

The bard of Gen Z

Cameron Winter and his band, Geese, make music that explores the dread and social alienation of my generation.

by [Colton Bernasol](#)
February 26, 2026

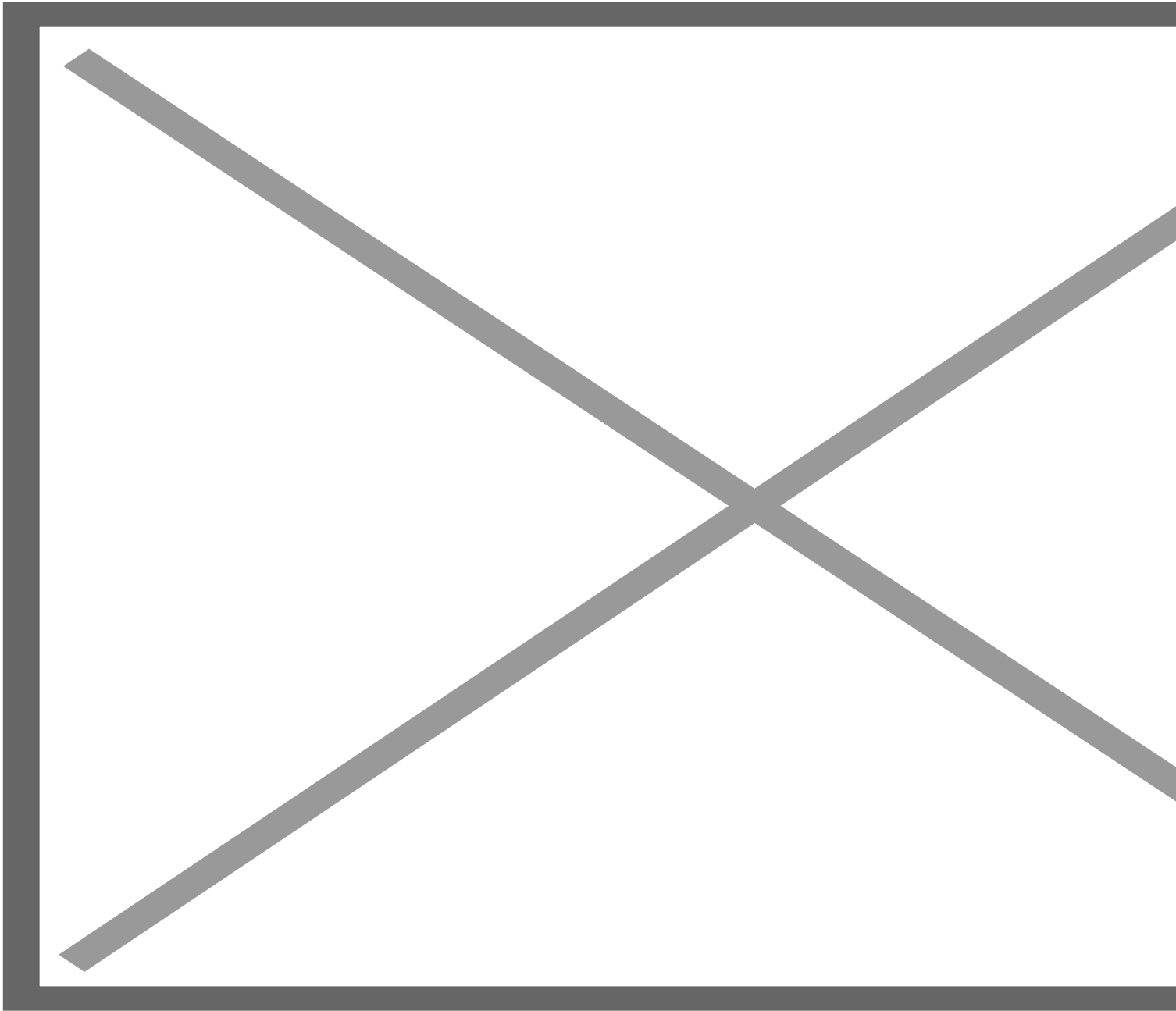


Photo by Daniel Richardson

A young and relatively new bard hails from Long Island, and his name is Cameron Winter. The band Geese (made up of Winter, Max Bassin, Emily Green, and Dominic Digesu)—of which he is the lead singer—has turned his stunning, at times indecipherable, at times earnest, songwriting into revelation. For some, his idiosyncratic fusion of the mythic, the vulgar, and the religious in his lyrics is more joke than talent. Others can't help but return to it and seek out its meandering evocations supported and amplified by Digesu's groovy bass, Bassin's tight drumming, and Green's vulnerable guitar melodies.

The critics love Winter and Geese—as do I. Lindsay Zoladz of *The New York Times* named *Getting Killed*, Geese's third studio album, the [best record of the year](#) in 2025. *GQ* [profiled](#) the young rock stars to uncover their influences, from Radiohead to Bob Dylan. *Pitchfork* [heaped praise](#) upon both Winter's 2024 solo album *Heavy Metal* and Geese's *Getting Killed*. Geese has been featured on NPR's Tiny Desk and on *Saturday Night Live*. Already they are leaving a mark in the contemporary North American music scene, poised to be remembered as a great band.

