

WHO'S NEXT

ANDRA DAY

HOMETOWN: San Diego
INFLUENCES: Nina Simone, Billie Holiday, Lauryn Hill
ALBUM: *Cheers to the Fall*, out Aug. 28
WEBSITE: andraday.com

ANDRA DAY GOT HER START WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM Stevie Wonder, after his wife heard her singing in a Southern California store. An impressed Wonder introduced her to songwriter-producer Adrian Gurvitz (Eddie Money, Stevie Nicks, Kenny G), and less than a year later Day signed a record deal and went on to record her debut album *Cheers to the Fall*. "It was surreal," she says. "I grew up in Southeast San Diego, which has both artists and gangs, but it's still one of those places where everybody knows everybody. You're raised by your family and your peers, so my community comes through in my music."

Since that fateful encounter, 30-year-old Day has built a YouTube following with covers of songs by Eminem and Muse, and has recorded original tracks with Ziggy Marley, the Dap-Kings and Raphael Saadiq, who helped hone her sound in the studio. Spike

Lee, whom she met at the Sundance Film Festival, directed the video for her first single, "Forever Mine." Drawing inspiration from such iconic artists as Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Etta James and Janis Joplin, Day tapped into her raw emotions and embraced her raspy, full-bodied alto voice. "When I started working on this album, I prayed—because I always pray before I write—and was instructed to be truthful and not sugarcoat anything," she says. "I've been hurt, but I've also made mistakes and been selfish. So I want to be completely open in my music and share the ugliness that most people tuck away."

Those legendary singers also inspired her look—which usually includes a bouffant, bright red lipstick and pinup-girl outfits. "I'm drawn to styles of the '30s to the '50s, especially rockabilly, and those eras' icons—from Marilyn Monroe and Billie Holiday to Lena Horne and Lucille Ball. It's a cocktail of inspiration."