

In Proximity
PinkPantheress
Season 3 Episode 32
Final Transcript

PinkPantheress: Before music, I was a film head. So like, editing for me was like perfect. So I was like, I want to be a film editor. But my brain just wasn't, it wasn't meshing to it very well. So I was like, I'm going to figure something else out.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

PinkPantheress: And that was music. It's easy for people to look at me and assume that maybe the music wouldn't be this well thought out because they have an image of what a producer looks like already and it just doesn't look like me potentially. Do you have a favorite movie?

Paola Mardo: Ooh. I was supposed to ask you this!

[0:26 - "In Proximity Theme" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: You're watching and listening to In Proximity. I'm Paola Mardo and today I'm talking to Pink Pantheress. Pink is a multi-platinum recording artist, songwriter and producer. Stateside featuring Zara Larsson recently became her first number one on the Billboard Global 200. The two-time Grammy nominee also received the Brit Award for producer of the year, the youngest person and first woman to do so. But before she got her start in the music world, Pink Pantheress was a film student in London, watching Alfred Hitchcock movies and editing films and videos, maybe some K-pop fan edits. But she's been making music and producing songs since high school. In 2021, she started releasing music anonymously on TikTok. Her drum and bass beats, soft melodic vocal, early 2000s references and savvy use of social media made her music go viral and catapulted her into stardom.

PinkPantheress has had an incredible year already with new music.

[CLIP: PinkPantheress - Stateside + Zara Larsson (Official Video)]

Paola Mardo: Her Coachella debut.

[CLIP: PINKPANTHERESS PERFORMING STARS LIVE AT COACHELLA 2026]

Paola Mardo: A world tour, and an incredible moment when figure skater Alyssa Liu performed to Stateside.

[CLIP: OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST ALYSA LIU PERFORMING AT EXHIBITION GALA TO STATESIDE + ZARA LARSSON BY PINKPANTHERESS 2026]

Paola Mardo: I got to speak to Pink about her work and process and specifically what a music producer does. A lot of folks who listen to this podcast are filmmakers and music producing is so

different from producing films or podcasts, but she and I both got to nerd out on editing in GarageBand and Pro Tools and Logic. She also shares her love of film, advice for artists starting out today, how and why she got her iconic name and how she landed on the Black Panther: Wakanda Forever soundtrack, which is how I heard of her actually.

[02:12 - 'Anya Mmiri' (From "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever - Music From and Inspired By"/Visualizer) by CKay ft. PinkPantheress]

Paola Mardo: Shoutout composer Ludwig Göransson and director and co-writer, Ryan Coogler. To me, PinkPantheress is a musical mad genius, a true Gen Z artist and multi-hyphenate. Her music goes hard, but stays proudly feminine. We have a lot of Pink fans at Prox and folks have been raving about her as an artist who truly created her own sound on her own terms and isn't afraid of challenging the norms of what a singer and music producer can look like, sound like, and be. Here's PinkPantheress.

[02:55 - "KN 9 to 5" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: Well, welcome to In Proximity PinkPantheress.

PinkPantheress: Thank you.

Paola Mardo: Very excited to have you here. And I know we're recording this right before you go on tour. You recently earned your first number one on the Billboard 200 with Stateside featuring Zara Larsson.

PinkPantheress: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: How does that feel?

PinkPantheress: Yeah, it feels great. Yeah. Yeah, it feels really good.

Paola Mardo: Does it feel kind of abstract when people tell you or like-

PinkPantheress: Yeah, definitely. It feels abstract only because yeah, it's number one, but my body for some reason hasn't processed it yet. So I'll hear someone say it and I'm like, oh. But I know that in due time I'll be like, damn, that's so crazy how big that song got. So crazy. Oh my goodness, this is insane. It just takes me a little sec to process all of that kind of stuff. But yeah, I'm very happy about the success.

Paola Mardo: It's such a fun song and it's so catchy.

PinkPantheress: Thank you.

Paola Mardo: Actually, when your name's come up as a guest idea for this show multiple times, I think our team has been most excited for you to come here, just so you know.

PinkPantheress: Wow, thank you.

Paola Mardo: They're not often that excited by that. So I'm kidding. But no, we're excited to hear it. And I want to say it's funny, I know you've talked about sort of, I don't know if struggling is the right word, but sort of trying to find your place between being niche and mainstream.

PinkPantheress: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: Where do you see yourself right now?

PinkPantheress: Honestly, I definitely don't think I'm a niche anymore, but I do still think that I sit in music culturally in quite a specific place, which doesn't really penetrate either. It doesn't penetrate the mainstream in full force.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

PinkPantheress: So it's kind of an in between.

Paola Mardo: But your song was at the Olympics.

PinkPantheress: It was at the Olympics.

[CLIP: OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST ALYSA LIU PERFORMING AT EXHIBITION GALA TO STATESIDE + ZARA LARSSON BY PINKPANTHERESS 2026]

Paola Mardo: Alyssa Liu danced to it. I know. It was so fun.

PinkPantheress: Yes.

Paola Mardo: Did you know she was going to do that?

PinkPantheress: I knew that she was a really big fan pre-Olympics because somebody told me and I was like, wow, that's so fabulous. And I was like, "This is super fun," but I didn't think that it was going to mean that she would use a song, put it that way. And so yeah, I found out and I was like, this is extreme for me. I mean, obviously I'm sure she's just a fan of the song, but I think it's really nice. She really, in every interview I've seen her in, she always brings up her favorite music and I'm always listed and I'm just like, "Wow, she's mentioned my name three times in interviews." I met her the other day. She's so sweet. And what's so funny when we met, it wasn't even like a, "Oh my God, hey." I think it was that I turned to her and I was like, I had this big hat that I was wearing to the party and I was like, "I really want to get rid of this hat. Should I throw it in the bush over there?" And she was like, "Yeah, I think that you could do that." It was such a casual conversation. Like we'd known each other for ages, but very sweet, very sweet girl.

