

Myles Smith

My Mess, My Heart, My Life.

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Credit: Jennifer McCord

The artistic process can take people to deep and buried places in the soul. Sometimes it takes a while to get there. But for his debut album, Myles Smith dove in headfirst, deliberately confronting his past by rereading his old therapy notes. There he found five years of his life, between 2017 and 2022, documented with no filter; a portrait of a man coming of age while reckoning with his emotions. It cracked him open, revealing on the page his purpose for this next era. Out of those old journals came *My Mess, My Heart, My Life*.

“I wanted to release a debut album that said what I wanted it to say, rather than what everyone else wanted me to do,” says Smith. It’s easy to forget that this is the Luton-born 27-year-old’s first full-length project, given his stratospheric rise over the past few years. Ever since his 2024 single “Stargazing” turned him into a global star, spending 40 weeks in the UK chart, breaking into the Top 20 on the Billboard Hot 100, and reaching No. 1 on

the Billboard Alternative Airplay chart, Smith has been operating in the industry's big league: winning the BRIT Rising Star Award and being named a TIME100 honoree in 2025; landing another Billboard Alternative No. 1 with "Nice To Meet You"; amassing more than four billion combined streams; touring with his childhood hero Ed Sheeran; and playing more than 120 shows worldwide last year alone. Recording a debut album was the only unticked box on his ascendant hitmaker to-do list.

But Smith was intent on taking his time. "It would have been easy to drop an album full of 'Stargazings' and 'Nice To Meet Yous'," he says – and indeed, both tracks appear on the record. "But for me, it's about 'What's the story I want to tell? What do I think is important for the world to hear?'"

The album's opening track, 'My Mess', is a good place to start. With lines pulled nearly verbatim from those therapy notes, it was one of the first songs Smith wrote for the project, an emotional baptism of fire for both him and the listener. Over sparse, quick acoustic riffs, he paints a vivid picture of his upbringing: "*I was born into a fractured family / Where a word could start a war*". Then, in the chorus, he connects the dots, illustrating how those experiences shaped him. "*Sorry I'm so damn indecisive / I was raised just to do as I'm told,*" he sings, voice thick with emotion. "*And I hate the way that I'm still like this / I'm still learning to walk on my own*".

The words *My Mess, My Heart, My Life.* serve as a narrative roadmap as much as an album title, guiding the listener through its three core themes. Once Smith has put all his cards on the table on 'My Mess', he gradually transitions into more raw and delicate storytelling, laying his heart bare on songs such as 'Grandma's Place'. Following 2025's "My First Heartbreak", which explored the impact of his father's absence, 'Grandma's Place' mourns the safe haven he lost after his parents' divorce. "My grandma was always the only person on that side of the family that I really connected to," he says, explaining how they drifted apart once his father left. From the smell of Dettol and oxtail soup to plastic-wrapped sofas, Smith immerses the listener in his memories, but the lyrics offer more than nostalgia. "It's also about the opportunities missed to rebuild a relationship," he explains. "And the shame and regret I live with – not being able to speak to her now, having missed those final years of her life."

Elsewhere, Smith pushes his songwriting outside of his inner world and into the lives of others. The soaring love song 'Heaven', for instance, was inspired not by a personal relationship, but from witnessing his close friend, producer and co-writer Peter Fenn get married and have his first child. Meanwhile, on 'Mary's Song', he grapples with heavier themes, merging the stories of two women in his life who experienced domestic and sexual violence. "When I got to 18, I became very aware of the difference in how women and men experience the world, and the weight of what so many women carry around," he says. It's a track that broadens his horizons sonically, too, set against a poppy, boom-bap beat that leans away from the rollicking stomp-clap sound that Smith has become known for. "I wanted to bring light to it in a way that's accessible. It's not too heavy, but there's enough so that, if you listen, there's a story in there."

There's perhaps no better time for Smith to release this record into the world, as society grapples with an ever-growing masculinity crisis. Here is an artist who cuts through the noise with a simple proposition: open up, show emotion, support each other. Nowhere is this more clear than on 'Sertraline', a strikingly confessional track about struggling with anxiety and depression. It was one of the hardest songs to write on the album, but Smith sees its purpose extending beyond his own catharsis. "There's a pocket of young men right now who scare me with how out of touch they are with their emotions," he says, referencing the manosphere. "It's important for me as a Black male songwriter to speak about my experiences of struggling. I don't have the most confidence. I do break down sometimes. I have been broken. Saying those things out loud is really important, because I don't want it to ever be confused that showing your emotions is weak."

