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## 10 Questions with ... Bailey Bryan

### BRIEF CAREER SYNOPSIS:

Bailey Bryan is the fresh-faced singer-songwriter signed to 300/WAR. You may know her for her fun, quirky single, "Own It," which spawned an equally interesting music video concept. Or, you may know her as one of only three artists across all genres to be named to the Grammy's Artist Of Tomorrow program. Or, perhaps you've seen her name pop up on all of the "next big thing" and "artists to watch" lists. But, what Bailey Bryan wants you to know most is just - her. Bryan sat down recently with All Access to discuss her point of view on Country music, her writing style, and where she draws courage and inspiration. Bryan is a force of nature spewing positivity at every turn, and she is ready to tell her story through her eyes, "So Far.

1. Bailey, thank you for taking the time for "10 Questions" today. You have just released your debut EP, "So Far," and you are currently promoting your debut single, "Own It," to radio. With the EP having just released last Friday, are you currently working toward a full-length album? How did you select songs for this EP project, and what made "Own It" the standout as a single?

I've been coming to Nashville to write songs since I was 15 years old, so we had accumulated a lot of songs by the time I was 15 when I signed my publishing deal. At 19, even though it doesn't feel like that much time, we had a lot of songs to choose from when it came to figuring out how we would do a body of work, and we decided to go with an EP. I'm not sure if it will be followed by a second EP or a full album. I think for a full album, we definitely have enough songs for it, but the way we pick songs for this EP is that I wanted to do the first five songs that I feel like really most accurately represent my kind of music and the lessons I learned that have made me who I am as far as artist and a person. These were the ones that really stood out in that way, because I'm still in the process of introducing myself to people. These are the songs I want people to hear first; these are the ones that I think are a good set up for everything I am going to release in the future. With "Own It," I wrote that, and for me you can listen to the beat or the melody, and it is light-hearted. It was the start of me learning to write about these kinds of lessons. It's the single, because it's a really good introduction to me. I always say it's the introduction and message I want to send. It's the tip of the iceberg of that idea that hardships and imperfections and some of the ugliest things we can go through in life, but they can create the most beautiful things in us as human beings. And I was like, "You know, I am actually really passionate about this. If I ever get the chance to speak to millions through my music, I want to say something that I am passionate about." That's kind of a common thread throughout the songs on the EP. It's all lessons and finding the good in the hard parts of life. Encouraging people to be honest about their own struggles and what they are going through. When people have things bottled inside of them that are hurting them, or if they do not come to terms with them, that's when you hurt other people. Whereas, if you do the opposite and are honest about it, then you're healing other people who are going through it. You don't have to know how to fix somebody else's problems, but some of my problems are the things that make me who I am, and so I don't

hate my problems. I'm just learning. That's the way I want to go about life, and hopefully encourage other people to go about life, too.

2. Who have you been working with on the project in the studio? And how did you whittle down four years of material to five songs for the EP?