Paola Mardo: I love that. That's so cool. That's so cool. Can we talk a little bit about your name? I know you've talked about it on other interviews, but for our audience, because we are a film, TV, production company, Pink Pantheress has sort of filmed TV roots. How did it come about and why choose it as your artist's name?

PinkPantheress: So basically when I was making TikTok, I wanted it to just be Pantheress. It was taken. So I was like, "Well, what can I do?" And then I was just thinking of the Pink Panther. Obviously your mind would go there. So then I put Pink in front of it and it just

happened to be not taken. Don't know how or why, because what a great name it is. And I still to this day get people that are like, "Oh, I feel like she would be bigger if her name wasn't Pink Pantheress. It's because it's such a ridiculous name." I'm like, "You know what? It's so profound as a name." Almost I feel like some of my success is because of the name because people are just like, "What a interesting name I have to find out more."

Paola Mardo: I want to say one of the first times I heard your music and truly started listening to it was when you were in the Wakanda Forever soundtrack. And I literally was like, "Who's Pink Pantheress? What is that name?" So I think it is true.

[LAUGHTER]

[07:03 - "Good Times: by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: Let's talk about film. Yes. You have a film background. Can you talk about that a little bit?

PinkPantheress: Yeah, of course. So before music, I was a film head. So you can be both, I am both, but before I discovered music, because I like to say I discovered music, I was a big film buff. So basically my dad raised me on The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly. And Alfred Hitchcock, I would watch these as a kid, a lot of Laurel and Hardy and a lot of these older things, older films.

Paola Mardo: Classic.

PinkPantheress: I'm a huge Hitchcock fan. So yeah, I decided that I wanted to go into film. I was like, "Oh, what path in film?" And then I discovered editing and I used to be such a ... When I started to get more into music, I started to make edits online and stuff. And I discovered that editing was so fun. I was like, "This is so fun. You're in control of everything, basically." You can take things out, you can change the meaning of this piece of footage if you want, you can manipulate it. I was just such a big fan. I am a fan of, sounds so crazy, but I love controlling media, if that makes... Oh, that sounds insane!

Paola Mardo: No, I hear it though, because this connects to your music producer.

PinkPantheress: Yeah, exactly. I love manipulating source material, whatever it is. So basically editing for me was perfect. So I was like, "I want to be a film editor." So I went to study film in high school, secondary school, is what we call it, secondary school, and then went to uni for film, UAL LCC. And then, yeah, I literally went to one Zoom. It was COVID, so Zoom session, and then I was like, "Everyone in this class knows more than me. I'm out."

[LAUGHTER]

Paola Mardo: Oh, man. I hear that though. I mean, to me, I got into film early on, and I remember my high school had ... Well, I immigrated here from the Philippines at 15. I was born in LA, grew up in Malaysia, Philippines, and then moved to the Bay Area at 15. And I wanted to do film production. There was a film production class, I think, but it was all a bunch of dudes, and they all just seemed to know how to make skate videos or whatever. And I did not. I mean, I did the family home video camera. So was it sort of something similar? You just felt like you did more and new more?

PinkPantheress: You're right, there was a lot more. Well, there was a lot more boys, but also, so funny, the skate videos, that takes me back because- You know what I'm talking about. I do. Basically, for me, it was like, yeah, I was just looking in the class and basically I'm somebody ... I was explaining this to my friend who is a director in the UK, his name's Lauzza and we went to school together. He now is, in my opinion, a really big spearhead in this music video direction in the UK, which is very ... Yeah, everyone, if you want to check his stuff out, Lauzza. Basically, yeah. And I was talking to him yesterday and I was saying how if I can't understand every aspect of what I'm doing, like for example, with music, I studied music theory, I've played piano my whole life. I am a classical pianist, so I know how to play it.

I understand notation, I understand all of this stuff with music, and I listen to enough music. I like to think to get the full ... Obviously, I'm not going to be like, "I know everything about music, but I understand the general scope of what I am trying to do." When it came to film though, pretty much other than film theory and editing,

Everything sounded so mumbo jumbo. I could not understand. I would meet ... He's a director. I was talking to about directing and he was saying all these things, he had to go location scouting and find a DOP and I just have never wrapped my head around ... My brain just wasn't meshing to it very well. So I was like, "I'm going to figure something else out and that was music."

Paola Mardo: But music producing to me, I'm like, that's a whole other language. Exactly. I don't even ... I do edit audio because I'm a podcast producer, but what you do with beats and loops and I don't even know, you know what I mean? I can't understand that.

PinkPantheress: Yeah, exactly.

Paola Mardo: So you still learn something that was also, I think, quite technical.

PinkPantheress: Yeah, yeah, yeah. 100%. I mean, I was using ... That's the other thing actually, funnily enough, what do you use to edit audio?

Paola Mardo: ProTools.

PinkPantheress: Pro Tools.

Paola Mardo: But I started in Garage Band. I think you did too, right?

PinkPantheress: Of course, as we all did.

Paola Mardo: I was on my laptop. I was like, "I want to do this, but I don't have money for whatever. Let's just do GarageBand."

