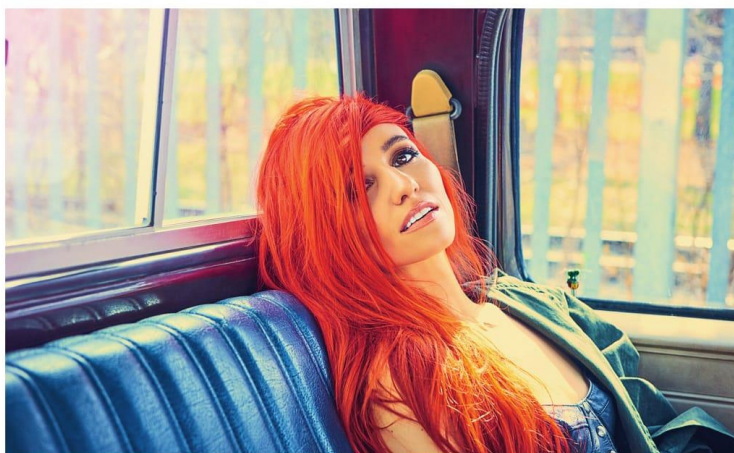


# DEPARTURES

1.4M Print Circulation



Lights dyed her hair fire red to match that of En, the heroine of her comic *Skin&Earth*.



## THE POP DIVA COMIC AUTEUR

*Lights's new album serves as a soundtrack to her own graphic novel series.*

Canadian artist Lights (née Valerie Anne Poxleitner) acquired a niche following in the late 2000s for her smart, synth-driven, indie-pop songs—but this month, with the release of her fourth studio album, *Skin&Earth* (Warner Bros.), the 30-year-old proves she's a full-on pop powerhouse. The record is one component of an ambitious larger project: It has a corresponding six-issue comic series (Dynamite Entertainment) that's written, lettered, and inked by the singer herself; each installment incorporates lyrics from songs on the album. Both the album and the series center on a character named En, a

young woman battling her demons in a postapocalyptic, hypercapitalist world. To get further into character leading up to the album's planned release on September 22, Lights even dyed her hair fire red to match her heroine's.

"Comics have always influenced my aesthetic and the content of my art," she says. "They aren't just about superheroes, and they're not just for kids. They're at the forefront of social issues. Yet people might think the album is going to be this meandering art piece that really doesn't care about radio. But I wanted this to be the best pop album I could make—just still

have this underlying concept and this really cool comic to accompany it."

Though *Skin&Earth* is filled with Marvel-esque imagery—for example, on the summery, feel-good track "Kicks," Lights proclaims, "It's how we get our kicks/Machete in the sticks"—it doesn't alienate listeners who aren't versed in graphic novels. The singer's ultimate goal is to make standout pop that is also sharp and self-aware. And vocally, she brims with confidence, often forgoing her typically delicate delivery for a supercharged punch, more pop siren than indie darling. "I found a new place in my voice," she says. "This more soulful, powerful place that I've never sung from before. There was strength there that I previously never really knew existed. That tied into my vision of En and how she came to be."

—Avery Stone