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## the beat

# HOW STARS TAKE ON TEGAN & SARA

With the covers album *The Con X: Covers*, Sara Bareilles, Hayley Williams and more reimagine the duo's momentous LP

BY CHRIS PAYNE

In 2007, Canadian alt-poppers **Tegan & Sara** released *The Con*, a career-defining album and beacon of hope to thousands of misunderstood young listeners, many from the same LGBTQ community as the **Quin** twins. It came at a particularly tumultuous time: "I was going through a divorce, and my relationship with Tegan had become incredibly difficult partly due to the stress and anxiety," remembers Sara, 37. "I felt actually sick onstage most of the time." Through its bite-sized hooks and jittery indie-rock salvos, *The Con* lays bare the dreams and demons of its creators, and now, some of their closest allies. They've commissioned 14 artists including **Cyndi Lauper** and **Bleachers** to interpret its 14 tracks on *The Con X: Covers*, due Oct. 20 on Warner Bros. Sara and collaborators such as **Sara Bareilles**, **Shura** and **PVRIS' Lynn Gunn** reflect on the groundbreaking album.



Sara (left) and Tegan Quin celebrate the 10-year anniversary of their fifth album, *The Con* (inset).



### SARA BAREILLES

The pop singer met the pair on the 2010 Lilith Fair revival tour. "I don't exactly remember the joke, but Sara is still in my phone as 'Sara from Tegan and Sara (Also a Heathen),' " says Bareilles. The Broadway-approved artist's take on "Floorplan" comes off even more ominous than the original: "I love when they play against the sadness of a lyric by making it upbeat," she says. "I mostly lean toward depressing things in my own life, but that's fine."



### HAYLEY WILLIAMS

"We've toured with **Paramore**," recalls Sara, who commissioned the trio's powerhouse vocalist to cover "Nineteen." Paramore, which released its spunky new wave LP, *After Laughter*, in May, got to know the Quins after inviting them out on tour in 2010. Four years later, the band secured the duo as main support on its inaugural Parahoy! cruise.



### LYNN GUNN

"When I was in seventh grade, my best friend's sister had just come out to her family," says Gunn, "and she was introducing my friend to Tegan & Sara." Gunn, who at 18 came out to her parents on the eve of PVRIS' first tour, flipped the anxious rock track "Are You Ten Years Ago" into a mystical synthscape. "I wanted to take its darker chord progression and roll with that [and] bring the PVRIS element to it."



### SHURA

The English singer recalls figuring out her own sexuality in her early teens. "Growing up as a queer teenager, *The Con* was the most important Tegan & Sara record in my personal and musical upbringing." Shura adapted *The Con*'s strummy title track into a spacey, electronic epic. "The whole record is perfect," she says. "I just wanted to explore a different sonic landscape."



### RYAN ADAMS

Adams cameos on the twee earworm "Back in Your Head," spinning it into a work of amp-rattling rock. His connection to the sisters goes back to when he took them on tour in 2002. "It was one of the first tours we did where the big headlining artist was coming to our dressing room like, 'Do you want to hang out?'" recalls Sara. "We didn't feel like we had a community then, but now that we have more power and leverage, we can create the community that we want."