PinkPantheress: I love Pro Tools. I think it's one of those things where I'll watch an engineer use it and I'll be like, "This looks extremely cohesive as a program." I just love simplicity though and hence what I actually still use. I moved onto Logic though now. I love Logic. Yeah. That's my roots in my short lived, but actually ever going-

Paola Mardo: In progress.

PinkPantheress: In progress.

Paola Mardo: You'll circle back. You're circling back now.

PinkPantheress: And this is a good start to be in such a ... Yeah.

Paola Mardo: You're In Proximity.

PinkPantheress: I'm In Proximity.

Paola Mardo: There you go. There you go.

PinkPantheress: Do you have a favorite movie?

Paola Mardo: Ooh. I was supposed to ask you this.

PinkPantheress: I love asking people questions.

Paola Mardo: I do, but I hope it's ... I get a little self-conscious saying it because I feel like it's such a predictable answer, but I really love The Godfather because I watched it when I was 11 years old for some reason. My dad was watching it. I was watching it and yes, it's a gangster movie, but I really loved the family drama of it all. And it was just so beautiful.

PinkPantheress: Understood.

Paola Mardo: Violence aside.

PinkPantheress: Yeah, of course.

Paola Mardo: And I think at that point, my dad, he really exposed me to film. So I was watching everything from Disney to action films, Jackie Chan, Arnold Schwarzenegger, that kind of stuff. I think Godfather was the first sort of like, "Oh, this is a bit different. It's drama." And it kind of opened my eyes to film in a different way. For better or worse.

PinkPantheress: Good selection.

Paola Mardo: What is your favorite movie? You said Hitchcock or no?

PinkPantheress: Actually, funnily enough, okay, boom. I have a series of rotation of answers because it does change depending on my mood. Actually, funnily enough, I want to add Sinners to the list. I'm not even just saying that because I'm here, but I will say my favorite, favorite is Vertigo by Hitchcock. Exactly. Yeah. Just because now we're speaking about him and I'm like, wait, yeah, I have to ... Or I love Fantastic Mr. Fox by Wes Anderson.

[LAUGHTER]

Paola Mardo: Oh, really? I love this range. This is Range.

PinkPantheress: That film is so, so good.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

PinkPantheress: Incredible movie.

Paola Mardo: I love that. So you said Sinners is your current favorite or is there another-

PinkPantheress: New favorite. In 10 years, if you asked me the same question, I'd say Sinners.

Paola Mardo: Okay.

PinkPantheress: I just needed to let it age for a little bit.

Paola Mardo: Yeah, I hear that. We'll have you back in 10 years.

PinkPantheress: Yeah, please.

Paola Mardo: Well, I want to ask you about another Proximity, In Proximity project. Earlier I said I really learned about your music through Wakanda Forever.

PinkPantheress: Oh yeah.

Paola Mardo: You did a song with-

PinkPantheress: CKay.

Paola Mardo: CKay and worked with Ludwig Göransson as well, composer of the film and producer of the soundtrack. Can you talk about how that collaboration went down because it was so cool?

PinkPantheress: With Ludwig or with CKay?

Paola Mardo: Both.

PinkPantheress: So yeah, I got called to into a studio at Abbey Road in London and they asked ... Yeah, literally I went in. I wasn't even sure if I knew what it was for, but they were like, "We have this song. Do you want to hear it?" I was like, "Yeah, let's go." Showed me the song and I was like, I love-

Paola Mardo: And who's this? CKay or...

PinkPantheress: CKay. So CKay is an Afrobeats artist and he made Love, and I don't want to pronounce this wrong, but I'm going to Nwantiti, which is when I goes ... Anyway, and so I love his singing voice and I was so down to do it and Ludwig killed me. I think I'm sure you've met him. I love how dry he is, just his humor, because obviously, where is he from? Is he Swedish?

Paola Mardo: Swedish.

PinkPantheress: Swedish. Obviously, land of the musicians makes sense because he's a genius. But I literally was just like, he understands, we understood each other's humor very well and yeah, I got on with him. So I genuinely thought he was hilarious, a key, if you will.

Paola Mardo: Yes, yes. I can see that. I can see that. I can see that dry wit and humor.

PinkPantheress: Very dry. Wit.

Paola Mardo: Where it's kind of like, wait, was that? That was a joke. Yes.

PinkPantheress: Yes, I know! It's amazing.

[LAUGHTER]

[15:25 - "In Proximity '90s" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: But can we talk a little bit about your origin story?

PinkPantheress: Of course.

Paola Mardo: Because you famously came up on social media on TikTok, but you're making music before that, and when you went on TikTok, you were anonymous for a bit before blowing up and doing all the things. But can I just ask how you even developed your musical taste and style? Because it's quite unique and it's very special.

PinkPantheress: Yeah, so I'm obviously from the UK and I used to be an emo fan, used to be a really big K-pop fan. And when I'm a fan of something, I like to study it. So when I was a big emo fan, it wasn't just one band, I was a fan. I got into everyone at once. And so I would be obsessed with ... I'd watch all their tour footage, but I'd also watch their BTS footage and how they made the songs. Same with every genre I got into. So basically what it ended up doing, I think I took up way too much of my brain space with all this knowledge that I didn't know what to do with. I was like, "Well, I know all this stuff. What do I do?" Then I was like, "Okay, well maybe I should put it into my music and see what happens." And I've honestly, I'm very open about the fact that I was never like ... I used to produce only, and we used to make music with my friend who could sing really well.