We mostly paired things down. It's been a cool process, because I don't feel like it was too structured like, "You need to write 10 more ballads," or "You need an upbeat song, and make sure you write a song about this." It really was like, I'm going in, and I'm writing things that are true to me. If you do that, there is going to be enough of everything to make a body of work you like and the right songs just kind rose to the top. Even when we didn't know if it was going to be an EP or what would be the next single we were going to release, it was always just kind of like - that's a song, and we need to keep looking at that song. I think when you are writing from a really honest place, it's just always been my intention to tell my story and hope people relate to it. When you do it that way, it's just kind of an organic process. My songwriting is organic. In the studio, I am really fortunate that my work thus far has been produced by my publishers Dennis Matkowsky and Becki Devries. That's been a really awesome process for me, because they have been my team since I was 15. I signed with them before I had anybody else on my team whatsoever. Between the time I was 14 and 17, they were basically developing me and encouraging me. What they taught me as an artist was... it was never "Think about what people are going to think when you write this. Or make sure it sounds like this. Make sure it fits into this box." Before I signed with them, I had zero experience co-writing. Their advice to me with co-writing was, "You're going to go in, you're going to talk about what's true you. If you have an idea, say it. It doesn't matter if you are the youngest person in the room or the only girl in the room or the least experienced. Your ideas and your experiences are valid. You should write about them. Because that's what people are going to connect to the most." It's not about worrying about "is this relatable enough" or whatever, because if you're true to yourself, then other people will relate to that. Authenticity always connects. That's basically the basis of what they taught me, and now I get to go in and record these songs that I've either written with them or they encouraged me how me how to write. It's been a good process, because I've had my hand in every single one of these songs from the writing to the production. I have a vision in my head for every song that I write and how it sounds. I think all of it goes into the emotion and even the sound of the music. I want it to reflect who I am and the influences that I have that makes me my own artist. So, I've got to be in direct communication obviously with Dennis the whole time, because it's just as important to him that what I am doing is true to me. It's not his or anyone else's opinion. It's like, "What sounds like Bailey?" I've crafted that with them from the time I was 14, so it's definitely been a really unique, awesome process. I wouldn't want it any other way.

3. Starting out in the business at such a young age, did you ever feel pressured to write a certain way or take your music in a certain direction in order to find success?

I've been fortunate to have creativity and liberty as I have figured out my sound. I'm a 19-year-old with management and a record deal. I'm getting to go on radio tour and have this song out, and it's like - wow, you're so young and you get to enjoy all thing stuff that is happening. I had a three to four year period of time before I signed my record deal or had anyone else on my team besides my publishers where I was just writing and thinking about what I wanted to do as an artist. So, during that time, I had a lot of time to figure out what it means to be me as an artist and write from a really honest place. I was lucky to get to learn what it is that makes me who I am and what makes me unique as an artist. I am thankful for that, because the more people who know about you, the more opinions there are about "Well, you should be more like this, don't say that, because that's not Country." Or something like that. I know why I am here and why I'm a writer and why I am in Country music and that is because songwriting is so important to me. Aside from sonically, if I've gotten an negative feedback from Country it's that you can hear too much of a Pop influence of whatever. But, if you

listen to the lyrics - which is what I spend the most time pouring over, and as an artist, that's what Country music means to me - pay attention to the lyrics. Everyone says it, but it's telling a story. Country is the genre where you can most consistently find a story and something you can relate to in your heart as a human being. So, as I progress and more people know who I am, the people want to offer their opinions, which is important. I've learned to know who you are but to be able to take advice. In my core, I know who I am and why I am doing this, even if it's not exactly how someone else is doing it. So, having had that freedom before anyone knew who I was at all has helped me to find freedom even when people might be trying to tell me what to do. It just about discerning what's valuable information to take into consideration and make me better and figuring out what do I need to take with a grain of salt and remember who I am and not let it discourage me.

4. As not only a newer artist, but as a young woman, where does your sense of self and your self-confidence come from in your daily life and in your music?

