How Sombr became music's next big thing

By GINA LORUSSO
Managing Editor

Not every artist needs a debut album to prove they're worthy of the spotlight. Shane Boose, more commonly known as his stage name, Sombr, became a household name rather quickly.

Before ever releasing a full-length project, Sombr has built a massive fanbase and is becoming one of the most promising new talents in the music industry. Most of his success comes from fragments of his songs featured on social media posts, straying from the traditional way of building a fanbase and establishing a reputation.

The music landscape is constantly evolving, and using social media to his advantage has made it easier for Sombr to connect with listeners in a more immediate and authentic way.

"He'd been honing his craft for years by the time he broke through the noise. But finding success was ultimately a matter of going to sleep anonymous, and waking up a viral sensation," Mood Magazine wrote in an Instagram post.

His songs "Back to Friends" and "Undressed" went viral on TikTok in early 2025, starting a ripple effect that carried over onto streaming platforms and catapulted him into mainstream music. "Back to Friends" marked his first Billboard Hot 100 hit, entering at No. 90.

These two tracks dig into the highs and lows of young love that Generation Z knows all too well, capturing the confusion, heartbreak and excitement of modern relationships. His lyrics are candid and don't feel forced, sparking relatable emotions and making listeners feel like he's telling their story.

The lyrics "I don't wanna get undressed/ For a new person all over again" from "Undressed" capture the emotional vulnerability of opening up to a new person after losing a previous lover. At the same time, they reflect the hesitancy associated with modern hookup culture, highlighting the tension between genuine connection and casual intimacy.

He pulls inspiration from alternative artists like Jeff Buckley, Phoebe Bridgers and The 1975, blending modern and indie pop to create his signature sound that's impossible to ignore.

"I was just writing and producing in my bedroom, and posted a snippet on TikTok one day that took off. And then everything changed," he said in an interview with Off the Record Press. "Now I live in LA and I write all my music and co-produce it with Tony Berg at Sound City Studios."

With growing recognition from record producers and fans, he transitioned from an underground name on TikTok to a rising star, and soon after, his music started appearing on Spotify's "New Music Friday" and "Viral Hits" playlists.

The recent release of his first album, "I Barely Know Her," on Aug. 22, cemented his place in the industry.

He wrote this album completely on his own, each track an inside look at his love life and the complexities of navigating rising stardom. There's a story between every line, showing his ability to storytell and share moments that feel deeply personal.

The first time I listened to the album in full, I was completely blown away. I had high hopes for this project as it was preceded by four catchy singles: "Back to Friends," "Undressed," "We Never Dated" and "12 to 12."

"12 to 12" is by far my favorite, making its way onto my TikTok "For You Page" multiple times a day and nestling itself in my head long after I've finished scrolling.



WIKIMEDIACOMMONS/FRANCE3C0

Singer-songwriter Sombr debuts first album "I Barely Know Her" on Aug. 22.

Another thing that sets Sombr's music apart from other artists is his unique vocal production. He frequently uses the telephone effect, which is a production style used to make vocals sound like they're coming through a phone. This distortion not only adds layers to his sound, but makes listeners feel like they're part of a one-on-one conversation.

When it comes to new albums, it's rare that I like every song, but with "I Barely Know Her," it was an effortless listen from start to finish.

Dare I say it's a perfect album?

Even if it's not, this sets a high bar for Sombr's future work, leaving listeners, especially me, excited to see what he does next.

She's no one's 'Best Friend'

Sabrina Carpenter releases all too familiar album

By GRACE CONNEELY-NOLAN
Arts & Life Editor

It's been almost a year since "Short n' Sweet," the album that elevated Sabrina Carpenter's status to one of the biggest pop stars in our generation, delivering her first No.1 single and Grammy. Now here we are again, being gifted more — as on Aug. 29, Carpenter dropped her newest album, "Man's Best Friend."

Her niche is clear: a sweet, bubbly blonde who can get under a man's skin while slyly undermining and asserting her dominance.

"Man's Best Friend" is packed with comedic and sexual lyricism, where Carpenter alternates between sarcastic quips and heavy-hearted sighs.

Following the release of the single "Manchild" in June, fans wondered about the direction of the record. Curiosity spiked once Carpenter unveiled a widely debated album cover, which shows her on her hands and knees with her hair being pulled from above, presumably by a man.

Listening to the album, the cover makes sense. It highlights Carpenter's inability to cut herself off from men, even when treated poorly — like a dog, emotions tugged back and forth.

It's all about the lack of control.

Say what you want, but she is timely. The 12-track, 38-minute project, created with Jack Antonoff, Amy Allen and John Ryan, brings out her lustful, quirky and sneakily heartfelt sound.

Like any album, it takes time to pick out favorites and rule out the duds, so it took me about three listens to narrow it down — and I admit, it's growing on me.

Right off the bat, the first new song, "Tears," which doubles as the album's second single, hooked me with its string section and siren-like vocals. But the chorus — "I get wet at the thought of you (Uh-huh)" and "Tears run down my thighs," — felt like a cheap switch-up.

