alex Brzezicka](#)

AURORA walks us through the path stoned with thorns and petals that led to her new album, suspended between heaven and hell.

"I think of myself, my own body, as a goddess but I also think of you as a goddess and you as a god," Aurora says to me. It's a bizarre moment of catharsis: we're on the ninth floor of the Universal Music building in the centre of London, though it feels as if it could be the peak of Mount Olympus with Zeus about to send a lightning bolt our way. According to one of Norway's most enigmatic artists of this decade, profane and sacrum clash more often than we'd think. Only in that clash, we can find the golden mean. In between sadness and serenity.

On her fourth album, *The Gods We Can Touch*, Aurora brings heaven and hell back to Earth. She sends shivers down our spines as we convert to her coven descended from the Garden of Eden, the 21st-century children of Eve. As she was the first one to eat the forbidden fruit, we are the first ones to feel no shame when embracing the pleasure and essence of who we are within. Subverting biblical symbolism, inspired by the bravery of the queer community and pantheon of Greek gods, Aurora ascended to a self-assembled studio in a 400-year-old castle in Norway to give birth to a painfully beautiful project. It's a joy-sprouting celebration of diversity: the message of love embedded there has the power to melt even the coldest and the hardest of hearts.

For an artist who came up with such a grand idea, Aurora seems surprisingly grounded. She's interacting with surroundings on her terms, whenever it's a spontaneous series of humming or a plant-petting moment just before we shoot. It's surreal to think that she's a viral social sensation, following the re-emergence of her single, 'Runaway' (written when 11-years-old), as a TikTok trend. It's even stranger that at the centre of her magic veiled in enchanting vocals and spells-like lyrics, hides a human.

Following Aurora's example on the 'The Gods We Can Touch', we should dethrone our deities and burn precious castles we built for them in the skies. Staring at the fire, we'd see a flashing glimpse of our past lives when, once, someone put us high up there too. We were grateful to come down. In the society that praises perfection as a virtue, Aurora dares us to show off our flaws and, stripped from the false pretence, stand proudly in front of other beings. Leaving shame behind, let's dance altogether, drink wine and make a toast: to the dark, the light and love in it.

You've just released an album and it's absolutely stunning, congrats. In your previous ones, you've portrayed more of an inward journey. This time it feels like you want to teach people about these big, outward concepts. How that change of perspective come about?

I often react to my own work when I start my next work because for me all my albums are a part of a long timeline. I just knew when I had the title, 'The Gods We Can Touch', which people can figure out for themselves what it means, what it truly means. I know. I knew that I wanted to make an album about freedom, about not having shame for being different, for being sexual, for being curious, for being not good enough; all of these things that we're ashamed of all the time. I wanted to make an album that really celebrated the human and imperfect and the raw.



Among all the mythologies and gods' out there, you chose the Greek ones. What makes you feel connected to them?

What I liked about it is to see the mythology of the Western world that I actually resonated with. There's not so much with the modern Western world that I connect with because the Western world throughout history has brought so much destruction and abuse to the world which is very sad. I like Greek mythology because it included more imperfections. They have more room for humane. They have gods and goddesses to celebrate the very things that modern religion puts shame upon like being a woman, being gay, drinking wine, being sexual, being trans. They all had gods to celebrate these things so I wonder what happened on the way, where we lost that kind of freedom? Why do we have the need to impose control on each other with religion? Because faith is a very beautiful thing, it's a big part of being a human, this spiritual side.

I completely get that. It's so strange. In the modern age, we do need to bring back that idea of religion. For example, the spiritual idea of two opposites being in the same realm: the contrast of heaven and hell is one of the most fascinating concepts in literature, arts or even psychology. How come you've used it in the album?