It has come from a series of things in my life. I think it started with travelling to Nashville and finally starting to have experiences with things outside of my little town, my little kind of bubble that I lived in. My hometown is a beautiful place, and I am thankful that I got to grow up there, but there's so much outside of it that, and you don't learn about yourself until you just step outside of what you know. Another thing I really credit to getting me out of that bubble and the perspective that I have now and that I am developing just on life is that I had spine surgery when I was 16 years old. That's something I talk about a lot, because it really did shape who I am and get me to really start thinking about the message I want to send to people. I was 16 living in this little bubble of a town; my biggest concern was if my parent were going to let me go to the football game on Friday. So, I lived a very privileged, sheltered life and hadn't experienced a lot of real hardships. For me, going through this surgery - which is to correct Scoliosis, because my spine was shaped like an S, but now the top half of it is straight - I didn't realize that was going to make me a couple of inches taller, and it makes you lose a lot of weight. It makes you feel not like yourself for a minute. You don't really know who you are at 16; at 19, you're still figuring it out. Something I have learned recently is knowing exactly who you are, being able to sum it up, is kind of an illusion. But, you can know what is important to you - the things that you stand for - and at 16, you don't really know that. You don't really know how to be confident in yourself. So, then to go through a really big change in my life and something that took months of recovery, physically, and missing out on school and the football games and my friends was a big kind of wakeup call for me. It was kind of a realization that this nice little world I had will keep spinning whether or not I'm in it. It was a thing that caused me to have perspective and realize I need to think about what's important to me and what do I put my self-worth in. There is so much more outside the thing that you focus on as a 16 year old. There is nothing wrong with that, but it started me thinking about who I am as an artist and what do I really want to say to people if I'm given the opportunity to speak to hundreds or thousands or millions someday. That's what I've been working towards; that's what I wanted. It helped me realize that we all have insecurities, and everyone is trying to figure out who they are and fighting through different experiences - big or small - every single day. It helped me look up from my self-pity bubble that I was in for a second, thinking that no one understood. But wait, what if everyone is going through something? And everyone is. No one's life is perfect, and nobody is perfect, and not everyone else thinks that they are... no matter what's on social media. I was like, I am passionate about this! And, I wrote my first single, "Own It," on my first trip back to Nashville after the surgery. That was kind of the start me of having fun, accepting, and learning the things that make you who you are, even if they are not the most perfect or cookie cutter thing. Even if they are not what other people say is acceptable, or perfect, or ideal, or whatever.

5. With "Own It," you have created quite a buzz with the look and feel of your music video. Was that concept something you had in mind? How did the video come to life?

It was definitely a collaborative effort. I wish I could say I thought specifically to film it vertically from a phone - and everyone always tells me I should take credit for it, but I can't. That was a little six-person video production company in Peoria, Illinois that sent back the treatment and said, "Let's do a vertical video." So, we went to Peoria and filmed it, but the idea to include social media and have it have a homemade personalized feeling, I came up with that, because I wanted to think about the way to expand the message on it and also the fun feeling of it. And, also that shows that side of my personality. I am really passionate about using social media in a positive way, because I feel like it's such a big part of my generation, and I think it can be used in a really negative way. It can be used to tear people down and portray a life that's not real, or it can be used to encourage other people and to portray something that is real and honest. That's what I try to do on social media on a daily basis - aside from promoting my music, because I have to do that, too, obviously. I want to connect with people through it. Tying that hand-in-hand with "Own It," which sends a message of being real and accepting things that make you who you are. I wanted them to go hand-in-hand. Greenshoe Studio in Peoria, Illinois sent it back and was like, "Let's do that and make it vertical so people can watch it like SnapChat." It was completely genius. I am very happy with how it turned out.

6. Can you tell us about the experience you've had out on radio tour? What have you learned so far about the relationship between radio and record labels? What have you learned about yourself through the process?

