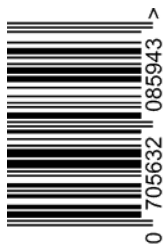


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Issue 06



A.G. Cook • Hannah Diamond • Timothy Luke • Uffie • Yuele • Bladee • Black Dresses



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ALBUM
REVIEW

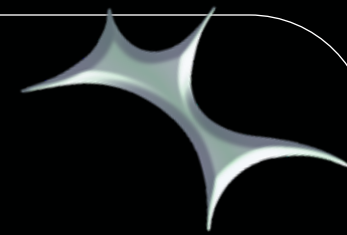
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UFFIE

7

PC MUSIC

ALBUM REVIEW



CREST__BLADEE/ECCO2K

While the conception of a seraphic realm feels Christian, the philosophical approach taken is more Buddhist. Bladee and Ecco are all-too-aware of the pitfalls on the road to self-improvement, falling into traps of materiality and vanity; as one track bluntly puts it, "Desire Is a Trap." At the core of the quest for ascension, there's still an emptiness, a desire for beauty and perfection that can evolve into covetousness—the group's hesitancy to foreground their own faces makes sense given the frequent lyrical yearning for a different life and self. Mantras are central to Bladee and Ecco's approach to songwriting, as words shift and transform into one another through a kind of spiritual looping; "Yeses (Red Cross)" begins with Bladee repeating the words "Literal Christ, literal Crest" and ends with Ecco's tongue-twister refrain of "Sex sells/Success/Yes, yes."

GLITCH PRINCESS__YUELE



Personal disaster occurs at the same scale as actual apocalypse on Glitch Princess. Where yeule once favored synthetic harp swells and breathy vocal harmonies, there's now industrial booms, throbbing audio feedback, and synths like thousands of bottle rockets whistling off into the sky at once. The enormity of the sounds make mundane actions—bleeding, eating, having sex—feel precipitous. yeule sings about leaving their "real" body, suggesting there's somewhere else for consciousness to go. Maybe there will be soon, and we'll indeed have to re-learn those essential behaviors as if from the beginning. For all their pessimism, yeule offers one consolation: When contemplating the body's destruction, needs that might have otherwise been hidden can unselfconsciously emerge, like to be seen or known or loved completely.



FORGET YOUR OWN FACE__BLACK DRESSES

Forget Your Own Face is both their slightest album to date, and maybe the most essential to understanding why Black Dresses keep making music. There's distortion as always, but the production feels cleaner, with less emphasis on speaker-destroying bass. It leaves more room to hear the camaraderie between the two members, particularly when McCallion's tender vocal fry and Rook's screams go head-to-head on "Let's Be." "No Normal" is another standout in this regard, with call-and-response vocals and frantic drums that make good on the group's stated Linkin Park influence—it's like "Faint" combined with the stimulant of your choice. Songs like "No Normal" and "Money Makes You Stupid" prove Black Dresses can do nostalgia and goofiness as well as anyone, but they incorporate it seamlessly into their own aggressively blown-out sound.

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PHOTOGRAPHY JEANNE BUCHI

BLOGHOUSE QUEEN UFFIE IS BACK TO RECLAIM HER CROWN

ANNA CAFOLLA

12 APRIL 2022

A PIONEER OF THE WILDLY INFLUENTIAL MOVEMENT, UFFIE DROPPED ONE ALBUM AND DISAPPEARED. A DECADE ON, SHE'S BACK AND MAKING MUSIC ON HER OWN TERMS.

POV: it's 2009 and you're getting the party started (right?). You're getting drunk, and freaky fly(-y-y-y). You button up your American Apparel disco pants, reject the incoming call on your BlackBerry Bold, and emerge from the dank bathroom into Erol Alkan's Trash in London, or an Institutbes night in Paris, or Dim Mak Tuesdays at Cinespace Los Angeles. A fresh Ed Banger signee – found because of a particularly pumping Peaches edit on MySpace – just finished the warm up. A chugging bass reverberates, and a twisting wrench sound rallies the sweaty crowd. A hoity toity voice percolating with autotune and cool-girl affect cuts through the fug – “MC am I people call me Uff, when I rock the party you bust a nut.”

Bloghouse was a scene known more for its energy and aesthetics than any set of presiding sonic rules. Its sound traversed indie, hip-hop, electro house, dappled by bootlegged edits and chaotic mashups, and fed off MySpace, Limewire, and microblogs of the internet, before bleeding onto scenester dancefloors across the world. Today's biggest bangers are indebted to bloghouse – the producers of Dua Lipa, BTS, and Doja Cat hits were most certainly frequenting the Ed Banger nights of the late 00s. In Lina Abascal's recent book, *Never Be Alone Again: How Bloghouse United the Internet and the Dancefloor*, producer A-Trak shares that what unified the scene was the “general idea of collisions”. It was a time when the forum and the bulletin board shaped the cultural landscape, expanding beyond traditional music consumption, record stores, and radio. Art, self-definition, and music community codification were in the people's hands, and the internet made genres gloriously creative and weird. MySpace profile tweaks and proximity to fans made things pretty personal, and the combination of all that made its oddball stars international. As Abascal notes in her book, it could only have happened at that one hyper specific moment in time.

Uffie's “Pop The Glock” was a glistening maraschino cherry on top of this DIY sundae, and maybe the first ‘viral’ hit. Not that she set

out to sit atop that pedestal. The scene's sticky high-gloss, creative collisions, and playful impermanence mirrors her own narrative thread. Uploading her first tune to MySpace in 2005, she was catapulted into a realm where she collaborated with everyone from Pharrell to Crystal Castles, Featz, and Ed Banger labelmates Justice. The Hong Kong-born, Miami-raised, Paris-based indignant kid of both the internet and party circuit, she embarked on a whirlwind global club tour through 2009 and 2010, and dropped her full-length debut, *Sex Dreams and Denim Jeans*, steering and defining the scene with acerbic rhymes and an electro rap, disco-y house sound clash. During this time, she also lost her mother, gave birth to her daughter, got divorced, and had her son. Eventually, she moved out to Joshua Tree, CA, to take a real hiatus. Now, the indie sleaze cultural revival sees the era's aesthetics emerging once again, as a new gen discovers a taste for its carefree sounds and liberated atmosphere. A decade after her first record dropped, Uffie – real name Anna-Catherine Hartley – is once again at the eye of a cultural storm. “Where does the party go?” she asked last month, as part of a track from her forthcoming album *Sunshine Factory*, which is billed as a haven for “the daydreamers, the freaks, the lovers, and the escapists”. Today, she releases pulsing new track “sophia”. *Sunshine Factory* recalls the vivid, at times pithy, always deceptively heartbreaking and

