LA WEEKLY®

JANUARY 10-16, 2025 | VOL. 37 / NO. 10 | LAWEEKLY.COM

SOPHIE LLOYD

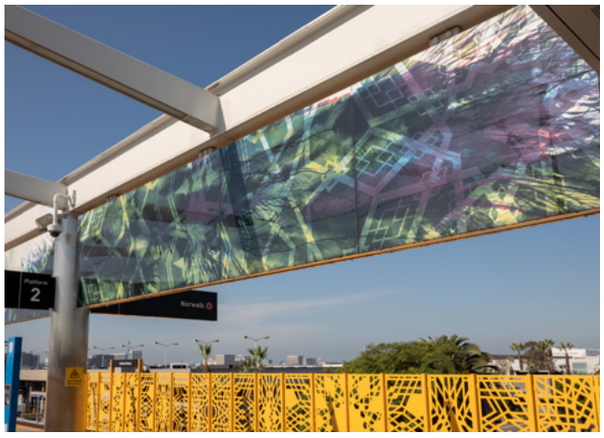
SHREDS THE WHISKY IN HER U.S. DEBUT

BY MARK STEFANOS

ARTIST SHERIN GUIRGUIS BRINGS RISE TO METRO'S AVIATION/ CENTURY STATION

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

COURTESY MICHELE STUEVEN



COURTESY LA METRO

Los Angeles-based Egyptian artist Sherin Guirguis's work *Rise* has been unveiled at the recently opened Aviation/Century Metro Station near Los Angeles International Airport on an elevated light rail station along the K-Line at the intersection of Aviation Boulevard and Century Boulevard.

Known for her work exploring cultural identity and lost feminist histories, *Rise* is meant to reflect the diversity of the surrounding neighborhood and the rest of Los Angeles County. It represents individuals who migrated into the area, many of whom may face tremendous challenges. The artwork is located on the platform and fence and is a richly colored piece filled with countless yellow and blue designs and patterns. The bright color of the piece stands out for blocks to drivers passing underneath the station.

Guirguis was selected through an open competitive selection process out of 1200 applicants, following the recommendation of a panel of community-based artist professionals. She collaborated with the local organization Free Arts to develop a workshop for the youth the organization serves. Through an art-making activity, students were introduced to the unique techniques of painting and papercutting which she used in her commissioned artwork.

"I really connected with it because we immigrated here from Egypt when I was 12 years old and I remember coming through LAX for the first time," Guirguis tells *LA Weekly* from the bustling platform staffed with Metro ambassadors. "We took a taxi ride to Arcadia that seemed three days long, so I was excited to do this particular station. I took patterns and decorative ornamental elements from around the neighborhood that have cultural significance to build out this pattern for the station. The fence is the most prominent piece of the station, and you can see it from blocks away and shows how art can have an actual impact on its immediate community."

She started with Mashrabiya patterns from her own culture and drove around picking up elements from sidewalks, fences, and tiles on people's floors in the surrounding community.

"This neighborhood and those near here have a lot of different heritages and histories," she says. The golden color of the fence embodies the idea of spirituality in the broadest of senses and is meant to be uplifting like a sunset."

The panels on the side of the station reflect being on the coast in California, combining the colors of the sky and the water and connecting the idea of migration through water and land.

"I paint these huge panels and lay them down in my studio in Highland Park and push the paint around to get kinetic energy to embody the idea of moving people and places.

The metro art program is allotted a minimum of half a percent of the total construction cost for any transit production project to public art. It aims to impact riders and respond to the surrounding community.

"One of the things we've heard from community members is a desire for artwork that you can see even if you're not riding the system," says Zipporah Yamamoto, Metro's Deputy Executive Officer of Arts and Community Enrichment. "The panel was looking for something that would speak to this particular location. All of the artwork in the system is site-specific and responsive, distinguishing one neighborhood from another, and this is the gateway to the airport with people coming from all over the world. Sherin's proposal really spoke to that and connected this place with our system in a unique way. The panel was also looking for artwork that regular commuters could see day after day that could remain timeless as well as welcome newcomers for the first time."

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LAWEEKLY.COM

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LA WEEKLY

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KEINEMUSIK'S RAMPA SETS RED STUDIOS AGLOW WITH 3.5 HOUR NEW YEAR'S EVE SET

BY CAROLINE CHANG

Rampa, one of the frontmen of influential music collective Keinemusik, rang in the New Year to a massively sold-out crowd at RED Studios Hollywood on Tuesday night, Dec. 31.

