

Gabi Ammirato Tackles Her Generation by Singing about the Real Issues

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Inspired by the earlier sounds of Taylor Swift, **Gabi Ammirato** knew she wanted to not only sing songs that people loved. She wanted to tell stories with her lyrics. She said, “I feel strongly about some of the things facing my generation, like bullying and trying to fit in so much that you lose what makes you an original,” adding, “I ended up with songs that I think resonate with my generation and hopefully others. Being able to relate to my music is most important to me so if I achieved that I am happy.”

With that she dropped an album that speaks volumes about her characters. So we'll get to what this young artist had to say about life, music and what she's doing to help the world become a better place.

Kendra: Not even able to vote yet, you write about pretty heavy topics. At what point in your life did you realize this was the type of music you wanted to create and record?

Gabi Ammirato: I don't think I realized it until the songs for this album were done. This is my first album so I had very little idea what to expect when I went in to write the songs with Matthew. He was really cool about showing me the way and he let me take the lead on what I wanted to write about. He was totally committed to the fact that who I am as an artist was most important, and that I found my voice through this work. I knew going in that I had certain messages that I wanted to share with the world and that I was going to work from my journal. I was influenced the most by Taylor Swift growing up and the way she uses her life as the source of what she writes about.

Kendra: You've shared that you hope your latest album can change the world, but what record's changed yours for the better so far?

Gabi: Not sure there is a specific album but more specific songs. I love Sam Smith's song “I'm Not the Only One.” His whole sound is so amazing it makes me feel all the emotions he is conveying and that is something I love and try to do with my music. I love Tori Kelly's “Hollow and Should've Been Us.” Her songs tell stories I can relate to and love the feel of them. Justin Bieber's new album is definitely his best work, I feel like he found himself. So many great songs but “Love Yourself” is a current favorite, and inspiration. If I had to pick an album it would be Taylor

Swift's *Fearless*, so many great songs that told stories and that is when I think I knew I wanted to do things in music.

Kendra: You dropped *Dramatic* not too long ago and that title track is killer. I too hate over over dramatic situations, but I am my mother's child and love gossip. Do you just stay away from all of it?

Gabi: I wish I could say that I do, but that is not the case. I am not sure you can avoid it to be truthful. I know I have tried and it just seems to keep finding me. I do have to say that all gossip is not bad and the kind I am singing about in *Dramatic* is the kind that is destructive. When someone actually goes about creating a whole story and their intent is to do harm, that is the kind that bugs me the most. Just don't understand the need to put negative energy out to the world, we have enough of that. The song was inspired by a friend who tends to be that "drama queen" who has to make everything bigger than it is...and that does get old but we are still good friends so I think I have built up a tolerance for it because I have learned that she isn't trying to be negative, just trying to get a bit more attention? I do have to limit the time I spend with the stereotypical "theater kid" who is so over animated and focused on themselves that it drives me batty. I am involved in theater and have to say that the vast majority of "theater kids" are the quiet artistic types I enjoy. Unfortunately people remember the stereotypic ones so we all get a bad rap....

Kendra: *Dramatic* also touches on the issue of bullying with "Missing Piece/Peace," but you flip things and make it about the bully. Was that based on anyone in particular? You don't have to name names of course.

Gabi: Yes, that was based on someone. In fact, it is based on someone I thought enough of to date (first serious boyfriend actually). The event that inspired the song happened after we broke up but it was traumatic to realize that I had misjudged this person and the values they held. Some say I am too hard on him because he did not actually do the bullying himself, but in my mind he stood by and let it happen. He had the power to say no this is not right, stop it. I think that is a key message for us all; if we don't step up to stop it we share the blame or guilt as much as if we had done the bullying ourselves. After all if we as a community don't allow others to bully then the issue ends right there. The power is in all our hands.

The twist in the song comes from a question I was once asked about whether I felt bad for the bullied kid or the bully. I answered that they would probably be surprised by my answer because clearly I feel bad for the kid being bullied, but I actually feel worse for the bully. The reason I feel that way is because if you have ever taken the time to get to understand the bully you find that they are a hurt and damaged person too and no one cares to help them. Think about it if you help the bully heal themselves, again the bullying issue stops there. So I don't let them totally off the hook and say poor bully, but instead I challenge them to do the work to look inside themselves and figure out what is broken or what is "the missing piece" that they need to address so they can find peace. The title is that play on words "Missing Piece/Peace".

