



MUSIC

GET TO KNOW: **JESSICA WINTER**

by [Alex Brzezicka](#)

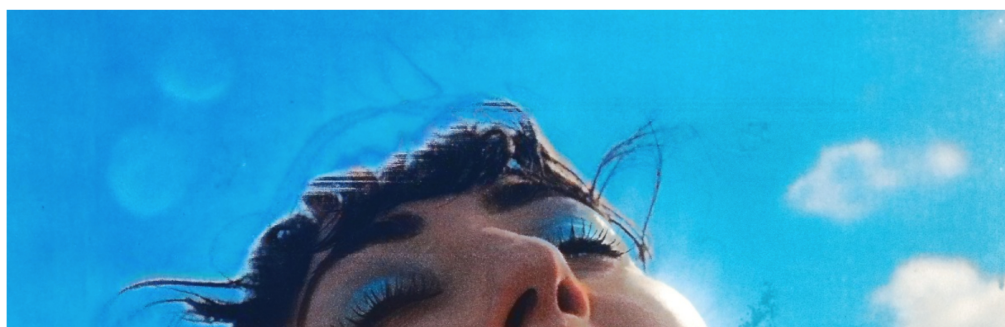
Let's 'crance' to the grooviest synth-goth realness available.

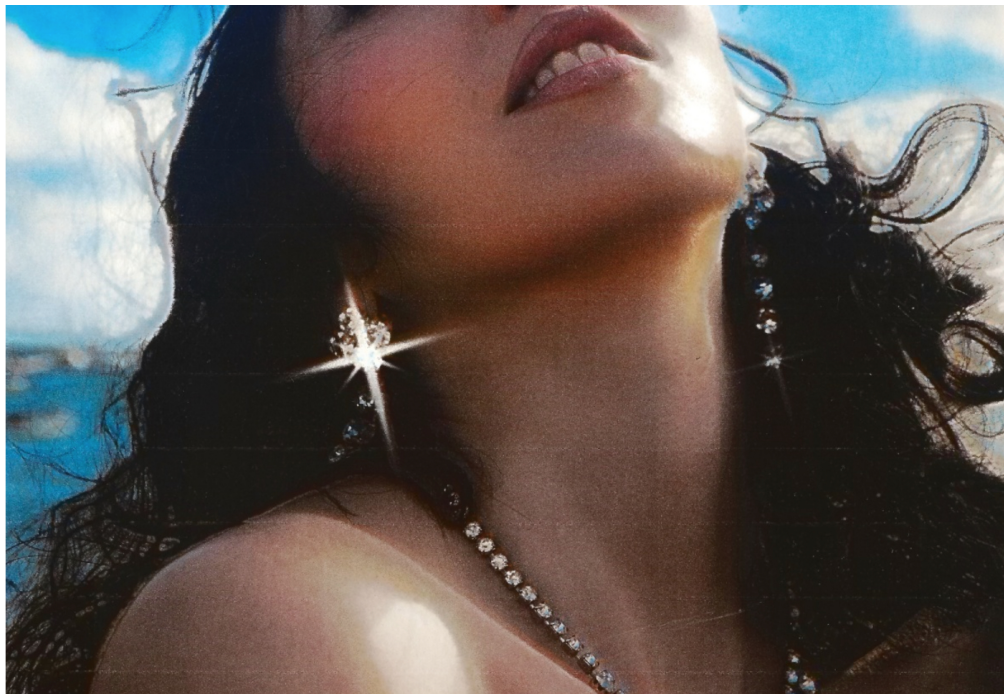
Jessica Winter is an emotional purist. For her, it's all or nothing: she's not bothered with in-between blandness so always delivers razor-sharp lyrics, her musical blades are sharp and polished, so we can see ourselves clearly in them. Naked and vulnerable, "I know you're going to hurt me so bad/But ooh, I'd rather feel something than nothing at all," she opens up in her new EP *More Sad Music*, and it sends shivers right down the spine.

The game that Winter is inviting you to take part in is ruled by ruthless laws of love. It's also the one that she's a skilful player in, drawing on personal and past experiences. No matter how intense it'll get, don't be scared, if you're brave enough to open up, you'll get to pour your heart out to the grooviest beats out there. Along with a couple of her madly talented friends like [Jazmin Bean](#), Jessica coined the name 'crance' for their music's shared vibe. She wants you to cry and dance, AKA crance, with her. It's a dance on the edge of sanity with a promise of post-party 6am catharsis. Get dressed in your best garms and go get that waterproof mascara. It's about time for a good time.

Spending much of her childhood days in hospital beds, Jessica has always had the drive to venture outside of closed spaces, whether physically or spiritually. Today, she stands on her own feet on the unstable musical ground. Just the way she wants it: escaping genres and all old male producers who wanted to groom the teenage her into a pop star. Already getting traction after producing Jazmin's heavily streamed debut album, Polish singer Brodka's track 'Game Changer' and recently Walt Disco's spicy single 'Macilent', she has decided to make it solo.

