

 The interview | **Kyiv**

# “Kyiv is a special place - a place to make beautiful things”

Meet Luna, Ukraine’s hypnotic trance-pop sensation

WORDS DARREN LOUCAIDES

“**W**e just make what we feel, you know? We try to find sounds that describe the feelings in our souls.” So says rising pop star Luna. Her attitude of total authenticity has catapulted her to national stardom in the space of two years, and inspired *Vogue* to describe her as the “face of Ukraine’s musical revolution”.

Luna’s mix of hypnotic electronica and heartfelt lyrics has certainly been a breath of fresh air in her home nation’s music scene. “Usually a pop star in our country is someone with so much make-up, not natural, and with very expensive music videos,” she says. “But I’m all about my life, and true life.”

This has been evident since the start of Luna’s career. In October 2015 she uploaded a home-made video for her track *Osen* (Autumn) to YouTube. She’d had no luck finding someone to work with her on a video, “so I decided to take my son and my MacBook and go to the street near my mother’s house. We made the video in two hours, and I put it online.”

In the video Luna crouches above the camera wearing a long coat, her young son playing nearby, with Soviet-era-style buildings looming in →



the background. At one point the boy approaches the camera in tears, and Luna comforts him. The action matches perfectly with a swelling of synths, making for a truly touching moment.

The video has become an online sensation, with more than a million views to date. Not bad for someone who wasn't planning to become a pop star.

Born in Dresden, Germany, Luna and her family moved to Kyiv when she was small. Although she learnt piano and vocals at music school, she went on to study journalism and PR at the National University of Kyiv. After graduating, she helped other artists, and even starred in a few music videos, but found it frustrating when people didn't share her artistic vision. "So I thought I'd better do my own project," she says. After a period of what she refers to as "drama" in her life, she decided to pour all the anguish and ideas she'd been amassing into her music.

Luna made a few demos in her apartment-turned-studio in Kyiv, but needed a collaborator. That's when she met Sasha Voloshchuk, an electronic musician who was looking for a singer. The pair started working together, building on the blend of lulling vocals and restrained trance-like melodies in *Osen* for Luna's debut album *Magnity* (Magnets), released in May 2016, which made the Ukraine iTunes top 20. In October of the same year Luna followed that up with EP *Grustnyi Dens* (Sad Dance), which debuted at number one on the Ukraine iTunes chart and number two on iTunes Russia.

Further songs appeared throughout 2017, ahead of the release of Luna's second LP, *Ostrov Svobody* (Liberty Island), in November that year. The album was grittier and moodier than her previous work, but this didn't deter her growing fanbase – quite the opposite.



## "I'm not really a professional musician, but it's in my heart"



The video for beguiling album opener *Free Love* has garnered more than five million views on YouTube.

Luna credits her city's openness and creative spirit as part of the reason for her success. "I think Kyiv is a really special place. It's a great place to make beautiful things. To paint, to make art, sing songs. And we have such great music." Although commercial Russian and Ukrainian pop still dominates the charts for now, people are increasingly looking for more artistic musicians, and Luna believes that "in a few years more people will understand me and my sound".

In the meantime, Luna isn't resting on her laurels. As we speak she's in



PHOTO: GRIGOR DEVEJIEV, CLOTHES: ANOUKI



LUNA COMBINES AN EDGY fashion aesthetic (left) with an authentic, original musical style that's inspired both by her relationships and her home city of Kyiv (top right)



Moscow doing a fashion shoot for *Russian Tatler*, and she has her first concerts in Berlin and Tel Aviv coming up later this year, having previously played in Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Latvia and Kazakhstan. She's also keen to tour Europe soon in support of her upcoming third album, *Zakoldovanniye Sny* (Enchanted Dreams), which will be another shift in musical gears.

"The songs aren't about sadness this time," she says. "They're about love and happiness." That's partly due to a romance between Luna and her musical partner Voloshchuk. "After two years of working together, we just fell in love," she beams. "This album is about our love. It's our best yet."

It all comes back to that key ingredient: authenticity. "I just sing about my life," Luna says, adding with a laugh that this might be why she's never been any good at karaoke. "I don't understand how to sing something when it's not my feelings – I'm not really a professional musician. But it's in my heart."

[l-u-n-a.com](http://l-u-n-a.com)

 Wizz Air flies to Kyiv

## Luna's Kyiv tips

### The bar

"My favourite bar is Right Coffee Bar. It's very close to our rehearsal space and the waiters are superb.

You can order oatmeal for breakfast, and drink some fresh juice with raw food. When I'm there I feel so at home." [facebook.com/rightcoffeobar](https://facebook.com/rightcoffeobar)



### The restaurant

"In Zigzag you can have a tasty breakfast, and there are cool dinner options, too. It's located in my favourite Kyiv area, Shevchenkivskyi District, on a very historical street called Reitarska. There's a real city mood to the place – you feel a bit like you're in New York. The chef cooks exquisitely and the meals are refined and tasty." [zigzagkyiv.com/en](http://zigzagkyiv.com/en)



### The nightclub

"The best nightclub for me is Closer, because all the fashionable youth go clubbing there, and the owners always book the most contemporary artists. Because of that, this club has actually inspired me to create some of my tracks." [facebook.com/closerkiev](https://facebook.com/closerkiev)

