An essential new voice on the indie-rock scene, 21-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 Los Angeles-based artist speaks an unfiltered truth about all that sets them apart from the wider world, confronting everything from shame and self-loathing to misplaced affection and the chaos of living with an overactive brain. Originally from the Philadelphia suburbs, the musician otherwise known as Gabi Gamberg started writing songs after taking up guitar at age nine, then later shaped their sound by playing countless DIY shows in backyards and basements in New York City and New Jersey. After spending much of the past year on tour with the likes of Sir Chloe and illuminati hotties, Daffo now makes their full-length debut with *Where the Earth Bends*: a one-of-a-kind coming-of-age album that finds powerful catharsis in painful confession.

Produced and mixed by Rob Schnapf (a veteran producer known for his work with Elliott Smith, Beck, Cat Power, and more), *Where the Earth Bends* encompasses an intimate yet frenetic sound that perfectly mirrors the album’s emotional intensity. In bringing the LP to life, Daffo worked in close collaboration with Schnapf and engineer Matt Schuessler (Kurt Vile, Steve Gunn), enlisting esteemed musicians like drummer Josh Adams (Devendra Banhart, Jon Batiste) and embracing a boldly naturalistic approach to every element of the production process. Recorded at Schnapf’s Mant Sounds Studio in L.A. and featuring Gamberg on guitar, violin, Mellotron, drums, and more, *Where the Earth Bends* ultimately embodies an unfettered energy that exponentially magnifies the pure impact of their songwriting. “Rob and Matt gave me the space to explore and really put my mark on the songs, which helped me to believe in myself in a new way,” says Gamberg. “The whole experience was so joyful for me, even though a lot of these songs are very sad.”

The latest entry in an acclaimed catalog including their widely beloved 2021 debut EP *Crisis Kit* and its 2023 follow-up *Pest*, *Where the Earth Bends* begins on the oddly thrilling lament of “Get a Life”: a sing-along-ready rumination on the all-too-familiar challenge of living fully in the moment. “I feel like I spend a lot of time knowing I should be present, I should be enjoying the things in front of me, but I can’t,” says Gamberg, who wrote “Get a Life” in the midst of a meditation retreat in upstate New York. “It’s a lot of knowing what you should be doing, but not being able to do it.” The first song recorded for *Where the Earth Bends*, “Get a Life” instantly set the tone for the spirit of playful experimentation that soon infused all of the LP. “At some point I picked up some spoons and used them as percussion, and we ended up keeping that on the track,” says Gamberg. “It was my first time working with Rob and Matt and we had so much fun putting the song together—nothing ever felt forced, which was true for the whole album.”

Deeply rooted in Daffo’s unsparing self-reflection, *Where the Earth Bends* sheds light on their struggle with obsessive-compulsive disorder on songs like the distortion-drenched “Habit.” “I wrote that song at a moment when I was having a hard time with my OCD and cyclical thinking,” says Gamberg. “It’s partly about how I tend to come to conclusions about certain situations before even allowing myself to experience them.” Meanwhile, “Quick Fix” examines how attempts at self-soothing frequently lead to prolonged suffering. Detailing the empty pleasures of cigarette smoking and one-night stands, the visceral yet ineffably gentle track serves as a sonic testament to Gamberg’s inner battle to understand and forgive themselves. “The first verse, about eating junk and smoking, I squeezed out during a very intense writer’s block,” Gamberg says. “On tour, I quit smoking for my voice. When I came back from tour, I still couldn’t write until one day I started smoking again. That day I was able to finish the song; my slight regression became fuel for the rest of the words.”

Written entirely by Gamberg, *Where the Earth Bends* inhabits a particularly raw emotionality on “Dagger Song”—a hypnotically droney and mercurial track that explodes into an exhilarating outburst at the bridge. “It’s about a person I had a very close relationship with who decided to not be in my life anymore, and me trying to respect their desire for space while also grieving the loss of that connection,” says Gamberg. Imbued with equal parts rage, shame, and resolve, the sublimely grungy “Absence Makes the Heart Grow” documents the slow dissolution of a long-distance relationship. “I wrote the song at the end of a relationship, and in my pain, I felt as though the cliché about distance making the heart grow fonder was a sham,” says Gamberg. “It made everything harder, the waves of emotion that accompanied reuniting and separating were too intense to navigate. So, I decided to twist the saying into something that felt more real to me.” And on “Sideways,” Daffo builds a gorgeous tension between the track’s tender sonic backdrop (delicate piano, warm upright bass, softly sprawling acoustic guitar) and their heavy-hearted confession of a possibly harmful tendency to hide their feelings from others (from the chorus: *“I can’t say what I mean/So I let it out sideways/And if I could say what I mean/I’d still let it out/Sideways”*).

With their artist name taken from the swath of daffodils that grew in the yard of their childhood home, Gamberg first tapped into their innate musicality by taking up violin age six, then underwent classical training for nearly a decade before discovering their affinity for guitar. At the age of 15, they took part in a summer program at Boston’s Berklee College of Music, where they 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 enrolled at Idyllwild Arts Academy (a residential arts high school in Southern California) just after Covid hit. “I spent a lot of my time secluded in the mountains, writing and recording and going to classes on Zoom,” says Gamberg, who self-released *Crisis Kit* during their time at Idyllwild. “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.”

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, they 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,” which later appeared as a bonus track on *Pest.* Not long after *Pest’*s arrival, Daffo inked a deal with Concord Records, then left NYU to focus on their music full-time.

Since signing with Concord (who spearheaded the first-time vinyl release of *Crisis Kit* and *Pest*), Daffo has landed spots on lineups to major international festivals like The Great Escape, London Calling, and Pitchfork Paris, in addition to touring as direct support for Annie DiRusso and Blondshell. “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.” Looking back on the making of *Where the Earth Bends,* Gamberg notes that the experience of songwriting remains unaltered by the ever-growing reach of their artistry. “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.”