And so I produced for her and she'd be the voice and I was like, "Oh, this is fun. This is great." Then at some point I was like, "I want to sing." But honestly, I'm not the best singer. So I was like, "Okay, I'm just going to have to make it work and see what happens." Because I love writing. So I was like, "I want to just see what happens if I try and sing." I tried to sing and then it just naturally, all of these genres kind of ended up blending together, a lot of dance and I'm a big dance fan as well. I love garage and drum and bass and I've always loved it. And if you're from the UK, you're just kind of born and raised with it. It's not really a genre that's like out there. It's actually more of a norm over there.

So I was releasing music without necessarily even thinking too much like, "Oh, this is really different for everybody." I was definitely looking online to see like, "Oh, what do I think people are going to want to hear?" You did an

Paola Mardo: You did audience study, audience survey.

PinkPantheress: Kind of audience-

Paola Mardo: Market research.

PinkPantheress: I did a bit of market research. Basically, I knew that I wanted to make dance and I wanted to make drum and bass for sure, specifically drum and bass and jungle. I'm a big fan of those genres and to anyone watching those basically their genres which are like contained ... If you listen to the PowerPuff Girls theme tune and it's those heavy breaks.

[CLIP: The Powerpuff Girls Theme Song, Cartoon Network 1998]

Paola Mardo: Powerpuff Girls.

PinkPantheress: And that's the main element of drum and base. Well, drum and-

Paola Mardo: That's why that's your icon?

PinkPantheress: What is? Oh, is it? No, it's not actually ... I don't know why that's my icon.

Paola Mardo: Isn't that funny?

PinkPantheress: But you have the same hair as ... I don't know why, but your hair reminds me of...

Paola Mardo: Buttercup? Why? Thank you. I'm the oldest, so I always consider myself a Blossom.

[LAUGHTER]

PinkPantheress: Of three?

Paola Mardo: Yes.

PinkPantheress: Oh, that's so cute. Thank you.

Paola Mardo: Yes. But I'll take the Buttercup.

PinkPantheress: It's so cute. So yeah, so market research. I just do kind of do market research and there's like, oh, let me have a go at posting and see what people think. And people were really receptive to the genre that I was making. I was like, "Well, I'm going to keep leaning into this because ..." Why not? I love it. And people like it. So yeah.

[18:33 - "Good Times: by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: I want to play actually one of your TikToks. Oh. We're going to cut to TikTok right now. Don't worry. It's not going to be embarrassing, I think. No.

[Playing PinkPantheress Tik Tok Clip]

PinkPantheress: Everyone's being so cute about my production, so I'm going to show you how I made my song tonight off of. The first thing I start off with is figuring out the chords like this. As you can see, I put them in manually like that. Okay, there's the bass. So I'll compare what I just recorded to the final version of the track. So this piano from earlier, I just pitched it up.

Paola Mardo: This is Logic?

PinkPantheress: Yeah.

[PinkPantheress Tik Tok Clip]

PinkPantheress: Ended up sounding like this. Just changed the synth and then the bass. I ended up changing it to this instead. And then it ended up sounding like this. Okay. I'm bad at drums, so I got my co-producer Count Baldor. He's amazing. And this is how we ended up with Tonight.

PinkPantheress: Shoutout to any producer watching this. I used Logic. I used to use GarageBand, but we upgraded. Lots of love.

[Clip Ends]

Paola Mardo: Yeah. Love that. That was great.

PinkPantheress: No, yeah.

Paola Mardo: Thank you. Can you talk a little bit about, first of all, music producer because in film and TV and even podcasting, producing means so many different things.

PinkPantheress: Of course.

Paola Mardo: What does a music producer do?

PinkPantheress: So a music producer essentially is the creator, the person that creates the beat or the background music or arranges the song for you. Basically anything that involves the arrangement and development of a track.

Paola Mardo: So you showed a little bit of your process on TikTok. Can you share, I don't know, because I've seen people want to know more about how you do this.

PinkPantheress: Oh yeah, of course.

Paola Mardo: What are things you would want to maybe advice or just like technique or things that you like to have when you make a song?

PinkPantheress: Yeah. When I first started, I had a lot of songs that I really wanted to sample or again, manipulate, speed up, slow it down. That is a form of production. It's sampling, but it's quite low in terms for what I was doing. I was being quite low lift with it. So I would take a track, I would find a track and I would basically take it and then speed it up, slow it down, and then I'd add things to an already existing bit of audio and I would use Logic or actually I would use GarageBand for that. So I would just rip the audio and then cut it up and then add all this stuff to it. And I would add drum loops or I would ... Yeah. And this was what it was at the beginning. As time went on, I started to gain a bit more confidence in what I could do.

And I also started to collaborate with other people. So some songs that I have are, I've always worked with Oscar Scheller, Mura Masa. These are producers from the UK. So they have a strong understanding of what my sound is. Some of my songs are songs produced by these producers, which I would then listen to and take. And then I would add my own production on top or I would manipulate the audio again and then write over that. And then some songs are the reverse where I'd make basically the whole beat and then I'd get a producer to come in and kind of like add things they think they hear. And then some songs are just me. So it's like a mix of the three. Mura Masa made my biggest song. So he produced Boys a Liar. He produced Just For Me. Oscar Scheller did Stateside and Stateside, the Stateside remix, sorry, he made the remix.

The Dare and me made the original. So it's a really long ... I could go on for ages about it. But yeah, so it's really ... The thing about me is like, I have a set few producers that I work with. I only work with about three in rotation. I don't really stray outside of my three. Some people only work with one producer. Some artists I know only work with one, and then some artists work with everyone, like just different songs have different producers. And I think all methods work.

