

By day, Harry Michael commutesto a normal job and punches a clock just like the rest of us. The moment he walks into the studio, everything changes. The mild-mannered man transforms into an unrestrained beast, sinking his teeth into airy production pierced by his tightly wound raps, bold bars, magnetic melodies, and hard-hitting hooks. Through this metamorphosis, Masked Wolf has unassumingly established himself as a powerful, passionate, and primal hip-hop force. Amassing over 150 million streams and counting thus far, the Australian rapper and singer unleashes a torrent of personal truths and emotions on his 2021 debut for Elektra Records.

“If you saw me walking around on the street, you might not realize that I’m a rapper,” he admits. “When I get into the studio, the mask comes off—you see the wolf inside of me. It’s all work and no play. We’re not chilling and vibing; I’m there to get shit done. I’m in my natural habitat. Whenever I worked a nine-to-five, I wasn’t living how I wanted to live. The studio is a breath of fresh air. The beast does come out, and it feels good.”

Growing up in Sydney, Harry found freedom in writing. As an only child, his parents’ divorce hit him especially hard. Mom and dad both relocated, but he opted to stay close to his friends. So, he moved in with his grandparents who had emigrated from Greece and barely spoke English. Obsessed with the likes of Eminem and G-Unit, he picked up a pen and expressed himself through poems and verses. He also taught himself how to record and would rap well into the morning most nights until his grandfather knocked on the door and urged him to go to bed.

Hip-hop anesthetized his isolation.

“I always wanted a brother or a sister, because I wanted to have either that protection or someone to protect,” he explains. “A key reason why I wrote was because I didn’t have a sibling to talk to about how I felt. That’s why writing became so essential. I’d never spoken to my parents about it. I was introverted and extroverted at the same time. I bottled everything up and only released it through music.”

After graduating from school, he tirelessly worked in sales to fund recording. He even took out a loan to build a home studio as he cut hundreds of songs and logged thousands of hours in the lab. While driving for work, he often thought of ideas in the car. In 2018, he dropped his independent debut “Speed Racer.” It gathered millions of streams and turned heads across Australia. “I felt like I found my sound,” he smiles. “It really kicked down the door.”

Following “Night Rider” and “Water Walkin,” he unveiled “Astronaut in the Ocean.” Awash in airy guitar, jagged 808s, neon keys, and deft wordplay, he submerged himself in honest lyricism, facing depression head-on and asking, *“What you know about rolling down in the deep?”*That one-two-punch of a recognizable riff and chantable chorus organically caught fire online. It incited hundreds of thousands Tik Tok videos, spanning everything from footage of U.S. military Blackhawk chopper crews to welders and ice fisherman *(far from your typical Tik Tok fare!)*. Meanwhile, Kansas City Chief Super Bowl champ quarterback Patrick Mahomes even incorporated the tune into an Instagram post, fueling its explosion in early 2021.

For as bombastic as the response may be, the song itself arose from a moment of intense introspection. “I had put a lot of money and time into music, but it wasn’t really being heard,” he admits. “To be honest, it was mentally draining. There were points where I thought, ‘Should I give up? Should I stop?’ I made the decision to keep going for it. Everything stemmed from this hardship. ‘Astronaut in the Ocean’ is about this time in my life. Voice your depression and anxiety. I’m essentially asking, ‘Have you been the same places? Tell me your story’.”

With more music on the horizon, Masked Wolf will undoubtedly inspire countless others to take that mask off…

“My message is to say what you need to say, before it’s too late,” he leaves off. “A lot of times in life, we overlook the power of telling the truth and being real with ourselves—which is what I try to convey in my songs. Open up about who you really are and what you want from life. You can always go for what you want. I’m proof. When you listen to me, I want you to know this is authentically who I am.”