On her debut EP *Sad Music* and the new, sequel-like, *More Sad Music*, Jessica proves that she's got the star quality that the industry people saw in her early on. Though you need a bit of darkness in you and the will to look straight at it if you want to fully appreciate her dim allure. Like the North Star, it's always there but shines brightest on lonely winter nights. We talked to Jessica to help us spot it.





You've just released 'More Sad Music' EP, can you walk me through the process of creating it?

I had the *Sad Music* EP and then I just kept having more tragic romantic moments in my life. I was aiming for a happier EP but it just became *More Sad Music*. That's how it ended up having to come out. I believe that the personal is political so I took from drawing on quite personal, intimate problems. Hopefully, a lot of people can resonate with that and take from it what they want. This one is very personal. More personal probably than the first one. I feel like I definitely exorcised a few demons and helped my own problems, getting them out.

The whole EP is a bit of an emotional bullet, especially with 'I Think You're Going To Hurt Me (So Bad)'; can you reveal backstory and inspiration behind it?

It's really interesting because I'm so wrapped up in what I'm doing in my own day-to-day life that I've never realized that it might be quite bizarre to somebody else, that notion of just wanting to feel something other than having to face your own loneliness. At the time, I was just like 'I know this is going to be bad. I'm walking into a bad situation. I'm definitely going to get hurt'. You'd do anything for the fear of potentially not feeling anything and being alone forever. It's really weird because Jack Saunders publicly on air decided to say 'Jess, it's okay to be lonely. I've had some of the best times on my own watching films and eating popcorn' and then I was like 'he's broadcasting therapy to me because he's quite concerned about the song that I'm releasing'.

Sometimes it's better to go for the experience anyway than just having this nothingness.

You'd rather risk maybe feeling a bit hurt from something. For me at the time, it was like 'I feel intense love here' so I'd rather risk going for it and knowing that you're probably gonna hurt me because most of the time that's how the story goes for me personally.





A lot of your music is coming from this dark, sad place, is that something that you're doing consciously?

I've always been on the anti. I don't know why. I find the weirder things more interesting. Maybe weird and not as public topics. The darker side of love and difficulties with relationships. That is maybe because that is how my life has panned out a bit more. It's more interesting to me but also, I've grown up with some very weird relationship issues from staying with my parents and things like that. The dysfunction of it comes out more in the music from personal experiences. It's not something I'm conscious of. It's just something that I have to do. That's why I've always gone to the piano to make me feel better. By pouring out the sadness, I feel amazing after it.

How does London and the creative community you're surrounded by influence your music?

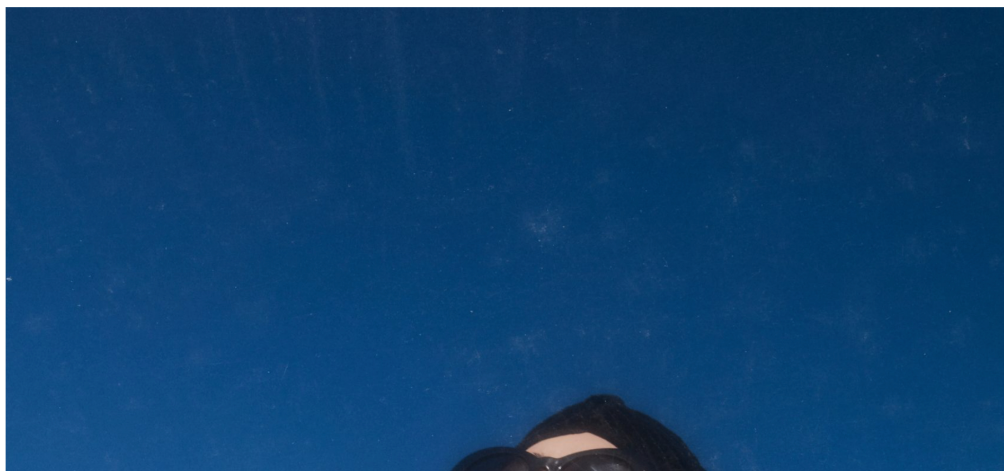
London itself is a very functioning dysfunctional place. It's like a monster. There are all these monsters that have come out of London. We've all found each other through either playing live or on Instagram. There is a really nice community that's come out of the, I keep calling it 'crance', a cry-dance scene. There are people that need to hear it and be a part of that rather than "everything's amazing" or "I'm living my best life" online communities; which is toxic. I feel that people need a bit of realness.

What is the message that you want to send to the people listening to your music?

That's the thing, it's not because I want people to just listen to my woes. It's more about 'I feel this. I'm sure you feel this too'. We can all feel this together. What's nice is that when you put a message out in a song or even through sounds, the right people gravitate towards it. That's why there has been this community that has grown from it. It's not just me. In general, this kind of music. Singing from a bit more of an honest place.

Making music is a great way to find out new things about yourself through expression. What has been the most shocking/interesting thing that you have found out?

