

WHERE DID THEY COME FROM: JOJI

BY BRENDAN DITULLIO

With the sweeping success of his hit single “Glimpse of Us”, singer songwriter Joji has cemented himself as the voice of a generation. Currently on tour, Joji is promoting the release of his third studio album *Smithereens*. However, as Joji continues to rise in popularity, fans have begun to look into his controversial past and ask the question—where did this guy come from?

Joji, real name George Kusunoki Miller, was born on September 18, 1992 in Osaka, Japan. He is half-Japanese and half-Australian, and he lived in Japan until moving to the U.S. at age 18 for college. It was here that George began posting online content under the persona “Filthy Frank.”

Filthy Frank lived up to his name. Known for his shock humor, the character posted everything from offensive rants to embarrassing public pranks and crude music videos. Easily recognized by his glasses and blue polo, his most recognizable trait was his coarse, throaty voice. With video titles like “Filthy Frank vs. Animal Rights” and “How to Dubstep,” it was only natural that his videos attracted the younger, meme-obsessed generation of the early 2010s. Over the course of six years, George would build an expansive YouTube em-

pire, creating a web of characters tangled up in complex, edgy lore. His videos regularly went viral, with a majority of them garnering over 10 million views each. Most notably, George accidentally kicked off the Harlem Shake trend after a video of him dancing in his notorious pink bodysuit went viral in 2013.

Throughout the Frank years, hints of George’s unique musical stylings would seep through the cracks. He created the aforementioned “Pink Guy” character and used it as a musical outlet, regularly putting out short, lighthearted ukulele music videos about fried noodles and anime women. At the same time, George secretly began to post music under the name Joji. The ukulele acoustics and haunting high-pitch vocals were still there, but the music was less ironic, with lyrics focusing more on George’s personal relationships and struggles. George believed his fan base wouldn’t care for his more lo-fi music, so he decided to keep Joji a secret until his identity leaked in 2016. After this leak, George released two singles and announced his first Joji album: *Chloe Burbank: Volume 1*.

Chloe Burbank: Volume 1 never released. While there have been leaks, the project in its entirety has

never been heard by the public. The common belief is that George simply became too busy as he tried to balance his two musical personas, Joji and Pink Guy. 2017 was a huge year for George, as he started working with record label 88rising to release his *In Tongues* EP, his first official Joji project. Meanwhile, George put out his second Pink Guy album titled *Pink Season*. This release was wildly successful, landing at number 70 on the U.S. Billboard 200. Featuring songs about memes, high school, and Nickelodeon sitcoms, George’s signature crude humor was on display in full force, and his audience couldn’t wait for more. Unbeknownst to fans, *Pink Season* would be the Filthy Frank brand’s swan song.

After months of Filthy Frank inactivity, George posted a Twitter statement on December 29, 2017, putting an end to Frank. While George was grateful to his old fanbase, he simply no longer enjoyed producing crude, satirical content. He also noted health concerns, explaining that throat tissue damage and neurological issues made it difficult to continue playing Frank. Fans were saddened, and thousands of tributes started pouring in from across the world for the characters and videos that George created. At the time of

its abandonment, the TVFilthyFrank channel boasted 7.88 million subscribers and over one billion views.

Although Frank is gone, George has gone on to find wild success with his projects as Joji. He has released three full-length albums—*BALLADS 1*, *Nectar*, and *Smithereens*—all of which have received critical acclaim. Rather than being about memes or teriyaki sauce, George’s songs are now more personal and genuine. This only makes sense, as Joji isn’t a character like Filthy Frank or Pink Guy—Joji is just George Kusunoki Miller.