Though RED Studios is a dark warehouse-like space at night, Rampa played under a large mirrored logo with spotlights shining through, mimicking the warm sun rays many would associate with a Keinemusik set. The shimmering lights, melodic beats, and adoring fans in silky head scarves transformed this night in Hollywood to more of a sunset set in Ibiza. The intoxicating three and a half hour set stayed true to Keinemusik's good vibration sound, with infectious Afro House beats keeping the crowd on their feet and grooving along until the early hours of the morning.

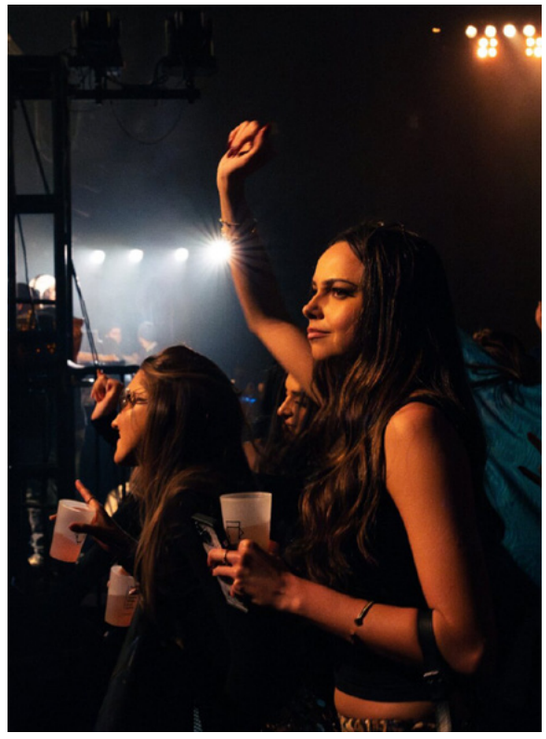
Rampa, with his signature baseball cap and casual skater-like style, commanded the crowd masterfully while party-goers danced both behind him on stage and around the massive floor area below. As the clock struck midnight, supporting artist ANASTAZJA and Rampa came together and cued up a fun mix of "Find Your Love" by Drake. Confetti fell from the ceiling, creating a euphoric atmosphere felt throughout the massive room as audience members celebrated the turning of the year, welcoming 2025. Keeping the absolutely electric energy going, Rampa quickly cued up Keinemusik hit "Thandaza" as the crowd danced in the new year.

Keinemusik, which directly translates to "no music" in German, is a music-creator collective founded in Berlin consisting of primary members Rampa, &ME and Adam Port. The group has spent the past decade building their movement from the ground up — stripping house and techno back to its simple roots and reshaping it with their own unique spin.

Frequently leaning on the phrase "less is more" to describe his style and pulling inspiration from hip hop and drum-driven Afrobeats, Rampa's contribution to Keinemusik has helped the collective gain global recognition and a cult-like following. Keinemusik has created their own lane in the scene, reimagining not only sound, but also the atmosphere of live electronic events and what it means to be an artist and a DJ in the space. The Keinemusik project is undeniably one of the dominant forces behind the rapid rise of Afro House music worldwide we've seen in recent years.

Rampa's New Year's Eve celebration comes to us from heavy-hitting, event production company, Framework. They're one of the most prominent electronic music event producers in the Los Angeles area, responsible for venues Sound Nightclub and Spotlight LA. Framework is known for creating one-of-a-kind experiences with world-class house and techno artists in SoCal and beyond. Both Keinemusik and Framework's rise to prominence over the past decade have been attributed to persistence and being fearless in doing something different.

With Keinemusik's strong following and revolutionary reputation, and Framework's relentless commitment to building community and creating impact in underground electronic music, this event blossomed into the perfect pairing for an unforgettable New Year's Eve celebration.



ALL IMAGES COURTESY CAROLINE CHANG

WHAT'S POPPING UP

The Winter Fancy Food Show In Las Vegas

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

The Winter Fancy Food Show takes place from Sunday, Jan. 19 through Tuesday, Jan. 21 at the Las Vegas Convention Center and will highlight some of the food trends to look forward to in 2025.

