THE LOST BIO

PHOEBE BRIDGERS is a singer-songwriter from Pasadena, CA. Her prior solo work includes her debut, ***Strangers in the Alps*** (2017), and a second LP, ***Punisher*** (2020), released at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Beloved in equal measure for her deceptively subtle voice and her meticulous, incisive lyrics, she is today, at 31, one of the most respected rock stars in the game.

Bridgers was last seen on stage with **boygenius**, her supergroup with best friends **Lucy Dacus** and **Julien Baker**, collecting their Grammy Awards for 2023's ***the record***, including 'Best Alternative Music Album' and both 'Best Rock Song' and 'Best Rock Performance' for their song **"Not Strong Enough."** Bridgers, it turns out, left the building as the evening's most awarded artist; she won her fourth Grammy, 'Best Pop Duo/Group Performance,' for the song **"Ghost in the Machine,"** a feature on **SZA's *SOS***. Before that, a stint of dates opening for **Taylor Swift** on **The Eras Tour**. And before that, for nearly two years, her solo **Reunion Tour**, featuring three sold-out legs in North America, thirty shows in Europe, and a finale of dates in South America, Asia, and Australia. Online and on television, she delivered some of the sharpest and most memorable filmed performances of the last few years, among them **NPR's Tiny Desk** and ***Saturday Night Live***, and since her last solo record, she's released a number of one-off singles, covers, and collaborations with Paul McCartney, MUNA, Bright Eyes, The 1975, Lorde, Taylor Swift, The National, and more. She's also set to appear, later this year, in A24's ***Primetime***, starring alongside **Robert Pattinson** in the feature-film debut from director **Lance Oppenheim** (*Some Kind of Heaven*, *Ren Faire*).

But it's been six long years since ***Punisher*** was released, and Phoebe Bridgers, to any inquiring critic or fan, still has a lot of lost time to account for.

She'd be the first to tell you that. Because she lost a parent. And she fell in love. And she wrote ***Lost Weekend***, in the thick of it all.

Much was made of Bridgers's wise-for-her-years virtuosity when ***Stranger in the Alps*** was released, about a month after the artist's 23rd birthday; and ***Punisher*** was, it seems, universally praised as something of a promise-made-good-on, a clever, alluring, measured yet thrilling, ultimately very memorable sophomore album from an artist whose meteoric talent as a songwriter had been suddenly matched by her road-honed band and their richer, more daring accompaniment. But anyone queuing up ***Lost Weekend*** can expect to discover something more remarkable still—Bridgers at the height of her powers, a master, taking nothing more seriously than this craft, refining here many of the motifs that distinguished her work previously on this new album that's otherwise, everywhere, full of surprises.

The album's opening couplet—which ranks among her very best—and which is sung—startlingly—through a vocoder, confirms this immediately: "Crying in a suit and tie / but you should see the other guy / One more time for old time's sake / I'll watch him get carried away." Bridgers's great skill as a lyricist has never really been in question; thus the quality of the writing

on ***Lost Weekend*** isn't likely to come as a surprise, nor will the pleasure that will reward any listener's close readings. There are echoes ("You know me, and I'll never forgive you for that" vs "You love me, and I won't ever let you forget") and inversions (witnessing an act of violence, "Fist through the drywall / I'm frozen in place," in the album's opening song vs inheriting it later, exasperated in adulthood, "I fought the wall, and the wall won," in the album's closing song) and clever similes ("Hiding in the bathroom like Shelley Duvall") and great rhyme schemes ("I'll be waving from the plane / I'll see the sky in the ocean / A couple ibuprofen / and I'm sleeping all the way"… "Liberty Tree Mall / in the photo booth / This place is dying / We don't care if we're living proof").

But it's the way these lyrics soak in such strange, compelling, unpredictable arrangements here that best distinguishes ***Lost Weekend*** from all that came before it. Many of the songs on the album resolve unexpectedly. Their arrangements propagate as deeply felt emotions do—with force, but fleetingly—although a few of them do stick around, after being introduced, to reprise late in the album, to great effect. The instruments at hand are varied, yet focused; guitars and synthesizers lead the charge; this is not an overstuffed experimental record with a hundred bells and whistles, yet still, the familiar gives way to ecstatic rushes, sudden halts, even a few screams and shouts. ***Lost Weekend***, which was produced by **Tony Berg**, **Ethan Gruska**, **Jack Antonoff**, & **Phoebe Bridgers**, with additional production by **Alex G**, is roomier and stranger than anything else Bridgers has made.

