Blending dystopian soundscapes with jumpy flows and ethereal melodies, Bktherula makes a new kind of rap psychedelia. Since breaking out with “Left Right” in 2019, she’s oscillated between raucous cloud rap and gentle R&B, fusing impressionistic songwriting with complex musicality to create affecting anthems that feel futuristic and universal. The 20-year-old has been rewarded with a growing legion of fans and a slot, in many critics’ estimations, as Atlanta’s next up. She’s planted more seeds with “Forever, Part 2 (Jezebel),” a celestial offering from *LVL 5, Part 1,* her kaleidoscopic new EP on Warner Records.

With naked transparency, ambient synths, diaphanous vocals, and cheeky metaphors, Bk uses “Forever, Part 2 (Jezebel)” to unspool a tale of romantic disappointment: *“I was givin’ my all to you, you cold, I give you my sweater / Took you to a ball or two, and baby, you fit in a slipper.”* But she’s about more than breakup songs. On “Tan,” she leans into her braggadocious instincts, unloading a barrage of free-associative flexes over a chaotic bassline. Jumping from delicate crooning to jagged rhythmic structures, *LVL 5* sees Bk go from reflecting on her impulses before surrendering to them, an immersive seesaw act that’s made her one of the most compelling new voices in hip-hop. Her new output is both a result of craftsmanship and lessons in living.

“I’m about to break through,” she declares confidently. A big reason for that self-assurance has to do with the music itself, which includes muted meditations and a collaboration with Rico Nasty. Another reason is her own personal evolution: “I just got wiser about certain things.”

Before the young Bk accumulated that wisdom, she was absorbing the sounds of acts like A Tribe Called Quest and Michael Jackson alongside her dad, a rapper who was in a group that opened for Tribe. “I was into music before I could even talk,” she remembers. That predisposition resulted in her becoming interested in dance, which meant she was soon well-versed in hip-hop, tap, and jazz. By the age of nine, Bk was recording her own music, with her mother using a tape recorder to capture the two of them singing. “It made me want to burst into tears, it was so pure,” she says of those first a cappella recordings.

Inspired by her own family and the music she grew up listening to, Bk eventually took her recording habits to the next level. At age 13, she uploaded her first songs to SoundCloud. At 16, she was putting her playfully swaggering raps to the test by performing at local shows in Atlanta’s rap underground. At around that same time, she unloaded “Faygo” and “Left Right,” two singles that promptly went viral, with the latter getting an even bigger surge just last year. “I’m on TikTok scrolling or I’m on my Instagram Reels and scrolling, and I was just like, ‘Oh nah, niggas are taking the time out they day and using this as a sound,’” she says.

As of today, “Left Right” has earned tens of millions of streams across multiple streaming platforms. It also helped her secure a deal with Warner Records. Now, Bk is looking to continue her level up with major international music festival performances and NYFW and London Fashion Week runway shows. American headline tour. She is also committed to embracing herself like never before. “I’ve always promoted self-love, but you can’t say that and then dip your toe in the water. “You gotta go all the way,” she says. “My leg’s gonna be in there the next couple years—my arm too.”

Battling doubts and the occasional spurt of negativity is a type of spiritual warfare that’s led Bk to increased self-acceptance, a journey that empowers herself and her fans. “I see how much my music affects other people in a good way,” she says. “I want to make the mantras in my songs to benefit the kids of today and tomorrow. I want my music to stick.”