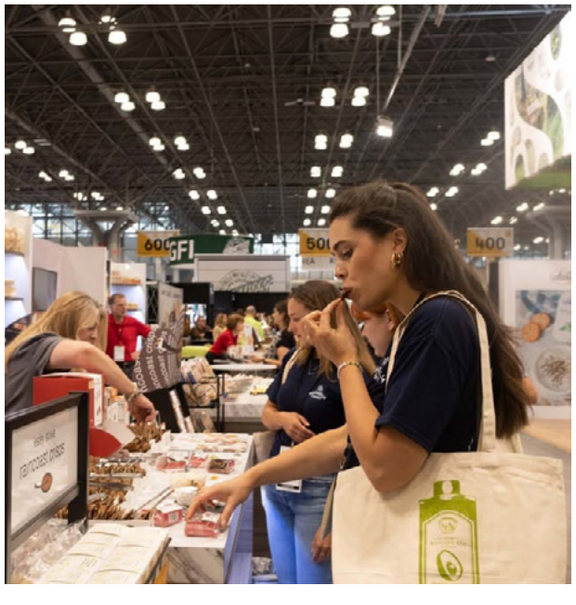
New York Times bestselling author and founder of Ayoh, Molly Baz will be on stage presenting a keynote on controversial condiments, consumer packaged goods launches, and selling big on social media.

Startup CPG will debut its female founder initiative, Further CPG, during the show with a Further Female Founder Lounge and related programming. Further CPG will host a pitch session with 10 brands, a retailer panel including Whole Foods, and close with a Female Founder Mixer.

As the official partner country, Italy's Pavilion will feature more than 90 exhibitors, a new product zone with guided tasting sessions and an array of notable chef showcases, as well as a dedicated event celebrating Italy on Monday, Jan. 20.

Some of the trends predicted by the 2025 Specialty Food Association Trendspotter predictions products include:

ALL IMAGES COURTESY SPECIALTY FOOD ASSOCIATION



ALL IMAGES COURTESY SPECIALTY FOOD ASSOCIATION

Girl Dinner 2.0

Snacking is here to stay, with freestyle format and flavor combinations infusing new energy into the red-hot category. Cited as one of the top trends driving growth in SFA's 2024-25 State of the Specialty Food Industry research, snacking is gaining nuance and seeing innovations. Look for familiar snacks with a twist like Fishwife's tinned seafood, Poppy Handcrafted Popcorn, Acme's Lox in a Box snack kit, Firehook Crackers, Lotus Foods Forbidden Rice Ramen, Brooklyn Cured charcuterie and Goodnow Farms Chocolate.

Instant Global Gratification

Trendspotter and Saveur Editor-in-Chief Kat Craddock was excited by "so, so many great new South Asian brands" and expects that consumers everywhere will continue to gain access to non-native flavors and new-to-them dishes in convenient formats. Craddock noted Vermont-made Dosa Kitchen dosa batter, Sun Ghee's flavored ghee, Arya Roti's pre-made roti, Doosra's snacks, and Satya Desi Pantry." Among SFA members, this trend is exemplified by Xinca's pupusas, Sobo Foods plant-based dumplings, pi00a Asian-inspired pizzas, Brooklyn Delhi's Chickpea Tikka Masala, and Yolélé's Yassa Fonio Pilaf.

Yes, Chef

Building on the Summer 2024 trend of Upscaling at Home, look for a proliferation of chef-y kits for the home cook, according to Trendspotter Chef Clara Park. Economic concerns are a major factor driving this trend. Some SFA member product examples: Todo Verde's Al Pastor Seasoning, Flour & Olive's baking mixes, Olio Piro Olive Oil, Jasper Hill Farm Harbison cheese, Sabatino White Truffle Sauce, The Matzo Project Matzo Ball Soup Kit, and DeLallo Pizza Night gift box.

Functional Foods, Natural Enhancements

Functional foods that support cognitive health and emotional well-being will also grow in popularity. Ingredients like adaptogens, nootropics, and mood-enhancing botanicals will be featured in various products. Taylor Pass Honey Co. Reserve Mānuka Honey UMF 05+ MGO83+, ALO Original Awaken Aloe Vera + Wheatgrass drink, Brook37 Wellness Teas, and High Country Fungus Magic Cocoa with seven mushrooms are example products from SFA members.

Chili Cornucopia

Chilis remain popular and they're available in many varieties. Seen in previous Trendspotter highlights such as nuanced heat, chilies are everywhere, but gone are the days of the ghost peppers and gratuitous fire. It's about flavor with chili crisp and crunch, berbere, hot honey, and harissa like The Spice House's Aji Amarillo, Alicorp's Tari Rocoto Pepper Sauce, Sachili Smoked Red Pepper Seasoning (Marash), and Madhu Chocolate Mango Chili Bar, which uses Mathania.

