

Allie X interview: "I'm still on a journey to discover who I am."

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by Peter Robinson



Allie X is one of this universe's 78 greatest popstars and for that reason and many others should be a) celebrated at every opportunity, b) protected at all costs, c) streamed endlessly upon the release of *Cape God*, her fourth ~~album~~ body of work. She recently took time out from her busy



went quite a lot like this.

You sent over an early stream of the new album last November — how have people been reacting to it so far?

Early on, even earlier than I sent it to you, a couple of folks I played it for in LA were very nice about it but I could tell they had no idea what I was doing. They were like: “Why would you go in this direction?” But in the most part it’s been very positive. People say it’s different, but in a way that sounds more Allie X than anything else they’ve heard. I think the reason for that is that it’s probably my most personal work and my most representative of, like, ‘actual feelings’ I have — as opposed to me digging into my unconscious mind and making something more abstract. So to answer your question most of the feedback’s been very positive and I no longer feel nervous that my fans won’t understand.

**I suppose early feedback being ‘what the hell are you doing’ must have been...
Difficult.**

It wasn’t anyone in the press at that point, it was more like producers and people like that. It just clued me into the fact that maybe some fans might not like it that much if they’re used to me belting my face off and having ten synths layered on top of each other. But at the same time, my internal team and my partner and [producer] Oscar Görres were really into it. Everyone was saying it was special.

You mentioned ‘actual feelings’. It feels like we’re seeing more of you in the imagery this time round, so is this an emotional unveiling as well as a visual one?

It wasn't my intention, it just happened pretty seamlessly. My visual intention was to represent a gothic Americana. I didn't want anything to look too posed. I wanted to capture moments in stories in the photos. My photography inspiration was really specific: this photographer called Gregory Crewdson. You'd recognise his work if you Googled him — mundane American East Coast settings that are also grotesque and surreal. I even went as far as con-

who had a different style but still had that liminal space feeling that I was trying to capture, and I ended up working with him — his name's Brendon Burton and ever since he was 17 he's been driving around the States by himself shooting ghost downs and derelict buildings.

You can't go wrong with a derelict building.

LOVE a derelict building. He's a really shy guy who doesn't like to promote himself but I've been saying: "Brendon, you've got to get a book and get in the press and tell them what you do!" It's very bold and ballsy — it's kind of dangerous. The record cover was shot in a CAVE in the woods in upstate New York. I thought we'd park and the cave would be there but no, we had to hike 45 minutes to get there.





The problematic thing with caves is, much as they've been in place for thousands of years, they've got to start moving around at some point. It's hard to truly trust a cave.

I was nervous actually. I was like: "Does anyone have any weed?" So I got kind of stoned. And then I was even MORE scared when I was in the cave. (*Chortle*) I was going: "It's haunted! People will fall into the water!" But I digress.

A few years ago you were, I think, the first artist I'd interviewed who explicitly talked about Jungian notions of shadow. Then obviously BTS came along and planted their flag in the whole thing. Were you a bit: "Hang on, I'm the popstar who has thoughts about Carl Gustav Jung"?

Nah it's fine! Did you see I have a song on their album?



It was really fun to write that song, I'm really glad it's on the record. I'm a big fan.

You've got a song called Madame X on your album...

Which was written before Madonna put out her album! I mean, I'm such a Madonna fan and if Madonna came for me I'd just be like: queen, this one's yours, I have no fight. But the idea for Madame X has been in the notes in my phone since 2017. We wrote it in April, May or June 2018.

I love that you've already got all the dates straight on this.

(Laughs) I just know what the truth is!!! I know it was before summer 2018. But again, if Madonna wanted to accuse me of anything, it's like: Madonna, you win. You're my queen.

And the song's actually about heroin?

It's about singing to your drug of choice. I wrote it with a writer in LA who had a history with painkillers and she wrote a lot of the lyrics on that tune. I was really astounded by what was coming out of her mouth. It's basically serenading your love, but your love is your drug of choice — be it painkillers, fentanyl, heroin, whatever. But I think it's more of a downer kind of a thing. Alcohol would be included too. It's about floating on a cloud and all your troubles go away and you don't really think too much any more, being peacefully held in a moment.

Can we call Cape God your fourth album?

CollXtion I and Super Sunset were eight songs each, so we're calling those EPs.

To me a strong eight-song EP is just a proper album where the artist has pre-emptively removed the three tracks nobody likes.



The question is: is this where you imagined you'd be on your fourth body of work?

I didn't actually think about it. It's kind of unexpected actually, the way this sound went, now that I think of it. I didn't plan it. I always had pretty high ambitions for the amount of people I'd reach. I'd always wanted to do this on a large scale, I've never been very humble about it. But I've never known if I'm a Top 40 artist or an alternative artist. I used to think I was making indie music, then I put *Catch* out and all of a sudden I had major labels contacting me and Katy Perry tweeting about my song. And then I was in LA as part of the pop machine, and I was like: well I guess I'm doing that. With this record I've tried to ignore what's on the radio, what other people are doing, and how other people classify me, and instead I've simply tried to do something that's deeply representative of who I am and what I think is cool. And I still don't know where that fits, but hopefully I'll have success.

For people who haven't heard the album, who are you and what do you think is cool?

I'm still on a journey to discover who I am. This is a project that's about identity and finding your own truth. Like I said earlier, I'm an attention-seeker but I think I'm also very kind and compassionate. I can be funny. I have an affinity to the LGBTQ+ community. I love dogs. I have a very strange diet and I love a *look*. I love to pull off a look.

