

BOY SODA



A ZINE BY **PUSH**



NAME	A.K.A.
<i>Brae Luo Palealo</i>	<i>"BOY SODA"</i>



BOY SODA

Interview with Jess Lord



BOY SODA is the moniker of 27-year-old R&B singer Brae Luafalealo from Australia's Central Coast. Last year, his confident, sultry and swag-infused debut album, SOULSTAR, earned him the ARIA Award for Best R&B Album. On the cusp of releasing his deluxe album, aptly titled SOULSTAR DELUXE, Brae chats to Jess Lord about developing a deeper relationship with himself, surrounding yourself with the right people, making life a whimsical adventure, and more.

LISTENING TO YOUR ALBUM, SOULSTAR, ONE THING THAT REALLY STANDS OUT IS HOW YOU'VE DEVELOPED SUCH A DISTINCT SOUND. HOW DID YOU FIND YOUR SOUND?

It was a thought process of just asking myself, "What do I actually like to listen to?". It sounds like such a simple concept to just make what you like, but it takes a long time to figure yourself out. When you first start making music, that shock of hearing your own voice on something is so amazing and thrilling and magical that it takes a while for that feeling to die off, for you to then determine whether it's actually good or not.



What I enjoy about this career and being an artist is that it's such a long process of self-discovery. I had a lot of people pushing me to make an album that kind of puts a flag in the sand and says, "This is wholeheartedly me, like it or hate it". You have to make a decision [about who you are]; that's kind of what making an album feels like. I think that mindset going into it really helped me search for the truest ways to talk about things, and then to write the songs that I was scared to write.

WHY WERE YOU SCARED TO WRITE THE SONGS FEATURED ON SOULSTAR?

I was scared to open up a can of worms inside myself. To write a song, you have to deal with something that you've been potentially neglecting or not wanting to really look at in the face. They're about really important subjects, and you don't want to get it wrong; to misarticulate yourself or not do it justice. And that's a really good reason to not start those songs. On a skill level and on a spiritual level, I was just not ready. I don't think I had a close enough relationship with myself to know that that's what wanted to come out yet.

HOW DID YOU DEVELOP A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH YOURSELF?

Off the back of so much self-inquisition and self-talk. Up until making the album, I always felt like I was chasing this satiating sense of knowing myself. It almost felt like a romanticised thing that maybe I was never gonna find, you know? I always wondered if maybe it was made up. But now I know I just needed X amount of life experience for me to understand [myself]. Or I just



needed to go through things in real life. The cliché is that people say, trust the process, right? Good things take time. But now I know that it really, truly does. You can't rush those things.

I'm 27 now and the industry can feel like you're running out of time. But it's incomprehensible to me that I would be ready to do what I'm doing now at any second earlier. I would not have understood myself musically enough. I would not have had the experience of working with teams or multiple creatives. I would not have had the confidence to be able to articulate myself in rooms full of people that feel important. I've needed years and years and years of writing bad songs and being in rooms to feel as aligned as I do now.

WHAT HAS KEPT
YOU MOTIVATED
THROUGHOUT YOUR
CAREER?

People tell you that it's a ten year grind. That actually helped me a lot. Hearing that when I was 5 years in made me feel like they didn't think, 'Why hasn't this happened yet?' I'm getting up to my 10 year mark and things are only just starting to truly change for me, and I think it's because it takes that much time to learn yourself and to learn how to carry yourself. I think resilience is kind of the biggest skill out of it all, you know.

WHAT IS YOUR
GREATEST AMBITION
FOR BOY SODA?

My greatest ambition, honestly, is just to do this for my whole life. I have this urgency to have this sonic proof that I existed and this traceable record of how I felt throughout the years; how my thinking changed, how my views of the world changed, how my relationship with relationships changed. That feels like the most amazing thing I could do with my life.



I think that soul-searching is why, when you get music that feels true and potent, other people can relate to it easily and apply it to their own lives.



We're in a world where we're like, trying to train fucking drones and put facial recognition into everything. All that stuff is getting out of control. The pendulum is swinging and now nothing is more important than self-expression. Human experiences, like music, will always be the medicine for that stuff, I think.

