

# On continually moving forward

Singer-songwriter Allegra Krieger discusses being surprised by her own work, juggling touring with day jobs, and prioritizing community in New York City.

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As told to Emma Bowers, 2165 words.

Tags: [Music](#), [Process](#), [Day jobs](#), [Inspiration](#), [Beginnings](#), [Focus](#).

**I wanted to ask you about your relationship to the word “prolific.” How does that word feel to you?**

I write pretty naturally, pretty frequently, and it’s really just a way for me to move through different seasons of my life. I think writing and then releasing just kind of opens up the door for more creativity. I’ve noticed that with this last record rollout, people use the word “prolific” and then it almost feels like something that you have to... well, it adds pressure. But thus far, I still kind of maintain this approach where I’m writing as a means to explore my inner world and the outer world. I really just love writing, and if I have the opportunity to release music, then I’m really grateful for that. I think I would just do it anyway with my little iPhone recordings, just to get them out of my body and move on to the next phase.

**I recently saw that you’re working on another record?**

I’m actually at the studio right now working on that.

**Is there anything that you learned from the last go-around that you’re excited to apply to this one?**

I think my experiences in recording studios have always been high-pressure. You’ve got limited time and pressure, just because of the money. You’re either saving up for a year to do it or a label is putting the money into it. Making the last record, we only had four days in the studio and then two or three mix days. It all had to come together really swiftly. I was really grateful to have this band and the people I was working with because they helped it go very seamlessly, but I think for this next record, I really want to just take it slower and kind of delve into one song at a time. I want to really seep into the record as a whole.

**What else are you looking forward to creatively when it comes to the next record?**

I really always wanted to record a record that was just a live band. I don’t really get to play with a band super frequently, and I love doing that. It’s a particular energy and sound and I wanted to capture that. It felt really natural and fun and easy, so I’m happy with the way that it turned out. You’re always going to think, “I could have done this differently.” There’s so many different directions you can go. Playing with a live band means just leaving it in that one moment and then moving on.

**Do any of those “I could have done that differently” moments stick out to you? How do you reconcile that or learn from it?**

So many, if not a huge majority. I think that’s also the reason why I like releasing a lot of music, because after I release something, I always have this feeling that I have something else that I want to say or want to do. Everything I’ve done has just been a huge learning experience, and they’ve all come about in different ways.

Ultimately the moments that stick out to me are the vocal moments where I think, "Why didn't I just redo that?" It's easy to be self-critical, but honestly, I really try to not get too dialed into it all in that way because once it's done, it's done. If it's out in the world, there's nothing you can do. But there's definitely a lot of moments like that.

**When you're in these really creative cycles, what does your relationship to rest look like? Do you ever intentionally take a break from creating or try to get out of that zone?**

Being creative is kind of my resting place. When I have space to write and record, that's my vacation from normal life. Because normally I work in a restaurant or I'm touring, and to me, that is more work. Writing is, I think, the best feeling. The studio is not really my most comfy place, but the writing of the songs is where I feel really happy and relaxed. I think that because I'm making this record very slowly right now that the rest will come. Maybe if I could ever leave my day job for real... As it stands now, it's like, you get back from tour, you get back from a session, and you kind of just get thrown back into the regular hustle of life.

**Do you have any advice in terms of balancing those things, if you were to meet someone at an earlier stage who's looking for this kind of career and this kind of life?**

I'm kind of still in the place where I'm looking for advice, too. But if I did have something to offer, it would be really trusting your gut and your own voice, and keeping to whatever path you feel is the most natural. I think it's easy to get swayed by other influences or other people. Typically, if it's your work and it's your voice, you know the right world for it. You can't really rely on outward validation and certain opportunities and certain scenes. They fade really quickly. I think as long as you feel good about what you're doing, then that's the most important thing.

**You moved around a good bit before settling in New York, and I've seen you talk about being curious about what happens when you stay in a place for a while. How is that going?**

It's going pretty good. It's funny because I feel like I became very rooted in New York, and then this last year was probably the busiest year of touring that I've experienced thus far. I think my body and my creative spirit really wanted to just be in New York and sit and write and drink my coffee and do my thing. When I got home from touring most recently, I went back to my old bartending job, and that's really grounding. I've still been pretty busy, and I'm always generally pretty chaotic, but it's been nice to kind of ground with friends and get back into a normal routine.

