

SYMPHIOSIS

ISSUE 001



CHANEL B.

FACIO...

WHERE FASHION MEETS MUSIC

FROM THE EDITOR

Fashion has always borrowed from music.

From subcultures to silhouettes, from stage to street, the influence is constant. But what's often overlooked is how deeply music informs not just what we wear, but how fashion is constructed, communicated, and understood.

This is where Symphiosis shifts.

If music is where this relationship begins, fashion is where it is reinterpreted and re-expressed, not as a response, but as a system in its own right.

This issue comes from that same way of seeing that relationship. Not as two separate disciplines, but as practices that have always existed in dialogue.

What fashion takes from music is the ability to connect beyond the visual. Through its relationship with music, it builds worlds shaped as much by what we hear as what we see, extending beyond aesthetic reference into identity, atmosphere, and cultural alignment.

Across this are independent creatives, alongside those shaping the industries themselves. Some navigate both spaces directly, others engage with their overlap more loosely, or from a singular discipline influenced by the other. What connects them is not their position, but their proximity to a shared cultural exchange.

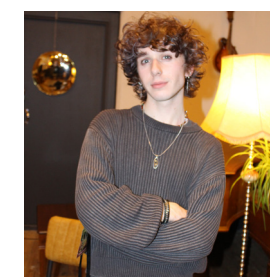
This issue moves through that space in all its forms.

To create access where there has been distance. To highlight practices that move across, around, and in response to these industries. And to recognise that their relationship is not defined at a single point of overlap, but across a wider network of people shaping it.

This is not about where one ends and the other begins.

It's about what happens when they are understood as inseparable, even in their differences.

Gian Andrea Gnaegi
Editor-in-Chief
Symphiosis



Symphiosis is an independent publication expressed across two editorial perspectives. You are now immersing into the fashion side.

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Symphiosis
Issue 001
Spring 2026

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Collaboration is all about shifting your perspective.

- GeeJay

The Musicians of Tomorrow

Stitching Sound

Before the Music

Beyond the Image

Who Have I Become?

Imagining Sound

*Music
Fashion on reverse*

Pratt, Look 1: This look reflects Pratt's approach to identity-led design, where structure is grounded in presence, with volume and proportion shaped by the way the body occupies the garment.



© Saskia Avins; sourced via Vogue Runway / Instagram

THE DESIGNERS OF TOMORROW

TRACELIN PRATT

MACY GRIMSHAW

By *Núria Tavares*

Garments are never the beginning. They're the result. Every collection starts earlier – with an idea, a question, a feeling that refuses to stay invisible. It emerges somewhere hard to explain like a feeling, a memory, a surface, or a person you can almost picture but can't fully describe. Something sits quietly in the background, shaping decisions before anything physical exists. And then, slowly, that atmosphere begins to take form.

When you look at the work of Traiceline Pratt and Macy Grimshaw, you can feel that difference immediately, not just in the final garments, but in where those garments originate. They are both building collections, both working within the same contemporary fashion landscape, yet their starting points feel almost completely opposed. One begins with people, memory, and identity, the other with observation, material, and the act of seeing differently. And that divergence shapes everything that follows.

With Pratt, everything seems to start with people. Not in the distant, romanticised sense of a 'muse,' but in a way that feels grounded and specific. His collections carry the presence of real lives, the kind of people you recognise without needing them to be explained. There's an immediacy to it, as if the garments already belong to someone before they've even been made.

You can almost picture them in motion: a long coat worn slightly open, a shirt half-tucked, a sleeve pushed up absentmindedly. He builds collections like he's assembling

a cast, women with distinct emotional and social realities: a single mother, a woman navigating independence, someone balancing authority and vulnerability. These figures are not decorative references; they shape the garments from the inside out.

Once those identities exist, the clothes begin to form around them. It becomes less about designing in isolation and more about translating lived experience into something tangible. You start to see it in the construction: coats that hold their shape sitting firmly on the shoulders as if offering protection; softer fabrics that fall closer to the body introducing a sense of intimacy; waistlines that shift subtly – never fully fixed, suggesting movement between strength and softness. There's a careful balance in the silhouettes. Tailoring that leans toward the masculine, but is offset by fluidity, by drape, by the way fabric responds to the body rather than controlling it entirely.

But there's also a restraint in how Pratt works. Nothing feels excessive. A garment might appear simple at first, a clean-cut blazer, a structured dress, but the detail reveals itself gradually: a seam placed slightly off-centre, a proportion that feels just unfamiliar enough, a fabric that holds weight but moves unexpectedly. He doesn't overload the design with concept; instead, he allows meaning to settle into the garment quietly through small, deliberate decisions. Memory plays a crucial role but never becomes literal.

His upbringing in the Bahamas doesn't surface as an obvious reference, but one you can sense in the atmosphere of the clothes. Through the muted warmth of certain tones, in fabrics that feel breathable yet substantial, in the ease of how pieces are layered; never rigid, always slightly undone. It's less about representing a place and more about carrying its feeling. The garments don't feel temporary or trend-driven; they feel lived-in, as though they've existed before and will continue to exist beyond the collection itself.

Grimshaw's process, by contrast, feels like it starts in an entirely different place. Where Pratt begins internally, she begins by looking outward. Her work is grounded in observation; in paying attention to the kinds of details most people move past without noticing. Urban surfaces, discarded objects, fragments of the everyday, things that exist on the edges of perception. There's something almost methodical about it.

She collects, photographs, revisits. And in that repetition, something begins to shift. The familiar starts to feel unfamiliar; the ordinary takes on a different kind of presence.

