

As an artist and songwriter, Yungblud lives to stir up the raw energy of rebellion. On his self-titled debut EP, the 19-year-old Northern England native confronts everything from gentrification to disenfranchisement to addiction, turning each track into an infectious anthem that packs endless cathartic power.

With his frenetic take on alt-pop equally inspired by punk, hip-hop, and UK garage, Yungblud makes brilliant use of his breakneck flow and tongue-in-cheek attitude, delivering pointed lyrics without ever getting heavy-handed. “I want my music to always have a message, but I don’t want to preach to anybody,” says Yungblud, otherwise known as Dominic Harrison. “When people preach to me, I completely switch off—like, ‘Why are you trying to tell me to do?’ This music’s just an outburst of emotion and anger, and everything else going on in my head.”

Throughout *Yungblud*, the London-based artist shows the nuance of his songwriting, turning out instantly catchy protest songs that reveal the personal toll of political tensions. His debut U.S. single—and the EP’s most heartbreaking moment—“I Love You, Will You Marry Me” takes its title from a real-life, ill-fated marriage proposal spray-painted at a public housing project in South Yorkshire. Merging its bouncy ska rhythms with gritty storytelling, the track tells the couple’s tragic story and recounts how the graffiti was appropriated for marketing purposes as the council estate transformed into a trendy apartment complex. “The redevelopment company made loads of money off what this guy created, and he ended up with nothing,” says Harrison. “He was homeless at the time all this was going on, so he contacted the company and asked, ‘Since you sold all these flats using something I made, could you maybe give me a place to live?’ But they just ignored him.”

Recorded in “a tiny room in a very smoky basement” in the West End of London, *Yungblud* came to life with the help of Matt Schwartz (a producer/songwriter known for his work with Massive Attack and Kylie Minogue). The project was subsequently brought to the attention of Geffen Records by Martin Terefe who also features as a producer on several of *Yungblud*’s forthcoming tracks. The collaborators performed all the music on the EP (Harrison plays guitar, bass, piano, and drums), shaping a guitar-driven sound spiked with tightly crafted beats. “It feels like rock-and-roll is on life support right now, because everyone keeps trying to do it the same way it’s been done since the ‘60s,” says Harrison. “I’m trying to change that and bring in some hip-hop, because to me hip-hop and rock-and-roll share the same soul.”

The embodiment of Yungblud’s sonic sensibilities, opening track “King Charles” fuses wiry grooves, heavy guitar riffs, and sharp-tongued lyrics capturing the confusion of being young at such a volatile moment in time. “‘King Charles’ is about your future being determined by people who aren’t even going to be around to see it,” says Harrison. “Young people know the future we want, but we’re being held back by an older generation that isn’t ready quite ready for it yet.”

With its snarling riffs and urgent beats, “Tin Pan Boy” cleverly assails the careless nature of gentrification. As *Yungblud*’s fiery centerpiece, the chant-ready track zeroes in on Denmark Street in London’s Soho neighborhood—the former stomping grounds of the Sex Pistols and

Rolling Stones, long regarded as Britain's Tin Pan Alley. "Growing up I spent a lot of time in music shops there," says Harrison. "Now all this redevelopment is happening, and the independent businesses are being forced out. It's tearing the heart out of the place, which is really sad to me. I don't want to live in a world where it's just 15 nice coffee shops in a row—I want to live somewhere that's got soul."

Switching gears for the slow-burning, intensely charged "Polygraph Eyes," Yungblud spins a seedy portrait of a Saturday night out ("Absent on absinthe/Dancing to bad synth") and offers his delicate commentary on consent ("She slurs when she speaks/But you hear what you want when she can't even talk"). "We've been brought up in a society where the lad mentality has just been accepted, and I think that's something that needs to be talked about," says Harrison. "It's been amazing to see all the uproar that's happened lately," he adds. "My goal with the song was to create something that people can sing along to, then pay closer attention to the lyrics after a few listens."

Born in Yorkshire, Harrison first picked up a guitar at age two and began writing his own songs when he was ten. At 16 he moved to London, then spent the next few years struggling to define his musical vision. "I got slightly lost for a while, writing stuff that didn't make sense to who I was," he says. But after reconnecting with the firebrand artists that first compelled him to create music—The Clash, Arctic Monkeys, N.W.A—Harrison felt unstoppably inspired. "Once I figured out what I wanted to say, I went on this mad rampage and wrote so much," he recalls. With "King Charles" independently released in April 2017, Yungblud quickly built a major buzz online and landed his deal with Geffen Records by that summer's end.

For Yungblud, each song begins with a blast of outrage, then finds its form through lyrics both fantastically irreverent and full of heart. "I grew up on all these amazing lyricists, like David Bowie and Bruce Springsteen and Chris Difford from Squeeze, so making music that's got some poetry to it is really important to me," Harrison points out. And in Yungblud's live show, the impossibly hopeful spirit of his songs becomes even more potent and powerful. "I want it to be mad at my shows, everyone jumping around and having a laugh," says Harrison, who's now gearing up for a spring tour with K.Flay. "Mostly I want everyone to feel like we're all in this together—we're all fucked but it's okay, because we're the ones who are the future."