Vivacious Vinegars

Multiple trends collide in the rise of interesting new vinegar flavors, uses, and occasions. American Vinegar Works Apple Cider Hot Vinegar, Manicaretti/Alemany Chestnut and Honey Vinegar, Giusti Sweet and Sour White Condiment, Ottogi America Korean Plum Vinegar, Mikey V's Sam Sauce with yuzu and black vinegar, and Villa Manodori's Dark Cherry Balsamic showcase SFA members driving this trend.

Gimme (Some) Sugar

As consumers set personal guidelines for new styles of health-focused eating. Keep an eye out for Bumbleberry Farms Sweet Maple Honey Cream and Bourbon Barrel Foods Aged Pure Cane Sorghum, Little Red Kitchen's Molasses Cookies, and Sunday Night Foods' Chocolate Premium Sauce.

ALSO TRENDING

Oil-based Hot Sauces

Black Garlic

Lavender

Flavored Cheeses

"It's not all blueberry Wensleydale, kiddos. Flavored cheese is getting fancier, and far more global," said Craddock in a press release. "Examples include Marieke's fenugreek gouda, Vermont Creamery's honey-truffle chevre, and Montchevre's collaboration with Mike's Hot Honey." LA

SOPHIE LLOYD SHREDS THE WHISKY

BY MARK STEFANOS

Not everyone with a guitar and a dream becomes a global sensation — but not everyone is Sophie Lloyd. Growing up in a small town outside of Reading, England, Sophie was cast out for her love of rock music in a place where it wasn't exactly celebrated. "I even got suspended from school for wearing a studded bracelet once," she shared with us.

The guitar became her refuge. And undeterred by the haters around her, Sophie turned to the internet to find a community, starting a video diary in 2012 to track her guitar-learning progress. As the years progressed, those clips would go on to showcase her incredible talent and gain her a massive following, earning her over 180 million YouTube views to date. Then came big-time collaborations including touring as Machine Gun Kelly's guitarist, two full-length solo albums, and her U.S. solo performance debut coming Thursday, Jan. 16 at the Whisky a Go Go. The guitar that was once her escape from the world is now taking her around it.

In the interview below, Sophie talks about her journey getting to this moment, the emotions behind her most recent album *Imposter Syndrome*, and gives us a bit of insight into how she has become a beacon for a new wave of rock 'n' roll.

COURTESY ADAM BRAZIER

How the hell did you learn to shred like that?

A lot of nights noodling on the guitar for hours on end! I started by learning covers and studying different guitarists' playing styles and techniques. Trying to figure out their thought process and theory behind their solos and riffs. I then started to write my own music, this helped me really become creative and think outside the box and develop my own unique sound.

What inspired you to start posting your music and performances online?

I came from quite a small town where there wasn't really a music scene so I didn't have anyone to jam with or connect with musically in real life, so I think that's why I turned to the Internet to have a place to express myself and maybe meet like-minded people. I originally started posting videos in 2012, which was before being a YouTuber or online content creator was really a thing. So originally I started posting just as a video diary to myself to track my progress, and it was a bonus if anyone actually saw them.

Your music has gone viral all around the world – are there any differences in what audiences like, and how they respond to you, in America vs. England vs. globally?

The power of the Internet is really incredible, you can reach people from all corners of the globe. I'm relatively new to live performances. So I haven't really had the opportunity to see a big difference in their response yet. At my London show people traveled from all around the world to come and see me at my debut show, it's incredible to see the passion people have for music.

My show at the Whisky on the 16th of January in Los Angeles will be my first live solo show outside of the UK, so that will be really interesting. I'm so excited to see how the American audience reacts. They're definitely the loudest online and where the majority of my fan base comes from. I absolutely love performing in America with Machine Gun Kelly so I imagine it's gonna be an amazing night.

What kind of sound are you trying to create with your solo work?

My heart lies in the classic rock 'n' roll sound. Heavy riffs, crazy solos and

powerful vocals. So that will always be something that is consistent in my original music. However I tried to be versatile with it, I'm into a bunch of different genres from R&B to heavy metal, pop and orchestral music, and I love to mash up these different genres with rock guitar playing. So at the moment, I don't really want to pigeonhole myself into one particular sound, as I'm having so much fun exploring the versatility and differences in different types of music. For example, I'd love to collaborate with people from the classic rock world, such as Slash, however, I'd also love to work with DJs and rappers to create something truly unique. I think working with the MGK guys has really opened my eyes to how rock music and shred guitar can have a place in all genres of music.