This shift is where her design process really takes hold. She isn't interested in presenting objects as they are, but in what happens when they're unsettled. There's a kind of tension driving this approach, a curiosity around how perception can be altered and how easily certainty begins to slip. It feels less like observation and more like interrogation.

Instead of moving directly into garment design, she turns to material experimentation as a way of working through that tension. Leather becomes her primary surface, but she treats it less as a symbol of luxury and more as something to be challenged and redefined. It's printed onto, stretched, moulded, and manipulated until it resists its original identity.

Surfaces begin to shift: a rigid, industrial texture reminiscent of a garage door is translated into something wearable, holding structure against the body. Pencil shavings are reworked until they echo the softness and irregularity of feathers, hovering somewhere between fragility and artifice. These transformations feel deliberate but also slightly disorienting, as if the material is caught between what it was and what it's becoming. What emerges isn't just a new texture, but a new emotional register.

There's something quietly unsettling in the way these materials operate. They invite recognition, then disrupt it. You think you understand what you're looking at, and then that certainty dissolves. This instability becomes central to the work, it mirrors the way memory functions, how something once clear can return altered, distorted, or incomplete. The materials don't just imitate; they carry a sense of displacement.

This is what makes Grimshaw's approach feel so distinct. The details that feel slightly off in scale and placement turn the body into a secondary consideration - something the material eventually adapts to. Clothing is not the origin point, but the residue of a transformation. The work doesn't just alter how objects look; it shifts how they're felt, turning them into something more ambiguous, and psychologically charged.

The contrast between these two approaches becomes most visible in how their collections resolve as a whole. Pratt's work finds cohesion through narrative. Each garment feels anchored within the same world, held together by the lives they were designed around. You can imagine who is wearing them, how the fabric shifts as they move, the quiet gestures that shape the silhouette, the context that gives each piece meaning. There is a continuity of identity running through the collection, something stable and recognisable, even as individual garments change.



Grimshaw, Look 1: From the Rue de Mauricette collection, this look reflects her process of observation, where surface is treated as something unstable, suspended between garment and environment.

© Lawrence Atkin; via Fondazione Sozzani.

DESIGNERS OF TOMORROW



Grimshaw, Look 2: From the Rue de Mauricette collection, fragmented materials are reassembled into a structured form, where disruption becomes embedded in the garment itself.

© Lawrence Atkin; via Fondazione ITS.

Grimshaw's collections resist that kind of grounding. Their cohesion doesn't come from people, but from process with each piece being connected through transformation and the repeated act of taking something known and pushing it into unfamiliar territory. The garments don't point back to a wearer or a narrative in the same way; instead, they draw attention to their own instability. Where Pratt's work feels lived-in, as though it belongs to someone, Grimshaw's feels unsettled, as though it belongs nowhere entirely.

They point towards two different futures for fashion. Pratt's work suggests a movement back toward clothing that feels emotionally grounded and connected to lived experience. In an industry often driven by speed and constant reinvention, his approach introduces a sense of stability. By building collections from memory and identity, he creates garments that feel less tied to fleeting trends and more anchored in something enduring. This points toward a recalibration in fashion, where personal narrative isn't applied to design, but dictates it from the outset.

Grimshaw's impact moves in a different direction, one that challenges the boundaries of fashion at a material level. By elevating overlooked and discarded elements, she disrupts traditional ideas of value and beauty. Her work encourages a reconsideration of what materials are worth attention and how they can be used. This has implications that extend beyond aesthetics, touching on questions of sustainability and consumption. Rather than presenting it as a visible statement, it's embedded within the act of transformation itself.

Despite their differences, both designers share a rejection of trend as a starting point. They are not looking to the fashion cycle for direction. Instead, they begin in quieter, more personal spaces. And it's this commitment to process that gives their work its depth. Each garment holds the imprint of the thinking behind it. In both cases, the design process exceeds the garment.

While one holds onto identity; the other destabilises perception. What emerges is not a vague shift, but a more deliberate redefinition of practice. Fashion is moving away from surface-level resolution and toward process as a form of inquiry, where garments operate as evidence rather than conclusions. A collection no longer just presents an idea; it reveals how that idea was formed, tested, and transformed. The garment, in this context, is not the final statement but the visible trace of a way of thinking that refuses to stay predictable.



Pratt, Look 2: This look reflects subtle shifts in construction, carried through gesture, where tailoring softens through wear and movement rather than through formal alteration.

© Rachel Roland Martins; via Office Magazine.

DESIGNING SOUND: FROM AESTHETIC INSPIRATION TO FINAL RUNWAY COLLECTIONS

For fashion design student Núria Tavares, garments don't begin with fabric, they start with sound. Music becomes a way of building worlds, shaping designs through rhythm, atmosphere and instinct.

The fashion studios at UCA Epsom carry a familiar kind of noise – machines humming, fabric shifting, conversations folding into one another. Around us, garments sit mid-process: half-draped forms, loose threads, things not yet resolved. Nearby, one piece hangs slightly apart – a length of fabric pinned into soft, continuous folds, the shape shifting subtly as it falls.

Núria speaks in a way that feels continuous within that environment – mid-thought, slightly looping, but precise in instinct. “It’s always been there,” she says. “I just didn’t realise until maybe last year that I worked best like this.” For her, designing doesn’t begin with fabric or form, but with sound. Even so, translating her process into words isn’t straightforward. “It’s the part that I always struggle with,” she admits.

“Because I daydream a lot, I tend to visualise things that go alongside music,” she explains, “like when you’re looking out a train window and it kind of plays like a film in your head. And I’ve sort of trained my brain to put myself in the world of that song.”

