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**CHART
BREAKER**
DISCOVERING NEW TALENT SINCE 1894[1]

BRYCE VINE

With breakout hit "Drew Barrymore," the Los Angeles native finally feels comfortable in his skin

By Taylor Weatherby

Photographed by Djeneba Aduayom

School of rock

After getting a guitar for his 13th birthday, Bryce Vine, now 30, taught himself how to use it by mimicking chords from Blink-182 and Third Eye Blind songs. Vine (born Bryce Ross-Johnson) always envisioned himself in a band — only not as a singer. After forming a punk group called Goodsell in high school, he became the band's frontman on account of his songwriting skills: "I [always thought] if you were going to make music, then you had to write it yourself."

Meeting his match

Vine attended Boston's esteemed Berklee College of Music on a scholarship but says, "I felt totally out of my league." Toying with everything from jazz to gospel in classes, he came to a conclusion: "I just had to find a niche and mold my own genre,

because I never fit into any one." While at school, Vine met producer Nolan Lambroza, now known as Sir Nolan — he's behind singles for Shawn Mendes and Selena Gomez — and started exploring what his voice could do over pop and rap beats.

Failed Project

At the request of his mother, Vine tried out for the Glee-scouting reality series *The Glee Project* during his second year at Berklee. He made it to the final 12 but immediately knew it wasn't the right path. "They wanted me to fit a character that I wasn't, [who's] a dick to everybody," he recalls. "I wasn't trying to be an actor on a reality show; I wanted to be a musician." Instead of becoming discouraged when he was the first of the 12 bootied off, he saw it as an opportunity: "Everyone's going to see me on national television," says Vine, who used it as inspiration to write more songs.

Saved by technology

Six years after leaving the show in 2011 and returning home to Los Angeles, Vine was in need of a hook for a love song he was working on. He scrolled through old audio recordings on his phone, finding an idea that Julia Michaels, who dated Lambroza in 2015, had given him to use. He adapted it for the sultry breakout "Drew Barrymore," independently released last November and now climbing the Billboard Hot 100. Suddenly, Vine had multiple labels vying for him, but the clear choice was Sire Records, thanks to label head Rani Hancock: "I loved the idea of signing to a female president. I knew that the sensitivity of my project was going to be handled a certain way." His debut album, *Carnival*, is already underway, with plans to release it in early 2019. ●

Vine photographed Sept. 4 at Optimist Studios in Los Angeles. Watch him talk about how he got his start in music and more at Billboard.com/videos.