Every radio station is different. I had a very long, crazy schedule, and you look at the radio tour schedule like, "how am I going to be able to do this? This is an intense schedule." I am new to all of these things except for songwriting. I have no idea how anyone does this. "Do other people do this? I don't know." Quite honestly, I was really nervous about radio tour, because I heard horror stories where you're going to be very tired. But, you're dealing with real human beings every day. Just like the artist might be having a bad day, the person at the radio station might be having a bad day, too. Some [other artists] would go in to a station and say, "Yeah, this was a hard one." And, then I go in, and they are the nicest person ever I've ever met. You just have to take it all in with a grain of salt. I've played in a couple of lobbies at stations, where you literally walk in with your guitar and they're like "Oh hey, Bailey. Good to meet you. Want to play a couple of songs?" I just walked in like, "Okay, yes. Yes, I will." Just things like that. It's just a wide range of surroundings and stuff. Sometimes it would be a very formal, like a conference room or performance room that is very fancy, and I'd be like, "Wow you have a sound system." Then other times, you're like playing in the corner of somebody's office. It was kind of cool. I grew up listening to the radio - and listening to Country radio - and you hear the interviews, and you hear the liners that people do, and you never think about the other side of it. You don't think there are actual other people putting so much work into this, and also these artists had to go to these stations and do this. I was nervous, because I didn't want to mess that up. I didn't know how I was going to have energy to do all of it. But, then I realized everywhere I go is different, and everywhere I go has different human beings. I was like, I am going to talk to this wall that is radio station. If you look at it like I am going to experience all of these different personalities and human beings and people who are bringing my music to so many other people, it's a really cool, unique experience. It's different than any other part of the job - or any job, really. It took me a minute to be like, "Okay I am going in here, and no one is going think I'm weird because I am talking about myself. That's what I am here to do." But, also to just be real; if you make connections for the purpose of connecting with another human being, not just the purpose of let's be friends so you can play my song, having that experience makes you a better artist, I feel like. I was tired by the end of it, for sure. But, it's unique, and it's something I'll never forget. Before that, I saw Washington and the Northwest and the West Coast: California, Oregon, and around there. And, I had seen Nashville. That was it. So, now people are like, "My cousin is visiting there from somewhere in Colorado or Arkansas," and I'm like "Oh, I've been there. I went there on radio tour! Do they know so-and-so at this radio station?" I'm starting to become a well-travelled person, and it's kind of nice.

7. So, you met a lot of people on your radio tour, but you can't get to every radio station in America. Your music feels like an eclectic blend of styles. How would you describe your music to someone who has not heard your work yet? And, how do you want to be known?

I like to introduce myself first as a songwriter. Obviously, you can tell I have a passion about that and like to talk about it. I learn a lot of things about myself after I write a song. I'll tell a story about something I learned about a song, and I'll be like "Oh yeah, I did learn that. Oh yeah, I am passionate about that." I don't think I could be or really would be the artist I am if I wasn't writing these songs. I love to sing and perform, but it would be really, really different... that's what I focus on as an artist. That's how I introduce myself. For me, I credit the place where I grew up as having an influence on how I write music and how it sounds, because I'm not shy. I have a wide range of influences. That's what makes me who I am as an artist, because I grew up in little town in Washington State called Sequim. It's little, and there's farms, and there's combine tractors on the way to school. The whole thing. So, I related to Country music. I fell in love with it right around the time I was starting to write songs, and I think that's why I place so much importance on songwriting. But, then I could drive two hours and be in Seattle where there is this amazing underground Hip-Hop scene and Alternative music: Macklemore, Biggie, Nirvana - the West Coast, really cool, different sounds that are different from Country. I had access to all of that geographically, and then streaming became really popular. Through that, I listened to every Spotify playlist that came up on my homepage and discovered all kinds of different sounds. If you ask me who my favorite artists are, it would range from the Dixie Chicks to the Red Hot Chili Peppers to Drake and Chance the Rapper. It really is all over the place. To me, Country music is so recognized for storytelling. That's what it is famous for, and that's why I love it so much. You can find storytelling in any genre, and that's art; I think that's the basis of it. So, to find the different ways people tell stories and convey emotion, that helps me form my perspective as a Country artist and find new ways to do it and bring a new sound or fresh perspective to Country music as a young person who accesses music in so many different ways.

8. You listened to different stuff growing up, so can we say that you decided to pursue Country? Or, are you just making music that inspires you, and leaving any labels for others to determine?