“The buildings, the atmosphere – I’m basically making little universes in my head based off songs, and then I design based on what I see.”

Those internal worlds often become her starting point. From there her decisions are usually quick, she says. “Like as soon as we get a brief, there’s usually a word or a phrase that just sticks. A lot of the time I’ll have a song in mind straight away. And then it branches off into genres, and that starts to influence the overall aesthetics of my work. When music isn’t her starting point, Núria frames sound as, “more like a backup – like a plan B.” She smiles slightly, “but it’s a very good plan B.” What that “plan B” offers isn’t direct translation but something close to re-immersion.

Each project builds around a playlist that keeps her inside that space, she says. “And I’ll just let them play.” Even when that first spark doesn’t come in the studio, music is still there to bring her back to her work. “It’s like I’ll be designing all day, and then I go home, listen to the playlist, and suddenly I’m like – wait, this could work.”

When asked how exactly this inspiration shapes her work, Núria repeats herself slightly, “it’s just... like putting yourself inside a world, and then I ask myself: If there was a character moving through a space to this song, what does that look like?”



Núria Tavares

From there, the work becomes less about explanation and more about translation. She describes it as making connections rather than following a fixed logic, “like finding synonyms between what I’m trying to design and the songs I’m listening to.” Those connections go beyond the lyrics of a song. “I think it’s the instrumentals that really get me,” she says. “I’ll find songs through lyrics, but it’s usually the instrumentals that define it.”

“If I hear a piano, I go more minimal... softer fabrics, more restrained. Something like a saxophone... it’s more... sharp? Extravagant? So, I’ll look for fabrics that feel like that. Like satin, something shiny.”

At other times, the reference is more visual. “There was a song... I can’t remember which one... but the lyrics had this kind of hourglass shape, and I just started designing something shaped like that. I’ve looked at sound waves too,” she adds. “They sometimes inspire shapes within my designs as well.” Still, when she tries to pin her process down, the explanation slips slightly out of reach. “It’s not like I’m sitting there thinking, ‘This equals this.’ It just sort of... happens. Because I’ve already built the world in my head, the decisions feel quite natural afterwards. And I already know what it’s supposed to look like – I just have to figure out how to actually make it.”

The first time this way of working became clear to her was during a first-year project. “It was a trouser project – really heavily draped, all based on loops and circles. I didn’t want the garments to look the same. I didn’t even want them to look similar, but I wanted them to have that same element of repetition.” She points to Conan Gray’s Never Ending Song – a song that, “I listened to over a hundred times a week,” Núria laughs. “And then I was listening to songs like that, that had repeated lines or melodies... but they didn’t feel boring. And I think that’s what I took from it.”

Now, that same thinking carries into her current work, where movement sits as close to the centre as the garment itself. “It’s very much about how fabric moves,” she says. “So I’ll think about, like – if a character is walking down a corridor to this song, what movement would be there?”

Sometimes, that is worked out physically, she explains how she puts on her playlist and moves with it. “Like I’ll dance around my room, or even just in my head,” she laughs. “It helps me turn it from something 2D into something physical

I can actually feel what it should look like.

“And that then makes it easier to draw, easier to build, because it already feels real.”

Without that framework, the process changes. “If I don’t have music, I really struggle,” she says. “It’s not that I can’t design, but it’s different.”

“Music gives me tunnel vision,” she quickly adds. “With it, I can see the end – I can see what I want out of the collection or the concept.” But that dependence comes with its own pressure.

“There have been times where I’ve gone like two weeks without drawing anything, just because I haven’t found the right song,” she exhales slightly, “and that’s really frustrating. Because the minute you fall behind, you’re basically screwed... so yeah, it’s hit or miss.”

Still, Núria sees that instinctive connection as part of what makes her work distinct. “I don’t think I’ve ever met anyone who uses music like this, but when I explain it, people realise they do it too – just subconsciously. I’m just more aware of it.”

And in that sense, music is not just a reference point. “I do think it’s my advantage – you can’t fake it. People can tell.”

That same idea of authenticity carries through to how she thinks about the relationship between music and fashion more broadly. “I don’t think music affects fashion as much as fashion affects music,” she says. “You look at stage outfits, red carpets – that shapes how an artist is seen. But there’s definitely still influence – like brand ambassadors, or certain aesthetics.”

What, in her opinion, matters most is whether the two feel aligned. “You can always tell when there’s a disconnect – when it doesn’t feel real.” In a landscape where audiences read image and sound together, she sees that as essential. “In an age where fans are really parasocial, authenticity is what wins. When it’s inauthentic, it just falls flat.”

When the two industries come together – in shows, campaigns, or imagery – the same idea holds. “It has to be built in the same world. It can’t feel separate. You can’t have really fast music with something slow and expect it to feel right. It should feel like it belongs there, like it’s part of the same thing.”

Looking ahead, she doesn’t see her approach changing. “I can definitely see a difference in my work now. While there might not always be the chance to listen to music while working, I’ll keep doing it as long as I can.”

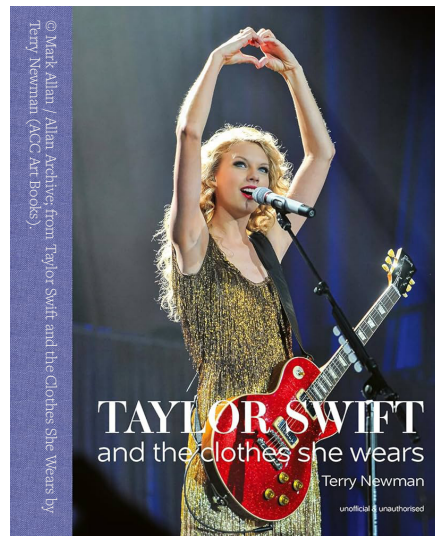
“It just makes sense to me,” she pauses, before landing on the simplest version of what she’s been saying all along:

“I think music just... makes it real.”