profound storytelling of her previous work. It melds this energy with the melancholic pop of her 2019 EP *Tokyo Love Hotel*, but delves further into the dualities Uffie has always thrived in, the euphoric highs and comedowns, and the intersections of the persona and the personal, as she parses a new perspective on life that she's gained in time away from music. Chaz Bear of Toro y Moi bolsters *Sunshine Factory*'s poppy, punky, electro driven production – and there's a delightful cameo from peer and fellow provocative pop agitator Peaches. Now 34 and living in LA with her two kids, she's spent time as a songwriter at pop's frontier, working with the likes of P!nk and Khalid, has collaborated with Charli XCX and Galantis, and embarked on tour with Sega Bodega.

We meet at London's Shoreditch House, where that day she was meant to get in the studio with Jessie Ware – but Storm Eunice stands in their way. We watch as a billboard pendulum swings precariously from a construction site crane outside. The mimosas on our table shake, and Uffie wraps herself a bit tighter in her neon orange furry coat. Tonight, she's hitting a rave hosted by PC Music affiliate Danny L Harle – weather warning be damned, we're ready to Uff.

“Cool”, your first single from the album, recalls original era Uff with its energy and playfulness, but it also highlights thrilling new sounds from you, and more meditative lyrics. Why was “Cool” the comeback single?

Uffie: “Cool” began this journey for me. The rest of the album came together in a more non-linear way, but “Cool” came first and really set my tone. It tied my old and new worlds together, and maybe felt like a palate cleanser?

Palate cleanser – I love that.

Uffie: Oh, it's my phrase of the week! I was really excited by writing and recording “Cool”, but I didn't really know how ready I was to go all in. The process though felt so organic and liberating – I knew I wanted Toro Y Moi to feature and Bear ended up as a core collaborator and bringing in live instruments I wouldn't even dream about. I got serious about putting a project together quickly after that. And I wanted to work with a smaller but still very strong group of people, not so strung out.

“Pop The Glock” and all your biggest tunes had lyrics that were so geared to be sung back to you by a crowd. With this record written in a pandemic, and with a different emotional perspective more broadly, how did you approach songwriting this time?

Uffie: I've spent a long time now writing for other artists. I've learned more about structure, and importantly, how to put myself really deeply in other people's shoes. I got tired of writing lyrics that were just like ‘Oh, my heart's broken!’ That happens to me all the time, sure! I wanted to explore the metaphorical, double meanings. I believe in writing what I know though, and I was going through a bad break up. I wrote things in an hour and really leaned into that crazy time. And in the pandemic, I got to really choose what to do.

“Sunshine Factory is something I came up with forever ago. I loved the idea of a Berghain-ass looking factory - grey and grim on the outside - that's so flamboyant and colourful inside, a safe little space”

My albums took so long to do. That first one was a struggle. Like I was so young I didn't even know an album was in my contract – I didn't realise I had to even make one when I was first signed. I was young, not serious about music, going out and playing shows three or four times a week. When the label asked where the record was I was like... ‘what record?’ Being on the road was difficult too, and I didn't have a prolonged period of time to knuckle down in the studio to produce a cohesive piece of work.

Tell me about when you first felt like you were popping off.

Uffie: When I put “Pop The Glock” on MySpace it just went crazy so quickly. It was my first introduction to social media and it was with the first song I wrote. I did what my friends did – put a song online. I thought this was my little online space and a cute thing for my profile. This was where we were all getting crazy intense over the drama of moving people out of our top friends and making silly songs – how did I know it would define this huge part of my life.

What's it like for you, as an artist coming from those more radical and capricious communities of music online, and seeing more set formulas for musicians to blow up on social media and orchestrate careers online? Where labels take socials super seriously, and there's a clear TikTok to Top Ten chart pipeline.

Uffie: It makes me a little sad, to be honest. I was just listening to this song I've been working on recently and I noticed how long the intro was. It builds so beautifully, and it requires you to sink into it and have patience. And what sucks about the current space is how the algorithm is based on the success of previous work and pre-existing things, of curating playlists of similar sounds for mass streaming. So what are we chasing? How sustainable is it? And then everything feels so temporary and engineered to attention spans no longer than 30 seconds.

There's a paradox really. On one hand, TikTok has the ability to blow up a small artist with one tune in the way MySpace did. It democratizes the space. But it's also one big corporate marketing scheme where our depleted attention spans are currency and labels and streaming platforms have the keys to the bank. I also think about how these social platforms throw up genres and music communities young people never experienced firsthand.

Uffie: ‘Indie sleaze!’

Please let's talk about that.

Uffie: The friend I'm staying with here used to throw parties called People Are Germs. That was the peak of it all. It's been hilarious going through old photos with her – like us in the bathtub with the Klaxons. Everyone in their shitty fluoro and RayBan knockoffs. It was a wild, hedonistic time when we lived our lives to go out. That's not the culture anymore. It's kind of funny to be at this point in my life where I see something I was so deeply in come back around. Bizarre, but fun. I think it's appropriate timing-wise for its return, now everybody's free from being locked up.

There was a blissful kind of naivete to that time. Where you weren't aware of the impact it would have. What's your relationship to your older body of work?

Uffie: I remember recording certain songs and feeling so uncomfortable, or nervous and hesitant about something I was saying. I will forever hear that, which other people can't – they just hear a record they love. Definitely “Our Song” – I remember feeling so vulnerable with it. The new stuff as well I think will take me a while before I can properly listen back – just because it's packed lyrically with intense memories I've hoarded for years.

How has motherhood impacted your output? Filming the “Pop The Glock” video in two parts with the birth of your daughter is such a crazy kind of metaphor I think!