"The music I've listened to the most for pleasure is probably ambient music," Bridgers said, when asked about the compositional impetus behind the album's interludes and transitions, "but I don't even think I realized how much interstitial stuff there was on the album until it was done. What I love about ambient music is that, when you're listening, you can't help but feel whatever it is that it's trying to make you feel. The method of emotional transfer from composer to listener is totally different than it is when relying on a lyric to tell you something or inform you of something."

Which is not to say that ***Lost Weekend*** is lacking in Classic PB. Lead single **"Lost Boys"** is irresistible. Rarely has a simple "Yeah!" been engineered to put a smile on one's face so quickly; its melody may prove eternal.There are many elegantly plotted songs here, like **"Haunted"** and **"The Governor's Waltz,"** that will remind longtime listeners of the artist's gifts for narrative and musical storytelling. And **"I Can't Wait"** is very likely to stand tall among fans' all-time favorites; its climax, a delicate clearing in the middle of the song, lingers over a moment of self-actualization: "All my life, side by side / Hyde Jekyll Hyde / Finally together;" its second climax —surprise!—with that beat, that guitar riff, is exceedingly beautiful.

But generally, it seems as if it were necessary that Bridgers broaden her repertoire while composing ***Lost Weekend*** to accommodate some very big changes in her life. The album's grand narrative trades back and forth between two emotional extremes—love and loss—which each, as the album progresses, cast the other in stark relief.

The artist's father, Tony Bridgers, passed away in December 2022, and his memory is examined and reexamined across a number of interrelated tracks on ***Lost Weekend***. Bridgers relays her grief—and her relief, and regret, and sorrow and rage—with such acuity and specificity that it's probably impossible to walk away from this record without a hole in one's heart. **"Still Standing,"** the album's centerpiece, is one of the most deeply affecting songs she's ever written. In it, a scene remembered from childhood resonates harrowingly: "I found her bleeding over the sink / But when you said sorry, you were looking at me." But really what resonates is Bridgers's ability to make meaning from this complicated loss in a way that all of us can understand.

Lost Weekend's counterpoint is a new romance, which suffuses so many other corners of its music. Joy and wonderment course through "**Liberty Tree,"** and they're big enough to fill a stadium on "**Bobby,"** a soaring, spectacular highlight. On **"Kill Me,"** as she's singing about the start of this all, one can literally hear the air get sucked out of the room. Bridgers's vocal performance is astounding; here and throughout the album, one is reminded that it's *this voice*, channeled with total clarity, that makes her music so special. Bridgers's singing voice is the sound of the self at its most self-aware; and with it, she's able to create for the listener a kind of intimacy hard-found in contemporary music.

Lost Weekend is a remarkable examination of the artist's life to this point, made with care, during a period of introspection. It will cement her reputation as one of the finest songwriters of her generation, in no small part because Bridgers took her time making it.

"The album is vastly different than it was when I started. It's nothing at all like I imagined," she said. "There are certain things that seem now like the heart of the album that weren't part of it for a long time. I think most indie musicians, at least the ones I know, write for two years and make an album and then they write for another two years and make another album, but if I'd stopped after two years or whatever, it would have felt like walking off a cliff." Pausing, she added: "I was a little world-weary. I wanted to step back from public life. I kept feeling like, If I write more songs, that means doing the opposite, and I was hating something about that. I needed a different relationship to the music I was making and to the world in which it was going to appear. The album's about that, in a way. And it could only have been made on the other side of that reckoning."

"But if I ever come out of hiding," she sings, on the album's closer, **"Lost Weekend (Reprise),"** "you won't have to know how to find me again." So three cheers for that, and for Phoebe, for this, her third album.

Lost Weekend is out later this summer on Dead Oceans. Earlier this year, some of its songs were premiered at phones-free, small-venue live shows announced day-of across the United States (culminating with a surprise show at MSG); a world tour will follow, beginning this fall.