Núria’s first year trouser project based on loops, circles, and repetition

SOUND AND STYLE: TERRY NEWMAN ON HOW MUSICIANS SHAPE FASHION'S CULTURAL RELEVANCE



Style doesn't begin on the runway. It takes shape in sound, image, and the figures who carry it into culture. Fashion writer Terry Newman, whose work explores musicians and the clothes they wear, discusses how music gives fashion its cultural relevance.

In Terry Newman's telling, musicians do not simply wear clothes, they give fashion its pulse.

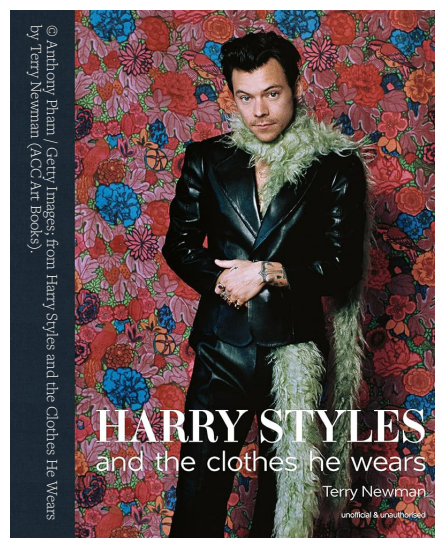
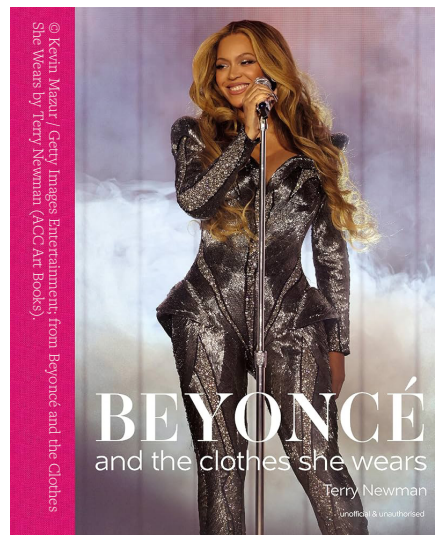
As a fashion writer and author, Newman's work consistently returns to the relationship between music, image, and style. Across books on cultural figures such as *Taylor Swift*, *Harry Styles* and *Beyoncé*, she examines how clothes, once worn in concert or public view, move beyond the individual and into culture. Clothing, in her writing, is never just aesthetic – it is tied to performance, identity and the way an image travels. “Musicians occupy a particular space where visibility meets emotion,” she says.

“People do not just see what they wear, they connect it to a feeling, a lyric, a moment. That gives clothes a kind of momentum.” And this is what allows certain looks to travel so far beyond the stage. What is worn by musicians becomes part of a wider fashion language because it arrives with atmosphere, identity, and memory already attached.

That is also why, for Newman, attitude matters so much. Clothing alone may be readable, but it is rarely enough.

“It is always the attitude.”

“Clothes on their own are fairly mute,” she says, “what gives them life is the way they are worn – the sense of ease, defiance or vulnerability behind them.” In other words, style does not stop at the garment. It begins there.



Newman is equally clear that the most resonant references are rarely straightforward. “A reference moves beyond nostalgia when it stops being polite. As soon as it is twisted, reworked or placed in a new context, it begins to function as language rather than homage. Fashion rarely lingers on faithful reproduction – it prefers something more subversive.” That tension between recognition and disruption is what, from Newman's perspective, gives style in music its staying power. The look may be familiar, but the point is that it has been re-voiced.

She sees that same principle in the way contemporary figures are placed inside longer histories. “Placing someone like Harry Styles within a broader lineage shows that these moments are rarely new in isolation. What appears contemporary is often a recombination of earlier ideas, whether that is glam, dandyism or queer dressing, all filtered through a present lens.”

Still, a musician's wardrobe only endures when it balances clarity with a slight sense of disruption. “They are easy to read at first glance, yet something feels just off enough to keep your attention. That tension is what designers return to, because it leaves room for reinterpretation.”

Newman's perspective resists the idea that fashion simply dresses music, or that musicians merely reflect what designers create. The exchange is active, ongoing, and often led from the stage rather than the showroom. The most lasting ideas, as she sees it, are not only worn – they are made visible.

“Musicians are not simply wearing fashion – they are shaping it.”

Her thinking is perhaps clearest when stated directly:

Q: When fashion borrows from musicians, what tends to survive that translation?

TN: Attitude tends to carry through most strongly, with silhouette close behind. The finer details often disappear, but the overall spirit, whether that is looseness, precision or a play with gender, translates quite well. Rebellion, on the other hand, is often softened along the way.

Q: Why doesn't replicating a look guarantee its impact?

TN: You can copy the look exactly, but without an underlying attitude it does not quite land.

Q: Are there artists whose fashion influence is over-credited or under-acknowledged?

TN: Visibility has a way of skewing things. Some figures are credited simply because their image travelled widely or was carefully mythologised. Others, often working at the edges or within subcultures, shape the aesthetic language more quietly and receive far less recognition.

Q: If you were writing the chapter on music's influence that fashion magazines still miss, what would you want them to understand more clearly?

TN: I would want a clearer understanding that musicians are not simply wearing fashion, they are shaping it. The relationship is not one-directional. It is a conversation, and often the most interesting ideas begin on the musician's side of that exchange.

