

To hear art-pop auteur Taali is to be transported to her gleaming, sylvan sonic world. Her quietly powerful voice creeps and climbs like a vine. Her organic, electronically enhanced compositions possess mind and body. Her lyrics draw us ever deeper into a place that roils with such history and meaning that the personal becomes universal. In this intimate space, the New York-native (born Talia Billig) not only mints her own genre-of-one—a beguiling mix of tropical pulse, chamber pop, avant-electronica, and quiet storm—but directly address trauma, love, and identity.

Though she's a solo artist, this lifelong community-builder doesn't walk alone. Taali draws direct inspiration from the empowering Judaic culture passed down from her family, and the uplifting stories of the fierce women she surrounds herself with. In tribute to that, she goes simply by Taali because, she says, "That's what my loved ones call me. The more I make this music, the closer I feel to my ancestry and myself. The name should be more familiar too."

Taali grew up north of the Bronx in Hastings-on Hudson. Her parents didn't believe in babying their children so instead of Sesame Street, she got lessons about radical Jewish ladies like labor activist Clara Lemlich and anarchist author Emma Goldman. Instead of silly kiddie music, she heard Mom's folk (Dylan, Simon, Mitchell) and Dad's soul (Wonder, Withers, Rawls), plus Israeli singers like Ofra Haza. On holidays the family would sing around the table, an influence only now emerging in Taali's work. "I grew up with these beautiful Judaic harmonies all around me, but for the longest time I left my heritage out of my music," she says. "A good friend recently told me the best thing you can have in life is culture and she was right."

By the age of 4, Taali was reading. By 6, she was telling off misogynistic kindergarten teachers. At 8, she heard about a kids' radio contest calling for musical entries, so she auditioned with a Little Mermaid song and won, all without telling her folks. "I really admire that kid's confidence," Taali quips. "I'm still trying to emulate it." She soon began disappearing at odd hours—turns out she was playing the neighbors' piano. It wasn't until college, when she found peers as driven as her, that she realized her love for fostering creative community. Taali got a BFA in jazz voice, but The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music was mostly an excuse to workshop her first band, hang in storied Greenwich Village, and use her extracurricular lessons to study and bond with singer-songwriters like Sasha Dobson (Puss n Boots) and Becca Stevens (David Crosby).

By day, Talia learned the industry working for legendary Blue Note president Bruce Lundvall. By night, she could be found playing or powwowing among the Lower East Side crowd at Rockwood Music Hall, then inviting the evening's performers to her Orchard Street apartment for jam sessions. Thusly her Orchard Sessions video salon was born: Taali would bring in an artist, arrange a song with those on hand to play, then film with herself typically on piano, percussion, or harmony. The episodes are still online—bespoke singalongs with Snarky Puppy, Luke Temple, Jarina De Marco, and more. "I got to pick who came based on me being their biggest fan," Taali says. "It was all my favorite friends and it allowed me to love music in a way that was completely not ego or success driven." That style of intimate collaboration inspired

Taali to explore writing for others, and an opportunity came quickly. Blue Note star José James, whom she'd networked with at work, caught one of her Rockwood gigs and invited her to write on his 2014 album, *While You Were Sleeping*. The chemistry was immediate and electric—she landed two songs on the set, joined James' band as a background singer, toured the world for a couple years, and wound up cowriting five tracks for his 2017 LP, *Love in a Time of Madness*.

Emboldened, she pursued other writing opportunities, but soon hit an unexpected, albeit welcome, detour: "I started to write things I wanted to keep." The very first of those songs, "Hear You Now," and its powerful video, premiered via *Billboard Magazine*. The electropop earworm opens in a hail of dense but airy harmonies—those Judaic melodies—as Taali coos, "Bow your head, gather up all the words you haven't said." And as a dembow snap pushes her on, she promises, "Oh but they're gonna feel you, oh they'll see you, oh they'll hear you now." It's not only the declaration of an incredibly driven, able, studied, and practiced artist coming into her craft; it's a pledge to leave no emotional stone unturned. "The song is in second person but I'm speaking to myself," she explains. "It was written in 2017 as women were starting to speak up about their traumas. I have my own and this is the beginning of me addressing it."

As Taali creates her most personal music yet, they call en masse: "Make them hear you now." Appropriately, the single stands strong as the single for Taali's debut album, "I Am Here," set to release March 22nd. A powerful, honest and blisteringly unique musical statement, the album will come out via Taali's own Rainbow Blonde Records. Taali and José James decided to found the label with the ideal of an artist collective where every person, from artist to engineer, is a vital part of the story. For Taali, it's the culmination of not only her five years at a major label, but her time on Orchard Street building something humble but meaningful. It's the part where her journey inward flips to encompass the small universe around her—her family, her friends, her past, her present—all leading to an inspired future. "What I've learned," says Taali, "is that you need to have people, a team, a community, to make good art. Now we can create a sound and vision that's our own."