Uffie: I’m more aware of the energy that I’m putting out into the world, for sure. There’s real vulnerable moments on this album, like “Giants” and “Crowdsurfinginyoursheets”. I worried they were too exposing. I wrote “Giants” for someone I really loved, and it first felt too raw. But it was important for me to have those peaks and lows.

“I was so young in this industry and I got exposed to a lot of shit no one should ever be, but now... I have never felt more confident than now, honestly. This has been important to me, as a woman in this industry and a single mom of two kids. It’s empowering to finally feel independent of producers who thought what they knew was best for me”

Where does the name for Sunshine Factory come from?

Uffie: It’s something I came up with forever ago actually. I like to keep little words and phrases I like on my notes app, for lyrics or projects. I thought maybe it would be a fashion brand. But I just loved the idea of a Berghain-ass looking factory – grey and grim on the outside – that’s so flamboyant and colourful inside, a safe little space. It also says so much about all the different possibilities of this record – like, live instruments that I’ve never done before – that’s really thanks to (Chaz) Bear – and feeling more fluid in playing with genre and style. I have real faith in what a testament this album is to who I am and what I am excited to make.

What ultimately brought you back to music?

Uffie: I am always looking for the best medium to truly express myself. I went to school to study fashion in Paris when I was young. After my mom died and I was in Joshua Tree, I did some painting, but I actually went to study biology. I moved to Seattle where my sister was after my divorce, and then I started flying to LA to work with producers and do songwriting. Coming to music from this different angle and reintroducing it into my life with a new lens was really liberating again.

“It’s empowering to finally feel independent of producers who thought what they knew was best for me. This is healing. I’m the one deciding, the one curating, the person who wants to be here.”

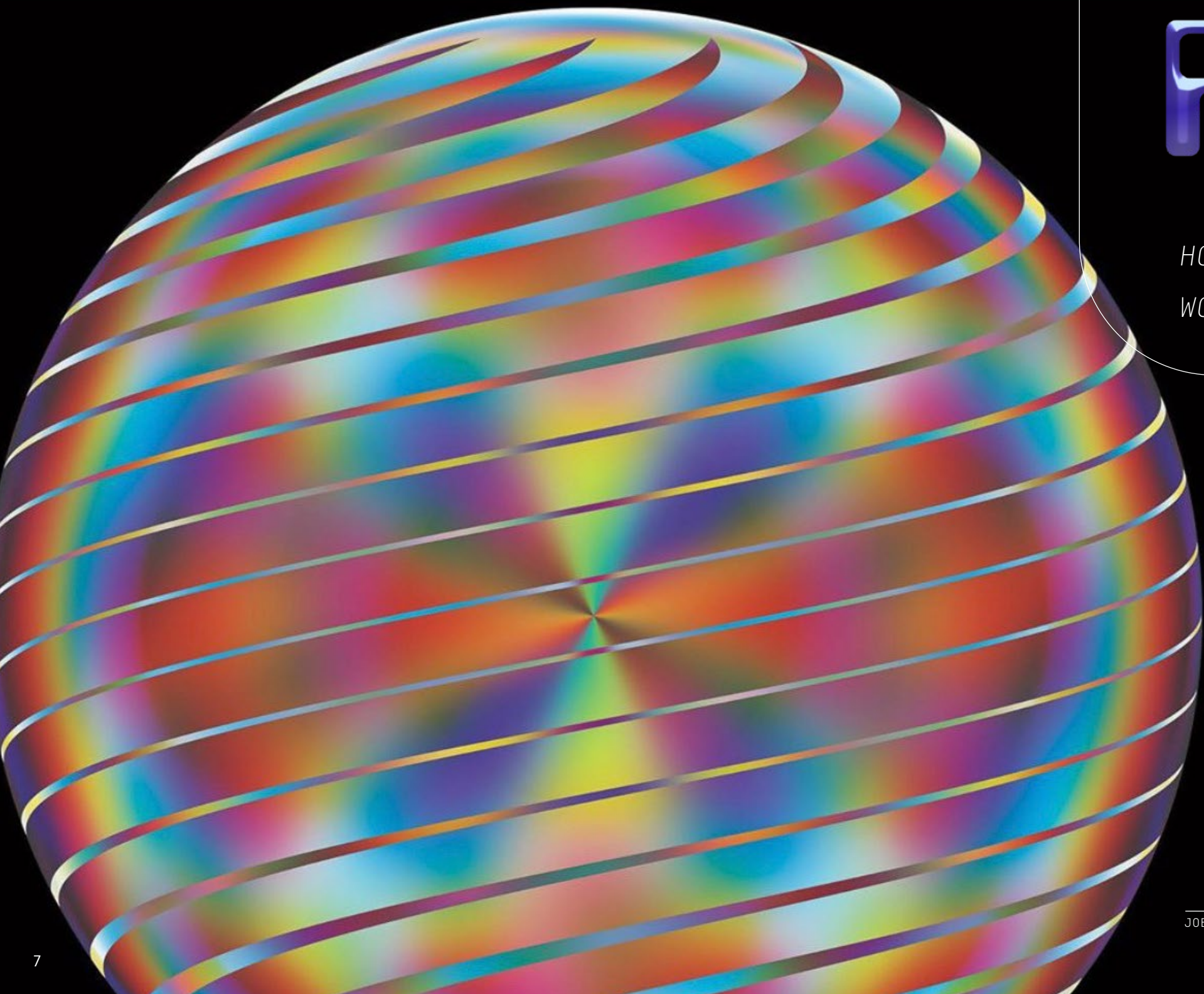
Have you thought about how you’re appealing to Day One fans, and a new era?

Uffie: I’m excited, and a bit scared. I think this is a time where communities go so hard for the music and artists they attach themselves to. Salv (Sega Bodega) is so tapped into that world, and working with him and seeing that has been refreshing. There’s a real power in music collectives right now. I was thankful to have that time to make music on my own but I love to find people through music – I met Salv on the internet and now we’re about to tour together. Him, Shygirl, and their crew are really cool to watch get bigger.

What is the presiding mood now?

Uffie: I was so young in this industry and I got exposed to a lot of shit no one should ever be, but now... I have never felt more confident than now, honestly. This has been important to me, as a woman in this industry and a single mom of two kids. It’s empowering to finally feel independent of producers who thought what they knew was best for me. This is healing. I’m the one deciding, the one curating, the person who wants to be here. I have a vocabulary that I didn’t have before that helps me take charge. I’m owning my 30s and getting older, and this feels like an adult record to me.