BEHIND THE LENS OF



RAM SHERGILL

ON PHOTOGRAPHY, FEELING, AND WHO'S REALLY IN THE FRAME

For fashion photographer Ram Shergill, an image begins long before the camera is raised. Shaped through instinct and collaboration, his portraits blur the line between photographer and subject – where authorship, identity, and control begin to merge.

When Ram Shergill photographs someone, the image carries more than the person in front of the lens.

“You’re seeing me and them combined,” he says.

It’s a simple phrase, but it runs through everything he does. Across his career, he has worked with creatives including *Amy Winehouse*, *Cillian Murphy*, *Paloma Faith*, and the *Scissor Sisters*. His work is shaped as much by the brief, the styling, the music, and the atmosphere as by the person that’s being captured. For Shergill, an image takes shape before the camera is even lifted.

When asked whether his photographs reveal who someone is, or shape how they are seen, he replies, “a combination of both.” The balance changes depending on the context. For a title like *Vogue* or *Harper’s Bazaar*, the visual language is already defined. Other projects leave more room for direction. Shooting Cillian Murphy for *Shortlist Mode* was a “carte blanche, free type of brief,” bringing him into conversations with the art and fashion directors who value his opinion as much as his skill.

As his career has developed, so has his role. “Normally photographers turn up with their camera, they take a picture and then they leave and do all the retouching.” Now he no longer just shows up; creative direction has become part of his process. That means arriving early,

standing in front of rails of clothing and editing them down, deciding what belongs in the frame and what doesn’t.

“They have all the rails out for me, and then I pick. And I say, this is good, this is good, this is good. That’s not good, that’s not good.” Even when working with advertisers – in situations where branding is expected to dominate – he pushes back. “If it was *Dolce & Gabbana* or *Bulgari*, we want to have those,” he says. “But sometimes I say no. You don’t have that, I have that.”

With musicians, the dynamic changes. Shergill does not treat them as blank pages to be styled into submission. He treats them as artists with their own internal logic. “When I’m working with talent like *Amy*, I let her hold the reins.”

An early shoot with Amy Winehouse right after the release of *Frank* makes that clear. Suggestions of *Dior* or *Gucci* were quickly dismissed. What mattered to her was something else entirely: a *Louis Vuitton* bag she had bought in Camden Market, covered in markings from her and her friends. “She doesn’t care – it means something to her.” That detail matters more than any brand placement. Shergill doesn’t try to override that instinct. “Why should I be someone who’s going to be a barrier to her creativity? She’s an artist.”

MUSIC AND IDENTITY

Rather than direction, the process becomes a conversation that he reduces to something instinctive. “Feeling,” he says. “I would definitely say feeling.” It sits somewhere between instinct and interaction, a kind of psychological layering that happens between photographer and model. Neither fully controls the image, “you become intertwined,” he says. “It’s me and you.” That intertwining is physical as much as conceptual: a slight adjustment of a face, a hand guiding a pose, a moment of contact that allows the subject to settle. “If I take your picture, I might say, do you mind if I just move your face like that? That one-to-one interaction – someone holding your hand, touching your face – it builds trust. And that goes into the camera.”

To shape the context of how that feeling unfolds, he often turns to music. “I design a world around the music,” he says. “I make it into a film.” With Amy he recalls playing *Martha Reeves and the Vandellas*. The reference wasn’t imposed directly; it opened something. He suggested a shift in her eyeliner – more elongated, more ‘60s, more like Martha Reeves. “And she went: ‘yeah you’re right.’ Then she started doing it herself. That’s when the signature look came through.”

Across other shoots, the music expands outward: film soundtracks, orchestral scores, John Barry, *Gladiator*, *Tron*, Daft Punk. At one point, he played the *Tron* soundtrack on repeat so relentlessly in the studio that his team wanted it changed. “They were so fed up with me, begging me to change it,” he laughs. “So I played the other one from Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. What that does is put them in a real opera.” The repetition is deliberate. The room shifts with it and evolving posing into something more. “They’re performing. They’re performing the best version of themselves in that world.”

That distinction – between posing and performing – runs through how he thinks about identity, particularly in music. For Shergill, the image should belong to the artist, not the brand surrounding them. In earlier work with the Scissor Sisters, he built a concept rooted in character rather than fashion, assigning each member a role and a colour palette. It gave the band something more than a look, it gave them a shared visual language. He points to how many pop stars are dressed in custom-made pieces rather than off-the-rack fashion for exactly that reason. A recognisable label can take over the frame. A garment made for the artist keeps the focus where it belongs. “If it’s Raye, it needs to show her not Gucci,” he says.

BEHIND THE LENS



Amy Winehouse by Ram Shergill, National Portrait Gallery
©Ram Shergill

AUTHENTICITY AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

And the same desire for something real – something authentic, carries into how he approaches cultural references. It’s something that traces back to how he first encountered image and sound through Indian Cinema, where music, motion, and image were never separate. He stays wary of references that flatten history into costume. He recalls a *Harper’s Bazaar* cover centred around Egyptian iconography. “I looked at the project, I looked at the mood board, and I wasn’t really sure.” This feeling of uncertainty led him to pull back on the day of the shoot, avoiding a direct Cleopatra imitation. “I just gave it a wink,” he says.

That line becomes sharper in contrast with another experience. He recalls working on a shoot that leaned heavily into Indian-inspired imagery. Something felt off almost immediately. The styling pushed toward spectacle – the model painted blue, positioned as a Krishna-like figure, layered with ornament and detail. On paper, it echoed familiar visual codes – in practice it collapsed. “It didn’t feel authentic,” he says. “It just felt like a Christmas tree.” Too many elements were pulled together without understanding their meaning, too much emphasis on surface. “It felt like a mishmash. It didn’t feel real.”