Kendra: Do you have any advice for those currently dealing with a bully?

Gabi: You know every time I hear someone give advice it sounds so cliché and easy. Speak up. I think that is the best advice but I think we have to realize that it is not easy to do. Many times the person bullied is not that confident, maybe even a little timid or just a gentle soul. Unfortunately this gets them targeted and when it happens it is just so hard to stand up for yourself and speak out. People underestimate just how hard it is to grow up. In *Stay True* I sing about how hard it is to grow up and find yourself. It is a struggle to not just "fit in". So telling them to go tell an adult sounds good and is the right thing to do, but it is a HARD thing for them to do. So my advice is find someone you can confide in, look for that kid who makes eye contact and seems to understand. Find that human connection because you can't stop it on your own. My strong advice is for everyone else in the world. Open your eyes, pay attention... notice those kids who don't fit in and reach out and include them. I think inclusion is the solution to most of what is wrong in our world today...people who feel alienated or not included build up anger and it leads to school violence and self-harming behavior, even suicide. We are all one human race, we owe it to each other to stand by each other. If we don't allow bullying and we help the bullies heal it will cease to exist...we can do this.

Gabi: Oh yes I do. I LOVE Shawn Mendes. I know he is the current "it" boy but I have loved him since I first heard

him sing. First of all we are kindred spirits because his songs tell stories too. He is so clean cut and cute. He seems so genuine and that is the most attractive thing to me. Also he seems really kind and nice and that is SO important too. Doesn't matter how talented or cute you are if you aren't a great human being. His smile is amazing, just lights up his face. I saw him at Q102 Jingle Ball in Philadelphia and it was magical! Him, his guitar and his voice... perfection! My dream is to get to sing with him someday...

Kendra: It's obvious you're writing for your peers. Is there any other way you're helping out people your age on top of your music, like charity work?

Gabi: Community service is really important to me. I was raised in a family where I was taught from an early age that it is our responsibility to help others. We receive many blessings in life and sharing them with others makes them even more special. I do a lot of different things like raise funds for different charities, put on shows at senior homes and [Ronald McDonald House](#) but the most important thing to me is my not for profit. When I was 11-years-old I started my not for profit called [Access 2 the Arts](#). This organization works to provide access to the arts for less advantaged children. The arts are so important to our world and participating in them provides children with so many skills. It is critical that they get the chance to participate even if their parents can't fit it in their budget. It breaks my heart that the arts programs have been cut in our country and I personally think that fact is part of the reason our test scores are so poor when compared with the rest of the world.

So there are lots of reasons to support the arts. I started this program because one of my dance teachers told me a story of helping children who had been devastated by Katrina. She explained that they had to glue nickels on their shoes to create tap shoes. My heart broke a little that day because it had never occurred to me that not every kid got to dance. I went home and dug out my outgrown tap shoes and took them to her. We sterilized them and cleaned them up and since then over 700 children have had the opportunity to tap dance, including some in Nigeria. We offer vocal scholarships and some day one of my kids is going to be on Broadway and I am going to go see them perform. We have sent art supplies to schools in Belize and India by partnering with a local Catholic high school who does service trips. My greatest dream is to be successful enough in the music industry that I can influence all my peers to join me in my mission. We all know what the arts mean to us and we should be committed to helping other kids find themselves through the arts. Our motto is support the arts today...create a brighter tomorrow.

Kendra: What's your plans for the next couple of months – touring, recording again?

Gabi: I am a junior in high school so I am getting ready for college with SATs and college visits etc.. all of which is rich stuff for future songs. I am working on a plan to get some local shows going and see where that will take me. It can be hard to break in and get play time so working on a plan about reaching out to college radio stations. I think that might be a great way to reach audiences too and with my brother being a freshman at UCLA all his buddies can by my little promoters on their campuses. Not sure how it will work but looking for that non-traditional way to get myself heard. I am always thinking about my next songs and recording again.

Kendra: They always say young people have their finger to the pulse of what's hot. With that, are there any new artists you think our readers would love to know about?

Gabi: You mean other than me right haha...I am not sure if these guys are up and comers because they have songs on the radio but my current favorites are [Alessia Cara](#)...love her voice, her message and her whole vibe. Saw her at Jingle Ball and she was amazing...another one I would love to sing with. Also love [Daya](#) and her song "Hide Away". I can totally relate to the message of that song. Another local artist I enjoy is [Ayla Gentiletti](#). We met through other circles but I really enjoy her voice and music.