THE ART OF PC MUSIC

*HOW PC MUSIC REVOLUTIONISED A VISUAL
WORLD FOR POP MUSIC AND BEYOND*

Speaking to A.G. Cook, Hannah Diamond, Timothy Luke and more, we unearth the long history of PC Music's internet-oriented aesthetic

PC MUSIC

So often is the phrase “cultural reset” touted today that we regularly lose sight of the genuine moments which ruptured the zeitgeist. I’m talking about moments of rupture powerful enough to release tremors felt by the culture years after first breaking ground. One such cultural reset belongs to the record label and art collective PC Music. Starting in 2013 by musician and composer Alex “A. G.” Cook, the “DIY” label came onto the scene with a play on the visual language of 2000s minisites, and the glossy CGI-laden stock photos of popular advertising. The reappropriation of glossy hi-fidelity imagery was already being seen in the contemporary art world at the time (most noticeably by the collective DIS), but A. G.’s desire to take these aesthetic queues further into the virtual realm set it apart from the rest. “I was born in 1990, so I’ve got distinct memories of custom-coded GeoCities and Angelfire sites and elaborate Neopets guilds, as well as point-and-click games like The Longest Journey and The Neverhood,” A. G. tells me when we sit down to talk about the label’s early days. “By the 2010s, virtual space became much more defined by apps and social media, and I remember feeling nostalgic for that previous version of computer games and the internet, one that was a bit more unpredictable and DIY.”

Ever since the 2013 debut, so much about PC Music has already been said, discussed, and dissected across the internet that it’s hard to know where to even begin. In Dazed’s 2019 retrospective of the label, the magazine heralded PC Music as “the most exhilarating record label of the 2010s.” Whilst undeniably true, it summarises a more acute problem with the discourse over PC Music since its conception. It is, of course, the most exhilarating record label of the 2010s – but perhaps just as importantly, it is the most exhilarating visual art collective of that same decade.

There is no denying that PC Music’s aesthetic identity has always been synonymous with its pop and internet-orientated sound. “There’s always a discussion about how divisive PC Music was, but I think the visual side was received quite well, and explained the label’s musical aims pretty efficiently,” A. G. explains. “For me, it was important that each artist on the label would have their own specific visual aesthetic, and I spent a lot of time encouraging variety rather than something that could be easily pigeonholed.” A. G. is right in that the visual was generally received quite well – if you’re willing to look beyond the storm of confusion, criticism, and ignorance that plagued its sonic output of the time. It seemed, from the onset, many branded PC’s artistry as weird or kitsch parodies of pop. But, A. G. was always committed to crafting serious tributes to a culture he took quite seriously.

When I speak to the flurry of artists and musicians involved with PC Music, each conversation seems to underline PC’s commitment to its aesthetic and sonic output as entirely genuine and innovative. “PC Music has always had simple, strong, high fidelity imagery,” says Max Schramp, one of the co-founders and designers at Parent Company, a design studio that has been creating visuals and graphics for PC Music since 2018. “The label’s definitely always been home to visual art as much as music,” adds Umru Rothenberg, co-founder and designer at Parent Company, who released his first EP with PC Music as Umru in 2018. “I think PC has a strong sense of what imagery suits the label’s image and musical output without limiting the artists’ creative direction.” Parent Company’s own visual output is ostensibly impressive, employing “futuristic maximalist design that embodies tactile and emotional responses across all fields,” as states its own mission statement. “We dominate the somatosensory system,” it adds.

Somatosensory domination and futuristic maximalism are two key components of the kind of visuals and aesthetics that can be sourced from the success of PC Music’s original visual output back in the early 2010s. Emma Segal-Grossman, one of the designers at Parent Company, agrees as much. “We’re always finding that A. G. and PC have often, literally years ago, already explored the same ideas we think are interesting and funny now,” she says. Parent Company seems to only be expanding a universe which gave birth to them. When I touch on this with A. G., he brings up an astute array of comparisons to the universe-building nature of PC’s visual structure. “I always loved projects like Gorillaz and Daft Punk where the music was very overtly connected to a specific world of imagery, but I like to think that we’re actually a lot closer to that reality, like a reality where every band is a cartoon and every DJ is a stylised robot,” he says. It’s a fascinating point of view, one which leads him to the conclusion that PC’s visuals operate more as “a secret door connecting the mainstream and the underground” than anything else.

Of course, in the art world, the aesthetic landscape of PC Music was seen as a perfect blend of pop futurism, utopianism, and satire of accelerated capitalist consumerism. Contemporary art museums even started taking note of the aesthetic. But, as time has gone on and the label’s visual output has evolved, it’s clear that PC Music’s aes-

thetic was never intended to be about the future of art. It was always about the present. One artist who always understood this is Hannah Amond, more commonly known under the PC roster as Hannah Diamond.

“It’s funny because when you think about the millennium and all the imagery and the aesthetics around that time, people called that futuristic when actually it was just the present,” Hannah tells me when she sits down to chat in the midst of finishing her second album. “I think often

“It’s funny because when you think about the millennium and all the imagery and the aesthetics around that time, people called that futuristic when actually it was just the present”

what makes things seem futuristic is when something is aiming higher, or pushing something forward. Maybe that’s why PC Music got described as being futuristic.” Hannah was one of the original artists signed to the label back in its early DIY days and remains one of its most recognisable champions to date. Yet, whilst a pop star in her own right, Hannah’s work has always been equal parts visual as it has been sonic. Her debut amassed a flurry of confusion from fans and critics, thanks to her ultra retouched pseudo-Y2K glossy images on singles and EP releases.

“For me, I feel like my memories of when it all began conflict in some ways,” Hannah says. “It was a really exciting time because that was like a camp of people that were excited by it because I feel like not many people were really making images like us at all.”

She's right: the super-polished and super-DIY approach to the boundaries of retouching were bold and daring, especially for a label that was to be taken seriously in the industry. Many, however, believed Hannah to be the fake "think piece" project of A. G. Cook (similar to the rumours circulating about PC-adjacent producer Sophie Xeon at the time) hiding behind the crystallised avatar of Hannah Diamond. But, the truth was much further than that. "At the start, I really felt people discredited me and took away the agency that I have with my work," she says. "So with [my debut album] Reflections and the visual body of work I put out with it, I wanted to prove everybody wrong."