I'm really drawn to contrasts. I'm a very contrasty person. That's my favourite thing about myself, my contrasts: about life and about the world because everything is so complex. You would be rude to say that everything is not complex because everything is so multidimensional. I'm very fascinated by the light and the dark, heaven and hell and our need to divide the two and to have an all-perfect thing to worship. Even society today is very obsessed with perfection, in celebrities. We're very obsessed with it and that scares me because it's very unhealthy. We're not meant to be perfect. We should love the fact that we are not; that we are diverse and natural. I find the contrasts in everything very exciting. But also, I find heaven and hell much more similar than we think.





When they're combined and there's this space in between that where enlightenment exists. A lot of your album and your work lives there...

I am very connected to that space.

What do you do to transport and connect yourself to that paradoxical, holy dimension?

Well, I meditate and think a lot. I use a lot of time to philosophise. I know if that's even a word. Because I love thinking about things and wondering why everything is like it is. I am very good at accepting that I am both good and bad. I'm good at accepting that the people I look up to and love can also disappoint me; that the people that I disagree with and hate that there are also things with them that I will love. I spend a lot of time accepting the two sides of everything. I love the sadness in life. I love the happiness. I love the raw and ugly and love the beautiful and pure. I see them all as the same thing. I love the full experience of everything. I see so much beauty in a lot of the things the world has forgotten are beautiful. I think maybe that helps at least to reach that space.

Definitely. I feel like we need to go back to the source, especially the ancient cultures. People seemed to forget about that now. Your album touches on the fact that gods are much more humane and flawed than we would think. If that's the case, why a lot of people are so scared to see the god in themselves but it's so easy for them to project that onto others?

I don't know but I find the same questions really fascinating. I think about it so much. Maybe we need something bigger. Something to strive for. Something almighty, all-knowing, perfect and divine that we can look up to because we love being led. We love serving someone and something which is also strange. I see no fault in that either. I think that could be potentially a very good thing: to strive towards something good and better, reflect on yourself. That's always good until it starts becoming a weapon toward controlling minorities and controlling the weak in the society, making them weak because it's clear who has not been hurt as much by these things and who has been hurt by them the most. My biggest issue is when it ends up in the wrong hands and what a great power it is to claim that you're in touch with whoever knows everything. Like how it started with stealing money from the poor even and then promising them they would go to heaven. It's like a business more when it comes to money and controlling people, more than the beautiful part of faith which many people also practise in the world.

Usually, people forget that there are two sides to it. The institution one often stands in opposition to the real thing. That causes the minorities to be discriminated against, as you've said before. You were very inspired by the queer and drag community when working on the album. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

A lot of the queer community, the drag community and the whole LGBTQIA+ community inspires me a lot because they, to me, are the essence of having no shame when they manage to overcome the shame the world afflicts on them and maybe sometimes the internal shame that they can't get rid of because the world tells them that that's how they should think about themselves. If they manage to overcome it, at least slightly, then they become so untouchable because there's no one... I can't come up with any other example of the same kind of freedom in expressing yourself and not caring what the world thinks. Despite what the world thinks they shout out loudly in their fashion and the way they behave. It's incredibly empowering and brave and obvious. That's exactly how it should be. It's a very special thing. It's very unique. When you show the world this, when you celebrate yourself, when you become loud, you also show the world that: 'You can't touch me anymore. I can't be hurt by what you say because I'm embracing who I am'. The strongest, most powerful tool in the whole world is when you're untouchable. It can't even hurt you anymore.



I definitely agree especially when there's love behind it. When you realise that you can love without any limitations. That's quite beautiful.

It is. Also, showing love that you know the world has been fighting against is also very empowering in itself. It's just so incredibly beautiful and inspiring. I love the whole sentiment of it. I'm part of the community myself but I'm not relating to a lot of these troubles that many people have had because I've had quite an easy journey outward. Of course, inward realising that 'oh I feel like this', was confusing and strange at the beginning but my meeting with the world has been very soft compared to a lot of people's experiences. Mostly that's why I fight for it.

That's really inspiring when you know how difficult it could be so you use your platform to spread the message of love. Talking about the concept of love, you're approaching it in such an amazing and simple way. It's easy to fall into cliches but you manage not to do that. What does it mean for you to love?