I think when I work with a producer that I think is really talented, I'm working with them because they are inherently talented people, but I also feel like I vet them. So I will ... They come to learn who I am. So they come to know what I like, what I don't like, and therefore the process becomes easier between us. Now I know I can go to someone like a Count Baldor and he will just know what to make me or I'll ask him, or I'll play this and then he will know where to take it next. And so yeah, it's an interesting process. But yeah, we work all very quickly. I don't spend that long.

Paola Mardo: But you're not making a song in a day, I presume. Not anymore.

PinkPantheress: Yeah. In a day for sure. Yeah. Yeah. In a day, for sure.

Paola Mardo: Wow.

PinkPantheress: Yeah. I don't know. It really varies. It varies on how much I like the song and it varies on who I have with me that day. If I'm working by myself though, yeah, it will take a day, less than a few hours.

[LAUGHTER]

Paola Mardo: That's incredible. No, that's awesome. And then you can get TikTok video at the end showing the process.

PinkPantheress: I need to do more.

Paola Mardo: The BTS? Yeah, you should.

PinkPantheress: Have you ever tried a music production?

Paola Mardo: Me. Great question. You know, I feel like when I was getting into GarageBand and even more so Pro Tools, I tried, because I do compose my podcast. So I would do narrative podcasts and it's kind of like composing because you put music underneath. Yes, of course. It's

very, very simple. So I would say it's like the V1 version of music producing, but I don't know how to do loops and beats and things like that, which I would love to learn, honestly.

PinkPantheress: I feel like it translates pretty well.

Paola Mardo: Yeah. I hope so.

PinkPantheress: Yeah, yeah.

Paola Mardo: I think it's fun. I like ... Because I could totally ... What you were saying about wanting to manipulate media, I think that's why I fell in love with the craft too. And podcasting is so early. It's more of a spoken medium than you put music and things underneath. Now it's all talk shows as well, but like cutting things up, creating new things out of it, making new meaning by just adding a song or a sound that I find really fun. But no, I have mad respect for what you do. I mean, can I also ask, because for me, when I started podcasting, and this wasn't even, this is like 10 years ago. It's not even that like old of a medium, it's still so new. But I would do it in my closet, just sort of speaking into a microphone or like interviewing someone on a dinner table and then editing at home. Working now, I have like a production team.

PinkPantheress: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: I have my crew, you have your producers, I have my own production crew. And I think making that jump from working by myself to a team, it did take time to learn how to do that. What was it like for you as someone who likes to be in control of the media?

PinkPantheress: Yeah, for sure. Well, my first project was half the songs were done just by me. By myself in my room, same as you. I had the tiny microphone, computer, just like wrote them all, produced them all, half of them. And then the other half were made by like a few producers. I'll try and name all of them. I'm scared I'm going to miss some names, but oh my goodness, hope no one's offended. So it was my school friend Phil, who's a producer, and another friend from our hometown called Kairos. They made one of the songs. Then we had a man called Zach Nahome who made one of the songs. Then we had Oscar Scheller was the first producer I ever worked with. And then we have Jkarri and Izko who made a song on there too. And these are all producers and they're great and talented. So please, if anyone hears a name they recognize or want to look into it more.

Paola Mardo: Shoutout.

PinkPantheress: Yeah, shout out. And also what's really fun I find nowadays is looking at Spotify credits. It's so fun. I'm like, who did program this actually? Anyway-

Paola Mardo: We put credits on our podcast as well. Which is important.

PinkPantheress: Which is great. Very important.

Paola Mardo: So making that jump from working by yourself to-

PinkPantheress: And Mura Masa on that project too. Making that jump. Yeah. So the first session I did with Oscar Scheller, I remember my manager at the time was like, "Oh, I want to set you up to do a session." I was like, "What is a session? I did all this myself. You want me to

do a session now?" I was not offended, but I was like, "I don't want to break this cycle that I'm in of making music my way." And I was all worried and I'm going to hate it. I didn't know what a session was. I just had no idea. So I was like, "Okay, I'll do it. "

Paola Mardo: What is a session?

PinkPantheress: So a session typically, typically, typically, unless you're a producer artist or a artist that is very involved in the production end of things, if you're just a vocalist or something or like a performer artist, you would just make the songs with a producer. Like that's how it usually works. You're a really talented singer, but maybe you don't know how to make music yourself. So you are a talented vocalist who goes and meets up with a producer that's really good at playing keys or something. So that's how it typically works. I obviously am the opposite. So I'm a producer first, and then vocalist last, like second, whatever.

So for me, it was like, well, what is this for? So I went into the session, met him. He's the nicest person ever. He's a very warm ... Everyone loves Oscar because he's very just warm and kind. So already I was like, "Oh, okay, this is chill. This is nice." And then we ended up making a Noticed I Cried or I Must Apologize, I forget which one was first, but they're both my favorite songs in my top five of my favorite songs. And I was like, wow, he can do things that I want to do. And so I'm watching them work. So I was kind of picking up on what they did. They were using MIDI's. I'd never used a MIDI controller in my life. So a MIDI controller is like a mini piano, which you can input notes in.

I before then was just using my keyboard on my laptop and I thought that was the only way to do it. And then I watched them do it and I was like, "Oh, I can just buy a keyboard and do it myself.

Paola Mardo: Amazing.