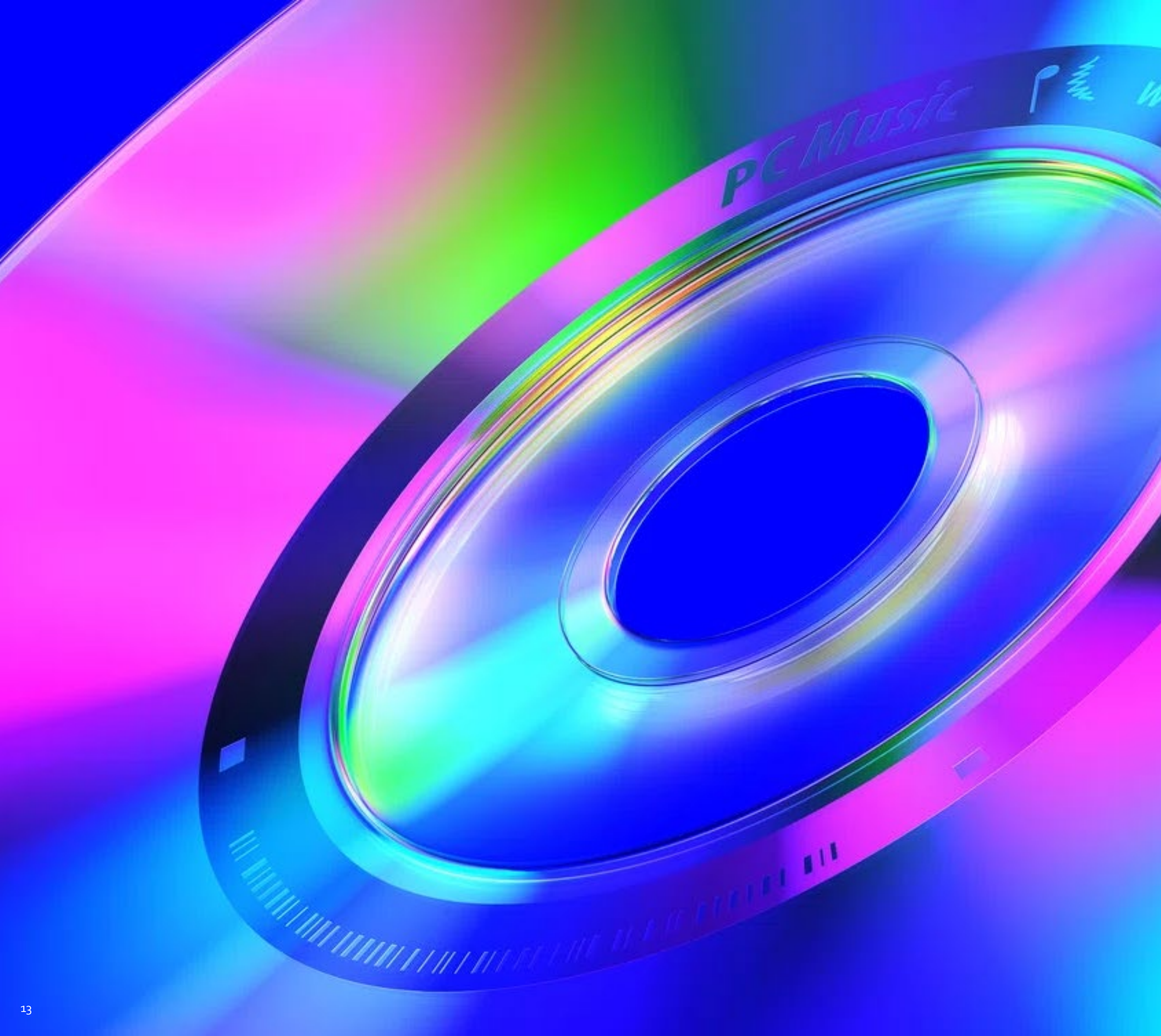
Looking back from 2022, it's easy to see Hannah was actually one of the individuals crafting pop aesthetics that is commonplace today. But, Hannah's visual journey began much more quietly. She was originally in fashion communication, looking to the forgone ad campaigns of clothing brand Miss Sixty for artist inspiration. "Being a visual artist was the main thing I was doing before music so for me music was another exciting way that I could channel more of creating an entire visual world," she adds. The more we talk, the more I notice Hannah ease into a gentle confidence, remaining humble yet concise and clear about her artistic intentions from the beginning. "My music with PC started developing in tandem with me developing my artistic style as a visual artist," she says.

"Because for me, it's always genuinely coming from a place of wanting to communicate a specific feeling of mine, and that aesthetic is something that I've been working on my whole life."

Hannah met A. G. shortly after he graduated from studying music, and describes him fondly as a "kindred spirit" who immediately understood her visual perspective. "I was fascinated by big budget pop music videos like Nicki Minaj's Super Bass and Britney's Hold It Against Me, which felt otherworldly but almost within reach," A. G. says. "With all sorts of software becoming more accessible, I really became interested in how ambiguous something with high production value could be." Together, they were both fascinated by the celebrity aesthetic and, namely, its crossover into advertising. "A. G. was looking at making pop songs for friends and thinking about friends as a celebrity kind of idea. And when we met, I was doing the same thing but with photos. I was taking pictures of my friends and making perfume campaigns with them."

It's not just her background in fashion that led Hannah to carve out her visuals. She's also a skilled photographer and graphic designer in her own right, and constructs all her own visuals (album/EP covers, logos, gifs, website, merchandise) from debut to the present day. She's even helped create the visuals for other artists, such as PC Music star Namasenda, and





Hyperdub-signed artist Klein. When I attend Hannah's gig in Vauxhall, I can tell by the array of on-stage visuals and outfit pieces that she's incredibly thorough in her visual output. It's no wonder that today she's in-demand for her visuals as much as she is for her music. Most interesting, though, is how Hannah recalls a different early reception to her visual work than A. G., a reception she describes as frosty. "It always surprised me when people said that the PC music aesthetic was ironic and ingenuine," she explains. "Because for me, it's always genuinely coming from a place of wanting to communicate a specific feeling of mine, and that aesthetic is something that I've been working on my whole life."

