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SEEING COLOR
AN INTERVIEW WITH

EDDIE
BENJAMIN

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WORDS *by* KIMBERLY HADDAD

An Australian-born artist with innate musical talent and a fierce hunger for instrumental aptitude, Eddie Benjamin comes from a family of natural creatives. At just 18 years old, the Los Angeles-based singer, songwriter, and bassist is rising to superstardom—breaking into the industry with his unforgettable debut single “Fuck My Friends” and garnering the likes from musical hotshots including Diplo, Sia, Justin Bieber, and more. From his sensuous vocals and unconventional beats to his captivating charm and sweeping arsenal of instruments, Benjamin is redefining the standards of mainstream pop.

BASIC: Your father was a drummer and your mother and sister were both sensational dancers. Being raised in a musical household, your creativity has always been nurtured by your environment. What was your childhood like and how did you really home in on your passion for singing and songwriting?

EDDIE BENJAMIN: I was always around instruments and creativity in my family, but also at a production level as well. My mom was always putting on awarded dance shows in Australia, so I saw my family being creative constantly. I come from a place called Bondi Beach and one day, I saw Prince play the guitar. As I watched him play, I said to myself, “I should probably try that.” I was never pushed or forced to play an instrument. Music was just always around the house and I discovered it on my own as something I wanted to do. Once I started,

I became completely obsessed and it was all I could think about.

BASIC: You play a multitude of instruments, but bass is your absolute favorite. Tell me the story about when you first got your hands on a bass.

EB: I think it was my 11th or 12th birthday when I asked for a guitar. I got it and played for a couple of weeks and then my dad took me to see Prince live. I watched him slapping the bass and after that show I knew I had to find a way to get a bass. I wasn’t loving the guitar either. It was just the way the bass made me feel and listening to Prince and Stevie Wonder’s music really showed me what the bass was meant to do. So, eventually I gained the courage to ask my dad for one and it became my favorite thing to play.

BASIC: Did you find it easier to learn bass after already mastering the guitar?

EB: Yeah, I think I just loved it so much and that’s honestly what it made it so easy to learn. I picked the guitar back up to practice, but playing the bass was really all I wanted to do.

BASIC: We all have that one song that moves us, that one track that creates a strong emotional reaction and gives us goosebumps. What is this song for you?

EB: That’s a really good question. There are a few songs for me, but one thing I found is that some songs or albums are almost like track lists to your life in a certain moment of time. This is probably really obscure, but I would say “Autumn Leaves” by Miles Davis and Cannonball Adderley. It’s a jazz piece, but this song has a very strong pull for me.

BASIC: In a previous interview you spoke openly about having Synesthesia. I imagine having involuntary cognitive experiences can be incredibly overwhelming. When did you first discover this condition and how has it impacted your creative abilities?

EB: I haven’t done too much research about it. I’ve just read a little bit about it, but all I remember is ever since I was little, anytime I would start to understand things on my own, think about things, or listen to anything, I would see these patterns and colors and numbers surrounding it. There would be such a different energy around whatever I was doing at the time. It’s definitely super creative and what I mean by that is I try to bring it into play when I am writing music. When I hear music it is very intense for me because I can also see it. But it’s become part of me and my creative self. It just sort of is and I don’t really think about it. I don’t think it’s impacted me negatively, but there have definitely been times when I’ve found myself lying in bed after working on a song for like 12 hours straight and can’t sleep because everything is so vibrant and intense.

BASIC: I’ve never experienced that before, but I feel like this could possibly maybe be similar to being on mushrooms.

EB: HA! I would not know actually, but from the way I have heard people describe their colorful moments, that sounds about right.

BASIC: Your latest EP is absolute fire. I may have listened to your cover of Amy Winehouse’s “Back to Black” on repeat. Talk to me about your creative process and producing your EP. Are there any rituals or practices you’ve adapted to get your creative juices flowing?

EB: The songs on the EP have been made for a while now and they were all created during different moments in my life. This was me sort of exploring different styles and sounds and ideas. It really varies. When I wrote the song “Emotional”, I was at a time in my life where I was really trying to work on a different structure of music. It took me about six months to write that song. My creative timeline varies between where I am and what I’m doing. For example, I wrote “Diamond Eyes” which features Sia, in a single day. The creative process is dependent on how I am feeling and structure can ruin it for me sometimes. I have some artist friends who create on a structured timeline, especially with how the world has been, but for me it’s about being in the moment.

“MY LIFE EXPERIENCES IN GENERAL DICTATE MY CREATIVE WORKFLOW. FOR ME IT’S ALWAYS BEEN A HARD LINE BETWEEN LIVING TO CREATE AND CREATING TO LIVE.”

—EDDIE BENJAMIN

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BASIC: In thinking about the music you have created, is there something you released that perhaps you weren't very fond of at first, but your fans immediately loved?

EB: Yeah, for sure. But I think that's just part of being a young artist. I'm still learning new sounds and what needs to be said. It's complex because musically I have so much I want to do and say and there are so many different styles.

BASIC: Who or what experiences have inspired your work?

EB: My life experiences in general dictate my creative workflow. For me it's always been a hard line between living to create and creating to live. There's not one standout moment or relationship. It's everything I've experienced in my life and all the moments added up that continue to inspire my work.

BASIC: Your music video for "Speechless" featuring Maddie Ziegler dancing, is premiering on April 2 in congruence with the release of your EP. What is the general concept of this video?

EB: The video is really just a visual representation

of the story that I'm trying to portray through the song. It is about being in a relationship and being in this space of the unknown. It's the exploration and wonderland between two people.

BASIC: What impact do you think that commercialism and the media has had on your work?

EB: I wouldn't know at this stage. There's nothing currently that I feel is affecting my craft outside of me choosing to explore different sounds and staying open to following my personal musical desires.

BASIC: What has been the greatest sacrifice you have made for your craft?

EB: When your craft is such a big part of who you are, it's hard to look at any of it as a sacrifice.

BASIC: What are the last three songs played on your Spotify?

EB: "Too High" by Stevie Wonder
"Fire" by Jimmy Hendrix
"Leave the Door Open" by Bruno Mars and Anderson Pak

BASIC: If you were talking to a younger version of you, what advice would you give?

EB: I would tell myself to be free and try to live a life open to exploring all of its stages. It's important not to get caught up in the little things that don't matter.

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Coffee or Tea?

Tea

Night or Day?

Night

FaceTime or Phone

Call?

FaceTime

Miles Davis or Chet

Baker?

Miles Davis

Pad Thai or Orange

Chicken?

Orange Chicken

Meat Pies or Pizza?

Pizza

Vegemite or Nutella?

Nutella

Hot Tub or Hot

Spring?

Hot Tub

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The Witcher?

Game of Thrones

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Suede

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