



In

Conversation

Djeity

Interview by Tom Adshead

Editorial Photography by Sabrina Jolicoeur, MUTEK Set Photography by Vivien Gaumand

I sat down with Djeity (Della Orrey) at their studio to catch up after her performance at MUTEK 2025. The live show, *Things Are Not What They Seem*, blends live vocals, cinematic soundscapes, and immersive visuals. We ended up talking about the process of collaboration, some finer points on music production, and knowing when to let go.

[Interview edited for clarity]

TOM ADSHEAD

Starting off, who are you? Where you from? What do you do?

DELLA ORREY

I am Della Orrey, I'm a sound designer, composer, artist, pianist, singer-songwriter, and producer based in Tiohtià:ke - Mooniyang - Montréal.

TOM

You just had your debut at MUTEK. The performance was called "*Things Are Not What They Seem.*" Or was it "*As They Seem?*" Because I know that there was a typo on the program. What does the title mean for you?

DELLA

There was a typo. *Things Are Not What They Seem*, or *As They Seem...* Similar interchangeable meanings, but I think I like the posture of that as you can accept things at face value or question them. There's been a loss of critical thinking at times I find, so I wanted to lead with intrigue, in a way, because I know that things are really not as they seem with myself personally. I've been attempting to move through a lot of personal disappointment and intense disillusionment around myself, my identity and the world around me. So yeah, that's what the title(s) reference.

TOM

I feel like the sound of the project borrows from a bunch of places. I'm hearing explicitly a lot of melodic techno, which I know is what you've put out so far. But also, some of the kind of breaky stuff made me think of like 90s trip hop. There's also the orchestral elements that come through with the live cello. In your second track, which was a purely vocal piece, I heard a lot of Nina Simone. You're pulling from all these places; how would you describe like a sonic palette for yourself?

DELLA

Oof. How would I describe a Sonic palette for myself? Probably personal experience. That's the best two-word answer I can give you.

TOM

Right. And I know also, for context, part of your experience is in film scoring. "Cinematic" is a word that comes to mind when listening to your stuff.

DELLA

Oh, cool. Thank you!

TOM

So I'm wondering if there's any kind of bleed between those two practices? If you get into a similar mindset when writing as Djeity that you have when scoring for films?

DELLA

Yes and no. I would say when I'm working with a visual collaborator, like a director or a brand, I'm building something according to reference points that the client will provide. When working on a film, it's a similar process but also interpreting the intention of the story and it's characters are crucial; it's the actors' emotions, the unseen space you fill with silence, music or sound design. You can really have your own storytelling going on that you get lost in by yourself. I'm hired for those jobs within a position of trust, right? Because there's so much work, collaboration, time and money that goes into making a film - any one production is really so many moving parts. So when I appear in post production, the film's in the final sprint, right? I get to bring a new layer into the process. I'm always honoured and thankful to do that work.

In comparison, steering my own ship was an incredibly difficult start, due to a lack of belief in myself. Coming out of the background with all this technology, I've been able to do everything from start to finish, but I don't necessarily think that you should. It's good to collaborate with people. And it's really good to lend your vision to others that you trust. It helps with the massive fatigue of it all. I haven't been able to be in a position where I view myself and the songs that I create accurately or positively, due to my reasons that I'm working through.. So I've really been in my own way for so many years, to be fully honest. That's what's been so useful about working in film, the experience, track record to complete something and the muscles of being able to trust my own intuition in time.

“...you can accept things at face value or question them. There's been a loss of critical thinking at times I find, so I wanted to lead with intrigue.”

Photography provided courtesy of MUTEK and Vivien Gaumand





TOM Speaking of collaboration, I was wondering if you could talk about your visual presentation with your single artwork and the live visuals for the Satosphere Projection? You're working with al1z [Alice Aterman] to help launch this project and define the way people listen to your music. I think, more and more, music is totally defined by all the visual material surrounding it, everything you see before you hit 'play.' So how was that process for you, collaborating on the visuals for the MUTEK show?

