

THE REGRETTES



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Preaching a loud, uncompromising approach to life and love, LA pop-rock band The Regrettes are hitting heavy with their second studio album *How Do You Love?* Frontwoman **Lydia Night** sits down with **Rosanna Dodds** to tell us more about making the record, empowering their fans through music and how all their hard work's paying off.

On a cool California morning in late 2016, four musicians gathered at a Los Angeles studio for the first of a string of intensive recording sessions. Just a few weeks later, in early 2017, they dropped their debut, 15-track studio album titled *Feel Your Feelings Fool!* – arriving as a loud and unapologetic force championing friendship, loving fearlessly and living freely.

And so goes the story of The Regrettes, a Riot grrrl-esque band comprised of frontwoman Lydia Night, Genessa Gariano, Brooke Dickson and Drew Thomsen. The four-piece have all of the zip and zeal of their idols – think Gwen Stefani, Karen O and, more recently, Matty Healy – reworking their punchy attitude into a new-gen punk-rock sound.

18-year-old Night's just got back from playing a festival in Japan when we speak in August, and she seems dizzy from a cocktail of jet lag and elation. "I always put my health first," she says on handling the hectic schedule they've taken on with their recent US tour. "Sometimes that sucks! Sometimes that means I can't talk because I'm taking care of my voice or I don't go out with everyone and I feel isolated. But it's really worth it for me, because touring is a job and you're there to work. I need to be able to perform at my best."

The Regrettes are meticulously invested in honing their craft and ensuring their art is the best that it can be. This requires order and discipline – traits that are, to a certain degree, fairly opposed to their genre. "I do a lot of research. I watch a lot of performers who I really respect and take notes," Night

adds. "It's funny. My experiences of going to shows are always so different from my friends because I'm thinking about what I like and what I dislike. I'm constantly taking in information." But above all, they're conscientious about the state of the world, invested in dismantling systems and confronting abusers of power in a rebellious, raucous way. Punk? I think so.

Two years on from the release of *Feel Your Feelings Fool!*, Night's now approaching her 19th birthday. "I feel like an adult," she muses, when I ask her if she's comfortable with the idea of becoming a fully-fledged grown-up. "But at the same time, it's hard to know if the activities I do can be considered 'adult'..." It's a fair point to make. She might have a career worthy of someone twice her age, but on every other count, she's just a normal teenager. What sets her apart is her ability to make music that takes its hooks and harmonies from pop, while maintaining the urgency and emotional intelligence of something much deeper. Night's trump card is openness: the fierce, courageous, unapologetic kind. She's an artist who's interested in making punk-rock accessible; wearing sunglasses indoors or refusing to smile in an interview simply isn't her style.

The band's latest album *How Do You Love?*, which dropped two weeks before we speak, celebrates exactly this, charting their growth over the past two years. "There's a big difference between being 16 and 18, or at least there was for me," Night says, highlighting impact it's had on her music. "This album is a sort of concept: all of the themes and

stories that are being told had to be experienced in that time."

The record details the rise and fall of a past relationship, one that Night describes as "fucked up and manipulative." Opening track "Are You in Love? (Intro)" sets the scene with a spoken word poem, asking: "Are you in love? Do you feel it in your stomach? Does it twist and turn and scream and burn and start to make you cry, but you like it?" From there, the band takes listeners on an emotion-packed journey from the frantic excitement of that feeling in "California Friends" and "I Dare You", to a frustrated questioning of the whole affair in closing track "How Do You Love?"

Sharing that narrative has been an empowering process for Night, and one that she wants to experience with her audience. "All relationships can be terrifying," she considers. "I want people to know that it's OK to struggle, or to not have the right answers. It's OK to heal and come back from it stronger."

How to love better – more completely, unconditionally and without compromise – is a question that has pervaded music since the beginning of time. But The Regrettes aren't exactly interested in the act of loving someone else, as her album's title might suggest. It's more about the effect that love has on the self, and the self-love to be found in the process.

In the context of an increasingly alienating, and quite frankly terrifying political landscape in America, the LA band have also penned defiant tracks undermining the individuals who represent everything they stand against. Last year they dropped "Poor Boy", an anti-Kava-

naugh anthem pledging allegiance with all those who've been sexually assaulted or manipulated by men in power. "Silence is the perfect sound / For the man that tried to hold you down," they warn. "Poor boy, what you gonna do? Us girls are coming for you!"

"I thought a lot about whether I was doing something wrong by not talking about politics enough," Night says, on using their platform to fight for the freedom and fairness they preach. "But people need empowerment to be able to use their voice and do all the things that need to be done right now." The same sentiment follows through on *How Do You Love?*: "My thoughts with this album were that if I could create a story that could empower people – especially young women – and give them self-confidence, then that would be political in itself."

Theirs is a pertinent message against pliancy, against sitting back and looking pretty. The Regrettes want us to question everything, fall in love with ourselves first, and get dirty and dance with them in the process. Which brings us back to touring. Having completed their string of US shows and international festivals this summer, the band will be back on tour in the UK in November to perform *How Do You Love?* in all its raucous glory. Everything, it seems, is falling into place. "It's really special to see," Night smiles wistfully, when I ask what it's like to witness fans connect with their music around the world. "It's like all of your hard work starts to pay off when people start caring more. It's been a long time coming, for sure."





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