Your new album title and lead track are named Imposter Syndrome – do you still have imposter syndrome?

I think it'll be an ongoing battle. Some days I feel I've overcome it, whereas other days it comes back in full force. But throughout the process of writing this album, I've gone from a girl who was scared to play live, even in front of my own family, to performing in stadiums and arenas around the world and collaborating with some of my heroes. So although imposter syndrome and anxiety are still a part of my life, I no longer let it stop me from being who I want to be, and taking chances and opportunities, as that's what life's about.

What's some advice for fighting against those feelings?

I think, just being aware that the feelings are totally normal and that literally everyone in the world feels like that at times, is quite comforting. While working on the album I got to talk to some of my heroes and hearing their stories of such similar things made me realize I wasn't alone and that it was possible to overcome these feelings and be successful. In a world of social media, everything can be edited, photoshopped and filmed multiple times to be perfect. That can create a really high expectation of a bar that is impossible for anyone to meet. However, it's actually the human aspect and connection that is what people really appreciate and gets you further. So never be afraid to show that you're not perfect, you make mistakes, but that's what makes you unique and special and helps you to grow and learn.

You talk about being ostracized from social circles and finding solace in the guitar. Why do you think you weren't accepted?

I just came from a very small town where rock music wasn't really a thing and anything that stepped outside of the norm was looked down upon. As I progressed into a teenager and got really into rock and metal, people found that very weird and just didn't know how to react to it. I even got suspended from school for wearing a studded bracelet once. People can see the rock and metal culture as quite scary and aggressive when really it's the complete opposite.

COURTESY ADAM BRAZIER

How did that adversity help you cultivate your talents?

Although it was a tough time, I'm actually so grateful for it because when other people were going out with friends or partying, I would be at home practicing guitar and honing my skills. All my lunch times were spent in the music room practicing and writing songs.

***Imposter Syndrome* has a different lead vocalist for each track – what was the writing process like for the vocals?**

The album was written during Covid times so unfortunately there wasn't much that could be done in person. We started with the guitar, drums, and bass and basically made a glorified vocal backing track. We had ideas of who we wanted the vocalists to be, so when we would write, we would kind of write in the style for that particular vocalist, and then we just crossed our fingers and hoped the vocalist would say yes. Which surprisingly most of them did. We sent them the song and they would write the lyrics and melody on their end, then send it back over where we would give any feedback and maybe alter the backing to fit the melodies better. And we basically just sent it back-and-forth until we were all happy with the final result. In the future, I'd definitely love to get into the studio with people and work on music face-to-face, I'd be really interested to see what that dynamic brings to the music.

Having a different vocalist for each song sounds challenging, how did putting together the album come about?

It was definitely a lot more challenging than we first anticipated. As I'm an independent artist, I don't have the backing or expertise of a label, so just trying to align releases with everyone's schedules was a bit of a nightmare. It took quite a long time to put everything together with the first song being completed in 2021 and the last song not being finished till 2023. It was definitely a challenge, but we got there in the end and learned so much.

Have you ever thought of being the vocalist yourself?

I'll never say never, but the guitar is where my passion lies. I've never really had an urge to sing other than in the

shower. I'll leave the singing to the experts and stick to what I do best.

Is there something special about creating your own music versus playing someone else's?

Definitely writing original music is where my passion truly lies. The feeling you get when the crowd is singing back your own songs to you is like nothing else. When people come up to you and tell you that the song you wrote changed their life or helped them out of a dark time, that is truly what creating art is all about.

Even when I cover other band songs, I still try to do it in my own unique way. I think what makes music so exciting is how people can interpret it differently to create something new that resembles their own style.

Where do you get the inspiration for the solos you rewrite in the covers you do?

I'll start by learning the vocal melody on guitar then I'll try to rock it up a bit by adding bends and slides. Then where I feel it's needed, I'll add different licks or a crazy run, making sure I'm always hitting keynotes of the melody throughout that lick so people can still follow it.

I'll spend a lot of time studying the guitarist of the bands that I'm covering, looking at their specific licks and techniques that they use, and I'll try and emulate that, but I'll "Sophi-fy" it, maybe changing the fingering pattern or something to what feels more comfortable for me. But still keeping the essence and feel of what was intended by the original guitarist.

What is the Sophie Lloyd quality you bring to covers?

I've never really had the desire to just do basic covers and copy the guitarists exactly. I've always just wanted to be creative and take something and turn it into something completely different. With the covers, I'm honestly just having fun with the guitar, challenging myself and creating something that people haven't heard before and I hope makes them smile.

