

Ashe

Willson



photo credit: Luke Rogers

Ashe is learning to love herself — one song at a time.

A year and a half after walking away from the stage for what could've been the last time, Ashe — a singer-songwriter known for sharply-honest pop songs like “Moral of the Story” and “Til Forever Falls Apart”— returns with *Willson*, an album born out of the all-too-human experience of falling down and finding your way back up again.

Independently released on Sept. 6, 2024, *Willson* chronicles Ashe's journey of self-hatred, self-reflection, hard-earned healing and a little bit of love found in the moments between.

“I really fought my way back,” said Ashe, born Ashlyn Rae Willson. “I really did the work to get back to a place where I can actually be OK again and be able to make music.”

A California native who now lives in Nashville, Ashe made her mark on indie-pop with down-to-earth storytelling, a magnetic voice and knack for addictive hooks. Her music landed in films like Netflix hit *To All the Boys: P.S. I Still Love You*. She collaborated with the likes of Niall Horan, FINNEAS and Diane Keaton. She toured the world, growing an audience that helped her surpass two billion music streams and nearly a million followers on Instagram.

And as her career began gaining the momentum she once dreamed of, Ashe walked away. In early 2023, she canceled all her shows for the year due to a cocktail of exhaustion and panic attacks that resulted in a mental breakdown.

“When I canceled the tour, I didn't admit it to my team or anybody, but I [thought] maybe that's it,” Ashe said. “We had a good run. But I don't know if my psyche is cut out to handle being a public personality. I clearly lost the plot and my priorities for a little while.”

Until now, few knew what came after axing her tour and the months of silence that followed. She began to reflect — spending time writing letters to herself, working on home renovation projects and gardening. She could've quit; she wouldn't be the first. But instead, Ashe crawled back, line-by-line.

Her return to music started last summer, with a no-strings writing session among friends. The next day – riding the wave of being back in the studio – Ashe wrote “Please Don’t Fall In Love With Me,” which later became the opening number of *Willson*. She enlisted studio duo Collin Pastore and Jake Finch to track the song the same day it was written; the pair proceeded to co-produce *Willson*, recording much of the album in a backyard studio near Nashville’s Woodbine neighborhood. The album comes as the third in a trio named after Willson, following 2021’s *Ashlyn* and 2022 release *Rae*. *Willson* is the first artistic chapter from Ashe since parting with her label of seven years. As an independent artist, Ashe was primary songwriter on the 13-song release; she also took creative lead on visuals for the project.

On “Please Don’t Fall In Love With Me,” Ashe delivers quivering ruminations on her retreat from the limelight. She sings, “Please don’t fall in love with me, I’ll give you almost everything/ I’ll melt myself to fit your mold and carefully chip away my soul until there’s nothing left to see.”

“It makes sense that ‘Please Don’t Fall In Love With Me’ would be the first thing that fell out, because I was reality trying to get to the bottom of why I was no longer OK,” Ashe said.

The session opened proverbial flood-gates for Ashe. In a few weeks, she had written about half-dozen songs – the backbone of what became *Willson*. Ashe also unearthed an idea from a

writing session with pop powerhouses Julian Bunetta and Steph Jones (co-writers on Sabrina Carpenter hit “Espresso”) that became *Willson* lead single “Running Out Of Time,” the perfect song for a sticky summer night, driving with the windows rolled down and no destination in mind.

On the song, Ashe staddles a time-tested pop spirit with the restless nostalgia



album artwork

heard on heartland rock anthems (the single artwork pays a subtle tribute to Bruce Springsteen). And for Ashe, the feel-good love tune helps establish that, yes, the new album contains moments worth smiling about.

“I wanted to come out with something that is more uplifting and positive, because there’s a lot of shit and grime that I deal with on the record,” Ashe said. “I wanted to come out of the gate swinging, like, ‘I’m OK! I’m OK, everybody.’ It’s this fun, re-discovering yourself song.”

Willson continues with the likes of “Pull The Plug” – a subtle number that takes listeners into the intimate world of exploring new love – and “Castles,” a cinematic pop ballad that’ll push turntable speakers to the limit. The album nods at her return to music with “Dear Stranger,” where Ashe sings, “I’ve been pretty bad, but I’m comin’ back.”

On forthcoming single “I Wanna Love You (But I Don’t),” Ashe digs into her self-sabotage to the sonic backdrop of ‘80s pop gold. And the album includes standout song “I Hope You Die First,” a stripped-back folk tune grounded in the mortality of loving someone for a lifetime.

“I really love the person I’m with and I think death is such a scary thing to face by yourself,” Ashe said. “I just love him so much that I should be there. It made me think, I don’t want him to be alone.”

She continued, “I don’t ever want the person I love the most in the world to have to go through dying alone,” Ashe said, “and we were trying to find a creative way to paint that picture..”

Willson closes with “Ashe,” a reflective tune that finds the singer discovering that – through everything – she now knows how to love herself a little easier.

“If I look in the mirror, I’m like, ‘I love her. I appreciate everything she’s been through,’” Ashe said. “I have so much to work on. I hope that I’m always changing and always growing, because I think that we should be. But I genuinely like myself. And I don’t know that I could’ve ever said that until now.”

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