

Still There's a Glow
Sweet Pill



When artists release a landmark debut that leads them into new realms of performance and visibility, they must also navigate a paradigm shift within their own lives and relationships. Since 2022, **Sweet Pill** has been very much on go supporting their Topshelf Records released LP, *Where the Heart Is*. The record saw the New Jersey/Philadelphia quintet completing tours with the likes of La Dispute and The Wonder Years before embarking on their own headlining tour the following year, but that would hardly be the end of it. While earning cosigns from stars like

Hayley Williams, Vanderpump Rules' Katie Maloney, and Doja Cat, summer 2024 brought Sweet Pill to the UK for Outbreak Festival, and spring 2025 saw them appear in Australia before going to Europe in support of *Movements*.

The exhaustion of three years of consistent travel and the expectation to summarily express it on a subsequent work is no small undertaking, and the pressure it places on an artist like Sweet Pill singer Zayna Youssef and her relationships cannot be overstated. Failure to create a compelling work out of this expression is what's commonly referred to as the "Sophomore Slump," and is often characterized by a band drowning in its celebratory excess, succumbing to the pressure of surpassing their debut, or burning out from overwork. All of these realities were on the table for Sweet Pill, with Youssef and co. struggling to manage themselves throughout the constant demand generated after the release of *Where the Heart Is* and the acoustic Hopeless Records released EP *Unraveled*. With the EP title unintentionally foreshadowing the future, Sweet Pill ended up essentially scrapping a whole album's worth of demos. They had to move on their own time; they had to pause, look inward, and ease the pressure they had been heaping on themselves over the past three years.

This is where Sweet Pill was left after the whirlwind of *Where the Heart Is* dissipated. When the time came for Sweet Pill to begin recording the material they felt was meant to be their next album, Youssef was still figuring out what and how she wanted to sing on nearly half the songs on the record. This is where *Still There's a Glow* begins.

"It's not even that I procrastinated, I had just been trying to write these same parts for such a long time," she says.

Youssef was blocked, an unwelcome circumstance after finally finishing a touring regimen so intense it regularly resulted in her losing her voice. No matter how many times she sat down and tried, the feeling of things clicking into place just wouldn't come.

"You do it, you say it, and you don't even have to think about it really. You just make the sounds, noises, and words, and you think 'absolutely yes,' [but] it was like 'fuck, no' every single time. I couldn't differentiate between it being me just being hard on myself, or if it was like actually 'fuck, no.' Now, I realize it was definitely 50/50."

As with Youssef's internal lyrical struggles, *Still There's a Glow* was born of trial and error, and marks a shift in Sweet Pill's creative dynamic. The upcoming LP is their first time writing an album in its entirety as a quintet; *Where the Heart Is* was written with two different lineups, with some songs being reworked before the final product. *Still There's a Glow* began and finished with guitarists Jayce Williams and Sean McCall, bassist Ryan Cullen, and drummer Chris Kearney.

"I'm telling you, nothing was easy about this," Youssef asserts, while McCall says "Sonically and emotionally, *Still There's a Glow* covers a lot of ground upon self-reflection, learning from mistakes, and moving through the motions and emotions of being a human being. The process

of this record came from a lot of trial and error until the album essentially shaped and formed itself naturally.”

From the first note, *Still There's a Glow* sounds like a band that has put itself back together. The first track “Sunblind,” is upbeat and affirmative, the opening lyrics reading like advice;

*“Push back your hair so that you can see
Clear the air with every breath you breathe
Say the words you really mean
I'm alive!”*

With lyrics throughout that feel deeply determined in the face of daily struggles with pressure and self-doubt, *Still There's a Glow* represents the process of resolving internal issues. The songs are hard-hitting and crisply recorded as a result of engineering from Gradwell House wizards Matt Weber (producer, engineer, mixing) and Dave Downham (mastering), but these bouncy tracks are a little bit betrayed by titles that are largely surreal depictions of fire and carry themes of destruction with titles like “Sunblind,” “No Control,” “Glow,” “Smoke Screen,” “Slow Burn,” and “Rotten.” It's clear these titles also inform the tendencies in Youssef's life and personal relationships while the album art itself, created by trusted collaborator Kerry Dunn who has overseen the visual consistency between all of Sweet Pill's releases, is a clear explanation of the lyrics, *“I feel flammable, my mouth is a torch”* in the song “Smoke Screen,” and *“Burning the house I grew up in”* in the song “Letting Go.” The burning feelings are constant, and though she's in therapy now, Youssef is living the reality of a true artist. You simply have to find purpose in your suffering before you can direct and resolve it. She is unable to be defeated by self-confrontation. She is unable to be caged in a prison of her own design. In the aptly named “Tough Love,” Youssef reveals;

*“I am scared, but not a coward.
The difference is in the definition you give it.
Tough love, so toughen up.
What I have's enough.”*

Still There's a Glow is available through Hopeless Records.