An essential new voice on the indie-rock scene, 20-year-old singer/songwriter Daffo brings an unexpected beauty to the most uncomfortable of feelings. With a poetic specificity that cuts right to the heart, the Brooklyn-based artist speaks an unfiltered truth about all that sets them apart from the wider world, exploring everything from shame and self-loathing to misplaced affection and the chaos of living with an overactive brain. As a kid growing up in the Philadelphia suburbs, the musician otherwise known as Gabi Gamberg first started writing songs after taking up guitar at age 9, then later shaped their intimate yet frenetic sound by playing countless DIY shows in backyards and basements. Recently signed to Concord Records, Daffo is now set to share a new body of work revealing the full depth and power of their strangely poignant songwriting.

Daffo’s debut release for Concord, a reimagined rendition of their breakout hit “Poor Madeline” finds Portland-based folk artist Searows joining in for a more elaborately arranged take on the track. In creating the new version, Daffo worked with producer Philip Weinrobe (Adrianne Lenker, Deerhoof) and musicians like guitarist Adam Brisbin (Buck Meek, Jolie Holland), adding a lovely intensity to their lived-in reflection on feeling hopelessly adrift. “I wrote ‘Poor Madeline’ when I was 17 and having a tough time with my mental health,” says Gamberg, who penned the song as a student at Idyllwild Arts Academy (a residential arts high school in Southern California). “I was also dealing with all these stomach problems and kept thinking about the part in the children’s book *Madeline* where Madeline’s appendix bursts, so I decided to use her name in the lyrics.” Mastered by Heba Kadry (Björk, Sufjan Stevens) and mainly recorded live at Weinrobe’s Brooklyn studio, the update of “Poor Madeline” unfolds in luminous lap-steel tones, spellbinding violin melodies, delicate piano work, and an aching cascade of harmonies from Daffo and Searows—ultimately making for an exquisite new addition to Daffo’s catalog.

With their artist name taken from the swath of daffodils that grew in the yard of their childhood home, Gamberg started playing violin at age six and underwent classical training for nearly a decade, but immediately felt a much stronger affinity for guitar. “As soon as I picked up a guitar, I was constantly writing songs, mostly because I didn’t feel like playing other people’s music,” says Gamberg, a largely self-taught guitarist. At the age of 15, they took part in a five-week summer program at Boston’s Berklee College of Music, where they quickly crossed paths with Hudson Pollock—a fellow student who soon introduced Gamberg to the DIY community in northern New Jersey, including all-ages spaces like Serendipity Café (a student-run nonprofit venue that’s hosted likeminded artists such as Pinegrove and Alex G). “I started going up to New Jersey almost every weekend to record or play shows, and after a while I felt like I needed to get out my town altogether,” Gamberg says. Following a failed attempt at persuading their parents to let them drop out of high school, Gamberg headed to Idyllwild just after Covid hit. “I spent a lot of my time at Idyllwild secluded in the mountains, writing and recording and going to classes on Zoom,” they recall. “At first I had a hard time with songwriting classes; I didn’t like the idea of following any kind of formula or rules. But eventually I learned a lot about what makes a song effective, and how to convey things in a way that really gets through to somebody.”

During their time at Idyllwild, Daffo made their debut with *Crisis Kit*—a five-song EP co-produced by Gamberg and Pollock and self-released in 2021. After graduating, Gamberg enrolled at the Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music at New York University and slowly made their way into the local DIY scene. “The first time I played in New York, I didn’t know anyone and only one person showed up,” they say. “But then my first week of classes I went in and told everyone, ‘I’m playing a show on Friday and I don’t have a band, who wants to play with me?’ It’s a lot harder to tap into the DIY scene there, but pretty soon I was playing shows every weekend in New York and in Jersey.” As their community of fans began to grow, Gamberg downloaded TikTok on a whim and went viral with the second post they ever shared: a bedroom performance of a spontaneously composed song called “The Experiment.” “I woke up in the middle of the night with a melody and all these rhyming words stuck in my head, and finally I got up and grabbed my guitar and wrote it all down while I was basically still asleep,” Gamberg says of the song’s origins. Later on in 2023, “The Experiment” appeared as a bonus track on Daffo’s sophomore EP *Pest*, a brooding but tender project that drifts from the fuzzed-out catharsis of “Good God” to the glorious devastation of “Seed” to the heavy-hearted enchantment of “Complete Circle.” Not long after *Pest’*s arrival, Daffo inked their deal with Concord and left NYU to focus on their music full-time.

Fresh off their first-ever tour—a North American run as support for Sir Chloe—Daffo is now gearing up for a fall tour with Illuminati Hotties (and for the first-time vinyl release of *Crisis Kit* and *Pest*). “It’s so crazy to travel to so many places and talk to all the people who’ve been listening to my music,” Gamberg says. “Some people are really shy, some people give me art they’ve made, some people tell me very personal stories about the way my songs have helped them. It’s always cool to feel like the things I’ve gone through and written about weren’t all for nothing.” With their latest endeavors also including recording their next batch of songs with producer Rob Schnapf (Elliott Smith, Kurt Vile), Daffo points out that the experience of songwriting remains entirely unaltered by their ever-growing acclaim. “It’s amazing that people are able to connect with my music, and it makes me feel a deeper connection to the world overall,” says Gamberg. “But even though it gives me so much joy, I don’t think it’s really changed anything. At my core, I still just write for myself and for my survival. I still just want to make things that feel good to me.”