The significance of Smith's rise in a traditionally white-dominated genre is not lost on him, either. It's a path he's had to trailblaze largely on his own, navigating through narrow media stereotypes as a teenager to discover what blackness means to him. "When I was growing up, blackness was [about] being cool, wearing Nike Tech and Air Forces," he says. "Those things are definitely a part of Black culture, but that's one shade of a beautiful tree. I'm trying to highlight that there's so many other shades." He points to artists such as Kenny-

Hoopla and Shaboozey, who, like Smith, are bringing alternative expressions of Black identity into the mainstream. And, in the UK, the MOBO Awards, where this year “Nice To Meet You” was nominated for Song of The Year. But it was his performance of “Stargazing” at the ceremony that truly cemented his place within Black British music’s legacy. With the addition of stirring strings and delicate piano chords, Smith transformed his megahit into a moving, cinematic ballad – once again proving the diversity of both his talents and the Black community.

“For the UK especially, it’s important to highlight that we exist in so many different lanes,” he says. It’s not always been easy: as Smith’s audience grows, so too do his odds of receiving racist DMs or having uncomfortable encounters with fans and media. “As a Black person navigating this space, I’ve definitely had my challenges.” But armed with a support network and the knowledge that he’s not alone in his experience, Smith, as ever, is determined to find light in the dark. “This doesn’t just happen in music,” he says, matter-of-factly. “It happens to doctors, nurses, teachers, students, whoever. It’s just being Black. So whilst I have difficulties, I always step back and go, ‘What can I do to change it? And what can I do to educate people along the way?’”

That fierce sense of responsibility to his listeners runs throughout Smith’s artistry. Having found solace in artists such as Ed Sheeran, The Lumineers and Mumford & Sons as a teenager, he’s keenly aware of the formative impact music can have. “When you grow up in a fractured household, music becomes another parent. It taught me my morals, who I wanted to be, what I wanted to say and what was important,” he says. Now, Smith plays that role in his listeners’ lives; already, fans send messages of gratitude, explaining how his music saved their lives. “But I always say, you did that yourself. I just provided a tune in the background that made it go by faster.”

Often, though, those songs are difficult to fade into the background. Even when Smith tackles heavier themes, his tracks are irresistible for audience participation, whether they’re singing along in the car or belting in a crowd of thousands. As Smith prepares to go back on the road once more, with a colossal lineup of shows across North America, Europe and the UK later this year, he’s thinking about how he can continue to reach as many people as possible. Last year, that mission manifested as a surprise series of shows in more intimate pub venues. As always, it all stems back to honouring his roots.

“Growing up in Luton, from a working class family, paying even £20 for a concert ticket isn’t always affordable,” he says. “Having pockets here and there where fans who may not have the money can pop down and sing a few songs feels like my way of giving back: for every free haircut, every free drink at the cornershop, or every free chicken and chips that bossman gave me when I didn’t have the money.”

There’s no pretence to Smith’s generosity, just as there’s no formulaic blueprint steering his road to success. His north star is the kid who used to play alternative pop covers in his bedroom, a young Black boy who couldn’t quite see where he fit in. Whether he’s unearthing his old therapy notes, writing lyrics to inspire, or thinking about how to uplift the next generation, Smith is guided by lived experience and authenticity. And with *My Mess*, *My Heart*, *My Life*, he’s ready to show the world exactly what that means.

“I’ve had this idea in my head since the beginning of time,” he smiles. “As humans, we have so much hardship, walls and barriers we have to break through, but on the other side, there’s *life*.” Myles Smith doesn’t pretend to have all the answers. But there’s a good chance listeners will arrive at their own as he soundtracks their dizzying highs and lows. “I spent so much of life trying to figure out who I was, what I wanted to be, what I wanted to say, where I wanted to go. This album feels like I’m finally understanding who I am.”

**For more information, please contact
Carla Sacks, Kate Rakvic or Grace Dubay at Sacks & Co., 212.741.1000,
carla@sacksco.com, kate.rakvic@sacksco.com or grace.dubay@sacksco.com.**