

For ASTN, optimism and stormier emotions exist in perfect balance. The Los Angeles-based singer, songwriter, and producer makes genre-blurring songs built around light, textured R&B production, and relatable, repeatable hooks. But he also writes from a place of vulnerability, delving into his heavier thoughts. His new five-track EP, *You're Almost There*, pushes his introspective songwriting even further. On it, ASTN traces the contours of the growth and confidence that comes after pushing through hard times.

“People probably think I don’t have moments when I’m down,” the 20-year-old muses. “But I think they come across in my music.” A prime example is “Gradually,” the opening track on his Warner Records debut. It captures the desperation of a breakup, while other tracks like “Real” and “You’re Almost There” deal in bitterness and brutal reflection. However, they also offer soaring vocal runs and gleaming production, finding beauty in the darkness.

Over the course of *You're Almost There*, ASTN makes the terrifying decision to put his heart on the line again. On the closer, “Said It All,” he accepts that sometimes you have to take risks to experience life’s riches. That arc inspired the title; the idea that the world can sometimes feel scary, but the adversity doesn’t last forever. “Maybe it’s not today, maybe it’s not tomorrow, maybe it’s five years from now, but you’re almost there,” he says. “That’s the mindset you have to have.”

ASTN (born Austin Sanders) has been building to this moment since childhood. One of his earliest memories is getting a drum set for Christmas as a toddler. Early exposure to music proved invaluable as his family moved from Alabama to Arkansas to Florida, with brief stops in Mississippi and Georgia, before landing back in the Sunshine State. He grew up on country and rock music, but his older brother listened to hip-hop—leading him to new favorites like Bryson Tiller and Musiq Soulchild.

The budding hitmaker then developed his unique palette further by studying jazz in college. Inspired by a particularly harsh breakup, he began writing and singing as a sophomore. Drawing on the warmth of the R&B that he was learning to love, as well as the shimmer of poppier trap sounds, he started making projects like December 2017’s *Tell Your Friends*, which included the surprise hit ballad “Love No More.” He demonstrated even more depth as a songwriter on last June’s *IT’S NOT THAT SERIOUS* and showed his progress as a boundary-pushing producer on his “what if this song was rnb?” remix series on social media.

ASTN’s road to his new music is a testament to the power of perseverance. In early November 2021, he posted a TikTok remix of Billie Eilish’s “Happier Than Ever,” transforming the track into

a nostalgic slow jam. The clip resonated, clocking four million views in one night before exploding to 56.6 million in two months, leading to the demand for—and release of—a full-length cover.

Now, with *You're Almost There*, ASTN is ready to share what he has been carrying in his heart all along. “I just want that message to ring true,” he says. “Even if it’s not this relationship you’re in, if it’s not this battle you’re fighting now, you are almost there, whether ‘there’ is a million miles down the road or a couple feet ahead of you. I’m living proof of that.” With his new project and the support of Warner Music, his message is destined to reach more people than ever before.