IF YOU SEE YOUR MUSIC AS A RECORD OF YOUR LIFE, WHAT DOES THE SOULSTAR DELUXE ALBUM SAY ABOUT BOY SODA NOW?

His frontal lobe came through.

Wait.

I guess the frontal lobe came through on the actual SOULSTAR album, so this is more self-awareness or something. Who knows.

WHAT NEW ADDITIONS DOES THE DELUXE ALBUM BRING?

We've got five new songs. I really wanted to make everything feel a little bit more deluxe and a little bit shinier. We get an opportunity to expand on the world that we spend so long curating and creating and kind of flesh it out a little bit more, or speak about topics that maybe weren't as crucial for the OG album. They're informed by the original songs but just a little bit more sparkly. Very, very beautiful music. I'm really excited to drop it.

YOU'RE SIGNED TO A MAJOR LABEL (WARNER MUSIC GROUP). HOW HAVE YOU FOUND THAT EXPERIENCE?

It has allowed me to delegate all of the things that I would really struggle with and focus on the art. When you don't have a label, the amount of hats you have to wear is insane. I think it's been really nice to be with Warner and I feel like they've had the patience to invest and watch me do an EP and then a mixtape and then finally get to the album.

Obviously there's a correlation between creating and mental health. If one dips so does the other. That requires patience and understanding from

a label. I think every artist deserves that sense of patience.

If I didn't have them I'd still find a way, because music is what I was put on the earth to do. But I will say that they've changed my life for sure.



DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR ARTISTS LOOKING TO SIGN WITH A LABEL?

Just focus on the people.
When you make a decision, it
doesn't matter what kind of
numbers people are putting on
the table.

It doesn't mean anything. It's about who's going to be just as enthusiastic about your music a year after nothing's really popped off. Who's going to have that same delusional belief [in your music] that is required to get you through the facade of not having your moment yet?

We were very, very focused on the people when we were making our decision and it's for that reason that we're still with the same people five years later. Find people that you can trust and that are gonna have your best interests at the forefront of your mind.

HOW DID YOU FIND YOUR PEOPLE?

It's really hard. It was kind of by chance through mutual friends, to be honest. But I think being outside is very important. Unfortunately, being at a random event and just accidentally getting drunk with the right people is the reason that they think of you when a piece of paper slides across their desk the next morning.



I say that as someone who actually isn't outside very often, but being among community is a huge thing. Knowing what's going on, showing up to events, and seeing who are kind of the pillars of the community. Most of those websites where it's like 'Find Your Team'; that's never how it happens. There are things like BIGSOUND where I guess you can go and find your team and they're obviously amazing opportunities as well, but yeah, it's a people's game. You just know when you meet them, I guess.

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WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE R&B SCENE IN SYDNEY?



Incredibly fruitful. I think it's been brewing for a long time. It's having an underground moment before it has its moment. There are so many people in Sydney making amazing music and gigging a lot as well. It feels like this thing where if you're in the scene then you know how fucking busy it is and how much is going on. It's not mainstream yet but you see all these brands in Sydney come and find R&B or hip-hop artists to say like, "Can you please just let everyone know that we're cool?". There's a reason that brands are going out west or coming to R&B scenes to find their ambassadors. It's kind of at the centre of culture.

FINAL ADVICE FOR YOUNG CREATIVES?

I just think it's the time to send it. Take that leap of faith. I always viewed my 20s as low risk, high reward. My plan when I turned 20 was to throw shit at the wall until I was 30 and then see where we were when we got to 30. If I didn't want to be an artist anymore at 29, I could throw it all away and just start again, and get really into gardening or landscaping or something. I feel full liberty to make my life look however it wants and change it whenever the fuck I want. At any point in your life. It's the same until you have a certain amount of responsibilities, I guess.



If you don't start music until later in life, it's not like you're years behind. It's like no, you just weren't ready to express yourself yet.

Everyone's exactly where they're supposed to be, and everyone's exactly on time.

Obviously some people have safety nets in their parents and people are in different positions. But I think putting all the chips on yourself is the most exhilarating thing you can do. That commitment to self and commitment to the unknown is so scary. I don't think you can make that decision [to be an artist] and not have the most whimsical adventure in the process.





SOULSTAR

BOY SODA



Mantra

This album is proof I existed.
It's proof of progress within my language of expression.
There are no rules