How is your diet strange?

I have a health issue that resulted in my doing a really strict diet years ago: I don't do any sugar in any form, not even a banana, I don't do anything refined, gluten, dairy, and I like to confine foods correctly, and I like to have a bit of a fermented food.

I mean in a way everyone's doing that now so you were simply ahead of the curve.

IT'S TRUE! It's not even that strange any more. It felt strange five years ago — people were





You've said in the past that it took you a while to embrace your weirdness as a teenager, and obviously as a popstar you've been brilliantly weird so far, but it feels like you're emerging back out of that weirdness now. Is that a reflection of you becoming less weird as a person, or a reaction to a sense that weirdness has scared people away from your music, or something else? What's happening there?

Ha! "What's happening with your weirdness?"

Is that a fair question?

It's a TOTALLY valid question, I just haven't been asked it yet and I have a lot of feelings around it so I may ramble. So: as a teenager, I think what I wanted was to be pretty. And to be sought after by popular girls. and by boys. I just never was. I always had friends once



guess what I learned out of that was that you can be different and that's how you'll... I guess attract attention? Because I *am* an attention seeker. It's not like I've ever been shy. I've definitely been the weird girl but I've always wanted attention, and to be seen, and to be heard. I guess I'm a weird combination of things. There was a lot of evolution between my teens and the time I put out the Allie X music; being in a scene in Toronto, exposure to experimental music, a lot of time spent on Tumblr... I knew what I was and what I wanted to present to the world and I think it's safe to say Allie X visuals always have been, and continue to be, a heightened version of how I see myself in the world. There's always some element of mystery, or fantasy, or what have you. In the past work there's been a lot of veils and mystery and I feel like at this point in my life I'm actually ready to be more vulnerable. To take off my sunglasses, if you will. And to tell the story of what really carved me into the person I am now, for better or for worse. Am I less weird? It's so strange because if I go to the airport or the grocery store I think I look like I'm going to a yoga class — people don't immediately think of me as weird. But then I'll be in other situations where people are calling me a witch! I guess I'm both? People are layered like that.

And of course sometimes just because an artist presents themselves in a way that doesn't look like a persona, that doesn't mean it's not a persona. Sometimes it's a more clever persona than a persona that looks like one. It still communicates something.

Yeah! That makes sense. One thing I'll say is that the longer I live and the older I get, the more I crave real human connection. Or just real connection in general. When I came to LA I had that total reality show mentality: "I'm not here to make friends! I'm here with a purpose!" And now I feel like I want balance. And I want real friends. I want compassion, and nature. Which really surprises me, but it's a natural progression.

Friends can be quite demanding though can't they? With their 'birthdays' and their 'wanting to talk on the phone'.



now and that helps a lot. But it's very difficult for me to make friends here in LA because...
(Sighs) It's a place where everyone, including me, puts work first. It's hard for people to step away from their work. But I want more friends in the future.

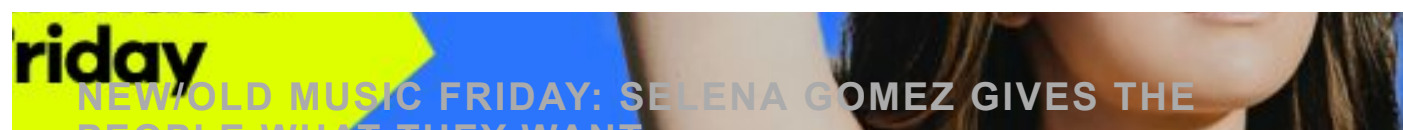
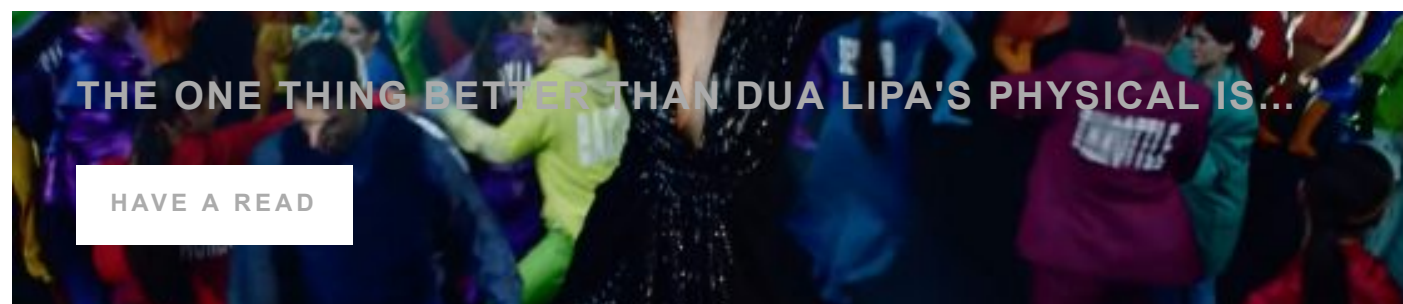
You've said elsewhere that if this goes tits up you could just move to Oregon and have five dogs. And there are worse things in the world than that, right?

Totally. I could be part of a *ceramics class*. I could go swimming in a lake. That all sounds great. Hopefully I can retire there with a lot of money in my pocket. I mean, that would be the ideal situation.

Allie X's very good album **Cape God** is out on February 21. [Why not go and see her bang it out live?](#)

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