I think very much of love as a power. I think of it as very complex and divine and spiritual and human and flawed. I think of love as maybe the reason why we're here. The meaning of life. I mean when we love ourselves; when we love food; when we love children; when we put ourselves aside and love someone else more; when we learn to forgive that's also love. It's just when we realise that we have the ability to love and we let love in. I think that we understand a bit of this. Something in us understands why it's here. It's incredible. It's easy to write about love when you think about it in that way. I rarely write about relationships. People always think I do in songs because, I guess, that's what is normal but I very rarely write about love in a relationship but more as this big thing.

The universal meaning of love. I got that impression in 'Blood In The Wine'. There's one line that touched me, 'I was given a heart before I was given a mind'. Would you mind sharing the story behind the song?

Well, that's a song celebrating a bit of the dangerous and raw in us. It's about enjoyment and ecstasy. It's about sex as well and liberation. Being proud of and free in your skin and body and with your enjoyment like feast and food and wine and everything. It's about us celebrating all that is a pleasure here in the world without feeling bad for it. I was thinking about it in the chorus, 'She's not a sinner, she's a lover'. It's just that it's not necessarily a sin to enjoy things

and to love things or love whoever you want to love. That's a huge misstep we have taken in our world to misplace a few of these beautiful things as sinful and shameful. This is a very ultimate song speaking up against shame.



We forget to enjoy simple things like these.

Because we are meant to. Life is so good with them.

This is so true.

Even like just masturbating. People are so afraid of it. People are actually feeling bad for something that feels good and then you can do... Like it's so weird. I don't understand. We're afraid to be naked in front of each other. That's also so weird. We should be able to without it being sexual.

It's so innocent. It should be so natural.

It is so innocent. The fact that we are making it not innocent, that's the thing that makes it unpure because it is pure. Our bodies are pure. I hate that we are making it into something bad. Like when we're telling girls to cover up in school uniforms or in normal schools without uniforms, I've seen many examples of girls being told that they can't show their shoulders. That's a part of the problem, making our arms something sexual. No wonder we're getting ab-

used and sexualised. That's a part of the problem. They're sexualising something completely normal and innocent and that's making it worse for us.

It's one of the things that we have to fight against and keep on. I'm really glad to hear that you stand up against it and preach for the change because I really want to live in a society where this is a norm.

Yeah, me too. Me too.



Fingers crossed. Changing the subject, you've just released a conceptual experience 'A Touch of Divine', can you tell walk me through it?

I got the opportunity to record some of my songs live from the album for the first time so, of course, it's a bit wonky and flawed but that's not the point for it to be perfect. I just want it to be raw and real. It's just a completely new way of doing a live show online. It's nothing like I've ever done before. It's also a chance to reach out to all people in the world at home so they all can be a part of this release and be included. I don't know, it feels good.

That sounds really amazing. About your community, we've talked about the concept of god

That sounds really amazing. About your community, we've talked about the concept of god projection. I feel like that happens a lot in your case because people are connecting on a spiritual level with your art. How do you approach that when someone's praising you almost like a goddess?

I feel like it's ok as long as they remember to praise themselves as a god and a goddess as well. I think of myself, my own body, as a goddess but I also think of you as a goddess and you as a god [points at photographer]. I do because it's like oh... We are capable of so many things. It's incredible to be alive and to be functional. We are so complex as well. It's so beautiful. It's incredible but I find it scary of course. I find it very scary. But also, it's important to not think too much about what people think you are and what they need you to be, what they hope you are. It doesn't matter. You just be what you are and don't think about what everyone else thinks because I'm just what I am anyway. It doesn't matter what people need me to be or think I am. I'm quite relaxed about it. I try the best I can to encourage, to erase that kind of feeling and they know it when they meet me. I'm very good at being human.

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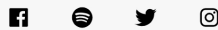
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