

## Singer Nicole Iris Could Be St. Louis' Next Big Thing



•Nicole Iris is releasing her debut EP next month.

Nicole Iris has an unusual background for a musician whose sparkling voice could shake up St. Louis' pop and R&B scenes. "No one from my family can sing," she says, laughing. "We are big on music, though. I grew up watching MTV, BET, which led to my finding a passion in music." A singer who's performed everywhere from Ballpark Village to the Ready Room, Iris also handles backing vocals for Grammy award-winning producer Courtney Orlando. With two singles generating buzz and an EP entitled *Suns, Moons, and Ideologies* slated for release next month, the pop alternative artist is poised to become one of the city's "it" performers. And if she can't quite credit her family for her vocal talent, she's found inspiration in some big-name artists along the way, including Mariah Carey. "When I was young, around eight years [old], I found a Mariah Carey cd and started listening to that all the time trying to emulate her voice." Iris explains. Of idols like Carey, she says, "I've been able to borrow elements from them and learn from them whether its their technique, style, or cadence. It has helped to make me a better and well rounded vocalist." Iris grew up in St.Louis, **graduating from Hazelwood East High School** before enrolling at University of Missouri - St. Louis. She got her big break in 2015: By making a random submission through STL Auditions, she met her current music team. "I was struggling finding people to work with," she says. "I was spending a lot of money on studio time and just trying to find people that believed in me, plus I was in school at the time so I wasn't making a lot of money... it made it a struggle the entire time." Iris considers Mariah Carey an inspiration. STL Auditions is an online resource for those seeking to work in theater, art and music. "It's like a Craigslist of auditions for St. Louis," Iris says. The site started in 2004 as a blog but then expanded its mission because of the growth of interest. The people who contacted her had a simple question: "Can you sing songs like Beyonce, Justin Timberlake and Rihanna?" It felt like a no brainer. Since then Iris has released two singles, "Runaway" and "Jump," both produced by local producer SongsByTitus. Their videos on YouTube have each gotten more than 2,300 views. SongsByTitus will also be helping Iris put together her first EP, with title and release date still in the works. Through the process of building her craft as an artist she has learned a great lesson of patience along the way. "With this whole thing, you have to be extremely patient, stay steady with what you are doing and not get discouraged about how long it take to get from point A to B," she says. But she knows she's not alone. "I have met so many people these last three or so years from all over who have shown me love and support," she says. And now, she hopes to give back that good energy. "I want to be influential to young girls, young women. I hope my story and my music has touched people."