SUMMER MOVIE GUID

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TEA
IN LIMB

CELEBRITY TRAVEL

Inspiration comes to artist while in transit

By Jae-Ha Kim
TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY

For alternative singer-songwriter-producer Sabrina Song, her new EP "Big Trick" reflects on a recent period of dissatisfaction.

"My writing tends to be pulled directly from my life experiences and worldview for the most part," Song, 26, said from her home in New York City's Brooklyn. "I've written many songs that try to unpack other people's perceptions of me that I was having in the period after releasing my debut album in 2024. 'I wanted to unpack these uglier feelings, while incorporating a bit of playfulness and cheekiness in the process, which is more in line with how I tend to handle things in my day-to-day life.

"It's the most me that my music has ever felt." This interview with Song has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: Did you work on any of these new songs while you were on the road?

A: I feel like songwriting inspiration strikes most for me while I'm in transit. I specifically remember singing the hook for my song "Background Actor" while I was driving one day. But that's how most of these songs started. I sing to myself while I'm biking or walking or on the train and then take those little ideas and figure out how to make them into actual songs.

Q: What do you remember about your first professional gig?

A: I performed during brunches at the restaurant in my town in high school, and that was a big deal for me. I would play Sara Bareilles, Billy Joel and Mazzy Star covers and nobody would listen. But I was just thrilled to get the chance to be paid to sing.

Q: What is your bucket list venue that you have yet to perform in?

A: Webster Hall is a big dream. It's one of my favorite venues and I've seen some incredible shows there.

Q: Did you ever feel there were barriers because you're Chinese American?

A: I've never felt shut out of opportunities in music, but I have felt a need to work very hard to prove myself and my abilities at times. It's the small comments that build up over time and stick in your psyche. At this point in my career and life, I feel as though I have a much stronger sense of self than I used to. In my eyes, Asian American artists are making some of the most compelling, innovative music today. So much progress has been made and it's really inspiring.

Q: Do you have any upcoming trips planned for the year?

A: I'm going to Portland, Oregon, with a group of friends. I love when friends show me around their hometowns.

Q: What is your favorite vacation destination?

A: The place I've traveled the most outside of the U.S. is London, partially because I love the city, but mostly because my best friend has lived there for a while now. She makes the city my favorite.

Q: What are your five favorite cities?

A: New York City, Montreal, London, Berlin and maybe Portland.

Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?

A: I really want to go to New Zealand. My best friend is from there and I believe her when she says it's the most beautiful place in the world.

Q: When you go away, what are some of your must-have items?

A: Noise-canceling headphones, a sleep mask and a book are my must-haves. I also try to bring my running shoes with me so I can explore a new city that way.

Q: What is your worst vacation memory?

A: I played SXSW in Austin in 2023 and some of my friends came to play in my band. Our flight home was really early so we figured we would get to the airport late the night before and wait at our gate. We found out (it) was closed for the night when we got there, so we laid down on the floor with all our gear and slept at the entrance until morning. It was such a tragically funny ending to such a great week.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.

Singer-songwriter-producer Sabrina Song longs to be at the beach whenever her time allows. MORGAN WINSTON

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