Whilst naysayers and confused consumers were plentiful, the cult following of dedicated and appreciative fans overwhelmed them, and A. G. wanted to keep on catering to them. Both Hannah and the trio at Parent Company frequently recall PC Music's history of creating websites of which Hannah helped in-part to make, (what she says was "inspired by the famous art project Mouchette"), as did Parent Company with A. G.'s solo ventures. "In the years leading up to PC Music I got very into early net art people like Jodi, Olia Lialina and Mark Napier," A. G. says on the subject of minisites. "There was also a wave of digital artists like the Computers Club crew who were re-using old tools and formats in quite a cheeky way that I admired."

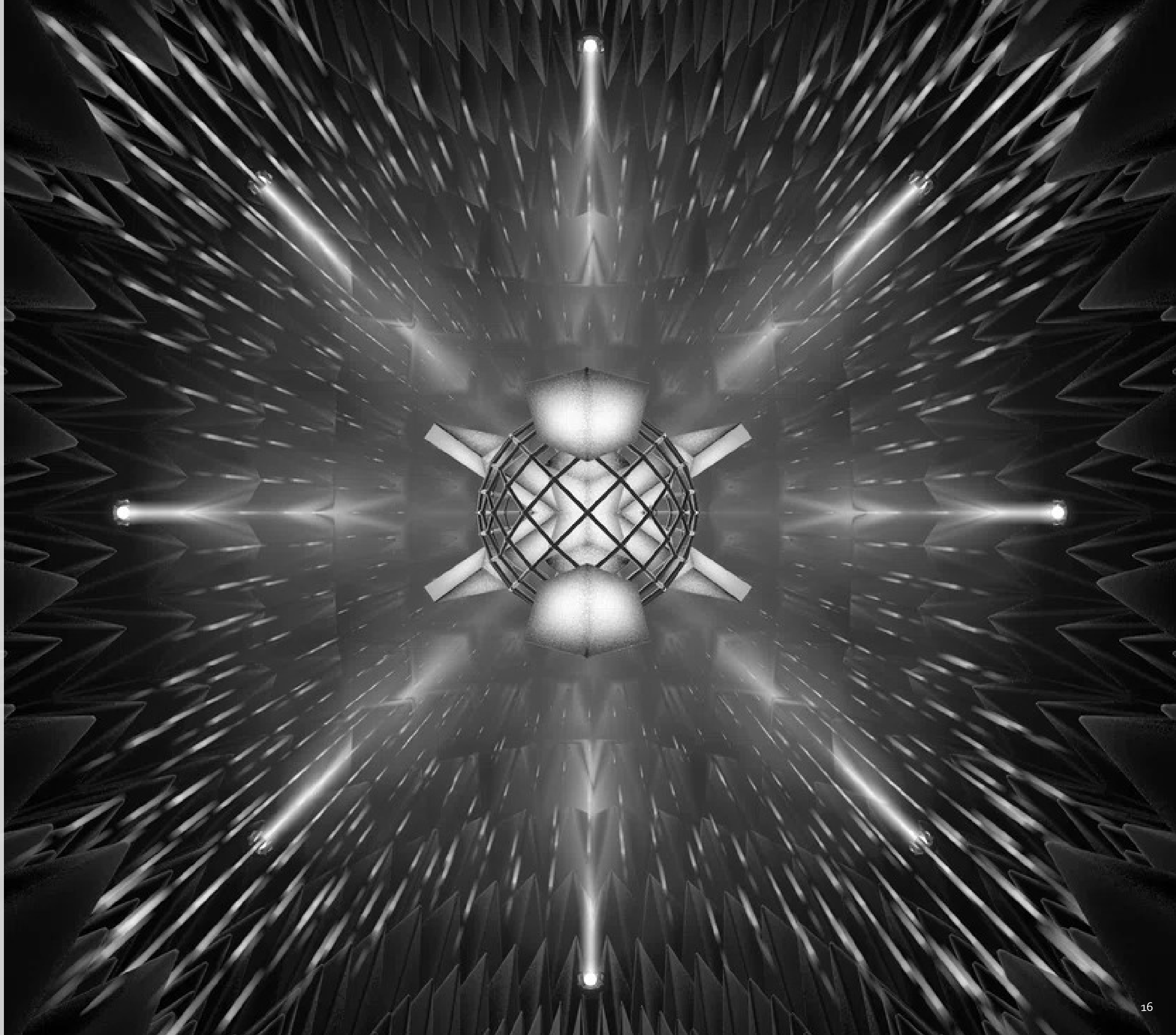
The creation of minisites proved to be a magnet for graphic talent, and the launch of Christmas 2.0 – a website hosting a Christmas-themed mixtape from PC Music, gone but not forgotten – is how designer Kim Laughton first began working with the label. "I made a webpage about the idea of an IVF immaculate conception, something that looked like a homepage for a company that provided lifestyle fitting GM babies," Kim says. He'd go on to make PC Music's iconic QT and EasyFun visuals, two of the rare times the label was making a clear and direct parody of brands (energy drinks and EasyJet, respectively). The EasyJet graphics were shut down by a cease-and-desist, but the QT logo and graphics lived on. "The QT logo started with intersecting 3D letters that I think A. G. found in a hardware shop," Kim tells me of its origins. "I made a render of that and then Simon Whybray made a vector for the logo and did the other can label design. The intent from the beginning as far as I understand was to be as clean, polished and corp as possible with the QT project."

The websites Kim and Hannah originally worked on are indicative of the large fandom PC Music has generated by way of its visual output. Longtime PC Music collaborator and multimedia artist Aaron Chan agrees as such. He explains to me that "PC-related visuals are usually tailored in a way for people that didn't know they wanted it, but they actually really want it," which is why the endless generation of content is so key to the label's graphic landscape. But, to understand why the specific aesthetics of PC resonate so well with its target audience – and why they always have – I approach graphic design juggernaut Timothy Luke. Immensely talented, and often imitated, Timothy first started doing graphics for PC Music when A. G. asked him to help come up with ideas for his work with Charli XCX on her "soft reboot" as an artist in 2016 with EP Number 1 Angel. "I think people appreciate pop being interrogated non-cynically," Timothy explains to me. "More broadly and vaguely, I think people enjoy pop things which are made well in some universal sense, and I think PC has always been about that end."

