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THELMA PLUM'S MONSTERS ARE COMING

Chatting to 19-year-old Thelma Plum about her brilliant new EP *Monsters*, and its forthcoming national tour has two effects: a reality check, and an incredible sense of awe. For someone still so young, Thelma has an air of calm grace and quiet confidence, rare, even in the wisest of people. She is proof that age doesn't define what you're capable of, and that the rules are in your own head.

Following only her debut EP *Rosie* in 2012, this year's *Monsters* is layered with the sophisticated sounds of a seasoned musician. It's no surprise then, to learn that Thelma has been honing her craft for as long as her memory treks back.

"My granddad used to play a lot of music to me when I was growing up; that had a huge impact so it's really always been there. I remember deciding when I wanted to do music was when I saw Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody play and I said to my mum that I was going to do exactly what they were doing one day. She was like, 'Ah, yeah ok,'" she laughs.

Laugh she may, but Thelma clearly has talent, drive and diligence that have put her right where she wants to be. For starters, Thelma is one of those people we all envy, who can pick up an instrument and teach herself how to play it.

"If I sit in front of an instrument for about an hour I usually tend to pick it up after that, so I can play some weird things."

Yet even for the flawlessly talented Thelma, hard work beats talent when the talent isn't working hard; especially when it comes to the writing process.

"I know when something sad happens, like if I have my heart broken, I tend to write a little bit more. I guess it depends on what's going on in my life at the time. Sometimes that doesn't happen either and I have to sit down and force myself to write about stuff. I sit down and play the pretend game, I make pretend problems and sing about those pretend problems. I always think, 'you know what? Break my heart', at least then I can write a song about it."

The *Monsters* EP, headed up by the hymn-like lead single *How Much Does Your Love Cost?* however, came from a place of real pain. The raw emotion that bleeds into this record paints an eerily honest picture of love and losing faith.

"All the songs I wrote at a certain time at the end of last year; and I actually wrote them when I was still in a relationship that I guess wasn't really working and the songs reflect on that. When you're still involved in something that you know isn't working, it's sort of futile that you're still there, but you can't really leave."

Combining this emotion and Thelma's hypnotic vocals with the visionary hip-hop producer M-Phazes, *Monsters* has reached new musical heights for Thelma. Wanting to make something that wasn't only acoustic, but without the knowledge to do so, Thelma was able to push her boundaries with his direction.

"He's had a big influence on me, even as a person and how I think about things musically. I would go to the studio with him and he'd be like 'we can do something like this', and I'd go 'mmhmm, no', and he'd say 'lets just try it anyway'. It would be the weirdest thing in the world that you'd think would never work, and all of a sudden it really works and is the main part of the song."

It's this ability to open up and keep on moving forward, that adds to Thelma's air of ageless grace. Having started with solo acoustic sessions to now playing a national tour with a band of brilliant musicians, Thelma is at once moving leaps and bounds, while staying assuredly grounded. There is calculated method to her monsters.

"I'm a little bit of a gypsy, I find it hard to stay in one place for a long time. I tend to live from one suitcase to another. But just writing music really helps me, that's a consistent thing that I do everyday. It helps me to know what I'm doing, why I'm doing this and why I love doing it."

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Young but in no way naïve, open, yet quietly guarded, Thelma feels no need to bare all to get to where she wants to be. She happily talks about her beloved rescue dog Tex, who's crying in the background while Thelma chats over the phone; but when it comes to influencers and advice, that's for her to know and everyone else to enjoy through her music.

"Meeting Paul Kelly was pretty cool. He's one of my hero's, we got to sit down and he told me some really cool advice that I'll probably never forget...but I think it'll keep that advice secret for now."

Catch Thelma and her Monsters tour around the country over October and November.

Sydney show: Fri 31 Oct | Oxford Art Factory

Tickets: www.moshtix.com.au

Info: www.facebook.com/thelmaplum

By Vicki Fletcher

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