

A black and white studio portrait of a young man with dark hair slicked back, looking off-camera to his left. He is wearing a dark, textured turtleneck sweater. His right hand is raised, with fingers slightly curled, resting against his chest. The background is a solid, dark gray. The lighting is soft, highlighting the contours of his face and the texture of the sweater.

Turtleneck: Songzio

Photography by **Stephanie Yt**
Styling by **Kim Latieule**
Grooming by **Lillie Ruso** at ERA
Photography assistance by **Erica Fletcher**

ZAK ABEL

North London musician Zak Abel has a soulful voice far beyond his young years, something that is rare to find in today's music scene. At just 22, he has two sold out headline dates at Scala under his belt and a debut album set for release next month. We caught up with Zak to talk about his evolving sound, internal battles, and dream collaborations.

Words by Aimee Phillips

You've previously described your sound as 'modern soul' - what influenced your love of this music genre?

My mum! We would always listen to the great 70s soul artists on the radio on the way to school. I wasn't allowed change the radio station so my love of soul was brainwashed into me from a young age.

As your music career has grown, do you feel that your sound has evolved? Which direction are you hoping to take it in?

My sound has definitely evolved and I'm sure it will keep evolving. I'm sure that after this album I'll experiment in the studio and take my sound to another place.

Your debut album 'Only When We're Naked' is due to come out in April. What were the inspirations behind the tracks on the album?

There's 10 tracks on the album and I'd say they're all inspired by something completely different. One song called Unstable is about my own instability, and how I feel it affects those closest to me, for example. Another song, called Rock Bottom, is about feeling like I'd reached the end of my tether and I guess it was a cry for help.

What is your creative process for writing music?

Most of the time I start with the chords, then a melody. I find that when I'm singing a melody, the mood of the song presents itself and then it inspires a topic. At the same time, I'm always writing things down. So sometimes a song can come about by something I've read or a phrase I heard in a Japanese anime cartoon!

What scares and excites you the most about your growing popularity as a musician?

I get super nervous but also very excited before I go on stage. Playing live is one of my favourite things to do in the world. But as much as one of my goals is to travel the world and play to loads of people, the thought also scares the shit out of me.

What is your FAULT?

Something I'm working on right now is BALANCE. When I overdo it and I don't pace myself, I can't be the kind of person I want to be. That's why drinking plenty of water, getting good sleep and trying to have a positive relationship with myself and other people is super important to me.

Story continued on **FAULT** Online