Mystery has, no doubt, played a role in Winter's rise. His lack of [social media presence](#) and his sold out solo piano performances made him into a contemporary myth. The lucky (and rich) who can get their hands on concert tickets get to witness his artistry at venues ranging from [Rockefeller Chapel](#) in Chicago to [Carnegie Hall](#) in New York. Behold the young Gen-Zer (can anything good come from Gen Z?), turned away from the audience, his slim figure draped in all-black pants and a button-up, as he arches his back over a magnificent grand piano. The rest of us have to tune in through bootlegged recordings on [YouTube](#) and [Tik-Tok](#). Such are the contradictions of this emerging artist, who makes a mockery of internet access even as his fame depends on the enigma the internet ecosystem helped create.

But enigma and intrigue are not what make Winter and Geese's music compelling to me. I think Gen Z is listening to Geese because those apocalyptic, heady, and vertiginous songs speak to the atmosphere of dread and violence that has surrounded all of our lives. For us, childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood have all been marked by terminal uncertainty and the collapse of social institutions that our elders promised would lead to a good life. There was 9/11, its spectacle war on terror and its Islamophobia; there was the financial crisis of 2008 and 2009, in which we watched our friends and families lose their homes and jobs as the wealthy profited; there was the rise of social media, our feeds inundated by videos of police regularly killing Black and Brown people; there was an unending string of school shootings, because of which we were trained to lock ourselves in classrooms to hide in the case of a frenzied, despairing gunman; and there was the COVID-19 pandemic, which claimed [1 million](#) deaths globally by September 2020. There was, and is, Donald Trump and his war against migrants; there was, and is, the consolidation of wealth among fewer and fewer people, as billionaires like Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk continue to reap the profits from the labor power of their employees.

My generation came of age in this climate of social alienation. Geese gives voice to its spirit.

"All people must smile in times of war," Winter sings in "100 Horses." Even if he attempts to hide political commentary behind a general meditation on finitude—"for all people must die scared or else die nervous"—I can't help but think of the wars that have defined all of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood for the band and so many of us. The war in Iraq. The war in Afghanistan. The war against migrants. The war on terror. The US-backed war in Gaza. Generation Z knows no time that hasn't been war time.

When I first listened to Winter's 2024 solo album, *Heavy Metal*, I was taken aback by the tension between his playful, mumbling, voice and the high calling of his most self-interrogating lines. In "Try as I May," Winter comes face-to-face with his failure to love, a failure that is not his alone. He wants to "love what fits in my hand," but he confesses: "I don't, I don't." This despair nearly takes over the whole album. "You make me feel like a zero-dollar man," he passionately belts. But then the song thematically shifts. He begs the listener to

consider a reality that modern skepticism has all but refused: “God is real. God is real / I’m not kidding, God is actually real.”

Even in the earnest and morally aspirational “Love takes miles,” humor shines through an otherwise serious tune. “Something will take you / by your pants.” His voice, just a step away from being totally indecipherable, manages to develop these comedic lines into a sober declaration: “Love takes miles / you better start a-walking, babe.”

But *Heavy Metal* doesn’t just draw people in to make them laugh. The album is also an existential meditation on vulnerability. It leaves the listener in spiritual vertigo. In “Drinking Age,” Winter’s self-knowledge unfolds into annihilating self-judgment. “Today I met who I’m gonna be from now on / And he’s a piece of shit, yeah.” Some may dismiss these lines as resentment directed by self-obsession, but who hasn’t felt such self-hate before? A foreboding terror that you are nothing more than the worst parts of yourself, that even time will fail to alleviate this fear? This is the power of Winter’s religious lyricism. Winter turns providence back around. Laughter reveals potential damnation.

Like Winter’s *Heavy Metal*, Geese’s *Getting Killed* revels in humor and judgment. The fusion of the band’s post-rock, alternative, and punk sounds manages to transfigure a funny line into a sharp and cutting meditation on uncertainty and dread. I can’t help but laugh at the line, “There’s a bomb in my car!” even if it prods at my anxiety. In the album’s titular song, the band’s electric guitar melodies and punchy keys earn Winter’s unapologetically direct lyrics: “I’m getting killed by a pretty good life.” *Who isn’t in this country?* I ask as I nod along.

Despite the album’s atmosphere of dread, *Getting Killed* manages to communicate something more than despair. In “Islands of Men,” the band defiantly builds toward hopeful ecstasy as they urge us to “stop running away / from what is real.” In “Half Real,” Winter insists on the reality of love even as others question it. The album is as engaged in spiritual purgation as it is in diagnosing modern forms of estrangement. Death is real, but it is neither final nor total. “Here I come,” chants Winter in the album’s final song, taking us through a whirlwind of grief and despair into the insistence that a voice—and thus a song—manages to remain alive in the ruins of what kills.

Death is all around, and this has made the title *Getting Killed* far more literal than perhaps even the band expected. I started last year with the suicide of a friend, this grief compounding in 2025 and 2026 with the violence Trump’s administration has unleashed seemingly everywhere, from immigration raids in Chicago and Minneapolis to bombing ships off the coast of Venezuela. But Geese’s unapologetic self-scrutiny of my generation’s despair gives rise to an authentic and credible search for something more. Both *Heavy Metal* and *Getting Killed* offer a sonic landscape to explore grief and rage, self-resentment and guilt, and the hope for relief. There, I can search the world for more love, more truth, more transcendence—and, despite Winter’s mockery of religion, the beginnings of genuine religious desire. Irony opens toward the Infinite. Perhaps [God is real](#). If so, we better start walking that mighty way into love.