

Singer-songwriter Beth Yap plans to enrol in Berklee College of Music in Boston.

ST PHOTO: MARCUS TAN



## Inspired by a piece of floating ash

While walking home one day, soul-pop/funk singer-songwriter Beth Yap was mesmerised by the sight of a few people burning hell notes.

"I saw a piece of ash floating in the wind and I thought, if I were to describe it poetically, I would say that it was dancing in the wind," says the 22-year-old, one of the newer home-grown acts performing on the second day of music festival Getai Soul this weekend.

That experience inspired her to write a song, *Beauty For Ashes*, that eventually became the title track to her debut album that will be launched with a gig at the Esplanade Recital Studio on May 31.

Yap, who performs under the moniker *bittymacbeth*, might be a new name in the Singapore scene, but she has been writing songs for most of her life.

"I would be making up my own songs about going to my grandmother's house at the age of seven," says Yap, who started piano lessons at the age of six.

"Music was something kind of natural to me, growing up in a musical family."

Her retired father, who used to run a desktop publishing business, was a guitar teacher. Her mother works as an editorial and communications specialist. Yap has an older brother, 25, who plays music as well.

Family events were always a musical affair and Yap says events such as Christmas gatherings were always lively with singalongs.

The Tanjong Katong Girls' School alumna convinced her parents to let her enrol in Singapore Polytechnic, where she graduated with a diploma in music and audio technology.

Awarded the school's SP Scholarship and SP Music and Arts Scholar-

ship, she honed her chops as a performer, composer and arranger there.

She was also active in the school's SP Jazz Band and fronts neo-soul group *Afterglow* with other members of the jazz group.

A three-week game and audio workshop in San Francisco, part of the polytechnic's overseas immersion programme, resulted in another song on her album, *Californian Dream*.

"I wrote part of the song while I was on the rooftop of the hostel we were staying at. We climbed up the fire escape so we could hang out on the roof.

"It was kind of chilly and we were just wearing our pyjamas and you could feel the wind and you could see the leaves changing colours because the season was turning into autumn."

The song, together with another early single released ahead of the album, *Haters Gon' Hate*, charted at No. 4 on Apple Music's Top R&B/Soul Singapore chart. Both songs were produced together with singer-songwriter Dru Chen, who is also performing at Getai Soul.

Come September, Yap, who is single, plans to head to the United States and enrol in music school Berklee College of Music in Boston, where she intends to study in the four-year contemporary writing and production degree programme.

She has already secured two scholarships from the school worth \$19,000, as well as a National Arts Council Arts Undergraduate scholarship capped at \$100,000.

She says: "I want to be an all-rounded performer, songwriter and arranger. I want to learn production too, so that in the future, I can be a producer and arrange for other artists."