I started travelling here four years ago. That was a really interesting period in my life, because I was still living in Sequim, going to high school trying to pay attention in class and just counting down the days until I could take my next trip to Nashville. My parents were very amazing and supportive in paying for those trips. Even when money wasn't good, they knew this was what I wanted to do and was good at - kind of the only thing I was good at, actually. Looking back on it now, we bet a lot on this whole music thing. Let's hope it works out, because academics? No, no. Numbers are hard; sports are hard. My dad was a college basketball player, and I played basketball for a long time in high school and middle school. I played for one year in high school, and then I was like, "Maybe music is my thing." But up until then, I played, and it was always like, no. I really wanted to be good, but I wasn't good. My point was, it was interesting coming to Nashville, which is the city I've dreamed of living in since before I even knew how to write songs. I knew that so many of my favorite artists were discovered here and lived here. I was like, "That's where I want to go." Just being passionate about singing and performing and hoping I could figure out how to write a song at some point - and I did. Finally getting to travel here and write songs at 14, 15, and 16 years old - this was my dream... coming here. I would just be so excited coming here, and I would take it all in and learn everything I could. I just wanted to write non-stop. I wanted to write as many songs with as many people that I could while I was here, and then going back and trying to live a normal life in school and trying to explain to my friends, "This is what a co-write is, and this how we do it." Everyone was like, "Okay...are you coming to the football game on Friday?" I was just writing my life. Writing what I know and my truths. And my influences are all in there, but it's about the story to me. Then, I moved here when I was 17 with my family, and they got me settled in. Once I graduated high school, I had this really amazing team around me that I wasn't expecting to have so quickly. My family was prepared to stay for a few years. It was really interesting and exciting how things worked out, and I found

some people that really have my back. It was pretty clear that my family belonged in Washington, and I only needed them here for that period of time, so they moved back. And, now it's been a few months that I've been living on my own. It is really crazy to look back, and that's the really cool thing about the EP is that it covers this whole span of time; different periods of transitions that have obviously inspired my writing and shaped me as a person. Independent Bailey, that's what the next body of work will be called.

#IndependentBailey. When it comes to the actual audience, the real people who are listening to the music, there are not actually any boxes. For me as an artist, I wanted to be accepted in this industry, and I want to play my music. But my priority is to make music that speaks to people. Am I impacting them? Am I writing what they want to hear?

9. Also, can you share with us what you - as a young millennial - want from Country music? What do you expect it to do for you? Stir emotions? Get up and dance? What?

What I find the most in Country music that draws me to it is the songs that tell something. That ties into the story, for sure, but it doesn't even have to be "This happened, then this happened," like a chronological story that it tells. Just something that make me feel something. That is what I look for the most. There's a lot of really good roll-your-windows-down Country right now, and that's an emotion in and of itself. It doesn't need to be the heavy ballad. This is Country music. It's just something that gives you freedom.

10. So, if another young woman came up to you - a girl who was 14 or 15 like you were when you first started traveling to Nashville - and she told you she wanted to pursue this industry, what advice would you give her?

First, I would tell her - because this is what parents told me - do all of the high school requirements to go to college in case you decide you want to do that. I knew that, for me personally, I felt like I just wanted to move to Nashville and do it. My parents were like, "Okay, but make sure you have that option." Keep paying attention in school as much as you can. I would just say, for me, I knew I was going to end up in Nashville, and I was going to write songs, and people were going to hear them in whatever capacity. And, that's all that I wanted. I had kind of this weird sense from a pretty early age that that's what I am supposed to do, and that's what was going to happen. I didn't sit down and have this calculated. Like alright, I need to move here, and I need to do this, and then this will happen. If I work hard in the ways that I can - I didn't grow up with all of these musical opportunities - all I knew was to find what I could do on my end to make sure that when these opportunities come - for some reason I thought I knew they would come. Maybe I was crazy to think that. I've been lucky in a lot of ways, in that people have taken a chance on me, and that's part of what it takes. Someone who had someone take a chance on them will take a chance on you. I just wanted to be ready for these opportunities. And, I would say that I just practiced my guitar and wrote songs every single day. Play music on the sidewalk if you want people to hear it. If that's the only way you can get performance experience, then do it. That's what I did. So, when it came time that I had the opportunity to travel to Nashville and play for record labels, I was ready as I could be. I was anticipating it, and I was prepared. So, to a 14-year-old who wants to do that, if you want it, just work for it in whatever capacity that you have the ability to right now. Because, so many little girls in small towns don't get to go travel to Nashville. I didn't think I would get to do that. This is going to sound cliché, but if you work hard and your kind to people and just put your head down and work on what you are passionate about, opportunities will come.