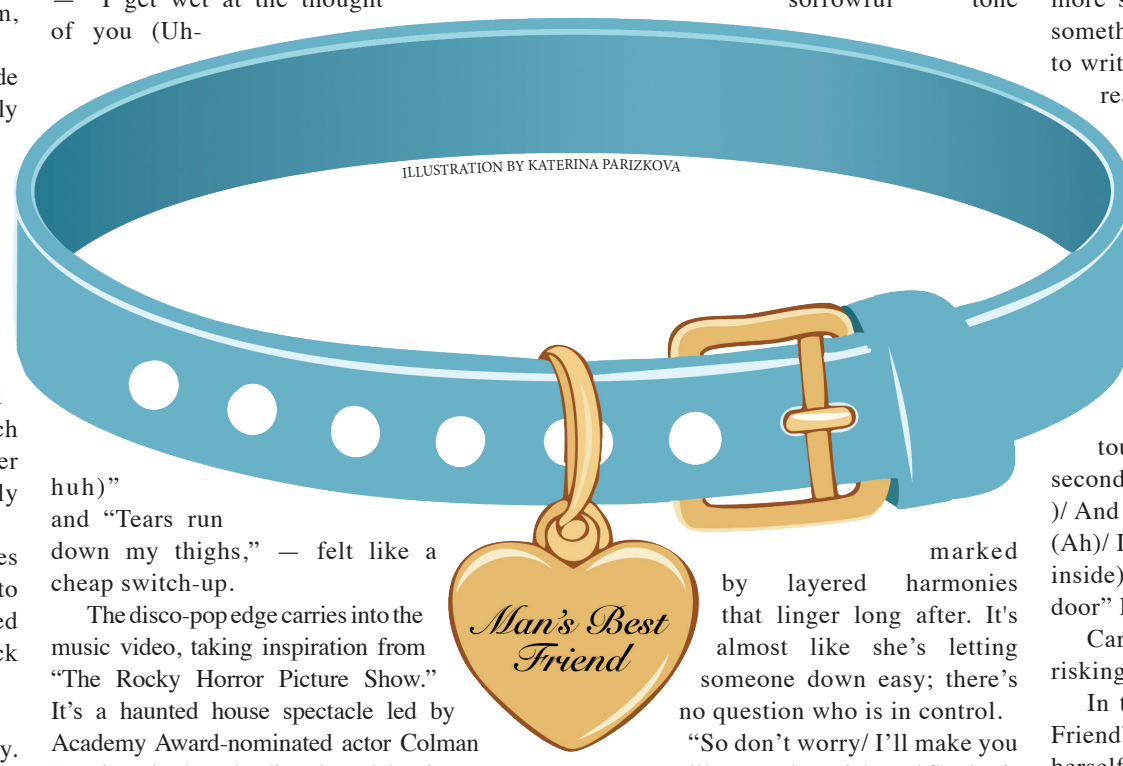


ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA

The disco-pop edge carries into the music video, taking inspiration from "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." It's a haunted house spectacle led by Academy Award-nominated actor Colman Domingo in drag, leading the celebration.

Sonically, the album leans into '70s and '80s disco. It draws on ABBA's "Voulez-Vous" with Carpenter's closing track, "Goodbye," channeling that era's dance-floor pull, making you want to move.

Production shines, but lyrically, Carpenter risks boxing herself in. She could have benefited from letting her sound evolve with more patience.

"Don't Worry I'll Make You Worry" is my personal favorite. A soulful yet upbeat, sorrowful tone marked by layered harmonies that linger long after. It's almost like she's letting someone down easy; there's no question who is in control.

"So don't worry/ I'll make you worry like no other girl can/ So don't worry/ Damn sure I'll never let you know where you stand" Carpenter swoons. Sweet poison — and it works.

In an interview with CBS Mornings, Carpenter prefaces that the album isn't for "pearl clutchers." It's not that serious; the whole point is to have fun and belt out the bold lyrics, resonating with any emotion you have a hard time admitting — let yourself feel it.

"When I started, you know, becoming more sexual as a person, I think it's just something that's a part of life. You want to write about it," Carpenter said. "I didn't realize it was as taboo of a topic until I started writing about it more freely."

Every track lands some sort of physical reference, guaranteed to leave listeners blushing or smirking.

Still, there's an over-reliance on sneaking in profane language. It's catchier when the innuendo is clever rather than explicit.

"House Tour" is a prime example: "Do you want the house tour?/ I could take you to the first, second, third floor/ (We can take it to the—)/ And I promise none of this is a metaphor (Ah)/ I just want you to come inside (Come inside)/ But never enter through the back door" Fun, sure, but heavy-handed.

Carpenter is pushing boundaries but risking predictability.

In today's pop landscape, "Man's Best Friend" proves she knows how to keep herself in the conversation, either by sparking a debate or delivering a chorus full of vulgar complexities. For now, that's enough to keep her on top — but it may take more evolution to keep her there.