

Sumner Rahr Is Revitalizing Rock

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Sumner Rahr may have gone viral on TikTok for his uncanny resemblance to a young Brad Pitt, but that's not what propelled him to nearly 100k followers on the app in a matter of months. As the lead singer and guitarist for *Band Called LoveJoy*, the 20-year-old music and economics student from Portland, Oregon is heading a new age of rock revival. With a raspy voice and soulful lyrics, he melds his affinity for poetry with his love of nature and western themes, combining classical and indie rock with a new-age sound filled with nostalgia and emotion. As he continues to amass thousands of listeners, Rahr spoke with me about the band's origin, his creative process, and his future outlook.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Tell me a bit about the band's name:

There's a street in Portland called Lovejoy that my friends and I would spend a lot of time on. I've loved the name forever. When we recorded our music, we put "lovejoy" in some of the songs and I thought, "that's our band name." Right before we released our music, another band came out called *Lovejoy*. They make punk rock, which is a totally different genre. So we started wondering, "what if we call ourselves a '*Band Called LoveJoy*'?" And at first it was just a joke, but then all of our friends and family started calling us *Band Called LoveJoy*. It feels weird to change it now.

You have a very distinct Western style. What places inspire your music?

A lot of the music is inspired by places that I've visited frequently throughout my childhood. I have a fishing cabin in Montana that I go to sometimes, and it's one of my favorite places on Earth. Portland is [behind] a lot of the inspiration for the songs, but the scenery takes place in Montana and Wyoming. That's where we pull a lot of our Western and cowboy themes.

Can you talk a bit about your creative process?

My inspiration for writing music comes from my desire to be one of the great rock bands. I read and write a lot of poetry, and I want to connect the stories and messages that I write in my poetry into songs. *Desert Mind* was originally a poem when I was going through extremely tough times. I really didn't know how to cope so I would journal and write poems. When it was time to make music, I would use those lyrics and put together a song. I only write about messages that I want to show the world. It's a sacred experience for me to write a song because it's what I do when I can't process the emotions in my head. When I'm holding on to something, putting it into a song and releasing that song is like letting that part of me go. I'm able to let go of things that I wasn't able to express.

What do you want people to feel when they listen to your music?

When I hear a song like *Fix You* or *Freebird*, these crazy, emotional, powerful songs, it sends shivers up and down my spine. That's the reason I wanted to start writing songs, to give that feeling to someone else. I want people to feel the full spectrum of emotions and I want my music to be a catalyst for that. If I can help someone with what they're going through, whether it's getting their emotions out or just resonating with the things that I'm trying to say, that's accomplishing my goal. Music is like my own personal therapist. Songwriting is. I want people to listen to the lyrics and think, "How can I apply this to my life?" This is my artistic expression. Everything that I have made is completely authentic and comes from within.

Who is your dream collaboration?

Neil Young. He's my all-time favorite artist.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

I see myself touring the country, putting out my second album, playing in front of thousands of people. Maybe even publishing poetry. Ultimately, I want to have my life set up in a way where my job is writing music for a living and playing all over the world. I'm ambitious. I think I'm on my way.