DELLA

It was really fun. I created a document for Alice, as she said that she needed cues. So I went through my Tumblr for visual references, and the idea of a flower motif came from that, because I really wanted something that was hard, pointy, and yet beautiful you know? Alice has such expertise with the dimensions and colours and what everything will look like. So I really let her do her own thing as I trusted her. Looking back I think it did take a lot of trust and communication. It's actually kind of hard for me to sometimes centre what it is that I want when it when I know that it may involve more work for

someone else. But I asked myself; "what do you like and what don't you like here?" Because this is coming off of about four years of failed visual projects for myself personally. I've been at this for a while. But when the time is right, the time is right, and when it feels good, it feels good and aligned. At the end of the day I'm just thankful that I'm happy with how it sounds, which is my lane, and anything Alice does is going to look really dope. This is also just a starting point for both of us that we can then refine and build off of as we perform more together in the future.

TOM I think it's super special when you can clearly see the trust artists have in each other, working collaboratively. That's a result of time spent working together. I was wondering, what would be an example of something you would tell Alice when you were working together on visuals?

DELLA

Yeah, I do have an example. So the cover art for *Universe* at first didn't feel like it was complete. So I just stepped away for a couple of days and then asked for a revision. But in the meantime, as a placeholder holder for distribution, I was messing around and ended up zoomed in on my favourite part of the image, and I really liked the way that looked. I ended up handing that to Alice and being like, "I actually love this feather part, and I just wish that this chrome circle could wrap around in the background, and then let's get rid of that extra background colour." Ended up being a slight change, but after the image just had that sense of completion regardless of the stress and pressure we were under at the time at that

point. But I was like, "I don't want to always look at this cover art and wonder what could have happened if I hadn't pushed." And sure enough, like I felt like so much better after asking for changes. I think art is about letting go, knowing when to not push further. You could always push ideas more and more, and sometimes it's just a little bit unnecessary. I think film has taught me how to just let things go. Like, yes, you could lose your mind over the final ten, five, two percent, but no one is going to notice these things. No one. So it's like, you have to be a bit self critical and ask, "is this the final 5% that you're like giving yourself 120% of the overall anxiety over really worth it?" Probably time to just let it go.

TOM That neatly leads into the next question I have. I feel - from personal experience - that everyone has their own sense of when a project is "done." In my own work, most of that process is making a track sound like it's mine and not just cool-sounding. What's the process for you when you're writing something down? Do you sit with the first elements of a track for a while, or does it kind of just come together all at once?

DELLA

*Universe* came together all at once. Like, it was just like, "bam! yay! it's here!" I was excited about it, because it felt good, and fun which hasn't always been the case as my other tracks have come from extremely painful points of my life. All of that emotion, and pain gets shot out into a track, or my lyrics, in desperation to have it all outside of me.

*Sugar City* is an example of this and I don't want to always be songwriting in that way as I don't think it's healthy. I want to write from a place of other emotions, like radical joy, healing, remembrance and triumph. For me, creating is easy to start - but it's another thing to finish.

TOM I think that's why, in your MUTEK set, ending with *Universe* felt like a punctuation or something. It felt explosively fun and bright, coming out of the other tracks. I thought the sequencing of the entire show felt really thoughtful.



Vivien Gaumand, MUTEK

DELLA

Thank you! Yeah, because *Universe* is who I am now, you know? And it really didn't start that way. There's just so much material I haven't shared yet. I'm sitting on whole eras of my life and it's sort of overwhelming. So yeah, this project is about storytelling, partly based on personal experience, and partly just some cool experiments in Ableton that came together really quickly and sounded dope to me. For the MUTEK performance I wanted to challenge myself- I initially thought I was going to perform in Ableton, but then I realized I really love CDJs. As a post-pandemic-lockdown outlet, CDJs have actually helped me love and discover music all over again. I just had no idea that DJing and the art of mixing in general was so much fun. I know a lot of people are really familiar with CDJs and some other people might think that they're tired, but for me, I was like: "oh no, this is exactly where I'm at right now, I want to be able to use this gear and also be able to sing or play whatever instruments are around me." It feels like a point of accessibility right now. But I have plans and one day I want to work with a live orchestra, you know? And one day I want a tuned grand piano, and to be in a concert hall. And then after that concert I would go to the club, and open a lineup with all my friends who DJ. And then the next day I could host a production workshop? I think the way I want to be involved with music isn't really centered around a metric of success like alcohol sales, venue politics or whatever. It's about community, it's about skill sharing and worldbuilding.