Timothy's portfolio for PC is considerably vast, and his exciting, innovative, and fresh eye for graphic design has been a welcome addition to PC Music since it entered its second era. "Rather than being prescriptive with a specific brief, I think we've always been quite over the top in looking at and thinking about all lots of reference points at once, and generally sharing an interest in really extreme and formal visual ideas," he tells me. "Coming in I really resonated with the visual language and sensibilities of the PC project, the celebration and manipulation of extreme pop ideas and aesthetics, and the various modulations of reference points from things we shared growing up."

Talking to Timothy is quite exciting, but that may be my bias – he's one of my favourite graphic designers working today. Asking him about the technical approaches he brought to PC illuminates how the label (namely A. G.) was operating with visuals back in 2016. "What I felt like I could bring to the table was my systems orientation and interest in clear and effective graphic devices and imagery," he says. "PC quickly became for me an avenue to explore possibilities in visual identity, structure, and output." One of his favourite projects to date is from one of PC Music's founding artists, Danny L Harle, and his IUL EP in 2017. "There are a few devices in there that manifest certain interests of mine in a clear way – in particular the meandering laser lines that function both as a visualisation of each track's melodic movement as well sigil-like icons," he explains. "I enjoy that kind of puzzle logic and extreme formality."

Timothy is also largely responsible for the new-and-improved PC Music logo, an iconic symbol to many of its fans. But, it was A. G. and his friend Rory Gleeson who first came up with it. "I took the PC Music logo really seriously, and ended up having it designed by my friend Rory Gleeson who had a lot more experience than I did," A. G. tells me when I ask him about the logo's history. "I was really adamant that the logo should be #0000ff blue, the default hyperlink colour, and we looked at a lot of built-in HTML symbols to find the shapes that were used for the P & C." Taking the idea of Personal Computer Music very literally, A. G. describes how it felt "amusing to make a logo that was very dictated by what a web browser could display". The logo itself "was truly designed to exist online". The logo has seen variations across the years, from one with a Kochi Gothic font that Rory made, to A. G.'s own 3D adaptation of the flat PC symbols that is quite commonplace for the label today. "When I worked with Timothy Luke to tidy up the PC Music logo, we finally did the obvious thing of integrating the P & C shapes into PC Music, and really doubling down on the flat shapes, while still sticking to that #0000ff blue, which really became the label's signature colour," A. G. adds. The more I talk to everyone at the helm of PC Music's visuals, the more I realise that the label and A. G. Cook have always cultivated a space for artists to be unrestrained and free in what they want to create. In 2014, Hannah and her close friend/mentor William E. Wright had launched Diamond Wright, an "image-making" studio that PC music integrated into its world pretty quickly. "William and I were working together with him doing creative direction and me doing photography, and we made a lot of the very early PC music artworks together like that," Hannah says. "Especially the ones for my Every Night cover and the Sophie stuff." Whilst Diamond Wright eventually dissolved, the two teamed up again recently to work on PC Music signee Namasenda and her mixtape Unlimited Ammo.





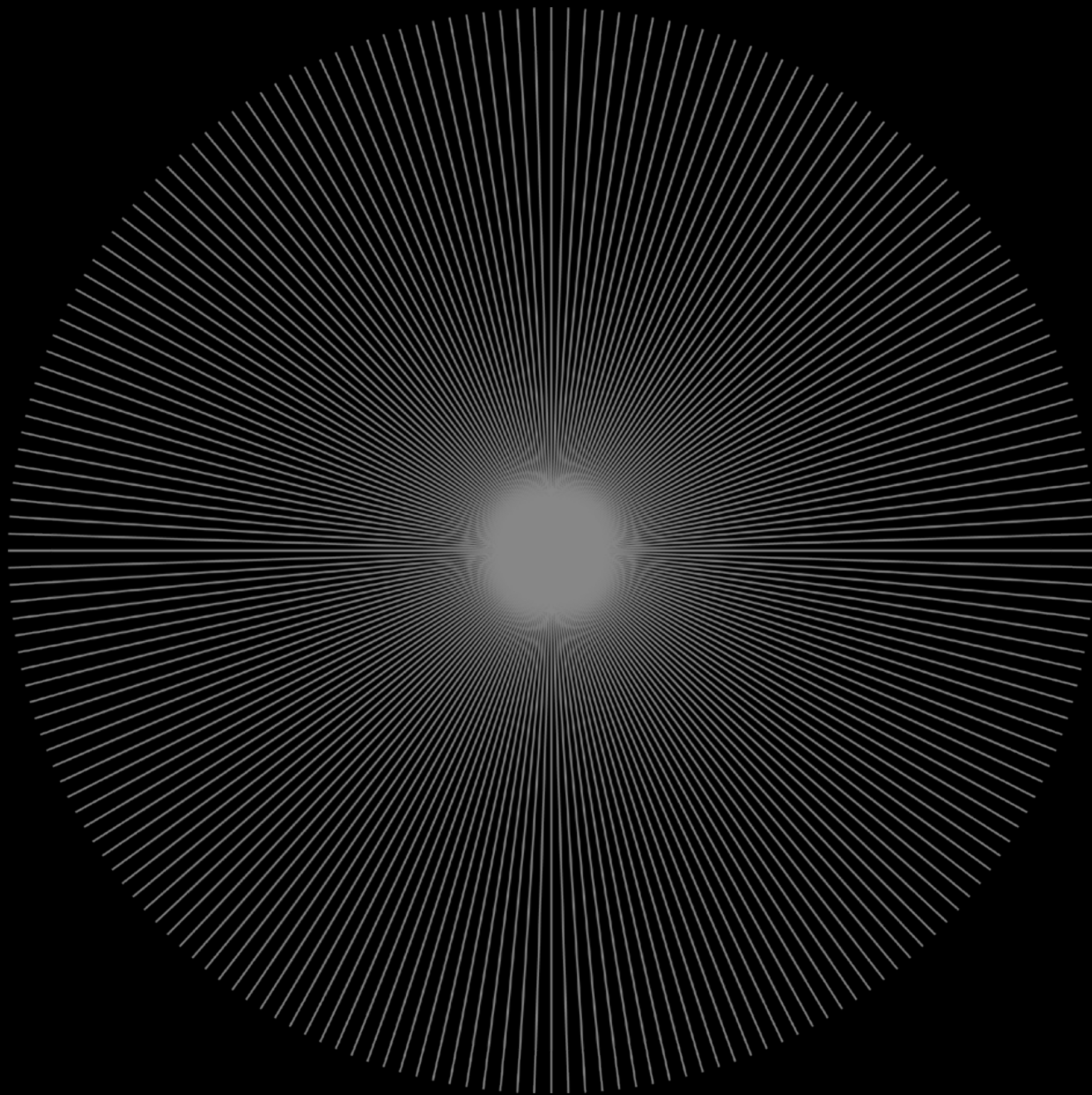
There's a persistent "family" vibe that pulsates through PC Music, and it's as evident in its visual world as it is in its musical one. Longstanding collaborators such as Aaron Chan and Daniel Swan are further testaments to this. Both have been working with PC Music to create graphics and live-show visuals since 2013, and Aaron even fondly describes Daniel as "the godfather of PC Music visuals" when we speak. They have, and continue to, make content they love in equal measure to their fans. It's a quality which breeds unprecedented levels of innovation in graphic and design that the label maintains to this day.