When he later photographed the work of Abu Jani Sandeep Khosla, the experience was entirely different. “That’s the real couture, the real Indian heritage. There’s a plethora of craftspeople putting all this culture into the fabric.” Here the garments weren’t referencing culture – they were the result of it, built through labour, history and collaboration across multiple hands. Photographing them felt closer to documenting something that already carried meaning. “Then I felt... now I’m recording a legacy, not a parody.”

The same instinct runs across all his work. He isn’t interested in imposing identity onto a subject but to build the conditions for something to surface.

“You’re not just taking a picture. You’re designing a world.”

And within that world something happens – something that doesn’t feel forced but exists in the moment between them. “If it feels right, the image feels right. If you force it, you can see it.”

Through that way of working Shergill continues to build lifeworlds around his subjects. In June 2026, his portraits of Amy Winehouse will be exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery as part of the *Frameless* exhibition, while marking a ten years as Editor-in-Chief, creative director, and founder of *The Protagonist Magazine*.

BEHIND THE LENS

OF RAM SHERGILL



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Shergill On Print In The Digital Age

Despite the digital shift, magazines haven’t disappeared – they’ve adapted. “They’re becoming more hybrid,” Shergill says, moving between print and screen. The physical copy still holds a different kind of weight. “Imagine going to the beach and your battery runs out,” he laughs. “You take a magazine, it gets wet, it dries – you still have it.”

What’s changed is how they’re seen. Where print once signalled identity, digital has thinned that visibility. “You’d see someone with a magazine and think, I want to sit next to them.” Now that connection is less immediate, folded into private screens.

As budgets shrink, and content becomes standardised across global editions, the imagery for a magazine shifts in value, “it becomes more like an artwork,” something to be held onto rather than scrolled past.

WHO HAVE YOU BECOME? CHANEL B. ON IMAGE, PERSPECTIVE AND VISUAL INTERPRETATION

Symphiosis brings musicians and fashion creatives into a single conversation, allowing work to move between disciplines. For this issue, creative director Chanel B. responds to GeeJay's *Who Have I Become?*, developing a visual language that carries the album's themes of change into image. Working across styling and creative direction, she frames identity as something fluid, shaped through time and perspective.

The project begins with reading.

Not to fix meaning too quickly, but to stay close to the original work – close enough to recognise its language, without closing it down. For Chanel B., working from *Who Have I Become?* meant holding that distance: aligned with what was there, while allowing space for her own understanding to take shape.

“The first thing I noticed was how open the interpretation felt,” she says. “Even within a single song, the perspective could shift.” She returns to *Young Girl* as an example – initially framed to her as a song about parenthood, about not wanting a daughter to grow up – but heard differently on her own terms.

“I could also hear it as someone speaking to their younger self. And I think that runs through the whole album. It's not always clear who's speaking, or from which point in time.” That instability in interpretation isn't resolved, it stays in play. Rather than fixing meaning, Chanel moves with it – between past and present. Her reading shifts as she spends more time with the work: what begins as a reflection on growing up expands through an understanding of its grounding in parenthood, without settling into it.

“I'm in a completely different stage of life – I'm only 23 – but I could still relate to it. At first, I read it quite directly. But the more I sat with it, and understood where GeeJay were coming from, that reading expanded.” What remains is a gap – between where the work comes from and how it's encountered. “It's not always clear where they're speaking from. Sometimes it feels like the future, sometimes the past, sometimes to themselves.”

That distance becomes the starting point for the shoot. Not a translation of the album, but a way of working through it – something that moves across time rather than fixing it in place. “To me, there's this constant sense of looking back,” she says. “So I started thinking about it as being told from the present, looking back at the past, with that question – ‘who have I become?’ – sitting in the middle.”

Photograph: Elina Sümeçz
Retouch: Gian Gnaegi
Styling: Chanel B.



CHANEL B.



Photography: Ramanie Rae Richards
Styling: Chanel B.

Stage 01 – Childhood:

Playful, oversized, and unresolved.

Silhouettes sit too large on the body, suggesting growth not yet reached. References – uniforms, outdoor space – remain familiar, but never settle into literal depiction. Identity exists here as something provisional: worn, tested, and not yet understood.



Q: What led you to interpret the album through distinct stages of life?

“It came quite naturally from listening. Some songs feel lighter, more playful. Others feel heavier, more reflective,” she says.

“So I started thinking about it in stages – childhood, your twenties, and then who you are now. The last stage became the anchor, because that’s where the album is speaking from. But the question ‘who have I become’ always implies looking backwards. You can’t answer it without thinking about who you’ve been.”

Q: Was that structure something you found in the work, or something you introduced?

“I think it’s there – just not explicitly. Especially if you’re listening from a different point in your life, you start applying your own experiences to it. So what I did wasn’t invent something new – it was more about amplifying something that was already there.”

From here, that reading begins to take shape visually. Each stage becomes a way of tracking how identity shifts – through clothing, posture, and relation.

Childhood begins with something familiar, but slightly out of reach. “When you think about childhood, there are certain references – school uniforms, clothing you haven’t grown into yet, being outside. So, I used those ideas but tried not to make it feel like a costume.”

Everything sits slightly off. Clothes are too big. Silhouettes don’t quite settle. The figure appears to be growing into something not yet defined. “You think you know who you are,” she says, “but you haven’t experienced shit yet.”

WHO HAVE YOU BECOME?