With your covers, you're reviving music and introducing it to a young audience – what kind of responses have you got from younger fans, and what's that feel like to help them discover classic music?

The shred covers are a really good way of reaching a wider audience but still showing the fun and creativity that can come with playing guitar. One of the most incredible things to me is when young fans come up to me saying I inspired them to play guitar, especially young girls. I'm honored to help shape a generation of young rockers. I'm also very open about any struggles I've faced, and I hope that gives them the courage to pursue their dreams and shows them it's possible to overcome any adversity and be who they want to be and rock out!

You're having your first U.S. headlining solo show here in LA at the world famous Whisky – why did you choose LA and the Whisky for the show?

It's such an iconic legendary venue. I think all of my favorite bands have played there at some point or another. It's a staple in rock 'n' roll history and I'm so honored that I get to be a part of that.

What do you like about coming to, and performing in, LA?

Being from the UK myself, whenever I go to America it literally feels like Disneyland for adults, it's such an exciting place full of opportunity. Los Angeles is really the home of rock 'n' roll so I feel a very special connection to it. There's so much history that revolves around this city, some amazing things and some dark things, but all equally important in shaping how rock 'n' roll is today. And I hope one day people will tell the story of the legendary night that was my first show at the Whisky!

There's a lot of hullabaloo over you being a woman stepping into what some would say is traditionally a man's role of hard rock guitarist – what do you think of all that?

I've always loved seeing powerful women in male-dominated fields, I think it's so badass!

I'm sure being a woman has helped me have the success I've had, as it is still a somewhat unique thing to see. I think smart women can utilize that fact to their advantage. However, I do think the tides are turning and we're actually seeing a lot more women in rock music nowadays which is awesome. As it becomes more normalized, young girls may see it as a more accessible option for them which is amazing.

However, there is definitely still an air of underlying misogyny and harassment in some areas of the industry which needs to be addressed. But we are seeing a shift in the right direction and I think the future of rock definitely has a strong female edge and I'm so excited for it.

Do you have any advice for women in male-centered fields or positions?

Building a good support system around you is important, having people you trust that can help guide and mentor you with your best interests at heart is very powerful. Also, remember that your views and opinions are so important. Be confident, dominant and assertive. Don't let people interrupt you or dismiss you. You deserve to be there.

I read that you picked up the guitar after watching The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie – are you still a Spongebob fan?

Yeah, embarrassingly that is true. I wish I had a way cooler rock 'n' roll story about why I picked up the guitar but it was the episode of SpongeBob where they turned the Twisted Sister song 'I wanna rock' into 'I'm a goofy goober, Rock' and SpongeBob levitates into the air playing that killer guitar solo as everyone watches in awe.

Although I don't watch SpongeBob anymore, I still think it's one of the best cartoons to ever exist! It's so funny, even for adults and actually has a lot of good life lessons! The world would be a better place if everyone watched one episode of SpongeBob SquarePants a day.

Have there been other pop-culture phenomena that have impacted you like that?

A lot of scores for video games and movies have had a big impact on me, especially recently. Being able to set a whole soundscape that alters the mood and feeling of a moment is very powerful. I'd definitely love to look into creating music for that.

What are you listening to these days?

My music taste is so vast at the moment. I have my girly pop playlist which I love to listen to in the car, full of Sabrina Carpenter, Chappel Roan, Charli XCX, Billie Eilish and GloRilla.

And then I've got my rock playlist which includes the likes of Ghost, Sleeptoken, Bad Omens, BMTH and Linkin Park.

And what is some music you always return to?

For me, something that will always be a staple in my playlist is classic rock Iron Maiden, Guns N' Roses, Pink Floyd, Van Halen and Led Zeppelin just to name a few.

What can we expect from Sophie Lloyd in 2025 and the coming years?

I'm loving performing live so much, so you can definitely expect a lot more of that including both original shows and also maybe a separate shred cover style show as well. I'm so excited to explore new opportunities, I'd love to perform at things such as sporting events, maybe even the WWE!

I'd also love to explore writing music for video games and movies and collaborating with a bunch of different artists from a wide variety of genres. I'm excited to help bring rock and roll back into the mainstream and inject some blistering solos into everyone's ears.

Sophie Lloyd will be performing at the Whisky a Go Go on Thursday, Jan. 16.

Interview edited for length and clarity.

Drummer Christopher Painter and Sophie Lloyd COURTESY JAKE HICKES