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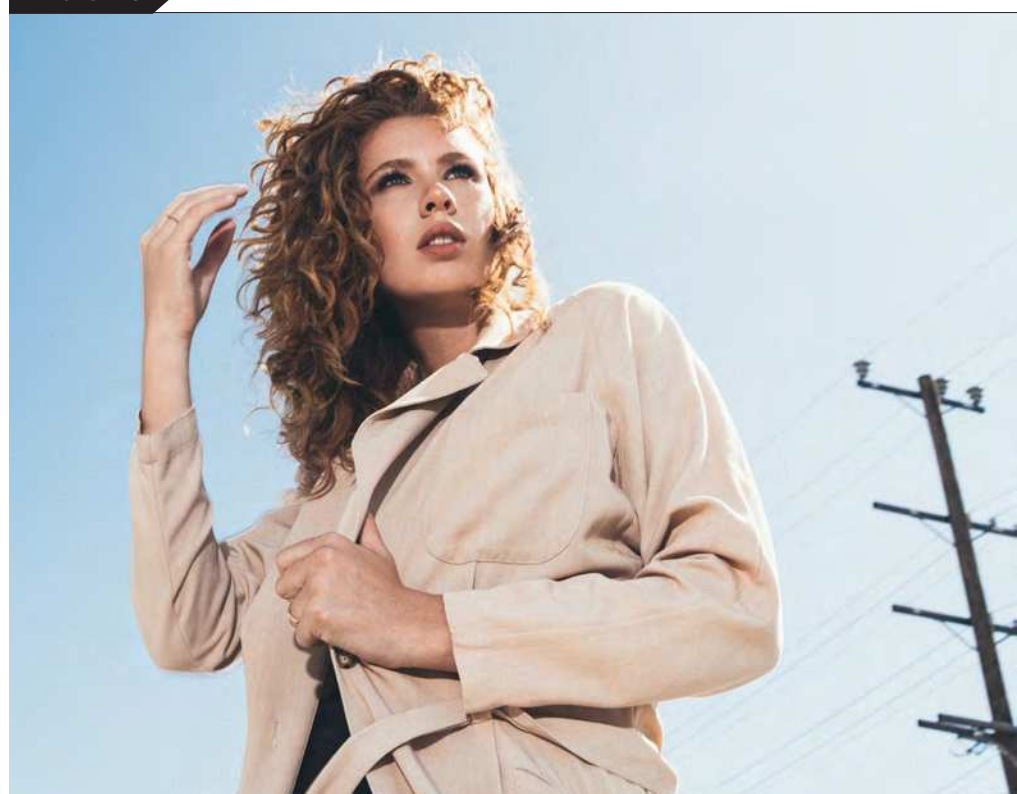
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MEGAWATT POP

Former Eugene musician Grace Mitchell makes waves in Los Angeles pop scene

Whether it's Lorde, Taylor Swift, Pink or Katy Perry, pure pop songwriting is as strong as ever: mad studio brains melding rock, soul, R&B and hip hop — as well as vital melodies and harmonies — into megawatt appeal. That's what pop music does, and that's what it always will do. Let your guard down long enough and you might even enjoy it. Pop music has aged just fine. Whether we have is another matter.

The thing is, pop just isn't where it used to be: radio and record stores. Instead, it's on the web, on sites like Spotify, Soundcloud, YouTube and Bandcamp. And it's there you'll hear Oregon-born pop singer/songwriter **Grace Mitchell**.

Mitchell releases her music in a playlist-style format. "It's hard to release a full-length album these days," she says. "It's all about streaming."

Since heading south to Los Angeles, Mitchell's been interviewed in the *Huffington Post*. She's recorded a song for a Ben Stiller movie. And she's garnered about 10,000 followers across a variety of social-media platforms.

The prevalence of these popular new forms of music consumption has affected not only her songwriting but also the overall sound of contemporary pop, she says.

"When people are listening to a playlist," Mitchell says, "you get a lot of different sounds. Different genres of music are getting blended together. Rap is getting more punk and pop is getting more indie."

You can hear this kind of blending on tracks like Mitchell's "RIIICH," a sort of slow-rolling SoCal hip-hop-influenced take on similar themes Lorde explores on her hit "Royals."

"Wouldn't it be nice if we got rich?" Mitchell sings rhythmically in an assured alto. "Wouldn't it be nice if we got paid?"

But this is music for dreamers and strivers, not the one percent. "All the world's a fantasy, when you never feel the gravity," she continues between world-class hooks.

"Hip hop is something that has influenced some of my music," Mitchell says, but she also says to ask her friends and they'll call what she does "rock."

Whether rock or hip hop, Mitchell knows how to drop a beat and build a perfect pop fantasy. "French Becky" mixes guitars and synths with an '80s feel, and it would fit nicely on Taylor Swift's *1989*.

Mitchell, now 20, left South Eugene High School at age 15 to pursue music. She lived for a time in Portland, and two years ago moved to L.A. Now, Mitchell is constantly writing and recording music, and she says her songwriting process is always a little different.

"It's always new," she explains. A lyrical, melodic or conceptual idea can spur a song in her mind, and she can't wait to bring it to her songwriting partners in the studio.

Mitchell grew up playing guitar and bass. She fondly remembers several local venues like WOW Hall and Axe & Fiddle in Cottage Grove, the city where she was born.

Since moving south, many of Mitchell's pre-conceived notions about L.A. have proven false.

"All the people are really down to earth," she says. "I spent a lot of time in Oregon listening to different music," she recalls. "I think that really helped create the music that I make."

Growing up in Oregon also helped Mitchell know the kind of people she wanted to be around. "Artists," she says.

She's found that community in L.A. ■

For more information, go to gracemitchell.com.