TOM On that note, if you're down, I'm kind of interested in nerding out a little bit in terms of production. Any kind of production-nerd stuff you want to share?

DELLA

Yay, absolutely! I'm obsessed with a wide, hollow bassline. I love it so much. Fun fact- I don't really like snare drums. I don't really use snare drums at all, haha. I think they throw off the entire mix. For me personally, I'd prefer to use pretty much anything else; I'll use the rim, I'll use a clap. I'll lay it like a tick in the distance. My mixing engineer and I, we came up with a term called a "knocker beat" for my style of percussion. It's definitely inspired by Burial, and that whole late 90's early dub kind of sound. But yeah, sorry-not-sorry about snares - I'd rather take a rim. Love a rim.

TOM The Burial reference is super useful. I was also thinking about the relation between your stuff and the other acts on the MUTEK lineup the night you performed; while you were playing the dome, Loidis was playing downstairs. He's tapped into the 00's dub sound. All of his percussion is super... 'squishy' I guess? And he rounds off the high-end of his drums super aggressively. Maybe he's also making knocker beats? It's a new term, hahah.



Courtesy of Sabrina Jolicoeur

“with all this technology, I’ve been able to do everything from start to finish, but I don’t necessarily think that you should. It’s good to collaborate with people.”

DELLA

Yeah, perhaps it’s a Djeity original, haha... I feel like the chaotic, distorted beats were what I was writing when I was getting my ass kicked living in New York City. Those years were a perpetually exhausting and enriching experience and I was finding peace in all that chaos being surrounded by a population where no one knew me. I know most people feel stressed out when they’re in crowds like that, but growing up in a remote small town, it was the first time I just felt so comforted to be around that many people. But yeah, knocker beats.

TOM Now that you’ve sort of identified your sound, are there any artists you feel a sort of kinship with? Anyone you hear yourself in?

DELLA

I’ve been listening to Chanpan a lot. They’re a very, very cool New York band and I think they’ll do really well. They’re awesome! I also really love Ouri’s stuff.

TOM Local legend. You guys both played MUTEK this year.

DELLA

Like, oh my gosh, I’ve been so inspired by Ouri, I feel held by her music. And of course Monsieurmadam, huge shoutout. I think they’re who I truly feel a kinship with. I want to tour and be on the lineups with Monsieurmadam, hands-down.

TOM What are your thoughts on Montréal’s music scene right now? How have you related to it as someone who’s lived in a place like New York?

DELLA

Montréal is such an incredible place to try and start whatever you want. People are so open here, and supportive. And the risk is relatively low, right? Your overhead is lower here than other North American cities, but most importantly, the energy is really open towards the arts. This is one of the few places in Canada where I feel like people genuinely have the space, time and willingness to support artists. There’s a lot of free shows, free festivals, and free public programming so it’s just really baked into the culture. I come from BC, which is a very different environment. I have experienced a genuine appreciation for anything artistic from Montréalers and that gives you the ability to grant yourself permission. I’m really thankful for this place. It has my heart.

TOM What’s next for Djeity? Or Della? Or both?

DELLA

Well, I have a residency on Vancouver Island, which will allow me to take a well-deserved break. I’m planning on preparing an ambient set for my show in Vancouver for *Ambient / Etc.* I’m hoping to create drones, capture field recordings, and implement sound art overtop excerpts from Nina Simone and James Baldwin. Then in the late fall I’ll come back to Montréal and work on some vocal recordings. I’m a little nervous about it, because so far my vocals have been performed live. So I’m excited to get more comfortable with that process within the studio. I think that’s an area I need to improve in as a producer, and as a performer. Then I’ll have another single ready hopefully for November, and I’m hoping to roll out my first album in early 2026. My personal goal is to do an international residency as I want to develop a reactive, immersive performance. I would love to introduce movement - my own movement - to my live sets, so I’ve been planning for that. I’d love to challenge this whole disconnect between audiences and the artist. I really want to rethink that setup. I don’t want to be like disconnected physically from the audience by a stage or a barrier that’s, like, something that doesn’t feel good to me. So yeah, I have some workshopping to do - it’s exciting! ■