

Toian's a storyteller who's already a fixture on the international scene, making a mark in the Caribbean, and United States. The Miami-based, Jamaica-born singer, songwriter, and producer meditates on heartbreak, dysfunction, and the process of moving forward, though her focus has always been on the emotions and narratives of her songs first. From singing tales of fatalistic romance to detailing her journey towards perseverance and positivity, Toian wants to speak to her listeners directly, especially young women who face the same challenges she has, to develop a more intimate relationship with them.

"I try to be as honest as I possibly can, and that's how I know it's a good record," she says, "it's soulful, it's pop with rhythm, it's afro, it's reggae, it's everything. It's spirit. I'll write a song and feel completely drained afterwards because I've let everything out."

Toian's upcoming EP, *I Hate You Don't Leave Me*, is a natural extension of her gift that goes even deeper than her previous work. Detailing a former relationship in unflinching honesty, she reckons with her experiences, and ultimately, her choices. During the relationship, Toian lived in Atlanta, but she moved away after the breakup, propelled by a journey towards greater self-love. "It was one of those situations where you feel like the person is the one, and then you wake up one day and realize they're not it," Toian says. "I knew the relationship wasn't right, but I didn't want to leave. I still wanted to make it work."

Produced by longtime friend and collaborator Supa Dups, *I Hate You Don't Leave Me* shows off Toian at her most vulnerable. By pulling inspiration from her private life, the rising R&B multi-hyphenate hopes to empower listeners to work through their experiences, too, and the resulting music sounds almost celebratory. Toian paints with a vast palette of sounds, from bold dancehall to mood-setting R&B to gleeful Afrobeat. She also looks back to comforting music from her youth, from Enya's ethereal landscapes, to buoyant reggae, to heartwarming gospel. It's joyful music, a sign that you can find light even at the end of a tough time.

Music has always been integral to Toian's life. She wanted to be a singer from the time she was a little kid in Jamaica, when her mother would encourage her to sing Whitney Houston for her friends. Later, she realized she had a unique skill. "I was at school, I think first grade, singing to my friend sitting beside me," she recalls. "When she tried to sing back, I realized not everybody could sing." From then on, everything revolved around music. Singing in her school choir and in karaoke bars, Toian would perform for anybody who would listen.

In high school, music fueled her rebellious phase—she'd sneak out to parties to be closer to the scene. One of these nights out ended in a tragedy that changed her life forever. On her way to a gathering, Toian was in a horrible car accident that took the life of her boyfriend. "At 17, I had to deal with losing my boyfriend, and I couldn't walk for maybe four months," she says. "I remember asking God every day why it happened. Why am I still here while he's gone? I woke up one morning and felt like I'd gotten the answer to that question: There is no answer. I had to accept what happened, and at that point, I started trying to get better."

Inspired by a close friend studying music business in Miami, Toian made plans to move to the States, giving her fresh momentum. After intense physical therapy, she walked through the airport at 17, months before doctors predicted she could. “Walking through those doors was literally like I just won the Olympics,” she says. While her stint in school was short-lived, lasting only a few months, moving to America brought her to the studio. After meeting a producer and attending sessions for the first time, she realized school was a “waste of time” for her. Immediately, Toian felt like she’d arrived where she was always meant to be.

She formally began her career in 2010, teaming up with Konshens on the celebratory “All Night Party.” But a big breakthrough came in 2014 when she collaborated with dancehall legend Vybz Kartel on “Ice Queen” and she got to hear her voice ring throughout Jamaica. In 2018, she ended up at a writing camp for Rihanna and it was there that she met Supa Dups. Now, as she continues to release textured, emotional, and vibrant solo music, her childhood dream has come to life. “I have wanted to be known worldwide since I was 5. I just wanted everybody to hear my voice,” she says. “As time progressed, I realized it’s actually possible.”

*I Hate You Don’t Leave Me* is a culmination of her journey so far, but it wasn’t made without its own struggles. Before the pandemic fully hit, Toian expected her EP to be finished—its final song, at least at the time, was recorded the day before Florida went into lockdown. But all the extra time to think gave her a new perspective. She moved back to Jamaica in early 2020 and felt connected again to the island’s fast-paced music scene, which lent a new dimension to the EP. She rethought things, and brought even more complexity to the colorful concoction of genres she was already planning to explore on the record.

The resulting sound is breezy and summery, a stark contrast to the reflective lyrics. The EP finds Toian baring her soul again, telling stories more personal than ever before. In a way, it’s what she feels like she owes herself—and the world—after going through what she has. She wants to connect, and with as many people as possible. “What keeps me going is knowing that I have a second chance at life,” Toian says. “I can’t just be here not living my dreams.”