You always think of 'what would I do in a song' or 'oh that's not what I'm into'. I found on this EP definitely that I haven't got one specific thing that I always go to. What I've learned is that the lyric is my definition. I'm more defined by the lyrics than the actual way the song is dressed. With 'Like A Knife' it's more like an indie disco dress, then 'With You Without You' is way more like the 80s Madonna vibe and then 'Do You Do You' is like a dance time. All of the messages in the songs link them together.





Which artists are your go-to when looking for inspiration?

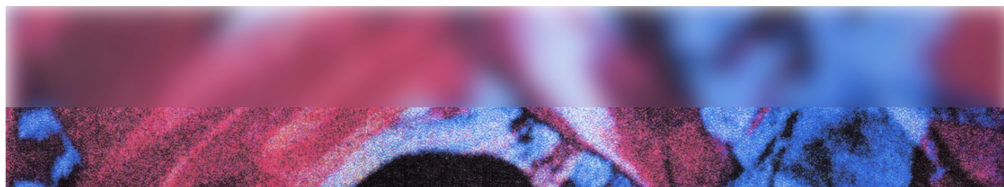
When I was growing up, I've always loved similar directness. There's a band called Eels. I just love his lyrics. They are just so direct but so poetic. It's so difficult to make simple direct lyrics without sounding really basic. I found him such an inspiration.

You've been a prolific collaborator, produced for Jazmin Bean and Walt Disco. What's your dream collaboration?

I actually recently worked with someone, we're still finishing the song, Andy Morin from Death Grips. I never thought of admitting that I'd actually get to collaborate with my favourite band. That was very cool. Surprisingly, I'd love to work with Sia. She's got a song called 'Flame'. That song just spoke to me the year that it was released. It's just insane. I'm not sure what she's up to now. I don't really follow her or anything. I love Lorde. I'm quite happy ticking along with the people I'm working with. I've done a song with Sega Bodega which we need to finish. This song we've got is definitely a little crance number. I just did a song with Madge as well.

You're doing a lot of activism work, exploring politics and social justice for example in Hate Zine, can you tell me what are you up to now and how does it correspond with your art?

Me and Louisa from Hate Zine, we've created this new club night called 'Hate the Haus'. We were just annoyed about every time we went to gigs or regular club nights, it was always loads of boys in bands. We wanted to make our own night that reflected music that we wanted to watch. By doing that, we were like also let's make it a point of all profits going to a charity or an organisation that we believe in. Each month before the pandemic, we were raising money for different people, for women and violence or trans rights, LGBTQ+i. Now we've decided to start back up again in December so we're gonna have the next one on December the 11th and we're still deciding who to raise money for. With the other activism, I wouldn't necessarily say I'm like a warrior or anything, I've just been part of the Extinction Rebellion, when we shut down Oxford Circus and stuff. There's been a lot of Polish trouble with the queer community. If you have a voice, even if it's just a tiny voice, I just think it's good to use your platform for the right messages because it is important.





Do you ever feel a need/pressure to fit into the music industry's boxes?

Oh my God, totally, which is why my own solo career has only started in the last couple of years because straight away when I was a teenager I was taken to go and be this pop star of what their view of me was. I was going around the houses, around different big producers in big studios, going from one to the other, doing writing sessions with these older men that were going 'you need to sound like this'. I was just totally bamboozled. By the end of it, I was just thinking, 'who the hell am I?'. I didn't even know what I like or I don't like anymore. I was just being told one thing after another and then getting confused and doubting everything I'm doing and doubting how I look. It took me a while to get out of that and then start, not realising who I was because you're always evolving, but getting back to what got me into this in the first place, what do I like, what I know, what I wanna look like. Even just a small basic thing like I'd always wear contacts in my eyes because I felt I couldn't wear glasses and sing. It was the whole progression of being comfortable with who you are and that is who you are so you can't change it.

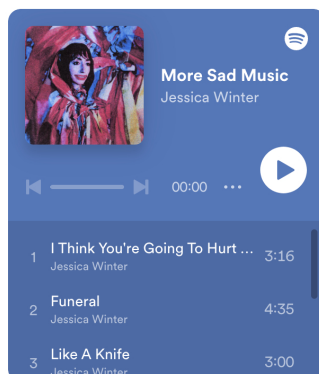
What are you working on right now?

Now that I have given birth to that very sad EP, I'm already in my mind planning it but nothing concrete yet. That'd be fun. Also, I've just finished scoring a children's TV show. It's coming out on CBBC. Very cute. It's called *Princess Mirror-Belle*. I've never done it before and I had to do 13, 20-minute episodes. It's crazy. With classical music and using strings. It's mental. I've never done it before in my life. I've lost a lot of sleep. Now that I've completed, I feel like I've just got to the top of Mount Everest. It's been a real mission but I really enjoyed it.

It's good to break out of your comfort zone.

It's also very inspiring. Obviously, the stuff that I do with Jazmin Bean and in my own music, Jaz and me, we have quite theatrical dramatic sounds. At one minute, it will be quite heavy and then it will go into some lush string arrangement. It really inspires me for the new stuff I'm gonna do.

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