PinkPantheress: So yeah, I was just watching and learning, watching and learning and yeah, it was incredible. But yeah, it was very hard for me to like get ... I was like, I just wanted to do everything myself. But after I collaborated for the first time with Oscar, I was like, "Yeah, this has to be the norm." There's a reason it makes your life easier and also it's like he's giving me ... I wouldn't have these songs without these people.

Paola Mardo: That's so cool. Can we talk a little bit about your music, performance, singing? Yeah. You just called yourself, did you say vocalist second? How did you, because you also have a really, I think, just really beautiful, special voice that paired with the beats, it just makes for a really just different sound. Is that something you practice a lot and rehearse or does it come natural or how did you find your voice?

[LAUGHTER]

PinkPantheress: So yeah, so I've always tried to sing in a British accent because somebody made it very aware to me when I was really young that every British artist sang with an American accent. So I made a very ... Which is kind of true. Sometimes I'm like, "Oh, is this person American?" And then it's like, "Oh, they're British." I'm like, "Oh wait, would they have such an American twang?" And I became so conscious of it with myself. I was like, "No, I can't sing with American. I just can't. I don't want people to ... I don't want that to be misconstrued." So I was like, "Let me sing with a British accent." And I think I was always such a big fan of They

are British artists. I love Lily Allen, always loved Lily Allen. And then Kate Nash, Image and Heap, and MIA. So all of these women basically have these very British sounding voices.

In my opinion, when I hear them, I'm like, this is so distinct, very British. So I was like, I'm going to make sure that's something that's a noticeable aspect of my voice because I have two singing voices. I can kind of belt in one, but when it comes to me as Pink Pantheress, as the artist Pink Pantheress, I do think, yeah, I found my voice because I kind of went for what came most natural to me. And for some, I don't know if it's because I like to think that Lily Allen was a big and Kate Nash were two artists that really informed how I sang. I've always loved how Lily sings. I love her and I love her voice. And I do think in many ways she sings in a way that I want to be able to sing in. I want to have these very clear cut melodies and I like how cool she sounds.

So yeah, I wanted to say that I kind of just studied all of these women and was like, "Okay, I'm going to accumulate my voice in this way." But also I think something that we all need to be very aware of is our weaknesses as well as our strengths. But I think we need to be aware of our weaknesses. And I think I'm glad that I didn't come out the gate trying to belt and know that I can't do it live. So I just tried to make sure I sang in a way that I knew I could do live basically.

Paola Mardo: Yeah. What came natural, but also you had these influences inspiring the process.

PinkPantheress: I was just lucky. And also I really like a soft vocal. I love a soft vocal. So there's an artist called The Streets in the UK. I love The Streets so much. The Streets is like my favorite. So Mike Skinner is like one of my favorite lyricists, but also like his voice. And I just love a soft, very like, not soft because his voice isn't soft, but I love a very like matter of fact voice. I don't know how else to describe it. Just like really ... Yeah. Anyway.

Paola Mardo: I can tell you've studied.

PinkPantheress: Yeah. I love ... Yeah.

Paola Mardo: The way you talk about it is very clear. You know. I'm going to have to Google. I love all the recs too, by the way. I'm going to have to look this up. There's a lot of them. We're going to put a playlist maybe at the bottom. Down here.

[32:05 - "In Proximity '90s" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: How long have you been making music?

PinkPantheress: Since I was 17.

Paola Mardo: Wow. 17.

PinkPantheress: So that was 2018.

Paola Mardo: Okay. Okay. Doing some math in my head. So that's about eight years?

PinkPantheress: Eight years.

Paola Mardo: Wow. Wow.

PinkPantheress: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: Eight years. I know you're like, it takes you a while to process awards, but I want to give you some flowers right now.

PinkPantheress: Thank you.

Paola Mardo: Two Grammy nominations. Brit Award for Producer of the Year. This year, and you are not only the youngest person to receive this award, you're the first and only woman.

PinkPantheress: I know.

Paola Mardo: Crazy. About time. You're also producer of the year at the 2024 Billboard Women in Music Awards.

PinkPantheress: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: Like I said earlier, you had the number one song right now on Billboard 200 with the state side. Your song was at the Olympics. I mean, I could go on. How does it feel to have reached this, I guess, level in your career after eight years of making music?

PinkPantheress: I just have to thank my lucky stars every day that I think there's two directions with me it could have gone. And I think because I started on TikTok, there was often early in my career, it definitely had the potential to go down this very shallow root of like, "Oh, well, she's a TikTok artist." And it did for a little sec go down that route. "She makes little ringtone music and like she ...What does she really bring to culture?"

And it was going down that route for like maybe a little second. And then I remember 2023 or something and Boy's a Liar had come out and I think people at that point then start and then my album Heaven Knows came out. I think people then ... There was a shift in narrative where people now were kind of understanding me more and what I was doing because I think a lot of my favorite artists are artists that I feel like I'm following the blueprint of. So I'm a big fan of Kalala. I'm a big fan of, as I said, MIA, who's also self-produced. I love Tanasha, I love Rochelle Jordan, I love electronic music, I love Santi Gold. Yeah, I love alternative music done by women. I love it. So especially Electropop, whatever. I love it all. So basically all that to say, I'm following that blueprint.

I'm following in the footsteps of these women in musically and my biggest influences. But I feel like for me, because I started online in this very like all of my songs going viral, I do feel like it's entered into this kind of mainstream now adjacent kind of field, which is an interesting place to be in because I feel like a lot of people haven't necessarily seen this blueprint kind of made ... I obviously have FK Twigs who is in a similar pocket of like electro alternative pop and obviously, you know, she's obviously doing amazing, like just sold out MSG, love that.