**What's your temp check on New York and creativity, or the scene of it. I think that there's a lot of pressure for young people who want to make it happen for themselves to go be in the center of things.**

I sometimes feel, really weirdly, far removed from all of that. I think I just love being in New York. It is sort of a hard place to live and it can be overwhelming, and I think if you're moving to a city to make your dreams come true, not just because you want to live there, it could probably be a little disappointing because it can take a really long time. I just like being in a city. I like the food, I like walking around, and I'm living with my sister now. I don't think I'm so tapped into the scene these days. I'll go to some weirdo shows that my friends play here and there. That's kind of my vibe these days.

**It's easy to get caught up in all of it when it feels like there's always something happening around you. Deciding to focus on what was in front of me worked for me when I lived in New York, too. Whenever I got too focused trying to follow a certain pulse or a certain scene, I got really down on myself.**

Obviously, community—I think in New York especially—is really important, for the sake of sanity. And it is hard [to find]. Honestly, that's the hardest thing about New York. There is so much movement and activity, it's hard to see your friends. I have really close friends I'll see, especially with touring now, a few times a year, and it's weird. I think the hard thing about the city is that everyone's busy. I think keeping it small and just moving through your day is the only way.

**Walking is such a big theme in your music. What do you do when you can't walk or can't sit with a guitar or a piano?**

This is something I talk about a lot because you can technically walk anywhere if you are able-bodied. My partner lives in Vermont, so sometimes I stay up here for certain periods of time, and you can't walk anywhere. There's this hill and it's so steep and I don't want to walk up it 'cause then that's exercise and that's not the point. Walking in the city is really special to me because you can kind of just float forever. Nothing gets in your way... You can just be lost in your own world. I feel like when I'm in a place where I can't just walk in that sort of way of parsing through my thoughts, I can get a little stir crazy.

I think that's sometimes why touring is hard for me, because you're around music all the time, but it's rare that you have the time to be alone with your thoughts. If you're not driving, you're at a venue with other people around. It's hard to get alone time to really sit with the guitar or a piano. I know some people can operate with that kind of movement pretty easily, but I think I've always found stability to be more helpful to my creative process.

**I know you're a big reader. When you're at a bookstore, how do you pick out books? Do you look at the cover?**

Maybe it's a cliché thing to say, but I always look for the blue [Fitzcarraldo Editions](#). Everything they put out I just really love and becomes some of my favorite books. Titles will impact me a lot. I remember being drawn to Clarice Lispector's [Near to The Wild Heart](#). I'm such a sucker for that vibe. I also love to look at booksellers' recommendations. That's probably the first place I'll look, because if you're working at a bookstore, you probably love to read and have worked through a lot of books, and I really appreciate that.

**I love the imagery that you use in your writing and the fact that it's diaristic but also has this dreamlike quality. Are there any writers that you feel like maybe passed the baton on that?**

Clarice Lispector was huge for me. Louise Glück, her writing is also really important to me. I really like Fleur Jaeggy. She's really cool. It's kind of impressionistic, but very harsh, and I like that kind of balance of just harsh reality with sort of abstract form. I also like stream-of-consciousness fiction. Anna Burns has two books that I really like, [Milkman](#) and [Little Constructions](#). There's this way that she writes as if you're almost in the character's head, so it has that sort of dreamscape quality.

**You've mentioned before that you often write stream-of-consciousness. Do things surprise you when you're in that realm?**

Honestly, I think any song that I've written that has been anywhere near decent was a surprise. Obviously you have to sit down and kind of work at it after the surprise happens and shape it and make it make sense, but I think that's kind of where the magic is in writing: in the surprise and in the randomness of it all. Those are the moments that I feel the most excited about in my songs, just because it's a fun little puzzle to connect with. Sometimes I don't really even know what emotion I'm getting at until something clicks, and then you can kind of go back into the song and shape it from there.

**I like the idea that those kinds of surprises are these little mysterious creatures that you have to entice or cultivate. Have you ever scared one off?**

Totally. I feel like when I am alone in my writing mode with my guitar I actually look a little cuckoo-bananas because I definitely get visibly excited. It's like playing a game, almost, and then you finally unlock the code. I don't know if I've ever scared one off, but maybe that will come in the future. Sometimes, if there's something that feels a little bit too stark or vulnerable, I've definitely thought, "Am I actually going to say that?" So I guess there have been times where I haven't said the thing that maybe I wanted to say.

**Allegra Krieger recommends:**

Ginger and goji berry tea

Movement: I would recommend to anybody that struggles with mental health, if they are able to find some kind of small practice of movement, something to get your heart rate flowing.

Vince Staples' album *Big Fish Theory*

*The Idiot* by Dostoevsky

*Apartamento* magazine

Name

Allegra Krieger

Vocation

singer-songwriter

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