When I finally broach the topic of PC Music visuals being disseminated and appropriated by every mainstream artist today with Hannah, she takes a long pause. Then, in her always-positive demeanour, she offers a refreshing take on her part in the legacy. "It's definitely cool to be a catalyst in some way, and maybe some of us were the first people that were starting to think in those terms," she says. "But there must have been other people thinking like that too at the time, you know?" For Hannah, it's always been a sign that people enjoyed the energy and excitement within pop music that PC Music was bringing to the front of its visuals, especially online. "Ultimately, the further it travels the more open people will be to receiving the things that we make and we do," she adds, referring to the current mass of discourse surrounding the hyperpop genre. The irony discourse has once again surged, this time encompassing Charli XCX, Sophie, and 100 geeks, although less heavy on the visuals. "At the start, it was quite a small niche group of people that were really into what we did. Now, it's blown up. It's exciting."

"I always wanted something universal and easy to understand, but also idiosyncratic and obsessive. I really think those connections are there, and it's in some ways the driving force behind a lot of my musical and visual output." -A.G. Cook

So, what exactly seems to be the constant push-and-pull factor of these visuals? It's still hard to tell, but A. G. believes it lies squarely in the label's original intentions: juxtaposition. "I always wanted something universal and easy to understand, but also idiosyncratic and obsessive," he explains. "I really think those connections are there, and it's in some ways the driving force behind a lot of my musical and visual output." When I press for more, A. G. doesn't disappoint. In his usual deeply genuine and unpretentious candour, he leaves me with a line I'll be thinking about for days to come: "Everything shares the same flat space and can be dragged over or instantly replaced with something else. In the end, a lot of meaning comes from juxtaposition, the tension between real and fake, hard and soft, loud and quiet, and so on."

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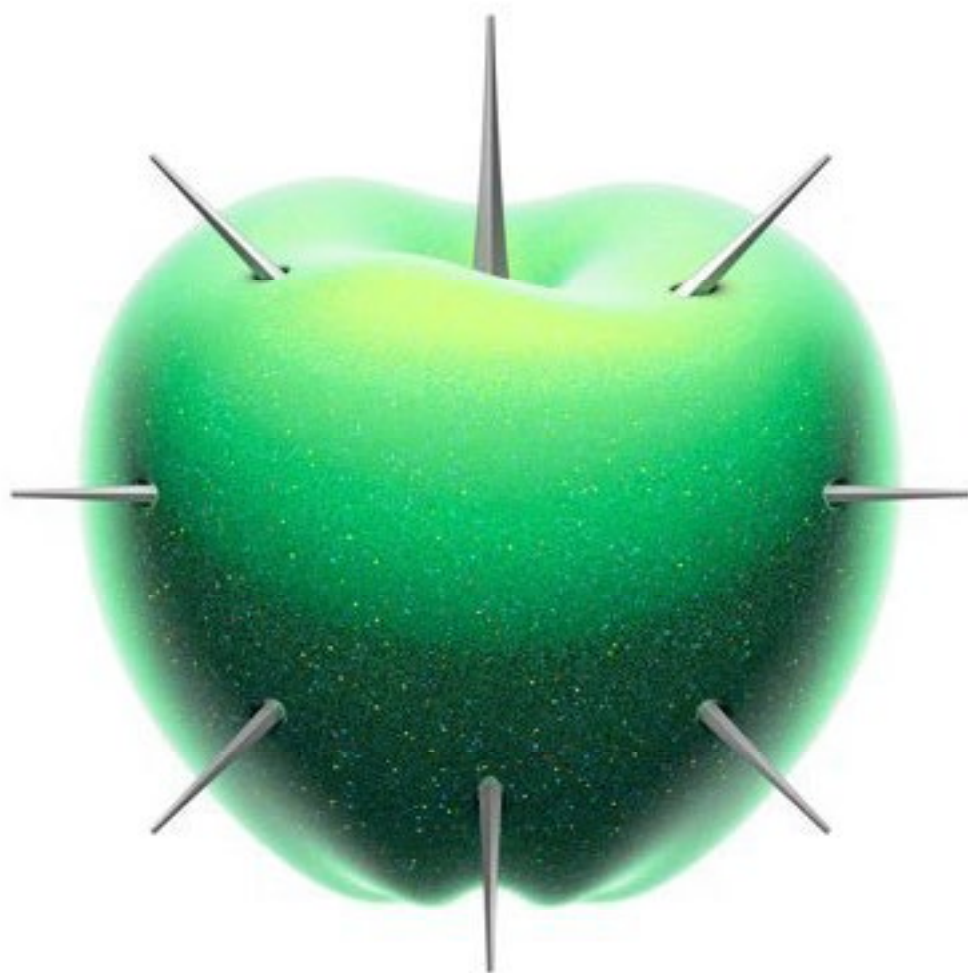


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