Paola Mardo: Wow.

PinkPantheress: So yeah, so I think now people are being more receptive to seeing this kind of representation in this field of music, but I don't necessarily think that it's been a ... Yeah, I don't

think the blueprint has necessarily been set in such a mainstream way because I just don't think that the space hasn't been really allowed for it. So I think now me going down this road, all I've ever wanted was to be respected as a musician, because it's so easy for some woman my age, so easy for people to be like, "Well, what does she really do? " And I've had people be like, "Well, what is she talented at because she can't sing, can't dance, what does she do? " So I think the recognition for being a producer, it's been crazy. And I'm like, "Wow, thank God it's gone down this route and not down this easily this mystery of, oh, she's just this girl doing this type of music. "Why should I even bother?"

Paola Mardo: Yeah, just a TikTok person or whatever it is.

PinkPantheress: It is. Yeah, it's a person. And I promise you, as soon as Boy's a Liar happened, there was that shift and I was so thankful. As soon as Heaven Knows came out, because all I've ever wanted to have been was following the footsteps of the women that encouraged me to make this kind of lane of music and be revered as like a taste maker. I've always wanted to be a taste maker, always, always, always. That's always been my dream is to be really well respected in music. So I'm really happy that it's entered that.

Paola Mardo: Why tastemaker? Why respect?

PinkPantheress: Because I just think it's easy. I think what people do so much, as we all do, is they see an image and they see maybe me dressed in this way or whoever, styled this way and they think I'm going to safely assume that she does music in this way or I'm going to safely assume that she ... I think people make assumptions based off how we all look, which is... you know...

Paola Mardo: Yeah.. Like you get labeled a certain way or stereotyped a certain way...

PinkPantheress: Labeled or ... A lot of people think that I make like, I don't know, like teeny bop bubblegum pop because I present as this almost like ... When I see people talk about my first project now, they're like, "Wow, she used to actually make quite like left field music." These are heavy breaks or these are quite like ... You know what I mean? So I think it's easy for people to look at me and assume that maybe the music wouldn't be this well thought out because they have an image of what a producer looks like already and it just doesn't look like me potentially. So I like when people then listen to my music and are like, "Oh wait, this is well informed." Or, "Oh wait, this has had a lot of thought put into it. " And you're

Paola Mardo: And you're like, "Duh, of course."

PinkPantheress: Yeah, because to me it's like-

Paola Mardo: It's what I've been doing this all time.

PinkPantheress: To me, it's like, well, I know I can do it and I have this thing in my head. I have no desire to convince people of anything. Even though I make tutorials, I'm only doing that to inform people that are interested, but I don't have this thing on my shoulder that's like, "I must prove everyone wrong."

So I like when people discover it for themselves and are surprised and they're like, "Oh, this is fun. This is great." Does it annoy me that people have assumptions which are then wrong?

Yeah. But at the end of the day, when I get things, when I get an award for my production or when I get this accolade that points to the fact that I did do a lot of this myself or it makes me happy because ... And also a lot of people don't know. As you said earlier, a lot of people don't think about production. They're like, "Well, what even is a producer in the first place?"

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

PinkPantheress: It's fine. It's nice. It's great. It's good for representation.

[38:34 - "Good Times: by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: To go back to TikTok though, because I think what you did really well on social media was find and connect with an audience. And I know that took a lot of work and a lot of studying. And I also know the algorithm has changed. The platform is different. You got to be on so many things now, not just one. Do you think that an artist can still break through today in the same way you did?

PinkPantheress: Yes, but not with as much ease. I always attribute a lot of my early success as definitely a lot of me and my ... I'm very persistent with success. If I want something, I'm like, I have to ... I'm like, if I want something or I want to achieve something and this road is closed, I will find a path which might take longer and windier, but I will get to my destination. And so I think it's a mix of this, my head and what I did and whatever the studying or whatever, but I also think a bit ... There is luck, definitely. There is luck. And I think I caught-

Paola Mardo: And talent.

PinkPantheress: Thank you. But I caught it early. When I started doing it was 2021 and literally TikTok music as a concept was only beginning. We had Say So going viral and we had Old Town Road.

Paola Mardo: That feels like a long time ago. 2021 only. Crazy.

PinkPantheress: And I remember thinking just like, okay, well, clearly this is going to start being a platform in which music is now going to be promoted because these songs are going crazy on this app. And honestly, I don't think before that there was a platform where ... I mean, actually that's a lie because we had ... Was that one before Musical.ly? We had Musical.ly and that

Paola Mardo: Oh yeah, before TikTok.

PinkPantheress: The seed being planted about how we can make music linear with video and like in this personal way, or we can choose the song, the song isn't provided for us. And so yeah, I just picked up on that early and I think I caught it before everyone picked up on it, basically.

Paola Mardo: Got you.

PinkPantheress: Because there were a few people doing it, but it wasn't like the thing to do. So yeah, I think it was the timing, the fact it was COVID and everyone was inside and on their phones. So that was a whirlwind in a bottle and I think that was kind of what did it. But nowadays, I think not only is it very saturated as a music promotion platform, but I think like Gen

Z, I keep saying our snouts are so, so sensitive. We can smell from a mile away when someone's trying to really make a Tik Tok song happen.