The second stage disrupts that stability. “This is where it becomes more unstable,” she says. “I wanted to dress them in things they wouldn’t normally wear. I asked them – would you wear this? And when they said no, I was like, good.”

For Jay, this meant pushing into something overtly preppy – controlled, performative. For Gee, it meant moving toward something more expressive, less contained. “It’s like projecting who you think you should be,” she says. “Even if it’s not you. I’m pretty sure that’s something every goes through in their life.”

To her, that instability had to extend into the actual space as well. “I wanted it to feel clinical – like you’re under scrutiny.” The white backdrop flattens everything, removing context and exposing detail. “I think in your 20s, you’re clinically over-analysing yourself. Trying to be this perfect version of you.”

She explains how this stage is supposed to hold multiple versions at once, “your twenties are layered – you’re navigating different identities, different environments, different expectations. You’ve got different friend groups, different versions of yourself depending on where you are. So visually, it needed to feel like a lot – but not messy in a way that breaks the whole thing.”

And details start to point forward. “The fringes that are already there,” she says, “they’re like parts of Gee that later become the fur, the glamour, the full expression. In your 20s, there’s things not fully embraced yet – but they’re starting to show.”

And even the discomfort is intentional. “When I look at the images, they don’t feel like GeeJay was fully comfortable – and that’s what I wanted – a mixture of overconfidence and discomfort”

Stage 02 – The 20s:

Layered, performative, and unstable.

Styling moves into unfamiliar territory – clothes that don’t quite belong to the wearer. The white backdrop flattens the image into something clinical, exposing each decision. Layering and detail suggest multiple identities held at once, with elements of a future self-beginning to surface but not yet fully integrated.



By the final stage, that tension settles.

“Comfort,” she says. “It’s the most cohesive they are – individually and together.” Here, it moves closer to something lived-in. Gee’s look comes from something she had already worn – something she felt comfortable in, particularly six months postpartum. “It was important that she felt like herself in it.”

Finding something for Jay that could sit alongside it – without disappearing, without overpowering – becomes a matter of testing, adjusting, reworking. “We tried things that looked right but didn’t feel right, and things that felt right but didn’t sit properly.” The final look comes together gradually – and, at one point, unexpectedly. “I saw a vest someone else was wearing and thought – that’s it. That works.”

What emerges isn’t just cohesion, it’s relation. “They’re not just a duo anymore – they’re a team. And like any team, the individualism is still there – it just becomes more harmonic.”

Q: What ties all three stages together?

“I was really conscious that it could feel like three separate shoots. So we introduced connectors – Jay’s bandana, Gee’s necklace. To me, they represent something core – something you carry through everything. It doesn’t need to be big. Sometimes it’s just a small thing that stays with you. Whether that is a piece of identity or clothing doesn’t matter.

And just like interpretation, her process remains open. “The bandana was originally orange,” she says. “But it didn’t work the final look. Changing it to yellow made everything sit properly.” That movement between instinct and adjustment runs through the whole process. “The idea for the concept came quite fast,” she says. “But then it was about refining it – changing colours, trying things out, stepping back.”

Q: Do you see the shoot as an extension of the album, or a separate work?

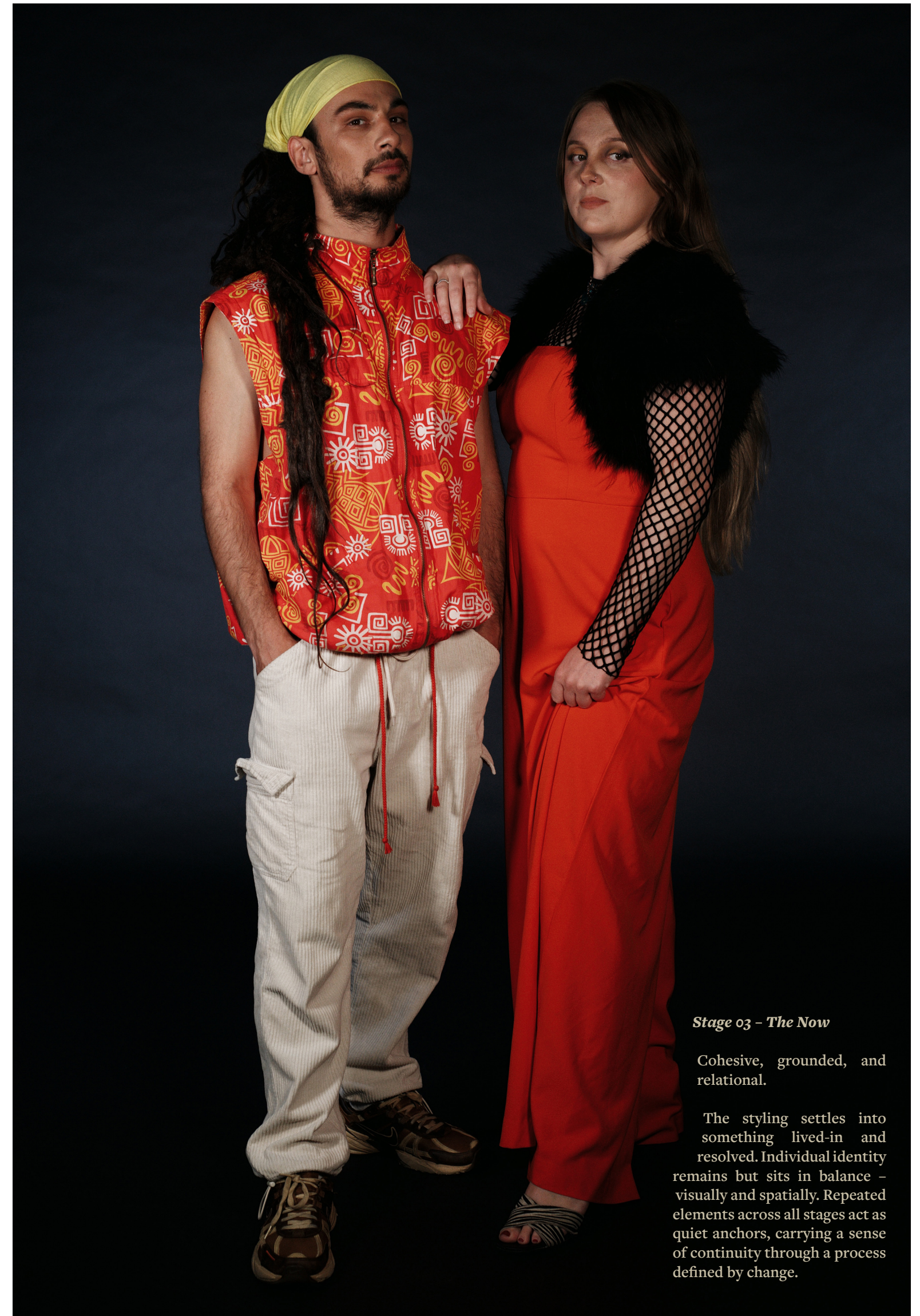
“It’s both. It’s based on the album, so it extends it – but it’s also its own thing. It’s like a parallel version, starting from the same place but arriving somewhere slightly different.”

