



'I almost killed myself because of Twitter a couple of years ago. Like, for real'

BILLIE EILISH

>> undermine all the hard work it took for me to get here."

Eilish steadies herself and lets out a long blast of air from her lungs. The passion for her craft is controlled yet ferocious. Her left eyebrow flickers, an unmistakable tick that is a result of her torments. It flares up whenever she's tired or putting herself under too much pressure, which, at the moment, is basically all the time. Another smile. "It's hard to know how to fight for what you believe in sometimes."

Ask any teenager, parent or teacher growing up in the age of social media: online bullying is perhaps the greatest mental health danger faced by young people dealing with the digital Wild West, where new tech meets this unparalleled connectivity.

Musicians with noticeable profiles – now more "reachable" than ever before, their appeal being how relatable and "touchable" they are in many ways – are not exempt from this, especially when they want to stay linked to their young audience base. Does Eilish pay heed to such criticism any more?

"Oh, God. It's unbelievable..." Eilish looks at me in a way that someone does when they're about to deliver uncomfortable news: anguish wrapped in a grin. "I almost killed myself because of Twitter a couple of years ago." The smile drops and her eyes go glassy. Suddenly the whole house goes very quiet. From the kitchen, a kettle switch clicks to indicate water is boiled.

"Like, for real."

All I have ever wanted is to be on stage and have people cheering for me." Apart from a brief period aged around three or four years old when all she wanted to do was talk about God ("I was deeply, full-on religious for about a year"), music has been at the very centre of Billie Eilish's 18 years on planet earth. This has everything to do with the way her mother, Maggie Baird, and father, Patrick O'Connell, decided to raise their two children, yet nothing to do with them being pushy, success-hungry tiger parents.

"Our little house had three pianos in it and probably four guitars," Maggie says. "We got the grand piano off Craigslist and the other piano was my childhood upright piano from Colorado." Maggie has, of course, been at her daughter's side all the way through this extraordinary four-and-a-half-year journey, from the moment Eilish recorded "Ocean Eyes" – the song was adapted from her brother's band's original as a choreography soundtrack for one of Billie's dance classes – to when the entire team travelled secretly to London in December last year to record the new James Bond theme song with guitarist Johnny Marr and composer Hans Zimmer. So close are the pair that >>

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