And I think I've been lucky that yes, for sure with some of my songs, I'm like, "Oh, let me do a cute little video or like, let me see what happens if I ... " But I've been lucky that all the songs that have gone viral of mine have kind of been because I posted the song once and like a fan or a fan page has been like, "Let me post this snippet of this song and then it'll go crazy on that back end rather than me being like, let me shove it down your throats." And then I also think everyone's making really good music. And I think now really excellent music has become a luxury.

Paola Mardo: The Bar is high.

PinkPantheress: The bar has gone so high for excellent musical really good music. So I think that the music quality has now gone up in general and so therefore it's harder to find excellent songs because it's harder to penetrate that news. And now every genre is also being done. So it's like so many reasons, but yes, I think it's super hard now. I think it's possible though. I think it's definitely possible, but I think now it takes more, way more.

Paola Mardo: Yeah, I think it's more like you can't do the things that have already been done because those are played out. Played out. But much like what you did, maybe try and see what ... It's hard to predict, but what is that next thing or like how to find your audience for this sort of messy place.

PinkPantheress: I was lucky that like in my first year or two years of my career, because again, like TikTok hadn't really, it was still like growing into this music kind of platform the first year or first year and a half, I was able to make mistakes, I was able to do things not the best way, but I also feel like people found it charming that they were watching a pop star develop in real time or an artist develop in real time. So I think I got given so much grace. People have always been so lovely to me and understanding of my process. A lot of people have actually been watching since I was at 500 followers.

Paola Mardo: Wow

PinkPantheress: Or whatever. So I think-

Paola Mardo: Real ones, real fans.

PinkPantheress: Real ones.

Paola Mardo: Day ones.

PinkPantheress: I've been really lucky, but it's very hard these days. Oh, I don't know what I would even do.

Paola Mardo: I guess if there are future pinks out there watching, listening, taking notes, they're like, "Okay, I can't do the same thing she did." What advice would you give them?

PinkPantheress: So when I ask a musician like, "What's your goal? What's your end goal here?" And they say, "Music is my passion, da, da, da." I'm like, okay, create whatever music

you want and if it sticks, it sticks and hopefully it works out because why would you ... I would never tell anyone that wants to make music that is birthed from their soul to do anything for engagement purposes if they ... Why would you tell someone to change their art? If I ask someone, they go, "I want to be famous," then I'm like, "Okay, you're going to have to study this then." If you want to be famous through music, then it is a business. It's a form of business and you have to study it like a business because when someone starts a business, they want to promote their product and your product is music.

So you need to promote it like a product. I think that if you want to be famous through music, which is some people's goals, again, there's a difference. Some people only want to make music and have fun with it and that's beautiful. Some people want both and some people want to just be famous through music.

So I think figure out what your desire is first. Go in with that. If you want to make music just to create music, then do it freely. Don't block all your family if you need to, but create music, post it online, just create freely. That's how it really should be if you want to just ... And then if you want to be famous through music, you must study. You must study and that's it. You have to study everything. Study the business model, study artists that you've seen do really successfully, have a five-year plan. So yeah, that would be my advice.

Paola Mardo: Get advice. Got to do the work. Do the work.

PinkPantheress: Do the work.

[45:03 - "Prox Recs Theme" by Ken Nana and Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: We're at our final segment.

PinkPantheress: Okay.

Paola Mardo: We call it Prox Recs.

PinkPantheress: Okay.

Paola Mardo: It's a segment where our guest recommends something for the audience. Usually it's something related to what you do. So maybe something that has inspired your practice.

PinkPantheress: Okay, cool.

Paola Mardo: Be a book. It could be a song, an artist, a movie, podcast, habit. I don't know. What would your prox rec be, Pink Pantheress?

PinkPantheress: Oh my Goodness. Okay. Before I say mine.

Paola Mardo: Yes. Do you want examples?

PinkPantheress: What is yours?

Paola Mardo: Mine. Gosh, this is my podcast. No, I'm kidding. What would I recommend? First of all, The Godfather. No. I also recommend Y Tu Mamá También. It's a film by Alfonso Cuarón,

also one of my favorites. Just a great independent film, international film. But I'm from the Philippines, so it was set in Mexico, but it reminded me a lot about where I came from in good and bad ways, a lot of social, cultural stuff. But yeah, maybe watch it without your parents for the young ones here. But yeah.

PinkPantheress: You know what movie, which a lot of people surprisingly haven't seen? I don't know why. Psycho by Alfred Hitchcock, because I'm somebody that obviously music and in tandem with movies are so important to me, music and movies. And I think if it comes to the perfect score, it is considered to be one of the best scores in the world. I just think it does it perfectly. Yeah. So that's my favorite. That's probably the one film that informed that for me very early

Paola Mardo: I love that. Yeah, that's a great word.

PinkPantheress: Psycho by Alfred Hitchcock.

Paola Mardo: Love that. Love that. Study up, audience.

PinkPantheress: You must. You must.

Paola Mardo: A lot of things to watch and listen to. Thank you Pink Pantheress for being on the show. This is great.

PinkPantheress: Thank you. Thank you.

[46:56 - In Proximity Theme Music by Ludwig Göransson]

[VOICEOVER]

Paola Mardo: In Proximity is a production of Proximity Media.

The show is hosted, directed and produced by Paola Mardo.

Executive producers are Ryan Coogler, Zinzi Coogler, and Sev Ohanian.

Theme song and additional music is by Ludwig Göransson.

Patrick Epino is our co-director and director of photography.

Ken Nana is our sound designer and mix engineer.

Our editors are Patrick Epino, Ken Nana, and Ben Caloza

The production team includes Celine Mendiola, Joy Woo, and Alexandria Santana.

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[VOICEOVER ENDS]