Q: What do the images communicate that the music alone cannot?

“They don’t replace the music – they expand it. They introduce another perspective, and I think that goes as much for GeeJay themselves as for the listener.”

Despite this, she refuses the idea of reducing the images to a single moment. “No – because the concept is progression. It only works when all three exist together.”

What emerges isn’t fixed, but worked through–shaped through reading, testing, negotiation, and adjustment. The question – “Who have I become?” – isn’t answered here. It’s asked again– just through another perspective



Stage 03 – The Now

Cohesive, grounded, and relational.

The styling settles into something lived-in and resolved. Individual identity remains but sits in balance – visually and spatially. Repeated elements across all stages act as quiet anchors, carrying a sense of continuity through a process defined by change.

IMAGINING SOUND: HA TSZ

Symphiosis opens beyond a single perspective. By inviting emerging designers to respond to GeeJay's second album *Who Have I Become?*, it traces how the same body of music moves through different hands, practices and ways of seeing.

Ha Tsz, a second-year design student at the University for the Creative Arts, approaches the album through performance as much as listening. Having designed stage outfits for musicians in his home city of Hong Kong, his response moves between spectacle and intimacy – anchored in Gee and Jay's partnership.

Ha Tsz:

I started by looking through their Instagram, especially their performance outfits, to get a sense of what they naturally gravitate towards.

For Gee, I noticed a lot of emphasis on the shoulders – either puffed shapes or pieces with volume and texture – so I began there. The look started with a high neckline layered with a short-sleeved top, then developed into something more structured with a shoulder-pad feel. I've been doing a lot of draping in my own work recently, so I brought that into the design as well.

The backless detail came in a bit later, but it ended up becoming really important. I was thinking about their partnership – the idea of being back-to-back, having to trust each other, especially with everything around parenthood. That sense of vulnerability and support felt central.

Colour took a bit longer to figure out. There are so many directions I could have gone in, but after seeing them live in Amsterdam, the lighting really stayed with me – especially the purple and blue tones. That moment felt the most memorable, so I based both looks around that palette.

For Jay, I started with movement. Because he's playing instruments, I wanted to make sure the outfit allowed him to move freely. The base is a pair of linen trousers, but the top is more fluid – something long and lightweight. In my head, it's almost like an apron shape, but extended and more dramatic, with proper sleeves and neckline. I imagined it in chiffon so it feels breathable and moves easily on stage.

Both looks are connected through the backless element and the overall idea of partnership – having each other's back through everything, balancing vulnerability with warmth and optimism. I also thought about how this could translate further into performance, as a more heightened, almost fantasy version of them on stage, where they appear as a kind of matching set.



© Ha Tsz

Viewed through the designer's lens, the album returns to Gee and Jay in a new form – translated, abstracted, and reimagined. Their responses vary between recognition and discovery, reflecting on how their work is interpreted beyond their own understanding.

GeeJay on Ha Tsz's Designs:

Gee: Oh wow – these are so pretty. I love the back of mine, that's really nice.

Jay: Yeah... the open back is mad. I've never worn anything like that before. I think I'd be a bit hesitant – but then I'm topless on the beach anyway, so I don't know why it feels different.

Gee: You'd wear it. Just maybe not straight away, not full length like that.

Jay: Yeah, maybe as a top first. From the front it feels quite structured – almost like a tunic – but then the back kind of breaks it open completely.

Gee: I think that's what I like about it. It's not just how it looks – it's the idea behind it. That thing of being back-to-back, having each other's back... it actually feels quite accurate for us.

Jay: Yeah. It's one of those things where once you know the meaning, it kind of locks everything in. It's not just design at that point – it's saying something.

Gee: And the colour as well – I'd honestly adore the purple one. It would feel like a really special piece to own. Purple's quite spiritual, and I think that's quite us. It's warm, but there's something deeper in it.

Jay: Yeah, and I like that they're not exactly the same colour.

Gee: Exactly. If it was identical, it would feel a bit forced – like you're trying to match. This feels more natural. Like we're connected, but still separate people.

Jay: Yeah, it kind of holds that balance. It brings us together without flattening us into the same thing.



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