

## SHOWCASE



**"I think success is being able to like what you do and how you do it and look at yourself in the mirror and be proud," says singer JoJo.**

PATONYA PARKER

"RV" with Robin Williams.

Navigating a mercurial entertainment industry, she battled pressure to change her sound and image, and distribution problems at her label prevented her from releasing a third studio album for years.

Looking back, she said: "I don't think that my experience as a child star was that hard. I was and continue to be so incredibly blessed. And there were things that I needed to grow through. I think the most challenging thing is when adulation and validation is introduced into a developing brain and injected into a young person's system. That is a drug. And it changes the way that they're going to develop. And it took me a long time to be able to even somewhat not need the validation of others to be OK with any decision I make."

## JOJO

**When:** 7 p.m. March 15

**Where:** Ramova Theatre, 3520 S. Halsted St.

**Tickets:** \$35

**Info:** [ramovachicago.com](http://ramovachicago.com)

Fame wasn't her only addiction. In her memoir, JoJo writes about her parents' struggles with drugs and alcohol and her own unhealthy coping mechanisms. She said her father died in 2015, but her mother has maintained sobriety for the last 10 years.

"I'm so inspired by that," she said of her mother's achievement.

JoJo endured ups and downs even after parting with Blackground in 2014 and signing with other major labels.

She has amassed a solid body of work beyond her early hits and popular interpretation of Drake's 2011 song "Marvin's Room" and won a Grammy in 2020 for "Say So," her collaboration with PJ Morton.

"I think success is being able to like what you do and how you do it and look at yourself in the mirror and be proud," she said. "I think success is in our relationships. It's feeling good in this body and having a good relationship with it."

That sense of self-acceptance is reflected in "Porcelain," which JoJo said was inspired by kintsugi, the Japanese art of repairing broken ceramics with lacquer and gold powder.

"We're all just walking kintsugi," she said.

BY ERICA THOMPSON,  
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# JOJO ON JOURNEY TO SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Ahead of her show at the Ramova Theatre, the singer and former child star reflects on her professional and personal challenges

**A** propulsive beat. An Uncle Luke sample. Lyrics about surrender and self-forgiveness.

On paper, the combination might seem strange, but singer JoJo has transformed the elements into a danceable self-help anthem in "Porcelain," a single from her new EP "NGL."

"It's like running full-force down the street crying, like I have to let go of something that I've been holding on to," JoJo said of the song. "And sometimes you're crying at the club, or sometimes you're driving in the car, and you're blasting music. And I've just been there so many times before. We really just played with the sample and hoped that it could work."

Chicago fans will hear the track live March 15 at the Ramova Theatre. The pop and R&B artist's knack

for experimentation has been a trademark of her more than 20-year career. She circumvented a long legal battle with her label, Blackground Records, by recording independent mixtapes and one-off song covers. In 2018, she regained control of her first two albums by rerecording them and making them available to stream for the first time. Between projects, she took a chance and nabbed the role of Satine in "Moulin Rouge!," mak-

ing her Broadway debut in 2023.

Last year, she wrote a memoir, "Over the Influence," which became a New York Times bestseller.

Now, recording on her own independent record label, Clover Music, the former child star is continuing to forge her own path.

"My whole life has been learning on the job," said JoJo, 34, who lives in New York. "I think all of us are. I've just never really felt like I 100% know what's going on. I'm just figuring it

out, like that sense of 'jump, and the net will appear' or 'just go ahead, and write through whatever it is you're feeling even if you don't know how it's going to come together. Just go ahead and be an artist, and don't worry about it too much.'"

JoJo achieved fame early, signing with Blackground Records in 2003 at 12. In the following years, she released hit songs "Leave (Get Out)" and "Too Little Too Late" and acted in movies including



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# SHOWCASE

## JOJO'S

## JOURNEY

JoJo plays the Ramona  
Theatre on March 15.  
CALLUM HUTCHINSON

**Singer reflects on overcoming personal and professional challenges  
in a career that's taken her from child star to Grammy winner,  
Broadway performer and bestselling author**

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