#### Bonus Questions

1. You were recently chosen as one of only three all-genre artists for Grammy's Artist Of Tomorrow initiative. Can you tell us how that came about and what it meant to you to be selected for the program?

That's exactly one of those examples of working hard on your own, and then somebody who did the same thing who is in a higher position takes a chance on you. Hillary Scott nominated me for the program, and it was simply because we had met before. We had written together, and she's been an awesome mentor and friend to me and has been a great example and encouraging me. She nominated me for it, and she showed up and said all these nice things about me on camera! Then, I got to do all these acoustic versions of my songs and talk about it, and I had so many people hear me on this platform that I didn't think I was going to get to have for who knows how long. That's one of those things that you can't even dream up, really. I can dream to win a Grammy some day or have a song on the radio or move to Nashville or record an EP. Those are things you obviously dream about. But, if you ask what's the coolest thing to happen, I could not have even thought it would be cool to meet Hillary Scott and that she would like me enough to nominate me for this Grammys Artist of Tomorrow Program. It's a really cool experience. It's just like one of those crazy amazing things that happened because someone was really kind and believed in me.

2. You've already gained a lot of traction on Spotify, and you've been named to multiple "Ones To Watch" lists. With the single on the rise and the EP out now, what are your goals for 2017?

This year is really about acknowledging all of the opportunities I had in 2016 and the way I have been set up really well. For 2017, I've had enough opportunities come in front of me that hopefully it will be a good year. It's about balance and about acknowledging that, and it's really just motivation for me to kind of live up to anyone who's taken a chance on me or said anything nice about me on an artist to watch list. Almost to prove them right, and also not let that pressure break me down. I've had moments where I look at things, and I'm like, "Am I doing good enough? Am I ready for whatever the next thing that comes is?" My plan is just to stick to my baseline of being honest as an artist and a human being and take every further opportunity that comes with gratitude. It's cool that I've had enough cool things happen last year that completely surprised me with just the kind of people that I've gotten to come into contact with that have helped me out. I'm just choosing to remember that none of this is promised, no matter how hard you work. There are ten other people working just as hard that deserve the opportunity just as much as you. Whatever the next thing is that comes, I am grateful for it in advance. This last year has already been amazing. I am hoping to just continue that and use every opportunity to the fullest.

3. So, the concert season is in full swing, and Music Festival season is also upon us. We've discussed out wide-ranging and varied your tastes are, and we've touched on the way you consume music with streaming and being geographically introduced to so many other genres. So, if we sat down and put together the Bailey Bryan Music Festival, what five artists would you want to see headline? Who do you think are five artists that you'd personally love to see, and that sum up the collective of your favorite entertainers?

We are going to start with the Dixie Chicks first. Favorite band ever. The Dixie Chicks were a huge songwriting influence for me. Then, Chance the Rapper, one of my favorite artists of all time. I just feel like it would be positive vibes. Chance is also on my bucket list to meet and write a song with someday. I definitely would have him headlining my festival. He's another example of a different genre but honest storytelling and such a positive message. That is just so inspiring to me. Sam Hunt, too - I am just naming all of my favorite artists, and he is such an inspiration to me as an artist. I think he has paved the way for other artists like me that may not fit into a traditional mold but that are very passionate about songwriting. So, Sam Hunt, for sure. The Red Hot Chili Peppers, because they were just a huge influence for me growing up. Reba, because who doesn't love Reba? Even if you don't think you are a Reba fan, you're a Reba fan. I was saying the other day, everyone is subconsciously a Reba fan whether you know it or not, and I just want her to be my grandmother. Or just adopt me in any capacity - that would be great. So, okay, what do we have? We have the Dixie Chicks, Chance

the Rapper, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Sam Hunt, and Reba. Yeah, that pretty much sums it up. I'm interested to see who shows up for this festival. It's going to be a wide array. That's my headlining five.